

Gray Zone tactics of China to capture Taiwan

The Gray Zone strategy represents a deliberate, calculated approach that challenges traditional international conflict models, requiring equally sophisticated and adaptive defensive strategies from Taiwan.

The geopolitical landscape between China and Taiwan represents a critical nexus of modern strategic competition, characterized by the sophisticated implementation of Gray Zone warfare. This emerging strategic paradigm transcends traditional military confrontation, instead employing a nuanced approach that operates in the ambiguous space between peace and open conflict.

China's engagement with Taiwan exemplifies this approach, utilizing a comprehensive toolkit of coercive methods that simultaneously target military, economic, technological, and psychological domains. The objective is multifaceted: to incrementally weaken Taiwan's international standing, erode its internal resilience, and create an environment conducive to potential reunification.

These tactics extend far beyond conventional warfare, incorporating sophisticated techniques such as:

Underwater Cable Infrastructure Disruption: Chinese engineers have unveiled a groundbreaking deep-sea tool capable of severing underwater communication cables with unprecedented precision. Developed by the state-owned China Ship Scientific Research Centre, this compact device can operate at depths up to 4 kms—double the range of

one identified as Zhao Zhan, and the other by the nickname Da Qi—have been ordered to leave by 31st March or face deportation for similar statements.

Innovative Landing Barges:

Satellite imagery has revealed China's development of advanced self-propelled landing barges, dubbed the Shuiqiao (水桥) platforms. These innovative bridge-like vessels represent a quantum leap in amphibious invasion capabilities, allowing rapid deployment of military vehicles and supplies directly onto shorelines. Key features of these landing barges include:

- Capacity to dock multiple ships simultaneously.
- Ability to create causeways up to 820 meters long.
- Flexibility to bypass challenging beach terrain.
- Potential to rapidly deploy up to 150 vehicles within 40-60 minutes Leveraging extensive naval base systems for persistent maritime presence.

The economic reliance with significant influence over Taiwan's critical supply chains and economic corridors has carefully targeted investments in key Taiwanese industries, designing economic incentive structures that preferentially benefit pro-reunification business entities, and developing selective economic policies that gradually increase Taiwan's dependence on mainland markets.



Extended Barges transporting Tanks to ports

China aims to make Taiwan's economic survival increasingly dependent on mainland cooperation and goodwill. This approach creates a subtle but powerful mechanism of potential coercion, where economic consequences can be leveraged as a strategic tool.

The technological domain represents another critical arena of strategic pressure. China has developed nuanced strategies designed to limit

Taiwan's technological sovereignty and international communication capabilities. These efforts extend beyond simple economic competition, involving systematic restrictions on Taiwan's participation in global technological forums, targeted cyber intrusion campaigns, and the creation of bureaucratic and technological barriers.

Psychological Warfare and Identity Erosion Perhaps the most sophisticated aspect of China's approach involves a long-term psychological warfare strategy aimed at gradually eroding Taiwanese national identity. This multifaceted approach goes beyond traditional propaganda, involving sustained campaigns that challenge Taiwan's historical narrative, strategic educational and cultural influence operations, and targeted messaging designed to create internal social fragmentation.

The strategy involves marrying Chinese cultural influences to Taiwan, indirectly working on the next generation's traditional values and potentially amending their beliefs.

These tactics collectively represent a comprehensive approach to strategic pressure that extends far beyond traditional military or diplomatic confrontation. By simultaneously targeting economic, technological, and psychological domains, the Gray Zone strategy represents a deliberate, calculated approach that challenges traditional international conflict models.

It requires equally sophisticated and adaptive defensive strategies from Taiwan and its international partners, demanding a holistic and dynamic response to these multifaceted pressures.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

China's Expansion in Myanmar



YANGON. China's strategic entrenchment in Myanmar represents a significant geopolitical development with far-reaching implications for regional power dynamics across Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific theater.

Beijing's methodical advancement of influence through security companies operating under the military junta's private security framework signals a sophisticated approach to establishing a client-state relationship without direct intervention. These security entities serve as effective instruments for projecting Chinese influence across Myanmar's political and economic landscape while maintaining plausible deniability.

The current military administration's transactional relationship with Chinese commercial interests reveals a concerning prioritization of immediate regime survival over long-term national sovereignty considerations. This arrangement has created fertile ground for Beijing's strategic advancement.

Myanmar's geographic position offers China a critical strategic advantage in resolving what security analysts term the "Malacca dilemma" - a vulnerability wherein approximately 80% of China's petroleum imports transit through the narrow Malacca Strait, creating a potential chokepoint during any maritime conflict scenario. Myanmar provides Beijing with the only viable land-based alternative route, significantly enhancing China's strategic resilience and energy security calculus.

China's methodical cultivation of influence in Myanmar must be understood within their broader Indo-Pacific strategy of alternative supply routes through Myanmar would substantially strengthen Beijing's position during any potential maritime confrontation.

The displacement of Lashio residents amid hostilities between junta forces and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) has generated grassroots resistance to Chinese interference, highlighting the complex interplay between local dynamics and great power competition.

China's role as mediator in upcoming negotiations between the junta and MNDAA further demonstrates Beijing's capacity to leverage internal conflicts to enhance its position as an indispensable regional powerbroker, gradually normalizing Chinese involvement in Myanmar's sovereign affairs.

Author: Shruti Kaushik



existing subsea communication infrastructure. A recent past reported incident mentioned how China's cargo vessel Hong Tai 58 allegedly damaged submarine communication cables.

Coordinated Digital Influence Campaigns and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS):

Through various platforms, China conducts psychological warfare to influence public opinion within Taiwan. This includes spreading propaganda about Taiwan's supposed inability to defend itself or portraying Beijing as a benign actor. Taiwan's government and military become the subject of constant criticism, often amplified by Chinese-backed social media influencers, trolling campaigns, and misinformation.

Recently, Chinese influencer Liu Zhenya was given until 25th March to leave the island or face deportation for promoting Beijing's military takeover of Taiwan on social media, according to Taiwan's National Immigration Agency (NIA). Two other Chinese individuals—



Chinese influencer promoting 'forceful reunification' on social media portal

Turkmenistan Forges New Gas Partnerships with Turkey



Turkey and Turkmenistan signed a formal agreement to enhance the transportation of natural gas through Iran. The primary organizations involved in this agreement are Türkiye's state-owned pipeline operator, BOTAS, and Turkmenistan's state-owned company, Turkmenneftgaz. This new arrangement is anticipated to enable the transfer of 2 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas from Turkmenistan to Türkiye, leveraging the current natural gas infrastructure in Iran.

The benefits of the swap agreement for Turkey

The recent agreement is crucial for Turkey, which lacks domestic natural gas reserves and relies heavily on imports to support its economy. This dependency, particularly on Russian gas—accounting for about 45% of imports in 2023—exposes Ankara to geopolitical risks. It is highlighted by how tensions with Russia over Syria in 2015 nearly jeopardized the TurkStream pipeline after Turkey shot down a Russian jet.

As the global energy landscape shifts from traditional areas like the North Sea to emerging regions such as the Black and Mediterranean seas, it is vital for Turkey to explore new offshore gas fields. Successfully developing these projects could encourage European nations to increase their gas purchases from Turkey, leveraging the country's strong pipeline infrastructure.

Why the agreement tackles Turkmenistan's economic vulnerabilities

Turkmenistan holds the world's fourth-largest proven natural gas reserves, with China as its main buyer, purchasing over 70% of its gas exports. In 2025, sales to China generated \$9.6 billion of Ashgabat's total gas revenue of \$14.7 billion, raising concerns about the country's reliance on Chinese markets. Since 2022, as Russia's role in the Chinese gas sector has grown, Turkmenistan has sought alternative export routes. This swap deal presents

Turkmenistan with a golden opportunity even though Türkiye is providing a modest compensation compared to China.

But in the medium term, Turkmenistan must devise strategies to boost gas exports to Europe via a pipeline through Azerbaijan and Türkiye across the Caspian Sea. However, collaborative efforts among these nations for this project have consistently struggled due to Turkmenistan's isolationist policies, strong opposition from Russia and Iran, China's considerable influence on Turkmenistan's energy sector, and the high costs of building an underwater pipeline.

The risks of gas transit through Iran

Utilizing Iran as a transit route carries significant risks due to its longstanding infrastructure challenges, which impede the efficient transport of natural gas to Türkiye as per their bilateral agreement. Since 2007, Iran has delivered limited amounts of Turkmen gas

to Türkiye but has frequently failed to meet its annual contractual obligations. Ongoing issues, such as outdated pipelines, fluctuations in domestic gas production, and a chronic electricity deficit causing frequent blackouts, exacerbate these challenges.

Furthermore, in light of evolving geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East, the active role of the Iranian proxy network increases the likelihood of additional EU sanctions aimed at the Iranian energy sector.

The recent agreement with Türkiye addresses economic vulnerabilities in both Ashgabat and Ankara. Although modest in scale, it sets a significant precedent with potential for growth. As Turkmenistan begins supplying gas to Europe, this deal may enhance the EU-Turkmenistan partnership; and strategically impact future energy distribution from Central Asia to Europe.

Author: Columist

Masters of the Mountains Indian Army's High-Altitude Prowess



Along the frozen frontier of the Himalayas, where oxygen thins and temperatures plummet to deadly extremes, stands an extraordinary force that has transformed these inhospitable heights into their domain. The Indian Army's high-altitude specialists have become legendary for their unmatched adaptation to one of Earth's most challenging environments. These soldiers don't merely survive in regions like Siachen, Ladakh, and Arunachal Pradesh—they thrive. Through rigorous training and generations of experience, Indian troops have developed physiological adaptations that allow them to operate effectively at elevations exceeding 15,000 feet, where simply breathing becomes a challenge for the unprepared.

The secret to their success lies in a comprehensive acclimatization protocol developed over decades. Indian soldiers undergo

a methodical three-stage adaptation process before deployment, allowing their bodies to gradually increase red blood cell production and adjust to oxygen scarcity. This scientific approach is complemented by specialized equipment designed specifically for high-altitude warfare, including extreme-weather clothing, advanced shelter systems, and modified weapons that function reliably in sub-zero conditions.

On the contrary, reports suggest China's PLA faces significant challenges with its high-altitude deployments. Unlike India's volunteer-based army, China's conscription model often places soldiers from lowland regions directly into high-altitude positions without adequate preparation. Medical reports indicate higher rates of altitude sickness, pulmonary edema, and psychological stress among PLA troops stationed along the border.

The Indian Army's advantage extends beyond physical adaptation. Years of continuous deployment have fostered an institutional knowledge of mountain warfare tactics and environmental awareness that cannot be replicated through training exercises alone. Indian patrols navigate treacherous terrain with confidence born of familiarity, while maintaining operational readiness year-round. As geopolitical tensions continue to simmer along the Himalayan frontier, the Indian Army's high-altitude specialists remain vigilant sentinels. Their remarkable resilience transforms what would be a weakness for most armies into India's strategic advantage—making them the undisputed masters of the mountains.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Unveiling Identity. The History, and Struggles of Baloch and Kurds

The Baloch are an Iranian ethnic group primarily residing in the province of Balochistan, which spans Iran and Pakistan, as well as parts of Afghanistan and the southeastern corner of the Iranian plateau in Southwest Asia. They speak Baluchi, a north-western Iranian language, and are generally classified as an Iranian people. The majority of Balochs adhere to Islam, with Sunni Muslims forming the predominant group, while a smaller number follow Shia Islam. The term "Balochi" is believed to mean "wanderer," reflecting their historically nomadic lifestyle. Their original homeland is considered to be the Iranian plateau. Due to their geographical position along caravan routes connecting Iran and India, the Baloch ensured they profited from trade passing through their lands.

However, lacking a centralized state or established cities, many resorted to banditry, which frequently brought them into conflict with rulers and military leaders. A significant cultural tradition among the Balochs is the practice of hosting feasts as a means of political negotiation. In Iran, there are approximately two million ethnic Baloch, making up the majority population in the eastern Sistan and Baluchestan Province. Since 2012, the Sunni Baloch population in Iran has increasingly demonstrated a shift toward Salafist ideology and a stronger anti-Shia stance in their opposition to the Shia-Islamist government.

The Kurds are an indigenous people of the Mesopotamian plains and surrounding highlands, inhabiting a region that today spans southeastern Turkey, northeastern Syria, northern Iraq, northwestern Iran, and southwestern Armenia. With an estimated population ranging between 25 million and 35 million, they are the fourth-largest ethnic group in the Middle East. Despite their significant numbers, they remain one of the largest stateless ethnic groups in the world. The Kurds share a common racial, cultural, and linguistic heritage, and while the majority follow Sunni Islam, their religious diversity includes Christians, Jews, Yazidis, and Zoroastrians.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the victorious Western allies initially recognized the Kurdish aspirations for statehood in the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, which proposed the creation of an independent Kurdistan. However, these hopes were soon shattered with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which formally established the borders of modern Turkey and failed to

Under Watch the Unspoken Fear of Baloch and Kurdish Lives



acknowledge Kurdish sovereignty, leaving them as minority populations in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Over the next eight decades, repeated Kurdish attempts to achieve independence were systematically suppressed. However, a turning point came after the First Gulf War when a Kurdish uprising in northern Iraq, coupled with the establishment of a no-fly zone, allowed the Kurds to carve out a semi-autonomous region. Their autonomy was further solidified following the Second Gulf War and the subsequent ousting of Saddam Hussein, enabling them to strengthen and expand their self-governance within northern Iraq.

What Fuels the Ongoing Struggle of Baloch and Kurds in Iran?

Iran's Baloch minority, estimated to number between one and four million, primarily resides in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, a region marked by poverty, underdevelopment, and harsh mountainous terrain. This isolation has contributed to the area becoming a key transit point for heroin and opium smuggling from neighboring Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Despite living within Iran's borders, the Baloch people maintain a strong cultural and ethnic identity tied to their counterparts across the border, yet they do not seek integration with those nations, instead valuing their historically independent nature. However, their situation is exacerbated by systemic discrimination, particularly against Sunni Baloch, who face cultural and religious marginalization.

Discriminatory policies include economic

neglect, exclusion from government positions, and severe restrictions on their cultural and linguistic rights. Many Baloch children remain undocumented, depriving them of access to education in their native language and, in some cases, even citizenship itself. For decades, the Baloch community has been subjected to repeated waves of mass arrests, imprisonment, and executions carried out by the Iranian authorities. Discussions surrounding the Baloch people have largely been framed within the context of "unlawful cross-border commerce," a narrative that criminalizes their trade and movement, further marginalizing them.

As a predominantly Sunni group, they are routinely excluded from holding key state positions under Iran's Shiite theocracy and face disproportionately harsh treatment by the judicial system. The Baloch have long demanded economic opportunities and local governance by their own representatives, a demand that has never been fully met, either before or after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, due to the central government's deep-seated mistrust. The Iranian state often attributes the challenges in Sistan-Baluchestan, including drug trafficking and kidnappings for ransom, to the Balochistan United Front. However, Baloch groups strongly refute these allegations, asserting instead that elements within Iran's Revolutionary Guards are complicit in the drug trade while simultaneously committing atrocities against the Baloch population. For decades, thousands of Baloch have been persecuted, arrested, and

executed under accusations of smuggling and criminal activity charges historically used to suppress and control border communities in Iran.

The situation for Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has deteriorated significantly due to mounting pressure from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian authorities have increasingly targeted Iraqi Kurdish refugees, particularly those affiliated with political parties, through a range of oppressive measures, including restrictions on obtaining essential documents, physical threats, and even assassination. Sources indicate that the persecution of Iranian Kurds in the KRI was explicitly addressed in agreements between Baghdad and Tehran, further legitimizing Iran's influence over their status. Iranian Kurds are confined to the Kurdistan region and face significant mobility restrictions, as local political dynamics can also hinder their movement within the KRI. Those holding a UNHCR certificate but lacking a residence permit are unable to travel from one city to another. Additionally, Iranian Kurds are systematically denied basic political and civil rights; they cannot vote, run for office, or obtain a passport. Even if an Iranian Kurd marries an Iraqi citizen, they are not granted Iraqi documents, nor can their children obtain Iraqi citizenship. Reports from a local NGO providing legal assistance to Iranian Kurds have documented at least 400 cases of politically motivated assassinations by the Iranian government in the KRI since 1980.

These assassinations are part of a broader campaign of harassment, with Iran using various intimidation tactics to instill fear within the Iranian Kurdish community. One method involves spreading threats through online channels such as the Telegram group "Diarunadiar," where messages warn Iranian Kurds that "there is no future for you in KRI." In other cases, Iranian agents publish photographs of Iranian Kurds' private residences and send direct messages to the inhabitants, such as "we are very close to you," reinforcing the sense of imminent danger. The impact of Iranian pressure extends beyond political activists and

party members, as individuals engaged in media work or those who publicly comment on Iranian politics are also targeted. Those with family in Iran are particularly vulnerable, as Iranian authorities often use their relatives as leverage to silence them. Iranian Kurdish journalists working in the KRI who publish critical articles about Iranian government frequently receive threats, which sometimes extend to their family members residing in Iran.

The Iranian government's control even affects access to healthcare, as documented by a legal assistance NGO that has recorded 150 cases of Iranian Kurds facing severe health difficulties, including ten to twelve individuals requiring treatment for conditions such as breast cancer or eye diseases that can only be treated abroad. However, since the KRI does not issue travel documents to Iranian Kurds, these patients are unable to seek the medical care they desperately need. The combination of physical threats, restrictions on movement, lack of legal rights, and targeted assassinations has created an environment of fear and uncertainty for Iranian Kurds in the KRI, leaving them vulnerable to continued repression by the Iranian government.

Tehran's Grip Loosens Under Pressure

In January 2025, Hrybarr Marri, president of the IFBM, criticized Iran's plans to relocate its capital from Tehran to the coastal region of Baluchistan, specifically Chabahar. He asserted that this move is an attempt to divide Balochistan and suppress the Baloch national liberation movement by settling non-Baloch populations in the area, thereby reducing Baloch representation in their homeland.

In September 2024, delegations from the Balochi and Kurdish communities participated in the International Forum on Security and Peace in the Middle East, held in Brussels. Representatives highlighted the challenges their nations face under Iranian governance and called for just and peaceful solutions, including the right to self-determination and greater autonomy.

In a January 2025 interview, Mustafa Hijri, the leader of PDKI, emphasized the Kurds' commitment to establishing a federal system in Iran. He stated that no prominent Kurdish party seeks separatism; instead, they aim for a democratic federal republic that ensures equitable representation for all ethnic groups within Iran.

Author: Columnist

From War to Business

The Thriving Gun Markets of Afghan-Pakistan Border



The gun markets along the Afghan-Pakistan border, such as the historic Dara Adam Khel market in Pakistan and various bazaars in Afghan provinces, thrive on a shadow economy influenced by prolonged conflicts and weak governance. Over decades, armed conflicts have heavily impacted the region's security situation, leading to a strong arms trade.

Dara Adam Khel, recognized as the largest open gun market in the world, is situated close to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and has served as an illegal arms source for the Taliban for many years. This city used to be a part of a unique legal framework known as the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) until its

merger with Khyber Province in 2018. Even though the market has been declared illegal since 2018, it continues to function as it has for centuries.

This bazaar has a straightforward layout, with many manufacturing spots among the shops. It boasts over 2,000 shops and employs over 20,000 workers. The local saying "Many sons and a lot of guns" reflects the community's deep connection to the arms trade. A skilled worker can craft an AK-47 in just four days, and the shops produce approximately 15,000 bullets daily. Prices for firearms can vary, influenced by factors such as buyer type and weapon quality.

Weapons in Dara Adam Khel are

manufactured, repaired, and modified, with more than 75% of the town's population engaged in this business. The market offers a wide variety of firearms, from simple pistols to advanced models like the American M16 and the Russian AK-47. Both original and replica versions of firearms are available at significantly lower prices than in the U.S., which serves as a draw for various buyers, including locals and insurgent groups.

The arms trade was notably strengthened following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent U.S. war. Despite a noted decrease in business recently, likely due to the Taliban's acquisition of leftover U.S. weaponry worth billions, the local arms manufacturing still shows signs of robust activity, particularly among non-state actors like the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

The U.S. withdrawal in 2021 resulted in an arsenal of military equipment being left behind, including arms and vehicles, which ended up in the hands of the Taliban. This surplus has altered the market dynamics, with both the Taliban and arms traders taking advantage of the influx of weapons, particularly in regions bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In areas like Nangarhar, the proximity to major arms trade routes and the Torkham Border Crossing supports both legal and illegal trade. Weapon prices have fluctuated but are generally recuperating since the Taliban takeover. While larger arms shipments might go to Taliban officials, localized selling is common among local leaders, especially under harsh economic conditions.

The arms market is intricately tied to the illegal drug trade, with drug-for-weapon exchanges being a historical practice in Afghanistan. International criminal networks have recently become involved in smuggling Afghan weapons, demonstrating the global reach of these markets. With ongoing issues related to illegal arms trade and drug trafficking, the Afghan-Pakistan border remains a focal point for security concerns that impact both regional stability and broader international contexts.

Future Prospects and Challenges

The traditional arms market in Dara Adam Khel is facing challenges due to increased regulation, competition from modern manufacturing, and shifting political dynamics. To address these issues, the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa plans to transform the sector into a formalized one, including registering manufacturers, providing access to quality raw materials, and facilitating entry into national and international markets.

Author: Columnist

What are the protests in Turkey about?



Tens of thousands of people across Turkey have been protesting the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, the main political rival of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Protesters have been fired upon with tear gas and rubber bullets in what has become the worst unrest in the country for more than a decade.

What sparked the protests?

Demonstrations began in Istanbul on 19 March, sparked by the arrest of leading opposition politician Ekrem Imamoglu earlier the same day.

Imamoglu was set to be elected as a presidential candidate for the secular Republican People's Party (CHP). On Sunday, a symbolic vote confirmed him as the party's 2028 candidate. The prosecution accuses Imamoglu of corruption. As part of the investigation, over 100 people have been detained. Sunday, he was arrested for "establishing and managing a criminal organization, taking bribes, extortion, unlawfully collecting and rigging tenders". Moreover, he has been suspended from office.

The CHP party called for protests after the arrest, calling it a coup against the next president. At multiple universities in Istanbul, students demonstrated chanting "We are not scared, we won't be silenced, we won't obey" - a common opposition slogan. Protests started off relatively small in scale for a city with more than 16 million people.

Since then, however, they have expanded to dozens of other Turkish cities and are currently at a level not seen in almost ten years. Although there have been encounters with police using tear gas and water cannons, most protests have been nonviolent.

In recent months, authorities have launched a significant statewide crackdown, focusing on opposition politicians, journalists, and entertainment industry leaders. According to some demonstrators, the protests also reflect broader worries about the economy, healthcare, and Turkey's move toward dictatorship.

Who is protesting?

Many of those protesting Imamoglu's arrest

are university students.

Students from different universities gathered in front of Istanbul University near the Beyazit area on Wednesday, breaking through a police barricade and moving towards Saraycine, where the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality building is located.

Protests on Thursday were also held on multiple university campuses in Istanbul before spreading to the streets.

More than 1,100 people have been detained since demonstrations began, according to Turkey's interior minister.

At least 10 journalists covering the protests have also been detained in Istanbul and Izmir during dawn raids by police.

The CHP continued its vote for the party's presidential candidate on Sunday, with supporters heading to the ballot box in a symbolic vote for Imamoglu despite his arrest.

There is a dictatorship in Turkey right now, nothing else. It's politics in name only."



Meanwhile, Sukru Ilker, 70, said protesters did not want to "confront the police" but to protect the candidate for the next vote.

Ayten Oktay, a 63-year-old pharmacist, said Turkey had "woken up", adding: "We will defend our rights until the end."

How has the Turkish government responded?

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has condemned the protests, saying his government would not "surrender" to "vandalism" or "street terror".

"We will not accept the disruption of public order," he has said.

Turkish authorities have banned public gatherings, but this has not deterred protesters.

Erdogan and his administration have also denied claims that Imamoglu's arrest was politically motivated, insisting that Turkey's judiciary is independent.

Turkey's president says the CHP has not been able to respond to the corruption allegations and accused its party chairman, Özgür Özel, of sowing unrest on the streets.

Author: Columnist

Ban no bar Tahaffuz-e-deen's serving of Islamist 'slow poison' content goes on unabated

Tahaffuz e Deen Media Services (TDMS) is an Islamic media channel established by Qari Ziya Ur Rahman Farooqui, son of another Islamic preacher Maulana Mahfooz Farooqui. Supported by Islamic organizations like Darul Uloom Deoband and Jamaatul Ulama-e-Hind, TDMS claims to endeavor to promote Islamic values.

It has branches in Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.

Ban by the Government of India

In April 2022, the Indian government prohibited access to the YouTube channel of Tahaffuz-e-Deen Media Services because of its alleged dissemination of false information and incitement of community discord. Nevertheless, the channel persists in uploading fresh content through a VPN and continues to operate an active website.

Key people at TDMS

Qari Ziya Ur Rahman Farooqui, the founder of Tahaffuz e Deen Media Services is also a proprietor at Abu Saad Enterprises, which specializes in publishing & printing services. Maulana Mahfooz Ur Rahman Farooqui Rahmani is a founder-member of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB). He has previously held key positions including President at Jamaat Ulama Hind Aurangabad, Member of the India Committee of Islamic Development Bank (IDB), and Maharashtra General Secretary of AIMM. He has also led various Islamic schools and madrassas. Additionally, he regularly features in TDMS' published videos.

TDMS & Popular Front's past links

In 2022, the Government of India labeled the Popular Front of India (PFI) as an 'unlawful association' and banned it for five years due to threats to national security and links to terrorist groups.

In November 2018, TDMS Aurangabad hosted PFI's Chairman E. Aboobacker. TDMS also covered PFI's 2017 conference. Additionally, Maulana Mahfooz Ur Rahman spoke at the 2017 All India Imams Council (AIIC) conference. AIIC is linked to PFI, which is also banned.

Controversial Statements or Positions Held by Tahaffuz-e-Deen and its Affiliates

TDMS' online platforms offer Islamic content with lectures and discussions from well-known

Muslim scholars. However, they show a consistent conservative Islamist agenda, criticizing the Indian government and its policies, especially as has been the case with the Anti-Waqf Bill and the Citizenship Amendment Bill in the past.

Reading materials on TDMS' official website

The books/reading material section at TDMS' official website features controversial titles, like those on Jihad. It even hosts books by the radical Islamist preacher Zakir Naik, who is currently on the run from Indian agencies.

TDMS & The Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH)

In October 2022, Ziya Ur Rahman, Founder of TDMS, endorsed a Jamaat e Islami Hind initiative on a news channel to strengthen Islamic values in the community. His father, Maulana Mahfooz Farooqui, had previously addressed the Aurangabad chapter of JIH.

Other vexed ties of TDMS & its associated persons



Mufti Yasir Al-Wajidi is an Islamic scholar in the United States who actively participates in TDMS conferences and contributes to their video content. He is known for openly



supporting the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and has criticized the Government of India in his speeches. Maulana Mahfooz Farooqui himself claims to have treated Sheikh Ahmed

Deedat. Deedat, the late Islamic preacher from South Africa is best known as the spiritual mentor to the controversial Zakir Naik. Furthermore, TDMS has consistently partnered with the All India Baitul Imdaad Charitable Trust (AIBCT), an NGO in Hyderabad that supports Rohingya refugees and operates in several states, including Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Additionally, AIBCT has organized donation campaigns for earthquake relief in Turkey.

Tahaffuz-e-deen Media Services (TDMS) claims to aim at promoting Islamic values within the Muslim community in India, garnering substantial backing from notable Islamic organizations and scholars. Nevertheless, an analysis of its content indicates a pronounced adherence to conservative Islamic values and a resistance against progressive governmental initiatives.

Furthermore, its past connections with groups such as the banned Popular Front of India (PFI) and dubious associations with contentious religious figures raise significant concerns. In today's media environment, where polarizing narratives abound, a comprehensive evaluation of TDMS is crucial for national harmony and security.

Author: Columnist

Who Is Badar Khan Suri and His Alleged Hamas Connection?

Badar Khan Suri, an Indian national and postdoctoral fellow at Georgetown University, has been a prominent figure in peace and conflict studies, focusing on state-building in post-conflict regions such as Iraq and Afghanistan. He earned his PhD from Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi, where his research delved into the challenges and opportunities of fostering cooperation among religiously diverse societies. At Georgetown's Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Suri continued his scholarly pursuits, emphasizing peacebuilding initiatives in the Middle East.

Suri's wife, Mapheze Saleh, is a U.S. citizen born in Missouri who spent much of her life in Gaza after the age of five. She previously worked for Al Jazeera and is known for her outspoken criticism of the Israeli government. Her father, Ahmed Yousef, served as a political adviser to the Hamas leadership and held positions such as Deputy Foreign Minister in the Hamas government in Gaza until 2010. Yousef has stated that he left the Hamas government after its five-year term ended and there were no fresh elections.



In March 2025, U.S. authorities detained Suri, alleging that he was actively spreading Hamas propaganda and promoting antisemitism on social media. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) claimed that Suri had close connections to a known or suspected terrorist who is a senior advisor to Hamas. These allegations led to the revocation of his J-1 visa and subsequent detention.



Suri's legal team has challenged these claims, arguing that his detention violates his First and Fifth Amendment rights, encompassing free speech and due process. They contend that Suri is being targeted for his academic work and personal beliefs rather than any actual wrongdoing, emphasizing that he holds a valid visa and has no criminal record. His wife, Saleh, has also faced online accusations and harassment due to her Palestinian heritage and criticisms of the Israeli government.

A U.S. district judge temporarily halted Suri's deportation, pending further court decisions. Georgetown University has expressed support for Suri, stating that they are not aware of him engaging in any illegal activity and emphasizing their commitment to free and open inquiry, even when the underlying ideas may be controversial or objectionable. Suri's detention has sparked significant attention from civil rights groups and academic communities, who view the move as unconstitutional and an attempt to suppress dissent.

The case has raised concerns about the broader implications for academic freedom and the rights of scholars to engage in discourse on contentious international issues without fear of reprisal.

SIO JAMIA STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH DR. BADAR KHAN SURI

Students Islamic Organisation of India (SIO), Jamia Millia Islamia Unit, strongly condemns the detention and deportation threat against Dr. Badar Khan Suri, an alumnus of our university and a respected scholar in Peace and Conflict Studies. The US government's actions reflect a broader pattern of repression against academics and activists engaged in research and advocacy related to Palestine.

Dr. Suri's work in conflict resolution has been widely recognised, and the targeting of scholars under unsubstantiated allegations raises serious concerns about academic freedom and human rights. Silencing intellectual voices through arbitrary detention and legal persecution is unacceptable.

We stand in full solidarity with Dr. Suri and demand his immediate release. We urge the international academic community and human rights organisations to take a stand against this injustice and ensure that scholars are not punished for their work and beliefs.



Several Indian Muslim organizations have condemned Suri's detention and the allegations against him. They argue that the actions taken by U.S. authorities are unjust and reflect a broader pattern of discrimination against individuals based on their political beliefs and associations. These organizations have called for Suri's immediate release and for the protection of academic freedom and human rights.

Additionally, the Students Islamic Organisation of India (SIO), Jamia Millia Islamia Unit, strongly condemned the detention and deportation threat against Dr. Badar Khan Suri, calling him an esteemed alumnus and a respected scholar in Peace and Conflict Studies. They emphasized that the U.S. government's actions reflect a wider pattern of repression against academics and activists engaged in research and advocacy related to Palestine.

Author: Columnist

VVP Villages Answer of China's Xiao Gang Villages



In a strategic move aimed at countering China's controversial efforts to establish artificial border villages along disputed territories, Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein has announced plans to urge the Centre to extend the Vibrant Village Programme (VVP) to include the India-Myanmar and India-Bhutan borders. This bold initiative comes as a clear response to China's expansionist activities in border regions, including its controversial establishment of fake villages in disputed territories like Tibet, aiming to assert control over territories through dubious means.



Launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs on April 10, 2023, the VVP was initially intended to focus on the northern border with China, targeting strategic villages in Arunachal Pradesh. The program is seen as a major step in India's push to secure and develop its border regions, promoting national security and economic growth in areas often neglected by past governments. As part of the first phase, ₹2,205 crore has been allocated for the construction of 105 roads, spanning 1,022 kilometers and connecting 125 villages. In addition, ₹104.99 crore has been earmarked for 187 developmental projects across 156 villages.

However, several villages along the northern, eastern, and western stretches of Arunachal Pradesh remain outside the ambit of the VVP. To ensure that these areas are not left behind, the state government has proactively pursued inclusion through additional schemes under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

The Arunachal Pradesh government's push to expand the program to include the India-Myanmar and India-Bhutan borders is not only about local development but also an assertive response to China's territorial ambitions. China has recently attempted to stake claims by establishing fake border villages (Xiao gang Village/ Artificial Village) in the disputed Tibet region, aiming to solidify its control over areas that remain contested. India's extension of the VVP to these borders sends a strong message: India will not be passive in the face of such provocative tactics. Instead, India will ensure that its own border villages are properly developed, with improved infrastructure, connectivity, and security.



Further strengthening India's border infrastructure, the central government has also sanctioned 22 connectivity projects and 212 additional infrastructure initiatives under the Northeast Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NSIDS). These projects aim to boost transportation, economic development, and connectivity in remote, border areas, ensuring that these regions are not neglected in the broader national development agenda.

This push for the expansion of the VVP signifies India's strong commitment to securing its borders and ensuring the prosperity of its border communities. By extending the program to include the borders with Myanmar and Bhutan, India is making a powerful statement about its sovereignty, resilience, and determination to counter any attempts to undermine its territorial integrity.

China's artificial village-building strategies, which seek to create a facade of control over contested areas, India's approach focuses on sustainable development and genuine welfare for those who reside in its border regions. The government's vision is clear: it seeks to empower these strategic areas, improve the quality of life for border residents, and ensure that all of India's border regions receive the attention they deserve—both in terms of development and security.

This expansion of the VVP is a direct answer to China's border manipulation tactics, signaling that India is ready to ensure its territorial sovereignty through genuine development rather than artificial claims. It is a message of resilience, unity, and a firm resolve to protect India's borders at all costs.

Author: Shruti Kankshik

The sacred process for selecting the next Dalai Lama, a tradition dating back to the 14th century, faces unprecedented interference from the Chinese government as they move aggressively to control who will succeed the aging 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso.

Traditional Selection Process Under Threat For centuries, the identification of a new Dalai Lama has followed carefully prescribed religious protocols. After the death of a Dalai Lama, senior Buddhist monks embark on a spiritual search guided by dreams, visions, and divine signs to find the child who is the reincarnation of their leader. The child must pass a series of tests, including recognizing possessions from the previous Dalai Lama's life. This revered tradition now faces systematic dismantling by Chinese authorities determined to control the process.

Chinese government has implemented several mechanisms to seize control of the selection:

Order No. 5 Regulation In 2007, Beijing introduced regulations requiring all reincarnated lamas to receive government approval, effectively giving the Communist Party veto power over the recognition of the next Dalai Lama. Recent reports indicate this regulation has been strengthened with additional enforcement provisions.

The "Golden Urn" Manipulation Chinese officials have repeatedly stated they will use a controversial method known as the "Golden Urn" ceremony to select the next Dalai Lama. While Beijing claims this has historical precedent, Tibetan Buddhist scholars note that this method was only occasionally used and never as the sole determinant.



Reports from Tibet indicate that authorities have established an extensive database of Tibetan children born during specific astrological periods. Government representatives have conducted surveys in remote Tibetan villages, documenting children who might match criteria for potential Dalai Lama candidates.

This is a calculated move to pre-identify politically acceptable candidates, said a former Tibetan government official who requested anonymity. "They're essentially creating a pool of children who can be groomed to serve as puppets of the Chinese state."

Monastery Surveillance Tibetan monasteries traditionally involved in the search process now operate under intense surveillance. Senior monks report constant monitoring, restrictions on communication with exiled religious authorities, and mandatory "political education" sessions.

"The monks who would traditionally lead the search are being systematically intimidated and controlled," said Lobsang Tsering, a monk who fled Tibet in 2022. "Any monk expressing loyalty to the Dalai Lama faces severe consequences."

The Dalai Lama's Counter-Strategies Aware of Beijing's intentions, the 14th Dalai Lama has proposed several alternatives to protect the authenticity of his succession:

1. Publicly declared the possibility of breaking the centuries-old reincarnation tradition.
2. Suggested he might be the last Dalai Lama, effectively removing the mechanism China could manipulate.
3. Introduced unprecedented uncertainty into the succession process.
4. Announced the next spiritual leader would be beyond China's immediate physical and political control.
5. Transformed the exiled administration into a robust decision-making body by Granting senior lamas outside Tibet significant authority in potential succession determinations.
6. Developed a parallel institutional structure independent of Chinese control.
7. To ensure the continuation of Tibetan Buddhist heritage emphasised collective spiritual authority over centralised control.

Dalai Lama Succession A Spiritual Tradition Under Threat

"I have made it clear that the authority to recognize the next Dalai Lama rests with me and my officials," the Dalai Lama stated recently. "No one else can force their will on this religious matter."

Tibetans Fear Cultural Extinction For Tibetans, China's interference threatens not just a religious tradition but their very cultural survival. Many Tibetans report increased anxiety as the current Dalai Lama ages. The prospect of a Chinese-selected Dalai Lama represents an existential threat to traditions they have preserved through decades of hardship.

International Implications The struggle over the Dalai Lama's succession has significant geopolitical dimensions. The United States has legislated that only the Tibetan Buddhist community can determine the succession, while

India, home to the largest Tibetan exile population, has grown increasingly vocal about preserving the authentic selection process. China, meanwhile, has warned other nations against "interfering in China's internal affairs" regarding the succession issue.

A Call to Preserve Sacred Tradition The time for diplomatic niceties and cautious statements has passed. China's brazen attempt to control the selection of the next Dalai Lama represents not just political opportunism but a direct assault on religious freedom and cultural sovereignty.

We cannot stand by as witnesses to this spiritual colonization. Each of us must raise our voices—citizens, governments, and religious leaders alike—to ensure that the sacred tradition of selecting the Dalai Lama remains where it belongs in the hands of the Tibetan people and their spiritual authorities.

The next Dalai Lama must be chosen according to authentic Tibetan Buddhist traditions, free from political manipulation. This is not merely about preserving a religious custom; it is about standing against the erasure of an entire civilization's soul.

Author: Shruti Kaushik



The Impact of Baloch Activist Arrests on Pakistan



Dr. Mahrang Baloch's arrest has ignited unrest in Balochistan. The Pakistani state, accused of waging a silent war against the Baloch, has escalated brutality against peaceful protesters. In Quetta, Turbat, Panjgur, and beyond, security forces have transformed demonstrations into bloodbaths, indiscriminately killing and arresting activists.

Dr. Mahrang Baloch, a human rights defender and leader of the Baloch Yakjehi Committee, was violently arrested on March 22 during a peaceful sit-in while demanding the release of forcibly disappeared persons. She is now falsely charged with terrorism, sedition, and murder, despite the fact that Pakistani police killed three unarmed Baloch protesters.

Her arrest is not just an attack on an

individual; it is an attack on an entire movement. It is a desperate attempt by the Pakistani state to criminalize Baloch activism and suppress the growing resistance against state oppression. But as history has shown, repression only fuels the fire.

On March 21, thousands of Baloch protesters gathered in Quetta demanding the release of Bebag Zehri, Dr. Hammal Baloch, Dr. Ilyas Baloch, and other enforced disappearance victims. The state responded ruthlessly: police opened fire, killing three, including a 12-year-old boy, and injuring dozens while ambulances were blocked.

The situation escalated on March 22, when the BYC staged a sit-in with the bodies of the slain protesters at Saryab Road. Just before dawn,

Pakistani security forces stormed the protest camp, arrested dozens, and forcefully seized the dead bodies. Among those arrested was Dr. Mahrang Baloch, who was dragged away alongside her sister and fellow activists. Their whereabouts remain unknown.

As if the crackdown wasn't enough, Pakistan imposed a total communication blackout across Quetta. Internet services and mobile networks were shut down, preventing any documentation of the ongoing violence. The goal was clear: to erase evidence of the state's crimes and silence the voices of the oppressed. This is not just state repression. This is an act of war.

The Building of Terror Charges The Pakistani state has escalated its

crackdown by filing bogus terrorism and murder charges against Dr. Mahrang Baloch and BYC leaders. Activists peacefully protesting enforced disappearances are labeled "terrorists." Mahrang faces charges under the draconian Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance, 1960, and is sentenced to a month in jail to break the BYC spirit.

ITRs allege that Dr. Mahrang led an armed mob attacking security forces; however, evidence shows police fired on unarmed protesters. Instead of holding security accountable, the state criminalizes victims—a tactic rooted in a history of blaming activists for state violence to justify further crackdowns and enforced disappearances.

Protests Erupt Across Pakistan

Baloch resistance endures despite repression. Dr. Mahrang's arrest and Quetta killings sparked protests across Balochistan, demanding the release of detained activists and an end to violence. Protests in Karachi and Islamabad involve students and activists. Escalation in Panjgur saw security forces injure protesters, while police in Lasbela attacked a protest camp. Pakistan's actions have turned Balochistan into a conflict zone.

The government wrongly believes arrests and violence will suppress Baloch resistance, which it has underestimated for decades. Methods to crush the movement include bullets, disappearances, blackouts, and terrorism charges. Despite enduring genocide and destruction, Baloch people persist. Pakistan's escalating brutality risks backlash: history shows no empire endures indefinitely.



Author: Columnist

Dr. Mahrang Baloch

China's Defense Budget Surge and Its Impact on Regional Security

On February 1, 2025, US President Donald Trump imposed tariffs on imports from China. Addressing the situation, China's 2025 defense budget reflected a moment of retaliation. Beijing also announced retaliatory tariffs against the US. Since 2014, the Presidential term of Xi Jinping, China's defense spending steadily increased, reflecting its commitment to military modernization and strategic ambitions.

On March 5, 2025, the National People's Congress of China announced its defense budget of approximately 1.78 trillion yuan (\$249 billion), raised by 7.2% during its 3rd annual legislative session. Both nations applied economic pressure to intensify global tensions. The increase in the Chinese defense budget also accelerates PLA modernization through 2027, with specific goals to develop naval forces and missiles, cyber warfare, and artificial intelligence for military applications.

The increasing strength of the Chinese military combined with budget growth creates major security hazards that affect both Indian control zones along the land and maritime domain as well, i.e. IAC region and Indian Ocean Region, while expanding its Belt and Road Initiative for strategic influence in the region. The Indian Ocean region has become a center of concern for India because China continues to expand its naval presence while simultaneously controlling essential port facilities in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

On the other side, India builds its defense strength by improving partnerships with the US, Japan, and Australia, as a developing regional military power while pushing maritime surveillance operations forward. Indian strategic defenses need continuous enhancement to guarantee the protection of both land and sea territories because China continues expanding its military and economic dominance.

The defense spending of India exists at a notable level which falls short compared to China's defense budget allocations. The Indian defense budget amounts to \$80 billion while China allocates \$246 billion for the same purpose making their spending nearly three times larger. Strategic measures have emerged from India to reduce the imbalance against Chinese military capabilities. Under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, India works to produce defense technology indigenously while modernizing its military forces and developing alliances with the US, Australia, and Japan through the Quad. India focuses on creating unpredictable military forces as well as forming stronger international alliances to ensure the preservation of its national security alongside regional peace.

Author: Akash K.

The Dark Side of Quantum Key Distribution (QKD)



Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) is a revolutionary technology that promises to secure communications in an era where quantum computing threatens to break traditional encryption systems. By using quantum mechanics—such as superposition and entanglement—QKD ensures that any attempt to intercept or measure encrypted keys is immediately detectable, making it virtually unbreakable. While this innovation holds immense potential for cybersecurity, experts warn of its darker side if misused.

One of the most concerning risks is the weaponization of QKD networks. Governments or state-sponsored entities could use QKD to establish secure, untraceable communication channels for espionage, covert operations, or even cyberattacks. This would give malicious actors an edge in carrying out operations without fear of detection or interference. Such networks could also undermine international relations by allowing countries to secretly bypass traditional intelligence-gathering methods, creating a dangerous imbalance in global security.

Another significant threat is the potential for infiltrating critical infrastructure. With QKD ensuring that communications are unbreakable, a rogue entity gaining access to a QKD network could disrupt essential services like power grids, banking systems, or military communication channels. The ability to manipulate such systems without detection could be catastrophic, particularly if vulnerabilities in QKD systems are exploited. Additionally, QKD could be used for malicious encryption. If an attacker were able to control the key distribution process, they could create their own encryption keys, locking up sensitive data or communications for ransom or unauthorized surveillance. This would be especially damaging in a world increasingly dependent on secure digital communication.

Finally, in authoritarian regimes, QKD could facilitate illegal surveillance. Governments could establish impervious surveillance networks to monitor citizens' communications without fear of detection, greatly infringing on privacy and civil liberties. Such systems could be used to suppress dissent and stifle freedom of expression, consolidating power in the hands of oppressive governments.

be used to suppress dissent and stifle freedom of expression, consolidating power in the hands of oppressive governments.

While QKD offers unparalleled security for communication systems, its misuse could have serious consequences. As this technology continues to evolve, it is essential that ethical guidelines and international standards are developed to prevent exploitation. Ensuring that QKD is used responsibly will be crucial in harnessing its benefits while avoiding the risks it poses.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

China's HQ-19

Challenging America's THAAD Supremacy



China has officially unveiled its *Hong Qi* (紅旗-19) air defense system after 14 years of development, positioning it as a direct competitor—and potential superior—to the American Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system.

The HQ-19, also known as Red Flag-19, is designed primarily for exo-atmospheric interception of ballistic missiles, making it a cornerstone of China's evolving missile defense architecture. What distinguishes the system, according to Chinese military officials, is its purported ability to engage hypersonic threats within Earth's atmosphere—a capability that, if verified, would represent a technological advancement over existing systems including THAAD.

While Western analysts have noted striking similarities between the two systems' physical design and operational parameters, Beijing insists the HQ-19 is an indigenous development that surpasses its American counterpart in discrimination capabilities and engagement flexibility.

Recent satellite imagery shows accelerated deployment of HQ-19 batteries to coastal areas facing Taiwan and the East China Sea. The system is increasingly integrated with China's

broader defense network, including space-based early warning satellites and AI-powered command nodes. Industry sources indicate China may be preparing export versions under the designation HQ-19E, potentially challenging American THAAD sales in competitive markets across Asia and the Middle East.

Independent verification of China's claims about the HQ-19's capabilities against hypersonic threats remains elusive, but the system's deployment nonetheless signals Beijing's emergence as a major player in advanced missile defense technology—with significant implications for strategic stability in the Indo-Pacific region.



Author: Shruti Kaushik

Ukrainian Mi-8 Helicopters Use Innovative Tactics to Combat Russian Drones



Russian Shahed -136 Drone

As drones continue to shape modern warfare, Ukrainian forces are demonstrating a remarkable ability to adapt to the evolving threats in their airspace. Since the early days of the Russian invasion, reconnaissance and strike drones, like the Shahed-136, have posed a significant challenge to Ukrainian defense. These low-cost UAVs swarm the skies, conducting surveillance and launching attacks with alarming precision. But Ukraine's response has been both creative and highly effective, especially in the use of Mi-8 helicopters in counter-drone operations.

Impressive Innovation on the Frontlines

In August 2024, viral combat footage captured a groundbreaking anti-drone tactic: Ukrainian Mi-8 helicopter crews successfully tracking and shooting down Russian drones mid-flight. This innovative method has been hailed as both cost-effective and efficient, offering a stark contrast to more expensive air defense systems that are often impractical against low-cost drones.

The Mi-8 helicopter, a stalwart in the Ukrainian fleet, has been repurposed for a unique anti-drone role. A particularly striking video shows a gunner positioned between the pilot and co-pilot in the nose of the helicopter, utilizing a 7.62mm FN MAG machine gun to bring down a Russian Shahed-136 drone while the helicopter remains in motion. This precise and swift action brings to mind World War II-era bomber gunners, who defended their aircraft from enemy fighters in a similar manner. The video highlights a rare and impressive tactic that turns a conventional helicopter into an efficient drone hunter.

Cost-Effective Solution to a Growing Problem
What makes this method even more

impressive is its cost-effectiveness. Drones like the Shahed-136 are significantly cheaper than traditional fighter jets or missile systems, which makes it financially inefficient for Ukraine to use expensive surface-to-air missile systems (SAMs) to counter them. A missile that costs hundreds of thousands of dollars would be an impractical response to a drone that can be replaced for a fraction of the price.

In response, Ukraine has employed a diverse set of tools to counter the drone menace. From machine gun-laden trucks to the adaptation of old aircraft, Ukrainian forces have embraced ingenuity over conventional methods. Yet, the Mi-8 helicopters' new role in anti-drone tactics stands out for its immediate effectiveness and the incredible precision of the door turret operators.

Author: Shruti Kaushik



Ukrainian Mi-8 helicopter

The effectiveness of the Mi-8s is particularly evident in another video showing a door gunner engaging a loitering Shahed-136 drone. The helicopter and the drone were traveling at similar speeds, allowing the gunner to accurately fire at the UAV, shutting it down mid-flight before it could carry out its mission. This quick and precise interception demonstrates an exceptional level of skill and adaptability on the part of the Ukrainian forces. Adapting to a Changing Battlefield

The inclusion of Mi-8 helicopters in the fight against drones underscores the Ukrainian military's ability to innovate in real-time. While these helicopters were originally designed for transport and support, their new role reflects how older platforms can be repurposed in response to emerging threats. The Mi-8's side door turret has proven to be a critical asset in these anti-drone operations, and the relatively low-cost ammunition used in these attacks makes it a financially sustainable solution in a conflict where resources are often stretched thin.

The Ukrainian strategy of leveraging available resources, such as the Mi-8 helicopters, to tackle modern technological threats is a testament to the creativity and resourcefulness of the Ukrainian military. These tactics have allowed Ukraine to punch above its weight in a high-tech arms race, ensuring that even the most inexpensive enemy drones can be effectively neutralized.

As the war continues to evolve, it is clear that these innovative counter-drone strategies are not just a temporary fix but a key component of Ukraine's broader defense strategy. The success of the Mi-8 helicopters in this new role could very well inspire other militaries facing similar drone threats to consider unconventional solutions of their own.

In the skies over Ukraine, the Mi-8 helicopter has proven that adaptability, combined with improvised tactics, can turn the tide against even the most advanced technological threats.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

DeepSeek AI

Still Seeking Its Place Within China's Military

China's Reluctance to Fully Trust Its Own AI



China's DeepSeek AI, developed for the People's Liberation Army (PLA), holds immense potential in revolutionizing military healthcare, physical training, and psychological support. However, despite its capabilities, the Chinese government and military have shown significant reluctance to fully trust and deploy this domestically developed technology. While it is used in some areas, DeepSeek's application in military contexts remains restricted, raising concerns about security, reliability, and internal distrust of the technology.

DeepSeek is designed to enhance military operations by assisting with medical diagnoses, treatment planning, physical fitness, and mental health. The AI system processes large volumes of data to help military doctors make quicker and more accurate decisions, improving efficiency in military hospitals. It also tailors physical training programs and provides psychological support to help soldiers maintain peak performance while managing stress. However, despite its benefits, DeepSeek's use remains limited within China, especially in military settings. The technology is deployed in select military hospitals and a few training centers, with only a small group of soldiers benefiting from its health and fitness programs. The majority of PLA forces do not have access to the system, highlighting a stark restriction in its application.

Military Use of DeepSeek: Where It's Restricted The core concern for the PLA lies in the military context, where DeepSeek's use is tightly controlled. Despite its potential to improve military healthcare, the tool's deployment in operational settings is minimal. There are several reasons for this limited use:

1. Security and Data Privacy Concerns: DeepSeek processes vast amounts of sensitive medical and fitness data, raising fears about potential data breaches. The PLA is concerned that such breaches could expose confidential information, compromising military operations and soldiers' health. Both cyber-attacks and internal vulnerabilities could pose risks to security.

2. Lack of Trust in Domestic AI: Despite DeepSeek being developed by Chinese companies, there is a lack of full trust in its reliability and effectiveness, particularly in the most sensitive military domains. The Chinese government and military, who are responsible for its creation, have expressed hesitations about deploying the tool widely, suggesting concerns over its long-term viability and potential hidden vulnerabilities.

3. Ethical and Oversight Concerns: Military decisions, especially in high-stakes combat scenarios, demand human oversight and ethical judgment. The PLA is cautious about over-relying on AI for decisions that could have life-or-death consequences. DeepSeek, while valuable for medical and fitness assessments, is not seen as a replacement for human intuition and decision-making in such critical situations.

Trust Issues Within China: Why is DeepSeek Restricted?
One of the biggest issues surrounding DeepSeek is the PLA's internal distrust of its own technology. Its R1 model, known for low compute requirements, has even overtaken ChatGPT as the top free app on China's Apple App Store. However, the PLA remains cautious about over-reliance on AI, emphasizing that it should support human decision-making rather than replace it—especially in combat scenarios.

This internal mistrust is compounded by concerns over data collection and surveillance. Although DeepSeek is designed for medical and training purposes, there are fears that it could be used to collect sensitive data or conduct remote surveillance. These concerns are amplified by China's tight control over data and history of using technology for surveillance. If China itself does not fully trust its own tool, it casts doubt on its broader global usage.

Is DeepSeek's Limited Use a Sign of Bigger Issues? DeepSeek AI shows great promise, but China's reluctance to fully embrace its technology within military contexts speaks volumes. The tool's restricted deployment highlights concerns about data security, AI reliability, and ethical considerations. The PLA remains hesitant to use DeepSeek extensively, especially in sensitive military operations, where errors or breaches could have catastrophic consequences.

China's hesitance to fully trust its own domestically developed AI raises serious questions for both domestic and international stakeholders. If the Chinese government cannot trust the technology, it raises doubts about its broader use, not just in China but globally. For now, DeepSeek's full potential remains untapped, with its adoption still hindered by security concerns and trust issues that need to be addressed before it can be widely deployed.

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