



## Another Phase of Dictated Democracy Imminent in Pakistan

*Dr Shalini Chawla | 17 January 2024*

“The recent judgment of the Supreme Court quashing the lifetime disqualifications for convicted leaders has brought relief to Nawaz, who is now eligible to contest the election. The Supreme Court’s decision is not surprising, and it is not unfair to assume that Nawaz’s return to Pakistan was conditioned on the assurance from the military that legal cases against him would be closed.”

**Read More:** <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/another-phase-of-dictated-democracy-imminent-in-pakistan-581823>

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## Winners and Losers

*Dr Niaz Murtaza | 23 January 2024*

“Even if the PTI wins by magic, we will still have an inept set-up with uneasy ties with all key internal and external forces. The only (tiny) hope is if the winner is allowed to appoint a competent cabinet, letting the Sharifs or Imran Khan run the parties, as Congress did after Rajiv Gandhi’s death to usher in India’s progress under Manmohan Singh. Otherwise, even if the winners are not certain, the losers are the masses.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1807900/winners-and-losers>

## **Baloch Long March: for Life, Liberty, Equality and Justice**

*Beberg Baloch | 21 December 2023*

“There are two approaches to the current Long March. One is that no results can come out of it, as the middle-class mentality is result-driven, and the history of false promises strengthens this approach. The second is that deriving result can be an over-expectation, looking at the history, but this march will further embolden the greater Baloch struggle for justice and equality.”

**Read More:** <https://tribune.com.pk/article/97780/baloch-long-march-for-life-liberty-equality-and-justice>

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## **Foreign Aid is No Panacea**

*Shahid Mehmood | 13 January 2024*

“In all these years, Pakistan’s economy instead finds itself saddled with huge external liabilities and has had to pay a steep cost (detailed in the paper). Take, for example, the net flow number (dollar inflow vs outflow): in the 21st century, the number stands in excess of negative \$50bn, meaning more dollars flowing out of Pakistan than coming in (as is likely to be the case in the near future).”

**Read More:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1805472/foreign-aid-is-no-panacea>

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## **Pakistan’s Afghan Predicament**

*Maleeha Lodhi | 15 January 2024*

“The surge in terrorist activities in 2023 led to a significant rise in the casualties of security personnel, which hit an eight-year high. This left Islamabad increasingly frustrated. Attacks by TTP became more audacious after the collapse of its ceasefire with the government in November 2022.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1805952/pakistans-afghan-predicament>

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## **Managing US Relations with Pakistan in Uncertain Times:**

### **Obstacles and Opportunities**

*Sayed Mohammed Ali | 19 January 2024*

“Pakistan is experiencing a confluence of serious challenges, including immense political polarization, an economic crisis, and resurgent terrorism. The already delayed general elections are supposed to be held in early February, but the confidence the new government will be able to muster remains to be seen.”

**Read More:** <https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2024-01/Managing%20US%20Relations%20with%20Pakistan%20in%20Uncertain%20Times%20-%20Obstacles%20and%20Opportunities.pdf>

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### **Trust Issues: Why are Pakistan and Iran Up in Arms?**

*Kiyya Baloch | 19 January 2024*

“Pakistan’s response to this strike was unprecedented, given its scale and timing against the backdrop of a region in crisis, and occurring shortly after Iran launched similar strikes in Iraq and Syria earlier this week. But this is hardly the first air strike in Pakistan — there is, in fact, a history of mistrust between the two countries which took an uglier turn with the emergence of Jaish al-Adl in 2012.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1806777>

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### **‘A Setback for US-Bangladesh Relations’**

*Ramisa Rob | 16 January 2024*

“The Biden administration’s emphasis on democracy led it to take a relatively outspoken position on Bangladesh—certainly when compared to India and China—but realistically US expectations about the effectiveness of these policies had to be tempered.”

**Read More:** <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/geopolitical-insights/news/setback-us-bangladesh-relations-3520601>

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## **The National Elections, Legitimacy, and Geo-Politics**

*AJM Shafiul Alam Bhuiyan | 17 January 2024*

“Every sovereign country, small or large, is accountable to its people and no country should seek legitimacy of the election from the international community. It has been proved once again that the BNP-Jamaat could not garner public support to topple the Awami League government. BNP’s leadership has an inherent weakness. The people who are running the party on the ground cannot make decisions independently because of interference.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/336964/the-national-elections-legitimacy-and>

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## **Bhutan’s Elections are a Bright Spot in South Asia**

*Micheal Kugelman | 10 January 2024*

“Bhutan held a runoff to determine the country’s next prime minister, with voters choosing between Tshering Tobgay, a former premier with the People’s Democratic Party, and former bureaucrat Pema Chewang, who leads the relatively new Bhutan Tendrel Party. Tobgay won after his party took 30 of the country’s 47 national assembly seats.”

**Read More:** <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/01/10/bhutan-elections-south-asia-democracy/>

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## **Maldives’ Pivot to China- A New Turn in Indo-Pacific Geopolitics**

*Rajiv Bhatia | 11 January 2024*

“President Mohamed Muizzu of Maldives and Chinese President Xi Jinping held the much-awaited meeting in Beijing and witnessed the signing of 20 bilateral agreements. This was a clear indication of their shared desire to deepen the bilateral relationship, as was attempted during the presidency of Abdulla Yameen (2013–18).”

**Read More:** <https://www.wionews.com/opinions-blogs/maldives-pivot-to-china-a-new-turn-in-indo-pacific-geopolitics-678893>

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## **Entailment of Maldives’ Actions Against India**

*Radhey Tambi | 19 January 2024*

“The coalition of People’s National Congress (PNC) and the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) won the election in Maldives on the backs of a campaign that was largely anti-India. Mohamed Muizzu took over as the 8th President of the Maldives. So far, his foreign policy has demonstrated and verified what optics held about his pro-China and anti-India stance. Maldives’ emerging cast of mind of treating New Delhi versus Male, and not, New Delhi and Male.”

**Read More:** [https://capsindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CAPS\\_InFocus\\_RT\\_19\\_01\\_24NIS.pdf](https://capsindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CAPS_InFocus_RT_19_01_24NIS.pdf)

## **Central Asia's Gradual Economic Repositioning**

*Richard Pomfret | 27 December 2023*

“Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Central Asia has economically benefited from re-routed trade and disaffected Russians setting up bank accounts and small businesses in Tashkent, Almaty and other Central Asian cities. But the Central Asian governments have distanced themselves from Russia’s war, abstaining to vote for or against the 2022 UN motion condemning Russia’s invasion.”

**Read More:** <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2023/12/27/central-asias-gradual-economic-repositioning/>

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## **The Linchpin of Central Asia Looks East**

*Harun Karčić | 19 January 2024*

“Kazakhstan’s strategic geographical position, situated between the East and West, while also sharing a border with China, presents extensive prospects for the transit of Chinese goods. Implementing a visa-free regime between Kazakhstan and China is vital, as Kazakhstan’s citizens are now exempt from visa requirements when visiting China.”

**Read More:** <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/silk-road-rivalries/linchpin-central-asia-looks-east-208724>

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## **How Attacks on Ships in the Red Sea by Yemen’s Houthi Rebels are Crimping Global Trade**

*Courtney Bonnell and David Mchugh | 13 January 2024*

“They have threatened to attack any vessel they believe is either going to or coming from Israel. That’s now escalated to apparently any vessel, with container ships and oil tankers flagged to countries like Norway and Liberia being attacked or drawing missile fire.”

**Read More:** <https://apnews.com/article/red-sea-yemen-houthis-attack-ships-f67d941c260528ac40315ecab4c34ca3>

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## **Deciphering the Broader Implications of Iran’s Attacks**

*Sinem Cengiz | 19 January 2024*

“In its attack on Irbil, the target was clear and direct: Israel and the US. Tehran adopted its conventional policy of showing military strength following Israeli and US strikes on its regional interests, but it has also set an eye on a wider audience than just Washington and Tel Aviv with this attack. Indirectly, it was also a message to Iraqi Kurdish leaders, Baghdad and Ankara.”

**Read More:** <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2444761>

## Gaza and the Winds of Change

*Aneela Shahzad | 19 January 2024*

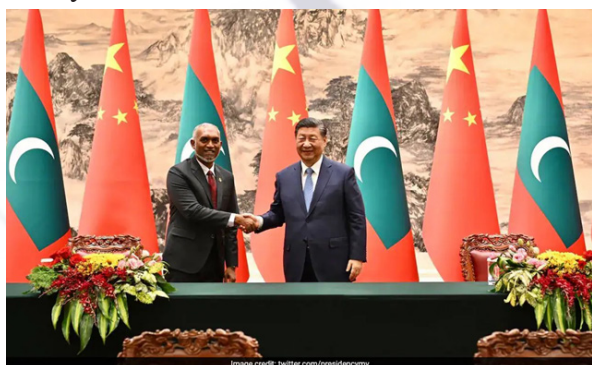
“As the winds of change fill the geopolitical atmosphere, one BRICS nation, South Africa, that has traditionally been a Western ally, has suddenly summoned the ICJ accusing Israel of ‘genocidal acts’ in Gaza. It seems like a complex interaction between BRICS and the Iran-led Axis of Resistance for Gaza has been brewing.”

**Read More:** <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2453670/gaza-and-the-winds-of-change>

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## REGION IN PICTURES

Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks with his Maldivian counterpart Mohamed Muizzu, who is on a five-day state visit.



Pic Credits: -NDTV World

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External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with his Iranian counterpart H Amirabdollahian during a joint press conference in Tehran.



Pic Credits: India Today

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Iranian Foreign Minister met Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister on Tuesday on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos.



Pic Credit: India Today

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US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (L) shakes hands with Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Hakan Fidan during a meeting at Vahdettin, a private residence of the presidency, in Istanbul, on January 6, 2024.



Pic Credits: The Times of Israel

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NOTE: **Regional Opinion and Trends** aims to capture prevailing opinions in South Asia and West Asia.

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