

Book Reviews

"Samraj ki Haqeeqat" (The Reality of Imperialism) By Dr Javed Akbar Ansari (forthcoming in 2026)

A Summary in the Author's Own Voice

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Why I Wrote This Book

Almost the entire Muslim world, and Pakistan in particular, is firmly in the grip of imperialism. Yet most of us do not even recognise this captivity. Pakistan is a neo-colony. Our state has become a vassal state in every practical sense, and genuine independence has been rendered meaningless. We are all prisoners of imperialism, but awareness of this imprisonment is absent. I wrote this book because that awareness is urgently needed and because without understanding how the system works, we cannot develop an effective strategy to resist it.

My intended audience is Muslim readers, particularly Islamic scholars and madrasa students. It is they who must lead the resistance, and they cannot do so without understanding the capitalist system that enslaves us.

What Imperialism Actually Is

Let me be clear about something most people misunderstand. Imperialism is not simply foreign military occupation or colonial rule. It is a system. Every system has parts organised around a single

purpose. Imperialism is the global organisational form of the capitalist system, whose sole purpose is the accumulation of capital for its own sake, growth of capital for the sake of further growth.

To understand imperialism we must understand capitalism. The capitalist system creates three things:

Capitalist individuality - the "Human Being" who claims self-determination and self-creation, whose ultimate instrument of imposing his will on the world is the accumulation of capital.

Capitalist society, Civil Society, centred on the Market, where Human Beings pursue their desires through contractual relationships.

Capitalist state, the Republic, where Human Beings collectively enforce the rule of capital through democratic consent.

Imperialism is the struggle to make these three things universal, to displace every non-capitalist form of individuality, society, and state from the face of the earth. That is what we are truly fighting against.

The History I Want You to Know

Modern imperialism is not the ancient empires of Greece or Rome. It was born in the sixteenth century when Spain, Portugal, France, and Britain conquered the Americas, killed tens of millions of indigenous people, and seized their wealth. It then extended to India, China, and Africa. After the First World War the

Ottoman Empire was carved up and the Middle East divided between Britain and France, leaving behind vassal "independent" states - Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan among them. After the Second World War the imperial powers formally withdrew from their colonies; but they replaced direct rule with vassal states governed by local elites trained to serve imperial interests.

I want to be honest about something here too: not every power that resisted European empire broke from this pattern. China and the Soviet Union never relinquished their own imperial conquests; China still occupies East Turkestan and Tibet, Russia still holds Dagestan, Chechnya, and other Muslim lands it seized. Capitalism has been imperial in one form or another since the sixteenth century; only its institutional shape and ruling ideology have changed across the centuries.

This is the world we live in today. The chains are less visible but no less real.

The Three Imperial Centres Today

Today global imperialism has three main centres:

America remains the dominant imperial force. It has surrounded the entire world with close to two hundred military bases. It controls the international institutional architecture - the IMF, WTO, WIPO, FATF, NATO, the World Bank - all instruments of American imperial dominance. Behind these

institutions stands American soft power through media, entertainment, technology, and the NGO network spread across every country.

China is a rising imperial power whose ambitions should not be romanticised; I say this especially to Pakistani readers who tend to see China as a friend. China continues to occupy East Turkestan and Tibet. It suppresses Muslim populations. Its Belt and Road Initiative and global investment programme serve its own imperial interests. China is not an alternative to imperialism; it is a competitor within the imperial system seeking to lead it, and in our own region it has spent years building military and economic footholds across the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand much as America has.

Russia is a declining imperial power defending its sphere of influence, as we see in Ukraine. Like China, it never freed the Muslim territories it conquered.

Five Defining Features of Today's Imperial System

I want to describe five characteristics that define contemporary imperialism:

First, a handful of monopolies dominate the entire global production and distribution system. The wealth they control exceeds that of many nations combined.

Second, finance has become the decisive force. The dominance of dollar hegemony and information

technology monopolies has enabled a global financial architecture that extracts wealth from the poor world and concentrates it in the imperial centres, causing staggering inequality.

Third, this economic system is backed by an international political alliance, led by America but including China among others, that sets the rules of the capitalist order and promotes the social and cultural environment in which imperialism can thrive.

Fourth, the system faces recurring comprehensive crises - financial, environmental, political, social - but the political managers of the system develop strategies that temporarily contain these crises and prevent systemic collapse.

Fifth, this particular configuration of imperialism took shape in the 1980s and was consolidated after the Soviet collapse in 1991. Its ideological foundation is neoliberalism.

Pakistan, A Mirror We Must Look Into

Let me speak plainly about my own country because we cannot resist what we refuse to see.

Pakistan was born through an agreement with British imperialism, backed by the ideological movement of Muslim nationalism. From its very earliest days our state sought to indebt itself to imperial powers. In December 1947 Jinnah requested a loan from America. By 1958 Ayub Khan had

approached the IMF. We have since signed twenty-four (24) IMF programmes. Today we are negotiating the largest loan agreement in our history, while being unable to draft our own annual budget freely.

Our entire economy is in the grip of imperialism. We are selling national assets at throwaway prices to imperial investors. Our interest payments consume our tax revenue. Our ruling elite keeps billions of dollars in imperial financial markets while ordinary Pakistanis suffer.

Our foreign policy tells the same story. The 1950 visit of Liaquat Ali Khan to America set the pattern of subordination. We joined SEATO and CENTO in the 1950s. In 1971 imperialism dismembered our country. After 2001 we became an instrument of American global terror campaigns, handing over mujahideen to our imperial masters. We cannot liberate Kashmir. We cover up Chinese atrocities in East Turkestan. Our foreign policy has one purpose - keeping both our imperial patrons, America and China, pleased simultaneously.

How Financial Warfare Works

I want my readers, especially the ulama, to understand something that is rarely explained clearly. America does not only use military force to maintain its dominance. It uses finance as a weapon.

The US dollar is the world's reserve currency. Every

bank in the world that uses the dollar is subject to American jurisdiction. The US Treasury's sanctions apparatus, with over eight thousand five hundred active sanctions, and growing every year since 2009, can cut any country, institution, or individual off from the global financial system.

Iran has experienced this most severely. Cuban children died during Covid because sanctions prevented the import of syringes. Venezuela cannot import machinery, food, or medicine. Afghanistan's foreign assets were simply seized. Russia has been expelled from the SWIFT banking system. Every bank in the world, including Pakistani banks, is compelled to enforce American financial rules or face being blacklisted. This is not diplomacy. This is financial warfare, and it is one of the primary tools through which imperial domination is maintained without firing a single bullet.

The Ideological Weapon: Neoliberalism

The ideological foundation of contemporary imperialism is neoliberalism, developed by Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman. Its core claim is that free capitalist markets without state interference will balance supply and demand and produce prosperity. State intervention is presented as the cause of crises, not their solution.

Neoliberalism demands the removal of all

restrictions on financial markets, privatisation of public assets, suppression of labour rights, and complete subordination of the state to private capital. The IMF, World Bank, WTO, and WIPO enforce this ideology globally, effectively acting as substitutes for the non-existent world capitalist state.

What neoliberalism actually produces is not prosperity but rentier capitalism - an economy where profit comes not from producing things but from owning things and extracting rent from them. Patents, financial instruments, land - all become mechanisms of extraction. The productive economy shrinks while the financial economy grows. Inequality explodes. And the system periodically crashes, requiring massive state bailouts of the very financial monopolies that neoliberalism was supposed to render unnecessary.

The Human Rights doctrine is neoliberalism's ideological weapon of external conquest. Every man and woman must become a "Human Being" - a capitalist individual. States that fail to enforce this transformation are subject to humanitarian intervention. This is how imperialism justifies its wars.

How I Read American Strategy

I want to explain my method before going further, because I think it matters. I have not relied on commentary about American strategy. I have gone to the planning documents themselves - the papers

produced by bodies like the Council on Foreign Relations, and by America's own executive office - because the planners of the empire say plainly, to each other, what they intend to do.

These documents are remarkably candid. One CFR strategist, Blackwill, argues that subduing China is essential to preserving American global hegemony, and that consultation with China on shared problems like the environment can only succeed once China has been thoroughly intimidated by growing Western military and economic capacity. Campbell and Sullivan, writing for the same body, propose something subtler - a "hybrid war" that keeps cooperation alive on climate and pandemics while still working systematically to cap Chinese power, tie it to American-defined rules, and block its reach across the Indo-Pacific. Both arrive at the same place by different roads: permanent contest with China is treated as a given, not a choice.

The clearest expression of this contest is the semiconductor war. America has restricted not just finished chips but the raw materials, equipment, software, and intellectual property that go into making them, with the explicit goal of keeping Chinese semiconductor capability at least four years behind global standards. China's response, a state investment fund created in 2014 and expanded since, aims for

parity with the West by 2030. This single industry captures the whole logic of inter-imperial rivalry: not trade as exchange, but trade as a weapon to be calibrated.

The same logic now governs supply chains generally. The 2022 White House document on building resilient supply chains identifies rare earths, semiconductors, pharmaceutical inputs, and large-capacity batteries as the four sectors America considers strategically exposed to China. The WTO and the Asian Development Bank have dressed this up in the language of "resilience", protecting global production from disruption, but in practice resilience policy means strengthening monopoly power within supply chains, raising barriers against small competitors, and accelerating America's own self-sufficiency relative to China. It is supply-chain mapping as a tool of imperial control, not as a neutral technical exercise.

On War

War is imperialism's decisive instrument. I want to be precise about the types of war we face today.

Direct inter-imperialist war between major nuclear powers is unlikely - the risk of mutual destruction and the collapse of the global capitalist system they all depend on makes it irrational. Instead we see proxy wars, where imperial powers fight each other through

client states; Ukraine is the clearest current example, with America fighting Russia without committing a single American soldier to the battlefield. We also see colonial wars, where imperial powers attack semi-capitalist nations directly to maintain control - Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Mali, Palestine.

These are wars of imperial maintenance, and since 2004 America has treated the Human Rights doctrine as its own UN-recognised licence to wage them.

NATO is the organisational instrument of Western imperial warfare. It exists not only to contain Russia and China but to prevent any independent European security arrangement from emerging - to keep America's own allies subordinated. Without NATO, Germany, France, and other European powers might pursue independent foreign policies. NATO prevents that.

Two Rival Capitalisms: Neoliberalism and Post-Fascism

There is a second ideology readers should understand, because it is sometimes mistaken for an alternative to neoliberal imperialism when it is nothing of the sort. Post-fascism accepts neoliberal economics only partially. Its core commitment is nationalism; it wants the sovereign nation-state freed from international institutions, but it has no interest in state-owned capitalism; it wants private capitalist

dominance, just organised around the nation rather than the globe.

It postures as anti-elite, mobilising public anger over capitalist inequality, and it is unmistakably hostile to Islam - it treats the spread of Islamic da'wah and the presence of Muslim migrants as existential threats to European civilisation, and demands their expulsion. It is not opposed to globalisation as such, only to globalisation that doesn't serve national interest, and it remains fully supportive of American global dominance, while shying away from wars it fears America cannot win. In short: post-fascism is a quarrel within capitalism, between its globalist and nationalist factions, not a challenge to capitalism itself.

The New Worker: Digital Monopoly and the Gig Economy

Digital monopolies are reshaping capitalist markets in every country, displacing small businesses - including the halal trades many of our own readers depend on - through relentless consolidation, and increasingly buying into state-owned enterprises through equity markets to bring national assets under their management.

Digital technology has produced a new kind of worker, one who serves capital from inside his own home. Digital corporations break this worker's labour into fragments managed entirely through online

platforms; he must remain perpetually online to receive work, and every action he takes feeds information back to the company that monitors and disciplines him. He cannot identify who is exploiting him, and bargaining or protest is effectively impossible. This is a new form of bondage within the capitalist system, and it is spreading fastest in exactly the precarious, insecure employment that the 2020-21 Covid crisis accelerated.

Why Only Islamic Revolution Can Succeed

I must now state clearly what distinguishes my analysis from secular anti-imperialist traditions, and I want to do this by looking honestly at who is actually resisting imperialism today. There are four such forces.

The first are the remaining Latin American holdouts, Cuba, Venezuela, Honduras, whose anti-imperial sentiment goes back to the nineteenth century and has more recently been carried by nationalism and socialism. Castro, Chávez, and others genuinely tried to build self-sufficient economies, and when commodity export prices were high, their welfare programmes won real popular support. But nationalism and socialism are themselves capitalist ideologies, so these revolutionary governments could never weaken capitalism's spiritual roots among their own people. When export revenues fell, welfare spending had to be cut, popular support collapsed,

and because these states had preserved liberal democratic structures, and never fully severed their links to global capitalist markets, imperial powers found ample room to subvert them from within. The Latin American experience proves something important: defeating imperialism requires building a genuinely non-capitalist economy and society, and either breaking with the global capitalist system or restructuring one's relationship to it on non-capitalist terms. Half-measures do not survive contact with falling commodity prices.

The second are the anti-war movements of America and Europe: nuclear disarmament in the 1960s, opposition to Vietnam in the 1970s, the anti-apartheid movement of the 1990s, and today's Palestine solidarity movement. These movements are typically reactive, rooted ideologically in anarchism with social-democratic and liberal currents mixed in, and they offer no coherent critique of capitalism as a system; they assume capitalist civilisation can simply be separated from its imperial expression, a claim with no historical or logical support. Like other new social movements - environmentalism, feminism, etc. - they tend to tolerate or even celebrate moral permissiveness, and their actual mobilisation is small: roughly seven-tenths of one percent of the American population participated in any given year recently.

The current Palestine movement is somewhat different in that opposition to anti-Islamic sentiment is part of its draw, which is bringing some Western Muslims into its orbit, though this also risks normalising anarchist and socialist frameworks within Muslim communities, a risk I think we should take seriously.

The third group is constitutional Islamic political parties: Jamaat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Tehreek-e-Labbaik, and their counterparts elsewhere. These parties are anti-imperial in principle, but their commitment to constitutionalism limits that opposition severely, because constitutions are themselves a framework of capitalist rule. These parties, like the apolitical Islamic movements, do not grasp that capitalism itself is the real taghut of our age; they treat it as a natural economic arrangement rather than a competing system of belief, and they remain captive to two capitalist ideologies of their own: Muslim nationalism and social democracy. Their anti-imperialism is conditional and symbolic rather than active. When they form governments, capitalist power is not disturbed: Imam Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt in 2013 kept negotiating with American imperialism throughout, and MMA's government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from 2002 to 2008 made no dent in the capitalist order.

The fourth are the Islamic movements proper: the

mujahideen tradition, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood's more militant wing. These are genuinely on the offensive against imperialism, though their reach remains largely confined to a handful of fronts, chiefly Yemen and coastal Africa, with state power unlikely in the near term. Sectarianism has been their great weakness. It cost jihadi forces dearly in Iraq and Syria. However, in Gaza war, alhamdulillah, Shia and Sunni forces (Hezbollah, Andarullah, Hamas) have stood shoulder to shoulder, while the Arab states stood by as America's clients and only the Islamic Republic of Iran gave the mujahideen real support; the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan offers the same example of Shia-Sunni unity.

Two Islamic states exist today, Iran and Afghanistan, both genuinely anti-imperial in principle and in practice, which is precisely why America is determined to force both back into the global capitalist system. The remainder of this book sets out, in my own assessment, the strategy by which these two states can resist that pressure.

The Jihadi State, Not the Welfare State

I want to introduce a distinction I think is essential. An Islamic state should not aim to become a welfare state, where government economic policy exists to continuously raise public living standards and

consumption. It should aim to be a jihadi state, where economic and social policy is judged by its effect on the religious and moral character of the people - spreading patience, reliance on God, and charitable spending, not by how much wealth it generates for its own sake. This was the model of the Rightly Guided Caliphate, and of most Islamic states across our history; a welfare state, in the modern sense, has no precedent in the Shari'ah at all.

For Iran and Afghanistan, building this kind of state is urgent precisely because both are extraordinary states, surrounded by the abode of war, under direct imperial attack, needing constantly growing strength and wealth to survive, while making sure that growth doesn't dissolve their Islamic character into a capitalist mould. I would propose six elements of such a strategy.

First, comprehensive state planning must take precedence over market processes. Islamic societies historically did not plan centrally, but decades of imperial-sponsored cultivation of capitalist individuality inside Iran and Afghanistan mean Islamic society will not simply re-emerge on its own; the state, where the people of faith currently hold power in both countries, has to actively shape it, with state representation reaching down to the factory floor, the market, and the local financing institution, and

planning organised as a genuinely popular process rather than a technocratic one.

Second, the military sector should be made the centre of the economy, not treated as a drain on it. Both countries face direct military threat - Israel against Iran chief among them - and need rapidly growing capacity in arms production, particularly air defence and IT-related defence technology. Defence production should be linked to agricultural and industrial output so that growth in one drives growth and employment in the others, and Iran and Afghanistan should cooperate directly on arms production and military planning.

Third, both states need to escape finance and build a genuine Tamweeli system in its place. Finance - wealth that perpetually seeks its own growth through interest and speculation - is specific to capitalism; for twelve centuries of Islamic history, credit existed and wealth grew without it. An Islamic financing system would have money created solely by the Islamic government, its quantity tied to estimates of national output rather than gold or foreign currency reserves; banking nationalised and replaced by a central Tamweeli institution responsible for monetary policy and the distribution of credit; all buying and selling of money and debt prohibited, so that no interest or speculative markets exist; and no membership in the

IMF, WTO, WHO, FATF, or WIPO.

Fourth, engagement with the global capitalist system cannot be severed entirely - neither economy is yet self-sufficient, though forty-five years of Islamic governance has measurably increased Iran's. I see three relatively safe channels for technology, imports, and external capital: networks of sincerely religious Muslim businessmen across countries like Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, Indonesia, and Malaysia, who can be drawn in as formal partners; cooperation with other states already exiled from the capitalist system - Russia, Belarus, Venezuela, Cuba, North Korea; and, carefully, technology transfer from China, whose rivalry with America over Iran and Afghanistan can be turned to advantage - though capital from China should be approached with real caution, since Chinese external lending is itself tied to an interest-based debt system, and China has its own imperial ambitions in the region, particularly toward drawing Afghanistan into its Belt and Road orbit.

Fifth, both states need a coordinated national strategy for natural disasters, to which both are highly exposed.

Sixth - and this is the point I want Iranian readers especially to absorb - democracy itself needs to be limited and ultimately set aside. Historically, democratic process has been a vehicle for imperial

penetration: it cultivates self-interest, gives capitalist domination cultural cover, and opens space for imperial infiltration. Iran's own experience over forty-five years illustrates this. Even with a democratic structure formally bound by sharia, social permissiveness has grown, feminism has spread like an epidemic, and election results show secular and pro-imperial sentiment strengthening over time. Afghanistan, by contrast, has rightly refused to establish any constitution, election, or parliament at all - despite considerable imperial pressure dressed up as concern for basic rights - and its political order is, alhamdulillah, far more secure as a result. Iran should learn from that example and progressively wind down its own democratic apparatus, as a matter of protecting the revolution itself.

Pakistan's Own Path: The Mosque Alliance

Pakistan is not Iran or Afghanistan, and I don't think wholesale rejection of democracy is realistic or even sensible here yet. But I do think our anti-imperial struggle is still in its infancy, and I want to set out concretely how I think it should be organised.

Within Pakistan's population there exists a minority I call the mukhlisin-e-deen - sincere Muslims, those who hold to the Shari'ah in their personal lives and deliberately avoid major sins. By one 2018 estimate they number around two crore, roughly nine percent

of the population. Most are unorganised; their faith expresses itself privately, with political expression flaring only occasionally, usually in response to open desecration of Islamic symbols.

Neither existing wing of Pakistan's Islamic movement reaches this constituency effectively. Da'wah-focused groups treat politics as forbidden territory and won't even resist the imperial-funded NGOs and intellectual circles arrayed against them. Political Islamic parties are anti-imperial in principle but not anti-capitalist; bound by the constitution, they speak to "the people" generally rather than to the sincere core specifically, which forces them into the language of capitalist rights and the frameworks of Muslim nationalism and social democracy - and when they do reach office, as with Imam Morsi in Egypt or the religious MMA'S Government In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, capitalist power is left untouched.

My proposal is to organise the mukhlisin-e-deen through a non-democratic structure built around the hundreds of thousands of mosques spread across the country, an inter-maslak mosque alliance (بين المسالك) formed at the neighbourhood, market, town, provincial, and federal level, uniting Deobandi, Bareilvi, Shia, and Ahl-e-Hadith mosques and madrasas together. Locally, this alliance would issue fatwa and arbitration, monitor prices on essentials

including rent and school and hospital fees - acting, in effect, as a muhtasib - promote halal business and a local Tamweeli financing arrangement, work to suppress visible vice such as interest dealing and obscene advertising, and let imams emerge as legitimate community leaders at every level. This is a way of organising society on a non-democratic basis, led by the mosque's regular worshippers rather than by elected representatives chasing votes - authority grounded in guidance rather than self-interest.

I recognise, though, that given Pakistan's actual conditions and the historical record of our Islamic parties, rejecting electoral politics outright isn't realistic yet; space for political action outside the constitutional system has to be built gradually, which means Islamic parties remain obliged to use elections for now. I would propose they do so differently than they have: contesting under the single platform of the mosque alliance rather than separately; building the broadest possible electoral coalition, with reform-minded networks - Tablighi Jamaat, Dawat-e-Islami, and Deobandi, Bareilvi, Shia, and Ahl-e-Hadith madrasas and khanqahs - actively campaigning rather than staying neutral; running an emotionally resonant campaign centred on defending Islamic symbols; and building a manifesto around the concrete implementation of Shari'ah - nationalising banks,

ending interest and speculative markets, cancelling sovereign and external debt - rather than vague slogans, while deliberately avoiding nationalist or social-democratic demands.

Religious parties won roughly sixty lakh votes, about nine percent of the total, in both the 2018 and 2024 elections. I believe a genuinely broad mosque-alliance coalition could realistically reach one to one-and-a-half crore votes and around fifty National Assembly seats - comparable to the MMA'S forty-five seats in 2002 - as previously inactive mukhlisin-e-deen are drawn into political life by the alliance itself. Crucially, the resulting MPs would answer to the mosque alliance, not to any individual party, with the alliance retaining the right to withdraw support from any representative who neglects that duty. Their parliamentary task would be twofold: continually expand and legally protect the mosque alliance's own social and political authority, and resist every government policy that further integrates our economy, society, and state into the imperial order - new defence, economic, or social agreements with imperial powers, deeper entanglement with imperial financial markets, IMF/WTO/WIPO agreements, and privatisation schemes that hand national assets to capitalist monopolies.

A real anti-imperial bloc in parliament, built this

way, could impose a genuine political cost on any government too eager to please our imperial patrons, and could weaken capitalist grip over both our economy and our society - not through revolution, but through the steady, deliberate transfer of state authority away from capitalist institutions, the judiciary, bureaucracy, police, legislature, and media, and toward Islamic social institutions, sustained over time within our existing democratic and constitutional framework.

What Must Be Done

The struggle against imperialism must be comprehensive - spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, economic, and political simultaneously. Targeting only one dimension is insufficient.

I must be honest with my readers. This struggle will not be won quickly. It may span generations - perhaps centuries. The capitalist-imperial system is deeply entrenched, globally organised, and ideologically pervasive. Anyone who promises quick victory is either deceiving you or deceiving themselves.

But the system is also in crisis. Its contradictions are deepening. Mujahideen are advancing in Afghanistan, Palestine, the Sahel, and Somalia. The new cold war is weakening all three imperial centres simultaneously, and environmental crisis is undermining the material foundations of the system itself.

The tide can be turned. But only by those who understand what they are fighting, and why.

This book is an attempt to provide that understanding. What follows - the detailed analysis of imperial economics, financial systems, supply chains, and the strategies of America and China, and the fuller working-out of the strategies for Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan I have only sketched here - is written in that spirit. May Allah make it beneficial.