SOUTH ASIA

COUNTRY ANALYSES

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GASAM
GÜNEY ASYA STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
2004

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SOUTH ASIA STRATEGIC RESEARCH CENTER

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FOREWORD

South Asia Strategic Research Center (GASAM) was founded in 2004 to provide accurate and objective information about the historical, political, economic, and sociocultural structures of the South Asian region, composed of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, as well as about strategic and geopolitical dynamics of the region.

GASAM aims to inform the Turkish public about South Asian countries and, in return, inform the South Asian public about Türkiye. It also aims to procure mutual benefits for them in the historical, economic, academic, and sociocultural domains, and this way to contribute to regional and global peace.

"South Asia Country Analyses" provides an overview of the region to improve the understanding of South Asian countries in Türkiye. This study aims to become a source of fundamental information about South Asia that will hopefully contribute to improving bilateral relations between Türkiye and the region's countries. It also seeks to explore South Asia's geographical,

historical, political, and economic potential and raise general awareness regarding the significance of this region.

The study is divided into two parts. The initial section is an introductory chapter discussing the general characteristics of South Asia. The second part provides separate analyses of eight South Asian countries. A different author wrote each chapter in this work. The book is prepared in two languages, Turkish and English, and the texts deliberately avoid complex academic jargon, offering analyses instead in a direct and succinct style.

One of the most significant attributes of this book is that it is an objective and collective work. It is also a pioneering study in that there is no such study with this scope either in Türkiye or in the region's countries. From this perspective, it is hoped that readers in Türkiye and South Asian countries will find this book, sponsored by GASAM, an invaluable compendium of fundamental information about South Asia.

We would like to convey our gratitude to every person and institution who supported the realization of our project. We hope that this work will contribute to the social, political, scientific, cultural, and economic activities between Türkiye and South Asian countries.

Cemal Demir
GASAM President

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POLITICS OF SOUTH ASIA

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Introduction

South Asia is one of the world's most complex and dynamic regions. Ranging from Afghanistan in the north to Sri Lanka in the south, the region is home to distinctive political sub-trends, persistent military conflicts, and rapidly changing societies. Making sense of South Asia requires a combination of strong analytical and interpretive skills as well as factual information. This necessitates that, rather than conducting broad yet superficial research on each country, one should have a critical perspective on the region's standard development and progress narratives. Thus, this study aims to embrace the complexities and contradictions of South Asia by thoroughly connecting them to the current debates on today's most important political matters. In comprehending and framing the region's

politics, this study takes comparative politics as the primary analytical framework and uses as sources a series of contemporary materials, including recently published works in political science, economics, social anthropology, and journalism, as well as films and documentaries.

South Asia is the southern region of Asia defined in geographical and ethnocultural terms. It consists of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka- the constituent countries in the modern sense. Topographically, the region is mainly located on Indian Plateau and isolated from mountainous barriers from the rest of Asia. In the south, the Indian Ocean is located. However, South Asia's borders are unclear regarding geographic extent as the regional countries' systemic and foreign political orientations are highly asymmetrical. Therefore, they might change depending on how the region is politically and socio-culturally defined. From this standpoint, it is agreed upon that South Asia is generally a part of the area framed by the Himalayas, Karakoram, and the Pamir Mountains in the north, Arakan in the east and northwestern border of the Amu Darya arising in the north of Hindi Kush. Confined by the Arabian Sea in the southwest and Bengal Gulf in the southeast, and reaching towards the Indian Ocean in the south, South Asia is a peninsula resembling the shape of a diamond and overland geopolitically bordered by West Asia, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia (Cohen, 2003; 304-305.)

The geographical borders of today's South Asian region and their extent are often discussed based on the administrative structures that are remnants of the British colonial period. It can be highly controversial which countries are to be included in South Asia apart from the core areas such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, namely, the centers of British colonialism. Mountainous countries such as Nepal and Bhutan and island countries Sri Lanka and Maldives are commonly included in South Asia despite not being former parts of the British administration. However, some consider Afghanistan, which was under British control until 1919, as part of Central Asia, West Asia, or the Middle East. On the other hand, Myanmar (formerly Burma), despite being ruled as part of the British administration between 1886-1937, is now regarded largely as part of Southeast Asia. Still, although Britain had colonized Aden Colony and Singapore during different periods, they were never included in South Asia (Mann, 2014; 13-15).

South Asia is a distinct geopolitical region that is geographically diverse and separated from other geostrategic areas in its proximity, such as Southeast Asia. The region hosts various geographical attributes typical to larger continents, such as glaciers, rainforests, valleys, deserts, and plains. Surrounded by the three water masses, the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean, and Arabian Sea, water streams within the region have a critical importance in light of ongoing water conflicts. In addition to the water conflicts, the region also hosts Gwadar and Hambantota ports that are critical in the geopolitics of the Oceans in the recent period (Chung, 2017; 315-320). The climate of this large region significantly varies depending on the area, from tropical monsoon in the south to mild climate in the north. This diversity is influenced by altitude and factors such as proximity to the coast and the seasonal effect of monsoons. South Asia is also significant in current climate change debates and constitutes one of the critical regions of green politics, especially based on a series of issues such as rising sea levels and changes in temperature and precipitation regimes (Ahmed and Suphachalasai, 2014).

Considering South Asia from a sociological aspect, diversity is yet again striking in terms of race, language, and beliefs. While the region makes up the world's most populous region with approximately two billion residents, its social diversity has paved the way for social applications varying subregionally in terms of many linguistic, ethnic, and religious groups. Thus, while the region hosts 98% of Hindus, 90% of Sikhs, and 30% of Muslims worldwide, there are about 35 million Christians and 25 million Buddhist residents (10 Countries With, 2015).

The linguistic geography of the region also depends mainly on this religious geography and is shaped by these borders. However, the written texts are divided more visibly based on beliefs. For instance, while Muslim countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan use Arabic and Persian alphabets, different ones, such as Devanagari alphabet used especially in India and by more than 120 South Asian languages such as Hindi, Marathi, Nepali, Pali, Konkani, Bodo, and Sindhi, are also in circulation. It is therefore safe to contend that South Asia, where according to linguists and literary scholars, more than 7000 spoken and living languages exist, is one of the most linguistically diverse regions of the world (Daniels and Bright, 1996; 395).

Such geographical and sociological variety and diversity have also influenced South Asia's politics, institutions, economy, and daily domestic and foreign policies. Therefore, federal governments in the region resorted at times to military or authoritarian practices to control the present sociological reality. While democratization gained pace in certain periods, undemocratic acts and governments have come to power as well. Foreign political reflections of these different waves then paved the way for different actions leading to cooperation or conflict. However, South Asia has never been a region where only domestic conditions and dynamics prevail; on the contrary, regional politics has always been under the maximum influence of its surroundings. Thus, this study aims to analyze not only the colonial legacy and its repercussions on today's South Asia but also the influence of China and actors of the Western world on the region.

Colonial Past, Nationalism, and Independence

South Asia, formerly defined as the Indian Subcontinent, was mainly identified as "India" during the colonial period when Britain ruled 94% of the region. With the emergence of the anti-colonial nationalist wave in India and as the anti-colonial wave veered more towards internal differences, independence aspirations could only be realized through partitions. The emergence of the Hindu majority on the one hand and Muslim Pakistan on the other, and subsequent breakups require analyzing especially institutional outcomes related to the colonial legacy more thoroughly to make sense of regional politics (Kudaisya and Yong, 2010; 45). Indeed, none of the modern South Asian countries existed prior to the colonial period. Except for Nepal partially, the political unity in each South Asian country is a British legacy. While the role of these institutions and political patterns inherited from British rule in the region's development is implied by scholars, they are also regarded as the source of ongoing disturbances in the region today. While the Western world believes that some socio-political institutions that were forcibly adopted in the colonial past ended the conflicts in the region, they disregard that these institutions, alien to regional values, were the cause of many conflicts that impeded regional awareness and integration (Barlas, 1995; 50). From this aspect, it is necessary to underline several institutional

colonial legacies that have created insecurity between states and always sabotaged regional integration.

Cartography, regarded as the fruit of colonial legacy, at this point, emerges as one of the main instruments of the colonizers. After all, cartography laid the ground for the phenomenon of the 'disputed border' and conceptions of nation-state and sovereignty. According to Kalpagam, measurement and mapping were the first instruments of a colonial project (Kalpagam, 1995) and corresponded to the roots of the plans colonizers needed to make for extracting economic and political benefits from the colonies. They controlled the region more firmly with cartography and measurement and later managed to increase profit generation. Undoubtedly, the important point here was that the color of the maps, representation of embossing features, and symbols were supposed not only to provide geographic information but also demonstrate the cultural superiority of the Europeans. In conclusion, cartography was used as an instrument by the colonizing powers to justify their expansionist policies and defend their dominance (Raj, 2017; 54-58).

The most crucial outcome of cartography was borders. The borders drawn by the British between countries of South Asia and beyond constitute the root cause of rising intra-regional and inter-regional conflict-prone dispositions and border disputes even today. While India and Pakistan confronted each other on the battlefield over border and land disputes, mainly in the Kashmir region, the same situation also occurred between China and Nepal. As Mishra proposed, the colonizers knowingly disregarded the region's socio-cultural, linguistic, and religious complexities, created artificial borders, and thus separated the local communities, and followed a divide-and-rule policy (Mishra, 2016; 5-26). Within this framework, while the primary function of the Radcliffe Commission employed in 1947 to resolve India's border disputes between East and West Pakistan was to divide Muslim and Hindu populations into two, the border tensions also have the capacity to primarily destabilize politics among the countries as illustrated in China's objection to the borders known as McMahon Line drawn by Shimla Accord between China, Tibet, and British India in 1914 (Mishra, 2016; 5-26).

The sovereignty framework, which proposes protecting and claiming the borders in possession, is strengthened with the logic of nationalism

and nation-state logic blossoming along this line. While one of the two prevailing nationalism models that developed during the colonial era was the European model based on ethnic origin, identity, language, religion, and cultural homogeneity, the other was an authentic indigenous model addressing the historical and cultural premises widespread and deeply rooted in the region, and shaped as a common front against colonialism. However, the British encouraged the European model to divide the anti-colonial movement, and the nation-building processes in the region have entirely evolved as a result of the imposition of Western values and abandonment of traditional values. Thus, many ethnic structures in the region could not be put into a coherent form, and a common identity could not be built. Traditional identities were subject to assimilation efforts, and sometimes coercive measures, including ethnic cleansing and genocide, were implemented. The intelligentsia and ruling elite interpreted nationhood as a structure that must entail a unique and distinctive culture, and therefore they perceived different identities as a threat to society because of the common understanding that nations cannot have common cultures (Mattli, 2000; 155).

A state-building process followed accordingly to continuously reproduce the nationhood constructed by the aforementioned nationalism understanding. The bureaucratic structure ruling the state behaved in a way to take the position of the most prominent inheritors of the post-colonial system. Accordingly, the bureaucratic elite educated in colonial schooling became actors equipped with proper rules and norms and embraced necessary behavior patterns. A significant lack of contact emerged between the officials who entered the bureaucratic class and the ordinary people who typically would be public officials (Tejani, 2014; 25). The weak position of political institutions against the overgrown bureaucratic structure resulted in limited political participation and even caused military dominance or the establishment of military governments in many countries. The military and bureaucracy were able to marginalize politics and complete the development of a military-bureaucratic oligarchic structure in several South Asian countries by suppressing emerging social and freedom movements. Therefore, it can be proposed that the colonial legacy in the South Asian case became an underlying reason for 1) the lack of trust among states, 2) the presence of a strong military and substantial investment in defense, 3)

the instability of political regimes of the states, 4) strong bureaucracy (Jabeen and Jadoon, 2013; 460).

Political Change: Government, Party, and Administration (Systems)

While colonial legacy influenced every founding value, norm, and behavior, political transformations directed at the changing values of the communities in the region were realized through, at times, institutional change or, at other times, grassroots social change. Again, it can be proposed that the level of modernization and democratization in the context of political developments of all the countries in the region determined the course of political change either positively or negatively. While processes of political change were positively encouraged by institutions, parties, elections, and ideas in some cases, in other cases, they were negatively impacted by wars, coups, civil conflicts, political crises, and social mobilization. Thus, change took the form of a response to coercion and pressures from domestic or external conditions and somehow contributed to continuities in countries (Chiriyankandath, 2015; 30-45).

Similar to other parts of the world, South Asian countries, with their massive demographic potential, experienced the problem of controlling mobilized masses- the biggest challenge of the twentieth century. The logic of institutions developed as a solution to this challenge was also in effect in these countries, and they underwent particular founding constitutional processes after the colonial period. In Pakistan, for instance, the process was led by regulations such as "Objectives Resolution," also cited as the country's Magna Carta. In India, constitutional texts were prepared under the leadership of influential intellectuals educated in the West, such as Ambedkar. Incidentally, while in the case of India, the framework of the country's main founding values was drawn as "Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic," in Indian-influenced Bangladesh, the main principles were framed properly to domestic conditions as "Nationalism, Secularism, Socialism and Democracy" (Krishnaswamy, 2009; 15-45).

Founding constitutions that laid the foundations of the system in the

countries were also subject to change. This situation was necessitated either by changing social values or the changing nature of country politics. For example, Pakistan wanted to reestablish parliamentary democracy after the coup d'état by the 1974 constitutional change. A similar situation could be observed in Bangladesh, where in 1978, the position of prime minister was created as executive power in the face of new political conditions following the coup, and the constitution was also subject to change for the sake of a socio-economic revival program. Similarly, Sri Lanka opted for a new constitution in 1978 to respond to the Tamil sensibilities, and the 2015 Constitution in Nepal sought to crown the new democratization process with a new constitution after the autocratic period (Jain, 2018). Surely, one must remember that South Asian countries continue to discuss their constitutional change processes as part of the changing socio-political conditions also today. For instance, in India, the need for a new electoral system prescribing holding all elections in the country at the same time has been debated as a result of the arguments that the intensity of the current election campaigns that continue every season weakens the dynamism of politics, especially in foreign affairs. From this perspective, it is argued that a constitutional change will solve the current problem (Tan and Hogue, 2021).

South Asian countries' motivation to open their parliaments immediately after their independence is considered significant regarding their democratization capacity. The fact that even Afghanistan, a country viewed as relatively weak in state capacity, has a parliament suggests that the region is considerably inclined to political progress if the conflictual geopolitical conditions were not present. In addition to the parliament, the presence of political parties, which is regarded as a prerequisite for democracy, in the countries of the region has been crucial in terms of both predictability in politics and having the ability to control the masses in line with certain objectives (Ahmed, 2020; 9). In this respect, India has the leading role beyond doubt as it harbors the most prominent political parties of the world, the Indian National Congress, and Indian Peoples' Party, and other more than a thousand parties. Similarly, despite the strong presence and influence of the military, the political parties in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka continue to be crucial components of politics with their solid social bases, organization, and ideologies. Especially in Nepal, where a new democratization wave oc-

curred in the 2010s, it is manifested that the powerful elements of the pre-democratic period have weakened as even the political crises have been related to political parties (Ahmed, 2020; 86-112).

The fact that elections are held consistently and periodically indicates that democracy has been institutionalized significantly in South Asian countries, which already have certain parliamentary capacities and powerful political parties (Mendis, 2007; 15-50). Despite having severe undemocratic limitations, India, claiming to be the world's largest liberal democracy, has the leading role in the region as elections are held regularly in the country. India also managed to organize elections on many levels, from local to general, and never experienced a military coup. India has also been able to reverse authoritarian tendencies as elections were held even after state-of-emergency periods regarded as undemocratic, such as the one declared during Indira Gandhi era (June, 1975-March, 1977). Notwithstanding clouds of suspicion over elections in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal due to the military or autocratic rule, elections still allowed political parties to maintain their political life by challenging established power structures especially after the new democratization wave emerged in the 2010s. The cases of Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif rising to power, and the 2018 elections in Bangladesh, which resulted in large scale violence, illustrate this well. Even though the leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party was in jail in the latter example, the party insisted on taking part in the elections despite the strong presence and reelection of the Awami League, headed by Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh Election, 2018)

One of the other factors encouraging political change as an informal institution both regionally and on a country basis in South Asia is 'ideas'. In the broadest sense, ideas that mobilize masses in line with certain mass interests emerged in nationalist, religious, leftist, and regionalist planes. For instance, the deep-rooted leftist tradition in the region paved the way for identifying country names as "Democratic Socialist Republic," as in Sri Lanka. In India, socialist characteristics of the country found room in the articles of its constitution. The Indian Left, having been able to bring into existence primarily the Indian National Congress and Communist Party of India and many other political parties, accounts for a crucial variable that has created leftist policies and enabled leftist ideas to remain in power for long years both in domestic and foreign

policy areas (Basu, 2005). Similarly, while it is possible to propose that the Pakistan Peoples Party, known as the "Party of the Bhuttos," represents the leftist tradition in the country, Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) has been one of the prominent actors in Nepali politics and has been able to come to power (Sunderason and Hoek, 2021; 161-213).

In addition to leftist tradition, another ideology that has attracted the crowds is nationalism. Nationalism has come in various forms in the region. At times it emerged as ethnic or religious nationalism; other times, it emerged in the form of territorial or linguistic nationalism. However, the oldest version of nationalism in the region is linguistic nationalism. The primary motivation that encouraged 'East Pakistan' to separate from Pakistan and become 'Bangladesh' in 1971 civil war was related to the Bengali language's struggle against Urdu (Van Schendel, 2009; 289). The main criteria for dividing India into states during the Nehru period were linguistic differences, and language still is one of the essential components of rising regional nationalism in the south, such as in the states of Tamil Nadu or Kerala. While the first case to come to mind in terms of ethnic nationalism could be Sri Lanka, where the tension between Sinhalese people and Tamils erupted into a major civil conflict; other examples could be Pashtun nationalism, the most significant motivation source for Taliban and Baloch nationalism that has been troubling Pakistan recently (Brass and Vanaik, 2002).

Religious nationalism has recently been central to the South Asian agenda and has been very determinant in regional politics. The most recent example is Hindu nationalism (Hindutva), which has ascended and found itself a place in the center of politics in Indian politics. With its roots extending to the 1900s, Hindutva gradually changed the sociological structure of the country, and this transformation played a considerable role in the Hindu nationalist Indian Peoples' Party's consolidation of its power (Narayan, 2021; 30-50). Movements like Mabatha, inspired by the Hindutva agenda to marginalize Muslims, and inciting Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, also correspond to different models of rising religious nationalism in the region (DeVotta, 2007). Apart from these examples, Islamic ideas that are influential upon the populations, primarily in Pakistan and Bangladesh, have significantly influenced the region's politics. Moreover, as demonstrated in the 1977 elections in Pakistan, Islamic ideas promoted by the leadership

of Mawlana Mawdudi could profoundly affect the crowds and give way to a particular political transformation for that period (Nasr, 1996; 3-9). Similarly, in Bangladesh, movements such as Jamaat-e Islami could play a critical role in the course of politics either on the side of the incumbents or in opposition (Kabir, 2006).

War as a factor to essentially trigger political change has directly impacted South Asian politics, especially in state- and nation-building processes. This impact can be observed in the conflicts from which Bangladesh emerged, the Pakistan-India war over Kashmir, foreign interventions such as the US invasion of Afghanistan, or fighting against an external power such as India's war against China in 1962 (Das Gupta and Lüthi, 2016; 15-20). Although these wars damaged state capacity in the short term, they had a critical role in state- and nation-building. It can be argued that border tensions have a similar effect as wars today. While India's border tensions with China, Pakistan, and Nepal strengthen the threat perception internally, it also has the potential to close the ranks further against external threats. Again, Pakistan's border tensions with Afghanistan and Iran, apart from India, have enabled the persistence of crisis and security agenda in the country as well as further domination of politics by the military (Chester, 2017; 25-50).

Designing politics suitably for both the external environment and internal change may be organized in many South Asian countries through military coups. While Pakistan undoubtedly holds the most extensive record at this point, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka also have unenviable records in terms of military dominance over politics. Especially in Pakistan, the coup attempts in 1951, 1980, and 1995 failed, and 1958, 1977, and 1999 coup attempts succeeded (Dossani, 2005; 46-50). But, again, it can be proposed that, instead of traditional coups, new coup types that can be defined as operating without bloodshed have been witnessed, especially in the latest years, as in the toppling of the Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan governments. Surely, it would be a mistake to approach the coup processes in South Asian politics only by focusing on the military. Indeed, primarily in India and Pakistan, a record of judicial bodies meddling in government practices exists. Moreover, judicial organs could interfere in government practices and potentially get involved in the resolution of crucial matters in national politics. Arguments over tutelage in such institutions are pretty popular in terms of adequately controlling institutions for their own agenda (Husain, 2020; 45-50).

The civil conflicts in the region that encourage actions against domestic disturbances and redefine internal dynamics are illustrative of a significant conflict experience model. From this aspect, the civil war in Sri Lanka is regarded by social scientists as one of the most crucial conflict models in terms of both the conflict process and post-conflict reconstruction. The ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamil parties provided a better understanding of conflict psychology and reidentified the island's current political balance (Raghavan, 2015). Similarly, Afghanistan, especially after the US invasion, makes up a case for the richest analyses of post-conflict reconstruction processes in the literature. However, conflicts of interest in the name of groups or factions mostly resulted in political crises and dealt a major blow to democracy and status quo powers. At this point, while the best example is the 2018 Constitutional Crisis in Sri Lanka, the Nepalese royal massacre in 2001, and the internal interest divisions in the incumbent Nepal Communist Party in 2020 can be other proper examples (Jha, 2021).

Lastly, in South Asia -a haven for social movements- the realization of political change via grassroots mobilization has been a major form of action for civil society already entertaining a vast repertoire. In almost all countries of the region, masses from all segments of society, ranging from peasant movements to workers' movements and from women's movements to youth movements, have been able to develop a shared repertoire- protest formats such as the road blockading or long marches peculiar to South Asia (Ray and Katzenstein, 2005). It is still etched in the memories that the farmers arriving from Punjab and Hyderabad organized long-lasting farmer protests in India's capital as the agricultural crisis unfolded in 2021. Similarly, the protests of migrant workers during the pandemic, the demonstrations of Shaheen Bagh women during the rise of violent campaigns against Muslims, and protests of the Jawaharlal Nehru University students can be cited as other examples (Salam, 2020; 30-40). Again, many exemplary events demonstrating the power of social movements as a factor expediting change in the region can be given, such as the People's Peace Movement of the Afghans in the rural areas against the rising internal violence in Afghanistan, the protests of Pashtuns and the Baloch with grievances about inequality and recently, the middle-class protests in Sri Lanka that laid the ground for the demise of Rajapaksa government (Sri Lanka's Main, 2022).

National Unity, Ethnic Conflicts, and Pluralism

Diversity, as one of the most prominent characteristics of South Asian countries, combined with the colonial legacy, reveals a great need to ensure national unity as the region's biggest challenge at the moment. In this respect, for societies whose trust in the state has decreased, mainly due to the health, economic and humanitarian crises that have risen after the pandemic, a new agenda of reassuring trust both among themselves and in their relations with the state emerges as an urgent need. It is argued that the social capital in the region's countries decreased even more when this domestic insecurity environment was supported by "Great Powers" with strong interests in the region (Inoguchi and Hotta, 2022). Thus, on the one hand, policies that will increase social capital and a sense of shared identity are brought to the agenda in response to processes such as polarization within societies. On the other hand, there are arguments regarding the need for appropriate public policies that would regenerate societies' trust in the state and the institution of politics.

Considering India- the region's center of gravity- it is apparent that it has consistently promoted the idea of unity and coexistence among diversities since independence, both with leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru and with the liberal nationalist or developmental state policies that focus on ending inequality. While it can be proposed that these policies, with their focus on keeping the society together based on "The Idea of India," have achieved a high capacity in acquiring a strong social capital through the construction of a shared identity (Khilnani, 1007; 1-15), it has been argued that this capacity has been impeded especially in recent years. It has been stated that the targeting of Muslims, the second largest majority of the country, as the new founding 'other' by the Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) agenda and policies, followed under the leadership of the ruling party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its leader Narendra Modi, induced in Muslim citizens of India a loss of their trust to the state and a feeling that they are seen as second-class citizens (Narayan, 2021, 30-50). Aiming to create a stronger Hindu vote base with its Hindutva agenda, BJP has drawn the reaction of many social segments beyond Muslims, especially Dalits, farmers, and migrant workers, due to the pursued neo-liberal policies and its exclusionary

identity agenda. In the last instance, it has been agreed upon that India's idea of unity is not working as before. For example, it is even accounted that the Dravidian population, which constitutes the majority in the south against the northern, Aryan-originated part of the country, gradually has lost faith in the idea of India and may one day put the separation on the agenda through regional politics (Fishman and Garcia, 2010; 230).

It is possible to provide more examples for India in terms of domestic political disturbances and foreign interventions that will accelerate the disintegration within the country. Pakistan also makes a similar case. Public opinion in Pakistan has embraced the army as the most trusted institution in the country for a long time. However, as demonstrated by the voting behavior, especially in the latest elections, this situation has shifted towards an increasing reaction against the military, and popular confidence in the military has decreased. It has been pointed out that the voters do not accept the army's intervention in politics, and trust in the political parties and politicians that came to power through military intervention has also gone down (Most Pakistanis, 2021). Indeed, the recent Punjab elections and the distribution of seats witnessed a significant voter support loss for the party of the Sharif family, which has the most established voter base in the state (Pakistan: Former, 2022). On the other hand, it has been pointed out that the Pashtun and Baluch regions' objections and loss of confidence towards the Pakistani state and politics have deteriorated due to their underdevelopment vis-à-vis Punjab- the political center of the country. Undoubtedly, it is a critical need for Pakistan to develop a policy towards the present negative perception for the sake of its unity, even when acknowledging the impact of foreign interventions, such as the Chinese investment in these regions, and the claims of negative intervention by countries such as the US and India (Shah, 2019; 4-6).

Afghanistan is another South Asian country with major obstacles to ensuring social cohesion. In fact, the country's sociological structure was considered as being divided for a long time between people of Turkic origin, such as Uzbek and Tajik in the north and Pashtuns in the south. The elections were also taken as a reflection of this division. Indeed, in the last elections held before the Taliban took over the government in Kabul, the results revealed that Abdullah Abdullah received the support

of the Turkic population, while Ashraf Ghani received the support of the Pashtun vote base (Ünlü, 2020). As a matter of fact, the most significant criticism of the Taliban, along with allegations of following a Pashtun nationalist agenda, was that it pursued an exclusionary policy for Afghanistan rather than an inclusive agenda. In effect, in the post-2021 period, when the Taliban overthrew the Ghani government and controlled Kabul, the most considerable criticism of the Taliban was that they could not put forward an inclusive administration. The Taliban at the time had already gained control of the areas that could cause security problems for itself. Even though the Taliban subsequently stated that it would execute a governmental opening for certain groups, such as Hazaras, the lack of an inclusive administration is still a trending topic in discussions. In addition, it has also been pointed out that the Taliban failed to obtain the legitimacy through which it could gather popular support in reconstructing a strong nation and society as well as a strong state. This failure is considered the top priority in the prospects of Afghanistan (Sajid, 2021).

Sri Lanka can be the last case to discuss South Asian countries' abilities to achieve domestic unity. As a country that has already experienced a period of violent internal conflict, Sri Lanka corresponds to an incident in which the psychological impact of the memory of the conflict period has not entirely disappeared, especially on minorities (Rotberg, 2010; 7-12). The Tamils, who entered into a major conflict against the Sinhala ethnic group during the civil war, have a perception that violence can still rise in case of the slightest crisis, and their leaders and ordinary members project this perception to the public. In fact, it has been observed that not only the Tamils but also Muslims and Christians, who correspond to other minorities on the island, similarly experienced the same fear in the Easter bombings that occurred on the island in the recent past. Both the policies of the Sinhala nationalist government and the threat of the Buddhist nationalist Mabatha movement can create an atmosphere that prevents minorities from living in peace (Kyaw, 2014; 2). On the other hand, following the pandemic and the last wave of protests that shook the Rajapaksa family's power, daily life has been clearly disrupted due to rising inflation, food security, and energy shortage problems. Thus, the middle class in Sri Lanka experienced incredible disappointment, and the crisis of confidence in state-society relations continued. It has been

pointed out that if the newly incumbent administration cannot solve the ongoing daily problems, especially the economy, it will encounter state default followed by a social default (Sri Lanka's Political, 2022).

Political Economy

Considering the economic debates in South Asia, the regional economy is generally analyzed through the economic trends affecting the whole region. The periods before and after economic liberalization can be clearly distinguished as two different trends. Besides, a new era has arguably emerged in which the economic liberalization and integration policies increasing with globalization first revealed the West as an economic power in the region, and then the rise of China and the Belt-Road project affected the regional economy. While the impact of the new Great Power competition between the West, primarily the US, and China unfolds, the COVID-19 pandemic and the following geopolitical changes, such as the Ukrainian Crisis, have influenced South Asia as much as the global economy. While South Asian countries are currently dealing with an intense economic crisis and experiencing a major state capacity problem, some countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka are in a major debt crisis related to the balance of payments and are in search of economic support and assistance through international actors for recovery.

Considering South Asian economies prior to the globalization and economic liberalization processes, it can be said that they generally have a traditional economy. However, those countries concluding their state-building processes successfully have transitioned from a traditional economy to a state-centered planned economy. While economies such as India and Bangladesh have followed an economic policy based on planning, production, and development with a general socialist economic style envisaging the nationalization of all sectors if possible, countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, and Afghanistan have tried to revive their economies rapidly with again certain state-centered planning schemes (Khan, 2015; 35-65). In this period, South Asian countries, which generally had an agriculture-centered economic structure, primarily attempted to increase production through modernization in agriculture and develop other sectors, where possible. Especially with the

Green Revolution that was effective in the region in the 1960s and the industrial development wave in the 1970s, some countries could have advanced the key sectors of their economies (Farmer, 1985; 205). However, countries such as Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, the former having experienced Soviet occupation and the latter internal conflict, naturally lost their limited infrastructure, could not proceed with their usual economic activities, and faced severe economic difficulties.

South Asian countries also started to be involved in the global economic integration process, especially with the globalization and economic liberalization wave that emerged after the Cold War. Thus, they attempted to ignite their growth processes with the international investments they tried to attract. While the timing of initiating economic liberalization naturally differed for each country, the level of success similarly varied. For example, some countries increased the pace of economic policies aimed at encouraging private enterprise and investment, privatizing the public sectors, improving budgetary discipline, and liberalizing the import regime in the 1990s and others in the 2000s. Although some countries attempted to gain economic momentum through the support they received from the structural adjustment packages of the IMF, many were unsuccessful in economic reforms. Furthermore, many of them, ranging from India to Pakistan, faced a balance of payments crisis that remains in the economic memory (Murshed, 2004; 318-319).

The rise of China arguably corresponded to a two-phased process for South Asian countries. First of all, China's model of becoming the production center has been an actual example for countries with a large workforce, especially India. Thus, like China, many countries have followed policies to attract large global companies. At this point, it is noteworthy that the neo-liberal model drawn by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has become an important symbol. Modi, formerly the Prime Minister of the country's Gujarat state, implemented neo-liberal policies known as the "Gujarat Model" in his own state. By making a big difference in the country compared to other states at that time, he became a rising leader in the country and brought his party to power by projecting this popularity in the country's politics. Claiming that he would extend the Gujarati Model to the whole country, Modi was able to bring a certain economic growth to his country in his first term after 2014. However, after the global economic crisis that emerged in 2019,

when the sustainability of economic growth could not be achieved, he put Hindu nationalism at the center of politics (Jaffrelot, 2016; 828-835).

Another aspect of China's rise reflected in the region is that the most important pillar of China's global vision includes South Asia. Thus, China has increased the economic investment agenda for all countries in the region, especially Pakistan. First, China puts Pakistan at the center of the Belt-Road Initiative within the framework of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Also, in its Pakistan policy, China has created ample space for investment in Pakistan, especially in the Balochistan region (Lu, 2015, 777-780). Putting the economic investment agenda into action for Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, besides Pakistan, China's policies from a geopolitical point of view considerably disturbed India and the Western world, particularly the US. Thus, a controversy regarding China's foreign policy began, on the one hand, in terms of whether China's support to the development of countries in this region is a debt trap. For example, Chinese regional policies such as long-term mortgages on the ports owned by Sri Lanka were proposed as evidence of debt trap Chinese policy supposedly involves. Moreover, under the influence of Chinese policy, Nepal's joining in Pakistan to reinitiate the tension in the border policy with India has been viewed as favoring Beijing (Knowler, 2014).

The process that reversed the economic growth momentum in the South Asian region was the inflation, energy, and food crises that followed the pandemic and, later, the Ukrainian Crisis. Many countries in the region initially experienced health crises due to the pandemic, and the problems spilled over to humanitarian and economic areas (Younus, 2021; 5-11). In this respect, many countries have experienced state capacity crises at different levels. The crises have led to a process in which weaknesses are exploited reciprocally, as in the case of border tensions between China and India. But, again, these crises have accelerated the Great Power competition in the region, and, unlike before during the Cold War, the Great Powers this time did not allow South Asian countries to benefit from great power competition by following a policy of balance with both sides. In fact, it has been pointed out earlier that Bangladesh is one of the countries that benefit the most from the competition between the US and China, and it has successfully utilized this circumstance for its economic growth. On the other hand, Sri Lanka's

declaration of bankruptcy as part of the latest crisis and the inability of any of the actors to provide adequate help to save Sri Lanka in this process was seen as a result of the Great Powers' disfavoring the 'policy of balancing' anymore. Moreover, in the latest crisis in Sri Lanka, the government was initially unable to control energy and food prices, which resulted in a lack of full access to the necessary supplies. Thus, daily life was clearly impacted, which also subsequently caused a massive wave of protests, and the incumbent Rajapaksa administration had to withdraw from power. It has been argued that in South Asia, there may be cases of defaulting economies similar to Sri Lanka in the coming period, especially in Pakistan. Also, it has been underlined that actors seeking solutions through actors such as the IMF and the World Bank will possibly become more dependent in the coming period (Younus, 2021; 9).

South Asia's Place in World Politics

Considering the rise of Asia as the emerging center of gravity in global politics, South Asia is the most critical connection point due to its strategic location. With a population of more than 2 billion, it hosts a quarter of global humanity. Even if the growth rates generally decreased during the pandemic, South Asia previously corresponded to one of the fastest-growing regional economies in the world, with an average GDP growth of 7.1% (South Asian Economies, 2021). South Asia hosts a very young population, as 40% of its population is in the youth category (Youth in South Asia, 2021). Therefore, it is estimated that it will be an economically active region and the future engine of growth for Asia. Although South Asian countries are at different stages of political development; today, all eight South Asian countries have some kind of democratic rule. Undoubtedly, the region has some problems of its own. For instance, despite having been one of the fastest-growing economic regions in the world for a long time, it is a serious paradox that it hosts 40% of the world's poor population, most of which belongs to the ultra-poor subcategory (Poverty Measures, 2018). There are also several traditional and new types of security problems in the region. For example, as a base for terrorist activities especially in the post-2001 era of counterterrorism, denying South Asian territory to terrorist groups has been a contentious issue all along in the region. Considering new types

of security approaches, many areas ranging from food safety to health safety and work safety to human security will potentially challenge the region's countries.

To recapitulate why South Asia is important in global politics, South Asia is primarily a region that presents both formidable challenges and opportunities. South Asia struggles with international terrorism, regional nuclear conflict, social instability, and humanitarian crises. It is also the only place in the world where there is a danger that two nuclear-armed countries could go to war. On the other hand, it is a region home to about one-fifth of the world's population, and it has growing market characteristics where the middle classes are eager to build a better future for themselves and their families. Thus, the region's remarkable social, economic, and technological transformations are closely followed. Global policymakers also produce policies related to the region by considering population, economy, growth, and strategic location. Policies created as such are mostly developed within the framework of population, energy, climate, nuclear, and security.

Considering the population data discussed above, South Asia, together with the world's youngest population, presents great potential in production and development. However, energy dependency in the region continues to hinder realization of this potential since no population potential can set production in motion without energy. The region's high energy deficit and dependence on imported fossil fuels in the field of energy requires finding alternative and more renewable energy resources to maintain the growth and development rate of the pre-pandemic period. This energy dependence is acknowledged as the biggest obstacle for the self-declared rising superpower India's struggle to catch up with China first and then surpass it. Importing energy mainly from Russia, Iran, and the Gulf and Central Asian countries, India aims to diversify its resources and reduce its dependency as much as possible. Indeed, India's one of top priorities is to develop projects related to clean and green energy sources and to increase its capacity (Narula, Reddy and Pachauri, 2017; 130).

South Asia is also one of the most vulnerable regions in terms of climate change problems- one of the contemporary issues. For instance, rising sea levels could potentially overflow much of the region's coastal are-

as, particularly in Bangladesh and India, and result in mass migration by triggering large-scale climate refugees. But, again, significant water wars are expected in the region as part of the water crisis. Even though the region has some of the most substantial rivers, it will likely become severely water-scarce soon. Considering possible crisis points such as the water dispute between China and India over the Brahmaputra River, the fragility of the Indus Waters Treaty between Pakistan and India, and disputes over sharing of waters, the potential for hydro-policy challenges and hydro-conflict is exceptionally high (Sivakumar and Stefanski, 2011; 20-24).

From an external perspective, perhaps the biggest problem of the South Asian region is the lack of an agenda and mechanism for joint action and struggle in the face of current opportunities and existing threats. Under normal circumstances, the functionality of the logic of regional organizations that sets rules, shapes behaviors, and influences results with a common agenda and cooperation framework against opportunities and threats is evident and can be observed in the cases of ASEAN or the African Union. For example, in South Asia, there are regional organizations that can realize this regionalist logic, such as The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal Initiative (BBIN), and South Asia Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation Program (SASEC). However, arguably, none of these organizations has been able to develop a common agenda and roadmap and tackle regional uncertainty. The dysfunctionality of SAARC is the most debated issue at this point. The region was unable to promote a collective response to the humanitarian tragedy of Rohingya that occurred in Myanmar, a vital matter for the geopolitical future of South Asia, let alone build a common regional security architecture (Haran, 2018; 200).

Having been unable to display a regional attitude, South Asia has difficulty in producing policies in the face of geopolitical changes. Therefore, for some, individual behaviors of the countries matter more. In this respect, the geopolitical changes during the post-9/11 period, the rise of China, and the Western policies to balance China have arguably shaped the foreign policy behavior in the region. The security-centered approach of the US, the acknowledged global hegemon in the post-9/11

period, determined the foreign policy behavior in South Asia. Although the US invasion of Afghanistan and its Pakistan-centered approach disturbed actors such as India, an opposing foreign political behavior could not be developed due to the dominance of US power. Instead, strategies were created by the region's countries in line with the US "War on Terror" concept. For example, even India, otherwise uneasy with the US foreign policy, has developed policies against the terrorist threat that may come from Afghanistan and Central Asian states within the scope of the fight against terrorism and has placed a security-centric approach at the heart of its West and Central Asia policy. Events such as the 2008 Mumbai Attacks in India or the 2014 Peshawar School Massacre in Pakistan were considered as the September 11 attacks of South Asian countries. Evidently, all actors in the region came up with new security concepts after these events. Indeed, it is noteworthy that geopolitical changes due to the invasion of Afghanistan and connecting Central Asia to the Indian Ocean favored US interests (Feyyaz, 2009; 45-50).

Another historical development affecting the region's geopolitics has been the strategic position of South Asia in China's rise and global vision. In particular, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which includes significant investments in Pakistan for China's Belt-Road Project, has not only led the US to produce a new Pakistan policy but also encouraged India to attempt building a new foreign policy cluster against China and Pakistan with the need for a new alliance policy (Lu, 2015, 777-780). Surely, it is considerable that China, within the scope of its South Asian policy, initiated a new opening, especially in terms of investment, towards not only Pakistan but all countries, ranging from Sri Lanka to Nepal and from Bangladesh to Afghanistan. Chinese policies developed towards the ports in Sri Lanka, which is of great importance in terms of controlling the Indian Ocean crossings, and Chinese investments in recent Nepali politics following a certain degree of democratization, resulted in consequences that affected all foreign policy actors in the region, as well as the emergence of domestic crises in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. At this point, while Bangladesh has admittedly achieved a certain success in the balancing policy in the Great Power competition and has made meaningful progress in growth, the Sri Lankan model arguably corresponds to an example of a failed balancing policy as the recent crisis led to the overthrow of the Rajapaksa administration (Pal, 2021; 9-20).

Perhaps the reason for the emergence of crises following the policies put into practice with the rise of China is related to the introduction of the US "Rebalance" strategy against China. The new American strategy against China was initiated during the Obama term, placed in the center by Trump, and continues as part of the Biden administration. This strategy coincides with a countermovement that will suppress increasing Chinese influence in certain areas. It also includes support packages for the countries of the region aiming to preserve the appeal of the US soft power against China's investments (Alenazi, 2020; 6-8). While this new US strategy with a soft and hard capacity managed to form the QUAD alliance, which includes the US, India, Japan, and Australia, or the AUK-US alliance, consisting of the US, Britain, and Australia, it has also been able to result in new policies that are preemptive against the Chinese appeal through economic support packages for the countries of a specific region, as in the case of the ASEAN Summit (Medcalf, 2022; 94-98). On the one hand, this new US policy has placed India at the center of its new policy in the region, especially within the scope of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. On the other hand, through a new Pakistani policy gaining Pakistan alongside the US against China, the US. aimed to deliver the message that a new peace in the region could only be achieved via the US. In this scope, the outcomes of the Great Power rivalry will continue to dominate the regional agenda in the coming period in terms of the future of individual countries such as Afghanistan, as well as the arrangement of relations between countries with problems, such as the rapprochement of India-Pakistan (Choong, 2019; 419-420).

Conclusion

It would not be an overestimation to claim that the discussions on the future of South Asia will be at the center of the post-pandemic period of chaos and uncertainty. At this point, it is possible to come up with many scenarios in which each country will internally face certain challenges. However, issues such as climate, economic crises, inflation, and security, all of which threaten the region's common future and require collaboration, should be addressed. Each country's need for formulating solutions to these issue areas is illustrated by the cases such as the problem of national unity in India, the crisis atmosphere in Pakistan

after Imran Khan, the issue of reconstruction in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, and the recovery process in Sri Lanka following the demise of the Rajapaksa government. In addition, state capacity in the region has considerably eroded due to potentially rising radicalization recalling the past when the region was described as a haven for terrorism, the economic crises awaiting especially Pakistan and many other countries who fail in the balance of payments, as exemplified in Sri Lanka's bankruptcy, and the developments such as rising temperature and floods in the region due to the changing climate conditions. This situation rapidly increases the imperative for all countries of the region to cooperate and collaborate.

Both domestic dynamics and common regional threats will occupy an essential place in the course of South Asian politics in the new era. It will also be necessary to focus on the change in the region's external environmental conditions. This change is related to the power vacuum that emerged after the withdrawal of the US troops and how this vacuum will be filled. While the US has been trying to rebalance China in Asian politics, withdrawing from certain regions such as Afghanistan, it also laid the ground for the prospects of a new geopolitical shift. In this context, on the one hand, there is a potential for an axis tending toward anti-Americanism pioneered by countries such as China and Russia. On the other hand, the initiatives of countries such as India, Japan, and Australia, which feel uneasy with the former, put forth the odds for alternative axes. While it has been reported that actors such as China could fill this power vacuum that emerged in South Asia, different dynamics of relations have arisen, in which actors such as India attempts to intensify their network of relations not only with Western countries but also with other actors like Iran that could be influential in the region. However, the actions of both these axes arguably increased uncertainty and instability in the region rather than providing stability. Therefore, the future policies of the actors in South Asian politics will continue to be debated.

The US withdrawal drew attention to the need to increase the role of international organizations such as the UN in the region and resolve the issues before the international community. However, it is also the case that none of the international organizations could have progress in solving security and conflict issues or economic and humanitarian problems. Thus, the regional initiative will expectedly be reconsidered

as a priority issue. Admittedly, all actors will experience difficulties in negotiating with a realistic motivation unless India and Pakistan undergo a reconciliation process. Therefore, it can be predicted that even a "Cold Peace," if could be established in the region, may generate a more comprehensive dialogue mechanism. Moreover, since coming to a certain agreement on the Kashmir issue is a prerequisite for initiating such a mechanism, we will perhaps experience a process that will hopefully lead to a broader understanding that the resolution of Kashmir issue is the key to stability in South Asia.

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AFGHANISTAN

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Introduction

In August 2021, the Taliban overthrew the government through bloodshed and took control of Afghanistan for the second time in history. This incident and the subsequent swift withdrawal of the US ended the bloodiest and longest US war of the 20th century. However, this was not the end of the problems in Afghanistan, and with the withdrawal of the US and other foreign powers, ongoing ethnic and religious divisions, and the problem of degradation of women re-emerged in the country.

Afghanistan has a population of nearly 39 million people of different ethnic origins. It comprises minorities, and no ethnic group has a dominant majority. However, there have been recent attempts to bring a particular ethnic group to prominence

through demographic engineering and immigration policy. Thus, the nation-building project in Afghanistan has not been very successful.

Yet, the Taliban has once again taken over the country's politics. Although they initially announced their intention to form an inclusive national government, they have not taken action for nearly a year and do not seem willing to do so. Thus, the continuation of the current government contributes to the long-aspired integration policy of the Pashtuns.

Geographic Structure

The geography of Afghanistan plays an essential role in its history and culture (WIIS, 2009: 1). Afghanistan is an entirely landlocked country with an area of approximately 647,500 square kilometers. Its shared borders with the neighboring countries are a total of 5,529 km; 2,430 km with Pakistan, 76 km with China, 936 km with Iran, 1206 km with Tajikistan, 744 km with Turkmenistan, and 137 km with Uzbekistan. The country's geography is mostly mountainous, and more than 49% of its territory has an altitude of over 2000 meters. The Hindu Kush Mountains stretching from east to west, divide Afghanistan into northern and southern regions. This natural division has also affected the historical, ethnic, and cultural structures of these two regions, such that today, historically, ethnically, and culturally, North Afghanistan has closer ties with Central Asia and South Afghanistan with South Asia (Çınarlı, 2009: 26).

Except for the plains of the northern and southwestern parts, the territory of Afghanistan is barren. Only 20% of the entire country has arable land, and irrigated agriculture is possible only on 30,000 square kilometers of its territory. The lowest altitude of the country is 258 meters in the Amu Darya basin, while the highest altitude is 7,492 meters at Noshak peak on the Pakistani border. The population of Afghanistan generally lives in the foothills of the Hindu Kush Mountains, and population density is higher in the eastern part of the country. Conflicts in Afghanistan are often the product of an eventful history and obstinate geographic location. Moreover, its geopolitics interconnects different civilizations. By providing a connection point between the powers of the cold North and the warm South and between the East to the West, Afghanistan has wit-

nessed significant events such as the numerous attacks of the Turks on India and the rivalry between Britain and Russia. Due to this geographical importance, regional and global powers have always attempted to dominate Afghanistan. As a result of these interventions, Afghanistan could not become a united nation. The lack of access to the sea created many problems for Afghanistan and made it heavily dependent on neighboring countries for trade. Internal and external competition led to various cycles of instability in Afghanistan. With numerous military coups taking place in the last century, Afghanistan is arguably the victim of its own geopolitics (Kuğu, 2020: 55-58).

The longest river in Central Asia, with a length of 2,400 kilometers, the Amu Darya, flows through Afghanistan's northern border with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan before reaching the Aral Sea in Kazakhstan. The Helmand River is Afghanistan's longest river, with a length of 1300 kilometers. The river flows southwestward through Afghanistan and constitutes a part of the Afghanistan-Iran border before reaching the Helmand marshes. The 650-kilometer-long Harirud River is located in the south of the town of Herat and flows westward from the Hindu Kush mountain range of central Afghanistan and turns northwest, forming a part of the border shared by Iran and Turkmenistan. The 460-kilometer-long Kabul River is the main river of eastern Afghanistan. It originates in the Hindu Kush mountain range and flows eastward to join together with the Indus River in Pakistan. Kabul River is dry most of the year but overflows in summer due to melting snow (CIA, 2006: 7-8).

Demographic Structure

It is estimated that Afghanistan has a population of approximately 39 million. The 2014 constitution officially recognized 14 ethnic groups in Afghanistan: Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, Turkmen, Baloch, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash, Aimak, and Pashai. Of course, there are other small groups that are not counted, such as Kyrgyz. There are no reliable statistics on the distribution of the total population by ethnic groups. The term 'Afghan' is used for Pashtuns; therefore, Afghanistan connotes the land of Pashtuns (Kuğu, 2020: 56).

Population patterns in Afghanistan have been unstable for decades due to local and international conflicts. Millions of people lost their homes due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1978. It is estimated that a part of the affected 6 million people has fled to Pakistan or Iran. Others have been internally displaced or migrated to other countries. After the Soviet withdrawal, people were displaced again due to civil war in the 1990s and NATO intervention in 2001. Economic distress and natural disasters such as extreme drought have also forced people to leave their homes. Therefore, many of the country's population are either internally displaced or sought refuge abroad. The infant mortality rate in Afghanistan is one of the highest in the world; more than 20% of children die before reaching the age of five. The average life expectancy in the country is 43 years. About 77% of Afghanistan's population lives in rural areas, and half of the urban population lives in Kabul (CIA, 2006: 30-31).

Although some argue that the ratio of Pashtuns to the total population is around 40-50%, there is no reliable source to verify this. According to their own estimates, Pashtuns make up the largest group in the country by 40% of the total population, while Tajiks are the second largest group by 20%; and Hazaras, Uzbeks, and Aymaks, roughly equal to each other in number, are ranked in the third place (Çınarlı, 2009: 52). Afghanistan's diverse ethnic groups extend beyond its borders. According to CIA statistics, the largest ethnic group in the country is the Pashtuns, who make up between 42 and 44 percent of the population. Tajiks constitute the second largest ethnic group with 25 to 27 percent, followed by Hazaras (9 to 10 percent), Uzbeks (8 to 9 percent), Aymaks (4%), Turkmen (3%), and Baluch (2%). About 80 to 85% of Afghans are Sunni, and 15 to 20% are Shia (CIA, 2006: 31). According to CIA figures, groups of Turkic origin make up about 20% of the population.

Political Structure

There are different reasons for the Afghanistan crisis. In addition to international factors, local factors such as widespread poverty, political underdevelopment, and the absence of a culture of tolerance are prominent. The political structure of Afghanistan has changed drastically in the last 40 years. Many political regimes have been established since the Soviet intervention, but none have endured. In this process, commu-

nist, religious, republican, and coalition governments were established and collapsed. With the fall of the Republic in August 2021, the Taliban returned to power and established a regime based on tribal traditions. A religious leader heads the Taliban government with the title of Amir al-Mu'minin. Thus, like Iran, the Taliban also claim to be the Islamic world's center. The Taliban's religious leader oversees all government affairs. The representatives approved by the leader are appointed as the special cabinet of the government.

Historical Structure

The commander of the 4000 personnel guarding Nader Shah, the ruler of Iran, was a Pashtun named Ahmad from the Abdali tribe. After a group of Iranian commanders killed Nader Shah, Ahmad and his companions left Iran. During his journey to Kandahar in 1747, representatives of the local tribes appointed him as the leader. From this point, he was to be called Ahmad Shah Abdali. According to some sources, Ahmad Shah was chosen as the leader because of his ability to command the forces, the military power of the people under his command, and his possession of a portion of Nader Shah's treasury (Çınarlı, 2009: 33). The Iranian governments did not recognize this move by Ahmad Shah Abdali.

In 1857, the British imposed the official separation of a particular part of Afghanistan from Iran and its independence on the Qajar government that ruled Iran. Although the Pashtuns, especially the Durranis, had previously abolished Iranian dominance over Afghanistan in cooperation with Britain, Iran officially continued to claim sovereignty over Afghanistan. Even though the Qajar army besieged Herat, the British army could advance toward Isfahan by bombarding Iran's southern cities. The defeated Iranian army had to withdraw from Herat and recognize Afghanistan's independence through the mediation of France. Thus, the Treaty of Paris provided legitimacy to the state established under British patronage.

Consequently, Afghanistan became significant as a buffer state between the British government in India and Russia, which had recently invaded Central Asia. Thus, the British administration in India took over the country's administration, and the Afghanistan policy was entrusted to the British Empire. Aware of Afghanistan's linguistic and ethnic diver-

sity, Britain and the loyal Pashtun elites tried to establish a very centralized political order from the beginning. The founder of this system was Emir Abdur Rahman Khan, who was appointed by the British and received annual cash and ammunition to appease the people and institute his centralized monarchy. This political order was created in favor of the Pashtuns; however, it sowed the seeds of ethnic conflicts in Afghanistan, which would later reach an unresolvable point (Malikzada, 2022).

In 1919, Amanullah Khan, a Pashtun, gained the independence of Afghanistan from Britain after a bloody war of attrition. By virtue of this independence, Pashtuns have remained in power in Afghanistan except for a few short periods in the twentieth century and have worked tirelessly to homogenize and unify Afghanistan. The Taliban, a fruit of the US war against the Soviets and religious schools in Pakistan, used the power vacuum that emerged after the Soviet withdrawal and amid the civil war to take over most of the country, and they marginalized other ethnic groups in Afghanistan during their brief rule. This process was stopped by the US invasion of Afghanistan, but it regained relevance in 2021.

Pashtun political elites have historically attempted to homogenize society to suppress uprisings of hostile groups or nationalities. Assimilation and homogenization can also involve the process of relocating members of an ethnic community into the territories of other nations or communities. The emigration of a young and educated generation from Afghanistan also undermined the possibility of resistance making the Taliban's plans for assimilation and homogenization easier. The Pashtun rulers of Afghanistan followed the same policy of homogenization to weaken or destroy other nations' spirit of resistance. For instance, Amir Abdurrahman followed such a policy. While living in exile in Central Asia, Rahman learned assimilation and homogenization techniques from Tsarist Russia (Malikzada, 2022), and this policy continues in different ways today.

Economic Structure

Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest countries and the poorest in Asia. Security threats, above all, have still impeded Afghanistan's eco-

nomic development. The economy is mainly dependent on foreign and international aid. After the NATO-led invasion in 2001, local and international initiatives stepped in to stimulate the economy by improving state institutions and constructing infrastructure across the country (CIA, 2006: 76).

Before the Soviet invasion, Afghanistan's economy was mainly based on agriculture and animal husbandry. The civil war caused by the invasion and the destruction of agriculture and irrigation systems brought the country's economy to the brink of collapse. Moreover, the migration of about six million people due to the recession caused significant damage to the country's economy in the short term. As a result of the chaotic situation, the majority of the Afghan population is malnourished and deprived of shelter and health services. During the war with the USSR, the Mujahideen started to produce poppy seeds, which became the country's primary source of income as a result of narcotic production, sale, and trade, and benefited from opium revenues to finance military expenditures (Çınarlı, 2009: 49). Today, Afghanistan produces 90% of worldwide opium (Keskin et al., 2021: 224), which is a major national and global security threat.

Afghan farmers are more willing to grow poppies and not so eager to produce grain because poppy requires much less water than grain. The climate of Afghanistan is dry, and the irrigation system was destroyed due to the civil war. Therefore, poppy cultivation has become the easiest way of earning income for peasants (Çınarlı, 2009: 49-50).

In 2020, Afghanistan's GDP was equal to $19 billion with a GDP per capita of $583. Its trade volume corresponds to 23% of its GDP. Agricultural products make up 70% of the country's exports, while the share of mineral products is 12% and industry products is 17%. On the other hand, agricultural products make up 40% of Afghanistan's imports; mineral products and factory products correspond to 4.6% and 59.4% respectively.

The most important export destinations of Afghanistan are India (47%), Pakistan (34%), China (3.6%), Türkiye (2.9%), UAE (2.9%), and others (9.3%). On the other hand, the most important suppliers of Afghanistan imports are Iran (14.6%), China (13.9%), Pakistan (12.9%), the USA (9.1%), Turkmenistan (8.1%), and others (more than 41%). The most es-

sential exported agricultural products are fresh grapes and raisins, plant juices and extracts, dates, figs, pineapples, avocados, onions, shallots, garlic, and leeks. The most important imported agricultural products are wheat flour, animal or vegetable fats and oils, sugar cane or sugar beet, tea, and wheat (WTO, 2020: 76).

Used effectively, Afghanistan's rich mineral resources could prove to be the best substitute for foreign aid, reducing the country's dependence on donor countries and foreign support. Properly managing these resources can allow Afghanistan to stand on its own feet. Strong policies and institutional arrangements and a certain political environment can pave the way for attracting domestic and foreign investors. Better management of mineral resources can result in sustainable economic growth that induces lasting peace (Katawazai, 2020).

Potential of the Country

Afghanistan's underdevelopment in all areas endows it with a high potential for progress. Afghanistan also has abundant natural resources that are largely untapped such as the highest-grade iron ore, copper, gold, rare earth minerals, and other natural resources. Similarly, although oil reserves were discovered long ago, they have only been extracted to a limited extent. Cast metals such as iron ore, copper, aluminum, tin, lead, and zinc are found in many parts of the country. Gemstones, rare earth metals, sulfur, talc, gypsum, and chromite are found in Central Afghanistan, Baghlan, Kunduz, Logar, and Khost, among other places. Most of Afghanistan's oil and natural gas reserves are located in two oil-rich geological basins, the Amu Darya Basin in the west and the Afghan-Tajik Basin in the east (Shafai, 2020: 7). Despite diverse and numerous natural resources, the share of this sector in total GDP is only 1.56% (Rashid, 2022).

Afghanistan's most significant potential is mineral reserves, estimated to be worth 1-3 trillion dollars. In addition to the world's largest lithium reserves, Afghanistan has extensive gold, platinum, silver, copper, iron, chromite, lithium, uranium, and aluminum reserves. The country's high-quality emeralds, rubies, sapphires, turquoises, and lapis lazuli have long captivated the gemstone market. Through extensive scientific mineral exploration, the US Geological Survey (USGS) has concluded

that Afghanistan has 60 million metric tons of copper, 2.2 billion tons of iron ore, lanthanum, cerium, neodymium, and 1.4 million tons of aluminum, gold, silver, zinc, mercury and lithium veins. According to Pentagon officials, initial analyzes in Ghazni province have revealed the potential for lithium deposits as large as Bolivia, which has the world's largest known lithium reserves. Moreover, the USGS estimates that the Khanneshin deposits in Helmand province will produce 1.1-1.4 million metric tons of rare earth elements. Some other reports also highlight that Afghanistan's rare earth sources are among the world's largest. Rare earth elements have become an indispensable part of modern technology. These elements are used in mobile phones, televisions, hybrid engines, computers, lasers, and batteries (Katawazai, 2020).

Primary geological surveys and considerable discoveries have limitedly taken place in Afghanistan. Therefore, it is very likely that several appealing medium and large-scale deposits are still to be discovered. In this context, the former government of Afghanistan had taken steps to improve the country's capacity to effectively and transparently regulate the mining and hydrocarbon sectors and to encourage private investment in these sectors (World Bank, 2013). Moreover, even though these regulations were abolished during the Taliban era, foreign investors with ongoing good relations with the Taliban have been more likely to be active in this sector.

Bilateral Relations with Türkiye and Recommendations

After the US invasion, Türkiye has undertaken comprehensive activities in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. These activities include training the Afghan army and police, building education and health centers, construction in general, and construction of roads. The absence of Turkish military activity in Afghanistan has been a significant factor in increasing the trust in Türkiye among Afghans, considering the Taliban's consistent criticism of the attacks of the international coalition forces ending up with civilian casualties. For this reason, foreign powers used the Turkish flag on their military vehicles to ensure their security in Afghanistan and avoided attacks for a long time. Thus, foreign powers benefited from Türkiye's popularity in Afghanistan in various ways (Salami, 2021).

Türkiye's strategic culture foresees a dynamic and inclusive foreign policy (Sadri Alibabalu, 2020: 69-70). Therefore, Turkish foreign policy towards Afghanistan in the new period, just like in the past, should be all-inclusive and designed for the benefit of all the poor and war-torn people of the country, regardless of sectarian, religious, or ethnic problems. However, similar to other countries supporting certain groups in Afghanistan, it is also vital for Türkiye to invest in its kin and support the Uzbeks. It is noteworthy that Türkiye has substantial leverage and high maneuvering capability in Afghanistan due to its close alliance with Pakistan and Qatar.

Apparently, Afghanistan will be the scene of political disputes and perhaps internal conflicts in the future, which will undoubtedly complicate the country's flaws in security. Therefore, not only local actors but also international actors such as China, Russia, Iran, India, and even the US have strategic importance and determining effect on the situation in Afghanistan. Regarding this fact, Türkiye has the capability to cooperate with these states regarding Afghanistan's problems and prevent the condition from worsening. Such a policy would also have a solid ground, especially considering the trust that Afghan ethnic groups, especially Pashtuns and Uzbeks, have in Türkiye.

It is noteworthy that the war-ravaged Afghanistan, with a destroyed foreign-dependent economy, must adapt to the modern international society. Therefore, the Taliban must reconsider ethnocentric and fundamentalist policies in its second term, thus not threatening international peace and security (Seren, 2021).

It is possible for Türkiye to encourage the Taliban through Pakistan and Qatar to abandon radical religious policies. The Turkish-Islamic model can fill in to alleviate social oppression, especially the oppression of women. This model allows democratic and religious institutions to be established in line with the new realities that have emerged in Afghanistan. Thus, an inclusive and legitimate constitution compatible with Afghanistan's conditions and satisfactory for the new and old generations can be written.

Türkiye can patiently observe the Taliban policies and then decide to grant the Taliban recognition. Therefore, it is not urgent for Türkiye to officially recognize the Taliban government because early recognition

of the Taliban may reflect on Türkiye's relations with other countries and create undesired perceptions about Türkiye. The production and export of drugs, and the influx of Afghan refugees and fugitives to other countries, including Türkiye, are still a severe threat to the world and Türkiye. Therefore, the solution to the Afghanistan problem requires international cooperation, and Türkiye can take constructive steps to facilitate this cooperation.

Today, Afghanistan struggles with various problems, such as women's rights and the education of young women, extreme poverty, political, social, and cultural underdevelopment, and heavy destruction of infrastructure. Türkiye is certainly a successful model for women's rights and the education of young women. Regarding this matter, Türkiye Diyanet Foundation can play an essential role in persuading the Taliban to accept the issue of education of young women and grant fundamental rights to Afghan women. For example, it would be very constructive to invite Afghan authorities and introduce them to Turkish schools, especially the Imam Hatip schools. Considering that a new education system has not been implemented yet in Afghanistan, Türkiye can fill in the establishment of educational institutions by providing technical and consultancy support to Afghan schools. Modern education is a prerequisite for raising a new and peaceful generation. Helping Afghan society in this regard is essential for its reach to self-sufficiency. There is also a need for new training centers and schools for the general education of children. Türkiye can also play a very active role here. Public trust towards Türkiye in Afghanistan provides an opportunity for Türkiye's education system to be a model. Compulsory education is a must for the new generation, and Afghanistan must follow this principle.

An international initiative is necessary regarding extreme poverty in Afghanistan, particularly in mountainous and rural areas. The first step of this initiative could be inviting global leaders for a meeting to raise capital to aid the new Afghanistan. In addition, establishing technical and vocational training centers and promoting vocational training can be productive in the short run because the lack of job opportunities has perpetuated poverty and caused refugees and job seekers to go abroad, including Türkiye. It might also be significant progress in the agricultural sector and food supply to educate people living in rural areas about agriculture through local governments.

The protracted war has deepened the underdevelopment all over Afghanistan. Investing in infrastructures such as education and health sectors could support society's physical and psychological restructuring and impact overall cultural and social development. Human engineering is only possible with long-term investments realized through a comprehensive cooperation process between local and international institutions.

Conclusion

The Taliban's regaining of power could cause profound changes in regional politics. China, Pakistan, and partially Qatar are the most influential actors in Afghanistan. Following a multilateral strategy with the general goal of resolving or mitigating conflicts in close proximity to its borders, China has been trying to increase its border security by establishing good relations with the Taliban. The rationale for this approach is that stability is one of the basic requirements for the success of Chinese projects. Also, Pakistan may increase its influence in Afghanistan and try to isolate India by allying with China. This move could considerably change the regional order and trouble the US, as China and Pakistan will have more flexibility and initiative over the Indian Ocean and Central Asia.

In these strategic conditions, the re-emergence of the Taliban could affect international security in various ways. The world faces challenges such as the influx of refugees abroad from Afghanistan, instability in Afghanistan's neighboring countries, and Afghanistan's transformation into a center of radicalism and international terrorism. Evidently, Afghanistan would experience partial stability provided that the Taliban pursue a cooperation policy with all countries and transform its concepts and ideological principles.

Today, the Taliban are trying to increase its legitimacy by inviting former government officials back into the country. However, what matters is that former government officials are unpopular because they fled Afghanistan amid the Taliban's advance, and they have been only an instrument for the Taliban to increase international legitimacy. Moreover, the fact that some influential figures in previous governments, such

as Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, did not flee Afghanistan and were unharmed by the Taliban provides ground for the proposition that ex-government members are becoming more accepting of the Taliban. However, it should be noted that these former government officials are Pashtuns who support the ethnic policies of the Taliban.

The international community's soft approach towards the Taliban increased the Taliban's bargaining power and gave them high self-confidence. Evidently, in case the Taliban can last a few more years, they can lay the foundations of their administration and continue to run the country. If such a scenario occurs, the problems in the society will remain unresolved as the Taliban will try to assimilate other ethnic and religious groups through Pashtun nationalism. Other ethnic groups will challenge this policy, and possibly armed resistance will emerge. Therefore, instability in Afghanistan is expected to continue.

Given international developments such as the Ukraine crisis and the West-Chinese rivalry, the Taliban will arguably take advantage of regional geopolitical rivalries and present itself to the world as an internationally recognized government. Moreover, regional and international actors that actively support the Taliban, such as Pakistan, China, Russia, Iran, and Arab countries, will increase the legitimacy of the Taliban. It seems that most states will recognize the Taliban soon officially, meaning that the Taliban government will survive.

Türkiye can play an important role in Afghanistan's future politics as an actor pursuing a balanced policy between all parties. In this regard, Türkiye is a close ally of Pakistan and Qatar, and the Taliban have a very close relationship with both countries. Therefore, Türkiye can refine the Taliban's policies through Pakistan and Qatar and keep the Taliban away from extremism and on a political ground in line with contemporary realities. In addition, Türkiye can share its experiences in educational, agricultural, industrial, and service sectors with the Taliban and thus create a basis for the competitive environment in future Afghanistan.

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BANGLADESH

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Introduction

This chapter discusses the geography, demographics, history, politics, culture, economy, and potential of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and its bilateral relations with Türkiye. The fact that the borders of Bangladesh do not correspond to any natural or cultural region clearly demonstrates that these borders are politically constructed. However, as an independent country, Bangladesh forms an economic zone and functions as a cultural epicenter.[1]

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1   In this chapter, the term 'Bengal' refers to the cultural aspect of Bangladesh.

Geographic Structure

"Memoirs of a Map of Hindoostan or the Mogul Empire" by James Renell is considered the initial point of the present geographical explorations of Bengal (Rennell, 1792). However, almost a century after a complete and accurate finding was put forth, W.W. Hunter compiled an eight-volume work that provided a statistically sound, in-depth description of Bengal (1875-77). As a result of his groundbreaking research, Hunter is now regarded as the first regional and historical geographer of modern Bengal. The Bengal District Gazetteers, published between 1905 and 1925, extensively used Hunter's ample and rich knowledge. To this end, these pocket-sized newspapers have contributed significantly to the general public's understanding of the workings of the economy and industry. For example, Jessore, Pabna, and Rajshahi newspapers are particularly prominent in this matter. Three works by L.S.S. O'Malley are among the most foundational texts that have considerably shaped our understanding of Bengal's people and historical geography.

Bangladesh (the country of the Bengals) has been the home of the Bengali people for generations. This cultural homeland stretches from Purulia in West Bengal to Cachar in Assam in the east. However, this area is politically divided between the states of India and the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is geographically bordered from all directions by several Indian states: West Bengal in the west and north, Assam in the north, Meghalaya in the north and northeast, and Tripura and Mizoram in the east. The southeast parts of Bangladesh meet Myanmar (Burma), and the Bay of Bengal is easily accessed through the southwest point of Bangladesh. Of the entire Bangladeshi land border- a total of 4,246 kilometers, 93.9% is shared with India, 6.1% is shared with Myanmar, and the country's southernmost border is the Bay of Bengal. Although Bangladesh has a small geographical size, it has a coastline of more than 580 kilometers. To the east of its territorial waters that reaches up to 12 nautical miles (22.22 km), Bangladesh has established an economic zone extending up to 200 nautical miles (370.40 km) offshore. Bengal is a thin land bridge between the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, with the Tibetan massif to the north. It is the highest point of the natural belt of the Bay of Bengal. Its location in South Asia makes it an im-

portant crossroads for the region. Bangladesh's borders extend in polar coordinates and along the equator respectively from 20°34'N to 26°33'N and from 88°01'E to 92°41'E. The legendary Royal Bengal Tiger inhabits the Sundarbans, a large mangrove region in southwestern Bangladesh.

The Bengal region connects two large parts of the Asian continent-South and Southeast Asia. There is substantial evidence that many aspects of Bengali society, including religious architecture, artistic forms, ceremonial food, clothing, and even Bengali vocabulary, were influenced by Arab, Persian, and Turkish cultures. *Lungi* (sarong) is the most prevalent men's clothing, rice and fish are the main products of the country, alongside many tropical products. Bengal is characterized by a wet, tropical climate rather than Asia's dry and barren western regions. Bangladesh's western tendencies is attributed to migration waves that spanned centuries, especially with the majority of its people converting to Islam.

The Bengal Basin is home to the largest delta in the world, formed by the confluence of several great rivers. It is the point where the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers create the 40,225 square kilometers large delta. Monsoons, changing water levels in the rivers, floods, alluvion and diluvion and fluctuations in riverbeds are among the defining characteristics of the physical and cultural geography of the region. Bangladesh, also known as the People's Republic of Bangladesh, is a South Asian country in the northeastern Indian subcontinent near the confluence of the Padma (Ganges) and Jamuna (Brahmaputra) rivers.

There are eight main divisions in Bangladesh: Barisal, Chattogram, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Mymensingh, and Sylhet. Under these administrative divisions, there are a total of 64 Districts (zilas), which are divided into 462 Upazilas and 34 Thanas. There are 95 to 99 residential zones in India. The sizes of the settlements vary between 0.40 hectares and 20.72 square kilometers.

Demographic Structure

The population density in Bangladesh is extremely high. While population growth on average was 2.5% per year in the 1970s, it decreased significantly to less than 2% in the 1990s. The country's neonatal mortality rate has also dropped considerably from 192 per 1000 live births

in 1975 to 51 per 1000 in 2000. The total fertility rate decreased from 6.34 to 2.50 per 100 women during the same period. Thus, the change in demographics of Bangladesh can be encapsulated as a transition from a high fertility/high mortality state to a low fertility/low mortality state. Numerous studies at the local level in Bangladesh have shown that higher female labor force participation rates, higher education levels, and greater access to birth control are important factors in the country's successful efforts to slow population growth (Razzaque et al., 1998; Khuda and Hossain, 1996; Khan and Raeside, 1998).

Bangladesh's population data is accessible from a variety of domestic and international sources. According to the latest figures from the United Nations, as of August 7, 2022, Bangladesh's population is 168,121,440. Bangladesh is the eighth most densely populated country in the world with a population density of 12.65 people per square kilometer (including dependent areas), and represents 2.11% of the worldwide population (3,277 people per mile² / 1,141 people per km²).

The term 'Bangladesh' derives from the Bengali people, who comprise 99% of the country's population. Indigenous peoples in Bangladesh are concentrated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Sylhet, Mymensingh, and North Bengal. Different regions of Bengal have their own distinct dialects. Both Chittagong and Sylhet dialects differ from each other. In 2013, the population was estimated to be around 160 million. Bangladesh is primarily a Muslim country but is home to a large Hindu (12%), Buddhist (1%), and Christian (1%) population.

Historical and Political Structure

Bangladesh's current borders have been drawn by various nations and empires, including the Indian empire, Buddhist regimes, Mongols (Mughal), Britain, and Pakistan. During the early years of British colonization in the 1700s, the area containing today's Bangladesh was known as the province of East Bengal. In 1947 the British government and the prominent political parties in India contributed to the division of Colonial India into India and Pakistan. Following the annexation of East Bengal, the province's name was changed to East Pakistan to reflect its new position within Pakistan. West Pakistan is founded on the provinces in northwestern British India.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League advocated greater freedom for East Pakistan's Bengali majority. Sheikh Mujib's original plan for Pakistan was the foundation of Pakistan as a federation between two equal states. In the 1970 elections, his party won 160 out of the 162 seats in East Pakistan, and 162 out of the 300 seats in the National Assembly of Pakistan, giving it an absolute majority to form the government and elect the prime minister. President Yahya postponed the National Assembly meeting to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Bengals, and the people of East Pakistan took to the streets with fury under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib and Awami League. Subsequently, more troops from West Pakistan were mobilized to the east. On March 25, 1971, the Pakistani army executed hundreds of civilians, captured Mujib, and brought him back to the west. Following East Pakistan's declaration of independence on March 26, the Bengalis and Pakistani army entered a full-scale war in April. Battalions of Bangladeshi *Mukti Bahini* (Freedom Fighters), mostly trained and armed by Indian forces, conducted guerilla warfare against the Pakistani military for ten months throughout the country. The Pakistani armed forces officially surrendered on 16 December. After serving some time in prison, Mujibur Rahman was released in January 1972 and eventually became the prime minister of Bangladesh.

In the decades following the country's victory over Pakistan in 1971, politics in Bangladesh increasingly resembled the country's previous regimes. The historical Bengali/Muslim divide and the uniqueness of Bangladesh as a nation are the most controversial issues for the country. Emotionally intense ideological debates over nationalism make it challenging to discuss more fundamental problems, such as distributive justice. The persistent "culture wars" leading to a more polarized political landscape also contribute to the gradual disappearance of political ideas (Siddiqi, 2010, p. 8).

Characteristics of Political Culture in Bangladesh from Socialism to Neoliberalism

Since its foundation in 1971, Bangladesh's political culture has undergone immense changes. The 1972 Constitution laid the four foundations of the state as nationalism, democracy, secularism, and socialism

(Riaz, 1994, p. 116). These foundations were shaped by, in addition to the broader historical and political climate of the period, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League's interpretation. Furthermore, as Mujib mentioned in his memoirs, socialism was considered freedom from exploitation rather than a function of communism (Rahman, 2012, p. 237). Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1972-75) was elected with great ambitions; however, in less than three years, he would pass the fourth constitutional amendment replacing parliamentary democracy with single-party authority.

In the years following Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination in the 1975 coup, Bangladesh was ruled by a former military leader and politician, General Ziaur Rahman. In 1979, Article 5 was added to the constitution. When the amendment became law, the socialist idea and secularism of the BAKSAL era (a political front comprising Bangladesh Awami League, the Communist Party of Bangladesh, National Awami Party (Muzaffar) and Jatiya League that was formed in 1975) were abandoned. Moreover, a Muslim Bangladeshi identity was adopted, contrary to the secular Bengali identity preferred by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) founded by Major Zia in 1978 and Mujib's Awami League.

While Zia's successor, General Ershad, agreed that state subsidies should be abolished and greater free trade and export should be encouraged (Siddiqi, 2010), he ruled as a dictator for seven years (1983-1990). During his rule, he abused power and suppressed democratic freedom of expression. Widely regarded as a popular leader, Ershad amended the constitution ("eighth amendment") and adopted Islam as the religion of the state.

State

Bangladesh's parliamentary democracy system (Jatiya Sangsad) has a president, a prime minister, and a single parliament. Every five years, elections are held to determine the representatives of the 300-seat parliament, which has a 50% quota for women in the parliament. The President's appointment for the position of Prime Minister must be approved by a simple majority of the legislature. The President is elected by the legislative body every five years. There are twenty districts, numerous sub-districts, union parishads, and countless villages throughout the country.

Leadership and Political Authorities

In today's political environment, there are more than fifty different political parties in Bangladesh. The four largest political parties in the country are Awami League (AL), Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jatiya Party (JP), and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). The Awami League has evolved from a socialist-leaning organization to its current secular stance. It does not adopt a hostile attitude towards India. The BNP is now led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and is less secular, more Islamic, and more anti-Indian than the Awami League. Shafiqur Rahman is currently the leader of Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh's largest and most influential Islamic movement and one of the country's oldest, most anti-secular, and anti-India political parties.

Cultural Structure

The culture of Bangladesh derives from its people's lifestyle. The country's culture is very diverse as it has been enriched by contributions from many different populations. For example, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism- the three major faiths prevalent in Bangladesh- have all had a significant cultural impact. During the Bengali Renaissance, which spanned the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, numerous prominent Bengali writers, scholars, filmmakers, musicians, painters, and scholars contributed to the development of Bengali culture. The dance, music, literature, architecture, and even clothing of the people reflect this culture.

There are three main categories of Bangladeshi music and dance: folk, classical and modern. Popular folk songs have a long history in the country and are generally centered around romantic themes. The country's spirituality, mysticism, and folklore inspire the songs. Baul, Murshidi, and Bhatiali are only a few examples of the folk music styles that have become popular with the contribution of talented songwriters such as Hason Raja and Abbas Uddin to the tradition. Both Western-influenced instruments, such as the guitar, and traditional instruments, such as bamboo flute and bashi and drums called *tabla* or *dhol*, are popular in Bangladeshi music.

Islam is embraced by 87% of Bangladesh's population, making it the

dominant religion in the country. Hinduism and Buddhism also have a considerable number of followers. Christians and Sikhs make up a small percentage of Bangladesh's population. Most of the remaining population are atheists or do not have any religious beliefs. Christmas, Eid-al-Fitr, Buddha Purnima, and Durga Puja are the four major religious holidays celebrated at the national level.

Bangladeshi fashion is different from other regions. In rural Bangladesh, men wear casual clothes called lungi rather than suits, shirts, and trousers. Panjabi is a traditional men's dress for special occasions, especially religious ones. While shari is women's primary and most common clothing, *salvar kameez* has become increasingly popular among the younger generation.

Bangladeshi cuisine is famous for its unique culinary heritage. Rice is the central component of the diet and is often served with other foods such as vegetables, fish, meat, eggs, curry, and lentil soup. Bangladesh is home to many different desserts, including its famous milk-based desserts. Dishes such *as shondesh, rasmalai, chom-chom, rasgulla*, and kala jam are examples of these types. Freshwater fish like *katla*, catfish called *magur*, and *shuki machh* provide most of Bangladesh's protein needs. Beef is also widely consumed.

Bangladesh's architectural features and designs are rooted in the country's rich cultural heritage, long history, and diverse religious practices. Structures styled in Pala Buddhist, Indo-Saracenic Revival, Islamic, and Mughal manner are just a few of the styles represented in the country. The country takes pride in its ancient structures and architectural monuments dating back thousands of years. The Kantajew Temple in Dinajpur, the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban (the parliament building), Ahsan Manzil in Dhaka, and the Lalbagh Fort in Dhaka illustrate the wide variety of architectural styles in Bangladesh.

Economic Structure

The real GDP in Bangladesh grew consistently by 7% in recent years. Much of this is attributed to the liberalization of foreign trade policies in the 1980s (Islam 1998; Hossain 2003). The country's GDP per capita increased by more than 350% in the last quarter of the century. More-

over, women's participation in the labor force has increased alongside low-skilled manufacturing exports.

Bangladesh's low-level socio-political turmoil has greatly contributed to the country's strong economic growth, which averaged 7% over the past decade, reaching 8% in the fiscal years of 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. As a result, Bangladesh has become one of the ten fastest-growing economies in the world. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2019 World Economic Outlook, Bangladesh's economy ranks 30th globally in terms of purchasing power parity and 39th in nominal terms. Bangladesh, as one of "the Next Eleven (N-11)" or "Frontier Five" countries, is expected to play an essential role in the global economy soon.

Bangladesh's GDP was 347,991 billion dollars (nominal) and 860.916 billion dollars (in purchasing power parity) in 2015. Its foreign exchange reserves increased to 32.93 billion dollars in April 2020. Leading financial institutions forecast that Bangladesh's economy will become the world's 24th-largest economy by 2030. This economic miracle is primarily due to strong macroeconomic management, structural changes, and significant investment in human capital and infrastructure.

The agriculture sector is Bangladesh's primary economic driving force. 37.6% of the population is employed in this sector. Its contribution to GDP is around %13.1. 21% of the workforce and 27.8% of GDP are directly or indirectly dependent on the manufacturing industry. About 39% of all jobs and 53.5% of GDP are in the service sector.

The ready-made garment (RMG) industry and remittances from Bangladeshi workers abroad are vital to the country's economy. The RMG employs around four million people, most of whom are women, accounting for 13% of GDP. The 16.4 billion dollars received through transfers in the 2018-2019 fiscal year arguably set a new benchmark. The amount of remittance flows grew at 9.47 percentage points since the remittance inflow was recorded at $14.98 billion for the fiscal year 2017-18. About 10% of Bangladeshis are now settled and work abroad. The ready-made garment sector accounts for almost 80% of exports and is growing rapidly. Bangladesh is the world's fourth largest clothing exporter, following China, Hong Kong, and Italy. Despite the unprecedented expansion, Bangladesh's ready-made garment industry is dangerously in a delicate balance.

Potential of the Country

Bangladesh is located in a part of the world poorly connected to other regions. However, the people of the country can collaborate in enhancing the infrastructure by building roads, tunnels, bridges, and power grids and increase Bangladesh's capacity to trade internationally. Bangladesh's location at the intersection of economic corridors endows it with the potential to serve as a transit hub connecting India, China, and Southeast Asia. In addition, the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative could supply Bangladesh with more trade, travel, and tourism.

The ready-made garment industry corresponds to more than 80% of export revenues and employs more than 4 million people, 60% of whom are women. This success makes Bangladesh the world's second-largest exporter of ready-made garments after China. Pharmaceutical exports are one of the fastest-growing components of the Bangladeshi economy and reach more than 125 countries, including the US and the EU. The growth in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in recent years can be partly attributed to European companies which provide service and development solutions to Bangladesh. Since China and India offer the vast majority of Bangladesh's imports, the country's trade surplus with the EU makes sense.

The Bay of Bengal currently hosts Bangladesh's new potential economic zone. Bangladesh's recent discoveries of rich marine resources fuel its efforts to expand the blue economy. Since 2015, Bangladesh government has organized seminars and discussion sessions focusing on the blue economy. Bangladesh's 7th Five-Year Plan (7th FYP) outlines twelve initiatives to ensure the permanence of Bangladesh's blue economy, which includes fisheries, renewable energy, human resources, transportation, tourism, and climate change. The government also established the "Blue Economy Cell" within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2017 to integrate blue economy projects across sectoral ministries. The blue economy could potentially contribute and have a significant impact on the Bangladeshi economy.

Bangladesh's foreign policy strategy is based on friendly relations with its neighbors and the formation of broad alliances. The government supports several SDGs, including those related to the environment and

water, as well as those promoting effectiveness of aid and the education of young women. In addition, Bangladesh is an active member of international organizations, and its military personnel significantly contribute to UN peacekeeping operations.

Bilateral Relations with Türkiye and Recommendations

Alongside common historical ties, Türkiye and Bengal have contemporary diplomatic relations. Their shared past spans centuries, ranging from the Sultanate to the Mughal period, British rule over Bengal, and the present day. In addition to the Mughal-Ottoman ties, Bengali Muslims supported Türkiye during the War of Independence in the early 20th century. Such deep-rooted relationships and cultural exchanges between the two countries greatly influence their willingness to cooperate.

Trade and Defense

Bangladesh and Türkiye are striving to improve their relations in many fields. As of 2020, annual trade between the two countries was about 850 million dollars. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, this amount has exceeded one billion dollars. The year started off at a slow pace, and until May 2022, bilateral trade increased by 15% compared to the same period in 2021. Increasing trade with Bangladesh is the most crucial goal for Türkiye.

The participation of Turkish companies in the Bangladeshi economy has been increasing. Turkish company 'Arçelik' bought Bangladeshi manufacturer Singer. The US-based energy company United Group and Turkish gas company Igaz intend for an investment partnership in Chittagong.

A Turkish firm with a record of delivering projects quickly and to a high standard at a reasonable cost has recently won The Dhaka Wasa water treatment plant tender. Another firm has been considering applying for a tender to produce 450 MW of electricity outside Dhaka. Turkish companies are also participating in many tenders for public development projects, including roads and bridges.

In recent years, the Turkish defense industry has attracted attention in Dhaka a great deal. Bangladesh has already purchased the Turkish-made Otokar Cobra light armored vehicles. In 2017, the Turkish company signed a contract to produce 680 light armored vehicles. The Bangladeshi government has agreed with Turkish defense firm Roketsan to purchase medium-range guided multiple rocket launchers. In addition, Türkiye has trained approximately 3,000 officers of the Bangladeshi army. The Bangladeshi army and Turkish company Roketsan signed a contract in June 2017 for the supply of laser-guided bombs. Türkiye as a country capable of producing drones and Bangladesh have agreed on enhanced military cooperation. They are also considering the feasibility of establishing a joint company to manufacture weapons. Bangladesh Ordnance Factories signed a contract with a Turkish company for the joint production of artillery shells.

Culture and Religion

The religious and cultural traditions of Türkiye and Bangladesh are similar in many aspects. Indeed, Türkiye is currently one of Bangladesh's most popular holiday destinations. Recently, an increasing number of patients from Bangladesh have started to travel to Türkiye for treatment.

Turkish media, including Daily Sabah, Anadolu Agency (AA) and TRT World, and Turkish television series "Diriliş: Ertuğrul" and "Payitaht Abdülhamit" play an essential role as soft power in promoting Turkish culture. Türkiye's technological and defense progress and the governmental scholarship program through YTB have also significantly improved Türkiye-Bangladesh cultural relations.

Humanitarian Aid Projects

Türkiye is willing to increase medical tourism activities in Bangladesh and has requested sixty acres of land to build a private hospital. During his visit to Türkiye in 2020, the Bangladeshi foreign minister discussed the issue with President Erdogan. On average, hospitals constructed in Türkiye possess 2,000 to 3,000 beds. In these centers, patients have access to all kinds of medical services. Implementing this plan will im-

prove healthcare services in Bangladesh and decrease the number of patients seeking treatment abroad.

Since the beginning of the Rohingya refugee problem, Türkiye has assisted Bangladesh in various ways. Both countries believe that Rohingya people should be allowed to return to their homes. In addition, Türkiye provided political and financial support to Bangladesh when Bangladesh applied to the International Court of Justice. Türkiye's contribution to resolving the Rohingya refugee crisis in a moment when Bangladesh lost the support from its allies, India and China, cultivated a close and brotherly bond between Türkiye and Bangladesh. Türkiye also supported Bangladesh and the Rohingya people through its multilateral initiatives in the G-20 and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and could draw considerable attention to the Bangladeshi cause in the international community.

Considering Türkiye's "Asia Anew Initiative", it can be argued that Türkiye and Bangladesh are ready to strengthen their cooperation. Therefore, their alliance must prioritize defense, culture, and economy around shared beliefs and values.

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BHUTAN

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Geographic and Demographic Structure

Located on the southern slopes of the Eastern Himalayas, Bhutan neighbors two politically powerful and sizable countries: India to the southwest and southeast, and China to the north and northwest. Located on the world's highest mountains, it covers an area of 38,394 km² and has a population of 727,145 (NSB, 2018). Bhutan is a country that has to exist in harsh and severe natural conditions on the one hand and is torn between the influence of the two powerful countries of the region on the other. In this sense, Bhutan is stuck between these gigantic entities.

Life in Bhutan is primarily determined by its geopolitical position. Understanding Bhutan requires taking into consideration the physical structure of the country. Arriving in Bhu-

tan by air travel, the first steps are taken at Paro Airport, 2,235 meters above sea level. Many visitors begin to feel the effects of high altitude at that very moment. High altitude is commonplace for the people of Bhutan because the country has the highest average altitude in the world. While the Gangkhar Puensum peak is 7,570 meters high, the Drangme Chhu valley is located 97 meters below sea level. The average altitude in the country is 3,280 meters. This situation has endowed the country for centuries with striking natural beauty, diversity of living beings and plants, and protection from external influences. Visitors, too, can easily be fascinated by such features of the country. However, although high valleys surrounded by mountains give a sense of closeness to the sky, and landscapes, where massive cliffs that are covered with dense forests are divided by waterfalls and rivers, provide great aesthetic pleasure, it should be noted that high altitude can cause different effects on people who are not accustomed to it. High altitude affects the functioning of the heart, and sleep due to the oxygen level. When exposed to high altitude for the first time, the pulse rate increases, but after a certain period, the body adapts and returns to normal conditions (Ainsilie et al., 2013: 233). In this sense, Bhutan makes its visitors who are not accustomed to high altitudes feel that they are in a "different environment" from the very first moment.

There are dozens of folktales about the formation of Bhutan, the hearth of mountainous ecosystems. Indeed, science easily explains how tectonic movements formed these lands. Bhutan's physical and geological characteristics emerged due to natural tectonic events spanning 70 million years. V-shaped valleys characterize Bhutan's topography in this still-active geological quadrant. Fast-flowing rivers and streams among the high mountain ranges nurture natural life. Frequently, the altitude drops sharply from 7,500 meters to 150 meters (Tshewang et al., 2021). Glacier-capped snowy peaks, deep valleys, and steep waterfalls are among Bhutan's natural landscapes.

Bhutan is famous for its nature and culture. Many studies were conducted focusing on its natural beauty and the lifestyle of its people. Due to the presence of mountainous ecosystems, isolation, and under-industrialization, the country has a significant biological diversity and unique cultural heritage. More than 70% of the country is covered with trees. With ceaseless efforts, Bhutan has managed to become the first "carbon

negative" country. Moreover, the people, on the other hand, are governed by an understanding shaped by the "Gross National Happiness" concept rooted in Buddhist beliefs. Having a worldview distant from globalization and material pursuits, Bhutanese people prefer a lifestyle prioritizing equal development and protecting the environment and cultural values. This idealism was shaped by both religious beliefs and the values made dominant by the Wangchuck Dynasty, which ruled the country for a long time. Furthermore, carefully opening up to the world in the last fifty years, Bhutan has succeeded in preserving its fundamental values in the process of modernization and development. For Bhutan, this transformation process has also been a process of integration. In 2008, the country transitioned to a constitutional monarchy and became the youngest democracy in the world. Still, the people continue to benefit from the sociocultural values provided by the Wangchuck Dynasty, which they hold dear (Choden and Wangchuck, 2018: 9).

Dzongs and monasteries illustrate Bhutan's current demographic structure and historical heritage.Dzongs serve an additional military function and do not follow a particular design. They were constructed on the advice of Buddhist monks called Lamas. One of the most famous dzongs, the Jakar Dzong, or the "white bird's castle," is located in Bumthang in the Chamkar Valley (Wangchuck and Choden, 2018: 26-7). Almost every dzong has a legend of its construction. It is told that sorcerers live in the dense forests around dzongs, and supernatural events occur there.

Bhutanese people have to wear their traditional clothes when going to dzongs. Women wear a dress called "kira" or a long skirt and jacket, while men wear dress-like clothing called "gho." It is forbidden to enter official buildings without ceremonial scarves. Men must wear long socks under gho, which lean until the knees. Slippers are not allowed in dzongs. In the lack of suitable shoes, one must enter there barefoot. Foreign visitors must also enter these buildings with clean clothes and definitely not by shorts and T-shirts (Wangchuck and Choden, 2018: 149). Similar rules also apply to temples.

Major religious buildings include historical temples called "lhakang" and monasteries still in active use. One of the most spectacular of these is Taktsang Monastery, also known as the "tiger's nest." Built in the 17th

century, this structure is one of the most important symbols of Bhutan's historical heritage. It was constructed in an inaccessible point of a very rocky area, hoping to provide protection from the invading armies (Ardussi, 1999: 42). All temples, which are important examples of Buddhist architecture, can be seen from afar with their white colors, cornered forms, and inlaid towers. From this aspect, they can be considered a kind of beacon in the mountainous region.

The people of Bhutan have led a more peaceful life than many other peoples in South Asia. The isolated state of the country, both as a preference and enforcement, was maintained almost until the end of the 20th century and has strengthened the social peace and cohesion in the country. Bhutan was never invaded in absolute terms, and it was largely protected from the British invasion by the Treaty of Sinchula in 1865. Exclusively, an intense migration influx occurred at the beginning of the 20th century from Nepal and India; and from Nepal again at the end of the 1950s (Chandra, 2019: 74). Now, the most crucial issue in Bhutan today is how to protect and develop existing values in the face of an inevitable process of development and opening up to the world.

Sociocultural Structure

Bhutan's sociocultural characteristics are based on two significant premises: the natural and living conditions induced by the country's unique position; and religious values. The unique identity of Bhutan derives from challenging natural conditions, harsh winters, steep mountain blocks that do not allow easy passage, settlements established in deep valleys that sometimes lead to a lack of connection and communication with other parts of the country, and communities that speak different languages and keep different traditions, although they have shared beliefs.

All communities in Bhutan value family unity. The formation of families varies across different regions' particular traditions and customs. For example, it is common for women to marry more than one man (polyandry) among the Layas, one of the peoples living in the high altitudes in the Gasa region. However, although the conditions for the formation of families differ, the order of family life is shaped by religious factors.

Gender equality is also a considerable fact for society. Compared to other countries in South Asia, women are arguably more prominent in social life in Bhutan. The laws entitle equal rights to men and women. It is also observed that some ethnic groups provide certain privileges to women. For example, it is common for the Bumthap people of Bumthang to pass the inheritance to women. According to Yangden (2009), women in Bhutan can take the lead in family decisions and financial affairs. Women have participated in the elections at the same rate as men. However, the share of women members of the parliament is 4.4%. It is asserted that this is because the education of young women had fallen behind before the 2000s, and a segment of society has prejudices against women (Chuki and Turner, 2017: 44).

79% of Bhutanese people are engaged in agriculture. Although they do not go much back in time, many studies have been carried out on improving agricultural conditions, extending organic agriculture, and increasing the diversity of agricultural products. The effectiveness of the improvements requires social awareness and infrastructural support. Although the positive results of innovations are revealed to them, farmers have difficulty adopting new technologies. Living in high-altitude and mountainous areas, they consider innovations risky and do not lean towards experimental endeavors (Roder, 2004: 114).

The languages spoken in Bhutan are crucial evidence of cultural diversity. The official language is Dzongkha, and the language of diplomacy and education is English. Still, more than twenty languages are spoken in this small country. The local languages are on the brink of extinction as they do not have a writing system and lack written sources (Dorjee, 2014: 85). According to Pema Wangdi's (2015) research, except for the three languages in Bhutan- Dzongkha, Tshangla, and Lhotsham (Nepali), all languages are in danger of extinction. Established in 1986 to develop and popularize the official language Dzongkha, the Dzongkha Development Commission works to document and preserve other local languages in Bhutan. In conclusion, linguistic diversity is the biggest carrier of cultural heritage, and preservation of this diversity is a part of the country's development philosophy, 'Gross National Happiness' (Norbu and Namgyel, 2019: 237).

The state religion in Bhutan is Buddhism. Before the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy, the country was known as the last Vajrayana Buddhist kingdom in the world. There are references to the principles of Buddhism in many articles of Bhutan's first constitution, which came into force in 2008. In fact, the concept of 'Gross National Happiness' includes principles deriving from the Buddhist worldview (Givel, 2015: 19).

Although Buddhism is endorsed as the official religion, it should be noted that there is a significant number of Hindus in the country. The Lhotshampas- one of the two most populous communities in the country, follow Hinduism. While Buddhism is common in northern Bhutan, Hinduism is widespread in the south. Buddhism dominates the country's general values and social structure, but Hindu traditions are also respected, and Hindu festivals are celebrated.

Religion in Bhutan provides spiritual guidance and is also an integral part of the Bhutanese identity. The name of the country, "Druk Yul," means *"the home of the thunder dragon."* This phrase refers to the "Druk" sect in Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet. "Drukpa" is used as the general name for the Bhutanese people. "Druk Gyalpo" means "dragon king," and Bhutanese kings bear this title. Many Bhutanese believe that the king is the "Bodhisattva"- the person who guides all living beings to attain Buddhahood in the Buddhist faith (Rigyal and Prude, 2012: 61). This is why photographs of the king, along with Buddhist images, decorate households and are placed on altars.

Economic Structure

Bhutan is classified as a small country in terms of population and area and undergoing a slow but deliberate economic transformation. The most important elements of Bhutan's economy are tourism, which has been progressing owing to the country's natural diversity and sociocultural characteristics, handicrafts that have survived thanks to well-preserved cultural values for centuries, and hydroelectric power plants, which have gained political importance. The people are engaged in agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry. The foundation of the Bhutanese economy is the "Gross National Happiness" perspective and the

sustainability approach that has been put into practice.

Gross National Happiness is a concept coined in the 1970s by Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth king of Bhutan. It has become an economic term in the 1980s and has played a decisive role in Bhutan's integration with the outside world since the 1960s. Bhutan, a country standing clear of the outside world for a long time due to its natural conditions and location, has managed to preserve the values that make it unique through this concept.

Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who succeeded to the throne in 1974, believed that the spiritual values that make up the Bhutanese society and culture are essential for the development and welfare of the country and compiled his views under the concept of Gross National Happiness. Wangchuck presented a different alternative to the conventional development theories with his statement, *"Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product."* In fact, this does not mean postponing or underestimating the economic development processes. On the contrary, it aims to focus on shaping the state of things reached as a result of the development process (Ura and Galay, 2004: 8).

Gross National Happiness is based on four pillars: Economic development, protection of cultural assets, protection of natural assets, and good governance without corruption. These four pillars have expanded into nine areas: standard of living, good governance, use and balance of time, community life force, cultural diversity and resilience, ecosystem diversity and resilience, public health, education, and psychological well-being. Center for Bhutan Studies has defined thirty-three criteria by conducting nationwide surveys to measure national welfare in these nine areas (Wangchuk and Choden, 2018: 44). The Gross National Happiness Index, in contrast to current notions of happiness in the West, emphasizes collective well-being and development. It prioritizes a collective understanding of welfare and happiness rather than individual well-being and happiness. Happiness is experienced individually, but it is also primarily collective (Ura et al., 2012: 1). Today, all government policies in Bhutan are developed based on the concept of Gross National Happiness. While striving for economic development, it is aimed not to compromise on the preservation of culture, traditions, and just and fair governance.

Potential of the Country

Bhutan's most important potential is in hydropower, natural diversity, and tourism. Its high potential in hydroelectric generation is also the cornerstone of the country's political and commercial relations in the region. Bhutan's natural diversity, which arose due to its location and isolated state of existence for centuries, should be considered and valued beyond tourism. On the other hand, Bhutan's tourism potential springs from many other characteristics and plays a key role in the country's future.

Hydropower is the backbone of Bhutan's economy. Rough terrain surrounded by the high peaks of the Himalayas and fast-flowing rivers at high altitudes provides a great advantage in terms of water resources for electricity generation. While this is the case, it has been Bhutan's neighborhood and good relations with India that have rendered the country's income from hydroelectric resources. Friendly relations with India play a decisive role in realizing and developing this potential. India provides the necessary infrastructure and technology for Bhutan through various donations to produce hydroelectricity. After all, utilizing this potential is in the interest of both countries. For example, Bhutan has exported 70% of its electricity to India since the early 2000s (Tshering and Tamang, 2004). Long-term plans are made to gradually increase the amount of electricity produced in the country, and large-scale hydroelectric projects that international organizations support to ensure sustainability are in the designing process at the moment (Hadikusumo and Tobgay, 2015).

Natural diversity in Bhutan is vital in terms of its worldwide prominence and participation in related scientific projects. It is essential that the country is regarded not only by tourism aspect but also as a global value deserving global support. Natural diversity requires decisive steps for protection today. Progressive and solid conservation measures are only possible by designating nature park areas and developing policies on issues such as logging and agriculture.

Nature parks in Bhutan include mountains and rivers considered sacred by Buddhism and Bon, endemic plant and animal species, high-altitude routes of great interest in trekking, and tribes with their unique language and traditions. Bhutan's two largest nature parks are Wangchuck

Centennial National Park and Jigme Dorji National Park. Wangchuck Centennial National Park hosts 244 species of plants, 23 species of large mammals, and 134 different bird species. The snow leopard and the Bengal tiger, symbols of the Himalayan region, live in this park (Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation, 2022).

There are many important trekking routes in Bhutan, some of which end in high valleys of almost 5000 meters. Throughout trekking routes, it is possible to experience different climates and meet both the generosity of nature and the richness of cultures (Gurung and Seeland, 2011: 351).

Despite all the difficulties brought by physical, climatic, and economic conditions, the Bhutanese government pursues a sound environmental protection policy. However, globalization and the media negatively influence the implementation of this protection policy in all areas. According to research by Rinzin et al. (2009), three main problems remain. First, protecting nature through the declaration of "nature parks" violates the rights of indigenous people. Second, the development of tourism makes it challenging to protect certain areas. Third, the inability to justify conservation on religious and cultural grounds rather than economic or scientific reasons is also a problem. To solve these problems, the government of Bhutan exercises many projects with the contributions of international organizations.

An actual evaluation of Bhutan's tourism potential requires considering many variables. Until today, tourism development has been impeded by the quota applied to the number of visitors admitted to the country and restricted visa procedures. From now on, improvements in sustainable tourism are expected to take place (Pratt and Suntikul, 2021: 85). Substantial developments are also necessary for the issues such as the physical structures of accommodation facilities, training in human resources, provision of transportation and infrastructure required in touristic areas, and facilitation of contact between different sectors such as handicrafts or festival organizations.

Bilateral Relations with Türkiye and Recommendations

Official relations between Bhutan and Türkiye were established with Türkiye's recognition of Bhutan. However, diplomatic ties found solid

ground with the signing of the Joint Declaration on 26 September 2012 by the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Türkiye and the Minister of State in charge of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan. Türkiye's donation to Bhutan after the natural disasters in May 2009 strengthened the friendly relations between the two countries. The Bhutanese Minister of Economy then visited Türkiye to attend a conference held in Istanbul on 9-13 May 2011. The Bhutan Minister of Public Works Yesvey Zimba's visit to Türkiye on 6-10 February 2012 was the first high-level official visit between the two countries. Bhutanese Foreign Minister Lyonpo Damcho Dorji participated in various official organizations in Türkiye in 2016. Türkiye donated ambulances to meet Bhutan's needs, and a full-fledged ambulance was delivered to the Bhutan Ministry of Health in February 2020 (mfa.gov.tr).

Kunzang Choden, the first woman writer of Bhutan, has a considerable role in the cultural relations between Türkiye and Bhutan. Two important works by Kunzang Choden, who visited Türkiye with her husband in 2009, have been translated into Turkish. Kunzang Choden is also a scholar and worked meticulously on the compilation of oral literature for many years. Her works, "Himalayan Tales from Bhutan - Secrets of the Yeti Legend" and "Folk Tales from Bhutan," were published in 2006 by Ariya Publishing.

Conclusion

The romanticized portrayal of countries leads either to underestimation of their problems or inhibits serious research on them. Colonialist and orientalist perspectives labeled countries such as Bhutan "underdeveloped" and either ignored or underestimated the values they represent. Mostly known for its legends and mystery, and thus included in touristic curiosities until the last two decades, Bhutan has started to acquire currency with its different features through the democratization process. It has also become associated with sustainability, cultural and natural diversity conservation, and ecological agriculture. Once portrayed as the homeland of the snowman Yeti and paradise on earth, Shangri-la, the country is now the subject of actual research with its actual characteristics. Bhutan represents an important trend for sustainable socio-economic development with its hydroelectric potential, water resources, biodiversity, and forest areas.

Today, Bhutan is at the very beginning of the transformation process other countries in the region experienced long ago. According to Dolma Roder (2012), the increasing consumerism and the destructive potential brought about by the spread of mass media have aroused the fear of cultural change and cultural losses in Bhutan. In fact, it would arguably be a success for human history if this transformation process is experienced as a voluntary exchange, namely, on the condition that Bhutan's values are absorbed and taken into account by the outside world in return for what Bhutan receives from the outside world. Author Kunzang Choden (1997) stated, *"Today, we are caught at the crossroads of traditionalism and modernity; we must not sacrifice our fields of experience for fear of exposing ourselves as backward under the scrutiny of the modernists' glare."* There are many lessons to be learned from this statement for many countries that are constantly under transformation and have to live in a globalized world. The rest of the world will have a lot to learn from Bhutan and other similar communities as long as they do not throw aside their own historical and social experiences and sacrifice their own cultural heritage on the path of modernization.

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INDIA

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Geographic Structure

Located in the Indian subcontinent, India is a South Asian country that has been home to various cultures and civilizations. It is the second most populous country after China and, by size, the seventh largest country in the world. It is bordered by Pakistan to the northwest; China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the northeast; Bangladesh, Myanmar, and the Bay of Bengal to the east; and the Gulf of Oman to the west (Güner and Ertürk, 2006).

In the shape of a triangle extending into the Indian Ocean, northern India is surrounded by the Himalayan Mountains, which stretch like an impenetrable wall from northwest to southeast. While these mountains cut off India's

contact with Turkestan, they connect Inner Asia to India through five vital passes in the northwest. The Himalayas, also known as the Snowy Mountains in Turkic mythology, are the source of the Ganges[1] and Indus[2] Rivers.

The function of the Nile River in Egypt is overtaken by the Indus River in this southern basin. The areas where these rivers extend through are significant as the cradle of Indian culture and civilization. Moreover, the Indus Valley Civilization or Harappan Civilization constitutes the oldest urban civilization in South Asia, extending over a wide area where the Indus Valley forms the backbone.

India's east and west coasts played a major role in developing world trade. Located in the south of India, the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), considered the place where Adam descended to the earth, is essential to India's history, culture, and trade.

On the other hand, Sind and Punjab basins have been vulnerable to foreign invaders since the first eras of history. Therefore, some historians include Afghanistan within historical India. The Khyber Pass connects these countries.

Dehli[3] is one of the most accounted cities in the history of India (Cöhce, 2002).

Containing various Western and Far Eastern elements, India has also been qualified as a separate continent due to its size and cosmopolitan structure. The borders of the Republic of India, dwelling on the legacy of one of the oldest civilizations in history, cover an area ranging from the peaks of the Himalayas to the tropical forests in the south of the country.

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1   Stretching from the Himalayas to Bengal for 2500 kilometers, the Ganges River is not only a source of water for Indians but also a river of great religious importance.

2   It is named Sind by Arabs.

3   The very first name of Dehli in the records is Dili. Located on the banks of the Jumna River, one of the main branches of the Ganges, the city was named Dehli after the Muslim-Turkic conquests. The form used today, "Delhi," became widespread as the British had difficulty pronouncing the former. Dehli, the center of all Turkic dynasties that ruled over India, is as significant as Otuken, Khanbaliq, Minbulak, Ghazni, Ray, Konya, and Istanbul for the history of Turks. Established on an area ascending just to the west of Mohammad Pur, Dehli is also in a strategic location connecting the Khyber pass to Central India and the Ganges rivers. Therefore, the history of the city has been extraordinarily vivid.

Demographic Structure

India is a country where people of many ethnicities have lived throughout history. Consequently, various sources determine that around 70% of the population is of Indo-Aryan origin, 25% is Dravidian, and 3.5% is of Turkic origin. Considering religion, 78% of the total population is Hindu, and 15% is Muslim.

To elaborate, in addition to being a country with diverse races and religions, India has also been the origin of many religions that exist today. The roots of the Indian religion date back to the middle of the second millennium BC. Indian religion-philosophy has developed almost without any external influence (Hriyanna, 2011).

With an ancient history, India is the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Moreover, it harbors a mosaic of religions, including Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Hindus are the most populous religious group in India, followed by Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains. Today's Indian culture and society are a reflection of religions that have had a great impact on Indian civilization. India also has 172 million Muslims today (INSAMER, 2022; AA, 2021).

As for languages, according to 2011 data, 528 million people speak Hindi as their native language in the country. Of the rest, Bengali is spoken by 97 million, Maratha by 83 million, Telugu by 81 million, Tamil by 69 million, Gujarati by 55 million, and Urdu by 50 million. It is noteworthy that Hindi and English, spoken by a large section of society, are also the language of official correspondence. India recognizes 22 regional languages and provides higher education mostly in English. The majority of the Muslim population continues to speak Urdu. The statement of the vice-President of India in 2019, "no imposition (of any language) and no opposition (to any language), that should be the position" (AA, 2019), can be considered the epitome of the country's democratic way of life.

English as the language of higher education provided an advantage to India in supplying many domestic or foreign technology bases, such as Silicon Valley with human capital, and rapidly becoming one of the world's technology giants, as illustrated by Microsoft's opening of its 4th data center in India.

Political Structure

India is considered the world's largest democracy, and its constitution-one of the determinants of the country's political structure- entered into force on 26 November 1950. The Constitution promises the principle of justice, freedom, and equality for all citizens. Although India is fundamentally governed by a federal form of government, it maintains the practice of parliamentary democracy owing to the presence of states and a bicameral structure. The Indian system distinguishes the position of the prime minister. Accordingly, although the constitution foresees the president as the head of the executive branch, the main executive power belongs to the prime minister and the cabinet of ministers. The cabinet is accountable to the Lok Sabha, one of the Indian bicameral houses. In addition, the dual parliaments in the country, the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha operate as the upper and lower houses.

This system governing all of India is called the union government. Moreover, chief ministers and state legislatures serve in the state governments of India.

A political party established in India is classified as a national party or a state party. The condition for a political party to be considered a national party is to have recognition in four or more states and the position of the ruling or opposition party in the recognizing states. Indian National Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), People's Party (Janata Dal), and Communist Party of India (Marxist-CPI) are the leading national parties in the country. State parties, on the other hand, are the parties that take part in the elections of several states in their region.

The Congress Party and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are the two prominent parties in Indian politics today. The Congress Party represents the nationalist-left ideology and experienced its most crucial ascendence after Mahatma Gandhi assumed leadership. Evidently, laying the country's foundations, the Congress Party dominated politics for many years. Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister, are charismatic figures known for building the idealist values of the country and their party.

Phenomena such as modern Westernization without being Westernist, anti-imperialism- panch shila in Indian political life were embraced

under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and his comrade Mahatma Gandhi. Nehru and Gandhi, like the Egyptian leader Nasser, represented Asia's two great ideological schools. Pursuing their ideas in the 'Non-Aligned Movement', they also played a significant role in forming the 'Third World' concept. In addition, the social reform movements of Nehru and Gandhi increased the social prominence of women, who had been neglected back then. Thus, unprecedently, Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter, could become the Prime Minister of India (Şahin, 2018).

Losing popularity especially since 2014, the Congress Party, has been replaced by the far-right and populist-leaning BJP, which opposes all these values (Trade Chakra, 2022; Politika Akademisi, 2014).

Historical and Cultural Structure

The people of India rarely had the tendency and enthusiasm to seize the neighboring countries and expand. However, they were constantly raided by outsiders, especially from the northwest (Cöhce, 1997). Before the Turks fully controlled India, the region was a scene of struggles between various countries. From the 7th century to the beginning of the 10th century, the rulers of India had been notable members of different Turkic and Afghan tribes. Although most of the commanders were Turks then, the significant Afghan majority in the army ensured Afghan dominance.

It is also documented that long before this period, the Turks from Turkestan were in contact with this region. As the Turkestan's elements of development were transferred to India through this interaction, the production and development in India increased. The arrival of the Turks to India coincides with their arrival to Anatolia, and India went through the brightest periods of its history during the Mughal Empire. The Mughals (1526-1858), the second longest-living state in Turkic history after the Ottoman Empire, had a great role in the spread of Turkic culture and the permanence of Islam in India. In addition, the rise of the dominance of the Turkic Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals in the region was enabled by the Turks' unique merits, such as leadership and warrior ethos. These characteristics helped Turks rule almost all of their destinations, like India. It is also a factor here that the Turks had permanently settled in the

places where they migrated when they had the opportunity to survive economically and socially (Şahin, 2020).

While Turks consolidated an empire with the Mughals in India, they also built a civilization. Turks significantly contributed to the formation of Indian civilization, considered one of the world's major civilizations, by no doubt with the progress made in literature, art, and architecture through crucial Turkic figures schooled in the cultural sphere. In addition to their role in India's current social development, they have also set an example for Europe in gardening and landscaping. Today, Turks still live in cities such as Hyderabad.

One of the most striking aspects of Turkic influence on the West and India is their mode of administration, which can be defined as multiculturalism-tolerance and classical secularism. Encountering people from many different ethnic and religious origins upon their arrival to India, Turks approached people's beliefs with respect during their rule and prevented religious-based cleavages and fundamentalism (traditions such as Sati, for example) in society. The most famous figure in this regard is Akbar Shah of the Mughal Empire, who made reforms and revolutionary modifications in the course of Indian history (Şahin, 2015).

Akbar Shah treated Hindus and Muslims fairly, adopted an understanding based on respect for existing beliefs in India, and strived for the welfare of the people. He believed that "the people are not for the state, but the state is for the people." During the reign of Akbar Shah, the primary problems in the country were identified on the spot, a struggle for a fair order was given, and social unity was achieved as the belief in the existence of a just administration took root. Akbar Shah held councils, made laws to ensure social unity, and made efforts in this direction. In this respect, similar to his contemporary Suleiman the Magnificent, he arguably left a mark on Turkish history.

In addition, with the famous *Din-i İlahi,* Akbar Shah proposed changes in Islam and interpreted it in tune with the age without amending the essence of it despite the opposition of religious scholars. His order implicated the concepts such as classical secularism and multiculturalism, and he became one of the first theoreticians of these concepts. Today, many countries still carry out policies based on multiculturalism. To elaborate, multiculturalism is a modern concept and connotes plura-

lism created by the convergence of different cultures (Şahin, 2020: 1968-1984). Turkic control culminated in India during the Akbar Shah era, often portrayed as India's golden age.

Following the collapse of the Mughal Empire, the British colonization of India initiated the destruction of the Turkic historical imprint and culture in this region. In fact, the current established term "Mughal Empire" was coined instead of India-Turkic Empire to hint that the Baburs are not a part of Turkic history. A process similar to the nation formation in Türkiye was also experienced in India against the British, who used many specific imperialist techniques (Şahin, 2014).

Like the anti-imperialist wave, the nationalist movement in India was influenced by the 1905 revolution in Europe as well as the Russian, Turkish, Iranian, and Soviet revolutions (Akalın, 2021). However, this movement gained its peculiar style under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and inspired the struggles for civil rights in many different parts of the world over time. Moreover, the motivation and unique resistance tactics provided by Gandhi's leadership still maintain their impact even today.

Acknowledging this impact, Albert Einstein stated, "Generations to come … will scarce believe that such a man as this one [Gandhi] ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth." The Foundation of the Republic of India on January 26, 1950 was facilitated by the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, who went into politics under Gandhi's guidance.

Economic Structure

India's economic values have an important place in its historical journey. The economy in India was primitive and unorganized until the Mughal Empire (1526-1858). Until this time, domestic products were sold only in domestic markets. The increase in production was mostly realized by the Mughal rule. Despite the significant amount of silver and capital entering the market, the Mughals implemented the barter trade system. The number of workers in the weaving sector- the most prominent production item regarding India and the Mughals, reached 1 million in this period. The Mughals and Asian peoples dominated the market. British and Dutch East India companies also operated here then. With the Ma-

harashtra rule after the Mughals, the use of currency, instead of barter, spread to all layers of the society, thus the country was connected to the world economies with all its segments (Frank, 2010).

Considering the Indian economy in the British colonial era, the Mughals had ceded the control of the Indian maritime trade and the import and export of domestic goods to the British before Britain established its control of the region. British plans to colonize India were not notorious at the time, and the internal turmoil in the Jahangir Shah era had a large share in this policy. However, the Indian economy fell back even compared to the Mughal period due to British colonization implementing the classical colonial approach. The reason for this is that the British East India companies transferred the region's wealth to Britain. When the people were increasingly impoverished, the British administration used Hindu beliefs such as caste, destiny, and rebirth and attempted to spread the conviction that poverty was their destiny (Büyüktaş, 2019; Galip, 1990).

During the struggle against British imperialism in India, Mahatma Gandhi also promoted economic independence and self-sufficiency through Satyagraha (Salt March) and the invention of Khadi fabric. Every Indian produced Khadi at home as part of economic civil disobedience.

Khadi Fabric and Salt March as an Economic Movement

"Khadi" means hand-woven fabric. This term was transformed into an instrument of political and economic activity by Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi. Khadi is a political action for the resurgence of the idea "yes we can" by reimplanting into people's hearts self-confidence that was destroyed through the years by the caste system and the deprivation of all kinds of independence in the grip of imperialism. The Khadi project was implemented to create in a holistic way economic resources for the villages instead of providing individual help for poor farmers facing financial hardship due to lack of employment in the dry season. Khadi is also a symbol of nationalism. Through Khadi, broad masses came to understand that they do not necessarily depend on the British and do not need to cooperate with them as they can easily produce this fabric at no cost. As a burgeoning reaction to the British,

who processed the raw material extracted from their land and sold them back, this idea transformed into an economic tool and a political stance through Gandhi's particular efforts (Gandhi.org, agis.2022a).

The salt march was a 24-day movement against the British attempt to monopolize salt in 1930 and played an essential role in Gandhi's worldwide prominence (Gandhi.org, 2022b).

It is noteworthy that the Indian independence struggle against British imperialism and the national movement emerged in the socio-economic area while the British had grounded the invasion of India on economic reasons. One should also remember that the economy was at the heart of the struggle led by Gandhi and Nehru, who rejected the caste system and opposed almost all the concepts of nobility. The promise of all-encompassing equality was imprinted on the founding principles of the Republic, established following this struggle.

The Indian economy also had to cope with demographic problems after the Republic's foundation. The main problem of India is the inability to diffuse welfare to the base and the further increase in unequal income distribution. In addition, due to income inequality, a large part of the population cannot adequately benefit from basic services such as shelter, nutrition, and health. In addition, India differs from many neighboring Asian countries in export due to the high demand in the domestic market. Since the production is insufficient for the domestic market, India remains a significant importer (Sethi and Dake, 2011).

Potential of the Country

India's potential has yet to be realized. Half of its population is still under the age of 25, and India is expected to lose its regional demographic advantage by 2036. Considering that the concept of superpower prescribes leading in all types of power, the size of the Indian economy highly impedes its transition to a superpower despite its large population and strong army.

The balance of growth and welfare could not be achieved in India. However, Jawaharlal Nehru, the founder of the Republic of India, promised freedom and wealth to everyone. Nevertheless, according to international statistics, India still needs to improve in many areas. For example,

according to the World Happiness Report compiled by the United Nations, among 149 countries, India ranked 139th in 2020. India is also ranked 131st according to the Human Development Index of the same year. Income inequality in the country is also at a high level. Both Mukesh Ambani, ranked by Forbes as the 10th richest person in the world in 2020, and starving people on the streets are Indian. In this respect, India is also a land of paradoxes. Since the population composes a market in economics, India is the largest market in the world where free trade is practiced. According to 2020 statistics, unlike other neighboring Southeast Asian countries, India has reached a literacy rate of 77%. This has increased the domestic demand for innovative products and fashioned consumer goods. Therefore, companies develop specific products for this market, especially in the automotive and smartphone sectors. India is the world's fifth-largest economy in nominal terms and 3rd largest by purchasing power parity (PPP). It is ranked 63rd in the World Bank's "Ease of Doing Business" index. In all these aspects, it has excellent potential for investment. It is pointed out in some Indian platforms during the discussions on India's status that the country has not reached the superpowers' level of infrastructure, and another 1.5 trillion dollars is needed to reach the desired level despite the previous investments by the governments (Hindustantimes, 2021; Kolayihracat.gov.tr .2022).

Undoubtedly, one of the most remarkable potentials for India is Bollywood. The Bollywood film industry produces 1000 films per year, approximately twice the production of Hollywood (Kara and Kozluklu, 2020). Bollywood also continues to compete with the recent favorite of the spectators, South Korean cinema. These facts lead to the expectation that Bollywood will be the main practical and theoretical determinant of the film and cinema industry in the future.

Examining the state of democracy in the country, which is of critical importance for investments, India's democracy ranks 47th among 167 countries according to the 2021 Democracy Index of the Economist Intelligence Until (EIU, 2022).

Considering the emerging markets and sectors, the best investment areas in India are information technology, fast-moving consumer goods, housing finance companies (a.k.a. mortgage previously), the automotive sector, and infrastructure (Tradebrains, 2022).

India has been one of the important centers of philosophy throughout history. While Indian philosophy first emerged as a belief system, materialist thinkers' influence transformed it into a path that people of all faiths could adopt. Indian philosophy as a belief is encapsulated in the most sacred texts/books- Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas.

The books of this belief have evidently had an important role in forming the ideas of Indian thinkers and leaders. For example, the leader of Indian independence, Mahatma Gandhi, stated that, among many different religious-political works he studied during his education abroad, the Bhagavad Gita had the most significant share in forming his ideology. According to Gandhi, the Bhagavad Gita includes figurative expressions and aims to guide people through the narrative.

One of India's most important sources of attraction is Indian belief and philosophy, which includes elements like Nirvana that are even very familiar to people of other faiths, and the physical and mental purification method- yoga practiced by people around the world. Today, the teachings developed by the gurus based on this view continue to influence people.

Indian philosophy is often interpreted only through traditional Indian beliefs. However, Indian philosophy has an intense structure with aspects other than belief. Nobel Prize-winning poet Tagore developed one of the essential masterpieces of Indian philosophy in recent history; Brahmanism with a socialist tuning targeted the attitude of traditional Indian belief toward women and lower classes. Apart from Tagore, one of the followers of materialist Indian philosophy is undoubtedly Jawaharlal Nehru. In addition to being one of the most prominent agnostics, his ideas with a unique interpretation of socialism are still a point of interest regarding Indian philosophy, belief, and politics.

Today, India remains one of the most important centers in the world, with its festivals, cuisine, TV series, and space program, as well as its position as one of the two most important nuclear powers of Southeast Asia along with Pakistan.

Bilateral Relations with Türkiye

Turkish-Indian relations are deep-rooted and can be traced back to an-

cient times, as illustrated in Mahatma Gandhi's statement, "India is like a mother; the Turkish and the Indian nations are like two children born from this mother." However, the 1912 Balkan War would be the exact reference point for the start of formal relations since the foundation of both countries. To help Türkiye, Dr. M. Ansari, one of the prominent leaders of Indian Muslims, arrived in Ottoman Türkiye with a team of 26 people, including five doctors and 21 health workers, and established a field hospital. Following the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Dr. Ansari and his team moved their hospital to Gallipoli and continued to help the Turkish army and people there.

In addition, the Khilafat Movement, founded in 1918 in India (Şahin, 2020), emerged as a movement struggling for the freedom and independence of the Turks in Anatolia as well as the independence of the Indian people. Arguably, the emphasis on "Khilafat" in the organization's name was of symbolic nature. The term "khilafat" was chosen to explicitly demand the end of the occupation in Anatolia, as it was one of the most familiar elements in this region at that time (TDV, 2022; Cöhce, 2022). One of the most prominent objectives of the movement was to support a nation that went to an all-out war against imperialism for the first time in history. The participation of Mahatma Gandhi in this movement shows that he aspired for a secular anti-imperialist movement and Indian independence. Fighting for Indian independence, Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian society offered their support, especially by forging European public opinion and providing financial support to the Turkish National Struggle. In 1922, when a clear Turkish victory in Anatolia was on the horizon, Britain widely arrested those who supported the Turkish National Struggle in India.

Türkiye's policies towards other oppressed nations after the republic's foundation resembled the Indian approach in the same matter. Türkiye was among the states that recognized India immediately after gaining its independence from Britain in 1948. In 1960, the first prime minister-level visit from India to Türkiye was made by Jawaharlal Nehru. Although the frequency of visits by the leaders of the two countries' decreased for a long time after 1965, commercial and economic relations continued.

The Bilateral Trade Agreement between India and Türkiye was signed in 1973. Institutional arrangements regarding a Joint Business Council

(JBC) between the Joint Economic and Technical Cooperation Committee (JEC) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) were signed in 1983, and the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Türkiye (DEİK) was founded in 1996 (DEİK, 2011). After the vice-President of India visited Türkiye on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Republic of Türkiye in 1998, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee also visited Türkiye in 2003. The Prime minister's visit led to a realization of India's innovative aspect and rising power in Türkiye. The bilateral dialogue continued in events such as G-20. Moreover, during Pranab Mukherjee's visit to Türkiye, important targets were set for bilateral relations.

For former Indian President Pranab Mukherjee, India and Türkiye are born partners. The two countries have set a target of 20 billion dollars in trade volume by 2025. India's economic relations with Türkiye have gained new momentum in recent years. Bilateral trade grew by 22% in 2018, exceeding 8.6 billion dollars. India ranked 6th in Türkiye's total imports in 2018 (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2022; Habertürk, 2019).

From an economic point of view, there are various opportunities and risks in India-Türkiye relations. First, there are populist and racist movements that might sometimes rise against Muslims in India. Second, India's preference to enhance foreign policy activity over its borders or regions, such as the Gulf region, where the Indian diaspora is concentrated, raises questions for the course of relations with Türkiye. Despite Iran's Muslim identity, India has signed important cooperation agreements with Iran, especially on maritime issues. This proves that the current government of India establishes relations with a particular preference favoring Türkiye. In addition, Türkiye's good relations with Pakistan are another determining factor in India's relations with Türkiye considering Indian-Pakistani relations. Türkiye already reacted against the cancellation of the autonomy of Jammu Kashmir and its transition to a union territory. Despite all this, Türkiye's economic orientation towards India is amplified by factors such as India's breakthroughs in informatics and its position as the largest and fastest-growing free-market economy in the world.

However, although a comprehensive economic partnership is pending on the agenda as there is still no concrete progress in signing a free trade agreement between the two countries, only a goodwill agreement was

signed in 2020 to develop and facilitate bilateral relations (DHA, 2019; AA, 2020).

Recommendations

Türkiye needs to develop relations with India to the extent of its relations with Pakistan through a balanced policy. It is in the interest of both countries to transfer India's information technologies and values it has created in this field to Türkiye. In addition, the enhanced relations with India can help Türkiye achieve faster its current objectives in economic creativity, as India achieved similar targets much earlier.

Considering the course of Indian foreign policy, the Jawaharlal Nehru era was characterized by idealism, the Indira Gandhi period between 1960-80 prioritized realism, and the post-Cold War era witnessed pragmatic policies with the liberalization undergoing (Ermağan, 2013; Özlük, 2021). Therefore, regardless of all kinds of political and ideological positions, India's improvement of relations with Türkiye in all aspects is compatible with the current pragmatist approach.

As a concrete indication of the expectation that every country will spend more time on bilateral relations as the slowing impact of coronavirus on economies fade away, it has been reported that Turkish-Indian defense industry cooperation will be realized soon. Thus, the Turkish member of the tripartite consortium will undertake the construction of 5 auxiliary fleet ships demanded by India. The shipbuilding project will be carried out in India, and it will take eight years (GASAM, 2020). This can create an important opportunity to increase the pace of bilateral relations.

There are allegations that the amendment to the citizenship law in India in December 2019 was made with the explicit aim of reducing the Muslim population because, according to the amendment, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, Hindus, and Christians fleeing religious oppression in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan could obtain Indian citizenship provided that they prove their identity and settlement in India for more than six years, Muslims in the same position are excluded from the law (AA, 2020). Such policies undermine India's historically prominent multiculturalism and damage India's image in countries with a high Muslim population.

In case India fully establishes the system envisioned by Gandhi, Nehru, and Tagore and leaving behind all extremist ideas, it can even become a member of the Islamic Cooperation Organization, for which it has always aspired, as a country with the fourth-largest Muslim population. If India acts on its self-declared position as the world's largest democracy and fulfills the requirements of democracy, perhaps it will acquire a wider area of soft power influence than Bollywood.

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MALDIVES

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Geographic Structure

Maldives is located in the South Asian region and forms the region's southernmost land masses. It is an archipelago in the Indian Ocean, located southwest of India and Sri Lanka. Its capital is Male. Maldives was renamed Dhivehi Jumhooriyyaa in 1968, which remains the official name today. Maldives is an archipelago country with approximately 1200 small coral islands. These small atolls belong to twenty natural atoll groups.[1]

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[1] The term "atoll" is translated into Turkish as "mercanada" and is borrowed from the Dhivehi language by other languages. See. https://www.atollsofmaldives.gov.mv/

Maldives in the Indian Ocean is composed of atolls on the top of a mountain rising from the ocean (Evirgen, 2002). These atolls were also named using some Arabic letters in the 1940s (Kavas, 2006). In the Dhivehi language, easily pronounced letters are more practical than long words that are difficult to articulate. Haa Alifu atoll is located in the northernmost of these atolls. The other atolls are Haa Dhaalu, Shaviyani, Noonu, Raa, Baa, Lhaviyani, Kaafu, Alifu Alifu, Alifu Dhaalu, Vaavu, Meemu, Faafu, Dhaalu, Thaa, Laamu, Gaafu Alifu, Gaafu Dhaalu, Gnaviyani, Seenu.[2] The country consists of 21 administrative units.

Compared to other South Asian countries, the oceanic climate is felt more in Maldives, which is close to the equator. The average temperature in the country does not change much due to its location (Robinson, 1989).

The total surface area of the atolls extending 800 km north and south in the Indian Ocean is less than 300 km². The altitude does not exceed two meters above sea level in atolls. But rarely, dunes up to 4 meters can form on the beaches due to the wind. Fua Mulaka, the country's largest island in terms of surface area, has been measured as less than 6 km in length and 1.4 km in width (Robinson, 1989).

The coral islands were formed due to the eruption of a volcanic mountain range. Some reefs act as a barrier around the islands (Zaidan, 2022). These reefs break the waves before they reach the shore.

Reefs surround the coral islands in the country. Reefs close to the shore prevent vessels from approaching the coast in many places. Ibn Battuta mentioned in his travels that the rope-derived material made from coconut trees was used in ships to stop the boats from being damaged.

The recent technological developments have brought about environmental issues in Maldives as well as all over the world. The revival of the tourism sector, the use of corals as building materials, and the problems in waste disposal have led to many environmental issues. Additionally, Maldives is under the risk of rising sea levels and flooding of the islands due to global warming.

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2   https://www.atollsofmaldives.gov.mv/atolls (Retrieved May 20, 2022)

Demographic Structure

Having a population of 530,957, Maldives is a genetically and linguistically relative people of India, the most powerful country of the Indian subcontinent.[3]

In Maldives, the population consists of, apart from the Divehi Rajje, speakers of Sinhalese- the language of Sri Lanka, Tamils from south India, and a small number of Arabs. Hindi and English are also spoken in the country (Avcı, 2003). This small island nation is under the influence of its relatives, the Indians.

The vast majority of the country is Muslim, and a significant part belongs to the Shafi'i sect. The inhabitants of the islands are incredibly calm, friendly, and helpful.

Being devoted supporters of Islam, the Maldivians were not culturally affected by the exploitation era they witnessed. But today, there is an erosion in the country's language. English is very common among young people, even in conversations between parents and children.

Government control is palpable in the country, and alcohol and pork are strictly prohibited in the regions where Maldivians live. Non-Muslims cannot settle in this island country; thus, the population is almost entirely Muslim. The government is rigorously keen on this issue as missionaries sometimes attempt to operate here. In addition, Libya, Kuwait, and Iran provide aid to the country for the execution of religious activities (Kavas, 2006).

Many workers from other countries of South Asia, namely Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan, come to Maldives for employment.

Political Structure

Maldives was under Portuguese occupation for a while in the second half of the sixteenth century and was attacked by people from the Malabar coast of India in the eighteenth century. The country was saved from invasion as Sultan Ghazi Hassan Izzaddin sought aid from the French. Maldives became a Dutch colony in the same century and a British col-

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3   https://www.mfa.gov.tr/maldivler-ekonomisi.tr.mfa (Retrieved May 23, 2022)

ony in the nineteenth century (Avcı, 2003).

There was also a parliament when Abdul Majeed Didi ruled the country between 1945-1953. However, Mohamed Amin Didi took over the government in 1953 and implemented many reforms. The country chose the republican administration instead of the monarchy in the same year. Thus, Mohamed Amin Didi went down in the history of Maldives as the first president. Mohamed Didi served until 1954 and was overthrown shortly after. Monarchy was brought back, and Amir Mohamed Fareed Didi ruled the country as a sultan until 1968. Between 1968 and 1978, Maldives changed its regime again, and President Ibrahim Nasir came to power (Robinson, 1989).

In 1959, a new country was founded on the islands south of Maldives. This administration, which was named the United Suvadive Republic, was supported by the British. During the reign of Ibrahim Ali Didi in Maldives, there were conflicts with the Suvadive Republic in the southern atolls. The British in control of the archipelago triggered this conflict. The war ended in the reign of Ibrahim Nasir, who came to power after Didi (Robinson, 1989). Britain, with its colonial rule in South Asia and many parts of the world, was also the cause of the turmoil in Maldives.

In 1965, Maldives declared its independence. However, the British government withdrew from its base on the island of Gan in the Addu atoll only in 1976. After Ibrahim Nasir fled to Sri Lanka with a large amount of money stolen from the treasury (Kavas, 2006), Maumoon Abdul Gayoom assumed the president's office in 1979 (Robinson, 1989). Gayoom remained in office until 2008, bringing the country to a satisfactory level in tourism revenues but ending the multi-party system.[4] Mohamed Nasheed became president after Gayoom lost the elections in 2008. With his vision to progress Maldives in every field, Nasheed was also interested in the policies to be developed in the face of climate change in the country. Nasheed was an activist and was overthrown in 2012 by a military coup.[5] This political crisis caused a decline in socio-economic areas, especially Maldives tourism (Rasheed, 2014).

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4   https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/9/7/maldives-a-timeline-to-corruption (Retrieved May 16, 2022)

5   https://majlis.gov.mv/en/19-parliament/speaker ((Retrieved May 16, 2022)

Maldives adopted the multi-party democratic system in 2008 (Özlük, 2016). The president of the Maldives is elected every five years, but they can serve for a maximum of two terms.[6]

From 2013 until 2018, Abdulla Yameen ruled the country, and İbrahim Mohamed Solih has been in power since 2018.

The parliament, or People's Majlis (People's Assembly), consists of 87 members. The Maldivian Democratic Party of the former and current presidents has 68 seats in the parliament.[7]

Historical and Cultural Structure

Maldives was an independent collection of islands in the first centuries of the common era (Robinson, 1989). Roman historian and soldier Ammianus Marcellinus is considered the first to record Maldives. In his fourth-century work, the people he referred to as "Divis" are probably the Maldivians who call themselves "Dhivehi Raajje." However, some scholars also claim that Maldives are mentioned in a second-century study by Ptolemy of Alexandria (Kavas, 2006). In the ninth century, a merchant named Suleiman testified that a queen ruled Maldives. At that time, the country was probably Buddhist-oriented. The islands' Buddhist temples, which are called stupas, verify this information (Robinson, 1989).

It is recorded that in 1153, the ruler of Maldives converted to Muslim through the efforts of Yusuf Shamsuddin Tabrizi or Ebul Berekat Berberi. An Arabic study in 1725 states that Tabrizi initiated the Islamization process in Maldives, while Ibn Battuta quoted that it was, in fact, Berberi (Casim Avcı, 2003). Considering that Ibn Battuta visited Maldives much earlier, the information he provided is likely to be more accurate.

It is striking that Battuta recorded that a woman, Khadijah, ruled Maldives. Other woman rulers also governed the archipelago (Bell, 1985).

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6   https://www.mfa.gov.tr/maldivler-siyasi-gorunumu.tr.mfa (Retrieved May 23, 2022)

7   https://www.mfa.gov.tr/maldivler-siyasi-gorunumu.tr.mfa (Retrieved May 23, 2022)

After Maldives endorsed Islam, the dynastic period began, through which six dynasties ruled these lands (Kavas, 2006).

Ibn Battuta traveled to Maldives in the 1340s and conveyed much information about the country. Staying in Maldives for a year and a half, he married and served as a judge. In his travels, he also cites the customs of the people and the woman ruler of the country, as well as a currency called "veda," a type of seashell (Battuta, 2019).

Maldives was colonized by Portugal, the Netherlands, and Britain, respectively. The Portuguese took control of the region by 1558, forty years after they started to trade here in 1518. Al-Ghaazee Muhammad Thakurufaanu al-A'uzam removed the Portuguese from the island in 1573. As an integral part of the colonial efforts in the Indian subcontinent, the Dutch joined their predecessors and proceeded to Maldives. Still, they got along well with the Maldivians. Benefiting from all the blessings of the subcontinent, Britain laid its claim on Maldives as well in 1796 and pursued the same policy they executed in India (Kavas, 2006). Maldives was conjoined to the British island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1887 and remained as such until its independence in 1965. In 1932, a democratic order was established alongside the sultanate. However, the monarchy was abolished in 1940, and a short-lived republic was declared in 1952, followed by the reinstation of the monarchy in 1954. The declaration of independence in 1965 did not abolish the sultanate until 1968, when the republican regime was adopted (Kavas, 2006).

The Dhivehi language in the Maldives is very similar to the Sinhalese language in northern Sri Lanka (Robinson, 1989). Dhivehi belongs to the Indo-European language family (Avcı, 2003). Familiarity with Hindi or Urdu helps one notice many common words and understand certain expressions. The people of Maldives appear to have been influenced by their northern neighbor India.

The alphabet in Maldives is derived from a mixture of Arabic and Dhivehi languages. The emerging writing system is called Thâna (Kavas, 2006).

Consisting entirely of Muslims, the sharia rules apply in the country. Since Maldives is mainly known for tourism, its culture has remained in the background. An examination of the constitution of Maldives im-

mediately reveals the difference between its appearance and substance. Articles 24 and 51 require that the president and ministers are Sunni Muslims. In addition to this remarkable statement, Article 32 states that the ultimate duty of the president is to spread Islam in Maldives (Ahmad, 2011).

Economic Structure

Maldives' structure is not very suitable for agriculture in terms of soil fertility. Throughout history, grain and textile products were imported into the country, and in return, fish, coconut products, amber, and items made from seashells were exported to different countries (Robinson, 1989).

Recent excavations in Maldives, stomping ground for merchant fleets, have revealed that Chinese merchants traveling west in the tenth century made regular visits to Male. However, despite having such an old trade history, the locals living on the island over time poorly progressed in trade -perhaps due to their calm nature. In the process of state monopolizing trade in Maldives, the leading trade communities, Bohra[8] and Sri Lankan Mors[9] were expelled from the country. The government created a merchant fleet and started to trade with India and the Middle East (Robinson, 1989).

Maldives could not establish a proper economic system after the British exploitation and experienced an economically unsteady period. In 1972, Sri Lanka's sudden decision to stop the purchase of dry fish caused economic problems in the country. As a result, the production sites became idle and were leased to a Japanese company. Another problem in the economy at that time was the low number of tourists due to the prohibition of the consumption of alcoholic beverages in the country (Robinson, 1989). However, despite the developmental problems experienced in many areas since the 1970s and 1980s in Maldives, there has been progress in drawing large numbers of tourists after realizing that improvements in tourism have evidently contributed to the country's economy (Rasheed, 2015).

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8   A people from North India belonging to the Ismaili branch of the Shia sect.

9   Tamil people with Arab or Muslim ancestry.

There are resorts on more than 70 islands in 7 atoll groups.[10] Some islands and sandbanks in Maldives are used by hotels. The number of these hotel isles is 86 (Baloğlu, 2012).

The currency of Maldives is Rufiyaa. Since the land is not fit for agriculture here, almost every product, especially fruits and vegetables, is imported, which puts people under economic pressure.

It is only possible to harvest bananas, coconuts, and mangoes from the country's lands. Since only 10% of the Maldivian lands are suitable for agriculture, only this cultivation level is feasible (Kavas, 2006). However, fishing and tourism are also very significant in the economy of Maldives. Boat building and handicrafts are other important sources of income. Tuna is exported to America, England, Japan, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, while various machinery and chemicals are imported from Japan and Sri Lanka (Avcı, 2003). Thailand, Sri Lanka, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, and India are the most prominent foreign trade partners in the recent period.[11]

As a superpower in South Asia, India assists Maldives in its development and transition to a democratic system as well as provides long-term loans (Özlük, 2016).

The tsunami that occurred in Maldives in 2004 dealt a heavy blow to tourism, the country's most important source of income, and consequently to the economy of Maldives.

The coronavirus pandemic in 2020 also affected Maldives immensely. The tourism sector has been severely damaged, and the country has not been able to accept tourists for about two years. Resolving the economic problems of this long period will take time in Maldives, just like in other countries.

Potential of the Country

Fishing is the most important source of income for Maldivians. The recently on-trend frozen fish products' contribution to the country's

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10   https://www.atollsofmaldives.gov.mv/ (Retrieved May 20, 2022)

11   https://www.mfa.gov.tr/maldivler-ekonomisi.tr.mfa (Retrieved May 23, 2022)

economy is considerable. Seafood is part of the local people's diet and is exported, providing a significant income to the country's economy (Rasheed, 2014).

There are settlements on 281 islands of Maldives- a natural wonder. Maldivians live in 195 of these, and 86 islands are used as hotels. There are around 1000 empty islands (Baloğlu, 2012). Evidently, utilizing these islands as hotel isles will contribute significantly to the country's economy.

The previously idle lands on the islands are zoned for construction. Providing dynamism in the economy, nevertheless, damages the islands' natural structure and brings ecological damage.

Bilateral Relations with Türkiye and Recommendations

Relations between Türkiye and Maldives started in 1979. After quite a while, the first official visit was made in 2005 due to the efforts of Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's office. In 2008, Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid made the first official visit by Maldives. In the same year, a "memorandum of understanding on cooperation" was signed between Türkiye and Maldives and ratified by the Turkish parliament in 2010 (Law no: 6053).

Maldivian Foreign Minister Dr. Mohamed Asim paid a visit to Türkiye In 2017. In 2018, he attended the extraordinary summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Jerusalem as well as the inauguration ceremony of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In return, Yavuz Selim Kıran, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, attended the inauguration ceremony of Maldivian President Mohamed Solih. In 2019, Maldivian Minister of Home Affairs Imran Abdulla visited Türkiye.[12]

The President of Maldives, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, received Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye to visit the Maldives at this level for the first time.[13] Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu

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12   https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-maldivler-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa (Retrieved May 20, 2022)

13   https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sayin-bakanimizin-maldivler-i-ziyareti--29-30-ocak-2022.tr.mfa (Retrieved May 20, 2022)

and Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid held a meeting in January 2022. Establishing closer ties between Türkiye and the Maldives was followed by cooperation agreements in trade, economy, culture, agriculture, environment, and diplomacy. Minister Çavuşoğlu also stated that the targeted trade volume with Maldives is 100 million dollars. In addition, it was decided that joint efforts and mutual support by Türkiye and Maldives would be put forward in the workings of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.[14]

Products such as iron, steel, starch, and malt are exported from Türkiye to Maldives. 18.2 million dollars of export volume in 2015 increased to 64.5 million dollars in 2018 but dropped back to 28.8 million dollars in 2019. In addition, the almost nonexistent import volume in 2015 reached 18.3 million dollars in 2019. Turkish Airlines has also taken a crucial step in facilitating transportation between the two countries. Since November 2012, Turkish Airlines flights have operated from Istanbul to Male daily.[15]

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14 https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/cavusoglu-maldivler-ile-ticaret-hacmimizin-100-milyon-dolara-cikarilabilmesini-hedefliyoruz/2489290 (Retrieved April 23, 2022)

15 https://www.mfa.gov.tr/maldivler-ekonomisi.tr.mfa (Retrieved May 23, 2022)

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NEPAL

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South Asia is considered one of the most cited places throughout recorded history due to its vibrant cultures, rich plains, towering mountains, and status as the cradle of numerous religions and civilizations. South Asia's vibrant and diverse nature is amplified by a small nation named Nepal, living in the heart of the Himalayas. People often associate Nepal with its unique non-rectangular shaped national flag, spiritual life, Mount Everest, priests and saints, Buddha, green paddy fields, and tropical rainforests. Yet, Nepal is more than that. This chapter aims to introduce different aspects of Nepal briefly.

Geographic Structure

To begin with, Nepal is a country located in the Himalayas that also contains parts of the Indo-Gangetic Plain. As a landlocked country, Nepal borders China to the north and India to the south, east, and west. Although China and India are Nepal's only neighbors, the thin Siliguri Corridor separates Nepal from Bangladesh, and the state of Sikkim, India, blocks its reach to Bhutan.

Nepal is the 93rd-largest nation in the world, with a total area of 147,516 square kilometers. Considering its tiny size, the diversity of Nepali terrain is remarkable, as illustrated in topographical maps.

Nepal is only 200 kilometers wide from North to South. Within this width, the 59 meters of altitude in Tarai in the south rises in the north to Mount Everest (8,848 meters), the roof of the earth. Almost 75% of Nepal's total area consists of mountains and rocky hills. Nepal can be roughly split into three geographical regions: Himal, Pahad, and Tarai.

Himal

Himal is a snow-covered mountainous region. Near the subalpine and alpine zones, the region embarks at about 3,000 meters towards areas primarily used for seasonal pastures (Nepali: Lakh).

Geographically, Himal covers approximately 15% of Nepal's total land mass. A few tens of kilometers to the north of the Lakhs, the high Himalayas rise up from 5,000 to 5,500 meters. While 90% of Nepal's mountains exceed 7,000 meters, eight are taller than 8,000 meters, including Kanchenjunga at 8,598 meters and Mount Everest at 8,848 meters. These eight mountains also make up eight of the ten highest mountains worldwide.

The Himal region has an extremely low population density due to its inaccessible nature and extremely cold climate. In some areas, there is less than one person per square kilometer. Yet, these areas capture the interest of thousands of visitors and researchers who travel to Nepal annually.

Pahad

Pahad refers to the mountainous region, rarely capped by snow and located in the south of Himal. This region starts from the Lower Himalayan Range, which reaches 600 to 3,000 meters. Pahad is home to around 45% of Nepali people and occupies 68% of Nepal's total land mass. Several of Nepal's major cities, including Pokhara and Kathmandu, are located in this region. Despite the rough topography, the soil in Pahad is very fertile. Rice, wheat, barley, maize, and sub-tropical fruits are all widely grown by local farmers in this region. Several climate conditions are experienced in Pahad, ranging from temperate to sub-alpine zones over 3,000 meters.

Tarai

Tarai is in the southern part of Nepal, consisting primarily of flat plains and a few hill ranges. Here the altitude reaches up to 600 meters, and it is Nepal's most populated region, taking up roughly 17% of its entire land area. Despite its modest size, almost 50% of the national population resides in this area. The Tarai region begins in the south near the border with India and encompasses the southern lowlands and the highly cultivated Ganges Plain. It is rich in arable and fertile soil and also known as the "Nepal's Granary." This region is also very diverse, with its tropical, monsoon, and subtropical climates.

Tarai is culturally akin to India's Bihar and Uttar Pradesh regions. Nepali is taught in schools and is often spoken in government offices, but locals mostly use Maithili, Bhojpuri, and Tharu.

Apart from this geographical division, Nepal was divided into seven states, 77 municipalities, and 753 local governments with the adaptation of the federal administrative structure on May 28, 2008. Each state has a separate government and a federal government in the center.

Demographic Structure

According to the 2021 census, Nepal's current population is 29,192,480. The annual population growth rate is 0.93% (Preliminary Report, 2022). In recent years, Nepal's population has been increasing steadily. In June

2001, the population increased by 5 million compared to the previous 1991 census (Census 1991, 1991) and reached 23 million (Census 2001, 2001) with a growth rate of 2,3%. The current population is roughly 30 million, growing at a rate of about 3 million per five years.

Almost 81% of the Nepalese population is Hindu, 9% is Buddhist, 4.5% is Muslim, 3% is Kirati, 1.4% is Christian, and the remaining are of other religions or non-religious (Preliminary Report, 2022). Although Hindus constitute most of Nepal's population, the Constitution identifies Nepal as a secular republic.

According to the 2001 census data, Nepal has at least 92 distinct languages. Nepali is the most widely spoken and understood language in Nepal. Aside from Nepali, other main languages spoken include Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Newari, and Awadhi.

Political Structure

Nepal is a multi-party federal republic governed by its Constitution. It is defined as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multicultural, and multilingual country with common aspirations of people living in different geographical regions, united for national independence, territorial integrity, national interest, and national welfare (Constitution of Nepal, 2015).

The form of government in Nepal is a multi-party, competitive, federal democratic republican parliamentary system. The President appoints the leader of the political party with the majority in the House of Representatives as the Prime Minister, and a Council of Ministers shall be formed in her/his chairmanship.

Historical and Cultural Structure

On the country's central, western, and southern plains, in the Siwalik hills of the Dang area, prehistoric sites have been found with paleolithic, mesolithic, and neolithic origins (Corvinus, 1985). Scholars believe that the oldest residents of contemporary Nepal and its surrounding areas were members of the Indus Valley civilization.

Studies found that the Gopalas and Mahisapalas were the earliest rulers

to make Matatirtha their capital, located in the southwest corner of the Kathmandu Valley. The Kirantis are claimed to have ruled the valley from the 7th or 8th century onwards. The sacred Hindu scripture Mahabharat mentions the famous King Yalambar.

Similarly, southern Nepal witnessed the rise of small kingdoms and clan confederations in the 6th century BC. Among one of these entities, a prince named Siddhartha Gautam from the Shakya Dynasty emerged. He renounced his status to lead an ascetic life and later became known as Gautam Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. Around 300 AD, the Licchavi arrived from northern India and overthrew the Kirantis. One of the legacies of the Licchavis is the Changu Narayan Temple near Bhaktapur, a UNESCO World Heritage Site dating back to the 5th century. In the early 7th century, Amshuverma, the first Thakuri king, inherited the throne from his Licchavi father-in-law. He established good relations with Tibet by marrying his daughter Bhrikuti to the famous Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo. Although the Licchavis brought art and architecture to the valley, the golden age of creativity is believed to arrive with the Mallas in 1200 (History of Nepal, 2022).

During their 550-year rule, the Mallas built numerous temples and magnificent palaces with picturesque squares. During their reign, society and cities were well organized; religious holidays and festivals were held, and literature, music, and art were encouraged. After Yaksha Malla's death, the Kathmandu valley was divided into three kingdoms: Kathmandu (Kantipur), Bhaktapur (Bhadgaon), and Patan (Lalitpur). During this time, Nepal, as we know it today, was divided into about 46 autonomous princedoms, Baise Rajya and Chaubise Rajya, meaning 22 princedoms and 24 princedoms, respectively (History of Nepal, 2022).

In the middle of the 18th century, an ambitious Gorkha King named Prithvi Narayan Shah united these princedoms. Instead of conjoining these new states to the Gorkha kingdom, he moved his capital to Kathmandu and established the Shah dynasty, which ruled unified Nepal from 1769 to 2008.

During a dinner party at the Narayanhiti palace on June 1, 2001, a terrible and tragic massacre decimated the royal family, including King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, and many of their closest relatives. Only King Birendra's brother, Gyanendra, and his family survived; thus, he

succeeded to the throne. Coming to power, King Gyanendra complied with the government for a certain period. Still, later, he dismissed the elected parliament, which held absolute power to suppress the Maoist rebellion (Hutt, 2004). The Maoist revolution in Nepal was a violent attempt to replace the constitutional government with a people's republic, and began in 1996 and then plunged the country into a decade-long civil war in which more than 16,000 people died (Nepal raises, 2009).

The Maoist party joined mainstream politics in 2006 following the people's revolution in the same year. As a result, King Gyanendra renounced his power and re-established the parliament. A constituent assembly election was held on April 10, 2008. On May 28, 2008, the newly elected assembly abolished the 240-year-old monarchy in Nepal, proclaimed the Federal Democratic Republic, and removed King Gyanendra from the status of king. Nepal today has a president as the head of state, and the prime minister heads the parliament and government (Nepal Votes, 2008).

Economic Structure

The importance of Silk and Spice roads is often mentioned throughout history. Examining the map of South Asia, one can quickly notice that the shortcut between these routes passes through Nepal. Various historical sources record the travels of traders to different parts of the Indian subcontinent and China via Nepal.

Nepal is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, with an annual growth rate of 6.6% in 2019, and its gross domestic product (GDP) for 2019 is $110.72 billion. Ranking 114th in the General Welfare Index, the country has risen 17 places in the table since 2011 (The Legatum, 2021).

Nepal is a developing economy and depends heavily on agriculture and remittances. Agriculture remains Nepal's main economic activity, employing approximately 65% of the population and providing 31.7% of the GDP. However, only 20% of the total area is arable, and the other 40.7% is forested (bushes, pastures, and forests); most of the rest is mountainous. The main products are vegetables and fruits (apple, pear, tomato, salad, peach, nectarine, potato), rice, and wheat. The Terai

plains produce an agricultural surplus. Some of this surplus provides for the food-deficient hill regions.

Nepal's GDP primarily depends on remittances from nationals working abroad (9.1%). Moreover, Nepal's economic development in social services and infrastructure has not made significant progress in recent years. The hand-woven carpets and apparel industry growth has slightly improved Nepal's goods trade balance since 2000. The export-oriented carpet and ready-to-wear sectors have prospered in recent years. Together, they account for approximately 70% of the country's goods exports. The European Union has become Nepal's largest apparel, fruit, and vegetable buyer.

Nepal has made progress in using natural resources, hydroelectricity, and tourism. In addition, historical heritage sites, multicultural history, and adventure sports such as rafting, mountaineering, paragliding, and bungee jumping attract hundreds of thousands of tourists to Nepal each year.

Nepal has an enormous capacity for hydroelectric generation. Recently, domestic and foreign investments in the development of the hydroelectric sector have started to increase. As a result, as of June 2022, up to 364 MWp of Nepal's surplus electricity is exported to India.

The main export products are ready-made clothing, carpets, legumes, handicrafts, leather, medicinal herbs, and paper products, which account for 90% of the total. As of 2020, Nepal's main export partners are India (69.9%), the US (10.3%), Germany (2.98%), the UK (1.95%), China (1.75%), and Türkiye (1.59%) (Nepal. The Observatory, 2020).

Potential of the Country

In 2020, Nepal ranked 159th in the world with a total export of 874 million dollars. In the last five reported years, Nepal's exports increased by $5.39 million, reaching $874 million in 2020 from $869 million in 2015 (Nepal. The observatory, 2020). According to the World Bank, Nepal has an estimated $9.2 billion of unrealized export potential. The World Bank also stated that Nepal has the potential to grow its exports by a factor of twelve, creating around 220,000 new employment. In addition, the World Bank has suggested that the government can revitalize Ne-

pal's trade dynamics by reducing trade costs and import duties and promoting tourism and digital/e-commerce (Prasain, 2021).

Nepal needs reforms in some critical areas to maximize its exports. For example, Nepal needs to be active in economic diplomacy to use much-needed capital, promote exports through digitalization, encourage exporters, increase digital trade, develop improved infrastructure, facilitate exports cheaply and quickly, and streamline the efficient process (Satyal, 2022).

While Nepal has theoretically 83,000 MW viable hydropower potential, in technical or financial terms, it only has 42,133 MW. India, China, and other countries are interested in investing in developing the hydropower sector in Nepal. However, political uncertainty and a challenging business environment hinder foreign investment. Unfortunately, the current total installed power stations can only produce 1095 MW.

Despite the difficulty of operations due to the steep mountainous terrain, mineral research has shown the presence of limestone, magnesite, zinc, copper, iron, mica, lead, and cobalt reserves. In 2018, active coal mines produced 11522 tons of coal.

Bilateral Relations with Türkiye

Diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Nepal were established in 1962. The Turkish Embassy in New Delhi is accredited to Nepal, and the Nepalese Embassy in Islamabad is accredited to Türkiye. In recent years, many high-level meetings were held between delegates from both countries. Finally, in March 2022, Nepalese Foreign Minister Dr. Narayan Khadka visited Türkiye and attended the Antalya Diplomacy Forum.

Türkiye has assisted the Nepalese people in the transition period after natural disasters and armed conflicts that have continued for ten years. In addition, Türkiye provided of assistance package through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) to construct dormitories for Kathmandu University School of Management (KUSOM) female students.

After the devastating earthquakes that hit Nepal on April 25, 2015, and May 12, 2015, Türkiye was essential in delivering humanitarian aid and

took part in rescue operations. Similarly, bilateral participation in trade has been increasing in recent years (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2020).

Recommendations

Tourism

The tourism sector plays a significant role in the realization of both the economy and national and international goals of both countries. Both Nepal and Türkiye have streets, places of worship, palaces, and other monuments that have witnessed ancient times and have been preserved since then. These venues are significant instances of how important diverse civilizations are to human beings worldwide.

On the one hand, Türkiye, the country where civilizations meet on the shores of the east with the west (Eurasia), and on the other hand, Nepal, the never-colonized country located in the east (South Asia) of the east and where more than a hundred languages are spoken, attracts tourists from all over the world. Undoubtedly, the hospitality tourists encounter in both countries has become a symbol of their rich cultures.

Nepal and Türkiye signed the Air Service Agreement in September 2010, which linked Europe and Nepal and added a new route to intercontinental traffic. Turkish Airlines has been operating direct flights between Kathmandu and Istanbul since 2013. Strengthening relations will be important in promoting and developing tourism for both cities.

Young Population

We are witnessing the most comfortable and easy period to travel from one country to another. People can travel worldwide for tourism, education, health services, job opportunities, and other reasons. Developed, developing, and underdeveloped countries continually build to improve their living conditions and achieve national objectives. The young population is the most open to the changes in this process. The world's future, which has turned into a global village, is built in the hands of these young people who can adapt to the conditions of talent, energy, ambition, geography, and time.

Nepal has a young, cheap, and hardworking labor force. On the other hand, Türkiye offers an excellent platform for Nepali workers who want to work in a safe and developed region. According to the 2011 census, Nepal has a total population of 26,494,504, of which 10,689,842 are young population aged 16-40 (40.3% of the total population) (Nepal Population Report 2011). Strengthening relationships will speed up the paperwork process, as well as make it easier to address the rights and problems of the Nepali worker community.

Education

Education is always a top concern for any individual, group, or country seeking to advance. Türkiye welcomes international students from all over the world due to its cosmopolitan atmosphere, rich culture, and history. Türkiye provides students with worldwide platforms and amenities and well-equipped campuses. The number of Nepali students actively promoting their own culture, discovering differences, and building their future in Türkiye is increasing yearly. Türkiye's higher education institutions have made significant progress toward becoming a center of attraction for international students. In 2018, it managed to rank among the top 10 countries in the world regarding the number of international students. According to 2018 data published by UNESCO, Türkiye hosts 125,138 students (YÖK-English Target-oriented Internationalization, 2020).

Concerning Türkiye and Nepal, academic staff exchange programs can be organized regarding research dealing with both nations' ancient history, the role of beliefs in society, the evolution of languages over time, and their struggle to survive. Many issues that impact society, particularly mythology, history, and language, might be explored academically. As a consequence of each of these, a broader perspective will be attained using knowledge gathered from different parts of the world.

In addition, about 7000 different plant species live in Nepal. The country also supports many animal species on its own, despite its small area. Approximately 180 kinds of mammals, 270 breeding birds, 120 kinds of reptiles, and 50 amphibians live in the country (Zuchora-Walske, 2008). Exploring these not only by tourists but also by researchers (especially

wildlife researchers and mountain research teams) will be an essential step to better understanding and protecting our world.

Investment

Nepal is a country with an open investment environment and significant opportunities for investors. Since 2007, the government has incentivized foreign investors through various regulations. The infrastructure and construction sector here will be a rewarding investment for Turkish companies as Nepal was aiming in the pre-pandemic period to be included in the developing country category by 2022 and is in a strategically important location. Even entering the East Asian market between China and India for projects such as regional airports, linked roads, and tunnels will be effective in attracting the attention of the surrounding markets and future goals.

 It is impossible to imagine any place without electricity; hospitals, train stations, offices, universities, and many similar or different business and private living spaces require it. Nepal is one of the most hydro-resource-rich countries with one of the world's highest per capita hydropower potentials. The estimated theoretical power potential is about 83,000 MW (Adhikari, n.d.). Nepal's total installed generation capacity is only 1,182 megawatts vis-a-vis 1,320 MW of electricity demand in 2018-2019 (Gunatilake et al., 2020). Turkish companies can establish hydroelectric power plants in Nepal to generate electricity, strengthening relations between countries and providing new job opportunities.

Nepal is the 93rd largest country in the world, with a surface area of 147,516 km². Despite having such a small area, it has an enormous geographical diversity. From the 59 meters altitude in the Tarai region (Plain) in the south of the country to the Himalayan region (mountainous) in the north and the world's highest peak Everest (8848 meters), the hills, plains, and valleys in between these regions are a unique experience for tourists. At the same time, the water passing through the mountains and hills can be used to solve the drinking water problems with various projects and establish the hydroelectric power plants mentioned above.

Evaluating these suggestions may also open up other fruitful opportu-

nities not included here. I believe that for everyone (individually) and every country putting effort, new paths can always be followed to develop, and it is never too late to realize dreams. I am most curious not about how many of the suggestions mentioned above will come true in the future due to this work but about what new ideas will blossom through it.

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PAKISTAN

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Geographic Structure

Forming a major land bridge between Southeast Asian countries and the Middle East, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is located on the Arabian Sea borderline in South Asia. It is bordered by India to the east, Iran to the southwest, Afghanistan to the north and west, and China to the northeast. The country has an area of 796,000 square kilometers. Pakistan can be divided into three main geographical regions: the high plateau and mountainous areas in the north and northwest of the country, the fertile Indus River Plain spreading over the center and the east, and the Balochistan Plateau pervading the southern and western parts (CIA World Factbook). Northern and northeastern Pakistan includes the Hindu Kush, Karakoram mountain ranges, and some parts of the Himalayas. This region contains the highest peaks in the world, such as K2. Moreover, it is

forged by climatic conditions, rough terrain, altitude, and the Himalayas as one of the most challenging places to penetrate Pakistan throughout history. The mountain range along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border can be crossed through historical passes such as Khojak, Khyber, and Baroghil. The arable soil in Pakistan is less than one-fifth of the whole. The Indus River basin, located in the north of Punjab and Sind province, constitutes the most fertile land in the country.

Demographic Structure

General Muhammad Ayub Khan, who became the head of state after the military coup he led in 1958, made the following note for April 25, 1967, in his diary: "1951 census 75 million, 1961 census 95 million and now God alone knows how many…" (Baxter, 2007, p.87) Ayub Khan was indeed correct: Pakistan's population, estimated as 40 million in 1947, reached 130 million in 1998. Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world, with a population of 242 million as of 2022. Pakistani society has a fragmented ethnic structure. While 44.7% of the population is Punjabi, 15.4% is Pashtun, 14.1% is Sindhi, 8.4% is Seraiki, 7.6% is Muhajir, 3.6% is Baloch, and other ethnic groups make up 6.3% of the population. Many languages are spoken in Pakistan. 48% of the population speaks Punjabi, 12% Sindhi, 10% Pashto, only 8% official language Urdu, 3% Baluchi, and 11% other languages (CIA World Factbook). Intriguingly, few people speak the official language Urdu.

The province of Balochistan, where almost 42% of the country's territory is located, has the lowest population density. It has the highest poverty rate among the Pakistani provinces. On the other hand, Punjab province- the country's political-economic center- has the highest population density. While as of 2022, the urban population makes up 37.7% of the country's population; Karachi and Lahore are the cities with the highest population.

One of Pakistan's most interesting ethnic groups is the Urdu-speaking Muhajirs (Muhajireen), who immigrated to the country during the partition of India. Unlike other Pakistani groups having a sentimental and political affinity with a particular place inside Pakistan, Muhajirs lacked these ties when they migrated to Pakistan. Muhajirs were also better ed-

ucated than other groups. There have been periods of ethnic conflicts in which the Punjabis and Sindhis fought against the Muhajirs when Pakistani governments delivered the Muhajirs housing and land to compensate for the goods and properties they left behind while migrating from India (Blood, 1995, pp. 142-143).

With a total of 242 million, Pakistan has the ninth largest population in the world regarding the workforce. While the majority of the population consists of Muslims, around 3.5% comprises Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and Ahmadis. The Shiite Muslim population is estimated to be about 15-20% of the total population. Pakistan has a very young population; today, 64% of the population is under the age of 30.

Political Structure

When Pakistan was founded, it consisted of two wings hundreds of kilometers apart, namely "West Pakistan" and "East Pakistan." The most notable detail of this political structure was that India was located between them.

Today, Pakistan consists of four provinces: Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "Federally Administered Tribal Areas" (FATA), previously located on the border with Afghanistan, was merged with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province in 2018. On the other hand, the Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir regions are governed neither by full autonomy nor by the provincial or federal government. Pakistan also has the Islamabad Capital Territory, administered by the federal government, with a similar status to Washington D.C. in the US. The president appoints each provincial governor on the recommendation of the prime minister. A province's wazir-e-azam (prime minister) is elected by majority vote in Provincial Assembly.

The country's first constitution, the Constitution of 1956, defined Pakistan as an Islamic Republic and prescribed the Pakistani National Assembly as a unicameral structure without a Senate. The constitution established an artificial balance between the two wings of the country, East Pakistan and West Pakistan. Moreover, it envisaged West Pakistan as *One Unit* rather than four separate provinces (Balochistan, Punjab, Sindh, and North-West Frontier Province). According to this constitu-

tion, Pakistan had a federal parliamentary system (Zafar, p.36), and the president was endowed with broad powers, such as the mandate to form the government and remove the prime minister.

However, the 1958 coup d'état took place before the constitution could be fully in force. The 1962 Constitution, a product of this military rule, sustained the unicameral federal system and did not include fundamental civil rights. Moreover, it replaced the political parties that Ayub Khan believed to be fragmenting the society with a new system called "Basic Democrats," in which politicians elected by adults only took part in the parliament. The presidential system was the most significant change brought about by the 1962 Constitution. Even today, it is still a matter of debate whether a parliamentary or presidential system is more appropriate for a country like Pakistan, a multi-ethnic and multilingual country.

This presidential system was not subject to checks and balances mechanisms, and central authority was strengthened vis-à-vis provincial authorities. The continuation of the "One Unit" policy made the smaller provinces feel they came under the control of the largest and most powerful province, Punjab. People living in remote provinces were made to travel to the center to receive even the most trivial permits. Former provincial capitals such as Karachi, Peshawar, and Quetta lost their earlier importance (Khan Khattak, 2004, p. 148). The authority of the Assembly was delimited; political parties were organized around notable and "trusted" figures and, therefore, could not properly do their function of aggregating and representing people's interests in the system. Fundamental rights and the role of political parties in the political system could only be added to the constitution with an amendment in 1965 (Zafar, pp. 38-40).

Ayub Khan had to resign under the army's pressure in 1969. After the downfall of General Yahya Khan's two-year-long rule following the 1971 East Pakistan crisis, the civilian government was re-established with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) initiative, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. In this period, a new constituent assembly steered the making of the 1973 Constitution. The 1973 Constitution reinstated the parliamentary system of government and strengthened the federal system by endowing the provinces with more authority. Moreover, it established the "Council of Common Interests" to increase harmony between the capital and the

provinces. Islam was endorsed as the official state religion for the first time, and some Islamic principles were embedded in the constitution. Although fundamental rights were widely covered in the constitution, restrictions could be placed on private property. With the 1973 Constitution, the Senate was established, the parliament took on a bicameral structure, the president was turned into a symbolic figure, and the prime minister's recommendations became binding on the president. The position of the prime minister also became stronger vis-à-vis the parliament when a simple parliamentary majority was no longer sufficient to remove the prime minister from power. As a deterrent against military coups and martial law, it was also declared that the constitution's abolition, repeal, or subversion would be considered treason and be subject to punishment (Zafar, pp.43-44).

Even though the 1973 Constitution was suspended by the 1977 coup d'état led by Zia-ul-Haq and the ensuing martial law, it was reenacted in 1985 with the "8th Amendment" decision that only changed Articles 270-A and 58(2). In the amendment to the constitution made during Zia ul-Haq's term, the president attained the authority to dismiss the prime minister and dissolve the parliament without a vote of no confidence in the parliament. This critical power was used against the PPP and PML-N governments in the 1990s. The president's authority to impeach the government was abolished in 1997 by an amendment to the constitution during the PML-N government (Baxter, pp. 133-134).

The 18th amendment to the constitution in 2010 abolished the federal government's authority over welfare issues, including planning, industry, agriculture and rural development, social services, and social protection. The local governments' functions and the local institutions were transferred back to the provinces, resulting in the abolition of 17 ministries, including food and agriculture, education, and health. The amendment also enabled access to capital funding by allowing provinces to borrow domestic and foreign loans under the condition that they are subject to limitations imposed by the National Economic Council (Shah, 2012).

Armed Forces

The armed forces are undoubtedly the most substantial actor in the Pa-

kistani political system. Parallel to many other countries, the land forces are the most powerful actor in the armed forces. We can attribute the political power of the army in Pakistan to the unbalanced power distribution among the present actors during the foundation of the state. The US military aid, which started in the early 1950s, and the inclusion of the army in the decision-making mechanisms by civilian politicians, mostly from bureaucratic backgrounds, were also influential in the acquired political role of the military- the strongest among all present actors in terms of unity, coordination and effectiveness. The Pakistani army carried out four classical military coups in 1958, 1969, 1977, and 1999, using civil politicians' inadequacy and disputes as an excuse. It is also noteworthy that coup attempts initiated by junior-ranking officers have never been successful in Pakistan since its establishment. While the Pakistani army controls Pakistani intelligence, it also has sources of income and an economic role independent of the executive power (Siddiqa, 2007).

Political Parties

Although Pakistani politics is currently based on a multi-party system, it is difficult to say that political parties have reached democratic maturity and have deep roots in the eyes of the people. Deprived of the opportunity to reach political maturity as they were closed during martial law periods, many political parties hardly endorse intra-party democracy. For example, according to the 1973 Constitution, a member of a political party who violates party discipline loses their seat in the parliament. According to article 63A, section 1, and sub-section (b) of the Constitution, the parties' deputies cannot divert from the party directives on agenda items such as votes of confidence, income laws, and constitutional amendments. Notably, these articles undermining intra-party democracy emerged because, in the past, party deputies sold their votes for money or other personal gains.

One of the best examples of this occurred in 1989 when the army bought off deputies of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by Benazir Bhutto to overthrow them. In turn, fear aroused that Bhutto would try to buy off the deputies of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the ruling party in Punjab province, to depose them from the Punjab Provin-

cial Assembly. PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif gathered his deputies and locked them in a facility in Changa Manga Forests in Lahore, keeping them there until the day of the provincial assembly vote (Shah, 2019). It should be noted that although the laws that undermine intra-party democracy in Pakistan give immense power to the party leaders, most of whom already dominate their parties, vote buying and allegiance changing are very frequent.

Despite the existence of leadership-dominated parties in Pakistan, one of the most critical factors constraining leaders' power over their parties is that politics revolve around certain families, both at the national and local level, due to the country's feudal past and the tribal structure. Therefore, the party leadership in Pakistan is inherited within dynastic families, as in the Bhutto, Sharif, and Hussain families, and only certain families can collect votes in the elections. This forces political parties to rely on these families and figures and turns politics into a "dynastic politics" in which "electables" are recruited to parties, preventing competitive politics and ordinary people's ascendence within society (Cheema, Javid, & Naseer, 2013; Malik, pp.81-93). Cheema, Javid, and Naseer found that between 1970 and 2008, Pakistani politics, laws, and programs were shaped by dynastic politicians from approximately 400 families (Cheema, Javid, & Naseer, 2013, p.1). Therefore, it is very difficult to talk about the existence of national political parties that are cadre-based, pervade the society, and have a well-functioning organization in Pakistan. Ethnic ties and tribal structures are important in the country, and there are political parties that defend the narrow interests of certain groups, such as Muhajirs, Punjabis, Sindhis, and Pashtuns. For example, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM, formerly Mohajir Qaumi Movement) remains an entirely class-based political party organized in the cities, advocating the rights of Urdu-speaking Muhajirs (Muhajireen) who migrated from India to Pakistan.

Historical and Cultural Structure

History

Immediately after Pakistan was founded on August 14, 1947, the Kashmir problem arose. While according to the agreement governing the

Partition of India, the future of predominantly Muslim places, like Kashmir, would be determined by their people, the prince of Kashmir chose to join India with a last-minute decision. When the Indian army then entered Kashmir, the Indo-Pakistani War broke out in 1948. The cease-fire line established after this war left the control of the Azad Kashmir region, constituting one-third of the larger Kashmir region to Pakistan; and two-thirds of the Jammu and Kashmir region, thus the substantial control of the strategically important Valley to India.

Liaquat Ali Khan overtook the prime minister's office after the death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1948, who is considered the country's founder. He composed "Objectives Resolution," which was accepted by the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in 1949, but he was assassinated on October 16, 1951. The second Governor-General of Pakistan, Khwaja Nazimuddin, succeeded Ali Khan. The fact that he is also of Bengali origin caused Punjabi leaders in West Pakistan to view him suspiciously. However, Ghulam Muhammed, who left the Ministry of Finance to take over the office of Governor-General, dismissed Prime Minister Nazimuddin with the support of the army and instead appointed Pakistan's Ambassador to Washington, Mohammad Ali Bogra. During Bogra's term, Pakistan became a member of the Baghdad Pact and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) (Wolpert, 1993, pp.60-61). In 1955, General Iskander Mirza, the Interior Minister of the Bogra government, replaced the Governor-General Ghulam Muhammed and appointed General Ayub Khan as the Chief of Staff.

From 1966 until the 1971 crisis, Pakistan dealt with the separatist aspirations that emerged in East Pakistan. The "Six Points" declared in 1966 by the Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman included demands for "autonomy for each state; the federal government dealing with only defense and foreign affairs; taxation and revenue collection being vested in the federating units and the federating units transferring a fair share to of these to the federation; separate accounts for the foreign exchange earnings of each state," and was perceived as separatism in West Pakistan (Wolpert, 1993). When Mujibur Rahman's party swept the 1970 elections in East Pakistan, Mujibur Rahman was expected to overtake as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The prevention of Mujibur Rahman's succession by the government in West Pakistan led to uprisings in East Pakistan. The efforts of the Pakistani army to

suppress the uprisings turned into a civil war. With the involvement of India, the eastern wing separated from Pakistan and gained independence, becoming Bangladesh.

The most crucial event that would affect Pakistan throughout the last decade of the Cold War and post-Cold War era was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Soviet invasion of Afghanistan suddenly turned the US-Pakistani relations into a strategic one. With varying levels of support from the US, Saudi Arabia, China, and Egypt, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) coordinated the mobilization, gathering, and arming of Afghan mujahideen groups.

The US administrations started to pay closer attention to Pakistan's nuclear program in the 1990s, although they were not necessarily troubled with it during the 1980s when the Afghan jihad continued. Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the end of the Cold War, the US administrations, procuring closer ties with India, partially lost their interest in the region and distanced themselves from Pakistan. One of the most important turning points in the history of Pakistan was the nuclear weapons test successfully carried out in 1998. Thus, Pakistan became the only predominantly Muslim country with nuclear weapons. The 9/11 attacks changed US-Pakistan relations irreversibly. Pakistan was one of the countries that the George Bush administration (2001-2009) demanded unconditional cooperation. Several of the "non-negotiable" demands that the US conveyed to President Musharraf included the complete termination of logistical support to Bin Laden; stopping al-Qaeda militants at the Pakistani border; confiscation of all weapons transferred to Afghanistan via Pakistan; unrestricted airspace access to flights and landings; access to Pakistani naval bases and borders; immediate access to intelligence and immigration information systems; vehement condemnation of the September 11 attacks and all domestic expressions supporting terrorism against the United States, its friends, and allies; cutting off gasoline supplies to the Taliban and preventing Pakistanis from traveling to Afghanistan to join the Taliban (Tahir-Kheli, 2018).

After the post-coup Pervez Musharraf period that lasted nine years, Pakistan returned to multi-party politics in 2008. Nawaz Sharif, exiled after the 1999 coup, was allowed to return to the country in 2007. At the end

of 2007, PPP leader Benazir Bhutto was assassinated. The country came under civilian rule again with the 2008 elections; however, the military's intervention in politics continued, albeit indirectly. No civilian government in the country has yet been able to complete its five-year term and join the subsequent elections.

Cultural Structure

Family and relatives are at the center of social life in Pakistan. Even among the most Westernized elite, the family maintains its central importance. Kinship is passed on by the father; brotherhood networks and paternal relatives are critical in social relations (Blood, pp.100-101). One of the large groups living in the country, Pashtuns, has a code of behavior called *Pakhtunwali,* which includes their customs and traditions. Pakhtunwali is considered to have two dimensions, victims' rights and collective responsibility in the face of crime. The former concerns how the victim's family can be compensated for their loss and what can be done for the victim. The custom emphasizes some form of compensation for the victim rather than the punishment of the offender. The latter rejects the principle of the individuality of the crime. The particular Pashtun tribe to which the criminal belongs shares responsibility for the crime.

Notable concepts in this custom are *ahd*-loyalty to the promises; *izzet*-individual and collective dignity; and *tureh*- the belief that conversation and gatherings will not solve issues and one can only rely on either God or the sword. Moreover, there are other rules such as *badal*- revenge; *melmastia*- hospitality; and *nanawati*- non-refusal of the asylum seeker (Spain, pp.40-42).

Beliefs in astrology and spiritual figures are important in Pakistani daily and political life. For example, in the early years of his rule, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto consulted with spiritual figures and attached great importance to astrologists' statements and writings. During the anti-government protests that started in 1977 alleging that the government cheated in the general elections, many astrologists sent letters to Prime Minister Bhutto foreseeing which days would be luckier for him in the management of the crisis, what he should or should not do, and even when he

would lose his power (Wolpert, pp. 318, 371-372). Thus, it should be no surprise that Imran Khan, who fell from power in 2022, also sought spiritual guidance from fortune-tellers and oracles (Taseer, 2019).

Economic Structure

When Pakistan was founded in 1947, it had a fragile economic infra-structure; for instance, it had only a few weaving mills and a cement plant (Looney, p. 196). In the 1950s, jute and cotton were the two most important export products providing foreign currency inflow. Although Pakistan is one of the world's leading textile manufacturers today, the foreign exchange deficit problem continues.

Pakistan's exports are primarily to the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Afghanistan. Its highest imports are from China, the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia.

Pakistan has persistently faced inequality in income distribution since its foundation. Studies by economists in the 1960s showed that forty large industrial groups owned about 42% of the country's industrial assets and more than 50% of domestic private assets. Eight of the nine major commercial banks at that time were controlled by the same industrial groups. The Chief Economist of the Planning Commission at the time, Mahbub ul Haq, reported that Pakistan's economic growth failed to improve the living standards of ordinary people, and the expectation that the development would spill over the lower segments in time only resulted in accumulation of the assets in twenty-two families (Blood, pp. 154-155). Moreover, according to a 2021 report, thirty-one families control the Pakistani financial market (Ul Haque and Husain, 2021).

While the number of people below the poverty line was 19 million in 1960, the population experiencing absolute poverty increased to 34 million in 1980. The number of people living in poverty decreased by 10 million in the 1980s due to remittances sent by the Pakistanis working in the Gulf region, but increased to 42 million once more between 1990 and 1995 (Looney, p. 198). Between 2001 and 2015, the proportion of individuals living below the national poverty line could be reduced from 64.3% to 24.3%. The World Bank reckons that the poverty rate in-

creased again after 2015 due to macroeconomic crises, the slowdown in growth, and the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2020). According to the Asian Development Bank, 21.9% of the population lived below the poverty line in 2018 (Asian Development Bank).

As in many other South Asian countries, the remittances from the Gulf region are the backbone of Pakistan's economy. According to the International Labor Organization data, the number of Pakistanis who went abroad to work as of the end of 2019 is more than 11 million[1] It increased by 27.6 compared to the previous year and reached 28 thousand (Mian, 2022). With the pandemic conditions ameliorating, the number of Pakistanis who registered with the Pakistan Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment to work abroad in 2021 increased by 27.6% compared to the previous year and reached 286,000 (Mian, 2022).

Pakistan has a long history also with the IMF. Pakistan's latest applications to the IMF were in 2008, 2013, and 2019, and it signed three agreements with the IMF for 7.6 billion dollars in 2008, 6.68 billion dollars in 2013, and 6 billion dollars in 2019. The two main reasons for Pakistan to apply for IMF assistance are the balance of payments problem occurring in times of current account deficit, and public finance mismanagement. Mismanagement in public finance stems from the inability to collect taxes, a general problem of all governments in Pakistan, and the subsidies governments apply in the energy sector (Dohadwala, Bin Khalid, and Nachiappan, 2020). During the economic crises spanning many years, Pakistan has received aid from other actors in addition to the IMF. Having close bilateral relations with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and China have often provided financial assistance through grants, loans, or foreign currency inflows to the Central Bank of Pakistan.

Potential of the Country

Pakistan does not make good use of its rich geographical features, pluralistic structure, and human capital. The country remains far below its tourism potential due to terrorism, militancy, lack of infrastructure investment, and poor performance in the fight against crime. Pakistan

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1   https://www.ilo.org/islamabad/areasofwork/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm

has aimed to replace its geopolitical approach with a geoeconomic one in recent years; nevertheless, especially starting from the Imran Khan period (2018-2022), promotional activities conducted around the world about the country's tourism potential have not yet been successful.

While the vast young population is one of the biggest challenges due to the current economic and political conditions, it raises Pakistan's national ceiling. The youth population growth rate requires creating new jobs for several million young people every year in Pakistan, yet the country falls behind this rate, and thus a great potential is wasted.

Pakistan needs to use its geographical location more effectively in line with geoeconomic targets. Currently, it cannot sufficiently use its neighboring position with the two fastest-growing countries, India and China, nor its location at a critical strategic connection point. Pakistan's trade volume with China and India is relatively low. While the country's share in world trade has decreased in the last two decades, many rival countries' shares have increased. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is capable of making Pakistan a transit point of international trade; however, the positive returns of this enormous investment have not yet been reflected in Pakistan and provinces such as Balochistan, through which the corridor passes. Having an excellent location between Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, East Asia, and South Asia, Pakistan's improvement of its logistics and transportation network, customs procedures, and infrastructure can bring the country to a firm level in both national and transit trade.

The persistent problem of energy supply in Pakistan can only be solved by greater regional integration. Improvements in energy trade with other countries, especially in Central Asia, can greatly relieve Pakistan (Indrawati, 2015).

Bilateral Relations with Türkiye

Türkiye-Pakistan relations are characterized by continuity. The modest friendship that started between the two countries in the 1950s quickly turned into a close political and military partnership. On the other hand, neither the partition of India nor the perception of the Soviet threat was sufficient for Türkiye to be pro-Pakistan immediately after

World War II. In fact, during this period, Türkiye refused to join the Pan-Islamic Confederation proposed by Pakistani Foreign Minister Zafarullah Khan during his trip to Türkiye, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon in 1952. Türkiye rejected this proposal on the grounds that "Islam as a cultural bond could not replace the political unity Türkiye needed due to its long border with the Soviet Union." In addition, Türkiye was satisfied with NATO and its military guarantees (Aslan, 2022).

However, the more Türkiye turned to the West and joined the anti-communist global (NATO, 1952) and regional (MEDO-Middle East Defense Organization, 1953, Baghdad Pact, 1955) security organizations; it developed closer ties with Pakistan. The embryonic Türkiye-Pakistan partnership proliferated, spread to Iraq and Iran, and culminated in the Baghdad Pact in 1955. On the other hand, while military and political relations developed rapidly, cultural, and economic relations fell behind even after establishing the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) between Pakistan, Iran, and Türkiye in 1964.

Pakistan-Türkiye bilateral relations are continuous in the plane of military, political and cultural relations, regardless of the policies and stances of governments and international and regional structures. The most unambiguous indication of this is that bilateral relations have not been interrupted in the last five years despite the political developments in Pakistan. Neither the forced resignation of Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the PML-N government, on corruption charges in 2017 nor the overthrowing of Prime Minister of the PTI government, Imran Khan, this time as a result of a vote of no confidence in a process that also led to coup accusations in 2022 caused considerable deterioration in Turkish-Pakistani relations.

Although Türkiye and Pakistan have had differences of opinion on Afghanistan since the 1990s, they are the ultimate supporters of each other in the international arena, especially in Kashmir and Cyprus issues. Despite the nearly perfect bilateral military, intelligence, and political relations, the similarity of their economic structures, for example, in textile exports, has caused economic relations between the two countries to remain deficient. While Pakistani students are among the largest student groups benefiting from Türkiye's scholarships, Turkish TV series have been in great demand in Pakistan lately, and both developments have allowed cultural relations to evolve further.

In order to further develop bilateral relations, the very close contact at the official level should be transformed into more concrete and permanent cooperation through universities and think tanks. Similarly, it would be helpful to move history and social closeness from the platonic level to a realistic level where the two communities interact more closely and get to know each other better.

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SRI LANKA

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Introduction

The island country of Sri Lanka, a teardrop-shaped landmass located at the southern tip of India, has been known by many different names throughout its long history. To Ptolemy and the Mediterranean world, this gem-filled island was known as *Taprobane*; in Mahayana Buddhist Sanskrit writings such as the Avalokitesvara-Guna-Karandavyuha Sutra, it was called *Simhaladvipa* ("Sinhala island"), and in the Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa chronicles, estimated to be written in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, the island was called *Dhammadipa* ("island of Buddhist teaching"). Furthermore, throughout history, Tamils called the island Eelam, while it has always been Lanka for the Sinhalese people. For the Arabs, the island was *Serendib*, meaning the island of jewels; for the Portuguese, *Ceilao*.

Finally, Ceylon- the British colonial denomination, remained its official name until the change to Sri Lanka in 1972 by the Sinhalese-dominated government (Holt, 2011, 1).

Geographic Structure

The island of Sri Lanka dwells in a strategic location close to major sea routes in the Indian Ocean, about 645 kilometers north of the equator and about 60 kilometers away from the Indian mainland. It is separated from the Indian subcontinent by the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait. Due to its location, Sri Lanka has climatic and cultural connections with three continents (https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sri-lanka/). Resembling the shape of a pear for some and the shape of a teardrop for others, it has a total surface area of 65,610 km² and a total coastline of 1,340 km. Sri Lanka's broadest point is 438 km long and 225 km wide. It is the 17th smallest country in Asia and 123rd biggest in the world (https://www.worlddata.info/asia/sri-lanka/index.php). Sri Lanka's terrain is largely flat and uneven (https://www.go-lanka.com/sri-lanka/geography.html). It has an altitude of 228 meters. In addition to the main island, it has about 80 smaller islands. Sri Lanka's only direct neighbor is India (https://www.worlddata.info/asia/sri-lanka/index.php).

Sri Lanka has about a hundred rivers originating from the mountains and flowing down the sea. Most flow fast during the rainy season, but the twelve major rivers comprise about 75% of the country's average annual river flow (https://www.go-lanka.com/sri-lanka/geography.html).

Climate

Located just north of the equator, Sri Lanka has a tropical climate that is hot and humid all year round. Temperature varies slightly seasonally. Lowland temperatures average 28 degrees throughout the year, and higher temperatures are measured in the northern-central plains. The temperature in the highlands varies according to the altitude; the highest average temperature in towns at higher altitudes is 20 degrees, and the lowest is 10 degrees.

The two monsoon seasons bring seasonal variations to the climate. The

southwestern monsoon bears rain from April to June in the densely populated southern and western parts of the island, and the northeast monsoon season afflicts most of the island from mid-October to mid-February. These rainfalls divide the island into Wet Zone and Dry Zone. In the year-round rainy Wet Zone, precipitation levels can exceed 3,700 millimeters per year. The term "Dry Zone" is sometimes misinterpreted because, during the monsoon season, the precipitation level here is up to 1,500 millimeters. Therefore, the term "dry" actually connotes a nine-month-long dryness every year (https://www.worlddata.info/asia/sri-lanka/index.php).

Demographic Structure

Sri Lanka has a pluralistic society. More than 99% of the country's population comprises the three ethnic groups—Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim—and the Sinhalese alone constitute almost three-quarters of the population. The Tamils consist of two groups - Sri Lankan Tamils (descendants from Southeast India, settled in Sri Lanka long ago) and Indian Tamils (relatively recent immigrants from Southeast India, many of whom were workers brought to British Ceylon). Slightly more than one-eighth of the total population belongs to the former group. Muslims make up about 7.5% of the population and their origin can be traced back to the Arab traders of the 8th century.

The Sinhalese People

The Sinhalese constitute the majority in Sri Lanka, live in the southwestern part of the country, and predominantly belong to the Theravada Buddhist faith. They believe they are descended from a lion, and their name is derived from the term "the house of the lions." The Sinhalese have traditionally settled in the rainy regions of the central, southern, and western cities of Sri Lanka. Here they are divided into two regional subgroups: Kandyan Sinhalese of the central highlands and Low-country Sinhalese of the areas near the sea. With the rise of government-supported internal colonization projects after 1945, significant domestic migration occurred to the arid region in central and northeast Sri Lanka. Sinhala is an Indo-European language of the Indo-Aryan group and

was brought to Sri Lanka by North Indian settlers around 500 BC (Levinson, 1992, p.264).

Sinhalese dynastic chronicles trace their origins to the exile of Prince Vijaya and his 500 followers from his father's kingdom in North India. According to chronicles depicting Sri Lanka as a country destined to preserve Buddhism, Vijaya (grandson of an Indian princess and a lion) arrived in Sri Lanka at the time of Buddha's death. In the third century BC, the Sinhalese king adopted Buddhism. In the first century BC, a Sinhalese Buddhist civilization based on irrigated rice cultivation emerged in the arid region, with the capital cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa (Levinson, 1992, p.264). However, by the 13th century AD, a great civilization collapse occurred due to reasons that are still debated (possible causes like malaria, internal conflicts, and invasions from South India), and the population relocated to the southwest (Levinson, 1992, p.265). Today, Sinhalese people form the majority in the country's southern, western, central, and north-central parts.

Sri Lankan Tamils

Linguistically and culturally related to the Tamil-speaking and Malayalam-speaking peoples of southern India, Sri Lankan Tamils have long resided in their traditional homeland (Sri Lanka's northern and eastern cultural regions). Geographical and historical conditions distinguished Sri Lankan Tamils as a distinct culture and society. Sri Lankan Tamils are predominantly Hindu and call their traditional homeland *Tamil Eelam*. While the term originally meant "Tamil Sri Lanka," it has now become almost synonymous with the aspirations for a separate state in the Tamil-dominated and Tamil-speaking North Eastern Province. Sri Lankan Tamils distinguish themselves from the "Indian Tamils," the Tamil-speaking descendants of South Indian Tamil workers brought to Sri Lanka to work in the nineteenth-century British tea plantations, as well as from native Tamils (Levinson, 1992, p.280).

The center of Sri Lankan Tamil population and culture is the densely populated Jaffna Peninsula in the north; the remaining Tamil population extends on the Mannar island and along the eastern coastline from northern Trincomalee to Batticaloa. Many Sri Lankan Tamils have re-

cently migrated to the North Central Province and Colombo; almost half of the Sri Lankan Tamil population live outside their traditional homeland. Sri Lankan Tamil communities live in key overseas places such as London, Australia, and Malaysia and maintain close ties with their families in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan Tamils working in these countries contribute significantly to the Sri Lankan Tamil economy through remittances (Levinson, 1992, p.280).

Sri Lankan Muslims

As a religious and ethnic community on the island, Muslims have a history of at least a thousand years. Although Sri Lanka's Muslim community is dispersed throughout the country, they only make up 9.7% of the total population. Most Sri Lankan Muslims are Sunni, and there is a small Shia (Ismaili) community, such as the Bohras. Still, the Sunni-Shiite separation in Sri Lanka does not stand out as much as in other places; it is even disregarded (Johansson, 2019, p.8). Most Sri Lankan Muslims are native Tamil speakers, but some also speak Sinhala, the language of the majority.

Sri Lanka's Muslim community can be traced back to the trading activity between South-Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Middle Eastern traders (i.e., Arabs and Persians) first traded in southern India in the seventh century, and this trade spread to Sri Lanka. They married Tamil and Sinhalese women and settled in Sri Lanka (Johansson, 2019, p.3-4). The descendants of Arab settlers in Sri Lanka were called Marakkala by Sinhalese, Sonahars by Tamils, and Moors by Europeans (Mohamed, 2011, p.430).

In his account of Sri Lanka, Marco Polo mentions Adam's Peak on the island and that he learned in 1281 from the Muslims who visited this place that the remains of Adam could be there. He also observed a significant Muslim presence in Sri Lanka (Bergreen, 2012, p.310). Traveling to Sri Lanka in the next century (1344), Ibn Battuta noted not only the prominent presence of Muslims along the coast, especially on the southwestern coast but also their permanent settlement in the inner parts of the island (Ibn Battuta Seyahatnamesi, 2000, pp.846-864).

The Portuguese, the first European naval power in the Indian Ocean, ar-

rived in Sri Lanka in the 16th century and started colonial activities on the island, bringing Christianity along. After the Portuguese, the Dutch ruled the island between 1638 and 1796 through colonial activities as well. The Dutch treated the Muslim inhabitants in the same way as the Portuguese did, forcing them to relocate from the east coast into the mountainous regions of Sri Lanka. Local Sinhalese kings assisted Muslims in their resettling, and Muslims had to engage in new professions such as fishing and weaving apart from trade, and they were admitted to the Sinhalese kingdoms (Johansson, 2019, p.5-6).

Later, the British took over Sri Lanka in 1796 and ruled until 1948. Since the British trade policy towards Muslims differed from the previous colonizers, Muslims once again found themselves in a new situation. The British were more tolerant of Muslim involvement in the trade. Muslims have also become more active in politics as a distinct group (Johansson, 2019, p.6).

The first legislative council established by the British convened in 1833, and a Tamil-speaking member represented the Muslims in this council. Approximately 50 years later, with the election of a Muslim member to the legislative council in 1889, Muslim identity was officially institutionalized in Sri Lanka (Johansson, 2019, p.6-7). The twentieth century marks the beginning of a period when the Muslim identity prominently manifested itself in Sri Lanka. It was also when conflicts between Muslims and other non-Muslim ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, such as Buddhists, started.

Historical and Cultural Structure

The history of Sri Lanka is also the history of European colonialism in South Asia. Colonialism in Sri Lanka lasted about 450 years, on average of 150 years per each European colonial administration, namely Portugal, the Netherlands, and Great Britain.

The Portuguese Rule

By the end of the fifteenth century, having established its dominance as a naval power in the Atlantic, Portugal was discovering new waters. In

1497, Vasco da Gama circumnavigated the Cape of Good Hope and discovered an oceanic route connecting Europe to India; thus, a new era of Portuguese naval supremacy began. Portuguese superiority in the seas and their knowledge of firearms gave them immense influence in South Asia, disproportionate to their strength in numbers (Syed, 2007, p.22).

At the beginning of the European period in Sri Lanka in the sixteenth century, there were three local centers of political power: the two Sinhalese kingdoms of Kotte and Kandy and the Tamil kingdom of Jaffna. None of these three kingdoms had the power to dominate the other two and reunite the island. Using palace plots and coups, the Portuguese controlled the kingdoms on the island and eventually annexed them. Only the Kingdom of Kandy, the last remnant of Buddhist Sinhalese power, remained independent. The Portuguese spent the next half century trying to expand their control over this kingdom (Syed, 2007, p.22).

The Dutch Rule

The Dutch became involved in the politics of the Indian Ocean in the early seventeenth century. The Dutch colonial empire in the seventeenth century was the most fertile empire the world had ever seen. The Dutch East India Company was a joint stock corporation based in Batavia on the island of Java. Controlling Asia's trade with Europe and headquartered in Batavia in today's Indonesia, the company acted to overtake the control of the highly lucrative spice trade from the Portuguese.

They captured the eastern ports of Trincomalee and Batticaloa in 1639; however, they were unsuccessful in conquering the inner parts of the island as they were more concerned with the English and French threats to their seaborne empire. Administering a more extensive region on the island than Portugal did, the Dutch divided it into three provinces: the governor resided in Colombo, while the other two regions were ruled from Jaffna and Galle by commanders (Peebles, 2006, pp.43-44).

The British Rule

The first record of British contact with Sri Lanka was a British pirate ship's attack on the Portuguese offshore of Galle's southwest harbor in 1592 (Syed, 2007, p.28). The British government pressured the British

East India Company to participate in the island's administration and guaranteed the company a monopoly on the cinnamon trade. While the British governor of the island was in charge of law and order, financial and commercial matters remained under the East India Company director's control. This system of "dual control" lasted from 1798 to 1802. After the Dutch officially turned over the island to the British with the Treaty of Amiens in 1802, which also ended the second phase of the Napoleonic Wars, Sri Lanka became the first British royal colony (Syed, 2007, p.29). The British controlled the entire island for 133 years and greatly influenced Sri Lanka (Peebles, 2006, p.44).

Sri Lanka entered the First World War as part of the British Empire. However, the war significantly impacted the rise of nationalism in Sri Lanka (Syed, 2007, pp.38-39). The nationalist movement in India served as a model for the nationalists in Sri Lanka. Similar to 1917, when the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League worked on their differences, major Sinhalese and Tamil political organizations merged to form the Ceylon National Congress in 1919. One of the first actions of the Ceylon National Congress was to propose a new constitution that would increase local control over the Executive Council and the budget. These demands were not met but led to the declaration of a new Constitution in 1920 (Syed, 2007, p.39).

In World War II, Sri Lanka was a substantial base of operations in the Allied offensive against the Japanese and the primary source of rubber, food, and other materials vital to the war. The island was almost unaffected by the war (Peebles, 2006, p.96). On the contrary, it considerably benefited from the war. Moreover, since Sri Lanka was the headquarters of the South East Asia Command then, extensive healthcare infrastructure and modern facilities were built to accommodate large numbers of troops all over the country. This inherited infrastructure improved living standards in independent Sri Lanka after the war (Syed, 2007, p.40).

Political Structure

The Independence of Sri Lanka

On February 4, 1948, Sri Lanka, then known as Ceylon, gained independence from the British Empire following India's independence and

became a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. In fact, Sri Lankan independence was a peaceful transition of a Britishized upper-class elite that has already been largely self-governing since 1931 (Peebles, 2006, p.95). These elite figures adapted without problem to the new British-style parliamentary democracy. Thus, unlike many British colonies, Sri Lanka's path to independence was peaceful. The United National Party (UNP) formed the first independent government, led by Don Stephen Senanayake. Its main opposition was Tamil parties and communists (Cummings, Elliot, and Bermoes, 2006, p.33).

Within six months following the independence, in August 1948, the democratically formed Sri Lankan legislature enacted the *Ceylon Citizenship Act* No. 18 of 1948, which would practically deprive most South Indian Tamil farmers of their rights. According to the act, only descendants of those born on the island before the law came into force could claim Ceylon citizenship. Thus, only 130,000 landholders and educated Indian Tamils could obtain citizenship, while the rest were rendered stateless and without the right to vote. About 600,000 stateless Indian Tamils were deported to India in the following years (Rajah, 2017, p.29).

When Senanayake died in 1952, he was succeeded by his son Dudley. An attempt to raise the price of rice a year later led to mass riots and Dudley's resignation. Consequently, his uncle, Sir John Kotelawala, succeeded him, and people began to call the UNP the "Uncle Nephew Party" (Cummings, Elliot, and Bermoes, 2006, p.33). The UNP was easily defeated by the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna coalition led by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in the 1956 general elections. Another law which included the Official Language Act (No. 33 of 1956), was enacted, giving Sinhala the status of the only official language of Sri Lanka. Until then, official correspondence was conducted in Tamil, Sinhala, and English, and anyone who spoke any of these three languages could work in the government; however, the new law reversed this situation. With the enactment of the law, Tamils who could not speak Sinhala fluently had to resign from government duties (Rajah, 2017, p.29).

Although Bandaranaike came to power through Sinhalese nationalism, he later began negotiating with Tamil leaders regarding some form of a federation. This effort resulted in the assassination of Bandaranaike by a Buddhist monk in 1959. Nevertheless, Bandaranaike is still regarded

by many as a national hero (Cummings, Elliot, & Bermoes, 2006, p.33). From now on, Sri Lanka would witness two entirely separate and hostile political systems, one Sinhalese and Buddhist, the other Tamil and Hindu. Furthermore, anti-Tamil rhetoric would finally lead to a nationwide revolt in 1958 that killed hundreds of people, mostly Tamils. The riots marked the first major incident of communal violence after independence and created a deep psychological rift between the two major ethnic groups.

Sri Lanka's membership in the United Nations

Sri Lanka's membership in the United Nations had been the goal of all governments until 1956 to establish the validity of the island's independent status. However, repeated vetoing by the Soviet Union prevented Sri Lanka from being a member of the UN until 1955, when a package deal was struck. Until then, the Soviet perspective was that Sri Lanka was not a sovereign state, probably on the grounds that it had close defensive ties with Britain. The Commonwealth countries supported Sri Lanka's repeated membership applications at the UN, yet evidently, the Soviet Union was not convinced (Wilson, 1979, pp.257-258). Finally, on 4 December, 1955, Sri Lanka was admitted to the UN as a Member State.

The First Woman Prime Minister in the World

Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the widowed wife of the late Solomon Bandaranaike, steered the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) to the government in the 1960 general election and thus became the world's first woman prime minister. She continued her husband's expropriation policies and deteriorated Sri Lanka's relations with the United States by nationalizing Sri Lankan oil companies. Most of the remaining British tea farmers left the country during this period. As a result, the economy weakened, and Dudley Senanayake and the UNP reassumed power in the 1965 elections. However, Senanayake's reluctance to reverse the SLFP's nationalization program caused him a great deal of support loss, and the SLFP defeated the UNP in the 1970 elections (Cummings, Elliot, and Bermoes, 2006, p. 34).

The Constitutions of 1972 and 1978

The 1972 Constitution realized long-standing aspirations to replace the colonially imposed Soulbury Constitution with a national one. The new constitution promised the preservation of Buddhism and the transformation of Sri Lanka into a socialist state, and it came into force on May 22, 1972, renaming the country the "Republic of Sri Lanka" (Peebles, 2006, p.124). In 1978, another constitution was made, changing the country's official name to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and introducing a semi-presidential government system similar to France. This constitution also endorsed a special status for the Buddhist religion (Syed, 2007, p.280).

The Civil War (1983-2009)

Against a backdrop of discrimination, Tamils founded the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on May 5, 1976. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, also known as the Tamil Tigers, became the most brutal and fearsome of all Tamil groups. They started an armed struggle against the Sinhalese governments (Santos, 2007, p.47). Shortly one month after coming to power in July 1977, the UNP government under President Jayewardene ordered the military to eradicate those organizing to establish a separate Tamil state. In August 1977, anti-Tamil violence spread throughout the country, Tamils were attacked and killed by hundreds of people, and thousands of Tamils became homeless (Santos, 2007, p.48). After the repression in 1977, the Jayewardene administration passed strict laws to deal with separatists, primarily the 1979 Prevention of Terrorism Act. Immediately after the Prevention of Terrorism Act became effective, a state of emergency was declared in the Tamil regions, and the army was once again instructed by the government to "destroy" the separatists (Santos, 2007, p.49).

After July 23, 1983, ethnic conflicts turned into a civil war. The civil war lasted until the end of 1994 and can be divided into four distinct phases: the escalation, 1983-1987 (Eelam War I); Indian intervention, 1987-1989; the term of Ranasinghe Premadasa, 1989-1993 (Eelam War II); and an attempt to find a solution through negotiations, resulting in the peaceful election of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, 1993-1994 (Peebles, 2006, p.151).

The preemptive war against the Tamils in Sri Lanka also rendered an alliance between the Tamils and India. To survive the preemptive war of 1983, Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka began to flow into Tamil Nadu in southern India. Separatist militants migrated with the refugees and were trained and financed by Indian intelligence during their stay in India (Santos, 2007, pp.54-55).

After Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who initiated the first mediation process between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan government, was assassinated on 31 October 1984, her son, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, attempted mediation and refused to endorse the establishment of a separate Tamil state. India pressured the separatist groups to negotiate. After six months of effort, Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene determined the ceasefire terms at a meeting in Delhi in early June 1985. Two weeks later, New Delhi pressured the extremists to sit at the negotiation table, and the ceasefire came into effect on 16 June (Peebles, 2006, p.154).

India sent 6,000 troops of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to Jaffna to disarm the Tamil Eelam Liberation Tigers and enforce the agreement. The three parties announced on September 28, 1987, that they had reached an agreement. Still, clashes broke out between the Indian Peace Keeping Force and the Tamil Tigers. By February 1988, although India had 72,000 soldiers in Sri Lanka, it could not defeat the Tamil Tigers. As a result, the Indian Peace Keeping Force left Sri Lanka, having spent $1.25 billion (Peebles, 2006, p. 156).

The final fracture between India and the Tamil separatists occurred when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was killed in a suicide attack by a Tamil militant on 19 May 1991. In response, India stopped aiding Tamil Tigers, and Tamil politicians' support for Tamil Tigers ended. After an extensive investigation, India convicted the leader of the Tamil Tigers, Velupillai Prabhakaran, of plotting the assassination. In 2006, LTTE attempted a rapprochement with India by apologizing for the assassination (Peebles, 2006, p.157).

The 1990s witnessed conflicts and peace negotiations. On May 1, 1993, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa died in a suicide attack by a Tamil militant during a parade. Thus, after Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, Sri Lankan prime minister was also assassinated by

a Tamil Tiger militant. In 2000, a Norwegian delegation led by Erik Solheim brought the Tamil Tigers and the government to the negotiating table; nevertheless, the dialogue was inconclusive. In October 2003, the United States designated the Tamil Tigers as a Terrorist Organization.

In May 2009, the Sri Lankan government launched an operation, what it called an "iron fist," against the Tamil Tigers. During the operation, many Tamil militants, and their leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, were killed in the forest they hid. After the army took control of the entire island, on May 18, 2009, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa declared to the parliament that the country was "liberated from terrorism and officially ended the 25-year civil war" (Weaver and Chamberlain, 2009).

Economic Structure

Under British rule, the burgeoning economy in Sri Lanka consisted of one main component: the agricultural sector. Manufacturing was an insignificant part of the economy. Banking and trade were mostly auxiliary to agriculture. The income based on foreign trade was derived from three basic plant products: tea, rubber, and coconut. Sri Lanka depended on imports for about three-quarters of its food demand and nearly all manufactured goods demand.

During the first three decades after independence, development policy focused on two themes: equity through social welfare and the substitution of imports with local products (https://www.britannica.com/place/Sri-Lanka/Demographic-trends). Until 1984, real growth rates were about 6 percent per year and the economy took a vibrant turn. However, later, the devastating effects of terrorism and civil war on the economy caused a significant slowdown in growth (https://www. britannica.com/place/Sri-Lanka/Demographic-trends).

After the end of the civil war in 2009, the increase in foreign tourist interest in Sri Lanka greatly revitalized the tourism sector, making it an essential source of foreign currency. Today Sri Lanka's main economic sectors are tourism, tea exports, clothing, textiles, rice cultivation, and other agricultural products. In addition to these sectors, overseas employment, mainly concentrated in the Middle East, contributes greatly to the foreign exchange inflow.

Potential of the Country

In today's environment, where the economy has collapsed, the government has resigned, the people have rioted, and the country has allied with China, the most considerable potential of Sri Lanka is its geopolitical power. Sri Lanka is an unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Indian Ocean. Whoever controls Sri Lanka, also controls the Indian Ocean and India. Therefore, Sri Lanka is an island country with a high geopolitical value in world politics. All developments here directly and closely concern the Asia-Pacific or the Indo-Pacific region. Sri Lanka is essential in the US Indo-Pacific strategy, prioritizing openness and safety of the Pacific and Indian oceans and keeping the Maritime Silk Road open and safe under China's Belt and Road initiative. Thus, aware of this geostrategic value, the Sri Lankan government has sometimes used it as leverage and will use it again in the future.

Sri Lankan-Turkish Relations

After Sri Lanka gained independence on February 4, 1948, the Turkish Embassy in New Delhi was accredited to Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan Embassy in Tel Aviv was accredited to Türkiye. Sri Lanka's Embassy in Ankara became operational in 2012, and Türkiye's Colombo Embassy was opened in 2013. Türkiye and Sri Lanka relations are steadily developing along the right track.

As part of his trip to the countries affected by the tsunami disaster that occurred in the Indian Ocean on December 26, 2004, Prime Minister R. Tayyip Erdoğan visited Sri Lanka on February 10, 2005, and this visit constituted a vital threshold in bilateral relations (Türkiye-Sri Lanka Siyasi İlişkileri).

Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa's visit to Türkiye in 2008 was the first presidential visit from Sri Lanka to Türkiye. Rauff Hakeem, Minister of Urban Development, Water Supply and Drainage, and President of the Parliamentary Friendship Association, specially appointed by the Sri Lankan Prime Minister of the time, Ranil Wickremasinghe, to develop bilateral relations, paid an official visit to Türkiye on February 2-8, 2016. Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu's visit to Sri Lanka on 14-15 June 2016 was the first foreign minister-level visit from Türkiye to Sri Lanka (Türkiye-Sri Lanka Siyasi İlişkileri).

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