



PAK AFFAIRS (ORGANIZATION)

BY: DR. AZHAR IMRAN

NOA LAHORE CAMPUS



@noacss.lahore



@noacsslahoreofficial



03321125112



www.noacss.pk



Follow Us →

NOA DIGITAL ACCOUNTS



Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

Visit our website www.noacss.pk

Organization of the Islamic Cooperation

Islamic organization

Also known as: Munazamat al-Ta'awun al-Islami, OIC

Written and fact-checked by

Arabic:

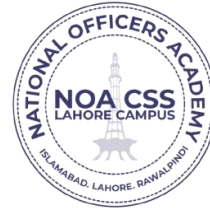
Munazamat al-Ta'awun al-Islami

Areas Of Involvement:

[economic growth](#)

[social change](#)

[culture](#)



Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), an [Islamic](#) organization established in [Jeddah](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), in May 1971, following [summits](#) by Muslim heads of state and government in 1969 and by Muslim foreign ministers in 1970.

The membership includes [Afghanistan](#), [Algeria](#), [Bahrain](#), [Bangladesh](#), [Benin](#), [Brunei](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Cameroon](#), [Chad](#), [Comoros](#), [Djibouti](#), [Egypt](#), [Gabon](#), The [Gambia](#), [Guinea](#), [Guinea-Bissau](#), [Indonesia](#), [Iran](#), [Iraq](#), [Jordan](#), [Kuwait](#), [Lebanon](#), [Libya](#), [Malaysia](#), [Maldives](#), [Mali](#), [Mauritania](#), [Morocco](#), [Niger](#), [Oman](#), [Pakistan](#), the [Palestinian Authority](#) (PA), [Qatar](#), Saudi [Arabia](#), [Senegal](#), [Sierra Leone](#), [Somalia](#), [Sudan](#), [Syria](#) (suspended), [Tunisia](#), [Turkey](#), [Uganda](#), [United Arab Emirates](#), and [Yemen](#).

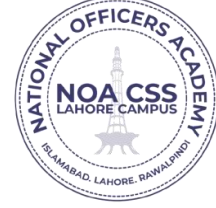
The conference aims at promoting Islamic solidarity by coordinating social, economic, scientific, and cultural activities. Under the banner of strengthening the struggle of Muslims, the conference pledges to eliminate [racial segregation](#) and [discrimination](#), especially in regard to the Palestinians. Projects include the International Islamic News Agency, the [Islamic Development Bank](#), the Islamic Solidarity Fund, and the World Centre for Islamic Education. Egypt was suspended in 1979 after it signed the agreement known as the [Camp David Accords](#) with Israel; in 1984 it accepted an offer to rejoin the organization. Syria was suspended in 2012 as its crackdown on [Arab Spring](#) protesters evolved into [civil war](#).



OIC: Past, Present and Future

By

Tayyab Siddiqui [\[1\]](#)



Abstract

It is frustrating that 57 Muslim countries, in possession of 70 percent of the world energy resources and 40 percent of the available raw material, should record only 5 percent of the world GDP. The failure of the Muslim world to embrace modern technology and spread education is obvious with only 500 PhDs being produced annually as compared to 3,000 in India and 5,000 in the UK. Although most Muslim countries gained independence from their colonial masters only after World War II, an organization like the Organization of Islamic Conference, created in 1969, has the potential of providing them the right leadership in their collective perception, only if it is restructured in accordance with the present challenges. – Editor)

Introduction

The decline of Muslim power and prestige after World War II accompanied by the agony caused by the creation of the state of Israel on Palestinian lands inspired Muslim intellectuals and scholars to appeal for the creation of an institution to identify the malaise afflicting the Islamic world and to seek strength through unity and solidarity among Muslim ranks.

Earlier, visionaries like Iqbal, Jamaludin Afghani and religious scholars such as Syed Qutub and Hasan Al-Banna had fired the Muslim imagination with precepts and schemes supported by Quranic injunctions as a panacea to the problems besetting the *ummah* (Muslim community). However, ethnic differences, varied historical experiences, political polarization and, above all, differing idealistic impulses rendered them mere pious dreams.





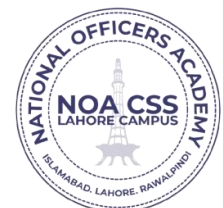
Historically, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) symbolizes the first tangible evidence of the yearning for Islamic unity. It came into existence in response to the arson by Zionists in August 1969 of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem – the first *qibla* (direction of prayer) of the Muslims and their third holiest shrine. Twenty-five Muslim states participated in a summit convened by King Hasan of Morocco in 1969. The outcome of the Rabat Summit was the establishment of the OIC. Today, the organization has 57 members.

The initial mandate of the OIC was to liberate Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa from Zionist occupation. It's Charter, adopted on 27 February 1970 stressed Islamic solidarity, strengthening of cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural and scientific fields and support for all Muslim peoples to safeguard their dignity, independence and national rights.

To achieve these objectives and coordinate its actions, a secretariat was set up in Jeddah and a number of committees were established to promote and accelerate cooperation in diverse fields – political, economic, social and scientific. It was further decided that OIC heads of states/governments would meet every three years to consider plans and proposals for strengthening ties among member states and to coordinate their response to contemporary developments, while preserving their individual political and cultural identities.

The OIC Charter

The OIC Charter, approved in March 1972, included a commitment to act through all means, both political and military, for the liberation of the Holy City of Al-Quds from Zionist occupation. It also reiterated the Islamic states' resolve to act in unison for the establishment of world peace, and reaffirmed their commitment to the United Nation's charter and to fundamental human rights. The OIC Charter was registered at the United Nations on 1 February 1974.



Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

Visit our website www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore

The main objectives of the Charter were to:[\[1\]](#)

1. Strengthen :
 1. Islamic solidarity among Member States.
 2. Cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural and scientific fields.
 3. The struggle of all Muslim people to safeguard their dignity, independence and national rights.
2. Coordinate action to:
 1. Safeguard Islamic Holy Places.
 2. Support the struggle of the Palestinian people and assist them in recovering their rights and liberating their occupied territory.
3. Work to:
 1. Eliminate racial discrimination and all forms of colonialism.
 2. Create a favourable atmosphere for the promotion of cooperation and understanding between Member States and other countries.

The Charter also enumerates the principles governing OIC activities, namely:

- Full equality among Member States.
- Support for the right to self determination and non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States.
- Support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each State.
- The settlement of any dispute that might arise among Member States by peaceful means such as negotiations, mediation, conciliation and arbitration.
- A pledge to refrain, in relations among Member States, from resorting to force or threatening to resort to the use of force against the unity and territorial integrity or the political independence of any one of them.[\[2\]](#)

Main Bodies and Committees

The OIC is composed of two main bodies:

- The Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Government, which is the supreme authority of the Organization which meets once every three years to lay down the Organization's policy; and



- The Conference of Foreign Ministers, which meets once a year to examine progress on the implementation of its decisions taken within the framework of the policy defined by the Islamic Summit.

The OIC set up a number of committees to ensure the coordination of its activities and the attainment of optimal results in all fields of political, economic, social, scientific and intellectual cooperation. The main committees include the Al Quds, the Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs, Committee for Economic and Trade Cooperation and Scientific and Technological Cooperation.[3] Fifteen of the committees are concerned with various political issues, such as Palestine, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc. The others relate to cultural, scientific, economic, legal, financial, technical, educational, informational, social and human affairs institutions. Their headquarters have been distributed among the various Islamic capitals.[4]



Evaluation

It has been stated above that the creation of the OIC at the Rabat Summit was primarily in response to the situation created by the sacrilege of Al Quds. Hence, the resolution adopted on 25 September 1969 while reaffirming the fraternal and spiritual bonds existing between their peoples, declared “*full support to the Palestinian people for the restitution of their rights and in their struggle for national liberation.*” It asked the international community to “*secure the speedy withdrawal of Israeli military forces from all the territories occupied as a result of the war of June 1967.*”

Organizational issues occupied the next few years. The OIC’s Secretariat was set up in March 1970 and two years later, its Charter was approved (in March 1972). Subsequent developments in the Middle East, particularly the Ramadan War of October 1973, forced the OIC to embrace all issues relating to the *ummah* and to broaden its canvas of activities. The October 1973 war had not only restored the pride of Arabs but oil diplomacy had forced the European nations to take a second look at their pro-Israel policies. It was against this background that the second summit was held in Lahore in February 1974.

The Lahore Summit was a landmark in the political struggle of Muslims to secure an influential role in international affairs. The leadership provided by Zulfikar Ali



Bhutto and the presence of Arab leaders like King Faisal, Sadat, Qaddafi, Boumedienne, and Arafat, among 37 heads of states/governments participating in the Summit, conferred on it a unique importance. The Summit decided to address the following issues:

1. eradication of poverty, disease and ignorance from Islamic countries;
2. regulation of the terms of trade between developed countries and developing Muslim countries especially the supply of raw materials and import of manufactured goods and know-how;
3. ensuring the sovereignty and full control of developing countries over their natural resources; and
4. mutual economic cooperation and solidarity among Muslim countries.

It was also decided to establish a committee of eight countries, including Pakistan, to devise ways and means for attainment of these objectives.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was recognized as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinians and it was declared that *“the Arab cause is the cause of all countries which oppose aggression and will not tolerate that the use of force be rewarded by territory or by other gains.”*

The OIC has, till now, held 10 summits interspersed at regular three-year intervals and numerous meetings at the ministerial and expert levels to oversee summit decisions. Unfortunately, these summits have been characterized more by empty rhetoric rather than concrete action. Through the years, the configuration of political and economic forces in international affairs has rendered the Muslim states more vulnerable and their leaders increasingly dependent on the U.S. for their survival. This has emasculated the OIC and weighed heavily on its decisions. Its leaders find themselves in a quandary. They are unable or unwilling to exert any meaningful pressure on the US-led west, regarded as allies of Israel, to mitigate the hardships of the Muslim people living in the occupied territories.

The mid-70s were the unprecedented but short-lived years of Arab ascendancy and prestige. The diplomatic influence and political clout of the Arab countries was in evidence with dramatic triumphs in the U.N. Arabic was accepted as one of the official UN languages. The General Assembly recognized the Palestinian people as *“the principal party to the question of Palestine.”* Arafat was invited to address the



General Assembly on 13 November 1974 and the PLO was given observer status at the U.N. In the same year, the UNGA established a Committee on “*the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.*” Thus, the Palestinian issue was placed in focus, drawing increasing international attention and support.

The Arab achievements in the U.N. were crowned with the adoption of UNGA Resolution 3379 of 10 November 1975 by which the General Assembly “*determined that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.*” The Resolution was adopted with 72 in favour, 35 against and 32 abstentions. With Zionism as its ideology, the reaction in Israel was severe and it campaigned hard to have the resolution annulled. The opportunity came in 1991. Israel, with the encouragement of the U.S. and European states, declared its intention to get 3379 revoked. The OIC Summit held in Senegal in August 1991 took note of these efforts and passed a unanimous resolution to defeat Israeli efforts in the U.N. by voting for the continuation of 3379.

The Israeli resolution, when moved in the UNGA after a couple of weeks, was carried and the majority of OIC member states either abstained or voted for the resolution. This was illustrative of the hypocrisy of Muslim potentates of playing to the domestic gallery while keeping the U.S. in good humour.

Since the establishment of the OIC, the Islamic world has suffered five major catastrophes, which have reduced it to almost a non-factor in international politics. The break up of Pakistan through armed intervention by India in 1971, the invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1982 that led to yet another Palestinian diaspora, the Iran-Iraq war, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the US occupation of Iraq have dealt a crippling blow to the unity, dignity and image of the Muslim world.

The OIC failed to respond meaningfully to any of these crises or demonstrate unity other than issuing high-sounding declarations at the end of each summit. In some cases, the OIC even remained a silent spectator.

This attitude not only disappointed Muslims around the world, but also encouraged the Organization’s adversaries to pursue their designs against Muslim countries with impunity. The history of the Palestine problem, ostensibly the *raison d’être* of the OIC, is a living testimony to the impotence and paralysis of the Organisation.

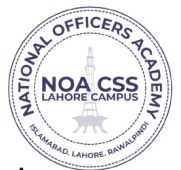


Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



The Palestine issue is now no longer seen as the vacation of the occupied territories by Israel and restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, but has been re-designated as a struggle between terrorists (Palestinians) and civilians (Israelis). The creeping annexation has eroded all possibilities of any settlement as Israeli policies have completely marginalised the Palestinians.

The OIC also espoused the Kashmir and Afghanistan issues, but failed to play any important or significant role in their resolution. The gathering of potentates at OIC summits and their empty calls for unity of action initially stirred Muslim hearts, but soon it became obvious that these speeches, laced with rhetoric and insincere sentiments, were meaningless and of no use for confronting the challenges faced by the Islamic *ummah*.

On the Kashmir issue, the OIC has failed to muster the courage to challenge New Delhi's policies of repression and widespread violation of human rights in Indian-held Kashmir. The inaction and indifference on Israeli massacres in Sabra and Shattila (Beirut 1982), in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992) and the recent US military intervention and brutalities in Iraq and Afghanistan have, many believe, rendered the OIC totally irrelevant to the needs and requirements of *ummah*. The resolutions adopted by the OIC thus betray a lack of seriousness and sincerity and hence carry no meaning or significance, thereby accentuating the frustration of the *ummah*.

The underlying causes of the inability of the OIC to be reckoned with as an institution of political significance in global affairs, besides the lack of political will of Muslim leaders, have originated from a lack of democratic set-up in those states, in addition to structural weaknesses, such as an absence of an institutional framework, poverty and illiteracy, and failure to recognize the absolute importance of science and technology for social emancipation and economic development.



10th Summit – Kuala Lumpur

The last OIC summit held in Putrajaya, Malaysia in 2003 was a milestone in the history of the OIC. Under the dynamic leadership of then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, the leaders decided to make a realistic appraisal of the international situation and the role that the OIC could play to preserve and protect the interests



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

of member-states against a sustained negative media campaign and political pressures circumscribing their economic and political rights. It was decided to dispassionately analyse the causes of decline and decay of Muslim societies and the political marginalization of the member-states, and evolve a comprehensive strategy to pull them out of this morass.

President Musharraf, who led the Pakistan delegation to the 10th summit in Malaysia, gave a clarion call to all Muslims in support of Mahathir's appeal. In a stirring message, President Musharraf outlined the existing realities. He referred to turbulent and troubled international developments. "The world is in turmoil. Reliance on military action and force define solutions to world disputes. Foreign occupation persists. Suppression of peoples has intensified. Power asymmetries are widening. Terrorism is taking its toll. Economic recession threatens the world fabric. Poverty is growing. Inequality is increasing."

In the context of this world view, President Musharraf warned that the Muslim world was in the vortex of this emerging global crisis. Most of those under foreign occupation were Muslim peoples. He cited the tragedies of Palestine and Kashmir. "Islamic nations are perceived as the sponsors of terrorism and proliferators of WMDs. Muslims are subjected to discrimination and exclusion. The insidious thesis of an inevitable clash of civilizations between Islam and the West is being openly propounded."⁵

Making this bold and frank analysis of ground realities and the political climate, he urged some soul-searching and stock-taking by the Muslim countries since he believed that the crisis confronting the Islamic world was both external and internal. "It is rooted in our own weaknesses and vulnerabilities. It flows from our economic, social and human underdevelopment, from dependencies and vulnerabilities, from the divisions and differences within, and amongst our societies and nests."

Musharraf's diagnosis of Islamic inertia and weaknesses touched the hearts of all participants. His message that "we are at a defining moment in history. We can either seize the moment and define history, or we can let the moment define our destiny. We must turn challenge into opportunity," created a strong resonance in the Muslim capitals.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



The 10th Summit accordingly asked the Chairman to constitute an OIC Commission of Eminent Persons (CEP) in order to finalize recommendations on the following three areas: i) to prepare a strategy and plan of action enabling the Islamic umma to meet the challenges of the 21st century; (ii) to prepare a comprehensive plan for promotion universally and in particular, within Islamic societies, policies and programmes for promoting enlightened moderation; (iii) to prepare recommendations for reform and restructuring of the OIC system.

The CEP held three sessions and prepared detailed recommendations which were approved by the ICFM meeting in Sa'na (Yemen) in May 2005, and submitted to the Makkah Summit.

The recommendations consisted of three parts: (i) challenges of the 21st century (ii) policies and programmes for promoting enlightened moderation, and (iii) OIC reform and restructuring. The recommendations to meet the political challenge of the 21st century relate to good governance, transparency and accountability, strengthening democracy, civil society, political participation and respect for human rights.⁶

Challenges of the 21st Century

Political Recommendations of the CEP

Challenges

1. Continued marginalization of the Ummah in influencing and setting the international agenda;
2. Widening gap between the ruler and the ruled in Muslim societies that have ramifications on politics, economy and culture of the Ummah;
3. Inability of the Muslim countries to practice good governance and transparency.

Recommendations

1. Emulate and implement universal good practices including combating corruption, and promoting accountability and transparency in the public and private sector;



2. Study good practices among OIC members on governance including ways of promoting capacity building among less developed OIC countries;
3. Strengthen democracy, civil society, political participation and respect for human rights;
4. Increase activity of member states in the UN and other organizations;
5. Support candidates of member countries to positions in international organizations;
6. Increase activity in the UN reform process including endeavors to seek adequate representation in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC);
7. More proactive coordination to promote the just causes of the occupied Muslim peoples;
8. Improve the situation of Muslim communities/minorities outside OIC membership;
9. Draw up a plan for OIC unity to gradually integrate in the future like other regional entities which could enable Ummah to meet the challenges and demands of globalization in the 21st century.

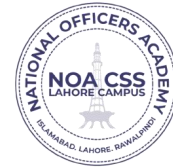
SECURITY

Challenges

1. Conflict within and among Muslim nations.
2. Foreign occupation of Muslim lands.
3. Tensions arising from Muslim minority status in a number of countries.
4. Extremist tendencies due to feelings of injustice, hopelessness and desperation.

Recommendations

1. Promote Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and develop a system of collective security that all Muslim countries could bind themselves together internationally to avoid border disputes and conflict;
2. Reactivate the decision to establish an Islamic Court of Justice.
3. Check the tendency of a fringe within the Ummah to resort to terrorism and violence through various means, including:
 1. Persuading the big powers to address the root causes of terrorism and intensifying coordination within OIC for combating terrorism; and



1.

1. Encouraging interpretations of Islam which emphasize peace and non violence and popularizing principles or programmes which promote a balanced, contemporary comprehensive and inclusive Islamic civilization.

ECONOMIC

Challenges



1. Failure to promote and implement sustainable development policies in the OIC world;
2. Failure to eradicate poverty, corruption, disease, and the lack of basic rights and the provision of basic needs;
3. Failure to develop strong economic cooperation despite vast natural and human resources;
1. Globalization and the need to deal with its negative effects.

Recommendations

1. Address poverty eradication through measures such as capacity building, micro credit schemes, small and medium enterprises and land reform among other programmes;
2. Promote economic cooperation and coordination among member countries to enable them to plan and sustainably manage their environment and natural resources efficiently, leading eventually to greater economic integration;
3. Sign and ratify all existing intra-OIG trade and economic agreements;
4. Encourage economic regional integration and development through free trade agreements, customs unions, common markets and other activities aimed at enhancing intra OIG trade and development;
5. Promote endeavors for institutionalized cooperation between OIG and UN Islamic Development Bank, World Bank, World Trade Organization, G-8;
6. Secretary General should be a member of the board of governors of the IDB.



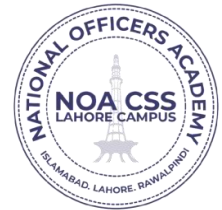
EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Challenges

1. Low level of contribution towards science and technology, especially in the area of research and development;
2. Lack of quality education and other flaws in the educational system;
3. Failure to generate creative and innovative ideas.

Recommendations

1. Increase budgetary allocation substantially, to provide quality education and enhance research and development;
2. Encourage private sector to contribute to research and development;
3. Establish a consortium for higher education to promote scientific research and provide academic opportunities, inter alia, for those Muslim students who cannot pursue higher education in western institutions due to difficulties arising after the events of 9/11;
4. Enhance exchanges of technologies among OIC countries;
5. Strengthen COMSTECH institutionally and financially;
6. Encourage creative, innovative and critical thinking within the education system;
7. OIC to develop standard high school curriculum in order to remove all prejudices about each other and the Secretary General to approach the western countries to remove the bias against Islam and Muslims from their curricula;
8. Special initiatives for women education and female literacy;
9. Modernization of curricula of religious schools.



MEDIA

Challenges

Misrepresentation and negative stereotyping of Islam and the Muslim Ummah.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen understanding and interpretation of the Muslim faith and religion to improve its image and understanding by others;
2. Consider an appropriate media strategy including the engagement of professional entities to improve the image of Islam and Muslims in the west and other parts of non Muslim world;
3. Establish a working relationship and better coordination between the Information Department of the OIC and national media of Member States.

OIC REFORM AND RESTRUCTURE

Challenges

1. Structural flaws and lack of political will within the OIC
2. Inability of the OIC as an Islamic organization to prove its relevance in today's world and the need to rejuvenate it;
3. Inability of the OIC to implement the resolutions agreed upon;
4. Inability to implement agreed programmes due to lack of funding.



Recommendations

OIC Charter

1. OIC must be restructured, reformed and revitalized including necessary changes in OIC charter and its name;
2. Maintenance of criteria for membership to preserve and promote its Islamic character;



Office of the Secretary General

1. OIC Secretary General's role should both be strengthened and fully supported. He should be given the full authority both to employ and terminate the services of OIG personnel including restructuring existing departments.
2. OIC General Secretariat should recruit officials on merit, nominated by those Member States, which make regular contributions and should be offered attractive financial incentives;
3. The Secretary General could consider appointing his Special Representatives both for fact finding as well as resolution of conflicts/disputes;
4. OIC's relations with important international / regional organizations should be strengthened and fully utilized to actively voice all Muslim causes

New Departments

1. The OIC should renew its emphasis on issues such as conflict resolution; inter-faith dialogue; human rights; democracy; good governance and combating Islamophobia, etc.
2. The OIC General Secretariat should enhance the capacity of the General Secretariat through restructuring to deal effectively with subjects such as, Islamic thought; enlightened moderation, higher education with a focus on science and technology, health care and women's development;
3. Therefore, the OIC General Secretariat would establish departments of Conflict Resolution, Enlightened Moderation, Women Development, NGOs and Muslim Minorities and a Strategic Planning Unit, and Consortium of Higher Education;
4. An OIC think tank to promote Islamic thought to respond effectively to ideological and intellectual challenges of the 21 Century and to interact more proactively with universities and intellectuals in the West. Members of the think tank should also include personalities who have expert knowledge of the problems of Muslim communities in their particular regions and countries.

Restructuring of Existing Departments

1. Restructuring of Dawa department and establish Dawa and Islamophobia department;



2. IINA should be activated for projection of OIC position;
3. A strong Information Department at the OIC Secretariat should be established to assist the OIC Secretary General for projection of OIC and updating of the OIC website;
4. Strengthening the Department of Palestine and Jerusalem in the light of new OIC vision.

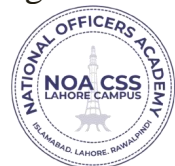
Implementation of Resolutions

1. Member States must demonstrate strong political commitment and provide the requisite financial backing to implement Summit and Ministerial resolutions, within specified time frame.
2. An executive body, comprising Summit and Ministerial Troikas, the OIC host country and the Secretary General, should be expeditiously established to implement Summit and Ministerial resolutions. The concerned Member States should be invited to participate in the deliberations of these meetings.
3. A Council of Permanent Representatives of OIC member states in Jeddah should be established for an effective coordination, implementation and follow – up.

On security issues, the commission has recommended the establishment of an Islamic court of justice, a system of collective security and intensifying coordination among OIC states for combating terrorism. On the economic front, the recommendations focus on addressing poverty alleviation, promoting economic cooperation, encouraging economic regional integration and development through free trade agreements, customs unions, common markets and institutionalized cooperation between the OIC and the UN, the Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank, the WTO and G-8.

The challenges of science and technology are to be met by increasing budgetary allocation for education, the establishment of a consortium for higher education to promote scientific research and exchanges of technologies among OIC members.

The recommendations in respect of policies and programmes constitute a roadmap for the revitalization of the OIC, and cover a very wide range of human activity, but the main emphasis is on the promotion of a comprehensive, civilizational and contemporary approach in the development of Muslim societies, enabling Muslims to shape their destiny.⁷



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

The structural weakness of the OIC received a fair number of recommendations, with emphasis on reform and the empowerment of the secretariat. The need for conflict-resolution, interfaith dialogue and capacity building of the secretariat through setting up a think-tank for preparing Muslims to meet ideological and intellectual changes also received priority. These recommendations became the priority agenda in the Makkah Summit, which adopted most of them in the form of a 10-year plan for the political, economic and cultural revival of Muslim societies.

Makkah Summit



These recommendations of the CEP were submitted to an extraordinary summit held in Makkah on December 9, 2005. The summit was convened at the initiative of King Abdullah to address the global changes and challenges confronting Muslim countries and examine the relevance and practicality of the recommendations by the CEP.⁸

The last summit held in Putrajaya in 2003 had deliberated on the role of the Muslim world in international affairs which all agreed was only marginal. Muslims across the world were in a state of disunity and discord, believing that their religion was the target of Western hostility and had become identified with fanaticism, even terrorism.

These feelings were shared by all Muslim leaders, expressed most eloquently by King Abdullah. “It bleeds the heart of a believer to see how this glorious civilization has fallen from the heights of glory to the ravine of frailty, and how its targets were hijacked by devilish and criminal gangs that spread havoc on earth.”

The summit was seen as a turning point in the OIC’s history, as it also addressed the issues of restructuring, reform and redefinition of the OIC mission, charter and objectives.⁹

The mood and expectations of Muslim leaders gathered in Makkah were best articulated by Pakistan. President Musharraf urged the summit participants to work out a strategy for Islamic revival and renaissance, adopt a conciliatory course in the interest of progress and prosperity of Muslims and pursue policies to face





formidable challenges on all fronts, in particular share the expanding frontiers of knowledge, education, science and technology.

He underscored the need for establishing a network of centres of excellence in science and technology in the Muslim world. He sounded a note of caution: “The challenge is indeed enormous, but ‘failure is not an option.’”

In the backdrop of these assessments and expectations, the result and outcome of the Makkah summit has failed to meet the high hopes vested in it. Indeed in many respects, it has generated disappointment, owing to its failure to take a balanced view of the world situation. While too much emphasis was laid on fighting extremism and terrorism, the summit failed to comment on the presence of US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Nor did it express support and solidarity to Iran and Syria, both under severe pressure and threats of invasion by the US. The absence of major Muslim leaders – President Bashan Asad of Syria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria and Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, for instance – robbed the summit of its luster.

The Makkah declaration reviewed the status of the member states in the contemporary world, acknowledging the “dire need of a fresh vision to turn the tide,” and called for “collective will” and “joint Islamic action.” The “10-year-programme of action” to face the challenges of the Muslim people in the 21st century proposed a wide range of reforms, initiatives and proposals to address the multifarious problems confronting the Ummah.

The Summit proposed the establishment of a free trade zone for the member-states and welcomed the formation of an Islamic international institution to finance commerce and called for increasing the capital of the Islamic Bank. The Summit urged that the member-states should allocate resources to preserve the Al Aqsa mosque, support Palestinian institutions and establish the Al Aqsa University in Al Quds.

The meeting renewed its approval of the Sudanese peace agreement and the resolution issued by the 10th OIC conference to establish a fund for reconstruction



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



activities in Sudan. It proposed establishing an independent “Islamic human rights institution” to monitor the rights situation in OIC member states.

The summit further stressed the importance of fighting poverty, unemployment and disease by forming a specialized fund through the Islamic Bank. It decided to take steps towards developing science and technology and to narrow the gap between the Muslim nations and developed countries.

The Makkah summit was heralded as a defining moment for collective efforts and resolve, but judging by its decisions, such a verdict would be highly exaggerated. The basic requirements to make Organization of Islamic Conference a living and dynamic instrument of restructuring and a new charter reflecting current realities have been postponed until the next summit to be held in Senegal.



Pakistan’s Role in the OIC

Pakistan, with its legacy rooted in the Islamic faith and its consistent support of Muslim causes, as well as in response to the overwhelming public support for the cause of liberation of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, became a founding member of the OIC in 1969.

Relations with the Islamic world are the corner stone of the foreign policy of Pakistan. As a founding member of the OIC, Pakistan has an abiding commitment to the purposes, principles and objectives of its Charter. Pakistan has played an important role in strengthening cooperation among Muslim states by its active participation in the programmes and activities of the OIC. The efforts by Pakistan have received due acknowledgment in the OIC signified by its membership of all key Standing Committees, subsidiary organs and specialized agencies of the OIC. Pakistan is also a key member of the OIC Contact Groups/Ad-hoc Committees on critical issues of the Islamic world – Palestine, Afghanistan, Jammu & Kashmir, and Somalia.¹⁰

Pakistan is the Chairman of the OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) which has its Headquarters in Islamabad. Pakistan also hosts the Secretariat of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), which is located in Karachi.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22



Mobile
0332 112 5112



More information call us
(051) 111 662 277



Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



Pakistan has been the forefront of efforts for comprehensive and drastic changes in the mandate of the OIC and has made a number of pragmatic proposals and strategies to overcome the deficiencies and inherent weaknesses of the organization. The strategy based on the analyses of prevailing world situation ran along these lines.

Pakistan has consistently supported the idea that the OIC first play an effective role in ensuring welfare of the Islamic Ummah. In the same spirit, the President of Pakistan proposed the solution at the 10th Islamic Summit on Islam and the Muslim World in the 21st Century – the Path of Enlightened Moderation.

Pakistan has been consulting the OIC Secretary General and other brotherly Muslim states to workout some strategy to realize the objectives of Pakistan's Resolution on Enlightened Moderation. Pakistan also held a National Seminar on the OIC to solicit the opinions of Islamic scholars, prominent citizens, notable academicians and well-respected parliamentarians.

The main aim was to discuss and create an understanding of the whole issue in order to promote a consensus around the themes of Enlightened Moderation, reforms of the OIC, and the challenges facing the Islamic Ummah in the 21st Century, so that responses can be generated to surmount contemporary and pressing challenges and to take advantage of the existing and potential opportunities.

After the tragic events of 9/11, the world has become dangerous and volatile. The situation has been further exacerbated by the widening gulf between Islam and the West, giving rise to apprehensions about a clash of civilizations.

There are misperceptions in the West about Islam, which is being seen as a faith propagating terrorism and extremism, bent upon striking at Western values. On the other hand, many Muslims believe that the West is demonizing their religion. They distrust the West because of its policies towards Muslims smarting under foreign occupation and alien domination.

The Ummah is in a state of siege, gripped by ignorance and despondency, hopelessness and apathy, disarray and discord. The Islamic countries need to focus



Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

Visit our website www.noacss.pk



on two-fold responsibilities, the first to emancipate the downtrodden people from abject poverty and social underdevelopment, and the second to make the world a better place for future generations.

The diversity of the member states worked both as the OIC's strength and weakness in terms of realization of its objectives. No serious attempt has been made to create regional economic hubs and develop them through a viable trade growth strategy under mechanism such as Custom Union or Trade Free Zone. Ideally, the 57 OIC countries could have been operationally divided into five or six regional blocs, structured and designed on the basis of geography and economic considerations, eventually to be integrated into one single Islamic block.



Contemporary World Scene

The challenges that face the Ummah were articulated in the analysis and statements of Pakistani leadership at the OIC forum: "A far reaching transformation is currently underway in international relations. New threats including nuclear proliferation, terrorism and extremism as well as the increased use of unilateralism have compounded the earlier threats arising from poverty, underdevelopment, territorial disputes, decolonization and denial of justice. The Muslim Ummah is caught in the vortex of this upheaval. A new relationship between Muslims and the West built on mutual respect, tolerance and understanding needs to be evolved to effectively deal with these new and old threats.

The virtual marginalization of Islamic countries at the global level constitutes the foremost challenge. Even those Islamic sates which had been endowed with vast natural resources have been unable to transform these assets to gain corresponding political weight and stature. On the contrary, they are under threat of economic isolation and social ferment.

In today's globalized world, economic strength determines the status and portion of a bloc or a country in the comity of nations. Without economic strength, the Ummah would remain vulnerable to external manipulation.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22



Mobile
0332 112 5112



More information call us
(051) 111 662 277



Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

The OIC's share in global trade is barely 6-7% and their collective GDP amounts to a meager 5% of the world GDP. Similarly, the human development indicator of the OIC countries are among the lowest in the world. The inadequate weightage of the Muslims at the international level despite the fact that they represent 1/5th of the world's population, possess 70% of the world's energy resources, and 40% of the global availability of raw material, is shameful.

President Musharraf made a fervent appeal to the Islamic World to seize the moment and realize the promise of a glorious destiny. The challenges facing Muslims today look formidable but can and should be dealt with collectively and comprehensively. Our perpetual dependence on other nations is the reason for our endemic under development.

We should prioritize economic growth targets and pursue poverty eradication through mutual financial and investment support. The Member States would need to follow a road map that envisages benchmarks and a time line in consonance with the MDGs. In recognition of the demands of contemporary reality a necessary shift in our focus from geo-strategic to geo-economic perspectives is required.

The OIC countries must begin focused efforts to ensure poverty eradication, human development, higher education, scientific and technological development and sustained economic growth without which the dream of peace and prosperity within our societies will remain elusive. This can be done because we have the human and material resources.¹¹

We must realize that we have to depend on ourselves to changes our destiny. We must create interdependence, learning from each other's best practices and using the strength of one to overcome the weakness of the other. Pakistan also proposed a number of suggestions to revitalize the OIC both in its philosophy and at the operational level, which are summarized below:

Proposals for Restructuring

General:

- The OIC must be enabled to respond to multifarious and multifaceted challenges, from globalization to Western countries power politics. Necessary institutions such as conflict prevention between members should be created.





National Officers
ACADEMY
The Largest CSS Preparatory Institute in Pakistan

NOA Lahore Campus

- The OIC must assess the security threats and developments that could have a bearing on their economic well being.
- Pan Islamic cooperation must commence with low=key areas, such as education, technology and defense production where member states are not required to make “big sacrifices.” Regional economic and cultural networking could provide foundation for intra-regional cooperation and realize the ambitious goals such as Islamic Common Market or common currency. Relevant models such as EU could be studied for fine tuning OIC strategies.
- The failure of the key institutions such as COMSTECH (Science and Technology) and COMSEC (Commerce) and COMIAC (Information) need to be analyzed. Instead of creating new structures, the existing ones should be invigorated and made fully functional to achieve the expected objectives.
- There are no binding obligations on members regarding follow-up and implementation of decisions. Therefore, the OIC must evolve mechanisms to follow up the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Islamic Summit and Ministerial meetings.
- People to people contact and exchange of scholars, media persons and cultural troupes could strengthen the sentiments of Islamic solidarity and unity.
- The OIC countries must establish Centers of Excellence in the fields of technology, education and economy which could be affiliated with international institutions of repute for long term exchange and cooperation. Coordination among think tanks and scholars across the OIC is imperative the handle the ideological and political problems of the OIC.
- The Islamic world must invest in the development of frontier technologies if it has to compete in the modern era of knowledge-based economy. The OIC should find a way to utilize the expertise and services of the Muslim expatriate community in North America and Europe.

Structural reforms:

- The existing charter provides a solid foundation to address issues of interest and concerns to Muslims in areas of security, politics, economic, science and technology, commerece. There is no need to reinvent the wheel by introducing major changes in the charter. The mechanism envisaged in the charter simply needs to be activated through better funding, committed personnel and strong political support from the member states.

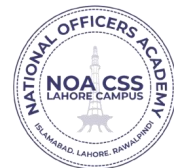


Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk





National Officers
ACADEMY[®]
The Largest CSS Preparatory Institute in Pakistan

NOA Lahore Campus

- In view of new challenges on account of globalization, misperception of the Islamic world, the existing OIC institutions should be strengthened and new departments with specific deliberable and time bound action plans be created in areas such as international terrorism, dispute settlement, education, women empowerment, human rights. The collaboration of professionals, civil society and think tanks could prove crucial for buttressing the existing “bureaucratic” structure.
- A Crisis Management Committee which can deal with emergencies arising when the Summit Conference or ICFM is not meeting.
- Reforms in the OIC cannot be modeled on the pattern of European Economic Community (EU) because the Islamic world is not one homogenous bloc. Due attention should, therefore, be given to regional sub-blocs, working under the umbrella of the OIC.
- Fraternal ties between the existing think tanks and institutions involved with security and international trade issues should be established and strengthened through bilateral and multilateral efforts.

Moderation

- In dealing with the West, the OIC members must avoid confrontation as well as capitulation. Despite inhospitable environment, the OIC should pursue a vision the central theme of which should consist of peaceful co-existence, harmonious interfaith dialogue, condemnation of terrorist acts and emphasis on settlement of disputes by peaceful means. In this respect, the existing gap between Muslim street opinions and the Governments should be abridged to avoid further polarization of Islamic societies. The Islamic world should promote signing of social contracts between governments and civil societies to ease the confrontation.
- Dialogue with the West to remove misperception of Islam as a religion seeking war against other religions and civilizations should be conducted under the OIC. Workshops, media activities and sustained advertisement highlighting Islam as a moderate and progressive religion should be launched by the OIC Secretariat for which special funds should be provided.
- Lack of economic justice within the Islamic societies is another obstacle in the path of moderation. The way forward is in democratization and preservation of human rights and civil liberties within Islamic countries.
- Internal reform in Muslim countries are inevitable. The US intervention in internal affairs of Islamic countries will continue. Keeping these factors in

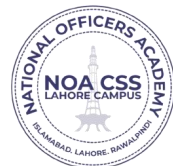


Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



mind, the Islamic countries should strive to benefit from their cooperation with knowledge based societies and thus help avoid marginalization of the Islamic world.

- Creation of an effective and genuine Pan Islamic Media or news agency was needed to safeguard the image of Islam and its followers and to project Islamic perspectives in unmistakable terms.

Observer status

- The inclusion of any non-Muslim state with sizeable Muslim minority should not be given an observer status within the OIC system as it will erode the Islamic character of the OIC. Also, it will have a negative impact for Pakistan by reducing its influence as a heavy weight within the OIC.

Conclusion

Despite its dismal performance so far, the fact remains that the OIC is a useful medium for projecting Muslim interests in the international fora. The weakness of the OIC is due to an internal lack of cohesion and unrepresentative leadership in most member states. Its challenges primarily are of democracy, of defense of Islam and development of societies, which are responsible for marginalization of Islamic countries in world affairs.



It is frustrating that despite the fact that Muslims represent one-fifth of the world's population, possess 70 per cent of the world energy resources and 40 per cent of the available raw material, its total GDP is only five per cent of the world GDP. The entire GDP of OIC member-states is a mere \$1,200 billion as against Japan's \$5,500 billion. The failure of the Muslim world to embrace modern technology and spread education is obvious with only 500 PhDs being produced annually as compared to 3,000 in India and 5,000 in the UK. Political marginalization has thus been further compounded by economic depression.

OIC's Charter and name need not be changed. An effective and powerful Secretary General of international stature could steer OIC's objectives and activities. Instead of indulging in total overhaul and restructuring, which in the long run could prove impractical, a modest beginning can be made by (i) setting up an institutional mechanism for conflict prevention and resolution with member states; (ii) creating a network of centers of excellence in science and technology; (iii) establishing a



permanent forum of Islamic thought to provide guidance and opinion; (iv) allocating adequate financial resources to implement these proposals; (v) allocating at least 0.5 percent of the GDP by the member states for implementing OIC objectives; and (vi) establishing a dedicated department in the OIC secretariat for promoting intra-OIC trade.

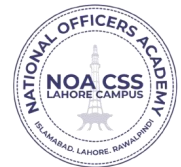
The OIC is an organization of Muslim countries. Non-Islamic states like India, Russia and the Philippines – who want to enter it for their own motives – should not be allowed to become observers or members of the OIC. This would not only affect Islamic solidarity but also weaken Pakistan’s influence in the OIC.

The OIC derives its legitimacy and strength not from the Charter but from the decisions of the heads of state/governments. OIC is primarily a political organization. Specialized bodies (like COMSTECH, COMCEC, IDB, ISBO) are already there and need activation rather than creating new structures on the pattern of IMB and the World Bank.

For the OIC to succeed, it should curb the tendency to set up new organizations or reach for unrealistic goals. For instance, the meeting of Islamic Conference Foreign Ministers (ICFM) held recently in Islamabad, inter alia, decided to set up a poverty alleviation fund of 10 billion dollars. Of 57 member states, how many are in a position to subscribe to this huge sum? Indeed, barring few, all member states qualify for assistance from this fund. Perhaps it would be more realistic if Pakistan’s proposal to set up a fund of 1 billion dollars for the promotion of science and technology is given positive consideration.

The conventional wisdom is that an organization is as strong as its members wish it to be. The gathering storms over Muslim societies should give a pause to Muslim leadership and they must respond to the changing world scenario with alacrity and imagination or else they will be consigned to oblivion and the OIC will remain at best, a footnote in contemporary political history.

⁵ Documents circulated at the 10th Summit, Putrajaya, October 2003



⁶ Islamabad Meeting of the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons, May 28-29, 2005, available in “Pakistan and the OIC” Report of the Pakistan Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

⁷ Speech of Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, at the Inaugural Session of the 2nd and Final Meeting of the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons, May 28, 2005.

⁸ Tayyab Siddiqui, “OIC at the Crossroads,” DAWN Newspaper, December 22, 2005.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Tayyab Siddiqui, “Restructuring OIC,” DAILY POST, May 15, 2007.

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamabad, Handbook, International Seminar on OIC Challenge and Response – Enlightened Moderation, 1-2 June, 2004.

Annexes

Members

Full Members

Afghanistan (1969)

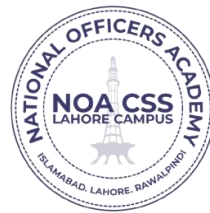
Algeria (1969)

Chad (1969)

Egypt (1969)

Guinea (1969)

Indonesia (1969)



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

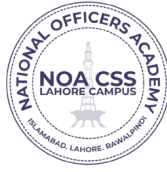


National Officers
ACADEMY®
The Largest CSS Preparatory Institute in Pakistan

NOA Lahore Campus

Iran (1969)

Jordan



Kuwait

Lebanon

Libya

Malaysia

Mali

Mauritania

Morocco

Niger

Pakistan

Palestine

Yemen

Saudi Arabia

Senegal

Sudan

Somalia



Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

Visit our website www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore



**National Officers
ACADEMY®**
The Largest CSS Preparatory Institute in Pakistan

NOA Lahore Campus

Tunisia

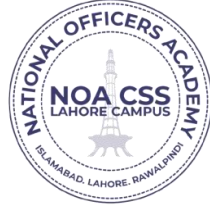
Turkey

Bahrain (1970)

Oman (1970)

Qatar

Syria



United Arab Emirates

Sierra Leone (1972)

Bangladesh (1974)

Gabon

Gambia

Guinea Bissau

Uganda

Burkina Faso (1975)

Cameroon

Comoros (1976)

Iraq (1976)



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore



National Officers
ACADEMY[®]
The Largest CSS Preparatory Institute in Pakistan

NOA Lahore Campus

Maldives

Djibouti (1978)

Benin (1982)

Brunei (1984)

Nigeria (1986)

Azerbaijan (1991)

Albania (1992)

Kyrgyzstan (1992)

Tajikistan (1992)

Turkmenistan

Mozambique (1994)

Kazakhstan (1995)

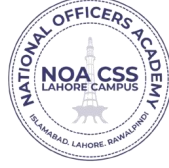
Uzbekistan (1995)

Suriname (1996)

Togo (1997)

Guyana (1998)

Cote D'Ivoire (2001)



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore

Observer States

Bosnia and Herzegovina (1994)

Central African Republic (1997)

Northern Cyprus (Turkish Cypriot State) (1979)



The Secretaries General of the OIC

1. H.R.H Tunku Abdul Rahman (Malaysia) (1971-1973)
2. H.E. Hassan Al-Touhami (Egypt) (1974-1975)
3. H.E. Dr Amadou Karim Gaye (Senagal) (1975-1979)
4. H.E. Mr. Habib Chatty (Tunisia) (1979-1984)
5. H.E. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (Pakistan) (1985-1988)
6. H.E. Dr. Hamid Algabid (Niger) (1989-1996)
7. H.E. Dr. Azeddine Laraki (Morrocco) (1997-2000)
8. H.E. Dr. Abdelouahed Belkeziz (Morocco) (2001-2004)
9. H.E. Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanogolu (Turkey) (2005 to Present)

Past Islamic Summit Conferences

Number	Date	Country	Place
1 st	1969 September 22 – 25	Morocco	Rabat
2 nd	1974 February 22 -24	Pakistan	Lahore
3 rd	1981 January 25-29	Saudi Arabia	Mecca & Taif



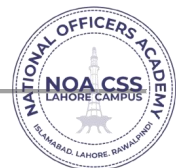


**National Officers
ACADEMY®**
The Largest CSS Preparatory Institute in Pakistan

NOA Lahore Campus

4 th	1984 January 16-19	Morocco	Casablanca
5 th	1987 January 26-29	Kuwait	Kuwait City
6 th	1991 December 9-11	Senagal	Dakkar
7 th	1994 December 13-15	Morocco	Casablanca
1 st Extraordinary	1997 March 23	Pakistan	Islamabad
8 th	1997 December 9-11	Iran	Tehran
9 th	2000 November 12-13	Qatar	Doha
2 nd Extraordinary	2003 March 5	Qatar	Doha
10 th	2003 October 16-17	Malaysia	Putrajaya
3 rd Extra Ordinary	2005 December 7-8	Saudi Arabia	Makkah Al Mukaramah

[1] Tayyab Siddiqui is a former ambassador of Pakistan.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore

[1] OIC Secretariat, Jeddah, *Basic Facts*. [2] *Ibid*.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] Senate of Pakistan, Foreign Relations Committee, “Pakistan and the OIC,” *Report 6*, September 2005.

ECO- Economic cooperation Organization

Founded as the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in 1964 by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Türkiye, the Forum was rechristened as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1985.

The ECO Region shelters more than 460 million inhabitants and expands over 8 million square kilometers of land, connecting the north to south, south and east to the west, Asia to Europe and Eurasia to the Arab World. Composed of some Caucasus, South, West and Central Asian countries, ECO is one of the oldest intergovernmental organizations.

The founding and fundamental goal of the Organization is to create amenable and conducive conditions for the continued promotion of sustainable economic development in the region, aiming at joint welfare and wellbeing of the Member States.

The ECO stretched the fabric of its cooperative partnership in the early 1990s, welcoming the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as five Central Asian nations, including the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan, as its members.

Over the past few decades, the Organization has relentlessly emerged as an effective forum of economic diplomacy and activism. The ECO Member States, bearing their shared cultural and historic affinities in mind, appear to be always ready, receptive and forthcoming to complement each other, intensifying their collaboration with action and result oriented motives to achieve the perceived target of greater connectivity and integration in the region.

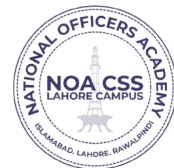


Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



During the 13th Summit at Islamabad in March 2017, the ECO Heads of State/Government endorsed and adopted the ECO Vision – 2025. It is a roadmap document meant for guiding the sectoral activities of the Organization in the years to come until 2025.



The virtual 14th ECO Summit was organized on March 4, 2021 under the theme of ‘Regional Economic Cooperation in the aftermath of COVID-19-’, whereby the highest ECO leadership put forward some strong and tangible recommendations and post-COVID strategies to support the resumption of development activities in the region.

Pakistan’s Geoeconomic Footprint in the ECO Region

- Dr. Tauseef Javed,



As Karl Marx opined, economics shapes human history – past, present, and future. It influences all aspects of life, especially politics. Globalisation has reinforced it, with countries competing to form economic alliances and developmental projects like BRICS and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Over the last two years, Pakistan has shifted its focus to geoeconomics, leveraging its strategic geography. Lately, most of the national news and the indigenous literature has covered the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a game changer for Pakistan’s regional cooperation and economic portfolio, which is true in terms of its scope and investment. In all this, other economic alliances failed to attain a reasonable place in the national discourse. One such example is the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO).

ECO was founded in 1964 by Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan as Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) to promote regional economic cooperation. It was renamed to ECO in 1985. It has advocated for effective multilateralism at the regional level and held out the prospect of regional economic integration at a time when the world was unaware of BRI and BRICS. The plan was to use the three nations’ shared history of kinship and fraternity to create a transparent international platform.



Pakistan and ECO

ECO’s primary forte lies in its emphasis on economic matters and fostering connectivity. The organisation strives to tailor its efforts to meet the unique requirements of its member states, aiming to establish an environment conducive to trade enhancement and economic betterment. As one of the founding members, Pakistan holds a profound dedication to actualising ECO’s objectives. Pakistan hosted the 13th ECO Summit in Islamabad in March 2017. The summit, themed “Connectivity for Regional Prosperity,” resulted in the adoption of two critical ECO documents: “Islamabad Declaration” and “ECO Vision 2025”. These documents outline the organisation’s agenda until 2025 and serve as tools to assess progress.



Interim Prime Minister of Pakistan, Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, while addressing the 16th Summit of ECO in Tashkent, emphasised Pakistan's unwavering dedication to the ECO's agenda for regional growth and development.

At the beginning of November 2023, Interim Prime Minister of Pakistan, Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, while addressing the 16th Summit of ECO in Tashkent, emphasised Pakistan's unwavering dedication to the ECO's agenda for regional growth and development. He highlighted the crucial role of promoting regional growth, trade, investment, connectivity, and sustainable economic development among member states, aligning with the ECO Vision 2025. This could be expanded not only by promoting the corridor-based concept but also by engaging in the networking of different economic corridors into each other, like CPEC and ECO networks. Such networks are connected through the proposed initiatives like Mainline or the ML-1 railway project. Under CPEC, initiatives like the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Rail and Road Corridor would bring greater regional advantages.

Table 1: Demographics of ECO region

Demographics	Value
Area	Approx. 8 million km ²
Population	Roughly half a billion (6.6% of the world population)

Compiled by the Author

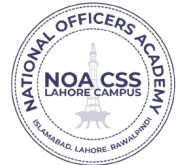


Table 2: Intra-regional trade and ECO, Pakistan's trade within ECO

Trade	Value
Intra-regional trade within ECO	\$76.5 billion (8.2% of total external trade among ECO member States)
Pakistan's internal trade within ECO	3% of its overall foreign trade

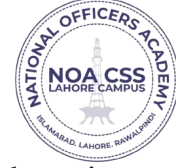
Compiled by the Author

The present status of intra-regional trade within the ECO and Pakistan's trade specifically are highlighted by these statistics in Table 2. The statistics underscore the significant disparity between the current trade volumes and the potential for



increased intra-regional trade given the region's resources and global population share, as shown in Table 1.

Discussion



ECO stands as a beacon of promise for regional economic collaboration among its member states. At its inception in 1985, ECO envisioned a cooperative framework nurturing economic growth, trade, and connectivity among its ten member states across Central Asia, West Asia, and South Asia. However, despite concerted efforts and commendable initiatives, the organisation has not fully realised its potential, especially in the realm of economic integration. Pakistan, a pivotal player in the region, views ECO as a crucial avenue for expanding trade, connectivity, and economic partnerships. Yet, several factors impede the realisation of these aspirations.

Firstly, the current volume of intra-regional trade within ECO remains significantly below its potential. Despite possessing abundant resources and a sizable collective population, intra-regional trade stands at a mere fraction of the total external trade, as shown in Tables 1 and 2. From Pakistan's standpoint, this underlines the need for a renewed focus on trade facilitation, tariff reduction, and the removal of non-tariff barriers among member states. Secondly, while the ECO endorsed pivotal agreements like the ECO-Trade Agreement (ECOTA), their full implementation faces hurdles. Ratification by several member states does not necessarily translate into effective execution, leading to unrealised benefits. Pakistan advocates for a collaborative effort towards the effective implementation of existing agreements while considering revisions that align with contemporary economic dynamics. Thirdly, enhanced connectivity remains a cornerstone for economic integration within ECO. Physical infrastructure development, particularly in transport and energy, holds the key to promoting stronger economic ties. Pakistan emphasises the need for collaborative projects aimed at improving road, rail, and energy networks across the region.

Furthermore, aligning ECO's economic integration strategies with Pakistan's national economic agenda and CPEC is crucial. It involves synergising regional objectives with domestic priorities to maximise mutual benefits. This alignment





could improve industrial cooperation, technological exchange, and investment opportunities. Pakistan envisages a reinvigorated ECO that catalyses economic growth and integration among member states. Through rigorous efforts in trade facilitation, agreement implementation, infrastructure development, alignment with national agendas, and institutional strengthening, ECO can transform into a formidable economic force, benefiting not only Pakistan but the entire region.



Dr. Tauseef Javed

Tauseef Javed works at the Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research (CSCR) as a Senior Research Associate. He has completed his Ph.D. from Fujian Normal University in Fuzhou, China. His research focuses on US economic aid policy toward Pakistan, international relations, history, and area studies from an interdisciplinary perspective. He can be reached at tjsatti2018@gmail.com



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

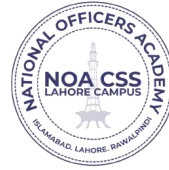
Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore

PAKISTAN: SAARC OR ECO

By

Javid Husain^[1]



The successful evolution of the European Union into a dynamic association of European states cooperating for common economic, political and security goals from the modest start of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952 and the phenomenal economic prosperity that Europe has achieved since then has encouraged the growth of regional cooperation organizations in other parts of the world. In Asia, ASEAN, ECO, GCC and SAARC readily come to one's mind as examples of regional organizations striving to promote cooperation among the member states in economic and other fields. Similar regional cooperation organizations have sprung up in other continents such as MERCOSUR in Latin America, NAFTA in North America and ECOWAS and SADC in Africa.

While regional cooperation per se is desirable, it is a mistake to assume that any regional association of states can evolve on the lines of the EU or can achieve results similar to those of the EU. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the challenges and the potential of regional organizations vary according to their economic circumstances, cultural and historical background, geographical location, intra-regional political relations, world outlook and vision of the future.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the SAARC has failed to make headway as the organization remains mired in political disputes among the member states such as the Kashmir dispute and bogged down by fears of India's hegemonic designs in the region both in the political and economic fields. The resultant lack of trust does not create a propitious climate for the promotion of regional cooperation. Cultural divergences among the member states, particularly between Pakistan and India, add to the list of negative factors militating against the success of SAARC. Additional obstacles in the way of the success of SAARC arise because of differences among its member states regarding their world outlook and their vision of the future. In fact, it would be correct to say that SAARC was born with genetic defects which simple declarations and pious hopes cannot eliminate. ECO, on the other hand, has a vast potential for regional cooperation leading to economic



integration because it meets all the prerequisites for this purpose. For Pakistan, ECO, therefore, has obvious advantages over SAARC.

Rationale for regional economic cooperation:

There are several reasons why countries opt for regional economic cooperation. From the point of view of economic analysis, regional cooperation through free trade among the member states on the basis of comparative advantage leads to increased GDP of all the member states as a result of a more efficient allocation of resources. That is to say, the total size of the cake becomes bigger than the sum total of its parts. Another benefit of regional economic cooperation is realized through economies of large scale production. The larger market created through regional economic cooperation also acts as a magnet for increased inflow of FDI and technology.

From the political point of view, regional cooperation helps in strengthening peace and stability in the region by defusing tensions, discouraging confrontational policies and building up linkages among the member states in various fields.

Finally, the united voice of the member states of a regional organization enhances the influence of the region as a whole in international political and economic forums.



Prerequisites for regional economic cooperation:

The ability of a regional organization to reap fully the economic and political benefits of regional cooperation is determined by the following prerequisites of its success:

- **Community of interests:** There must be a feeling of a common destiny and a shared vision of the future (shared goals and aspirations) among the member states.
- **Economic complementarities:** The economic benefits of regional cooperation will largely be determined by complementarities among the economies of the member states. The greater the economic



complementarities, the more the benefits for the member states of regional economic cooperation.

- Geographical proximity: Obviously the ability of member states to trade and cooperate with one another will be facilitated if they are located in close proximity geographically.
- Cultural affinities: This factor again facilitates regional cooperation by promoting a feeling of common identity among the member states. It is a major factor for the success of regional cooperation within the EU as all of its current members trace their cultural roots to Greco-Roman-Christian civilization. It also explains the EU's reluctance to admit Turkey, a major Muslim country, in its fold.
- Absence of serious disputes: The presence of serious disputes among the member states like the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India can act as a major obstacle in the progress of regional cooperation. The mistrust, tensions and even hostility that such disputes can generate do not provide propitious climate for regional cooperation. Conversely, the absence of such disputes or at least the ability of the member states to assign low priority to them facilitates regional cooperation as in the case of ASEAN.
- Non-existence of hegemonic designs: As shown by the example of SAARC, the fear of hegemonic designs of a member state (India in the case of SAARC) also blocks progress in regional cooperation. The absence of such apprehensions, on the other hand, promotes regional cooperation as has been the experience of the EU.

Evolutionary path of regional economic cooperation:

As the process of regional economic cooperation evolves from



programmes of cooperation in various economic fields to the establishment of a free trade area and then to the creation of a customs union leading to an economic union, the economies of the member states are gradually integrated resulting in the establishment of a single market where goods, capital and workers can move freely and in the harmonization of economic and monetary policies. The EU to a large extent has already reached this stage. Further, since economic issues cannot be totally separated from political and security issues as they affect them and are in turn affected by them, progress towards economic integration also generates



pressures for the coordination of foreign and security policies of the member states. These factors underline the importance of the community of interests and a shared vision of the future as prerequisites for the long-term success and progress of any scheme of regional economic cooperation.

The projected evolutionary path of regional economic cooperation leads to several important consequences. Firstly, the decision-making powers on issues of common interest are gradually transferred from national capitals to the headquarters of the regional organization as the process of regional integration takes place. Secondly, the more powerful state or states tend to dominate the decision-making process of the regional organization. Even if there are checks and balances to counter this tendency, it is likely that the more powerful state or states, because of their political and economic clout, will ultimately dominate the region and regional policies. This is already happening in the EU where Germany has acquired a pre-eminent position in the economic decision making process because of the weight of its economy. Thirdly, there is an inevitable contradiction between the process of regional integration, whose contours will be defined primarily by the dominant member state(s), and the maintenance of national identities of the smaller states. These likely consequences explain, partly at least, the opposition of several Latin American states to the creation of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) advocated by the US.



Potential and limitations of SAARC:

It is in the backdrop of the foregoing that we must examine the potential and limitations of SAARC. Even a cursory glance at the history and the ground realities in South Asia shows that SAARC does not fulfill most of the conditions essential for its successful evolution towards an economic union or even a customs union. The peoples of South Asia belong to two different civilizations, that is, Islam and Hinduism whose outlooks on life and about life are widely divergent. The Muslims and the Hindus are, therefore, culturally far apart. This was the main rationale for the Pakistan movement. The following quotation from Quaid-e-Azam's reply to Gandhi's denial of the Muslim nationhood should suffice to establish the cultural divergence between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and a Hindu-dominated India:



“We maintain and hold that Muslims and Hindus are two major nations by any definition or test of a nation. We are a nation of a hundred million and, what is more, we are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of values and proportion, legal laws and moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions. In short, we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of international law, we are a nation.” (*The Struggle for Pakistan*, Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, p.216)

Secondly, there are serious disputes between the member states of SAARC, the most important being the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India which has bedeviled relations between the two countries and hindered progress in regional cooperation.

Thirdly, there is little doubt that India entertains hegemonic ambitions in South Asia. Any doubts about India’s quest for hegemony in South Asia should be removed by an examination of India’s past conduct in dealing with its South Asian neighbours especially Pakistan and the following quotation from an article by C. Raja Mohan, a noted Indian security analyst, entitled “India and the Balance of Power” in the Foreign Affairs issue of July-August, 2006:



“India’s grand strategy divides the world into three concentric circles. In the first, which encompasses the immediate neighborhood, India has sought primacy and a veto over actions of outside powers. In the second, which encompasses the so-called extended neighborhood stretching across Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral, India has sought to balance influence of other powers and prevent them from undercutting its interests. In the third, which includes the entire global stage, India has tried to take its place as one of the great powers, a key player in international peace and security.”

Even generally, we must recognize that it is in the nature of an emerging great power like India to seek hegemony as pointed out by John J. Mearsheimer in his widely acclaimed book, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. After analyzing the anarchic nature of the international system, Mearsheimer concludes, “Thus the claim that states maximize relative power is tantamount to arguing that states are disposed to think offensively toward other states,.....Even when a great power



achieves a distinct military advantage over its rivals, it continues looking for chances to gain more power. The pursuit of power stops only when hegemony is achieved.” (p. 34, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*)

Because of cultural divergences rather than affinities, the presence of serious disputes among the member states of SAARC, and India’s hegemonic designs, the South Asian states lack a feeling of common destiny and a shared vision of the future. A pertinent example is the way India and Pakistan look at China. For India, China is a rival for power and influence in Asia. On the other hand, Pakistan views its relationship with China as a vital strategic partnership for safeguarding its security. While the SAARC member states do have the advantage of geographical proximity, their economic complementarities are weaker than those in the ECO region. Little wonder that the intra-regional trade as a percentage of the total trade is higher in the case of the ECO region than in the SAARC region.

The move towards a South Asian Customs Union and more so towards a South Asian Economic Union would unleash economic and political forces which would result in decisions about Pakistan’s economy and ultimately even its foreign policy, as the two cannot be separated, being taken at some regional forum dominated by India because of its sheer size. Thus, regional integration within the framework of the SAARC would negate the very rationale for the creation of Pakistan because the process of regional integration would subsume Pakistan’s national identity in the bigger and dominant Indian identity. India would, thus, have achieved through the process of regional integration what it has failed to achieve through coercive means so far.

This is not to deny that from Pakistan’s point of view SAARC can play a useful role by increasing regional trade on a level playing field and with due safeguards for the health of our economy. It can encourage regional cooperation in such areas as water management, environment, transportation, communication, cross-border crimes, communicable diseases, etc. Its very existence and the opportunity that it provides to the leaders of the member states to meet one another help in defusing tensions and promoting mutual understanding in South Asia. Thus, SAARC also has a valuable role to play in strengthening peace and stability in South Asia.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

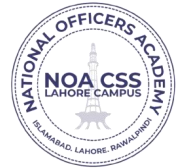
Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



These are not minor advantages and must be kept in view in any assessment of the future potential of SAARC. However, because of the various drawbacks and limitations from which it suffers, it is not an organization of choice for Pakistan for establishing a customs union or an economic union. If Pakistan makes the mistake of relying on SAARC for these purposes, it would either be frustrated in the achievement of these objectives or it would gradually lose its separate national identity. Neither of these scenarios would be in our national interest. A more realistic approach, which takes into account both the potential and the weaknesses of SAARC for Pakistan, would be a more advisable course for us.



Comparative advantages of the ECO:

For Pakistan, it is the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) which meets all the prerequisites of regional cooperation leading to regional integration. ECO was established in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey as the successor organization to the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD). In 1992, the Organization was expanded to include seven new member states, namely, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The ECO region covers a vast area of eight million square kilometers with the population of over 430 million. It is endowed with huge mineral, oil and gas resources. ECO has a vast potential for the strengthening of regional cooperation as it is based on the solid foundation of economic complementarities, common cultural heritage, geographical proximity and the absence of serious disputes and hegemonic designs among its members. These factors also provide the basis for a community of interests, that is, a common destiny and a shared vision of the future among the member states of ECO. Economic complementarities hold the promise of an enormous expansion of intra-regional trade and cooperation within the framework of ECO.

Just to give a few examples, some of the member states of ECO such as Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan are major oil and/or gas exporters while Pakistan and Turkey need to import oil and gas in large quantities. Pakistan by now has signed agreements with both Iran and Turkmenistan for the import of gas through pipelines. It already imports a substantial quantity of oil from Iran. Pakistan and Turkey are textile exporters whereas Iran and other ECO member states are textile importers. Pakistan is a major rice exporter while Iran imports rice





in large quantities. By way of contrast, in all these areas the economies of Pakistan and India are competitive rather than complementary. Thus the possibilities of increased trade and economic cooperation among the ECO member states are immense and far greater than those available within the framework of SAARC.

A paper published by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics in October, 2011 pointed out that trade in the ECO region, which amounted to \$40 billion in 2008-09, could increase by a factor of eight if the free trade agreement among the ECO countries was fully implemented. According to it, Pakistan has the potential to export to other ECO member states a broad range of commodities covering about 30 productive sectors including cotton and textile products, leather products, sports articles, cereals, carpets, staple fibers, apparel and clothing, vegetables, and fish products. (*“Strengthening intra-regional trade and investment in the ECO region”*, October, 2011 by Musleh ud Din and Ejaz Ghani)

The ECO Vision 2015 adopted by the ECO Council of Ministers in 2005 called for the dismantling of tariff and non-tariff barriers among the member states so as to increase the intra-regional trade to 20 percent of their total trade by 2015, besides other targets for the strengthening of regional cooperation in diverse fields like energy, transport and communications, industry and agriculture. It remains to be seen, however, whether the ECO countries, particularly their leaders and senior officials, will have the wisdom to realize this vast potential.

Pakistan must pay greater attention to ECO than it has done over the past few years to reap fully the economic and commercial benefits of regional cooperation that this organization offers. The ECO member states must redouble their efforts to achieve the targets contained in the ECO Vision 2015. The establishment of a free trade area among the ECO countries must be given the top priority by them. Above all, we must develop together with other ECO member states a regional outlook in dealing with various economic issues rather than limiting ourselves to narrow and, many a time, short-sighted considerations which are not in our self-interest.

Unfortunately, regional cooperation within the framework of ECO has suffered so far due to the sheer ignorance or lack of comprehension of its vast potential on the part of the senior officials and the lack of vision of the leaders of the member states. It is, therefore, necessary to educate our senior officials and policy makers



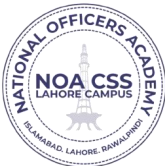
Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore



as well as the public about the advantages of regional cooperation within the framework of ECO. The armed conflict in Afghanistan continuing since the days of the Soviet occupation has also acted as a serious obstacle in the furtherance of the objectives of ECO. Consequently, the restoration of durable peace and stability in Afghanistan is an indispensable condition for the full realization of ECO's potential. Currently, the strained US-Iran relations also have had a negative effect on ECO. However, this factor should not be allowed by the member states to block progress towards regional cooperation in the ECO region, which is in their long-term interest for the reasons given earlier.

The ECO member states have already laid down an impressive institutional infrastructure including, inter alia, the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) to lower trade barriers among the member states, ECO Transit and Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) to facilitate ECO-wide transportation, and ECO Trade and Development Bank to support trade and developmental activities within the ECO region. It is now for the leaders of the ECO member states to concert their efforts for the promotion of economic integration within the framework of this promising regional organization.

[1] The author is a former Ambassador of Pakistan.



Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), political and economic [alliance](#) of six Middle Eastern countries—[Saudi Arabia](#), [Kuwait](#), the [United Arab Emirates](#), [Qatar](#), [Bahrain](#), and [Oman](#). The GCC was established in [Riyadh](#), Saudi Arabia, in May 1981. The purpose of the GCC is to achieve unity among its members based on their common objectives and their similar political and cultural identities, which are rooted in Arab and Islamic [cultures](#). Presidency of the council rotates annually.

Arguably the most important article of the GCC charter is Article 4, which states that the alliance was formed to strengthen relations among its member countries and to promote cooperation among the countries' citizens. The GCC also has a defense planning council that coordinates military cooperation between member countries. The highest decision-making entity of the GCC is the Supreme Council, which meets on an annual basis and consists of GCC heads of state. Decisions of the Supreme Council are adopted by unanimous approval. The Ministerial Council,



made up of foreign ministers or other government officials, meets every three months to [implement](#) the decisions of the Supreme Council and to propose new policy. The administrative arm of the alliance is the office of the Secretariat-General, which monitors policy implementation and arranges meetings.

GCC agreements typically focus on either security or economic coordination. In terms of security coordination, policies have included the creation of the Peninsula Shield Force in 1984, a joint military venture based in Saudi Arabia, and the signing of an intelligence-sharing pact in 2004. The first significant deployment of the Peninsula Shield Force was in 2011 in Bahrain to guard government [infrastructure](#) against an uprising there during the [Arab Spring](#) protests. Economic coordination included attempts at economic union, though integrative agreements were often lacklustre in comparison with policy coordination. An agreement to launch a single regional currency similar to the [euro](#) by 2010 saw little movement apart from the establishment of a [monetary](#) council in 2009. Coordination in tax policy proved fruitful, however: a [customs union](#) was [implemented](#) in 2015, and the member states began rolling out a [value-added tax](#) of 5 percent in 2018. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have tended to lead policy coordination. They were the first countries to send troops to Bahrain in 2011 and the first countries to levy the value-added tax.

While membership of the GCC remained consistent throughout its first several decades, changes in regional relationships sometimes led to speculation on changes in membership. Expansion appeared possible when the interests of Gulf countries aligned with those of other Arab states. [Jordan](#) and [Morocco](#), two other Arab monarchies, were invited to join the GCC in 2011, in the midst of the Arab Spring uprisings. Morocco declined, while Jordan's application remained [delayed](#) because of internal GCC disagreements. Conflicting interests at times led to rifts. [Egypt](#) and fellow GCC members Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain instated a blockade against Qatar in 2017. In December 2018 Qatar's [emir](#) skipped the GCC's annual summit and sent an envoy instead, though he sent his [prime minister](#) in 2019 as tensions seemed to thaw. The blockade was lifted during the following annual summit, held in January 2021, with Qatar's emir in attendance.

To Succeed, the GCC Requires Cooperation with Iran for Regional Security

GCC members understand that none of the mega projects they envision can be realized under the shadow of military confrontation with Iran

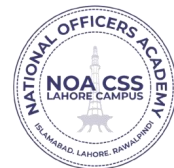


Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



By Mehran Haghirian



On March 28, 2024, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Jassim Al-Budaiwi, unveiled a [GCC Vision for Regional Security](#). The document, the first explicit articulation of a collective security vision in the GCC's 43-year history, builds on past statements and a 2000 joint defense [agreement](#),

all.



The document also bears some similarity to prior proposals from Iran, Russia, and China that aim to foster dialogue and cooperation in the Persian Gulf.

The GCC put forward this vision after years of internal strife, seeking a stable environment conducive to advancing ambitious development agendas. It follows the [January 2021 Al Ula Summit](#) that ended the Qatar blockade and [the March](#)



Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

Visit our website www.noacss.pk



[2023 Beijing agreement](#) that restored normal diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

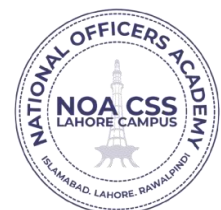
The initiative emphasizes broadening security-oriented discussions to include shared environmental challenges, energy transitions, food security, and regional and interregional connectivity agendas.

Though not directly mentioned, peaceful coexistence and cooperation with Tehran is necessary to realize the vision's goals. The tension-filled period from 2016 to 2020 included attacks in 2019 on tankers off the coast of Fujairah and [drone and missile attacks on Saudi oil installations](#) that were largely attributed to Tehran and its proxies. GCC members understand that none of the mega projects they envision can be realized under the shadow of military confrontation with Iran.

The [recent direct confrontation](#) between Iran and Israel has arguably redoubled the importance of constructively engaging Iran. An isolated Iran is likely to disrupt any progress towards development and peace.

If Iran and Saudi Arabia had not reconciled in 2023, the region would have been in a far worse situation today. Since the Beijing agreement, there have been numerous positive developments in GCC-Iran relations as well as in intra-GCC and GCC-Iraq ties. Saudi Arabia [hosted an Iranian president](#) for the first time in 11 years and allowed Iranian pilgrims to travel to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman [added to economic ties](#) with Iran. There has also been an influx of [GCC investments in Iraq](#). Tensions between Qatar and the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain have decreased.

Moreover, these diplomatic and economic engagements have been encouraged by European and Asian players, particularly China. The main inhibitor for expansion of regional ties continues to be U.S. sanctions reimposed on Iran after the Trump administration quit the 2015 Iran nuclear deal as well as U.S. efforts to normalize Persian Gulf ties with Israel while isolating Tehran. While some initially championed Washington's approach, regional players are no longer seeking the same objectives today.



Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

Visit our website www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore

Other Visions for Regional Security and Integration

Iran's [Hormuz Peace Endeavor](#) (HOPE) initiative, presented in 2019, sought to leverage the mandate given to the UN Secretary-General by [Resolution 598](#) (1987) which eventually ended the Iran-Iraq war. It provided “the necessary international umbrella” for discussions among the GCC, Iran and Iraq about energy security, freedom of navigation, non-proliferation, creating a weapons of mass destruction-free zone, hotlines and early warning systems, and conflict resolution mechanisms such as non-aggression pacts. The proposal encountered obstacles amid escalating tensions in 2019 and the Trump administration's “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran, which was supported at the time by some GCC states.

At the same time, Russia used its UN Security Council presidency in October 2020 to reintroduce its 2019 “Collective Security Concept for the Persian Gulf Region.” Russia [envisioned](#) creation of an Organization for Security and Cooperation in the Persian Gulf encompassing the eight littoral states, along with Russia, China, the United States, the European Union, India, and other interested parties as observers or associate members. This [initiative](#) aimed to build confidence and foster cooperation in a step-by-step way on arms control, including a nuclear weapons-free zone, and counterterrorism, while also encouraging economic, humanitarian, and environmental collaboration. However, Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine led Moscow to drop its efforts to advance the proposal.

China, since 2020, has also [called](#) for a multilateral effort to turn the Persian Gulf into an “oasis of stability.” The primary reasons are the region's strategic importance for China's Belt and Road Initiative, coupled with its growing energy needs. The [inclusion of Iran and Saudi Arabia](#) in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS could further facilitate Chinese mediation.

The Europeans, too, have been redoubling efforts to engage the region. In 2023, the European Union [appointed](#) a new EU Special Representative for the Gulf Region, Luigi Di Maio, to expand European ties with the GCC states, as well as with Iran and Iraq. France has also been a key advocate for regional dialogue. With the support of President Emanuel Macron, Iraq managed to [gather](#) regional players, as well as regional and international organizations, at the Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership in 2021 and in 2022 in Jordan.

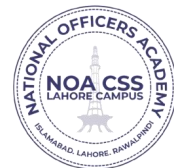


Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk





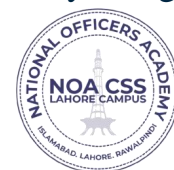
While European capitals and the EU have diplomatic ties with Tehran and all other regional players, the U.S. is still trying to forge regional alliances to counter or contain Iran. Initiatives like the [Middle East Strategic Alliance](#), the [Warsaw coalition](#), and various joint air defense and maritime exercises have struggled due to their exclusionary nature and focus on hard security issues. Today, there is more appetite for dialogue and cooperation in the region than military posturing.

Moving Beyond Confidence-Building Measures

These diverse security visions share principles from the Charter of the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the League of Arab States, the GCC Charter, and foundational tenets of international law. These principles champion respect for sovereignty, political independence, non-interference, and peaceful resolution of disputes. Beyond confidence-building measures, there is readiness for more substantial steps.

A critical aspect of the GCC Vision for Regional Security is its call for enhancing “economic cooperation between regional countries in a way that serves the interests of dialogue, communication, and building bridges.” The document mentions the need to address water and food security challenges through strengthened coordination and cooperation with regional and international partners, aiming to sustain global food supply chains and stabilize prices. The implementation of this inclusive approach is projected to alleviate hard security issues as well, such as maritime security challenges and threats of military conflict.

Addressing environmental challenges is highlighted as a paramount security concern. The vision advocates realistic, responsible, and balanced solutions to climate change, achievable only through enhanced coordination and cooperation not only among GCC states but also with Iran and Iraq. In addition, the vision mandates GCC states to work towards a Middle East free from weapons of mass destruction and guarantees the right of states to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. This underlines the necessity of cooperation between Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran to mitigate environmental risks associated with nuclear development, prevent nuclear proliferation, and even possibly integrate Iranian, Emirati, and Saudi nuclear energy outputs in the future.



Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

Visit our website www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore



Iraq's initiative, particularly through the Baghdad Conference, illustrates a commitment to widening security considerations to include shared environmental challenges, energy transitions, food security, and broader regional and interregional connectivity. Regional integration in the Persian Gulf and the broader Middle East was a key [stated goal](#) during the second meeting. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Al Sudani [emphasized](#) the importance of “strengthening the bonds of cooperation and partnership between our countries” through infrastructure interdependence, economic integration, and joint investments. He proposed “transforming the region from consumer-oriented economies to manufacturing nations by establishing joint industrial zones, enhancing collective industrial capacity, and linking supply chains to one capable of competing in global markets and launching mega projects in various sectors.”

The GCC Vision represents a significant step forward in addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing the region. By focusing on collaboration, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and sustainable development, the GCC not only aims to enhance the security and prosperity of its member states but also contribute to a more stable and peaceful international order. Engaging Iran in this dialogue is pivotal to ensuring the success of the vision.

Anticipated diplomatic engagements in 2024 offer pathways to advance this framework. This could be in the form of a third Baghdad Conference, an [expected](#) Beijing Summit of regional leaders, or an invitation to Iran to attend a GCC summit. The U.S. presidential election looms as a potential disruptor but also highlights the need to urgently solidify bilateral and multilateral relations in the Persian Gulf. None of the regional players in the Persian Gulf are yearning to revert to the pre-2021 era.

Mehran Haghirian is the Director of Regional Initiatives at the Bourse & Bazaar Foundation. He is currently leading the Integrated Futures Initiative, a project dedicated to supporting economic diplomacy and economic development in the Persian Gulf.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

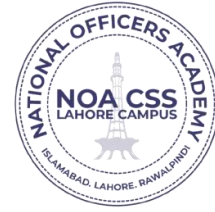
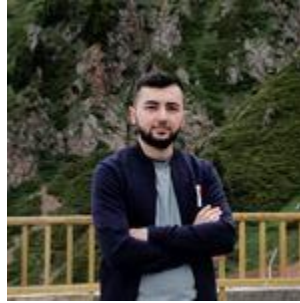
Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore

By: Vahe Minasyan



Vahe Minasyan is MAIA candidate at the Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University.

Research interests include: conflict resolution, diplomacy and interstate relations within the framework of security studies, particularly in the Middle East and the South Caucasus.

Introduction

The Gulf Cooperation Council has faced severe internal divisions since June 2017, when Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE cut diplomatic ties with Qatar and announced that they were closing their air, sea and land borders with Qatar. The latter represents one of the wealthiest countries in the world with the highest revenue per capita. However, Qatar is substantially dependent on imports of goods, which meant that the closure of borders with its neighbors threatened with not only political isolation, but also harsh economic consequences. Such drastic measures were implemented on the basis that Qatar supported various regional terrorist groups and had considerably enhanced its relations with Saudi Arabia's main rival Iran^[1]. Roots of Qatari ambitious foreign policies go back to 1990s when Qatar fundamentally transformed its regional behavior under the reign of Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. Before this period Qatar was largely a sidelined Gulf state that was concerned mostly with its domestic politics and relied on Saudi Arabia in security issues. After the two Gulf wars that underlined the smaller states' need for a diversified security system and amidst the Saudi increasing superiority, Sheikh Hamad introduced his vision of dynamic and flexible Qatar which relying on its natural gas resources started its adventure of becoming a regional actor. As the Sheikh succeeded in establishing quite stable domestic political environment, he diversified Qatar's list of partners in pursuit of pragmatic foreign policies. Qatar established relations with states such as the USA, Iran and Israel which apparently



did not share goodwill among each other. Qatar gave permission to host American military contingent near Doha in attempt to diminish the Saudi influence in its domestic affairs which opposed Hamad's independent policies and supported the previous Qatari emir overthrown by Hamad Al Thani. Al Jazeera's foundation also proves the ubiquity of Qatari ambitions and its scope of international reach[2].

I contend here that in addition to the abovementioned two arguments, three significant factors should be taken into account in an attempt to shed light on the origins of the conflict and contribute to the comprehensiveness of the explanation: 1) Qatar's deep political involvement in conflict zones such as Libya (supporting preferred groups, Qatar and Turkey supporting the Tripoli-based government led by Islamists and recognized by the UN; Russia, the UAE and Egypt backing the Tobruk-based government) and Syria (supporting the Islamic opposition beyond an acceptable extent, Al Tawhid a group within Islamic Front and Nusra Front affiliated with Al Qaeda which both were anti-American and anti-Saudi contingents[3]. Qatar was criticized both by Saudi Arabia and the US) has been one of the sharp divisions with other GCC states[4]. 2) Qatar's intensified ties and alignment with Turkey has been seen as a disturbing sign (Turkey's support for the Muslim Brotherhood designated as a terrorist group by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt)[5]. 3) Al Jazeera which has been Qatar's ideological resource that has regularly shifted from generally acknowledged political discourses in the region[6]. My research question covers Al Jazeera as an independent variable that has had a strong say in the eventual breakdown of the GCC due to its state-centered (promoting Qatari perspective) and regional performance that was largely independent from the GCC tacitly acknowledged political patterns. In the first part of the essay I am going to look into the GCC as a security alliance, underline its importance and find out the factors that generally lead to disagreements within security alliances to see the crisis through these lenses. In the second part of the essay, I am going beyond the conventional wisdom that stresses the two arguments mentioned above about the origins of the crisis, expand the scope of the examination by introducing the Al Jazeera effect, one of the three alternative factors that proves the nature of the crisis should be seen through broader lenses rather than mainly through Qatar's ties with Iran and terrorist networks.



Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

Visit our website www.noacss.pk

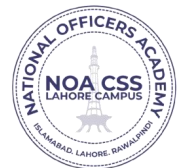
Background

Our knowledge about The Gulf Cooperation Council [Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait] is crucial in understanding internal dynamics of the alliance and identifying a broad set of factors that could lead to major tensions. What are the possible reasons that can outweigh the benefits of mutual cooperation in security spheres? I am going to look into the GCC formation through general assumptions about the reasons that lead security alliances to experience breakdowns as well as draw parallels with the Concert of Europe to compare patterns of alliances.

The Gulf Cooperation Council was founded in 1981 and the primary purpose of the alliance was the provision of collective security of the member states. The GCC emerged at the beginning of the war between Iran-Iraq which made the preservation of regional and national security a vital point in Gulf states' agenda. The member states were especially sensitive to the regional dynamics after the Iranian revolution. After the war, Iraq "joined" the list of security threats posed to the Gulf states by invading Kuwait. Thus, challenges to the regional security were inseparable part in the context of the GCC foundation and operation[7]. It would be wrong to assume that the GCC came to life in a politically smooth transformation. The establishment of the alliance had witnessed a few years of rivalry regarding the systemic structure of the alliance. Thus, the consent to form the GCC was reached not by inter-state reconciliation but due to outside factors of Iranian threat and the destabilizing effect of Iran-Iraq war. Subsequently, the disagreements amongst the member states have been quite prevalent within internal performance of the alliance. Addressing the formation of the GCC after 18 years in 1999 Emirati political scientist Abdulkhaleq Abdulla stated:

"Its nature and what it stands for was hardly clear at the outset, and it is certainly no clearer today," in part because the hasty formation of the GCC reflected "not so much sober thinking as...an immediate reaction to the turbulent regional events of 1979–80"[8].

These events referred to both the Iranian revolution that aimed at "exporting" the Islamic values established in Iran and the socialist Iraq that were hostile to the monarchical regimes. For smaller Gulf states those external threats were enhanced by the fear of increasing Saudi dominance[9]. It was the Saudi Foreign Minister al-



Faisal that was responsible for bringing different perspectives together. Eventually, the GCC Charter came as a compromise that called for “coordination and integration between member states in all fields, leading to their unity”, despite the fact that there were major disagreements regarding the nature of the alliance. The members were divided in their view of whether the organization should be a predominantly military or economic formation [10]. The Gulf crisis showed that the member states experienced tensions not only due to external security threats but because of largely internal divisions. Such drastic changes in security threats priorities made the GCC ineffective to a certain extent as regional security considerations became inferior to national security concerns. Every GCC member started to pursue an independent political agenda not taking into account the collective interests of the neighbors [11].

However, even if there were points of disagreements among the GCC members there had to be a broader and more concrete set of reasons to cause the breakdown. As Stephen Walt argues there are three main reasons that can undermine and eventually cause alliance breakdowns: changing perceptions of threats, declining credibility and domestic politics. In our case the declining credibility of the alliance is the most relevant and influential reason to look into in order to explain the effect of Al Jazeera. As to Walt, an alliance tends to lose its significance when member states become insecure about other countries’ objectives. Moreover, they might see their initial threat as a less dangerous factor than one of the member-states’ amplified aggressive behavior. On top of that, a member state can intimidate both its allies and adversaries with its new ambitious foreign policy stemming from relative gains in power. Finally, an alliance is going to disband when members begin suspecting that their allies would not adhere to their commitments of providing support which means an alliance can at some point stop being beneficial in security terms for any member state [12].

In the first half of the 19th century five dominant powers in Europe- Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia and later France decided to form an alliance on the basis of largely informal and at the same time influential rules to address the post-Napoleonic war period of Europe’s political landscape. These great powers mainly aimed at preventing the rise of a regional hegemon and extreme revolutionary movements that could undermine regional stability. Scholars disagree with each other regarding the efficiency of the alliance, but they do agree on the primary factors that led to its collapse. One of the main catalysts of the collapse was the



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



establishment of the French republic in 1848, which had a domino effect and spread to Austria and Prussia. Regime change destroyed a certain amount of trust which previous leaders shared. New regimes were both unaware of how the alliance operated and what the objectives of their counterparts were. Subsequently, each ally started pursuing independent political agenda at the expense of the alliance norms and eventually the lack of commitment to the norms stemming from absence of trust became one of the factors that put an end to the Concert of Europe[13]. The main similarity here concerning the GCC is that both alliances sought to prevent popular revolutionary movements from emerging and making a way into each regime. On the contrary, the main difference between these cases is the fact that there wasn't a dominant state in the system of the Concert that could affect the dynamics. Within the GCC power differentials did play a role in containing the spread of revolutionary movements with the help of Saudi (limited) leadership.

The Argument and the Alternatives



Since June 2017, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has experienced one of the most serious breakdowns throughout its history. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with Qatar along with closing the only land border with Saudi Arabia, restricting airspace for airplanes flying to and from Qatar as well as preventing Qatari ships from using many ports in the Gulf. For a state that heavily depends on imports those measures substantially harmed the national economy. Two other members Kuwait and Oman remained neutral and the former even suggested it mediate the crisis. Conventional wisdom says that there were two primary reasons that led to Qatar's isolation: its alleged support for regional terrorism and improving relations with Iran. The rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia represents the region's calling card[14]. The official Saudi statement on isolating Qatar was based on accusations of promoting terrorist organizations such as Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS and al-Qaeda aimed at undermining the regional security and of supporting terrorist groups backed by Iran such as Houthis in Yemen as well as others inside Saudi Arabia[15]. The UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation made a similar statement and stressed Qatar's unwillingness to act within the framework of GCC and pursue policies that serve common interests[16]. Bahrain's statement stood out with its critical nature and state-centered approach. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the hazardous patterns of Qatari funding and support of terrorism that aimed at



toppling the government in Bahrain and stressed the importance of taking firm counter measures[17]. On the contrary, Oman retained its long-established neutral position in foreign affairs and did not join the three states in isolating Qatar. Moreover, it offered Qatar its waterways and airspace to make up for the sanctions imposed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE[18]. Kuwait also embraced a neutral position within this crisis and as Mohammad Ramadhan, a Kuwaiti economic analyst and a regular columnist at Kuwait’s Arabic daily Al Qabas said:

“Kuwait’s situation is very clear. It wants to be part of the solution not part of the crisis. Kuwait was also elected as a member of the [United Nations] Security Council for the next two years, and this re-enforces its position as a mediator in this crisis”[19]

However, as it was pointed out in the first part of the essay, security alliances in general are extremely concerned with collective security and the GCC is not an exception. Security alliances come to life through challenging negotiations and political processes both domestically and regionally. Thus, it is in every member’s interest to preserve such alliances and they would encounter major internal obstacles on their way if there is a set of multidimensional predicaments that raise concerns about the cost-benefit balance of security alliances. I am going to look into one of such problematic issues that affected the ultimate breakdown of the GCC: the effect of Al Jazeera. I am going to start by delivering information about its foundation in the context of regional media sphere. Then, there will be a discussion on the patterns of Al Jazeera’s transformation from a considerably independent media source into elite-controlled tool of foreign affairs. Afterwards I am going to focus on the pan-Islamic and (selective) pro-democracy direction of the channel’s operation, which was in fact different between its English and Arabic versions. Finally, an empirical data will try to demonstrate that the role of Al Jazeera should be considered while addressing the breakdown of the GCC in 2017.



The Media Giant of the Arab world: Al Jazeera

Qatar’s Al Jazeera appeared in a limited sphere of the general Arab media environment where Arab people largely saw their media agencies as tools exploited by their official circles. Under these circumstances, Al Jazeera gained unprecedented popularity and weight through its coverage of insightful political, cultural, and economic issues[20]. In November 1996 al Jazeera initiated its first



airtime with financial support from Qatari government. The staff of the channel included a lot of journalists that used to work on dissolved BBC Arabic Service television channel. It is not surprising, that Al Jazeera drew so much attention from Arab audience, since it covered intriguing news and viewpoints as well as criticized a number of Arab countries[21]. The channel aspired to play a role of independent actor in the Gulf by implementing uncomplicated editorial practices. Such policies led to the multifaceted coverage of international events that could include viewpoints from Israeli officials, Saudi dissidents, and criticism of Qatar's actions from time to time[22]. When Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani came to power in 1995, he had a desire to establish a news agency that would provide insights unlike what was offered by CNN or BBC concerning the region. Al Jazeera was meant to become the pioneer of the regional news agencies void of any control stemming from Qatar's elites. The significance of expertise in the region was coupled with the analytical patterns of Western journalism and these two factors were essential when hiring journalists. Starting with such huge ambitions al Jazeera succeeded in becoming the most popular media source in the Gulf in the period of 1997-2002 through its broadcasting of live sessions, graphic imagery and disputes regarding the American attack on Iraq (1998), the second Palestinian Intifada and post-9/11 Afghanistan. It was the only media source worldwide that had official permission to show the American and British attack on Iraq and to convey Taliban's viewpoints from Afghanistan after 9/11. It broke all stereotypes of the Arab media by presenting opinions of Israeli figures and giving airtime to bin Laden's speech concerning the American bombardment in Afghanistan[23].

However, the scale of al Jazeera's independence has largely been disputed. For example, Wikileaks cables prove that there have been certain levels of cooperation between the channel and the Qatari government. In 2005 the Qatari ambassador in the US promised to get rid of a provocative article published on Al Jazeera's website when the wife of the former US vice president Lynne Cheney raised this question. The ambassador did what he had promised. On top of that, two years later when it was obvious that the relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia were progressing, one of Al Jazeera's employees revealed that they were not allowed touching topics about Saudi Arabia unless they gained higher authorization. Nevertheless, we should not overestimate the interaction patterns between Al Jazeera and the Qatari government and contend that the channel's operation is tied with unchallenging elite control. The fact that apparently there is connection between the two actors, which especially becomes clearer in the Arabic version of



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



the channel than in the English version should not be dismissed. It is eventually reasonable to accept the fact of such cooperation since the Qatari state was always aware of the concept of soft power and it surely was the proponent of pursuing its broad international interests through Al Jazeera[24] Hence, we should see Al Jazeera as a moderately independent news agency because there is also the factor of being a geopolitical tool to provide first and utmost Qatar's regional influence. The channel pursues this goal by giving opportunities to dissent voices, critically approaching other Arab governments and presenting Qatari understanding of the events and ongoing developments. Versatility of Al Jazeera's practices has led it to become a powerful source that has a say in shaping people's notions[25].

The major challenges for Al Jazeera's credibility came with the events of the Arab Spring. The channel experienced high levels of support while shedding light on the situation unfolding in Egypt, but after the uprising spread to Libya and Bahrain at the same time Al Jazeera chose the wrong path. It largely supported the aspirations of Libyans, but also illustrated highly indifferent position towards Bahraini events, which undermined its aim and image of "freedom fighter". These events further revealed the channel's scope of dependence on the Qatari policy patterns. The appointment of the Qatari royal member Sheikh Ahmed Al Thani as the director-general of Al Jazeera only inflamed the tensions[26] Systematic appearance of such actions has led to occasional closure of the channel by its neighbors. For example, when talking about shutting down Al Jazeera the UAE's ambassador to Russia, Ghobash, said:

"Closure of Al Jazeera was a reasonable demand. We do not claim to have press freedom. We do not promote the idea of press freedom. What we talk about is responsibility in speech. Freedom of speech has different constraints in different places. Speech in our part of the world has a particular context, and the context can go from peaceful to violent in no time simply because of words that spoken".

The ambassador's words can simply be perceived as a summary of other GCC states' visions of Al Jazeera which is being utilized by Qatar to pursue its individual interests by shaking up the region and harming Saudi Arabia and other countries[27]. It was already in 2004 when a leaked diplomatic cable illustrated MbZ's [the UAE's Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan] thoughts about Al Jazeera. According to the UAE's ruler the channel sympathized Al Qaeda and one of his sons was affected by the channel's misinformation. According to MbZ his



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



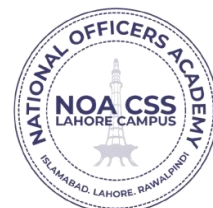
son used to be a good student, but had started to present views against Western actors due to Al Jazeera's influence. He also added:

“If [Al Jazeera] can affect the grandson of a moderate leader like Sheikh Zayed this way, imagine what it can do to the uneducated or the lower classes”[\[28\]](#).

Al Jazeera also tried to criticize Saudi Arabia in an indirect manner. As we know most of the regional news agencies are controlled by governments. In this context Al Jazeera tried to show how ineffective was Saudi media sphere by highlighting its political conservatism and inferiority of news compared to entertaining programs[\[29\]](#).

At the beginning of protests in North Africa Qatar demonstrated at first watchful behavior, but after a while it more vividly placed responsibility for the rise of the protests on the governments of North African countries. Al Jazeera made every effort to convey protestors' messages as well as encourage others in the region starting from Tunisia. Qatar was to a certain extent protected from such extreme political and economic grievances internally and could afford itself a completely different perspective for interpreting the events. On the contrary, its GCC member neighbors were at risk of experiencing such protests within their states and eventually they did experience such events in 2011. As Qatar realized the potential of the protests it immediately established Al Jazeera as a platform that raised the voices of protestors in a 24/7 manner from Cairo's Tahrir Square. Qatar aimed at presenting itself as a guardian of international norms such as political and human rights and more importantly Qatar was not concerned about these events penetrating the country[\[30\]](#). As we saw, one of Al Jazeera's main challenges regarding the coverage of the Arab Spring was the polarized position towards the protests that took place at the same time in Libya and Bahrain. International Herald Tribune best described why Al Jazeera largely ignored to give airtime to Bahraini grievances:

“The threat posed by Bahrain's protests was closer to home. Their success would have set a precedent for broader public participation in a region ruled by Sunni dynasties”.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

After facing a wave of criticism Al Jazeera launched a documentary on Bahraini protests. However, the documentary was only shown on the English Channel for a limited time, and it decided to exclude the film from its trendier Arabic channel. Media observers were ready for such a development of events. According to one of them, the English version publishes more independent data, than the Arabic version. He also recalls the fact that Qatar was one of the states that deployed forces to neighboring Bahrain to restore the order. So, there were too many factors involved here that did not allow Qatar to remain committed to its initial position of “freedom supporter”[31]. Al Jazeera’s explicit support for the revolutions and for the idea of toppling the notorious autocratic regimes represented a direct threat to the status-quo powers in the region, more particularly, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Al Jazeera widely pictured Qatar as a domain of (Islamist) democracy and as a force that might question political rights of the state leaders in the region. It was anticipated that such policies would cause deep hostility against Qatar within the official circles of Saudi and Emirati leaderships[32]. Saudi Arabia’s crown prince at the time, MbS [Mohammed bin Salman] strongly believed that Saudi interests were constantly threatened by Qatar’s policies such as working on relations with Iran, aiding groups that had anti-Saudi direction and bolstering Al Jazeera. The channel was perceived to be anti-Saudi and pro-Muslim Brotherhood as well as supportive of other groups designated as terrorist groups by Saudi Arabia. Eventually, when MbS came to power he decided to transform his passive resentment into action[33]. In fact, Qatar had envisioned the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood before the events of 2011 and delivered aid to Brotherhood affiliates in the region. Qatar also offered asylum for the Brotherhood exiles such as the Egyptian prominent political figure Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Hamas leader Khaled Mashal. Their populist and Sunni Islamist ideas were regularly being aired on Al Jazeera[34]. Al Qaradawi got his own show on Al Jazeera called Shari’a and Life which had more than sixty million viewers. Al Jazeera soon gained an image of pro-Brotherhood and clearly biased channel, especially after Qaradawi addresses the Egyptian events with evident prejudice[35]. Other news agencies such as Saudi Al Arabiyya saw the region in the framework of nation-states that were influenced by regional dominant powers. On the contrary, Al Jazeera tried to counter this notion by blurring national borders to establish a more transnational framework where the Arab World is united in an Umma [Muslim community]. In these terms Al Jazeera’s and Qaradawi’s approaches coalesced. Both advocated for pan-Islamic transformation of the region[36]. Some of Qaradawi’s infamous announcements were the fatwa conveyed live on Al Jazeera that called for



Gaddafi's murder and the one where he called to move to Syria. The latter was valid for all physically capable Sunni Muslims who could fight[37].

In 2014 a minor diplomatic crisis occurred when Saudi, Emirati and Bahraini ambassadors were recalled from Qatar because the latter violated one of the prior agreements on non-interference in the affairs of a GCC state. "Supporting hostile media" was one of the reasons which implied the role of Al Jazeera. Ambassadors returned to Qatar when a new agreement was signed[38]. Eventually in 2017 three GCC states-imposed blockade on Qatar due to the latter's continuing policies and this crisis heavily undermined the whole system of the GCC alliance. Blockaded states issued a list of thirteen demands that Qatar would have to comply with in order for the blockade to be lifted. One of the demands was shutting down Al Jazeera[39]. Both the UAE and Saudi Arabia perceived the Muslim Brotherhood as an eminent threat to their domestic affairs and close interaction between the group and Qatar promoted by Al Jazeera was one of the main reasons of the blockade. Especially Saudis were concerned as the Salafi Wahhabi branch of Islam is dominant in Qatar and the latter could use this factor to sow discord and consolidate opposition against the Saudi government. In such a context shutting down the channel seemed a crucial point[40]. Al Jazeera has demonstrated that it actually has the ability to make changes in the political landscape of the region and its influence has been broadly fostered by the events of the Arab Spring that revealed the vulnerabilities of a number of Arab regimes[41].



Case study: Bahrain: "Shouting in the dark"

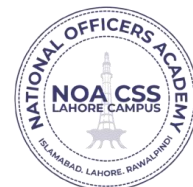
It can seem that including the factor of media in international relations in the Gulf and paying much attention to media's role would be politically insignificant. States cannot simply afford to put their relations with another state at risk especially in a complex region of the Gulf based on largely social phenomenon (Media). However, there are examples that challenge our general assumptions like the documentary about Bahrain called: "Bahrain: Shouting in the dark", aired by Al Jazeera. The documentary was aired in March 2011 and immediately had a huge resonance. It showed the nature of democratic movement in Bahrain combined with extremely brutal measures taken by the military and the police. The government had forbidden the foreign press from covering the uprising and prevented doctors as well as ambulances from providing medical services during the events. The national television was entirely under the government control and



started to expose famous Bahraini protestors as well as discredit them. Social sites like Facebook were used to deliver information on protestors, their identity and workplace to allow the government to oppress the movement in a targeted manner. Such measures were taken to deal with Shi'a opposition that also witnessed how the government demolished their mosques[42]. After the documentary's premiere, it was not surprising that the relations between Qatar and Bahrain would experience major tensions since the Bahraini authorities had made every effort to keep the uprising away from international attention. Bahraini news agencies labeled the documentary as "lies and slanders" in addition to a pro-government Sunni member of parliament Khamis Al-Rumaihi who stated that Qatar aimed at undermining the developments within the Bahraini national discourse. The film was broadcasted on Al Jazeera English only and bypassed the Arabic version of the channel that had been criticized for selective coverage of the uprisings in the region[43]. The film led a number of lawmakers in Bahrain to send a letter to the Qatari ambassador in Bahrain and call for more independent coverage of the events by Al Jazeera[44]. After the airing of the documentary, various online sources claimed that Bahrain was going to suspend its diplomatic relations with Qatar in protest against the film. Bahraini foreign minister expressed his criticism on his Twitter account:

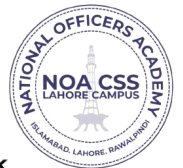
"It is obvious that there are people in Qatar who do not want good for Bahrain... And the opinionated film on Al Jazeera English is the best example of this puzzling animosity... A one whole-hour of exclusive rights to Al Jazeera English presenting a one-sided view... Dismissing the views of the majority of the Bahraini people... You deserve an Oscar".

Bahrain and Qatar did not publish any official response around the ongoing tensions due to their unwillingness to cause snowball effect. Eventually, the crisis faded away as the Bahraini foreign minister made another statement on his Twitter account: "The report about cutting off relations between Bahrain and Qatar is not true and lacks credibility. Relations between Manama and Doha are larger and deeper than a negative television program. Whoever targets Qatar and its people is in fact attacking his own family". Qatar's ambassador in Bahrain, Abdullah Al Thani in his turn stated that there was nothing that threatened the relations between Qatar and Bahrain: "The two countries have successfully settled issues and we never cared about negative developments"[45].



Conclusion

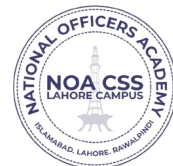
In this paper I attempted to advocate that there actually was a broader set of divisions within the GCC at the time when Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain imposed the blockade. The conventional wisdom encompassed the ideas of Qatar's cooperation with Iran and support for terrorist groups which definitely were the axis of tensions. However, those factors alone would be insufficient to cause a security alliance to deteriorate. The GCC was founded in an exceedingly unstable regional framework that was defined by active Iranian performance and Iran-Iraq war. The foundation of the GCC owed its materialization to the fact that all members were heavily concerned about their security rather than autonomy which compelled them to temporarily overcome interstate disagreements around the GCC characteristics. Then, I proceeded with identification of common factors that could destabilize performance of an alliance and underlined the power of alliance credibility. When an alliance stops being in the interest of every member state, patterns of mutual distrust begin to emerge. This can transform into a deeper belief that a certain member could distance itself from the alliance and begin pursuing independent as well as hostile policies not only against adversaries but also former allies. Other members would also review their policies towards the alliance in terms of comparing the benefits of its persistence to the potential harms coming from the separated member(s). Security alliances represent a combination of realist, liberalist and constructivist notions as they emerge as a response to regional or international security threats, persist based on institutional efforts and rely on shared values and identities. Similarly, they collapse due to multiple factors and the GCC breakdown is one of the vivid examples that highlighted the threats coming from Qatar's ambitious foreign policies in Syria and Libya, its military cooperation with Turkey and the factor of my interest Al Jazeera's performance. Further parallels drawn between The GCC and the Concert of Europe reinforce the significance of identity perception which resulted in the collapse of the earliest security alliances in history. In the next part, I examined the foundation and subsequent development of Al Jazeera. It emerged as the first regional and initially independent media source that won hearts and minds of the Arab people with its unlimited coverage of intriguing news that had been considered a sort of a taboo before. Its popularity was unprecedented compared to the state-controlled media sources of the region that substantially avoided sensitive reports. However, Al Jazeera's evident transformation into a governmental tool of foreign policy harmed its image of



impartiality. It is important to understand that the eventual breakdown of the GCC was preceded by continuing tensions amongst the member states due to the channel's growing reach. There were occasional resentments expressed by Saudi and Emirati officials that Al Jazeera "contributed" to the region's fragility. The events of the Arab Spring can be designated as the final watershed between Qatar and other GCC states. Throughout the protests Qatar expressed its solidarity with pro-democracy protestors and galvanized others with the help of Al Jazeera. The only exception was Bahrain which was too close to Qatar geographically to put it on the spot. It was in 2014 when the same GCC states that imposed blockade in 2017 cut their diplomatic ties with Qatar that allegedly interfered into internal affairs of member states with the help of Al Jazeera. After these events Al Jazeera became the Islamist center of Muslim Brotherhood members like Yusuf Al Qaradawi that severely worsened the relations between Qatar and Saudi-Emirati duet. His pan-Islamic ideas were seen as a direct threat to Saudi and Emirati elites that aspired to avoid any major sectarian revolts within their communities. Finally, not to sound too hypothetical, I decided to bring to attention an episode during the Arab Spring in the Gulf that was on the verge of becoming a real predicament. Having received criticism for its selective coverage of the protests, Al Jazeera launched a documentary in its English Channel (more self-regulating than the Arabic version) showing the cruelty of the Bahraini police and military forces against the opposition. Bahrain's foreign minister sarcastically addressed the documentary and heavily criticized it for its one-dimensional approach. He stated that there were actors in Qatar that wanted to harm Bahrain. After the statements various sources claimed that Bahrain would cut its diplomatic ties with Qatar but the two countries never made any official response to the sloppy situation fearing from further escalation. The conflict seemed to have been settled peacefully according to Qatar's ambassador to Bahrain.

[1] Wintour, Patrick. "Gulf Plunged Into Diplomatic Crisis As Countries Cut Ties With Qatar". *The Guardian*, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/05/saudi-arabia-and-bahrain-break-diplomatic-ties-with-qatar-over-terrorism>. Accessed 4 Apr 2021.

[2] Barakat, Sultan. *Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition And Achievement*. The Brookings Institution, Doha, 2014, pp. 6-9.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

[3] Cafiero, Giorgio, and Daniel Wagner. “How The Gulf Arab Rivalry Tore Libya Apart”. *The National Interest*, 2015, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-the-gulf-arab-rivalry-tore-libya-apart-14580?nopaging=1>. Accessed 2 May 2021.

[4] Oweis, Khaled. “Saudi-Qatar Rivalry Divides Syrian Opposition”. *Reuters*, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-qatar-idUSBREA0E1G720140115>. Accessed 2 May 2021.

[5] Kingsley, Patrick. “Decimated Muslim Brotherhood Still Inspires Fear. Its Members Wonder Why. (Published 2017)”. *Nytimes.Com*, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/15/world/europe/muslim-brotherhood-qatar-egypt-turkey-saudi-arabia.html>. Accessed 2 May 2021.

[6] Lynch, Marc. “Three Big Lessons Of The Qatar Crisis”. *The Washington Post*, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/14/three-big-lessons-of-the-qatar-crisis/>. Accessed 4 Apr 2021

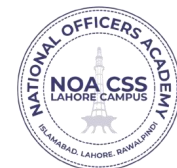
[7] Al-Mohannadi, Hamad, and Nayef Al-Shamari. “Transformations Of The Gulf Security Landscape After The Gulf Crisis: A Geopolitical Approach”. *The 2017 Gulf Crisis: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Mahjoob Zweiri et al., Springer, Doha, 2021, p. 80

[8] C. Ulrichsen, Kristian. “Perceptions And Divisions In Security And Defense Structures In Arab Gulf States”. *Divided Gulf: The Anatomy Of A Crisis*, Andreas Krieg, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 23-24

[9] Berger, Linda. “The Gulf Cooperation Council Between Unity And Discord Towards The Arab Uprisings”. *Sicherheit & Frieden*, vol 32, no. 4, 2014, pp. 260-264. *Nomos Verlag*, doi:10.5771/0175-274x-2014-4-260.

[10] Aluwaisheg, Abdel Aziz. “The Founding Of The GCC”. *Arab News*, 2020, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1659796>. Accessed 2 May 2021.

[11] Al-Mohannadi, Hamad, and Nayef Al-Shamari, Ibid, p.80



[12] Walt, M. Stephen ” Why alliances endure or collapse”, *Survival*, 39:1, 1997, pp. 158-160

[13] Lascurettes, Kyle. *What Can The Order Of 19Th-Century Europe Teach Policymakers About International Order In The 21St Century?*. RAND, 2017, pp. 4-16.

[14] “Qatar Crisis: What You Need To Know”. *BBC News*, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-40173757>. Accessed 4 Apr 2021

[15] “Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia Cuts Off Diplomatic And Consular Relations With The State Of Qatar | The Embassy Of The Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia”. *Saudiembassy.Net*, 2017, <https://www.saudiembassy.net/news/kingdom-saudi-arabia-cuts-diplomatic-and-consular-relations-state-qatar>. Accessed 4 Apr 2021.

[16] “UAE Supports Statements Of Kingdom Of Bahrain And Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia On Qatar.”. *Mofaic.Gov.Ae*, 2017, <https://www.mofaic.gov.ae/en/MediaHub/News/years/2017/6/5/05-06-2017-UAE-Qatar>. Accessed 4 Apr 2021.

[17] “Statement Of The Kingdom Of Bahrain On The Severance Of Diplomatic Relations With The State Of Qatar”. *Mofa.Gov.Bh*, 2017, <https://www.mofa.gov.bh/Default.aspx?tabid=7824&language=en-US&ItemId=7474>. Accessed 4 Apr 2021.

[18] Cafiero, Giorgio, and Theodore Karasik. “Yemen War And Qatar Crisis Challenge Oman’s Neutrality”. *Middle East Institute*, 2017, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/yemen-war-and-qatar-crisis-challenge-omans-neutrality>. Accessed 4 Apr 2021.

[19] Al Rifai, Nada, and Shane McGinley. “Kuwait And Oman: As They Remain Silent On The Qatar-Gulf Rift, What Does This Mean For Them?”. *Zawya.Com*, 2017, https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/story/Kuwait_and_Oman_As_they_remain_silen

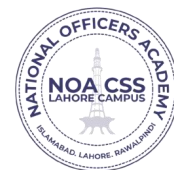


Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

Visit our website www.noacss.pk



t_on_the_QatarGulf_rift_what_does_this_mean_for_them-ZAWYA20170606110347/. Accessed 4 Apr 2021.

[20] Badawi, Haydar, and Catalina Petcu. “The History Of Al Jazeera”. *Al Jazeera In The Gulf And In The World*, Haydar Badawi, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 1

[21] Asisian, Njdeh. “The Qatar Crisis, Its Regional Implications, And The US National Interest”. *Small Wars Journal*, 2018, pp. 11-12.

[22] H. Warren, David. *Rivals In The Gulf: Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Abdullah Bin Bayyah, and the Qatar-UAE Contest Over the Arab Spring and the Gulf Crisis*, Routledge, 2021, Chapter 1.

[23] Badawi, Haydar, and Catalina Petcu, Ibid, p.4-5

[24] Kamrava, Mehran. *Qatar: Small State, Big Politics.*, Cornell University Pres, 2013, Chapter 3.

[25] Badawi, Haydar, and Catalina Petcu, Ibid, p. 26

[26] Khatib, Lina. “Qatar’s Foreign Policy: The Limits Of Pragmatism”. *International Affairs*, vol 89, no. 2, 2013, p. 428.

[27] Asisian, Njdeh, Ibid

[28] C. Davidson, Christopher. “The UAE, Qatar and the question of political Islam”. *Divided Gulf: The Anatomy Of A Crisis*, Andreas Krieg, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p.80

[29] Badawi, Haydar, and Catalina Petcu, Ibid, p.25

[30] C. Ulrichsen, Kristian, Ibid, p. 26-27

[31] Kamrava, Mehran. Ibid, p.89-90



[32] Quilliam, Neil. “The Saudi Dimension: Understanding the Kingdom’s Position in the Gulf Crisis”. *Divided Gulf: The Anatomy Of A Crisis*, Andreas Krieg, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p.113

[33] Quilliam, Neil, Ibid, p.112

[34] F. Gause III, Gregory. *What The Qatar Crisis Shows About The Middle East*. POMEPS, 2017, p. 10

[35] C. Davidson, Christopher, Ibid, p.86

[36] H. Warren, David, Ibid, Chapter 1

[37] Ibid, Chapter 2

[38] Ibid, Chapter 3



[39] J, Riggs, Robert. “The Qatar–Iran–Turkey Nexus: Shifts in Political Alliances and Economic Diversification in the Gulf Crisis”. *The 2017 Gulf Crisis: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Mahjoob Zweiri et al., Springer, Doha, 2021, p. 182

[40] F. Gause III, Gregory, p.11

[41] Badawi, Haydar, and Catalina Petcu, Ibid, p.28

[42] “Shouting In The Dark : The Dark And Bloody Legacy Of Bahrain’s Facebook Revolution”. *Huffpost*, 2011, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/shouting-in-the-dark-bahr_n_918944. Accessed 13 Apr 2021.

[43] Black, Ian. “Bahrain Protests To Qatar Over Al-Jazeera Film”. *The Guardian*, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/aug/07/bahrain-protests-qatar-aljazeera-film>. Accessed 13 Apr 2021.

[44] “Bahrain Denies It Has Plans To Snap Qatar Ties”. *Khaleej Times*, 2011, <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/region/bahrain-denies-it-has-plans-to-snap-qatar-ties>. Accessed 13 Apr 2021.



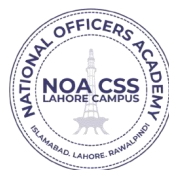
[45] Toumi, Habib. “Bahrain Denies Rift With Qatar”. *Gulfnews.Com*, 2011, <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-denies-rift-with-qatar-1.848279>. Accessed 13 Apr 2021.

The GCC Is On Board with the Saudi-Iran Agreement

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen



The signing of a **joint trilateral statement** by senior national security officials from Saudi Arabia and Iran in the presence of Chinese officials in Beijing on March 10 took many observers of regional politics by surprise, and generated a spate of **analyses** over what, if any, **geopolitical consequences** the agreement may have. It is certainly the case that Beijing’s role in sealing the deal to restore diplomatic relations between Riyadh and Tehran, which were **severed in January 2016**, adds a new dimension to the regional political landscape. Much may depend on what happens during the two-month follow-up period, how actively China remains involved, and whether the agreement leads to any tangible or durable improvement in political ties across the Gulf. Early indications suggest a **will**, both in Saudi Arabia and in Iran, to repair relations, which aligns with China’s interest in maintaining a workable balance in regional relationships that can offset the lack of progress on issues such as the revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).



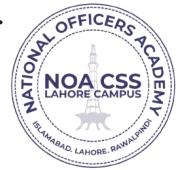
Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

Visit our website www.noacss.pk

Rather than focus on what the Saudi-Iran deal means for China, or for the trajectory of US-Gulf relations, this paper examines how the agreement may impact the other five Gulf States that together with Saudi Arabia form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Although the deal was negotiated on a bilateral basis by representatives of Saudi Arabia and Iran, the Wall Street Journal [reported](#) that a successful resumption of diplomatic relations is expected to lead to a GCC-Iran summit that will take place in China later in 2023. Historically, the six GCC states have [struggled](#) to reach a consensus on sensitive matters of regional and foreign policy, including relations with Iran, Iraq, or Yemen. This was evident in 2019 when officials in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates responded to a spate of attacks on maritime and energy targets by [launching](#) their own separate [channels](#) to Iran rather than seeking a collective GCC approach.



GCC Divisions

Conditions in the Gulf suggest that there are some grounds for optimism that a reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia might have positive spillover effects for the region. The GCC is moving beyond the most difficult decade in its 42-year history, which was marred by serious disagreements among its member states in 2014, when Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE [withdrew](#) their ambassadors from Qatar for a nine-month period, and again between June 2017 and January 2021, when the same three states, along with Egypt, placed Qatar under a political and economic [blockade](#), the longest and deepest intra-Gulf rift in decades. The latter crisis saw the four blockading states demand that Qatar [scale back](#) its relations with Iran and close its diplomatic missions in the country as the first of 13 sweeping “conditions” that, had they been accepted, would have [turned](#) Qatar into little more than a vassal state. However, the Gulf crisis ended in settlement in 2021 and relations have improved markedly in the two years since the [Al-Ula Declaration](#) that formally ended the matter.

In early 2017, then Emir of Kuwait Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah reached out to Iran to de-escalate the tensions with GCC states that had soared after the January 2016 storming of Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran and Mashhad. This took the form of a [letter](#) to then President Hassan Rouhani that sought to establish the basis for dialogue between the GCC and Iran. Kuwait’s Foreign Minister, Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah delivered the letter and [commented](#) that, “There is a genuine willingness and desire to have normal and fair relations with Iran,” and that, “Opening a



channel of communication will...bring benefit to both sides.” The Iranian leadership responded positively, with then Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif stating that Iran was ready for dialogue and that “we should aim together for a future that looks different.” President Rouhani subsequently **visited** Kuwait and Oman in February 2017, and Emir Sabah also traveled to Muscat to **meet** with the now deceased Sultan Qaboos bin Said to discuss ways to dial down tensions in the Gulf.

Attacks on shipping and energy facilities in Saudi Arabia and the UAE brought home the risks of being on the front line of confrontation.

On that occasion, while Emir Sabah’s letter was sent on behalf of the GCC, regional and international circumstances militated against a successful outcome to the call for dialogue. Donald Trump had just taken office in the United States and Saudi and Emirati leadership drew **close** to a presidential administration that favored confrontation rather than cooperation with Iran. Trump subsequently made his first foreign visit as president to Saudi Arabia in May 2017, and delivered a speech in which he **declared** that “all nations of conscience must work together to isolate Iran.” Two weeks later, as Saudi Arabia and the UAE moved against Qatar, analysts in **Kuwait** and **Oman** wondered if they might be next, given the emphasis on ties with Iran being one of the pretexts used to justify the blockade. Saudi and Emirati officials subsequently **welcomed** the Trump administration’s May 2018 decision to withdraw the United States from the JCPOA and adopt a “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran instead. However, attacks on shipping and energy facilities in Saudi Arabia and the UAE the following year brought home the risks and vulnerabilities of being on the front line of confrontation, especially as Trump pointedly **refused** to come to their defense.

Different Circumstances



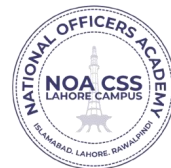
Circumstances are quite different this time around. Shaken by the 2019 attacks and shocked by the United States’ lack of response, Saudi and Emirati leaders have, both in words and actions, demonstrated an intent to achieve a workable coexistence with Iran that was lacking in 2017. This became clear in their responses to spiking US-Iran tensions in January 2020 after the **killing** of Qassem Soleimani, then commander of the Qods Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, by an American drone strike in Baghdad. Rather than join in the drumbeat



of accusatory rhetoric, the UAE called for “rational engagement” as Anwar Gargash, then UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, **stated** that, “Wisdom, balance, and political solutions must prevail over confrontation and escalation.” The Saudi leadership went further, and **sent** then Deputy Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman Al Saud to Washington to make the case in person for a de-escalation in tensions and a policy of restraint. Officials in Abu Dhabi and Riyadh also reached out to Iranian counterparts, **directly** and **indirectly**, to establish channels of communication and dialogue that paved the way, in fits and starts, for the China-brokered Saudi-Iran deal to restore relations.

The fact that the Saudi and Emirati outreach to Iran in and after 2019 was conducted separately, rather than as part of a regionwide initiative, is reflective of the resilience of national interests and bilateral relationships vis-à-vis a pooled or multilateral approach within the GCC. And yet, the fact that, for their own specific reasons, the two most powerful Gulf States are committed to de-escalation opens up more of a substantive space than when the push for diplomacy was driven by Kuwait and Oman. This does not necessarily mean that the GCC can take the lead in crafting a new approach, and it may be the case that the signs of competitive rivalry in Saudi-Emirati relations ensure that the GCC as an institution remains less than the sum of its individual members. It does, however, indicate that the passing in 2020 of Sultan Qaboos and Emir Sabah, the two “**mediators-in-chief**,” was not the end of Gulf-wide diplomacy.

What happens over (and beyond) the two-month period envisaged in the Saudi-Iran agreement for the restoration of relations will be closely followed in other GCC capitals, especially for signs that the deal is implementable for both sides, and for whether it leads to outcomes on other regional issues, such as Yemen. Officials on both sides of the Gulf are well aware of previous **periods of rapprochement**, which reduced tensions momentarily but failed to address deeper points of concern, such as interference in internal affairs or support for proxy regional groups. Any progress in the Oman-facilitated **talks** between Saudi and Houthi representatives in Yemen may provide an indicator of whether the 2023 deal could fare better than others, such as a 2001 security cooperation **agreement** that was referenced in the Beijing statement. Repairing ties of trust and developing a genuine regional community will take far more than signing a statement and reopening an embassy, however significant these steps are as symbols.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

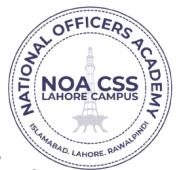
Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

Agreement Aligns with GCC Wishes

To the extent that the restoration of diplomatic relations between Riyadh and Tehran strengthens the **trajectory of dialogue and diplomacy** that has been seen in much of the broader region since 2020, the Beijing statement aligns with policy priorities in Gulf capitals that seek to engage rather than confront Iran. This includes Kuwait City, Doha, and Muscat, which, each for its own reasons, have sought to balance the maintenance of working relationships with Tehran with political and security commitments to both fellow GCC states and the United States. Oman has long served as a **facilitator** and intermediary for back-channel messaging between the US and Iran, most notably in the **prelude** to the P5+1 negotiations that culminated in the JCPOA; and more recently there have been signs that Qatar has **performed** a similar role. Qatar and Iran share the largest non-associated gas field in the world, which straddles their undersea maritime boundary, and officials in Doha would certainly benefit from a regional de-escalation as they move into the implementation stage of a two-phased expansion of gas production, which has assumed critical importance in light of the disruption to European and global energy markets caused by Russia’s war in Ukraine.

The UAE has its own bridge-building exercise with Iran, and with COP 28 set to take place in Dubai , officials will seek to minimize any destabilizing regional pressures.

The UAE has its own bridge-building exercise with Iran, and with the **COP 28** climate change conference set to take place in Dubai in November and December 2023, officials will seek to minimize any destabilizing regional pressures that could potentially mar the gathering. Memories are still fresh in Abu Dhabi of the **three missile and drone attacks** on the emirate that originated from Yemen in January 2022, and that **cast a shadow** over the oft-touted notion that the UAE is one of the safest and most secure places to live, work, and do business in the region. Although the UAE **redeployed** most of its forces out of Yemen in 2019, it remains indirectly **engaged** with political and military forces in the country’s southern regions, and will likely frame any assessment of the Saudi-Iran deal through a prism that analyzes implications for the future of the war, and for a political process. If, as is likely, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was motivated to reduce Iran’s ability to act as a spoiler while he redoubles a focus on delivering Vision 2030 and associated “**giga-projects**,” the UAE may take more

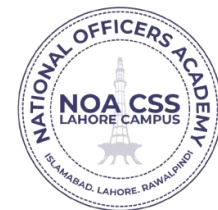


than a passing interest in their progress, especially as said projects move Saudi Arabia into direct competition with Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the travel, tourism, hospitality, and entertainment sectors.

Bahrain is likely to be the laggard in repairing ties with Iran, just as it was **the slowest to rebuild relations with Qatar** after the signing of the Al-Ula agreement in 2021. The Bahraini government has long viewed Iran as just as much a threat to its internal security as it is an external matter of foreign or regional policy, and entrenched attitudes within the policymaking establishment in Manama may be difficult to dislodge. That said, the domestic political **landscape** in Bahrain is calmer now than at any point since the uprising in 2011, and there is a sense that the country has at last “moved on” from the events of more than a decade ago. This was illustrated by a wide-ranging government reshuffle in June 2022, which saw the **appointment** of nine Shia ministers, something many would have considered unlikely in the immediate post-2011 period, even if the levers of power remain under the control of the ruling Sunni Khalifa family and its close allies in Abu Dhabi and Riyadh. And yet, those relationships may guide the Bahraini authorities in following the Saudis’ lead by exploring their own diplomatic restoration with Iran, just as Bahrain was the only other GCC state that mirrored the Saudis by **severing** ties with the Islamic Republic, rather than merely downgrading them.

Indeed, the next two months and beyond will help clarify how the Saudi-Iran agreement will impact intra-GCC relations, as well as those between the council and the Islamic Republic. For now, signs are positive that the accord may usher in a new trans-Gulf period of reconciliation that will facilitate political and economic cooperation. Having suffered the vagaries of discord and mutual distrust and having witnessed the failure of previous Saudi-Iran agreements, the latest accord appears to be the development that all Gulf countries have been waiting for.

partnerships. It is likely that other GCC member states will attempt to mend such a rift, or at least prevent it from widening. However, the success of mediation would depend heavily on the willingness of Mohammed bin Salman and Mohammed bin Zayed to set aside their personal differences. Today, this prospect seems far-fetched.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), is an intergovernmental organization established in 2001 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan with the aim of promoting cooperation and peace among its member states, as well as fostering “a new democratic, fair and rational international political and economic order.” The organization expanded to include India and Pakistan in 2017 and Iran in 2023, bringing the total to nine member states. The SCO also includes 3 observer states—Mongolia, Belarus, and Afghanistan (currently inactive)—and 14 dialogue partners: Sri Lanka, Turkey, Cambodia, Azerbaijan, Nepal, Armenia, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Myanmar, the Maldives, and the United Arab Emirates. The official languages of the SCO are Chinese and Russian.



2022 Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Heads of government pose for a group photo at the 2022 SCO Summit, including notable leaders such as China's Xi Jinping, Russia's Vladimir Putin, India's Narendra Modi, Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Iran's Ebrahim Raisi.(more)

It is the world’s largest regional organization by geography and population, covering about 80 percent of the Eurasian landmass and 40 percent of the world population. As of 2021, the bloc accounted for 20 percent of global GDP. Following the integration of Iran, the SCO now controls 20 percent of the world’s oil reserves and 44 percent of its natural gas. The SCO is a key institution in the Chinese and Russian strategic push toward a “multipolar world,” positioning itself as an alternative to Western-dominated international forums like the United Nations. At the 2005 SCO summit, Nursultan Nazarbayev, president of Kazakhstan, has been quoted as saying, “the leaders of the states sitting at this negotiation table are representatives of half of humanity.”

History, objectives, and structure





Formerly the Shanghai Five, founded in 1996, the organization was renamed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001 after Uzbekistan joined. The [SCO Charter](#), effective from 2003, outlines its goals to promote regional peace, stability, and prosperity through cooperation in politics, economics, [culture](#), and a coordinated effort to combat terrorism, extremism, and separatism.

The SCO is structured around its supreme decision-making body, the Council of Heads of State (CHS), which meets yearly to discuss organizational objectives. The CHS is supported by the Council of Heads of Government (CHG), which also meets annually to discuss strategic [initiatives](#), economic cooperation, and budgetary matters. Additional councils focus on areas such as security, technological exchange, and environmental protection. The SCO has two permanent bodies: the Secretariat in Beijing, and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The SCO maintains active partnerships with major regional and international bodies, including the UN, the [Commonwealth of Independent States](#), and [ASEAN](#). While [decision making](#) within the SCO requires [consensus](#), necessitating unanimous agreement from all member states, its policies and direction are heavily influenced by Russia and China, who are united in their desire to create a non-Western geopolitical forum and set of international norms. The [United States](#) applied for observer status in 2005 and was rejected, demonstrating the SCO's commitment to maintaining [autonomy](#) from Western influence.

Key initiatives

Security collaboration has been a central and highly successful [initiative](#), establishing the SCO as the primary security organization in [Central Asia](#). From 2011 to 2015, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) reported thwarting 20 planned terrorist attacks, disrupting 650 terrorist crimes, dismantling 440 terrorist training camps, arresting 2,700 extremist group members, neutralizing 1,700 others, and recovering 3,250 improvised explosive devices, 450,000 rounds of ammunition, and 52 tons of explosives. In addition to aggressive counterterrorism measures, the organization has promoted economic development and cultural dialogue as means to prevent further radicalization of [vulnerable](#) populations. The SCO has also made significant strides in anti-drug trafficking operations, accounting for 14 percent of confiscated drugs worldwide between 2012 and 2017. Despite initial [skepticism](#) of the SCO by the United Nations, the impressive

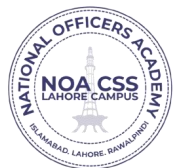


Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



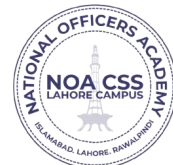
outcomes of the SCO's security operations have led the UN to recognize it as a crucial force for regional stability in Eurasia.

Energy cooperation is another key priority of the SCO. The SCO Energy Club, established in 2013, has significantly [enhanced](#) cooperation between major energy producers like Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, and consumers like China, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The Club has supported projects like the Central Asia–China Gas Pipeline, and plans are underway to develop Turkey into a vital gas hub through which trade can be conducted among member states and with Europe. Beyond traditional energy sectors, China and Russia have also exported nuclear reactors to other member states. These initiatives aim to establish the SCO as a self-sufficient energy system and have played a major role in blunting the impact of international sanctions on Russia over the [invasion of Ukraine](#).

The SCO intersects significantly with China's [Belt and Road Initiative \(BRI\)](#) a cornerstone of China's [foreign policy](#) designed to [enhance](#) global trade networks and [infrastructure](#) development across Asia, Europe, and Africa, functioning as a “new [Silk Road](#).” Most SCO member states, with the notable exception of India, have [endorsed](#) or participated in the BRI, [implementing](#) projects such as the aforementioned Central Asia–China Gas Pipeline, the [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor \(CPEC\)](#), the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) in Kazakhstan, and the planned China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan (CKU) railway project. While the BRI's focus on [enhancing](#) regional connectivity overlaps with the SCO's objectives of promoting integration between member states, these projects have sometimes raised concerns about China's growing influence in the region, which has led to friction with India and Russia.

Challenges and criticisms

Economic cooperation in the SCO has been limited, largely because Beijing's proposals for a development fund and a [free-trade zone](#) have met resistance from Moscow, which harbors concerns about potential Chinese financial dominance. Some analysts suggest that the integration of India and Pakistan to the SCO may balance the financial influences within the organization and [facilitate](#) the establishment of an SCO Development Bank. However, despite the lack of organizational-level economic cooperation, economic ties between individual SCO member states remain [robust](#).



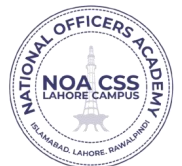
Instability in [Afghanistan](#) has been a major challenge for SCO member states since the organization's creation in 2001, due to the fact that Afghanistan shares borders with six SCO member states. At the SCO opening ceremony in 2001, Nursultan Nazarbayev described Afghanistan as a “cradle of terrorism, separatism, and extremism.” In 2005 the SCO-Afghanistan contact group was established for the purpose of maintaining stability in Afghanistan, and in 2012, Afghanistan became an SCO observer state, suggesting that the SCO saw potential for incorporating Afghanistan as a stable and productive member state. However, the situation in Afghanistan became a critical issue again following the [Taliban](#) takeover in September 2021. As of June 2024, no SCO member state has officially recognized the Taliban as the [legitimate](#) government of Afghanistan. This issue has proved [divisive](#) within the SCO, with India taking a cautious stance against legitimization of the Taliban government, and Russia, China, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan taking steps toward normalizing relations, arguing that as the Taliban continues to consolidate power in Afghanistan, ignoring the reality of its governance is not an option.

The SCO has often been criticized as a club of [authoritarian](#) governments, serving as a forum where Russia and China can normalize their aggressive posturing, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's [assertive](#) behavior in the [South China Sea](#) and toward Taiwan. However, this characterization is somewhat balanced and made more [nuanced](#) by the integration of India, the world's largest [democracy](#), which has been viewed as a counterweight to Chinese influence in Asia.

Outlook and future prospects

The SCO is currently at a [critical point](#) in its development toward being a key force in global affairs. Balancing its relationships with the United States and European Union—characterized by a delicate interplay of cooperation and competition—remains a crucial aspect of its development. Equally important is the SCO's ability to harmonize the interests of its member states, particularly the major powers: China, Russia, and India. The organization has also been criticized for producing more [rhetoric](#) than action, as it has not achieved the level of economic cooperation seen in organizations like ASEAN or the [European Union](#).

Nonetheless, the symbolic power of the SCO is significant, given its massive size, its anti-Western stance, and the historical [context](#) of its most influential



organization has two permanent bodies: the SCO Secretariat, based in Beijing [the SCO's main permanent executive body], and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), based in Tashkent ([SCO, 2021](#)). The SCO Secretary General and the head of the SCO RATS Executive Committee are appointed by the Council of Heads of State for a three-year term on a rotating basis in Russian alphabetical order with no possibility of extension ([SCO, 2021](#)). They are backed by their assistants and Secretariat officials recruited from among the citizens of the organization's member states ([SCO, 2021](#)). Vladimir Norov (Uzbekistan) and Jumakhon Giyosov (Tajikistan) have held respectively the positions of secretariat general and directors of the executive committee of the regional anti-terrorism structure since January 1, 2019 ([SCO, 2021](#)). In terms of external communication, the SCO cooperates well with a number of international, global and regional organizations, including the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the Economic Cooperation Organisation, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia and the International Committee of the Red Cross ([SCO, 2021](#)).

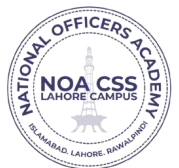
3. Main Achievements

On the basis of our analyses, observations and facts, we identify three main achievements of the SCO after its twenty years of existence, which we propose to outline here in this point in the successive way, namely: The enrichment and development of cooperation concept (i), the enrichment and improvement of cooperation mechanisms (ii) and the extension of cooperation areas (iii).

3.1. The Enrichment and Development of Cooperation Concept

The fundamental reason why the SCO has maintained its vitality and become an influential regional international organization in the face of changes in the international landscape over the past two decades lies in the "Shanghai Spirit". "The Shanghai Spirit" is the spiritual home of the SCO, "a unique source of smooth development of the SCO, and an important guide for developing state-to-state relations, coping with global threats and challenges and resolving international differences" ([CMFA, 2016](#)).

The core of the Shanghai Spirit is "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for the diversity of civilizations and pursuit of common development". The "Shanghai Spirit" was formed during the period of the "Shanghai Five" ([Rowden, 2018](#)). Two important documents of great significance were the Agreement on Strengthening Military Trust in Border Areas (1996) and



the Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in Border Areas (1997) signed by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The two documents broke through the traditional mode of cooperation and emphasized multilateral security cooperation on the basis of common interests, giving birth to the “Shanghai Spirit”. With the development of the Times and changes in the international situation, the Shanghai Spirit has been enriched and developed. At the 2018 SCO Qingdao Summit, President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech entitled “carrying forward the Shanghai spirit and building a community with a shared future”, in which he put forward the “five views”, which added new content to the Shanghai spirit and promoted the building of an SCO community with a shared future. “Five views” specifically refers to: innovative, coordinated, green, open and sharing development view; common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security view; open, inclusive, mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation view; equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusive civilization view; extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits global governance view. The SCO community with a shared future built on the basis of the five views includes a five-in-one community with a shared future: economic community, a world of common prosperity; security community, a world of universal security; peace community, a world of lasting peace; civilization community, an open and inclusive world; ecological community, a clean and beautiful world.

In short, the 20-year development of the SCO has formed the “Shanghai Spirit”, and in accordance with the innovation of practice and the requirements of the times, the “Shanghai Spirit” has been endowed with new connotation—the Five Views of the “Shanghai Spirit” ([Xia & Yun, 2019](#)). The enrichment, enhancement and development of the Shanghai Spirit “is of great significance to the international community’s search for a new, non-confrontational model of international relations, which calls for abandoning the Cold War mentality and transcending ideological differences” ([CMFA, 2006](#)).



Health and Covid-Crisis:

In terms of public health cooperation, following the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, the SCO focused on public health cooperation, stressing that the SCO should strengthen cooperation in the field of public health, coordinate and coordinate measures to respond to emergencies in the field of health and epidemic prevention, and strengthen scientific and technological cooperation in drugs, vaccines and testing reagents ([CMFA, 2020a](#)). This is why, despite the difficulties and critical



states that some of its member states found themselves in during this COVID-19 pandemic [to mention here only the cases of China, India and Russia], they were able to quickly see the light at the end of the tunnel. It is indeed an overall success in this health field of the SCO under the wind of COVID-19 after going through the great fear and uncertainty. This is mainly due to the hope that China has given following its resilience and quick rebound from the COVID-19. China's quick discharge from the weight of the COVID-19 has served as a relief to other SCO member states, especially through the sharing of its experience, and also its preparatory role in the distribution and sharing of some medical materials, basic necessities and various aids between them, the SCO member states: such as masks, respirators and others ... [\(RNA, 2020\)](#).

Major Challenges

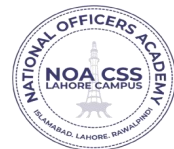
Over the past 20 years since its establishment, the SCO has developed and improved its cooperation concept, operation mechanism and cooperation areas, and made remarkable achievements in practice, such as border disputes, combating the “three evil forces” [terrorism, separatism, and extremism], and increasing economic cooperation within and between its member states and across the region. However, the SCO also faces challenges and development difficulties on its way forward. We have been able to identify three of its major challenges that we want to outline here successively in this point, namely: The intensification of great power game (i), the weakness of the sense of community (ii) and the transformation of cooperation pattern faces after expansion (iii).

4.1. The Intensification of Great Power Game

At present, there are four great powers in and outside the SCO region: the United States, China, Russia and India. Among them, the United States is well a major power outside the region; China, Russia and India are rather major countries within the region. The United States is stepping up its competition in Central Asia [\(Fredholm, 2013; Rowden, 2018\)](#). As for the establishment and development of the SCO, some Western scholars, mainly from the United States, have made a realistic interpretation, pointing out that the SCO is a product of regional rivalry under the new international pattern and the international situation, a reproduction of the Warsaw Organization, and a “club of centralists” from the perspective of geographical location and membership [\(Kagan, 2008\)](#). The essence of the SCO is still a traditional regional security cooperation organization and a geopolitical weight for China and Russia to challenge the Western world led by the United States in central Asia [\(Blank, 2005; McDermott, 2012\)](#). Thus, in the past 20 years



since the establishment of the SCO, the United States has stationed troops in Afghanistan under the pretext of “anti-terrorism” and intensified its competition in Central Asia. After Biden took office, the United States withdrew troops from Afghanistan, but did not relax its scramble for Central Asia. The United States, through the Trump administration, has successively launched the so-called Indo-Pacific Strategy, which implies that India, the United States, and other major Asian democracies, including Japan and Australia, will join together to contain the rise of China in the new framework of growing influence that speaks of the “New Cold War” ([Chen, 2018](#); [Makengo, 2020](#)). Also, the New Afghanistan strategy, is a comprehensive regional strategy, which called for a shift from a time-based approach to one based on battlefield conditions; the use of all the tools of American power: diplomatic, economic and military; and “crushing Pakistan and supporting India” in Afghanistan. These are to enable the United States to achieve significant results in Afghanistan; to avoid an abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan that could create a vacuum in Afghanistan for the reproduction of terrorism; to prevent the revival of terrorist sanctuaries that threaten U.S. security and the flow of weapons and nuclear materials into the hands of terrorists and enemies; and to impose U.S. leadership in the region ([Tian, 2018](#)). And the New Central Asia Strategy, which re-emphasizes the so-called “holy trinity”: strong the United States support for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all Central Asian nations, whose objects were: supporting and strengthening the sovereignty and independence of Central Asian states, individually and as a region; reducing terrorist threats in Central Asia; expanding and sustaining support for stability in Afghanistan; fostering connectivity between Central Asia and Afghanistan; promoting rule of law reform and respect for human rights; and promoting the United States investment in and development of Central Asia. These were in keeping with the logic of allowing the United States to retain influence and interest in Central Asia after the departure of U.S. forces in the region ([Putz, 2020](#)). Again, the United States has also strengthened the “C5 + 1” mechanism with Central Asian countries and intensified its efforts to contain and suppress China and Russia, intensifying the dispute over order in Central Asia ([Rowden, 2018](#)). Moreover, in order to compete with China for dominance in Central Asia, the United States has hyped up Xinjiang-related issues, smearing China’s image and alienating relations between China and Central Asian countries. It is fair to say that the great power competition that the United States is determined to instill in the SCO region has greatly worsened the external environment of the SCO and put the SCO under unprecedented geopolitical pressure ([Hao, 2021](#)).



Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

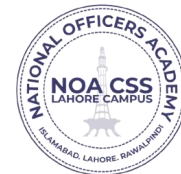
Visit our website www.noacss.pk

Prospects

Currently, the SCO is at a critical juncture of building on past achievements and forging ahead into the future. The future direction of the SCO must be mapped out in advance, both from the external environment and with a view to its own development. As a regional multilateral international organization that has been responsible for regional governance since its inception, the SCO is fully likely to play a greater role and make greater achievements in the future. We project here in succession three great directions, in the form of directive thoughts, that explore the path for further development of the, namely: The Shanghai spirit provides direction for multilateral cooperation (i), the SCO mechanism provides important guarantee for multilateral cooperation (ii) and a new type of international relations as an important driving force for multilateral cooperation (iii).

5.1. The Shanghai Spirit Provides Direction for Multilateral Cooperation

The “Shanghai spirit” proposed by the SCO is completely different from the ideas of previous Western-led international organizations. It rejects the traditional theories and modes of thinking on international relations such as zero-sum game, Cold War mentality and clash of civilizations, and the “five views” advocated by the SCO has won wide support and recognition from the member states. The Shanghai spirit, with the five views as its core, has led the SCO to create a new model of international relations featuring partnership rather than alliance and cooperation rather than confrontation ([Fredholm, 2013](#)). The Shanghai Spirit put forward and practiced by the SCO is an innovative and useful exploration of establishing a fair and equitable order in central Asia and the international political and economic order. It provides useful lessons for regional and even global governance in the face of profound change. The “Shanghai Spirit” is integrated with the “two constructs” of building a new type of international relations and a community with a shared future ([Yang, 2015](#); [Makengo, 2020](#)). It represents the trend of the times and the aspirations of developing countries, and contributes new wisdom and ideas to regional governance under the new circumstances. It will help change the fragmentation of regional governance and even global governance. Building a new international order that better reflects the rights and interests of developing countries and emerging countries is of great guiding and practical significance.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

5.2. The SCO Mechanism Provides Important Guarantee for Multilateral Cooperation

Over the past 20 years since its establishment, the SCO has been actively and steadily advancing its development in accordance with the principle of seeking common ground while shelving differences and seeking mutual benefit and win-win results, thus forming the SCO mechanism ([Fredholm, 2013](#); [Fan, 2021](#)). When the SCO was founded, it adopted the Shanghai Convention, which, for the first time in the world, clearly defined the concepts of terrorism, extremism and separatism, providing a legal basis for member states to jointly combat the “three forces”. Since then, the SCO has constantly improved its laws, regulations and institutions on security cooperation, providing legal tools for security cooperation among member states and effectively maintaining security and stability in the SCO region. The SCO is also making steady progress in institutionalizing economic cooperation. At present, the SCO member states are actively negotiating and signing the Agreement on Trade Facilitation among the SCO member States and the Framework Agreement on Trade in Services among the SCO member states, which will lay an indispensable legal foundation for promoting regional trade facilitation. In addition, significant progress has been made in the institutionalization of the SCO in political and cultural fields. It is fair to say that the SCO has made remarkable achievements in cooperation mechanisms. On the one hand, it has provided an important guarantee for the SCO’s development, and on the other hand, it has contributed the “SCO wisdom” and “SCO plan” to the international community.

5.3. A New Type of International Relations as an Important Driving Force for Multilateral Cooperation

Over the past two decades, the SCO has been open to the outside world, guided by a new type of state-to-state relations, and actively building a network of multilateral partners. The new type of state-to-state relations featuring mutual respect and win-win cooperation is an important driving force for deepening SCO cooperation ([Yang, 2015](#)). To be specific, the new type of state-to-state relations of the SCO is mainly manifested in the following three aspects: First, the relations between the eight SCO member states. The SCO member states adhere to equality, mutual respect, fairness and justice regardless of size and strength, and solve traditional and non-traditional security issues through dialogue and consultation. Through openness and cooperation, to seek mutual benefit and win-win results and jointly promote development and prosperity in the SCO region. Second, the relations between member states, observer states and partner member states. At



present, the SCO has eight member states, has four observer states including Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia and has six dialogue partners including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka. The SCO member states, as well as observer and partner member states, respect each other, consult on an equal footing, actively seek common interests and promote regional security, stability and prosperity. Third, the relations between SCO and the United Nations and other global and regional international organizations. Over the past two decades, the SCO has always upheld the authority of the United Nations, actively established contacts and conducted cooperation with the United Nations and its branches, and actively fostered a new type of international relations. In 2004, the SCO become UN observers, get involved in the rights of the General Assembly and work since then, the SCO carried out effective cooperation with some UN branches, such as the UN office on drugs and crime, the Secretariat of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the UN Security Council Anti-Terrorism Commission and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (Hao, 2020). All in all, cooperation within the SCO and with the UN and other international organizations is based on mutual respect, openness, inclusiveness and mutual benefit, which provides inexhaustible impetus for the development of the SCO.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this paper show that over the past 20 years since the SCO establishment in June 2001, its concept of cooperation has been constantly enriched and developed. Its cooperation mechanism has been constantly enriched and improved; and its areas of cooperation have been expanded. However, following its development over time and the advancement of its cooperation practices, it also faces challenges and development difficulties on its way forward; these include the facts of: the intensification of great power game in the region, the weakness of the sense of community between its member states and the transformation of cooperation pattern faces after expansion. With regard to its prospects, the Shanghai spirit will guide its multilateral cooperation vision. Also, the SCO mechanism provides an important guarantee for multilateral cooperation ahead. The new type of international relations will serve as an important driving force for its multilateral cooperation vision. Finally, based on our results, we believe that the SCO is fully capable of exerting greater influence and delivering greater results in the years to come.



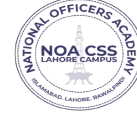
Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

The SCO and Indian Challenges



AUTHORS : [AYJAZ WANI](#) | [HARSH V. PANT](#)

On 28 April, New Delhi hosted a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member countries' defence ministers conclave to discuss regional peace and security, counterterrorism efforts and effective multilateralism. The conclave, chaired by India's defence minister Rajnath Singh, saw the [in-person](#) participation of his counterparts from Russia, China, Iran, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The special defence advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan joined virtually. The ministers discussed regional and international security under the SCO charter, signed a protocol, expressed their will to make the region "[secure, stable & prosperous](#)", and unanimously condemned all forms of terrorism. Mr Singh urged the SCO member countries to collectively work towards eliminating terrorism and hold to account its supporters. He further urged the member countries "[to effectively deal with terrorism](#)" as a top priority and make the SCO a more credible and robust international organisation. He also confirmed New Delhi's commitment to building the defence capacities of SCO members and the "[multidimensional welfare of the region](#)". In a veiled reference to China's aggression on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), he also called for a robust regional cooperation framework respecting the [territorial integrity and sovereignty](#) of all member states. India was given observer status in 2005 and gained the SCO's full membership at the Asthana summit in June 2017. From its inception as a full member, [India](#) not only supported strengthening the core agenda of SCO on terrorism and radicalism but reinforced its commitment to regional connectivity, stability, territorial integrity and sovereignty. New Delhi has always supported "[an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled process for enduring peace and reconciliation](#)" in the conflict-marred country. India has steadfastly used its diplomatic capital to campaign for strengthening cooperation and used the SCO platform to collaborate with regional counterparts. In 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Qingdao, China, coined the acronym [SECURE](#) to highlight the pressing regional challenges facing the SCO. Where S stands for security of citizens, E - economic development for all, C - connecting the region, U - uniting the people, R - respect for sovereignty and integrity, and E for environmental protection.

India not only supported strengthening the core agenda of SCO on terrorism and radicalism but reinforced its commitment to regional connectivity, stability, territorial integrity and sovereignty.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

Prime Minister Modi also stressed that lasting peace in Afghanistan could only be achieved via the Afghanistan Contact Group (ACG) under the auspices of SCO. The ACG was created in 2005 to maintain regional cooperation with Kabul on issues of mutual interest. The group became defunct after violence escalated in West Asia. Though the ACG was revived in 2017, the divergent interests and trust deficit forced the SCO member states to create other regional multilateral consultations on Afghanistan. Furthermore, some SCO member states used Afghanistan and the Taliban for their own geo-economic and geo-strategic interests against the West and also against each other. Some member countries used terrorism as a foreign policy tool to hinder India's growing stature in the Eurasian region. State-sponsored terrorism is India's biggest challenge, and the recent terror attack in the Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, where five army soldiers died, should be an eye-opener for SCO member states. India needs to sensitise the influential members of SCO on Pakistan's state-sponsored terrorism. The dreaded global and regional terror outfits, such as al-Qaeda, Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) to secure the SCO and greater Eurasian region from these radical extremist forces. The issue resonates with China, Russia and Central Asian Republics (CARs), which are facing increasing threats. Another common challenge to the SCO region is the illicit drug trade emanating from the Af-Pak region. In 2021, more than 80 per cent of opium and heroin supplies originated from Afghanistan via different routes to the global opium market. The greater involvement of terror outfits in the narcotic trade has sprung new geo-political challenges to the SCO. It has become a significant funding source for anti-state activities by the region's dreaded terror groups and radical Islamists. A volatile Afghanistan and terror sanctuaries in the Af-Pak region have created many bottlenecks in connectivity projects initiated by SCO member states and other regional countries of Eurasia. Additionally, Pakistan has impeded strategic, economic and cultural interests by blocking by refusing to facilitate connectivity via its territory. For instance, Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline has been stalled since 2006 due to instability in Afghanistan and hindrances created by Pakistan. Conversely, Islamabad has facilitated the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with US\$62 billion worth of investments. CPEC s Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK), violating India's sovereignty and territorial integration. However, India has explored new connectivity projects in the region like Chabahar port in the Iranian province of Sistan-Balochistan, and the 7,200 km long International North-South



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



Transport Corridor (INSTC) between Russia, Iran and India. India also became a member of the Ashgabat Agreement in 2018. New Delhi needs to use the SCO forum, including Chabahar port, into INSTC to expand its growing influence over Eurasia and [“to make efforts to develop reliable, resilient and diversified supply chains” in the region”](#).

A volatile Afghanistan and terror sanctuaries in the Af-Pak region have created many bottlenecks in connectivity projects initiated by SCO member states and other regional countries of Eurasia.

Last but not least, there continues to be a perception in the West that SCO is an anti-West forum. However, India's growing economic and political stature at the global level in the era of multi-vector foreign policy has made New Delhi a potential player in turning SCO into a development oriented organisation in Eurasia rather than an anti-west alliance. That is why New Delhi has been stressing maintaining peace and security based on [UN Charter provisions to ensure the collective prosperity of the region](#). India has advocated win-win cooperation within the SCO for regional or trans-regional connectivity, regional security and defence collaboration, combatting state-sponsored terrorism, and a peaceful, prosperous Afghanistan with an inclusive government and peaceful global order without rival blocks. The challenge for New Delhi, going forward, will remain one of using its substantial diplomatic capital toward making the Eurasian region a driver of economic growth and prosperity within the ambit of SCO.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s Rising Global Ambitions

By [Dr. Ross Bellaby](#)



Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

More information call us (051) 111 662 277

Visit our website www.noacss.pk



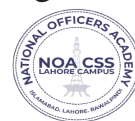
In the ever-evolving landscape of global geopolitics, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has emerged as a focal point of strategic importance. Amidst the backdrop of the rising geopolitical tensions, the SCO's activities have garnered significant attention. Given its expanding membership, the SCO shows global ambitions with a desire to influence both regional and global events.

Established in 2001, the SCO initially included Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan as member states. Over the years, its sphere of influence has widened significantly, encompassing India, Iran, Pakistan as member states, Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia as observer states, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Turkey as "Dialogue Partners." The recent [inclusion](#) of Saudi Arabia, along with Qatar and Egypt [signing](#) memoranda in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, marks a noteworthy expansion in its reach. Collectively, these nations represent a substantial portion of the Asian continent, contributing to 30% of the world's GDP and comprising 40% of the global population. This extensive reach underscores the SCO's potential as a formidable multilateral organization.

The SCO's stated [objectives](#) revolve around strengthening member relations, fostering cooperation, ensuring peace and security, and advocating for a "new, democratic, just, and rational political and economic international order." These goals may indicate an intention to reshape international relations and perhaps challenge the existing world order, potentially offering an alternative to the global system.

In the current geopolitical climate, and heightened tensions between major powers, the SCO's role becomes increasingly pivotal. The SCO's collective stance on key international issues could significantly sway global opinions and policies.

The SCO's influence extends beyond mere economic and demographic might. Its members' strategic locations, natural resources, and military capabilities make it a key player in regional security dynamics. The organization's focus on joint security initiatives and counter-terrorism efforts highlights its role in shaping regional peace and stability. Moreover, the SCO's emphasis on economic cooperation and connectivity, particularly through projects like the Belt and Road Initiative, positions it as a catalyst for regional economic integration and development.



As Kazakhstan assumes the chairmanship of the SCO from July 2023 to July 2024, a distinctive approach within the organization comes to the fore. Kazakhstan's tenure at the helm is poised to influence the SCO's trajectory, especially in the context of its multi-vector foreign policy. This policy approach involves engaging with multiple global powers and regional blocs simultaneously, avoiding over-reliance on any single entity while promoting national interests. In practice, it means navigating a diplomatic path that seeks cooperative relationships with a diverse range of countries and organizations. Such a strategy allows Kazakhstan to maintain a degree of autonomy and flexibility in international affairs. This approach suggests a continued opposition to bloc and ideological approaches to security challenges, offering a nuanced balance within the SCO.

Kazakhstan's National Coordinator for the SCO, Murat Mukushev, has [articulated](#) a vision for a balanced development across all areas of cooperation, encompassing security, trade, economy, culture, and humanitarian efforts. This indicates a comprehensive strategy, moving beyond the conventional security and economic focus, to encompass broader aspects of cooperation.

The Central Asian country has previously [stated](#) its intention to use the SCO chairmanship to promote reforms, aiming to transform the group into a "practical and effective platform." This objective signifies a move towards more grounded and action-oriented collaboration within the SCO, especially in areas of trade and security cooperation.

Kazakhstan's plan to [propose](#) the adoption of "On Global Unity for a Just World and Harmony" is a strategic move. This document outlines principles for strengthening confidence-building measures and ensuring global security, in line with Kazakhstan's non-bloc approach. Furthermore, Kazakhstan's initiative to [establish](#) the UN Regional Center for Sustainable Development Goals in Almaty, with a focus on Central Asia and Afghanistan, underscores a commitment to issues that are also relevant to the countries of the West. This may be an area of cooperation between the two sides.

Ultimately, the SCO, under Kazakhstan's current chairmanship, is set to embark on a path emphasizing balanced development and practical cooperation, veering away from bloc or ideologically driven security dynamics. As a result, the SCO's focus might shift towards more inclusive and diverse forms of collaboration,



acknowledging and addressing the varied interests and concerns of its members. This could lead to more sustainable and cooperative solutions to the region's challenges. The planned SCO summit in Astana next year will be a crucial moment to observe. It will provide insights into how Kazakhstan's leadership and its multi-vector foreign policy approach is shaping the organization's strategies and responses to the complex tapestry of contemporary regional and global challenges.

The SCO, with its expanding membership and ambitious goals, stands at a critical juncture in its quest for greater global influence. As it navigates the complex interplay of regional and international politics, the SCO's actions and decisions can certainly leave a mark on the global stage. Its ability to effectively leverage its collective strength and strategically position itself will determine its role in shaping the future geopolitical landscape.

Dr Ross Bellaby is a Senior Lecturer in Security Studies at Sheffield University, UK.

BRICS

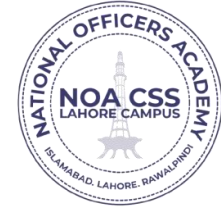
intergovernmental organization

Also known as: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa

Written by

Miles Kenny

Fact-checked by



[Turkey seeks to join the BRICS bloc of emerging economies, a Kremlin official says](#)

BRICS, informal grouping of countries that has developed into an [intergovernmental organization](#). The term originally denoted a collection of countries experiencing rapid [economic growth](#) that would, if growth were maintained at similar rates, emerge as the dominant economic players of the 21st century. The [acronym](#) has since been adopted as the name of a formal intergovernmental organization that aims to create greater economic and geopolitical [integration](#) and coordination among member states. The BRICS organization is commonly understood as an attempt to form a geopolitical bloc capable of counterbalancing the influence of Western-dominated global institutions





such as the [International Monetary Fund](#) (IMF) and the [World Bank](#). However, the genuine cohesion and alignment of the BRICS countries, and the actual value of the alliance, is a matter of debate. Some commentators point to the vast differences in the political systems, economies, and geopolitical positions of the member states as evidence of the organization's fragility.

The acronym "BRIC" ([Brazil](#), [Russia](#), [India](#), and [China](#)) was first used by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill to describe the four economies that could, if growth were maintained, dominate the global economy by 2050. Representatives of the BRIC countries first began meeting informally during the 2006 meeting of the [United Nations General Assembly](#). At their first summit in 2009, the BRIC states affirmed their commitment to a multipolar world order and global non-[interventionism](#) and called for a new global reserve currency as an [alternative](#) to the U.S. [dollar](#). In 2011 [South Africa](#) joined the organization, and the group's acronym changed to "BRICS." This reflected its focus away from a specific economic [designation](#) toward a more [inclusive](#) grouping of emerging regional leaders.

There is no formal application process to join BRICS, but new members must be unanimously approved by existing ones. At the 2023 BRICS summit in South Africa, BRICS announced the admission of [Saudi Arabia](#), [Iran](#), the [United Arab Emirates](#), [Egypt](#), [Ethiopia](#), and [Argentina](#) as new member states. The new members will officially join the organization in January 2024, and, as of September 2023, no signs have been given to indicate that the organization will change its name to reflect the new membership.

At the 2012 BRICS summit, after criticizing aspects of the IMF and the World Bank, members proposed the creation of a new international [development bank](#) to provide funding and loans for development projects in emerging economies. This New Development Bank (NDB) began operating in July 2014, with BRICS members having pooled \$100 billion as the bank's authorized capital. Each BRICS member holds an equal stake in the NDB and contributes an equal share to the bank's assets. Alongside the NDB, BRICS launched the [Contingency Reserve Agreement](#) (CRA), meant to provide countries experiencing economic strain with liquid currency. Unlike the NDB, the CRA is not bound by an equal contribution stipulation, and China provided 41 percent of the agreement's initial assets. BRICS members have discussed the creation of a common currency for [international](#)



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

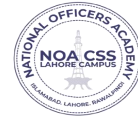


trade between member countries, but no concrete steps have been taken to accomplish this goal.

The international profile of BRICS rose in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as both Russian and Chinese tension with, and exclusion from, Western international institutions increased. Russia and China have suggested that the organization should serve as a counter against what they perceive as a global system that serves U.S. interests. The BRICS members who, excluding Russia, all experienced European colonialism, have portrayed the organization as a path to self-sufficiency and development for postcolonial states in the Global South. Yet critics argue that BRICS is merely a nominal grouping whose members in fact hold vastly different interests and geopolitical positions.

Analysts suggest that Chinese leaders view BRICS as a vehicle for China's geopolitical ambitions and wish to expand the group rapidly. Expansion is supported by the Russian government, which is desperate for allies and trading partners following widespread condemnation of its invasion of Ukraine. India and Brazil, on the other hand, are both significantly closer to the United States than the former two states are and view the group as a tool to maintain neutrality in a multipolar world, rather than as an anti-Western geopolitical bloc. Furthermore, India, while aligning itself with China in some regards, has clashed with its neighboring Asian power numerous times along their hotly contested border and remains wary of Chinese attempts at self-aggrandizement through BRICS. The actual power of the organization is further undermined by deep internal problems gripping core member states. Analysts point to deep economic and political challenges that, if left unresolved, could slow or even reverse the economic growth and geopolitical ascendancy of key member states. Yet, as more states vie for membership and tensions with the West continue to rise, the future of BRICS and its place in the global system remains to be determined.

BRICS: The Global South Challenging the Status Quo



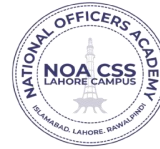
“New realities call for a fundamental reform of the institutions of global governance so that they may be more representative and better able to respond to the challenges that confront humanity.”
Cyril Ramaphosa

With this sentence, South Africa's president, Cyril Ramaphosa, set the tone during last month's BRICS summit in Johannesburg. The latest BRICS round of



expansion shows the manifestation of the desire of Global South countries to claim their share in economic development and take a leading role in global governance. The BRICS are a force to be reckoned with and are poised to shape the global world order. Now, the countries of the political West and, in particular, the European Union will have to re-evaluate their model for cooperation and development with the Global South to avoid losing these countries as crucial partners in a world order that is increasingly marked by fragmentation and competition.

From BRIC to BRICS to BRICS+



The concept of BRIC was originally coined in 2001 by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O’Neill, who argued that the original four countries – Brazil, Russia, India, and China – were the emerging global economic powers. The term BRIC quickly caught on and led to the formal establishment of the group at their first official summit in 2009, where the four countries decided to enhance cooperation in matters of economic growth and development.

In 2010, South Africa was invited to join, and the acronym was changed to BRICS. Even though, at the time, South Africa was a rather economic lightweight compared to the other members, the addition of South Africa to the group reflected the growing economic and political importance of the African continent. At the time, the BRICS were the up-and-coming economies of the Global South, a term that refers to more than just a geographic location but rather describes the vast landscape of developing, emerging and newly industrialised countries around the globe.

Recently, the BRICS gathered in Johannesburg for the 15th BRICS Summit, where they announced the accession of 6 new members from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. A further 22 countries have formally requested to join the bloc, which has now been renamed BRICS+. Additionally, more than 40 countries have expressed informal interest in participating.

Following the latest round of expansion, the BRICS now **represent close to half of the world’s population and make up 36% of the world’s Gross Domestic**



Product – more than that of the G7. The power of the Global South can surely no longer be denied on the big stage of world politics.

United in their ambition of enhancing economic development in the Global South, the group is still characterised by extreme political heterogeneity, with some members even being in open conflict with each other – as is the case **between China and India, which are not only economic rivals** but also **in concrete territorial disputes**. Still, the BRICS have clearly defined common economic interests and a common desire to change the global institutional model, from which they have felt side-lined for decades.

The group aims to have an equal voice in global politics, the world economy, and the financial system, as they believe that the current order – with its multilateral institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank – is unfair and biased towards the traditionally Western countries.

To this end, they have established the **New Development Bank**, a financial institution that provides financial assistance to developing countries. Additionally, they set up a mechanism to support member countries in dealing with financial crises and are working on an alternative payment system in their own currencies.

BRICS will shape a multipolar world



Led by China and strongly supported by Brazil, the BRICS are striving towards a paradigm shift in the global currency hierarchy that is dominated by the US dollar, which the BRICS countries see as a major roadblock for their economic capacity to act. Brazil's president, Lula da Silva, has thus been **calling for an end of dollar-dependency** as one of the priorities for the BRICS.

In this vein, China has doubled down on its global swap line network in renminbi while also **pushing its digital currency**, the e-yuan. While a complete de-dollarisation might be unrealistic in the near future, China has initiated several attempts for alternative payment settlements between the BRICS members. For instance, **Brazil has offered to guarantee Argentine payments** for Brazilian goods in renminbi, while new BRICS member Saudi Arabia is **considering accepting renminbi for payment settlements** in its oil trade.



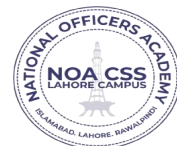
The BRICS are also at odds with global financial institutions, such as the World Bank and IMF, that impose austere conditionalities on developing countries, thus hamstringing their economic development. This is supported, for example, by Oxfam research, finding that **“for every dollar that the IMF provides to a poor country for social spending, it requires the country to cut four times more through austerity measures”**.

The Global South’s dissatisfaction with the Western financing model might, therefore, explain part of the accelerating appeal of BRICS. China has been exploiting this dissatisfaction with Western-dominated institutions and has stepped in as an investor and lender of last resort for these countries, thereby strengthening its economic and financial ties with the Global South.

For French president Emanuel Macron, the BRICS are a manifestation of the fragmentation of the global political system that carries a **“risk of a weakening of the West and more particularly of Europe.”** However, while the rise of the bloc reflects the dilution of Western dominance, the BRICS are still far from forming one homogenous group with clear political common interests and goals. Strong conflict lines exist between their members, exemplified by the geo-economic rivalry between China and India.

This was recently underlined by the absence of China’s President Xi Jinping from the latest G20 meeting hosted by India. One interpretation is that Xi’s absence from the G20 is to be seen as a direct affront against the host, India. Another explanation, however, could be that Xi wanted to take the opportunity to send a signal to the West that China values the BRICS summit as a more relevant global decision-making platform than the US-dominated G20 format.

The EU’s economic relationship with the Global South



From an economic standpoint, the BRICS are crucial partners for the European Union. Current economic trends indicate that the BRICS’ importance as a partner will increase soon. The blocs have deep trade integration with each other, with the EU displaying a growing import-dependency with the BRICS countries in recent years (figure 1).



Besides mostly primary and agricultural goods, the BRICS countries also provide an important value stream of critical raw materials for the EU. However, the BRICS aspire to be more than mere suppliers of basic products. As South African president Cyril Ramaphosa pointedly stated during the recent BRICS summit: “We want to export finished products, not rock and sand”.

There has also been growing dissatisfaction from the BRICS and the larger Global South with the EU’s trade restrictions and, particularly, with its “super-protectionist” agricultural policy that heavily constrains international trade. Again, China has been exploiting this by strengthening its trade relationships with the countries of the Global South and especially with the BRICS members. Against this backdrop, the EU aspires to finalise pending global free trade agreements, but negotiations with the MERCOSUR, for instance, are still in an [ongoing stalemate](#).

For the EU, securing access to BRICS markets and value chains will be of vital importance in the coming years. Especially considering China’s aggressive moves for stronger strategic economic ties with other Global South countries. In view of this, the EU will need to provide viable alternatives for developmental finance and cooperation that can compete with China’s programmes, both in terms of volume and conditionality.

Otherwise, the Global South will turn to alternative financing options to fill the void, which could further alienate these countries from the EU. Following the recent BRICS summit, where its members pushed for an alternative BRICS development bank, Werner Hoyer, president of the European Investment Bank, stated that the EU and traditional Western institutions are “[at risk of losing the confidence of the Global South unless they take more action and get more visible there](#)”.

Against this backdrop, the EU’s pledge to collaborate with Global South countries to promote economic and industrial development will be put to the test. As a first major instrument to this end, the EU has set up [NDICI – Global Europe](#), an 80 billion Euro instrument for promoting global development, as well as its current flagship development initiative, the [Global Gateway strategy](#). A 300 billion Euro investment strategy for global infrastructure projects designed to rival China’s Belt and Road Initiative while promoting sustainable and democratic development on a global scale. Though the plan, launched at the end of 2021, is still in its early



phases, and judgement is still out on its true impact and if it can deliver on its ambitious promises.

BRICS – Quo Vadis?



The current expansion of the BRICS certainly shows the growing assertiveness of the Global South on the international stage. However, the whole picture is, of course, hazier than that. The vast array of interests, values and political systems represented in the BRICS is too complex to be subsumed under one geopolitical entity.

Rather, the expansion of BRICS might reflect the ongoing process of global fragmentation. And while the movement is carrying strong momentum, what mostly unifies the BRICS is their rejection of the Western-dominated order as they see it. Still, as ever more Global South countries rally to join the BRICS to challenge the global status quo, the relationship between the traditional West and the Global South is at a crossroads.

In the absence of a multilateral and sustainable model for development and cooperation that credibly raises the prospects of long-term prosperity for the Global South, there is a real threat of further fragmentation. Therefore, the West would do well to bring the BRICS and the Global South to the table of global governance as partners on equal footing.

The inclusion of the African Union into the G20 was the first symbolic step in that regard. Now, the West and the EU, in particular, must follow through and rethink their model of cooperation and development with the Global South. Otherwise, they run the risk of losing the Global South in times of growing geopolitical tensions and global transformation challenges.

About the author

Lucas Resende Carvalho is a Junior Project Manager at the Bertelsmann Stiftung in the Europe's Future Program.



A BRICS Currency Could Shake the Dollar's Dominance

De-dollarization's moment might finally be here.

By **Joe Sullivan**, a senior advisor at the Lindsey Group and a former special advisor and staff economist at the White House Council of Economic Advisers during the Trump administration.

Chinese President Xi Jinping (R) and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva shake hands in Beijing.

Chinese President Xi Jinping (R) and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva shake hands in Beijing on April 14.

Talk of de-dollarization is in the air. Last month, in New Delhi, Alexander Babakov, deputy chairman of Russia's State Duma, said that Russia is now spearheading the development of a new currency. It is to be used for cross-border trade by the BRICS nations: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Weeks later, in Beijing, Brazil's president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, chimed in. "Every night," he said, he asks himself "why all countries have to base their trade on the dollar."

These developments complicate the narrative that the dollar's reign is stable because it is the one-eyed money in a land of blind individual competitors like the euro, yen, and yuan. As one economist put it, "Europe is a museum, Japan is a nursing home, and China is a jail." He's not wrong. But a BRICS-issued currency would be different. It'd be like a new union of up-and-coming discontents who, on the scale of GDP, now collectively outweigh not only the reigning hegemon, the United States, but the entire G-7 weight class put together.

Foreign governments wanting to liberate themselves from reliance on the U.S. dollar are anything but new. Murmurs in foreign capitals about a desire to dethrone the dollar have been making headlines since the 1960s. But the talk has yet to turn into results. By one measure, the dollar is now used in 84.3 percent of cross-border trade—compared to just 4.5 percent for the Chinese yuan. And the Kremlin's habitual use of lies as an instrument of statecraft offers grounds for skepticism about anything Russia says. On a litany of practical questions, like how much the other BRICS nations are on board with Babakov's proposal, for now, answers remain unclear.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

Nevertheless, at least based on the economics, a BRICS-issued currency's prospects for success are new. However early plans for it are, and however many practical questions remain unanswered, such a currency really could dislodge the U.S. dollar as the reserve currency of BRICS members. Unlike competitors proposed in the past, like a digital yuan, this hypothetical currency actually has the potential to usurp, or at least shake, the dollar's place on the throne.

Let's call the hypothetical currency the *bric*.

If the BRICS used only the bric for international trade, they would remove an impediment that now thwarts their efforts to escape dollar hegemony. Those efforts now often take the form of bilateral agreements to denominate trade in non-dollar currencies, like the yuan, now the main currency of trade between China and Russia. The impediment? Russia is unwilling to source the rest of its imports from China. So after bilateral transactions between the two countries, Russia tends to want to park the proceeds in dollar-denominated assets to buy the rest of its imports from the rest of the world, which still uses the dollar for trade,.

If China and Russia each used only the bric for trade, however, Russia would not have any need to park the proceeds of bilateral trade in dollars. After all, Russia would be using brics, not dollars, to buy the rest of its imports. Enter, at last, de-dollarization.

Is it realistic to imagine the BRICS using only the bric for trade? Yes.

For starters, they could fund the entirety of their import bills by themselves. In 2022, as a whole, the BRICS ran a trade surplus, also known as a balance of payments surplus, of \$387 billion – mostly thanks to China.

The BRICS would also be poised to achieve a level of self-sufficiency in international trade that has eluded the world's other currency unions. Because a BRICS currency union—unlike any before it—would not be among countries united by shared territorial borders, its members would likely be able to produce a wider range of goods than any existing monetary union. An artifact of geographic diversity, that is an opening for a degree of self-sufficiency that has painfully eluded currency unions defined by geographic concentration, like the Eurozone, also home to a \$476 billion trade deficit in 2022.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

But the BRICS would not even need to trade only with each other. Because each member of the BRICS grouping is an economic heavyweight in its own region, countries around the world would likely be willing to do business in the bric. If Thailand felt compelled to use the bric to do business with China, Brazil's importers could still purchase shrimp from Thai exporters, keeping Thailand's shrimp on Brazil's menus. Goods produced in one country can also circumvent trade restrictions between two countries by being exported to, and then re-exported from, a third country. That's often a consequence of new trade restrictions, like tariffs. If the United States boycotted bilateral trade with China rather than trade in the bric, its children could continue to play with Chinese-made toys that became exports to countries like Vietnam and then exports to the United States.



Russian

President Vladimir Putin, accompanied by Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, visits the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius in Sergiyev Posad near Moscow on June 26.



Russia Is No Conservative Haven

The Western populist right has fallen for Vladimir Putin's latest propaganda ploy.



A preview of something like the absolute worst-case scenario that could befall consumers in BRICS countries if their governments adopted “bric or bust” terms of trade comes from today’s Russia. American and European governments have prioritized Russia’s economic isolation. Nevertheless, some U.S. and European goods continue to flow into Russia. The costs for consumers are real, but not catastrophic. As officials in BRICS countries grow increasingly emphatic about their desire to de-dollarize, with today’s Russia as an upper bound of how bad it could get, the risk-reward tradeoff of de-dollarization will look increasingly attractive.

To displace the dollar as a reserve currency among BRICS, the bric would also need safe assets to be parked in when not in use for trade. Is it realistic to imagine the bric finding these? Yes.

For starters, because the BRICS run a trade and balance of payments surplus, the bric would not necessarily need to attract any foreign money at all. BRICS governments could use some combination of carrots and sticks to get their own households and firms to buy bric assets with their savings and effectively coerce and subsidize the market into existence.

But assets denominated in the bric would actually have characteristics likely to make them unusually attractive to foreign investors. Among the major drawbacks of gold as an asset class for global investors is that, in spite of its risk-reducing value as a diversifier, it does not pay interest. Since the BRICS reportedly plan to back their new currency with gold and other metals with intrinsic value, like rare-earth metals, interest-paying assets denominated in the bric would resemble interest-paying gold. That’s an unusual characteristic. It is one that could make the assets denominated in the bric attractive to investors who want both the interest-bearing property of bonds and the diversifying properties of gold.

Sure, for bric bonds to simply function as an interest-bearing version of gold, they’d need to be perceived as having a relatively low risk of default. And the debt even of sovereign governments in the BRIC countries has non-trivial default risk. But these risks could be mitigated. Issuers of debt denominated in the bric could shorten debt maturities to lower the riskiness. Investors might trust a government in South Africa to pay you back “30 from now” when the unit of time is days but not when it is years. Prices could also simply compensate investors for that risk. If market participants demanded higher yields for buying bric assets, they could



likely get them. That's because BRICS governments would be willing to pay for the viability of the bric.

The bric, to be fair, would raise a litany of thorny practical concerns. Used primarily for international trade rather than domestic circulation within any one country, the bric would complicate the job of national central bankers in BRICS countries. Creating a supranational central bank like the European Central Bank to manage the bric would also take work. These are challenges—but not necessarily insurmountable ones.

The geopolitics among BRICS members is also thorny. But a BRICS currency would represent cooperation in a well-defined area where interests align. Countries like India and China may have security interests at odds with each other. But India and China do share an interest in de-dollarizing. And they can cooperate on shared interests while competing on others.

The bric would not so much snatch the crown off of the dollar's head as shrink the size of the territory in its domain. Even if the BRICS de-dollarized, much of the world would still use dollars, and the global monetary order would become more multipolar than unipolar.

Many Americans are inclined to lament declines in the dollar's global role. They should think before they lament. The dollar's global role has always been a double-edged sword for the United States. Though it does allow Washington to add sanctions to its foreign-policy toolkit, by raising the price of the U.S. dollar, it raises the cost of American goods and services to the rest of the world, decreasing exports and costing the United States jobs. But the side that cuts into America at home has been sharpening, and the side that cuts America's enemies abroad has been dulling.

Among those who understand that the dollar's global role comes at the expense of jobs and export competitiveness at home, at least based on comments from 2014, is Jared Bernstein, now head of the White House Council of Economic Advisors. But these costs have only grown over time as the U.S. economy shrinks relative to the world's. Meanwhile, among the traditional benefits of the dollar's global role is America's ability to use financial sanctions to try to advance its security interests. But Washington sees the security interests of the United States in the 21st century as increasingly defined by competition with state actors like China and Russia. If





that is correct, and if the checkered track record of sanctions on Russia is any indication, sanctions will become an increasingly ineffective tool of U.S. security policy.

If the bric replaces the dollar as the reserve currency of the BRICS, the reactions will be varied and bizarre. Applause seems poised to come loudly from officials in BRICS countries with anti-imperialist dispositions, from certain Republicans in the U.S. Senate, and from U.S. President Joe Biden's top economist. Boos seem poised to emanate from both former U.S. President Donald Trump and the U.S. national security community that he so often feuds with. Either way, the dollar's reign isn't likely to end overnight—but a bric would begin the slow erosion of its dominance.

Joe Sullivan is a senior advisor at the Lindsey Group and a former special advisor to the chairman and staff economist at the White House Council of Economic Advisers during the Trump administration. X: [@TheMedianJoe](#)



BRICS AND NEW WORLD ORDER

The political and economic interests of the heterogeneous group of countries under China's leadership are too diverse to seriously challenge Western supremacy. However, as a bloc, the BRICS Plus members would be in a position to pressure the West in terms of global reserves of raw materials.

Not everyone is happy with the current balance of power in the world. The BRICS states of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa want to change the geopolitical and geoeconomic order and form a collective counterweight to the United States and the West. At the beginning of 2024, the alliance was expanded by five countries and is now called BRICS Plus, although Argentina rejected its invitation at the last minute at the instigation of its new president, Javier Milei.

At this point, let's have a brief digression on the history of its creation. The post-Cold War era has been dominated by the so-called Pax Americana, which – until recently – has provided a relatively stable order in which the US and its allies have largely set the geopolitical and geoeconomic tone. The vast majority of world trade is conducted in US dollars, and in international bodies and organisations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank the US is the dominant



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore

heavyweight alongside the other G7 states. In 2009, Brazil, Russia, India and China founded the BRIC group of states in the hopes of changing this. When South Africa joined in 2010, BRIC became BRICS. At the beginning of 2024, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt and Ethiopia joined on the initiative of Beijing, turning BRICS into BRICS Plus. Chinese President Xi Jinping particularly hopes that this will open up new opportunities in his efforts to end America's global dominance.

End of American dominance and protection against sanctions

While three of the new BRICS Plus members – Saudi Arabia, Iran and the UAE – are important oil and gas producers, Egypt and Ethiopia are key players in Africa with large populations. With its economy suffering massively under US economic sanctions, Iran is urgently looking for new trading partners. All these middle powers have a common interest, which the well-known political scientist Ivan Krastev formulated as follows: they want to be at the table and not on the menu. In other words, they want to trade as little as possible via the US-dominated international financial system, they want to be less dependent on the West and, above all, they want to take the bite out of any Western economic sanctions. These aims are precisely why bringing some major fossil fuel producers into the bloc has a particular appeal to China, the leading BRICS power. Beijing could be preparing for war against Taiwan – at least as an option. In the various war scenarios that China's leadership is probably playing through, possible sanctions by the West are likely to play a prominent role, especially given the harsh punitive measures taken against Russia following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Having Saudi Arabia, Iran and the UAE on its side in the event of a conflict would be economically vital for the supply of oil and natural gas as well as politically helpful.



Heterogeneous alliance

But how realistic is the prospect of establishing a new world order and dislodging the US dollar as the global reserve currency? Apart from their scepticism towards the US-dominated international economic and financial system, the BRICS Plus members do not share much in common. On the contrary, India and China have been engaged in a bloody border conflict in the Himalayas for decades. New Delhi



has clearly taken Washington’s side in the geopolitical struggle between the US and China while also being politically and militarily supported by the latter. Moreover, while India’s economy is still relatively closed and primarily focused on the domestic market, China’s is closely intertwined with those of the US and the EU, even if there are tendencies towards decoupling. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia and Iran are arch-enemies who only resumed diplomatic relations in May 2023 under Chinese mediation and remain hostile to each other in the Middle East. While Saudi Arabia maintains a strategic security and energy partnership with the US, Iran is repeatedly on the brink of war with Washington and its ally Israel.

Apart from wanting to play a bigger role on the global stage, the five founding members of BRICS have never really been like-minded. While Russia and China have increasingly positioned themselves as antipoles to the US, India has gradually drawn closer to the US to counter a more aggressive China. Although they occasionally toy with the anti-American option, South Africa and Brazil continue to foster close ties with the US in both economic and political terms. It is no coincidence that India, Brazil and South Africa are democracies, while Russia and China are autocracies – and ones that get along very well with the authoritarian rulers of Iran and Saudi Arabia.

In addition to having diverging political and economic interests, the BRICS Plus countries also differ strongly in terms of their respective economic and demographic weight. Collectively, the five BRICS countries account for around 41 per cent of the world’s population, approximately 32 per cent of global economic output (adjusted for purchasing power), and roughly 20 per cent of all goods exported worldwide. If we add the five countries that make up the “Plus” part, the combined bloc only accounts for slightly more – around 45 per cent of the world’s population, 36 per cent of global GDP, and 25 per cent of global goods exports. Thus, the expansion is likely to fundamentally alter the character of the previously exclusive club of leading regional economies. It will be replaced by a curious mixture of very large, large, medium-sized and small countries, some of which are pursuing very different interests. What’s more, the BRICS Plus group is already clearly dominated by China, which accounts for almost two-thirds of the bloc’s economic output and 39 per cent of its population. As understandable as Beijing’s claim to leadership may be against this backdrop, these imbalances are problematic



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



for ensuring joint action on an equal footing. The balance between the interests of the junior partners and dominant China is therefore likely to remain delicate. And it is unlikely that forming an internationally relevant bloc capable of cohesive action out of such a heterogeneous group of countries will represent a genuine success for Beijing.

A Flourish chart

A Flourish chart

A Flourish chart



BRICS Plus as a potential raw-materials superpower

As the figure above shows, even if their political interests were more aligned, the combined economic weight of the BRICS Plus countries would not be enough – at least in the short to medium term – to turn the US-dominated world order on its head. However, there is one exception, as the BRICS Plus countries would collectively be in a dominant position when it comes to raw material deposits. With the inclusion of Saudi Arabia, Iran and the UAE, the bloc would account for 43 per cent of global oil production and a very large share of global oil reserves. Almost 40 per cent of the rare earth deposits required to manufacture batteries for electric vehicles, power storage systems and microelectronics are in the hands of China, which also has a near monopoly on their processing. Thus, when it comes to the supply of raw materials, the BRICS Plus bloc could potentially put the West under considerable pressure – in a scenario with echoes of the OPEC oil embargo of 1973.

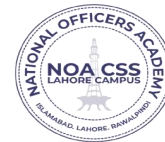
G7 and US dollar still dominant

From an overall economic perspective, however, a reorganisation of the world and an end to the US dollar as the reserve currency is a pipe dream of Beijing, Moscow and Tehran, which will not come true in the foreseeable future. As the most important industrialised countries of the West, the G7 nations still jointly account for around 30 per cent of global GDP, just under 10 per cent of the world's



population, and roughly 27 per cent of all exported goods. As still the largest economy and the only military superpower, the US continues to dominate not only the G7 but also the world. Around 62 per cent of global currency reserves are invested in US dollars, compared to just 2 per cent in Chinese yuan. The BRICS group's track record to date also speaks against a rapid end to the Pax Americana. The bloc's greatest success so far has been founding the New Development Bank in 2014, which is modelled on the World Bank. To date, the bank has issued loans with a total value of just over 30 billion US dollars. Tellingly, most of the loans have been granted in US dollars.

From China's point of view, however, the meagre balance sheet of the previous BRICS format and the uncertain prospects for BRICS Plus are acceptable. The old BRICS format did not really advance the interests of the rulers in Beijing. So, their thinking goes, why not try a new start that could at least irritate the US and its partners while possibly strengthening some bilateral relations, especially in the Middle East, where China is keen to gain more influence? At the same time, the BRICS Plus initiative allows some smaller powers to position themselves as players in the geopolitical competition of the incipient Cold War 2.0 between China and the US so that they can avoid becoming mere pawns or a theatre of war in this conflict.



Author:

[Mario Holzner](#) is Director of the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw) and was a Fellow of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) in 2023.

The interactive graphics were created by **Alireza Sabouniha**. He is research assistant at wiiw and recently completed his master's degree in Economics at the WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business).



Phone
(042) 352 396 22



Mobile
0332 112 5112



More information call us
(051) 111 662 277



Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation

Asian organization

Also known as: SAARC

Written and fact-checked by

1985 - present

Headquarters:

[Kathmandu](#)

Areas Of Involvement:

[economic development](#)



Recent News

[Revival of SAARC spirit can solve many regional problems: Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Yunus](#)

South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), organization of South Asian nations, founded in 1985 and dedicated to economic, technological, social, and cultural development emphasizing [collective](#) self-reliance. Its seven founding members are [Bangladesh](#), [Bhutan](#), [India](#), the [Maldives](#), [Nepal](#), [Pakistan](#), and [Sri Lanka](#). [Afghanistan](#) joined the organization in 2007. Meetings of heads of state are usually scheduled annually; meetings of foreign secretaries, twice annually. Headquarters are in [Kathmandu](#), Nepal.

The 11 stated areas of cooperation are agriculture; education, [culture](#), and sports; health, population, and child welfare; the [environment](#) and meteorology; rural development (including the SAARC Youth Volunteers Program); tourism; transport; science and technology; communications; women in development; and the prevention of drug trafficking and [drug abuse](#). The charter stipulates that decisions are to be unanimous and that “bilateral and [contentious](#) issues” are to be avoided.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

History



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

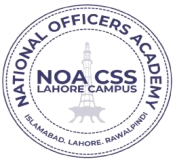
Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is an economic and political organization of eight countries in South Asia. It was established in 1985 when the Heads of State of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka formally adopted the charter. Afghanistan joined as the 8th member of SAARC in 2007. To date, 18th Summits have been held and Nepal's former Foreign Secretary is the current Secretary General of SAARC. The 19th Summit will be hosted by Pakistan in 2016.

Objectives

SAARC aims to promote economic growth, social progress and cultural development within the South Asia region. The objectives of SAARC, as defined in its charter, are as follows:

- Promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improve their quality of life
- Accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region by providing all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and realise their full potential
- Promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia
- Contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems
- Promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields
- Strengthen co-operation with other developing countries
- Strengthen co-operation among themselves in international forms on matters of common interest; and
- Cooperate with international and regional organisation with similar aims and purposes.



Structure and Process

Cooperation in SAARC is based on respect for the five principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in internal

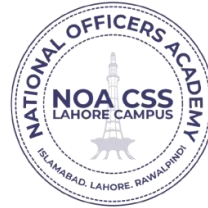


affairs of the Member States and mutual benefit. Regional cooperation is seen as a complement to the bilateral and multilateral relations of SAARC Member States. SAARC Summits are held annually and the country hosting the Summit holds the Chair of the Association. Decisions are made on an unanimity basis while bilateral and contentious issues are excluded from the deliberations of SAARC. In addition to the eight Member States, nine Observer States join SAARC Summits: China, the US, Myanmar, Iran, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Mauritius and the European Union.

Areas of Cooperation

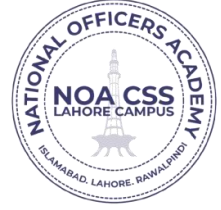
The Member States agreed on the following areas of cooperation:

- Agriculture and rural development
- Education and culture
- Biotechnology
- Economic, trade and finance
- Energy
- Environment
- Tourism
- Science and Technology
- Information, Communication and Media
- Poverty alleviation
- Security aspects
- People-to-People Contacts
- Funding mechanism
- Social development



SAARC AND PEACE IN SOUTH ASIA

By
Dr. Humayun Khan and Salman Haidar*



This essay has been jointly written by Dr. Humayun Khan – former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan – and Salman Haidar – former Foreign Secretary of India – and reflects the commonality of thought on Indo- Pak relations of two opposing sides. South Asia is one of the most important regions of the world. It is home to one fourth of the entire human race, it has a vast reservoir of talent in many fields, two of the countries of the region are nuclear powers, it has the largest middle class in the world and constitutes a huge market. At the same time, the region contains the majority of the world’s poor, it is ridden with sectarian and caste beliefs and it has, for the past sixty years, devoted a disproportionate share of its resources to non-productive sectors like defense. Most significantly, the countries of South Asia, since they achieved independence, have not been able to forge a cooperative framework that can match the European Union or ASEAN. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), now more than 25 years old, remains dormant.

Yet, by all standards, the countries of South Asia are ideally placed to fashion, among themselves, an environment of peace and cooperation. They have an ancient shared history and are heirs to a common and proud heritage. For centuries, they enjoyed a unity which brought together a variety of religions, cultures and traditions and resulted in a good deal of fusion and commonality of norms. Even under the British, this coexistence continued. As independent States, they have so many practices and values that they share and which they could build upon to the immense benefit of each of them.

Unfortunately, none of this has happened and relations between the countries of the region, particularly the two largest, India and Pakistan, have never achieved a stable and positive character. To understand why this is so, one has to go back to the beginning of their existence as independent States.



Historians differ in their interpretation of how partition came about. Pakistanis have traditionally subscribed to the view that it was the determination and singleness of purpose consistently displayed by Mr. Jinnah that won them a separate State of their own. Others maintain that Mr. Jinnah tried till the very last to maintain the concept of a united India and his sole concern was to achieve a fair deal for the permanent Muslim minority. In his view, the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946, would have achieved this, but the Congress scuttled it. Whatever be the case, when partition was decided upon, the common expectation was that the two newly independent States would live in peace and cooperation with each other. Sadly, the process of dividing a subcontinent with 400 million inhabitants was rushed through in a matter of weeks and took place in brutal circumstances, leading to a virtual bloodbath, in which upto a million people were killed and some 12 million displaced. More importantly, this massacre generated acute feelings of hostility between the various communities like the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs, who had lived peacefully with each other for centuries. The after effects of partition influenced bilateral relations for a long time. However, it is a tribute to human nature that, over the past sixty odd years, this bitterness has given way to feelings of nostalgia among those who had to leave their homes in 1947 and begin a new life in another country. Today, it is this very category that leads the call for peace and good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan. This is especially true of the inhabitants of East and West Punjab.

Added to this, a new problem which was to bedevil relations for more than sixty years, and which still remains unsolved, arose over the princely State of Jammu and Kashmir. The disputed accession to India by the Maharaja led to internal disturbances and, eventually, to the first of three wars between India and Pakistan in 1948. It ended with a ceasefire sponsored by the United Nations in 1949 and an agreement to hold a plebiscite, under UN auspices, to determine the wishes of the Kashmiri people. For various reasons, such a plebiscite was never held and controversy still rages over which side was responsible for this. In September, 1965, the two countries were again engaged in a war which ended in a stalemate within three weeks. The UN once more brokered a ceasefire. A post-war peace conference was sponsored by the Soviet Union at Tashkent, which ended in agreement to solve all differences peacefully, but did not meaningfully address the casus belli, which was Kashmir. The third war between the two neighbours arose out of the dangerously faulty policies of the military regime in Pakistan to suppress the separatist movement in its Eastern wing. India invaded East Pakistan in



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



December 1971, in support of the independence movement and, later in the month, the new State of Bangladesh was born. This event, in which the Pakistan army suffered a humiliating defeat, greatly intensified the old hostilities and generated new ones, which have not been erased to this day. The fear of a larger neighbour, bent on destroying Pakistan, which had always existed, now became a virtual phobia, particularly among the armed forces of Pakistan

All this reinforced the smaller country's belief that security was its primary and overwhelming concern and all its policies like defense expenditure and external alliances, and finally, the acquisition of nuclear capability, flowed from this.

Between the three open conflicts, the bilateral relationship followed an erratic course. The Simla Agreement, reached in 1972, attempted to lay down terms for a durable peace. On paper, this agreement has held, in the sense that war has been avoided for 40 years, yet it has never actually succeeded in providing the desired amount of stability in Indo-Pak relations. Near warlike situations have repeatedly occurred. Pakistan's support for the Sikh secessionist movement in the 1980's; the Indian occupation of the Siachen Glacier in 1984; the internal uprising in Jammu and Kashmir in 1990; the highly provocative incursion by the Pakistan army into Kargil in 1999; the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in the winter of 2001 and, finally, the horrendous carnage by Pakistan-based terrorists in Mumbai in September 2008, were all events that could have led to a full blown conflict, which, after 1998, would have proved fatal, as it would have involved two nuclear powers. Such a conflict would affect, not just the two protagonists but the South Asia region as a whole and, indeed, the entire international community.

This is a generally discouraging picture, but it is not the whole story. Despite all the setbacks, saner elements in both countries continued to work for normalization of relations. In the 1980's, there were serious discussions on a No-War Pact and a Treaty of Peace and Friendship. A Joint Commission was set up to promote cooperation in diverse fields. In the 1990's, the two Foreign Secretaries devised a framework for a composite dialogue to address a whole range of issues and, finally, in 1999, Prime Minister Vajpayee undertook his ground breaking bus 'yatra' to Lahore, where both sides signed the Lahore Declaration. It was on this occasion that the Indian Prime visited the National Monument in the city and made the categorical statement that India had fully accepted the reality of Pakistan as a



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

separate, independent State and nobody should fear that India wanted to harm it. This initiative of Mr. Vajpayee, which was warmly welcomed in Pakistan and worldwide, showed that much can be achieved by bold and imaginative leadership. Unfortunately, the spirit of Lahore did not survive long and was wrecked by Gen. Musharraf's rash adventure in Kargil. Despite this, Mr. Vajpayee again took the initiative and invited Musharraf to Agra in 2001. He was well received and the talks began on a positive note. Contrary to expectations, however, the Summit ended in failure as Musharraf took a rigid line on Kashmir and Vajpayee's team did the same on cross-border incursions. Another hiatus of two years followed. Then, at the SAARC meeting in Islamabad in January 2004, Vajpayee once again extended the olive branch and agreed to start a composite dialogue that would address all issues, including Kashmir. In return, Musharraf gave a clear assurance that Pakistan would not allow its territory to be used for cross-border incursions. The spirit of the Islamabad agreement received added impetus by the observance of a ceasefire along the Line of Control in Kashmir and the successful tour of the Indian cricket team, during which the public on both sides gave enthusiastic demonstrations of friendship.

The dialogue process itself continued satisfactorily for four years, when it was rudely shattered by the carnage at Mumbai in September, 2008. As if to confirm the fragility of the overall relationship, India broke off the composite dialogue.



Two years were lost because public feeling in India was greatly aroused by Mumbai and Dr. ManMohan Singh's government felt that its policies should reflect this. The basic reality, however, remained. It was not in the interest of either country to depart from the path of negotiations and the suspension of talks after Mumbai was not, in any way, helping the fight against terror. At the SAARC meeting in Thimpu, Bhutan, in 2010, the two Prime Ministers agreed to a limited resumption of talks and soon afterwards, the Foreign Secretaries were able to expand the agenda to cover all subjects which had been under discussion in the composite dialogue.

At the moment, these talks are proceeding well, though there have been no major breakthroughs. The first meeting of Foreign Ministers in the summer of 2010 was something of a fiasco, but the second meeting, which was held in Delhi in July



2011, showed a very positive approach by both sides and has raised expectations about the future. The task before the two countries now is to ensure that the dialogue becomes truly uninterrupted and does not remain hostage to single events. The present seems to be a propitious moment to attempt this.

The two most inflammable issues that could jeopardize the peace process are Kashmir and terrorism. There are hopeful signs that mutually acceptable solutions to both can be found. On Kashmir, the back channel that ManMohan Singh and Musharraf set up, made considerable progress. Indeed, according to some, it had worked out a framework for a settlement. Unfortunately, the new elected government in Pakistan has, more or less, disowned this process, largely because it was based on ideas put forward by a military dictator who had no mandate. Perhaps, the army which, presumably, had supported it while Musharraf was in power, has now had second thoughts.

Clearly, all political parties in Pakistan are eager to improve relations with India. This is evident from recent public declarations made by Prime Minister Gillani and opposition leader Nawaz Sharif. Yet they both hold back for fear of opposition from the military. To move forward courageously on the Kashmir issue and build on the progress already achieved, is now the main task before the two countries, for no better route to a conclusion can be envisaged.

The crucial point in a settlement on Kashmir must remain its acceptance by the Kashmiri people. Efforts to mobilize Kashmiri opinion in favour of a compromise are vital. The basic demand of the Kashmiris on both sides seems to be the de facto restoration of the order that prevailed in the State at the time of partition. This is tempered by a sense of realism, in that they acknowledge that boundaries cannot be re-drawn, but they can be made irrelevant. There is no significant demand for accession to Pakistan, except on the part of a very few separatists. Nor is there any genuine expectation of an independent Kashmir in the legal sense. In Indian administered Kashmir, the call is for autonomy as envisaged at the time of accession. In addition, there are specific complaints to be addressed like the concentration of troops in urban areas, recovery of missing persons, return of refugees who have fled, compensation for victims of violence and so on. All these are under discussion between Delhi and Srinagar and are part of the confidence building measures agreed to by both India and Pakistan. The desire to make the

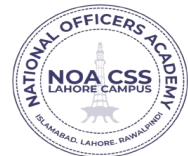


Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

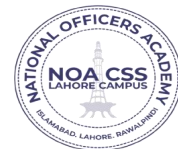
Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



Line of Control a totally porous border is shared by Kashmiris on both sides and the agreed confidence building measures clearly envisage freedom of movement for travel and trade. Unfortunately, the agreed CBMs are not being implemented in their true spirit, but they do represent the essential elements of a settlement and are eminently doable. Some incremental progress on this front was achieved at the Foreign Ministers' meeting in July 2011, but much more can be done. For example, the frequency of the bus services across the LOC was increased and some facilitative steps for cross-border trade, including an expansion in the list of tradable commodities, were introduced. It is difficult to understand why, if the concept of a porous border has been agreed to by all stakeholders, there should not be full vehicular traffic on all routes and free exchange of goods. If the agreed CBM's are faithfully implemented, further steps like coordinating mechanisms on common issues like the environment, water, tourism etc. should not be difficult. Basically, the main purpose of a settlement must be to bring comfort to the inhabitants of Kashmir, to put an end to the violence, the killings and the abuse of human rights and to enable them to live a normal life in peace. The achievement of this objective is by no means impossible, but this requires a degree of trust and cooperation, in the overall sense, between India and Pakistan.

On terrorism, the obvious need is for both countries to cooperate in defeating this menace. Regrettably, a number of terrorist incidents in India have been found to have originated in Pakistan, so Indian public opinion has been negatively influenced. Where the culprits have been or can be identified, it is incumbent on Pakistan to bring them to book and to satisfy India that it is making genuine efforts to do so. Conversely, India must do so in cases where Pakistan has been the sufferer in Indian acts of terror. In the long run, however, the absolute necessity of a cooperative effort to fight terror is clear. This would involve effective institutional arrangements for intelligence sharing, border controls, effective joint anti-terror mechanisms and so on.

Apart from these two major issues, there are a host of other problems like Siachen, Sir Creek, the Wullar Barrage, trade, visas, drug trafficking and, of course, nuclear transparency. On some of these, like Sir Creek and Siachen, negotiations are reportedly in the final stages and an early conclusion would greatly strengthen the peace process.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



Clearly, therefore, there are no problems between the two countries that cannot be solved through dialogue. The question is, how can dialogue be made the sole and continuous method and how can its derailment by single, unexpected events, be avoided. At the cost of stating the obvious, the answer to this is that the mistrust and hostility of the past sixty years have to be overcome. We have seen that, in the early years, there was reason for this, but much water has flowed under the bridge and the mind-sets in both countries need to adjust to changed circumstances.

Indian attitudes towards its neighbours have evolved as the country has moved steadily towards its own cherished goals. Its economic progress and its political stability, together with its size, have lifted it to the status of a world power. In order to merit this status, India needs to project itself as a good neighbour to the smaller countries of South Asia and not as a regional hegemon. In fact, India itself needs regional stability to continue its march forward without unnecessary distractions. Thus it has nothing to gain from bad relations with its neighbours and should have no hesitation in accepting the independence and separate personality of other countries, including Pakistan. Most right thinking Indians take this view. However, smaller neighbours are still not fully convinced of this.

As for Pakistan, its history since independence has not been a happy one. There was a prospect in the 1960's that it might become a model developing country, but this hope soon vanished in the face of political instability and poor performance in the economic and social spheres. Repeated military intervention prevented democracy from taking root and continuing misgovernance, by both civilian and uniformed rulers, led the country to the serious condition in which it finds itself today. The fear of an aggressive and more powerful neighbour drove it towards becoming a security State, allocating the bulk of its resources to non-productive ends and ensuring the dominance of its armed forces in framing national policies. It also drove it to seek external alliances which were unequal in their nature and involved it in global rivalries. Its problems were further exacerbated by years of turmoil on its western border, as it allowed itself to be dragged into developments in Afghanistan, both after the Soviet intervention in 1979 and the US led war on terror in 2001. Today, Pakistan finds itself as the biggest victim of terrorism as well as its main source. Internally, the country is going through what many consider the most testing phase in its history and is faced with domestic problems

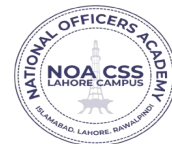


Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk





which demand that it focus its attention on internal issues. In order to be able to do this, peace with India, is an imperative.

Given this, it is manifestly in the interests of both India and Pakistan to forge a relationship of peace and amity. Why then can they not achieve this? Their relationship remains erratic and is badly in need of continuity and durability. While they must go on with efforts to solve specific differences, they have to look for a sea change in their overall attitude towards each other. The time has come for imaginative policies by each to bring this about.

The basic discourse which pervades Indo-Pak relations is whether specific disputes must first be solved before true normalization can be achieved or whether individual disputes are more easily resolved in an overall atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation. Each side has wavered from one point of view to the other at different times. Regrettably, they have never held the same view at the same time. The present promising state of their relations seems a propitious moment to ensure that their future is based more on their permanent interests rather than the settlement of specific disputes. To prove this point, they have to create a lasting environment of mutual trust and freedom from fear.

Looking at the present conditions within Pakistan and India, the former's need for peace is obviously greater, but the weakness of its civilian government and its internal malaise makes it unlikely that it can take any bold initiative. The army continues to hold sway in vital areas like relations with India, the US and Afghanistan, and the army remains obsessed with the image of a hostile India. Public opinion and political parties in Pakistan do not share this obsession, but they seem helpless. India, on the other hand, can live with the present state of affairs, yet it stands to benefit greatly from a transformed relationship. Bad relations with its neighbours can be a serious impediment in the way of achieving its aspirations. Undoubtedly, there exist in India also, lobbies that do not favour good relations with Pakistan, yet as both Vajpayee and ManMohan Singh have shown, that, in spite of this, bold leaders can launch major initiatives to bring about a real change. India needs to lay at rest even the imaginary fears of the military in Pakistan. In fact, it still needs convince all shades of opinion in Pakistan that these fears are indeed imaginary. This will enable Pakistan to concentrate on solving its internal problems rather than looking for external bogies.

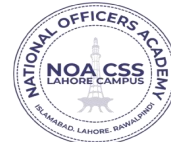


Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



The question is how and what Prime Minister ManMohan Singh can now do to bring this about. Like Vajpayee, he clearly has a strong desire for good relations with Pakistan. Despite domestic political pressures, he has been persistent in trying to improve relations and has revived the stalled dialogue more than once. Some useful progress on various issues and a measure of improved mutual confidence has indeed been achieved at recent meetings. But we are still some way from the major initiatives that could bring about real change and transform relations between the two countries. The slow and measured exchanges of the current dialogue have been useful, but now what is needed is direct engagement at the very top. Without that, major agreements on contested issues would be difficult.

A favourable opportunity has arisen out of the recent private visit of Mr. Zardari to Ajmer. He held talks with the Indian Prime Minister in Delhi and, among other things, renewed the invitation to the Indian leader to visit Pakistan. It is important that this invitation be availed of soon, for it would provide an opportunity for some bold initiatives. Maybe the political situation in both countries is not, at the moment, ideal because of impending elections etc, but certainly the visit should take place sooner rather than later.

During the visit, while reiterating his commitment to the ongoing dialogue and possibly announcing agreement on some specific issues like Siachen and Sir Creek, he could launch some imaginative measures to create trust and confidence between the two countries. He could, for example, revive the idea of a No-War Pact and a Treaty of Peace and Friendship, for which the drafts already exist. Some say this is unnecessary, because the Simla agreement of 1972 serves the same purpose. However, a formal reassertion of peaceful intentions would be lauded by the people of both countries and would be enthusiastically endorsed by the international community. To counter the military argument from the Pakistan side, he could offer discussions on relocation of forces along the border and propose regular meetings between Chiefs of the armed forces and of Intelligence agencies, to lessen suspicions. It is strange indeed that high level visits to both countries by top military leaders from all over the world are a regular occurrence, but those from two neighbouring countries do not even see each other. A better understanding of the thinking of each other's military cannot be over-emphasised, because the security syndrome in the Pakistan army is the major obstacle in the way of progress. There may be some reluctance, perhaps on the part



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



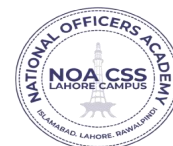
of democratically elected civilian forces in India, to bring the armies directly into bilateral diplomacy, but it is difficult to see that this would have anything but positive effects, provided all such exchanges are under the aegis and control of the elected governments.

On the major outstanding issue of Kashmir, a clear decision by both sides, at the highest level, to simultaneously resume the back channel and the official negotiations could be taken and a firm political directive issued to officials on both sides to make the Line of Control a truly porous border, with free movement of vehicular traffic for travel and trade. A settlement of the Kashmir problem would also be of great value in addressing the vital issue of water. Although the Indus Water Treaty has held for more than fifty years, there has recently been an increase in complaints of violation of the Treaty. Clearly, a dispute over water will have disastrous consequences for bilateral relations and it is imperative that both sides should seek to preempt this by entering into talks about joint efforts in water management and to arrest environmental degradation in the upper reaches, which is causing a depletion in water flow. Such joint efforts will only be possible when the basic political issue of Kashmir is resolved.

The other major issue is terrorism. There remains the very real danger that, if another major terrorist attack, like the one in Mumbai in September 2008, takes place and its origins are traced to Pakistan, the peace process would again be endangered. Talks between the two countries have addressed this issue on a priority basis and there is agreement that firm action will be taken against the culprits. This would apply to both sides, wherever the culprits are found. It is encouraging to note that, in the two recent terrorist incidents in Delhi and Mumbai, India did not point a finger at Pakistan.

There are encouraging signs that both sides realize that they need to cooperate in combating terrorism. It is now essential that institutional arrangements for such cooperation be strengthened. Sharing of Intelligence and contacts between heads of intelligence agencies must become the norm.

On Afghanistan, it is true that Pakistan has a vital stake in how the issue is resolved, but India too has legitimate interests. The Afghan problem has the potential of affecting Indo-Pakistan relations either in a positive or a negative way.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

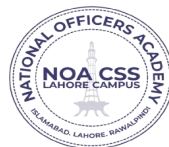
If it is allowed to become an additional point of discord between the two, the negative impact on stability in South Asia will be enormous. If, on the other hand, India and Pakistan can consult each other on how maximum benefits can be obtained for all three countries, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, the positive impact on the region will be equally immense. Pakistan can take the initiative by bringing the subject of Afghanistan on to the agenda of Indo-Pakistan talks.

The nuclear issue could be addressed so that the two countries can show to the international community that they are responsible nuclear powers and pose no threat to the region or the world. There already exists an agreement on non-attack on each others' facilities. The area of agreement could be expanded to include nuclear safety, transparency, peaceful uses of nuclear power and so on.

In the critical field of economic development, common ground could be explored for mutually beneficial trade and economic relations. A major advance has been made with Pakistan agreeing to give Most Favoured Nation status to India. This will remove a major obstacle in the way of trade, though both countries will need to work out arrangements to avoid damage to each other's economy. Pakistan can offer valuable transit facilities for Indian trade and commerce with Afghanistan and Central Asia. There is a need to allow vehicular traffic to flow freely across the land border. Pipeline projects to carry oil and gas across the subcontinent could become a reality. There are many possibilities.

As stated earlier ManMohan Singh's visit could be a decisive moment for substantive and meaningful progress. The visit needs to take place soon and intensive diplomatic activity will be required to make it a success. Much can be achieved, provided both sides realize that the time has come to put their relationship on stable and permanent foundations.

Implementation will be easy. Deep seated mindsets are difficult to change. Nor are they just a sign of obstinacy. Those who hold on to them genuinely believe that they have reason to do so. They cannot be ignored. The task of convincing them that these reasons do not necessarily hold good today will be an uphill struggle, but it must be taken up with determination.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

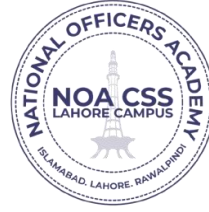
Visit our website
www.noacss.pk



National Officers
ACADEMY®
The Largest CSS Preparatory Institute in Pakistan

NOA Lahore Campus

Official efforts will need to be supplemented by those at the people to people level and it is encouraging to note that a number of non-official bodies have been set up to promote good relations. These include civil society organizations, parliamentarians, journalists and businessmen. Such endeavours must be encouraged by both governments. The key to any lasting relationship is that the people on both sides should want it. They can only show this if they can easily meet each other with a minimum of restrictions. South Asia's greatest resource is the human one. In the long run, it is on this that the stability of the region will rest.



Phone
(042) 352 396 22

Mobile
0332 112 5112

More information call us
(051) 111 662 277

Visit our website
www.noacss.pk

NOA Lahore Campus | Near Allah Hoo Chowk, Shoukat Khanum Road, Johar Town Lahore