

THE FUTURE

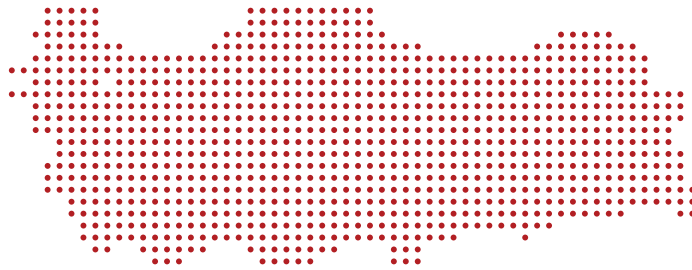
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THE FUTURE INSTITUTE

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The Future is a newsletter periodically published by The Future Institute. This journal aims to chronicle the major events and developments in the societies of the emerging nations with the potential of impacting their future. The newsletter offers snippets of news analysis that might be advantageous to the academics, policy-makers, social and political workers, students and various organisations.



The World is bigger than five:

Turkey is a European, Middle Eastern, and Central Asian power

When an egocentric US and weaning Europe's policy circles are busy figuring whether Turkey is out of control, according to this ex-CIA official, no, it is not. Fuller argues that the key to understanding Turkey's vision is not about what the West wants Turkey to be, but rather how Turkey sees its own place in the world. Drawing on from seven hundred years of Ottoman imperial tradition, Fuller argues that Turkey's vision today is beyond merely neo-Ottomanism. Turkey must be acknowledged as a European, Balkan, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, North African and even limited African, Caucasian, Central Asian, Eurasian, and especially a Muslim power parallel to Riyadh's short-lived claim for leadership.

There are ample historical and recent justifications—manifested through Turkey's role for these claims and these claims are not specific to the ruling AKP. Despite, being prickly neighbours with each other over a few tactical geopolitical rivalries, Turkey shares deeply anti-colonial anti-Western traditions of the Middle East with Iran, which is another heavyweight in the Muslim world and a close Eurasian ally of China and Russia. On the other hand, NATO is Ankara's ticket to a seat at a major western strategic table. Despite Turkey's S-400 appraisals, which deeply upsets NATO, in the end Europe would rather keep a prickly and independent Turkey within European councils than kick it out—where it would lose even further leverage.

Reference: <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/12/04/is-turkey-out-of-control/> (Is Turkey out of control?, by Graham E. Fuller, Responsible Statecraft)



Military win in Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict serving diplomatic win for Turkey

On 9 November 2020, a Russia-brokered peace deal ended the six-week war between Azerbaijan and Armenia. This deal entails exchange prisoners of war and the bodies of the fallen between both parties and keeping their control over territories as on the day of the ceasefire. Azerbaijan and Armenia have a long history of conflict and ethnic violence with roots in the post World War I era that finally escalated into war when the Soviet Union collapsed in the early nineties. The control over the Nagorno-Karabakh territory has always been a pivotal point in this conflict.

The first war lasted more than six years till 1994 that displaced approximately 725,000 Azerbaijanis and 500,000 Armenians from both Azerbaijan and Armenia. Over the next three decades, the ceasefire was violated multiple times and occasional conflicts occurred. However, the Nagorno-Karabakh region had since been governed by the self-proclaimed state of Artsakh under Armenian control. In September 2020, Azerbaijani armed forces launched this latest offensive to recapture this territory. Azerbaijani victory owed to a great extent to the Turkish support; both weaponry hardware and military knowledge through intelligence and advisors. This outcome is a significant achievement for Turkey in its journey towards becoming an international power-broker.

Reference: <https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/policy-briefs/nagorno-karabakh-war-new-balance-power-southern-caucasus> (The Nagorno-Karabakh war: A new balance of power in the southern Caucasus, in Al Jazeera Centre for Studies)



Artificial intelligence: nationalism and futuristic arms race

The author argues that continued rapid progress in machine learning will drive the emergence of a new kind of geopolitics what he calls—Artificial Intelligence Nationalism. Machine learning is an omni-use technology that will transform the economy and the military, which will create instability at the state and international level, forcing governments to act. The author predicts that AI policy will become the single most important area of government policy due to its overarching nature. An accelerated arms race will emerge among countries leading the field of AI to progress even faster than predicted and rapidly integrated in national and international politics. We will see increased protectionist state action to support national champions, block takeovers by foreign firms and attract talent in this field.

This arms race will potentially speed up the pace of AI development and shorten the timescale for getting to Artificial General Intelligence. Although there will be many common aspects to this techno-nationalist agenda, there will also be important state-specific policies. The international order and international norms will be in flux as a result. The author concludes by discussing how a period of AI Nationalism might transition to one of global cooperation where AI will be treated as a global public good.

Reference: <https://www.ianhogarth.com/blog/2018/6/13/ai-nationalism> (AI Nationalism, by Ian Hogarth, Ian Hogarth Blog)

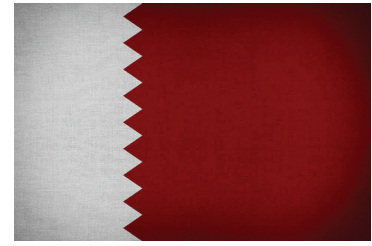


Anwar Ibrahim in Malaysia: a never-ending struggle to democratic power continues

As the COVID-19 situation is worsening in Malaysia, a political crisis has also attracted the world's attention when the opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim, declared in a press conference that he had the majority parliamentary support to topple the current government led by Prime Minister Muhyiddin and restore his own party as the governing alliance. However, Anwar Ibrahim was not successful to meet the constitutional monarch of the country immediately. After a delayed meeting with Anwar in October 2020, the King later indicated that he was not convinced about the opposition leader's ability to form a new government. Anwar Ibrahim was sacked as the Deputy Prime Minister in 1998 by the then Prime Minister Mahathir. Since then, Anwar has endured years in multiple times in prison for sodomy and corruption charges, which were described by rights groups as staged and politically motivated charges and trumped up by Mahathir's and his successor's administrations.

In this time, Anwar formed and led a political party, Pakatan Harapan, that eventually ended the rule of UMNO, the grand old party, in 2018. The UMNO ruled the country since its independence and Anwar was once a leader in this party. In this national election, former Prime Minister Mahathir returned to politics and formed an unlikely alliance with Anwar Ibrahim with a succession plan to transfer the power to Anwar in a later stage. However, Mahathir was ousted by a political coup, led by the current Prime Minister Muhyiddin, after Mahathir refused to set a date for handing over power to Anwar as had been agreed before the 2018 election. Therefore, many observers now consider Anwar as the rightful leader of the country, entangled in political and bureaucratic games, and Malaysia's eternal prime-minister-in-waiting.

Reference: <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3112661/nearly-man-will-anwar-ibrahim-ever-lead-malaysia> (The nearly man: will Anwar Ibrahim ever lead Malaysia?, by Tashny Sukumaran & Bhavan Jaipragas, South China Morning Post)



Saudi advances to resolve Qatar blockade

After three and a half years of air, land and sea blockade imposed on Qatar by neighbouring Kingdom Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom is now offering a diplomatic ceasefire at the end of 2020. During the initial siege in June 2017, Saudi Arabia was joined by the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan told the media in December 2020 that UAE, Bahrain and Egypt would also be involved in the ongoing resolution process. Although this blockade was later joined by Jordan and supported by various countries such as the Maldives, Mauritania, Senegal, Comoros, Yemen and the eastern-provincial government aligned with warlord Khalifa Haftar in Libya, the effort was obviously spearheaded by the KSA in its beginning as well as in its current state. Qatar was accused by the KSA for supporting ‘terrorism’; however, the Saudi Foreign Minister in 2017 classified some Islamic political movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas as those so-called terrorist groups being supported by Qatar. Saudis also complained about the Al Jazeera media network, which is based in Doha, and blocked its website as well as Qatar’s close diplomatic relation with Iran.

The whole saga started with some unidentified hackers hacking the Qatar News Agency website and posting fake remarks attributed to the Emir of Qatar that expressed support for Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas. Over nearly four years, Qatar has remained resolute in rejecting Saudi allegations and demonstrated its economic capability to sustain such difficulties. Interestingly, this blockade started just after five months of Donald Trump’s inauguration as the President of the United States while the abovementioned hacking took place just two days after he met Arab and Muslim leaders in Riyadh, and the KSA authority has started demonstrating its willingness for a resolution only a month after he was defeated in the 2020 US presidential election.

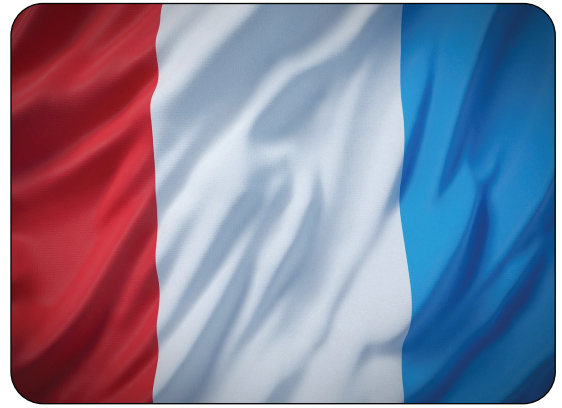
Reference: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-02/saudi-ara-bia-and-qatar-near-us-brokered-deal-to-end-3-year-rift> (Saudi Arabia, Qatar Near U.S.-Brokered Deal to End Rift, by Fiona MacDonald & Matthew Martin)



India's state-sponsored terror against Chinese interest on Pakistani soil

Pakistan has accused India of running dozens of training camps in Afghanistan for multiple globally outlawed militant groups to plot terrorism on Pakistani soil to destabilise the country. This is the first time Pakistan has officially accused India of sponsoring terrorism inside Pakistan to target Pakistani and Chinese economic and other interests. Top Pakistani civilian and military officials have presented what they said was “irrefutable evidence” including—banking transactions worth millions of dollars, audio clips and details of contacts between Indian intelligence operatives and diplomats with fugitive Pakistani militants operating out of Afghanistan. Many of these terrorist organisations, including U.N.-designated terrorist organisations, e.g., Jamaat ul Ahrar, Baloch Liberation Army and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. Drone operations by the US has also killed some of these groups leadership and many of whom have taken shelter fleeing counter-terrorism operations inside Pakistan. The Pakistani authorities said they would share the “dossier” with the United Nations and five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, to pressure India to halt its terrorist activities inside Pakistan.

Reference: <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/pakistan-claims-ir-refutable-evidence-indian-links-terrorism-pakistani-soil> (Pakistan Claims 'Irrefutable Evidence' of Indian Links to Terrorism on Pakistani Soil, by Ayaz Ali, Voice of America)



‘War on Terror’

precedes human rights in France’s weapon trade with Egypt

In December 2020, Egyptian President El-Sisi officially visited France at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron. During this visit, the French President said the sale of weapons to Egypt would continue uninterrupted and the international criticism of human rights abuse by the Egyptian government will not be a hindrance in this trade because, as Macron stated, Cairo’s ability to counter the terrorism in the region has the priority. Since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi took power through a military coup in 2013, economic and military ties between Egypt and France has grown stronger. While thousands of political activists are being detained and even killed in police custody, the Egyptian government has been procuring massive weapons supply from France. Various human rights organisations have harshly criticised this statement by the French President and described this as a ‘blank check given to the ruthless repression carried out by Sisi against civil society’, as stated by Benedicte Jeannerod, France Director at Human Rights Watch.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN28H0BY> (Alongside Sisi, Macron says France will sell arms to Egypt irrespective of rights, by John Irish, Reuters)

Economic forecast for key Muslim countries

Economic and Business Research has recently published its World Economic League Table 2021 report. Here are some economic predictions for several Muslim countries:

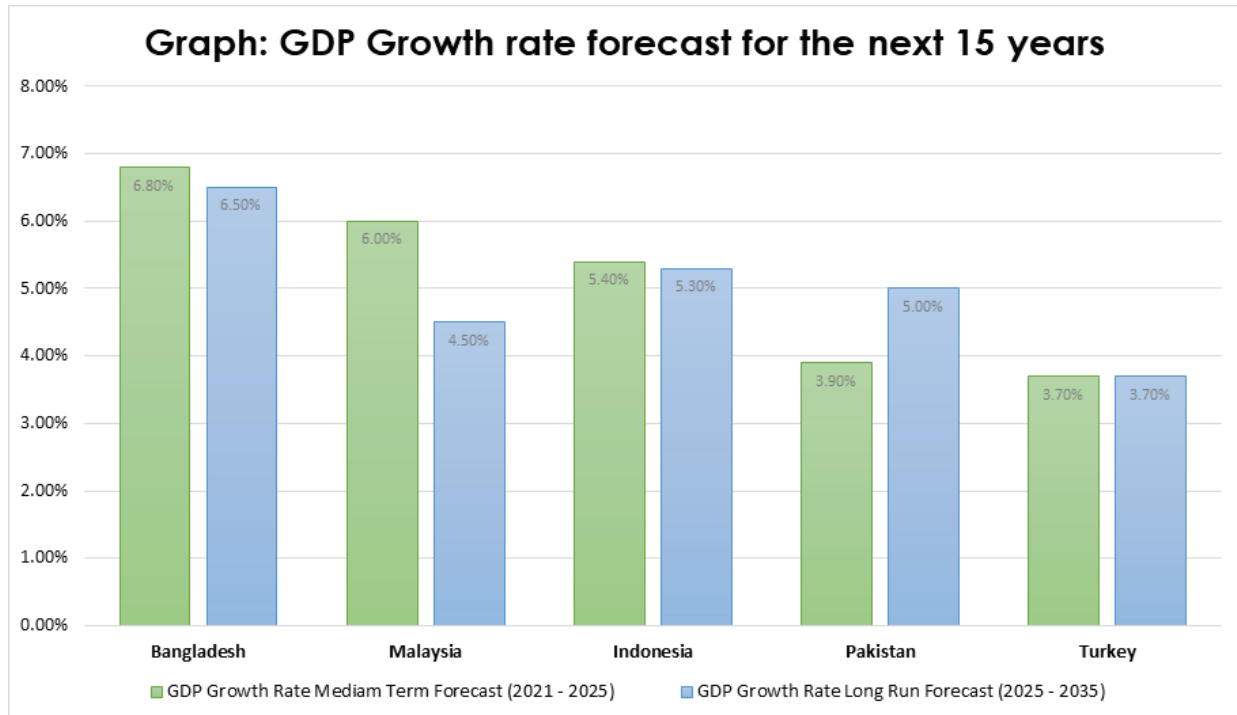
Table 1: World Economic League Ranking Change by 2035

Country	World Economic League Ranking (2020)	World Economic League Ranking Prediction (2035)
Indonesia	15	8
Turkey	22	21
Malaysia	34	28
Bangladesh	41	25
Pakistan	45	36

Table 2: GDP Growth Rate Prediction for next 15 years

Country	GDP Growth Rate Medium Term (2021-2025)	GDP Growth Rate Long Run Prediction (2025-2035)
Bangladesh	6.8%	6.5%
Malaysia	6.0%	4.5%
Indonesia	5.4%	5.3%
Pakistan	3.9%	5.0%
Turkey	3.7%	3.7%

Graph 1: GDP growth rate forecast



The tables and graph show that Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Turkey will see upward mobility in global economic ranking. Indonesia will see a 87.5%, Bangladesh 64%, Pakistan 25%, Malaysia 21%, Turkey 5% positive shift in its ranking. Indonesia will be the world's 8th largest economy compared to its current 15th position. Turkey will be the 21st biggest economy. In our estimation, Turkey will grow even bigger at a much faster rate. The methodology followed by the World Economic League has not taken into account the recent changes in Turkey's monetary policy as well as explorations in the Mediterranean.

We expect that these new developments as well as a vibrant and dynamic defence industry will have a network effect on the economy which will cause faster growth. Indonesia and Bangladesh will see tremendous growth in relative terms to their current position. Overall, these indicators show a very positive long-term trend for these countries.

Reference: World Economic League Table 2021, Economics and Business Research.

Contributing Editors

Dr. Faroque Amin
Nazmus Sakib



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