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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.

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Ali Abbas

June 01, 2025

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Balochistan: From Sardars to Streets

Asad Ullah Raisani

June 01, 2025

Balochistan: From Sardars to Streets" explores the historical and ongoing insurgencies in Balochistan, rooted in political exclusion and tribal leadership by Sardars. It highlights the shift from traditional tribal authority to grassroots movements, reflecting the evolving dynamics of Balochistan's socio-political landscape.

Disarming The Future: AI Arms Race

Nomeen Kassi

June 3, 2025

This article highlights how the rise of AI and autonomous weapons is reshaping modern warfare, creating strategic instability and eroding international law. It stresses the urgent need for global regulations to prevent an uncontrollable arms race and protect humanity.

Russia's Tightrope Walk: The Limits of Neutrality in the India-Pakistan Conflict

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June 3, 2025

This op-ed highlight that Russia's claim of neutrality in South Asia is undermined by its strategic alignment with India, exposing the contradictions in its balancing act amid growing regional tensions and reliance on China.

Indian Defence Minister's Ignorance of IAEA Mandate

Attaullah

June 3, 2025

This article highlights the Indian Defense Minister's flawed call for IAEA oversight of Pakistan's nuclear weapons—showing a clear misunderstanding of the agency's mandate. It underscores Pakistan's strong nuclear safety record and warns that such reckless remarks raise doubts about India's nuclear command credibility

Nuclear arsenal safety

Nomeen Kassi

June 4, 2025

India and Pakistan recently ended their worst military clash in decades, triggered by a false flag operation and deadly exchanges. This article tells how, after a humiliating defeat, India's Defence Minister controversially urged the IAEA to take control of Pakistan's nukes, worsening tensions. It also tells how Pakistan condemned the remarks and highlighted India's poor nuclear safety record and repeated incidents of nuclear material theft and trafficking.

The Economic Recovery of Pakistan: A Macroeconomic Miracle?

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June 13, 2025

This article tells that while Pakistan's economy has improved significantly, lasting stability requires serious reforms in taxation, exports, and governance.

Preemption or Provocation?

Asad Ullah Raisani

June 14, 2025

This op-ed highlight that India's Operation Sindoor, launched without credible evidence, violates international law and poses a serious threat to regional stability and South Asia's fragile peace.

Nuclear Apartheid in the Middle East

Shahzadi Irum

June 18, 2025

The article critiques the global nuclear order as a form of "nuclear apartheid," where powerful nations like the U.S. enable allies like Israel to possess nuclear weapons unchecked, while punishing others like Iran for peaceful pursuits. It highlights the double standards and brutality behind Israel's actions, particularly its attack on Iran and devastation in Gaza. The piece argues that this system reflects a deeper global injustice where power, not principle, defines who has the right to security and sovereignty.

Lies, Deception and Pushing the West into Another Deadly Episode of Confrontation – A Rebuttal

Ali Abbas

June 23, 2025

Adnan Dhume's article in *The Wall Street Journal* tells a distorted story about Pakistan's nuclear program, rooted in bias and strategic frustration. It tells half-truths by ignoring India's own nuclear misconduct and misrepresents Pakistan's posture of deterrence as aggression. It tells more about Western double standards than about any real threat from Pakistan.

Iran-Israel Conflict-A Risk of Escalation to Dangerous Level

Muneeb-Ur-Rahman

June 25, 2025

This piece highlights Israel's aggressive posture toward Iran, driven more by expansionist ambitions than genuine security threats. It warns that destabilizing Iran would have dire consequences for regional stability, global oil markets, and Pakistan's security. The article urges global powers to reject war-mongering and instead pursue a just solution for Palestine.

Petrol Woes in Quetta Reflect Economic Gaps

Hamza Nasir

June 30, 2025

This piece tells how Quetta's fuel crisis—triggered by a crackdown on smuggled Iranian petrol—exposes deeper economic inequalities. It highlights how uniform national fuel pricing ignores regional challenges, worsening hardships for Balochistan's population. The article calls for policy reforms that support legal supply chains, local infrastructure, and the formalization of informal markets.

Unpacking Dhume's Frustrated Jingoism

Shahzadi Irum

June 30, 2025

The piece rejects Dhume's comparisons and highlights Western hypocrisy, arguing Pakistan's deterrence prevented regional chaos, not provoked it.

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The Stabilizing Impact of Hypersonic Missiles

Ali Abbas

June 01, 2025

Hypersonic weapons are one of the emerging technologies that have unprecedented potential to disrupt warfare both in the present and the future, as they become more mature through scientific development and actual battlefield use. China and Russia are the leading nations in hypersonic weapons technology, possessing readily deployable units. As far as Russia is concerned, it has used its Zircon and Kinzhal hypersonic weapons in actual battlefields during the war in Ukraine. Although China has not used a hypersonic weapon itself in a battlefield, Pakistan's use of a Chinese hypersonic weapon, the CM-400AKG, against an S-400 battery in the recent Pak-India standoff could provide invaluable data about the weapon and its impacts on strategic calculations. BMD could be an attempt to minimize India's vulnerability to Pakistani missile strikes. At the strategic long-range level, there is a consensus among scholars and experts that conventional ballistic missiles with modern capabilities such as MIRVs, ballistic missiles with terminal maneuverability, and decoys already provide sufficient strike capabilities to bypass theatre and point defense Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) systems; making them a better option when compared to modern hypersonic weapons such as Hypersonic Glide Vehicles (HGVs) and Hypersonic Cruise Missiles (HCMs).

Hypersonic weapons at long ranges have to overcome challenges that are absent in the traditional ballistic missile parabolic flight – these include exponential heat and air-drag, both of which are functions of atmospheric flight. In addition to that, the energy loss caused by active maneuvers by the hypersonic weapon can slow down the weapon and reduce its effectiveness. To add to the complexity, hypersonic weapons need more sophisticated engineering and comparatively larger funding. That being said, hypersonic weapons can be deadly in theatre and tactical levels where target distances are manageable. Specifically, a hypersonic weapon can rely on its speed, which crosses Mach 5, or 1500 meters per second, and major evasive maneuvers, to put point defenses, moving targets, and naval assets at grave risk. The important aspect that relates to the notion of strategic stability is the effectiveness of hypersonic weapons against BMD systems. BMDs negatively impact strategic stability by undermining the concept of mutual

vulnerability, which extends to Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), and therefore affects deterrence stability. Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal argues that India's acquisition of BMD systems may induce a false sense of security in its strategic calculations vis-à-vis Pakistan and increase the temptations of toying with the idea of a First Strike. In his words, he says, "BMD could be an attempt to minimize India's vulnerability to Pakistani missile strikes." Pakistan's use of the CM-400AKG re-asserts India's vulnerability and minimizes the destabilizing effects of its purported BMD program. Pakistan's use of the CM-400AKG and its success in destroying an S-400 radar reasserts India's vulnerability and minimizes the destabilizing effects of its purported BMD program. A report by Army Recognition also recognizes the concern that the strike could diminish the securing impact of BMDs. "If these systems are capable of bypassing the S-400, a system engineered with multi-band radar networks and advanced interception missiles, there is growing concern that even the most advanced U.S. and European defenses may require substantial upgrades to remain credible."

Nonetheless, the notion of invulnerability surrounding BMD systems has been subject to skepticism for a long time. A report by the Keil Institute recognizes Ukrainian limitations in missile defense, according to which, a single patriot battery equipped with 32 launchers needs to fire all of its interceptor missiles to even have a chance to intercept one hypersonic weapon. In this context, the financial and logistical costs of defense alone seem overinflated and discouraging as far as the optimism around the BMD systems is concerned. Annie Jacobson also alluded to the fantasy surrounding the US interceptor systems, highlighting that the US interceptor systems have a reported success rate of 45 percent, which is awfully inadequate when it comes to avoiding obliteration by nuclear weapons. James M. Acton has also pointed out the 'unrealistic' nature of interceptor tests conducted by the Missile Defense Agency (MDA). The recent use of the CM-400AKG may not be the last nail in the coffin for BMDs, but it has certainly amplified the doubts regarding their effectiveness. Even Western sources have begun acknowledging the severe limitations and handicaps faced by these systems.

Interestingly, military planners still seem to be convinced about the efficacy of BMD systems as countries continue to focus on developing more sophisticated BMD systems.

The most recent development in this regard is Donald Trump's announcement of the "Golden Dome", which can admittedly counter emerging missile threats such as space-launched missiles. That is yet to be ascertained after the BMD becomes operational. The notion of invulnerability surrounding BMD systems has been subject to skepticism for a long time.

However, previous attempts to counter similar emerging missile related threats, such as the US withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty only amplified arms race dynamics between the US and its rivals i.e. Russia and China, and it proved to be a bad decision as after 23 years from the withdrawal, the US is yet to possess adequate countermeasures vis-à-vis Russian and Chinese ballistic and hypersonic missiles. The case with the Golden Dome may be the same; the announced completion date of the project is 2029, but that remains an estimate since programs with this degree of sophistication almost always face delays. Chances are that by the time the Golden Dome attains operational capability, offensive weapons will also undergo advancement phases, which can increasingly jeopardize the effectiveness of BMD systems even in the future. Hypersonic weapons continue to raise questions about the adequacy of BMD systems and may induce a stabilizing effect on strategic calculations.

Hypersonic weapons continue to raise questions about the adequacy of BMD systems, and to that extent, may induce a stabilizing effect on strategic calculations, becoming increasingly a cornerstone of deterrence and strategic stability. The skepticism surrounding the BMDs' true efficacy continues to grow, and modern-day munitions will prove a tough match for the modern-day defense.

<https://stratheia.com/the-stabilizing-impact-of-hypersonic-missiles/>

Balochistan: From Sardars to Streets

Asad Ullah Raisani

June 01, 2025

It is not the first time in the country's history that Balochistan has become a buzzword. Whether it's politicians, academics, media personnel, analysts, or even members of the armed forces, Balochistan is being discussed on every platform and at every level today in Pakistan. Unfortunately, such conversations/discussions often center on issues, rather than on what can genuinely be done to end the persistent and seemingly endless *nazuk daur* (difficult period) in Balochistan. Even when it comes to the problems in Balochistan, many people lack a clear understanding of the causes of chaos in the province. Some blame the *Sardars (tribal princes)* for all the problems, while others believe that the center has not given the Baloch their due share of natural resources and minerals. There are also those who argue that certain organizations have impeded the political process from taking root in the province. And there are also people with views that Balochistan is suffering due to external involvements in the region, as the province lies in a geopolitical "crush zone." Not all of these views are entirely inaccurate; in fact, they are partly correct to some degree.

However, to identify a genuine course of action for the future, the problems in the province can be better understood by comparing previous insurgencies and struggles with the current one, and by recognizing that *Sardars* are becoming increasingly irrelevant to the province's issues today. Balochistan has witnessed multiple insurgencies since 1948, each rooted in political exclusion, perceived injustices, and led by *Sardars*. According to renowned authors and academicians such as Sher Muhammad Marri in *Baloch Qaum*, Selig S. Harrison in *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baloch Nationalism and Soviet Temptation*, Taj Mohammad Breseeg in *Baloch Nationalism*, and Rizwan Zeb in *Ethno-Political Conflict in Pakistan: The Baloch Movement*, the first rebellion occurred when Prince Abdul Karim, the brother of the last Khan of Kalat, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan, opposed Balochistan's accession to Pakistan. The second uprising followed the imposition of the One Unit Scheme (OUS) in 1955, which led to the Khan of Kalat's protest and Nawab Nauroz Khan's revolt. The third insurgency began in 1962, when President Ayub Khan stripped Baloch leaders of their traditional titles, sparking armed resistance. However, these

insurgencies were relatively short-lived. The most violent insurgency ensued when the elected Balochistan government was sacked by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1973. As various sources report, thousands died in this insurgency. Even though the province was relatively peaceful between 1977 and 1999, such tribal leaders as Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri, Nawab Akbar Bugti, and Sardar Attaullah Mengal held great tribal power. Whether exiled or politically suppressed, these *Sardars* were vital parts of the Baloch identity and politics; they were advocates of the Baloch rights and the Baloch autonomy.

The ongoing insurgency and agitation in Balochistan have been active since 2004 and intensified following the death of Nawab Akbar Bugti in 2006, an event that triggered widespread unrest. The uprising stemmed from deep-rooted grievances related to political marginalization and the control of natural resources. It has since become the longest-running insurgency in the country's history. The tension took an upturn after a rape case of Dr. Shazia Khalid in 2005 that Bugti condemned vehemently and with some demands. His demands were not accepted by the then-President General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008), causing violent confrontations leading to the death of Bugti. This episode intensified the scale of the insurgency, even in the Makran region, which had not been involved in previous uprisings, and created a substantial boost in recruitments in the separatist militant groups.

However, it is important to understand that *Sardars* have lost their sway over the Baloch in both the ongoing insurgency and the peaceful struggle for the rights of the Baloch community. The Baloch have increasingly begun to distance themselves from their tribal leaders. Today, many Baloch entering politics idealize figures who emerged from student politics and come from middle-class backgrounds, having reached their current political positions through grassroots activism. Similarly, those joining or aspiring to join Baloch militant groups do not do so under the influence of any *Sardar*. Instead, they are motivated by shared aspirations and grievances. As a result, many militants now come from middle-class families rather than from the households of *Sardars*.

With the mounting fame of some activists of the basic rights of the Baloch community, it is further evident that the Baloch are starting to give up, or many have already given up on *Sardars*. Even the towering political careers of certain nationalist politicians are

sustained by expressing their support for one of such movements that is led by non-*Sardars*. This brings both clarity and complexity for the authorities as well as for the Baloch. Historically, it was easier for the state to negotiate with a few tribal chiefs, but today's unrest is decentralized, involving middle-class Baloch youth acting independently of tribal leadership. This shift complicates efforts to contain the conflict, as modern militants are harder to predict and may have external backing. Politically, the Baloch are increasingly disillusioned with dynastic leadership, seeking representatives who emerge from grassroots movements and understand their aspirations. This has created confusion, as those claiming to represent the Baloch often lack genuine support, while influential voices are sidelined.

The erosion or thinning of tribal authority presents an opportunity for new, educated Baloch leadership to rise. However, political engineering continues to undermine electoral confidence, deepening alienation. The new generation of Baloch, focused on accountability and justice, may pave the way for a more democratic and inclusive political culture. Moreover, the trust of the Baloch populace in institutions cannot be restored through mere words or by maintaining a heavy-handed approach. Instead, there is a need to translate words into actions on a war footing, as the people of the province have lost patience due to the long-standing tradition of unfulfilled promises in the province.

Conclusively, Balochistan today stands at a crossroads where old methods have lost relevance. The *Sardars* no longer define the Baloch voice, and the younger, educated generation is demanding a different kind of politics—one rooted in accountability and rights. If the government and institutions continue to rely on outdated power structures or fail to nurture democratic space, they risk alienating a generation that still holds hope. As John Adams once said, there must be “a government of laws, and not of men.” Balochistan deserves nothing less.

<https://www.wgi.world/balochistan-from-sardars-to-streets/>

Disarming The Future: AI Arms Race

Nomeen Kassi

June 3, 2025

The world of warfare is now exploring autonomous weapons, a technology that navigates through Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML). The rapid advancement of weapons controlled by machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) is termed the 'Intelligentization of war' by Chinese strategists. With major players acquiring this technology, the globe might face a shift in its strategic stability. Autonomous weapons do not require human intervention and are targeted by sensors and software. Through ML, a weapon creates its model of a task to complete and is guided accordingly. This attack will be hard for humans to predict or control, thereby making accountability difficult, resulting in erosion of the international law against the use of force. Currently, states are interested in acquiring the Lethal Autonomous Weapon System (LAWS). AI-driven weaponry will swiftly cause a security dilemma and escalate into an arms race.

To illustrate, India is rapidly adopting AI-led technologies, which can potentially erode strategic stability in South Asia. States involved in major conflicts generally prefer to adopt modern warfare technologies for the effective upgradation of their regular armed force against their potential rivals. Resultantly, both India and Pakistan are determined to expand their defensive capabilities beyond the existing ones while increasing their reliance on emerging warfare technologies such as autonomous weapons. It is widely perceived by scholars and policymakers that AI-driven weaponry will swiftly cause a security dilemma and escalate into an arms race by shifting the tactical offense-defense balance. If this becomes a case between major global players such as India and Pakistan, the situation could result in strategic instability, created by mutual uncertainty over the balance of power. However, a strong justification for this pursuit of technological superiority is to enhance their deterrence. For instance, if India acquires such technology, Pakistan too will follow to uphold the balance. It traps states in what Richard Danzig called a "Technology Roulette".

AI-driven weapons come with certain risks due to their inherent complexity. For instance, they may be vulnerable to hacking and code errors. Which may cause unpredictable accidents... This implication would lead to a chaotic situation where states might lose

control of what they have created. Therefore, this technological aspiration requires more attention to attributes that can mitigate the consequences of failure and facilitate resilient recovery of such weapons. This requires serious deliberation at the global level. The idea of “Arms control for AI” remains in its infancy, and international law remains very much in flux. International efforts made in regard to war and weapons have four rationales: ethics, legality, stability, and safety. The military AI has raised concerns on all four grounds. The “killer Robots” should alone be banned on ethical and legal grounds. Senior policy adviser at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Neil Davison, believes that “AWS are an immediate cause of humanitarian concern and demand an urgent, international political response”. Subsequently, non-proliferation of autonomous and lethal military weapons is of the hour. With global powers, along with other countries trying to acquire such technology, the AI arms race will soon be at its peak. Subsequently, to reduce the tension, major powers must undergo difficult compromises to forgo AI militarization in order to achieve mutual security. So far, 30 countries have declared support for the treaty banning LAWS. Since 2018, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has continued to say that LAWS are politically unacceptable and morally repugnant and has called for their prohibition under international law. AWS is an immediate cause of humanitarian concern and demands an urgent, international political response.

Nations perceived benefits through the acquisition of LAWS may become a challenge in the path of AI arms control efforts. Such armaments threaten global stability as they increase the probability of major conflicts between rivals. Also, the international community should be concerned about rogue states or terrorist groups acquiring this technological shift. If this happens, world peace will come down to ashes. Concerning International law and norms, they speak very little regarding the AI militarization; in any case, norms and laws are not enough to mitigate the threat posed by such weapons. In this regard, ICRC recommends that “states should adopt new legally binding rules on autonomous weapons, that will help prevent serious risks of harm to civilians and address ethical concerns, while offering the benefit of legal certainty and stability”. It suggests three grounds on which autonomous weapons could be prohibited: First, unpredictable autonomous weapons should be prohibited. Second, autonomous weapons that are designed and used to apply force against people directly should be prohibited. Third,

there needs to be strict restrictions on the design and use of all other autonomous weapons to mitigate the risks mentioned above. Unpredictable autonomous weapons should be prohibited. In contrast, the advocates of AI militarization debate that AI militarization can offer tools for peaceful resolution and global stability. They justify that AI can prevent war through data analysis and detect early signs of conflict. Thereby reducing the chances of confrontation or attack, creating stability, and avoiding conflict. Furthermore, they argue that the use of AI can minimize the harm through its precision targeting, hence optimizing collateral damage. With a concerted effort, AI can help prevent war and limit its impact when it does occur, to the collective benefit of humanity. With this rationale prevailing among the proponents of AI weapons, disarmament becomes a hard ordeal. Disarming the AI-led technologies would require significant efforts.

States need to focus more on negotiations. In this globalized world, “Track II” diplomacy can play a major role in controlling the spread of AI militarization through shaping public opinion and subsequent pressure. However, in a realist world, the state’s primary focus is its survival and security. In the complex web of militarization and uncertain relations, states would want to focus more on enhancing their power rather than reducing it. Disarming the future would not be easy, as all the states are now competing for their survival on all fronts. The current global scenario with the Ukraine-Russia war, US-China trade war, Indo-Pak conflict, and US-Iran nuclear negotiations, it hard for the world to agree on disarmament. All the flashpoints of the world are ‘flashing’ right now, and disarming the future would not be easy, as all the states are now competing for their survival on all fronts. However, there must be certain laws to prohibit the large-scale damage of autonomous weapons. Humanity must be preserved in warfare.

<https://strattheia.com/disarming-the-future-ai-arms-race/>

Russia's Tightrope Walk: The Limits of Neutrality in the India-Pakistan Conflict

Summra Hamid

June 3, 2025

Russia has always sought to keep friendly ties with both India and Pakistan, positioning itself as a geopolitical balancer in South Asia. In the meantime, Russia's dual imperatives, maintaining India as a traditional ally and broadening its strategic convergence with China, combine with its balancing act. Russia has become more economically and diplomatically reliant on China as a result of its eastward shift, particularly after the acquisition of Crimea and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Moscow's balancing act has once again shown its limitations and contradictions due to the recent escalation between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. In 2023 alone, their combined trade of \$241 billion hit a new high. However, Moscow finds it challenging to keep the balance given China's expanding influence in Asia, its posture in the Asia-Pacific, and especially its close relationships with Pakistan. Additionally, both Pakistan's and China's relations with India too. It has become a diplomatic tightrope walk for Moscow to balance these conflicting objectives without alienating either partner.

However, Moscow's balancing act has once again shown its limitations and contradictions due to the recent escalation between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. Even though Russia has maintained that it is neutral toward these nations, its actions during the most recent India-Pakistan conflict exposed a clear bias, casting doubt on its credibility as a neutral actor and beginning to raise some serious concerns about the coherence of its foreign policy. Some detractors sometimes argue that Russia's strategic alliance with India is a logical byproduct of realpolitik, motivated by shared geopolitical objectives, military sales, and persistent bilateral connections. Given the current scenario, it's evident that India does not see the United States or Russia as restraining powers, given New Delhi's ignorance of the Simla Agreement and numerous transgressions of international standards and laws, including cross-border military operations without multilateral permission. Rather, it asserts its strategic independence by frequently taking unilateral action in any regional crisis. When the conflict erupted and escalated along the Line of Control (LoC) in March 2025, Moscow was quick to issue an obligatory call for "restraint

on both sides.” Yet, beneath this diplomatic thin cover, Russia’s policy moves leaned towards India. Russia’s policy moves leaned towards India, offering intelligence-sharing against Pakistan and support for the operation ‘Sindoor’. Pakistan not only responded to the escalation by India responsibly but also continuously urged global powers to intervene diplomatically and de-escalate tensions. Whereas Russia responded by supporting its “long-lasting strategic partner” India, by offering intelligence-sharing against Pakistan and for operation ‘Sindoor’ and its support on so-called “counterterrorism efforts”, a term that New Delhi’s propagated throughout the conflict. This is not new. Russia than the Soviet Union, has historically sided with India, most notably during the 1971 war, when it deployed naval flotillas to deter the U.S. fleet, which supported Pakistan at that time. Although times have changed and Russia now hosts defense dialogues with Islamabad, the strategic hierarchy remains clear.

India is a major arms buyer with 8.3% of arms imports from Russia, and around 36% of Russian arms are bought by India. It is also a member of BRICS, and a critical partner in Russia’s pivot to Asia, specifically after increasing global isolation of Russia due to the Ukraine war. However, Pakistan remains a peripheral actor in the Russian foreign policy outlook, despite recent energy and defense ventures. The strategic hierarchy remains clear... Pakistan remains a peripheral actor in the Russian foreign policy outlook. Russia proceeded with its commitment to deliver advanced military equipment to India. Notably, the INS Tushil, a Russian-made stealth frigate, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in December 2024, with its sister ship, INS Tamal, which will be received by India in 2025. Other than this, the majority of the weapons and systems that India used against Pakistan were Russian-made like S-400 Triumpf, SAMAR Air Defence System (uses Russian R-73/R-27 missiles), Schilka ZSU-23-4, Zu-23mm Anti-Aircraft Guns, R-73 and R-27 Missiles. All these weapons and their usage against Pakistan accentuated the fact that India has been strengthening and enhancing its military capabilities to wage war against Pakistan, while using China only as an excuse to convince the international community. However, these statements and concerns have been made time and again by Pakistan on international forums.

On the contrary, Russia ended its arms embargo on Pakistan in 2014, and in 2016, it held its first-ever combined military drills with Islamabad. These actions were perceived as an effort to lessen excessive reliance on India and hedge bets. But the recent response to the crisis and its quick unification with New Delhi validates that these were mainly symbolic actions without any strategic realignment. Furthermore, given Russia's growing economic and diplomatic dependence on China, its disregard for Pakistan's lingering security threats may be interpreted as implicit support for New Delhi's forceful regional posture, which Beijing also finds unsettling. What Russia does not understand is that the substance and appearance of its foreign policy dent its quest for balance. You cannot support India's cross-border military activities under the pretense of "anti-terror operations" while courting Islamabad with cheap energy sales and joint drills. This duality is a contradiction rather than a balance. This duality is a contradiction rather than a balance. Russia's refusal or incapacity to act as a true mediator in South Asia has been shown by the most recent India-Pakistan war. Moscow's balancing act will remain a geopolitical fantasy as long as it confuses strategic goals with selective assistance. Furthermore, illusions are harmful in the unstable South Asian theater. From a realist perspective, Russia's actions make sense strategically because India is a key node in Moscow's "Greater Eurasia" goal, a larger defense market, and a BRICS partner. Furthermore, Pakistan's view of Russian neutrality is complicated by this selective participation, which also reduces Russia's ability to mediate future conflicts.

Additionally, it might move Islamabad (a gateway to Eurasia) closer to China, which would lessen Moscow's influence in the larger Eurasian geopolitical struggle. All things considered, Russia's activities during the India-Pakistan war in 2025 were both materially and diplomatically in line with Indian goals rather than being blatantly interventionist. In addition to rhetorical balance, a methodical reevaluation of crisis diplomacy, public messaging, and strategic delivery would have been necessary for a truly neutral position.

<https://stratheia.com/russias-tightrope-walk-the-limits-of-neutrality-in-the-india-pakistan-conflict/>

Indian Defence Minister's Ignorance of IAEA Mandate

Attaullah

June 3, 2025

The Indian Defense Minister, in his recent statement, has publicly exhibited sheer ignorance of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) mandate. He urged that the IAEA should take Pakistan's nuclear weapons under its supervision, failing to grasp that the IAEA mandate only regulates peaceful nuclear programs, not military facilities, of its members. Pakistan's Foreign Office criticized Singh's poor understanding of international nuclear oversight mechanisms, stating his comments reveal sheer "ignorance of the mandate and responsibilities" of a specialized UN Agency like the IAEA. IAEA regulates only peaceful nuclear activities, not military programs. Its mandate focuses on safe, secure, and peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. It only does so by the consent of its members under the agreements/protocols signed by the members. IAEA plays the key role of regulator through inspections and verifications. The IAEA statute mandates promoting peaceful nuclear use, not disarmament or seizure of military programs. The minister gravely misunderstands non-proliferation frameworks and global nuclear governance.

Contrary to the minister's limited knowledge, Pakistan is the only nuclear-armed country outside the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which makes a clear distinction between a peaceful nuclear program and its military program. The peaceful nuclear program remains under various IAEA safeguards/protocols, duly by the consent of the state of Pakistan, while the military program is completely free from foreign interference, with no state or international organization having any jurisdiction over its weapons program. Additionally, it has established state-of-the-art nuclear facilities and safety and security standards and has established its credibility in the areas of nuclear safety and security under the Pakistan Center of Excellence for Nuclear Security (PCENS) by imparting training to local and international participants. Pakistan shares its expertise with other countries from around the world on nuclear safety and security related to peaceful uses of nuclear energy and benefits from the best practices offered by other friendly countries. On a visit to Pakistan in 2018, the IAEA's Director General, Yukio Amano, recognized that Pakistan's nuclear safety and security regime was exemplary. He

particularly remarked that there has not been a single incident of theft of nuclear material or nuclear security lapse in Pakistan's nuclear program. Similarly, during a visit to Pakistan in 2023, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi had lauded Pakistan's "world-class and impeccable" nuclear safety record, due to its consistent record on improving nuclear safety and security as per international standards and its contribution toward global non-proliferation efforts under the UN resolutions and related non-proliferation regimes. Additionally, in another visit to Pakistan in February 2025, Grossi said that Pakistan's nuclear safety and security record for six decades makes the country's peaceful nuclear programme a success story. The alarming and irresponsible behavior of the defense minister overseeing India's nuclear arsenal. The Indian defense minister is a member of the Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) that oversees India's nuclear arsenal. His lack of professionalism reveals ignorance of global nuclear protocols and nuclear governance, which is a basic prerequisite for his position. His reckless rhetoric increases regional tensions and nuclear risks. It raises a question about the credibility of India's reputation as a so-called responsible or normal nuclear power, revealing a poor learning of global security matters.

A kind suggestion: Minister, your enthusiasm for regional security is noted. However, wisdom lies in understanding the distinction between rhetoric and responsibility. A part of the suggestion is to revisit the IAEA's founding statute (article II), the NPT, and other international frameworks and tenets of diplomatic discourse. Familiarity with these principles will enhance India's standing and your stature in the international community. There is a dire need for restraint in public statements on serious security matters in the region, lest India's voice be diminished by misinformed zeal.

India is the only country that maintains an ambiguous classification of its nuclear power plants as Civilian Safeguarded, Civilian Un-safeguarded, and Military Facilities. Its nuclear program embeds various loose ends in terms of safety and security, with grave concerns over the repeated uranium theft, radiological material smuggling, vulnerable facility security, and links to global criminal organizations, posing a risk of radiological terrorism in the region. With a poorer nuclear safety and security record, repeated breaches and vulnerabilities at power plants, the disturbing pattern suggests India itself could be the region's greatest nuclear security risk. The minister's reckless rhetoric has

subjected India's nuclear command to global ridicule and concern. His staggering ignorance of the IAEA mandate raises a question: Did he miss briefings, or is he simply choosing to ignore them? The normalization of recklessness in high offices is dangerously holding the regional peace hostage to domestic politics. India's motive behind creating a manufactured crisis becomes evident: it seems to be a false flag operation used as a dubious justification for retaliation, merely serving as a pretext for aggression against Pakistan. The minister appears to be trying to divert the world's attention from recent tensions and the government's humiliation, while silencing domestic critics of the regime. Yet, he lectures others on responsibility, which embodies his very recklessness, that he falsely accuses others of. It appears that India's nuclear arsenal is only slightly safer than his grasp of International law. Perhaps, a briefing book might be better than a battle cry. The international community should urge responsible leaders in India to reclaim control of nuclear policy from such irresponsible hands. The world needs assurance that India's nuclear arsenal is managed by competence, not bombast. India deserves more informed leadership on nuclear issues, and the world expects it.

<https://strafasia.com/indian-defence-ministers-ignorance-of-iaea-mandate/>

Nuclear arsenal safety

Nomeen Kassi

June 4, 2025

The two nuclear rivals, India and Pakistan, have just ended their worst military conflict in nearly three decades. The conflict began after India's false flag operation in Pahalgam that killed 26 people. India accused the terrorist attack of being backed by Pakistan in Indian occupied Kashmir. In the face of Pakistan's denial of the allegations, India struck what it called "terrorist camps" in Pakistan in retaliation for an attack it falsely accused Pakistan of. This led to four days of intense drone, missiles, and artillery exchanges, leaving nearly 70 people, including dozens of civilians, dead on both sides. India had a worse defeat before the ceasefire was called by the USA. However, after such a clash and defeat, India's defence minister, Rajnath Singh, opted for a very blatant statement regarding Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. On May 15, Singh said that the "International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should take charge of Pakistan's nuclear weapons".

This statement comes after India's disgraceful defeat in the dogfight against Pakistan's air force. He further added that "I wanted to raise this question for the world: are nuclear weapons safe in the hands of a rogue and irresponsible nation?" Additionally, this statement was made at a time when the situation was very sensitive between the two nuclear rivals. On the other hand, the ceasefire agreement has not yet been processed, with constant delays. Similarly, blatant statements from Indian leaders are making the situation worse, such as the one by Singh. Pakistan strongly condemned India's remarks on Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Additionally, in response to the Indian minister's comments, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said that "These irresponsible remarks reveal his profound insecurity and frustration regarding Pakistan's effective defense and deterrence against Indian aggression through conventional means. Pakistan's conventional capabilities are adequate to deter India, without the self-imposed 'nuclear blackmail' that New Delhi suffers. It is to be noted that Pakistan has repeatedly expressed concerns over the continued "provocative and inflammatory remarks by Indian leadership, as a threat to the fragile regional peace".

In reply to Singh's question, the MoFA spokesperson raised questions on India's involvement in "repeated theft" and "illicit trafficking incidents" involving nuclear and

radioactive material in India. He thinks that the IAEA and the international community should be worried about that instead. In return, he probed the measures taken by New Delhi “for the safety and security of nuclear and other radioactive material.”

In the past, there have been several mishaps on India’s account showing its poor safety standards in nuclear energy. The spokesman cited certain incidents to remind India of their standing regarding the safety of nuclear energy. Citing these incidents, he recalled, just last year, five individuals with a radioactive device reported as allegedly stolen from the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) were found in Dehradun, India. Likewise, a gang of individuals was found in illegal possession of a highly radioactive and toxic substance, californium, worth \$100 million. Three incidents of theft of californium were also reported in 2021. In addition to the ones not cited, there is an endless list of incidents dating since 1994 when the first recorded incident of nuclear smuggling in India took place. To list a few incidents, in June 1998, Police arrested a politician in the Indian state of West Bengal, who they said was carrying more than 100 kg of uranium. On 5 May 2021, more than seven kgs of Uranium were seized in the Indian state of Maharashtra, possessed by unauthorized people. Similarly, on 3 June 2021, Indian security agencies arrested seven unauthorized people and seized 6.4 kg of uranium from their possession. As per Indian Government officials, in 2013, guerrilla fighters in northeast India illegally obtained uranium ore from a government-run milling complex in northeast India and strapped it to high explosives to make a crude bomb before being caught by police. The list is very long. India claims to be a responsible nuclear weapon state, but repetitive incidents of theft validate that nuclear material in India is unsafe. For India, it is important to secure nuclear material at home instead of commenting blatantly regarding Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal. Such incidents in India show that nuclear arsenals in India are unsafe and not under proper watch. Shafaqat Ali Khan also expressed concerns regarding the black market in India. He stated that “These incidents also suggest the existence of a black market for sensitive, dual-use materials inside India”. He added that “Pakistan urges a thorough investigation of these incidents” and “calls upon India to ensure the safety and security of its nuclear facilities and arsenal.” The cumulative incidents of nuclear trafficking in India have set alarms across the world. Such disturbing developments in India regarding their nuclear arsenals make India in no position to

question Pakistan's nuclear capabilities and call it a rogue state. One should focus on one's safety first rather than start a game of blame. India has always been involved in the blame game and false flag operations concerning Pakistan. That is all India always does.

The MoFA also criticized Singh's remarks as "ignorant of the mandate and responsibilities" of the IAEA, tasked with verifying that nuclear programmes remain peaceful. India's civilian nuclear facilities are subject to the IAEA safeguards under a 2008 agreement, but its strategic programme is not. A leading US non-proliferation watchdog, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, has a nuclear security index that gave India a low ranking for its poor safety and security of nuclear material. This position has not changed since 2020. It has categorized Pakistan as the "most improved country" in the ranking for countries with weapons-usable nuclear materials. India claims to be a responsible nuclear weapon state, but repetitive incidents of theft validate that nuclear material in India is unsafe. For India, it is important to secure nuclear material at home instead of commenting blatantly regarding Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/06/04/nuclear-arsenal-safety/>

The Economic Recovery of Pakistan: A Macroeconomic Miracle?

Hamza Nasir

June 13, 2025

The big American financial magazine Barron's has called Pakistan's current economic recovery a "macroeconomic miracle" that deserves international attention. Because Canada has gone through boom-and-bust cycles in the past, it stands out for receiving this recognition. Still, the improvements may not last if the problems underlying the economy are not addressed.

During the last two years, there have been major changes in key economic statistics in Pakistan. Listening to economic news, you might be shocked to hear that inflation has plummeted from 38% to just 0.3% in the span of only two years. Pakistan's stock market has reached new highs, investor confidence is back, and the price of its Eurobonds maturing in 2031 has risen from \$0.4 to close to \$0.8. They also prove foreign investors and creditors have faith in Pakistan's efforts to improve its economic performance. Interest rates in the country were raised steadily by the State Bank of Pakistan from 10% to 22% to stop inflation and lowered once normal prices were reached. While in office, the Shehbaz Sharif government entered an agreement with the IMF for \$7 billion to stabilize Pakistan's economy and build credibility. Furthermore, major lenders like China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates allowed Lebanon to repay its loans, so it faced a few short-term money issues.

What these students have done deserves to be acknowledged. They prove the government is handling policy in a mature way and making serious efforts to keep the economy stable, which has rarely been true in Pakistan. In her words, "For Sandglass Capital Management chief investment officer Genna Lozovsky, Pakistan is a promising country." We can watch it with no fear; now it's too tame. After facing default, Ireland's turnaround is quite impressive.

What Is Reality?

Referring to it as a miracle could suggest that things are stronger than they actually are. While Pakistan's situation looks stable now, it is still heavily dependent on the IMF and foreign creditors. The economy is not yet strong, and adhering to the IMF terms calls for

policies that are sometimes difficult for politicians. Making revenue is even more challenging right now. For a long time, Pakistan has suffered from a low ratio of tax to GDP. Tax collection reform has often been avoided because of concerns related to politics. Increasing China's own financial contribution is necessary, as only then will it reduce its dependence on foreign cash.

Furthermore, Pakistan mostly exports a restricted range of goods. The agricultural products of cotton, textiles, and cereals account for just under two-thirds of West Africa's exports. Even though the IT sector now earns \$3 billion per year, that is much less than the \$200 billion that India earns each year from IT exports. If Pakistan does not increase its economic activities to create more value, it will consistently face difficulties with its foreign earnings and resilience.

Meanwhile, issues around geopolitics are still present in the background. After the deadly attack in Pahalgam and the tension that followed with India, it is obvious that such events can disrupt the growing economy. Despite Finance Minister Aurangzeb declaring that it was just a short-lived problem with few financial consequences, the instability in the region proves that investors' confidence can change quickly.

Pakistan's allies are also becoming less generous. As noted by *Barron's*, countries like China and Gulf nations are no longer offering blank cheques. The days of unconditional bailouts may be over. As Khaled Sellami of Barings put it, "The government knows if they deviate from the tightrope they are walking, they won't have external finance." This reality places additional pressure on Islamabad to stay the course of reform and avoid fiscal misadventures.

Even with these problems, we should continue to feel hopeful. The nation's current account is now in surplus, and in the previous financial year, it also experienced a primary fiscal surplus. It has been a long time since the US saw these kinds of gains. If they are preserved, they can help a country enjoy stability for a long time. Still, there's no guarantee that it will happen. People in Pakistan are unsure about where the country's recovery will lead. It can either build on this progress by reforming the country's structure or go back to simple efforts and promoting popular measures, since there will be another election soon. All in all, the Pakistani economic recovery is genuine, but it's wrong to call

it a miracle when there is still much to do. The government should always push for changes in taxes, energy prices, government matters, and competitiveness in exports. If this careless approach prevails, the country may just repeat its history of losing gains again. Presently, Pakistan has defied the possibilities. We must ensure that this development remains sustainable.

<https://www.paradigmshift.com.pk/pakistan-economic-recovery/>

Preemption or Provocation?

Asad Ullah Raisani

June 14, 2025

On April 22, four terrorists opened fire on tourists in Pahalgam, in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K), resulting in 26 deaths and multiple injuries. The Indian government, much of the Indian media, and a large number of the country's content creators quickly jumped to the conclusion that Pakistan was behind the attack. However, they have yet to present any evidence to support this claim, relying instead on the naïve justification that, since a group, already banned in Pakistan, is allegedly behind the incident and has not, in their view, been brought to justice, this establishes Pakistan's complicity.

Happymon Jacob, an Indian columnist, echoes a similar narrative in his Hindustan Times article titled "The Many Messages in Operation Sindoor," ironically blaming Pakistan for being attacked. This article is a rebuttal to his claims. The justification to attack Pakistan is so naïve that one can hardly take it seriously. If such logic were accepted, then by the same standard, there are also groups or individuals in India that support terrorism in Pakistan. For that matter, despite substantial evidence linking Modi to the 2002 Gujarat riots, he becomes the Prime Minister, does that mean the Indian state supports the massacre of Muslims?

Those making such claims need to understand that this is not how international law or diplomacy functions. Country 'A' cannot ask Country 'B' to take action against certain groups or individuals within its territory based solely on suspicion or historical grievances; concrete evidence is required for any legitimate response. Otherwise, without credible proof, any country could blame foreign groups for incidents and demand action, undermining international law and accountability. New Delhi, under this naïve justification, started a false flag operation titled Operation Sindoor. The Indian narrative of Operation Sindoor emphasizes a strategic shift from "restraint" to "resolve." However, such measures need to be critically analyzed considering international law, regional stability, and historical context. Firstly, the Modi regime's 'mad-venture' against Pakistan is a clear violation of Pakistan's territorial sovereignty, violating the UN Charter (Article 2(4)). The article clearly prohibits the use of force against the political independence and

territorial integrity of a state. New Delhi undertook a similar action in 2019, known as the Balakot Strikes. It has not been able to prove in this or the previous case that there is a clear, direct, and immediate threat, which is necessary for the UN Charter's Article 51 concept of self-defense.

Moreover, according to international law specialists such as Mary Ellen O'Connell, the concept of preemptive self-defense lacks legal justification unless there is clear evidence of an imminent and overwhelming threat. New Delhi's claim of self-defense is implausible in international forums without credible international verification of the targets struck, whether in the recent or in previous actions by Indian forces. Secondly, the Modi regime's attribution of the Pahalgam attack to groups based in Pakistan, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, while politically persuasive, does not substitute for credible, evidence-based accountability or international investigations. Recent history, as seen in the cases of the 2008 Mumbai attacks and the Pathankot incident, shows that New Delhi has not been able to translate its unilateral provision of intelligence into judicial outcomes, partly due to a lack of legally admissible evidence or judicial processes acceptable under international standards. Pakistan has consistently and repeatedly called for joint investigations and has cooperated in multilateral counter-terrorism platforms like the UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Pakistan was removed from the FATF's grey list in 2022 after the organization recognized its notable success in preventing the financing of terrorism and prosecuting terrorists identified by the UN since 2018. This development contradicts the narrative of a state actively sheltering or enabling terrorist actors with impunity.

Thirdly, there is also a growing misconception in New Delhi that Pakistan 'bluffs' nuclear risk. This dismissal is dangerously cavalier. The Stimson Center and Crisis Group have both warned in their respective reports that limited conventional strikes under a "cold start" or "surgical strike" framework could escalate uncontrollably in a politically charged environment. Even if India and Pakistan do not explicitly reference nuclear weapons, the very existence of these weapons exerts a silent influence on the decision-making on both sides. AD National Command Authority, Pakistan, Lt Gen Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, has repeatedly stated that Pakistan's nuclear posture is defensive, it aims to deter external

aggression (not enable proxy warfare), and officially, Pakistan does not subscribe to a No-First Use (NFU) Policy. The risk of false alarms and miscalculation, as seen in the current India-Pakistan escalation following the false flag operation by the BJP regime, during which Indian MiG-29 and Rafale jets, along with dozens of (Israeli) drones, were shot down, remains high. Downplaying these risks undermines the fragile deterrence equilibrium in South Asia. Fourthly, India's military adventurism in 2019 and the recent case, under the false pretext of preemption, risks derailing the nascent peace processes and diminishing the chances of dialogue between the two nuclear-armed rivals, continuously endangering both regional and global peace. The Modi regime, in its efforts to appease Hindutva ideologues, save face amid repeated failures to protect its own citizens, and possibly for reasons not publicly known, has taken unilateral military actions that risk plunging the region back into instability.

Furthermore, it was India, not Pakistan, that initially took the issue of Kashmir to the United Nations, and it is now India that disregards the UN resolutions on the matter. International bodies and agencies, such as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the European Parliament, have raised concerns about the legal and humanitarian implications of Indian policies in IIOJ&K since the revocation of Article 370 in August 2019. Without addressing the underlying political issues, any unilateral militaristic action in this sensitive region risks further alienating the local populace and complicating India's own counterinsurgency efforts. In sum, India's unilateral military actions under Operation Sindoor lack legal and evidentiary justification, undermine international norms, and heighten regional instability. Without credible proof or dialogue, such actions risk escalating tensions with Pakistan, eroding global trust, and jeopardizing prospects for peace in a volatile South Asian landscape where one nuclear-armed country maintains rivalries with two nuclear neighbors.

<https://thegsinsight.com/preemption-or-provocation/>

Nuclear Apartheid in the Middle East

Shahzadi Irum

June 18, 2025

In global politics, the concept of nuclear non-proliferation is often used not to make the world safer, but to preserve the power of certain countries. This creates an unfair system like “Nuclear Apartheid,” where some countries are allowed to have nuclear weapons while others are denied that right, even if they adhere to international rules. This unfairness is painfully obvious in the Middle East. The US, claiming to protect global peace, applies double standards. Israel, which hasn’t signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and is widely known to possess nuclear weapons, faces no international pressure. But Iran, which claims it wants nuclear energy for peaceful use, is punished with sanctions, isolation, and even the threat of war. And standing behind this unjust system is the US, arming, shielding, and justifying every move, even as the region slips further from peace.

Israel, the long-indulged ally of the US, has ruled the Middle East like a self-proclaimed monarch for over half a century. Backed by tacit US support and shielded from international accountability, it has secretly built a nuclear arsenal and carried out countless military operations with impunity. Its most brutal campaign, however, has been the merciless slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza. Now, after turning Gaza into a mass grave, the Zionist regime has redirected its aggression towards Iran, desperate to block it from developing even peaceful nuclear capabilities, regardless of legality or intent. What gives certain states the authority to decide who can or cannot pursue nuclear technology? How can one nation maintain an undeclared arsenal with complete impunity, while another faces deadly missile strikes simply for attempting to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes under international law?

In the early hours of June 13, 2025, Tel Aviv, quietly yet fully supported by Washington, executed “Operation Rising Lion,” a massive and coordinated pre-emptive strike against Tehran. Over 200 fighter jets and missiles were deployed in a surprise attack that targeted dozens of sites, including nuclear facilities, air defense systems, military compounds, and even private residences. Several high-ranking Iranian military commanders and

prominent nuclear scientists were martyred. For Tehran, it was nothing short of a Pearl Harbor moment—a sudden and devastating assault launched while the country was actively engaged in nuclear negotiations. Most disturbingly, those involved in the nuclear talks were among the targets. This raises a serious concern: Were they being pressured behind closed doors, and then eliminated when they refused to comply? After witnessing this latest act of nuclear apartheid in the Gulf, it becomes undeniably clear that Iran is being set up to face the same fate as Iraq. We have seen this ruthless strategy before, where the US, under the banner of global security, accused Iraq of possessing weapons of mass destruction, only to later admit that those claims were unfounded. The result? A shattered nation, countless civilian lives lost, and decades of instability. Now, the same plot is being replayed, this time in Iran. Similar strategies have already devastated Syria and Libya. Behind this aggression lies Israel's deep fear of losing its nuclear monopoly. For Israel, the idea of any nuclear-capable neighbor is intolerable. Why is it that only allies of the West are allowed to develop nuclear power, while others face destruction for trying?

This fear-driven narrative has now become a political tool for Netanyahu, who repeatedly paints Iran as the ultimate threat to Israel's very existence, claiming that launching attacks on Iran is necessary to prevent a so-called "nuclear holocaust" and to secure the region's future. However, such claims ring hollow when measured against the brutal reality in Gaza. Israel has already dropped the equivalent of six nuclear bombs on a besieged strip of land where over two million people live, half of them children. Entire families have been wiped out. Homes, hospitals, and schools have been turned to rubble. How can Netanyahu claim to prevent a hypothetical nuclear catastrophe when his government is already unleashing one?

The ongoing crisis in the Middle East reveals something far deeper than a dispute over weapons. The nuclear apartheid is not just a political term; it reflects a real global divide where some countries are permitted to hold devastating power and use it freely, while others are threatened and bombed for simply desiring a sense of security.

Just as apartheid in South Africa denied Black communities their dignity and right to equality, today's nuclear apartheid treats Arab and Muslim lives as disposable in the eyes of global powers. This isn't about Iran and Israel; it's about a larger, unfair global system.

In this system, the right to safety, the right to defend, and even the right to exist with dignity are granted selectively, based not on justice but on alliance and interests.

<https://centrefordevelopmentandstability.com/nuclear-apartheid-in-the-middle-east>

Lies, Deception and Pushing the West into Another Deadly Episode of Confrontation – A Rebuttal

Ali Abbas

June 23, 2025

Sadanand Dhume's article, published recently in the infamous Wall Street Journal, is based on an illogical notion that nuclear facilities can be targeted and destroyed with no retaliation in sight. The author fails to remember that Iraq and Syria had been severely weakened before their nuclear facilities were destroyed. They didn't have any real retaliatory powers in the first place, and Iraq was tied in a costly war with Iran. No one can roll back Pakistan's nuclear program, which has enjoyed 27 years of overt status. It is a matter of fact that no one can roll back Pakistan's nuclear program, which has enjoyed 27 years of overt status. The program acquired maturity even before 1998, and so, as of now, is too complex and developed to be destroyed or dismantled by any power or by any means as naively depicted by this author.

The author attempts to propagate the allegations that Pakistan's nuclear program is a result of theft and charity is a result of his loss for words and betrays his clear frustration with India's strategic paralysis. It must be mentioned that India itself misused the plutonium produced by the Canada-India Reactor, U.S.-supplied (CIRUS) reactor, for conducting its nuclear test in 1974. CIRUS was ostensibly for peaceful nuclear energy purposes. As such, India is guilty of duplicity itself and stands on no moral high ground to blame, accuse, or dictate anyone, especially Pakistan. The author highlights the Indo-Israeli plans to attack Kahuta in the 1980s, noting in a one-liner that "the attack didn't happen". Intentionally forgetting that it was Pakistan's credible threat of retaliation against its adversary that deterred the attack. The author's choice of words implies that the attack was stopped due to Indo-Israeli goodwill, which has never existed for Pakistan. In this context, the author's signaling for a strike against Pakistani sites in the current era is nonsensical. If Pakistan deterred India in the 1980s Indian threat when Pakistan didn't possess any nuclear weapons capabilities, then one only needs to imagine how India may threaten Pakistan for a large-scale strike now, when Pakistan possesses both

credible nuclear weapons and the related delivery systems. Nonetheless, Pakistan doesn't rely on its nuclear weapons as a first line of defense; rather, it boasts one of the most capable army, navies, and Air forces in the world, whose conventional capabilities are credible enough, as demonstrated in the recent India-Pakistan crisis, to deter any misadventure by the enemy. India misused the CIRUS reactor to conduct its 1974 nuclear test; hypocrisy knows no bounds.

A nuclear Pakistan marked as a blunder for Indian national security only means that India's purported national security is based on bullying its smaller neighbors. The only objective that Pakistan's nuclear weapons program has achieved is credible deterrence and defense against an aggressive and belligerent India and any other country mad enough to breach the country's sovereignty. The author refers to Western sources citing Pakistani backing of alleged terrorists killing Indians on Indian soil. However, western sources have been biased in their reporting as far as terrorism and their links to Islam are concerned – sensible minds do not take western reports too seriously. The veneer of impartiality and credibility of Western sources has been seriously eroded.

A clear example of their bias is their overt silence over Israel's massacre of Muslims in the Middle East. Also, when Israel illegally attacked Iran's sites, the West was silent, but as soon as Iran rightfully retaliated, they blamed Iran for the escalation. Their attitude towards Pakistan can't be much different. Pakistan has been at the receiving end of global terrorism and has suffered more than any other during the US Global War on Terror. Western and Indian sources find it convenient to falsely blame Pakistan for all the terrorist activities they suffer from. The author, while blatantly ignoring frequent Uranium thefts across India, is concerned about non-existent terrorists roaming around Pakistan's safely guarded nuclear facilities, who, according to him, may steal a nuclear bomb, which has been prepared for takeaway by Pakistan's nuclear authorities. It would suit him much better if he were concerned about fissile material proliferation at home. Pakistan deterred India in the 1980s without a nuclear arsenal; imagine the balance today.

The author's lack of sensible journalism also leads him to believe that Pakistan's military is filled with religious extremists. Not taking into consideration that those in charge of the weapons go through rigorous security clearances and that their competencies are measured, which is commonly termed the Personnel Reliability Program (PRP). Clear rubbish being pushed by mindless Indian journalists and so-called experts, and it's a shame that the Western outlets provide editorial space for such nonsense. This only shows Western complicity in the 5th Generation War being waged on Pakistan and the Islamic World. Contrary to what the author wants to believe, Iran has never initiated a direct conflict with either the US or Israel. In all instances of direct conflict, it was the West, with its support of Israel, that initiated a war with Iran, the latest example being the Israeli unprovoked airstrikes on Iran. Iran undoubtedly has been vocal against both the US and Israel, and it has chanted "Death to America – Death to Israel", but it has never initiated a direct conflict as irresponsibly.

Pakistan, too, has been subject to such blackmail by India and its western partners. 25 years into the 21st century, and Pakistan has yet to, according to the Indians, obliterate the Hindutva regime. Pakistan has upheld robust signaling that has always been for peace and primarily self-defense only, and has never acted irresponsibly, especially about its nuclear capabilities. The veneer of Western impartiality is shattered by their selective outrage and silence on Israel's aggression.

The only thing the Indians have to sell to the world is their fake cries about terrorism emanating from Pakistan when, in reality, there are hundreds of separatist movements active inside India, whose issues stem more from local grievances against the Indian regime rather than tacit or overt Pakistani support.

<https://stratheia.com/lies-deception-and-pushing-the-west-into-another-deadly-episode-of-confrontation-a-rebuttal/>

Iran-Israel Conflict-A Risk of Escalation to Dangerous Level

Muneeb-Ur-Rahman

June 25, 2025

In the past 30 years, Israel, the only nation in the Middle East that possesses nuclear weapons in contravention of the U.N. Security Council and that does not allow the IAEA inspectors to enter its territory, has insisted that Iran is on the brink of obtaining nuclear weapons. The brutal aggression by Israel in Gaza and its ongoing escalating attacks on Iranian assets have led to a new, sad history of Israeli violations of international law.

There was no evidence of an imminent Iranian attack against Israel, and this is not sufficient under international law to justify Israel in launching the attack, based on its assessment that Iran will soon acquire a nuclear capability. When a strong opinion within the American intelligence also holds that Iran is not presently engaged in nuclear weapon construction, and it was the US president, Donald Trump, who pulled Iran out of the JCPOA nuclear agreement unilaterally and restored American sanctions on Iran at the behest of Israel. Critics argue that the foreign policy of Israel is not defensive, it is expansionist, supremacist and driven by a messianic urge. To his critics, Netanyahu now relies on the conflict against Iran and in Gaza to hold his coalition. Therefore, it positions Iran as a security threat and would carry on with the genocide in Gaza. Critics argue that Israel's foreign policy is not defensive. It is expansionist, supremacist, and driven by a messianic urge towards controlling the region by military means and portraying itself as a constant victim on the diplomatic front. This time, Israel is publicly musing about full regime change in Iran. Not a political transition only, but a calculated division of the Iranian state. In a time when all recent history of foreign-imposed regime change holds only cautionary tales. Such a collapse would not only have implications in the Middle East and South Asia but also to world powers such as Russia and China. The initial consequences of this Israeli-Iran war will divert the already considerably dimmed attention to the ongoing starvation and slaughter of innocent Palestinians. The other fear is that war can result in even greater impunity and increase Israeli bombardment in Gaza. A majority of observers

in the oil market also believe that this war is a standing threat to the Strait of Hormuz. Iran could potentially block traffic by using ships and shore-based missiles, which could result in a sudden spike in oil prices. Nevertheless, Iran will directly challenge the security of ships in the Persian Gulf only when it has nothing to lose. Destabilization of Iran would pose a clear message that no strategic partner of China is secure against disruption of US. In addition, although Israel seems to have successfully attacked two natural gas processing plants in Phase Fourteen of the South Pars gas field, Iran shut operations there. Simultaneously, Israel has not attacked oil production installations and Kharg Island, where 90 percent of the Iranian crude oil and condensate exports are loaded onto tankers. This keeps Iran in the oil market intact and keeps the Chinese interest unhurt and the price of oil under control. However, Beijing has sunk a lot in Tehran, not only economically, but diplomatically, in the wider context of developing a multipolar world order that defies U.S. hegemony. The destabilization of Iran would not only threaten China's westward economic expansion but also pose a clear message that no strategic partner of China is secure against disruption by the US.

In the short term, the conflict between Israel and Iran may benefit Russia, as US interest and favor will shift away from Ukraine to Israel, and the increase in the price of oil will allow Moscow to have more money to finance its military effort against Ukraine. However, the possibility of regime collapse in Iran could lead to the failure of an established regime that had been working closely with Moscow, and Russia would undergo the need to contend with others to gain influence with the new regime that arose in Iran after the present regime became ineffective. In case of Pakistan, a regime collapse in Iran would lead to chaos on the Iran-Pakistan border, resulting in increased cross-border militancy and potential refugee crisis, disruption in trade, in addition to oil prices shooting up. India and Israel are also close allies, and a pro-Israel or Western sponsored regime in Iran could make Iran a hostile Western neighbor. This would leave Pakistan between two

strategic needles, and this would greatly raise Pakistan's regional insecurity, as well as adding challenges on diplomatic fronts. What Israel wants in Iran is not reform, it is ruin. In conclusion, continuing to hound Iran over and over again about what Israel wants is not the solution. The solution is a viable Palestinian state. Going to war with Iran based not on the threat that Iran poses to America, but by the fact that the powerful lobby group of Israel in the US wants the US to do so, will limit the choices of the US and push the region in chaos. What Israel wants in Iran is not reform- it is ruin. And anyone who chooses sides on this project either through sectarian bias, political calculation, or simple ignorance is not merely on the wrong side of history, they are, in fact, direct partners of the next regional disaster. Pakistan, the region, and the world can still say no to this madness. However, that window is quickly closing.

<https://stratheia.com/iran-israel-conflict-a-risk-of-escalation-to-dangerous-level/>

Petrol Woes in Quetta Reflect Economic Gaps

Hamza Nasir

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Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, is facing a serious fuel shortage, hitting it once again, which has been troubling the city with the vicious circle of disturbances, an increase in prices, and increasing unrest among the masses. Though the scenario can be termed as a logistic or administrative debacle in its face value, in-depth analysis depicts that the fuel crunch is symptomatic of structural deficiencies in Pakistan's most endowed part-Balochistan. The crackdown on Iranian petrol shows how fragile Balochistan's formal fuel network truly is.

The Current Shortage, which has paralyzed daily life across Quetta and surrounding areas drying up the smuggled Iranian petrol. The fuel available in Iran, significantly cheaper and more accessible, has been the savior of the Balochistan people over the decades. The informal supply chain, which filled the loopholes created by the formal channels, has almost disappeared as border controls become tighter and there is increased enforcement by paramilitary groups to curb smuggling under FATF requirements and economic reform. Even though this crackdown is legally and politically reasonable, it has highlighted the instability of the fuel infrastructure in Balochistan. Unlike Punjab or Sindh, where several licensed oil marketing companies (OMCs) have a fairly efficient logistics setup, Balochistan has never been part of the formal fuel distribution system of Pakistan. The province spans nearly 44 percent of Pakistan's landmass, but has the lowest count of petrol stations and OMC facilities among other infrastructure. The province is usually neglected by the private oil companies as they are profit-driven and hence are not interested in the province because of the large distances involved, its numerous security threats, as well as the relatively small consumer base. This made the use of informal or black-market petrol, especially Iranian petrol, not only convenient but also a matter of survival for Quetta. The people of Quetta are facing consequences. There has been a huge hike in the black market price of petrol, and in some places the cost has

risen to Rs. 300-350 per litre. The worst hits include the motorbike riders, the rickshaw drivers, and the operators of public transport, most of whom survive on the day-to-day wages. With the increasing regional pressure, the reports have corroborated that 60-70 percent of the fuel pumps in Balochistan have been shut down because of the Iranian supply being cut off, with the government denying any official shortage in Quetta. There has been an increase in transport charges, and this has hit the small traders, office workers, and students. The ripple effects are being experienced even in the whole local economy, where goods are becoming costly, and the supply chain is slow. Uniform national pricing discourages oil marketing companies from serving distant, high-cost regions like Quetta.

The Social cost of this crisis is even more disturbing. Scenes of families stuck for hours on the roads with an empty tank are not rare anymore. Once comfortable middle-class people who can barely afford the cost of living now are being driven to the wall: some are forced to abandon their cars on the roads, others are left to be crowded at the fuel filling stations. This has involved women and children in cars stuck in this mayhem, which has depicted a worrying trend of civic misdemeanor and low standards of public services. It is not merely a nuisance, but a daily humiliation that reflects the consequences of poor governance and the indifference to the suffering of Balochistan. This is not simply an energy issue; it is a glaring example of economic neglect. Despite the great role Balochistan plays in the national exchequer with gas fields, minerals, and a strategic trade route, Gwadar, the province still lacks basic-level investment in infrastructure, thereby making it a chronic problem. The shortage of petroleum indicates a larger inability to incorporate Balochistan into the national economy in a manner that is equally resourceful and logical.

The federal government's price control mechanisms also fail to take regional disparities into account. Uniform pricing across Pakistan, while politically popular, has unintended consequences. Such policies deter the activities of OMCs in locations whose transport costs and supply challenges are significantly greater, such as Quetta, as they have little reason to prevail there, and instead encourage such operations in black markets. Not only does this increase regional disparity, but it also causes energy access to become geographically and privilege dependent. Shuttering informal supply chains without alternatives pushes already-marginalised communities into economic shock.

And of course, the new fuel crisis has underscored yet another hazardous trend in the economy, the fact that the informal economy can provide a safety net to the underdeveloped areas. Rather than establishing strong legal supply chains, the state has permitted the default institutionalization of informal channels. Closing them without an alternative source causes shock that upsets already unstable communities. As it turns out, in the case of Quetta, what can happen is a drying up of the city literally and even economically. The federal and provincial governments should not react timely and effectively in the short term by firefighting, but with a long-term economic vision. This incorporates encouraging oil firms to develop production in underserved areas by providing tax exemptions, subsidized transport, and infrastructural amenities. Reliance on long-haul fuel transport could also be minimized by smaller refineries nearer the border. Besides, Balochistan could use special energy corridors that could provide urban centers such as Quetta with a more regular supply. Transparent dialogue between local communities and the government is also needed. Instead of seeing informal petrol traders as criminals, a step-by-step transition plan should be developed that formalizes segments of the supply chain as well as safeguards livelihoods. This would involve economic empathy rather than just enforcement by regulations.

Moreover, the province should accelerate the investment in other sources of energy and renewable energy sources, e.g., solar power. The decentralized solar grids would suit Balochistan due to an open space cover and availability of sunlight to enable the remote region to enjoy energy security without depending on petrol supply chains that are far away. Energy equity for Balochistan demands incentives for legal distributors and rapid investment in local renewables. After all, the fuel shortage in Quetta is not only an empty fuel pump story. It is a tale of exclusion, structural imbalance, and policy step-down. It is a wake-up call that economic shifts and border closures, however noble their intentions, require real changes on the ground.

Pakistan should instead begin by addressing the essential needs of the poorest, most marginalized province, so that they are not relegated to the smugglers and informal players. Infrastructure in Quetta needs something more than petrol; a place in the national roadmap of the economy that considers its contribution, as well as its burdens.

<https://stratheia.com/petrol-woes-in-quetta-reflect-economic-gaps/>

Unpacking Dhume's Frustrated Jingoism

Shahzadi Irum

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When you can't fix the crack, you paint over the wall, and that's exactly what India has been doing since the loss of Operation Sindoor. The operation was a strategic embarrassment, and instead of accepting it and learning from it, many in India, from government officials to media voices, have been trying to cover it up. They have done this through loud speeches, emotional headlines, and forceful opinion pieces. Sadanand Dhume's recent fabrication in "The Wall Street Journal", attempting to compare Pakistan and Iran's nuclear programs, is yet another example of a flawed narrative shaped more by frustration than facts. Rather than addressing the failure, he shifts attention by creating fear and making weak comparisons between Pakistan and Iran's nuclear programs – a comparison that doesn't make sense. His article doesn't come from careful thought. It stems from frustration and a desire to prove something after a national setback.

In his article, Dhume tries to scare readers by claiming that a nuclear-armed Iran would be more dangerous than Pakistan. To support his argument, he places Pakistan and Iran in the same category, overlooking how different their nuclear programs truly are. Pakistan didn't pursue the nuclear path out of pride or power projection; it was compelled to do so by relentless Indian hostility. Since its creation, India has regarded Pakistan as an adversary: from illegally occupying Kashmir to waging a full-scale war in 1965, and then in 1971, played a direct role in dividing Pakistan into two and supporting the formation of Bangladesh. Just three years later, India conducted its first nuclear test in Pokhran in 1974, sending a loud and clear message of regional dominance. In an environment of constant provocation and existential threats, Pakistan developed its nuclear program not out of ambition but as a necessary deterrent against Indian aggression.

Iran, on the other hand, has been under intense international scrutiny for nearly fifty years. The country has consistently emphasized that its nuclear ambitions are peaceful, focused on energy production, medical research, and scientific development, and claims that its program operates completely within these bounds. Comparing Pakistan with Iran is misleading, as it overlooks the differing political systems, security concerns, and histories

of these nations. This is not an analysis; rather, it is a skillfully crafted, dangerous viewpoint that reflects India's sick mindset.

Dhume's claim about how Pakistan acquired the nuclear bomb lacks serious analysis—it expresses frustration. His words reflect the pain India still feels after the embarrassment of Operation Sindoor. Rather than acknowledging Pakistan's success, many Indians try to cover it up by spreading false and distorted narratives. Asserting that the Pakistan nuclear program was based on “theft” and “charity” is merely a product of their own imagination. In reality, our nuclear capabilities were the result of the tireless efforts of numerous Pakistani scientists, engineers, and leaders who sacrificed everything to protect their country. This was a national achievement, forged through unity, courage, and determination.

India's real problem is not how Pakistan got the bomb; it's the fact that we got it at all, despite all their efforts to stop us. That's what truly bothered them. Now, writers like Dhume try to provoke Pakistan into revealing defense secrets. But what they don't realize is: real strength doesn't need to explain itself. And those who shout the loudest often understand the least. Pakistan doesn't need to explain how it became a nuclear power. The fact that we did it against all odds is enough. And no amount of frustrated words can change the truth.

Another claim is that the US looked the other way while Pakistan pursued the bomb. Even if we accept the claim that the US knowingly overlooked Pakistan's nuclear program, let's not pretend it was out of trust or blind loyalty. It was America's own strategic interests. Washington needed a frontline state against the Soviets in Afghanistan, so nonproliferation conveniently took a backseat. This wasn't generosity – it was cold, hard realpolitik. The same US that struck civil nuclear deals with India later, despite its refusal to sign the NPT, has always bent the rules when it suited its agenda. So don't twist history to paint Pakistan as a beneficiary of US leniency. Pakistan acted in its national interests, just as America did in its own.

Dhume's assertion that allowing Pakistan to acquire nuclear weapons was India's biggest mistake overlooks an important fact: India went nuclear first, not Pakistan. After the wars from 1965 to 1971 and years of hostility, what should Pakistan have done? Wait for

another attack? Building the bomb was about protecting our people, not threatening others. He quotes Mr. Panda saying India had to “tolerate death by a thousand cuts,” but who forced India to tolerate anything? No one. What India couldn’t do was launch a full-scale war because Pakistan had the bomb. Here, Dhume is attempting to portray Pakistan’s nuclear weapons as a tool of terrorism, when in reality, they serve as a tool of deterrence that has effectively prevented the region from falling into chaos. Blaming Pakistan now while ignoring India’s actions in Kashmir, Gujarat 2002, and the rise of Hindutva extremism is pure hypocrisy. The West, too, has no moral high ground; it once trained the same militants it now condemns, and even backed Osama bin Laden. The truth is simple: Pakistan didn’t destabilize the region; it stopped India from acting with impunity. And that’s what Dhume can’t digest. Additionally, he argues that a nuclear-armed Iran would pose a substantial threat to the world. However, he intentionally overlooks the fact that Iran remains a signatory to the NPT and allows for regular IAEA inspections, unlike Israel, which possesses nuclear weapons outside of any international framework and faces no accountability. Blaming Iran by supporting groups like Hezbollah or Hamas, without addressing the decades of occupation and injustice that fuel such resistance, presents a one-sided and incomplete perspective.

In conclusion, a closer analysis reveals that Dhume’s piece is filled with frustration toward Pakistan. What truly enrages him isn’t Iran or Pakistan’s nuclear capability. The truth is, India still hasn’t moved on from what happened during the so-called Operation Sindoor. What really bothers Dhume isn’t that Pakistan has nuclear weapons; it’s that Pakistan stood its ground, shocked them, and proved it could match India’s power on equal footing. He calls Pakistan’s nuclear program a “blunder” because the embarrassment of Operation Sindoor still hurts Indian pride. It was not a blunder; it was a seismic shock they will never recover from.

<https://centrefordevelopmentandstability.com/unpacking-dhumes-frustrated-jingoism>