



## **Examining the Taliban's Words, Thoughts, and Deeds, Part I: The Myth of Taliban 2.0**

*Mohammad Bashir Mobasher and Mohammad Qadam Shah | December 14, 2021*

“Internationally, they are seeking recognition and economic support; domestically, they are in the pursuit of opposition, focused on entrenching their control over Afghanistan, and enforcing their unwavering politico-religious ideology.”

**Read More:** <https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/examining-the-talibans-words-thoughts-and-deeds-part-i-the-myth-of-taliban-2-0/>

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## **Brutally Ineffective: How The Taliban Are Failing In Their New Role As Counter-Insurgents**

*Colin Clarke And Jonathan Schroden | November 29, 2021*

“Current trendlines in Afghanistan therefore suggest that the Islamic State will persist — and likely intensify — as an armed resistance against the Taliban regime. The longer this occurs, the greater the challenge will be to the Taliban.”

**Read More:** <https://warontherocks.com/2021/11/brutally-ineffective-how-the-taliban-are-failing-in-their-new-role-as-counter-insurgents/>

## **China-Pakistan Belt And Road Initiative Hits Buffers**

*Adnan Aamir | November 30, 2021*

“Pakistan’s lack of responsiveness dampens China’s appetite for fresh projects. The messy U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August, and the return of the Taliban to Kabul, could worsen the uncertainty.”

**Read More:** <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Asia-Insight/China-Pakistan-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-hits-buffers>

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## **Pakistan Braces For A Deep And Wide US Assault**

*FM Shakil | November 24, 2021*

Pakistan is now actively trying to strike a new “balance” in its relations with the US and China. US could be on the verge of imposing more stringent measures if it perceives China is dominating Islamabad’s foreign policy calculus in the post-US withdrawal from Afghanistan era”

**Read More:** <https://asiatimes.com/2021/11/pakistan-braces-for-a-deep-and-wide-us-assault/>

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## **What Would It Mean For Pakistan To Lose Major Non-NATO Ally Status?**

*Ejaz Haider | November 23, 2021*

“The problem at this point relates to two factors: U.S. domestic politics where the Republicans are bent on making life difficult for Biden and Pakistan’s archrival India which, under its current right-wing government, wants to shrink Pakistan’s diplomatic space whenever and wherever it can”

**Read More:** <https://southasianvoices.org/what-would-it-mean-for-pakistan-to-lose-major-non-nato-ally-status/>

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## **More Continuity Than Change In Tehran**

*Jason M. Brodsky and Omer Carmi | December 03, 2021*

“There have been several clues as to Iran’s nuclear strategy heading into the 2021 Vienna negotiations — and they all took place months before Raisi became president in August. Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s demands have consistently centred on full sanctions removal, verification, and guarantees.”

**Read More:** <https://www.mei.edu/publications/more-continuity-change-tehran>

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## **The Iranian And Houthi War Against Saudi Arabia**

*Seth G. Jones, Jared Thompson, Danielle Ngo, Brian McSorley and Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. | December 21, 2021*

“Houthis are orchestrating an increasingly intense irregular warfare campaign against Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Gulf using sophisticated cruise and ballistic missiles, UAVs, and other stand-off weapons.”

**Read More:** <https://www.csis.org/analysis/iranian-and-houthi-war-against-saudi-arabia>

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## **Facing Up To Foreign Influence: How Outsiders Helped Create Lebanon’s Current Crisis**

*Nicholas Noe | December 01, 2021*

“With the first local and national elections since the October 2019 protests set to take place in only a few months, Western states should go further and refrain from supporting a side. They should work with both allies and adversaries to negotiate a multilateral “ceasefire” whereby all external actors would refrain from interfering in the country’s polls.”

**Read More:** <https://warontherocks.com/2021/12/facing-up-to-foreign-influence-how-outsiders-helped-create-lebanons-current-crisis/>

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## **America Is Not Withdrawing From the Middle East**

*Dalia Dassa Kaye | December 01, 2021*

“The United States’ “strategic competition” with China currently dominates American foreign policy discussion, representing bipartisan consensus in an otherwise divided Washington.”

**Read More:** <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-12-01/america-not-withdrawing-middle-east>

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## **Sri Lanka’s Balancing Act Between China And India**

*Rup Narayan Das | December 03, 2021*

“While China engages in capital intensive projects that it has the requisite resources to undertake, India’s engagement in Sri Lanka is based on humanitarian and developmental needs, people-to-people ties and the welfare of ordinary people.”

**Read More:** <https://jamestown.org/program/sri-lankas-balancing-act-between-china-and-india/>

## REGION IN PICTURES

Representatives of 57 Islamic countries participated in the 17th Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Afghanistan held in Islamabad on 19 Dec 21.



File Photo/AFP

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Israel announced that it had completed construction of a massive barrier running the length of the Gaza Strip both above and below ground. The \$1.1 billion project is meant to end the threat of cross-border attack tunnels from the Palestinian enclave.



AP Photo/Tsafrir Abayov F

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On 12 Dec 21, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett reached United Arab Emirates on a historic visit, marking the first time an Israeli leader has publicly met the UAE's de-facto ruler, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.



Pic credits: Israeli Government Press Office (GPO) | Handout | Anadolu Agency

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The National Security Advisor, Moeed Yusuf, led a six-member delegation in a meeting with his Russian counterpart, Nikolay Patrushev, on December 1 in Moscow.



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The views expressed in this brief are those of the author and not necessarily of the Centre or any other organisation.