

Power, Data, and the Orbiting Future: Rethinking Data Centers in an Age of Energy Uncertainty

By Uday Kumar Varma

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It may seem almost incongruous to speak of the future of data centers at a time when the world is engulfed in an unprecedented energy crisis. With tensions simmering across Iran, Israel, and the United States, and oil markets facing horrible disruption, the immediate instinct is to look inward—to conserve, to stabilise, to endure.

And yet, it is precisely in moments of crisis that the contours of the future become most visible. The trajectory of artificial intelligence is not in doubt; its expansion is relentless, its appetite for computation insatiable. Data centers, as the physical engines of this transformation, will only grow in importance. The question, therefore, is not whether we can afford to think about their future, but whether we can afford not to.

For the present crisis, however severe, will pass. The structural forces reshaping the global economy—digitisation, automation, and the rise of AI—will not. To respond only to the volatility of today, without preparing for the certainties of tomorrow, would be to mistake turbulence for destiny.

It is in this larger context that the future of data centers—on Earth, and perhaps even in space—demands serious attention.

The convergence of two accelerating realities—geopolitical instability in energy markets and the exponential growth of artificial intelligence—has placed data centers at the very heart of global strategic thinking. The ongoing tensions involving Iran, Israel, and the United States have already begun to cast long shadows over global oil supply chains. Even the anticipation of disruption has pushed markets into volatility, reminding the world of a fundamental truth: energy remains the invisible infrastructure beneath all digital ambition.

At the same time, AI is no longer a peripheral technology. From large language models to real-time analytics, its appetite for computational power is voracious—and growing. Data centres, the physical embodiment of this digital hunger, are expanding at a pace that is beginning to strain terrestrial limits. Land, water, electricity, and public consent—all are emerging as constraints. In this context, the once fanciful idea of orbital data centres is being reconsidered with surprising seriousness by companies such as SpaceX, Google, and Open AI.

The appeal of space-based data infrastructure lies in a simple proposition: abundant solar energy, uninterrupted by night cycles or atmospheric losses, and free from terrestrial grid constraints. Yet, as the recent analysis suggests, feasibility hinges on a delicate balance of technological breakthroughs— particularly in launch costs, energy efficiency, and thermal management. Visionaries like Elon Musk see near-term viability, while more cautious voices such as Sam Altman urge restraint.

What, then, does the future hold?

Globally, three trends are likely to define the trajectory of data centers. First, energy diversification will become imperative. The traditional model—large terrestrial data centers powered by fossil fuels—is increasingly untenable. Even before geopolitical tensions, environmental regulations and public opposition were slowing new projects. The current crisis only accelerates the shift toward renewables. Solar, wind, and even small modular nuclear reactors are likely to become integral to next-generation data infrastructure.

Second, geographic redistribution will intensify. Data centers will increasingly migrate to regions offering a combination of cheap land, political stability, and renewable energy abundance. Countries in the Global South, particularly those with high solar irradiance, stand to gain. This is where India emerges as a potentially decisive player.

Third, technological experimentation will expand the frontier. Orbital data centers, while still speculative, represent a broader willingness to rethink the physical location of computation. Whether in low-Earth orbit, undersea installations, or even polar regions, the future of data infrastructure will be defined by adaptability rather than convention.

For India, the moment is both an opportunity and a challenge.

India's digital economy is expanding rapidly, driven by initiatives such as Digital India and an increasingly data-intensive governance and commercial ecosystem. The demand for domestic data storage—further reinforced by data localisation policies—is set to surge. Yet India's energy landscape presents a paradox. While it remains dependent on imported fossil fuels, it is also one of the world's fastest-growing renewable energy producers.

This duality suggests a strategic pathway.

India must anchor its data-center expansion firmly in renewable energy ecosystems. Co-locating data centers with large solar parks in states like Rajasthan or Gujarat, or wind corridors in Tamil Nadu, could mitigate both cost and carbon concerns. Such an approach would not only enhance energy security but also position India as a global hub for green data infrastructure.

Simultaneously, India should invest in energy-efficient computing technologies. Advances in chip design, cooling systems, and AI model optimisation can significantly reduce the energy footprint of computation. In a resource-constrained environment, efficiency is as critical as capacity.

There is also a case for strategic participation in emerging paradigms, including space-based data infrastructure. While India may not immediately lead in this domain, its growing capabilities in space technology—demonstrated by organisations like Indian Space Research Organisation—suggest that it should not remain a passive observer. Collaborative ventures, regulatory frameworks, and targeted R&D could ensure that India is prepared if and when orbital data centers become viable.

Finally, policy coherence will be crucial. Data centers sit at the intersection of multiple domains—energy, environment, technology, and national security. A fragmented approach will only exacerbate existing constraints. What is needed is an integrated strategy that aligns incentives, streamlines approvals, and anticipates future disruptions.

The deeper question, however, is philosophical as much as technological. The rise of AI compels humanity to confront the material costs of its digital aspirations. Data may seem ethereal, but its storage and processing are profoundly physical, grounded in energy, infrastructure, and environmental impact.

In that sense, the debate over orbital data centers is emblematic of a larger transition. It is not merely about where computation happens, but about how civilisation chooses to power its intelligence.

If the current energy crisis teaches anything, it is that resilience will define the next phase of global development. Whether on Earth or in orbit, the data centers of the future will need to be not only powerful, but sustainable, adaptable, and strategically grounded.

And in that unfolding story, India has both a stake—and a chance to lead

From Strategic Inertia to a Pro-active Peace Initiate: Ending the Iran / US-Israel War – Part -2

By Sardar Sanjay Matkar

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On 07 April 2026, Donald Trump stated that either Iran would open the Strait of Hormuz or, in his own words posted to Truth Social that morning “a whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again.” This sent shock waves throughout the world, since it was very clear that Trump was threatening a nuclear attack on Iran, an explicit threat to use nuclear weapons to vaporize 93 million people and destroy a civilization that is 7,000 years old and a cornerstone of human history. The world reacted in horror and anger, but not one country or its leadership, not even one, said that it is terminating or pausing its relationship with the USA in response to a threat of nuclear aggression against the people of Iran. The New York Times, citing historians, former U.S. officials and legal experts, observed that “no other recent American president has talked so openly about committing potential war crimes.” But there was no reaction beyond words in the public domain, none.

While the world was reacting verbally, Pakistan was working in the background, using all its connections with both Iran and the USA to prevent a catastrophe and emerged as a unlikely diplomatic peace broker, helping secure a two-week ceasefire between Iran and the USA, defying sceptics and all those who thought that it did not have the capacity to accomplish such a complex, high stakes achievement. To understand how this was achieved, we must understand that Pakistan has enjoyed good relationships with Iran since its birth. Iran was the first country to recognise Pakistan after independence in 1947. Pakistan returned the favour for the Islamic republic after the 1979 revolution. It also represents Iranian diplomatic interests in Washington, where Tehran has no embassy.

With regards to the USA, Asif Munir has built-up a personal rapport with the U.S. President Donald Trump, who once called him “my favourite field marshal”, and described him as “a great fighter”, “a very important guy”, and an “exceptional human being”. Asif Munir conforms to Trump’s idea of a “tough guy”, a behind-the-scenes dictator, the unchallenged ruler of Pakistan with a dashing personality and life-long immunity from prosecution for his own crimes against humanity, a leader who can be controlled by Trump. It helps immensely that Munir nominated Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Even with this background, Pakistan’s role is significant. It managed to construct an off-ramp that Trump could use and prevented the region from tipping into a possible nuclear war. Pakistan’s proposal gave both sides an excuse to step back from the edge. It is a fact that the USA delegation comprising of its Vice-President JD Vance (a born-again Christian), Jared Kushner (Trump’s son-in-law and a hard-core Zionist Jew), and Steve Witkoff (a real-estate developer, golf partner of Donald Trump and reportedly a close associate of the Russian mobster Anatoly Golubchik) was not able to take this opportunity to find a mutually agreeable peace initiative with the Iranian delegation. Interestingly, the U.S. delegation did not have any experienced diplomat from the State Department in a leadership position in these talks.

Trump had first announced a pause to the Iran war, while heaping praise on Asif Munir for this opportunity for peace. Iran responded in a more conditional format, agreeing a halt to attacks and a limited safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, without embracing Trump's full narrative. Which makes this development meaningful but still uncertain? Reuters reported that U.S. crude fell sharply after Trump's announcement and Iran's conditional signal on transit. But market relief is not the same thing as long-term confidence. It must be understood that the even after the cease-fire announcement, there is no operational clarity from Iran. According to Reuters, there are over 1,000 vessels still stuck inside the strait, where it would take more than two weeks to clear the backlog. The truce is providing an opportunity, but not maritime certainty.

The Strait of Hormuz has been reopened by Iran from the 17th – 22nd April, 2026 as a gesture of support to ceasefire agreement, but it is still not an international waterway like it was before the war started. Iran has stated clearly that ships will transit under coordination with its armed forces and subject to what it calls technical limitations. So, the chokepoint is still not "open" for all ships, which is a very different outcome from one in which the United States and a broader international coalition wanted 'freedom of navigation' on its own terms. Trump on his side announced a blockade of the strait by the U.S. Navy and threatened to seize those ships that paid Iran the toll-fees for safe passage through the strait. The blockade has not been fully successful with some ships escaping through it, and Tehran warned that it would close the waterway again if the US naval blockade of Iranian ports continued. Last night Trump posted on social media that he might end the ceasefire with Iran and "start dropping bombs again" if a long-term deal to end the war was not agreed by the time the truce expires.

The two-weeks ceasefire agreement is not a "peace accord" by any stretch of imagination. The Iranians have published the conditions that are acceptable to them to ensure a long-term peace, which have been rejected by the Americans. As for the 'Islamabad Accord' under which there is this two week of cease-fire, the full text of this agreement is not available publicly, there is no real assurance that this agreement will hold strong for the proposed 14 days, and there is no guarantee that Donald Trump will not pivot on his own announcement and restart hostilities.

Then there are the questions of Israel and the Gulf States. While officially Netanyahu's office issued a statement in English, saying that the PM supports the US decision and claiming that "Iran no longer poses a nuclear, missile and terror threat to America, Israel, Iran's Arab neighbours and the world", Israel's opposition leader, Yair Lapid, who had strongly supported his country's attack on regional nemesis Iran, called the ceasefire one of the greatest "political disasters in all of our history". Israel had not even been involved in negotiations, he said, adding that, despite its military successes, the prime minister had "failed politically, failed strategically, and didn't meet a single one of the goals that he himself set", adding that it would take years to repair the damage inflicted upon the country through the prime minister's "arrogance". Pakistan had announced that as part of this two-week ceasefire Israeli attacks on Hezbollah in Lebanon would also cease, Netanyahu has stated that he does not regard the ceasefire as extending to Israel's war on Lebanon. The U.S. appears to be willing to allow these attacks to continue during its peace negotiations with Iran.

According to Ahron Bregman, a senior teaching fellow at the Department for War Studies at King's College London; "The Iranian regime is still in place, its ballistic missile programme could be rebuilt very quickly, and it's still got 440kg of enriched uranium at 60 percent purity, enough for 10 bombs." In fact, according to observers, despite the significant military defeats, including the loss of control over its airspace, the assassination of much of its leadership and many of Iran's key military figures, Iran has emerged stronger as a result. For now, Israel is not expected to attend peace talks in Pakistan on Friday. But it is at these talks that Israel's freedom to continue attacks on Lebanon may be determined by the US and Iran.

Avigdor Lieberman, a former defence minister and head of the right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu party put his views across clearly. According to him “The ceasefire with Iran gives the ayatollah regime a timeout and an opportunity to reorganize,” and should the full agreement not address Israel’s concerns about uranium enrichment, ballistic missile production and support for terrorism in the region, “we will have to return to another campaign under more difficult conditions and pay a heavier price”. It can be safely assumed that Israel will restart their conflict with Iran at the first opportunity, the only question being, will the USA be with them as before?

The Gulf nations had reacted to the two-week U.S.-Iran ceasefire with cautious optimism and relief, welcoming it as a step toward regional stability, while immediately reporting continued Iranian strikes and expressing concerns over its enforcement. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar welcomed the truce, with the UAE calling it a strategic outcome, while all reported defensive interceptions of Iranian missiles and drones.

So, where does the world go from here? Iran’s 10-point peace plan includes four important conditions; a guarantee that Iran will not be attacked again, an end to Israeli strikes in Lebanon, Iran will impose a fee of US\$ Two million per ship that wishes to transit the Gulf of Hormuz, and Iran will establish the rules of safe passage through Hormuz. Essentially, Iran stands to gain over US\$ 80 billion per year from the transit fees, and if this agreement is accepted, it would be the USA and Israel that gives Iran a massive upgrade and make them very rich in the process. On the pragmatic side, Trump and Netanyahu have made this world more dangerous. Their attack on Iran has hardened the extremism of Iran’s regime which will race to develop nuclear weapons as fast as they can because of this war. The consequences for the Israel-American defeat at the hands of the Ayatollahs and the ICG (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) will remain as a political-military lesson for many years. The future looks as bleak as ever. Israel will keep the middle east conflict ongoing as-long-as it is funded by the USA and the Christian-Zionist billionaires across the world. Iran will get their nuclear weapons, if not self-developed, then purchased from Pakistan. The Gulf countries will have to remain constantly alert to dangers to their national and financial security and the rest of the world will have to keep dealing with rising prices of fuel and natural gas and all the other products of the crude oil industry.

All this is dependent on the peace accord being converted into a peace treaty. For who knows; The President of USA who believes himself to be a King (as per his White House Easter speech), then Jesus Christ as depicted in a picture posted by through his account on social media, and after there was a backlash from his own supporters, a replaced picture of him being hugged and blessed by Jesus, thus being anointed as a messiah. In this avatar Trump attacked the current Pope, Leo XIV, for condemning the Iran war, and stating that the Pope is “weak on crime and terrible on foreign policy”, to which the Pope responded, “I’m not afraid of the Trump administration or of speaking out loudly about the message of the Gospel.” This is not Trump’s first public outburst against the Vatican. On 30th April 2025, after he had attended the funeral of Pope Francis (who was succeeded by Leo XIV), he was asked by a reporter at the White House who he would like to succeed Pope Francis, he quipped: “I’d like to be Pope. That would be my number one choice.” In another post on his social media, Trump also suggested Leo only became pope because of him.

Essentially, this is the instability factor that is affecting the whole world negatively. An American President who has been internationally defined as a bully with access to nuclear weapons, but considers himself first as the best candidate to be the Pope and leader of the Catholic world, then upgrades himself to be a King, then a step-up to be Jesus Christ himself, and finally settling on the position of a messiah for the Western world. This is the person who might restart the Iran conflict anytime at his whim, a man described by the New York Times as ‘clearly insane’. Let that be in your thoughts as we look at the future.

Hormuz is a Strait of High Stakes, Where Law and Leverage Collide

By Admiral Arun Prakash

The writer is a former Indian Navy chief

Iran's closure of the Strait brings it into direct conflict with the UNCLOS regime of Transit Passage. But it also remains this beleaguered nation's final strategic lever

The Strait of Hormuz is, today, the epicentre of a global economic and maritime crisis. Following the unprovoked US-Israeli attack on Iran on February 28, the waterway now has the status of a “war zone”, placing severe restrictions on the passage of global shipping. Impacting nearly 20 per cent of the world's oil and 25 per cent of LNG trade, this is the most significant disruption to global energy supply since the 1970s.

Its navy may have been destroyed, but the threat posed by Iran's coastal missile batteries, drone swarms, and sea mines has been sufficient to deter all but the most desperate commercial shipping from attempting a passage through the Strait of Hormuz. Marine insurance premiums have jumped from 400 per cent to 600 per cent, and Iran is reportedly demanding tolls of up to \$1 per barrel of oil for transit, a measure seen as “extortionate”. Yet this challenge defies an easy or swift resolution. It is essential to step back and grasp the full interplay of legal, strategic, and political factors at work.

An overwhelming majority of global trade travels by sea, and while the oceans may appear vast, the compulsions of safe and expeditious transit tend to funnel shipping traffic through a set of narrow waterways, termed “maritime choke points” — constricted channels that connect major seas. By controlling access to vital seas, these choke points have, historically, amplified naval power projection, turning geography into a force multiplier for maritime powers.

“Pax Britannica”, which defined Britain's role as the global hegemon between 1815 and 1914, was built upon its control over strategic locations like Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Oman, Singapore and Cape Town, which dominated choke points and sea lanes. In World War I, the Dardanelles Strait played a pivotal role in prolonging the survival of the Ottoman Empire, when successive Allied amphibious assaults were thwarted by the Turks.

In the current scenario, US President Donald Trump's obsession with acquiring Greenland, and regaining control of the Panama Canal Zone may arouse derision, but it is rooted in strategic concern regarding the control of choke points, particularly in the context of rising competition with China and Russia. Greenland happens to be the northern anchor of the strategic Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) Gap, a narrow transit corridor that is the primary exit for Russia's Northern Fleet from its Arctic bases. As for China, with the melting of the Arctic ice, it is actively eyeing the Northern Sea Route via the GIUK Gap as a polar extension of its Maritime Silk Road.

The principle that the sea was international territory, and that all nations were free to use it for trade, has a hoary provenance, going back to the concept of Mare Liberum, or “free sea”, proposed by Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius in 1609. Since nations had taken to arbitrary extensions of territorial waters, order and regulation were restored by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which fixed the limit of “territorial waters” at 12 miles. Maritime choke points have, however, created a hurdle to the established principle of freedom of navigation because they often fall within the territorial waters of one or more states.

To prevent global commerce from being held hostage by geography, two legal regimes were adopted by UNCLOS for shipping to negotiate territorial waters. One was the concept of “Innocent Passage” that allows a vessel to pass through the territorial waters of a state, subject to stringent restrictions on movement and activities, including suspension of passage.

A similar right, termed “Transit Passage”, was created, applicable only to international straits, granting freedom of navigation solely for the purpose of continuous and expeditious transit of global trade. Unlike in the case of innocent passage, the coastal state cannot suspend or hamper transit passage in any way, nor can it discriminate between flags.

The Strait of Hormuz, connecting the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman, qualifies as a “strait used for international navigation” under UNCLOS. The entire navigable corridor of this strait falls within the territorial waters of Iran and Oman. Iran signed the UNCLOS in 1982, but has not (like the US) ratified it so far. Having deliberately chosen to apply the restrictive Innocent Passage clause, Iran’s closure of the Strait brings it into direct conflict with the UNCLOS regime of Transit Passage, designed precisely to prevent such a unilateral blockade of strategic straits.

Maritime choke points are the physical manifestations of global interdependence. While coastal states like Iran and Oman or those bordering the Malacca Strait have legitimate interests in protecting their waters from threats such as pollution and smuggling, international law, specifically the regime of Transit Passage, denies them the right to interfere with the flow of global shipping. Moreover, an attempt to exercise control by mining, or the threat of kinetic action, would be seen as an illegal and aggressive action under the UN Charter.

However, Iran faces stark choices against overwhelming military odds. With its political and military leadership brutally decapitated, its economy under a total embargo, and its infrastructure devastated by heavy bombardment, the Strait of Hormuz remains this beleaguered nation’s final strategic lever. Tehran is likely to exploit this choke point to extract maximum concessions from its adversaries.

For India, the Strait of Hormuz is no mere waterway but a vital “jugular vein”, whose closure or disruption poses a grave threat to national security, economic growth and domestic stability. The continuation of this conflict also evokes the unthinkable spectre of a “mushroom cloud” over the region.

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India in the Turbulent Waters of the Indian Ocean

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The Indian Ocean, including its extended parts, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, borders 37 sovereign nations. It transports around 75% of the world’s maritime trade and 50% of daily global oil consumption. In this context, it is important to understand the visit of India’s External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, to Mauritius. The Minister, despite the war in West Asia, attended the 9th edition of the Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) which was held from 10-12 April 2026 with the theme ‘Collective Stewardship for Indian Ocean Governance’ to deliberate on shared responsibilities, cooperative frameworks, and the future of regional governance.

During the same visit, 11 High Impact Community Development Projects were inaugurated in areas of sustainable development, energy, sports and infrastructure, launch of iGOT Karmayogi platform, and handing over 90 e-buses were done by India to Mauritius. Dr. S. Jaishankar also met PM Ramgoolam, President Gokhool and former PM Jugnauth. On the side lines of the IOC, Dr. S. Jaishankar interacted with his counterparts from Mauritius, Seychelles, Bhutan and Nepal.

In October 2024, the United Kingdom ceded its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and agreed to hand the islands back to Mauritius. The islands also host the American naval base – Diego Garcia. As the IOC was coming to an end, the UK announced that the deal was put on hold amidst the pressure exerted by US President Donald Trump. Maldives, another Indian Ocean littoral state and India's neighbour, welcomed the pause. Malé has put itself in direct opposition to any handover. How Delhi navigates its 'Neighbourhood First' policy and its historical support to Port Louis' rightful claims for decolonisation remains to be seen.

Mauritius is central to India's MAHASAGAR vision. In February 2024, India inaugurated a new airstrip and jetty on Agalega Island. This infrastructure is expected to help India enhance its maritime presence and monitor the Mozambique channel, leading to improved regional security, and also to counter China's 'String of Pearls' strategy and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Providing 'Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief' (HADR) is also one of India's profound diplomatic outreach. It has committed a package worth USD 450 million for relief and reconstruction work. Delhi aims to be the 'First Responder' in the region and has carried HADR activities through its initiatives like Operation Samudra Maitri (Indonesia, 2018), Operation Vanilla (Madagascar, 2020), Operation Karuna (Myanmar, 2023), Operation Sagarbandhu (Sri Lanka, 2025), amongst others.

India also carries joint naval exercises with the Indian Ocean states, such as – Bono Sagar (Bangladesh), Varuna (France), PASSEX (UK), SIMBEX (Singapore), SLINEX (Sri Lanka), AIKEYME (Africa India Key Maritime Engagement). Such ventures position India to be the net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region but it has its own complexities and challenges. For example, the urgent need for the Strait of Hormuz to be safe, open and accessible, Houthi attacks in Bab el Mandeb strait, pirates off the coast of Somalia, Rohingya refugees in Andaman Sea, chokepoints like Malacca and Sunda, IUU (Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated) fishing. To counter some of these turbulence in the Indian Ocean, the Djibouti Code of Conduct and its Jeddah Amendment needs to be effectively implemented in a collaborative approach.

On 04 March 2026, a US torpedo attacked IRIS Dena which sank within 3 minutes, 20 nautical miles off the coast of Sri Lanka killing around 90 sailors. The Iranian navy ship was returning home after participating in the MILAN naval exercise and the International Fleet Review hosted by India. India has not condemned the sinking of the ship. Actions by developed states, far away from the theatre of war, put Global South states like India and Sri Lanka into a conundrum with respect to maritime security and navigation in the Indian Ocean. During the IOC, Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi warned the world that "the Indian Ocean should not become a point of conflict, hostility".

India should also tread cautiously with the recent trend of regime changes in the Indian Ocean states, the 'India Out' campaign in Maldives, effects of climate change and China's growing footprint. The fears that India is building a base in Assumption, Seychelles and in Agalega, Mauritius needs to be satisfactorily addressed.

Another view coming from the IOC was that of Nepal's Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal who observed that as a signatory to the UNCLOS "landlocked nations possess inherent rights to access the high seas and to participate in the maritime economy".

Regional platforms and initiatives such as the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), Colombo Security Conclave (CSC), Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), African Union, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), should be utilized to their maximum potential to provide structured avenues for dialogue, security, cooperation, and capacity building.

Dr. S. Jaishankar and Dhaka's newly appointed Foreign Minister, Dr. Khalilur Rahman, went by the same flight to Port Louis. The latter was on his maiden visit to India. After the Mauritius visit, Dr. S. Jaishankar flew to UAE in the event of the ceasefire to give a 2-week window for negotiations to stop the Iran war.

It is high time to expand the membership of IORA to include states like Myanmar and those in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. The 11-year ongoing wait that has arisen in the next India African Union Summit is a matter of grave concern. The next Summit, which is reported to be held in 2026, should focus on how these two entities can work together for maritime security and prosperity in the Indian Ocean.

India announced that it will host the Indian Ocean Conference in 2027. MEA's Secretary (East) P Kumaran also noted that India, the current chair of IORA, is considering hosting the Leaders' Summit in 2027. The author suggests that these events should not be held in Delhi but in a coastal city with the Indian Ocean as the backdrop!

In his IOC speech, Dr. S. Jaishankar remarked that India's approach for the Indian Ocean Region is rooted "in cooperation, not in confrontation" and that should be the way forward for every state that has a stake in the Indian Ocean.

India's Dharma Diplomacy: Even Iran Is Seeking It

By - Dr. Santhosh Mathew

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India and Iran share a relationship that stretches across centuries—two of the world's oldest and most majestic civilizations, bound not merely by trade routes but by cultural memory and strategic necessity. For years, this partnership carried a quiet resilience. It was only after 2019 that visible shifts began to emerge. India recalibrated its global engagements under mounting geopolitical pressures, but it would be naïve to assume that Iran has forgotten the depth of past cooperation. International relations are not driven by nostalgia; they are governed by national interests, survival instincts, and calculated statecraft.

In today's globalized economy, no country—however resource-rich—can afford isolation. Iran, despite its vast oil reserves, finds itself constrained by sanctions, strategic rivalries, and regional instability. It is within this context that India's importance becomes not just relevant, but indispensable. The Chabahar Port stands as a powerful symbol of this interdependence. Located on Iran's southeastern coast, it is far more than a commercial hub. It is Iran's economic lifeline. Under heavy sanctions imposed by Western powers, particularly the United States, Iran has struggled to maintain access to global markets. India's investment and operational involvement in Chabahar have provided Tehran with a crucial window to the world. Beyond trade, the port facilitates connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan entirely. This not only secures India's strategic interests but also ensures a steady stream of transit revenue for Iran.

Energy remains the lifeblood of the global economy, and Iran's oil needs reliable buyers. India has long been one of the most trusted customers of Iranian crude. Even amid international pressure, India explored mechanisms to sustain this trade. The rupee-rial arrangement, for instance, allowed transactions to continue without reliance on the U.S. dollar, offering Iran a critical cushion against foreign exchange constraints. Such financial ingenuity reflects not sentimentality but pragmatic diplomacy.

The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) further deepens this partnership. By linking India with Russia and Europe through Iran, the corridor transforms Iran into a pivotal transit hub. In times of economic uncertainty and shifting alliances, this strategic geography becomes a source of leverage and survival for Tehran. Equally significant is India's role in sustaining Iran's domestic economy during difficult times. Essential commodities such as basmati rice, tea, and sugar from India help stabilize Iranian markets. When Western pharmaceutical supplies become inaccessible, India—the “pharmacy of the world”—steps in with affordable, life-saving medicines. This humanitarian-economic dimension adds another layer to the bilateral relationship.

India's diplomatic maturity in handling such complexities deserves attention. Under the stewardship of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, India has demonstrated a rare ability to maintain balanced ties with adversarial blocs. It engages Iran while strengthening relations with Israel and the United States. This doctrine of strategic autonomy allows India to act not as a subordinate ally, but as an independent pole in global politics. Even critics like Shashi Tharoor have acknowledged the professionalism underpinning this approach.

Security concerns in the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea further reinforce the need for Indo-Iranian cooperation. Maritime attacks and regional conflicts disrupt trade routes that are vital to both nations. Ensuring the safety of shipping lanes, particularly through critical chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz, requires coordination and dialogue. In such turbulent conditions, Iran increasingly recognizes India as a stable and reliable partner—one that does not abandon its friends in times of crisis.

Speculation often fills the gaps left by secrecy in international affairs. There are whispers of discreet assistance—technical, logistical, even humanitarian—extended by India to Iran, including support for infrastructure like water purification systems or port development. While such claims remain unverified, they reflect a broader perception: that India's engagement with Iran is deeper than what meets the eye. Meanwhile, Pakistan's credibility deficit is well known, particularly in Tehran. In contrast, India's consistent and measured approach has earned it a degree of trust that few others enjoy. There are even suggestions that, in the context of escalating tensions between Iran and the United States, Tehran sees New Delhi as a potential mediator—capable of playing a constructive role in de-escalation.

At the same time, global conflicts carry economic consequences back home. A prolonged Iran-U.S. confrontation could significantly impact Indian corporate giants like Reliance Industries. Its Jamnagar refinery, the largest in the world, accounts for a substantial share of India's petroleum exports. Disruptions in global supply chains, currency fluctuations, and policy interventions—such as restrictions on exports to prioritize domestic supply—could result in massive financial losses. This underscores the delicate balance India must maintain between strategic diplomacy and economic stability.

Ultimately, India-Iran relations are not a tale of emotional solidarity but of mutual necessity. Iran needs India for economic access, trade, and diplomatic balance. India, in turn, engages Iran as part of a broader geopolitical calculus—securing energy routes, countering regional adversaries, and expanding its strategic footprint.

Dharma diplomacy, as it is often described, is not about moral grandstanding. It is about calibrated restraint, principled engagement, and the ability to act with both wisdom and realism. In a world increasingly defined by conflict and fragmentation, India's approach offers a model of balance—one that even a nation like Iran, under immense pressure, appears to be seeking.

Recalling CIA's "Bay of Pigs" Fiasco of 1961

By - Vappala Balachandran

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On 16 April 2026 the "National Security Archives" of the US George Washington University (NSAGWU) published new classified documents relating to the ill-fated "Bay of Pigs" covert operation to coincide with its 65th anniversary. These indicated that the Cuban intelligence had known about the super-secret American operation four months before the actual invasion on April 7, 1961.

"Bay of Pigs" invasion of Cuba was one of the biggest CIA's covert intelligence operations in history which cost American taxpayers anything between US dollars 13 to 46 million in 1961. This will be like US\$ 141 to 560 million now. Like in the case of the recent US-Israel invasion Iran, the CIA planners had expected the Cuban public to rise in revolt against Fidel Castro once the CIA trained ground invasion force landed on Cuba's shores.

Preparations on the operation's blueprint started on 11 December 1959 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved it in principle. On 17 March 1960 he signed the US National Security Directive ordering the CIA to train and equip Cuban exiles as guerilla force. Vice-President Richard Nixon chaired the group to execute it. After the failed invasion, another effort codenamed "Operation Mongoose" was started on 4 November 1961 under the orders of President John F Kennedy, led by Air Force General Edward Landsdale.

Had the CIA planners studied "Open-Source Intelligence" they would have found that it was an impossible task. Such grave errors often happen when bureaucracy or intelligence services work in silos without caring to read academic or media studies. The Institute for International Social Research at Princeton had, as pointed out by the late US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, found in 1960 that there was remote possibility of shift in Cuban people's allegiance to Fidel Castro.

This costly adventure resulted in the resignation of the legendary Allen Dulles as CIA director. An important side effect of this mistake was that the US government had to assume responsibility for the release of almost 75% of the Brigade 2506 who were imprisoned by Cuba. This para-military group of Cuban exiles was raised in Guatemala and specially trained as CIA invading force since 1960. Also, more money had to be spent to undo the damage done by this botched CIA Operation.

NSAGWU's new documents revealed that four months before the invasion, Cuban intelligence agents had filed a detailed report on CIA's preparations to invade Cuba. A Confidential report dated 12 January 1961 sent to the "Cuban Ministry of Armed Forces Intelligence" titled "Report on Mercenary Camps and Bases in Guatemala, Nicaragua and Florida" said that CIA had established a training base for a large exile force. Cuban agents counted an estimated 48 B-26 airplanes that were to be used in the attack and stated that the "majority of the planes are unmarked, and most are painted black." Night-time "parachute drills" were being conducted as part of the training of the invasion force, and "training sessions are being held using real firepower."

Another startling CIA document unearthed was a detailed summary sent to the deputy director on the CIA-Mafia collaboration to assassinate Castro before the Bay of Pigs invasion. The history starts with the authorization from the deputy director for plans, Richard Bissell, for "a sensitive mission requiring gangster-type action". The mission target was the liquidation of Fidel Castro.

For this, the CIA's Technical Services Division "developed a pill that had the elements of rapid solubility, high lethal content, and little or no traceability". However, the project was cancelled shortly after the Bay of Pigs episode.

Another document reveals the frustration of President John F. Kennedy over the CIA when he knew of these developments. Kennedy considered "reconfiguring" or even "dismantling the intelligence agency". Correspondence with his aide Arthur Schlesinger was on what reforms could be undertaken and whether CIA should have autonomy or should be put under stricter control as there were complaints that it had grown bigger than the State Department.

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India is Proud of: **Professor Mohammed Sharif** **(Aligarh's Muslim Sanskrit professor)**



Professor Mohammed Sharif, is a professor of great standing and repute worldwide, in Aligarh Muslim University's Sanskrit Department. He was born in 1963 in a non-descript village of District Amethi in UP. After basic education in Amethi, he joined Allahabad University for higher education. After graduation with Sanskrit, Philosophy and Urdu, he studied for his post-graduation in Sanskrit. Further he obtained Ph. D. and D. Lit in Sanskrit from Allahabad University.

He has the distinction of being the first Muslim scholar in the World to obtain D. Lit. in Sanskrit from Allahabad University.

Talking about Sanskrit Dept of AMU he says with pride "Ours is an ancient department. We began functions in 1875 and are thriving till date. In 1880 Pt Ganesh Chandra became first Sanskrit teacher in erstwhile MAO College. When MAO college became AMU in 1920, Pt. Ram Swaroop Shastri was appointed as lecturer & Head Department of Sanskrit."

‘A student of Sanskrit’ is the epithet he likes to go by as he claims to be always learning. He has been working in Aligarh Muslim University’s Sanskrit department for over 32 years and strongly proclaims that his university is entirely free of any form of discrimination or prejudice. “The culture of AMU is truly representative of the culture of India. Extraordinarily pluralistic and diverse”, he says.

Specialised in Sanskrit Literature and Indian Philosophy, Prof Sharif’s PhD thesis was titled ‘Nal Damayanti Katha Ka Sameekshatmak Adhyayana’ – which is a critical analysis of the story of Nal and Damayanti in Mahabharata where the themes of love, deceit and war between Lord Indra and Raja Nal are explored.

“Mujhe bas Hinduon se pyaar aur aashirvaad mila hai” (I have received only love and blessings from Hindus)”, he added as he explained his advent into the study of Sanskrit.

As a small-town boy in then Sultanpur (now Amethi), Uttar Pradesh, Mohammed Sharif fell in love with the language during his school days. He completed his higher secondary education with Sanskrit as one of his primary subjects and went on to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Sanskrit, Philosophy and Urdu.

When asked whether he faced any resistance from his family due to his academic choices, he proudly stated that his parents supported every decision of his with all their heart. “I only had to endure some taunts by members of my extended family. Those people who compartmentalize the arts, which is an expression of life, will never be able to see beyond their narrow understanding of religion”, he said.

But what is religion to him? And how did he go on to choose a career path so unconventional for a Muslim? He says “We tend to associate certain languages and cultural appearances with specific identities and the languages become a taboo if you’re indoctrinated by your societal position. But I never made those correlations. Saare dharm apni apni jagah par theek hai.”

As per Prof Sharif “Karma karna humare upar hai. Uska phal kya milega ya nateeja kya hoga yeh Bhagwan aur Allah tai karenge.” (It is our job to do our duty, the result is not to be fretted over as the Almighty will look after that)

Prof Sharif is true example of our great Indian culture and philosophy and people around are proud of him.

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