

# Why the US & China want a presence in the Bay of Bengal

The United States and China seek presence in the Bay of Bengal due to its immense **geostrategic and economic importance**, which includes critical shipping lanes, abundant energy resources, and a strategic location that connects South Asia with Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

**Why the US Wants Presence in the Bay of Bengal:**

- The Bay of Bengal is a key maritime gateway that enhances the US's power projection and deterrence capabilities in the Indo-Pacific.

- The US aims to counter China's growing influence in the region by building stronger military and diplomatic ties with countries like India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar.

- Establishing naval and air bases, such as the proposed US naval station on Bangladesh's Saint Martin Island, is part of the US Indo-Pacific strategy to maintain a free and open maritime domain.

- The US conducts joint naval exercises (e.g., Exercise Malabar with India, Japan, and Australia) to strengthen regional security cooperation and deter potential threats.

- The Bay of Bengal is crucial for maintaining the security of vital sea lanes that carry energy imports and trade, which are essential for global economic stability and US interests.

**Why China Wants a Presence in the Bay of Bengal:**

- China's interest is driven by the need to secure alternative maritime trade routes that bypass the vulnerable Strait of Malacca, a major chokepoint for Chinese imports and energy supplies.

- The Bay of Bengal offers China access to important ports in Bangladesh (Chattogram and Mongla), which are part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and help expand its economic and military footprint.

- China invests heavily in port infrastructure

and military cooperation with littoral states like Bangladesh to establish a strategic foothold and project naval power in the Indian Ocean.

- China's presence helps ensure uninterrupted energy supplies critical to its economic growth and counters India's influence in the region.

- The region is also important for China's broader geopolitical ambitions to become a dominant power in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific, leveraging debt diplomacy and military ties to gain influence.

**Shared Strategic Importance:**

- Both powers recognize the Bay of Bengal as a vital maritime space for energy security, trade routes, and regional influence.

- The Bay's proximity to the Malacca Strait and its natural resources, including oil and gas

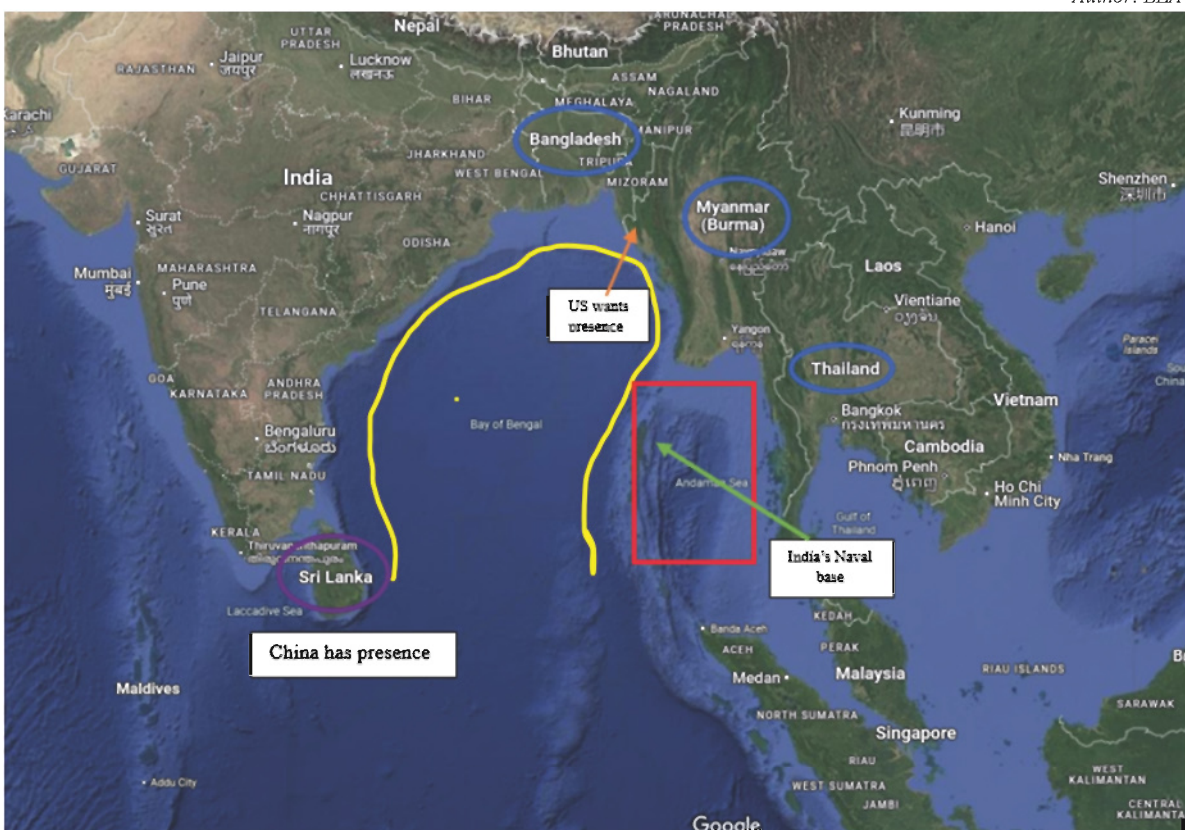
reserves, make it a hotspot for strategic competition.

- India, a key regional power, also actively seeks to maintain its dominance and security in the Bay, often aligning with the US and other partners to counterbalance China's ambitions.

In summary, the US aims to maintain regional balance and prevent Chinese dominance, while China seeks to secure trade routes, energy supplies, and expand its strategic reach through investments and military presence in the

the Bay of Bengal a new epicentre of geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific.

Author: LEA



# Ghulam Khan Border

## How will the border closure affect trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan



The closure of the Ghulam Khan border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan will have **significant negative effects on trade and economic relations** between the two countries, like the impacts seen with other border closures, such as Torkham.

**Key impacts include:**

- Disruption of Bilateral Trade**

Ghulam Khan serves as a vital trade link, especially for goods moving between Pakistan's North Waziristan and Afghanistan's Khost province. Its closure will disrupt established trade flows, causing delays, reducing trade volumes, and forcing traders to seek alternative, often longer and costlier routes. This disruption mirrors the sharp decline in trade volumes observed after the Torkham crossing closures, where trade dropped from \$2.5 billion in 2023 to \$1.6 billion in 2024.

- Impact on Transit Trade**

The closure will hinder transit trade under agreements like the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), which depends heavily on border crossings like Ghulam Khan and Torkham for access to ports and regional markets. This will affect not only bilateral trade but also Afghanistan's access to Pakistani ports (Karachi, Gwadar) and Pakistan's trade routes to Central Asia.

- Financial Losses**

Traders on both sides will face financial losses

due to stranded goods, increased transportation costs, and lost business opportunities. Past closures have resulted in millions of dollars in losses within weeks, as seen with Torkham, where losses reached \$25 million in 20 days.

- Economic and Political Strain**

Prolonged border closures exacerbate tensions and strain political relations, which in turn undermine economic cooperation and regional stability. The closure may also impact local livelihoods dependent on cross-border trade and transport services.

- Increased Pressure on Alternative Routes**

With Ghulam Khan closed, traders may divert to other crossings like Torkham or Spin Boldak, which could become congested or insecure. Afghanistan may also accelerate efforts to use alternative trade corridors such as Iran's Chabahar port to bypass Pakistan, though these alternatives are often more expensive and less efficient.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the closure of the Ghulam Khan crossing will significantly disrupt trade, cause financial losses, increase logistical challenges, and deepen economic and political tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, while pushing Afghanistan to seek alternative trade routes.

Author: LEA

# North Waziristan Signals Escalating Militancy Crisis

In one of the deadliest attacks on Pakistan's security forces this year, a coordinated car bomb strike occurred on the morning of **25 June 2025** in Mir Ali Tehsil's Tahir Chowk, North Waziristan. The blast targeted a military convoy, killing 13 Pakistani soldiers and injuring 10 others, while 19 civilians were also wounded in the explosion.

In a separate but almost simultaneous attack, a suspected suicide bomber struck a Pakistan Army Quick Response Force vehicle near Ghulam Khan, injuring six soldiers and three of them are critical. Earlier in the day, another suicide attack reportedly killed 14 soldiers and wounded at least 24 others, underscoring the scale and precision of the militant offensive.

The Hafiz Gul Bahadur faction of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) swiftly claimed responsibility for the attacks, marking a sharp escalation in the group's operational tempo. Previously sidelined, the faction has returned to prominence, drawing strength from its coordination with the Afghan Taliban and its access to sanctuaries across the border.

Despite the mounting toll, the Pakistani military has yet to issue a formal statement.

These strikes expose more than just a lapse in tactical security and they signal a deeper rot at the heart of Pakistan's counter-insurgency doctrine. North Waziristan, once claimed to be "cleared" through multiple operations, remains a theatre of instability.

The TTP's resurgence particularly via factions like Gul Bahadur's, reflects the failure of Islamabad's policy of appeasement and selective disengagement. The safe passage given to Taliban factions during the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan has now returned to haunt Pakistan.

For India and other regional actors, the implications are clear: Pakistan's western frontier is slipping into militant hands again, raising concerns of spillover instability, arms trafficking, and unchecked extremist consolidation.

The return of suicide bombings on military targets reveals a harsh truth of Pakistan's army is now fighting a war not just across borders, but within its own claimed strongholds.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

# India Denies Signing Communique of SCO Defense Summit



India has repudiated signing Joint Statement at Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) defence summit citing inadequate references of India's concern on terrorism, held in Tianjin, People's Republic of China.

Indian External Affairs minister Dr. Jaishankar stated that India wanted a reference to terrorism in the outcome document of SCO summit, but it wasn't intolerable to one country, citing Pakistan equivocally.

Initially it was Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh who attended defence ministerial meeting, where he refused to sign the joint communique of the SCO since the absence of Pahalgam terror attack and reference of cross-border terrorism but militant activities of Balochistan referenced in a paragraph.

*"Peace and prosperity cannot co-exist with terrorism and proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the hands of non-state actors and terror groups. Dealing with these challenges requires decisive action. It is imperative that those who sponsor, nurture and utilise terrorism for their narrow and selfish ends must bear the*

*consequences. Some countries use cross-border terrorism as an instrument of policy and provide shelter to terrorists. There should be no place for such double standards. SCO should not hesitate to criticise such nations,"* said Shri Rajnath Singh.

In a similar meeting of the security council secretaries of the SCO in Beijing, National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval made a significant remark called for spurning 'double standards', urged the members of SCO to hold accountable perpetrators, financiers and organizers while reiterating collective cooperation in combating cross-border terrorism. NSA also showed its deep concern over continued terror threat from UN designated terrorists' outfit such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) Al Qaeda, ISIS and its affiliates.

The next Meeting of Ministers of Defense of SCO member states will be held in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2026.

Author: LEA

# China's Hongmen Syndicate Emerges as a Global Proxy Force

In a high-profile gathering in December last year, Wang Kuo-kui, better known as "Broken Tooth," resurfaced in public view, this time not as a criminal kingpin, but as a cultural leader. The 69-year-old former triad boss presided over a ceremony in Macau as head of the World Hongmen Historical and Cultural Associationa group under heavy U.S. sanctions since 2020 for its ties to drug trafficking, cybercrime, and illicit finance.

Now, intelligence agencies and investigators across at least seven countries warn that this so-called "cultural" association is operating far beyond symbolic activity. Evidence gathered over the past 18 months shows that Hongmen is not only surviving international pressure but it is expanding into Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific, aligning itself quietly with the overseas objectives of the Chinese Communist Party.

What has alarmed investigators most in 2025 is how deeply the group has entrenched itself in countries that are either strategically important to Beijing or central to its Belt and Road Initiative. Despite ongoing criminal probes in Malaysia, the Philippines, Laos, Uganda, and Thailand, the network's core operatives continue to appear at official events, open new "cultural" offices, and offer security services to Chinese firms operating abroad.

In Uganda, a Hongmen-linked office was inaugurated last year as a "China Overseas Police Center", raising immediate red flags in diplomatic circles. Though Beijing described it as a support center for expatriate citizens, Western officials see it as an extraterritorial surveillance node which is a method China

increasingly uses to monitor its nationals and influence host governments under the guise of "soft power."

Photographs and documents reviewed by global news agencies show that Hongmen

leaders met Cambodian Deputy Defence officials in April 2025, during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Phnom Penh. In Cambodia's capital, a Hongmen retail stores aredecorated more like a political shrine than a commercial outlet and hosts regular closed-door meetings with local power brokers.

Wang, the group's central figure, has long denied any illegal activity. But public records, leaked footage, and financial traces paint a different picture. Since his release from prison in 2012, Wang has traveled openly through Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, and South Africa, often accompanying or preceding official Chinese delegations. In several cases, he has received awards from CCP-linked bodies, including a "Patriotism Medal" in Guangdong.

Malaysian investigators confirmed this month that Hongmen fronts were used in a failed cryptocurrency scheme known as HongBi, which defrauded hundreds of investors and collapsed shortly after launch. Wang's affiliates are also under scrutiny for money laundering through casinos in Genting Highlands and infrastructure-linked bribery in Myanmar's BRI zones.

Further south, South African police have registered new shell companies with links to Hongmen operatives, including a firm offering "security for Chinese nationals and investments." Thai authorities also traced Wang's top lieutenant, Bai Zhonghui, moving operations from Bangkok to Cape Town after a 2023 crackdown on illicit gambling.

Despite these revelations, Beijing has remained silent. Neither the Chinese Foreign Ministry nor any of its embassies in countries where Hongmen operates have issued clarifications. Experts say this silence speaks volumes.

Wang's rebranding as a "cultural envoy" comes at a time when China is actively pushing its informal diplomatic tools, especially in states where formal influence is resisted. From online scams to elite schmoozing, the Hongmen syndicate now serves as China's unofficial enforcement armwhere legal limits end and coercive power begins.

And as July 2025 begins, multiple Western intelligence assessments have classified the group not just as a criminal threat, but as a geopolitical proxy, warning that Hongmen's presence often signals Beijing's longer-term strategic interest in a country.

Author: Shruti Kaushik





# From Socio-Religious Front to Extremist Links

## The Wahdat-e-Islami Hind Story



In February of 2024, Delhi Police caught Hanif Sheikh, a Wahdat-e-Islami Hind (WIH) member and ex-SIMI after 22 years of evasion for indoctrinating youth and promoting communal disharmony. A similar investigation in 2023 had previously led security agencies to Anwar Rashid who had actively used his associations with the three groups- SIMI, PFI and the WIH, for years, to promote extremist and violent Islamist ideology. In 2019, Syed Bukhari, president of the WIH's Tamil Nadu chapter was apprehended by the National Investigation Agency for suspected association with terror outfit Ansarullah. These cases collectively highlight the involvement of Wahdat-linked individuals and associated banned outfits like SIMI and PFI in radicalization, terror activities, and cross-border terror networks.

### Key figures and Spread

Wahdat-e-Islami Hind is led by Maulana Mohammad Ziauddin Siddiqui, as chief of the organization. Siddiqui also holds a prominent position in the Muslim Numainda Council, an umbrella organisation of Muslim NGOs; and is incidentally a former office bearer of banned terror outfit SIMI.

WIH's former president Maulana Attaurrahman Wajdi was also booked in 2001 under the UAPA for participating in a meeting

in Surat allegedly organised to promote SIMI. No official or comprehensive list of WIH's key office bearers has been made available in public sources of information.

As per 2011 reports, Wahdat-e-Islami Hind was registered as a socio-religious organization in Saharanpur (in 2006) and its Madurai office was set up in 2011; with a stated mission of propagating Islamic values and guiding followers towards religious practices. Controversies, however, abound its members' affiliations, activities and stance on sensitive issues, raising concerns about the extremist ideology underlying this organization.

Interestingly, while the national division of WIH maintains a limited social media presence, Wahdat's state/city chapters have several of their own pages and channels, strewn all over, and primarily across YouTube and Facebook.

### Controversial stances and engagements

Wahdat-e-Islami Hind has frequently found itself at the center of controversy due to its alleged links to now-banned Popular Front of India (PFI) and its predecessor SIMI. Its members had incidentally also come down heavily upon the Government of India for its 2022 investigation into PFI.

Wahdat members with SIMI and other terror outfit associations have been apprehended in

several cases by Indian security & investigation agencies. Besides those aforementioned at the start of this article, there are such bewildering instances as prayer meets conducted under the banner of WIH for the Kouachi brothers-perpetrators in the infamous 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks in France.

WIH's positions on issues like the Waqf Amendment Bill, Uniform Civil Code (UCC), and CAA/NRC have already drawn controversy in the past. Furthermore, its aggressive push for dawah activities across India also demands scrutiny. Video captures of both the WIH-sponsored events and its members' speeches are strewn online with marked anti-government and conservative Islamist rigor evident throughout.

### Other questionable linkages

Both the Wahdat-e-Islami Hind and Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) are grounded in the philosophy of Syed Abul A'la Maududi on unification of Muslim Ummah. Former WIH president Late Maulana Wajdi in fact served as a long time member of JIH as well. Both of the said bodies had expressed reservations against the ousting of the radical Muslim Brotherhood (MB) affiliated Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi; thus, hinting at internal ideological alignment with the controversial international body.

WIH chief Ziauddin Siddiqui also spoke at the 2017 Akola convention of the Federation of Islamic Youth Organisation (FIYO), renamed as the Islamic Youth Federation (IYF) in 2019. FIYO/IYF is also a proponent of Maududi. Some media reports alleged that few IYF members have aimed to establish the Islamic State (IS) in India. Indian agencies have also investigated IYF links to Sharjeel Imam, known for his allegedly inflammatory speeches made during anti-CAA protests, in the past.

Wajdi also shared close links with UP chapter of Jamiat Ulema, having served, at one time, as manager of Saharanpur Jamiat's Muslim Fund.

Wajdi also held key position at the Babri Masjid Action Committee; with the WIH eventually outrightly rejecting the Supreme Court's final judgment in the Babri case.

In summary, Wahdat-e-Islami Hind's links with banned extremist groups like SIMI and PFI, along with its leaders' involvement in radical activities, reveal a pattern of promoting extremist ideology under the guise of a socio-religious organization. Its controversial positions and ideological ties to radical networks underscore the need for continued scrutiny to protect India's security.

Author: LEA

# Jamiatul Falah

## Educational Institution or Ideological Nexus?

Madarsa Jamiatul Falah (JuF) stands as an Islamic educational institution (madarsa) based in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh. Established in its current form in 1962, it evolved from earlier educational initiatives in the region. However, its reputation has been increasingly shaped by significant and sometimes controversial connections to various Islamic organizations and influential figures, both within India and abroad.

### Key Leadership

Jamiatul Falah's leadership is dominated by figures with close ties to influential and sometimes divisive Islamic organizations. Maulana Anees Ahmad Madni serves as the current Director, while T. Arif Ali—also the Secretary General of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind—acts as Vice-Chancellor. Maulana Tahir Madni, a former Director, has held prominent roles within both JuF and the Rashtriya Ulama Council (RUC). Rahmatullah Athari Falahi, Chancellor of AlFalaha University (an institution under JuF), has represented Jamiatul Falah in high-profile meetings with Turkish IHH Insani Yardım Vakfı officials, underscoring the institution's extensive international engagements.

### Links with Jamaat-e-Islami Hind

Jamiatul Falah's organizational ties to Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), a major Indian Islamic organization, are deeply entrenched. The appointment of T. Arif Ali, JIH's Secretary General, as Vice-Chancellor highlights this relationship. Maulana Tahir Madni also holds a senior position within JIH. The influence of JIH is further reinforced by the regular presence of its affiliated student wings—the Students' Islamic Organisation of India (SIO) and the Girls' Islamic Organisation (GIO)—have regularly held event at JuF, raising concerns about ideological indoctrination and organizational overlap.



### Other Controversial Linkages

Jamiatul Falah's prominence as an educational institution is accompanied by a series of associations that have drawn significant scrutiny and raised concerns about its broader influence and ideological leanings.

Maulana Tahir Madni, Jamiatul Falah's former director, chaired a seminar session at Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) in 2018. IOS itself has been linked to the now-banned Popular Front of India (PFI), especially through Prof. P. Koya, a prominent PFI member and IOS council member. Notably, Prof. Koya met with Turkish IHH officials shortly before a Jamiatul Falah delegation under Rahmatullah Athari visited the same organization in 2018, suggesting potential coordination or shared agendas.

Jamiatul Falah was among the Indian institutions invited to a solidarity event in Istanbul organized by the Turkish government-backed NGO IGETEV in 2016, alongside JIH and IOS. Other controversial

invitees to the same event included Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan's US-based charity front Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), and Muslim-Brotherhood affiliated World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) among others. IHH is a key partner of JIH's Human Welfare Foundation, and T. Arif Ali, JuF's Vice-Chancellor, has been a member of the Turkish government's UNIW council, raising concerns about the institution's foreign affiliations.

Jamiatul Falah's international reach is further complicated by its invitation to Zakir Naik, the controversial Islamic preacher, to speak at its golden jubilee event in 2012. It is noteworthy that Naik also shares close ties with the Turkish President Erdogan & the IHH.

Jamiatul Falah's official website features an endorsement by the late Yusuf Qaradawi, a prominent Islamic scholar linked to the Muslim Brotherhood. Given that the current Turkish government is a known supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, this further highlights JuF's international ideological connections and potential exposure to radical influences.

Finally, Jamiatul Falah has faced controversy due to its alumni's involvement with banned organizations. Shahid Badr, the former head of the banned Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), is an alumnus of JuF.

### Conclusion

While Jamiatul Falah continues to function as an educational institution, its leadership's affiliations and controversial linkages with organizations like Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, the Popular Front of India, and international NGOs have drawn significant scrutiny. The institution's story reflects the complex and often troubling interplay between faith, education, and politics in contemporary India, raising legitimate questions about its broader influence and the ideologies it may propagate.

Author: LEA

# AFMI

## Beneath the Benevolence

## Contentious Activism & Controversial Alliances

The American Federation of Muslims of Indian Origin (AFMI) is a USA-based non-profit, with the stated mission of strengthening "underprivileged Indian Muslim minorities through education". Founded in 1989, AFMI, however, has drawn scrutiny as part of a broader network linked allegedly to extremism. AFMI and its leaders have promoted contentious narratives on sensitive issues such as the 2002 Gujarat riots, Kashmir, Khalistan, and the Rohingya crisis. Its extensive ties within India—to NGOs, politicians, businesses, and Islamic organizations, several of which have faced controversy—raise concerns about its potential for disruptive activism in India.

### Leadership and Networks

AFMI is led primarily by Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) with strong ties to India, including founder and General Secretary Dr. Abdur Rehman Nakadar—a physician and philanthropist behind educational institutions such as the Dr. Nakadar Institute of Knowledge in Gujarat—alongside President-elect Saeed Patel, a U.S.-based social activist and entrepreneur, and Vice-President Aslam Abdullah, an Islamic scholar and editor-in-chief of the Muslim Observer. Other prominent members include Dr. Tajuddin, Altaf Patel, Sirajuddin Thakur, Hussain Nagamia, and Babu Khalfan.

engagement with Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) and its charity front, the Human Welfare Foundation, as well as support for Vision 2026 underscores its ties to Indian organizations over contentious agendas.

Additionally, AFMI has funded Harsh Mander's Centre for Equity Studies, which is connected to left-leaning foreign NGOs and has advocated for controversial causes in India. AFMI's network extends to figures like Mahbubul Hoque, the Chancellor of USTM Meghalaya, whose recent arrest for alleged fraud and irregularities drew criticism from student and activist groups. Beyond these, AFMI collaborates with a broad range of Islamic charities and educational NGOs across India, including MESCO in Mumbai, Delhi Youth Welfare Association (DYWA) and the New Education Initiative (NEI) India, further widening its influence and raising questions about the nature of its partnerships.

### Controversial International Ties

AFMI's international network includes direct and indirect links to the Coalition Against Genocide (CAG) and Sikh Khalistani groups like the Sikh Coalition and Sikh Religious Society. It also maintains connections with prominent entities such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Islamic Relief USA, and Muslim Aid USA—organizations accused of serving as



The organization sustains close connections with India through annual conventions, educational programs, and state-level initiatives.

### Controversial Engagements and Stances

AFMI has consistently engaged with issues affecting Indian minorities, organizing a 2008 International Dalit-Minorities Conference in New York and forging alliances for Dalit rights. It has also shown sympathy toward Khalistani causes, meeting Sikh groups in Amritsar, inviting pro-Khalistani figures to its conferences, and publishing supportive articles. Beyond its educational mission, AFMI launched projects to digitize Muslim heritage sites in India and allocated significant funds for rehabilitation work for Indian Muslims.

AFMI has taken controversial stances on major Indian events, labeling the 2002 Gujarat riots as a "preplanned genocide" with government complicity, joining the Coalition Against Genocide, and publishing articles critical of Indian government actions in Kashmir while supporting separatist figures. The organization maintains strong anti-RSS and anti-BJP positions, and has provided legal aid to detainees in Indian riot and terror cases alongside other controversial Indian American Muslim groups. These activities raise questions about AFMI's influence and intentions regarding India's domestic affairs.

### Controversial Ties Within India

AFMI maintains significant links with several Indian NGOs and charitable organizations, some of which have been mired in controversy. Notably, the Ajmal Foundation and Markazul Maarif in Assam—both linked to Badruddin Ajmal—have co-hosted AFMI events and are active in education and relief. Markazul Maarif has faced controversy, including receiving funds from Turkey's IHH (linked to Al Qaeda and Hamas) & Kuwait's Social Reform Society; discrepancies in Madarsa child records, and the 2022 demolition of its Bongaigaon Madrasa for alleged ties to Al-Qaeda and Ansarullah Bangla Team.

In 2015, Syed Zafar Mahmood of Zakat Foundation India (ZFI) was spotted at AFMI's Silver Jubilee Convention in Burlington. ZFI has been accused of links to radical preacher Zakir Naik and of supporting Rohingya refugee settlement in Delhi. Furthermore, AFMI's

charity fronts for Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan and alleged proxies for Pakistan's ISI, with claims of financing groups like Hizbul Mujahideen, Hamas, Palestinian Jihadists, and Al Qaeda.

AFMI's founding and activities have been closely associated with groups like the Indian Muslim Relief Council (IMRC), Association of Indian Muslims (AIM), and Consultative Council of Indian Muslims (CCIM), all of which have coordinated with AFMI during major incidents such as the 1992 Bombay riots and the 2002 Gujarat riots. Notably, ISNA and CCIM were identified as U.S.-based supporters of the Indian group SIMI in 2002.

AFMI's network further includes the International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF), which has partnered with groups linked to Palestinian terrorism and the Al Qaeda-affiliated Abu Huraira Centre. AFMI trustee Dr. Tajuddin is a founding member of the Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA), which has been criticized for alleged misuse of funds. AFMI also collaborates with the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)—investigated for funding Al Qaeda—and the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), designated a terrorist group by the UAE. These associations have led to persistent scrutiny of AFMI's international linkages.

### Conclusion

AFMI's educational programs targeted at Indian Muslims are expansive. However, its involvement in sensitive political and social issues, controversial domestic and international partnerships, and alleged links to organizations with extremist ties raise serious concerns. AFMI's broader agenda and network thus warrant scrutiny to ensure alignment with, and upholding of India's internal security.

Author: LEA



# Nepal Bajhang Border Visit Rekindles Trade and Traditions



Chief District Officer (CDO) Kailash Bahadur Thakurathi has become the first senior Nepali official to visit the remote Nepal-China border point in Bajhang, a strategic location that has drawn increased attention due to rising Chinese activity along the Himalayan frontier.

The visit, accompanied by security officials, was aimed at preparing a local border management strategy to curb cross-border smuggling and to establish routine surveillance. Bajhang's northern border has long been used as a route for the illicit trade of rare herbs and wildlife, largely due to weak oversight and limited infrastructure.

Thakurathi stated that efforts are underway to formalize the monitoring process and explore the potential of reopening the transit point for regulated trade and tourism. He noted that such initiatives could help economically uplift Bajhang and other districts in Nepal's Far-West.

However, the border region has also become a point of strategic concern. Over the past two years, China has reportedly expanded

infrastructure along its side of the border, including new roadways, observation posts, and logistics hubs under the guise of development and pilgrimage support. Satellite imagery and field reports have shown increased dual-use facilities—projects that serve both civilian and military functions.

Local officials and regional analysts believe these developments could gradually shift control over sensitive areas, especially in regions like Bajhang that lack significant state presence.

There are growing concerns that China may be attempting to exert soft control over Nepal's border areas by engaging in unchecked infrastructure growth and limiting traditional access.

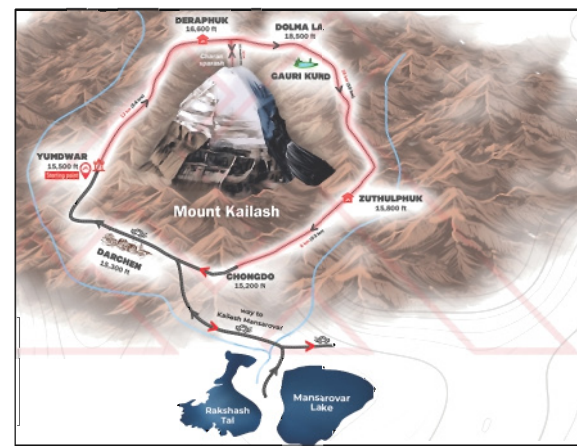
One such example is the continued restriction on access to Mansarovar Lake, a sacred pilgrimage site for Bajhang residents. For six years, locals have been unable to complete their kul puja, a ritual that requires bringing water from the lake since after China imposed strict

entry bans during the COVID-19 pandemic and did not reinstate access.

Thakurathi confirmed that he intends to raise the issue with Chinese counterparts, emphasizing the cultural significance of the ritual. Local communities have expressed frustration at the lack of official follow-up in previous years.

While China presents its activities as development-oriented, Nepali officials remain cautious about the long-term implications. Beijing has also extended cultural and humanitarian outreach through aid, construction of small monasteries, and cross-border exchanges—all of which are seen as part of a broader influence strategy across Nepal's high Himalayan districts.

Given Bajhang's proximity to the Nepal-India-China tri-junction, observers suggest that strategic balancing is essential. India has increased its monitoring of the region, particularly after noticing accelerated Chinese development around Kailash-Mansarovar and adjoining ridgelines.



**Nepal's federal government has not yet issued a formal statement on the matter, but local authorities have begun drafting a border coordination plan to enhance security, trade oversight, and cultural access. Further administrative visits and bilateral discussions are expected in the coming months.**

Author: Shruti Kaushik

# Iran's Nuclear Program Damaged but Not Destroyed



The recent military strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities may have bought time, but they have not eliminated the underlying threat. Rafael Grossi's stark assessment on Sunday reveals the complex reality facing international efforts to contain Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Despite extensive damage to the Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan facilities from US and Israeli attacks, the IAEA Director General's warning that Iran could restore uranium enrichment capabilities "within a few months" underscores a fundamental challenge in nuclear proliferation. Technical knowledge and expertise cannot be bombed out of existence.

Grossi's revelation about Iran's pre-strike activities adds another troubling dimension. The movement of equipment and materials without IAEA notification, captured only in satellite imagery, suggests Tehran may have anticipated the attacks and taken protective measures. This "great ambiguity," as Grossi termed it, complicates efforts to assess the true impact of the military action.

The timing of these developments is particularly significant. Iran's parliament has suspended cooperation with the IAEA, creating a diplomatic vacuum precisely when enhanced monitoring is most critical. Without inspectors on the ground, the international community is operating partially blind, relying on satellite surveillance and intelligence rather than direct oversight.

This situation highlights the limitations of military solutions to nuclear proliferation. While the strikes have undoubtedly set back Iran's program, they have not addressed the root causes or eliminated the technical foundation

that makes rapid reconstitution possible. The infrastructure may be damaged, but the institutional knowledge remains intact.

Grossi's call for immediate inspector access represents more than procedural necessity. It reflects the urgent need to establish ground truth about Iran's current capabilities and intentions. Without this transparency, the international community faces the dangerous prospect of making critical decisions based on incomplete information.

The Iran case exposes a fundamental flaw in current non-proliferation strategy. Military strikes can destroy facilities but cannot erase knowledge or eliminate the political will to pursue nuclear capabilities. Each cycle of attack and reconstruction potentially makes Iran's program more resilient and harder to monitor.

More critically, the breakdown in IAEA cooperation signals a dangerous precedent. If states can simply withdraw from international oversight when facing pressure, the entire nuclear monitoring system becomes voluntary and ultimately ineffective. This erosion of multilateral institutions may prove more damaging to global security than any single nuclear program.

The path forward requires acknowledging that sustainable solutions must address Iran's underlying motivations for pursuing nuclear capabilities, not just its technical capacity. Without this broader diplomatic engagement, the international community risks a perpetual cycle of military intervention and reconstitution that ultimately strengthens rather than weakens proliferation threats.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

# Thailand-Cambodia Border Tensions A Strategic Analysis



Border tensions between Thailand and Cambodia have escalated dramatically following a deadly clash in May 2025. The crisis has evolved into a complex diplomatic and legal confrontation that threatens regional stability.

The current crisis began on May 28, 2025, when a Cambodian soldier was killed during a border clash near Morokot village in Cambodia's northwestern Preah Vihear province. According to Cambodian officials, the incident occurred when Cambodian troops conducting a routine patrol were fired upon by Thai forces. This single death has since triggered a cascade of military reinforcements, diplomatic maneuvering, and nationalist rhetoric on both sides.

## Cambodia's Response

Cambodia has announced its intention to refer disputes over four border areas to the International Court of Justice, marking a return to its favored strategy of legal internationalization. This approach mirrors Cambodia's successful 2013 ICJ case regarding the Preah Vihear temple, where it secured a symbolic legal victory over Thailand.

Hun Sen, now Cambodia's Senate President, has escalated rhetoric by describing Thailand's

potential economic measures as "a new weapon" against Cambodia, while asserting his country's readiness to withstand any Thai pressure tactics. However, claims about Cambodia possessing weapons capable of reaching Bangkok appear to be absent from recent verified statements, suggesting the original article may have contained unsubstantiated information.

Cambodia has begun implementing economic countermeasures, with Prime Minister Hun Manet announcing a halt to fuel and gas imports from Thailand, demonstrating Phnom Penh's willingness to accept economic costs to maintain its strategic position.

## Thailand's Reflex

Thailand has firmly rejected ICJ jurisdiction and proposed that all boundary-related issues be handled through existing bilateral mechanisms. Despite initial military reinforcements on both sides, Thailand and Cambodia have agreed to return their troops to previously agreed positions, suggesting Bangkok's preference for de-escalation while maintaining firmness.

The Thai approach reflects a calculated strategy of avoiding legal entanglement while

strengthening its position on the ground. Thailand's participation in regional military exercises and partnerships continues to signal its commitment to stability and multilateral engagement.

## The Domestic Political Dimension

The crisis has created political turbulence within Thailand itself. A leaked phone call between Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra and Hun Sen has sparked protests and investigations that could threaten the Prime Minister's position. This domestic vulnerability adds another layer of complexity to Thailand's strategic calculations, potentially limiting its room for maneuver.

Cambodia's selective focus on Thailand, rather than addressing similar border issues with Vietnam, reveals strategic calculations about opponent selection. Thailand's predictable diplomatic restraint and legal caution make it an attractive target for Cambodia. The use of Chinese-supplied military equipment by Cambodia raises broader questions about arms transfers, while China avoids direct involvement, the proliferation of its weapons systems enables smaller states to adopt more assertive postures in territorial disputes.

## Strategic Assessment

This confrontation represents a test case for how territorial disputes might be resolved—or exploited in contemporary Southeast Asia. Cambodia's strategy of combining legal internationalization with economic pressure and nationalist mobilization could serve as a template for other regional disputes.

For Thailand, the challenge lies in countering Cambodia's multifaceted approach without escalation. Success requires maintaining military readiness while denying Cambodia the legal and diplomatic victories it seeks. The outcome may determine whether international legal forums become the preferred venue for boundary revision in the region.

The Thailand-Cambodia border dispute serves as a microcosm of evolving security challenges in Southeast Asia, where traditional military deterrence intersects with legal warfare and economic coercion. The resolution of this crisis will likely influence how future territorial disputes unfold across the region, making it a conflict worth watching far beyond its immediate geographical boundaries.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

# Amid SAARC freeze, Pak & China eye a new bloc



With the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) effectively frozen since 2016 due to India-Pakistan tensions, Pakistan and China are actively exploring the creation of a new regional bloc. This initiative aims to revive regional cooperation, focusing on enhancing connectivity, trade, and political dialogue among South and Central Asian countries, potentially replacing the dormant SAARC framework.

## Background and Motivations

SAARC, founded in 1985 to promote economic and political cooperation among South Asian nations, has struggled to function effectively, largely due to the persistent rivalry between India and Pakistan. The last SAARC summit was held in 2014, and the planned 2016 summit in Islamabad was canceled after India, followed by Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Bhutan, boycotted it, citing security concerns. Since then, SAARC has remained inactive. Pakistan and China see this vacuum as an opportunity to reshape regional multilateral cooperation through a new platform that prioritizes practical engagement over political disputes.

## The New Bloc Proposal

Discussions are reportedly at an advanced stage, with a key trilateral meeting held on June 19, 2025, in Kunming, China, involving Pakistan, China, and Bangladesh. The objective is to invite other former SAARC members—including Sri Lanka, Maldives, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Bhutan—to join this new grouping. India is expected to receive an invitation but is unlikely to participate given its strained relations with

both Pakistan and China and divergent strategic interests.

## Implications for Pakistan, China, India, and Regional Geopolitics

For Pakistan, the new bloc offers a chance to overcome diplomatic isolation in South Asia and promote regional connectivity aligned with its interests. China, though not a SAARC member, is the key driver behind this initiative, using it to expand its influence in South Asia and further its Belt and Road Initiative through enhanced regional integration.

India views the move with concern, perceiving it as a China-led effort to undermine its regional primacy. India's non-participation could deepen regional fragmentation, reducing its leverage in South Asian multilateral forums and complicating its geopolitical rivalry with China and Pakistan. The new bloc could shift the regional balance of power towards a China-Pakistan axis, potentially sidelining India and altering South Asia's strategic landscape.

## Conclusion

The Pakistan-China initiative to form a new regional bloc reflects the urgent need to revive South Asian cooperation amid SAARC's prolonged dormancy. While it promises enhanced connectivity and economic engagement for member states, it also risks further dividing the region along geopolitical lines. The success and impact of this new bloc will depend on its ability to attract broad participation and navigate the complex India-China-Pakistan dynamics that have long defined South Asian politics.

Author: LEA



# India's Silent Surge

## 52 Defence Satellites to Watch Over Every Threat



India is quietly redrawing the lines of modern warfare is not with noise, but with vision. In a strategic move that signals a deep shift in the country's defence thinking, the government has cleared the launch of 52 dedicated defence surveillance satellites, a first-of-its-kind military-only space constellation aimed at building a permanent, independent eye in the sky.

This initiative, catalyzed by intelligence gaps noticed during Operation Sindoor, marks India's most significant expansion into military space operations.

It is backed by a comprehensive and classified military space doctrine, developed collaboratively by the Ministry of Defence, ISRO, DRDO, the Strategic Forces Command, and the three armed services.

These satellites will not merely hover as passive observers. Each will be designed to deliver real-time imaging, radar-based tracking, thermal sensing, and even electronic intelligence (ELINT), offering India 24/7 visibility over conflict-prone regions.

Whether it's monitoring troop build-up along the Line of Actual Control, identifying terror camps across the western border, or tracking foreign submarines in the Indian Ocean, this orbital network will be India's most advanced reconnaissance system to date.

The constellation is expected to feature a combination of electro-optical sensors, synthetic aperture radar (SAR) for all-weather surveillance, and infrared and hyper-spectral imaging payloads. Unlike traditional satellites shared between civilian and military users, this network will operate exclusively for defence purposes and controlled through secure military command nodes and integrated directly with India's emerging air defence grid, missile warning systems, and armed drone operations.

The urgency behind this project is not accidental. During Operation Sindoor earlier this year, Indian forces found themselves navigating operational challenges due to delayed satellite feeds and commercial data dependency.

With two volatile fronts: China to the north and Pakistan to the west and increasingly contested maritime zones, India can no longer afford reactive intelligence gathering. It needs precision, speed, and complete control. These 52 satellites are the answer.

Defence officials familiar with the project describe it as "a tectonic shift in India's strategic readiness." The satellites will allow seamless data fusion from land, sea, air, and space, empowering commanders with near-instant threat assessments. Whether it's a missile launch, a stealth aircraft crossing radar lines, or a hostile convoy amassing near the border, alerts will reach decision-makers in real time.

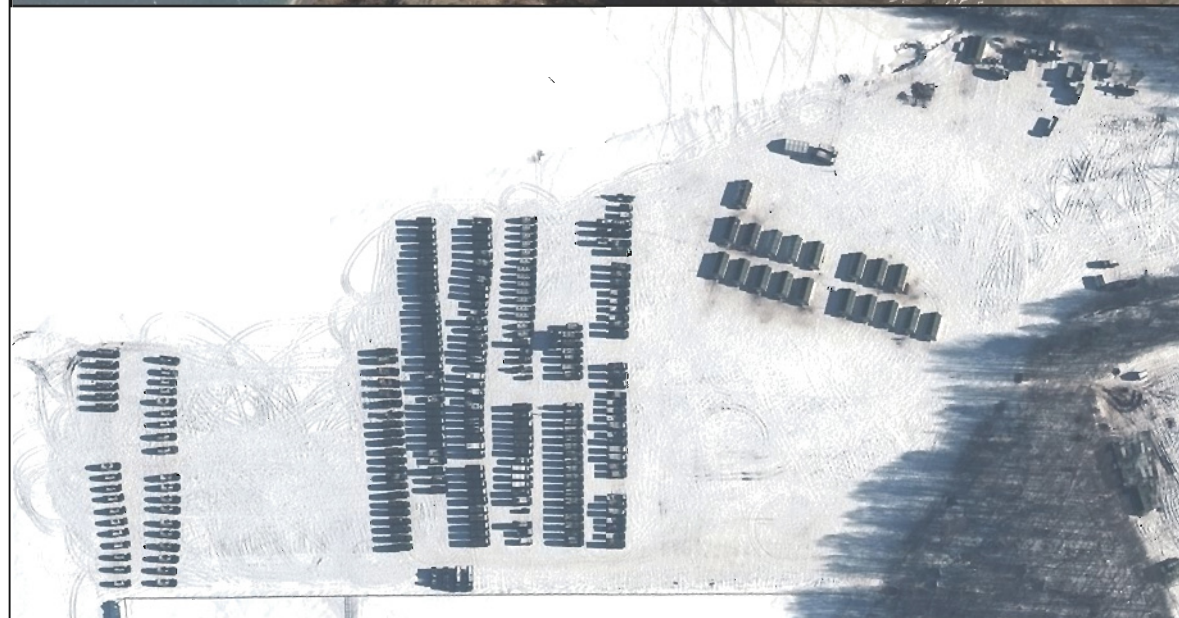
This development also places India in direct conversation with the world's top space-military powers.

The United States, Russia, and China have long fielded extensive military satellite constellations. China's aggressive space militarization—including its ASAT (anti-satellite) capabilities and space-based naval monitoring is a growing concern for Indian strategists. India's 2019 Mission Shakti ASAT test showed proof of capability. Now, this constellation demonstrates strategic will.

The launch phase is scheduled to begin later this year, with the first set of satellites expected to be operational by mid-2026. The Defence Space Agency (DSA) will coordinate launch logistics, while payloads are being co-developed by ISRO, DRDO, and select Indian private aerospace partners under strict confidentiality. Deployment will occur in staggered phases, but defence insiders suggest that the core capability will be online in less than 24 months.

In many ways, this is not just a space project. It is the backbone of India's 21st-century deterrence strategy. A quiet but potent message to adversaries: You will be seen. And we will decide how to respond.

With these 52 satellites, India is not just catching up. It is charting its own trajectory toward secure skies and strategic autonomy.



# India Accelerates

## Emergency Defence Procurement



In a strategic push to enhance combat readiness, India has fast-tracked the procurement of critical military systems worth ₹1,981.9 crore for the Army under the Emergency Procurement (EP-5) scheme. The contracts, signed with domestic vendors, are aimed at strengthening frontline capabilities in response to emerging drone and border threats.

The procurement covers a range of systems including loitering munitions (Nagatra-1R), counter-drone equipment, VSHORADS (Igla-1S), Switch VTOL surveillance drones, low-level lightweight radars, night-vision sights, bulletproof gear, and quick-reaction fighting vehicles. All equipment is to be delivered within 12 months, significantly compressing conventional delivery timelines.

This round of emergency procurement follows Operation Sindoor in May 2025, when

India conducted precise air and missile strikes against terror infrastructure across the border. The operation underscored the urgent need for faster ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) capabilities and mobile firepower—gaps that EP-5 now seeks to fill.

The Ministry of Defence emphasized that all 13 contracts under EP-5 have been awarded to Indian companies, aligning with the government's Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) mission. This includes firms like Solar Industries, IdeaForge, and Adani Defense, marking another step in boosting indigenous defense manufacturing.

Looking ahead, the government is preparing to roll out EP-6, a significantly larger phase estimated at ₹40,000 crore, with integrated procurements planned across the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

# Blackout Without Bloodshed



In modern warfare, disabling the enemy no longer requires lethal force alone. Among the most cunning tools of non-lethal military disruption is the graphite bomb, it's also known as the "soft bomb," "power killer," or "blackout bomb." These weapons don't explode in a traditional sense to destroy infrastructure but instead cripple nations by plunging them into darkness.

Graphite bombs work through a deceptively simple yet devastating mechanism. Packed with bundles of ultra-fine, chemically treated graphite filaments, each thinner than a human hair. The bomb disperses these conductive fibers over power infrastructure such as transformers and transmission lines. When the graphite settles on high-voltage systems, it induces short circuits, electrical discharges, and in many cases, fires. The result: a sudden collapse of the power grid.

What sets this weapon apart is its non-lethal, targeted design. Rather than destroying buildings or taking lives, graphite bombs silently erase a city's ability to function by cutting electricity, disabling communications, halting transportation, and disorienting command systems.

Their use can instantly paralyze both military and civilian infrastructure, creating chaos without a single shot fired.

Deployed from fighter jets or missiles, graphite bombs release hundreds of soda-can-sized submunitions mid-air. These drift gently to their targets, releasing spiderweb-like clouds of graphite that float and cling to power systems. The fibers' exceptional conductivity is nearly 100 times higher than steel and it amplifies the electrical surge, overwhelming the system's insulation and triggering widespread blackouts.

First used by the U.S. during the Gulf War and later in Yugoslavia, graphite bombs have since become a key component of electronic and psychological warfare. Their silent destruction can immobilize a city, shake public morale, and buy critical time during an invasion or strike. Making them an ideal tool for 21st-century conflicts that prize disruption over devastation.

As future warfare leans more into information and infrastructure denial, graphite bombs exemplify a new kind of power: silent, precise, and devastating without drawing blood.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

