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# Why Is the Middle East Such a Complicated Region to Study?

*Sarmad Ishfaq*

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# Foreword

Welcome to the fourteenth edition of the Paradigm Shift e-magazine. Since starting Paradigm Shift ([www.ParadigmShift.com.pk](http://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 **16 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](http://www.ParadigmShift.com.pk)

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



# Why Is the Middle East Such a Complicated Region to Study?

## About the Author



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



The following piece acts as a primer for researchers and readers into the complicated world of the Middle East and the impact of its portrayal by the West.

A culturally, politically, and historically diverse area, the Middle East has been quite an enigmatic region for scholars to study. This is mainly because of past



and present complexities in the region itself and also due to the obscure picture painted by the methodologies employed by scholars in the past. Although there are copious amounts of problems, this article has only briefly elucidated several major ones i.e. History, Definitional Issues, Islam, the West-dominated field, Orientalism, and a Lack of Theoretical Focus. This article highlights complications faced by both international relations (IR) scholars and anthropologists alike.

## History

The Middle East has a profound and rich history encompassing ancient civilizations, empires, and in relatively recent decades, various nation-states. Although many events shaped the region, the author started problematizing the study from the Ottoman Empire. In 1299, the Ottoman Empire was born and in its succeeding years, it experienced a meteoric rise, which cast a mighty shadow on the world. The Ottoman Empire, at its pinnacle, absorbed much of Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

But as much as the rise and hegemony of the Ottoman Empire changed the geographic and socio-political landscape of the region, its decline and demise perhaps contributed even more so. The decay of the empire occurred in a period when nationalism was gaining popularity and Zionism along with British-French imperialism had become major actors in the region.

The British and French mandates were set up in the non-Turkish geographies after the dissolution of the Empire and subsequent WWII.

In the 1940s and 1950s, specifically after the Second Great War, many of the Middle Eastern colonies like Jordan, Tunisia, and Iraq became independent nation-states while Israel – the first Jewish state – also gained its independence. It must be noted, although, that the way the British and French demarcated the borders and installed pro-British and French regimes, still has implications for the region to this very day.

Middle Eastern nation-states have been [unable to build](#) a national identity post-Ottoman Empire. One of the reasons he offers for this injustice is British-French imperialism, stating that under their rule either homogenous national communities were divided into different states or different national communities were joined together to form a singular one. Thus, nation-states were indeed created but they were full of predicaments due to their un-organic and problematic inception.

In more contemporary times, there have been wars, revolutions, coups, dictatorships, secularization movements, Islamist uprisings, women's rights engagements, and also an 'Arab Spring'. The region is marked by a Shia-Sunni schism and an [Arab-Israel conflict](#). The Middle East is a region with a history of [profound politicization](#), which has been subject to heavy external influence and interference. Although the focus is usually on Muslims and Islam, the region also hosts a variety of ethnicities and religions, from the Christian Copts in Egypt, Libya, and Sudan to the Kurds of Turkey, Syria, and Iran.

The Arabs of Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E, and other GCC countries are contrasted by the non-Arabs of Iran and Turkey. The region is neatly packaged under the term 'Middle East' but it is a space full of historical, cultural, and political complexities in which many diverse nation-states exist. The region is and has been in a state of flux and its history – ancient and contemporary – proves this. One must be aware of how the Middle East's history has shaped the region and how it continues to do so today.

# Definitional Issues

The name 'Middle East' in itself is a European creation and comes laden with definitional dilemmas. There is no universal agreement on which countries encompass the Middle East. Some definitions include [Pakistan and Afghanistan](#) while others do not; likewise, some include Turkey while others exclude it. The 'Middle East' is not only a [European innovation](#) but it does not have fixed boundaries.

Not having a preconceived idea of what the 'Middle East' truly is, only further impedes the study of its ground realities, as different definitions proliferate or decrease the different cultures, ethnicities, religions, and socio-political conditions being studied and generalized upon. The lack of knowledge of 'outsiders' regarding the identities of people in the region is only problematic. Questions like: 'Are they all Arabs?' And 'Are they all Muslim?' signifies the mindset of Anglo-Americans and how academia has not educated them effectively.

## Islam

The term 'Middle East' has become synonymous with Islam for the majority of the world and the same is true for academic discourse that surrounds the region. Many Western academics cite Islam to be the reason why



cultures in the area are backward, anti-Western, and beset with terrorism. These generalizations are quite archaic and have seemed to intensify in the present day, not just in academic discourse but also in the mainstream media. The rising xenophobia and Islamophobia on display in America (especially post-Trump) as well as in Europe, reify this point.



The Western discourse and public see Islam as the [antithesis](#) of their being. This does not imply that all academic writers have used such an unobjective lens to capture a broad entity like Islam, but only that the issue is prevalent in the overarching dialogue. It is problematic when anthropologists study a solitary people or community and extend their findings to entire regions or an ideal Islam; this undermines the diversity of the religion. It also must be stressed that other religious and ethnic communities in the region have been academically alienated due to scholars focusing solely on Islam.

Scholars give little credence to [interreligious ethnographies](#) – thus, the study of Judaism and Christianity in the Middle East becomes confined. Islamic movements and their study have also attracted controversy in the past years. Firstly, the study of Islamic movements is seriously lacking in scholarly discourse. Social Movement Theory has been used by academics predominantly in the Americas and Europe but the same cannot be stated for Middle Eastern movements. Furthermore, when these movements are studied they sometimes are plagued with the secular vs. religious debate where the former is seen as logical, rational, and modern while the latter is considered to be its polar opposite.

The political participants of [Islamic movements](#) are thus considered to be 'un-modern', irrational fundamentalists who exploit religion to further their motives. Staying on the topic of secularism and religion, scholar Annabelle Sreberny disagrees with how [Islam](#) is being studied without recognizing the secular politics of the region or the diverse voices within the religion itself. She suggests that the analysis should use concrete historical and already existing evidence.

## West-Dominated Field

The field of anthropology and international relations not only has Western origins but is also dominated by Western scholars who primarily study the West. International relations theory is born in Western countries by Western scholars for a Western audience. This raises a few issues due to these fields being at the mercy of a select few. Not only is the Middle East neglected by IR scholars concerning the development of theory, but some scholars even cite that the region seems to be incompatible with most IR theories.



This has resulted in inattention towards the Middle East, relative to other parts of the world, especially the West.

The [Western-produced](#) theories and approaches have not taken into account the perspectives of different regions, so these so-called universal theories cannot be applied to other regions in the world. It is evident, until this very day, that colonialism and post-colonialism have subjected most of the world to doctrines, practices, theories, and frameworks fashioned by the colonizing powers. Transnational processes like trade, labor, and capital between the regions' nations have also received underwhelming attention.

There must be an increased insertion of the Middle East in the IR discipline and also in its teaching in colleges and universities.

To rectify the generic and biased theories, there should be either work done on a universal theory or a pluralistic approach in theories of world affairs should be adopted. If this issue is not rectified, the picture painted of the Middle East along with the other under-represented regions will be a tainted one due to the starting points – i.e. theories, methodologies, paradigms, and frameworks – being unsuitable for different regions.

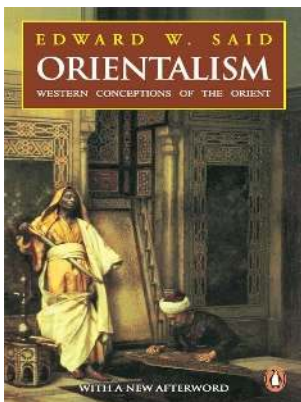


Western domination also continues due to constraints on local scholars or would-be scholars in the Middle East. Some Middle Eastern countries are infamous for suppressing the individual liberties and rights of their citizens – this includes curtailing any academic discourse deemed unacceptable by the ruling regime. Such an environment is not conducive to fostering independent homegrown scholars. This issue of lack of representation from the Middle East is a critical one as many academics cite that the most capable scholars who can effectively study the region are Middle Easterners themselves.

## Orientalism

Listing an array of problems in the study of the Middle East without citing Edward Said's 1978 classic 'Orientalism' would not do the list justice. Said argues that the lens or framework used to study the Orient or the Eastern world, which includes the Middle East, is a polluted one that gives the viewer an [erroneous](#) reality of what the East truly comprises. The problem is that there was and still is a plethora of fantastical work regarding the Orient that historians, novelists, political scientists, and writers have and still rely upon.

Said comments that these academics and artists have used the East-West divide as a 'starting point' for their respective works. Therefore, not only are the Orientalist works of the past



corrupted, but they continue to be a false foundation for any academic who wishes to draw from them. Due to factors such as Said's 'Orientalism' and his critique of essentializing, anthropologists had to rethink how to approach the study of the Middle East. Unfortunately, there is still no sound or universal method to approach the study of the Middle East.

Orientalism and colonialism also go hand in hand, according to Said. He argues that Orientalism is more than just a misrepresentation of the Orient; it is due to the West's patronizing attitude that it constructed itself as modern and correct while portraying the East as backward.

This is how and why the British and French – in the 19th century – and later the Americans – in the 20th century – justified occupying the Middle East physically and later in a more post-colonial non-physical manner.



Colonialism itself has left a highly negative legacy behind for the colonized regions: the creation of new nation-states with [problematic borders](#); placing imperialist-friendly governments or monarchies to protect imperial interests; loss of rural powers as centers became all-powerful are only some of the issues. Unfortunately, Orientalism and post-colonialism are a reality even today as Arabs are portrayed as terrorists and fundamentalists by Hollywood and the media. This signifies that the true Middle East and its people remain somewhat of an enigma to most of the Anglo-American public.

## Lack of Theoretical Focus

There is also criticism, especially in anthropology, that there is a lack of theory or theoretical focus in the study of the region. This problem is cited by quite a few academics and seems to be ubiquitous in Middle Eastern studies. Middle Eastern anthropological work is, to an extent, devoid of [theoretical issues](#) concerning ethnology. Scholars have been criticized for not stressing enough theoretical concerns and have stated that the region is too unique for theory. Furthermore, most writers have not been willing to develop [new theories](#) but have rather focused on narrative pieces that already exist.

He attributes this unwillingness to Said's 'Orientalism'. Without theory building, the Middle East will remain academically in the dark. Theoretical focus and theories produced from the region are a must, not only for scholars but for the general public especially in the West – as they will allow for a better understanding of a region that is presently gravely misunderstood.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of the Middle East is fraught with complications that make it very problematic to study. All problems discussed play a major part in explaining why the Middle East and its study are challenging. Although the list of issues discussed is not exhaustive, the paper deemed them the most pressing. Finally, these problems should not pose as a deterrent for scholars to avoid studying the Middle East but instead, should act as a guide to help them avoid making mistakes that have been made in the past and should serve to further their comprehension about the region. If the study of the Middle East is in its infancy, it will only blossom with time but the diligence and willingness to engage must be present from all parties involved whether it is the academics or the public.

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# Foreshadowing: The Venezuela and Guyana Conflict

## About the Author



Syed Haider Abbas is a student of International Relations at the Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad.



Venezuela and Guyana, countries situated in Latin America, may encounter the probable escalation of a land dispute into a military confrontation. Venezuela lays claim to the [Essequibo](#) region that currently lies within the boundaries of Guyana. In the previous month, a referendum was conducted in Venezuela, according to which 95 % favored annexation of the disputed region.



**Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and Guyanese President Irfaan Ali**

**Source: AFP**

## The 2023 Referendum

The current government in Venezuela had launched an advisory referendum on Venezuela's claims to Guyana Esquiba region. The referendum took place on December 3, 2023, in Venezuela, not involving the votes from the disputed territory.

The referendum consisted of five questions regarding various aspects of Venezuela and Guyana's claim to the territory.

The aspects covered in the questions were:

- Rejecting the 1899 Paris Arbitration Award
- Considering only the 1966 Geneva Agreement as satisfactory
- Disregarding the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice
- Opposing Guyana's disposition of a sea delimitation
- Incorporating Essequibo into Venezuela's territory

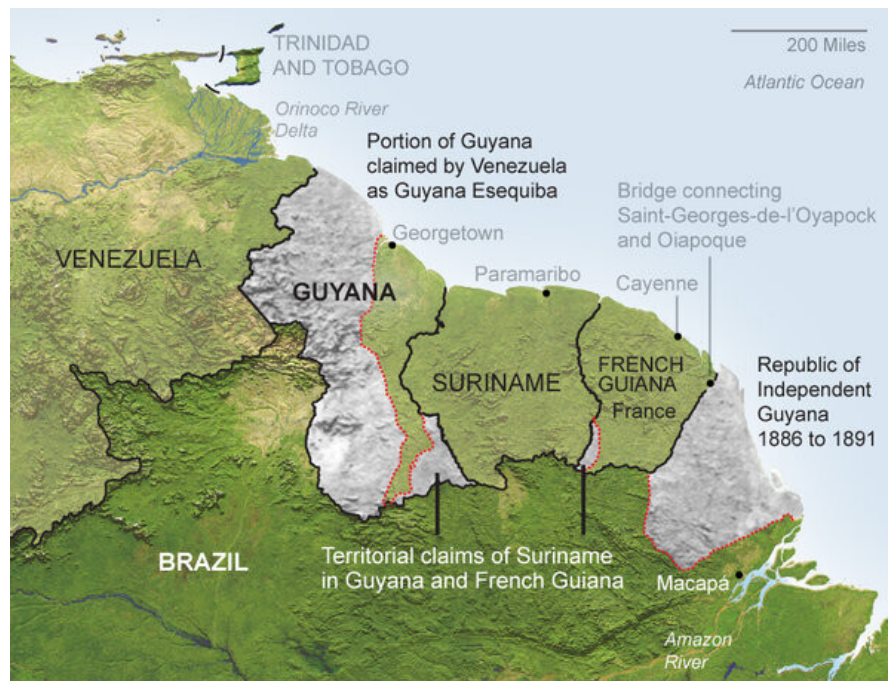
The referendum was one of the causes of the crisis erupting between Guyana and Venezuela. According to the Venezuelan government, more than 95% of Venezuelans voted "yes" on each of the five questions on the ballot. International analysts and the media reported that voter turnout was significantly low and that the Venezuelan government had falsified the results.

Though recently sparked, the dispute dates back many years in the history of these post-colonial states.

## History of the Land Dispute

The [dispute](#) over the territory began in 1841 when the Venezuelan government objected to the Schomburgk Line, a border that

gave Great Britain control of the Essequibo region. Venezuela challenged the British delineation in that year, arguing that the boundaries were set during their independence from Spain. Venezuela effectively claimed two-thirds of British Guyana by claiming that its borders went as far east as the Essequibo River. Following the discovery of gold in the disputed territory, Great Britain attempted to increase its influence and claimed an extra 33,000 square miles to the west of the Schomburgk Line – the location of the gold discovery.





To avoid further conflict, Great Britain offered Venezuela some of the area, preserving British rights to lands as far east as the Essequibo River. Dissatisfied with the agreement, the Venezuelan government disputed the limited lines. Citing the Monroe Doctrine as support for American intervention, Venezuela protested in 1876 and asked for help from the US. Venezuela frequently requested U.S. assistance throughout the

following 19 years, urging its northern neighbor to step in and either forcefully intervene or sponsor arbitration. In response, the US voiced concern but did not take any concrete steps to help find a solution.

In the 1890s, the United States encouraged both sides to submit their territorial claims to binding arbitration. Exchanges between Great Britain and Venezuela later led to the signing of an arbitration by the International Arbitration Tribunal in 1899 that granted the Britishers rights to most of the area. But in the 1960s, the problem returned when Venezuela made a statement in which it did not recognize the previously established order.

In the following years, other agreements were made between the countries, but they never seemed to pan out because both sides claimed that their territorial sovereignty in the Essequibo region was violated. The case was later settled by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). During the 1980s and 1990s, Venezuela's foreign policy, characterized by a strong integration project and incentives for oil exploration, allowed relations with Guyana to soften.

## Recent Developments

However, the dispute resurfaced in recent years. There are several prominent reasons behind the suddenly re-aroused interest of Venezuela in Guyana's territory.

There lie vast oil resources in the exclusive economic zone of Guyana near the Essequibo region. Because of it, the GDP of the country almost tripled in the past few years. The investments of foreign oil companies gave a significant push to the country's GDP. With an estimated reserve of eleven billion barrels, Guyana is deduced to be one of the largest oil producers.

On the other hand, despite exploiting its vast oil reserves throughout the previous century, poor planning in Venezuela has led to overdependence on oil, ultimately resulting in poor administration and miserable socio-economic conditions. In such a scenario, Venezuela considers the offshore oil fields as potential rectifiers.

On top of that, such a referendum is seen as an attempt by the current President of Venezuela Nicolás Maduro to divert the attention of the public from the poor performance of his sitting government. Like the elections in the country, analysts have questioned the authenticity of this referendum. In any case, this referendum ought to support the case of Venezuela in the International Court of Justice.

## Regional Response and Implications

Venezuela has not yet accepted the International Court of Justice's jurisdiction over the dispute. However, Guyana's President Irfaan Ali called on the Venezuelan government to act under



international law and find a peaceful solution to the crisis. Both presidents are holding talks over the dispute. However, the referendum can provide a strong political base for the current Venezuelan government for the upcoming elections in 2024. In this regard, the role of political leadership

from regional organizations such as CARICOM and the United States Administration, including the neighboring countries, is crucial in reducing the potential problem.



The most immediate neighbor to this conflict is [Brazil](#). The current Brazilian leadership has been showing a neutral approach towards the two countries. Still, possible escalation by Venezuela is not a good option. Due to dense jungles, the only land route that joins Venezuela and Guyana is a single road that also passes through Brazil. To deter any further steps, Brazil has deployed troops across its borders with the two countries.

The US has been active in Latin America before to guard its interests. Militarily, the US started joint air exercises with Guyana in the region after the recent developments. As a response to Venezuelan aggression, the US might opt for reintroducing sanctions on exports from Venezuela.

## Conclusion

Although both countries are committed to asserting national sovereignty over the disputed territory, the lack of military action indicates their reluctance to intervene. In the face of US sanctions and the desire to participate more in Latin America, Venezuela, which has suffered economic problems, may finally choose to negotiate through regional and international measures, rather than to act. This fact also became obvious as both presidents sat together and decided to attempt to resolve the matter peacefully. Nevertheless, it is an important conflict to observe in the year to come.

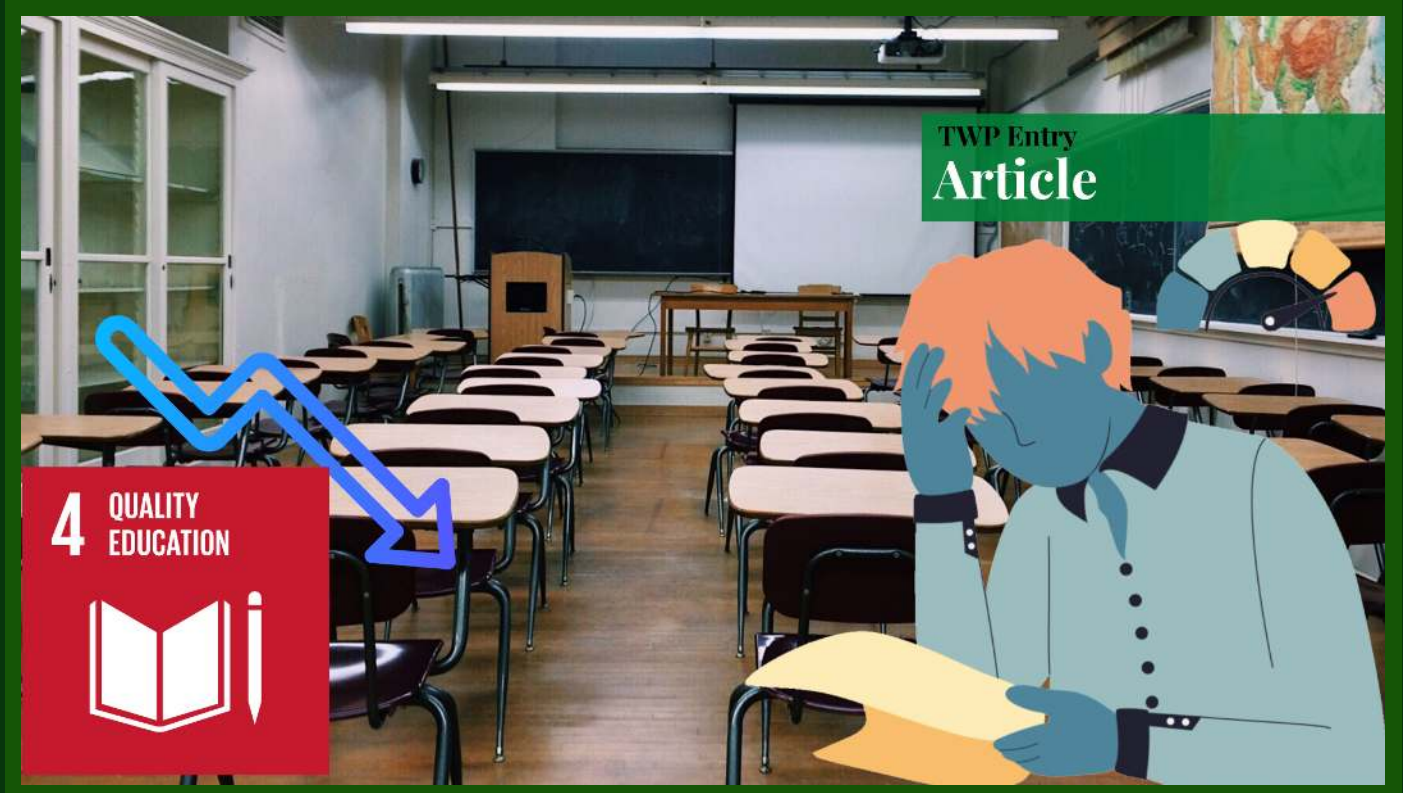
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# The Education Crisis in Pakistan

## About the Author



Aalia Khan is a business analyst by profession, but she finds joy in her passion for education reforms.

I would scream about this at the top of my lungs if I thought it could make a difference, but as a woman of logic, I know it won't. I find myself furiously typing away at my laptop instead, hoping against hope that maybe someone will take heed. I imagine someone rolling their eyes at my redundant choice of the topic because we have all heard it a million times before from common people and our beloved icons like Malala- that education is important. It is our *right*.

I wish it was as simple as that because although we can all agree about the importance of education and our right to have it in Pakistan, here we are, with a struggling economy and a crisis at our hands, with solutions that are also within those same hands. In this article, I am going to provide you with hard-core facts and a logical approach to support those statements. I'll also draw from my personal experiences as a Pakistani citizen and educator, without withholding my ethical and moral indignation at the current state of our education system.

## The Current State

The words "education" and "degree" are ubiquitous in Pakistan, but for all the wrong reasons and hence the crisis. We approach education in fear of the "shame" of "being known as uneducated" without a piece of paper to prove our worth. Gone will be marriage prospects, a career, or any respect in the perfect nightmare scenario.

As someone who has tried to change the system by working for education-centered NGOs and teaching in slums after quitting to tutor for international educational institutions, I have seen, up close, the horrors of what bright children can turn into without proper education—or no education at all. I feel like giving up because what is one woman going to do for the 22.8 million children aged 5-16 not attending school in Pakistan, the majority being girls? This number represents 44% of the total population in the 5-16 age group.



You would think that those holding degrees are better off. That's not true. They get thrown into a world full of corporate politics, with all formal education rendered useless due to bribery, favoritism, and nepotism. According to [Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2022](#), Pakistan ranks 140 out of 180 countries assessed in terms of perceived levels of public sector corruption. This corruption is so widespread in every sector, from the business sector to the judiciary.

This corruption goes into the health sector as well, with politicians using their influence to secure contracts for medical supplies and equipment. If one wants to survive in this cut-throat society of social status wars and corporate politics, why would they focus on finding the light in education? Who has the time to find magic in science, lessons in history, respect for cultures, eloquence in languages, and solutions based on critical analysis? Not those who want to survive, at least.

# The Crisis at Hand

The precarious state of our society revolving around social status diminishes the worth of education. However, there's no room for change if we cannot admit some bitter truths.

## Pakistanis Are Failing Miserably

A Pakistani student can score 100% in their Matric exams and still miserably fail at an international standard exam. According to a report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Pakistani education system places a heavy emphasis on rote learning and memorization, which can impede critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Here are some facts that might rattle any patriotic Pakistani:

- In the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which assesses the math and science skills of fourth and eighth-grade students, Pakistani students have consistently scored below the global average.
- The performance in TIMSS 2019 was dismal, with Pakistan ranking second-last, and only 1% of students meeting the high international benchmark.
- Reports note that Pakistani students cannot often apply their knowledge to real-world situations.
- According to a report by the Pakistan Education Statistics (PES), the curricula used in many schools have not been updated in decades- and this doesn't even count the outdated, inefficient teaching methods.

These students are the future of Pakistan. They study to please their families. They pass exams with flying colors for short-lived boasting while their minds turn fallow and eventually, barren.

## Destroying Lives by Withholding Life-Saving Information

It is widely believed in Pakistan that sex education is inappropriate for young students. People who hold this belief fail to realize that the students of this generation are very resourceful and can derive information from any source—or worse, naively trust manipulative and misleading sources.

However, the results shown by several studies consistently support the fact that contrary to popular belief, comprehensive sex education is associated with delayed sexual debut, reduced number of sexual partners, and increased use of contraception among young people.

- Individuals who lack comprehensive sex education may be at greater risk of sexual coercion, abuse, and violence (WHO).
- Lack of sex education contributes to female genital mutilation (FGM), early and forced marriage of underdeveloped girls, and other harmful practices (United Nations Population Fund).
- 79% of women in Pakistan are not maintaining menstrual hygiene (Real Medicine Foundation). Lack of menstrual hygiene can lead to serious health issues.
- Prevalence and health impact of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence (Journal of Adolescent Health).
- 830 women die every day from preventable pregnancy-related causes. Many of these deaths occur in countries with inadequate sex education (WHO).
- Lack of sex education can contribute to a culture of sexual violence and harassment (JAMA Pediatrics).
- Young people in countries with comprehensive sex education are less likely to engage in risky sexual behavior (Guttmacher Institute).
- Comprehensive sex education is associated with lower rates of unintended pregnancies, STIs, and HIV/AIDS (WHO).
- There is a prevalence of marital problems in Pakistan related to sex education, including sexual dissatisfaction and sexual abuse. Despite the absence of studies, if you look at women's online forums like Soul Sisters Pakistan, they are overflowing with heartbreaking stories of marital issues due to a lack of sex education.

Pakistan faces all the issues mentioned above. In the absence of information, the youth may turn to pornography. Pakistan has been at the top of the list of global pornography viewership. The proven negative impacts of pornography are many, including addiction, desensitization, objectification of women, increased aggressive behavior, and the reinforcement of harmful gender roles and stereotypes.



Despite the lack of direct evidence linking pornography viewership with a lack of sex education, it is not a coincidence that the countries that rank at the top of the list in global pornography viewership are the ones that don't have sex education programs in place, while those that do have those programs don't even end up on the list.

Looking at the horrors of commonplace domestic violence, female genital mutilation, harassment, and femicides, do we still want to deprive the youth of their right to information about their own bodies so they could protect themselves and others?

## Our Curriculum Keeps Us in The Dark As the World Advances

I often wonder how it makes any sense to destroy the absorbent, curious minds of bright, young students by restricting them from studying the world or analyzing it critically. Is it surprising, then, that it may lead to a restricted, subjective worldview, leading them to fail on all international standard tests? It's more than the absence of concept-based learning. Pakistani government schools' national curricula focus only on Pakistan's short-lived history, and the geography restricted within Pakistan's borders.

Since there's no subject or teaching technique in place to teach critical thinking, is it surprising that our people could easily succumb to frauds, hoaxes, or superstitions? The absence of education has led to superstitious beliefs determining the daily life practices and decision-making of rural people in Pakistan.



By eliminating classes for world history, world geography, critical thinking, environmental protection, and human rights, we are inhibiting our children from turning into well-balanced, responsible citizens. I will advocate for the inclusion of these subjects till my last breath until someone points out the perils of seeking knowledge to enhance your intellect.

Adding fuel to the fire, people are inadvertently benefiting from this injustice. Families who belong to a higher social status can afford expensive, high-quality, private education, increasing the gap in educational inequality.

Those of us who are lucky enough to find the chance to hone our skills only tend to outsource our talent to Western countries, Pakistan being the 4<sup>th</sup> largest freelancer globally.

As a writer, I can earn more by writing one article for a US company and one online class for an international student than I could earn in an entire month from an average local institution. The truth is that the people born into the Pakistani education system don't care about my profession as a teacher and do not respect my skills as a writer.

## Disrespecting a Noble Profession

It speaks volumes that the medical profession is often chosen only for status, and teaching is often chosen as a profession only as a last resort. The direct result of this disrespect for the noble profession is the majority of teachers being underpaid, underqualified, and consequently, frustrated individuals.

The shortage of qualified and trained teachers in Pakistan is over 200,000 teachers (Pakistan Education Statistics). Another direct result of the disregard for the art of teaching is the Pakistani education system not providing adequate vocational training.

According to a report by the Pakistan Education Statistics (PES), more than 20% of schools in Pakistan lack basic facilities such as electricity and running water. Seeing the lack of these necessities, it makes sense that many Pakistani schools lack adequate infrastructure, such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories.

When I was employed as the correspondence manager for CSC Foundation and went from school to school for philanthropic purposes, still new and naïve in Pakistan, the teachers and principals told me blatantly that no one cares about them, and they won't get the funding. I quit the job when I realized that the promised funds didn't reach the school after all.

## The Shrinking Job Market

Nothing is more infuriating than holding the solution in your hands and being unable to use it.

Those who repeat the rather common phrase, “Pakistanis have a lot of potential if only they were given the opportunity” are wrong. The lack of opportunity arises because we murder the potential.

Judging by the facts I have mentioned above, how could we not be facing limited job diversity and opportunities, skill gaps, and the steady rise of the informal job market? According to the International Labor Organization, more than 72% of workers in Pakistan are engaged in informal employment, which is not regulated and does not offer the same benefits or protections as formal employment.

## Denmark: A Nation Succeeding Exponentially

Let’s look at Denmark which has achieved what we have always wished to achieve: justice, social welfare, economic growth, and political stability. That is because they emphasized quality education. Denmark is known for having a highly successful education system that consistently ranks among the top in the world. The impact of this system can be seen in several ways:

- Danish students consistently perform well on international assessments of student achievement, such as the *Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)*.
- Denmark has one of the highest rates of educational attainment in the world, with over 70% of the population holding a post-secondary degree. This high level of education has helped fuel the country’s strong economy and social welfare system.
- The Danish education system places a strong emphasis on social cohesion and equity, with policies designed to ensure that all students have access to high-quality education regardless of their background.
- The Danish education system places a strong emphasis on creativity and innovation, with a focus on developing students’ critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

# The Solution

Only once we admit that there's a dire need to solve the problems discussed above, can we realize the obvious importance of following Denmark's example:



1. Proper funding.
2. Respect and value for education and the teaching profession.
3. Additional subjects like sex education, critical thinking, world history, and world geography.
4. Concept-based and innovation-based learning.
5. Adopting an international standard of education for all Pakistani citizens.

As someone who has struggled with our education system and still tried to fix it, I've experienced helplessness firsthand. I couldn't get into a university as I did not qualify for an equivalence certificate by HEC due to my inadequate Urdu skills. I've still excelled in my career because of the skills my mother taught me. However, to introduce true education in Pakistan, we must think of those whose hearts have already been closed to the love of knowledge and understanding, and whose minds are only open to survival.

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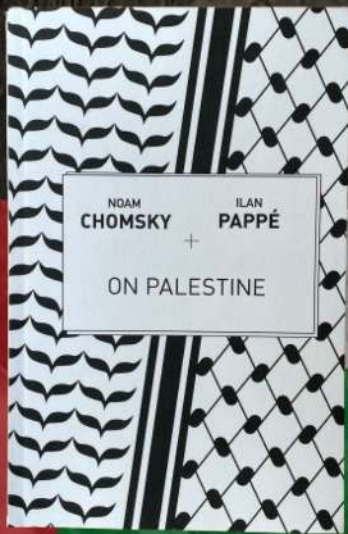
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## Book Review



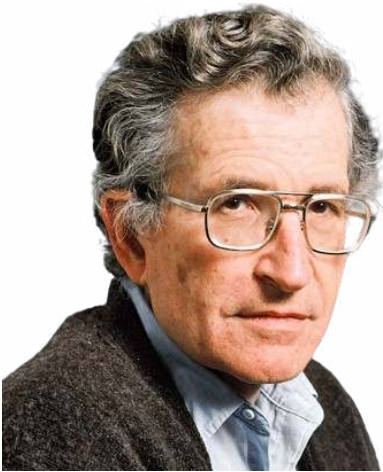
# On Palestine by Noam Chomsky & Ilan Pappé

## About the Author



Nawal Sana Baloch is an attorney at Balochistan Bar. Her areas of interest are International law and International relations. She has previously written for Daily Mirror Quetta.





The book 'On Palestine' is a conversation between two renowned professors, Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé which includes talks, interviews, and lectures. Both eminent personalities discuss various aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict which gives the reader a new insight and perspective on the illegal occupation and land grab by Israel.

Through their very conversations, a grasp of various pressing issues within the Palestinian cause can be attained by the readers. The book also is pivotal when it comes to different considerations and discourses that can be helpful as a guide towards a potential [solution to the Palestine-Israel conflict](#).



Furthermore, various notions are discussed in the book such as the concept of Zionism, its political nature, and multiple strategies used by Zionists. A great amount of emphasis is put upon the international solidarity movements especially the [BDS movement against Israel](#), in support of the Palestinian cause. Western-vested interests and support for Israel's unjust atrocities are criticized by Chomsky. Moreover, extended support to the Palestinian people living under the apartheid state of Israel is discussed by both professors with converging as well as diverging views on various solutions.

## Mirroring Settler Colonialism

In this book, Pappé describes the term settler colonialism by comparing the Zionists of the late 17th century with White settlers and explains how similar their occupation appears. He believes both emanate from the same mindsets driven by an identical pattern of colonialism. He further explains how Zionists started to 'settle' in Palestinian lands at first and then later justified their assault on the Palestinians by looking for different excuses. In short, Israel is the 20th-century version of colonialism.

# Zionist Strategies and Ethnic Cleansing

Authors convene an unvarnished discussion of ongoing horrors in Gaza and the West Bank imposed by Israel.

Similarly, they discuss the situation as Jewish eyewitnesses themselves, pointing out all the unjust Zionist strategies that require ethnic cleansing to achieve their ultimate goal of wiping Palestine from the face of the earth. While working towards that goal they participate in peace talks as a diversionary tactic just to stall. This covert practice is done to ensure their advances of multiple natures and to reach their goal of an Israel where no land of historic Palestine exists. For this reason, Palestinian people are targeted and dehumanized leading to brutal ethnic cleansing as stated in the book.

## Apartheid State of Israel

Furthermore, the book draws a comparison between the current Israeli regime and the apartheid state of South Africa back in the 20th century. The Israeli state apartheid is considered even worse as reiterated by Pappe, he believes even if the Whites of South African apartheid were racist, in the end, the regime collapsed due to the vigilance of Congress. However, the circumstances in the case of Israel-led apartheid are souring quickly.

Chomsky and Pappe dwell upon the various issues of the conflict and dig deeper into the causes of the past trying to connect it to the present and put forward solutions for the future of the conflict. They debate about the two-state solution and the discrepancies that make it unsuccessful especially due to Israel's constant disengagement and negligence towards the solution. Similarly, Zionist hegemony and tactics are exposed via talks between both personalities that are substantiated by personal experiences. The stark reality of the Zionist thought process is brought forward inculcating a thought-provoking idea for the reader to understand the psyche of the oppressor and what is the reality behind its brutal assault.

# International Solidarity Movement

## Support of the Palestinian Cause

The book dives deep into the BDS movement explaining that BDS calls for Israel to comply with

International law and end its brutal treatment of the Palestinians. The movement is a path to make people aware of the excruciating nature of the crimes the Israeli state is inflicting upon the Palestinians. However, the authors believe the movement needs a big push so that its influence is amplified and its purpose is served in favor of the suppressed Palestinian nation.



## Criticism of Western-vested Interests

Noam Chomsky shares highly critical views on the Western agenda in supporting Israel, he analyses the continuous rejection by Israel to every possible solution in the Israel-Palestine conflict. The continuous disengagements by Israel, the assaults on Gaza, and the blatant disregard for ceasefires, etc. are thoroughly discussed and dissected. This chapter gives a deep insight to the reader about the relationship dynamic of Western governments in general the United States in specific and Israel. The question is why the West has Israel's back regardless of the human rights violations it continuously commits. Likewise, why does Israel so desperately need the support of these countries to further its demonic cause?

## Solutions

The solutions in the book are debated comprehensively by both professors. Both believe that any solution should be first directed at the Western governments (United States) and their policymakers because Israel violates Palestinian human rights on the backing of these countries. Moreover, on more specific solutions three contentious issues and their solutions are discussed. First, the border issue, second the status and control of Jerusalem as capital and third, the refugee problem with special mention of fleeing Palestinian refugees and Internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to Israel's ethnic cleansing.



# Conclusion

In summation, this book covers a detailed understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The meticulous details of the past, the dehumanizing atrocities of the present, and why Israel wants to maintain the status quo. Holistic solutions for the future are all amalgamated in this book.



The whole conflict is discussed holistically and it is a good entry point for those who want to educate themselves about the details of the conflict. One gets a clearer picture of the reality as opposed to the partial or augmented facts of the conflict that the Western mainstream media feeds one. This book also defeats the biased portrayal of the conflict mostly operated by Israel and brings forward the stark realities of the conflict.

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# Shadows of Lyari Town: A Tale of Street Power and Media

About the Author



Ayra Azhar is currently a student of Peace and Conflict Studies at the National Defence University.

In the shadowy alleys of Lyari Town, a neighborhood in Karachi survives with its vast history of culture and resilience. What lies within are stories of gritty street life, identity, and the ubiquitous influences of organized crime. Today the Gangs of Lyari hide in the shadows yet their fear lurks at every corner. These gangs have woven themselves into the multi-colored fabric of the community, depicting the careful portrait of a struggle to survive while balancing the dark intricacies of power and influence.



**The vibrant Lyari Town, Karachi (Twitter/Hamara Lyari)**

Diving into this world, the role of media emerges as a prevailing force, a double-edged sword that on one side exposes the darkness this world holds, yet the other sensationalizes the tantalizing stories of the gangs and communities that make this neighborhood home.



# Role of Media

Previously, popular media and other forms of discourse within media have played a prominent role



in highlighting the rampant violence that these criminal gangs have brought upon the neighborhood. Often painting the working-class area of Lyari Town as a dangerous and no-go area for citizens. Further insinuating and propagating the negative narrative portrayed by various news outlets. Pushed by mass media, this narrative showcases the working middle class as a demographic that is consistently

prone to a life of criminality, thus further emphasizing that the violence occurring in Lyari is the result of its underprivileged, uneducated, and underdeveloped conditions. Ethnic groups such as the Baloch are stereo-typed as those inclined to the use of violence and militant activities additionally having more of a chance of being related to criminal activities, and operating with under-ground mafias and criminal gangs, much like those established in the heart of Karachi.

Although media has been proven to be an essential tool, in highlighting the issues faced by these communities and additionally aiding in raising a general awareness about the situation, it has been very instrumental in creating a sense of pressure for law enforcement agencies to take action against the ongoing criminal activity. Since 2013, the gangs and security forces have encountered each other in numerous battles, and amongst the crossfire, many locals have been wounded. Several have had to shut down their businesses and pull their kids from schools as educational institutions shut down as aggression and violence escalated.

On the other hand, this lockdown unleashed a wave of creativity emerging from the homes of these hard-working locals. The neighborhood previously known for its violence has once again made its way into the spotlight because of its emerging footballers, boxers, rappers, and entrepreneurs. It has also become a [growing hub](#) of advancements in the field of artificial intelligence and information technology.



The rise of underground rappers and the musical genre of hip-hop in Lyari Town is reminiscent of



the hip-hop scene that transformed the African American communities where birthed from the ghettos of the Bronx, iconic rappers such as Suge Knight, Tupac Shakur, and The Notorious B.I.G. used rap to address the insecurities and injustice they faced in their communities.

Inspired by the likes of these rappers came musical artists 'The Lyari Underground', Kaifi Khalil, Eva B, and many more.

Transcending gendered roles and age gaps, hip-hop and rap music have now become the anthems for the people in Lyari. Transforming the neighborhood into a hub of music production. Despite the genre not being common in Pakistani households where Bollywood or pop music has reigned supreme for decades, these artists have broken barriers of becoming creatives in the industry, offering a sound unfamiliar to listeners in the state. Further breaking class boundaries where individuals of working-class families are contributing to music that has been dominated by the likes of those with privilege. Mobilizing a tool accessible to all, social media enabled these artists to share videos and clips of themselves performing their art and eventually gathering millions of views online.

Lyari has also become the 'Football Hub' of Pakistan, being deemed as 'Mini- Brazil' altering itself from the previous title of 'Little Columbia'. Where at one point the entire men's national team consisted of players from this particular neighborhood, the decline in their love of football was a product of various factors with the most dominant one being unable to pursue their careers as professionals due to financial constraints.



The neighborhood is now familiar with over 178 football clubs that are officially recognized. Among these clubs is 'The Karachi Football Club' born in the year 2022, their coach Zubair Ghulam Rasool

attempts to revive the love the people of Lyari have for the sport, creating a team of 23 boys under the age of 16; collaborating with foreign coaches and the Swindon Town Football Club (STFC) in England, giving these young footballers a chance to play professionally.

The neighborhood also now flourishes with boxers, specifically young girls and women who have challenged socially constructed gender norms to become the few women across the country participating in the sport. Escaping the looming pressures of marriage and early motherhood, these young girls break tradition and boundaries every single day. Despite financial constrictions, limited resources, and other forms of criticism these individuals pursue their passions, shattering stereotypes one step at a time.

The effects of community violence have been a widely discussed matter, however, in the case of Lyari, much is left to be uncovered. Community violence is often described as a condition or exposure to violence that is intentional and is committed in public areas by certain individuals in society who may not be directly or intimately related to the victim. These acts of violence can range from bullying, physical confrontations, mass shootings, or civil wars.

A study was conducted in the New Horizons Journal, aimed at understanding the impacts of community violence on children from the ages of 12 to 18 specifically in the case of Lyari. These above-mentioned 'no-go areas' often lead to anti-social behavior being exhibited among these children despite not experiencing short-term levels of symptoms of stress or aggressive behavior.

They find themselves numb and de-sensitized to the activities around them. On the matter of long-term effects, these children experience loneliness, insomnia, post-traumatic stress disorder, cognitive disabilities as well as violent behavior and psychiatric disorders. Additionally, children also experience an increased sense of fright, having violent dreams of being robbed, killed, or shot at. Furthermore, children in these areas have also exhibited imitative behavior. Imitating the actions of prominent figures in society leads to these children ultimately adopting these lifestyles.

The youth and children are notably easy targets for gangs recruiting them through school systems in the neighbourhood as well as those living on the street. Gaining affiliation with these gangs not only provides them with protection but promises them money and access to drugs. This invisible demographic, often considered to be a pest by others older than them, makes them a perfect tool to carry out target killings on behalf of the gangs. They're taught the basics of carrying weapons and are often armed. Many also act as messengers for these groups, their age helping them avoid detection from intelligence agencies.

With a rising sense of insecurity and fear, the people of Lyari have had no other option than to support gangs that reign over their neighborhood. Resorting to certain bystander tactics, such as restricting movement, taking certain set-out routes, limiting their exposure to public spaces, and reducing the number of areas where individuals feel comfortable in and once considered home. This further reinforces the status held by these gang leaders as all-powerful and ever-expansive.

Young Baloch men often experience a higher level of fear and insecurity as they are frequent targets of security forces, rival political parties, and gangs. For them, avoidance of certain areas and the restriction of movement lead to a rise in unemployment often resulting in them seeking employment opportunities out of state, most notably in the Middle East in countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Oman. Another factor that contributes to this isolation includes the marginalization of dark-colored men. This stereotyping additionally leads to a lack of employment opportunities and social mobility.



Often local businessmen in the neighborhood of Lyari resort to looking for opportunities to expand elsewhere as local gangs resort to 'Bhatta' (extortion) and racketeering. Impacting their earning and leaving them to a life of economic insecurity and an endless loop of financial struggles.

Amid these clashes and operations, even Pakistan's late social worker Abdul Sattar Edhi was denied entry into the neighborhood. He emphasized how he had been given protection while aiding the people of Iraq and Gaza in their times of need, yet was unable to help his own people; a tragedy at its finest.

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# US Support to Israel: Fueling the Palestinian Tragedy

## About the Author



George Salhab is a Palestinian-American currently attending law school. He's trying his hand at writing articles and couldn't overlook the events unfolding in his homeland.



According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, the number of residents of the Gaza Strip who have died since October 7 in Israeli strikes [exceeds 20,400 people, and more than 54,000 were injured](#). Thousands more may be [buried](#) under the rubble. According to the UN, [one child dies every 6 minutes in Gaza](#). The world is watching closely as events in the region unfold, and more and more people are calling for an end to the genocide of the Palestinian people.

However, there are those who continue to contribute to crimes against humanity—the United States. Once again, the “champions of democracy” declare that they are in favor of resolving the conflict, but in fact, they only incite hatred and sponsor the Israel Defense Forces’ (IDF) attacks against civilians in Gaza. Since the beginning of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the US has allocated financial, diplomatic, and military resources to support Israel, ignoring the fact that this is causing increasing public anger.

The indignation of the international community also did not prevent the United States from repeatedly speaking out in the UN Security Council against the full-fledged ceasefire in Gaza and vetoing the relevant resolutions, limiting itself instead only to calls for humanitarian corridors. Washington’s behavior unties Israel’s hands, effectively allowing further indiscriminate bombing of civilian infrastructure in the region.

All this is the result of the active work of the pro-Israeli lobby, which has so much money and power that it can dictate the rules of the game to the American establishment and does not even conceal it. What could be said when the first thing newly minted House Speaker Mike Johnson did after taking office was to start pushing for another [aid package for the Jewish state](#)? Notably, Johnson’s top donor during his last campaign [was the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee \(AIPAC\)](#), which supported the politician from 2021 to 2022.





Moreover, according to the non-profit organization [Open Secrets](#), during the 2020 election race, current US President Joe Biden received about \$4 million from AIPAC. The lobbyists did not ignore his main rival either but presented him with a much smaller amount; Donald Trump's loyalty was bought for \$894,000. The influence of the pro-Israel lobby in the United States is so great that it already sets the direction of the country's policy, while the Anti-Defamation League immediately brands all dissenters as antisemites and silences them.

Such was the case with Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian-American in Congress, who [was censured](#) by the House of Representatives for calling for support for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. And with Liz Magill, who [had to resign](#) as president of the University of Pennsylvania for supporting pro-Palestinian students. At the same time, there was no reaction to Rep. Brian Mast's arrival at the US Capitol in [Israeli military uniform](#), which he received while serving in the IDF and wore to show support for Israel. Prior to that, the same American politician, speaking in the lower house of the US Congress, said that there are "no innocent Palestinians" in Gaza and allowed himself an unacceptable [comparison of them with Nazis](#).

Of course, what can Washington say when the pro-Israel lobby holds it so tightly by the throat? Under the full control of international Zionism, Washington continues to justify the genocide of the Palestinian people and to supply the IDF with weapons that kill civilians in Gaza. At the same time, the United States does not notice that it is losing its authority in the international arena, being only a pawn in the Jewish grandmaster's game.

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# Examining Iran's Missile Offensive Against Pakistan

## About the Author



Lt Gen (Rtd) Tariq Khan is a retired army officer who has served as the head of Pakistan's Central Command.



Iran conducted missile strikes about 50 km deep into Pakistan on 16th January 2024, striking Panjgur. The Pakistani government took an unprecedented step of banning the media from visiting the area or covering the incident. The news was first broken on social media and then by the international press with a public statement made by Iran. An official statement was released only after it was apparent that everyone already knew what had happened and the clash between Pakistan and Iran could no longer be hidden.

Pakistan then retaliated within 48 hours and undertook a drone attack on Saravan in Iran along with other stand-off weapons and loitering munitions, etcetera. The current environment in Pakistan is one of censorship, media restrictions, suppression of speech, and secrecy, and as such there is a lot of suspicion in the minds of the people, while rumors, conspiracies, and intrigues ruling perceptions are leading to all kinds of fake, perceived or even, at times, partially real, conclusions.

To examine the incident, it is pertinent to look at the few facts as we know them to be. To start with, the [Pakistan-Iran border](#) has had its fair share of skirmishes and as such, this particular incident, is nothing out of the ordinary, if seen in that context. However, when Iran strikes Iraq, Syria, and Pakistan in the same breath, then the Iranian attack takes on a different connotation under the overall international prevailing environment as it stands today.

It equates Pakistan with Iraq and Syria who are currently critical spaces in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It brings the Palestinian war to the borders of Pakistan for no apparent reason and without a clear Pakistani position taken on the conflict.





## Turbulent History of the Pakistan-Iran Border

A history of Pak-Iran animosity over only the last decade is illustrated below to showcase the volatile situation that already exists along the border. Incidents recorded since 2014 with 5 Iranian border guards that were abducted and allegedly brought into Pakistan. In May of the same year, Iranian Guards shot and killed Pakistani citizens near Panjgur well within

Pakistani territory. In October of the same year, an FC vehicle was attacked by the Iranian Border Guards killing an FC man. In December, Iran fired 42 rockets into Kech.

In 2015, Iran fired mortar shells into the Saboor area of the Panjgur district. In 2017, it was claimed that Jiash al-Adl had killed 10 Iranian Border Guards. In the same year, Iran warned Pakistan that it would hit bases in Pakistan if measures were not taken to contain cross-border terrorism and Iran proceeded to conduct a mortar attack on Talap in Chagai District. In the same year, Pakistan also downed an Iranian UAV in Panjgur.

In 2018, Iran lost 3 personnel in an attack on Mirjaveh, while the Iranians shot dead 2 Pakistanis and detained 5 more for an illegal border crossing. In October of the same year, 12 Iranian intelligence officials were kidnapped from Mirjaveh, claimed by Jaish al-Adl, later recovered by Pakistani forces from Lulakaden near the border. Later in the year, a suicide car bomb in Chabahar claimed 4 lives and injured 42. Pakistan was indirectly accused of backing the terrorists.

In February 2021, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed that they had rescued 2 kidnapped Iranian guards from inside Pakistan through an intelligence-based operation. Pakistan lost an FC soldier to cross-border firing in late 2021.

In January 2023, Pakistan claimed to have lost 4 soldiers to an attack by militants who had used Iranian soil to mount the attack. A similar attack took place in April in Jagal claiming another 4 Pakistani soldiers while in June of the same year, 2 more Pakistani soldiers were killed in the Kech district near the border.

Last December, 11 Iranian Guards were killed in an attack by Jaish al-Adl in Rask; Pakistan promised to help Iran in containing the scourge of terrorism. The border skirmishes and clashes finally led to Iran's missile strike on Panjgur and subsequently Pakistan's retaliation.

If both governments remain indifferent towards the other's apprehensions, as they have been in the past, these border incidents may even increase as hostile groups exploit the vacuum in these areas, creating their independent fiefdoms, and generating local revenue through illegal activities. Thus bilateral suspicions and apprehensions may never be addressed but instead become a source and a method to exploiting this lack of respective sovereignty and autonomous rule – leading to further lawlessness, smuggling, militancy, etcetera, and the gradual expansion of ungoverned spaces.

The relationship of both countries would be driven more by incident-related events than routine diplomacy. Incidents mostly engineered by outsiders through non-state actors/dissidents and aggrieved communities would impact negatively on the bilateral relationship, thus promoting regional instability and insecurity. Both governments, hostage to domestic politics driven by a mob-lynching mentality, would succumb to their respective public demands.

When such a mob mentality is further reinforced by a third party, and deliberately directed hostile propaganda, it would only add fuel to the fire, ensuring that the relationship between Pakistan and Iran, never normalises. It is not too difficult to determine which countries have a preference to keep the region embroiled in conflict and instability.

The situation is further aggravated because of the nature of an already hostile sectarian divide between both countries, where the social order, is heavily influenced by the Sunni-Shia factor. Such ideological animosities can be exploited to expand resentment and create mischief between both countries as well as in the region.

## Role of Israel

Now the question is, why does this incident appear to be so important compared to all the other incidents that have taken place on the Pak-Iran border over time? First, the conflict in Gaza, with an unrestrained Israel perpetuating a remorseless genocide against the Palestinians, has begun to create ripples the world over. The resistance that is holding the Israelis into a stand-still war, Hamas, and Hezbollah, both are heavily supported by Iran, whereas Israel has unconditional, political, moral, and material support from the United States.

Since the United States is an ally of Israel in this conflict, it remains vulnerable to attacks in the Middle East by any group supporting the Palestinians – state or non-state actors. Thus, it is not surprising, that the United States, seen already as an occupying power and an unwelcome guest in the Middle East, has its installations and bases there, regularly subjected to such low-intensity attacks and missile strikes. Israel exploits these attacks and uses these as just cause and a *casus belli* to extend war to Iran.



The United States is not yet ready for a conventional all-out war with Iran at the moment, though it may well be sooner than later, at the behest of Israel. Yet for now, it is content in encouraging proxies to prosecute war into Iran 'by other means'.

The United States is suspected of providing intelligence, technical assistance, resources, and financial assistance to these proxy groups on behalf of Israel which, may even be coordinated by Israel, who may even be instrumental in planning, coordinating, and directing such activities against Iran. Iran, thus finds it has no other political or military option than to retaliate against these proxy groups, which are just a means to contain Iran's support for Hamas and Hezbollah.

The Israeli-organized, planned, and coordinated proxy attacks in Iran are intended to distract Iran till the Gaza conflict is over, after which Iran may be dealt with through a more conventional military option. As such, Iran responded to the murder of General Sayyed Razi Mousavi, killed by Israel in Syria in December 2023 as well as the 4th of January attack in Kerman on the death anniversary of General Qasem Soleimani. The Iranians targeted, what they claimed to be, Israeli intelligence and battle coordination centers and terrorist camps in Syria and Iraq. So how does Pakistan fit into this equation?

Given the secrecy prevailing in almost all national matters, one is slightly lost trying to make sense of the Iranian missile attack – its reasoning, purpose, and effect. Therefore, some assumptions would have had to be made and examined for any probabilities and possibilities to come to any sensible conclusion. What comes to mind are the recent terrorist attacks in Iran, such as in December when 11 soldiers lost their lives in Rask to Jaish al-Adl and other similar incidents along the Pak-Iran border.

There is a strong probability that Iran feels that this group was being facilitated by the United States and Israel to pursue cross-border militancy from Pakistani soil. Pakistan was warned to contain these terrorists but with minimal effect just as nothing was ever done to curtail hostile activity emanating from Iran against Pak-Balochistan. It appears, and is a credible possibility, that the intelligence on both sides has retained an undercover capability against the other for a better bargaining position in any bilateral engagement – it is a kind of stupid game that all intelligence agencies play amongst themselves; the precedent already exists.



It is why, one stands committed to the conclusion that one has often voiced – *Terrorism can only be contained if all intelligence agencies globally are reigned in* – failing which, they will continue to compete with one another in perpetuating chaos, violence, and terrorism. They do this all in the name of their respective national interests. Being relatively autonomous and under no legal restraint, never subject to any inquiries, these intelligence agencies are the worst components of militancy, low-intensity conflicts, assassinations, murder, and wanton killing the world over.

However, when the Pak-Iran border hostilities are measured in the context of the Houthi attacks on international shipping, resourced and equipped by Iran and the international Task Force 153 in response to it, the Pakistan Navy's deployment in the Gulf of Aden becomes even more



ominous for Iran. They may suspect that Pakistan is colluding with the United States, is soft on Israel, and is on the other side of the fence despite Pakistan's categorical denial that it was not part of any task force and that it was only protecting its shipping lanes.

Perceptions are developed over theories that are manipulated, and with the Indians sitting in Chabahar, their influence over Iranian thinking cannot be ruled out. So there now exists a situation where Iran suspects Pakistan of supporting the United States in extending low-intensity conflict in Iran from Pakistani soil and where Pakistan feels that India is influencing matters against Pakistan with their heavy presence in Iran. In line with these assumptions, Iran probably felt that while dealing with Iraq and Syria, it may as well deal with Pakistan as well.

Iran was sending a message that it would not allow the United States and Israel to conduct proxy wars with neighboring countries and that Iran had the capacity and capability to handle such a threat on a multi-dimensional level in a multi-directional capacity.

However, now reports are coming in from the Middle East, from one source or another that the attacks were undertaken with Pakistan's permission, but that they were not supposed to be publicized and that the public announcement by Iran was a diplomatic faux pas.

Given the blanket media censorship and secrecy the Pakistani government had imposed on this incident at first, this version of the story may have some currency to it. It was only after it was well publicized by Iran that official acceptance of the incident was broadcast. Yet some quarters report that Iran was requested to admit to having made a mistake and to make a public apology for the violation and that Pakistan would be willing to forgive and forget. All would be well again between the two Islamic brotherly states and all could return to business as usual.

Iran reportedly refused to follow suit and instead stated that it was an event of national security on which they would never compromise and that if need be, they would do it again. This confirmed that it was a deliberate act that was directed at designated targets well within Pakistani territory. So regardless of all the explanations leading to the incident and those after it, it appears that Iran had grossly miscalculated and was led by a wild assumption that Pakistan would not or could not respond. Pakistan was thus forced to reciprocate and respond within 48 hours – the response was a precision strike, professionally executed, measured, and accurately applied.

India was the first to insinuate that Pakistan was responsible for terrorism in the region, and the United States blamed Iran for being reckless and irresponsible. Both were disappointed that the matter did not escalate and the Pak-Iran relationship was restored to the usual levels in a very short time. China and Russia both offered to mediate and expressed their desire for regional peace and stability.

The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed his deep concern and called on both countries to exercise maximum restraint and avoid further escalation. These positions of various nations indicate who are one's friends and who are one's enemies – who were looking for escalation and who preferred regional peace.



Now the incident itself was a product of an illogical process, poorly thought through. Precedents from past military applications indicate that cross-border activity is never affected by missiles/airstrikes but can only be contained by boots on the ground. So what was Iran's desired end-state in undertaking such an ill-thought-out adventure? It was possibly to flex muscles and show the world it could handle incidents across many borders simultaneously, and at will.

It was also a message to Pakistan, not to cooperate with the United States/Israel and facilitate cross-border attacks from its territory into Iran. Presently, it is still not clear why the incident was initiated, but for now, it can be concluded that it was a miscalculated step. Nevertheless, now that it happened, what are the consequences? First, Iran does not have an adequate early warning or an appropriate air defense system which would be a delight for the Israelis to learn about. It may even encourage Israel to undertake air strikes on Iran sooner rather than later.

Second, it also disappointed India which has been threatening to undertake another Balakot-styled incident where in this case, contrary to the last one, they come out on top. Pakistan's timely response has probably established a deterrence towards such an adventure or projecting any such foolish venture in the immediate future. Third, it exposed how India and the United States (egged on by Israel) would like to keep the region destabilized and open to intrusion.

Fourth, and on Pakistan's domestic front, the Balochistan Separatist Movement will take a hit and the establishment will get more space to move against the militants.



Fifth, under the present circumstances, the military appears to have come out on top, where the huge image problem that the Armed Forces have been suffering from for some time has been partially addressed for now.

The public at large has come out in support of the Armed Forces and this must be capitalised upon by the military. Lastly, it may lead to internal sectarian military activity allowing an opportunity for the administration to effectively and efficiently eradicate this scourge permanently.

Now it is recognized that India can and does perpetuate terrorism against Pakistan from the Iranian territory (Kulbashan case) and the United States probably does facilitate militancy in support of militant groups in Pak-Balochistan operating against Iran. The unintended consequences of the exchange of munitions on both sides, by Pakistan and Iran, show how this allows freedom of action for both sides to circumvent legal aspects, human rights watch, and other regulatory bodies by striking in each other's countries through coordinated operations.

## A Potential Way Forward

The incident has brought to the forefront the notion of developing such a capability on a mutual basis. In this light, it is strongly recommended to initiate a process of a joint anti-terrorism/militancy force to overwatch the border region. The force is to be commanded by a



Pakistani commander and then an Iranian one or vice versa, on a six-month rotational basis. The overall system should be tried out for a year for its efficacy and if found to be counter-productive, duly dismantled and disbanded. The force would be equally manned, funded, and equipped by both countries with a joint training

center and an independent intelligence setup.



The joint headquarters would be fully autonomous, with total freedom of action and complete liberty of movement up to about 50 to 100 km parallel to the border within both countries. No government would be in a position to influence the force that would be working within the parameters of a mutually agreed mandate and defined limits/boundaries. Neither would it operate in prejudice to the existing law enforcement agencies, or the Armed Forces of either country. Militants also involved in criminal activity would be prioritised, as militants first and then as criminals for jurisdiction.

Deliberate effort and steps to be undertaken by either side to ensure that this Joint Agency established is not politicized and instead is facilitated to operate freely/independently against all hostile elements without mala-fide intent, favor, or partiality. The mandate would be open to review/reconsideration/improvements and updates after every 3 months or whenever so needed.

This could become a regional anti-terrorism concept and facility, which as an idea could expand to even bring in Afghanistan at a later stage – thus Pak-Iran-Afghan borders would be fully secured, manned, and regulated. This would enhance a better relationship between the three



countries and remove the greatest reason for continual animosity: border-related disputes. It could open the doors for China and Central Asian countries to develop the concept as well. This is a suggestion that addresses the exploitation of one country against the other in the

emotional, ideological, political, and security paradigm and it is the most workable method to manage borders mutually. It jointly impacts militancy/terrorism and insurgency, regardless of nationality, location, or sponsorship, making the non-state actor ineffective.

However, the one thing that will go against this recommendation or idea would be corrupt government officials and politicians in either country, who thrive on porous borders, facilitating smuggling, transporting illegal material, and human trafficking. These conduits developed for criminal purposes are also used by militants and are a means to facilitate terror financing.

If peace has to be established in these border regions and between these countries, then all such activities must stop. The author ends this analysis with the far-fetched hope, that somewhere at some someplace, a conscience comes to life and develops a mutually agreed concept. To prepare a joint plan for the lines suggested, with a view to helping both countries and others who may wish to be part of the arrangement, to co-exist in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation.

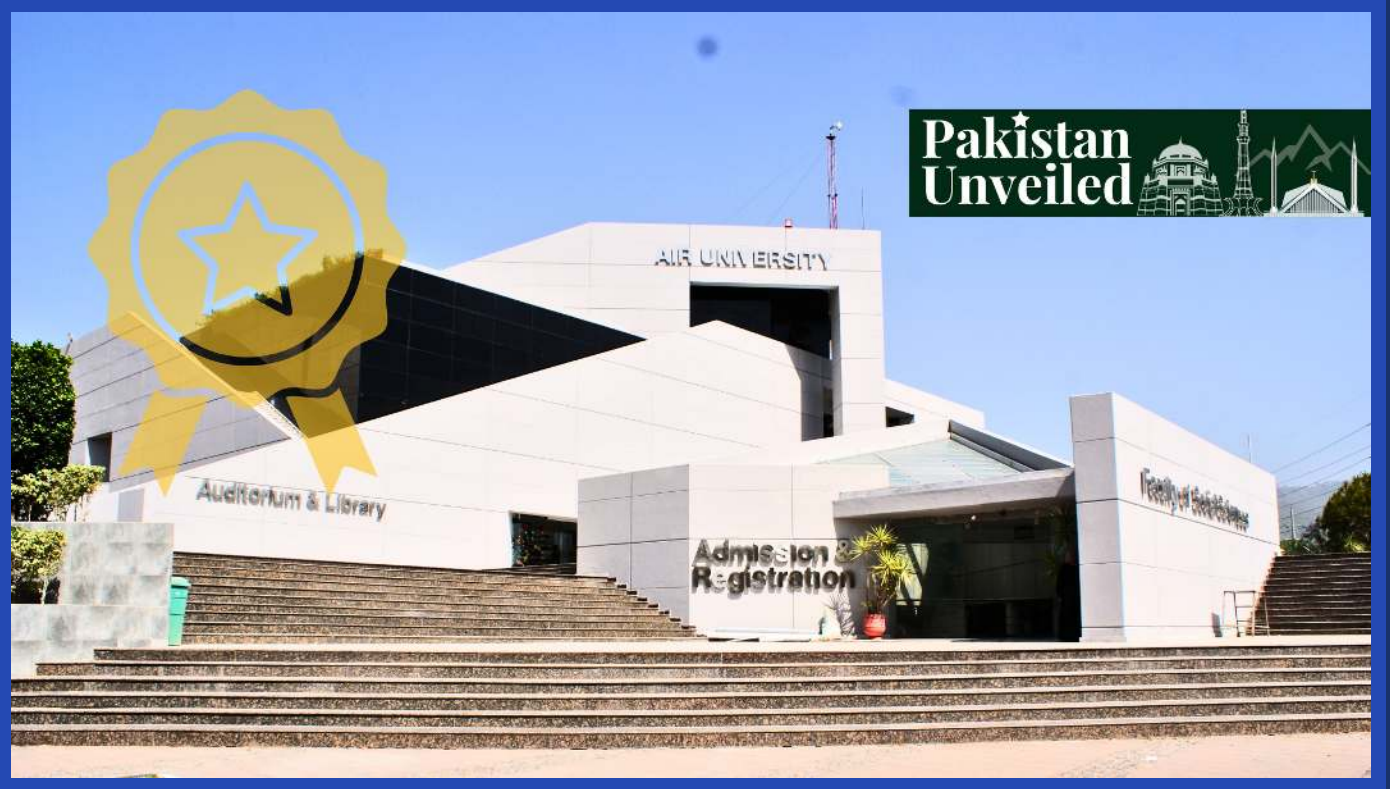
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# Air University Soars to 3rd in Pakistan: World Rankings 2024

About the Author



Official staff account.



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The university's undergraduate and graduate degree programs consist of five departments:

- Aerospace Sciences and Strategic Studies
- Engineering
- Basic and Applied Sciences
- Social Sciences
- Avionics and Aeronautics



### **Air University, Islamabad**

For engineering degrees, lab work provides a great opportunity for students to recreate in labs what they have learned in lectures; this method of educating through applied knowledge rather than purely isolated theoretical learning proves beneficial for the students as well as for society. Furthermore, there are plenty of groups and organizations on campus based on all kinds of interests such as music, literature, and art due to which a wonderful and dynamic atmosphere reigns supreme.



Air University ranking 3rd on the 2024 list highlights the fact that it is a prime educational institute for any student who wants a wholesome, full-scale education with a healthy dose of extracurriculars.

It is situated in Islamabad, a grand city adorned with cultural monuments and hunting lands. The institute has become a fast-growing victor in the field of higher education, given that its academic standards are unmatched and its pioneering research has revived and created a perfect environment for learning.

The university ensures a core commitment to the production of highly competent graduates with specialized functional skills blended with their strong moral values and integrity, fostered by its nationally reputable and recognized programs. It nurtures students into becoming deserving leaders who can positively contribute to their respective fields.

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# Insight into the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

## About the Author



Minahil Khalid is a student of M.Phil International Relations at Kinnaird College for Women University, Lahore. Her research interests revolve around global political issues and security studies.





The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) has been introduced as an offset to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and is expected to serve as an alternative to the Suez Canal as a trade route. Launched in September 2023 at the G20 summit in New Delhi, this corridor aimed to unveil the economic plans of world leaders from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the European Union, India, France, Germany, Italy, and the United States, after they signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU).

The plan of action indicates the uplifting of regional and global trade through the strengthening of transportation and communication links between Europe and Asia. The commitment of IMEC in moving towards introducing two distinct "corridors" showcases its strategic and economic importance, which can pose a threat to China's BRI and consequently Pakistan, since Pakistan is a close ally of China.

However, regardless of the corridor's geopolitical implications, it has faced a setback since the Israel-Palestine war on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

This conflict has caused complexities in the way of developing political and economic ties between Israel and the Middle East. In reality, the obstacles to this economic corridor are far more complicated than they seem, as it has yet to be backed up by strong investments.

## Economic and Strategic Significance of IMEC

The MOU signed during the G20 summit highlights the vision of extensive energy and security goals for the European Nations. It was accompanied by an allowance for the United States to



transform its national security goals, aimed at revitalizing regional and economic integration. During the summit, two separate corridors were proposed: the East Corridor and the North Corridor.

The Eastern Corridor would be responsible for linking India to the Arabian Gulf, whereas the Northern Corridor envisions the connection of the Arabian Gulf to Europe. In the Northern Corridor, the most visible infrastructural project is the operation of the UAE-Saudi Arabia-Amman railway network which would allow services and goods to be transported between Europe, India, the UAE, Jordan, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. This project also includes enhancing digital connectivity and pipes via electric cables to support a clean hydrogen project.



The IMEC is expected to bolster technology and energy partnerships between the involved nations. Strategic ties between India and Israel have been evident since they collaborated on military and technological programs. The partnership between the two states has strengthened since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came into power in India in the year 2014. The possession of the [Haifa Port](#) by the Adani Group highlights its importance as a trading hub, indicating a deeper integration of India into Europe and the Middle East. This key port is also crucial for the provision of an opportunity for Israel to create a trade route that would connect the Mediterranean and the Gulf, moving past the Suez Canal.

Apart from this, a [300-kilometer](#) rail track is to be constructed under this corridor's main infrastructural project that would create a connection between Amman and the port of Haifa.



Moreover, strong trade volumes between India and Saudi Arabia prove the economic potential of this initiative. India and the UAE have also cemented an investment opportunity worth \$15 billion, with trade standing at a whopping \$85 billion.

The IMEC can further provide opportunities for Europe to expand its economic ties and help it cut back on its dependence on China. Ties between India and Europe may flourish as EU nations like France, Italy, and Germany have already transformed their relations with India, indicating the significance of the corridor in the EU's vast strategic ambitions. Furthermore, if implementing IMEC sets its course, it can tremendously impact global trade dynamics.

Ships journeying through the Suez Canal may decline in number, causing a huge loss to nations like Egypt. The Suez Canal holds immense importance as [12% of global trade and 7% of global oil shipments](#) are transported through it. So, even when new economic opportunities for nations involved in the corridor may be initiated, it would severely impact the economic interests of Egypt due to its heavy reliance on the Suez Canal.

Besides this, IMEC is mostly considered a response to China's rising global ambitions. The Gulf states as a part of the corridor are determined to maintain a geopolitical and economic balance in their ties with China, the West, and Russia. They view the IMEC as an initiative that could boost their relations and reliance on global production networks.

## Obstacles to the Implementation of IMEC

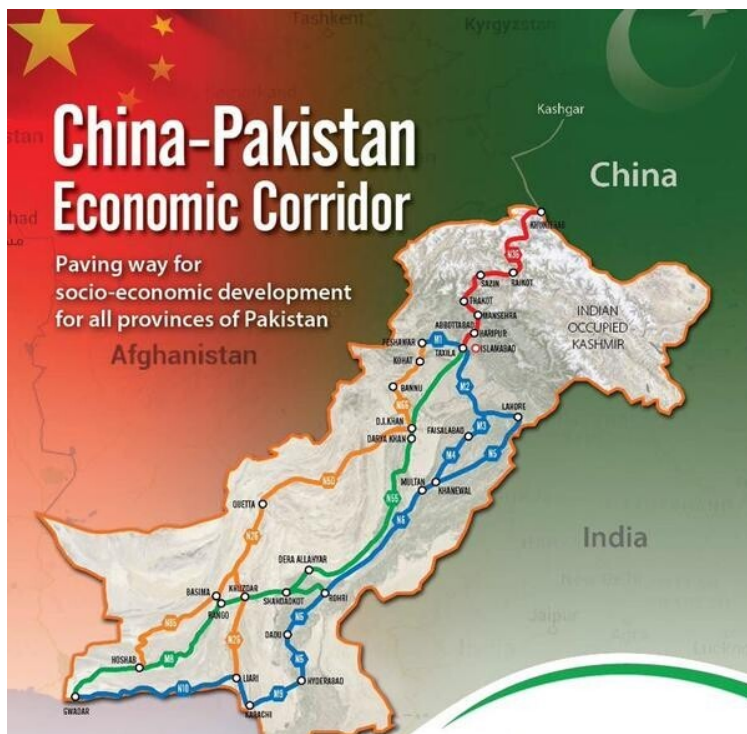
The start of the Israel-Palestine war changed the course of the initiatives that were to be taken under IMEC, making it a complicated venture to establish economic and political connections between Israel and the Middle Eastern nations. The war has also resulted in the delaying of a minilateral meeting of the [I2U2](#) (a partnership between India, Israel, the UAE, and the U.S.) scheduled for October.

With the escalation of tensions, the nations involved in the IMEC also failed to initiate a meeting within sixty days for the development of an IMEC plan of action, which had been discussed during the G20 summit. This indicates that the development of diplomatic relations between the nations has become a complex issue. Although the eastern and northern corridors were announced successfully alongside several other projects, the nations involved are yet to form a consensus regarding the funding of said projects. They require billions in funding and the total could add up to [\\$20 billion](#). It can be deduced from this that the IMEC lacks clarification for its financing.

Moving on, several geopolitical concerns can become a challenge for the implementation of this corridor. These include tensions between nations, such as the dispute between India and Pakistan, the Saudi-Iran rivalry, and ongoing conflicts in Yemen and Syria. In addition to these, the geographical location of Iran concerning the Strait of Hormuz may also impede the effective functioning of this corridor.

Even though the IMEC is aimed at counterbalancing BRI, China may cause a diversion of investments and trade towards IMEC which can serve as a potential challenge to the corridor's stability and security. The development of trust between the involved nations is yet to be seen as Europe's major concerns revolve around certifying that the infrastructural projects under the IMEC will not be used or exploited to benefit Russia or China's influence. These European concerns seem pertinent due to the rise of China's control in the Middle East accompanied by Russia's increased role in the region.

Lastly, the exclusion of regional actors such as Türkiye, Oman, and Iraq can consequently raise opportunities for the creation of alternative competing projects. It can hinder diplomatic relations, as indicated by President Erdogan's [statement](#), "There can be no corridor without Turkey." These countries could have served as a geographical benefit for the corridor, and their exclusion may cripple its successful implementation. Without meticulous observation of these obstacles, the smooth functioning of this corridor will remain at risk.



## Scrutinizing Potential Challenges for Pakistan

The IMEC may give rise to several issues and challenges for Pakistan considering India's competition with Pakistan and China. Pakistan's involvement in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has enabled the nation to have control over crucial land that has impeded India's relations with European nations and the Middle East.

The IMEC may allow India to surpass Pakistan by hindering its geopolitical influence in the region. If this corridor becomes a major transportation route, then it can cause regional isolation for Pakistan and this isolation may even escalate over time.



The economy of Pakistan is already in turmoil and the newly proposed initiatives of the IMEC might take the trade and investment opportunities further away from it. This corridor's strategic interests can threaten Pakistan's foreign policy and regional relations as it has established its aims and objectives

with major powers like the U.S. and the European Nations.

IMEC's associated projects work as a countermeasure to China's BRI. Pakistan is a close ally of China. This situation may bring Pakistan to odd terms with the strategic and economic ambitions of the IMEC, consequently weakening the nation's diplomatic and regional relations. To prevent these potential pitfalls, Pakistan needs to come up with a meticulously devised plan for engaging with the new economic networks introduced by IMEC. It might also need to bring forward new policies that would strengthen the nation's regional, economic, as well as trade relations to fend off any hostilities from IMEC.

## Conclusion

It can be deduced that IMEC is of major importance to the nations involved as it has a significant potential for boosting strategic and economic ties. It proposes cooperation and connection between the Persian Gulf, Asia, and Europe while aligning with the European Union's Indo-Pacific strategy and paving the way for the diversification of economic relations between states.

IMEC may offer plenty of potential economic benefits on a regional and international level however, such goals cannot be achieved if certain challenges and obstacles are not addressed. The rising influence of China and Russia in the region raises concerns over the implementation of the corridor.



Finally, geopolitical tensions such as the Indo-Pakistani dispute, the Saudi-Iran rivalry, and more are yet to be navigated. When viewed from Pakistan's perspective, these potential challenges may create regional complexities that need to be reassessed and addressed.

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# Anchors Aweigh: Pakistan's Seaports in the Global Trade Network

## About the Author



Fatimah Naeem is pursuing her Bachelor's in Peace and Conflict Studies from National Defence University Islamabad.



Since ancient times, sea routes have played a significant role in establishing connections between continents and shaping the world into a global village. The need to provide docking and other facilities to massive shipping vessels increased day by day. That is where “seaports” came in. These ports are situated close to coastal lines in hopes of fostering connectivity while assisting trade and commerce activities.

To proceed with the discourse, one should be able to distinguish between “seaports” and “harbors.”

A seaport is considered to be a state’s commercial water facility which constitutes warehouses for the wear and tear of the vessels, along with docks, cranes, and infrastructure for handling cargo. Providing facilities for the movement of goods between local and global markets, seaports encompass the functions of a maritime hub. A harbor, on the other hand, offers a mooring place for ships and other waterborne vessels to safely anchor themselves.

## Pakistan’s Seaports:

Pakistan’s geographical location provides the country with economic as well as military leverage. With a 1064-kilometer-long coastline, Pakistan has utilized its key maritime hubs for negotiating strategic alliances with China and catalyzing commerce with landlocked countries in Central Asia.

A comprehensive analysis of the seven major seaports of Pakistan is given below:

### Karachi Port and Harbor:

Numerous headlines across the world read Karachi as “the economic hub of Pakistan” and the “City of Lights” but many fail to understand the reasoning behind it. “Karachi Port and Harbor” is one of the most ancient seaports in the entirety of South Asia, predating Pakistan’s existence. To be more precise, a nebulous idea of its foundation can be traced back to the time of the Mughal Empire in 1557 when a preserved pamphlet, from that era, described the Karachi Port as a resting place for Turkish travelers and merchants. During British colonial rule, the port was utilized as a strategic seaborne route.



Peeking into trade, the port handles nearly 60% of the country's national imports and exports. Boasting an annual 65.62 million tons of cargo and 1.56 million TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units), Karachi Port anchors considerable vitality.

Sitting on 32 km of wharves and docks, the anchorage depth of the seaport is 16 meters. In addition, 41 berths and 8 wharves are utilized by incoming and outgoing commercial vessels.

Accessing its harbor abilities, the Karachi Port offers space for naval and commercial shipbuilding and repair. The harbor also provides facilities such as dry docks, steel handling plants, and construction complexes. Another important factor that contributes to the ports' significance is its proximity to the Strait of Hormuz and the Suez Canal.

Since its inception, Pakistan has been working towards alleviating the burden and congestion of the Karachi Port which has sown seeds for the building of other seaports along the commercially advantageous coastline.



## The Pakistan Seaport of Gwadar:

Situated in the nexus of Balochistan, the Gwadar Port is a recent development of the state to enhance its commercial stature while bringing about economic and social prosperity to the compromised region. The port spans a total area of [2,292 acres](#), and it is known as the deepest seaport in the world.



**“Gwadar Port” by Saad Suddozai has been licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)**

The [Gwadar Port of Pakistan](#) became operational in 2016 to boost the economic alliance between Pakistan and China through CPEC, a commercial and trade project between the two.

It opens into the Arabian Sea under the administration of the Gwadar Port Authority (GPA). The operational and executive control over the entirety of the Gwadar Port has been handed over to the China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) and has been leased to China till the year 2059. Linking the port to the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) and Belt and Road projects, Gwadar Port has also boosted some enticing initiatives such as Pak-Afghan trade and CPEC.

The Gwadar Port is significantly closer to the Chabahar Port of Iran with viable access to the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman. This geographic positioning has assisted in factorizing multiple expansionary activities for the seaport.

According to reports from ISSI (Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad), the current cargo capacity of the port, as of 2023, is 8.5 million tons while the current container capacity can be rounded off to 30 million TEUs. The expansionary projects have proposed the management of cargo capacity worth 400 million tons by 2045.

Moreover, the port is characterized by a floating liquefied natural gas facility, the Gwadar Special Economic Zone, and a dedicated facility to promote CPEC interests. Future propositions include linking the port to the Khunjerab railway to establish a commuting route with industrial hubs that are situated within the vicinity.

### **The Pakistan Seaport of Muhammad Bin Qasim:**

Named after the great Muslim emperor Muhammad Bin Qasim, the port was established in the year 1890, in Karachi.

Crowned the second busiest port in Pakistan, it roughly handles 35% of the state's total maritime trade with impressive statistics leading up to 1,500 port calls, a container volume of 700,000 TEUs, and an annual cargo tonnage of 16.6 million tons.

The artificial port has been carrying out operational duties since the 1980s and harbors 50 sq km of the area while also being conveniently close to the Korangi Industrial Area, Mehran Town, Lucknow Society, and Allah Wala Town. It supports local as well as international shipping lines.

Moreover, it houses around 273 industrial units and is situated close to the customs office, making the import/export process easier.

To bring administrative ease, the harbor is categorized into three main zones:

- Northwestern Industrial Zone (2,920 acres)
- Southwestern Industrial Zone (1,000 acres)
- Eastern Industrial Zone (8,300 acres)

State-of-the-art facilities such as additional liquid cargo terminals, container terminals, oil terminals, and a steel jetty are all predicted initiatives set in motion by the Port Qasim Authority (PQA).

Another commendable initiative is the collaboration between “Pakistan Customs” and the “US Customs and Border Protection Forces” which is focusing on an integrated cargo-contained control facility that will scan shipments bound for the US at Port Qasim. Along with revamping maritime trade security, it also plays the effective role of risk-reduction for inbound goods.

### **The Pakistan Seaport of Ketī Bandar:**

Pakistan seaport of Ketī Bandar is the state’s oldest port and has been offering opportunities to local prospects while playing a conducive role in enhancing the fishing industry of the country. Only a four-hour drive away from Karachi, the port is located in the Thatta district and has been economically supporting the native population.

Being an extension of the ancient port of Debal near Manora island, the current port is situated adjacent to the Indus River.

The port is expected to develop further as a part of CPEC. Being closely linked to the national highway (N-10), it offers accessibility for better import/export opportunities.

Furthermore, it is positioned close to Gharo and Mirpur Sakro – two rapidly developing towns in the Sindh province. The surrounding settlements are mostly dependent on the port and its fishing activities to bring about socio-economic sustainability. The accumulated hundreds of kilograms of fish are sold at the quayside markets where Arabian Sea produce is preferred.



## The Pakistan Seaport of Ormara:

Located between the ports of Karachi and Gwadar, the Pakistan seaport of Ormara stretches along the Makran coast harboring commercial as well as naval significance for the country. Functioning since the era of

Alexander the Great, the port has provided substantial accessibility and control to the Indus region.

The port is an important aspect of Pakistan's fishing industry and has been consistently operational in shipping fresh produce to the larger harbors for repackaging and subsequent export. Similar to the Ketī Bandar Port, Ormara Port has successfully drawn a linkage to N-10 which has contributed to developing the port and bringing in much-needed facilities.

Additionally, Ormara also houses Pakistan's Jinnah naval base. Holding the title of the second-largest naval base in the country, its galvanization was undertaken on behalf of the Ministry of Defence by Belgium and Turkey. The construction of the naval base has brought about significant prosperity in achieving the economic agenda.

The proximate cadet college has also helped in boosting finances at the port. Lastly, the government of Pakistan has also introduced various schemes to redeem the lost spark of Ormara's prosperity and to invest in its revitalization, helping it achieve the status of a thriving strategic hub by 2030.

## The Pakistan Seaport of Pasni:

Another notable entity along the Makran coastline is the Pasni Port. It is relatively smaller than the others but similar when it comes to efficient trade operations.



The functional capacity of the port and its jurisdiction fall under both the Balochistan Port Authority and Pakistan's maritime affairs Federal Secretary.

Due to the lack of arable land, the locality depends heavily on the port-to-ship supplements. Impressively, the port harbors' up-to-date facilities combat economic and sustenance shortcomings while providing an adequate fishing harbor as well.

The regulatory authority for the matters of fishing and harbor activities falls under the Balochistan [Sea Fisheries Act of 1971](#) and is intended to protect marine life and the livelihood of the locals.

Moreover, a considerable amount of the exports are designated for Turbat and Karachi. The facilities are expected to meet the requirements set for export to EU states, repackaging the produce once again before the final departure. Accrediting the Pasni naval base, the port is established conveniently close to major roadways and air bases that link the seaport with the Pasni airport as well as N-10.

## The Pakistan Seaport of Jiwani:

As one moves 60 km west from the Gwadar Port, there rests the Pakistan seaport of Jiwani. The utilization of the port for both naval and commercial purposes has been carried out since WWII.



Located close to the Gulf of Oman, the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf, and Iran's Chabahar port, Jiwani port holds significant strategic importance. More importantly, China has taken an interest in establishing an off-shore base within the Jiwani Port similar to the way it has done so in Gwadar. This expansionary project falls under the strategic and economic interests of both Pakistan and China.

Furthermore, the vamping up of the fishing facilities and setting up of off-shore drilling units has been the focal point of future development projects to attract foreign investment. The locals of Jiwani are majorly dependent on the sale and export of fish products to the urban centers of Pakistan and abroad as well.

## Why Are Pakistan's Seaports Not Utilized to Their Full Potential?

Pakistan's fortunate geographic position along the cusp of the Arabian Sea has invited a heightened potential for trade. Unfortunately, the three major ports, namely, Karachi Port, Gwadar Port, and Bin Qasim Port lack the infrastructure and capacity to manage the sea traffic threshold that is being demanded in the contemporary world. The [poor operational capabilities](#) are credited to political, security, technical, and socioeconomic concerns. [Logistics Performance Indicators](#) (LPI) report that in comparison to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, Pakistan's seaport industries have been going through a downward spiral.

The constantly changing tides of Pakistan's governance intimidate potential investors, driving the country's maritime prospects to endangerment. The political polarity has also deviated responsible officials from their duties despite being federally and provincially appointed.

Bringing in a new wave of security dilemmas, the development of Gwadar Port, specifically, has been targeted on multiple occasions. Regarded as an unfair disposition towards the native Baloch, attempts to jeopardize the project, by both internal and external actors, have been constant since its inception.

As for the technical shortcomings, one may assume them to be innumerable, due to a lack of visionary approach. Intermodal and multimodal transportation schemes are known to be effective in combating the persisting inadequate value chain, but poor port structure and related infrastructural issues have adversely affected the promising potential of Pakistan's seaports.

Last but not least, socioeconomic concerns have been ignored the most. The local populations residing within the vicinity of the seaports face deprivation in terms of inclusivity within the policy-making.



Although the development of seaports is tied to the nexus of human welfare, the lack thereof has led to tensions brewing amongst the locals.

## A Possibility to Turn Harsh Tides?

Pakistan offers trade connectivity to countries like China, Afghanistan, and numerous Central Asian states. Utilizing this prospect, the government should [negotiate deals and investments](#) in an attempt to alleviate Pakistan's socioeconomic burden. The port of Gwadar holds a unique potential to be operated as a trans-shipment hub due to its location near the Strait of Hormuz. Moreover, constructing more berths and building an advanced mechanized setup for cargo-customs clearance would also prove to be a time-efficient and effective approach for further port development.

Decreasing the polarity and increasing the inclusivity among the responsible authorities and local population through capacity-building and policy-making activities would also aid in reducing social ignorance surrounding the deprived localities near the seaports.

## Conclusion

Pakistan has many opportunities to exercise its maritime potential but unfortunately, has been suffering from a lack of progress. With soaring inflation and deteriorating political conditions, the country's trade and commerce have been suffering in the highly competitive global import/export industry. Navigating through high tides and still seas, Pakistan's numerous ports have proved to be a commendable asset that can further thrive and flourish if the concerned authorities pay their due attention to its development.

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Article

# Canada–Philippines Defence Agreement and the South China Sea Dispute

About the Author



M. Shahbaz Rajper is a freelance columnist from Sindh.





The Canada-Philippines defence agreement finds its basis in the China-Philippines territorial [dispute over the South China Sea](#), especially in the region near to Second Thomas Shoal which China claims to be its territory along with the almost complete South China Sea based on its disputed

“nine-dash line.”

On [December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023](#), the Philippines accused China of ramming a supply boat near the Second Thomas Shoal, while China constantly blames the former’s involvement in the region as the reason for the escalation of tensions among states. The Philippines already shares defence agreements with the United States to counter China’s actions in the South China Sea under many agreements, mainly the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). The VFA allows the rotation of thousands of American troops in and out of the Philippines for exercises and war drills strengthening its military as well as a naval presence in the region.

A similar VFA is expected to be signed between Canada and the Philippines, further complicating the security dynamics of the region. The nature of the agreement is based on the defence agreement with the sharing of information and training exercises and war drills practised between the military of both countries. It is being claimed by the governments that this agreement is based on mutual trust and confidence, and it is anticipated to withstand political changes and the test of time.

Canada’s role can be strengthened in the region with this defence pact as its support for the Philippines against China’s assertiveness would be more justified. The backing by Canada in the [2016 ruling](#) of the Permanent Court of Arbitration which dismissed China’s expensive claims in the South China Sea shows Canada’s support for the Philippines in these matters of intense security and geopolitical importance.

Another important factor of this agreement is the inclusion of Canada's [Dark Vessel Detection](#) system which is aimed at combating illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing. This system will enhance the security of the Philippines' borders in the South China Sea and will also regulate China's actions. This will also enhance the maritime awareness of the Philippines over its territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), areas that have been disputed and contested for years with China's claims.

China views any involvement in the South China Sea as an interference in its sovereignty claims on the territorial waters of the South China Sea. China is very clear in its stance that the region of the South China Sea should not become a ground for geopolitical interests for countries outside the region like the United States and Canada. This reflects the broader context of the South China Sea dispute, where China has several confrontations with almost all the other participants, the Philippines being one of them.



With the existing US presence and involvement in the region along with its naval presence, the inclusion of Canada in the region will strengthen both the position of the Philippines as well as provide more strength to the US. From the geopolitics perspective, this defence agreement is not only going to strengthen the relations between Canada and the Philippines but it will

also incorporate many actors such as China and the United States into the equation. Such multiplicity of actors is due to the increasing sensitivity of the disputed territorial waters of the South China Sea.

The Canada-Philippines Defence Agreement, which is geared towards enhancing military cooperation between the two countries and facilitating disaster response, is indirectly intertwined with the dispute over the South China Sea, especially given the Philippines' territorial spats with China.



The pact, which complements the already existing defence pacts of the US-Philippines, will enable Manila to boost its military capabilities against Chinese aggression, particularly in the vicinity of contested areas like the Second Thomas Shoal.

Canada has remained involved, evident in how it has backed the

Philippines in international arbitration that challenged China's claim over the strategic waterway; it has also provided Manila with its state-of-the-art Dark Vessel Detection system, to reinforce maritime security and clamp down on illicit activities. As expected, this has sparked a backlash from Beijing, which regards it as a ploy to complicate its territorial claims and a bid to challenge its sovereignty in the South China Sea.

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Opinion

# Donald Trump's Ukraine Policy: From Allies to Ambiguity

## About the Author



Sanan Hassan Lashari is a political analyst and journalist at Daily Minute Mirror News. He is also pursuing an MPhil in International Relations from Punjab University.



According to Donald Trump, if Moscow invades Ukraine—a NATO ally of the US that has not yet paid its share of the defense budget—he is going to endorse it. This encapsulates Trump’s policy towards Ukraine and the ensuing war. Various American leaders disregarded this claim as absurd and mocked it for being both appalling and unhinged.



When Donald Trump entered office in 2016, he warned the allies that the United States would not support any nation that did not allocate two percent of its defense expenditure to the military alliance. This statement was made as the US Senate deliberated on legislation regarding military and financial assistance for Ukraine. In my perspective, Donald Trump’s remarks concerning NATO are merely soothing music to Putin’s ears. For this reason, analysts are speculating about what might happen to Ukraine if Trump wins the subsequent elections.

The NATO alliance was founded during the Cold War to contain the USSR; to this day, it continues to provide substantial resistance against Russia. NATO President [Jens Stoltenberg](#) asserts how the Western military alliance would meet the threat head-on with full resistance and claims that the former American president’s remarks are likely to put NATO soldiers and member nations in jeopardy. A few weeks prior, Trump issued a bold statement:

**“I will have that war settled in one day, twenty-four hours”**

*[Donald Trump](#)*

Trump may use his executive authority to halt or slow down American aid to Ukraine, even if the US Congress passed a bill granting the country military and economic help for a longer period. Trump’s policy for Ukraine is incredibly unpredictable and chaotic. When he first came to office, he backed Russian claims to Crimea and Donbas, dismissed the American ambassador in Ukraine, and even went as far as refusing to meet with the President of the Ukrainian country.

As told by [Ruth Deyermond](#), the US administration condemned Russia's attempt to annex Crimea. However, during his tenure, Trump hinted that he would recognize Russian control of the Crimean territory because everyone who lives there speaks Russian. The pandemonium intensified when Trump's understanding of the particular matter diverged significantly from that of his aides. Trump's perceptions and mistrust of the NATO allies make him hesitant to cooperate with European nations.

In the past, he took office without prior foreign policy training or expertise and chose ministers and secretaries based more on personal ties than their qualifications. If elected and in power, he would undoubtedly oppose penalizing Russia and would instead move on to using delaying strategies to secure Russian triumph.



Despite Trump's political inclinations, some of Ukraine's supporters still belong to the Republican party. To keep them from losing their loyalty or vote, [Mike Pompeo](#) attempted to assuage their fears during his speech in Tokyo. The former secretary of state, who worked for the Trump administration, stated he had never witnessed

Washington turn its back on its allies. He vowed that Trump would be a leader who would work to end the [Russian conflict with Ukraine](#) as he wants world peace.

When he initially invaded Ukraine, Putin did not have a backup plan, but I believe that Trump's victory in the US presidential elections will serve as Russia's backup plan. This would be a nightmare for the West. I fear that Trump will not put pressure on Putin to leave areas that Moscow has confiscated since its invasion. In my opinion, the war will finish on Russia's terms, if Trump cuts off the supply of weapons.



Public support for the Ukrainian war in the United States has decreased as well. According to a [Pew Survey](#), more individuals believe that America should concentrate on solving its domestic issues. Nearly 51% of respondents think that America should prioritize its internal issues. A professor of national security at New Haven University,

Jeffrey Treistman, claims that it is uncertain whether or not the war will stop if US backing is withdrawn.

There is potential that the battle might last for years or perhaps even decades. Zelensky has previously stated that he is unafraid of US elections, and with the admirable resistance shown by the Ukrainian people throughout the war, the right for Ukraine to exist will not necessarily disappear if US support ends.

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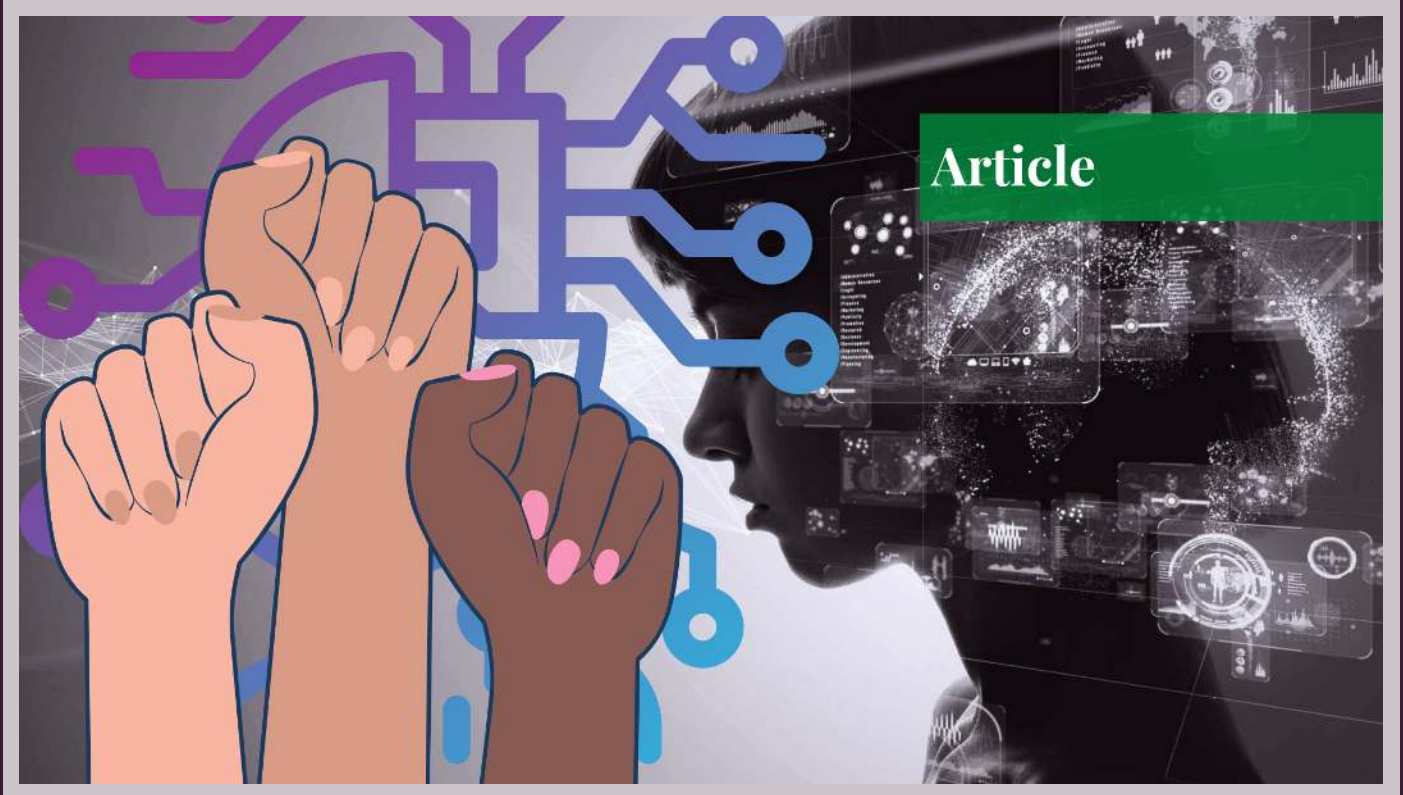
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# Women's Rights in the Era of Artificial Intelligence

## About the Author



Huzaifah Sehgal is a lawyer with expertise in international law, technology law, corporate law, environmental law, and constitutional law.





## Introduction

In an era of rapid digitization, where artificial intelligence (AI) continues to seep into every facet of our lives, there are growing concerns that the absence of proper regulation of such technologies may cause more damage than the potential benefits they offer. The dangers posed by AI in this regard disproportionately affect women compared to their male counterparts.

From exhibiting gender bias to facing repercussions of breaches of data privacy and security, women are rendered increasingly vulnerable in today's technology-driven age. This challenge is further heightened for women in APAC countries, in particular, Southeast Asian countries, where age-old societal prejudices still wield significant influence.

## AI Bias

AI utilizes data, statistical analysis, and human-created hypotheses to achieve specific outcomes. The operation of AI hinges on the data fed to it, which primarily influences the outputs it generates. AI, just like the data it's fed, is neither immune **nor exempt from human bias**, and as a result, its decisions are also prone to the same bias.

In recent years, there have been numerous reports of AI bias that have had a direct and adverse impact on the rights of women.

Such AI biases are a much more significant concern than human bias, as AI not only has the potential to exacerbate these biases but also carries far-reaching consequences beyond those of human actions.



## Amazon AI Recruitment Tool

In 2015, the machine-learning specialists at Amazon discovered that the AI algorithm employed by the company as its recruiting engine 'did not like women'. The data provided to the AI tool limned the domination of men, leading to the software teaching itself that men were

preferable. This had the effect of penalizing resumes that had mentioned the word "women's".

Although Amazon corrected this bias, there was no assurance that the software would not showcase some other forms of bias in the recruitment process, ultimately resulting in the discontinuation of the AI tool.

## Apple Credit Card

Similarly, Apple's credit card which utilizes AI algorithms to determine creditworthiness was bashed for discriminating against women on the accusation that it offered smaller limits of credit to women as compared to their male counterparts. The issue came into the limelight in 2019 when an influencer took to his X (formerly Twitter) that Apple Credit Card had portrayed sexism.

As per him, his credit line was 20x more than his wife's despite both of them sharing the same income and credit score. The perplexing aspect of this accusation was that the software did not solicit any gender input. The discrimination it exhibited, occurred without any awareness of gender per se, which highlights AI's potential to amplify gender-based bias.

## Gym Software

Computer software being used by a gym in the UK automatically categorized Dr. Louise Shelby, a woman, as a male after she had entered “doctor” as her title. Having categorized her as a male, she was given access to the men’s changing room. She was told that if she needed it fixed, she should remove her professional title from the gym’s online registration system. These instances highlight AI’s potential to exacerbate systemic bias held against women, undoing decades of progress in women’s rights.

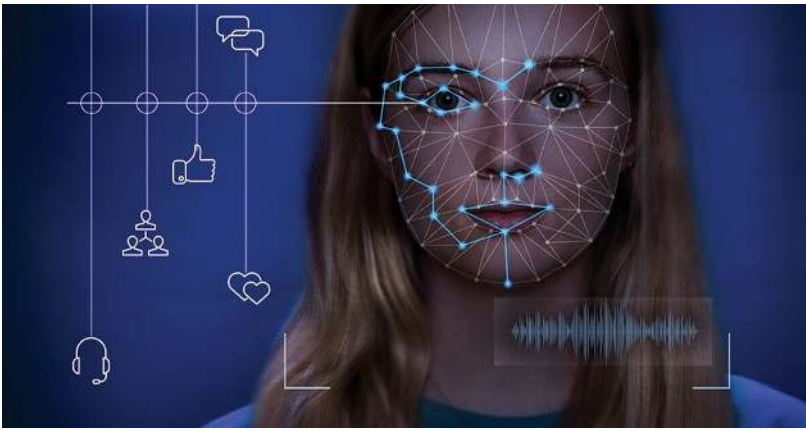
Furthermore, such instances contravene anti-discrimination laws, in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW defines “discrimination” as, “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”.

This definition indicates that when AI systems exhibit such bias against women, they essentially perpetuate discrimination and reinforce societal inequalities. Without a robust legal framework governing the intersection of innovation, ethics, and law, and providing mechanisms to mitigate these AI deficiencies, safeguarding fundamental rights, especially of women, becomes a daunting endeavor.

## Privacy & Data Protection

Without the data provided to it, AI is an empty vessel, and this reality underscores the growing apprehension surrounding the impact of AI technologies on data privacy. One’s facial features or voice can be misused by ‘bad’ actors to create AI-generated fake images or videos, mostly of women (often sexual in nature) to injure their social reputation, take revenge, show ‘masculinity’, ‘sextort’, bully, or spread misinformation.





Such fake images and videos, which are referred to as '[deepfakes](#)' are predominantly non-consensual creations, which, in particular, target women. As per the report of Sensity AI, out of the non-consensual sexual deepfakes, [99 percent were made of women](#).

Individuals, including women, who have dared to advocate against such image-based sexual abuse, have experienced becoming targets of such abuse themselves.

There are concerns that the creation of deepfakes does not amount to the processing of 'personal data' of individuals and thus does not infringe the data or privacy rights of individuals. Some argue that the data protection rules do not encompass the governance of deepfakes, as the content produced through deepfake AI technologies does not belong to any real individual. Chidera Okolie contends that while this assertion [may hold in cases involving deepfakes](#) of non-existent or fictional individuals, it becomes less defensible when applied to deepfakes of real, existing individuals.

Okolie maintains that when a deepfake is created by using the data of an individual, and the end product i.e. the deepfake can be traced back to that person, it would fall under Article 4(1) of the EU General Data Protection Regulation: Regulation (EU) 2016/679, the definition of 'personal data', which is defined as, "any information which are related to an identified or identifiable natural person." Therefore, a deepfake that can be linked to an individual could be considered the 'personal data' of that person—a non-consensual deepfake thus violates an individual's data and privacy rights.

The creation and dissemination of non-consensual sexual deepfakes featuring women can subject women to severe psychological trauma. In theory at the very least, there is a striking parallel between viewing one's pornographic deepfakes and being drugged and violated.

This underpins AI's capability of perpetuating gender-based violence against women, becoming the modern mode of [stripping women of their sexual autonomy](#).

Apart from the mental trauma on the victim, the effects of sexual deepfakes targeting women are particularly dangerous in developing Southeast Asian countries, such as Pakistan, where killing women in the name of 'honor' is still endemic. Although the country's legal framework forbids honor crimes, prevalent cultural stereotypes often rationalize such mindless acts, even resulting in the exoneration of individuals accused of [murder under the guise of honor](#).

The far-reaching consequences stemming from violations of personal data and the abuse of generative AI to produce explicit deepfakes emphasize the need for comprehensive regulation of AI on the issue. Non-consensual explicit deepfakes of women run counter to international legal instruments such as the CEDAW and the Lanzarote Convention.

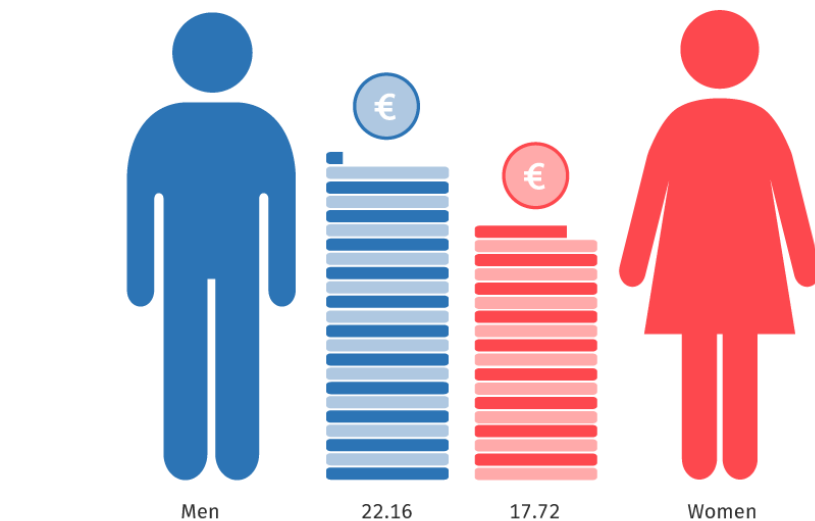
On a national level, different countries have different legal frameworks governing the issue; most of them bring explicit deepfakes within the ambit of criminal law as sexual offenses. The UK's Revenge Pornography Guideline, Nigeria's Sexual Offenses Act 2003 and Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015, Pakistan's Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016 and Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) 1860, and Canada's Canadian Criminal Code, all outlaw sexual exploitation of women, potentially encompassing instances of non-consensual explicit deepfakes targeting women.

## Technology & Women at Work

The quantitative and qualitative impacts of technological change also disproportionately affect women. Women currently occupy a significant portion of low-skilled and labor-intensive jobs, positions that teeter at the edge of displacement due to advancements in automation and technology. It is estimated by McKinsey and Company that around [15% of the global workforce could be displaced between 2016 and 2030](#).

### Gross average earnings, 2019

for calculating the gender pay gap in euros per hour



Preliminary result

© Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2020

coming from Southeast Asian countries with conservative social norms such as India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, the garment sector has played a pivotal role in enhancing their economic and social positions. The technological displacement of this sector would therefore deliver a severe blow to the economic and social rights of women in the region.

With the phasing out of low-skilled and labor-intensive jobs, new opportunities may emerge for women in job markets traditionally dominated by men. However, technology cannot bridge gender inequality automatically—“it largely depends on the design of the technology and the capabilities of women from under-represented groups to access and use technologies and solutions that respond to their needs.”

While women possess the capability to excel in tasks traditionally performed by men, the decisive factor in their shift from low-skilled positions to roles once monopolized by men hinges on deeply ingrained societal prejudices and attitudes. Nevertheless, online work procurement through app-based platforms has opened gateways for women to access jobs in male-dominated fields.

The International Labor Organization’s report titled ‘[The Game Changers: Women and the Future of Work in Asia and the Pacific](#)’ has highlighted how technology is going to affect the garment sector in APAC countries—a sector dominated by working women in the region. For women

The flexibility associated with such procurement of work is a way to open new job opportunities to women; however, research by [Barzilay and Ben David](#) shows that there are significant pay gaps between male and female online workers. Furthermore, the pace of digitization has left labor laws lagging significantly behind the evolving labor landscape, posing potential harm to women's economic and social rights. Conversely, women might find increased opportunities for employment in the technology sector itself, encompassing the fields of automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence, taking on roles such as technicians, clerical, or administrative support staff.

In the Philippines, women already constitute 59% of the business processing outsourcing workforce. To sustain and extend this trend across the APAC, it is crucial to offer necessary training and support to women in the region. Additionally, certain companies, such as All Claims Adjustment Bureau, hire female workers from the APAC region for remote positions. Although the primary motivation behind such endeavors may be cost-effectiveness, these opportunities nonetheless



stand as crucial pillars in protecting the employment rights of women in the Asia Pacific in the face of the changing technological landscape.

## Conclusion

As the human race enters into the epoch of the 4th industrial revolution, there are legitimate concerns regarding the adverse impacts of this technological age on women and their rights. This concern is grounded in the manifestations of AI discrimination, violations of women's data privacy rights, and the imminent peril of their job displacement to technology and automation.



The unprecedented rate of technological advancement underscores the need for regulation of AI and other emerging technologies. Such regulation should aim at adopting a human-rights (or perhaps women-rights) approach—testing and validating AI softwares along the lines of established women-rights norms and standards. It also warrants the upgradation of the existing legal framework for the protection of women’s rights to keep them relevant in the contemporary age.

Regarding the looming threat of job displacement of women, states should introduce measures to support women in preparing and adapting to the morphing tech landscape by investing in the development of their skills through training.

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# The Israeli War in Gaza: Where Climate Change Meets Conflict

## About the Author



Shireen Mushtaq is an assistant professor in the international relations department at Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore. She has a Ph.D. in international relations; her thesis is on Nation-building in Afghanistan: Post-Afghan Surge (2009–Present). She has worked extensively on the regional dynamics of South Asia, covering a wide range of issues such as nations and nationalism, strategic and maritime security, and foreign policy. She can be reached at [shireen.mushtaq@kinnaird.edu.pk](mailto:shireen.mushtaq@kinnaird.edu.pk).



Aiman Iqbal is the managing editor of the Journal of Peace and Diplomacy, published by the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPDS), and the assistant editor of The Diplomatic Insight magazine. She holds an MPhil in international relations. She can be reached at [aimaniqbal106@gmail.com](mailto:aimaniqbal106@gmail.com).

# Introduction

COP28, held in Dubai in December 2023, marked a critical moment in the fight against climate



change. The conference focused on assessing progress under the Paris Agreement and establishing a decisive course of action to secure a sustainable future. The summit inaugurated the [Loss and Damage Fund](#) to support

developing nations [impacted by climate change](#). Moreover, a landmark agreement was reached to set the trajectory for the gradual phasing out of [fossil fuels](#) for a cleaner future with net-zero emissions by 2050.

This commitment was reinforced by a pledge to triple global renewable energy capacity by 2030, marking a substantial move towards cleaner energy sources. Acknowledging the importance of private investments, COP28 introduced a [\\$30 billion](#) private market capital dedicated to supporting low-carbon and climate-resilient projects, particularly in emerging economies. Although ambitious goals for collaborative environmental solutions were set at COP28, ongoing conflicts around the world, particularly in the Middle East, threatened to undermine their implementation.

## Middle East's Vulnerability to Climate Change

The relationship between [conflict, the military and climate change](#) is reciprocal. When resources shrink under the strain of the changing climate, communities compete for limited resources, increasing the risk of conflict. Climate change acts as a [threat multiplier](#) amplifying the existing social, economic, and political tensions contributing to conflict.



Even attempts to fight climate change can have unforeseen local consequences, potentially intensifying existing conflicts by reshaping social and economic realities. At the same time, conflict itself can also contribute to environmental degradation and exacerbate climate change. Conflict extends beyond burning oil fields, impacting the climate through mass refugee displacements and land degradation.

The Middle East is exceptionally susceptible to climate change, with significant impacts on water supplies, food production, and potential security concerns. The countries anticipate a 50% per capita water availability reduction by 2050, with the UAE's freshwater resources facing a risk of depletion in 50 years. A Lancet study projects a substantial rise in heat-related deaths in the Middle East and North Africa by 2,100, with Iraq potentially experiencing 138,000 annual fatalities due to increased temperatures.



Similarly, the Levant region confronts an impending collapse of food and water systems. Climate-induced water scarcity aggravates regional tensions and resource competition, as evident from the case of the southeastern Anatolia project, which has choked the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, sparking tensions with downstream nations like Syria and Iraq.



# The Climate Impact of the Israeli War in Gaza

Since 2022, the Middle East has witnessed 107 [water conflicts](#), 60% of which were fueled by the [Israel-Palestine military tensions](#). In the West Bank, Israeli forces have repeatedly destroyed Palestinian water systems, complicating the crisis. Beyond the Israeli-Palestinian tensions, the Middle East has witnessed deadly clashes over water resources in Yemen, bombings of infrastructure in Syria, and violent protests in Iraq.

In addition to these challenges, the ongoing Israeli war in Gaza has been intensified by major environmental concerns, particularly the persistent impact of the illegal 16-year [blockade](#) imposed by Israel, affecting the entire population. In addition to the [shortage](#) of drinking water, the [restrictions](#) on essential goods have raised concerns over the short- and long-term health challenges, as the consequent humanitarian disaster involves massive [displacements](#) without appropriate housing, water, food, or healthcare.

The environmental impact of the ongoing violence in Gaza is not a minor concern. In the four months since the beginning of this war, Israel has used numerous [munitions](#) which have resulted in the deaths of more than [27,000](#) people, many of whom remain trapped under collapsed structures. The use of white phosphorus by Israel in the military operations in Gaza and Lebanon will also have a long-lasting [environmental impact](#), including the destruction of vegetation and contamination of soil, in addition to significant harm to the population and their surroundings.

The damaged water sanitation and hygiene infrastructure increases not only the risk of flooding but also the spread of diseases like cholera. [Fossil fuel burning to excessive carbon emissions](#); the munitions alone produce as many emissions as thousands of homes and vehicles do annually. Any reconstruction process in the future will also generate massive carbon emissions.

The Israeli military response has forced the displacement of Palestinians from Gaza, raising immediate concerns about the welfare of displaced populations. The subject of displacement has also strained relations between Israel and neighboring countries, with [Jordan](#) withdrawing from agreements with Israel due to ethical concerns amid ongoing violence in Gaza.

Furthermore, in early January, the US and UK conducted [air strikes](#) in Yemen in response to the latter's attacks on commercial and military ships to compel Israel to cease atrocities in Gaza. Concerns have been raised about the strikes' environmental impact, which includes air and water pollution and the destruction of local ecosystems and infrastructure. The [Israeli war in Gaza](#) is shifting the focus to short-term priorities, away from long-term threats like climate change. The



economic instability following the war could lead to the sidelining of climate efforts in favor of security and recovery.

## COP28 and the Israeli War in Gaza

At COP28, a few leaders like Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Cyril Ramaphosa

criticized Israel's bombardment of Gaza as "war crimes." The Colombian president, Gustavo Petro, labeled it "genocide and barbarism unleashed on the Palestinian people." Moreover, the Iranian delegation led by Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian [withdrew](#) from the conference in protest against Israel's participation, citing it as inconsistent with the objectives and principles of the COP.

The UN secretary-general, Antonio Guterres, also [pointed out](#) that conflicts are causing immense suffering and emotions. "We just heard the news that the bombs are sounding again in Gaza. And climate chaos is fanning the flames of injustice," he remarked. However, the formal agenda of the conference was limited, despite the concerns raised by political leaders and activists explicitly linking climate justice with the rights of Palestinians and calling for a ceasefire.

The agenda and negotiations remained oblivious to the urgency of the situation and the impact of militarization on the global climate. The Colombian environment minister, Maria Susanna Mohamad, noted a disconnect between discussions at COP and the situation in Gaza and the West Bank. She [remarked](#) that the issues in these regions were disregarded, as if “nobody cares.”

## Conclusion

Although climate action rightfully dominated discussions, the wider environmental impact of the regional conflicts was neglected. The destruction of infrastructure and resources and military activities directly contribute to environmental degradation. The absence of explicit environmental discussions during such events indicates a very concerning detachment from the broader discourse on climate.

The lack of consideration of geopolitical factors within the climate justice narrative at COP28 limited its effectiveness in addressing the interconnected global climate-related challenges. The exclusion highlights a lack of understanding of the direct link between a commitment to climate justice and the geopolitical realities influencing it. The absence of substantial discussions on the subject represents a missed opportunity to utilize the conference at such a time to tackle pressing global issues that cannot be solved in isolation.

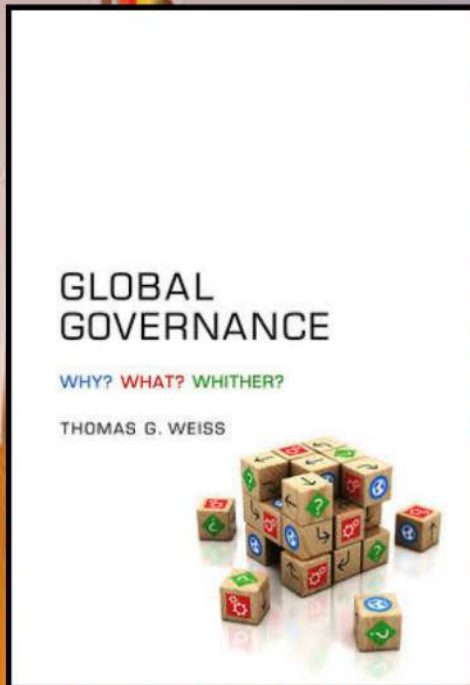
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## Book Review



# Global Governance: Why? What? Whither?

## About the Author



Ayesha Firdous is pursuing her bachelor's in international relations from International Islamic University, Islamabad.







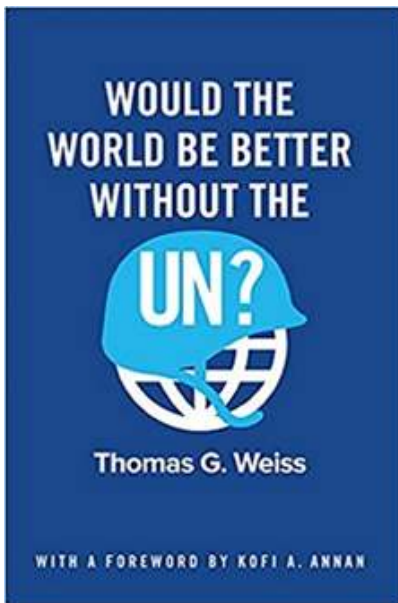
## The Author

Thomas G. Weiss, the author of the book *Global Governance: Why? What? Whither?*, is a distinguished international diplomat and scholar of international relations and global governance. Born in 1946, he has special expertise in the politics of the United Nations, where he served in various high-ranking roles. He was named a 2016 Andrew Carnegie Fellow for a project exploring the concept of a world without the United Nations. Since 1998, he has been a presidential professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is also the director

emeritus of the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies.

Weiss has held leadership positions in Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies, the Academic Council on the UN System, the International Peace Academy, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. He has written extensively about international organizations, conflict management, humanitarian action, the responsibility to protect doctrine, North-South relations, and US foreign policy.

How does the world work without a global government? The world is not governed by a single central authority, yet there's no chaos or war. So, how is this order and stability maintained in this anarchic system? Thomas G. Weiss studies and tries to answer this question in his book on global governance. The "why" part is where the author starts by talking about why we need global governance. He explains how problems in the world are all connected, and he looks at this in a way that's different from what most people think. He goes deep into the topic, giving us detailed insights into how international relations are changing.



The “what” part of the book talks about the different ways of global governance. He thoroughly looks at things like international organizations, agreements between countries, and how they work together. He talks about what works well and what doesn’t. The way he explains these complicated ideas makes it easy for anyone to understand.

The “whither” part looks into the future. He argues about where global governance might be headed. This part is like a guide for people who make decisions and gives analysis for readers to draw

conclusions about what might happen in our connected world. Weiss is great at considering different points of view. He discusses experts’ arguments, gives examples, and uses real-life stories. This way of writing makes the book interesting and helps us see the whole picture of how global governance works.

He analyses how the world deals with global issues like climate change, nuclear weapons, humanitarian crises, terrorism, economic development, and pandemics without a central authority. He says that global governance is a complex and evolving system that depends on different actors, including governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and businesses. These actors cooperate and compete to address global problems without there being a single decision-maker.

## Global Governance Gaps Identified in the Book

His main goal is to identify the specific areas where global governance needs to develop to effectively address current global challenges and to propose the most effective strategies for facilitating this development in the future.

According to the author, there are five main global governance gaps. The knowledge gap means that there is not enough understanding among the major actors in global governance about the basis of major problems.

Normative gaps translate to difficulties in reaching an agreement over universally acceptable norms, which can serve as the basis for the response to these major global problems. Policy gaps lead to challenges in the development of strategies to address global problems.

Institutional gaps refer to the weaknesses of global institutions in their response to global problems and their lack of resources. Lastly, he identifies compliance gaps, which mean that when countries don't follow the rules and agreements they've made, there should be consequences (including the use of force), but this is not often seen in global politics.

The way the author explains these gaps makes them very easy to understand in terms of global governance and its challenges. Thomas G. Weiss argues that we must avoid pessimism in addressing the challenges, meaning that the current system is unable to change or that even if it changes, it will also be disorderly and chaotic. According to the author, a global government rather than global governance provides an essential factor.



## Shortcomings of the Book

Despite Weiss' analysis in the book, *Global Governance: Why? What? Whither?* fails to consider crucial factors that influence global governance.

### Lacking Analysis

The author overlooks opposing forces like nationalism and the rise of regional powers that act as obstacles to stronger global governance frameworks. A more thorough exploration of these challenges could strengthen the overall argument.

## Limited Exploration of Alternative Methods

*Global Governance: Why? What? Whither?* does not consider more methods of global governance that propose different paths for development. A more expansive exploration of diverse approaches could enhance the book's depth and broaden its perspective.

## Western-centric Focus

Weiss mostly focuses on Western viewpoints and perspectives of global governance, potentially neglecting perspectives from other parts of the world. A more broad approach to global governance, considering diverse cultural and regional perspectives, could improve the book's analysis.

## Rapid Growth of Global Governance

*Global Governance: Why? What? Whither?* might struggle to keep up with the rapidly changing nature of global governance. Given the dynamic nature of international relations, a potential weakness could be the book's challenge in providing the very latest analysis.

In conclusion, while the book has notable strengths in its comprehensive analysis, accessible language, and identification of governance gaps, there are areas where it could benefit from a more complete analysis, consideration of alternative methods, and a more globally inclusive perspective. Additionally, addressing the timeliness concern could enhance the book's relevance in the rapidly evolving international relations.

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# Singapore's Giant Digital Economy

## About the Author



M. Karam is a final-year Civil Engineering student who also serves as the Editorial Head of the NEDian newspaper.



# Introduction

The Chief of Infocom Media Development Authority (IMDA), Lew Chuen Hong, when speaking to



the [reporters](#), emphasised how vital a digital economy is for Singapore, and noted that the country could transcend all kinds of physical constraints to bring access to consumers and markets across the world through digitalisation.

The term digital economy applies to the economy that unwaveringly relies on digital technology, online transactions, and its transformative effect on traditional industries. Digital modernizations such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality, blockchain, and autonomous vehicles are pivotal in establishing a digital economy. However, estimates of the size of the digital economy are not easily comparable across formats.

To understand the international comparison of estimates of the digital economy of Singapore, the primary purpose should be to understand its economic contribution and pace of change. In simpler terms, Singapore's digital economy can be broken down into two main components:

1. Information & Communications sector (I&C)
2. Digitalisation in the rest of the economy (excluding I&C)

The total contribution of the digital economy in Singapore amounted to [S\\$106 billion in 2022, equivalent to 17.3%](#) of Singapore's nominal GDP, up from 13% of GDP in 2017. It has expanded at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 12.9% per annum since 2017. The I&C sector accounted for around 1/3rd of Singapore's digital economy, with the remaining 2/3rd attributable to digitalisation in the rest of the economy.



# Information & Communications Sector (I&C)

The Information and Communications sector (I&C) deals with both different types of communications networks and their technologies. The I&C sector combines manufacturing and services industries



whose products primarily fulfill or facilitate the function of information processing and communication by electronic means, including transmission and display.

Between 2017 and 2022, the I&C sector was the fastest growing sector with a value-added CAGR of 10.3% per annum over the 2017 to 2022 period as compared to the real GDP CAGR of 2.6% per annum over the same period. Moreover, this sector alone was responsible for 5.4% of the GDP, an increase from 4.3% in 2017.

The key sub-sectors responsible for such a massive boost were online services, games, and e-commerce, with S\$ 6.4bn, S\$ 5.2bn and S\$2.1 bn value-add from 2017-2022. Such sub-sectors also showed a nominal growth of 70% value-add CAGR from 2017-22

## Digitalisation

Apart from the I&C sector, the sectors that immensely contributed to their digitisation were finance and insurance, wholesale trade, manufacturing, professional services, transportation and storage, real estate, retail trade, construction and accommodation, and food services. Most of the contributions were by finance, insurance, wholesale trade, and manufacturing, sharing a 45.6% collective value-add CAGR from 2017-2022.

The value-add from this part of the economy showed a flavoursome spike, increasing from S\$38.6 billion in 2017 to S\$72.8 billion in 2022, equivalent to a CAGR of 13.5% per annum.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Non-Small & Medium Enterprises (non-SMEs) led to an increase in the technology adoption rate from 74% in 2018 to 94% in 2022. However, there is a significant gap between SMEs and the non-SMEs. For example, the technology adoption intensity of SMEs boosted to 2.1 in 2022, but this is considerably lower than non-SME's 5.7.



## Navigating the Digital Workforce Landscape

With the ever-growing market of digital infrastructure and surging digital economy, the role of the workforce in the sectors affecting the digital economy becomes inevitable. With perpetuating digitalisation, tech professionals across Singapore are sought-after. As per the report of IMDA, the number of tech-oriented jobs has grown at a rate of 5.3% (of total employment) per annum from 2017 to 2022; both I&C and non-I&C sectors compel the increase in demand.



However, the non-I&C held the largest share of 57% of the total jobs in 2022. The tech jobs that showed significant demand included cloud, network and infrastructure, management, and product management. However, job roles related to software and applications surpassed the rest with a 33% share of total tech jobs from 2017-2022.

With that said, one cannot suppress the role of the foreign workforce in Singapore as it plays a crucial role in the economy and digitalisation. According to the data shared by the Ministry of Manpower, the total foreign workforce in 2023 is 1,488,000, which is 7.35% greater than the numbers in 2018.

With its booming economy, the trend of foreign workforce contribution is constantly inflating, as mentioned in the report of IMDA.

## Conclusion

The [Singapore model](#) should be a case study for other developing countries. Its digital economy has almost doubled in the past five years and is still on the trend to become even more gigantic than it is today. The IMDA report emphasised that the tech space in the world is fast-moving yet saturated. With Singapore's projection to [invest a further S\\$200 million](#) over the next few years into digitally focused projects, one could only imagine how strong it will become in the digital space.

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# The super QUICK QUIZ

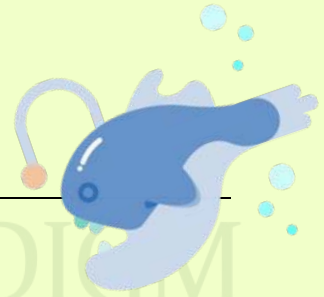


Test your general knowledge!



**Q1. What is the longest river in Asia?**

- A. Nile River
- B. Euphrates River
- C. Yangtze River
- D. Yellow River



**Q2. What is height of Mount Everest?**

- A. 8000 meters
- B. 7478 meters
- C. 8840 meters
- D. 8848 meters

**Q3. What percentage of the world's population lives in the Northern Hemisphere?**

- A. 50%
- B. 60%
- C. 80%
- D. 90%



**Q4. Which is the tallest mountain on Earth?**

A. K2

B. Mount Everest

C. Mauna Kea

D. Rakaposhi

**Q5. Which country has the largest Muslim population?**

A. Malaysia

B. Indonesia

C. Saudi Arabia

D. Pakistan

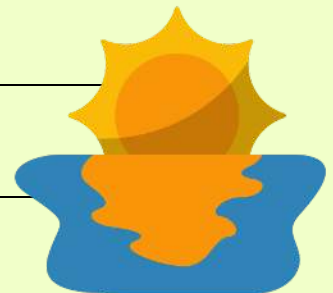
**Q6. What is the official number of islands in the world?**

A. 675,000

B. 800,000

C. 860,000

D. 900,000





**Q7. When did Uzbekistan declare independence?**

A. 1989

B. 1990

C. 1991

D. 1995



**Q8. How many countries/republics formed the USSR?**

A. 15

B. 19

C. 12

D. 9

**Q9. How many countries are part of the European Union?**

A. 20

B. 26

C. 44

D. 27



# Answers!

## 1. C) Yangtze

The Yangtze is the longest river in Asia. The source of the Yangtze is in the Tibetan Plateau, and it flows into the East China Sea. It is also the largest river in China, where it flows through 10 provinces and has 8 main tributaries.

## 2. D) 8848m

The highest mountain in the world is Mount Everest, sitting pretty at 8,848m in the Himalayas in Nepal.

## 3. D) 90%

There are 7.7 billion people living in the world, of which 90% are in the northern hemisphere.

## 4. C) Mauna Kea

The tallest mountain in the world from base to peak is Mauna Kea, a long-dormant volcano in Hawaii, USA. In total, it is approximately 10,205m (33481 feet) in height, taller than Mount Everest's 8,849m (29032 feet). Over half of Mauna Kea is underwater in the Pacific Ocean.

## 5. B) Indonesia

The country with the single largest population of Muslims is Indonesia in Southeast Asia, which on its own hosts 13% of the world's Muslims. Together, the Muslims in the countries of Southeast Asia constitute the world's third-largest population of Muslims.

## 6. D) 900,000

There are about 900,000 official islands in the world. This number consists of all the officially-reported islands of each country. The total number of islands in the world is unknown. There may be hundreds of thousands of tiny islands that are unknown and uncounted.



**7. C) 1991**

The Soviet government established the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic as a constituent (union) republic of the U.S.S.R. in 1924. Uzbekistan declared its independence from the Soviet Union on August 31, 1991. The capital is Tashkent (Toshkent).

**8. A) 15**

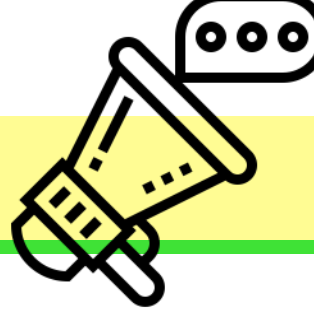
In the decades after it was established, the Russian-dominated Soviet Union grew into one of the world's most powerful and influential states and eventually encompassed 15 republics —Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Belorussia, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. In 1991, the Soviet Union was dissolved following the collapse of its communist government.

**9. D) 27**

The European Union ( EU ) is an economic and political union of 27 countries. It operates an internal (or single) market which allows free movement of goods, capital, services and people between member states.

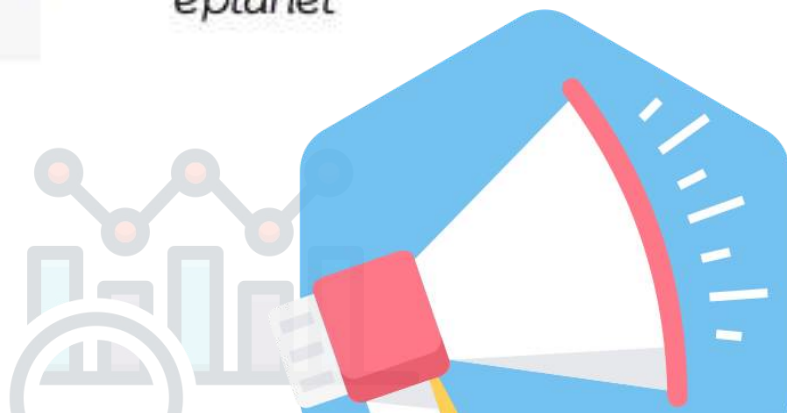


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