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Harvest of Hardship: Understanding Pakistan & Its Wheat Crisis

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Foreword

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

With over **150,000 - 200,000 monthly visits**, and over **65,000 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

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



Article

Harvest of Hardship: Understanding Pakistan and its Wheat Crisis

About the Author



M. Zulqarnain writes on a diverse range of topics such as geopolitics, economy, social inequality, governance, and other important current affairs stories in national and international spheres.



What is being seen and reported in the news regarding farmers' protests in Punjab is a crisis of great magnitude on account of its potential repercussions on socio-political stability. At the heart



of this "wheat crisis" stands the decision taken by the Pakistani Government to [reduce](#) the quota for wheat procurement from the farming community.

The "wheat crisis" has been part of the national headlines for a few months now with locals protesting in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).

Considering these widespread episodic protests regarding the wheat subsidy in AJK and GB, another protracted controversy over this delicate issue would not be in the favor of the nation or the government.

In hybrid economies such as Pakistan's, government intervention in the market through centralized wheat procurement processes serves a two-pronged purpose. First, it ensures that the national demand for the crop is met efficiently. Second, farmers are protected from the downsides of the free market. Thus, wheat procurement by the government is a mechanism for price stabilization.

Interestingly, the farmers' agitation against unfair state policies is not restricted to Pakistan only. For instance, [farmers in India also staged massive demonstrations](#), that descended into violence, against a "farm law" just two years ago. They objected to a new law that left them at the "mercy of corporations" in the bid to secure profitable prices for their produce.

Agriculture—A game changer for Pakistan?

Agriculture is the lifeblood of Pakistan—it employs around 37% of labor, sustains the country's populace, and fuels its economic engine. Without ensuring a flourishing agricultural sector, food security is a distant daydream. Furthermore, agriculture is intertwined with the livelihood of millions of small-scale farmers in Pakistan who comprise most of the rural population.

Wheat is also an important staple crop and an indispensable component of the daily diet of the 240 million population in Pakistan. It also contributes to almost 2% of the total GDP (gross domestic product).

Fortunately, farmers have enjoyed a steady rise in wheat production over time. This year, at harvest time in April 2024, wheat again became a bumper crop.

According to the [Pakistan Institute of Development Economics](#) (PIDE), "A significant increase in wheat production has been observed in the past four decades, that is, from 11 million tons, in 1980 to 25 million tons in 2020."

This year, favorable weather conditions in the Rabi season (October-April) led to the output of 30 million tonnes of wheat as opposed to the 26.2 million tonnes produced in 2022.

How Did the Wheat Crisis in Pakistan Start?

Pakistan experienced devastating floods in 2022, dampening wheat production and supply and risking a shortage in the market. To mitigate the supply shortages, the caretaker government imported wheat crops through the private sector.

According to the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, "Between September 2023 and March 2024, more than 3.5 million tonnes of wheat were imported into Pakistan from the international market, where prices were much lower."



As a result, the federal and provincial divisions were already holding **4.3 million tonnes** of wheat in reserve when farmers started harvesting their produce this year.

Under normal circumstances, the Government of Pakistan procures almost 20% of wheat produced by farmers

annually. It procured 5.6 million tonnes of wheat from farmers in 2023, out of a total of 28 million tonnes.

However, the provincial government in Punjab slashed the wheat procurement quota to merely 1.4 million tonnes—far below the usual 6 million targets—arguing two concerns. First, storage capacity issues due to full stocks and second, financial non-violability, claiming above-normal moisture in the harvest.

Farmers' Response

This sudden policy shift enraged the farming community. They staged protests across the province against the decision to reduce the provincial procurement quota and an inordinate delay in grain purchases.

A surplus stock of wheat, hoarded by imports, threatens the commercial interest of farmers as they sell wheat at a lower price and invest the profit in other crops such as cotton. This surplus is at the disposal of the provincial and federal governments and is at the heart of delays in procurement from domestic farmers who were desperately looking to sell their produce.

Under the banner of Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI), farmers in Punjab, the breadbasket of the country, demanded the administration to meet the target of wheat procurement quota of 2 million tonnes at a supporting price of 39,000 per kg.

According to Khalid Khokar, the President of PKI, farmers are also likely to incur losses of [Rs. 400 billion](#) otherwise.

Farmers' woes were further exacerbated when the government unilaterally replaced the manual process of registering as a wheat tradesman with a digitalized one. Many farmers found themselves in troubled waters as they lacked adequate digital literacy and education to tackle this challenge.

If the government does not raise the target quota, price stability will be disrupted thus incurring financial losses to farmers as they are forced to sell at a lower price. They will have no alternative, but to sell their bumper crop for less than the supporting price in the open market or to the private sector. The market-determined wheat price has declined to a staggering Rs. 3,000 to 3,900 per kg which is 25% less than the supporting price.

Government's Response

The Government has taken several steps to placate farmers. It, initially, directed Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services (PASSCO) to increase the procurement target to 1.8 million tonnes of wheat—an increase of 0.4 million tonnes from the initial procurement target. Nonetheless, it was rejected by farmers as peanuts.

Simultaneously, the Punjab Government has also announced interest-free loans of Rs. 150bn to farmers as compensation for their losses. However, the matter is yet to be settled.

Lessons to Learn from the Economic Crisis

Like many other perennial problems concerning poor governance and planning in the history of this country—such as the questionable contracts with [IPPs \(independent power producers\)](#)—the current food crisis also indicates a lack of foresight and prudent policymaking, rendering the wider public interest at risk.



Despite a rising trade deficit due to high imports of commodities, the decision to procure surplus wheat is a glaring case of maladministration and bad governance. It is equally unjust to the farmer community which plays a

significant role in ensuring food security for the country.

Similarly, it also indicates the loopholes in guaranteeing security and order. For instance, an Intelligence Bureau (IB) report stated, "The farmers' protests may cause a major law and order situation in coming days."

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident of inadequate planning as there are various precedents of bad governance in other key sectors that have incurred economic losses and precipitated social unrest.

The lessons from this crisis are primarily rooted in "poor planning and management". For example, Gilgit-Baltistan also reeked of dissent due to the massive protests and demonstrations that took place in January 2024 after the government decided to cut down wheat subsidies.

Way Forward

The government needs to lend an ear to the farmer's demands by increasing its storage capacity and exporting it to neighbors such as Afghanistan. It would be, otherwise, tantamount to an "economic murder" of farmers.

Provincial governments that do not fulfill their needs through local production must also be encouraged to procure wheat from farmers in Punjab. For instance, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has already proclaimed to procure 0.3 million tonnes from Punjab.

Lastly, the private sector with adequate storage capacity and warehouses must be incentivized to avert a full-blown wheat crisis.

The nation owes to its farmers for their determination and hard work, they cannot be risked antagonizing through exploitation and a surmounting wheat crisis.

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

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You may also like: [The Agricultural Sector of Pakistan: Benefits of Precision Agriculture](#)

Also related: [Tax Evasion: Poison for Agriculture](#)



Yemen's Crossroads: Navigating the Proxy Conflict Between Iran & Saudi Arabia in the Middle East

About the Author



Maidah Tariq is a graduate of international relations from National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad, Pakistan. She has a keen interest in the security and foreign policy of China, and Middle Eastern politics.



Introduction

Historically, the Middle East was the area of influence of France and Great Britain, followed by the USA and the former Soviet Union. As soon as the Western players started to gradually withdraw from the

region in the early 2000s, Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia emerged as new players in the Middle East. The conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia has intensified due to their deep-rooted historical and political differences and geopolitical aspirations. Both states are struggling hard to become the dominant power in the Arab world.

Iran pursues an expansionist policy where it portrays itself as the protector of the Shiite world, influencing countries such as Bahrain, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. Contrarily, Saudi Arabia pursues a Salafist expansionist stance where it aims to unite the [Sunni world](#) against the Shiites, along with maintaining dominance in the Gulf region. The strained ties between the two countries have highlighted sectarian faultlines throughout the Middle East, affecting different areas and contributing to conflicts rooted in Hobbesian norms and beliefs.

Yemen, a strategically positioned country with a sizable population in a dire crisis, is a prime example of this geopolitical battle. Comprehending the Yemeni issue necessitates taking into account its local and regional aspects. Analyzing the crisis requires recognizing the wider fight between Iran and Saudi Arabia as well as the local factors within Yemen.

Historical Ties of Saudi Arabia and Iran with Yemen

Involvement of Saudi Arabia in Iran

Saudi Arabia's relationship with Yemen is tangled and complex. Yemen views Saudi Arabia as an influential regional player, whereas Saudi Arabia perceives Yemen as a challenging state in its neighborhood. Saudi Arabia is using the approach of "containment and maintenance" in which it supports the Yemeni regime to prevent its collapse. However, strategically, the Saudis wanted Yemen to be weak, as stated by King Abdul Aziz. The king perceived Yemen as a threat to Saudi Arabia's national security and took measures to neutralize the threat. Saudis have taken measures such as the construction of a border fence due to economic concerns, like the fear of an influx of Yemeni migrants.

In the past, Wahabi Saudi Arabia supported the Zaydi imamate in Yemen; however, later on, ideological opposition surfaced. Riyadh supported the Zaydis against Arab nationalist republicans in the 1960s. Following the republicans' victory, pragmatism took hold, leading to Salafist clerics being stationed in Zaydi mosques and conversions to Sunni Islam. Saudi Arabia began to financially support the Yemeni government and tribal leaders in the 1980s.

Tensions Escalate Between Riyadh and Sanaa

Tensions heightened between Yemen and Saudi Arabia as Yemen supported Saddam Hussain during the [Persian Gulf War in 1991](#). This led to deteriorating relations between the two states and the deportation of Yemeni migrant laborers. In 1994, a failed succession attempt was supported by Riyadh, but later on, it focused on border negotiations to reconcile with Yemen. In the 2000s, another rift came in the relations as Saudi Arabia sought to fight against terrorism and Yemen turned into a major front in the fight against Al-Qaeda. This prompted the establishment of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in 2009.



Involvement of Iran in Yemen

The involvement of Iran in Yemen is quite complex. Imamate was being supported by both Saudi Arabia and Iran before 1979. However, after the Iranian Revolution, northern Yemen made an alliance with Saudi Arabia and Iraq, while southern Yemen tilted towards Iran. In the 1986 civil war in Yemen, Tehran backed a

Marxist faction. In order to strengthen his rule, President Saleh of Yemen put regional powers against one another during the 1990s, but relations remained amiable throughout.

Yemen Crisis: The Most Overt Sign of the Iran and Saudi Arabia Rivalry

Arab Spring

Sectarian conflicts and geopolitical issues are not the only reasons for the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The causes of this rivalry are deeply rooted in the [Iranian Revolution](#) of 1979, due to which Iran's identity was radically transformed. This revolution aimed to export its ideology and replace a Western-oriented monarchy with an anti-Western regime.

Abdullah Saleh, in his three-decade rule, failed to establish a stable government, which resulted in an authoritarian state with issues such as unemployment, societal division based on tribal systems, and unjust distribution of income. As the Arab Spring uprisings further heightened the tensions, Saleh had to resign due to pressure from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). While the National Dialogue Conference and interim president [Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi](#) sought stability, they were unable to offer a long-term solution. Houthi advances were made possible by worsening political and economic unrest.

Additionally, due to the [Arab Spring uprisings](#) in 2011 in the Middle East, the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia further intensified, and Iran gained influence in the Yemeni and Iraqi states. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia also entered into a direct war in Yemen in 2015 as it felt besieged.

Therefore, Saudi Arabia formulated a reactive foreign policy against Iran due to the change in power dynamics in the region and the downfall of Saudi allies such as Egypt's President Mubarak.

Dimensions of the Rivalry

The dimensions of the rivalry are economic, political, and ideological. In order to balance Iran, Saudi Arabia provides support to anti-Iranian groups by increasing military power and spreading Wahhabism. Contrarily, to counter Saudi Arabia, Iran supports militia forces and cultural centers in different parts of the world and employs ideological power.

Due to the siege of Yemen by Iran, Saudi Arabia had started perceiving the Houthi group's advancements as an existential threat, fearing that a Shiite state would be established at its border. Therefore, Saudi Arabia has utilized sectarianism to bolster the legitimacy of its regime by strategically emphasizing the Iranian threat to reinforce its claim to Sunni leadership.

Reasons for the Intervention in Yemen

Saudi Arabia's intervention has further fueled the ongoing crisis, [as Yemen was already in a miserable condition](#) and was facing social, political, and economic issues at the local level. The main concern for Saudi Arabia is Shiite expansionism, resulting in concerns about Shiite mobilization across its borders. Therefore, Saudi Arabia formed a coalition with other Arab nations and supported the recognized government of Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi in Yemen. Hadi's government is fighting against the former forces loyal to the former president, Abdullah Ali Saleh, and Houthi rebels.

Two dimensions are being unfolded in [the Yemeni crisis](#). The first is related to local problems, whereas the second concerns the involvement of global and regional powers, mainly Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the different groups they support in Yemen based on their interests. Iran is being accused of backing Houthis while Saudi Arabia and its allies are making military and political interventions in Yemen, which has contributed a lot to its devastation. This external intervention further worsened the situation and deepened the crisis.

Houthis: An Iranian Proxy & Threat for Saudi Arabia

Due to the instability in Yemen, the Houthi group took over in 2014. In order to restore Hadi's power, Saudi Arabia launched [Operation Decisive Storm](#). Yemen was turned into a proxy battleground due to the divisions between the north and south, along with the differences that existed between allied powers. Iran is being blamed by Saudi Arabia for backing the Houthis, while Saudi Arabia is being blamed by Iran [for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen](#). Therefore, the complex dynamics of the conflict not only involve local grievances but also highlight the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, where both states support different groups based on their strategic interests.

Subsequently, Iran wisely takes advantage of the Houthis' victories to progressively expand its power without having to pay a heavy price. However, Saudi Arabia is still fighting a drawn-out war and is facing significant financial difficulties. Although Iran is believed to have had a part in the Houthis' backing, the level of their reliance on Iran is complicated because the Houthis did not have much assistance at



first. Iran establishes a foothold in the region without having to shoulder the majority of the costs of the battle by taking advantage of Saudi Arabia's misperceptions of its threat and strategic errors.

Recent Developments in the War in Yemen

Although the six-month [UN-brokered](#) ceasefire officially failed in October 2022, since then, hostility levels between the KSA and Yemen have remained quite low. In April 2023, the peace talks mediated by Oman also [resumed](#) between Saudi and Houthi officials, along with the ongoing UN mediation efforts. Even with continuous efforts, real progress remains difficult to achieve.

On September 14, 2023, the first Houthi delegation to visit the Saudi capital since the war's start produced nothing more than optimistic statements. The talks mostly focused on initiatives for reconstruction, the possible reopening of ports under Houthi control and the airport in Sanaa, as well as the creation of a timeline for the departure of foreign forces from Yemen.

The sole commercial air route from Sanaa was suspended, and a [Houthi drone strike](#) in late September tragically claimed the lives of four Bahraini members of the Saudi-led coalition, casting a shadow over these negotiations.

However, the [Saudi-Iran rapprochement mediated by China](#) could help both states reach political settlements and maintain cordial relations with each other. These negotiations led to an agreement that aimed for the re-opening of both side's embassies and the reestablishing of diplomatic relations after years of animosity and tension.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has increased its use of [political violence](#) in Yemen in recent months, especially in the governorates of Abyan and Shawba. By using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and IEDs, AQAP attacked forces that supported the Southern Transitional Council (STC). Three soldiers from the Security Belt Forces, which is affiliated with STC, and a military commander perished in August 2023 as a result of a large explosion.

There are rumors of outside assistance and the perception that AQAP is trying to reclaim power in the area due to the recent spike in violence, which includes the use of drones.

Five fighters backed by the STC were injured in an attack that occurred in early October, demonstrating the ongoing anti-separatist efforts. The state of affairs indicates possible ramifications for regional stability and reflects a complex web of conflict dynamics.

Abdel-Malek al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthis, warned that direct American intervention in the



Hamas-Israel War would result in military retaliation from the group within three days of the October 7 attack on Israel. Later, US officials declared in mid-October that the USS Carney had successfully intercepted multiple Houthi drones and cruise missiles that were headed toward Israel. On October 31, the Houthis formally joined

the Hamas-Israel War to defend Palestinians in the Gaza Strip while continuing their missile and drone assaults.

Attacks like this continued until November. The Houthi attacks have caused global trade disruptions, turning the Red Sea into a focal point of conflict. After [taking over a commercial ship on November 19](#), the Houthis have since used drones, missiles, and speedboats to target at least thirty-three more ships. Major shipping companies have stopped using the Red Sea, which is where almost 15% of all seaborne trade passes, as a result of this ongoing assault. Rather, ships are rerouting, circumnavigating Southern Africa on longer and more expensive itineraries.

The consequences are severe, as concerns about a new cost-of-living crisis are sparked by the increased costs of shipping and insurance. The United States and the United Kingdom launched coordinated airstrikes on Houthi targets in Yemen on January 11 and 22, respectively, in response to the situation. The Houthis are not affected by these developments and have [vowed](#) to continue their military campaign in the Gaza Strip until a ceasefire is reached and supplies are permitted into the enclave. The situation is made more complex by the uncertainty surrounding the attacks' potential to continue and their possible effects on world trade.

Conclusion

According to Wendt's point of view, cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Iran could be achieved if both agreed to shift from conflict to cooperation. The Iranian Revolution was the major event



that strained relations between the two states, which forced them to move towards a [Hobbesian framework](#) marked by mutual existential threats. Cordial relations were maintained, but for a very short period, and then animosity prevailed, fueled by regional

events such as Arab Spring uprisings and the Persian Gulf War.

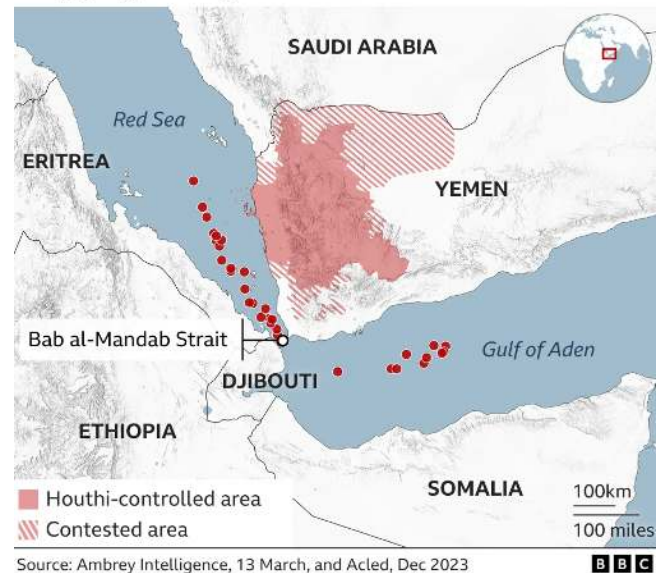
The current Yemen crisis is exacerbated by the ideological and geopolitical conflict that exists between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Houthis, marginalized by Saudi and Yemeni states, looked to Iran for assistance and support, especially after the year 2014. Although the main aim of Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen was to curb Iran's influence, it actually made the Houthis more tilted towards Iran. The Yemeni humanitarian catastrophe highlights the dangerous consequences of the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle Eastern region.

Recently, Saudi Arabia and Iran have agreed to come to the negotiating table with the efforts of [China](#). The Saudi government is not receiving the same support from the USA as it used to, whereas Tehran is in a dilemma after the Abraham Accords and does not want [Saudi Arabia to recognize Israel](#). In international relations, there are no permanent enemies or friends, only national interests. Therefore, Iran and Saudi Arabia agree on maintaining cordial relationships in pursuit of their respective interests.

Saudi Arabia also wants to end its conflict in Yemen with Iran because there could be an impact on the [Bab Al Mandeb](#) if the Houthi group manages to seize control of Yemen's west coast. Approximately 5% of the oil that travels worldwide passes through this strait. If Houthis take control of that region, it might stop the flow of oil through this crucial channel. Therefore, negotiations should also be made with the Houthi rebels to bring stability to Yemen and the entire Middle Eastern region.

However, the peace process is now halted due to the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict. Negotiations over the Yemeni crisis are stalling due to the Houthi's involvement in the Israel-Gaza conflict, which is drawing attention and resources from abroad. But as the Yemen crisis is causing harm to both regional powers, a change to more fair policies, dialogue between the Houthi rebels and Saudi Arabia, and an understanding of regional stability that benefits all parties involved are necessary for Saudi-Iran normalization and for resolving these crises.

Shipping damaged in attacks off coast of Yemen



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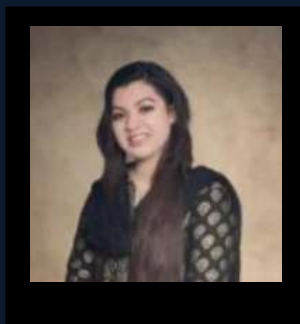
You may also like: [The War in Yemen: How It Began & Who Are the Houthis?](#)

Also read: [Houthi Rebels Hijacking Cargo Ships In the Red Sea](#)



The Philosophy of Imam Al-Ghazali: Understanding Human Nature and Happiness

About the Author



Saba Imran is an independent researcher with research interests in geopolitics, foreign policy analysis, and strategic studies. She aspires to become a prolific writer.



Life on Earth emerged due to the Big Bang, which gave birth to diverse living organisms, including the greatest creation of God: human beings. Human beings are extraordinary creatures that are equipped with spectacular capabilities to think, analyze, and interpret. In [*The Call of the Marching Bell*](#), Allama Muhammad Iqbal rightly postulates the magnificent creation of mankind. He states that life is the mysterious formation of Adam, and it is the essence of the words "be and it was." Let's now explore the diverse shades of human personality that make them the most distinguished creatures.

Human personality is a blend of unique attributes and traits that define an individual's character. Many Western psychologists explain personality according to their respective research. Diverse schools of thought flourished in the early nineteenth century to explain human personality. They include behaviorism, the psychoanalytic theory, the trait theory, and the social learning theory. However, according to the Islamic perspective, the development of personality is dependent on the spiritual nature of an individual. Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali was without a doubt one of the most eminent Islamic thinkers in this regard. He devoted his life to learning and teaching.

A Short Biography of Al-Ghazali

Abû Hâmid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazâlî (c. 1056–1111), commonly known as Al-Ghazali, was a well-known and influential philosopher, sufi theologian, and mystic. His contribution helped in the revival of the spiritual aspect of Islam, paving the enlightenment journey of the Muslim world. Imam Al-Ghazali was born in Tus, an ancient Persian city located in Iran near Mashhad. He received religious education from prominent scholars of his time.



Having a zealous mindset and keen interest in comprehending the spiritual states of human beings led him to gain the attention of Seljuk vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, who designated him as a chief professor at the Nizâmiyya Madrasa of Baghdad. Al-Ghazali excelled in the area of Sufism, or *tasawwuf*, Islamic philosophy and theology.

He wrote myriad books, including the most famous, *Ihya Ulum al-din* (Revival of the Religious Sciences) and *Kiṁiyā' al-Sa'ādah* (Alchemy of Happiness). Revival is a series of forty books, serving as a guide to ethical behavior for Muslims in their daily lives.

Al-Ghazali's work relied heavily on the teachings of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to prepare Muslims for the afterlife. His works are the paradigm in the domains of philosophy, politics, mysticism, morality, and rational knowledge. He refuted the works of several Muslim scholars; he ascribed them to falsely focusing on the material life. His untiring efforts in exploring the manifold secrets of human personality have encouraged mankind to ponder its miraculous creation. It continues to influence people even in contemporary times.

Al-Ghazali's Philosophy of Human Nature

Al-Ghazali posits there are two realms: the realm of decrees and the realm of creation and since



humans have both a physical body and a soul, they fall into both of these categories. Al-Ghazali used the terms *al-aql* (intellect), *al-nafs* (soul), *al-qalb* (heart), and *al-rūh* (spirit) to describe the spirituality of humans. The quality within the human spirit, he says, ranges from animalistic to angelic.

According to al-Ghazali, human beings possess a range of spiritual qualities. These include:

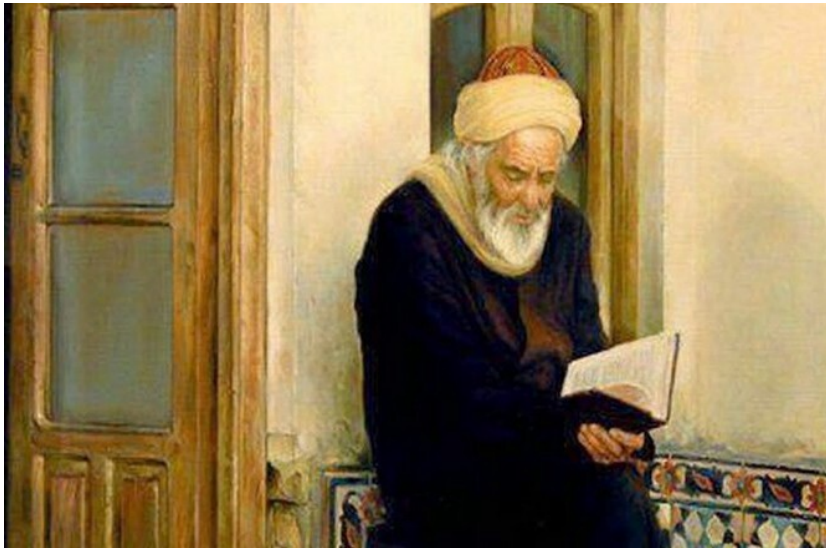
1. Animalistic: Focused on basic needs like eating and drinking.
2. Ferocious: Driven by aggression and destruction.
3. Demonical: Inclined towards evil, trickery, and deception.
4. Angelic (highest): Devoted to sincere worship of God and yearning for a connection with the Divine.

Human beings are characterized by the nature of animals. Animals are involved in eating, drinking, and bearing progeny. On the other hand, mankind is related to the nature of Satan. Satan's evils are provoking deception, encouraging one to lie, and inducing rivalry. Moreover, human beings possess anger, which instigates conflict. Nonetheless, the characteristics of angels are also present within humans since the soul has heavenly attributes. Human beings are constantly engaged in the struggle to adopt the attributes of the spirit. When the spirit dominates through reflection and submission, a person ascends to the level of angels; otherwise, he is inferior to animals.

Al-Ghazali's Alchemy of Happiness

Al-Ghazali uses the word *nafs* to describe the human personality. Human personality is divided into three types that reside in the human soul: notably, *nafs al-ammārah* (the prompting soul), *nafs al-lawwāmah* (the self-reproaching soul), and *nafs al-muṭmainnah* (the contented soul). The first type of personality, *nafs al-ammārah*, is formed when the human soul becomes infected with negative desires. It leads one to commit evil and sinful acts. *Nafs al-ammārah* incapacitates the cognitive process, and the psychological potential of reason becomes a servant of instinctive desires and anger.

On the contrary, *nafs al-lawwāmah* is a self-critical personality in which the human soul blames



oneself for evil acts and struggles to suppress animalistic attributes. Moreover, the faculty of reason endeavors to subjugate the impulses. Educating this personality with moral goodness and knowledge can help it attain angelic status. The third personality, *nafs al-muṭmainnah*, is a tranquil, calm, happy, and peaceful

personality. The human soul has conquered wicked desires, and it yields to the faculty of reason, thus leading to the state of serenity. The soul's contentment lies in its submission to God, which helps a person achieve peace of mind and body.

But what makes human beings so unique, and what differentiates them from the animal kingdom? The answer is simple: It is the purity of the heart. The heart has a spiritual potential that can be related to God and serves as an abode of intuitive knowledge. Ghazali views it as the heart where the soul dwells. It is through the heart that a person can comprehend the secrets of life.

Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali explains in [Alchemy of Happiness](#) that the heart has two doors. One is the spiritual or unseen world, and the other is the physical or tangible world. When a man's heart is cleansed from instinctive desires such as lust and anger, his heart becomes pure. It reflects the true light of the soul, transforming his corporeal existence into a higher spiritual intellect. The concept of a purified heart can be seen in the verses from the [Mathnawi](#) written by Mawlana Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi.

Thus, a pure heart is no longer of this world. It now has a direct relationship with the unseen, guiding an individual through all the thick and thin of life. This transformation of man leads to a psychological state of bliss and peace.

Human beings need to realize the value of happiness, which directs a positive approach to life. Humanity needs to realize that it's the most majestic creature on planet Earth. It is bestowed with striking capacities that can change its physical existence into that of a radiant spiritual individual.

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Article

Prospects of Revival of SAARC: Role of Pakistan

About the Author



Syed Imran Sardar is a Research Analyst at the Institute of Regional Studies. He is running the Regional Conflict and Human Security Program at the institute.

Mr. Sardar has also authored a book titled "Conflict Transformation between India and Pakistan: A New Approach". Mr. Sardar has taught Area Study courses at the National University of Modern Languages. He also teaches Research Methodology at the Foreign Service Academy, and Information Service Academy, Islamabad. His research work has been cited and indexed nationally & internationally. He also contributes to local newspapers and online platforms.

Introduction



The revival of SAARC remains a daunting challenge in contemporary times. Since 2014, the last summit was held in Kathmandu, SAARC has not been able to make its way to the next summit, which was supposed to be held in

Islamabad. Since then, the organization has been hostage to India-Pakistan conflictual relationships. The issue of terrorism, the revocation of Article 370, and polarization in the region altogether have failed SAARC in implementing its core objectives.

Despite being dysfunctional for the last ten years, no member states have expressed any inclination towards disbanding the organization. The identity of SAARC, being the only organization representing all the South Asian states, remains intact.

Nevertheless, the lingering question pertains to navigating internal discord and addressing various structural flaws within the SAARC framework. So in view of dealing with the current deadlock, this study puts forward some practical suggestions, especially in the context of Pakistan.

The Legacy of SAARC

Established in December 1985, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) began its journey with an ironclad commitment by its founding members, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan, to uplift the quality of life of the people living in a region which was the least integrated and one of the most poverty-ridden regions in the world.



In its formative years, from 1985 to 1989, the SAARC Summits were held regularly, and several important conventions were concluded in response to pressing issues of the time. For instance, the SAARC [Regional Convention on](#)

[Suppression of Terrorism](#) and an agreement to establish a “[South Asian Food Reserve](#).”

However, starting from 1989, the frequency of annual sessions began to decline. Over 22 years, from 1989 to 2011, only 12 summits were convened. Subsequently, from 2011 to now, spanning 13 years, only one summit occurred in 2014. The debilitating frequency of annual meetings speaks volumes about the inherent discord between the member states, especially between India and Pakistan. The extra-regional power politics and the mushroom growth of sub-regional and trans-regional organizations have negatively impacted the progress of the SAARC. SAARC has been practically dysfunctional since 2014.

Nevertheless, in nearly a decade of dormancy, none of the member states have expressed any desire to disband the organization. All the states, especially the smaller states, still have faith in the SAARC and are quite hopeful for its revival. The importance of SAARC has remained impervious to the prevailing challenges.

The establishment of SAARC Regional Centers, South Asian University, the South Asian Development Fund, the Food Bank, and the Arbitration Council are some of the outstanding achievements that SAARC has made so far. But it is worth mentioning that almost all the achievements that SAARC has made in the past 38 years were made possible when Pakistan-India relations were normal.

This implies that the [normalization of Pakistan-India relations](#) is the key to the smooth functioning of SAARC, and there is no scope for either minus-India or minus-Pakistan-led growth within SAARC. This possibility has been discussed causally in both Pakistani and Indian literature.



Current Challenges

The revival of SAARC remains a daunting challenge in the contemporary geo-political and geo-strategic environment that the so-called “China threat” has potentially shaped.

The Galwan Valley face-off between the Chinese and Indian forces in June 2020 and the subsequent push in India-US relations (evident from [operationalizing the QUAD through a](#)

[naval power show](#) in November 2020) brought a paradigm shift in the strategic culture of South Asia. Later, the [Ukraine War](#) that broke out in February 2022 led to an increased polarization in the South Asian region.

Now, the divide is quite visible as the US and like-minded Western powers are trying to consolidate their position in the region through a strategic partnership with India and promoting its role as the “net security provider” in the region. Mindful of the existing tide, China and Russia are treading cautiously in their bilateral engagements with the South Asian states. The existing “polarization” has accentuated the division within the SAARC, which was already paralyzed because of two major incidents, i.e., the Uri attack on the Indian Army Brigade Headquarters in 2016 and the revocation of Article 370 by India in 2019.



Today, minus Pakistan, India is willing to work with other neighbors and has already been doing so for quite a long time. Circumventing Pakistan, New Delhi is quite active in streamlining connectivity agreements under Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal Network (BBIN), which was conceived after Pakistan objected to India's proposed regional

Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) as half-baked [in the last summit that took place](#) in Kathmandu, Nepal in 2014.

The same agreement was passed in 2015 under the BBIN platform, and now it is in the final stage and ready for implementation soon. Apart from MVA, India is widening the scope of the BBIN by mulling cooperation on energy and trade. On the other hand, minus India, Pakistan prefers to work with other SAARC countries. Still, Islamabad's efforts have been unsuccessful in fully exploiting its bilateral relations in this regard because of New Delhi's greater influence over the foreign policy decisions of the smaller states.

Moreover, due to existing acrimonious relationships between India and Pakistan, no cross-border regional connectivity mechanism, especially energy and transportation, could be operational under the SAARC framework. Practically, only bilateral/intergovernmental mechanisms exist in the region. In almost all the existing bilateral mechanisms (especially in the energy sector), New Delhi is well connected with the region's smaller states compared to Pakistan. (India-Bangladesh 1160 MW, Bhutan-India 2260 MW, India-Nepal 520 MW, Pakistan-Afghanistan (CASA 1000 MW)). Thus, the vision of economic integration under SAARC remains a challenge as India and Pakistan have opted for alternate, more simply, opposing modes of integration within the South Asian region.

For India, SAARC is no longer a significant component of its “Neighbourhood Policy.” The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC, a transregional organization) has gained more significance.



However, India is skillfully using the SAARC forum to advance its part of integration while circumventing Pakistan. The Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal Network (BBIN) is a prime example.

Unfortunately, New Delhi has spoiled the SAARC’s spirit of “region-ness.” New Delhi is now using the SAARC forum only to advance its two-pronged policy of isolating Pakistan and [neutralizing the impact of Chinese influence](#). Be it SAARC, the BBIN, or BIMSTEC, New Delhi is determined to play a central role. For Pakistan, though SAARC remains an important organization in achieving the goal of regional cooperation in South Asia, Islamabad’s increasing reliance on Chinese-led development projects has largely shaped its image as a “typical member” of the SAARC.

The Prospects

Despite several loopholes and the mushroom growth of other sub-regional organizations (i.e., BISMTECH and BBIN), SAARC’s identity as the only organization representing all the South Asian countries remains intact.

The smaller states, despite the existing polarization in the region, are still interested in the revival of SAARC, which they believe can be potentially helpful in streamlining cooperation on less controversial issues such as [poverty reduction](#), people-to-people contact, cultural exchanges, tourism, and science and technology cooperation.

The alternative/opposing economic integration infrastructures could be integrated into the SAARC vision of economic integration if Pakistan-India relations are normalized. Moreover, in the absence of annual summits, which have been in limbo since 2016, the regular meetings have gained more importance as the organization is relatively alive and surviving on committee-level interactions between the member states.

SAARC has been quite active since Ambassador Golam Sarwar from the People's Republic of Bangladesh assumed charge as the 15th Secretary General of the organization on 25 October 2023. After 4 years, the 39th SAARC Charter Day was celebrated on 11 December 2023. Many board of governors' meetings of regional centers have been held so far. More recently, in 2024, the 31st meeting of the governing board of the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre was held in January.

Conclusion

To tap the potential of existing synergy at the SAARC Secretariat, Islamabad needs to engage with its current Secretary General, Ambassador Golam Sarwar. Pakistan can consider inviting him (virtually or in person) to conferences, seminars, etc.

Former [Secretary General Mr. Esala Ruwan Weerakoon visited Pakistan](#) in December 2021. Islamabad also needs to increase its engagements with the SAARC regional centers and be active on SAARC's social media platforms. In its engagements with member countries, Pakistan should stress the fulfillment of the social charter of the SAARC and also make efforts to mobilize the observer states to contribute to the SAARC Development Fund.

Such initiatives would help rebuild the member states' confidence in SAARC. Pakistan also needs to make serious efforts to convene the pending SAARC Summit. For that matter, Islamabad needs an active engagement with the current chair of the SAARC (Nepal) and other smaller states to mobilize their support in setting the ground for the summit in Islamabad.

Previously, in 2018, the former PM of Pakistan, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, attempted in that regard. During his visit to Nepal, he met with the Prime Minister and the President of Nepal, K.P Sharma Oli and Bidya Devi



Bhandari, and other political figures. He urged them to play their role in convening the SAARC Summit.

To address the emerging climate-related issues, Pakistan needs to stress the active role of the SAARC Disaster Management Centre. Based in India, the Centre can be exploited to encourage climate cooperation within SAARC. Pakistan also needs to push for reforms in the SAARC Charter. Learning from other organizations like CAREC (Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program), the SAARC's institutional framework/decision-making process can be simplified. Multiple layers (SAARC Summits (Apex Body), Council of Ministers, standing committees, programming committees, technical committees, working groups, and action committees) are potentially delaying the decision-making in the SAARC.

Additionally, since Pakistan-India relations are the key to the revival of SAARC, both Pakistan and India need to expedite efforts to normalize their relations in the greater interest of the welfare of South Asian people. In conclusion, Pakistan should not be kept hostage to the existing stalemate between India and Pakistan.



Islamabad's continued inattentive attitude will provide New Delhi room for contemplating policies detrimental to Pakistan's relations with other smaller states. The forum of SAARC at this point in time needs to be fully utilized to neutralize India's policy of isolating Pakistan within the SAARC, and this can only be possible through active engagement with the member countries

and participation in the meetings and events.

This piece was originally published by the [Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad](#)

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Ireland and South Africa's Enduring Support for Palestine

About the Author



Wardah Shahid is a graduate in Peace and Conflict Studies, from National Defence University, Islamabad. As a social science student, her focal points harbor critical analysis of the changing regional and global political dimensions.



Introduction

The protracted conflict between Israel and the tyrannized state of Palestine has donned a genocidal armor, with the Israeli forces slashing its opponents (i.e. 70% of whom, are Palestinian women and minors) for the last eight months, with no ceasefire in sight. States around the world, have

risen with their support for the [Palestinian plight](#).

Israel, in its savagery, has [tried to use every tool](#) (missile attacks, forceful disappearance, assassinations, use of phosphorus gas, etc.) in its defense to silence the Palestinians into submission and win this war.

However, they underestimated the Palestinian wit and the global support for its cause. The liberation war cry is echoed everywhere with multiple sit-downs, protests, and campaigns demanding an end to this brutality. Notable amongst these movements has been the enduring support of two countries, Ireland and South Africa, who see their histories of occupation and oppression being reflected in Palestine's constant struggle for freedom.

This article paints the crimson tapestry of Palestine's historic allies, i.e., South Africa and Ireland, to explain their solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

Palestinian History at a Glance

A century of Palestinian occupation has been the parting gift of the British, who, followed by the infamous "Balfour Declaration in 1917," decided to grant the Jewish people a homeland in Palestine. The British mandate was successful, and in 1948, the State of Israel was created.



This marked a mass exodus of Jews to Israel while violently displacing the indigenous Palestinians to neighboring states. As settler-colonialism was on the rise, the Palestinians were in constant agony; losing their homeland while being discriminated against racially, socially, politically, and economically. With such uncertainty looming on the horizon, the Palestinians with their Arab allies retaliated against the Israeli occupation; such can be witnessed through the “Arab Revolt of 1948,” which resulted in the territory being divided into three segments while also displacing [750,000 Palestinians](#).

Additionally, periodic belligerence was witnessed between Israel and its Arab neighbors in the form of the “Six-Day War” in 1967 and the “Yom Kippur War” in 1973. Finally, peace negotiations in 1979, known as the “Camp David Accords,” calmed the waters and settled the territorial dispute.

This did not last long, as the First and Second Intifadas erupted in 1987. Then again in 2000. Long story short, the consistent Israeli brutality culminated in a freedom struggle against the Zionist political movement, which was the precursor to the October 7th attack by Hamas, resulting in [34,700 Palestinian casualties](#).

Therefore, the blatant use of force by Israel has garnered attention in the form of solidarity movements that can be showcased in the following case studies.

Ireland: “Saoirse do Phalaistín!” (Freedom for Palestine!)

Ireland, a north-western nation approximately 2000 miles from the [Middle East](#), has showcased the true essence of solidarity as witnessed through the visible signs of Palestinian flags and its keffiyehs being donned proudly by its Irish supporters.

Along with the display of the solidarity mural, [80%](#) of the Irish people agree that a genocide is taking place, and are campaigning to urge the international community into action. Drawing up parallels between both conflicts is paramount to the current discussion.

Historical Overview

Britain’s colonizing spree kicked off in the 12th century with Ireland, which resulted in 800 years of subjugation inflicted by the English. Ireland was used as a specimen for its barbaric experiments—visible in its policies and structures, and later used on other colonies. The continuous onslaught was eliminated when the Irish descended upon their British masters, resulting in the “Anglo-Irish War” from 1919 to 1921, fought between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the British forces. This ended in an Irish victory with an Irish free state but at the expense of Northern Ireland, which was held under British control.

The independence war did not subside the internal strife as the country quickly entered a civil war—the IRA and the provisional Irish government fought over the Anglo-Irish treaty, which was a harness carefully crafted by the British to keep the Irish State under its control, denying them sovereign independence.

Even after the culmination of the Republic of Ireland in 1949, the North still grappled with an ethno-nationalistic conflict known as the “Troubles” between the Unionists and the Loyalists, which ended after the “Good Friday Agreement” was signed in 1998.



Ireland and its Enduring Support for Palestine

Political Support

Ireland is one of the most pro-Palestinian nations in the world, therefore, the Irish public opinion has always been well against Israel. Still, the massive expulsion of the Palestinians after the Six-day War

cemented its position as a vanguard of the Palestinian cause, which later on manifested in its Middle-Eastern policy.

After joining the European Union (EU) in 1980, it was the first among its member nations to call for the establishment of a Palestinian state while also recognizing the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as a legitimate authority of its people. Irish governments led by Fianna Fail and Fine Gael parties have supported the BDS Movement, i.e., Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, as a means to pressure Israel to end its oppressive campaign against the Palestinians.

Moreover, political support was showcased during the peak of the Second Intifada when former Irish Foreign Minister Brian Cowen met PLO leader Yasser Arafat and applauded his efforts in leading the freedom struggle and becoming a symbol of self-determination and outstanding persistence.

Adding on, several laws, motions, and bills, such as the "Occupied Territories Bill 2018," have been passed in the *Dáil Éireann* (lower house), which aims at economically choking Israel and limiting any trade with companies linked to the settler colonialists. Ireland and its legislative bodies have been standing tall in their support for Palestine.

Subsequently, the current genocidal campaign has also caught the attention of the Irish leadership, as Ireland's President Michael D. Higgins and Prime Minister Leo Varadkar have openly opposed Israel's actions as violations of International law.

Furthermore, the Irish political party, Sinn Fein, with historic ties to the PLO, has called for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from Ireland over allegations of its role in the genocide.

Lastly, following the October 7 attacks, the people in Ireland have been vocal about their stance on a peaceful resolution, an immediate ceasefire, and the provision of urgent humanitarian aid to civilians in need.

Civil Society Groups

The Irish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) has been at the forefront of Palestinian nationalism in Ireland, organizing country-wide protests as a means to call off Israel's indiscriminate bombing and blockade of Gaza.

Irish Support via Music

Irish nationalism for the Palestinian cause has reached new heights, with popular music groups such as the hip-hop trio "Kneecap" and the rock

band "The Shan Vans" showing staunch support for Palestine through their music. Shan Van's signature song, "The Old Women," portrays a clear image of the Palestinian and Irish hunger strikes during their captivity under their respective colonial masters.



On 28th May 2024, the Republic of Ireland recognized the Palestinian State. Irish PM Simon Harris emphasized that such a move is conditional to any peace process. In this regard, it has been decided that a full embassy of Ireland in Ramallah would also be established.

South Africa's "Inkululeko kwePalestine!" (Freedom for Palestine!)

The word apartheid, which is used to describe the current Israeli occupation, has its roots in the colonial history of South Africa up until the 1990s when the black South African population finally broke the shackles of slavery from their white masters.

Due to its tragic history, apartheid has been given broader importance in international law as it was declared a crime against humanity by the 1998 "Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court."



Therefore, the shared history of oppression has made South Africa a prominent defender of Palestinian rights. Its forefather and anti-apartheid activist, Nelson Mandela, frequently drew parallels between the two

situations from time to time.

Historical Overview

Since the beginning, South Africa had been under imperial occupation—the Dutch in 1652, the British settlers, and finally, the National Party, which laid the groundwork for apartheid in 1948. Under their rule, they enshrined a racist social system whereby the black population was relegated to the bottom of society—socially, politically, and economically.

The "Pass laws," were a noteworthy example—they required black South Africans to carry mandatory identification passes for work, travel, and security checks in their own homeland. In this regard, the process of displacement and domination over the local populace, usually along the lines of race and ethnicity, was witnessed.

The main aim of the settler colonialists was to deny them autonomy and basic rights, thus encouraging unequal development. The end of apartheid in the 1990s resulted in an exemplary show of resistance that had garnered an era of reconciliation and reformation in a once war-ravaged country.

South Africa and its Enduring Support for Palestine

“As a South African, one knows oppression, resistance, and apartheid”

Leila Samira Khan, a South African lawyer and activist

South Africa’s unwavering endorsement has flourished since the beginning, as the African National Congress is deeply affiliated with the Palestinian resistance under the PLO. It has consistently accused Israel of committing crimes against humanity. Nelson Mandela and Yasser Arafat had a cordial relationship, and both understood the gravity of the situation.

The resilient backing of the South Africans to the Palestinians held ground immediately after the



system of apartheid crumbled in the 1990s. Diplomatic relations were soon formed with Palestine.

High-ranking religious figures from the South African branch of the Anglican Church have denounced Israeli aggression and have declared it an apartheid state in

the wake of the current onslaught.

Adding on, before the October 7 attacks, South Africa denigrated the Israeli embassy as a liaison office. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has also expressed grave concerns regarding the surmounting death toll in Gaza.

He reinforced his country's stance that Israel should halt its atrocities and declare an immediate ceasefire. Diplomatic ties have been effectively suspended, with its parliament voting to close the Israeli embassy in South Africa and moving to withdraw its diplomatic staff.

Lastly, a brave and yet courageous act by the South Africans was their legal proceedings against Israel on December 29, 2023, in the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The hearings regarding South Africa's appeal took place around 11–12 January 2024, which reinstated that Israel is aiming to eliminate Palestinian—racial and ethnic groups through its genocidal campaign. It proudly

invoked the "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide 1948" against Israel, stating that the military operations in Gaza and the locality should be ceased and Israel should be apprehended for its actions. The judgment did not comply with the original demands but underpinned Israel's obligations under the Genocide Convention.

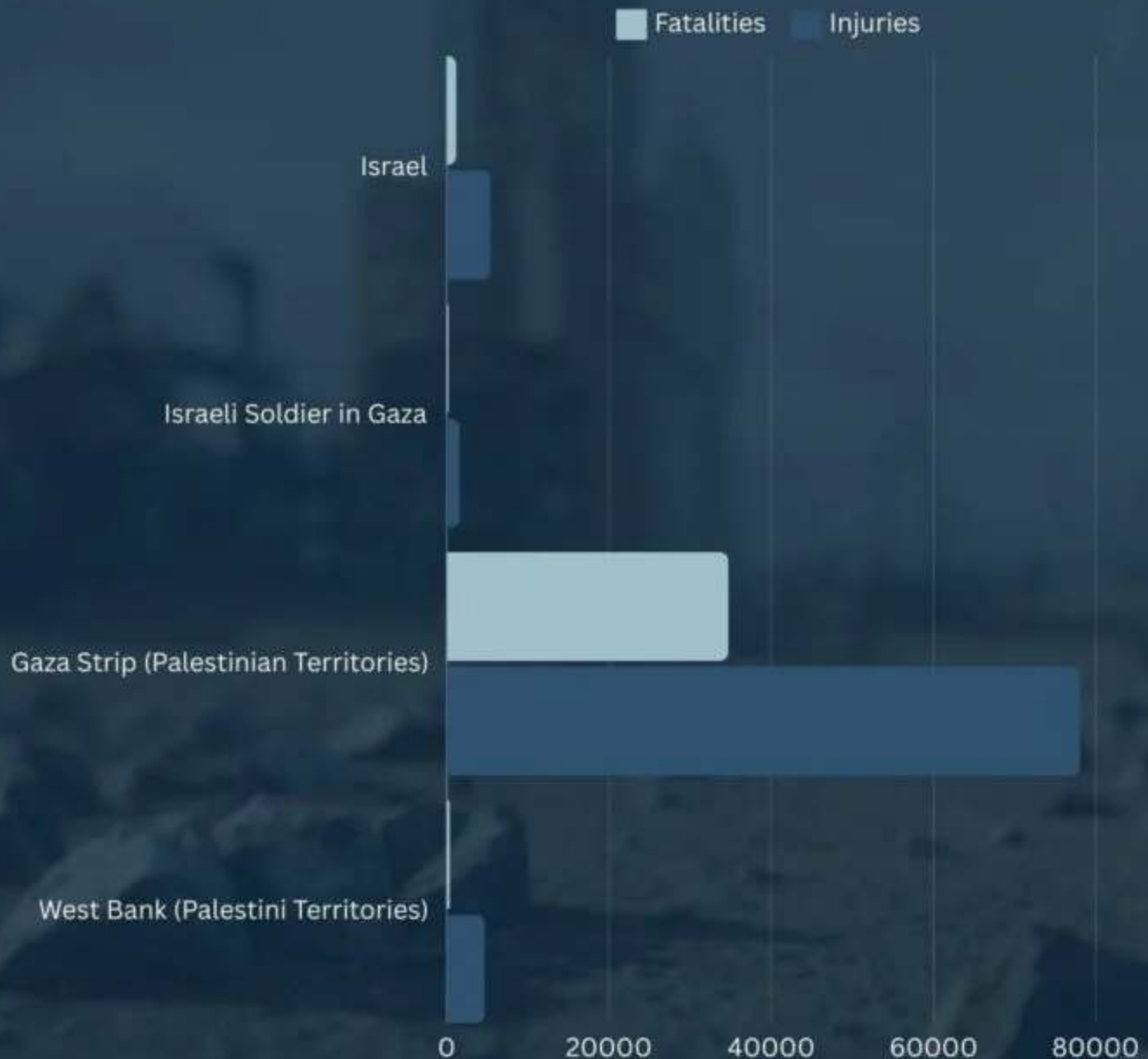
Critical Analysis

Israel, in its apparent bloodlust and unwavering support from its Zionist allies around the world, has not left any stone unturned. The Israeli settler colonialists unabatedly continue to showcase their ethnic cleansing campaign in Gaza by targeting innocent civilians, hospitals, schools, residential buildings, refugee camps, and aid agencies.



FATALITIES & INJURIES

SINCE OCTOBER 7TH



Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Fatalities and Injuries that have taken place since October 7 as of May '24

Moreover, the merciless slaughter is not enough for the Israelis. They have also acquired an inhuman means of increasing Palestinian suffering by eliminating food supplies, medical equipment, and other necessities required for individuals in a war-ravaged zone.

The [Palestinian reality today hinges](#) upon many other liberation movements in the past. In this, one thing is to be understood—the rise and fall of imperial dynasties has always wrought havoc upon the colonized nations. The British divide-and-rule policy has culminated in weak and fragmented states, continuously grappling for stability but getting none.

Conclusion

Assessing the conflict in real-time and comparing it with existing struggles for justice and peace has been the ultimate catalyst for worldwide solidarity movements, which can be seen in the cooperation granted by the Irish and South Africans. They share similar goals, motivations, and a mutual oppressor, i.e., Britain, whose unjust imperial practices not only inflicted pain upon South Africa, in the form of its apartheid practices but also on the native Irish, who were thrust into a bloody sectarian conflict rooted in English-Protestant settler colonialism.

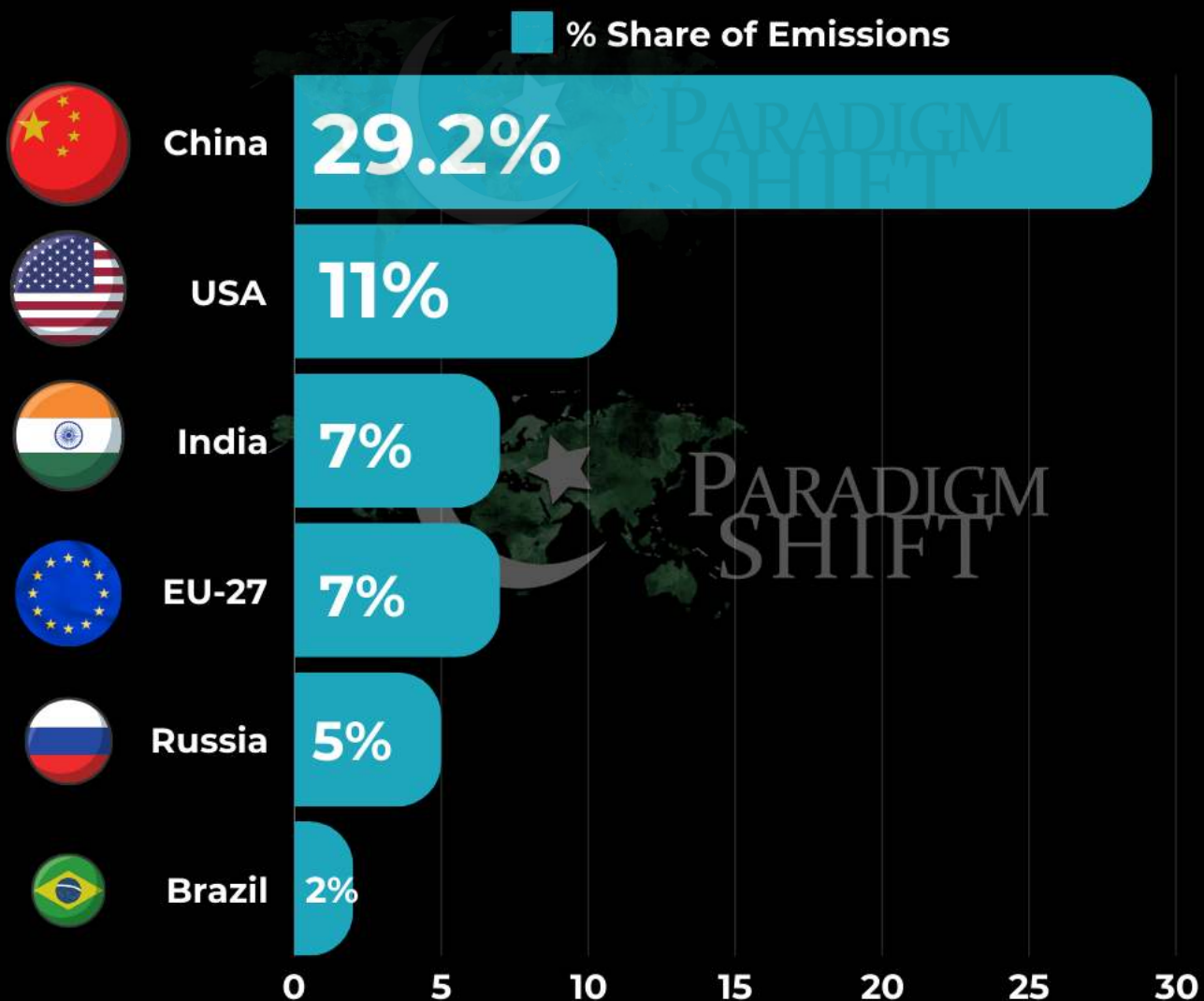
In support of the Palestinians, they see an uncanny resemblance to their struggles against the British occupation, which transcends race, religion, and geography.

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GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS WORLDWIDE (2022)



Source: The Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research



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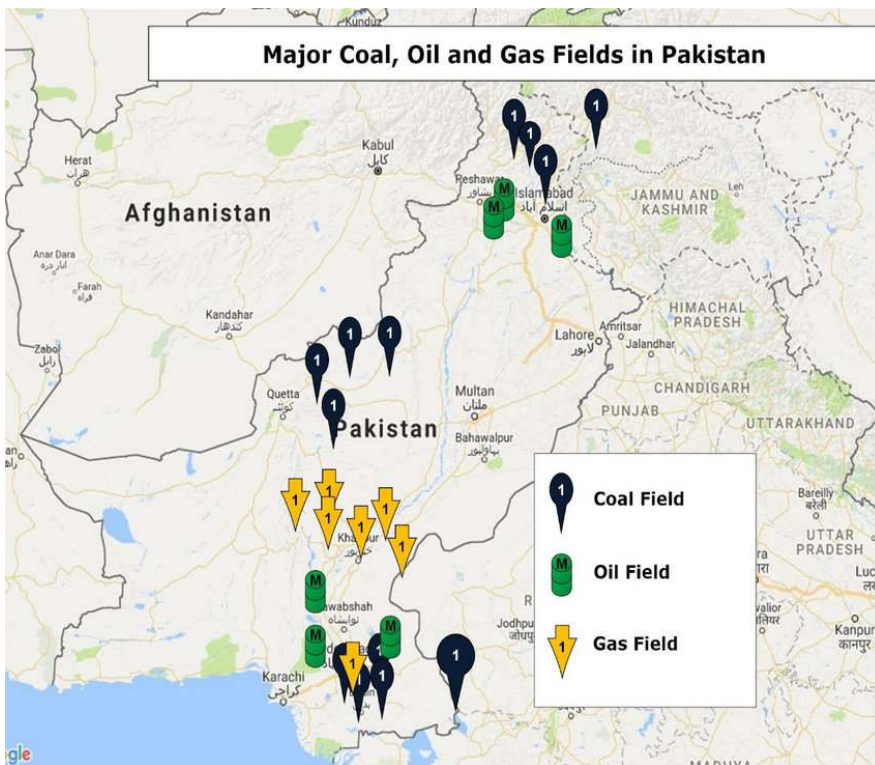


The Case of Oilfields in Pakistan: From Resource Abundance to Scarcity

About the Author



Ayesha Khan is a student at the University of Karachi. She's a critical thinker and has an interest in writing.



The First Oilfield in Pakistan

The discovery of oil in today's Pakistan region dates back to the year 1885, when thirteen wells were dug in the Khattan region of Balochistan. However, the first commercial success came with the drilling of the Khaur-1 well by the Attock Oil Company in 1915. Following the discovery of Khaur,

more oil was discovered in Morgah, Rawalpindi, where the first oil refinery, Attock Refinery Limited (ARL), was set up in the same year. Operating even today, the operations of ARL began in 1922.

However, for post-partition Pakistan, 1960 proved to be an important year for the oil and gas sector. The first oilfield in Pakistan was discovered in 1964 when a well was dug in Toot, a region in the Pothohar Plateau in northern Pakistan, 135 km southwest of Islamabad.

The Toot oilfield has recovered almost 70% of the total reserves, while the leftovers are estimated to vanish in the next ten years. The refinery started commercial production in 1967 and reached its peak in 1986 with 2,400 barrels of oil per day.

Pakistan Refinery Limited was also set up in 1960. It was established under the Mineral Development Corporation, which was introduced by Ayub Khan for the exploration of mineral reserves and the enhancement of industrial potential. The refinery was set up in the coastal belt of Karachi and was traded on the Pakistan Stock Exchange.



A Period of Oil Discoveries in Pakistan

During 1960–70, exploratory wells for oil reserves were drilled out. The companies involved were ESSO Eastern Inc. (ESSO), the Sun Oil Company (SOC), and the Oil and Gas Development Company (OGDC). The Sun Oil Company focused on coastal

areas, namely Korangi Creek, Patiani Creek, and Dabbo Creek. Almost five hundred wells were drilled. Most of them were located in Sindh. Out of these wells, only one contained a small amount of gas while others were unable to provide traces of oil.

Consequently, the efforts of oil exploration bore no fruit until the year 1970. During 1970–80, exploratory wells were drilled across the country. Again, most of them were located in Sindh. Earlier, all the exploration was carried out onshore (exploration of resources from beneath the earth's surface).

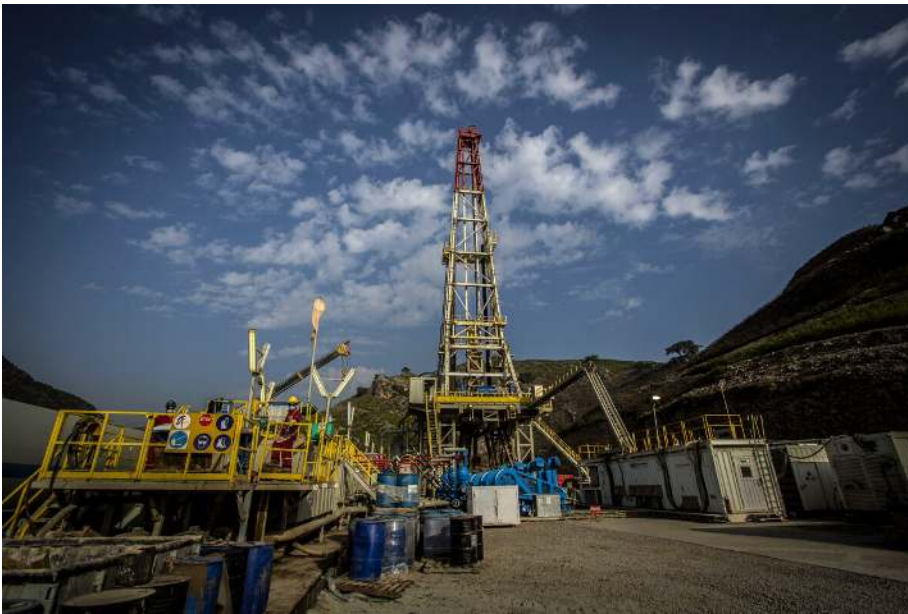
However, in 1972, [for the first time, offshore drilling \(exploration of resources from beneath the ocean's seabed\) took place](#) in Pakistan by a German company, Wintershall. The company drilled three wells, namely Marine A1, Indus Marine B1, and Indus Marine C1. Before this, the closest Pakistan had come to offshore drilling was when the Sun Oil Company (USA) [carried out seismic surveys in 1961](#) and then drilled three near-shore wells, Dabbo Creek-1, Patiani Creek-1, and Korangi Creek-1.

During 1980–1990, the search for oil persisted, and more than five thousand wells were drilled. The majority of them were located in Sindh. These efforts resulted in the setting up of significant oilfields in Pakistan.

After no production in previous years, Sindh started producing 47% of the total oil demand in the country. In 1981, the Khaskheli Oilfield was a significant discovery by UTP in the coastal area of Badin. Tando Adam Oilfield was set up in 1984. Afterward, the Laghari and Mazari oilfields were established. During the 1990s, a total of 31 oilfields were discovered in Pakistan.

Discoveries of Oilfields in Pakistan After 2000

In the first decade of 2000, MOL Pakistan discovered a number of oilfields. In 2002, the Manzalai Oilfield was set up in the southwest of Kohat Basin. Makori Oilfield was set up in 2005 in KPK and started commercial production in May 2006. Makori-2 and 3 were also drilled, but 2 was dry and 3 was put into production in 2010. The Mamikhel and Maramzai oilfields in Pakistan were established in 2008 and 2009, respectively. However, OGDC discovered the Mela Oilfield in 2006



and Nashpa in 2009.

In the second decade, from 2013–16, 83 new oil discoveries were made. In 2015, the Tando Allahyar Oilfield was set up by OGDC. The next year, in June, 6 oil discoveries were made out of which two were made by Petroleum Exploration (Pvt) Ltd.

(PEL) and UEP (United Energy Pakistan Limited). While the other two were discovered by OGDC.

Among these six oilfields, two were located in KPK, the northwestern province of Pakistan. In the meantime, the exploration focus shifted from Sindh to other provinces. In June 2019, almost 50 new exploration blocks were made, while very few of them were in Sindh. KPK has shown a rise in discoveries since 2005 and has the largest hydrocarbon-producing Tal Block. It is evident that KPK has replaced Sindh as the chief oil contributor in the country. Unfortunately, Pakistan is currently facing a decline in discoveries.

Declining in Recent Years

Discoveries are being made in the country. Despite these discoveries, the decline is constant because they are insignificant when compared to international standards. Drillings in Pakistan have a high success rate, but wells drilled contain reserves in small quantities. As a consequence, Pakistan cannot replenish oil the same way it consumes.

A number of economic factors are contributing to the decline, namely the cost of exploration. Oil exploration is a big-budget process that requires geological surveys, drilling equipment, and expertise. Due to the non-discovery of large oil reserves, exploration companies tend to invest less in the exploratory process. Another contributing factor is technological limitations. Drilling in deep water or inaccessible areas requires advanced technology that is unavailable in Pakistan. Earlier, on the strength of advanced methodologies of foreign companies, large reserves were discovered.

Political factors that are influencing the decline include corruption and lack of transparency. Companies seeking licenses for petroleum rights come across unfavorable conditions created by officials of the petroleum department. Inconsistent political decisions concerning licenses, taxes, and oil prices directly affect the exploratory process. The change of governmental authorities, inconsistent legal frameworks, and conflicts create an uncertain operating scenario for oil companies, leading to inefficiency from their side.

Not only the government but also oil companies are actively participating in corruption. According to an audit of 2012–14 of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources, 40 multinational and national oil and gas companies embezzled 134 billion rupees from the public in the name of petroleum levies and gas surcharges. A large number of oil wells were also sold by these companies in association with government officials. On investigation by FIA, the audit, customs, and petroleum director general was reluctant to give records.

There is a lack of transparency in tender processes for oil exploration blocks. Tenders are awarded to politically connected and financially favored companies, which block potentially expert companies from coming forward. Consequently, a lack of interest and inefficiency are observed in the exploration of oil reserves.

Available Oil Reserves

The total oil reserves in the country are estimated to be 1,234 million barrels, of which 985 million (78.8% of the total reserves) have been consumed and 233 million are yet to be utilized as of 2022. It indicates that leftover deposits will be fully utilized in the next 15 years.

Province	Total (million barrels)	Consumed (million barrels)	Remaining (million barrels)
Sindh	509.58	430.60	78.98
Punjab	457.43	383.20	74.23
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK)	264.83	170.59	94.24
Balochistan	1.84	0.24	1.60

Production and Requirements

The total refining capacity of the country is 19 million tons; however, it cannot be fully achieved due to the non-upgradation of machinery and financial and political constraints. Pakistan only meets 30% of its requirements; the remaining 70% is fulfilled by imported oil worth \$1-2 billion monthly.

In 2019, 4.9 million metric tons were produced which only met 20% of the country's requirement; the remaining 80% was met by imports worth \$15-16 billion further worsening the economic dimensions.



Dependence on Imported Oil

As discussed earlier, there are no significant oil discoveries carried out in the country. Oil companies refining domestic oil are unable to fulfill the demand as it is increasing rapidly. Their non-upgraded system and lack of expertise in oil refining are further increasing their dependence on imported oil. Pakistan is a [net importer of petroleum products](#), it obtains crude oil mainly from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. At the same time, refined petroleum products are obtained from the UAE, Kuwait, and Oman.

According to research carried out by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, crude oil and refined products at the lowest prices can be imported from Saudi Arabia and Malaysia in place of the UAE. The research also suggested that heavy dependence on imported oil can be reduced by increasing refining capacity and establishing new oil refineries. Reducing tariffs and embracing investors can help in the formation of new oil refineries. Importing only crude oil and refining through local refineries can save up to USD 923 million.

Conclusion

Pakistan is standing in a position where its oil reserves are diminishing with no major discoveries. Foreign companies are on the verge of exiting, and local ones are engaged in corruption, along with the petroleum department. The import bill is filled with petroleum imports costing billions of dollars. Given the current scenario, Pakistan is going through a critical juncture in which immediate action is required. To achieve healthy economic growth, clear and transparent tender processes should be held to shift heavy dependence on imported oil. In addition, measures should be taken and policies should be formed to overcome current conditions.

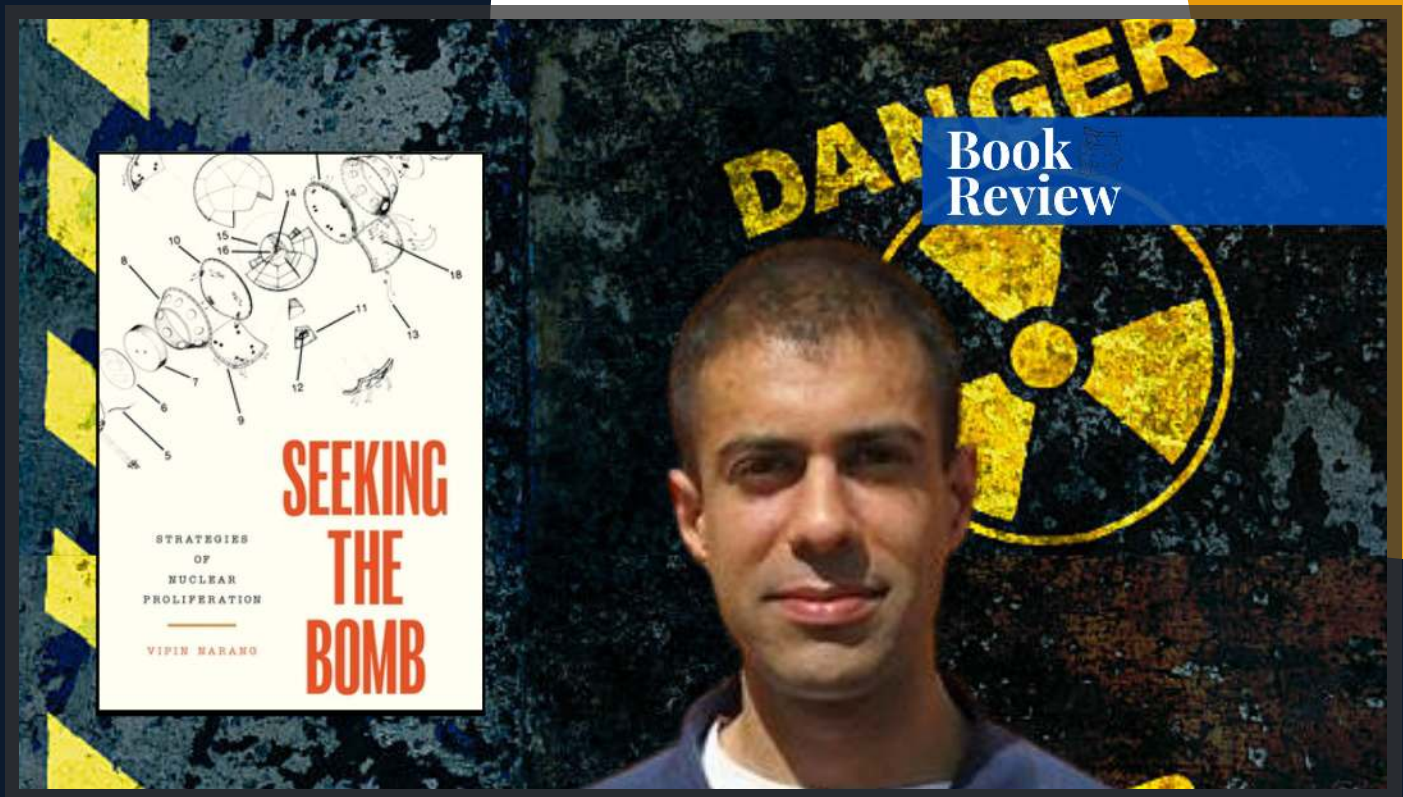
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Seeking The Bomb: Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation by Vipin Narang

About the Author



Syeda Sabahat Athar Bukhari is a student of BS-Strategic Studies at the National Defence University. She is also an intern at the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies and the Press Network of Pakistan.



Author's Biography

Vipin Narang, the author of "Seeking the Bomb: Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation," works at Defense for Space Policy as the Principal Deputy Assistant. Narang is also the Frank Stanton Professor of Nuclear Security and Political Science and a member

of the Security Studies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

His work adaptation mostly consists of nuclear and deterrence strategies, appearing on well-known international platforms. Vipin Narang received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2010 and holds an MS and BS from Stanford University.

Introduction

The book, published by Princeton University Press, delves into a clear and apprehensible analysis of [proliferation techniques and different strategies](#) adopted by various states around the globe. Taking a zoomed view, the book demonstrates the multifaceted nature of a state's pursuits for nuclear weapons.

Initiating from the account of the Israeli strike in 2007 over Syria's furtive nuclear reactor, the study sets the stage for a much darker and more in-depth analysis of nuclear proliferation dynamics. It highlights the significance of acquiring nuclear capabilities through the revelations of Syria's nuclear ambitions, its confidential cooperation with North Korea, and the eventual Israeli intervention.

Strategies for Nuclear Proliferation

The book academically discusses the dissection of the four nuclear proliferation strategies: hedging, sprinting, sheltered pursuit, and hiding.

It elucidates the motivations and modus operandi hidden behind each strategy. As such, it also provides a meticulous understanding of states' pursuit of nuclear capabilities.

1. Hedging

The book, while considering states like West Germany, Brazil, Argentina, Sweden, Switzerland, India, and Japan submerges into the discourse of the complexities within the concept of hedging.

Referring to a national security or alignment strategy that one state carries, characterized by a mix of confrontational and cooperative elements, is what we call hedging. It entails the balance that the states have to upkeep while desiring to acquire nuclear weapons and also abstaining

from immediate weaponization.

2. Sprinting

As it calls "sprinting" a tactic of nuclear proliferation, the book concentrates on highlighting "why" and "how" states like China, France, and the Soviet Union built up their nuclear arsenals and refined their nuclear strategy.

Sprinting refers to an immediate action taken by the state to resolve any issue. The discourse encircles how these states became nuclear-powered during the "Cold War" as the Soviet Union secured the weapons, contrasting against the threat of an American nuclear arsenal.

3. Sheltered Pursuit

As the core particulars, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel existed to explore the phenomenon of "sheltered pursuits." The concept typically sheds light on how major powers provide diplomatic and military cover to inspire all nuclear states and assist them in developing and advancing their atomic agendas with dispensation.



Such pursuers construct their strategies based on opportunities and threats that they confront. They back themselves by major powers and cultivate these nuclear arsenals under the shade of tolerance and collusion.

4. Hiding

By examining the cases of Iraq, Taiwan, and South Africa, Narang's book deliberates on the strategy of "hiding" as a means of nuclear proliferation.

It explores how these states, under the nose of the international arena, plan to amass nuclear weaponry, which exacerbates the risks affiliated with international security and raises questions about the credibility of international law through such covert nuclear programs.

Analysis

One of the book's strengths lies in its systematic breakdown of nuclear proliferation strategies into four distinct categories.

Through comprehensive examples and insightful analysis, the author explains how states such as Sweden, Japan, and India adopt hedging tactics, maintaining the possibility of nuclear weapons while refraining from immediate weaponization. Similarly, the narratives of sprinters like the Soviet Union, France, and China highlight the race to build nuclear arsenals amid geopolitical tensions and strategic imperatives.

A particularly intriguing aspect of the book is its exploration of sheltered pursuit, wherein major powers provide support or turn a blind eye to aspiring nuclear states like Israel, Pakistan, and North Korea. By delving into historical precedents and geopolitical dynamics, the author illuminates the complex interplay between patron states and their proteges in the pursuit of nuclear capabilities.

The examination of hiding as a proliferation tactic is equally compelling, exemplified by cases such as Iraq, Taiwan, and South Africa.

The book explores the rationale behind veiled nuclear programs, the challenges of concealment, and the potential consequences for global security.

Moreover, "Seeking the Bomb" offers a nuanced discussion of counter-proliferation strategies and the implications of nuclear reversal, drawing from real-world examples such as [Iran](#), Syria, and Libya. By emphasizing the importance of understanding proliferation techniques in international relations, the book provides valuable insights for policymakers grappling with the intricacies of nuclear proliferation.

It gives decision-makers insightful information on controlling the dangers of proliferation and reducing the likelihood of nuclear war in a world where uncertainty is growing.



The book presents a thorough theory that outperforms others, explaining the ways states select particular proliferation tactics and why they do so. Determining a state's path toward nuclear weapons highlights the crucial role that security considerations and domestic political consensus play. According to the hypothesis, the timing and mode

of proliferation are ultimately decided by domestic consensus, even as security considerations drive the initial discussion of weaponization. Ergo, this book is a seminal contribution to the field, offering fresh perspectives and innovative insights that will undoubtedly shape scholarly discourse and policymaking in the years to come.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, “Seeking the Bomb: Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation” is a tour de force that



challenges conventional notions of nuclear proliferation while offering a comprehensive understanding of state motivations and tactics. With its rigorous analysis, rich historical context, and practical implications, this book is essential for anyone concerned with global security and the future of nuclear nonproliferation efforts. It provides a

comprehensive picture of how states desire nuclear weapons, challenging conventional notions of nuclear proliferation.

This book not only enriches our understanding of nuclear proliferation but also underscores the imperative for continued research and vigilance in the realm of global security and nuclear weapons proliferation.

For further exploration, I recommend consulting reputable sources such as academic journals, policy briefs, and expert analyses to deepen one’s understanding of this critical subject matter.

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Chabahar Port Agreement Between India and Iran

About the Author



Maria Sadaqat is pursuing a BSc in Accounting and Finance from IBA, Karachi.



The US has traditionally had an impact on relations between Iran and India as in the Middle East, Iran is thought to pose the biggest threat to Western interests. Iran is viewed as the region's biggest opponent by Israel, the US proxy in the area. Iran has suffered terribly as a result of economic sanctions imposed by the US and its liberal institutions, causing a negative impact not just on the nation's economy but also on its international relations. The Western group has been further enraged by Iran's admission to the BRICS. This antipathy grew with Iran's recent counterattacks on Israel.

Owing to the US's historical practice of abandoning its allies after resolving geostrategic conflicts, India is adopting a middle-ground strategy between the US and the emerging Eastern powers. A friendly and cordial India is essential for the United States to offset the rapidly rising might of China. India is receiving more military hardware and armaments from the United States. [India bought \\$20 billion worth of weapons](#) from the US in 2020, up from \$8 billion in 2013.

To further its own interests, India has maintained a delicate balance between all regional and global powers.

Iran's Port and Maritime Organization (IPO) and India Port Global Limited (IPGL) recently inked a 10-year deal for the development and management of the Chabahar port in furtherance of this agenda, allowing India to operate its first overseas port at Chabahar. This port has given India access to new commercial opportunities and strengthened the supply network throughout the region. Additionally, it will allow India a chance to reach out to Russian, Central Asian, and European markets.



India's main source of weapons and armaments has been Russia. Russia has dispatched the inaugural Agroexpress train to India, carrying cereals and oat flakes. A \$1.7 billion deal has already been inked by Russia and Iran to construct a railroad that will link Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia as part of the

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). India will thus be able to strengthen its ties and collaboration with Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Russia as a result of its agreement with Iran to develop and run the Chabahar port.

Additionally, India gains substantial leverage over Pakistan with this deal. India may now directly access the markets in Central Asia by avoiding the [Gwadar port of Pakistan](#). Moreover, this will also increase Indian espionage in Pakistan. The Kulbhushan Jadhav case is one of the examples of how India uses its alliance with Iran to conduct terrorism in Pakistan. India has also promised to invest \$120 million in the Chabahar port under the terms of the agreement inked between the IPGL and IPO. Furthermore, India has extended an offer of a \$250 million loan to improve the Iranian port's infrastructure.



By the end of 2018, India had initially assumed operational management of the Chabahar port for a two-year, renewable tenure. Nevertheless, the US sanctions had consistently tarnished this accord. Following this new ten-year port arrangement for Chabahar, the US has warned India of impending penalties. The US opposes all collaboration and agreements with Iran. Following Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Pakistan, the latter said that work on the [Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline](#) would begin in order to avoid paying a punishment of \$18 billion. The US, however, issued Pakistan a strong warning about sanctions.

By imposing economic sanctions, the US persistently tries to thwart any kind of relationship that other nations may have with Iran. Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar said, "I think it's a question of communicating, convincing and getting people to understand that this is actually for everyone's benefit," in response to a query posed by the news reports. He went on to say that the United States had also recognized the greater significance of the Chabahar port.

Due to the ongoing general elections in India, the Indian government is currently unable to withdraw from this agreement under any circumstances. By upholding this pact, India can demonstrate to its citizens that it is a global force that can support the BJP in the upcoming elections. However, because of the US sanctions, the Indian government will eventually find it extremely difficult to carry out this deal. Nevertheless, India can also use the US's geostrategic importance to circumvent economic sanctions and move on with this accord.

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The New BRICS Currency: Replacing the United States Dollar?

About the Author



Hareem Amna graduated with a degree in applied psychology from GCUF and a post-graduation certification in clinical psychology from Kinnaird College. She is an aspiring writer focused on writing about current issues.



An Overview of BRICS

Formed in 2006, BRICS is a formal organization of the governments of several countries. Originally, it was known as "BRIC," an abbreviation for the countries included at that time – Brazil, Russia, India, and China. South Africa joined later in 2010. The term "BRIC" was devised by Jim O'Neill in 2001 in a research paper. In that research paper, the chief economist highlighted the economic growth potential of the BRIC countries. Back when it was formed, it was not a formal partnership but rather a platform of cooperation between the governments. Currently, BRICS is viewed as a bloc focused on geopolitics to counter [Western hegemony](#).

How BRICS Operates

The first formal meeting to discuss the agenda of BRICS was held in 2009. The head of state of a member nation holds the chairpersonship for a year, and after every year, the chairpersonship is rotated among the member nations. Presently, Russia's [President Putin is the chairman](#) of the organization.

Why Was the Bloc Formed?

Shortly after the [Global Financial crisis](#) of 2007–2008, the global South started questioning the aptness and credibility of the global financial system that was led by the United States.

Since there was a dominance of the US and Europe in monetary institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, the countries gradually started developing mistrust over these bodies.

Hence, some members of the South formed BRICS with the objectives of increasing economic and political standing in the world and enhancing cooperation in areas including science, innovation, technology, culture, and development. As predicted by Jim O'Neill, in the long run, the BRICS countries want to influence the world economy by 2050. Lately, the BRICS member countries represent almost [40 percent of the world population](#) and 26 percent of the global economy.

BRICS Expansion in 2024

Many countries have shown interest in joining BRICS. The alternative world order that BRICS is presenting to the nations is quite captivating, especially the nations whose voices are kept at bay in West-led organizations like the UN, IMF, etc. The BRICS Summit 2023 [announced that six new members would be admitted in the year 2024](#).

These new BRICS members included the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Argentina; although Argentina withdrew its membership application. This decision came into effect on 1st January 2024 and BRICS is now being called [BRICS+](#). Collectively, the members of BRICS+ represent 37.3 percent of the world's GDP. Pakistan is also [looking forward to becoming a BRICS member](#) with the support of Russian chairmanship.

New Development Bank: The Central Bank of BRICS

Up till now, BRICS has formed two [important forums](#). One is the Parliamentary Forum and the other is the New Development Bank. Various parliamentary forums hold meetings with ministers from different departments of member nations to promote and strengthen contact at the leadership level.



The [New Development Bank](#) (NDB) was established in 2015. It is a multilateral development bank with [\\$50 billion](#) subscribed in

[capital](#) and \$100 billion as initial authorized capital. The main purpose behind the creation of this bank was to challenge the US-led monetary system. Unlike the IMF, the NDB doesn't have stringent [Structural Adjustment Programs \(SAPs\)](#) as a precondition for getting a loan.

The SAPs have been long criticized by smaller nations and NDB came up with a better alternative. Furthermore, NDB is made with the vision of funding developmental and infrastructural projects in its member nations. It has also provided for a \$100 billion [contingency reserve arrangement](#) that members can tap into during financial liquidity turmoil.

BRICS and Its Impact on the US Dollar

The US dollar, once a gold-backed currency, has ruled world markets and global trade. As strong as the currency is, the US uses the dollar as a weapon. The strong impact of the US dollar has given the United States government a [monopoly over many monetary decisions](#), including foreign exchange. From imposing uncalled-for sanctions on countries, and imposing trade restrictions to increasing duty and interest rates, the US does it all of its own volition.

The ever-great rivals of the US – China and Russia – have long challenged the United States' monopoly over the global reserve currency. Hence, for these two states, BRICS is the perfect opportunity for them to do so. Under the BRICS forum, the countries have encouraged each other to trade in their currencies and [ditch the dollar](#). There have also been talks to introduce a [BRICS currency to overcome the dollar's hegemony](#).

What is the New BRICS Currency?

In the 2023 BRICS summit held in South Africa, there was no official declaration that pointed towards the formation of a [new BRICS currency](#), but the discussion has been going on for a long time on multiple BRICS forums. Within the BRICS, all current members have separate local currencies, so it makes much more sense to have a single currency for trade and other purposes.

It was predicted that this new currency would be announced at the next summit of BRICS in 2024, but former Russian diplomat Yury Ushakov gave an insight into the BRICS currency during an interview. He introduced [BRICS Pay](#), a system of payment based on blockchain technology, although it hasn't been officially launched by BRICS yet. To put it in simple words, it's not a paper-based currency but rather a digital one, a [cryptocurrency](#).

The possibility of BRICS Pay being a gold-backed currency is also being hypothesized because there has been a particular increase in gold buying by the BRICS nations, especially China. This common currency will not only be easily accessible for international trade and transactions but also for [national and domestic businesses](#).

Economic Implications of the Common Currency

If this theory is efficiently converted into reality, it will prove to be a giant step towards de-dollarization, and it will most definitely put an end to the reliance on the US dollar. The BRICS currency would introduce a new global reserve currency. The United States will lose control of monetary decisions, and bodies like the IMF and World Bank will need rigorous reforms. The idea of BRICS Pay will make cross-border payments irreproachable, thus, resulting in financial inclusivity and economic integration.



It can also prove to be a substitute for the SWIFT system, henceforth, modifying the global economic landscape. As for BRICS states, they will greatly benefit by not having a foreign sanction or change in interest rate affect their lending and purchasing.

Thus, their economic impact will not only be strengthened globally but also prove to be a substantial step towards economic integration among BRICS members.

Geopolitical Implications

Although the shift is already being seen from a unipolar world order to a multipolar world order, if BRICS is successful in its agenda, then it will gain the trust of other nations and, in turn, draw their attention more towards the global South. It will attract more trade and investment from other countries, particularly the Gulf countries.

The notion behind BRICS is not just economic but also geopolitical. A recent example is China, which brokered the Iran-Saudi rapprochement to further its geopolitical standing. By bolstering diplomatic ties, BRICS members can bring about and sustain regional stability. Moreover, it will endorse a soft image of the global South to the rest of the world.

Will the BRICS Currency Dethrone the US Dollar?

The currency has not been officially launched yet due to the lack of consent among BRICS members. India, explicitly, has always been at loggerheads with China. Many important initiatives have been blocked by New Delhi on the BRICS platform purely out of rivalry and competition with China and Russia. Another major challenge that BRICS nations might face is providing mass training to their financial bodies to effectively use the new BRICS currency and restructuring their financial institutions and legislation.

The stability of the US dollar has undeniably gained global trust and countries hold their foreign reserves in dollars. No other currency is as liquid as the dollar; hence, it is a safer choice for international trade. Standing against the dollar will be a daunting task. Therefore, BRICS Pay won't dominate the world in the near future but if BRICS nations resolve their internal political disagreements, then, in several years, the BRICS currency will be strong enough to challenge the US dollar's dominance.

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The Rohingya Crisis of Myanmar: A Protracted Social Conflict

About the Author



Fatimah Naeem is pursuing her bachelor's in peace and conflict studies from National Defence University Islamabad.



Introduction

After transitioning to a democratic form of governance in [May 2016](#), Myanmar's military-oriented state system was finally beginning to see an end, as perceived by the global community. Unfortunately, the ground realities were completely different in this regard. Even after sustaining a democratically elected government, the quasi-military structure of the state institutions put a plethora of question marks on Myanmar's democratic legitimacy.

Despite facing sanctions and diplomatic isolation from the international community, Myanmar's quasi-military regime persists in violating the fundamental human rights of the persecuted Rohingya Muslim community. The most recent mass expulsion of the Rohingya Muslim population in August 2017 was an upsetting episode that saw genocidal attributes committed by the right-wing extremist military regime.

A protracted social conflict in nature, the Rohingya Muslim crisis is an ethnic dilemma that has seen no progressive prospects in decades.

By using Edward Azar's protracted social conflict theory, one can analyze the complex profile of this crisis. But first, some thorough digging into the 2017 episode and present conditions is required.

Clearance Operation Campaign of 2017 and Present Implications

According to some reports, the 2017 violence was perpetrated when the Arakan Salvation Rohingya Army (ASRA), a separatist-militant group, claimed responsibility for deliberately launching attacks on Myanmar's law enforcement institutes. In retaliation, the Myanmar government orchestrated a brutal military-mounted campaign to neutralize the "terrorist" threat that persisted in Rakhine. This led to violence, persecution, and displacement of thousands of Rohingya Muslims, mostly women and children.

The Rohingya population fled to neighboring Bangladesh, a country already struggling to withhold the demographic burden of 300,000 Rohingya Muslims. Currently hosting a million documented refugees, Bangladesh's Cox's Bazaar has been designated a haven for the fleeing refugees. The living conditions within the camps are terrible, with poor sanitation and a lack of facilities to cater



to the Rohingya's needs. The humanitarian aid provided by [UNICEF](#) and [UNHCR](#) barely covers the necessities for survival.

As of now, besides threats of persecution and statelessness, the Rohingya refugees residing in Cox's Bazaar are prone to climate hazards. As monsoon approaches Bangladesh, consistent rainfall and storms cover the landscape from June through October annually. The Rohingya Muslims, to withstand the harsh weather conditions, opt to build sturdy camps within the refugee areas but the lack of materials and resources leaves the door open for destruction and diseases.

Protracted Social Conflict Theory by Edward Azar

Being one of the forefathers of the pedagogical implications of Conflict Resolution, Edward E. Azar has proposed that identity-based ambiguities and deprivations fuel the majority of contemporary conflicts. He defines it as follows:

*"In brief, **protracted social conflicts** occur when communities are deprived of the satisfaction of their basic needs on the basis of the communal identity. However, the deprivation is the result of a complex causal chain involving the role of the state and the pattern of international linkages. Furthermore, initial conditions (colonial legacy, domestic historical setting, and the multi-communal nature of the society) play important roles in shaping the genesis of protracted social conflict."*

The protracted social conflict theory is characterized by three key phases. Each phase describes the different proponents that fuel the prolongation of conflict and what contributes to making the conflict a socially protracted one.

Genesis

The transformation of circumstances from non-conflictual to conflictual can be credited to a particular set of conditions that play a role in instigating violence. These conditions are known as "genesis." It is further spread into four variables: communal content, human needs, government and the state's role, and international linkages.

Process Dynamics

This component of the theory describes the repercussions followed by the preconditions of genesis, mapping how the four variables play a part in transforming the conflict from a latent stage to an active one. Azar describes how “communal actions and strategies, state actions and strategies, and built-in mechanisms of conflict” are the determining factors in the metamorphosis of a covert conflict into an overt one.

Outcome Analysis

Azar claims that protracted conflicts usually have negative results since the prolonged timeline distorts the root cause of the conflict. Typically, it results in negative-sum outputs with no clarity at the end and no difference between the winners and compromisers of the protracted social conflict. This ultimately hinders any hope for reconciliation and solutions that come anywhere near meeting the unmet needs.

Examining the Rohingya Crisis through the Protracted Social Conflict Model

By employing the various proponents of the protracted social conflict model, one can deduce an analysis of the conflict or crisis at hand and look for opportunities to transform the underlying patterns and relationships of the conflicting parties.

Genesis

The Rohingya Muslim community, predominantly residing in the Rakhine state of Myanmar, has been facing persecution since the late 18th century. As the spread of Theravada Buddhism (a branch of Buddhism) became more sporadic, extremist homogenous sentiments among the Buddhist community also flourished.

Even though Myanmar is home to approximately [135 indigenous ethnic groups](#), discrimination runs rampant in the country at the hands of the quasi-military regime.



The Rohingya community, which has been an easy target of ethnic cleansing, has gone through an indefinite violation of basic human rights.

To a certain extent, the role of international linkages has exasperated the crisis into an active genocide. China and India have economic interests in the

resource-rich Myanmar and have plans to advertise economic incentives in the region while collaborating with the quasi-military regime. China and India view the Rohingya Muslims as separatists who follow extremist Islamic ideologies, ultimately painting them as “terrorists” on the regional canvas.

Some individual actors have made efforts to promote democracy in the country but have been mostly shunned by the military echelon. Moreover, separatist groups among different ethnic communities have germinated, but efforts to eradicate the quasi-military regime have been in vain.

Process Dynamics

The era of British imperialism in South Asia marked the beginning of violent processes against the Rohingya Muslims. Initially, the process of expulsion of Rohingya Muslims was passive in nature, and later on, this passivity would become one of the major reasons for the crisis. The British colonial objectives included expanding the control of the British Crown into the region of Burma (presently Myanmar). The Crown did so by bringing demographic changes and relocating thousands of Indians into the Arakan state (presently Rakhine state). This demographic change would give the Burmese kingdom an excuse to delegitimize the presence of Rohingya Muslims who had been living in Arakan for centuries.

The violent expulsion of the Rohingya Muslims was manifested in three mass exoduses.

Operation Dragon King

Operation Dragon King was a military operation carried out in 1978 by the Tatmadaw and Burmese immigration officials in the northern Rakhine state (formerly Arakan), where approximately 200,000 Rohingya Muslims were driven out from fear of mass arrests, persecution, and horrific violence. Neighboring Bangladesh bore the most burden of fleeing Rohingya refugees.

Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation

Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation was another military operation carried out by the Tatmadaw and Burmese army against the so-called “Rohingya foreigners” in the northern Rakhine state, which saw the mass exodus of 250,000 Rohingya Muslims into neighboring Bangladesh as well as into Thailand and Malaysia. An interesting aspect is that the military operations weren’t just carried out against the RSO separatists but also numerous other ethnic groups who were feared for jeopardizing Myanmar’s military control and homogeneity objectives.

The Rohingya Crisis of 2017

The Rohingya Crisis of 2017 was a scheme of renewed violence by the quasi-military regime of Myanmar. Reports of rape, murder, and arson triggered the third and largest migration of Rohingya refugees, with over 600,000 people displaced from Rakhine. After making promises of democracy and granting basic citizenship laws to the Rohingya community, the quasi-military establishment engaged in a violent crackdown against the innocent Rohingya Muslims, which is defined as “genocide” among various textbook definitions.

Outcome Analysis

So far, on an individual level, the outcomes of repeated expulsion and violence have left the Rohingya Muslims frustrated and disappointed in the ineffectiveness of humanitarian organizations.

With a lack of citizenship laws and advocacy, Rohingya individuals are left to fend for themselves while facing terrible situations in refugee camps.

Being the largest “stateless” community in the world, the Rohingya Muslims suffer from relative deprivation and have been impoverished for decades. Bangladesh has made efforts to negotiate repatriation with Myanmar’s government but it goes against the policy of non-refoulment, ultimately putting peace initiatives on a pedestal.

On the state level, Myanmar has barely shown an interest in catering to the fundamental human rights of Rohingya Muslims and has started to promote the in-patronization of other ethnic groups into the Rakhine state to eliminate the Rohingya traces demographically. Bangladesh, which hosts almost a million documented refugees and thousands of undocumented refugees, is seeking ways to grant safe migration to Rohingya Muslims in other countries to lessen the burden on its economy and welfare infrastructure.

Way Forward

“Reconciliation and forgiveness are inextricably linked to the identity and unity we develop as a nation.”

Joni Madraiwiwi

By utilizing Edward Azar’s protracted social conflict model, one can analyze the dynamic profile and trends of a conflict and work towards a resolution or management mechanism. The Rohingya Muslim ethnic dilemma has persisted for centuries and needs to be highlighted on the global stage if peace is to prevail in the region. Moreover, external state actors such as China and India should play their role progressively and assist in transforming the ethnic crisis to improve the tarnished relations between Myanmar’s military regime and the persecuted Rohingya Muslims.



Nelson Mandela's Centre for Truth and Reconciliation sets an altruistic example of achieving peace, consideration, and empathy among the apartheid African authorities and the Black African community. A similar mechanism to foster connectivity and progress may encourage a positive trajectory for the relations

between the Rohingya Muslims and the quasi-military regime of Myanmar. The first step to this connectivity is granting citizenship rights to the Rohingya Muslims and promoting capacity-building prospects in Myanmar's state infrastructure.

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Opinion



The Good & Bad Taliban

About the Author



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



Pakistan has been a victim of labels being imposed upon it and its conduct. One of these labels pertain to the good-Taliban bad-Taliban syndrome. Yet, Pakistan never clarifies its position; either because of indifference or plain incompetence, but most likely both.

The fact is that those who are addressed as the good Taliban are the Afghan resistance movement, while those who are recognized as the bad Taliban were criminals from the FATA areas who usurped tribal authority in violation of custom, tradition and local laws. The former was engaged in a resistance movement against who they considered to be foreign occupation forces and the latter was a tool in the hands of Al Qaeda.

The former 'good Taliban' moved freely across the fluid border and used Pakistani territory to establish an administrative staging area. This allowed them a safe haven for their families and space to meet, coordinate, plan and interact with one another. They did the same, at a much larger scale and in far more overt manner, in Dubai and Doha where it allowed them to establish diplomatic ties with the international community in general and the US in particular.

However, the bad Taliban used the concept of establishing an Islamic Emirates as a casus belli, challenging the Pakistani constitution, but were essentially resourced and funded by agencies hostile to Pakistan so as to create an environment of chaos and confusion. The world expected for Pakistan to deal with both Taliban in an equitable manner, in other words, rout the Afghan Taliban from Pakistan just as the Pakistan law enforcement agencies were routing the Pakistani Taliban (TTP).

The Afghan Taliban were a resistance movement as a consequence of international presence in Afghanistan and not because of anything Pakistan had done. Their movement to and from Pakistan was a product of a time-based tradition of easement rights across the Durand Line to allow the people of the area to meet each other and their relatives.

The Afghan Taliban had caused no harm to Pakistan, but the world expected that Pakistan start a fresh war on behalf of the international coalition in its own territory. That Pakistan must fight the Afghan Taliban for the exact same reason that they were housed and accommodated in the UAE and Qatar but where the international community, hypocritically, looked the other way. As it was, Pakistan was already plagued by its own internal battles with the TTP and was never in a position to start another conflict against a people it had no bone to pick with.

Considering that Pakistan was being blamed for providing safe havens to the Afghan Taliban, the concern is extremely skewed when seen in the light of the border management arrangements. On a 2670 Km long border, Pakistan had and still has today about 1100 posts, while the Afghans and the coalition combined had only about 350 posts. No one publicly acknowledged that the battles that were fought were always in Afghan territory and never in Pakistan and that if anyone needed to deal with the matter, they would have to deal with it there in Afghanistan.

Nor did anyone take into consideration the huge poppy crop (9,900 tonnes in 2017 amounting to 7% of Afghanistan's GDP) that provided billions to the insurgency to resource their initiatives. The American coalition confined themselves to their small garrisons, while the Taliban operated all around them and established a credible presence in the rural areas of Afghanistan. In 2021, they dominated 40% of Afghanistan.



To ignore all this—the Taliban dominant presence in the rural areas, the resources from the poppy, the safe-havens provided in the UAE and Doha and the unprecedented corruption—and instead only blame Pakistan with the tongue in cheek, the good Taliban argument, stinks of duplicity, deceit and dishonesty.

Pakistan's intelligence agencies had access to the Afghan Taliban leadership and as such provided some sort of go-between services. The international community was convinced that the Pakistani Intelligence could influence the Afghan Taliban which was not only an exaggerated perception, but one that was encouraged as own intelligence operators inflated themselves with a false importance. Yet, they remained as mere event-mangers facilitating and coordinating matters between the Afghan Taliban and powers that be but were never more than that.

As negotiations failed or the Afghan Taliban refused to fall into line, the Pakistani intelligence agencies were blamed for not putting their weight behind the arguments proffered by the West. There was no weight. The Afghan Taliban considered themselves to be independent in their philosophy, arrogant in their posture and superior in their demeanor.

To the Pakistani intelligence operators, they remained condescending as they used and handled these operators to their own ends.

The Afghan Taliban are a product of a conservative, strict religious education where anyone not in line with their thought is not taken seriously. Theirs is an obscurantist outlook where all people must be forced to live like they did in Arabia 1400 years ago and that there could be no other righteous way of life. Armed with this conviction, they perceive, that having won the war in Afghanistan, it has been a validation of their commitment towards their belief and faith.

It is their conviction now that the impossible is possible and that two super powers were routed in their lands because of their firm belief and piety. They are not willing to accept any other logic or rational nor do they have the awareness, education or the wherewithal to analyze it any other way. To present any other argument to them about how the Soviets were forced to withdraw or how the US finally called it quits is tantamount to blasphemy.

With this mindset, the Afghans in general feel that Pakistan is a weak state that cannot be relied upon and that it is always willing to be dictated by super powers, unlike themselves. Our own politicians are very much part of developing this thought and have encouraged people in general and the Afghans in particular to believe that we were fighting on the US side and by default were the enemy of the Afghans in this conflict. This is not true and Pakistan had gone to great lengths not to enter Afghan territory or to conduct dedicated operations against Afghan Taliban.

Allowing access to Afghanistan by land routes was a product of an international agreement of which every nation was a signatory to and it was a unanimous understanding (UN Resolution 1378). Had Pakistan not complied with it, it would have found itself fighting on the Taliban side against an international coalition in general and India most certainly. This is something no one in the government explains and we watch impassively as our reputation is torn to bits regularly by the Afghans who see us as US stooges.

A self-created impression by our very own in search of a little political mileage and a few moments of glory as they trash their own country. The Afghan Taliban comprise two components: the leadership, which at various levels and tiers could possibly make up about 25% of the Taliban overall strength, and the foot soldiers who are almost like a mob.



The overall strength of the Taliban is about a 100,000 with some new recruits joining on a daily basis. The lower tier mob is unruly, ill-disciplined and not inclined to be bound by orders. The leadership is relatively more aware, have seen the world and how it functions, and

show an element of moderation.

Where the leadership would very much like to establish some reasonable convention in local administration, education and the law, the mob is adamant in imposing their committed belief that Islamic law, as only they interpret it, must be put in vogue. This brings the Taliban leadership in conflict with the mob which is why at times it appears that the mob is driving the leadership rather than the other way around.

On the other hand, if the leadership decides to demobilize the mob so as to bring about some stability, they will themselves lose their clout and authority. Hence, it has now become a case of where both entities needing each other. The leadership has been put into a difficult situation because of sanctions, the looming humanitarian crisis, failing economy and unemployment. One cannot expect that they would take any hard decisions at this time and further aggravate their own problems.

In light of these difficulties, playing to the galleries, Pakistan once again figures out as a convenient scapegoat for the Taliban leadership. Playing on the self-created and false perception that Pakistan is the West's lackey, that the government is unIslamic and that the constitution is not in line with the Sharia, the Taliban love to run down Pakistan creating animosity amongst the masses and generally ridiculing Pakistan.



This has further expanded into the Durand Line dispute, where the Taliban incorrectly believe the alignment to be illegal. They see this as an opportunity to show their military prowess and try to outshine Pakistan in daily skirmishes and border clashes.

Pakistan tries to play this down in the hope that the world does not notice and that Pakistan is still recognized as a major influence on the Afghan Taliban.

While Pakistan tries to display benign generosity in tolerating unreasonable behavior from the Afghans, the Afghans, true to habit, see this as a weakness, lack of political and military will. As such, it is expected that this conflict will pick up in times to come and will get much worse if not addressed. On the other hand, the Afghan promise of dealing with the TTP was just hooting into the wind and the sooner Pakistan realizes it, the better.

Afghanistan is a separate country, with its own interests and Pakistan does not figure out in the bigger equation where it is concerned. In the event Afghanistan does come to any terms with any bloc, region or country, the first country it will drop is Pakistan. Afghanistan has no right making comments on Pakistan's system of governance or the faith of its people and should be advised to mind its own business.

Pakistan's main concern as to how would India see this situation or exploit it, is misplaced and by catering to fears of Indian revival in Afghanistan by this totally impotent, powerless and ineffectual behavior, Pakistan is inviting more trouble for itself.

Some steps the Pakistan must take immediately:

1. Pakistan must have detailed talks with the Afghan representatives, defining how the relationship can be improved based on mutual respect and trust. Steps to improve relationship should be listed as KPIs and given timelines with well-articulated instruments of implementation.
2. Pakistan must list areas where it can provide immediate assistance to Afghanistan in training, administration, education and communication, etcetera.
3. There is a possibility, that with its present attitude, Afghanistan may well refuse to talk or accept any assistance. In that case, Pakistan should downgrade the embassy in Kabul till they, the Afghans, request that it be re-established to full strength. Pakistan must make it clear that status quo, as it is today, is unacceptable.
4. Conduct and complete border fencing by an aggressive posture. Conduct border based military operations designed to put the Afghans in their place, addressing their false sense of superiority. This has been happening since 1947 – why not now?
5. Inform the Afghans that we do not believe in their Islam or Wahabism and have our own beliefs. Take it or leave it.
6. Give a final ultimatum to the Afghans and the TTP and then proceed to conduct long range artillery attacks on TTP position, employ drones and the air force to bomb them into shape.
7. Shut down the trade routes with Afghanistan till they guarantee good behavior and comply with international convention.
8. Deny use of own airspace to air traffic to and from Afghanistan.
9. Cancel all visas and block IDs given to Afghans. Cancel their passports.

It is time for Pakistan to take a stand on something at least. We are not a powerful nation but neither are we so helpless that a few uneducated, righteous extremists from Afghanistan can set the terms for a relationship with us.



Worst still is our own limited intellect trying to draw foreign policy mileage from a relationship that was never there and continuing to live a self-deceiving lie.

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Modi 3.0: Predictions and Challenges in 2024

About the Author



Abu Bakar is an English Literature graduate from NUML Islamabad and a Russian Open-Door Scholarship winner for an MPhil degree in Modern Languages. He also works as a freelance columnist.





Amidst voices from all over the world that India is moving towards authoritarianism under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the crippled democracy unexpectedly fought back really well and restricted Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to 240 seats out of a total of 543 seats of Lok Sabha. The narrative of “[chaar sau paar](#)” proved to be just a narrative. However, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has still formed a government and sworn in Narendra Modi as the PM for the third time on 8th June 2024.

Approximately 85% of federal ministries went into the hands of Modi’s BJP, including foreign affairs and defense ministries. Key ministers of the previous government were still given the same portfolios. But the question remains whether the BJP would pursue the same domestic and foreign policies in the presence of a coalition government as it pursued in its previous tenures. To answer this, let’s critically analyze and discuss the predictions and possibilities of a “Modi 3.0” tenure.

Neighbourhood First Policy

To the oath-taking ceremony, India invited presidents and prime ministers of seven neighboring countries, arranged one-on-one meetings, and discussed strengthening economic collaboration—showing Modi’s “Neighbourhood First” policy. Modi also reiterated his commitment to provide financial and political support to the neighboring states—excluding China and Pakistan. He also committed support to the “security and growth of all in the region” known as the SAGAR vision, showing India’s intention to help the neighboring states.



In addition, India is likely to focus on the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)—an organization of seven countries—to strengthen technological and economic cooperation. It has also invited presidents of some of its member states. Strengthening influence over regional states may gradually transform them into a key player in the geopolitics of the region.

Role of the US

In the same manner, India is likely to resume friendly relations with the US, including a strategic and economic partnership in the Indo-Pacific region. Both states are members of I2U2 and QUAD and virtually support the [India Middle-East Economic Corridor \(IMEC\)](#). The US needs a key player in the region to contain the rise of China and India seems to be helpful, owing to its historically hostile relations with China.

Joe Biden congratulated Modi and hailed the US-India friendship as “growing as we unlock a shared future of unlimited potential.” On the shoulders of the US, India aims to emerge as a regional hegemon and gradually book a prominent place in world politics.

A New Global Order?

Similarly, India may move towards a new global order dominated by the middle powers including India, South Africa, Brazil, Turkey, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and many other states as it previously refused to cut off ties with Russia for its invasion of Ukraine and continued oil trade despite the US’ stern warnings. Through the platform of BRICS—an organization of five countries—India would surely thrive and slowly shift towards the new world order; aiming to launch a global currency against the dollar.

Role of Pakistan

Towards Pakistan, it may use the agenda of “the otherization of the image of Pakistan” to strengthen Hindutva (a vision Modi has in mind to achieve in his life) and increase their vote bank on the pretext of taking surgical strikes and falsely labeling Pakistan a country harboring terrorist groups, as said by Fahd Hamayun, an Assistant Professor of Political Science, and Neubauer Faculty Fellow at Tufts University, USA.

Similarly, pursuing Hindutva may transform the country from a secular state to purely a Hindu state, a violation of the Indian constitution. In the long run, hostile intentions towards Pakistan may give birth to instability in the region. In this world, being a global village, instability in one place leads to disorder in another. Consequently, the flames of aggressiveness shown by India would be felt far and wide.

However, in the presence of a coalition government (National Democratic Alliance) and a strong opposition, Modi may face hardship in pursuing his agenda as done so in the previous tenures.



Role of China

In the same manner, China appears to be a hurdle on its way to becoming not only a regional hegemon but a key player in world politics. China has also increased its patrolling ships in the Indo-Pacific region on the pretext of research ships and is now responsible for 12-15 ships per annum,

which used to be 3-4 per annum. India has repeatedly labeled it a spy activity of China.

Keeping in mind China's suspicious activities in the Indo-Pacific region, India is likely to pursue hostile relations against China with the assistance of the US. Recently, India angered China by congratulating the [newly elected president of Taiwan](#).

Role of the Middle East

Regarding the Middle East, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to resume friendly relations with KSA, Iran, and other Arab states. KSA being a key trade partner and a member of IMEC cannot afford hostile relations with India being its largest labour market and a key exporter of Saudi oil.

Similarly, Iran has also agreed to grant control of the operation of Chabahar Port for the next 10 years; a deal was signed in the previous month. Under the agreement, India will develop and operate the port.

This is the very first attempt of India Port Global Limited (IPGL) to take control of any foreign port, benefitting India to avoid [Gwadar port](#) for import/export and to connect with Central Asian and European states via Iran.

The opposition group (India Alliance) led by [Rahul Gandhi's Indian National Congress](#) (INC) is set to give a tough time to the "Modi 3.0" tenure. It won 232 seats including 99 seats won by the INC. Modi may encounter challenges from a strong opposition and its people, who turned against him in the 2024 general elections while pursuing various proposed agendas.

The largest minority, Muslims of India, is the greatest hurdle to promoting Hindutva and Modi's nationalism in India, as previously proven during his past two terms. Moreover, the growing unemployment rate, higher inflation, and economic disparities may turn Modi's attention to domestic issues. The current unemployment rate rose to 8.1% as Modi fell short of fulfilling his promise of creating 20 million jobs.

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IMF Policies: The Gallows for Pakistan

About the Author



M. Ahmed is a dedicated article writer currently pursuing his studies at the National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad, Pakistan. With a passion for writing and a keen eye for detail, he is interested in a variety of topics, including politics, policy, economics, culture, and Islam.



The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was established in 1944, as the result of the Bretton Woods Conference, to facilitate member countries [facing foreign exchange problems](#) by providing them loans to do business with other countries. Several IMF policies have been drafted for the State of Pakistan as well.

Pakistan has knocked on the [IMF's door 23 times in 75 years](#). In 1958 Pakistan went to the IMF for the first time for a bailout, of \$25 million, which was not withdrawn. Interestingly, the biggest amount, \$4.93 billion, was withdrawn in 2008 under the Gilani Government and the second largest sum was withdrawn by the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PMLN) Government between 2013 and 2016, of \$4.39 billion.

Now, Islamabad is seeking another \$6 billion loan program from the IMF despite knowing that the external debt of Pakistan has crossed [\\$130 billion](#).

We are going to the IMF repeatedly because we are trapped in a vicious cycle of debt that refuses to let the economy grow.

Pakistan is entangled due to the IMF and its situational policies. Structural ones would have been better suited in this circumstance. One needs to comprehend the economic cycle to understand how [IMF policies further push us into debt](#).

The Economic Cycle

Economies go through four phases known as the business cycle: boom, peak, recession, and slum. The governments make decisions according to these phases to regulate the economy using fiscal and monetary policies because both, sudden booms and recessions, are devastating and destabilizing for the economy. The governments take expansionary and contractionary policies to deal with the problems of the balance of payment, inflation, unemployment, and economic growth which are caused because of the above-mentioned phases.

[Expansionary policies](#) are taken when the economies are in recession—to avoid the slum phase in which governments increase their spending, decrease taxes, and decrease interest rates which creates employment and investment that leads to economic growth.

On the other hand, [contractionary policies](#) are undertaken when the economies are at a boom to avoid the peak in which governments decrease their spending, increase taxes, and increase interest rates, which in turn creates unemployment and decreases investment; leading to low economic growth.

Economic Stability—Real or Just an Illusion?

The aforementioned policies are used to restabilize the economies, as any sudden disruption, whether positive or negative, can throw them off balance.



If we observe the economic condition of Pakistan, it is quite concerning as private consumption expenditure was reported at \$282.737 billion in December of 2023. This statistic shows a decrease from the \$323.234 billion of December 2022. Private consumption

takes up 79.9 % of GDP which indicates that it plays a crucial role in the economic growth of the country. This means that people are demanding less, and production is decreasing in Pakistan.

The unemployment rate is another indicator to observe the economic condition of the country which reached a worrying 8.5 % in 2023 from 6.3 % in 2021. The number of unemployed people went from 4.1 million in 2021 to 5.6 million in 2023 in the labor market.

All these numbers and indicators disclose that the economy of Pakistan is in recession and moving towards the slump phase. To avoid this very outcome, the Pakistani Government needs expansionary policies such as increasing government spending and decreasing tax and interest rates to increase the aggregate demand, investments, and employment in the market.

In contrast, the IMF is demanding to impose an additional tax of around \$1.3 trillion in the upcoming fiscal year and instructing the nation to broaden its tax base by imposing more on salaried and non-salaried individuals. This will decrease the disposable income of the individuals and the consumption expenditure leading to a decrease in the aggregate demand that will further lower the economic growth of Pakistan.

Moreover, the IMF requires curtailing subsidies which will reduce government spending and lower the aggregate demand further squeezing the economic maturation of the country.

Despite this, the IMF is also seeking a hike in interest rates from [19.5% to 20%](#) and it is not an insignificant increase. Investments have an inverse relation with interest rates so, a hike in interest rates will halt the investments which will negatively hit the production cycle.

Investments are the second most important key component of GDP and already investment-to-GDP ratio of Pakistan is the [lowest](#) amongst the regional countries. A hike in interest rates will further curb the investments which in return will slim down the economic development and create unemployment.

This illustrates that the IMF is demanding contractionary policies when the need of the time is expansionary policies as Pakistan needs immense investments and government spending. These would be necessary to boost its aggregate demand to stimulate production and generate employment and investment in the market, eventually shouldering less economic growth than the previous year.

It is quite concerning that despite all of this we are going for the [24th IMF](#) program and ready to adhere to IMF policies which may as well lead the country into dearth. The government should consider the state's financial condition before making any decision as this will further push it into the entrapment of debt.

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The United Nations: An Organization in Need of Reforms

About the Author



Mughees Ahmed is a student of international relations at the University of Central Punjab. His scholarly pursuits are driven mostly by a deep interest in comprehending the complex forces that govern international relations. He has an interest in a variety of subjects, including philosophy, politics, history, and religion. He often writes on security studies, conflict management and resolution, and diplomacy.





The Broken United Nations

Located just across the road from the United Nations, the world's preeminent organization for international law and cooperation, there is a structure in Geneva that resembles a massive broken chair. The lost limb is a metaphor for both the UN's current situation and the devastating force of landmines. Its main supports are broken; one shove would cause the entire structure to collapse, although this wasn't always the case.

When the [United Nations](#) was established in 1945, its goal was to serve as a platform for all countries in order to advance world peace. However, some contend that the United Nations is in dire need of reforms given the ongoing hostilities in many regions. The system is antiquated and utterly obsolete. It takes you back to a bygone age when a select group of nations, led by the United States and a few European states, controlled the whole world.

Many people believe that the UN is fading because it no longer accurately represents the nuanced reality of modern multilateralism. Since the UN lacks the political clout to forge agreements when international law is broken, a growing number of political leaders are skipping the organization's annual session commencing in September.

Even if the system isn't flawless and isn't even operating well, the United Nations is still the backbone of the global community and may be more crucial than ever at a time when nations are breaking apart. One state, one vote is the guiding concept of the UN General Assembly. Though it doesn't often operate that way, all 193 sovereign member nations are supposedly on an equal footing regardless of size, population, or finances. Due to its intrinsic political nature, the process is vulnerable to conflicting agendas, lobbying, and bargaining.

From the League of Nations to the UN

The first [intergovernmental organization was the League of Nations](#), established in 1920 following the Great War, with the principal goal of fostering international cooperation and averting future hostilities through cooperative security and diplomacy.

The League of Nations did, however, succeed in one area—fostering the notion of an international community—despite its limitations. Over time, the League of Nations lost its allure and eventually proved unsuccessful in avoiding World War II. Human nature has always included conflict, indescribable as it may seem. There was no doubt that military confrontations would continue after two world wars. However, the Second World War was so painful and expensive that there had to be a less terrible way to fight wars.

Thus, the primary principle of the United Nations was to replace warfare with diplomacy. Instead of using force to settle disagreements, nations would engage in discourse. So, in addition to the moral and ethical ramifications, diplomacy was a more useful and less expensive form of aggression. The greatest way to put it was when UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld stated that the United Nations was founded to save people from hell, not to take them to heaven.

After the negotiations in Moscow and Yalta, the allied powers decided to revive the League of Nations in a more expansive form. Thus, the United Nations Charter's ratification in 1945 created a new platform for the worldwide community. Attending the San Francisco summit, representatives from fifty different nations became members of the new organization. However, once the Soviet Union fell apart and Africa gained independence, the number of member states increased to 193.

The Organs of the UN

In the meantime, the organization's constitution, which outlines its basic goals, structure, and methods of operation, is contained in the UN Charter, which established the organization. The document also creates the six main UN bodies, which are:

- The Trusteeship Council
- The International Court of Justice
- The General Assembly
- The Security Council
- The Secretariat
- The Council for Economic and Social Affairs.



The General Assembly

The UN's General Assembly is its fundamental body. All member states, from little nations like Moldova to powerful nations like Russia, are equally represented there. Each state has one vote and a platform to debate a range of issues. The General Assembly's resolutions, however, are non-compulsory suggestions; therefore, the decisions made by it are not legally enforceable.



The Security Council

A little more serious, the [Security Council's](#) fifteen members are in charge of upholding global security and peace. The council has the power to adopt legally binding decisions on issues pertaining to global security, as well as to impose sanctions and

authorize peacekeeping operations. Five members of the Security Council are permanent, but the General Assembly chooses the remaining 10 to serve two-year terms.

The Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, the French Republic, and the Republic of China were among its founding members. Since then, there have been significant changes. The People's Republic of China currently occupies the seat that belonged to the Republic of China, while the Russian Federation succeeded the Soviet Union in that position. These five [countries possess veto power in the Security Council](#) in addition to being the world's leading nuclear powers.

Regardless of how many other countries support them, they can use their veto power to thwart resolutions and decisions put forth by other UN members. Although they are all equal in principle, they are not in practice. For example, one permanent member has the power to reject a resolution that has the backing of the other four permanent members.

The cooperation of all five permanent member nations is necessary for the Security Council to operate effectively. That is as unrealistic as it sounds. But the main goal, while the UN Charter was being drafted, was to encourage the world's superpowers to join the organization. The five permanent members were granted disproportionate power as a result of the veto, which was intended to prevent the major powers from abstaining or leaving the UN if their vital interests were threatened. This is precisely what led to the collapse of the League of Nations before the UN.



The International Court of Justice (ICJ)

Furthermore, the principal judicial body of the United Nations is the International Court of Justice, which is situated in The Hague. It serves as the primary court system for the UN. It is in charge of resolving disputes between nations and offers advisory views on legal matters that the Security Council, General Assembly, and other UN bodies send to it for consideration.

Parties to the dispute must abide by its rulings, but enforcement isn't always successful because different parties understand the results differently. Additionally, rulings are made by a relative majority, and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) elects the court's 15 justices for 9-year terms. It's not simple to operate an organization the size and complexity of the United Nations.

The Secretariat

The Secretariat is the main body in charge of daily administration. Approximately 38,000 individuals are employed by the office, while an additional 112,000 work as contractors in the field. Its chairperson, the secretary-general, is chosen for a five-year term by the UNGA based on the Security Council's proposal. The secretary-general is the principal spokesperson for the UN. Thus far, there have been nine secretaries-general. The secretary-general at the moment is the Portuguese politician and diplomat, António Guterres.

Though, in theory, the Secretariat is the UN's executive branch; in reality, it has very little power because of its inability to override the Security Council's veto mandate. As a result, the secretary-general mostly advances the objectives set by the [Economic and Social Council](#), another important UN body, rather than political and security matters.

The Economic and Social Council

The 54-member Economic and Social Council is in charge of fostering collaboration between governments on economic and social issues. The Economic and Social Council is in charge of several specialized organizations. Among them are the World Bank Group, UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), the IMF (International Monetary Fund), and the WHO (World Health Organization), among others. Thirty specialized agencies and affiliated organizations work together to manage a range of global issues.

Every agency has a distinct headquarters. For example, the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) oversees agriculture from Rome, the IEA (International Energy Agency) manages nuclear energy from Vienna, and UNESCO oversees science and culture from Paris. Furthermore, the IMF oversees the economy from Washington, while the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) handles the environment from Nairobi. Lastly, the World Health Organization strives to prevent pandemics and advance healthcare from Geneva. While the majority of these organizations function autonomously, they collaborate with the UN in different ways.

The Trusteeship Council

The Trusteeship Council is the last major organ. Its primary purpose was to oversee colonial lands and areas seized from the vanquished nations at the close of World War II. It makes sense that this body is no longer in operation because all of the trust areas have achieved independence or self-governance. The last trust territory was Palao, which gained independence in 1994 and joined the UN as a member state. It's interesting that the council has disbanded because it indicates that introducing reforms in the United Nations is still feasible, even with regard to its core institutions.

Why Reforms in the United Nations Are Necessary

A vast budget keeps the entire UN together. State contributions are determined based on each nation's GDP. The biggest donor to the UN is the United States, followed by China, Japan, Germany, Britain, and so forth. Nevertheless, despite several well-meaning initiatives throughout the years, the UN has not fully updated its Charter to reflect the evolving times. The bipolar order during the Cold War gave way to the unipolar and then multipolar orders, but the UN has not changed and is still operating under outdated principles.



The Security Council of the United Nations is typically the first place people consider when considering whether or not the organization is still necessary. Without a doubt, this UN organization has the worst institutional dysfunction. The Security Council can issue legally binding decisions and impose penalties. In the event of a crisis, the council has the ability to

employ its renowned blue berets (peacekeepers). The goal of these irregular troops, who were established in 1956, is to preserve or strengthen the peace.

The five veto members were able to agree throughout the Six Day War, the Kuwait War, and the Libyan War. However, the veto is often used to safeguard interstate interests. For instance, France opposed its colonies in Algeria and the Koros, while Britain blocked Argentina's 1982 invasion of the Falklands. This practice is still in use today. Anything about Taiwan's ethnic minorities and Tibet is subject to Chinese veto power.

Even when [opposing Russia](#) on its own, the United States frequently vetoes resolutions related to Israel. Russia is the largest skeptic; between 1946 and 2020, the Russians used their veto 148 times, while the Americans used it 86 times. The United Kingdom, China, and France have each exercised their [vetoes 30, 19, and 18 times](#), respectively. At the UN headquarters, the Russian ambassadors are so prone to showing off their veto power that they are referred to as the “net men.”

Today, the five veto powers are separated by insurmountable ideological and political divides. While America, Britain, and France present a front on one side, Russia and China often work together on the other. The Security Council has not responded to Ukraine’s concerns. There are disputes in Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, and many other countries due to the veto power held by one or more permanent members. Because of this, the Security Council’s membership, powers, and functions need to be redesigned for it to work effectively and quickly.

Every member of the Security Council, including those with veto power, is [defective](#). It goes back to a period almost eight decades ago when the five countries just so happened to be victorious in a world war. Many find it challenging to support such an extremely exclusive institution, as some of the major players in the world that we know now were not even on the political map when the UN was established. Given that Germany and Japan were on the wrong side of history when the UN was founded, they are not eligible to exercise their veto authority. However, Africa does not have the ability to veto decisions.

If the UN doesn’t make any changes and continues to be disconnected from the modern international order, more powerful nations will choose to forego the [Security Council’s](#) consent before taking military action. Both Russia’s actions in Ukraine and America’s earlier actions in Iraq were overt breaches of the UN Charter. Similarly, over the past 20 years, military conflicts, that are unilateral in nature, have gradually returned. This tendency has been made feasible by the Security Council’s dysfunction.

For what it's worth, the UN leadership is aware that geopolitical conflict undermines its legitimacy and credibility over the long run. The president of the General Assembly made [reestablishing trust and rekindling global unity the focus of his 78th session](#) in July 2023. Around the same time, the secretary-general emphasized in his annual report that the United Nations had to change—that it was either reforms or ruptures—because the organization had not been able to keep up with the rapidly changing globe.

Is Change Possible in the UN?

However, because it depends on the desire of the permanent members, many believe that introducing reforms in the United Nations is unachievable. Before improvements can occur, a kind of agreement needs to be reached. Taking into account the current state of global geopolitics, that is [unlikely to occur anytime soon](#), and as a result, the UN is relegated to the status of an antiquated organization incapable of bringing about change or stopping violent wars.

The big countries, in response to the UN's lack of influence, are fortifying their own regional blocs. While the West has NATO and the EU. Africa has the African Union. China is in charge of the [Shanghai Cooperation Organization \(SCO\)](#), and Russia is the leader of the [Collective Security Treaty Organization \(CSTO\)](#). As outdated as the UN may be, it nevertheless serves a role since none of these regional blocs are equipped to address global issues like artificial intelligence, pandemics, misinformation, climate change, famines, and refugee crises.

The global South views the UN as a catalyst for sustainable development and economic transformation. Even if the UN cannot end hostilities, it may provide its position as a forum for political discussions and de-escalation if the other nations want. Additionally, the UN provides a forum for professionals and specialists from a wide range of academic fields to collaborate and share ideas. Organizations like the World Health Organization and UNESCO carry out important tasks.



Therefore, even while regional blocs and organizations are emerging, none can take the position of the UN. Actually, in order to advance in the same fields, the international community would need to create a new organization akin to the UN if it were to stop operating. But generally

speaking, the United States has shrunk to the size of a political pauper; it can no longer stop wars from breaking out and is now forced to cope with transnational problems like nuclear proliferation, cyber security, human rights, education, and health care.

However, war prevention—which was the UN’s main goal—is no longer an option. In that sense, the company is genuinely out of date. Although the United Nations specialized agencies remain vital, the Security Council has permanently damaged the organization’s authority and [credibility](#). Power politics still have flaws, and this is not going to change. The power hierarchy is ultimately a part of the natural order of things. Those at the bottom of the ladder are constantly gazing up, those in the center are constantly trying to go up the ladder, and those at the top never stop kicking others in the teeth.

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The Osama Bin Laden Operation: CIA & Its Fake Vaccination Drive in Pakistan

About the Author



Areen khan is currently pursuing her law degree from University of London.

Introduction

On the historic night of May 2, 2011, a covert operation unfolded in Abbottabad, Pakistan. In the early hours, several Navy SEALs descended onto Bin Laden's compound. The carefully planned operation and tireless efforts of more than a decade finally bore fruit as Osama Bin Laden, the notorious leader of Al-Qaeda and the mastermind behind the [tragic 9/11 attacks](#), was finally killed. This marked the end of his reign of terror. This plan owes its success to the CIA and its fake vaccination drive.

This pivotal moment resulted from a decade of efforts by American intelligence agencies, who, driven by their pursuit of capturing the leader of Al-Qaeda, had often disregarded the sovereignty and rights of other countries. The CIA has had a long history of involvement in Pakistan, going as far back as 2005 with the start of Operation Cannonball—part of the much larger “War on Terrorism.”

The Vaccination Ruse

Just two months after the historic death of Bin Laden, an article was published by The Guardian. This piece unveiled a [controversial operation conducted by the CIA](#) in March 2011 in the city of Abbottabad, Pakistan.



It was revealed that the CIA had used the guise of a Hepatitis B vaccination program to try and collect DNA samples from children present at the compound. These samples were to be compared with those of Laden's sister, who died in Boston in 2010, to try and confirm if any of the children were related to Bin Laden, which would then confirm his presence there.

They organized a fake vaccination drive in poor areas of Abbottabad and, after some weeks, moved it to the rich suburbs of Bilal town, where the compound was thought to be located. Pakistani authorities were unaware of this operation taking place on their soil. It is still unclear how successful, if at all, this operation was. There were also suspicions of the charity organization “Save the Children” being involved, but they have since denied their involvement.



To achieve their objective, the CIA enlisted a local doctor, Shakil Afridi, who then employed other



low-ranked medical workers who were unaware of the actual motives behind the faux vaccination drive. Shakil Afridi was charged with 33 years behind bars for his involvement in the operation (later acquitted but still imprisoned due to murder charges). There is speculation by some that Afridi was used as a mere scapegoat.

Consequences

Vaccines were already a controversial issue in Pakistan, especially in the less developed areas. Islamist groups were spreading propaganda against vaccines. Several rumors were being circulated, such as polio vaccines being part of a Jewish or Christian conspiracy, used to make Muslim girls infertile or to stunt the growth of Muslims. Additionally, there were claims that pig fat was used in the vaccines, and some religious leaders even claimed that it was un-Islamic to take medications before a disease was contracted.

For the less educated Pakistanis, whose only source of information was these Islamic leaders or word of mouth, such rumors were enough for them to avoid vaccines. This proved to be extremely dangerous for both the people and the healthcare workers in the country. There were several reported incidents of attacks against workers, even fatalities.

Several organizations questioned the ethics of such a fake program.

“The CIA’s fake vaccination program overstepped a boundary in that they engaged in an activity that is [purely humanitarian](#) and purely medical and health-related,” Sam Worthington, the CEO of InterAction, an alliance of international non-governmental organizations, told The Daily Beast. “By introducing a degree of lack of trust associated with vaccinations I think there’s harm done on vaccination programs in sensitive areas around the world.” In response to the criticism, the White House announced that the CIA had pledged not to use vaccination programs as a cover for espionage.

Moreover, this scheme took place during the rapid spread of poliovirus. Several parents refused to give their children polio drops. During such a dire health emergency, the CIA’s plan only added fuel to the fire.

“The ruse has provided seeming proof for a widely held belief in Pakistan, fuelled by religious extremists, that polio drops are a Western conspiracy to sterilise the population.”

- Saeed Shah

The Taliban, especially, were running campaigns against vaccines. The CIA’s operation contributed to the dissemination of these rumors, adding to the existing distrust and resistance regarding vaccines. The number of children contracting diseases, especially polio, increased due to this, as did the violence against the health workers who were going door to door to perform their duty.

Recently, a [research paper](#) published in the Journal of the European Economic Association brought attention to this issue again. It was found that after the CIA’s plot was uncovered, there was an estimated 30% decline in the vaccination rate, corresponding to an 11-percentage-point reduction in the likelihood that any child is vaccinated.

There was a trend of vaccination rates going down in areas where the Islamist groups were more dominant. Pakistan had worked hard to achieve some credibility with its public and the CIA's ruse, which aided the spread of misinformation in the country and set them back.

However, on a brighter note, in 2013, trust in vaccination increased. This is due to the relentless efforts of the Pakistani healthcare workers, who did not back down despite low funding and threats to their lives. They got the help of other Islamic leaders and showed the families videos to make them accept that vaccines are indeed safe and halal. There were also TV ad campaigns that helped with this mission. But there are still suspicions among many people, several years later.

Conclusion

Due to the CIA's hunger for catching Bin Laden, they paid no regard to the possible consequences of such actions on normal civilians. In the aftermath of the CIA's covert operation, not only the public's confidence was undermined in humanitarian and vaccination efforts, but it also strengthened the radical groups spreading anti-vaccine propaganda, which then led to a surge of disease outbreaks and violence against healthcare workers across the country.

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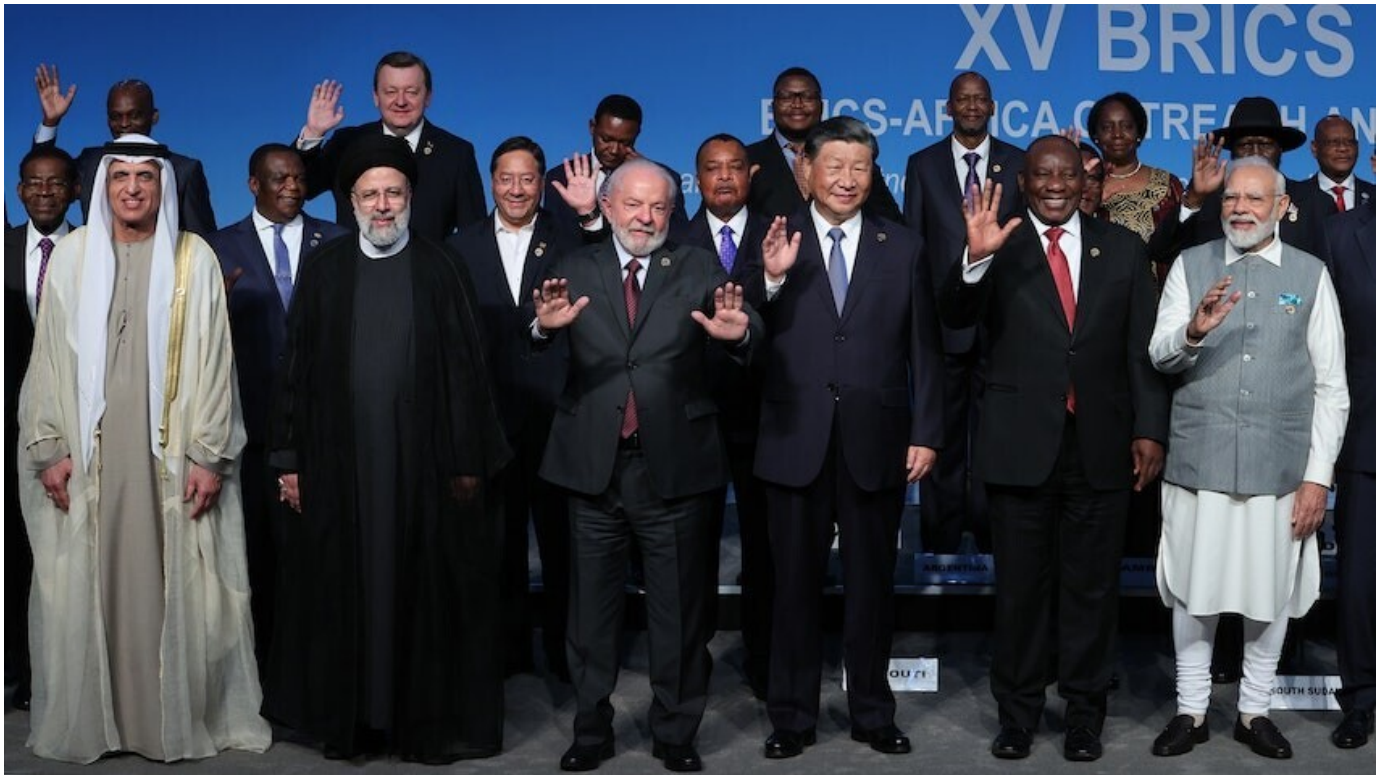


Pakistan at the Crossroads: BRICS Membership and Goeconomic Realities

About the Author



Danial Nisar is a current affairs writer.



The 15th BRICS summit convened in Johannesburg, South Africa, on August 23, 2023, attracting widespread attention as global partnerships and alliances continue to shape geopolitical dynamics. Originating from the vision of economist John O'Neill at Goldman Sachs in 2001, BRICS initially comprised Brazil, Russia, India, and China, later expanding with South Africa's inclusion in 2010, leading to its rechristening.

Goldman Sachs had forecasted that these emerging market economies would command global economic dominance by 2050. Since its inception, BRICS has become a significant economic and political force, influencing international affairs. The recent BRICS summit made headlines globally as it delved into the prospect of introducing an alternative unified currency for intra-member trade, potentially challenging the dominance of the US-led financial system.

With a combined GDP surpassing the [G7](#) nations, [BRICS economies](#) collectively contribute over 26 % of the global GDP. Furthermore, encompassing 41% of the world's population, these member states wield considerable influence, holding [15 %](#) of the voting power at the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

To reshape the prevailing world order and amplify the voices of the Global South, BRICS seeks to expand its influence by welcoming six new members—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, Argentina, and Ethiopia —during its 15th summit. This move signifies a strategic shift towards inclusivity and diversification. The growing interest from 40 other nations in joining BRICS underscores the organization’s burgeoning significance on the global stage.

At the core of BRICS’ mission lies the principle of fostering “South-South” collaboration and amplifying the influence of emerging economies globally. However, tensions have surfaced within the group, particularly between China and India, regarding the expansion of BRICS.

India’s stance on Pakistan wanting to join the BRICS group has become a focal point, with policymakers wary of the implications it might hold for India’s strategic interests. Despite Pakistan not formally applying for BRICS membership, the specter of such a request looms large due to its potential ramifications, particularly in exacerbating existing tensions between India and Pakistan. India’s reluctance to entertain Pakistan’s inclusion stems from concerns over its strategic positioning within BRICS, particularly in countering China’s growing influence within the organization.

The delicate balance within BRICS underscores the complexities of navigating geopolitical dynamics among member states with diverging interests. This highlights the challenges inherent in achieving the group’s overarching collective goals.

Implications of Pakistan’s BRICS Membership

Pakistan’s leadership and policymakers carefully weigh the potential economic benefits against the diplomatic implications of joining BRICS. The decision carries significant weight despite the latter’s serious deliberation, considering economic and diplomatic factors. While the economic advantages of BRICS membership for Pakistan are considerable, including the opportunity to reduce reliance on the United States for trade, the diplomatic ramifications cannot be overlooked.



Tackling Monetary Challenges

After joining BRICS, Pakistan would be offered access to new trade avenues, enabling diversification and potentially reducing dependency on traditional economic partners. Moreover, BRICS has established vital institutions such as the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) and the New Development Bank (NDB), which hold substantial economic importance. With a capital base exceeding \$100 billion, the CRA aims to support member states in addressing short-term balance of payment challenges. Meanwhile, the NDB provides funding to members without imposing stringent conditions typically associated with institutions like the IMF.

For Pakistan, the lure of economic stability and autonomy, coupled with the opportunity to strengthen ties with influential emerging economies, presents a compelling case for BRICS membership, notwithstanding the diplomatic intricacies it entails. Pakistan's fervent advocacy for a multipolar world finds resonance in its potential membership in BRICS, aligning itself with states sharing similar ideological inclinations.

Partnerships within BRICS

For Pakistan, forging alliances with emerging economies is advantageous and imperative for its economic prosperity and geopolitical standing. The country maintains amicable relations with several BRICS member states, setting a solid foundation for deeper collaboration.

The robust partnership between China and Pakistan, epitomized by the [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor](#) (CPEC), underscores the strategic importance of their alliance within the broader



framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Furthermore, [Pakistan's reevaluation of its foreign policy](#) towards China and Russia reflects shifting regional and global dynamics, presenting opportunities for enhanced cooperation, particularly in

accessing Central Asian markets and addressing defense and energy needs.

Saudi Arabia's supportive investments and bilateral relations contribute to Pakistan's economic stability, while the prospect of BRICS membership promises to bolster these ties further. Additionally, access to the markets of Brazil and South Africa through BRICS membership offers lucrative opportunities for trade expansion.

Despite potential objections from India, Pakistan's prudent foreign policy approach toward its neighbor aims to foster an environment of mutual benefit and cooperation. Pakistan seeks to advance its interests within BRICS by navigating diplomatic intricacies with caution while promoting regional stability and economic prosperity.

A substantial share of Pakistan's trade connected within the BRICS framework underscores the bloc's critical importance for the country's economic landscape. With approximately 35.2 % of total imports sourced from BRICS countries and 11.1 % of exports directed toward these nations in 2021, Pakistan stands to significantly benefit from deeper integration into the bloc.

Embracing BRICS aligns with Pakistan's foreign policy goal of transitioning from geopolitics to geoeconomics, offering numerous avenues for economic diversification and growth. Moreover, amidst ongoing global perceptions of extremism and terrorism, BRICS membership presents an opportunity for Pakistan to enhance its international image through trade-based relations with member countries, thereby fostering a narrative of economic cooperation and stability.

Conclusion

Pakistan can chart a more independent foreign policy course through BRICS membership by reducing reliance on Western institutions and the United States. However, overcoming potential obstacles requires adept diplomacy to address the concerns of existing members, particularly India, while maintaining balanced relations with Europe and the United States.

Strategic measures such as broadening the tax base, implementing governance reforms, and increasing exports are essential to bolster Pakistan's candidacy for BRICS membership. Joining the bloc promises economic prosperity and well-being, given its projected role as a significant driver of global growth in the future. Serious deliberation on the prospects of joining BRICS is imperative for Pakistan, as it stands to leverage the expanding clout of the bloc to advance its economic interests and enhance its standing on the global stage.

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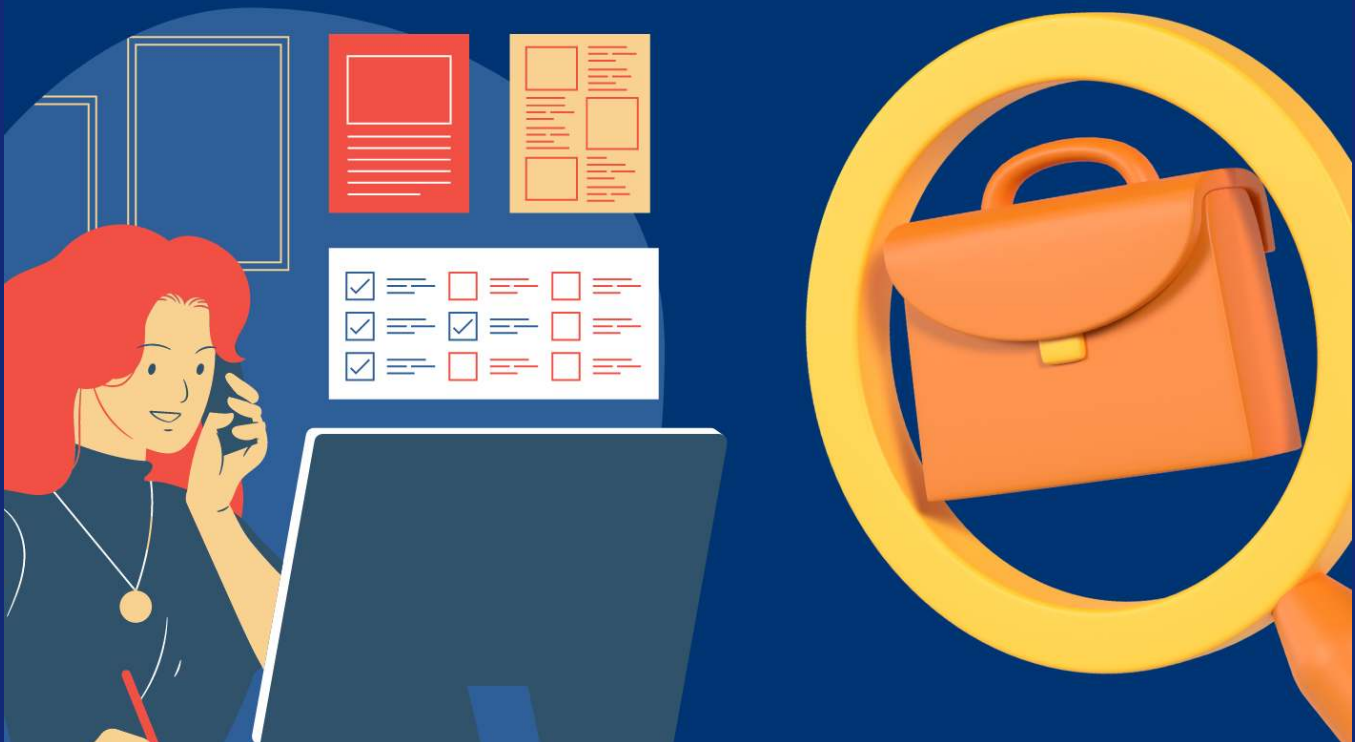


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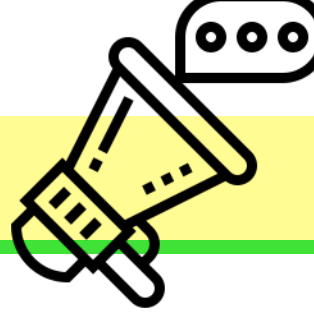
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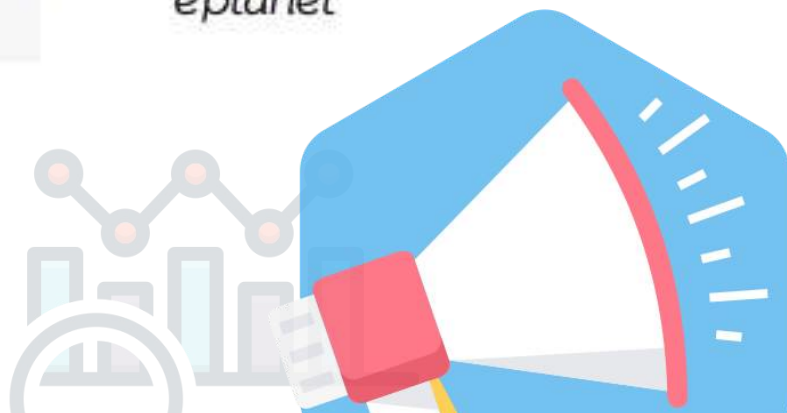


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