

Balochistan Think Tank Network



BTTN Monthly Collage

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About BTTN

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) was established at Quetta, on March 1, 2021. It is an autonomous, non-profit, non-partisan, and multidisciplinary Research Center with a focus not limited to Balochistan only but includes the regional and global dynamics which can influence Pakistan. Broadly, BTTN endeavors to undertake in-depth research of provincial issues with a view to developing the socio, political, and economic status of the province. Its interests also include issues of Energy, Regional Stability, Strategic Stability, Peace and Security, Arms Control and Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology, Conflict Resolution, Regional Connectivity, and Socioeconomic development at the national level. Geopolitically, besides South Asia, BTTN's research areas also include regions of Europe and Africa.

BTTN OP-EDs

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) Faculty of Research has been writing op-eds on a regular basis on different contemporary issues that are published on various international and national platforms. The opinions expressed in this edition are the authors' individual views and do not reflect the official policy of BTTN or any governmental organization. This electronic review is compiled monthly.

SUMMARY OF OP-EDs

Balochistan's Health Crisis

Hamza Nasir

February 7, 2025

This Piece discusses Balochistan's healthcare system, particularly Quetta, faces severe challenges due to high medical costs, outdated equipment and a shortage of trained professionals. Many patients are forced to seek treatment in other cities, highlighting the region's inadequate infrastructure. Urgent reforms, including modern medical facilities, trained personnel and improved health card implementation are necessary to prevent further loss of lives.

America's New MTCTR POLICY

Zafar Khan

February 9, 2025

This opinion piece depicts that new changes of the US in the MTCR might trigger arms race, proliferation, and crisis instability between the haves and have nots. Security driven countries are closely monitoring what the US and its allies do and how such measures might impact the broader promises of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament these countries made to the world.

Nigeria's Strategic Misstep

Shahzadi Irum

February 11, 2025

France's neocolonial grip on Africa has long exploited its resources under the guise of stability, but the Sahel nations have finally expelled it to reclaim their sovereignty. However, Nigeria is now foolishly welcoming France, ignoring its history of economic manipulation and political interference. By signing investment deals, Abuja risks falling into the same trap that kept other African nations in cycles of poverty and instability. If Nigeria fails to learn from history, it may soon pay a heavy price for embracing an imperialist power that has repeatedly plundered the continent.

The U.S. Withdrawal from WHO: Consequences and Implications for Pakistan

Nomeen Kassi

February 11, 2025

The article discusses the us decision to withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO) and its potential global consequences. It emphasizes the impact this decision could have on international health corporations, particularly in addressing pandemics. For Pakistan, the us exit could hinder global health efforts and affects the country's ability to respond to future health crisis. The article underscores the importance of continued multilateral corporation in global health governance.

The Cost of Populism: How Trump's Policies Reshape World Order

Shah Meer

February 13, 2025

The Cost of Populism: How Trump's Policies Reshape World Order" By Shah Meer. Trump is compromising America's long-term objectives for short-term domestic populist gains. His unilateral withdrawals from international regimes have raised concerns about the international process that has for long sustained the US hegemony. The tariffs imposed on Canada, Mexico and China are alienating the US allies and creating space for China to dominate the world order by taking parallel initiatives. These actions risk isolating the US on the international stage, weakening multilateral frameworks, and eroding the very ideas that have underpinned its dominance since World War II.

AJ&K Is Not Complete Without IIOJ&K

Alamgir Khan

February 16, 2025

Pakistan observes Kashmir Solidarity Day on February 5 to express unwavering support for Kashmiris' right to self-determination under UN resolutions. India has consistently violated international law, particularly in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), through human rights abuses, demographic changes, and suppression of freedoms. Despite India's revocation of Article 370 in 2019 and ongoing atrocities, Kashmiris remain resolute in their struggle. Pakistan urges the global community to intervene, stop human rights violations, and ensure a peaceful resolution following international law

Solidarity with Kashmir

Atta Ullah

February 16, 2025

Op-ed, "Solidarity with Kashmir", written by Mr. Atta Ullah, highlights the enduring suffering of the Kashmiri people in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) on the Kashmir Day. The notion of "Complete Kashmir" lies in bringing an end to the suffering of Kashmiri people there, and the socio-economic integration of the region by peaceful means.

Is India on Path of Dismemberment?

Atta Ullah

February 16, 2025

Op-ed, “Is India on Path of Dismemberment”, written by Mr. Atta Ullah, highlights India’s descent into chaos and instability, intensifying the ongoing freedom movements in the length and width of India, from Kashmir to Northeastern Nagalim. India’s recent imposition of emergency in Northeastern Manipur seems to be the failure of democracy by the might of force in upholding diverse ethnic groups in one country.

Erosion of Trust

Usama Khalid

February 17, 2025

The article examines the escalating global threat of nuclear proliferation and the shifting power dynamics in the 21st century, driven by the erosion of trust in international institutions, the weakening of arms control regimes, and the decline of the unipolar world order led by the United States. Key factors include the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the rise of China, and the growing self-reliance of emerging states in securing their own defense, particularly in regions like East Asia and the Middle East. The collapse of major arms control agreements, such as the Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA) and the INF Treaty, alongside the unresolved deadlock on treaties like FMCT, has exacerbated global mistrust and instability. This environment is pushing states to prioritize their own security and survivability, often outside international oversight, further destabilizing global peace and order.

Stargate and the Race for AI Dominance

Pairman Bazai

February 18, 2025

The two rivals of the century, the US and China, are engaged in competition in the field, not only for economic gains but also for AI dominance. AI is no longer just about automation and efficiency but also a critical tool in geopolitics, military strategy, and economic dominance. AI has become a national priority for both of the powers. There are two strategic ways to contain rival, including: imposing sanctions and increasing tariffs on relative material and competing through innovations and developments.

Causes of Balochistan Backwardness – Way Forward

Sadaf Nadeem

February 19, 2025

The article "Causes of Balochistan Backwardness – Way Forward" examines the factors contributing to Balochistan's underdevelopment, including historical neglect, inadequate infrastructure, and political marginalization. It proposes actionable reforms to address these challenges and promote socio-economic growth in the region.

US Sanctions on Pakistan and the South Asian Security Dilemma

Summra Hamid

February 20, 2025

The article "US Sanctions on Pakistan and the South Asian Security Dilemma" examines the implications of recent U.S. sanctions imposed on Pakistan's ballistic missile program. These sanctions, targeting entities like Pakistan's National Development Complex, aim to curb missile development perceived as a threat to regional and global security. In response, Pakistan may enhance its missile and nuclear capabilities as a deterrent, potentially triggering an arms race with India and destabilizing South Asia. The piece suggests that these sanctions could push Pakistan closer to China, altering the regional balance of power.

The Indo-US Growing Strategic Partnership: Balancing China's Influence in South Asia

Summra Hamid

February 20, 2025

The Indo-US Growing Strategic Partnership: Balancing China's Influence in South Asia discusses how the evolving collaboration between India and the United States is reshaping the geopolitical landscape of South Asia. This partnership aims to counterbalance China's expanding influence in the region, with the success of this strategy hinging on maintaining power dynamics without escalating tensions. The article emphasizes that developing cooperation over conflict is crucial for regional stability.

Astro-politics and Conflicts in Gray Zone

Naseem Sabzal

February 20, 2025

The space race has evolved from Cold War rivalries to a competition for dominance in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and beyond. Countries like the US, China, Russia, and India are developing military capabilities

in space, including Anti-Satellite Weapons (ASATs) and cyber warfare. The growing militarization of space raises concerns about conflicts, satellite security, and space debris. Existing space treaties need updates to address modern challenges and regulate private corporations to ensure peaceful space exploration.

Why Trump`s India Bet Could Backfire?

Sher Ali

February 21, 2025

Why Trump`s India`s Bet Could Backfire” by Sher Ali Kakar. During his recent visit to Washington, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump in their wide-ranging joint statement at the White House agreed to give a new impetus to their defense cooperation by transferring advanced military technologies to India. The two sides reaffirmed their commitments to eliminating terrorism while adding a Pakistan-specific reference that has no basis. This has once again sparked concerns about the Trump administration`s biased South Asia policy by continuing the legacy of the Biden administration policy toward the region which ended by imposing sanctions on Pakistan`s missile program while playing no role in promoting broader regional interests.

The AI Arms Race: How LLMS are shaping the Future of intelligence?

Muhammad Sulaman

February 22, 2025

The rapid advancement of Large Language Models (LLMs) has intensified competition among tech giants like OpenAI, Google, and Microsoft, driving innovation while raising ethical and regulatory concerns. With market projections soaring, these models are shaping the future of work, education, and human-machine interaction. However, challenges such as bias, misinformation, monopolization, and accessibility remain pressing issues. Ensuring transparency, regulation, and inclusiveness is crucial to harnessing AI`s potential for societal benefit.

The unspoken tragedy in Balochistan

Aadersh Hamza

February 27, 2025

Ethnic violence in Balochistan, particularly the targeted killings of Punjabis, highlights the tragic consequences of hatred and inaction. Despite international laws against ethnic discrimination and terrorism, militants continue to justify their brutality, while the government`s failure to act deepens public despair. The silence of civil society further

exacerbates the crisis, leaving victims without support or acknowledgment. Without urgent intervention, Balochistan risks spiraling into irreversible chaos.

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Balochistan's Health Crisis

Hamza Nasir

February 7, 2025

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

One of the biggest concerns in Quetta's healthcare system is the unaffordability of medical treatment. The high costs associated with even minor procedures make healthcare inaccessible to a significant portion of the population. The government introduced health cards to alleviate some of these financial burdens. Their implementation remains ineffective due to bureaucratic hurdles, lack of awareness and limited facilities where these cards are accepted. As a result, patients continue to struggle with costly medical bills pushing many families into financial crisis.

Another pressing issue is the lack of professional and well-trained doctors. Many hospitals and clinics in Quetta employ under qualified practitioners leading to misdiagnoses and improper treatments. The absence of advanced medical technology further worsens the situation. For instance, essential medical procedures such as dialysis, MRI scans and even minor surgeries are performed using outdated and often malfunctioning equipment. Patients who require consistent and advanced medical care are left with no choice but to travel to other cities bearing additional costs for transportation and accommodation.

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

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

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

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

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

Urgent reforms are necessary to address the healthcare crisis in Quetta, Balochistan. The government must prioritize upgrading hospitals with modern medical equipment and ensure the availability of essential medicines. Life-saving procedures like dialysis should be performed with state-of-the-art machines and healthcare providers must be trained to handle a range of medical issues through better medical education programs. The health card system should be expanded effectively implemented and made more accessible by removing bureaucratic hurdles and increasing awareness. Hospitals in

Quetta must maintain a reliable supply of essential medicines and equipment with streamlined distribution. The people of Quetta deserve competent medical care and affordable treatments, and the government must take responsibility and act before more lives are lost due to neglect.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2025/balochistan-s-healthcrisis#:~:text=The%20shortage%20of%20life-saving,state%20of%20healthcare%20in%20Quetta.>

America's New MTCR Policy

Zafar Khan

February 9, 2025

The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) is an informal and voluntary export control regime that bears a political understanding between the member states to curb the presumed proliferation of Category I and Category II missiles and missile technology. The MTCR is not a formal and legally binding treaty between the states. The MTCR works on a voluntary basis that is subject to amendments from time to time. It was formed in 1987 by the G-7 technological advanced countries. Currently, it has 35 members including that of India that joined the MTCR in 2016. China is not a part of the MTCR. Although China requested its membership in 2004, it was not offered for obvious geopolitical and geostrategic rivalry. Pakistan is also not part of this informal political understanding of the MTCR.

More recently, the Biden-Harris Administration introduced "New Guidance for Missile Technology Exports to Advance Nonproliferation Goals and Bolster Allied Defense Capabilities". On January 3, 2025, former president Joe Biden issued a National Security Memorandum) regarding the MTCR voluntarily. The January 3 factsheet argues, "These updates reflect a renewed US commitment to nonproliferation, while advancing the President's goals of strengthening allied defense capabilities, bolstering the US defense industrial base, streamlining defense trade, and deterring adversaries." In addition, the factsheet opines, "These policy changes will help the United States advance shared defense objectives with close allies, including the implementation of AUKUS, while maintaining a strong leadership role on nonproliferation and export control policy." Also, this politically voluntarily modified policy establishes a memorandum that "the MTCR is not designed to impede national space programs or international cooperation in such programs as long as such programs could not contribute to delivery systems for WMD."

The fundamental rationale of the MTCR regime is to curtail the export of missiles and the missile technology that has the range of 300km with the ability to carry the payload of 500kg of any type of weapons of mass destruction. The US and its strategic allies and partners often consider this restraint outdated and that such guidelines need to be

updated and/or modified in accordance with the US interpretation of the changing strategic environment where the US and its allies and partners consider themselves to be threatened by the perceived archrivals and their partners. That said, the US made exceptions to Ukraine and South Korea on their development of such missiles. This is not the first time the US attempted to modify the changes on a voluntary basis.

The new MTCR policy initiated by the US will help boost the US arms sales to its strategic allies and partners. The US considers that it is lagging in terms of its sales for both commercial and military purposes while countries outside the MTCR are exploiting such advantages. Such a policy will make the broader standing of the MTCR irrelevant, ineffective and biased whether one is part of the MTCR or not. As membership is irrelevant, this undermines the credibility of this informal multilateral regime aimed at curbing the proliferation of missiles and missile technology.

On the one hand, the US considers this policy shift as a better opportunity for its allies and partners to acquire missiles and the related unmanned and space launched vehicles with increasing ranges and payloads contrary to the traditional MTCR constraint measures. But, on the other hand, the US claims to be active while following the non-proliferation measures. In this context, Henry Sokolski, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, argues, "Our government may want to make love by sharing dangerous missile technology with countries it views as 'people like us.' That's a policy decision. But in this case, the White House is trying to dress this love up as if it's making nonproliferation. It's not."

This reflects that the US remains responsible for proliferating the long ranges and payloads to its strategic allies and partners which in turn will increase, arms race, security dilemma and dangerous military escalation between the rivals.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2526565/americas-new-mtcr-policy>

Nigeria's Strategic Misstep

Shahzadi Irum

February 11, 2025

For ages, Africa has been a free treasury for Western powers, exploited like an infinite bounty, its riches pillaged while its people remain shackled by external control. Though colonial rule has officially ended, but the ghost of imperialism continues to haunt the continent, where France continues to struggle to maintain its dominance through economic stranglehold, military intervention, and political manipulation.

France's ruthless sway over Africa is a tale of harsh exploitation, neocolonial arrogance, and suffocating dominance that has crippled the region for decades. Under the guise of "counterterrorism" and "stability", France has mercilessly looted the Sahel's resources, manipulated its governments, and enforced economic dependency through the CFA franc, a colonial relic designed to keep these nations in shackles. Its military interventions, far from establishing peace, have only exacerbated instability, and backed unpopular and corrupt regimes, while deepening the suffering of the people.

When the people of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, finally rose against this cruel oppression, France's reaction was utter desperation – diplomatic blackmail, economic coercion, and veiled threats. The hypocrisy is obvious; while claiming to support democracy and human rights, France has systematically violated the sovereignty of Sahelian countries, treating them as hereditary slaves rather than independent nations. However, the winds are shifting. The people of the Sahel are awakening, rejecting French imperialism, and forging new paths toward self-reliance. France's era of unregulated dominance in the region is coming to an end, and no amount of coercion can stem the growing resistance against its parasitic hold. The Sahel nations have decisively asserted their sovereignty, removing France from their territories and closing their doors once and for all, ensuring its venomous influence never returns.

As more and more African nations gradually locked their doors on France and declared their intention to terminate all cooperation agreements with it – the former colonizer is now desperately seeking new pawns in the region. Shockingly Nigeria – a major economy in West Africa, is welcoming France with open arms, practically rolling out the

red carpet for its return. While countries like Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and other Sahelian countries have booted out France to reclaim their sovereignty, Nigeria is foolishly walking into the same trap, inviting an imperialist power that has long plundered Africa's resources and undermining its stability. Overlooking France's dark history in the Sahel, Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu visited France to meet with President Emmanuel Macron, marking the first official visit by Abuja's head of state to Paris in two decades. During this visit, Paris secured a 300-million-euro investment deal, pledging support for infrastructure, healthcare, transportation, agriculture, renewable energy, and a solid mineral sector. However, history bears witness that such deals with France come at a heavy price for African nations. France has long pretended to be a key trade partner for Africa, yet its track record is one of exploitation rather than genuine cooperation. Sahelian countries that were once under France's influence, have seen no real development over the past century. Instead, France sucked their resources and trapped them in cycles of instability, poverty, and external control, which led to its expulsion. So, after being kicked out of the Sahel why did France suddenly show affection for Nigeria? The answer is clear, it has been expelled from key West African nations and is now desperately seeking new pawns to continue its plunder. And Abuja, knowingly stepping into this trap, has become that pawn, with its vast oil and gas reserves now at the center of France's strategic target.

Lastly, embracing France is not just poor judgment of Nigeria; it is a reckless act that will have dire consequences. Has Nigeria learned nothing from history, particularly when France is known for investing only with hidden agendas? It historically exploits, manipulates, and extracts wealth while leaving nations in deeper crises. If Nigeria thinks it will be an exception, it is gravely mistaken. There's an old saying: "Wise men build barriers before the flood; fools wait for the water to rise. But instead of heeding this wisdom, Nigeria is not just ignoring the looming flood but is recklessly rushing toward it, trusting the very waters that have already swept others away.

<https://policywatcher.com/2025/02/nigerias-strategic-misstep/>

The U.S. Withdrawal from WHO: Consequences and Implications for Pakistan

Nomeen Kassi

February 11, 2025

The recent announcement from Donald Trump in January 2025, of re-withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO) comes to the globe both as a surprise and as an expectation. WHO, a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN), was officially established on April 7, 1948, as a result of the World Health Assembly held in Geneva. 61 countries came together to create an organization that focused on the international health crisis. Trump's withdrawal from WHO jeopardizes global health efforts, weakening pandemic preparedness and vaccine distribution worldwide.

The creation of this organization was part of broader efforts, connected to the aftermath of WWII, to promote global cooperation. Its focus is improving health, controlling diseases, raising awareness, and providing technical assistance during health crises. The formation of the WHO marks a significant step toward cooperative global action in health crises. Nonetheless, WHO has played a critical role in addressing major global health crises such as smallpox eradication, polio vaccination campaigns, and its remarkable management of the global response to pandemics like COVID-19.

The withdrawal from WHO by the U.S. under President Donald Trump was first seen in July 2020, when the organization was formally notified of its decision to withdraw. This move had significant implications, not only for global public health but also for countries like Pakistan. Trump's administration cited dissatisfaction with the WHO's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and its perceived bias towards China as the reason. Trump's administration also accused the WHO of mismanaging the COVID-19 response, particularly during the initial spread of the outbreak in China. The U.S. also asserted that the organization had not held China responsible for the virus spread. They also highlighted the inability of WHO to control the virus, which contributed to devastation caused by the global pandemic.

However, this decision was part of a broader "America First" foreign policy agenda by Donald Trump, which aimed to reduce U.S. involvement in multilateral organizations.

Trump views that these organizations do not align with American interests. Trump aims to reduce American involvement in global affairs. He rather focuses on “making America great again.” This idea reflects the ‘Isolationism’ policy of the U.S. in the 1820s. Moreover, the U.S. gives the rationale of disproportionately funding the organization while receiving little in return. Trump argues that the U.S. is contributing more than any other country to the WHO’s budget. Pakistan faces critical challenges as U.S. funding for polio eradication and disease control efforts diminishes.

Significant international criticism followed the U.S.’s withdrawal from WHO. Being the largest donor to the organization, the U.S. played a crucial role in funding global health initiatives to counter global crises, such as the distribution of vaccines, epidemic preparedness, and the provision of medical resources to countries in need. The U.S.’s absence will weaken the organization’s ability to coordinate global health responses, leading to rising concerns that the world will struggle to respond effectively to future pandemics or health emergencies. This will boost the world health crisis.

The withdrawal has immediate and long-term consequences for Pakistan, a country already grappling with significant health challenges. As a member of the WHO, Pakistan has benefited from various programs and initiatives supported by the organization, including polio eradication efforts, maternal and child health services, and disease surveillance. The U.S. played a major role in financing many of these efforts, and the loss of this funding threatens the continuity and expansion of health programs in Pakistan, including initiatives aimed at combating infectious diseases like tuberculosis, malaria, and polio.

Pakistan remains one of the few countries where polio is endemic. Therefore, the decrease in U.S. support will increase Pakistan’s susceptibility to the spread of polio. Pakistan’s polio eradication campaign has faced significant challenges due to logistical, security, and cultural barriers. The current crisis has to contend with reduced funding from the United States of America. This places Pakistan in a very critical position to combat polio.

Furthermore, one must consider Pakistan's relationship with China and China's presence in global affairs after the U.S. withdrawal. As the U.S. sought to reduce its involvement in global organizations, China stepped in to fill the gap, highlighting its presence in the global arena. China's growing influence in WHO alters global health diplomacy, impacting Pakistan's international health cooperation. China is becoming a more dominant player in the WHO and other international initiatives, replacing the U.S. On the other hand, Pakistan and China's growing close ties make Pakistan navigate a shifting global health landscape where China's influence at WHO is on the rise. This alignment with China has positive aspects for Pakistan, as it allows Pakistan to benefit from China's support in health-related issues.

However, Pakistan finds itself in a challenging position with the U.S., as they are dissatisfied with China's increasing influence. Admittedly, Pakistan's healthcare system might face additional strain due to the disruptions in global health partnerships. Pakistan is bound to seek alternative sources of funding and cooperation. This global shift also made it harder for Pakistan to continue its progress in health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as WHO's ability to assist Pakistan in meeting These goals might get weak with WHO's reduced funds after the U.S. withdrawal. The loss of U.S. support within WHO affected critical public health initiatives, while Pakistan's position in the shifting geopolitics of global health required a careful recalibration of its diplomatic strategies.

In the long run, the U.S. decision highlighted the interconnectedness of global health and politics. The current situation underscores the significance of multilateral cooperation in tackling global challenges. As the U.S. later rejoined WHO under the Biden administration, the consequences of this withdrawal lingered for countries that rely on global cooperation to strengthen their healthcare systems. Trump's isolationist policies continue to disrupt multilateral health initiatives, forcing nations to recalibrate their diplomatic strategies.

Trump's return to office has once again highlighted the decision to re-withdraw from WHO. The world is yet to witness the implications of the U.S. re-withdrawing. For the

first time, the withdrawal from WHO was temporary. However, this time, the decision coincides with the return to the office.

<https://stratheia.com/the-u-s-withdrawal-from-who-consequences-and-implications-for-pakistan/>

The Cost of Populism: How Trump's Policies Reshape World Order

Shah Meer

February 13, 2025

The election of Donald Trump as the 47th President of the US has ushered in a new debate about the durability and credibility of the World Order. Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO), claims of annexing Canada as the US 51st state, reclaiming the control of the vital Panama Canal, changing the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, and, taking hold of the Gaza Strip under the pretext of reconstruction, imposition of tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China, and preparations of revoking the legal status of migrants has challenged the principles of the post-World War II international system. But what is world order in itself and how is Trump challenging it? Trump's short-term populist policies are compromising America's long-term strategic dominance in global affairs.

The concept of world order, defined as a set of guiding principles that regulates interaction among entities to achieve particular goals and objectives, is as old as society itself. An order encompasses rules, norms, values, and institutions meant to achieve security, stability and growth.

In the process of shaping world order, the powerful and weaker states have incentives to join it. The weaker states seek to ensure their security and protect themselves from potential aggression given their power disparities with the stronger states, while the powerful states structure the order in a way that suits their long-term interests.

However, during the formative age and throughout evolution of the order, the powerful states have to make concessions to the weaker ones for long-term objectives. These concessions can take the form of giving aids, loans, diplomatic support, military assistance if needed, exchange programs and other potential favors. Although such measures may appear to compromise the short-term objectives of the hegemon, they are instrumental in securing long-term influence.

For instance, the American aids and military support to foreign countries may invoke domestic resentment due to perceived economic burdens. However, these strategic investments enhance America's global influence, maintain alliances which are crucial for its hegemony, and sustain its leadership role in international affairs.

What basically Trump is doing is compromising America's long-term objectives for short-term domestic populist gains. His unilateral withdrawals from international regimes have raised concerns about the international process that has for long sustained the US hegemony. Withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership allowed China to strengthen its economic influence through the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

The tariffs imposed on Canada, Mexico and China are alienating the US allies and creating space for China to dominate the world order by taking parallel initiatives. These actions risk isolating the US on the international stage, weakening multilateral frameworks, and eroding the very ideas that have underpinned its dominance since World War II.

On January 23, 2017, Donald Trump officially withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership which was a trade agreement between 12 Pacific Rim economies. Trump, for populist gains, believed that the agreement had destroyed local job market. He said, "The Trans-Pacific Partnership is another disaster done and pushed by special interests who want to rape our country, just a continuing rape of our country".

According to the research by Peterson Institute for National Economies, the deal would have increased US exports by \$123 billion but had swung to a \$2 billion loss. According to a US International Trade Commission assessment, the Trans-Pacific Partnership would have boosted the country's GDP by \$42.7 billion by 2032, if Trump had not withdrawn.

To be more precise, the major objective of the TPP was to sustain American economic dominance and shape the rules governing trade in the Asia-Pacific region by uniting the various trading partners under American leadership to counter China's expanding economic sway.

In response to American withdrawal, 15 Asia-Pacific nations signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) by the end of 2020. The RCEP, which prominently includes China, went into effect on January 1st of that year and compressed regulatory harmonization and tariff reductions aimed at promoting trade among its member nations, significantly increasing China's role in shaping regional trade apparatus. By isolating the U.S. from multilateral institutions, Trump is eroding the very foundations of American global leadership.

For short-term populist gains, Trump is compromising the long-term strategic objectives of the US, and international standards that hold the US as the sole superpower. Similar to his first term, Trump once again demonstrates a willingness to unilaterally challenge international standards, as evidenced by his recent withdrawal from the WHO and the Paris Agreement which are becoming worse, as the tectonic plates.

That hold the US unipolarity is also trembling with the rise of China, Russian resurgence, and the formation of parallel institutions that give considerable say to China. In sum, Trump's short-term policies may have appealed to his domestic vote base, but they have come at the cost of eroding the very foundations of the global order that sustained American dominance.

<https://stratheia.com/the-cost-of-populism-how-trumps-policies-reshape-world-order/>

AJ&K Is Not Complete Without IIOJ&K

Alamgir Khan

February 16, 2025

Pakistan observes Kashmir Solidarity Day every year on 5th February to express unwavering political, moral and diplomatic support to the struggle of our Kashmiri brethren for their right of self-determination, as enshrined in the UN Charter and relevant UN resolutions. Following the conclusion of the World Wars, the decolonization process, the emergence of nation-states, and technological advancements demonstrate the necessity and awareness of implementing international law to improve the living conditions of those who are occupied. But certain nations—India foremost among them—continues to flout international law and their religious beliefs, violating every human right, especially in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOJ&K).

India has consistently disregarded United Nations resolutions, international law, and fundamental human rights since gaining independence in 1947. For example, it illegally and violently overran the Muslim-majority state of Jammu & Kashmir, violated the 1947 British Parliament plan, and promised a free and fair referendum under its own leader, Jawaharlal Nehru. The same thing was done in 2019 when India revoked Jammu & Kashmir's special status under Articles 370 and 35(A) of the Indian Constitution, which recognize Kashmir as a disputed territory. Without even considering the concerns of the neighboring states, especially Pakistan.

India has been engaging in a number of tactics that violate fundamental human rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), specifically Articles 3 and 5, which guarantee the right to life and the right to live in freedom and safety, as well as the right to be free from torture and inhuman treatment, respectively. These tactics include rape, torture, mass killings, phony encounters, and extrajudicial killings.

Thousands of citizens, including demonstrators and political leaders, have been detained under the Public Safety Act (PSA), frequently without a trial, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR). According to data from human rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, security forces have used excessive force on demonstrators and shotguns, which have resulted in multiple fatalities and serious injuries, primarily to the eyes.

The curfew and lockdown in Indian illegally occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) have resulted in the worst human rights abuses. The people of Kashmir, however, are increasingly calling for total independence from India rather than just lifting the curfew. Pakistan also insists on foreign media and human rights group to be allowed access to raise awareness of the horrors occurring in IIOJK till Kashmiris are granted their fundamental right to freedom.

The revocation of the special autonomous status of the Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir on 5th August 2019, under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government has undertaken a range of tactics to engineering Demography by favouring Hindus largely concentrated in the Jammu region of IIOJK. Prime Minister Narendra Modi revoked Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which had guaranteed a special status to the state of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Along with this, Article 35A was also abrogated, which gave powers to the legislature of IIOJK to decide who are the state subjects and thus entitled to certain privileges like jobs, scholarships, aid and right to own property. Despite using most inhuman means like arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, torture, use of pellet guns on unarmed protesters, and killing thousands of young Kashmiris, India has still not been able to break the will of Kashmiris and dissuade them from pursuing their basic right of self-determination.

Indian leaders frequently use misleading rhetoric to mislead the world community. Although Kashmiris are sometimes accused of terrorism by Indian leaders, the UN Charter, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other UN declarations allow people to fight for their right to self-determination. Thus, it is not right to label the Kashmiri people's struggle for freedom as terrorism. Regarding the claim of cross-border terrorism, India has rejected Pakistan's repeated proposals to strengthen the role of UN Observers on the Line of Control (LOC).

India should remind itself of the UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir, which it has consistently disregarded with impunity, as it vies for a permanent seat on the council. In a similar way, the international community ought to acknowledge its obligation under the UN Charter to address the problem of Kashmir. Why can't the UN

resolutions on Kashmir be implemented if they can be implemented on Iraq, Kosovo, and East Timor?

The Indian authorities have failed the people of Kashmir and have long denied them justice for decades of abuses by security forces, leading to a cycle of an unending violence. Pakistan urges the international community to help revert the unilateral and unlawful actions India has taken in IIOJK since August 5, 2019, halting all human rights abuses, reversing the demographic shifts in IIOJK, and peacefully resolving the Jammu and Kashmir conflict in line with international law. Pakistan will keep doing everything in its capacity to help the people of Kashmir achieve their unalienable right to self-determination, as guaranteed by the pertinent UN Security Council Resolutions.

<https://strafasia.com/ajk-is-not-complete-without-iiojk/>

Solidarity with Kashmir

Atta Ullah

February 16, 2025

Kashmir Day, observed on the 5th of February Every year, highlights the enduring suffering of the Kashmiri people. In post-August 2019 stasis, Kashmir has once again become a source of contention between two nuclear-armed countries. Since the illegal occupation of the valley in 1948, India has continued with recurring rhetoric on the status of the region and has pursued aggressive policies, which pose a threat to regional peace and stability. Recently, the Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh made an unfounded assertion about the *completion* of the Kashmir region as it was before its illegal occupation by the Indian forces. However, the notion of a “Complete Kashmir”, a disputed region between two countries, needs a timely revisit beyond India’s geopolitical ambitions.

India has been obsessed with the notion of occupying and ruling the complete region of the formally princely state of Kashmir. India has long treated it as a geopolitical trophy for its hegemonic ambitions and paranoid prestige attached to geographical expansion. This disregards the lives of the people living in that area whose right to self-determination, as enshrined by the UN Charter and Security Council Resolutions, has long been held in abeyance by India. The region remains divided into Azad and Jammu Kashmir (AJ&K), a semi-autonomous region ruled by its indigenous people on the Pakistani side, and Indian Illogically Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIJOK). It remains under the rule of both countries in parts, with the claim by India over the whole region, while Pakistan’s diplomatic position on the Right to self-determination for the people of Kashmir over the past seven decades.

Kashmir has remained a bone of contention between Pakistan and India and awaits a solution under the UN Charter. However, with the understanding that no country can unilaterally change the region’s status quo, India did so unilaterally and illegally in 2019 by stripping the region’s autonomous status. Since then, it has been hell-bent on portraying a false sense of normalcy out of the most militarized region of the world.

The Indian Minister Singh's recent remarks are harping over the fact that "J&K Is "Incomplete" Without Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. In fact, it is *Azad Jammu and Kashmir* (AJ&K), ruled by Indigenous people of the region, which is incomplete without IIOJK. Is India ready to let Kashmir get complete? The notion of complete Kashmir, a home to its indigenous people, can and should be achieved only through the right to self-determination of its people which India has been denying to them for more than half a millennium. What else does India think will make Kashmir get complete? In essence, a complete Kashmir means the integration of its people across physical barriers and geographical limits. It lies in the internationally recognized right of the Kashmiri people on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) to determine their future. A complete Kashmir lies in how its people wish to live a life free from colonial occupation and repression. Not in the expansion of the most militarized region and open-air prison in the world: IIOJK, under Indian control. The completion of Kashmir on a territorial basis is nothing except a project of territorial expansion.

Besides, the defense minister, while ignoring the illegal Indian occupation and worst colonial treatment that India has perpetrated on the people of Kashmir, in general, and since 2019 in particular, sets another criterion for its completion. That is: how does a country treat people in the respective parts of the region? The Indian Minister said without a second thought that Pakistan is not treating the people of AJK well, which India is obsessed with calling PoK or Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and justifying this for its occupation. If this is the criteria, that a country not treating the people of a certain region well should cede that territory to the neighboring country, then India is supposed to cede as much of its troubled regions to its neighbors as it has. i.e. Punjab to Sikh Community, Tamil to the indigenous Tamil people, and Assam to Bangladesh, among a long list of dozens of insurgencies going on in India. Otherwise, India's paranoid ambitions of overgrowing its geographical size can do nothing but bring regional disaster of its own causing.

In the same string, the minister took a jab in the name of cross-border terrorism in the region. Despite the fact there is no border separating the two parts of the region, it is a "line of control" that marks the self-governance of Indigenous people in AJ&K and the

freedom struggle of the local people on the other side of the line: in IJOK. That said, the Indian minister's statement seems more of Goebbels's maxim of "accuse(ing) your enemy of your own sins", or to accuse your enemy of that which you are guilty of yourself. That to shadow India's own international terrorism: reportedly in Pakistan and cross-continental terrorism, beyond the region, in Canada, the United States, and Australia.

To conclude, the Idea of "complete" Kashmir should, in essence, bring an end to the sufferings of the people in IJOK. It should bring an end to the territorial claims and conflict over Kashmir by peaceful means. Above all, it should lead to the socio-economic integration of the region and the uplift of its people to determine their future.

<https://strafasia.com/solidarity-with-kashmir/>

Is India on Path of Dismemberment?

Atta Ullah

February 16, 2025

India's long-held secular credentials, which claimed to guarantee social cohesion and cultural diversity, have come under severe scrutiny with the rise of Hindutva and Hindu radicalism. The marginalized religious and ethnic minority groups are increasingly facing systemic discrimination and persecution, intensifying their ongoing freedom movements in the length and width of India, from Kashmir to Northeastern Nagalim.

The latest wave of violence started in May 2023 between the Meitei Majority Hindu tribe with greater political power and the Indigenous Kuki Christian minority tribe, which remains marginalized, over land rights in Northeast India. In the wake of India's Citizenship Amendment Act and National Registration of Citizens, which the International Community terms as "fundamentally discriminatory," there is clear evidence of using these laws as tools of demographic engineering and systemic marginalization of the Indigenous people, especially religious and ethnic minorities. In the areas where there is any freedom movement, such as in Kashmir and the Northeastern Seven Sisters region, these Laws, in continuation of previous attempts, seem to discredit the independent movements of the local people. Among others, the struggle for independence of Nagalim, the oldest conflict in Asia or the second oldest in the world, has gained much traction with international support for the Independent State of Nagalim.

Historically, Nagalim, meaning "the land of Naga Language speaking people," encompasses present-day Nagaland proper, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh in India, and Kachin State and Sagaing Division in Myanmar. In 1929, the Naga People, through a Memorandum, conveyed that once the British left, they should be left to live on their own as before the colonization. In 1946, the British asked the Naga National Council (NNC) and the Indian Government to work out their terms of co-existence once the British withdrew from the region. Subsequently, in June 1947, the NNC and India reached a Nine Point Agreement under which India was given the Guardian Powers for 10 Years; thereafter, the Naga people would be free to decide their future. Unlike other union territories that were forced to sign the Indian Union Charter, Nagas never signed

it, and they maintained their independence with a separate army, a flag, and a constitution. However, India violated the terms of the agreement. It tried to integrate and assimilate the whole region through forced conversions from Christianity to Hinduism and ethnic cleansing to quash their freedom struggle. As a result, on 14 August 1947, Nagalim was declared an independent country. India disregarded the Declaration of Independence and sent its “armed forces to destroy, by any means, the material and spiritual basis of Naga peoples’ independence.” In 1951, NNC, once again, held a referendum, and the Plebiscite turned out to be 99.9% vote for independence.

The Nagalim resistance movement gained momentum when, in 1952, under the presence of heavy military deployment, India imposed general elections on the Naga people, which they boycotted. From 1956, the year India’s constitution failed to live up to the commitments under the agreement with the Naga people, to 1959, the Naga people fought the Indian forces and defeated them. Later on, in 1975, when India imposed a surrender act called the “Shillong Accord” upon the Naga people, they gathered under the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) and opposed India. Thereafter, various negotiations have only resulted in a framework agreement to resolve the issue. On the peace talks under the Modi Government, the Former CM of Nagaland says that these negotiations “have remained purely symbolic and deceptive” because the paper talks differ from the actions on the ground.

In an interview, Miss Grace Collins, the honorary president of the Nagalim Independent State recognized by the US, recently argued that the region was “divided without the consent of the local people into four parts,” as mentioned above. Further, Ms. Collins contends that “there is nothing Indian about Nagas DNA wise, they do not look Indian by any means from the traditional word of Asian.” That said, Ms. Grace further adds that India has given a free hand to Hindu Zionist groups under the pretext of an ethnic clash in Manipur to counter and neutralize their freedom struggle systemically.

India has put an area restriction area; no people are allowed to come in or go out of Nagaland. It has used draconian laws as an instrument of persecution, which gives the Indian forces “the right to shoot any Nagas without any consequences,” says Ms. Grace. Since 2010, India has restricted foreign investment in the region to hinder

economic development. A human rights organization recently granted India an F rating, “the third most human rights violator in Asia.” As per the said organization, the atrocities committed by Indian forces and radical groups have resulted in violation of 24 out of 30 Human Rights declarations. Groups Like the Global Hindu Heritage Foundation (GHHF), a non-profit organization in the US, collect donations in America and fund violence against religious and ethnic minorities, especially in the Northeastern states of Nagaland and Manipur.

Ms. Grace recently reiterated that the only option out of a breakup *of* India and a Breakup *with* India for the Indigenous people was a breakup *from* India. Her comments come in the contemporary geopolitical context of great power contestation where the struggle of an Independent State of Nagalim can become a tool for coercion and compliance and, subsequently, punishment for India. Such an eventuality, as some commenters point out, would shape the region and beyond, marking the beginning of the dismemberment of India. She further suggested that since Naga Christians and Muslims in India are equally oppressed by the Hindu radicals, this brings them a common cause, and, therefore, the Muslim countries and their leadership should support the Nagalim just like they do for their fellow Muslims. According to Ms. Grace, “It would be the most beautiful act of service by the international community to support the creation of a Christian state of Nagalim in the Northeast of India.”

<https://strafasia.com/is-india-on-path-of-dismemberment/>

Erosion of Trust

Usama Khalid

February 17, 2025

The world is as divisive and uncertain today as has never been observed since the end of World Wars in the last century. Ever since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, there has been an active threat of nuclear escalation. However, the situation has not reached – that level of nuclear use- yet, but the threat cannot be discounted. Since the disintegration of former USSR, the world remained aligned with the unipolar global structure reigned by the United States.

The crumbling foundations of arms control and disarmament regimes, Russian invasion of Ukraine, economic and diplomatic rise of China and the new multilateral arrangements by the emerging states, are all the contributing factors that have significantly been reshaping the global power dynamics in the 21st century.

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

The ever-increasing distrust among the states with the weakening of international institutions is the main cause of the erosion of the trust on the unipolar global order – in simple terms on the US. This has been fueling the sense of self-reliance in security realm among the emerging states i.e. there has been critical observation in South Korea and Japan on the extended nuclear deterrence of the US – especially in the post Russia-Ukraine war. In the region where North Korea is already an established nuclear power, the threat is and will be looming on these two states to adopt a robust defensive mechanism to protect themselves from the lingering sword of extinction because reliance on the third party might not be helpful at the given circumstances.

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

Contemporarily, the weakening of the existing arms control and disarmament regimes is the primary reason in ascending the threat of global proliferation. Commencing from collapse of Iran Nuclear Deal (commonly known as JCPOA) in 2018, US withdrawal from Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019, cessation of talks on the New START since 2021, US withdrawal from Open Skies Treaty (OST) in 2020, and the unresolved deadlock on the proposed Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). The larger sense of mistrust among each other at the global political spectrum resulted in the states' disassociation from such Confidence Building Measures (CBMs).

Emerging powers are also questioning the concept of deterrence umbrella in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine because in that case the invader is the mammoth nuclear possessing force, while the victim is non-nuclear armed state. Ukraine – the victim of Russian aggression – once inherited the USSR's nuclear weapons which they gave away in 1994 in return for the Security assurances to its territorial sovereignty by the US, Britain and Russia itself.

At this current juncture, where every state and region are in a hostile mode in one way or the other, the security stabilization is hard to maintain. Erosion of trust on the dying Global Unipolar hegemon US, weakening of non-proliferation regimes and the evolving shift in the global world order is coercing states to think differently when it comes to their own survivability, security and territorial integrity.

The ineffectiveness of international institutions has also become the driving factor in changing the global narrative of international policing in crisis situations. Tussles and

rivalries are hampering the established regimes of nuclear non-proliferation. In such circumstances, states with potential capabilities then try to pursue policies independent of international oversight and inspection – in a classical text known as *Anarchy* – will further destabilize the global peace and order.

<https://policyeast.com/erosion-of-trust/>

Stargate and the Race for AI Dominance

Pairman Bazai

February 18, 2025

The great power competition has entered into the AI battleground for AI supremacy and is under big turns. Semiconductors (microchips) are the oil of the 21st century, and AI models are the modern tanks. In just a few years' wars, their strategies and tactics will be decided by superintelligent robots who will be the powerful weapons of the future. The two rivals of the century, the US and China, are engaged in competition in the field, not only for economic gains but also for AI dominance. AI is no longer just about automation and efficiency but also a critical tool in geopolitics, military strategy, and economic dominance. AI has become a national priority for both of the powers. There are two strategic ways to contain rivals, including: imposing sanctions and increasing tariffs on relative material and competing through innovations and developments.

To maintain its dominance in technology, the US applied both of the strategies to its competitors. The US-China semiconductor tensions have intensified through escalating sanctions and countermeasures. Since 2022, the US has imposed strict export controls, restricting China's access to advanced chip-making technology to curb its military and AI advancements. It also expanded its Entity List, blocking around 140 major Chinese tech firms (e.g., Huawei, SMIC, and Naura Technology etc.) from acquiring critical US technologies. In retaliation, China imposed export bans on key materials like gallium and germanium, essential for semiconductor production. These moves have disrupted the global supply chain, pushing both nations to strengthen their domestic chip industries for self-reliance while fueling broader geopolitical and economic competition.

China has made AI development a national priority, embedding it in its surveillance systems, economic planning, and military applications. According to a 2023 report by Tsinghua University, China's AI industry grew by 40% annually, with investments exceeding \$70 billion. The US, wary of losing its edge, is now accelerating efforts to maintain leadership in the AI domain. When it seemed that the US was leading the field, BANG! China had arrived with DeepSeek, trying to break all the schemes. On the other hand, the US is trying to secure its leadership in AI through its new private-sector,

joint mega project of an ambitious AI infrastructure initiative, the Stargate. It was launched in January 2025. The major partners included OpenAI, SoftBank, Oracle, and MGX.

With an estimated investment of up to 500 billion USD, the Stargate Project represents one of the most significant AI infrastructure initiatives in history. The cost of the four-year project of Stargate is 500 billion USD, which is double the NASA Apollo Program which was around 280–320 billion USD in today's money. The project shows that it will be entirely privately funded without burdening American taxpayers, but while Trump has made a bold move, the program will remain full of uncertainties. The plan includes the construction of advanced data centers across the US, with the first already underway in Abilene, Texas. Trump stated that Stargate will construct the centers. "These data hubs will supply the processing power required for next-generation AI models, reaffirming America's leadership in AI research and innovation.

The Stargate project not only aims for US economic and technological progress but also is a strategic response to counter the Chinese technological development. Chinese investment in the integration of automated surveillance, biometric identification, and predictive policing in its governance raises concerns about digital authoritarianism, as many reports indicate that it monitors over 700 million citizens daily. The US focuses on driving AI innovation by working closely with private companies like OpenAI and NVIDIA, using their expertise to push technological advancements. Furthermore, in the last five years, it was noted that China had a lead in AI-generated patents that was around 2.5 times higher than the total of the US patents. Hence the point is, can the Stargate Project bridge this widening gap, or is it merely a symbolic move?

The Stargate Project represents a pivotal moment in the US-China technological rivalry, but its success is far from guaranteed. As both nations double down on AI investments, global order is shifting towards an era where AI supremacy is as crucial as military power. The 500 billion USD leaves the question of whether the Stargate Project give the United States the strategic upper hand, or is merely the beginning of a prolonged AI

arms race with uncertain outcomes? Either way, the world is entering an age where AI dictates geopolitics as much as diplomacy and military force.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2025/02/18/the-stargate-and-the-race-for-ai-dominance/>

Causes of Balochistan Backwardness – Way Forward

Sadaf Nadeem

February 19, 2025

Political exclusion in Balochistan goes beyond the mere denial of representation, participation, and voice to certain groups or regions in political decision-making processes.

Instead, it involves the absence of genuine political representation, resulting in a lack of agency and empowerment for the people. Marginalization, on the other hand, is the process through which these groups are pushed to the periphery of political, social, and economic systems, leaving them underrepresented and underserved. In the case of Balochistan, these two concepts are deeply intertwined and manifest in the region's historical and ongoing struggles.

Despite being Pakistan's largest province by area and home to 12.34 million people (as per the 2017 Census), with the 2023 Census estimating its population at 14.89million, Balochistan remains underdeveloped despite its natural resources and strategic importance.

Understanding Balochistan's current political marginalization requires critical examination of its geography and history. This opinion piece aims to shed light on the causes of Balochistan backwardness, analyze the root causes of its marginalization, and propose actionable reforms to address its challenges.

Historically, the region has faced neglect and exclusion under various governing authorities. During the British Raj, Balochistan was treated primarily as a buffer zone, with minimal focus on the welfare or development of its people.

After independence, northern Balochistan, which was formerly British Balochistan, continued to be governed as a "Chief Commissioner's Province," limiting its autonomy and political representation. Meanwhile, Kalati Balochistan remained under the rule of the Khan of Kalat until its formal accession to Pakistan. Balochistan, in its current territorial form, was officially granted provincial status in 1970. Major decisions regarding resource allocation and infrastructure development were often made without consulting local communities. Even under Pakistani rule, local governance has

remained weak, with key decisions frequently dictated by federal authorities rather than the region's own people.

This historical marginalization continues to manifest in Balochistan's present-day political structure, where representation remains a major challenge. This lack of local representation and the continued disregard for the rights and aspirations of not only the Baloch people but also other communities such as Pashtuns and Hazaras has hindered Balochistan's ability to harness its vast potential for political, economic, and social development.

The political structure in Balochistan, even after partition, reflects the marginalization of its people. As per the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), Balochistan holds 16 general seats and a total of 20 seats in the National Assembly. While it accounts for 44% of the total area, its representation in the National Assembly is significantly lower due to seat allocation being based on population rather than land area. Given that Balochistan has the lowest population among all provinces, its parliamentary representation remains limited. This may be one of the reasons that it has resulted in a sense of disenfranchisement among the local population, which feels excluded from national decision-making processes. This lack of effective political representation is further compounded by governance failures and financial constraints, deepening local grievances.

Political marginalization is further compounded by the presence of the Sardari system, a traditional tribal leadership structure often marked by corruption and limited democratic participation. As noted by political experts, this system has significantly stunted the development of a more inclusive and transparent local governance system in Balochistan. For instance, tribal leaders often influence the distribution of development funds, leading to uneven resource allocation.

The lack of political representation and weak governance structures have deepened the grievances of the people. Political analysts, including Dr. Kaiser Bengali, argue that Balochistan's political issues cannot be addressed without strengthening effective provincial autonomy. While the 18th Amendment granted provinces more control over their affairs, Balochistan has struggled to generate sufficient revenue to meet its

financial needs. Despite expectations that provincial autonomy would lead to economic self-sufficiency, the province continues to face budget deficits and remains heavily dependent on federal transfers, which account for nearly 70% of its total budget. This raises questions about the effectiveness of financial autonomy and whether further decentralization is needed.

Since significant federal funds are allocated to Balochistan, misgovernance and corruption have led to inefficient utilization of these resources, particularly in critical infrastructure such as education and healthcare. Without addressing these systemic governance failures, financial autonomy alone cannot resolve the province's long-standing issues.

This political exclusion extends beyond just electoral representation. Local governance in Balochistan is largely shaped by the Sardari system, which remains influential in determining the allocation of resources and political power. While most political representatives are local, the real concern is how they come into power, often through patronage and elite influence rather than democratic accountability. This system is frequently criticized for perpetuating corruption and a lack of transparency.

For instance, while significant federal and provincial funds are allocated for development, these funds are often mismanaged or distributed through politically influential individuals and groups rather than being used to directly benefit the local communities. As a result, many areas remain deprived of basic services such as clean water, education, and healthcare. The challenge is not merely a lack of federal funding but rather the inefficiency and corruption within local governance structures, which are disconnected from the needs of the people and lack public accountability mechanisms.

To move forward, it is critical that Balochistan's political system is reformed to promote greater local participation, democratic representation, and transparency. The establishment of a more inclusive governance model, coupled with mechanisms to monitor resource allocation and service delivery, is essential to ensure that development efforts truly address the needs of Balochistan's population.

Without significant political reforms, Balochistan will continue to face the devastating consequences of marginalization, including persistent underdevelopment, social unrest, and widening inequality. To address these challenges, it is crucial to prioritize by strengthening political inclusion through meaningful representation at both provincial and federal levels. Empowering local governance with greater autonomy and resources is equally vital, ensuring that development aligns with the needs of the people.

Additionally, addressing deep-rooted issues such as corruption, the exclusion of marginalized communities, including lower-income groups, women, and ethnic minorities, and the lack of transparency in resource allocation is imperative. By adopting these measures, Balochistan can not only overcome its current challenges but also emerge as a cornerstone of Pakistan's socio-economic growth and stability.

<https://www.wgi.world/causes-of-balochistan-backwardness-way-forward/>

US Sanctions on Pakistan and the South Asian Security Dilemma

Summra Hamid

February 20, 2025

The recent imposition of US sanctions on Pakistan's ballistic missile program has ushered in a wave of debate and concern, particularly regarding their far-reaching implications particularly on security balance, affecting regional stability in South Asia.

These sanctions, aimed at curtailing Pakistan's missile development activities, target key institutions such as the National Development Complex and various private entities. Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has denounced the sanctions as "unfortunate and biased," arguing that they exacerbate military asymmetries and undermine regional peace and stability. This move marks a significant escalation in US policy and rhetoric towards Pakistan's strategic capabilities, raising critical questions about the future of regional security dynamics.

The MoFA's statement highlights the perceived double standards in US foreign policy, pointing out that similar sanctions have not been applied to other countries with advanced missile programs. This sentiment was seconded by former Pakistani envoy, Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, describing the sanctions as discriminatory and ineffective in curbing Pakistan's strategic capabilities.

The US has often been criticized for its preferential treatment of India, particularly in the context of strategic partnerships and defense cooperation. For instance, the US has provided India with advanced military technology and support, while imposing stringent sanctions on Pakistan. The US's reluctance to criticize India's domestic policies, such as the revocation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, emboldens India to pursue further controversial actions, potentially disregarding international concerns.

Deputy National Security Adviser Jon Finer emphasized that Pakistan's actions regarding the development of its missile program raise "real questions" about its intentions, suggesting that Islamabad's missile capabilities could potentially target regions beyond South Asia, including the United States itself. However, on the contrary, India's Agni-V being an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) with a range of over

7,000 kilometers, capable of reaching targets across Asia and into Europe, remains unnoticed.

The US imposed sanctions on Pakistan after its nuclear tests, mirroring the response to India, but with significantly less severity towards India, showcasing US biased foreign policy in South Asia. With this, it is quite clear that the US views India as a counterweight vis-à-vis China that is perceived to be a potential threat to the US predominance in the region. Therefore, any security threat created by India remains unnoticed in the eyes of the US. Intentionally, whatever and however India acts are ignored for geopolitical reasons.

The imposition of these sanctions is likely to intensify the security dilemma in South Asia concept in international relations where actions taken by one state to enhance its security cause insecurity in other states, leading to an arms race and heightened tensions. These sanctions could also have significant geopolitical ramifications, pushing Pakistan closer to China, its long-standing ally.

As Pakistan seeks to counterbalance the growing Indo-US partnership, it may deepen its military and economic ties with China, potentially altering the strategic balance in South Asia. According to the MoFA, “such actions only serve to destabilize the regional balance, compelling Pakistan to strengthen its deterrence capabilities further.”

In the context of South Asia, the US sanctions on Pakistan could prompt Islamabad to further bolster its missile and nuclear capabilities as a deterrent against the perceived threats from both the US and India. This, in turn, could trigger a corresponding response from India, escalating the arms race in the region and against Pakistan. For India, the sanctions are a clear indication of US support in its strategic rivalry with Pakistan, potentially emboldening New Delhi’s stance. Ultimately, leading to more assertive policies by India, including accelerated development of its own missile and defense capabilities against Pakistan.

The motivations behind the US sanctions on Pakistan’s missile program are debated, with some viewing them as an effort to curb nuclear proliferation, while others see them as a tactic to limit China’s growing influence in the region. Critics argue that the

sanctions are part of a broader strategy to contain China's influence in the region, with Pakistan being viewed as a key player in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

By targeting Pakistan's missile capabilities, the US aims to curtail China's strategic reach and limit its influence in South Asia and beyond. However, this approach carries risks. Such an outcome would counteract US objectives and potentially create a more formidable regional bloc. Additionally, it could strain US relations with other regional actors, including allies who may view the sanctions as destabilizing.

In conclusion, the US sanctions on Pakistan's ballistic missile program aim to counter China while presenting the situation as addressing proliferation concerns. It risks exacerbating the security dilemma in South Asia. By intensifying regional rivalries and prompting an arms race, these sanctions could undermine efforts to achieve long-term peace and stability in the region. It is crucial for all stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue and pursue balanced approaches to security that consider the complex dynamics of South Asia. The need for diplomacy and multilateral cooperation has never been greater. Only through inclusive dialogue and mutual respect can the global community build a future that is balanced, equitable, and sustainable, mitigating the risks of conflict and fostering a stable and secure South Asia.

<https://www.wgi.world/us-sanctions-on-pakistan-and-the-south-asian-security-dilemma/>

The Indo-US Growing Strategic Partnership: Balancing China's Influence in South Asia

Summra Hamid

February 20, 2025

The Indo-US strategic partnership has significantly evolved, marked by recent developments that underscore its depth and implications for South Asia's geopolitical landscape. This alliance, rooted in shared democratic values and mutual strategic interests, particularly in countering China's expanding influence, presents both opportunities and challenges for the region.

In October 2024, India formalized an agreement with the United States to procure 31 MQ-9B drones, comprising 16 Sky Guardian and 15 Sea Guardian variants worth 4 billion. This acquisition aims to enhance India's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities across various domains. Further solidifying defense ties, the U.S. and India have made notable progress under the Defense Industrial Cooperation Roadmap.

Since 2008, India has contracted for more than \$ 20 billion worth of U.S.-origin defense articles. This includes a variety of military equipment such as transport and maritime aircraft, helicopters, anti-ship missiles, and howitzers. In 2016 the U.S. Congress designated India as a "Major Defense Partner," which grants India certain defense trade and security cooperation privileges. Moreover, India is expected to spend at least \$200 billion over the next decade to modernize its armed forces.

Among collaborations, co-production arrangements for jet engines, munitions, and ground mobility systems are included. Notably, a teaming agreement between Lockheed Martin and Tata Advanced Systems Limited was established to set up a Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facility in India for the C-130J Super Hercules aircraft.

Additionally, the launch of the India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) initiative has raised defense innovation collaboration between governments, businesses, and academic institutions. Additionally, among the top suppliers of arms, the US is at the third number of defense exports to India. Since 2008, about 62% of

India's defense imports (by value) have come from Russia, followed by France (11%), the US (10%), and Israel (7%).

For Pakistan, the deepening Indo-US partnership raises significant security concerns. India's bolstered military capabilities, supported by the US technology and defense systems, could potentially alter the strategic balance in South Asia. This development challenges Pakistan's traditional reliance on strategic balance to deter aggression.

Moreover, the US strategic tilt towards India has complicated its relationship with Pakistan, a nation that has historically been a key ally in the region. It is difficult for Islamabad to balance its alliance with China while maintaining relations with Washington, as it is challenging because of the growing US-India cooperation and with historical abuse of power by India.

The Indo-Pacific region is witnessing a dynamic interplay of geopolitical forces. The US, through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), a strategic partnership with India, Japan, and Australia, is actively working to counter China's growing influence. The 2023 Quad summit in Tokyo highlighted the specific focus on the importance of maintaining a "free and open Indo-Pacific," emphasizing a rules-based order and freedom of navigation.

In contrast, China is deepening its strategic partnerships through platforms like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The 2024 SCO summit in Islamabad saw leaders, including China and Russia, focus on boosting mutual trade, joint investment projects, and developing new international transport corridors, signaling China's commitment to expanding its economic and political influence within the region.

Moreover, China has intensified its cooperation with Pakistan. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), exemplifies this partnership. Recent developments include the inauguration of the New Gwadar International Airport in October 2024, a project funded mainly by China, aiming to enhance connectivity and economic growth in the region. While the Indo-US partnership's focus on military alliances and power projection could overshadow

pressing regional challenges such as poverty, climate change, and human development.

In conclusion, growing defense cooperation between the United States and India has profound implications for the South Asian region. It shifts the strategic balance in favor of India, leading to increased tensions and an arms race as Pakistan and China bolster their own military capabilities in response. This cooperation also heightens military tensions, particularly in the Indian Ocean and Himalayan regions, impacting regional stability and peace.

Economically, the partnership puts pressure on countries like Pakistan, potentially facing sanctions or restrictions from the U.S. for the perceived threats. Geopolitically, the U.S.-India alliance may serve as a counterbalance to China's influence in the perceived Indo-Pacific, prompting competition for regional dominance. Additionally, this cooperation may strengthen security alliances, with China and Pakistan deepening their strategic partnerships, further fueling a regional arms race.

The evolving Indo-US partnership is reshaping South Asia's geopolitical contours. Its long-term success will depend on balancing power dynamics without escalating regional tensions, fostering an environment where cooperation prevails over conflict. Overall, the U.S.-India defense collaboration significantly alters the regional dynamics, affecting strategic balance, stability, economic conditions, and geopolitical alignments in South Asia.

<https://www.wgi.world/the-indo-us-growing-strategic-partnership-balancing-chinas-influence-in-south-asia/>

Astro-politics and Conflicts in Gray Zone

Naseem Sabzal

February 20, 2025

Since the first object was sent into space, humans flew over those edges that separated the earth from boundaries and imaginations where ancient people could only look. On October 4, 1957, Sputnik-1 made its maiden flight into lower Earth orbit and the Soviet Union recorded its name as the first nation to have the privilege of waving its flag in Space.

The race to wander in the gray zone between Earth and Outer Space was also part of the arms race during the Cold War, but neither the US nor the Soviet was sure why they wanted to fly in a cold, empty and uninhabited region apart from psychological and ideological supremacy on its adversary. But now more than 80 countries are running active space programs and this time the race is not only about dominating the minds of adversaries, but the race to populate low earth orbit with communication, spying, remote sensing, navigation satellites and colonize celestial bodies Mars and Moon for martian and lunar resources. In recent years military activities in the gray zone and outer space have advanced.

The establishment of US space force (USSF), development of Anti-Satellite Weapons (ASAT), cyber-attacks on satellites have shifted the discourse of peaceful use of space and this is all about sphere of influence in space. The strategic edge in space is driving countries to drag conflicts into space and turn the gray zone (LEO) Low-Earth orbit into a battlefield in future and finally mark the era of Astropolitics.

The US, China and Russia are leading countries in space followed by India, Japan and the European Space Agency. The implications of power politics and geopolitical confrontations on earth can be seen in space. The US announced its Space Force (USSF) in 2019 to protect its interests in space and become a space power. The USSF became the first army to operate outside earth which raised concerns on the future of the gray zone, is there a need for an army in space where humans cannot mobilize, nor do terrorists can threaten our peace.

As Tim Marshall says, in his book, 'The Future of Geography' "this is the era of Astropolitics". This is the final front of confrontation and geopolitics will be taken over by Astropolitics. The formation of USSF is just a sign we are actually entering into this era. where countries will be flexing their muscles to dominate the limitless region, and it gives much more context of placing weapons in space without weapons no army can operate and without adversaries no army can exist, and space race is turning out to be space arms race.

The course of Astropolitical events can be seen with the development of the ASAT by the US, China, Russia and India. It has revolutionized the nature of warfare on earth and space. Cyber-attacks in the 21st century play a crucial role in taking down opponents by cutting off access to communication and navigation satellites.

From locating enemies to launching missiles the satellites provide pinpoint accuracy. They are soldiers in the dark in space away from our reach. But ASAT is a game changer. Satellites flying above the Karman line are not safe. They can be taken down and sometimes we cannot even find out who shot down the satellite due to complexities in the tracking system, jamming and blinding of satellites with non-kinetic ASATs

Around 9822 active and 2770 inactive satellites are orbiting in low earth orbit which is inarguably the gray zone between the Earth and outer space. Satellite destruction and debris in space has become a major threat for those satellites which are indispensable for navigation, communication and weather forecast. Thousands of debris freely moving in space and now ASATs are big questions. Is confrontation in Space a worthwhile idea?

Apparently, it is not because space is very vulnerable to such hostile military activities. Though Outer space Treaty of 1967 restricts countries from placing or testing nuclear weapons in this region and ensures use of celestial bodies for peaceful purposes but placing or testing of conventional weapons or ASATs is a big loophole which is exploited by countries leading in space activities and this seems to be the rationale of power show and political confrontation on earth between US, Russia, China and India

The idea of turning space race into space arms race will have its far-reaching consequences. This is a large enough area to roam freely, quite enough to pave the ways for setting humans on Mars or Moon in future. This only seems possible if the way to space is clear without weapons or a hostile environment. Technological advancement and geopolitics on earth is posing a threat to the peaceful environment of space.

The outdated space treaties need to be renegotiated with current challenges and a common understanding for space exploration is matter of time for global peace and cooperation in space activities while the subject of treaties also need to be extended to private corporation leading in space which must have check on their activities to avoid polluting space with countless satellites or unregulated activities.

<https://policyeast.com/astro-politics-and-conflicts-in-gray-zone/>

Why Trump`s India Bet Could Backfire?

Sher Ali

February 21, 2025

For the past two decades, the United States has made an enormous bet in the Asia-Pacific—that treating India as a key partner will help the US secure its geopolitical interests in the region. From George W. Bush onward, successive US administrations have bolstered India`s military capabilities. During his recent visit to Washington, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump in their wide-ranging joint statement at the White House agreed to give a new impetus to their defense cooperation by transferring advanced military technologies to India.

The two sides reaffirmed their commitments to eliminating terrorism while adding a Pakistan-specific reference that has no basis. This has once again sparked concerns about the Trump administration`s biased South Asia policy by continuing the legacy of the Biden administration policy toward the region which ended by imposing sanctions on Pakistan`s missile program while playing no role in promoting broader regional interests. US president does not take into account India`s sponsorship of terrorism, subversion, and extrajudicial killings in the region and beyond, nor its hate crimes against Muslims

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

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

Furthermore, Washington is turning a blind eye to the Indian government's brutalities in the Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOK), where innocent people are being killed and tortured by the occupation forces daily with impunity, failing to address non-compliance of India with the UNSC resolutions. Unfortunately, in complete disrespect of international law and the UN Charter, the Modi-led Indian government is pursuing its hegemonic designs, threatening international peace and security. The US needs to adopt an unbiased policy for South Asia given the region's history, which is characterized by major wars, and the unending rivalry between the two nuclear-armed neighbours

The Modi-Trump talks also "pledged to work together to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and to deny access to such weapons by terrorists and non-state actors". However, it is important to note that the US military support to India undermines the very aim of the global non-proliferation regime and the US commitments to the non-proliferation efforts. Such initiatives would only undermine the already weekend arms control regimes and global efforts for non-proliferation.

The US continued support to India is only resulting in a strategic imbalance in South Asia, intensifying India-Pakistan rivalry and Pakistan's threat perceptions, and fueling the regional arms race and action-reaction syndrome. The Indo-US defense cooperation and the geopolitical interests of the US are affecting the existing treaties and hindering progress towards meaningful dialogues and cooperation as it privileges its national preference over the collective.

The US is supporting India's military modernization at the expense of regional security and stability. Also, the development of nuclear-capable long-range missiles by India is posing a serious threat to global peace and security alongside its poor nuclear safety and security record and aggressive military posturing. To maintain global peace an escalation between the two nuclear-armed neighbours has to be averted

Pakistan and India are already on the brink of a dangerous nuclear escalation due to the absence of institutionalized confidence-building measures (CBMs), the suspension of diplomatic ties between Islamabad and New Delhi, and the Indian government's aggressive military posture in South Asia. In such an uncertain security environment, strategic stability is not only key to peace and security in the region but also to maintaining global peace as an escalation between the two nuclear-armed neighbors has the potential to engulf global peace.

The US is only exacerbating military imbalances in South Asia by supplying advanced military technologies to India. The US needs to adopt an unbiased policy for South Asia given the region's history, which is characterized by major wars, the unending rivalry between the two nuclear-armed neighbors, and unresolved disputes, which continue to create threats to regional peace and stability. The US should not ignore Pakistan's two-decade-long cooperation with the US in its war on terror due to which Pakistan suffered economically. Besides, it resulted in the loss of thousands of its people.

In the immediate term, the US should stop providing India with advanced military technologies realizing its widespread implications. The Trump administration should support and promote initiatives for peace and stability in the region. Lastly, to counter the Indian threats at all levels, Pakistan has no other option but to maintain the credibility of its nuclear deterrence.

<https://stratheia.com/why-trumps-india-bet-could-backfire/>

The AI Arms Race: How LLMS are shaping the Future of intelligence?

Muhammad Sulaman

February 22, 2025

The rapid evolution of Large Language Models (LLMs) has sparked an unprecedented race among tech giants and startups alike. OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, Microsoft's Copilot, Anthropic's Claude, DeepSeek, and Elon Musk's Grok are all vying for dominance in a market that is projected to grow from USD 214.6 billion in 2024 to USD 1339.1 billion in 2030. This competition is not just about technological superiority, it is about shaping the future of work, education, and human-machine interaction. But as these models grow more powerful, the stakes are becoming increasingly high, raising critical questions about ethics, accessibility, water usage and the concentration of power.

The Players

OpenAI's ChatGPT: With over 100 million active users and millions of daily queries, ChatGPT remains a leader in the LLM space. OpenAI's GPT-4 Turbo, released in 2023, is significantly faster and cheaper than its predecessors, with improved contextual understanding and reduced hallucinations. GPT-4 significantly outperforming its predecessors in complex reasoning and creativity, as evidenced by its performance in the MMLU (Massively Multitask Language Understanding) benchmark where it scored around 86.4%, surpassing human performance in several academic areas.

Google DeepMind's Gemini: Google's Gemini (formerly Bard) is built on Google's vast search and cloud infrastructure, making it a formidable competitor. Gemini 1.5, released in 2024, boasts a context length of over 1 million tokens, allowing it to process extensive documents and codebases with greater accuracy. Preliminary data suggest Gemini could achieve a 90% accuracy in image captioning tasks, according to internal tests, although exact figures remain under wraps.

Anthropic's Claude: Focused on AI safety, Claude models emphasize reliability and ethical considerations. Claude 3, launched in early 2024, has been trained with

Constitutional AI, making it one of the most transparent and controlled models in the industry.

Microsoft's Copilot: Powered by GitHub and Azure's AI capabilities, has transformed coding practices, with over 1 million developers using it monthly by 2023. It is claimed to boost coding efficiency by up to 55%, reducing the time developers spend on writing code by automating routine tasks. This integration into the developer's workflow exemplifies how LLMs are becoming indispensable tools in tech industries.

Meta's Llama: Meta's Llama series prioritizes open-source access to large language models. Llama 2, released in 2023, was trained on over 2 trillion tokens, providing a cost-effective alternative to proprietary models. Llama 3, released in 2024, offers even greater performance and capabilities, including improved reasoning, coding, and multilingual support. Available in various sizes up to 405 billion parameters, Llama 3 represents a significant advancement in open-source LLMs.

Elon Musk's Grok: Developed by xAI, Grok is designed for real-time engagement and social media integration. Grok 2, embedded into X (formerly Twitter), leverages user-generated content for improved conversational accuracy.

DeepSeek: As China's response to Western AI dominance, DeepSeek has made significant strides in scientific research applications. DeepSeek 2, with an expanded dataset of Chinese and multilingual content, is gaining traction in academia and enterprise AI solutions.

The Driving Forces Behind the Race

The competition is fuelled by three key factors: innovation, market share, and data. Each model is racing to improve its capabilities, whether through larger datasets, better algorithms, or novel architecture like Google's Pathways. Market share is equally critical, as companies seek to lock users into their ecosystems. Microsoft's integration of Copilot into its suite of products is a prime example of this strategy.

Data, however, is the lifeblood of LLMs. The more data a model can access, the better it performs. This has led to concerns about privacy and the ethical use of data, particularly as models like Grok tap into real-time social media feeds. The European Union's AI Act, set to take effect in August 2025, aims to regulate these practices, but enforcement remains a challenge.

The Risks and Ethical Dilemmas

While the advancements in LLMs are impressive, they come with significant risks. Bias and misinformation remain persistent issues. For instance, a 2023 study by Stanford University found that GPT-4 exhibited racial and gender biases in 29% of test cases. Similarly, the proliferation of AI-generated content has raised concerns about the spread of misinformation, with deepfakes and fake news becoming increasingly sophisticated.

Another concern is the concentration of power in the hands of a few tech giants. OpenAI, Google, and Microsoft dominate the LLM landscape, raising questions about monopolistic practices and the marginalization of smaller players. This could stifle innovation and limit the diversity of perspectives in AI development.

The Path Forward

To ensure that the LLM race benefits society as a whole, several steps must be taken. First, transparency and accountability must be prioritized. Companies should disclose the datasets used to train their models and allow independent audits to assess bias and ethical compliance. Second, regulation must strike a balance between fostering innovation and protecting users. The EU's AI Act is a step in the right direction, but global cooperation is needed to create consistent standards.

Finally, accessibility must be addressed. While LLMs have the potential to democratize knowledge, their high costs and reliance on cloud infrastructure could exacerbate the digital divide. Initiatives like OpenAI's ChatGPT API and Google's Gemini Nano (a lightweight version for mobile devices) are promising, but more needs to be done to ensure that these technologies are accessible to all.

Conclusion

The race between LLMs is not just a technological competition, it is a battle for the future of AI. As models like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot continue to evolve, they hold the promise of transforming industries and improving lives. However, without careful oversight and a commitment to ethical principles, this race could lead to unintended consequences, from entrenched biases to the concentration of power in the hands of a few. The question is not who will win the race, but how can we ensure that the race itself benefits humanity as a whole. The stakes are too high to leave this to chance.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2025/02/22/the-ai-arms-race-how-llms-are-shaping-the-future-of-intelligence/>

The unspoken tragedy in Balochistan

Aadersh Hamza

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“When we see others as the enemy, we risk becoming what we hate.” Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu’s quote perfectly captures the tragic irony of ethnic violence in Balochistan. The province has witnessed generations lost in this hatred that reaps nothing.

Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, was once the melting pot of different ethnicities of Pakistan. But who would have thought that this land, famous for its hospitality, would one day become conservatively narrow-minded for particular ethnicities? Over the years, numerous Punjabis have been ruthlessly targeted in the province: labourers, drivers, teachers, doctors, the elderly, and even travelers with families. Hundreds and thousands of families have migrated to other provinces, leaving back their businesses, properties and even their ancestral cemeteries in the province, to which they gave everything. Their only crime being their identity.

In contrast to that, individuals from Balochistan not only travel freely across other provinces, particularly Punjab, but many have also settled there, earning livelihoods and seeking better opportunities. Despite this, no instance has ever been reported where the residents of Balochistan were targeted by a Punjabi, Sindhi or Pashtun simply out of ethnic hatred. This raises a crucial question: why does this deeply rooted hostility persist in Balochistan alone?

The ethno-militant groups justify their actions by claiming suppression by the state and exploitation of their resources by outsiders. At face value, these grievances might warrant political discourse, but turning their hatred toward every Punjabi makes them the very oppressors they claim to resist. The systematic targeting of innocent civilians is not a rebellion against injustice, it is an injustice in itself.

Even if these militants reject Pakistani laws, they cannot be oblivious to international law, which holds them accountable for their actions. Dehumanizing individuals based on ethnicity is not just a violation of international humanitarian law but also an act of

terrorism, punishable under global legal frameworks. Several key provisions underscore this: Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees every individual's right to life, liberty, and security. Article 2 of the UDHR prohibits discrimination based on race and ethnicity. Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides protection against ethnic discrimination. The Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol II classify ethnic-based killings as potential war crimes. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination mandates signatories to protect citizens from racial violence. Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court states that widespread and systematic ethnic cleansing can constitute crimes against humanity.

No ideology, no matter how passionately defended, justifies the killing of innocent, unarmed civilians. Militants may argue for the merit of their cause, but the moment they resort to bloodshed against non-combatants, they forfeit any claim to moral legitimacy.

While the militant attacks in Balochistan are increasing, the government's inaction is pushing the masses into despair. Ordinary individuals are put through severe security checks, which is seen as an ordeal by them and the security lapses, after such ordeals become more frustrating for them. As one disillusioned resident of Balochistan vented on social media:

“One side doesn't allow us to travel without ID cards, while the other side doesn't allow us to travel with them. We are crushed between both.”

The February 19 target killing of Punjabi travelers occurred just hundreds of meters from a Levies check post on N-70 National Highway. Shockingly, this was the second such attack on the same highway and in the same vicinity within a few months.

Balochistan doesn't need empty rhetoric: it needs action. Without serious introspection and decisive intervention, the province edges closer to a point of no return where silence means nothing but complicity.

The masses hardly see any hope. A worker in Quetta confided to me: "Will it be safe to travel in a private car? I brought my family here, and now I worry about how to send them back. We all have Punjab addresses on our CNICs."

This isn't just one man's fear— it is the silent terror gripping thousands of labourers in Balochistan. They have committed no crime, yet they pay the ultimate price. The ruling elite, apparently disconnected from these realities, offers nothing beyond hollow condemnations.

What is even more disturbing than the lack of the writ of the government is the silence of Balochistan's civil society. While many voices are quick to highlight injustices against the Baloch, Pashtun or Hazara, and rightly so, there is no outcry against the ethnic cleansing of Punjabis. Most of these Punjabis belong to the same province, face all the hardships equally as the other communities, yet they find no sympathizers for them when they get attacked. No protests against their killings, no roadblocks, no strikes and no social media outcry.

The attacks of 36-27 August 2024, when the militants launched coordinated assaults on multiple towns and highways, should have been a wake-up call. But instead of strengthening security, the situation has continued to deteriorate. Passengers are dragged from buses and executed. Even the military convoys are tracked and ambushed with impunity and the pattern is chillingly repetitive.

The Pakistan Security Report 2024 documented 202 terrorist attacks in Balochistan alone. Meanwhile, one of the militant groups, in its annual report, boasted 302 attacks in 2024, including 10 grand operations and six suicide attacks.

In just the first two months of 2025, multiple terrorist attacks have already claimed heavy casualties. According to the Provincial Home Department, 3,374 people have been killed in terrorist attacks in Balochistan over the past 15 years.

Yet, federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi recently claimed that the Balochistan situation could be controlled by a single SHO.

With terror escalating unchecked, one can only ask: Where is that mythical SHO?

Balochistan doesn't need empty rhetoric: it needs action. Without serious introspection and decisive intervention, the province edges closer to a point of no return where silence means nothing but complicity.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/02/27/the-unspoken-tragedy-in-balochistan/>