

Where Does the Ummah of Islam Stand in the War Over Rare Earth Elements (REEs)?

(Translated)

<https://www.alwaie.org/archives/article/20244>

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Al Waie Magazine Issue No. 477

Fortieth Year, Shawwal 1447 AH corresponding to April 2026 CE

These days, news headlines are dominated by numerous articles concerning Rare Earth Elements (REEs), highlighting the intense competition to possess and control them, or rather, a war called the Rare Earth War. But what exactly are REEs? Why this race, and what lies behind it? Why are they at the heart of a trade war that could escalate into a military conflict? And why is the president of the world's most powerful country making such a flurry of activity, flying from country to country, issuing threats and promises, and forging deals and agreements to acquire REEs?

With industrial development, technological advancements, and the global shift towards a less harmful world, the demand for certain REEs with low emissions is increasing. These elements are essential components in the most important advanced industries upon which the world increasingly relies, such as those related to the internet, medical research, advanced weaponry, and sophisticated communications. Hence, the heavy reliance on certain types of minerals called REEs, due to their limited number, locations, manufacturing processes, and supply chains.

REEs are a group of 17 metallic elements with a range of unique physical, chemical, magnetic, and optical properties that make them highly valuable. They are used in various fields and a wide range of vital industries, including consumer products such as smartphones, television screens, and computers; clean energy products such as electric vehicle motors and wind turbines; and military applications such as missile systems, modern fighter jets, and other military equipment. They are also used in the manufacturing of electric vehicle batteries, medical devices, glass, lasers, lighting, computers, and robotics.

On the other hand, they are called rare elements because of the difficulty in extracting them and the complexity of their separation, refining, and commercial processing. This is due to their presence within complex materials. Furthermore, the number of countries capable of refining and processing them is extremely limited, even though some of them exist in larger quantities than copper, for example. They are classified as rare metals because extracting them in small quantities requires removing tons of rubble and rock, causing environmental pollution and high costs. Then comes the separation of the metals and their preparation for use. China has managed to reduce the production cost of some of them by 30% compared to any other country, making it a major exporter. China, which focused on advanced industries from the early 1990s onward, recognized the importance of rare metals in modern and smart industries. It invested in developing the technology for extracting, separating, and refining them, ultimately dominating 90% of global production by the beginning of the 21st century. This was facilitated by low labor costs and the country's less stringent environmental regulations, allowing it to export its surplus production at competitive prices. Therefore, China has come to dominate the rare metals industry.

These elements possess unique properties that make them indispensable in advanced industries. REEs, when used in high-tech devices, can make them smaller, cheaper, and lighter, and they also improve the quality of various technologies. Their strong magnetic properties are used to create powerful, compact magnets, which contributes to miniaturizing electronic devices, strengthening metals, and increasing their efficiency.

As a result of a greedy, colonialist capitalist ideology based on conflict, competition, and monopoly, these metals have become central to the struggle and strategic importance of

major powers. REEs have become a weapon that major powers compete to control, given their crucial role in securing their economic and political standing. REEs are not merely raw materials; they are instruments of power that enhance influence in the technology market and the military economy. Some countries are even considering finding new and unconventional sources, such as deep-sea mining or even mining on the moon, because these metals have become a prominent feature of the modern geopolitical conflict between the world's two largest economies. These two countries are the United States and China. Therefore, these minerals have become more than just an economic resource; they have become a tool for political pressure between Washington and Beijing. China possesses 44 million tons of REEs, representing half of the world's reserves and 23 times the amount held by the United States. China controls approximately 70% of global production and monopolizes more than 80% of refining and processing operations, granting it immense power to influence global supply chains and use them as a geopolitical bargaining chip. Furthermore, China monopolizes the production of seven rare earth elements essential for manufacturing permanent magnets, which are crucial in various modern industries, controlling 90% of permanent magnet production.

Another major challenge for the US in REEs processing is China's dominance in global mining and refining operations. This poses a significant problem for the US in extracting and processing Rare Earth Elements, as it sends extracted materials to China for further processing. Furthermore, China has imposed restrictions on seven REEs that are crucial to future industries.

Regarding tariffs, China has retaliated against US tariffs by imposing and increasing tariffs on minerals exported to the US and Europe. This has led to higher production costs for European and American goods, particularly electric vehicles, resulting in the layoff of hundreds of thousands of workers. China now supplies 90% of the global electric vehicle market. China has also prohibited the sale of any products containing Chinese REEs to other countries. Additionally, it has imposed restrictions on the transfer of rare earth mining and extraction technology.

On the other hand, Rare Earth Elements (REEs) have become central to military industries that rely on artificial intelligence. This has led the United States to fear China's military capabilities and its potential for military superiority. China has increased its military spending to \$230 billion, augmented its nuclear arsenal to 500 warheads, and acquired 370 naval vessels, including ships and submarines. It has also developed its space programs and military satellites. China is attempting to close the gap with the United States in military matters, noting that the American F-35 fighter jet requires 450 kilograms of REEs.

Therefore, China could threaten the American and European defense industry if it imposed restrictions on it, making REEs a focus of geopolitical conflict between the United States and China, which provides an opportunity for China to surpass America in the fields of defense, space, automobiles and artificial intelligence, which prompted Trump to describe China as an evil country that is holding the world hostage. He raised tariffs on China and promised to retaliate, so China responded in kind. Then the American retreat in dealing with China began, and a meeting took place between the Chinese and American presidents and experts after Trump changed his tone and turned it into a conciliatory tone, where Trump described Chinese President Xi as an old friend with whom he has a very good relationship in a clear Machiavellian retreat.

REEs have thus become a strategic commodity in the competition between major powers: China, the United States, Japan, and the European Union. These powers have even filed a lawsuit against China at the World Trade Organization, arguing that the tariffs and export quotas China imposed on REEs violated WTO rules. Reliance on China has been recognized as a strategic risk, prompting major powers to take steps to decouple from Chinese supply chains by exploring for resources domestically and seeking alternative sources in Africa, particularly in resource-rich countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Namibia, and Nigeria. Some companies have also worked on

developing methods to recover REEs from old electronic devices and are attempting to find industrial alternatives and substitutes for REEs to reduce dependency on China.

US President Donald Trump attempted to gain control of Greenland, a Danish territory rich in REEs. The US also struck a deal with Pakistan, which possesses 92 different minerals across most of its territory, in exchange for US investments. In Morocco, a \$60 billion rare earth mineral agreement was signed in exchange for US recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara and its support in the UN Security Council against Algeria. The Algerian ambassador in Washington offered his country's willingness to discuss a rare earth mineral deal with the US, similar to the one with Ukraine. Ukraine, for its part, signed agreements with the US for REEs worth half a trillion dollars in exchange for reconstruction efforts following the Russo-Ukrainian War. Agreements were also signed with Japan for the supply of 16 million tons of REEs, and with Malaysia for 18.5 million tons. Afghanistan, another country rich in REEs, is now being targeted by the US, after its defeat and withdrawal, as it attempts to re-establish its Bagram Air Base to exploit the minerals, conduct military operations, and secure supply routes for REEs that pass through Afghanistan. Sudan's fields are also rich in REEs used in strategic industries. One of the objectives of the civil war instigated by the US was to seize complete control of the country's resources and REEs, eliminate its rivals, and work towards the fragmentation of Sudan, including the secession of resource-rich Darfur, to exploit its resources. Nor should we forget the problems it stirs up against every resource-rich country, such as what it stirs up against Nigeria under the pretext of killing Christians, or resource-rich Venezuela under the pretext of drug smuggling, and before them Iraq. America has made a contract with Australia regarding REEs, as it possesses 5.7 million tons.

In Turkiye, Erdogan announced that there are 694 million tons of resources, primarily REEs. He stated that Turkiye possesses 10 of the 17 REEs, amounting to approximately 12.5 million tons of rare earth oxides, and added that their extraction requires international cooperation. Europe, on the other hand, relies heavily on China for REEs, despite having some untapped reserves. Domestic production covers only a small fraction of the demand and faces environmental and social challenges that hinder its development.

This is the reality of the economic struggle over REEs, even though Allah (swt) created them not for conflict and war, but to serve humanity. Allah (swt) has made subservient to humanity, placing all that is in the heavens and the earth to serve humankind, their interests, and their various needs. The earth is filled with mines and raw materials required by numerous industries. If it is used in accordance with what Allah (swt) has commanded, it will be good for all of humanity, even in the face of conflict, which uses force, iron, and great might to spread the religion, prevent the encroachment of the infidels, and protect Muslims, their wealth, and their honor.

Allah (swt) has also distributed these minerals and resources across the earth according to His will, not equally. However, human nature, greed, competition, and the desire for dominance have made these resources a subject of competition among governments throughout history, all vying for access and exploitation. Regarding the importance of mineral resources and their uses, Allah (swt) says, **﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن يَنْصُرُهُ ۖ﴾** **“And We sent down iron with its great might, benefits for humanity, and means for Allah to prove who is willing to stand up for Him and His messengers without seeing Him. Surely Allah is All-Powerful, Almighty”** [TMQ Surah Al-Hadid, 57:25].

Therefore, Islam has defined how the Ummah's capabilities, resources, and wealth should be utilized for two purposes: first, to establish and spread the Deen of Allah (swt), and second, to meet humanity's needs and secure its interests.

The Muslim World has been blessed by Allah (swt) with immense wealth, a fact beyond dispute. Muslim lands possess vast resources and numerous rare and precious minerals, yet these remain untapped by the Ummah of Islam. It is imperative that Muslims invest in and utilize these resources. Mining, rare minerals, and natural resources have become a political

issue among the great powers. Therefore, a unified and effective response is necessary, and this can only be achieved through the unity of the Islamic Ummah, liberation from its rulers, and the establishment of the Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly Guided Caliphate). This Khilafah would confront China, America, Europe, Russia, and all other powers coveting the resources of the Muslim world, and end the war waged against it by its agent leaders. It is crucial to emphasize a fundamental truth: the proper and effective utilization of the wealth, rare minerals, and natural mineral resources of the Muslim world is virtually impossible in the absence of Khilafah and under the dominance of Kufr (disbelief).

Islam has clarified the fundamental Shariah rulings of economics and ownership, dividing ownership into three categories: private ownership, state ownership, and public ownership. Natural and subsurface resources, which are considered inexhaustible and whose reserves are constantly being replenished, such as oil, gas, gold, iron, uranium, lithium and other strategic and rare earth elements, clearly fall under the category of public ownership. It has been established that this type of ownership is not for private individuals and does not belong to the state, but rather to the Islamic Ummah. It is to be managed as a matter of public interest for Muslims, unlike the capitalist system in its view of natural resource ownership and extraction methods. In the Western capitalist system, natural resources such as oil, gas, and minerals become exclusive property through processes like privatization or concessions granted to large local or foreign corporations.

It is essential to remember that surrendering or privatizing the Ummah's wealth, or granting concessions to transnational corporations and countries within the framework of the capitalist economic model, is a major political and economic catastrophe. It is a form of colonialism that ties the economies of poor countries to those of global powers and international colonial institutions, as seen in the experiences of African, Latin American, and Muslim-majority countries. The entry of foreign companies has not brought economic progress. Instead, it has led to political instability, widespread corruption, the plundering of resources, and the erosion of economic and political independence. Furthermore, handing over the Ummah's wealth to colonialist powers, whether through their corporations or international institutions, is not only invalid from an Islamic perspective, but also a grave political and security error, a form of political suicide. Islam forbids any type of economic cooperation that strengthens the enemies of Islam, allows non-Muslims to control Muslim resources, or results in the subjugation of the Islamic Ummah. Islam also forbids the entry of colonialist companies into Muslim lands under the guise of extracting natural resources, because they are not in reality commercial companies, but instead they are affiliated with political, intelligence, and military agencies seeking to achieve colonialist goals, and because this is considered cooperation with the enemy and strengthening them. It is similar to handing over weapons to the enemy during war, especially countries that are considered countries at war with Muslims such as China, America, Europe, Russia, and other colonialist powers, as this is considered assistance to regimes hostile to Islam.

Therefore, the Muslim world must utilize its own resources, processing and mining them. Establishing an industrial infrastructure for processing and mining is essential, given its immense political and economic benefits. Islam is not merely a Deen of individual worship; it is a distinct way of life, offering clear, just, and humane Shariah rulings, even in the smallest political and economic dimensions concerning the well-being of the Ummah, including mineral resources.

Finally, the struggle over Rare Earth Elements (REEs) will remain intense in the future, and the future of artificial intelligence will depend on Ummah's ability to secure these strategic resources. With the escalating competition between the United States, Europe, and China, technological security and economic independence are inextricably linked to access to these minerals. Consequently, we see America imposing its global system of globalization, privatization, and exploitation through the threat of force or via its instruments: the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations, under the guise of investment and cooperation, and other colonial tools and methods, to infiltrate countries and plunder our resources.

It is worth noting that the rivalry between the two powers is not limited to trade, but extends to artificial intelligence, clean energy, and defense. This conflict has led to instability, making gold a safe haven, which has driven up its price and slowed economic growth and development. The United States seeks to establish an international alliance to undermine China's dominance, known as the Pax Silica, a deterrence alliance. It works to diversify its sources of Rare Earth Elements (REEs) from other countries by any means available, even by force, and attempts to develop recycling technologies and establish domestic factories to extract and process available REEs, despite the environmental challenges and high costs.

On the political front, America is working to keep two issues on the table to pressure China: the Taiwan issue and the North and South Korea issue. This is intended to keep China preoccupied and prevent it from gaining a foothold in the Middle East. The US will use its Middle Eastern proxies, such as the rulers of Turkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, as players to maintain its hegemony, in accordance with Henry Kissinger's plan that whoever controls the Middle East can control the global market and energy supply routes.

America had sidelined China in the Ukrainian-Russian war and weakened its role for political and economic reasons. It distanced China from Russia, when China feared being subjected to the same sanctions as Russia. America seized control of all the political levers in the war, weakening Europe and positioning itself as the dominant player, to the point where Europe cannot take any action against Russia without its approval. Yet, it's worth noting that America is weaker today than ever before; it is little more than an overbearing global policeman. Currently, it seeks to escape its domestic crises, such as unemployment and huge debt. It can neither afford to wage war with China, nor can it engage in an arms race with it. Therefore, the current situation is favorable for China to develop and activate its nuclear programs to become a rival to America. It also presents an opportunity for the Muslim World to regain its strength, unity, and global leadership, transforming from a battleground and arena of conflict into a leading force on the world stage.

Therefore, the Islamic Ummah is at the heart of the conflict, so it must unify and establish the Khilafah Rashidah (rightly guided Caliphate), and it must search for rare earth elements and others to utilize them, and this is in the interest of care and in the interest of preparing to terrorize the enemy. We have seen the ban imposed on the Muslim World in the field of possessing effective weapons, by supplying the armed forces in Muslim countries with defective or limited-effective weapons, and these weapons are only directed as ordered and stipulated by the manufacturer and supplier.

Therefore, the Khilafah must ensure the existence of research centers that enable industry in the Khilafah to become a global leader. This will entail significant state investment and linking industry with university research to meet the Khilafah's needs for engineers in all fields, as well as experts and planners in all types of manufacturing. Furthermore, the Khilafah must encourage private sector institutions to play their role in research, development, innovation, and competition.

The Khilafah's pursuit of becoming an industrial state necessitates the existence of heavy industry, such as the manufacturing of engines and industrial machinery, the factory of factories, which is the engine of strategic industry. This machine industry must be directed towards the benefit of the Ummah and its superiority over all other nations. As you know, the Muslim countries, if unified, are capable of transforming from followers to influential players in the global power equation. The Muslim lands possess the correct ideology, geographical expanse, strategic location, natural resources, and immense human potential. However, they need a comprehensive project that unifies their will and liberates their political and economic decisions from foreign domination.

In the preamble to its draft constitution, Hizb ut Tahrir adopted articles defining public property, its types, and how it should be utilized. It also addressed the issue of owning factories and military manufacturing facilities, including heavy industries such as engines, machinery, vehicle bodies, and electronic components and related industries. Furthermore, it adopted articles prohibiting the state from converting private property into public property,

arguing that public ownership is inherent in the nature and characteristics of wealth, not determined by the Khilafah's opinion. The Khilafah cannot grant permission to any individual, to the exclusion of the rest of its citizens, to own or exploit public property. It asserts that the state is capable of controlling global markets because it possesses the correct and beneficial ideology for human happiness, and it is capable of reshaping the concepts of economics, trade, justice, and the common good. Moreover, it controls most of the world's resources within its borders, enabling it to impose its conditions and dominance over all rare earth elements due to its economic strength, the needs of other nations for these resources, its strategic location, and its control over energy supply routes thanks to its vast territory and numerous waterways.

Finally, regarding the prospects for a war of REEs, major powers will inevitably continue to pursue material gains. The trade war is unlikely to end soon; rather, it is expected to escalate into a protracted, multi-dimensional conflict encompassing economics, technology, military affairs, and even geopolitical influence. Smaller nations and some individuals may benefit from this conflict, but the struggle itself will not cease. The future lies in the hands of those who possess REEs, and the strategic race to secure global influence will persist as major powers attempt to redraw supply chains to ensure their national security and reduce their dependence on China. This competition could even extend beyond economic warfare, if alternative solutions are not found. All current solutions will be temporary until the fundamental solution arrives with the return of the Khilafah Rashidah. This Khilafah will rid the world of the evils of capitalism that have plagued it, and will put an end to tyranny, injustice, and colonialism. The Khilafah will transform the motivation for international conflict into upholding ideology to guide humanity from darkness to light and for the benefit of humankind, rather than the pursuit of personal gain, the perpetuation of deprivation, and the entrenchment of global monopolies.