

The Israel-Gaza War Timeline

Trump Peace Plan Ends Two Years of Devastation

As the Israel-Gaza war entered its second anniversary in October 2025, a fragile hope emerged from the soil of Egypt's Red Sea resort. Donald Trump, the US President flanked by leaders of Arab nations including Egypt, Qatar and Turkey, signed what many calling a historic peace agreement, crucially ending the protracted bloodshed that transformed Middle East and claimed over 68,000 Palestinian and nearly 2,000 Israeli lives.

The journey to this most awaited moment began with an unimaginable violence and wound through multiple failed ceasefires, regional escalation, humanitarian catastrophe, and the targeted killing of militant leaders. Let me provide you a comprehensive timeline of a conflict that redefined the modern warfare in the densely populated Gaza Strip.

The Spark: Operation Al-Aqsa Flood

It all started on October 7, 2023, when Israeli were celebrating Jewish holidays, an unprecedented, coordinated and a deadliest attack was carried out by approximately 3,000 Hamas militants, infiltrated southern Israel using trucks, motorcycles, bulldozers, speedboats, and paragliders, firing over 3,000 rockets within 20 minutes.

The attackers massacred civilians among the Nova music festival massacre was one of the barbaric where at least 325 young people were killed and set homes ablaze. The total casualties raised to 1195 including 115 civilians dead and 251 hostages taken into Gaza. Israel acknowledged the attack is the 'failure of imagination' and 'an intelligence failure for the ages'.

Hamas characterized the attack as retaliation to the Israeli's prolong land confiscations, settlement expansions and military occupations. However, they seemingly did not aware it would be the root cause of years of devastation.

Israel Response: Operation "Swords of Iron"

Israel response was swift and clear. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared it would "destroy Hamas" and bring back every hostage. On 27th October, Israel Defence Force (IDF) initiated a large-scale ground incursion into northern Gaza with an invasion platoons exceeding 100,000 soldiers.

The military campaign carried out series of airstrikes, targeted civilian denser places like hospital and refugee camps claiming the presence of Hamas among the civilians. By December 2023, the death toll rapidly increased into tens of thousands, with systematic demolition of infrastructures in Gaza. Israel claimed it killed 8,000 Hamas fighters by late December 2023 though it could not be verified independently.

First ceasefire attempt

The first truce was reportedly brokered by the involvement of Egypt, Qatar, and the United States on November 22, 2023. This four-day pause commenced from November 24, releasing 50 Israeli hostages and 150 Palestinian prisoners with increased humanitarian assistance arrived at Gaza. However, 105 hostages were released primarily women and children in exchange of 249 Palestinian prisoners. This ceasefire extended up to 7 days, though, collapsed on 1st December, both blamed each other for violating ceasefire terms. Hamas proclaimed next day that it would not release anymore hostage until the war ends.

The War Expands: Regional Players Enter the Fray

The conflict rapidly mired regional players, making a multi-front regional war, drawing Iran's 'Axis of Resistance' network across the Middle East.

Hezbollah in Lebanon entered in the fray just one day after October 7 attacks, declaring solidarity with Hamas, firing guided rockets and artillery at Israeli positions in the Shebaa Farms. The cross-border exchange extended throughout the 2024 with Hezbollah launched 1,900 attacks and Israel conducted 8,300 strikes between October 2023 to September 2024.

Notable incident was Israel's coordinated explosion of Hezbollah's pagers and walkie-talkies on September 17-18, and assassination of its Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah on September 27, 2024. Report suggest ceasefire was brokered by US and France took effect on November 2024 though repeated violations reported.

Yemen's Houthis Iran-backed Houthi rebels launched missiles and drones at Israel in solidarity with Hamas, targets included commercial vessels inbound Israel in the Red Sea and Bab-el-Mandeb strait. They pronounced it will be continued until Israel cease its operation in Gaza. Since it disturbs global shipping route, US launched Operation Prosperity Guardian to protect shipping by conducting strikes on Houthi since January 2024. Despite these actions, Houthis continued to be a significant regional player maintaining their campaign throughout the conflict.

Iran's Direct Confrontation- The protracted proxy conflict between Iran and Israel came face to face by the direct military confrontation in 2024. In April and October 2024, Iran launched barrage of missiles and drones following Israeli strikes on Iranian interests in regional countries. The escalation intensified in June 2025 when



Israel followed by the US conducted a major 12-day operation (Operation Rising Lion) targeting Iran's missile capabilities, military sites, regional infrastructure and most crucially nuclear facilities. These strikes claimed senior defense leaders including IRGC head Hossein Salami, and several nuclear scientists to push back decades of nuclear research.

The United States used bunker-buster bombs to target Iran's nuclear facilities at Natanz, Isfahan, and Fordow on June 22, 2025. Iran launched retaliated strike on US facilities in Qatar, but no significant damages reported. The ceasefire was announced on June 24, 2025, ending 12-day war.

Decapitating Hamas Leadership

Throughout the War, Israel systematically and precisely eradicated Hamas' senior leadership in the campaign of targeted killings that spanned multiple countries.

LEADERSHIP DECIMATION
Systematic Elimination of Hamas Command Structure
Israel targeted assassinations of key Hamas Leaders
January 2024 - May 2025

January 2024
Saleh al-Arouri
Deputy Hamas Chief & Military Wing Founder
Beirut, Lebanon

July 2024
Mohammed Deif
Head of Hamas Military Wing
Gaza

July 2024
Ismail Haniyeh
Hamas Political Chief
Tehran, Iran

October 2024
Yahya Sinwar
Gaza Hamas Leader & October 7 Architect
Gaza

May 2025
Mohammed Sinwar
Military Commander
Gaza

Humanitarian Catastrophe: Famine and International Outcry

As Israel deepened and intensified its military offense, UN official called it 'a humanitarian catastrophe of epic proportions'. According to Gaza's Ministry of Health, by October 2025, over 67,000 Palestinians has been killed, with nearly half being women and children. 70% of infrastructures including homes, schools,

hospitals and essential services were destroyed to dust, forcing millions of people displaced, living under inhumane conditions.

In a historic first for the Middle East, the UN-backed Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) officially declared famine in Gaza on August 22, 2025, marked with widespread starvation, destitution, preventable death. Over 20,000 children were treated with malnutrition. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called it 'a man-made disaster, a moral indictment and a failure of humanity itself'.

Leading to precarious situation in Gaza, international community started to respond diversely. On December 29, 2025, South Africa filed a case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing Israel of committing genocide and at least 13 countries were supported it. On January 26, 2024, ICJ issued a preliminary ruling ordered Israel to take measures to prevent acts of genocide and allow humanitarian services into Gaza.

However, Israel rejected the allegation with Netanyahu saying "No one will stop us. Not the Hague, not the Axis of Evil, no one". In November 2024, ICJ issued arrest warrant against Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza, as well as Hamas military leader Mohammed Deif who confirmed dead lately.

There were multiple attempts made at UN Security Council calling for immediate ceasefire in Gaza, however, each was denied with US using veto citing inadequate condemnation of Hamas or recognizing Israel's right to self-defence. Additionally, many nations including Africa,

Latin America and Islamic World explicitly described Israel's actions as genocide. Countries like UK, Australia, Canada, and France recognized Palestine statehood, putting pressure on two-state solutions that endorsed by many countries.

The Second Ceasefire

After two years of devastation warfare, a second truce was commenced on January 17, 2025, brokered by Qatar, Egypt, and the US with the involvement of both Biden and Trump administration. Hamas released 25 living hostages and remains of eight dead hostages in exchange for approximately 1,500 imprisoned Palestinians. However, the truce not long lasted as Israel demanded complete release of hostages before proceeding with phase two, while Hamas insisted on a permanent ceasefire. Two months of calm disrupted by Israel launching surprise attack on Gaza in March in the name of Operation Might and Sword.

The renewed military actions accounts ~400 dead on a single day while Netanyahu declared "this is just the beginning" and initiated targeted ground operation in central and southern Gaza. From April to September 2025, Israel expander further its operations in different names including Operation Gideon's Chariots targeting Khan Younis and Rafah, drawing severe international condemnation. As a result, Germany suspended its arm deal with Israel while Norway said it re-evaluate its sovereign wealth fund's investment in the country. The air strike on Doha, Qatar in September 2025, yielded huge condemnation from Arab worlds, resulted in talks for creation Arab Nato. Furthermore, the worsening humanitarian conditions stimulate people of Gaza itself organize anti-Hamas protest.

Trump's Peace Plan Intervention

On September 29, 2025, US President Donald Trump along with Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu at the White House, unveiled an comprehensive 20-points Gaza Peace Plan, carefully drafted in consultation of Arab and Muslim countries including Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey. Trump gave Hamas a deadline of October 5, 2025, to accept a proposal or face with hell, threatening the group with "complete obliteration" if it is refused. The Trump Peace Plan comes with two phases, Immediate actions and Stabilization & Governance respectively. Key Components of the 20-Point Plan:

Phase One-Immediate Actions

- Immediate cessation of all military operations upon Israeli cabinet approval.
- Release of all Israeli hostages, living and deceased, within 72 hours of Israeli withdrawal.
- Israeli forces withdraw to agreed-upon lines within 24 hours.
- Release of 2,000 Palestinian prisoners, including 250 serving life sentences and 1,700

detailed since the war began.

Immediate commencement of full humanitarian aid delivery.

Phase Two-Stabilization and Governance

- Formation of an International Stabilization Force (ISF) comprising U.S., Arab, and international partners to deploy in Gaza.
- Gaza transitions to "temporary transitional governance" of a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee operating under an international board-the "Board of Peace" headed by Trump and including former British Prime Minister Tony Blair.
- Palestinian Authority undergoes reform program to prepare for eventual governance of Gaza.

Demilitarization

- Independent monitor group oversees "demilitarization" of Gaza.
- All weapons placed "permanently beyond use" through internationally funded buy-back program.
- All "military, terror, and offensive infrastructure" to be destroyed.

Long-term Framework

- Large-scale reconstruction and economic development plan to "rebuild and energize Gaza", with World Bank estimates exceeding \$50 billion.
- Establishment of special economic zones with preferred tariff rates.
- "Interfaith dialogue process" to change Israeli and Palestinian "mindsets and narratives" about peace.
- Conditional pathway toward Palestinian self-determination and statehood, though Netanyahu stated definitively that "there will be no Palestinian state" under the plan.
- Israel agrees not to annex Gaza and guarantees Gazans' right to return.

On October 3, 2025, Hamas agreed to release all remaining hostage and transfer administration of Gaza to Palestinian technocrats but did not commit to full disarmament.

The October Agreement

On October 8, 2025, Trump announced that Hamas has reached a consensus and signed the first phase of peace deal. On the early hours of October 10, 2025, the Israeli cabinet has approved the agreement, and ceasefire formally took effect on the same day.

The implementation taken swiftly. Israeli forces withdrew to designated lines and on 13, October, Hamas released 20 remaining living hostages to Israel along with remains of four deceased captives. Israel released 250 Palestinian prisoners serving life sentences and over 1,700 detainees from Gaza. Global media filled with families embracing the arrival of its members with tearful joy on both sides.

The Historic Summit at Sharm el-Sheikh

On October 13, 2025, Trump arrived Egypt's Red Sea Resort of Sharm el-Sheikh for an international summit attended by over 20 world leaders. The signing ceremony broadcasted globally. Trump formalized the "Trump Declaration for Enduring Peace and Prosperity" alongside Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Form the word of Trump "together we have accomplished what everyone thought was impossible", he is calling it "a new and beautiful chapter for the Middle East". El-Sisi praised Trump that he is "the only one" capable of securing peace in the region and awarded the highest civilian honour of Egypt to Donald Trump.

Earlier the same day, Trump addressed the Israeli Knesset in Jerusalem, proclaiming a "historic dawn of a new Middle East". The White House released the full text of the declaration: "We, the undersigned, welcome the truly historic commitment and implementation by all parties to the Trump Peace Agreement, ending more than two years of profound suffering and loss-opening a new chapter for the region defined by hope, security, and a shared vision for peace and prosperity."

An Uncertain Peace and Fragile Hope

Although signing of peace deal is ephemeral, significant challenges remain. When asked Trump about the second phase of the negotiations, he acknowledged that "the phases are all a bit mixed up with each other". The second phase focused on Hamas disarmament and Gaza's future governance is where the real obstacle persists.

Hamas has shown reluctant to embrace full disarmament while Israel insists it will not withdraw when Hamas retains any military capability. The fate of governance of Gaza remains unresolved, with Israel's vision of no Palestine statehood, the Palestinian Authority and the existence of Hamas.

For now, the families on both sides reunited with loved ones, aid are flowing throughout Gaza, and the guns are at rest for the moment. Whether this October peace deal is to end a devastating chapter or merely another ephemeral pause in an ongoing tragedy remains to be seen.

Author: LEA

OTS Ministers Convene in Gabala to Strengthen Regional Influence

Gabala, Azerbaijan, October 7, 2025. The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) convened in the mountain city of Gabala ahead of the 12th Heads of State Summit, but this year's meeting carried a noticeably different tone. Behind the formal language of cooperation, the discussions reflected a bloc moving quietly toward structured political and economic coordination. The five member states: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan held closed-door discussions that extended well beyond ceremonial diplomacy. While official statements emphasized political, economic, and cultural collaboration, the private sessions reportedly focused on energy corridors, defense cooperation, and digital connectivity. The conversation was less about declarations and more about designing mechanisms that could strengthen the Turkic world's collective influence across Eurasia.

For Türkiye, the session aligned closely with its broader strategic outreach. Ankara's ambition to expand trade, defense, and infrastructure linkages into Central Asia continues to shape the OTS agenda. Its growing leadership within the organization reflects an effort to blend cultural solidarity with hard economic influence.

Azerbaijan, hosting the gathering in Gabala, reinforced its role as the region's pragmatic intermediary. Following its post-conflict resurgence and expanding energy partnerships, Baku's influence within the Turkic network is now more pronounced. Its capacity to connect Eurasian resources to Mediterranean markets gives it leverage in shaping future energy and logistics projects under the OTS framework.



Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, often cautious in their regional alignments, appeared more assertive in steering discussions on trade and infrastructure. Both countries are recalibrating their foreign relations as they navigate between Russia's declining economic pull, China's shifting priorities, and Türkiye's growing presence. Their participation signaled a measured effort to diversify strategic options while maintaining regional stability.

Kyrgyzstan, though smaller in scale, remains an active voice for cultural cohesion and regional cooperation, recognizing its geographic importance for transport and communication routes within Central Asia.

The observer states also contributed to the meeting's broader undertone. Hungary's continued participation underscored its ongoing interest in bridging Europe and Eurasia through cultural diplomacy and economic engagement. Turkmenistan's presence indicated a gradual departure from isolation, driven by growing energy export potential. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, participating under observer status, added a political dimension that reflected Türkiye's intent to consolidate support across multiple platforms.

The timing of the Gabala meeting was notable. With the global energy map shifting, European demand patterns changing, and regional powers like Russia and China adjusting to economic strain, the OTS found itself in a moment of opportunity. Ministers reportedly explored new investment structures, customs harmonization systems, and coordinated infrastructure financing. These initiatives, though still evolving, suggest that the OTS is preparing to operate as a serious economic network rather than a symbolic alliance.

Gabala, once a quiet waypoint on the ancient Silk Road, has become a venue where strategic geometry is being redrawn. The OTS, founded on linguistic and cultural kinship, is steadily evolving into a mechanism for policy coordination and regional leverage. Its appeal lies in flexibility rather than rigid institutionalism, offering members a platform that adapts to shifting political realities.

While the organization remains closely associated with Ankara's foreign policy orbit, its Central Asian members are increasingly shaping it into a balanced platform for mutual advantage. The Gabala session may be remembered as a turning point where the Turkic States began to shift from collective memory to collective purpose is not merely preserving identity, but projecting influence.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Sir Creek: An Enduring Boundary Dispute

Earlier this month, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh issued a stern warning to Pakistan on its development of military activities with mala-fide intentions in the Sir Creek region may cause for altering history and geography. Meanwhile the Chief of Army Staff Upendra Dwivedi reiterated similar statements emphasizing hitting Pakistan hard if they are hesitant to stop state-sponsored terrorism whereas Air Chief Marshal told troops to be prepared for current and future wars. It's quite unusual for Indian military personnel issuing provocative statements. Implies credible intelligence on Pakistan's ill-intend actions in the Creek region.

Understanding Sir Creek

Sir Creek is a 96-km tidal estuary (where sea tides and river stream meets) running between Pakistan's Sindh and India's Gujarat in the Rann of Kutch region. The uninhabited marshland known as Ban Ganga earlier, renamed "Sir Creek" during the British Raj period. This creek flows into Arabian Sea and act as the most contentious maritime boundary between both nations.

This seemingly modest waterway carries potential strategic, economic and ecological significance. The creek run through vast saline mudflats that serve as critical habitat for migratory birds and other marine life. It is one among the Asia's largest fishing grounds. It became a challenging terrain especially during monsoon characterized by venomous Russell's vipers, scorpions, and shifting tidal patterns.

Origin and Evolution of the Dispute

The Sir Creek dispute traces back to 1905, when a dissension between Kutch and Sindh government over a seemingly trivial matter collection of firewood from the creek area. To resolve the matter, the Government of Bombay issued a resolution 1192 of 1914 which incorporated contradictory provisions that fuelled the dispute over a century.

The 1914 resolution provide two conflicting interpretations.

- Paragraph 9 says that the boundary lies in the eastern bank of the creek, effectively granting the entire creek to Sindh (now Pakistan).

- Paragraph 10 applied the Talweg Principle, stating that since Sir Creek is navigable most of the year, the boundary should follow the mid-channel.



This ambiguity in the resolution became apparent factor of unresolved dispute over century. After 1947 partition, Kutch remained with India while Sindh became a part of Pakistan, transforming what once the internal administrative conflict into international boundary dispute. This dispute caught prominence during aftermath of 1965 India-Pakistan War, when Pakistan claims over the half of the Rann of Kutch, the international tribunal granted India 90% of its claims while deliberately excluded Sir Creek resolution from the resolution.

India's Legal Perspective

India bases its claim on Talweg Principle of international law which proposes when a boundary between two political entities is a waterway, the boundary eventually running through the middle of the navigable waterway. India espouses this position with few factors such as.

- A 1925 map showing the boundary drawn along the mid-channel

- Mid-channel pillars constructed in 1924

- International maritime law precedents that favour navigable channel boundaries

- Pakistan's official note of May 19, 1958, which India claims acknowledged the 1914 Resolution Map was merely an annexure to the resolution.

Since India argues that Sir Creek is a navigable during high tides as mentioned in

1914 Resolution and that fishing trawlers regularly access the channel to reach Arabian Sea. Under international law, this navigability status ensures the Talweg principle is applicable.

Pakistan's Perspective

Pakistan ambitiously claims entire Sir Creek region based on the 1914 Bombay Government Resolution, particularly citing Paragraph 9 which places boundary on the eastern bank of the creek. It pointing out the green line shown on the 1914 Resolution Map depicting eastern bans as boundary, saying the Resolution intended to be permanent agreement and the Sir Creek is non-navigable as India claims. Hence Pakistan wants entire creek.

Strategic Significance of the Sir Creek

Sir Creek holds a potential importance for both nations. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently emphasised, "the road to Karachi passes through the Creek". This creek is the direct maritime access to Karachi, Pakistan's largest commercial hub and primary naval base. Creek provide control over maritime boundary that aligns with maritime and coastal defence. Hence, India's presence in the creek enhances the strategic defence capabilities given the proximity of Pakistan's economic heartland.

For Pakistan, it can use creek for simultaneous attacks during conflicts. The recent developments in the region show escalating militarization. Since 2019, Pakistan has significantly bolstered its presence with accretion of new Creek Battalions, coastal

defence boats, marine assault crafts, upgraded air defences and plans for additional naval posts. India has mirrored similar moves particularly after 2008 Mumbai terror attacks launched from Arabian Sea.

Economic Potential

The seabed holds substantial economic value across multiple sectors ranging from energy to Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The seabed is believed to possess significant oil and natural gas deposits. These resources are largely under explored, representing billions of dollars potential wealth for whatever nations holds access. The U.S. oil exploration deal is imperative hence Pakistan could try to attain the access to the creek.

Thousands of fishing families on both sides of the water making it more valuable. This water is one among the Asia's largest fishing grounds providing critical livelihoods for coastal communities in Gujarat and Sindh.

Nevertheless, control over Sir Creek directly affects the delimitation of Exclusive Economic Zones extending 200 nautical miles into Arabian Sea. A small shift could cause losing thousands of square kilometer territory and associated resource rights.

The Humanitarian Crisis

The ambiguity in the boundary creates a humanitarian crisis for fishing communities on both riverbanks. Hundreds of fishermen from both countries are arrested annually for allegedly straying into disputed waters. The absence of deliberate demarcation and proper navigational equipment for small boats makes violations virtually inevitable.

Approximately 194 Indian fishermen held in custody while 81 Pakistani fishermen in Indian custody. These fishermen often happen to spent more than a year of prison before being released through diplomatic exchanges, leaving family in debt and poverty. The economic impact is devastating as confiscated boats are the primary source of income of those families.

The strong tidal waves make it hard for small boat to determine the invisible border leading to detentions that violate international law calling form criminal penalties and prompt release of fishing crews.

Recent Development and Military Escalation

The Sir Creek dispute renewed attention after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh issued a stark warning to Pakistan about military buildup in

the region. Singh reiterated "any misadventure in the Sir Creek sector will invite a decisive response that can change both history and geography".

This warning came amid reports suggest Pakistan expanded its military infrastructure near Sir Creek including:

- New Creek Battalions and emergency airstrips
- Reinforcement of the Bholari airbase (damaged during Operation Sindoor)
- Deployment of marine assault boats and surveillance aircraft
- Mini cantonments and defence installations.

As Singh stated, "the road to Karachi passes through the creek" reminding Pakistan that during Indo-Pak war, India reached up to Lahore and now will not hesitate deep further, and Pakistan's backbone Karachi port is more vulnerable for the Indian defence capabilities.

However, some Pakistani reports suggests that if India hold Karachi vulnerable then Pakistan could target Kandla Port aka **Deendayal Port** in the Kutch district of Gujarat. It is India's largest cargo handling port situated in the Arabian Sea.

Diplomatic Stalemate

Although several initiatives had been on the table for negotiation, the dispute remains unresolved. There were twelve rounds of talks have been held between 1997 to 2012 without any breakthrough. Key challenges prevent negotiations are India insists on bilateral resolution under 1972 Simla Agreement, rejecting third-party involvement including international entities and proposing demarcating maritime boundaries first followed by resolving territorial disputes.

Adversely, Pakistan demands resolving territorial disputes before acting for maritime boundary demarcation. It also proposes international arbitration through bodies like International Court of Justice (ICJ), claiming that it has historical precedent from 1914 Resolution.

However, it is very unlikely that ICJ favouring Pakistan claims as it applied Talweg principle for navigable waterways, exemplified in the case of Benin v. Niger in 2005. As both nations militarize the Sir Creek zone and simultaneously claiming territory ownership, it likely remains a flashpoint in India-Pakistan relations for the foreseeable future.

Author: LEA

Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Visits New Delhi Amid Regional Tensions and Realignment

Taliban Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi visits India from October 9-16, 2025, marking the historic and high-level diplomatic engagement between New Delhi and the Taliban administration since the group's return to power in August 2021. This visit facilitated by a temporary UN Security Council travel exemption, has reshaped regional geopolitical dynamics and triggered significant diplomatic tensions with Pakistan while signalling India's pragmatic pivot toward increasing engagement with the Taliban regime, a counter measures for atrocities by Pakistan.

India has announced its "technical mission" in Kabul, restoring formal diplomatic relation by re-establishing full embassy status after a four-year hiatus. It places India among approximately twelve nations that are maintaining embassies in Kabul, though Russia only officially recognized the Taliban government since July 2025.

Strategic Overlook

India hosting Taliban Foreign Minister Muttaqi represents a pragmatic and calibrated strategy of engagement without formal

recognition of Taliban government. The External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar emphasized that India remains fully committed to Afghanistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence while avoiding endorsement of Taliban's governance structure.

This engagement does not mean India endorse all activities of Taliban particularly women and minority rights. However, the engagement is the need of hour amid having hostile neighbours.

The timing of Muttaqi's visits coincides with dramatically deteriorating relations between Pakistan and the Taliban, creating an unprecedented opportunity for India to expand its influence. Historically, Taliban evolved from the ideology of Deobandi which is in Uttar Pradesh of India.

There are reports suggests that Taliban rejected the invitation extended by Pakistan in the Moscow Format consultations and proceeded with visiting India directly. This diplomatic drift represents a remarkable reversal of traditional regional dynamics where Pakistan historically served as the Taliban's primary patron and gateway to international

legitimacy. Nevertheless, the shift is caused by several factors including Pakistan's ongoing disputes over the Durand Line against the so called Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamabad's pressure over Afghan refugee repatriation.

Comprehensive Joint Statement

Both India and Afghanistan committed to counter-terrorism cooperation and security assurances that addresses India's primary concerns about Afghanistan serving as a base for anti-India terrorism. The Afghan Foreign Minister Muttaqi reiterated the commitment that Afghan government will never allow any terror group to operate against India from the soil of Afghanistan.

Both countries unequivocally condemned all acts of terrorism emerging from regional counties, indirectly pointing to Pakistan, and underscored the importance of promoting peace, stability and mutual trust in the region. Afghanistan is the first Muslim nation showed solidarity with India immediately after the barbaric Pahalgam terror attack which had killed 26 people.

India committed to establishing a Trauma Centre, Modern Diagnostic Centre, 50-bed hospital in Kabul's Bagmati district. Oncology Centre, Trauma Centre, and five Maternity Health Clinics in Pakitka, Ghosht, and Pakia provinces.

Both sides welcomed the commencement of the India-Afghanistan Air Freight Corridor, which aimed to enhance the direct trade bypassing Pakistan territory. Taliban also invited Indian companies to invest in mining sector, with endorses exploiting \$-3 trillion worth of untapped mineral reserves.

India successfully constructed India-Afghanistan Friendship dam (Salma Dam) in Herat and agreed to work with hydroelectric project that address Afghan's energy needs. All the activities represent India's commitment to the development of Afghan people and its prosperity while regional countries like Pakistan that works to destroy its neighbours.

International Reactions

Pakistan furious about India-Afghanistan relations, blatantly made comments, particularly Pak Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said, "Afghans always been loyal to India and against Pakistan in the past and present, and they would continue to remain the same in the future as well". One step further, Pakistan conducted an air strike inside Kabul claiming it targets TTP leader. However, while Muttaqi emphasized peace talk, Taliban retaliated heavily by attacking the Pakistan troops in the border.

Pak Defence Minister Khawaja Asif also said in an interview that Afghans "have always been loyal to India and against Pakistan in the past and present, and they would continue to remain the same in the future as well."

China which maintains embassy in Kabul, remain cautious and observes the development of India-Afghanistan rapprochement. Russia, the only member that formally recognized Taliban government views India's engagement as potentially legitimizing its own recognizing decisions and multipolar engagement in the region.

However, on the same day India-Afghanistan issued joint statements, the European Parliament adopted resolution condemning Taliban's treatment of women and calling for targeted sanctions against Taliban leaders.

Strategic Implications

The India-Afghanistan rapprochement

indicates a fundamental shift in South Asian geopolitical dynamics as Pakistan and Taliban maintained close ties in the past. However, the recent realignment might be influenced by the series of incidents including the forced refugee-repatriation. Pakistan's atrocities against Afghanistan in the name of TTP, and the border demarcation strained the traditional alliance.

The desperation of international legitimization and need of economic assistance made the Taliban to diversify its partnership. And it perfectly aligns with India's security strategy in the region and its neighbour first policy.

Upon aligning with Taliban, India can be relaxed a little that terrorism will not emerge from Afghan soil and it posits India in a well place countering Pakistan's terrorism. Meanwhile, India can boost regional exports and bolster its economy by diversifying regional connectivity.

This October visit of Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi to India marks significant moment in South Asian diplomacy.

While not formally recognizing but engaging with Taliban, India showcasing sophisticated and calculated diplomatic positioning. The success of the meet could be securing concrete commitments on counter-terrorism cooperation, economic collaboration, and humanitarian assistance.

For Afghanistan, this rapprochement offers crucial diversification away from exclusive dependence from Pakistan and provide access to one of the largest economies in the world. For India, it could be a theatre to enhance the engagement with Central Asia and boosting security deterrence against hostile neighbourhoods. The success or failure of this engagement will likely reflect broader international approaches to the Taliban regime and reshape the geopolitical landscape of South and Central Asia for years to come.

Author: LEA



Global Gen-Z Protests

A comprehensive Analysis of Causes and Patterns



The year 2024-2025 witnessed unprecedented wave of youth-led protests across multiple continents with the Generation Z at the forefront of political movements. Demonstrations, spanning from Nepal to Morocco, Bangladesh to Philippines, indicates a significant shift in global political activism and pose potential challenges for governments particularly in developing countries with large numbers of young population, economic downturns and the widespread of social media access.

Where Gen-Z Protests are Taking Place?

The scale of Gen-Z protests in 2024-2025 is astounding, affecting countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

In latest, Madagascar experienced youth-led demonstrations in September 2025, triggered by inadequate basic need services such as severe water and electricity scarcity. This protest was carried out by social media group called "GenZ Madagascar", successfully led the President Andry Rajoelina to dissolve his government, with not less than 20 deaths and over 100 injuries reported.

Nepal has seen the most crucial political upheaval in September 2025, where Gen-Z protesters were contended with the ban of social media, successfully forced to Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli to step down and led the former Supreme Court Justice Sushila Karki as interim prime minister. This protest marked as one of the violent protests taken by youths in this year, resulted more than 50 people deceased and 1000+ people got injured with demonstrations

storming parliament buildings and government facilities blazed.

In Bangladesh, student led protests in July 2024 evolved form opposing newly introduced quota-based government job systems into a wider movement, ousted then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to flee the country after decades in power. Reports suggest that around 1000 people got died during these protests.

North African country Morocco has seen ongoing protest being carried out by "GenZ 212" (212 referring country code), demanding enhancement of basic services such as better healthcare and education instead of focusing FIFA World Cup 2030 preparations. The demonstration resulted in few deaths and hundreds of arrests so far and youths continuing to be on the street.

The Southeast Asian country Indonesia faced similar youth led protest over economic and political grievances including tax hikes, legislative corruptions and mass layoffs, fuelled by public frustration. Students and university organizations are at the forefront of these demonstrations.

Other significant movements included the Philippines over corruptions, Kenya over tax hikes shifted into broader anti-government protests, and Peru over its political instability and dis-satisfaction of administration.

Root Causes of Gen-Z Protests

Economic Frustration and Youth Unemployment are the primary drivers of all these movements. This led youths to feel dissatisfaction on the cost-of-living crisis

including increase of food prices and higher urbanization levels.

Subsequently it fuels anti-corruption sentiments, a common thread through virtually all Gen-Z movements. In Nepal, protesters were used hashtags like #nepobabies and #PoliticianNobabyNepal to highlight the contrast between lavish lifestyle of politicians and the widespread poverty.

Corruption and abuse of power by political elites have been central grievances in nations like Indonesia and Philippines, with widespread targets on political and governmental buildings. Similar activities reflected in Nepal and Bangladesh where politicians and their residents got attacked and government buildings were set ablaze. Transparency on political wealth and comprehensive investigations into corruption were the demand of youths.

In an effort of constrain people rights particularly digital rights and social media restrictions backfired, often serving as immediate trigger for the widespread protests. Nepal's ban on social media is such one example, transferred peaceful online protests into violent street demonstrations. In this digital world, youth sees social media restrictions as fundamental rights violations.

Often poor governance and lack of youth representations in decision-making processes fuel widespread disaffections. Youths feel marginalized from political processes and perceive traditional political institutions as unresponsive to their needs. For instance, in Morocco, governments actions on revitalizing stadiums for world cup while people struggle for basic health services, and in Madagascar, the inadequate water and electricity supply resulted in youths protesting government.

Common Factors Among All Protests

Sophisticated use of social media for organization and coordination, utilizing encrypted messaging apps, social media platforms and even gaming applications. In Nepal, "Hami Nepal" Discord server became a central organizing tool, with over 100,000 users participating in virtual discussion on selecting interim leadership.

Modern Gen-Z protests deliberately avoid traditional leadership settings. Unlike historical movements, these demonstrations are characterized by informal leadership and issue-based organization. Protest organizers often issue caution over the participation of any political party or their student wings in demonstrations.

Author: LEA

Ngari Rising

Drones and Stealth Take Off

China's expansion on the Tibetan Plateau has entered a decisive new phase, with recent developments signaling a sharp leap in both technological and military capability. Satellite imagery and official announcements indicate that several high-altitude facilities, including a reinforced storage base and a dedicated unmanned-equipment test site in Tibet's Ngari (Ali) region, are now fully operational.

On September 28, Beijing inaugurated its first unmanned-equipment test base above 4,300 meters in Ali Prefecture. The facility allows for drone assembly, high-altitude flight trials, and endurance testing, filling a crucial gap in plateau aerospace research. State media presented the Ngari complex as a scientific milestone, emphasizing civilian applications such as disaster-relief missions, high-altitude data collection, and technological innovation. Yet, the location, altitude, and design reveal a clear strategic dimension: enhancing the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) operational reach, surveillance, and endurance along the Himalayan frontier.

Across Tibet, satellite imagery shows a flurry of construction now transitioning into operational readiness. In Shigatse and Shannan, hardened storage depots, reinforced hangars, extended aprons, fuel terminals, and service roads have transformed what were once temporary sites into permanent logistics hubs. These upgrades allow sustained troop and equipment presence year-round, erasing many natural constraints that historically limited high-altitude military operations.

Notably, images have captured advanced unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) resembling China's stealthy flying-wing designs stationed on high-altitude aprons. Their presence suggests the integration of next-generation drones into PLA operations in the western theatre, providing enhanced surveillance and

strike capabilities at elevations once considered prohibitive.

The Ngari unmanned test facility serves dual purposes. While engineers and scientists conduct trials in low-oxygen conditions to advance civilian technologies, the same testing directly strengthens the PLA's unmanned aviation and sensor programs. Each test flight contributes to refining engines, communications, and control systems capable of sustained operations above 4,000 meters—capabilities that can be swiftly translated into military readiness.

For India and neighboring nations, the implications are clear. These operational bases enhance China's ability to mobilize rapidly, conduct long-range reconnaissance, and maintain continuous deployment cycles in regions previously accessible only seasonally. The shift from construction to functionality reduces Beijing's logistical vulnerabilities while strengthening its power projection along the Line of Actual Control.

The environmental cost of this rapid development is also significant. High-altitude construction has led to permafrost degradation, road-cut erosion, and other ecological disturbances. Yet Beijing continues to frame the expansion as a symbol of scientific progress and regional development, masking the dual-use and strategic benefits of these sites.

The operational status of the Ngari test base and the reinforced storage depots signals that the plateau has become a laboratory for both technological innovation and military preparedness. For India, the strategic lesson is clear: vigilance, improved high-altitude logistics, and preparation for a future where technological testing and military deployment are increasingly intertwined.

Author: Shruti Kaushik



Venezuelan Opposition Leader Maria Corina Machado Wins 2025 Nobel Peace Prize

"Tireless work promoting democratic rights for the people of Venezuela and for her struggle to achieve a just and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy", the Norwegian Nobel Committee official declared Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado wins the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize, ending the dream run of US President Donald Trump's highly publicized campaign for the prestigious award. The decision came after reviewing 358 nominations including 244 individuals and 94 organizations that has been working for the promotion of peace among human being.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee endorsed Machado as 'one of the most extraordinary examples of civilian courage in Latin America in recent times.' Machado who was an industrial engineer, has spent much of past years in hiding and for decades fighting against Venezuela's authoritarian drift under Presidents Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro. Upon receiving the award, Machado emphasized that the award is not for her but the movement of Venezuelan people.

The prize, worth approximately \$1.2 million will be formally given to Machado on December 10, 2025, at the Oslo ceremony, however, whether Machado can safely attend remains uncertain given ongoing threats from the Maduro regime.

All about Nobel Peace Prize

It traces back to century, Alfred Nobel, the Swedish chemist who known for the invention of dynamite, during deathbed signed a final will, allocating 94% of his vast fortune approximated amounted to 31 million Swedish kronor to establish five prestigious awards. He specified that the Peace Prize should be awarded "to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations and the abolition or reduction of standing armies and the formation and spreading of peace congress". Uniquely among the Nobel Prizes, the Peace Prize is awarded by Norwegian Nobel Committee than Swedish institutions.

The structure of Norwegian Nobel Committee consists of five members appointed by Norwegian Parliament (Storting) for six-year terms. The 2025 committee is chaired by Jorgen Watne Frydnes, a human rights advocate and

former head of PEN Norway, alongside vice-char Asle Toje, a foreign policy scholar and former Research Director at the Nobel Institute.

The selection process involves rigorous evaluation by permanent advisers, typically Norwegian university professors with expertise relevant to peace studies. Though committee seeks unanimous decision for selecting the winner, it can proceed with simple majority vote. Notably, all nomination information remains confidential for 50 years, protecting the integrity of the selection process from the external influence and pressure.

MAGA Meltdown

US President Donald Trump's aggressive public campaign for the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize came to an end. Trump repeatedly claimed he deserves the award pointing out alleged resolution of "seven global conflicts" including disputes between Israel and Hamas, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and India and Pakistan which denied by India but endorsed by Pakistan.

The Norwegian allegedly reported that Trump cold-called Norwegian Finance Minister Jens Stoltenberg and discussed both trade tariffs and his burning desire for the Nobel Peace Prize.

At UN General Assembly in September, he controversially declared his 'peace record', claiming to have ended wars even between Thailand and Cambodia, asserting that "everyone says" he deserves recognition. However, the relentless self-promotion did not favour him, as Nobel Committee members traditionally avoid appearing to reward leaders who lobby openly for recognition.

The White House responded with furious statements, with Steven Cheung, White House Communications Director immediately declared that "the Nobel Committee proved they place politics over peace". Notably, the White House failed to issue congratulatory message to Machado reflecting the deep frustration and personal disappointment.

Global Reactions

Ultimately, the social media take-on Trump's Nobel Prize desires, mocking globally under the hashtag #NobelPeacePrize, creating memes and reels went viral. In a bizarre twist, Vladimir

Putin offered support for Trump, criticizing the Nobel Committee's past decisions and suggesting it has awarded prizes to individuals who contributed little to global peace.

Former Latin American presidents praised Machado's recognition, viewing it as a validation of democratic resistance across the region. Colombian and Chilean former Presidents endorsed the words of Nobel Peace Committee highlighting the power of civilian courage over military force, noting Machado's approach embodies "ballots over bullets" in confronting authoritarian regimes.

European leaders have welcomed the decision of Nobel Peace Committee, stating that

"at a time when democracy is under threat, it is more important than ever to defend common ground". The former American President Barack Obama expressed his greeting in X (formerly twitter) saying, "Congratulations to new Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Corina Machado for her courageous struggle to bring democracy to Venezuela".

Despite Machado's victory, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continue Trump Nobel Peace Prize campaign, stating "President Trump deserves it" and put criticism on Nobel Peace Committee.

Machado's Gracious Response to Trump

In a remarkable turn, Machado dedicated her prize to Trump during her acceptance stating, "I dedicate this prize to the suffering people of Venezuela and to President Trump for his decisive support for our cause!". She later confirmed with BBC Mundo that she expressed gratitude to Trump for what he's doing around the world for peace, freedom, and democracy.

President Trump also confirmed the conversation between him and Machado where she told Trump, "I am accepting this in honour of you because you really deserved it". He added ironically that "I didn't say, 'Give it to me', though, I think she might have".

The Nobel Peace Committee made clear that external pressure played a zero role in the selection process, stating "We base our decision only on the work and the will of Alfred Nobel".

The Message

The 2025 Nobel Peace Prize sending a powerful message to the world about democratic resilience in an era of rising authoritarianism. While many countries in conflict losing values of democracy, the Committee's decision to honour a woman "keeping the flame of democracy burning amid growing darkness" sends a clear message about the international community's support and commitment to democratic values regardless of geopolitical convenience or pressure from major powers.

Maria Corina Machado's recognition, achieved while in hiding and facing severe persecution, demonstrates that genuine peace work requires sacrifice and moral courage rather than public relations campaigns or diplomatic theatre.

The 2025 Nobel Peace Prize will be remembered not just for who won, but for the stark contrast it revealed between authentic democratic leadership and hollow political ambitions.

Author: LEA

THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE 2025



Maria Corina Machado

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Helium, Rare Earths and the End of Strategic Weakness

China has systematically eliminated its industrial vulnerabilities to secure strategic autonomy. Central to this effort are helium and rare earths, two critical resources that underpin high-tech and defense capabilities.

Until 2022, China depended on the U.S. for ninety-five percent of its helium. Helium is indispensable for quantum computing, rocket propulsion, MRI machines, and the cooling of advanced chip lithography systems. This reliance created a strategic constraint: any attempt to leverage rare earths risked a counter-blockade of helium, which could have paralyzed China's high-tech sector. Recognizing this, Beijing prioritized domestic helium production, diversified imports to friendly suppliers, and developed breakthrough extraction technologies. By 2024, China reduced its helium dependence on the U.S. to less than five percent, removing a critical leverage point.

Simultaneously, China consolidated control over rare earths, now referred to as the 'new gold' of modern industry. These seventeen elements are essential for semiconductors, electric vehicles, wind turbines, precision-guided munitions, and stealth technology. China produces approximately sixty percent of global output and controls most of the processing capacity. This gives Beijing a strategic tool to influence global high-tech supply chains without exposing itself to counter-pressure.

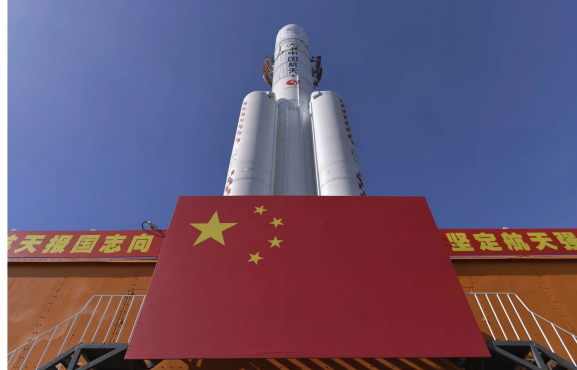
The operational logic is clear: strategic leverage requires capability, not rhetoric. China systematically neutralized vulnerabilities across helium, semiconductors, energy, telecommunications, and pharmaceuticals. Only after achieving industrial and technological independence can Beijing deploy leverage measures, such as controlling rare earth exports, with minimal risk of crippling retaliation.

The broader implications are profound. Nations reliant on global supply chains without domestic alternatives remain strategically exposed. China's ability to act decisively in these sectors demonstrates that strategic sovereignty control over critical resources and technology is now the decisive currency of power.

For policymakers, the takeaway is unambiguous. Industrial independence, supply-chain diversification, and advanced technology development are not optional; they are essential for national security.

Strategically, the message is clear: global power is increasingly determined by control over critical inputs, the ability to operate independently, and the foresight to neutralize vulnerabilities before they can be exploited. China's actions illustrate how capability enables leverage, and leverage enforces influence.

Author: Shruti Kausik



CHINA'S KJ-3000 NEW SKY SENTINEL

Aircraft

KJ-3000 Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C), by XAC (Xi'an Aircraft Corporation). Evolution of the Y-20 series of cargo aircraft

Status

Second prototype completes test flight

Key Technologies

- Digital Array Radar (DAR) with Gallium Nitride (GaN) chips
- Dual-band detection: S-band + UHF/P-band fusion
- AI-assisted decision-making system
- Big data intelligence processing suite

Detection Range

- 400–600 km for stealth targets
- Over 1,000 km for conventional targets

Tracking Capacity

- Tracks 1,200 airborne targets
- Prioritizes 100 high-threat targets simultaneously

Performance

- Range: 10,000 km
- Loiter Time: 12 hours (24 hours with refueling)
- Engine: Fully domestically produced powerplant

Projected Induction: 2027



Author: Shruti Kausik

£330 Million UK-India Defence Deal Amid Global Defence Realignment and Trade Tensions

India's comprehensive defence diversification attained another milestone, signing £330 million worth of defence deal with United Kingdom for the procurement of British-manufactured Lightweight Multirole Missile (LMM), commonly known as Martlet Missiles. The deal was announced during UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's historic first visit to Mumbai accompanied by entrepreneurs, business and University vice chancellors. It indicates a broader context of India's aggressive defence diversification, moving beyond traditional dependence on Russian equipment while navigating complex relationship with global partner.

The British origin Martlet LLM system bolster India's multi-domain capabilities across air-to-surface, surface-to-air, air-to-air, and surface-to-surface engagement frameworks. It comes with a 13-kg weight, 6-9 km range, and laser beam riding guidance potentially avoid electric countermeasures, offers tactical flexibility across diverse operational scenarios.

Martlet has been integrated into the Royal Navy of Britain since 2021 particularly aboard Wildcat helicopters. Ongoing shipboard deployments trials also increasing the scope of the missile. Operational capabilities and effectiveness are proven as the same system has been deployed in Ukraine successfully employed against Russian Ka-52 helicopters, drone swarms, and low-flying cruise missiles, demonstrating versatility against contemporary and regional threats.

While this defence deal enhances India's multi-domain defence capabilities, technology transfer and indigenous manufacturing, strategical defence diversification, this contract directly secures around 700 jobs at Thales Belfast facility in Northern Ireland, where the same missiles are currently manufactured for Ukrainian forces, increasing Britain's strategic footprint in Indo-Pacific strategy amid power competition, and reiterates its ability to be defence exporter and credible defence partner.

Simultaneously, both countries signed an implementing arrangement for electric-powered naval propulsion systems worth an initial £250 million, representing defence industrial roadmap focusing on advanced maritime technologies for future naval operations.



Lightweight Multirole Missile, Courtesy: Thales

India's recent Major Defence Agreements

India has increased its defence budget over the year and made multiple significant defence contracts across the globe avoiding independent crisis on any particular country. In April 2025, India signed a deal with France, a naval aviation partnership worth of \$65,000 crore agreement for 26 Rafale marine fighter jets for Indian Navy. It marked France's largest ever defence export to India, including 22 single-seat and 4 twin-seat aircraft with expected delivery by 2030.

Just a day before this UK deal, India and Australia signed defence agreements including classified information sharing, submarine search and rescue operation, and joint staff talks. It added significance to Quad initiatives amid concerns over potential US disengagement from Quad.

In last month, India and Israel also deepened its defence cooperation, focusing on emerging technologies including bilateral agreements. Israel remains a crucial supplier accounting to 13% India's weapons import.

Despite pressure from Western countries, India bolstered its long enduring relationship with Russia, negotiating additional \$-400 air defence beyond current \$5.5 billion five-system deal from 2018. Russia continues to account for 36% of India's defence imports.

What International Media Perceives

European defence publications including UK Defence Journal and Modern Diplomacy, characterized this deal as a "Strategic alignment between two major democracies seeking to counterbalance China's growing regional assertiveness." Meanwhile, American media views it as a breakthrough for UK defence exports to Indian market which historically dominated by Russian, French, and Israeli suppliers. US lawmakers urging Trump administration to "Reset and Repair" ties with India, recognizing India's potential role in Indo-Pacific strategy and inevitable growing power in the Asia.

This broader UK-India partnership comes along other sectors, including opening of British university campuses in India, establishment of joint AI centres, critical minerals collaboration, and enhanced fintech cooperation. It implies a long-term strategic comprehensive framework beyond traditional defence cooperation.

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Author: LEA

China's DF-61 ICBM New Strategic Equations in Asia



Beijing's unveiling of the DF-61 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) has introduced a new dimension to Asia's nuclear landscape. Developed by the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), the missile's design marks a leap in the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force's (PLARF) ability to project power across continents. With a range estimated at around 15,000 kilometers, the DF-61 places virtually every corner of the globe within China's nuclear reach including the continental United States and all of Asia.

At the core of this system lies a combination of technologies designed to ensure survivability, readiness, and flexibility. Unlike older liquid-fueled missiles, the DF-61 employs solid-fuel propulsion, which allows for rapid launch readiness and reduces vulnerability to preemptive strikes. Its deployment on a massive 16-wheeled transporter-erector-launcher (TEL) platform enables road mobility, allowing the missile to be repositioned quickly across different terrains. This mobility complicates adversary surveillance and targeting efforts, granting the PLARF significant operational advantage in crisis situations.

Analysts point to another major advancement: the DF-61's capacity to carry up to 12 nuclear warheads configured as Multiple Independently targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs). Such a configuration means that a single missile could engage multiple targets at varying ranges and trajectories. This dramatically increases the lethality and deterrence value of China's nuclear forces, effectively enabling a single launch to neutralize several high-value targets across regions.

While much of the global discussion has centered on the missile's potential reach to North America, its implications for India's

strategic calculus are significant. The DF-61 can be deployed from China's western missile bases in Xinjiang and Tibet locations that place all of India well within strike range. The mobility of these systems further complicates India's task of detection and interception, especially given the challenges of operating in the high-altitude terrain that already hosts multiple Chinese strategic assets.

India's Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) systems, though steadily advancing, were originally designed to counter shorter-range and intermediate threats. The emergence of a road-mobile, MIRV-equipped ICBM such as the DF-61 demands a broader reassessment of early-warning capabilities, interception architecture, and second-strike readiness. The combination of solid-fuel mobility and multiple warheads reduces response times for adversaries and increases the difficulty of neutralizing a Chinese launch before it reaches terminal phase.

Experts suggest that India's deterrence posture must now account for a more diversified Chinese missile force that blends long-range precision with operational survivability. The DF-61's design indicates a deliberate effort by Beijing to develop a "launch-on-command" architecture is a posture that maintains readiness without over alert levels. This approach enhances deterrence credibility while keeping operational intentions ambiguous, a hallmark of China's strategic signaling.

India, meanwhile, continues to strengthen its nuclear triad. The development of the Agni-V and upcoming Agni-VI missiles, alongside the operationalization of nuclear-capable submarines like the INS Arighat, forms the backbone of New Delhi's second-strike capability. However, the arrival of DF-61 introduces new pressure to accelerate next-

generation systems, particularly in terms of survivability and MIRV technology.

The missile also underscores a broader shift in China's defense thinking that merges deterrence with global reach. Beijing's focus appears to be on achieving parity with the United States while simultaneously maintaining regional dominance. For India, this evolution transforms the deterrence equation from a primarily bilateral issue into a multi-front strategic challenge. As China's strategic assets gain intercontinental capability, its influence in Asia inevitably deepens, linking regional posturing with global deterrence narratives.

From an operational standpoint, India's defense planners may consider enhancing the integration between space-based surveillance, radar networks, and missile interceptors. The success of systems like the DF-61 relies heavily on mobility and concealment areas where space reconnaissance and persistent surveillance could play decisive roles. Equally critical will be strengthening cyber and electronic warfare capabilities to counter the digital infrastructure that supports China's missile command and control systems.

The DF-61's emergence also carries implications beyond hard security. In diplomatic terms, it strengthens China's leverage in arms control discussions and strategic dialogues. By fielding a credible and mobile intercontinental deterrent, Beijing can assert itself as a peer actor in global disarmament forums while retaining tactical advantages in Asia. For regional actors like India, Japan, and Australia, this raises the urgency of enhancing defense cooperation and joint situational awareness mechanisms.

Ultimately, the DF-61 is a new missile which represents strategic signal. It communicates Beijing's intent to ensure its deterrence remains survivable, flexible, and unchallenged, even amid evolving global alignments. For India, the challenge lies in maintaining credible deterrence through technological parity, early-warning precision, and diplomatic foresight.

The Asian balance of power is once again being rewritten, not through open confrontation, but through the silent readiness of mobile launchers deep inside the Chinese heartland.

Author: Shruti Kausik