Road to COP28

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COP28, or the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), will take place between the 30th of November and the 12th of December in Dubai. Every year, COPs continue to be the main event concerning the climate policy of the United Nations, which should be watched closely by all security policy experts as well.

From Zero to COP – What are the By-Steps?

To highlight the importance of the event it is crucial to mention, that different stakeholder groups being present at the actual summit, very often undergo months of preparation, including such activities:

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Reports: The IPCC often releases important reports assessing the current state of climate science, impacts, and potential solutions. These reports are used as a foundation for negotiations. The latest one was released on 20th March 2023 and gathered a notable public acknowledgement with its' ominous words foretelling backdrops of multiple crises.

Pre-COP Meetings: These serve as a platform for further negotiations and discussions. This includes also a great deal of grassroots-organised events, such as Regional COPs (RCOYs) and Local COPs (LCOPs) which gather people from the region with the aim of devising a strategy to address their particular problems.

As it is often said by many COP-goers, in this type of event, it is the preparation that is most important, as participation itself very often turns out to be less empowering for the specific climate action. But what is the reason for this critical approach to participation at the COP?

COP28 – The most controversial ever?

Given the amount of preparation that many stakeholders and individuals put into their participation in COP, it should come as no surprise that they closely monitor issues of transparency, empowerment and freedom of expression at the meeting itself. This year, many communities, especially activist ones, have been vociferous in expressing their doubts or even openly refusing to come to the event. The Boycott COP28 – Save the Planet movement, explains that establishing the UAE as host of this year's summit is also the height of hypocrisy, as the country, emitting around 204.6 tonnes of CO2 per year, blatantly disregards the sustainability guidelines. Furthermore, concerns about freedom of speech at the summit are raised – the UAE is only the 138th country in the World Press Freedom Index.

Negotiating Nodes for December

However difficult it is to assess what specific issues will come to the fore at this year's COP, I however dare to predict that phase-out of fossil fuels, forest restoration and loss and damage may take the lead. While I do share the pessimistic views with many and do not bear a lot of hope in the fulfilment of the first aim (sadly also because of the place of the conference), it will be certainly interesting to closely watch advancements in the other two. Especially the loss and damage fund, which was much talked about at the previous COP and which promises to assist the countries most affected by the current climate crisis by highly developed countries. This idea has been widely promoted in many circles over the past year and stakeholders who see it as important will certainly arrive in Dubai well prepared and very determined.

Regardless of our opinion on the causality of COP summits, there is no denying that it is annually the most important climate trend-setting event

of the UN and its countries. If only with a pinch of salt, it should therefore be watched closely.