

## Analysis

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## Running Dry: Competing for water on a thirsty planet

**LONDON:** In India's 'Silicon Valley' tech hub of Bangalore, where gleaming office complexes and apartment blocks have sprouted faster than the plumbing to serve them, only 60% of the water the city needs each day arrives through its water pipes. Much of the rest is pumped from groundwater wells and delivered to homes and offices by a fleet of private and government tanker trucks that growl through the streets of the city of 12 million.

But Bangalore's groundwater is running dry. A government think tank last year predicted the city - like others in India, including New Delhi - could run out of usable groundwater as early as 2020 as aquifers deplete. By 2030, half of India's population - now about 1.4 billion people - may lack enough drinking water, the report predicted. Around the world, fresh water is fast becoming a dangerously scarce resource, driving a surge in fights to secure supplies and fears over rising numbers of deaths in water conflicts.

### Water conflict

Growing populations, more farming and economic growth, climate change and a rush of people to cities all are increasing pressure on the world's limited water supplies, researchers say. UN data shows 2 billion people - a quarter of the world's population - now are using water much faster than natural sources, such as groundwater, can be replenished.

In 2015, the United Nations' 193 members agreed a new set of global development goals, including one to give everyone access to safe and affordable drinking water by 2030. But in places from Africa to the Middle East, "big rivers are drying out, the population is increasing, demand is piling up and we can't supply (people) with water and food", warned General Tom Middendorp, a former Dutch defence chief.

Globally, the number of conflicts related to water scarcity has risen from roughly 16 in the 1990s to about 73 in the past five years, according to a chronology maintained by the Pacific Institute, which tracks freshwater security issues. In the 1990s, conflicts driven by water scarcity led to about 350 deaths, in places from Yemen to Nigeria, according to the chronology based on news reports and other sources.

But in the last five years, at least 3,000 people - and perhaps more than 10 times that many, if estimates of refugee deaths by Medecins Sans Frontieres are included - have died in clashes related to water in a huge range of countries, it noted. "We see conflicts over water, unfortunately, almost everywhere around the world now as competition grows over the scarce resource," said Peter Gleick, co-founder of the California-based Pacific Institute. "If you look at the number of conflicts over water in the past few decades, it's going up exponentially."

Water shortages are likely to lead to a growing death toll in coming decades, as farmers struggle to access enough water to grow crops and families turn to riskier water sources to slake their thirst, researchers say. So far, "with very rare exceptions, no one dies of literal thirst", Gleick said. "But more and more people die from contaminated water or conflicts over access to water."

### Rethinking water

Besides fuelling conflict, increased water scarcity is also beginning to spark widespread reassessment of how water is captured, managed, shared and used around the world. In the American West, legal challenges - including by Native American tribes - may reshape old water rights systems that give farmers or cities with "senior" rights as much water as they like, leaving others and natural ecosystems increasingly dry. The West needs rules "reflective of modern needs and desires, rather than the rules we've had for 150 years and have had to stick by", said Bob Anderson, director of the Native American Law Center at the University of Washington.

Thirsty cities from Singapore to Los Angeles, worried their supplies of water may fall short, are trying innovative ideas to cut water demand and find new sources of the precious liquid. Singapore, for instance, has thrown a wall across a seafront bay, gradually turning what once was saltwater into a huge new freshwater reservoir for the city-state, which today relies on neighboring Malaysia for much of its water.

"It is crucial to be water-independent," said Adam Reutens-Tan, a Singapore resident whose family has slashed its water use, through measures from serving one-pot meals to save on dish-washing to taking five-minute showers. Los Angeles, which built its growth on water sucked from the distant Owens and Colorado rivers, is looking to capture stormwater and more rain to recharge its own aquifers as climate change and competition threaten its old supplies. — Reuters

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Supporters of US President Donald Trump and US First Lady Melania Trump pose outside Buckingham Palace in central London yesterday, on the first day of their three-day State Visit to the UK. — AFP

## Blood, treasure or fantasy: What is the UK-US 'special relationship'?

Britain's so-called special relationship with the United States was one of the most enduring alliances of the 20th century, though Brexit and the presidency of Donald Trump have raised questions about its future. Trump began a three-day visit to Britain yesterday almost a year after he created controversy during his last trip by praising Prime Minister Theresa May's rivals and criticizing the way she was handling the Brexit negotiations. During Trump's presidency, the alliance with Britain - famously nurtured by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s - is increasingly fraying. What is the special relationship, and how do the United States and Britain compare on key measures?

### Economy

The United States is the world's biggest economy, worth about \$21.3 trillion or 24 percent of global GDP, while Britain is the fifth largest, worth about \$2.8 trillion or 3 percent of global GDP. While the European Union accounts for about half of Britain's external trade, the United States is by far its biggest single trading partner, followed by Germany, the Netherlands, France and China. Britain, for its part, is the United States' seventh largest trade partner, after

China, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Germany and South Korea. The United States and Britain both report a surplus in goods trade with the other, indicating they are not competing like with like. For decades, Washington and London shared a desire to open up world markets to free trade.

### Military

The United States, which spends more on its military than the next seven highest-spending countries combined, is proposing to spend \$686 billion on defense this year. It has the second largest number of nuclear weapons after Russia. The US Navy operates a fleet of 14 Ohio-class nuclear submarines, each of which can carry 20 Trident II D5 missiles with multiple, independently-targeted warheads.

Britain, which has the biggest defense budget in the EU, spends about 40 billion pounds (\$53 billion) a year. France and Russia are the only other nuclear powers in Europe. Britain has a fleet of four Vanguard-class submarines, which can each carry 16 Trident II D5 missiles. These are leased from a pool of such missiles that it shares with the US Navy.

The two militaries have fought side-by-side in Europe, Korea, Kuwait, Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya and

Syria. Britain views the US-led NATO alliance as the foundation of its defense. Trump has demanded that Western allies pay more into NATO. U.S. forces operate out of several military bases in Britain including the Lakenheath, Croughton and Menwith Hill air bases.

### Intelligence

Intelligence cooperation between the United States and Britain is extremely close and one of the main areas where the alliance works in practice. During World War Two, the two countries forged a close intelligence sharing deal that was later extended to include Canada, Australia and New Zealand and became known as the "Five Eyes". It brings the United States' modern, computer-powered technological spying together with Britain's more traditional human intelligence operations, which are strong in the former Soviet Union, Europe and the Middle East.

Cooperation between the main domestic and foreign spy agencies is close. Because their geographical strengths are complementary, data collected by Britain's GCHQ eavesdropping agency is of particular use to the US National Security Agency (NSA). The US intelligence budget excluding military intelligence is \$60 bil-

lion while the UK intelligence budget is 2.3 billion pounds (\$2.89 billion).

### Finance

London and New York are the world's two biggest financial centers. While London is by far the biggest centre for foreign exchange trading and international lending, New York is king for bonds and stocks. New York overtook London as the globe's most attractive financial centre last year, according to the Z/Yen global financial centers index, which ranks 100 centers on factors such as infrastructure and access to quality staff. London dominates the \$5.1 trillion-a-day global foreign currency markets: Far more currency is exchanged in London than the United States and the rest of the EU put together. Wall Street's S&P 500, an index grouping the stocks of 500 of the largest US corporations, is worth about \$25.7 trillion, according to Refinitiv data. By comparison, the FTSE all-share index, which groups more than 600 shares traded on the London Stock Exchange, is worth about 2.5 trillion pounds. The US bond market, including government and corporate debt, is worth over \$40.7 trillion, according to the Bank for International Settlements, while Britain's bond market is worth \$5.8 trillion. — Reuters

## What would it take for US Congress to impeach Trump?

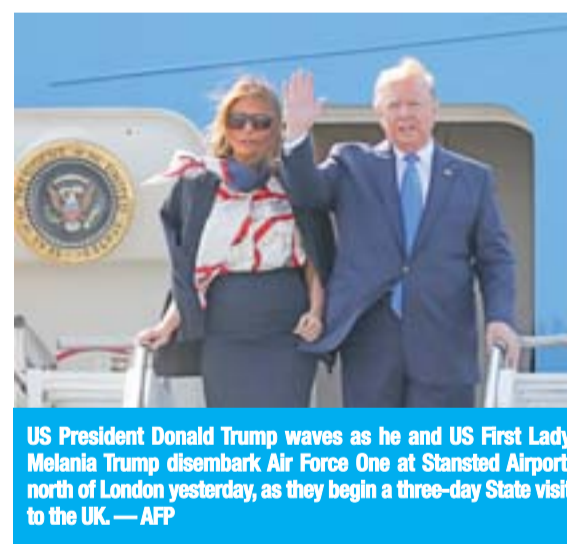
US President Donald Trump, under growing pressure from numerous investigations of him and his administration, last week scorned talk of being removed from office via the impeachment process as "dirty, filthy, disgusting." The US Constitution empowers Congress to impeach the president, although no president has ever been removed from office as a direct result of this arduous procedure. Some lawmakers in the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives favor starting the process. But the Senate, where it would have to end, is controlled by Trump's fellow Republicans. They are unlikely to remove him from office, unless public sentiment shifts strongly in favor of it. The following is how the impeachment process works.

### Why impeachment?

The founders of the United States created the office of the presidency and feared that its powers could be abused. So they included impeachment as a central part of the Constitution. They gave the House "the sole power of impeachment;" the Senate, "the sole power to try all impeachments;" and the chief justice of the Supreme Court the duty of presiding over impeachment trials in the Senate. The president, under the Constitution, can be removed from office for "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors." What exactly that means is unclear. Historically, it can encompass corruption and other abuses, including trying to obstruct judicial proceedings. Before he became president in 1974, Republican Vice President Gerald Ford said: "An impeachable offense is whatever a majority of the House of Representatives considers it to be at a given moment in history." Ford replaced President Richard Nixon, who resigned before Congress could impeach him.

### How does it work?

Impeachment begins in the House, which debates and votes on whether to bring charges against the president via approval of an impeachment resolution, or "articles of impeachment," by a simple majority of the House's 435 members. If the House approves such a resolution, a trial is then held in the Senate. House members act as the prosecutors; the senators as jurors; the chief justice presides. A two-thirds majority vote is required in the 100-member Senate to convict and remove a president. This has never happened. Presidents Andrew Johnson in



US President Donald Trump waves as he and US First Lady Melania Trump disembark Air Force One at Stansted Airport, north of London yesterday, as they begin a three-day State visit to the UK. — AFP

1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998 were impeached by the House, but both of them stayed in office after being acquitted by the Senate.

### Can Supreme Court overturn?

No Trump has said on Twitter that he would ask the Supreme Court to intervene if Democrats tried to impeach him. But the founders explicitly rejected making a Senate conviction appealable to the federal judiciary.

### Proof of wrongdoing?

In a typical criminal court case, jurors are told to convict only if there is "proof beyond a reasonable doubt," a fairly stringent standard. Impeachment proceedings are different. The House and Senate can set their own standards for proof.

### Party breakdown in congress?

The House has 235 Democrats, 197 Republicans and three vacant seats. As a result, the Democrats could impeach Trump with no Republican support. In 1998, when Republicans had a House majority, the chamber voted largely along party lines to impeach Clinton, a Democrat. The Senate now has 53 Republicans, 45 Democrats and two independents who usually vote with the Democrats. Conviction and removal of a president would require 67 votes. So, for Trump to be impeached, at least 20 Republicans and all the Democrats and independents would have to vote against him.

### Who becomes president?

In the unlikely event the Senate convicted Trump, Vice President Mike Pence would become president for the remainder of Trump's term, which ends on Jan 20, 2021. — Reuters

## Burning tyres: The murky oil business polluting Asia

When local investigators scoured a riverbed in southern Malaysia for clues in a chemical dumping case that hospitalized over one thousand people earlier this year, they found a cocktail of toxins, including a colorless liquid commonly secreted when tyres are recycled. That led environment officials and police to a small firm called P Tech Resources involved in pyrolysis - a business of burning old tyres to make low-grade oil that industry sources say is also common elsewhere in Southeast Asia, China and India.

Police have charged a lorry driver and all three of P Tech's directors for violating a law prohibiting the illegal dumping of waste. The firm's directors and the firm also each face 15 charges for offences related to waste controls and air pollution brought by the environment department. They have all denied wrongdoing. Lawyers representing them and local police declined comment citing ongoing court proceedings.

Reuters was not able to reach the three directors of P Tech or the company secretary, the only four company officials listed in documents filed with Malaysia's companies regulator. Its premises were closed and calls to its registered office went unanswered. The documents show P Tech, registered in 2017, manufactures and trades tyre oils.

Done properly, in a controlled environment, tyre pyrolysis has been lauded by the recycling industry as a green way of turning a complex waste into a useful energy source. In this process, tyres are heated in the absence of oxygen and the gases released are condensed into a low-quality oil that can be used in asphalt or fuel oil, depending on its purity.

Some firms in Europe and the United States have developed technology to limit emissions and waste from pyrolysis, but with low margins this green approach has not had widespread commercial success, industry experts said. Reuters visited the premises of P Tech. Piles of tyres bound in bales, a tall chimney and a filthy pond could be seen behind closed gates. Neighboring workers told Reuters the firm operated at night and its work produced a stench that would linger until the morning. No one from P Tech was available for comment.

"Tyre pyrolysis is not a problem. The problem is with the mismanagement of it," Yeo Bee Yin, Malaysia's environment minister told Reuters when asked about the pyrolysis industry in her country. She noted P Tech was licensed for pyrolysis but did not speak specifically about the dumping case. Yeo said Malaysia used to have "very lax environmental laws" and "very low punishments" for breaches but has stepped up enforcement recently and closed down some illegal pyrolysis operators in order to better regulate the sector. — Reuters