



THE NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE

*Brilliant & Eminent*

# THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Malaysia's Elements of National Power



Vol 1 | Issue 1 | 2023

ISSN 2811 -454X



## UPNM

National Defence University of Malaysia

Kewajipan • Maruah • Integriti

A programme in collaboration with  
National Defence University of Malaysia  
(NDUM)



# **NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. Aim and Scope
2. Editorial Board
3. Commandant's Preface
4. About the National Resilience College

**Diplomatic, Political and Economic Studies**

**THE PRACTICE OF STATECRAFT BY GREAT POWERS: THE FRENCH IN AN EVOLVING EUROPE**

## NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE THE STATESMAN JOURNAL 2023

### AIM AND SCOPE

The Statesman Journal is a product of the National Resilience College (NRC) under the Malaysian Armed Forces and is a prominent platform for academic excellence and thought leadership. This esteemed publication predominantly showcases a variety of original research papers and articles authored by course and faculty members of the NRC. The journal's coverage extends beyond just military or defence issues, delving into a broad spectrum of subjects related to security and strategic studies.

One of the journal's fundamental goals is cultivating a culture of intellectual depth and critical analysis within the Malaysian Armed Forces' ranks and broader academic and strategic circles. The dissemination of research and insights from the NRC enables The Statesman Journal to contribute to shaping and enhancing discussions around national security significantly. Moreover, The Statesman Journal is known for its in-depth, well-researched, and insightful analysis of pertinent topics. Its dedication to maintaining high standards of excellence and relevance elevates it beyond a typical academic journal. It is a valuable resource for a diverse audience, including scholars, strategists, and those engaged in comprehensive study and understanding of strategic issues.

In presenting innovative ideas, diverse perspectives, and potential solutions to contemporary challenges, The Statesman Journal plays a crucial role in enriching the dialogue on national security and strategic matters within Malaysia and in a wider regional context. This makes it an essential contributor to strategic studies, offering rich content that is both informative and thought-provoking.



**NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE**  
**THE STATESMAN JOURNAL 2023**

**EDITORIAL BOARD**

**Chairman**

Major General Datuk Haji Mohd Nizam bin Haji Jaffar

**Editorial Advisors**

Major General Dato' Abdul Rahim bin Mohd Yusuff (Retired)

First Admiral Rosli bin Abd Ghani

Brigadier General Koey Tang Chai RMAF

Norashikin binti Sahol Hamid

**Chief Editor**

Dr Tharishini Krishnan

**Editors**

Major General Dato' Dr. Kwong Fook Wen (Retired)

Major General Dato' Dr. A. Endry Nixon (Retired)

Prof. Dato' Dr. Jesbil Singh@Jasbir Singh Sandhu

Associate Professor Dr. Radziah binti Abdul Rahim

Dr. Erda Wati binti Bakar

Norashikin binti Sahol Hamid

**Publisher**

National Resilience College

No 1 Jalan Puspahanas P1, Precinct 1

62000 PUTRAJAYA

Tel: +603-88710701; Fax: +603-88710557

Email: pejabat.mkn@gmail.com

The views expressed are the author's own and not necessarily those of the Malaysian Armed Forces. The government of Malaysia will not be legally responsible in contract, tort or otherwise, for any statement made in this publication.

**Copyright of NRC 2023**





## COMMANDANT'S PREFACE

**MAJOR GENERAL DATUK HAJI MOHD NIZAM BIN HAJI JAFFAR**  
**COMMANDANT OF NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE**

I am honoured to introduce this edition of the Statesman Journal, an intellectual repository dedicated to nurturing strategic thinkers of statesman quality. This edition focuses on the 8th pillar of National Security Policy, which is People's Security, a topic of paramount significance in the contemporary geopolitical landscape and strategic outlook.

In an era marked by rapid changes and complex challenges, the role of a statesman transcends conventional boundaries of leadership. It demands an astute understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of national power, encompassing military strength, economic resilience, diplomatic acumen, technological advancement, and cultural influence. This journal seeks to unravel these elements through its rigorous and thought-provoking discourse, offering deep and wide-ranging insights. Our contributors, a distinguished cadre of course members and thought leaders, bring a wealth of expertise and perspectives. Their analyses not only dissect the components of national power but also synthesise these elements in the context of global dynamics and regional intricacies. This approach is particularly relevant for Malaysia, a nation that continues to navigate its path on the global stage with strategic finesse and resilience.

Through my years, I have witnessed firsthand the evolution of national security paradigms and the increasing importance of a holistic understanding of power. This journal serves as a beacon of knowledge, guiding current and future leaders in the art and science of statecraft. It reinforces the ethos of the National Resilience College, where the development of strategic acumen is inextricably linked with a deep appreciation of global affairs and national interests. The articles within this edition cover various topics, from the traditional realms of military strategy and economic policies to the emerging frontiers of cyber power and cultural diplomacy. Each piece contributes to a comprehensive understanding of national power and encourages readers to think critically about Malaysia's role and strategy in an interconnected world.

In conclusion, I hope this edition of the Statesman Journal will inspire and challenge you. May it ignite a passion for strategic thinking and a commitment to the noble pursuit of statesmanship. As we forge ahead in these tumultuous times, let us carry the torch of knowledge and wisdom, mindful of our duty to our nation and the global community.

**Major General Datuk Haji Mohd Nizam bin Haji Jaffar**  
Commandant  
National Resilience College

# NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE

*National Resilience Course*

**The National Resilience College** is the National Centre for Defence Studies senior college of the Malaysian Armed Forces. We provide the capstone to strategic education of those officers of the Armed Forces and in future, equivalent civil servants who have the potential to reach the highest ranks and who must, therefore, understand and be comfortable working at the strategic level across government and in the international environment. The college was established following the strategic vision of the late Yang Amat Berhormat Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussien's vision of promoting greater understanding between senior military officers, diplomats, civil servants, officials and the corporate sector.

The NRC is a strategic college designed to provide best practices for the highest level of thinking in achieving the nation's grand interest. The course at NRC will be the continuity of studies of the Malaysian Armed Forces Defence College and Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College but with emphasis on high-level studies at the grand strategic level focusing on defence and security of the nation, the region and the world.

Officially, the NRC was established on 31st July 2019 to cater to the professional development of the Malaysian Armed Forces officers of Brigadier General and Colonel in rank or equivalent. The study program is known as the National Resilience Programme, and the academic program is provided in collaboration with the National Defence University of Malaysia (NDUM). The NRC 2024 cohort will span an academic year from 8th January to 8th December 2024 to provide Course Members (CM) with third-level Professional Military Education (PME) in international affairs, security, policy and strategy.

The college course content is designed not entirely on defence studies. Still, the NRC looks at a wide range of factors, including values related to stability, security and prosperity at the national, regional and global levels. The program focuses on the grand national strategic level, at which governments make decisions about their instruments of power as they relate to promoting the nation's national interests.

# INTERNATIONAL SECURITY & POLITICS

*National Resilience Course*

This journal section includes discussions on "International Security and Politics," the ever-evolving landscape of regional security and the broader geopolitical climate. Here, we examine international organisations' pivotal role and influence in an increasingly globalised world, assessing their impact on the tapestry of global interactions.

A core focus of the articles is the discussion of critical issues in international politics, particularly those that significantly affect global peace and security. Our contributors offer insightful perspectives on these complex matters, fostering a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play on the worldwide stage. Additionally, this journal section emphasises Southeast Asia's political changes and developments, analysing their implications for both internal and regional peace and stability. This regional focus provides readers with a nuanced view of the challenges and opportunities in this part of the world.

Moreover, "International Security and Politics" is a platform for rich academic dialogue and learning to enrich our readers' understanding of the intricacies of international politics and security issues, presenting diverse viewpoints. Through this journal, we aim to contribute to the body of knowledge in international security and politics, offering valuable insights for anyone interested in understanding the complex realities of our globalised world.

## SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN RAPPROCHEMENT AND EFFECT ON REGIONAL PEACE, SECURITY, AND POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

**Brigadier General Hesham Afifi Abdelaal Afifi**

Egyptian Army

National Resilience College, PUSPAHANAS

### Abstract

*The Middle East has seen conflict during the past century because of regional states' and major powers' quest to gain power and regional interests. The competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran is one of the most remarkable contests in the Gulf region and the Middle East. Although the two countries are rival regional powers, they play an essential role in the peace and stability of the region. Since the fall of the Pahlavi regime in 1979 and the subsequent rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran, political and strategic differences between Tehran and Riyadh emerged and widened by their competition. The central argument of this paper is that, despite this contest between the two states, the negative repercussions have affected the region and the Middle East for extended years. In March 2023, the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran was generated. On this ground, this paper aims to highlight the impacts of the rapprochement on the Middle East and the expected challenges that might stand in the way of achieving it. The discussion is divided into (a) discussing major issues in Saudi Arabia- Iran relations, (b) the impact of cordial relations between Tehran and Riyadh on regional peace and stability in the Middle East, (c) highlighting the challenges that might stand in the way of achieving the rapprochement. The study adopted a qualitative research methodology approach based on sources collected through reliable secondary data. The results of the study found that the impact of the cordial relations between the two countries is still intangible regarding the armed conflicts they supported on the ground, especially in Yemen, Iraq, and Syria. However, some tangible developments at the political and diplomatic levels have taken place, especially at the bilateral level, such as the return of Syria to the Arab League. And another series of normalisations between other countries in the Middle East due to the rapprochement. Moreover, the study found many challenges facing the implementation of the rapprochement, the most important of which is the existence of goodwill to achieve peace in the Middle East, sectarian and religious divisions, the interests of the conflicting parties on the ground, and some external forces with interest in the failure of the rapprochement.*

**Keywords:** *Diplomatic Developments in the Gulf Power, Middle East Peace and Stability, Rapprochement Challenges, Regional Power Dynamics, Saudi Arabia-Iran Relations*

## Introduction

The Middle East has long been plagued by conflicts and competitions that have shaped its political, social, and economic landscape. From ancient rivalries to modern power struggles, the Middle East is a complex web of tensions and rivalries between nations, ethnic groups, and ideological factions. One of the key driving factors behind the conflicts and competitions in the Middle East is the pursuit of power and influence. This competition for control and dominance has fuelled conflicts and proxy wars, often leaving local populations in the crossfire. The turmoil and rivalries in the Middle East stem from a web of intricate factors, including historical legacies, geopolitical interests, ethnic tensions, economic struggles, religious differences, and the influence of foreign powers. These multifaceted causes have led to catastrophic outcomes, resulting in widespread human suffering, extensive displacement of populations, and a bleak and unpredictable future for the inhabitants of the region.

Saudi Arabia and Iran are two regional powers in the Middle East with diverse religious and political ideologies. They have been contesting for influence and dominance in the region for decades. The rivalry is fuelled by a combination of religious, political, and economic factors, which often lead to proxy conflicts and power struggles in countries like Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Lebanon. They have had contrasting approaches towards governing and spreading their respective versions of Islam. Saudi Arabia represents the Sunni Muslim majority and follows The Salafi theory. Iran, on the other hand, is predominantly Shia Muslim and subscribes to Wilayat al-Faqih. Religion plays a significant role in this rivalry, as both countries seek to promote their interpretation of Islam and gain influence over the Muslim world. Each government considers itself as the true guardian and protector of Islam, striving to be the preeminent voice for Muslims globally (Khaleel, 2023, p. 738).

Additionally, their conflicting geopolitical goals intensify the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran (Attiq-ur-Rehman, 2023). Saudi Arabia views Iran's increasing regional influence as a threat to its hegemony and as a destabilising force. Conversely, Iran sees itself as a dominant regional power due to its large population, vast resources, and historical legacy as the Persian Empire. It aims to expand its sphere of influence and establish itself as a regional leader. This competition for power and influence often manifests through supporting opposing factions and engaging in proxy conflicts. The competition between the two regional powers is not only limited to geopolitics but also has significant economic implications. Both countries are major oil producers and compete for market share and influence within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Their rivalry has resulted in fluctuations in global oil prices (Widakuswara, 2023). The competition between them is multifaceted, driven by religious, political, and economic factors.

The article addresses some basic questions: what is the future of the rapprochement among the expected challenges, what are these challenges, and what are the anticipated impacts on the Middle East from achieving the rapprochement? The central aim of the article is to highlight the competition for leadership in the region between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the motives of the Iranian-Saudi rapprochement, the motives of China to mediate between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the impact of cordial relations between them. The discussion is divided into three parts: (a) significant issues in Saudi-Iran relations; (b) the impact of cordial relations between Tehran and Riyadh on regional peace and stability in the Middle East; (c) the challenges that might derail the process of rapprochement.

## **Overview of Iranian-Saudi Relations**

Cooperation, rivalry, and tense diplomatic standoffs have marked the historical relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. At the same time, both countries are major players in the Middle East. The relationship between the two countries began after the signing of a friendship treaty in 1929, and in 1930, the two countries began to exchange ambassadors. During this period, the commercial activities of the two countries were limited to the export of carpets by Iranian pilgrims to Saudi Arabia. However, after 1950, when oil resources in the Persian Gulf were discovered, rivalry for regional economic interests became a more important concern for governments and one of the primary causes of future political conflict (Isik, 2023). Relations between the two countries initially seemed optimistic when Iran was ruled by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi circa 1941 to 1979, who maintained friendly relations with the Saudi government. Except for some tense stances because of the execution of an Iranian citizen after accusing him of throwing dirt at the Kaaba and insulting the Prophet and the Companions in 1943. Moreover, Iran recognised Israel in 1955. However, tensions began to rise after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, when an Islamic theocracy led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini overthrew the Shah's regime. The new government in Iran adopted a revolutionary ideology that sought to export its Islamic revolution to other countries, including Saudi Arabia, which is ruled by a Sunni monarchy.

## **Issues in Saudi Arabia-Iran Relations**

Shiite Muslims make up most of Iran's population, whilst Sunni Wahhabis make up most of Saudi Arabia's. Both countries are major players in the Middle East and have been openly vying for regional dominance since the Iranian revolution. Shia Muslim clerics led the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and its establishment was seen as a challenge to predominantly Sunni Saudi Arabia. Based on religious grounds, this challenge sparked continuous tensions that eventually led to severing relations (Diansaei, 2018). Moreover, the sectarian differences of opinion between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the quest for Middle Eastern supremacy, geopolitical rivalries, and the tendency to be the leading country among Islamic countries are among the factors that increase the tension that led to diplomatic relations breakdown (Isik, 2023). Another factor is the control of oil resources and field ownership. All these factors contributed to potential security threats from each other and concerns about the security of their homeland (Gul, 2021).

The first diplomatic crisis between the two countries was in 1987. In that year's pilgrimage season, Saudi security forces, because of accusations that they had rioted, killed some Iranian pilgrims. Because of this incident, the Iranians assaulted the Saudi Arabian embassy in Tehran, and the Saudi ambassador perished to escape the attackers. Following these incidents, Saudi Arabia shuttered its embassy in Tehran, although it quickly reopened. In 2015, around 2,000 pilgrims lost their lives during the pilgrimage known as the Mecca stampede, nearly 400 of whom were citizens of Iran. After this event, Iran blamed Saudi Arabia, which worsened the relationship between the two rivalries. Finally, in 2016, Nimr al-Nimr, a well-known Shiite cleric and opponent of the Saudi regime, was put to death, the Saudi embassy was assaulted in Tehran in response to these occurrences, and Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic ties with Iran and expelled Iranian officials. The deterioration of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, especially after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, led to the recognition of Iran's ambition as an Islamic country in light of the revolution's facts.

## **Iran's ambition in the Middle East**

Since the 1979 revolution and up until the present, there has been a desire to export the Iranian revolution around the world, particularly to its core region in the Arab Gulf. Articles (152) and (154), which call for "protecting the weak on earth" and "defending Muslims in all parts of the world." The Iranian government is attempting to legitimise Iranian policy in this area through these constitutional passages. The Iranian foreign policy has three objectives: Firstly, maintaining Iranian regional dominance and expanding into the Arab world. Secondly, Maintaining the Iranian government and shielding it from attack, as what happened in Iraq, and finally, preserving its gains, especially its nuclear programme, and its position in the Islamic world (Khaleel, 2023).

The Iranian foreign policy is based on three pillars; the first pillar is ideology, the idea that Iran is an empire and the most prominent Shiite nation in the world, which is seen in all Persian writings. These writings emphasise two aspects: first, Iran's haughty attitude towards its Arab neighbours, and second, the idea of consolidating the Persian nation, which exists amid a Sunni environment. The second pillar is the geographical aspect, which gives Iran a strategic advantage since it controls waterways vital to international trade, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, which it frequently wields as a bargaining chip with Western nations. The third pillar is the apparent disparity in the strategic balance of power between the two sides of the Gulf (Iran and the Gulf Cooperation Council), which includes contrasts in the military, economic and industrial sectors and the geographic and demographic spheres (Khaleel, 2023).

## **Deterioration of relations**

The deterioration of relations caused conflicts and divisions within the Middle East and many armed conflicts supported by both parties, which led to the violation of the sovereignty of many countries. Supporting opposing factions in the polarisation process started with the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) while Syria and Libya backed Iran during the conflict, Saudi Arabia backed Iraq, the Sunni Arab government against Iran's Shiite government (Feleh, 2012), and other proxy wars in the region aftermath Arab spring such as Syria and Yemen where Saudi Arabia has led a coalition of Arab countries against Houthi rebels with Iran backs.

In addition, Iran has been involved in several conflicts in the Middle East as well. It supports various Shia militias such as the Popular Mobilisation Forces in Iraq and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Syria to support the government, Hezbollah in Lebanon, supporting the Bahraini Shiites against the Sunni regime, and finally, Supporting the Houthi group in Yemen against the legitimate government. On the other side, Saudi Arabia has been involved in the conflict in Yemen, where it has led a coalition of Arab countries against Houthi rebels. It has already supported the opposition against the Syrian regime. Moreover, Turkey has been involved in the Syrian conflict since 2011, supporting various rebel groups against the Syrian government. Turkey has also launched military operations against Kurdish militias in Syria and Iraq.

## **Relationship with the West**

In July 1969, The US started to help Saudi Arabia and Iran economically by exporting weapons to them to build a "Middle Eastern front" against communism. On the other hand, the British-designed Twin Pillars doctrine would have reinforced Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East under the Shah's authority. It attempted to make these nations Cold War allies by supporting the two leading Middle Eastern countries with vast oil resources. This strategy focused on Iran because it had a larger economy and population and was diplomatically closer to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) than Saudi Arabia. This policy sought to keep Iran away from the USSR. Saudi authorities criticised that Saudi Arabia seemed to be less significant than Iran after Iran was made the focal point. However, in the end, Saudi Arabia finally had a more favourable position in the US's coalition in the Middle East since Iran had tighter connections with its neighbour, the USSR (Keynoush, 2016).

The positive turning point in the advantage of Iran was the US overthrowing Saddam's administration. Iran would have partially fulfilled its goals even if there had been no combat in Iraq (Abuelghanam, 2018). Based on the argument, it is believed that the behaviour of the US expresses its dominance as a superpower at the head of the world system with a future vision for the world and possesses the tools necessary to achieve that vision. By getting rid of the Iraqi regime, the US created a strong Shiite competitor in the Middle East, which is Iran, against its Sunni neighbour, which is Saudi Arabia. It utilised its media tools to promote that Iran is one of the three evil Axis countries which pose an imminent danger to its neighbours to continue exporting weapons worth billions of dollars annually to countries in the region, led by Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, the persistent concerns allegedly stemming from Iran's actions influence the pursuit to secure ongoing oil needs. In conclusion, it has become evident that one of these states aligns with Western interests while the other gravitates towards Eastern alliances. This raises the question: what underlying motivations drive each nation towards rapprochement?

## **The Rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran - Motives of the Iranian-Saudi Rapprochement**

The rapprochement could be more effective for both Saudi Arabia and Iran to revive the Iranian nuclear agreement; moreover, Saudi Arabia wants to Yemen's six-year conflict, which has threatened the country's security and the sources of its oil wealth, which have become targets for Houthi missiles. In addition, The Saudi decision-makers realised that a discussion with Iran is more beneficial after failing to influence the war in Syria and Donald Trump's unwillingness to support it against Iran after bombing its oil installations in September 2019 (Khaleel, 2023). Saudi Arabia has finally realised that its security and the region's security will not come from outside. However, collaboration and reconciliation can be achieved through face-to-face dialogue. This rapprochement could be a platform to settle all Saudi-Iranian disagreements (Mohammadi, 2023).

Based on the argument, the rapprochement is believed to achieve Saudi Arabia's desire to strengthen economic relations with Iran through more regional partnerships and economic exchange. It chose to be pragmatic rather than unconditionally align itself with US interests. As a result, it preferred a conflict resolution process that provided some economic gains that China could achieve rather than the process in which compromise was in favour of the US. On the other hand, the Iranian government is eager to re-establish diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia to strengthen its currently disputed international legitimacy and to lay the foundation for greater regional participation, economically and socially, which would strengthen the government locally to demonstrate to its citizens that Iran is not entirely isolated. This rapprochement is considered a dramatic improvement in Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Foreign policy to create synchronisation between regional issues and international negotiations and the motivation to move toward the emerging major powers such as China and Russia to make a balance with the West.

## **Motives of China to mediate between Saudi Arabia and Iran**

China has very important economic relations and benefits with Iran and Saudi Arabia. Moreover, China is a significant oil buyer from both nations, so China was motivated to engage in this mediation to safeguard energy security, advance the Belt and Road Initiative, and attempt to offset US influence and presence (Isik, 2023). The absence of US dominance in the region and its overt recent mishandling of relations with Saudi Arabia opened the door widely to efforts by China to bring Saudi Arabia into a solid rapprochement. Washington's pressure on the nations in the area to punish Russia for the Russia-Ukraine war was the reason behind the fall in US influence. Moreover, china wanted to set a good example for other nations in the international community regarding respecting their sovereignty and interests, which is preferable to a US-controlled Middle East policy (Copley, 2023).

Based on the argument, it is believed that China could restore reconciliation between two countries in the US sphere of influence since the end of the Cold War. It proves that it not only possesses a future vision of the world but also the elements for implementing that vision, which are the elements of comprehensive national power, and this establishes the beginning of a new multipolar world order. China wanted to prove that it had a diplomatic presence on top of its economic presence in the Middle East. Until recently, China's interactions with the Gulf were primarily commercial, whereas the US was heavily involved. After this diplomatic success, China has stepped up its political and security contacts with the regional states.

## **The development of relations since the rapprochement**

Since the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, there have been some developments in their relations, such as the engagement in diplomatic communication at various levels. This includes exchanging diplomatic visits, reopening embassies, and holding talks to discuss regional issues. The last visit was for the Saudi foreign minister to Iran on 18 June 2023 to discuss opening the embassy in Tehran. Syria is returning to the Arab League on 7 May 2023 after an absence since 2011 and the invitation to President Bashar al-Assad to attend the Arab summit in Jeddah on 19 May 2023. Some cooperation is in facilitating the Hajj pilgrimage for Iranian pilgrims. On the other hand, economically, both countries have shown interest in exploring investment opportunities in various sectors, including energy, infrastructure, tourism, and agriculture.

## **The Impact of Cordial Relations between Tehran and Riyadh on Regional Peace and Political Stability in the Middle East**

Reopening of embassies, the renewal of a security cooperation pact, and a commercial and technology deal from earlier agreements are all included in the rapprochement; it may lead to significant impacts, which are supposed to be beneficial for regional economic cooperation, security, and stability, these impacts are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Internally, the two nations could be able to use their financial resources to fund their national development plans, especially Saudi Arabia needs this for its ambitious Vision 2030 economic reform plan, which aims to lessen its reliance on oil production by expanding into other areas including industry, logistics, tourism, and other sectors. On the other hand, Iran expects regional collaboration and cooperation to solve the regional conflicts, cooperation in the energy security field, and more cooperation inside OPEC. All these factors will lead to regional stability that will enable both sides to sustain their economy and dramatically change the whole region for the better (Mohammadi, 2023). In Lebanon, it may ease the process of compromising the presidential candidate. It is notable that so far, no agreement has been reached in Lebanon on a candidate for the presidential elections because of the intransigence of Hezbollah, supported by Iran and other parties likely to be backed by Saudi Arabia for more than eight months.

Moreover, in Bahrain, the rapprochement may lessen the Iranian interference to support the Shia who want to reform the Sunni government; Iran was accused of fomenting unrest for years (Dale, 2023). On the other side, in Yemen, the parties can begin with a dialogue and move into a conflict resolution process between the official government of Yemen and the Houthis with the ideas of Saudi Arabia and Iran (Gul, 2021). Iran can still play a significant role in collaborating and engaging all parties to settle the conflicts in the Middle East in general, in Yemen in particular, through the right way, which is the political engagement solution. Nevertheless, it had already engaged to settle the situation in Yemen in 2015 to no avail. After the rapprochement, Iran and

Saudi Arabia is on the right course to do that. Conversely, other leading players, such as Egypt, can play a significant role in settling the conflict in Yemen, which still remarkably affects the Arab countries. The normalisation between Cairo and Tehran is in process after severing relations in 1979; thus, those three leading players in the Middle East can play a significant role in terms of peace, security and political stability because the differences between them are minimal and can be overcome (Mohammadi, 2023). Meanwhile, the Yemenis see the rapprochement as an abject failure for the Saudi-led coalition. It is believed that Saudi Arabia is looking for a way out of this crisis, which exhausted it; thus, it negotiated with the Houthis, and as a result, all air strikes on the Houthis stopped, and they exchanged the captives. Furthermore, in return, The Houthis controlled the missile and drone strikes on Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) regardless of the support of the legitimate government, especially in light of the Houthis' continued refusal to engage in negotiations with the Yemeni government (monitor, 2023).

In Israel, the rapprochement will increase the gap between Gulf countries and Israel, an advantage for Iran. This is why Israel does not welcome this rapprochement (Aljazerah, 2023). Israel has lost the advantage of being the ruler of the Middle East since the Trump administration presented Iran as a common threat and brought the Gulf States and Israel together, which is called the Abraham Accord. The restoration of ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran is a grave and perilous trend for Israel (Mahad, 2023). Based on the argument, Iran is considered a significant threat to Israel, which is why Iran encountered multiple pressures, with Israel targeting its bases in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. Suppose Saudi Arabia and Iran have a good will to enhance the regional security by not supporting the armed groups on the ground. In that case, this will lead to regional security and respect for the sovereignty of other states.

The rapprochement paved the road for other series of relations, such as The Iran-Gulf normalisation process, which has become more promising after the Saudi Arabia and Iran rapprochement, normalisation processes in the Middle East in different combinations such as Turkey and the Gulf States, Turkey and Egypt become available (Isik, 2023). Based on the argument, this is true because the rapprochement has already accelerated the normalisation in the whole region, as it can be noted that once the rapprochement was completed, Syria returned to the Arab League on 7 May 2023 after an absence since 2011.

On the other hand, diplomatic relations between Egypt and Turkey were normalised by opening embassies in the two countries as of 27 May 2023 after severing ties since 2013. Moreover, Egypt received the first Iranian tourist group on 11 July 2023 as the first step toward normalisation after severing ties since 1979. The rapprochement may improve the climate for communication and diplomacy between the US and Iran by lowering regional tensions and instability. Additionally, a procedure has started that might eliminate the barriers to the US and Iran resuming talks and the 2015 nuclear agreement (Ali Ahmad, 2020). Based on the argument, it is believed that the rapprochement will prompt the US to reconsider its vision towards the region and look more objectively at its problems, significantly since resolving the region's issues away from America will threaten its interests and those of Israel. In addition, easing tensions and conflicts in the Arab Gulf region will ensure the security of global trade and oil exports from countries bordering the Gulf, where the most critical straits and waterways are in the Middle East.

Iran and Saudi Arabia possess all the elements of comprehensive national power, which qualify them to possess the capabilities necessary to achieve security and stability in the Middle East, as well as to secure their economic interests from any external interference because Iran is the second largest country in the Middle East after Saudi Arabia in terms of area and the second largest country in the Middle East after Egypt in terms of population, moreover, both of them are oil-producing countries, in addition to their large military expenditure.

## **Challenges of Iranian-Saudi Rapprochement**

Sectarian difference is also considered a significant challenge to religious institutions in both countries. The Salafi religious institution in Saudi Arabia and its influence on Saudi foreign policy trends are in opposition to the Iranian political system. These two opposing poles in the region's Islamist policies each present themselves as having greater political legitimacy when it comes to Islam and Muslims. On the other hand, The Saudis are obsessed with anxiety over Iran's meddling in the affairs of the Arab Gulf states and devotion to the notion of spreading the Iranian revolution(Khaleel, 2023).

Based on the argument, it is believed that Iran often Deals with the states in the Middle East from the perspective of its Islamic revolution's logic, not peaceful coexistence's logic. This has been reflected in its interference in other states and the mobilisation of Arab Shiites in favour of Iranian foreign policy within the framework of Shiite expansion, which is known as the politics of the revolution and not the politics of the state. The evidence to support that is the declaration for Ebrahim Raisi, the new president of Iran, vowed to continue the revolution's path, believing that his election victory is a popular message of the need to uphold the "values of the revolution." He emphasised that the positions his nation takes on regional issues are "non-negotiable".

The regional issues in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen pose challenges to improving relations between the two nations. Especially since the beneficiary parties on the ground before the rapprochement, such as the Houthis in Yemen, may feel that their hopes of achieving their goals have diminished in light of this rapprochement. This may prompt them to try to thwart it or to obtain support from other sources that may be interested in not improving the situation between the two parties. Since Israel has worked for years to penetrate the area by establishing one front against Iran, this rapprochement will not be in the interest of Israel. It will diminish the Israeli influence in the region. This might provide a new obstacle. The Iranian-Saudi rapprochement would mark a significant gap in Israel's anti-Iran front and, most crucially. On the other hand, since the Islamic revolution in Iran, the US has presented Iran as a giant danger to the Arab Gulf region to sell them their arsenals of weapons, which are worth billions of dollars. If this policy is abandoned because of the rapprochement, the US will suffer a significant loss, which may pose another challenge. Moreover, it is believed that more than the rapprochement alone is needed to ensure long-term peace or collaboration because numerous issues still divide the two countries, including divisions over religion and regional power. Moreover, Iran's nuclear programme is considered highly important for Saudi Arabia to be resolved. In other words, if trust and goodwill between the two parties are not maintained, this rapprochement may encounter challenges or fail.

## Conclusion

The future of this rapprochement can be that it bears several scenarios between progress, regression, or remaining at the same level. The most likely scenario is the progress. The reasons for this scenario being possible are some positive steps that prove the goodwill and the desire to take serious steps to fulfil the rapprochement, such as the return of Syria to the Arab League. Additionally, Saudi Arabia invited Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to attend the Arab Summit in Jeddah on 19 May 2023. Furthermore, the Saudi Foreign Minister visited Iran on 18 June 2023 to discuss reopening the Saudi embassy in Tehran. While most initiatives undertaken so far primarily serve Saudi Arabia's and Iran's bilateral interests, there remains a hopeful anticipation for substantial developments in regional peace and political stability, particularly concerning countries like Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, and Lebanon.

The impact of their friendly relations is still intangible regarding the armed conflicts the two nations support, particularly in Yemen, Iraq, and Syria. However, there have been some actual developments in diplomatic communication at various levels to reopen embassies, facilitate the Hajj pilgrimage for Iranian pilgrims, and show interest in exploring investment opportunities in multiple sectors. On the other hand, some political developments have taken place, such as Syria's return to the Arab League and the invitation to President Bashar al-Assad to attend the Arab summit in Jeddah on 19 May 2023—moreover, the normalisation discussions between Egypt, Turkey and Iran. On the contrary side, achieving this rapprochement is not smooth. Some challenges are facing its implementation, the most important of which is the existence of goodwill to achieve peace in the Middle East, sectarian and religious divisions, the interests of the conflicting parties on the ground, and the interest of some external parties in the failure of the rapprochement.

## SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN RAPPROCHEMENT AND EFFECT ON REGIONAL PEACE, SECURITY, AND POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

### References

- Abuelghanam, T. (2018). Mixed messages: Iran versus Saudi Arabia and GCC. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2347798918795937>.
- Ali Ahmad, N. (2020). Saudi-Iranian Rivalry: The Struggle for Power and Influence in the Middle East. *PAKISTAN SOCIAL SCIENCES REVIEW*, 587-597.
- Aljazeera. (2023). the regional reactions to the return of Saudi-Iranian relations. Doha: Aljazeera.
- Attiq-ur-Rehman. (2023, April 25). Tehran - Riyadh Diplomatic Normalisation: A Serious Challenge or a Great Opportunity for Beijing. *Defence Journal*, Karachi.
- Dale, G. (2023, 15 March). Voice of America News. Retrieved from Voice of America News / FIND; Washington: <https://www.proquest.com/reports/observers-welcome-saudi-iran-rapprochement/docview/2786967767/se-2?accountid=51108>.
- Diansaei, B. (2018). Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East: Leadership and Sectarianism (2011-2017). *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 124-134.
- Feleh, H. A. (2012). the impact of American policy on the Iraq- Iranian war 1980-1988 (historical study). *The International and Political Journal*, 207.
- Gregory R. Copley. (2023). Xi in Arabia, It was more consequential than Washington realised. But now the battle has been joined. *The Global Architecture*, 9-12.
- Gul, A. H. (2021). Iran and Saudi Arabia's Strategic Rivalry and the Middle Eastern Security: An Assessment. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal*, 17-29.
- Isik, A. (2023). outcomes of reconciliation between Saudi Arabia And Iran. Sultan Qaboos University, 1-24.
- Keynoush, B. (2016). A Historical Overview of Saudi-Iranian Relations. In *Saudi Arabia and Iran: Friends or Foes?* 1st edition. Palgrave Macmillan., 9-39.
- Khaleel, A. I. (2023). The Regional Dimension in the Administration of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi: Iranian- Saudi Relations (As A model). *Res Militaris*, 728-743.

- Mahad, D. (2023, May 5). The Conversation US; Boston. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/can-china-broker-peace-yemen-further-beijings/docview/2809934961/se-2?accountid=51108>
- Mohammadi, A. A. (2023, 12 July). Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Iran to Malaysia. (B. G. aal, Interviewer)
- Monitor, Y. (2023). why did the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement fail to end the Yemen war? Yemen monitor, 15 June.
- Widakuswara, P. (2023, March 15). US Continues Yemen Diplomacy Following Chinese-Brokered Saudi-Iran Deal. Voice of America News/ FIND, Washington.



**Brigadier General Hesham Afifi Abdelaal Afifi**

Brigadier General Hesham Afifi Abdelaal Afifi, from the Egyptian Army, graduated from the Egyptian Military Academy as a 2nd Lt on 30 Jun 1996. He served as an Armor Platoon leader and company commander in the western Military region. After 8 years, he was posted to the Military Police Special Guards Unit, responsible for guarding the VIPs. After finishing his commitment to the MP, He shifted his career from an Armor officer to an HR officer. Throughout his career in Human Resources Management, he held various positions such as the Head of Files and Information Department in the Egyptian Armor Corps, the Head of Reserves and Mobilization, the Head of Service and Redeployment, and the Chief of Officers Affairs in the same organization. Before attending NRC, he also served as the Chief of the General Planning Branch of the Organisation and Administration Authority of the Egyptian Armed Forces. For international missions, he served as a Military Observer in the United Nations mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo “MONUC” in 2005 and as a personnel officer in the same mission under “MONUSCO” in 2015. In his professional military education, Brigadier General Hesham completed a Bachelor of Military Science degree along with all the mandatory courses leading up to the Tank Battalion Commander Course, the Battalion Commander Course of Organization and Administration, and the Leaders Course of Organization and Administration and Officers' Affairs. He has a strong academic background in Human Resources Management, having obtained a diploma from the USA. He has also earned a Bachelor's degree in Management Science, a Master's degree in Human resources management, and a scholarship as a fellow of the Defense National College at Higher Nasser Academy in Egypt. Currently, he is pursuing his PhD research.

## THE ROLE OF INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN ENHANCING PEOPLE-CENTERED SECURITY

**Colonel Meor Anas Bin Meor Ahmad**

National Resilience College, PUSPAHANAS

### Abstract

*Globalisation has also created new vulnerabilities in world security perceptions. The security concept has evolved from a state-centric security approach to a human-centric one. It emphasises the need for a People-Centered Security (PCS) approach that recognises the importance of protecting human rights, promoting human security, and addressing the specific needs of individuals and communities. Although state governments retain the primary role in advancing PCS agendas, Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) will complement a gap-filling role to provide the necessary support to governments upon their request to strengthen their capacity to respond to current and emerging threats. This article contended that international organisations play a significant role in assisting the government in achieving PCS agendas. It aims to discuss the roles, issues, and challenges government and international organisations face in addressing the PCS agenda. Sources from secondary data were employed to substantiate the discussion. The discussion is divided into two sections. The first section gives an overview of the emergence of PCS as a new security concept and the roles of IGOs and NGOs. The second section discusses the issues and challenges of IGOs and NGOs in implementing PCS. Implementing PCS faces challenges such as ensuring local ownership, managing complex power dynamics, addressing competing national priorities and geopolitical factors, fostering a good governance climate, promoting collective security, empowering states as global actors, and effectively delegating and managing foreign aid. International organisations and governments can overcome these challenges by fostering local participation and encouraging hierarchical structures of top-down, bottom-up, or hybrid power dynamics. By collaborating with international organisations, states can promote peace, protect human rights, and address security concerns comprehensively. Recommendations include enhancing collaboration between state government and international organisations, empowering local communities, promoting good governance practices, and addressing power dynamics. Working together between state governments and international organisations can contribute to a more secure and prosperous world centred on the well-being and security of individuals and communities.*

**Keywords:** Human Security, People-Centered Security, International Organisations, NGOs, Governance

## Introduction

Security is an elusive concept. After the Cold War, states began distinguishing between traditional and new approaches to security thinking. Buzan claims that security covers a multidimensional concept covering military, political, economic, environmental, and societal elements. Globalisation has also created new vulnerabilities to old threats and a new security context. Nation-states still play significant roles in the way the world functions. However, more institutionally, they are becoming part of more economically and politically accessible organisations. Security perceptions have been changed from a state-centric security approach towards a human-centric security approach. The human security framework is also parallel to the debate over development and trends in international law and relations, which precede the protection of human rights over the sovereignty and integrity of the state. This move to recognise people emphasises the need for a more People-Centered Security (PCS) approach instead of using states as the focus of security assistance.

PCS emerged over time as a solution to the unfulfilled promise of human security. It endeavours to achieve a balance that the human security concept could not muster between state and people-centric securities. It has raised the essential roles of government and international organisations in pursuing PCS agendas. State governments retain the primary role of protecting human security due to their mandate, authority, and resources. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2018) highlighted that a government has to develop laws, regulations, and policies that protect human rights, advance social justice, and uphold the rule of law. International organisations must work in conjunction with state governments and, in response to a request from those governments, supply them with the required support to enhance their capacity to deal with new and existing threats. Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are used to classify international organisations. Both shared aims, knowledge, and resources can complement one another, resulting in more effective and sustainable outcomes. Governments may capitalise on IGOs and NGOs' grassroots presence and specialised expertise to create policies and programs addressing people's needs. In turn, IGOs and NGOs gain from governments' legitimacy and power as they advocate for systemic changes that ensure the accomplishment of their projects (Abiddin, 2022). For Malaysia, its participation in the international arena through international organisations may uplift the roles of Malaysia as a small state in pursuing the human security agenda for its citizens.

State governments and international organisations often work together and form partnerships to address securities matters. As a result of their size, influence, willingness to challenge the status quo, and ability to address transnational concerns, international organisations are frequently expected to play a gap-filling role for the government. IGOs and NGOs are prominent types of organisations involved in PCS-related sectors.

This article contends that international organisations play a significant role in assisting the government in achieving PCS context. In this view, this article aims to discuss the roles, issues and challenges both IGOs and NGOs face in addressing PCS. First, the article begins by providing an overview of the emergence of PCS as a new security concept and the roles of international organisations. Secondly, it dwells on the issues and challenges of international organisations implementing PCS. This article will provide recommendations for enhancing PCS initiatives.

## **The Emergence of PCS Approach to Security as a New Security Concept**

The scope of security studies has evolved to encompass theoretical discussions surrounding human rights in the realm of international politics. This shift, often referred to as “new humanitarianism,” has significantly altered perceptions of security. In the aftermath of World War II, humanitarian principles have become integral to global politics. State actors predominantly oversee this domain, with support from various United Nations (UN) organisations. The concept of humanitarian universalism has gained a solid footing in the Western world, often employed in restructuring states that have lost their control over military power. This has led to a change in the funding dynamics of conflicts, with a greater emphasis on the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Haziran 2017). International entities have increasingly moved away from strictly upholding state sovereignty in cases where nations fail to address human rights concerns. Instead, there is a growing focus on implementing humanitarian actions in these states.

## **Aligning human security to the PCS concept**

The idea of human security has evolved in two ways, from just war to humanitarian intervention. Firstly, the Canadian government published the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in the Human Security Report as a reaction to the genocides in Rwanda and Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Secondly is the UNDP report, which made a much more extensive description and focused on the development and different security sectors like food, economic or societal security. These approaches must combine and emphasise individuals’ security and interrelated security features. This notion has focused on emerging a new security context emphasising the requirement for a greater people-centred approach to security (Kaldor, 2011). The human security framework also parallels the debate over development and trends in international law and relations, which precede the protection of human rights over the sovereignty and integrity of the state. The UN has emphasised that with the end of the Cold War, people should be at the focus of development, and the necessity for a human-centred approach to security has been acknowledged by every head of state member of the UN (UNDP, 1994). Therefore, the overarching principle is that “there will be no development without security and no security without development, and both development and security also depend on respect for human rights and the rule of law.”

In recent years, PCS can be seen as a component or an extension of the broader human security framework, encompassing various dimensions beyond traditional security concerns, as stated by Buzan. This concept was defined in response to the critique of the human security agenda, and human rights are at the core of its agenda. By prioritising human rights, it seeks to address the root causes of insecurity and foster a more just and equitable society (UNGA, 2005). The concept also focuses on vulnerable groups, such as women, children, refugees, and marginalised communities. It aims to address their needs and vulnerabilities, incorporate a gender perspective, reduce inequalities, and ensure their inclusion and participation in decision-making processes (Zojer, 2019). The UN has leveraged the PCS approach by echoing the principles of human security (dignity and respect, contextual relevance, participation and empowerment, and inclusivity and non-discrimination) in outlining 17 targeted goals under the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Hence, achieving SDG 16, one of the 17 goals, requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including governments, international organisations, and local communities. Therefore, governments have a crucial role in creating policies and legal frameworks. In parallel to it, NGOs also play a vital role in advocating for the rights and well-being of individuals, providing essential services, and empowering communities.

## **International organisations and their roles**

International organisations play critical roles in solving global difficulties effectively, promoting worldwide collaboration, facilitating international diplomacy, and addressing global issues that call for collective action. IGOs and NGOs are two types of international organisations that perform similar functions and strive to achieve the same goals: to assist people in need and empower the less fortunate members of society. However, the structure of these organisations and the way they carry out their missions can be different (Fisher, 2018).

Formal agreements among sovereign governments give rise to IGOs, which provide a forum for their members to collaborate on international issues of mutual concern. The UN, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are all examples of IGOs that work to improve areas including international security, international trade, public health, and global government. On the other hand, NGOs are charitable groups that work on a regional, national, or global scale. Many are motivated by a desire to improve society, the environment, or people's fundamental rights. Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Transparency International Malaysia, and the Malaysian AIDS Council are all examples of NGOs. Their work complements government endeavours and is crucial in resolving societal issues and fostering good governance.

IGOs and NGOs play essential, multi-faceted, complementary roles in strengthening PCS capability. These organisations play a crucial role in society within the capacity development paradigm of state institutions by encouraging change, providing necessary services, and fostering sustainable development (Barron et al., 2020). Adopting the UN SDGs for 2030 is a recent and prominent illustration of their functions. They participate in implementing SDG 16 under the UN initiatives by promoting safety, preserving human rights, and guaranteeing equal access to justice, also contributing their participation directly to PCS (UN, 2015).

The Initiatives For International Dialogue (IID), a regional organisation based in the Philippines focusing on conflict transformation, peacebuilding, and human rights advocacy in Southeast Asia, is an example of an IGO. IID works on peacebuilding efforts in the conflict-affected region of Mindanao in the Philippines. They facilitate dialogue and mediation processes between different ethnic and religious groups to promote peaceful coexistence and address the root causes of the conflict (Ferth, 2021).

NGOs also advocate for the awareness of individuals' rights on security concerns and influencing policies and practices. They highlight the importance of PCS, promote inclusivity, and provide a platform for marginalised voices (Matarasso, 2019). They offer to fill gaps in service provision, counselling, legal aid, shelter, and rehabilitation, working closely with communities to address their specific security needs (UN Women, 2019). NGOs play a vital role in monitoring the implementation of PCS policies and holding governments accountable for their commitments. A recent example of an NGO playing a significant role in promoting PCS is the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The IRC is a global humanitarian organisation that works to respond to and assist people affected by conflict and disaster. They have been actively involved in addressing the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh to provide life-saving assistance, protection, and support to the affected population. In promoting PCS, the IRC ensures access to basic needs such as shelter, healthcare, and education. Moreover, the IRC engages in advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the Rohingya's plight and promote their rights and well-being. They work with governments, international bodies, and other stakeholders to advocate for policy changes, support conflict resolution efforts, and address the root causes of displacement and insecurity (IRC, 2023).

## **Challenges in Implementing PCS to Security**

On a global scale, state governments and international organisations have made tremendous efforts to advance the goal of incorporating the PCS concept into mainstream discourse. Governments can approach security concerns more comprehensively, considering the rights and needs of citizens and communities. Despite the potential advantages that PCS programs offer the government, their implementation poses several significant challenges. Widespread implementation of PCS in the governmental system has proven challenging. The benefits and challenges of implementing PCS by government and international organisations are discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **Implementing local ownership concept**

The first challenge is for IGOs and NGOs to acknowledge the need for local ownership. Local ownership must be encouraged to ensure that all stakeholders at every level can manage and supply the desired services to their respective populations effectively, efficiently, resiliently, and autonomously (UNDG, 2017; Mark, 2022). Diverse local actors inside and beyond the state must establish and lead PCS development programs. Local ownership is the symbol of the prevention of external participants' monopoly. Therefore, international organisations should acknowledge the vital importance of local ownership so that it will accurately represent local opinions.

The situation in Rohingya is a good case study for examining the relevance of this principle. Effective humanitarian interventions require cooperation between international NGOs and their local equivalents. To get assistance and support, the Rohingya have benefited from the collaboration of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, the Arakan Rohingya National Organization, and the Malaysian NGO Yayasan Al-Khairiah (IRC, 2023). By pooling resources from around the world with local knowledge, these partnerships enable a more thorough and long-lasting response. NGOs can better serve communities, boost resilience, and tailor aid to individual needs if they encourage local participation in decision-making.

### **Managing complex power dynamics: top-down, bottom-up, or hybrid**

Secondly, it is challenging to manage PCS's complex power dynamics, which can be either top-down, bottom-up, or hybrid. Top-down decision-making and hierarchical structures are commonly applied in conventional security techniques based on state-centric security. To make a change toward the PCS approach, it must consider the need for bottom-up power dynamics that encourage genuine participation and community involvement (Mark, 2022). It will strengthen state governance and community-building initiatives. A legal framework that is responsive enough to the population's demands and provides avenues for their involvement should be established. It will promote fruitful communication between state institutions and a cross-section of civil society actors.

It is essential to ensure that the voices and needs of marginalised and vulnerable populations are recognised, represented, and effectively addressed in the decision-making processes (Yu, 2019). Stakeholders must also improve their approaches and instruments for working with non-state and hybrid security players, as they are essential to many countries' PCS issues. Malaysia adopted a top-down approach from the federal to state and local authority levels. The participatory decision-making processes in the Malaysian planning system involve various actors, such as planners, developers, and NGOs, and provide avenues for the public to contribute and have rights in the planning process. It reflects the values of public interest and ensures a democratic planning system that empowers the public to participate effectively in the process, besides binding all parties accountable for their action (Marlyana et al., 2022).

### **Competing interests between state sovereignty, national priorities, and geopolitical factors**

The competing national priorities and geopolitical factors were other significant barriers international organisations faced while embracing PCS. International organisations usually work in geopolitical situations where different countries' interests and agendas compete. These interests can sway decision-making processes and undermine the collaborative efforts to protect PCS. Governments can prioritise issues related to their national security more than those related to collective security or human rights, making it difficult for IGOs and NGOs to pursue PCS.

Political disputes, rivalries, and conflicting national agendas may impede the efficacy of cooperation endeavours. During the Syrian civil war, various countries' pursuit of geopolitical aims frequently preceded concerns regarding the PCS. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (2023), the Syrian government has been accused of committing various violations of human rights against its people with the assistance of Russia and Iran. These violations include the targeting of civilians and the deployment of chemical weapons. In terms of geopolitical, the involvement of regional powers like Iran and Saudi Arabia, who have supported opposing sides, has exacerbated the political and sectarian dimensions of the war. Furthermore, the conflict has been impacted by the rivalries and interests of major powers such as the United States, Russia, and Turkey, which has impeded coordinated efforts to address the situation (Gurses & Sirkeci, 2017). In pursuing PCS in the face of competing for national aims and geopolitical forces, these activities constitute a clear violation of the principles of PCS because they impeded efforts to provide humanitarian assistance and maintain the rights of individuals whose lives were adversely affected.

## **Good governance practices**

Global governance architecture is based on international organisations' participation as key participants. Good governance practices are increasingly crucial for both the public and non-profit sectors. Leakage, misuse of authority, corruption, transparent practices that assure accountability, ethical behaviour, and responsible management are all topics that must be addressed while discussing the growth of IGOs and NGOs (Hafez, 2019). Poor governance is another significant challenge faced by international organisations. To qualify as an NGO, an organisation must be non-partisan, non-profit, run entirely on volunteer effort, and serve the public good. The absence of these traits is a warning indication of dysfunctional NGO leadership. Many NGOs' boards of directors mismanage funds indirectly or unintentionally, which leads to NGOs not operating well (Springman, 2022). Hafez (2019) then identified the problems of poor governance among NGOs in Malaysia to be addressed timely, given the launch of the 'Good Governance Evaluation Code' for organisations under the Registrar of Societies (ROS) in 2017 that underpins the five principles of good governance as an evaluation mechanism for Malaysian NGOs. Implementing good governance mechanisms will ensure that NGOs achieve their objectives.

## **Harnessing international organisations: empowering states as global actors**

The participation of international organisations in promoting PCS provides an opportunity for smaller state governments to demonstrate their statecraft on the world stage. A country uses statecraft to advance its interests and intentions in international relations. Participating in PCS initiatives at multilateral forums, conferences, and working groups facilitated by international organisations can help smaller states increase their visibility, influence, and commitment to advancing peace, human rights, and inclusive governance (Jonathan & Shaun, 1995; Andrea, 2014).

Small state governments can contribute to developing global agendas, policies, and practices that put people first by collaborating with IGOs or NGOs. It gives them a seat at the table regarding international peace and security choices. This viewpoint is consistent with former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's claim that "being small does not imply a lack of big ideas." Small governments generally participate through regional and like-minded organisations, such as NGOs, to share duties and amplify their voice and impact. Key global forums for promoting PCS include the UN and its six main organs. Smaller countries can participate fully in the UN General Assembly debates on security, human rights, and development issues regardless of size or geopolitical importance. As a result, individuals are better equipped to express their views and advocate for policies that reflect their national interests and values. On the other hand, using international organisations to empower nations as global actors in advancing PCS has considerable benefits. However, limited resources in terms of financial and human capacity may limit their participation on the world stage. Power dynamics where extensive and more powerful states often have a stronger voice and more remarkable ability to shape agendas and policies, making it difficult for smaller states to overcome these power imbalances and ensure that their perspectives and interests are adequately represented and considered. All of this will impair their ability to interact effectively.

## **Promoting collective security in safeguarding humanitarian interests**

Governments understand the importance of dealing with humanitarian crises and helping vulnerable populations. To achieve this, they work with international organisations to address security issues. Recognising that individuals and communities are interconnected, governments protect their well-being and rights by promoting a peaceful and secure world. International organisations are responsible for coordinating humanitarian aid, advocating for human rights, and upholding the values of peace, security, and cooperation. They encourage the state government to work together to address security issues collectively. This concept of collective security aims to protect all states and alliances from violence and human rights violations, promoting peace and stability. IGOs and NGOs ensure collective security by implementing effective peace and conflict resolution strategies. However, political constraints and conflicting objectives among member states and international organisations often hinder their efforts.

Achieving a balance between collective security and national interests can be challenging, mainly when political considerations influence decision-making processes (Klotz, 2019). Establishing a consensus among the stakeholders promoting PCS is a crucial step toward success. However, this can be challenging due to the divergent priorities, methodologies, and mandates of IGOs, NGOs, and other governments as stakeholders. In conflict-affected areas, humanitarian aid workers may need help accessing affected populations due to security concerns, logistical challenges, and political obstacles, which can hinder their ability to provide timely and sustained aid. To overcome these hurdles, international organisations, governments, and relevant authorities must collaborate through diplomatic efforts, negotiation, and cooperation.

NATO exemplifies the organisation that champions collective security. NATO is a military alliance of 30 member countries committed to collective defence and promoting stability in the Euro-Atlantic region. One key challenge for NATO is balancing collective security and national interests regarding burden-sharing, particularly in defence spending and contributions (Klotz, 2019). In the Ukraine-Russia conflict, NATO stepped up to bolster Ukraine's capacity to manage civil emergencies and safeguard civilians. NATO members concentrated on rendering medical, emergency, and aid services to displaced persons in the affected Ukrainian regions (NATO, 2023). This assistance promotes collective security by sharing best practices, conducting joint exercises, and enhancing civilian-military cooperation. Complementing NATO's endeavours are NGOs such as the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), also known as Doctors Without Borders, which is a global humanitarian medical organisation that assists conflict victims, those afflicted with diseases, natural disasters, and other emergencies. They offer aid to vulnerable populations without bias based on race, religion, or political affiliation. They work alongside governments, international organisations, and NGOs to coordinate and enhance humanitarian interventions (Kathryn, 2005).

## **Delegation of authority and access to foreign aid**

Collaboration between nations is crucial for solving global issues and attaining shared objectives. Often, governments become part of international organisations using agency theory to distribute responsibilities and duties. In this arrangement, state governments are the primary entities, while international organisations act as their representatives in foreign matters (Cannon et al., 2020). By entrusting decision-making power to these organisations, governments can benefit from their proficiency, resources, and insights to tackle some of the world's most urgent problems. Despite delegation of responsibility, governments retain ultimate control and governance over these institutions through membership, voting rights, and participation in policy-making procedures. When multinational organisations distribute responsibility, the main challenge is ensuring accountability. Governments are responsible for ensuring these organisations fulfil their objectives and act in their best interests. To achieve this, transparency and accountability procedures must be implemented to hold these organisations responsible for their actions and decisions. It is important to note that delegating authority to these organisations may result in losing sovereignty, control, and decision-making power. Therefore, governments must carefully consider the impact of ceding sovereignty and how it could affect their national interests (Brock, 2019).

To maximise the effectiveness of their international aid programs, state governments must delegate responsibilities to international organisations. These organisations serve as valuable intermediaries, allowing for better coordination, prioritisation, and optimisation of resources. By collaborating with specific countries and utilising funding from member countries, state governments can make significant strides in global development programs. The WHO is used to illustrate this concept. Serves as a pivotal entity in coordinating worldwide health initiatives, offering technical support, establishing health standards, and facilitating international aid efforts related to health.

Governments across the globe rely on WHO as a vital resource to address global health challenges effectively and secure access to global health funding for relevant projects (Cannon et al., 2020). Another example is the UNDP or World Bank, which offers education, healthcare, environmental conservation, and good governance aid. This approach saves time and money and increases the impact of aid efforts for the greater good (Henry et al., 2019).

## Conclusion

Improving human security requires the collaborative effort of governments and international organisations. The move towards a more PCS approach recognises how important it is to defend human rights, eliminate vulnerabilities, and promote inclusion. While international organisations support and complement the state government's efforts, the former is significant in formulating policies and legal frameworks to safeguard human security. Both IGOs and NGOs, with their grassroots presence and specialised expertise, bridge the gap between communities and government as policymakers, advocating for systemic changes and providing essential services. Although putting people at the centre of security presents several challenges, it *provides state governments with opportunities for global engagement, promoting collective security and effective foreign aid management. By embracing these benefits and participating in PCS initiatives, states can achieve a more secure, just, and prosperous world.* A small state such as Malaysia may benefit by taking an essential role in international organisations in pursuing the PCS agenda to ensure recognition from other states in the international arena.

Some recommendations are put forward to help implement the PCS approach. These recommendations include increasing collaboration and partnerships between state governments and international organisations, empowering local communities, encouraging good governance practices, and tackling complicated power relations. Implementing these proposals will allow governments and international organisations to collaborate in implementing PCS more efficiently. It will lead to an increase in the protection of human rights, an improvement in access to justice, and the formation of more inclusive and resilient societies. In the end, peace and security can be achieved.

## THE ROLE OF INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN ENHANCING PEOPLE-CENTERED SECURITY

### References:

- Abiddin, N. Z., Ibrahim, I., & Abdul Aziz, S. A. (2022). The role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for community development: the way forward. *Journal of Management Information and Decision Sciences*, 25(2), pp 1-10.
- Andrea, Ó. S. (2014) *Small States at the United Nations: Diverse Perspectives, Shared Opportunities*. IPI Publications. [https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi\\_e\\_pub\\_small\\_states\\_at\\_un.pdf](https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi_e_pub_small_states_at_un.pdf)
- Barron, P., Melling, L., & Mawby, R. I. (2020). Non-Governmental Organisations and Human Security: History and Conceptual Development. In *Non-Governmental Organisations and Human Security*. pp. 1-15.
- Brock, L. (2019). *Multinational Organisations and the Limits of Accountability: The World Bank, Extractive Industries, and Civil Society*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cannon, C., & Thomas B. (2020). 'The Governance of International Organisations: Structural Components, Internal Mechanisms, and Contemporary Challenges,' *Advances in Corporate Governance: Comparative Perspectives*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198866367.003.0009>,
- Ferth, V. M., & Jovanie. C. E. (2021). Frictional Binaries: Hybridity, Civil Society, and Liberal-Local Peacebuilding in Mindanao. pp 99-125. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-67758-9\\_6](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-67758-9_6)
- Haziran, (2017). Human Security Concepts for Ngo's In Post-Intervention Societies - A Case Study in Iraq. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 10 (50). pp 167-172
- Henry, L., Sundstrom, L., Winston, C., & Bala-Miller, P. (2019). NGO participation in global governance institutions: international and domestic drivers of engagement. *Interest Groups & Advocacy*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41309-019-00066->
- Gurses, M., & Sirkeci, I. (2017). Syria conflict and international relations theory: An appraisal. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 5(4), pp 1-14.
- Kaldor, M. (2011). *Human Security*, (3rd ed.), Polity.
- Kathryn E. J, (2005). A Case Study of Medecins Sans Frontiers and International Humanitarian NGO Effectiveness. <https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir:102465/datastream/PDF/>

- Klotz, F. (2019). The Power of National Interests: An Analysis of State Strategies to Balance National Interests and Collective Security. *International Studies Quarterly*, 63(4).
- Mark Sedra, (2022). A People-centred Approach to Security; Seeking Conceptual Clarity to Guide UN Policy Development. UNDP
- Marlyana, Jamalunlaili, & Muhammad Hakim Danial, 2022. The Challenges of Public Participation in the Malaysian Planning System. *Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners*, 20 (4) (2022), pp 195 – 209
- Matarasso, F. (2019). A restless art: How participation in the arts changes people and communities. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
- Mazwin Nik Anis. (2023). MADANI- A Humane Concept. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/01/20/Madani---a-humane-concept>
- Mohd Faridh Hafez, Mohd Omar & Sharifah Hayaati Syed Ismail. (2019). Development of NGO Governance in Malaysia: Lessons From Indonesia and Jordan. *Seminar Pengajian Islam, Kemanusiaan Dan Sains Sosial (SPIKES)*, 13 (2).
- Mohamed Basyir. (2023). Zahid Announces Setting Up Of Madani Council. <https://www.nst.com/news/nation/2023/03/891429/Zahid-announces-setting-Madani-council>
- United Nations. (2015). Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- United Nations. (2017). Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>
- UNDG. (2017). Capacity Development: UNDAF Companion Guidance), <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/UNDG-UNDAF-Companion-Pieces-8-Capacity-Development.pdf>
- UN Women. (2019). Handbook for National Action Plans on Violence Against Women.
- IRC. (2023). Rohingya Crisis. <https://www.rescue.org/country/rohingya-crisis>
- IRC. (2023). Localizing Aid: A Critical Agenda for Rohingya Refugee Response. <https://www.rescue.org/report/localizing-aid-critical-agenda-rohingya-refugee-response>

IISS. (2023). The civil war in Syria: an intractable conflict with geopolitical implications. <https://www.iiss.org/en/online-analysis/online-analysis/2021/12/the-civil-war-in-syria-an-intractable-conflict-with-geopolitical-implications/>

Springman J. (2022). The Political Economy of NGO Service Provision. *World Politics Information and Decision Sciences*, 25(2), pp 1-11.

Yu, K.N. (2019). 4 Challenges NGOs Face and Corresponding Solutions. *Asian NGO*. <https://asiango.org/magazine/post-magazine/article/article-detail/118/4-challenges-ngos-face-and-corresponding-solutions>



**Colonel Meor Anas bin Meor Ahmad**

Colonel Meor Anas bin Meor Ahmad joined the OCS, RMC in 1990 as a pivotal step in his military career of excellence. Then, he was commissioned as a Platoon Commander in the elite 8th Battalion (Parachute) Royal Ranger Regiment in 1992. His career also featured vital staff appointments, including roles as a Staff Officer Grade 2 at Army HQ, specializing in Human Resources and Army Restructuring, and later as a Staff Officer Grade 1 at MAF HQ, specializing in Operations and Exercises. He also assumed a critical role as Deputy Commander of the esteemed 501st Territorial Army Regiment in Johor Bahru, Directing Staff at the Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College and the Chief of Staff of the 5th Infantry Division Headquarters. His commitment to lifelong learning is evident through extensive professional military education, including Infantry Captain Career Course in the USA and CGSC in the Philippines. He holds a Master's in Defence Studies from the UKM and a Master's in Management Science from the UUM. Additionally, he earned a Diploma in Accounting from UiTM and an Advanced Diploma in Management Science from the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN).

## BRICS' POTENTIAL AS AN ECONOMIC GLOBAL POWERHOUSE AND ITS CHALLENGE TO THE US-LED ECONOMIC SYSTEM

First Admiral Hj Jamaludin bin Hj Sairi  
Royal Malaysian Navy

### Abstract

*The BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) have emerged as a formidable economic bloc with the potential to challenge the US-led economic system. The BRICS nations have witnessed remarkable economic growth in recent years, fueled by their large populations, abundant natural resources, and expanding consumer markets. China and India, in particular, have experienced rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, propelling them to become the world's second and fifth-largest economies, respectively. The GDP of the BRICS countries has surpassed that of traditional economic powerhouses like the United States, Europe, and Japan. The BRICS nations have fostered closer economic cooperation and established alternative financial institutions such as the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). These pose a challenge to the Bretton Woods institutions that were put in place by the United States and Western allies following the Second World War (WW2). Despite BRICS' significant potential as a global economic powerhouse, the group faces several challenges in becoming a global powerhouse and reshaping the US-led economic system. Internal issues such as income inequality, corruption, and geopolitical tensions within individual member nations may hinder their sustained economic growth and collective efforts. Moreover, divergent interests and competing priorities among the BRICS nations could impede their unity. The current geopolitical landscape, characterised by strategic rivalries and trade tensions, may also challenge the BRICS nations' aspirations. The group must address internal challenges and navigate resistance from established powers like the United States to fully realise its potential as a collective force in the global economy. The established powers are unlikely to relinquish their economic dominance without resistance.*

**Keywords:** *Economic Global Powerhouse, US-led Economic System, Institutions, Economic Growth, Global Economic Governance*

## Introduction

The BRICS alliance of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa has emerged as a significant force in the global economic landscape (Io Lo & Hiscock, 2014). BRICS, initially referred to as BRIC, was coined in 2001 by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill to describe the rising economic power of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. South Africa joined the group in 2010, expanding it to BRICS (Neill, 2001). Moreover, since its formation, BRICS has gained prominence as an essential economic bloc, challenging the traditional dominance of Western powers. One key objective of BRICS is to promote cooperation among member countries to achieve sustainable economic growth and development. The alliance seeks to strengthen economic ties, encourage trade and investment, enhance financial cooperation, and foster technological innovation. Through collective efforts, BRICS aims to address global challenges and shape the international economic order (BRICS Information Centre, 2021).

The economic potential of BRICS member countries is a cornerstone of the alliance's significance. Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa are recognised for their large populations, abundant natural resources, and rapidly growing economies. Individually, these countries have demonstrated impressive economic growth rates, contributing to their status as emerging economic powerhouses (World Bank, 2021; IMF, 2021). The BRICS alliance has emerged as a significant player in the global economy. With its diverse membership and shared objectives, BRICS aims to harness the economic potential of its member countries to promote sustainable development, enhance economic cooperation, and reshape the international economic order.

This article examines the emergence of BRICS, looking at the group's development and performance as an emerging economy. The article examines the BRICS economy and the prospect of becoming a global economic powerhouse. First, the history and the development of BRICS. Second, an insight into the financial cooperations and institutions in BRICS. Third, the article will then assess the cohesiveness of BRICS. Fourth, the prospect of BRICS and sustaining growth trajectory will be followed by the conclusion.

## The Current Economic Global System Headed By US and Western Allies

The current global economic system is predominantly led by the United States and its Western allies under the Bretton Woods system created in 1944. The United States, as the largest economy in the world, has significant influence over global economic policies, trade agreements, and financial institutions. Together with its Western allies, which include countries in Europe and other parts of the world, they shape the rules and norms of the international economic order. Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO) are primarily dominated by these countries, reflecting their economic and political power. However, it is essential to note that emerging economies and regional alliances like BRICS are increasingly challenging this traditional order, seeking greater representation and a more balanced global economic system.

## **BRICS As An Emerging Economy**

As an emerging economy association, BRICS came together to promote cooperation and influence global governance. Key factors, including economic interests, geopolitical considerations, and shared aspirations for a more equitable international order, brought BRICS countries together.

Economic interests play a significant role in driving the cohesion among BRICS nations. According to the IMF report (2020), each member represents a sizable and rapidly growing economy, possessing abundant natural resources, a large consumer base, and substantial investment potential. Therefore, by joining forces, BRICS countries seek to leverage their collective economic strength to enhance trade and investment opportunities among themselves, reduce dependence on traditional economic powers, and foster greater economic integration. The IMF also reported that the BRICS countries collectively accounted for approximately 23% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and their combined GDP was larger than that of the European Union. Geopolitical considerations have also contributed to the unity of BRICS (Ramirez, 2017). This is where the member countries shared a common desire to challenge the dominance of Western powers in global affairs and increase their influence on the international stage. Moreover, BRICS nations aim to establish a multipolar world order where decision-making is more inclusive and reflects the interests of emerging economies. According to Kapsos (2016), it brings to the shared aspiration that it is driven by a belief that the existing global institutions and governance structures, such as the United Nations Security Council and the International Monetary Fund, should be reformed to reflect the changing balance of power. Besides that, by aligning their positions and working together, BRICS countries can exert more significant influence in shaping the global agenda.

In addition, the formation of BRICS also reflects a convergence of political ideologies and values among its member nations (Lo, 2016). While each country has its unique political system, there is a general inclination towards non-interference in internal affairs, respect for sovereignty, and a rejection of unilateralism. These commonalities provide a foundation for cooperation and understanding, enabling BRICS countries to navigate geopolitical challenges and promote shared values within the international community. The members often collaborate on sustainable development, climate change, and social welfare issues, highlighting their shared commitment to addressing global challenges. Furthermore, BRICS cooperation is strengthened through various institutional frameworks. According to Kirton & Larionova (2022), the organisation conducts annual summits, ministerial meetings, and working group sessions, which serve as platforms for dialogue and decision-making. The New Development Bank (NDB), established by BRICS members, provides financial support for infrastructure and sustainable development projects within the member countries and other developing nations. These institutional mechanisms foster trust, deepen cooperation, and facilitate the implementation of joint initiatives.

## Economic Growth Rates and Trends in BRICS Countries

ECONOMIC GROWTH RATES AND TRENDS IN BRICS COUNTRIES (1980 – 2020)	
CHINA	9.6 %
INDIA	6.7%
RUSSIA	1.9%
BRAZIL	2.4%
SOUTH AFRICA	1.8%

Source: IMF 2021  
Figure 1

Collectively, BRICS represent over 40% of the world’s population and a significant share of global GDP, have witnessed impressive growth rates, and played a crucial role in reshaping the global economic landscape (World Trade Organization, 2021). China, for one, as the largest economy among the BRICS nations, has experienced remarkable economic growth over the past few decades. China’s average annual GDP growth rate was around 9.6% from 1980 to 2020 (IMF, 2021). This rapid expansion has enabled China to become the world’s second-largest economy and a major global trade and investment player. China’s economic success can be attributed to its large domestic market, substantial investments in infrastructure, and advancements in technology and manufacturing (refer to Figure 1).

India, the world’s sixth-largest economy, has also witnessed significant economic growth. India’s average annual GDP growth rate was approximately 6.7% from 1980 to 2020 (IMF, 2021). The country’s dynamic population, expanding middle class, and ongoing structural reforms have contributed to its economic expansion. India’s focus on information technology, services, and manufacturing sectors has attracted foreign direct investment and positioned the country as a global hub for innovation and entrepreneurship. Russia, with its vast natural resources and skilled workforce, has been a key player in the global economy. From 1980 to 2020, Russia’s average annual GDP growth rate was approximately 1.9% (IMF, 2021). While the country’s growth rates have fluctuated due to its dependence on commodity prices and geopolitical factors, Russia contributes significantly to global energy markets and other sectors such as aerospace, defence, and technology.

Brazil, the largest economy in Latin America, has faced various economic challenges but has shown resilience and potential for growth. From 1980 to 2020, Brazil's average annual GDP growth rate was approximately 2.4% (IMF, 2021). The country's rich natural resources, diverse agriculture, and vibrant consumer market provide a solid foundation for economic expansion. Brazil has implemented reforms to improve the business environment, attract investment, and promote sustainable development, positioning itself as a regional leader and an attractive market for global companies. Finally, South Africa, the most industrialised economy in Africa, has played a significant role in the BRICS alliance. From 1980 to 2020, South Africa's average annual GDP growth rate was approximately 1.8% (IMF, 2021). While the country has faced economic challenges such as slow growth and high unemployment, it has undertaken reforms to address structural issues and promote investment. South Africa's strategic location, well-developed infrastructure, and diverse sectors, including mining, finance, and tourism, position it as an essential gateway to the African continent.

The BRICS countries have demonstrated substantial economic growth rates, highlighting their global economic powerhouse potential. China's rapid expansion, India's promising growth trajectory, and the contributions of Russia, Brazil, and South Africa collectively position the BRICS alliance as significant players in the global economy. While challenges and variations in growth rates exist, these countries continue to implement structural reforms, invest in infrastructure, and diversify their economies to sustain long-term growth.

## Factors Contributing to the Economic Growth of BRICS Nations

Table 1: Summary of Factors Contributing to Rise of BRICS

**TABLE FROM FAdm Hj Jamaludin PAGE 5**

-

The economic growth of the BRICS nations was fueled by various factors that boosted their development and emergence as major global economic players (refer to Table 1). One crucial factor driving economic growth in the BRICS nations is the expansion of domestic consumption and urbanisation (Haseeb, Hassan & Azam, 2017). With that, rising incomes, a growing middle class, and urban migration have increased consumer spending, creating a strong domestic market for goods and services. This is then related to the demand generated by domestic consumers which spurred investment, entrepreneurship, and industrialisation within these countries.

Furthermore, several BRICS nations possess abundant natural resources, including oil, gas, minerals, and agricultural products. The exploitation and export of these resources have been significant contributors to economic growth. Countries like Brazil, Russia, and South Africa have leveraged their resource endowments to boost exports, attract foreign investment, and generate revenue for development projects (Li, Waheed & Yildirim, 2023).

Following that, infrastructure investments play a crucial role in driving economic growth. BRICS nations have undertaken extensive infrastructure development projects, including constructing transportation networks, power plants, telecommunications systems, and industrial zones (Pradhan & Arvin, 2018). This effort improved infrastructure, enhanced connectivity, promoted trade and investment, and stimulated economic activity, contributing to overall growth. Moreover, according to Naude (2018), foreign direct investment (FDI) has played a crucial role in the economic growth of BRICS nations. These countries have actively attracted FDI by implementing favourable policies, offering incentives, and creating business-friendly environments. With that, FDI inflows bring capital, technology, and managerial expertise, stimulating domestic industries, creating jobs, and driving innovation.

Conversely, several BRICS nations have implemented economic reforms and liberalisation measures to stimulate growth. These reforms include deregulation, privatisation, trade liberalisation, and simplifying business processes (Ray & Thakur, 2020). By reducing bureaucratic hurdles and creating a more conducive business environment, these countries have attracted investment, fostered entrepreneurship, and encouraged competition, leading to increased productivity and growth. Medvedev (2015) observed that BRICS has also invested in education, healthcare, and skills development, which are vital for sustainable economic growth. BRICS nations have recognised the importance of human capital development and have invested significantly in education and skills training programs. Medvedev further argued that these initiatives help create a skilled workforce, promote innovation, and enhance productivity, thereby driving economic growth.

In addition, technological advancements and innovation have played a pivotal role in the economic growth of BRICS nations (Brandao Santana et al., 2015). These countries have focused on developing and adopting new technologies, encouraging research and development, and promoting digital transformation. Hence, technological advancements have led to increased productivity, efficiency gains, and the emergence of new industries, contributing to overall economic growth. Moreover, BRICS nations have established platforms for regional cooperation, such as the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) (Dent, 2021). These initiatives aim to enhance financial cooperation, promote trade and investment, and fund infrastructure projects. Due to that, regional cooperation fosters economic integration, strengthens diplomatic ties, and facilitates knowledge sharing among member countries, contributing to collective economic growth.

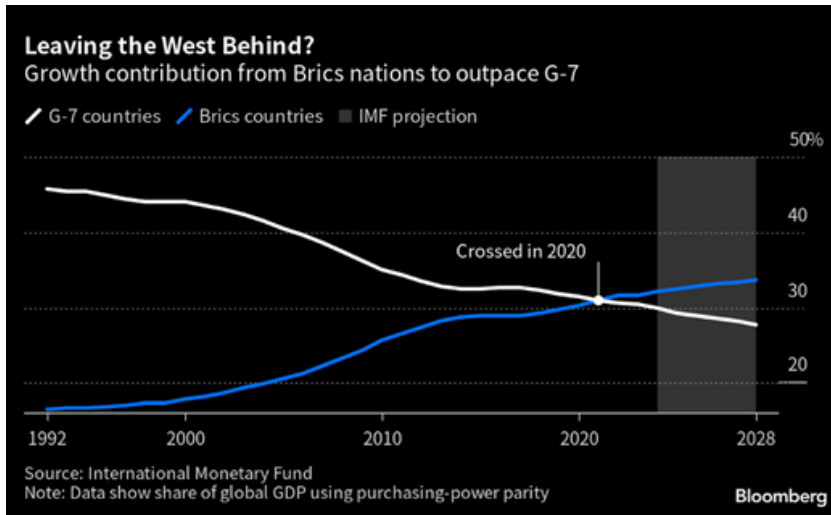


Figure 2

In recent years, the achievements of BRICS demonstrate a growing interest in the organisation. The five-member club has eclipsed the G7 nations regarding purchasing power parity and GDP growth rate, a trend that will intensify as additional countries join. BRICS has overtaken G7, surpassing the US, the UK, Germany, France, Japan, Italy, and Canada (Tanzi, 2023). In 2020, BRICS comprised 31.5% of the global GDP; the G7 shares have fallen to 30% (Figure 2). Following growth, the overall population of BRICS member states would exceed 4.3 billion, accounting for more than half of the global population. It is anticipated that an enlarged BRICS would have a GDP of \$30 trillion, exceeding that of the United States (Hitkari, 2023).

**Trade and Investment Cooperation within BRICS**

Trade among BRICS nations has witnessed remarkable growth over the years. According to data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), intra-BRICS exports increased from \$95 billion in 2001 to \$281 billion in 2020 (UNCTAD, 2021). Moreover, Pomfrt (2021) argued that the expanding middle class, rising incomes, and increasing consumer demand within these economies had fueled this rise in trade. Furthermore, the reduction of trade barriers, the elimination of tariffs on various goods, and the implementation of preferential trade agreements have also played a role in facilitating trade growth within BRICS.

Moreover, BRICS nations have established institutional mechanisms to promote trade and investment cooperation. The BRICS Business Council and the BRICS Trade Promotion Working Group are two key platforms that facilitate dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of information among businesses and governments (Khmelevskaya, n.d.). These mechanisms aim to identify opportunities, address challenges, and enhance trade and investment ties between member nations. Due to that, the FDI flows among BRICS countries have been significant in fostering

economic cooperation. According to the World Investment Report 2021 by UNCTAD, FDI inflows among BRICS nations reached \$133 billion in 2020 (UNCTAD, 2021). Market opportunities, access to resources, and technological cooperation drive these investments. The establishment of the NDB by BRICS countries has further facilitated investment cooperation by funding infrastructure projects and sustainable development initiatives within the member nations.

Furthermore, trade and investment cooperation within BRICS nations extends to various sectors (Neill, 2001). For instance, China has become a major trading partner for many BRICS countries, particularly in machinery, electronics, and textiles. With its abundant energy resources, Russia has been an important oil and gas supplier to other BRICS nations. India has strengthened ties in information technology, pharmaceuticals, and services. As a major agricultural exporter, Brazil has witnessed increased trade in commodities such as soybeans, meat, and sugar. With its diverse mineral resources, South Africa has engaged in business and investment partnerships related to mining, tourism, and financial services.

Despite the positive trajectory, trade and investment cooperation within BRICS face certain challenges. These include trade imbalances, regulatory barriers, infrastructure gaps, and geopolitical factors. However, member nations have recognised the importance of addressing these challenges and have undertaken initiatives to enhance cooperation. Prospects for trade and investment within BRICS remain promising, driven by continued economic growth, infrastructure development, and ongoing efforts to deepen regional integration and reduce trade barriers.

## **Financial Cooperation And Institutions In BRICS**

### **Establishment and Objectives of the New Development Bank (NDB)**

Establishing the NDB reflects the BRICS countries' aspirations to enhance financial cooperation, reduce dependence on traditional financial institutions, and address the infrastructure financing gap in emerging economies (Andronova & Shelepov, 2019). The NDB funds projects to improve the BRICS countries' and other emerging economies' infrastructure and sustainable development (Cooper, 2017). The NDB focuses on long-term projects that provide sustainable economic growth in developing nations. It also promotes economic growth through construction projects like roads and bridges. In turn, it builds better communities by providing quality infrastructure for the people. It seeks to support environmentally friendly economic growth in developing countries.

## **The Significance of the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**

The CRA is a precaution to help member countries deal with potential financial crises (McDowell, 2019). Moreover, it provides a pool of financial resources that member countries can access in case of balance of payments difficulties, thus helping to prevent and mitigate economic crises. Furthermore, the CRA enhances regional financial stability by promoting cooperation and mutual assistance among BRICS countries. McDowell (2019) further reiterates that the CRA reinforces confidence in member countries' financial systems and strengthens the global financial architecture. The creation of the CRA by BRICS countries is one of the recent actions taken to reduce their reliance on external institutions during financial stress. It promotes dialogue among non-member countries to increase BRICS members' financial independence and autonomy. Financial governance is becoming more inclusive and reliant on member countries. Hence, establishing the NDB and the CRA reflects the BRICS nations' commitment to enhancing economic cooperation, promoting sustainable development, and strengthening regional financial stability.

## **BRICS Expansion of Influence To Include More Developing Countries**

The BRICS have indeed sought to expand their influence by engaging with more developing countries worldwide. While it is essential to clarify that the core membership of the BRICS bloc has not officially expanded, the BRICS countries have pursued strategies to strengthen their partnerships and cooperation with other nations. Through mechanisms like the BRICS Plus framework, the BRICS countries have invited select non-BRICS countries to participate in summits and meetings, aiming to foster dialogue and collaboration. This outreach demonstrates their desire to extend their influence beyond their core group and engage with a broader range of developing countries.

The BRICS countries have actively sought to enhance economic ties, investment, and development cooperation with nations in regions like East Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. They have initiated trade agreements, investment partnerships, and joint projects in various sectors to promote inclusive growth and mutual benefits. This expansion of influence allows the BRICS countries to offer new opportunities for developing nations to boost their economies and address financial challenges. By leveraging their economic power and cooperation frameworks, the BRICS countries aim to contribute to developing and advancing a wider range of nations, enhancing their global influence in international politics and economics.

To sum up, BRICS's more significant influence is a testimony to the countries that have made a serious play to join the group amid heightened political tensions and deepening inequality (Jokela et al., 2023). BRICS are still studying and discussing the different standards or issues that should be put into this discussion. The question of what the international standard for trade would be is difficult. The difficulty has to do with economic disparities, political tensions, cultural and social differences, legal frameworks, and geographical considerations, not just economics.

## The Role of BRICS Institutions in Challenging the US-Led Economic System

This section explores how the NDB and CRA challenge the US-led economic system, including their alternative financing models, emphasis on sustainable development, and the potential for more significant influence in global financial governance. These institutions also play a role in challenging the dominance of the US-led economic system.

The rise of BRICS nations has significant implications for global economic governance and poses challenges to the traditional dominance of the US. The shifting power dynamics, calls for reform, the establishment of alternative financial institutions, and regional integration initiatives all contribute to the changing landscape of global economic governance. However, BRICS nations face challenges in coordinating their interests, establishing institutional capacity, and overcoming geopolitical and financial constraints (Denisov, Lukyanov & Safranchuk, 2019). Overcoming these challenges will be crucial for BRICS to effectively reshape global economic governance and challenge the traditional dominance of the United States.

The NDB presents an alternative financing model to the US-led economic system. Unlike traditional financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, which are predominantly led by Western powers, the NDB allows BRICS nations to access funding for infrastructure and sustainable development projects without being subject to the conditionalities and influence of Western-dominated institutions (Ghosh, 2016).

Besides that, the NDB and CRA also challenge the US-led economic system by strongly emphasising sustainable development (Ghosh, 2016). While the US-led system has been criticised for prioritising economic growth at the expense of environmental concerns and social inclusivity, the NDB and CRA prioritise projects that are environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive, and aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Blyth & Kettell, 2019). This emphasis on sustainable development challenges the traditional economic paradigm and promotes a more holistic and balanced approach to economic growth (Dent, 2021).

Therefore, establishing the NDB and CRA allows BRICS nations to exert greater influence in global financial governance, challenging the dominance of the US-led economic system. Through these institutions, BRICS nations have a platform to voice their perspectives, shape financial norms and regulations, and contribute to the reform of global financial institutions. This potential for more significant influence challenges the power dynamics within the US-led economic system and promotes a more multipolar and inclusive approach to global economic governance.

## Implications of BRICS' Rise on Global Economic Governance and Challenges to US Dominance

The rise of BRICS nations challenges the traditional dominance of the US in global economic governance. According to Cooper (2017), with BRICS growing economic clout and influence, BRICS countries seek a more significant say in decision-making processes and a more equitable distribution of power within global economic institutions. This shift in power dynamics challenges the existing governance structure, which has been largely shaped by the US and other Western powers (Ramo, 2016).

Moreover, Cooper (2017) stated that BRICS nations have been vocal in advocating for reforms in global economic governance institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank (Larionova & Shelepov, 2021). They also argued that these institutions should better reflect the changing global economic landscape and provide greater representation and voice to emerging economies. Due to that, this demand for reform challenges the traditional dominance of the US and other Western powers in shaping the rules and policies of global economic governance (Woods, 2018). According to Wang (2016), BRICS nations have also engaged in regional integration initiatives that aim to deepen economic cooperation among member countries. For example, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the African Continental Free Trade Area are regional integration initiatives that promote economic connectivity and enhance trade and investment flows among BRICS nations (Ghosh, 2016). These initiatives challenge the traditional dominance of the US by fostering regional economic integration outside of Western-led frameworks (Moyo, 2021).

Nevertheless, a study by Hopewell (2014) states that while BRICS nations pose challenges to the traditional dominance of the US, they face several challenges in reshaping global economic governance. BRICS nations have diverse economic and political interests, challenging coordination and consensus-building. Each country has priorities, and aligning their interests within the BRICS framework can be complex. Overcoming these divergent interests is crucial for effectively challenging the dominance of the United States and presenting a unified front in global economic governance (Le Corre & Rampa, 2015). Burgos and Reyna (2019) also claimed that BRICS institutions, such as the NDB and CRA, are still in their early stages and face challenges in establishing their institutional capacity and legitimacy. Hence, building robust governance structures, ensuring transparency, and maintaining accountability are crucial for these institutions to gain trust and credibility on the global stage.

Strengthening the institutional capacity of BRICS institutions will enhance their ability to challenge the traditional dominance of the US (Dent, 2021).

## The Dominance of US Dollars as the World Reserve Currency

According to Siddiqui (2020), the World Reserve Currency was pegged with the US dollar after WW2. The US dollar is the dominant currency in the world, and it has been for a long time. However, according to Gosh (2016), other currencies have been prevalent in the past and will probably be dominant again. The most important currency in the world today was created by a man named Alexander Hamilton, who is also known as one of America's founding fathers (Ambrose, n.d.). He designed a form of money called "Bills of Credit", which was then implemented by President George Washington and Congress to establish an American monetary system. The US dollar became a fiat currency along with the British Pound, French Franc, Japanese Yen, Swiss Franc, and German Mark after WW2 when countries stopped pegging their currencies to gold (Ambrose, n.d.).

Even though the BRICS countries are trying to change that by creating their international reserve currency, they have also been promoting their currencies as alternatives to the US dollar. However, these efforts have not been going well (Pant, 2013). Furthermore, Pant (2013) argued that the BRICS countries have struggled to promote their currencies because they are not accepted as a valid alternative in many countries. They have struggled to get other nations to accept them as an international reserve currency. Some nations, such as China, Russia, and India, already have national currencies and see no need for another. Other countries do not want to adopt something unrelated to their culture or history. A failed attempt at creating an alternative to the US dollar was when Montenegro tried using its currency instead of Euros in 2006 (Cohen, 2009). International trade is conducted in US dollars because they are the most widely accepted currency globally. It is also used as a reference point for future agreements on trade and other economic activities. There is no alternative to the US dollar if international trade occurs through a global economy based on free market principles.

Another factor affecting the delay of BRICS growth is the dominance of the Dollar and other countries pegging their currencies with it (Siddiqui, 2020). The establishment of the BRICS bank and monetary fund has been delayed due to a lack of support from Western countries, including the US, and they are not expected to be launched soon. The BRICS Bank is a proposed development bank of the BRICS countries that was created to finance infrastructure projects in emerging markets to increase long-term financial flows. The US dollar has dominated international reserve assets and has been a vital trading currency for over a decade. Countries like China, Mexico, and Japan have built large dollar reserves to keep their currency from depreciating (Siddiqui, 2020). The US economy is a haven for investors, and countries can borrow at low rates. In the past ten years, many other countries, such as Russia and China, have been building up their reserves, too, but to keep up with the US dollar, they are going into debt themselves (Fantacci & Gobbi, 2021). All these countries are now just following the US into this debt trap. This has caused dissatisfaction with the US dollar, leading to other countries looking for a new reserve currency. Meanwhile, developing countries' debts will continue to be an issue that developing countries must face to grow out of poverty. Developed countries benefit from being able to borrow at steady, low rates and only for a limited period.

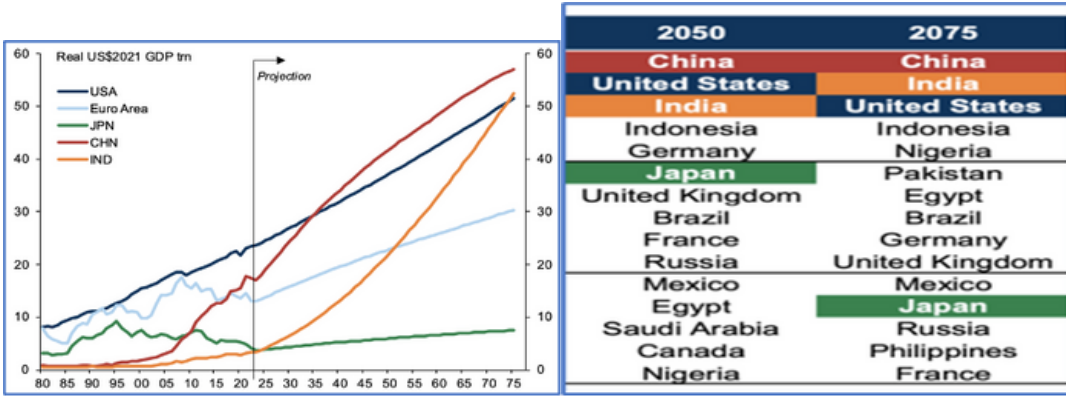
Furthermore, according to Siddiqui (2020), the US is the largest debt holder in the world as of June 2022, at 14.8 trillion dollars. Japan comes next with \$10.7 trillion in debt, followed by China with \$9 trillion. The bottom line is the US dollar dominance, and the rise of non-traditional reserve currencies is the most significant. Global credit rating agencies still consider most countries with much debt safe. However, when they have trouble, or if there is any contagion in other countries like in 2008, it could lead to an international economic meltdown. The world of the future looks like being split between Chinese and American spheres of influence, which means the Dollar will continue to feature heavily (Rautakorpi, 2021). Moreover, the Yuan would take some of the Dollar's market share. If they agree on one, a BRICS currency would undoubtedly be an attractive opportunity for many countries that do not naturally align with the US. However, the EU struggles with its common currency, and those countries are much more politically and geographically aligned than the BRICS. Therefore, this article argues that no other nation or group of nations can completely replace what the US brings to the table to back up the mighty Dollar.

This article supports that Bitcoin will become the BRICS' and the world's reserve currency. It is decentralised and cannot be seized, making it easy for everyone to get on board. There are many different uses for Bitcoin. First, it can be used as a store of value and a medium of exchange (Rautakorpi, 2021). Rautakorpi (2021) claimed that it could also be used as a hedge against inflation or other monetary policy or in the field of finance. Although Khan et al., 2020 argued that Bitcoin is not a personal preference for money, it is highly valuable. Finally, it costs more than gold and has many features that make it easy to transfer value across borders while maintaining its privacy and decentralised nature (ElGayyar et al., 2020).

Prospects Of BRICS And Sustaining Growth Trajectory

## **Significant Economic Potential and Growth Trajectory**

This section explores the prospects of BRICS and its ability to sustain its growth trajectory and confirms that BRICS has emerged as a prominent grouping with significant economic potential. BRICS nations have demonstrated robust economic growth over the past decade, contributing to global GDP and trade expansion (Agyei et al., 2022). Their large populations, expanding middle-class consumer base, and abundant natural resources provide a solid foundation for sustained economic growth (Lawrence, 2019). Additionally, ongoing urbanisation, technological advancements, and investments in infrastructure and innovation are expected to fuel further economic development in BRICS countries (Agrawal, Chakraborty & Sen, 2020).



Source: GS (2022)  
Figure 3

Figure 3 demonstrates that the projections imply that four BRICS countries, namely China, India, Brazil, and Russia, will be the world’s largest economies in 2050 and 2075 (Daly & Gedminas, 2023).

Sustaining the growth trajectory of BRICS countries requires addressing key challenges. These include improving governance, enhancing institutional capacity, addressing income inequality, promoting inclusive growth, and addressing environmental sustainability (IMF, 2020). Strengthening institutions, promoting good governance practices, investing in human capital, and adopting sustainable development strategies can contribute to long-term growth sustainability in BRICS nations.

**Advancement of Innovation, Technology, and Infrastructure**

The advancement of innovation and technology is crucial for sustaining economic growth in the long term. BRICS nations have recognised the importance of innovation-driven growth and have made substantial investments in research and development. For example, China has become a global leader in artificial intelligence and renewable energy technologies (The World Bank Group, 2021). Collaborative initiatives among BRICS countries, such as the BRICS Innovation Cooperation Action Plan, can promote knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and innovation-driven growth (NDRC, 2018). Investments in infrastructure play a vital role in sustaining economic growth and development. BRICS countries have prioritised infrastructure development, including transportation, energy, and telecommunications, to improve connectivity and facilitate trade and investment. Initiatives like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank provide funding for infrastructure projects, supporting sustained economic growth in BRICS nations (Dent, 2021).

De-dollarisation

## Conclusion

BRICS nations have grown economically due to their vast populations and consumer markets. However, challenges such as income inequality, corruption, and conflicting interests may impede their progress. They aim to promote sustainable development and cooperation to transform the global economy, as the US and its allies hold significant influence through institutions like the IMF, World Bank, and WTO.

BRICS nations aim to reduce US dominance in global economic governance, seeking more representation in the IMF and World Bank. BRICS countries also promote regional integration initiatives, which challenge Western-led frameworks. However, coordination and consensus-building can be complex due to diverse interests. Building robust governance structures for BRICS institutions is crucial to gain trust and credibility. Meanwhile, Bitcoin has the potential to become the world's reserve currency. Its decentralised nature makes it accessible for anyone to use and cannot be seized. It offers advantages over traditional forms of currency, such as being a better store of value than gold or the US dollar, being more private and decentralised, and facilitating the transfer of value across borders without intermediaries.

In conclusion, the BRICS countries possess significant economic potential due to their sizeable populations, expanding consumer bases, and abundant natural resources. However, they must tackle income inequality and environmental sustainability challenges to maintain growth. Therefore, investment in human capital, innovation, and infrastructure development is crucial for long-term sustainability. The BRICS nations are also considering de-dollarisation, which means rejecting the US dollar for cross-border business. Hence, it is essential to focus on governance and inclusivity to achieve their long-term potential. As these BRICS countries continue to enhance their economic capabilities, address challenges, and strengthen their collaboration, BRICS is poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the global economic landscape.

## BRICS POTENTIAL AS AN ECONOMIC GLOBAL POWERHOUSE AND ITS CHALLENGE TO THE US-LED ECONOMIC SYSTEM

### References:

AfDB (African Development Bank). (2021). Infrastructure Development in Africa. Retrieved from <https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/topics/infrastructure-development>

Aggarwal, V. K., & Chow, H. K. (2016). *Rising Powers and the Future of Global Governance: Lessons from the BRICS*. Routledge.

Agrawal, M., Chakraborty, L., & Sen, K. (2020). *Economic Growth and Structural Transformation in the BRICS: Comparative Perspectives*. Oxford University Press.

Agyei, S. K., Junior, P. O., Bossman, A., Asafo-Adjei, E., Asiamah, O., & Adam, A. M. (2022). Spillovers and contagion between BRIC and G7 markets: New evidence from time-frequency analysis. *PLoS ONE*, 17(7 July), e0271088. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0271088>

Ambrose, D. (n.d.). *The Many Faces of Alexander Hamilton: The Life & Legacy of America's Most Elusive Founding Father*. Retrieved June 13, 2023, from [https://books.google.com.my/books?hl=en&lr=&id=it4TCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=The+most+important+currency+in+the+world+today+was+created+by+a+man+named+Alexander+Hamilton,+who+is+also+known+as+one+of+America%27s+founding+fathers.+&ots=cPlOZGn7Ea&sig=\\_4y3f2](https://books.google.com.my/books?hl=en&lr=&id=it4TCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=The+most+important+currency+in+the+world+today+was+created+by+a+man+named+Alexander+Hamilton,+who+is+also+known+as+one+of+America%27s+founding+fathers.+&ots=cPlOZGn7Ea&sig=_4y3f2)

Andronova, I., & Shelepov, A. (2019). Potential for strengthening the NDB's and AIIB's role in the global financial system. *International Journal of Agricultural Management*, 8(1), 39–54. <https://doi.org/10.17323/1996-7845-2019-01-0>

Barbosa, N., & Pereira, L. F. (2019). Economic Growth and Structural Transformation in the BRICS. *Brazilian Journal of Political Economy*, 39(4), 856–877.

Blyth, M., & Kettell, S. (2019). *The BRICS and the Global Order: An Introduction*. In *The BRICS and the Future of Global Order* (pp. 1-24). Lexington Books.

Brandaõ Santana, N., Rebelatto, D. A. D. N., Périco, A. E., Moralles, H. F., & Leal Filho, W. (2015). Technological innovation for sustainable development: An analysis of different types of impacts for countries in the BRICS and G7 groups. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology*, 22(5), 425–436. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504509.2015.1069766>

BRICS Information Centre. (2021). Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). Retrieved from <https://brics.nd.edu/contingent-reserve-arrangement/>

Burgos, S. E., & Reyna, M. B. (2019). *BRICS and the Future of Global Order: A Latin American Perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Cohen, B. J. (2009). Dollar Dominance, Euro Aspirations: Recipe for Discord? *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 47(4), 741–766. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1468-5965.2009.02003.X>

Cooper, A. F. (2017). The BRICS' New Development Bank: Shifting from Material Leverage to Innovative Capacity. *Global Policy*, 8(3), 275–284. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12458>

Cotter, R., Li, X., & Yilmaz, K. (2017). BRICS Countries and Global Governance. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*.

Daly, K., & Gedminas, T. (2023, Jan 4). The path to 2075: Slower global growth, but convergence remains intact. Retrieved from CEPR: <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/path-2075-slower-global-growth-convergence-remains-intact>

Dent, C. M. (2021). *The New Development Bank: Innovation and Legacy in the Global Financial Architecture*. Springer.

Denisov, I., Kazantsev, A., Lukyanov, F., & Safranchuk, I. (2019). Shifting Strategic Focus of BRICS and Great Power Competition. 43(6), 487–498. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2019.1669888>

Ding, S., & Yuan, X. (2016). *BRICS and the Global Economy*. Routledge.

ElGayyar, M. M., ElYamany, H. F., Grolinger, K., Capretz, M. A. M., & Mir, S. (2020). Blockchain-Based Federated Identity And Auditing. *International Journal of Blockchains and Cryptocurrencies*, 1(2), 179. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBC.2020.109004>

Eurasian Development Bank. (2021). Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Retrieved from <https://eabr.org/en/about-eabr/eurasian-economic-union/>

Fantacci, L., & Gobbi, L. (2021). Stablecoins, Central Bank Digital Currencies, and US Dollar Hegemony: The Geopolitical Stake of Innovations in Money and Payments. *Accounting, Economics, and Law: A Convivium*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/AEL-2020-0053/MachineReadableCitation/Ris>

Ghosh, D. (2016). BRICS New Development Bank and Contingent Reserve Arrangement: A Paradigm Shift in Global Economic Governance? *Global Policy*, 7(3), 349-359.

Haseeb, M., Hassan, S., & Azam, M. (2017). Rural-urban transformation, energy consumption, economic growth, and CO2 emissions using the STRIPAT model for BRICS countries. *Environmental Progress and Sustainable Energy*, 36(2), 523-531.

[BRICS Information Centre. \(2021\). Contingent Reserve Arrangement \(CRA\). Retrieved from https://brics.nd.edu/contingent-reserve-arrangement/](https://brics.nd.edu/contingent-reserve-arrangement/)

[Burgos, S. E., & Reyna, M. B. \(2019\). BRICS and the Future of Global Order: A Latin American Perspective. Palgrave Macmillan.](#)

[Cohen, B. J. \(2009\). Dollar Dominance, Euro Aspirations: Recipe for Discord? \*JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies\*, 47\(4\), 741-766. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1468-5965.2009.02003.X](#)

[Cooper, A. F. \(2017\). The BRICS' New Development Bank: Shifting from Material Leverage to Innovative Capacity. \*Global Policy\*, 8\(3\), 275-284. https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12458](#)

Hitkari, C. (2023, May 1). Can more bricks at BRICS build a new world order? *Modern Diplomacy*. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/05/01/can-more-bricks-at-brics-build-a-new-world-order/>

Hopewell, K. (2014). Different Paths To Power: The Rise of Brazil, India, and China at the World Trade Organization. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2014.927387>, 22(2), 311-338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2014.927387>

lo Lo, V., & Hiscock, M. (2014). The rise of the BRICS in the global political economy. In *The Rise of the BRICS in the Global Political Economy: Changing Paradigms?* <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781782545477>

IMF (International Monetary Fund). (2020). *World Economic Outlook: A Long and Difficult Ascent*. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/09/30/world-economic-outlook-october-2020>

IMF (International Monetary Fund). (2021). *World Economic Outlook Database*. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2021/October>

IMF (International Monetary Fund). (2023). *World Economic Outlook Database*. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2023/April>

International Monetary Fund (IMF). (2017). Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) and the IMF: A Factsheet. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2016/08/01/15/29/Contingent-Reserve-Arrangement>

International Monetary Fund (IMF). (2019). Reserve Pooling in the New Development Bank's Contingent Reserve Arrangement. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2019/04/26/Reserve-Pooling-in-the-New-Development-Banks-Contingent-Reserve-Arrangement-46834>

International Monetary Fund (IMF). (2021). World Economic Outlook Database. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2021/October>

Jokela, J., Creutz, K., Saul, A., Helwig, N., Sinkkonen, V., Kronlund, A., Kallio, J., Nizhnikau, R., & Ketola, J. (2023). Multilateral cooperation in an era of strategic competition: Options for influence for Finland and the European Union. <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164671>

Kapsos, S., & Bourmpoula, E. (2016). The Role of Infrastructure Investment in Promoting Economic Growth and Development in the BRICS. ILO Working Papers, No. 994682153402676.

Khan, M. Z., Ali, Y., Sultan, H. Bin, Hasan, M., & Baloch, S. (2020). Future of Currency: A Comparison Between Traditional, Digital Fiat And Cryptocurrency exchange mediums. *International Journal of Blockchains and Cryptocurrencies*, 1(2), 206. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBC.2020.109003>

Khmelevskaya, N. (n.d.). BRICS Evolving Institutional Identity The Real Contours and Targets for the BRICS Monetary Partnership to Facilitate Trade and Investment. Kirton, J., & Larionova, M. (2022). Contagious convergent cumulative cooperation: the dynamic development of the G20, BRICS, and SCO. *International Politics*, 1-29. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-022-00407-7>

Lawrence, R. (2019). Emerging economies and the changing structure of the world economy. Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Le Corre, P., & Rampa, F. (2015). BRICS and Coexistence: An Alternative Vision of World Order. Brookings Institution Press.

Larionova, M., & Shelepov, A. (2021). BRICS, G20, and Global Economic Governance Reform. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01925121211035122>, 43(4), 512-530. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01925121211035122>

Li, T., Yue, X. G., Waheed, H., & Yıldırım, B. (2023). Can energy efficiency and natural resources foster economic growth? Evidence from BRICS countries. *Resources Policy*, 83, 103643. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2023.103643>

Lo, B. (2016). The illusion of convergence—Russia, China, and the BRICS. *Russie. Nei. Visions*, 92, 3049

McDowell, D. (2019). Emergent International Liquidity Agreements: Central Bank Cooperation After the Global Financial Crisis. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 22(2), 441–467. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-017-0106-0>

Medvedev, D. (2015). A new reality: Russia and global challenges. *Russian Journal of Economics*, 1(2), 109–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ruje.2015.11.004>

Ministry of Commerce, People's Republic of China. (2021). Report on the Work of BRICS Trade Ministers Meeting. Retrieved from <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/significantnews/202111/20211103173714.shtml>

Moyo, D. (2021). *Edge of Chaos: Why Democracy Is Failing to Deliver Economic Growth—and How to Fix It*. Basic Books.

Naude, W., & Rossouw, R. (2018). Foreign Direct Investment and Economic Growth in BRICS Countries: A Panel Data Analysis. *The World Economy*, 41(2), 523–541.

NDB (New Development Bank). (2021). About Us. Retrieved from <https://www.ndb.int/about-us/>

NDRC (National Development and Reform Commission). (2018). BRICS Innovation Cooperation Action Plan (2017-2020). Retrieved from [http://www.ndrc.gov.cn/zcfb/zcfbtz/201806/t20180606\\_1092492.html](http://www.ndrc.gov.cn/zcfb/zcfbtz/201806/t20180606_1092492.html)

O'Neill, J. (2001). Building Better Global Economic BRICs. Goldman Sachs Global Economics Paper No. 66. Retrieved from <https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/archive/archive-pdfs/build-better-brics.pdf>

Pant, H. V. (2013). The BRICS Fallacy. *BRICS*, 36(3), 91–105. <http://Dx.Doi.Org/10.1080/0163660X.2013.825552>, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2013.825552>

Pomfret, R. (2021). 'Regionalism' and the global trade system. *World Economy*, 44(9), 2496-2514. <https://doi.org/10.1111/twec.13155>

Pradhan, R. P., & Arvin, M. B. (2018). Infrastructure Development, Economic Growth, and Globalisation: Evidence from the BRICS Countries. *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*, 54(8), 1775-1791.

Ramírez, M. D., & González, M. (2017). Technological Innovation and Economic Growth: Evidence from the BRICS. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 8(7), 118-126.

Ramo, J. C. (2016). *The Seventh Sense: Power, Fortune, and Survival in the Age of Networks*. Little, Brown Spark.

Rautakorpi, V. (2021). *Through the Looking Glass : Connecting the Dots Between US Hegemony and Its Trade and Investment Policies*.

Ray, S., Bandyopadhyay, K., & Thakur, V. (2020). *Liberalisation of Insurance Sector: An Analysis of India and Brics*. New Delhi: Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER).

Sachdeva, G. (2018). *BRICS: Challenges and Opportunities*. Routledge.

Siddiqui, K. (2020). The US Dollar and the World Economy: A Critical Review. *Athens Journal of Business & Economics*, 6, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajbe.6-1-2>

Tanzi, A. (2023, Apr 17). China to Be Top World Growth Source in Next Five Years, IMF Says. Retrieved from Bloomberg: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-04-17/china-to-be-top-world-growth-source-in-next-five-years-imf-says>

The New Development Bank. (n.d.). Knowledge Hub. Retrieved from <https://www.ndb.int/knowledge-hub/>

The New Development Bank. (n.d.). Objectives. Retrieved from <https://www.ndb.int/about-us/objectives/>

The New Development Bank. (n.d.). Projects and Operations. Retrieved from <https://www.ndb.int/projects-and-operations/>

The World Bank Group. (2021). *China: Technology, Innovation, and Development*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/brief/technology-innovation-and-development>

UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development). (2021). UNCTADStat Database. Retrieved from <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/>

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). (2021). World Investment Report 2021: Investing in Sustainable Recovery. Retrieved from [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/wir2021\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/wir2021_en.pdf)

Wang, Y. (2016). Complexity of the Relations Among Leading States and Following States: The Case of East Asian Regional Integration. 189–208. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22972-0\\_11/Cover](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22972-0_11/Cover)

Woods, N. (2018). The Globalizers: The IMF, the World Bank, and Their Borrowers. Princeton University Press.

World Bank. (2017). BRICS: Investment Opportunities and Challenges. Retrieved from <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/654811488762152496/Investment-opportunities-and-challenges-in-BRICS.pdf>

World Bank. (2021). Global Economic Prospects, January 2021. Retrieved from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34646>

World Trade Organization (WTO). (2021). World Trade Statistical Review 2021. Retrieved from [https://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/statis\\_e/wts2021\\_e/wts2021\\_e.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/wts2021_e/wts2021_e.pdf)

WTO (World Trade Organization). (2021). International Trade and Market Access Data. Retrieved from <https://www.wto.org/>

## ASSESSING MALAYSIA'S INTERMEDIARY ROLE IN THE ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION

**FAdm Kamaruddin bin Omar**

Royal Malaysian Navy

### **Abstract**

This article assesses Malaysia's intermediary role in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and has the potential to leverage the organisation. The OIC was initially formed to address conflicts involving Muslim nations, and Malaysia played a vital role in its establishment. However, over time, the OIC has struggled to effectively defend the rights and interests of Islamic countries. Internal problems within member nations, such as civil wars and political instability, have hindered economic development and contributed to challenges like poverty, unemployment, and limited access to essential services. As a middle-power country with solid relationships among OIC members, Malaysia can utilise the OIC as a platform for fostering community, economic, military, and security cooperation. This study aims to achieve three objectives: firstly, to assess Malaysia's approach to forming an 'Ummah' among OIC countries; secondly, to identify Malaysia's role in promoting economic development within the OIC; and thirdly, to analyse its contributions from a military and security perspective. The concept of Ummah emphasises unity amongst people, not only among Muslims but with all the communities from different religions and cultures. Malaysia's positive political relations with key OIC members such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, as well as its expertise in areas like Islamic banking and the concept of 'halal,' enhance its potential as an intermediary in uniting OIC countries. Despite its size, Malaysia's active involvement in socio-political, socio-economic, military, and security improvements positions it as a contemporary trendsetter within the OIC. Therefore, Malaysia's intermediary role in the OIC holds significant potential for shaping unity and economic development within the organisation. Its positive political relations, economic initiatives, and focus on military and security cooperation position Malaysia as a contemporary trendsetter. Through active engagement in socio-political, socio-economic, military, and security improvements, Malaysia can enhance the OIC's effectiveness in defending the rights and interests of Islamic countries. By contributing to the unity of the 'Ummah' and promoting economic development, Malaysia can pave the way for a stronger and more prosperous future for the OIC and its member countries.

**Keywords:** Malaysia, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), intermediary role, economic development, military and security, 'Ummah'.

## Introduction

In the 20th century, we have witnessed political relations becoming increasingly complex. However, with political, economic, or social changes, the relationship between Islamic countries is also very complex, making it difficult to unify. The peak of the unification of Islamic countries can be seen during the bombing of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969 in Jerusalem, which shocked Muslims worldwide to unite to support Palestine face Israel (Lestari et al., 2020). The incident also led to the establishing of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in which Malaysia plays a crucial role. In the beginning, the organisation could witness the OIC being so vocal in defending the rights of Islamic countries, but nowadays, it is seen as increasingly gloomy. Many rights violations in Islamic countries have occurred, but Islamic countries remain silent in support, such as the Saudi Arabia-Maute conflict and the latest, the Sudan conflict (Balci and Duman, 2022). The desire for unification is disappearing, requiring more attention to the spirit of Islamic union.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) represents a diverse ensemble of 57 nations, each marked by its unique political landscape, economic status, and cultural ethos. This diversity, while a source of strength, sometimes complicates consensus-building among members. Regrettably, several OIC nations grapple with internal strife, as exemplified by the recent civil unrest in Sudan (Ahsan, 2020). Over the years, the OIC's efficacy as a stabilising force has been questioned, given the apparent decline in its capacity to mediate conflicts among its members. This political turbulence not only impedes economic progression but also exacerbates poverty. Many member states confront high unemployment rates and inadequate access to essential services. Economic disparities and limited resources further accentuate these challenges. Moreover, the rise of extremist ideologies, coupled with episodes of terrorism and insurgency, often culminates in attempts to overthrow established governance structures under the guise of societal advancement. Such events undermine the integrity of Islamic governance and pose substantial risks to regional and global peace and socio-economic structures (Breidlid, 2021).

Within the diverse tapestry of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Malaysia emerges as a potentially pivotal player. Despite its modest size and emerging middle-power status, Malaysia boasts commendable diplomatic ties with most Arab nations. This positions Malaysia uniquely to act as a catalyst for unity among Muslim-majority nations through the OIC's framework. The nation's stature within the OIC is not merely symbolic; it can meaningfully influence the Islamic unity trajectory, as Walker et al. (2021) highlighted. In light of Malaysia's influential position and its harmonious relationships within the OIC, the country stands poised to harness the organisation's potential across multifarious domains—encompassing societal, economic, military, and security facets. This essay endeavours to delve into Malaysia's nuanced role within the OIC. The primary objectives guiding this study are threefold: (a) To scrutinise Malaysia's strategies and endeavours in fostering the concept of 'Ummah' among OIC member nations; (b) To illuminate Malaysia's pivotal role in spurring economic growth and collaboration within the OIC community; and (c) To critically assess Malaysia's contributions from a military and security standpoint, aiming to fortify the stability and resilience of OIC member states.

## Malaysia's Approach Towards Strengthening Muslim' Ummah'

The term "Ummah" embodies a profound sense of unity, fostering bonds of brotherhood that underpin the Muslim community's socio-cultural and economic sustainability. Rooted in Arabic, "Ummah" translates to "community," encapsulating notions of a collective state or a fraternity of believers. The Qur'anic reference to "Ummah Wahida" (meaning "One Community") underscores the envisioned unity and interconnectedness of the global Muslim populace. This connection manifests in myriad ways, both formally and informally. For instance, international bodies like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) represent structured, official channels of unity. In contrast, informal networks, such as the "Bamboo Network" – or the "Guanxi Network" among Chinese emigrants, exemplify organic connections among communities, as elucidated by Halili & Rodriguez (2021). Drawing inspiration from the success of the Bamboo Network, the concept of Ummah could potentially serve as a foundation for an informal alliance across the Malay Archipelago. Such an alliance could synergise Muslim-majority nations like Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and Timor, thereby fostering ties with prominent Middle Eastern and North African countries, including Turkey, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, and Morocco. If actualised in alignment with the guiding principles of the Quran and Sunnah, this vision of Ummah could potentially augment the efficacy and unity of formal organisations like the OIC.

As a significant OIC member, Malaysia can potentially empower the concept of Ummah among OIC countries. Malaysia has solid relations with most major OIC countries and forging new partnerships with Western and Asia Pacific nations. Since 1965, Malaysia has established relations with various West Asian nations, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia (Abu-Hussin et al. 2021). Saudi Arabia became Malaysia's biggest OIC trading partner in 2007 after joining the OIC in 1969. The 2008 Yesser initiative, which made Saudi Arabia the first GCC country to achieve full e-government, strengthened Malaysia's connection with Saudi Arabia. Turkey is among the few Muslim nations with good diplomatic relations with Malaysia. Malaysia's top trading partner has always been Turkey. Radzi et al. (2023) noted that in June 2003, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Malaysia, strengthening relations. Trade between the two countries has reached \$1 billion each year. Turkey was Malaysia's 6th largest OIC commercial partner in 2007.

The prevailing trends in international relations underscore the pitfalls of centring governance around a single religion or ethnicity. Such centrism can incite rebellions from marginalised minority groups, capturing the attention of major powers and potentially culminating in ethno-religious conflicts. Aydin (2023) notes that countries like Turkey, Germany, and Denmark have steered clear of religious and ethnic bias in governance, setting precedents for others. While establishing the OIC signalled a commitment to Islamic sovereignty, its focus on diverse Islamic sects has paradoxically deepened divisions among Islamic nations. A lesson can be drawn from the European Union (EU), which prioritised economic and security cooperation for regional rejuvenation post-World War II. The EU's foundations lie in initiatives like the

European Defence Community (EDC) and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) (Gnatik, 2022). Rye (2020) characterises the Schuman Declaration or Monnet Plan as a seminal blueprint promoting materialistic integration transcending religious and ethnic boundaries.

Though wary of alienating non-Christian constituents, EU policymakers hesitated to incorporate explicit religious references in the EU Constitution. On the other hand, the OIC's genesis was a religiously charged reaction to the arson at Al-Aqsa Mosque. Its architects firmly believed that Islam could be the linchpin to unite Muslims. Despite its religious genesis, the OIC's major initiatives lean heavily towards materialistic goals. Over-emphasising diverse Islamic doctrines, however, risks alienating other religions, hampering the economic progression of Islamic nations. Malaysia, with its diverse tapestry of cultures and religions, can serve as a linchpin in galvanising unity among OIC members. Ali (2022) asserts that the interpretations of sovereignty are notably distinct among OIC member states. Concepts like the "home of Islam" or the "Islamic unity" tenet of the OIC Charter sometimes catalyse internal conflicts. Notwithstanding their significant Muslim demographics, countries like Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq find unity elusive. Despite its aspirational transnational Islamic character, the OIC's efficacy is circumscribed by member states, primarily driven by their national agendas. In juxtaposition, Malaysia's multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition exemplifies peaceful coexistence and development, making it a potential model for OIC's unity without sidelining religious convictions.

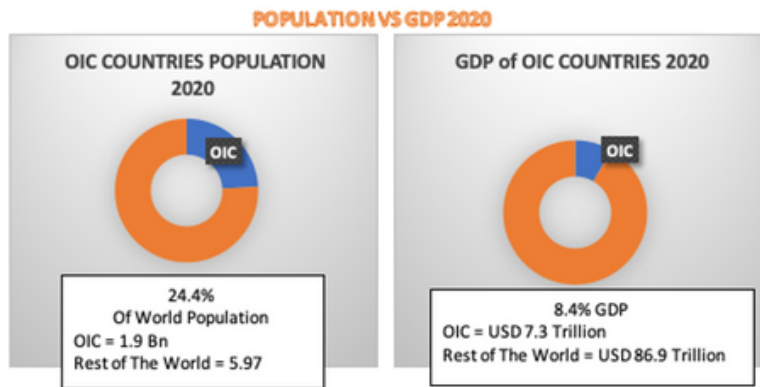
Identity conflicts can jeopardise intra-group cohesion. Nations, steeped in their ideologies, can inadvertently marginalise the perspectives of others. Herein, Malaysia can offer strategies to mitigate identity clashes among Islamic states. While the OIC and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ostensibly share similar identities, their distinct membership criteria, objectives, and operational scopes inhibit unity. Freer (2022) elucidates the GCC as a consortium of six Gulf Arab nations aimed at fostering multifaceted cooperation. Given the overlapping memberships between the OIC and GCC, collaboration on mutual interests is feasible. With its unique societal tapestry, Malaysia can offer the OIC insights into managing identity dynamics and promoting cohesive societies, aligning with the Sustainability Development Goal (SDG) 10 under the Malaysia Madani framework.

Islamophobia, exacerbated post-9/11, remains a pervasive challenge, especially in the Western world. Nisar (2022) highlights the tendency to ascribe global acts of terror to Muslims unfairly. Proactively countering Islamophobia, the OIC has leveraged ICT, mass media, and social platforms, with media houses like Al Jazeera striving to disseminate an authentic narrative on Islam. Given Malaysia's multi-ethnic harmony, it is well-poised to spearhead OIC's initiatives against Islamophobia, promoting a nuanced understanding of Islam and advocating policies fostering global religious tolerance.

## Malaysia's Role in Promoting Economic Development and Growth amongst OIC Members

Numerous Islamic countries grapple with political, economic, and social challenges, a consequence of the decline in the influence of Islamic states on the global stage. Internal discord and disputes are commonplace, exemplified by recent upheavals in Sudan, which descended into a severe civil conflict. An examination of demographic metrics indicates a disparity between the growth of the Muslim population and corresponding economic development. Herman and Indrawan (2021) note that in 2020, OIC nations collectively housed approximately 1.9 billion individuals, constituting about 24% of the global populace. However, in economic terms, OIC members' cumulative Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stood at approximately USD 7.3 trillion at prevailing global prices, representing a mere 8.4% of the global total. This stands in contrast to 2016 figures, where the OIC's population represented 23.77% of the global total, but their economic contribution was roughly 8.51% of the global GDP, as Halim (2017) cited. It is evident that while there has been a slight improvement, significant disparities remain.

**Figure 1 The 2020 World and OIC Population and GDP Comparison**



The 2020 World and OIC Population and GDP Comparison (Herman and Indrawan, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly exacerbated vulnerabilities in many Muslim nations, leading to significant socio-economic dislocation. Consequences such as constrained mobility, dwindling job opportunities, escalating conflicts, heightened vulnerability, and intensified prejudice have been acutely felt. The economic ramifications were particularly severe for nations like Saudi Arabia, which has been heavily reliant on its oil and gas sector. The pandemic precipitated a drastic decline in oil prices from USD 70 per barrel pre-COVID, plunging to USD 17.85 in April 2020 and further plummeting to an unprecedented negative rate of (-) USD 37.63 per barrel. To mitigate the cascading economic fallout, the Saudi Arabian government had to allocate USD 32 billion as stimulus, aimed at supporting over 14 million workers within the oil and gas sector.

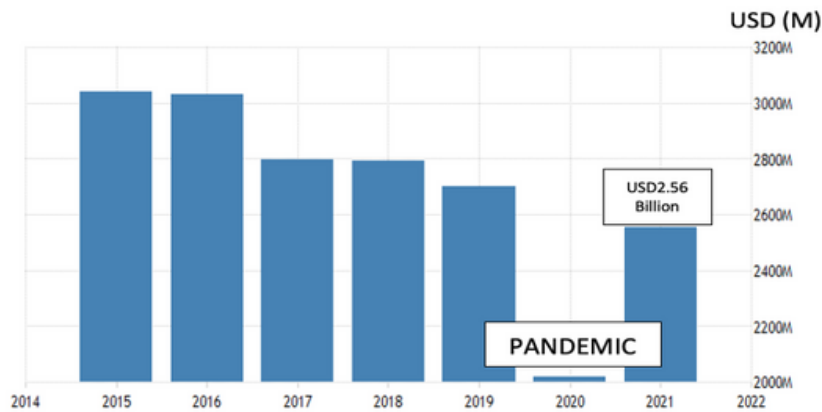
Amid these challenges, Malaysia stands poised to serve as a unifying force, fostering Islamic economic resurgence across the Ummah. Due to its robust ties with numerous Muslim nations, Malaysia can spearhead collaborative economic initiatives, steering the OIC towards a more resilient and dynamic future. The burgeoning partnership between Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), an OIC member, is particularly noteworthy. In his 1975 diplomatic outreach, Malaysia's Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak engaged with several West Asian nations, notably the Gulf States, to fortify bilateral relations. The rapport between Malaysia and the UAE has since flourished, resulting in heightened cooperation. Given their influential stature within the Middle East and expansive global investments, the UAE can serve as a pivotal partner for Malaysia in attracting foreign direct investments, promoting trade, and forging business alliances within the OIC ambit. The symbiotic relationship between Malaysia and the UAE is undeniable on the trade front. Abu-Hussin et al. (2021) noted that these nations share converging objectives and perceptions on international and regional terrains. Their collaboration extends to platforms like the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and the OIC. This rapport is further manifested in substantial trade figures. In 2021 alone, Malaysian exports to the UAE tallied an impressive USD 2.56 billion, with primary export commodities encompassing gold, jewellery, wood, palm oil, petroleum products, and electronics. Thus, leveraging its economic acumen, Malaysia is well-positioned to galvanise the UAE, and by extension, other OIC members, towards sculpting a Ummah-centric Islamic economy.

In the financial sphere, Islamic banking emerges as a cornerstone for engendering an Islamic economic ecosystem. Malaysia's pioneering role in institutionalising this system has garnered global acclaim. Ben bouilli-Chlef (2022) emphasises the consequential ripple effect of Malaysia's initiative, with Middle Eastern entities like Al Rajhi Bank and Kuwait Finance House making significant inroads. Data from The Banker elucidates the expanding acceptance of Islamic banking within Muslim nations and in countries such as the US, Europe, and China. The sector grew from \$1.509 billion in 2017 to \$1.624 billion in 2018, marking an annual growth rate of 7.59%, a marked increase from the 4.74% witnessed in 2017.

However, while Malaysia has welcomed investment from these Islamic banking entities, there remain constraints in further liberalising its Islamic financial sector. Commitments under instruments like the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) predominantly centre on "cross-border supply," "overseas demand," and "natural movement" (Chen, 2018). Although some latitude exists for international Islamic banks under the AFAS, these are predominantly circumscribed to transactions in foreign currency. Notably, West Asian Islamic nations exhibit reticence in their GATS commitments on banking (Schulze, 2021). Expanding this sector necessitates a foundational trust buttressed by robust policies. The Ummah Networks can be pivotal in strengthening global partnerships, such as with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (IFTFC).

Consequently, Malaysia emerges as a crucial catalyst in amalgamating the OIC nations through promoting Islamic banking. For many OIC members, capital infusion is indispensable for national development. By prioritising Islamic banking, impoverished nations can benefit and enhance the OIC’s financial clout, ultimately translating to influential political and social trajectories.

**Figure 2 Malaysia export to the United Arab Emirates 2015-2021**



Adapted from <https://tradingeconomics.com/malaysia/ united-arab-emirates>

While serving as Chairman of the OIC from October 2003 to March 2008, Malaysia shifted the organisation’s emphasis from purely political issues to economic ones, taking a more hands-on approach to economic development and project implementation among OIC members. (BERNAMA, 2003). Malaysia played a role in strengthening economic relations and expanding the scope of cooperation among Member States during its presidency of the OIC. Gulzar (2021) states that Malaysia has been involved with the implementation of the Trade Preference System (TPS-OIC) among OIC member countries as a way to establish an Islamic Common Market (ICM), the establishment of Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the existence of world seminars and forums such as the Islamic Economic Forum (WIFE) are examples of program initiatives explicitly aimed at promoting, enhancing and strengthening economic relations. Today, the OIC is implementing ‘OIC 2025’ to overcome problems arising from political and economic developments in the world and to help the OIC countries achieve sustainable development (Ahsan, 2020). Malaysia has been recognised as one of the world’s leading Islamic finance and banking hubs. Malaysia has developed a robust regulatory framework for Islamic finance, offering various Islamic financial products and services. By promoting its expertise in Islamic banking, Malaysia can attract investments from OIC member countries and become a centre for Islamic finance within the OIC region. This would contribute to the development of the Islamic banking sector and facilitate economic cooperation among member countries.

Unity among Muslim countries can contribute to more significant achievements for the Ummah. Malaysia will continue working with the OIC to promote peace and security, especially concerning Muslim issues. Malaysia will continue to support and extend cooperation to Muslims to achieve the dreams of OIC ancestors in ensuring that Muslims worldwide become a better and united Ummah. In evolving the unity, Malaysia played a role in developing the halal industry among the OIC members and expanding into worldwide commercial trade. According to Saiman and Yusma (2022), the halal concept is used as a certification for food by the Islamic Development Department of Malaysia (JAKIM), which plays an essential role in the documentation of halal certification. JAKIM's halal certification was initially recognised in 1974 when it became the first implementation for using goods corresponding to halal standards. Halal certification is a process to determine whether a product has reached the standards to produce a halal-certified product or service.[1] It also ensures users enjoy a healthy, safe, clean, high-quality experience. Halal products have now been upgraded to services, including hospitality and finance. This progress has encouraged the OIC to jointly promote the halal industry in achieving sustainability of life. Halim and Salleh (2012) mention that this effort continues to the OIC level in preparing Halal Food Standards.

The Standing Committee on Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) has established the OIC Standardisation Expert Group. At the 10th meeting of the OIC Standardisation Expert Group, under agenda item 6 of the meeting, the draft text of the OIC Halal Food Standard was discussed. At the 25th session of COMCEC, the Standardisation Expert Group finally finalised three documents, namely "OIC General Guidelines on Halal Food", "Guidelines for Bodies Providing Halal Certification" and the "Guidelines for Authorised Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Halal Certification Bodies". Although it has not yet been approved, the OIC's determination to form a halal industry existed before it was adopted globally. Malaysia has positioned itself as a global Halal Hub, providing halal products and services to Muslim consumers worldwide. Malaysia has developed a comprehensive halal ecosystem, including certification standards, logistics, warehouses, and research centres. By leveraging its expertise in the halal industry, Malaysia can strengthen its role as a leading provider of halal products and services within the OIC countries, catering to the needs of the Muslim population globally.

## Malaysia's Role in Promoting Peace and Stability in the Islamic World

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the sole multinational entity binding nations based on religious principles. As enshrined in the revised Charter, particularly in the Preamble's paragraphs 2, 4, 5, and 6, the OIC members are enjoined by the august Islamic tenets of unity and fraternity. These tenets emphasise fostering unity and solidarity, upholding Islamic virtues of peace, compassion, tolerance, equality, justice, and human dignity, and endorsing values like moderation, diversity, and preserving Islamic symbols and shared heritage (Dadashova et al., 2019). Furthermore, the OIC Charter presents an articulate framework that could alleviate the United Nations' responsibilities, particularly the Security Council, by recognising and accommodating regional perspectives.

Historically, the OIC has endeavoured to mediate and arbitrate in regional disputes, exemplified by its intervention efforts during the Iraq-Iran war. However, their initiative was unsuccessful, culminating in Iraq's dominance over Iran (Ali and Sultan, 2023). This incident subsequently provided the impetus for the United States and its allies to militarily intervene in Iraq under the aegis of the United Nations. Furthermore, Gnanguênon (2021) sheds light on the OIC's perceived reticence in the context of the Sudanese crisis. The 2019 military coup, which witnessed the ouster of President Omar al-Bashir, precipitated a seismic political shift with General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Force's General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemeti, emerging as potent actors. This power disequilibrium ignited the civil war on 15 April 2023. The OIC's restraint in commenting on this intricate quagmire possibly stemmed from the potential repercussions from major global actors, notably the U.S.

Contrastingly, Malaysia, despite its relatively modest stature, has been remarkably proactive on the global stage. As Mukhtaruddin and Misban (2023) emphasise, the UN Security Council (UNSC) has elected Malaysia as a non-permanent member on four distinct occasions (1965, 1989-90, 1999-2000, and 2015-16). This reflects Malaysia's consistent engagement in peacekeeping endeavours, as witnessed in contexts like the Kosovo War, the East Timor Crisis, and other African nations embroiled in conflicts. Furthermore, at forums such as the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the UNSC, Malaysia has been a vocal advocate for the Palestinian cause. Rooted in a nationalist and Islamic ethos, Malaysia staunchly opposes Israel's policies, perceiving them as blatant transgressions against Palestinian rights and sovereignty. This perspective, framed against Zionism's perceived injustice and threat to national sovereignty, resonates with many OIC members, including Indonesia. These narratives underscore the diverse approaches and contributions of OIC members in international diplomacy and conflict resolution.

Figure 3 Malaysian Peacekeeper in UNIFIL



According to Nordin et al. (2022), Malaysia's exemplary commitment to international peacekeeping is evident through its participation in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Malaysia deployed a commendable force of 854 ground troops, gaining the trust and affection of the Lebanese populace. In contrast, prior movements, like the coordination of French forces in Lebanon by the United Nations, encountered significant local resistance. Malaysia's distinctive, amicable approach to peacekeeping differentiated them, naturally drawing civilians towards them. Since January 2007, Malaysia has sustained its peacekeeping presence in Lebanon, with a total of 14,240 personnel having served in the region.

Furthermore, the country's humanitarian endeavours are not confined to peacekeeping alone. For instance, Malaysia's rapid response to the recent earthquake in Turkiye through its Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance Team (SMART) marked its commitment to global aid. Given this vast experience, Malaysia is well-positioned to lead and coordinate humanitarian interventions within the OIC during crises or natural disasters, reflecting the Muslim Ummah's inherent spirit of compassion and unity. Economic empowerment and development are at the heart of Malaysia's international efforts. For instance, Malaysia's initiatives during its UN mission in Somalia focused on local economic development, which was instrumental in identifying and fostering beneficial investment opportunities (Webersik, 2006). Alongside economic strategies, Malaysia underscores the pivotal role of education and knowledge dissemination. This commitment is exemplified by the establishing of the International Islamic University Malaysia, a landmark educational institution supported by sponsorships from eight governments and OIC members. Malaysia can extend its expertise through such initiatives, fostering Islamic educational and research advancements across OIC countries. By championing knowledge-sharing, Malaysia holds the potential to stimulate intellectual enhancement and uplift the Muslim Ummah globally.

Malaysia's natural inclination to empathise with and assist distressed communities has significantly contributed to regional stability. The Malaysian military personnel serving under the UN banner have been appreciated for their compassionate approach, winning the trust of local communities. Such commendable behaviours have positioned Malaysia as a referential model amongst Muslim nations, making it a cornerstone for unity within the Ummah. Given Malaysia's successful track record of bridging cultural divides and earning the goodwill of local populations, it is not far-fetched to envision the nation as a potential mediator among Islamic countries. The UN and OIC can draw inspiration from Malaysia's capabilities, reinforcing the nation's prospective role as a linchpin in uniting OIC member states.

## **Conclusion**

In the intricate web of international relations, Malaysia has consistently demonstrated a pivotal role, particularly within the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) framework. Despite the multifaceted challenges facing Islamic nations, from socio-economic disparities to internal strife and political instability, Malaysia's unique positioning allows it to bridge divides and foster collective unity. The nation's unwavering commitment to championing the Ummah ideal, as evidenced by its promotion of Islamic banking, enhancement of the halal industry, and dedicated peacekeeping endeavours, accentuates its stature as a beacon of unity and collaboration within the OIC. Throughout history, few organisations, like the OIC, have endeavoured to intertwine nations based on shared religious principles. In this context, the OIC represents a collective of nations and epitomises the Ummah's enduring spirit. Malaysia's focal role in this matrix is underscored by its tireless efforts to foster economic cooperation, reinforce brotherhood bonds, and champion Muslim-majority countries' rights and interests.

Malaysia's multi-pronged approach, ranging from its robust Islamic finance infrastructure to its advocacy for Palestinian rights at global forums, has consolidated its reputation as a mediator and innovator. The nation's ability to synergise its diverse cultural tapestry with its profound Islamic ethos provides a blueprint for OIC nations to navigate the challenges of the 21st century. In closing, the multifarious challenges facing the Muslim Ummah underscore the paramount importance of unity, collaboration, and innovative leadership. Malaysia's harmonious blend of tradition and modernity offers hope for the OIC's future. By leveraging its expertise, diplomatic prowess, and commitment to the principles of the Ummah, Malaysia stands poised to galvanise the OIC towards a brighter, more unified future. The nation's consistent contributions testify to the transformative power of unity, underscoring the potential for collective progress when nations coalesce around shared values and aspirations.

## ASSESSING MALAYSIA'S INTERMEDIARY ROLE IN THE ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION

### References:

Abu-Hussin, M. F., Idris, A., Yaakop, M. R. M., & Salleh, M. A. (2021). Essential Factors Influencing Malaysia's Relations with the United Arab Emirates. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, 8(4), 477-495.

Ahmed, Z. S., & Akbarzadeh, S. (2021). Sectarianism and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 9(1), 76-93.

Ahsan, M. (2020). Desertification in the OIC Member Countries: Factors, Challenges and the Way Forward. *Bartın Orman Fakültesi Dergisi*, 22(2), 642-653.

Ali, J. A. (2022). Modernity, Its Crisis, and Islamic Revivalism. *Religions*, 14(1), 15.

Ali, T., & Sultan, H. (2023). The emerging role of the organisation of Islamic cooperation in global governance since 1969. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 10(1), 2202052.

Al Madani, H., Alotaibi, K. O., & Alhammadi, S. (2020). The role of Sukuk in achieving sustainable development: evidence from the Islamic Development Bank. *Banks Bank Syst*, 15(4), 36-48.

Araz, S., & Wardani, D. (2019, October). Trade Performance Analysis of Indonesia and Malaysia to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In *Third International Conference on Sustainable Innovation 2019-Humanity, Education and Social Sciences (IcoSIHESS 2019)* (pp. 144-149). Atlantis Press.

Aydin, E. (2023). CHAPTER XIV. Recent Advances in Economics and Administration Sciences Concepts, Researches and Applications, pp. 269.

Ben bouali-Chlef, H. (2022). Developments in the Islamic financial industry across the world-analytical study. *Journal of Advanced Economic Research/V*, 7(02).

BERNAMA (2003). Malaysia formally assumes chairman post, *The Star*, 17 October 2003, Available at:<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2003/10/17/malaysia-formally-assumes-chairman-post/>

Breidlid, T. (2021). Countering or contributing to radicalisation and violent extremism in Kenya? A critical case study. *Critical studies on terrorism*, 14(2), 225-246.

Canbay, Z. Y. (2020). *The Role of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Conflict Resolution: A Case Study of Mindanao* [Doctoral dissertation, Hamad Bin Khalifa University]..

Chen, C. C. (2018). *ASEAN Financial Integration and 'One Belt, One Road': Legal Challenges to and Opportunities for China in Southeast Asia*. In Yun Zhao (ed), (2018). *International*

*Governance and the Rule of Law in China under the Belt and Road Initiative* (pp. 163-96), Cambridge University Press.

Dadashova, K. K., Sodikov, S. J., Tukhvatullin, R. R., & Nesterchuk, O. A. (2019, December). *Initiative of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Formation of a Global-Regional Partnership: UN-OIC Model*. In *External Challenges and Risks for Russia in the Context of the World Community's Transition to Polycentrism: Economics, Finance, and Business* (ICEFB 2019) (pp. 28-31). Atlantis Press.

Elfaki, H. M. O. A., & Embib, N. A. C. *Islamic Cooperatives: Basic Concepts and Evidence from Organization Of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Countries. Islamic Business and COVID-19 Recovery: Towards Attaining Financial And Social Wellbeing*, pp. 33-42.

Fatoni, A., Herman, S., & Abdullah, A. (2019). *Ibn Khaldun model on poverty: The case of organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) countries*. *Journal of Islamic Monetary Economics and Finance*, 5(2), 341-366.

Freer, C. (2022). *MENA regional organisations in peacemaking and peacebuilding: the League of Arab States, Gulf Cooperation Council, and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation*.

Gnanguênon, A. (2021). *Chad in its Regional Environment: Political Alliances and ad hoc Military Coalitions*. Policy Brief. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Peace and Security, ISBN : 978-2-490093-26-7

Gnatiuk, M. (2022). *Integration and the European Security Solution: Overcoming the Security Dilemma*. *Ukrainian Policymaker*, 10(10), 18-26.

Gulzar, S. (2021). *An Islamic Common Market: Imperative For Economic Integration Of Muslim Countries*. *Jihat ul Islam*, 14(2), 39-48.

Halili, B. L., & Rodríguez González, C. (2021). *Reversing the Bamboo Network: Chinese Capital, geopolitics, and Institutions in Southeast Asia*. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 1-34.

Halim, M. A. A., & Salleh, M. M. M. (2012). The possibility of uniformity on halal standards in Islamic countries (OIC) organisations. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 17(17), 6-10.

Hamdan, R. (2021). Malaysia must play a proactive intermediary role in OIC, *News Straits Times*, 13 May 2021, Available at: <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2021/05/689937/malaysia-must-play-proactive-intermediary-role-oic>

Hassan, M. K., Bin-Nashwan, S. A., & Muneeza, A. (2022). OIC Economies during the COVID-19: Implications and Recommendations. In *Towards a Post-Covid Global Financial System* (pp. 37-50). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Haugom, L. (2019). Turkish foreign policy under Erdogan: A change in international orientation? *Comparative Strategy*, 38(3), 206-223.

Herman, S. & Indrawan, W. (2021). Islamic development concept: a proposal for the betterment of Muslim Ummah in the post-pandemic episode. *JESI (Jurnal Ekonomi Syariah Indonesia)*, 11(1), 12-27.

Ismail, E. (2022). *The Antisemitic Origins of Islamist Violence: A Study of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic State* (Doctoral dissertation, Department of Sociology, Uppsala University).

Balci, A. & Duman, T. İ. (2022). Muslim Solidarity in the UN General Assembly: Evidence from Elections of Rotating Members to the Security Council. *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, 28(3), 330-354.  
<https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-02803001>

Khan, M. I., & Ahmad, B. (2022). Pakistan And The Conflicts Of The Muslim World: A Case Study Of OIC. *Pakistan Journal of Social Research*, 4(03), 652-658.

Lestari, A., Widhiyoga, G., & Kusumo, G. D. (2020). Proceeding Article Templates 3rd Ictess (The Effectiveness Of Islamic Cooperation Organizations (OIC) In Handling The Palestine-Israel Conflict In 2016-2019). In *The 3rdICTESS (International Conference on Technology, Education and Social Sciences, Global Security and Global Cooperation in a Changing World*, 10 December, 2020, ISSN 2622-2361.

Mukhtaruddin, M. J., & Misban, M. (2023). The Constructive Role of Malaysia As A Non-Permanent Member Of The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) In The Question Of Palestine (QOP). *Russian Law Journal*, 11(4s).

Nisar, H. (2022). Islamophobia and Disintegrated Muslim World: Revisiting the Role of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). *Capital Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 30-37.

Nordin, N. N. H., Husin, W. N., Salleh, M. Z., & Harun, A. L. (2022). The Role of Economic Activities in Enhancing the Acceptance of Lebanese Towards Malaysian Peacekeepers Through Good Governance as Mediator Variable. *Asian Social Science*, 18(7), 1-9.

Okumuş, M. Y. (2019). The Role Of Muslim Actors In Peacebuilding In The Philippines: Turkey, Malaysia And The Organization Of Islamic Cooperation [Doctoral Dissertation, İstanbul Şehir University].

Pali, A. G. (2023). The Beginning And Development of Islamic Thought And Civilization, Sub-Sahara African Academic Research Publications, *Journal of Human, Social & Political Science Research*, Vol. 27, No.6, ISSN:2416-7999, pp. 117-128

Radzi, M. S. M., Esa, M. S., & Othman, Z. (2023). The Ummatic Elements in Malaysia-Turkey Economic Cooperation: A Study on Investment Aspects. *BASKARA: Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, 5(2), 123-135.

Rye, L. (2020). The Legitimacy of the EU in Historical Perspective: History of a Never-ending Quest. *European Papers-A Journal on Law and Integration*, 2020(1), 191-207.

Saiman, M. Z., & Yusma, N. S. (2022). Issues And Challenges Of Promotion of Halal Certification For Muslim Entrepreneurs In Malaysia. *al-Qanatir: International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 28(2), 116-128.

Schulze, M. P. (2021). Of bumping and bending: Foreign universities' FDI strategies in Malaysia. *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, 112(2), 179-194.

Talang, M. N. (2020). Economic Impact Due To Covid-19 & Solutions From Islamic Economic And Finance: Malaysia And Saudi Arabia, LinkedIn, 16 July 2020, Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/economic-activities-due-covid-19-solutions-from-islamic-talang/>

Tajwar, A. & Sultan, H. (2023). The emerging role of the organisation of Islamic cooperation in global governance since 1969, *Cogent Arts & Humanities* (2023), 10:2202052, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2202052>

Webersik, C. (2006). Mogadishu: An economy without a state. *Third World Quarterly*, 27(8), 1463-1480.

Waikar, P., Osman, M. N. M., & Ali, R. (2021). Dancing with the Ummah: Islam in Malaysia's foreign policy under Najib Razak. *The Pacific Review*, 34(2), 230-258.

## **Sudan: The Power Struggle Between Two Generals and the East-West Geopolitical Battlefield**

**Colonel Jagjit Singh a/l Indar Singh**  
**First Admiral Kamaruddin bin Omar**  
**Brigadier General Haji Abdul Jalal Zaidi bin Abdul Majid**  
**Colonel Meor Anas bin Meor Ahmad**  
National Resilience College, PUSPAHANAS

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the power dynamics between two Sudanese Generals, Abdullah Fattah al-Burhan and Hamdan Dagalo, and their impact on the geopolitical landscape of the East and West. The central focus is to explore the origins of the conflict in Sudan, considering both generals' motivations and the influence of regional and international stakeholders, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Russia, Israel, and Western countries. The paper begins with a historical overview of the conflict in Sudan, detailing the violent confrontations between the Sudanese Armed Forces, led by General Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces under General Dagalo's command. It highlights the crisis and its repercussions on neighbouring countries, delving into how each neighbour has responded to the border issues. The study further investigates the internal and external ramifications of the Sudanese conflict. This includes an analysis of the prospects for Sudan, the warring factions, and the civilian population, focusing on issues like displacement and threats to regional security. The paper also explores how various actors have influenced and responded to the Sudanese conflict through diplomatic and military strategies to advance their interests. The paper proposes solutions for a more stable and prosperous future in Sudan to address the ongoing conflict and power struggle. Its concluding remarks emphasise that the conflict is deeply rooted in Sudan's military and security structure, raising essential questions about its role in the nation's politics.

**Keywords:** Military Leadership, Power Struggle, Political Stability, Internal and External Factors, Implication and Civil War

## Introduction

Sudan, a nation in the heart of North-East Africa, is a tapestry of rich history, diverse cultural heritage, and breathtaking landscapes. Since its emancipation from British colonial rule in 1956, the country has navigated a complex trajectory marked by a series of internal conflicts that have significantly shaped its historical and political landscape. A primary catalyst for these conflicts has been the stark divide between the predominantly Arab-Muslim North and the ethnically diverse South, home to a variety of African ethnic groups practising traditional religions and Christianity. This division led to a prolonged civil war, which ultimately resulted in the secession of South Sudan in 2011 and also witnessed a revival of violent unrest in Darfur and other regions of Sudan.

In more recent years, Sudan's political arena has been fraught with challenges, raising concerns regarding the fragility of the country's peace process. A notable development in this context is the emerging power struggle between two influential military figures: General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. This rivalry presents a critical security dilemma and carries significant implications for the future of Sudanese politics and the aspiration for democratic reform. This paper aims to dissect the intricate dynamics underpinning this power struggle. It intends to analyse the backgrounds of Generals Burhan and Dagalo, charting their rise to prominence, current rivalry, and the interplay of external factors and interests influencing this scenario. The paper will offer a comprehensive examination of this conflict's causes and potential consequences, particularly concerning its impact on the nation and the broader region. Concluding with forward-thinking insights, the paper will propose strategies and recommendations to guide Sudan towards future stability and peace.

## The Road To Conflict

The conflict between Burhan and Dagalo has its roots in the events that led to the downfall of Bashir's regime. Rising fuel and bread prices sparked the protests that erupted in December 2018 but soon grew to encompass broader grievances against Bashir's 30-year rule, including corruption, economic mismanagement, and political repression. The protests ultimately led to Bashir's ouster in April 2019 (Dunne, 2020), but they also exposed deep divisions within Sudan's military and security apparatus. A temporary administration was founded, composed of military and civilians, and Abdalla Hamdok took office as Prime Minister in August 2019. However, Hamdok was overthrown by the military in another coup in October 2021 (Thomas and De Waal, 2022).

## The Rival Generals

General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, born in 1960, hails from the Berti ethnic group in North Darfur, Sudan. His military career began in the 1980s when he joined the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). Over the years, Burhan rose through the ranks, demonstrating his military prowess and leadership skills (Najimdeen, 2023). In 2019, he became the head of the Transitional Military Council (TMC), assuming control after the ousting of Sudan's long-time president, Omar al-Bashir. General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemeti, was born in 1975 and belonged to the Maharaja branch of the Rizeigat Arab tribe in Darfur. He began his military career as a child soldier during the second Sudanese civil war (Deng, 2023). Dagalo gained notoriety as the leader of the Janjaweed militia, which was accused of committing atrocities during the Darfur conflict. Despite international criticism, Dagalo managed to secure a position of power within Sudan's military establishment—the image of the rival Generals as per Figure 1.



**General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo**

**General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan**

Figure 1. The Waring Generals

## The Power Struggle

The power struggle between Burhan and Dagalo can be traced back to Sudan's political transition following Bashir's removal. The TMC, led by Burhan and Dagalo as deputy, initially took control, promising a change to civilian rule. However, this transition was marred by protests and a violent crackdown by security forces, resulting in civilian casualties. Dagalo and his Rapid Support Forces (RSF) played a significant role in suppressing dissent. As the power struggle intensified, differing objectives and ambitions became evident. Burhan was seen as more moderate and open to negotiations and compromises with pro-democracy groups.

Conversely, Dagalo appeared more interested in consolidating power. Both generals have been vying for control over Sudan since the long-time leader Omar al-Bashir was ousted in April 2019 (Bassil and Zhang, 2021). In August 2019, Burhan signed a power-sharing deal with the opposition Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), establishing the Sovereignty Council and civilian-led cabinet. However, all factions within the military did not embrace the power-sharing agreement. Dagalo and the RSF, in particular, were suspicious of the FFC and wary of ceding too much power to civilians. The RSF had played a significant role in Bashir's regime, and many members were accused of committing atrocities in Darfur and other parts of Sudan. The FFC and other civil society groups saw the RSF as a continuation of Bashir's repressive security tool and called for its disbandment. The tension between Burhan and Dagalo came to a head in June 2020 when security forces opened fire on peaceful protesters in Khartoum, killing dozens and injuring hundreds. The RSF was widely blamed for the crackdown, and Dagalo was criticised for his role. The incident sparked renewed protests and calls for disbanding the RSF, but Dagalo remained defiant.

Since then, the power struggle between Burhan and Dagalo has continued to simmer. While Burhan has sought to consolidate his authority over the Sovereignty Council and the military, Dagalo has maintained his grip on the RSF and other key security agencies. The two men have also clashed over policy issues, such as how to deal with Sudan's economic crisis and address the country's history of conflict and violence. On 15 April 2023, both Generals erupted into civil war, which marked the beginning of a dramatic new chapter in the history of Sudan (Zambakari, 2023).

## **Allies Turned Foes**

Burhan and Dagalo jointly staged a coup in October 2021 (Carboni and Raleigh, 2021), overthrowing the tenuous transition to civilian administration established after Bashir's overthrow two years earlier. They were allies while opposing the civilians in charge of the government, but since they both participated in the coup, their differences worsened as each faction vied for power. The current situation was initiated by an effort to contain Dagalo's force and place it under the army's command. The RSF is fighting against being incorporated into the national army because they are worried about losing their status and being forced to serve civilians and military generals, significantly if their pay is decreased. When the framework agreement changed Dagalo's status to that of Burhan's equal rather than his deputy, tensions increased even further.

Negotiations to put the nation back on the path to democracy have been ongoing in recent months. Burhan and Dagalo agreed to a framework deal with political parties and pro-democracy organisations under international pressure. However, the agreement remained ambiguous on crucial grounds of contention, such as who would have ultimate power and how the RSF would be absorbed into the armed forces. The United States and Saudi Arabia initiated a ceasefire, but it soon broke down, and both sides accused the other of breaking it and bombing infrastructure and killing civilians.

Tanks, artillery, and bombers are operating in densely populated areas of the capital, creating a spectacle of battle that is entirely out of the ordinary for Khartoum. Fighting has also moved to parts of northern and eastern Sudan close to Egypt's and Ethiopia's borders and the war-torn western Darfur region. Burhan ordered the RSF to be disbanded as the war intensified and referred to it as a "rebel" organisation. In response, Dagalo described the army leader as "a radical Islamist who is bombing civilians from the air" (Bishai, 2023).

The fact that both sides have bases throughout the country and are fighting in cities and towns across the nation is one of the reasons why this situation is such a nightmare in Sudan. Power struggles now threaten the country, with possibly catastrophic repercussions for the rest of the area in Sudan. Sudan borders South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Libya, the Central African Republic (CAR), and Egypt and is in a volatile region. Instability in Sudan will not stay in Sudan, affecting its neighbouring countries. Elastration Bordering nations with Sudan, according to Figure 2.

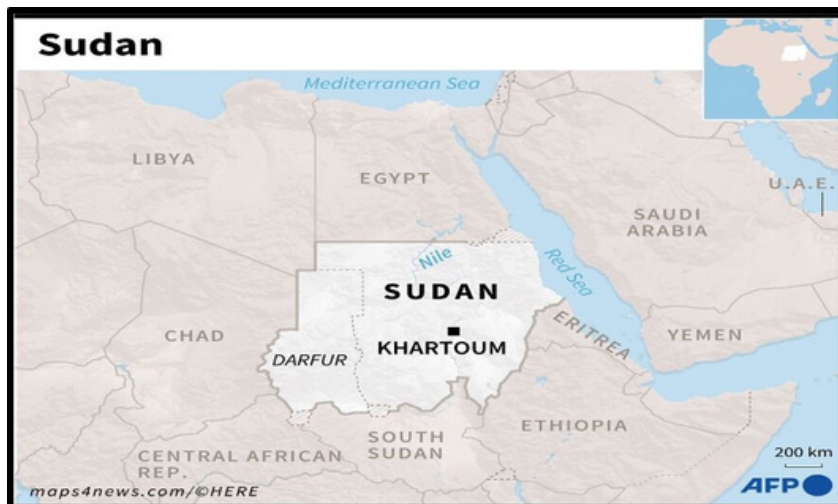


Figure 2. Bordering Nations with Sudan

The notorious Janjaweed militants that Bashir unleashed on non-Arab ethnic minorities in the western Darfur region a decade earlier gave rise to RSF, founded in 2013 (Grewal, 2021). They were part of a terror campaign that led to Bashir's being charged by the International Criminal Court with war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The heavily armed militia and regular Sudanese forces participated in the Saudi-led coalition's operations in Yemen's civil war in 2015. As a result, the force was strengthened, and Dagalo's reputation overseas was raised, giving him enough regional allies to compete with Burhan. This force also supported relations with the

Wagner Group in Russia and took part in the battle in nearby Libya (Heinemann-Grüder and Aris, 2022). The RSF has been charged with committing further atrocities domestically, particularly as part of a security crackdown following Bashir's overthrow. Since then, despite Sudan's economy's decline, the RSF has become more powerful and wealthy. Tensions with the regular army, which has historically had a stranglehold on the nation's economy, have been fuelled by the struggle for power and the depletion of resources.

## **The Role of External Forces at Regional And International Levels**

Behind Burhan are the Egyptians; Burhan had military training in Egypt and enjoyed the president's support (Oxford Analytica, 2021). In the past, Egypt tried their best to prevent Burhan from collapsing. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have supported Dagalo (Kulkarni, 2023), and RSF sent ground forces to Yemen as part of a coalition led by Saudi Arabia battling the Houthi rebels. They have given him much financial support over the past ten years, and they believe Dagalo is currently the best wager in Khartoum since it is the most structured group. Just days before President Vladimir Putin began his full-scale assault on Ukraine, Dagalo also visited Moscow. Russian businesses operating in Sudan are connected to the Wagner group, and the RSF has links to gold mines and diamonds in Darfur. Both leaders have tried to proclaim their democratic credentials. The conflict in Sudan has attracted the involvement of various external forces at regional and international levels. These external actors have played significant roles in shaping the dynamics of the conflict. Here are some examples of external forces and their roles in the Sudanese conflict.

### **Regional Powers**

Egypt is keeping a close eye on the most recent developments. The military of Sudan, which the nation views as an ally against Ethiopia, enjoys a close relationship with it and has been concerned about the impact of the Sudanese conflict on the region's stability, mainly due to the potential implications for its own national security and water resources. Egypt has engaged in diplomatic efforts to mediate the conflict and maintain stability (Ahram Online, 2021). The building of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) at the Nile has created this issue. Egypt calls for international mediation in the GERD crisis.

Sudan shares a border with Ethiopia, and the conflict in Sudan has had spillover effects on Ethiopia. Ethiopia has been involved in the conflict due to its relations with various Sudanese actors, including the government and rebel groups (Al Jazeera, 2021). Sudan's military and Ethiopia's Tigray rebels signed a border security resolution agreement. Ethiopia, a landlocked country, has clashed with Sudan and Egypt over its ambitious hydroelectric construction, which could affect the flow of the Nile River.

African Union (AU) has been actively involved in peace efforts in Sudan (African Union, 2022). It has deployed peacekeeping missions and mediated between different Sudanese factions to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation. This was evident during the North and South Sudan conflict and can be leveraged for the current predicament. The AU's engagement in Sudan reflects its commitment to the principles enshrined in the African Union Constitutive Act, including promoting peace, security and socioeconomic development.

Gulf countries, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have been involved in the Sudanese conflict due to their strategic interests and regional influence. They have provided financial assistance to Sudan and have sought to mediate between different Sudanese factions (The National, 2021). The Red Sea, including oil shipments, is a vital waterway for international trade. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are keenly interested in securing the Red Sea and maintaining maritime security.

## **Regional Influence**

Due to its advantageous location, Sudan borders several unstable nations, including Chad, South Sudan, and Libya. For its part, Russia wants to strengthen its position in the region and project power over the Red Sea and the more considerable influence in the Middle East by increasing its presence and influence in Sudan. Due to its strategic location on the Red Sea, proximity to the Nile River, an enormous stretch of gold riches, agriculture potential, and foreign investment, the third-largest country in Africa has long been sought after by foreign powers, including its neighbours, the Gulf countries, Russia, and Western countries.

The general election that is anticipated to take place in July of this year has been placed in serious doubt by the most recent conflict, which has further marginalised expectations for the development of a peaceful democracy. According to Magdi el-Gizouli (2022), a Sudanese analyst at the Rift Valley Institute, everyone wanted a piece of Sudan, and it could not take all the interference. The delicate equilibrium fell apart when too many conflicting interests and claims existed. Since adjacent countries are already embroiled in their internal disputes, many observers worry that the continuous confrontation between the military and RSF will spread to those nations, destabilising the entire area and continent.

What occurs in Sudan will not remain in Sudan, according to Alan Boswell (2021) of the International Crisis Group, who also stated that South Sudan and Chad appear to be most at imminent risk of spillover. Still, the likelihood of a significant outside intervention increases if the battle drags on. The involvement of more parties will

increase misunderstanding and drag this internal conflict to a different level. The war in Sudan may worsen, given that refugees from conflict areas in western Sudan have already poured into coup-prone Chad (Singh, 2022). South Sudan, established in 2011 and has seen terrible civil wars, is still unstable and weak. When South Sudan broke away from Sudan, it also took 75% of Khartoum's oil reserves, leaving the latter with significantly less money and sources of income. Sudan attracted international investors, including the UAE, to stem the economy's decline. Sudan's vast and comparatively underutilised potential of the fertile soil that borders the Nile River was recognised by the oil-rich West Asian country, which invested extensively in the agricultural industry. The UAE took advantage of the chance to increase its power in the Horn of Africa. It forged strong links with the head of the RSF, Dagalo (Sharfi, 2022).

## **International Actors**

The multifaceted roles of external forces in the Sudanese conflict are critical in understanding the geopolitical dynamics. These roles encompass diplomatic mediation, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and financial support, each evolving to meet the region's changing needs. The United Nations (UN) has been instrumental in fostering peace and providing humanitarian aid in Sudan. The deployment of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has been pivotal in protecting civilians and facilitating peace negotiations (United Nations, 2022). While the UN's direct intervention in the current crisis remains to be seen, its ongoing efforts, in tandem with the African Union, hint at potential future involvement.

Russia's engagement in Sudan, especially in recent years, is a testament to the complex international interest in the region. Economic cooperation forms a cornerstone of this relationship, with Russia and Sudan signing agreements in the energy, mining, and agriculture sectors. Russian firms have expressed interest in Sudan's oil and gas sector, with the Wagner Group, allegedly linked to President Vladimir Putin, showing interest in Sudan's natural resources, including gold and uranium (Blank, 2022). Additionally, Russia has emerged as a significant arms supplier to Sudan, providing military equipment amidst international scrutiny over their use in internal conflicts. Diplomatically, Russia has leveraged its position in the United Nations Security Council to shield Sudan from potential sanctions, reflecting a broader strategic objective to expand its global influence. Militarily, the 2017 agreement to establish a naval base near Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast underscores Russia's desire for a strategic regional presence (Blank, 2022).

The United States has also shown a keen interest in Sudan's transition, particularly in supporting democratic processes and peace initiatives. Following the ousting of Bashir in 2019, the US and other Western nations viewed this as an opportunity to facilitate Sudan's democratic transition and counter Russia's influence. The US has provided diplomatic assistance, economic support, and sanctions relief, engaging in various mediation efforts (US Department of State, 2023). Western interests in Sudan encompass political stability and peace promotion, economic development through resource access, and security concerns, particularly in combating terrorism due to Sudan's strategic location. Israel's involvement in Sudan is driven by geopolitical strategies, particularly to counter Iran's influence in the region. The normalisation of relations between Israel and Sudan in 2020, followed by the establishment of diplomatic ties, signifies this strategic alignment. Moreover, Israel's engagement with Sudanese security authorities, including discussions with Dagalo, emphasises counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation (Tawfik, 2022).

China's presence in the region, mainly through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), highlights its long-term economic interests. The peace and stability of the Horn of Africa, including Sudan, are crucial for China's objectives. This is evident in China's engagement with countries in the Horn of Africa, such as North and South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya, focusing on economic collaboration and resource development (Bodetti, 2019). Therefore, the involvement of these external actors in Sudan is complex and multi-dimensional, each driven by their unique geopolitical and economic interests. Their roles in the ongoing Sudanese conflict and the broader regional context will continue to shape Sudan's political and security landscape and the Horn of Africa.



Figure 3: Countries Making Up The Horn of Africa

The armed conflict that erupted in Sudan on 15 April 2023 has plunged the country into a state of turmoil, with the epicentres of violence being the Darfur region and the capital, Khartoum. This conflict stems from a power struggle between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), initially established by former President Omar al-Bashir. General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, instrumental in the coup that dismantled the transitional government following al-Bashir's 2019 overthrow, currently assumes the role of Sudan's de facto leader (Adam Fulton and Oliver Holmes, 2023). Despite Burhan's pledge for a civilian transition, his alliance with RSF commander General Dagalo has been pivotal in sustaining the military's grip on power. The crux of their contention lies in disagreements over various issues, notably the integration of RSF paramilitaries into the Sudanese army.

The crisis in Sudan extends its implications far beyond its borders, significantly affecting the Horn of Africa, a region already beleaguered by conflicts, political unrest, and severe humanitarian crises. These are further exacerbated by one of the most prolonged and intense droughts in recent history. The instability in Sudan presents a substantial risk to the stability of the Horn of Africa, a region of heightened global strategic interest due to its proximity to the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean. Given their strategic implications, nations such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti have maintained a keen interest in Sudan's developments (Ismail Numan Telci, 2022). The ramifications of Sudan's conflict are far-reaching. As reported by Najimdeen (2023), the unrest has resulted in over 1,800 fatalities, with approximately 425,000 individuals seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Notably, 170,000 have fled to Egypt, 100,000 to western Chad, and 1.2 million people have been internally displaced within Sudan. The crisis in Sudan, which escalated into armed conflict on 15 April 2023, had profound effects on its neighbouring countries, with ramifications in security, humanitarian, economic, and diplomatic spheres. The following paragraphs will discuss the overview of these impacts, focusing on Egypt, Libya, Chad, the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the involvement of Gulf Nations.

## **Egypt**

The conflict in Sudan poses significant security challenges for Egypt, particularly with reports of cross-border infiltrations and arms smuggling, threatening national security (Adam Fulton and Oliver Holmes, 2023). The refugee influx from Sudan has strained Egypt's resources, impacting healthcare, housing, and education systems. Additionally, the conflict threatens Nile water management, crucial for Egypt's agriculture and economy. Egypt's diplomatic engagement in resolving the conflict and its economic interests in Sudan further underscore its deep involvement in the crisis.

## **Libya**

The historical tension between Sudan and Libya under Omar al-Bashir and Muammar Gaddafi has exacerbated the Libyan migration issue (Jason Burke and Zeinab Mohammed Salih, 2023). The return of Sudanese militants from the Libyan conflict has heightened tensions in Darfur. Khalifa Haftar's alleged support for the RSF indicates Libya's indirect involvement in the Sudanese conflict, which could fuel further instability.

## **Chad**

The intricate social and cultural ties between Chad and Sudan make Chad particularly vulnerable to the Sudanese conflict. With numerous Chadian families having connections in Sudan and the presence of Sudanese refugees in Chad, the conflict exacerbates regional instability (Najimdeen, 2023). The historical use of rebels and armed opposition in border areas further complicates the situation, with recent military deployments along the Chad-Sudan border highlighting these tensions.

## **Central African Republic (CAR)**

The CAR's involvement in the Sudanese conflict is marked by allegations of Sudanese security officials supporting CAR rebel groups (Mohammed Amin, 2023). The RSF's connections to the Russian Wagner group and its activities in the CAR-Sudan border region highlight the complexities of the crisis and its potential to influence the CAR's internal dynamics.

## **South Sudan**

As a neighbouring country, South Sudan faces humanitarian, security, and economic repercussions from the Sudanese conflict. The ongoing strife reminds South Sudan of its turbulent history and raises concerns about the region's stability (Abdelwahab El-Affendi, 2023). The potential disruption of oil transportation through Sudan poses significant economic risks.

## **Ethiopia**

The crisis in Sudan directly impacts Ethiopia's security, given their shared borders and intertwined political dynamics (Jonas Horner and Ahmed Soliman, 2023). Ethiopia's involvement in the Sudanese conflict, coupled with its internal challenges following the Tigray War, illustrates the complex interdependencies in the region.

## **Eritrea**

The escalation of war in Sudan could force Eritrean refugees to seek new shelters, complicating regional stability. The controversy surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project adds another layer to this complexity, with Sudan's stance on the project being a point of contention among neighbouring countries

## Gulf Nations

The involvement of Gulf states in Sudan, particularly their competition for influence in the Red Sea region, has been noted (Mason, 2022). The interests of countries like the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in Sudan's political landscape demonstrate the broader geopolitical competition.

In conclusion, the Sudanese conflict's spillover effects on neighbouring countries are multifaceted and complex, encompassing security, humanitarian, and geopolitical dimensions. The involvement of regional and international actors further complicates the situation, highlighting the need for comprehensive and coordinated responses to address the crisis and its regional implications.

## The Way Forward

Conflicts between the Sudan Army and RSF have progressively worsened in this social and political chaos environment. The previously agreed-upon path between Burhan and Dagalo to incorporate the RSF, military personnel, and weapons into the army has been subverted by Dagalo's political aspirations to monopolise executive power, which has led to the escalation of hostilities. The hope-filled democratic transition is over; Sudan now faces a serious threat of state failure and disintegration. However, for the first time in decades, Khartoum has been involved in the fighting, and now its citizens are suffering because of the long-term hostilities against the country's borders and the general unrest.

Therefore, the increased internal and external focus may help Sudan break out of its impasse. Suppose regional and international actors work to integrate the militias into the national army and facilitate political talks between military and civilian groups. In that case, Sudan may be saved from the terrible fate of state disintegration, the prospects for stability, and later democracy and development. Recommendations as a way forward for a better and peaceful Sudan are as follows: Firstly, both parties must find their way back to negotiations that prioritise the inclusive integration of all military players in the national army to prevent the impending threat of a protracted civil war and state dissolution, or the current escalation will continue. This is a vitally important step to safeguard Sudan's territorial integrity and prevent the collapse of its governmental machinery.

Secondly, leaders must establish constitutional and legal safeguards that prohibit the use of armaments for political purposes to protect local people in Darfur, Khartoum, and elsewhere who have endured persecution, human rights violations, and suffering as a result of the impunity enjoyed by both state and non-state actors. Thirdly, to resume political discussions between civilian politicians speaking for pro-democracy groups and the army leadership. The departure of Hamdok, the previous

prime minister of Sudan, which came after violent demonstrations and deadlocked negotiations, raised concerns about Sudan's prospects for democracy. By bringing Hamdok and other civilian politicians back to the negotiating table with army leaders and providing some guarantees given to civilians by regional and international actors such as the African Union and the United Nations, it may be possible to restore citizens' faith in Sudan's democratic transition and peaceful power-sharing arrangements between military and civilian groups.

Fourthly, the current violence was also sparked by unsolved concerns over political power and wealth distribution between Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, and its outlying regions. Although ceasefire and truce agreements have been reached in recent years regarding the civil wars in Darfur and other distant locations, their underlying causes, notably the persecution and marginalisation of non-Muslims and African tribes living there, have not been addressed. Fifthly, Burhan and Dagalo, the two sides vying for supremacy in the current armed conflict, have yet to be seen using executive power. The genuine social, economic, and political demands of the people in these areas have yet to be addressed. Indicators of poverty and underdevelopment in Sudan have worsened since 2021, and even more so after Hamdok's resignation reduced civilian participation in the executive branch of government. Peace and stability in Sudan may be elusive if future negotiations between military commanders, the army and civilian groups do not address the socioeconomic and political problems of the Sudanese peripheries.

The African Union must play a pivotal role in coercing both parties back to the negotiation table and working out a win-win solution to restore normalcy to the conflict. Protecting civilians is paramount so that confidence-building measures can be instilled in society. Finally, the immediate need for humanitarian assistance should be allowed by warring parties to ease human suffering, especially among refugees and internally displaced Persons. This must be included in the negotiation of peace until the proper rule of law is broken.

## Conclusion

Sudan's history of conflicts is deeply rooted in issues of identity, economic disparity, and political marginalisation. The country has experienced multiple civil wars, most notably the First and Second Civil Wars and the ongoing power struggle. Sudan still faces significant challenges on its path towards stability, peace, and inclusive governance. International support and concerted efforts are crucial to helping Sudan navigate these complex issues and build a prosperous and peaceful nation. The international community must continue to play a vital role in supporting Sudan's transitional government and promoting dialogue and reconciliation among various stakeholders. Ultimately, the collective effort of the Sudanese people and their leaders will determine the country's future and its ability to overcome its turbulent past.

The struggle for power between Generals Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo represents a significant challenge to Sudan's transition to civilian rule and its prospects for stability and democratic reform. The conflict is rooted in the divisions within Sudan's military and security apparatus and raises questions about the military's role in politics. It also can potentially escalate into wider violence and instability, with severe implications for Sudan and the region. As a part of that conflict, Sudan's generals, who have reportedly corrupt players in the local economy, have looked abroad for allies. This has meant enticing Gulf nations to invest in the vast, largely untapped potential of the fertile land that borders the Nile River for agricultural purposes. Deals involving gold with Russia's infamous Wagner organisation, accused of transporting gold out of Sudan, have been far murkier. The head of Wagner, Yevgeniy Prigozhin, has been charged by the US Treasury with profiting personally off Sudan's natural riches and promoting evil online through his troll farm. The interests of Russia in the nation and region are far more extensive. The Red Sea may be seen from the bleak coastline of eastern Sudan. To provide its warships access to and control one of the busiest and most contentious water routes, the Kremlin has attempted to create a military facility in Port Sudan for years. A deal on the facility between Moscow and Sudan's military government is almost complete.

Unsurprisingly, a broad spectrum of governments is attempting to affect what is happening in Sudan. The army's conflict with the RSF paramilitary group is focused on concluding before it escalates. It threatens to transform from a relatively simple power struggle into a more complicated civil war.

## References:

Abdelwahab El-Affendi., 2023 “The Darfur conflict revisited: Lessons un-learned”, Al Jazeera, 26 February 2023, <https://bit.ly/3LeWtL4> (accessed 20 May 2023).

Adam Fulton and Oliver Holmes., 2023 “Sudan conflict: why is there fighting and what is at stake in the region?” The Guardian, 16 April 2023, <https://bit.ly/40GBdmZ> (accessed 19 May 2023).

Bassil, N. and Zhang, J., 2021. The post-Bashir era in Sudan: tragedy or remedy? *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 75(3), pp.252-259.

Bishai, L.S., 2023. Resistance is life: how Sudan’s resistance committees perform democratic power. *The Journal of North African Studies*, pp.1-19.

Blank, S., 2022. Gunboat diplomacy à la Russe: Russia’s naval base in Sudan and its implications. *Defense & Security Analysis*, 38(4), pp.470-489.

Bodetti, A., 2019. How China Came to Dominate South Sudan’s Oil, *The Diplomat*, 11 February 2019, Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/how-china-came-to-dominate-south-sudans-oil>

Boswell, A., 2021. Conflict and Crisis in South Sudan’s Equatoria.

Carboni, A. and Raleigh, C., 2021. Regime cycles and political change in African autocracies. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 59(4), pp.415-437.

Deng, M., 2023. On the Path of Destruction: How Two Generals Plunged Sudan Into Civil War-An Explanatory Note. *Verfassungsblog*.

Dunne, M., 2020. Fear and learning in the Arab uprisings. *Journal of Democracy*, 31(1), pp.182-192.

Grewal, S., 2021. Why Sudan succeeded where Algeria failed. *Journal of Democracy*, 32(4), pp.102-114.

Heinemann-Grüder, A. and Aris, S., 2022. Wagner Group. *Russian Analytical Digest (RAD)*, 290.

<https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/414029/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt,-Sudan-call-for-international-mediation-in-.aspx>(accessed 20 May 2023)

. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/22/sudans-military-ethiopias-tigray-rebels-sign-agreement> (accessed 20 May 2023).

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/mena/sudan-s-shifting-sands-bring-saudi-arabia-and-use-closer-1.1180797> (accessed 20 May 2023).

<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unamid> (accessed 21 May 2023).

<https://au.int/en/sudan> (Accessed 20 May 2023).

<https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-sudan/> (accessed 21 May 2023).

Ismail Numan Telci., 2022 “The Horn of Africa as venue for regional competition: Motivations, instruments and relationship patterns.” *Insight on Africa*, Issue 14, no. 1 (2022): 73-87.

Jason Burke and Zeinab Mohammed Salih., 2023 “Libyan warlord could plunge Sudan into a drawn-out ‘nightmare’ conflict”, *The Guardian*, 23 April 2023, <https://bit.ly/3L6sdll> (accessed 21 May 2023).

Jonas Horner and Ahmed Soliman., 2023 “Coordinating international responses to Ethiopia–Sudan tensions”, Chatham House, 12 April 2023, <https://bit.ly/3L8cbr7> (accessed 19 April 2023).

John Ikani., 2023 “African Leaders Sue for Peace in Sudan as Conflict Rage On”, *The Heritage Times*, 18 April 2023, <https://bit.ly/41WmfKv> (accessed 20 May 2023).

Katharine Houreld and Stefanie Le., 2023 “Peace deal ending Ethiopia’s Tigray war yet to dispel fear of more atrocities”, *The Washington Post*, 25 January 2023, <https://wapo.st/3ArIY6l> (accessed 20 May 2023).

Kulkarni, P., 2023. As fighting continues, left calls for restoring the revolution. *Green Left Weekly*, (1379), pp.14-15.

Mason, R., 2022. Pushing the envelope of national security and state influence at the margins: Saudi and Iranian competition in the Horn of Africa. In *The Gulf States and the Horn of Africa* (pp. 36-67). Manchester University Press.

Mohammed Amin., 2023 “Hemeti’s CAR coup boast sheds light on Sudanese role in conflict next door”, *Middle East Eye*, 18 January 2023, <https://bit.ly/3AuCLG2> (accessed 21 May 2023).

Muttlak, H.K. and Aldeen, R.D.M., 2019. The geostrategic importance of Sudan in the Israeli strategic perception. *Tikrit Journal For Political Science*, pp.528-557.

- Najimdeen, H.A., 2023. Sudan's Crisis and the Implications for Its Neighbours.
- Oakes, J., 2021. War Lord: Khalifa Haftar and the Future of Libya. Amberley Publishing Limited.
- Oxford Analytica, 2021. Sudan coup sets back Egypt's GERD position. Emerald Expert Briefings, (oxen-db).
- Sharif, M., 2022. Sudan's foreign policy predicament in the context of the GCC diplomatic rift. In *The Gulf States and the Horn of Africa* (pp. 272-294). Manchester University Press.
- Singh, N., 2022. The Myth of the Coup Contagion. *Journal of Democracy*, 33(4), pp.74-88.
- Tawfik, R., 2022. Sudan's Normalization with Israel: A Break with the Past or Another Phase of Extraversion? *African Studies Review*, 65(4), pp.886-910.
- Thomas, E. and El-Gizouli, M.A.G.D.I., 2022. The Costs of Peace.
- Thomas, E. and De Waal, A., 2022. Hunger in Sudan's political marketplace. World Peace Foundation. Occasional Paper, 32.
- "UNHCR., 2023 gravely concerned as refugees fleeing fighting in Sudan arrive in Chad", UNHCR, 20 April 2023, <https://bit.ly/3Huevrp> (accessed 21 May 2023).
- Zambakari, C. (2023, May 16). The Struggle for Sudan's Soul: The Perils of a Turbulent Transition. The Zambakari Advisory | Africa Report No. 9. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4449377>

## Taliban 2.0: Afghanistan Government Legitimacy

FAdm Abdullah Sani Ismail  
BG Hesham Afifi Abdelaal Afifi  
Col Zamri Othman  
Col Azman Taib RMAF

### Abstract

The legitimacy of the Afghan government is framed by historical, political, socio-economic and security perspectives. It begins with a brief history of Afghanistan, tracing its evolution through various phases of rule, culminating in the recent return to power of the Taliban. The concept of governmental legitimacy is then explored, delineating the factors contributing to a government being considered legitimate by its citizens, regional and the international community. Emphasis is given to the Taliban's approach toward women's rights and the education system, with a critical evaluation of their policies and implementation. A detailed examination of the socio-economic impacts of the current political situation is presented, focusing on how these issues affect the legitimacy of the government. This paper addresses the following questions: (1) Is the Taliban 2.0 capable of leading Afghanistan towards a democratic and sovereign state and have they introduced effective policies thus far? (2) What challenges do they face in achieving their objectives, and why do they lack international recognition? (3) Can the Taliban government sustain itself despite the lack of international support? In answering these questions, the paper employs a qualitative research methodology based on the data collected from mostly secondary sources such as journals, articles, books and views from different scholars and delves into the significant internal security challenges Afghanistan faces, such as refugee crisis, food and health security, drug-related challenges, poverty and ethnic tensions that compound these concerns. This paper also discusses and examine the Doha Agreement's role in shaping Afghanistan's current political landscape and how it has impacted the legitimacy of the Taliban-led government. Responses from Middle Eastern countries to the changing dynamics in Afghanistan are also analysed including illustrating how regional powers perceive the new government and its potential influence on its legitimacy. Afghanistan's rapidly changing political situation has led countries like Malaysia to evaluate its impact on regional security, human rights and humanitarian concerns. The Taliban's actions to resolve internal challenges, especially regarding women's rights and education, might change the international community perspective toward the acceptance of the Taliban led as a legitimate government. However, support from the international community is crucial for the Taliban 2.0 to address these challenges effectively and avoid reverting to previous conduct that led to its failure.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, Taliban 2.0, Socio-economic, Legitimacy, Internal Security, Political Landscape.

## INTRODUCTION

The international community has been concerned following the Taliban 2.0 take over the power from the previous Afghanistan government in August 2021. A comprehensive assessment of the Taliban's legitimacy as a ruling government necessitates exploring various factors, including global recognition, internal acknowledgement, effective administration, adherence to human rights, citizen participation and the country's stability and national security. The aftermath of Afghanistan's previous democratic governance saw the world community hesitant to officially recognise the Taliban's government. Recognition from institutions like the United Nations (UN) and countries worldwide is pivotal in granting a government its authenticity.

For a government to be legitimate domestically, its citizenry must accept it. Given that the Taliban has faced substantial opposition from various Afghan societal groups, closely examining the prevailing sentiments and movements is required to understand the current internal acknowledgement. Effective governance, highlighted by the ability to provide essential services, maintain peace and secure the country's borders, is a fundamental determinant of a government's legitimacy. The Taliban's previous stint in power raised doubts about their capability in these areas, warranting a present-day evaluation of their governance. Concerns about the Taliban's legitimacy are further magnified due to their troubling history regarding human rights, particularly towards women and minorities. Hence, a critical analysis of the current human rights situation is vital. The governance process also entails active public participation, which is a measure of legitimacy. The undemocratic manner of the Taliban's rise to power necessitates assessing public participation in the present governance structure. The level of stability and peace under the Taliban, compared with conflict and insecurity, is a crucial metric in this legitimacy discourse. Past Taliban regimes were marred by instability, leading to apprehensions about the future. A thorough examination of these dimensions is indispensable to comprehend the complex political landscape of Afghanistan under Taliban rule.

In understanding the evolution and the legitimacy of Afghanistan's government, this paper will provide a brief overview of the historical context and legitimacy theories, including the political developments and transitions that have shaped Afghanistan's government structure. It will set the stage for discussing the challenges and legitimacy of the current government.

## AFGHANISTAN: A GEOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

Afghanistan, referred to as the 'Heart of Asia,' is strategically located at the crossroads of South and Central Asia, serving for centuries as a vital geographical hub. The landlocked country, spanning approximately 652,864 square kilometres, is flanked by six nations. Its northern frontier with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan serves as the southern edge of Central Asia. At the same time, its eastern and southeastern borders with China and Pakistan link it to the South Asian region. Iran lies to the West, providing a connection to the Middle East. The country's topography is dominated by the Hindu Kush Mountain range, which spans northeast to southwest, including the Amu Darya River valley and the Registan Desert. Its diverse climates and landscapes, from barren deserts to alpine summits have profoundly shaped its history, culture and socio-economic dynamics.



Picture 1: Afghanistan and the International Borders

Sources: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan>

## THE HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN

From 1973 to 2021, Afghanistan underwent a tumultuous journey characterised by political upheavals, social volatility, and external interventions that reshaped its socio-political landscape. The period began with a peaceful coup in 1973, led by Mohammed Daoud Khan, which abolished the monarchy and established Afghanistan as a republic. Khan aimed for modernisation, reduced Soviet influence, and centralised power, but faced resistance and public discontent due to ambitious policies and a mid-70s drought. By 1978, escalating socio-political tensions culminated in the Saur Revolution led by the Soviet-aligned People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), toppling Khan and installing a pro-Soviet communist regime. The following years were marked by political coups, communist rule, armed opposition, and the infamous Soviet invasion in 1979, leading to a protracted civil war.

Soviet intervention triggered intense Mujahideen resistance, backed by nations including the US, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. The conflict-induced a humanitarian crisis, ultimately forcing the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. The PDPA government persisted until 1992 when Mujahideen forces overthrew it, leading to factional warfare and the rise of the Taliban. From 1992 to 2001, Afghanistan experienced shifting dynamics, transitioning from internal conflict to Taliban rule. The Taliban seized Kabul in 1996, establishing strict Sharia law. Although they restored order, their association with international terrorists like Osama bin Laden led to isolation. The refusal to hand over bin Laden post-9/11 prompted the US-led invasion 2001, ushering in a new phase.

Between 2001 and 2021, Afghanistan saw conflict, attempts at nation-building, and the eventual resurgence of the Taliban. The US-led Operation Enduring Freedom removed the Taliban in 2001, paving the way for a UN-backed interim government and the Bonn Agreement's democratic reconstruction. Despite a new constitution and elections, insurgency, corruption, and sluggish development plagued the country. From 2006, the Taliban regained strength through local grievances, poor governance, and flawed counterinsurgency efforts. A 2009 US troop surge aimed to weaken the Taliban and strengthen Afghan governance. The election of Ashraf Ghani in 2014 highlighted Afghanistan's fragile democracy. The 2020 US-Taliban agreement outlined troop withdrawal and peace talks, but 2021 saw the Taliban retaking power as US forces left, concluding two tumultuous decades.

Today, Afghanistan is led by Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada, who maintains tight control. This historical journey reflects Afghanistan's ongoing challenges and complexities, highlighting its volatile past and uncertain future.

## **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TALIBAN 2.0**

The establishment of the Taliban 2.0 is linked to the signing of the agreement on 29 August 2020 between the US and the Taliban for bringing peace to Afghanistan (Doha Agreement). However, the United States (US) has not recognised the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan as a state but is known as the Taliban. The aimed the agreement is to end the longstanding conflict by facilitating a political settlement and US troop withdrawal. Under the agreement, the US committed to withdrawing troops within 14 months, while the Taliban guaranteed prevention of international terrorist threats. It also called for inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue to negotiate a ceasefire, political roadmap and power-sharing arrangement (Agreement, 2020). Intra-Afghan talks in Doha aimed to establish power-sharing between the Taliban and Afghan government but faced challenges such as prisoner releases, government structure and interpretation of Islamic law. These issues ultimately led to the failure of the negotiations (Debnath, 2022). In August 2021, the Taliban launched a successful offensive following the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan. They swiftly captured provincial capitals and took control of Kabul, leading to the collapse of the Afghan government (Debnath, 2022). The Taliban then established an interim government called the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

The Doha Agreement has created a path for the Taliban to lead the Afghan government by facilitating the withdrawal of US and NATO troops. However, it failed to fulfil the agreed-upon points, resulting in the collapse of the Ashraf Ghani government. The agreement did not explicitly dictate the formation of a Taliban government or specify power-sharing arrangements. Instead, it provided a negotiation platform and aimed for an inclusive political settlement and a new Afghan government. The Taliban government's formation generated mixed reactions and international concerns due to doubts about its inclusivity and legitimacy. Critics pointed out the absence of women and minority groups in key positions and the failure to establish a diverse and broad-based government reflecting Afghan society.

## **CONCEPT OF LEGITIMACY OF A GOVERNMENT**

The legitimacy of a government is of utmost importance as it allows a state to function independently and participate in the international system. A legitimate and recognised government brings numerous benefits, including exchanging diplomats, entering treaties, accessing state assets abroad and receiving aid. Legitimacy refers to an elected governing body or authority recognised and accepted as rightful, lawful and valid by the nation's citizens or jurisdiction. The process through which a government attains power plays a crucial role in determining its legitimacy, with governments elected through free and fair elections generally considered legitimate. According to Bilinski, a government is deemed legitimate if it is acknowledged by the people under its authority as the rightful ruler (Bilinski, 2022). Legitimacy can also be derived from factors other than elections, such as successfully leading a revolution or gaining recognition from other nations. Adherence to established laws and constitutional principles is a primary source of legitimacy. A government operating within the framework of a constitution, respecting citizens' rights and freedoms is often regarded as legitimate.

Legitimacy is not an inherent quality of a government but is bestowed upon it by the consent and acceptance of the governed. If a government fails to fulfil its responsibilities, abuses power or violates citizens' rights, its legitimacy may be questioned or undermined. Recognition of a government involves various factors, including political legitimacy, constitutionality, human rights performance and diplomatic relations (Saul, 2021). A legitimate government garners trust and support from its citizens, enabling effective policy implementation, decision-making and law enforcement. Legitimacy provides a foundation for social unity, cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts. A government without legitimacy may suffer opposition, unrest, and political instability, social divisions, and lawlessness.

## **Legitimate Government from International Order or United Nations Perspective**

Recognition of governments in international affairs is the act of acknowledging and accepting their authority. From the International Law Commission's perspective, there is no uniform practice for recognition, and it is often driven by foreign policy and expediency rather than legal obligation. When there is no straightforward procedure, debates arise regarding recognising non-democratically established governments and their representation at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly.

The government is legitimate if that government is being recognised, and according to international order and diplomacy, the 'recognition' term can be described as when one state acknowledges the existence of another state and the government of that state can speak on behalf of the state in international affairs (Anderson, 2021). There are two perspectives on state recognition: constitutive and declaratory theories. Constitutive theorists argue that recognition is necessary for statehood and joining the international community. Declaratory theorists believe that recognition is a declaration and does not determine state status (Oppenheim, 2018). Therefore, the international community must acknowledge the new regime even though a government is overthrown through unconstitutional means. Regarding the Taliban 2.0 situation, it raises questions about whether their government could be recognised, represent themselves at the UN General Assembly and receive diplomatic privileges.

The UN is an international organisation crucial to establishing and maintaining global governance legitimacy. According to Article 2(7) of the UN Charter, non-interference in member states' domestic affairs is emphasised. The UN believes that the legitimacy of a government is primarily determined by recognition from other member states and the international community. Each state is free to decide whether to recognise the legal status of a foreign state's authority. Recognition can be expressed through official statements, diplomatic relations, or bilateral treaties. International law considers a regime the state's government when it exercises effective control and fulfils internal responsibilities and external obligations (Anderson, 2021).

The international order allows states to acknowledge or ignore a newly established government (Barber, 2022). Barber highlighted that the 'Estrada Doctrine' suggests that public declarations are unnecessary for recognising or not recognising the government. However, states must determine how they will engage with the new authority for diplomatic, economic and trade purposes, accepting them without commenting on their legitimacy. The UN considers human rights, democracy and the rule of law when assessing a government's legitimacy. If a government is accused of violating human rights, suppressing democracy, or threatening peace and security. The UN may act through diplomatic efforts, sanctions, or military.

intervention authorised by the Security Council. Concerning Taliban 2.0, UN Credential Committee 76th session has decided that the Taliban candidate to represent Afghanistan, Suhail Shaheen, is not allowed into the world body and the current UN ambassador appointed by the ousted Afghan government, Ghulam Isaczi will represent Afghanistan as the Permanent Representative to the UN (Nichols, 2021).

In short, recognition of governments in the international order is a political process based on acceptance of a new state or government. The International Law Commission sees recognition as a matter of political expediency, not obligation. States have the discretion to recognise or not recognise new authorities. A legitimate government is typically recognised when it supported by other states and the international community, with human rights and democracy influencing perspectives on legitimacy.

## **AFGHANISTAN GOVERNMENT AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

Although the Taliban 2.0 is not officially recognised as a legitimate government, there are some countries that have established unofficial ties in terms of socio-economic development. Concerns among the international communities revolve around three main issues: the protection of human rights, the inclusivity of the government and the Taliban's relationship with foreign terrorist networks. While accepting the need for Taliban cooperation, some states hesitate to recognise their administration. The UK Foreign Secretary visited Islamabad and stressed the significance of dealing with the Taliban without accepting them as the government.

Countries that participated in the Afghan conflict, representatives of the previous Afghan government continue to carry out diplomatic duties (Syed, 2021). Western states, especially the US, are wary because recognising the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan holds political, diplomatic and economic implications. The Taliban seeks international recognition to establish formal diplomatic channels and communication with the global community (Jaafari, 2021). India, strategically allied with the US, has concerns about the Taliban's control in Afghanistan. India and the US have built a partnership aimed at countering China's influence, and India has been a major investor in Afghanistan's development. The return of the Taliban to power has placed India in a vulnerable position and requests the international community monitor the operations of the Taliban to prevent regional instability and the revival of terrorist networks.

China has significant long-term interests in Afghanistan, including investments in the mining sector and the Belt and Road Initiative (DeYoung, 2021). Russia and China have engaged with the Taliban leadership, reflecting their strategic considerations and a desire to shape the evolving dynamics in their favour. Pakistan, a key ally of China, has historically influenced the Taliban and aims to limit India's strategic influence in Afghanistan. Aligned with Russia and China, Iran also closely monitors developments in its neighbouring country, seeking assurances from the Taliban regarding terrorism and the rights of Shiite populations.

## RESPONSE FROM THE MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES

Saudi Arabia, led by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, is experiencing economic, defence and foreign policy changes. Recent events, including the cancellation of a meeting between Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin, followed by a meeting between Saudi Arabia's Deputy Defence Minister and the Russian Defence Minister, indicate a shift in Saudi Arabia's foreign policy.

While Saudi Arabia has been a strategic ally of the US, it differs in its concerns and recognition of the Taliban government, except for the shared concern about terrorist organisations like Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) and Al-Qaeda using Afghanistan as a base. The potential threat to global security arises if Afghanistan becomes a haven for these terrorist groups once again. Qatar's role as a mediator in the Qatar Peace Process and its facilitation of the Doha Agreement in 2020 have elevated its status and improved its relationship with the US. However, Saudi Arabia holds an unfavourable view of Qatar's strategic position.

Considering the evolving situation in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia is aligning itself more closely with Russia and Pakistan. While it may not recognise the Taliban government as quickly as in 1996, Saudi Arabia's current strategy aligns with that of the China-Russia group. Qatar's role as a power broker and negotiator with the Taliban puts it in a key position to engage with the movement and the newly formed government. Qatar's influence over the Taliban has grown significantly since establishing the Taliban's political office in Doha in 2013, which is crucial for Western countries in their dealings with the Taliban. However, Qatar has clarified that it is not currently considering formal recognition of the Taliban government and emphasizes the importance of international engagement and assistance through multilateral bodies to establish a functional governance system in Afghanistan.

Qatar finds itself in a delicate position due to its role in the evacuation of US and Afghan citizens from Kabul. However, regional states like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates view Qatar's connections with the Taliban unfavourably, accusing it of ties to extremist groups (Putz, 2021). As a mediator, Qatar must navigate this challenging situation carefully. Turkey, another major player in Afghanistan, has extensive experience on the ground as a NATO member. It has supported non-combatant foreign troops and has been responsible for security at Kabul's airport. Turkey collaborated closely with Qatar in evacuation efforts and engaged in discussions with Taliban leaders for future cooperation, including operating and maintaining the airport in Kabul. Turkey's involvement in the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process provides a platform for dialogue with the Taliban (Bateman, 2021).

The actions of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey in response to the Taliban government demonstrate differing goals and potentially divergent paths. While Turkey and Qatar share similar objectives, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have contrasting positions. This divergence between Saudi Arabia and its regional allies, Qatar and Turkey may further widen the gap, particularly regarding engagement with the Taliban and addressing other regional challenges (Saif, 2019).

## **INTERNAL SECURITY CHALLENGES**

Afghanistan's enduring instability results from its tumultuous history marked by invasions, civil war, insurgency and most recently, the return to power of the Taliban in August 2021. These events have highlighted many internal security vulnerabilities, including the Taliban's comeback, the potential growth of ISIS-K, and many social, economic, and political issues that complicate these security issues. From 1996 until 2001, they enforced Sharia Law, repressed women and destroyed cultural heritage, although they now promise a more moderate government (Rashid, 2000). Various social, economic and political factors compound these security issues and the legitimacy of the Taliban government. The abrupt departure of the Western-backed government, leading to political instability, has spurred uncertainty and fear among the populace. Ethnic tensions and local conflicts due to Afghanistan's diverse ethnic and tribal divisions also contribute to internal security challenges (Barfield, 2010). These internal security challenges as highlighted by the western social media agencies has been a stumbling block to the establishment of the legitimate Taliban government.

### **Refugee Crisis**

Afghanistan's refugee dilemma, caused by war, political unrest, and economic hardships, affects national security. With 2.6 million refugees and 3.5 million IDPs, Afghanistan has one of the world's largest internally displaced populations. The Taliban's rise threatens internal security. Displacement causes resource scarcity, public health concerns, and ethnic or tribal strife in congested IDP camps. These camps' harsh circumstances make extremist recruiting more likely, increasing security risks. Political instability and resource shortages make Afghanistan's reaction to this catastrophe dependent on the Taliban's foreign engagement (Nation, 2022). International aid is often insufficient, prompting calls for more comprehensive and lasting support to address this complex humanitarian and security issue.

### **Food and Health Security**

Food and health security issues significantly influence Afghanistan's security landscape. With the country primarily relying on agriculture, factors such as prolonged drought, conflict and political instability have disrupted agricultural activities, causing food scarcity. More than half of the population lives below the poverty line and escalating conflict and insecurity have increased food insecurity, leaving communities without livelihood opportunities and exacerbating social tensions. Furthermore, Afghanistan's health sector, already burdened by persistent conflict, faces fresh challenges like the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and governance changes. In combination with an unprecedented health crisis, this under-resourced healthcare system risks numerous lives and fosters discontent and mistrust towards the government, potentially inciting social unrest.

## **Drug-Related Challenges**

Afghanistan's security is significantly linked to the country's pivotal role as a leading global opium producer. The challenges it faces from drug cultivation, addiction and related criminal activities lead to a persistent crisis with profound socio-economic and security impacts. The illicit drug trade fuels cycles of violence, corruption and economic instability, particularly in rural areas where alternatives to opium cultivation are limited. Insurgents, including the Taliban, are purportedly funded through this lucrative industry, posing severe threats to national security. Moreover, the country's alarming drug addiction rates significantly strain the public health system, exacerbating social instability, escalating crime and deepening poverty.

## **Poverty**

Afghanistan's extreme poverty threatens its internal stability and has become a major security threat due to recent political turmoil and ongoing violence. Due to unemployment, droughts and an underdeveloped nation, almost half of Afghanistan's population lives in poverty. Extremist groups recruit from the underprivileged, causing social turmoil and violence. Poverty further exacerbates societal issues like drug abuse and crime, escalating social instability. It also hampers the government's ability to provide essential public services including security.

## **Ethnic Tensions**

Afghanistan's ethnically diverse landscape, featuring Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and others, is a defining aspect of its rich culture. However, this ethnic plurality also contributes to internal frictions that significantly impact national security. Historical hostilities and power dynamics among these groups often escalate into conflicts, exacerbating the country's broader security challenges. Instances include the 1990s civil war and the ongoing Taliban insurgency, highlighting how ethnic divisions can destabilise national security. These tensions can undermine the efficiency of the state's security forces, with ethnic loyalty sometimes overshadowing national allegiance.

In the midst of these complex internal security issues, Afghanistan's path to stability and legitimacy remains uncertain. The challenges outlined underscore the need for comprehensive, sustained international support, not only to address humanitarian crises but also to foster a secure environment that can pave the way for sustainable governance, social cohesion and lasting peace. The journey towards legitimacy of the Taliban 2.0 and the stability in Afghanistan is a multifaceted endeavour that requires a concerted effort from both national and international actors to address the intricate web of interconnected challenges.

## TALIBAN'S ADMINISTRATION TOWARDS WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

Human rights concerns arise from the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law. Their rule included arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings, and limits on freedom of expression and assembly. The international community has urged the Taliban to respect and protect human rights, liberty, security, freedom of expression, religion and association. The Taliban's treatment of women and their rights to education and work has drawn international attention and concern. Women faced severe restrictions on their rights and freedoms. They were denied education, employment and severely punished for violating clothing codes. The international community expects the Taliban to protect women's rights and secure their equitable participation in Afghan society. Despite being unrecognised governments, the UN Secretary-General has urged on the Taliban to comply with international human rights and humanitarian law (Saul, 2021).

The Taliban 2.0 administration has made many policy changes from the preceding regime. The Doha Agreement represents the end of four decades of war, security improvements and centralisation of power across Afghanistan. Due to its past activities and interpretation of Islamic Law (Sharia), the Taliban's education, human rights, and women's rights policies have been criticised. The Taliban's position on these topics has changed and they have indicated a readiness to soften. As part of policy change, the Taliban initially implemented media, gender, and other rules (Rubin, 2022). The Taliban pledged to safeguard human rights, especially Afghan women to gain worldwide recognition. However, there has been no significant improvement and changes have been made (Mark S. Cogan, Don McLain Gill, 2022). Anderson reports that Taliban commanders have promised to work on human and women's rights to gain world respect (Anderson, 2021). Rubin also noted the Taliban's women's rights programme, which included consent for marriage, the right to marry, Sharia-compliant property inheritance and polygamous equality. Still, their actions on the ground will establish their commitment to human rights and its ideals.

In the 1990s, the Taliban implemented strict restrictions on education, particularly for girls and women. They closed schools and universities for girls, imposed limitations on curriculum content and enforced gender segregation in educational settings. These policies resulted in a significant setback for education, particularly for women and girls. The current Taliban regime has made statements suggesting a potential shift in their stance on education and women's rights. According to the Taliban's Minister of Higher Education, the people in Afghanistan will continue to receive their education according to Sharia law without a mixed male and female environment. The Taliban regime will commit to upholding the 'rights of women' (Ahmadi, 2022). However, in September 2021, the Deputy Education Minister of Afghanistan mentioned that girls would not allow to attend secondary school until a new education policy was approved. The argument here is whether the Taliban's true extent of their commitment to protecting human rights, promoting inclusivity and respecting the rights and freedoms of all Afghan citizens, including women and girls remains to be seen.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ITS IMPACT**

Afghanistan's infrastructure, education, healthcare and women's empowerment have improved despite its turbulent history. UNDP-supported infrastructure projects have boosted trade, connectivity and services. USAID-led education projects have boosted educational options and enrolment, notably for women and girls, enabling them for workforce involvement. UN Women's Empowerment Programmes have encouraged gender equality, political participation and economic opportunities for women, increasing their financial independence and social prestige. WHO-supported healthcare projects have improved services, professional training, and access to medical facilities, improving health and life expectancy. Despite the challenges, investing in development is crucial for nation-building, improving lives and fostering stability in Afghanistan.

## **POST-CONFLICT CHALLENGES**

After years of conflict and political upheaval, Afghanistan emerged as a nation with a significant challenge in various areas such as education, healthcare, employment and basic infrastructure. The highly centralised form of government and unitary system outlined in the new constitution posed challenges to nation-building, potentially leading to conflict escalation. However, efforts have been made to address these challenges through development initiatives in education, health sector development, economic development, poverty alleviation, infrastructure rehabilitation and women's empowerment.

### **Development Initiatives in Education and Health Sectors**

In education, the Taliban has established schools, training programs for teachers and improving educational system to increase access to a quality education. These programmes have improved literacy and education, especially for vulnerable girls (USAID, 2021). International institutions, donors and the Afghan government have prioritised healthcare improvement. Efforts have improved maternal and child health, disease prevention and healthcare provision in remote areas.

### **Economic Development, Poverty Alleviation and Infrastructure Rehabilitation**

Agriculture, infrastructure, and private investment have encouraged socioeconomic development. Empowering women entrepreneurs and supporting small enterprises has created jobs, reduced poverty, and improved Afghan livelihoods (UNDP, United Nations Development Programs, 2022). Roads, bridges, and energy networks have been vital to economic progress and living standards. Infrastructure improves mobility, market access and public services (UNDP, United Nations Development Programs, 2020).

## **Women's Empowerment**

Women's empowerment has been promoted through policies and programs focusing on access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities and political participation. These initiatives aim to foster inclusive development and create a more equitable society. Women's empowerment initiatives contribute to inclusive development and foster a more equitable and prosperous society (UNDP, United Nations Development Programs, 2020).

## **Role of International Support**

International support has played a vital role in Afghanistan's socio-economic development. Donor governments, international organisations and NGOs have contributed financial, technical and capacity-building assistance. According to a recent World Bank report, Afghanistan will need \$6 billion to \$8 billion in annual international grants between 2020 and 2024 to support essential services, economic growth and any potential reduction in violence after a Taliban settlement. Security and political stability can boost private-sector investment and job development, but Afghanistan remains relies on grants for governmental spending. International grants are needed to close the revenue-expenditure imbalance and promote development. Grants account for 75% of governmental spending, with receipts of \$2.5 billion and expenses of \$11 billion (Bank, 2019).

## **NEW STRATEGIC ROADMAP TO DEVELOP THE COUNTRY**

The Taliban 2.0, which had taken power in Afghanistan, had recently tried to portray itself as more moderate. Foreign relations are one area in which the Taliban have allegedly been deradicalised. Since establishing the Afghan National Unity Government in 2014, the Taliban have been expanding their diplomatic ties with regional nations, marking an unusual reversal from their previous ideologically based views of foreign states (Solhdoost, 2023). The 2020 Doha peace talks between the US and the Taliban allowed the militant group to display their purported image makeover, which gave the Taliban's political gambit a political boost. The Taliban gained international recognition after the US signed the Doha Agreement with them, elevating the terrorist group to the role of security guarantor in Afghanistan (Afzal, 2020).

As the Doha peace negotiations permitted them to appear reasonable, the Taliban restrained their remarks and expanded their diplomatic outreach. In their inaugural news conference in Kabul in August 2021, the Taliban highlighted sovereignty and non-interference, declaring, "We do not want to have any problem with the international community" to outline their plan to reshape Afghanistan's future under their rule (NPR, 2021). The Taliban have traded with dozens of countries, including Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, India and China. Afghanistan's de facto rulers' unconventional rhetoric and proactive foreign policy have made their recognition inevitable.

The Taliban have recognised the distinction between leading a fundamentalist movement and governing a state that engages with the international community. The Taliban 2.0 have employed a pragmatic approach, balancing their rigid morality with a newfound emphasis on bureaucratic competence, especially in foreign affairs. The current Taliban has begun to interact with the world in a manner akin to a nascent republic. Although maintaining stern, authoritarian domestic rule, they have adopted a practical foreign policy approach. The group understands that their survival within the global framework heavily hinges on diplomatic judgement, leading them to establish relations with diverse nations, including former adversaries.

The Taliban has also acknowledged that their overt association with terrorist groups like al-Qaeda proved detrimental, attracting anger from global and regional powers. The aftermath of the 9/11 attacks served as a pivotal learning experience, compelling the Taliban to decouple their interests from such groups. Towards forming a representative political order, several proposals advocating for extensive intra-Afghan consultations have been discussed, albeit without agreement on implementation methods. The goal is to facilitate Afghan-centric dialogue involving the Taliban and other stakeholders, addressing governance, human rights and economic hurdles facing Afghanistan. Proposals include national consultation processes, unifying socio-political and ethnic groups under a single council, drafting a new constitution, and emphasising human rights, education and employment access.

Economically, a humanitarian-financial corridor is being created to fight poverty and hunger. Easing banking and foreign exchange restrictions, creating a trust fund for civil service salaries, stabilising currency with frozen assets, promoting trade and small-scale investments and reducing aid dependency to improve accountability and sustainability (Samad, 2022).

## **WAY FORWARD**

This section aims to recommend actionable steps the Afghanistan government could undertake to overcome the numerous challenges discussed in the preceding parts of this study. It recommends possible strategies, providing meaningful recommendations to bolster the legitimacy of the Afghan government, a critical factor for stability and progress. The suggestions are organised in three axes to provide unique perspectives and potential solutions: internal development, regional integration and global efforts.

Internal development will address governance, inclusion and the diverse Afghan population's socio-economic requirements. It will investigate efforts to unite ethnic and political groups and strengthen state legitimacy from within. Regional integration will analyse Afghanistan's connections with its immediate neighbours and offer political and economic initiatives to help Afghanistan utilise regional partnerships for mutual benefit, peace and stability. It will examine foreign aid and diplomatic support in Afghanistan's development globally. The global efforts are to provide a comprehensive, executable roadmap for Afghanistan's government that addresses internal, regional and global factors to build a stronger and stable future.

## **Internal Development**

To be recognised by the international community, the Taliban must re-engage with the local population and solve human rights issues, including equal rights for women to work, by empowering and educating them. The Taliban must also recognise that the current generation of Afghans is better educated and more socially concerned. The Taliban must keep the country safe since outside interference could escalate the conflict and threaten Afghanistan's stability. Afghanistan's instability and conflict could lead to its isolation (O'Donnell, 2022).

It is believed that nation-building should be the priority for the Afghan government to overcome the challenges. However, the concept of nation-building should emphasise assistance for developing governmental infrastructure, civil society, dispute resolution mechanisms and economic assistance to increase stability. They must establish justice, safety, an atmosphere that promotes economic growth and the potential for a democratic society. Afghans must engage internally, especially with citizens and local warlords to ensure that nation-building can get underway without a hitch. They must comprehend how Afghanistan's social and political landscape has evolved since their previous rule twenty years ago. The Taliban's perspective must adapt, considering the rapidly shifting regional geopolitical landscape and the country will not profit from the reinstatement of a strict and authoritarian system of government.

## **Regional Integration**

In order to achieve future development and recognition in the area without leaving behind any member nations, Afghanistan must be a participating member of the Asian organisations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The Taliban must integrate with the regional countries so that the humanitarian crisis and related issues that arise along with it, which have been haunting the region since the 1970s, can be mitigated. India and Pakistan can play a decisive role, with assistance from the international community, in helping the Taliban by bringing more effective governance to Afghanistan. At the same time, security forces can be established to safeguard civil society and ensure the country's sovereignty. This requires assistance from international communities because it is costly and challenging to sustain. It is reported that the USA spent USD 133 billion over the last two decades on nation-building in Afghanistan after the invasion in 1990 (Whitlock, 2019).

## Global Efforts

Afghanistan needs to have a legitimate government and accepted by the international community which capable to win the trust of the Afghans. Global efforts are required to fight against illicit drug trafficking, which has been one of the primary sources of income for the Taliban. To win the fight, alternative viable income sources need to be generated so that the Taliban will no longer depend on the illicit drug trade for its survival. On paper, Afghanistan is one of the world's most resource-rich nations due to its large amounts of oil, natural gas and valuable minerals like chromite, copper, lithium, iron, gold and more (O'Donnell, 2022).

Afghanistan is also well known for its saffron and other spices, including the red gold spice, which is considered the greatest in the world. Due to its high demand and cost, saffron can aid Afghans in escaping poverty. Since spice is a more profitable commodity, it has primarily supplanted opium farming in some parts of the nation, and the former government of Afghanistan pushed the poppy farmers to produce saffron to decrease the production of narcotics (Mehmood, 2021). The task will have a double-effect by bringing peace and security to Afghanistan in addition to defeat drug trafficking. In order to restore security and peace in Afghanistan and support the nation's future development, the Taliban must regain the support of the international community soonest.

## CONCLUSION

The legitimacy of the current Afghan government is a complex issue deeply rooted in the interplay of historical, political, socio-economic and security factors. The recent re-emergence of the Taliban, as mandated by the Doha Agreement, has inaugurated an intricate political tableau, inviting an array of reactions from Middle Eastern countries and the broader international community, thus reflecting the multi-faceted global perspectives on Afghanistan's situation. Internal security challenges are embedded within this intricate political tapestry, which adds further depth and complexity to the matter.

The resurgence of extremist factions, the escalating security threats and the persistent socio-economic issues that blight the country have a profound effect on perceptions regarding the government's legitimacy. Furthermore, the Taliban's stance on crucial societal issues, such as women's rights and education, introduces further complications. The discrepancy between their public declarations and the actions witnessed on the ground has stirred uncertainty. This disparity in words and actions has inevitably influenced local and international viewpoints regarding the nature of their governance, casting doubt on their commitment to progressive societal change.

## TALIBAN 2.0: AFGHANISTAN GOVERNMENT LEGITIMACY

### References:

Afzal. (2020). America's Responsibilities on the Cusp of its Peace Deal with the Taliban. . <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos>.

Agreement, D. (2020). Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan.

Ahmadi, B. (2022, April 01). Taliban's Ban on Girls' Education in Afghanistan. Retrieved from United States Institute of Peace: [www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)

Anderson, S. R. (2021, August 26). History and the Recognition of the Taliban. Retrieved from Lawfare: [www.lawfareblog.com](http://www.lawfareblog.com)

Bank, T. W. (2019, December 5). Afghanistan will Need Continued International Support after Political Settlement. Retrieved from The World Bank: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/12/05/afghanistan-will-need-continued-international-support-after-political-settlement>

Barber, R. (2022, May 19). The Role of The General Assembly in Determining the Legitimacy of Government. Cambridge Core, 627-656. Retrieved from THE ROLE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN DETERMINING THE LEGITIMACY OF GOVERNMENTS: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-and-comparative-law-quarterly/article/role-of-the-general-assembly-in-determining-the-legitimacy-of-governments>

Barfield, T. (2010). Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History. Princeton University Press.

Bateman, T. (2021). Afghanistan: Qatar and Turkey Become Taliban's Lifeline to the Outside World . BBC.

BERNAMA. (2023, Mac 22). Malaysia ready to cooperate with Afghanistan - PM. Kuala Lumpur , Malaysia.

Bilinski, A. (2022, March 27). Types of Legitimate Government. Retrieved from study.com: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/types-of-legitimacy-in-government.html>

Debnath, A. (2022, May 10). Ipleaders. Retrieved from The Doha Agreement: <https://blog.ipleaders.in/the-doha-agreement>

DeYoung, K. (2021). Countries are Establishing Relations with the Taliban Even Though None has Offered Formal Recognition of the Militant Government.

George, S. (2021, August 28). The Washington Post. Retrieved from Surprise, panic and fateful choices: The day America lost its longest war: [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

Jaafari, S. (2021, September 17). The World. Retrieved from The Taliban want international recognition. Countries are debating: [theworld.org](http://theworld.org)

Mark S. Cogan, Don McLain Gill. (2022). Legitimacy and International Development in a Taliban dominated Afghanistan. *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*.

Mehmood. (2021, October 31). the medialine, Afghanistan's Saffron Growers Worried Taliban Will Ban Heavily Female Workforce. Retrieved from <https://themedialine.org/by-region/afghanistans>: <https://themedialine.org/by-region/afghanistans>

Nation, U. (2022, September 27). UN - Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. Retrieved from Afghanistan's Future Depends on Taliban's Engagement with World, But Restrictions on Women Signal Lack of International Commitments, Briefer Warns Security Council: <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc15038.doc.htm>

Nichols, M. (2021, December 02). Reuters . Retrieved from U.N. committee agrees Taliban, Myanmar junta not allowed in U.N. for now: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-myanmar-junta-unlikely-be-let-into-un-now-diplomats-2021-12-01/>

NPR. (2021, December 15). What the Taliban really want from the world, in their own words, taliban-afghanistan-girls-education-womens-rights./taliban-afghanistan-girls-education-womens-rights. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2021/12/15/1064001076/>: <https://www.npr.org/2021/12/15/1064001076/>

O'Donnell. (2022, July ). The Taliban Have Picked Up the Resource Curse. *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/11/analysis/the-taliban-have-picked-up-the-resource-curse>

Oppenheim, L. (2018). *International Law. A Treatise*. Frankfurt: BoD-Book on Demand.

Putz, C. (2021, June 25). The Diplomat. Retrieved from Diplomat: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/will-turkey-keep-providing-security-for-the-afghan-capitals-airport/>

Putz, C. (2021, June 25). The Diplomat. Retrieved from Diplomat: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/will-turkey-keep-providing-security-for-the-afghan-capitals-airport/>

Rashid, A. (2000). Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia. Yale University Press.

Rubin, B. R. (2022, October 2022 20). Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation. Retrieved from stimson: <https://www.stimson.org/2022/afghanistan-under-the-taliban-findings-on-the-currnt-situation/>

Saif, S. (2019). Heart of Asia Meeting Adopt Istanbul Declaration . Istanbul : Anadolu Agency.

Samad, O. (2022). Afghanistan needs a political roadmap to reduce economic hardship. atlantic council.

Saul, B. (2021, December 15). International Centre for Counter Terrorism. Retrieved from "Recognition" and the Taliban's International Legal Status: [www.icct.nl](http://www.icct.nl)

Solhdoost, M. (2023). The Taliban and Their Machiavellian moment. journal of Asian and African Studies, 519-529.

Syed, B. S. (2021, September 4). Dawn. Retrieved from Taliban contro; over Kabul "New Reality": Qureshi: <https://www.dawn.com>

UNDP. (2020, Jul 10). United Nations Development Programs. Retrieved from Economic Empowrment of Afghan Women: <https://www.undp.org>

UNDP. (2022, March 23). United Nations Development Programs. Retrieved from Cash for work schemes build a road to resilience for Afghans: <https://www.undp.org>

USAID. (2021). United State Agency International Development. Retrieved from Education in Afghanistan: <https://www.usaid.gov>

Whitlock. (2019). Built to Fail. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/nvestigations/Afghanistan-papers>.



**UPNM**

National Defence University of Malaysia

Kewajipan • Marsiah • Integriti

# NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE

*NURTURING STRATEGIC THINKERS OF STATESMAN QUALITY*

# 2023 THE STATESMAN JOURNAL



 nrc\_official\_19

 National Resilience College

 @nrc\_official\_19