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# Interaction



**March 2025**

**CHIEF EDITOR**

Nusrat Mirza

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

Bismah Mirza

**EDITOR**

Mirza Kashif Baig

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

Syed Samiullah

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Yusuf Rahi

**PRODUCTION MANAGER**

M. H. Khan

**LAYOUT DESIGNER**

Malik Zia Muhammad

• **CONTRIBUTORS**

Dr. Bushra Batool  
Wajeeha Najam

• **BUREAU CHIEF & DIRECTOR MARKETING**

**Islamabad**  
Prof. Dr. M. Attaullah Khan

• **REPRESENTATIVES**

**UK (London)**

Tahir Shah

**Bangladesh**

Abdul Rahim Khan

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Tauheed Commercial Area, Phase-V, DHA.,  
Karachi, Pakistan.

**Mailing Address**

Plot No.71/C, 1st Floor, 24th Commercial Street,  
Tauheed Commercial Area, Phase-V, DHA.,  
Karachi, Pakistan.

Tel : +92 21 358 619 35 -36

Email : rfi@rfipakistan.com

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## EDITORIAL

# RIYADH 2025

## A NEW WORLD ORDER IN THE MAKING?

The recent high-profile meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, has sent ripples through global geopolitics, with analysts speculating that it could begin a strategic realignment of world powers. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov sat with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman alongside Kremlin advisor Osha Kof.

The meeting's official agenda revolved around pressing global concerns the Gaza ceasefire, the Palestinian issue, and the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war. However, beneath the surface, the meeting has evoked historical parallels to the 1945 Yalta Conference, where major world powers redrew the map of post-war Europe. Could Riyadh 2025 be laying the groundwork for a new world order?

From February 4 to 11, 1945, the Yalta

Conference brought together U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin. Their discussions shaped the post-World War II order, determining the fate of Europe, the partitioning of Germany, and the establishment of the United Nations. The conference also saw the sidelining of Adolf Hitler, marking Germany's defeat and subsequent division.

While different in its context, the Riyadh meeting is similar to Yalta in that it involves significant powers making critical decisions about global conflicts this time centered on Gaza, Ukraine, and potentially the Middle East's future political landscape. The key question remains: Is Riyadh 2025 a venue where the fate of different regions is being decided behind closed doors?

One of the most pressing issues discussed in Riyadh was the ongoing crisis in Gaza. Over two million Palestinians are facing displacement as Israel continues its military operations. The critical discussion points revolved around where these displaced people would go how many could settle in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, or Egypt? How would regional powers handle the inevitable resistance from Palestinian factions and international human rights organizations?

Saudi Arabia has historically been a significant player in the Palestinian issue, balancing its regional ambitions with its role as the custodian of Islam's holiest sites.



**Yalta Conference, Feb 4-11, 1945: President Franklin D. Roosevelt with Mr. Edward Stettinius and Mr. Harry Hopkins. (FILE PHOTO)**

However, its increasingly close ties with Israel, brokered through U.S. interests, raise concerns about its position in these negotiations. If Riyadh becomes a key decision-maker in shaping a post-conflict Palestine, what implications will this have for Palestinian self-determination?

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the Riyadh meeting is the apparent alignment between the U.S. and Russia. For years, these two nations have been at odds over various geopolitical issues, particularly regarding Ukraine and NATO expansion. Yet, their joint presence in Riyadh suggests a possible behind-the-scenes understanding of managing the Middle East's evolving dynamics, if not a formal alliance.

This raises questions about China's exclusion from the discussions. China has been a rising global power actively engaging in Middle Eastern affairs, mainly through economic investments and the Belt and Road Initiative. If China is deliberately sidelined, it suggests an effort to carve out a new power structure that limits Beijing's influence.

China's absence from the Riyadh meeting has drawn significant attention. The country has been increasingly assertive in global geopolitics, from expanding its influence in Africa and Latin America to positioning itself as a key mediator in Middle Eastern affairs. Unlike the U.S. and Russia, China has maintained a relatively neutral stance on Israel-Palestine while strengthening its economic and strategic ties with Iran and Saudi Arabia.

If the U.S. and Russia are working together to redefine the global order, as some analysts suggest, keeping China out of these discussions is a bold move. But can a new world order be established without involving the world's second-largest economy and a significant military power? Historically, such

attempts have failed, as sidelined powers often respond by forging alternative alliances.

The Riyadh meeting may not be as dramatic as the Yalta Conference, but it signals the beginning of potential shifts in global alignments. The Middle East remains at the heart of global power struggles, and any decisions made there will have far-reaching consequences. Suppose the U.S. and Russia work together to define a new geopolitical landscape. In that case, it remains to be seen how other global players, including China, the European Union, and regional powers like Iran and Turkey, will respond.

The question remains: Are we witnessing the foundation of a new world order? Suppose Riyadh 2025 is indeed the stage where the fate of different regions is being shaped. In that case, the coming years will reveal whether these agreements hold or if we are heading toward another period of geopolitical turbulence. Only time will tell whether this historical moment will be remembered as a turning point or a missed opportunity for authentic global cooperation.



**Displaced Palestinians shelter in a tent camp amid the ongoing conflict with Israel, in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip.**



# RFI ENGAGES RUSSIAN DELEGATES AT THE BEACH LUXURY HOTEL, KARACHI

On 18 February 2025, the Rabita Forum International convened a brief informal gathering at Karachi's Beach Luxury Hotel. The event was attended by Mr. Andrey Viktorovich Fedorov, Consul General of the Russian Federation in Karachi; Dr. Alishev Timirkhan Bulatovich, Vice-Rector of Kazan Federal University; and other esteemed Russian scholars and diplomats. Prof. Dr. Zabta Khan Shinwari, Vice Chancellor of the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences, and Technology (FUUAST), also honored the occasion with his presence.

RFI Chairman Nusrat Mirza extended a warm welcome to the distinguished guests, emphasizing the importance of academic and intellectual exchanges between Pakistan and Russia. He advocated for regular interactions among academic institutions, think tanks, and intellectuals from both nations to foster closer ties and collaborative efforts for the mutual benefit of their peoples.

Consul General Fedorov and Vice-Rector Dr. Bulatovich concurred with Mirza's sentiments, expressing gratitude for RFI's amiability. Prof. Dr. Shinwari echoed these views, stating, "Our doors are always open for collaborations that lead to development and prosperity."

As a gesture of goodwill, RFI presented each guest with a token gift at the conclusion of the meeting.



# FUUAST & KFU

## HOTS THE FIRST PAKISTAN-RUSSIA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



The Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), in collaboration with Kazan Federal University (KFU) of Russia, successfully convened the first Pakistan-Russia International Conference on February 18-19, 2025, at the Beach Luxury Hotel in Karachi. The event, themed "The Evolving Pakistan-Russia Relationship in a Changing Global Order," aimed to explore and enhance bilateral ties across various sectors, including education, culture, trade, and defense.

The conference commenced with a plenary session where Prof. Dr. Zabta Khan Shinwari, Vice Chancellor of FUUAST, delivered an opening address emphasizing the pivotal role of academic collaborations in strengthening Pakistan-Russia relations. While Dr. Timirkhan Alishev, Vice-Rector for International Affairs at KFU, discussed the existing academic connections between

Russian and Pakistani universities.

The conference featured video messages from Konstantin Mogilevsky, Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education of Russia, and Muhammad Khalid Jamali, Pakistan's Ambassador to Russia. Both dignitaries extended their greetings to the participants and expressed optimism about the future of Pakistan-Russia relations. Additionally, Andrey Viktorovich Fedorov, Consul General of Russia in Karachi, provided an overview of the historical and prospective developments in relations between the two countries.

Spanning two dynamic days, the event featured 25 thought-provoking sessions, bringing together over 100 esteemed researchers in international relations, political science, economics, and security affairs. A distinguished assembly of experts including academics, media professionals, diplomats, think tank members, social activists, and influential personalities actively engaged in insightful discussions. The sessions delved into fundamental themes such as strengthening defense collaborations, advancing key energy projects, and unlocking new avenues for trade and infrastructure development between





Russia and Pakistan, promoting meaningful dialogue and strategic partnerships.

The success of the conference was attributed to the dedicated efforts of the organizing and scientific committees, including members from FUUAST, KFU. The conference successfully fostered dialogue and collaboration between Russian and Pakistani academic institutions, paving the way for future partnerships in education and research. The announcement of the next conference in



Kazan, Russia, in 2026 reflects the commitment of both nations to continue this academic and cultural exchange.

## ASCE HOSTS A ONE-DAY WORKSHOP ON "CPEC 2.0 AND GLOBAL RESPONSES"

The Area Study Centre for Europe (ASCE), University of Karachi, organized a one-day workshop on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) 2.0 and Global Responses on February 21, 2025. The event gathered scholars and experts to discuss the evolving scope of CPEC and its international implications.

Prof. Dr. Uzma Shujaat, Acting Director of ASCE, opened the session by emphasizing the significance of CPEC 2.0, highlighting its transition from infrastructure and energy projects to industrialization, technological advancements, agriculture, and socioeconomic development. Among the distinguished speakers, Mr. Muhammad Ahsan provided a historical perspective on CPEC, stressing the challenges faced in the



initial phases and the need for a well-structured approach in the upcoming phase. Dr. Sajjad Ahmad elaborated on how CPEC 2.0 is poised to transform Pakistan's economic landscape by expanding beyond traditional sectors, reinforcing the country's role as a regional trade and connectivity hub. Dr. Asad Ur Rehman analyzed its economic potential, urging strategic planning and commitment to maximize trade, employment, and industrial growth opportunities. The workshop saw active participation from scholars and students, fostering engaging discussions. Media coverage by RFI Digital amplified the event's key takeaways. The event, as a whole, provided a comprehensive understanding of CPEC 2.0, reinforcing the need for informed policymaking and continued academic discourse to ensure its successful implementation.



# RUSSIA-NK-CHINA ALLIANCE-DYNAMICS- SIGNIFICANCE-FUTURE



**AMBASSADOR (R) HASAN HABIB**

The prevailing World Order that the US and the West brought in place in the post-World War II era, was based on liberal democratic values and neoclassical economics. It promised to peace and shared prosperity to the mankind. It kept geopolitical order and a semblance of peace in the world as the two super powers avoided direct conflict. The World only witnessed proxies and localized conflicts.

Since President Trump's 1st rule the US itself is undermining the prevailing order and this system is on the verge of collapse. President Trump's second administration may further undermine many core purposes of the multi-lateral order including free trade, collective security, climate change to name a few.

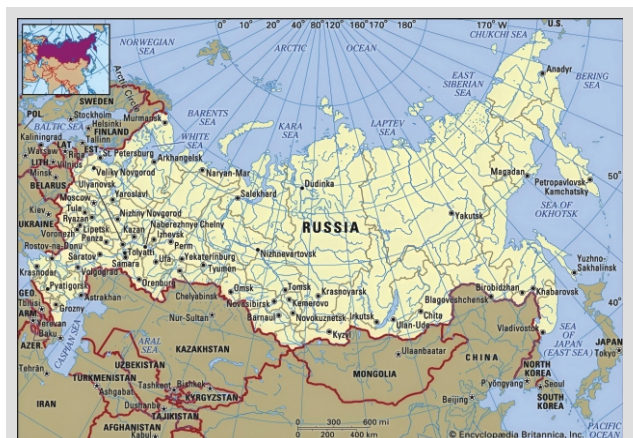
Trump's second term will also create a World leadership vacuum that may lead to geopolitical chaos. The question that emerges from this bleak scenario is can the international community reform its politico-economic institutions to deliver essential services to ordinary people and strengthen the international, regional and national order.

## REACTION FROM THE NON-CAPITALIST CAMP

The Capitalist West was basking in success and newfound wealth in the post-Cold War period. Countries outside the West's friendly circle like China, Russia, Iran, North Korea,

Venezuela, etc. felt insecure and threatened. They needed a security umbrella for protection against the US-supported expansionist and the belligerent West. The Warsaw countries were falling one by one to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). When Ukraine fell to the far right, Russians panicked and invaded it to secure its borders.

While the World focused on the Russia-DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea or North Korea) military cooperation and what DPRK offered (troops and weapons) to Russia, it ignored the emerging Russia-North Korea-China alliance. The new cooperative relationship also ensured the Chinese energy security in the form of Russian oil and gas. The emerging alliance posed a serious threat to the US and its regional allies like South Korea and Japan. This alliance is impacting regional and global peace.



**Map of Russia and its neighbors**





**Kim Jung Un sending off troops to Ukraine**

## IS IT AN ALLIANCE?

President Putin called China an ally and North's Kim Jong Un has called Russia an ally. Russia and DPRK have a formal treaty. Russia-China military behavior shows all signs of an alliance such as security talks and joint military exercises. On the other hand, Pyongyang has treaties with both Russia and China that include mutual defense clauses.

Around 2017, Russia and China declared a joint approach to Korean security issues that has essentially endured into the present. Both Russia and China have long ignored US/UN sanctions on North Korea and are its primary partners in trade, economic, and military exchanges. This practically translates into an informal trilateral alliance. While China is not very comfortable with many acts of DPRK especially those leading to its nuclear weapon-missile program, it will not show its reaction openly.

China's economic leverage over North Korea is being reduced by Russo-DPRK-enhanced trade, aid, and capital flows from Russia. China continues to support North Korea through \$2.3 billion trade (2023). Yet, the alliance raises the possibility of Russia and/or North Korea taking more aggressive unilateral steps in Ukraine and South Korea.

## CHINA'S DIMINISHED LEVERAGE ON NORTH KOREA AND RUSSIA

China has presented itself as a neutral actor in the Ukraine war. It is clear that without the economic support by China (purchase of Russian oil and gas) and provision of some dual-use goods and components, Russia could not continue its war. Yet China has little real influence over Russia.

The eroding of China's economic-political leverage over North Korea and its neutrality in the Ukrainian war is worrisome as it reduces Chinese importance, internationally. The world expects China to restrain North Korea's from its aggressive policies.

Post-Ukrainian war gung-ho North Korea will be less prone to listen to China. Beijing is well aware that the presence of dual-capable North Korean missiles, better air defenses, and potentially dangerous nuclear weapons will force Washington and others to reciprocate by moving more US dual or nuclear-capable IRBMs to the region. The advanced radars like the Terminal High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) system is already aggressively watching China, limiting its air freedom. Further, the US may approve of its allies' proliferation, letting Seoul and Tokyo go nuclear. China's desire for no more nuclear states in Northeast Asia will suffer. Thus the North Korean aggressive missile program and nuclearization make it a "strategic liability" and a clear and present threat of undesired proliferation in the Chinese neighborhood.

This conflict of interests between the treaty allies exacerbates Chinese national security concerns, particularly regarding the United States and its allies' aggressive moves in the Indo-Pacific area. The US has already ramped up its military presence on and around the Korean Peninsula by the regular deployment of strategic US assets to the region, China is

very uncomfortable with it. China's escalation control over North Korea and Russia has also diminished and it is trapped in an arms race across Northeast Asia. The Chinese neighbors around the South China Sea, with US urging and support, are arming to the teeth and present a serious threat to the Chinese economic survival.

### **NORTH KOREAN GAINS FROM THE UKRAINIAN WAR**

Russia's dependence on some 15,000 North Korean troops and weapons draws international attention to the security of the Korean peninsula. According to some estimates, North Korea has provided Russia with 20,000 shipping containers' load of weapons, including artillery shells, ballistic missiles, rocket systems, and long-range howitzers. Further, North Korea is ready to send still more troops to Russia filling the manpower gaps in its military adventure. The DPRK has received valuable battle experience and a chance to test its weapons in actual war theater. This will be an immense gain for its army and will lead to improved efficiency of its otherwise low tech weapons. It has received up to \$5.5 billion in payments from Russia. North Korea could earn up to \$572 million annually through troop deployment if this arrangement continues.

The main beneficiary of war payments from Russia is the North Korean defense industry leading further plans for the mass production of attack drones and better missiles (IRBMs). Also, the DPRK military is gaining valuable battlefield experience, help in its satellite program, upgrade of air defense systems as well as large amounts of oil and food from Russia. It all translates into enhanced North Korea's deterrence capabilities which may embolden it to take more provocative risks vis-à-vis Seoul and



**North Korean artillery in action**

Toyō.

### **RUSSIAN GAINS AND ATTITUDE**

Russia by receiving North Korean arms and troops, and providing Pyongyang with more oil than the annual cap set by UNSC resolutions, has effectively abandoned arms control and non-proliferation norms. Further, Moscow is highly likely to agree to DPRK requests for transfer of weapons technologies. Although, the war in Ukraine has depleted much of their old weapon stockpiles, both Russia and DPRK are poised to accelerate the production of newer and better weapons vital for modern war.

China's allies regularly make nuclear threats, which is serious. The frequent, Russian, nuclear threats throughout 2024 serve to deter the West from helping Ukraine. China's opposition to the first use of nuclear weapons has promoted its image as a responsible nuclear weapons state. However, its allies reveal potentially disturbing trends. Russia considers its nuclear weapons a symbol of its superpower status. Russia has loosened the conditions of its deterrence and if faced a defeat in Ukraine, through visible Western backing, severe internal pressures may result in nuclear use.

**Continued on page 15**

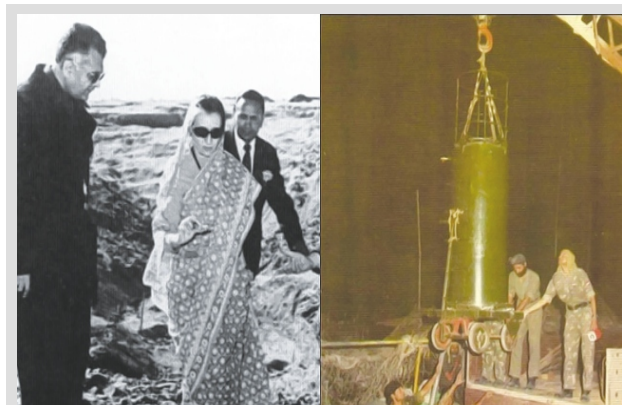


# TEHRAN'S NUCLEAR ASPIRATIONS AND RUSSIA'S SUPPORT

**NUSRAT MIRZA**

America's ambition to maintain its supremacy over the world is not hidden from anyone; if any country stands in its way, it is punished. America's doctrine is that in pursuing supremacy, it combats to destabilize states and overthrow the serving governments. It does not even refrain from shedding blood and destroying any country through direct attacks or proxy wars. It, in fact, most of the time does not care for the welfare of humankind. Instead, it imposes its desires on them, resulting in the birth of many resistant forces and nations.

If we examine the regional dynamics, India appears to be closely following the strategic footprints of the United States. Its hostility toward Pakistan has been evident since the very beginning, as it never truly accepted Pakistan's existence with an open heart. The two nations have remained in a state of conflict, primarily over Kashmir, leading to multiple confrontations, including the full-scale war of 1965.



**First Nuclear test in Rajasthan's Pokhran-I: Smiling Buddha**

Later, in 1971, India, with strategic backing from the Soviet Union, played a crucial role in the separation of East Pakistan, reshaping the region's geopolitical landscape. Further intensifying tensions, India conducted its first nuclear test in 1974 at Pokhran, under the codename "Smiling Buddha," a move perceived as an attempt to intimidate Pakistan. This direct nuclear threat left Pakistan with no choice but to embark on its own nuclear weapons program to ensure its survival and maintain strategic deterrence.

Iran faces geopolitical constraints on all sides, with increasing restrictions imposed upon it. If its adversaries had the capability, they would further tighten these constraints, even blocking Iranian airspace. Israel remains particularly hostile toward Iran due to Tehran's support for Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon. The brutalities committed by Israel in Palestine have drawn widespread

condemnation, highlighting the humanitarian crisis. Iran has also historically backed Syria's former ruling elite and, through them, facilitated aid to Hezbollah.

To secure the fragile regime of Bashar al-Assad, General Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force, made a covert visit to Moscow in July 2015. At that time, Assad had lost control over nearly 80% of Syria's territory and population. However, Russia, despite its diplomatic ties with Iran, refrained from providing substantial assistance due to its strong relations with Israel. Instead, Moscow limited Iran's influence to Syria and played a mediating role in brokering the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and the Westan arrangement that ultimately did not favor Iran but provided temporary relief from mounting pressure.

General Soleimani's visit was officially disclosed three weeks later, yet it laid the groundwork for a deeper relationship between Tehran and Moscow. Over time, what was once a restricted partnership evolved into a full-fledged strategic alliance. This transformation culminated in signing the Iran-Russia Strategic Partnership Agreement in January 2025.

Russia, engaged in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, found itself reliant on Iranian drones, missiles, and other military equipment, bringing the two nations even closer. Consequently, Moscow, which had previously facilitated the West's efforts to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions, has now shifted its stance, actively supporting Iran's pursuit of nuclear advancements.

Russia now acquires Iranian-made drones, missiles, and advanced weaponry that it does not produce domestically. In return, there is growing speculation that Moscow may be aiding Iran in developing

nuclear capabilities. While some argue that Russia is driven by necessity rather than intent, Western observers attribute this development to Moscow's recklessness. Historically, Russian decision-making has often been reactive, first, contemplating later, and suffering the consequences afterward. Past miscalculations include the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, which led to the collapse of the USSR into 15 independent states, and its role in the disintegration of East Pakistan to weaken Pakistan.

Today, Russia's long-standing military ties with India have strengthened New Delhi, which now aligns more closely with the United States. Eventually, India may challenge Russian interests, further complicating Moscow's strategic position. Instead of coercing Iran into full dependency on Russia, the United States could consider diplomatic engagement, providing Iran with security assurances against potential Israeli or American attacks.

The current reality, however, is that Russia is not only supplying advanced weapons to Iran but also extending its support to pro-Iranian armed groups, including the Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon.



**Iranian Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani attends Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's meeting in Tehran (FILE PHOTO)**



**Houthi rebel fighters display their weapons during a gathering aimed at mobilizing more fighters for the Iranian backed Houthi movement, in Sanaa, Yemen (FILE PHOTO)**

According to The Wall Street Journal, Moscow provided satellite intelligence that enabled Houthi forces to target U.S. and Israeli ships in the Mediterranean. Additionally, Russia allegedly funneled \$10 million in weapons to the Houthis via Iran.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah received sophisticated Russian-made anti-tank guided missiles, which were later deployed against Israeli targets. Russia has also supplied arms to resistance forces operating in the Golan Heights, signaling its broader role in supporting Iran's regional proxies. These developments underscore a major geopolitical shift, where Moscow, once a neutral actor in Iran's nuclear affairs, is now a key enabler of Tehran's strategic ambitions.

Israel responded with full force following Hamas' surprise attack on October 7, 2023. It carried out precision strikes that eliminated 16 senior Hezbollah commanders, including key figures like Hassan Nasrallah, significantly weakening Hezbollah's operational strength in Lebanon. The retaliation included the deployment of missiles and drones, which also led to the destruction of Iran's missile factories, its S-300 air defense systems, and other

critical defense infrastructure. Since then, Iran has found itself with limited strategic options and increasingly sees nuclear capability as its ultimate deterrent.

While Iran possesses uranium enrichment facilities, technical expertise, and the necessary infrastructure, it has refrained from assembling a nuclear weapon, fearing severe repercussions from Israel and the United States. However, with Russia's backing, this restraint may not last indefinitely. In September 2024, U.S. intelligence reports indicated that Russia had increased its nuclear cooperation with Iran.

Moscow is now supplying Iran with nuclear technology, including materials crucial for weaponization, and providing guidance on warhead design and delivery systems. Russia is also offering Iran satellite and space-based rocket technology, further enhancing Tehran's strategic capabilities. Most surprisingly, reports suggest that Russia is considering equipping Iran with technology for miniaturized nuclear weapons, deployable via missile systems. Simultaneously, Moscow is assisting Iran in restoring its air defense systems, enabling it to withstand potential aerial assaults.

Under the rising U.S. and Israeli pressure, Iran is resisting fiercely, determined to ensure its survival by any means necessary. As tensions escalate, the implications extend beyond Iran itself. For Pakistan, which shares a border with Iran, any military confrontation involving Tehran could have serious geopolitical and security repercussions. A full-scale conflict could destabilize the entire region, making it imperative for global powers to reassess their approach to Iran and its growing alignment with Russia.

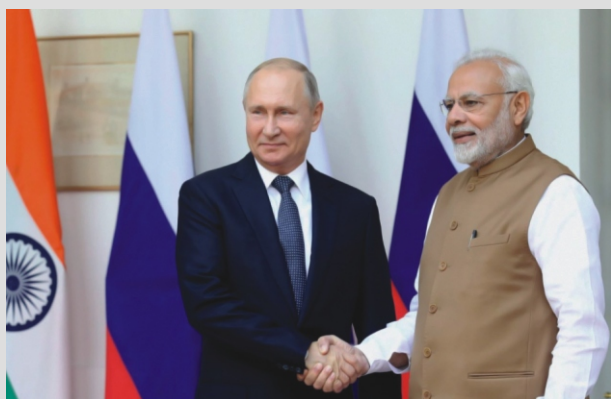
**The author is the Chief Editor of the monthly Interaction.**



# INDIA'S DOUBLE GAME



AIR COMD ZAHID UL HASSAN, SI(M), TI(M), (R)



**June 20, 2020: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Russian President Vladimir Putin before a meeting at Hyderabad House, sign a \$5 billion deal to buy Russian S-400 air defence**

'Realism' marks that in the anarchic world, the nature of interstate relations remains competitive and conflictual. States prioritize their survival and national interests and seek to achieve and maintain a balance of power against their competitors by accumulating power either through groupings or alliances.

During the Cold War, one of the major reasons to successfully avoid direct conflict between the nuclear-armed USA and the Soviet Union was the existence of NATO and the Warsaw Pact as the world broadly remained polarized between the Soviet and the American blocs while non-aligned countries largely remained non-consequential. However, global power contestation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is being characterized by realignments and

readjustments of partnerships and alliances within the ambit of multipolarity.

Interestingly, throughout the Cold War era, India remained aligned with the Soviet bloc primarily to address its geopolitical and geostrategic needs, though it championed Non-Aligned rhetoric. Nevertheless, the nuclearization of India in 1998 coupled with the American desire to contain fast-rising China opened a window of opportunity for India to align itself with the West and act as a counterweight to China. However, a closer look at the global geopolitical environment vis-à-vis Indian play of realpolitik reveals certain ironic realities.

India on the one hand is maximizing economic benefits from Russia by playing conduit to the Russian oil and substantially increasing the bilateral trade. According to a senior Russian diplomat, Indian bilateral trade with Russia reached over USD 66 billion in 2024. India also continues to purchase and upgrade Russian military hardware as 65-70 percent of the existing Indian military inventory of its Armed Forces is of Russian origin. In the same regard, India has recently inducted Russian S-400 Surface to Air Missiles to establish so-called missile defense shield around its vital national areas and installations.

However, on the other hand, Indian supply of ammunition to the Ukraine alongside repeated abstentions in the UNSC has left

Russians skeptical of Indian support and stance. Resultantly, Indian Prime Minister Modi, External Affairs Minister Jay Shankar and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval had to rush to Moscow one after the other to offer clarifications to the Russian President Putin.

The USA declared China as the strategic competitor in its Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS-2022) in February 2022 and simultaneously designated India as its strategic partner and counterweight to China. Ever since India has been granted exceptionalism and preferential treatment to enhance its technological and military potential against China.

The USA not only granted an unprecedented CAATSA waiver to India for purchasing S-400 from Russia but also facilitated access to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). The USA entered into 123 civil nuclear agreement besides exporting niche military capabilities to India and concluded a number of military agreements including the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA); Logistic Support Agreement (LSA); Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Intelligence (BECA) with India.



**S-400 Missile Defence System which India has acquired from Russia**

Nevertheless, interestingly, India has expressed its inability to side with the USA in case it involves in a confrontation with China (Mr Ashley Tellis, Tata Chair for Strategic Affairs and a Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace). Likewise, though India is an integral part of the US-led QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) against China, however, it is also the founding member of non-Western organizations like SCO and BRICS. Similarly, alongside being the strategic partner with the USA and becoming home to Western technologies and military hardware, India is also fostering bilateral trade with China (USD 136 billion) and Russia (USD 66 billion), and also becoming part of the De-dollarization initiative.

The USA, owing to geopolitical compulsions, had been turning blind eyes to human rights transgressions and even to the export of state-sponsored terrorism by India. However, of late, the USA has started to express its discontentment about Indian behavior through a number of actions.

First of all, it supported the Canadian allegations of Indian involvement in terrorism on Canadian soil and asked India to cooperate in the investigations besides unearthing a murder plot and filing an indictment against an Indian official by the USA's Justice Department. In the same context, USA's State Department also issued a 'report on religious freedom within India in 2023', and held meetings with the Sikh activists in the White House on 20 September 2024, ahead of the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Washington.

In the same continuation, despite serious diplomatic efforts, India could not secure an invitation for Prime Minister Modi to President Trump's oath-taking ceremony. Adding insult

to injury, India on one hand faces the real threat of deportation of its over 700,000 illegal immigrants from the USA while on the other hand, President Trump has hinted at imposing high tariffs on Indian imports.

Given the geopolitical, geo-economic, and geostrategic realities, there seems to be a growing cognizance within the Indian strategic community that India can ill-afford (economic and military) confrontation with a global power like China. Whereas, the two-front war scenario against the nuclear-armed neighbors (China and Pakistan) portrays a further scary picture for India.

Assessing the emerging geopolitical environment, the former Indian Army Chief, General Naravane in an article published on 14 August 2023, clearly stated that, "two-front war would mean defeat". More recently, in order to de-escalate border tensions, Indian Prime Minister Modi met with Chinese President Xi Jinping on 23 October 2024, on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia. Rapprochement between China and India would raise questions about the future

and effectiveness of the US Indo-Pacific Strategy and the QUAD.

A prudent review of the prevalent geopolitical and geostrategic environment reveals certain interesting but stark paradoxes about the Indian stance. Under the disguise of 'strategic autonomy', India is trying to simultaneously ride boats flowing in diametrically opposite directions. India's existing economic and military potential is a constant and unsurmountable barrier to its perceived global aspirations.

Similarly, being the epicenter and exporter of state-sponsored terrorism, Indian attempts to play victim of terrorism card also did not gain traction. Taking the realistic view, it can be concluded that India, in a bid to have best of both the worlds, intends playing the double game by running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, which in the global power contestation, is neither achievable nor sustainable proposition.

**The Author is a retired Air Officer from the PAF and currently serves as the Registrar at the DHA Suffa University (DSU), Karachi.**

Continued from page 15

## RUSSIA-NK-CHINA ALLIANCE- DYNAMICS-SIGNIFICANCE-FUTURE

### CONCLUSION

Examining the Russia-NK-China alliance and deterrence dynamics closely, we find that these powers are trapped in their obsession to exhibit great power status. China sees the alliance as a counterbalance to the US interference in the Taiwan strait and the South China Sea. While Russia looks to East Europe as its erstwhile sphere of influence being encroached by the NATO.

It appears that the year 2025 will be a watershed year for the resurgence of the

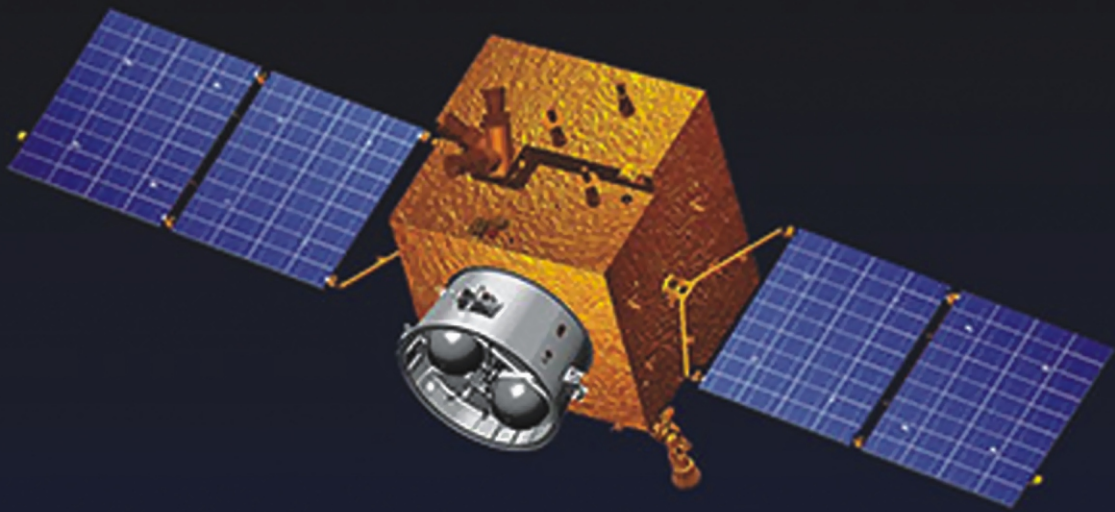
global far right. Trump's administration will embolden extreme-right parties around the world. Trump's new "trade war" may trigger a de-globalization shock leading to hyper-individualism, xenophobia, unexpected migration, and a newer approach to climate change. All this is disturbing and worrisome for China and Russia.

If the World misunderstands or ignores these emerging new three states' alliances and the deterrence dynamics, the peril to peace and security would be unimaginable.

**The author is a Senior Fellow at Institute of Business Management (IoBM) & Co-Chairman of Pakistan Council on Foreign Relations.**



# PRSS-1



# PAKISTAN'S FIRST OPTICAL REMOTE SENSING SATELLITE

# PRSS-1

**SYED SAMIULLAH**



**PRSS-1 and PakTES-1A launch in China  
(Photo Credit: SUPARCO)**

The Remote Sensing Satellite System (PRSS-1) is Pakistan's first optical remote sensing satellite. It was launched on July 9, 2018, by LM-2C/SMA, a launch vehicle from Jiuquan Satellite Center (JLSC), China. The satellite was initially developed by China's Academy of Space Technology (CAST) and later it was sold to Pakistan.

On that same day, Pakistan sent its another flagship satellite, Pakistan Technology Evaluation Satellite-1A (PakTES-1A) indigenously designed and developed by the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), Pakistan. It was co-launched with PRSS-1 by the same launch vehicle. PakTES-1A was a 285 kg satellite equipped with an optical payload commensurate with national needs. It had a design life of three years and was to operate at an altitude of 610 km.

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS OF PRSS-1

The Pakistan Remote Sensing Satellite-1 (PRSS-1) brings a pretty high-resolution imaging capability to the country. PRSS-1 orbits the Earth in a sun-synchronous orbit (SSO), meaning it passes over the same location at the same solar time every day, ensuring consistent lighting for its images. This makes it an incredibly reliable tool for a wide range of applications.

Equipped with an electro-optical imaging system, PRSS-1 captures highly detailed images with a 0.98-meter resolution in panchromatic mode (a grayscale imaging technique used in photography and satellite imaging that combines red, green, and blue bands to create a single-band image) and 2.89 meters in multispectral mode (a technology that captures images using multiple bands of light, including visible light,



**Pakistan Technology Evaluation Satellite  
(PakTES-1A)**

infrared, and ultraviolet light across the electromagnetic spectrum). With a 4-day revisit time, it can provide fresh satellite data on any location, helping decision-makers respond quickly to changing conditions on the ground. The satellite was built to operate for seven years, providing a long-term source of valuable imagery. In addition to panchromatic and multispectral modes, its imaging capabilities include pan-sharpened mode (a data fusion technique that combines high-resolution panchromatic images with lower-resolution color images to create a high-resolution color image), which allows for different levels of detail and color enhancement to suit various needs.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF PRSS-1 FOR PAKISTAN**

The launch of PRSS-1 provided Pakistan with independent access to high-resolution satellite imagery. Previously, Pakistan relied on foreign satellites for remote sensing data, which often led to delays and high costs. The benefits of PRSS-1 span multiple sectors, making it a vital asset for national development:

#### **1. LAND MAPPING AND URBAN PLANNING**

High-resolution imagery from PRSS-1



**A Long March 2C rocket, launched at the JSLC-China, carries both PRSS-1 & PakTES-1A**



**Imagery of Mangla Dam, Pakistan by PakTES-1A**

remains instrumental in land use classification, urban expansion monitoring, and infrastructure development. The data supports efficient planning and management of urban and rural areas, ensuring sustainable growth and effective resource allocation.

#### **2. AGRICULTURAL AND CROP MONITORING**

Agriculture plays a crucial role in Pakistan's economy, and PRSS-1 helps in crop assessment, yield estimation, and classification of agricultural land. By providing insights into soil conditions, vegetation health, and irrigation patterns, the satellite enhances precision farming techniques, leading to improved productivity and food security.

#### **3. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE MONITORING**

The satellite aids in monitoring deforestation, desertification, air pollution, and climate change impacts. By tracking environmental changes over time, policymakers can implement data-driven strategies to combat ecological degradation and promote conservation efforts.

#### **4. DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND RELIEF OPERATIONS**

PRSS-1 also plays a crucial role in disaster



management by providing real-time satellite imagery for floods, earthquakes, landslides, and other natural disasters. The satellite helps authorities assess damage, plan rescue operations, and ensure timely relief efforts, minimizing the impact of disasters on human lives and infrastructure.

## 5. WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

With water scarcity being a growing concern for Pakistan, PRSS-1 enables efficient monitoring of freshwater sources, reservoirs, and river systems. The imagery helps identify potential sites for new water storage facilities and supports conservation strategies to ensure long-term water availability.

## 6. SUPPORT FOR CPEC AND MEGA INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

PRSS-1 contribution to the monitoring and planning of large-scale infrastructure projects, including those under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is of great importance. The satellite provides high-resolution imagery to track construction progress, analyze land suitability, and enhance project execution efficiency.

## 7. NATIONAL AFFORESTATION CAMPAIGNS

The satellite data is also being utilized in tree plantation drives and afforestation projects, aiding in site selection and tracking the effectiveness of reforestation efforts across the country.

## GROUND STATIONS AND DATA ACCESSIBILITY

To maximize the benefits of PRSS-1, two ground stations have been established in Islamabad and Karachi for satellite operations, image reception, processing, and data archiving. These stations allow Pakistani users to access high-quality satellite imagery

directly, reducing dependency on foreign sources.

Additionally, SUPARCO (Pakistan's National Space Agency) has launched a dedicated web portal where users can browse, order, and download satellite imagery products. This initiative enhances accessibility and encourages stakeholders from various industries to utilize satellite data for research, development, and operational purposes.

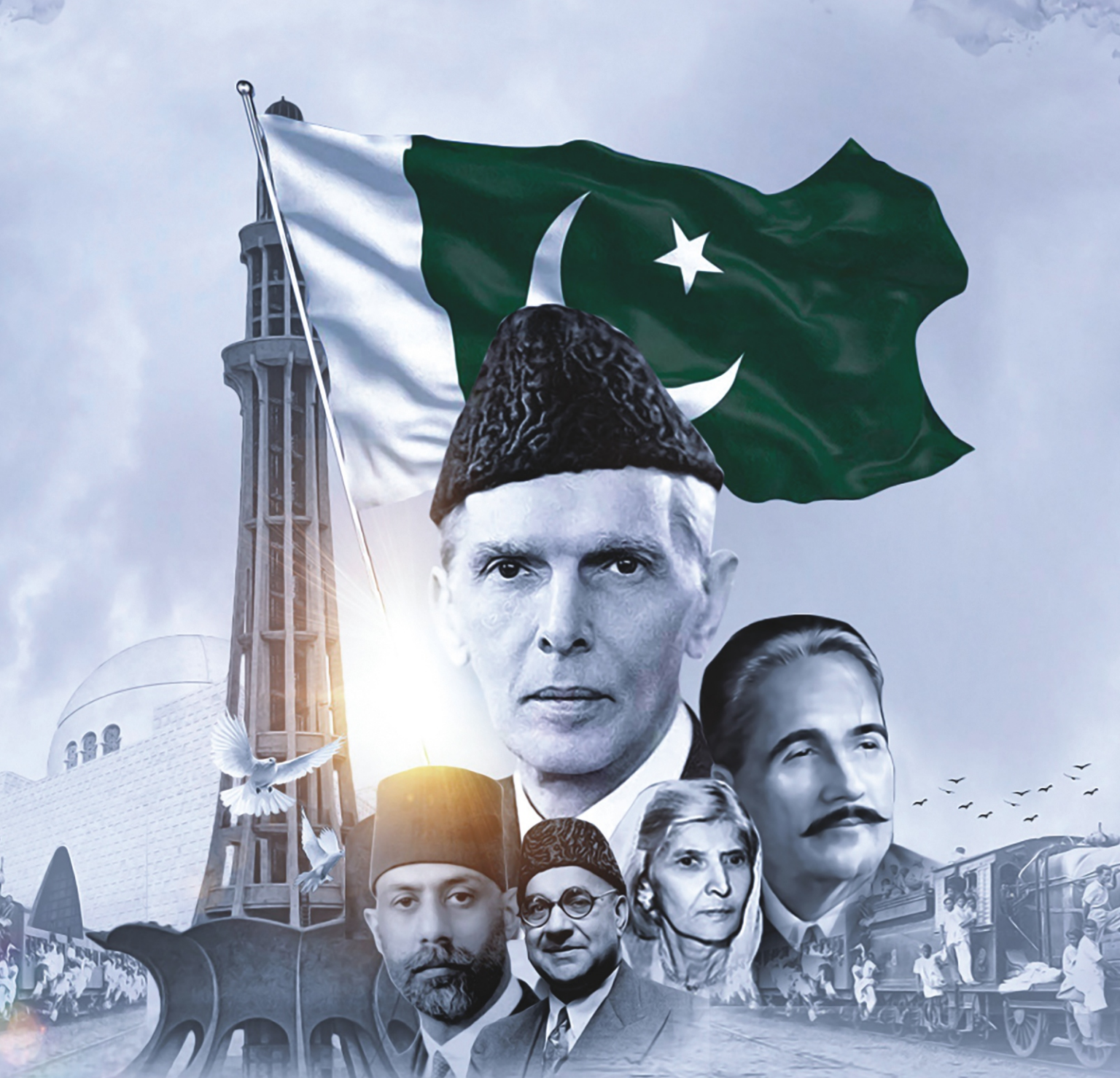
## CONCLUSION

The launch of PRSS-1 and PakTES-1A marked a new era of space technology in Pakistan, enabling the country to achieve self-reliance in satellite-based earth observation. With continuous improvements and further advancements in space technology, Pakistan is now on the path to expanding its space exploration capabilities continuously, which will further contribute to national progress and scientific innovation.

The author is the head of the Research Department at Rabita Forum International (RFI) and Associate Editor of Monthly Interaction.



**Launching platform of Pakistan's first Remote Sensing Satellite (PRSS-1) and Pakistan's indigenous Technology Evaluation Satellite (PAK TES-1A)**



# PAKISTAN CORNER

**Welcome to "Pakistan Corner," a dedicated section in our magazine where we explore the rich tapestry of Pakistan's history, culture, and legacy before and after its independence. This series aims to illuminate the diverse heritages, local languages, various cultures, and unsung heroes of the nation, offering our readers an in-depth look into the different facets that shape today's Pakistan.**



# POST-INDEPENDENCE HISTORY OF PAKISTAN

## (1965-1968)

### TEAM INTERACTION

The 1965 war between India and Pakistan was a defining moment in their history, deeply tied to the long-standing Kashmir dispute. What began as skirmishes in the Rann of Kutch quickly escalated into a full-scale war on September 6, when India launched an attack on Lahore and Sialkot. In response, General Ayub Khan, the then president, addressed the nation, calling for unity and resilience in defending the homeland. Despite being initially caught off guard, the Pakistani military and civilians displayed remarkable courage. The Pakistan Army, though outnumbered, fought heroically in battles like Chawinda and Jassar, successfully repelling Indian advances. The Pakistan Navy carried out a bold operation against the Indian port of Dwarka, while the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) dominated the skies with decisive strikes on Indian airbases at Pathankot and Halwara.

Throughout the conflict, Pakistan witnessed extraordinary acts of bravery, with heroes like Major Aziz Bhatti Shaheed (Nishan-e-Haider) making the ultimate sacrifice. The war also united civilians, students, and the media in an unprecedented display of patriotism. As both nations suffered heavy losses, the war ended in a stalemate, paving the way for the Tashkent Agreement under UN mediation. Facing American disapproval and recognizing the need for diplomacy, Ayub Khan took significant steps to improve ties with the Soviet Union. His efforts,



**Khem Karan, the Indian market town, was the place from where Indians were to launch their thrust on Kasur and then on to Lahore**

along with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's skilled negotiations, led to Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin visiting Islamabad in an attempt to normalize relations.

The same year, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, delivered a resolute address at the United Nations General Assembly, accompanied by atomic scientist Aziz Ahmed. With unwavering determination, he articulated Pakistan's stance on nuclear deterrence, famously declaring, "If India builds the [nuclear] bomb, we will eat grass, even go hungry, but we will get one of [our] own... We have no other choice." His words featured Pakistan's deep commitment to developing nuclear capabilities in response to regional security challenges.

Following this bold declaration, Bhutto



worked closely with renowned scientists Abdus Salam and Munir Ahmad Khan to strengthen Pakistan's nuclear infrastructure. This teamwork led to significant strides in nuclear power development, including a commercial nuclear power plant agreement with General Electric Canada, alongside additional accords with the United Kingdom and France. These efforts laid the foundation for Pakistan's long-term nuclear goals.

However, in 1966, Bhutto's political career took a turbulent turn when he vehemently opposed the Tashkent Agreement a peace accord signed to resolve the Indo-Pakistani conflict. His strong dissent put him at odds with President Ayub Khan, ultimately leading to his dismissal from the cabinet. Bhutto's removal sparked widespread protests and labor strikes, particularly in West Pakistan, where public discontent with Ayub Khan's leadership grew. The unrest further eroded the President's authority, marking a turning point in Pakistan's political landscape.

Amidst this political turbulence, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of the Awami League unveiled a six-point program in 1966, advocating for substantial regional autonomy.



**Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a Pakistani politician, he served as the Fourth President of Pakistan from 1971 to 1973 and later as the Ninth Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1973 to 1977**

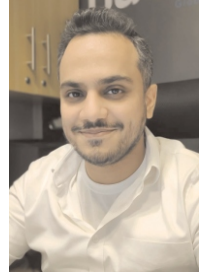
This proposal was firmly rejected by Bhutto, leading to heightened tensions between East and West Pakistan. Concurrently, economist Mahbub ul Haq published a report highlighting economic disparities and the concentration of wealth among a selected few families, intensifying calls for systemic reforms.

In an attempt to showcase the nation's progress, Ayub Khan commemorated a "Decade of Development" in 1968. Contrarily, this celebration was met with intense criticism from student organizations and leftist groups, who accused his administration of promoting crony capitalism, exploiting workers, and suppressing the rights of various ethnic groups, including Bengalis, Sindhis, Baloches, and Pashtoons. These grievances further fueled nationalist sentiments, especially in East Pakistan, where the demand for autonomy gained momentum.

In response to the growing demand for change, a socialist convention convened in Lahore in 1967, bringing together leftist intellectuals and activists. This assembly culminated in the formation of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), with Bhutto elected as its inaugural chairman. The PPP leadership, including figures like J.A. Rahim and Mubashir Hassan, pledged to challenge Ayub Khan's regime through the mobilization of popular support. The PPP's emergence coincided with a surge in labor strikes and civil unrest throughout the country, as diverse groups united in opposition to Ayub Khan's policies. International criticism, notably from the United States, further eroded his authority. By late 1968, escalating protests and political pressure compelled Ayub Khan to resign, leading to the imposition of martial law under General Yahya Khan.

(Continue...)

# ASSESSING TRUMP'S DELIVERABLES



## FEASIBILITY AND GLOBAL IMPACT

**MIRZA KASHIF BAIG**

As Donald Trump took the oath of office in January 2025 for his second term, his administration has swiftly implemented key policy promises. His proposed deliverables from economic policies to foreign affairs are being tested in real-time. This has examined the feasibility of his policies and their global ramifications based on developments up to February 23, 2025.

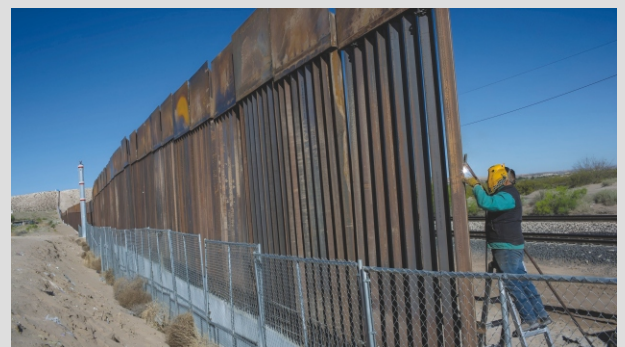
### ECONOMIC REVIVAL AND TRADE WARS

Trump has reaffirmed his commitment to protectionist economic policies, implementing new tariffs on Chinese imports and renegotiating trade agreements with Mexico and Canada. While these measures are intended to boost American manufacturing, businesses, and global markets have resisted prolonged trade wars. The stock market has experienced volatility, and some corporations have begun lobbying for exemptions. Although Trump has followed through on his tariff promises, he has signaled a willingness to negotiate specific trade conditions, particularly with European allies. These trade wars could have mixed consequences for Pakistan. A shift in U.S.-China trade relations could open new economic opportunities for Pakistan as an alternative trading partner for China. However, if Trump's policies disrupt global markets, Pakistan's economy heavily reliant on trade with the U.S. and China could face instability.

### IMMIGRATION AND BORDER CONTROL

One of Trump's earliest executive actions in 2025 involved reinforcing border security and accelerating the construction of additional barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border. Mass deportation operations have begun, but they face significant logistical challenges, including a backlog in immigration courts and resistance from civil rights organizations. Several states have also filed legal challenges, potentially delaying full-scale implementation. Despite these hurdles, Trump has doubled down on his immigration stance, making it clear that he intends to push ahead with stricter border controls.

Stricter immigration policies could impact Pakistan's diaspora in the U.S., particularly students and professionals seeking opportunities abroad. Increased scrutiny of visa approvals and work permits may limit



**A worker welds a new fence between the Anapra neighborhood of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico and Sunland Park**

mobility and economic remittances from Pakistani expatriates.

### FOREIGN POLICY: NATO, UKRAINE, AND ISOLATIONISM

Trump has pressured NATO allies to increase their defense spending, warning of potential consequences for non-compliance. However, he has not followed through on threats to reduce U.S. commitments to NATO, mainly due to bipartisan resistance in Congress. Regarding Ukraine, Trump has scaled back U.S. military aid but has not entirely cut off support. Instead, his administration is exploring diplomatic negotiations with Russia to end the ongoing conflict, which has sparked both praise and concern from European allies. Additionally, Trump is trying to single out China and thin the relations between Russia and China. A Nixonian doctrine repetition.

For Pakistan, Trump's less interventionist approach to global conflicts may offer an opportunity to strengthen regional diplomacy. If the U.S. scales back its involvement in international disputes, Pakistan could be more significant in regional peace initiatives, particularly in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

### MIDDLE EAST POLICY AND U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONS

The Trump administration has reaffirmed its strong alliance with Israel, expanding

military and economic cooperation. His administration has also pushed for an extension of the Abraham Accords, encouraging more Arab nations to normalize relations with Israel. However, tensions with Iran have escalated following increased sanctions and military posturing. Some are concerned that continued aggressive policies toward Iran could lead to new conflicts in the region, disrupting global energy markets. It is also a question that Russia has a strategic ally of Iran. Will it be possible for Russia to break the alliance of Russia, China, and Iran, knowing the American intention?

For Pakistan, a more aggressive U.S. stance towards Iran could increase regional instability, particularly along Pakistan's western border. Additionally, Pakistan's traditional support for Palestine could create diplomatic challenges if U.S. policies favor Israel at the expense of Palestinian interests.

### CHINA AND THE INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY

Trump has intensified economic and military measures against China, reinforcing alliances with Taiwan, Japan, and Australia. The administration has increased U.S. naval patrols in the South China Sea, leading to heightened tensions. While Trump has fulfilled his promise of taking a hardline stance on China, the economic decoupling process remains complex, with U.S. businesses pushing back against severe trade restrictions. His administration may need to recalibrate its approach to avoid economic disruptions.

For Pakistan, U.S.-China tensions could have profound effects. The Trump administration may scrutinize Pakistan's strategic alignment with China, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Pakistan could face diplomatic pressure from the U.S. to limit its





economic ties with China, forcing Islamabad to navigate a delicate balancing act.

## **GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS AND U.S. WITHDRAWAL**

Trump has continued criticizing international organizations such as the UN, WHO, and WTO, reducing U.S. financial contributions. However, he has stopped short of complete withdrawal, instead leveraging these institutions to negotiate better terms for U.S. involvement. His administration is also reassessing America's role in global climate agreements, indicating that he may roll back previous commitments.

For Pakistan, a weakened role of international organizations due to U.S. disengagement may have economic and diplomatic repercussions. Reduced funding to UN agencies could impact development programs in Pakistan, including humanitarian aid and climate change initiatives.

## **PENTAGON SHAKE-UP AND ITS IMPLICATIONS**

In a major move, President Trump has overhauled the Pentagon's leadership, replacing Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin with a more hawkish figure, citing the need for a stronger national defense strategy. Other key officials, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, have also been replaced with individuals aligned with Trump's America First vision. This shake-up has signaled a shift in defense strategy, with a renewed focus on countering China, reassessing military alliances, and reducing overseas troop commitments. Additionally, Trump has announced plans to restructure U.S. military aid programs, shifting priorities towards direct investments in domestic military infrastructure. The administration also considers significant troop withdrawals from certain Middle Eastern and European locations to reduce American

military entanglements abroad.

For Pakistan, these changes in the Pentagon could lead to shifts in U.S. military engagement in South Asia. If Trump reduces military aid to regional allies or increases pressure on China militarily, Pakistan could find itself in a delicate position, needing to balance its strategic partnerships carefully. Additionally, any reduction in U.S. involvement in Afghanistan could increase security concerns along Pakistan's western border.

## **CONCLUSION: WHAT HAS TRUMP FOLLOWED THROUGH ON?**

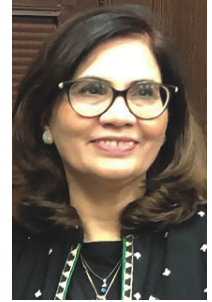
Trump has aggressively pursued his campaign promises, particularly in trade, immigration, and China policy. However, constraints such as legal challenges, economic realities, and bipartisan opposition have moderated some of his actions. While he has implemented new tariffs, reinforced border policies, and exerted pressure on NATO, his administration has been forced to navigate diplomatic and economic pushback.

For Pakistan, Trump's second term presents both challenges and opportunities. Economic policies affecting global trade could disrupt Pakistan's financial stability, while diplomatic shifts may require a more strategic foreign policy approach from Islamabad. Additionally, U.S. disengagement from international institutions could weaken development programs in Pakistan, requiring increased regional cooperation.

As Trump's second term progresses, the world remains watchful of how his policies will reshape global power dynamics. The next few months will determine whether his bold strategies will lead to sustained gains or unintended consequences for the U.S., its allies, and nations like Pakistan.

**The Author is the Editor of the Monthly Interaction.**

# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF CHINA PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR



**PROF. DR UZMA SHUJAAT**



China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a strategically bilateral initiative aimed at connecting Gwadar port in Pakistan which China's Xinjiang region through a network of transportation and energy projects. Despite its potential to super economic growth and regional integration, CPEC also faces several challenges including political and security risk social and environmental risk.

CPEC phase 2.0 represents a paradigm shift in Pakistan- China relations. This phase aims to redefine the framework of bilateral relations through deeper collaboration, advanced technological transfer and transformative socio- economic projects. China's commitment to transforming CPEC into a multi dimensional Framework with 5 very thematic corridors, Innovation. Green corridors. Regional connectivity. This initiative

reflects China's commitment to transforming cutting edge technologies modernising Pakistan's and infrastructure and fostering a knowledge based economy.

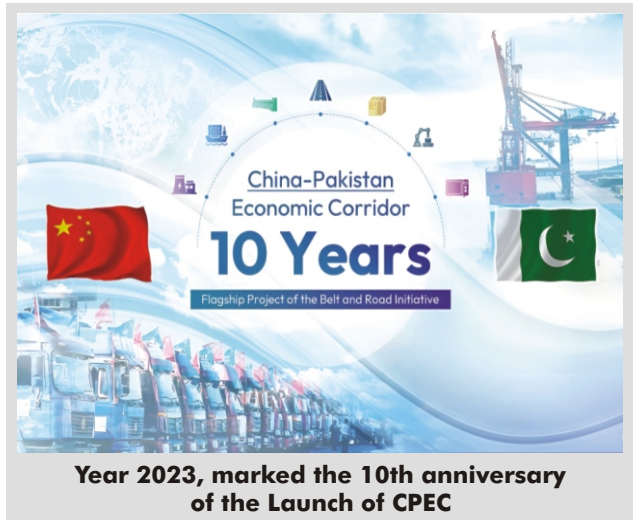
- Establishing an economic growth corridor with clean priorities.
- Tech-driven industries + fostering innovation.
- Addressing poverty alleviation, education and healthcare through targeted socio-economic projects.
- Accelerating energy transition and promoting sustainable economic models.
- Expanding exports and building global supply chain linkages.

As the two nations strengthen their partnerships through initiatives like these, the world will witness CPEC phase 2.0 emerge as a model of international cooperation and economic integration benefiting not only China and Pakistan but the entire region.

The location and geography of a country play a significant role in shaping its strategic cooperation with other countries. In today's globalized world, geographical location is not the only factor that influences the development of geo-economics and geopolitical relations. Corridors with weak and unstable economies can benefit from their geographical location by offering attractive opportunities for strategic cooperation to fulfil their national interests. In that context, Pakistan's a particular example of a country facing such a situation.

Pakistan's geographical location is between two rapidly developing countries China and India and share borders with energy rich Iran and have proximity the central Asian States. The CPEC 1st and second phases designed to harvest short term projects but the third phase aims to 1st phase electricity + infrastructure, inefficiencies, encourage intra-Pak and regional connectivity. 2nd productive capacity by boosting industries particularly export oriented through special economic zones supported by Chinese investment.

The 3rd phase involves the construction of railway lines and energy pipelines between Kashgar and Northern Pak and upgradation of Korakoram Highway. Despite Pakistan's promising economic development through CPEC, it faces several challenges that threaten it's political, economic, social and security stability. There are also other obstacles such as socio-political issues, low literacy rates, terrorist attacks and corruption. Massive investment from China through CPEC has

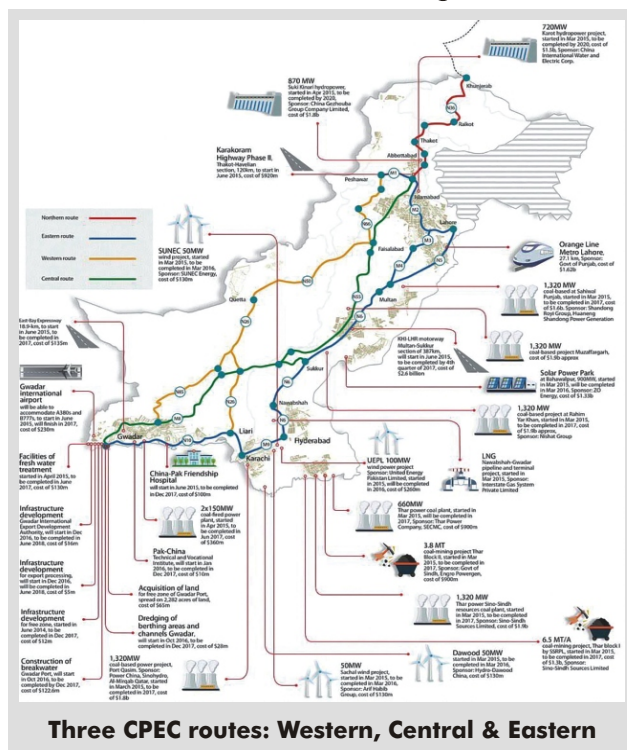


increased Pakistan's economic dependence in China. If we see through the lenses of dependency theory, Theotonio Dos Santos, which describe how countries become dependent on one another due to expansion and self-sustainment. In this perspective we can understand why Pakistan continued to work with China despite many challenges.

D Theory fundamentally explains how developing countries can be trapped in an unbalanced economic relationship. Actually, the DT is a part of the structuralism paradigm which assumes certain basic principles when examining its politics. Exploitation can take the form of investment and development benefiting the developed countries.

A country cannot rely solely on using only land, labour and capital to achieve sustainable economic growth. Instead it must increasingly rely on increasing productivity by introducing advance technologies and developing it's capital goods sector. So there are many challenges for Pakistan in implementing CPEC in a full fledge manner at the same time Pakistan will have many benefits from their projects.

The author is the Acting Director of the Area Study Centre for Europe, University of Karachi.





# US-INDIA BROMANCE

## A COMPLEX PARTNERSHIP WITH REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS



**BISMAH MIRZA**

In the evolving geopolitical landscape, the relationship between the United States and India has taken center stage, particularly in the aftermath of Donald Trump's return to the White House in 2024. The relationship, often dubbed as a "bromance," has become a cornerstone of both countries' strategic interests, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. Trump's administration, focusing on a renewed "Make America Great Again" agenda, significantly emphasized strengthening U.S.-India ties, particularly in trade, defense, and energy cooperation. However, the collaboration has been far from seamless, facing challenges ranging from trade imbalances to immigration tensions, as well as broader regional security concerns.

### ● TRADE AND ECONOMIC DISPUTES

The trade dynamics between the U.S. and India have been marked by persistent imbalances. Under President Trump, there was a strong push to address these issues,



**Indian PM Narendra Modi meets US President Donald Trump**

including the imposition of tariffs on Indian goods. During Modi's visit to Washington in February 2025, both leaders worked towards resolving existing trade disputes. India made some concessions, such as agreeing to reduce tariffs on certain American products, including whiskey and motorcycles. However, the U.S. expressed concerns over India's high tariffs on American-made automobiles, calling it a "big problem." Despite Modi's efforts to mitigate these concerns, the lack of significant trade concessions from the U.S. highlighted the limitations of their economic diplomacy.

### ● ENERGY AND DEFENSE COOPERATION

The U.S. and India have found common ground in energy and defense cooperation. In February 2025, the U.S. committed to increasing its exports of oil and natural gas to India, helping meet India's growing energy demands. This partnership is seen as mutually beneficial, as India seeks to diversify its energy sources and reduce its dependence on traditional suppliers, particularly from the Middle East. The energy deal is part of a broader strategy to enhance U.S.-India economic ties, with India aiming to raise the share of natural gas in its energy mix significantly by 2030.

On the defense front, both countries agreed to collaborate on cutting-edge military technology, including the sale of F-35 fighter jets to India. This deal is expected to



**US'S F-35 jet, possessing Stealth capability**

strengthen India's air defense capabilities, aligning with the broader goal of countering China's growing influence in the region. However, the complex dynamics of defense cooperation are not without challenges. India has a long-standing relationship with Russia, which has been a key arms supplier, and concerns remain about India's ability to manage and operate advanced defense systems like the F-35. Moreover, there is skepticism about whether the U.S. will fully deliver on these defense promises, as seen with past discussions surrounding the F-16 deal.

### ● IMMIGRATION TENSIONS AND DEPORTATION

While defense and trade agreements took center stage, immigration issues also surfaced as a point of contention. Trump's administration had previously focused on tackling illegal immigration, particularly from countries like India, where many individuals overstayed their visas. Just before Modi's trip to the U.S., a plane carrying 100 illegal Indian immigrants was sent back to India, creating tensions in the bilateral relationship. However, Modi's pragmatic approach allowed him to navigate the issue by accepting the deported migrants, signaling a willingness to cooperate on immigration matters despite domestic

challenges.

Despite these efforts, the relationship between the two countries has often been strained by differing approaches to immigration enforcement. Modi's cooperation with the U.S. on immigration was viewed as a necessary step to improve bilateral ties, but the long-term effectiveness of such measures remains uncertain, especially given the political sensitivities surrounding deportations in India.

### ● HUMAN RIGHTS AND REGIONAL SECURITY

The U.S.-India partnership has also been shaped by issues related to human rights, particularly regarding the treatment of Muslim minorities in India. The U.S., under both the Trump and Biden administrations, has raised concerns about the state of religious freedom and minority rights in India. However, these issues were largely avoided in public discussions between Trump and Modi, with the focus shifting towards more strategic and economic concerns. Trump's transactional approach to foreign policy meant that human rights concerns were sidelined in favor of economic and defense priorities.

The most notable omission during these high-level talks was the lack of focus on human rights issues. Trump's administration largely sidelined concerns about India's treatment of minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians, which had drawn criticism from other global leaders. Modi, for his part, avoided addressing these sensitive issues, reflecting the transactional nature of his relationship with the U.S. under Trump. This avoidance allowed both sides to concentrate on economic and strategic priorities but also limited the development of a truly comprehensive and balanced partnership.

Continued on page 35

# KYRGYZSTAN AND TAJIKISTAN RESOLVE DECADES-OLD BORDER DISPUTE

## A HISTORIC AGREEMENT FOR CENTRAL ASIA

DR. S. BUSHRA BATOOL



**Fighting regularly flares up between the two mountainous countries Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that share a 970 km (600 miles) border with around half of the frontier contested.**

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, two ex-Soviet Central Asian republics, have announced a historic resolution to their long-standing border dispute, marking a potential turning point for the two nations, and for the wider Central Asian region. The agreement addresses the 970-kilometer (600-mile) shared border between the two countries, which has been the focal point of ethnic and territorial clashes for decades. The dispute has not only resulted in periodic violence but has also strained the relationships between the two countries, affecting not just border communities but also broader regional stability. The resolution is seen as a major diplomatic achievement, promising to ease long-standing tensions and to foster cooperation between these neighbouring states.

### THE NATURE OF THE BORDER DISPUTE

The Kyrgyz-Tajik border dispute is rooted in the Soviet era when the Soviet Union created borders without regard to the ethnic makeup, geographical realities, or the practical needs of the people in the region. During the period between 1924 and 1936, Soviet authorities drew arbitrary boundaries in Central Asia that often split ethnic groups across borders. As a result, people with shared cultural, linguistic, and historical ties found themselves living on opposite sides of national boundaries, creating tensions that lingered even after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Tajikistan, home to around 10 million people, and Kyrgyzstan, with a population of more than seven million, are two of the poorest nations in Central Asia. The lack of clear borders and territorial disputes over land, water resources, and strategic territories have led to periodic violent clashes between ethnic groups in the region. Since gaining independence after the decline of the Soviet Union, both countries have been embroiled in border conflicts, and the Kyrgyz-Tajik border has been the site of violent skirmishes on multiple occasions. The Fergana Valley, one of the most densely populated regions in Central Asia, is a significant hotspot in the border dispute. It lies at the intersection of the borders of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and has been a focal point for territorial



disagreements. Soviet-era border demarcations divided the valley in such a way that it disregarded the region's complex ethnic composition. This has led to recurring clashes, particularly in areas where Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek communities live in close proximity.

### CLASHES AND ESCALATIONS: A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Tensions between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have often boiled over into violence, with frequent border skirmishes causing significant loss of life. In September 2022, two days of violent clashes between the two countries' forces resulted in over 100 deaths and the evacuation of approximately 140,000 people from border areas. Earlier, in April 2021, similar clashes resulted in the deaths of around 20 people and the injury of more than 200 others. These incidents highlight the fragility of peace in the region and the constant threat of escalations that have plagued both nations for years.

Historically, disputes over access to water resources, grazing land for livestock, and agricultural territories have been common causes of conflict. These issues, combined with ethnic rivalries, have resulted in hundreds of casualties and significant property damage. For instance, in May-June 1990, violent

clashes between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz residents in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, led to the deaths of at least 300 people, with some estimates placing the number as high as 1,000. Similarly, the June 2010 clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks resulted in more than 400 casualties and extensive property destruction.

### THE PATH TO A RESOLUTION

The resolution of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border dispute came after years of negotiations and diplomatic efforts. Following months of intense discussions, the two countries finalized the border agreement in December 2024, with the final document being approved on February 21, 2025. The agreement covers the delimitation and demarcation of the remaining sections of the border, addressing critical points of contention that have fuelled conflict over the years.

The agreement is significant for several reasons. First, it is expected to resolve the last unresolved border conflict in Central Asia, bringing stability to a region that has long been marred by territorial disputes. Second, it represents a major diplomatic breakthrough between the two nations, who had previously struggled to find common ground on key issues. The document will now be signed by the respective heads of state, marking a crucial step toward reducing hostilities and enhancing cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. One of the most challenging aspects of the negotiations was the lack of access to original Soviet-era maps, which could have provided greater clarity on the exact border demarcations. Despite this challenge, both countries demonstrated a commitment to finding a peaceful resolution. As a result, this agreement is viewed not only as a resolution to a long-standing territorial issue but also as a symbol of growing diplomatic ties between the two nations.



**A Kyrgyz soldier at a burnt-out border checkpoint in the village of Kyzyl-Bel, near the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border (FILE PHOTO)**

## THE BROADER REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The resolution of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border dispute holds important implications for the wider region of Central Asia. For years, the unresolved border issues between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have prevented deeper cooperation among the Central Asian states. However, the successful resolution of this dispute could pave the way for greater regional stability and collaboration, especially in areas such as trade, security, and resource management. Central Asia, a region that has historically been a sphere of influence for Russia, is witnessing increasing competition from other global powers, including China, Turkey, and the European Union. These countries are seeking to expand their influence in the region, and the resolution of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border dispute could serve as a stepping stone for further cooperation among the Central Asian republics. The end of this conflict would likely reduce tensions, allowing these nations to focus more on economic development and regional integration.

Both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are members of the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and in 2022, Kyrgyzstan had requested Russian mediation to help resolve the border dispute. While Russia, preoccupied with its military campaign in Ukraine, did not appear to play a significant role in the recent agreement, the involvement of Moscow in facilitating peace in the region remains an important consideration for future diplomatic efforts.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The Kyrgyz-Tajik border agreement is a crucial step in the ongoing efforts to address border disputes in Central Asia. However, challenges remain, particularly in the implementation phase. Both countries must



**Leaders of the member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) (FILE PHOTO)**

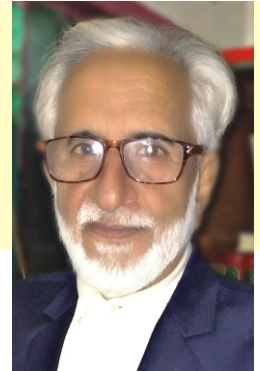
ensure that the agreement is fully enforced, and that any lingering issues are addressed through diplomatic channels. The success of this agreement could serve as a model for resolving other border disputes in the region, and it has the potential to foster greater cooperation among Central Asian states.

The finalization of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border agreement offers hope for the future of Central Asia, where tensions have historically impeded regional development. If successfully implemented, this agreement could lay the foundation for lasting peace and cooperation in a region that is increasingly important in global geopolitics.

For Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, this agreement is not only an end to a territorial dispute but also an opportunity to build stronger, more peaceful relations and to embrace the opportunities that regional cooperation can bring. As the two nations prepare to sign the agreement, the world will be watching to see how this historic step unfolds, and how it shapes the future of Central Asia.

The author is a Research Officer at Rabita Forum International (RFI).

# PROPHET IBRAHIM'S VISION



## BUILDING SOCIETAL PROGRESS ON PEACE AND STABILITY

**KHURSHEED ALAM**

**'...O my Lord! Make the city (Makkah) a place of peace and provide its inhabitants with fruits (economic prosperity)...'**

In this prayer, Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.) earnestly beseeches the Almighty to bestow two fundamental blessings upon the city of Makkah: enduring peace and abundant prosperity. This supplication highlights a universal principle: true economic prosperity is inextricably linked to a foundation of peace and stability. The sequence in Prophet Ibrahim's prayer is deliberate and instructive. He first seeks security for the city, recognizing that peace is the bedrock upon which all societal progress is built. Once peace is established, the pathway to prosperity becomes attainable, allowing for the flourishing of trade, innovation, and overall well-being.

In today's interconnected world, the lessons from Prophet Ibrahim's supplication are more relevant than ever. Political stability and social harmony serve as significant attractive features to both domestic and international investments. Investors meticulously evaluate a country's environment before committing resources. On a broad scale, the factors considered can be the following:

### 1. POLITICAL AND LEGAL STABILITY:

A consistent and predictable political climate, underpinned by robust legal frameworks, assures investors that their investments are safeguarded against abrupt policy changes or governmental upheavals. Such stability minimizes the risk of disruptions in business operations, fostering confidence among investors.

### 2. ECONOMIC INDICATORS:

Metrics such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, inflation rates, and consumer price indices offer insights into a nation's economic health and its potential for delivering returns on investment. Positive trends in these indicators signal a conducive environment for business ventures.

### 3. MARKET SIZE AND POTENTIAL:

The extent of the domestic market, coupled with access to regional markets, determines the potential customer base and scalability of investments. A larger, more accessible market enhances the attractiveness of investment opportunities.

### 4. INFRASTRUCTURE QUALITY:

Efficient infrastructure including transportation systems, communication networks, and utilities is essential for seamless business operations. Investors are naturally drawn to regions where such facilities are well-developed and reliable.



## 5. REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT:

Transparent, consistent, and business-friendly regulations, encompassing tax policies and the ease of doing business, reduce bureaucratic obstacles. This transparency nurtures a favorable investment climate by ensuring that businesses can operate without undue hindrances.

## 6. EXCHANGE RATE STABILITY:

Stable currency exchange rates mitigate the risk of value erosion for foreign investments, providing a predictable financial landscape that is crucial for long-term planning and profitability.

## 7. ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND GOVERNANCE (ESG) FACTORS:

There is a growing emphasis on a country's commitment to sustainable practices, social responsibility, and strong governance structures. Investors are increasingly considering these factors, recognizing that they contribute to the long-term viability and ethical grounding of their investments.

Assessing Pakistan's current political and economic landscape reveals significant challenges across various sectors. Political instability has been a persistent issue, undermining economic development and deterring both domestic and foreign investments. This instability often leads to inconsistent policies and governance, creating an environment of uncertainty that hampers long-term planning and growth. The entanglement of political leaders and the establishment in power struggles has diverted attention from essential governance and development tasks. This focus on political maneuvering over national progress has resulted in weakened institutions and a lack of coherent policy implementation. The business community, too, faces challenges such as bureaucratic red tape, corruption, and a lack



of transparency, all of which stifle entrepreneurial initiatives and economic expansion.

Legal institutions, tasked with upholding justice and the rule of law, often grapple with inefficiencies and external pressures. These challenges compromise their ability to function impartially, leading to a decline in public trust and further exacerbating societal discord. On external fronts, Pakistan also faces complex challenges. Every happening on the international stages affects Pakistan's interests. For example, the current strategic move between the United States and India has raised concerns for Pakistan, as it may shift regional power balances and impact Pakistan's security and diplomatic standing. In the same way, India's increasing involvement in Afghanistan adds another layer of complexity, potentially challenging Pakistan's influence and interests in the region. In short, any activity in the globe shakes all the member states and Pakistan is one of the most important in them.

However, in response to external challenges, Pakistan has sought to balance its ties with the major powers, strengthen ties with traditional allies and explore new partnerships, particularly with energy rich

nations in Central Asia. However, the success of such initiatives is contingent upon internal stability and cohesive governance. Achieving meaningful progress requires a unified effort from all stakeholders. Political leaders, the military establishment, the business sector, and civil society must prioritize national interests over individual or institutional gains. This involves engaging in open dialogues to address grievances, particularly in regions like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where feelings of marginalization have fueled unrest.

Establishing clear boundaries for institutional roles is also one of the most inevitable moves, essential to prevent

overreach and ensure that each entity operates within its designated sphere. Such delineation promotes accountability and reduces conflicts of interest, paving the way for a more stable governance structure. In a nutshell, the ultimate objective is to create an environment conducive to economic development and social harmony. By committing to transparency, justice, and collaborative nation-building, Pakistan can navigate its current challenges and work towards a prosperous future.

**The author is a freelance writer with expertise in Social Sciences, history, strategic affairs and ethnic studies.**

Continued from page 29

## US-INDIA BROMANCE

The relationship between India and the U.S. under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has evolved into a complex and strategic partnership. Modi's efforts to deepen ties with the U.S. during Donald Trump's presidency were based on mutual interests, particularly in countering China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

However, this partnership has been far from smooth, marred by persistent trade imbalances, contentious immigration issues, and ideological differences. Despite their rapport, Modi's visits to the U.S. have been complicated by ongoing trade disputes, with Trump pushing for greater access to Indian markets, yet Modi's concessions have remained limited.

## ● CONCLUSION

While the U.S.-India partnership continues to evolve, several challenges remain, particularly concerning trade imbalances, immigration, and regional security. Both countries have made significant strides in

areas such as defense cooperation and energy security, but lingering issues surrounding tariffs, defense deals, and regional dynamics will continue to test the strength of their relationship. For India, maintaining its strategic autonomy while deepening ties with the U.S. presents a delicate balancing act. As the relationship progresses, questions arise about whether India's growing partnership with the U.S. will ultimately serve its long-term interests, especially given the historical complexities of the U.S. involvement in the region.

For Pakistan, the evolving U.S.-India bromance is a matter of concern, as it reshapes the regional balance of power. While India may benefit from closer ties with the U.S., the long-term costs of such an alliance remain uncertain, particularly when viewed through the lens of Pakistan's own strategic interests. As India and the U.S. continue to deepen their collaboration, the question remains: at what cost will this "bromance" come for both countries and the region as a whole?

**The author is the Executive Editor of the monthly Interaction.**

# CRAFTING PAKISTAN'S PATH TO PROSPERITY



**WAJEEHA NAJAM**

Nation-building is a multifaceted and challenging process, particularly for a country like Pakistan, which has grappled with political instability, migration crises, governance transitions, and military interventions. Despite these challenges, Pakistan possesses immense potential for transformation. By drawing lessons from the successes of nations such as Japan, China, South Korea, and Germany, Pakistan can harness its strengths and chart a path toward becoming a resilient and prosperous nation-state.

Pakistan's political history has been characterized by frequent shifts between parliamentary and presidential systems, coupled with delays in constitutional reforms. This instability has hindered the country's progress. However, political science theories, such as Modernization Theory, offer insights into how nations can achieve stability. Seymour Lipset's articulation of this theory

suggests that as societies develop economically, they tend to adopt more stable and democratic governance structures.

To reduce political volatility, Pakistan must institutionalize democracy by establishing transparent and accountable political systems that uphold the rule of law. Strengthening local governance through regular elections can empower citizens and foster their active participation in national development. This approach can be informed by the examples of Germany's federal system and Sweden's transparent governance model, both of which emphasize decentralization, accountability, and citizen engagement. By adopting similar practices, Pakistan can create a culture of accountability and inclusivity, laying the foundation for enduring political stability.

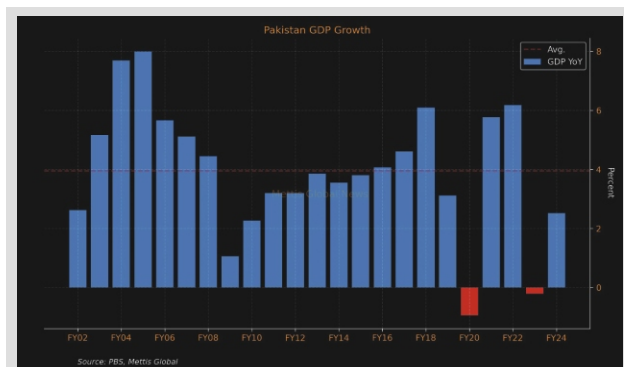
This political stability is crucial to addressing the social cohesion challenges Pakistan faces. As a nation with a rich mosaic of ethnicities, languages, and religions, managing diversity has often been a source of tension. Constructivist Theory in international relations emphasizes that national identity is shaped by shared histories and narratives. For Pakistan, this means crafting a unifying national identity that transcends ethnic and religious divides while celebrating its diversity. Promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their background, is essential for fostering social cohesion.

By addressing disparities and ensuring



**Migrants crossing into Pakistan during partition**





### The economic challenges of Pakistan

representation for marginalized groups, Pakistan can build a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Canada's multiculturalism policy and Rwanda's post-genocide reconciliation efforts both provide valuable lessons in celebrating diversity while fostering unity. By nurturing a collective identity rooted in common values, Pakistan can strengthen its social fabric and mitigate divisions.

Economic development plays an equally important role in the nation-building process. Pakistan's economy has faced numerous challenges, including fluctuating growth rates, external debt, and the impact of political instability. However, the success stories of countries like China and South Korea demonstrate how industrialization and innovation can drive economic transformation. Dependency Theory, proposed by Raúl Prebisch, highlights the constraints imposed by the global economic order on developing nations. To overcome these challenges, Pakistan must focus on self-reliance and sustainable growth. Investing in infrastructure, education, and technology is critical for building a robust economic foundation.

Policies that encourage entrepreneurship, attract foreign investment, and strengthen international trade relationships can diversify the economy and reduce dependency. South

Korea's focus on technological innovation and export-oriented industrialization, as well as China's Special Economic Zones (SEZs), offer useful models for Pakistan to emulate in positioning itself as a hub for innovation and economic growth, particularly by leveraging its youthful population and strategic geographic location.

To support this economic development, investing in education and human capital is essential. While Pakistan has made strides in improving literacy rates, significant disparities persist, particularly in rural areas. Human Capital Theory underscores the importance of investing in education to enhance a nation's economic productivity by equipping its workforce with relevant skills. Therefore, prioritizing quality education at all levels and ensuring accessibility for all segments of society is vital. Integrating modern technologies into the education system and emphasizing technical and vocational training can prepare the youth to meet the demands of a globalized economy. Countries like Finland and Singapore have excelled in these areas by focusing on equity, teacher training, and skills development, respectively. By adopting similar strategies, Pakistan can unlock its human potential and drive sustainable development.

Effective leadership is crucial for navigating the complexities of nation-building. Pakistan has often struggled with inconsistent governance and a lack of long-term vision. Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes the role of visionary leaders in inspiring positive change through charisma, intellectual stimulation, and a clear strategic direction. In this regard, Pakistan's leaders must prioritize national unity, economic development, and social stability. Transparent and accountable governance, coupled with long-term planning, will help the

country overcome its challenges.

Lee Kuan Yew's leadership in Singapore, which focused on meritocracy, anti-corruption, and long-term planning, serves as a powerful example of how visionary leadership can transform a nation. Similarly, Nelson Mandela's leadership in South Africa demonstrated the power of reconciliation and inclusive governance. By fostering a culture of integrity and innovation, Pakistan's leaders can guide the country toward a brighter future.

In this pursuit of stability and progress, national security plays a foundational role. Pakistan's security challenges, both internal and external, have significantly influenced its policies. Realist Theory in international relations highlights the centrality of national security in shaping a country's domestic and foreign policies.

To ensure stability, Pakistan must modernize its defense strategies and strengthen diplomatic ties with neighboring countries. Balancing military influence with civilian governance is essential for maintaining internal stability. Switzerland's policy of armed neutrality and Indonesia's approach to counterterrorism, which combines military action with community engagement and de-radicalization programs, offer valuable lessons. By fostering regional cooperation and addressing security concerns through dialogue, Pakistan can create an environment conducive to peace and development.

At the same time, Pakistan's rich cultural heritage can serve as a source of strength. The Theory of Cultural Pluralism advocates for celebrating diversity as a unifying force rather than a source of division. By embracing its cultural mosaic, Pakistan can foster a sense of national pride and unity. Promoting national culture through media, education, and the arts



**Pakistan still has a low literacy rate relative to other countries, as of 2022 Pakistan's literacy rates range from 62.85 (2023 Censuses)**

can strengthen a shared sense of identity. Highlighting common values while celebrating diversity will nurture a sense of belonging and collective purpose among citizens. India's "Unity in Diversity" model and Malaysia's emphasis on cultural festivals and heritage preservation showcase how a nation can celebrate its cultural pluralism while fostering national pride. By adopting similar approaches, Pakistan can strengthen its cultural fabric and promote national unity.

Pakistan's journey toward nation-building is undeniably complex, but the potential for success is immense. By focusing on solutions, Pakistan can overcome its historical challenges. Drawing inspiration from the transformative experiences of successful countries, Pakistan can build upon its strengths and chart a path toward a unified, prosperous, and resilient future. The highlighted strategies and approaches provide a roadmap for Pakistan to not only survive but thrive as a modern, progressive nation. With the right vision and collective effort, Pakistan can realize its potential and emerge as a beacon of hope and progress in the region.

**The author is a Research Officer at Rabita Forum International (RFI).**

# TECH TUG-OF-WAR

## FRANCE - INDIA AI TIES AND THE STRATEGIC CALCULUS FOR PAKISTAN



**KHUSHBOO FARID KHAN GHOURI**



**French President Emmanuel Macron (front C) poses for a group picture with world leaders and attendees at the end of the plenary session of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Summit, at the Grand Palais, in Paris on Feb 11, 2025**

Last month, world leaders gathered in France for the Paris Global AI Summit, co-hosted by India. This two-day summit brought together global leadership, tech giants, policymakers, and industry experts to discuss the future of AI. Topics included how to regulate AI, the necessary investments, and how AI could be applied across various sectors. The summit took place in the middle of the deep seek mania and growing global interest in AI, highlighting the significance of AI geopolitics, particularly in the context of India-France relations. France views India as its most important partner in Asia, a partnership with serious strategic implications for Pakistan.

Pakistan's absence from crucial events like

the Paris Global AI Summit and others, which hold immense relevance both regionally and globally, underscores the country's growing disconnect from rapidly evolving technological trends. This absence can be linked to several key areas where its importance is evident for Pakistan's present and future standing.

As India forges ahead with technological advancements in collaboration with global leaders like United States and France, Pakistan risks falling behind in the regional power dynamics. AI has the potential to enhance military capabilities, boost economic competitiveness, and improve governance. Without participating in such events and engaging with global AI leaders, Pakistan is effectively side-lining itself from discussions that will shape the region's strategic future. India's growing strength in AI, particularly with France's support, may widen the gap in military and economic power between the two neighbours, leading to long-term security challenges for Pakistan.

Moreover, AI has emerged as a key driver of economic growth, with applications ranging from smart cities and healthcare to agriculture and education. By not engaging in global discussions on AI, Pakistan misses out on opportunities for economic innovation, investment, and collaboration. Countries like India are positioning themselves as attractive destinations for AI-related investment, while



Pakistan's absence could mean it falls further behind in competitiveness, innovation, and attracting international partners.

In an increasingly AI-driven world, not being part of global AI summits and discussions isolates Pakistan from shaping international AI governance, ethical standards, and regulatory frameworks. As countries like France, India, the U.S., and China assert influence in AI policy, Pakistan's lack of involvement means it will have little say in the global norms and rules that will inevitably affect it. This technological isolation could limit Pakistan's ability to negotiate or influence policies that directly impact its economic and security interests.

Additionally, the benefits of AI go beyond global and regional geopolitics, they are critical for local development as well. AI can help Pakistan address domestic challenges, including improving public services, increasing agricultural productivity, enhancing healthcare, and streamlining governance. By not participating in AI-related global initiatives, Pakistan is forgoing opportunities to learn from other nations, adopt best practices, and implement AI-driven solutions that could help solve some of its most pressing local issues.

As China takes the lead in technology and the U.S. aims to dominate the AI sector by maintaining control over Silicon Valley, the collaboration between France and India in Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to reshape the geopolitical landscape of South Asia and introduce new challenges for the region. As India strengthens its technological ties with France, the strategic implications for Pakistan are significant. AI is increasingly becoming a tool for both economic growth and military modernization, and Pakistan's relative inaction in this area could have far-reaching consequences particularly in

defence, cybersecurity, and economic competitiveness.

France and India are expanding their defence collaboration into AI-driven military technologies. This partnership includes developing autonomous drones, AI-guided missile systems, and AI-powered surveillance platforms. These technologies are critical for modern warfare, providing India with a significant technological edge in both conventional and non-conventional military arenas. The inclusion of AI in India's defence strategy, supported by French expertise, widens the gap between India's military capabilities and those of Pakistan, which has yet to adopt AI at the same level.

Furthermore, the France-India AI partnership extends beyond defence into areas such as smart infrastructure, healthcare, and education. With AI's potential to revolutionize industries, India stands to benefit economically through enhanced productivity and innovation. France's contribution to AI-driven infrastructure development, including smart cities and energy management systems, positions India as a leader in the regional digital economy. This growing economic partnership has significant implications for Pakistan, which is not investing at the same



**Illustration by Indian Army leverages the assistance of CAIR in integrating AI**



**Can defence manufacturing turn into an export industry for Pakistan with IA support?**

scale in AI, risking economic stagnation and further isolation.

As cyberattacks become more frequent and sophisticated, AI-based solutions are crucial for protecting critical infrastructure. AI is also being used by France and India to strengthen cybersecurity frameworks. India's focus on AI-enhanced cybersecurity will ensure its ability to safeguard vital data, while Pakistan's limited progress in this area leaves it vulnerable to cyber threats from both state and non-state actors. The cybersecurity gap between the two nations could further destabilize regional security dynamics.

The growing France-India AI collaboration has significant long-term implications for Pakistan, spanning across military, economic, and cybersecurity domains. For instance, the development of AI-driven military technologies by India will widen the already existing gap in defence capabilities between India and Pakistan. Autonomous systems, AI-powered surveillance, and precision-strike capabilities will provide India with faster decision-making processes and more accurate targeting, making conventional

military responses from Pakistan less effective. If India continues to integrate AI into its defence systems, Pakistan's reliance on traditional deterrents, including nuclear weapons, could be undermined by AI-powered missile defence systems and autonomous countermeasures.

Secondly, AI-driven economic growth will be a key factor in India's future development, further exacerbating Pakistan's economic vulnerabilities. India's use of AI in industries such as healthcare, agriculture, and education will not only drive economic growth but will also attract foreign investment. Without similar investments in AI and digital infrastructure, Pakistan risks being left behind in the regional economic race. The absence of AI innovation could isolate Pakistan from international trade opportunities, especially as the global economy becomes increasingly digital.

Thirdly, AI is rapidly transforming the nature of cybersecurity, with nations adopting AI-based tools to prevent cyberattacks and safeguard critical data. India's advances in AI-driven cybersecurity, with the support of France, will allow it to protect its national security interests and critical infrastructure more effectively.

In contrast, Pakistan's lack of AI-driven cybersecurity tools leaves it vulnerable to cyberattacks, which could target key sectors such as energy, banking, and defence. The growing disparity in cybersecurity capabilities could expose Pakistan to increased espionage, sabotage, and cyber warfare, further compromising its national security. Lastly, the deepening ties between India and France in AI could lead to Pakistan's diplomatic isolation in the technological sphere.

Continued on page 46

# WHY TRUMP'S INDIA BET COULD BACKFIRE?



**SHER ALI KAKAR**

For the past two decades, the United States has made an enormous bet in the Asia-Pacific that treating India as a key partner will help the US secure its geopolitical interests in the region. From George W. Bush onward, successive US administrations have bolstered India's military capabilities. During his recent visit to Washington, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump in their wide-ranging joint statement at the White House agreed to give a new impetus to their defense cooperation by transferring advanced military technologies to India. The two sides reaffirmed their commitments to eliminating terrorism while adding a Pakistan-specific reference that has no basis. This has once again sparked concerns about the Trump administration's biased South Asia policy by continuing the legacy of the Biden administration policy toward the region which ended by imposing sanctions on Pakistan's missile program while playing no role in promoting broader regional interests.

Washington has again chosen to ignore the obvious danger of supporting India's military might and aggressive policies. Instead, bet on providing advanced military technologies to India including the sale of state-of-the-art fighter jets which will make India part of an exclusive group of countries, including the NATO allies Israel and Japan, authorized to purchase the F-35s known for their stealth capabilities and supersonic

speed. Surprisingly, the US president, in its wide-ranging discussion, does not take into account India's sponsorship of terrorism, subversion, and extrajudicial killings in the region and beyond, and its hate crimes against Muslims and other minorities in India, maintaining its effective silence. The killing of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil and plotting to kill an American citizen have already exposed Indian state-sponsored terrorism.

Furthermore, Washington is turning a blind eye to the Indian government's brutalities in the Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOK), where innocent people are being killed and tortured by the occupation forces daily with impunity, failing to address non-compliance of India with the UNSC resolutions. Unfortunately, in complete disrespect of international law and the UN Charter, the Modi-led Indian government is



**F-35, fighter jet, Donald Trump offered to India**





**Indian and US Army personal exchange greetings during a humanitarian and disaster relief exercise (HADR) amid the Indo-US joint exercise 'Yudh Abhyas', in Tapovan, Uttarakhand**

pursuing its hegemonic designs, threatening international peace and security. The Modi-Trump talks also “pledged to work together to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and to deny access to such weapons by terrorists and non-state actors”. However, it is important to note that the US military support to India undermines the very aim of the global non-proliferation regime and the US commitments to the non-proliferation efforts.

Such initiatives would only undermine the already weekend arms control regimes and global efforts for non-proliferation. The US continued support to India is only resulting in a strategic imbalance in South Asia, intensifying India-Pakistan rivalry and Pakistan's threat perceptions, and fueling the regional arms race and action-reaction syndrome. The Indo-US defense cooperation and the geopolitical interests of the US are affecting the existing treaties and hindering progress towards meaningful dialogues and cooperation as it privileges its national preference over the collective. The US is supporting India's military modernization at the expense of regional security and stability. Also, the development of nuclear-capable long-range

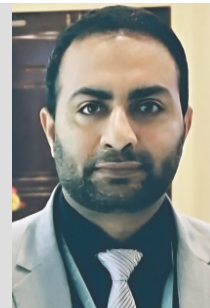
missiles by India is posing a serious threat to global peace and security alongside its poor nuclear safety and security record and aggressive military posturing.

Pakistan and India are already on the brink of a dangerous nuclear escalation due to the absence of institutionalized confidence-building measures (CBMs), the suspension of diplomatic ties between Islamabad and New Delhi, and the Indian government's aggressive military posture in South Asia. In such an uncertain security environment, strategic stability is not only key to peace and security in the region but also to maintaining global peace as escalation between the two nuclear-armed neighbors has the potential to engulf global peace. The US is only exacerbating military imbalances in South Asia by supplying advanced military technologies to India. The US needs to adopt an unbiased policy for South Asia given the region's history, which is characterized by major wars, the unending rivalry between the two nuclear-armed neighbors, and unresolved disputes, which continue to create threats to regional peace and stability.

The US should not ignore Pakistan's two-decade-long cooperation with the US in its war on terror which profoundly suffered Pakistan economically. Besides, it resulted in the loss of thousands of people. In the immediate term, the US should stop providing India with advanced military technologies realizing its widespread implications. The Trump administration should support and promote initiatives for peace and stability in the region. Lastly, to counter the Indian threats at all levels, Pakistan has no other option but to maintain the credibility of its nuclear deterrence.

**The Author is working as Associate Director of Research (Nuclear and Strategic Affairs) at Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN), at BUIEMS, Quetta.**

# GLOBAL WORRIES ABOUT EMERGENCE OF INDIA AS A ROGUE STATE



**TARIQUE AHMED ABRO**

The Washington Post of 31 December 2024 carried an investigative report of its Bureau Chief in India, Gerry Shih, titled "India carrying out covert assassination campaigns in Pakistan," which unveiled that India has launched "an ambitious assassination program in Pakistan, with marked similarities to operations in North America." According to the report, "India's intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), has since 2021 deployed a methodical assassination program to kill at least a half dozen people deep within Pakistan." A similar report was published by The Guardian on 4 April 2024, revealing that, since 2020, "India has been involved in the assassination of around twenty Pakistani citizens in Pakistan."

A news story titled "RAW goes rogue, globally," carried by The Express Tribune on 21 April 2024, quoted Michael Kugelman, Director of the Wilson Center's South Asia Institute, as stating that, "from strictly moral and normative, not to mention legal, perspectives, these tactics are deeply troubling. They violate key principles of international law like territorial integrity and national sovereignty, and they are clearly illegal." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on 18 September 2023 that he had "credible information linking the Indian government to the prominent Sikh leader's assassination on the Canadian soil." On 14 October 2024, an official announcement was

made by Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly that six Indian diplomats and consular officials had received a notice of expulsion from Canada, including the High Commissioner of India, in relation to a targeted campaign against Canadian citizens. According to her, the decision to expel the diplomats "was made with great consideration and only after Canadian police gathered ample, clear and concrete evidence which identified six individuals as persons of interest in the Nijjar case."

On 14 January 2024, an opinion article titled "India Is the Latest Member of a Growing Assassination Club" by Justin Ling, a journalist based in Toronto, was published by the Washington, D.C. based Foreign Policy news publication. He underscored that the assassinations of foreign nationals "reveal India's extraordinary entry into a club of



**Demonstrators outside the Consulate General of India in Vancouver after the shooting of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Sikh separatist leader in June. (FILE PHOTO)**

nations that use homicide to advance their international and domestic agenda.” He further noted that “political assassinations on foreign soil are, in light of international law, illegal and by diplomatic convention, they are a cardinal sin and potentially even an act of war.”

Notably, two of the three countries US and Canada targeted by India in its recent state-sponsored international terrorist activities are NATO member states, and are protected by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, also known as the “Collective Defense Obligations” clause, which states that “an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” On 30 October 2024, Canada's Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister David Morrison confirmed in a briefing to parliamentary members of the national security committee that Indian Home Minister Amit Shah had authorized a systematic campaign of violence, intimidation, and intelligence-gathering targeting Sikh leaders within Canada.

The US District Court for the Southern District of New York had issued summons on 19 September 2024 to the Government of India, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, and former RAW chief Samant Goel in Gurpatwant Singh Pannun assassination plot, a lawyer for the Sikh for Justice (SFJ) organization. The summons came after Pannun filed a lawsuit in the US court alleging that the Indian government, specifically RAW, was involved in a conspiracy to kill him, and presented substantial evidence to support his claim of RAW's involvement in the assassination plot. This proves that India's top leadership has been complicit in authorizing and operating a covert global assassination program, further tarnishing its image globally, particularly in North America.



**A Bajranj Dal activist armed with an iron stick shouting slogans against Muslims, burning Muslim shops and attacking residences in Sahapur, Ahmedabad. (FILE PHOTO)**

Articles carried by The Washington Post, The Guardian, and Foreign Policy have rung alarm bells in key capitals of the world that the growing frequency, sophistication and audacity of Indian state-sponsored terrorist activities inside their countries and India's network of extraterritorial killings have become a global problem that needs to be addressed on priority. Elaine Pearson, Asia Director at Human Rights Watch, had warned in December 2023 that India's “involvement in assassination plots in the US and Canada suggests a new and notorious leap in extrajudicial killings.”

It is no secret that Indian leader Narendra Modi, under the influence of Hindutva, could go to any lengths to achieve his political objectives. According to a BBC documentary titled “India: The Modi Question”, Narendra



Modi was "directly responsible for the 2002 massacre of Muslims in the Indian state of Gujarat." Three years later, in 2005, Narendra Modi was denied a visa by the US Department of State for the same reason.

Given New Delhi's involvement in and culpability for the sickening killing spree by its state agents in foreign countries, it is imperative for the international community to take appropriate preventive and punitive measures before it gets too late for many other foreign nationals who could fall prey to India's global assassination program. There is an urgent need to bring to justice Indian government and its entities and individuals who are responsible for such assassinations,

including the decision makers, masterminds, killers, handlers, facilitators and financiers. It is important to discipline India which has turned into a rogue state under the Modi government. India, therefore, is a ripe case for inclusion in the Grey and Black lists of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). This will be an effective way to address Western worries about emergence of India as a state sponsoring international terrorism.

(Previously carried by Strafasia on 19 February 2025)

**The author is a Research Officer at the Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS).**

Continued from page 41

## TECH TUG-OF-WAR:

As AI becomes a focal point for global governance and innovation, countries that fail to invest in AI risk being marginalized in international forums focused on technology regulation, digital trade, and cybersecurity norms. Pakistan's limited engagement in AI development means it could struggle to influence global AI policy and may be excluded from strategic partnerships centered on technological collaboration. To mitigate the risks posed by the France-India AI partnership, Pakistan must take decisive steps to invest in AI and future technologies. Pakistan urgently needs to prioritize formulating a national AI strategy that defines objectives for AI development in military, economic, and governance sectors. It should focus on collaboration between government, industry, and academia to foster innovation and develop AI talent. Also, Pakistan must allocate resources to developing AI-driven defence systems, including autonomous drones, AI-powered surveillance, and

automated defence mechanisms. Partnerships with countries that have advanced AI capabilities, such as China and Turkey, could help Pakistan acquire the necessary technologies and expertise. To counter the growing threat of cyberattacks, Pakistan should prioritize investments in AI-driven cybersecurity frameworks. These frameworks would help safeguard critical infrastructure, protect sensitive data, and prevent cyber espionage. As India continues to invest heavily in AI and future technologies with support from France, Pakistan must re-evaluate its own technological strategies or risk being left behind in an increasingly digital world. With the next AI Summit scheduled to be held in India, Pakistan must do its homework and prepare to engage in this rapidly evolving technological landscape. Failure to do so could further deepen its isolation and widen the strategic gap between itself and its neighbours.

**The author is lecturer at the department of Science & Humanities, FAST-NUCES and Ph.D. scholar at the Dept of International Relations, University of Karachi.**

# EROSION OF TRUST

## HOW GLOBAL INSTABILITY FUELS THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE?

**MUHAMMAD USAMA KHALID**



The world is as divisive and uncertain today as has never been observed since the end of the World Wars in the last century. Ever since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, there has been an active threat of nuclear escalation. However, the situation has not reached - that level of nuclear use- yet, but the threat cannot be discounted. Since the disintegration of the former USSR, the world remained aligned with the unipolar global structure reigned by the United States. The crumbling foundations of arms control and disarmament regimes, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the economic and diplomatic rise of China, and the new multilateral arrangements by the emerging states, are all the contributing factors that have significantly been reshaping the global power

dynamics in the 21st century.

The uncertainty and the fading trust in the global institutions, exacerbate the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, therefore, this particular threat spectrum of nuclear proliferation and escalation is at the highest levels since the end of the Cold War. In the bipolar world that existed at the time, both states kept each other from attacking each other by competing in small technological battles over delivery vehicles, not the destructive power of their weapons. However, with the withdrawal of the Cold War era's arms control arrangements both by Russia and the US, the threat of proliferation in the non-conventional domain of atomic weapons is at the highest levels.

The ever-increasing distrust among the states with the weakening of international institutions is the main cause of the erosion of trust in the unipolar global order - in simple terms in the US. This has been fueling the sense of self-reliance in the security realm among the emerging states i.e. there has been critical observation in South Korea and Japan on the extended nuclear deterrence of the US - especially in the post-Russia-Ukraine war. In the region where North Korea is already an established nuclear power, the threat is and will be looming on these two states to adopt a robust defensive mechanism to protect themselves from the lingering sword of extinction because reliance on the third party



**Ukrainian soldiers at a highway checkpoint near Slovyansk, not far from where anti-government forces ambushed a Ukrainian Army convoy. (FILE PHOTO)**

might not be helpful in the given circumstances.

On the other hand, militarily and conflictually active regions of the Middle East cannot be ignored whenever the debate occurs over the threat of nuclear escalation. The instance of Libya in the past and in the contemporary era allegations had been leveled, and similar speculations are for Iran. Iran has been accused of enriching the uranium to the level required to develop an atomic bomb. However, the Israeli factor in this context cannot be disregarded because it is the major instigator of threat to the theocratic regime in the hostile region. Though, despite several attempts to halt the Iranian nuclear program by the United States and Israel, Iran has abstained from developing the nuclear weapon, its ability to acquire it cannot be discounted.

Contemporarily, the weakening of the existing arms control and disarmament regimes is the primary reason for increasing the threat of global proliferation. Commencing from the collapse of the Iran Nuclear Deal (commonly known as JCPOA) in 2018, the US withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019, the cessation of talks on the New START since 2021, US withdrawal from Open Skies Treaty (OST) in 2020, and the unresolved deadlock on the proposed Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). The larger sense of mistrust among each other on the global political spectrum resulted in the states' disassociation from such confidence-building measures (CBMs). Emerging powers are also questioning the concept of the deterrence umbrella in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine because in that case, the invader is the mammoth nuclear-possessing force, while the victim is a non-nuclear armed state. Ukraine the victim of Russian



**US Secretary of State John Kerry, (left) meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javed Zarif, (right) in Vienna, Austria (FILE PHOTO)**

aggression once inherited the USSR's nuclear weapons which they gave away in 1994 in return for the security assurances of its territorial sovereignty by the US, Britain, and Russia itself.

At this current juncture, where every state and region is in a hostile mode in one way or the other, security stabilization is hard to maintain. Erosion of trust in the dying Global Unipolar hegemon US, weakening of non-proliferation regimes and the evolving shift in the global world order are coercing states to think differently when it comes to their own survivability, security, and territorial integrity. The ineffectiveness of international institutions has also become the driving factor in changing the global narrative of international policing in crises. Tussles and rivalries are hampering the established regimes of nuclear non-proliferation. In such circumstances, states with potential capabilities then try to pursue policies independent of international oversight and inspection in a classical text known as Anarchy - which will further destabilize global peace and order.

The author is a Research Officer at Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN), BUITEMS, Quetta.





RAMADAN KAREEM

*Mubarak*

**2025**

*Welcome, Ramadan!  
May ALLAH  
mercy and blessings be  
upon us as we embark  
on this journey of faith*



Interaction



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**RABITA FORUM INTERNATIONAL**

Plot No.F8/3, Block-4, Old Clifton, Karachi, Pakistan.

+92 21 358 619 35 - 36 rfi@rfipakistan.com www.facebook.com/rfipakistan

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