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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)

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SVI aims to project strategic foresight on issues of national and international import through dispassionate, impartial, and independent research, analyses, and studies. The current spotlight of the SVI is on national security, regional and international peace and stability, strategic studies, nuclear non-proliferation, arms control, and strategic stability, nuclear safety, and security and energy studies.

SVI Foresight

SVI Foresight is a monthly electronic journal. It has a multi-disciplinary perspective highlighting contemporary strategic and security studies. The Journal is envisioned to be a collection of policy-oriented articles written by the SVI Research Officers, Visiting Faculty, and professional experts. The objective is to provide the readership with a concise all-around and real-time policy-oriented discourse on contemporary strategic regional and international developments, highlighting their relevance to Pakistan.

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Editor's Note

In this collection of SVI Foresight for the month of December, we have curated a diverse array of perspectives that aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities shaping our world.

South Asia, a region rich in history, cultural diversity, and geopolitical significance, is at the forefront of our discussions in the edition. Beyond the borders of the region, our e-journal extends its gaze to the broader international stage. The happenings in the Middle East have been analyzed by the scholars. It is our belief that by examining these international perspectives, we can better appreciate the shared challenges and collaborative opportunities that transcend borders.

It is hoped that this issue will help readers in staying updated with the current strategic environment and they will find the analyses useful. The *SVI Foresight* team invites and highly encourages contributions from the security and strategic community in the form of opinion-based short commentaries on contemporary political, security, nuclear, and strategic issues. Any suggestions for further improvements are welcome. Please see [here](#) the copy of the *SVI Foresight* electronic journal. You can find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and can also access the SVI [website](#).

Amber Afreen Abid
Editor, SVI Foresight

What is Hamas? Its Origin, Funding, And Modus Operandi

Syed Raza Abbas

Hamas is a Palestinian politico-armed faction operating out of the Gaza Strip. Hamas is an Arabic acronym for “Islamic Resistance Movement”. Hamas was founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in 1987 during the first “Intifada,” the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. Sheikh Yassin was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood with its roots in neighboring Egypt. Hamas had ideological differences with the nationalist secular Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) of Yasser Arafat. Israeli intelligence found those differences helpful and tried to undermine the PLO by funding and propping up Hamas as a counterweight to the PLO. Before the creation of Hamas, its founding father, Sheikh Yassin, had good working relations with Israelis and was involved in various charitable work around the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Sheikh Yassin was not in favor of the armed struggle against Israel as he aimed to work with them for the betterment of the Palestinian people. Israelis misjudged the intentions of Sheikh Yassin, and they generously funded Hamas through various mediums. Contemporary developments

around the Gaza Strip are proving those Israeli calculations futile to their own national security for using Hamas as a counterweight to PLO.

Hamas has a political wing, which Ismail Haneyyah leads. They contest elections and are in charge of the political affairs of the Gaza Strip. The military wing of Hamas is known as the “Izz Din Al-Qassam Brigade,” which is currently fighting against the Israelis, and this same brigade conducted Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7. The political leadership of Hamas manages its affairs from abroad, and they have offices in Turkiye and Qatar, respectively. Hamas receives the bulk of its funding from Qatar and Iran. Iran annually provides around 100 million dollars to different Palestinian liberation fronts operating out of the Gaza Strip. Iran publicly acknowledges that it supports the Palestinian cause because support for the liberation of Palestine has been the central pillar of Iranian foreign policy since the Islamic revolution of 1979. Iran also provides arms and ammunition to the Hamas militant wing to fight the Israeli occupation, and there are testimonies of Hamas leaders thanking the Islamic Republic for their military support. Qatar is one of the few Gulf countries that support the people of

the Gaza Strip. Qatari funding to Gaza passes through Israelis. Qatar provides 100 dollars per month to the Palestinian families affected by the conflict. The money goes through Israeli and U.N donor agencies, which record the funds provided. They run most of the power plants in Gaza and fund various charitable organizations. The fuel for the power plants goes through Egypt and Israel, for which Qataris pay to the respective governments. It is allegedly reported that fuel provided by Qataris for the power plants in Gaza ends up in the hands of Hamas, and they then resell that fuel and use it to fire rockets against Israeli settlements. Hamas also collects a few million dollars from charities in different Gulf countries and Turkiye and funnels this money into Gaza via crypto currencies and various offshore trading companies. Hamas utilizes those illegal sources of funding because they are officially designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S., UK, and E.U., due to which they cannot use legal banking channels.

Hamas has adopted a very cost-effective approach to fight the Israelis, who are much superior to the rag-tag fighters of Hamas. Hamas has dug up tunnels in the entirety of the Gaza Strip, mostly in southern Gaza, which is very densely populated, and those tunnels are at some locations 50 meters deep

and hundreds of kilometers long. The total area of Gaza is estimated to be 365 sq. km, which runs across the coastal belt of the Mediterranean Sea. It answers the question of why the Israelis are delaying a full-blown ground invasion of Gaza and have infiltrated into Gaza in the targeted regions because they know that the ground invasion of Gaza won't be a walk in the park. Hamas has borrowed its tactics of fighting Israelis from Iranian-trained and funded Hezbollah, which is located in Southern Lebanon. In 2006, Israelis were forced to withdraw from South Lebanon due to the stiff resistance and tunnel warfare that Hezbollah waged. Hamas uses those deep and widespread tunnels to store fuel, arms, ammunition, food, and medicine supplies, shelter for its fighters, and to make rockets. Hamas has enough expertise in manufacturing rockets locally within those tunnels and a variety of improvised explosive devices. Hamas fires barrages of locally made Qassam and Grad rockets toward Israel and then retreats into the tunnels to avoid Israeli airstrikes. Israel has acquired a state-of-the-art air and missile defense system to secure its citizens and territory from Hamas rocket attacks. The famous iron dome is all weather missile defense system specifically designed to counter the threat of incoming Hamas rockets. Each battery of the Iron Dome consists of a radar that intercepts the

incoming missile and a Tamir interceptor that kills the incoming rocket in the air before landing on the intended target. Every Iron Dome battery contains three/four launchers, each carrying 20 interceptors. Hamas's strategy is simple: they overwhelm the Israeli Iron Dome system. First, they launch the incendiary balloons possessing low-yield explosives and a barrage of rockets. In simple mathematics, one battery of Iron Dome can stop 60/80 incoming missiles at one time if Hamas first fires incendiary balloons, then a barrage of 20 to 30 rockets, at least 5 to 10 rockets are going to fall on the Israeli territory. Iron Dome can be reloaded relatively quickly in a few minutes, but still, Hamas has that few-minute window to fire rockets toward Israel. On top of that, Israel funnels a lot of resources into its missile and air defense system. In contrast, Hamas uses water and sewerage pipes to make the design of rockets and put crude explosives into those rockets and uses a very basic and cheap ignition mechanism. On the other hand, one battery of the Iron Dome costs Israel 100 million dollars, and one interceptor missile costs 40,000 to 50,000 dollars to intercept a rocket worth a few 100 dollars. In his landmark paper "Why big nations lose small wars?" Andrew Mack argued the same point. An asymmetric war is one where there is considerable disparity between the two

contending parties in terms of technology and resources. To meet those shortcomings, the smaller group wages war in an asymmetric way to exhaust the resources and will to fight of the much larger and superior adversary. Hamas has been doing the same with Israelis since their inception.

<https://policywatcher.com/2023/12/what-is-hamas-its-origin-funding-and-modus-operandi/>

Syed Raza Abbas

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India's Foray into International Assassinations

M. Abu Baker

India's external intelligence service, Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) is under global monitoring due to cross-continental terrorism. R&AW is facing accusations of involvement in the assassination of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June in Surrey, outside Vancouver, Canada. Moreover, R&AW is implicated in a separate incident related to the discovery of a plot to assassinate a Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun (a dual citizen of the United States and Canada) on US soil. The US has charged an Indian national with paying a hit man to kill Pannun, who works as the general counsel for the New York-based Sikh for Justice (SFJ). SFJ is a group that advocates for the secession of India's Punjab state and the creation of an independent Sikh state called "Khalistan" within India.

Reportedly, the scheme was foiled back in June by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), shortly after the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The US Justice Department alleged that an Indian Government Agency Employee (named – CC-1), whose responsibilities included security and intelligence working together

with Nikhil Gupta directed an unsuccessful plot to assassinate Pannun. The media reported that, Nikhil Gupta was later arrested in June by Czech authorities. The top federal prosecutor in Manhattan Damian Williams said in a statement "the defendant conspired from India to assassinate, right here in New York City, a US citizen of Indian origin who has publicly advocated for the establishment of a sovereign state for Sikhs".

Moreover, it is not the first occasion that R&AW got caught red-handedly. Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stunned the diplomatic community across the world with explosive allegations in a speech to the House of Commons back in September. He said "Canadian security agencies have been actively pursuing credible allegations of a potential link between "agents of the Government of India" and the killing of a Canadian citizen, Hardeep Singh Nijjar." He further added "Any involvement of a foreign government in the killing of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil is an unacceptable violation of our sovereignty." In addition to that, Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly ordered the expulsion of a senior Indian diplomat – Pavan Kumar Rai, the head of R&AW in Canada. As a result diplomatic tensions between India & Canada escalated,

leading to the expulsion of diplomats from both sides.

The US is deeply concerned about the plot and killing of Nijjar. It is pressing the Indian government to conduct an investigation and hold to account those responsible. US ambassador David Cohen to Canada was the first one to have confirmed that Trudeau's allegations were based on the information shared by "Five Eyes" (An intelligence alliance between the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). Cohen also added during exclusive interview to CTV News that "there was a lot of communication between Ottawa and Washington in relation to Trudeau's allegations." This suggests that without the support of US, Canada may not have opted to make these revelations public.

In addition to that, the assassination plot so concerned Biden administration that he dispatched two top intelligence officials to press India for cooperation and issue a stern warning against any potential repetition. Media reports revealed that CIA Director William Burns flew to India in August to deliver the message of displeasure to his counterpart Ravi Sinha, followed by Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines in October. The latest visit by the FBI Director Christopher Wray to India underscores ongoing high-level attention and

seriousness with which the matter is being addressed.

It is important to highlight here that, Pakistan repeatedly brought attention to India's subversive activities. But these concerns were largely ignored by the Western countries. However, incidents in Canada and US support of Pakistan's claims that Indian intelligence has been actively involved in abductions and assassinations, and that Pakistan has remained a target of espionage and a series of targeted killings by R&AW. India's malicious activities in Pakistan are evident from the arrest of Indian Naval officer, Kulbhushan Yadav from the Pakistani province of Balochistan in March 2016. He entered Pakistan clandestinely to foment trouble by facilitating terrorist activities and spying for R&AW. He later admitted to his crime. In addition to that, Pakistan in December 2022, released a comprehensive dossier providing concrete and irrefutable evidence of India's involvement in the Lahore attack of June 2021. The terrorist attack was planned, supported, and executed by Indian intelligence. These actions under Modi's far-right government highlight a pattern of rogue behavior.

Apart from that, in recent times, R&AW has encountered significant setbacks and faced

global embarrassment. The media reported multiple incidents of Indian spies being captured in various countries on espionage charges. Back in 2014, UAE arrested and subsequently convicted two Indians for sharing sensitive information about the UAE with Indian intelligence. Likewise, R&AW is under scrutiny with four separate cases of alleged spying currently being investigated in Germany. It includes an Indian couple guilty of espionage. They confessed to collecting and supplying information to R&AW about Kashmiri and Sikhs in Germany. In a recent development, eight Indian officers are facing the death penalty in Qatar for espionage. This sheds light on another apparent failure in R&AW's operations.

Moreover, according to a report published by 'The Print', it was revealed that the closure of R&AW's stations in San Francisco and Washington DC has left the agency unrepresented in North America for the first time since its establishment in 1968. The decision to close R&AW's stations is a major blowback for India. It also shows apprehensions about the agency's continued offensive operations in the West. Along with that, the British intelligence multiple times had voiced displeasure over the increasing involvement of R&AW in Sikh diasporic politics in the country under former R&AW

chief Samant Kumar Goel. Furthermore, an explosive report by The Washington Post exposed the activities of Disinfo Lab. It was created in mid-2020 by Lt.Col. Dibya Satpathy, an intelligence officer, to influence the global perception of India. He established links with Western journalists and sought favorable coverage of India & critical coverage of China and Pakistan. These incidents collectively unveil that the Indian intelligence apparatus is now under heightened global scrutiny. Additionally, this series of incidents and cases validates Pakistan's apprehensions regarding India's actions that they were genuine, rather than mere paranoia that had been overlooked by the West due to geo-political dynamics.

<https://theglobalpolitico.com/2023/12/18/indias-foray-into-international-assassinations/>

M. Abu Baker

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Unraveling India's Decision on Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir: Flawed Foundations

Sher Bano

The recent ruling by the Supreme Court of India, upholding the central government's decision to abrogate Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir, has reignited a profound debate on the intricate facets surrounding this move. Following this judgment, a thorough examination of the legal, political, and humanitarian dimensions becomes imperative to highlight the inherent flaws in the decision.

The Supreme Court's endorsement of the government's choice to annul Article 370 is grounded in several contentions, each necessitating scrupulous scrutiny. Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, joined by Justices Gavai and Surya Kant, asserted that Jammu & Kashmir lacks internal sovereignty distinct from other states, oversimplifying the region's intricate historical and geopolitical context.

Furthermore, the court upheld the creation of Ladakh as a separate union territory, a decision within the administrative purview that warrants closer examination due to its potential impact on the cultural and historical ties within the region.

The directive to conduct assembly elections in Jammu & Kashmir by September 30 next year, alongside the call for the restoration of statehood, raises questions about the ambiguity surrounding the timeline for such significant political changes. The lack of clarity on these matters contributes to the uncertainty shrouding the region's future political landscape.

Chief Justice Chandrachud's characterization of Article 370 as an interim arrangement due to war conditions in the erstwhile state raises concerns. Disregarding the unique circumstances and aspirations of the people of Jammu & Kashmir undermines the principles of justice and fairness. Justice SK Kaul's concurrence with the Chief Justice's judgment reinforces this perspective, emphasizing that Article 370 was intended to gradually bring the region on par with other Indian states.

The assertion that the principle of consultation was not required during the exercise of presidential power departs from fundamental democratic tenets. Consultation is integral to democratic decision-making, and sidelining it in such a significant decision sets a concerning precedent.

Chief Justice Chandrachud's argument that every decision of the central government

cannot be subject to legal challenge raises valid concerns. While efficiency is crucial, unchecked executive power can lead to potential misuse, jeopardizing the principles of accountability and transparency foundational to a democratic system.

The Supreme Court's reliance on historical documents, such as the proclamation of Maharaja and the Instrument of Accession, to justify the abrogation of Article 370 is open to interpretation. The emphasis on textual reading and the classification of Article 370 as a temporary provision raises questions about the nuanced understanding of the region's historical context.

The circumstances surrounding the pronouncement of the verdict are noteworthy. The Supreme Court bench assembled to deliver three separate and concurring judgments, with Justices Kaul and Khanna providing individual opinions. The differing interpretations by the justices underscore the complexity and divisiveness of the issue.

Even before the final verdict, the reported house arrest of political figures like Mehbooba Mufti and restrictions on journalists near the residences of prominent leaders raise concerns about freedom of expression and political dissent. A thriving

democracy necessitates open dialogue and diverse opinions, and such restrictions undermine these principles.

Pakistan's swift rejection of the judgment, citing the non-recognition of India's actions in Jammu & Kashmir under international law, adds a geopolitical layer to the controversy. The assertion that India cannot make unilateral decisions on the disputed territory without considering the will of the Kashmiri people and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions is echoed by many in the international community.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani's said that India claiming alterations to the demographic and political landscape of Kashmir since August 2019, underscore broader concerns about the impact of India's decisions on the region. Jilani's call for rescinding these measures for peace and dialogue is a plea for a more diplomatic and inclusive approach.

In conclusion, the recent Supreme Court verdict on Article 370, while legally binding, invites scrutiny for its potential long-term consequences. The dismissal of internal sovereignty, ambiguity in statehood restoration, and perceived violations of democratic principles warrant a nuanced examination. As the geopolitical landscape

evolves, a balanced approach that respects the region's historical context and addresses the concerns raised by various stakeholders is essential for lasting stability and justice in Jammu & Kashmir.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/19122023-unraveling-indias-decision-on-article-370-in-jammu-kashmir-flawed-foundations-opened/>

Sher Bano

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Decoding I2U2: India's Middle East Balancing Act and the Arab World's Dilemma

Komal Khan

India's intricate balancing in the ongoing Gaza War overshadows India's regional objectives in the Middle Eastern Quad, leading to a strategy dilemma that navigates between India's competing priorities. India's polarity between its relations with Israel and Arab nations was observed when it chose to abstain from vote on the Gaza-Israel ceasefire. This indicates retrenchment of the I2U2 agreement, which was meant to close the divide between Arab governments and democracies.

The 'I2U2' partnership aims to establish a robust security framework in West Asia. This collaborative effort involves India, Israel, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates to strengthen their multilateral cooperation between the public and commercial sectors in the domain of technology and to work together on international challenges pertaining to water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security. The purpose of India's engagement in the Middle Eastern Quad in the form of the I2U2 partnership is to strategically situate it as a key international player in the complexities of Middle Eastern conflicts. It was designed to enable India to

assume the role of a mediator and an extra-regional overseer.

India's Rationale for Supporting Israel

India's alignment with Israel in the Gaza war can be attributed to several strategic and economic factors. First, Israel's significant role as one of India's top arms suppliers in 2021 highlights the strategic importance of their defense partnership. The potential coproduction of weapons systems further deepens this cooperation. Second, there are indications of a shift in India's business community's perception of Israel, as demonstrated by the successful bid by the Adani Group and an Israeli partner for Haifa Port, worth USD \$1.2 billion. This suggests a growing interest in investment opportunities and economic cooperation between the two countries. Ongoing negotiations for an India-Israel Free Trade Agreement further underscore the economic significance of Israel for India. Third, a growing U.S.-India partnership coupled with the United States' unwavering support for Israel may be resulting in India following suit.

Foreign Policy Trade-Offs

The Middle East, characterized by its complexity and volatility, features numerous ongoing conflicts and divergent interests.

India's decision to take sides in Israel-Gaza conflict holds the capacity to undermine its longstanding policy of non-alignment in the Middle East, a principle integral to its foreign policy framework. Significantly, such an alignment may complicate India's ability to adeptly navigate the intricate regional dynamics of the Middle East and to realize its economic, energy and strategic interests aligned with the region. Significantly, it raises queries about the potential impact on India's energy security, given the substantial role played by Arab states as major suppliers of oil and gas to India. Out of India's total trade with the Middle Eastern Region, Middle Eastern crude oil makes up over 61% of all of India's imports.

India's foreign policy towards the Middle East is driven by a blend of diplomatic, economic, and strategic factors, which are evident in its associations with significant Arab nations. These goals are particularly exemplified by its close commercial links to Oman which accounted for US\$ 9.988 billion in 2021-2022; its robust energy cooperation with Saudi Arabia which is India's second largest trade partner; with Qatar, with bilateral trade increasing to USD 17.2 Billion in 2021-2022; and its economic and human resource collaboration with the United Arab Emirates. Bahrain is becoming a

more significant economic partner, as seen by agreements on investment and taxation. India's support for a two-state solution is emphasized by its principled position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. India being the tenth largest trade partner of Israel with make it a foreign policy priority. These links demonstrate India's skillful management of the complex interaction between energy, security, economic, and strategic interests, as well as its active participation in regional fora to seek maritime security objectives. The Middle Eastern QUAD holds strategic significance in this regard.

More specifically, this alignment may be perceived as a setback for the I2U2 partnership. India's participation partnership in I2U2 is driven by its global ambitions, seeking strategic independence beyond South Asia. This engagement is important for India due to the potential strategic benefits it offers, including economic and energy security, access to advanced defense technologies, and a role as an international stakeholder in key maritime regions. India's military presence in the Middle East is exemplified by initiatives such as its involvement in maritime security operations in the Gulf.

India's standing in the QUAD stemmed mainly from the fact that it prioritized its partnership with the US, the Arab world, and

Israel under the QUAD framework. Notably, India decided to forgo emphasizing democracy when it signed a cooperation deal with the UAE. However, unlike its initial commitment to the Arab states within the I2U2 Club, India's support for Israel on the international scene is again based on its advocacy of liberal democracy against authoritarianism. The UAE's efforts to normalize relations with Israel are part of a larger Middle Eastern agenda, which emphasizes the UAE's interdependence with other Arab countries in the region. However, it is imperative to recognize that the Middle East as a whole has continuously depended on diplomatic endeavors to uphold a delicate balance in its regional connections.

Secondly, the UAE, being a member of I2U2, cannot be assumed to not be a pro-Palestinian Arab state. Despite normalizing relations through the Abraham Accords, the UAE's condemnation of Israel's military action in Gaza shows that it is unable to act independently of the Arab world. The UAE's position on the Israeli-Palestinian issue is mostly shaped by regional dynamics, Arab unity as previously evident in Saudi-Iran conflict, and the possible effects on its relations with other Arab states. Different Arab states, significantly including those under the US influence, have reacted

and condemned the Israeli military incursion in Gaza to differing degrees. A ceasefire has been called for and condemned by the UAE, while Jordan took a firm stand by removing its ambassador from Israel. Bahrain became the first country under the Abraham Accords to respond to the conflict with such measures when its parliament recalled its ambassador to Israel and cut off commercial ties. These reactions show the complexity of relationships within the Arab world; some countries have chosen to criticize Israel's conduct in a more forceful and outspoken manner, while others may have chosen to respond more subtly or silently. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the dispute will influence initiative for the normalization of relations between Arab nations and Israel. Setting the precedent, despite the White House's assurances on Saudi Arabia's commitment to normalization, the disagreement is also anticipated to affect talks regarding the normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Israel cannot accomplish regional integration by ignoring the Palestinian issue, as demonstrated by the Hamas-Israel battle. The I2U2 is certain to be impacted by the political constraints that may exist between the UAE and Israel, highlighting the complexities of Arabs regional relations.

What Comes Next for India?

India's strategy towards Middle Eastern conflicts requires maintaining a delicate balance, marked by the assigned neutral posture it committed to with the Arab states in the I2U2 agreement. Following India's foreign policy precedents in the Israel-Palestine conflict conditioned India to de-emphasize its defense ties with Israel in order to maintain cordial relations with Arab nations. India's strategic global role requires India's dependability in managing conflicts, subject to its foreign policy objectives and the current dynamics in the Middle East and beyond.

In conclusion, India's approach to the Middle East has shifted from ideological solidarity to a more strategic engagement with countries like the United States, Israel, and the Gulf states, focusing on economic development and security cooperation.

<https://strafasia.com/decoding-i2u2-indias-middle-east-balancing-act-and-the-arab-worlds-dilemma/>

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