

SUNDAY, 18 JANUARY 2025

**Trump invites world leaders to join Gaza 'Board of Peace'**  
US President Donald Trump's so-called "Board of Peace" for post-war Gaza began to take shape on Saturday, with the leaders of Egypt, Turkiye, Argentina and Canada asked to join.



**A Kingdom's Fall, a Theocracy's Fortress: Why Iran Isn't Repeating 1979**

The 1979 revolution succeeded not merely because of massive popular discontent, but because of a fatal convergence: a unified opposition front and a ruling elite that proved incapable of defending itself.

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## U.S. and Pakistan Reignite Military Alliance with Joint Drills and Major Defense Sales.



ISLAMABAD: In a powerful signal of rekindled strategic alignment, Pakistani and American troops have concluded an intensive, high-stakes joint military exercise at Pakistan's premier National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC) in Pabbi. The successful drills mark a definitive resurgence in defence cooperation between the two nations, underscoring a period of revitalized military-to-military ties characterized by renewed joint training, substantial new defence procurements, and high-level political endorsements, most notably from former US President Donald Trump.

Deep Dive into "Inspired Gambit 2026"

The two-week exercise, codenamed "Inspired Gambit 2026," ran from January 8 to 16 and involved elite professional contingents from the Pakistan Army's Special Service Group (SSG) and counterpart units from the US Army. The training curriculum was meticulously designed to hone combined infantry skills, enhance tactical coordination in complex environments, and refine joint counter-terrorism operational procedures. According to a detailed statement from the US Central Command (Centcom), the primary objective was to "increase interoperability and shared expertise in confronting terrorism," a persistent common threat that has historically linked the security interests of both countries. "Training exercises like this between the US and Pakistan are foundational to strengthening our long-standing defence partnership," Centcom emphasized, noting the critical role such engagements play in "building mutual trust, understanding,

and seamless operational synergy for real-world contingencies."

This iteration is notably the 13th chapter in a bilateral exercise series that traces its origins back to 1995, illustrating a durable, if occasionally paused, history of tactical collaboration. This year's drills were particularly

comprehensive, featuring a blend of high-pressure, scenario-based simulations in specially designed urban terrain facilities, live-fire combat ranges, and in-depth strategic planning sessions. These modules facilitated a robust exchange of best practices in critical areas including, but not limited

to, close-quarter battle (CQB) in built-up areas, precision hostage rescue operations, coordinated air-ground integration, and sophisticated intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) sharing protocols. High-Level Diplomatic Endorsement Adding considerable diplomatic heft to the military

proceedings, US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome, accompanied by a delegation of senior Pentagon and Centcom officials, personally observed the final phase of the exercise on January 16. Their prominent presence was widely interpreted as a tangible symbol of Washington's deliberate and high-priority commitment to revitalizing its strategic partnerships in South Asia. This re-engagement is viewed as particularly timely, given the evolving regional security landscape marked by the volatile situation in Afghanistan, the persistent threat of cross-border militancy, and the need for coordinated responses to emerging extremist networks. A Broader Context of Strategic Recalibration

The exercise is not an isolated event but a cornerstone of a broader, perceptible thaw in the Pak-US security relationship. Informed sources within defence circles indicate that Washington has recently approved a series of major Foreign Military Sales (FMS) to Pakistan. These pending deals, valued in the hundreds of millions of dollars, are said to include advanced precision-guided munitions, sophisticated communications and surveillance technology upgrades, and counter-insurgency aircraft packages. This material support is compounded by a shift in rhetorical tone at the highest levels. A diplomatic pivot and provides political cover for deepened security cooperation.

Strategic analysts perceive this multi-faceted outreach as a calculated recalibration of US policy. "This is a clear strategic pivot," explained Dr. Ayesha Siddiqi, a prominent defence analyst based in Islamabad. "Washington is pursuing several ob-

### Pakistan-EU Ties Gain Momentum: Dar Emphasizes Dialogue Amid Regional Talks

ISLAMABAD: In a pivotal telephone conversation, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar engaged with the European Union's High Representative and Vice President Kaja Kallas, emphasizing the critical need for dialogue and diplomacy to address the escalating situation in Iran. The call, held on Friday, highlights Islamabad's proactive stance on regional stability while signaling a fresh impetus in Pakistan-EU relations. 24newshtv DPM Dar and EU Representative discuss bilateral cooperation

The discussion comes against the backdrop of heightened tensions in Iran, where anti-government protests triggered by economic hardships have erupted into widespread demonstrations. European governments, including the EU, have voiced strong condemnation of Tehran's crackdown on these unrests. Adding to the concerns, the EU's aviation regulator has advised airlines to steer clear of Iranian airspace due to elevated risks from weapons systems, air-defense activities, and potential misidentifications. During the call, Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's

commitment to "sustained dialogue and engagement" as essential tools for de-escalation. Both leaders agreed to maintain close contact to monitor developments and coordinate responses. "DPM/FM reaffirmed the importance of sustained dialogue and engagement," stated Pakistan's Foreign Office, underscoring the nation's long-standing policy of advocating restraint and political solutions in regional crises to avert further instability. Beyond the Iran focus, the conversation celebrated the "positive momentum" in bilateral ties between Pakistan and the



jectives simultaneously: counterbalancing China's deepening influence in the region through its Belt and Road Initiative and strategic presence, leveraging Pakistan's unique influence and intelligence reach for stability in Afghanistan, and ensuring a capable partner remains engaged in the fight against transnational terrorist groups that threaten wider interests. 'Inspired Gambit' isn't just about drills; it's a tangible signal of renewed trust and a long-term investment in Pakistan's security capabilities."

#### Regional Ripples and Reactions

The revitalized partnership has generated significant ripples beyond the bilateral sphere, most notably in neighbouring India. The Indian National Congress, the principal opposition party, launched a sharp critique of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, labelling the expanding US-Pakistan defence collaboration a "serious blow to India's Vishwaguru [global leader] diplomacy." Congress leaders argued that this development undermines New Delhi's sustained diplomatic efforts to internationally isolate Islamabad over issues of terrorism and regional foment, revealing complexities in Washington's balancing act between two key regional partners.

#### Forward-Looking Commitments

Pakistan's military, through its media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), issued a statement fully aligned with Centcom's outlook. The ISPR affirmed that the exercise "significantly enhances bilateral counter-terrorism cooperation and contributes directly to the overarching goal of regional peace and stability." With the relationship on an upward trajectory, security experts and officials on both sides anticipate an expansion of such collaborative initiatives. The future roadmap may include more frequent and complex joint exercises, expanded intelligence fusion efforts, and potentially even coordinated operations along porous border regions.

This renewed and revitalized alliance arrives at a critical juncture for Pakistan, which continues to confront a potent and evolving internal security challenge from a constellation of resurgent militant groups along its western and southwestern frontiers. This threat landscape is characterized not only by entrenched domestic terrorist organizations but also by cross-border militancy and the potential spillover of regional instability, particularly from Afghanistan. Within this complex environment, Pakistani officials express measured optimism that the bolstered partnership with the United States, synergizing cutting-edge American defense technology with Pakistan's hard-earned operational experience and granular ground intelligence, will prove transformative. The anticipated infusion of advanced equipment—spanning next-generation surveillance systems, precision-strike capabilities, and secure communication networks—is seen as a force multiplier. It promises to equip Pakistan's security forces with the enhanced situational awareness, tactical speed, and strategic reach required to preempt threats, dismantle militant networks with greater efficacy, and solidify territorial control in restive regions. This capability upgrade is deemed essential not merely for reactive/



### Handshake in Dhaka: Can India and Pakistan Revive Ties in 2026?

DHAKA: In a moment that has captured international attention, Pakistan's National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar exchanged a brief handshake and greetings at the funeral of former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, sparking widespread speculation about a potential revival of dialogue between the two nuclear-armed neighbors in 2026. This unexpected interaction, the first high-level contact since the May military conflict, unfolded on December 31, 2025, at Bangladesh's National Parliament House, where dignitaries from over 33 countries gathered to pay their respects.

A Handshake in Dhaka: Ayaz Sadiq–Jaishankar Meeting Amid Pak-India ... The encounter, captured in photos shared by Bangladesh's Chief

Adviser Dr. Muhammad Yunus, showed the two leaders smiling as they shook hands. According to sources, Jaishankar approached Sadiq, introducing himself and initiating the gesture, which Sadiq later described as a "surprise" but welcomed as a positive step. "It was a brief but cordial exchange," a Pakistani official noted, emphasizing that while no formal discussions occurred, the moment symbolized a potential easing of tensions. This development comes amid broader geopolitical shifts, including the re-election of US President Donald Trump, whose administration has hinted at renewed peace initiatives in South Asia. Analysts suggest the handshake could align with Trump's push for regional stability, encouraging backchannel talks between Islamabad and New Delhi. "I think that the interaction between Jais-

hankar and Ayaz Sadiq is a welcome development for the new year," said Mustafa Hyder Sayed, an Islamabad-based foreign policy analyst, in comments to international media. However, reactions have been mixed. In Pakistan, the event has been hailed as a diplomatic win, with Sadiq briefing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif upon his return, highlighting the informal nature but potential for future engagement. Indian officials, meanwhile, have downplayed it as a routine courtesy at a multilateral event. Bangladesh, hosting the funeral, echoed this sentiment, clarifying that the handshake was a standard gesture and not indicative of a breakthrough, countering exaggerated narratives from Pakistani media. The timing is noteworthy, coinciding with the annual exchange of nuclear installation lists and prisoner details between India and

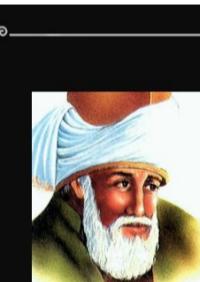
Pakistan on January 1, 2026—a longstanding confidence-building measure under bilateral agreements. This routine yet symbolic act, following the Dhaka meeting, has fueled optimism for de-escalation after months of strained relations post the May skirmishes. Experts caution that while the handshake opens a window for dialogue, deep-seated issues like Kashmir, terrorism, and border security remain hurdles. "It's a spark, but sustaining it will require concrete steps," noted a South Asia strategist in New Delhi. As 2026 unfolds, all eyes are on whether this fleeting moment in Dhaka evolves into meaningful talks, potentially reshaping the volatile India-Pakistan dynamic.



The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be only the beginning.

— Rebecca West —

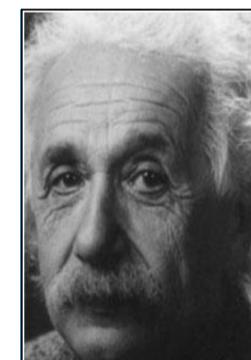
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When the world pushes you to your knees, you're in the perfect position to pray.

~ Rumi

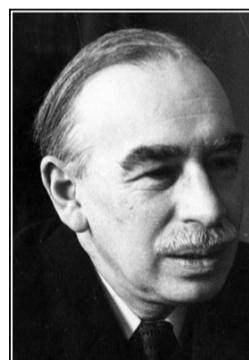
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A clever person solves a problem. A wise person avoids it.

— Albert Einstein —

AZ QUOTES



Worldly wisdom teaches that it is better for reputation to fail conventionally than to succeed unconventionally.

— John Maynard Keynes —

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### Pakistan Forges New South Asian Bloc: Tripartite Ties with Bangladesh and China Set to Expand, Sideline India

Rawalpindi, January 18, 2026

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has reaffirmed its commitment to an emerging trilateral cooperation framework with Bangladesh and China, signaling a potential shift in South Asia's regional dynamics as the initiative aims to boost connectivity, trade, and development while potentially creating an alternative to the stalled South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The mechanism, launched in mid-2025, is poised for expansion, with Pakistani officials expressing intentions to "expand

and duplicate" the model to include more countries, amid heightened tensions with India that have rendered SAARC largely defunct. aa.com.trChina, Pakistan, Bangladesh pledge deeper ties at 1st trilateral ... The trilateral initiative kicked off with its inaugural meeting on June 19, 2025, in Kunming, Yunnan province of China, attended by Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, Bangladesh's acting Foreign Secretary Ruhul Alam Siddique, and Pakistan's Additional Foreign Secretary Imran Ahmed Siddiqui. The

three nations pledged to advance cooperation guided by principles of good-neighbourliness, equality, mutual trust, openness, inclusiveness, common development, and win-win outcomes, focusing on economic growth and improving livelihoods. Foreign Office spokesman Tahir Andrabi, during a weekly media briefing on January 8, 2026, emphasized Pakistan's dedication to the Pakistan-China-Bangladesh mechanism, building on the vice ministers and foreign secretaries' meeting from the previous year. "We look forward to positive

outcomes in line with the agreed joint communiqué," Andrabi stated, highlighting ongoing consultations to deliver practical results in regional connectivity and trade. This development was further underscored in the Joint Press Communiqué of the Seventh Round of China-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue on January 5, 2026, where both nations expressed readiness to leverage the China-Bangladesh-Pakistan cooperation to achieve new milestones. The dialogue also covered broader areas like counter-terrorism,

### Press Freedom Concerns Grow in Occupied Kashmir

Journalists in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) continue to face unprecedented pressure and restrictions while covering ground realities, raising serious concerns about the state of press freedom in the region. Media professionals have reported frequent questioning by security forces, surveillance of their movements, and intimidation tactics during field reporting. Several journalists claim that their equipment has been seized or tampered with during reporting on sensitive incidents, while others have received explicit warnings against covering particular topics.

The shrinking space for independent journalism has forced many reporters into self-censorship, compromising the flow of information to the public. Local and national press bodies have repeatedly expressed alarm that such practices undermine transparency, accountability, and public trust. Independent news coverage, which is essential for democratic governance and social awareness, is increasingly curtailed under the pretext of "maintaining law and order."

### Psychological Stress Rising Among Kashmiri Population

Mental health experts in IOJK are sounding alarms over a sharp increase in stress-related illnesses, particularly anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic disorders. Continuous exposure to militarization, curfews, night raids, and unpredictable movement restrictions has created an atmosphere of pervasive fear. Children and youth, growing up in these conditions, are showing early signs of trauma, while the elderly struggle with compounded stress due to isolation and lack of mobility.

Healthcare professionals note that psychological strain has long-term consequences on physical health, including hypertension, insomnia, and weakened immunity. Mental health facilities in the region are limited, and access to counseling and therapy remains sporadic, leaving many residents without support. In rural and mountainous districts, where hospitals are far, delays in treatment further exacerbate mental and physical health issues.

Psychologists emphasize that prolonged exposure to fear and uncertainty contributes to generational trauma. Students, for instance, face learning disruptions not just from closures of schools and colleges but also from heightened stress levels at home. Parents report children displaying withdrawal, aggression, and decreased academic performance. Adults in working age groups struggle with unemployment, loss of income, and constant anxiety over safety, compounding community-wide stress.

The strategic military partnership between Pakistan and the United States is experiencing a significant and multifaceted revival, moving beyond a period of strained relations. This renewed alliance is currently being driven by two powerful, interconnected forces: a notable boom in American defense sales to Pakistan and a series of high-profile joint counter-terrorism exercises. This re-engagement suggests a mutual recognition of shared security interests in a complex regional landscape, particularly concerning stability in Afghanistan and countering transnational militant threats.

The tangible core of this reengagement is a substantial increase in defense procurement. Pakistan is in the process of finalizing or has recently completed major arms deals with the United States, focusing on modernizing its military hardware. These sales are believed to include advanced attack and surveillance helicopters, precision-guided munitions,

security, economic ties under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and opposition to unilateral actions in South Asia, with implicit references to issues like Kashmir. Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has been a vocal proponent, suggesting the trilateral model could be replicated across regions to foster mutual collaboration in shared interests. Analysts interpret this as an effort to form a new bloc that sidelines India, especially given SAARC's inactivity due to India-Pakistan rivalries. The initiative aligns with China's Belt and Road ambitions, potentially integrating Bangladesh more deeply into regional infrastructure projects while strengthening Pakistan's strategic partnerships.

Key areas of focus include trade, investment, infrastructure, agriculture, digital economy, environment protection, marine sciences, green infrastructure, culture, education, and people-to-people exchanges. Experts note that this cooperation could enhance economic resilience in South Asia, particularly for Bangladesh's interim government post the ouster of Sheikh Hasina, and provide Pakistan with diversified alliances amid evolving geopolitics. While the mechanism remains in its nascent stages, its emphasis on inclusivity has sparked discussions about inviting other nations, potentially reshaping alliances in the region. As consultations progress, this tripartite tie could mark a new chapter in South Asian diplomacy, prioritizing

development over division.

### Security Forces Conduct Search Operation in Srinagar

Srinagar, Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir: A joint search operation was launched by security forces in parts of Srinagar city on Thursday.

The operation, according to sources, was conducted by the Kothibagh Police in coordination with personnel from the 132 Battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The search is reported to have taken place in specific areas of the city, though official details regarding the precise locations or the immediate reason for the operation have not been publicly disclosed.

Such operations are routinely ca-

rried out by security forces in the region to maintain law and order and for anti-militancy purposes. Authorities often cite them as necessary measures for security and stability.

No further information about the operation's outcome or any incidents during the search has been officially released at this time.

## Iran's Internal Fissures Widen as Baloch Militants Rebrand and Align



ISLAMABAD, Jan 18, 2026 – A profound and multi-layered crisis is mounting against Iran's clerical establishment, as a potent combination of internal dissent and calculated external pressure tests the regime's resilience, according to a comprehensive security assessment published Sunday. The analysis highlights a pivotal strategic shift unfolding within militant groups in Iran's volatile southeastern borderlands, a development with direct and alarming implications for regional stability, particularly for Pakistan.

Authored by prominent security analyst Muhammad Amir Rana in Dawn, the assessment argues that while Tehran has managed to suppress the latest wave of street protests, the nature of the threat it faces is undergoing a dangerous metamorphosis. External state actors, in concert with domestic resistance elements, are moving away from hopes of a sudden collapse and are instead adopting a strategy of sustained, multidimensional pressure. This long-game approach aims to incrementally erode the regime's foundations by exacerbating its ins-

titutional fissures, stoking economic hardship, and empowering its localized adversaries through both political and paramilitary means.

The most tangible manifestation of this new phase is the dramatic reorganization and rebranding of Baloch separatist forces in the restive Sistan-Baluchestan province. Intelligence reports and regional monitoring indicate that the notorious Sunni militant group Jaishul Adl (Army of Justice) has undergone a significant transformation. It has reconstituted itself under the new banner of the "People's Fighters Front" (PFF), absorbing three smaller, hardline factions: the Nasr Movement, the Pada Baloch Movement, and the Muhammad Rasul Allah Group. This merger represents the most substantial consolidation of Baloch militant power in the region in nearly a decade and suggests a new phase of coordinated ambition.

Analysts interpret this move as a calculated ideological and strategic pivot. By shedding its explicitly religious Jaishul Adl identity, the new PFF seeks to project a secular, na-

tionalist character. "This makeover is not merely cosmetic," Rana notes. "It aims to craft a more palatable and accommodative profile that resonates with the region's broader, more moderate Baloch population. It also aligns the group's stated ideology with other ethno-nationalist insurgencies, such as Kurdish groups inside Iran and the Baloch Liberation Army across the border in Pakistan." This secular rebranding is seen as a deliberate effort to broaden its appeal to the Baloch diaspora and, critically, to become a more viable candidate for covert support from external state backers who may be hesitant to fund groups with jihadist affiliations, thus opening new channels for funding and advanced weaponry.

This militant consolidation is occurring against a backdrop of increasingly visible, though not yet fatal, cracks within the Iranian power structure. The analysis points to growing discord within the clerical bodies meant to ensure regime continuity—the Assembly of Experts and the Guardian Council—as well as persistent rivalry between the powerful Islamic Re-

volutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the regular military, the Artesh. While all institutions ultimately remain under the strategic command of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, these internal tensions complicate cohesive decision-making and resource allocation, especially in a protracted crisis that demands seamless security coordination.

Rana's assessment further warns that the regime's own foundational security doctrine may now be weaponized against it. Iran's strategy of "forward defence"—projecting power and securing strategic depth through proxy networks across the Middle East—has created a vulnerability. Adversaries, recognizing the strain placed on IRGC resources by managing external proxies like Hezbollah and the Houthis, could seek to mirror this tactic internally. "The next logical step for Iran's enemies," the analysis suggests, "would be to stimulate or amplify proxy conflicts within Iran's own borders, thereby forcing the IRGC to fight a draining multi-front war at home while its external 'Axis of Resistance' is preoccupied and weakened. This would stretch

Iran's security apparatus to a breaking point, creating opportunities for further domestic unrest."

For Pakistan, the implications of this evolving scenario are immediate and severe. The rise of a stronger, unified Baloch militant coalition ideologically committed to a "Greater Balochistan"—a nationalist vision spanning territory in Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan—poses a direct cross-border threat. It raises the alarming specter of enhanced operational coordination, shared logistics, and safe haven exchanges between separatist groups on both sides of the porous frontier. The Sistan-Baluchestan region, already a hub for narcotics trafficking and human smuggling within the infamous "Golden Crescent," risks descending into a fully-fledged zone of chaos. Such an environment could attract an even more dangerous array of actors, including remnants of the Islamic State (IS) and other transnational terrorist franchises seeking new footholds, thereby internationalizing a local conflict.

"Pakistan must view this not as a distant Iranian internal matter, but as an emerging national security crisis on its own doorstep," Rana concludes. "Any significant political shift or fragmentation of state authority in Iran will inevitably spill over with profound geopolitical and geoeconomic consequences for Pakistan." While some in strategic circles might perceive a weakened Iran as offering limited short-term advantages, the analysis strongly cautions that the primary outcome for Islamabad would be a severe escalation of internal security challenges in Balochistan and the potential for serious, possibly open, friction with the Iranian state, which has historically accused Pakistan of harboring anti-Iran militants, potentially leading to border skirmishes or a breakdown of bilateral security cooperation.

The situation presents an acute dilemma for regional and global powers. Their recalibrated strategies appear to favor a patient campaign of erosion over direct confrontation, leveraging Iran's internal and periphery weaknesses to gradually curtail its regional influence. How Tehran manages this gathering storm in Sistan-Baluchestan, and whether it can prevent the crisis from forging a destabilizing nexus with Pakistan's own Baloch insurgency, will be a critical test of the regime's durability and a key determinant of future stability in Southwest Asia, with ripple effects likely to be felt from the Gulf to Central Asia. The coming months will reveal whether Iran's security architecture can contain this multi-vector threat or if it marks the beginning of a new, more volatile chapter for the entire region.



IDDS

## Why Iran Isn't Facing a Repeat of 1979

### A fundamental shift in the nature of power makes regime collapse unlikely today



#### A Kingdom's Fall, a Theocracy's Fortress: Why Iran Isn't Repeating 1979

A specter is haunting international analysis of Iran—the specter of 1979. As sustained, nationwide protests surge through Iranian cities, the familiar, gripping question rises again: Is the Islamic Republic on the brink of a second revolution? The parallels feel visceral. Images of mass defiance, economic despair, and cultural rebellion evoke the final, feverish months of the Pahlavi monarchy. Yet, this seductive analogy is a profound and potentially dangerous historical fallacy. The conditions that shattered the Shah's throne are not those that challenge the Supreme Leader's rule. To understand why Iran is not repeating 1979 is to understand the fundamental evolution of state power from a brittle autocracy to a fortified theocratic-security complex.

#### 1979: The Anatomy of a Collapse

The 1979 revolution succeeded not merely because of massive popular discontent, but because of a fatal convergence: a unified opposition front and a ruling elite that proved incapable of defending itself.

**The Vacant Throne:** At the center was a failing monarch. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was terminally ill, heavily medicated, and politically paralyzed. His leadership was marked by profound indecision. He famously left Iran twice during crises, first in 1953 and, fatefully, in January 1979, an act of abandonment that signaled terminal weakness to both the opposition and his own forces.

**The Fractured Sword:** The Shah's coercive apparatus was a collection of disparate, weakly-ideologized institutions. Beyond the feared but narrow SAVAK intelligence service, the regular army was structured for conventional warfare, not urban suppression. The police and gendarmerie were drawn from broader society, lacking deep loyalty to the regime's ideology. When

the crisis peaked, this fragmented structure crumbled. Commanders hesitated, prioritizing self-preservation; rank-and-file forces in some areas simply stopped fighting, some even cooperating with protesters to maintain order. The regime's repressive capacity disintegrated because its will and cohesion did.

#### 2026: The Architecture of a Theocratic Security State

The Islamic Republic of today is a fundamentally different entity, engineered over 45 years to survive the very kind of challenge that destroyed its predecessor.

**The Decisive Center:** Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is the antithesis of the vacillating Shah. His leadership through multiple crises—the 2009 Green Movement, the 2019-20 fuel protests, the 2022-23 "Woman, Life, Freedom" uprising—has been unwavering, ruthless, and strategically coherent. There is no flight, no public doubt. The center holds with grim resolve.

**The Interlocking Shield:** The regime's power does not rest on one pillar but on a deeply embedded, redundant, and ideologically forged security architecture. This is a system of overlapping, mutually reinforcing institutions:

**The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC):** A parallel military with its own ground, naval, and aerospace forces, deeply invested in Iran's political and economic life.

**The Basij Resistance Force:** A vast, decentralized paramilitary militia embedded in neighborhoods, universities, and workplaces, acting as the regime's eyes, ears, and first line of suppression.

**Intelligence Ministries:** Multiple, competing agencies ensure no dissent goes unmonitored.

**Law Enforcement:** Now thoroughly ideologized and integrated into the security command structure.

**The Bond of Identity:** Crucially, the personnel of this apparatus are not mere employees; they are true believers and stakeholders. They undergo rigorous ideological vetting. Their social status, economic privileges, and very sense of purpose are inextricably linked to the survival of the Velayat-e Faqih (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist) system. For a senior IRGC commander or a Basij commander, the fall of the regime isn't a job loss; it is a cosmic defeat, the end of their world. This transforms repression from a duty into a sacred mission.

#### Protest vs. Revolution: A Critical Distinction

This structural reality dictates a stark outcome: even protests larger in scale and geographic spread than those of 1979 are not sufficient to cause a revolution. The regime perceives them not as legitimate dissent but as "foreign-backed sedition," a framing that internally justifies extreme violence. The protests trigger not confusion and hesitation, but a pre-programmed, overwhelming response from a unified security conglomerate.

The historical lesson is clear: Revolutions are not made by protesters in the streets alone; they are made when those in the palaces and barracks stop believing in their right to rule. In 1979, the elite lost faith and the military fractured. Today, the core elite—the security-political complex around Khamenei—remains deeply committed, financially invested, and ideologically unified. There is no sign of the critical elite defection that turns a crisis into a collapse.

#### The Only Possible Fracture Point

Given this architecture, what could genuinely destabilize the regime? Not incremental protest, but a catastrophic shock to its central nervous system—its leadership. A direct external intervention that physically removes Khamenei

and key pillars of the security command could trigger a chaotic and contested succession, potentially creating openings. However, such an attack could equally consolidate a "fortress Iran" mentality, rallying loyalists. And even in a collapse scenario, Iran would not dissolve into a stateless void like Libya or Afghanistan. It retains a deep-state bureaucracy and a strong national identity that would resist total fragmentation.

#### The Peril of the False Analogy

The greatest danger lies in policy-makers and observers clinging to the 1979 analogy. Misreading the theocratic security state as a replay of the sclerotic monarchy leads to fatal miscalculations: overestimating the protest movement's immediate revolutionary potential, underestimating the regime's capacity and will for violence, and potentially endorsing strategies that escalate suffering without achieving change.

Understanding why Iran is not repeating 1979 is not an apology for the regime's endurance. It is a necessary, clear-eyed recognition of the formidable, brutal system that has been built. It shifts the question from "Is this the revolution?" to a more complex and sobering one: Against a state that has successfully fused ideology, identity, and institutional power into a unified shield, what form of change is actually possible, and at what human cost? The answer to that question will define Iran's future far more accurately than any nostalgic glance toward 1979.

# Kashmir Dispute ~ Debate, Discourse & Dimensions



# Kashmir Dispute

### (Debate, Discourse & Dimensions)

DR. SHEIKH WALEED

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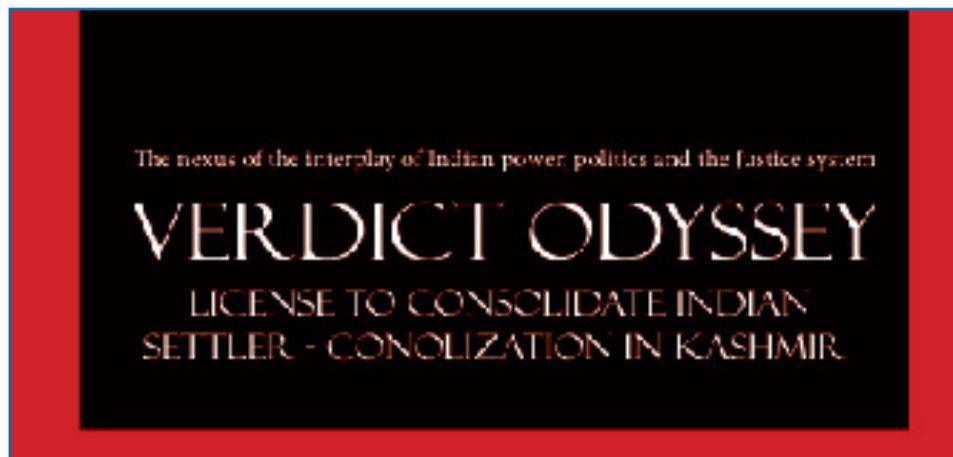
# WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN KASHMIR—AND WHY DOES THE WORLD STAY SILENT ?



# Why You Should Read This Book

This book presents well-researched insights into the Kashmir conflict, examining its historical, legal, political, and human rights aspects. Drawing from academic work and field experience, it challenges common narratives with facts and firsthand understanding. Written by Dr. Waleed Rasool, a scholar and expert on Kashmir affairs, the book serves as a valuable resource for students, researchers, policymakers, and anyone seeking a deeper, unbiased view of one of South Asia's most complex conflicts.

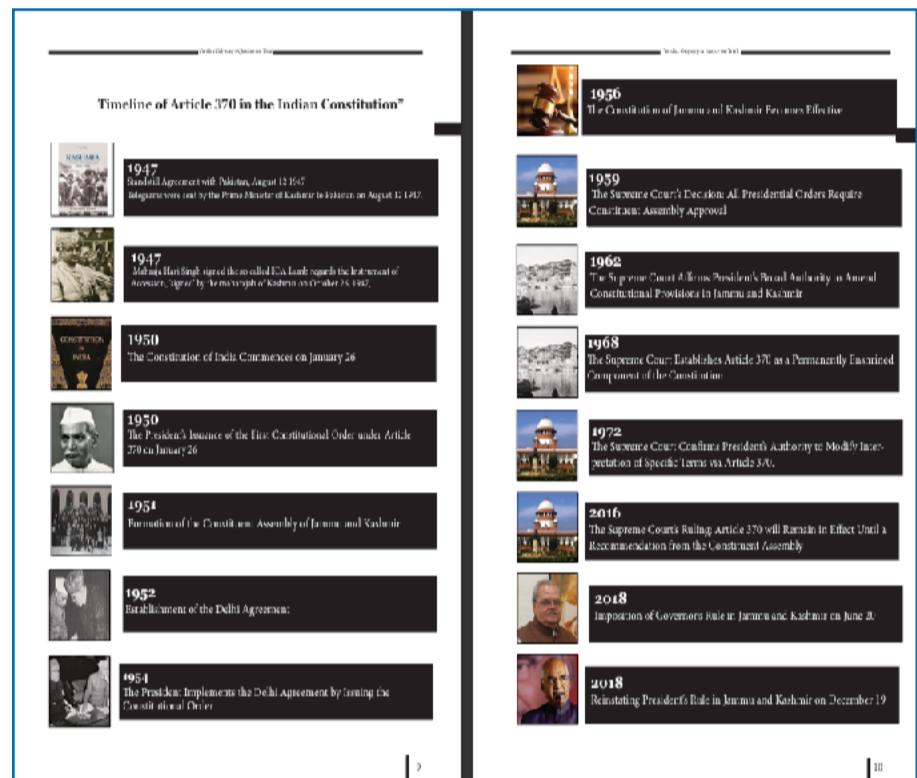
# Verdict Odyssey



"The trajectory from an ostensibly independent state to the abyss of pan-Indianism, with the courtroom floor slumming shut, sealing even the little space for Kashmir to breathe, through the revocation of its internal autonomy as per Article 370. A critical discourse analysis of the Supreme Court hearing."



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In a historic decision that shook the world, India's Supreme Court upheld the abrogation of Article 370, ending Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomy. But what really happened behind the courtroom doors? "Verdict Odyssey" is the definitive, critical account that goes beyond the headlines to expose the legal, political, and human drama of this landmark case.

This isn't just a book; it's a crucial investigation into one of the most significant geopolitical events of our time.