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EDITORIAL

PAHALGAM'S BLOODSHED AND A FAMILIAR PLAYBOOK



The Pahalgam terrorist attack began around 3 pm on April 22, 2025 in Indian Occupied Kashmir that left 26 peoples dead (CCTV footage)

On April 22, gunmen unleashed carnage on a group of tourists in the scenic town of Pahalgam, Indian Occupied Kashmir a terror attack that left 26 people dead. As shock and grief gave way to questions, India's government hurried to blame Pakistan, painting the incident as cross-border terrorism. But the facts and timing tell a different story. Pakistan's leadership strongly rejected India's narrative, with Defence authorities openly suggesting that this atrocity was a false flag operation engineered by New Delhi.

Indeed, a closer dissection of the Pahalgam incident reveals a cynical pattern strikingly similar to the Pulwama episode of 2019, suggesting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government may once again be exploiting bloodshed for political gain, this

time eyeing the upcoming Bihar elections. The stage appears set for another manufactured crisis to whip up nationalist fervor, and Pakistan is calling it out in no uncertain terms. The strange thing is that the Pulwama and Uri attacks, and this time, the Pahalgam attack took place during the Modi or the BJP government. It can easily be concluded that the BJP kills its citizens just to win the election.

The attack in Pahalgam was horrifying in its brutality and deeply embarrassing for Indian security forces. Four to six militants in camouflage infiltrated a tourist spot in broad daylight, and gunned down 26 unarmed civilians, mostly Hindu tourists, at close range. This massacre, the deadliest in Indian-occupied Kashmir in over two decades, represents a colossal security failure by Indian authorities, despite its history of attacks since 1993.

Even last year, 10 people were killed in this or a nearby locality. Thus, voices within India have pointed fingers at their own government's lapses. Opposition figures slammed the security lapse and police failure that allowed the Pahalgam carnage. Notably, Prime Minister Modi skipped an all-party security meeting on the incident, choosing instead to continue campaigning in Bihar. This blatant prioritization of politics over national security underscores the Modi government's negligence.

The Pahalgam incident reeks of a staged drama timed for political dividends. The attack was a false flag operation orchestrated by the

Modi regime. The context cannot be ignored: Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is desperate to sway voters in Bihar state, a key state heading into elections. Rallying public anger against Pakistan is a well-tested BJP tactic whenever facing electoral challenges. We saw this script in February 2019, when the Pulwama incident occurred shortly before the elections. Revelations by former Kashmiri governor Satya Pal Malik exposed that Pulwama was enabled by severe security lapses intentionally overlooked by the Modi administration to inflame nationalist sentiments for electoral benefit. That playbook seems to be in use again. The timing of the Pahalgam attack and Modi's eagerness to leverage it on the Bihar campaign trail raise red flags, suggesting a manufactured incident a bloody spectacle choreographed to stoke nationalist fervor and distract from domestic woes.

One puzzling aspect of the Pahalgam attack is the weaponry used a clue suggesting a deeper conspiracy. Indian investigators acknowledge that the assailants at Pahalgam were armed with American-made M4 carbine rifles, alongside AK-47s. This mirrors the March attack on Pakistan's Jaffar Express train, where insurgents used similar U.S.-origin assault rifles traced back to stockpiles left behind by American forces in Afghanistan. The presence of identical American rifles in both the Pahalgam and Jaffar Express attacks is too significant to dismiss as a coincidence. It suggests a deeper, possibly coordinated conspiracy intended to destabilize Pakistan, undermining India's simplistic accusations of Pakistani involvement.

A student of political science could not rule out the possibility that a third party, like Israel or any other, may also be involved in selling military hardware or diverting attention or keeping Pakistan busy with India, not to play



Moment when militants attacked and hijacked Jaffar Express

any role in international affairs or developing its economy in the cover of Modi's help to win election in the state of Bihar of India.

Pakistan responded swiftly and resolutely. Refusing to be provoked by India's accusations, Islamabad immediately alerted its defenses. Within hours, Pakistan's armed forces mobilized, securing forward positions, and strategic missile units were prepared. The National Security Committee (NSC), chaired by Pakistan's Prime Minister, decided on a measured yet firm response. All branches of Pakistan's military demonstrated heightened readiness, signalling that any attempted misadventure across the Line of Control would meet a formidable response. The NSC's message was clear: Pakistan remains fully capable and prepared to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity against misadventure.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect is Modi's willingness to sacrifice his citizens' lives for political theatre. All the evidence strongly confirms that the Pahalgam incident was indeed orchestrated internally, and Indian planners chose innocent civilians, callously permitting mass murder to fabricate a crisis. This mirrors Pulwama, where Indian personnel died due to deliberately overlooked



Pakistan National Security Committee (NSC) meeting on April 24, 2025 to address Post-Pahalgam attack, situation

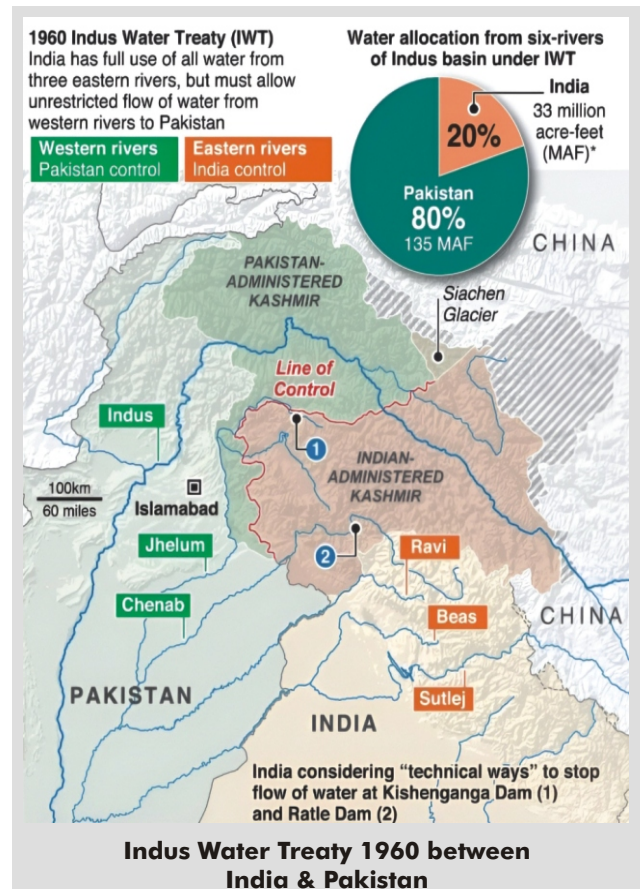
intelligence and security protocols. Such actions represent a horrifying betrayal of public trust, weaponising citizens' blood for electoral gains.

India's claims against Pakistan ring hollow, given New Delhi's documented role in terrorism against Pakistan. Islamabad has repeatedly exposed India's sponsorship of terror groups operating within Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan. The arrest and confessions of Kulbhushan Jadhav unveiled extensive Indian involvement in orchestrating sabotage and violence inside Pakistan. Moreover, India's systemic oppression and state terrorism in occupied Kashmir marked by human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, and widespread torture further undermine India's credibility on issues of terrorism.

Following Pahalgam, India dangerously escalated tensions by suspending the Indus Waters Treaty, a reckless move threatening regional stability. Pakistan has responded decisively, warning that violations would invalidate the Simla Accord and all bilateral agreements. Islamabad has emphasized that choking Pakistan's water supply constitutes an act of war, necessitating a robust response. With superior nuclear capabilities and proven

military readiness, Pakistan's warnings to India are explicit: any misadventure will have catastrophic consequences. It is to be noted that in the Indus Water Treaty, there is no clause that any country can unilaterally abolish any clause or the treaty itself.

India's narrative around the Pahalgam attack collapses under scrutiny. It appears to be a reckless false flag provocation designed to further Modi's political agenda. Pakistan's response has been measured yet firm, highlighting India's provocations and reaffirming Islamabad's commitment to peace, but not at the expense of security. India's government must cease this dangerous game or risk devastating consequences. Pakistan's restraint should never be mistaken for weakness; Islamabad stands ready to defend itself resolutely against aggression.



PIIA ORGANIZES INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

"SEVENTY YEARS AFTER BANDUNG: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES"

TEAM INTERACTION



The Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA) hosted a two-day international conference titled "Seventy Years after Bandung: The Struggle Continues" on April 26-27, 2025, bringing together scholars, diplomats, and experts from Pakistan and abroad to reflect on the shifting dynamics of global politics.

The conference focused on comparing the world order of the past with the challenges of the present, particularly the issues of global

injustice, the struggle for a fair international economic system, environmental degradation, the impact of modern technologies, and the enduring promises of the post-colonial era.

After the welcome address by Dr. Masuma Hasan, the honorary chairperson of PIIA, the event was formally inaugurated by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, who, in his opening remarks, emphasized the need to revisit and reaffirm the core principles that shaped the



Bandung spirit solidarity, non-alignment, sovereignty, and the collective resistance to colonization.

He expressed deep concerns over the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the continued struggles in India-held Jammu and Kashmir. Senator Sherry Rehman, a senior leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), in her keynote address, underlined the urgent need to prioritize environmental sustainability alongside other global challenges. She emphasized that clean environments, protection of natural resources, and climate justice must be central to any discussions about the future international order.

Throughout the two days, a series of thought-provoking sessions tackled critical themes such as decolonization, the challenges of the Global South, emerging technologies, human rights, environmental degradation, multipolarity, and the quest for global peace. Each session aimed to foster deeper dialogue, propose pathways for cooperation, and develop practical strategies to advance justice, equality, and genuine sovereignty.

By revisiting the Bandung legacy and adapting its spirit to contemporary realities, the PIIA's international conference offered a timely and critical platform for intellectual exchange, aiming to shape a more equitable and peaceful global future.



REMARKS BY

LT GEN (R) KHALID AHMED KIDWAI, NI, HI, HI(M)

**CHAIRING THE SESSION AT PIIA'S
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TITLED**

"70 YEARS AFTER BANDUNG: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES"

NOTE: In celebration of seventy years since the Bandung Conference, the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA) hosted a series of significant sessions, among which "Cutting Edge Technologies" held special prominence. Chaired by Lt Gen (R) Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, Advisor Development National Command Authority (AD NCA), the session featured a distinguished panel comprising Dr. M. Shaheer Waqar, President of 3D Group and AI and Cyber security Consultant; Dr. Hammad Mehmood Cheema, Project Director at the National Chip Design Centre, NUST; and Mr. John Mark Ochieng, Corporate Communications Officer at the Kenya Space Agency. The experts addressed three critical themes: the future impact of artificial intelligence, technological sovereignty, the geopolitical significance of microchips, and the dynamics of cooperation and rivalry in outer space. General Kidwai's comprehensive and highly relevant remarks are presented here in full for the benefit of our readers.

- Ladies and gentlemen. Assalam Alaikum and good afternoon.
- It gives me immense pleasure to chair this parallel session on an important and one of today's most relevant topics, that is, Cutting Edge Technologies. In the world that we live in today, there can be no two opinions on the reality that Technology is King. It has been for many decades of our modern world as we have grown up in, but in recent times, for at least the last one decade or so, cutting-edge technology in almost every sphere of our lives has moved and touched us at a breathtaking pace. In almost all aspects of human endeavor, technological advances, cutting edge technological advances, continue to lead and set trends, even life styles, to which modern life, nations, national policies, are



Lt. Gen (R) Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, NI, HI HI(M)



Panel of the session “Cutting Edge Technologies”

expected to adjust and adopt, or else, lag behind competitors at the risk of losing out with consequences in a variety of fields ranging from multi-dimensional sectors of national security, economic advantages, developmental goals, GDPs, health, education, even travel and leisure, etc, etc. Most of these technologies cannot be confined in straight jackets. These have cross applications in a variety of our everyday lives. While some may be more relevant to civil applications, the same may also be relevant to military applications, and vice versa. Cutting-edge technologies rule the roost in today's world, and nations had better keep abreast.

- Today's session has three eminent speakers and experts in their respective fields. They will dwell on different aspects and areas of cutting-edge technologies and enlighten us in areas of their expertise.

- Dr Shaheer Waqar, President 3D Group, and AI and Cyber Security Consultant,

Islamabad, will be speaking on the Impact of Artificial Intelligence in the Future, even though AI, as we know it and as it unfolds its daily and weekly wonders, has been around for some time. It will take some crystal ball gazing on the part of Dr Waqar to tell us about the impact of AI in the future. With his expertise and wide mastery over the subject, one looks forward to his views with great interest.

- The second speaker is Dr Hammad Mehmood Cheema, Project Director, National Chip Design Centre, National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Islamabad. His topic is Technological Sovereignty: How Microchips Became the New Oil in Geopolitical Rivalries. As a Director of the relevant subject at Pakistan's prestigious University NUST, Dr Hammad is eminently qualified to tell us about the criticality of the wonder technology of microchips, which are the heart and soul of all modern technologies. Indeed, I might venture to say that in many

ways, microchips are central to the ongoing trade war between the US and China because these are at the core of most cutting edge technologies imbedded whether in AI, robotics, cyber warfare, drones, hypersonic missiles, space technologies, communications, energy applications, and in a variety of civil and military applications. No wonder that the sponsors of the conference have considered it apt to refer to microchips as the new oil relevant to technological sovereignty and geo-political rivalries. I am reminded of a slogan that became popular in India sometime in 1994 when fast food chains first appeared on the scene in Indian life with their burgers and French fries, as against the dearth of investments in hardcore technologies. The popular slogan of the protestors coined by the BJP supporters was "Microchips yes, potato chips no". In many ways, the slogan gave a fillip and strength to what is now a very large IT industry in India. Today, for India, microchips are certainly the new oil and facilitate India's technological sovereignty. So I will say to Dr Hammad, microchips, yes, please tell us more about this new oil in geo-political rivalries.

- The third speaker of this session is Mr John Mark Ochieng, Communications Officer, Kenya Space Agency in Nairobi. His topic is "What Cooperation and Rivalry in Outer Space Mean for the Future of Space Exploration". The topic is current and relates to the race for scientific, strategic, and military advantage in outer space by some of the leading space-faring nations of the world. The select group includes Pakistan's closest friend, China, as well as the closest geo-political rival, India, both of which have moved into space by leaps and bounds despite being relatively late starters. Pakistan lagged behind in this area because of a lack of direction and government support, even though Pakistan's space agency,

SUPARCO, was established in 1961, and India's space agency, ISRO, was established in 1969. It was only since 2001, after four wasted decades, when SUPARCO was taken over by the Strategic Plans Division SPD that SUPARCO was put through a rigorous rejuvenation and reorganizing process. It was given clear-cut strategic direction and objectives, and adequate funding to deliver on the objectives. It took time, but resultantly, SUPARCO is today a vibrant organization and has placed a number of Communications and Remote Sensing Satellites in space with the assistance of China. It is now gearing up to send a manned mission to the Chinese Space Lab next year to conduct scientific experiments.

- Ladies and gentlemen. As you can see, the spread between the three speakers and their respective topics on various aspects of cutting-edge technologies, there is a rich blend of some of the most current and relevant technologies that this session will be presenting to you.

- Before I request our speakers to take the floor for their respective topics, I, as the fourth member of the panel, would like to express my thoughts as well on the subject of cutting-edge technologies. Also, because I happen to be the sole military man on this panel, my views would cover the effects of cutting-edge technologies on the military and on warfare as I see these.

- Cutting-edge technologies, or emerging technologies as these are fashionably being referred to nowadays, is a vast spectrum that is not only important but is also simultaneously both current as well as futuristic. Current because some of these technologies have been operationalized and are with us, and futuristic because some others are in the process of being tested and will be

operationalized in due course of time for civil and military applications.

- In principle, I would say that all technologies, including emerging technologies that are employed for military purposes, generate a profound effect on the development of weapons and on war-fighting tactics and strategies. These also include the three technologies that our speakers will be discussing later: Artificial Intelligence, Microchips, and Space technologies. By implication, therefore, the effects so generated impact the maintenance of military and strategic balance between adversaries in a conflict region. And because strategic balance between adversaries is a guarantor of regional peace, as indeed strategic imbalance is an invitation to aggression and breakdown of peace, one can safely conclude that emerging technologies based on cutting edge technologies are directly linked to the preservation of peace between two or more adversaries through the generation of strategic deterrence effects of technologies.

- In the context of our region of South Asia, which is between India and Pakistan, any strategic imbalance induced through the induction of these technologies for military purposes by India would most certainly affect deterrence stability in South Asia. Therefore for Pakistan particularly it is imperative to ensure that it does not allow such strategic imbalances to be induced that will negatively affect the delicate strategic balance that Pakistan has worked so hard to establish through the acquisition of a robust nuclear weapons capability as The Great Equalizer in an operational environment of relative conventional asymmetry in selected areas of conventional forces.

- Some of the emerging technologies have been around for quite some time now, and are

relevant and vital particularly to the security environments of countries like Pakistan which are located in international crush zones and have to bear the brunt of the cross currents of international geo-political power play, east-west, north-south as these play out in our region even as I speak.

- In addition to the interplay of the cross currents of international geo-political power play, Pakistan continues to bear the strategic consequences of the unfinished agenda of the partition of India, with the unresolved conflict over Kashmir with its eastern neighbour. Therefore for Pakistan's national security dynamics, and strategic stability in South Asia, the geopolitical challenges translate into a variety of threat scenarios, ranging from the good old fashioned contact warfare to non-contact warfare like Hybrid war, 5th Generation war, and the evolving notions of national security ranging from the traditional to the non-traditional, all of which must be taken into account by Pakistan's national and strategic planners.

- It will be relevant for me here to mention or anticipate with reference to the latest episode of the killing of 28 people in Pahalgam in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir that both India and Pakistan, while planning their respective operational responses and counter responses for the near future, will take into account the deterrence effects of the respective nuclear arsenals as well as of the operationalized technologies in the respective inventories. Both capabilities will exercise a profound influence on the response options and decision-making available to each side.

- In this complex mix, we can also add the emergence of exotic and new technologies, as these evolve and unfold year after year, not only globally, but more importantly, from

Pakistan's perspective in our region of South Asia. If you have been following closely the two raging wars of our current times, the war in Ukraine, and the one-sided genocidal war in Gaza, and now, recently the melt down in Syria, followed by Israel's relentless bombing out of Syria's residual military capability, many of these technologies along with their novel, lethal, and devastating results, are on full display like a science fiction movie, for us professionals to marvel and take home lessons with relevance to our respective professional assessments, and application where necessary in our own strategic and operational environments, and in our own war preparedness.

- The study of the effects that are being generated by the new and emerging technologies in different domains and from different perspectives can be looked at from two interlinked prisms. One, the role or blend of emerging technologies in comprehensive national security broadly, and two, the strategic effects or implications of emerging technologies on Strategic Stability or Deterrence Stability in South Asia, which, of course, is of immediate and direct concern to us in Pakistan in the aftermath of the Pahalgam Episode. In my opinion, there is an obvious connectivity between the two prisms or perspectives.

- I would also like to take a somewhat philosophical and historical view of the term Emerging Technologies. The term Emerging Technologies, in recent years, has caught the imagination and attention of today's military professionals as something of a new and exotic term of our times. Perhaps because exotic technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), hypersonic weapons, suicide drones, reconnaissance and armed but invisible drones, directed energy weapons, cyber

warfare, robotics, space capabilities, and potential space warfare, etc., conjure up a vision of a Star Wars-like inter-galactic warfare from unknown faraway distances. In this faceless warfare, the adversary can neither be seen nor pinpointed for possible retribution and retaliation.

- A video-game like environment where an anonymous individual, not necessarily our traditional professional soldier, perhaps, for all you know, a hired mercenary, a part time college going kid, sitting in Miami Florida casually playing on a video-screen in a corner of the CENTCOM operations room, who can blow up with mind boggling precision Ayman Al Zawahiri in the balcony of a Kabul apartment.

- Or a faceless cyber space hacking operation which can switch off the electricity grid of a mega city thousands of miles away on a different continent, plunging modern life into chaos and panic besides inflicting massive financial losses.

- Or a few computer whiz kids sitting in an insignificant operations room in Tel Aviv conducting strategically lethal and precision strikes on a wanted adversary like Ismail Haniyeh Shaheed, generating the effects of a decapitating strike.

- Or the recently conducted deadly strikes on Dnipro and other strategically sensitive targets in Ukraine by the Russian hypersonic Oshernik Missiles with speeds of over 10 Machs, which simply cannot be intercepted by any known NATO air defence system.

- The effects generated through some of these technologies therefore include shock and awe, surprise, and destruction far in excess of conventional technologies as we have known them - force multipliers in any way you look. This, ladies and gentlemen, is warfare without a nametag. This is not the

future; this is here and now, as I said, on full display on the international screen of the two current wars; notions of traditional deterrence stability being blown away because of a one-sided acquisition of a capability made possible by emerging technologies, I'll repeat for emphasis, notions of traditional deterrence stability being blown away because of a one-sided acquisition of a capability made possible by emerging technologies; and for added emphasis, please note, one-sided acquisition. It is true for Europe, it is true for Trans-Atlantic, and Trans-Pacific; how then can it not be true for South Asia?

- But before you get too alarmed, let me put things in a philosophical perspective to calm nerves. Of course, we all seem to have latched on to this relatively new term or coinage of emerging technologies with much enthusiasm, awe and novelty as if the development and emergence of technologies before our current era had come to a stop and that it is only of late that technologies have made a breakthrough and started to emerge or re-emerge from hibernation.

- Philosophically speaking, if we look at technologies in a historical perspective, I would like to submit that for ages past, and for that matter for centuries past, technologies and technological developments in any given era, were always dynamic, progressive and generated profound strategic effects on the strategic stability-instability paradigm in that particular era, time, place and region. Of course with each passing decade, or a couple of decades, or a century, the complexity and lethality of technologies certainly became more and more challenging in each era than in the eras past but because science and technology are by their very nature progressive, innovative and a marvel, new technologies did not really stop emerging -

ever. Technologies remain in an unstoppable race to ever-expanding frontiers of excellence, innovation, capabilities, and mysteries. It is impossible to tell where and when these would stop, if ever.

- Today, if we were to look into the future, say ten, twenty or thirty years from now, I would venture to say confidently that the emerging technologies of today which we find so fascinating and absolutely up there in the order of scientific and engineering excellence, and therefore, perhaps creating strategic instabilities, will surely be overtaken by even greater and more and more innovative developmental marvels of technologies; it is in the nature of the beast; science and technology. One might even agree that today's emerging technologies that we are viewing and debating with such awe will probably pale into lesser significance when the scientists of the future would outdo themselves in inventing even more exotic technologies in a couple of years and decades from now.

- But as surely as night follows the day, the flip side constant of the history of military technologies is that strategists, antagonists, scientists and engineers in each era have invariably found antidotes and effective counters to the emerging technologies of their respective times. While many inventions initially developed for civil applications found their way into military applications, the fact is that, in line with Newton's 3rd Law of Motion, for every action there was invariably an equal and opposite reaction. Thus we find in military history that whether it was the then emerging technologies of archery, horse cavalry, artillery, a fighter airplane, a tank, a missile, a submarine, means of communications, lasers, satellites, or even a nuclear weapon, science and technology invariably provided near-simultaneously a counter to the particular

emerging technology of the day. It is also a historical reality that all of these technological developments at different times in history did indeed lead to destabilizing the then prevailing strategic or deterrence stability order for a while, but only up to such time until a counter technology or antidote re-established strategic and deterrence stability.

- What follows from that past historical perspective, therefore, is that the current and upcoming technologies that we today are referring to as cutting edge or emerging technologies would surely soon enough find their counter and antidote through timely scientific human endeavor. It is only a matter of time. Strategic stability, politically and militarily speaking, wherever disturbed, will soon then be re-established. That, in my opinion, is a recorded lesson of history in the interplay of the forces of science and technology and deterrence stability.

- In this context, I would like to briefly give examples from the short history of 75 years in South Asia, that is, India and Pakistan, and recall the strategic effects of the then-emerging technologies on strategic stability in South Asia, which were generated at various times. The inductions in Pakistan's military of the then state of the art technologies in the form of F-86 Sabre jets, the F-104 Star fighters, the varieties of Mirages, MIGs, F-16s, and now in India of the Rafale fighter aircraft, the S-400 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) system, the Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missiles, the various versions of US and Soviet built tanks and artillery, culminating in the development of nuclear weapons in South Asia, confirmed through the conduct of nuclear tests in May 1998.

- Add to this the long inventory of delivery systems comprising of a variety of ballistic and cruise missiles. All of these are examples of

new or emerging technologies that arrived at a certain point in time on the South Asian strategic scene, played their due role in destabilizing the then prevailing strategic stability paradigm in South Asia, for a while, till the other side did catching up, found an antidote of an equal and opposite technology only to restore the disturbed strategic balance sooner rather than later.

- It is only logical therefore to expect that with the availability of ever evolving exotic technologies for the purposes of deterrence, or for furthering military advantage against perceived adversaries, or for fighting wars, strategists and practitioners of war will continue to make adjustments and introduce innovation in deterrence strategies, war fighting techniques, tactics, doctrines, and strategies, what you will.

- As has happened so often in the past, some of the technologies developed for civil applications with the good of humanity at heart will continue to be adopted, wherever possible, to serve the purposes of new types of warfare, kinetic or non-kinetic. The phenomenon also works the other way around, where strategists and practitioners of warfare will continue to demand that a certain type or category of technology be developed by scientists and engineers through focused R&D to meet the ends of strategies. And so the cycle continues. The cooperative and corporate interests of governments, the military-industrial complexes, the military strategists and practitioners, the think tanks, and scientists and engineers of various shades perpetuate a common professional and vested interest.

- I think I will stop here. If there are still some gaps in my presentation, I will be very happy to tackle these in the Q&A session.



REVIVING EQUITABLE DISARMAMENT

SUBSTANCE, SEQUENCE, AND THE CD'S CREDIBILITY

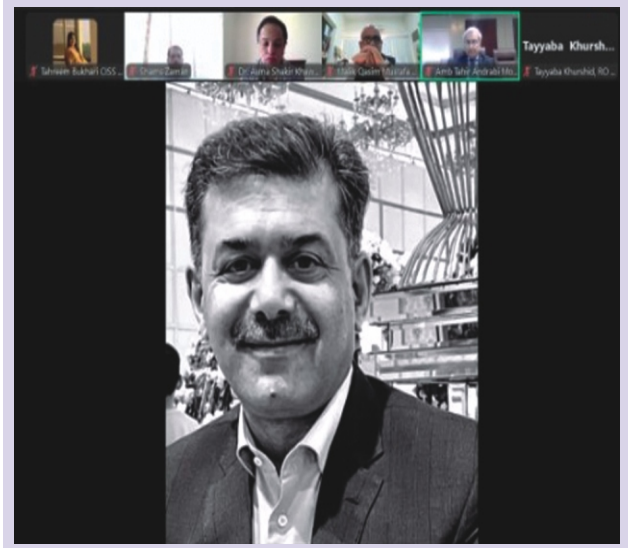
BRIG. (R) ZAHIR UL HAIDER KAZMI

- **NOTE:** On April 21, 2025, the Center for International Strategic Studies AJK organized a hybrid seminar on the theme "Assessing Developments in the Conference on Disarmament (CD): Likely Outcomes & Future Trajectories."
- In the seminar, Brig (R) Dr. Zahir ul Haider Kazmi, Advisor Arms Control, SPD, delivered a key address, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to global nuclear disarmament and emphasizing that it must be universal, verifiable, and non-discriminatory, and must not reinforce global inequalities.
- Due to its strategic relevance, his address is shared here for the interest of readers.

Distinguished colleagues and participants,

Let me thank the Center for International Strategic Studies, AJK, for hosting this timely seminar. Today's session is not only about the Conference on Disarmament (CD) it is about restoring the principle of security for all in a system increasingly defined by selective restraint and strategic privilege. The CD remains the principal multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, but it is jinxed into a logjam. It has not adopted a Program of Work since 2010. The last treaty it negotiated the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is three decades old and has not entered into force. We are witnessing not a procedural delay, but deeper political interests at play.

*While the CD has not formally adopted a Program of Work in over a decade, structured discussions have resumed in recent years through subsidiary bodies. In 2025, the decision to reconvene these with updated mandates was reaffirmed. However, dialogue



without convergence highlights the persistence of structural divisions that have prevented forward movement.* CD was a body built for substance, but has become a treadmill everyone runs, sweats, burns calories without moving an inch forward. This inertia reflects a global order where equity is negotiable, but dominance is non-negotiable.

FRAMING THE AGENDA FROM VISION TO GRIDLOCK

The CD was founded on the vision articulated in UNGA's First Special Session on Disarmament in 1978 (SSOD-I) – a commitment to general and complete disarmament under strict international control, pursued through non-discriminatory, verifiable, and equitable means. Yet today, this vision is buried under the weight of bloc politics, major power competition, and issue selectivity.

Certain states insist on progress on their preferred agenda items – particularly the so-called Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty – while sidestepping legally binding commitments on space weaponization and negative security assurances. This strategic selectivity brings us to disarmament's central paradox: those who demand progress often perpetuate the imbalances that preclude it. It is this contradiction – between rhetorical universality and practical exclusivity – that has brought the CD to its present impasse.

DISARMAMENT EQUITY OR ENTRENCHMENT?

Pakistan remains firmly committed to the objective of global nuclear disarmament – but not on terms that entrench inequality. We believe disarmament must be universal, verifiable, and non-discriminatory. These are not semantic preferences – they are essential preconditions for durable peace. India's unsafe guarded plutonium stockpile alone exceeds 3,000 kilograms, according to Western estimates that tend to understate Indian capabilities. None of it is under IAEA safeguards and it can be converted into at least 500 nuclear bombs – placing India third after the United States and Russia in terms of potential warhead count.

Those advocating an FMCT must ask: Can

a treaty that ignores existing fissile material stockpiles be considered fair or stabilising? Would anyone accept a climate treaty that exempts the world's biggest polluters? An FMCT that exempts accumulated stockpiles is equally unjust. Such a treaty would not be a step toward disarmament, it would be a leap towards strategic hedging.

This is not obstructionism.

Pakistan's principled rejection of an inequitable FMCT is not about blocking progress – it is about preventing a treaty that would codify global asymmetries and cement India's fissile material ascendancy in South Asia. *Those who declared moratoria after accumulating large fissile stockpiles now face no cost. They retain the ability to weaponize these stocks while pressing others to forgo production. Such asymmetry institutionalizes imbalance, not disarmament.* A treaty based on such terms would not be equitable – it would be destabilizing.

And if equity must be explained further: Pakistan maintains only a Full Spectrum Deterrence within confines of Credible Minimum Deterrence framework. We do not pursue ICBMs. Our arsenal is designed to deter existential threats not to project power or seek superiority. Let me also clarify our call for reciprocity. It is not transactional. Reciprocity means comprehensive legal obligations for all – including accounting existing stockpiles, not just future production. *Of all the issues on the CD's agenda, Negative Security Assurances should be the least controversial. They do not require disarmament – only a declaratory commitment by nuclear weapon states not to threaten non-nuclear states. That even this lowest-hanging fruit remains unpicked speaks to the deep asymmetries in the disarmament discourse.* If disarmament is to succeed, it must not erode the security of some to serve the comfort of others.

PAROS SPACE SECURITY OR STRATEGIC MONOPOLY?

Pakistan has consistently advocated for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS), not as a diplomatic slogan, but as a strategic imperative. We are a party to all five UN space treaties, including the Moon Agreement a distinction not shared by many, including India. India's ASAT test in March 2019 generated over 400 pieces of orbital debris in under ten minutes more than several states have across their entire history of peaceful space exploration. The debris has endangered civilian and commercial satellites. India's satellites targeting weapon capabilities even hold the satellites of its allies and partners at risk. India claims strategic autonomy and has not given any commitment not to hit satellites of its current partners.

The American National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Synthetic Aperture Radar Mission (NISAR) collaboration, under the façade of scientific cooperation, enables dual-use space technologies. Coupled with the relaxation of Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) guidelines for India, this integration fuels destabilizing capabilities that go beyond Earth's atmosphere. While Pakistan champions legal equity in space, others pursue dual-use alignments that erode global norms. *Western proposals on responsible space behaviour are narrowly confined to non-binding norms focused only on kinetic-energy direct-ascent ASAT tests.

This approach allows those who already possess such capabilities to retain them, while avoiding legal constraints on non-kinetic or future ASAT developments. It reinforces a division of 'haves' and 'have-nots' in space, limiting technological equity.*

Norms, however well-intentioned, have failed to prevent these trends. Norms didn't stop ASAT tests. Only law can add to possible barriers to war in space. That is why Pakistan supports China and Russia's draft PAROS treaty and continues to co-sponsor the annual UNGA resolution calling for a legally binding instrument. Negotiating a treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space (PPWT) is not just desirable it is overdue.

CD'S RELEVANCE THE COST OF SELECTIVITY

The CD's inability to adopt a Programme of Work since 2010 is not due to lack of dialogue, but due to disproportionate focus on a single agenda item the FMCT while ignoring others like PAROS and Negative Security Assurances (NSAs). The 2009 FMCT push failed because it ignored regional realities. Let's learn from history. Today, emerging technologies AI-enabled weapons, hypersonics, cyber tools, and counter space systems are eroding the remaining boundaries of restraint.

These technologies are not peripheral to disarmament they are transforming the strategic environment in which disarmament must now occur. The CD's agenda should reflect these contemporary realities and incorporate emerging threats such as the military use of AI, autonomous systems, and dual-use satellite networks. These developments are not evenly distributed. They are consolidating in the hands of a few, further skewing global power dynamics and magnifying instability. A disarmament framework that tolerates selective acceleration in one domain while stalling others only accelerates global insecurity.

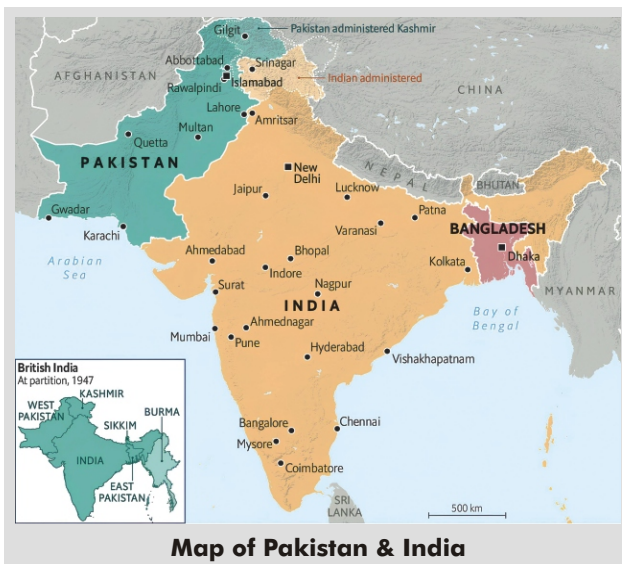
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PAKISTAN - INDIA RELATIONS

A FUTURISTIC APPRAISAL

PROF. DR. TANWEER KHALID



The India-Pakistan relationship is complex, marked by historical tensions rooted in the partition of British India in 1947. These include a longstanding dispute over Kashmir and multiple wars, though there also have been periods of cooperation and attempts at peace. Thus, relations between the two countries are mired in power politics, making the two countries perennial rivals with competing identities and interests. The bloody partition and the hasty departure of the British had left unresolved territorial disputes, mainly Kashmir, Junagadh, and Sir Creek. This violent partition resulted in large-scale migration and communal violence, setting the stage for a strained relationship.

As we look ahead to the prospects of improved if not fully cordial relations, it is

essential to keep in mind the historical, political, and strategic dimensions of the relationship. At the same time, the underlying issues of animosity must remain in focus, as hostility between the two countries stems from political, cultural, social, and economic factors. Kashmir is the main cause of enmity for both India and Pakistan, which is why both countries focus their attention on buying weapons and the latest military technology instead of working for the welfare of their citizens.

Abrogation of Article 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution removed the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. It is an important step of the Indian government to strengthen its control over Jammu and Kashmir, despite the escalation of the conflict with Pakistan. The repeal of this Article has become one of the main events affecting the bilateral relations of India and Pakistan, as well as the standpoint of future development of the whole South Asian region, revolutionizing regional security and politics. Revoking the Article has not only worsened relations but heightened diplomatic tensions, followed by armed conflict on the Line of Control (LoC). Pakistan sees the act as a breach of UN resolutions, while India considers it an internal matter with the intention of developing integrated regional states. The official reason of the Indian government is that the special status of Jammu and Kashmir hampered its development and

incited separation. This narrative was received by Pakistan as outright hostility and portrayed India as aggressive and a violation of UN Security Council resolutions, inciting brutality against the Kashmiri people. Rivalry between the two states was escalated diplomatically and militarily. Pakistan responded by reducing the level of its relations with India, expelling the Indian High Commissioner, and stopping trade relations as well. The incident brought back the focus on the Kashmir dispute on the international level, and Pakistan tried to mobilize support from countries like China, Malaysia, and Turkey, but others like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and European States considered it as India's internal matter. The act led to debates internationally questioning the federation, democracy, and human rights in India, thus putting a new strategic dimension to South Asian affairs, amplifying concerns in an unsteady security environment between the two nuclear powers India and Pakistan. This continued friction in response to disputed developments has not only expanded the lack of trust but also increased the probability of military action in an already unstable region.

The scrapping of Article 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution brought relations between Pakistan and India to the lowest point but there was no global outrage pouring to India's assertion of its foreign policy muscle and successful diplomacy, while Pakistan is left far behind and requires much more efforts for seeking attention at the diplomatic level. February 2019 initiated the Palwama-Balakot crisis and the Indo-Pak ceasefire agreement on the Line of Control (LoC), bringing the two nuclear-armed neighbors perilously close to a catastrophe. The ceasefire agreement brought temporary relief to the civilian population, but its violations (four attempts at



Indian soldiers while patrolling along the LOC

LoC since 2000) indicate no positive development. Rather, the Uri- Palwama-Balakot crisis has set a dangerous precedent of attacking the mainland and posturing for a horizontal escalation. Such actions do not portray better days ahead for both India and Pakistan. Besides the Kashmir problem, strained relations between India and Pakistan have led to issues of terrorism, nuclearization, border disputes, and water disputes. Presently, much depends on the mindset and ideology of the Modi government in India. Since the Modi-led nationalist government has come to power, there has been an increase in communal and religious tensions. The BJP-led government by Narendra Modi is the political offshoot of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) an Indian right-wing Hindu nationalist paramilitary volunteer organization which has an agenda of transforming India by Hindutva, an ideology aiming for the dominance of Hindus. This ideology considers non-Hindus as 'foreign invaders' and 'second-rate citizens'.

The BJP used this ultra-nationalist approach in elections in 2014, 2019, and 2024, and Muslims in India were used as a scapegoat for getting the Hindu vote. The Kashmir conflict became the center of communal tension in the face of the BJP committing to repeal Article 370 and 35A in

their election campaign. Since 2019, the Modi government has systematically and aggressively implemented extremist policies against its Muslim minority. This Article provided the basis for the state's accession to the Indian Union in 1947 but revoking Article 370 and 35A and passing the Citizenship Amendment Act in December 2019 to determine the special privileges of residents of Jammu and Kashmir and allowing non-permanent members to buy properties in the state are affecting the social fabric, provoking extremism in the Indian society and thereby worsening the security situation. Modi's slavish dedication to Hindutva ideology and anti-Muslim rhetoric is worsening India-Pakistan relations.

Constitutionally, India, the most populous democracy, is a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic, but it is yet to be seen whether it remains a secular, pluralistic democratic state or transforms into a Hindu majoritarian autocracy. Modi describes himself as a Hindu nationalist, and his 2019 election victory is polarizing Indian society. Despite the analysis, Modi's populist rhetoric, close ties with India's economic elite, and advocacy of Hindutva account for his unstoppable popularity. He believes in using

brute force against minorities to push them to subservience, lending credence to the idea of 'Indian Fascism'. His approach to Kashmir sees an exponential increase in extrajudicial killings, torture, and custodial deaths accompanied by violence and force. Pakistan and other nations in the region are affected by this extremist mindset of India's populist leaders. Weak states like Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka are aware of this threat and oppose India's assertiveness. Training of Tamil terrorists in the 1980s and aiding insurgencies in Pakistan's Balochistan province are open examples of its brinkmanship. Support for the extremist approach of Indian hardliners like Amit Shah and Subramanyam Jaishankar, who boast of militarily taking back territories from Pakistan, is on the cards. This is to project Modi's strong man image, which resonates well with his support base.

India-Pakistan ties depend on the mood of the policymakers, which is often fluctuating between acrimony and polemics, which could improve or at least manage a bad situation. At the face of it, India's obstinacy in not discussing the Kashmir issue because it was already settled by revoking Article 370 in any future talks with Pakistan means no substantive engagement at this stage because the scrapping of the Article continues to fuel animosity, especially along the Line of Control (LoC). This has led to an increase in ceasefire violations on both sides of the border, taking tensions to the lowest level, resulting in insecurity in the region's security environment. Pakistan's effort to internationalize the Kashmir issue was hampered because most of the Western democracies, including America, Britain, and France, did not fully condemn India but insisted that both sides must sit down for negotiations. India's foreign policy muscle and assertion that revoking the article was an



Clashes erupt in Kashmir as protestors confront Indian security forces following the revocation of Article 370 and 35A

internal matter averted global outrage. But, nevertheless, the approach is crucial for South Asian geopolitics because of India-Pakistan relations coming to the lowest ebb. Pakistan cut off diplomatic relations with India and downgraded its diplomacy by deporting the Indian High Commissioner and asking its own High Commissioner to leave New Delhi. Trade also stopped, but since it was insignificant, there was not much adverse effect. The rigid position on both sides made it harder for diplomacy and made relations freeze over. The attack in Pulwama in February 2024 and the Indian military operation of the air strike in Balakot have led to a worsening of relations within a climate of insecurity. India's successful diplomacy and the sympathy of the US, Russia, and the European States unenhanced in favor of Pakistan. India has increased its economic cooperation with countries that supported its cause and balanced off Pakistan's efforts as 'propaganda'.

All this wedged deeper the structural differences pertaining to the Kashmir issue. Animosity between India and Pakistan has made the search for common solutions even more distant. Abrogation of Article 370 has facilitated more violence and armed force with stricter security in Jammu and Kashmir. Insufficient discourse and cooperation between India and Pakistan and the absence of diplomatic relations have prevented regional interaction and collaboration in broader regional issues, including counter terrorism, economic integration, and development, exposing South Asia to long-term instability and poverty. Abolition of Article 370 has aggravated the public and political stance of both countries. In India, this abrogation is the biggest step towards the completion of integration of Jammu and Kashmir, while to Pakistan, it is a devilish

attempt against the oppressed Kashmiri people, trampling their right to determine their future. The government of Pakistan has turned to the nations of the world, especially those of the Islamic faith, to voice their support, but the world's major economies have not aggressively opposed the Act. This lack of support on the international platform has made diplomacy a lonely affair for Pakistan, to which it must pay focused attention.

Keeping in view foreign policy, it needs to be understood that it is a method by which a state interacts with other states to pursue its interests, and a successful foreign policy can bring economic, political, and strategic gains, which can help a state to raise its stature regionally and even globally. Pakistan has pursued a complex foreign policy since its independence, and its Islamic identity, its disputes with India, and its geostrategic location have played a key role in shaping its foreign policy. Unresolved territorial disputes, mainly Kashmir, Junagadh, and Sir Creek, have proved to be permanent sources of tension between India and Pakistan, which have not only caused wars but also have become the reason for nuclearization of the sub-continent.

The intensity of their hostility can be measured by the fact that, well over seven decades, their relations remain hostile. India's larger size, its military superiority, and



AJK Assembly rejects abrogation of Article 370 by Indian Government



Afghan Taliban's Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaq meets Pakistan's Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir at GHQ, Rawalpindi

occasional claims by Indian leadership to undo the partition of the sub-continent have created a deep sense of insecurity. This fear from India has dominated the mindset of Pakistan's policymakers, leading the country to do a balancing act by seeking support from other powers. Pakistan's geostrategic location has also played a key role in shaping its foreign policy. Located at the juncture of important regions of South, West, and Central Asia with India in the East - the second most populous country, China in the North with the world's largest population, and Afghanistan in its North West, one of the most troubled countries of the world. Former USSR always had close ties with India, but in a sharply divided world politics, Pakistan has now decided to have ties with the communist bloc instead of depending on a few Western sources. Besides, security threats from India have led the military to play a greater role not only in security but in foreign policy as well. In the current context, Pakistan's relations with India remain confrontational. Since India's unilateral revocation of Article 370 and 35A in August 2019, the Kashmir issue has assumed centrality in Pakistan's extra-regional diplomacy. Both countries have also had fierce competition to enhance their respective

influence in Afghanistan. Excluding Taliban rule in Afghanistan, from 1996 to 2001, Afghanistan has largely displayed hostility towards Pakistan. Their hostility flared up when Afghanistan put forward its irredentist claim on Pakistan's territory, in particular KPK and Balochistan, and India extended its wholehearted support to Afghanistan, making it a theatre of proxy war between India and Pakistan. At this stage, we can keep our fingers crossed and wait for the best.

With this historical perspective, prospects of developing India-Pakistan ties are bleak. Recent terrorist acts of hijacking the Jaffer Express in Balochistan, when fingers were pointed out towards India, which has always indulged in espionage activities and supported secessionist elements inside Balochistan and many parts of KPK. Besides, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's podcast that Pakistan is waging a proxy war against India is fuelling the fire to the diplomatic impasse.

Though this is nothing new in the bilateral relations but coming from Narendra Modi at this stage and putting the blame of all that goes wrong in India on Pakistan is shifting the onus and creating obstacles in the resumption of formal talks between the nuclear neighbors. Though low-level diplomatic engagement continues on some issues like renewal of the Kartarpur Corridor agreement, issuance of visas to Sikh pilgrims, and release of stray fishermen in each other's territorial waters, unless the leadership in India shows willingness to come out of the blame game, normalization of the ties remains bleak.

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THE US - CHINA RIVALRY AND THE THUCYDIDES TRAP

NUSRAT MIRZA

Graham Allison, an American intellectual and professor at Harvard University, coined the term "Thucydides' Trap" in a 2012 article in the Financial Times. He later elaborated on this idea in his book *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?*

So, what exactly is this Thucydides' Trap? It is the idea that a war becomes almost inevitable when a rising power threatens to displace an existing great power. The concept comes from the history of the long war between Athens and Sparta, which lasted for 73 years, from 431 BC to 404 BC. In this conflict, Athens was the dominant power of the time, while Sparta was the challenger. Eventually, Sparta, the rising power, defeated Athens.

Thucydides, the man behind this theory, was himself a general from Athens. He belonged to a noble Athenian family and was exiled during the war. While in exile, he wrote the history of that war in a very detailed and scientific manner. He even included the speeches of leaders and generals of that time in his historical account, which made his work unique and valuable.

Graham Allison, born in 1940, used this historical reference to highlight the increasing tensions between the United States and China, especially in the areas of trade, technology, and emerging innovations. He raised the alarm that the growing rivalry could lead to war if not handled wisely. According to him,



The trade war has intensified between United States and China in 2025

there is a 75 to 80 percent chance of war between a rising and an existing superpower. However, he also believes that peace is still possible. The remaining 20 to 25 percent is the space where wisdom, diplomacy, and mutual understanding can prevail. Peace, he says, is not a dream; it is a real and achievable goal if both sides act wisely and with mutual consent. It is clear from history that the deadlock between Greece and Sparta ultimately led to war. And this is not the only case history is full of similar events where a rising power and a dominant power ended up in conflict. However, there have also been examples where war was avoided despite rising tensions.

For instance, Germany and Great Britain did not go to war in the 1890s, even though there was a fierce economic rivalry. Similarly, at the end of the Fifteenth Presidency, tensions between Portugal and Spain rose, but they did

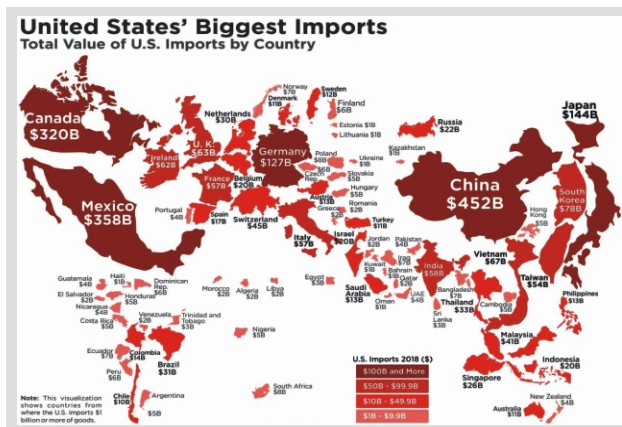
cancelled all planned purchases of Boeing aircraft and has halted further orders. Meanwhile, Donald Trump proudly claims victory in a trade war against Europe and insists that China will soon follow.

But these moves are pushing the world toward the edge. The U.S. president's confrontational path could potentially lead to a global catastrophe a collapse not just of diplomatic ties, but of the planet's stability itself.

On a lighter note, as scientists across the globe are on a mission to discover an Earth-like planet that can sustain human life, there is a growing assumption that Elon Musk, driven by his bold visions of space colonization, may have already found such a planet. Some believe that preparations are quietly underway to relocate the white Americans to this new world. Recent U.S. policies, including the systematic expulsion of Asians and Africans, seem to support this theory. Could it be that these steps are part of a broader plan to ensure that only white Americans are transported to a habitable planet, leaving the rest behind? But this also raises a haunting question: Has the United States built enough spacecraft to carry an entire population to another world? Judging by their increasingly exclusionary policies, I think they already have.

China may face some challenges due to the newly imposed tariffs, but it is expected to continue its efforts to sustain the momentum of its economic growth. Even American thinkers like Graham Allison and Scott Bent have advised that the United States should adopt a path of practical cooperation rather than one of endless hostility.

However, contrary to this wisdom, it appears that the United States is more inclined to push the world into devastating wars in an



attempt to reassert its global dominance. It seems to be operating under a calculated four-point plan.

First, the U.S. aimed to detach Britain from the European Union, thereby weakening European unity and reducing any potential challenge from Europe after dealing with Russia and China, a move that has already been successfully executed.

Second, the plan includes expelling Africans and Asians from within the United States, contributing to rising internal divisions and reinforcing nationalist rhetoric.

Third, it seeks to inflate global prices, which have already been in motion due to the ongoing trade and tariff wars, impacting economies worldwide.

And fourth, the most dangerous element: to provoke multiple wars, such as the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, the increasing tensions between Europe and Russia, and the looming threat of war between India and China.

The ultimate aim appears to be the creation of a world shattered by conflict, hunger, and instability, where the U.S. can once again emerge as a supreme power, standing tall over a war-torn, exhausted, and childless planet.

The author is the Chief Editor of Monthly Interaction.

PNS YAMAMA (274)



**SYED SAMIULLAH**

PNS

YAMAMA (274)



PNS Yamama (274):
A newly inducted Avante 2200 class corvette of the Pakistan Navy, slicing through the waves

A new chapter was added to Pakistan's maritime story in a quiet but meaningful ceremony at Jinnah Naval Base. A sleek, steel-gray vessel, PNS Yamama, now officially part of the Pakistan Navy, stood tall, not as just another warship, but as a symbol of readiness, resilience, and regional responsibility.

For those unfamiliar with the rhythms of naval development, this might sound like routine news. But PNS Yamama isn't just another ship. It represents something larger: how Pakistan is preparing to meet the growing demands of maritime security in a world where oceans have become both highways and battlegrounds.

PNS Yamama (274) is the fourth ship in Pakistan Navy's Yarmook-class Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) program, based on the OPV 2600 design by Damen Shipyards Group and built in Romania at Damen Shipyards

Galati. These vessels aren't designed for show they're built to stay at sea for weeks, monitor vast coastlines, chase down smugglers, rescue sailors in distress, and, if needed, stand their ground in hostile waters.

To answer the question, why does it matter? Let's take a step back. Why would a country like Pakistan already juggling economic pressures, political challenges, and internal security issues invest in warships? Because oceans matter. More than 90% of the world's trade moves by sea. Pakistan's coastline, stretching over 1,000 kilometers along the Arabian Sea, is its gateway to global commerce. Through ports like Gwadar and Karachi, fuel, food, medicine, and raw materials flow in and out of the country. These sea lanes called Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) are lifelines and lifelines need protection.

With the arrival of PNS Yamama, the Navy now has a sharper eye on the western coast, where security threats are as much about pirates and traffickers as they are about the possibility of conventional conflict. The ship also plays a key role in protecting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a multi-billion-dollar trade and infrastructure project that relies heavily on maritime safety.

Unlike massive destroyers or missile-laden frigates, offshore patrol vessels are more versatile. They're like utility players on a football team not flashy, but crucial. They

patrol. They monitor. They escort. And when needed, they fight.

The OPV 2600 design, which serves as the foundation for PNS Yamama, is the largest and most advanced patrol vessel Damen has to offer. But what exactly does "2600" mean here?

- 2600 tons is the ship's weight that's roughly three times heavier than a fully-loaded Boeing 747.
- 98 meters long about the length of a football field.
- It can cruise at 24 knots (that's about 44 km/h on water) and operate across 5,000 nautical miles enough to sail non-stop from Karachi to Sydney.

The ship can house up to 140 personnel if needed, though typically it runs with a crew of 60. It's built to stay steady in rough waters able to function in storms with waves reaching 4 to 6 meters high, and survive even harsher seas if necessary.

Does it carry weapons? Absolutely but not heavily armed, since this isn't primarily a warship. It features a 76mm main gun, similar in firepower to a compact tank cannon, complemented by two 20mm guns for close-range protection. Yet, the true strength of PNS



Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf (center front row) poses with senior officials during the induction ceremony of offshore patrol vessel PNS Yamama in Karachi on April 14, 2025 (Photo: DGPR Pakistan Navy)



Scale model of OPV 2600 at Damen's booth at DIMDEX 2024

Yamama lies in its sophisticated systems:

- Advanced radar and sensors allowing it to identify and respond to potential threats long before they become critical.
- A dedicated helicopter deck and hangar, essential for swift aerial missions, from search-and-rescue operations to quick-response pursuits.
- Two fast-deployment Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs) for boarding suspicious vessels rapidly and efficiently.
- Most notably, the vessel can carry modular mission containers, customizable add-ons enabling it to quickly adapt roles ranging from mine-clearing operations and anti-submarine warfare, to environmental protection and even serving as a mobile medical facility.

While Damen Shipyards designed and built the ship, a Dutch company named Alewijnse handled one of the trickiest parts the electrical system. Everything from the engine controls to the radar to the power distribution was installed and fine-tuned by their engineers. According to project manager Alex Antohi, this wasn't just another job it was a collaboration shaped by the specific needs of the Pakistan Navy.



**Vice Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi
handing over the traditional Command Scroll
to the Commanding Officer of PNS YAMAMA
at Constanta Port, Romania**

PNS Yamama is not sailing alone in this mission. She joins PNS Yarmouk and PNS Tabuk (both commissioned in 2020), and PNS Hunain, delivered in 2024. These four vessels are part of a broader plan to modernize the Navy's surface fleet. The goal? A versatile, modular, and responsive fleet of at least 50 vessels, of which more than 20 will be major combat ships.

These OPVs aren't just for patrol—they're future-ready. In fact, they can even be upgraded to carry long-range cruise missiles, including Pakistan's home-produced Harbah missile, capable of striking targets 280 km away. That means these ships aren't just watchers—they can hit back if needed.

Speaking during the ceremony, Vice Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi, said, "The Offshore Patrol Vessels project is an ultimate success not only for Pakistan but for Damen, the Galati Shipyard and all co-makers involved in the conception, design, construction and commissioning of the four OPVs. I am confident that the collaboration between the Pakistan Navy and Damen will further extend to new avenues for shared gains."

In conclusion, as PNS Yamama sets sail, she embodies more than steel and engineering—she reflects Pakistan's growing commitment to securing its maritime domain and safeguarding vital national interests. Her induction into the fleet marks a strategic step forward, adding not only advanced systems and mission adaptability but also enhancing the Navy's ability to respond to evolving regional challenges.

More than just a ship, Yamama is a symbol of modern naval readiness, reinforcing Pakistan's presence in the Indian Ocean with greater strength, smarter capabilities, and a renewed sense of purpose.

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PNS Yamama (274)

**DR. FAROOQ ADIL**

SOME NEW PHASES OF HARDSHIP

Have wars truly left our region, or are there still trials yet to come? This question might not have arisen had Donald Trump, shortly after getting elected, not nostalgically recalled Bagram Airbase.

President Donald Trump is considered a fan of deal-making and an opponent of wars. So, why would such a man need Bagram Airbase, the world's largest military airbase? Trump himself answered this question in his February 26, 2025, conversation with his cabinet, stating that keeping the base would allow the U.S. to keep an eye on China. While saying this, he also recalled the past. He expressed regret that if the U.S. still had Bagram, it wouldn't have had to endure the humiliating withdrawal of 2021. The past cannot be changed, but lessons can certainly be learned from it especially by a seasoned

politician like Trump. The context of his cabinet remarks supports this reflection. But the pressing question is: what will be the consequences of America's renewed interest in Bagram?

This question is inherently complex, but even a surface-level reading of available facts stirs concern. Why? Because President Trump hasn't just expressed a desire to regain control of Bagram, he also claimed that the Taliban's interim government has handed the base over to China. If China does indeed control Bagram, would it simply walk away from it? The answer is clearly no. International politics does not work in simple binaries of yes and no, or black and white. There are many shades in between.

It's much like when Trump imposed tariffs on numerous countries many expected this to trigger a major backlash even within the West. But those expectations didn't materialize immediately, as the order was retracted soon after being issued. Similarly, the Bagram issue won't present two simple options accept or prepare for war. Matters will drag on, and that prolonged uncertainty is what will be troubling. This could mark the beginning of a new kind of tension in the region.

As Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Iran's next-door neighbor, Pakistan, will be directly affected by this new conflict. China is Pakistan's all-weather trusted ally that has stood by it through every test. In the coming



A view of the Bagram Airfield base after all US and NATO forces evacuated in Parwan province, eastern Afghanistan (FILE PHOTO)

days, as tensions rise between the U.S. and China over trade, economics, and beyond, the region is bound to feel the impact, whether anyone likes it or not. China, Afghanistan, India, and Iran will be affected, and Pakistan will not remain unaffected. Both its security and economy will be impacted. In other words, Pakistan will have to walk a tightrope. It can neither afford confrontation with the U.S. due to its friendship with China, nor can it afford to join any anti-China alliance under U.S. pressure.

In the current world scenario, Pakistan finds itself in a position similar to the 1960s during the era of the Non-Aligned Movement. Pakistan's top priority should remain what it currently is putting national interests first. But maintaining neutrality between two global powers is far from simple.

One fortunate aspect for Pakistan is that no political adventurer will be at the helm during this period. Had such a situation arisen under any swashbuckler's rule, Pakistan may have found itself in deep trouble even before the great powers clashed, just as the impulsive approach of the great one himself during a relatively stable time distanced Pakistan from some of its best allies. The current ruling coalition is expected to handle such complexities with better planning and foresight.

While an active establishment is not ideal in governance, Pakistan's current conditions demand not only unity among all state stakeholders but also active and enthusiastic cooperation from the establishment. Fortunately, such alignment appears to be in place now, and this may be the key to solving Pakistan's challenges.

The U.S.-China rivalry is a many-armed creature whose consequences will not remain limited to these two countries this is already



United States & China Trade war in 2025

evident. For Pakistan, the more important question is: what will happen to its economic revival plans like CPEC and BRI, jointly launched with China? Superficially, one might assume everything will collapse. But when dealing with such major projects, it's important to remember a key principle of international affairs: these conflicts are not simply black or white; numerous possibilities exist in between. All that's needed are people who can perceive, understand, and capitalize on them.

A simpler answer is that neither China will act hastily regarding CPEC and BRI, nor should we panic. But this situation is not a T20 match it's more like a Test match, or perhaps even slower and more patience-demanding. At this point, we must remember the old lesson that patience bears sweet fruit. It shouldn't be too hard to grasp, but if at any moment it becomes difficult, we should look to our Chinese friends for inspiration.

America's renewed interest in Bagram has another motive, besides monitoring China. By establishing its presence there, the U.S. also wants to keep an eye on extremism to prevent another 9/11-like incident. This means it intends to closely monitor not just the Afghan Taliban, but also the TTP, ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and similar entities.

Though Pakistan is currently suffering from TTP terrorism, the issue runs deeper and is



The location where the Jaffar Express was hijack by terrorists in Balochistan in March 2025 (FILE PHOTO)

quite sensitive. Pakistan's religious class has already exhausted its share of jihadi enthusiasm. New realities have opened their eyes. The renowned fatwa 'Paigham-e-Pakistan' by Pakistan's scholars against violence, terrorism, and armed resistance to

Continued from page 16

REVIVING EQUITABLE DISARMAMENT

To restore relevance, the CD must adopt a package approach giving precedence to nuclear disarmament, PAROS, and NSAs. Any attempt to de-link these issues will only reinforce mistrust and ensure continued deadlock.

DISARMAMENT EQUITY OR ENTRENCHMENT?

In closing, let me offer few propositions.

First, substance must replace symbolism. The CD must stop recycling agendas and begin addressing the core issues with legal intent and political honesty. It is time to step off the diplomatic treadmill and start walking a path of meaningful negotiation starting PAROS and Negative Security Assurances.

Second, sequence matters. Disarmament cannot progress on one track while others are derailed. The imbalance of emphasis between different agenda items has paralyzed

the state stands as a milestone. They no longer wish to act emotionally as in the past, but they face a challenge four to five decades of legacy still haunt them like a ghost. Even if they want to speak clearly to the extremist elements within society, they can't, because radical influences are deeply embedded from top to bottom.

These very toxic effects have made it difficult to speak truthfully, and even religious leaders are under pressure. The ghost of the past is chasing us, and in such a scenario, the presence of a self-interested global power at Bagram may become a challenge for us as well. It means the long-delayed but essential work of grassroots deradicalization can no longer be postponed. We are out of time.

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

progress for over two decades. Third, equity is non-negotiable. For disarmament to be real, it must reinforce not compromise the security of all states, especially those living under regional asymmetries and doctrinal threats that are fuelled by extra-regional powers. The bigger question is: Will the leading powers lead by example halting nuclear modernization, ratifying the CTBT, and engaging sincerely on PAROS or remain architects of strategic stagnation?

Pakistan remains ready to engage constructively, transparently, and responsibly. But our engagement will not be on the basis of selective obligations or strategic exceptionalism. It will be grounded in principled reciprocity, regional balance, and legal equity. If the CD is to be strengthened, it must reject hierarchies of security. Disarmament cannot be a mechanism of control it must become an instrument of collective responsibility.

Thank you.



THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF GWADAR AND CHAHBAHAR FOR PAKISTAN

PROF. DR UZMA SHUJAAT

Pakistan's National Security Policy 2022-2026 reinforces neutrality in great power competition, striving to maintain balanced and beneficial relationships with both the US and China and its tightrope diplomacy for Pakistan. In this scenario this paper is an attempt to highlight the strategic importance of Gwadar and Chahbahar Port.

China is engaged since last two decades in extensive investment in Chahbahar port as a potential assert in Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Chinese authorities reiterated on many occasions that it does not see Chahbahar as a competition to CPEC but that complement each other, as it would enhance the overall regional connectivity and infrastructure.

If we see in retrospect, India has been

logging to operationalize the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) in collaboration with Iran; the desire could not be realized due to US sanctions on Iran. China's growing in the region; instability and Afghanistan's tilt towards India and insufficient investment are the major reasons.

In 2020, the major blow to Indian design was when Iran unilaterally developed India from Chahbahr rail project over India's absence of financial engagement. Since then, the negotiations between the two countries have taken many shifts and turns. This scenario is meditative of that fact that India's persistently trying to remain engaged with Iran over Chahbahar and strongly indicates its foreign policy agenda of maintaining supremacy in the region.

Again in 2020 China and Iran have signed a historic deal to establish a direct shipping line to Chahbahar encompassing the Sheed Beheshti and Shaheed Kakantari Ports. Its indicates, Chinese extensive investment in Iran give Chahbahar a potential assert in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

According to Chinese authorities and policy narrative they have always emphasized that it does not see Chahbahar as a competition to CPEC but that they complement each other, as it would increase the overall regional connectivity and infrastructure. Additionally, mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia have already



Chahbahar Port is a seaport located in Chahbahar in Southeastern Iran, it is only about 170 km west of the Pakistani port of Gwadar

increased the China's diplomatic clout in Iran.

The Chahbahar and the linkages it opens up, can be seen either as a challenge to be countered or an opportunity to be exploited for Pakistan.

According to Dawn, editorial way back in 2016 it was suggested that there are two types of avenues, though, the lens of rivalry, the cooperative relations being forged by three of Pakistan's four neighbors with Chahbahar as an emblem of this cooperation, look like at that time as encirclement of the Pakistan. When Tehran, New Delhi and Kabul sat together and issued a statement that the path to progress for regional countries goes through joint cooperation, the same ties appear as an opportunity to be tapped, calling for reciprocal measures but time have proved any engagement of India any bilateral or trilateral would not give any benefit to Pakistan due to long standing hostile attitude of India towards Pakistan.

In comparison to Gwadar Port Pakistan's southwest in Balochistan has attracted regional and geo-political attention since its construction as a transformative economic hubs for Pakistan. Gwadar Port has received attention on the regional and geopolitical stage, its pushed India to continue to invest in Chahbahar port as a counterbalance to Gwadar's potential influence, but that investment was halted due to lack of frauds.

Pakistan's internal governance issues and security concerns have solved sometime its progress, but significance of Gwadar Port cannot be isolated, just across the border, Iran's Chahbahar Port, supported by India, plays a role in the regional power dynamics, but faces its own challenges, particularly shaped by US-Iran tensions.

Simultaneously these two Gwadar + Chahbahar offer a lens into the Arabian Sea



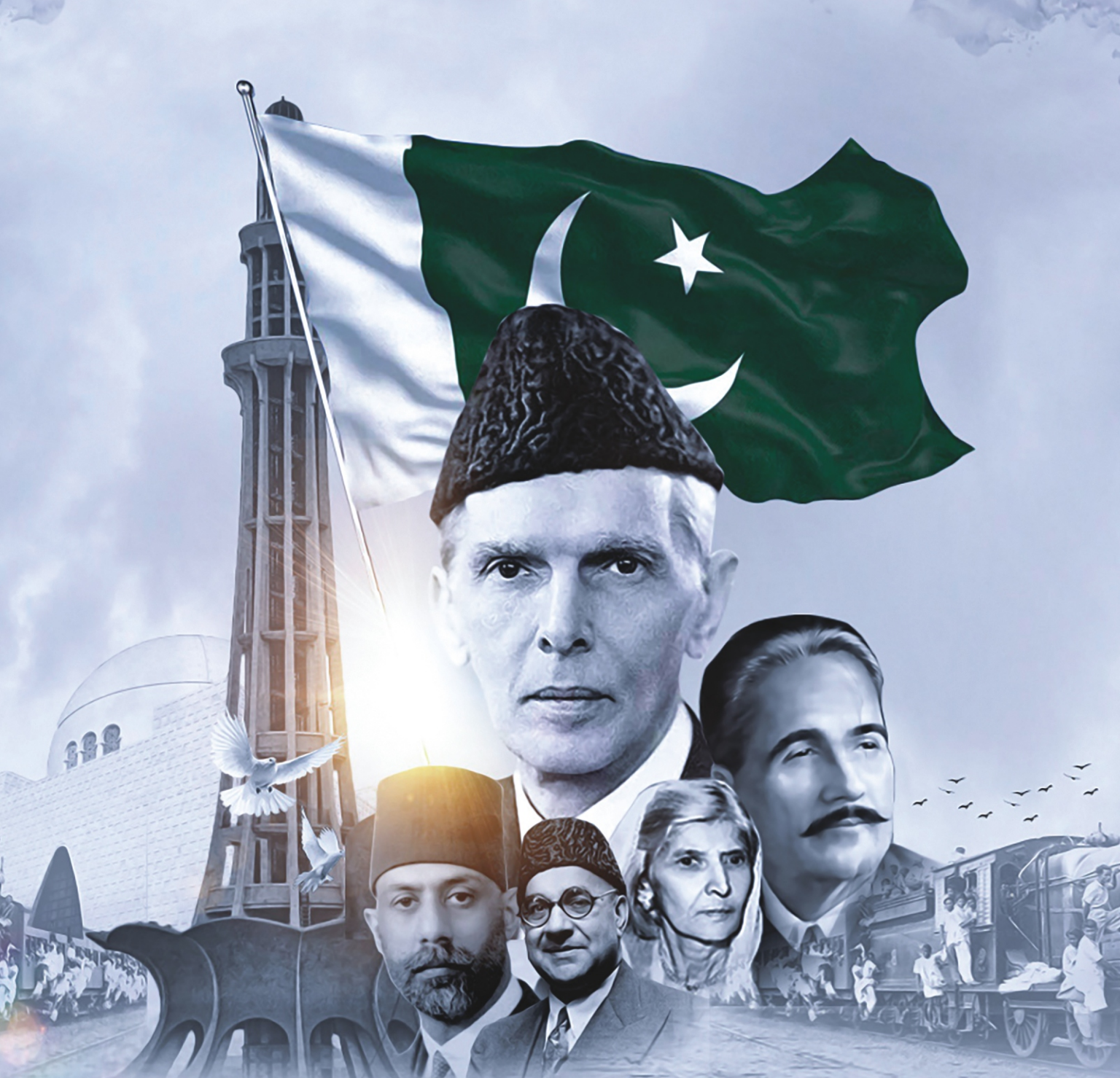
**China's Belt and Road Initiative,
Pakistan's Gwadar Port**

and Indo- Pacific power dynamics, revealing the interplay of local challenges, regional and global rivalries that continue to influence the development of these ports and defensive the regions evolving geopolitical chessboard.

The forecast of Gwadar in the near future suggest that it serves as a linchpin in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its flagship project the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that will provide a direct link to the Arabian Sea and the potential gateway to the Middle East, Africa and Europe. But perhaps the port's biggest promise is that it will reduce reliance on the vulnerable Malacca Strait.

Strategically and geographically, Chahbahar and Gwadar share similarities, but they serve different political purpose. While Gwadar remain Central to China's regional ambitious, Chahbahar has emerged as India's efforts to counterbalance in the past or maybe in the future Chinese influence. However, both ports face challenges while Gwadar contends with an insurgency in Balochistan, security concern and economic issues, Chahbahar remain vulnerable to shifting US sanctions and regional instability, particularly as tensions in the Middle East escalate.

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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.

THE POST-INDEPENDENCE HISTORY OF PAKISTAN

(THE 1973 CONSTITUTION)

TEAM INTERACTION



Political leaders after an agreement on the prerequisites of the 1973 constitution

The 1973 Constitution marked a major turning point in Pakistan's political evolution. It introduced a parliamentary system where the Prime Minister was designated as the head of the executive, while the President assumed a ceremonial role, symbolizing national unity.

The drafting and ratification process of the Constitution reflected an effort to create a document that genuinely captured the will and aspirations of the Pakistani people. For months, the country's leading legal minds, constitutional experts, political leaders, and respected religious scholars worked together to craft a truly representative constitution. Unlike earlier efforts that were often piecemeal or limited in scope, this time the objective was clear: to develop a complete, well-rounded document that would cover

governance, fundamental rights, commerce, finances, civil liberties, and the delicate separation of powers between institutions.

In developing the Constitution, ideas from both Islamic teachings on civil rights and Western political philosophy, particularly the principles of John Locke, were thoughtfully interwoven. The final result was a fine balance between tradition and modernity. It introduced a bicameral Parliament consisting of a National Assembly, which represented the will of the people, and a Senate, which ensured equal representation of all provinces. Islam was declared the state religion, and important civil liberties such as freedom of speech, religion, press, movement, thought, and association were formally protected under the Fundamental Rights section.

The Constitution was not merely about political arrangements. It was also a reflection of a deep settlement between conservative Islamic values and liberal humanist ideals, particularly advocated by Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party. On 20 October 1972, leaders of all political parties revived the draft and agreed to its adoption. The document was ratified unanimously by the National Assembly on 19 April 1973, and it fully came into effect on 14 August 1973, after which Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, stepping down as President, officially assumed office as Prime Minister, while Fazal Elahi Chaudhry became President.

The structure of the 1973 Constitution introduced several innovations compared to earlier documents. Unlike the constitutions of 1956 and 1962, this new constitution provided strong security guarantees to every citizen. The first part of the document defined the State itself and enshrined core principles such as life, liberty, equality, prohibition of slavery, protection of cultural and linguistic rights, and safeguards concerning arrest, detention, and discrimination. Drawing from British Common Law traditions, the Constitution's due process clause ensured that no law could override fundamental rights, with courts empowered to strike down any violations. In contrast to the models adopted by India and Bangladesh, Pakistan's Constitution was more cautious and emphasized balancing competing interests. It recognized Pakistan as a federation of four provinces and redefined the country's geography, while explicitly linking governance to Islamic values. It introduced a federal system based on separation of powers, strong checks and balances, and detailed the roles and eligibility criteria for public offices. It specifically mandated that only a Muslim of at least forty-five years of age could become President or Prime Minister, although no



The Parliament House of Pakistan displays the Kalma-e-Tayyiba on its front, symbolizing the nation's commitment to its Islamic identity, democratic values and sovereignty

religious restrictions were imposed for other key positions like provincial governors and Chief Ministers.

One of the most innovative aspects was the establishment of the Council of Common Interests, composed of the Chief Ministers of each province and an equal number of federal ministers nominated by the Prime Minister. This council was tasked with regulating important policies related to resource sharing and resolving inter-provincial disputes, particularly over issues like water distribution etc. Similarly, the National Finance Commission was created to ensure equitable distribution of revenues between the federation and the provinces, highlighting the Constitution's commitment to provincial autonomy and balanced federalism.

In terms of societal aspirations, the Constitution promoted the Islamic way of life, encouraged the development of local governments, guaranteed full participation of women in national affairs, protected minority rights, and emphasized the goal of social and economic well-being for all citizens. Urdu was declared the national language, English was retained for the time as the official language, and the preservation of regional languages and cultures was also formally recognized.



A historic glimpse inside Pakistan's National Assembly during the early 1970s, where leaders gathered to debate, draft, and ultimately pass the 1973 Constitution

Continued on page 43

**MIRZA KASHIF BAIG**

WHEN HUMANITY FAILS

WHY THE MUSLIM WORLD MUST RISE FOR PALESTINE



An aerial view of buildings destroyed by Israeli air strikes in a camp for Palestinian refugees in Gaza City

The early months of 2025 have brought an alarming escalation in the suffering of Palestinians. Even during a brief ceasefire in January, Palestinian families were still retrieving bodies from previous bombardments, and the wounded succumbed to untreated injuries. This fragile lull shattered in mid-March when Israel unleashed a renewed onslaught on the Gaza Strip. In a single night of bombing on March 18, more than 400 Palestinians were killed as warplanes pounded densely populated neighbourhoods. Gaza's hospitals, already barely functioning, were overwhelmed by waves of victims, many of them children pulled from the rubble of their homes.

By April 2025, the scale of carnage reached unspeakable levels. Gaza's health authorities reported over 50,000 Palestinians killed since the war's start in late 2023 a

staggering toll that climbed rapidly in recent weeks. At least 17,000 of the dead are children, a whole generation wiped out before our eyes. Tens of thousands more are injured, and thousands remain missing beneath collapsed buildings. The humanitarian situation is nightmarish: more than two million people trapped under relentless bombardment, with food, water and electricity often completely cut off. It is a campaign of collective punishment that grows more brutal by the day.

Even outside Gaza, the cruelty continues unabated. In the occupied West Bank, deadly military raids on Palestinian towns, home demolitions, and attacks on worshippers at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque have further deepened Palestinian agony. Equally shocking as these atrocities is the world's deafening silence or worse, its hypocrisy. As Israel intensifies this campaign of collective punishment, most world leaders offer nothing beyond hollow words. The United Nations has convened emergency sessions, only to see meaningful action blocked by powerful allies of Israel. The same international community that preaches human rights watches quietly as an entire people is decimated in real time.

Consider the contrast: if any other military had slaughtered tens of thousands of civilians in a few months, global sanctions and war-crimes tribunals would be assured. Yet for Gaza, the unacceptable has been normalised

under the pretext of “self-defence.” Bombing hospitals and apartment blocks is excused; humanitarian aid is openly obstructed in violation of international law with impunity. Apart from a few voices calling it the worst humanitarian crisis in decades, there is mostly silence or outright complicity. This moral paralysis has only emboldened Israel's extremist government to push even further.

Every day that the world averts its gaze, more innocent lives are extinguished. With each Palestinian child killed and each neighbourhood reduced to dust, a question haunts the global conscience: How can genocide unfold in plain sight, yet those with the power to stop it choose inaction?

Amid this bleak reality, a powerful voice of moral clarity has emerged from Pakistan. In April 2025, an assembly of the country's most prominent Islamic scholars led by Mufti Taqi Usmani and Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman issued a joint religious decree (fatwa) declaring that armed jihad against Israel has become obligatory for Muslim governments, given the carnage in Gaza and the world's indifference.



Bodies of Palestinians who were killed in a blast at the Al-Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza

“What is the purpose of our armies and weapons, if not to protect our brothers and sisters?” Mufti Taqi Usmani asked, giving voice to the frustration of millions. “Over 50,000 Palestinian Muslims have been martyred in Gaza right before our eyes. We have failed to take practical steps. Instead of holding conferences in Islamabad, we should be standing with the freedom fighters in Gaza.” His words struck at the heart of Muslim leaders' inertia. Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman concurred, emphasizing that according to Islamic law, when any Muslim community is under attack, jihad (armed struggle) becomes fard a mandatory duty on all Muslims to help defend them.

This fatwa was a call for action, not just emotion. It urged Pakistan's government and all Muslim nations to move beyond rhetoric and heed their religious and moral duty to confront Israel's aggression. The scholars cut through the fog of political excuses and reminded the Ummah that when oppression reaches such horrifying extremes, resisting it is not merely permitted it is compulsory.

The stance of these scholars is strongly supported by Islamic scripture and tradition. The Qur'an commands believers: “And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed men, women, and children?” (Qur'an 4:75). When innocent people are being massacred and driven from their homes, Islam makes it a duty for the faithful to stand against the oppressor. Jihad, far from being an act of mindless violence, means a just struggle to protect the innocent and uphold justice when all other means have failed.

Islam also places immense emphasis on Muslim unity and mutual responsibility. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught that “the believers are like one body; if

one part of the body is hurt, the whole body reacts with fever and pain." By this analogy, the pain of a child in Gaza should be felt by a family in Pakistan or Turkey as their own. The Qur'an urges, "And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided" (3:103), underscoring that Muslims must stand together. When any part of the Ummah bleeds, the entire Ummah is obligated to respond as one. Coming to Palestine's aid is not a matter of charity or politics but a religious obligation.

If Israel's onslaught is not confronted now, it will not stop at Palestine. An aggressor emboldened by impunity will inevitably set its sights on new targets. Already, some in Israel openly speak of expanding beyond Palestine. Today, it is Gaza's children; tomorrow, it could be another Muslim community facing the same fate. History shows that when one of us is attacked and we do nothing, we invite the oppressor to attack us all, one by one.

The only effective answer is unity and action. The Muslim world, 1.5 billion strong, must finally unite in purpose. Our leaders should take tangible steps from cutting diplomatic ties and boycotts to forming a joint defence pact to truly protect Palestinian lives. Such measures may be daunting, but the alternative is a future of humiliation and



**Children cry out for food relief in Rafah, Gaza:
One Palestinian child is killed every 10 minutes**

subjugation.

We now stand at a moral crossroads. What does it mean to be a Muslim or even a human being if we allow this slaughter to continue? If we fail this test, we not only betray the Palestinians but also the core ideals of our faith. Future generations would ask why we stayed silent in the face of such evil. Yet if we rise together now, we can change the course of history. Let this be the moment the Ummah rediscovers its courage and unity. Our actions must match our prayers for Palestine. Even a small light can pierce the darkness; if millions act as one, that light becomes an unquenchable blaze of justice.

The blood of Gaza's children cries out to our collective conscience. We must answer not just with tears or words, but with the will to do what is right. We believe that if we stand firm for justice, divine help will be with us. Now is the time to prove that the Ummah is alive, that our bonds of brotherhood are real, and that we will no longer stand by while our brethren are slaughtered. History is watching, and so is our Creator. The choice is ours—unite now in the cause of justice, or fall divided under the weight of injustice. The time to act is now.

The author is the Editor of Monthly Interaction.



**Mufti Taqi Usmani (left) &
Mufti Muneeb ur Rehman (right)**

**WAJEEHA NAJAM**

LINES DRAWN IN DUST AND WATER

THE INDIA-PAKISTAN DILEMMA



The India-Pakistan relationship remains one of the most volatile and intractable conflicts in contemporary international relations, with recent developments further worsening tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbors. The terrorist attack in Indian-administered Kashmir on April 23, 2025, which killed 26 tourists, has reignited hostilities at a time when existing mechanisms for conflict resolution appear increasingly fragile.

This incident, coupled with Pakistan's persistent advocacy for Kashmiri self-determination and growing tensions over water-sharing agreements, creates a perfect storm that threatens to push the region toward renewed conflict. The complex interplay between these issues demands careful examination, as their resolution - or continued

stalemate - will have profound implications for regional stability and security.

At the heart of the bilateral tensions lies the decades-old Kashmir dispute, which has defied resolution despite numerous international interventions and bilateral attempts at negotiation. Pakistan's official position, rooted in the United Nations Security Council resolutions of 1948-49, maintains that the Kashmiri people should exercise their right to self-determination through a plebiscite. This stance has remained consistent throughout Pakistan's political history, though its practical implementation has varied across different administrations.

India's revocation of Article 370 in August 2019, which stripped Jammu and Kashmir of its special autonomous status, dramatically altered the political landscape and further complicated Pakistan's diplomatic position. The move was interpreted by Islamabad as an aggressive attempt to unilaterally change the status quo, leading to a hardening of positions on both sides. The April 2025 attack, which Indian authorities have attributed to Pakistan-based militants, has only served to reinforce New Delhi's narrative that cross-border terrorism remains Pakistan's preferred instrument of policy in Kashmir.

India's response to the attack reflects its evolving counterterrorism strategy, which has increasingly emphasized military and economic measures over purely diplomatic

approaches. The characterization of the incident as an "act of war" by Indian officials suggests a potential escalation in rhetoric that could presage more aggressive responses. This hardening stance is mirrored in India's domestic political landscape, where nationalist sentiment has made compromise on Kashmir increasingly difficult for any government in New Delhi. Meanwhile, Pakistan's continued insistence on framing the Kashmiri struggle as one of self-determination, coupled with its denials of involvement in cross-border militancy, creates a fundamental impasse in bilateral relations. The resulting dynamic is one where neither side can afford to appear weak or conciliatory, locking both countries into a cycle of confrontation with no clear exit strategy.

The situation is further complicated by the involvement of external powers, particularly China, whose growing strategic partnership with Pakistan has introduced new dimensions to the conflict. Beijing's willingness to shield Islamabad from international censure through its veto power at the United Nations Security Council has emboldened Pakistan's position on Kashmir, while simultaneously deepening India's suspicions of a coordinated effort to undermine its territorial integrity. At the same time, India's strengthening strategic ties with the United States and other Western powers have transformed what was once a bilateral dispute into a theater of great power competition. This internationalization of the conflict makes resolution even more challenging, as both India and Pakistan can now rely on external patrons to mitigate the costs of their confrontation, reducing incentives for compromise.

Parallel to the Kashmir conflict, tensions over water sharing present another potentially explosive flashpoint in bilateral relations. The

Indus Waters Treaty, brokered by the World Bank in 1960, has long been held up as a rare example of successful cooperation between the two rivals, having survived three major wars. However, the treaty now faces unprecedented strain due to a combination of climate change, population growth, and political tensions. India's construction of hydroelectric projects on rivers allocated to Pakistan under the treaty, particularly the Chenab and Jhelum, has raised serious concerns in Islamabad about potential water shortages. For Pakistan, where over 60 percent of agriculture depends on the Indus basin, any significant reduction in water flows could have catastrophic consequences for food security and economic stability. The situation is rendered even more precarious by climate change, with glacial retreat in the Himalayas and changing precipitation patterns already reducing water availability across the region.

The potential weaponization of water resources adds another layer of complexity to an already fraught relationship. India has previously hinted at leveraging its upstream position as a strategic tool, most notably following the 2019 Pulwama attack, when senior officials suggested reviewing the Indus Waters Treaty. While New Delhi has stopped short of formally abrogating the agreement, its increasing control over upstream flows gives it significant coercive power that could be employed during crises. Pakistan, recognizing its vulnerability, has sought international arbitration on several occasions, but India's insistence on resolving disputes bilaterally has left these mechanisms largely ineffective. The resulting stalemate creates conditions where water-related tensions could escalate rapidly, potentially surpassing Kashmir as the primary driver of conflict.

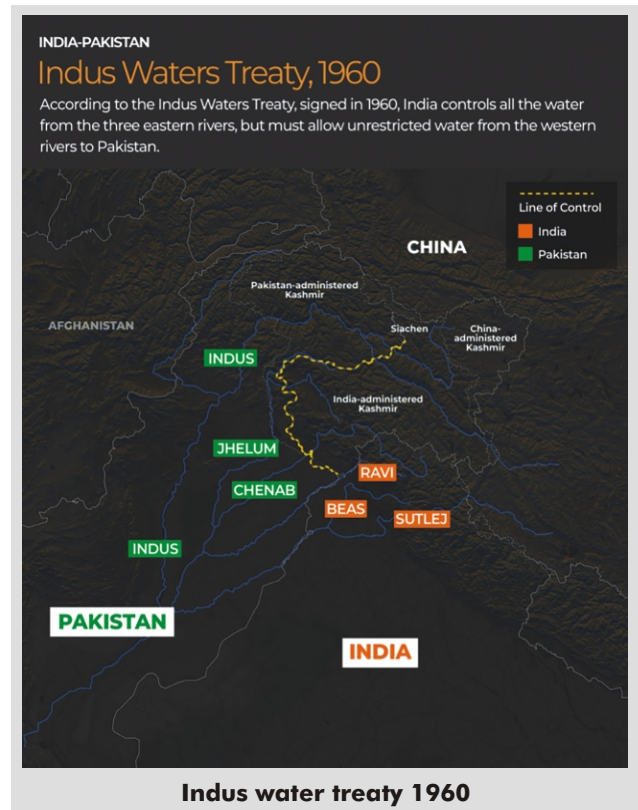
between the two nations.

Against this backdrop of mounting tensions, the prospects for meaningful dialogue appear increasingly remote. Traditional diplomatic channels have deteriorated over years of mutual suspicion, while domestic political constraints on both sides limit the scope for compromise. In India, the political costs of appearing soft on Pakistan have become prohibitive, while in Pakistan, the military establishment retains significant influence over foreign policy, particularly regarding Kashmir. This institutional dynamic creates significant barriers to conflict resolution, as neither side can easily deviate from established positions without facing domestic backlash. The absence of strong economic ties, which in other conflict situations often serve as a moderating influence, further reduces incentives for cooperation.

Yet despite these challenges, the costs of continued confrontation are simply too high to ignore. Both nations face pressing domestic challenges, from economic development to climate change adaptation, that require attention and resources currently diverted toward military preparedness and border security.

The risk of unintended escalation remains ever-present, particularly along the Line of Control in Kashmir, where periodic exchanges of fire could spiral into broader conflict. Perhaps most alarmingly, the nuclear dimension of the rivalry means that any major confrontation carries existential risks not just for the two countries, but for the entire region.

In this context, exploring alternative pathways to de-escalation becomes not just desirable but imperative. Track II diplomacy, involving scholars, retired officials, and civil society representatives, could help rebuild



some measure of trust outside the constraints of formal negotiations. Confidence-building measures, such as reviving and strengthening the 2003 ceasefire agreement, could help reduce tensions along the border. Perhaps most promising would be cooperation on shared challenges like climate change and water management, where mutual interests might provide a foundation for broader engagement.

The Indus Waters Treaty itself could serve as a model for such cooperation, demonstrating that even amid profound political differences, practical arrangements can be sustained when they serve both parties' interests. The international community has an important role to play in facilitating such engagement, though its involvement must be carefully calibrated to avoid appearing partial to either side.

Neutral forums like the World Bank, which

already oversees the Indus Waters Treaty, could provide technical assistance and mediation on water issues. Regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization might offer platforms for dialogue that don't carry the political baggage of Western-led initiatives. What's clear is that without some mechanism for dialogue and confidence-building, the current trajectory points toward continued tension and the ever-present risk of crisis.

Ultimately, the India-Pakistan relationship stands at a critical juncture. The combination of unresolved territorial disputes, water tensions, and geopolitical rivalries creates a potent mix that could easily lead to renewed conflict. Yet the shared challenges both

nations face - from climate change to economic development - suggest that cooperation, however difficult, remains the only sustainable path forward. Breaking the current impasse will require courageous leadership on both sides, as well as creative approaches that can bridge the deep mistrust that has accumulated over decades. The alternative - a continuation of the status quo - risks not just the stability of South Asia, but global security more broadly. In an era of multiple global crises, allowing this festering conflict to worsen would represent a failure of statecraft with potentially tragic consequences.

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

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THE POST-INDEPENDENCE HISTORY OF PAKISTAN

Religion played a defining role under the Constitution. It declared Pakistan the Islamic Republic, and committed the state to ensuring that all laws conformed to Islamic teachings as laid down in the Quran and Sunnah. Arabic language instruction, the correct publication of the holy Quran, and the organization of religious institutions like masajids, zakat, and waqf were made constitutional responsibilities.

Practices such as gambling, alcohol consumption, prostitution, and pornography were explicitly prohibited. Furthermore, to guide the Islamization of legislation and governance, the Constitution established the Council of Islamic Ideology, an advisory body tasked with recommending measures to bring laws into conformity with Islamic commands. It also provided a formal constitutional definition of a Muslim and, through the

Second Amendment in 1974, declared the Qadianies (Ahmadiyya community) as non-Muslim. Later, the Fourth Amendment ensured reserved seats for non-Muslim minorities in the National Assembly, balancing religious identity with minority protection.

Finally, the Constitution was organized into several parts and schedules, each dealing with specific aspects of state affairs, ranging from fundamental rights to emergency provisions, financial matters, judiciary setup, elections, and the mechanisms for constitutional amendment. In its entirety, the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan remains a living document, reflecting both the ideals and compromises that shaped the nation's early democratic evolution. Despite facing many amendments, suspensions, and challenges over the decades, it continues to serve as the bedrock of Pakistan's political and legal system, symbolizing the collective will of its people for democracy, federalism, Islamic identity, and constitutional governance.

Continue.....



CHINA'S "STRING OF PEARLS" AND ITS STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

DR. S. BUSHRA BATOOL

The term "String of Pearls" refers to China's strategic initiative to establish a network of military and commercial facilities across the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), effectively creating a geopolitical arc that encircles India. Each "pearl" symbolizes a port or base where China has invested heavily, forming a chain stretching from the Chinese mainland to Port Sudan in Africa.

These facilities, while often developed under the banner of commercial expansion and infrastructure development, raise significant security concerns due to their potential to be repurposed for military use during times of conflict. This strategy represents a broader shift in China's maritime posture from a historically Pacific Ocean-focused presence to a newfound emphasis on the Indian Ocean. China's goals include safeguarding energy routes, expanding maritime trade influence, and projecting power in a region historically dominated by

India and Western naval forces.

■ KEY NODES IN THE STRING OF PEARLS

a) GWADAR PORT, PAKISTAN

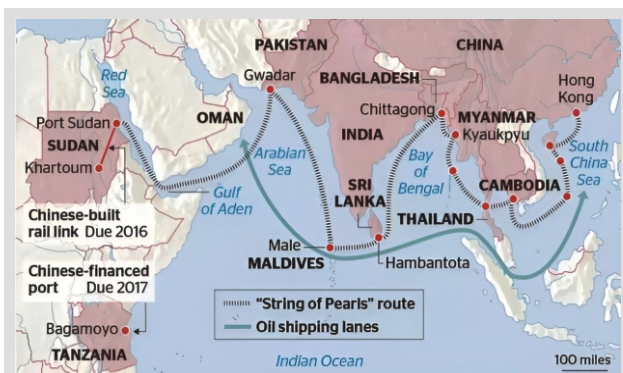
Located near the Strait of Hormuz, Gwadar offers China a critical gateway to the Persian Gulf, through which nearly 20% of the world's oil transits. The port is central to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and holds the potential to serve not just as a trade hub, but also as a surveillance outpost or even a military facility. Gwadar enhances China's energy security by offering a shorter overland route to western China while simultaneously undermining Indian and U.S. dominance in the Arabian Sea.

b) HAMBANTOTA PORT, SRI LANKA

Strategically placed on Sri Lanka's southern coast, Hambantota sits near vital east west shipping lanes. Though officially leased for 99 years to a Chinese company for commercial purposes, concerns persist that it could become a PLA Navy logistics hub. Hambantota is a major node in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and its proximity to India's southern coast makes it especially sensitive.

c) CHITTAGONG PORT, BANGLADESH

The Chittagong (Chattogram) port enhances China's maritime reach in South Asia and is positioned near the Strait of Malacca, a critical trade artery. China has significantly invested in the port and



String of Pearls

surrounding infrastructure, including the Karnaphuli tunnel, industrial zones, and power projects. Through these projects, China gains long-term economic influence in Bangladesh and a potential monitoring post near eastern India and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

d) SITTWE PORT, MYANMAR

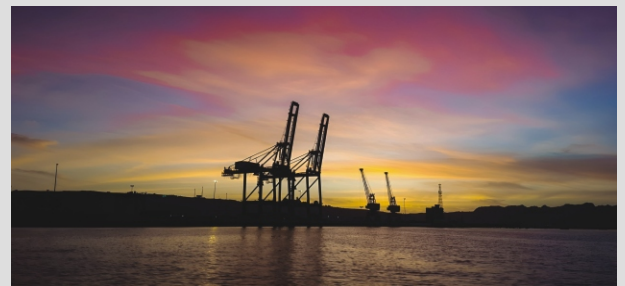
Sittwe, located on Myanmar's western coast, serves as a pivotal link in China's strategy to bypass the Malacca Strait a known choke point for energy shipments. With overland infrastructure like pipelines and highways to Yunnan province in southern China, Sittwe allows China to import oil from the Middle East without traversing vulnerable sea routes. This port also enhances China's footprint in the Bay of Bengal, putting it closer to Indian naval assets.

e) HAINAN ISLAND, CHINA

While not foreign territory, Hainan Island in the South China Sea is China's primary naval launchpad into the Indian Ocean. Home to the Yulin Naval Base the country's largest and most advanced Hainan hosts nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, and other assets from the PLA Navy's South Sea Fleet. It forms the operational hub from which China can sustain long-range deployments and connect with other pearls across the Indian Ocean.

■ STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

India views the String of Pearls as a direct challenge to its strategic autonomy, especially in its immediate maritime neighborhood. This initiative, when combined with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor and the broader Belt and Road Initiative, signals Beijing's intention to establish a semi-permanent presence in the IOR, potentially limiting India's regional influence.



Gwadar Port in Pakistan is part of China's Belt and Road Initiative

■ KEY CONCERNS FOR INDIA:

- **Strategic Encirclement:** The growing network of Chinese bases around India threatens to dilute India's dominance in the Indian Ocean. Although China lacks direct coastal access to the IOR, its ability to operate from friendly ports allows it to project power deep into India's maritime backyard.
- **Economic Diversion:** Rising security threats may force India to divert more resources toward defense spending, potentially hampering economic growth and development in other sectors.
- **Maritime Security Risks:** China's naval expansion, including its growing fleet of submarines and destroyers, poses a threat to Indian maritime interests and could compromise sea lanes critical for trade and energy supplies.
- **Pakistan Factor:** China's military and economic backing of Pakistan, especially in Gwadar, fuels long-standing concerns of a two-front challenge for India on both land and sea.
- **Eastern Flank Vulnerability:** Ports like Kyaukpyu in Myanmar and the infrastructure at Sittwe are also viewed with alarm, as they place Chinese influence close to India's eastern seaboard.

■ INDIA'S COUNTERMEASURES

In response to China's expanding

influence, India has adopted a multi-pronged approach, involving diplomatic engagement, defense partnerships, infrastructure development, and strategic naval deployments.

a) **STRATEGIC EXPANSION IN THE GULF OF OMAN**

India has been steadily increasing its naval presence in the Gulf of Oman – a critical gateway to the Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf oil routes. Notable initiatives include:

- **Operation Sankalp (2019 present):** Launched to escort Indian merchant vessels after rising U.S.-Iran tensions.
- **Mission-based deployments:** The Indian Navy now regularly rotates warships through the region to ensure a constant strategic presence.

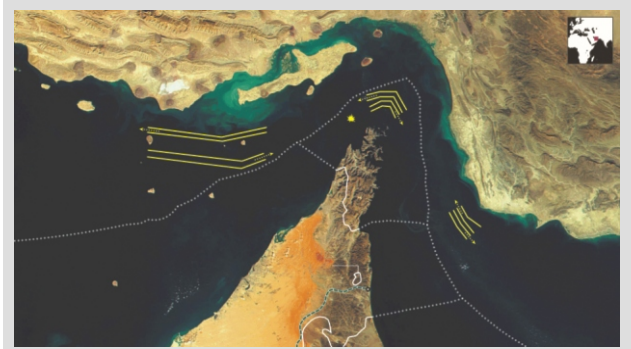
b) **STRENGTHENING PORT ACCESS AND ALLIANCES**

India has deepened partnerships with countries like Oman and Iran:

- **Duqm Port (Oman):** India has secured access for refueling and resupply of naval vessels. Oman also allows joint training and hosts Indian military personnel.
- **Chabahar Port (Iran):** In May 2024, India signed a 10-year deal to operate the Shahid Beheshti terminal. With an investment of \$120 million, this gives India overland access to Afghanistan and



The Chittagong (Chattogram) Port



Gulf of Oman

Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan-controlled routes and countering Chinese control at Gwadar.

c) **NAVAL EXERCISES AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

India actively conducts joint naval exercises such as:

- Naseem Al Bahr with Oman, enhancing interoperability.
- Bilateral and trilateral engagements with UAE, Iran, and other Gulf nations to bolster maritime diplomacy.

■ **CONCLUSION**

The String of Pearls is more than just a maritime infrastructure strategy – it's a blueprint for geostrategic dominance. While China insists that these developments are purely commercial, the dual-use nature of ports and bases leaves room for strategic repurposing, particularly in the event of conflict.

For India, the challenge is multifaceted; it must protect its maritime interests, sustain its influence across the IOR, and forge robust partnerships to counterbalance China's ambitions. With calculated diplomacy, strategic port agreements, and a forward-leaning naval policy, India is gradually building its own network, a "Necklace of Diamonds," to safeguard its future in the Indian Ocean.

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

**HAMZA NASIR**

INITIATIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN BALOCHISTAN

Major infrastructure projects are transforming the economic profile of Quetta and Balochistan at present. The new international airport in Gwadar and upgraded Quetta-Zhob and Quetta-Gwadar roads will strengthen regional trade connections. The question of the prime beneficiary stands unanswered from these developments. Sustainable economic growth, together with better conditions for local communities, must be the result of these initiatives rather than having foreign investors receive most of the benefits.

The Gwadar International Airport serves as one of Pakistan's biggest airports following its recent inauguration and offers services for domestic and international flight operations at its \$246 million cost. The Boeing 747 and comparable aircraft find a home at this airport, which serves as a strategic trade and logistics hub for Gwadar. Air connectivity improvements will influence Quetta development as Balochistan's commercial hub, along with its administrative center, by boosting trade along tourism flow.

The enhancement of road infrastructure will both simplify trade operations and decrease transportation expenses across the board. The Quetta-Zhob highway, located on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Western Route, is undergoing improvement work covering 331 kilometers at a project cost of PKR 63 billion. Construction on the project



An aerial drone photo taken on Sept 13, 2024 shows a view of the New Gwadar International Airport in Gwadar, Pakistan

will cut the duration of travel between Quetta and Zhob, which will boost the flow of commodities and products between locations. The Quetta-Gwadar highway represents a vital transportation link fighting to establish superior connectivity between Balochistan's prime city and Pakistan's primary oceanic port. According to the National Highway Authority (NHA), these projects will offer 50% faster journey times and lead to lower business logistical costs. The development brings significant economic potential to the city of Quetta. Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) reported in their research that infrastructure investments boost the country's economic development rate. Intensified road infrastructure combined with enhanced air travel facilities induces investors

to bring money into transportation and hospitality services, as well as retail ventures. Local businesses will gain advantages from both the increased supply of goods and services and tourist traffic. The resources will create increasing job prospects. Direct and indirect jobs being generated by the construction sector have become one of the primary achievements of the Balochistan Board of Investment & Trade (BBolT) during the last five years.

These promising prospects still face multiple obstacles. Development projects on a large scale in Balochistan have historically failed to offer their benefits directly to the people who live there. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data reveals that Balochistan stands as the province with the highest poverty rate, after showing that 40% of its people live in poverty. Foreign and national investors can experience profits, yet the local population continues to face economic challenges. Adequate policy implementation becomes crucial since improper policies could let project benefits accumulate with a select few while economic gaps expand.

A comprehensive strategic policy that includes all stakeholders must be developed to achieve maximum benefits from these developments across Quetta as well as Balochistan. Local business operations need to become the top priority in government policies. The State Bank of Pakistan reveals that SMEs in Balochistan obtain formal financing at only 5%, while Punjab's comparable figure reaches 17%. Local entrepreneurs can use emerging economic opportunities through enhanced credit accessibility and educational assistance, and logistical resources.

All infrastructure development projects need to implement binding provisions for

hiring local workers. CPEC projects across different provinces should implement workforce participation rules that require local labor participation at a rate of 30%. Organizations should extend their skill development programs. Each year, the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) Balochistan provides technical training to 10,000 individuals, but this number needs to rise to fulfill the increasing requirement for a competent labor force in new industries.

Economic expansion should extend its advantages beyond Quetta, along with other urban locations. Rural areas that usually miss out on large-scale development plans need to obtain improved transportation and trade possibilities. The government should create rural connectivity programs and establish industrial zones in smaller towns in order to spread economic growth uniformly across the region. Effective management of the current infrastructure expansion across Balochistan, alongside Gwadar and Quetta development, presents opportunities for the province to become a prominent player in regional commerce. Economic progress leads to success only through sustainable and inclusive development practices, which maintain equality for all. The success of current Balochistan infrastructure projects relies on policymakers developing connected local business programs together with employment targets and environmental regulatory implementation. Through proper implementation, Quetta can become a prosperous economic hub from which development enriches all members of the community.

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

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