



THE FUTURE

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

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Extreme flooding devastates Pakistan

Pakistan has been subject to extreme monsoon rains since mid-June 2022. Coupled with a severe heatwave earlier, which caused a higher-than-normal melting of glaciers, the country faced its worst flooding in a decade. The floods have affected more than 33 million people and destroyed or damaged more than 1 million homes, killing at least 1,300 people, among them at least 400 children.



The worst flooding was seen along the Indus River in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Sindh. Approximately 150 bridges and 3,500 kilometres of road have been destroyed across the country, while in agricultural terms, more than 700,000 livestock have been lost, alongside the devastation of 2 million acres of crops and orchards. The U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has identified the floods as an unprecedented climate catastrophe.

While the flooding has led to an immense humanitarian catastrophe, it had also come at a time when the Pakistani economy was already struggling with a balance of payments crisis, rising debt, and soaring inflation, making things even worse. Moreover, the floods have endangered Pakistan's already precarious health infrastructure, bringing with them a new set of concerning health challenges - a glaring disparity in access to health services between rural and urban areas and the expected rise in waterborne diseases such as cholera, malaria, dengue fever, etc. from waterlogging and lack of sanitation.



Despite the U.N. appeal for urgent aid for the flood affected in Pakistan, experts have said that the relief efforts are too little, too late. While the initial estimate by Pakistani officials for flood damage was \$10bn, initial U.N. relief calls were for just around \$160mn, which was later increased to \$800mn. But incoming funds from the wealthy nations have not even crossed that of the first U.N. estimate, with the relief efforts being both slow and suffering from mishandling and corruption allegations by politicians and institutions at the local level.

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Queen Elizabeth II dies - Charles III proclaimed the new king

Queen Elizabeth II, a highly visible figure in both British public life and the international political scene, passed away on September 8, 2022, heralding the end of an era for the United Kingdom. The longest reigning monarch in British history, her reign saw the end of Britain's stint as an imperial power and the refashioning of the British monarchy as a source of British soft power, mainly through the setting up of the Commonwealth of Nations in 1949.

Upon her death, Elizabeth II was succeeded by her eldest son, now King Charles III, who had earlier served as heir apparent and Prince of Wales. The Queen's death was marked by a ten-day mourning period followed by a state funeral held at Westminster Abbey on 19 September, an event attended by numerous heads of state and televised live to a global audience.

The death of Queen Elizabeth II and the accession of King Charles III have brought to the fore many questions, among them the future of the British monarchy and its relevance in a fast-changing world. Seen as an apolitical and rather charming figure, the Queen has arguably acted as the most important diplomatic representative for London for the past 70 years, and it remains to be seen whether Charles III can continue that stint, even as many decry his lack of gravitas and charm as compared to Elizabeth II. Moreover, with the Queen's death, the Commonwealth's future may be in jeopardy, as voices in countries such as Australia and New Zealand, alongside some Caribbean states, call for the removal of the British monarch as head of the state have become stronger.



Finally, there is the spectre of Britain's colonial past and the monarchy benefiting from that legacy. Analysts have pointed out that the royal family's wealth is inextricably tied up with the projects of enslavement and colonisation throughout Asia and Africa. Supporters of the monarchy and British officials, in general, have tended to avoid confronting this legacy, but it remains to be seen for how long they will be able to do so, and when they do, the future of the monarchy will inextricably be linked with it.

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Influential Islamic scholar Yusuf Al-Qaradawi dies

Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, one of the world's most influential Muslim scholars, and a vocal advocate for Palestinian liberation as well as for the Arab revolutions of 2011, passed away on Monday, the 26th of September, at the age of 96. Born in British-ruled Egypt in 1926, Qaradawi's formative years at the prestigious al-Azhar, emerging as among its brightest students, and his association with the Muslim Brotherhood were instrumental in his emergence as a leading scholar and Muslim activist.

In lieu of his activism, he was imprisoned repeatedly in the 1940s and 50s, experiencing torture alongside other detainees. He later chose to move to Qatar as a teacher, eventually developing a close relationship with the-then Qatari emir, Sheikh Ahmad Bin Ali Al Thani, and attaining fame and patronage.

Qaradawi was able to achieve status as a globally recognised religious authority through his writing as well as a media personality. His written style was both highly accessible and lucid, making his works highly popular. As an author, he was highly prolific, having published more than 100 works over the length of his long career.

Qaradawi's weekly prime-time religious programme on Al-Jazeera, al-Shari'a wa-l-Hayah (The Sharia and Life), began in 1996, the same year the channel was first launched and continued uninterrupted for seventeen years till 2013, garnering millions of views from around the world. He also helped establish and presided over major transnational Islamic scholarly organisations such as the European Council for Fatwa and Research and the International Union of Muslim Scholars.



Azami notes that in his writings and speeches, Qaradawi wrote and spoke about a wide range of issues, from theology and religious practice to democracy, Palestine, and climate change, all from a Muslim perspective. Over the last decade, Qaradawi had come to the fore for voicing support for the 2011 Arab uprisings and opposition to Sisi, which led to the imprisonment of his daughter and her husband in Egypt in 2017. Despite his intellectual influence on the Muslim Brotherhood, Qaradawi had turned down multiple offers to lead the group, focusing instead on his scholarly endeavours. In lieu of his advanced age, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi retired from public life in 2018.

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Ex-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev dead at 91

Mikhail Gorbachev, the last President of the Soviet Union and person credited with bringing an end to the Cold War, died in Moscow on August 30, after a long period of illness. His death comes at a crucial time in Russian politics and economy, which has been suffering from sanctions and increasing isolation on the world stage over its war in Ukraine.

As a President of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's legacy is rather mixed. His seven-year tenure as Soviet President ended in chaos but resulted in key reforms that ended the Cold War in the early 90s. After taking power in 1985, Gorbachev introduced limited economic and political freedoms – including his “glasnost” policy of free speech – as part of the notion of perestroika, or restructuring of the Soviet economy and bureaucracy.

However, erstwhile economic woes and secessionist movements that led to 15 republics demanding autonomy from the union meant that the days of the USSR were numbered. Soon after, Gorbachev was removed from power in a military coup in 1991, and the USSR was dissolved on 26 December 1991, resulting in its constituent republics gaining full sovereignty.

Gorbachev was instrumental in brokering arms reduction deals with Western and American partners responsible for ending the Cold War and the unification of the two parts of Germany. He also held out on the use of repressive force to crush movements for autonomy in the various Soviet republics, which could have descended into civil war. While many in the West and even within Russia have admired his policies in hindsight, his legacy as the enabler of the dissolution of the Soviet Union has also caused many in Russia to feel wronged and humiliated, fueling both the rise of nostalgia regarding the Soviet Union, and support for Putin's current expansionist and authoritarian policies.

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Appraising the role of corporations in the Israel-Palestine conflict

An important yet much-avoided aspect of the Israeli-Palestine conflict is the role of pro-Israeli western corporations in supporting the Israeli settler colonial project relentless in the disenfranchisement of the Palestinian people and the occupation of Palestinian lands since 1947. The Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement, as part of its effort to pressure Israel to meet its obligations under international law and fight for Palestinian rights, has been at the forefront of applying pressure on individuals and corporations to cut ties with Israeli institutions. Notable past BDS campaigns include boycotts and campaigns against G4S, Hewlett-Packard, and movements for the academic boycott of Israeli institutions in U.S. universities.

In general, such efforts have resulted in a greater global awareness of Israeli oppression of Palestinians and the appropriation of Palestinian land as part of the settler project, and consumer brands have been facing growing pressure to take a stand on Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. A case in point is Ben and Jerry's, a well-known US-based ice cream maker, which had announced in July 2021 that it would discontinue sales in Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, calling it "inconsistent" with the progressive values and social mission that it retained the right to promote. However, Unilever, the parent company of Ben & Jerry's, recently sold its business in Israel to a local licensee, going around the restrictions of the socially conscious ice cream business in the West Bank. Calling it a violation of the merger contract between the two companies, Ben & Jerry's filed a lawsuit in response, challenging Unilever's sale of the Israeli business in a federal court in New York, and the case is ongoing, expecting to bring on the debate about the need for corporate ethics in the face of Israeli policies



In another instance, a Google employee named Ariel Koren resigned in protest of company rule silencing dissenting and Palestinian voices opposing a \$1.2bn collaboration between Google, Amazon and the Israeli military on an artificial intelligence and surveillance programme called Project Nimbus. She announced her resignation after identifying a policy of retaliation and hostility within Google against her social activism alongside other Palestinian voices within the organisation. In the field of travel and tourism, Booking.com, an online travel booking website, announced that it would begin adding safety advice to all reservations in the occupied West Bank across its platforms, a move similar to that of Airbnb between 2018-19, when the latter had stopped listing properties in the occupied West Bank. Experts have noted, however, that despite a growing international trend toward more ethical business practices, as in the above examples, many international companies continue to do business in the West Bank and other occupied territories.

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Billionaire gives away leading fashion firm to tackle climate change

Patagonia, a US-based private company selling outdoor apparel and equipment, made news headlines after its founder Yvon Chouinard gave away ownership of the company to entities that would help fight the climate crisis. The biggest share of Patagonia, 98% of its stock, will now be under the non-profit Holdfast Collective, which will ensure that the company's annual profits of \$100 million are used to protect nature and biodiversity, support thriving communities, and combat the environmental crisis. This trust will establish a permanent legal structure to ensure that the company never deviates from Chouinard's vision of running a business that benefits the environment.

Patagonia has long been known as a conservationist company and has been vocal on environmental issues over the years. The company, through its clothing products promising long life and durability, tries to counter fast fashion and reduce the waste generation in the long run. As such, corporate activism is an important part of Patagonia's brand identity. For example, during Trump's presidency, the company became one of the most outspoken corporate critics of Trump's environmental policies, suing then-President Donald Trump over his administration's move to dramatically shrink two national monuments in Utah in 2017.

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Uyghur issue suffers setback in U.N. Human Rights Council

On October 6, the 47-member United Nations Human Rights Council voted down a motion to hold a debate on alleged human rights violations by China against Uyghurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang. This is seen as a victory for Beijing as it seeks to avoid further scrutiny regarding its role in the oppression of the Muslim Uyghur population in Xinjiang.

The draft motion had been proposed by a bloc of mostly Western countries, including the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Turkey. Observers see the defeat of the motion (19 against, 17 in favour, 11 abstentions) as a setback to accountability efforts, the West's moral authority on human rights, and even the credibility of the United Nations itself.

Previously, outgoing U.N. Human Rights Chief Michelle Bachelet released her long-delayed Xinjiang report on August 31 of 2022, citing possible crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in the far-western region by the Chinese government.

The U.N. Human Rights report comes four years after a groundbreaking report from the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination revealed that over one million people were being held in a network of detention centres across Xinjiang. Human rights organisations decried and condemned the move, calling it a betrayal of human rights. Observers have also noted that most Muslim countries went against the motion, including Pakistan, Qatar, Indonesia, and the UAE, while others, such as Malaysia, abstained, the reasoning being that with China's dismissal of the U.N. report, any discussion on the issue would be ineffective and antagonistic anyway.

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Contributing Editors

Mohammad Hossain

Dr Nazmus Sakib

Dr Faroque Amin



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