



The U.S. Dollar at 81: Global Dominance, Historical Foundations, and Future Challenges

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Introduction

As we mark 81 years since the United States dollar (USD) ascended to global prominence in 1944, it remains the most sought-after currency in the world—for trade settlement, foreign exchange reserves, and as a base currency in global markets. From the embers of World War II to the digital age of cryptocurrency and de-dollarization debates, the journey of the dollar is a narrative interwoven with economic pragmatism, geopolitical manoeuvring, and institutional innovation. This article revisits the genesis of the dollar's hegemony at the Bretton Woods Conference, examines the global events that cemented its role, and explores the contemporary threats posed by new financial coalitions and digital assets.

The Bretton Woods Conference: Birthplace of Dollar Dominance

The story of the dollar's supremacy begins in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, where from July 1 to July 22, 1944, 44 Allied nations gathered to design a new post-war international monetary system. Spearheaded by economists John Maynard Keynes (UK) and Harry Dexter White (USA), the conference established key global institutions—the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank—and laid the foundation for what would become the Bretton Woods system.

Under this arrangement, currencies were pegged to the U.S. dollar, which in turn was convertible to gold at a fixed rate of \$35 per ounce. The dollar's centrality was justified by the relative economic strength of the United States, which emerged from World War II as the undisputed global industrial and financial leader, controlling more than two-thirds of the world's gold reserves.

Geopolitical Catalysts of Dollar Dominance

Several pivotal geopolitical events cemented the U.S. dollar's pre-eminence in global finance:

1. Post-War Reconstruction and the Marshall Plan (1948)

The U.S. funded Europe's reconstruction through the Marshall Plan, disbursing over \$13 billion (over \$150 billion in today's terms) to Western Europe. This ensured widespread use of the dollar and integrated global markets into a U.S.-centric financial architecture.

2. Cold War and Strategic Alliances (1947–1991)

U.S. influence over NATO and its economic alliances fostered trust in the dollar as a stable and powerful reserve asset. The military-industrial complex was backed by a global system of dollar-based financial dependencies.

3. The Oil Shock and Petrodollar System (1970s)

After the Nixon Shock in 1971 ended the dollar's convertibility to gold, the U.S. struck a strategic agreement with Saudi Arabia and other OPEC nations to price oil exclusively in dollars. The petrodollar system institutionalized global demand for the dollar, as nations had to hold dollar reserves to buy energy.

4. The Fall of the Soviet Union (1991)

The dissolution of the USSR marked the end of ideological competition in global finance, reinforcing a unipolar dollar-based world. Former Eastern Bloc nations embraced market reforms under the IMF and World Bank's guidance—institutions anchored in the dollar-based system.

5. China's WTO Accession (2001)

Global trade entered a new phase when China joined the World Trade Organization, accelerating the global supply chain economy, most of which transacted in dollars. This reinforced the greenback's dominance as the default trade settlement currency.

The Dollar in Global Finance: Metrics of Dominance

Today, the U.S. dollar retains its hegemonic status through multiple financial channels:

- Reserves: Over 58% of global central bank reserves are held in USD (IMF COFER data, 2024).
- Trade: Roughly 88% of global FX transactions involve the U.S. dollar (BIS, 2022).
- Debt: More than half of international debt securities are issued in dollars.
- SWIFT Usage: USD remains the most-used currency for cross-border payments via SWIFT, despite rising competition from the euro and yuan.

Emerging Challenges to Dollar Hegemony

While the dollar remains dominant, systemic and structural threats are emerging, largely from geopolitical fragmentation, technological disruption, and alternatives to Western-centric financial systems.

1. BRICS and the Push for a Multilateral Currency

The BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—have increasingly voiced their dissatisfaction with the dollar’s dominance. The 2023 BRICS summit introduced discussions on a common BRICS currency, likely to be backed by a basket of member currencies or commodities like gold and oil. The primary motivations include:

- Avoiding U.S. sanctions, especially for Russia and China.
- Reducing Forex volatility and reliance on U.S. monetary policy.
- Creating an alternative trade and reserve system to rival the IMF-led structure.

Though operational and political hurdles remain, BRICS expansion to include countries like Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia strengthens the momentum toward a multipolar monetary order.

2. Cryptocurrencies and Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs)

The rapid proliferation of cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum, though volatile, has challenged fiat currency models by offering decentralized, censorship-resistant alternatives. Meanwhile, countries like China have piloted their digital yuan (e-CNY) to reduce dependence on the dollar in cross-border trade. Additionally, CBDCs being developed by over 100 central banks globally (including the U.S. Federal Reserve’s exploration of a digital dollar) signal a tectonic shift in monetary infrastructure, where programmable, sovereign-backed digital money could reshape currency hierarchies.

3. U.S. Fiscal Deficits and Inflationary Pressures

The dollar’s dominance has long allowed the U.S. to run persistent fiscal deficits, as global demand for Treasuries remains strong. However, recent inflationary surges, unsustainable debt levels (now exceeding \$34 trillion), and rising interest rates are causing questions about the dollar’s long-term credibility and value stability.

Conclusion: Sustained Supremacy or Strategic Retreat?

Eighty-one years after Bretton Woods, the U.S. dollar stands not only as a monetary unit but as a pillar of global economic order. Its unmatched liquidity, stability, and institutional trust have made it indispensable to trade, reserves, and global finance. Yet, monetary hegemony is never permanent. The emergence of BRICS initiatives, digital currencies, and geopolitical rebalancing reflect a world in search of monetary plurality.

While no single challenger has yet matched the dollar’s depth and network effects, the future may not be a zero-sum game. Rather, we are likely to see the gradual erosion of absolute dollar dominance, replaced by a multipolar system where multiple currencies—sovereign and digital—coexist. For policymakers and scholars alike, the imperative is clear: to understand not only the institutional history that established the dollar’s role, but also the economic, technological, and political shifts that will determine its next chapter.

Deconstructing Myanmar 2021 Coup D’etat

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On February 1, 2021, Myanmar’s military, which is also known as Tatmadaw, declared a state of emergency and assumed their control of the government. This action, by the Tatmadaw, was followed by the general elections held in November 2020, which resulted in a significant victory for the National League of Democracy (NLD). However, the military disputed over the election results and detained several political leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi,

thereby disrupted the country's political transition leading to widespread unrest as peaceful protests were suppressed and resistance evolved into armed movements involving ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and political parties. Over time Myanmar's the EAOs of eastern, southern and northern regions emerged as a key area of coordinated resistance, gaining grass-root momentum. This article examines the underlying causes and consequences of this coup, how coalitions are being formed and where the resistance has succeeded along with its impacts on India-Myanmar relations and recent developments.

Causes of the Coup

The 2021 coup did not occur in isolation. The Tatmadaw, they have historically played a central role in Myanmar's governance, as they have ruled the country for decades before a gradual transition toward semi-civilian rule began in 2011. Although the elections were introduced, the military, they had retained constitutional authority over key ministries, held 25% of parliamentary seats by default, and preserved broad veto powers. According to reports published the Tatmadaw cited unverified claims of election fraud as the justification of them seizing power. However, the international observers did not report any irregularities. The institutional structure, which continued to favour military dominance even during democratic reforms, they created an environment where civilian governance lacked full autonomy. This allowed the military to reassert their control without legal barriers. After the 2021 coup resistance in Myanmar shifted from civil disobedience to organized armed struggle. The National Unity Government (NUG) has emerged as a parallel administration while local defence units known as People's Defence Forces (PDFs) formed across the country. These groups, although fragmented at first began coordinating with long established EAOs. Together they represent a decentralised but growing front against the military this transformation has reshaped Myanmar's conflict dynamics especially with the rise of joint operations across regions. This shift from an isolated resistance movements to a more networked insurgency has expanded the geographical and strategic scope of resistance movements. Cooperation in intelligence, logistics and military action has improved since 2023. As a result the resistance is no longer limited to ethnic enclaves but it is increasingly national in scope with eastern Myanmar playing a significant role in this evolving network. In December 2024, UN reports estimated that over 3.4 million individuals had been displaced, with children comprising nearly 40% of those affected. Additionally, Myanmar's military has been involved in air strikes and other operations that targeted areas held by resistance groups. Reports suggest an incident in which 40 people were killed in a single attack, highlighting the intensity of the conflict and its impact on non-combatants.

Understanding the Resistance Landscape

The northern region of Myanmar consists of Chin, Sagaing and Kachin states that have seen the junta forces being challenged resulting in the Tatmadaw's lost control. The presence of various EAOs in Chin state namely Chin National Army, Chin National Defence Forces, Chinland Defence Force are present challenging the junta's involvement. The Sagaing state includes Burma National Revolution Army, National Liberation Army as well as People's Defence Forces (Kalay). Kachin state is a base for the Shanni Nationalities Army. Reports suggest that there are other India based EAOs that work for the Chin state and Sagaing stat which are partially in support of the junta and partially anti-junta based on their interest. Several EAOs have sided with the NUG and a few have sided with the junta describing the complex roles EAOs played during and after the coup. The anti-coup organisations in the northern region have however made it difficult for the junta to sustain in the region and access the border freely.

Areas in the southern Sagaing, Magway, and parts of Bago and Mon States, they have seen coordinated actions by anti-junta forces. In April 2025, the anti-coup fighters in these regions, they declared a two-week ceasefire to allow humanitarian access after a devastating earthquake that took place in Myanmar.

According to the ceasefire declared by resistance groups was not matched by the military, which continued its operations during the same period. However, challenges remain, as reports from UN officials condemned the junta's violations of humanitarian space during the same period. Furthermore, public support for the resistance remains strong in several of the southern areas. Networks of the local militias, underground, activists, and civilian committees, they have worked together to create parallel governance structures and distribute aid. These efforts, they have not gone unchallenged. Targeted raids and arrests, they have still continued, limiting the movement's to operate openly.

The eastern region of Myanmar comprising Shan, Kayah, and Kayin states has become a major front of armed resistance against the military junta. Ethnic armed groups that were historically focused on regional autonomy have intensified their operations often aligning with broader anti junta goals. One of the most active forces in Kayah State is the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF) has condemned the junta forces for its actions. In Kayin State Karen National Union (KNU) remains a longstanding force while newer actors like the Bamar People's Liberation Army (BPLA) have emerged. The BPLA consists largely of urban youth and former professionals who now train in eastern jungle camps. The turning point in the anti junta struggle came in October 2023 with the launch of Operation 1027 by the Three Brotherhood Alliance a coalition of three ethnic armed groups - the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Arakan Army (AA). Concentrated in northern Shan State near the China border their offensive marked one of the junta's significant territorial losses since the 2021 coup. The alliance captured Chinshwehaw a strategic town and key trade gateway to China, this not only disrupted the military's control over border commerce but also exposed its limited capacity to repel coordinated ethnic offensives. Multiple reports suggest that junta troops in the area experienced logistical breakdowns, desertions and failed airstrike responses. The strength of the Brotherhood Alliance lies in its inter ethnic coordination, operational discipline and ability to execute simultaneous attacks across regions. Together these group's battlefield successes have elevated it from regional military forces to a central player in the national resistance landscape especially in Myanmar's northeast.

India Myanmar relations and recent developments

Pre-independence Burma was a province of British India and after partition it continues to be an important neighbour for India. It is strategically relevant in India's regional vision, as the land bridge to South East Asia. The relationship shared between India and Myanmar is signified by the geographical closeness, economic interdependence, security alliance, complex history and layered present. India seeks to enhance its relations with Myanmar in the line of its 'Act East' and 'Neighbourhood First' policies. The 2021 coup has diplomatically isolated Myanmar due to opposition by countries against the Junta. This has led to raising a dual challenge for India that is Myanmar getting closer to China and repercussions in the northeast region of India. Both of these further make it difficult for India to continue to deepen its engagements with Myanmar.

The coup followed by the civil war -took back Myanmar to its dark past of political instability and has made Myanmar the global crime capital. While also impacting India's internal security as far as the north-eastern region is concerned especially in states that share border with Myanmar i.e. Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh. There are regular reports of Burmese citizens being caught in Indian territory with arms, and Indian ethnic rebel groups fleeing away to Myanmar in case of covert operations carried out by the Indian Armed Forces. The porous border of approximately 1600kms, between India and Myanmar, has become a key issue which has prompted solutions that involve fencing of the border and thereby discontinuing the Free Movement Regime or FMR (that allows the people living on the border to cross the border freely within a radius of 16kms on either sides)

This is both necessary and troublesome since the FMR becomes a safe haven for movement of illegal weapons and illicit drugs across the border because of the presence of many tough forest spots that are lightly guarded, and this is being used to inflict communal violence as well as a getaway of refuge for the junta soldiers; yet fencing the border is a huge task that will have obvious revolts from the locals that might turn against India if they pair up with cross border rebel groups. The presence of Myanmar's EAOs on the border is far more than the junta's control (15% to 20%) Reports consistently highlight Tatmadaw's partial and challenged control in the bordering states mainly Sagaing, Chin and Kachin.

China's budding interest and presence in Myanmar mainly highlighted by huge investments made under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, India finds itself in a strategic bind, since dealing with the junta makes India's aspiration of democracy take a backseat, and while dealing with the ethnic rebel groups ignites the spark of rebels back home to fight harder for their cause. India's Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project that aims at connecting India and Myanmar trilaterally via sea, river and road, mainly opposed by the Arakan Army. Paletwa is an important point for this project to be successful, has been captured by the AA holds strategic significance as far as trade transport for India's NER is concerned, not to forget its security magnitude. The AA has been somewhat successful in opposing the Indian Projects but it has been observed that the AA never touched Chinese projects. Although the Chin National Army has shown support for this project especially focusing on the betterment and livelihood of the people living in the Chin state.

Conclusion

In recent developments, the military leadership in Myanmar appears to be using the idea of democracy more as a display than a genuine process. Announcements about holding elections and carrying out official procedures like the census seem aimed at showing the world that order and governance are being restored. However, these efforts often lack real public involvement or transparency. Instead of promoting meaningful change, they give the impression of democracy without its substance. This controlled approach suggests that the intent is less about reform and more about holding onto power while appearing legitimate in the eyes of others. While delving deeper into the Myanmar resistance groups, it was observed that control of territory alone does not ensure stability. Junta withdrawal has created space not just for democratic hopes but also illicit chains of trade. Border areas around Myawaddy and along Mizoram are now drug trafficking, cybercrime and human trafficking routes. The eastern border is a testament to the strength of the resistance and the ills that blossom when power breaks down in contested areas. India's interaction with Myanmar following the coup is laden with paradoxes. While security concerns and connectivity aims compel collaboration with the junta, India must also be mindful of regional aspirations and democratic legitimacy. A dual-track approach balancing pragmatic diplomacy with support for federal democratic transition is still India's best realistic road ahead.

Trump, Tariffs, and Tensions: The Strain in India-US Relations

By Arjun Singh Dyarakoti

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Donald Trump's latest remarks against India on increasing the tariffs on Indian imports to the United States (US) and criticism of India for buying crude oil from Russia have caused turbulations in the India-US relations. "India is not only buying massive amounts of Russian Oil, they are then, for much of the Oil purchased, selling it on the Open Market for big profits. They don't care how many people in Ukraine are being killed by the Russian War Machine.

Because of this, I will be substantially raising the Tariff paid by India to the USA.” Trump had posted on the social network Truth Social. New Delhi responded to these remarks swiftly describing them as unjustified and unreasonable. The official statement released by India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) justified India’s decision to purchase the crude oil from Russia, attributing it to global market situation and the diversion of traditional oil suppliers to Europe in the aftermath of the outbreak of conflict. Furthermore, India also cited that India had every right to secure its national interest and economic security like any major economy in the world. Meanwhile, it also pointed out that the volume of trade between Europe and Russia in 2023 surpassed that between India and Russia in the same year. Similarly, the statement by MEA also brought the fore the heavy dependence of US on Russia for the import of “hexafluoride for its nuclear industry, palladium for its EV industry, fertilisers as well as chemicals”. The response of India was well measured. While it justified its position, at the same time it did not shy away from exposing the US and Europe for the contradiction in what they practise and what they preach.

Not many observers of the foreign policy had expected such staunch criticism of India by US under Donald Trump, especially when his victory in November 2024 was received positively by majority of Indians. Furthermore, the personal bonhomie between Prime Minister Modi and President Trump had led many to believe that bilateral ties under Trump’s presidency would reach new heights. However, as is rightly said in international politics, equations and dynamics among countries are not always constant. With the changing air of geopolitics and ongoing developments, the nature of relations between countries continues to evolve over time. Trump’s recent decision to explicitly and vocally criticise India, calling its economy “dead” and threatening to impose additional penalties, comes against the backdrop of his growing exasperation and desperation, as his tall claims of ending the Russia–Ukraine war within 24 hours remain far from reality. Moreover, India’s denial of any role played by Trump in brokering a ceasefire between India and Pakistan in the recent May 2025 conflict, contrary to his assertions, appears to have further irked him, prompting such brazenly critical remarks. Trump had threatened to levy additional 10 percent tariffs on countries that align with BRICS Plus bloc’s “Anti American” policies. India’s active membership and participation in the grouping also seem to have not gone down well with the US administration. Ashley J. Tellis, in his Foreign Affairs article titled “India’s Great-Power Delusions,” attributes Washington’s disenchantment with New Delhi to India’s continued emphasis on multipolarity and its reluctance to enter into formal alliances, as well as its sustained engagement with Western adversaries such as Iran and Russia—factors which, in his view, reduce India’s strategic utility for the US. India, however, has every right to chart its own path in pursuit of national interest and, accordingly, refuses to align itself exclusively with the US or become part of any single bloc or alliance. In response, Trump has attempted to weaponise trade to exert pressure on India and, by extension, weaken Russia in the ongoing war. Far from being delusional, India remains acutely aware of the delicate tightrope it must walk.

It was not long ago that both countries seemed to have overcome the “hesitations of history” marked by the geopolitical dynamics during the cold war era. The recent developments have put the bilateral relationship between India and US in a tough spot. Particularly when US is India’s largest trading partner and Indian exports account for almost 20 percent of India’s economy. The strategic partnership between India and US is extremely crucial for both the countries. Both India and US require each other to counterweight the Chinese rise and its expansion in order to safeguard their geostrategic and geopolitical interests. This is evident in the rise of QUAD and increasing India-US defence cooperation in the past few decades. At the same time, the relations between India and Russia are not just defined by the purchase of cheap oil, but dates back to decades of trust and friendship, rooted in mutual support of each other in key matters of strategic importance. Therefore, the much-touted strategic autonomy, that every Indian government has practised with varying degrees since independence, confronts strong challenges. On the one hand, India must withstand pressure and consequent threats from the United States;

on the other, it must adhere to its position of purchasing oil and arms from Russia to secure its economic and energy security and to bolster its defence capabilities.

Caught in such a complex situation, India must diversify its export markets, particularly in the European Union, especially after the India–UK trade deal was finalised in 2025, and the Gulf region, where New Delhi has cultivated strong ties over the past decade. At the same time, as Rohit Lamba argues, “India should build coalitions with countries facing similar tariffs: Vietnam, Bangladesh, Brazil, and even close US allies like the EU and Japan” in order to create fissures in the US-imposed tariff wall.

For India to be least affected by the shockwaves and threats of this nature and to be able to exercise her strategic autonomy without fear of consequences, a strong economic and military strength based mostly on self-reliant models becomes extremely important. While India has surpassed Japan to become the fourth largest economy after US, China and Germany and its growth story is promising, it still has miles to go before it becomes a power that commands both fear and respect simultaneously. Only then can a country fully exercise strategic autonomy in the true sense, without being unduly perturbed by the turbulence of geopolitics.

Some analysts predict that the recent remarks and position of the United States could push India closer to China and Russia. While India remains an old and trusted partner of Russia, Trump’s statements may further strengthen the strategic closeness between New Delhi and Moscow. However, the conjectures around cooperation between Beijing and New Delhi beyond the existing areas of cooperation on climate change, global governance and multilateralism among others appear to be highly overstretch. The prospects and probability of India-US cooperation have always been greater than India and China cooperating with each other. This is backed by deepening convergence in Indo-Pacific, strong democratic values and strengthening defence partnership between the two countries. It is pertinent to note that for much of the cold war era, while India and US didn’t share best of the bond, with India facing US sanction post Pokhran, but never did the relations between the two countries became as acrimonious as they have been between India and China in the past and continue to be in the present. Notwithstanding all this, the recent developments serve as a reminder of the famous remark by Thucydides: “The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.” While the US, as a global power, does not hesitate to assert its will, India is a rising power and is by no means weak, which was reflected in its assertive response to Trump’s remark reiterating that “India will take all actions necessary to protect its national interests.” The brazenness of Trump’s criticism showcases that he is least bothered about the possible consequences for the trajectory of India-US relations ahead. However, it will be too premature to write of the gains and mutual cooperation build over the past few decades merely based on the ongoing tariff tensions between India and US.

Pakistan’s Strategic Blackmailing under the Shadow of the Nuclear Card

By Prof. Manish and Aditi Saxena

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The ‘war on terror’ manifested in the Operation Sindoor by the targeted destruction of terror infrastructure of Pakistan, and the Pakistani military’s reactive attacks on civilian areas and religious structures of India, was a clear takeover of the issue of terrorism to the state-level conflict by the Pakistani army. Terrorism as a policy option of the Pakistan Army has not changed but metamorphosed to adopt newer methods according to changing circumstances and needs. The US, among other nations, backed India’s response to terrorism by President Trump, stating,

“India has a sovereign right to combat terrorism,” and Vice President JD Vance, while urging restraint, remarked, “This is fundamentally a regional matter, not America’s war and not something we should try to control.” However, from the recent two visits by the Pakistani Army Chief, Asim Munir, to the United States, fundamental questions arise regarding the content, intent, and attribution of his speech there in relation to terrorism, nuclear posturing, and the broader geopolitics at play.

The first visit by General Munir to the U.S. in June 2025 occurred shortly after the U.S. General Michael Kurilla, Commander of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), called Pakistan a “phenomenal partner” in counterterrorism and commended its contribution to regional peace and stability at a House Armed Services Committee hearing, arguing in favour of strengthening ties with both India and Pakistan. However, not everyone within the house agrees with General Kurilla’s viewpoint, as the same house has passed many resolutions against the Pakistani military harbouring terror organisations and contained its aid to Pakistan. The U.S. must not forget that among so many others, the 9/11 plotters, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Osama Bin Laden, were arrested from Pakistan. Therefore, the U.S. must rethink partnering with Pakistan on countering terrorism. The second visit of General Munir occurred in August 2025 to attend the change of command ceremony of the U.S. Central Command, meeting with the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine, for closer military cooperation, and to address the Pakistani diaspora. The recent upswing in the US-Pakistan ties under President Trump is being used by General Munir for strategic messaging, visible in the remarks he made in his address to the Pakistani diaspora.

On the question of the nuclear threat, Gen. Munir remarked, “if we think we are going down, we’ll take half the world down with us.” This expansion of threat from India to half of the world implies the perils emanating from an irresponsible nuclear rogue state, for the peace and stability of the region. The nuclear card has always been played by Pakistan to bring international pressure on India to contain the conflict, but India’s stand remains firm that the nuclear threat cannot serve as a cover for Pakistan to do terrorism in our country. Although, the analogy used by him in comparing Pakistan to a ‘dump truck full of gravel’ and India being a ‘shining Mercedes’ comes close to the viewpoint of ‘restrainers’ in Delhi, to highlight Delhi’s economic stakes in a potential conflict in which Pakistan has nothing to lose, signalling a tilt towards posturing rather than intent; Pakistan has been renewing its nuclear weapon capabilities and cannot be relied upon due to the presence of non-state actors working in a military-jihadist complex, thriving through its trusted terror groups.

On the question of religious extremism, the tragic terror attack on civilians in Pahalgam was a peculiar example of religious extremism and jihad, which is out rightly manifesting in the recent speech by the Pakistani Army Chief, Asim Munir’s address to the Pakistani diaspora in the United States, reiterating ‘Kalma’ (faith in the religion of Islam) as the basis for the foundation of Pakistan as created by Allah 1,300 years after the creation of Medina, and reaffirming the repressive jihadist viewpoint by stating that the Hindus and Muslims are different. For a country to voice this on an international stage, the world must investigate the minority rights abuse being carried out inside its domestic sphere.

On the question of Kashmir, the Pakistani chief remarked, “it is our jugular vein”, signalling the Army’s will to keep alive the sentiment for Kashmir and an existential threat from India to ensure its privileged position in the country. The unaccountable military rule has always taken over the civilian political leadership from arriving at a workable solution for peaceful coexistence. The world must look into the failing democratic apparatus of Pakistan.

On the question of investments, Gen. Munir’s visit comes at a time of strained economic ties between India and the US on the issue of tariffs and sanctions over oil, gas, and weapons, and therefore, Pakistan’s bid for American investments, military procurement, and any workable oil deal would be a welcome business for the U.S.,

However, there remains high ambiguity on the claims of ‘massive offshore oil reserves’, as Pakistan ranks 52nd on fuel list with proven reserves just 0.021% of global reserves, as per the data provided by Worldometer.

On the questions of diplomatic manoeuvring, Gen. Munir boasted of Pakistan’s capability of offering a ‘masterclass’ on balancing rival powers. This has been true for Pakistan due to the Cold War alliance and the strategic location of Pakistan, in convincing its ‘usability’ to the US. As the geo economic conundrum spirals, Pakistan can be a strategic link as it did during the Nixon administration between the U.S. and China, like it did between the U.S. and Afghanistan. Also, his greeting with a private lunch with President Trump, otherwise restricted to heads of state or government in the recent meeting, highlights the US’s acceptance of the military as the de facto ruler of the Pakistani state, despite the lack of political accountability. Also, tapping into the policy of ‘aggrandizement’, Pakistan could sell the Nobel Prize card to President Trump, over his mediation initiatives. Pakistani Chief’s diplomatic outreach signals the central role of the Pakistani military in its polity and acts as a communication to its domestic hardliners and international audience on what the future holds for Pakistan after an unacknowledged defeat in Operation Sindoor.

The world needs to come together to condemn and mitigate the threats of terrorism under a nuclear umbrella. President Trump, who had once accused Islamabad of deceit and providing a safe haven to terrorists, despite receiving over \$33 billion in aid in 15 years, must remember the security as well as the economic imperatives of partnering with a rogue state before succumbing to the geo economic dynamics. As the Indian Ministry of External Affairs has affirmed, even as New Delhi will not succumb to nuclear intimidation, Gen. Asim Munir’s renewed nuclear threats raise serious concerns over the credibility of Islamabad’s nuclear command and control, especially in a country where the military is closely aligned with terrorist groups.

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India is Proud of:

Simon Oraon

How Jharkhand’s Waterman, Padm Shree awardee, is ensuring all year water Supply in 51 Villages & bringing back the forest



This 84-year-old man, a Padma Shri awardee, has transformed the lives of thousands of villagers in Jharkhand with his massive tree-planting and water conservation efforts.

Little has changed in Simon Oraon's daily routine in the last 60 years. At 84, he gets up at 0430 Hrs, goes to the fields, diligently checks the saplings he has planted around the village, takes a round of the forest he has grown all on his own while facing great odds, and traces his steps back to his house in time for lunch.

He has changed the lives of thousands of villagers with a massive tree plantation drive and has organised a well and pond digging initiative to store rainwater as well.

Simon Oraon a resident of Khaksi Toli village, under Bero block, about 35 kms from Ranchi. He has been working in 51 villages of Bero to protect natural flora for decades and was awarded the Padma Shri in 2016.

Ironic as it may seem, Jharkhand, known for its lush green forests, is reeling under severe water scarcity. Indiscriminate deforestation and erratic weather patterns are playing havoc in the state, causing crop failures. Faced with all these calamitous conditions, Simon is nonetheless undeterred from his mission of water conservation and forest plantation. His earlier efforts are still alive today. The residents of these 51 villages owe him the agricultural prosperity he brought them through simple water conservation efforts.

The tribals in the area had traditionally always grown a mono crop of paddy (that too with frequent failures) and were oblivious to the harm being done to the environment by the felling of forests. Every year, after sowing paddy, Simon's father and uncle would leave for the city to look for odd jobs. Simon started taking care of his family, as well as the farming work.

Once he told a visiting team, "As a child, I had seen trees in Bero cut and transported in huge trucks. I was even initially fascinated by these huge machines. But I realised after several years, when a severe drought in 1961 caused total crop failure, how much harm this deforestation was causing. I took the lead, called all the villagers of Khaksi Toli village, and urged them to stand firm against the mindless cutting of trees."

"We initially started with only our villages. But then word spread, and more villages joined in the mission against wood smugglers. It was a tough task, but we did it and stopped forest mafias and wood smugglers in our areas. It was all team work with the support of the villagers," adds Simon. His efforts took time to show results but paid off finally. In addition to afforestation, Simon has also ensured the year around supply of water to all 51 villages of his block. This magic happened due to his creative ideas.

He constructed the first dam near his village in Narpatna in 1960. The dam, however, was washed away during the next monsoon. In the starting phase, several dams failed to withstand the monsoon water. Then, after the water resource department intervened, the size and width of the dams were increased and the concrete strengthened.

These dams have not faced any cracks since. In addition to constructing dams in Jharia Narpatna and Kharia, Simon and his team also built dams in Gaighat, Deshbali and a few other locations in nearby villages. All ponds are linked with dams, which act as water reservoirs, ensuring continuous water supply to meet the needs of the villagers.

"We have worked hard to reinstate our forests. It is because of the blessings of the forest gods that more than 1600 families here now reap three crops besides paddy every year, from nearly 2100 acres of land. Migration has declined. Additionally, we are now supplying vegetables to Ranchi, Jamshedpur and Kolkatta. We are able to do so because of our forest and water conservation steps," Simon says.

About Padma Shree award to him, he says “Whatever I have done is due to the support of the community. It’s a Padma Shri for all those who made my mission succeed.”

Simple living and high thinking is the best way to explain Simon Oraon’s lifestyle. Nothing has changed in his life. He lives in a small house and continues with his mission to plant 1000 trees every year. “As long as I have the energy to walk and work, I will keep planting trees. These trees give us life and it’s our duty to protect them. We should make trees our partners for a green revolution and development,” he says.

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