



PARADIGM SHIFT

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The Controversial Oil Deal Between Pakistan & Russia

Amna Asif

The Impact of Brexit on the UK Economy

*Huda Raza, Manal Shah,
Shanza Rehan, & Shiza Safdar*

The Economic Cost of Political Instability

Laiba Umer Malik

Myths around Pakistan's Nukes & National Security

Brigadier Syed Mushtaq Ahmed

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David vs. Goliath: The Epic Military Mismatch Between Palestine & Israel

Sarmad Ishfaq

Prisoners of Geography by Tim Marshall

Javeria Tariq

Karachi, the City That Was

Mir Adnan Aziz

All Hail Extremism

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Saudi Arabia-Iran Conflict: Threats & Consequences

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Foreword

Welcome to the second edition of the Paradigm Shift e-magazine. Since starting Paradigm Shift (www.ParadigmShift.com.pk) on August 14th, 2020, we have come a long way.

With over 80k-100k monthly visitors, and over 43,000 followers on social media, we are now able to serve a wider percentage of the Pakistani youth. All our pieces are sent in by brilliant writers and researchers, and our gifted editors constantly ensure the quality of our content.

We aim for, and work towards three major goals:

1. To become a comprehensive library with high-quality content on international relations, current affairs, global politics, and Pakistan.
2. To provide a free medium where individuals can access research from across the globe, and can send in their own work to share their voice with the world.
3. To showcase Pakistan in a positive and factual manner through our 'Pakistan Unveiled' section.

We have handpicked 9 special pieces from our website for this edition, and we hope that you gain some insights from them. For more content on a variety of topics from across the world, please visit **www.ParadigmShift.com.pk**.

We hope that you consider sharing our website and social media with your friends and family so that we can effectively increase our reach. Thank you again for all your support through the years.



Article

Article: Myths Around Pakistan's Nukes & National Security

About the Author



Brigadier Syed Mushtaq Ahmed (Retd) has extensive experience in areas of national security, intelligence and strategic issues. He has worked as a Senior Research Analyst in a strategic organization, and has a niche for writing research articles and analytical assessments, specializing in counterintelligence, counter-terrorism and nuclear security.

Nuclear Assets—A Boon or a Bane?

President Biden's latest remarks regarding the insecurity of the nukes of Pakistan were either by intent or a gaffe, given his senility—the latter being more of an excuse since security statements are prepared scripts.



The U-turn by State Department's spokesman, Vedant Patel, is perhaps at best a placating effort or indication of policy differences between the State Department and the US Intelligence Community. Notwithstanding, the abiding concern about Pakistan's nuclear security has been omnipresent, and modulated in time to force it into submission.

What is particularly in the cross-hairs has been Pakistan's strategic assets, which albeit a boon and a sin qua non for its security, is paradoxically considered a bane for the West and therefore a cause of continual concern and scorn by the US and its cohorts, especially Israel and India. Spinning cobwebs around these make the state as well as the nukes look more and more fragile and vulnerable.

Myth #1: Balkanization of Pakistan

This has been the common theme resonating in the policy circles without any letup. In 2009, US experts saw Pakistan's disintegration threatening the security of nuclear arsenals, Afghanistan, India, the oil-rich Persian Gulf, Central Asia, the US and its allies. In 2013, the counter-insurgency expert and adviser to then-CENTCOM Commander Gen David Petraeus, David Kilcullen asserted, *"Pakistan could collapse within six months in the face of snowballing insurgency."*

Indian writers like Vicky Nanjappa sing to the same tune, *"....The first step towards balkanisation would be to weaken the Pakistan Army...If the balkanisation of Pakistan takes place, then the power shifts in India's favour. With Pakistan being reduced to a province, the power balance between China and India would be maintained...."*. Sanat Bhardwaj too has stated that *"The balkanization is approaching fast and imminent."*

Myth #2: Pakistan as a Failing State

The US National Intelligence Council (NIC) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in a jointly prepared Global Futures Assessment Report in 2008 said *"by year 2015 Pakistan would be a failed state, ripe with civil war, bloodshed, inter-provincial rivalries and struggle for control of its nuclear weapons and complete Talibanisation."*

Bruce Riedel's anxiety *"about not just a collapsing Pakistan, but also a fundamentalist Pakistan friendly to Al Qaeda that gains control of the country and its nukes"* is all but well known. Indian senior defence analyst, Lt Gen PR Shankar (Retd) contends that *"A weak and fragile Pakistan is failing. Its descent is steady"*.

Pakistan figured at 10th in the Failed States Index compiled for 2009 by Foreign Policy Magazine, but the country has considerably gained ground, standing at 30th in the Fragile State Index in 2022.

Myth #3: Pakistan as the Epicentre of Terrorism

Senator John Kerry stated that Pakistan was *"'ground zero' for the terrorist threat"* to the United States. The 2019 Country Reports on Terrorism considered Pakistan to have *"remained a safe harbor for other regionally focused terrorist groups."*

The paranoid concern though has mellowed down, it still resonates in some Western capitals. Her Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi at the CICA meeting in Kazakhstan in October 2022 branded Pakistan as *"the global epicentre of terrorism...."*

Myth #4: Nuclear Arsenal Under Siege

John R. Bolton stated, “that the *extremists who harboured Al Qaeda* could get control of *Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal*”. Hillary Clinton considered Pakistan, an unstable and nuclear-armed country, to pose “a mortal threat to the security and safety” of the United States and the world.

Simon Tisdall warned that Pakistan was “*continuing to expand its nuclear bomb-making facilities despite growing international concern that advancing Islamist extremists could overrun one or more of its atomic weapon plants or seize sufficient radioactive material to make a dirty bomb*”. US Senators even urged Obama to apply the Nunn-Lugar bill to safeguard the nukes of Pakistan.

Purported Objective

While most of the aforementioned myths have lost the wind in their sails, they still reverberate with some disdain. Is this then mere conjecturing by the US and Indian press about the insecurity of Pakistan’s nuclear capability? Perhaps not! It may well be more of a policy implemented to create chaos and civil unrest as a pretext for capping Pakistan.

Media during the last two decades is indicative of a set variable trend and a particular design portending a sinister plan of either neutralising or taking out the nukes of Pakistan through devious direct/indirect means and methods. However, much to the chagrin of the policymakers, all such caricaturing ad nauseam turned sour without yielding its purported objectives thanks to the astute nuclear diplomacy and resilient defence and security of the nuclear assets.



The diabolic scheme of neutralising the strategic assets through double jeopardy of economic strangulation and engendering constructive chaos is now at work. The security of the nukes already under stress is further compounded by the deteriorating economic conditions of Pakistan.

The compulsion of following the IMF route runs the inherent risk of invoking international intervention, amounting to surrendering economic sovereignty—the tell-tale signs of which are now becoming apparent. This is further exacerbated by an often overplayed contentious public discourse of security vs economy, questioning whether nuclear weapons are required or would conventional weapons be sufficient to provide requisite security.



How much strategic cum conventional capability is enough is ascertained by the evolving security environment. The nuclear capability has provided the requisite security dividend which the conventional capability alone could not afford. In view of the ever-growing conventional asymmetry vis-à-vis India, the qualitative advancement of Pakistan's nuclear programme is a cost-effective proposition.

Considering our critical dependence on nuclear capability, while we consciously institute the conventional-nuclear balance, the developmental programme (not open-ended) without relent must be cautiously pursued within the parameters of credible minimum deterrence.

Notwithstanding the bigoted Western concerns, nuclear sovereignty must be zealously guarded with relentless efforts. Given the fear of looming economic insolvency, the effort of inducing the country's top leadership unwittingly to stop financing the nuclear development, amounting to putting a virtual freeze, or agreeing to a joint custodial may well be on the cards, which needs to be factored in astutely in our security calculations.

Political Faux Pas

While we have successfully steered through the turbulent periods of the last two decades, the present decade presents us with a new internal challenge. The civil-military diatribe, the ongoing politico-economic instability, and the militant resurgence—all are but an explosive mix, adding new dimensions to the erstwhile doomsday scenarios about the country.

It goes without saying that the much-needed political stability and security remain an absolute must for economic progress; the former providing the requisite umbrella for the latter's development. Never before in our history has the military come under so much derision and unwanted criticism for its illusory apolitical role.

Held in high esteem, the nation has always looked upon the military as its eventual saviour in crises. Therefore, to redeem its revered image, it is imperative that for the larger national interest, the military plays its traditional role one more time, before its avowed intent of becoming apolitical. To diffusing the present crises, it must facilitate the much-needed political discourse, leading to a free-fair adult franchise sooner than later.

Incidentally, the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission may also well be in order under an independent judiciary, but that remains a distant reality. For now, it's time to put aside personal/institutional egos to contend with the present challenges and convert these into opportunities, to instill nationalism and forge a more cohesive and united nation, by attending to the miseries of flood-affected distressed and dislocated people in earnest.

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

To read more about international nuclear deals: [The India-US Nuclear Deal & Its Implications for Pakistan](#)

For more about Pakistan's nuclear assets, read: [Propaganda Against Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons: From "Islamic Bomb" to Biden's Comments](#)



Research
Paper

The Impact of Brexit on the UK Economy

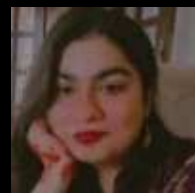
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Introduction

The United Kingdom formally announced its intention of leaving the EU by revoking Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, which permits a state to withdraw from the EU and is followed by withdrawal negotiations over a period of two years. The Brexit negotiations covered various aspects of economy, border management, citizen rights both of EU and UK citizens, future trade with the EU, and financial liabilities of the UK to the EU.



Negotiations were to conclude in three possible ways. Like Iceland and Norway, the UK could have continued to be a member of the EU's single market. This scenario is often referred to as soft Brexit, that the trade costs don't significantly increase post-Brexit. The single market lowers trade costs by reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers.

Under hard Brexit, Britain could leave the European Economic Area and work under the WTO regulations, which would result in increased trading costs for Britain. Under this scenario, that's now applicable since the end of the transition period, both tariff and non-tariff barriers have increased for Britain. Outside the single market, the UK wouldn't have to abide by EU economic regulations.¹

Keeping in view the trade volumes between the UK and the EU, the United Kingdom runs a trade deficit compared to EU member states and is more likely to be significantly impacted by withdrawal than the EU. The EU accounted for 44% of UK exports and 53% of its imports. Exports to the EU account for 12% of the UK's GDP, whereas imports from the UK account for only 3% of the EU's GDP. Brexit will certainly lead to a reduction in trade between the parties.²

So far, post-Brexit reports indicate that the losses that the UK economy will suffer from higher trade barriers outweigh the fiscal savings. The single market enabled Britain to be the financial hub for serving EU markets. Post-Brexit, firms are not finding commercial logic to invest in the UK as evidenced by a number of companies pulling out from the UK. Hence, a reduction in FDI is seen post-Brexit.

While Brexit voters might be cheering the regaining of 'supposedly' lost sovereignty, the economic challenges facing Britain ahead would make many realize that they didn't rationally assess the costs and benefits of Brexit.

Neo-liberalism

This study's theoretical framework is based on the theory of neo-liberalism, which draws its basic roots from the liberal theory that proposes more freedoms for individuals and fewer state interventions. It is basically centered on the idea of laissez-faire, a basic tenet of Anglo-American capitalism that calls for less interference in the economic affairs of society and the pursuit of more liberal policies that ultimately improve economic efficiency and more competition and hence promote human well-being.

Therefore, it requires a reduction in trade barriers and the promotion of a conducive environment for free trade. It is charged with the promotion of good relations with countries and flexible labor market policies that would ultimately promote economic independence. The watchwords of economic neo-liberalists are privatization and deregulation.



Brexit and Neo-liberalism

Brexit used the neoliberal intellectual argument to advance its cause and justification, that the EU is a regionally hegemonic and protectionist federal institution that impedes free trade by imposing unnecessary regulations. Therefore, leaving the single market would enable it to escape the EU regulations and make trade deals and impose regulations of its choice and preferences without having to bring the consensus of 27 other member states.

Moreover, the supporters of Brexit believed that the EU wasn't economically liberal enough and that leaving it was the only way to seek the desired liberalization for the UK economy.³ The UK had problems with the common agricultural policy and labor laws under EU regulations, considering them protectionist in nature. The desired model of the UK economy is far more liberal than its European counterparts, and therefore, Brexit was necessary to achieve that.

According to neo-liberalist interpretation, the EU is viewed by pro-Brexiteers as the elephant in the room as it prioritizes intra-EU trade being part of the Customs Union. Other than the economic perspective, the EU is seen as a supra-nationalist entity putting constraints on national sovereignty, freedom, and democracy, and the EU's precedence over the UK's parliament and courts.

As the populist narrative during the referendum was to 'take back control' post-Brexit, the UK is implementing deregulations, reducing taxes and tariffs, and its own sanction policy that resonates with the neoliberal agenda. While the UK can substantially exercise more freedom in trade deals, it has made trade more expensive by non-tariff barriers and has lost commercial logic for investors as a financial hub for EU markets.

Britain's Role in the EU

The United Kingdom, as we all know, has been a prominent and important member of the European Union. As one of the largest member states, the UK has contributed a lot to shaping European integration since 1973 in two ways. First, it constrained EU initiatives; the UK sought to limit EU initiatives and veto them frequently. Maastricht Treaty stands as an example of such an act.

Second, it supported only those EU initiatives which filled up its interests. The UK stimulated a variety of initiatives as part of its support role, from introducing a regional and cohesion policy shaped in the 1970s to the relaunch of the internal/single market in the 1980s. It also advocated in favor of broadening the EU to include the new member states. Thus, UK governments have had some success in modifying EU projects to suit their own objectives.



The EU-UK Free Trade Agreement

Following France, Germany, and Italy, the United Kingdom ranked fourth among the EU's biggest contributors in 2014. To a budget totalling 116.53 billion euros, it contributed 11.34 billion euros (\$12.24 billion). This contribution increased to 18.20 billion euros in 2015, with a total amount of 118.60 billion euros.⁴

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement comprises not just trade in Intellectual property rights (IPR), investments, commodities, services, and public tender but also covers a large variety of other crucial sectors that are in the best interests of the EU, including government assistance, taxation efficiency, air and road transportation, power and sustainability, etcetera.

The Agreement enables EU stockholders to set up their businesses in the UK without any restrictions and guarantees safeguards against discrimination when it comes to public tendering. The agreement ensures sustained and sustainable connectivity for the transportation sectors of air, road, rail, and maritime. Thus, the agreement permits the UK to continue taking part in various EU programs for the period 2021-2027.⁵

Post-Brexit Economy of the UK

Before Brexit, the economy of the UK was quite dependent on the European Union market for prosperity and sustainability. Since the 2016 referendum, a great deal of change has been made for the UK and the EU. The negotiations for the withdrawal of the British from the EU under Article 5 started in March 2017. Finally, after the referendum on 31st January 2020, the UK exited the European Union. Thus, it is the only sovereign state to have left the EU.⁶

Membership of the EU has provided spectacular trade benefits which have helped in removing the “red tape” also known as the non-tariff barriers. This includes documentation, inspection, product standards, and imports/exports declaration. European Union, to all its members, has been successfully providing benefits since its establishment, contributing to its major success.

Since the UK has left the EU’s single market and customs union, the “red tape” has exponentially increased with the introduction of a hard border between the UK and the EU. When change comes in any process, institution, or system, complications make way. The same is the issue for EU-UK relations in recent times because of which there are clearance issues and border crossing problems at both parties’ end.

With Brexit and its influence being accepted and worked upon, more disruptions at the borders are foreseen. Institutions and businesses are trying to cope with the post-Brexit life because the goods delay poses a major threat to the business sector of the United Kingdom. The delays come at a heavy cost, and now there is an understanding that goods delays and border issues of no tariff barrier have the same impact as tariffs would have had under the no-Brexit deal.⁷

Economic Arguments in Favor of Britain post-Brexit

A number of factors can be cited as the reasons for British people voting to leave. The main basis for concluding that it was in the best interest of Britain was cost-benefit calculations; that is the notion by pro-Brexit supporters that Britain received less than it contributed to the EU. Other reasons would be the sense of values and identity as well as the anti-immigration/anti-globalization rhetoric presented to the voters.

All these influenced the outcome of the referendum. The pro-Brexit parties advocated that the sharing of political power with the EU was a needless limitation to British sovereignty. Moreover, the UK will need to bear the cost of hiring a large number of civil servants to regain its capacity in trade negotiations. As Britain's GDP is less than one-fifth of the EU's GDP, it'll have less advantage in trade negotiations.⁸



Regulatory Freedoms

Economic arguments disseminated by pro-Brexit politicians center around the idea that Britain is now free to strike trade agreements with countries on its own terms. Pro-Brexiteers promise better and free regulations that the UK designed and focus on growth and innovation by limiting burdens on businesses. However, even when it was a member of the EU, the UK had fewer regulations than most EU countries.

Ease in Reaching New Agreements

Not having to compromise with 27 other countries or taking long rounds of negotiations to finalize an agreement gave Brexit substance. However, this advantage can't be weighed against the fact that post-Brexit, the EU will have an upper hand in the terms of negotiating preferences.

Independent Sanction Policy

Post-Brexit, the UK can use sanctions according to its national interests to promote its values and combat terrorism or other threats. The UK is eager to project itself as a significant player in world politics. The UK sanction regime is not completely synonymous with those in retained EU law. For instance, in July 2020, the UK adopted the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations, which gives it the authority to freeze assets and impose travel bans on persons involved in violation of human rights.

Establishing Strategic Partnership Via AUKUS

This new partnership will promote strategic relationships and coordination between the UK, Australia, and the US in the Pacific region. Its first initiative is collaboration on nuclear-powered submarines. London's role in the deal was opportunistic, as France lost the contract that would have provided Australia with subsidiary defense capabilities.

A New Point-Based Immigration System

One of the grave reasons that drove Britain to exit from the EU was the increasing flux of immigration in the UK. During the Brexit campaign, the UK government promised to end free movement. Post-Brexit has materialized into a point-based immigration system that treats EU migrants in the same way as non-EU migrants. The purpose of the new system is not to restrict immigration, but to make it more diverse and selective in terms of allowing skilled people who fall on merit to work in Britain.

Free movement to Britain from the EU ended on 31 December and a new point-based immigration system was put in place from 1st January 2021, which is applicable to all those coming to work in the UK apart from Irish citizens. The estimates of reduced immigration from the EEA can, however, reduce UK's GDP significantly.

Brexit and the Future of European Integration

Before explaining the repercussions that Brexit will have on the future of UK-EU relations and the EU's integration itself, we briefly explain the history of this bitter-sweet relationship. The United Kingdom became a member of the EU in 1973. The most logical reason behind British membership was to avoid the reoccurrence of another war or alliance against Britain in the post-Cold war period.⁹

Another reason was the growing size of the EU market; therefore, it was in the best interests of Britain to join the European project. Even as part of the EU, Britain opposed the political deepening of the union, for it always saw it as economic integration. Britain had a significant influence as a member of the EU, by either providing opposition to the commission or pushing for various rules and agreements that still benefit the union.

Moreover, Britain had a conflict over the federalist approach of the union and its intervention in the country such as the strict EU agricultural and fisheries laws that often proved tough for the local businesses. The UK runs a significant trade deficit with the European Union. Following the exit, the UK will lose its position in the negotiation process in terms of agreements and deals.

Brexit is more of a political defeat for the EU than an economic one as it'll change the balance of power in the EU. The process is definitely a test of European integration as expressed by various officers and officials of the EU. Britain undoubtedly had an important financial and military position and also a soft power influence in the rest of the world.



The future relationship depends upon the attitude of both parties. The economic consequences are harsh for Britain, the cost of living would rise, and the sterling would fall. However, for the EU, the economic consequences could be mildly negative while political consequences could be far-reaching.

Conclusion

Our findings and analysis conclude that the neoliberal agenda related to Brexit works mostly in rhetoric by providing substance to pro-Brexit leaders in their electorates back home, but it is not evident in outcomes or in the reality of implementation. The promises of the UK taking back control and improving the economy post-Brexit turned out to be hollow as it increased the trade costs for Britain.

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

If you want to submit your articles/research papers/book reviews, please check the [Submissions](#) page.

To read more about Brexit, read: [The UK's Ode to Brexit](#)

To read more about the UK's sordid history, read: [Crown of Blood: The Dark Side of Elizabeth II's Legacy](#)

Endnotes

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Meet Our Top Interns!



Ayesha Zafar is currently pursuing her Bachelor's in International Relations from National Defence University, Islamabad. Her areas of interest include Middle Eastern politics, the geopolitics of Central Asia, and the Indo-Pacific region



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M. Mustafa Ahmed Khan is currently studying Economics and Political Science at LUMS. His interests include, but are not limited to, International Relations, political economy, & economics. He is also an avid cinephile who thoroughly enjoys listening to music.



Hafsa Ammar is a student of the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at the National Defence University, Islamabad. Her areas of expertise are hybrid warfare, narrative building, and nuclear deterrence in South Asia. She has been published on various local & intl. mediums.



Summaiyya Qureshi completed her bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Lahore College for Women University, Lahore. Her areas of interest include geopolitics, foreign policy analysis, and nuclearization.



Mahrukh Khalid Siddiqui graduated with a degree in Social Sciences with a major in Development Studies from Bahria University Islamabad. She is currently working as a Technical Associate in the Government Affairs Department of Siemens Pakistan.



Maryam Yasmeen is a student of IR at Kinnaird College, Lahore. She has published multiple articles on various issues and topics related to global politics. She aims to achieve excellence as a writer, researcher, and academic in the field of International Relations and cyber security.





David vs Goliath: The Epic Military Mismatch Between Palestine & Israel

About the Author



Sarmad Ishfaq is an independent researcher and writer whose work has been published by Harvard Kennedy School Review, the Diplomat, Open Democracy, Paradigm Shift, Mondoweiss, and Eurasia Review to name a few. He has also been published by several international peer-reviewed journals such as Taylor and Francis' Social Identities. He previously worked as a research fellow for LCPR. Sarmad has a master's degree in IR from UoWD where he was recognized as the 'Top Graduate'.

Introduction

If one has followed objective reporting on the animosity-filled skirmishes between Palestine and Israel, it becomes clear that the Palestinians have suffered far more in terms of human losses and otherwise in relation to the Israelis. Although there might be several explanations for this reality, the primary reason undoubtedly is the vast difference in military strengths between Israel and Palestine.

While Israel boasts an impressive and technologically advanced military (i.e., the Israel Defense Forces), Palestine's de facto fighting force is rudimentary at best. In fact, the disparity is so colossal that the military conflict between the two sides cannot really be called a conflict in a fair sense as Palestine does not even possess an official land army, air force, or navy.



In a sense, this is not a secret. Writing for the New York Times this past May, Mona El-Naggar alluded to this reality stating that “the [arsenal \[of Hamas & Islamic Jihad\] pales in comparison to the vast destructive powers](#) of Israel’s air force.” And yet while the mainstream media is cognizant of the military discrepancy between both sides, the consequences of this discrepancy are almost never commented on.

This piece aims to remedy that not only by delineating the military mismatch of Israel’s Goliath to Palestine’s David but also by highlighting the tragic consequences of such a discrepancy i.e. the overwhelming casualties of the Palestinian people.

Israel's Military Strength

Israel has one of the world's most advanced and battle-hardened military forces in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) that has enjoyed success in a myriad of conflicts. Winning most wars and conflicts since 1948 especially those against numerous foes, the IDF is a force to reckon with. The IDF was ranked [20th out of 140 countries](#) in military strength by Global Firepower (GFP) in 2021.

Israel's total military personnel is 643,000, with 170,000 active and 465,000 in reserves. There is 8,000 paramilitary personnel as well. There are also over 3 million Israelis who are fit for service. While the Arab states were the primary threats to Israel initially, this changed due to Israel's peace treaties with Egypt (in 1979) and Jordan (in 1994)—the [normalization deals with other Arab states](#) in the Trump era have also helped secure Israel externally.

Armed groups such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Fatah were threats in the 1960s but later renounced violence. This military vacuum was eventually filled by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, both of which are spearheading the Palestinian freedom movement today. These armed groups have become the *raison d'être* for the IDF in contemporary memory, especially during the [First and Second Intifadas](#), Operation Defensive Shield, the [2008 Gaza War](#), and Operation Cast Lead among others.

Currently, the Israeli Ground Forces have 1,650 tanks, which includes one of the best tanks ever produced, the Merkava Mk II/III/IV. The country also possesses 7,500 armored vehicles (which includes the Achzarit), 650 self-propelled artillery guns as well as 300 towed artillery weapons. Furthermore, many Israeli tanks and armored vehicles are equipped with a state-of-the-art ["trophy" system](#).

The trophy system detects when an anti-tank missile has been launched and concurrently launches its own missile to neutralize it, making the vehicles invulnerable to such attacks. The IDF's advanced technology can also be seen reflected in its use of robots such as the [unmanned ground vehicle, the Guardian](#), as well as unmanned aerial drones.

The Israeli Air Force has around 600 aircrafts, which includes 241 fighters/interceptors. Fighter jets include the F-15 Eagle, the F-16 Fighting Falcon, and the F-35 Lightning II—all American-made. Furthermore, the air force possesses the F-16I “Sufa”, which is a modified F-16 installed with a “state-of-the-art weapons system, [a specially constructed radar system](#), and a unique helmet system that allows the pilot to launch weapons at an enemy plane using only sight.”



The air force also has a total of 128 helicopters which include 48 American-made AH-64 Apache attack helicopters. Besides combat jets and helicopters, there are numerous transport and renaissance aircraft as well. As for Israel’s Navy, it has 4 corvettes, 5 submarines, and 48 patrol vessels. Israel’s defense budget, one of the highest in the world, was [\\$22 billion according](#) to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in 2020.

Not only this, but its military expenditure per capita is the highest in the world with \$2,508 per capita. It was also the 12th biggest arms supplier in 2020. Israel also possesses one of the most advanced air-defense systems in the world, the Iron Dome, which can intercept short-range rockets and artillery shells fired from 4-70 km away. The system was made with funding from America and has a success rate of 90%.

The country also has furtively developed nuclear weapons, which were not compliant with the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty). It is said that Israel possesses anywhere from 80 to 400 nuclear warheads which can be delivered by air, land, or sea. This impressive array of manpower and machinery coupled with Israel’s monolithic relationship with the sole superpower, the United States of America, makes the state’s defense even more potent.

America sends around [\\$4 billion in military aid](#) to Israel annually. The superpower has given [\\$58 billion to Israel in military aid since 2000](#), which is higher than what America sent, in the same period, in military aid to the rest of the world combined. If there were ever an existential threat to Israel, America undoubtedly would not only support its ally diplomatically and financially but also militarily due to America's seemingly perennial military bases in the Middle East.

The United States has numerous bases in close proximity to Israel—Bahrain hosts [America's 5th Fleet](#) and has [7,000](#) American troops. Moreover, Kuwait has around 15,000 American troops posted, Qatar has 10,000, and Jordan has 1,500, to name a few. Oman hosts a military airport with hundreds of American troops as well.

Palestine's Armed Forces

Instead of traditional armed forces, Palestinians find aid in armed groups such as Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, among others. Although Palestine does officially have an institution called the Palestine Security Services (PSS), which encompasses the police, border police intelligence, etcetera, it is ironically more of a security force for Israel than Palestine. The number of PSS members is [estimated to be around 40,000](#).

The PSS, however, is heavily dependent on Israel—in fact, there exists security cooperation



between both sides which has drawn massive criticism from Palestinians. Yara Hawari, a Palestine policy fellow with Al Shabaka, writes that “the PA (Palestinian Authority) security forces exist under the framework of a ‘securitised peace’, meaning they are obligated to [work in full cooperation with the Israeli regime](#).”

The PSS enjoys a sizable budget; in 2013, the defense budget was a hefty [\\$1 billion](#) (a shocking 28% of the current overall budget at that time). The majority of this budget is sourced from international donors such as the US, EU, Canada, and the UK, but as mentioned, this is no blessing for the Palestinians but is effectively indirect aid to Israel as it is used to perpetuate and sustain the internal oppression system.



When Trump slashed over [\\$60 million in yearly funds](#) for the PSS, even Israel expressed concern over this move as it was “thought that co-operation with Israeli forces, which helps keep relative calm in the West Bank, could be affected.” Therefore, the PSS is ineffectual when both states are fighting against each other. Moreover, the PSS has helped

crack down on Palestinians during such times.

Counting PSS numbers is hence futile since, in an asymmetric conflict between Palestinians and Israel, it will not act as the defender of the Palestinian people. For this reason, when comparing Israel and Palestine in terms of military strength, it is necessary to compare the IDF with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) since the former is the official military force of Israel, and the latter is the de facto defense force of the Palestinians.

It is pertinent to note that most of the armed struggle against Israel is concentrated in the Gaza Strip where Hamas is in power. The West Bank, by contrast, is primarily controlled by Israel with pockets controlled by the Fatah-led PA. Fatah is generally anti-Hamas and has used the PSS to close the latter’s offices and arrest many of its members with [the assistance of Israel](#).

This is the chief reason why resistance primarily takes place [via slingshot](#) in the West Bank; a poetic equivalent to David's slingshot and the symbol of Palestinian resistance for decades. While Hamas and Islamic Jihad do have scattered cells in the West Bank, there is not any durable infrastructure that can mobilize a concerted armed resistance as Fatah and Israel do not allow that (even though Hamas's popularity has risen in recent years in the area).

Hamas

Hamas' military wing, Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades (IQB), is the largest and most well-equipped group in Gaza currently. However, juxtaposed to Israel, it is nowhere near as advanced and does not have nearly as many soldiers, the equipment, or the funding. Hamas' goal is to establish an Islamic state in Palestine composed of Gaza, the West Bank, and current-day Israel.

Hamas is primarily operative in Gaza Strip which is labelled as the world's largest open-air prison due to the ignominious Israeli and Egyptian blockades since 2007. Gaza is one of the most densely populated places on earth with around [2 million people living on just 365 square km of land](#). The number of soldiers that the IQB has is debated with some estimates being as low as 10,000 while others state the number is [around 40,000](#).

Hamas and its armed wing, the IQB, has, with the assistance of Syria and Iran, amassed a sizable arsenal of rockets, their primary weapon of choice. The IQB has the capability of creating homemade rockets as well using scraps of metal from plumbing pipes and components from dud Israeli bombs. Having this armory of rockets despite the constant overt and surreptitious surveillance of Gazans by the IDF and [the Shin Bet](#) is quite miraculous.

Since IQB has virtually no air force, tanks, ships, or most equipment used by conventional armies, its main strength is the use of short and long-range unguided rockets and mortar projectiles. This means the IQB is not a conventional army by any means and is merely a guerrilla force. Some of the rockets acquired from Iran include the 107mm rocket (8km range), the Fajr 3 (43 km range), and the Fajr 5 (75 km range).

Syria has helped Hamas and the IQB by providing them with M302 rockets, which have a 180 km range. Domestically produced rockets include the [Q-12 \(12 km range\)](#), the [S-40 \(40 km range\)](#), [S-55 \(55 km range\)](#), J-90 (90 km range), and the R-160 (160 km range). Israeli intelligence states that Hamas, PIJ, and others have around [14,000](#) to 30,000 rockets and mortar projectiles in Gaza.

The May 2021 conflict between Hamas and Israel caused by [Palestinian evictions in Sheikh Jarrah](#) had the world on edge. Hamas was able to launch rockets to even Tel Aviv, which meant that Hamas not only replenished its rocket stock but also improved its capabilities. Although many of the rockets were thwarted mid-air by the Iron Dome system, Hamas saw to overload the system by launching a volley of rockets, some of which did eventually fall on Israel.

Most of the rockets used are short-range known as Qassams, but, as mentioned above, the group has mid-range and long-range rockets as well. It must be mentioned that since most rockets are unguided, they can only be used for area bombardment—many of them [often misfire or fall short of Israel \(falling within Gaza\)](#). Hamas/IQB also use mortars, a short-range artillery system, that fire in a high, indirect trajectory.

The group uses the Soviet 82-millimetre as well as the more dominant Iranian-built 120-millimetre HM-16 mortars. Hamas also uses incendiary balloons which are basic but effective. Several inconspicuous party-like balloons are inflated and attached with explosives beneath them. Hamas launches these from Gaza from where the Mediterranean Sea winds push them into Israel. When the balloons fall, they explode and usually end up burning crops or property.

Since 2018, these balloons have burned over [10,400 acres in Israel](#). Although in short supply, the most advanced equipment Hamas has is an unmanned suicide drone, the Shihab kamikaze drone, but its success is unknown. The group also uses Kornet anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) which is its main line of defense when Israel invades with tanks and armored vehicles.

Hamas has used both the Soviet versions as well as a North Korean knockoff and has damaged/destroyed a few Merkava tanks in previous conflicts. However, tanks and vehicles equipped with the trophy system are a great countermeasure against ATGMs. Unsurprisingly, the Palestinians do not possess an Iron Dome of their own and are bombarded by [Israeli artillery and mortars](#) indiscriminately and incessantly during periods of turmoil.

Hamas' budget (defense and otherwise) is minimal compared to Israel's. The figures are unclear but most of Hamas' funding for taking care of Gaza and keeping its armed group operational comes from foreign sources such as Iran and Qatar. Some of these funds are allowed to travel to Gaza. As of early 2021, around \$30 million in Qatari cash was being delivered to Gaza. Qatar also pledged [\\$500 million to reconstruct](#) Gaza after the IDF's 11 days of atrocities against Palestinians in May 2021.

How much of this money if at all ends up being used for Hamas' military budget is obfuscated. Where Israel has the United States, Hamas has Iran—which is another David v. Goliath parallel. Although Iran's economy and regional influence are not supreme, it is undebated that without the help of Iran groups like Hamas, PIJ, and Hezbollah would not be nearly as effective.

Qatar also provides assistance to Palestine and Hamas financially. However, other nearby Muslim states have begun [romancing Israel at Palestine's expense](#), especially since the Abraham Accords in 2020.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

Although PIJ is smaller and less known internationally vis-à-vis Hamas, it is still very effective. According to sources, the group has at least 9,000 soldiers. The group enjoys direct Iranian support both militarily and financially. Since PIJ is not politically in charge of Gaza, unlike Hamas, it has a more open hand when it comes to retaliation against Israel. Like Hamas' armed wing, it too relies predominantly on rockets.

Reports state that although the group has Iranian backing, many of its rockets are internally manufactured and its armory is [on equal footing to Hamas](#). Due to the 2014 squeeze on Hamas by Egypt and Israel, the PIJ has steadily grown in stature. The armed wing of the group called the Al-Quds Brigades is active in both the West Bank and Gaza but more so in the latter.

Moreover, both IQB and PIJ have collaborated various times in efforts against Israel. As far as the varieties of rockets are concerned, the PIJ extensively used the Badr 3 in the 2021 conflict, which carries a 300-400 kg warhead and is a mid-range rocket (around 13 km). Rockets such as the al-Quds 101 rocket, a homemade one, and the al-Quds 4 have also been used as has the Fajr 5 (mentioned above).

Similar to Hamas, the PIJ also employs mortars against Israel. Also like Hamas, the PIJ has no air force or navy and has virtually no advanced equipment. The parallels between both groups do not stop there as PIJ is known to use incendiary balloons as well. It is difficult to ascertain the group's budget, but according to Israeli media, [Iran sends \\$30 million per year to PIJ](#).

Skewed Casualties—A Consequence of the Military Mismatch

The mismatch between Palestine and Israel cannot only be discerned through each side's military strength but is also hauntingly reflected through the disparity of the number of people killed by each side. The weaker Hamas and PIJ kill far fewer Israelis (both combatants and civilians), whereas the IDF not only kills substantially more Palestinians (both combatants and civilians) but is also responsible for razing a surfeit of Palestinian infrastructure such as apartments, hospitals, as well as weapon depots etcetera.



The following table highlights some of the more recent conflicts between Palestine and Israel and shows the wide schism between Palestinian casualties versus Israeli casualties.

Recent conflicts	Palestinian civilians & combatants killed	Palestinian civilians & combatants injured	Israeli civilians & combatants killed	Israeli civilians & combatants injured
Gaza War (2008-09)	1,300	500	13	518
Operation Returning Echo (2012)	23	74		23
Operation Pillar of Defence (2012)	225	1,000	6	239
Operation Protective Edge (2014)	2,310	10,626	73	556
May 2021 Conflict	434	2,500	12	123
Total Palestinian Casualties		Total Israeli Casualties		
18,992		1,563		

The total number of casualties in these conflicts, of both Palestinian and Israelis, is an estimated 20,555 (18,992 Palestinians+1,563 Israelis). This means that a staggering 92.39% of Palestinians died or were wounded in these conflicts contrasted with only 7.60% of Israelis.

These results show just how skewed the human impact has been on the Palestinians compared to the Israelis, and this is symptomatic of the severe mismatch between both sides' fighting forces. It must be asserted here that these are figures from recent skirmishes between the two and the actual number of Palestinian casualties since 1948 would be astronomical.

Conclusion

While Israel has the resources and capabilities to enter Gaza or the West Bank militarily as it has done ad nauseam, for the IQB and PIJ the reverse is untenable, owing to their rudimentary fighting equipment.



Rockets, mortars, slingshots, and the unassuming number of troops make the Palestinians the David in this conflict, whereas the Iron Dome, Merkavas, Sufas, hundreds of thousands of troops, and the billions of dollars in defense budget make Israel a tremendous Goliath to overcome.

It is therefore unsurprising that the Palestinians suffer disproportionately whenever there is a skirmish, big or small, with Israel.

This piece was originally published on [Mondoweiss](#). The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

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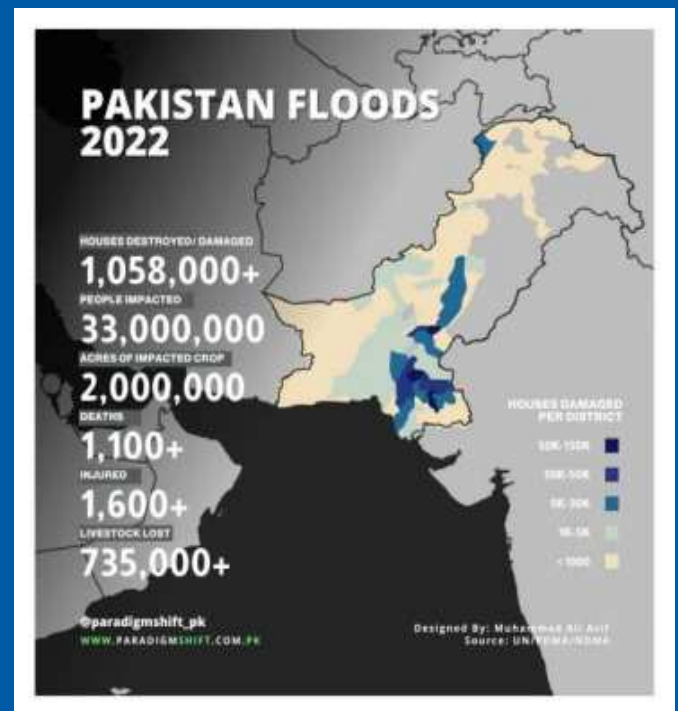


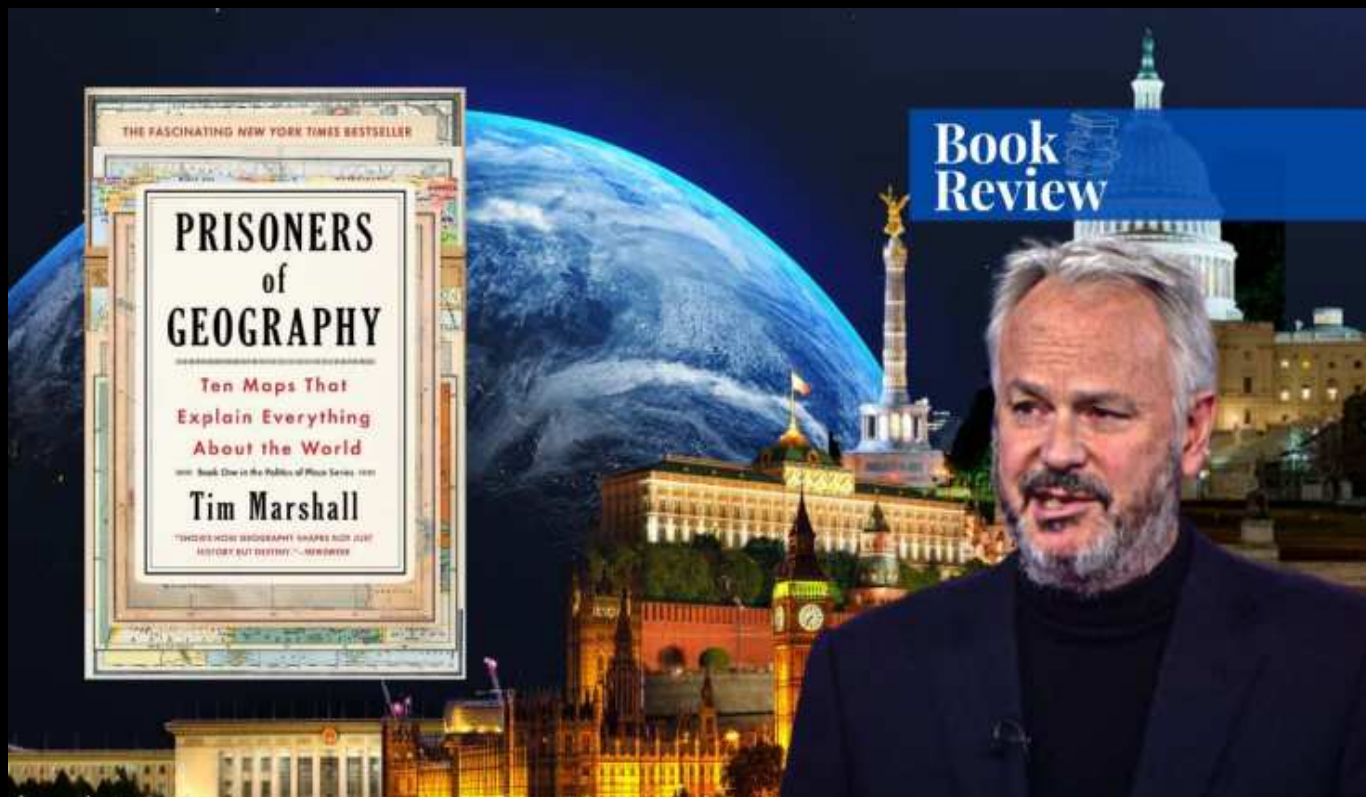
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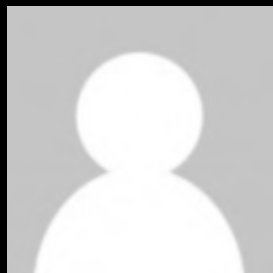




Prisoners of Geography by Tim Marshall

Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need to Know About Global Politics

About the Author



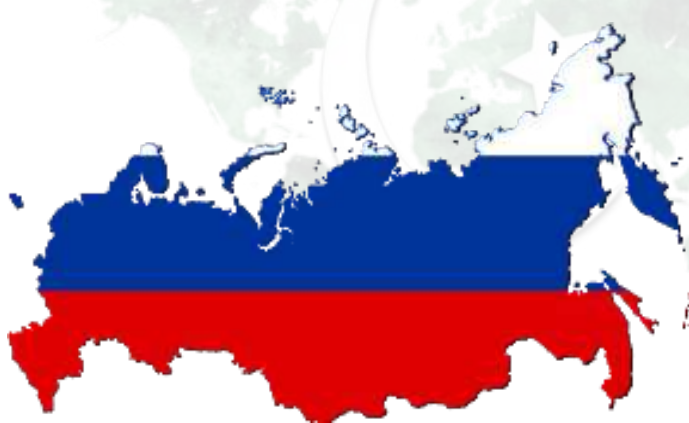
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Author

Tim Marshall, the [author of the book](#) *"Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need to Know About Global Politics"* is a British author, journalist and broadcaster who specializes in international affairs and diplomacy. He is also the guest commentator for BBC, Sky News, and LBC as well as a leading authority on foreign affairs with more than thirty years of experience.

Rapacious Russia

Prisoners of Geography is divided into ten interesting chapters with insights into states' politics, economies societies and geographies. The first three chapters are about the key states of world



politics: Russia, China, and the US. In the first chapter "Russia", the author explores the territory of the Russian Republic under the leadership of Vladimir Putin.

Unlike other states that have natural borders of sea, mountains and deserts, the Russian southern border is one which welcomes the enemy from Europe to attack it, giving rise to the fear of being attacked i.e. 'realism' in terms of international relations. The book points out Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova as the key states in Russian security policy.

Curious China

In the second chapter named "China", the book analyses the rise of China as the global hegemon whilst challenging the international status quo. In order to be a global power like the US, China has been following certain steps.

From using soft power like that of BRI to using hard power against Uighur, Hong Kong, Tibet and Taiwan, China is trying to influence the globe. Also, its presence in the Indo-Pacific Ocean is one of the ways to exercise its regional influence against India and kick the US out of the Asian region.

The United States

In the third chapter named "United States", Tim Marshall discusses the lucky geography of the state which made it the global superpower. *Prisoners of Geography* also discusses the history of the US from being a colony of Britain to its way to independence in 1776. The view of its lucky geography changed after Japan attacked the US in World War II.



The attack compelled the US to get itself involved in the war militarily and be the cause of nuclear proliferation around the globe. After the war, many EU states started to rely on the US for their security and military needs which led to the creation of NATO in 1949. This bloc resulted in the creation of a security dilemma between the two leading states i.e. the US and the USSR.

The book also discusses the US involvement in Cuba, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. However, the main threat to the US hegemony is the rise of China and so in order to counter it, the US is making sure to win the trust of every state surrounding China. The US's presence in Japan, Vietnam, and the South China Sea is a confirmation of that determination.

Western Europe

In the fourth chapter named "Western Europe", the author discusses the difference between the US and Europe's geography. Europe's geography is designed in a way that it has divided the states and the people naturally through natural boundaries. In the case of the US, there are fewer natural borders inside the territory which gives it a homogenous population.

Prisoners of Geography also makes the comparison between the economy of Northern and Southern Europe, coming to the conclusion that the former is richer than the latter due to its fertility, borders and resources. The financial crises after the two major wars in the region have led the states to better coordinate with each other which then resulted in the establishment of the EU.

Africa

In the fifth chapter of the book named “Africa”, Tim Marshall answers one of the key questions: why has Africa failed in both politics and technology unlike other continents of the world? In the answer, he points out two main reasons behind the failure. One is the ‘geographic factor’. Unlike Europe, Asia or North America, which have rivers that connect each other, the utmost source of trade and interconnection between them, Africa lacks them. The continent’s great rivers do not meet each other which causes disconnection in the continent.



The other reason lies in the human factor. In Europe and North America, there is a unifying language of English which sustains human interaction but Africa does not possess it. The lack of a lingua franca has caused them to be separated from the continent. The chapter also analyses the ethnic conflicts, diseases and fights for water among the states of Africa.

The Middle East

In the sixth chapter named “Middle East”, the author analyses the region of the centre of world politics. It is the longest chapter of the book which covers entirely every state of the region. *Prisoners of Geography* discusses the role of different branches of Islam in creating divisions among them.

The author has compared the Middle East pre and post-9/11, the rise of ISIS, the Islamic Cold War between Iran and KSA, the Palestine-Israel conflict, and the problems with Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. The question of why Arab Spring 2011 failed has also been addressed.

Turkey has been called the moderate state in the Middle East and is also viewed as a competitor by Iraq, KSA, Israel and Russia. It wants to regain the status that it previously had before World War I. The chapter also analyses the role of oil and gas in keeping the US and China in the region.

South Asia

In the seventh chapter named "India and Pakistan", the author discusses the problem between both states. The fortunate geography of both states has been discussed in the chapter as how this geography compels China and US in those states. The enmity between the two states is not just over a piece of land i.e. Kashmir but also over the control of water flows i.e. the Indus River.



The chapter also discusses the role of Pakistan in the Afghan war against Americans, the British, NATO, and in support of Taliban and Al-Qaeda. However, the separatist movements in India and their clashes with the neighbours like Bhutan, and Nepal are discussed a little.

East Asia

In the eighth chapter named "Korea and Japan", the author explores the clashes between Japan, North Korea, and South Korea. Korea has always remained in the hands of either China or Japan since World War II, but it fought a major war thus creating two lands across the 38th parallel by the United Nations.

On the other hand, Japan after being devastated by two nuclear bombs, was trained to be the permanent station for US naval bases in East Asia mainly in the South China Sea.



Latin America

In the ninth chapter named "Latin America", Tim Marshall compares the geographies of Africa, and North and South America. He argues that the problems with South America and Africa are the same. Both continents have vast diverse populations and are rich in natural resources. Although states like Brazil, Mexico, Chile, and Peru appear to be wealthy, they cannot be compared to the US, the UK, or France.



The other problem is that these states have just defeated slavery and colonizers so they have a long way to development. All the states of Latin America are majorly under the influence of the US because of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. The chapter discloses the major states of Latin America, their resources, problems, and US interests. However, the UK's interest in the region is ignored.

The Arctic

In the last chapter named "The Arctic", the author explores the regions and areas surrounded by the Arctic Ocean which are the United States, Canada, Norway, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Russia, and Sweden. The temperature here reaches up to 26 degrees Celsius in the summer and falls up to -45 in winter.

The region is neglected security-wise because it is difficult to stand the chilly winters and safeguard the territory. However, the smuggling of goods from these areas is a common problem that all states face. The other major problem here is the melting of the ice due to global warming.

Conclusion

In the concluding note of the book, the author states that it is not just geography that shapes world politics, great ideas, and people also confine together in order to formulate it. However, that does not undermine the importance of geography which is continuing to predict the power politics around the globe.

The author has also highlighted the problem of climate change which would not only impact the geography of Earth but also its demography as well. The impact of climate change will not only affect Americans, Russians, and Chinese but would affect the whole of humanity.

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The Controversial Oil Deal Between Pakistan and Russia

About the Author



Amna Asif is a second-year graduate student at NUST.

Introduction

The inflation rate in Pakistan during the month of October was 26.6%, with foreign reserves currently at \$13.721 billion. These numbers will continue to rise and fall, respectively, if Pakistan does not resort to an alternative for energy imports, which account for 25% of the import bill and are the main culprit behind the depletion of foreign reserves.

However, in the month of November, the Finance Minister, Ishaq Dar, announced that a deal with Russia, an Oil Producing and Exporting Country (OPEC) country, is underway to gain access to discounted energy imports.

The Deal

Despite the fact that the deal is in its initial phase, the Finance Minister stated that a deal is currently in progress with terms that are similar to India's. In February 2022, the United States along with its allies exhorted countries to decrease the amount of oil they purchase from Russia and to adopt other alternatives to meet their domestic energy demands in order to punish the Kremlin for the belligerence and aggression it exhibited when attacking Ukraine, a sovereign country.



However, numerous allies including India have failed to adhere to the advice and instead have drastically increased their import of Russian oil. India, in particular, defends its right to maintain economic ties with countries as it is liable for its country's needs. Thus, importing oil and energy

resources is the principal priority, the origin from which the resources are imported is nugatory.

The sanctions imposed on Moscow in tandem with the demand decrease for Russian oil caused the market price of Russian oil to be \$30 lower than Brent oil in February 2022.

India decided to leverage this price fall and began importing crude oil from Russia in large quantities.

In May, India imported **819,000 barrels per day (bpd)**. This was a conspicuous increase in crude oil imports as opposed to the **33,000 barrels** purchased in the same month a year before. The discount that India received was sufficient for India to deliberate such a sharp increase in the number of barrels imported per day.



However, as Russia broadened its oil market, the discount that India and other countries received was **\$7-\$8 per barrel less** than Brent oil. Thus, it is more economical than opting for an alternative that is more expensive and will leave a deeper mark on the foreign reserves.

Similarly, Pakistan is currently negotiating an oil deal with Russia that will allow it to purchase oil at the same rate sold to India. This will be a more feasible option for Pakistan whose gradually depleting foreign reserves currently stand at **\$13.721 billion**. According to last year's import bill, energy imports accounted for **25% of the entire bill**. Thus, one can conjecture that even a slight discount on the energy sector imports will be a viable option for Pakistan.

According to **Asad Ullah Kamran**, the total amount that Pakistan can potentially save has been calculated to be approximately **\$3 billion**. Consequently, the money saved from purchasing Russian crude oil instead of Brent crude oil can be utilized to service payments on debts, invest in prolific ventures, or for human development programs.

This will be beneficial for the country as money is required to fulfill numerous requests, inter alia, relief to health workers and financial support for flood victims, yet a deficit in the budget prevents governments from completing those obligations and demands.

Geopolitical Consequences

The United States is a significant stakeholder in numerous international organizations that



possesses the power to impose sanctions. Generally, an ally or a country having diplomatic ties with the United States will adhere to the caveats and advice provided by the superpower.

India, however, has disobeyed the orders of the US and has prioritized its own internal

interests over those of the Western nations. This did not evoke anger or sanctions upon India from the United States as the former is a strategic player in the Indo-Pacific, America's current interest and priority at the moment in the global sphere.

Pakistan, on the other hand, does not intend to be a part of the United States' containment of China strategy. Thus, it is possible that the United States may impose sanctions on Pakistan if it continues with the Russian oil deal. Besides sanctions, Pakistan may risk severing ties with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates which account for [90%](#) of Pakistan's imports of crude petroleum.

Moreover, recently, Saudi Arabia announced that it anticipates investing [\\$10 billion to build an oil refinery in Gwadar](#). This project was to materialize in 2015 but did not proceed forward due to the severing of ties between the two countries. Now that the project has once again been announced, efforts should be made to cement the relationship with Saudi Arabia as opposed to undertaking ventures that could prove fatal to the bilateral ties with other Muslim nations.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the proposed deal including jeopardizing international aid/benefits, risking sanctions, and the currency of transactions. Pakistan was recently removed from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) gray list. However, completing transactions with a sanctioned country via an insecure payment system could cause the international organization to place Pakistan on the list again.



This would be devastating for Pakistan as four years of constant efforts were made to meet the [40 recommendations delineated by FATF](#). Moreover, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently began releasing tranches of the [\\$6 billion bailout program](#) after a stagnant period with no bilateral talks or activity.

Pakistan is in dire need of any financial aid it is able to obtain. If the IMF program is halted due to Pakistan's oil deal with Russia, this could prove to be fatal to the economic state of affairs. Another limitation is the currency in which oil is to be purchased from the Kremlin. After sanctions were imposed, barring Russia from processing transactions through the SWIFT system, Moscow decided on an alternative approach in which oil would be sold in roubles, the country's currency.

Therefore, in order for a country to gain access to Russian oil, it must purchase roubles from the international market using its foreign reserves and through a non-sanctioned Russian bank. As stated earlier, this could lead to a domino effect in which Pakistan would be sanctioned by the IMF and FATF. Moreover, Western countries may be skeptical of Pakistan's motives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the oil deal with Russia could yield positive results for Pakistan, as it is a more viable and less expensive alternative to the Brent crude oil that Pakistan purchases from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. However, if Pakistan decides to shift its focus from the Muslim countries with whom it has been transacting with respect to oil then it could risk severing bilateral relations with those countries.

Additionally, the Financial Action Task Force, International Monetary Fund, and other Western nations could potentially sanction Pakistan for purchasing crude oil from Russia. This would be devastating for a country that is already reeling at the brink of an economic crisis. Thus, Pakistan ought to proceed with the oil deal, if and only if sanctions will not be imposed by international organizations and Western countries.

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

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The Economic Cost of Political Instability

About the Author



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Introduction

Political Instability is defined as the tendency of a change in the government and its structures, either in a “constitutional” or “unconstitutional” way. On the other hand, economic growth is defined as the measure which reveals the number of monetary transactions happening within the economy. Generally, quantitative measures of GDP and GNP reflect the economic growth of a country. Thus, by integrating both terms, we analyze the question of whether a high propensity for an executive collapse leads to a reduction of growth.



Political stability and economic growth work in tandem with each other. In the delicate scheme of things, their relationship is such that in absence of the former, the latter dies away. The relationship between political stability and economic growth

has always remained the core of **policy-making** in almost every country.

However, developing countries face significant instability in political systems and extreme law and order situations. As, developing countries have low national income and low per capita GDP, their probability of falling prey to political crises increases. So, it is a fact that the meager economic growth of a country leads to political chaos.

No one can deny the impact of a political crisis on economic events and fall in the economic progress. Consequently, various social scientists have termed the relationship between political stability and the economy as a **two-way relation**. A study on political instability labeled “**The economic cost of general strikes in Nepal**” revealed that strikes in Nepal led to a decline in the GDP growth rate from **0.6% to 2.2%**.

In Spain, the strike cost is an average of 0.1 % of the GDP rate while in Austria, the cost is 0.46% of the GDP. The neighboring countries of Pakistan like India and Bangladesh are assumed to face an average cost of 2% of the GDP rate. Moreover, political uncertainty and economic investments are also negatively related. This negative relation escalates unemployment and lessens productivity.

Political Instability in Pakistan

South Asia's economic outlook (2020) showed that Pakistan had a growth rate of 1.9% in comparison with Bangladesh (8.1%), Afghanistan (3.9%), and India (4.2%). Right after its inception in 1947, Pakistan faced several issues, with the worst being political instability.



The stability under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam and Liaquat Ali Khan didn't last long and from 1951-58, the inconsistent period of prime ministers began with Khawaja Nazimuddin and ended with Malik Feroz Khan Noon. Those were the days when Pakistan was also going through a constitutional crisis.

With the beginning of the stable military government of Ayub Khan, Pakistan's economy grew at the highest rate. However, in 1970, Pakistan experienced a period of the highest political instability which resulted in a high economic loss for the country because of the separation of East Pakistan.

The lost period of the '90s is a sad metaphor for Pakistan's economic condition because of political instability which plunged the country into foreign debt, and a decrease in export rates and revenues. The instability due to the delay of elections and the rise of emergency by Musharraf made the GDP growth rate fall from 4.8% to 1.7%. The situation was aggravated when the political instability augmented by fragile policies led to post-9/11 terrorism in Pakistan.

In 2007, the assassination attempt of Benazir Bhutto drove the nation into a dilemma of uncertainty. The ignorant attitude of the government towards economic policies and institutional development caused extreme macroeconomic instability. During Nawaz Sharif's period, Pakistan started with a [GDP growth rate of 4.4%](#) and the expectation was there for more growth, but this growth cycle was interrupted by Imran Khan's political campaigns and the Panama cases.



PTI's sit-in in Islamabad led to the shutting down of business activity and the closure of trade routes, for which Pakistan faced an economic loss of 610 billion due to PTI's long March of [216](#) days in Islamabad.

Piercing Protests

FDI, one of the major indicators of economic growth, is also affected by political uncertainty in the country. In 2014-2015, after the Panama leaks, the Prime Minister was disqualified from holding public office, and this situation [created extreme fluctuations in FDI in Pakistan's economy](#).

Protests are one of the factors which express the situation of political instability. Although [protests](#) are the signals of a healthy democracy, their association with the shutdown of economic events and loss of private and public property make them stressful for the economy. The state of political instability and policy uncertainty destroy the confidence of investors.

The political instability has made Pakistan's authorities incompetent in raising long-term structural reforms, without which the country cannot prosper. In Pakistan, the rise of violence and civil unrest due to political instability has disrupted the normal trajectory of life, decreased normal market procedures, and played a part in lowering the productivity growth of the country.

Traders and businesses have also felt the ripples of political instability because of the rise in the direct cost of production. Whenever the Pakistani government has tried to reduce the balance of payment crisis via IMF deals, etc., these stabilization policies have been overshadowed by political instability. The continued balance crisis and the inability to capture deals of debt relief may lead Pakistan toward bankruptcy.

A Way Forward

The government needs to carry out structural changes for increasing exports and productivity, and this growth must be inclusive so that elites do not capture the state resources. Beyond all steps, strengthening the institutions and their development would directly diminish political instability and ensure economic stability.

The ruling class can also acquire some insights from the governance framework of the [miracle economies of “East Asia”](#) as these states are true models that have gained high economic growth while remaining relatively politically stable.

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Saudi Arabia–Iran Conflict: Threats & Consequences

About the Author



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Introduction

Iran and Saudi Arabia have had a strained bilateral relationship and a heated conflict for decades now. Both countries have disparate affiliations regarding religious sects, despite both being Islamic states, and have varying opinions regarding, inter alia, relations with Western Nations and oil-exporting policies.

Iran is a staunch supporter of the Shia sect of Islam while Saudi Arabia is a proponent of the Sunni sect. This has been a bone of contention for both countries as their opposing views generally cause them to be at the opposite of the spectrum. The tension between the two nations has increased and could result in an invasion or potentially a war that could include other surrounding Gulf States.

Major issues

One major issue is their support and affiliation with different Islamic sects. Iran is a predominantly Shiite theocracy with a [90% Shia Muslim population](#); Saudi Arabia is a predominantly Sunni monarchy with a [90% Sunni Muslim population](#).

Most of the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman, who also form the Gulf Cooperation Council are Sunni Islam supporters, an organization spearheaded by Saudi Arabia. Thus it is a direct point of



vexation for Iran whose primary objective is to gain hegemony in the Muslim world and influence decisions in other surrounding countries.

However, over the past several decades, tensions have gradually increased. Particularly after the Iraq invasion by the United States, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's government led to the installation of a Shia-inclined government in Iraq. Therefore, to Saudi Arabia's consternation, the bilateral ties between Iran and Iraq were strengthened even further as they now had a common religious leaning.

This engendered grave concern from Saudi Arabia. It feared Iran's imminent rise in power and global influence, which would ultimately affect the global political landscape. Another major issue that Saudi Arabia and Iran seem to be unable to concur on is the degree to which the relationship with the West should be maintained.

Saudi Arabia has strong bilateral ties with the United States, Europe, and the United Kingdom. Moreover, they all appear to share similar interests with respect to security and oil. Regional and global security is a prime priority for Saudi Arabia and the United States as it is inextricably linked with economic growth and international prosperity. Iran, however, is a pariah state that is sanctioned by most Western countries.

The Western countries have imposed these sanctions to prevent Iran from pursuing its nuclear objectives. Despite the sanctions, Iran has continued to bolster its uranium stock. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as of October 2022, Iran has an estimated [62.3 kilograms \(137.3 pounds\)](#) of uranium enriched to up to [60% fissile purity](#). That amounts to an increase of 6.7 kilograms since [the](#) watchdogs report in September.

This raised international concerns from the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the IAEA who are apprehensive of Iran's intentions and conjecture that perhaps Iran is planning an attack on the Middle East's energy infrastructure. Lastly, Iran and Saudi Arabia are unable to coincide with oil exporting policies. Both countries are members of the Oil Production and Exporting Countries (OPEC), an intergovernmental organization with 13 members.

This organization plays a principal role in determining the price of oil at any given time period. It has the ability to both increase supply to lower the cost of oil and provide relief to the masses. Likewise, it also possesses the authority to decrease or limit its oil output and increase its price. In terms of an issue between Iran and Saudi Arabia, both are unable to decide on an oil output cap to stabilize the oil prices in the market.

Iran is capping its oil output as it would hinder its ability to generate revenue, the mainstay of the Iranian economy. Similarly, Saudi Arabia dreads a greater Iranian influence if they cap its own oil supply while allowing Iran to continue its production and selling without any limitations. However, not capping the prices has raised concerns in Saudi Arabia which has lost a substantial amount of



revenue due to the low oil prices.

According to RUSI, the sharp decline in prices back in 2015 caused a \$98 billion budget deficit in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, compelling the Kingdom to raise that amount from

another source to fill the void. Saudi Arabia has taken necessary steps to limit Iran's oil output; it has decreased oil prices by 35 cents to European customers, directly targeting Iran's prospective market.

This 'Oil War' will continue until both countries decide that mutual prosperity is far more beneficial than rivalry and unilateral interests, which seems impossible considering the skin-deep enmity between the two.

Current Conflict between Saudi Arabia & Iran

Iran is currently enveloped in chaos and unrest. The death of 22-year-old Masah Amini was the initial contingency that engendered remonstrations across Iran with females demanding their basic liberties including the repeal of the stringent dress codes for women. Moreover, they covet the overthrow of Ali Khamenei's government. Unfortunately, that is a quixotic desire as Khamenei has ruled as an authoritarian head of the country for over 30 years now.

The riots are becoming increasingly violent as law enforcement agencies attempt to quell the disturbance. Consequently, Iran contends that Saudi Arabia is the main perpetrator behind the growing turbulent situation in the country. According to Wall Street Journal, Iran's intelligence



minister apprised Saudi Arabia that its strategic patience would run out if it continues to foment violence through media and proxies in Iran.

Saudi Arabia has vehemently denied interference in the

country's societal landscape. Moreover, on [November 10, 2022](#), Saudi Arabia shared intelligence information with the United States that included details of the imminent attacks that Iran has conspired to execute in the upcoming weeks. Additionally, on [November 11, 2022](#), the United States flew [two B-52 bombers](#) over the Middle East as a warning to Iran indicating their strength and force in case Iran finalizes its plans to ultimately attack Saudi Arabia's energy infrastructure.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Saudi Arabia-Iran conflict is convoluted and replete with animosity. The actions that one will take in retaliation to the other's motives are difficult to assess and prognosticate. They have had disagreements over several major issues ranging from religious sects to relations with the West. This has led them to align themselves accordingly, typically against each other.

However, as the current situation in Iran worsens, the threats toward Saudi Arabia have increased. The final result could be a full-fledged invasion or attack if bilateral talks with international mediation are not conducted to resolve the prevailing issues.

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Karachi, the City That Was

About the Author



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Glorious Past Marred by Corruption

Karachi, the industrial and business hub of Pakistan, welcomed all into its harmonious and magnanimous fold. It led to a trading post of 400,000 exploding into a megalopolis of nearly 300 million people. Catering for 70 percent of national revenue, the city of Karachi merited able, honest, and sagacious governance.

Not to be, corruption, crime, and ethnicity ensured that Karachi, the city that was, regressed into the potted, rutted, and totally gutted entity that it is. The Global Liveability Index 2022 [ranks Karachi as the fifth least livable city in the world](#). Dedicated apolitical individuals vying for the city's welfare were murdered ruthlessly. Hakeem Saeed sahib's alleged murderers [belonged to the MQM](#).

Four ANP local office bearers were awarded double life sentences for the murder of Ms [Perween Rahman, a dedicated social activist](#). An MQM member was hanged for MD KESC Mr [Shahid Hamid's murder](#). Even ordinary citizens were not spared. MQM activists were sentenced for the horrendous [Baldia Factory arson](#) that saw 260 bread earners burnt to cinders. The infamous People's Amn Committee, known for murders and drug-running, anointed Lyari's electoral candidates; it was a PPP protégé.

MQM's Sinful Rule

When the Karachi operation mercifully did start in September 2013, [intelligence agencies rounded up](#) 5,882 criminals. 3235 were closely associated with political parties. 913 were involved in anti-state activities, whereas 1,341 were working for proscribed outfits.

Security officials said 1,700 of these hardcore criminals, involved in murders and other criminal activities, were MQM activists, whereas 1,563 were associated with PPP and ANP. These parties always denied militant/criminal elements within their folds. However, criminal culpability at the highest levels lays bare as the apprehended divulged political affiliations and exposed the godfathers patronizing their sordid crimes.



A classified US cable dated 22 April 2009 captioned “The Gangs of Karachi” read: “MQM has 10000 active armed members and as many as 25000 armed fighters in reserve. This is compared to the city’s 33000 police officers. The party operates through

Sector Commanders, who take their orders directly from the party leader who lives in exile in the UK. MQM’s detractors claim these armed men are involved in extortion, assassinating political rivals, shootings at campaign rallies and the murder of people from other ethnic communities. In the past eight years alone, MQM was issued over a million arms licenses”.

The cable further reads: “With PPP in control of the provincial government and having an influential member in place as the Home Minister, a large number of weapons permits are currently being issued to PPP workers. A police official recently said, given the volume of weapons permits being issued to PPP members, the party will soon be as well-armed as MQM”.

Patronized crime and mega-corruption allegations have remained synonymous with the abysmal governance of Sindh. Transparency International reported an astounding 94 billion dollars lost to corruption during PPP’s 2014-19 years. An indicator of this rapacious lot was Liaquat Qaimkhani, Karachi’s DG of Parks and Horticulture.

Arrested by NAB, he was found to have [set up 71 ghost parks](#) with fake companies to maintain them. A raid at his palatial home, boasting his elaborate 2-marla bathroom, yielded cash and items worth over 10 billion rupees, 8 luxury vehicles, and a cache of automatic weapons. Apart from remaining Advisor to MQM Mayor Waseem Akhtar, Qaimkhani was patronized by individuals from different political parties.

Devastating the City of Lights

A multitude of these rags to ill-gotten riches stories have enabled the destruction of Karachi. Every single aspect of this city is a goldmine staked by politically patronized mafias. As residents yearn for water, the illegal tanker mafia pockets 55 billion rupees annually.



8 billion cubic feet of sand and gravel are removed illegally each year from the city waterbeds. A [2019 WWF report](#) says Karachi produces 475 million gallons of wastewater daily which ends up in the sea. Poisonous chemicals from Karachi's many factories seep daily into water supply lines.

Bloomberg cites a [2019 study that found Karachi](#) to have the [worst public transport](#) system in the world; it is also the most dangerous. Billions are made by conniving officials and their political masters; the criminal travesties affect millions of lives adversely.

Karachi's 58 major stormwater drains and the smaller 600 feeding them have been encroached upon by the politically patronized land mafia. This includes over 60000 illegal houses and many commercial blocks on this land. This is the audacious impunity that has been the governance of Karachi.

Even DHA and KPT jumped into the fray with the former setting up the DHA Golf Club and the latter the KPT Housing Scheme in Chinna Creek backwaters. These were set up at the cost of the crucial eco-enabling mangrove swamps. This is apart from DHA reclaiming land to extend its domain into the sea. The recent deluge saw the devastation of roads in Karachi yet again.

Experts claim that 70 percent of bike and rickshaw riders are suffering from vertebral damage. Many expecting women have lost their pregnancies or given premature birth. Merely another opportunity for the unscrupulous, billions in road repairs shall be pocketed, as is from the annual "cleaning" of drains. For want of an effective rainwater drainage mechanism, the road patchwork shall wash away with the slightest rain as the rapacious cycle goes on.

The Parallels Between Karachi & Lagos

Nigeria, gaining independence in 1960, is one of the world's largest oil exporters. Its 2011-2020 oil and gas revenue stood at 394 billion dollars. An October 10, 2019 article in The Economist revealed that since its independence, 600 billion dollars have been stolen from Nigeria. This has

resulted in 70 million Nigerians living on less than a dollar a day.

Lagos, the Karachi-like commercial hub of Nigeria, is ranked the least livable city in the world. In an eerie similarity, the repeated cycle bereft of any safety measures sees a corruption-prone Nigeria



ravaged by floods leaving 500 people dead with 1.4 million displaced.

The world at large has moved on with the majority having implemented and accepted standards of civility and governance.

Tragically, our political landscape remains dominated by primitive greed with constant jousting for pillaging rights. A proven paradigm, rule of law, and wealth retention not creation is the key to prosperity. This demands honest and prudent leadership. It remains the only and most crucial imperative towards the resurgence of Karachi and a vibrant Pakistan.

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All Hail Extremism

About the Author



Raja Abdullah is a final year student of BS IR at the National Defence University, Islamabad.

Aggression and frustration in a community pave the way to extreme poles, which eventually endanger the stability and put a stop to the progress of society. In the post-modern world, perceptions of acting out are leading to a paradoxical situation whether it be the leaders through their statements and actions fueling extremism or the public demand that shapes the reaction of the leaders.

This paradox is prevailing in the political scenario of Pakistan since its inception. If we go through the pages of history, democratic phase or dictatorship, each era held its own sort of extreme either religious or political. Now, that we are at the peak of the digitalization of politics, Pakistan is experiencing a new kind of aggressiveness that dominates each fiber of the social fabric.



It would not be wrong to say that the ship of Pakistan is in a storm of staunch extremism and the only option left is sinking. In spite of this situation, power-hungry individuals and organizations jump to fill that void. The

intentions of the general public are taken care of by the leaders in alignment with people's approach to politics.

There are few agendas—short-term economic policies, religious rhetoric, [anti-Americanism](#)—that are addressed to meet the public demand and in the end, key issues—political stability, education and health, homogeneity—remain untouched. Key political figures are in a phase of fear that if they don't stick to the popular narrative they might face defeat in the upcoming elections. This vicious cycle of power and public approach has continued to grow, and it has given birth to an unprecedented level of bewilderment.

Six years after the secession of East Pakistan, the government was in the hands of religiously motivated Zia-ul-Haq who forcefully marginalized his opponents. Soon after the death of Zia, a ten-year musical chair game was played between PMLN and PPP. After the disintegration of the USSR, domestic political turmoil and strategic tensions with India in Kashmir kept the state busy.

While the implications of Zia's hardcore policies were prevailing in society, Musharraf overthrew Nawaz to rule the state with liberal-oriented policies for the next nine years. The policies of Zia and Musharraf were entirely contrasting; the former tried to Islamize the structure and the latter did the opposite of that. One thing that remained constant in both aforementioned eras was the attractive wrapper of extremism in which the policies were sold to the people.

After the restoration of civilian democratic rule in 2008, Pakistan faced severe magnitudes of



terrorism which is still haunting the security of the state, and counter-terrorism measures influenced the foreign policy as well as public policy. With the advancements in the media industry,

the agenda of politics in Pakistan undergoes a paradigm shift from the battle of the systems to the competition of strong narrative construction.

The progress of Pakistan is swaying between the popular media discourses of the two political gigantic balloons with smaller interest groups on each side. The followers of each side consume a huge amount of emotional or rational explanations on TV or social media.

By mentioning the courses of history, I want to argue that the fabric of Pakistani society is skillfully sewn with the threads of extremism in every sphere of life. The opportunist political elite persuade the minds of the people with extreme emotional statements and people buy that in order to be a part of the societal assembly. The socio-political structure of Pakistan is in dire need of attention and transformational policies because the paradox of extremism will prevail unless its antidote solution is gradually and systematically injected.

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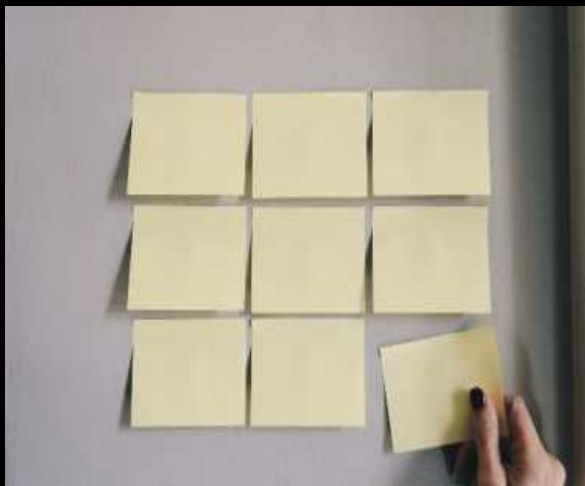
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