Echoes of Genocide: Bangladesh's Renewed Call for Recognition and Justice

RAHMAN'S TIGHTROPE WALK WITH PAKISTAN

■ BY EARTH NEWS POLITICAL DESK

In the charged language of remembrance, history rarely speaks in whispers. It returns, often uninvited, to shape the present. Bangladesh's newly elected Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has done precisely that—reopening a chapter many believed diplomacy had carefully, if uneasily, folded away. His stark description of the 1971 military crackdown by Pakistan as "one of the most heinous genocides in history" is not merely a commemorative statement; it is a political signal, a recalibration of memory in the service of contemporary statecraft.

Marking Genocide Day on March 25, Rahman invoked the horrors of Operation Searchlight, the brutal campaign launched by the Pakistani military in what was then East Pakistan. His words were deliberate, evocative, and unambiguous. He described the night as one of the darkest in the nation's history, when unarmed civilians were targeted in a systematic campaign of violence. For Bangladesh, this is not just history—it is the moral bedrock of its identity.

Nearly five and a half decades after independence, the wounds of 1971 remain open, their edges sharpened by the absence of closure. Pakistan has long maintained that the issue was resolved through diplomatic agreements and subsequent outreach. Bangladesh, however, continues to see an unfinished reckoning—one that demands not just acknowledgment, but contrition.

Rahman's remarks must be read in this context. They are not an isolated reflection on the past but part of a broader narrative struggle—one that pits memory against diplomacy, justice against pragmatism. His assertion that the massacre was "pre-planned" and his questioning of why resistance failed at the time introduce a subtle but significant layer of introspection, even critique, within Bangladesh's own historical discourse.

The personal dimension of this history is impossible to ignore. Rahman is the son of Ziaur-Rahman, a pivotal figure in the Liberation War. Then a major in the Pakistan Army, Zia-ur-Rahman defected and emerged as one of the earliest voices of resistance. On March 27, 1971, he famously declared Bangladesh's independence on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the towering leader of Bengali nationalism. This legacy inevitably shapes Tarique Rahman's political identity, lending emotional weight to his words. Yet, beyond personal history lies the more intricate terrain of geopolitics. Bangladesh-Pakistan relations have always

been tethered to the unresolved legacy of 1971. While periods of rapprochement have occurred, they have often been fragile, vulnerable to the resurgence of historical grievances.

Recent years had hinted at a thaw. Following the political transition in Bangladesh after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in August 2024, the interim administration under Muhammad Yunus pursued a more conciliatory approach toward Islamabad. Diplomatic engagements resumed, including foreign secretary-level talks after a hiatus of more than a decade. Trade links were revived, and military officials from both sides initiated dialogue—a significant departure from years of estrangement.

Pakistan, for its part, appeared eager to turn the page. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar described 2025 as a "turning point" in bilateral relations, framing the renewed engagement as a long-overdue reconciliation between "brotherly" nations. During a visit to Dhaka, Dar reiterated Islamabad's long-standing position: that the issues of 1971 had been settled decades ago, citing the 1974 tripartite agreement involving India and Bangladesh, as well as subsequent diplomatic gestures, including Pervez Musharraf's 2002 visit to Dhaka.

But history, it seems, does not yield so easily to diplomatic convenience. Bangladesh's interim leadership firmly rejected Pakistan's claim of closure. Then foreign adviser Touhid Hossain underscored that Dhaka does not consider the matter resolved. The demands remain consistent and clear: a formal apology, the repatriation of stranded Pakistani citizens, and an equitable share of pre-1971 financial assets. These are not merely technical issues; they are deeply symbolic, tied to national dignity and historical justice.

Rahman's recent remarks suggest that this position will endure under his leadership, even as his party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), has traditionally adopted a more prag-

matic stance toward Pakistan compared to its rival, the Awami League. The BNP has often prioritized strategic engagement over historical emphasis, seeking to balance memory with realpolitik. Yet, Rahman's invocation of genocide indicates that even pragmatism has its limits.

This raises a crucial question: can Bangladesh simultaneously pursue closer ties with Pakistan while insisting on a fuller acknowledgment of 1971?

The answer lies in the delicate art of political balancing. On one hand, there are compelling reasons for engagement. Regional stability, economic cooperation, and shared strategic interests all argue in favor of improved relations. On the other, there is the enduring imperative of historical justice—a force that cannot be easily sidelined without domestic political cost.

Rahman's message appears to navigate this tension carefully. While his language on 1971 is uncompromising, he also frames remembrance as a forward-looking exercise. His call to up-

hold the ideals of the Liberation War—equality, human dignity, and social justice—is less about rekindling hostility and more about reinforcing national identity. It is an attempt to anchor Bangladesh's future in the values forged during its struggle for independence.

At the same time, his subtle critique of past political leadership—questioning why the genocide could not be resisted—signals a willingness to revisit established narratives. This hints at an evolving historiography within Bangladesh, one that is more self-reflective, even as it remains firm in its condemnation of external aggression.

For Pakistan, the challenge is equally complex. Islamabad's insistence that the chapter of 1971 is closed may be diplomatically expedient, but it risks appearing dismissive of Bangladesh's deeply held grievances. Calls to "move on" or "clean the heart," as articulated by Pakistani leaders, may resonate domestically but are unlikely to find acceptance in Dhaka without substantive gestures.

The exchange between Yunus and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif during the D-8 summit in Cairo captures this dynamic. Yunus expressed a desire to resolve outstanding issues "once and for all," while Sharif reiterated that past agreements had already done so, albeit with a willingness to consider any remaining concerns. The conversation was polite, even cordial—but it revealed a fundamental divergence in perception.

Now, with Rahman firmly in power following a decisive electoral victory, that divergence may become more pronounced. His government inherits a relationship that is cautiously warming but structurally fragile. The path forward will require not just diplomatic finesse but also a willingness on both sides to engage with history in a more meaningful way.

For Bangladesh, the memory of March 25, 1971, is non-negotiable. It is a defining moment, etched into the national consciousness. Any attempt to dilute its significance would be politically untenable. For Pakistan, acknowledging this reality may be the key to unlocking a more durable relationship.

History, after all, is not merely about the past. It is about recognition, responsibility, and the narratives nations choose to carry forward. Tarique Rahman's words serve as a reminder that while time may soften memories, it does not erase them. The ghosts of 1971 continue to linger—not as obstacles to reconciliation, but as unresolved questions demanding answers.

Whether Dhaka and Islamabad can transform these questions into a shared understanding remains to be seen. What is certain, however, is that the conversation is far from over.

Power, Precision, and the Price of Automation

War at the Speed of Thought: The Rise of Artificial Intelligence on the Battlefield

■ BY EARTH NEWS POLITICAL DESK

Wars have always evolved with technology, but rarely has a single conflict altered the character of warfare as profoundly as the one now unfolding across the Persian Gulf. What began in late February 2026 as a coordinated military campaign by the United States and Israel—codenamed "Operation Epic Fury" and "Operation Roaring Lion"—has rapidly expanded into something far larger than a regional confrontation. It is being described, with growing consensus, as the world's first full-scale artificial intelligence-driven war.

This description is not a dramatic exaggeration. It reflects a fundamental transformation in how wars are planned, executed, and experienced. For the first time, artificial intelligence has moved beyond its traditional role as an analytical aid and has become a central actor in the machinery of war. It now shapes targeting decisions, accelerates operational timelines, and influences outcomes at a pace that challenges human comprehension.

The implications are profound. This is not merely a technological shift; it is a moral, strategic, and political turning point—one that raises urgent questions about accountability, control, and the future of armed conflict.

War at Unprecedented Speed

Historically, warfare has been constrained by human limits—limits of cognition, coordination, and communication. Even in the era of modern precision weapons, military operations required time for intelligence verification, planning, and execution. Decisions, however urgent, passed through layers of human judgment.

That constraint has now been dramatically reduced.

In the opening hours of the conflict, the United States reportedly conducted nearly 900 strikes on Iranian targets. Within ten days, that number exceeded 5,500. Such an operational tempo would have been unimaginable in earlier conflicts. It is not simply a matter of improved firepower; it is the result of decision-making processes that have been accelerated to extraordinary speeds.

Artificial intelligence systems are at the core of this transformation. By processing vast quantities of data—from satellites, surveillance networks, intercepted communications, and cyber intelligence—these systems generate actionable insights in real time. They identify patterns, predict movements, and recommend targets with a speed and scale that surpass human capability.

The phrase "war at the speed of thought," once metaphorical, has taken on a literal meaning.

Yet speed, while advantageous in combat, carries inherent risks. Decisions made faster are not always decisions made better.

The Compression of the Kill Chain

The modern battlefield operates through

what is known as the "kill chain"—a sequence that includes detection, identification, targeting, engagement, and assessment. Traditionally, this chain involved multiple layers of human oversight to ensure accuracy and accountability.

Artificial intelligence has compressed this chain into a near-instantaneous process.

Advanced systems now integrate years of accumulated data to construct detailed behavioral models. In the case of Iran, intelligence reportedly included seemingly mundane information—traffic patterns, surveillance footage, and infrastructure usage—collected over long periods. When processed through machine learning algorithms, this data revealed patterns that enabled highly precise targeting.

These capabilities allowed for coordinated strikes against critical infrastructure and leadership figures at the very outset of the conflict. Operations that once required extensive human planning were executed with remarkable speed and precision.

However, this efficiency raises a critical question: when machines play a decisive role in identifying and engaging targets, who is responsible for the outcome?

The answer remains uncertain, and that uncertainty is deeply troubling.

The Rise of Affordable Autonomous Warfare

Another defining feature of this conflict is the widespread use of low-cost autonomous systems, particularly drones. These systems have introduced a new dimension to warfare—one in which affordability and scale can rival sophistication.

The United States has deployed large numbers of inexpensive unmanned combat systems designed for high-volume operations. These drones, capable of autonomous navigation and coordinated swarm behavior, offer a cost-effective alternative to traditional missiles. Their relatively low production cost allows for mass deployment, making them a formidable tool in modern warfare.

Significantly, some of these systems are believed to have been developed through reverse engineering of earlier Iranian designs. This reflects a broader trend: technological innovation in warfare is no longer confined to a single direction. States with varying levels of technological advancement can adapt and replicate capabilities, creating a more complex and competitive environment.

Iran has demonstrated similar adaptability. It has employed drone swarms, cyber operations, and distributed hacking networks to target both military and civilian infrastructure. The battlefield has expanded beyond physical terrain to include digital networks and information systems.

This convergence of technologies has blurred the traditional lines between conventional and asymmetric warfare.

Civilian Harm in the Age of Precision

One of the most widely cited advantages of artificial intelligence in warfare is its potential to reduce collateral damage. Precision targeting, guided by advanced analytics, was expected to

minimize harm to civilians.

The reality has been far more complicated.

The compression of decision-making timelines leaves little room for verification. Artificial intelligence systems rely heavily on the quality and accuracy of their data. When that data is outdated or incomplete, the consequences can be devastating.

A tragic example occurred when a missile strike near a primary school resulted in the deaths of more than 170 civilians, many of them children. The intended target was a nearby military facility. However, the targeting system failed to distinguish the school as a separate structure, likely due to outdated intelligence.

Such incidents highlight a critical limitation of artificial intelligence. While it excels at identifying patterns, it struggles with contextual understanding. It can recognize structures but may not accurately interpret their current use. It can predict behavior but cannot fully account for human unpredictability.

When combined with rapid decision-making, these limitations can lead to irreversible errors.

The Intensification of Uncertainty

Far from eliminating the uncertainty of war, artificial intelligence has, in some respects, amplified it.

Drone swarms, for example, can saturate airspace and overwhelm defense systems, increasing the likelihood of misidentification. In one incident, allied aircraft were mistakenly targeted and destroyed during a high-intensity engagement. This event underscored the risks of operating in an environment where machines and humans must interact under extreme pressure.

The complexity of modern warfare, enhanced by automation, creates new forms of confusion. Systems designed to improve clarity can, under certain conditions, contribute to chaos.

The Illusion of Perfect Control

There is a persistent belief that advanced technology can make warfare more controlled and predictable. Artificial intelligence, with its capacity for precision and speed, seems to promise a cleaner form of conflict.

This belief is increasingly being challenged.

Artificial intelligence systems are not infallible. They can be vulnerable to errors, manipulation, and unforeseen scenarios. Cyberattacks can disrupt operations in ways that are difficult to anticipate. Algorithms can fail when confronted with conditions outside their training data.

Moreover, the delegation of critical decisions to machines raises ethical concerns. The concept of "meaningful human control" becomes difficult to sustain when decisions occur faster than humans can intervene.

In this context, control may be more apparent than real.

Diplomacy Struggling to Keep Pace

While the battlefield has embraced artificial intelligence, diplomatic efforts to regulate its use remain fragmented and slow.

International forums have attempted to address the challenges posed by autonomous weapons and military artificial intelligence. Discussions have focused on establishing guidelines, defining levels of autonomy, and ensuring accountability.

However, these efforts have struggled to keep pace with technological developments. Major powers have shown reluctance to commit to binding agreements, fearing that restrictions could place them at a strategic disadvantage.

This dynamic creates a dilemma: states recognize the need for regulation but are unwilling to limit their own capabilities in an environment of competition.

The result is a widening gap between technological reality and international governance.

Air Superiority and Evolving Military Doctrine

Despite the transformative role of artificial intelligence, traditional principles of military strategy remain relevant.

Israel's initial operations focused on suppressing and destroying enemy air defenses, a critical step in establishing air superiority. Through a combination of cyber operations, drone strikes, and conventional airpower, it created conditions that allowed for sustained operations within Iranian airspace.

This approach reflects a continuity in military thinking: control of the air remains a decisive factor in modern warfare.

However, the methods used to achieve this control have evolved. Artificial intelligence has enhanced target selection, mission planning, and execution, enabling faster and more coordinated operations.

The integration of new technologies with established strategies illustrates how warfare is changing—not by abandoning the past, but by building upon it.

Strategy Without a Clear End State

For all the tactical successes observed in this conflict, a fundamental question remains unanswered: what is the ultimate objective?

Military operations are not ends in themselves. They are instruments used to achieve political goals. Destroying infrastructure, eliminating leadership, and gaining air superiority are means to an end, not the end itself.

In the current conflict, that end remains unclear.

Is the goal to dismantle Iran's nuclear capabilities permanently? To weaken its military leadership? To influence its political system? Each objective requires a different strategy and carries different risks.

Without a clearly defined end state, there is a danger that military actions become disconnected from broader political outcomes. This can lead to prolonged instability and repeated cycles of conflict.

The Human Cost of Accelerated Warfare

At its core, this conflict is not about technology but about its impact on human lives.

The acceleration of warfare has compressed not only decision-making but also the experience of suffering. Casualties that might once have accumulated over weeks now occur within hours. Civilian infrastructure, caught in the path of rapid and repeated strikes, bears a significant burden.

The expectation that artificial intelligence would make warfare more humane has not been fully realized. Instead, the efficiency of modern systems has, in some cases, increased the scale and speed of destruction.

This raises a difficult but essential question: does greater efficiency in warfare necessarily lead to better outcomes for humanity?

The evidence so far suggests otherwise.

A World at a Turning Point

The implications of this conflict extend far beyond the Persian Gulf. As artificial intelligence becomes more deeply integrated into military systems, its influence will continue to grow.

The international community faces a critical challenge: how to harness the benefits of artificial intelligence while mitigating its risks. This requires not only technological solutions but also ethical frameworks, legal standards, and political will.

Key questions must be addressed. How can accountability be ensured when machines play a central role in decision-making? What constitutes meaningful human control in an automated environment? How can international norms be established in a competitive global landscape?

These are complex issues, but they cannot be ignored.

Conclusion: The Future of War and Responsibility

The conflict unfolding in 2026 represents a defining moment in the history of warfare. It marks the transition from human-centered decision-making to machine-assisted, and in some cases machine-driven, operations.

This transition offers both opportunities and dangers. Artificial intelligence can enhance precision, improve efficiency, and reduce risks for military personnel. At the same time, it introduces new uncertainties, ethical dilemmas, and potential for unintended consequences.

The challenge lies in finding a balance.

Technology will continue to advance. That is inevitable. What remains uncertain is how it will be governed and how it will be used. The choices made today will shape the nature of conflict for decades to come.

If the lessons of this war are not carefully considered, the future may be defined by conflicts that are faster, more intense, and more destructive than ever before.

The task before the global community is clear: to ensure that the evolution of warfare does not outpace the principles of humanity that must guide it.

The alternative is a world where decisions are made in an instant, but their consequences endure for generations.