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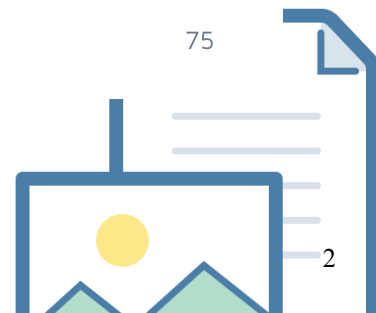


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Foreword

Welcome to the eighteenth 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 **350,000 followers** on social media and unique traffic on our website, 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 **11 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.



History's Echo: Why the US & Israel Are Repeating Saddam's Mistake in Iran

About the Author



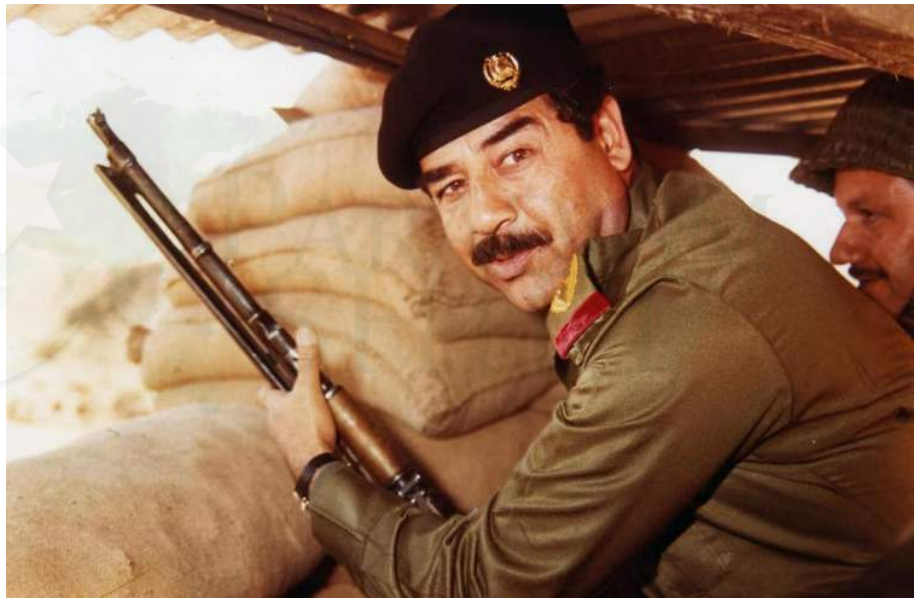
Uzair Ahmed is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in international relations at the National Defence University in Islamabad. His interests include analysing geopolitics, security dynamics, and foreign policy.

The mistake of 1980 was simple: Saddam Hussein believed that a nation's hatred for its rulers is greater than its love for its soil. He was wrong. 45 years later, Washington and Tel Aviv appear to be making the exact same miscalculation with Iran.

The Leaflet Delusion

In the early days of the 1980 invasion, Iraqi bombers did not just drop bombs. They also dropped [leaflets](#). Written in Persian, these papers urged the Iranian people to rise against their own government, promising that Iran would be safe if the regime changed. Saddam Hussein believed that a regime only one year old, struggling from the post-revolution dismantling of its military, would crumble under the first sign of external pressure.

He was wrong. Instead of fracturing, the Iranian people, including Arabs, Baloch, and Kurds, who had deep grievances



against the new government, instantly united for the integrity and sovereignty of Iran. The external threat acted as a catalyst for unity, transforming a chaotic political transition into the "Sacred Defense."

Today, the leaflets have been replaced by cyber operations and satellite broadcasts amplifying the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement. The technology is different. The psychology used is identical. The moment foreign missiles touch Iranian soil, the grievance against the state is overtaken by the defense of the homeland. This ceases to be a struggle of civil liberties in Tehran or Isfahan. It becomes a fight against a century of foreign interference.

This is not accidental. States don't simply react to threats, but they also interpret them. [Tehran's political elite](#) has spent four decades constructing a national identity built around resisting foreign interference or attacks. Every strike validates that narrative more effectively than any internal propaganda ever could.

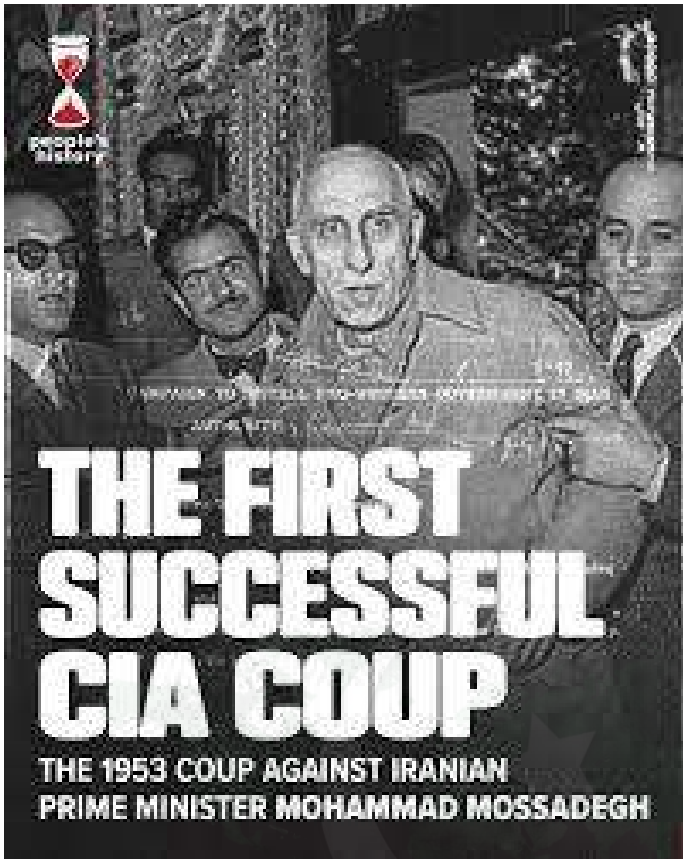
The Decapitation Myth

The second pillar of the current strategy appears to be regime decapitation. The belief that removing the supreme leader triggers immediate collapse and opens a path to a pro-Western transition. The Iranian regime is not dependent on the supreme leader alone. Although the supreme leader holds immeasurable authority over the three pillars of the government, the judiciary, the Parliament, and the military, each operates with its own chains of command under the [velayat-e-faqih](#) system, deliberately designed so that no single point of failure can bring it down. It is a lesson Iran learned from watching the Shah's centralized rule collapse overnight.



A “Weakened” Iran Is Still Not 1980

Yes, Iran's economy is brittle. Yes, domestic anger is real. Critics who call Iran “weak” are not entirely wrong, but they are drawing the wrong conclusion from a correct observation. Economic harsh conditions and national integrity are not the same thing. The Iranian people draw a clear line between grievances against their own government or regime and threats from outside. History provides them with a reason.



In 1953, the CIA overthrew the Iranian elected government to protect Western oil interests. That wound never fully healed. It is reopened by every foreign strike. Unlike 1980, when Iran fought an 8-year war completely alone, today it sits at the center of a regional network stretching from [Iraq](#) to [Lebanon](#) to [Yemen](#). Weakening the economy has not weakened the strategic posture.

Why This Matters Beyond the Middle East

For most Western analysts, Iran is an abstract problem. For Pakistan, it is a neighbor. Pakistan shares a [909-kilometer border](#). A destabilized Iran

or a refugee crisis coming through Sistan-Balochistan lands directly in Pakistan's lap, hitting a security situation and an economic recovery that can absorb very little additional pressure. When Washington miscalculates the Iranian pulse, Islamabad feels the tremors first.

The Lesson Still Unlearned

The current campaign risks the same outcome. Strike Iran's sovereignty, and you don't weaken the regime. You save it.

Policymakers in Washington and Tel Aviv would do well to review their assumptions. Iran is not a weak state waiting to be liberated; it is a civilization with a long history of defending its soil. From Cyrus to the Sacred Defense, Iranians have repeatedly demonstrated that external aggression does not fracture national will; it forges it. A strategy that ignores this history is not just miscalculated. History has already answered, and it cost eight years of war.

One can only hope that before the next escalation, someone pauses long enough to ask why the last person who tried this spent eight years drowning in the consequences.

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Article

The Use of AI in Modern Warfare and the Rise of Data Localization

About the Author



Huzaiifa Younas is a project coordinator at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), focusing on strategic and political affairs, and a graduate of strategic studies from the National Defence University (NDU). He has authored numerous pieces on the evolving geopolitical landscape.

Oded Ailam, who had previously worked in the Mossad's counterterrorism division, commented on the rapid operation against Iran that led to the assassination of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. He mentioned that the operation took . He also noted that the contemporary battlefield is more dependent on data than on tanks and aircraft. A former CIA veteran and writer, David McCloskey, disclosed that data and information today are multilayered. He explained that individuals always leave behind a trail. However, a major breakthrough in the contemporary US-Israeli and Iran conflict has showcased how artificial intelligence (AI) is being integrated into intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities to amplify information-gathering [only sixty seconds](#) capabilities.

US-Israel AI Integration

The US has integrated AI into its military capabilities by launching the Maven system in 2017, in which contracts have been signed with data mining companies such as Palantir and Anthropic. In the recent strikes, [Maven was powered by Claude AI](#) (a tool launched by Anthropic) in identifying



hundreds of possible targets, categorizing them in terms of their importance, and providing precise coordinates. This allowed Iran's adversary to obtain a heightened awareness of the battlefield, significantly [compressing the kill chain](#), i.e., the time required for recognizing a target and executing a strike against it. A similar scenario was observed during the abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, where Claude AI was reportedly used by the US. Israel's use of the artificial intelligence decision support systems (AI-DSS) known as the "[Lavender](#)" system to identify low-level Hamas operatives in Gaza is another case where AI is being leveraged to process large data sets combined with on-ground intelligence-gathering capabilities.

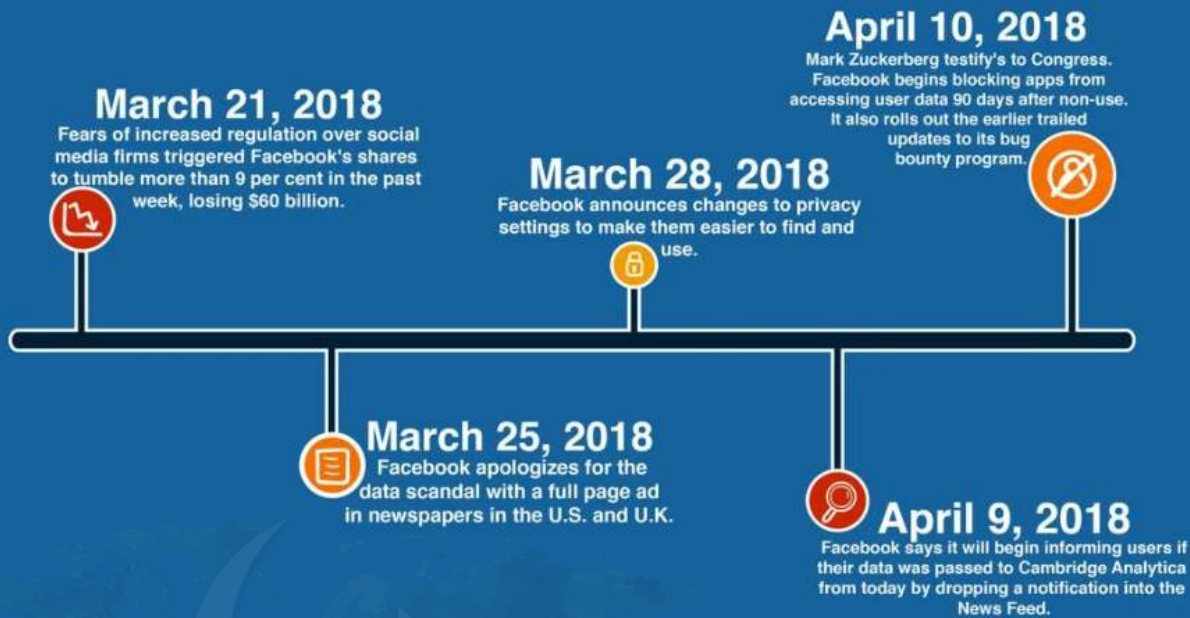
Data as a Part of Warfare

In this entire scenario, data has emerged as a crucial strategic asset that is enabling states to achieve increased battlefield awareness. [Modern ISR systems](#) are designed to collect intelligence from land, air, sea, and space to achieve superiority in the information domain. Technologies that enable these data-gathering practices include ground, maritime, and space-based surveillance systems, along with unmanned aerial systems for low-cost surveillance. This data is then used to make informed and rapid decisions, and superior ISR ability allows adversaries to outpace each other in the data warfare domain.

With the arrival of AI, states are leveraging it to process large data sets instantaneously and provide recommendations for targeting, along with their exact locations. [Issues associated with AI](#) remain, such as the black box paradox, where the reason behind AI arriving at a particular decision remains ambiguous, or the automation bias, where on-field military commanders would associate AI decisions as better than their own thinking processes. However, these issues have not deterred states from using AI to achieve an advantageous position in data collection practices. To shift the balance of this asymmetry in terms of rapid data collection and processing, states at the deficient side of this spectrum could adopt a strategy of localizing data.

“Data localization” refers to the practice employed by states to gather, store, and process data within the territorial realm, i.e., a localized area of the state. With the discovery of the Internet of Things (IoT), the world became strongly interconnected due to the flow of data beyond borders with limited restrictions. Data, due to the nature of its usage and flow in cyberspace, cannot be administered similarly to other assets such as oil, water, population, military, economy, etc. A state’s national security is dependent upon its ability to exercise its power over its resources without interference, resulting in the maintenance of its sovereignty.

Facebook Scandal Timeline



Therefore, to [ensure data sovereignty](#), states must exercise precautions in handling their data, giving precedence to data that is sensitive and whose exploitation could result in a national security threat. Several cases have emerged over the years related to how data infrastructures and systems are being used for global surveillance purposes. Prominent ones include the [Snowden Leaks](#) in 2013, where a former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor leaked thousands of documents affiliated with surveillance activities using big data. Another major scenario included the one revolving around the [Cambridge Analytica scandal](#), where the data of millions of Facebook users was harvested and used to influence the general public perception in favor of Donald Trump in the 2016 elections.

Data Localization Practices

The above scenarios, along with the ongoing US-Israel and Iran war, indicate that big data algorithms, which were previously recognized by humans and computer networks, are now shifting towards pattern recognition, threat detection, and decision-making through the use of AI. However, the main difference is the compression of the kill chain, where the decision-to-time ratio has significantly decreased.



This would allow states equipped with advanced missile technologies and the ability to rapidly gather and process data a major advantage against states that are susceptible to such tactics due to their dependence on globalized data networks. For example, Iran has adopted a [total internet blackout](#) to stay out of these globalized networks, where data from Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) could be used by adversaries to identify targets and carry out precision strikes.

The arrival of AI in identifying the above-mentioned patterns will push states to adopt data localization practices following the recent war in Iran. Rather than going for total data localization, which would result in economic repercussions and global isolation (as seen in North Korea), states could adopt strategies such as [geopatriation](#), where a strategic relocation of digital assets in line with national and geopolitical interests would be observed.

Similarly, a conditional form of localization can also be adopted where a balance is struck between maintaining digital sovereignty and avoiding economic repercussions. This would include sharing data, which is required for global interdependence, while restricting data that could be a threat to a nation's national security, such as seen through China's [Cyber Security Law \(CSL\) 2017](#), India's [Digital Personal Data Protection Act \(DPDP\) 2023](#), and Russia's ["On Personal Data"](#) in 2016.

While these are strategies that equip states with a superior advantage against their adversaries, the repercussions of adopting AI-powered data processing tactics in military operations, as well as the practice of localizing data to counter former strategies, would be too large for states to re-establish diplomatic ties. This would ultimately result in a scenario where a technologically advanced state, such as the US, equipped with AI-powered weapons and fueled by tech giants and military-industrial complexes, would be confident enough to secure its global interests, a scenario not observed since the 2003 Iraq War. In comparison, technologically lacking states such as Iran would resort to strategies of strict data governance, which carries with it risks of economic strain, global isolation, and human rights abuse.

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51 Years of the Biological Weapons Convention: Reflection, Responsibility, and the Way Forward

About the Author



Rimsha Malik is currently serving as an Associate Research Officer at the Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS), AJK. I am a gold medalist in International Relations, with a strong academic foundation in strategic and security studies.

The 51st anniversary of the Biological Weapons Convention cannot be a regular diplomatic affair. It is a time that demands reflection instead of ritualistic commendation. Over 50 years have lapsed since the Convention became effective, yet most of the shortcomings evident in the early years remain today. It has transformed the world, science has grown fast, and there is a strategic rivalry between the great powers. The actual question is not whether the BWC is still relevant, but whether it is powerful enough to be relevant in the future. The Convention was seen as a historic success when it was negotiated in the early 1970s. States have made a moral and humanitarian decision to prohibit a complete type of weapons, the first in history. That judgment set a valuable international precedent: the notion that sickness should never be a weapon.

Current biological weapons activity, 2022

Biological weapons are organisms or toxins used to cause death or harm through their poisonous properties.



Data source: OWID based on ACA (2022), NTI (2022), and CNS (2008).

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Note: Information as of September 15, 2022. "Allegedly" means one country charged another, but the claims were not confirmed by the country itself or impartial observers.

Image Source: [Our World in Data \(CC BY 4.0\)](#)

The principle is popular even now. But the issue is not the norm per se; the issue is its weak enforcement. Contrary to other arms control treaties, the BWC has yet to implement a legally binding verification process. States are supposed to adhere to the rules, in large part, due to trust and voluntary transparency, which is not enough in modern politics, and recent global events have only made these flaws more apparent.



The pace of scientific advancement in biotechnology and gene editing, as well as artificial intelligence, is outpacing the capacity of the international system to regulate it.

Such technologies can revolutionize the health of people, agriculture, and medical research, but can also pose significant security problems when abused. There is an increasing disparity between the advancement in technology and the international control over it, and the BWC has failed to keep up with the advancement. The Convention seems to languish in the political thinking of the past in place of adjusting to new realities.

The other problem is the growing politicization of biological threats. Major powers are increasingly employing biological issues as a strategic competition instead of enhancing cooperation. Slanders are used, retaliation is retorted, and the transparency is selective and not real. This tendency undermines the authority of the Convention and creates doubts among the smaller states and developing states. Once the failure of the powerful countries in showing responsible leadership, the whole mechanism of trust in the world starts to go away. The role of the responsible states plays an even greater role in this case. Pakistan has been constantly upholding the goals of the Biological Weapons Convention and has repeatedly stressed that biological weapons do not feature in Pakistan's national security policy.

Pakistan has been categorical and firm on its stance that international security cannot be founded on confrontation, but rather cooperation, and that disarmament agreements should be applied in a non-discriminatory way. The strategy is indicative of the broader goal of responsible behaviour in the international system rather than a short-term political interest. The position of Pakistan is also significant as it will reflect the view of the developing world. To a lot of the nations in the Global South, the BWC is not only concerned with the issue of the prevention of biological weapons, but it is also concerned with the provision of access to peaceful science development. The peaceful use of biotechnology, disease surveys, and public health issues are still major concerns of developing nations.

Pakistan has consistently emphasized the need to enhance collaboration in these aspects by saying that security and development cannot be discussed as two different phenomena. It is a wise strategy that proves that a responsible state does not simply discuss security threats, but also global cooperation and mutual development.

In the future, the Biological Weapons Convention will be determined by how states will be interested in going beyond symbolic diplomacy. The measures of confidence-building should also be more transparent and more consistent. There should be encouragement of scientific cooperation instead of limiting it. Above all, the Convention should be revised in order to correspond to the realities of contemporary science. By disregarding these pitfalls, we will be weakening the treaty as time goes by and lowering its credibility in the global world.

Pakistan can contribute positively to the enhancement of the Convention in the next few years. Pakistan can contribute to making the BWC more efficient by promoting cooperation between the developed and developing nations, advancing transparency, and facilitating reforms. Meanwhile, these initiatives also help strengthen the perception of Pakistan as a responsible state actor that subscribes to multilateralism and international stability.

Responsible behaviour has never been more important in a world where mistrust is on the rise and political tensions are escalating. The Biological Weapons Convention, after 51 years, remains a vital undertaking by the international community to counter the abuse of science. But the anniversary must not just be about the past: it must be about the future as well. Enhancing the application, increasing transparency, and fair cooperation have to be prioritized now. The continued adherence of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the tenets of the BWC sends a strong signal that responsible states must be prepared to be the first to act in case global peace and trust are to prevail in the biological world.

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Infographic of the month!

Chronology of Crisis: Security Threats and Assassination Attempts (2024–2026)

Overview of major security breaches and assassination attempts targeting Donald Trump over a two-year period.

Since 2024, Donald Trump has faced a recurring series of high-level security threats ranging from active shooter scenarios at rallies to sophisticated security perimeter breaches. This timeline tracks the escalation of these events and the resulting law enforcement responses.

2024: Targeted Assassination Attempts

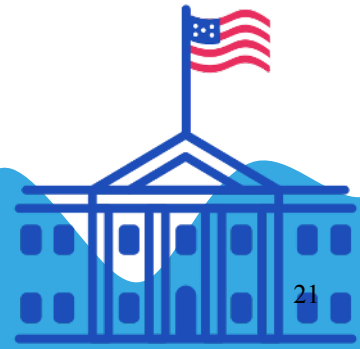


2025–2026: Perimeter Breaches and Gala Incidents



From campaign rallies to golf courses and even the White House Correspondents' Dinner, Donald Trump faced an extraordinary series of security threats between 2024 and 2026.

The incidents ranged from assassination attempts and armed breaches to infiltrations of his own security perimeter—raising major questions about political violence, Secret Service preparedness, and the growing volatility surrounding U.S. politics.



Beyond Hormuz: Mapping Global Maritime Chokepoints

About the Author



Muhammad Haseeb Sulehria is a student of Defense and Strategic Studies at Quaid-i-Azam University, and a former internee at Pakistan's Ministry of Defense. With a keen interest in national and international affairs, he actively explores issues of security, strategy, and global politics, aspiring to contribute to policymaking and peacebuilding.





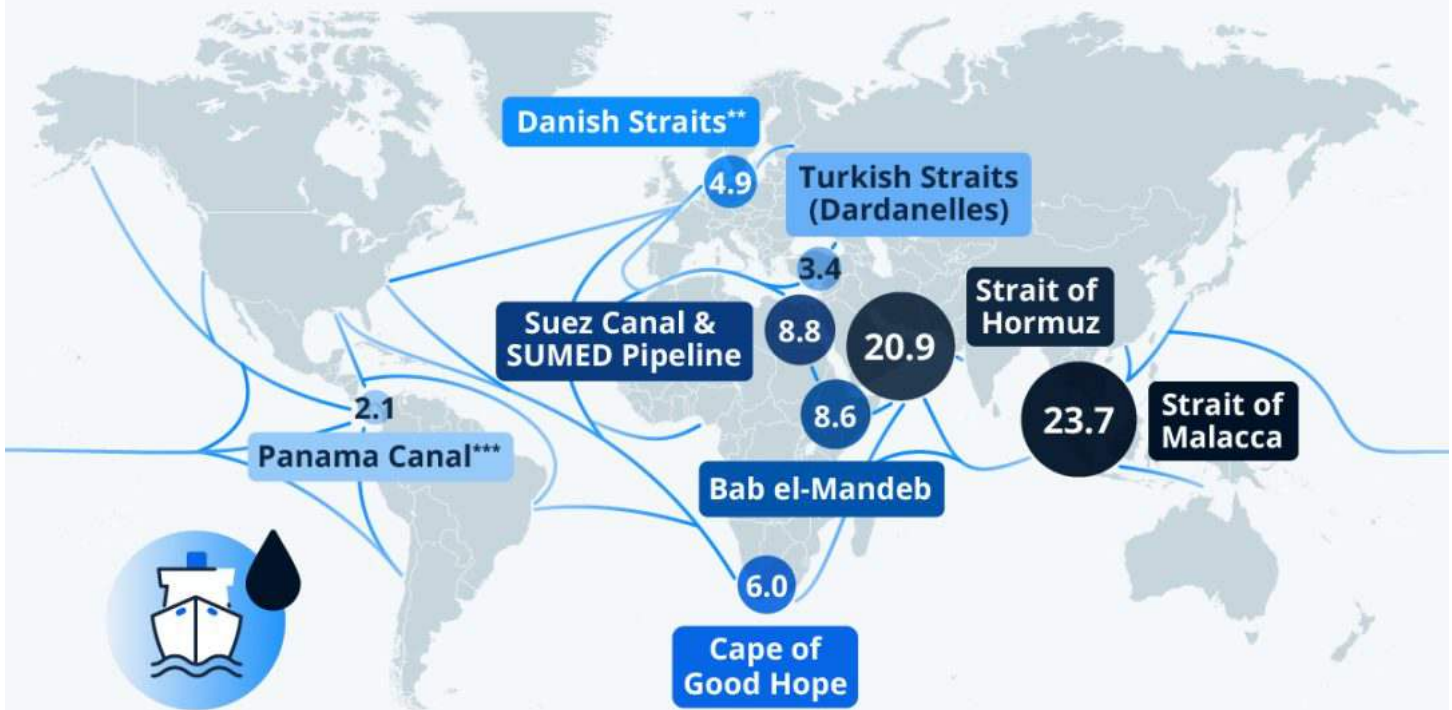
The Strait of Hormuz and the Fragility of Energy Trade

The conflict in Iran, along with the threat posed to the Strait of Hormuz, has been a stark reminder that we remain very reliant upon maritime commerce. In a world of highways, railways, and aircraft shuttling goods from one location to another, shipping vessels continue to transport over half of international trade by value and almost [85% by volume](#).

Now, the first thing to stress here is that while there are lots of other potential choke points, the Strait of Hormuz is particularly crucial for global trade for the simple reason that there just isn't really another way around it. The Strait of Hormuz is the only maritime route out of the oil-rich Persian Gulf into the rest of the world. There are a couple of other potential choke points that fit this bill. The Turkish Straits are the only way out of the Black Sea, for instance, and the Danish Straits are the only way out of the Baltic Sea. But neither of these is as important to international trade and especially energy markets as the Strait of Hormuz. Basically, every other big choke point has alternative sea routes.

Global Oil Shipments Depend on Major Chokepoints

Volume of crude oil and petroleum liquids transported through world chokepoints* in 2023 (million barrels per day)



* and the Cape of Good Hope ** excludes flows through Kiel Canal *** by fiscal year (Oct. 1-Sept. 30)

Source: EIA



statista

Global Oil Shipments Depend on Major Chokepoints by Anna Fleck licensed by Statista under CC BY N.D 4.0

Now, since the de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz, several affected countries have found creative workarounds to keep their oil and gas exports up. Iraq, for instance, has leaned more heavily on pipeline exports to Turkey.

The UAE has exported more from the port of Fuera, which sits on the other side of the Strait of Hormuz. And the Saudis have been using their East-West pipeline to transport oil across the country to the Red Sea. But this is far from a perfect solution. None of these alternative routes has the capacity to fully replace trade through the strait. Otherwise, the world wouldn't be in this mess. And things could get a lot worse if the Bab al Mandab, the next choke point on our list, were to be shut.

The Bab al Mandab and the Red Sea Corridor

For background information, the Bab al Mandab means "gate of sorrow." It is a narrow strip of water that links the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aiden, hence the Indian Ocean. The majority of sea trade conducted from Europe to Asia uses the Bab al Mandab route, making it much more significant than the shorter one.

According to an analysis by The Economist, for instance, [16% of all seaborne trade](#) by value passes through the Bab al Mandab compared to about 6% for the Strait of Hormuz. Now, the reason why the Strait of Hormuz gets more attention is that it's usually more central to the international energy markets. In normal times, [20%](#) of all oil and gas trade consumed by the world passes through the Strait of Hormuz compared to 10% by Bab al Mandab.

This has changed in recent weeks as it has been mentioned previously that Saudi Arabia started relying more heavily on exports via the Red Sea, which mostly flow out towards Asia via the Bab al Mandab. Unfortunately for both the Saudis and the global economy, on March 28th, 2026, the Houthis, who are widely considered an Iranian proxy outfit and who control most of southern Yemen, announced that they would be joining the war. So far, this has mostly involved sending the occasional missile towards Israel. But there's been some speculation that if the war continues, the Houthis could escalate by targeting ships passing through the Bab al Mandab.

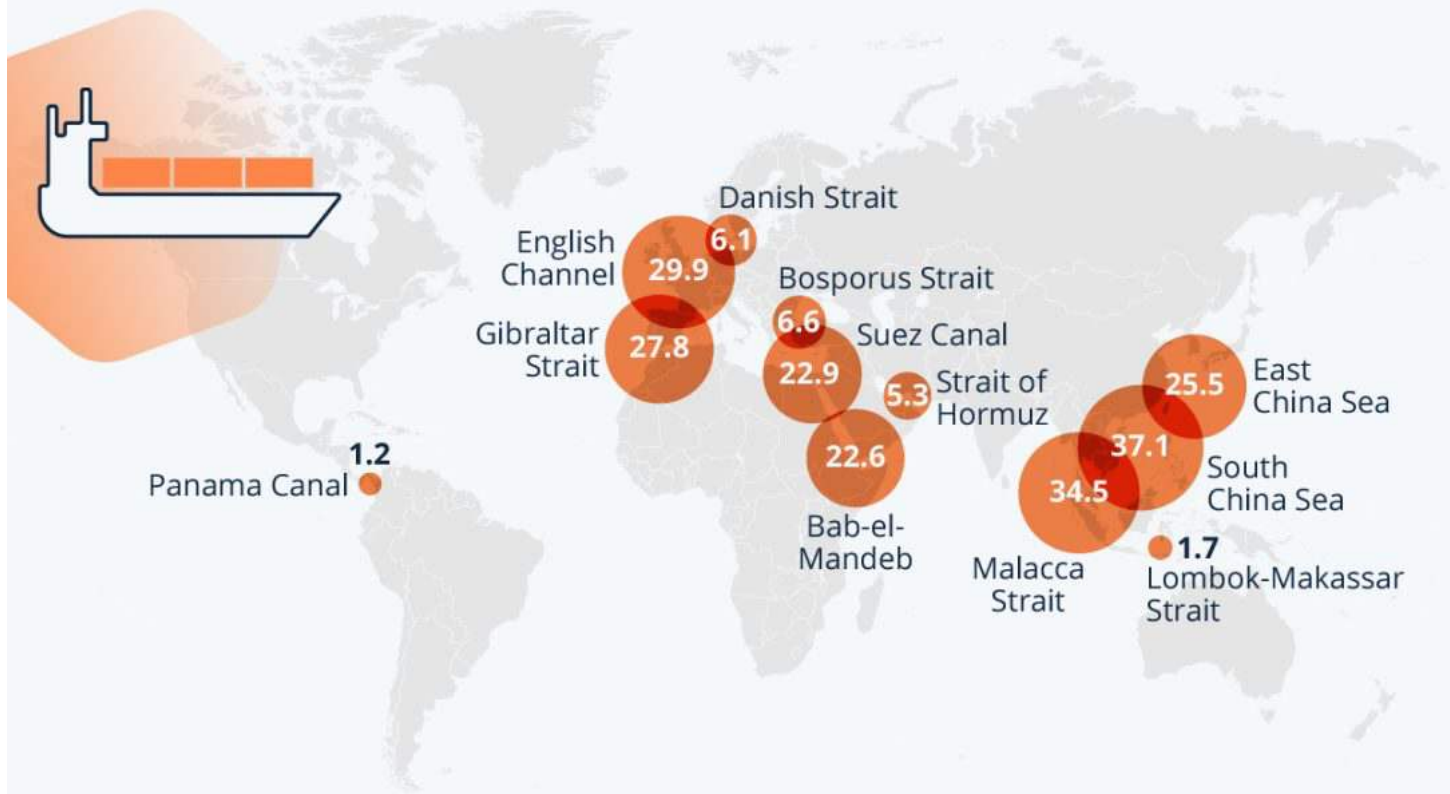
Even if the Houthis, who have a degree of operational independence from Iran, decide against it, it's still within striking distance of Iran.

Last week, an unnamed Iranian military official told the semi-official Tasnim news agency that Iran was considering opening a new front at Bab al Mandab if Trump plans a ground invasion.

If this were to happen, it would be pretty terrible news for trade between Europe and Asia, given that the next most direct maritime route includes an 8,000 km detour of Africa.

Global Shipping's Chokepoints

Share of maritime-traded goods between non-neighboring nations passing through the following chokepoints (in %)



2019 data. Share by weight. Assuming shortest route trade using major ports
Source: Pratson. Assessing impacts to maritime shipping from marine chokepoint closures. Communications in Transportation Research (2023)



Other Major Maritime Chokepoints and the Global Trade System

Suez Canal

In fact, there are only three other choke points in the global economy that would cause a similar inconvenience to shipping. The first is the Suez Canal, which sits at the top of the Red Sea and is effectively part of the same route as the Bab al Mandab. Like the Bab al Mandab, the closure of the Suez Canal would be terrible for Europe-Asia trade, and four ships would have to go around the Horn of Africa.



Panama Canal

The second is the Panama Canal, which is incredibly important for maritime trade between the east and west sides of America and for trade between America's east coast and Asia. Its closure would force ships going between America's east and west coasts to go all the way around South America and force ships going between America's east coast and Asia to go via the Atlantic rather than the Pacific, which takes about 50% longer.

Strait of Gibraltar

The third is the Strait of Gibraltar, which sits between Morocco and Spain and is especially important for trade between the Mediterranean states and both America and the rest of Europe. This choke point doesn't really get as much attention as the others because, well, everyone sort of assumes it will always be open, but its closure would be incredibly disruptive. Not only would it force an absolutely insane detour all the way around Africa up through the Bab al Mandab and then the Suez Canal, but it would also prove massively disruptive to the global economy. Given that, according to a study, something like 20% of the world's maritime trade by value passes through here more than any other strait.



Strait of Malacca

In fact, the only strait that hosts more trade is the Strait of Malacca, a stretch of water sandwiched between the Indonesian island of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula with Singapore at its southern tip.

The Strait connects the Indian Ocean in the west with the South China Sea and Pacific Ocean in the east, and as such is vital for maritime traffic traveling between East Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. China is particularly dependent on the Strait of Malacca, which accounts for something like two-thirds of all of China's maritime trade and about 3/4 of its oil imports. In 2003, Chinese Premier Hu Jintao coined the term Malacca dilemma to refer to this precarious dependence on the strait and the associated risk that some future adversary, perhaps the US, might block the strait in the event of a conflict.

Taiwan Strait

But it probably wouldn't be the end of the world, given that there are lots of alternative routes that don't require massive detours. This is true for most of the nearby straits, too, like the Taiwan Strait between Taiwan and the Chinese province of Fujian and the Korea Strait between South Korea and Japan. They witness a large amount of trade. However, they are easily circumvented.

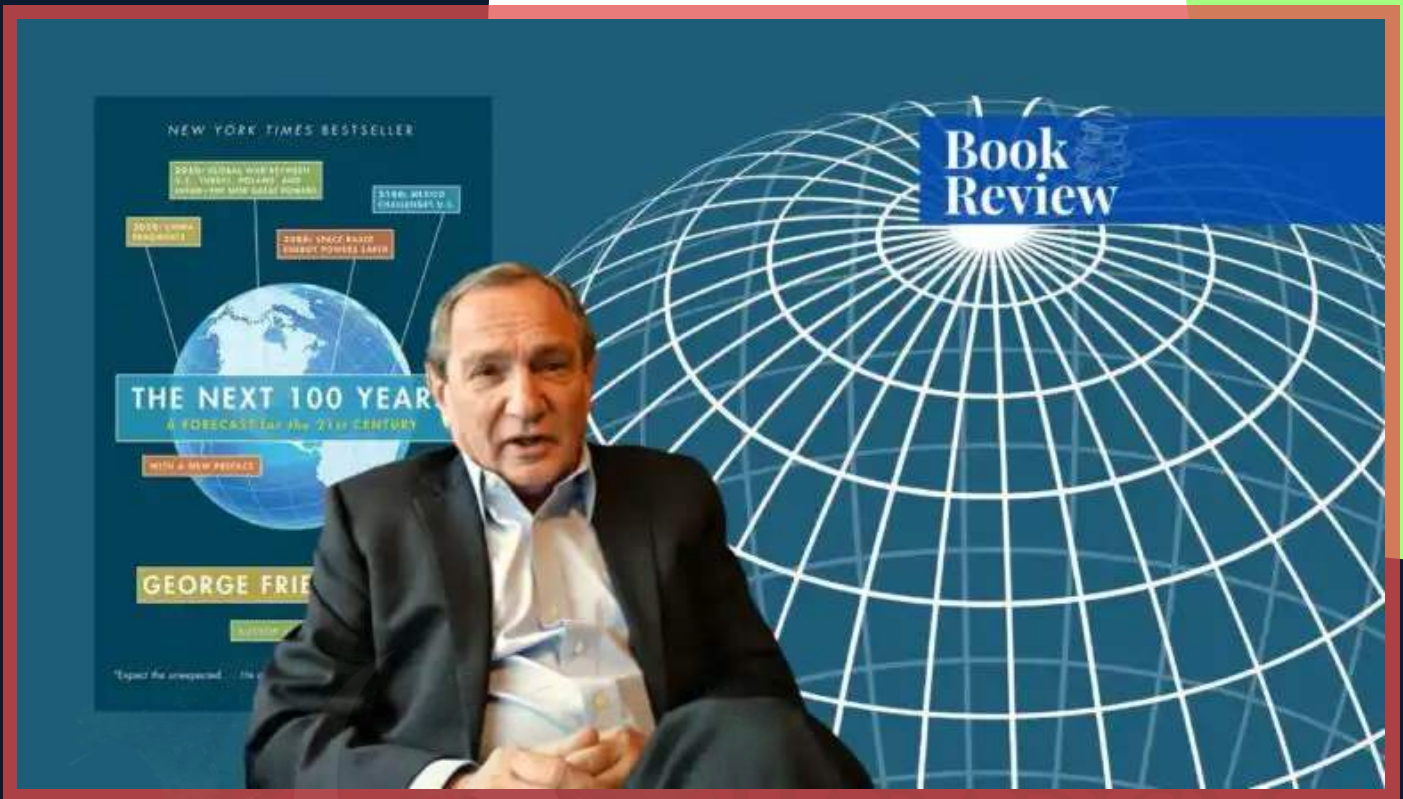
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The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century

About the Author



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



Introduction

We are seeing different trends emerge in the world that might not have been imaginable a century ago. The power structure from the last century has changed so rapidly that most of the states have tasted the protocol of having a powerful state and also have tasted the ferocity of destruction at the hands of other powerful states.

The 20th century is thought by many to be the most deadly century, in which two world wars were fought. Millions of people died, and millions were forced to evacuate their lands. The Cold War made the other half of the twentieth century the most suffocating, as both the powerful states (the US and the USSR) were about to experience a nuclear holocaust.



As the century turned from bipolar to unipolar, the war on terror started along with the looming, ferocious climate change. Many powerful states have emerged in different regions of the world, and these states are going to decide the coming decades of this century.

Overview

The author conducts an in-depth examination of historical trends and draws on contemporary geopolitical and geostrategic forecasting in order to identify potential trends and foresee the course of global politics. Friedman's analysis is based on an extensive study of history and geopolitics, despite the fact that some of his predictions may seem fanciful or unrealistic.

The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century makes a significant contribution to the ongoing debate over the future of the globe in the twenty-first century, whether or not his prediction is realized. He achieves an effective mix of giving comprehensive information and making his projections understandable to a wider audience.

Theme of the Book

Friedman begins *The Next 100 Years* by stating [his core opinion that the international](#) system is intrinsically unstable and that power transitions are a natural and repeating phenomenon in world history. He contends that the balance of power is continually shifting and that this dynamic will continue to impact international relations in the future.

He then identifies four geopolitical zones as the most important players in the twenty-first century: the United States, Europe, Russia, and China. According to Friedman, each of these regions has distinct strengths and limitations, and the interplay between them will determine global politics in the future.

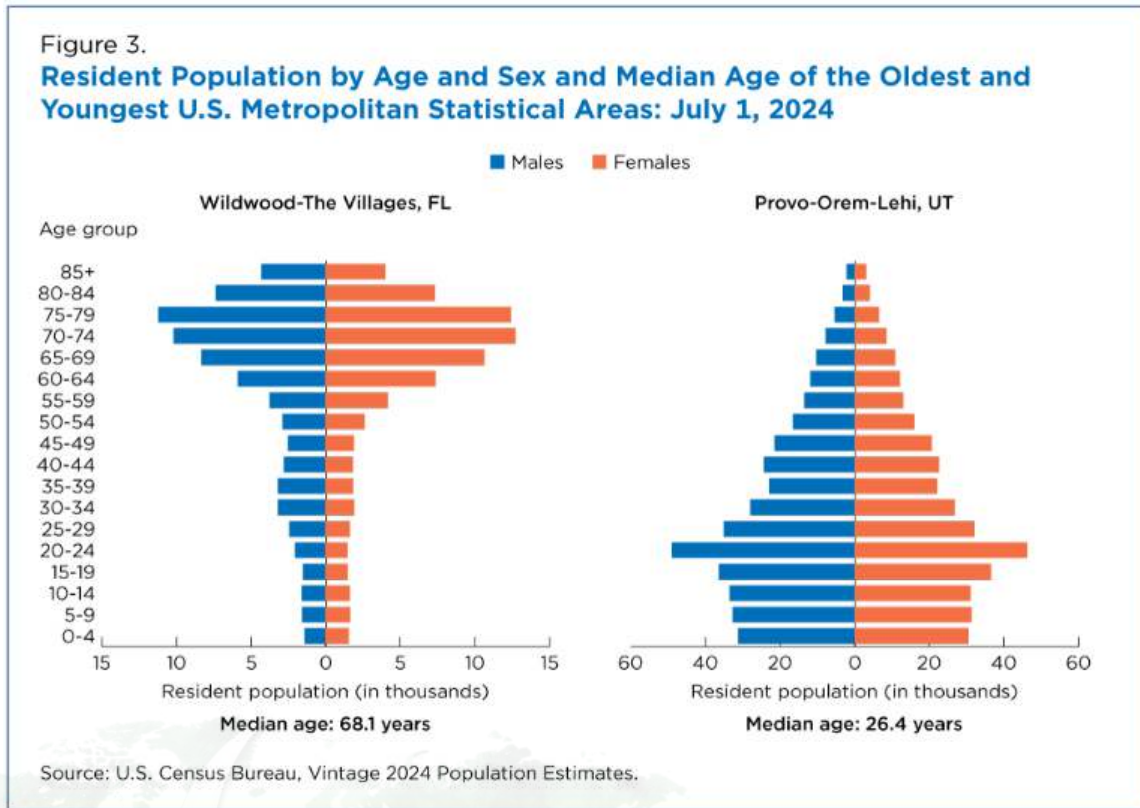
The Next 100 Years is structured into three major sections, each of which focuses on a distinct time period in the next 100 years. During these time periods, he outlines several features and power structures for the following decades. The first section looks at the bygone decade which was from 2010 to 2020. The second portion diagnoses the middle of the century, from 2020 to 2050, while the third part addresses the latter half of the century, from 2050 to 2100.



United States

One of Friedman's key topics in his book is the United States' relative fall as a worldwide superpower. According to Friedman, rising nations such as China, Russia, and India will pose greater threats to the United States. He claims that the [United States will lose its global dominance](#) [due](#) to a combination of economic, military, and demographic factors.

According to Friedman, one of the primary causes of this reduction is the United States' reliance on foreign oil. He claims that as domestic oil output drops, the US will become increasingly subject to energy shortages and price shocks. This, in turn, will lead to a greater reliance on imports, making the US more vulnerable to the policies of oil-producing countries such as Saudi Arabia and Russia.



Another factor that Friedman believes will contribute to the decline of the US is demographic change. He notes that the US is aging rapidly, with the baby boomer generation entering retirement and placing a strain on the country's social security and healthcare systems.

At the same time, the birth rate in the US is declining, which means that the country will have a smaller workforce to support its aging population.

Friedman also believes that non-state entities such as terrorist groups and cybercriminals would pose greater difficulties and strains to the United States. He claims that these groups will be able to carry out attacks and weaken the country's security by exploiting the vulnerabilities of the US's open society and technical infrastructure.

Despite these problems, Friedman is hopeful about the United States' long-term prospects. He emphasizes the country's great legacy of innovations and entrepreneurship, which he believes will assist it in overcoming problems and maintaining its place as a worldwide leader. He also points out that the United States has significant military and geopolitical might, which he believes might help it maintain its place as a superpower.

Russia



After discussing the United States' geographic and economic advantages, Friedman contends that Russia's geopolitical situation is unique and that its future is defined by its past experience as a Eurasian power. He observes that Russia has always served as a buffer zone between Europe and Asia and that its location gives it the ability and allows it to influence events on both continents.

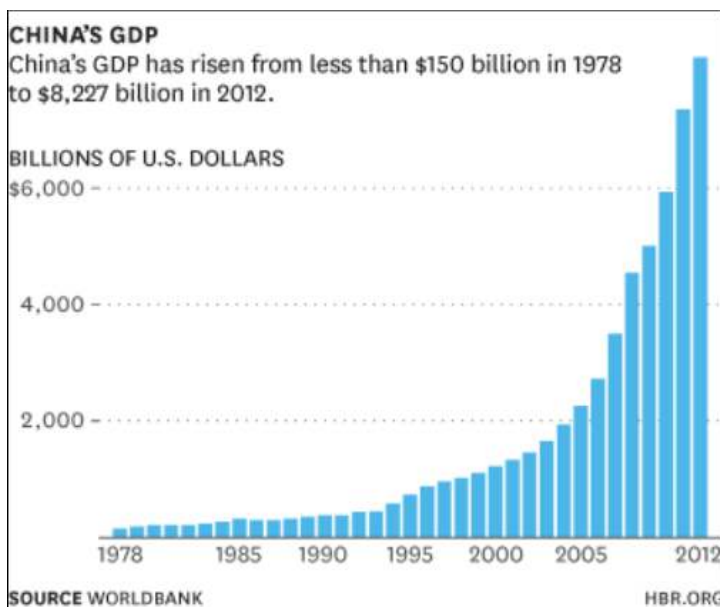
Friedman believes that Russia's history has molded its political culture, which prioritizes strong leadership and the centralization of power. He contends that Russia's current political system, led by President Vladimir Putin, is a continuation of this history and is unlikely to alter in the near future.

Russia's principal geopolitical goal, according to Friedman, is to maintain its dominance over its traditional sphere of influence, which encompasses Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. He observes that Russia's historical experience has made it apprehensive of foreign meddling in this region and that it will go to any length to prevent NATO and other Western organizations from expanding into this area.

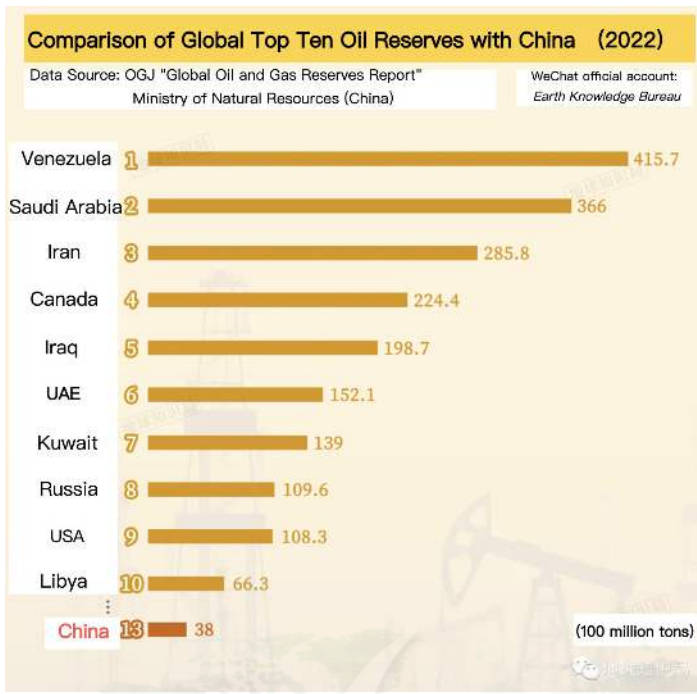
Friedman believes that Russia's relationship with the US will remain strained in the future and that the two countries will struggle for dominance in Eurasia. He contends that the US would want to preserve its dominance in Europe and Asia, while Russia will seek to keep the US out of its area of influence.

Despite this competition, Friedman believes that there are areas of potential cooperation between Russia and the United States. He notes that both countries share a common interest in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and in fighting terrorism. He also argues that Russia's energy resources could be a source of cooperation, as the United States seeks to reduce its dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

China



China, on the other hand, is a rising power with a rapidly growing economy during the last few decades. He observes that China's ascent is not a new event but rather a continuation of a trend that began in the late 1970s when the country began to open up to the outside world. According to Friedman, China's development is not necessarily a threat to the United States but rather a challenge that the United States must be prepared to face.



Friedman contends that China's ascent is not inevitable and that the country confronts a number of hurdles that could stymie its progress. China's population problem is one of the most serious challenges it faces. The country's one-child policy, which was implemented in 1979, has led to an aging population and a shrinking workforce. This demographic problem could lead to slower economic growth in the future, and could also strain China's social welfare system.

Another issue that China faces is a scarcity of natural resources. While the country has a large population and a growing economy, it has limited natural resources such as oil and gas. China has been trying hard to get energy resources from other countries, but this strategy may grow more challenging as other countries compete for those resources.

Friedman also argues that [China confronts major political issues](#). The Communist Party's authoritarian political structure may limit the country's ability to innovate and adapt to new conditions. Control of the media and the internet by the government may also hinder the country's capacity to engage with the rest of the world and learn from other countries.

Despite these challenges, Friedman believes that China will continue to grow and become a major player on the global stage. He notes that China has a long history of civilization and that its people are resilient and adaptable. Friedman also believes that China will become more assertive on the international stage as it seeks to protect its interests and expand its influence. However, he argues that China is unlikely to become a hegemonic power and that the country will face significant challenges in maintaining its rise.

Why this Book

One of the major advantages of *The Next 100 Years* is Friedman's ability to synthesize complex geopolitical trends and distill them into clear and concise predictions about the future. His analysis of the four major regions is particularly insightful, and it provides a valuable framework for understanding the evolving dynamics of global politics.

Friedman's focus on the importance of power transfers and the inherent volatility of the international system serves as a valuable reminder that the world is continuously changing, with new problems and possibilities appearing all the time.

Another strength of the book is its broad scope. Rather than focusing on a specific issue or region, Friedman provides a comprehensive analysis of the major trends that will shape the 21st century.

This allows readers to develop a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between different factors, and to see how seemingly disparate issues are interconnected.

Conclusion

In conclusion, George Friedman's *The Next 100 Years* is a thought-provoking and fascinating read that challenges readers to think deeply about the future of our world. Through his insightful analysis and predictions, Friedman paints a vivid picture of the geopolitical landscape that awaits us in the coming century. While some of his predictions may be controversial or unsettling, they are nevertheless grounded in a deep understanding of history, human nature, and the forces that shape our world.

As such, *The Next 100 Years* offers valuable insights for anyone who wishes to better understand the complex and ever-changing world in which we live. Ultimately, this book reminds us that the future is always uncertain and that the [choices](#) we make today will have profound implications for generations to come.

It is a timely reminder that we must be thoughtful, proactive, and courageous in our efforts to shape the world in which we live. In short, *The Next 100 Years* is a must-read for anyone who cares about the future of our planet, and the role that we all have to play in shaping it.

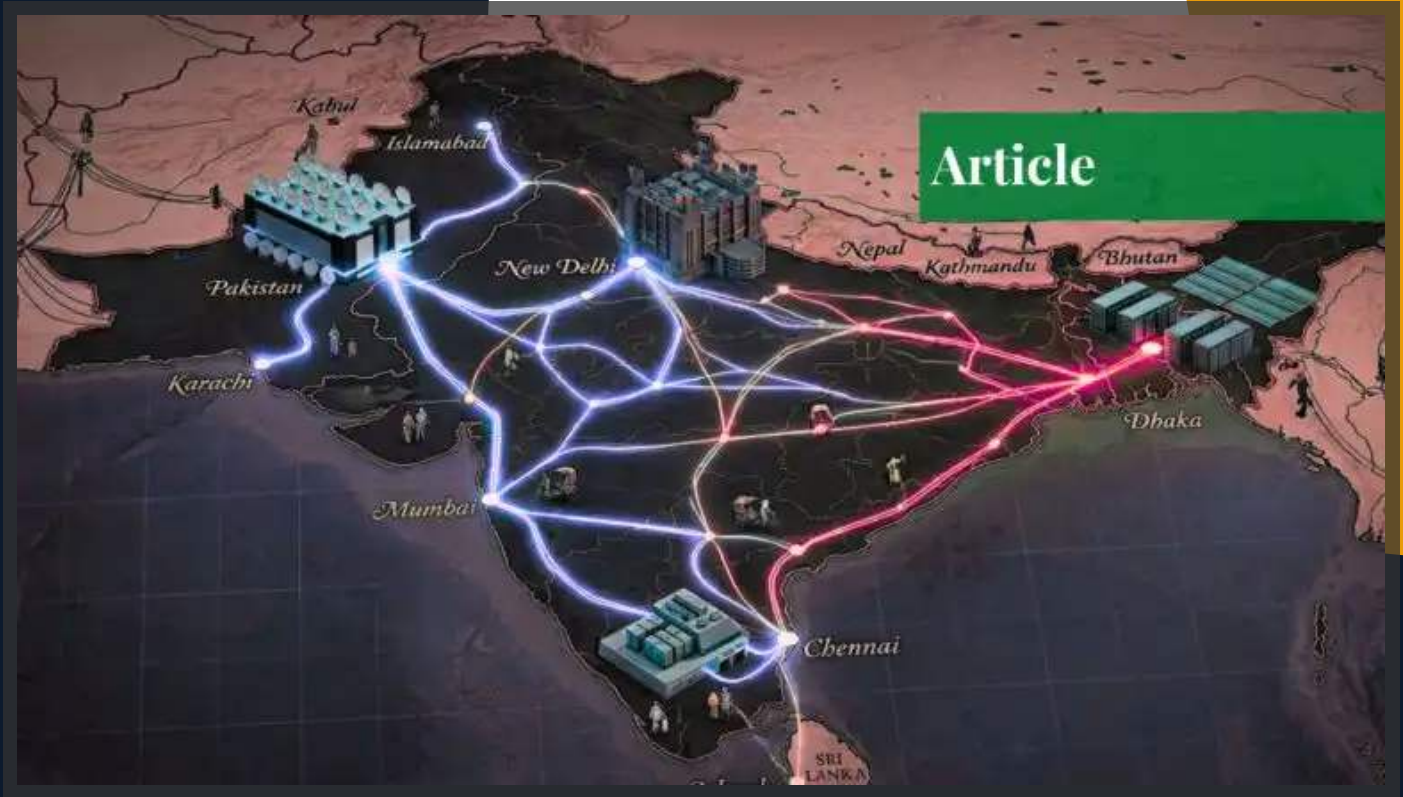
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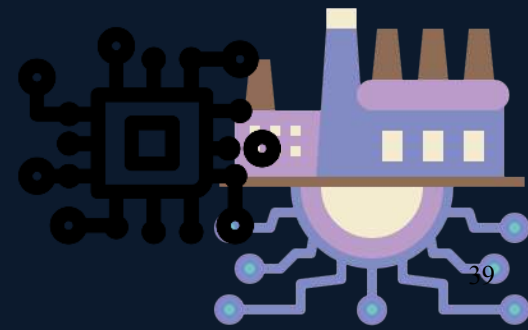


Why Is South Asia Becoming the Terrain of Digital Power?

About the Author



Moinuddin Ahmad is a student of International Relations with a strong interest in foreign policy, security studies, and global governance. His writings examine the intersection of geopolitics, technology, and strategic affairs, exploring how emerging trends are reshaping international security and the global order.



The following big geopolitical battle might not be based on the territory, trade routes, or even technology itself. It is also being contested more and more over the invisible architecture of data, and South Asia is not just a part of this contest. It is coming to be the landscape on which it takes place.



Data colonialism in South Asia

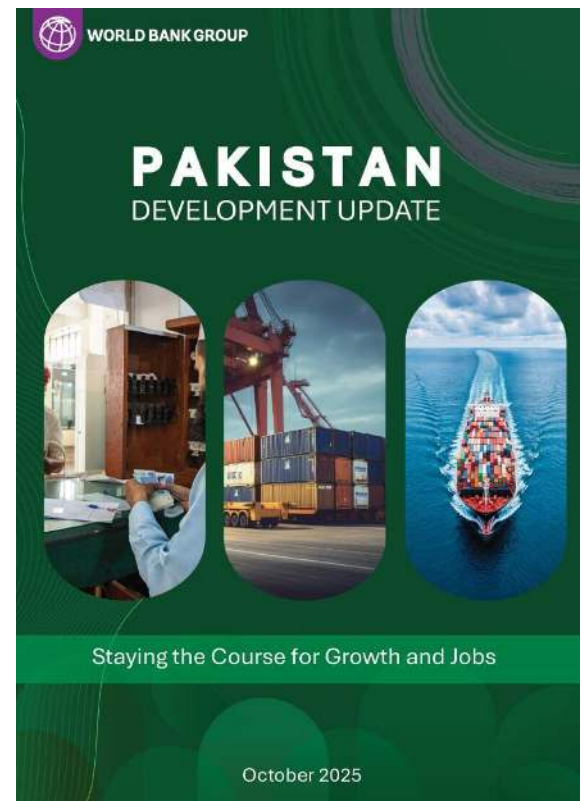
This distinction matters. None of them is a leading manufacturer of sophisticated digital technologies yet, nor does it set global standards for artificial intelligence or cloud in the world. However, the region is fast gaining strategic relevance due to its magnitude, structural loopholes, and the increasing incorporation in the external digital networks.

What is becoming more apparent is a complex competition between national powers, as global actors are increasingly influencing the infrastructure, rules, and vulnerabilities that characterize the generation, control, and contestation of data.

The paradox of this transformation is in the middle. South Asia is closely connected and loosely exposed. According to the [World Bank](#), 61 percent of individuals in the region reside within the coverage of mobile broadband networks and fail to use the internet, the highest in the world. Simultaneously, the economies of the region are quickly becoming digital and integrated into the global arena, and are also producing more and more data. This establishes a two-fold reality in that enormous pools of untapped digital potential exist alongside a prior overreliance on external technological systems.

In this regard, data is not just a product of connectivity. It is an asset of strategy that supports the economic life, the capacity of states, and the geopolitical power. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development underlines that the digital economy is becoming more material, and it needs enormous physical infrastructure, including data centers, fiber-optic cables, cooling systems, and energy supply. It estimates that data centers operating in isolation can consume up to 1,000 terawatt-hours of power in the world in 2026. Data control, consequently, cannot be detached from infrastructure control that makes it possible.

The vulnerabilities of South Asia are strategically important at this point. The digital infrastructure of the region is not even, disjointed, and in most instances externally reliant. This is the dynamic that is most evident in Pakistan. In the 2025 Pakistan Development Update published by the World Bank, it is stated that the number of people engaging in internet usage is only approximately one-third of the entire population, which is covered by mobile networks, and the number of towers is not that high, and the implementation of 5G networks is lacking, which restricts access and quality.



Such limitations not only slow down the digital adoption, but they also determine the conditions under which it takes place.

When domestic infrastructure is insufficient, digital expansion tends to rely on external systems. This creates a kind of asymmetric integration: states can access global connectivity and services, but on terms that restrict their ability to control data flows and stores. This dilemma is reflected in the decision of Pakistan to permit Starlink to operate, as reported by The Diplomat in 2025. Satellite-based internet has the potential to fill connectivity gaps, especially in remote regions, although it also creates dependence on foreign-owned infrastructure in areas where important communication networks are required.

The outcome is the change in the experience of sovereignty in the digital era. The territory no longer becomes a guarantee of the control over the flows of information. Rather, sovereignty is conditional upon the power to control infrastructure, control platforms, and continue access. South Asian digital path can be seen, in this regard, not merely as a question of modernization, but as whether states can have any meaningful control over more and more externalized systems.

India has tried to overcome this difficulty by putting data governance in terms of strategic autonomy. Its focus on the concept of data sovereignty is an indication of fears of what policy makers have termed as data colonialism, which is the act of foreign companies taking advantage of domestic data without giving it back to the local community. This strategy aims at placing India as a participant of the global digital economy, but not as a follower in it.

But even the relative merits of India bring to light the constraints of sovereignty in an extremely globalized system. Although it has built extensive digital public infrastructure and has a massive domestic market, it is still involved in international supply chains of semiconductors, cloud services, and advanced technology. This is an expression of a larger structural fact: the sovereignty of the digital is not unconditioned. It is in a web of dependencies, which can be controlled, but not eradicated.

In South Asia, all these dependencies are further compounded by the political practices that directly influence the digital space. The utilization of internet shutdowns is one of the most far-reaching and yet neglected factors. [Access Now](#) also reports that in 2025, the Asia-Pacific region had registered 195 instances of internet shutdowns, with India and Pakistan being the most common. Although the reasons behind such shutdowns are often motivated by security reasons, the strategic consequences of such shutdowns go way beyond the immediate political situations.

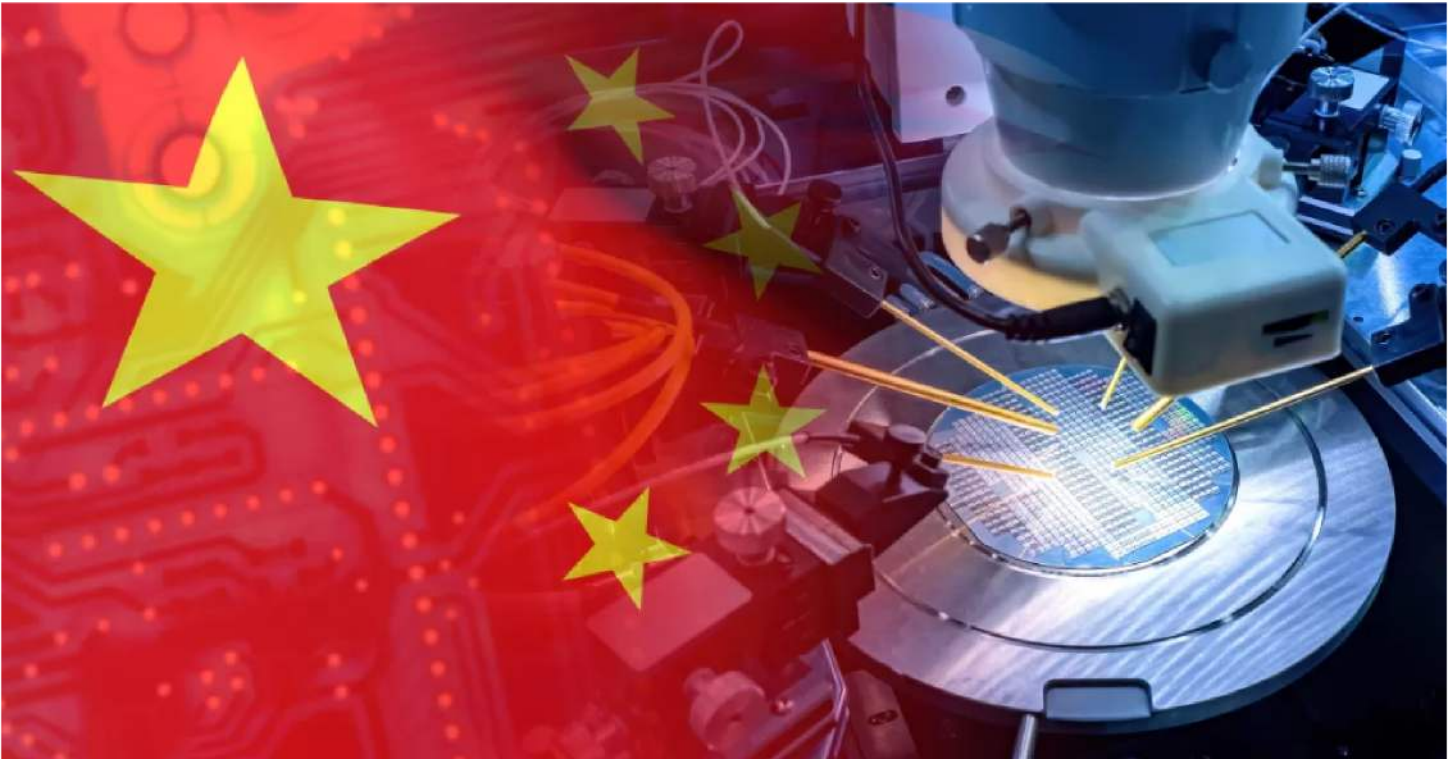


Practically, the shutdowns are an indicator that the connectivity is conditional; it can be broken in case of instability, depending on the time when the digital infrastructure is required. This erodes confidence in the digital systems, deters future investment, and sustains the pillars of a stable digital economy. More to the point, it causes a structural vulnerability: in the event that domestic systems are viewed as untrustworthy, users and businesses will be more willing to resort to third-party platforms and other connectivity tools.

This dialectic puts forward an important though undervalued truth: the practices that are supposed to impose control over the digital space can actually externalize the latter. States can unwillingly drive the data flows, user behavior, and dependence on the Internet by disrupting domestic connectivity, strengthening the effects of external actors. Internet shutdowns are, in a way, not only instruments of control but also signs of strategic vulnerability.

These weaknesses are enhanced by the wider geopolitical background. South Asia is at the crossroads of rival digital ecosystems, especially those that are influenced by the United States and China. Both provide different models of technological development, investment in infrastructure, and regulatory models.

The interaction with these models between access, control, and alignment is usually complicated by trade-offs between the countries in the region.



The strategy of China has been to invest in infrastructure such as telecommunication and data systems, and the United States and its partners have been [investing](#) in cloud services, digital trade, and regulatory standards. States in South Asia, which do not have fully-fledged domestic alternatives, tend to work on them at the same time. The outcome is a discontinuous digital topography where various layers of the ecosystem, such as hardware, software, connectivity, and governance, are shaped by various external forces.

This disintegration leads to the so-called stratified dependence. A nation might depend on a group of partners in terms of physical infrastructure, another group in terms of digital services, and another group in terms of regulation congruence. Although this may yield flexibility in the short run, it makes long-term strategic planning more complicated and puts the organization in a position of exposure to external pressure.

There is also a lack of coordinated approaches at the regional level, which also restricts strategic autonomy.

South Asia does not have standardized data governance, transnational data movements, or online trade. Although the data protection laws and the digital policies have been put in place in individual countries, they are mostly nationwide. The patchwork of regulations that has arisen minimizes interoperability, adds costs, and undermines the collective bargaining capacity of the region in global digital negotiations.

Another aspect of the new competition is environmental constraints. The digital infrastructure development, as noted by UNCTAD, has high energy and water implications. South Asia, which is already energy-deficient and vulnerable to climate change, will have to compete with the material costs of digitalization. The region will otherwise end up consuming the environmental costs of the digital economy without receiving much of the value.



Put collectively, these forces indicate a paradigm change in the way power is exercised in the region. The geopolitics of data in South Asia is not characterized by one rivalry or even one technology. The interaction of the infrastructure gaps, the governance choices, political practices, and the external competition shapes it. This intersection is a very strategic location in the region.

To call South Asia a battleground is thus to acknowledge a particular type of struggle, the one that is diffuse, multi-layered, and usually indirect. It is not typified by blatant conflict but by the painting and development of systems, interdependencies, and standards. This is not done by controlling the territory but by having the capacity to define the way data is created, passed, stored, and managed.



The key concern is whether South Asia will continue to be the battleground or become a participant in the [process](#) of its formation. The solution will be based on a chain of interconnected decisions. Physical infrastructure investment, fiber networks, data centers, energy systems, etc., is necessary, but it has to be supported by coherent regulatory frameworks to improve transparency, interoperability, and trust.

It is also critical that the political practices

that weaken digital confidence should be reevaluated. The lessening of dependency on internet blackouts and other problems of creating more stability in the connection is not just a matter of governance but rather a strategic necessity. In the digital economy, trust is a type of infrastructure by itself.

Another avenue that has not been utilized is regional [cooperation](#). Coherent data governance, cybersecurity, and digital trade would increase resilience and decrease the reliance on external systems. Although political facts have traditionally curtailed this kind of collaboration, the increasing significance of digital structures can generate new motivations for convergence.

The interests are not limited to economics. The management of information and online infrastructure is becoming an influential factor in political independence, security, and international power. A territory that is reliant on external systems can have its strategic alternatives limited. On the other hand, a place that builds its own forces and synchronizes its policies can have a more significant impact on the conditions of digital interaction.

South Asia is at the [crossroads](#) in this matter. It will not be only technological adoption or market growth that will determine its digital future. It will be determined by the extent to which it manages to go through the relationship between dependency and autonomy, control and openness, fragmentation and coordination.

In case the current trends continue, the area will become a battlefield, where the data flows will be modified mainly by foreign forces, and the domestic apparatus will be limited. In case, though, South Asia can make its infrastructure development in line with a consistent policy and regional collaboration, it can become a more self-reliant and powerful actor in the global digital landscape.

The data politics are not a far-fetched concept. It is playing out live and changing the principles of power. That process is especially apparent in South Asia, not so much because the region is in the global vanguard of the digital, but because it demonstrates, in a rather disconcerting way, how digital power is produced, challenged, and dominated.

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Pakistan's History of Diplomatic Mediation and the US-Iran War

About the Author



Muhammad Hamza Tanveer is a political analyst specializing in South Asian and Middle Eastern affairs. His work focuses on religious nationalism, regional security, and minority rights. He has been featured in Stratheia, Pakistan Today, Pakistan Observer, and the Asian Mirror. He is also working as a research analyst and political commentator for Paradigm Shift and contributes to the monthly magazine of Nearpeer.

With the two-week ceasefire, both the US and Iran are claiming victory in the war. The claim of victory of either side is debatable. However, the victory of a third country is irrefutable, and that is Pakistan. After years of global isolation, Pakistan has emerged as a strong diplomatic power on the global stage in recent years. The world has witnessed the pinnacle of Pakistan's diplomatic influence in the recent ceasefire between the United States and Iran, as the country played a critical role in de-escalating regional tensions. However, Pakistan's role as an international mediator is not new. For decades, Pakistan has been involved in quiet diplomacy among different nations.



Nevertheless, Pakistan, just like a phoenix, has once again risen from the ashes. The country is now known around the world for its strong diplomatic influence. Since the start of the US-Israeli war on Iran, there has been widespread fear of a broader regional war in the Middle East, which could ultimately lead to World War 3.

However, some populist political leaders in the past damaged the country's international standing through their populist moves. Such leaders turned statecraft into megaphone diplomacy, subordinating the country's foreign policy to mere theatrics to enhance their populism. Indeed, such theatrics and moves help populist leaders win public popularity. However, this always comes at the expense of the nation's international standing. Countries led by populist figures, as seen in India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, often face the risk of diplomatic isolation driven by rhetoric and political theatrics. The same happened with Pakistan.

The US President Donald Trump's self-imposed deadline and his threat to demolish "a whole civilization" further increased fear around the globe. Pakistan's timely intervention led to peace negotiations, following a two-week ceasefire between Washington and Tehran. However, this is not the first time Pakistan has mediated between warring or conflicting states. In June 2025, Pakistan also mediated between the US and Iran to establish a temporary ceasefire, saving the region from a catastrophe. Pakistan's history of international mediation dates back to the 1970s.

Diplomatic Mediation of Pakistan between the US and China during the Cold War



During the Cold War, the United States needed a strong regional power against the Soviet Union. By the late 1960s, relations between China and the Soviet Union started deteriorating.

The United States saw an opportunity in this increasing split between the two sides. The US forces were also deeply stuck in the Vietnam War. China supported North Vietnam. Washington hoped that cordial relations with China might pressure North Vietnam to negotiate. Moreover, the US understood that building ties with China could improve its global position and weaken Soviet influence around the world.

For this purpose, Washington sought Pakistan's help as the latter had cordial relations with China. Islamabad played a critical role in organizing backdoor diplomacy between the two sides. In 1971, Henry Kissinger visited China for diplomatic negotiations with the then-government. This visit was followed by a state-level visit to China by then-US President Richard Nixon, establishing cordial diplomatic relations between the two sides. Pakistan's role in mediating between Washington and Beijing continues to stand as a hallmark of its diplomatic reach and influence.

Pakistan as a Diplomatic Bridge and Mediator in the Geneva Accords

During the Soviet-Afghan War, Pakistan acted as a frontline state by training Afghan Mujahedin and hosting millions of Afghan refugees. It was due to Pakistan's role that the Soviet intervention



and invasion of Afghanistan failed. Pakistan played a critical role in the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The Soviet-Afghan issue was resolved through negotiations under the United Nations. Pakistan represented interests and demands aligned with the Afghan resistance

groups. Due to Pakistan's role, a neutral government was installed in Afghanistan following the Soviet intervention in the country. The Soviet Union and the United States provided security guarantees to Afghanistan under the Geneva Accords.

Pakistan as a Mediator Between the Afghan Taliban and the United States

After almost two decades of continuous bombing in Afghanistan, the United States decided to leave the country, as it was impossible for the NATO alliance to defeat the Afghan Taliban. However, the US government needed a face-saving way to leave the country. The Afghan Taliban, due to deep-rooted distrust, were not interested in peace negotiations with the US government. Washington [asked](#) the Pakistani government for its assistance to bring the Afghan Taliban to the negotiation table. Pakistan played a pivotal role in the signing of the [Doha Agreement](#) between the Afghan Taliban and the US government in February 2020. This agreement marked an end to the 20-year-long US-led so-called "War on Terror".

Pakistan's Diplomatic Revival: The US-Iran Talks in Islamabad

The US-Israeli unprovoked attack on Iran during the ongoing negotiation process between Tehran and Washington was a sheer violation of international rules and norms. This attack inculcated a deep-rooted sense of distrust among the Iranian government officials. Iran's strong retaliation



forced the United States to seek a face-saving. US President Donald Trump, in his desperation over humiliating losses in the US-Israel-Iran war, threatened to demolish the whole

Iranian civilization. This threat sparked fear around the globe.

However, through its astute diplomacy, Pakistan not only potentially saved the Iranian civilization but also saved the world from a broader regional war.

Pakistan, through its backdoor diplomacy, established a two-week ceasefire between the two sides,



and top government officials from both sides visited Islamabad to achieve some semblance of peace. However, whether long term peace can be achieved in the region remains to be seen.

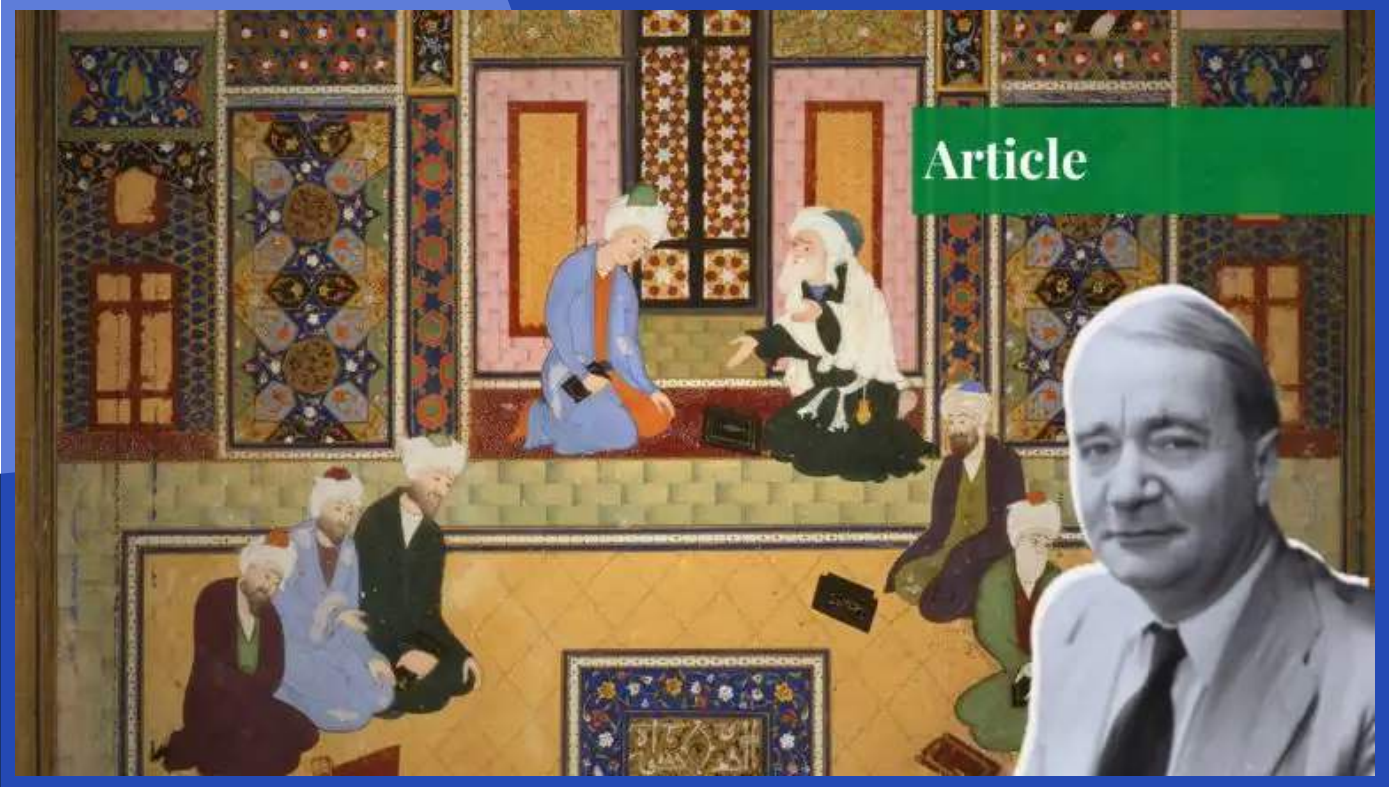
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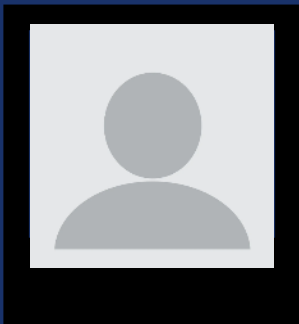
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Henry Corbin and the Rediscovery of Islamic Philosophy

About the Author



Mahrukh Batool studied economics but has always been more haunted by history. She writes about colonialism, the long afterlife of empires, and the ideas that still shape how we think.





When Henry Corbin arrived in Tehran in 1945 to take up a position at the newly established [Institut Français d'Iranologie](#). He found university philosophy departments teaching almost exclusively Western thinkers, Descartes, Kant, and Hegel, while native traditions of Islamic philosophy persisted largely outside the modern academy.

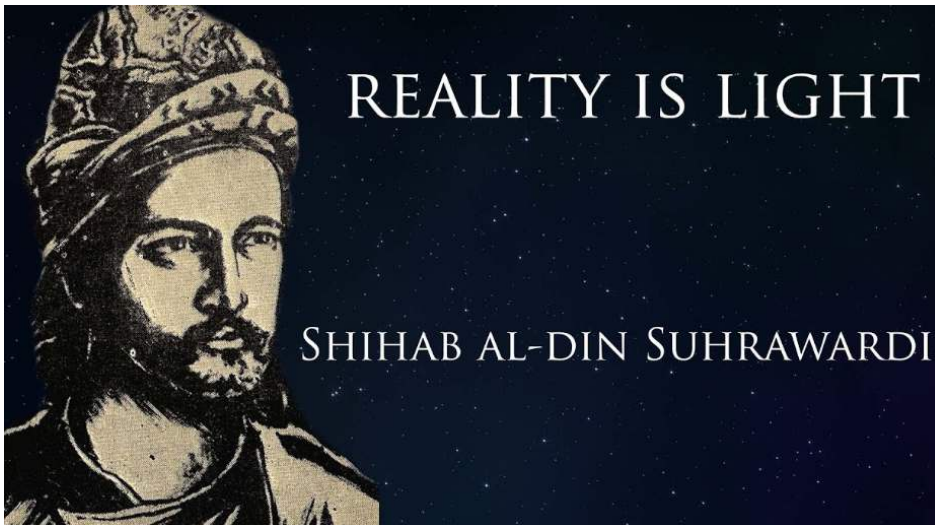
Corbin spent the next three decades working alongside major Iranian scholars like [Seyyed Hossein Nasr](#) to reverse that situation. The irony is that the man most responsible for insisting Islamic philosophy belonged within philosophy's canon itself was a Frenchman from Paris. What do we make of that?

The question matters because it sits at the intersection of two urgent concerns: the debate about who gets to represent whom across the divide of East and West, and the less fashionable question of whether Western intellectual life has amputated something from itself that it cannot recover without looking elsewhere.

From Heidegger to the East

Born in Paris in 1903, Corbin was formed in the rigorous traditions of European philosophy. He studied theology and scholasticism and became one of the first French translators of [Martin Heidegger](#), traveling to Germany to meet the philosopher whose work he found electrifying. Heidegger's project was essentially an attempt to dig beneath the crust of Western metaphysics and recover the forgotten question of "*being*," which centuries of rationalist abstraction had buried under procedure and system. Corbin absorbed this method of retrieval and then followed it in a direction Heidegger never anticipated.

The decisive turn came through an encounter with a manuscript. Louis Massignon, the great French scholar of Islamic studies, placed in Corbin's hands the writings of [Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi](#). Suhrawardi's project, which he called *Hikmat al-Ishraq* or the *Philosophy of Illumination*, proposed that reality, at its foundation, was not the kind of thing that syllogisms could fully grasp. Reality was structured like light. It proceeded from an absolute luminous source through cascading gradations, and genuine knowledge of it required not merely the operation of reason but a transformation of the one who seeks to know. The knower had to be changed by the



known.

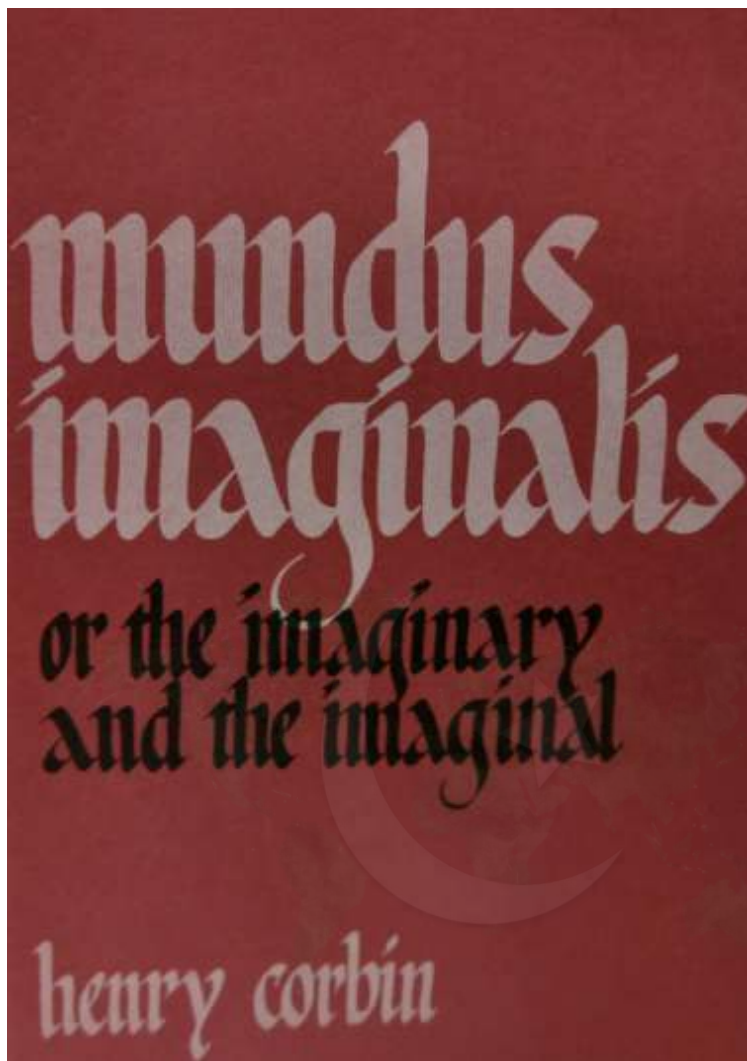
Corbin later said that with this encounter, his spiritual destiny was sealed. It is worth pausing over what that sentence means. Corbin was not being rhetorical. He meant that Suhrawardi had answered something in him that

Heidegger had only opened. Where Heidegger diagnosed the forgetting of *being* as the central catastrophe of Western thought, Suhrawardi offered a geography of what had been lost and a method for finding it again.

The Reality of the Imaginal

That geography is called the *alam al-mithal*, or what Corbin translated into Latin as the *mundus imaginalis*, the imaginal world. This is perhaps his most original and consequential contribution to philosophy, and it requires careful handling because its name makes it easy to misunderstand. The imaginal world is not the imaginary world. It is, according to the tradition Corbin recovered from centuries of Sufi and Shi'ite metaphysics, an ontologically real domain situated between the world of matter and the world of pure intellect.

Western philosophy since the Enlightenment had progressively narrowed its account of

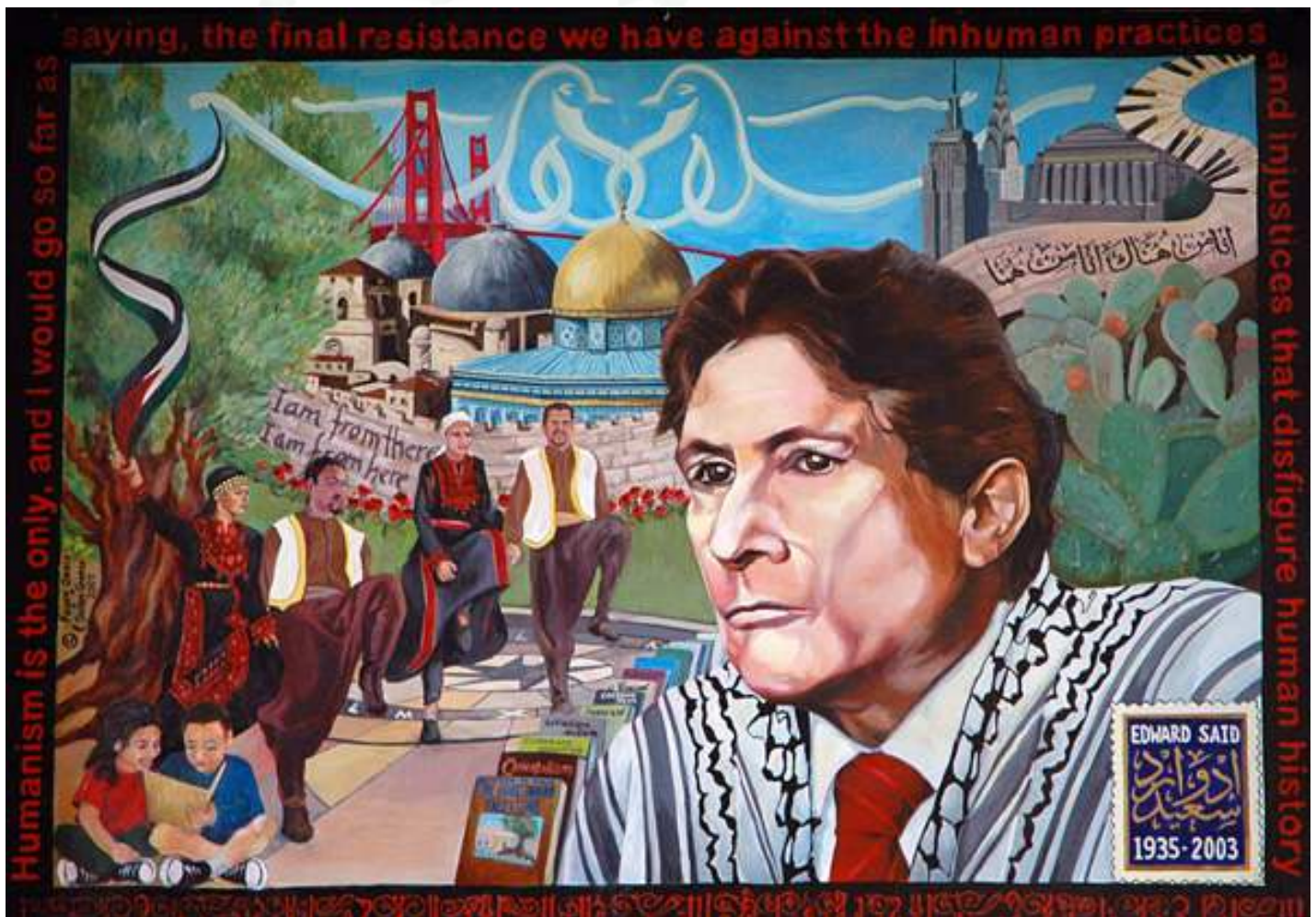


valid knowledge to either empirical sense data or rational inference. Everything that did not fit one of these two categories was either dismissed as superstition or demoted to the status of mere poetry. The Islamic theosophers, as Corbin called them, had never made this amputation.

In the tradition running from Suhrawardi through [Ibn Arabi](#) to [Mulla Sadra](#), the imagination in its active, disciplined form was understood as a genuine cognitive faculty that disclosed real features of reality unavailable to the senses or to abstract reasoning. This was not anti-rationalism. These were among the most technically accomplished philosophers of their age. It was, rather, a richer account of what reason was embedded in and what it required around it to function truthfully.

Beyond Orientalism

It is here that the question of Orientalism becomes genuinely complex. [Edward Said's critique](#), devastating and largely correct in its target, described Western scholarship on the East as a mode of power. The construction of an exotic, legible, subordinate object called the Orient by a rational, authoritative, superior subject called the West.



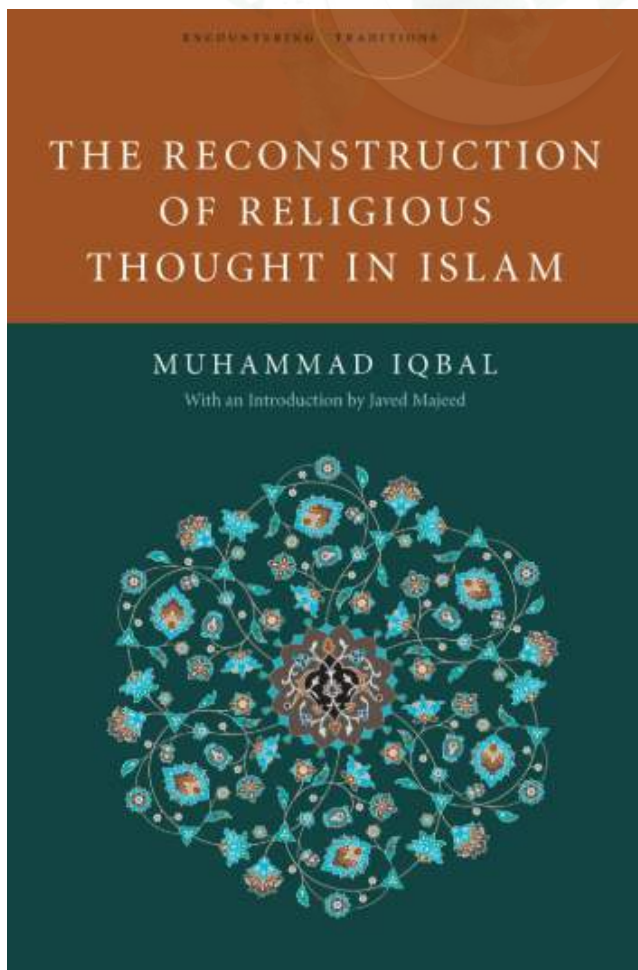
“Edward Said Memorial at San Francisco State University” by Leilani Xicotencatl is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

But Corbin did not write about the Islamic philosophers the way a naturalist writes about specimens. He wrote from inside their problems, attempting to understand a doctrine as it is experienced by someone living within it, rather than reducing it to a historical curiosity. His [decades-long dialogue](#) with Allameh Tabataba’i, the great Shia philosopher and theologian, produced some of the most remarkable cross-traditional thinking of the twentieth century.

It was further refracted through the comparative philosophy of Toshihiko Izutsu, whose engagement brought Buddhist and Taoist vocabularies into the same conceptual space. It is difficult to think of a cleaner example of what dialogical philosophy across civilizations might actually look like.

The Question for Pakistan

None of this exempts Corbin from criticism. His tendency to treat Islamic philosophy as a timeless spiritual repository, somewhat removed from the political and social histories in which it was embedded, reflects real limitations. These are legitimate concerns. And yet the alternative to a flawed dialogism is not a pure and perfect encounter. It is usually no encounter at all. And for postcolonial societies like Pakistan, where the problem is not that Western scholars have said too much about our intellectual traditions but that our own institutions have internalized the assumption that serious philosophy happens elsewhere, Corbin's example carries a particular provocation.



Iqbal, whose philosophical poetry and prose constitute one of the twentieth century's most serious attempts to reconstruct Islamic thought in dialogue with Western philosophy, remains largely absent from the syllabi. Students may encounter Iqbal as a national poet, assigned in Urdu literature courses or invoked in civic ceremonies, but rarely as a philosopher whose engagement with Bergson, Nietzsche, and Rumi deserves rigorous critical examination on its own terms. The tradition Iqbal drew upon, including the very illuminationist lineage that Corbin spent his life recovering, needs to be treated as a living intellectual resource.

This curricular failure reflects a deeper, unexamined assumption that the categories of legitimate thought were settled in Europe and that everything else requires their endorsement. Corbin, the Frenchman who annotated his copies of Heidegger in Arabic and Persian and who described arriving in Iran as arriving in a country the color of heaven, did not share that assumption.

He knew that the philosophical conversation about the nature of reality, the structure of knowledge, and the life of the spirit has been conducted across many languages, many centuries, and many traditions and that any account of it that begins and ends in Europe is simply incomplete and that engagement, even flawed engagement, is better than the silence of mutual incomprehension. The threshold he crossed remains open. The question is whether we have the courage, on both sides, to meet somewhere in the middle.

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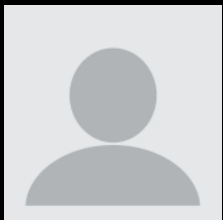
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21st Century Afghanistan: The Embodiment of “A Country Without Women”

About the Author



Syeda Farani Fatima is an undergraduate student of International Relations at the International Islamic University of Islamabad, with a strong interest in anti-corruption, counter-terrorism and geopolitics. Strongly committed to fighting corruption, terrorism, and supporting national reform through research and public service.





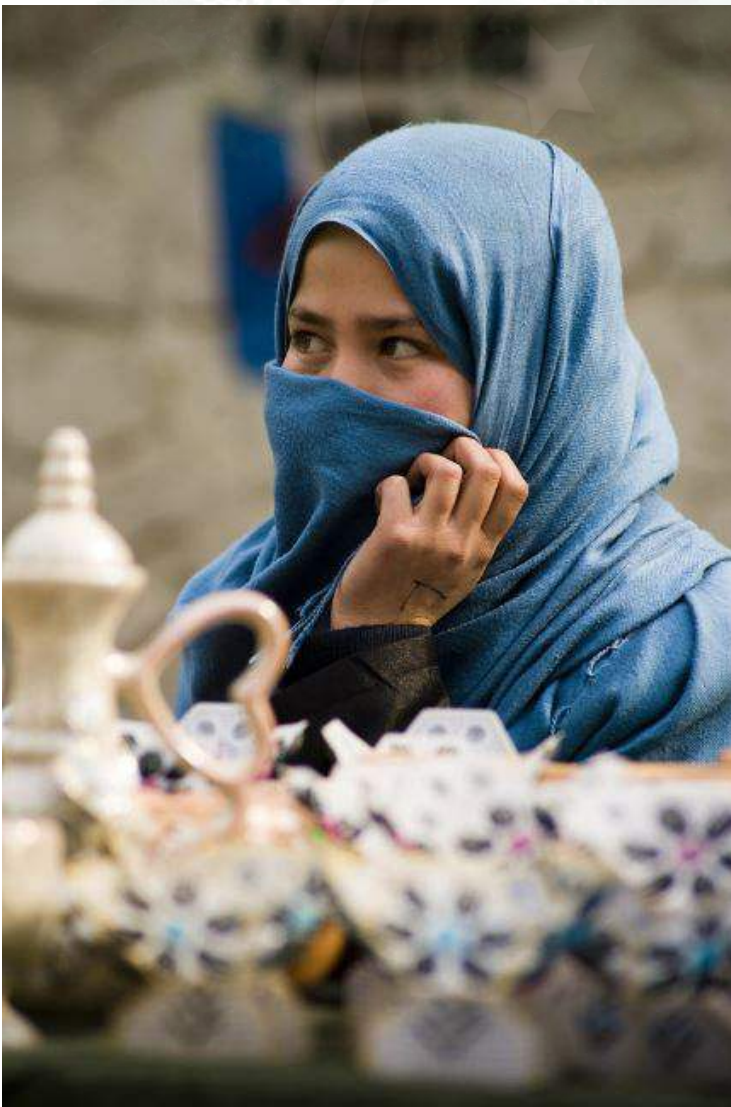
Introduction

In French literature, there is a phrase known as "*le pays sans femmes*," which means "a country without women." It represents an imaginary land where women exist but in silence. They are deprived of basic rights, including education, freedom of speech, participation in politics, and access to healthcare. A French philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir, in her book "The Second Sex," wrote an [everlasting statement](#) that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." This statement emphasized that social norms, rather than biological ones, construct gender roles. It explained how societal norms can shape women's identity by restricting their freedom.

What once appeared as a literary imagination has, unfortunately, become reality. Afghanistan under Taliban rule is a real-life example of *le pays sans femmes*. The Taliban has implemented rules that have restricted women from participating in education, politics, etc. They saw women as mere objects. In their eyes, women have no right over men; their sole purpose is reproduction to continue the lineage. [According to UNESCO](#), Afghanistan is the only country across the globe where girls' education is banned, due to which approximately 2.2 million women are illiterate. Thus, the metaphor "*le pays sans femmes*" is no longer fictional; it has transformed into a bitter reality. Afghanistan resembles *le pays sans femmes*, as Taliban laws have erased women from public spheres.

Women in Afghanistan Pre-Taliban Rule

In the period 2001-2021, the literacy rate of females in Afghanistan rose. As of the year 2018, more than [3.5 million girls](#) were enrolled in primary and secondary schools. Women were also engaged in politics. The lower house (Wolesi Jirga) was [allotted](#) 27 per cent of the seats, and the provincial councils were [allotted](#) 25 per cent of the seats that were reserved for women. It resulted in the election of the first woman vice president of Afghanistan, Fawzia Koofi, in 2014. Habiba Sarabi became the [first woman to serve as governor of Bamyan Province](#) between 2005 and 2013. Shukeria Barakzai, Malalai Joya, and Fawzia Gailani were members of parliament. They ensured the rights of women, gender equality, and education.



The Taliban's return to power terminated all these developments. Girls were restricted from attending schools. Girls' schools were destroyed. Their jobs were confiscated. They were restricted from going outside of their homes for any purpose without male guardians. The UN Secretary-General [noted](#), "Women and girls are paying the highest price under the Taliban's return to power, facing restrictions on education, employment, and freedom of movement."

There are laws for the protection of women's rights, like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"Empowering Afghan Women [Image 1 of 3]" by [DVIDSHUB](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Afghanistan is openly violating these laws, but still it is standing like a house built on a stand, fragile yet enduring. They should remember the famous [statement](#) of Eleanor Roosevelt that “a woman is like a tea bag; you can’t tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water.”

The Taliban Policies on Women

On 4th January, the Taliban announced a [new penal code](#) known as the “Criminal Procedural Codes for Courts.” The penal code has laws that violate women’s rights. [Article 32](#) of the code says that a husband can beat his wife with a stick. If in this act she gets wounds or bruises, her husband would get only 15 days’ imprisonment if and only if she succeeds in proving it. Psychological and sexual violence against women has not been prohibited.

[Article 34](#) of the code restricts women from taking refuge in their parents’ house. If a woman goes to her family without taking permission from her husband and she does not return home despite her husband’s request, it would be considered a crime. The woman and her family members who prevented her from going to her husband’s home are considered criminals and would be imprisoned for 3 months. [Article 19](#) of the code says that if anyone performs permissible acts (Amaal e Mubah), acts that are prohibited by the Taliban leader must be punished. Women’s education is also described as a permissible act according to the penal code. This law has directly violated women’s right to expression.



“A young girl pictured on International Women’s Day in Helmand, Afghanistan.” by DFID is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

These laws have restricted women in every sector, whether it is education, employment, politics, etc. The sole purpose of women is to give birth to a child. If it is a baby girl, then the so-called male guardians will kill the baby girl, and if it is a boy, then they will bring him up as a future terrorist to destroy the peace of this world. Even they don't care about women's maternal health. After giving birth, a woman should rest for a minimum of six weeks for her physical recovery, but there is no concept of women's health in Afghanistan, which is why the population rate is increasing.

As per [reports](#) provided by Worldometer, the Afghan population has reached 44.6 million in 2026. Even though there are laws regarding the [dress code of women](#). It is made compulsory for Afghan women to cover their bodies from head to toe. For this purpose, they wear burqahs. So, women in Afghanistan are so controlled that they are told what they can wear, when to talk, when to meet their family, etc.

These policies resonate with *les pays sans femmes*, a land without women. Though there are women in Afghanistan, they are invisible, as they have no rights. Approximately half of the population in Afghanistan is women. As per [reports](#), there are 49.51% women in Afghanistan, but still, they can't take a stand for themselves because they are deprived of education. Education is a basic pillar of human empowerment. Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "Give me an educated mother, and I shall promise you the birth of a civilized, educated nation."

Impacts on the State and Women

The exclusion of women from politics has weakened the Afghan governance. Before [Taliban rule](#), they actively participated in politics, but under the Taliban government, they were restricted from participating in any sphere of life. There should be women in politics because women have a very different perspective on understanding the situation, so their decisions in state matters can bring some creative and effective policies, which could be beneficial for the state.



The exclusion of women from education, healthcare, and other businesses has a severe impact on the GDP of Afghanistan. The [UNDP has said](#) that restricting women from these sectors has cost Afghanistan billions of dollars. Due to this, the poverty level has [increased](#) to 97%. This is because half of the population is women, and they are restricted from doing jobs. The other half is the male population, out of which many are children who can't do jobs, and the remaining have no proper education. They only get education related to Islam as per their own Sharia, which is not sufficient to achieve a qualified job.

Not only on the state, but also it has severe impacts on women. Psychologically, Afghan women face a high level of anxiety due to social isolation. Studies say that living inside a room for your whole life and acting according to your guardian can cause psychological problems. Due to this, the personal identity of women has faded in Afghanistan. Now, women have accepted the male dominance over them.

Conclusion

Les pays sans femmes have become a brutal reality in Afghanistan. There are women who exist but have been silenced, women who travel but with a male guardian, women who speak but with the permission of a male, and women who get punished for so many little things. But women can do nothing as their freedom and motivation have vanished. Men and women are two basic pillars of society. There should be a balance between them. The dominance of one can destroy society. A land without women cannot flourish. It would become a land without a future, as no society can progress by silencing half of its population.

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Indian Disinformation Against Pakistan: Propaganda and Fake News

About the Author



Syed Hammad Ali is pursuing a BS in International Relations programme from International Islamic University, Islamabad and has a keen interest in research works, policy analysis, defence and strategic studies and conflict resolution.



Garry Kasparov, a Russian political activist, once noted, *"The point of modern propaganda isn't only to misinform or push an agenda. It is to exhaust your critical thinking, to annihilate truth."* Just imagine, you don't need any direct offense or even any diplomatic thaw, just a social media post, and countries could destabilize internally. The advent of [artificial intelligence](#) has further exacerbated the situation. From fake news to deepfakes, the disinformation revolution has transformed the warfare dynamics in the international arena. The Indo-Pak strategic contest has also experienced a similar scenario, whereby India has been continuously utilizing its vast disinformation networks against Pakistan. An Indian-sponsored disinformation campaign once again targeted Pakistan in late March 2026.

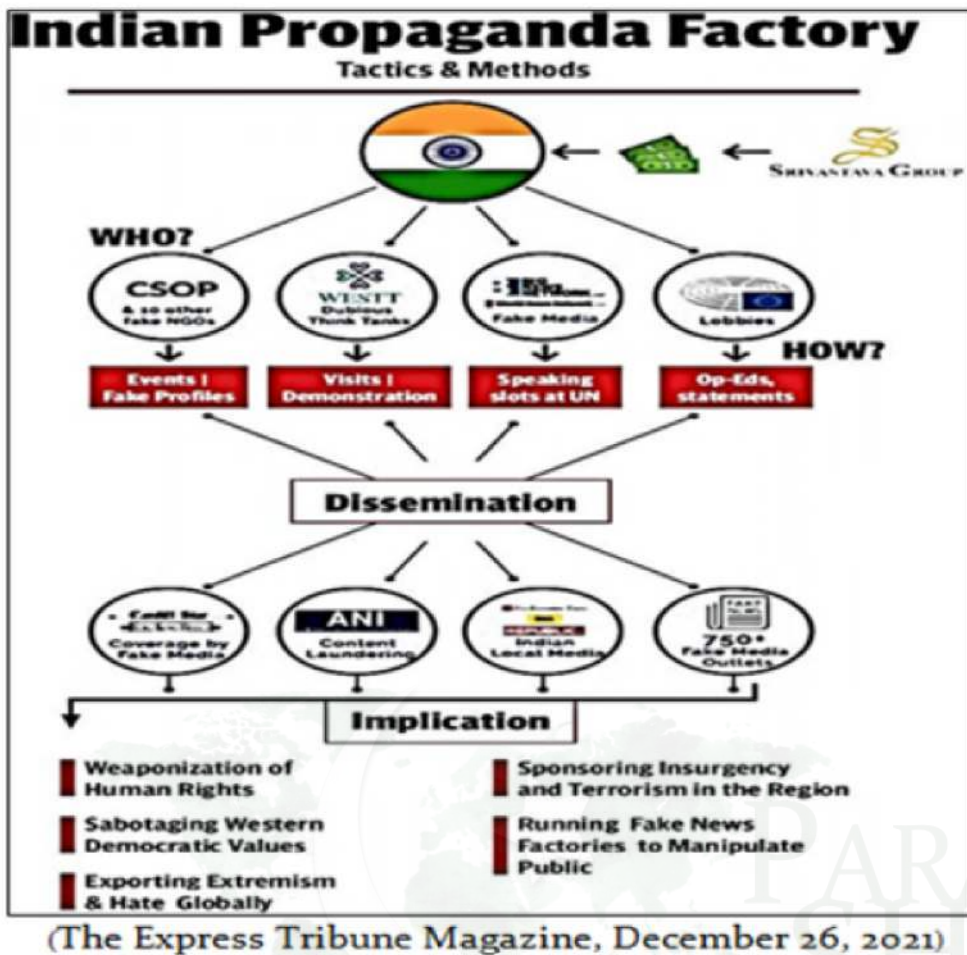


Historical Context

The Indian disinformation campaign against Pakistan is not a new phenomenon; rather, it has been practiced throughout history. Emanating from criticism of Pakistan's nuclear status in the Indian chronicles, Pakistan has always been a prey to Indian propaganda. The 'Indian Chronicles,' which [revealed](#) the existence of a global network of over 750 bogus media sources in over 115 nations, was one of the investigative reports released by the EU DisinfoLab in December 2019 and December 2020.

The Indian holding firm Srivastava Group ran this network in collaboration with several non-

governmental organizations and people who appeared to be aligned with the government. These organizations were engaged in the methodical creation and dissemination of material that opposed Pakistan. Likewise, India has always raised allegations about Pakistan's nuclear safety and security program, claiming vulnerabilities in its nuclear infrastructure. These allegations appear to be of political interest.



The 'IPA' Disinformation Network

"In the Information Age, success is not merely the result of whose army wins, but whose story wins" (Joseph Nye)

A coordinated social media disinformation campaign originating from India was [exposed](#) by Pakistan's intelligence agencies this month. It aimed at spreading fake official statements accusing Pakistan of playing double standards. This campaign came at a very critical time when the US-Iran war was at its peak. Exploiting the opportunity, Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz, halting nearly 20% of the world's oil trade. In this, Pakistan has emerged as a key mediator to end the ongoing hostilities.

Pakistan just hosted the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt in Islamabad to create a suitable environment for negotiations between the US and Iran and put an end to the war. Pakistan's international standing has improved so far, especially after the irrefutable success in the May 2025 conflict with India. Whether it's the US, Russia, or China, Pakistan is currently enjoying a balanced relationship with all three. This has caused panic in the Indian strategic circles. Thus, to create domestic instability and disrupt its increasing international stature, the Indian government is using disinformation as a primary tool against Pakistan.

According to research, the online campaign was allegedly started by many fictitious social media profiles that purported to be Iranian media outlets, such as Iran TV and INN Iran News. According to reports, these accounts spread accusations that Pakistan was helping the United States with oil supplies, a narrative that analysts believe was intended to incite outrage and suspicion among the local populace. In general, India is adhering to a structured model called "Initiator, Proliferator, and Amplifier."

Under this strategy, first, some fake posts are shared by key accounts (initiation), then through various networks, those posts are spread throughout social media (proliferation), and finally, some foreign accounts further supplement these narratives (amplification). Investigation revealed that many of the accounts shaping the narrative were operated from India, while numerous accounts responsible for amplifying and spreading the messages appeared to originate from Afghanistan. The Times of Iran News is one of the most prominent media handles based in India, disseminating false narratives against Pakistan.

Role of AI

The emergence of artificial intelligence has provided a great impetus to the traditional disinformation campaigns. And India is extensively leveraging this opportunity. The Indo-Pak May 2025 conflict is its best manifestation.

A fake film of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif admitting military defeat in India's Operation Sindoor was shared on several popular social media sites. Even though the Deepfakes Analysis Unit (DAU) labeled it a hoax, the initial speed with which it went viral prompted the worry that internal perception needed to be managed.



In addition, the Grok AI feature added to the X platform has further worsened the situation. Now, there isn't a need for a real person or team to spread a narrative. Rather, the AI bot created will itself disseminate anti-adversary statements and reply to comments or any post that it considers against it. These events confirm that AI has become an inevitable part of modern cognitive wars.

Domestic Disinformation Campaign

India is not only disseminating misinformation against outside players; rather, the Indian government, notably under the Modi administration, is using fake opinions and censorship to manipulate public opinion. India is rewriting its history using lies and factual errors. PM Modi was [shown](#) in chains in a cartoon named 'Ananda Vikatan' following the deportation of undocumented Indians from the United States. Such parodies are considered fake news by the government, even though the government itself is known to promote fake news that supports its view of India's 'greatness.'

Implications

- Disinformation campaigns by India against Pakistan would only create mistrust between the two.
- When a state feels threatened, such false flag operations have the tendency to lead to conflicts or even wars.
- Pakistan's already volatile domestic political situation could be emboldened through such anti-state fake news and narratives.

What Pakistan Should Do?

One of the major impacts of disinformation campaigns against a targeted state is on the public nerves, which can be easily intensified. Therefore, the government of Pakistan should primarily focus on media literacy, creating awareness amongst the public, in particular the youth. It could be embedded in the national educational curriculum. Secondly, to counter Indian narratives, Pakistan should itself create a media network, propagating the actual position and narrative of the state.



The recently released drama serial 'Jahannam Barasta e Jannat' is its best manifestation. Likewise, Pakistan should grab international attention towards this matter and collaborate with foreign organizations to counter Indian narratives. A

special media task force could be created to oversee and expose the disinformation networks against the state. Official messages should be conveyed to the various social media companies to block such fake narratives or content emanating from unreliable sources.

Conclusion

The recent Indian propaganda against Pakistan to undermine its efforts for peace and cessation of hostilities in the Middle East once again reminded us of the evolving nature of the Indian counterfeit projects. The embedding of artificial intelligence is another major obstacle to clearly differentiating between original and fake content. From the grassroots to the state level, there is an urgent need to counter and reduce the impact of [disinformation](#) campaigns by India, preserving Pakistan's national and international prestige.

"Disinformation is more than just lying: it's the denial and twisting of reality in order to present some desired image to the rest of the world." (Will Hurd)

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Social Media in Pakistan: Internal Conflict in the Digital Age

About the Author



Nisar Khan Kakar is a writer and poet, and a BS English student at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan, hailing from District Killa Saifullah, Balochistan. He serves as Assistant Coordinator for Literary Prose at the Quaidian Debating and Literary Society (QDLS).



Late into the night, millions of young Pakistanis are still awake, scrolling on their phones. It's rarely just for fun or curiosity anymore — it feels more like something they can't control. Their thumbs keep moving almost automatically, their minds feel restless, and sleep gets sacrificed, one video after another.



What seems like a simple personal choice is actually far from it. Behind every video, post, and trending sound, there's an algorithm quietly deciding what we see, how we feel, and slowly shaping the way we think.

Many young Pakistanis are quietly fighting with themselves. They feel guilty for wasting so much time on their phones, get irritated when they see their friends doing better, and constantly worry about not being good enough compared to others online. Yet, despite all these struggles, they can't seem to stop scrolling. Every notification makes their heart beat faster. Their mind swings between wanting more and feeling anxious, but the cycle somehow continues.

Every day, students sit with books in front of them, but their minds are elsewhere. They struggle with self-doubt, jealousy, and the constant fear that they are falling behind. Deep down, they know they should be studying, resting, or spending time with friends in real life, but the phone keeps winning. This is the hidden struggle so many young people are facing — a whole generation fighting with itself, where the battle inside feels just as endless as the scroll outside.

These algorithms weren't built to teach or inspire us. Their real purpose is simple: keep us watching, liking, and sharing for as long as possible. That's why they push angry content, extreme opinions, and dramatic posts far more than calm, balanced voices.

Thoughtful discussions rarely go viral. Instead, people are constantly fed things that trigger anger, envy, fear, or obsession—because those emotions make us stay longer.

Over time, this endless stimulation weakens our attention span, drains our emotional strength, and makes it harder to reflect on our lives. Anxiety slowly becomes a normal part of the day—sitting with students in classrooms, libraries, and bedrooms—quietly affecting their focus, motivation, and relationships.

The Endless Scroll

Pakistani youth are drowning in a cascade of algorithm-curated content. By 2024, **54.38 million adults (38.9% of those 18+)** were active on social media. **TikTok alone counts 54.38 million users aged 18 and above in Pakistan.** This nonstop stream optimized for engagement is testing young brains. Critics warn the “TikTok generation” has “shorter attention spans to details.” World Health Organization data echo the warning: a recent report notes that uncontrolled social media use can “**lead to depression, bullying, anxiety, and poor academic performance.**”



Beyond distraction, algorithms promote a culture of comparison. According to Pakistani studies, social media has a psychological impact.

For example, a **study** of 300 Karachi undergraduates found that **40% scroll Instagram for 2-4 hours per day, and 57% stated being**

more stressed after using the app. Similarly, nursing students in Karachi found a clearly favorable link between excessive social media use and depression.

According to research conducted in Islamabad, higher Instagram use “strongly predicts decreased self-esteem,” which leads to higher instances of depressive disorders. In effect, crafted highlight reels foster anxiety, since inescapable “inward comparisons” cause youngsters to believe they are frequently lacking. Online platforms intensify the fear of missing out (FoMO) on a massive scale. One Pakistani study found a direct, positive correlation between FOMO and social-media addiction. In urban areas with universities, many young people search for affirmation rather than information, and many leave feeling worse.

This loop of comparison and validation develops an internal conflict. The same student who knows they should study or sleep swings by support, worry, and peer pressure. Anxiety becomes relentless, a mental tug-of-war from which few can break free. Self-esteem, ambition, and even daily moods are all in transition as young minds balance purpose and distraction. Every scroll quietly feeds your self-doubt, even as it distracts you with entertainment. The war inside remains invisible, but it slowly drains you.

Polarization in the Feed

The societal implications are similarly depressing. Algorithms do more than simply entertain; they



amplify division. According to a recent Pakistani study, tailored feeds “considerably boost polarization.” Pakistani users who believe they see varied perspectives may instead be caught in hidden filter bubbles. A Tribune columnist illustrates and writes; a teenager clicks on an engaging religious lecture, and within weeks his feed might become “flooded with information that grows steadily more challenging, angrier, and more intolerant.” He didn’t go looking for violence; the [algorithm found him](#).

Indeed, the author cautions that Pakistan’s youth are being secretly conditioned to be outraged: “The algorithm is already the most effective recruiter in the country,” causing content recommendations to have pushed millions of young people into echo chambers that didn’t exist in prior generations. The emotional toll of this quiet struggle worsens the internal conflict, with bitterness, fear, and doubt competing for mental space alongside anxiousness.



Reclaiming Control

How can a self-conflicted generation achieve harmony? Experts suggest that Pakistani institutions need to modernize. UNESCO-led programs focusing on Media and Information Literacy highlight the importance of teaching critical analysis of algorithms and biases. Practically, incorporating digital literacy into university programs could enable students to critically evaluate online information rather than merely accept it. At the same time, families and educators should foster in-person connections: One survey indicates that over [33% of adults globally now experience persistent loneliness](#), an increase from 23% ten years ago. In educational settings, setting aside time without screens—opportunities for direct conversations—can help restore emotional resilience.

The answer lies in both internal and external factors. Young people in Pakistan must take back charge of their focus, address the anxiety caused by social comparisons and division, and cultivate the patience, empathy, and self-awareness that algorithms undermine. This is a continuous, subtle battle—a conflict waged in bedrooms, classrooms, and minds—that necessitates awareness, purpose, and guidance. Only by facing their internal emotional and cognitive struggles can they disrupt the cycle of anxiety and reclaim their sense of agency.

The psychological, social, and intellectual development of Pakistani youth has been transformed by algorithm-operated digital platforms, which became common after 2000. People can access information and communicate with others through these technologies, but their unregulated use leads to increased anxiety, social comparison, and societal divides. People need to reject technology in order to solve their problems, but they should create a more aware and knowledgeable connection with technological systems.

The educational system needs to establish pathways for students to learn digital literacy and media awareness, which will help them interpret algorithmic systems that control their emotional responses. Families and communities need to promote better digital usage patterns together with increased time spent on offline activities, which will help people achieve a balanced lifestyle. The development of technology that benefits humanity depends on young people acquiring knowledge and building resilience as essential skills.

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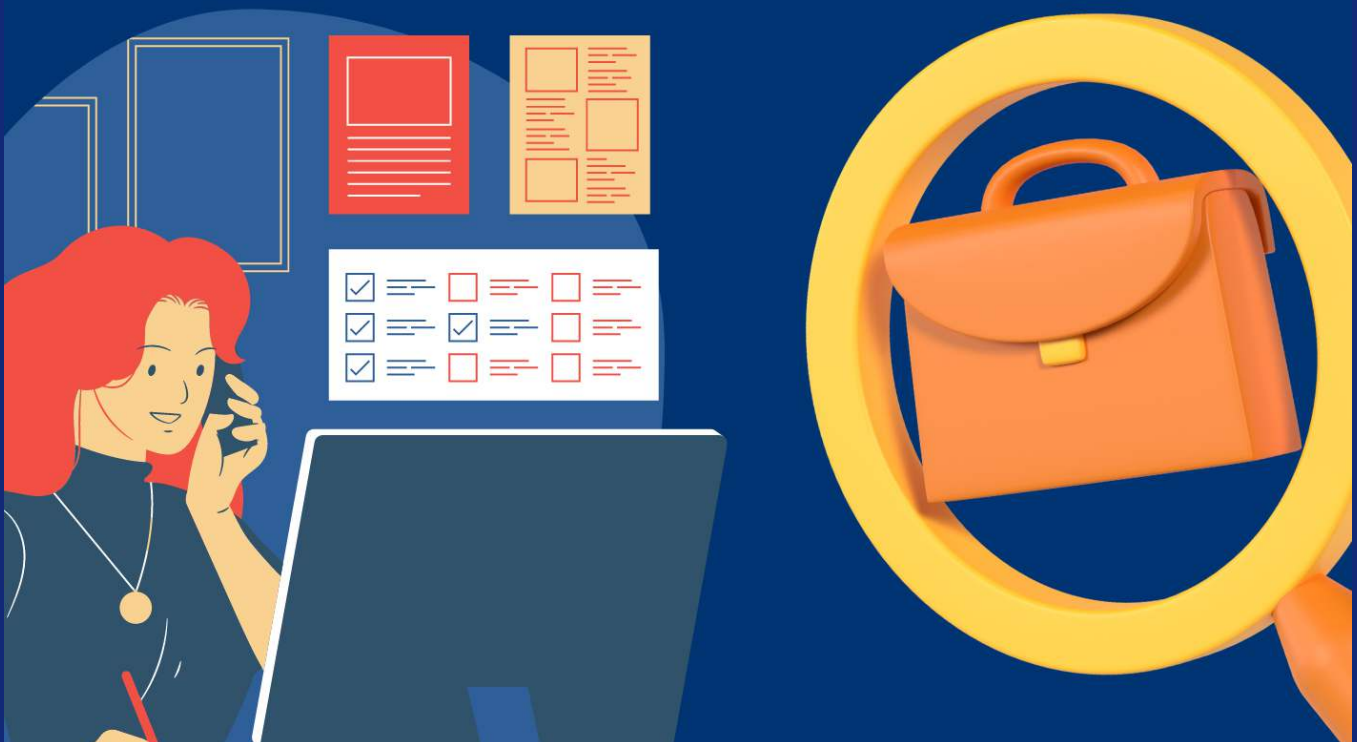


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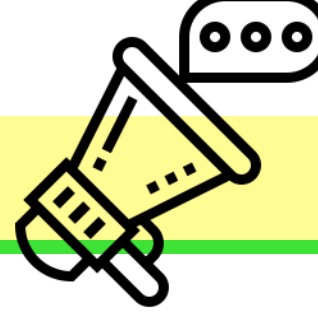
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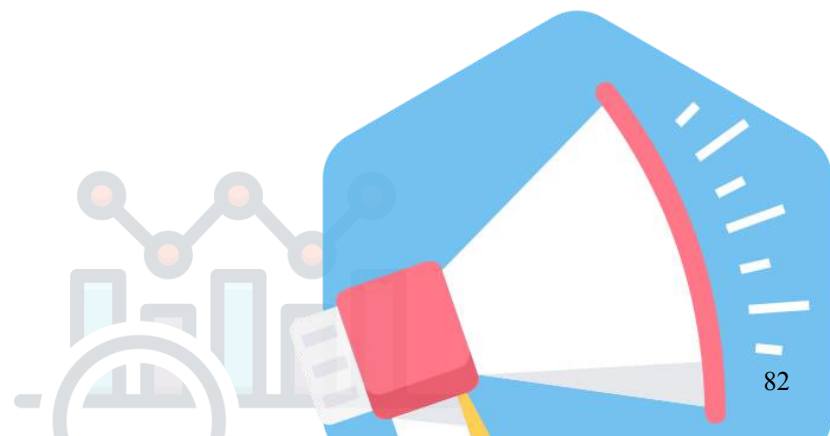


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