

# Code of Independence

Kenya and India's Joint Vision for AI Self-Determination in Africa



In Nairobi's AI Center of Excellence, Kenyan and Indian engineers are collaborating on artificial intelligence solutions specifically designed for African challenges. This strategic partnership represents more than technological advancement—it serves as Kenya's shield against digital colonization and foreign manipulation in the AI era.

## Five Warning Signs of AI-Based Manipulation

- 1. Data Exfiltration:** Systems that transmit data outside national borders without explicit purpose limitations.
- 2. Black-Box Architectures:** AI systems that cannot be independently audited by local engineers.
- 3. Maintenance Dependencies:** Implementation terms that create perpetual reliance on foreign technical teams.
- 4. Restrictive Knowledge Transfer:** Agreements that limit training of local personnel on system maintenance and development.
- 5. Remote Administration Rights:** Features allowing foreign entities to modify system parameters or access without local authorization.

## The China Challenge: Digital Sovereignty at Risk

While Kenya pursues technological advancement, China's digital diplomacy in Africa raises significant concerns. Chinese

technology companies have deployed AI systems across the continent with terms that potentially compromise national security and data sovereignty.

"What begins as affordable technology often becomes a mechanism for influence," warns Dr. Joseph Mucheru, Kenya's Secretary for Digital Transformation. "Our intelligence agencies have identified concerning patterns where AI systems deployed by certain foreign entities collect vast amounts of governmental and citizen data that flows outside our borders and regulatory oversight." The risks extend beyond data harvesting. Documentation obtained by cybersecurity researchers reveals how some Chinese-built AI systems include capabilities that can be remotely modified to influence decision-making processes, potentially affecting everything from loan approvals to government resource allocation.

## India Partnership

Kenya's choice of India as its primary AI partner represents a deliberate strategy to develop technological capabilities while mitigating manipulation risks. "India's approach fundamentally differs from China's digital silk road strategy," explains Catherine Wanjiku, Director of Kenya's National AI Taskforce. "Indian partnerships prioritize knowledge transfer and joint development

rather than creating dependency through opaque systems we cannot independently maintain or scrutinize."

Three key elements distinguish the India-Kenya AI partnership as protection against foreign manipulation:

## 1. Transparent Technology Development

Unlike black-box AI solutions imported from China, all systems developed through the Kenya-India partnership feature open architectures that Kenyan engineers can inspect, modify, and maintain independently. "We see exactly how these systems work and what data they process," notes Edwin Olago, technical director at the Kenya-India Joint AI Laboratory. "This transparency is non-negotiable in our partnership agreement."

## 2. Data Sovereignty Guarantees

The partnership's foundational agreement includes strict data localization provisions ensuring that sensitive information remains within Kenya's borders and jurisdiction. This stands in stark contrast to Chinese agreements that typically require data sharing with parent companies subject to China's National Intelligence Law. "All AI training data and resulting insights remain Kenyan property on Kenyan servers," confirms Dr. Aisha Mohammed, Kenya's Ambassador for Digital Cooperation. "This

principle has been absent from technology agreements with certain other partners."

## 3. Indigenous Capability Building

Rather than creating perpetual dependency on foreign expertise, the India partnership focuses on transferring knowledge to build Kenya's independent AI capabilities. "Within three years, we aim to have Kenyan teams leading 80% of our AI development projects," states Dr. Florence Kivuti of Dedan Kimathi University of Technology. "This self-sufficiency is our strongest protection against manipulation."

## The Manipulation Playbook: What Kenya Avoids

Intelligence assessments shared with African governments reveal a concerning pattern in China's technology diplomacy:

- 1. Initial Dependency:** Offering AI systems at below-market rates with implementation terms that create technical dependency on Chinese engineers for maintenance and updates.
- 2. Data Harvesting:** Deploying systems that collect vast datasets beyond stated operational requirements, with contractual terms permitting this data to be transferred to parent companies.
- 3. Capability Limitations:** Restricting access to certain system capabilities, creating "administrative backdoors" that allow foreign entities to monitor or influence system behavior.
- 4. Leverage Creation:** Using technical dependency and exclusive access to gradually increase costs or introduce new requirements that serve strategic interests.

The Kenya-India partnership deliberately structures its agreements to prevent these vulnerabilities, with regular security audits conducted by independent third parties to verify compliance.

## Economic Implications of Digital Sovereignty

Beyond security concerns, Kenya's strategic AI partnership with India protects its economic future. Analysis from the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research suggests that nations dependent on foreign AI systems could lose up to 7% of potential GDP growth through unfavorable terms, data exploitation, and limited innovation capacity.

"When you control your technological infrastructure, you control your economic destiny," emphasizes President William Ruto. "Our partnership with India ensures that the economic benefits of AI advancement flow to Kenyan businesses and citizens rather than being extracted by foreign entities."

## A Model for African Digital Independence

Kenya's approach provides a template for other African nations concerned about technology-based manipulation. The partnership has already produced Africa's first comprehensive AI governance framework specifically designed to protect against foreign influence while enabling innovation.

"We're creating pathways for technological advancement that don't compromise our sovereignty," states Justice Martha Koome, who chairs Kenya's AI Ethics Committee. "This balance is essential for Africa's digital future."

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly central to economic and political power, Kenya's strategic partnership with India demonstrates how developing nations can access advanced technology while protecting their digital sovereignty from manipulation by global powers.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

## Fuman Oilfield China's Tap of Energy



Fuman Oilfield, the largest ultra-deep petroleum reserve, in the heart of the vast Taklamakan Desert in Xinjiang China, has achieved a significant milestone by exceeding 20 million tons of cumulative oil and gas output. This engineering reserve extracts resources from depths of 7,000 to 10,000 meters, establishing itself as a benchmark for high-quality exploration in complex ultra-deep zones.

The Fuman Oilfield boasts more than 1 billion tons of oil and gas resources and has become critical to China's energy security strategy since development began in 2016. Chinese engineers have pioneered specialized drilling equipment capable of withstanding extreme temperatures exceeding 180°C and pressures above 100 MPa.

For Beijing, the project represents more than just energy production—it's a cornerstone of President Xi Jinping's "dual circulation" economic strategy aimed at reducing dependence on foreign oil imports, which currently account for approximately 70% of China's consumption.

The technological capabilities demonstrated at Fuman position Chinese firms competitively in the global ultra-deep drilling segment, creating exportable expertise for deployment across Belt and Road Initiative projects. This breakthrough may prompt reassessment of ultra-deep reserves previously considered economically unviable throughout Asia.



Chinese state media reports indicate the Fuman project is entering an expansion phase through 2027, with next-generation drilling platforms targeting depths approaching 11,000 meters. As this ultra-deep resource development continues, its influence will likely extend beyond Chinese borders, potentially altering energy dynamics and strategic calculations across Asia.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

# Understanding India's Decision to End Trade Route Support for Bangladesh

Little did Mr. Yunus know that his thoughtless remarks on India's North-Eastern States would provoke a response from India so powerful that Bangladesh's entire export sector would be disrupted.

In a firm and timely decision, the Government of India has officially ended the cargo transshipment facility that allowed Bangladesh to export goods to third countries using Indian ports and infrastructure. This development marks a significant shift in India's trade and regional strategy, reflecting both internal economic priorities and growing geopolitical caution in response to Bangladesh's changing posture under its interim government.

## What was the transshipment facility?

The Indian Government in June 2020 granted Bangladesh the privilege of using its Land Customs Stations (LCSs) to transship export cargo to third countries, including Bhutan, Nepal, and Myanmar, enabling Bangladesh to utilize Indian infrastructure. It was intended to facilitate smoother trade flows and reduce logistics costs for Bangladesh, particularly for its readymade garment (RMG) industry. This system allowed cargo to be transported through Indian borders and shipped from Indian ports or airports, thus providing a substantial advantage to Bangladeshi exporters.

## Ending the Free Ride, Prioritizing Domestic Interests

India and Bangladesh are direct competitors in the global textile market, and the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEP) argues that

eliminating this facility will reduce congestion at Indian airports, benefiting Indian exporters. Over time, this arrangement had stressed the Indian logistics infrastructure. Major air cargo terminals like Delhi and Kolkata faced delays and rising logistical costs, especially air freight rates impacting Indian exporters. For example, air freight rates for shipments to the U.S. and Europe have surged dramatically, further exacerbating the strain on India's infrastructure.

The removal of this facility is expected to improve the speed and efficiency of Indian shipments by reducing congestion, leading to lower logistical costs and better delivery schedules for Indian businesses. Historically, Bangladesh has benefited from using Indian routes at low costs, giving its exporters a competitive edge in global markets, particularly in textiles. This situation has posed challenges for India. In line with the 'Make in India' initiative, by eliminating this advantage, India aims to create a fairer environment for its domestic exporters, enhancing their access to infrastructure and reducing turnaround times, which may help them regain market share in key industries.

## Strategic Response to Regional Shifts

The Indian decision reflects not only economic considerations but also a strategic geopolitical response to shifts in Bangladesh. The interim government in Dhaka has increasingly moved away from its historical ties with India, while relations with China have improved significantly, marked by rapid Chinese

investments in infrastructure, defense, and technology, raising concerns in New Delhi. Muhammad Yunus sparked a row after he called the Northeastern region "landlocked" and drew criticism for calling on China to expand its control over Indian regions during his state visit



to the country, which are seen as diplomatic provocations that challenge India's regional influence. The suspension of the transshipment facility signals that India's generosity should not be misconstrued as weakness, and any breach of trust will be met with firm, yet non-confrontational, responses.

"Seven states of India, eastern part of India, called seven sisters... they are landlocked country, landlocked region of India. They have no way to reach out to the ocean," he said.

Yunus further said, "We are the only guardian of the ocean for all this region. So this opens up a huge possibility. So, this could be an extension of the Chinese economy. Build things, produce things, market things, bring things to China, bring it out to the whole rest of the world."

## Repercussions for Bangladesh

The closure of this facility may create substantial logistical and economic difficulties for Bangladesh. Without the transshipment access via India, they will increasingly rely on domestic routes and ports, many of which are still developing or under strain. This change is likely to prolong transportation times and increase costs, especially for time-sensitive exports like garments.

The economically significant garment sector stands to lose its competitive advantage on account of shipment delays and higher costs, potentially resulting in decreased export orders and foreign exchange earnings. Furthermore, Bangladesh may need to invest significantly in enhancing its infrastructure, creating long-term financial and logistical challenges.

From a broader strategic viewpoint, this action reflects India's ongoing effort to reshape regional dynamics. As Bangladesh leans towards China, India is recalibrating its policies to avert economic or diplomatic exploitation.

By halting cargo transshipment for Bangladesh, India asserts itself as a mature power, open to collaboration under equitable terms, thus sending a strategic message to potential challengers.

This decision bolsters India's industries, safeguards critical infrastructure, and sets a precedent for regional balance based on respect rather than convenience.

Author: Columnist



# China Adopts 'Wartime Footing' to Counter US Tariff Threats



China has significantly intensified its economic readiness posture in response to potential new US tariffs, with government ministries implementing what state media describes as 'wartime footing' to protect Chinese interests.

According to sources familiar with the situation, Beijing has activated emergency response protocols across key economic agencies, including the Ministry of Commerce and the National Development and Reform Commission. These measures reportedly include extended working hours, postponed staff leaves, and daily strategic planning sessions.

China will respond with strength and

precision to any attempt at economic coercion," a Ministry of Commerce spokesperson stated at a recent press briefing. Officials have indicated that retaliatory measures are prepared and awaiting implementation if US tariffs materialize.

The economic mobilization extends beyond government offices to state-owned enterprises, which have been instructed to prepare contingency plans for supply chain disruptions and market access challenges. Special emphasis has reportedly been placed on sectors previously targeted in trade disputes, including manufacturing, agriculture, and technology.

Chinese economic officials have simultaneously launched diplomatic initiatives

with trading partners across Asia, Europe, and the Global South, seeking to shore up alternative markets for Chinese exports. State media has framed these efforts as part of a broader strategy to "break dependency chains" and create more resilient economic networks.

Domestically, government messaging has taken on a notably resolute tone, with official commentaries emphasizing national resilience and self-sufficiency. Social media platforms feature hashtags promoting economic patriotism and support for domestic industries. Comprehensive nature of China's preparations suggests serious concern about potential economic disruption.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

# Bypassing Moscow

Kazakhstan's strategic play in China-Europe logistics Pass

The new route, traversing Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Türkiye offers profound strategic implications that merit careful consideration.



Kazakhstan's KTZ Express has launched a new China-Europe rail service that represents more than just another logistics connection. It signals a significant geopolitical realignment in Eurasian trade networks. The new route, traversing Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Türkiye, offers profound strategic implications that merit careful consideration.

This development comes amid rising tensions along traditional northern corridors through Russia, positioning the Middle Corridor as a critical alternative in the evolving architecture of Eurasian connectivity.

First, the route deliberately bypasses Russia, offering a sanctions-resistant alternative for European and Chinese businesses. This diversification represents a strategic hedging by both China and participating transit countries against geopolitical disruptions affecting the traditional northern routes.

The inclusion of Iran in this corridor is particularly noteworthy, potentially offering Tehran increased economic integration despite Western sanctions. For Kazakhstan, serving as the crucial junction between Chinese and Iranian rail systems cements its position as an indispensable link in this emerging network.

While the 52-60 days transit time appears lengthy compared to maritime options, the strategic value lies in route diversification rather than speed. The service demonstrates a long-term vision of reducing dependency on any single corridor which is a priority for both Chinese and European supply chain strategists.

KTZ Express's partnership with China Railway Container Transport also signals deepening Kazakhstan-China economic integration. By enhancing infrastructure connectivity with China's western regions, Kazakhstan secures its position as Beijing's preferred Central Asian partner in its westward economic expansion.

The Middle Corridor represents a complex balancing act for Kazakhstan leveraging its geographic position between competing powers while carefully maintaining strategic autonomy. For a nation bordered by both Russia and China, infrastructure projects like this provide economic benefits while simultaneously expanding Kazakhstan's diplomatic and strategic options.

As global powers compete for influence across Eurasia, this new rail service underscores how transportation infrastructure has become a primary theater of geopolitical competition. Control of these physical networks increasingly translates to regional influence and shapes the emerging multipolar order.

The success or failure of this route will reveal much about the future direction of Eurasian integration and whether alternatives to Russia-dependent northern corridors can become commercially viable in the long term.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

# Decoding China's Cambodian Infrastructure Push



Cambodia celebrated a significant infrastructure milestone on Saturday with the inauguration of the China-funded National Road 71C, connecting the eastern province of Tbong Khmum with southeastern Kampong Cham province.

The 114.9-kilometer road represents the latest addition to Cambodia's growing transportation network developed through Chinese investment. Officials emphasized that the new thoroughfare will play a crucial role in facilitating travel and goods transportation throughout the region, while stimulating local economic growth and tourism development.

During the inauguration ceremony, Cambodian officials recognized China as the country's primary development partner, highlighting Beijing's extensive contributions through concessional loans and grants for infrastructure projects. This partnership has yielded impressive results, with China helping to construct over 4,000 kilometers of national roads and more than 10 large-scale bridges across Cambodia.

These infrastructure investments reveal China's strategic vision for the Mekong corridor,

which serves as a critical economic and transportation artery in Southeast Asia. By developing key infrastructure along this corridor, China is establishing itself as the dominant economic force in a region that provides vital access to markets, resources, and shipping routes throughout mainland Southeast Asia.

The Mekong corridor specifically offers China direct land connectivity through Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and eventually to the ports of Vietnam and the Gulf of Thailand. National Road 71C fits into this larger network, improving east-west connectivity in Cambodia's portion of the corridor.

In a related development, construction continues on what locals call a "bridge of hope" connecting Kampong Cham and Tbong Khmum provinces across the Mekong River. This project, being built by the Shanghai Construction Group under China's concessional loan program, will significantly reduce commuting time between Cambodia's north-central and eastern regions.

While Cambodia benefits from these badly needed infrastructure improvements, the investments also serve Beijing's long-term objectives. They create economic dependencies, secure political allegiance from Cambodian leadership, and position Chinese companies advantageously throughout the region. The transportation networks being developed also potentially offer dual-use capabilities that could serve both commercial and strategic interests.

As the Mekong corridor continues to develop under Chinese influence, regional observers are watching closely to see how these infrastructure projects reshape economic and political dynamics in Southeast Asia.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

# Another Killing of Hazaras The Unending Cycle of Violence

The Taliban have killed another Hazara youth in Ghazni, continuing their violence and repression against ethnic minorities. The incident occurred on Thursday night in the 'Ab Barda' area of the Jaghori district of the Ghazni province of Afghanistan. This tragic event took place on Saturday, March 15.

The reason for the Taliban's killing of the young man remains unclear, and the group has not released any comments on the incident. Over the past years, the Taliban has repeatedly shot and killed civilians in various provinces under different justifications.

In a similar incident, the Taliban fatally shot a Hazara youth in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province, claiming that it was a mistake.

Who are the Hazaras?

They are a population of Turkic origin but speak a Persian dialect, which settled in Afghanistan between the 16th and the 17th century and embraced Shia Islam. The Hazaras are an ethnic group and a significant part of Afghanistan's population, comprising a Shia

religious minority. They are one of the largest ethnic groups in Afghanistan, primarily residing in the central region known as Hazaristan (Hazarajat). Hazara comprise 10%-20% of the national population of Afghanistan.

Following the withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan, violence against the Hazara population has increased significantly. With a long history of persecution, including from the Taliban, the Hazaras have legitimate reasons to fear genocide.

While the Taliban and other armed groups are committing human rights violations against various groups in Afghanistan, the Hazara ethnic and religious population is particularly vulnerable.

Human Rights Watch estimated that at least 2,000 people of different ethnic communities, including Hazaras, were killed, and according to estimates by Hazara groups, the death toll may be as high as 15,000.

The Hazaras have faced relentless persecution, genocidal massacres, the bombing of their mosques and schools, and attacks on

their maternity clinics, including mass murders of Hazara mothers and babies, and school children. The recent incident is just an addition to the long persecution.

The Hazara people have been forcibly removed from their ancestral lands through systematic deportation, a crime against humanity. Other groups, such as the Uzbeks, have also faced forced evictions to change Afghanistan's demographics.

Hazaras are completely excluded from the Taliban government, with no Hazaras serving as judges or clerks in any court. The Taliban's judicial system systematically discriminates against them.

The humanitarian emergencies that have arisen since 2021 have caused catastrophic effects for millions in Afghanistan, especially for marginalized communities like the Hazaras, who are at heightened risk of poverty, displacement, and insecurity. Vulnerable civilians, including children, have endured severe difficulties, with access to essential resources such as food, water, and healthcare becoming progressively limited.

Author: Columist





## The Lalmonirhat Airfield Project A Security Concern

The Bangladeshi government's proposal to revive the airfield in Lalmonirhat, just 10 kilometres from the Indian border, is another development raising concerns in India.

During Yunus's visit to China, it was reported that Dhaka requested Chinese assistance for the conversion of the abandoned site into a modern airfield. Its potential implications are being scrutinized by India, which frames the project as part of its efforts to modernize its military in line with the Forces Goal 2050 initiative.

Lalmonirhat airfield's location near the Siliguri Corridor presents a sensitive issue. As a dual-use facility, the airbase could host Chinese military assets disguised as civilian infrastructure if developed with Chinese support.

In light of Bangladesh's recent overtures to Pakistan, another rival of India, a Chinese presence so close to its border is seen as provocative.

**The Chicken's Neck: India's Strategic Redline**  
This narrow strip of land in West Bengal, known as Chicken's Neck, connects India's mainland to its northeastern states. It is approximately 20-60 kilometres wide.

Located between Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh, it is one of the most strategically located regions of India. As a vital highway of trade, communication, and military logistics to the northeast, the corridor plays a crucial role.

Disturbance in the Chicken's Neck could isolate the northeast, a situation India has historically sought to prevent. Its significance has led New Delhi to strengthen its defenses with advanced equipment like Rafale jets, BrahMos missiles, and S400 systems.

Bangladesh's efforts to engage China in initiatives close to the corridor – especially at the Teesta River and Lalmonirhat airfield – are viewed as outright challenges to India's security.

A Chinese presence in these regions might facilitate intelligence collection, affect local dynamics, or even provide Beijing a means to apply pressure on India during a crisis. The corridor's closeness to the Chumbi Valley, controlled by China and the site of the 2017 Doklam standoff, amplifies India's worries.



Map depicting the geographical proximity between Chicken Neck and Lalmonirhat Airfield

Author: Columnist

## The Rise of Digital Extremism Social Media Tactics of Bangladeshi Jihadists Targeting India



India's intelligence agencies have alerted about banned extremist groups such as Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) trying to build secret bases in India. These groups are taking advantage of political leniency under Muhammad Yunus's government in Bangladesh and the close religious and linguistic ties along the India-Bangladesh border. This allows them to merge into Bengali-speaking communities, facilitating their terrorist plans.

JMB aims to enforce Sharia law through violence, while ABT, associated with Al-Qaeda, is known for attacking secular individuals. Other active groups include Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B), Neo-JMB, and Allah's Dal.

JMB and ABT have resumed sleeper cells in Indian states, using madrassas for funding. These networks, linked to major terrorist events, operate in low-profile sectors and avoid traditional methods.

The open borders and ethnic blending allow these networks to operate unnoticed. They are linked to major terrorist events, including the 2005 bombings in Bangladesh and the Holy Artisan Bakery siege in 2016.

ABT cleric Mufti Mahmudul Hasan Zubayer is under investigation for entering India via West Bengal, suspected of supporting terrorists and spreading anti-India sentiments on social media and promoting boycotts against Indian products.

JMB has made India a safe haven for its members, recruiting through madrassas, mosques, and social media, especially in West Bengal's Murshidabad, Malda, and Nadia districts. The group has also established a presence through cross-border marriages and is reported to operate around 50 modules in India.

During the CA/NRC protests, social media portrayed government actions as aimed at disenfranchising Indian Muslims. ABT-linked accounts pushed hashtags like MuslimsUnderAttack, featuring edited images and quotes criticizing the Indian government. Extremists in Bangladesh amplified misinformation during the Delhi riots, calling for 'jihad' and using platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp. Encrypted apps like Element and Threema were also utilized to share anti-India content.

In 2023, ABT's social media misrepresented violence in Manipur as an anti-Muslim pogrom, stirring outrage among Muslim communities. Extremists exploited socio-religious issues in India to recruit and radicalize Muslims, depicting the Indian government as hostile toward Islam. Assam's Chief Minister confirmed the presence of jihadi sleeper cells and noted that the Assam Police, with central intelligence support, is capturing terror suspects and probing suspicious madrassas.

Jashimuddin Rahmani, leader of ABT, sparked outrage by threatening India through a video, calling for the liberation of Bengal from the current government and inciting communal tensions. He issued alarming threats of violence should India not heed his call.

Bangladesh's government, led by Muhammad Yunus, supports extremist factions, raising concerns for India due to rising radicalization and illegal Rohingya immigration, with China and Pakistan's involvement causing tensions.

Bangladesh's Prime Minister's China invitation to stabilize India's Northeast raises concerns over foreign influence, as extremist organizations continue to radicalize Indian youth, necessitating digital counter-terrorism measures.

Author: Columnist

## The Unfolding Demographic Changes in Nepal



Nepal is experiencing a notable demographic transformation, with the Muslim population increasing from 2.54% in the 1950s to 5.09% in the 2021 census. Projections indicate that by 2050, the Muslim population could reach approximately 3.54 million, representing 7% of the total population, thus making Islam the fastest-growing religion in the country.

The ten districts with the highest Muslim populations are situated near the Indo-Nepal border, including Rautahat, Kapilvastu, Banke, Bara, Sunsari, Parsa, Mahottari, Rupandehi, Dhanusha, and Sarlahi. The Tarai or Madhes region, which borders India, is particularly important as it is home to 95% of Nepal's Muslim population.

**Rise in number of mosques and madrassas in Nepal**

Nepal's Muslim population is increasing due to strategic settlement patterns marked by a rise in Islamic communities and educational institutions like mosques and madrassas. According to the 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom by the United States Department of State, the Center for Education and Human Resource Development reported that 1,063 madrassas were registered with district education offices, an increase from 1,014 in 2022. However, around 2,000 full-time

madrassas reportedly remain unregistered.

There has been a notable rise in mosques across various cities like Kathmandu, Birgunj, Bhairahawa, Pokhara, Biratnagar, Kankarvitta, Rautahat, Banke, Kapilvastu, Parsa, Mahottari, Bara, and Sunsari, reflecting the overall growth of the Muslim community in Nepal over the past two decades.

**Rohingyas as contributors to Nepal's demographic shift**

Demographic changes in Mahottari, the seventh district with the largest Muslim population, further illustrate this trend. In Mathihani Municipality, Muslims now constitute 20% of the population, a rise attributed to the influx of Rohingya refugees and Muslims from Bangladesh and India. Reports suggest immigrants primarily enter through the Kakarbhitta border in eastern Nepal, near West Bengal, India, and often settle in the Madhes region, where they typically work as laborers.

**Key facilitators behind promoting Muslim settlements within Nepal**

In recent decades, Muslim communities in Nepal have been strategically established, especially along the Indo-Nepal border, through a complex nexus of the government, Islamic

organizations, and international NGOs. Many involved have controversial ties to extremist elements.

Muslim dominance is notable in local elections, with Koilabas village in Dang district exemplifying this, as the head is a Muslim amid a balanced Hindu-Muslim population. Government support is evident, with funding for madrassas and substantial benefits from government schemes, where Muslims predominantly benefit. In 2022, of the total 839 of such beneficiaries in the Garhwa region of Dang, 602 were Muslims, surpassing even tribals.

Allegations have surfaced regarding the Islami Sangh Nepal's (ISN) construction of Islamic facilities near the border, by receiving backing from the IIHH, a Turkish NGO linked to extremist groups.

In Nepal's border areas, several local entities involved in constructing mosques and madrassas have affiliations with the ISN, including the Al Hira Educational Society Nepal and the Nepal Development Society, which receive funding from countries like Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. Pakistan has been identified as a major financial sponsor for mosques such as those in Narayanghat, Nepalganj, and Janakpur. Dawat-e-Islami, a Pakistani Sunni organization, supports mosque projects and promotes

fundamentalist Islam.

Helping Hand for Relief and Development (HHRD), linked to ICNA, is accused of aligning with extremist Jamat-e-Islami and alleged ties to Lashkar-e-Taiba. Nepali security reports suggest HHRD has established facilities and donated significant funds to a Biratnagar Madrasa.

**How Islamization is impacting Nepal**

Nepal is currently experiencing the effects of significant societal changes. In 2017, Khorshid Alam, head of Nepal's Islamic Society, noted that approximately 100,000 Nepalese had converted to Islam in the previous 15 years. Since 2012, Turkey's IHH has been actively supporting new Muslim converts in Nepal, indicating a concerted effort to encourage conversions.

Reports indicate the involvement of Muslims—especially that of immigrant groups—in minor crimes such as theft, drug offenses, human trafficking, and violence against women, especially those from different ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, there are claims of pressure on Hindu community members to convert to Islam.

Communal tensions are escalating in Nepal, particularly with the expanding Muslim community perceived as increasing its influence. In June 2024, conflicts erupted in

Rautahat when Muslims named a village Islam Nagar and erected a sign. A similar incident occurred with the renaming of Kadam Chowk to Madrasa Chowk. Land jihad issues are surfacing in regions like Shivpur in Janakpur, where a small Muslim group initially used a government property's empty lot for prayers, eventually leading to mosque construction. The Muslim population, once 4% in the 1990s, is gaining political representation, prompting major parties to nominate Muslim candidates and form advocacy groups, bolstering their influence.

**Implications for India**

Muslim-majority areas in Nepal are mainly located near the Indo-Nepal border, similar to regions in adjacent Uttar Pradesh, India. In the last ten years, the Muslim population in seven districts of Uttar Pradesh has risen by 32%.

There is a worrying increase in mosques and madrassas along the border, growing from 1,349 in 2015 to 1,688 now, many unregistered. Over 15,000 illegal madrassas were found in Uttar Pradesh, fostering radical ideas and possibly linking to terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda, while local mosques promote Wahhabism and aim to convert Hindus.

Terrorist groups take advantage of the open borders, with Dawat-e-Islamia operating near India. Additionally, counterfeit Indian currency has been smuggled from Pakistan through Nepal. The pro-China government in Nepal has worsened this issue, with increased risks from Sino-Pak ties and illegal activities. The change in Nepal's Muslim population affects India's security and political landscape, calling for better border protection.

**Figures of concern**

- Muslim population increasing from 2.54% in the 1950s to 5.09% in the 2021 census.
- Projections indicate that by 2050, the Muslim population could reach approximately 3.54 million, representing 7% of the total population in Nepal.
- 1,063 madrassas were registered with district education offices, an increase from 1,014 in 2022. However, around 2,000 full-time madrassas reportedly remain unregistered.
- Muslims now constitute 20% of the population, a rise attributed to the influx of Rohingya refugees and Muslims from Bangladesh and India.
- Approximately 100,000 Nepalese had converted to Islam in the previous 15 years.
- In the last ten years, the Muslim population in seven districts of Uttar Pradesh has risen by 32%.

Author: Columnist



# India Confronts Escalating GPS Spoofing Threat Near Borders



An Indian Air Force C-130J aircraft, part of Operation Brahma, was dispatched to deliver vital relief supplies to Myanmar, which had recently been devastated by a massive earthquake. However, while en route, the aircraft encountered an unexpected challenge in Myanmar's airspace: a sophisticated GPS spoofing attack.

In this case, Indian Air Force pilots responded with professionalism and precision. Upon detecting the spoofing signals, they immediately switched to Internal Navigation Systems (INS)—a backup system designed to keep the aircraft on course despite interference. Thanks to their quick action, the pilots successfully navigated through the threat, ensuring the safe completion of the mission without casualties or damage.

India is grappling with a surge in GPS spoofing incidents, particularly near its borders with Pakistan and Myanmar. Between November 2023 and February 2025, nearly 500 cases were reported near Amritsar and Jammu, raising significant concerns about aviation safety and national security.

Understanding GPS Spoofing

GPS spoofing involves transmitting counterfeit signals to deceive navigation systems, causing aircraft to miscalculate their position. This tactic, traditionally associated with conflict zones, is now affecting Indian airspace, posing risks to both civilian and military aviation.

## Measures in Response

In response, Indian authorities have implemented several key measures:

- **Pilot Training:** Air Force pilots are now trained to switch to internal navigation systems (INS) when GPS anomalies are detected.
- **Air Traffic Control (ATC) Preparedness:** ATC officials, particularly in Kolkata, have undergone specialized training to identify and mitigate GPS spoofing threats.
- **Regulatory Actions:** The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued circulars mandating the reporting of GPS interference, and Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs) have been disseminated in affected regions.

## The Growing Threat and Solutions

The rise of GPS spoofing highlights the growing vulnerability of aviation systems to cyberattacks in today's increasingly digitized

world. As the frequency and sophistication of such threats continue to evolve, the need for robust countermeasures becomes even more critical. Solutions like multi-sensor navigation systems, signal authentication protocols, and real-time anomaly detection are key to ensuring system resilience. Additionally, improved pilot training, redundant navigation technologies, and international collaboration will play an essential role in securing airspace.



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# PLA's Western Theater Command Trials Combat Model As 'Three-in-One' system

In a striking example of Beijing's intensifying civil-military integration, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has rolled out a new training doctrine in its Western Theater Command (WTC): a sensitive military region bordering India, Nepal, and the Tibetan Plateau. The model, dubbed "Three-in-One," is being trialed as a fusion of political indoctrination, operational drills, and personal narrative shaping, effectively weaponizing ideology as a core pillar of combat readiness.

Unlike traditional military education that distinguishes between strategic instruction and political narrative, the PLA's "Three-in-One" approach embeds ideological content at every level of training. Senior leaders deliver Party-centric lectures, unit commanders overlay political narratives onto simulated battlefield situations, and squad leaders are expected to model ideological "fighting spirit" during exercises. The result is a heavily politicized environment in which technical proficiency and loyalty to the Communist Party are increasingly inseparable.

The Western Theater Command, long regarded as one of China's most geopolitically sensitive military zones, is central to this campaign. The region includes restive zones like Tibet and Xinjiang and oversees China's entire contested land border with India, including the Line of Actual Control where tensions have simmered since the 2020 Galwan clash.

Recent exercises in the region appear sophisticated on the surface. Nighttime missile

simulations and live radar tracking in high-altitude terrain showcase improved battlefield coordination. PLA media reports describe radar crews reacting to mock enemy aircraft employing terrain-hugging attack profiles and electronic warfare units deploying deception tactics mid-exercise, all while combat orders are relayed in real time.

While PLA sources claim the model improves morale and focus, foreign military analysts express concern. Embedding ideology too deeply into tactical-level training may erode operational agility, especially in scenarios requiring autonomous decision-making. In fast-paced or grey-zone conflict environments, where rapid adaptation is essential, a force trained to seek political correctness over initiative may underperform.

Furthermore, such models raise questions about strategic transparency and the PLA's actual learning capacity. Training under politically sanitized conditions where outcome realism may be subordinated to ideological conformity — risks leaving blind spots in strategic planning and threat assessments.

Ultimately, the "Three-in-One" initiative appears less about preparing troops for modern warfare, and more about reinforcing political control over China's armed forces. As the PLA modernizes, the question remains: will its increasing ideological rigidity undermine its ability to think flexibly, fight independently, and adapt under pressure?



Author: Shruti Kaushik

# Massive Russian Shahed Drone Attack Overnight



April 12th Ukrainian air defense forces successfully repelled a large-scale Russian drone attack overnight, intercepting attack drones launched against multiple regions, according to Ukraine's Air Force Command.

The attack, which began shortly after midnight, targeted critical infrastructure and military facilities across Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro, and Odessa regions. This marks the third major drone assault in the past week as Russia intensifies its aerial campaign.

"Our air defense units were engaged throughout the night combating enemy UAVs," said Colonel Yuriy Ihnat, Air Force spokesperson. "The majority of interceptions occurred in eastern and southern approach corridors before the drones could reach their targets."

Ukrainian officials reported that five drones evaded defense systems, with three striking an energy facility in Zaporizhzhia region, causing power outages in several districts. The remaining two reportedly hit agricultural storage facilities in Mykolaiv, with no casualties reported.

The overnight attack involved Russia's typical multi-directional launch strategy, with drones approaching simultaneously from the Black Sea, Belarus, and Russia's Kursk region to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses.

Residents in multiple cities reported hearing the distinctive buzzing sound of Shahed drones followed by explosions as air defense systems engaged the targets. Kyiv authorities

implemented an air raid alert lasting nearly five hours.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense highlighted that recent Western-supplied counter-drone systems have significantly improved interception rates, with officials claiming an 88% success rate in last night's attack compared to approximately 70% in similar assaults earlier this year.

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Energy company DTEK has dispatched emergency repair crews to restore power to affected areas in Zaporizhzhia, with service expected to resume by evening.

This attack follows President Zelensky's recent appeals to Western allies for additional air defense systems and specialized anti-drone technology as Russia continues to target Ukrainian energy infrastructure ahead of the approaching summer months.

Ukrainian intelligence officials warn that Russia has recently received a new shipment of Shahed drones from Iran and is preparing for sustained aerial campaigns in the coming weeks.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

# India's Successful Test of Ghatak UCAV



India has taken a remarkable stride in strengthening its defense capabilities with the successful test flight of the Ghatak Unmanned Strike Aerial Vehicle (USAV) technology demonstrator. This milestone, achieved by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), is not just a testament to India's scientific prowess but also a bold statement of the nation's growing self-reliance in cutting-edge defense technologies.

The trial was conducted at the Aeronautical Test Range in Chitradurga, Karnataka. The Ghatak UCAV—earlier known as SWIFT (Stealth Wing Flying Testbed) is India's ambitious project aimed at developing a stealthy, autonomous combat drone, and its recent success places India among a select group of nations that have mastered advanced flying wing technology.

One of the most striking features of the Ghatak UCAV is its tailless flying wing design, similar in appearance to the U.S. B-2 Spirit stealth bomber. This configuration significantly reduces radar cross-section, making the UCAV hard to detect and ideal for deep penetration strikes in hostile environments. Built using lightweight carbon composite materials, the airframe is both strong and aerodynamically efficient.

During the test, the Ghatak UCAV performed fully autonomous takeoff and landing, a critical

benchmark for modern UAV systems. This was achieved without the support of ground-based radar or operators, thanks to sophisticated onboard sensor fusion and GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation (GAGAN) systems. These technologies enhance navigation precision and integrity, enabling the UCAV to operate in contested or GPS-denied environments.

The UCAV has also undergone multiple developmental flights since its maiden trial in July 2022, each helping refine its flight controls, software systems, and overall performance. The project has also led to the establishment of a dedicated Ground Control Station and advanced simulation infrastructure, laying the groundwork for future drone operations.

This successful test is not just a technical feat—it is a moment of national pride. It underscores India's steady progress toward **Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)** in the defense sector. With continued development, the Ghatak UCAV will play a key role in the Indian Air Force's future air combat strategies, potentially transforming the way India projects power and ensures security.

India has indeed sent a clear message: it is ready to lead in the era of autonomous warfare, with homegrown technology at its core.

Author: Shruti Kaushik



# Between Opportunity and Overdependence

## Uzbekistan's Economic Reform, Chinese Investment and the Balance of Power

Uzbekistan, a Central Asian country with a rich culture and a key position on the historic Silk Road, has been making significant economic changes since President Shavkat Mirziyoyev took office in 2016. These reforms include relaxing foreign exchange controls and promoting privatization, helping the economy connect with the global market.

Under President Shavkat, Uzbekistan has balanced relations with major powers like China, Russia, and the United States, becoming part of the EU's GSP+ trade system. The country has strengthened ties with China through trade and investment.

However, the growing influence of Chinese businesses raises concerns among Uzbeks about debt, political interference, and national sovereignty. This leads to important questions: Is the partnership with China beneficial for both sides or just one? Are Chinese investments sustainable in the long run?

### The Uzbekistan-China relations

Uzbekistan and China established diplomatic ties in 1992, being the first Central Asian country to do so. They co-founded the Shanghai Five in 2001, evolving into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. A friendship treaty in 2005 enhanced their relationship. Uzbekistan became a strategic partner in 2016 by joining the Belt and Road Initiative. Investments increased after President Mirziyoyev took office in 2016, and the CKJ Railway project resumed in June 2024. Uzbekistan plans to offer Chinese citizens a 10-day, then 30-day visa-free entry to promote tourism and trade.

### Bilateral Trade and Investments

Since President Mirziyoyev took office in 2016 and introduced market reforms, trade between Uzbekistan and China has grown steadily. By the end of 2024, Chinese investments in Uzbekistan surpassed 19 billion USD, with total trade reaching 13.1 billion USD. As of February 2025, China led with 3,576 foreign-invested companies in Uzbekistan. There are 15,505 foreign investment enterprises, focusing on key sectors like energy and infrastructure. China will finance the Mulalak hydropower plant in Uzbekistan through loans.

**Uzbek-China Trade Snapshot as per Export Genius report. (March 2024 to Feb 2025)**

#### Imports from China

Total Import Value: \$12.94 billion  
Share in Total Imports: 10.67%  
Number of Importers: 18,097  
Top five imported categories

#### Exports to China

Total Export Value: \$2.10 billion  
Share in Total Exports: 7.12%  
Number of Exporters: 748  
Top five exported categories

#### Favourable Business Ground

- Uzbekistan continues to provide a favorable



environment for foreign investors, which attracts mainly the Chinese. With a population exceeding 33 million and the growing largest young population, it is a viable market. In the first two months of 2025, Uzbekistan imported 552,649 mobile phones from abroad, mainly from China (404,185 units), Vietnam (129,589 units), and India (14,269 units). China remains the major exporter of mobile phones to Uzbekistan. In 2024, Uzbekistan imported 4.2 million mobile phones worth \$374.5 million, while 3.2 million mobile phones were imported from China.

- In 2024, Uzbekistan imported 74,700 passenger cars, including EVs, valued at \$128 billion, with over 80% sourced from China, per the Statistics Agency. South Korea came in second place. This surge, spurred by a booming young population, underscores China's grip on Uzbekistan's trade but warns of overdependence on one supplier.
- SF Airlines, a major Chinese cargo carrier, is expanding into Uzbekistan to tap into emerging markets. They plan to increase flight frequency, showing confidence in cargo demand. By January 1, 2025, China was the leading country for foreign-invested companies in Uzbekistan, with a 45% rise in Chinese firms over the year. In an April 2, 2025 meeting, Jasurbek Choriyev

discussed with Jimmy Chang the interest of Sino Road and Bridge Corporation in Uzbekistan's infrastructure, advocating for public-private partnerships to balance investment and oversight, as heavy dependence on China could be risky.

### Balancing act

Uzbekistan's strategic position and efforts to balance relationships with major powers make it a desirable investment destination. The country is actively diversifying its investments to reduce reliance on one partner, especially in mining, infrastructure, and energy. While China and Russia dominate regional investments, European and Western investments are increasing.

*"Western investors are primarily interested in the development of the energy industry, particularly green energy, as well as trade and infrastructure. Uzbekistan is now the most dynamically developing market in the region". Oybek Shaykhov, head of the European-Uzbek Association for Economic Cooperation.*

The EU has allocated €10 billion for the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, aiming to cut travel between Europe and Central Asia to 15 days. An investment forum will be held in 2025 to strengthen connections. The EBRD plans to invest €7 to €8 billion in raw materials and renewable energy by 2027, and the EIB intends to allocate €365 million for various projects in the region.

### Regional relations

A major shift in regional diplomacy occurred as border disputes between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan concluded during a meeting in Khujand, Tajikistan, on March 31, 2025. This agreement enhances security and economic growth and fosters better trade and infrastructure collaboration.

The Consultative Meetings of Central Asian Heads of State began in 2015 to discuss trade, transportation, water management, and security. Uzbekistan is working with allies and the UN to tackle crime and drug trafficking and includes Afghanistan in regional stability efforts.

### Raising concerns

#### Growing Debt

In recent years, Uzbekistan's external debt has

sharply increased, rising from \$11.6 billion at the end of 2017 to \$34.9 billion by the end of 2023. By January 2025, China has invested \$105 billion in Central Asia over 22 years, with \$18 billion going to Uzbekistan. Half of this amount comes from loans by the China Development Bank, which plays a key role in China's foreign policy. Manufacturing, mining, and construction account for 63.3 percent of financial commitments, including major projects like the gas-to-liquids facility and gas pipeline. Transportation, warehousing, and the energy industry follow, with telecommunications also receiving funding since 2007.

#### Energy concerns

Uzbekistan is no longer self-sufficient in natural gas, with imports from Turkmenistan and Russia rising 2.41 times to \$1.67 billion, although monthly imports fell to \$127.9 million. This shift began in 2023, indicating lower domestic production or higher internal demand. Gas exports to China fell to \$34.2 million in December but annual exports increased by 18.4%. Discrepancies in trade data highlight transparency issues, while reliance on imports increases energy dependence. Uzbekistan must carefully manage its debt with China to maintain economic independence and reduce corruption risks.

#### Sinophobia

Recently, the presence of Sinophobia among Uzbeks flooded over social media with viral posts such as unverified land sales to Chinese investors and increased visibility of Chinese business and cultural elements, sparking debates and concerns on its impact on national identity and sovereignty. The opinions are divided as some people fear over economic dependencies and dilutions; others welcomed investments as key to modernization. The government has responded with reassurances, emphasizing regulatory safeguards and highlighting successful projects like the BYD auto plant. These efforts aim to balance public concerns with strategic goals as Uzbekistan seeks to diversify its economy amid challenges in traditional sectors.

### Way ahead

Since taking office in 2016, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has made significant economic changes and a balanced foreign strategy for Uzbekistan. Key to this shift is the growing relationship with China, involving major infrastructure projects and investment through the Belt and Road Initiative. While Chinese investments boost economic growth, they raise concerns about sovereignty and debt. Uzbekistan must diversify its alliances, particularly with the European Union, to maintain economic independence and transparency.

Author: Columisti

# Controversial Cholistan Canal Project

## Why Sindh is at the Epicenter of Protests

A canal initiative launched in the Cholistan area of Punjab province, Pakistan, has plunged the entire country into significant turmoil. Widespread protests have emerged across the nation, particularly in the Sindh province, where demonstrators argue that their region will suffer the most from what is being described as an unsustainable economic and ecological endeavor recently unveiled by the Government of Pakistan.

The proposed 176-kilometer-long Cholistan canal, now renamed as Mahfooz Shaheed Canal and System is a core element of the Green Pakistan Initiative.

### What is the Green Pakistan Initiative (GPI)?

The GPI project, launched in February with a budget of \$5.5 billion, aims to irrigate 4.8 million acres of arid land by constructing six canals—two each in Sindh, Balochistan, and Punjab. Five canals will be along the Indus River, and one will be by the Sutlej River.

The project's main goal is to enhance agricultural productivity and food security in Pakistan, particularly by converting the Cholistan Desert in southern Punjab into arable land. This initiative is crucial, as agriculture contributes 25 percent to Pakistan's GDP and employs 57 percent of the workforce.

### What is the scale of the Cholistan Canal?

The proposed initiative is the largest canal project under the GPI framework, involving the construction of a canal on the Sutlej River with a capacity of 4,320 cusecs (116,665 liters per second). It will draw water from Punjab's Rasul-Qadirabad, Qadirabad-Balokli, and Balokli-Sulemanli link canals, with a budget of Rs. 21,134 million. The aim is to create a new irrigation area in the Cholistan desert of



southern Punjab, covering 1.2 million acres in two phases: 455,000 acres in Phase I and 744,000 acres in Phase II.

### Why is Sindh protesting against the Cholistan Canal?

Nationalist parties, writers, social activists, students, and religious figures in the Sindh province are protesting against the Cholistan canal, and the reasons are multifold.

First and foremost, the Pakistani government's assertion that the proposed canal, reliant on surplus monsoon floodwaters from the Sutlej, will not impact Sindh's water allocation has significant flaws. The 1960 Indus Water Treaty grants India control over the eastern rivers—Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi—while

Pakistan manages the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab rivers. India's extensive water extraction and dam construction on the Sutlej, compounded by climate change, have significantly decreased the average water flow into Pakistan. Consequently, the expectation that the Cholistan canal can meet its water needs solely from the Sutlej's monsoon flows is unrealistic. Critics contend that the canal will inevitably divert water from the Indus Basin via the Sukkur Barrage, threatening the water security of downstream Sindh. The Sukkur Barrage is key for Sindh's irrigation, providing water to 5.2 million acres, covering seven canals over 5,500 kilometers. It also supplies Balochistan via the North Western Canal. Sindh believes its water resources are

mainly used for Punjab's benefit, risking its own irrigation system. Nabil Bux Sathio warned that the Cholistan canal project would harm 12 million acres of Sindh's farmland to irrigate only 1.2 million acres in Punjab.

### Challenges

The project has legal issues due to the 18th Constitutional Amendment in Pakistan, which gives equal ownership rights over oil, gas, and waters to federal and provincial governments but lacks clarity on lower riparian provinces' water rights. The 1991 Water Apportionment Accord set water shares for each province, and the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) was created to resolve disputes. However, IRSA approved the Cholistan Canal project, hurting Sindh's rights, and the Sindh High Court questioned its authority due to the lack of a federal member from Sindh.

Sindh is facing economic and environmental challenges from the project, causing saltwater intrusion that impacts farmland and leads to climate-induced migration. Major cities are struggling with water shortages and pollution. Protests reflect wider dissatisfaction with federal water policies. Political implications arise, especially with the Pakistan People's Party, governing Sindh and part of the ruling coalition, involved in the demonstrations, which could jeopardize the alliance's stability.

### Does the Cholistan Canal stand to impact India, and how?

The Cholistan Canal project is mainly a Pakistani effort but has indirect impacts on India, especially concerning shared water resources from the Sutlej River. Although General Ayub gave control of the Sutlej to India, the project will use flood flows that might

change water supply to India during floods, affecting the area's water balance.

Changes in water use could challenge the Indus Water Treaty between the two nations. The project near the India-Pakistan border might raise diplomatic tensions, as India may voice concerns over its influence on water flow and agreements.

Furthermore, transforming Cholistan Desert into farmable land could alter agricultural trends in Indian states and affect markets. If Pakistan's agriculture improves significantly, it may impact India's agricultural exports and competition. Large irrigation projects can cause ecological changes, with potential long-term environmental effects crossing borders, influencing shared biodiversity. Additionally, the project might have slight effects on regional climate, relevant to both countries amid climate change.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the future of the Cholistan Canal project and water management in Pakistan depends on policymakers' ability to balance conflicting interests. While the project promises economic growth and improvement in agricultural output through advanced irrigation, Sindh is grappling with severe water scarcity due to years of mismanagement. As protests and discussions intensify, a balanced, inclusive, and data-driven approach to water management becomes essential.

Although primarily a domestic initiative, the Cholistan Canal project could indirectly affect India as well, warranting careful monitoring of its regional implications and potential impact on India-Pakistan relations concerning shared water resources.

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