



A Global Politics Publication & Knowledge Hub For
Students, Emerging Writers, & CSS Aspirants

The Paradigm Shift Magazine
March 2023

Zaviya by Ashfaq Ahmed

Adil Abbasi

Are China & Russia Replacing
the US in the Middle East?

Sana Azhar

Exploring the Legal
Framework of Public
Interest Litigation in
Pakistan

Mehwish Batool

Restored Saudi-Iran
Relations & the Role
of China

Afifa Iqbal

The Pension Fiasco
in France & UK

Maryam Jilani

Blood & Silk: Power & Conflict
in Modern Southeast Asia

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A Guide to Becoming a
Civil Servant in Pakistan

Torchbearer CSS Academy

A Look at the Major
Economic Systems

Haris Khan

The Dangers of Free
Speech Absolutism

Mir Adnan Aziz

The Strategic Importance
of the Indian Ocean to
China & India

Allah Nawaz



The Writer's Paradigm

Our First All-Pakistan Writing Contest is LIVE!

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Foreword

Welcome to the sixth 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 **200,000 monthly visits**, and over **45,000 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:

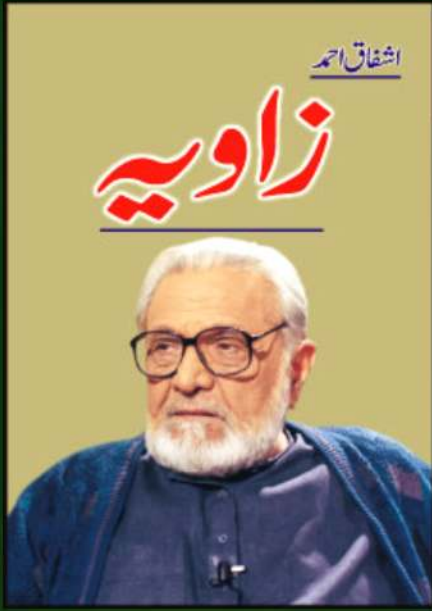
1. To become a comprehensive library with high-quality content on **international relations, current affairs, global politics, and Pakistan**.
2. To provide a **free medium** where individuals can access research from across the globe, and can send in their own work to share their voice with the world.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

We have handpicked **15 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

This edition of the magazine also features the guidelines for our **All-Pakistan Writing Contest** titled **"The Writer's Paradigm"**, which we are hosting in collaboration with **Air University**!

Submissions open on the **7th of April**, and close on the **23rd of April** - so make sure you sign up if you are eligible. Big cash prizes await!

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.



Book
Review



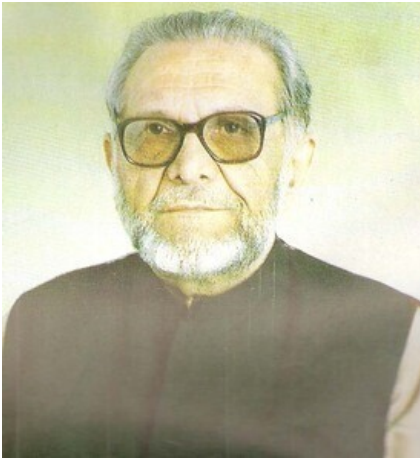
Zaviya by Ashfaq Ahmed

About the Author



Adil Abbasi is a member of ICMA Pakistan and serves as the Principal of TVET Institute of PVTC, Government of Punjab. He is a professional blogger and writes about business, finance, and skills development

Introduction



Ashfaq Ahmed was a renowned writer who made significant contributions to Urdu literature. His work garnered widespread acclaim, and he was recognized with prestigious awards for his meritorious services in the fields of literature and broadcasting.

Ashfaq Ahmed sahab was known for his appearances on the PTV programs *Baitakh* (The Guest Room) and *Zaviya* (The Dimension).

During these programs, he interacted with his fans, especially the youth audience, and provided them with swift yet satisfying responses to their questions. His programs were filled with wisdom and selfless life lessons that were intended to help viewers navigate life's challenges.

To fully understand the depth of his teachings, it is recommended to watch the recorded versions of his program or [read the books](#) compiled from his talks. While in this review, I'm attempting to summarize some of the lessons I learned from *Zaviya* (Part 1), it is important to note that these are my own interpretations and do not fully represent the breadth and depth of Ashfaq Ahmed's wisdom.

While I may not have completely grasped the profound wisdom conveyed in his simple yet meaningful words, I am endeavoring to share some life lessons that I consider crucial for anyone aspiring to lead a fulfilling life. Although I have made an effort to infer the true meanings of his message, I recognize that my interpretation may be flawed. Therefore, I encourage readers to explore Ashfaq Ahmed's works for themselves and draw their own conclusions.

For parents, it is a great idea to introduce their young children to *Zaviya* as it can help them understand different perspectives and make better decisions in life. His teachings are a valuable resource for anyone seeking to live a life filled with purpose and fulfillment. To access the Urdu version of these profound lessons, simply [click here](#).

Dealing with Life's Problems and Disappointments

Ashfaq Ahmed highlights the need to put life's problems into perspective. He argues that our difficulties are just a part of our existence, but we tend to give them more weight than they deserve. Instead of addressing each issue individually, we often allow them to affect all aspects of our lives, leading to a state of chaos.



He also suggests that our desires can be a source of disappointment. As humans, our wants are insatiable, and we keep adding to our list of desires, which can never be fully satisfied. Instead, he advises us to focus on our necessary wishes, which are few and manageable, to avoid feelings of discontentment and frustration.

By adopting this perspective, we can manage our lives better and find contentment in the simple things. Rather than letting problems overwhelm us, we can address them one by one and focus on our essential needs, leading to a more fulfilling life.

Call to Action for Helping Others

Ashfaq Ahmed inspires us to take practical steps towards making life easier for those around us. He points out that we often prioritize words over actions when it comes to helping others. Instead of providing practical assistance and resources, we tend to rely on advice and rhetoric, which is not always an effective approach.

He reinforces his message by offering several examples from everyday life. For instance, he suggests offering water to someone in the heat, providing blankets in the cold, teaching without compensation, and refraining from objecting to office matters.

These simple acts can make a significant difference in someone's life and can show our compassion and concern for others.

His message is clear: it's not enough to talk about helping others; we must take action. By doing so, we can create a more compassionate and empathetic world where everyone feels supported and cared for.

The Importance of Respecting Teachers

Ashfaq Ahmed shares a personal experience that occurred while he was teaching in Italy. He was fined for a traffic violation, and when he shared the news with his acquaintances, they were not pleased. Unable to pay the fine, he was compelled to appear in court. However, when he mentioned that he was a teacher, the court treated him with immense respect. The judge even stood up to honor him, despite the obligation to impose fines according to the law.

He reflects on this incident to underscore the significance of respecting teachers in society. He highlights that teachers play a vital role in shaping future generations and must be valued and appreciated accordingly. The incident he narrated demonstrates how a teacher's profession can garner immense respect and admiration, even in a legal setting.

His message is clear: teachers are not just educators but also role models, influencers, and pillars of society. Therefore, they deserve to be held in high regard and given the respect they deserve. By doing so, we can create a culture that values education, inspires teachers to do their best, and ultimately benefits society as a whole.

Perspective on Giving and Criticism

He highlights two important aspects of human behavior: giving and criticism. He believes that what we give to others is not from our own resources but from what Allah, the Ultimate Giver, has bestowed upon us.

Therefore, when someone asks for help, we should see ourselves as giving what we have received. His message is one of gratitude and empathy, emphasizing that giving is not just a moral obligation but also an act of acknowledging and appreciating the blessings we have received in life.

Moreover, Ashfaq sahab points out that criticism often reflects our own unfulfilled desires to be like the person we are criticizing. It can be a manifestation of our envy of what others have achieved, but we have not. By criticizing others, we may be projecting our own insecurities and shortcomings onto them.

To cultivate a spirit of giving, we must recognize and be grateful for the blessings we have received. To curb our tendency to criticize, we must focus on our own growth and development, rather than comparing ourselves to others. By doing so, we can foster a more positive and empathetic outlook towards others and ourselves.

Knowledge: Literacy vs Skills

In *Zaviya*, Ashfaq sahab challenges the traditional notion that only literacy equals knowledge. He argues that those who possess skills are just as knowledgeable as those who can read and write. However, our society often overlooks the knowledge of skilled individuals and instead privileges those with reading and writing skills. He emphasizes that skilled people who build and create things should be respected equally as they are the practical people who take action and shape the world.

In a society that values talk over action, he stresses the importance of recognizing the value of practical skills and the need for action. His message is clear: our lives should be full of action, not just information. We should acknowledge and respect those who possess practical skills and take actions that bring about positive change. By doing so, we can create a society that values action and practicality, not just theoretical knowledge.

Expressing Gratitude and Praise

Ashfaq Ahmed sahab emphasizes the significance of showing gratitude to others, praising them for their good work, and offering encouragement. He notes that although we may be good people, we often struggle to express appreciation and give praise to those around us. He stresses that expressing thanks and praise is crucial in demonstrating support for others and can help motivate them to continue their good work.

Unfortunately, he observes that we often only offer recognition and praise to individuals after they have passed away, rather than supporting and encouraging them while they are still alive. He argues that this is not an effective approach and that we should make a conscious effort to appreciate and encourage those around us while they are still with us.

Purifying the Inner Self for True Change

He also stresses the importance of purifying the inner self, which is the key to true change in one's life. He points out that people often blame external conditions for their problems and hope that changing their environment will lead to a change in themselves. However, he argues that this approach is misguided.

Just like changing the color of an old car will not improve its performance, changing external conditions will not bring about real change within us. Instead, he believes that the focus should be on purifying the inner self, which involves examining one's thoughts, beliefs, and actions. Only by doing so can we address the root causes of our problems and bring about lasting change in our lives.

Showing Respect to Officials to Combat Bribery

Through *Zaviya*, he also highlights the issue of bribery and corruption in society, emphasizing that it often stems from a lack of connection and recognition between individuals and those in positions of power.

He argues that on happy occasions we tend to interact only with those we know, such as family and friends, while ignoring those we don't know, including officials who are on duty.

He suggests that individuals should show respect, love, and honor to officials without considering their position or financial status. This can decrease the likelihood of bribery and increase officials' consciousness to not engage in wrongdoing, as it can threaten their reputation and honor. By valuing and acknowledging their contributions, individuals can create a culture of respect and appreciation for those in positions of power.

Ashfaq Ahmed sahab emphasizes the importance of building connections and recognizing the contributions of those around us, regardless of their position or status. This can lead to a more harmonious and just society, free from the negative effects of corruption and bribery.

God's System and Gratitude

He delves into the complex topic of God's system, which may appear unjust on the surface. He notes that some people are wealthy while others are poor, and some are healthy while others are sick. However, he argues that this is not necessarily the case. According to him, God has provided the basics of life for free, but when it comes to wealth, what He gives us is not solely ours. It includes portions for others which we often neglect.

He says that the unjust system we see is created by us and that we are the ones causing injustice to our fellow human beings. He posits that this injustice leads us to dwell on the past and fear the future and suggests that people who truly live in the present and enjoy life are those who are thankful and do not live in the past or fear the future.

Seeking Help and Avoiding Arrogance

Ashfaq Ahmed sahab highlights the importance of seeking help when facing complex issues, even for those who are educated and well-off. He argues that overestimating one's own abilities can lead to costly mistakes and ultimately hinder progress. Instead, seeking assistance from others can provide a fresh perspective and bridge the gap to finding solutions.

However, he also warns against the arrogance that sometimes accompanies education and knowledge. Educated individuals may try to influence others through their knowledge, leading to disrespect and even hatred towards the educated. This can ultimately push others away from knowledge and hinder progress in society. Thus, he emphasizes the importance of humility and respect towards others, regardless of their level of education or status in society.

The Power of Clear Resolve and Dedication in Achieving Goals

In a powerful story in *Zaviya*, we learn about an uneducated village girl from Pakistan who defied the odds and became a top businesswoman in Europe. This inspiring tale serves as a reminder of the power of clear resolve and dedication in achieving our goals, no matter how daunting they may seem.

He emphasizes that the key to success lies in focusing our energies on the areas where we want to grow, whether it be spiritual or material. This story serves as a powerful reminder that anything is possible when we set our minds to it. By cultivating a clear resolve within ourselves and dedicating ourselves fully to our goals, we can achieve success in any area of our lives.

Whether we are seeking to improve our spiritual lives, build successful businesses, or pursue any other endeavor, the power of clear resolve and dedication cannot be underestimated.

Understanding Allah's Will and His Commands

Ashfaq Ahmed sahab believes that as humans, our curiosity can often become our interference in God's will, leading to an imbalance in our lives. We may question why bad people seem to enjoy life while good people struggle, but before raising such questions, we must first fully follow Allah's commands.

According to Ashfaq Ahmed sahab, in order to understand the will of Allah, we must first fully enter into the divine commandments without exception. He further emphasizes that our focus should be on fully dedicating ourselves to the pursuit of our goals, whether they be spiritual or material. By doing so, we can achieve success in our endeavors.

His message is that we must trust in the wisdom of Allah's will and follow His commandments without hesitation, while also dedicating ourselves to the pursuit of our goals. Through this approach, we can find balance in our lives and achieve success in all aspects of life.

The Importance of Sharing Beyond Material Possessions

While giving is undoubtedly a noble act, Ashfaq Ahmed sahab argues that sharing our presence, thoughts, feelings, and listening skills are equally crucial. He believes that humans tend to overlook the value of sharing, and instead try to control and conquer. However, he suggests that God has provided us with everything we need based on the principle of sharing, not only with our fellow humans but also with animals. By recognizing this principle, we can learn to coexist in harmony and share our blessings with others.



Ashfaq Ahmed sahab's emphasis on sharing is rooted in the belief that material possessions alone cannot provide true happiness and contentment. Instead, he asserts that genuine connection and empathy towards others are essential components of a fulfilling life. Sharing our time and attention with those in need can have a powerful impact, allowing individuals to feel heard, understood, and appreciated.

Moreover, when we open ourselves up to sharing, we create space for reciprocity, where others can share their own experiences, perspectives, and insights with us. This exchange can lead to mutual growth and a deeper sense of community. Ultimately, sharing can be a powerful force for positive change, allowing us to transcend materialism and connect with others on a deeper level.

Don't Embarrass Others

Ashfaq sahab brings attention to a prevalent issue among the educated and accomplished community. They tend to attribute a lack of progress solely to illiteracy and ignorance, which can be insulting to those who face challenges in accessing education and achieving success.

Such behavior is especially prevalent when people boast about their own success stories, suggesting that their achievements are solely the result of their hard work and determination. This can leave others feeling embarrassed and disheartened, especially those who may have struggled even more but were unable to attain similar levels of success. It is essential to be conscious of the impact of our words and avoid arguments that may cause others to feel defeated or discouraged.

Taking More without Giving

Ashfaq sahab reflects on how our country was founded on the principles of selflessness and sacrifice, with individuals willing to give their all for their nation. However, over time, this mindset of giving before taking has eroded and transformed into a mentality of taking without giving.



He cites the example of a man who, despite having his legs amputated while operating a machine in Pakistan Steel Mill, still implored his colleagues not to turn off the machine as it would cost the country a million rupees. He highlights that it is people like this man who are the real heroes of our nation, those who give without expecting anything in return, even in their small capacities. Sadly, our society is currently dominated by those who give less and take more.

Finding Pious People

Ashfaq sahab sheds light on how the ego gets in the way of us finding and following pious people. He explains that our ego tends to seek out pious individuals among those who are of higher social status, which prevents us from recognizing the good qualities of those who are lower in status than us. This tendency results in us missing out on good people in our everyday lives, including colleagues and subordinates.

He further emphasizes that the sign of a pious person is not based on their social status, but rather their contentment with their current situation, their lack of complaints, and their strong belief in their faith. Therefore, it is important to look beyond one's social status and recognize the qualities of pious individuals around us. By doing so, we can learn from them, follow their lead, and strive to become better versions of ourselves.

Balancing Self-expression

Ashfaq sahab urges us to pay attention to the most common attitude of complaint: that no one understands us. We may feel that we have a lot to teach the world but often feel unheard and misunderstood. This problem is especially common in domestic issues, with many women feeling that their voices are not heard.

In *Zaviya*, he advises us to get to know ourselves as much as is necessary, and beyond that, it is better for us that people don't know too much about us, as our imperfections become more evident the more we reveal. Therefore, we should avoid the tendency to talk, tell, and lecture too much, as this can lead to discontentment and disappointment.

The Importance of Patience

The true essence of patience is that we never allow ourselves to become frustrated by difficulties. Even if we find ourselves stuck in a traffic jam, we should not resort to honking our horns or pounding our fists on the steering wheel. Instead, we should have faith in God, who is always with us. He knows when we are in distress and, with a genuine display of patience, He will help us out of our troubles. This same patience should be applied to the pursuit of knowledge, as all knowledge is with God and He will provide it to us when the time is right.

Live in the Present

Ashfaq sahab imparts an inspiring story of a laborer in *Zaviya* to remind us to live in the present, rather than regretting the past or worrying about the future. The laborer chose to forgo a day's wages in order to savor the beauty of a flower blooming in his home and to see his child taking the first step. He wanted to be present to witness and appreciate these moments. Ashfaq sahab cautions us against squandering our present moments, lamenting the fruits we have missed, and dreaming of the abundance of fruits we may one day enjoy.

Pray with Humility

He delves into the intricacies of dua, or prayer. He emphasizes that we often make mistakes when it comes to prayer, such as asking for something small when God already has a bounty for us. When we pray too much without humility and don't see fulfillment, we start to doubt and become impatient, wondering why only us. To counter this, he suggests that we should pray as if we are crying, coming out of our ego shells.



He even suggests asking Allah in writing, just as we would write requests for tasks in the world and then pursue them. In this way, we can approach Allah with the same humility and helplessness as a child, free from the constraints of our own abilities, wisdom, education, and skills.

How to Achieve Unity

Ashfaq sahab draws our attention to a disheartening reality: the lack of unity among people. Despite countless people writing, lecturing, and discussing the importance of unity, and even parties and associations regularly publishing literature on the subject, unity remains elusive.

According to him, this is due to a lack of action. We talk a lot about helping others, especially the educated, but rarely do we actually take steps to do so. Unless we start taking practical steps to assist one another, there can be no genuine connection between people that will keep them united.

The Damaging Effects of Competition

According to Ashfaq sahab, the idea of competition that we are taught is flawed. He believes that competition is only beneficial when it's about piety. Any other form of competition can be damaging to our self-respect and that of others. This message is important in a society where we are often pitted against each other in various aspects of our lives, including education, careers, and even personal relationships. It's a reminder to focus on improving ourselves and being kind to others, rather than striving to outdo or surpass them.

Overcoming Obstacles to Fulfilling Our Desires

According to Ashfaq sahab, we often sabotage our own desires by obstructing the path to their realization. Our impatience and the desire for immediate gratification can impede the fulfillment of our goals. However, if we genuinely desire something and are willing to put in the effort, the universe will conspire to make it happen. Nevertheless, achieving our aspirations requires a process that demands perseverance, resilience, and patience.

Unfortunately, we tend to interrupt this process repeatedly, which can prevent us from achieving our desired outcomes. Thus, we must learn to trust the process, remain patient, and persistently work towards our goals to achieve our dreams.

How God Speaks to Us

Ashfaq Ahmed sahab teaches us that God communicates with us in ways that are not always obvious or easily recognizable. He believed that God's message was often conveyed through the actions and words of other people, and that it is our responsibility to listen carefully and respond appropriately. However, he also acknowledged that we are often too distracted or preoccupied with our own lives to recognize these messages. We may make excuses or rationalize our inaction, even when we feel a sense of obligation or duty to help others.

In order to respond to God's call, we must also overcome our own selfish desires and ego-driven concerns. This requires a willingness to put the needs of others before our own, and to act with compassion and kindness even when it may be difficult or inconvenient.

The Importance of Practicing What We Teach

Ashfaq sahab emphasizes the importance of practicing what we teach and leading by example. Often, we talk about things from the past and give examples from renowned personalities, but we don't act upon them when it comes to us. For instance, we teach forgiveness is good, but we find it challenging to forgive when it comes to us.

His message reminds us that it's not enough to give advice and preach about the virtues of certain qualities; we must also incorporate them into our daily lives. By doing so, we not only become better individuals but also inspire those around us to follow suit because people mostly follow our actions instead of advice.

Breaking Free from Material Possessions

The author's idea of over-association with material things in our lives highlights an important



aspect of modern-day living, where we often equate our self-worth with the possessions we own. In this context, our possessions become more than mere objects, and we become emotionally attached to them, making them a part of our identity.

However, Ashfaq sahab reminds us that everything in life, including material possessions, has a finite existence, and it is essential to realize that our worth is not defined by what we own. Instead, our worth comes from our relationships with other humans and our ability to make a positive impact on the world around us. By reducing our attachment to material possessions, we can focus on cultivating deeper connections with other people and living a more meaningful life.

The Power of Small Acts of Kindness

He suggests that instead of overwhelming ourselves with the desire to do grandiose things to help others, we should focus on small acts of kindness. Many times, we may want to do something significant like building a hospital for the poor or opening a school for orphans, but we may lose motivation due to the enormity of the task. Instead, he advises that we take the first step and start with small acts of kindness.

By starting with small steps, like helping just one person or engaging in a meaningful conversation, we can gain motivation and inspiration to take further steps towards achieving bigger goals. These small acts of kindness can create a ripple effect and inspire others to do the same, creating a positive change in the world.

Conclusion

Ashfaq Ahmed sahab's *Zaviya* is a masterpiece that has the potential to impact our lives positively. Through his deep insights and thought-provoking narratives, he has shown us that life is not just about materialistic success but also about spiritual growth and self-discovery. It is essential to understand the purpose of our existence, to be content with what we have, and to focus on improving ourselves.

If you haven't read *Zaviya* yet, I encourage you to explore it yourself and discover the profound messages that it contains. Let us strive to apply the book's lessons in our daily lives and become better versions of ourselves.

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

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.

For more book reviews, please [click here](#).



The Writer's Paradigm!

Our First All-Pakistan Writing Contest!



The Writer's Paradigm: Rules & Guidelines

Paradigm Shift proudly presents to you, **The Writer's Paradigm** – our **All-Pakistan** writing contest. The contest this year is in collaboration with the prestigious Air University. The guidelines are already [available on the website](#), and **submissions will be open from the 7th of April**.

We would STRONGLY ADVISE you to read **ALL** the guidelines to ensure your submission is **NOT** rejected and that you have a real chance of **winning!**

100% Free

There is no registration or registration fee. The contest is free.

Age Limit

Contestants must be between the **ages of 18-35**. If you are shortlisted, we might require a picture of your CNIC.

Word Limit

We are looking for a **2000-2500** word article. Details on what kind of article will be explained below.

Judgment Criteria

The article will be judged based on the following:

1. Language and vocabulary
2. Adherence to the word limit
3. The originality/creativity of the submission
4. The quality of the analysis
5. The references and sources used

Judgment Method

Pieces sent to The Writer's Paradigm will be initially judged and shortlisted by our editorial team. The shortlisted pieces will then be sent to a panel of **expert judges** who will grade the articles based on the aforementioned criteria. Three winners from Pakistan will be selected based on their ratings.

Judges Panel

The esteemed judges of The Writer's Paradigm for this year are:

1. Mr. Ali Shahab, CSS Instructor & Mentor
2. Former Ambassador Mr. Irfan Yusuf Shami
3. Ms. Amna Baig, Superintendent Police
4. Mr. Sarmad Ishfaq, CEO Paradigm Shift

Timeline

You can send in your articles from **April 7th until April 23, 2023**. We will not entertain any contest submissions sent to us after **11:59 PM** on April 23, 2023. Results will be announced in the **first week of May, 2023**.

Winners of The Writer's Paradigm

1st place: Rs 50,000

2nd place: Rs 30,000

3rd place: Rs 10,000



All winners will also:

- Receive a **Digital Certificate of Excellence**.
- Get their **article published on the website and the monthly PDF magazine**.
- Be celebrated on **our website** (around 200,000 visits per month) as well as our **social media** platforms (50,000+ people).

What Kind of Articles Are We Looking For?

Entrants have the choice to write their piece on **any one of the six themes** (mentioned after this section).

Articles must be **analytical** and **NOT** simply state current or historical events. We want you to dig deeper and use creative arguments to captivate the audience. In other words, we are looking for pieces that go beyond the surface level and delve deeper by **providing a research-backed analysis**.

For example: Do **NOT** write an article titled “Pakistan’s Economic Crisis” and then simply discuss what our current GDP and external debt is. That’s boring! Instead, you could write an article titled “How Pakistan can save itself from economic peril”. In such an article, the writer should briefly mention the terrible economic scenario in the country **but the main research and argument** should focus on policies the country needs to adopt to rid itself of this crisis. Facts, statistics, and certain arguments should be backed by research and cited via [hyperlinks](#) in the body of the article.

All articles will undergo a strict plagiarism check. **Plagiarism should not exceed 10%.**

All articles will also undergo an **AI check**. We will **NOT** tolerate the use of any AI software/website such as Chat GPT. This will result in an instant **blacklisting of the author**.

For more examples of the kind of articles we are looking for, check the following examples:

1. [Sultan Mehmed II's Ottoman Empire Compared to Atatürk's Secular Turkey](#)
2. [Reality Check: Economic Crisis in Pakistan](#)
3. [Explainer: Mini-Budget 2023 of Pakistan](#)
4. ["Gold Russ-h": The Russian Ruble vs USD](#)
5. [Russian Influence Operations: Disinformation Campaigns](#)

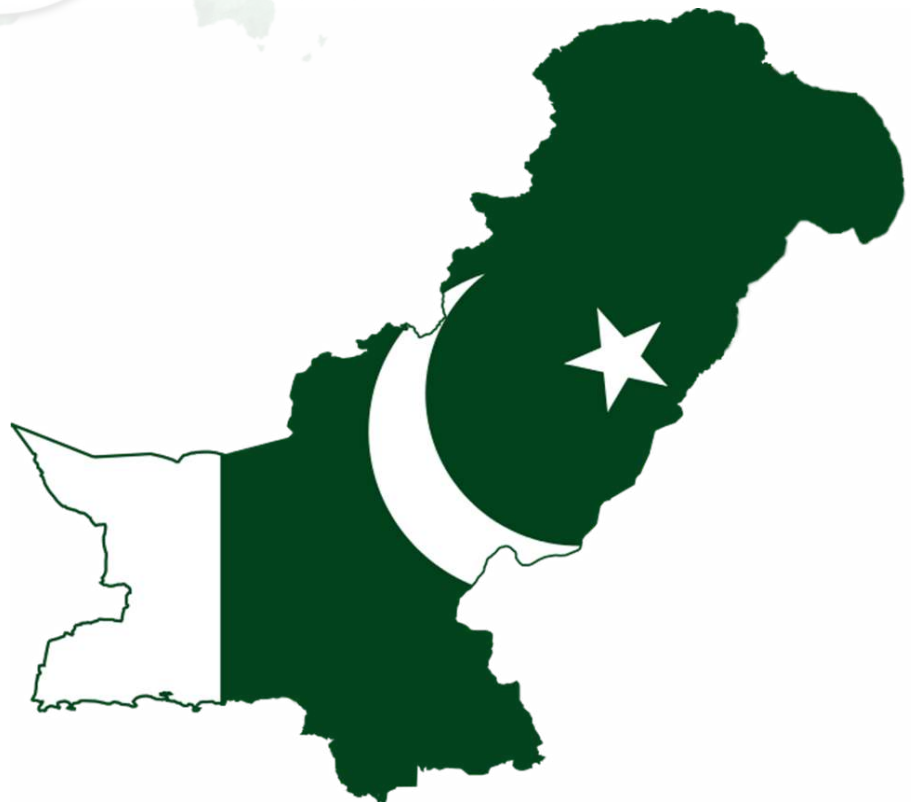
Themes

Your article sent to The Writer's Paradigm **MUST** be based on **one** of the following **6 themes**. Under each theme are several examples that are there to stimulate your thinking. It is completely **up to you** if you want to use these examples, modify them, or completely devise your **own specific topic** as long as it aligns with the general theme that you have chosen.

1. Pakistan's Current Economic Crisis

Examples:

- Design an economic policy that can help Pakistan avert this crisis.
- Comparing Pakistan's economic collapse to another country's (lessons to be learned).
- Is IMF a tangible solution or an economic hitman for Pakistan?



2. What is the Future of the Russia-Ukraine War?

Examples:

- Russia's win is assured and NATO's influence will decrease in the region.
- Ukraine and the West will prevail and Putin will be overthrown.
- The global impact of the Russia-Ukraine war (economic, food supply, etcetera)
- The importance of propaganda in this war and who is actually winning it.

3. Which Bloc Will Dominate in 2023 and Beyond?

Examples:

- Which bloc do you see dominating the global markets and why?
- The West's influence is stagnating due to a new Chinese-Russian-led bloc.
- Will BRICS become the next big thing?
- Is the world multipolar or still in the shadow of America?

4. Energy Crisis in Pakistan

Examples:

- Why does Pakistan have an energy crisis and how do we solve it?
- Hydro solutions to Pakistan's energy problems.
- Lessons for Pakistan from countries that overcame their energy issues.



- How CPEC can change Pakistan's energy network.
- Will an investment in clean energy be beneficial to Pakistan?

5. Enabling Education in Pakistan

Examples:

- Can online education drive academic research in Pakistan?
- Frame a curriculum that would replace the SNC.
- Is the SNC is a suitable/unsuitable curriculum for Pakistan? Why?
- What educational reforms are needed in Pakistan?
- Comparing Pakistan's education system to another country's (lessons).

6. Pakistan's Digital Roadmap

Examples:

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Article



A Guide to Becoming a Civil Servant in Pakistan

About the Author



Torchbearer CSS Academy – TBA Karachi ignites aspirations and transforms them into valuable knowledge and enthusiasm. They magnify talents and carve abilities to achieve dedicated success, by providing quality education for competitive exam aspirants who believe in themselves and their goals.



Introduction

Joining the civil services of Pakistan can be a highly rewarding career path, but it requires careful consideration and preparation for the CSS exam. Before embarking on this journey, it is essential to assess your commitment and energy for the job. Serving in civil services demands a consistent dedication to public service and a willingness to work towards the betterment of Pakistan.

Eligibility Criteria

Joining the civil services of Pakistan is a process that involves several steps, and the first and foremost step is to determine if you meet the eligibility criteria for the CSS exam. Typically, the eligibility criteria include age, educational qualifications, and nationality requirements.

Exam Preparation

To succeed in the CSS exam, you will need to study a wide range of subjects, including Pakistan's history, current affairs, and administrative law. The course structure tested in these examinations includes a list of subjects that you will need to pass.

Upon successfully passing all courses, you will be given employment in one of the following civil service sectors: Commerce and Trade Group, Pakistan Customs Service, Pakistan Administrative Service, Foreign Service of Pakistan, Inland Revenue Service, Information Group, Military Lands and Cantonment Group, Office Management Group, Pakistan Audit and Accounts Service, Police Service of Pakistan, Postal Group, and Railways (Commercial and Transportation) Group.

MCQ-Based Preliminary Test

The Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) portion of the CSS exam in Pakistan is known as the [MCQs-based written test or MPT](#) of CSS. This 200-mark exam comprises two papers: General Knowledge and Ability and Current Affairs.

The syllabus for the General Knowledge and Ability paper includes subjects such as English, Urdu, Islamic Studies, Ethics (for non-Muslims), Mathematics, General Knowledge, and analytical reasoning, while the syllabus for the Current Affairs paper includes subjects such as Pakistan affairs, international affairs, and current events.

Consistent practice is a [crucial tip to cracking the CSS exam](#). It is recommended to solve as many MCQs as possible from previous years' question papers, mock tests, and online resources. Students should try to solve the Mathematics portion last as it can be time-consuming. When attempting the paper, it is essential to manage time effectively as time management is crucial for the MCQs portion of the CSS exam.

The CSS Written Exam

The CSS written examination is the second stage of the CSS exam in Pakistan and consists of six compulsory papers and six optional papers. Two papers are held in a single day. The written examination is a 1200-mark exam, with 600 marks allocated to compulsory papers and 600 marks to optional papers. These 12 papers are held on six consecutive days at a centre allocated by FPSC. Qualifying marks for the compulsory papers is 40% and for optional papers, it is 33%

Solving CSS Exam Papers

Each paper of the CSS written exam is three hours long, and there are six compulsory and six



optional papers, held on six consecutive days at a respective centre allocated by the FPSC of Pakistan. The first two papers are English essays as well as précis and composition.

Students are required to choose one essay from eight to ten options and write a well-structured essay in three hours, with a clear outline, introduction, and arguments that justify their stance on the respective topic. This paper can be challenging due to incomplete preparation, difficulty in cracking the essay topic, and managing time. The second paper is English précis and composition, which requires proficiency in English grammar.

The other ten papers consist of an objective section (20 marks) and seven subjective questions. Students must answer four subjective questions. The CSS-written papers cover a wide range of topics, events, and subjects, with some papers being analytical and others being factual. To succeed in the exam, time management is vital when attempting the questions. Extra efforts, such as graphical representation and relevant maps, can help students pass the exam with flying colors.

Psychological Assessment Test (PAT)

Before the interview, candidates are required to take a Psychological Assessment Test (PAT). This test evaluates individuals through written tasks and group activities, providing insights into their psychological makeup and assessing their suitability for a particular role or situation. The written task requires candidates to express their thoughts on a given topic, question, picture, or scenario, and trained psychologists carefully analyze each response, examining the words and lines written by the candidate.

This process allows them to gain insight into the candidate's thought process, personality traits, and emotional stability, among other factors. Overall, the PAT is an essential component of the selection process, providing valuable information to assess the candidate's potential for success in the civil services of Pakistan.

Panel Interview

The final merit list is prepared based on the results of the written examination, the PAT, the interview, and the medical examination. The candidates who score the highest marks in these stages are offered employment in the civil services of Pakistan in various groups. It is important to note that becoming a part of the civil services of Pakistan is a highly prestigious and fulfilling career, but it requires dedication, hard work, and consistent effort.

Common Training Program (CTP)

The basic training at the Civil Services Academy (CSA) in Lahore focuses on developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for a career in civil services. It covers a wide range of subjects, including governance, economics, international relations, law, management, and public policy. The training program consists of classroom lectures, group discussions, case studies, field visits, and other experiential learning activities.

During the training, candidates are also exposed to various aspects of Pakistani society and culture to enable them to understand the diverse needs and aspirations of the people they will serve as civil servants. The training at CSA Lahore also emphasizes the development of leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills to enable candidates to effectively interact with colleagues, superiors, and citizens.



Special Training Program (STP)

The Special Training Program (STP) is a mandatory training program for candidates who have completed their Common Training Program. The National School of Public Policy (NSPP) conducts the STP to provide practical training in respective cadres in designated institutions. Over the course of six months, the STP covers a wide range of topics, including management, leadership, public policy, governance, and administration.

To excel in the STP, candidates should be proactive, enhance their networking skills, manage their time effectively, and participate in extracurricular activities. Some famous academies for the STP are the National Police Academy, Foreign Service Academy, Pakistan Railway Academy Walton, and the Information Group Academy, among others.

Overall, this examination requires patience, consistency, decisiveness, and an eagerness to achieve something bigger. Candidates who possess these abilities will easily crack all phases of the competitive examinations.

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Are China and Russia Replacing the US in the Middle East?

About the Author



Sana Azhar is a design graduate of the National College of Arts. She likes to read and write about international relations, especially the ongoing great game between powerful states.



Introduction

In the current geopolitical contest, it can be observed that the balance of power is shifting from the US to the Asian region. Support and relations with countries are significant in maintaining or shifting the balance of power in international relations. Middle eastern countries specifically Saudi Arabia and Iran have a very important role in this regard. These countries, due to their oil wealth and geo-strategic value, have always played a fundamental role in shaping the world order from the era of colonialism to the Cold War, and even post-Cold War.

The US's shift to the Indo-Pacific region, deteriorating US-Saudi relations, US-Iran hostility, KSA-Iran reconciliation, and the emerging Cold War have allowed both China and Russia space to maneuver in the Middle East. The shift in the relations between Saudi Arabia and the US is primarily because of the latter's shift to the Indo-Pacific region.

US-Saudi Relations

The US wants to contain China which is a major threat to its superpower status, which is why it has been improving its relations with India, ASEAN, and even Solomon Island countries. In addition to this, over the course of history, the US has tried to impose its sets of values on other countries and thus, its habit of policing has pushed countries towards new allies.



President Biden has categorically stated that America will not support Saudi Arabia in the Yemen war because of human rights violations. The US is only providing defensive weapons and security to Saudi Arabia while imposing a ban on providing offensive weapons to it against Yemen.

Moreover, [Saudi Arabia, as per its 2030 vision](#), is shifting its economic dependence away from oil and that is where improving relations with China and Russia is significant. Finally, the sanctions on both Iran and Russia have allowed the two countries to engage in trade which has reduced the economic damage caused by the US's sanctions.

China-Russo-Saudi Relations

To begin with, China and Saudi Arabia have been improving relations in the military and technology spheres. Since Saudi Arabia is no longer being facilitated by the US in offensive weapons against Yemen, this need is fully filled by China. China's policy is to enhance bilateral relations without there being interference in the internal affairs of a state. Therefore, China is now offering Saudi Arabia its [C-H4 drones](#) which it can use in Yemen.

In addition to this, Saudi Arabia is now looking to make more deals in weapons with China. It can facilitate it by providing swarm drones, hypersonic missiles, surveillance, and artificial intelligence technology. This is a major shift seen in Saudi Arabia's policy as it is the largest arms buyer of American weapons.

China is also heavily investing in technology and economic projects in Saudi Arabia. China has recently cemented a deal with Saudi Arabia of [\\$500 billion](#) for the construction of the megacity Neom. The deal also includes Huawei, China's tech giant, which the US believes is a tool used by China for espionage. Under this deal, Huawei is going to provide data centers and cloud computing while building high-tech complexes.

With this, China has also made a deal of a [joint venture of about \\$207 million](#) with SenseTime, a Chinese tech company that too is banned by the US. Under this agreement, China is going to establish an artificial intelligence lab in Saudi Arabia. Besides this, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) extends to the Middle East. After cementing a 25-year deal with Iran, in 2022, China alone has made a \$5.5 billion investment in Saudi Arabia.

The recent OPEC plus announcement of cutting down 200 million barrels of oil per day was seen by the USA as an attempt by Saudi Arabia to favour Russia. Although Saudi Arabia's official stance is that the decision was primarily based on national interests. In addition to this, Russia is also providing military cooperation to Saudi Arabia, especially in building [nuclear reactors](#).

Relations with Iran

These changing relation trends show that the vacuum created by the pivot to Asia has significantly benefited China and Russia. China has made Iran part of its BRI project and is also buying cheap oil from Iran which otherwise it cannot sell to the international market. Russia is also enhancing its military and economic ties with Iran.

Western countries have claimed that Iran has provided drones including Shahed-136 and Mohajer-6 to Russia for its war in Ukraine. In exchange, Russia has been providing Iran with military and technical support. Russia is also likely to provide [24 Sukhoi Su-35 fighter](#) jets to Iran which are intended to enhance the capacity and modernize Iran's air force.

Russia's increasing military alignment with Iran is a threat to the US's national interests in the region. Furthermore, Russia is also enhancing economic ties with Iran in hydrocarbons. Russian state-owned company Gazprom has signed an MoU of [\\$40 billion to build gas projects](#) including LNG terminals in Iran. It has also pledged to establish mutual trade centers that will help Iran cater to large cargoes that come from Russia through India.

Russia is also developing a trading corridor in partnership with Iran and India. The corridor is going to start from the Persian Gulf and go up all the way to the Caspian Sea by bypassing Europe.



The aim behind this trade link is to avoid sanctions from Europe on both Iran and Russia; an attempt by these countries to relocate their supply chains. This is a major success for Russia as it will provide it with direct access to the South Asian markets.

The reconciliation between decades-old arch-rivals Iran and KSA is going to become a watershed moment in the history of the world. As the deal is brokered between these two countries by China, it will not only increase China's economic but also political influence in the region. This rapprochement is going to reduce the conflict and proxy wars in Yemen, Syria, and other Middle Eastern countries. Thus, limiting space for the US to maneuver in the region.

After analyzing the entire changing situation of the Middle East, it might not be wrong to say that China and Russia are on the course to take the space that the US once enjoyed in the region.

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Infographics of the Month!

Most Photographed Monuments in the world

According to ThunderTech



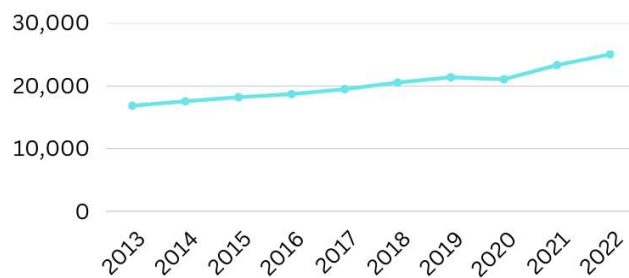
Largest Economies in The World

Sources: Trading Economics, WEF, IMF



United States \$25.035 trillion (2022)

Trend



Agriculture (0.9%)

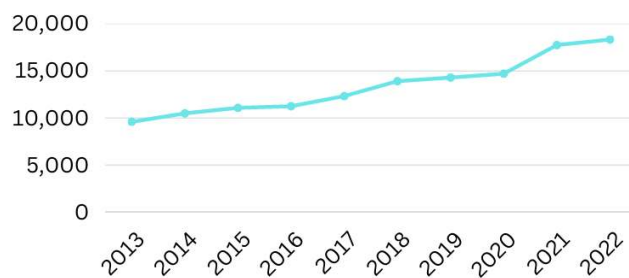
Industry (18.9%)

Services (80.2%)



China \$18.321 trillion (2022)

Trend



Agriculture (7.9%)

Industry (40.5%)

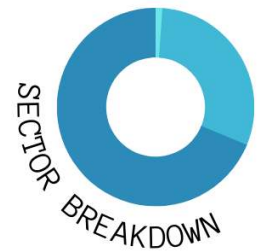
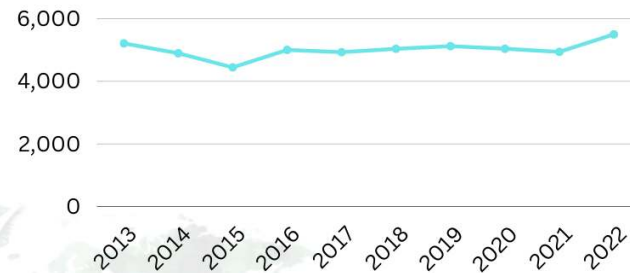
Services (51.6%)



Japan

\$5.5 trillion (2022)

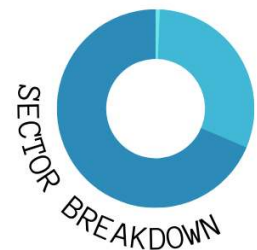
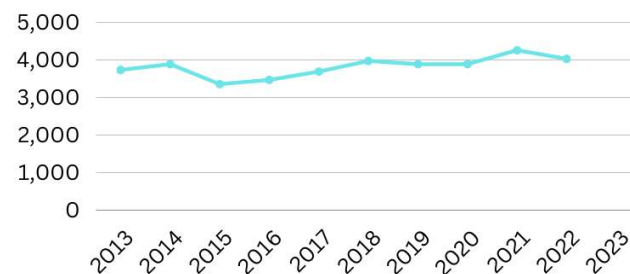
Trend (10 yrs)



Germany

\$4.03 trillion (2022)

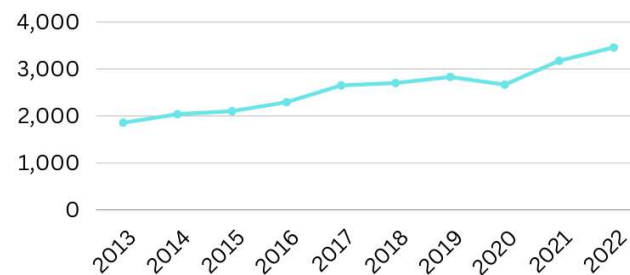
Trend (10 yrs)



India

\$3.469 trillion (2022)

Trend (10 yrs)





Restored Saudi–Iran Relations and the Role of China

About the Author



Afifa Iqbal has a keen interest in identity politics, colonialism and post-colonial development. She is currently working as a Research Assistant at ITU while pursuing her postgraduate studies in Development, Technology and Policy. She is a Gold Medalist in Political Science from the University of Punjab.



Introduction

In a joint statement released on the 10th of March, Saudi Arabia and Iran acknowledged China's role in brokering the diplomatic breakthrough and [stated](#); "The three countries announce that an agreement has been reached between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, that includes an agreement to resume diplomatic relations between them and re-open their embassies and missions within a period not exceeding two months, and the agreement includes their affirmation of the respect for the sovereignty of states and the non-interference in internal affairs of states."



Given the intensity of Saudi-Iran animosity and the overall politico-strategic climate of the region as well as the Muslim world, the rapprochement between [Iran and Saudi Arabia](#) is a much-welcome development. In addition, the mediatory efforts of China, given its increasingly important global status in a world hurtling towards multipolarity, signals a potential reordering of global diplomatic dynamics.

Snapshot of Saudi-Iran Rivalry

Iran and Saudi Arabia have been at the opposite end of a bitter rivalry for decades, characterized by political, religious, and economic tensions, as well as competing regional influence and geopolitical interests. Although the two countries had been involved in proxy wars in various parts of the Middle East, the execution of Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr by Saudi Arabia in 2016 marked a particularly dark moment in the already fraught relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The tentacles of the Saudi-Iran rivalry have spread far beyond the Middle East, carving out a deep and divisive sectarian fault line throughout the wider Muslim world. For instance, Pakistan has suffered a great deal due to the extended fight of the aforementioned archrivals for religious legitimacy and ideological domination of the Muslim world.



The mushrooming of Saudi-backed madrassahs after the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union can largely be held responsible for the twin problems of puritanical fanaticism and religious persecution of Pakistan's Shia minority. One particularly jarring event that highlights the extent of this rot in Pakistani society—and is still fresh in public memory—is that of [anti-Shiite](#) protests by the Sunni hardliners and their sympathizers that engulfed Karachi in September 2020.

As Kim Ghattas argues in "Black Wave": "The Saudi-Iran rivalry went beyond geopolitics, descending into an ever-greater competition for Islamic legitimacy through religious and cultural domination, changing societies from within—not only in Saudi Arabia and Iran but throughout the region."

From Rivalry to Reconciliation

Following the Saudi government's execution of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a prominent Shia cleric and vocal critic of the Saudi government in 2016, the aggrieved Iranian protestors stormed the Kingdom's embassy in Tehran. The images of smoke billowing from the Saudi embassy, with fire engines and police in riot gear stationed outside and the diplomatic enclave barricaded, vividly illustrated the depth of anger felt by many Iranians towards the execution.

Soon after, in retaliation, Saudi Arabia announced to sever diplomatic relations with Iran dashing



any and all hopes of reconciliation. The press conference by the Saudi foreign minister, Adel al-Jubeir, aptly depicted the anger of the Saudi government over

the storming of its diplomatic mission in Iran; “These ongoing aggressions against diplomatic missions are a violation of all agreements and international conventions.”

So, between then and now, what changed? In 2016, the global politico-strategic climate was markedly different from today. Iran had locked down the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) agreement the year before, and with the gradual lifting of sanctions, the prospects for the revitalization of the Iranian economy were improving.

As for the Kingdom, although Washington had certain apprehensions about the Kingdom’s involvement in the Yemeni civil war and its human rights record, the bilateral relationship between the two countries was still strong, and it only got better with the ascension of Donald Trump to the White House. The first foreign visit of Mr. Trump was to Saudi Arabia.

As Bruce Riedel, director of Brookings’s Intelligence Project, [explains](#); “[T]he Saudis flattered Mr. Trump in every way possible and he returned the flattery. And since then he has given them, in effect, a blank check for their foreign policy and for their internal politics.”

While Saudi Arabia was at the receiving end of Trump's benevolence, Iran faced his wrath. The reinstatement of economic sanctions against Iran by the US, as well as the pressure placed on other JCPOA signatories to follow suit, put Iran in a tight spot. Amidst this, the [assassination of General Qasem Soleimani](#), commander of the Quds Force, further aggrieved Iran prompting it to increase its influence in Iraq and intensify the proxy activities in the Middle East. This, in turn, added to the anxieties of Saudi Arabia about the increasing influence of Iran in the region, creating a vicious cycle of distrust and diplomatic sparring.

After the election of Joe Biden to the presidency, the climate in Washington started shifting against Saudi Arabia. The performative moral posturing of the Democratic Party meant that human rights abuses would get configured in the US and Saudi Arabia relations. The Biden administration paused several arms deals with Saudi Arabia and imposed sanctions on certain individuals associated with the Kingdom.

The reassessment implied that Saudi Arabia had to reconsider its approach towards Iran and cultivate new strong allies apart from the United States. Between 2021 and 2022, several rounds of dialogue between Saudi and Iranian officials took place in Iraq and Oman which ultimately culminated in the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two states.

The rapprochement does provide hope and opportunity for both states to engage in a constructive dialogue, build trust, and work towards tempering off the proxy wars, but it requires absolute commitment from both states.

The presence of a powerful mediator to assure that the two states remain on the reconciliatory path is instrumental in this regard. For instance, after the Second World War, it took years of concerted efforts by France, Germany, and other Western European states to overwrite centuries of grievances with the help of active diplomatic, security, and economic support from the United States.

An Analysis of China's Role

The People's Republic of China's commitment to non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states offers a refreshing departure from the performative moral posturing and neo-imperial logic of American exceptionalism. One would hardly find Chinese officials making impassioned speeches on international platforms about the moral bankruptcy of their opponents and proactively issuing unilateral calls for arms against countries allegedly posing an existential threat to their country.



Hence, the involvement of China in Saudi-Iran reconciliation is a good omen and presents an alternative to American involvement in the diplomatic process. It also shows that America is no longer the only sheriff in town. The emergence of China as a major global power is disrupting the longstanding hegemony of the US in dictating the direction of global affairs in accordance with its own agenda.

The increasing diplomatic footprint of China, hot on the heels of economic investment in other states and a shared progress narrative, is also a clear indication of China's ambition on the world stage. In the Saudi-Iran context, these tendencies mean that China stands to benefit more from the establishment of strong diplomatic relations between the two Gulf states.

Earlier, China entered into a [twenty-five-year partnership](#) with Iran worth \$400 billion, and more than [25%](#) of Saudi oil imports are headed towards China. Moreover, brokering the deal has added to the diplomatic clout of the People's Republic of China in the embattled Middle Eastern region.

Conclusion

The recent diplomatic breakthrough between Saudi Arabia and Iran, whilst not a panacea, is indeed a positive step towards reducing tensions and promoting stability in the Middle East. Ultimately, the path towards lasting peace and prosperity in the Middle East will require patience, persistence, and a commitment to constructive engagement.

To this end, the increasing importance and role of China signal a shift in the ethos of global diplomacy; a welcome break from the ethos marked by neo-imperialism and adventurism of the US.

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Research Paper



Exploring the Legal Framework of Public Interest Litigation in Pakistan

About the Author



Mehwish Batool is a recent law graduate from LUMS. She works at the office of the Attorney General for Pakistan.

Introduction

Public interest litigation is a brainchild of modern industrial society whose hallmark is mass



production and mass consumption which led to the 'massification' of society. This started problems that were practically unrevealed in the past and led to the replacement of old individual rights with social rights. This shows that in the past the accentuation was on 'individuality' while

'collectivity' is the concept of today's world that helps in the development or enhancement of the notion of public interest litigation.

Public interest litigation is elaborated as non-formal remedial litigation that is not initiated for the assistance of one individual but for the benefit of an oppressed or exploitative class who are denied their constitutional rights and helps them to have access to the court for the enforcement of their fundamental rights.

In *Muntizma committee v. Director Katchi Abadi Sindh (PLD 1992 KHC Sindh)*, the court defined public interest litigation as 'not a means to satisfy the curiosity of the people but a litigation which is instituted with a desire that the court would be able to give effective relief to the whole section of the society'. Thus the basic rationale behind this concept comprehends that public interest litigation should be able to overcome the defects and shortcomings of the adversarial legal system which intercepts vulnerable groups of a society to take benefits from law and justice.

Evolution of the Concept of Public Interest Litigation

In Pakistan, the concept of public interest litigation developed into four stages. The first stage is the 'activist phase' which was aimed at the relaxation of standing for unrepresented interests. In this phase, the judges must listen to the injustices of vulnerable people in order to prevent lawlessness, corruption, and law of the jungle in society.

The second stage consists of the realization of the judges to throw open the restrictive gates of locus standi for the aggrieved person. This can be seen in the case of *Benazir Bhutto v. Federation of Pakistan* (PLD 1988 SC 416) and a leading case of *Darshin Masih* (PLD 1990 SC 513) which are considered pioneering cases of public interest litigation.

The third stage began to show up the limitation of public interest litigation in terms of procedural relaxation and such issues have been discussed in *Ardeshir Cowajee v. Multiline Associates, Karachi* (PLD 1990 SC 513). The fourth stage alters the focus of Public interest litigation and shifts to petitions which defend one private interest against another. This appears in *Benazir Bhutto v. Federation of Pakistan* (PLD 1988 SC 416) which shifted the focus of petitions from vulnerable groups of society to individual private interest.

Constitutional Foundations of Public Interest Litigation

Article 4 declares the right to the protection and equal treatment of citizens in accordance with the law. In addition to that, Articles 8-28 provide the constitutional guarantees of the fundamental rights of all citizens and also declared that any law which is inconsistent with these rights is considered null and void.

The important constitutional questions related to public interest litigation include the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to act as a protector or guarantor of the fundamental rights of citizens provided under constitution Article 175 (2) of the Constitution and Article 184 provides jurisdiction to the Supreme Court to make decisions on the matters of public importance with reference to any of the fundamental rights.

The jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under Article 184(3) is not dependent on the concept of aggrieved party as in the context of the adversary proceedings. Thus the Supreme Court further loosened the traditional rule of the aggrieved person or locus standi.



As explained in Article 184(3), the Supreme Court can only take notice of those matters which contain elements of public importance which are defined as matters which affect the whole body or people of an entire community (Khan, 1993). Thus through the relaxation of the stringent requirements of adversarial procedures and an adaptation of non-formal procedures such as letters, telegrams, media, and newspapers, the courts have revolutionized the judicial process into more encompassing or inclusive (Rizvi, 1991).

The growth of public interest litigation and democratization of justice reached its climax during Justice Chaudhary Iftikhar's era who had taken hundreds of suo moto actions and entertained 450 constitutional petitions, but his successors have adopted a more conservative approach while entertaining constitutional petitions related to public interest matters and specially suo moto actions.

On the other hand, the apex court in the post-Chaudhry Iftikhar era has also given landmark judgments related to public interest matters to democratize and liberalize the concept of justice so that every section, howsoever, lowly occupied and downtrodden gets an equal chance to get a fair deal.

Protection of Fundamental Rights

To Ensure Merit

The court has used the ambit of public interest litigation in different spheres to protect the fundamental rights of citizens and to ensure merit or banish the elements of corruption from society such as in *Syed Mubashir Raza Jaffari v. EOBI (PLC 2014 SC 428)* when the court took



notice of the violation of fundamental rights of citizens at large by a public body EOBI in the manner of selections and appointments based on political influence, nepotism, and cronyism.

The court stated that the aggrieved person not only presents his individual right but this case was also concerned with the rights of more than 23,127 who had applied for jobs in this public institution and had their applications passed over due to nepotism and political pressure.

Similarly, the court has also used the same analogy of protecting the fundamental rights of citizens through the legal framework of Article 184 (3) in *Muhammad Akram v. Registrar Islamabad High Court (PLD 2016 SC 961)* in which the appointments in Islamabad High Court were made in colorful exercise of power or by rejecting the transparent process of recruitment provided under the relevant service rules. This act of power would have far-reaching undulate effects on the public at large which resulted in depriving meritorious citizens of the opportunity of competing for public offices on merit.

The apex court of the state has also used the rationale of public interest litigation in protecting the fundamental rights of underprivileged sections of the society by taking suo moto action against the eviction of I-11 residents of Katchi Abadi (Malik, 2015) from their homes who were deprived of their fundamental rights to life, equality, dignity, shelter, and due process as guaranteed by the constitution under Article 9, 10A, 14,15, 24 and 25 respectively.

To Protect the Environment

The mechanism of public interest litigation is not only used to protect the rights of the citizen but has also been used in environmental litigation for the development of environmental law.

In *Lahore Bachao Tehrik vs. Dr. Iqbal Muhammad Chauhan* (2015 SCMR 1520), the Apex court took action regarding the cutting of trees for widening activities proposed by the provincial government due to traffic congestion problems and bottlenecks on the Lahore Canal Road. It granted permission on the condition that during widening activities there would be a minimal intrusion to the environment and for each tree cut as a result of proposed construction activities, the provincial government had to plant ten trees so that cutting of trees would in no way be hazardous for the environment.

With the increasing confidence of the nation over the judicial forum, people are coming up with issues towards the court which require unconventional remedies from the courts and question the fact if it really comes under the realm of consumer protection or of environmental law. However, the courts have proved that it should not really matter because both angles could fall under the jurisprudence as elaborated in *Shehla Zia v WAPDA* (PLD 1994 SC 693) case.



To Provide Basic Necessities

In *Shahab Usto vs. Government of Sindh* (2017 SCMR 732), a constitutional petition was filed before the court to ensure basic necessities such as clean drinking water and a safe environment for the people of the province of Sindh. The court formed a commission to record findings about the supply of clean water to the residents of the respective province along with the deteriorating conditions of sanitation. Footage of waste or polluted water flowing into canals or channels was found which resulted in severe environmental hazards and human suffering.

To Protect Endangered Species and Preserve Wildlife

Along with the protection of the environment, the court also has also used its judicial powers to protect endangered species and preserve wildlife through the *Province of Sindh vs. Laal Khan chandio* (2016 SCMR 48).



The court took notice of the license granted to foreigners by the provincial government to hunt Houbara Bustard whose status was designed by experts as vulnerable and threatened and the evidence showed that the species of Houbara Bustard was declining.

Thus through the framework of public interest litigation, courts are not only taking action regarding the fundamental rights of the citizens but also seeking to prevent the decimation of endangered species from the machinations of federal and provincial governments.

To Protect Minorities

In *PLD 2014 SC 699*, the court took suo moto action through the petition filed by an NGO “Justice Helpline” regarding the Peshawar church attack and other petitions filed by the Hindu community against the desecration of their places of worship. The court issued a landmark judgment on the decision of minorities and freedom of religion and proposed different measures to promote a culture of religious and social tolerance.

Similarly, to establish a precedent for promoting religious tolerance, the court took suo moto action against Kot Radha Kishan lynching case (Haider, 2014) in which a Christian couple had been falsely accused of tossing out pages of the Holy Quran, later brutally killed and thrown alive into the brick kiln. The court passed the death penalty for five and two years’ imprisonment for eight individuals in order to protect the rights of minorities.

To Make Public Officials Accountable

In *Anjum Aqeel Khan vs. National Police Foundation (2015 SCMR 1348)*, the Supreme Court ordered NAB to initiate proceedings against the Board of Directors and Administrative committee of the National Police Foundation who were involved in irregularities and corruption in the launch of the National Police Foundation Housing Society by the National Police Foundation for poor police officials.

These kinds of cases have not only restored the faith of the general public in the transparency of the judiciary but have also made the judicial process the panacea for all the problems of the public in developing countries like Pakistan and India.

To Promote Culture & the National Language

The realm of public interest litigation has also been used for the preservation of national integrity and sovereignty through the adoption or promotion of the use of the national language Urdu as the official language of the state to help citizens understand everything within their own culture and language.

In *Muhammad Kowkab Iqbal v. Government of Pakistan* (PLD 2015 SC 1210), the court stated that in the governance of the federation and provinces, there was hardly any necessity for the use of a language other than Urdu which cannot be understood by the majority of the people of the state. Moreover, the court also ordered the provincial and federal governments to coordinate with each other for uniformity in the Urdu language to benefit the public at large.

Similarly, in *PLD 2015 SC 257*, the court took suo moto action upon the fact that a large number of law books privately published and cited in court contained glaring mistakes committed by authors and publishers in the text of statutes and different provisions of various acts. The court also stated that the mistakes in these acts are misleading legal scholars and also creating uncertainty in the legal system. Moreover, the court also ordered an Urdu translation of all federal and provincial acts and laws.

To Protect the Rights of Women

Recently the court has used its Suo Motu jurisdiction to take action against rape and murder cases to protect the rights of the already marginalized class of women. This includes Suo Motu notice of four-year-old girl rape and murder in Mardan on 26th January (Arif and Bhatti, 2018), against the murder of female medical student Asma Rani in Kohat, against a recent incident in Chichawatni tehsil where an eight-year-old girl was burnt alive on 12th April (Bhatti, 2018), against Multan panchayat rape case in 2017 (Gabool and Bhatti, 2018), against seven-year-old Zainab's rape and murder case on 10th February (Cheema, 2018).

Impact of Public Interest Litigation on the Judicial System of Pakistan

The analysis of these cases shows that public interest litigation has brought a revolution in the traditional form of the judicial process and transformed it from adversarial to polycentric and adjudicative to legislative (Sathe, 2005, p. 235).



There has been a relaxation in the standard principles of the judicial process in the form of locus standi or aggrieved person to promote the use of the legal system and accommodate the underprivileged or marginalized class of society (Rizvi, 1991).

It further demonstrates that the integration of public interest litigation has awakened the consciousness of the public regarding the dignity of human life, the significance of civil rights, and especially the right of equal justice independent of class bifurcation of the society. Through this mode of litigation, the courts have corroborated a non-violent means to halt the exploitation of the lower classes, to support social justice, and to establish individualized as well as the collective responsibility of legal practitioners to administer social justice to the exploited or underprivileged class (Khan, 1993).

Thus, it has played an instrumental role in provoking the social consciousness amongst convicted prisoners, bonded laborers, marginalized castes, scheduled tribes, sexually harassed women, slum dwellers, victims of police affliction, or any other disparaged class of society (Rizvi, 1991). It not only protects the exploitative class but is also considered a legal device to make government or state officials accountable or not to leave state agencies free to disrupt the law in its enforcement because of their negligent or corrupt behavior.

It has also made people realize that the judiciary has a constitutional power of intervention, which can be used to improve the adversities arising from marginalization or suppression by the state's administrative negligence.

Although public interest litigation has received massive support and public or judicial recognition because of its positive rationale, it has also received its share of criticism as well.

It has been criticized by judicial scholars and legal practitioners on the fact that it overburdens the court by questioning them to resolve queries that are more affiliated with the legislative or executive branches of the state.

Public interest litigation usually does not represent the interest of secluded classes of society rather it has been hijacked by middle-class interests or personal interests of individuals which are predominantly political in nature.

It has also been considered a tool of the judiciary for intervention in the political sphere along with matters related to governmental policies. This form of litigation has questioned the transparency of the judiciary and politicized the judicial process when it moves out of its constitutional ambit and encroaches on the constitutional obligations of the other branches of the state (Hurra, 1993).

Conclusion

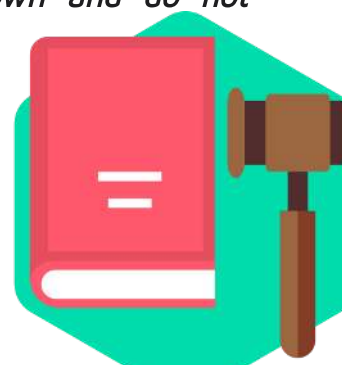
The analysis of the post-Chaudhary Iftikhar era shows the involvement of the judiciary in achieving the essence or the basic rationale of public interest litigation i.e. to assist disadvantaged individuals and communities in accessing justice. The above discussion proved that although public interest litigation achieved its climax in Justice Iftikhar's era, the later judges have also not disappointed the public and maintained the legacy of the benevolent judicial process.

Moreover, to make this process more efficient, transparent, and effective the recent judges have taken a lot of initiatives for the benefit of the public at large but the Supreme Court should also look into the impact or implementation of those initiatives. Lastly, although this concept has been criticized by many legal practitioners, bureaucracy, and the media, its advantages outweigh its criticisms as presented by the above-mentioned cases and discussion.

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A Look at the Major Economic Systems

About the Author



Haris Khan is currently pursuing his M.Phil. in Finance.

Introduction

An economic system dictates the allocation of resources including labor, capital, and other resources, the production and distribution of goods, and how individuals and entities interact within the marketplace. The 20th century saw the widespread adoption of two major contrasting economic systems: command economy and market economy.

Command Economy

Command economies were promoted by the rise of Marxists which emphasized the collective ownership of property and the elimination of economic inequality. A command economy is an economic system in which the government plans and controls the economy, allocating resources and regulating the production and distribution of goods and services.

A command economy can ensure a high degree of social and economic stability, as the government has the power to direct resources toward the areas it deems most important. This can be particularly beneficial in times of crisis, as the government can take swift and decisive action to address economic problems. However, despite its potential benefits, the command economy has its drawbacks including a lack of competition and stifled innovation.

Market Economy

Conversely, market economies also gained popularity, owing to their association with higher standards of living, greater innovation, and economic growth. Moreover, the rise of market economies was facilitated by the decline of traditional economies, which were characterized by subsistence agriculture and barter-based trade.

A market economy is based on the principles of supply and demand, where prices are determined by the free market, and businesses and consumers make decisions based on their self-interest. However, market economies are criticized for exacerbating income inequality, especially during the events like the financial crises of 1997-98 & 2007-08 and Covid-19.



Mixed Economy

Due to the perceived limitation of both the command and market economies, the need for alternative economic systems is raised. A mixed economy fuses elements of a market economy, where market forces dictate prices, and a command economy, in which the government exerts a significant influence on resource allocation and overall economic direction.

In a mixed economy, the government may exercise regulatory oversight over certain industrial sectors to ensure that they operate in the public interest. Additionally, the government may also furnish social safety measures that are not satisfactorily supplied by the market. The mixed economy has the potential to be more effective in the future due to its flexibility to respond to changing economic conditions and societal needs, promotion of innovation, efficient regulatory mechanisms, provision of public goods, and encouragement of corporate social responsibility.

By striking a balance between market forces and government intervention, a mixed economy can foster economic growth, ensure social welfare, and advance environmental sustainability. Overall, the mixed economy is a promising economic system that is well-suited to meet future challenges. At the same time, through the regulation of certain industries, the government can aid in deterring monopolies and market failure that can lead to economic instability and unequal distribution of wealth.

Case Studies

UAE and China are two nations that have been consistently thriving with a mixed economic system. The COVID-19 pandemic may have affected the economies of several nations, but UAE has maintained an impressive line of defense against it. Despite the obstacles caused by COVID-19, the UAE has shown early signs of growth in world trade, setting a positive example for the rest of the world to follow.



The UAE is an energy-producing country, and therefore the country's economy is heavily dependent on energy revenues. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant disruption in global oil demand and led to a drop in oil prices. However, the UAE's non-oil sectors, such as logistics, technology, and financial services performed well during the pandemic and helped to offset the impact of lower oil prices.

China has been one of the world's fastest-growing economies for several decades, with average annual GDP growth rates of [around 9.5% between 1978 and 2021](#). Furthermore, China's transition from a purely free market system to a semi-market system has made it an attractive model for growth & stability for a rising number of countries, particularly in the developing and post-communist world.

Based on the aforementioned arguments, it can be inferred that the mixed economic model offers a viable option for countries seeking to improve their economies and tackle the potential crisis. With no other attractive alternative available, countries may choose to adopt this economic system to achieve better performance and stability.

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Article



The Austro-Prussian War of 1866

About the Author



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Introduction



Europe has always been an epicenter of disagreements, conflicts, violence, disputes, and power struggles. It's no wonder that war is probably inevitable in such a large and inextricably linked continent, with rapidly shifting borders through most of history. Austria and Prussia were

two such states that competed for dominance and power consolidation in Central Europe.

Prussia was transforming into the most dominant and influential among all the integrated states, second only to the Austrian Empire. It was led by the Hohenzollern family, majorly King William I, and Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck. On the other hand, Emperor Franz Joseph I who belonged to the dynasty of Habsburg ruled over Austria.

Even though these rulers were competing to gain more power and dominance in the region, particularly to expand their sphere of influence and authority over Central Europe, they also cooperated during the period of the Second Schleswig War, with both Austria and Prussia [conquering the area of Schleswig Holstein](#) jointly which was controlled by Danish.

War of 1866

In 1866, Prussia strongly disagreed with the governmental decisions and political choices made by the Governor of Austria. It triggered several conflicts and disputes between both states and resulted in the maneuvering of troops by Austria along the border side of Prussia.

Both Austria and Prussia started to plan strategies for the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 against each other. Otto von Bismarck suggested approaching the southern ally, Italy, which affirmed on April 8 that if Prussia were to launch a war against Austria within the upcoming ninety days, it would join hands with the German state in an attempt to counter and confront [Austria's strength](#).

Austria, however, was cognizant of the newly gained companionship and started deploying its troops all along the Italian border. Approximately five days later, Italy asserted general maneuvering, and Austria followed suit the next day. Consequently, Prussia started its maneuvering in various stages starting from May 3 to May 12.

All the parties started to prepare for war, and many of the German states formed alliances with the state of Austria. Consequently, Prussia conquered Saxony, Hanover, as well as Hesse on the 15th of June in retaliation with the purpose of defeating its neighbors before they would stand behind Austria. A few days later, Italy fulfilled its promise by declaring war against Austria.

Major Battles

At the Battle of Langensalza on June 27, Prussia experienced its first defeat against Hanover, but the latter's success was brief because the remaining troops of Prussia ultimately besieged them and pushed them to surrender. However, the Austrian commander was not confident to indulge



his own forces in a direct war. Even when outweighing the Prussians, the Austrians were surrounded and forced back as their adversaries fought with clever antagonism.

By July, Austrian general, Ludwig August Ritter von Benedek, had abandoned his hopes and instructed the withdrawal of his forces. He wrote to Emperor Franz Josef, pleading with him

to improve relations with the Prussians in order to prevent a ["catastrophe for the Austrian army"](#).

The Prussian army was fully prepared to initiate an attack against Austria at the start of July at



the Battle of Königgrätz. The Austrians approximately had a force of 215,000, but the Prussians only had about 124,000. The Prussian army headed by Karl Eberhard Herwarth von Bittenfeld was attacked by the Austrian army. This offensive attack made Bittenfeld reluctant to launch a full attack as it seemed unwise therefore he ordered Alexander von Schoeler to take a defensive position along with the advanced guard's 7th battalion.

In the meantime, General Eduard von Fransecky of Prussia advanced and confronted two Austrian corps. King William I, seeing this success, gave an order to the army to unite with General Fransecky's forces who were advancing towards Sadová which they captured soon.

Prussia's Victory

The Prussian fourth and eighth divisions wanted to surpass the River of Bystrice and join their companions, but they were confronted with intense Austrian bombardments. Benedek, on the other hand, chose not to proceed with a counter-offensive at the same time, enabling the Prussians to preserve some degree of resistance for maintaining their strength.

Despite Prussians having been momentarily pushed back by the Austrians, the Austrians made a mistake when Benedek denied initiating a full-scale attack against Prussian battalions. The Prussians retaliated strongly by defeating Austria's army, resulting in a victory for the Prussians.

Minor conflicts persisted till July 22nd, when a peace accord was finally accepted at 7:36 p.m. The Peace of Prague was signed between Austria and Prussia in August which officially ended the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. At the suggestion of Bismarck, no further territory had been taken under the sphere of influence of Prussia.

However, some parts of Austria including Hesse, Schleswig Holstein, and Hanover were taken, and German states (with the exception of Austria) were unified under the authority of Emperor William I. Furthermore, a Treaty of Vienna was signed in 1866 after the Third Battle of Italian Liberation, which occurred throughout the Austro-Prussian War after Italy came to the defense of Prussia.

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Declassified Diplomacy – Argentina and the US

About the Author



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Introduction

The declassified documents in the National Security Archive were an initiative started by the Obama government as an executive order in 2009. The order entailed various guidelines to manage classified information within government structures. The declassification was not only a government initiative but an opportunity for various students of subjects like politics, diplomacy, history, and journalism to study all those historic timelines with a clearer and more in-depth insight into the chronological timelines of all those hidden details.

One of the most interesting finds of such archives is how the United States has dealt with other nations, particularly under turbulent circumstances. The most pertinent of these relations is in the 1970s with the military dictatorship in Argentina. The archive under discussion elaborates how an extreme case of human rights violations, civil unrest, political turmoil, and thin global relations was overseen by the American government of the time.

Military Coup in Argentina

After a turbulent era of political unrest throughout the country, the military junta or coalition led by General Jorge Rafael Videla Rodando took over the state by staging a violent coup. Of course, this was the final stage in the plan that was set in motion a few years ago, when Videla's subordinates arranged for most opposition leaders to be removed from the [race by killing them off](#).

All these killings were just a trailer for what was about to come after when almost thirty thousand people were documented missing throughout the five years of military rule. The dictatorial government did not deny these activities on any front but called them the "Dirty War," which was a war not with an enemy from outside, but with the Argentinian people themselves.

The whole movement was called “El Proceso” wherein the government would pick up anyone it suspected to be conspiring against them, siding with any leftist groups or anyone still opting or believing in communist or socialist ideologies, and proceed to torture them to extort information before finally killing them. These missing individuals were never documented by the government, so they could go on pretending that these people never existed, but it was the foreign embassies who kept count of these *Desaparecidos*.

Kissinger Enters

The account of these atrocities was a part of the six-page article sent back from Buenos Aires to the State Department in 1980. After the clear and blatant violations of human rights in Argentina, where people were being treated as pawns, the American government needed to intervene. Unfortunately, the former Secretary of State passed a remark that was mistakenly or consciously misunderstood.

Henry Kissinger was somehow known to be colluding with the Carter administration’s efforts to mediate the human rights crisis in Argentina. This was proven by the declassified documents of Confidential Cable of June 27, 1978, which highlighted Kissinger’s visit to Argentina. His praise for the military dictatorship brought fear within the administration that it was leaving space to allow

further bloodshed in the country.



Henry Kissinger was of the view that the problems faced by Argentina were of a type the American government and people could not comprehend living in an ideal country. He played a huge role in aiding the military junta way before it came to power when he supported a grant of \$50,000,000 for security assistance for the junta approved by Congress on behalf of the Ford administration.

Kissinger wanted to keep the terms cordial based on his ties with the regime in Argentina, so quiet diplomacy was maintained. The Carter administration, on the other hand, had a policy for foreign policy goals of their own. Thus, the government relied on silent but public diplomacy to mediate the human rights situation in Argentina.



Carter Administration Uses Quiet Diplomacy

Quiet diplomacy is exercised by refraining from taking extreme measures or action against the involved party or the use of secret negotiations with the next country to avoid public attention. Another

name for this diplomacy is “backdoor” diplomacy. Carter was condemned and called out for not publicly calling out the military junta for its atrocities despite being in a powerful position and his rhetoric of human rights policy.

The Congress itself was divided into two thoughts about the policy; one where the members believed that the policy should be implemented without regard for national security, beyond regard for international relations as *in toto*, but the other half believed that the foreign policies should be considered where the anti-communist perspective of the military regime should be used as a tool against the Soviet Union.

Thus, the administration decided to deal with the situation out of the public eye to evade any assumptions on both sides of the ordeal. Even if President Jimmy Carter failed to raise the issue in a more public setting, he had directly raised the issue with General Videla in the privacy of the room i.e., behind the cameras.

The United States somehow managed to mediate the [whole human rights](#) crisis by exercising smart but quiet diplomacy, which is proven by several reduced political prisoners throughout the years of Carter's presidency.

Robert Pastor, a member of the National Security Council staff, took it on his own accord to stop Kissinger from making a pro-military junta speech that would have undermined all efforts to mediate the political prisoners' situation. The speech was more set against the human rights policy [that Carter's foreign policy](#) backed and more in favor of what the Argentinian dictatorship was doing. Pastor averted what could have been a plausible condemnation of human rights violations on a public platform that could have allowed for more [licensed bloodshed](#).

The importance of quiet diplomacy in this situation is key since a government that does not care for human rights already, cannot be risked being further aggravated. The military junta used the term "[National Reorganization Process](#)" or "[Proceso](#)" to justify its atrocities as a mechanism to reform the pure form of Western civilization, one devoid of any leftist ideas or non-coherent groups of people.

The military regime could not be openly criticized because the people in Argentina did not seem to consider it wholly wrong; most of them believed it to be the only reasonable choice after



instability led people to lose faith in the whole ideology behind democracy.

Eventually, in 1980, the US diplomats sent a telegram expressing their dismay at the continuity of the disappearances by the military just because they seemed to work in their favor. The persons were tortured for information and then murdered without any court charge. The number of missing persons had reduced during the Carter government, but it was evident that the government had failed to fight the entire issue of human rights violations with its weak foreign policies that needed bureaucratic support.

The approach of the foreign relations department in Carter's government was not a faulty one, it just proved to be an impractical one. On paper, the approach of quiet diplomacy looked like the right one, but unfortunately forcing a military regime to stop acts that constituted terrorism required a definitive form of force.

This just goes to show how any kind of diplomatic effort will be rendered useless unless supported by structural factors and administration completely or at least resource-wise. Hence, even silent diplomatic efforts need media and public applause, and most well-meaning intentions require solid foundations of support to work out.

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Opinion

The Dangers of Free Speech Absolutism

About the Author



Mir Adnan Aziz is a freelance contributor.



“Satire”, wrote Jonathan Swift “is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own”. Old as communication itself, satire has evolved with humankind. In medieval times, a bard’s satire was deemed powerful enough to kill. A means to social criticism satire, like every other aspect of our individual and collective lives, is not sans duty and responsibility.

Dereliction of this all-crucial aspect leads to hate-inducing material in spoken and written words. It is encouraged by getting protection in what has dangerously become a limitless yet perilous ambit of free speech absolutism. One prime example is Charlie Hebdo, a French (so-called) satirical weekly paper. Referred to as Charlie, it proclaims its right to disparage, among other things, anything related to religious authority.

It shot to notoriety in the Muslim world and fame in the West with the extremely insensitive and [offensive publication](#) of the Holy Prophet’s (PBUH) cartoons. This led to an attack on Charlie’s office killing 12 staff members. This act was condemned unequivocally across the religious divide. Muslim community leaders in France described the shooting as “an attack on French Muslims as well as their non-Muslim compatriots”.

Subsequent marches, with European leaders leading them, drew millions. The rallying slogan was Je Suis Charlie; I am Charlie. Unfortunately, the act of a few was lampooned with Islam as a religion and Muslims as a community. The provocation was further exacerbated when the offensive cartoons were projected onto government buildings. The [use of the veil was banned](#) as authorities cracked down on the Islamic community at large, citing their resolve to eliminate “Islamist” terror networks.

Charlie came up with the inciting mantra of “not to participate in ridiculing the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was to let the extremists win”. The western world lent support to this extremely offensive stand with New York Times columnist Ross Douthat writing: “The right to blaspheme is essential to the liberal order”.

Charlie's methodical insensitivity in publishing offensive material might not be all about satire. Fighting for survival, it had seen its readership dwindle from 120,000 per week to less than 30,000. Publishing Muslim-centric offensive material, it saw a reversal in its fortunes. The attack on its office was followed by large donations, record sales, and a legion of new subscribers. Five million copies of what Charlie called "the survivors' edition" was picked up as soon as they hit the stands.

Reveling in this Muslim-bashing adulation, Charlie printed a caricature of 2-year-old Alan Kurdi who, along with his family, drowned while trying to flee war-ravaged Syria. Charlie depicted this tragedy with heartless cartoons of the baby's body with the caption "So near his goal". One near a McDonald's publicity board read "two children's menus for the price of one"; yet another said, "The proof that Europe is Christian; Christians walk on water, Muslim kids sink".

When Charlie published a cartoon with President Macron and his wife Brigitte, it drew the ire of many. Tiphaine, the first lady's daughter, called it "totally outrageous to make such attacks in 21st century France". President Macron dubbed it "a mockery; a terrible discourtesy". Conversely, when the French government banned burkinis, Charlie's front page urging Muslim women to loosen up and take to the beaches naked evoked no condemnation.

A recent cartoon, the latest affront to everything human, shows a huge pile of rubble in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that saw over 50,000 perish, over 100,000 wounded, and more than seven million children affected in the Türkiye-Syria earthquake. It says "Earthquake in Turkey. Don't even need to send tanks".

Hitler, despite what David Stannard's book *American Holocaust* describes as the horrific genocide of the natives of the Americas, remains the most demonized person in history.



Mere denial of the horrors wrought by Hitler is deemed a sacrilege, a punishable crime in the free speech western world today.

Today, Muslim bashing is a surrogate of free speech. It has also become a monetary boom for many, given that Islamophobia has become a sure-profit industry, politically and otherwise, in the post-9/11 years. This is a world where user accounts can be suspended under the Covid misinformation policy. It is also a world where an individual is protected by slander and libel laws yet efforts to demonize a religion or its adherents are encouraged, applauded, and financed.

When Jyllands-Posten, a Danish paper, published caricatures of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Hamshahri, an Iranian paper reciprocated with the International Holocaust Cartoon Contest. The

former was defended as an expression of free speech by the West; the latter was condemned with some even calling for what they termed retributive measures.

Ironically, what we have today is an ever-expanding web of intolerance snaring the world. Those entangled, entice incitement through [hate speech](#). A very few within the targeted multitude react violently with the others claiming victimhood and glory for being the standard bearer of free speech. This vicious circle, with extremes at both ends, is a symbiotic relationship. It feeds off each other in an increasingly frenzied cycle.

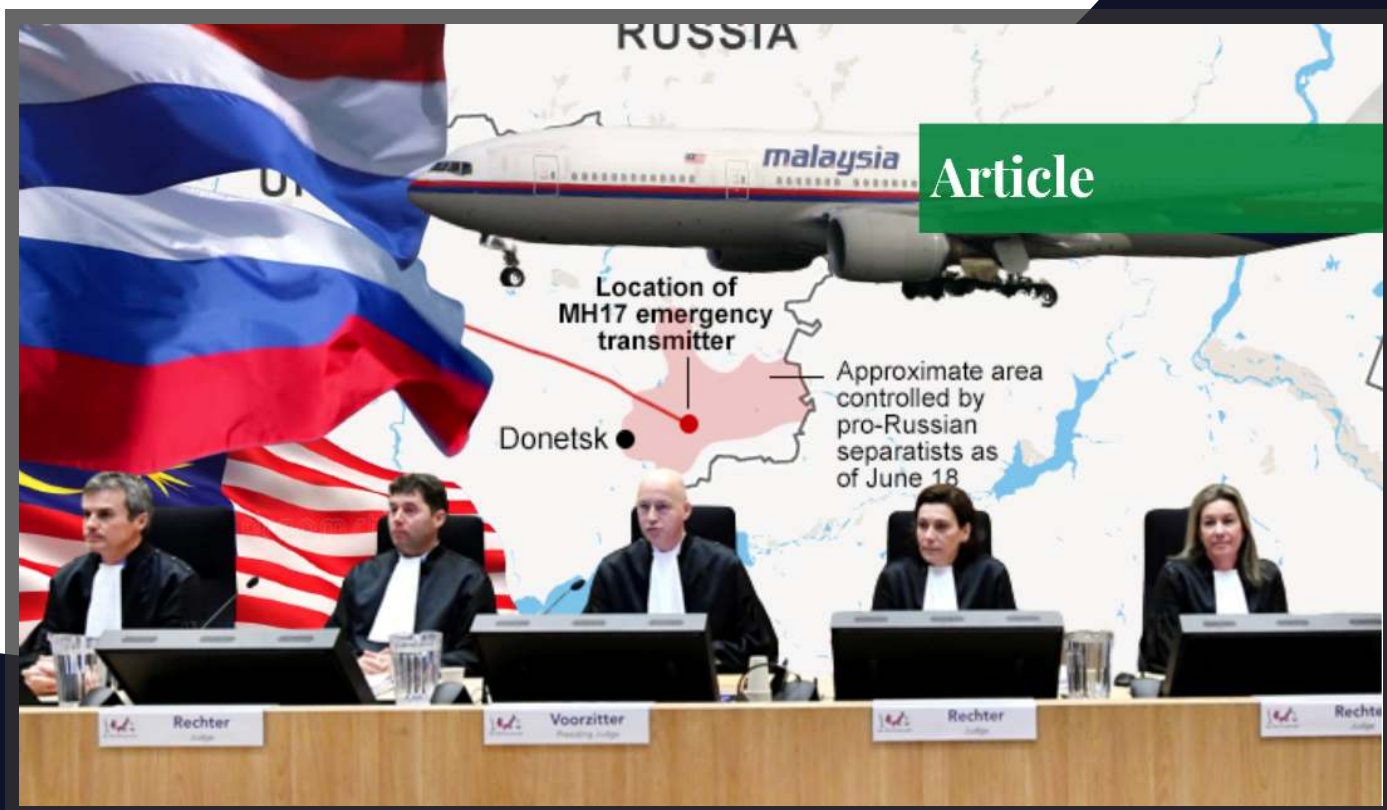


Tolerance and empathy are the building blocks of each culture and society. It is imperative that we inculcate these attributes in our collective lives and forge a bond that educates us about the pain and anguish that unbridled free speech can and does cause. Free speech absolutism, like its religious counterpart, creates hate-induced barriers and divisions. Tolerance and empathy is the only bridge that can unite and create harmony and a far better world.

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Also related: [Hate Speech vs Free Speech Explained](#)



A Closer Look at the MH17 Plane Crash Investigation

About the Author



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When It Rained Skins and Steels

Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport was busy on 17th July 2014, where 283 people of all identities were busy getting their baggage inspected and tickets checked in, to board the Malaysian Airlines MH17 which was to land in Kuala Lumpur. Some of them were fresh school graduates and some were going to see their families. The flight took off as usual, with no abnormalities in sight.

It was around 16:20 local time, three hours into the flight when something abnormal occurred. The flight was passing over Eastern Ukraine when all of a sudden, a loud thud was heard, and after that, everything became history; the MH17 plane crash.

The site was unsightly, with body parts all scattered on the corn fields of Donetsk along with components of MH17. It seemed like a missile hit the plane, but nothing was confirmed. Considering the importance of the demystification of such a drastic event, this article digs deep into the investigation process and court hearings of the MH17 plane crash and provides details on how the case was solved and the culprits punished.

Legal Proceedings for the MH17 Plane Crash

In order to realize the collective concrete efforts against the attack, a joint investigation team was set up on 7th August 2014 by four states most impacted by the incident; Netherlands, Belgium, Australia, and Malaysia, along with Ukraine, where the happening occurred. The team was made responsible for investigating the specificities of the attack along with collecting evidence adequate to prosecute the perpetrators involved.

The case was defended by the Public Prosecution Service of the Netherlands and the hearings were to be held in Schiphol Judicial Complex. On 13th October 2015, the Dutch Safety Board, a Netherlands-based safety investigation organization, presented a detailed report in court that an armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine's airspace was visible for months due to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict of 2014, where the airspace should have been completely restricted by Ukraine in light of the aircraft that were already destroyed in that area by the separatists.

Instead of complete blocking, Ukraine only prohibited low-altitude flying of civil aircraft. On 17th July 2014, the day of the incident, almost 160 commercial flights took off over that airspace. The report went on by mentioning that MH17 was flying over Eastern Ukraine when at 13.20 Coordinated Universal Time, it was hit on the left and above its cockpit area by a 9N314M warhead shot by a Buk missile present within 320 km square of the area.

The explosive material of the warhead destroyed the front of the airplane which ultimately led to a blast, resulting in the death of everybody on the spot and pieces of the airplane body falling within a 50-kilometer square of land. Moving on, in September 2014, the joint team confirmed that the missile was launched from Pervomaisk in Eastern Ukraine, an area controlled by the pro-Russian separatists at that time.

On 5th July 2017, Australia, Ukraine, Netherlands, Malaysia, and Belgium collectively decided to initiate the prosecution of suspects under the Dutch legal proceedings in the Netherlands. Ukraine agreed on passing on the prosecution rights to the Netherlands, which ensured that the perpetrators will be punished for all the victims of the attack.

The investigation took an interesting turn on 24th May 2018, when the joint team through an in-depth comparative analysis of characteristics possessed by the Buk Telar involved in the attack



with other Russian and Ukrainian Buk Telars, found that the Buk Telar involved in the attack was recorded as it was joining the 53rd brigade of the Russian army, thus belonging to Russia. On the basis of these findings, the Netherlands started highlighting Russia as a culprit.

On 19th July 2019, the Public Prosecution Service Netherlands finalized four suspects for prosecution. [Igor Girkin](#), who was the commander of the Donetsk Republic Army and former colonel of the Russian Federal Security Service, thus influential enough to be holding contact with Russia throughout. Secondly, [Sergey Dubinsky](#), the head of Donetsk Republic's intelligence service and former military officer of the Russian military intelligence department.

Thirdly, [Oleg Pulatov](#), the deputy head of the Donetsk republic intelligence service and former military officer of the Russian military intelligence as well. Lastly, [Leonid Kharchenko](#), commander of Donetsk republic's combat unit. On 9th March 2020, despite being summoned to the court, none of the suspects appeared. Only Pulatov was represented by two lawyers in his absence.

The prosecutor announced their charges to be the crashing of MH17 which caused the death of 298 people punishable by article [168](#) of the criminal code of the Netherlands along with article [289](#) which punishes the murder of those 298 passengers. Moving on, from 8th June to 3rd July 2020, the prosecutors provided detailed accounts of how various forms of the investigation were conducted.

Investigation Techniques

Telecommunication Investigation

The security service of Ukraine (SBU) had been intercepting the telephone conversations of suspicious individuals involved in the armed conflicts in Eastern Ukraine long before the incident. These intercepted calls were especially listened to by the SBU after the MH17 plane crash, which revealed that Girkin, Kharchenko, and Dubinsky were conversing about getting a Buk missile for their defense.

Once a suspicious call was located, the SBU started investigating other calls on the same telephone line, focusing on both sides of the conversation along with recovering the metadata of the phones involved.

The joint team further validated the conversations by finding the location of the telephones by analyzing the locations where they emitted signals and matching it with the places the perpetrators were at the time of the calls, questioning witnesses about the calls, and fact-checking by using open-source information.

The perpetrators were using secure means and multiple phone numbers, but the investigators were able to connect the dots. Pulatov used the phone number 380631212511 which was found through his account on [OK.ru](#), a social network site in Russia, where he casually gave out his number under his account name Oleg.Pulatov.

Dubinsky used the phone number [380631213401](#), which was revealed through intercepted phone calls where he was called by the name “Dubinskiy” at certain points. Girkin’s phone number was revealed to be 380637087501. The investigators recognized his voice in an interview he gave under another name “Igor Strelkov” on TV and after searching for his identity, they found that Igor was actually Girkin.

Lastly, Kharchenko used the number 380660827518 by him sharing his name as “Kharchenko Leonid” in a call. All the above perpetrators were found talking about a “BUK” in their conversations.

Forensic Investigation

341 steel components found in the destruction area and 29 dead bodies were compared with different areas of 9N314M warhead of Buk missiles, to find out their point of origin.

In addition, Belgium Royal Military Academy in partnership with Netherlands Aerospace Centre conducted three arena tests where they calculated the angles and speed of the aircraft fragments as they flew in the air during the crash and concluded that an area of 75 kilometers in Southeast Ukraine was where the missile must have been fired in order to create the level of damage that it did.

Radar Investigation

The investigation took a considerably important route when the primary radar data of Russia, Ukraine, and NATO was requested to detect the presence of any missile. Russia unnecessarily delayed the provision of the data and provided the data of Ust-Donetsk air traffic radar, which did not show the presence of any military aircraft or missile near MH17.

Russia took it as an excuse to redirect the investigations by asserting that MH17 was not destroyed by any missile. Two experts hired by the Dutch Ministry of Defense and EUROCONTROL concluded that the absence of a missile did not mean MH17 wasn't destroyed by it. Data from Buturinskaya radar where a missile could have been visible for a little while was never provided by Russia.

Satellite Investigation

Coming towards the satellite imagery, the joint investigation team tried to obtain images of the possible launch site and the area of the crash. Geoserve, a private company that sold satellite images from various different sources provided the team with images from 16, 20, and 21 July, where images from 17 July were not recorded and after that, apparently hindered by clouds. However, Google Earth provided the images on 17th July 2014.

To find more information, China, Russia, and the US were contacted; China did not have any imagery to share, Russia provided low-quality images, and requests for Donetsk and Luhansk area images where the crash occurred were ignored. In fact, Russia provided satellite images of a Ukrainian Buk system launching on 17 July 2014, but again, refused to provide a digital copy of those images, and the satellite images did not match with Google Earth and other sites' information on missiles on those days.

The investigators also found a BUK TELAR whose code started with 2 and ended with 3 in Russia through several images, which could possibly be the one that shot MH17 down. A day after the attack, the US president clearly mentioned that the plane was shot down by a surface-to-air missile in the conflict-ridden area of separatists in Eastern Ukraine.

A US National intelligence officer also commented that the US intelligence community was able to detect an [SA-11 missile](#) six kilometers south of eastern Ukraine. As their ways are never disclosed, an exception was made when the Dutch National Prosecutor for counter-terrorism, intelligence, and security was called and briefed by the US officials on how the investigation was done.

Image investigation

The investigators obtained visual evidence including photos and videos by having access to mobiles and memory cards of the people who recorded them. These materials were sent to the



Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute, a weather forecasting organization of the Netherlands, which analyzed the color and lightning in the photos and aligned it with the cloud levels and overall weather of that specific area on 17 July 2014, when MH17 was shot.

Alternate Scenarios

The joint investigation team actually considered three scenarios: MH17 being struck by lightning, having a head-to-head collision with a fighter jet, or being hit by a surface-to-air Buk missile. The first two were ruled out, and the third one prevailed because the materials found on the destruction site and within the dead bodies are typically present within a Buk missile.

Closing Speech

On 20th December 2021, at the closing speech, major highlights of the investigations were made prominent. The Public Prosecution Service concluded that the Buk Telar was transferred from Russia via the border to Donetsk by a man called Andrey Chernykh who entered Ukraine as part of the logistics unit to carry military equipment ordered by DPR (Donetsk people's republic) by Pro-Russian separatists during the 2014 Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The Telar was carried in a white Volvo truck, where it was moved to Pervomaiskyi and launched from there. All the soot components and metal fragments on the destruction site and within the bodies of the victims are confirmed to belong to Buk missiles. After MH17 was destroyed, Dubinsky was ordered by Girkin to quickly evacuate the "damaged tank" to Russia the day after the attack.

It was also concluded that the missile was indeed part of the 53rd brigade in Russia. The Public Prosecution Service also mentioned that although few military personnel get immunity for indulging in military attacks under state orders during an armed conflict, the defendants brought the missile themselves and used it for their own benefit in the armed conflict, which put them at a further disadvantage.

Final Verdict

As for the sentence, the criminal code [168](#) of Dutch law contained high punishment for crashing an airplane and causing the death of 298 people. The defendants had already attacked Ukrainian aircraft in the past and consciously decided to carry out further violence by shooting down MH17, knowing the potential destruction it would cause. They purposely directed their missile at the civil aviation path and ignored the prevention of civilian deaths.

At last, on 17 November 2022, the court delivered its verdict. Girkin, Dubinsky, and Kharchenko were sentenced to life in prison with a fine of 16 million Euros for downing the MH17 along with being responsible for the murder of 298 people on board. Pulatov, who was the only one sending his lawyers for defense, was acquitted on the basis of a lack of evidence that he was involved in destroying the plane.

As the criminals were tried in absentia and were still absent when the verdict was announced, it is less likely that they will serve their sentence. In addition, Russia has refused to extradite the sentenced individuals back to the Netherlands to be punished.

Conclusion

The MH17 plane crash should not be viewed merely as an isolated incident, as this event of the past generated certain similar patterns identifiable in matters of the present. Russia provided so-called witness statements on a Ukrainian missile launching from the area of Amvrosiivka on the day of the MH17 crash, to assert that the missile fired was indeed from Ukraine itself, but the witness had no background and could not be matched or confirmed by anything.

The Russian government had been paying “trolls” pretending to be journalists in spreading false information about the Ukrainian existence. Similarly, 75% of the 35.9 million tweets by 75 Russian official accounts were about manipulative materials questioning the independence of Ukrainian land. MH17 was downed by separatists involved in fighting against the Ukrainian government, where this “norm of war” of throwing missiles like stones from a sling, ended up taking innocent lives from areas completely uninvolved in the conflict.

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A Digital Democracy: Social Media & Political Participation

About the Author



Torchbearer CSS Academy – TBA Karachi ignites aspirations and transforms them into valuable knowledge and enthusiasm. They magnify talents and carve abilities to achieve dedicated success, by providing quality education for competitive exam aspirants who believe in themselves and their goals.



Digital Landscapes

The democratic process has always flourished through the liberation of ideas, political awareness, and the ability of a [society to engage in civilized discourse](#). The amelioration of social media has provided the world an opportunity to achieve these to a greater and more valuable extent.

Social media is strengthening democracy through the increase in political knowledge of individuals through the uprise of political content and democratic engagement on it. The presence of significant entities and individuals related to democratic affairs on social media provides an enhanced opportunity for transparency and accountability.

Social media has provided equal opportunities for everyone to participate in democratic affairs. It has incentivized the rise of digital democracy through the ease of liberation of the ideas of the



common man. It has strengthened democratic discourse due to the rise of political content on different platforms. In fact, political and democratic content is witnessing an uprise on social platforms, leading to an increase in the democratic engagement of individuals digitally.

Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube act as a source of political information and news for individuals. Political content continues to rise on these platforms even outside the circle of news channels. Individual creators also provide valuable political and democratic content in order to cater to the demand of the public. The amelioration of social media and its extensions to every domain of life has stimulated the consciousness of people.

Public Awareness

Similarly, political engagement on social media has increased the knowledge of the masses on this matter. The struggling class that was generally unaware of the nitpicks of political affairs is also partaking in them. This increase in political knowledge is a direct consequence of the liberation of digital democracy through social media platforms.

One of the key advantages of the rise of social media is that state actors and government officials are present in it. Moreover, state-run channels and pages on these platforms are also a source of political enlightenment for individuals. This also enables the inter-connectedness of countries and strengthens the democratic discourse globally.

The presence of state officials and responsible entities facilitates accountability and transparency through these social media platforms. This enables the voice of the common man to be heard by the relevant authorities directly. As a result, the concerns and suggestions of the masses can be addressed openly, and this can have significant positive effects on the political and democratic discourse.

Women especially have been oblivious to democratic affairs historically. However, social media has been a catalyst to fill this void. It has increased democratic exposure to all genders. Even the people that were always considered to be ineffectual in the democratic discourse have significance today. Hence through social media, the democratic process has evolved to be inclusive to all and encompasses everyone.

Moreover, social media platforms have now become an important tool in the uplifting of political movements. Political and democratic movements are strengthened by the digital participation of the masses for a common cause. Movements like the '[Black Lives Matter](#)' are an example of the success of social media in liberating and uplifting the democratic process.

The promotion of freedom of speech is one of the most significant impacts of social media. Social liberation through digital discourse has highlighted the importance of the right to free speech for everyone. People have been aligning with Voltaire's idea that "I may disagree with you, but I will defend to death your right to say it". This strengthens the democratic process and creates an environment that facilitates the participation of all individuals in it.



Social media also incentivizes the establishment of civil societies by gathering individuals interested in the uplifting of a common cause. Digital engagements have made it easier to gather individuals and ultimately form functional civil societies.

The formation of civil societies through their social media groups and pages is also an example of this phenomenon. Communities or issues that are generally left out due to geographical or political complexities can have an impactful voice through social media platforms. The grievances that are neglected otherwise are highlighted through social media.

Obstacles

Despite all the merits that social media has in the uplifting of digital democracy and political participation, it also suffers from some setbacks. One of the major hurdles to the flourishing of the digital democratic process is the prevalence of false narratives on social media platforms. It prevails mainly due to the existence of groups that are uneducated, and to some extent, due to the fact that humans are emotional creatures as a whole.

Due to the ease of using social media, it is the perfect catalyst for the spread of misinformation. People often upload content without any effort to know the reality and without effort to do substantial research. This creates a distorted image of the matter and often leads to either spread of misconception or misinformation.

Social media is also used by entities to induce inflammation in the masses in order to achieve their goals. A one-sided image of democratic and political matters is shown to align it with personal interests. Similarly, coordinated hindrances to the democratic process are also facilitated through safe havens like groups and pages of social media. Even opposition to such practices leads to the exclusion from those groups, or in more serious cases, results in bans from the online platform entirely.

The deliberate spread of disinformation is also prevalent on social media. Entities invest heavily in the uplifting of disinformation regarding their adversaries. Due to this, social media can be considered a major tool for proxy wars and for sabotaging the image of enemies. Campaigns to malign the opponent can also be executed swiftly through the use of social media.

Many news outlets are observed to be focused on raising sensation to gain the attention of the viewers and increase their ratings. Their obsession with such media frenzy often leads to unfair reporting. The problems presented by social media in the embracement of digital democracy can be tackled by taking certain strategic measures such as the establishment of proper and independent fact-checking entities.

Neutral entities can be assigned the task to look for and then removing or flagging inappropriate or misleading content. Entities that spread disinformation are a key hindrance to the uplifting of digital democracy. Consequences are to be placed for companies or countries that are involved in the spread of disinformation.

Conclusion

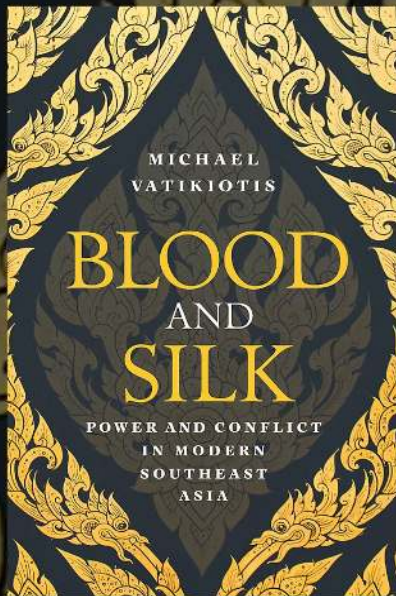
In conclusion, social media is one of the most important tools for the development of democratic processes. It strengthens the political discourse by enlightening the general public and facilitating their participation. It has removed most of the prevailing boundaries that were present in the conventional political process. It has uplifted marginalized groups and promoted freedom of expression.

Concerns like disinformation, media frenzy, and false narratives are certain resistances to digital democracy. However, countermeasures like uplifting fairness, instilling moral values necessary for civilized discourse, and implementing laws to counter such hindrances are required.

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Book
Review



Blood and Silk: Power and Conflict in Modern Southeast Asia

About the Author



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Introduction

In *"Blood and Silk: Power and Conflict in Modern Southeast Asia"*, Michael Vatikiotis starts with the mid-1950s, when Southeast Asia became an ideological battleground between traditional elites and forces of modernity allied with communism. Former colonial powers sided with traditional elites because they feared the spread of communism.

Southeast Asian countries faced multiple military coups, and by the mid-1980s authoritarian rule was the norm of the region. All these military regimes in Southeast Asia were either installed or backed by the United States so that they kept communism at bay.

Geography and Economic Growth

Geographically, Southeast Asia is surrounded by warm waters and its coastal areas supported trading centres that allowed the accretion of material and cultural influence both from the East and West. The region was a channel for trade between Indian, Chinese, and Arab traders which created cosmopolitan crucibles in the region. These traders established their communities and made Southeast Asia a diverse region with Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Europeans arrived during the 1500s in Southeast Asia to enrich themselves, exploiting the region and leaving it divided in the mid-twentieth century. By the end of the 20th century, nations of Southeast Asia had achieved remarkable levels of development and admirable stability. Economic sustainability was observed because of the high level of foreign direct investment attracted to Southeast Asia's relatively open, well-educated, and stable societies.

Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand today have a per capita GDP above \$3000, placing them in the middle-income category. Despite the remarkable economic growth, there is a startling reality of the gap between the rich and the poor, and this inequality is because economic growth has favoured those who own the capital rather than the labour working for it.

Inequality & Violence

In Indonesia, the economic growth over the past decade has primarily benefited only the richest 20% and left behind the remaining 80% of the population. Thailand's overall poverty rate has come down from 14% of the population to less than 10% in the past five years



but at least 20% of Thais earn over 60% of the income of the country. 25 families in the Philippines own more of the country's wealth than 75 million Filipinos.

Southeast Asia has always been marked by the shadow of political violence. Ordinary people have been aroused to protest by shallow, empty, and rhetorical promises of a better future, but their hopes are dashed, beaten to a bloody pulp, and left by the side of the road somewhere with no hopes of justice.

There was the army's violent crackdown on student protesters in Thailand in 1973 and 1976, on popular protests in Myanmar and Cambodia, an outbreak of ethnic and religious violence in Indonesia, and the detention of opposition politicians in Malaysia. Too much of the violence associated with politics in Southeast Asia stems from elite power struggles. Political leaders in Indonesia even justified their anti-communist killings of 1965 saying that the killings were justified to save the country from communism and that no official apology was necessary.

Lacking Governance

One of the fundamental weaknesses of governance in Southeast Asia is the lack of importance attached to the institutions. People in political institutions serve their own selfish interests and because of patronage, people serve the leader of the faction, not the wider interest of the state. Due to the primary ties of patronage and the protection this afforded, the people in Southeast Asia relied on interpersonal networks rather than institutions. When people have problems, they do not call the police but turn to the relationship which has access to the power.

During the 1980s, there were protests across Southeast Asia against corrupt and repressive authoritarian regimes. President Ferdinand Marcos was ousted in the Philippines because of the people's power revolution. Young Burmese protested against the military in 1988 and got shot down, imprisoned, and tortured. Despite the massacre, the military promised to hold elections in 1990, but that was short-lived considering the new era of military dictatorship in Myanmar.

The 1990s saw the start of an extraordinary boom in economic growth in Southeast Asia, with capital and investment from buoyant liberated Western economies pouring in to capitalize on economic reforms. As the level of investment increased, the concerns about constraints on political freedom diminished.

With the increase in investment in Thailand, the banking sector ballooned and become harder to scrutinize, the stock market became high-rolling casinos, and high-interest rates inflated the price of assets.

It all came crashing down on 2 July, 1997 when the Thai Bhat lost half its value against the dollar. As a result, the currencies of the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia also lost their value against the dollar.

Severe economic hardship boiled over in violent anger in Indonesia when Suharto secured re-election in 1998. People felt that their strong leaders no longer fulfilled their social contract promising prosperity in return for limited freedom. As a result, Suharto's authoritarian regime fell in 1998. In November 1998, the students protested against new emergency powers for the army after the end of Suharto's dictatorship.

In 2015, Cambodia ranked 150 out of 168 on the corruption index, Thailand sat at 76, Vietnam at 112, and Indonesia at 88. Such high levels of corruption are alarming in the part of the world increasingly at the center of global finance and investment. Corruption scandals affect governments and their leaders, expose them to international prosecution, upsets bilateral relationship that helps balance the contest between China and the United States, impedes political reforms, and encourages kleptocratic leaders to maintain repressive measures to hold on to power.

Corruption is more than a troubling affliction; it is crippling southeast Asia's progress. In 2015, PM Najib Tun Razak was found to have siphoned public money; \$6 billion were transferred from a Singapore bank to the PM's private bank account in March 2013. In Malaysia, anyone who questioned the PM's corruption or voiced concern about the scandal was charged with sedition. The roots of corruption lie in the weakness of institutions; police who turn a blind eye to a crime for money, authorities who take bribes to ignore rules, and government officials who demand an extra payment to carry out their duties.

Internal Conflicts

"Blood and Silk" also focuses on internal conflicts in Southeast Asia that have plagued the region ever since its independence.

All these internal conflicts are related to an ethnic minority that seek to achieve meaningful autonomy if not independence. Karen, Kachin, and Rakhine Muslims in Myanmar, Muslims Moro in the Philippines, Acehnese in North Sumatra, and Muslim Malay in southern Thailand are all fighting for autonomy.

In Southeast Asia, long-running operations against separatist guerrillas' armies have served to boost military prestige and justify the need for the army to act as guardians of the state. The least complicated resolution of subnational conflicts is granting sovereignty, but with fear of partition and loss of territory, governments of Southeast Asia retain a strong impulse to impose authority and compel people.

Behind ideals of sovereignty are little more than selfish personal interests; preserving official position or a lucrative source of illegal income, sometimes even justifying the military expenditure. A peaceful solution requires compromise, but a compromise in Southeast Asia is still regarded as a sign of weakness, a loss of face.

The Chinese Threat

Southeast Asia's accessible geography ensured an abundance of trade but also made the region vulnerable to foreign intrusion and invasion. The first invasion that the Southeast Asians faced was by Europeans followed by Japan in 1941 and are now facing the threat of Chinese invasion. It is difficult to gauge the Chinese threat to Southeast Asia in military terms because China has not actually gone to war with anyone since the 1970s.

After the start of the Cold War in the 1950s, China started to present a threat to Southeast Asian security. Communist insurgencies across Southeast Asia received ideological and material support from China. When China ceased supporting communist insurgencies, it began asserting sovereignty over islands and features in the South China Sea in the 1980s.

China's economy began to grow after its free market reform in 1978. Opportunity to invest in and trade with China has been a considerable driver of growth and prosperity for Southeast Asia, with trade now valued at \$500 billion between 10 countries of ASEAN, making ASEAN the largest



trading partner of China. China's focus is on building infrastructure, roads, railways, and seaports because it intends to develop sources of cheap power and reliable overland routes from China through Southeast Asia to the sea, so that it does not solely rely on the Malacca Strait.

Under Jinping's leadership, China has been flexing its muscles, no longer hiding its strength or sheathing its power. After decades of struggle for democracy, Southeast Asia is finally on the path to democracy, but all this free government is jeopardized by the laziness of politicians. Leaders are willing to challenge legal and institutional safeguards of ethnic and religious communities for short-term political gains. Unfortunately, the legacy of colonial-engineered ethnic pluralism has proven an obstacle to effective nation-building, holding up democratic progress.

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PEMRA Suspends ARY News' License Again

About the Author



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Introduction

"Well, here we are, Mr. Pilgrim, trapped in the amber of this moment. There is no why." — Kurt Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five

Like Mr. Pilgrim, Pakistan's media landscape is frozen in the "amber of the moment" created and curated by constitutional and extra-constitutional forces alike. The only difference is that there is a *why* and a logic to it; the logic of power and control. The brass-knuckles tactics of censorship, intimidation, and violence against [journalists](#) in Pakistan are no secret.

Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press, the government and other powerful actors have resorted to these tactics to silence critical voices and maintain control over the narrative. Then there is a politicization of the media through incentivization, the velvet glove approach. Fall in line and get rewarded. But this also necessitates judgement calls by media houses.

Like the high rollers at the Las Vegas Strip, the mainstream media houses bet on the political parties and alternatively get rewarded/penalized. The change in guard has often spelled trouble for the affiliated media house of the previous guard.

Cancelling ARY's License: Counter-productive and Ineffective

PEMRA issued a ban on airing the speeches, both recorded and live, of the former premier Imran Khan on March 5 with the accompanying warning that any media house found in violation would have its broadcasting license cancelled.

The notification stated; "It has been observed that Imran Khan [Chairman PTI] in his speeches/statements is continuously alleging state institutions by leveling baseless allegations and spreading hate speech through his provocative statements against state institutions and officers which is prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order and is likely to disturb public peace and tranquility."

Hardly a few hours later, PEMRA suspended the broadcasting license of ARY News, the privately owned satellite news channel. The suspension order flagged clips of Imran Khan's speech aired during the 9 pm bulletin as "willful defiance to the Prohibition Order".

The [suspension order](#) stated, "Foregoing in view, the competent authority i.e. the Chairman PEMRA in exercise of powers vested in Section 30(3) of the PEMRA Ordinance 2002 as amended by PEMRA (Amendment) Act 2007, hereby Suspends broadcast satellite TV Channel license conferred to M/s ARY Communications Ltd. (ARY News) with immediate effect, till further orders."

According to [ARY News management](#), they were unfairly targeted as the license of other news channels that broadcasted clips of Imran Khan's Zaman Park speech was not cancelled. "The PEMRA announcement arrived after 8 pm, and practically all the networks broadcast excerpts of Imran Khan's address in their 9 pm bulletins. The regulatory authorities, however, just suspended our license."

While the dysfunction within the news broadcasting channels is hardly debatable given the biased reporting and sensationalism, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has only added to this dysfunction through its hotchpotch of politically-charged and misguided policies and notices.

In the current political climate, the suspension order has proved to be counter-productive and ineffective. Issuing the order against a channel alleged to be aligned with the interests of the previous government while letting others off the hook only adds fuel to an already raging fire. More so, this selective and politically-motivated targeting provides fodder to self-styled journalists on social media platforms, particularly YouTube, who are adept at creating hyper-sensational and politically-divisive content.

If the purpose of the directive was to stop the broadcasting of Imran Khan's speeches, then it failed spectacularly. Even [without ARY News](#), Khan's speeches are reaching his audience just fine. After all, this is the age of social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

The directive disregards the reality of the digital age and the viewership habits of the target audience. We have, after all, entered 2023. Someone should give this memo to PEMRA.

In an ideal world, every institution would operate within its constitutional limits and every news channel would provide unbiased news coverage, but since this hardly seems the case for the foreseeable future, the regulatory authority could, at the very least, understand the intricacies of the digital world and refrain from issuing such orders that accomplish next to nothing.

Another important tidbit to remember is that people's minds are not tabula rasa. The regulator cannot expect to imprint on them the state-backed narratives or erase the very same narratives from their minds when the realignment of the state's interests takes place followed by re-articulation of its narratives. If Imran Khan was propped up as Superman in 2014 then he could hardly be Lex Luthor in 2023.

Two things the directive did accomplish were stoking the anger of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's overzealous supporters and drawing the criticism of international organizations that advocate for media freedom and safety. The Committee to Protect Journalists, an independent non-profit and non-governmental organization, condemned the revocation of ARY News' license.

The Asia program coordinator, [Beh Lih Yi](#), called for the immediate reversal of the act. "Pakistan's ban on satellite television channels broadcasting former Prime Minister Imran Khan's speeches and the suspension of ARY News' license are the government's latest attacks on press freedom and the right to information. Authorities must immediately reverse these blatant acts of censorship and allow the media to report on key political developments in the country freely."

[International Federation of Journalists](#), an associate member of UNESCO and the world's largest organization of journalists, also condemned the directive stating; "The suspension of transmission would be tantamount to depriving Pakistan of the media freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan that have been so hard fought for and defended by journalists and unions.



The IFJ urges the Pakistani government to ensure freedom of expression in accordance with the Constitution of Pakistan and its international commitments and obligations.”

While performative in nature, such condemnations translate into lower rankings on indexes such as World Press Freedom Index. This, in turn, have some bearings on indexes such as the Democracy Index which then impact the global perception of the country. Put simply, revoking the license of ARY News and other news channels on political grounds is bad for the country’s image and economy.

Issues to Focus on

The “About PEMRA” section on the [official website](#) of the regulatory authority reads; “PEMRA has been established under PEMRA Ordinance 2002 to facilitate and regulate the private electronic media. It has the mandate to improve the standards of information, education, and entertainment and to enlarge the choice available to the people of Pakistan Including news, current affairs, religious knowledge, art and culture as well as science and technology.” According to this, PEMRA has to ‘facilitate’ *and* regulate private electronic media. Au contraire, it has thrown its full weight behind arbitrary regulation and that too mostly based on the directives of the powers that be.



During the Musharraf regime, the regulatory authority was used to clamp down on dissenting voices. Since then, very little has changed. Not long ago, it was Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman's Geo TV that was at the receiving end of PEMRA's wrath. Today, it is Salman Iqbal's ARY News. In 2021, the then-prime minister Imran Khan sat with HBO's Jonathan Swan for an interview. When asked about the causes of sexual violence in Pakistan, Khan said, "If a woman is wearing very few clothes it will have an impact on the man unless they are robots. I mean, it's common sense."

Despite the prevalence of rape cases in the country, the airing of the clippings was not met with any censorship or suspension orders, and they were shown on almost all news channels. Unsurprisingly, PEMRA chose to sit that one out, but it draws the line at the criticism of *public* institutions. The situation would be comical if it was not so tragic.

Concluding Remarks

While taking stock of the current situation, I am reminded of the title sequence of a children's classic, "A Series of Unfortunate Events";

"You may think that Baudelaires, ought to prevail,
And be tucked some place, all safe and sound,
Count Olaf captured, and rotting in jail,
His henchpeople nowhere around,
But there's no happy endings, not here and not now,
This tale is all sorrows and woes,
You dream that justice, and peace win the day,
But that's not how the story goes"

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Article

The Strategic Importance of the Indian Ocean to China and India

About the Author



Allah Nawaz is studying at Anaheim University.

Introduction

The 21st century is marked with swiftly changing dynamics of global politics and to cope with looming challenges, states are adopting timely measures to secure their respective national interests. This article will focus on the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region [where a tug of war can be witnessed between China and India](#).

To pursue and secure its economic interests, China has been extending its military might in the Indian Ocean region with the help of smaller South Asian littoral states. The network of Chinese bases in these states makes a string encircling India, and strategists have termed it as the string of pearls strategy.

The smaller South Asian states are either directly or indirectly dependent on China in terms of trade and economic relations which gives China an upper hand in this region. The debt trap launched by China showed its true colours when China [took charge of the Hambantota seaport of Sri Lanka for a lease of 99 years](#).

A View from the Indian Ocean

The famous American maritime strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan once stated that [“whoever controls the Indian Ocean will dominate Asia, the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters.”](#) The significant amount of oil flow from the Persian Gulf to the whole world augments its strategic importance, and the sea lines of communications help the smooth flow of goods through this region.

The vast territory of the Indian Ocean hosts the most important choke points. The north-western portion [hosts the Strait of Hormuz, while the eastern portion hosts the Strait of Malacca](#). The Malacca strait is critical for China’s trade supplies, as it connects the South China Sea. The third important chokepoint is Bab el Mandeb, or the Strait of Djibouti, which links the Indian Ocean with the Red Sea.

The US base in Diego Garcia of the Chagos Islands and the Chinese military base in the Obock region of Djibouti are significant. India, the third main stakeholder in the Indian Ocean region, currently carried strategic deals with Australia for mutual adventures on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The establishment of the fifth Indian naval command on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal is another significant anti-China move.

China's Strategic Policies

The Salami-slicing Tactic

The term was first introduced by Hungarian Stalinist dictator Mátyás Rákosi. The [salami-slicing strategy in war terminology is defined as dividing the major disputed areas into smaller portions](#) and then conquering them one by one. China practices salami-slicing tactics against India in border areas by slow and gradual movements.

The [turbulent standoffs between both states due to lack of exact demarcation have](#) given birth to new challenges. After the annexation of Aksai Chin in 1962, the border in the Ladakh region was termed as the line of actual control (LAC). The new battlefield emerged last year at the tri-junction area of Doklam where India, Bhutan, and China have high stakes.

The Chinese ambitions of constructing a road to link Bhutan's market faced backlash from India as Chinese strong footprints in this region was [a direct threat to the Indian Siliguri corridor](#). The Aksai Chin annexation, the Pangong Lake incident, and the Doklam issue were carried out using this salami-slicing strategy. The annexation of the Paracel Islands from Vietnam in the 1970s and the Scarborough Shoals case are other prominent examples of this strategy.

String of Pearls

The [string can be divided into two parts: the western half and the eastern half](#). The western half of the string starts from Djibouti, where China has [established a military base in the Obock region](#), allowing the Chinese navy to keep a close eye on the Bab el Mandab region and the western portion of the Indian Ocean.

The next point in this string is Gwadar, the most significant deep seaport in the region.

The [naval cooperation between China and Pakistan is a serious concern](#) for India, as this Pakistani port not only serves as a commercial port but also as a naval base used for surveillance. The third important base is in Feydhoo Finolhu island of the Maldives. The eastern half of the string starts from the Chittagong port of Bangladesh; the other key base is Coco island in Myanmar.

The string gains more importance by the inclusion of the Kyaukpyu commercial port of Myanmar which is established by China. The purpose of this port is to transport oil supplies from Myanmar to Kunming city of China to cut Chinese dependence on the Malacca Strait. The other key bases are in Kuantan (Malaysia) and Maura (Brunei).

Maritime Silk Route

Chinese President Xi Jinping has been desiring the revival of the ancient silk route of China; it will pass through the Indian Ocean and connect South Asian states with European markets. Indian and American strategists, however, have [referred to it as a debt trap](#).

Sea Wings

China, under its project 'sea wings' launched in December 2019, deployed underwater unmanned submarines and research vessels in the Indian Ocean, to gather information about the location of the Indian submarines. These submarines detect the electronic signals emerging from the movement of Indian submarines and vessels.



India's Strategic Policies

The Necklace of Diamonds

To counter the Chinese string of pearl strategy, India is focusing on the same sort of encircling



strategy. India established the Chabahar port in Iran to nullify the Gwadar impact, but the objectives are yet to be achieved. The development of the fifth naval command centre in the Andaman and Nicobar islands is aimed to secure the Bay of Bengal territories from Chinese adventures.

Other important Indian bases included in this counter strategy are the Changi base in Singapore, the Sabang base on the northern tip of Indonesia, the Duqm base in Oman, and the base on Assumption Island in Seychelles.

Double Fish Hook Strategy

With the support of France, Australia, Japan, and the US, Indian naval forces launched the double fish hook strategy to counter the growing Chinese military power. The eastern hook starts from the Andaman Islands and includes the Sabang port of Indonesia and the Diego Garcia base of the USA in the Chagos Islands.

The western hook starts from the Chabahar port of Iran and includes the Duqm base of Oman and the Assumption base in Seychelles.

Military Modernization Through Alliances

The United States

The nuclear deal concluded in 2008, paved the way for US military supplies to India. The Indian military new land warfare doctrine of 2018 introduced multi-front war scenarios against Pakistan and China (northern border). The new land warfare doctrine divides the battle group and divisions into more integrated battle groups.

To carry these battle groups to war fronts, India has been purchasing the Chinook helicopters, the C-130J Hercules, the C-17 Globemaster, Howitzers, and the deadly AH-64 Apache.

Russia and Israel

The alliance with Russia has provided India with the T-90 tanks, [the S-400 missile system](#), the



BrahMos missile, and the Akula-II submarine. The Indo-Israel defence collaboration mainly revolves around the modernisation of the Indian army through the supply of more advanced electronic warfare systems such as the Rishat-2, GSAT-6, GSAT-7, among others.

These long-range reconnaissance and observatory systems have given India an edge to track enemy movement in the region. Moreover, the provision of air defence systems like the Barak-8 and the Barak-1 have enormously increased Indian military power. India has also been purchasing the T-80 tanks and the Kamov Ka-25 helicopters from Israel



Conclusion

It is clear that the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region is not only confined to China and India. The involvement of the US in this great game diversifies the impact of this rivalry. China's rise in South Asia to secure alternative trade routes

is not acceptable to India and the US. Hence, India's continuous military modernisation with the support of the US is aimed to neutralise Chinese military ingress into the Indian Ocean region.

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The Pension Fiasco in France and the UK

About the Author



Maryam Jilani is a student of Sociology who passionately believes in the advocacy of human rights and women empowerment.

Uk and France: Countries in Europe

The United Kingdom is an island nation off the coast of Europe's northwest. London, the nation's



capital, is one of the top cities for business, finance, and culture in the globe. Moreover, it has significantly influenced the global economy, particularly in the fields of technology and production.

France, on the other hand, is a nation in northwest Europe. It is one of the most influential countries in Western history and culture, having had former

colonies all over the world. With the Atlantic and Mediterranean Seas, the Alps, and the Pyrenees as its borders, France has long served as a physical, linguistic, and financial link between northern and southern Europe. It is one of the top manufacturing nations on earth and the largest agricultural producer in Europe.

A Look at UK and France's Recent Workforce

In the three months leading up to January 2023, there were over [32.8 million](#) working persons in the UK, somewhat more than during the corresponding time in 2022. The average yearly wage for full-time workers in the UK in 2022 was about [33,000 pounds](#), with men between the [ages of 40 and 49](#) making the most money working full-time.

In conclusion, males of all ages continuously made more money each year than their female counterparts. The biggest disparity was seen in older age groups, where women in their 50s made about 30,603 pounds a year, while males made about 37,877 pounds.

For women and men in France, the life expectancy at birth is 85.1 and 79.1 years respectively. The economic stimulus initiatives allowed a robust recovery after 2020, which was marked by an exceptional crisis (COVID-19) and a decline in hiring as a consequence.

Furthermore, the gross domestic product increased by 7.0% in 2021, whereas, in the 4th quarter of 2021, the unemployment rate was 7.4%, which was a 0.7-point decline from the previous year and 27,728,000 persons were employed. The job market for those between the ages of 15 and 64 was 67.3% in this same year which was the highest level since 1975.

Pension Gap in the UK

There is still a startling difference in pensions between men and women in modern-day Britain. Women continue to be the underdogs when it comes to having financial stability in old age. According to official data, single women make up the majority of the UK's poorest seniors. The gender pension disparity occurs in many other nations as well, therefore it won't be readily fixed.

Those with little to no private pension savings, however, are at a significant disadvantage in retirement due to the UK's extremely low level of state pension coverage. The fact that women have fewer lifetime incomes is one of the main causes of the gender pension gap.

They are more likely than men to work part-time or in positions with lower incomes on average, or to work a second job and retire early; typically earning less than men throughout an average working life due to caring duties which extend to even adulthood, after their child-rearing years. This puts their retirement savings at risk as they receive lower pensions because pension funds are based on their earnings.

Their income ability and pension chances continue to be seriously hampered by the inadequate care systems in the country, which apply to both youngsters and senior citizens. Many people provide unpaid care for loved ones, yet this reduces their availability for paid employment. Based on recent ONS data, the number of women quitting their jobs to care for their families has [increased by 3%](#) in the last year.

Without significant adjustments, these issues will only get worse as the population ages. The groundbreaking workplace pension auto-enrolment program, which puts many women in danger of lesser pensions than men, is likewise entrenched with the gender pensions disparity. The only people who qualify to be enrolled as a matter of course are those who make more than £10,000 per year in any one job. Hence the total absence of those with several occupations that each pay less than £10,000 is thought to affect increasingly 3 million women.

Another issue for low-paid women is that many workplace pension plans require those making just under £12,570 annually to pay 25% more for their pensions, which could lead to more people choosing to forgo retirement entirely. This issue affects well over a million women, and even though the Treasury has vowed to right the wrong, it won't happen until 2025.

Furthermore, women who divorce may also suffer later in life. The government was credited with the brilliant notion of allowing divorced women to share their ex's pension. However, when a partner doesn't accurately disclose the correct worth of their pension, many divorced women miss out greatly due to a lack of financial literacy and inadequate safeguards. The wife may be severely underpaid if she cannot access competent legal representation or just believes that the value provided by her husband is accurate.

Women are missing out disproportionately on both private and state pensions, which is even more concerning. Even the newly created state pension, which was introduced in 2016, shows women losing out after decades of injustice in the public insurance system. This is surprising considering that the new system is designed to provide a flat-rate state pension without any components based on wages.

According to the full state pension amount (although it has decreased from £30 per week), women are still expected to have pensions that are around £10 per week below that of men. It is predicted that the gap won't close until the 2040s. The old system's remnants play a role in this, but there are also aspects of the standard requirements that disfavor women.

For instance, the child benefit means test mandates that women file for the benefit even if they are aware they will not receive any, lest they lose their score for their government pension.

Pension Reform Legislation: Protests on the Streets of France

Among the major European economies, France has the lowest eligibility age for a government pension and spends a lot of money maintaining the system. Emmanuel Macron's proposals to extend the retirement age in France from 62 to 64, which will result in making some government workers lose their privileges, and the period of work years necessary to be eligible for a full pension to increase, have resulted in numerous pension protests.



The opposition movement has lasted over two months and is historically sizable even by French measures. It is estimated that 1.28 million people took to the streets on 14 March 2023. The measure is seen as a violation of the social compact by many in the streets since French workers pay a significant portion of their salaries over the period they are employed to fund a reasonably decent and efficient retirement system.

By raising the qualifying floor, benefits will be reduced, which will disproportionately impact the poorest people. Nevertheless, given that the administration has been oblivious to those voices for weeks on end, unions claim they are left with no choice but to step up the campaign. They have switched from a plan developed around single-day protests to one that combines more disruptive, wide strikes in advance of final votes on the pension legislation in the Senate and National Assembly of France. Even though it will be difficult, if properly applied, the strategy could be successful.

The disruptions may make it more difficult to pass legislation because President Macron lacks an absolute majority in the National Assembly and depends on support from the right-wing Les Républicains. The plan of the unions is as follows: they concentrate on work stoppages at control points like public transportation, garbage pickup, ports, and refineries where they feel they can organize members. These strikes cause oversized interruptions for businesses and the general public alike.

Strikes like these have a significant chance of alienating prospective supporters under normal conditions, but these are not usual conditions. In one poll, about [seven out of ten](#) respondents said they opposed the pension change, while 56% said they would support an ongoing strike to stop the legislation.

The regional train system is a key component of the union plan since it has historically been a hub for worker rebellion. The “renewable strike” was approved by train unions giving employees the legal right to continue being on the job until they choose otherwise. The conditions are right for this trend to continue.

Rail workers have been joined by dock workers at the major ports, from the Channel to the Mediterranean, trash collectors in Paris, truck drivers purposefully decelerating down traffic or obstructing highways, and workers at power companies who have pushed the law's boundaries to impose headline-grabbing power outages, directly attacking everything from an Amazon warehouse to the New York Stock Exchange.

Since Macron was unsure of the support of enough parliamentarians, he made a sudden, last-minute decision to deploy special constitutional powers to push the measures through without a vote on 16 March 2023. [Article 49.3](#) of the constitution gave the executive special authority to ignore parliamentarians. The exercise of extraordinary powers highlights Macron's challenging parliamentary position.

As his centrist grouping failed to win an actual majority in the parliamentary elections last June amid big improvements for the far right and radical left, he was seriously undercut in the National Assembly. Without a plurality, the administration was forced to rely on Les Républicains lawmakers to support the pension reforms. The numbers, however, did not add up despite weeks of talks. Immediately after, hundreds of people spontaneously assembled in protest at the city's Place de la Concorde as trade unions vowed to step up the strikes and pension protests that had been going on since January.

Philippe Martinez, the leader of the hardline CGT union, claimed that imposing the rule "shows disrespect toward the public." On 16 March 2023, several demonstrators flung cobblestones as police arrested and used tear gas and water jet to try to disperse the throng. Moreover, there were unplanned demonstrations against the change in several other French cities, notably Marseille.

La Figaro reports that police have taken [120 persons](#) into custody in Paris. In one encounter with protesters and rioters, a police officer allegedly suffered injuries. Many demonstrators set fires and damaged storefronts in side streets as the gathering dispersed, according to Agence France-Presse reporters. According to them, looting occurred during protests in Marseille, which is in the south of the nation.

Furthermore, conflicts between protestors and police personnel also broke out in Nantes, Rennes, and Lyon, which are in the southeast. On Thursday, March 23, French unions demanded yet another day of strikes and protests against the legislation.

France's Resistance & the UK's Passive Submission

Analyzing the situation of pensions in the UK, one could easily see a pattern of laws, procedures, and obscure pension planning schemes in the state as well as private workplaces, which works as a spider web trapping. Those who had known to suffer a wage gap during their working period would face even more troublesome circumstances later in their life when the amplified lack of funds, disrupted healthcare, degrading lifestyles, and increasing inflation would bring them into a cycle of tyranny.

In a country where they have contributed and have been a substantial part of the productive workforce, women's conditions would nonetheless be cruel to their existence and survival. Even the laws and rules in women's favor have loopholes and they could easily miss out on any given opportunity due to a lack of awareness and financial illiteracy. It seems obvious that it would be beneficial to lower the auto-enrolment levels to include anyone making less than £10,000.

There must be a strengthening of the protection of women's pensions following divorce and enhancing workplace financial knowledge to assist women in understanding pensions. Another radical reform might look at ways to support women and their spouses' pension payments during the years they are caring for others, as well as ways to encourage stay-at-home mothers to ask their spouses for pension contributions on their behalf.

In the case of France, it has a pension system that is cherished for what parliamentarians refer to as "solidarity between the generations" – where the workforce pays statutory payroll levies to finance those in retirement. This is in contrast to the market-led system of the UK. A state pension is provided to all French employees.

The historic, massive demonstrations, opposition, and resistance on the streets of France are not a mere pass time for people but in fact, a true reflection of their misery and a reaction to the drastically poorly calculated measure.

The people who work most of their lives and have a hard time surviving and making it past each day have a clear stance and are not ready to let go of their rights. However, the power of French unions is likewise not as homogeneous as foreigners may believe. The grève par procuration, or “proxy strike,” theory was put forward by a pollster and a sociologist in response to the 1995 French strike wave, which was also related to pension reform. This theory postulates that some employees participated in the strike as representatives of supporters who lacks the resources or militant mindset to participate themselves.

The concept was appealing to trade unionists who were concerned about their waning power, but it has subsequently been used as a justification for their inability to attract and motivate the rank-and-file. Why mobilize if you can just rely on the well-known bulwarks of union power to carry the load? Although few openly support the proxy strike as a tactic, the underlying reasoning is still prevalent in some parts of the labor movement.



Riot police were present in Paris, France on Saturday amid pension protests against raising the retirement age. There are several important businesses, ranging from aviation to logistics, where unions have failed to turn out in force, despite all the areas of the economy where they are flexing their muscles. Wide strikes among teachers have been resisted, despite their clear disruptive potential.

If French unions are successful in unseating Macron, it will be a tremendous win. But they have already exceeded all expectations in numerous ways. By forging national integration, they have demonstrated that they can still credibly assert their right to speak for the nation's working class, adding tens of thousands of supporters in the process.

Also, they have highlighted those who oppose the president's agenda. Therefore it could be concluded that the socioeconomic and political climate of the UK and France vary drastically; the narrative of pension in the UK is dominated by passive submission in contrast to France's disapproval, mass mobilization, and resistance.

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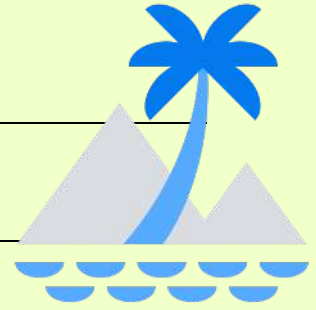
1. Which country has the longest coastline in the world?

A. Canada

B. Australia

C. Indonesia

D. Russia



2. Which is the world's most populated country?

A. India

B. China

C. USA

D. Russia



3. What is the capital of the Philippines?

A. Dili

B. Jakarta

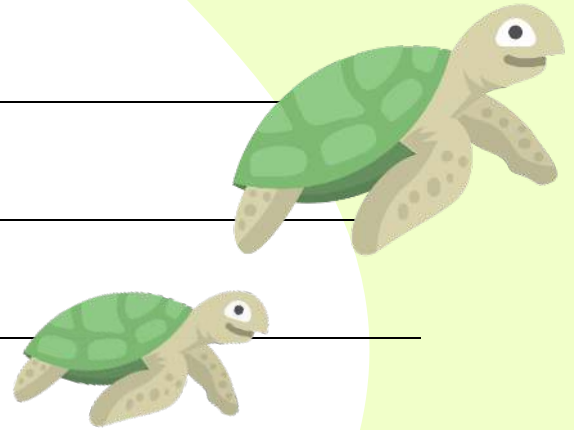
C. Marawi

D. Manilla



4. The Great Barrier Reef is off the coast of?

- A. USA
- B. Australia
- C. India
- D. Thailand



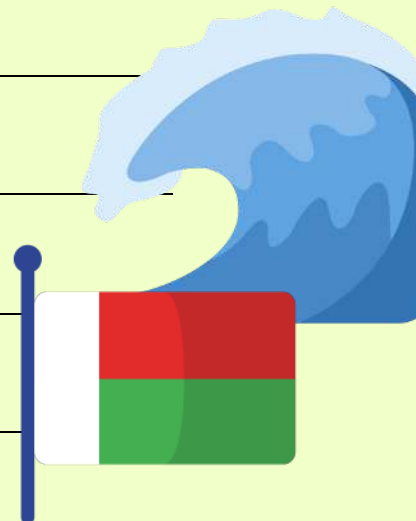
5. Which is the World's Smallest Country?

- A. Monaco
- B. Luxembourg
- C. Vatican City
- D. Lichtenstein



6. In which ocean is the island of Madagascar?

- A. Arctic
- B. Pacific
- C. Indian
- D. Atlantic



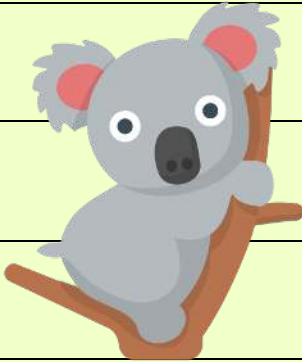
7. Where is the Chernobyl nuclear plant located?

- A. _____ Russia
- B. _____ Ukraine
- C. _____ Serbia
- D. _____ Finland



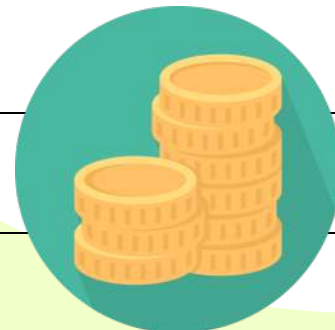
8. What is the capital of Australia?

- A. _____ Sydney
- B. _____ Melbourne
- C. _____ Canberra
- D. _____ Adelaide



9. Which country uses the Shilling as its currency?

- A. _____ Kenya
- B. _____ Malta
- C. _____ Qatar
- D. _____ Zimbabwe



Answers!



1. A (Canada)

Canada's coastline is the world's longest, measuring 243,042 km (includes the mainland coast and the coasts of offshore islands). This compares with Indonesia (54,716 km), Russia (37,653 km), the United States (19,924 km) and China (14,500 km).

2. B (China)

China has the world's largest population (1.426 billion), but India (1.417 billion) is expected to claim this title in 2023. The next five most populous nations – the United States, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria and Brazil – together have fewer people than India or China. In fact, China's population is greater than the entire population of Europe (744 million) or the Americas (1.04 billion) and roughly equivalent to that of all nations in Africa (1.427 billion).

3. D (Manilla)

Manila is the capital, but nearby Quezon City is the country's most-populous city. Both are part of the National Capital Region (Metro Manila), located on Luzon, the largest island.

4. B (Australia)

Stretching for 1,429 miles over an area of approximately 133,000 square miles, the Great Barrier Reef is the largest coral reef system in the world. The reef is located off the coast of Queensland, Australia, in the Coral Sea.

5. C (Vatican City)

The smallest country in the world is Vatican City, according to worldatlas.com. It is a nation-state located within Rome, Italy and is home to the global headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. The country boasts an area of just 0.19 square miles, or 0.49 square kilometers, and has a population of around 800 to 900 people.

6. C (Indian)

Madagascar, officially the Republic of Madagascar, is a sovereign island country in the Indian Ocean, approximately 400 kilometres (250 miles) off the coast of East Africa across the Mozambique Channel. At 592,800 square kilometres (228,900 sq. mi.), it is the world's second-largest island country, after Indonesia.

7. B (Ukraine)

The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant is located about 81 miles (130 kilometers) north of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and about 12 miles (20 km) south of the border with Belarus, according to the World Nuclear Association.

8. C (Canberra)

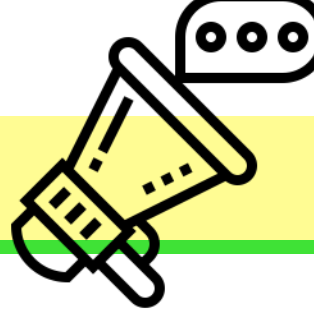
Australia's capital is Canberra, located in the southeast between the larger and more important economic and cultural centres of Sydney and Melbourne.

9. A (Kenya)

Currently the shilling is used as a currency in five east African countries: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia, as well as the de facto country of Somaliland.

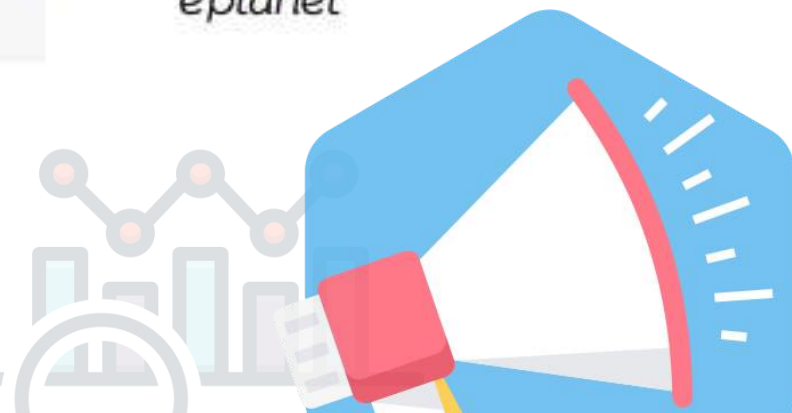


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