

A comic by
Orijit Sen & Samarth

GANG OF 20



Centre for Financial Accountability (CFA) engages and supports efforts to advance transparency and accountability in financial institutions. We monitor the investments of national and international financial institutions, engage on policies that impact the banking sector and economy of the country. We do this via research, campaigns and training to help movements, organizations, activists, students and youth to engage and partake in campaigns that can shift policies and change public discourse on banking and economy and demystify the world of finance to help citizens make banks and governments more transparent and accountable. More information about CFA can be accessed at www.cenfa.org



Orijit Sen is a graphic artist, muralist, cartoonist and designer based in Goa, India. He is a co-founder of People Tree - a collaborative studio and store for artists, designers and craftspeople. Orijit is the author of *River of Stories* (1994), considered to be India's first graphic novel. In 2021, Orijit launched Comixense - a comics quarterly for young readers - in collaboration with Ektara Trust, and is its Chief Editor. He also teaches comics and graphic art, and has been Mario Miranda Chair Visiting Professor at Goa University as well as Visiting Professor at the Visual Arts Department of Ashoka University.

Samarth is a graphic novelist and researcher. His first graphic novel - *Suit*, was published by Yoda Press in January 2022. His work has been a means for him to study and interpret socio-political relationships. Over the last 2 years he has also been working in the social and development sector, building learning experiences for secondary school students. Most of his independent work happens before and after work hours. You can find him on instagram under the handle 'roeqin'.

Sonal Raghuvanshi is the Editor and co-ordinator of this book. She is a political economy researcher and is currently associated with the Centre for Financial Accountability. Her research looks at the role of finance in development (critically engaging with international financial institutions) and macroeconomic policy in developing economies alongside a critical engagement with the economics discipline. She is also an associate editor with an academic journal and an organizer with various progressive student groups and movements.

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This comic is a work of fiction and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental. The book attempts to demystify seemingly complex political economy issues beyond the regular formats.

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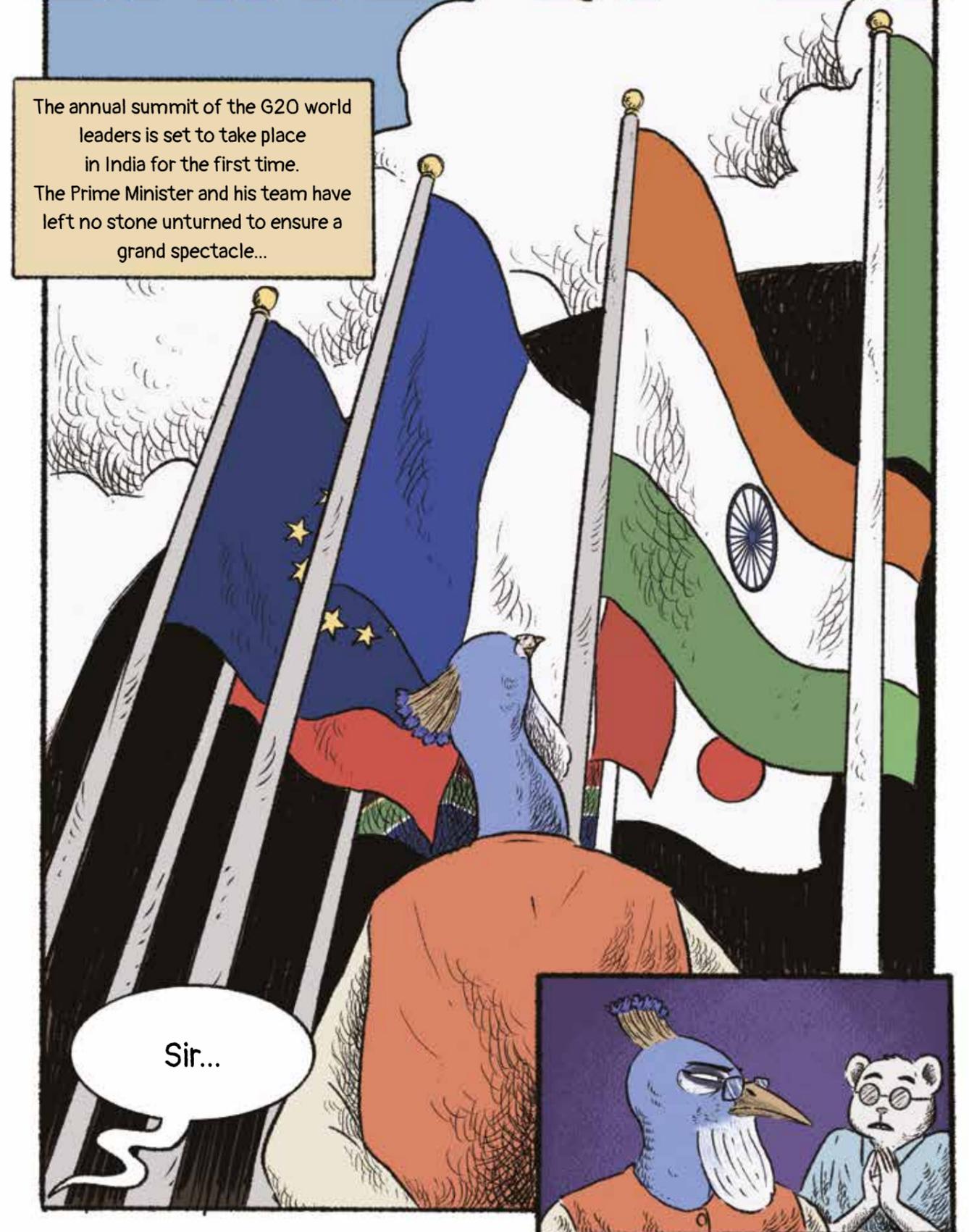
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GANG OF 20





Yes?...
What is it?

Sir, we have
successfully routed the
fiber optic cables to all the available
workstations.
More than 300 cable strands
have been installed for
communication.

Platoons of security
personnel have been
deployed to secure
the area.

Move back there,
you are not allowed
to block the gate!

Good! Make sure
it is all world class!
At least one generation
ahead of whatever those
Canadians put up at
the last G20!

Arrey, why
should we move? We have
travelled across the breadth
of this country to
be here!

If anyone needs
to move it's those parasites
that you are guarding!

G20 Murdabad!!

The venue has come up in
record time on the banks of the
famous Chai-Pani lake, renamed
by the Prime Minister in memory
of the days when he sold tea at a
railway station nearby.

As the leaders of the
G20 nations trickle in,
they are duly impressed
by what they see.

While at the gates, a large
herd of animals have
gathered in opposition.

Ahhh, we were
not expecting
such grandeur!

President
Korea

Vasudeva
Kutumbakam!

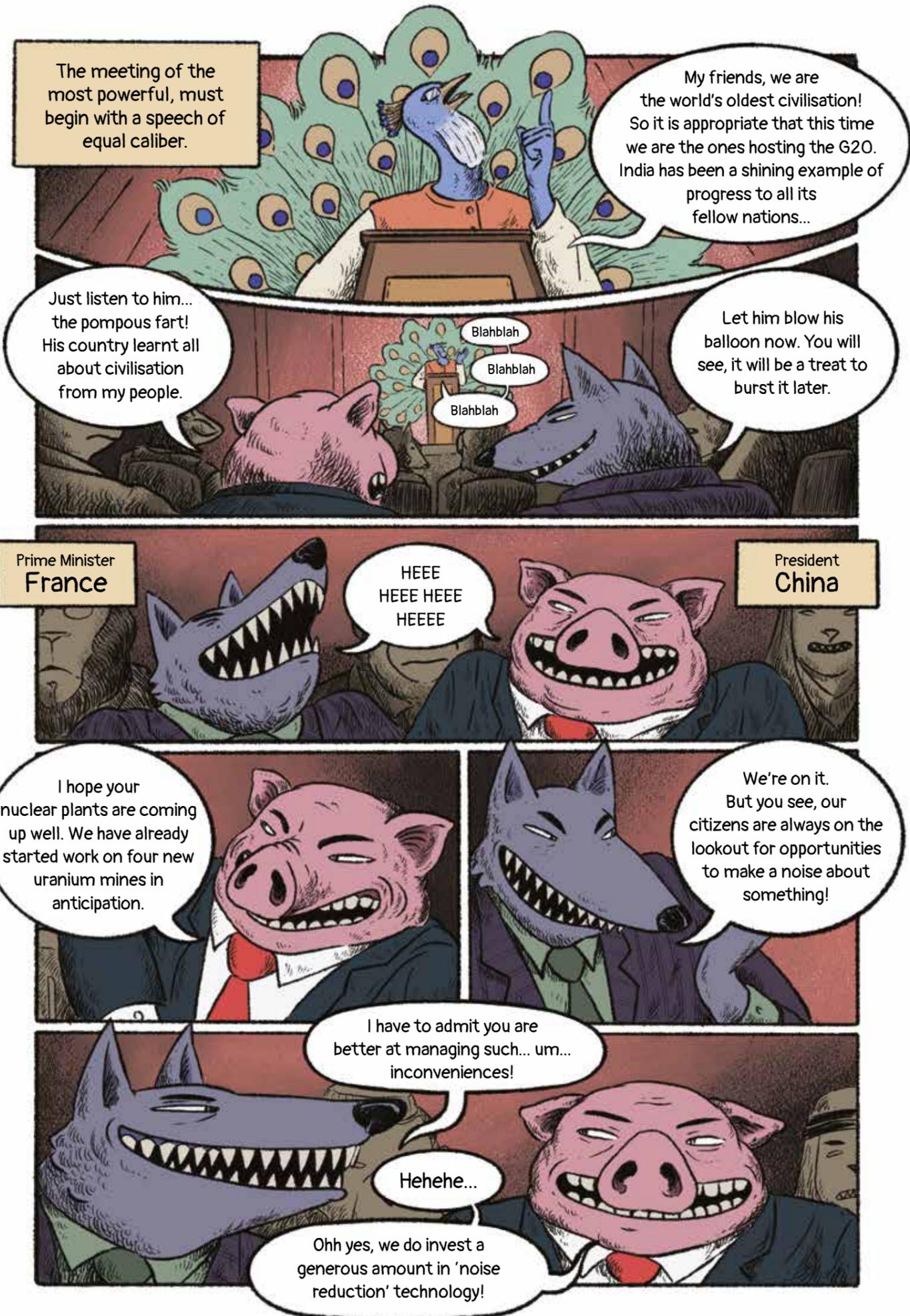
Ahem,
what?...

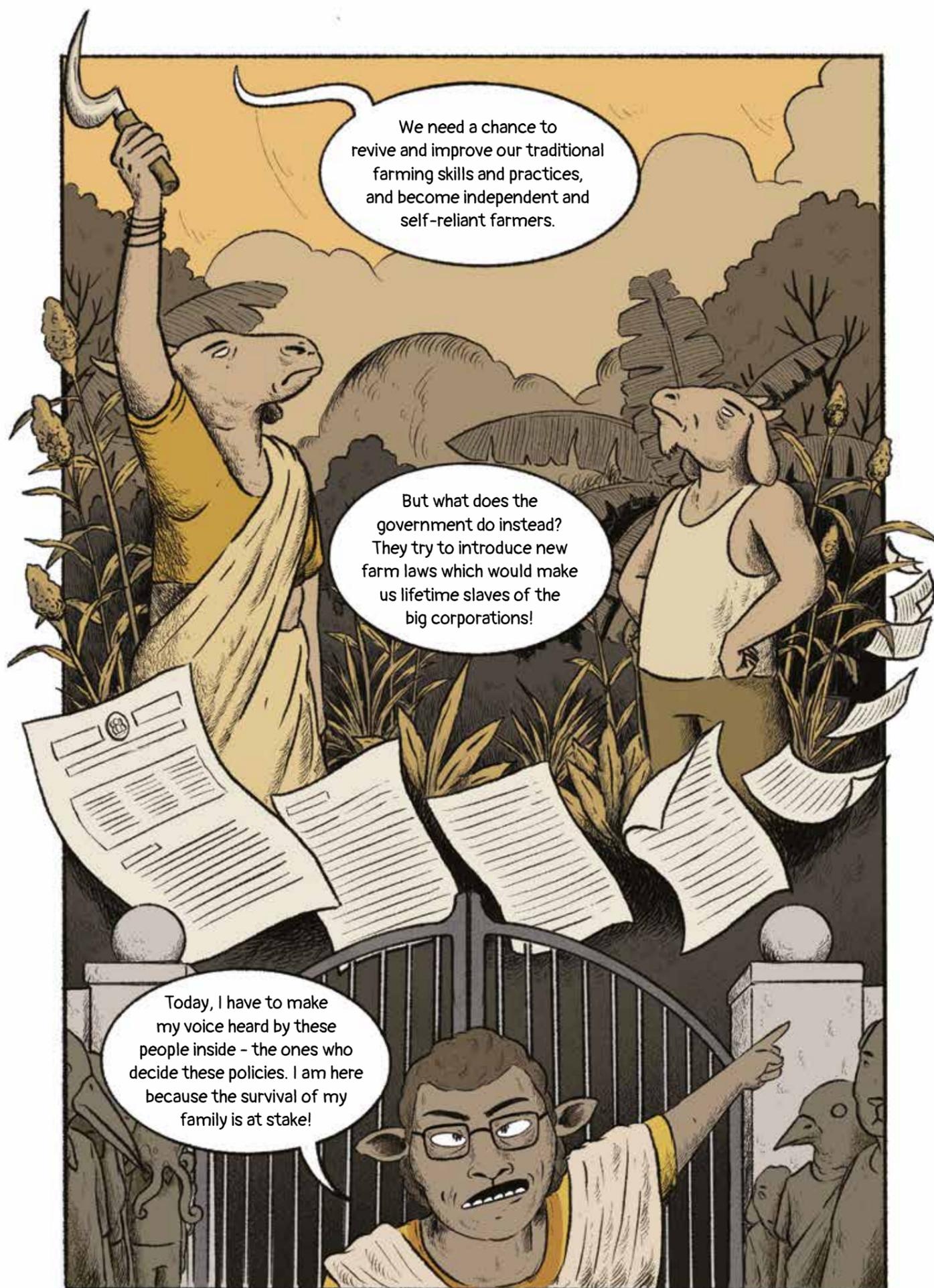
G20
GO BACK

WE

G
2
0

POVERTY
PEOPLE
POLLUTION
PLANET
PARALYSIS
PROSPERITY







The small scale subsistence farmers are only going to be exploited by these profit hungry corporations.

Yes! How are we to be self sufficient when our farmers are starving?

Isn't food security a duty to be fulfilled by the governments?

Agriculture Secretary Kenya

A duty of the government you say? It is YOU have brought your people to this sorry state with your protectionist ideologies!

Wake up and open up Madame! The market and its self regulating mechanisms can take care of EVERYTHING!



HAHA HAAAA

EVERYTHING!!!



What you are saying goes against the International Treaty on Farmer's Rights accepted by the United Nations...



Prime Minister UK

HAHAHA HAHA

United Nations? Look around you, Minister. We ARE the United Nations!



While the mighty countries play their games of deception, the stories unfolding outside find new realities.



We must set up a kitchen. The children are starving...





My brothers and sisters, you would not believe what I tell you, but we saw it with our own eyes!

SAVE CLIMATE REFUGEES

Our mother, the ocean, that cared for us over all these years has been upset.

We are fishermen, we rely on her to feed our families. We should have seen the signs sooner.

In the last few years she had been inching her way up to our homes, but this year she swallowed them up entirely.

There is nothing left of our village but rubble, and there is nowhere for us to go.



The construction of structures here is illegal. Clear them! Move out! You cannot gather here!

Do our children not have a right to a happy future?

Must we beg the leaders of our nation?

Are we responsible for the fate that has come our way?

CRASH

DHUUD DHUUD

ATEEE EEE

While entire villages drown, the leaders of the most powerful nations have their own delusion to drown in.



And now a toast to a greener future!

We, the leaders of the great nations, have all taken massive steps to combat climate change. I salute each and every one of you for the effort!

Prime Minister Australia

Yet, let us remind ourselves that the battle is far from won...

Considering the world's continuing dependency on oil, coal, and gas, we cannot magically stop consuming them entirely.

So what is the way ahead?

The answer lies in taking small but determined steps.

Take, for example, the radical Alcohol Dependency Reduction Plan that my cabinet has just approved.



We have assured captains of industry this move will not affect their drinking programs in the short or medium-term. We now have their full support!

We cannot transition to non-alcoholic beverages overnight, can we? Additional investments in beer consumption have to be made in the short term to achieve our long-term goals.

Determined to lead by example, my cabinet - whose average age is 73 - will therefore continue to drink as normal till they reach the age of 100.

They will then strategically start cutting down over the next 10 years until they reach net-zero alcohol consumption.

The actual end date for alcohol consumption may be as early as 2060!

If that is the case, add another 20 years for us! We're still a... developing nation, you see.

What a visionary program, Minister!

To the future, ladies and gentlemen!



Protest? Refugees?
This has to be a
seperatist plot!

SIR!!

Bzzz
Bzzz
Bzzz
Bzzz

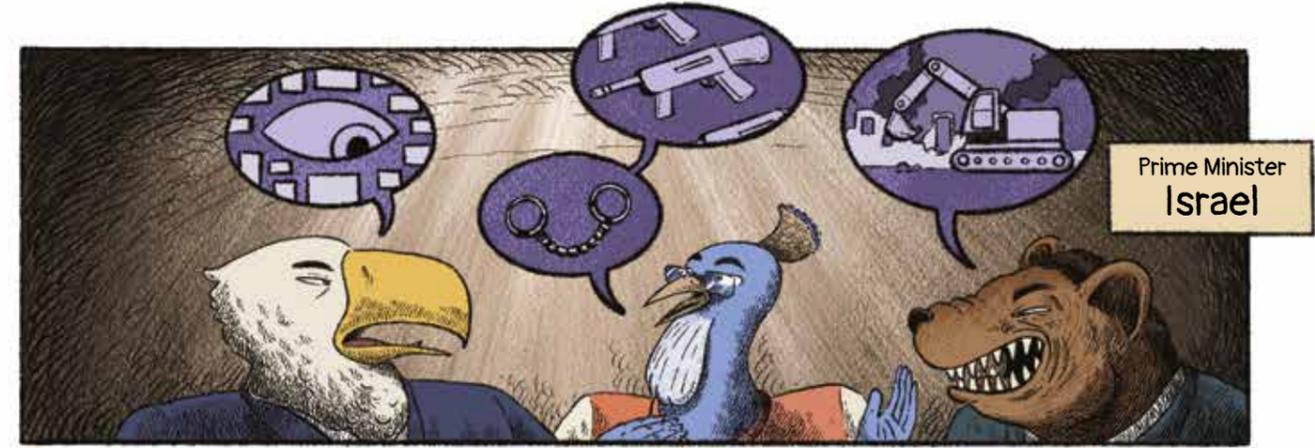
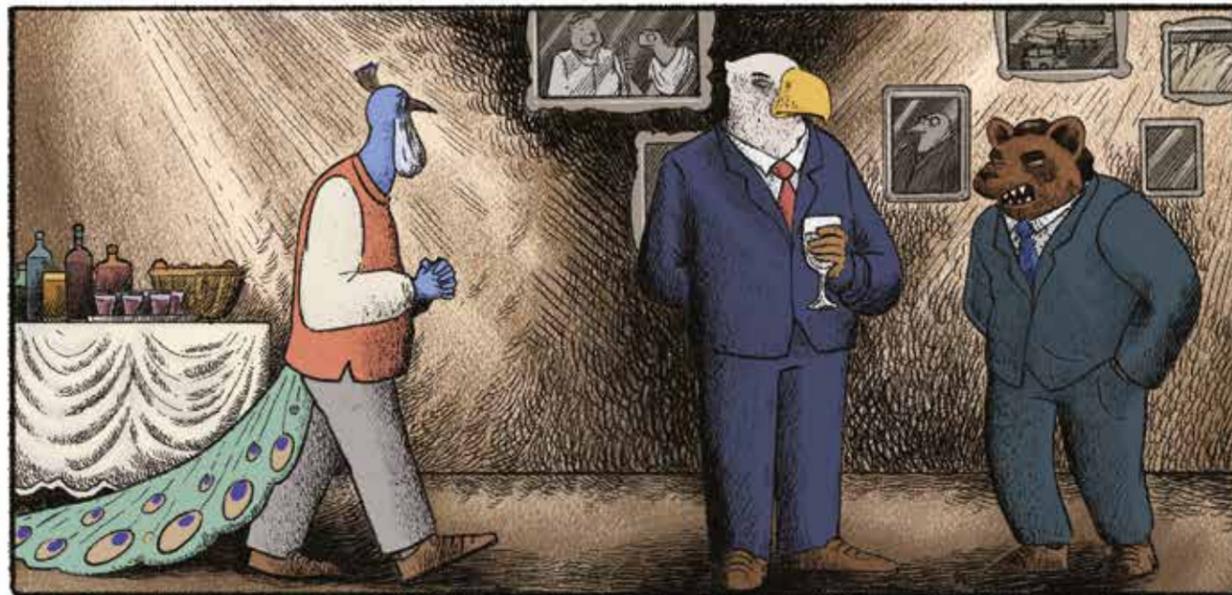


Sir, the protestors are
demanding immediate action
on the climate crisis.
They've even started a
hunger strike!

The situation is quite
tense sir. The NSA has
requested clearance for
a full scale crackdown!

Hmmm, there is
international media
crawling everywhere,
and we can't even suspend
network connectivity
in this area.

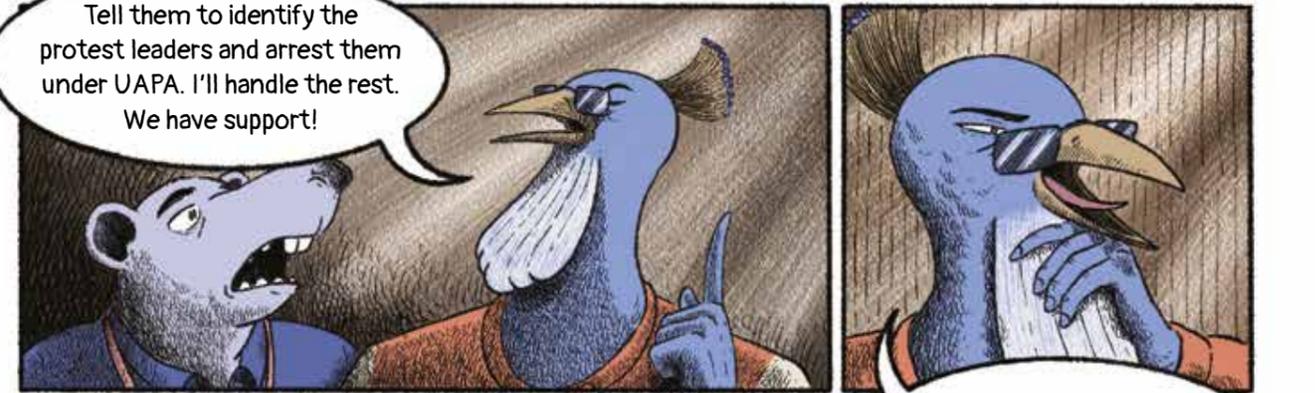
Let me think of
something...



Prime Minister
Israel

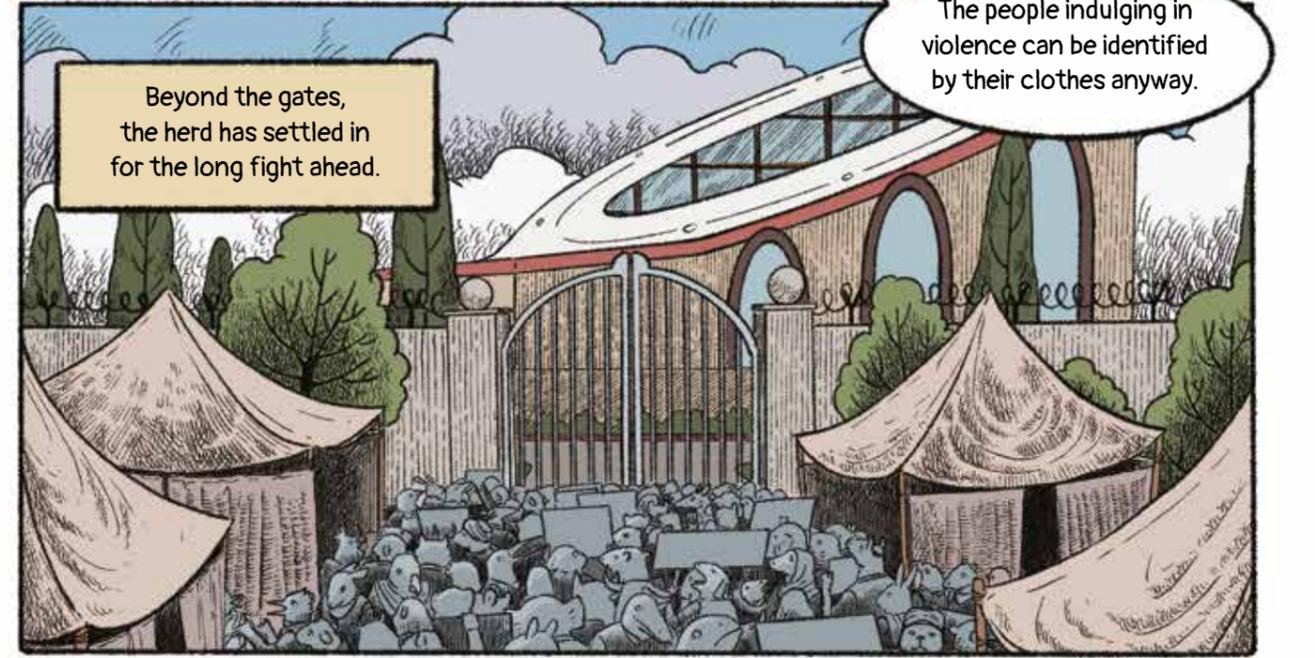


PAT
PAT



Tell them to identify the
protest leaders and arrest them
under UAPA. I'll handle the rest.
We have support!

The people indulging in
violence can be identified
by their clothes anyway.



Beyond the gates,
the herd has settled in
for the long fight ahead.



Creatures from across the land pour in to join the protests - students, teachers, farmers, workers...

G20 MURDABAD!

G20 MURDABAD!

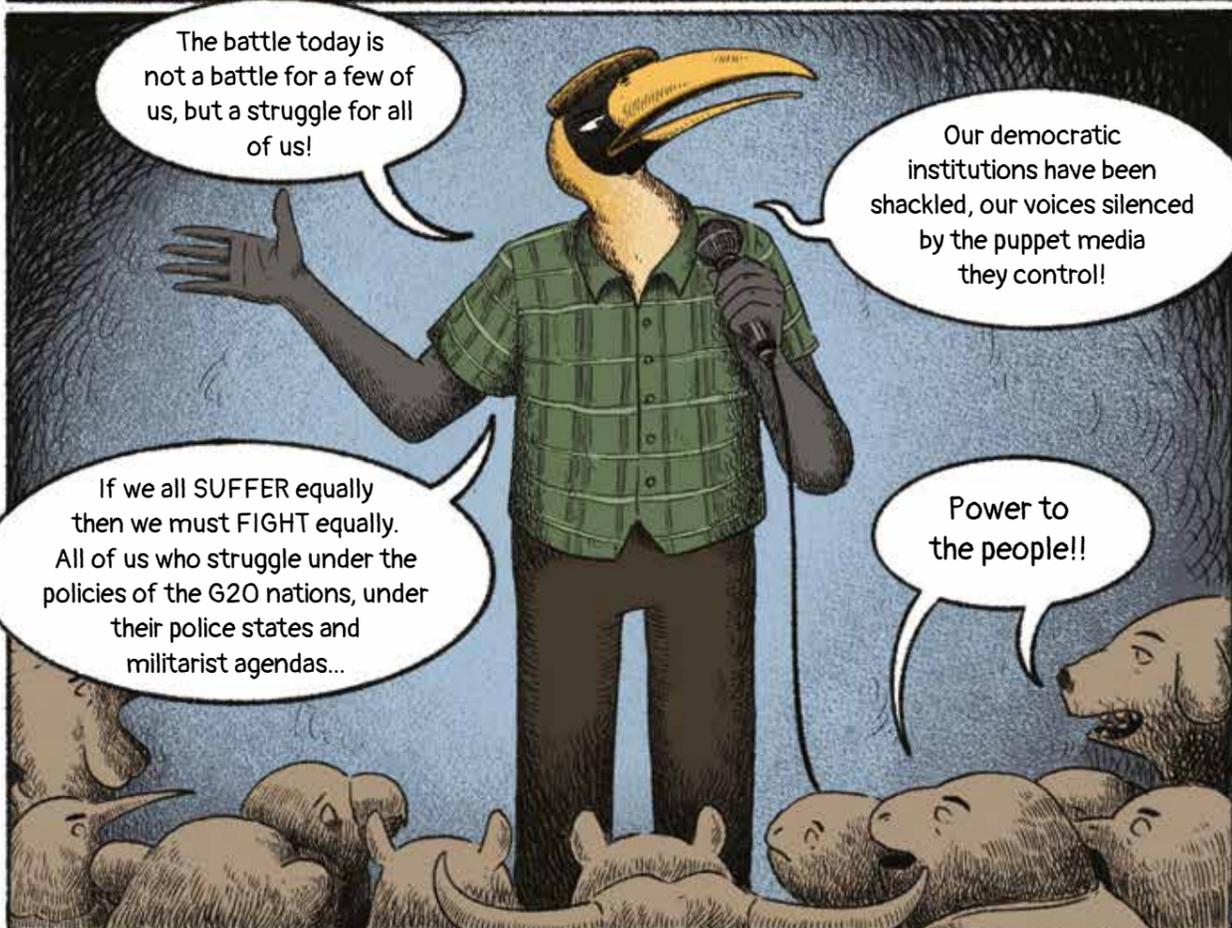


The battle today is not a battle for a few of us, but a struggle for all of us!

Our democratic institutions have been shackled, our voices silenced by the puppet media they control!

If we all SUFFER equally then we must FIGHT equally. All of us who struggle under the policies of the G20 nations, under their police states and militarist agendas...

Power to the people!!



...We stand with the historical struggles of all the marginalised and oppressed creatures of this land!

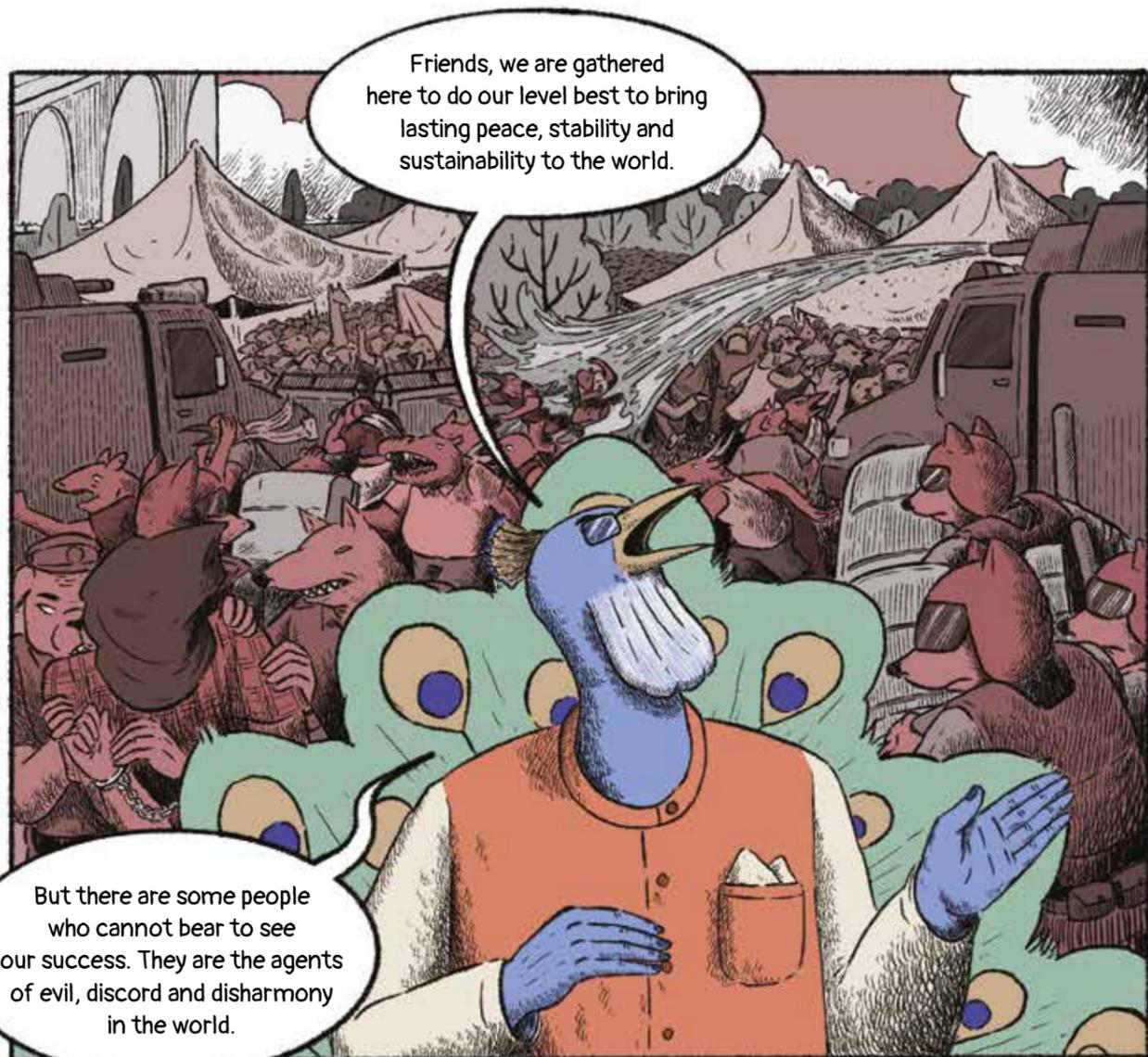
They brand us as anti-nationals, but do they understand patriotism in the first place?



We must connect our struggles - students, refugees, labourers, farmers... UNITED!

Inquilab Zindabad!





Friends, we are gathered here to do our level best to bring lasting peace, stability and sustainability to the world.

But there are some people who cannot bear to see our success. They are the agents of evil, discord and disharmony in the world.



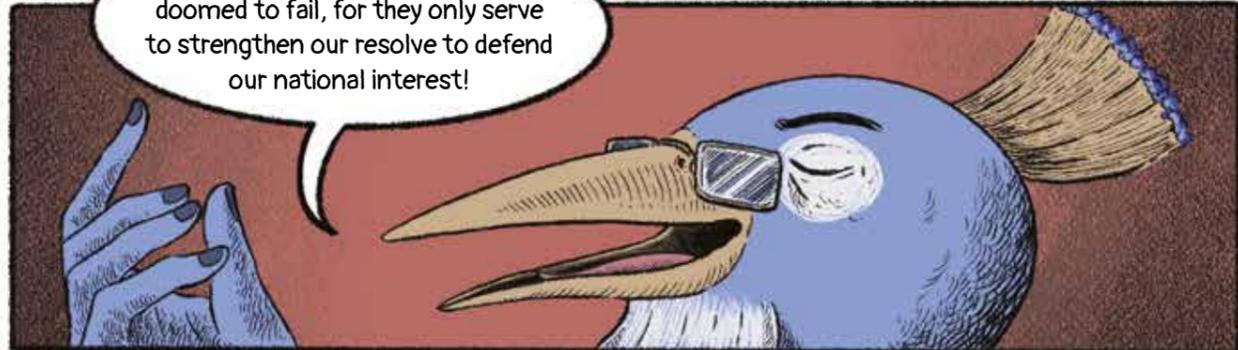
Just today, our vigilant police forces were able to avert an attack on THIS VERY ASSEMBLY by such forces!

These anti-nationals tried to tear down my country's pride and hard-won global recognition!

GASP

GASP

GASP



But such attempts are doomed to fail, for they only serve to strengthen our resolve to defend our national interest!



Every pillar of my government has stood firmly on the side of the people!

Our Judiciary, Legislature, Executive and Media have been the envy of lesser nations.

Our human rights record has been unparalleled.

Our commitment to secularism has been the most significant aspect of our growth.

We enjoy the full support of the people. Together, we take giant strides towards progress!

As the G20 summit concludes, the blood, sweat and tears of the people are quickly washed away outside and the site is returned to its pristine condition.



I can't believe it!

What's the matter, Fatima?



The G20 summit has failed us yet again!

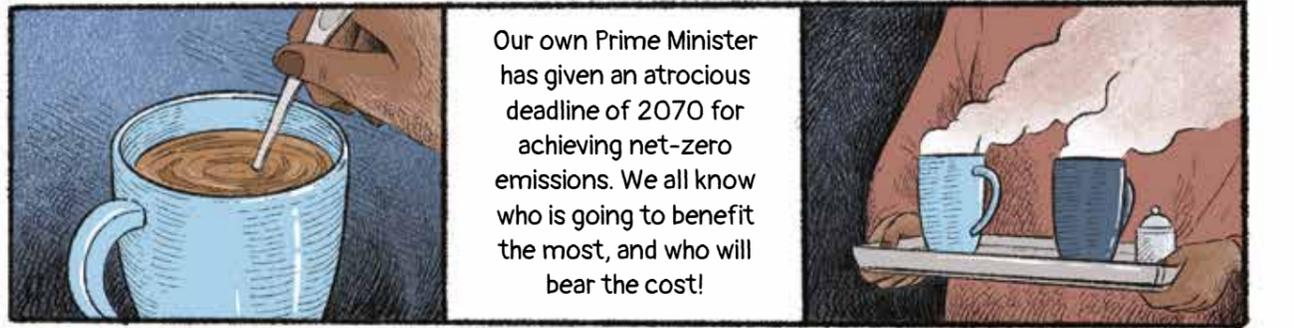
They pretend like they have achieved something great, but in truth there has been no action taken.



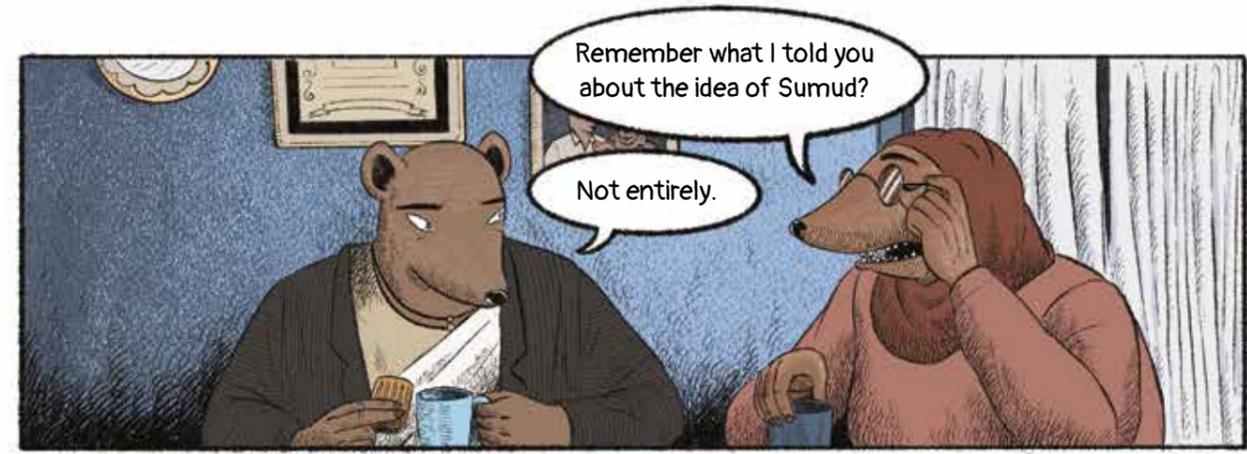
Ammi we cannot afford to have this go on year after year!

Our futures seem to lie in the hands of global capitalists and warmongers who can't see beyond their own selfish agendas.

Ahh - but I had expected that. Isn't that the case every year?



Our own Prime Minister has given an atrocious deadline of 2070 for achieving net-zero emissions. We all know who is going to benefit the most, and who will bear the cost!



Remember what I told you about the idea of Sumud?

Not entirely.



The Palestinian people chose this ideology after being oppressed, abused and violated for years.

Its difficult for me to explain in English, but when injustice and violence destroys what you hold most dear, you stay strong, and resist the oppression.

Your actions are based on love - for your people, for your land. In the simplest translation, it is resilience.

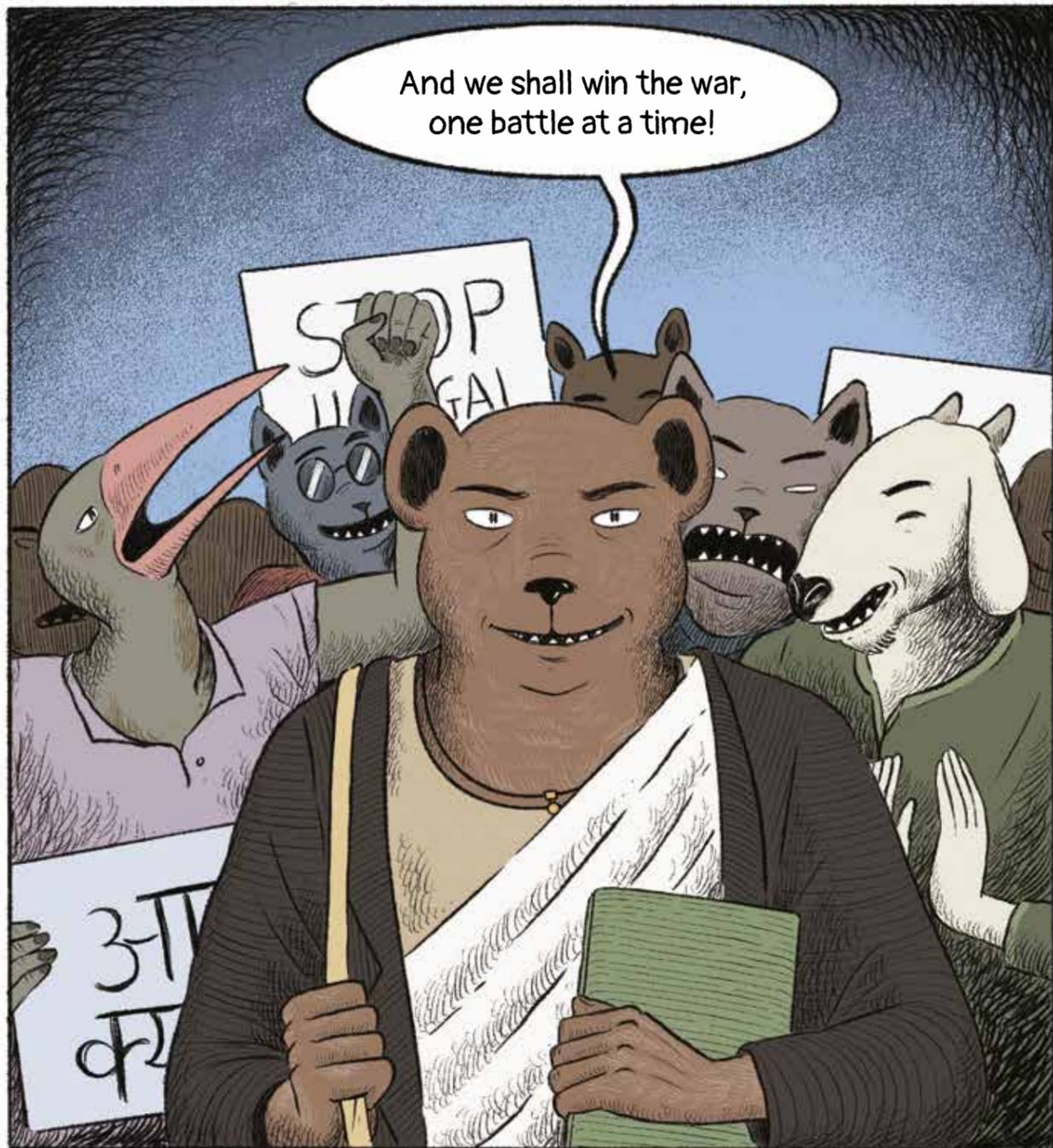


Don't you have your own fight today?

Yes! The final hearing of the illegal mining case in Quepem.



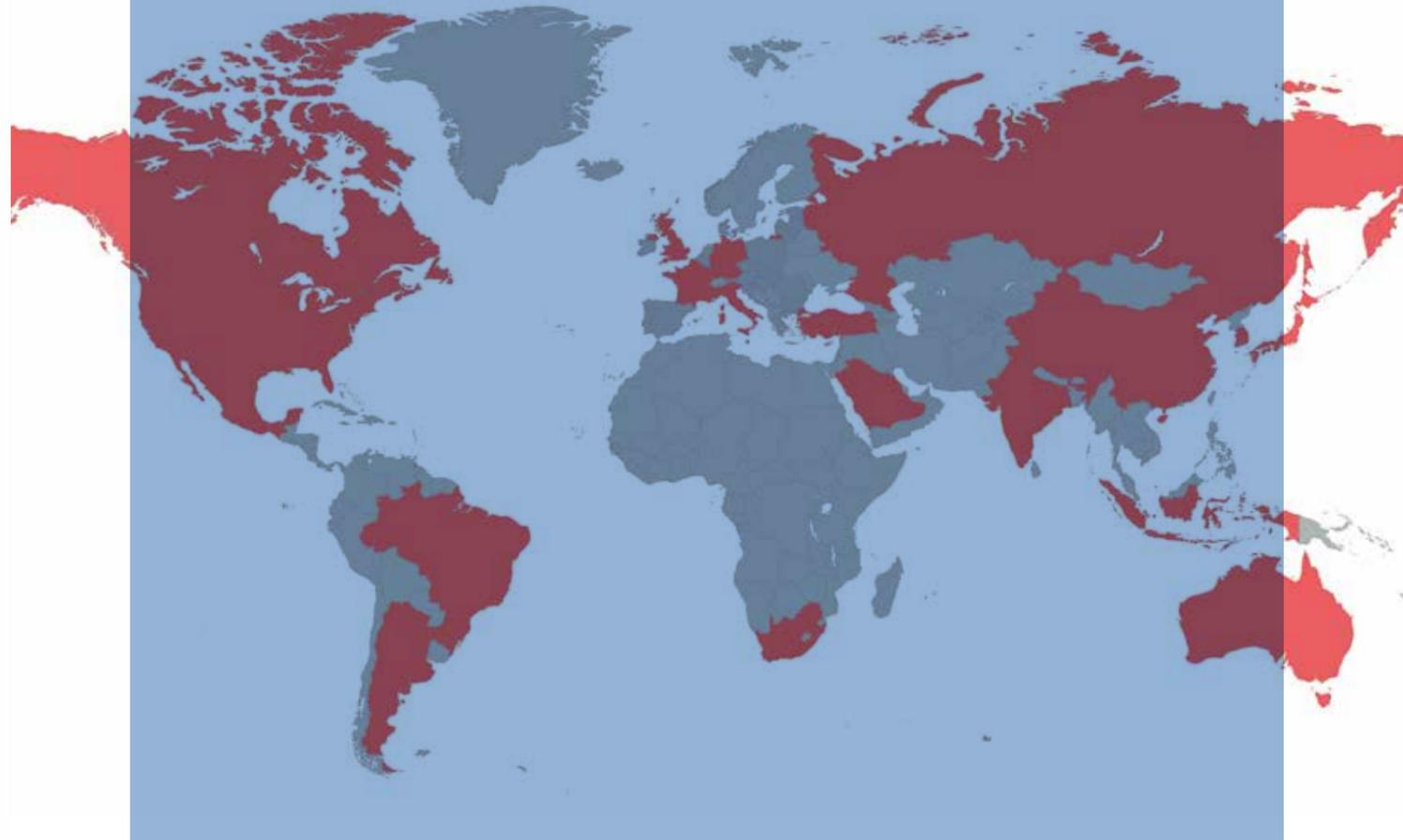
Keep the faith, and put up a good fight. You are not alone!



THE ORIGINS OF THE GANG OF 20

Founded in 1999, in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis, the Group of Twenty (G20) was announced by the finance ministers of the Group of Seven (G7) as the forum for international cooperation on financial and economic questions and was supposed to act as a platform to unite finance ministers and central bankers from twenty of the world's largest established and emerging economies. However, the G20 meetings at the level of heads of state and government owe their existence to the 2008 financial crisis as a mechanism of crisis coordination for saving

capitalism at the highest political level. Since then, the G20 leaders have met regularly, and the G20 has become the central forum for international economic cooperation. The G20 economies produce around 80 per cent of global economic output in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) adjusted for purchasing power parity and collectively account for three-quarters of global trade. Of the 20 countries with the largest volume of exports worldwide, 15 are members of the G20. Two-thirds of the world population lives in G20 member countries.

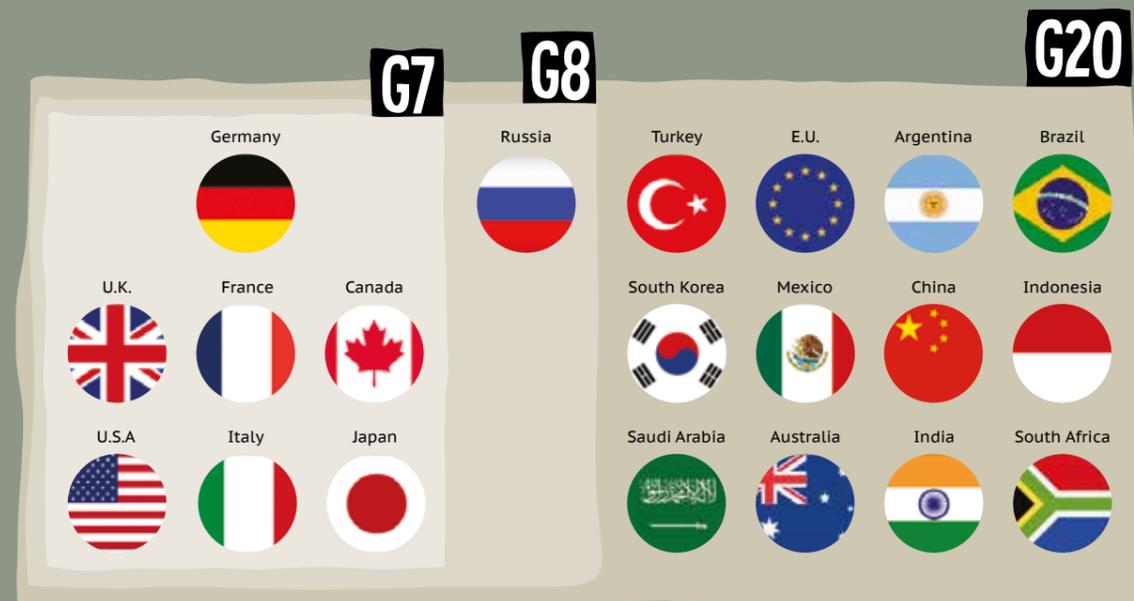


A FORUM OF CHOICE: EXCLUSIVE AND CONVENIENT BY DESIGN

The membership of the G20 or rather the expansion from G7 (and later G8) to G20 points toward a self-styled collegium that rather emanated out of choice - the choice of retaining an imperialist core without a major reconfiguration of the global economic system. To put it simply, the composition of the G20 points towards a schema to gain legitimacy through the token representation of the small minority of developing nations. The

decision to have some countries over the others only draws in space for more questions. The inclusion of Russia and China was inevitable and called for. The inclusion of Saudi Arabia over Iran; South Africa over Egypt and Nigeria (even though they are the biggest economies in Africa); and Mexico, Argentina, Brazil over Venezuela are some noteworthy examples of restrictions on membership. The co-optation of the

emerging economies during the time was a shorthand route to the G7's control of the multilateral institutions and with wider legitimacy and support from the emerging players in the developing world. Needless to say, this group, in and of itself, is far away from creating a narrative for economic justice, because it has taken up the mantle to manage global capitalism without much restructuring of the Bretton Woods Institutions.



HOW DOES THE G20 WORK

The G20 is not a permanent institution with headquarters, offices, secretariat or staff. The agenda and activities are all decided by the rotating presidencies, in consultation with the member countries. To ensure continuity, the system of 'troika' is in place. The troika consists of the current host country, its predecessor and its successor. The 2023 Presidency will be held by India.

The G20 meetings happen in three major streams. The finance track, where the primary focus is on global economic and financial issues such as monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies, infrastructure investment, financial regulation, financial inclusion, and international taxation among others. In this track, the governments (through finance ministers) and central bank governors from these nations meet year-round at the ministerial level. Outcomes from the ministerial-level meetings are brought together at the annual G20 Summit, where leaders prepare and implement their decisions based on the findings in a communiqué.

The sherpa track focuses on broader issues of importance, including flagship ones like political

engagement, gender equality, trade, sustainable development, debt, etc., and legacy and priority agendas like the pandemic, climate change, disaster resilience, migration, etc. The countries attend these meetings with representation from their respective emissaries and ministries. The G20 member nations have also created engagement groups (currently 8, in total) to achieve wider participation from different civil society stakeholders or social actors. They ought not to represent the government and are supposed to work as autonomous, independent groups.

The role of the G20 is mainly to place pressure on the international community of stakeholders, facilitate dialogue, and institutionalize balance for the upkeep of the current interdependent market economies in particular and global capitalism in general. In the existing structure of global governance, G20 can be seen as an informal norm creator of sorts, where most of the policy recommendations emanate out of a club governance format. Later, this club governance format became all so powerful and a major site of contestation in the global financial architecture.

SOME IMPENDING ISSUES WITH THE G20

FIRSTLY,

the G20 is not a united coherent body and is plagued with internal and compositional divisions. It is seemingly more democratic than the G7 but still is reflective of a self-appointed elite body functioning in a top-down manner because they make up 80% of global economic output. It only leads one to question what macroeconomic coordination is being sought when some of the major countries from the global south are absent, or if economic justice was ever in the frame.

SECONDLY,

like many groups of its kind, the G20 has a temporal genesis. The club in its teens has diversified itself to discussing issues that go beyond the economic policy frame, giving it a facelift as an intergovernmental political forum. However, like any other political forum, it has managed to only claim to be a high-profile talking shop rather than have any substance on crucial agendas. Issues like climate change, just energy transition, equitable trade, and third world debt are all issues that attract attention but end up having no substantial gains at best or neoliberal policy prescriptions, at worst.

THIRDLY,

the G20 is a major obstacle in the process of democratization of economic governance. In many ways, it is at the core of power asymmetries and political economies that currently dominate the global division of labor. These are also emblematic of institutions that continue to amplify that division of labor and are symbols of the ossified neoliberal ideologies of the world. G20's formation was an endeavor at derailing and undermining an attempt to establish a similar level of coordination under the United Nations. But the G20 ended up setting a precedent for a process that juxtaposes and sometimes even contraposes itself with the UN processes of economic governance.

INDIA AND THE 2023 G20 PRESIDENCY: CHALLENGES TO THE INDIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

It is important to ask as to what India's role would be sitting on this high table - will it bring some important issues to the table for discussion or will it yet again help legitimize the decisions taken in the G7 processes. It will be important to also see how some of the crucial issues of the third world are framed and whether the summit itself ends up being about vague promises and platitudes while not taking any independent positions and floating with the developed world. Even more important is the role of civil society to push for these issues to be seen and addressed. Also, it would be a mistake to assume that southern (Global South) leadership, in this context, would necessarily be progressive because a lot of governments in the Global South have embraced neoliberalism, are part of

the international financial capital, and can very well be positioned as part of the global authoritarian elites (given the inequality figures across the India, Brazil and South Africa).

While the existing mess, semi-paralysis and inaction in the official summit might hold the ground as the leaders show very little imagination and commitment, clearly, the idea would still be to put together broken pieces and further push timelines for action. This situation, however, is neither desirable nor sustainable for we are nearing a crisis of unimaginable scale on multiple fronts. The level of intellectual contestation needs to increase against some of these institutions because when the forces of globalization hit the national space, it becomes increasingly difficult to

resist the normative power that comes with them.

It is important for the Indian civil society that deliberations leading to the 2023 summit begin in an inclusive manner and are grounded in national material contexts and spearheaded by an internationalist perspective so that we are able to break away from our own sub-imperial positionalities. The attempt should be to build from the below and beyond borders.

An enormous venue has come up on the banks of the Chaipani lake. Decked up with the best in class amenities, the leaders of the world and the international press have accumulated to witness the grandeur and vanity on display for the G20 (Gang of 20) Annual Meetings. There is tension within the venue in anticipation of the common beasts traveling the length and breadth of the country to register their protest for the lack of imagination, commitment and action shown by the Gang of 20. Irrespective, deceptive games continue inside the venue while the masses confront the new reality. "Inquilab Zindabad" echoes as the herd settles outside the venue and the supreme leader has been informed of the anti-national threat. The crackdown has begun. But this time it is different - the farmers, the working class, students, refugees and the marginalized are UNITED! Ready for one battle at a time.

Profit, Power, and Privilege cannot see anything other than the bright, digital lights of their bank details, the money sloshing in, the precious social wealth captured from the many for the few. This timely comic provides a glimpse into the callous dullness of world leadership. It tells us that we need something better. Oxygen, perhaps, rather than the stale air of air conditioned nothingness.

- VIJAY PRASHAD

This comic effectively exposes the pomposity of power, and the inevitability of resistance. It represents satire at its best.

- NEERA CHANDOKE

