

GREAT DECISIONS

Winter 2020 Update

Climate Change and the Global Order • India and Pakistan • Human Trafficking • Latin America's Northern Triangle • The Philippines and the U.S.

Climate Change and the Global Order

The 2020 World Economic Forum met at Davos, Switzerland, for its annual meeting in January. Some of the themes of the meeting were “Beyond Geopolitics” and “How to Save the Planet” and focused on climate change and its effect on both business and politics. Panels included important climate activists such as former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore, Ma Jun, current director of the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, and Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. President Donald Trump also attended, giving a keynote address to the forum on January 21. During the address, President Trump said the U.S. would join the World Economic Forum’s initiative to plant 1 trillion trees over the next decade, as part of a plan to combat global deforestation. He then went on to warn the forum about giving into “the perennial prophets of doom and their predictions of the apocalypse.”

While President Trump dismissed the potential threats of climate change, the rest of the forum was dominated by leaders of government and business discussing how the global community will respond to climate change. Some businesses, like global investment management company BlackRock, said that they would no longer work with companies that they consider a “sustainability risk.” BlackRock CEO Laurence Fink sent out a letter before the meeting in Davos calling on other chief executives and business leaders to join BlackRock in changing their business model for the new decade. “Awareness is rapidly changing, and I believe we are on the edge of a fundamental reshaping of finance,” Fink said in his letter.

Pressure for businesses and governments to respond to climate change came from all areas of society. During the meeting, several demonstrations from climate activists took place in the town of Davos. Some demonstrations were led by Thunberg, who also participated in a few of the panels during the forum. “Anything less than immediately ceasing these investments in the fossil fuel industry would be a betrayal of life itself,” Thunberg said during one forum. Many business leaders agreed that more needs to be done, but stopped short of agreeing to Thunberg’s proposal. “Should we draw a line and say we will not raise money for a company that is a carbon company, a fossil company?” David Solomon, CEO of Goldman Sachs, said during a panel, “We’re not going to do that, we’re not going to draw a line.”

Recommended Readings

Stanley Reed, “Climate Changes Takes Center Stage in Davos,” *New York Times* (Jan 20, 2020) <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/20/business/energy-environment/davos-climate-change.html>

Julia Horowitz, “BlackRock is changing its investment strategy because of climate change,” *CNN* (Jan 14, 2020) <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/14/investing/premarket-stocks-trading/index.html>

Justin Worland, “How Davos Became a Climate Change Conference” *Time* (Jan 27, 2020) <https://time.com/5771889/davos-climate-change/>

India and Pakistan

Despite international pushback, Jammu and Kashmir remain on lockdown by the Indian government nearly six months after the revocation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which had granted autonomy to the region. While some of the restrictions have been eased, such as a return of text messaging and some internet service, there remains a curfew and new laws like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The CAA was passed in December to much opposition from both Indians and the international community. The act is seen as a precursor to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) a census that will look to curb the growing rate of illegal immigration from neighboring Kashmir, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Critics worry that the government will use the register to discriminate against minority communities.

While people in Jammu and Kashmir are beginning to have some of their rights returned, they still have no active government following India's revoking of its autonomous status. India has arrested two former chief ministers of Jammu and Kashmir, Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah, under the Public Safety Act. The Public Safety Act (1978) is a law applied to Jammu and Kashmir that allows the Indian government to arrest any person in the region "in the case of a person acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the state." The law permits detention for up to two years, without trial or warrant. Ms. Mufti and Mr. Abdullah have been under house arrest since August, but have had their sentences extended under the Public Safety Act.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has remained forthright in his condemnation of India's actions regarding Kashmir. "Kashmir will now move toward independence," Kahn said during a meeting with the Pakistan National Assembly, referring to the revocation of Article 370 as a "fatal mistake." Pakistan officials have sought to bring the Kashmir situation to light on the international stage. Pakistan has appealed to the Saudi-led Organization of Islamic Cooperation for support, but so far has been rebuffed. The UN Security Council met to discuss Kashmir in August, with China leading the discussion on behalf of Pakistan. The most recent discussion took place behind closed doors in January, but no official action has been taken.

While speaking with Imran Khan at the World Economic Forum in January at Davos, Switzerland, U.S.

President Donald Trump said that he was ready to help resolve the Kashmir situation. "What's going on between Pakistan and India if we can help, we certainly will be willing to," Trump said during his meeting with Kahn. Kahn added that "The Pakistan-India conflict is a very big issue for us in Pakistan and we expect the U.S. to always play its part in de-escalating the tensions, because no other country can."

Recommended Readings

Joe Wallen, "We are near to economic collapse: Kashmir's tourism industry decimated by India's internet blackout," *The Telegraph* (Feb 6, 2020). <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/terror-and-security/near-economic-collapse-kashmirs-tourism-industry-decimated-indias/>

Saheli Roy Choudhury, "Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan again calls for Trump to mediate on Kashmir dispute," *CNBC* (Jan 27, 2020). <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/23/davos-2020-pakistan-prime-minister-imran-khan-on-kashmir.html>

Human Trafficking

On October 23, 2019, a refrigerated truck was found in South Essex, UK, containing the bodies of 39 Vietnamese people. The victims are believed to be part of a large human trafficking operation that smuggles poor from Vietnam into the UK. As of this writing, two British men and some ten Vietnamese have been arrested for manslaughter and for working with the smuggling operation. A similar story came out of the Netherlands, where in November a truck filled with 16 migrants from various countries of origin was stopped before boarding a ferry bound for the UK. These events highlight the dangers that modern slavery and human trafficking have with regard to restrictive immigration policies, with traffickers and victims using more extreme and dangerous methods to get to destination countries.

On January 31, President Trump gave a speech at the White House on the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). Trump said that combatting human trafficking was "100 percent committed to eradicating human trafficking from the Earth." During the speech, Trump highlighted the \$430 million that had been budgeted to help combat sex and labor trafficking across the globe. "We are dismantling the criminal organizations that

make large-scale human trafficking possible,” Trump said, “All federal departments are doing what they can to identify and destroy these groups.” President Trump also announced the creation of the Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is made up of 19 federal departments and agencies working together to prevent trafficking and assist survivors and victims.

While eradicating modern slavery has been a part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (that look to eliminate all global slavery by 2030), the goal seems far off. Studies from the University of Nottingham’s Rights Lab shows that 94 of the 193 UN members do not have any laws or penalties that explicitly punish forms of modern slavery such as child labor and forced marriages. While international laws and strong responses from governments are necessary, Jakub Sobik, a spokesman for Anti-Slavery International, says that just as much must be done by the private sector and NGOs. “Slavery in its nature looks to exploit people who fall slightly outside the rule of law,” Sobik said. The SDGs have set the benchmark at reducing slavery by 10,000 people per day, but the current trend is “nowhere near” accomplishing that, according to James Cockayne, Director of the Center for Policy Research at UN University. Cockayne believes that the biggest roadblock to ending modern slavery must come from the financial sector. “We must price modern slavery risk into our market practices,” Cockayne said while referencing the nearly \$150 billion that trafficking and slavery make in profit each year.

Recommended Readings

Gayle Markovitz, “How AI and satellite imaging can stamp out modern slavery” *World Economic Forum* (Jan 22, 2020). <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/how-ai-and-satellite-imaging-tech-can-put-an-end-to-modern-slavery/>

“Remarks by President Trump at the White House Summit on Human Trafficking: The 20th Anniversary of the

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Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000” *White House* (Jan 31, 2020). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-white-house-summit-human-trafficking-20th-anniversary-trafficking-victims-protection-act-2000/>

Suyin Haynes, “Slavery Still Exists All Around the World. Here’s How Some Countries Are Trying to Change That” *Time* (Dec 2, 2019). <https://time.com/5741714/end-modern-slavery-initiatives/>

Latin America’s Northern Triangle

Since the Trump administration cut funding for the Northern Triangle countries in March, members of Congress have called for more information regarding when and if funding will be reinstated and to what criteria the Trump administration is holding the Northern Triangle countries accountable. The deadline had been set for December 18 with the State Department failing to make a statement before then. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo wrote a letter in January addressing the House Foreign Affairs Committee saying that any plan for returning funds to the Northern Triangle governments was predicated on improving their border security and reintegrating migrants that had been sent back. The report also stated that some of the funding (around \$140 million) will be used primarily for the migration deals that had been negotiated with the individual countries and is focused on those objectives. Both the House Foreign Affairs Committee chair and House Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade chair have called for all the funding to be returned and a clear plan put in place.

While the Northern Triangle countries struggle to curb the rate of migration to both Mexico and the U.S., these countries also struggle to address the rampant corruption in their governments. As of early February, the two anti-corruption organizations in Honduras and Guatemala have been discontinued. The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH) were both shut down following attempts to combat corruption and embezzling within their respective governments. Despite these organizations’ limited successes, a new anti-corruption commission has begun in El Salvador (CICIES) that seeks to enable the federal justice system in the country to tackle corruption within the government.

Part of the Trump Administration’s plan to curb the flow of migration from the region has focused on

preventing large “migrant caravans” from crossing Mexico and getting to the U.S.-Mexico border. Mexico has put a large security presence along its border with Guatemala, working as the first barrier to entry to North America and hoping to break up the caravans before they even enter the country. Mexico has now begun detaining large numbers of migrants in facilities similar to facilities located along the U.S.-Mexico border, where migrants apply for asylum or get ready to be sent back to their country of origin.

Recommended Readings

Kirk Semple and Brent McDonald, “Mexico Breaks Up a Migrant Caravan, Pleasing White House” *New York Times* (Jan 24, 2020). <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/24/world/americas/migrant-caravan-mexico.html>

Nelson Renteria, “El Salvador launches anti-corruption commission, inspired by Guatemala” *Reuters* (Sep 6, 2019). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-el-salvador-corruption/el-salvador-launches-anti-corruption-commission-inspired-by-guatemala-idUSKCN1VR2QP>

The Philippines and the U.S.

On January 12, 2020, the Taal volcano, located in the Philippine province of Batangas, began spewing ash and eventually erupted. The volcano, located some 40 miles south of the Philippine capital of Manila, last erupted in 1977. The eruption could be felt for miles with seismic activity lasting until the end of January. Damage to the island is estimated at \$63 million with damage to both aquatic life and farmland. The eruption followed a buildup of seismic activity beginning last March.

Since the eruption ended in late January Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and his administration have taken steps to consolidate the government’s power and push the country closer to China. On February 11, the Duterte administration announced that it would be discontinuing the Visiting Forces Agreement and not allow U.S. troops to conduct any more joint exercises with Philippine forces. The U.S. now fears that Duterte will also discontinue the Mutual Defense Treaty from 1951, and the Obama era Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. Most experts view this move as part of Duterte’s “pivot” toward China, with the spokesperson for the administration saying that Duterte “will

not entertain” negotiations from President Trump.

Duterte’s decisions to discontinue the Visiting Forces Agreement comes on the heels of his administration’s attempt to strip the franchise rights of the largest media group in the Philippines, ABS-CBN Corp. Duterte claims that the media group has broken its legislative franchise by charging “additional fees” and allowing foreign investors. Critics, like the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, claim that Duterte is trying to consolidate his power over the media, as he had done with the news website Rappler in 2018. Both Rappler and ABS-CBN have been critical of the Duterte administration, especially with regard to election coverage and coverage of Duterte’s “War on Drugs.” “This proves without a doubt that this government is hell-bent on using all its powers to shut down the broadcasting network. We must not allow the vindictiveness of one man, no matter how powerful, to run roughshod over the constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of the press and of expression, and the people’s right to know,” the union said in a statement.

President Trump had invited leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to Washington in January, but Duterte declined to attend the meeting. While President Trump has yet to publicly respond to the end of the Visiting Forces Agreement, Duterte has claimed that Trump wants to save the deal or attempt to renegotiate.

Recommended Readings

Helen Regan and Jinky Jorgio, “Taal volcano eruption poses deadly dilemma for people living in its shadow,” *CNN* (Jan 19, 2020). <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/17/asia/taal-volcano-philippines-fatal-attraction-intl-hnk/index.html>

Julie McCarthy, “Philippines Says It Will End U.S. Security Agreement,” *NPR* (Feb 11, 2020). <https://www.npr.org/2020/02/11/804751958/philippines-says-it-will-end-u-s-security-agreementsays-pompeo>

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