

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC AFFAIRS



# Interaction

ISSUE-09

VOLUME-18

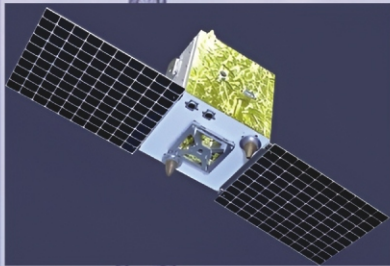
MC-1326

Rs.500/-

212

ABC CERTIFIED

APRIL 2025



## ICUBE-QAMAR

PAKISTAN'S FIRST STEP INTO DEEP SPACE EXPLORATION



[www.instagram.com/rfi.pakistan/](https://www.instagram.com/rfi.pakistan/)



[www.facebook.com/rfipakistan](https://www.facebook.com/rfipakistan)



[www.rfipakistan.com](https://www.rfipakistan.com)

# Interaction



**April 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

Printed by  
**NUSRAT MIRZA**

From Al-Asif Printers, Karachi

Published from  
71/C, 1st Floor, 24th Commercial Street,  
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

**Contents**

1	<b>American ambition: Ukraine - Trump's grip on Russia's jugular</b>	Editorial	02
2	<b>Asymmetric threats and the future of strategic Stability</b>	Brig. (R) Zahir Ul Haider Kazmi	04
3	<b>Region on the threshold of a new conflict</b>	Dr. Farooq Adil	09
4	<b>Power Play: Trump's dangerous gamble in Ukraine</b>	Nusrat Mirza	11
5	<b>India's hostile foreign policy: A barrier to regional peace</b>	Dr. Samreen Bari Aamir	13
6	<b>ICUBE-Qamar: Pakistan's first step into deep space exploration</b>	Syed Samiullah	17
7	<b>Trump's Nixon doctrine 2.0: what does it mean?</b>	Mirza Kashif Baig	21
8	<b>Post-independence history of Pakistan (1969-1973)</b>	Team Interaction	25
9	<b>Russia and Ukraine agree to Black Sea naval ceasefire</b>	Dr. S. Bushra Batool	30
10	<b>Reasserting Pakistan's influence in Asia: a call to action</b>	Sanaullah Bhatti	32
11	<b>Trump's Iran ultimatum: will Russia defend or desert Tehran?</b>	Bismah Mirza	35
12	<b>Veils of division</b>	Wajeeha Najam	37
13	<b>Balochistan's health crisis, costly neglect</b>	Hamza Nasir	41
14	<b>Pakistan's foreign policy amid global tensions: a strategic balancing act.</b>	Kanwar Khalid Ali Khan	43
15	<b>UN Declares 2025 the international year of Glacier's preservation: SUPARCO leads Pakistan's efforts in glacier monitoring</b>	Marya Tariq	46
16	<b>Education and modern technology: where does Pakistan's education system stand?</b>	Zaheer Yousufzay	47

**One Copy Rs. 500/-**  
**One Year Rs. 6000/-**



## EDITORIAL

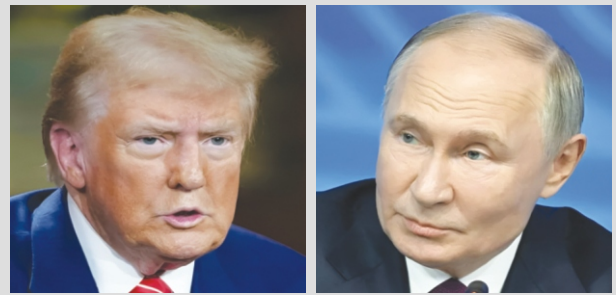
# AMERICAN AMBITION

## UKRAINE-TRUMP'S GRIP ON RUSSIA'S JUGULAR

The geopolitical stage has once again become the epicenter of controversy, sparked by an astonishing two-hour telephone conversation between President Trump and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin. Reportedly, this discussion revolved around nothing less than redrawing global borders a development eerily reminiscent of the infamous 1945 Yalta Conference, which shaped post-World War II geopolitics. Dubbed "Yalta 2.0," this proposed arrangement has left analysts questioning the intentions behind this unprecedented dialogue: Is it a genuine path to peace or merely a cunning trap?

President Trump, notorious for his bold, often aggressive, policy decisions, has repeatedly stated his intention to "Make America Great Again," seemingly unconcerned by the diplomatic backlash or global opinion. His second tenure has amplified this approach significantly. Recent developments suggest Trump's willingness to prioritize U.S. interests over traditional alliances, as demonstrated by his abrupt reduction in military and civilian aid to foreign nations and his aggressive stance toward allies over Ukraine. Thus, it is unsurprising that Trump's conversation with Putin raised alarms internationally, intensifying concerns about American hegemonic ambitions.

On the surface, "Yalta 2.0" promises a ceasefire and global stability through a mutual understanding between the two major powers, particularly concerning Ukraine a region of intense conflict and significant



File photos of US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin (FILE PHOTO)

geopolitical value. However, beneath this veil of diplomacy lies a complex web of strategic and economic ambitions that serve primarily American interests. The Trump administration has shown persistent interest in Ukraine's valuable mineral resources, suggesting a dual agenda beyond mere peace-making. Skeptics rightly point out that America's past interventions have often involved the strategic exploitation of foreign resources under the pretense of security and stability.

Russia, for its part, has publicly expressed suspicion, labeling the proposed ceasefire and territorial negotiations as a "ceasefire trap." The Russian media and political analysts fear that this could be a strategic maneuver aimed at weakening Russia's geopolitical position, especially given America's recent aggressive actions towards Ukraine, including attempts to secure control over critical nuclear energy infrastructure. For Moscow, allowing the U.S. to redraw boundaries under the guise of peace is seen as a severe risk to Russia's regional influence and strategic interests.

The historical parallel to Yalta is indeed

striking. The original Yalta Conference of 1945, attended by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, effectively carved Europe into spheres of influence, profoundly affecting global politics for decades. It provided short-term stability but planted seeds for long-term geopolitical tensions, including the Cold War. Today, a similar scenario seems to be unfolding. Trump's proposal to Putin raises crucial questions: What regions are on the negotiation table? What concessions might Russia have to make, and at what cost?

Critically, the core issue remains Ukraine. The U.S. administration has already openly shown its intent to secure Ukraine's nuclear plants, a move masked by promises of enhanced security and economic prosperity but driven by strategic and financial ambitions. The Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, has firmly stated that American ownership of critical infrastructure is "not on the table," recognizing the inherent dangers of compromising national sovereignty. Yet, Trump's aggressive diplomatic tactics indicate that Ukraine might be under intense pressure to reconsider.

For Russia, Trump's maneuvering appears less like genuine diplomacy and more like a geopolitical chess game designed to diminish Moscow's power in Eastern Europe. The promise of redrawn borders might momentarily appeal to Russian strategic calculations potentially providing a face-saving exit from the exhausting and costly conflict in Ukraine. However, the broader implications are unsettling. If Russia agrees to Trump's terms, it risks weakening its long-term geopolitical influence, inadvertently legitimizing American hegemony in a region it has traditionally considered crucial to its national security. Europe, too, watches anxiously. Any U.S.-Russia agreement to redraw geopolitical boundaries could severely

impact European autonomy, effectively placing Europe under heightened U.S. influence and dependency. Trump's agenda consistently disregards traditional alliances and European concerns, openly challenging Europe's strategic independence. A Yalta 2.0 scenario, brokered solely between Trump and Putin, threatens to sideline Europe entirely, limiting its capacity to manage its security and energy needs independently. Moreover, Trump's interest in Ukrainian mineral resources cannot be overlooked. Ukraine, rich in lithium, titanium, uranium, and other valuable minerals essential to technological and military industries, represents a lucrative opportunity for American corporations. Trump's willingness to negotiate with Putin may reflect less a commitment to peace than a calculated move to secure American economic interests under the cover of diplomacy. It can also be said NATO's presence in Ukraine is in disguise.

Thus, whether this "new Yalta" is a genuine diplomatic endeavor or a strategic maneuver to reinforce America's global dominance, masked as peaceful reconciliation, remains unclear. Russia's skepticism seems justified: history teaches that major power agreements often disguise deeper hegemonic designs. In conclusion, the proposed "Yalta 2.0" between Trump and Putin carries troubling implications. While it promises an end to hostilities and regional stability, beneath this optimistic narrative lies a high-stakes geopolitical gamble. It risks the sovereignty of Ukraine and the autonomy of Europe and potentially traps Russia in a strategic corner. The world should approach this development with utmost caution. After all, behind Trump's promise of peace and stability often lies a more complicated and aggressive reality one aimed at cementing American dominance at the expense of global stability.





# ASYMMETRIC THREATS AND THE FUTURE OF STRATEGIC STABILITY

**BRIG. (R) ZAHIR UL HAIDER KAZMI**

The nature of strategic competition is shifting, and global strategic instability is accentuating. The growing role of asymmetric threats in cyber, AI, and quantum technologies is altering how power is exercised and defended in the international system. These tools are not only inexpensive and more adaptable than conventional weapons but also capable of delivering strategic effects without crossing the traditional thresholds of war. Their deployment, especially by smaller states and non-state actors, challenges long-held assumptions about deterrence, sovereignty, and escalation.

In earlier phases of great power competition, access to strategic technologies especially nuclear and missile capabilities was tightly controlled by a handful of states. Today, however, the barriers to entering the cyber and AI domains have significantly eroded despite air tightening of export control regimes like the Wassenaar Arrangement. Commercially available surveillance tools, offensive malware kits, dual-use AI systems, and access to cloud-based supercomputing power have enabled a broader array of actors to project power asymmetrically.

A case in point is the proliferation of remote access trojans (RATs), penetration testing suites like Cobalt Strike (originally developed for defensive cybersecurity), and AI-generated influence content tools, all available for purchase or use with minimal



technical expertise. Similarly, facial recognition systems, license plate readers, drone swarms, and predictive policing algorithms once limited to advanced militaries are now deployed by municipal authorities, private actors, and in some cases, insurgent groups.

This trend reduces the barriers to entry for actors with limited military capacity but strong strategic motives, including ideologically motivated groups or mid-tier states seeking to level the playing field. Where once only high-end militaries could disrupt another state's national security architecture, today a capable cyber actor can target satellite communications, elections, or critical infrastructure from afar, using tools not necessarily labelled "weapons" in traditional terms.

The scope of vulnerability has also expanded. The 'attack surface' now extends far beyond state systems to civilian domains such as electricity grids, financial networks,



**AI robot using cyber security to protect information privacy. Futuristic concept of cyber crime prevention by artificial intelligence and machine learning process**

transportation systems, public health infrastructure, and supply chains. Attacks on these domains, whether by states or non-state actors, have the potential to trigger economic paralysis or societal instability without firing a shot. The 2021 ransomware attack on Colonial Pipeline in the U.S. disrupted nearly half of the fuel supply for the East Coast. In India, the suspected cyberattack on Mumbai's power grid in 2020, reportedly linked to regional tensions, highlighted how critical infrastructure can become a pressure point in interstate signalling. Even in countries with more modest digital footprints, cyberattacks on hospitals and telecom systems, such as in Indonesia (2022 ransomware attacks on national hospitals), have revealed deep vulnerabilities in civilian life.

These trends suggest that asymmetric threats, though often associated with small actors, are now deeply embedded in the strategies of major powers and are being shaped by a rapidly evolving commercial and geopolitical tech landscape.

## **TECHNOLOGY ACCESS AND CONTROL**

Access to cyber, AI, and quantum technologies remains highly stratified. Non-

proliferation regime's treaties, UN Security Council Resolutions like UNSCR 1540 and export control arrangements such as the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) and the U.S. International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) continue to shape which states can acquire advanced systems and under what terms. These regimes were originally built to plug holes in the Non-Proliferation Treaty in selectively preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and dual-use technologies. These now also govern key categories of cyber tools, surveillance platforms, AI software, cryptographic systems, and sensor technologies and have become highly synergised.

For example, the WA's 2013 inclusion of "intrusion software" restricted the sale of certain offensive cyber tools and surveillance platforms. This move was aimed at curbing human rights abuses, but it also affected access to penetration testing kits and lawful intercept technologies used by many developing countries for national security. Similarly, ITAR's restrictions on encryption, satellite imaging, and advanced AI for targeting or surveillance have long limited access for states like Pakistan, Iran, Sudan, and Venezuela, among others. The result is a widening capability gap. Countries like Pakistan, for instance, would face obstacles in acquiring export-controlled ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) software, post-quantum cryptographic tools, and military-grade cybersecurity suites. In contrast, the spigots of such technologies are open to Indian firms under U.S.-India strategic agreements and exceptional memberships of the export control arrangements. This has allowed Indian defence sector to access advanced simulation systems and secure communications platforms.



Commercial players in the West have restricted AI model access due to geopolitical or re-reputational risks. Open AI's GPT models, for instance, are geofenced in several countries, limiting access to frontier-level generative AI in places like China, Iran, and parts of the Middle East. While the reasoning often ties to compliance or ethical concerns, the effect is that non-aligned or smaller states face de facto exclusion from technology that may be critical to securing their digital sovereignty. The rise of open-source ecosystems has mitigated some of these constraints, but open models are often less capable, less secure, and more vulnerable to poisoning or back doors. Consequently, while asymmetric tools are proliferating, the power to dominate or define their use remains concentrated.

### INFLUENCE OPERATIONS

Asymmetric threats are most visibly manifest in the information domain, where AI-enhanced disinformation and influence operations have emerged as a low-cost but highly effective tool. These operations can shape narratives, sway public opinion, and erode trust in democratic institutions without any physical aggression. The 2016 U.S. election interference, widely attributed to Russian-linked actors, employed bot networks, deepfake-style content, and algorithmic amplification to manipulate perceptions. The same playbook was observed in Brexit-related social media campaigns, and again during elections in Brazil, Mexico, and parts of Southeast Asia.

In South Asia, the 2020 EU Disinfo Lab exposé revealed a 15-year-long campaign involving over 750 fake media outlets created to influence UN and EU narratives around Pakistan and China. The operation reportedly involved identity spoofing of NGOs and think

tanks to manipulate diplomatic discourse. These tactics demonstrate how information warfare can become institutionalized, bypassing traditional diplomacy altogether.

What makes such operations particularly potent today is the real-time adaptability of AI models, which generate, test, and modify content on the fly, enabling psychological manipulation at scale. Deepfakes, synthetic personas, and hyper-targeted messaging now blur the line between influence and coercion.

### CYBER OPERATIONS FOR FINANCIAL GAIN

Cyber capabilities are no longer limited to espionage or sabotage. A prominent new frontier is strategic financial disruption and gain. North Korea has emerged as the most active state in this category, using cyberattacks to generate revenue in defiance of sanctions.

Since 2016, DPRK-affiliated Lazarus Group has been linked to the theft of over \$3 billion from banks and crypto currency platforms worldwide. High-profile incidents include the 2016 Bangladesh Bank heist (attempted \$951 million SWIFT hack; \$81 million stolen), 2022 Axie Infinity hack, which drained \$600 million from a block chain-based gaming platform, and the ongoing phishing and ransomware attacks targeting



crypto exchanges in Southeast Asia and the U.S. These operations are conducted not with malware bombs, but with sophisticated social engineering, code reuse, and stealthy persistence. They demonstrate that strategic cyber tools can achieve financial, not just political, objectives, setting precedents for asymmetric economic warfare. Western states have witnessed financial cyber operations at scale. The Solar Winds breach (2020), attributed to Russian actors, infiltrated dozens of U.S. government agencies and private financial firms through compromised software updates.

### QUANTUM DISRUPTIONS

The next major frontier of asymmetric advantage lies in quantum computing and post-quantum cryptography. Intelligence agencies worldwide are already believed to be engaging in “harvest now, decrypt later” campaigns stockpiling encrypted data with the expectation that future quantum systems will crack them. If successful, this could result in historic exposure of sensitive diplomatic, military, and financial communications. The potential for destabilization is immense: quantum decryption could compromise treaty verification protocols, reveal covert operations, or undermine secure banking systems in real time and compromise nuclear weapons command and control.

China's Micius satellite, launched in 2016,



China's quantum communication satellite

marked a key milestone in quantum key distribution (QKD) transmitting encryption keys from space using entangled photons. This was followed by ground-to-satellite QKD tests and multi-node quantum networks, showing China's skill in building unbreakable communication channels. The U.S., meanwhile, is investing heavily in post-quantum cryptography (PQC) through National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) standardization efforts and DARPA's quantum resilience programs.

For smaller states, the threat is twofold: first, they risk being left out of standard-setting processes, and second, they may lack access to quantum-secure encryption tools due to export restrictions or technological underdevelopment. This creates a digital divide in information assurance, reinforcing the broader imbalance in strategic advantage.

### GOVERNANCE GAPS

The proliferation of asymmetric threats in cyber and emerging technologies is outpacing the development of global regulatory frameworks. Traditional arms control models built around material verification and state-centric compliance are struggling to adapt to non-material, dual-use, and often commercially sourced capabilities.

The UN Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, created by the UN General Assembly in 2018, is one of the few truly multilateral mechanisms where all UN member states can participate in discussions on cyber norms. Since its establishment, the OEWG has held annual sessions (2019-2021, with a renewed mandate for 2021-2025) aimed at developing rules of responsible state behavior,



promoting confidence-building measures, and addressing threats to international peace in cyberspace.

However, progress has been slow. Geopolitical divisions especially between the U.S. and its allies on one hand, and Russia, China, and some developing states on the other have hindered consensus on definitions, thresholds, and enforcement. Unlike others in the region, Pakistan has played a constructive role in promoting inclusive cyber norms and capacity-building for developing states. Some, though visibly active, have often contributed to deadlock by prioritizing sovereignty and control over attribution and cross-border data governance. Many developing countries have raised concerns that the norms being shaped may disproportionately reflect the interests of technologically dominant powers, while lacking mechanisms to ensure equitable access to defensive capabilities.

Meanwhile, other efforts such as the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and regional initiatives like ASEAN's cyber CBMs have produced overlapping, yet non-binding outputs. These forums lack enforcement teeth and do not include non-state stakeholders who often operate the infrastructure under threat. Critically, most cyber infrastructure is owned or operated by private industry. Yet most norm-development remains government-dominated, sidelining companies, civil society, and technical experts whose insights are essential. This makes the case for a multi stakeholder governance model not just a multilateral one more urgent.

## TOWARD A NEW SECURITY FRAMEWORK

Addressing asymmetric threats will require a redefinition of what constitutes strategic stability. Traditional frameworks focused on



A figure from the letter shows how the Micius satellite transfers quantum keys across vast distances

nuclear balance, parity or conventional force balances are ill-equipped to manage the fluid, borderless, and deniable nature of cyber and AI threats. The international community must prioritize the creation of legally binding norms for military uses of AI and cyber tools, including clear prohibitions on destructive cyber operations targeting critical civilian infrastructure. Mechanisms for incident de-escalation, attribution transparency, and pre-emptive diplomacy must be institutionalized possibly through a cyber early warning or incident notification system, modelled on existing nuclear risk reduction measures.

At the same time, it is essential to ensure that emerging governance frameworks do not reinforce structural asymmetries by legitimizing unequal access to security-enhancing technologies. That requires including non-nuclear cyber powers, such as Singapore, and private sector actors in norm-setting processes. Without this, the digital domain risks becoming yet another theatre of strategic exclusion. If norms and trust frameworks are not developed now, emerging technologies will continue to escalate instability in unpredictable and unregulated ways, undermining global peace even in the absence of kinetic war.

The author is Advisor Arms Control, SPD, NCA.



# REGION ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW CONFLICT

**DR. FAROOQ ADIL**

Our region has entered a new era of conflict. One indication of this is the tragic hijacking of the Jafar Express in Balochistan, but to fully grasp the situation, it is essential to see the bigger picture. Terrorism has plagued Pakistan for the past three to four decades, but in recent weeks, its intensity has surged dramatically.

More precisely, it has escalated even further following Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's recent visit to Pakistan. Several key leaders have been martyred, and a passenger train in Balochistan was hijacked, resulting in significant loss of life. The loss of human life is always painful, but the abduction of an entire passenger train has brought the situation to new heights of deterioration.

The question is: what is the background of this fresh wave of terrorism, and why did it intensify after President Erdogan's visit? Answering this critical question could bring us closer to understanding the root of the problem. Once the cause of a problem is understood, finding its solution becomes relatively easier. To comprehend the region's current strategic situation, President Erdogan's visit to Pakistan holds a key position. Meetings and discussions between Pakistani and Turkish leadership are not uncommon, but their significance at this particular moment is extraordinary. It was just last year when President Erdogan and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met at the D-8 Conference in



**President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan & Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif sign joint declaration of 7th meeting of Türkiye-Pakistan High Level Strategic Cooperation Council**

Cairo.

During the meeting, Erdogan remarked that Providence had entrusted Shehbaz Sharif with Pakistan's leadership at a crucial time. The world is moving past old conflicts and entering a new era, he noted, adding that there is a need to explore and nurture new pathways rather than relying on long, outdated routes. To achieve this, it is essential to form an initial dialogue mechanism involving three fraternal nations with exemplary mutual trust and cooperation: Pakistan, Türkiye, and Azerbaijan.

President Erdogan's recent visit to Pakistan was a follow-up to this proposal, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's subsequent visit to Azerbaijan was part of the same context,



finalizing the trilateral dialogue mechanism. The question is: what will be the significance of this mechanism? I posed this question to the Republic of Türkiye's ambassador, Dr. Irfan Nazir Oglu. Dr. Irfan Nazir Oglu is not just an ambassador but also a visionary and a sincere friend of Pakistan.

Responding to my question, he stated that Pakistan and Türkiye, as friendly nations, stand at a historic juncture where their vision and actions could not only ensure the development and prosperity of both brotherly nations but also transform the fate of the entire region. The detailed explanation behind Dr. Oglu's statement is that this region could connect Türkiye to Greater Eurasia via Pakistan. For this purpose, a corridor named the "Middle Corridor" has been proposed. This corridor would support the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) while maintaining its unique identity and proving beneficial for the region.

The next question that arises is: what is the connection between this initiative and the recent surge in terrorism in Pakistan? The recent assassination of Darul Uloom Haqqania Akora Khattak's head, Maulana Hamid-ul-Haq Haqqani, is a chilling incident. Similarly, the killing of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) leader Mufti Abdul Baqi Noor Zai near Quetta Airport demands attention. What could possibly be the motive behind these two high-profile assassinations? Understanding this motive can provide insight into the implications of the recent wave of terrorism.

Religious groups, especially institutions like Darul Uloom Haqqania and religious parties like Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, have historically supported activities labeled as jihad in this region. Over the past three to four decades, the changing forms, objectives, and outcomes of this jihad have lifted many veils for the patrons of these jihadi groups. They now

understand that these activities carried out in the name of religion not only tarnished the reputation of religion itself but also plunged the entire region, including Pakistan, into a state of perpetual instability.

These groups have now begun to rise above past emotionalism and make decisions based on ground realities. Consequently, militants operating in the name of religion are losing the support of Pakistan's religious factions. These militants now fear that their support base will collapse in the days to come. In this backdrop, their desperate strategy is to instill fear and terror among religious groups. Additionally, Pakistan's religious factions are optimistic about CPEC and Gwadar's great future and do not wish to obstruct its path. This makes them a target for a second reason.

Another aspect of the situation that must be considered is the newfound alliance between groups like the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and separatists advocating for ethnic and linguistic divisions. Many of their activities now support one another. Afghanistan's interest in the Jafar Express incident stems from this very alliance. In summary, all these negative forces aim to disrupt the region's economic integration with other parts of the world, and they are being used by unseen hands like India and other forces for this purpose. The hijacking of the Jafar Express aimed to scare off powers like China and others invested in the region.

Can they succeed? The answer is no. The reason is that all stakeholders, including Pakistan, are deeply committed to these initiatives. One might even say they have put everything on the line and are unwilling to back down. This is why we now stand at the doorway of a new conflict.

**The author is a mass media theorist and former advisor to the President of Pakistan.**

# POWER PLAY

## TRUMP'S DANGEROUS GAMBLE IN UKRAINE

**NUSRAT MIRZA**

President Trump's second tenure has taken the whole world by storm. His policies seem to be less diplomatic and more aggressive. President Trump appears willing to do whatever it takes to 'Make America Great Again' and will not stop at any lengths to implement his vision of American greatness. Much like his previous tenure, he is not bothered by the global criticism of his methodology and is showing the least bit of regard or courtesy to his allies. He has already greatly criticized his European allies on the matter of the Ukraine war, has taken a very aggressive tone with the Ukrainian President, all the while publically humiliating him, is making many changes in the American military leadership, and is heavily cutting back on US Aids (military and civilian) to other countries. On the matter of the Ukraine-Russia war, his stance is simple: he doesn't want to

waste American resources in this conflict and is willing to broker a peace deal between the two countries.

If this option is not acceptable to Ukraine, then Ukraine and the European countries are welcome to take on Russia without American support. President Trump wants to revive the American economy, cut back on costs, and get America out of most of the conflicts it is currently involved in. While some of these objectives seem noble, one should not be fooled by them. All these objectives are a veil under which the Trump administration intends to further American hegemonic designs. This is evident from the American proposal of taking over Ukrainian nuclear power plants. According to the White House, during a phone call with Ukrainian President Zelensky, President Trump discussed 'American Ownership' of Ukrainian nuclear power plants. According to President Zelensky, only the sprawling Zaporizhzhia plant, which is occupied by Russian forces, was discussed, and he made it clear that American ownership is not on the table. Here, it is important to understand what American ownership of Ukrainian power plants would mean for the US, Ukraine, Europe, and Russia.

The potential benefits for the US in controlling Ukrainian nuclear power plants are multifaceted, combining strategic ambitions with significant economic gains. From a strategic standpoint, American



**US President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance clash with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during an Oval Office meeting on February 28, 2025 (FILE PHOTO)**

oversight of these facilities would bolster security measures, reducing the risks of nuclear accidents stemming from the ongoing conflict. This outcome aligns with US interests in preventing any escalation into a broader atomic disaster. Moreover, such control would severely curtail Russia's ability to exploit these facilities as bargaining chips in the conflict, effectively undermining Moscow's leverage. Geopolitically, deeper American involvement in Ukraine's critical infrastructure would amplify US influence in Eastern Europe, countering Russian dominance and strengthening alliances with Ukraine and other regional partners.

On the economic front, gaining control of Ukraine's nuclear plants presents substantial opportunities for US corporations specializing in nuclear energy, opening the door to lucrative contracts focused on maintenance, modernization, and the future expansion of these facilities. Furthermore, discussions about tying plant control to broader economic agreements could grant American companies privileged access to Ukraine's abundant mineral resources a prize of immense economic value. Ultimately, by assuming authority over these vital energy assets, the US would also gain considerable sway over regional energy markets, solidifying its hegemonic posture to safeguard regional stability and prosperity.

The potential for US control of Ukrainian nuclear power plants carries significant and troubling implications, particularly for Ukraine and Europe. For Ukraine, surrendering its nuclear energy assets to American control would represent nothing short of a complete compromise of national sovereignty. While increased American security measures might deter Russian aggression and help avoid catastrophic nuclear incidents, Ukraine would



**Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, captured by Russia in March 22 (FILE PHOTO)**

effectively be handing over the keys to its independence, leaving its critical infrastructure and energy security firmly in the grip of the United States. Any economic benefits from American modernization and operational efficiency investments would come at a steep price the risk of permanently losing control over valuable national assets. Politically, Ukraine would be irreversibly bound to Western interests, diminishing its leverage and autonomy in future negotiations, especially concerning Russia. For Europe, the scenario is equally troubling. Though US management of Ukrainian nuclear facilities could reduce immediate nuclear risks and strengthen overall energy stability, the continent would find itself dangerously dependent on America for its energy needs. This dependence would severely limit Europe's freedom to make independent geopolitical decisions, effectively placing European policy-making under substantial American influence. Instead of moving towards greater energy independence, Europe would be shackled to American priorities, forced to align with policies that primarily serve US strategic and economic ambitions.

**Continued from page 23**





# INDIA'S HOSTILE FOREIGN POLICY

## A BARRIER TO REGIONAL PEACE

**DR. SAMREEN BARI AAMIR**

Human nature drives people to seek peace and harmony, which is why states are often compared to mothers for their citizens, just as people feel safe and protected at home, they view their homes as secure havens. However, when a neighbor continuously disrupts peace and creates problems, a home can feel like a place of constant fear. If there is always a looming threat of attack, living safely becomes impossible. In such a situation, people may feel homeless despite still residing in their homes. India as a neighbor is one of the most barbaric and selfish, engaging in rivalries with almost all its neighbors. These conflicts have created and continue to fuel anarchic situations throughout the region, making India the worst neighbor for its surrounding countries.

Take the example of China, which is located on the northern side of India; its economy is five times larger than India's, yet India's ambitions to act and become the region's policeman have compelled it to remain in conflict with China. India suffered a harsh defeat in the 1962 war over border disputes, as it had remained unsettled since its independence. It is also a fact that China and India share the longest unmarked border in the world. The violent encounters in the Ladakh region serve as another lesson, yet India refuses to learn; instead, it continues its attempts to undermine China's prestige, territorial integrity, and global image.

Another dark side of India is its alleged role in protecting and promoting terrorism within the borders of its neighboring countries. Granting asylum to the Dalai lama is another major point of contention between India and China. A parallel Tibetan government operates from India with the support of the Indian government, posing a direct threat and challenge to China. This ongoing dispute exacerbates bilateral tensions, as China perceives India's backing of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan diaspora as unwarranted meddling in its domestic matters.

India has also historically interfered in Sri Lanka's territorial matters and has provided aid and protection to militant groups, fueling insurgency in the region. No one can forget India's support for Tamil militant groups, which was aimed at intervening in Sri Lanka's



**Sri Lankan military image taken near Mullaitivu 2009, victory over the separatist Tamil Tigers was declared by the Sri Lankan President that year (FILE PHOTO)**

internal affairs and exerting political pressure. Beyond this, India also seeks to dominate and disrupt Sri Lanka's blue economy. The frequent arrests of Sri Lankan fishermen and violations of Sri Lanka's maritime boundaries have become routine.

These poor fishermen remain constant targets of India's hostility. India is also frustrated by Sri Lanka's growing ties with China, particularly in projects like the Hambantota Port. As a result, it continues to pressure Sri Lanka, with its aggression often directed at vulnerable fishing communities. Historically, India has consistently exerted pressure on Sri Lanka to prevent it from fostering strong ties with China. Through various means, India has influenced Sri Lanka's decision-making, particularly in discouraging or obstructing Chinese projects within the country. Furthermore, Sri Lanka has long been within India's strategic sphere, with India leveraging its influence to shape both Sri Lanka's domestic and foreign policies. The worst tragedy of Bangladesh is that it shares a 4,096 km-long border with India, which provides India with significant leverage to influence Bangladesh's internal as well as external affairs. It is a well-established fact that India is the primary, if not the sole, actor in South Asia responsible for creating anarchy and instability. Nearly all of India's neighboring countries are experiencing its hostility and facing direct aggression.

Pakistan has faced India's hostility since its inception, as India never wholeheartedly recognized or accepted Pakistan's sovereignty. Since independence, India's primary objective has been to destabilize and divide Pakistan. Taking advantage of the political unrest in Bangladesh, India not only intervened in the internal affairs of then-East Pakistan but also provided arms, military support, and trained

rebels, finally leading to the breakup of Pakistan through an armed insurgency.

In fact, after achieving its objective, India successfully turned Bangladesh into its political satellite, exerting direct influence over its internal and external matters. India has used the Awami League and its leaders, first Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and then his daughter, Sheikh Hasina Wajid, as a means of indirectly controlling Bangladesh. It is a well-established fact that India has manipulated Bangladeshi elections to ensure its preferred party remains in power. India's ultimate goal is not only to control the people of Bangladesh but also to exploit its resources for its benefit.

Due to India's advantageous geographic location, it has taken control of the major river networks, severely limiting Bangladesh's access to water and making life more difficult for its citizens. Furthermore, India has significant control over trade and transportation networks, which limits Bangladesh's independence in regional and global affairs. Beyond political and economic dominance, India's Border Security Force (BSF) has frequently been occupied in fatal bombardments on unarmed Bangladeshi innocent civilians along the border, sparking allegations of human rights violations. Furthermore, India has actively discouraged deeper diplomatic and economic collaboration between Bangladesh and China, seeking to maintain Bangladesh within its exclusive orbit of influence.

No nation can understand and experience India's antagonism better than Pakistan, which has borne the brunt of its aggressive posturing and cruel conduct since gaining independence. India's refusal to fully acknowledge Pakistan's sovereignty has had dire consequences, including the horrific massacres of displaced populations during

Partition an atrocity unmatched in modern history. Shortly after independence, India seized Jammu and Kashmir, declaring unlawful control over the territory. Since then, Kashmiris have endured relentless persecution by Indian forces in their ongoing struggle for self-determination and liberation. India's hostility escalated further when it launched an attack on Pakistan in 1965 and later played a destructive role in the separatist movement in East Pakistan (1971), leading to the creation of Bangladesh. India's persistent interference in Pakistan's internal affairs has fueled instability, making the region highly volatile.

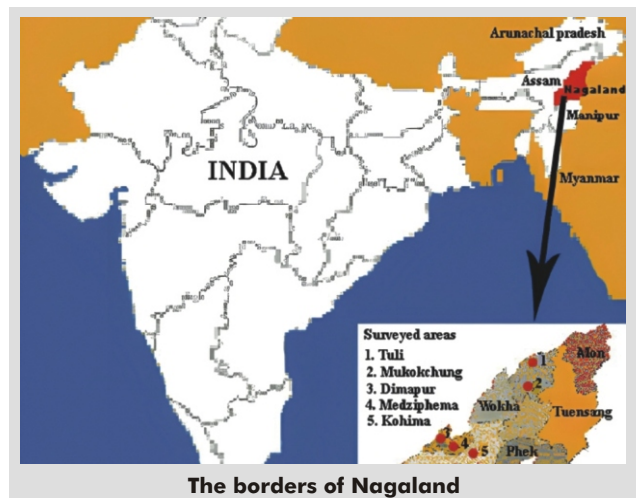
India has been actively supporting separatist movements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Sindh, aiming to weaken Pakistan from within. Additionally, as the upper riparian state, India has repeatedly blocked Pakistan's water supply, damaging crops and, at critical times, releasing excessive water without warning, causing devastating floods. India's involvement in insurgency and terrorism is well-documented, with solid evidence such as the arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian intelligence agent caught operating in Balochistan. India has proven to be the most hostile neighbor for Pakistan, continuously working against Pakistan's sovereignty and regional stability.

India's greed for territorial expansion, aimed at gaining more power and exerting pressure on the innocent citizens of its neighboring countries, is increasing day by day. Its latest move to divide historically united, peacefully coexisting communities along the India-Myanmar border is ruthless. These communities, which share deep-rooted ethnic, religious, and cultural ties, are now at risk due to India's aggressive policies. Despite

the world community's awareness, no state is willing to intervene, as global powers prioritize their economic interests in India. Even the United Nations has failed to take action.

Historically, in the 1970s, India and Myanmar signed the Free Movement Regime (FMR) agreement, allowing citizens from both countries to travel up to 16 km across the border without a visa for economic and family-related activities. This agreement served as a mutual acknowledgment of their long-standing historical ties. However, India's hostile government is no longer respecting this crucial agreement and is actively undermining the peaceful coexistence of these communities. Furthermore, India's attempts to annex border regions, including Nagaland, have been evident since its independence, reflecting its consistent policy of expansionism and regional dominance.

At the time of independence, the Naga region was densely populated by the Naga community, leading its leaders to declare sovereignty in 1947. However, India forcefully annexed the region, suppressing the Naga National Council's demand for self-determination and independence. The Indian Army not only used brutal force to crush the movement but also employed a divide-and-





rule strategy, creating internal discord among Naga leaders. As a result, the movement fragmented into multiple factions, weakening its strength. This deliberate approach ultimately enabled India to suppress the struggle for self-determination. The Sagging region in Myanmar has a significant Naga population, and its 1,643 km-long border with India serves as a clear example of how artificial borders have separated historically connected communities, severing long-standing ties and personal relationships. India's pursuit of power and dominance has led to the division of families and the disruption of centuries-old bonds.

Although both governments initially agreed to keep the border open to facilitate free movement for these communities, India's inconsistent policies and self-serving leadership have led to the unilateral decision to fence the entire boundary. This move has caused widespread unrest among local populations. Families are now being forcibly separated brothers on one side of the border in Myanmar and siblings on the Indian side threatening their cultural and historical unity. Such an authoritative approach by India has fueled resentment and growing tensions in the region.

Nepal, a smaller nation bordered by India to the north, finds itself in a challenging position due to India's history of territorial conflicts and regional interference. Lasting peace has proven elusive for countries sharing boundaries with India, as demonstrated by the ongoing Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura dispute. Historical evidence from the 1815 Sugauli Treaty clearly establishes Nepal's sovereignty over these territories, yet India continues its expansionist policies. This was evident when India unilaterally constructed a road through Lipulekh without consulting

Nepal, prompting Kathmandu to respond by officially updating its national map to reaffirm its territorial claims.

India's tendency to foster instability among its neighbors became apparent when it allegedly supplied weapons to Madhesi groups of Indian origin in Nepal, aiming to provoke unrest. This interference ultimately drove Nepal to seek closer relations with China, much to India's dissatisfaction. Beyond political meddling, India has engaged in resource competition with Nepal by building dams on shared rivers. These projects not only disrupt Nepal's water availability, affecting agricultural productivity, but also pose flood risks when India unexpectedly releases water, causing loss of life and damage to arable land. Despite Nepal's persistent appeals, India has refused to establish fair water-sharing agreements. New Delhi continues to employ diplomatic coercion to influence Nepal's domestic and foreign policies, infringing upon its sovereign rights. India's role in supporting insurgent movements across South Asia reflects its broader strategy of territorial assertion and regional dominance. Such actions have consistently destabilized the area, positioning India as a primary obstacle to peace in the region.

The global community must oppose India's misinformation and disinformation drives aimed at neighboring nations. By targeting smaller neighboring countries, India seems to use this influence as part of a larger geopolitical policy, possibly aligned with more powerful international actors. Time will ultimately expose the underlying motives behind these threatening policies.

**The author is an Assistant Professor at DHA Suffa University and the Founding President of Center for Alternative Perspectives.**

# ICUBE-QAMAR



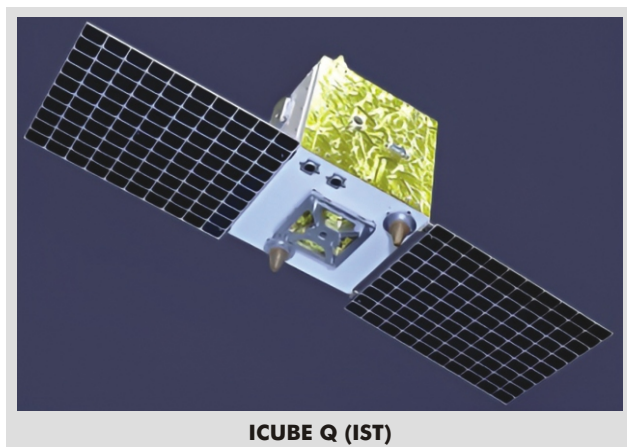




# ICUBE-QAMAR

## PAKISTAN'S FIRST STEP INTO DEEP SPACE EXPLORATION

**SYED SAMIULLAH**



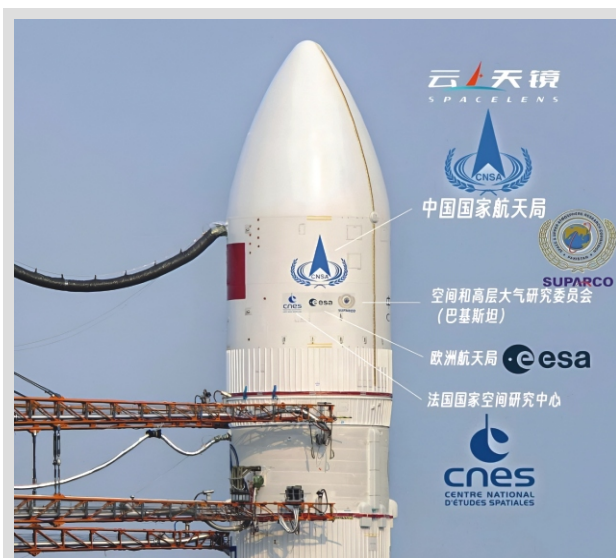
**ICUBE Q (IST)**

ICUBE-Q, also known as ICUBE-QAMAR, marked a historic milestone for Pakistan as it was the country's first deep space mission. This pioneering Nano-satellite was developed specifically for lunar remote sensing, an advanced method of collecting information about the Moon without direct contact. Unlike traditional methods that require instruments to be physically placed at the observation site, remote sensing enables scientists to gather data from a distance, making it an essential tool for exploring celestial bodies like the Moon.

This mission was not just a standalone effort by Pakistan but a result of remarkable international collaboration. ICUBE-QAMAR was one of the four international payloads on board China's prestigious Chang'e 6 lunar mission, which aims to return samples from the far side of the Moon something that has never been done before in human history.

### BACKGROUND

In 2019, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) extended an exciting invitation to the global scientific community: an opportunity to send lightweight payloads less than 10 kilograms aboard its upcoming Chang'e 6 lunar sample-return mission. This mission, aimed at collecting samples from the far side of the Moon and returning them to Earth, also included room for international collaboration. In 2022, CNSA announced that scientific instruments from France, Italy, and Sweden would be part of the lander, while a Pakistani payload would be onboard the orbiter, bringing a proud moment for



**Pakistan Space and Upper atmosphere Research Commission, #SUPARCO's logo is seen on China's most powerful rocket**



Pakistan's space ambitions.

Rising to the occasion, the faculty and students of the Institute of Space Technology (IST) submitted a proposal for a small but powerful lunar CubeSat, named ICUBE-Qamar (ICUBE-Q). Following a rigorous evaluation process, the satellite was officially selected to fly on the Chang'e 6 mission.

## DEVELOPMENT AND LAUNCH

Fundamentally, the development of ICUBE-Q was a result of a healthy partnership between IST, Pakistan's national space agency SUPARCO, and the Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) of China. While the initial design was carried out at IST's Space Systems Laboratory, the actual development and integration took place at the Intelligent Satellite Technology Center at SJTU's School of Aeronautics and Astronautics. Locally in China, the satellite is referred to as SJTU Siyuan 2.

The Nano-satellite was launched on May 3, 2024, from the Wenchang Space Launch Site aboard a Long March 5 Y8 rocket. Then only after five days of its launch, on May 8, 2024, at precisely 08:14 UTC (13:14 PKT), ICUBE-Q was successfully deployed from the lunar orbiter stack into space. After a series of onboard tests during the following days, the satellite transmitted its first images back to Earth on May 11, 2024, captured from an altitude of 200 kilometers above the Moon's

surface. Speaking to the media, Dr. Khurram Khursheed, spokesperson for the Institute of Space Technology (IST) and Head of the Department of Electrical and Computer Science, expressed pride in the achievement. "This is a moment of great honor and scientific achievement for Pakistan. The success of ICUBE-Q demonstrates our capability to contribute meaningfully to deep space exploration," he stated. "Its surface-level analysis capabilities, transmitting images at a modest 1-kbps, will provide crucial data on crater locations, water, and traces of ice on the moon's surface," Dr. Khursheed added.

## OBJECTIVES

The mission's objectives go far beyond simply capturing images. ICUBE-Q is designed to carry out a range of advanced tasks, including capturing high-resolution imagery of the Moon's surface and conducting intelligent on-orbit data processing to minimize transmission loads. Additionally, it aims to collect valuable data on the lunar magnetic field, contributing to the development of a comprehensive lunar magnetic field model. The mission also seeks to validate emerging technologies in deep space communication and demonstrate the viability of low-cost, nano-satellite-based exploration, setting the stage for future innovations in deep space missions.

## SPECIFICATIONS

Designing and building a satellite capable of deep space exploration is an extraordinary engineering achievement, especially when operating under tight restrictions of size and weight. The ICUBE-Q satellite, weighing in at just 6.5 kilograms, is a prime example of how complex systems can be condensed into a compact form without compromising functionality or durability. Fitting all essential components such as the power supply,

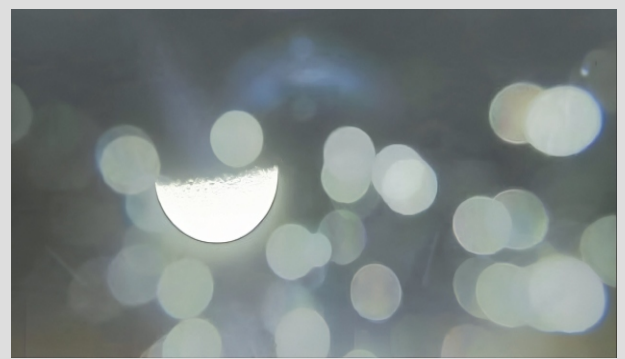


Scientists pose with "ICUBE-Qamar" IST

communication systems, and scientific instruments into such a small frame posed numerous technical challenges. The satellite had to be not only efficient but also exceptionally resilient to endure the tough environment of space, including gravitational fluctuations, intense radiation, extreme temperature changes, and even the unescapable lunar dust.

To meet the demands above, ICUBE-Q was outfitted with a range of advanced features. It incorporates multi-sensor fusion technology to enhance navigational accuracy, multi-layer radiation shielding to protect sensitive electronics, and sophisticated thermal control systems to maintain optimal operating conditions in the face of volatile space temperatures. The ICUBE-Q system itself is comprised of three main parts: the core satellite body, a separation mechanism that includes a power control box, and a sturdy mounting bracket. Additionally, it is powered by a 12-volt, 11.6 amp-hour battery (delivering 139.2 watts) and is supported by two solar panels that deploy once in orbit.

For communication and data handling, the satellite operates on X-band frequencies, managing telemetry, tracking, command (TT&C), and image transmission at a data rate of 1 kilobit per second. Its attitude control system ensures precise orientation using a combination of reaction wheels, Sun sensors, and a star tracker all of which contribute to three-axis stabilization. The satellite's structure, built with lightweight yet strong



**The first lunar image captured by Pakistan's inaugural lunar satellite ICUBE-Qamar shows the moon**

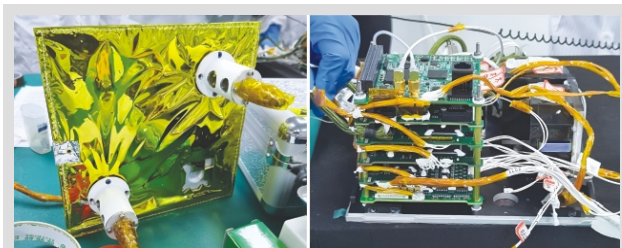
materials like magnesium alloy and honeycomb carbon fiber, offers a perfect balance between durability and efficiency.

ICUBE-Q carries two visible-light cameras, each with a 1-megapixel resolution (1280×720), positioned on opposite sides of the satellite's X-axis to maximize image capture. To enhance reliability and mission success, the satellite also includes intelligent onboard features such as automatic fault detection and a smart task scheduling system, allowing it to adapt and perform even in unpredictable situations.

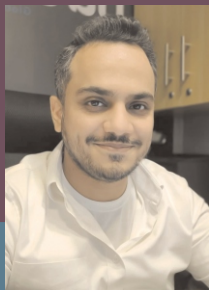
## CONCLUSION

Pakistan's successful deployment of ICUBE-QAMAR, its first lunar CubeSat, signifies a significant step forward in the nation's scientific and technological journey. The compact yet efficient design fulfills advanced scientific objectives, including imaging, data transmission, and studying the Moon's surface and magnetic field. ICUBE-QAMAR serves as an inspiration for young scientists, engineers, and students, proving that ambitious goals like deep space exploration can be achieved with vision, collaboration, and perseverance.

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



**TT&C Antennas and Subsystems**



# TRUMP'S NIXON DOCTRINE 2.0

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

**MIRZA KASHIF BAIG**

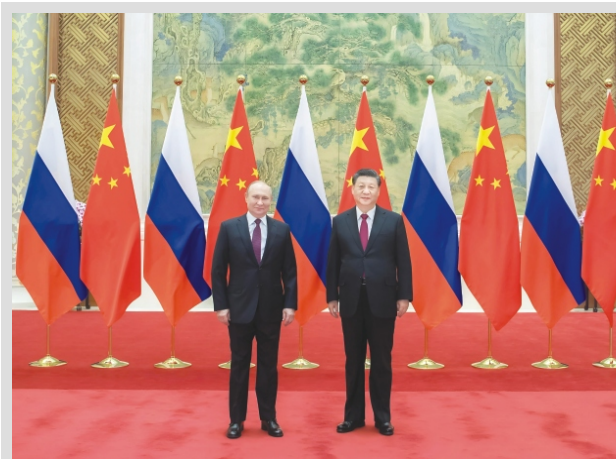
President Trump's strategic maneuvers on the global chessboard have consistently sparked controversy and speculation, and his latest geopolitical gambit an attempt to pivot Russia away from its partnership with China stands as one of his most audacious yet. This "Reverse Nixon Doctrine," as analysts have termed it, mirrors Richard Nixon's famous Cold War policy but inverted: instead of courting China against the Soviets, Trump aims to draw Russia closer, effectively isolating China. However, beneath this calculated diplomatic veneer lie profound implications for Russia, potentially leaving Moscow dangerously isolated, economically vulnerable, and geopolitically exposed.

At the core of Trump's latest strategy lies a simple yet powerful premise: China, rather than Russia, represents America's most significant threat to global supremacy. Trump's administration has made no secret of its desire to curb China's growing economic and military prowess. By enticing Moscow away from Beijing, the United States hopes to diminish China's global influence and severely disrupt the powerful Sino-Russian partnership, which has emerged as a significant counterweight to Western dominance.

Yet, Trump's apparent generosity toward Moscow comes with significant strings attached. For Russia, distancing itself from China would mean severing critical economic ties that have grown immensely valuable,

particularly in recent years. Today, after India, China is Russia's largest crude oil and natural gas buyer. Energy exports to China provide Russia with a reliable revenue stream that significantly cushions the nation against Western sanctions and geopolitical isolation. A sudden pivot away from Beijing would force Russia to seek alternative markets in an already saturated global energy landscape no simple task, considering that Europe remains cautious due to ongoing tensions over Ukraine and America's continued pressure for reduced reliance on Russian energy.

Moreover, Russia's relationship with China extends beyond oil and gas exports. The two nations have forged deep strategic alliances, cooperating on military technology, joint military exercises, infrastructure projects, and investments in emerging technologies.



**Chinese President Xi Jinping after holding talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin**



Chinese investment has buoyed the Russian economy amid sustained Western sanctions and geopolitical friction. Any abrupt shift away from China would inevitably come at enormous economic cost to Russia, potentially plunging the nation into deeper fiscal turmoil.

Given these stark realities, the question arises: What exactly can the United States offer Moscow that would justify such a substantial geopolitical gamble? Certainly, Washington could provide some attractive short-term incentives lifting economic sanctions, increasing bilateral trade, facilitating Western investment, or perhaps promising limited diplomatic concessions on critical issues such as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Indeed, recent diplomatic engagements between Trump and Putin hint at tentative discussions about potential concessions, possibly including partial easing of sanctions and acknowledgment of Russia's security concerns in Eastern Europe.

Yet, history has demonstrated that American promises especially those contingent upon shifting geopolitical alignments carry inherent risks and uncertainties. Having navigated decades of adversarial relations with Washington, Russia understands that today's diplomatic assurances may quickly vanish with tomorrow's administration or policy shift. Given the volatility of recent American foreign policy and its shifting alliances, Moscow would rightfully question the reliability of any U.S. commitments.

Furthermore, Russia may carefully evaluate the strategic implications of aligning itself more closely with the United States. Such a move could severely restrict Moscow's strategic autonomy, forcing Russia into a subordinate role within a U.S.-dominated geopolitical structure. Moscow deeply values

its independence on the world stage; compromising its strategic flexibility for uncertain American concessions is a gamble Putin might be unwilling to take.

Another crucial factor Russia must consider is China's likely response to any perceived betrayal. Already keenly aware of Trump's intentions to isolate it, Beijing would undoubtedly retaliate economically and politically against Russia, further exacerbating Moscow's isolation. A Chinese economic backlash could severely damage Russia's economic stability, as alternative economic partners capable of replacing China's enormous market are practically nonexistent. Politically, abandoning China could render Russia even more isolated, alienating existing allies and leaving Moscow dangerously vulnerable to Western pressures.

Undoubtedly aware of these potential consequences, Russia finds itself at a critical crossroads. On the surface, Trump's Reverse Nixon Doctrine presents an appealing narrative an opportunity for Moscow to emerge from isolation and sanctions, re-engage with Western markets, and potentially secure diplomatic victories on key geopolitical disputes. However, beneath this attractive surface lies the stark reality of Russia's precarious geopolitical position. Accepting Trump's overtures could well trap Russia in a strategic dead end economically weakened, politically compromised, and more isolated than ever before.

Ultimately, the success of Trump's Reverse Nixon Doctrine depends entirely on Russia's perception of American promises' sincerity, sustainability, and credibility. President Putin and his advisors must navigate a treacherous geopolitical landscape, fully aware that aligning too closely with Washington could alter Russia's international position for

decades.

A miscalculation could cost Russia its partnership with China and its economic stability and geopolitical leverage, leaving Moscow deeply vulnerable. Thus, while Trump's gambit seeks to remake global power dynamics to America's advantage, it simultaneously represents a grave risk for Russia. Whether the Kremlin sees through this

calculated American maneuver, recognizing its potential dangers and pitfalls, remains an open question. Moscow now faces perhaps its most challenging geopolitical decision in decades. This choice will profoundly shape the global balance of power and determine Russia's future role on the international stage.

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

Continued from page 12

## POWER PLAY

### TRUMP'S DANGEROUS GAMBLE IN UKRAINE

Thus, while superficially offering stability and protection, the US proposal ultimately threatens the autonomy of both Ukraine and Europe, further exposing President Trump's hidden hegemonic agenda beneath his proclaimed goal of making "America Great Again." US control of Ukrainian nuclear power plants would deliver a severe and strategic blow to Russian interests, significantly undermining Moscow's long-term ambitions in Eastern Europe.

For Russia, losing influence over Ukraine's nuclear energy sector would be more than just an economic setback it would represent a strategic defeat, stripping Russia of crucial leverage in the ongoing conflict and severely limiting its ability to pressure Kyiv into submission. Moscow would find its regional influence severely diminished, forced to watch as the United States solidifies its foothold on Russia's doorstep.

Militarily, American control of these nuclear facilities would rob Russia of potential tactical advantages, denying it the opportunity to exploit these plants as strongholds or strategic bargaining chips in the conflict. This move would be an unmistakable symbolic defeat on the information battlefield, fueling

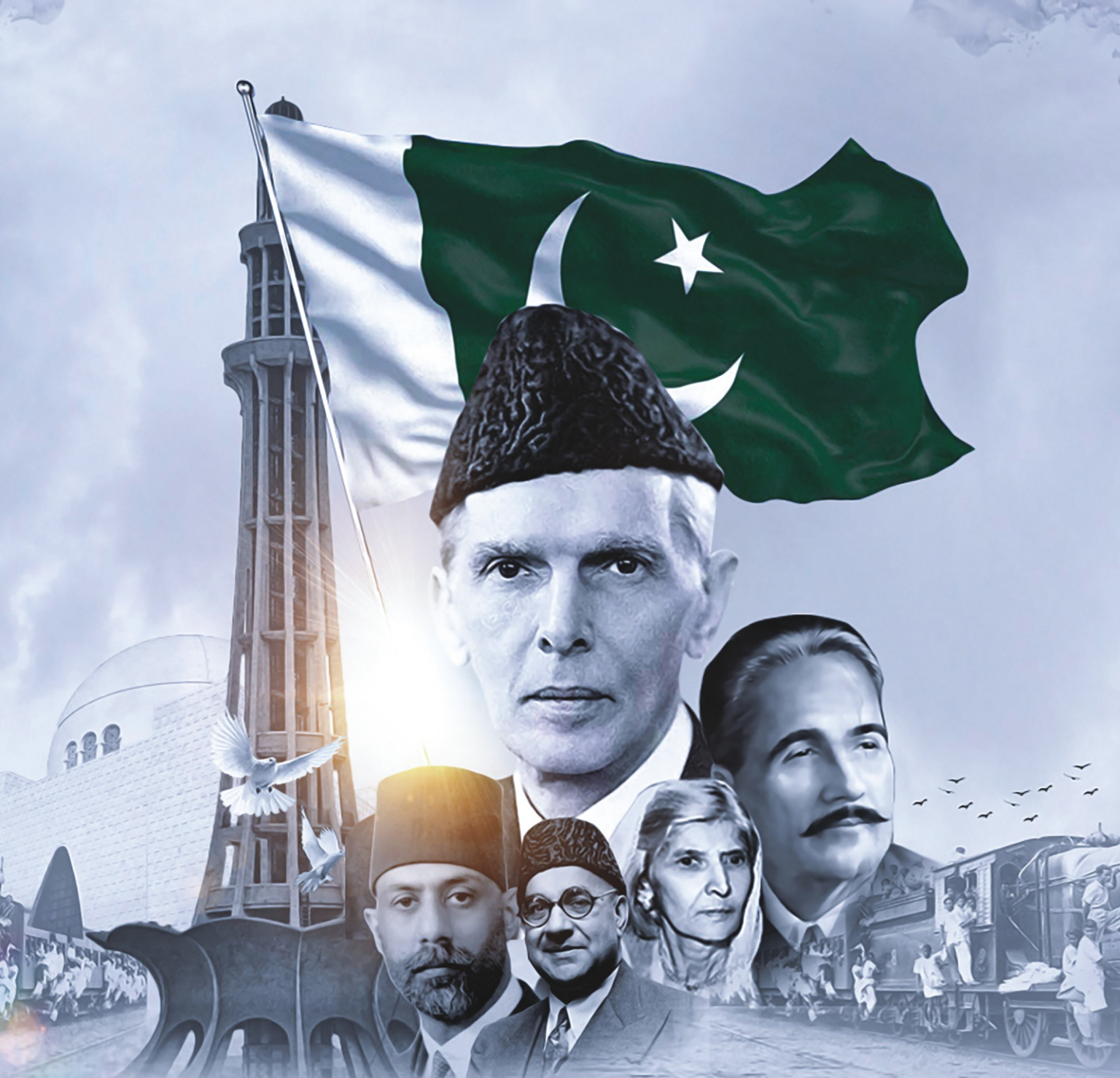
Western and Ukrainian narratives of Russian decline and isolation. Despite inevitable Kremlin attempts at counter-propaganda, the stark reality of lost influence would be nearly impossible to obscure.

Economically, potential US agreements granting American access to Ukraine's mineral resources would further damage Russian prospects, effectively shutting Moscow out of lucrative regional opportunities. Above all, from the Russian viewpoint, the increased American presence in Ukraine constitutes an existential threat, intensifying Russia's fears about NATO encroachment and severely eroding its power in a region vital to its national security and geopolitical ambitions.

Ultimately, President Trump's aggressive pursuit of American ownership of Ukrainian nuclear plants may superficially promise stability and economic prosperity. However, beneath these surface-level assurances lies a dangerous game of geopolitical dominance. For Ukraine, it means sacrificing sovereignty; for Europe, a deepening dependency on US whims; and for Russia, an existential threat capable of fueling greater instability. In his relentless drive to "Make America Great Again," Trump appears willing to gamble with global security, reducing complex international relationships to mere pawns in his hegemonic quest.

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





# 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

## (1969-1973)

### TEAM INTERACTION

President General Yahya Khan was fully aware that the country's political environment was becoming increasingly unstable. Progressive and socialist movements were gaining ground, and public pressure for a change in leadership was growing louder. In response, he addressed the nation on television and announced a major decision: general elections would be held the following year, and power would be handed over to the elected representatives.

To make way for this transition, President Yahya suspended the 1962 Constitution and introduced a new legal structure called the Legal Framework Order (LFO) of 1970. This order brought significant changes, especially in West Pakistan. One of the major shifts was the abolishment of the 'One Unit' scheme, which led to the removal of the "West" label from Pakistan. Provinces were restored to their original status as they were in 1947, and elections would now be held through direct voting, replacing the earlier system of equal representation.

This move also reinstated key state institutions like the parliament, Supreme Court, and central government, giving them back their original roles. However, it's important to note that these reforms applied only to West Pakistan. East Pakistan remained unaffected by these changes. In the lead-up to Pakistan's first-ever general elections, the political landscape was buzzing with activity.



**Pakistani President General Yahya Khan  
along with United States President Richard  
Nixon in October 1970 (FILE PHOTO)**

The Election Commission had officially registered 24 political parties, and their rallies drew huge crowds across the country, showing the public's eagerness to participate in the democratic process. However, just before Election Day, a devastating cyclone hit East Pakistan, claiming around half a million lives. Despite this heartbreaking tragedy, the people's determination to vote remained strong; they were ready to shape their future through the ballot box.

In East Pakistan, the Awami League campaigned hard around its famous Six Points agenda, and gained massive support. Meanwhile, in West Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) emerged as a powerful force. With its popular slogan, "roti, kapda aur makaan" (food, clothing, and shelter) and a socialist message, the PPP quickly struck a chord with the working class. On the other side, the conservative Pakistan

Muslim League (PML), led by Nurul Amin, focused on religious and nationalist slogans to appeal to voters across the country.

Out of the 313 seats in the National Assembly, the Awami League won a clear majority with 167 seats, all from East Pakistan, while the PPP secured 88 seats, all from West Pakistan. The Awami League had enough seats to form the government on its own, but the political leadership in West Pakistan refused to hand over power to a party based entirely in the East. Talks were initiated to find a middle ground. Bhutto famously remarked, "Udhar tum, idhar hum" "You rule there (East), we rule here (West)," suggesting a power-sharing arrangement instead of a unified government. PPP leaders argued that the Awami League lacked any mandate in the western wing of the country.

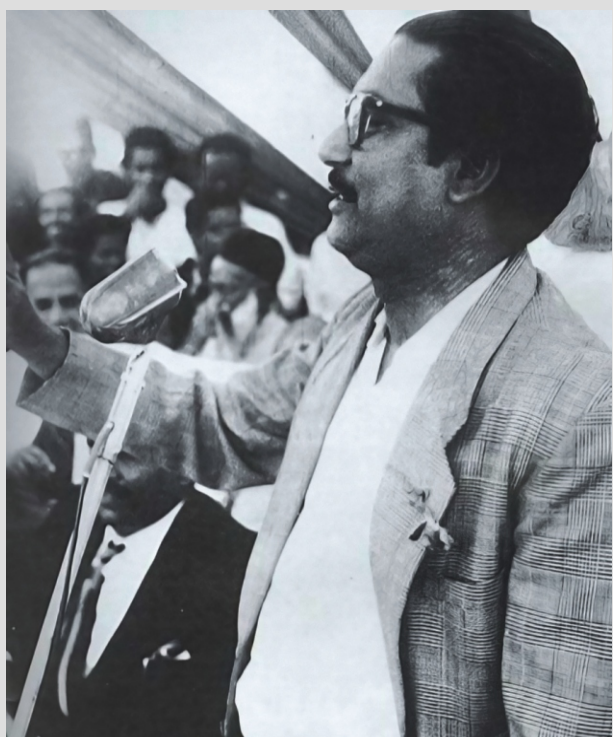
Though President Yahya Khan invited the Awami League to the National Assembly

session in Islamabad, he didn't officially invite them to form the government, mainly due to Bhutto's resistance. With no consensus reached, Yahya Khan made a controversial decision he appointed Nurul Amin, a Bengali politician known for opposing the independence movement, as Prime Minister and gave him the additional role of the country's first and only Vice President.

After the political deadlock, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman launched a non-cooperation movement in early 1971 that brought East Pakistan's government to a standstill. Offices, institutions, and law enforcement stopped working as the Awami League called for civil disobedience. Despite efforts, talks between Sheikh Mujib and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto failed, and tensions escalated further.

In response, President Yahya Khan decided to take military action. The army launched Operation Searchlight and later Operation Barisal, aimed at restoring order, but these operations resulted in a widespread crackdown against political activists, students, and civilians in East Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib was arrested and secretly brought to Islamabad, while other Awami League leaders fled to India, where they formed a parallel government-in-exile.

Meanwhile, India took a vicious role. With Indian support, a guerrilla group called the Mukti Bahini began attacking Pakistani forces in East Pakistan. As the situation worsened, millions of Bengali Muslims and Hindus fled to India, triggering a humanitarian crisis. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi cunningly began providing military aid to the rebels openly. In March 1971, Major General Ziaur Rahman, speaking on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, declared East Pakistan's independence, naming the new country Bangladesh.



**Mujeeb-ur-Rehman announcing his Six points  
(FILE PHOTO)**

As the conflict intensified, Pakistan's military launched pre-emptive air strikes on 11 Indian airbases on 3 December 1971, aiming to stop India from interfering. But this move backfired. India officially entered the war on the side of the Bangladeshi forces. The Pakistani military in East Pakistan, untrained in guerrilla warfare and isolated from the western wing, struggled to hold their ground. Under the leadership of General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi and Admiral Muhammad Sharif, the Pakistani forces were gradually pushed back. Overwhelmed, exhausted, and outnumbered, the Eastern Command eventually surrendered in Dhaka on 16 December 1971 to the combined forces of India and the Mukti Bahini.

Despite the surrender, Indian Army Chief Sam Manekshaw later acknowledged that the Pakistani soldiers fought bravely under extremely difficult conditions. Still, the war had a heavy human cost. Independent researchers estimate around 300,000 civilian deaths during this tragic period. The outcome shook the entire nation. President Yahya Khan resigned, and on 20 December 1971, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was sworn in as President and Chief



**Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the 1971 crisis**

Martial Law Administrator, marking the beginning of a new and difficult chapter in Pakistan's history.

After the painful fall of East Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto took charge of a broken and grieving nation. One of his very first decisions as the new leader was to release Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had been imprisoned in West Pakistan. In his another move, Bhutto also placed former President Yahya Khan under house arrest, holding him accountable for the military and political failures that led to the crisis. Bhutto also dismissed the top military leadership. General Gul Hassan Khan, who was then the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, was relieved of his duties. Air Marshal Abdul Rahim Khan of the Air Force and Vice-Admiral Muzaffar Hassan of the Navy were also removed from their positions.

Bhutto then addressed the nation on Pakistan Television (PTV), delivering a powerful and emotional speech that spoke directly to the hearts of his fellow Pakistanis. He acknowledged the pain, confusion, and sorrow felt across the country, and promised a new beginning. To find out the truth behind the war and its devastating outcome, Bhutto ordered the creation of the Hamoodur Rahman Commission, led by Chief Justice Hamoodur Rahman, a respected Bengali



**President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto with Dr. Munir A. Khan and Prof. Salam in KANUPP**





**Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, after holding PM office**

judge. The commission was tasked with investigating the causes of the 1971 war and identifying those responsible for the military and political breakdown.

In July 1972, Bhutto made a historic visit to India, where he met with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Together, they signed the Shimla Agreement, which laid the foundation for peaceful relations between the two countries. Bhutto managed to bring back the Pakistani soldiers who had been taken as prisoners of war and recovered around 5,000 square miles of Pakistani territory captured by Indian forces. As part of this agreement, Bhutto also formally recognized Bangladesh as an independent country.

On the economic front, Bhutto broke away from the capitalist policies of former President Ayub Khan and introduced a socialist approach. On 2 January 1972, he nationalized major industries across

Pakistan iron and steel, heavy machinery, cement, petrochemicals, and more bringing them under state control. This was part of his vision to empower the working class and reduce economic inequality. A new labour policy was also introduced, granting greater rights to workers and giving trade unions more voice and power.

On the strategic front, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had been a strong advocate for nuclear deterrence even before he came to power. As early as 1967, he had spoken about the importance of Pakistan having its own nuclear capability to ensure national security, especially in a region where India was rapidly advancing its defense technologies. Soon after taking control of the country in December 1971, Bhutto moved swiftly on this vision. Just a few weeks later, on 20 January 1972, he held a highly secretive meeting in Multan. This meeting brought together some of Pakistan's most brilliant scientists and engineers, organized at Bhutto's request by Dr. Abdus Salam, the country's Nobel Prize-winning physicist and then-Science Adviser to the Prime Minister.

In that meeting, Bhutto made a bold and historic announcement: Pakistan would develop its own nuclear weapons program. He emphasized that Pakistan needed to protect its sovereignty and maintain a balance of power in South Asia. Around the same time in 1972, Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI, discovered that India was close to developing an atomic bomb through its secret nuclear program. This news added urgency to Bhutto's mission. As a result, the government increased defense and science funding by over 200%, signaling a clear national priority.

In the early years, Dr. Abdus Salam played a key role in laying the foundation of the program. He helped gather a strong team of

Pakistani scientists, engineers, and mathematicians, many of whom were working abroad or in different institutions. These experts came together to form the Theoretical Physics Group (TPG) a special weapons division within the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC).

Under Bhutto's leadership, this team worked on designing the bomb, running complex physics calculations, and laying the groundwork for what would eventually become one of Pakistan's most defining strategic achievements—a credible nuclear deterrent.

As Pakistan entered a new era, the foundation for developing a military nuclear capability was firmly laid. This journey wasn't just about building a bomb—it involved creating an entire system known as the nuclear fuel cycle, which included everything from uranium mining and processing to fuel enrichment, reprocessing, and weapons design.

At the center of this scientific and strategic mission was the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC). On 20 January 1972, during the historic Multan Conference of scientists and engineers, Munir Ahmad Khan was appointed as the new Chairman of PAEC. Before this, he was serving as Director of Nuclear Power and Reactors at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna.

Munir Ahmad Khan was no ordinary official—he was a world-renowned expert in plutonium technology. Over time, he became known as the “technical father” of Pakistan's nuclear program, as recognized by a report from the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), London. Working closely with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who is often referred to as the political father of Pakistan's nuclear

project, Khan laid the groundwork for key technologies, especially plutonium reprocessing—a crucial step in nuclear weapons development.

While the nation focused on scientific progress, it was also transitioning politically. After the tragic loss of East Pakistan, the first session of the new National Assembly was finally held on 14 April 1972 at the State Bank Building in Islamabad. This session brought together 144 Members from West Pakistan and two members from former East Pakistan—Nurul Amin and Raja Tridev Roy, who had chosen to remain with Pakistan.

Soon after, on 17 April 1972, the National Assembly adopted an Interim Constitution, which introduced a Presidential form of government for the time being. It was also decided that this setup would continue at least until 14 August 1973. This interim arrangement clearly defined the division of powers between the Centre and the Provinces—a critical step in maintaining balance and unity in the post-1971 scenario.

On the same day, a Constitution Committee was formed to draft a permanent Constitution for the country. After months of deliberation, the draft Constitution was submitted on 31 December 1972. It was unanimously passed by the Assembly on 10 April 1973, authenticated by the President two days later, and finally came into effect on 14 August 1973—Pakistan's Independence Day.

This new 1973 Constitution introduced a parliamentary form of government, where the Prime Minister became the head of the executive, and the President served as a ceremonial symbol of unity. On that historic day, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto took oath as the first elected Prime Minister, while Fazal Elahi Chaudhry became the President of Pakistan.

**Continue...**



# RUSSIA AND UKRAINE AGREE TO BLACK SEA NAVAL CEASEFIRE

**DR. S. BUSHRA BATOOL**

In a significant development amid ongoing conflict, Russia and Ukraine have separately agreed to a naval ceasefire in the Black Sea following three days of peace negotiations held in Saudi Arabia. The breakthrough, brokered by the United States, marks a potential step toward easing tensions in one of the world's most strategically and economically vital maritime corridors. According to statements from Washington, both countries have committed to halting military activity in the Black Sea and pledged to implement measures that enforce a previously agreed ban on attacks against each other's energy infrastructure. This agreement is seen as a revival of earlier attempts to secure the region for international trade, especially for agricultural exports.

The ceasefire is expected to reopen crucial trade routes and help stabilize global food prices, which have surged since the original grain deal between Russia and Ukraine collapsed in July 2023. That deal, established in 2022, had allowed commercial vessels safe passage through the Black Sea during wartime conditions. However, Russia withdrew from the arrangement, accusing the West of failing to meet obligations related to its agricultural trade. Despite the announcement from Washington, Moscow stated that the ceasefire would only come into effect if specific sanctions targeting its food and fertilizer industries were lifted. Russia is demanding the

reconnection of key banks to the Swift payment system, removal of restrictions on Russian-flagged vessels involved in food exports, and resumption of supplies of agricultural equipment.

Ukrainian officials have expressed cautious optimism. President Volodymyr Zelensky called the agreement a positive development but stopped short of celebrating it as a breakthrough. "It is too early to say that it will work, but these were the right meetings, the right decisions, the right steps," Zelensky said at a press conference in Kyiv. He emphasized that Ukraine could not be blamed for failing to pursue peace, indirectly responding to former US President Donald Trump's earlier accusation that Kyiv was hindering peace efforts. Ukraine's Defense Minister, Rustem Umerov, echoed similar sentiments. He noted that third-party nations may play a role in monitoring compliance with the ceasefire terms. However, he issued a stern warning that the movement of Russian warships beyond the eastern part of the Black Sea would be interpreted as a direct violation of the agreement and a threat to Ukraine's national security. "In this case, Ukraine will have full right to exercise self-defence," Umerov stated.

The current ceasefire proposal resembles the earlier 2022 grain export deal that allowed the safe transport of essential goods like grain. The end of that agreement in 2023



had a direct impact on global food prices, as both Russia and Ukraine are major players in the international grain market. The recent talks in Riyadh were facilitated by US diplomats meeting separately with Russian and Ukrainian delegates, as the two nations have yet to engage in direct negotiations. The White House confirmed that it would work toward restoring Russia's access to global markets for agricultural and fertilizer exports, a move that appears aimed at addressing some of Moscow's concerns. However, it remains unclear when the ceasefire will officially come into effect.

Trump, who has taken a keen interest in the



peace process, was asked about the possibility of lifting sanctions in response to Russia's conditions. He replied, "We're thinking about all of them right now. We're looking at them," suggesting that some flexibility may be on the table to sustain the agreement. Zelensky, however, criticized what he described as a potential "weakening of positions," referring to the US's willingness to ease sanctions. He reiterated that Ukraine would continue pressing for tougher sanctions on Russia and increase its request for Western military aid if Moscow failed to uphold its end of the deal. In a televised address, Zelensky accused the Kremlin of misrepresenting the agreement, especially the claim that the ceasefire depended solely on the lifting of sanctions. He

suggested this was a strategy by Moscow to delay implementation while continuing hostile actions on the ground.

Indeed, despite the diplomatic efforts, hostilities continued this week. Russia accused Ukraine of attacking its civilian energy infrastructure even while negotiations were ongoing. Meanwhile, Ukraine reported overnight drone and missile attacks, including a large-scale assault involving 139 drones and a ballistic missile. Kyiv also claimed an airstrike killed 30 Russian soldiers in the Kursk region. Earlier, Russia had launched a missile barrage on the north-eastern Ukrainian city of Sumy, injuring over 100 people. Ukrainian officials condemned the assault as yet another example of Moscow's disregard for ceasefire promises.

The ceasefire agreement also includes a renewed commitment to halt strikes on each other's energy networks, a key issue in the war. Russian attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure have led to widespread power outages, leaving millions without energy during freezing winters. The targeting of nuclear facilities has prompted warnings from international bodies, including the UN's atomic watchdog, calling for restraint on both sides. While the agreements represent progress, the path to a durable peace remains uncertain. Implementation details are still vague, and mutual distrust runs deep. Yet, observers note that even a limited naval ceasefire could serve as a stepping stone toward broader negotiations, provided both sides demonstrate commitment to the terms. For now, the world watches with cautious hope as diplomacy attempts to navigate the turbulent waters of the Black Sea, once again a focal point of conflict, and perhaps, the first glimmer of reconciliation.

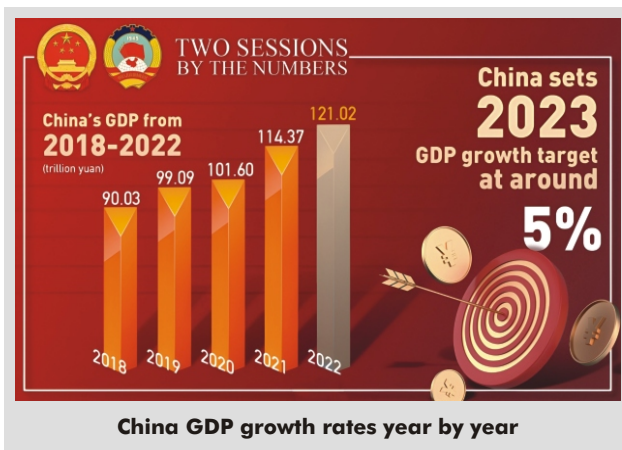
**The author is a Research Officer at Rabita Forum International (RFI).**



# REASSERTING PAKISTAN'S INFLUENCE IN ASIA

## A CALL TO ACTION

**SANAULLAH BHATTI**



The United States and Russia agreed to explore the economic and investment opportunities that could arise for both countries from an end to the war in Ukraine, following discussions at the Diriyah Palace in Riyadh. This meeting marked a significant shift in Washington's approach to Moscow. The statement was issued on March 18, after an agreement between Russia and the United States for a ceasefire in the Russo-Ukrainian War. Notably, this is the first time since World War II that an Asian country has been selected to facilitate US-Russia peace talks. Surprisingly, Europe and Ukraine have been excluded from these discussions, which aim to establish principles for a ceasefire in Ukraine.

Apart from this remarkable development in the US-Russia peace talks, the choice of a Middle Eastern country for peace talks between two great powers highlights the significance of the Asian theater in future

global strategic affairs. Over the last two decades, the world has witnessed an efficient shift in power dynamics and strategic relevance from Europe to Asia, largely driven by rapid economic growth, military modernization, geopolitical alignments, restructuring of organizational roles, and political rationalization.

China has virtually taken over large-scale industrialization and an export-led strategy, growing its GDP from \$1.2 trillion in 2000 to \$17.79 trillion in 2023. India has seized the services sector, particularly in information technology and business process outsourcing. The country's GDP has grown from \$477 billion in 2000 to \$3.57 trillion in 2023. Military modernization in Asia has undergone significant transformations over the last two decades, with implications for regional security dynamics and potential flashpoints, including the South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula, and the Pacific Ocean.

This security threat has been exacerbated by the United States' involvement in its informal strategic alliance with Japan, India, and Australia in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), which aims to counter China's growing military presence in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. China's military modernization is primarily focused on developing advanced military capabilities, while India prioritizes modernizing its military by increasing its naval and air capabilities.

Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asian countries are also growing their military capabilities in response to the threat from North Korea and China's expansionist objectives in the region.

The landscapes of power and security dynamics in Asia are being reshaped by interplays of strategic and economic realignments of regional perspectives. In 2011, the United States announced the US Pivot to Asia Project, reflecting a shift from Europe to Asia in strategic, political, and economic balancing. China launched the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, a massive infrastructure development project aimed at connecting Asia with Europe and Africa. India reinstated its Act East project in 2014 to widen its relations with Southeast Asian countries. India now launches India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) via sea and land routes.

All these massive projects require an inclusive correlation of their beneficiaries with effective intervention in the reorganization of security and strategic realms to serve their interests. These tendencies herald a profound consideration for all countries striving for political continuity, economic stability, and security resilience in regional relevance. This phase in world politics marks a realignment of

strategic alliances with clear objectives. Consequently, every nation must remain relevant to secure its interests and opportunities.

Following the rapid change in the Asian part of the world, the Gulf region has set itself a role as an enlightened, progressive, peaceful, and modernized political entity, exercising its influence in the normalization of conflicts for peace. The United Arab Emirates has emerged as a pioneer in promoting tourism and modernization in the Gulf countries. By investing heavily in sectors like finance, tourism, renewable energy, and technology, the UAE has inspired other regional entities to adopt a diversified economy and become a global business and tourism hub over the last two decades. In the post-COVID-19 era, Southeast Asian countries have shown resilience in the face of global economic uncertainty, with most countries maintaining stable growth momentum.

In a nutshell, present developments are painting a picture in which Arabs are moving towards liberalization of the socio-economic sphere to achieve modernity in their political approach. India is thriving as the largest democratic entity, acquiring strategic and economic capabilities to counterbalance Chinese influence in the region. Meanwhile, China is expanding its influence over the Pacific and Asia, seeking to maximize its sphere of influence.

Pakistan is a natural bridge between the Eurasian heartland and the Arabian Sea, offering critical overland connectivity for trade and energy transactions. It is actively engaging its economic, strategic, and cultural ties with regional entities to capitalize on its geographic significance. In this regard, Pakistan has documented several trade and



**People's Liberation Army while marching during a national parade**



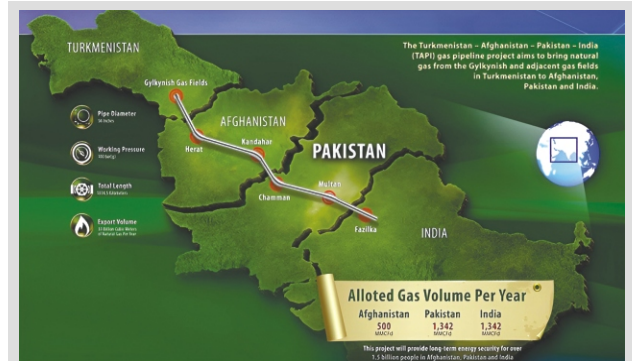


**India fortifies naval arsenal with 4.8b aircraft carrier to counterbalance China's maritime influence**

investment agreements, mainly related to mega energy projects, with China, Iran, and Central Asian countries.

Three grand projects the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline (TAPI), the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are underway, showcasing Pakistan's potential as a prime choice for regional connectivity. This attribute of regional connectivity is significantly characterized with long term strategic partnership with neighboring countries to pursue a permanent framework of structural guarantee. However, over the last two decades, Pakistan has been entangled in the vortex of terrorism, with various groups operating within its borders and across borders. Terrorism is a complex issue with multiple causes and factors contributing to its persistence.

Pakistan's involvement in the Soviet-Afghan War and the War on Terrorism led to an influx of militant groups, sectarianism, radicalization, and vulnerability of defense peripheries. This catastrophic phase severely eroded the country's socio-political institutional framework and eclipsed opportunities to benefit from rapid economic



**TAPI: Gas pipeline project between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan & India**

growth, as seen in other parts of Asia, where peace and consistency prevailed during this period.

To reclaim its position in the rapidly shifting Asian landscape, Pakistan must adopt a two-pronged approach, focusing on achieving political stability and driving economic modernization. By capitalizing on its strategic location, Pakistan can establish itself as a critical node in regional connectivity, fostering economic expansion and stability. Pakistan can draw inspiration from the success stories of its Asian counterparts, such as Gulf and Southeast Asian countries, which have effectively harnessed their strategic locations, invested in infrastructure development, and cultivated regional connectivity to propel economic growth and stability.

By emulating these examples and leveraging its own strategic partnerships with regional players, including China, Iran, and Central Asian nations, Pakistan can unlock its full potential and reassert its influence in the Asian region. Ultimately, Pakistan's future in Asia hinges on its ability to prioritize political stability, drive economic modernization, and capitalize on its strategic location to become a hub of regional connectivity.

The author is a freelance Researcher and a graduate of International Relations, University of Karachi.



# TRUMP'S IRAN ULTIMATUM

## WILL RUSSIA DEFEND OR DESERT TEHRAN?

**BISMAH BAIG MIRZA**



**Donald Trump, (left) addressing a joint session of Congress at the Capitol in Washington, DC on March 4, 2025, While (right) and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei attending a ceremony in Tehran, Iran on March 8, 2025 (FILE PHOTO)**

President Trump's latest move against Iran has once again stirred global anxieties. He issued a stern ultimatum demanding Tehran dismantle its nuclear ambitions within two months or face severe consequences. Trump's aggressive posture has sent tremors through international diplomatic circles, highlighting his signature disregard for diplomatic subtleties and raising urgent questions about Russia's potential reaction. The critical concern is whether Moscow will step in to defend its Iranian ally or retreat and risk isolation and the erosion of a crucial strategic partnership.

Trump's direct communication with Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, delivered through diplomatic channels via the United Arab Emirates, leaves no room for ambiguity. The message is starkly clear Washington demands a swift rollback of Iran's

nuclear program, hinting ominously that failure to comply would prompt the United States to pursue "other ways to resolve" the dispute. Tehran's response has predictably been defiant yet carefully measured. While Ayatollah Khamenei dismissed Trump's threats as deceitful and manipulative, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi conceded that the message carries threats and potential diplomatic openings. Tehran thus stands at a critical juncture, weighing its response amidst mounting international pressure and regional tensions.

However, the most profound implications of Trump's aggressive policy lie in Moscow's reaction. Historically, Russia has positioned itself as a steadfast advocate of Tehran's right to pursue peaceful nuclear energy, consistently urging dialogue over coercion. Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin spokesperson, reaffirmed Moscow's stance, cautioning against reckless escalation and underscoring the need for measured diplomatic approaches. Yet, beneath this public caution lies a troubling reality: Russia now faces a perilous strategic crossroads. By backing Tehran openly, Russia risks provoking American wrath, deepening its already troubling isolation amid heavy Western sanctions stemming from the Ukrainian conflict. Conversely, stepping back from its alliance with Iran would represent a strategic capitulation, jeopardizing Russia's credibility

and diminishing its influence in a geopolitically critical region.

Further complicating this precarious scenario is the volatile situation in Yemen, where Iran-backed Houthi rebels have intensified attacks targeting Western maritime routes in the strategically vital Red Sea. Washington directly blames Tehran for these provocations, leveraging the situation to justify decisive military actions, including targeted airstrikes on Houthi leadership and deploying additional naval assets to the region. Trump's rapid military escalation underscores the lengths to which his administration is willing to go, unafraid of intensifying military pressure to achieve its strategic aims. Russia's involvement with the Houthis reportedly through the provision of weapons and intelligence reinforces Moscow's intricate geopolitical balancing act, simultaneously challenging U.S. interests while attempting to maintain strategic relevance in regional dynamics.

Yet, Russia's path forward is fraught with peril. Continued alignment with Tehran amid escalating U.S. threats could lead Moscow to increased international isolation, imposing severe economic and diplomatic costs. Already battered by Western sanctions over Ukraine and strained by ongoing geopolitical tensions, the Russian economy might buckle under additional punitive measures stemming from support for Iran. Moreover, intensified military conflict in the Persian Gulf could significantly undermine Russia's broader strategic objectives, drawing Moscow further into a destabilizing regional conflict it can ill afford. Nevertheless, abandoning Tehran would not be without profound consequences either. Russia risks damaging its credibility as a reliable ally, weakening its influence across the broader Middle Eastern landscape. Long



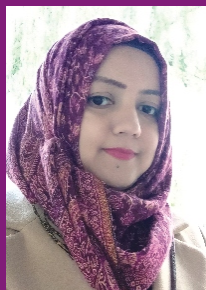
**Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, January 2025 (FILE PHOTO)**

central to Russia's regional strategy, Iran provides Moscow with a crucial strategic foothold, counterbalancing Western influence and serving as a critical partner in Syria and beyond. Losing Iranian trust could severely curtail Russia's geopolitical maneuverability, relegating Moscow to the margins of regional politics. Ultimately, the Trump administration's provocative ultimatum has thrown Russia into an unwelcome dilemma, forcing a stark reassessment of its foreign policy calculus. The Kremlin must swiftly weigh the substantial risks of isolation against the equally damaging possibility of losing a vital strategic partner. Trump's aggressive push against Iran not only threatens regional stability but also directly challenges Moscow's capacity to navigate a complex geopolitical landscape.

The weeks ahead promise intense diplomatic maneuvering and strategic recalibrations in Moscow, Tehran, and Washington. Trump's uncompromising stance places global stability at stake, forcing Russia into uncomfortable and potentially dangerous geopolitical decisions. As the deadline looms, the world watches anxiously to see how Moscow will navigate this latest American gamble a decision destined to shape Russia's future and the very balance of power across the Middle East and beyond.

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





# VEILS OF DIVISION

**WAJEEHA NAJAM**

One of the most damaging effects of Islamophobia is the reinforcement of binary divisions, casting Muslims as the "other" and non-Muslims as the normative group. This narrative is perpetuated by media portrayals, political rhetoric, and policies that associate Islam with extremism. A 2021 report by the Pew Research Center found that 52% of Americans believe Islam is incompatible with democratic values, reflecting widespread misconceptions.

Such narratives lead to the marginalization of Muslim communities, where individuals are viewed with suspicion, resulting in social exclusion. The erosion of social cohesion is another consequence, as distrust between communities grows, making integration harder. In Europe, for instance, a 2017 survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) revealed that 39% of Muslims experienced discrimination in the past year, with many avoiding public spaces

due to fear of harassment.

Muslims also encounter significant barriers in freely practicing their faith. Attacks on mosques and Islamic centers are common in Western countries. In the U.S., the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) documented over 500 anti-mosque incidents between 2014 and 2021, including vandalism, arson, and protests against mosque constructions. Muslim women who wear the hijab or niqab face workplace discrimination and public hostility.

In France, where the hijab is banned in public schools and government buildings, a 2019 study by the French National Human Rights Commission found that 60% of Muslim women wearing religious attire reported being verbally or physically assaulted. Media and political rhetoric further intensify these issues by consistently associating Muslims with terrorism. A 2020 study by the University of Cambridge analyzed news coverage and



People hold up a banner during a 'Unity Vigil' against racism and Islamophobia (FILE PHOTO)



**Demonstrators wearing hijab protest against the bill on separatism in Paris (FILE PHOTO)**

found that 78% of stories involving Muslims linked them to extremism, reinforcing negative stereotypes.

Globally, Islamophobia is not confined to the West. In countries like India, Muslims face increasing marginalization, fueled by nationalist rhetoric and policies that discriminate against them. Reports of lynchings and social boycotts have surged in recent years, as anti-Muslim sentiment becomes more pronounced. Similarly, in China, the government's treatment of Uighur Muslims has drawn international condemnation, with widespread reports of detention camps and cultural erasure. These examples highlight that Islamophobia is a global issue, manifesting in various forms and affecting communities worldwide.

Refugees from Muslim-majority countries are particularly stigmatized, often portrayed as security threats or cultural invaders. Despite fleeing war and persecution, they are met with hostility and restrictive immigration policies. In the U.S., the Trump administration's "Muslim ban" (2017) suspended entry from several Muslim-majority nations, citing terrorism

concerns, despite data showing that the likelihood of being killed by a foreign-born terrorist in the U.S. is 1 in 3.6 million per year.

Similarly, in Europe, far-right parties have capitalized on anti-refugee sentiment, with figures like Marine Le Pen in France and Matteo Salvini in Italy framing Muslim migration as an existential threat. Yet, research by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) shows that refugees contribute positively to host economies, with many filling labor shortages in critical sectors.

Moreover, it is essential to recognize the positive contributions of Muslim communities to society. From advancements in science and technology to significant cultural and artistic achievements, Muslims have played a crucial role in shaping various aspects of modern civilization. For instance, during the Golden Age of Islam, scholars like Al-Khwarizmi and Avicenna (Ibn Sina) made groundbreaking contributions to mathematics and medicine, respectively.

Today, Muslim individuals and organizations continue to impact their communities through charitable work, education, and cultural enrichment. Highlighting these contributions not only counters negative stereotypes but also fosters a more inclusive narrative that recognizes the



**Graffiti defaces a mosque at the Islamic Centre of America in Dearborn, Mich**



value of diversity in our societies.

In terms of international law, several frameworks exist that aim to protect the rights of religious minorities, including Muslims. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) affirms the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, mandating that individuals can practice their faith without fear of persecution.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) further reinforces these rights, emphasizing that everyone shall have the right to manifest their religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching. However, these protections are often undermined by state policies and societal attitudes that foster Islamophobia, highlighting a significant gap between international legal standards and actual practices.

Moreover, the United Nations has established specific mechanisms to address discrimination and promote tolerance. The UN's Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001) calls for a comprehensive approach to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, explicitly mentioning the need to address anti-Muslim sentiments. Yet, the effectiveness of these initiatives depends

largely on member states' commitment to implementing and enforcing these principles domestically.

Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" (1996) provides one theoretical framework for understanding Islamophobia. He argued that post-Cold War conflicts would stem from cultural and religious differences, particularly between Islam and the West. Huntington claimed that Islamic revivalism posed a challenge to Western secular-democratic values, portraying Muslim societies as inherently oppositional. He cited conflicts in the Balkans, Chechnya, and Kashmir as evidence of civilizational clashes.

However, critics argue that Huntington's theory oversimplifies complex geopolitical struggles by reducing them to religious binaries. For example, the war in Bosnia was not purely a religious conflict but also involved nationalism and territorial disputes. By framing Islam as an existential threat, Huntington's thesis has been used to justify military interventions and discriminatory policies, fueling Islamophobia rather than explaining it.

Deepa Kumar (2012) offers a more critical perspective, arguing that Islamophobia is not merely racism but a deliberate political strategy. She highlights how the U.S. and its allies use anti-Muslim rhetoric to legitimize wars, such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, and to expand surveillance programs like the Patriot Act. Domestically, this has led to the erosion of civil liberties, with Muslims facing disproportionate policing and profiling. Kumar points to the manufacturing of fear through media and political discourse, where terms like "radical Islamic terrorism" create a false narrative that justifies repression.

A 2018 report by the Brennan Center for Justice found that U.S. counterterrorism laws



**Memorial of the fifty killed people in shootings at two Mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand**



overwhelmingly targeted Muslim communities, despite right-wing extremism accounting for a larger share of domestic terror attacks. This selective enforcement reveals how Islamophobia serves elite interests, maintaining control while suppressing dissent.

The consequences of Islamophobia are far-reaching. One of the most alarming effects is the potential for violent extremism on both sides. Islamophobic policies and rhetoric can radicalize marginalized Muslims, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy where alienation breeds extremism. At the same time, far-right groups exploit anti-Muslim sentiments, leading to hate crimes like the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand, where 51 Muslims were killed. The shooter cited anti-Muslim conspiracy theories in his manifesto, illustrating how extremist ideologies feed off Islamophobic discourse.

Another consequence is the erosion of democratic values. Surveillance laws, such as the UK's "Prevent" strategy, disproportionately target Muslims, undermining privacy and freedom of speech. A 2019 study by the Open Society Justice Initiative found that 80% of referrals under Prevent involved Muslims, many of whom had no links to terrorism. Such measures normalize authoritarianism, affecting all citizens.

Muslims also suffer significant psychological and social harm due to Islamophobia. Chronic discrimination leads to mental health struggles, including anxiety, depression, and trauma. A 2020 study in the *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* found that 45% of Muslim Americans reported symptoms of depression linked to discrimination. Many also engage in self-censorship, hiding their religious identity to avoid backlash. Economic disadvantages further compound these issues,

with employment discrimination limiting career opportunities. A 2021 report by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) showed that Muslims filed 40% more workplace discrimination complaints in the U.S. compared to other religious groups.

Countering Islamophobia requires a multi-faceted approach. Education and media reform are crucial. Schools should incorporate accurate histories of Islam and Muslim contributions to civilization, countering stereotypes from an early age. Media outlets must avoid sensationalism and diversify Muslim representation, moving beyond the narrow focus on terrorism. Legal and policy



**A scene in Khargone, India where buildings were demolished in mostly Muslim neighborhoods in the wake of violent clashes  
(FILE PHOTO)**

measures are also essential. Strengthening anti-discrimination laws and ensuring their enforcement can help combat hate crimes and workplace bias. Refugee support programs, such as language classes and community initiatives, can foster integration and reduce xenophobia. Finally, interfaith and cross-cultural dialogue is vital. Encouraging interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims helps dismantle stereotypes, while solidarity movements can challenge Islamophobic rhetoric in public discourse.

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

**HAMZA NASIR**

# BALUCHISTAN'S HEALTH CRISIS, COSTLY NEGLECT



**A out view of the Emergency Department of Civil Hospital, Quetta**

Baluchistan, particularly its capital Quetta has long suffered from a severely inadequate healthcare system. Despite being the largest province of Pakistan in terms of land area its medical infrastructure remains underdeveloped. The residents of Quetta face challenges ranging from expensive treatments to a lack of basic medical facilities forcing many patients to seek treatment in other cities like Karachi and Islamabad. This crisis is not just a matter of inconvenience but one that has been costing lives for years.

One of the biggest concerns in Quetta's healthcare system is the unaffordability of medical treatment. The high costs associated with even minor procedures make healthcare inaccessible to a significant portion of the population. The government introduced health cards to alleviate some of these financial burdens. Their implementation remains ineffective due to bureaucratic hurdles, lack of awareness and limited

facilities where these cards are accepted. As a result, patients continue to struggle with costly medical bills pushing many families into financial crisis. Another pressing issue is the lack of professional and well-trained doctors. Many hospitals and clinics in Quetta employ underqualified practitioners leading to misdiagnoses and improper treatments. The absence of advanced medical technology further worsens the situation. For instance, essential medical procedures such as dialysis, MRI scans, and even minor surgeries are performed using outdated and often malfunctioning equipment. Patients who require consistent and advanced medical care are left with no choice but to travel to other cities bearing additional costs for transportation and accommodation.

The unavailability of basic medical facilities is another critical concern. Hospitals frequently run out of essential medicines, and in many cases, patients are asked to arrange medicines and equipment on their own. The shortage of life-saving drugs and modern medical machines not only delays treatment but also leads to unnecessary suffering and deaths. For patients suffering from chronic illnesses, this situation is particularly dire.

Personal experience underscores this alarming state of healthcare in Quetta. My own uncle suffered from kidney failure five years ago requiring multiple dialysis procedures. He underwent regular dialysis at

the Kidney Center in Quetta yet his condition continued to deteriorate. It was only when he sought treatment in Karachi that he realized the procedures in Quetta were either incomplete or ineffective due to outdated and poorly functioning dialysis machines. The doctors in Karachi confirmed that the treatments he received in Quetta were inadequate and failed to meet medical standards. Within days of undergoing dialysis in Karachi, he felt significantly better highlighting the stark contrast in medical care between the two cities. Dialysis is a life-saving procedure for patients with kidney failure requiring them to undergo treatment once, twice, or even thrice a week to alleviate severe pain. In Quetta, this crucial procedure is fraught with risks due to obsolete machines and insufficient medical expertise.

It is no surprise that patients in Quetta fear seeking medical attention even for minor ailments. The lack of trust in the local healthcare system has forced people to endure long and costly journeys for treatments that should be readily available in their own city. This reality not only burdens the patients but also reflects the government's failure to prioritize healthcare in the region.

According to a report by UNICEF, Quetta city has 63 public health facilities serving a population of approximately 1.01 million, with 20% of Union Councils lacking any public



**Citizens buy medicine from the pharmacy, adjacent to Government Hospital, Quetta**

health facilities. A study highlighted that 88.8% of patients in Quetta found the cost of medicines to be high emphasizing the financial barriers to healthcare access. These statistics underscore the critical need for comprehensive healthcare reforms in the region.

Urgent reforms are necessary to address the healthcare crisis in Quetta, Balochistan. The government must prioritize upgrading hospitals with modern medical equipment and ensure the availability of essential medicines. Life-saving procedures like dialysis should be performed with state-of-the-art machines and healthcare providers must be trained to handle a range of medical issues through better medical education programs. The health card system should be expanded effectively implemented and made more accessible by removing bureaucratic hurdles and increasing awareness. Hospitals in Quetta must maintain a reliable supply of essential medicines and equipment with streamlined distribution. The people of Quetta deserve competent medical care and affordable treatments, and the government must take responsibility and act before more lives are lost due to neglect.

The author is a graduate of Economics from BUIEMS and a Librarian at BTTN.



**The children's ward in Civil Hospital, Quetta**





# PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY AMID GLOBAL TENSIONS

## A STRATEGIC BALANCING ACT.

**KANWAR KHALID ALI KHAN**

Pakistan's foreign policy faces the daunting challenge of navigating turbulent global waters in a world increasingly defined by geopolitical fragmentation, trade wars, and realignments. Positioned at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, Pakistan must balance its historical ties with the United States, its deepening economic reliance on China, and its evolving relations with Russia all while managing regional security concerns, including India's rising influence and Afghanistan's uncertain trajectory.

With the global order shifting away from unipolar dominance to multipolar competition, Pakistan's foreign policy must be both pragmatic and adaptable. Let us explore how Pakistan is recalibrating its diplomatic and economic strategies amid global tensions, assessing the impact of U.S.-China trade wars, the BRICS challenge to Western hegemony, and the emerging fault lines in great power politics.

### THE U.S.-CHINA TRADE WAR AND ITS RIPPLE EFFECTS

The escalating trade war between the United States and China is not merely a contest over tariffs but a broader struggle for technological and economic supremacy. Washington's efforts to contain China's rise through economic restrictions, supply chain decoupling, and geopolitical pressure have intensified in recent years.



**The new long march trade war between China and the United States is likely to begin**

For Pakistan, this confrontation presents both risks and opportunities. As a key partner in China's Belt and Road Initiative Pakistan has heavily invested in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has transformed its infrastructure landscape. However, this alignment also exposes Islamabad to American skepticism. The U.S. has repeatedly expressed concerns over CPEC's debt sustainability and China's growing economic footprint in Pakistan, signaling potential consequences for Pakistan's access to Western financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank.

Yet, Pakistan cannot afford to alienate the U.S., given its reliance on trade, remittances from the Pakistani diaspora in North America, and security cooperation. The challenge, therefore, lies in maintaining economic ties with China without provoking punitive actions from Washington.

## PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT WITH RUSSIA

Historically, Pakistan and Russia stood on opposite sides during the Cold War, with Islamabad firmly aligned with Washington against Soviet influence in Afghanistan. However, in recent years, a thaw in relations has been evident. Moscow has supplied Pakistan with military hardware, conducted joint military drills, and engaged in energy cooperation discussions.

The Russia-Ukraine war has further complicated the global landscape, triggering Western sanctions and a European energy crisis. While Pakistan has sought discounted Russian oil amid rising inflation and an energy crunch, it has had to tread carefully to avoid antagonizing the U.S. and European partners.

Pakistan's recent import of Russian crude, facilitated through China, suggests a growing willingness to diversify energy sources. However, Islamabad must balance this pragmatic engagement with the geopolitical realities of Western sanctions and its traditional reliance on Gulf states for energy security.

## INDIA'S STRATEGIC CALCULATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

India's foreign policy under Narendra Modi has pursued a delicate balancing act between global powers, strengthening ties with the U.S. while maintaining historical relations with Russia. The U.S. sees India as a crucial counterweight to China, reflected in its inclusion in the Quad alliance alongside Japan and Australia. Simultaneously, India continues to import Russian oil and military hardware, demonstrating strategic autonomy.

For Pakistan, India's growing proximity to Washington and its defense pacts with the U.S. pose security concerns, particularly in terms of military modernization and intelligence



China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

cooperation. Additionally, India's aggressive posturing in Kashmir and along the Line of Control complicates regional stability.

However, Pakistan has an opportunity to leverage its own geopolitical position. As the West looks to counterbalance China, Islamabad could position itself as a mediator in regional conflicts, ensuring that its interests are not entirely overshadowed by the U.S.-India partnership.

## PAKISTAN AND THE BRICS CHALLENGE TO WESTERN DOMINANCE

The expansion of BRICS as an alternative to Western-led financial institutions signals a shift in global economic governance. China and Russia have been particularly vocal about reducing dependence on the U.S. dollar, advocating for trade in local currencies and alternative financial mechanisms.

Pakistan, facing recurring economic crises, could benefit from closer ties with BRICS nations. However, its delicate position balancing relationships with both BRICS members and Western financial institutions requires careful diplomacy. The recent proposal for trade settlements in Chinese yuan, particularly for energy imports from Russia and Iran, underscores Islamabad's gradual pivot away from dollar dependence.



Yet, Pakistan's inclusion in BRICS remains a distant prospect, given India's resistance and the bloc's cautious expansion strategy. Nevertheless, Islamabad can enhance trade and investment cooperation with BRICS economies to mitigate economic vulnerabilities.

### THE AFGHAN FACTOR BEING A PERSISTENT CHALLENGE

The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan has added another layer of complexity to Pakistan's foreign policy. While Islamabad initially welcomed the U.S. withdrawal, the evolving security situation marked by cross-border terrorism and economic instability has strained relations.

Washington's freezing of Afghan assets and reluctance to engage with the Taliban regime has left Pakistan in a difficult position. On one hand, Islamabad cannot afford an unstable Afghanistan, as it directly impacts security along the western border. On the other hand, aligning too closely with the Taliban risks alienating Western allies.

Pakistan's approach has been to advocate for humanitarian aid and engagement with Kabul while ensuring its own national security interests are protected. However, the rise of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and growing U.S. skepticism over Pakistan's role in counterterrorism efforts present ongoing diplomatic challenges.

### PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY: WALKING THE TIGHTROPE

With an economy in distress, Pakistan's foreign policy must also be guided by economic imperatives. The country's repeated IMF bailouts, high external debt, and currency volatility underscore the need for diversified trade and investment partnerships.

China remains Pakistan's largest investor, but Islamabad must also explore new markets in the Gulf, Southeast Asia, and Africa. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have provided financial lifelines, but Pakistan must offer long-term economic incentives beyond temporary deposits in its central bank. Additionally, the European Union remains a vital trading partner, with Pakistan benefiting from the Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP+). Maintaining favorable trade terms requires diplomatic finesse, particularly amid Western concerns over human rights and governance issues.

### THE ROAD AHEAD

Pakistan's foreign policy in the emerging global order requires a nuanced and multi-vector approach. The era of binary alliances is over; Islamabad must engage with all major powers without becoming overly dependent on any single bloc. The key to Pakistan's success lies in economic resilience, diplomatic agility, and strategic foresight. Strengthening regional connectivity through trade corridors, investing in self-sufficiency, and maintaining a balanced security posture will be critical in navigating the uncertainties of the 21st century. As global tensions escalate, Pakistan's ability to adapt will determine whether it emerges as a stabilizing force or remains a pawn in great power rivalries. The choices made today will shape its geopolitical standing for decades to come.





# UN DECLARES 2025 THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF GLACIER'S PRESERVATION

## SUPARCO LEADS PAKISTAN'S EFFORTS IN GLACIER MONITORING

**MARYA TARIQ**

As glaciers around the world continue to melt at an alarming pace due to climate change, the urgency for global action has never been greater. In response to this growing environmental crisis, the United Nations has officially declared 2025 as the "International Year of Glacier's Preservation" and designated Mar 21 as the World Day for Glaciers, to be observed annually from 2025 onward. Pakistan, home to a vast network of glaciers within the Hindukush-Karakoram-Himalayan (HKH) region, plays a pivotal role in this global conservation narrative. Often referred to as the "Third Pole", the HKH region holds more than 6,500 glaciers, spanning approximately 13,000 square kilometers. These icy giants are essential to sustaining the Indus River System, which forms the backbone of Pakistan's agriculture, drinking water supply, and hydropower generation.

In response to the mounting threats posed by climate change, SUPARCO, the National Space Agency of Pakistan, has taken significant steps to monitor and preserve these vital natural resources. Establishing a dedicated Glacier Monitoring and Research Center in Gilgit-Baltistan, SUPARCO is actively engaged in studying glacier surges, retreats, snow melts, and the dangerous phenomenon of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs). These efforts are a key part of Pakistan's broader climate resilience strategy. A groundbreaking achievement by SUPARCO is



the development of the first-ever digital "Glacier Inventory of Pakistan," which catalogs all known glaciers along with their essential physical parameters. This inventory serves as a crucial resource for scientists, policymakers, and environmentalists in understanding glacial behavior and planning appropriate responses. By utilizing advanced space technologies, SUPARCO is enhancing Pakistan's capacity to monitor changes in glacier health, ice cover, and climate-related impacts. Satellite imagery analysis some dating as far back as 1972 is combined with ground-based research, including ice core sampling, glacier mass balance studies, and field assessments. These integrated techniques provide critical insights into the evolving dynamics of Pakistan's glacial systems and their influence on water availability and climate adaptation. Further strengthening its global scientific footprint, Pakistan through SUPARCO is also an active participant in the International Ice Memory Project.

Continued on page 48



# EDUCATION AND MODERN TECHNOLOGY

## WHERE DOES PAKISTAN'S EDUCATION SYSTEM STAND?

**ZAHEER YOUSUFZAY**

It's no secret that education is the backbone of a nation's progress. Especially, in today's rapidly changing world, only those countries are moving forward that have embraced modern technology in their education systems. Concepts like artificial intelligence, e-learning, virtual classrooms, and creative teaching methods are not just trends anymore they are becoming essential tools for learning across the globe. Around the world, these methods are transforming how students absorb knowledge and how teachers deliver it. As Pakistanis, the real question we must ask ourselves is: Where does Pakistan stand in this global shift? Are we adapting, or are we falling behind? In many developed countries, the transformation of education has already taken place. Nations like Finland, Singapore, China, and South Korea have invested heavily in digital learning, integrating smart classrooms and AI-based systems into their schools. These countries are seeing real

results stronger student performance, more inclusive education, and faster adaptation to modern challenges. Meanwhile, Pakistan's education system remains stuck in traditional methods, burdened by a lack of resources, outdated curricula, and slow policy response.

The gap becomes clearer when we compare the numbers. Where developed countries spend 4 to 7 percent of their GDP on education, Pakistan spends just 1.7 percent. This limited investment has led to 23 million children remaining out of school a crisis that demands immediate attention. Around the world, over 80% of schools now use some form of digital technology. In contrast, about 70% of public schools in Pakistan don't even have basic IT facilities. Internet access, which is essential for online education, is still a luxury in many rural parts of Pakistan, leaving students disconnected from the modern world. Pakistan's education system is spread across four distinct streams: government schools, private schools, Cambridge system schools (O & A Levels), and religious madrasas. Among these, government schools serve the majority of the population, yet they continue to struggle with chronic underfunding, poor teacher training, and outdated teaching materials, which greatly affect the quality of learning.

Private schools, though known for delivering better academic outcomes, remain financially out of reach for many Pakistani families. Cambridge system schools, offering



**Boys attend a class at a school in Swat**

O and A Levels, are limited to urban elite circles and add to the growing educational divide. Meanwhile, madrasas play a vital role in religious education, but the lack of integration with modern science and technology subjects leaves their students at a disadvantage when it comes to career development and broader participation in the national economy. Several barriers continue to block Pakistan's path to digital education. The lack of electricity and internet in remote areas makes online learning difficult. Most teachers are not trained in using modern teaching tools, and many students can't afford the devices needed for digital learning. Slow curriculum updates and the absence of digital awareness among parents and students further slowdown progress. These are not just technical problems they reflect a deeper lack of planning, vision, and political will.

To truly move forward, policy makers must rethink their priorities. First and foremost, the education budget must be increased to at least 4 or 5 percent of GDP. Teachers must be trained regularly in digital skills so they can engage students using modern methods. The government should invest in creating free

internet zones and provide affordable tablets and laptops to students from low-income backgrounds. Collaboration with the private sector can also help speed up the introduction of new technologies in classrooms. But beyond infrastructure, what's most needed is a shift in mindset. Our curriculum should reflect the needs of today's world, with a strong focus on science, technology, engineering, and digital literacy. Awareness campaigns must be launched to inform parents and students about the benefits of online learning and how to use it effectively. And above all, research and development in the field of education must be supported so that Pakistan can find homegrown solutions for its unique challenges. Pakistan has all the potential to rise in the field of education. Our students are capable, our teachers are passionate, and our youth are eager to learn. What we need now is a clear and honest commitment to change. If we embrace modern technology today, we can build an education system that not only meets global standards but also prepares our future generations to lead in the digital world.

**The author is an educationist and a member of team RFI.**

Continued from page 46

## UN DECLARES 2025

This ambitious initiative aims to preserve glacial ice samples in Antarctica, safeguarding them for future generations of researchers. With glaciers melting faster than ever, this project ensures that invaluable climatic and environmental data will remain accessible for centuries, enabling deeper understanding of Earth's long-term climate patterns. SUPARCO's efforts extend beyond research and data collection; the agency remains deeply committed to public awareness and scientific collaboration. By

sharing knowledge and expertise, SUPARCO supports both national and international efforts to mitigate the growing risks of water scarcity and glacial hazards in Pakistan.

As the world prepares to observe the International Year of Glacier's Preservation in 2025, SUPARCO stands at the forefront of Pakistan's commitment to environmental stewardship. Through innovation, research, and strategic partnerships, it is helping to protect the country's vital glacial resources ensuring a more sustainable and resilient future for generations to come.

**The author is Manager Outreach and Awareness at SUPARCO.**



عيد الفطر  
Eid al-Fitr  
MUBARAK

2025



Interaction



ماہنامہ زاویہ نگاہ

**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

www.rfipakistan.com

You Tube Channel

<http://www.youtube.com/@RFIofficial>