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Foreword

Welcome to the thirteenth 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 around **200,000 monthly visits**, and over **60,000 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 **12 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

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Act Now Against These Companies Profiting from the Genocide of the Palestinian People

To Boycott or Not to Boycott: A Pakistani Dilemma

About the Author

M. Hamza Tanvir graduated from COMSATS University. He has a keen interest in international relations and regional politics.

The War in Gaza

Israel has killed over 21,000 Palestinians since October 7, 2023. This includes a huge number of children and women. Most of the people killed in this war are civilians, including journalists. Israel blames Hamas for its recent genocide in the Gaza Strip. However, many, including UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, hold that the Hamas attacks did not happen in isolation, as they were the result of decades of oppression and occupation.

Moreover, it is being claimed by many experts that Israel is committing this ethnic cleansing in Gaza to build the Ben-Gurion Canal around the Gaza Strip to achieve its economic aims and decrease dependence on the Suez Canal. Different international food chains and brands have been supporting Israel in its war crimes in Gaza. This has sparked outrage among pro-Palestinian people all around the globe.

The BDS Movement Against Israel

Israel's technological advancement, its support by the United States and some other European nations, disharmony among the Muslim states, and its weak military strength have coerced the pro-Palestinian people to look for other means to stop Israel's atrocities. Boycotting pro-Israel and Israeli products has become an effective way to protest against Israel's massacre in Gaza. For this purpose, the Palestinian people have developed the "Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction movement."

This movement has enlisted numerous pro-Israel products that the weak Muslim nations should boycott to support Palestine. Although the movement has been labeled anti-Semitic by sympathizers of Israel, a host of famous personalities, including celebrities, have joined it.

Amidst this new wave of Israeli war crimes in Gaza, the BDS movement has resurfaced. People around the world are boycotting the brands that, directly or indirectly, are supporting Israel in its genocidal campaign in Gaza. This boycott of Israeli products has resulted in colossal losses for many of these brands.

As per reports, Starbucks has faced a huge loss of more than $11 billion due to this boycott. Furthermore, reports suggest that Starbucks and H&M would permanently close their businesses in Morocco by the end of 2023 due to the losses followed by the prevailing boycott. The Israeli boycott campaign is gaining momentum with time. People in Pakistan have also shunned pro-Israel brands in the wake of this boycott movement. McDonald's, Nestlé, Pepsi, Fiverr, and Amazon are among the most well-known pro-Israel brands and companies in Pakistan.

McDonald's Pakistan has experienced the most serious blowback due to this boycott. The effect of McDonald's boycott could be gauged by the fact that it has lowered its prices by up to 60 percent to maintain its sales in the country. However, this boycott campaign has sparked a new debate among citizens about whether international brands should be boycotted or not.

Anti-boycott Stance

In this renewed debate on boycotting pro-Israel brands, some people hold that international brands and companies operating in Pakistan should not be boycotted. Such people have their views about the issue. Their strongest argument is that a huge number of the Pakistani population is associated with pro-Israel international brands and companies working in the country to earn their livelihood.

As per estimates, Nestlé runs four factories in Pakistan and has almost 3,700 direct employees. In addition, a huge number of people are also indirectly associated with Nestlé by supplying, selling, and distributing their products. McDonald's Pakistan also has a huge number of employees in Pakistan. The same goes for Unilever and other pro-Israel companies operating in Pakistan.

The country earns a huge chunk of its remittances through freelancing. According to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Pakistan earned almost $397 million in FY 2021–22. Fiverr, headquartered in Israel, is one of the major freelancing platforms and takes 20 percent of every order. This also strengthens Israel's economy, along with providing remittances to countries like Pakistan.

Another major argument the people opposing the Israeli boycott present is that boycotting international brands will hamper foreign direct investment (FDI) in the country in the future. For a dollar-starved country like Pakistan, foreign direct investments are necessary to solve its employment and economic issues. Foreign investors and international companies will be frightened to invest in Pakistan, lest the boycotting attitude of the country have a detrimental effect on its economy.

Pro-boycott Stance

On the other hand, there are people in Pakistan who support boycotts against pro-Israel brands and companies. In the past, there has been a boycott campaign in Pakistan against French companies because of the pro-blasphemy stance of the French government. Supporters of the boycott campaign also have solid arguments in support of their stance. They hold that boycotting pro-Israel companies will pressure them and the Israeli government economically. Recently, Starbucks has faced massive losses due to its pro-Israel stance. Moreover, the boycott of McDonald's in Pakistan and other Muslim countries has also been effective.

Utilizing the Israeli Boycott

No doubt, boycotting international brands in Pakistan will impinge on the economy of the country by reducing foreign direct investment. It will also impact the people employed by brands like Nestlé, Pepsi, Unilever, and other such companies. However, it will also help in the promotion of local brands. Instead of using cold drinks made by international companies, Pakistani people can use local soft drinks like Cola Next, Pakola, etc.

This will also help in decreasing the current account deficit of the country, along with providing alternate employment opportunities to people affiliated with international brands in Pakistan. Generating employment opportunities inside the country and an increase in the value of the rupee will cease the persistent brain drain in Pakistan.

Two of Pakistan's neighboring countries, Russia and China, have made significant progress by promoting local products. Russia has launched its own brands to replace McDonald's & IKEA in the country (*similar logos of imitation brands in Russia shown in the image on the left*). Similarly, China has also emerged to the level of a superpower by promoting local industries. This has provided a significant boost to the country's economy.

By developing local industries, China has also become one of the major exporters in the world.

Promoting local industries can also elevate Pakistan's economic plight. For freelancing, Pakistani people can also use local platforms. In addition, promoting local businesses will also decrease their dependence on foreign companies. It will also increase the value of the rupee internationally. Indeed, there are contradictory views on boycotting international companies and businesses. However, the arguments on both sides have their own weight and strengths.

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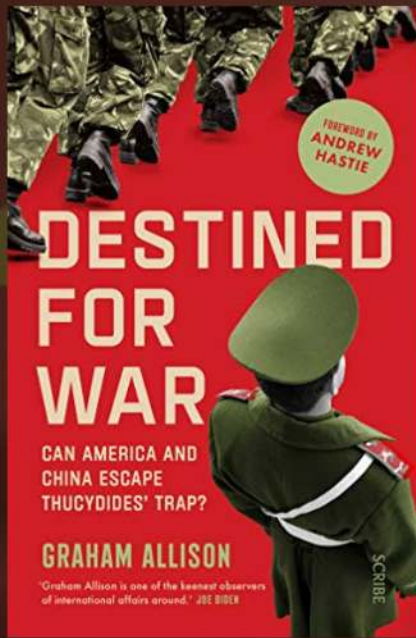
Destined for War: Can America and China Escape the Thucydides's Trap

About the Author

M. Shehryar is currently pursuing his Bachelor's in International Relations at the University of Peshawar.

Various dominant powers have molded and dominated the global order throughout history, with other states supporting them. In *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape the Thucydides's Trap*, Allison states the United States enjoys hegemony, but this system is under threat from various rising nations, particularly China. China's ambitions to recapture greatness have alarmed the White House. This is reminiscent of Trump's "Make America Great Again" election campaign slogan, which had strained US relations with many states.

The dispute in the South China Sea is rising, potentially leading to a dangerous clash between the two countries. The ongoing worldwide discussion concerns whether China and America can avoid Thucydides's Trap, a situation in which war between an existing and rising power becomes unavoidable. Allison claims that war between the United States and China is unavoidable, and cautions that historical trends show states stumbling toward conflict due to escalating incentives beyond political control.

Despite leaders' aversion to violence, historical ties and trust deficits might accidentally lead to armed confrontations. The author urges both countries' presidents to adopt foreign policies that promote peace, asking them to learn from previous mistakes to prevent their countries from repeating the tragic cycle of conflict. The American order has dominated the world's events for over a century. However, the rise of China has instilled fear in the United States, creating a toxic cocktail of arrogance, pride, and paranoia that might result in conflict.

The Thucydides Trap highlights the deadly dynamic that occurs when an ascending power, like Athens or Germany a century ago, or China now, challenges an established power, such as Sparta or Britain in the past, or the United States today. Henry Kissinger suggested that embracing Thucydides's Trap concept offers a valuable perspective, acting as a lens to cut through the noise of daily news and comprehend the underlying dynamics.

Destined for War serves as a strategic guide for serious readers seeking to navigate and understand the complexities of our seemingly chaotic world. Historians, politicians, and scientists frequently seek insights from both the past and the present to derive generalizations or principles that can guide leaders in future decision-making.

This book meticulously explores the last 500 years of history, identifying 16 situations in which the rise of a power posed a threat to an established power, with twelve of these examples resulting in war. When third-party provocations induce reactions, a spiral begins that accidentally draws both powers into an undesired territory.

In the contemporary global power equilibrium, China adopts a revisionist perspective, contending that the current world order was established during a period when China was a weaker nation and not significantly engaged internationally. Reflecting on its past, China, once a dominant force, has experienced subjugation by Western powers, a viewpoint that resonates with both the Chinese authorities and its populace. Unlike the United States, which promotes universalism and works to spread its culture around the world, China is more internally focused.

China acknowledges a historical oversight in neglecting its maritime interests, viewing war as a last resort in conflict resolution. As a result, under Xi's leadership, there is a concerted effort to strengthen the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) naval, air, and missile capabilities while simultaneously reducing ground forces. Xi Jinping's efforts are centered on the goal of restoring China's greatness. Specific goals and timelines have been established to achieve this vision.

China aims to be the dominant force in the primary markets of ten leading technologies by 2025. Looking ahead to 2035, the goal is to establish itself as the leading innovator in all advanced technologies. As a result of these ambitions, China aims to unambiguously claim the top spot by 2049, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the People's Republic, encompassing not only economic domains but also asserting supremacy, including military strength.

Allison goes on to outline China's grand strategy, identifying four primary goals that shape the country's overall strategic vision, which is restoring China to its pre-West Asian dominance, reestablishing China's former territories, as well as territories for which China is also seeking their former sphere of influence and national prestige. While describing China's revival strategies, he also provides a more comprehensive account of the similarities and differences between the US and China's foreign policies, claiming that both are prisoners of their extreme superiority complexes, with one seeing itself as the beacon for the world and the other going even further, seeing itself as the unique link between humans and heavens and seeing everyone else as barbarians.

America is a democratic country with an open political and economic system, whereas China is an authoritarian with legitimacy derived from competence in performance. Both have distinct values. Americans perceive their cultural principles as globally relevant and actively export these ideals abroad, while China adopts a more introspective stance, refraining from disseminating its values or interfering in foreign affairs.

The diverse American populace primarily comprises immigrants, in contrast to China's predominantly native-born citizens. Moreover, China's governance structure is highly centralized, as opposed to the more restrained governmental authority in the United States. China believes in harmony and order through domestic hierarchies. The approach taken by China is "unashamedly realpolitik" which allows the Chinese government to be very flexible without considering the need to justify its actions. America's perspective is conflicted; it wants an international "rule-based" order with rules that conform to its own domestic rules.

The United States has a genuine political understanding of "might is right." The Chinese are skeptical of the US's "rule-based" order arguing that they were not part of the global arena when these norms were established. In contrast to 2004, when the US economy outstripped China's, the two nations reached economic parity a decade later. By 2024, projections indicate that China's economy will surpass that of the US. Moreover, China has established itself as a key trade partner with all principal Asian states.

Considering the above factors, it appears almost inevitable that China and the US are on a collision course, compounded by their disparate geographical positioning, divergent historical contexts, and incongruent perceptions of reality, leaving them without a neutral baseline to resolve their disagreements. The US didn't face a problem that was not soluble by the mobilization of resources and never needed a strategic vision.

The nature of the conflict between China and the United States is very different. China does not bet everything on a single battle. China may improve its position and believe in defeating the enemy without ever fighting. China frequently employs its military against opponents who are equal to or stronger than it, possibly as a surprise. China will be patient as they gain an advantage in Asia.

China may show reluctance to engage in deadly confrontations with the United States, given the assessment that it may require over ten years for China's military capabilities to be on par with those of the US, even within proximate regions. Allison raises concerns that should current trends in the South China Sea prove disadvantageous for China, this may provoke a detrimental response against Chinese interests, alongside challenges to broader US influence.

Conversely, the United States is also averse to warfare. Since World War I, it has experienced victory in only one out of five major wars it has participated in. The desire among the American populace to avoid further casualties is a significant deterrent against entering into conflict.

There are numerous events that could spark a war between China and the United States, including an unintentional collision in the South China Sea, Taiwan's declaration of independence, and a war provoked by a third party. China has engaged in substantial infrastructure development on its islands to enhance its monitoring capabilities. Continuous intelligence confrontations persist between China and the United States, with China endeavoring to impede American surveillance efforts.

Allison additionally offered some clues for American politicians seeking to make China's rise a case of no war: higher authorities can assist in resolving rivalry without resorting to war. States can become embedded in large economic, political, and security institutions that constrain previously normal behavior. Wise statesmen make a virtue of necessity by distinguishing between needs and desires. Economic interdependence raises the cost of war while decreasing its likelihood.

Along with hints for US leaders, Allison has also proposed strategies for the US to address the ascendant China, which are to accommodate, undermine, negotiate a long peace, and redefine the relationship. He also added that the US should face up to the realities of the situation, recognizing that there is no solution to China but rather a condition that must be managed over time. Furthermore, he suggests that all options be considered and that trade-offs be accepted.

Allison underscores the mutual objectives between China and the US in mitigating climate change, averting nuclear catastrophe, and curtailing international terrorism, advocating for a US strategic plan beyond mere reliance on the current state, hoping for optimal outcomes.

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Unrest and Uncertainty: Analyzing the Wave of Military Coups in Africa

About the Author

M. Shahbaz Rajper is a freelance columnist from Sindh.

Historical Context

Since 2020, countries in West and Central Africa have witnessed several military coups. The recent one in Gabon marks eight such coups since 2020 in this region alone; these events provide a setback to efforts underway by governments in this part of Africa to shed its reputation as a "coup belt." These events often account for persistent insecurity and corruption allowing military interventions.

Niger witnessed members of its Presidential Guard detain President Mohamed Bazoum on July 20, 2023, citing concerns for security deterioration and poor governance. This event raised significant alarm over regional stability, particularly since Niger has long been seen as an essential ally in combating insurgencies linked to al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

Burkina Faso experienced its first coup d'etat in January 2022, when military members overthrew President Roch Kaboré for failing to contain Islamist militant violence, prompting another coup attempt later that same year, which further destabilized its society and economy. A further coup occurred three months later, in September, which further undermined national stability.

Guinea saw its coup in September 2021 when Colonel Mamady Doumbouya ousted President Alpha Condé for altering the constitution to extend his term, after amending it unilaterally with controversial changes that extended it by three years. Military promises of democratic elections have yet to materialize despite promises made during these three years by Colonel Mamady Doumbouya himself.

Chad experienced an army takeover following President Idriss Deby's assassination, infuriating civil unrest. Mali experienced two coup attempts within six months: one in August 2020 followed by one more in May 2021 that disrupted democratic governance transition processes.

Gabon witnessed military officers declaring themselves to have taken power following President Ali Bongo's re-election, with accusations that his vote had been fraudulent; opposition parties denounced it as such and the coup leaders used credibility issues as justification.

International Reactions and Perspectives

Coups reveal deeper sociopolitical concerns that need to be evaluated from multiple angles. First and foremost, coups tend to arise out of profound dissatisfaction with existing governance structures. Military intervention often justifies itself by alleging corruption or poor governance practices as the reasons. Civil-military relations often break down due to this phenomenon with soldiers no longer adhering to civilian oversight while acting as alternative power centers.

Secondly, these events demonstrate an absence of trust in democratic processes and institutions, such as in Gabon where military intervention cited election fraud as justification, showing just how fragile electoral integrity in Gabon remains. Similar justifications were used by Guinea and Mali's military juntas during similar political crises, and this lack of faith eventually led to military coups in West Africa being seen as solutions.

International responses to military coups have been swift and unanimously condemnatory, emphasizing their significance for democratic governance and the rule of law. Organizations including the African Union and UN as well as countries including France have all denounced these military takeovers.

From an international relations viewpoint, these countries pose a threat to regional stability and security, creating a vacuum that can worsen existing challenges like insurgencies and economic instability. The international community recognizes that stability in these nations is imperative to overall regional peace and development.

Conclusion

Military coups across Africa, specifically West and Central Africa, are an unpredictable trend that threatens progress toward stable democratic governance. Military involvement, often justified in the face of governance failings poses a considerable threat to political stability and development. Understanding such events requires conducting extensive historical, political, and socioeconomic analyses within each nation as well as an examination of regional dynamics impacting these occurrences.

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Is the Softening of the US's Support for Israel Possible?

About the Author

Zahid Hussain is a retired engineer, based in Canada.

The United States supported the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. In the early decades, US support for Israel was mostly moral and was described by President John F Kennedy in the early '60s as a "special relationship." This relationship changed drastically after the 1967 Arab-Israel war when the US saw Israel as a stabilizing force in the Middle East to ensure reliable oil supply from the region on which it so heavily depended.

The strong bond with Israel also acted as a counterweight to the growing influence of the Soviet Union at that time. Since the 1967 war, the foreign policy of US has supported Israel not only morally, but also diplomatically, financially, and militarily. Successive US governments have solidified this support even further by adding every possible adjective to this support by calling it unwavering, unshakable, iron-clad, and rock-solid, to name a few.

Over the last three decades, the US and Israel have been cooperating in developing advanced defence technologies, particularly in the surveillance and intelligence domain. At the same time, the trade between the two countries has grown steadily making the US Israel's top trading partner, with annual bilateral trade of nearly $50 billion in goods and services, further strengthening the bond between the two countries.

This support has not diminished even when Israel ignored the clear wishes of the US presidents regarding its actions, such as the establishment of new settlements in the West Bank or ignoring the United Nations Security Council resolutions that the US did not veto. Palestinians and their supporters have often singled out the unconditional support of the US for Israel as the key reason why Israel does not seem motivated to negotiate a peace deal with Palestinians.

The horrors of the Israeli war in Gaza have affected everyone who has seen the heart-wrenching images of death and destruction. Young people in particular have been deeply disturbed as they mostly get the news from social media and podcasts on their hand-held devices which are full of horrific images. As of today, more than 17,000 Palestinians have been killed.

According to an NBC poll conducted in mid-November 2023, 56% of all US voters disapproved of President Joe Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas war. Among voters aged 18 to 34, a whopping 70% of them disapprove. This level of disapproval is problematic for Biden as, along with other issues, it puts his poll numbers behind Donald Trump in the presidential election next year. Trump now holds a slight advantage in the survey among young voters.

The loss of young voters' traditionally solid support can even cost the Democrats not only the White House but also the two houses of Congress where they currently hold a very slim majority in the Senate and are short of a majority by only a handful of seats in the House.

Does this mean that the present or future administrations in the US would recalibrate their unconditional support of Israel? Other strategic imperatives would prevent the US from significantly changing its support for Israel such as to deter Iran and its proxies from causing any trouble in the region or to counter the growing influence of China and Russia in that area. It should, however, be possible for the US to nudge Israel to seriously start negotiating with Palestinians in exchange for its support.

The US is still officially committed to a two-state solution which is the goal of Palestinians. President Biden is in the final year of his term before the next presidential election in November 2024. In January 2024, the US election cycle will begin in earnest with the start of primaries. It is unlikely that Biden will undertake a risky major initiative of peacemaking in the Middle East during the election cycle.

It should, however, be possible for him to persuade Israel to take significant steps to loosen its tight control of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to improve their living conditions. This confidence-building step will go a long way to restart the peace process which was launched in Oslo in 1993 when the time is right. Palestinians will respond positively if they see a possibility of a peace deal.

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The White Man's Burden – An American Delusion

About the Author

Hadiqa Maryam Abbasi is an undergraduate at International Islamic University Islamabad in the department of Politics and International relations.

Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem titled, "The White Man's Burden" in 1899 to justify the colonial authority exuded by America on the Philipines. In a broader lens, it provided a rationale for the colonialism of the Third World by the West, saying that the burden to democratize and civilize the people of underdeveloped countries lies on the shoulders of Whites. Kipling is dead, but his words still resonate within the walls of the White House where interventionist foreign policy is formulated.
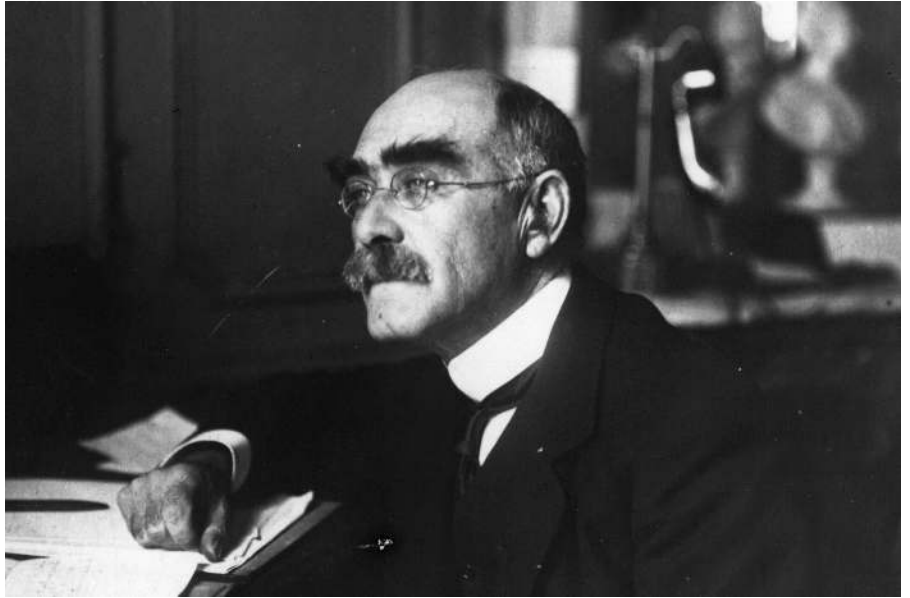
What Is The "White Man's Burden" Mentality?

It's been almost one and a half centuries since Kipling wrote this poem (a blatant manifestation of the dated, racist, and colonial mindset), but his words and mentality are far from being dead or forgotten. The US still thinks that the people from the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Latin America are uncivilized and undemocratic. And it is its job to civilize them and dictate to them what kind of government they should have in their countries.

With this mentality, from Asia to Africa, and from the Middle East to Latin America, the US has invaded and successfully conducted various regime-change operations across the globe.

While acting as the Global policeman, the US toppled many regimes in Latin America, orchestrated the Arab Spring, invaded Iraq, executed Saddam Hussein, bombed Libya, killed Gaddafi, overthrew Morsi, divided Vietnam and Korea, bombed Afghanistan back to the Stone Age, pushed the entire Middle East and Africa into civil war and a whirlpool of economic chaos, killed millions of innocent citizens across the globe and much more.

History Repeats Itself

Let's have a quick review of the US invasion of Libya and Iraq.

Libya 2011

The US says that it invaded Libya to safeguard human rights and to free the North African State from the clutches of barbarianism. But, today's Libya is presenting a much more horrific picture than the Libya of the past.

According to reports, Libya's human rights situation is much worse than it was back in 2011. There has been a civil war going on for the past ten years. Two factions are fighting to get hold of Tripoli. The state still doesn't have its constitution, all the while security forces and armed militias are continuously committing grave human rights violations against civilians.

The government of National Unity has held control over Tripoli, and the Libyan Government is in charge of the country's eastern and southern regions. Some parts of the country are under the brutal control of armed militias, who can and have been doing whatever they want without any restriction or retribution. Abductions for ransom, sexual slavery, torture, and economic chaos are all prevalent in post-Gaddafi Libya. The Mediterranean Sea has become a mass graveyard for Libyans trying to escape the war-torn country.

Iraq 2003

The same goes for Iraq. At the time of the invasion, the Western leaders blatantly lied about Iraq having WMDs (weapons of mass destruction) and made false claims. Let's look at a few of the white lies uttered by the Western hawks. Twenty years ago, George Bush said in his televised address, "American and Coalition forces are in Iraq to free its people and to defend the world from the grave danger" of nuclear weapons. Neither were the weapons of mass destruction found nor are the people free today.

**An American Soldier points his gun at an injured Iraqi
— Wally Santana — July 2003/AP Photo**

Similar statements were uttered by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK). On September 24, 2002, the then-UK Prime Minister Tony Blair told the British House of Commons that the claims of weapons of mass destruction were true and that action in Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein was imperative, declaring, "Of course, there is no doubt that Iraq, the region, and the whole world would be better off without Saddam." The public should question Mr. Blair, Saddam is gone, but the region instead of being better off has been plunged into its deadliest turmoil of the decade; where are the aforementioned weapons of mass destruction?

"My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources ... What we're giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence."

Colin Powell, then-US Secretary of State, addressing the Security Council

What sort of 'solid' intelligence was it, that, after twenty years, you have been forced to accept the truth and deny the fact that Iraq had any weapons? A poignant question is raised as to whether Powell was ill-informed or was deliberately making false claims. But one thing remains plain as day, the decision to invade Iraq with such brutal ferocity was taken impulsively without giving any second thoughts to the consequences of the invasion.

After seven drawn-out years of mindless war and bloodshed, President Obama said in his televised address, "Operation Iraqi Freedom is over, and the Iraqi people now have lead responsibility for the security of their country." To date, nobody knows what kind of freedom Obama was talking about.

Let's take a look at the awful legacy this brutal war left behind. The US invasion of Iraq destabilized the whole region and pushed Iraq into a civil war, leaving more than 200,000 innocent civilians dead. The economy effectively collapsed and turned the country into a battleground for Iran and Saudi Arabia struggling to gain a foothold in the region.

President Bush shamelessly dubbed this entire fiasco "Mission Accomplished" and an American victory. That's what the deadly US-led invasion bequeathed Iraq.

The horrible aftershocks of the war still reverberate throughout the whole region, and today, both Libya and Iraq are grappling with multiple issues including but not limited to acute food insecurity and climbing unemployment. Is this the" liberal democracy" promised by George H.W. Bush? How can a country trampling the sovereignty of nations across the globe claim to be the flag bearer of democracy and peace?

Under the pretext of democratization and human rights, all that the West has done to date is destroy nations, loot their resources, and reduce them down to dilapidated states whom they could easily control through imperialist institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. If it was really about democracy, the Dictator Sisi of Egypt would not have been a golfing buddy of former US president Donald Trump.

It's high time for the US to shed its "White Man's Burden" mentality and realize that it is not an American duty to dictate the ins and outs of Government to other sovereign states.

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Number of Palestinian and Israeli fatalities and injuries caused by the 2023 Israel-Palestine War
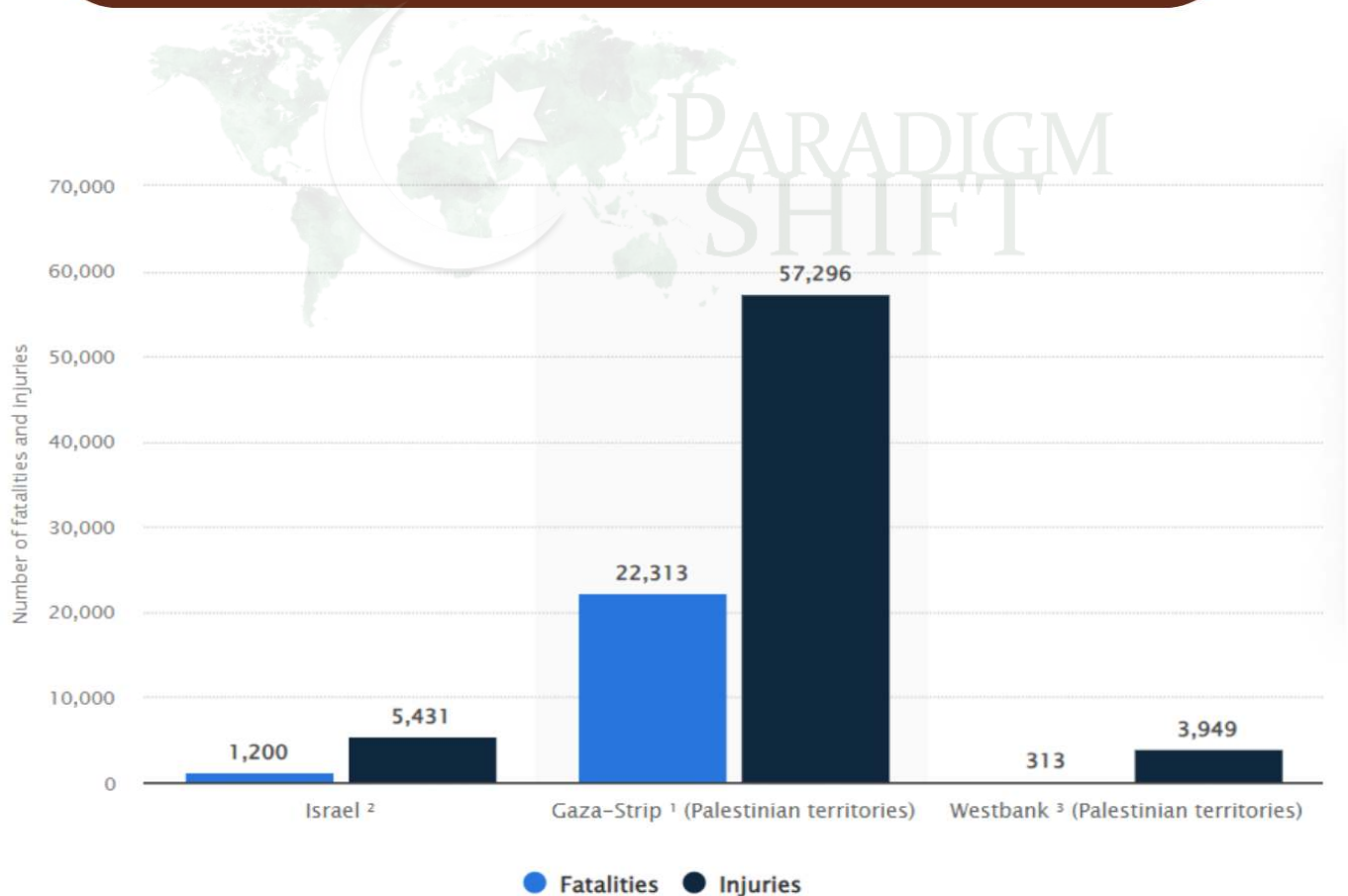
Since October 7, 2023 (till January 3, 2024), 22,313 Palestinians have been killed, and 57,296 have been injured.

The number of Palestinian deaths in the West Bank is 313.

¹ *According to the source, the data is based on official reporting of Gaza Ministry of Health (MoH) on fatalities and injuries.*

² *According to the source, the data is based on official reporting of Israeli authorities on fatalities and injuries*

³ *According to the source, the data is based on official reporting of the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) on fatalities and injuries.*

Source: Statista

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Al-Khidmat is working with its partners on ground to get aid to the people of Gaza.

Visit https://alkhidmat.org/

Evolving Concept of Sovereignty in Democratic & Capitalistic Societies

About the Author

Khalid Kayani is a highly educated United Arab Emirates-based Pakistani businessman. During his business career, he has invested in and created businesses in Russia, the United Arab Emirates, West & East Africa, Europe, China, and Pakistan.

The concept of sovereignty is tied to individual freedom which is experienced by the sanctity of the individual space. Individual space refers to personal time, physical surroundings, and mental autonomy which enables the following:

1. Autonomy and Independence: Having personal space fosters autonomy and independence. When individuals have the freedom to make decisions about how they spend their time and what activities they engage in, they develop a sense of agency and self-reliance.

2. Creativity and Innovation: Individual space allows uninterrupted thinking, brainstorming, and creativity. Solitude provides a conducive environment for generating new ideas, solving problems, and exploring unconventional approaches to various challenges.

3. Emotional Regulation: Spending time alone helps individuals regulate their emotions. It provides an opportunity to process feelings, manage stress, and develop healthy coping mechanisms. Emotional resilience is crucial for maintaining balanced mental health.

4. Personal Interests: Individual space enables individuals to pursue their passions and hobbies without judgment or external pressures. Engaging in activities they enjoy contributes to a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction.

5. Healthy Relationships: Well-rounded personalities arise from individuals who are comfortable with themselves. Having personal space allows individuals to develop a strong sense of self which leads to healthier and more genuine relationships with others. They can establish boundaries and communicate their needs effectively.

6. Reduced Stress: Personal space acts as a buffer against the demands of daily life. It offers a respite from external pressures, giving individuals an opportunity to relax and recharge which in turn contributes to overall well-being.

7. Decision-Making: Spending time in individual space allows for focused decision-making. It helps individuals weigh options, consider consequences, and make choices aligned with their values and aspirations.

8. Balanced Well-Being: Balancing time spent with others and time spent alone leads to a more holistic sense of well-being. Social interactions are important, but individual space helps maintain a healthy equilibrium and prevents burnout.

Individual space transforms into collective space in the form of organizations, associations, guilds, and other business entities through a process that involves combining individual efforts, skills, and resources to achieve common goals. This transformation process occurs as follows:

1. Shared Vision and Goals: In the transition from individual space to collective space, individuals with similar interests, skills, or objectives come together based on a shared vision and common goals. This shared purpose becomes the foundation upon which the collective entity is built.
2. Pooling of Resources: Individual space involves personal resources such as time, expertise, and knowledge. In the collective space, these resources are pooled together to create a more substantial and impactful presence. Financial resources, equipment, skills, and talents are combined to achieve larger objectives.
3. Collaborative Efforts: The shift to collective space encourages collaboration among individuals with diverse skills and backgrounds. This collaborative approach leverages the strengths of different team members to achieve outcomes that might not be possible in individual spaces.
4. Learning and Skill Development: Collective spaces offer opportunities for learning and skill development through shared experiences, training programs, and interactions with others. Members can benefit from exposure to new perspectives, ideas, and practices.
5. Achievement of Scale: Collective spaces allow for the achievement of scale that individuals cannot attain on their own. Business organizations, for example, can expand their operations, reach broader markets, and offer a wider range of products or services.

Overall, the transition from individual space to collective space involves the aggregation of individual contributions, resources, and efforts to create a unified and coordinated entity. This transformation allows for the pursuit of larger objectives, increased impact, and the realization of goals that extend beyond what individuals can achieve in their respective personal spaces.

A collective space (organizations, associations, guilds families, clubs, etc.,) plays a crucial role in fostering innovation and the creation of wealth.

A collective's structure, culture, and processes can significantly influence its ability to innovate and generate economic value. Some of the ways the collective (organization) space contributes to these aspects are:

1. Diverse Talent Pool: An organization brings together individuals with diverse skills, backgrounds, and perspectives. This diversity fosters creativity and the exchange of ideas, leading to innovative solutions to complex problems.
2. Collaboration and Cross-Pollination: Organizational space encourages collaboration among individuals from different departments and disciplines. Interactions and knowledge-sharing between individuals with different expertise spark new ideas and approaches.
3. Intellectual Property Management: Organizational space facilitates the management and protection of intellectual property, such as patents, trademarks, and copyrights. This protection encourages innovation by ensuring that creators are rewarded for their innovative efforts.
4. Wealth Creation: Successful innovation leads to the creation of wealth. Innovative products or services can generate new revenue streams, capture market share, and contribute to the organization's financial growth.
5. Economic Growth: Organizations that consistently innovate contribute to economic growth at various levels, including local economies and industries. Such organizations drive job creation and stimulate economic activity.

In summary, organizational (collective) space provides the structure, culture, and resources necessary for fostering innovation and creating wealth. A cohesive and nurturing organizational environment encourages creativity and collaboration. The pursuit of novel ideas leads to the development of innovative products, services, and solutions that drive economic success.

The concept of individual sovereignty and its aggregation to define national sovereignty emphasizes the importance of individual rights and freedoms in shaping a nation's identity and strength.

1. Empowerment of Individuals: Recognizing and protecting individual sovereignty empowers citizens to actively participate in the nation's development. When individuals have the freedom to express themselves, engage in meaningful pursuits, and make informed choices, they contribute to the overall growth and progress of the nation.

2. Collective Identity: The collection of individual sovereignties reflects the diversity and richness of a nation's population. Each person's unique experiences, cultures, and perspectives contribute to the collective identity of the nation, making it more vibrant and inclusive.

3. Democratic Values: Respecting individual sovereignty aligns with democratic principles. In democratic societies, the rights of individuals are upheld and their voices are heard through the electoral process. This strengthens the democratic foundations of the nation.

4. Innovation and Progress: When individuals are free to pursue their interests and ideas, it can lead to innovation, creativity, and progress. Nurturing individual sovereignty encourages entrepreneurship, research, and the generation of new ideas that benefit the nation as a whole.

5. Social Cohesion: Protecting individual sovereignty while fostering a sense of national unity leads to greater social cohesion. When individuals are respected and valued for their unique contributions, it can lead to stronger bonds among citizens.

6. Human Rights: Recognizing individual sovereignty aligns with the protection of fundamental human rights. These rights, such as freedom of speech, expression, and privacy, are essential for personal dignity and well-being.

7. Responsibility and Accountability: Respecting individual sovereignty doesn't negate the importance of accountability to the larger community. Balancing individual freedoms with responsibilities to society ensures that personal actions do not harm the collective good.

8. Cultural Enrichment: Embracing individual sovereignties contributes to cultural diversity and enrichment. Different traditions, languages, and ways of life create a more vibrant and dynamic national culture.

9. Global Perspective: Nations that protect individual sovereignty gain respect on the global stage. Demonstrating a commitment to human rights and personal freedoms enhances a nation's reputation and influence in international relations.

10. Peace and Stability: Respecting individual sovereignty contributes to societal harmony by reducing conflict arising from the suppression of personal freedoms. Societies that value individual rights tend to be more stable and peaceful.

A deeper understanding of the relationship between individual sovereignty and national sovereignty shows that the concept of sovereignty starts from an individual's personal space and his/her sovereignty, and not the other way around. All the national institutions like governments, judiciary, and regulatory bodies should design/reform their framework accordingly.

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Cyberwarfare in the Israel–Hamas Conflict

About the Author

Babar Khan Akhunzada is a cyber-wizard and entrepreneur. He is the founder of SecurityWall, a cybersecurity firm focused on a hybrid auditing approach

The intensification of cyberwarfare in global conflicts is epitomized in the ongoing digital confrontation between Israel and Hamas. This dynamic arena of cyber conflict has become a critical front in their longstanding geopolitical strife. Israel, known for its technological prowess and sophisticated cyber capabilities, faces a persistent challenge from Hamas, an organization recognized by several countries, including the United States and the European Union, as a terrorist group. Hamas has increasingly embraced cyber tactics to compensate for its conventional military disparities.

Digital Fronts in the Israel-Hamas Conflict and PSYOPs

Recent events have marked a significant escalation in cyberwarfare tactics. Israeli websites and infrastructure have become targets for international hackers, with notable incidents including repeated attacks on the Jerusalem Post's website. Groups from Gaza, Iran, and Russia are under suspicion, but attribution remains a challenge in cyberspace.

One alarming strategy used by hackers is the spread of misinformation. An example is the infiltration of an Israeli rocket warning app by Anon Ghost, which led to the broadcast of false alarms and threatening messages. These psychological tactics aim to create panic and confusion, undermining public trust in critical systems. Cybersecurity experts identified various actors carrying out psychological operations (PSYOPs) not limited to direct attacks but across social media platforms and messaging apps.

While some fabricated narratives completely, others used selective facts and omissions to promote distorted perspectives. Most masked their identities, posing as hacktivist collectives or journalists. The timing and coordination of these PSYOPs suggest deliberate efforts to manipulate perceptions about developments on the ground. Determining the ultimate sponsors and beneficiaries of this deception remains an ongoing challenge.

Bringing Influential Websites Down

Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks have been a common tool, aimed at overwhelming websites with traffic, causing them to crash. Over 100 Israeli sites have been affected, with the Jerusalem Post being a prominent victim. While groups like Anonymous Sudan have claimed responsibility, there's skepticism among experts about their actual affiliations.

- **Jerusalem Post Cyber Attack**: The Jerusalem Post reported a significant cyber attack, attributed to Anonymous Sudan. This disrupted their website, but it was restored by the following day.
- **AnonGhost's RedAlert Exploit**: A pro-Palestinian group, AnonGhost, exploited a vulnerability in the RedAlert app. This app, designed to warn of real-time rocket launches, was manipulated to send false alarms about a nuclear bomb.
- **Attacks by Ghosts of Palestine**: Another group, Ghosts of Palestine, claimed responsibility for attacks against various Israeli organizations including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ben Gurion Airport.

This situation underscores the increasing complexity and international scope of cyberwarfare, especially in politically charged contexts like the Israel-Palestine conflict. The use of cyber attacks to further political agendas and the involvement of various groups from different countries highlights the evolving nature of global cyber threats.

Beyond website disruptions, there's a growing concern over attacks on critical infrastructure. Hackers employing sophisticated methods, like using fake LinkedIn profiles to install malware, pose a serious risk. These attacks could potentially lead to devastating consequences such as shutting down power stations or other vital services.

The Russian and Iranian Angles

Attributing cyber attacks to specific state actors is complex. While there are suggestions of Russian involvement, particularly in light of strained Israel-Russia relations post-Ukraine conflict, direct links are hard to establish. Similarly, Iranian hackers' involvement is a subject of speculation, given the historical context of Iran-Israel cyber confrontations.

Israel, recognizing the gravity of these threats, has been proactive in bolstering its cyber defenses. The establishment of the Israeli National Cyber Directorate in 2017 underscores this commitment. The country's cyber strategy focuses on deterrence, resilience, and collaboration with intelligence and private sectors, making it a formidable force in cyber defense.

Pakistani Hacking Groups

Amid the escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, various hacker groups are actively participating in cyber attacks. Pro-Israeli hacktivists have been noted for their activities, including an instance where the official Hamas website was allegedly taken down by Indian hackers. In Pakistan, a group called "Team Insane PK" claimed to have hacked an Israeli hydroelectric power plant.

Other Pakistani hacker groups like Pakistan Cyber Hunter, Pakistani Leet Hackers, and Team HEROX have also been mentioned in reports by cybersecurity monitoring firms. This surge in cyber attacks against government websites and IT systems is seen as a direct response to the ongoing conflict, as observed by researchers.

Team Insane Pakistan has launched distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks targeting various Israeli organizations, including Cyber 7 (Israel's cybersecurity innovation hub), a tour company, and the Hadassah Hospital. Following these attacks, the Indonesian group Garnesia Team targeted the Sheba Medical Center with a DDoS attack.

Team Insane Pakistan then shared a news story about Israeli hospitals going offline as a precaution against cyber attacks, accompanying the story with a taunting remark. The post ended with a call to action for all Muslim cyber armies to proceed with their activities.

Role of Cyberwarfare in Military Strategy and Insights

Israel's military strategy is heavily focused on cyberspace, both offensive and defensive. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) engage in cyber operations to complement traditional military activities. This approach is crucial for a country like Israel, which, despite its small size, has managed to develop one of the world's most advanced cyber defense systems.

The cyberwarfare landscape in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has escalated with 137 groups involved, exceeding those in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Post the 7th October Hamas attacks on Israel, at least 22 new groups have emerged. Most of these groups are based in Asia, addressing long-standing regional grievances, and many are involved in the edition of #opIsrael. The most prevalent attack methods are DDoS and website defacement.

While numerous data breach and leak claims have been made, many are either disproven or based on old data. In terms of geographic representation, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia are the main sources of anti-Israel cyber groups, whereas pro-Israel cyber groups are predominantly based in India.

This situation illustrates the growing complexity and international nature of cyber warfare in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A Wake-Up Call for Cybersecurity in Global Conflicts

The Israel-Hamas cyber conflict highlights the need for robust cybersecurity measures, especially as the distinction between state and non-state actors in cyberwarfare becomes increasingly blurred. The international community must recognize the growing significance of cyber threats and develop collaborative strategies to mitigate these risks.

As the digital landscape evolves, so does the nature of conflict. The Israel-Hamas cyber confrontation is a stark reminder of this new reality. Understanding the dynamics of cyberwarfare, staying ahead of emerging threats, and fostering international cooperation are crucial for maintaining global security in the digital age.

As real-world tensions spilled into the online sphere, the information domain became an active front in the war for hearts and minds. Moving forward, the international community must find ways to counter false narratives without infringing on free expression. With technology's role in conflicts continuing to grow, establishing information integrity will only gain importance.

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Will the Lost Glimmer in CPEC's Progress Push China into Abandoning It?

About the Author

Fiza Bibi Ameen is a final-semester BS Physics student and gold medal qualifier at Riphah International University, Islamabad. She also contributed a prize-winning submission to the HEC inter-university essay writing competition for the year 2022. She fancies theoretical research in her subject and prospects of advancement in personal, professional, and economic life, particularly for the less developed parts of Pakistan.

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The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), China's largest Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), earned well-deserved national and international praise after its inception in 2015. While peeking beneath the surface and looking toward the future, one can see that this is the largest infrastructure project undertaken in Pakistan. The bilateral initiative is aimed at helping both nations thrive through the connectivity of trade centers in Pakistan, China, and the Gulf States.

China and Pakistan trade via Karakoram Highway

History celebrates many milestones achieved under the shade of CPEC such as improvements in infrastructure, power structures, and more. As of now, several fossil fuel and renewable source-based power plants operate in Pakistan, extending the umbrella for under-construction and under-consideration projects. The infrastructure projects in CPEC's spectrum such as the Karakoram Highway in the scarcely connected northern areas are welcomed warmly at all levels of the community and state.

An Unwelcomed Turn in the Road?

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects were recently reviewed for progress by the Caretaker Federal Minister of Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Muhammad Sami Saeed. Despite his directions to expedite the processes further, today's voices about CPEC seem nowhere at par with the initial, long-lost confidence when CPEC was considered an optimistic and opportunistic turning point for Pakistan and the region.

The question, however, remains: has CPEC's translation facilitated its initial game changer image? Has it helped Pakistan escape from its economic abyss, as it once promised? Has it bridged the gap between Pakistan's dues and the self-sufficiency it can owe to CPEC from this time forward? This also begs the question of whether China is still interested in CPEC or not.

To answer these questions, a look at how global stakeholders view CPEC (and how some of these views became realities) is necessary.

In 2021, the United States Institute of Peace claimed that Pakistan's lagging approach to much-needed structural economic reforms impedes CPEC. The report also considered Pakistan guilty of negligence as it allowed an indeliberate facility to China, a country aiming to win with a geostrategic approach, in using what they call "debt-trap diplomacy". Amid the screeches of Pakistan's economic system, the halted projects can be attributed more to the system than to uncontrollable, external factors.

Then, there are doubts regarding CPEC figures' transparency. For example, when Ahsan Iqbal, a concerned minister back on CPEC's 10th anniversary, claimed that it had created 230,000 jobs in Pakistan in addition to other $25 billion completed projects and one-third of the power supply to Pakistan, experts questioned the accuracy of employment data. The head of Pakistan's Board of Investment (2018-19) emphasized the need for a third-party assessment to verify the minister's claims. He further argued that permanent and temporary jobs hadn't been specified either. One may ask: How would an obscure road lead one promptly in the right direction?

He was not alone in citing the doubt-triggering information as an impediment. The plans, without the involvement of local leaders, were documented, for instance, by this long-term project (2017-2030). It was only when the project started, that the local citizens found out about it. Moreover, the reports go on to say that instead of raising awareness among the locals, any anti-CPEC protests are found to be dealt with strictly. The state's security at the project points stands as an example. A South Asian expert, Michael Kugelman, analyzed both the economics and security in Pakistan as contributing factors to the deceleration of CPEC projects as well.

There's no denying the economic downturn that envelops Pakistan differently each year. As for security, incidents have been reported, particularly attacks on the CPEC teams even in times when Pakistan's overall security circumstances are trudging towards improvement.

One major focus of this bilateral project is Balochistan, the most impoverished province of Pakistan. Quite naturally, the citizens of Balochistan have been demanding a greater share of the province-specific projects. The unrest among them over the approach to CPEC has been reported by many press houses. South Asian Voices published that, many times the signed agreements in Balochistan did not involve the provincial government's take on them. The resistance groups in regard to CPEC, thus, could be found in higher frequency within Balochistan.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTD), while noting that CPEC has failed to live up to its initial image, also accused China's loans of having worsened Pakistan's economic crisis. A Baloch citizen's fear and unrest due to China's interference in their areas and jobs led to an increase in separatist activities and recruitment. Thus, the researchers and analysts continue beseeching attention to the underlying issues behind the curtains; But, so far, reality hasn't shown repetition helping the right actions for one of Asia's biggest projects in history.

Some of the delay in progress can be put into the pandemic's basket; China, being the initial epicenter, grappled with multifaceted issues. Pakistan, a country with already unsatisfactory health facilities in its far-flung areas, had its fair share of troubles. Another unpleasant plot twist in the bilateral relationship occurred when Pakistan invited Saudi Arabia as a third partner in this project, and a federal minister from the PTI government in 2018 announced it. Later, another federal minister debunked this news. Allowing Saudi Arabia, a strong US strategic partner, to be in China's deepest interest areas—Gwadar and Balochistan, as the analysts view it—naturally triggered concerns from China's side, at least momentarily.

Along with dragging Pakistan many hundred miles away from where it once envisioned itself to be in the year 2023, the political crises sabotaged Pakistan's promptness to the expedition of projects and the world's eagerness to invest here.

Amid the Complications, Will China Entertain an Alternative?

There is no denying the latest slowdown and hazy interest in CPEC. This tempts one to question whether China will abandon CPEC altogether. Recently, China, the good old friend, has once again revised its vow to support and cooperate with Pakistan. However, China demanded a guarantee for the safety of Chinese organizations and their staff working here in Pakistan on CPEC, as if to confirm once again how desperate the security situation becomes occasionally. It is quite plain, provided the needed security and welcoming environment, the coming years might welcome another era of development and connectivity for the duo.

What the world forgets while questioning whether China will continue dispensing resources for CPEC, is the offerings it has for China. Despite being a reasonably challenging long-term project, it has unprecedented promises for China. Pakistan, though poor in management, has always had a natural resource potential and a boastful geographic location. Giving China a direct route to the energy-magnet Gulf States will boost not only its trade but also its geostrategic and geopolitical standing. Foreign experts see China's access to Middle Eastern countries via CPEC as a means of solidifying its position as a military power, something it has yet to achieve in that region. Will China pass over such an unprecedented opportunity after waiting this long?

Then, the world glimpses strains in the US-China relationship. China knows it too well that the US, a global power in economics, military, and political impact on the world and a close affiliate of India (another of China's ever-exacerbating international relations) desires the expansion of China's power in the glittering South

The Asian region is the last thing. Thus, the more China delays and seeks alternative plans for this well-thought project, the more power it gives to its Cold War rivals. Therefore, it should go without saying that China will not permit that fear to materialize. It may cause the attention to shift to a more urgent plan, but it will always find a way back.

If China is Not All Set to Leave CPEC, What Is It Waiting For?

Security

Mercifully, gone are the years when terrorism plagued almost all Pakistanis with firsthand emotional, financial, and even mortal damage. The acts of terrorism and other extreme events aren't nonexistent as of today, but improving tourism does show the increased level of safety that Pakistan has achieved.

However, CPEC organizations are more concerned with their security, which is arguably in jeopardy. China is waiting for further security improvements to avoid risks.

The panacea to this from Pakistan's side is awareness. In a country with a declining literacy rate, how can a layman from its most deprived province be expected to comprehend anything in such a complex and well-planned project?

Nothing elicits fear more than uncertainty, and fear appears to be a defense mechanism in security issues. It is high time to inform the masses with verified facts and data. Furthermore, the local audience's perspective regarding projects and development should be considered. In a nutshell, instead of winning over the populace by force (which is failing, by and large), an effective strategy for winning them through awareness campaigns should be developed.

A Needed Shift in Economics

In a country where millions of people go abroad every year to earn a secure, promising livelihood and where inflation and currency crises continue reaching historic peaks, there's no denying the waning confidence of foreign investors.

Fluctuations in the economy aren't completely avoidable; however, hasn't the world celebrated the nations that have surmounted these challenges? Pakistan's deepest issue is not only notwithstanding debts but the reforms that need to be implemented. The lack of transparency, the difference in rules for various financial groups, indifference to the unearthed poor populace's issues, and the lack of a practical strategy to tackle the discovered ones have shoved Pakistan into an abyss from which it has not found a way to return.

In the current years, when even stout patriots are losing faith in glimmering shades of improvement, China is not yet ready to shift the debt balance any further.

The solution lies in reforms and transparency. Assisting Pakistan in winning China's confidence will prompt the process, and will eventually lead to China, Pakistan, and the region cherishing their much-awaited geo-strategic position.

Political Stability

The political awareness and steadfastness of the nation over the demands for transparency have reached unprecedented levels. However, Pakistan's political situation has further deteriorated rather than improved. This is not a new crisis. Pakistan's history is etched with political instability, with no elected prime minister ever getting to complete their tenure. In a country with embarrassing rankings on corruption, freedom of speech, justice, and rule of law indexes, this new level of unrest is painting Pakistan's image in frightful colors. China is waiting for the flood of political energy to pass before investing. However, Pakistan's reality is not painting a welcoming portrait yet. The need of the hour is a change in political patterns with a pragmatic approach such that the rule of law situation would improve rather than worsen.

Conclusion

If a project as promising as CPEC, hope for the far-flung population suffering from poor infrastructure and connectivity, slows down, a well-structured future slips away. Although several

projects have been completed as part of China's BRI, the years of development have also discovered potential complications associated with the project's interest areas. Researchers and analysts continue to warn Pakistan about the most likely complexities. However, history has shown that Pakistan has not dealt with them effectively.

Because China's economic power will grow through trade connections, it will establish a geo-strategic influence in the region, a Chinese aspiration that the competitive West, and aggressive neighbour India do not encourage. Given that, it does not seem that China will leave the project entirely and seek an alternative.

However, it does look like the deteriorating security, economic, and political situation in Pakistan will impede this project for a good while and in a significant magnitude. Thus, for the most part, the ball of CPEC's future is in Pakistan's court; its commitment to needed reforms and pattern changes sharpens or blurs the line between development and negligence.

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Metamorphosis of Ideals: Mussolini's Evolution from Socialism to Fascism

About the Author

M. Sharif Jakhrani is a graduate of Political Science from GC University Lahore. His areas of interest are ethnic conflict and the politics of religion in Pakistan. Currently, he is based in Lahore and tweets at @SharifJakhrani. He can also be reached at muhammadsharifj65@gmail.com

Evolving Political Ideologies

The fluidity of political ideologies is often not adequately discussed in mainstream socio-political discourses. Ideologies are deemed as something absolute and those who adhere to them are seen as ardent proponents who unwaveringly follow, regardless of changing socio-political dynamics. This has been proven wrong in multiple instances throughout history.

An example worth discussing is that of the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini who gained a reputation as a socialist in his early life only to take an opposite shift and move to the other end of the political spectrum by fathering an ultra-nationalist and anti-socialist ideology eventually leading to the foundation of the much dreaded fascist Italy.

Mussolini was born to a father who was a radical socialist and a prominent member of the revolutionary and anarchist circles of his time. His dedication to the revolutionary cause can be gauged from the fact that he named his son Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini, after the prominent revolutionaries and anarchists of his time i.e. Benito Juarez, Amilcare Ciprani, and Andrea Costa.

This would undoubtedly go on to shape Mussolini's early ideological thinking to the extent that he is said to have worn a locket with a picture of Karl Marx at all times when he was only ten years old. After he graduated from college in 1901, Mussolini went to Switzerland, an attractive employment destination for most of the Italians of his time, as an émigré looking for employment. There he would work as a bricklayer and often switch between different daily wage jobs by the virtue of which he would soon find himself in the company of other socialists and anarchists.

Writings on Socialism

It was not long before Mussolini began writing for a local socialist newspaper. In his articles, he aired extreme socialist views and expressed his resentment against the decadent political elite of Italy and its political system.

This earned him the title of an "Authoritarian Communist" in the socialist circles. After a while, he moved to Trento, an Italian-speaking city under Austro-Hungarian control, and took up a job as a secretary for the local Labour Party. At the same time, he worked as an editor of *L'Avvenire del Lavoratore* (The Future of the Worker), the newspaper of the local socialist party.

Having worked in these positions for over a year, he moved back to his hometown where he started working as the editor of a weekly periodical called *Lotta di Class* (The Class Struggle). Soon, he built himself a reputation for social disruption which, in late 1911, landed him in jail for campaigning against Italy's military invasion of Libya. After completing his six months of jail term, Mussolini was finally freed in early 1912. By this point, he had become a renowned socialist, known across Italy for his activism.

His reputation was such that his release from prison was announced by *Avanti!*, the official newspaper of the Italian Socialist Party, as "Comrade Mussolini has left the Prison this morning more socialist than ever". He went on to join the newspaper as an editor and became an important member of the Italian Socialist Party, thereby, becoming a part of the socialist circles at the national level.

He also contested the parliamentary elections of 1913 from this platform, but, to his misfortune, he lost. This was the peak of Mussolini's political career as a crusader for the socialist cause. At the same time, this was also the point where his metamorphoses into an ultra-nationalist fanatic would begin.

World War I

The outbreak of the WWI was a watershed moment for the whole of Europe, more so for Mussolini and other socialists. However, Mussolini and the Italian Socialist Party disagreed on a very important point: should Italy join the war? The Italian Socialist Party, in the start, advocated for Italian neutrality, a stance that Mussolini initially adhered to but later abandoned.

Mussolini saw this crisis as an opportunity to push for the overhaul and reorganization of Italian politics and society in line with socialist principles. He believed that the war would provide the material conditions for a Marxist revolution. Furthermore, the war was also deemed as a chance for Italy to reclaim its territories under the control of foreign powers like Austro-Hungary. Therefore, he started writing pro-intervention articles in *Avanti!*, advising the party to advocate for Italian participation in the war. This did not sit well with the party which led to Mussolini's resignation from *Avanti!*.

Benito Mussolini continued his pro-intervention campaign with *Il Popolo d'Italia* (The People of Italy), a pro-war newspaper founded by Mussolini himself. Consequently, the chasm increased and Mussolini was expelled from the Italian Socialist Party. This marked the formal end of his career as a socialist. He now began pursuing an ideology of his own.

The First World War acted as a catalyst for Mussolini's ideological transformation. Having severed all the links with the mainstream socialist movement, he now trod a path and exhibited tendencies diametrically opposite to his previously dearly held socialist beliefs. Immediately after being expelled from the Socialist Party, he founded *Fasci d'Azione Rivoluzionaria* (Leagues of Revolutionary Action) in late 1914, a pro-intervention group aiming to promote Italian entry into the war.

This was a precursor to a further right-wing *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* (Italian fighting bands) which was formed in 1919 to suppress Italian socialists whom Mussolini called "Slackers and defeatists". In 1921, this organization was reorganized into the National Fascist Party in Italy which was led by Mussolini. At the same time, having miserably performed in the elections of 1919, the organization formed a paramilitary organization called the *Squadristi,* most famously known as the Blackshirts. They would carry out systematic and coordinated acts of extreme physical violence against Mussolini's political opponents, mostly those affiliated with the Italian Socialist Party.

The once-famous 'Authoritarian communist,' who had built an entire political career as a radical socialist—working as an editor for multiple socialist newspapers and serving prison sentences for the socialist cause, even culminating in *Avanti!* labeling him "more socialist than ever"—had completely forsaken his father's legacy and a lifetime of socialist activism. Now working full-time to crush his old comrades, many of whom would be beaten to death by his Blackshirts, he aimed to replace socialism with fascism in Italy.

"Socialism is a fraud, a comedy, a phantom, and a blackmail," Mussolini went on to remark about socialism. The transformation was now complete. Finally in power after his famous March on Rome, Mussolini proclaimed a fascist dictatorship and directed the whole state machinery against socialists in Italy. At that time, he could not have imagined that his eventual death would come at the hands of the very communist partisans he had tried so hard to subdue.

Instances such as Benito Mussolini's transformation to fascism provide compelling illustrations of the fluidity inherent in political ideologies, where individuals skillfully adapt to the shifting dynamics amidst socio-political upheavals. Frequently, this metamorphosis manifests as individuals traverse the political spectrum, sometimes to the very extremes, mirroring the transformative journey exemplified by Mussolini himself.

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From Grit to Glory: Rebirth of Football in Pakistan

About the Author

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Pakistan has a large youth bulge which mostly consists of children and young adults. The UNDP report reveals that currently 64% of the nation is younger than 30, and 29% are between the ages of 15 and 29. The participation of these youngsters in sports and other recreational activities becomes a source of entertainment and economic development for the country. For instance, the cricket leagues played in different areas of Pakistan serve as a means of generating income through sponsors, merchandising, and other commercial activities such as tours and friendly matches.

Football, however, with its 3.5 billion fans around the world, has an ironic past in Pakistan dating back to the 20th century. The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), since its foundation in 1947, has seen many ups and downs in reviving this sport. The various factors such as political instability, corruption, lack of funds, and poor infrastructure hindered the progress and development of this game.

During the past few years, it has been observed that PFF is investing heavily in the players and the infrastructure. From basic facilities to international tours, the federation is doing its best to provide all the necessary equipment. This year, in February, the PFF Normalization Committee nominated 36 players for the men's national football team training camp, which was primarily aimed at preparing a squad for the friendly matches against Maldives, Mauritius, Kenya, and Djibouti.

The federation has also made some major developments in the team by signing new players and coaches. To strengthen the squad, the PFF called back all the quality players (of Pakistani nationality) playing abroad to join the team. Players such as Otis Khan, Harun Hamid, Rahis Nabi, and Easah Suliman are no doubt professional footballers who play for foreign clubs as defenders, midfielders and wingers. The induction of such players helped other local players to learn advanced tactics and skills from them.

Moreover, signing a contract with Stephen Constantine, an English professional coach and former player, helped Pakistan achieve a historic victory against Cambodia in the second round of World Cup qualifiers. The victory led to emotional celebrations around the entire football community in Pakistan, as it was the first time in 75 years of history that the team qualified for the second stage of the competition.

Pakistan's football team after defeating Cambodia 1-0
Photo credits: Pakistan Cricket's X account

In the second stage of the World Cup qualifiers, Pakistan competed with Saudi Arabia and Tajikistan, losing in both matches. However, it served as an opportunity for the national players to represent Pakistan at a higher level and gain further experience by competing with stronger players.

In the last decade, football has gained much importance all over Pakistan. In popular areas such as Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Gilgit, Chitral and Islamabad, numerous football tournaments are being held throughout the year.

The PFF is unquestionably making progress and the club managers, players and coaches at the local and departmental levels are also showing keen interest in developing this sport.

While we are witnessing a rapid change in the dynamics of this sport in Pakistan, there is still room for improvement. In talking to a private news channel, Haseeb Khan, the former under-19 captain, stressed, "Pakistan needs to introduce higher-level football leagues in the country, just like we have PSL, one of the famous cricket leagues in Asia."

The establishment of advanced national leagues will not only help in recruiting quality players but will also attract better footballers and coaches from other countries. "PFF has the potential to fill the gap and it must plan it sooner for the betterment of the football community," the former captain added.

Consequently, in recent years there have been positive developments in the state of football despite facing significant challenges such as poor infrastructure and lack of funds. With a chance of new players coming in, promoting football in Pakistan may provide an opportunity for the sponsors and investors to invest in various football clubs and training academies, hence boosting the economy at a higher level. It is remarkable to note that Pakistan is well-equipped with the working-age population. There is a lot of young talent in Pakistan – with little to more attention from the government, the country can become an epicenter of football in the whole of Asia.

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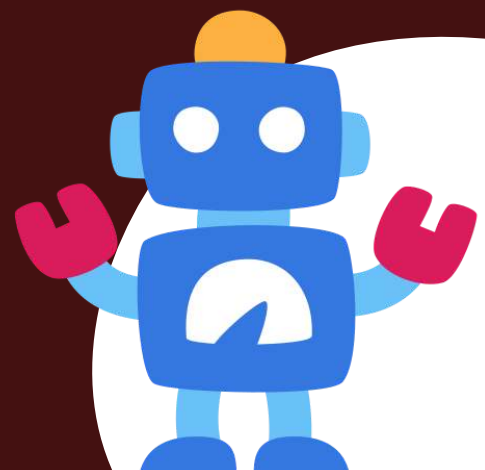You may also like: Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem Bags Silver at the World Athletics Championships
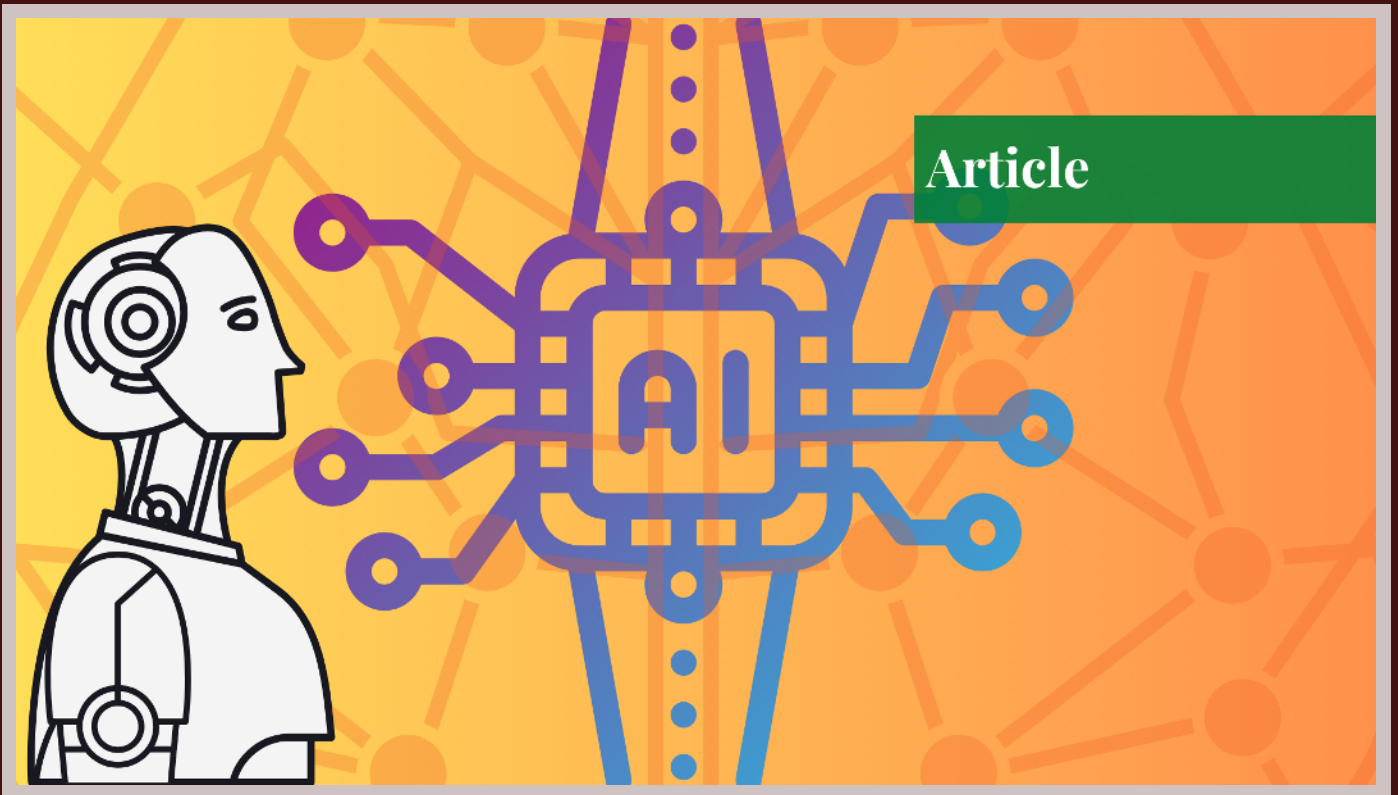
Artificial Intelligence & Jobs: What Does the Future Hold?

About the Author

Noman Waheed is a graduate of NUST.

Introduction

Every innovation comes with a price; however, depending upon its usage, it can either be beneficial or harmful. The case of artificial intelligence (AI) is not so different. Ostensibly, it seems that AI-induced systems are creating challenges for people, especially the workforce, yet the prospects of AI-led all-inclusive development are encouraging. At present, we are benefiting from AI-based systems in various ways. Apple's Siri, Microsoft's Cortana, Amazon's Alexa, and Google's Assistant are evident examples of AI-powered applications.

With each passing day, AI is proving itself successful in its ultimate goal of making intelligent machines, as envisioned by its founder, John McCarthy, in 1955. AI, the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, is now performing complex tasks of speech recognition, problem-solving, and decision-making, which were once considered the sole domain of human beings. Many people are skeptical about the rise of AI; however, there is a need to view it in a broader paradigm. As one of the AI researchers, Eliezer Yudkowsky said, "By far the greatest danger of artificial intelligence is that people conclude too early that they understand it." Consequently, the rise of AI is a source of better job opportunities, provided that people are well-versed and well-skilled according to the demands of AI systems.

Artificial Intelligence and Jobs

Countries across the world are spending enormously on AI-based technologies. According to CB Insights, global funding for AI companies reached $8.3bn in the third quarter of 2023. In Israel alone, AI-based industries comprise 17% of total tech industries. China is another leading player in the field of AI. The burgeoning investments in AI companies appear to be warning signs for blue-collar workers. According to the World Economic Forum report, "Future of Jobs 2023", 83 million jobs will be eliminated by 2027. In America, it is predicted that 47% of blue-collar jobs will be automated by 2025. Similarly, in Southeast Asia, 133 million people will lose their jobs in the next 20 years. All these figures pose a very grave picture for the overall workforce of the world if they do not equip themselves with the latest technological trends.

In fact, the threats of AI-induced systems are not only limited to blue-collar workers; white-collar workers are in equal danger. For instance, Bridgewater Associates, the world's largest hedge fund, has employed AI robots for hiring and firing of employees. This shows that the top managerial jobs are going to be automated very soon. Ever-increasing demands of industrial productivity require fast-paced processing, and those who are unable to meet this demand are bound to be replaced by robots. The share of humans in the global workforce, which at present comprises 71%, is decreasing at a much faster pace.

Institutionalized jobs, such as those of teachers and journalists, are also under threat now that students can learn efficiently and effectively through artificial intelligence systems. ChatGPT is one such example, which provides an array of ideas with just one prompt. Likewise, leading media platforms, such as Forbes and the Associated Press, are using journo-bots for gathering business and sports news. These bots are able to identify fake news as they can easily sift out the news on the basis of their distinctive patterns, as identified by Nature Communication, a leading journal in the field of AI.

Impact on Employment in Pakistan

As far as Pakistan's job market is concerned, the country is highly susceptible to the effects of AI. We are already facing the dilemma of unskilled youth having no substantial employment. On the one hand, the unceasing rise of AI has exacerbated the unemployment woes of the youth, while on the other hand, it is creating enormous challenges for those who are somehow employed. The jobs that are at acute risk of replacement due to artificial intelligence include bank tellers, data entry clerks, postal clerks, cashiers, ticket clerks, insurance clerks, and street vendors.

A research study conducted by Dawn shows that approximately 17% of jobs in Pakistan are at a high risk of automation. With the increasing trend of automation like the Internet of Things (IoT), smart home systems, and machine learning, our job market finds itself in a position no less vulnerable than the Achilles heel. Industries that heavily rely on a manual workforce may face significant job losses due to the routine nature of tasks, leading to a surge in unemployment within the country's labor force.

In the wake of growing AI startups and incubation centers, these routine jobs are at high risk of being replaced by highly sophisticated machines and robots. In fact, as per the Labour Force Surveys of Pakistan, from 2014 to 2021, employment in the agricultural sector lowered from 42.3% to 37.4%, and in the manufacturing sector, from 15.4% to 14.8%. Consequently, there is genuine apprehension about the widening gulf between the unemployed and employed workforces of the country vis-à-vis the relentless rise of AI.

Will Artificial Intelligence Provide More Jobs?

After expounding the ills of AI, it is imperative to shed light on the more nuanced aspect of AI, i.e., the job opportunities AI is going to offer in the future. According to the World Economic Forum, artificial intelligence will create 69 million new jobs by 2027. These new jobs will be created primarily in tech-based industries, such as self-driving automobiles. For instance, Tesla will undoubtedly require a tech-savvy workforce to manufacture cars. The same is the case with the robotics industry, where we will witness enormous job potential because of the inclusion of AI-based robots.

In Pakistan, as per the McKinsey Report "A Future that Works," AI could increase labor productivity by 30% to 40% in sectors like healthcare, manufacturing, and agriculture. However, the need is to upskill our youth with emerging trends so they can make their space in these sectors. The confluence of info-tech and bio-tech has opened up huge vistas of jobs.

Though the author of 21 Lessons for the 21st Century, Yuval Noah Harari, is skeptical about this emerging trend because of the increasing danger of hackability of human thoughts and opinions, the IT sector is demanding more curious minds that can make innovations like biosensors and biochips of the like of brain implants developed by Elon Musk's Neuralink. These technologies will give us a better understanding of human nature and their inclinations.

Fast-paced technological developments, like the quantum computer developed by Google, are inviting brilliant minds to come up with novel ideas for leading these innovations ahead. With the help of AI, the quantum computer can solve even complex computations within 200 seconds, which even the supercomputer would take 10,000 years to complete. Thus, we are witnessing enormous job potential in the field of AI as several technological advancements are making their way into it.

AI-powered military hardware is propelling at a much faster pace than anticipated by most strategists. Several countries across the globe have articulated their AI strategies for keeping their arsenals aligned with highly sophisticated modern warfare. Countries like the US, Russia, and China are investing heavily in AI-led military research centers. The Sea Hunter submarine of the US, the Soaring Dragon unmanned combat aerial vehicle of China, and the Skybots F-850 space exploratory robot of Russia are evident examples of AI-based military machines. This shows that people have bright chances of materializing their potential in the military-industrial complex.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the unceasing rise of AI is posing a serious threat to employability; however, one can find better job opportunities by upgrading his skills per the demands of AI. Skills never remain constant; a person has to learn new ideas and gain expertise to survive vis-à-vis emerging trends. After all, it is all about living up to the basic Darwinian principle of "survival of the fittest." Instead of being pessimistic in the face of AI, one should focus on skill enhancement. The defeatist approach does not bode well, and only those emerge victorious who dare to take bold steps.

Surely, it is a great challenge for the global workforce, but a task that is not unachievable. It only demands determination, diligence, and dedication to modify current working patterns in accordance with the demands of AI. Also, it is the need of the hour to align human resources according to the challenging nature of AI. In this regard, the observation of Klaus Schwab, the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, is very pertinent: "It is critical for businesses to re-skill and up-skill their existing workforce to meet emerging demands."

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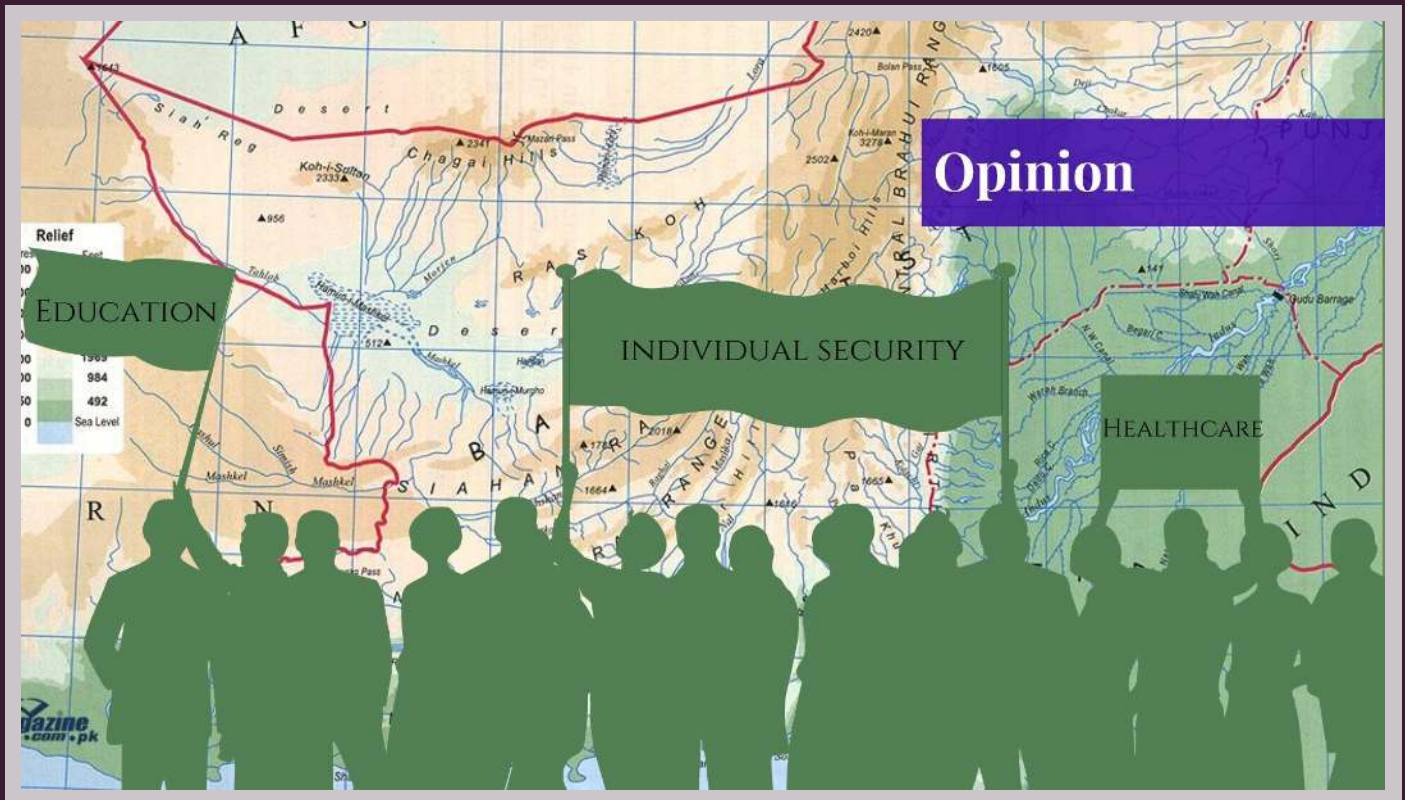
The Balochistan Issue: Exploitative Politics?

About the Author

Irfan is a final year student of BS Politics and International Relations (IR) from International Islamic University Islamabad.

Balochistan, being the biggest province of Pakistan area-wise, became a separate province in 1970. The Provincial Assembly of Balochistan came into being under a presidential order on March 30, 1970, after the dissolution of the One Unit Program. Baloch separatists were not in favor of joining Pakistan. Struggling for a separate homeland, their movement started to gain momentum in the 1970s. The president of Pakistan at that time, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto ordered the state forces to suppress the movement. The military operation lasted 4 long years, from 1973 to 1977. It took the lives of an estimated 16,000 innocent civilians. About 5,300 Baloch separatists and 3000 Pakistani soldiers were killed. After this operation, the movement settled for a little while but it managed to flourish again over the years.

The Baloch people, mainly Baloch separatists, felt alienated. Since that time, the separatists have been carrying out violent attacks against Pakistani forces including the Pakistan Army and FC Rangers.

Women carrying water cans back to their village due to lack of necessary plumbing and infrastructure
AP Photo/Anjum Naveed

Political Pitfalls

The political structure of Balochistan has always remained a conflictual issue. It is widely believed that the elected officials of Balochistan are the products of the establishment. They are not voted to seat by the people but rather are handpicked by those in power. There has always been a trend of a coalition government in Balochistan which does not fulfill the basic needs of the common people of Balochistan. The problems that Baloch citizens are facing in every city and town of the province are innumerable. Political parties come to power to fill their pockets and favor their dear ones. A common man in the street enjoys no basic facilities from the ruling elites nor are his fundamental rights fulfilled.

Members of the National Assembly of Pakistan representing Balochistan also play a vital role in the formation of the central government. Although there are 16 members from Balochistan they are trump cards for the government. Recent developments from PMLN and PPP point to the importance of these 16 members. PMLN's president, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, visited Balochistan in the middle of November (14th November) and almost 30 provincial and national members joined the PMLN party. PPP leadership also gathered in Balochistan at November-end to attract seat holders towards their political ideology which resulted in around a dozen members joining the PPP party. This shift of loyalties by joining parties was done solely for increasing personal chances at winning elections rather than having an affinity towards or resonating with party manifestos.

Rich in Resources

Balochistan is rich in resources like coal, chromite, oil, natural gas, gold, and many more. The first and foremost right of these resources is to Baloch citizens and then to the remaining provinces of Pakistan. But something contradictory takes place in the state. The Baloch are still living in misery, despite living on top of literal and figurative goldmines.

They don't have access to basic facilities such as schools, hospitals, clean drinking water, healthy food, properly paved roads, and gas and electricity connections. They are yet to leave the Stone Age. Gold reserves are abundant in Balochistan but people are still struggling for safe drinking water – two incomprehensible but simultaneous realities.

Reko Diq

Pakistan's mines, especially those located in Balochistan are rich beyond measure. Reko Diq in particular, contains gold and copper reserves. Reko Diq is a town in the Chagai District of Balochistan and Reko Diq Mine is a planned mining operation. Reko Diq is owned 50% by the Barrick Company, 25% by the three federal state-owned enterprises, and 25% by the province of Balochistan. Reko Diq has one of the world's largest copper and gold reserves of about 5.9 billion tonnes. But the question to the authorities is where the 25% share of the province is going and being invested. The dilemma of the people of the province is still increasing and no solid steps are being taken to alleviate the misery.

Missing Persons

The issue of missing persons is gaining strength with each passing moment. The youth of Balochistan is being killed in fake encounters. The number of enforced disappeared persons in Balochistan has increased this year as compared to the previous year. Armed Forces have been known to pick people from their homes, educational institutions, and public places and make them disappear without a trace or reason.

The families of these missing people spend the rest of their lives on the roads or from one police station to another or from one court to another. Many Baloch people have been killed at the hands of the CTD who used the label of terrorism to justify their actions. Recently, a Baloch youth named Balaach was arrested by CTD on 20th November, and an FIR was registered against him on the 21st. CTD claimed that they recovered 20 kilograms of explosives from Balaach. They presented him before the court.

But on the night between the 22nd and 23rd of November, Balaach's body was brought to the Turbat hospital where his family identified him. His family and thousands of others sat on the road in Turbat. They demanded a fair inquiry and FIR against the CTD personnel but nothing happened. At last, the Balochistan High Court ordered the suspension of the four CTD personnel.

March to Punjab

Tired of the fake encounters and the missing of their beloved ones, a massive crowd headed a long march from Turbat towards Islamabad. The majority of the crowd consisted of women and the families of the missing persons. On Tuesday, the 19th of December, they reached Dera Ghazi Khan which is a city connecting Balochistan to Punjab. Dr. Mahrung Baloch lead the rally.

Their demands included the safe recovery of their loved ones and an end to enforced disappearances and fake encounters. They stated that the people who are victims of the enforced disappearances are either social activists, part of political student organizations, or mere students in any educational institution. They raise their voices against the wrongdoings of the state which is their right as is mentioned in Article 19 of the Constitution. They highlight the main issues of their daily life. Raising slogans and holding banners for their basic rights is considered a crime.

People of Balochistan are frequently labeled as mutineers. The reason for this is that they speak for their rights and demand their basic rights from State institutions. They demand the same rights and dealings that are being doled to the other provinces.

Balochistan makes up 44% of Pakistan and area-wise is Pakistan's largest province but is the most exploited and neglected one of all. Every government before coming into power promises to solve the issues of the Baloch but after gaining the seat no one pays heed to the province. Since independence, the development of Balochistan has been put on the back burner and so have the people of Balochistan. It is high time for the state institutions and the government to take effective measures to meet the grievances of the people of Balochistan, otherwise, it could prove disastrous in the long run.

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The super
QUICK QUIZ
Test your general knowledge!

Q1. What is the longest river in Europe?

A.   Danube
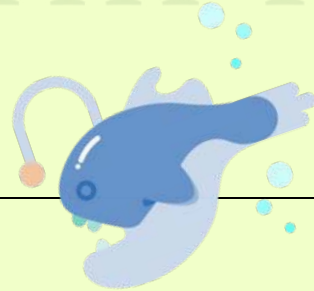
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B.   Ural

_____

C.   Volga

_____

D.   Rhine

_____

Q2. What is the deepest point in the world's oceans?

A.   Java Trench

_____

B.   Puerto Rico Trench

_____

C.   Mariana Trench

_____

D.   Tonga Trench

_____

Q3. Which river forms the border between the United States and Mexico?

A.   Colorado River

_____

B.   Mississippi River

_____

C.   Rio Grande

_____

D.   Amazon River

_____

Q4. Who discovered penicillin?

A.	Marie Curie

B.	Alexander Fleming

C.	Louis Pasteur

D.	Isaac Newton

Q5. What is the pH value of pure water?

A.	5

B.	7

C.	9

D.	11

Q6. The Magna Carta was signed in which year?

A.	1215

B.	1453

C.	1066

D.	1337

Q7. The ancient city of Petra is located in which country?

A.   Egypt

B.   Jordan

C.   Greece

D.   Italy

Q8. In which year did the Berlin Wall fall?

A.   1989

B.   1979

C.   1991

D.   1980

Q9. What was the main cause of the American Civil War?

A.   Taxation without representation

B.   Slavery and states' rights

C.   Territorial expansion

D.   Industrialization

Answers!

1. **C) Volga**

   The Volga is the longest river in Europe. Situated in Russia, it flows through Central Russia to Southern Russia and into the Caspian Sea. The Volga has a length of 3,531 km, and a catchment area of 1,360,000 km.

2. **C) Mariana Trench**

   An arcing depression, the Mariana Trench stretches for more than 1,580 miles (2,540 km) with a mean width of 43 miles (69 km). The greatest depths are reached in Challenger Deep, a smaller steep-walled valley on the floor of the main trench southwest of Guam.

3. **C) Rio Grande**

   Rio Grande, fifth longest river of North America, and the 20th longest in the world, forming the border between the U.S. state of Texas and Mexico. The total length of the river is about 1,900 miles (3,060 km).

4. **B) Alexander Fleming**

   Penicillin was discovered in 1928 by Scottish scientist Alexander Fleming.

5. **B) 7**

   The pH value of pure water is 7, which is considered neutral on the pH scale.

6. **A) 1215**

   The Magna Carta, charter of English liberties granted by King John on June 15, 1215, under threat of civil war and reissued, with alterations, in 1216, 1217, and 1225. By declaring the sovereign to be subject to the rule of law and documenting the liberties held by "free men," the Magna Carta provided the foundation for individual rights in Anglo-American jurisprudence.

7. **B) Jordan**

Petra, originally known to its inhabitants as Raqmu or Raqēmō, is a historic and archaeological city in southern Jordan. Famous for its rock-cut architecture and water conduit system, Petra is also called the "Rose City" because of the colour of the sandstone from which it is carved.

8. **A) 1989**

The Berlin Wall, a symbol of the Cold War, was brought down in 1989, leading to the eventual reunification of East and West Germany.

9. **B) Slavery and states' rights**

The American Civil War was the culmination of the struggle between the advocates and opponents of slavery that dated from the founding of the United States. This sectional conflict between Northern states and slaveholding Southern states had been tempered by a series of political compromises, but by the late 1850s the issue of the extension of slavery to the western states had reached a boiling point. The election of Abraham Lincoln, a member of the antislavery Republican Party, as president in 1860 precipitated the secession of 11 Southern states, leading to a civil war.

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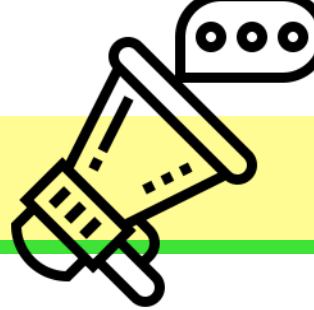
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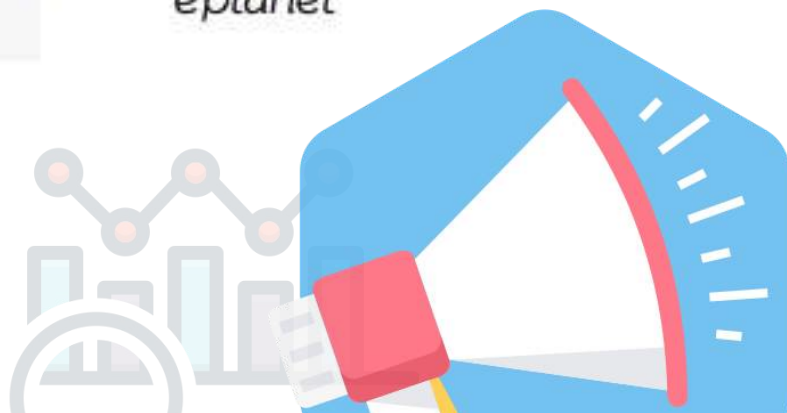
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