

— A SATIRICAL DISPATCH FROM THE PROMISED LAND —

MOSES AT MAR-A-LAGO

or, the Diplomatic Post-it Note That Was Meant to Part the Red Sea

The world today looks like a biblical epic rewritten by exhausted diplomats. Trump wanted to enter as Moses, raise his staff, and part the Red Sea. Instead, the miracle has been reduced to a one-page memorandum.

*Not tablets from Sinai. Not divine commandments. A diplomatic Post-it note saying:
'Let us stop fighting now and argue about the impossible parts later.'*

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

TRUMP, as Moses, with a Post-it note.

TEHRAN, as itself, tending an old fire.

PAKISTAN, as the innkeeper presenting an invoice.

INDIA, as the householder reading the Gita in another room.

THE UAE, as the strategic flank that nobody photographed in time.

BEIJING, as a man smiling into his tea.

By **JASPER CREED** | Defence & Strategic Affairs Correspondent

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■ ACT I — THE MIRACLE ON A POST-IT

Donald Trump entered the Iran crisis with the unmistakable expectation of a Cecil B. DeMille production. He would arrive on the eastern shore. He would raise his staff. The waters would part. He would lead the chosen out of bondage and on to a podium where, twenty-four hours later, he would receive a Nobel Peace Prize and possibly a stake in the parted sea's underground oil reserves.

What he got instead was a memorandum. **One page. Single-spaced. Reportedly meant to end the US-Iran conflict and open a thirty-day negotiation window** on the harder questions: nuclear enrichment, sanctions, frozen assets, and the Strait of Hormuz. Sinai, this was not. The Lord did not, in this iteration, descend in cloud and thunder. The Lord, in this iteration, was a White House intern transcribing bullet points while the principal himself was on a different call about tariffs.

There is a particular comedy in the gap between the imagined miracle and the actual deliverable. Trump promised deliverance in twenty-four hours. Geopolitics replied with the patience of the Old Testament: first the desert, then the tribes, then the plague of negotiators, then the sea that refuses, despite considerable rhetorical pressure on cable news, to part. Forty days. Forty nights. One Post-it. Even the Egyptians, in their own historical memory, would have considered this a thin reading of the source material.

Of all the ironies, perhaps the sharpest is this: the original Moses was a man of impediment. Slow of speech, slow of tongue, doubtful of his own commission. He had to be persuaded to do the parting at all. **Trump arrived volunteering to be Moses, and discovered that the Red Sea, for reasons known only to itself, had decided to remain a sea.**

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■ ACT II — THE PATIENCE OF PERSEPOLIS

Iran, meanwhile, is playing a much older game. Trump thinks in television cycles. Tehran thinks in *civilizational time*. There is a difference. The first is measured in chyrons and ratings demographics. The second is measured in dynasties.

Iran has the memory of Persepolis, the patience of bazaars, and the Zoroastrian instinct that fire is not always for explosion. Sometimes it is for endurance. Sometimes the flame in the temple is the point: not the army at the gate, not the satrap at the door, but the fire that has been burning, in some form or other, since before the men at the gate had ancestors capable of writing down their own names.

While Trump searches for a photo-op exit, Tehran is testing whether the great dealmaker is negotiating from strength or merely looking for a dignified retreat from a promise that became too large. **This is what Tehran does. It waits.** It waits while empires arrive and announce themselves. It waits while envoys speak in firm voices about red lines. It waits while the men in the firm voices are replaced by other men in firm voices, who are replaced, eventually, by men with quieter voices, who arrive with one-page memoranda and a faintly pleading tone.

There is, in Tehran's patience, the disquieting confidence of a city that has seen this script performed before. Cyrus arrived. Alexander arrived. The Caliphates arrived. The Mongols arrived. The British arrived (briefly, with their usual bureaucratic enthusiasm). The Americans arrived in 1953 and, by way of complicated regret, kept arriving. The flame is still burning. Each of those arrivals was, at the time, the most important event in world history. Each was succeeded, in due course, by a man with a different staff and a different sea to part. Tehran has filed the receipts.

What Trump reads as Iranian intransigence is, properly understood, Iranian aesthetics. There is no rush. There is no obligation to perform urgency. There is, instead, the calm work of testing whether the man across the table is offering a deal or asking for a hand to walk down the steps with.

***"Cyrus arrived. Alexander arrived. The Mongols arrived. "
Tehran has filed the receipts.
The flame is still burning."***



■ ACT III — THE INNKEEPER WANTS A SERVICE CHARGE

And then comes Pakistan, trying very hard to appear as the holy mediator between empires.

The satire writes itself, and one feels almost guilty for transcribing it. **This is not Solomon delivering judgment.** This is a cash-strapped innkeeper offering to host the peace conference, if someone else can cover the advance, and the laundry, and a small honorarium for the proprietor's dignity. Pakistan wants the photograph. Pakistan wants the relevance. Pakistan wants the applause. And Pakistan would, if it could be arranged with the appropriate discretion, very much like the service charge.

The trouble, as ever, is the balance sheet under the robes. **Pakistan recently repaid a tranche of UAE deposits** while simultaneously depending on Saudi inflows and an IMF programme to stabilise its foreign exchange position. This is not the silhouette of a power broker. This is the silhouette of a man rearranging his overdrafts at the front desk while assuring the management that he will, of course, be paying for the entire conference himself.

America may be tired and confused. America may be holding a one-page memo where there should be tablets of stone. But America still has dollars. It still has carriers. It still has institutions. It still has, through some combination of inertia and habit, residual credibility. Pakistan has press conferences, overdraft diplomacy, and the expression of a man trying to enter the VIP lounge with an expired boarding pass.

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- Hosting peace conference at five-star Islamabad venue: *Cost plus 12% service charge*
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All transactions denominated in foreign currency. Pakistani rupee not accepted on premises.

There is also the small matter of credentials. A genuine mediator, as the discipline understands it, is a party that both sides trust because it has demonstrated, through long observed conduct, that it has nothing to gain from misrepresenting either. Pakistan, as the discipline understands it, is a party that has spent four decades demonstrating, through long observed conduct, that it has something to gain from approximately every conceivable misrepresentation. **This does not, on its face, make for an obvious choice of envoy.** But Islamabad is undeterred. Islamabad has been undeterred since 1979, and sees no reason to begin now.

***"Pakistan has press conferences, overdraft diplomacy,
and the expression of a man trying to enter the VIP lounge
with an expired boarding pass."***



■ ACT IV — KRISHNA AT KURUKSHETRA, AND THE GITA ROLE

And then there is India. Quiet. Composed. Reading the Bhagavad Gita in another room while the empires perform.

India is not trying to be Moses. India is not standing on a mountain asking for applause. India is not Pakistan, attempting to convert vulnerability into visibility. India is, with the patience of Krishna at Kurukshetra, playing the Gita role: **do your duty, protect your interests, keep your balance, and let the noisy men discover, in due course, the cost of their own vanity.**

What this looks like in operational terms is unglamorous. It is the maintenance of working channels with Tehran. It is the deepening of strategic partnership with Washington. It is the quiet expansion of trade and energy ties with the Gulf. It is a clear focus on energy security and maritime access that does not require a press conference to enforce. It is the case-by-case coordination of ship movements through Hormuz while emphasising, with the steadying repetition of a man who has done this before, *de-escalation, diplomacy, freedom of navigation, and unimpeded transit through international waterways.* That is not weakness. That is civilization-scale chess, played at a board where the moves are small but the position, after each one, is improved.

There is a reason the Gita is the comparison. Krishna, in the original text, does not actually fight. He drives the chariot. He gives counsel. He explains, at considerable length, the nature of duty, the necessity of action without attachment, and the foolishness of mistaking inaction for wisdom or wisdom for inaction. He does not, at any point, attempt to convince the assembled hosts that he is personally indispensable to the day's outcome. **The day's outcome turns out, in due course, to require him.**

There is, additionally, the small but significant fact that India does not need this crisis to define it. India is the world's fifth largest economy, on its way to fourth and then third. It does not need to be the man at the press conference. It does not need to be the man with the staff. It is content to be the man who, when the dust settles, owns the road that everyone now needs to use.

***"That is not weakness.
That is civilization-scale chess,
played at a board where the moves are small but the position is improved."***



■ ACT V — THE EMIRATI FLANK

The UAE piece makes India's performance even sharper. While Pakistan's old Gulf friendships have, by 2026, taken on the texture of creditor relationships, India has spent the past four years deepening its strategic partnership with the UAE across trade, energy, investment, finance, and defence.

The arithmetic is unsentimental. India and the UAE have set a target of **two hundred billion dollars in bilateral trade by 2032**. A ten-year LNG agreement between HPCL and ADNOC Gas was signed in the closing months of 2025. UAE participation in Indian infrastructure and financial projects — Dholera, GIFT City, the Greenfield Mumbai Port, the new financial corridor between Surat and Bharuch — is now sufficiently formalised that the announcements have stopped feeling, to the regional press, like news. The India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement has reduced or removed tariffs across a wide range of products and expanded market access for services. The CEPA framework has, in operational practice, become the rails that carry the post-war regional architecture.

The contrast with Pakistan is delicious in a way that requires no rhetorical embellishment. Pakistan is trying to borrow credibility from a crisis. India is quietly compounding credibility through relationships. Pakistan wants to be seen as indispensable. India is becoming indispensable without needing to announce it every morning. Pakistan needs the photograph to prove the relationship exists. India's relationship has produced, by April 2026, the photograph that the world is now arguing about — the one taken in Abu Dhabi on the twenty-sixth, in which the geometry of power was rearranged without any of the participants raising their voices.

There is a deeper point here, and Creed will offer it without commentary. **Strategic friendships are demonstrated, not declared.** Pakistan, for forty years, has declared. India, for the past decade, has demonstrated. The Gulf, which has watched both performances with the practiced patience of bazaar merchants, has drawn the appropriate conclusion. The conclusion is reflected in the trade figures. The trade figures are not, on the whole, kind to Islamabad.

***"Pakistan is trying to borrow credibility from a crisis.
India is quietly compounding credibility through relationships."***



■ ACT VI — TEA IN BEIJING

Somewhere in Beijing, one imagines very serious men smiling into their tea.

Every American distraction in Hormuz is a useful case study for Taiwan. Every hesitation, every redeployment, every sanction dilemma, every public search for an exit, every Truth Social post in which the President of the United States explains, with the bewildered patience of a man addressing an unusually slow audience, that he is the only person in the world capable of solving the problem he has just announced the existence of — every one of these tells Beijing something useful about the present-day American capacity to fight, deter, and conclude.

Beijing is not a sentimental observer. Beijing is taking notes. If Washington can be stretched in the Gulf, it can be tested in the Taiwan Strait. If Washington can be persuaded to settle for a Post-it note in Tehran, it can perhaps be persuaded, at the appropriate hour, to settle for a similar piece of paper in respect of an island Beijing has long described as a province. The case study is being assembled in real time. The case study is free. Iran is paying for it. America is paying for it. The supporting cast — Pakistan, Israel, the Gulf, even Russia — are paying for it. Beijing, contributing only its attention, is the one party in the entire production that is incurring no costs and accumulating only data.

Iran sees this. Russia sees it. India sees it most clearly of all. Each of these powers is, in its own register, drawing the same conclusion from the same evidence, and each is adjusting its posture accordingly. The conclusion is that the post-war regional order — and behind it, the post-war global order — is now being written by parties whose press releases nobody is reading, while the parties whose press releases everyone *is* reading are the ones who have already, without quite realising it, lost the agenda.

"The case study is free. Iran is paying for it. America is paying for it. Beijing, contributing only its attention, is the one party in the production incurring no costs and accumulating only data."



■ THE FINAL TABLEAU

And so we have the closing scene of this particular biblical farce.

MOSES OF MAR-A-LAGO stands before the Red Sea, raising his staff and waiting for the waters to obey.

TEHRAN tends the ancient flame.

BEIJING takes notes for Taiwan.

EUROPE checks the invoice.

PAKISTAN adjusts its sherwani and asks whether mediation comes with dollar reimbursement.

And **INDIA**, the old cradle of civilization, says little, calculates much, strengthens its UAE flank, keeps its Iran channel open, manages Washington, watches China, and lets the impatient empires mistake silence for absence.

There is, in this tableau, the texture of the scene the great epics have always closed with. Loud men, exhausted, demanding miracles. Quiet men, watching, declining to demand anything. Empires running out of breath. Empires still finding theirs. And, somewhere off the main stage, the patient hands of a civilization that has watched all of this happen before, and is content to watch it happen again, knowing that the script has, since approximately the Indus Valley, tended to end the same way.

Trump, of course, will eventually receive his photograph. He may even receive a Nobel Peace Prize, which the Norwegian committee, having concluded several decades ago that the prize is awarded as much for theatrical effect as for actual peace, will not unduly resist. Pakistan will receive its service charge, denominated, one assumes, in the only currency in which it currently transacts. China will receive its case study. Iran will receive what it has always received — time, and the small grim satisfaction of having outlasted yet another envoy. India will receive the outcome.



■ **THE SUMMARY IN FIVE LINES**

Trump wants a miracle.

Pakistan wants a service fee.

China wants a precedent.

Iran wants time.

India wants the outcome.

Of these, only one will, in due course, receive what they came for.

*"The world today looks like a biblical epic rewritten by exhausted diplomats.
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A PERSONAL INVITATION FROM THE CORRESPONDENT



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*The third-best.
You are here.
(That is fine.)*

— JASPER CREED —

An opinion edition. The empirical anchors include: the publicly reported one-page US-Iran framework (May 2026), Pakistan's repayment of UAE deposits and ongoing IMF programme, the India-UAE CEPA targeting USD 200bn in bilateral trade by 2032, the HPCL-ADNOC Gas ten-year LNG agreement, and UAE participation in Dholera, GIFT City and other Indian projects. Tone, satire, biblical imagery, and characterisations are the correspondent's own. Where empires are described as exhausted, the correspondent has been generous. Where Pakistan is described as cash-strapped, the correspondent has been factual.

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