



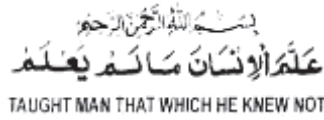
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A Periodical of INSIGHTS

INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES, RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS
NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD



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E9 Quarterly is a periodical publication of the Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA), National Defence University, Islamabad, the premier security and strategic studies institution. It is a compilation of INSIGHTS written by the research community occasionally. These briefs discover new dimensions of subjects related to the National Security of Pakistan while focusing on practical and objective solutions to the problems for the consumption of respective stakeholders. All INSIGHTS appearing in E9 Quarterly are selected after rigorous scrutiny and edited by senior faculty members.

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Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA)
National Defence University Islamabad – Pakistan

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E9 QUARTERLY

CONTENTS

Insights	Page No
Editorial Note	i
Human Resource Requirement in Scandinavia: Opportunities for Pakistan <i>Hadiqa Mir</i>	1
India's Double Standards on Terrorism in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization <i>Syed Taimoor Shah</i>	8
China's New Push for Israeli–Palestinian Peace Talks: Will it make a Difference? <i>Dr Muhammad Shabbir</i>	15
Sudan Crisis: What Worries the World? <i>Khadija Younas</i>	21
The US “Strategy of Disruption” against China <i>Mehwish Kiani</i>	27
ISKP: A Mythical Reality or a US Proxy <i>Hafiz Muhammad Gulraiz</i>	36
Minimizing the Role of Middleman to Improve the Agriculture Yield in Pakistan <i>Marium Akhtar</i>	42

Insights	Page No
Mustard Oil: A Homegrown Alternative to Reduce Edible Oil Import Bill <i>Faiza Qureshi</i>	47
Geopolitics of Climate Change <i>Faiza Qureshi</i>	54
“Re-Imagining the Society”: The Second Policy Pillar of NISP-2018 <i>Rida Bilal</i>	60
Simla Agreement: Is it Still Relevant? <i>Ms Ayesha Malik</i>	66
The Balkanization of Jammu and Kashmir <i>Ms Ayesha Malik</i>	71

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Editorial Note

The second issue of volume 2, 2023 of E9 Quarterly in hand contains twelve INSIGHTS written during the second quarter of 2023. These INSIGHTS discuss economic, political and security challenges facing Pakistan while highlighting the importance of strategic alignment, domestic institutions, and economic reforms. Pakistan must strengthen its institutions and implement economic reforms to achieve sustained growth.

This issue covers the potential of Pakistan's Human Resource to benefit from Human Resource Requirement in Scandinavia. Pakistan direly needs foreign remittances to steady balance of payments as well as to uplift living standards. Economy and GDP per Capita of Scandinavia offers attractive opportunities for Pakistanis.

Besides this, India's Double Standards on Terrorism in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in contradiction to 'Shanghai Spirit' have also been exposed as India instead of making efforts to advance cooperation on SCO initiatives to mitigate the "Three Evils" terrorism, separatism and religious extremism is promoting these through state sponsorship.

China's initiative to resume peace talks between Israel and Palestine and the likelihood of its success, Sudan Crisis created by abrupt fighting between Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) led by Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Rapid Support Force (RSF) led by Gen Mohammad Hamdan Dagalo making Sudan yet another chessboard where global powers are jostling for power and influence in Africa, The US "Strategy of Disruption" against China to stall China's rapid rise as the world's second-largest economy with substantial exports, heavy investments in Asia, Africa and Latin America and a 'win-win strategy' under a peaceful coexistence approach to bolster its global presence, State of Khurasan Province (ISKP) - its origin and myths surrounding its ideology, activities, recruitments and revenues, Measures to minimize the Role of Middleman in agriculture sector of Pakistan for incentivizing farming to ensure food security, Pakistan's potential to meet edible oil requirements

domestically by increasing production of mustard oil and thus reducing edible oil import bill, factors contributing to shortfall in production of oil seed crops and measures to increase proportion of cultivable land for oil seed crops cultivation like availability of more land for cultivation of oil seeds crops through zoning, offering better and competitive support price and increasing modern processing, crushing and extraction facilities have also been touched upon in this issue.

The issue further entails Pakistan's National Internal Security Policy (NISP). It highlights that NISP is an ambitious policy with long list of 120 objectives but, on the ground, one can witness a clear gap between the policy formulation and its implementation. The objectives of NISP can only be achieved if there is a minimum but realistic agenda instead of a long wish list.

We hope that this publication will assist readers in keeping up to date with the current strategic landscape and find the analyses informative. We welcome contributions in the form of short pieces of writing offering insight on national security matters.

Human Resource Requirement in Scandinavia: Opportunities for Pakistan

Hadiqa Mir

Abstract

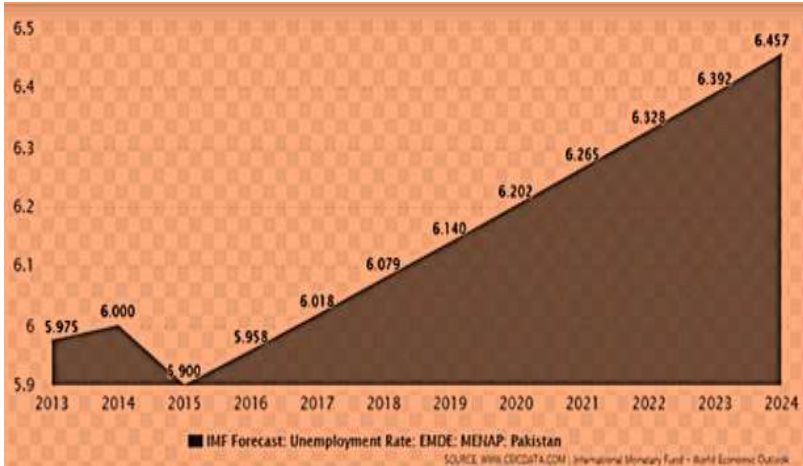
This INSIGHT discusses the potential of Pakistan's Human Resource to benefit from Human Resource Requirement in Scandinavia. It highlights that Pakistan direly needs foreign remittances to contribute to Pakistan's economy as well as to uplift living standard. It also discusses that very negligible number of Pakistani diaspora exists in this region despite the fact that economy and GDP per Capita of Scandinavia offers attractive opportunities for Pakistanis. It makes certain recommendations as well for Pakistan to work upon to tap the potential.

Keywords: Human Resource, Productivity, Inflation, Unemployment, Diaspora, Outsourcing, GDP per Capita, Foreign Remittances.

Human resource is a great asset for the economy of any nation as it contributes to the overall productivity of nation's economy. It actually enables the nation to capitalize on available resource and opportunities, therefore, the presence of trained and well equipped human resource is blessing for any nation. Pakistan in this regard, is indeed fortunate to possess highly qualified, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled human resource. If this potential is utilized properly, it can bring huge benefits for the nation.

Major threats to the Pakistan's economic security are the declining standard of living, rising inflation, and youth unemployment rate. The aim of successive governments has always been to promote higher education and increase literacy. However, the strategy to train human resource has always been a missing link. Resultantly, there are significantly more graduates than job openings causing social

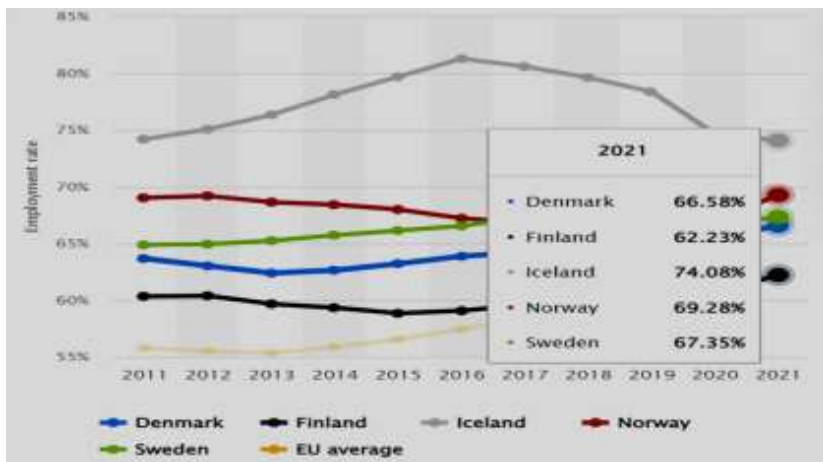
disparities. IMF World's Economic Outlook Report 2019" foresees a sharp increase in the unemployment rate in Pakistan.¹



If human resource is not effectively managed, it becomes a liability for the country. The governments have two alternatives in this regard: either they can find foreign markets to pay for the skilled human resource, or they can create more jobs domestically. Both options should be applied simultaneously according to the situation of respective country to chalk out a comprehensive plan of action to channelize and utilize human resource. In context of Pakistan, it is difficult to create new jobs in current economic situation; thus, outsourcing human resource alongwith internal consumption is key to resolving the challenge. Therefore, there is a need to look into new opportunities abroad and develop a practical plan for utilising human resource to boost the economy. A large number of Pakistanis are already supporting economy of the country through foreign remittances, however, decreasing opportunities in the existing job markets are hinting towards diversification of job avenues.



The Scandinavian region could be a reliable potential job market owing to its robust economies and high standard of living. All five Nordic countries are among the 20 countries in the world with the highest GDP per capita, showing how economically successful the region is.



The Scandinavian nations of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland are renowned for employment opportunities and growing job market as well. The Graph shows the annual average earning over the

years in Scandinavia which shows why Scandinavia should be considered as a potential job market.

As per the graph the annual average earning of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland is €35,485.73, €39,273.77, €45,686.24, €33,155.47 and €49,514.31 respectively. Whereas, the annual average earning of EU is €24 947² and Middle East is €35,388.³

The Scandinavian region could be a reliable potential job market owing to its robust economies and high standard of living. All five Nordic countries are among the 20 countries in the world with the highest GDP per capita, showing how economically successful the region is.

Furthermore, increasing employment rates also indicate the presence of opportunities for foreign workforce. As far as the specific demand in Scandinavia is concerned, the specific job market and job opportunities vary by country and industry. The country wise details are as following:-

- **Sweden:** The fields in demand are doctors, nurses, midwifery, dentists, engineers, accountants, teachers, lawyers, IT experts, software and system developers, decorators, carpenters, chefs, drivers, electricians, welders, construction workers and fire fighters.⁴
- **Denmark:** It needs civil engineers, architects, biochemists, accountants, dentists, doctors, electronic engineers, IT project managers, lawyers, music teachers, nurses, pharmacists, psychologists and hospitality and housekeeping experts.⁵
- **Norway:** Oil, gas and renewable energy experts, IT professionals, project managers, civil and mechanical engineers are prosperous professionals in Norway. Furthermore, Norway has an aging population, which is creating demand for more healthcare and social service workers. Therefore, it is a good market for the medical human resource.
- **Finland:** IT and software professionals, HR managers, engineers, accountants, doctors, nurses, teachers and STEM professionals can have better opportunities.

- **Iceland:** The job opportunities are available in construction, healthcare, IT and tourism areas. The economic forecast of Iceland suggests that between “2022 and 2025, the number of jobs in Iceland will increase by 15,000, while the number of Icelandic workers will only increase by 3,000. Therefore 80% of the required workforce must be filled by expats”.⁶

Therefore, the data shows requirement of diverse human resource in various fields and Pakistan can offer human resource in all aforementioned fields.

As far as key stakeholders are concerned, Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training (MOFEPT) and Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) are key stakeholders alongwith MoFA. MOFEPT maintains the data of trained skilled workers, whereas, MOPHRD trains the HR and maintains the data of outgoing emigrants registered in all categories.⁷ National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) working under the MOFEPT is tasked to oversee the professional / vocational training. 4500 institutes under NAVTTTC are training human resource in Pakistan.

According to Schedule-II of the Rules of Business, 1973, the MOPHRD's designated business is to establish and coordinate national policies for job promotion and manpower development for prospective international employees. Furthermore, creation of short- and long-term programmes to enhance human capital and advance employment overseas also come under the mandate of the ministry.

The National Industrial Relations Commission (NIRC), the Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment (BE&OE), and the Directorate of Workers Education (DWE) are the three attached departments that make up Pakistan's current HR Development and Allocation Infrastructure. There are also four autonomous bodies: the Overseas Pakistan Foundation (OPF), The Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC), Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), and the Workers Welfare Fund (WWF). These autonomous bodies and departments are working under the MOPHRD.⁸

The Bureau of Emigrants and Overseas Employment (BE&OE) reports that Pakistan exported 832,339 workers in 2022 which is the second-largest number ever recorded, with 946,571 being the most in 2015. In addition, 12 Million skilled and unskilled individuals travelled to various countries across the world during last 4 years; however, only 578 of them were registered for Scandinavia. Hence, 0.0048% of all immigrants opt to go to Scandinavia as their final destination. Engineers, computer programmers, managers, cooks, and general labourers made up the majority of the immigrants.⁹ Furthermore, the figures highlight that there is a need for immediate action and focused investigation to find out why the Pakistan's human resource export is low in these countries despite availability of opportunities. Unfortunately, the lack of research culture in HR sector is the main reason depriving us to diversify our HR markets and exploring available opportunities.

Scandinavian countries are known for their inclusive and innovative HR practices. Opportunities for skilled labour are promoted through official channels, whereas, those for unskilled labour are investigated through private sectors, however, there are some challenges too. First and foremost is that the job market is fiercely competitive as it is offering good remittances and exposure. Secondly, visa regimes are tough for non-EU countries. Thirdly, people are not aware of the opportunities available in Scandinavian region. Own diaspora is very small and people do not have access to job advertisements as they have in case of Middle East and other European countries.

Above in view, following are the recommendations:-

- Keeping in consideration the opportunities available, there is a need to deploy Commercial Welfare attaché in Scandinavia.
- MOPHRD should collaborate with MoFA to negotiate visa regimes with Scandinavian Governments.
- MOPHRD can compile detailed HR data at national level. The data should include following credentials:-
 - The HR exported to other countries.
 - The excess trained HR available within fields.
 - The HR requirements in various countries along with the numbers.

- There is need of an official website related to Scandinavia that can be used to advertise opportunities in the region in addition to the guidance related to the visa processing.
- MOPHRD should pass guidelines to MOFEPT to train HR in accordance with the requirement abroad.
- Public-private cooperation could be used to train professionals according to the demand in Scandinavia. HR export system may be outsourced to the private sector. In this regard, private companies and agents can be certified to find opportunities in Scandinavia and facilitate training according to the necessity there. MOPHRD may only facilitate and regulate the process.
- Short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals may be set and evaluated on yearly basis through a detailed report.

By adopting the above mentioned recommendations we can diversify our job markets, therefore, generating more remittances for the country.

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About Insight and Author

This INSIGHT was first published on the ISSRA website in April 2023. It can be accessed at <https://www.ndu.edu.pk/issra/pub/insight/Human-Resource-Requirement-in-Scandinavia-Opportunities-for-Pakistan/Human-Resource-Requirement-in-Scandinavia-Opportunities-for-Pakistan.pdf>. The writer is a Research Associate at NDU and can be reached at hadimir310@gmail.com

India's Double Standards on Terrorism in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Syed Taimoor Shah

Abstract

This INSIGHT discusses India's Double Standards on Terrorism in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in contradiction to 'Shanghai Spirit' the undergirding values and guidelines for the SCO. It highlights that India is inclined to extend its propaganda against Pakistan to SCO platform by maligning Pakistan for promoting and abetting terrorism and overlooking diplomatic norms. India instead of making efforts to advance cooperation on SCO initiatives to mitigate the "Three Evils" terrorism, separatism and religious extremism is promoting these through state sponsorship.

Keywords: Shanghai Spirit, Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, Terrorism, Extremism, Separatism, Hindutva, Subversive Activities, Disrupting Activities, Irredentism.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) aims to promote cooperation in the fields of security, economy, culture, science and technology. The Shanghai Spirit derives the core value of SCO based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equal rights, consultations, respect for the diversity of cultures, aspiration towards common development, non-alignment, no-targeting anyone and openness.¹ The organization has two permanent bodies, i.e., Secretariat in Beijing and Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent. RATS deals with combatting terrorism, extremism and separatism regionally and globally.²

The inclusion of Pakistan and India in the organization in 2017 generated mixed signals of optimism and pessimism. Optimists believe that this platform would allow respective countries to address their bilateral issues and potentially yield favorable outcomes. Pessimists, conversely, caution

that tension between member states, especially between Pakistan and India, would hinder the progress within the organization. However, it is no surprise that the present situation gives greater relevance to the pessimistic outlook. India's false propaganda against Pakistan, a persistent tactic employed for years, has been extending to the platform of SCO. Presently, India holds the SCO Chairmanship and has been exploiting its position of influence by maligning Pakistan for promoting and abetting terrorism at its meetings. Indian External Affairs Minister, in a recent SCO meeting held at Goa, very blatantly twisted the facts by saying, "Victims of terrorism do not sit together with perpetrators of terrorism to discuss terrorism."³

In a recent seminar on the SCO Armed Forces Contribution in Military Medicine, Healthcare and Pandemic (New Delhi - March 21, 2023), Pakistan was practically denied active participation upon displaying its official map.⁴ Another noteworthy event happened at SCO Defence Ministers' meeting held in New Delhi on April 27, 2023, when Indian Defence Minister avoided shaking hands with his Chinese counterpart, causing a fractious atmosphere.



Furthermore, the Indian Foreign Minister, while using the SCO platform, made aggressive, unrealistic and derogatory remarks accusing his Pakistani counterpart of being a "spokesperson of the terror industry."⁵ These undiplomatic occurrences reported on the SCO platform clearly

show India is trying to politicize the organization for its strategic objectives. This approach appears to be similar to what it has demonstrated at SAARC, which put the regional organization in limbo.

India is the only country in SCO hosting all 'three evils' indicated by RATS, i.e., terrorism, extremism and separatism. There are numerous occasions where India has expressed its commitment to eradicate these evils; however, its actions at home and abroad demonstrate otherwise. India is deeply involved in state terrorism, promoting the extremist agenda of Hindutva, suppressing minorities nationwide for Hindu supremacy, and committing heinous war crimes in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Its deteriorating human rights record has faced criticism from international organizations repeatedly. The US State Department Country Reports of Human Rights Practices (2021),⁶ Annual Report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (2023),⁷ Amnesty International Country Profile (2022),⁸ Human Rights Watch Report (2021)⁹ and Freedom House Report (2022)¹⁰ have raised serious concerns over India's harsh discrimination, including arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial killings, religious persecution of minorities and media policy restricting the use of the internet. Indian leadership equally accused its minorities with derogatory terms, such as *Corona Jihad* and *Corona Terrorism*, during the Covid-19 pandemic, when many Covid-19-positive cases were found among Muslims.¹¹ Furthering the extremist ideology of *Hindutva*, it aims to reshape India by pursuing communal policies (Citizenship Amendment Act - 2019)¹² by targeting Muslim and Christian minorities that have sparked religious, ethnic and racial intolerance and xenophobia. The recent killings of Christians and burning of Churches in Manipur (Northeast India) manifest Indian state-sponsored terrorism and extremist approach towards *Hindu Maharashtra*.¹³ In reality, people's resentment in Manipur lies with demands for equal civil rights and against the ruling party, BJP, involved in unequal communal policies.

Besides deteriorating domestic situation, India is also involved in malicious activities across its borders. Since India has been vocal in its accusation against Pakistan, mounting evidence (shown in the figure below) suggests India's direct involvement in proliferating terrorism in

Pakistan. Indian intelligence operators have been implicated in sabotage activities, meddling in state affairs and state-sponsored terrorism. Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is actively involved in conducting subversive activities by providing financial support through bank transactions worth millions of dollars and material support to multiple UN-designated terrorist organizations. In this regard, Pakistan has already shared a dossier with the UN containing irrefutable evidence of India's involvement in numerous terror activities in Pakistan.¹⁴ Furthermore, the Western intelligentsia has also exposed DisinfoLab's false propaganda network, building a deceptive narrative against Pakistan.



India once again maliciously blames Pakistan for a recent terrorist attack in the Poonch District ahead of a controversial G20 meeting on tourism in Srinagar to create a diversion from its human rights violations. It seems to call out other countries when it is being condemned on international forums for its antagonistic behaviour towards its minorities. India calls it interference in its internal affairs but has been conducting disrupting activities in other countries. Former TTP spokesperson Ehsanullah Ehsan and Commander Latif Mehsud verified the RAW-NDS-TTP nexus.¹⁵ Expert

India's rhetoric on terrorism, extremism and separatism at the SCO platform contradicts Shanghai Spirit and disregards factual evidence.

Bharat Karnad and Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval have openly discussed India's use of non-state actors to exploit Pakistan's vulnerabilities.¹⁶ A recent report by Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction titled "Why the Afghan Security Forces Collapsed?" mentioned that the Indian consulate provided financial support to anti-Taliban warlords to create resistance in North Afghanistan.¹⁷ Recently, Qatar has also exposed the Indian intelligence agency's involvement in anti-state activities. Eight Indian naval officers are facing a possible death penalty for spying on the submarine programme for another Middle Eastern country.¹⁸ Indians were also found to be involved in instigating critics of Qatar's hosting of the world cup. India always plays a double game and spoils efforts to bring peace and stability. Though the BJP government is cognizant of its policies' falsehood and radical approach in running diplomatic affairs through hardcore intelligence apparatus, it seems an effort to justify its political standing behind RSS-radical ideology and safeguard unethical practices.

As an SCO member, India is responsible for upholding the values and goals outlined in the Shanghai Spirit; however, it seems to contradict these principles by failing to follow international law and treaties, such as UN resolutions on Kashmir. This non-compliance indicates India's malicious intentions, particularly in opposition to initiatives like BRI and CPEC that aim to promote regional development and connectivity. India's political rhetoric and covert actions appear to be misaligned, as its activities in South Asia and Eurasia reflect the geopolitical interests of the US in competing with and containing China.

India's instrumentalisation of the SCO forum for its strategic interests represents a deviation from its obligations. To address India's baseless claims, it is important for other SCO member states to work together and present factual evidence of India's double standards. The theme of this year's SCO Summit is SECURE, an acronym that stands for Security, Economy and Trade, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity. India should start with introspection for course correction. It must take responsibility for promoting peace and stability in the region and beyond by reflecting on its actions and making necessary changes in its behaviour. India should respect the sovereign

rights of other nations, avoid interference, refrain from irredentism, and tackle terrorism, extremism and separatism domestically. It must align with the international community in creating a conducive environment for peaceful coexistence.

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About Insight and Author

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China's New Push for Israeli–Palestinian Peace Talks: Will it make a Difference?

Dr Muhammad Shabbir

Abstract

This INSIGHT examines China's initiative to resume peace talks between Israel and Palestine, the likelihood of its success and US role in it. It highlights China's stance on Israel-Palestine Conflict over time and objectives China wants to achieve if this initiative works and challenges faced with this proposition.

Keywords: Peace Talks, Reconciliation, Settlements, Abraham Accords, Strategic Considerations, Trusted Mediator, Rising Super Power, Technological Advancements, Innovation, Research and Development

China has been making efforts to revive the stalled peace talks between Israeli and Palestinian officials. In April 2023, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang held telephonic conversations with top diplomats from both sides, renewing hopes for reconciliation in one of the world's most volatile regions.¹ This comes after several years of deadlock, with little progress made on the peace process since the collapse of US-brokered negotiations in 2014 while Israel's policy of illegal settlements in occupied territories continues. However, the development came soon after China facilitated the revival of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. While China has long advocated for a two-state solution, this latest push could prove to be a crucial turning point in the conflict. This article will examine China's initiative to resume peace talks and the likelihood of its success.

China's Stance on the Israel-Palestine Conflict

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping offered a four-point plan for peace to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.² This proposal was reworked and renewed in 2017.³ The four-point plan that Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi proposed in 2021 to defuse the growing Palestine-Israel conflict mirrored past plans.⁴ Consistent with China's position on the conflict since the early 1990s, these proposals have called for a two-state solution based on the 1967 boundaries, condemned human rights violations and aggressiveness on both sides and advocated for mediated negotiations.⁵ This stance of China on the conflict is in line with the international consensus and the principles espoused by the so-called "moderate" Arab side. So far, though, these suggestions have not resonated with the relevant parties.

China's Relationship with Israel

With annual bilateral trade of almost \$15 billion, Israel is China's largest trading partner in the Middle East.⁶ When it comes to military technology, Israel is a major source for China that the United States is reluctant to share.



US-China Economic and Security Review Commission data shows that Israel supplied China with more weapons systems and advanced military technologies than any other country saves Russia.⁷ Many business

events have been held in both China and Israel, allowing for technology to be transferred from Israel to Chinese corporations. There are also extensive ties between businesses in the two countries in the area of research and development, which led to the signing of a general "R&D Cooperation Agreement" between the two countries in 2010 and a separate R&D Cooperation Agreement with the municipal government of Shanghai, which provides funding for research and development for any joint projects of Israeli and Chinese companies. The United States has been angered by this relationship on multiple occasions, and on those occasions, it has pushed Israel to back out of numerous arrangements with China. However, rather than hoarding technology, the trend has been to share it.⁸ Thus, the relationship between Israel and China has been steadily trending upwards.

China's Relations with Palestine

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and other Palestinian organizations have far weaker ties with China.⁹ Thus, the relationship between China and Palestine is not as strong as it is with other Arab countries that support the Palestinian cause. This, coupled with China's close relationship with Israel, could hinder China's ability to broker a lasting peace agreement between Israel and Palestine. However, the recent development of China playing a significant role in fostering diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran has raised hopes for potential positive impacts on other regional conflicts, including the long-standing Israel-Palestine dispute.

Likelihood of Success

While the details of China's latest proposal have not been made public, it is likely to build on previous proposals and call for a two-state solution. This could bring the US back into the fold, as it has been a proponent of a two-state solution for decades. However, given the current political climate in the US, the US being the key facilitator of the

China's push for the Palestine-Israel peace process is a sign of its growing importance in the Middle East, and it is likely to continue to play a significant role in the years to come.

Abraham Accords, its support for Israel in declaring Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the ongoing tensions between the US and China, it is unclear how willing the US would be to work with China on this issue.

The United States and China have been engaged in a broader geopolitical rivalry, and any significant Chinese involvement in the peace process could be seen as a challenge to US influence in the region. Thus, if China were to make progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, it would likely be viewed by the US leadership through the lens of competition and influence in the Middle East. The US may raise concerns about China's involvement and that it is using the peace process to advance its strategic interests in the region. It could also try to work with other countries in the region to counter China's influence. Therefore, it will be important to see how China engages with both sides and whether it is able to make any meaningful contributions. In the immediate terms, the US is likely to take a wait-and-see approach to China's role in the peace process.

From China's perspective, its interest in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process stems from a combination of strategic considerations and the desire to enhance its influence in the Middle East. China has been on a diplomatic offensive in the region, as demonstrated by its successful brokering of the restoration of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia. By engaging in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, China aims to position itself as a trusted mediator and bolster its image as a rising superpower capable of playing a constructive role in the region. Additionally, Israel, known as the "start-up nation" offers technological advancements and innovation that align with China's own goals for development. However, it is important to note that the Palestine-Israel peace process is a complex and sensitive issue. There are many factors that will need to be considered in order to reach a successful conclusion. These include the right of return for Palestinian refugees; the status of Jerusalem; the security of Israel; and the borders of a future Palestinian state. Notwithstanding the challenges, the establishment of peace and stability in the region could unlock substantial trade potential, benefiting both China and Israel economically.

For Israel, China holds significant economic and political clout. Israel has developed strong relations with China, particularly in the fields of trade, technology, and research and development. Israel may view China's involvement as an opportunity to diversify its diplomatic alliances, as China is the world's second-largest economy and a rising superpower. While the US has traditionally played a leading role in Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, the relationship has occasionally faced strains, and the US may prioritize its own interests in the region. Engaging with China could provide Israel with an alternative avenue to explore potential solutions. Thus, there is reason to be cautiously optimistic about China's latest push for peace talks.

Conclusion

To sum up, China's efforts to mediate the peace process have been met with mixed reactions. Some observers have praised China for its willingness to take on a difficult role, while others have criticized China for not doing enough to woo Israel to make concessions. The key challenge for China to address is the one that has derailed previous peace talks, including the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Notwithstanding the challenges, China's role in the peace process is a sign of its growing importance in the Middle East, and it is likely to continue to play a significant role in the years to come. If China can successfully mediate the peace process, it would be a major achievement that would boost its status as a global power.

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Sudan Crisis: What Worries the World?

Khadija Younus

Abstract

This INSIGHT discusses Sudan Crisis created by abrupt fighting between Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) led by Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Rapid Support Force (RSF) led by Gen Mohammad Hamdan Dagalo for control of the resource-rich and strategically located state having traceable footprints of geopolitics. It highlights that Sudan has become yet another chessboard where global powers are jostling for power and influence in Africa.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Political Instability, Poor Governance, Transitional Council, Divisive Tactics, Socio-economic Tensions, Squabble, Colour Revolution

On April 15, 2023, Sudan witnessed abrupt fighting between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) led by Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Rapid Support Force (RSF) led by Gen Mohammad Hamdan Dagalo, both accusing each other of attacking first. However, the fighting is for control of the resource-rich and strategically located state having traceable footprints of geopolitics. More than 1,800 people have so far been killed since the fighting began leaving almost 1.6 million people displaced.¹ Efforts by the international community to end the war by bringing both warring factions to a peaceful settlement have so far failed. However, a series of ceasefires have remained fragile, with the first one brokered by the US on April 24 that remained intact for 72-hours.²

Formerly, both Gen Burhan and Gen Dagalo were together in a coup against former President Omar al-Bashir, removing him from power in 2019. After the coup, a transitional council was set up jointly of civilian leaders and military that agreed to a transitional government for three

years until elections in 2022 while signing a new constitution. However, another coup by the army in 2021 removed the joint transitional setup and once again promised to conduct a democratic election in 2023. Again, a joint transitional setup took control of the governance of the country. The current fighting is in violation of the joint transitional setup that both the generals had agreed upon earlier. Political instability coupled with poor governance in Sudan dates back to the 20th Century British colonization that co-governed Sudan with Egypt under the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty.³ Under the arrangement, the British replaced political leaders and developed a government run by the Islamic School System in the North of Sudan while power in the South was shared among hundreds of different tribal leaders and Christian missionaries. This divisive tactic created deep-rooted socio-economic tensions throughout Sudan (North & South), culminating in the second civil war in the South (1983-2005) for more regional autonomy and, resultantly, South Sudan separated from North Sudan in 2011.⁴



Major global powers are drawn to Sudan's geostrategic location for its proximity to the Red Sea. Its location on River Nile is very important for downstream Egypt and upstream Ethiopia, along with valuable oil, gold, iron ore, silver and copper resources besides considerable hydro-electric potential. Sudan exported \$317 million crude oil to the world in 2020,⁵ while the most valuable export from Sudan is gold, ranking third in Africa for production. UAE, Italy and Turkey are the top exporting

destinations for Sudan's gold.⁶ There are reports that the Russian Wagner Group has been involved in Sudan's gold mining business for quite some time. The Group is reported to have been supplying the country's army and paramilitaries with equipment and training.⁷

Regional countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, and UAE watch for their interests. Sudan's northern neighbour Egypt is considered a close aide to Gen Burhan. So far, about 150,000⁸ people have crossed into Egypt since the fighting began. Shortly before the conflict, Egyptian troops and the SAF were undergoing a joint military exercise named 'Nile Defenders'⁹ encompassing army, navy and air force contingents. Libya – the northwest neighbor enjoys a very close cooperation with the RSF's Gen Dagalo, who had sent his militia to fight on behalf of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar in the Libyan civil war.¹⁰

There are reports that Gen Haftar is providing arms to Gen Dagalo in the current conflict.¹¹ Wealthy oil producers like Saudi Arabia and UAE have signed business deals with Sudan to invest in a range of projects from agriculture to an airline and a strategic port on the Red Sea coast. UAE is another close ally to Gen Dagalo who benefitted from the RSF militia in the Yemen civil war against Houthi rebels.¹²

Amidst global dimensions, the major one is the Russian plan for a naval base in Port Sudan, speculated to have spurred the current power struggle. The 25-year-long port agreement with Russia was signed in 2017 by then President Omar. However, the subsequent coups hung the project's prospects in balance. However, by Feb 12, 2023, a joint press conference by the Russian Foreign Minister and his Sudanese counterpart confirmed Sudan's decision to host a Russian naval base on

Averting humanitarian crisis calls for inclusive multilateral efforts in unison with international organizations and regimes for an agreement to address the current power struggle and return to civilian rule.

the Red Sea.¹³ Earlier, the US ambassador had categorically enunciated US opposition against rekindling the deal with Russia and warned of consequences if Sudan did so.¹⁴ The US Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland also visited Sudan in March 2023.¹⁵ The US is aware of the

Wagner group's activities in Sudan and has already imposed sanctions on two of its companies.¹⁶ Western media has claimed that the Russian group is supplying the RSF with missiles to help it combat the SAF.¹⁷

The talk of transitioning to democracy for improved governance in the country has never ended. However, one of the major problems in this transition has been the SAF and the RSF. There are plans for military reforms under an internationally-brokered deal that called for the RSF to be integrated into the SAF besides shifting the country towards democracy. But the RSF suggested the absorption should be gradual and happen over ten years, while the country's military insisted on two years. The disagreement on a timeline is one of the reasons for the current war.¹⁸

The power struggle is also labelled as a spin-off of the US-Russia tensions. It seems that both have picked up sides in the squabble. Gen Burhan is supported by Egypt's Gen. Fattah El-Sisi, who enjoys a strategic partnership with the US and is an important US ally in Africa.¹⁹ The US has a reputation for safeguarding its interests under the garb of democracy as memories of the Arab Spring are still fresh, while some view the situation as another colour revolution. One is also reminded of the US history of smooth sailing with autocrats/dictators in different parts of the globe to secure its strategic interests. On the other hand, the Russian efforts for the strategic port deal with Sudan have been quite consistent. Besides this, the Russian Wagner Group's business activities in Sudan are also well known. It is no surprise that the Group's arms supplies to Gen Dagalo²⁰ have earned his favours for the Russian naval base.²¹

The US is being criticized for not having been able to anticipate the infighting and thus its inability to prevent the infighting in Sudan, as intense rivalry between the two armed factions was no secret and also for its failure to empower the civilian leaders.²² The US and its allies' efforts to isolate Moscow with sanctions over the Ukraine invasion and bolstering democracies worldwide, especially in Sudan, have faced a setback. It is not known as to what extent the port deal would be executed amid the on-going turmoil. No doubt, Sudan is yet another chessboard where global powers are jostling for power and influence in Africa.

Besides, security in the African continent is seriously under stress, particularly for those sharing borders with Sudan due to the unchecked movement of people and arms. The spill over of the fighting is leading to a refugee crisis that is developing into a humanitarian crisis. Averting the humanitarian crisis calls for inclusive multilateral efforts in unison with international organizations and regimes for an agreement to address the current power struggle and return to swift civilian rule.

The Sudan crisis may turn into a proxy battle when regional ethnic and tribal forces are pushed to take sides and leading to a humanitarian catastrophe. The need is to have a strong ceasefire followed by broad-based peace negotiations with support from regional and international parties. Picking sides while attempting to put an end to the war would not help. Given the power politics and ulterior motives of the warring factions, it is unlikely that Sudan will return to civilian transition very soon.

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The US “Strategy of Disruption” against China

Mehwish Kiani

Abstract

This INSIGHT discusses The US “Strategy of Disruption” against China to stall China’s rapid rise as the world’s second-largest economy with substantial exports, heavy investments in Asia, Africa and Latin America and a ‘win-win strategy’ under a peaceful coexistence approach to bolster its global presence. It highlights that although the US has an advantage over China economically, militarily and technologically but China’s growing dominance in international markets, military presence in the South China Sea, and technological advancements are worrisome for the US.

Keywords: Unilateralism, Geopolitics, Protectionism, Multilateralism, Geo-economics, Free Trade.

The US is widely recognized as the world's leading superpower due to its economic might, the most powerful military, the highest defence budget and pivotal role in global financial institutions.¹ However, China's rapid rise as the world's second-largest economy with substantial exports, heavy investments in Asia, Africa and Latin America and a ‘win-win strategy’ under a peaceful coexistence approach to bolster its global presence has put the US in a challenging situation and complicating their bilateral relations.² Although the US has an advantage over China economically, militarily and technologically, China’s growing dominance in international markets, military presence in the South China Sea, and technological advancements are worrisome for the US.

To maintain its competitive edge, the US has adopted a passive-aggressive stance towards China. In his recent speech at the NATO Summit 2021, President Biden emphasised the importance of not

working with 'autocratic powers' such as China and Russia, which pose multifaceted threats.³ The US has labelled China a 'revisionist power', its 'strategic competitor' and the 'biggest geopolitical concern' according to the National Security Strategy of 2022.⁴ The US remains vigilant to counter China's influence and maintains a competitive edge while collaborating with its allies on common causes, technology, economy and defence. Coalitions like QUAD and AUKUS are being formed to work towards such objectives.⁵

In essence, the US has adopted a multifaceted strategy to **DISRUPT** China's increasing economic, technological and diplomatic outreach. The **STRATEGY OF DISRUPTION** refers to various tactics, procedures and actions defined by a state in the international arena to address potential risks and threats to its national interests posed by rivals. This strategy is implemented to restrict the adversary's ability and capacity to expand its influence, slow down the pace of success, and discourage aggressive behaviour.



The 'US Strategy of Disruption' against China manifests through diplomatic, technological, military and economic means. The US might have resorted to this strategy because the US does not possess, anymore, the wherewithal and strategic liberty of action to **COMPETE** and **WIN** against China in the evolving world order. In fact, the Chinese strategy has used the existing international political and economic structures and mechanisms, such as the UN and WTO, evolved post-World War II

to its advantage, outmaneuvering the US on the global stage. As a result, the US appears to be changing the game's rules to maintain its dominance by reverting to old tactics like unilateralism, geopolitics and protectionism instead of multilateralism, geo-economics and free trade.

Diplomatically, the US is trying to limit China's actions across various fronts. China has been accused of engaging in illicit trade practices, violating human rights, stealing intellectual property, and having territorial ambitions, which the US continues to condemn.⁶ The Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, which the US has implemented, has identified China as the only country seeking regional hegemony and utilising 'predatory economic strategies' to pressurize others.⁷ Additionally, the US is attempting to restrict China's involvement in multilateral organizations such as the UN, WTO and WHO.⁸ The US collaborates with ASEAN states in Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam to counteract China's growing influence. To ensure its economic security presence and influence, the US has lifted sanctions from ASEAN states, especially Myanmar, to allow US companies to access the region's abundant resources.⁹

The US has largely ignored China's efforts to resolve significant contentious issues through peace initiatives. China has recently brokered a Saudi-Iran rapprochement, proposed a peace plan for Ukraine, and put forth another initiative to resolve the Palestinian issue. However, the US has downplayed or given no reaction to these peace initiatives taken by China. The US seems concerned about China's growing diplomatic influence, particularly after establishing its economic prowess. At the G-7 Summit in Hiroshima on May 21, 2023, President Biden announced plans to send more weapons and ammunition to the Ukraine war while inviting the President of Ukraine as a special guest and speaker at the 3-day summit.

US has adopted "Strategy of Disruption", because it does not possess, anymore, the wherewithal and strategic liberty of action to COMPETE and WIN against China in the emerging global order.

In the technology domain, the US perceives China's technological progress, specifically in artificial intelligence, cyber-security and 5G wireless networks, as a strategic threat.¹⁰ As a result, the US has launched a campaign to criticize and diminish China's technological advancements, claiming that China has used them for malicious purposes, such as espionage and cyber-attacks, which endanger US national security. However, the truth is that the US is striving to maintain its economic competitiveness and protect its companies from competition, even from countries considered allies, to sustain its dominance. The US has banned Chinese tech firms, including Hikvision, Megvii, Sense Time, Huawei, ZTE and TikTok, from doing business with US companies, arguing that they could be coerced into providing covert information about their customers as they are affiliated with the Chinese government.¹¹ The Trump administration also prohibited 800 Chinese drones from being used to monitor US government facilities, citing national security concerns.¹² The technology industry for semiconductors and chips is facing intense scrutiny in the US as measures are being implemented to limit China's manufacturing capabilities. Taiwan's TSMC and South Korea manufacture 92% of the highest-performing chips,¹³ while the US drastically reduced chip production from 37% in 1990 to 10%.¹⁴ To increase its output of chip technology, the US has restricted China's manufacturing capabilities of NAND-type flash memory with over 128 layers and logic circuits with technology generations below 14-16 nm to produce advanced semiconductors.¹⁵ Other countries such as Japan, the Netherlands, the EU and Germany have also implemented similar restrictions on Chinese semiconductor exports.¹⁶

Militarily, the US is increasing its military presence and influence in regions where China is also expanding its investment and military power, such as the Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa. China established its first military outpost in Djibouti in 2017 and naval bases in Equatorial Guinea, causing concern for the Biden administration.¹⁷ As a result, the US has increased engagement with African states, particularly Equatorial Guinea.¹⁸ The US has strengthened security ties with Australia, Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore through regular military exercises under the

Indo-Pacific Strategy 2020.¹⁹ The US announced in 2020 that it would deploy 60% of its warships in the Asia-Pacific, making it more responsive to China's growing influence.²⁰ Moreover, the US provided Taiwan with advanced military equipment in 2021 to resist China's aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea.²¹ The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue was established among Australia, India, the US and Japan to counter China's global reach as part of the US Strategy of Disruption.²² In addition, the US is constructing four new military bases in the northern Philippines, which may provoke China as it would provide US forces with a strategically located staging ground close to southern China and Taiwan.²³

On the economic front, the US is reevaluating its economic strategies due to China's significant economic growth and potential threat to US interests. In 2018-2019, President Trump used Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 to impose trade tariffs on China totaling \$200 billion.²⁴ These tariffs aimed to hinder China's industrial growth and resulted in a trade war between the two countries. As a result, China's imports to the US decreased from 22% to 18%.²⁵ The US has also enacted the Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act 2022, prohibiting imports from Xinjiang due to alleged forced labour practices.²⁶ Additionally, the US is working on controlling major Chinese supply chains crucial for producing renewable energy sources as part of its transition from fossil fuels.²⁷ Even though the disruption of the low-cost supply chain from China will cause short-term economic pain, but protection against China's inevitable disruptions of future US consumption is a priority for the US.²⁸ The US has organized a Global Summit on Supply Chain Resilience in 2021 and is working on a free trade and investment agreement to encourage its partners to collaborate against China.²⁹ Similarly, in South Asia, the US is working on diplomatic efforts to undermine the CPEC project, claiming that China is trapping Pakistan and other countries in debt (generally termed as a 'debt trap') to gain economic dominance. India also opposes the CPEC project, as its successful completion will strengthen China's position in the region. This could also lead to Pakistan becoming a strong economic player, undermining India's hegemonic designs in the region and the US's global position. Recent political and economic turmoil in Sri Lanka and Pakistan and instability

in Iran and Afghanistan can be viewed in the larger context of the US Strategy of Disruption.

In Africa, China has become a top trading partner of several African countries, with trade amounting to \$254 billion in 2021.³⁰ However, the US has disapproved of China's investments in manufacturing, telecommunication, agro-processing and infrastructure projects across African nations, particularly South Africa.³¹ China is often accused of imposing debt traps on African states through loans. The US has emphasized its Africa Strategy to safeguard African open societies from China and Russia's harmful activities.³²

On the domestic front, looking at China's economic growth pattern before COVID and its economic performance afterwards, it appears that the US Strategy of Disruption is succeeding in some measures also. In 2019, China's growth rate was 5.95%, but in 2020 it slowed to 2.24%. Although it experienced a brief boost of 8.45% in 2021, it dropped to 3% in 2022³³ - significantly lower than its annual growth rate of 10% since 1978.³⁴ This economic downturn will likely highlight the development gap between China's western and eastern regions.

Thus, the question remains as to what the likely end-state of the US Strategy of Disruption against China would be. Does the US expect that this passive or defensive strategic approach would stop the Chinese rise? Keeping in mind that any strategy has a temporal limit, it appears that the US is utilizing its Strategy of Disruption to impede, slow down and disrupt Chinese economic rise to eventually gain a window of opportunity for exploiting China's internal fault-lines to create 'Implosion' within China, like Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, etc. These politico-socio-economic fault-lines exist as alleged and so-called narratives of human rights violations in Xinjiang, disaffection within Hong Kong, security irritants over Taiwan, autocratic political structures, etc. Subsequently, by taking advantage of the US' widespread military presence in areas and regions surrounding China, the US can always exert military pressure on China by involving it in military conflicts in the South China Sea, Taiwan, Korean Peninsula and India, etc.

There is no gainsaying that China is fully aware of the US policies and has shown abundant patience in addressing issues with the US quietly and tactfully. President Xi has urged cooperation over competition, while Chinese officials have responded to the American allegations of human rights violations in equally strong tone. China may also be pursuing its counterstrategy against the US but with no visible hype. Nonetheless, the US Strategy of Disruption is fast advancing distrust and regional conflicts. If China manages to ward off US attempts to exploit its internal fault-lines and instead be able to cause socio-economic and political problems within the US and its geographical neighbourhood, it may continue with its global rise, which seems quite evident. In any case, in this era of geopolitical uncertainty, it is always helpful to see and analyse almost all conflicts and happenings with the help of the 'US-China Rivalry Lens' to get a more precise and more transparent understanding of the evolving geostrategic chess board.

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ISKP: A Mythical Reality or a US Proxy

Hafiz Muhammad Gulraiz

Abstract

This INSIGHT discusses State of Khurasan Province (ISKP) - its origin and myths surrounding its ideology, activities and sources of recruitments and revenues. It highlights that its activities are more aligned to the strategic interests of the West and in particular the US and counterproductive to China and the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan. Its sources of information and propagation are also influenced by and based in the West. Its elimination is in the interest of Afghanistan, its neighbors and the region.

Keywords: Khilafat, Wilayats, Sense of Integration, Distorting Religious Narratives, Glorifying Violence, Exploiting Susceptibilities.

The State of Khurasan Province (ISKP) is referred to as a terror group carrying out activities in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan since 2014.¹ As per Wilson Center, it is an offshoot of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) that evolved from the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). In 2004, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), a local offshoot of Al Qaeda (AQ) founded by Abu Musab al Zarqawi, merged into the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became its head in May 2010. According to al-Furqan Media, on April 8, 2013, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi transformed ISI into ISIS, proclaimed it a Khilafat, and assumed control as its self-appointed Khalifa.² The Khilafat has 35 Islamic State Wilayats, with 19 located in Iraq and Syria and 16 dispersed throughout several geographical regions; Khurasan is one of them.³

ISKP emerged in 2014 after the defections of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), AQ, and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In response to these defections, IS sent envoys from Iraq and Syria to meet with local militants, including some TTP officials.⁴ IS formally declared

the establishment of its Khurasan Province in January 2015. Hafiz Khan Saeed, a former TTP commander, was selected as ISKP's head.⁵



Predominantly, they are believed to be present in Kabul and Northern Afghanistan, in addition to the eastern provinces of Afghanistan, including Nangarhar and Kunar.⁶ ISKP's governing body is modeled after ISIS and is now led by Shahab-al-Muhajir. The philosophy of ISKP is in line with that of the IS as a whole, which advocates for a global Caliphate based on Sharia law.⁷

Other than local recruits, the organization leverages its online platform to attract a significant proportion of global membership by means of deceit and manipulation, with a particular focus on younger individuals who possess advanced technical skills and exhibit a greater propensity for online activity. The groups employ diverse strategies such as providing a sense of integration in a larger community or cause, distorting religious narratives, glorifying violence as an act of heroism or nobility, exploiting susceptibilities, and concealing their true objectives and intentions from potential members. Additionally, they present themselves as a generous entity that champions justice and liberty.

The United States (US) Department of Treasury claims that local contributions, taxes, extortion, potential earnings from natural resource exploitation, and some financial assistance from ISIS-core are the

primary sources of revenue for ISKP. The security situation in Afghanistan indicates that this entire terror organization is a tool for anyone with money in the bank.

Scores of suicide attacks and target killings from 2016 to 2022 were attributed to or claimed by ISKP. Most of the attacks were low profile, but ISKP was also assumed to be involved in some major terror activities like the Kabul airport attack, the Russian Embassy attack,⁸ and the attack on Pakistan Embassy in Kabul.⁹

Notwithstanding the above information, there are a few very interesting paradoxes concerning ISKP and its 'so-called' anti-West leaning. There is no doubt that geopolitically, the biggest beneficiary of terrorist activities of ISIS or ISKP across the world has been the US. Firstly, the mere presence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria justified the presence of US military in the region for the American public. Now, the presence of ISKP in Afghanistan provides the US leverage to justify its security stance against Afghanistan. Moreover, since the US exit from Afghanistan, ISKP has emerged as the biggest threat to the existing Taliban regime and neighboring states of Afghanistan. For example, President Putin indicated that since the Taliban assumed control in Afghanistan, battle-hardened ISIS jihadists from Iraq and Syria have reportedly started making their way into Afghanistan.

Sources claim that for China, the most worrisome development is the inflow of East Turkestan Movement (ETM) militants from Xinjiang into ISKP. China has substantial economic investments in Afghanistan, such as Amu Darya Oil Project and Mes Aynak Copper Mines, lithium extraction project, etc. Furthermore, China aspires to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Kabul. But a recent ISKP-claimed attack in Kunduz in October 2021 carried out by a Uighur Muslim was in potential revenge for the Taliban's desire to build closer ties with Beijing. China is worried about sabotage of its economic projects and rising radicalism in the Xinjiang region despite Taliban security pledges.¹⁰

Similarly, it is believed that ISKP has created instability across the border between Iran and Afghanistan. ISKP is a Sunni extremist terrorist

organization with an anti-Shia leaning, making it an obvious adversary of Iran.¹¹ Against this backdrop, it is evident that ISKP is directly responsible for destabilizing Afghanistan and the region, a situation which is, directly and indirectly, supporting US strategic objectives in the region within the larger context of US-China global rivalry.

Secondly, it is very interesting to note that primary sources of information about ISKP and earlier about ISIS, etc., have always been Western sources and not local sources where these organizations operate. There is even a mystery regarding the birthplace of ISKP, e.g., western media sources like Wilson Center, CSIS, Stimson and EUAA say that it originated in Afghanistan.¹² Conversely, there exists scholarly discourse positing that its origin traces back to Syria and Iraq. Similarly, there is a mystery surrounding the life and deaths of leaders of ISIS like Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi and Omer Al Baghdadi, etc. They seem to be mythical characters from a Hollywood feature film rather than real-life characters. Hence, the bulk of what we know about ISKP originates either from Western sources or erstwhile Afghan security and intelligence services on the payroll of the West. The fact that there are few local unbiased sources about the aforementioned group is confusing and paradoxical. Isn't it intriguing that the majority of literature on the organization originates in the West rather than where it operates?

Despite having a reputation as an anti-western group, ISKP has several paradoxes that indicate otherwise.

Thirdly, ISKP has indeed been known to have more of a virtual presence than a physical one. Over the years, ISKP began to challenge the credibility of their adversaries by disseminating declarations via semi-official sources such as Khurasan Wilayah News, Tor Bairaghuna, Al-Millat Media, Al-Azaim Foundation and Khurasan Ghag Radio. In recent years, ISKP increased its media output significantly, releasing a multitude of books and booklets across digital platforms. The Al-Azaim Foundation was established as the official media entity of the group, disseminating all print materials, audio statements and video productions. A considerable quantity of this material has been

concentrated on the Taliban, with the intent of undermining their legitimacy and esteem as a political and spiritual power.¹³ The matter for consideration is How? Despite possessing sophisticated and advanced cyber capabilities of their own, authorities in the US and Europe seem unsuccessful in identifying and impeding the virtual activities of ISKP. Isn't it ironic that a terrorist organization like ISKP is able to plan and coordinate all its activities from a war-torn country like Afghanistan through virtual platforms, and still, the most advanced countries cannot do anything about it? It is, perhaps, only possible if the countries that are supposed to catch the bad guys are the ones propagating them also.¹⁴ This is called as playing on both sides of the fence. No wonder Mr. Hamid Karzai, former Afghan President, called IS as a 'tool' of the US.¹⁵

Owing to all the controversies surrounding ISKP, it has become more critical than ever to unearth more information about this IS offshoot. Western powers, particularly the US, have a history of using proxies to achieve their objectives post-1945. ISKP received significant limelight in the aftermath of the US hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan and since then, the circumstantial evidence suggests that ISKP is working virtually and also on the ground as a proxy of the Western world. Academics also mention US backing for Syrian rebel groups as evidence of a broader strategy of using this proxy in the region. China's growing economic and military might is posing a challenge to the US global dominance. Against the backdrop of US-China rivalry, disrupting economic and trade connectivity through regional instability aligns well with the US strategic interests in the broader region of South and Central Asia.

Therefore, it remains in the interest of Afghanistan and the neighboring countries that they join hands in eliminating the menace of ISKP from the region. It should be remembered that confronting ISKP would mean confronting the strategic interests of the US, and that would make the task even more difficult. However, to achieve this common interest, Afghanistan and all its neighbouring countries need to unite, and for this purpose, organizations like ECO, SCO, or any other regional forum can be effectively utilized. Moreover, neighbouring countries should support Afghanistan in economic, military and intelligence domains to make it strong enough to deal with ISKP successfully so that its

operational capabilities are curtailed and it is unable to conduct any further attacks against the countries surrounding Afghanistan thereby providing pretext to the West to exploit regional stability.

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Minimizing the Role of Middleman to Improve the Agriculture Yield in Pakistan

Marium Akhtar

Abstract

This INSIGHT discusses the Role of Middleman in affecting the Agriculture Yield and suggests measures to minimize their role and incentivize farming to ensure food security in Pakistan. It highlights that middleman instead of facilitating farmers are inclined to exploit their lack of resources, awareness and exposure and resort to hoarding for unjust profiteering and artificial price hikes and thus affecting the per acre yield.

Keywords: Middleman, Yield, Subsistence Farmers, Self-sustained Farmers, Facilitation Centers, Exploitation.

The majority of the labour force in Pakistan is employed in the agricultural sector, which accounts for about 24 percent of the country's GDP.¹ Thus, it is impossible to disregard any challenge that stands in the way of its expansion. Ironically since ages, middleman, also known as 'Aarhti' in local language, is a persistent bone of contention between farmer's growth and agriculture yield. Subsistence farmers which comprise 90% of farming community with 48% of cultivated land share are directly dependent on Aarhti to avail crop inputs for their Rabi & Kharif crops. Self-sustained farmers having 52% land share, are financially well-off and can purchase their crop inputs from open market or can dictate on their terms while negotiating with Aarhtis (if required). The role of Middleman is having two sides of the coin as they are crucial because they connect farmers with traders and retail markets whereas, sometimes the ill practices by these Aarhtis cause disruptions in supply chain, causing inflation and farmers do not get their due share of profit resulting in poverty. Even in big countries like China² and India, the agricultural markets are run by middlemen and these

individuals are often seen as one of the root causes of low earnings and stumpy standard of living of the farmers.³



The mechanism in place since ages is that the farmer due to his little education, knowledge and resources, is being provided with several services by the middleman. These services mainly include provision of finance, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and other commodities necessary for the overall agricultural practices during the sowing season. When the crops are ready to harvest, the middleman or Aarhti plays selling role during the harvest season by linking the producer (farmer) to consumer markets by facilitating transport of produce to the markets. In other words, the farmer is obligated to sell his crop to the same aarhti, and he has influence over the farmer's financial inflows. As the latter supervises the revenues for what the former produces, the middleman has a great influence over the farmer.

The reason why middlemen are preferred by small scale or subsistence farmers and wholesalers has also to do with commercialization. Farmers with little resources are the ones who participate in the middleman channel. They have fewer cattle units, smaller farms overall, and less money from selling other products. For underprivileged farmers, the availability of informal loans with flexible terms and no strict criteria for collateral is nothing short of a miracle.

The role of middleman may be of significance for the growers but on the contrary, few of the exploitative roles performed by middleman cause

damage to the overall market and the farmer's income too. Two main exploitative steps include; first the disruption of steady flow of commodities from farm to markets as large quantities of produce is usually stored by the middleman in an effort to subsequently cause an artificial hike in prices creating huge fluctuations in the price of a particular commodity and secondly promote low quality seeds, fertilizers and pesticides which reduce the crop yield. Government already has relevant processes, departments and policies in place designed to be farmer friendly but need improvement. Approximately all major banks like Zarai Taraqiati Bank (ZTBL), National Bank of Pakistan (NBP), Habib Bank Limited (HBL), United Bank Limited (UBL), Bank Al Habib, Faysal Bank etc. provide credit and loan facilities to farmers for agriculture, livestock and farm mechanization. A few hurdles in the process of acquiring finances from formal institutions like banks include complex loan application, high collateral requirements, less number of bank branches in some areas and high interest rate which narrow down the overall scope of financing to the small-scale farmer. For technology based support, several digital apps like 'Bakhabar Kissan', 'Ricult Pakistan', 'Kissan Bazaar', 'Agri Smart', 'Kissan Dost' and 'Mandi Online' are there to provide information regarding crop cultivation, trading, weather, pests and diseases for future crop management. FinTech companies in Pakistan like JazzCash, Easypaisa, Finja, SimSim and CreditFix provide digital payment solutions for farmers provided they are educated enough to use them.

Food grain self-sufficiency necessitates proper storage facilities. The present storage facilities are inadequate on many levels for a significant rise in production in Pakistan.⁴ Farmers in Pakistan have had little or no control over picking the marketplaces or customers to whom they will sell their produce for decades due to lack of storage facilities.

Punjab Government started working to eliminate and minimize the role of middleman in 2000. Since then various efforts have been made but all in vain.⁵ Recently, in 2021, Punjab Government made an effort to interlink nearly 132 agriculture markets to ensure reasonable prices of crops to farmers but the results were not sustainable.⁶ The middleman system is in place since centuries, so it is impossible to completely

remove it. However, the exploitation can be controlled with strategic long-term planning of both financial resources and system integration. Farmers have varying opinions about Aarathi, too. Some farmers assert that aarthis provide assistance when things are tough. Others, while recognizing the financial assistance given during the crisis, express that these charges have extremely high interest rates.⁷

To boost per-acre production and feed our nation's rapidly expanding population, we must empower our farmers to inhibit their over reliance on the aarathi domination in markets. All issues cannot be handled entirely by the government. Market linkages and public-private partnerships should be encouraged for outsourcing to yield better results. Efforts should be made to improve timely loan disbursement to small farmers with broader outreach through effective governance.

The authorities should make it simple and easy for farmers, including those in small towns, to get high yield seed and effective fertilizer and pesticides. Infrastructure should be improved linking the farm with market and beyond. Country-wide technologically advanced storage facilities near farms should be created or the old ones can be updated to meet the requirements and avoid wastage, hence reducing reliance on middleman for market selection.

Facilitation centers with public-private partnership should be established at union council level under one roof (Bank, Insurance, Input Suppliers, Technical Experts, and Brokerage Units etc.). The concept should be farmer friendly ensuring that all inputs of farmer's choice are available. In case of non-availability, facilitation centers should ensure to provision of products from other sources.

Facilitation center should have a list of the service providers in various categories for the farmer to choose from. Services at doorsteps should be provided, ensuring picking up the crops from farmers' doorsteps at the announced guided price, with certain service charges that may be applicable.

A transparent system must be in place utilizing all digital platforms for the process and operations with minimum human interference to avoid

any manipulation, corruption or exploitation at any step. FinTech companies can not only facilitate farmers in getting timely loan but also provide crop inputs along with crop advisory services to enhance their farm productivity. Farmer awareness and training programs should be organized for familiarization and utilization of FinTech services. Government should buy farmers' crop at the end of each agricultural season at prices that have been publicly announced. For this, buying centers should be located at each union council level to reduce the farm to market distance.

The middleman acts as a liaison between producers or growers and consumers. But in Pakistan facilitator exploits farmers on different accounts. Active policy measures should be adopted to facilitate farmers so that they can concentrate more in increasing the yield of their produce instead of wasting their valuable time in combating the exploitation of Middleman, thereby ensuring the food security of the country.

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Mustard Oil: A Homegrown Alternative to Reduce Edible Oil Import Bill

Faiza Qureshi

Abstract

This INSIGHT discusses Pakistan's potential to meet edible oil requirements domestically by increasing production of mustard oil and thus reducing Edible Oil Import Bill. It highlights the factors contributing to shortfall in production of oil seed crops and measures to increase proportion of cultivable land for oil seed crops cultivation. It recommends availability of more land for cultivation of oil seeds crops through zoning, offering better and competitive support price and increasing modern processing, crushing and extraction facilities.

Keywords: Edible Oil Imports, Import Bill, Food Industry, Dietary Practices, Balance of Payment Gap.

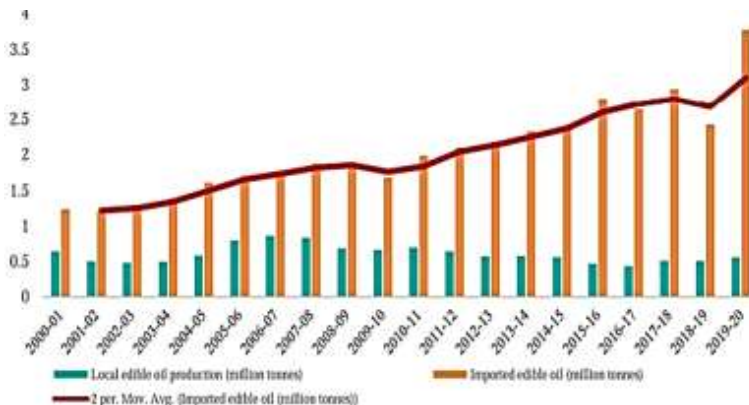
Despite being an agricultural country, Pakistan has become the world's fourth-largest edible oil importer, with an import bill of \$4.5 billion in the fiscal year 2021-22. This import increase is mainly due to rising domestic consumption and price fluctuations in the international edible oil market. Over the past two decades, Pakistan's edible oil imports have grown at an annual rate of 12.3%, resulting in a staggering 398.7% increase in the import bill by 2020. In 2006, the import bill was \$615 million, but it rose to \$3.068 billion in 2020.¹ The State Bank of Pakistan also reported a 47% increase in the import bill year-on-year in FY 2021.²

Palm and Soybean oil are the major imports for Pakistan, along with some oilseeds such as Soybean, Canola and Sunflower. Palm oil imports dominated the import bill in 2021, costing \$2.44 billion.³ In terms of quantity, oilseed and related products have surpassed 7 million metric

tons in the same fiscal year, with 87% of Palm and Soybean oil and the remaining 13% comprising Rapeseed, Sunflower, Groundnut, and other related seeds.⁴

In Pakistan, the food industry consumes 96% of edible oil commercially and domestically. The per capita consumption in Pakistan is around 24 kg, higher than in India and Sri Lanka, which is responsive mainly to rising GDP. It is worth noting that transformation in dietary practices has decreased the use of hydrogenated products but starkly increased oil usage, 87% of which is imported Palm and Soybean oil.

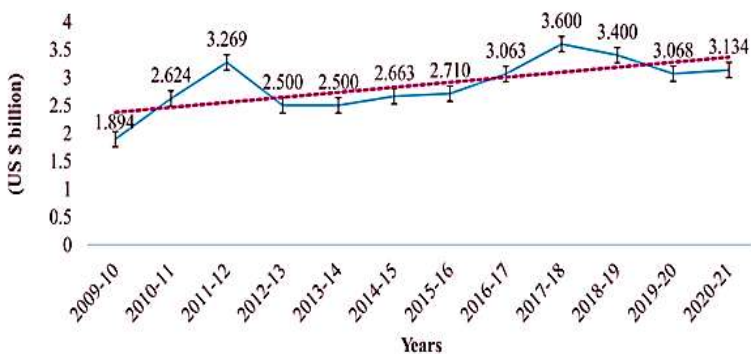
Pakistan imports 75% of its Palm oil from Indonesia and 25% from Malaysia under the Preferential Trade Agreement and Free Trade Agreement, respectively.⁵ According to the trade map, the global average per ton cost of Palm oil is \$1050, making it the cheapest edible oil. Figure 2 (given below) illustrates a sudden surge in import bills in 2011 and onwards, mainly due to Indonesia's crude oil export discouragement policy and imposing a \$20-25 per ton export duty.



Similarly, the US-China rivalry also impacted the international Palm oil market, where the US reduced the trade of Soybean oil with China, eventually opening space for Indonesian Palm oil to fill in, resulting in increased demand and subsequent price hikes.⁶ Therefore, Pakistan must utilize its domestic edible oil production potential to avoid the uncertain international edible oil market, related hiked import bill, and widening balance of payment gap.

Over the past two decades, Pakistan has witnessed a gradual decline in domestic production of edible oils, where it was 0.642 MT in 2000-01 and 0.431 MT in 2017, but positive changes have been observed since the initiation of the Punjab Oilseed Promotion Initiative in 2017-18. Mustard and its varieties have replaced imported Palm oil and are the second-largest source, contributing approximately 38% of the country's edible oil production. Mustard is known for its high oil content, ranging from 40% to 44%, making it an attractive option. Cottonseed, the primary contributor at 52%, is often blended with other oils due to its low oil content and higher saturated fats. Currently, Pakistan has 585.50 hectares of Mustard cultivated land, with a production of 17.16 mund per acre in most parts of Pakistan.⁷ Mustard and Rapeseed contribute 32% of total domestic oil produced.⁸ Although Mustard/ Rapeseed contain higher Euric content, with the introduction of Canola varieties of the crop, the health profile of the crop has been enhanced. Despite the positives mentioned earlier, the crop still experiences multiple bottlenecks in increasing production.

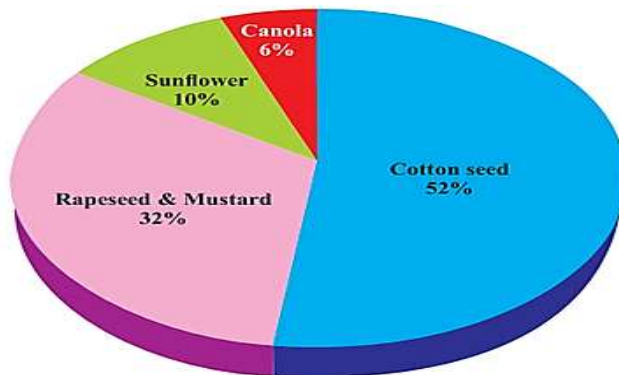
A predominant challenge to Mustard cultivation in Pakistan is competition with Wheat over land. Wheat is a staple and highly demanded cash crop and is preferred over Mustard, given their overlapping sowing time, between September and October. Around 40% of cultivated land in Pakistan is consumed by Wheat, i.e., about 9 million hectares, whereas Mustard is generally grown over marginal lands, with lower availability of water and fertility.



(Figure 2: Edible Oil Import Bill)

Oil seed crops are undervalued due to their non-cash crop status; in the year 2023, the prices ranged from PKR 9000 to 11000 in Chakwal, Faisalabad, Attock and other regions of Punjab (Chakwal Mustard/ Rapeseed and Canola are of high yield, and such seed type is provided to farmers for better yield across Pakistan).⁹

A significant bottleneck is the absence of organized processing and crushing facilities. The existing crushing facilities in Pakistan primarily comprise local *kohloos* in villages. In contrast, high solvent extractors employ advanced extraction technologies, with a production capacity of approx. 4 – 4.5 MT oil. Pakistan Oilseed Development Board (PODB) indicated that 46.5% of oil production is through *kohloos*, with a minimum yield of 0.10 MT.¹⁰ Moreover, the gap between farmers and extractors hinders oilseed production, indicating that improved extraction methods and a more substantial market presence for oil products can yield greater efficiency.



(Figure 3: Share from Local Produce)

On the demand side, the presence of a strong Sulphur smell and Euristic Acid associated with cardiovascular diseases, Mustard is not preferred. To address this, imported Canola varieties were introduced in 2005-2006. Initially, Canola production remained low, but since Pakistan's first indigenous Canola variety was introduced in 2016, AARI Canola yield has substantially increased.¹¹ Canola being GE Mustard, holds

health benefits and similar production costs and can serve as a low-cost alternative to expensive imported oils.

Retail competition is another impediment in mainstreaming Canola. There is a price difference of approximately PKR 100 between Palm and Canola oil.¹² Consequently, market dynamics prioritize price considerations over the health benefits associated with the product.

With such decreased production and prospects of increasing demands, a large-scale initiative is needed, drawing its roots in Pakistani households to a policy captivating growers. Following practices can help discourage imported edible oils and route self-sufficiency in edible oils.

- Given the minor household usage, a mass awareness campaign through electronic and print media is necessary, including dietitians and cooking experts inducing the benefits of Mustard and Canola oils. Mustard / Canola oil branding should be undertaken, and a retail policy should be devised over percentage allocation to different oils in the consumer market.
- At stage two, Mustard / Rapeseed and Canola farming should be encouraged by introducing farmer-friendly policies. Centered on sustainable and longer-term Mustard production since the subsidies provided on crops prove fugacious. Therefore, to increase the cultivating land, the concept of zoning be adopted, where zones specify the geographically proximal region specified for growing selected crops. In addition, a cluster-based approach be adopted to analyse climatic, soil and marketing contingencies needed before consideration of any agriculture-supportive policy.
- Shaving some land off the wheat cultivated areas can also be considered. Given the per acre yield of mustard to be 17.16, an impactful contribution can be expected from 0.5 million hectares. In this regard, intercropping with Wheat and Sugarcane should be deliberated to enhance production. There is a possibility of increasing oilseed production up to 34.41% of domestic needs using additional area from wheat and sugarcane.

- The government should promote value-added agriculture in oilseeds to incentivize farmers and attract mustard / canola cultivation.
- Furthermore, farmers' confidence in their crops should be increased by introducing a market-friendly Minimum Support Price (MSP) for mustard/ canola.
- Additional attention should be paid to Research and Development (R&D), hybrid and genetically engineered GE Rapeseed/ Mustard, specifically Canola seeds with greater yield, health benefits, and climate resistance. Furthermore, seed provision be strictly monitored, and high-yield seeds be made available through government and private research institutes.
- Import of low-quality edible oil should be tariffed 5-10% more. Similarly, policy interventions conditioning importers to develop and procure equal or substantial quantities of locally produced edible oil or oil seed should be undertaken.
- Government should establish efficient extraction facilities near the farm areas, thereby decreasing reliance on production-deficient Kohloos.
- Additionally, projects of Soya bean, Sunflower and good Palm oil should be undertaken (as a pilot project of Palm oil in Thatta – 2016) as a step towards self-sufficiency in edible oils. Corporate farming can also incentivize regular and sustainable Mustard/ Rapeseed/ Canola oil production.

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Geopolitics of Climate Change

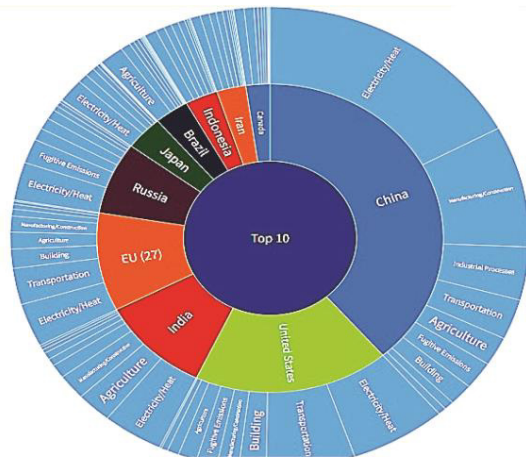
Faiza Qureshi

Abstract

This INSIGHT discusses the potential use of Climate Change as a geopolitical tool, and its implications for developing and underdeveloped countries particularly those who rely more on China or Russia. It further says that since most of the literature available on climate risk has been prepared by organizations under the influence of West therefore, they use it as a tool to further vested interests thus underplaying the magnanimity of threat the world faces.

Keywords: Sectoral Approach, Environmental Degradation, Ecological Patterns, Climate Change, National Security, Adaptation Strategy.

Barry Buzan in his sectoral approach to security has identified environmental degradation as a separate threat to mankind. With no specific boundaries and a shift in ecological patterns, Climate Change has been identified as the biggest threat to human race and is therefore being given a renewed importance in the realm of national security.



Source 1: World Resource Institute-2019

There are two broad perspectives surrounding the debate on changing climate. Liberalists

propagate the success of climate agreements, where rich countries finance climate projects in developing countries, thus bolstering success of UN Climate change regime. Realist perspective on the other hand proposes that technical, political and financial aspects need to be given thorough consideration before compliance to climate commitments, as regardless of the agreements, natural disasters will remain preventable and global temperature will continue to rise. It can therefore be deduced that developing states need to decrease their reliance on foreign intervention while focusing more on adaptation strategies.

Statistics show that the world's 30% richest states are in control of 70% of the global resources and are therefore primarily responsible for the degradation of environment. Since 1750s, USA has been the top emitter, responsible for 25% of historical emissions, twice higher than China.¹ The top 10 GHG emitters contribute over 2/3rd of global emissions, with China, United States and India contributing 42.6% of the total emissions.² At present, China is the largest carbon emitter in the world, with 11.680 GT, i-e around 32% and US around 12.6% (4.535GT) of the world's total in 2020.³ Globally, energy sector is the biggest GHG emitter and Chinese energy reliance on coal is estimated to be around 67% in its overall energy mix.⁴ Unfortunately, most of the literature available on Climate risk has been prepared by organizations under the influence of West and therefore use it as a tool to further vested interests, thus diminishing the magnanimity of threat the world faces.

This is evident from the fact that all the states marked as the most vulnerable countries by the Climate Risk Index and are under heavy Chinese influence and investment and are located in Asia, North America, and Africa.⁵ Most reports have conveniently ignored US' contribution to ecological damage and labeled China and Russia as "Climate Evils". There exists a probability that the Global North could utilize commitments to address climate change as a geopolitical tool against rival nations in a similar manner as they have employed human rights and terrorism since last couple of decades for their political gains.

The current geopolitical tools have interlinked Climate Change, energy and geopolitics. Firstly, global emission commitments for developing countries can potentially be weaponized, where rich countries can

potentially be weaponized, where rich countries can impose mandatory emission reductions on underdeveloped nations, thus limiting their survival and economic growth. Secondly, higher tariffs on non-green products will increase the market barriers and make it difficult to meet commitments. The underlying intention is therefore to forcefully penalize poorer nations, let developing countries bear cost of emissions while the developed world continues to attain competitive advantage for their domestic products. Thirdly, the developed countries from the Western bloc have been using climate negotiating platforms to further their interests and have been forcing underdeveloped countries into emission reduction and other climate commitments.

Climate Change can alter the balance of power when it comes to energy mix. The gradual shift to cleaner energy resources suggests that Natural gas is the future. In this regard, Central Asian States, with abundant natural gas resources will potentially be attaining a powerful status. Russia aims at the establishment of OPEC

Climate Change has the potential of being used as a geopolitical tool, and its implications are as evident as its causative factors.

style organization of natural gas exporting countries including Iran, Qatar, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan,⁶ and growing ties between Iran and Russia suggest that Moscow will counter western sanctions through Tehran, creating new Natural Gas hub.⁷ Thus, Climate Change may change the status of traditional petroleum exporting powers.

As clean and green technological superpowers are emerging, the monopolization of technological innovation is considered a power booster. At present, China is the largest producer and exporter of green energy products and clean energy technology. Chinese firms offer infusion of new technologies to upgrade traditional energy plants to cleaner ones. To counter increasing Chinese influence in the green market, US administration has signed Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The project has incurred a cost of \$369 billion with the aim to develop domestic clean energy sector and decrease global dependence on China.⁸ This will intensify the rivalry between the two powers. With such interlinked environmental and commercial interests at stake, US

might use its global dominance to impede Chinese interests by coercing developing and underdeveloped countries to abide by Climate laws.

The changing climate has led to physical geographical changes as well. According to NASA, Arctic ice is melting at a rate of 12.6% per decade due to global warming,⁹ such ice melting in the Arctic has opened window of opportunity for frozen Northern countries like China, Russia and the US. Arctic accounts for 30% undiscovered gas resources, while melting of ice sheets have opened sea ways for longer duration.¹⁰ With US exiting the purchase plan of Green Land, the region is now open for Russia to increase its influence. Moscow has previously conducted major military exercises, with advanced warheads in the Arctic as an expression of consolidating Russian influence in the region.¹¹ Commercially, Russia seeks to attract cargo ships away from Suez Canal and provide alternate passage to ships through Northern Sea routes, although such a plan would bear higher cost but will consolidate Russian hegemony in Arctic.^{12,13} Additionally, by investing in Russian LNG projects, China is furthering Russian claim in the region. China describes itself as a “Near Arctic State”. The Chinese Polar Silk route passing through the Northern region and Chinese infrastructural development, can help Beijing use the region for commercial and military purposes, thus leading to greater contestation.¹⁴ One can therefore conclude that Climate Change has geopolitical implications while the international climate initiatives have been heavily politicized.

Therefore, given the deepening US-China rivalry and its spillover effects on Climate commitments, it can be asserted that developing states are more likely to experience its effects at geophysical, diplomatic and economic fronts. If climate change were to be weaponized, then nations aligned with China may face more rigorous commitments, predominantly driven by the West. Such a scenario proposes decreasing reliance on international climate assistance and alternate development of domestic and regional resilience. Along with repercussions of being directly pawned into US-China rivalry, states are equally subjected to climate litigation at domestic and international forums, where non-governmental organizations and certain pressure groups can be used to spur geopolitical motives. This situation is illustrated in the complaint

lodged with the European Ombudsman regarding the European Union's importation of Russian oil and gas, contending that it will impact both human rights associated with war in Ukraine and GHG emissions.¹⁵ In a recent development, the UN has asked international court of justice (ICJ) to provide advisory opinion on legal consequences for states in case of noncompliance to climate commitments. Although ICJ will enjoy advisory jurisdiction, but stringent actions taken by UN Security Council and General Assembly can be weaponized to further interests of global north.¹⁶ Based on the aforementioned assessment of the global green regime, the prospects of its success appear bleak, and only time will ultimately provide a definitive answer.

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About Insight and Author

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“Re-Imagining the Society”: The Second Policy Pillar of NISP-2018

Rida Bilal

Abstract

This INSIGHT discusses Pakistan's National Internal Security Policy. It highlights that NISP has an ambitious policy as it outlines a long list of 120 objectives but, on the ground, one can witness a clear gap between the policy formulation and its implementation. The complete burden of responsibility lies with the government agencies while ignoring civil society and the private sector. The objectives of NISP can only be achieved if there is a minimum but realistic agenda instead of a long wish list. For this, the government needs to incentivize the private sector and civil society as it is a shared responsibility.

Keywords: National Internal Security Policy, External Security, Preservation of Sovereignty and Integrity, National Action Plan, Kinetic Operations, Counter Terrorism Legislation.

The concept of security is rapidly evolving due to the complex contemporary challenges. It has multiple and overlapping dimensions, however, broadly speaking, it can be mainly categorized into two domains, i.e., internal, and external. Notwithstanding the theoretical underpinning of the concept, internal security, in simple words means “the preservation of sovereignty and integrity of the state from disruptive and anti-national forces of the state”.¹

Internal security objectives are sometimes available in public discourse in the shape of a national policy. Pakistan’s first national internal security policy (NISP) was issued in 2014 followed by a National Action Plan (NAP). These policy documents guided the kinetic operations and numerous counter terrorism legislation in the country. Building on the hard-earned successes of NISP 2014 and NAP, the government of

Pakistan unveiled NISP 2018 which guides comprehensive recommendations for the administrative, socio-economic, and ideational domains with the 6Rs strategy i.e., Reorient, Reimagine, Reconcile, Redistribute, Recognize and adoption of a Regional Approach. The tenure of NISP 2018 is completing this year; therefore, it is the right time to critically assess the efficacy of this policy for sustainable peace.

The whole of the nation's approach adopted by the NISP 2018 describes the concept of a peaceful, democratic, and inclusive society forged by promoting rule of law, inclusive growth, and respect for diversity by creating a shared vision, provision of social justice and ensuring political stability.² NISP 2018 outlined short, medium, and long-term objectives to achieve the strategic and operational goals for strengthening the state-citizen relationship. The short-term objectives are aimed at addressing the multiple security challenges of terrorism and extremism while the medium-term objectives tend to address the systematic challenges faced by the internal security of Pakistan. Lastly, the long-term objectives critically evaluate the factors contributing to insecurity and violence disturbing the peace and stability of the country.

The NISP 2018 is based on six prong strategy. A total of 120 objectives are outlined in the policy, ranging from the use of hard power to soft power, judicial to administrative reforms and from legal to executive measures. Although all the objectives outlined in NISP are critical, however, for an in-depth analysis, three objectives namely 'National Narrative', 'Media Reforms', and 'Tourism & Cultural Activities' envisioned under the second pillar 'Re-imagining the Society' have been assessed in this paper. Unlike the other pillars and objectives outlined, these three not only focus on building a diverse society but also help in promoting the soft image of Pakistan in the international arena.

The responsibility for the development of a comprehensive 'National Narrative' has been assigned to the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and the provincial governments. Under this objective, two short-term goals have been identified for NACTA, firstly, the formulation of a 'National Cultural Plan' and secondly to actively involve the civil society at the provincial level as a key partner. NACTA

has been successful in formulating a strategy for the implementation of the 'National Cultural Plan' which serves the purpose of making society more vibrant to rekindle cultural values. The celebration of cultural festivals in each province and the preservation of cultural heritage sites are also made part of the plan. The provincial governments and their respective municipal authorities are tasked to execute the policies.

The plan on paper may seem simple with promising results but other than Punjab and KPK, it was at the bottom of the priority list of Baluchistan and Sindh. According to Punjab Information and Culture Department,³ the provincial government has organized multiple special events and programs for the promotion of the local culture of Punjab. Currently, three mega projects have been completed and twenty-two projects are ongoing which include the up-gradation of existing cultural facilities, museums, and art councils.

According to the Annual Development Program (ADP) 2022-23, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cultural Directorate has reserved 100 billion rupees in phase-1 for the development of cultural and archaeological infrastructure.⁴ Phase-1 includes the establishment of cultural complexes at the divisional level and the promotion of cultural-community activities. Furthermore, according to the same report, out of 124 total projects, 90 are ongoing and 38 are due for completion.⁵ The organization of cultural activities and the preservation of cultural heritage sites not only help in promoting the local culture but also assists in developing a peaceful society based on the national narrative of co-existence and acceptance of diversity.

Ministry of Tourism, Archeology, Culture and Youth Affairs Sindh's annual progress report 2018-19 indicates the allocation of a total of 14,495 million for cultural promotion and heritage protection.⁶ The government has announced several initiatives to promote local culture through engaging various cultural research centers. Moreover, funds have been allocated for the restoration of various archaeological sites in Karachi, but practical progress is not visible due to the less effective management structure. The cultural departments of Baluchistan hardly tried its implementation. Even if they did, not many details about the projects have been announced to the public except for the amount of

27.9 million that had been allocated for cultural promotion and heritage protection.

Regarding the second objective of 'Media Reforms', the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and Pakistan Electronic Media Regulation Authority (PEMRA) have been made responsible for the formulation and implementation of the strategy to regulate media, control hate speech and airing of fake content.

The securing of online spaces to curb provocative statements is a long-term objective assigned to PTA. It has imposed 'Removal and Blocking of Unlawful Online Content (Procedure, Oversight and Safeguards) Rules, 2021' which have helped to block objectionable content. Famous social media apps like Snack Video and BIGO Live are the first companies to register with PTA under these rules.⁷ PTA has also started awareness and behaviour change communication campaigns. However, it is worth mentioning that monitoring mechanisms had been developed but could not be implemented as planned due to which rogue elements are tarnishing the social fabric of society by using cyber spaces for their nefarious designs.

The performance of PEMRA is satisfactory as it has issued a total of 335 show cause notices and 118 pieces of advice to various TV channels for violating the Electronic Media Code of Conduct 2015. PEMRA Annual Report of 2019-2020 published in the year 2021 indicates that a fine of Rs.23.1 million was imposed on satellite TV channels on account of airing fake news and hate speech. However, hate speech and fake news could not be fully controlled.

The third objective 'Tourism and Cultural Activities' assign crucial tasks of promoting the local cultures of Pakistan across borders to the Ministry of Interior and Department of Cultures. In this regard, the Ministry of Culture was successful in developing an inclusive and participatory cultural policy with equal participation of all provincial and federal stakeholders with PNCA (Pakistan National Council of Arts) as the core facilitator. For the positive image building of Pakistan, PNCA took vibrant steps to promote cultural activities both locally and across borders motivated by patriotism.⁸ For instance, organization of cultural

event on visit of Uzbek President on 3rd March 2022, Jashn-e-Nowruz held on 17th March 2022, “The Golden Hour” Art Exhibition held on 7th January 2022, “Maritime Treasures of Pakistan” Art Exhibition from 1st to 3rd March 2022, “See Pakistan” Photography Exhibition held from 19th March to 15th April 2022 are just to name a few.

The agenda of cultural promotion is directly linked with tourism. In this regard, The Tourism Department of Punjab is currently investing 282 million according to the Annual Development Program 2021-22, on various regular and district development packages based on tourist-friendly policies.⁹ The development of various resorts, parks and lakes to promote Eco-tourism had been a key priority of the Punjab Tourism Department. A total of 39 projects are undergoing with 17 new schemes introduced. The Integrated Development Strategy (IDS) adopted by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), in this regard, prioritized the development of tourism department. It has been declared in the IDS document of the year 2018-19 that KP caters 19% of the total tourist traffic hence focus was placed on increasing KP’s domestic tourism by 10 percent every year. Currently 24 projects are ongoing with 4 new projects introduced.¹⁰

The Tourism Directorate of Baluchistan, and Sindh tried to outline necessary steps for the promotion and development of tourism, but the implementation had been critically weak. The statistics available on the websites of Baluchistan, and Sindh Tourism Departments are inadequate and generally outdated supporting the fact that cultural promotion and tourism both have been on the bottom of priority list of these two provincial governments.

The provinces of Pakistan are rich in cultural diversity and form a vital part of our national identity. They require effective governance, along with administrative capacity and finances to protect and promote their tourism, culture, and heritage. Moreover, social media cells of provincial departments lack the proficiency to regulate, organize and update their data on websites. The Annual Progress Reports are often difficult to access and, even if the information is available, it is outdated and inadequate. This proves to be a big challenge for researchers and analysts to determine the successes and failures of the policies initiated.

NISP seems to be an ambitious policy as it outlines a long list of 120 objectives but, on the ground, one can witness a clear gap between the policy formulation and its implementation. The absence of the KPIs in the NISP is testimony to the fact that the policy formulation process is less transparent and lacks inclusiveness. The complete burden of responsibility lies with the government agencies while ignoring civil society and the private sector. The objectives of NISP can only be achieved if there is a minimum but realistic agenda instead of a long wish list with an inclusive approach. For this, the government needs to incentivize the private sector and civil society as it is a shared responsibility.

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About Insight and Author

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Simla Agreement: Is it Still Relevant?

Ms Ayesha Malik

Abstract

This INSIGHT discusses whether Simla Agreement is still relevant when India is acting unilaterally even on bilateral issues like Kashmir. It highlights that India is neither ready to engage with Pakistan bilaterally nor concedes to internationalize Kashmir Issue. In such a situation Pakistan has the right to withdraw from Simla Agreement on the context of India's disinterest in bilateralism on the one hand and renunciation of mediation on the pretext of Simla Agreement on the other.

Keywords: Simla Agreement, Bilateral Negotiations, Normalization of Relations, Plebiscite, Perpetual Stalemate.

In his farewell speech to the Pentagon in December 2006, Donald Rumsfeld warned that 'weakness is provocative'. This approach seems to be the beating heart of many powers' foreign policy and also serves to explain the Simla Agreement. Pakistan signed the pact just after losing a war in which it was dismembered, conceding ground which has only served to weaken its claims since. The agreement itself is a mere six clauses and yet the scholarly ink spilled in its support or critique runs many lengths. Following India's abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status in August 2019, the question for Pakistan is whether the Simla Agreement should be given CPR and revived or it is worth withdrawing from entirely.

The Agreement requires India and Pakistan to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations and prohibits either country from unilaterally altering the situation.¹ In relation to Kashmir, it states that "the basic issues and causes of conflict which have bedeviled the relations between the two countries for the last 25 years shall be resolved by peaceful means"² and binds both parties to discuss

the modalities and arrangements for durable peace and normalization of relations, including a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir.³ Pakistan maintains its desire to talk to India but also solicits international intervention to ensure the implementation of Security Council Resolutions. Its longstanding position has been that Jammu and Kashmir needs to be demilitarized and a supervised plebiscite held. India meanwhile states that the Simla Agreement precludes international involvement in the issue (despite India being the one to take the issue to the UN) and deprives Pakistan of locus standi from intervening in Kashmir. India also contends that local elections in Kashmir (held under the eyes of its huge army, which have been marred by violence, boycotts, and accusations of rigging) are the same as a plebiscite.

Pakistan's main grievance is that by abrogating Article 370 and balkanizing the territory into two separate states, India has unilaterally altered the situation in violation of the Simla Agreement. However, the international community has alarmingly seemed to side with India largely due to its desire to not rankle this regional power too much. When China convened a closed-door meeting of the Security Council to discuss the issue, Russia and France cited the Agreement when vetoing a resolution tabled during the meeting. The UN Secretary General also recalled the Simla Agreement when appealing for maximum restraint between the parties following the tensions that ensued in August 2019.

India's talk of bilateralism is confrontation masquerading as cooperation. It has merely served to exclude outside involvement in an issue India has no desire to solve. Relying on the Simla Agreement is a gross cop-out which ignores the fact that the pact refers to meetings between 'Heads' which would resolve disputes, these meetings have happened only a few times. Talks have then stopped or stalled and there were never any serious efforts to resolve the dispute. In fact, the Agreement has led to this issue being more deeply entrenched, creating a perpetual stalemate as one side cannot talk about Kashmir when the other refuses to engage and then annexes the territory to its own.

Pakistan has continued to court international intervention, drawing attention to the genocidal saffron policies of the BJP and its 'settler laws'

in Jammu and Kashmir. These have not really worked and India is now an aspiring superpower longingly eyeing a permanent seat at the Security Council. In abrogating Article 370, it is also acting to ensure that it will not be refused a seat due to its inability to resolve the Kashmir dispute. It also aims to preclude a mediator as given its powerful status; it is wary of the equal treatment which would be given to both sides in mediation. It has stopped engaging with even the UN's Military Observer Group to India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) following the Simla Agreement, leaving only Pakistan reporting to the organization which is largely toothless due to India's refusal to participate.

So, what should Pakistan do? We are currently again in a weak position. First World money lenders are at our throats. Our economic situation will worsen and our defence budget will be cut (while India side-eyeing China has anxiously increased its own by 13 percent). However, Pakistan should look to thwart India's long term goals. It can seek China's support in countering India's bid for a permanent SC seat due to the Kashmir dispute. Moreover, it can also publicize its attempt to bring India to resolve the issue bilaterally through a mediator. While the US and Russia would not be acceptable to either state, the Gulf States may have an increasing role to play.

The ceasefire on the Line of Control agreed to in February 2021 was facilitated by the UAE, with the country's ambassador to the US claiming he had helped arrange meetings between Indian and Pakistani intelligence chiefs in finalizing the truce. The UAE may be an acceptable mediator to both Pakistan and India, though Pakistan should be wary of increasing economic cooperation between the two states. Moreover, a key issue with the Simla Agreement is its lack of specific mandated mechanisms. In a last ditch effort to save the agreement and abide by the need for bilateral cooperation inherent in it, Pakistan should look to draft an actionable sub-agreement under Simla Agreement similar to the Good Friday Agreement between Ireland and the UK regarding the status of Northern Ireland and distribute it in order to force India to the table. This sub-agreement should provide a framework which structures in detail how difficult issues will be addressed and discussed, including

issues relevant to both sides, namely demilitarization, policing, and self-determination. The Simla Agreement's relevance seems to be predicated on the fact that it delineates the Line of Control between the two countries; however, the text understands this to be a defacto border, not a de jure one. Pakistan should include in any new sub-agreements its intention to continue to respect the defacto border. If India does not agree to this framework agreement, which is likely, then Pakistan should withdraw from the Simla Agreement and seek to internationalize the dispute once again.

The focus of Pakistan's argument should be highlighting that legal title for Jammu & Kashmir has not passed to India. The Security Council Resolutions and India's own constitutional history clearly reflect this position. As such, Pakistan must make every effort to reverse India's 5 August 2019 game plan which is aimed at 'internalizing' the matter and changing the goalposts so that Kashmir issue no longer remains a 'dispute' under international law. While most of the international community no longer views the 1950's formula of UN-supervised plebiscite practical today, Pakistan must not forget the real value of the UNSC Resolutions in that they crystallize Kashmir as a disputed territory under international law where title has not passed to either India or Pakistan.

Pakistan's withdrawal from Simla would be valid under international law. This is because India, in annexing and bifurcating the disputed territory, has committed a material breach of the agreement. Article 60 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties defines a material breach of a treaty as the violation of a provision essential to the accomplishment of the object or purpose of the treaty, which in this instance would be a unilateral act which does not accord with bilateralism. Withdrawing after having attempted to create a sub-agreement and appointing a mediator would indicate that Pakistan has attempted to uphold the obligations under the treaty as much as it could, leaving withdrawal as the only remaining option.

In the early decades, following partition, the Kashmir issue was overwhelmingly viewed as an international dispute on the UN agenda. Simla provided India with the perfect excuse to 'bilateralise' the dispute.

The treaty has, so far, only been an obstacle to Pakistan's attempts to 'internationalize' the Kashmir issue which India uses to roadblock the discussion of Kashmir as well as other issues such as Sir Creek. On 5 August 2019, India has once again moved to change the goalposts, and is now trying to portray Kashmir as an 'internal' matter. Countering the Indian juggernaut will require Pakistan to develop a bold Kashmir policy based on sustained diplomatic, legal, and academic engagement with the international community and effective media and strategic communication strategy for mobilizing public support at home.

After all, while weakness is provocative, history proves that Goliaths can be beaten.

References

- ¹ **Clause 1(ii), Simla Agreement 1972:** That the two countries are resolved to settle their differences by *peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon* between them. *Pending the final settlement of any of the problems between the two countries, neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation, and both shall prevent the organisation, assistance or encouragement of any acts detrimental to the maintenance of peaceful and harmonious relations.* (Emphasis Added)
- ² **Clause 1(iv), Simla Agreement 1972:** That the basic issues and causes of conflict which have bedeviled the relations between the two countries for the last 25 years shall be resolved by peaceful means.
- ³ **Clause 6, Simla Agreement 1972:** Both Governments agree that the respective Heads will meet again at a mutually convenient time in the future and that, in the meanwhile, the representatives of the two sides will meet to discuss further the modalities and arrangements for the establishment of durable peace and normalisation of relations, including the questions of repatriation of prisoners of war and civilians internees, *a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir* and the resumption of diplomatic relations. (Emphasis Added)

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The Balkanization of Jammu and Kashmir

Ms Ayesha Malik

Abstract

This INSIGHT discusses India's annexation of Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019 and its repercussions for India, Pakistan and China. It highlights that many Indian constitutional lawyers defended the abrogation of Article 370, arguing it is in accordance with India's domestic law, however, the most agreed that the bifurcation of the territory into two, Jammu and Kashmir and Laddakh was legally void because the input of Jammu and Kashmir's legislature could not be given which was mandatory. The reluctance on the part of the Indian superior judiciary to censure the government for its unconstitutional moves and China's reservations are also indicative of its being in violation of international covenants and local laws.

Keywords: Regional Super Power, Balkanization, Disputed Territory, Annexation, Demography, Non Democratic, Abrogation.

In the mid-1990s, when he was Mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdogan famously quipped “democracy is like a tram. You ride it until you arrive at your destination, then you step off.” India, once called the world's largest democracy, seems to have adopted this approach when it comes to Jammu and Kashmir. After achieving regional superpower status and following the BJP's election into power, it has become decidedly and unapologetically non-democratic. On August 5, 2019, Jammu and Kashmir was annexed to India and bifurcated into two. These historic constitutional changes redefined the legal status of the disputed territory and fundamentally changed its relationship with India, Pakistan, and even China. Many Indian constitutional lawyers defended the abrogation of Article 370, arguing it is in accordance with India's domestic law, however, the most agreed that the bifurcation of the territory into two, Jammu and Kashmir and Laddakh, was legally

void. This is a strange conclusion to reach at. From Pakistan's point of view, while both are bad, the annexation seems to be far worse. However, the bifurcation of the state is a worrying development that should be followed very carefully by Pakistan and China because firstly, this seeks to dilute the demography of the state. Laddakh has a Buddhist majority with a sizable Shia Muslim population while Kashmir valley has a Muslim majority, and Jammu has a Hindu majority. Now that these have been balkanized by India into two territories and India's settler laws encourage non-local, mostly Hindu Indians to move to Jammu and Kashmir, it is likely that India wants the Muslim majority in the valley to be substantially diluted. This would be a problem for Pakistan's long-standing legal position which is that a referendum should be held in the state, as the question now is when would this be held and also how many local Kashmiris would be left in the territory to vote? Secondly, significantly for India, it faces many critics at home regarding the bifurcation as it forms a worrying precedence for other states and undermines its own constitution. Thirdly, another country which has a bearing on this change is China which is unhappy with the unilateral nature of the step on territory which it considers disputed, and which abuts land upon which China and India have clashed very recently. We will turn to the second and third of these issues in turn as the first has been much discussed in Pakistan's opposition to this law.

The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act (2019) was passed by India's Parliament with a two-thirds majority days after the abrogation of Article 370. The law is unprecedented as never before in India's history has a state been bifurcated into two union territories. Amit Shah, as Foreign Minister, explained that the state was bifurcated owing to the "long pending demand of people of Laddakh, to give it the status of a Union Territory to enable them to realize their aspirations", whilst for Jammu and Kashmir, the reason given is "the prevailing internal security situation, fuelled by cross border terrorism in the existing State of Jammu and Kashmir." The law however is legally void as India's constitution, under Article 3, does not allow the Parliament to get rid of a state and create two union territories in its place. Also, even if it could be argued (as some Indian constitutional lawyers do) that the constitution does allow this, it could not be done while the state of

Jammu and Kashmir was under the President's rule, as it requires the input of the state's legislature. As the input of Jammu and Kashmir's legislature could not be given, Parliament consented to its own proposed reorganization, which undermines the safeguards of a federalist structure and may create a dangerous precedent which takes away the prerogative of states to have a say in their reorganization. This erodes the democratic nature of the constitution under which a state may not be guaranteed its territorial integrity but they are guaranteed a say in the extent to which this is altered.

Petitions were filed before India's Supreme Court challenging the abrogation of Article 370 and the state's bifurcation soon after those laws were passed. Notices were issued by the court and stays were not granted. The matter was last heard in March 2020, when the Supreme Court ruled that it should not be referred to a larger bench. Since then nothing has happened in an incredibly important case of constitutional significance with the court showing no urgency despite virtually hearing other cases during the coronavirus pandemic. Over three years have passed since these petitions were filed before the Court and it seems unlikely that we will have a pronouncement on the matter any time soon. However, it does indicate a clear reluctance on the part of the superior judiciary to censure the government for its unconstitutional moves.

The other important element to this relates to China. The Chinese Foreign Ministry released a statement the day after India's announcement regarding the bifurcation which said that "India has continued to undermine China's territorial sovereignty by unilaterally changing its domestic law". Since then China has stated that it is following the situation closely and maintains that any unilateral change to the status quo is illegal and invalid. President Xi, in October 2019, during a visit to India was quoted as saying the "dragon and elephant dance is the only correct choice for China and India", which seems to indicate that China wants India to act in tandem with it and not unilaterally in order to prevent issues. The reason for China's indignation is because Laddakh abuts China's Aksai Chin where the Line of Actual Control between India and China runs. This is not only the site

of the 1962 Sino-Indian war but also where border clashes took place between Indian and Chinese forces in 2020 and more recently in 2022. However, China is taking ever increasingly aggressive postures in defence of its territorial claims, especially in the South China Sea. In April 2023, the Chinese government renamed 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh in Chinese and Tibetan characters, referring to the region as 'Zangnan, the southern part of Tibet' and part of Chinese territory. In this context, it seems apparent that India's unilateral actions of 5 August 2019 have opened a new front with China and its evolving state practice on exerting its territorial claims.

As both sides are now competing to build infrastructure along the disputed Line of Actual Control, there are likely to be more clashes along this area especially given India's aim is to enhance Laddakh's connectivity and construction of a new road to a high-altitude base has already started. India is investing heavily in defence infrastructure in Laddakh in a move which signals its desire to meet China toe to toe along the disputed border. The Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, inaugurated 75 infrastructure projects in Laddakh in October 2022 - these include bridges, roads, helipads, landing ground for aircraft, and storage for up to 22,000 troops and 450 heavy vehicles and tanks. All of this signals why India chose to bifurcate the territory in the first place - at the heart of this decision is its desire to ensure defence preparedness at high altitudes while distancing the area from the Jammu and Kashmir 'dispute'. The alibi of allowing the people of Laddakh 'to realize their aspirations' is a mere fig leaf, as is shown by the fact that the population, both Buddhist and Shia, began protests in February 2023 disillusioned with what was promised to them after the bifurcation and what was delivered. India's real reasons should be a cause for concern for both China and Pakistan but could also be an opportunity for Pakistan and China to align their state practice in a way which preserves their joint interests while preserving the disputed nature of the territory.

Not only is the division of the state of Jammu and Kashmir a violation of international law, it is also an erosion of India's democracy, and it affects two of the largest countries in the region. In violating their own constitution to further oppress and change the demographics of the

valley, India can no longer claim to be the world's largest democracy. This ride ended in August 2019 and India has most definitely gotten off the tram.

About Insight and Author

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