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India's BRICS Presidency and the Management of Disagreement



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Abstract: India's BRICS presidency demonstrates how states with divergent strategic interests can sustain cooperation within a flexible diplomatic framework. The analysis examines BRICS as a platform for managing disagreements over security, trade and regional order, while highlighting India's multi-alignment strategy and its relationships with the United States, China and Russia.

The eighteenth BRICS Summit in New Delhi was important less because it produced a unified geopolitical position than because it showed how states with different interests can work inside the same diplomatic framework. Under India's presidency, the expanded grouping brought together countries with contrasting relationships with the United States, China, Russia and one another. The New Delhi Declaration reaffirmed consensus, institutional reform, economic cooperation and a greater role for developing countries in global governance.¹ What deserves closer attention is how governments that disagree on security, trade and regional order manage to preserve cooperation without first settling those disagreements.

Part of the answer lies in the design of the grouping. BRICS rests on no treaty, maintains no permanent secretariat and places no binding obligations on its members. Scholars describe an arrangement of this kind as an informal intergovernmental organization, and its principal advantage is that states can organize themselves without surrendering independence.² Because membership costs little, governments that distrust one another can still

take part. India's own conduct follows a related pattern, which the literature calls multi-alignment.³ A country following this approach builds several partnerships at the same time, gives each a particular purpose, and allows none of them to close off the others.⁴ Read together, these two features explain the New Delhi outcome. BRICS is not built to settle the quarrels of its members. It is built to manage them, and the summit showed how much diplomatic work that modest function can carry.

India's relationship with the United States shows the method in practice. The two countries work mainly on Indo-Pacific balance, maritime security, technology and supply chains, and the Quad has also taken up critical minerals and new communication standards.⁵ That relationship came under heavy strain during 2025. In February 2026, Washington lowered its tariff on Indian goods from 25 to 18 per cent. It also removed an extra duty imposed because India was buying Russian oil. In return, India made large commitments to purchase American products.⁶ The repair was real, but confidence was not fully restored. One assessment concluded that the episode made

hedging more important to Indian foreign policy, not less.⁷

Relations with Russia follow a separate logic, built on a long defense relationship and on energy. Vladimir Putin met Narendra Modi in New Delhi on the eve of the summit, and their talks covered civil nuclear energy, defense, fertilizers and critical minerals. By July 2026, Russia supplied a record 51 per cent of India's crude oil imports, because supplies from the Middle East had been disrupted.⁸ A commitment made in one negotiation was therefore overtaken by conditions created in another. That is the ordinary difficulty faced by a large energy importer.

Engagement with China runs alongside open competition. Xi Jinping travelled to New Delhi for the summit, his first visit to India since 2019. He and Modi agreed on the need to respect existing understandings on the border, and to address the trade imbalance and questions of market access.⁹ Direct flights have resumed and some investment rules have been relaxed. Yet the boundary remains unsettled, large deployments stay in place, and New Delhi remains concerned about Chinese export controls on rare earths and about Chinese defense ties with Pakistan.¹⁰ The Gulf shows a similar picture. India keeps energy and investment links with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and diplomatic ties with Iran, although these states stand on opposite sides of a regional war.

“The economic passages worked in the same way. Russia, China and Iran pressed for stronger language on sanctions and on reducing dependence on the dollar, while India resisted an openly anti-Western position.”

BRICS holds all of these tensions at once. India and China compete for influence in Asia. Iran and the Gulf states are regional rivals. Russia is in open confrontation with Western governments, while India deepens its economic links with them. The contrast with an alliance is instructive. An alliance requires its members to align their positions and to act together against a third party. This grouping asks only those members continue to attend, and that they accept wording each can live with. The value of it is not that such differences were settled. It is that a method exists for working despite them. In May 2026, a meeting of BRICS foreign ministers ended without a joint statement because of the war involving Iran.¹¹ Four months later, agreement was reached in New Delhi.

The method was careful wording. Talks on the hardest passages continued into the early hours. India avoided

deciding who was at fault, and the text recorded the national positions of members while calling for maximum restraint.¹² The declaration expressed concern about attacks on civilian infrastructure and on nuclear facilities under international safeguards, without naming any party.¹³ Language of this kind is often dismissed as vague. In practice it performs a precise function, because it allows each government to report a result at home without endorsing the position of its rival. The summit also gave the Iranian and Emirati leaderships a place to meet. A framework of this kind cannot deliver justice or stop a war, but it keeps channels open when bilateral relations are closed.

The economic passages worked in the same way. Russia, China and Iran pressed for stronger language on sanctions and on reducing dependence on the dollar, while India resisted an openly anti-Western position.¹⁴ The final text criticized unilateral tariffs and sanctions but named no country, which allowed governments with very different exposure to Western markets to accept the same sentence.¹⁵ Financial cooperation followed a similar path. Discussion centered on settlement in local currencies and on linking payment systems, and Indian officials confirmed that no common currency is under consideration.¹⁶ The aim is to add options rather than to replace the existing order.

Scholars of contested multilateralism have shown how dissatisfied states use one institution to press for change in another.¹⁷ BRICS fits that description only in part, because its members disagree about how far such pressure should go. China tends to treat the grouping as a way to widen non-Western influence. Russia values it as diplomatic and economic space during a period of isolation. India treats it as an instrument of strategic autonomy and of Global South representation. Other members bring their own priorities, and these asymmetries continue to limit the cohesion of the group.¹⁸ What results is a diplomatic ecosystem in which different visions of order meet, not a single geopolitical project.

A framework of this kind can do only so much. It preserves dialogue, lowers the cost of disagreement and protects institutional relationships that bilateral friction might otherwise break. It does not assign responsibility, and it rarely produces collective action when the interests of members collide. Yet in a period when few states are willing to choose one camp, that modest function has become valuable. For middle and smaller powers, including those of South Asia, the practical lesson is that access to such frameworks now matters as much as the

strength of any single bilateral partnership. The future of diplomacy may depend less on removing rivalry than on maintaining places where rivalry and cooperation can exist together. India's presidency of BRICS shows how emerging powers are adapting to a world in which no single alignment defines a country's place in international politics.

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Planetary Change and the New Geopolitics of the Anthropocene



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Abstract: Planetary change is increasingly intertwined with geopolitics, development, technology and resource competition. The discussion examines how human activity, governance and political choices shape environmental challenges, while considering the geopolitical implications of climate change, technological expansion and resource pressures. It emphasizes cooperation, adaptation and resilience in responding to planetary transformation.

For much of human history, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, and droughts were understood as powerful forces of nature that existed beyond human control. We could prepare for these calamities and attempt to recover from their consequences, but their occurrence was largely considered independent of human actions. However, when an earthquake, flood or hurricane strikes, the immediate images are often of collapsed buildings, rescue operations, and humanitarian suffering. Yet the consequences are rarely determined by geological forces alone. The same natural hazard can produce very different outcomes depending on governance capacity, institutional preparedness, public trust, and economic resilience. In the Anthropocene,¹ an era in which human activities have become a major force shaping the planet, the impact of disasters increasingly reflects political choices as much as natural conditions. Whether or not it represents a formally recognized geological age, one reality is increasingly clear: humans are part of an interconnected global system, and the consequences of our actions on the Earth have become impossible to ignore.

This can be observed in the primary cause of earthquakes

that is scientifically said that it is driven by tectonic movements of plate, while emerging research suggests that climate-related processes, including glacier retreat, changing water pressure, and alterations in the Earth's surface conditions, can influence seismic activity in certain regions.² This should not be interpreted as an assertion that earthquakes are directly linked to environmental change. Though the evolving relationship between climate and geology demonstrates that environmental crises can no longer be examined within isolated scientific boundaries; they increasingly intersect with questions of governance, security, and geopolitics.

Climate change now exerts considerable influence over migration, resource security, economic stability, and international cooperation. With this the unequal geography of vulnerability has transformed climate change into a major issue of global diplomacy, where adaptation, climate finance, and technological access have become central concerns. This is where the significance of the Anthropocene becomes more visible, however the scale of contemporary human activity has altered the relationship between societies and nature. The challenge today is not

only understanding how the planet influences human affairs, but also how human decisions are reshaping the conditions of life on Earth.

Nepal's flash flood offers a further reminder that the issue of climate change is no longer a talking point for climate change or environmental policy, but it is now also a geopolitical one. The flash floods in Nepal have once again highlighted the effect of the fragile ecosystem and the changing glaciers in the mountain areas due to global warming. These geological processes have always had a strong influence on the formation of the Himalayas, but the new challenges of the Anthropocene, as climate stressors begin to take their toll, are changing the relationship between the landscape and human societies. The impact of glacier retreat, and increasingly erratic weather conditions, is not limited to the national level and is likely to have an impact on water resources, hydropower development, infrastructure and regional connectivity in South Asia.³

The call for climate compensation⁴ when climate-related disasters strike in Nepal is a watershed moment in global climate politics. In vulnerable countries, environmental catastrophes are no longer moments to be dealt with in a state of emergency, but are emerging as a subject of the diplomatic discourse on climate justice, adaptation and responsibility. It is not only a matter of black and white, but one of understanding the ramifications of a connected world when the impact of change on Earth is not shared equally. The Himalayas are, when considered in this way, yet another characteristic of the Anthropocene: the environmental changes that take place in one region can impact political agendas, economic policies and international relationships in another.

When two powerful earthquakes struck Venezuela in 2026, the event was initially understood through the language of geology: tectonic movement, seismic intensity, and physical disruption. Yet its significance extended beyond the movement of the Earth's crust. Venezuela's position as a major energy-producing country places environmental challenges within a broader context of resource politics, regional relations, and global economic interests. Environmental events in strategically important regions increasingly intersect with questions of energy security, resilience, and international cooperation.⁵ Thus, an earthquake or indeed any significant disruption in the environment should not be viewed as merely a geological event, but take place within an intricate web of energy and environmental interests, regional dynamics and global interdependence.

It is also unfolding across that the planet has not occurred only through changes in climate and natural systems; it has also been shaped by the expansion of human technological capabilities, creating both unprecedented opportunities and new environmental pressures. For instance, industrial technologies enabled large scale resource extraction and fossil fuel consumption, while modern technological systems have increased demand for energy and critical minerals. The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure has also raised new questions about energy consumption and environmental costs. Technology is therefore not merely a manifestation of human capability that has made life more efficient; it has also become part of the broader processes driving planetary transformation. While it offers solutions to environmental challenges, it simultaneously shapes the scale and nature of those challenges.

“Whether a disaster becomes a catastrophe now depends less on nature and more on governance, institutions, and political choices.”

The relationship between earthquakes, climate change, and geopolitics reflects a reality more complex than any single explanation. Environmental challenges cannot be understood only as the result of human activity, nor can they be viewed simply as unavoidable forces of nature. The Anthropocene provides an important lens for understanding how human actions have become connected with planetary systems, but it should not become an argument of blame. The challenge is to recognize how development choices, technological advancement, resource competition, and political decisions shape humanity's relationship with the planet. The future of global politics will depend not only on understanding environmental change but also on the ability of societies to cooperate, adapt, and build resilience. The planet's changing conditions are not simply a story of human success or failure; they reflect the choices societies make in balancing development, innovation, and environmental responsibility.

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Zambia's Mineral Dilemma: Global Demand, Domestic Expectations



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Abstract: Zambia is counting on the demand for critical minerals and plans for a copper production increase to three times by 2031, appealing to foreign investors to process and value-add locally. However, most Zambia citizens still believe the economy is deteriorating, and increasing prices at home will determine the success of the Government, rather than the volume of exports.

Imagine a country rich in minerals that are essential to the global economy, yet still struggling to turn those resources into broad national prosperity. This is the challenge facing Zambia. Copper, cobalt, lithium, nickel, graphite, and rare earth elements are increasingly described as critical minerals because they are essential for electric vehicles, renewable-energy systems, electricity networks, and modern technologies. As geopolitical competition

intensifies, access to these minerals has become a strategic concern for China, the United States, the European Union, and other major economies.

For African countries, this competition creates both opportunity and risk. The continent possesses many of the minerals required for the global energy transition, but much of its mineral wealth has historically been exported in raw or lightly processed form. Limited infrastructure,

technology, financing, and industrial capacity have often prevented African states from capturing more value from extraction. Zambia illustrates this problem clearly. It is one of Africa's major copper producers, but its long mining history has not always produced the level of economic transformation expected from such resource wealth.

Copper has shaped Zambia's economy since the colonial period. Large-scale mining in the Copperbelt encouraged the construction of railways, towns, and industrial infrastructure, and copper remained the country's most important export after independence in 1964. President Kenneth Kaunda's government believed that political independence should be accompanied by greater economic control over natural resources. The 1969 Matero Reforms increased state ownership in mining, and the major state-controlled operations were later consolidated into Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) in 1982. The goal was to ensure that mining revenue supported employment, infrastructure, and social services.¹

However, dependence on copper also exposed Zambia to global price shocks. Falling copper prices after the mid-1970s, together with declining production, debt, outdated technology, and insufficient investment, weakened the state-led model. By the 1990s, economic crisis and pressure from international financial institutions pushed Zambia toward liberalisation. Privatisation of ZCCM began in 1996 and was largely completed by 2000. Foreign investors brought capital and technology that helped revive production, but privatisation also created debate over foreign ownership, employment, and whether Zambia was receiving a fair share of the value produced by its minerals.²

“Zambia is racing to triple its copper output by 2031, but most citizens still say the economy is moving in the wrong direction.”

That unresolved question remains at the centre of Zambia's mineral politics today. Under President Hakainde Hichilema, first elected in 2021, the government has tried to combine investor-friendly policies with greater domestic participation and value addition. His United Party for National Development (UPND) pledged to improve mining governance, expand the copper value chain, and increase the economic benefits Zambia receives from its mineral resources. During his first term, the government focused on restoring investor confidence, expanding production, and attracting new investment into mining.³

Hichilema was re-elected in August 2026 and began a second five-year term in September. His re-election gives the government political continuity at a moment when Zambia's mineral resources are becoming more strategically important.⁴ Yet the second term also begins with pressure to demonstrate that investment and mining growth can improve everyday life. In 2024, a survey found that 66 percent of Zambians believed the country was moving in the wrong direction, while 73 percent described national economic conditions as fairly bad or very bad. The rising cost of living was the issue citizens most wanted the government to address.⁵

This dissatisfaction matters for Zambia's critical-minerals strategy. The government may succeed in attracting foreign capital and increasing copper exports, but citizens are likely to judge that success through jobs, prices, income, electricity access, and public services. The political challenge for Hichilema is therefore not simply to expand the mining sector, but to show that Zambia's growing importance in global mineral supply chains can generate visible domestic benefits. If mineral-sector growth does not improve living standards, the gap between national economic ambitions and public expectations could widen.

Zambia's National Critical Minerals Strategy 2024–2028 is designed to address part of this problem. It identifies 11 strategically important minerals: copper, cobalt, lithium, nickel, graphite, manganese, columbite-tantalite, tin, uranium, sugilite, and rare earth elements. Its priorities include better geological mapping, stronger government-private-sector partnerships, beneficiation and value addition, and research and development.⁶ The strategy shows that Zambia does not want to remain simply a supplier of raw minerals. It wants to participate more fully in the value chain.⁷

Value addition is especially important. Processing and refining minerals domestically could create jobs, develop technical skills, strengthen manufacturing, increase government revenue, and allow Zambia to retain a larger share of the economic value generated from its resources. This is also why the government has set a target of increasing annual copper production from roughly 800,000 tonnes to three million tonnes by 2031. The production strategy is intended to stimulate exploration, mining, processing, and the supply of mining-related goods and services.

However, increasing production alone will not guarantee transformation. Zambia could produce far more copper while continuing to export much of its economic value abroad. The country still faces electricity shortages, infrastructure constraints, limited processing capacity, shortages of specialised skills, and the high cost of financing major mining projects. Large-scale mining also requires foreign capital and technology, creating a difficult balance between attracting multinational investors and retaining greater national control over the benefits of extraction.

“The central question is whether Zambia can turn this geopolitical advantage into domestic economic value.”

Geopolitics gives Zambia additional bargaining power. China has long been an important investor in Zambian mining and infrastructure, while Western countries are increasingly interested in alternative sources of critical minerals. Zambia has generally avoided presenting this as a simple choice between China and the West. Instead, it can use competition among external partners to seek investment, technology, infrastructure, and market access. Critical minerals therefore function not only as commodities but also as instruments of economic diplomacy.

The central question is whether Zambia can turn this geopolitical advantage into domestic economic value. Its history shows the limitations of both heavy state control and extensive dependence on foreign investors. Hichilema’s second term therefore faces a more demanding test than simply raising production. The government must connect mining growth with local processing, employment, industrial development, and improved living standards.

Zambia’s fight for value is ultimately taking place on two fronts. Internationally, it must negotiate with powerful governments and multinational companies that want secure access to strategic minerals. Domestically, it must convince citizens that the mineral boom can improve their lives. If Zambia can retain more value through processing, skills, local industries, and stronger institutions, critical minerals could become a foundation for long-term economic transformation. If it cannot, the country risks repeating an old pattern in a new global economy:

exporting valuable resources while much of the wealth created from them is captured elsewhere.

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Houthi Escalation in Yemen: The Growing Threat to Shipping Through Bab el-Mandeb



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Abstract: In the past two years, since July 2023, Houthis attacks including a fatal one on the cargo ship *Tihamah* have reduced traffic through Bab el-Mandeb by about half. The rerouting around Africa will be expensive and not magically solve the issue, and in addition, Iran is able to exert an indirect influence on the Houthis, as a crisis around the Huways also has the potential to become a broader issue of stability in the Gulf, which requires a political and not military solution.

The world had already witnessed the Houthi forces demonstrating their ability to threaten international shipping after the Gaza catastrophe began in October 2023. Their series of attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea forced major shipping companies to divert vessels around the Cape of Good Hope, while the United States and the United Kingdom launched military strikes against Houthi positions within an “international maritime security operation”. Although Houthi maritime activity was seen as relatively limited earlier in 2026, the threat still remains visible. The situation transformed sharply in July, when the Houthis announced a maritime embargo against Saudi-linked shipping on July 20. Then claimed attacks on Saudi oil tankers two days later and subsequently expanded their threats to other Saudi-associated vessels. More significantly, Reuters reported on July 29 that the group was considering imposing fees on commercial vessels passing through the southern Red Sea. This suggests a shift from selective attacks towards an attempt to exercise coercive control over maritime traffic. Additionally, the reported

involvement of Iran further connects the maritime crisis with the wider Iran–US confrontation.¹

The latest escalation is particularly intimidating because both the objectives and the geographical landscapes of the threat have been broadened substantially. Earlier attacks were largely highlighted as responses to the Gaza destruction and directed at Israeli-linked vessels. In July 2026, however, Saudi-associated and energy-related shipping also came under threat, directly implicating the southern Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb region.² While the consequences are already visible: shipping companies are redirecting vessels, and war-risk insurance costs have remarkably been risen. On August 12, an Egyptian-owned cargo vessel *Tihamah* was attacked near Bab el-Mandeb, killing four crew members and two rescuers and injuring ten others. Subsequently, traffic through the Bab el-Mandeb and Red Sea had already fallen by more than 50 percent from earlier levels and declined further after the July blockade. Where it's firmly observed that A chokepoint does not have to be physically closed to become strategically dysfunctional. The perception of

insecurity alone can push commercial operators to avoid the route, disrupting a huge chunk of global commerce.³

Bab el-Mandeb is a narrow maritime passage between Yemen and the Horn of Africa, connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea/Indian Ocean. At its northern end, the Red Sea joins the Suez Canal, creating a continuous maritime corridor linking the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean and Europe. This makes Bab el-Mandeb a classic maritime chokepoint: a relatively narrow passage through which substantial international shipping must pass, where insecurity can have consequences far beyond its immediate geography. Its importance is particularly visible in the flow of energy. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, 8.1 million barrels per day of crude oil and petroleum liquids passed through Bab el-Mandeb in the second quarter of 2026, compared with 4.1 million barrels per day in 2024. The crisis has therefore emphasized not the disappearance of its strategic importance, but how quickly vital flows can be displaced when the route becomes risky.⁴

“Houthi attacks have cut ship traffic through Bab el-Mandeb by nearly half, turning a narrow strait into a global economic flashpoint.”

Whereas the issue is that avoiding Bab el-Mandeb does not provide an equivalent alternative. Although ships can avail the scope to bypass Africa through the Cape of Good Hope, longer voyages will encounter higher fuel consumption, increased crew and operational costs, greater insurance expenses, and potentially higher freight rates. Moreover, Bab el-Mandeb and the Suez Canal form parts of the same maritime system, where insecurity at the southern entrance can undermine the expediency of the entire Red Sea and Suez route even if the canal itself remains operational. This threat is furthermore considered to be multidimensional. U.S. maritime authorities identify risks ranging from UAVs, unmanned surface and underwater vehicles, and ballistic and cruise missiles to small-arms fire, explosive boats, and illegal boardings or seizures. Thus, the challenge doesn't turn out to be simply physical closure; it is the consequence of sustained insecurity that makes a strategically important commercial passage increasingly difficult and costly to navigate.⁵

The first economic consequence of this maritime insecurity is the route diversion of ships. When ships even avoid Bab el-Mandeb and the Red Sea channel, they have the option to sail around the Cape of Good Hope, but this

alternative is considerably longer and more expensive. During the previous Red Sea crisis, a tanker voyage from the Persian Gulf to the Amsterdam-Rotterdam-Antwerp hub took about 19 days through Suez, compared with nearly 35 days via the Cape. Longer voyages increase fuel consumption, crew and operating costs alongside insurance expenses and delivery times, which substantially reduces the vessel utilisation. The 2026 experience already demonstrates how rapidly commercial behaviour changes: after the Houthis' July maritime blockade against Saudi Arabia, Bab el-Mandeb traffic dropped by around 24%, while mainstream tanker traffic particularly declined with far-reaching effects. By mid-August, overall traffic remained around 15% below the pre-blockade average, with tanker traffic approximately 38–40% lower. The market accordingly does not wait for a complete blockade, where it is widely perceived that this range of risks alone can alter regular shipping patterns.⁶

These consequences spread beyond shipping into energy security and consumer prices. Bab el-Mandeb is considered to be a key corridor for crude oil, petroleum products, and LNG. Record shows, in the second quarter of 2026, around 8.1 million barrels per day of crude oil and petroleum liquids passed through the strait, partly because Saudi Arabia rerouted more oil towards its Red Sea port of Yanbu during disruption elsewhere.⁷ This creates a strategic paradox: the more precarious the Strait of Hormuz becomes, the more important Bab el-Mandeb turns out to be as an alternative. Redirection cannot entirely replace these corridors because alternatives are longer, costlier along with having the capacity-constraints. Higher maritime risk can therefore translate into higher amounts of losses, insurance, and import costs, eventually affecting businesses and consumers. As a result, Import-dependent developing economies are particularly vulnerable because they have fewer substitutes to absorb such shocks.⁸

Bab el-Mandeb has evolved from a maritime security concern into an instrument of regional power politics. Although the Houthis are well-aligned with Iran, they hold their own political and military objectives in Yemen. Their maritime campaign therefore has both a local dimension involving Yemen and Saudi Arabia and a wider strategic aspect engaging Iran, the United States and Israel. The July 2026 blockade of Saudi-linked shipping made this especially clear, as the Houthis exercised their position near the Red Sea to apply pressure while the United States and Iran were already in proxy confrontation.⁹ While Iran

“The central principle should be clear: commercial shipping should not become a bargaining chip or objective of warfare in any regional conflicts.”

does not directly control Bab el-Mandeb, its relationship with the Houthis provides Tehran a form of indirect strategic leverage over this significant maritime corridor. The likelihood of simultaneous disturbance at Bab el-Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz makes the threat even more severe, potentially transforming a regional conflict into a global strategic challenge. At its fundamental point, this also raises a question of freedom of navigation: whether a non-state armed group can really determine which ships, companies, or national affiliations will safely be able to use an important international waterway.¹⁰

Protecting navigation hence requires something more than military retaliation. Multinational maritime surveillance, intelligence-sharing, early warning, naval coordination and appropriate protection for commercial vessels can reinforce existing security efforts. But military deterrence alone can produce a cycle of attack, retaliation and further escalation. A strong response must also address the political incentives behind the crisis through a broader regional framework involving Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt and other Red Sea states. The central principle should be clear: commercial shipping should not become a bargaining chip or objective of warfare in any regional conflicts.

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Germany's Far-Right Challenge: The AfD's Rise and the Future of Europe



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Abstract: The AfD's growing electoral strength is reshaping Germany's political landscape and testing the country's established approach to containing the far right. Its rise intersects with public distrust, migration, labour shortages, coalition pressures, and competing visions of Germany's role in Europe. The developments in Saxony-Anhalt carry wider implications for democratic stability, European cohesion, and future political alignments.

With over 44 percent of the vote, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) won the regional election in Saxony-Anhalt on September 6, more than doubling its 20.8 percent performance in 2021. It has become the main opposition party in Germany. It is projected to secure 39 of 83 seats in the state parliament in Magdeburg, three fewer than the 42 required for an absolute majority. The incumbent Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), led nationally by Chancellor Friedrich Merz, scored less than half, only 17 percent. AfD lead candidate Ulrich Siegmund has called other parties to cooperate with AfD to be a part of fundamental political shift even though he previously stated that he wants to govern alone.¹

Germany's mainstream political parties have taken the firewall strategy to counter AfD. They have refused to work with the AfD. In areas, such as Saxony-Anhalt, domestic intelligence services consider the AfD to be radical, making cooperation particularly delicate in light of Germany's Nazi background. As the AfD has become the main opposition party, the firewall has already produced odd partnerships, such as the three-party coalition in charge of Thuringia.²

Excluding the AfD in Saxony-Anhalt would require the CDU, Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Greens, Left Party and Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW) to

govern together. It will require them to establish a five-party coalition party. However, it will be unusual, complicated and unstable. The AfD, if they want to win, they might have to make a coalition with another party. Even though firewall strategy exists, the only party they can govern with is the BSW, which won 5.3 percent of the vote. Both parties differ in various issues but share certain similarities like a Russia-friendly stance and opposition to immigration.³ The BSW has alluded to tacit cooperation even while other parties have ruled out publicly supporting an AfD-led government.⁴

Across Europe, old democratic parties are losing their popularity as they try to make unstable coalitions just to exclude the far-right parties from gaining strength. Such a step is rather increasing dissatisfaction among the public and making way for the far-right to win public support.⁵

The AfD has been entangled in controversies since its foundation in 2013, including claims of foreign espionage connections, covert deportation plots, and internal nepotism, with some Saxony-Anhalt lawmakers allegedly hiring family members. After lead candidate Maximilian Krah stated that not all members of the Nazi SS were criminals, it was expelled from the far-right Identity & Democracy group of the European Parliament in 2024. He was also

investigated by German prosecutors regarding alleged illegal payments, bribery and money laundering linked to China and Russia. For attending a covert discussion on preparations for mass deportations of individuals with immigrant backgrounds, some AfD members also attracted criticism.⁶

In the AfD's Saxony-Anhalt program, the party has stated that Islam belongs neither to Germany nor to Saxony-Anhalt. In addition to proposing to oppose the call to prayer, restrict mosque construction, stop Islamic religious instruction in schools, and replace university chairs in Islamic theology with non-confessional Islamic studies, it makes a distinction between Muslims it considers to be accepting of the constitutional order and those it labels political Islam.⁷ Though some of these proposals are contrary to the German constitution such as religious freedom. AfD has promised a remigration and deportation offensive, in which they consider migrant people unwanted, and a ban on rainbow flags in schools.⁸ AfD's manifesto pledges to abolish asylum on safe-third-country grounds, deny residency to foreigners with criminal records, stop treating Ukrainians as war refugees and, abolish church asylum, make recognized refugees work in waste disposal, review acquired citizenships, and use prisons to hold individuals designated for deportation.⁹

"AfD's rise might increase mistrust from France and Poland, and that a weaker coalition might force Germany to return to focusing on trade with China instead of adopting a more hawkish EU stance."

There is already a labor shortage in Saxony-Anhalt as its population has shrunk by 25 percent since reunification. Only one new employee enters the workforce for every two who retire. Foreign workers without German citizenship contributed about 68.3 billion euros to East Germany's economy in 2025. The study cautioned that if labor shortages are not addressed through immigration, regional prosperity and services, including healthcare, may be jeopardized.¹⁰

AfD's rise might increase mistrust from France and Poland, and that a weaker coalition might force Germany to return to focusing on trade with China instead of adopting a more hawkish EU stance. This would complicate negotiations over the Industrial Accelerator Act, where France and Germany already disagree on Made in Europe procurement regulations, as well as the EU's China policy discussions this October.¹¹

The European Policy Centre warns that Germany will be seen more and more through the lens of a fragmenting political center, which translates to a weaker and more

divided Germany. According to the European Council on Foreign Relations, this might lead Europe toward fragmentation and exploitation.¹² Many European far-right parties, including France's National Rally, oppose energy-transition policies and renewable expansion, and that AfD's anti-EU, pro-Russia positioning has pushed nationalist framing, "what's in it for us, the Germans?" into mainstream discourse.¹³ Like minded parties in Europe share anti-immigration platforms and strong nationalist messages, which is what worries the EU as election season approaches in France, Italy, Spain and Poland.¹⁴

The AfD's success in Saxony-Anhalt is a test of Germany's democratic system, which has existed since reunification to keep the extreme right out of power. So far the firewall has been held, but each election that forces the major parties into larger and more uncomfortable coalitions makes that tactic harder to sustain and more likely to be painted as an insult to democratic choice. Whether the CDU, SPD, Greens, Left and BSW can keep a five-party government together or whether a quieter deal with the AfD eventually emerges, the underlying pressures will not go away: labor shortages, migration issues and public distrust of the established parties. A divided and inward-looking Germany matters for EU policy on China, trade and Ukraine, and offers a model that far-right movements elsewhere in Europe might follow as their own elections approach. The result in Magdeburg will be watched very closely far beyond Saxony-Anhalt.

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When Extremism Becomes Useful: The Politics of Identity in South Asia



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Abstract: Extremism in South Asia survives not only through ideology, but also because identity, fear and exclusion can become politically useful. Across India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, different forms of extremism reveal how political actors mobilise perceived threats to consolidate authority. Countering extremism therefore requires accountability, impartial institutions and protection of minorities.

Extremism in South Asia is neither a new phenomenon nor limited to religious radicalization or communal violence; it also includes political polarization, ethnic nationalism, separatist movements and hate campaign. Sometimes it is the state itself that practices fanaticism and sometimes it is a random social media post that ignites riots. Over time, governments across the region have taken security measures, conducted operations against violent groups, imposed restrictions on extremist organizations and imposed various legal and policy responses. While these measures have had varying degree of relevance and effectiveness, a fundamental question remains: why does extremism continue to survive, adapt and reappear across South Asia despite decades of institutional intervention and political changes? One answer is that extremism can become politically useful.

Across South Asia, extremist ideas do not survive only because individuals believe in them. Political actors, social

organizations and state institutions have drawn on identity, fear and exclusion to mobilize supporters, legitimize authority, frame groups as security threats, redirect public anger or consolidate power. Hindu majoritarianism in India, Taliban rule in Afghanistan, militancy in Pakistan, Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka and Myanmar, and the intersection of religious identity and mobilization in Bangladesh are products of distinct political histories and ideological traditions; yet they demonstrate a recurring pattern where identity becomes a political tool.

India is perhaps the clearest example of how religious identity can become electorally powerful. The Ram Janmabhoomi Movement and the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 helped convert religious polarization into electoral support. Under Narendra Modi, Hindu nationalism has increasingly been institutionalized through measures such as the 2019 revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special

constitutional status, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC), anti-conversion and cow protection laws.¹ This political climate has also enabled violence: three Muslim men were killed amid tensions over a Mughal-era mosque survey in Uttar Pradesh in 2024,² while a Muslim teenager, Sabbir Malik, was beaten to death in Haryana after being accused of carrying beef.³ In 2025, the India Persecution Tracker documented at least 27 Muslims killed by Hindu extremists in religiously motivated hate crimes and another 23 Muslims killed by state actors.⁴

Muslims are increasingly portrayed as threats to national identity and security, while issues such as cow protection, religious conversion and alleged illegal migration can be used to consolidate majoritarian support. Christian communities have also faced mob attacks amid accusations of forced conversion.⁵ When polarizing religious rhetoric can strengthen political solidarity among a majority community, the incentive to abandon it weakens.

Pakistan demonstrates a different relationship between extremism and political utility. Religious extremism operates through militant organizations, sectarian networks, discriminatory laws, social pressure and mob violence. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and other militant groups have attacked civilians and state institutions, while blasphemy accusations have triggered vigilante violence against minorities.⁶ Pakistan's blasphemy laws have also been exploited for personal vendetta, property disputes and other forms of coercion.⁷ Once religious rhetoric becomes embedded in law, public institutions and social expectations, actors can invoke it to pressure governments, silence opponents or establish their own legitimacy. The state may fight militant groups while operating within a political environment in which religious actors possess substantial influence.

Afghanistan demonstrates an even more extreme transformation where the state itself has become an extremist movement. Since returning to power in 2021, the Taliban has made its interpretation of Islam a governing framework. Girls are barred from secondary and higher education, women are excluded from most forms of employment and restrictions on mobility and public participation have become institutionalized.⁸ The Soviet invasion, US, Pakistani and Saudi support for the Afghan jihad, the militarization of Afghan politics, civil war, Taliban's emergence and the subsequent US-led war all contributed to the political environment in which militant Islam developed.⁹ External intervention did not create Taliban ideology or excuse the movement's present policies, but it demonstrates how extremism develops within environments shaped by domestic and international power politics.

Bangladesh presents a distinct variation in which religious

mobilization intersects with electoral competition, political rivalry and communal tensions. The killing of Dipu Chandra Das following allegations concerning religious sentiment and the December 2025 attacks on Prothom Alo and The Daily Star illustrate the visibility of organized mob violence.¹⁰ The attacks were preceded by online incitement, showing how social media can turn religious and political tensions into collective violence.¹¹ Groups mobilized under the banner of 'Tawhidi Janata' also reflect a mob culture where religious sentiment is used to justify intimidation and brutality.

“Until the political incentives that make extremism useful are confronted, defeating extremist organizations will not be enough to defeat extremism itself.”

At the same time, religious violence cannot always be separated from political conflict. A 2025 UK Home Office assessment, drawing on Bangladesh Police data, found that many attacks on minorities after the fall of the Awami League regime were politically motivated rather than communal.¹² This overlap shows how religious identity can be politically instrumentalized, making minorities vulnerable because of faith and political affiliation. Its persistence points to political incentives, weak accountability and the normalization of mob violence.

Sri Lanka provides another example of how religious nationalism can become politically useful. Buddhist nationalist organizations such as the Bodu Bala Sena have portrayed Muslims as a threat to Sinhala-Buddhist identity, culture and economic interests. Rumors about demographic and economic threats have generated hostility and a 'moral panic' around a perceived religious and cultural threat.¹³ The historical roots are deeper than any single organization, as Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and Muslim identity have developed through a century of political and socioeconomic competition.¹⁴

Myanmar demonstrates the most devastating consequences of this process. Buddhist nationalism and ethnic exclusion contributed to the construction of the idea that the Rohingya are outsiders to the national community. They were portrayed not simply as a religious minority but as a demographic, cultural and national threat.¹⁵ Recent United Nations reporting continues to document severe abuses against the Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar.¹⁶

These cases should not be placed into one category. TTP terrorism is not the same as Hindutva politics; Taliban rule is not equivalent to Buddhist nationalism; and mob violence in Bangladesh cannot simply be equated with systematic persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar. Their origins, institutional structures and degrees of violence differ

considerably. What connects them is a political mechanism rather than a common ideology: identity can become a resource for acquiring or maintaining power.

Extremism becomes particularly useful when it provides an enemy. Minorities, migrants or political rivals can be portrayed as threats, turning complex problems into emotionally powerful narratives. This also explains why extremism can survive the defeat or fall of extremist organizations: narratives remain embedded in people's minds, allowing ideology to outlive the organization itself.

Social media has intensified this process. It has not created the underlying politics, but it has accelerated the mobilization of fear. The medium has changed, but the mechanism remains familiar: identify a threat, construct an enemy, mobilize a community and turn fear into collective action.

The deeper problem is not simply the existence of extremist beliefs, but the political environment that rewards mobilization. When politicians gain support by portraying minorities as threats, religious organizations gain influence by claiming to defend faith, or governments tolerate extremist actors for political convenience or because of weak law enforcement, extremism becomes self-reinforcing. This is why counterterrorism alone cannot defeat extremism. Stronger institutions, impartial law enforcement, independent courts, minority protection and accountability are necessary to make political violence and religious hatred costly rather than rewarding.

The ideologies and targets may differ across South Asia, but the pattern remains similar. Until the incentives that make extremism useful are confronted, defeating extremist organizations will not be enough to defeat extremism itself. It will continue to recur in society, taking different forms and affecting people, states and the wider region.

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25 Years After 9/11: The Wars, Divisions and Unintended Consequences



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Abstract: The twenty-five-year legacy of 9/11 reveals profound consequences for international security, foreign policy and social relations. The analysis examines the subsequent war on terror; military interventions in Afghanistan and other countries, and their wider effects on Muslims, Arabs and South Asians, highlighting the divisions and unintended consequences of post-9/11 policies.

"Never forget": The most widely repeated phrase used on anniversary stickers, signs, and memorials to honor the victims of the 9/11 attack.

On that fateful day, the whole world was glued to the news channels to get the latest updates. Some turned off their TV sets to avoid the fear and anxiety. After that, the USA declared war on terror. At the time, the situation was so intense that little attention was given to the long-term impact it could eventually have. U.S. foreign and security policies increasingly affected Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians. Organizations, institutions, and universities kept surveillance on people in certain communities. Reports of hate crimes and attacks were made in different places. Muslims were arrested on suspicion of involvement in the attack. The relationship with the Middle East also changed significantly. Questions later emerged over whether U.S.-led efforts to restore or promote democracy in certain countries in the region achieved their intended outcomes. Now, twenty-five years later, the question is what the world has become in response to it.

It goes without saying that this attack affected Americans to the core, as three weeks after 9/11, 87 percent said they felt angry about the attacks on the World Trade Center and

Pentagon. A sense of patriotism was seen inside, as the majority of them said that even after one year of the attack. In that context, then-President George W. Bush declared the "war on terror" after Congress passed the 2001 AUMF, authorizing military force against those who were engaged in the 9/11 attacks. However, eventually it was not limited to Afghanistan; the USA and its allied forces entered Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, and later conducted military operations in Iraq (2003), Pakistan (2004), Libya (2011), Syria, and Yemen (2014 onwards). It cannot be denied that the war on terror was started to eliminate al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, and the USA justified it as a "just war." However, the consequences were severe and generated continuing debate over proportionality and long-term outcomes. The objective of the USA and its allies also shifted to stabilizing Afghanistan by establishing democracy and institutions to run the country. After two decades of war, the Taliban returned to power following the U.S. withdrawal, leaving the outcome of that effort widely debated.

"In an interconnected world, the shockwaves of a crisis anywhere can become the reality of everyone."

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a debatable decision, as per many scholars and experts. After the 9/11 attack, the wounds on U.S. soil were still fresh, and the decision to go to war was made in an atmosphere of intense pressure and uncertainty. The United States proceeded without a further UN Security Council resolution explicitly authorizing the invasion; in February 2003, then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell asked the UN Security Council to support action against Iraq, arguing that Saddam Hussein was continuing to stockpile and manufacture weapons of mass destruction (WMD), in violation of UN Resolution 687.¹ Another stated objective was to overthrow Saddam Hussein and establish democracy for the Iraqi people. Later, it was found that the USA and UK relied on the information of two Iraqi defectors, an engineer called Rafid Ahmed Alwan al-Janabi and an intelligence officer called Maj Muhammad Harith, who claimed that they had first-hand knowledge of Iraq's WMD program. Both men later said they had fabricated their evidence because they wanted the allies to invade and oust Saddam.² Post-invasion investigations found neither active WMD stockpiles nor a connection between Saddam Hussein's regime and the 9/11 attack. The failure of pre-war intelligence raised questions about its credibility, while an estimate placed war-related deaths between 2003 and 2011 at 461,000.³ The war was also estimated to have cost the U.S. \$3 trillion.⁴

After everything, the world cannot forget the descriptions and pictures of human rights violations in Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. Since 2002, 780 Muslim men and boys from more than 47 countries have been sent to Guantanamo Bay.⁵ At Abu Ghraib, the Red Cross reported that 70% to 90% of detainees had been arrested by mistake or had no links to armed insurgencies and were labeled as "security threats."⁶ Because of months of inhuman treatment, including mental, physical, and sexual violence, prisoners still suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), severe depression and despair, and chronic anxiety and paranoia. This made it difficult for some prisoners to adapt to society after they were released. After bearing humiliation, some also struggled to get a stable job to lead their lives. Constant judgment, suspicion, and racism made recovery more difficult. Some eventually recovered and rebuilt their lives, while others were drawn toward extremist networks.

The relationship between detention and later radicalization is complex, but the prisons became important spaces for contact among militants and later featured prominently in extremist narratives. The effects of detention also reached beyond individual prisoners. Leaders of ISIS, including Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, spent time in U.S. detention

facilities in Iraq, where they networked and organized.⁷ For some detainees, experiences of detention became part of later grievance and radicalization. Terrorist organizations also used torture stories and photos of detention in propaganda and recruitment, including for foreign fighters. These dynamics were among several factors associated with post-9/11 radicalization; they should not be treated as a single explanation for extremism. At the same time, Islamophobia and suspicion toward Muslims increased after 9/11. Muslims, Arabs, Asians, and South Asians often faced longer airport inspections, racial profiling, and surveillance.

The attack on September 11, 2001, produced a chain reaction that included prolonged military campaigns, governance challenges, human rights violations in detention, radicalization, and the rise of Islamophobia.

In Iraq, the absence of the WMD stockpiles cited before the invasion intensified debate over the basis for the war. After 25 years since the unforgettable attack, many scholars still debate whether the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq achieved their intended objectives. U.S. forces removed the Taliban government in 2001 but were unable to prevent the group from returning to power after the withdrawal.

The wars also carried major financial and human costs. With the U.S. out of Afghanistan and the Taliban in control, 69% of Americans say the U.S. failed to achieve its goals there, and 53% said the same about Iraq.⁸ The regional effects did not remain confined to Iraq and Afghanistan, but shaped security calculations across the Middle East and Europe. The course of action from 2001 also altered the regional balance of power after the removal of Saddam Hussein and the growing influence of Shia-led political actors across Iraq and the wider region. The democratic stability promised by Western countries was only partly realized, while instability and anti-Western grievances contributed to conditions in which brutal transnational insurgencies could grow, including the evolution of Al-Qaeda in Iraq into ISIS, which later carried out and inspired attacks beyond the region.

In the long term, these conflicts triggered a humanitarian crisis, as millions of refugees fled toward Europe, contributing to political polarization. Later, the withdrawal of Western forces created additional strategic space for rivals such as China and Russia to expand their influence. The post-9/11 period therefore transformed the Middle East from a region of extensive Western influence toward a more multipolar strategic environment, while also changing how particular communities were viewed in security and public discourse.

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When Wall Street Broke the World: The 2008 Financial Collapse and Why It Still Matters Today



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Abstract: The 2008 financial crisis exposed the fragility of an increasingly interconnected global financial system. Risky lending, excessive leverage, the housing bubble, and institutional vulnerabilities transformed a US housing collapse into a worldwide economic crisis. Its legacy extends beyond financial markets, shaping debates over inequality, public trust, government intervention, debt, financial stability, and the risks underlying today's global economy.

September 2008, A 158-year-old bank collapsed overnight. \$600 billion gone, and retirement accounts vanished. Millions lost their jobs. The real cause of this lie was so simple that you could fit in a billboard: “Why rent when you can own?” In the early 2000s, 9/11 just sucker-punched the US economy and the wall street kind of Twitchy. To boost an economy grappling with poor growth, the Federal Reserve

slashed the interest rate nearly to zero.¹ The result was that a large number of people started borrowing and buying houses. Housing prices were rising steadily, creating widespread confidence in the property market, while banks and other financial institutions expanded access to mortgages, extending loans to an increasingly broad range of borrowers.

What can go wrong? House prices never fall. What the US couldn't predict was that the very policy that they took to boost their Economy would be the very reason for the collapse of the World Financial Market. As the significant drop-in interest rates enabled banks to lend more to borrowers, these also included "Subprime mortgages," which were loans given to borrowers with weaker credit histories. Traditionally, banks turned down Subprime borrowers as they were considered too risky. The looming recession encouraged banks to expand risky lending practices, including mortgages given to borrowers with weak financial backgrounds. Since rising housing prices created confidence that properties could always be resold, lending standards weakened dramatically, turning homeownership into a widespread financial gamble. This led to the creation of a housing bubble in the late 1990s. At first it was a whisper. A missed mortgage and an empty condo somewhere in Louisiana, and then came the wave. Home prices were falling. For years, the housing market was like a Jenga Tower built on lies, leverage, and wild optimism.²

By early 2008, the subprime mortgages and risky financial deals started to implode. Panic spread like wildfire. The financial crisis intensified dramatically in September 2008, as the collapse of major financial institutions exposed the deep vulnerabilities within the global financial system. On September 7, 2008, the U.S. government placed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, two government-sponsored enterprises responsible for a significant share of the American mortgage market, under federal conservatorship. The decision effectively nationalized the institutions to stabilize them and prevent further disruption in the housing finance sector.

The crisis escalated further on September 15, 2008, when Lehman Brothers, one of the oldest and largest investment banks in the United States with a history spanning 158 years, filed for bankruptcy after the Federal Reserve and the U.S. government declined to provide financial assistance. The collapse of Lehman Brothers represented the largest bankruptcy in American history and triggered severe panic across global financial markets. If Lehman can die, anyone can.

In the following weeks, financial instability spread rapidly across international markets. Stock exchanges around the world experienced extreme volatility as investors lost confidence in the stability of major financial institutions. Banks became increasingly unwilling to lend to one another except at extremely high interest rates because of uncertainty regarding their exposure to toxic assets. As a result, global credit markets effectively froze, limiting the flow of capital necessary for businesses and consumers.³

By late 2008, there was a full collapse, and the shockwave did not stop at Wall Street. Across Europe, governments rushed to save failing banks as fear spread that one financial collapse could bring down the entire global economy.

Ultimately, the 2008 financial crisis evolved from a collapse in the U.S. housing market into a worldwide economic downturn. The failure of major financial institutions, the freezing of global credit markets, and the extensive government interventions marked the beginning of the Great Recession, the most severe global economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In response to the escalating crisis, the Bush administration introduced the \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) on October 3, 2008, to purchase distressed financial assets and provide emergency support to struggling financial institutions. Banks were too big to fail. If they collapsed, the entire global economy would collapse. However, the crisis had already expanded beyond the United States and developed into a global financial emergency.⁴

Although the world eventually recovered from the 2008 financial crisis, its consequences continue to shape the global economy today. The crisis revealed that modern financial markets are deeply interconnected, meaning that a problem originating in one sector of one country can quickly spread across borders. The collapse of the U.S. housing market did not remain an American problem; it disrupted banks, governments, businesses, and households worldwide. This interconnectedness remains one of the defining characteristics of today's global economy.

One of the most important lessons from 2008 is the danger of excessive debt and financial speculation. Today, governments, corporations, and households carry historically high levels of debt. While the sources of risk have changed, concerns remain about financial stability. Instead of subprime mortgages, current vulnerabilities include highly leveraged corporations, fragile banking institutions, shadow banking systems, and risks emerging from commercial real estate markets.

"In an interconnected world, the shockwaves of a crisis anywhere can become the reality of everyone."

The crisis also transformed the relationship between governments and financial institutions. In 2008, governments intervened with massive bailouts because some banks were considered "too big to fail." This created a debate that continues today: should governments rescue financial institutions to prevent economic collapse, or does doing so encourage reckless behavior by protecting institutions from the consequences of their own decisions?

The legacy of 2008 can also be seen in today's rising public distrust toward financial institutions and economic inequality. Many ordinary citizens lost homes, jobs, and savings, while large financial institutions received government support. This contributed to political dissatisfaction, increased skepticism toward globalization,

and demands for stronger economic accountability.

Furthermore, the crisis changed how central banks operate. The Federal Reserve and other major central banks now play a much larger role in managing economic shocks through interest-rate policies, liquidity support, and emergency interventions. However, the same low-interest-rate policies that helped economies recover after 2008 also contributed to new challenges, including asset price inflation and concerns about financial bubbles.

The lessons of 2008 cannot be understood only through the collapse of banks and financial markets. They represent a larger reality of the modern world: no crisis remains isolated anymore. The COVID-19 pandemic brought the world to a standstill, disrupting human connections, global mobility, and economic activity. The Russia–Ukraine war exposed Europe’s dependence on external energy supplies and reshaped the global energy landscape. The instability surrounding the Strait of Hormuz has once again demonstrated how a single geopolitical flashpoint can send shockwaves through global oil and gas markets. Whether it emerges from a pandemic, a battlefield, an energy corridor, or a financial institution, a crisis in today’s world does not respect borders.

History has repeatedly shown that periods of stability can create a dangerous sense of confidence. Beneath the surface, new vulnerabilities continue to develop through debt, geopolitical rivalry, economic dependence, and financial complexity. The next global disruption may not arrive in the form we expect, but one certainty remains: in an interconnected world, the shockwaves of a crisis anywhere can become the reality of everyone.

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From September Promises to Present Crisis: Understanding the Failure of Camp David and Oslo



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Abstract: The Camp David Accords and Oslo Declaration created historic diplomatic openings, but neither resolved the deeper disputes surrounding territory, sovereignty, security and national identity. Their limitations remain visible in the continuing Gaza crisis, instability in the West Bank and weakening prospects for a two-state solution. Sustainable peace requires addressing unresolved political realities, not agreements alone.

In the history of Middle Eastern diplomacy, September has repeatedly marked as crucial turning point. On 17 September 1978, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed the Camp David Accords under the mediation of U.S. President Jimmy Carter.¹ Fifteen years from this event, on 13 September 1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat signed the Oslo Declaration of Principles, creating the first official recognition between Israel and the Palestinian leadership. Though both agreements created international optimism, decades later, the region remains defined by unresolved questions of territory, sovereignty, security, and national identity. The ongoing Gaza crisis, instability in the West Bank, and the weakening prospects of a two-state solution demonstrate the limitations of these earlier peace frameworks.²

The Camp David Accords emerged from decades of conflict between Egypt and Israel. Following the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel occupied the Sinai Peninsula, which became the central territorial dispute between the two countries. From a realist international relations perspective, Camp David succeeded because both states had clear strategic interests. Egypt regained occupied territory and strengthened its international position, while Israel achieved security by removing the threat of war with its largest Arab neighbor.³ The agreement therefore solved one dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict but left the Palestinian question unresolved.

The Oslo Accords attempted to address this unresolved issue. Signed in 1993, Oslo represented the first direct political agreement between Israel and the PLO. Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, while the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist. However, Oslo was designed as an interim arrangement. It postponed the most difficult issues, including final borders, Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, Palestinian refugees, and sovereignty. The agreement created a process for negotiations but did not define the final political outcome.⁴

“Recognition between governments can open the way for peace, but it cannot by itself resolve deeper disputes over territory, sovereignty and national identity.”

Both agreements focused more on reducing immediate confrontation than resolving the deeper causes of conflict. Camp David managed the Egypt-Israel conflict, while Oslo created limited political cooperation between Israel

and the PLO. However, neither agreement fully addressed questions of sovereignty, identity, and territorial rights.

The central challenge of Israeli Palestinian conflict has been territory. Oslo postponed decisions on borders, Jerusalem, settlements, and refugees. The expansion of Israeli settlements and changing realities in the West Bank have repeatedly raised concerns about the viability of a two-state solution. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 emphasized that settlements in occupied Palestinian territory constitute a major obstacle to peace.⁵

Another challenge was the unequal position of the negotiating parties. Israel participated as an established state with international recognition, while Palestinians entered negotiations without full sovereignty. The Oslo framework created Palestinian administrative institutions but did not establish an independent Palestinian state.

Peace agreements also faced opposition within both societies. The Oslo process suffered from growing mistrust and violence, including the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. Among Palestinians, opposition emerged from groups that viewed Oslo as insufficient because it did not guarantee independence and statehood.⁶ The history of Camp David and Oslo offers a significant message about the limits of peace agreements. Recognition between governments can open the way for peace, but it cannot by itself resolve deeper disputes over territory, sovereignty, and national identity.

The current Middle Eastern crisis demonstrates the consequences of unresolved issues from the Oslo period. The Gaza war after October 2023 represents the most serious breakdown of Israeli Palestinian relations in decades. The conflict has produced massive humanitarian consequences, destroyed infrastructure, and further reduced trust between Israelis and Palestinians. Even after ceasefire efforts, Gaza continues to face questions regarding governance, reconstruction, security, and political authority.⁷

One of the most difficult questions today is who will govern Gaza after the conflict. Israel has argued that Hamas cannot remain a governing and military force, while Palestinians and regional actors have raised concerns about replacing one form of political uncertainty with another. Without a legitimate political framework, reconstruction alone cannot create long-term stability. Recent UN assessments have warned that rising violence and territorial fragmentation threaten the possibility of establishing a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.⁸

Beyond Palestine, the contemporary regional order is shaped by Iran-Israel rivalry, proxy conflicts involving actors in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, and the growing role of non-state actors in regional politics. These developments show a shift from traditional state-to-state conflicts toward a more complex security environment where local conflicts are connected to broader geopolitical competition.⁹

“A durable resolution requires confronting the underlying political realities surrounding sovereignty, security, equality, and competing national identities.”

At the same time, Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar have adopted more independent foreign policies by balancing relations with global and regional powers. While normalization agreements such as the Abraham Accords changed diplomatic relations between Israel and several Arab states, they did not resolve the Palestinian issue, which remains a major source of regional tension.¹⁰ Conflicts in Syria and Yemen, along with instability affecting Red Sea security and global trade routes, further demonstrate that Middle Eastern instability is no longer driven by a single conflict but by interconnected challenges involving weak states, regional rivalries, and competing security interests.¹¹ Five decades of Middle Eastern diplomacy demonstrate that agreements between political leaders alone are insufficient to create sustainable peace. A durable resolution requires confronting the underlying political realities surrounding sovereignty, security, equality, and competing national identities.

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