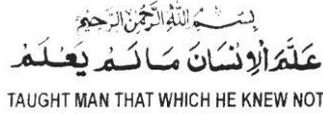


# QUARTERLY

A Periodical of INSIGHTS



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INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES, RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

# E9 QUARTERLY

A Periodical of INSIGHTS



Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA)  
National Defence University Islamabad – Pakistan

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# E9 QUARTERLY

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# Editorial Note

The first issue of volume 4, 2025, of E9 Quarterly, a distinctive compilation of ten insights written during the first quarter of 2025, is now in your hands. These insights delve into Pakistan's economic, political, and security challenges, underlining the urgent need for strategic alignment. This alignment, crucial for harmonising national interests with global trends and regional dynamics, domestic institutions' reform, and financial restructuring for sustained growth, is a matter of immediate concern. This issue comprehensively analyses the prospects of creating new provinces in Pakistan to improve governance and resource distribution. It explores the potential benefits such as enhanced local representation, improved resource management, and increased responsiveness of local government.

This issue also explores India's preferential trade diplomacy with its neighbours through initiatives like the Neighbourhood First Policy and Act East Policy to strengthen India's economic ties with Southeast and East Asia, opportunities for Pakistan to revive its Antarctic Programme, emphasising Antarctica's importance in climate research and geopolitics, and wildfires in the Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP) as a significant environmental threat worsened by climate change and human activity, highlighting gaps in firefighting coordination and resource allocation, emphasising the need for better collaboration between the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board and other agencies.

This issue also delves into the historical and cultural bond between Türkiye and Pakistan, emphasising shared experiences and mutual support in challenging times, advocating for closer cooperation and transportation connectivity between Asian nations to foster growth and the urgent need for developing a well-designed, performance-oriented AI policy in Pakistan with emphasis on setting realistic goals aligned with current capabilities to encourage innovation and focus on outcomes rather than just inputs.

This issue further explores the global de-dollarisation trend driven by countries like China and Russia, which aim to reduce reliance on the US Dollar. It also discusses Pakistan's National Space Policy (NSPP) 2024, which outlines the country's space ambitions with a primary focus on national security and socioeconomic development. The policy aims to enhance STEM education, foster public-private partnerships, and strengthen international cooperation.

Finally, the issue discusses Vietnam's economic transformation and geopolitical significance, rooted in its strategic location in Southeast Asia, detailing Vietnam's success in balancing relations with major powers, implementing economic reforms, and signing key trade agreements, besides drawing lessons for Pakistan's economic strategies out of Vietnam's approach and the rising trend of overseas target killings by states, focusing on India's growing involvement under Modi's government by comparing India's actions to those of countries like Israel and the US, emphasising the use of extrajudicial measures through intelligence agencies. It also highlights India's targeting of Sikhs and Kashmiris, leading to international tensions, and calls for more apparent international norms and accountability to regulate such actions.

With its unique insight into national security matters, we hope this publication will assist our esteemed readers in maintaining a comprehensive understanding of the current strategic landscape. We strongly encourage you to share your expertise through short writing pieces. These can include policy analyses, case studies, or thought pieces on current geopolitical and economic issues in Pakistan and its neighbouring regions. We value well-researched and balanced perspectives that can contribute to a deeper understanding of the region.

# The Creation of New Provinces in Pakistan

*Fatima Saleem*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT discusses the creation of new provinces in Pakistan, a proposal that has the potential to significantly improve governance and resource distribution. It explores promising benefits such as enhanced local representation, improved resource management, and increased responsiveness of local government. It also delves into the challenges, comparing global examples like Nigeria and India. New administrative units could enhance local representation and development, but careful consideration of ethnic and political factors is essential to avoid instability.*

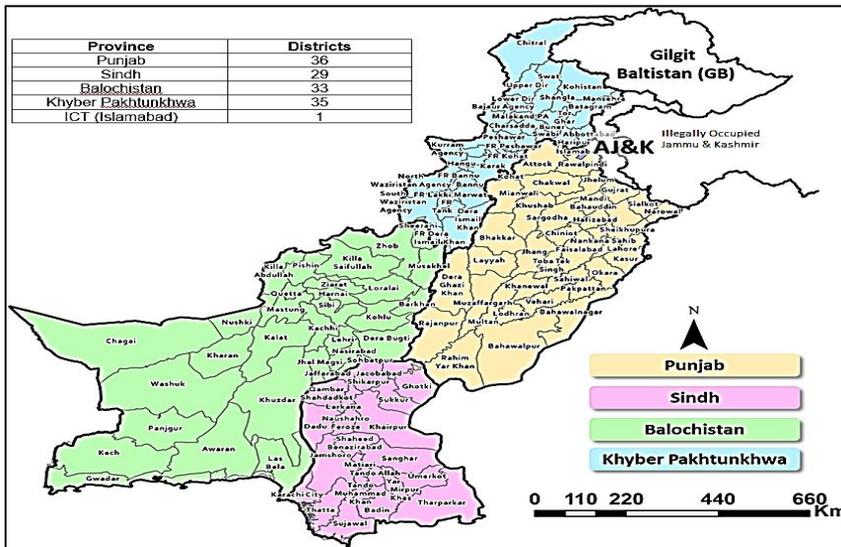
**Keywords:** Provinces, Administrative Units, Ethnopolitical Factors.

The idea of creating new provinces in Pakistan is familiar and has been debated many times. Given the country's growing population, governing large expanses of geography has become challenging. Hence, smaller administrative units should be established with better local representation.

While some present the proposal's merits, others believe that carving out new provinces will fuel instability. Opponents of the idea argue that in a resource-stricken, ethnically diverse country like Pakistan, the creation of more boundaries can potentially fuel fragmentation, violence, and ethnonationalism. This insight attempts to address the debate surrounding the creation of new provinces while considering how countries worldwide have benefitted from more provinces. It also acknowledges the potential challenges, such as managing ethnic tensions, ensuring equitable resource distribution, and maintaining national unity.

Pakistan’s government is premised on a federal structure that distributes power between the center and the constituents. This helps cater to the demands of the country’s heterogeneous and ethnically diverse landscape. The federal structure allows for the autonomy of the provinces while maintaining a unified national identity. On the other hand, in a unitary style of government, the power is concentrated in the center. Regardless of the type of government, countries continue to create more provinces for efficient service delivery. Figure 1 shows the provincial evolution of states in the last fifty years.

**Figure 1:** Map Showing Districts of Pakistan



Source: Research Gate

Nigeria's closer population and geographical territory are excellent examples for analysing the prospects of making new provinces. The government has done its utmost to ensure that no single ethnic group dominates any of its states. At its independence in 1960, the country was divided into four regions. However, 36 new states with seven hundred seventy-four local government bodies have been created. According to data, the increased number of administrative units has aided the Nigerian government in improving resource allocation and addressing

regional inequalities. For instance, the creation of new states in Nigeria has led to more targeted development initiatives and enhanced service delivery at the local level.

In Turkiye, provinces were organised based on historical regions; however, new boundaries have been made based on administrative needs. This has enhanced social cohesion, improved resource management, and increased the responsiveness of its local government.

**Figure 2:** Comparison of the Total Number of Provinces in Countries around the Globe

Serial No.	Country	Form of Government	Geographical Area (Million km <sup>2</sup> )	Population (2022)	No. of Provinces in 1974	No. of Provinces in 2024
1	Pakistan	Federal	0.882	235.8 million	4	4
2	India	Quasi-Federal	3.287	1.417 billion	22	28
3	Malaysia	Federal	0.33	33.94 million	13	13
4	Nigeria	Federal	0.924	218.5 million	12	36
5	Indonesia	Unitary	1.904	275.5 million	26	38
6	Bangladesh	Unitary	0.148	171.2 million	4	8
7	Turkey	Unitary	0.783	84.98 million	67	81
8	Iran	Unitary	1.648	88.55 million	14	30
9	China	Unitary	9.6	1.412 billion	34	34

India and Pakistan also have a resemblance in ethnic and linguistic diversity. Over time, the Indian government has successfully addressed the demand for new states to address issues like lack of political representation, economic disparity, and development. The following parameters have been considered in the creation of new states in India:-

- Geographic: MP, UP
- Linguistic: South India
- Cultural: Telangana and Andhra
- Historical: Goa

In the last few decades, India has created at least six new provinces to better cater to the needs of its growing population.<sup>1</sup> More provinces/states have helped the Indian government improve administration and curb insurgencies and separatist movements. The creation of the States of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand in 2000 improved local governments' performance and helped these regions' economic growth.

Globally, no country has a province with a population exceeding 25% of its total population. In Pakistan, however, the province of Punjab hosts 56% of the country's total population, while Balochistan accounts for a meager 5%. This has led to uneven resource distribution and unfair political representation in the national legislature.

Pakistan's four provinces are divided based on British-era ethnolinguistic division, where districts and regions on the peripheries of each are the poorest and rank the lowest in HDI. In addition, due to the sheer travelling distance, the provincial centres remain inaccessible to the locals residing on the fringes of each region, thus making government services unavailable to many. To sum up, the ineffectiveness of the prevalent governance model, unfair political representation, underdevelopment, and the uneven distribution of resources have inculcated in the masses a sense of deprivation and deep-rooted grievances.

**New provinces will allow efficient administration and better resource distribution.**

Ethnicity continues to dominate our political discourse, leading to politics of nonissues that overshadow the welfare of the people. In Pakistan, new provinces should be carved out based on the individual needs of each region; however, the most decisive factor in the demarcation of these boundaries should be administrative needs. New provinces can be formed based on geographical configuration, population size, historical and cultural context, economic viability, local security dynamics, and ethnolinguistic diversity.

A phased approach is recommended for creating smaller units. This systematic process will empower local governments with more control over finances, enhance governance, and ensure greater public access to funds and services. It will pave the way for organised development, particularly in health care and educational facilities. Improved administration and enhanced development will help address the locals' grievances, contributing to the suppression of militancy.

Considering the advantages of more units, 3-4 provinces can be carved from Punjab and 2-3 from Sindh, KP, and Balochistan. The GB and AJ&K regions can also be made into separate provinces with provisional status. Moreover, given Lahore and Karachi's economic vitality and population size, the two metropolitan areas can be designated independent metropolis similar to Islamabad. This strategic division can lead to significantly improved governance, better resource allocation, and enhanced local representation, fostering a sense of optimism and hope for the future.

Creating new provinces in a developing country like Pakistan necessitates thorough deliberation and the management of political, ethnic, racial, and linguistic differences.<sup>2</sup> Initiating an informed debate on the subject is crucial to engaging all stakeholders so that their voices are heard. Moreover, a comprehensive roadmap must be prepared for political, administrative, and economic aspects to ensure the proposal's robustness.<sup>3</sup> Creating new provinces is poised to strengthen the federation and promote unity and diversity.

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## About Insight and Author

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# India's Preferential Trade Diplomacy with Neighbours: A Perspective for Pakistan

*Muhammad Umar Farooq Baloch*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT explores India's preferential trade diplomacy with its neighbours and its impact on Pakistan's strategy. Under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), India has integrated economic and geopolitical goals to isolate Pakistan in trade, using platforms like the UN, G20, and SCO. Initiatives like the Neighbourhood First and Act East Policy have strengthened India's economic ties with Southeast and East Asia. In contrast, Pakistan is advised to enhance economic cooperation with its Western neighbours and Central Asian Republics, focusing on new trade opportunities in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) region. This strategic shift presents a promising future for Pakistan's positioning in South and Central Asia's evolving geopolitical landscape.*

**Keywords:** Preferential Trade, Trade Diplomacy, Neighbourhood First Policy, Act East Policy.

**T**his insight explores Indian diplomacy with its neighbours, focusing on integrating its foreign policy and economic goals. It emphasises India's aggressive foreign policy patterns and its concentrated efforts to counter Pakistan, potentially at the expense of regional peace and stability. India's efforts to counter Pakistan are influenced by several critical factors, including the ongoing great power rivalry between the United States (US) and China, the Sino-India border disputes, the Kashmir dispute, and the US-led Indian role as a 'net security provider' in the region.

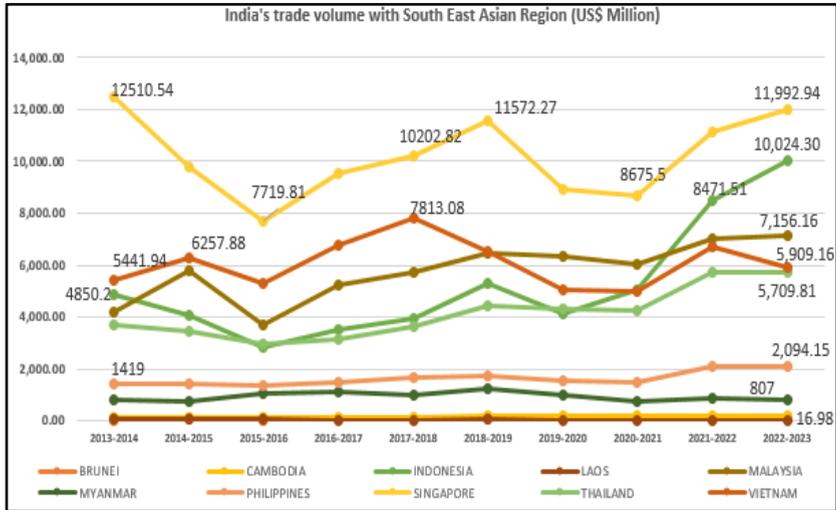
India's foreign policy objectives aim to isolate Pakistan, particularly in trade and economic sectors, under the Indian government's policies, especially during the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) rule. This approach reflects the mindset of Modi's regime and promotes extreme ideologies destabilising regional economic cooperation, besides the non-functional South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

**Pakistan envisions revitalising economic cooperation with all its neighbours. However, given Indian policies and actions, Pakistan should focus on its western neighbourhood including countries in ECO.**

India changed its political and economic strategies after the end of the Cold War. This involved adopting economic reforms in the early 1990s, deepening ties with the US, and launching the 'Look East Policy' (LEP) in 1992, later renamed the 'Neighbourhood First Policy'.<sup>1</sup> The 'Act East Policy' was announced in November 2014 as an upgrade of the LEP and a diplomatic initiative to promote economic, strategic, and cultural relations with the vast Asia-Pacific region at different levels.<sup>2</sup> India sought to enhance economic, trade, and investment engagements to strengthen its role in the neighbourhood through initiatives such as SAARC, Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Initiative (BBIN), and South Asian Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC).<sup>3</sup> This shift is also in line with the US Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), of which the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) group of states is an important part, in which India has a critical role to play on behalf of the US.

India's Neighbourhood First Policy aims to seize economic opportunities, particularly with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Northeast Asia. Over the last few years, India's economic connections with ASEAN have grown significantly, as shown in Figure 1. Through trade agreements in goods and services, ASEAN and India have created one of the largest trade areas in the world, with a combined GDP of approximately US\$3 trillion and a market of 1.8 billion people. India seeks to exchange over US\$80 billion in goods and services with ASEAN members annually.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1: India's Trade Volume with Southeast Asian Region<sup>5</sup>**



India signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with South Korea in 2009 to increase bilateral trade to US\$50 billion by 2030. In 2011, India strategically signed trade agreements to enhance its economic position. For instance, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Japan aims to eliminate tariffs on various goods and promote investment streams. This is part of India's broader strategy to develop strategic partnerships with countries like Australia, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia and enhance cooperation with the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the Bay of Bengal Initiatives for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) members. As reflected in Figure 2, India has signed several bilateral and multilateral trade agreements with these states, each serving a specific economic purpose.

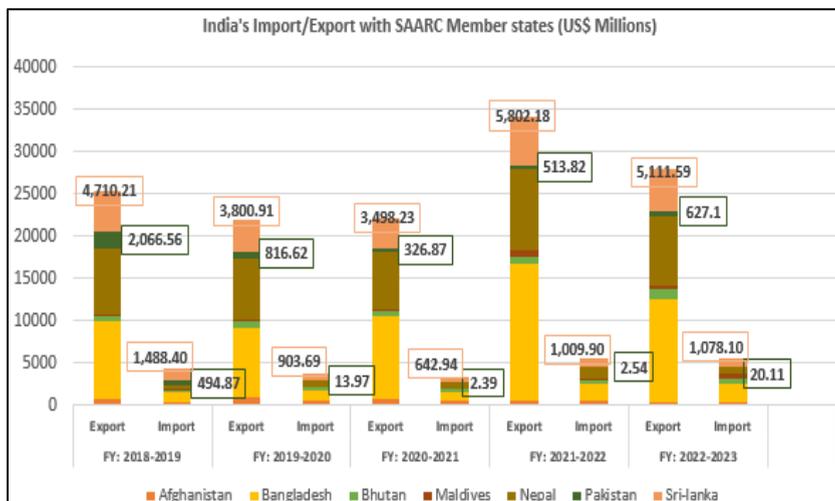
India's trade policies have significantly influenced its relations with Pakistan. It has imposed a steep 200% tariff on all imports from Pakistan, making Pakistani goods more expensive in Indian markets. This has directly impacted Pakistan's economy, affecting its export potential and trade balance. India has also employed non-tariff barriers, such as regulatory requirements and customs, to restrict trade with Pakistan. By

revoking Pakistan's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status, India has sought to control trade and economic cooperation at global and regional forums. In contrast, India has signed six limited-time Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) with states other than Pakistan, including distant states like Afghanistan.

**Figure 2:** India's Key Trade Agreements with Asian Nations<sup>6</sup>

Sr.	Member States	With Effect From	Trade Agreements
1.	Sri Lanka	March 2000	Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
2.	Thailand	September 2004	Early Harvest Scheme (EHS)
3.	Singapore	August 2005	Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)
4.	South Asia	January 2006	South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA)
5.	ASEAN	January 2010	FTA
6.	Korea	January 2010	Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)
7.	UAE	May 2022	CEPA
8.	Nepal	October 2009	FTA and Treaty of Trade

Although India's foreign trade during the fiscal year 2022-2023 reached US\$1.6 trillion, exports to Pakistan were only US\$627 million (0.1% of the total exports by India), and imports were US\$20 million (0.003% of total imports to India).<sup>7</sup> As evident in Figure 3, India has enhanced trade with all SAARC countries, less Pakistan.

**Figure 3: India's Trade with SAARC Member States (US\$ in Millions)<sup>8</sup>**

India has been proactive in its efforts to isolate Pakistan on the international economic stage. It has sought to influence global and regional forums, such as the United Nations (UN), the Group of 20 (G20), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). India's actions to isolate Pakistan are evident in its investments in projects such as Iran's Chabahar Port, which aims to find alternative routes towards Afghanistan and Central Asia. India has also tried to isolate Pakistan on the international economic fronts, as seen in its efforts to push Pakistan into the 'grey list' of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).<sup>9</sup>

Pakistan envisions improving trade relations with all its neighbours, including India. However, given Indian policies and actions, there is a need for Pakistan to focus on countries in SAARC, less India until India shows willingness. Focusing on the Western neighbourhood, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) also offers trade dividends. It should be the main pillar for nurturing Pakistan's strategic partnerships and exploring new markets and regional trade networks within and beyond Asia. Moreover, Pakistan's efforts to strengthen its trade relations with Central Asian Republics (CARs) through initiatives like the Pakistan-Central Asia Trade Corridor (PCATC), also known as the

'Middle Corridor, show promise. This approach promotes regional stability and economic integration and positions Pakistan as a proactive competitor in the evolving geopolitical landscape of South and Central Asia.

India uses its 'Neighbourhood First Policy' as a fundamental tool for developing relations and economic cooperation with neighbouring states. However, India is constantly making efforts to isolate its immediate neighbour, Pakistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan's pivot to geoeconomics, as mentioned in the National Security Policy (NSP),<sup>10</sup> remains focused on diversifying its trade partners, strengthening economic ties with emerging economies, and pursuing regional cooperation and peace initiatives across the globe. Pakistan has immense potential to enhance trade and economic cooperation with regional partners by establishing alternative routes to access regional and global markets.

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## About Insight and Author

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# Exploring Opportunities for Pakistan to Revive its Antarctic Programme

*Syed Haris Shah*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT explores opportunities for Pakistan to revive its Antarctic Programme, emphasising Antarctica's importance in climate research and geopolitics. It suggests partnering with countries like China to enhance scientific capabilities and overcome financial challenges. Revitalising the programme would boost Pakistan's role in global scientific diplomacy.*

**Keywords:** Antarctic, Climate, Scientific Expedition.

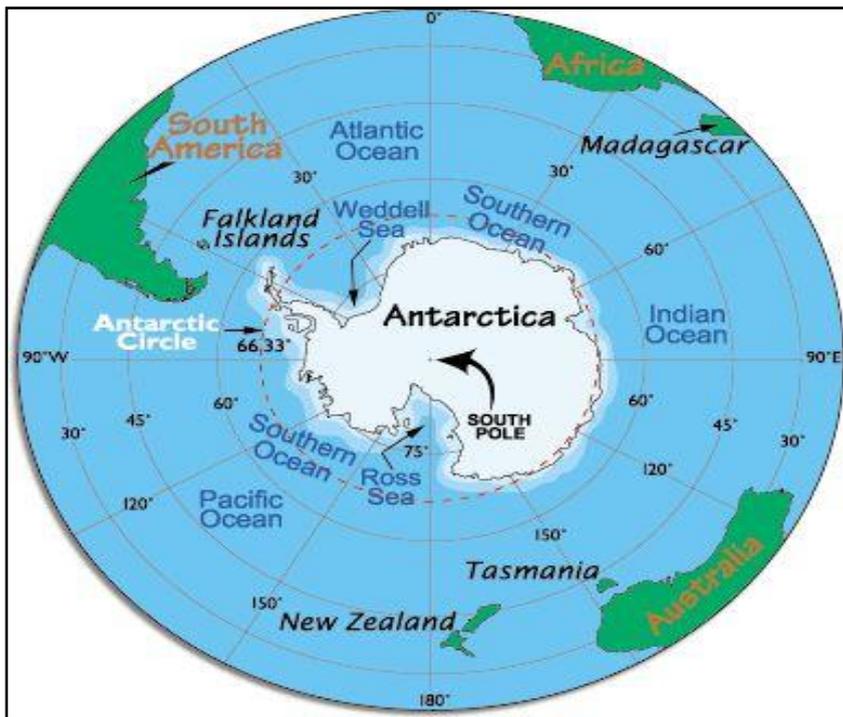
Pakistan is one of the countries that took part in scientific expeditions to Antarctica during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Antarctica is a vast, uninhabited, snow-covered continent at the South Pole. Its area is around 14,200,000 km<sup>2</sup>, making it the fifth-largest continent and the most isolated from human inhabitation.<sup>1</sup>

Even though Antarctica is an isolated continent, its significance in scientific diplomacy, geopolitics, and the transformation of global order cannot be denied. Its importance can be recognised from the recorded history of its expeditions, colonisation, and territorial proclamations by leading Imperialist Powers, including the Spanish and British Empires.<sup>2</sup>

The proclamation of territory by the imperialist powers was transferred to the states, including the UK, New Zealand, Australia, France, Norway, Chile, and Argentina, which currently hold sovereignty over the Antarctic territories.<sup>3</sup> In the contemporary era, even states from the Global South, like Iran, call for acquiring land in the continent to become essential players in future geopolitics and expand their scientific capacities.<sup>4</sup>

The countries with their claims also provided spaces to other states for science-based capacity building and research.<sup>5</sup> For example, New Zealand provided space for one of the most prominent stations owned by the United States Antarctic Program (USAP), McMurdo Station (established in February 1956) at Ross Dependency. The station effectively conducts scientific activities regarding environmental sciences, atmospheric studies, and glaciology for the 'ice core research', thus achieving the aims of scientific diplomacy on a global level. Other states, including Russia, India, China, etc., also pursue scientific research by maintaining their stations in Antarctica.<sup>6</sup>

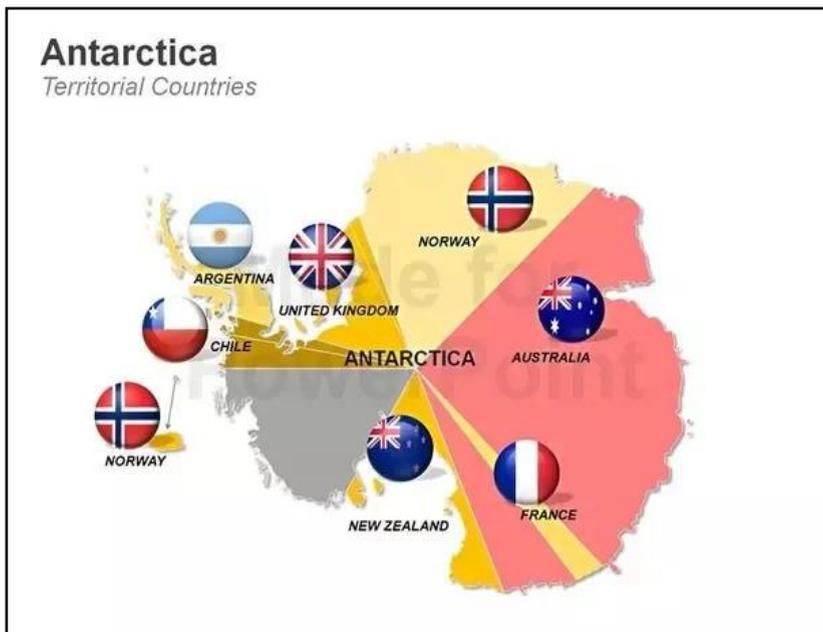
**Figure 1:** Antarctica on Global Map



Source: Pinterest

Many states have scientific establishments there, highlighting Antarctica's importance in global affairs. As China and Russia aim to expand their missions, some of the leading Western states, including Australia and New Zealand, have called for amending the legal status of the Antarctic Treaty to militarise the region and conduct mineral exploitation.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 2:** Political Map of Antarctica



**Source:** Fandom

The international legal regime for Antarctica, namely the Antarctic Treaty of 1959, has set rules for governing affairs in the whole region.<sup>8</sup> Its legal articles permit every state to conduct scientific research, explore opportunities for scientific diplomacy, and allow international agencies to pursue inspection of research stations and equipment. The treaty also restricts the militarisation and exploitation of resources inside Antarctica.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, scientific research affairs are monitored through the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), established in

1958.<sup>10</sup> Even though Pakistan is not a signatory to the Antarctic Treaty, it retains membership of the SCAR since 1989.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 3:** List of Antarctic Stations by Countries

S.no.	Expeditionary Countries	No. of Antarctic Stations / Establishments	Status (Active, Inactive, Seasonal, Closed)
1.	Argentina	Eight	7 Active + 1 Seasonal
2.	Australia	Four	4 Active
3.	Belgium	One	1 Active
4.	Brazil	One	1 Active
5.	Bulgaria	One	1 Active
6.	Chile	Six	3 Active + 3 Seasonal
7.	China	Five	3 Active + 2 Seasonal
8.	Czechia	One	1 Active
9.	Finland	One	1 Seasonal
10.	France	Two	2 Active
11.	Germany	Three	1 Active + 1 Seasonal + 1 Closed
12.	India	Four	1 Inactive + 3 Active
13.	Italy	Two	1 Seasonal + 1 Active
14.	Japan	Three	1 Active + 2 Seasonal
15.	New Zealand	One	1 Active
16.	Norway	One	1 Active
17.	Pakistan	Three	3 Inactive
18.	Poland	One	1 Active
19.	Russia	Five	5 Active
20.	South Africa	One	1 Active
21.	South Korea	One	1 Active
22.	Spain	Two	2 Seasonal
23.	Ukraine	One	1 Active
24.	United Kingdom	Four	3 Active + 1 Seasonal
25.	United States	Three	3 Active

**Sources:** SCAR, British Antarctic Survey & COMNAP

With the collaboration of SCAR and financial support from the Pakistan Science Foundation,<sup>12</sup> three scientific stations, including two Jinnah Antarctic Stations (JAS) and an unmanned weather observatory, were established at the Schirmacher Oasis of the Queen Maud Land, a Norway-claimed Antarctic territory. These Antarctic Stations were established under the leadership of the Ministry of Science & Technology's agency, the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO). The first Pakistani establishment in Antarctica was established on January 18, 1991, as an unmanned station known as the 'Iqbal Observatory Station'. Afterwards, Jinnah-I was established on January 25, 1991, and the Jinnah-II station was opened on January 5, 1992.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 4:** Members of the Pakistan Antarctic Programme at JAS



**Source:** Pakistan Strategic Forum

Institutions like the Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy had their role in support and research of this mission. PAF's support aircraft and the Navy's PNS 'Tariq' and PNS 'Behr Paima' played an important role in logistics during these expeditions. Their inclusion in the mission eventually made it possible to continue the operations smoothly, which can be again considered if Pakistan revives this programme.

Successively, SUPARCO launched Pakistan's second satellite, Badr-B, in 2001. This satellite remained connected with the Iqbal Observatory for weather and upper atmosphere conditions.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the Jinnah-I and Jinnah-II stations were engaged in oceanographic, environmental, geological, and biodiversity research. Therefore, Pakistan's interest in Antarctica was purely for scientific capacity-building.<sup>15</sup>

Pakistan showed interest in expanding the Antarctic expedition, as NIO formed the Polar Research Cell (PRC) in 2006. There were also suggestions for revamping the programme in 2010. However, due to the lack of funds and the shift towards other scientific research, the programme did not get an expansion.

Therefore, Pakistan halted its operations as stations were no longer maintained. Lack of funds also became a reason for Pakistan not to sign the Antarctic Treaty. Although Pakistan has cooperated with the US and Norway in the past for the expedition, currently, no potential partners can support Pakistan in such a mission.

Coming to the point of opportunities, the revival of the Antarctic Expedition will help mitigate environmental issues like climate change and melting glaciers of the Himalayas in the North of Pakistan (that are also known as the 'Third Pole' of the Globe) as there are similarities in the patterns of environmental security of both Antarctica and the Himalayas region.<sup>16</sup> Pakistani scientists can also expand their research for SUPARCO, as the Antarctic region is suitable for conducting upper atmospheric research.

The region can also be explored for capacity-building in biodiversity, enhancing mineral exploration abilities, and polar research. This will enhance Pakistan's scientific diplomacy, leading to widespread R&D and international cooperation. State institutions in Pakistan, like NIO and SUPARCO, can lead in the revival of this mission with the assistance of the Pakistan Armed Forces.

China maintains five Antarctic stations and has recently conducted the 40<sup>th</sup> expedition there, a source for Pakistan to enhance international cooperation in Antarctic activities.<sup>17</sup> It's necessary to consider a partnership with China to revive this programme. Pakistan will have widespread opportunities to improve its scientific capacity-building in environmental, oceanographic, geological, and space research. The NIO and other Pakistani scientific agencies should approach the Polar Research Institute of China (PRIC)'s vast missions.

The concern of low funds can be mitigated if Pakistan pursues collaborating with the Chinese mission. China has already established partnerships with Germany, Italy, and Russia, which Pakistan can consider in determining possible partnerships. China will also consider international partners like Pakistan for cooperation in scientific diplomacy that will be beneficial in dealing with the climate crisis.

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# Analysis of Islamabad's Wildfire Fighting Capabilities

*Daniyal Quadratullah*

## Abstract

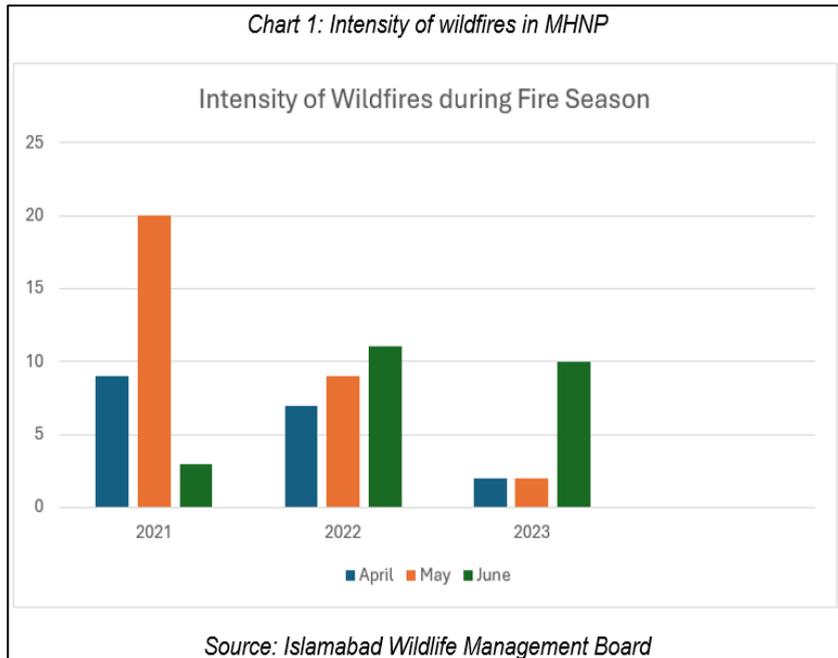
*This INSIGHT identifies wildfires in the Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP) as a significant environmental threat worsened by climate change and human activity. It highlights gaps in firefighting coordination and resource allocation, emphasising the need for better collaboration between the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board and other agencies.*

**Keywords:** Wildfire, Margalla Hills, Ecosystem.

**W**ildfires pose a substantive threat to individuals, property, and entire ecosystems. The last two decades have observed an alarming increase in such instances and the potential of wildfires to wreak havoc all around the globe. Pakistan is not aloof from such happenings either. The Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP), near Islamabad, has become a hotspot for repeated natural and man-caused wildfire incidents with alarming spikes in the fire season (April-June). As shown in Chart 1.<sup>1</sup> This insight aims to analyse the causes of wildfires in MHNP and the wild firefighting capabilities of Islamabad. It also identifies the shortcomings and offers policy recommendations to enhance future wild firefighting capabilities.

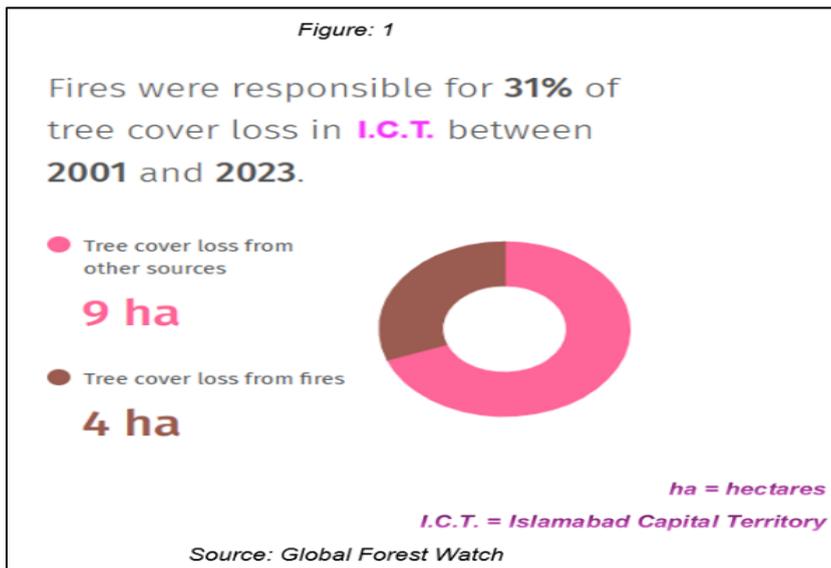
With its prolonged heat waves, climate change has significantly escalated the risk of wildfires. The increased dryness of vegetation, coupled with the abundance of dry grass and leaves, has made the MHNP more susceptible to ignition. From 2001 to 2023, the park endured 380 fire incidents, resulting in 500 hectares of forest cover loss. Figure 1 illustrates the staggering tree cover lost due to these wildfires, underscoring the gravity of the situation.

A substantial portion of wildfires in MHNP are the result of human negligence or intentional arson. Rina Saeed Khan pointed out, "Many fires inside MHNP are not natural forest fires, and about 80-90% of fires were set by humans." Hikers and picnic goers sometimes unintentionally ignite fires because of their negligent behaviour. Arson incidents are also the cause of wildfires in MHNP.



Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) and Wildlife Conservation Unit are the premier institutions mandated to conduct preventive, response, and rehabilitation measures in case of wildfires in the MHNP. IWMB also serves as the 'legal guardian' of the park under Section 21 of the Islamabad Wildlife Protection, Preservation, Conservation, and Management Ordinance, 1979. IWMB is a government-funded body under the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, which oversees environmental policies and regulations, including those related to wildlife management and firefighting. Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Metropolitan

Cooperation Islamabad (MCI) collaborate and assist IWMB in ensuring effective wildlife management.<sup>2</sup> The Wildlife Conservation Unit is mandated to safeguard the wildlife species and their habitats within the park's premises. It also supervises the forestation in these premises, conducting periodic raids targeting illegal wildlife hunting and timber extraction. These departments collectively address wildfire challenges with a multi-fold approach, compromising on spreading awareness and enhancing responsive behaviour within MHNP.



Currently employing traditional techniques to fight wildfires, IWMB utilises equipment, including fire beaters, leaf scrappers, and axes. These tools create firebreaks, clear vegetation, and manually extinguish fires. One key component of IWMB's current strategy is to hold periodic patrols and conduct community awareness programmes on a limited scale with additional support from CDA and MCI. In extreme wildfire situations in MHNP, Mi-17, and Bell 412, helicopters from the Pakistan Army or National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) are deployed for aerial support to fight wildfires. These helicopters use Bambi buckets to drop water and fire retardants to help control and extinguish the fires. However, these measures are often insufficient due to limited workforce

and resources, according to IWMB officials.<sup>3</sup> Table 1 shows the workforces utilised during the last six years for firefighting in MHNP.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 1:** Manpower Utilized to Fight Wildfires in MHNP

Year	IWMB	CDA
2019	40	600
2020	90	600
2021	90	610
2022	60	620
2023	45	615
2024	50	621

**Source:** IWMB Forest Fire Report

One key factor hindering the response to fighting wildfires in MHNP is the lack of coordination and communication between concerned stakeholders. According to Rina Saeed Khan, chairperson of the IWMB, “More than equipment, we need better coordination with the CDA and other relevant departments,” as no central combined command centre or communication line exists. There exists no mechanism to conduct regular joint drills to enhance coordinated responses. This lack of coordination underscores the importance of teamwork in combating wildfires and the need for better communication channels to ensure everyone is on the same page.

The link between human activities and wildfires can only be broken through community involvement. We can make a significant difference by promoting responsible behaviour within the park through awareness campaigns, educating and engaging local communities in fire monitoring and prevention, and strictly enforcing laws against intentional wildfires. Community workshops on fire safety can inform residents about preventing accidental fires, while volunteer fire watch groups can monitor high-risk areas and report any signs of wildfires. Incentives such as recognition awards can motivate community members to participate actively in wildfire prevention efforts, highlighting the crucial role of the community in this endeavour.

Establishing a central command centre with real-time communication tools can streamline IWMB, MCI, and CDA coordination. Interagency meetings at regular intervals can ensure that all stakeholders progress in the right direction on the same wavelength to respond more effectively to wildfire incidents. A shared digital platform for real-time updates can improve resource allocation coordination during relief operations. A mechanism for regular joint drills is needed to enhance coordinated responses to wildfires.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a buzzword and a potential game-changer in the fight against devastating wildfires. These technologies can efficiently detect early signs of wildfires, thus allowing the authorities to respond more quickly. For instance, the 'Fire Guard,' an AI-powered tool, was successfully put to pilot testing and could detect the possibility of a potential wildfire in MHNP well before it could even start. Similarly, in the United States (US), a pilot project, 'Alert California Program,' demonstrated a 30% reduction in wildfire response times using AI-powered technologies.

This programme uses a network of cameras equipped with AI to monitor the landscape 24/7. These cameras

**Effective wildfire management in MHNP requires combining data-driven strategies, advanced technologies, improved agency coordination, and active community involvement.**

detect smoke and alert fire officials, helping them respond more quickly. Due to financial constraints and rugged terrain in MHNP, the Pakistani authorities can use drones instead of cameras to monitor wildfires during the fire season. Drones equipped with thermal imaging cameras can monitor large areas and provide real-time data to firefighting teams. This potential of AI offers a ray of hope in the battle against wildfires.

In conclusion, as Pakistan battles challenges in combating wildfires that pose a severe threat to its already weak forestation system, the need to design a multidimensional approach with modern methods, AI-equipped tools, concerted efforts, better resources, and community involvement arises to ensure timely and effective responses to reduce and eventually eliminate the threat of wildfires.

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# Impressions about Friendly and Brotherly Country, Pakistan

*Maj Gen (R) Güray ALPAR*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT illuminates the profound historical and cultural bond between Türkiye and Pakistan, underscoring shared experiences and mutual support in challenging times. The author reflects on Pakistan's enduring hospitality, a testament to its resilience in the face of negative propaganda in international media. It also addresses the region's common economic and developmental challenges, advocating for closer cooperation and transportation connectivity between Asian nations to foster growth. Given its cultural and historical ties with the region, the author stresses Türkiye's potential role in mediating peace and promoting stability in South Asia.*

**Keywords:** Türkiye, War of Independence, Brotherly Nations.

**W**e all know the bond of affection between Türkiye and Pakistan is rooted in history. In addition to the material and moral support the Pakistani people gave to the Turkish during the War of Independence, the uniform stance of the people of the two countries in difficult times is yet another factor. However, seeing this fact in person and reading it from people's eyes makes people happy.

It was exciting to be invited to an event where the most relevant and highest position holders gave official information about Pakistan's economic, political, and cultural situation (Between 23 February - 02 March 2024). However, when we went to Pakistan, the hospitality and love we received made us even happier. Indeed, the people of Pakistan, due to their beliefs and traditions, have an incredibly peaceful and hospitable character, and you can observe this everywhere you go. Pakistani people do not deserve the malicious propaganda campaign

deliberately projected in international media to tarnish Pakistan's soft image as a peace-loving nation. Pakistan is a safe and peaceful country as long as there is no foreign intervention. We felt this personally in every street and avenue we went to, including at night, during our stay in Pakistan.

Efforts to create negative perceptions have become widespread and must be examined academically.

As a result of a bit of research we conducted, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) figures show that Pakistan is well below the USA in annual intentional killings per 100 thousand people. For the USA, this rate is approaching 23,000 people per year (2021), while in Pakistan, it is 8000 people (2018). Even if we consider the difference in population between Pakistan and the US, the numbers in Pakistan are still lower than those in the USA. These rates appear to be low in other crimes as well. The issue of preventing attacks against women is an important issue that we should all focus on and stop. A snapshot of figures for crimes against women shows Africa (3.1), America (1.6), Oceania (1.3), Asia (0.9) and Europe (0.7). When the situation is evaluated, it can be seen that Asia and Europe have the lowest rates.

It's crucial to emphasise the need for scientific analysis over purposeful prejudices. The number of women killed in attacks against women in Türkiye is around 300 annually, a figure that needs to be addressed. In England, where the fewest murders were committed, 250 women were killed. On the other hand, in the USA, 3000 women were killed in 2019 alone (The Silent Epidemic of Femicide in the US, 10 March 2023). This stark contrast underscores the need for objective understanding and evaluation. Pakistan seems to be the victim of a malicious propaganda campaign, and it's time to set the record straight.

Publications and media propaganda attempts to denigrate, humiliate, and turn the region into enemies are standard. We have revealed such malevolent publications that denigrate the area's people against each other, divide them, and pit them against each other. In our work with high-level academic and diplomatic groups from many countries, with whom we were together during the meetings in Pakistan, we have emphasised the importance of conducting enlightening and valuable

aspects of the meetings. Knowing each other correctly enables us to solve problems at the very beginning.

The main problem with the Asian continent is broken ties between people and countries. Today, the Asian continent, along with the African continent, is the region of the weakest transportation network. It takes days to reach from one country to another by air, let alone by land. This demonstrates that the academics who participated in our study from Nepal, which is very close to Pakistan, arrived after a journey that lasted almost a day. Even comparing the road, rail, and air traffic in Europe and North America with Asia is enough to understand this immediately. Why Asians are so divided and divorced from each other is also a separate matter of evaluation. When the obstacle to transportation is added to the already tricky geographical deployment, the picture reveals why these countries cannot develop. If the situation continues like this, they will not grow from hereon either. Attempts to hinder projects aimed at connecting Asian countries can only be malicious. These initiatives can't be accepted.

Another important issue we identified during our studies was the unfair economic pressure applied to Pakistan. Due to its geographical location, Pakistan is a country that has shared the difficulties experienced by the Afghan people since the Soviet occupation that started in 1979 and the subsequent US intervention in the region. We also know that Pakistan has no role in creating this trouble. In this process, Pakistan's contributions to maintaining regional stability are apparent. Pakistan was mistreated, and Pakistan had to pay a heavy price in this matter, for which it was not responsible. Despite this, it is unacceptable that these efforts are ignored and that pressures and veiled embargoes are applied to Pakistan just because it is implementing projects aimed at its economic development. This is a great injustice to Pakistan and its people.

Pakistan's economy and resources, like those of the surrounding countries, have great potential as we advance. Accepting this potential and mobilising it appropriately will create significant opportunities. At this point, it is a fact that ensuring stability in Afghanistan and the cooperation of countries such as Pakistan, India, and Iran will make

significant contributions to increasing the welfare of the people of these countries.

Türkiye's mediating role in ensuring peace in this region is essential. However, such an idea could change the fate of the area. It requires philosophical solid leaders and thinkers to see this truth through governments that have a vision, think about the future of their people, and produce discourses aimed at peaceful, rather than hostile, relations between peoples. We need conciliatory approaches, not war, violence, or hatred. Otherwise, the region's people will continue to experience similar pain and difficulties caused by economic weakness decades later.

Türkiye, which is very close to the region culturally, economically, and historically, has much to do with creating such an environment of peace and prosperity, as it has done so far. Türkiye knows these regions and knows the people and their cultures closely. When he learned that we were Türks, a businessman we met in Pakistan, he said that his grandmother and the other women removed their bracelets, rings, and necklaces and sent them to Anatolia during the Turkish War of Independence when he was a child. It touched us greatly, and it was also crucial in terms of revealing closeness. As it goes, a friend in need is indeed a friend. In this sense, it is evident that Türkiye sees this closeness between the Pakistani administration and the people in every sphere of life. This also applies to Pakistan. According to our historical and anthropological studies, our cultural affinity with Pakistan has an unbreakable depth of more than 2 thousand years. Like Mevlana's, our way of thinking and shared values make this even more substantial and bring us closer.

We know Pakistan, and they know Türkiye. We already know that the unrealistic perception created against Pakistan is purposeful. It is great to get to know the rich culture of this country. We also respect Pakistan's attempts to ensure peace and stability in its surroundings. In addition to rediscovering cultural richness, there are many initiatives we need to take without delay in the field of economic cooperation. One of these is the mutual coming together of our business people and the determination and implementation of common investment areas for the region and the future. Undoubtedly, such cooperation will contribute to creating a

regional security and stability environment and, as an exemplary model, will also increase the welfare of the region's people in the medium and long term.

## About Insight and Author

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# Pakistan's Aspiration for Artificial Intelligence (AI)

*Dr. Athar Osama*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT underscores the urgent need for developing a well-designed, performance-oriented AI policy in Pakistan, emphasising setting realistic goals. It explores how overambitious targets, such as producing 1 million AI graduates or filing 2,000 patents within unrealistic timelines, can hinder progress. The analysis stresses that effective policy must align with current capabilities, encourage innovation, and focus on outcomes rather than just inputs. It concludes that minimalist and adaptive policies, built on solid foundations, are essential for achieving meaningful impact in AI development.*

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Policy, Socioeconomic Landscape.

Artificial intelligence, a rapidly advancing and fast-moving target, has seen a resurgence since November 2022, when OpenAI launched ChatGPT. This has sparked global interest from technologists, innovators, entrepreneurs, investors, and policymakers. The past year witnessed record fundraising, and new venture activity focused on AI, with global AI-focused venture investment surpassing all other sectors combined. Understanding this global AI landscape is crucial for shaping effective policies.

AI, often hailed as the 'new electricity,' is a foundational or platform technology with the potential to transform the entire socioeconomic landscape. Like electricity, AI is expected to enhance productivity across various sectors, leading to a multiplier economic effect on global and national economies. Recognising this transformative potential is critical and inspiring, as it paves the way for a future full of possibilities and opportunities.

In the last few years, several countries have launched AI policies and strategies or recalibrated their earlier ones to account for the massive new interest in AI. India, for instance, has an AI Strategy that was announced by NITI Ayog (the Indian Planning Commission) in 2018, which lays out that country's aspirations in the realm of AI. Similar policies exist for the United Kingdom (2021), Canada (2021 and 2024), Singapore (2019 and 2023), Saudi Arabia (2020) and many other countries. Several of these policies define an evident and unique pathway for these countries. India, for instance, aspired to be the AI factory for the developing world (remaining 40% other than OECD and China, etc.). It aspires to be where problems in the developing world can be solved using AI. Similarly, the United Kingdom aspires to be not the global leader in AI but the leader in Europe. Taking advantage of the stringent AI regulation, the UK thinks it can attract AI talent who want to work in a relatively more relaxed regulatory environment than the EU. These visions and aspirations have a certain degree of realism and precision.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Microsoft have collaborated to address the global AI workforce shortage, aiming to position India as the go-to source for big tech. Singapore has also launched a program to retrain the older workforce in AI and modern technologies, creating Master's degrees and programs to match older professionals with younger individuals, allowing them to learn from each other's skill sets.

A well-designed AI policy should align interests and create a rigorous foundation for initiatives. The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication's (MoITT) commendable attempt to consult stakeholders on an AI policy is a step in the right direction. However, the policy's inability to execute after over a year is a matter of concern, especially given the rapid pace of AI development. A more performance-oriented policy, with clear metrics for outcomes and impacts, is needed to ensure that Pakistan's AI initiatives are effective and impactful.

Government ministries usually treat data as an instrument of control and one of the most guarded secrets, and they are very hesitant to share it even with other government departments, not to mention private entities like COE-AIs. It will be challenging even for PITB and NITBs to aggregate data from across the government and the country. This may require an

especially empowered entity with the complete backing of the PM Office to do so.

There is also a mention of creating a new AI regulator. This is not a good idea for three reasons. First, AI is a developing area with much experimentation that will take a considerable time. Coming down too heavily on regulating the technology will likely be counterproductive to this innovation. Second, there is a distinct strand of opinion worldwide (including US and UK) that we should adopt "wait and see" on the regulation of technology and regulate applications only when harm becomes apparent, and that too via existing regulatory arrangements. Third, it is hard to imagine a new regulatory body in Pakistan being created from scratch and developing the capacity to regulate a fast-moving industry properly. The right way is to build the capacity of existing regulators, such as SBP, SECP, PTA, etc., while keeping regulation light and allowing experimentation.

Similarly, other proposed institutions (such as a cloud and computational facility) are probably best suited for the private rather than the public sector. The government should think very clearly and carefully before starting any new public sector institutions and only do so if no private alternative is possible. Instead of funding and creating inefficient perpetual bureaucracies, many contracts can be given against clearly defined KPIs and service levels, and value can be realised.

Fourth, the proposed policy attempts to set several targets - some of these quantified - which is the right idea. However, many targets are unrealistic and exaggerated. The policy aspires to have 1 million graduates in AI and allied skills within three years (2027), of which one year has already passed. This is several times the current capacity of CS/IT departments of the entire country's higher education sector, and it is probably way more than the total workforce in the IT industry. To produce 1 million graduates, the policy talks about creating 10,000 trainers - a number way out of reach in any sector of the economy, not to mention a new and emerging area like AI.

The proposed policy also discusses creating an R&D culture in AI and Machine Learning. To do this, it puts forth a target of jumpstarting "at least 1,000 AI-led R&D initiatives funded in academia and the private

sector via fiscal and non-fiscal support" by 2026. Again, even though one year has already passed since a very ambitious target, the idea that 1000 AI-led R&D Initiatives can (or should) be funded to address the gaps in R&D culture is entirely unsuitable and reflects plainly how ignorant and out of touch the writer of the document is of the current state of national AI research capability. Another similar number is the aspiration to file 2000 patents in AI and related technologies by 2026.

Other targets include contributing 50 new AI models to open AI platforms annually (by 2024) and helping academia to register, apply, and train 150 unique AI models annually (by 2025). These are unrealistic and exaggerated numbers and meaningless targets unless they could be justified with proper reasons and rationale for why we should do this in the first place.

Finally, most of the goals and targets identified in the document lack evidence or performance orientation. Most "targets" are input measures achieved once money is disbursed and spent or straightforward "outputs," i.e., things that this money can buy. There is an apparent absence of "outcome" and "impact" metrics that require much more planning and effort than merely spending taxpayers' money and buying stuff from it.

There are three areas where the proposed AI policy puts a clear onus on AI to create a social impact. A lot of vague language does not identify a goal and target for the policy to be held accountable. In health services, for example, the policy talks about AI helping analyse clinical data, support primary physicians, enable diagnosis, and make it easier for patients to self-manage. Education and learning talks about personalised learning and AI-enabled adaptive assessment. In agriculture, it talks about predictive analytics for the agricultural supply chain, weather prediction, soil monitoring, etc. None of these are specific enough for the policy to be held to account.

A bold, ambitious, and performance-oriented policy could try to ensure that every Pakistani has access to AI-enabled diagnostics in 10 years. Hence, the shortage of specialist radiologists, pathologists, or oncologists in semi-urban and rural areas has become a thing of the past. It could also make literacy available to everyone using a device and an AI-enabled

tutor in 10 years, thus making out-of-school children a thing of the past. It could also improve agricultural productivity and reduce waste by 25%. Such targets could then become drivers of changes that the policy seeks to bring about and would mobilise all involved to demonstrate the impact of AI on the country and society at large.

The policy has an exciting way of signalling a particular intent, guiding action in a specific way or direction, and focusing the energies of a wide array of stakeholders towards a consciously identified strategy. A poorly designed policy does the opposite and is much more wasteful and time-consuming than no policy. Not only does it not put the resources where they are most needed, but it also puts them (and the energies of all those who follow these resources) where they are not needed, thus creating senseless initiatives, projects, and institutions that do not contribute to the desired action.

Policy needs to be minimalist and reflect meaningful changes in the status quo or course of action, leaving the implementing ministry or agency to fill out the details. Policy must also be adaptive—particularly for such a fast-moving area as AI—and built on solid intellectual foundations and assumptions that can be questioned, tested, and revised. If possible, the crisp and minimalist policy document must accompany the more comprehensive assessment and thought piece on which it rests.

An over-specified policy that is an assortment of unrealistic and often meaningless numbers is likely to do more harm than good for Pakistan's aspirations to establish a foothold in the Age of AI. Any effort to create a sensible AI policy will undoubtedly benefit from learning from the shortcomings of the draft AI policy of July 2023.

## About Insight and Author

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# De-Dollarisation: Prospects & Challenges for Pakistan

*Rafia Ashar*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT highlights the global de-dollarisation trend driven by countries like China and Russia, which aim to reduce reliance on the US Dollar. For Pakistan, this presents both opportunities and risks. Reducing USD dependence could strengthen economic ties with regional powers like China, primarily through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). However, it also poses risks of economic instability and strained relations with the US, necessitating careful consideration of financial strategies and regional integration.*

**Keywords:** De-Dollarisation, Monetary Sovereignty, Weaponization of US Dollar.

**I**n an era marked by the perpetual evolution of global finance, the concept of 'de-dollarisation' is gaining prominence. This term refers to countries diversifying their financial reserves and reducing their reliance on the US Dollar (USD). Pursuing monetary sovereignty, concerns about the USD's stability, and the aggressive 'weaponisation' of the USD are some factors driving this trend. The USD, the dominant world currency since the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement, is the primary currency used by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to fund developing nations.

However, the de-dollarisation drive gained momentum with the revival of the Russian economy and the rise of China with new alternative currencies like the Chinese Yuan and the Russian Ruble.<sup>1</sup> The governments of China and Russia, which have been working to reduce their reliance on the USD for the past ten years, have increased their cooperation by fostering collaboration between their financial systems, as

shown in Graph 1.<sup>2</sup> This effort was recently highlighted at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF), a significant global economic event in Russia known for its focus on international economic issues and attracting high-profile participants, where 132 countries worldwide, including BRICS nations, also showed an urge to create a financially independent payment system and use national currencies in international trade.<sup>3</sup>

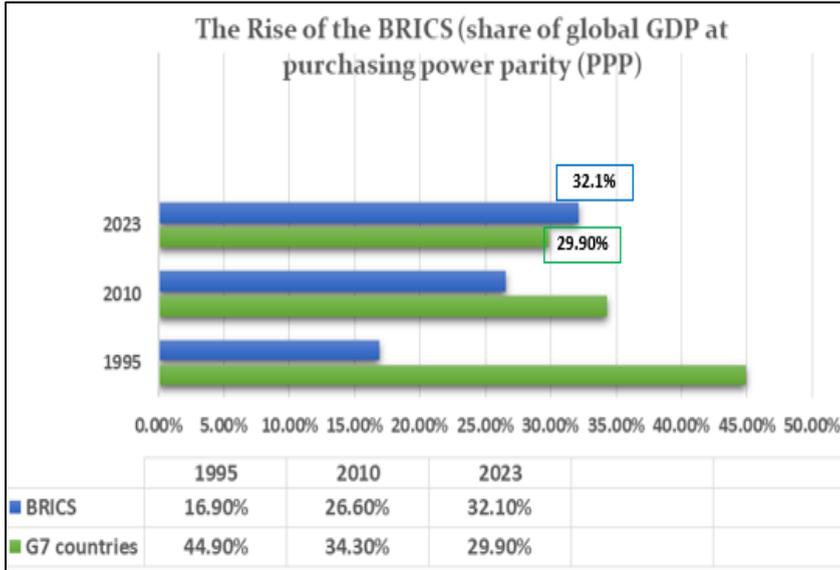


**Graph 1**

In this regard, several countries and regional trade organisations have adopted different de-dollarisation models, driven by the desire to reduce reliance on USD. China, Russia, India, Southeast Asian countries, African countries, and large trade organisations such as BRICS, ASEAN, and SCO are some key players.

Regarding trade and reserve holdings, the BRICS forum has been at the forefront of de-dollarisation efforts. By creating currency swap agreements, promoting trade in local currencies, and investigating alternative settlement systems, these countries have made significant progress towards reducing their reliance on USD. Graph 2 shows that the

total GDP of BRICS has surpassed the economically influential group of G7 countries.<sup>4</sup>

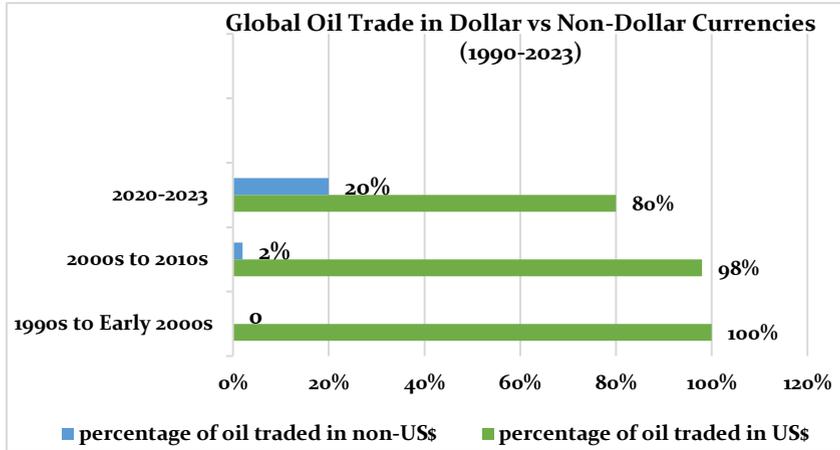


Graph 2

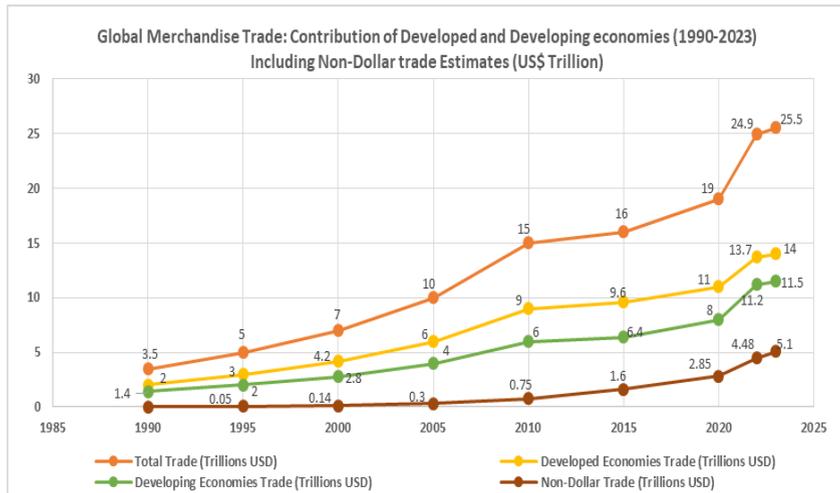
At a global level, de-dollarisation has prospects of disrupting and destabilising current financial systems. It can reduce USD dominance and transfer it to currencies such as the Euro, Chinese Yuan, or even a basket of currencies.<sup>5</sup> It could challenge the US ability to impose sanctions, as countries might circumvent US-controlled financial channels and trade using alternative currencies. De-dollarisation can stabilise regional currencies at the regional level depending on trade and connectivity between regional countries. Local currencies will face less pressure as alternative payment methods become more widely accepted and advanced.

Despite the rising momentum, de-dollarisation faces several challenges. The first key factor is the lack of viable alternatives to the USD. Although the Chinese Yuan (Renminbi) has been categorised as a possible rival, there are still several obstacles to internationalisation, and it is not yet entirely convertible.<sup>6</sup> The USD dominance provides global markets

liquidity and stability; hence, financial markets could become less predictable if there is a shift away from the USD due to greater currency volatility and decreased liquidity. Particularly for commodities like oil, the USD is frequently utilised as the base currency for international trade invoicing and pricing, as shown in Graph 3. This reliance on the USD in global trade presents a significant hurdle for de-dollarisation efforts.<sup>7</sup>



Graph 3



Graph 4

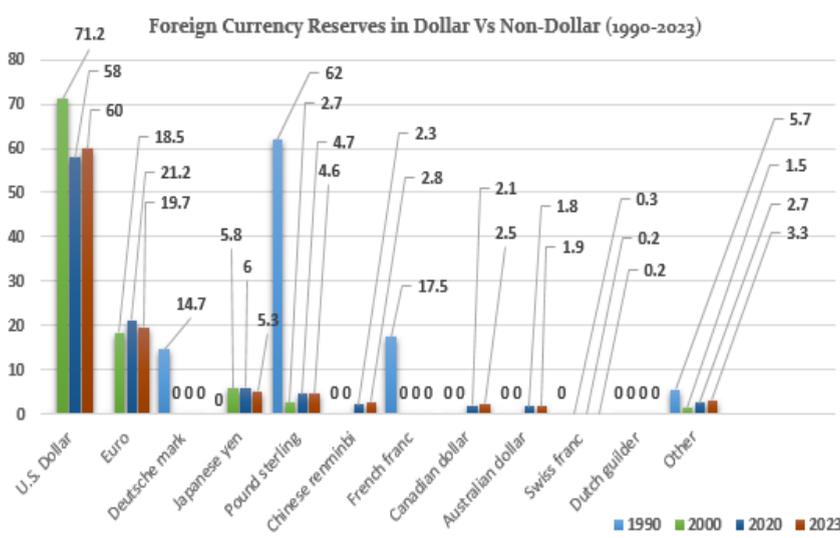
The global reserve currency composition is almost 60%, as shown in graph 4. This graph also indicates the level of USD integration in the international market share compared to alternative currencies, which only make up 40%.<sup>8</sup> Lastly, the shift from the USD faces challenges due to divergent economic agendas, geopolitical interests, and a varied state of development. The strength and reliability of USD are trusted by foreign companies, investors, and people, necessitating the establishment of trust in new systems to encourage currency conversion.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of Pakistan, de-dollarisation carries significant economic, geopolitical, and strategic implications. It empowers Pakistan to engage more actively with neighbouring countries like China, Afghanistan, and Iran by reducing its dependency on USD and trading in Yuan, particularly under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor framework or through currency swap settlements to facilitate trade in local currencies. Furthermore, diversifying foreign exchange reserves allows Pakistan to include Euro, Yuan, Yen, and other currencies, thereby reducing its reliance on USD. In addition, developing onshore financial markets to support the trade in local currencies also decreases the necessity for dollar-denominated debt, underscoring the strategic importance of Pakistan's economic decisions and the responsibility it entails.

On the other hand, regional de-dollarisation efforts could also bring significant benefits to Pakistan. For instance, China's central bank is working on a digital currency initiative and is seeking signatories from different countries. If oil-producing nations join this initiative, it could revolutionise global finance. For Pakistan, becoming a signatory could provide access to Chinese Financial Markets, enabling low-cost commercial borrowing in yuan and stimulating investment prospects. Moreover, the Gawadar legislation, which mandates all companies operating within its trading zones to conduct transactions in the local currency, presents a significant opportunity for Pakistan, aligning with broader regional de-dollarisation trends and offering a promising and hopeful future.

However, it's crucial to acknowledge that de-dollarisation can also increase Pakistan's vulnerability to US sanctions, and it might strain Pakistan's diplomatic relations with the US, potentially impacting foreign

aid, trade, and military assistance that currently benefits Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan’s economic stability could be at risk during the transition period as USD is deeply entrenched in global financial systems, and moving away from it might lead to volatility in exchange rates and financial markets, given that the vast majority of international trade from the 1990s to 2023 has been conducted in USD compared to non-dollar currencies as shown in the graph 5. These risks underscore the urgency of addressing the challenges of de-dollarisation and the need for immediate action.<sup>10</sup>



**Graph 5**

De-dollarisation presents both opportunities and challenges for the global economy and Pakistan. The diversification of monetary reserves and the pursuit of non-dollar alternatives by nations have left the future of the international financial system uncertain. For Pakistan, joining BRICS will offer significant advantages as a new economic world order emerges, marking a shift away from reliance on the traditional USD-dominated system. The ‘Dawn of the Asian Century’ offers new opportunities, with Asia primed to create an alternate financial order. Aligning with BRICS offers Pakistan a strategic pivot by leveraging its geoeconomic and geostrategic position to better integrate with the

emerging world order. However, this shift necessitates realigning current security and economic policies, which are traditionally oriented towards a Western-led financial framework. Additionally, regional economic integration within the ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) region in local currencies is another highly prospective aspect for Pakistan, as it enhances trade affairs and strengthens regional ties, contributing to a more robust and diversified economic landscape.

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# A Review of the National Space Policy of Pakistan

*Areesha Manzoor*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT reviews Pakistan's National Space Policy (NSPP) 2024, a unique and comprehensive document that sets out the country's distinctive space ambitions. It strongly emphasises national security and socioeconomic development, enhancing STEM education, fostering public-private partnerships, and strengthening international cooperation. The policy's commitment to self-reliance in space technologies and its dedication to addressing global challenges like climate change make it a strategic step towards achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

**Keywords:** Space Policy, Space Technologies, Climate Change.

Technology has revolutionised contemporary life and sparked human aspirations to explore space. The National Space Policy of Pakistan (NSPP)- 2024 sets space exploration goals to propel Pakistan towards prosperity. This Insight examines the NSPP-2024 and presents its elemental analysis.

Pakistan's space programme, with a rich legacy developed under the supervision of the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) in the early 1960s, is a significant achievement. SUPARCO's role is pivotal, from the launch of Pakistan's first rocket, Rehbar-1, with the assistance of the United States Space Agency in 1962, to the progression and launch of indigenously built satellites over the decades. This rich history of achievements is a source of pride and inspiration for the nation. After more than half a century spent in space navigation, the NSPP was launched in January 2024, setting forth guidelines for space exploration to enhance national security and prosperity.<sup>1</sup> The NSPP-2024

is a watershed event that will unfold new avenues of progress in space orbits for Pakistan.

**Figure 1:** An Overview of the National Space Policy of Pakistan 2024<sup>2</sup>



**Source:** Visual Summary of NSPP-2024 prepared by the Author

The NSPP, with its comprehensive and detailed structure comprising six segments: introduction, objectives, principles, thrust areas, comprehensive guidelines, implementation, and monitoring, ensures that all aspects of space policy and technology are considered and addressed. This thorough plan instils a sense of reassurance and confidence in its effectiveness. The policy envisions improving the 'quality of life of people of Pakistan while safeguarding national interest and sovereignty' and provides detailed guidelines to achieve these objectives.<sup>3</sup>

The policy provides directions for future space endeavours and aims to achieve socioeconomic development and enhance national security through space technologies. It is a beacon of hope, as it shows that Pakistan can achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of its National Vision 2025. This strategic plan aims to improve citizens' living standards through robust space programmes.<sup>4</sup>

This policy emphasises self-reliance in the technology sector while strengthening international cooperation, aligning with the nation's strategic vision.

The NSPP's eight thrust areas reflect its key objectives. These objectives include space technology applications, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education, infrastructure and local industry, space education and awareness, international collaboration, sustainable use of space, and formulation of space laws and regulations. This thorough plan ensures that all aspects of space policy and technology are considered and addressed.

The NSPP also provides comprehensive guidelines to achieve these objectives. One pivotal prerequisite for advancing space exploration is acquiring a robust mechanism for formulating national space policies and laws. NSPP

closed this legislative gap in the space sector by declaring SUPARCO the National Space

**National Space Policy of Pakistan outlines its space objectives, methods to achieve them, resource allocation, and alignment with national interests. It also considers global trends and emphasises the urgency and competitiveness of the space programme.**

Agency of Pakistan. With its expertise and resources, SUPARCO, in coordination with relevant federal and provincial ministries, is in charge of carrying out all space-related activities and is also responsible for implementing, monitoring, and reviewing space policy.

Another critical aspect of NSPP is its suggestion to form public-private partnerships to fund the research and development sector. The government can accomplish this by providing incentives to private partners. The policy underscores the pivotal role of space technologies in addressing current governance issues such as cyber challenges, urban development, climate change, and disaster mitigation. This emphasis on collaboration and progress is a key aspect of the NSPP.

The policy also guides using space as a diplomatic tool to achieve foreign policy objectives and strengthen international relations. Regional and international space collaborations have been sought to facilitate

investment and technology transfers. These collaborations could involve joint space missions, technology-sharing agreements, or participation in international space organisations. Pakistan shall continue advocating for international laws for the sustainable and peaceful use of space, demonstrating its commitment to global cooperation and the prevention of space weaponisation.<sup>5</sup>

The NSPP aims to revitalise Pakistan's longstanding efforts to use space peacefully through political commitment and dynamic international relations. The strategic plan promises to add immense value to the country's ongoing space programme. Pakistan's use of its space programme for peaceful purposes and socioeconomic development is a testament to the potential benefits of the NSPP 2024.<sup>6</sup>

Pakistan prioritises international cooperation in space and is also part of regional and international space agencies. It is evident from Pakistan's close collaboration with major spacefaring nations like the US, China, and Russia. Pakistan and the US cooperated in the early decades of SUPARCO, while China emerged as a pivotal space partner in the 21st century.<sup>7</sup> Pakistan also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Russia on space cooperation that can be revived now. Thus, Pakistan's global outlook on space cooperation can be advanced in light of the NSPP.

**Figure 2:** Pakistan Remote Sensing Satellite (PRSS-1)



Furthermore, NSPP reflects Pakistan's determined pursuit of space resources. Significant milestones have been achieved in this regard. These include the launch of its first deep space mission, ICUBE-QAMAR, on 3 May 2024 in collaboration with China under the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO) Framework.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Pakistan has launched PakSAT-MM1, a communication satellite intended to promote socioeconomic development and digitalisation within the country.<sup>9</sup> Pakistan aims to launch five GEO satellites and six Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites, as outlined in its Space Vision 2047.<sup>10</sup> The success of this Vision will play a crucial role in determining the success of NSPP.

SUPARCO is also establishing PSARB to prevent unauthorised satellite launches and assist in their registration. Ecosystems within universities are planned to foster academic-professional connections and promote Indigenous development and public outreach through partnerships with private partners.

Although NSPP has paved the way for Pakistan's space programme's success, consistent budgetary allocations will ensure its continuity and success. Moreover, the next step will be planning and operationalising its objectives through quantifiable measures. The process will take time since it is a debut policy launched only a few months ago.<sup>11</sup>

NSPP aligns with Pakistan's ongoing space programme. All ongoing projects have been gathered under its umbrella. It is a crucial step towards establishing guidelines for utilising advanced space technologies for national development and security. It also complies with international obligations for the peaceful uses of space technologies, showcasing Pakistan's commitment to global peace and cooperation and creating a legal framework for sustainable space usage. Advanced space technologies can help Pakistan tackle various governance-related challenges, including resource and risk management and urban planning. Achieving the objectives and implementing the NSPP will require international cooperation, public-private partnerships, and steadfast political commitment.

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# Growing Geopolitical Relevance and Economic Rise of Vietnam: Lessons for Pakistan

*Syed Muhammad Uzzam Kazmi*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT delves into Vietnam's economic transformation and geopolitical significance, deeply rooted in its strategic location in Southeast Asia. It outlines Vietnam's success in balancing relations with major powers, implementing economic reforms, and signing key trade agreements. The insight underscores the stark contrast between Vietnam's rapid rise and Pakistan's economic trajectory, underscoring the importance of aligning with global powers in Vietnam's development. It draws crucial lessons for Pakistan's economic strategies from Vietnam's approach.*

**Keywords:** Geopolitical Relevance, Economic Growth, Strategic Importance.

Vietnam's geopolitical significance is deeply rooted in its strategic geographical location along the South China Sea. This location, a crucial maritime gateway in Southeast Asia, has historically made Vietnam a focal point for major global powers aiming to exert influence in the region. Vietnam has effectively managed its relationships with international and regional powers, stimulating economic growth and increasing its strategic importance. This adept handling of major power dynamics has allowed Vietnam to attract significant investments and expand trade opportunities, thereby driving its development in both geopolitical and economic terms.<sup>1</sup>

Vietnam's transformation from an impoverished economy to one of the world's fastest-growing economies is a testament to the power of strategic

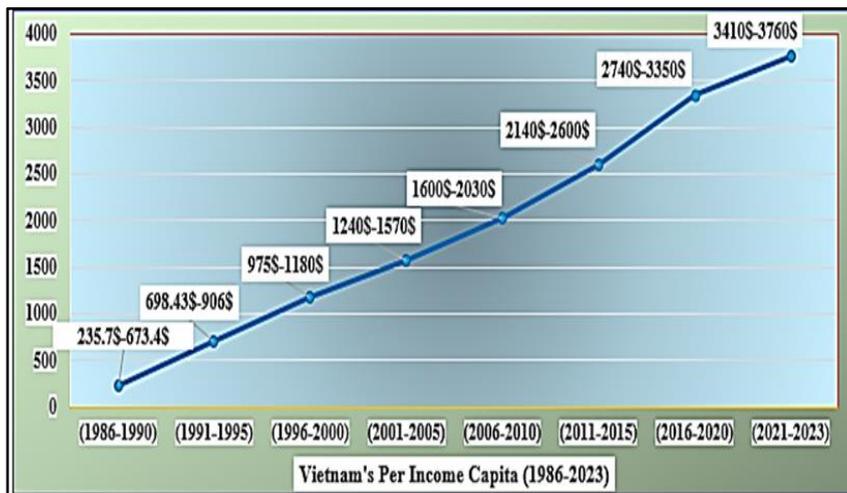
reforms. The journey began in 1986 with the Doi Moi (Renovation) reforms, which aimed to enhance the private sector's role and attract foreign investment, transitioning Vietnam from a centrally planned economy to an open market. These economic reforms played a pivotal role in Vietnam's economic rise, demonstrating the significant impact of such policies. At the same time, political stability and consistent leadership have underpinned these reforms. The Vietnamese government's maintenance of a predictable political climate has minimised social unrest and political turmoil, creating a secure environment for economic activities and investments. State-owned enterprises were significantly reduced, fostering the growth of private businesses. The combination of political stability and economic reform has been instrumental in curbing inflation and sustaining high growth rates, illustrating the critical role of a stable political environment in achieving financial success.



In 1994, the US lifted its trade embargo on Vietnam, opening the country to join the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). The lifting of the blockade was a strategic move by the US to counter China's influence in the region.<sup>2</sup> Another significant milestone in Vietnam's economic journey was signing a free trade agreement with the US in 2000. These strategic alliances played a crucial role in Vietnam's economic rise, underscoring

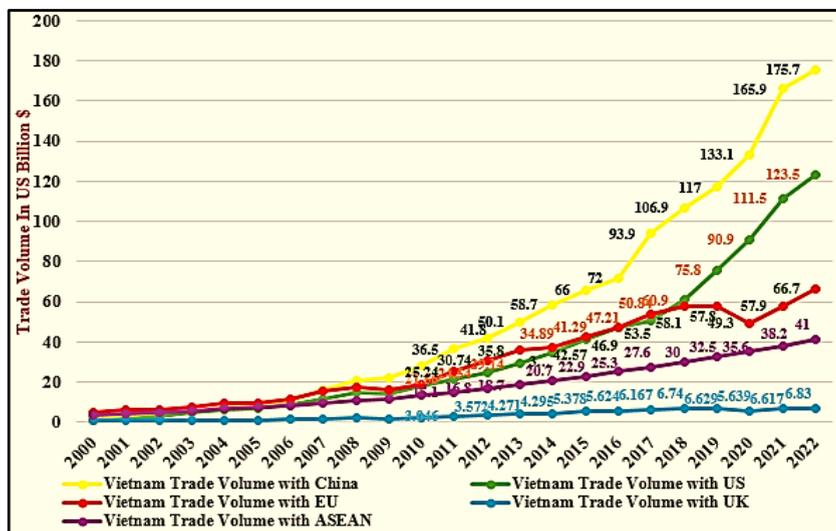
the importance of such partnerships. Its membership in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2007 significantly reduced tariffs and enhanced trade relations with several countries. The subsequent signing of crucial trade agreements, such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), further expanded Vietnam's market access, investment opportunities, and technological breakthroughs. These agreements focused on reducing tariffs and enhancing intraregional trade underscore Vietnam's feasibility of leveraging global alliances.

**Figure 1:** The Graph shows a Twelfold Increase in Vietnam's GDP Per Capita between 1986 – 2023



The US and EU have strategically leveraged Vietnam's economic reforms by diversifying their supply chains and reducing reliance on China. Since 2010, the similarity in export destinations between China and Vietnam has significantly increased. This shift is primarily due to Vietnam reorienting its exports towards the US and EU through trade agreements like EVFTA and CPTPP. Vietnam's exports to the US have seen rapid growth of US\$123.5 billion, constituting approximately 30% of Vietnam's total exports and 19% of its exports to the EU.

**Figure 1:** The Graph Shows the Exports/Imports Volume of Vietnam with China, the US, the EU, the UK, and ASEAN



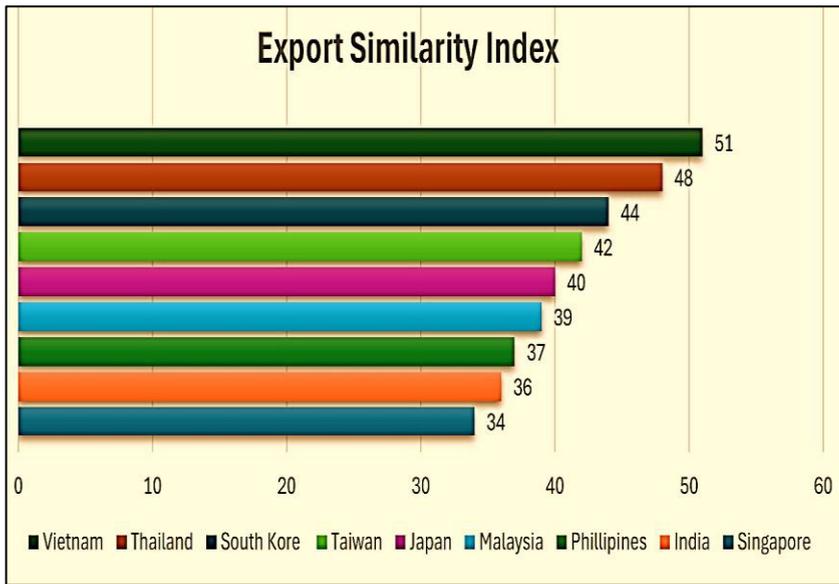
On the other hand, Vietnam and China have maintained a comprehensive strategic partnership since 2008. The graph shows that China remains Vietnam's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade growing from US\$12.15 billion to US\$175.7 billion.<sup>3</sup> China's strategic investment in Vietnam aims to diversify its manufacturing capabilities, sustain economic influence, and strengthen regional interdependencies amid ongoing geopolitical tensions with the US while safeguarding its economic interests effectively.<sup>4</sup>

**The Interplay of Vietnam's geographical location and its geopolitical significance to the West, particularly the US, has directly contributed to its economic rise.**

The ongoing trade war between the US and China has led multinational corporations to adopt the 'China plus one' strategy, which involves maintaining operations in China while expanding production to other countries like Vietnam. Vietnam's attractiveness as a substitute is evident in its ranking first in the export similarity index with China, with a 51% export similarity. The US is leveraging this high export similarity index to diversify supply chains away from China, enhancing resilience and

reducing dependence. As part of this strategic shift, the US introduced the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade agreement centred around the US and excluding China. This shift resulted in a surge in FDI, reaching US\$27.72 billion in 2022, solidifying Vietnam's role in global supply chains and as a critical player for the US to counter China's influence in the region.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 3:** The Graph Shows a 51% Similarity between China and Vietnam's Exports



Turning to a comparison of Pakistan and Vietnam's economic trajectory over the years, the following graphs represent a comparative analysis of both countries' foreign exchange reserves, exports to the US, GDP, and GDP per capita from 2000 to 2022. Over this period, Vietnam has followed a distinct path, with its foreign exchange reserves and exports to the US showing significant growth compared to Pakistan. Vietnam's GDP surpassed Pakistan's from 2007 onwards. Similarly, Pakistan's GDP per capita has consistently remained lower than Vietnam's, underscoring the countries' economic well-being differences.

Figure 4: Comparison of GDP Per Capita

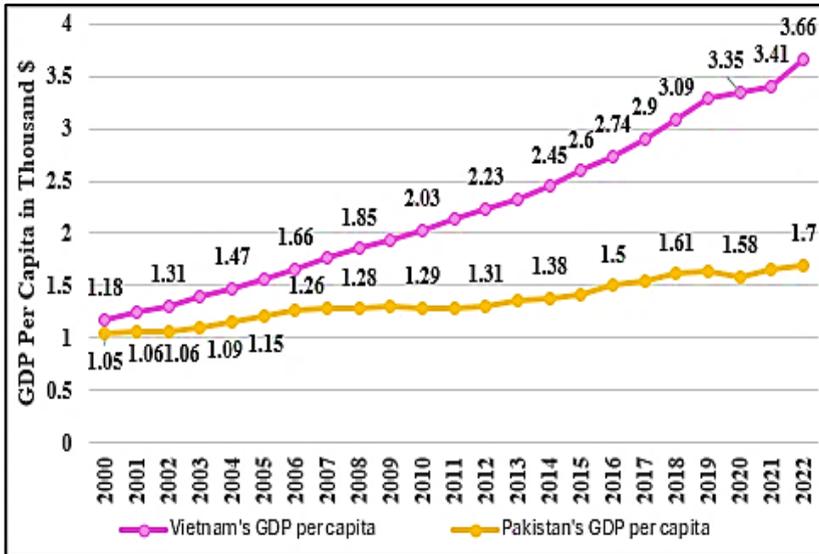


Figure 5: Comparison of Exports to US and Forex Reserves

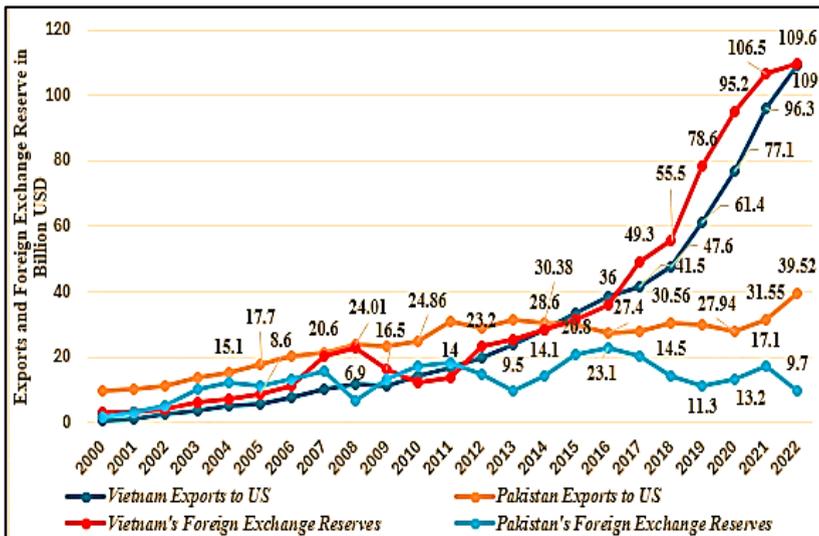
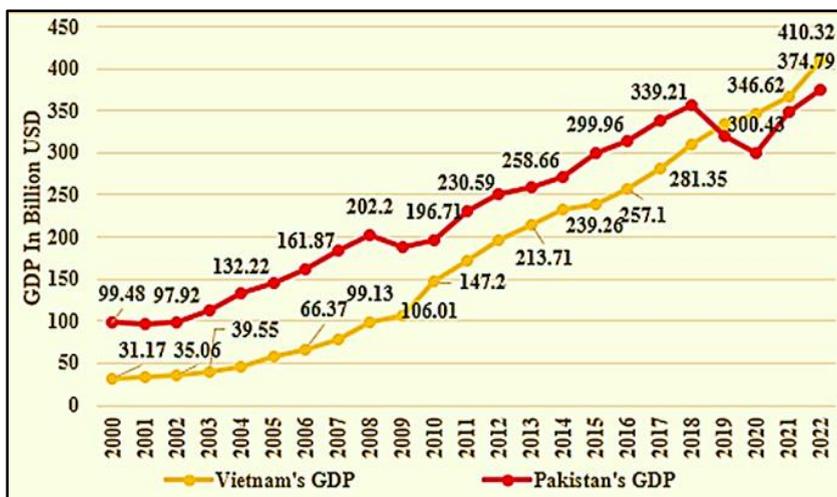


Figure 6: Comparison of GDP



The dissection of Vietnam's economic rise indicates that post-Cold War, only those countries who aligned themselves geopolitically with the US-led West or vice versa witnessed significant economic development. However, one can say that Vietnam introduced multiple initiatives in the late 1980s, such as economic reforms, political stability, and continuity of policies. It is also a fact that the catalyst moment remains their opening of diplomatic ties with the US in 1994. Similarly, India is another country that witnessed an unprecedented economic rise post-Cold War because its global relevance aligned with the geopolitical interests of the US-led West or vice versa. No wonder, today, the US calls India the net security provider in the region to counter China. It is important to note that Vietnam and India were neither geoeconomically nor geopolitically aligned with the US-led West during the Cold War. Indonesia is another example that remained largely non-aligned but swayed on both sides during the Cold War.

The disintegration of the former USSR and the eventual rise of China forced the US to find new strategic partners in Asia-Pacific to counter the emerging geopolitical challenge to its global supremacy. South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, etc., were already part of the US-led West, so the US concentrated on bringing Vietnam, India,

and Indonesia towards its corner. Since the US had little economic and political stakes in these countries during the Cold War, all three countries also managed to maintain relatively cordial relations with the US adversary, i.e., China. The primary reason for the ability of these countries to successfully hedge between the US and China was the US compulsion to increase its 'stakes' in these countries. Therefore, one notices a visible shift in the economic growth trajectory of all these countries, especially Vietnam, from the former USSR and later from China to the US-led West in the 1990s and more so at the start of the new millennium. However, once the US has firmly established its economic and political stakes in these countries, it would be possible for the US-led West to manipulate these countries' economic and political environment.

In the case of Pakistan, the situation is rather interesting. During the Cold War, Pakistan was aligned with the US-led West regarding geoeconomics and geopolitics. As soon as the Cold War ended, Pakistan lost its geopolitical relevance to the US-led West against China because the latter found India to be a preferable strategic partner against China, given its size, population, geography, etc. Whereas Pakistan tried to find geopolitical refuge with a reluctant China, geoeconomically, it remained anchored with the US-led West, which created a tremendous strategic vulnerability for Pakistan. Until today, Pakistan has yet to find its proper place and role within the context of US-China rivalry. On one hand, geopolitically, it tilts towards China and Russia. Still, on the other hand, geoeconomically, it cannot free itself from the clutches of the US-led West. It must be remembered that, in strategic terms, the US-led West has chosen India as its partner against China. For them, Pakistan is perhaps a potential 'spoiler', which enjoys closer ties with China. Hence, it seems that an economically fragile, sociopolitically weak, and vulnerable Pakistan serves more extensive strategic interests of the US-led West in the region.

Above all, Pakistan needs to determine its proper role and place in the geopolitical circus of the US-China rivalry. One option could be to work towards an alternate economic paradigm wherein Pakistan focuses on its "Pivot to Geoeconomics" despite geopolitical challenges, as outlined in the National Security Policy 2022-2026. This implies that Pakistan needs

to crystallise and list its economic priorities and pursue them fully, utilising all elements of national power (EoNP). In this process, Pakistan should seek the support of the US and China, wherever it serves its national interest, proportional to its actual strategic weight in the region. At the same time, Pakistan should continue doing business with the US, the UK, and the EU. It must try to diversify its export markets according to an economic roadmap. For example, suppose the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline or the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline makes economic sense; in that case, Pakistan must utilise all EoNP to complete these projects despite geopolitical challenges. Since the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and serves its national interest, Pakistan must go for it despite all internal and external challenges. Similarly, if trade with India and Iran is beneficial, Pakistan should also consider it a strategic priority despite fear of sanctions.

In short, Pakistan must outline its economic priorities clearly while keeping the general public confident about the enormous opportunities and dire challenges. This requires a coordinated effort utilising all EoNP. Pakistan needs to build an alternate economic paradigm wherein instead of looking towards the US and China for financial bailouts, the world and regional powers should look towards Pakistan as a game changer.

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## About Insight and Author

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# Overseas Target Killing by State: Analysing India's Behaviour

*Ayesha Afgun*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT explores the rising trend of overseas target killings by states, focusing on India's growing involvement under Modi's government. The analysis compares India's actions to those of countries like Israel and the US, emphasising the use of extrajudicial measures through intelligence agencies. It also highlights India's targeting of Sikhs and Kashmiris, leading to international tensions, and underscores the pressing need for more apparent international norms and accountability to regulate such actions.*

**Keywords:** Target Killing, Extrajudicial Killings, Sikhs, Kashmiris.

The controversial practice of overseas target killing, a clandestine instrument used by some states to 'neutralise' their perceived threats abroad has its origin in the complexities of intra-state relations in emerging geopolitics. Overseas target killing has historically been used as a tool by countries like Israel and the United States (US), mainly through their intelligence agencies – Mossad and CIA, respectively to achieve desired results.<sup>1</sup> This insight examines the BJP-led Indian mindset regarding target killing and the role of intelligence agencies like the CIA and Mossad in a similar context.

Mossad is known for its strategic overseas target killings, which it cited as critical to national security, particularly against perceived existential threats. One of its most infamous operations, 'Operation Wrath of God' (1972-1980s), was a covert mission to assassinate individuals involved in the 1972 Munich massacre of Israeli athletes. The killing of Imad Mughniyeh, a senior military commander of Hezbollah in 2008, is

another notable example. Likewise, Mossad is believed to have assassinated several Iranian nuclear scientists in the 2010s to disrupt Iran's nuclear program and the recent strategically planned alleged assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah with the use of explosive devices and bunker busters.

Likewise, the CIA has been involved in extrajudicial killings, especially during the war on terror, with a history of covert assassinations. These covert assassinations, often carried out by drone strikes, are secret and not officially acknowledged by the US government. The CIA's advancements in technology have shifted its tactics towards drone warfare. Since 2004, the CIA has used drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia to target the most wanted terrorists, resulting in significant debate over their legality due to numerous civilian casualties. The assassination of Osama bin Laden and Major General Qasem Soleimani further demonstrated the CIA's capabilities in intelligence gathering and covert operations at large.

Meanwhile, India, a relatively new player in overseas target killings on the international stage, is pursuing an assertive and aggressive foreign policy under Modi's regime to advance its self-proclaimed national security objectives.

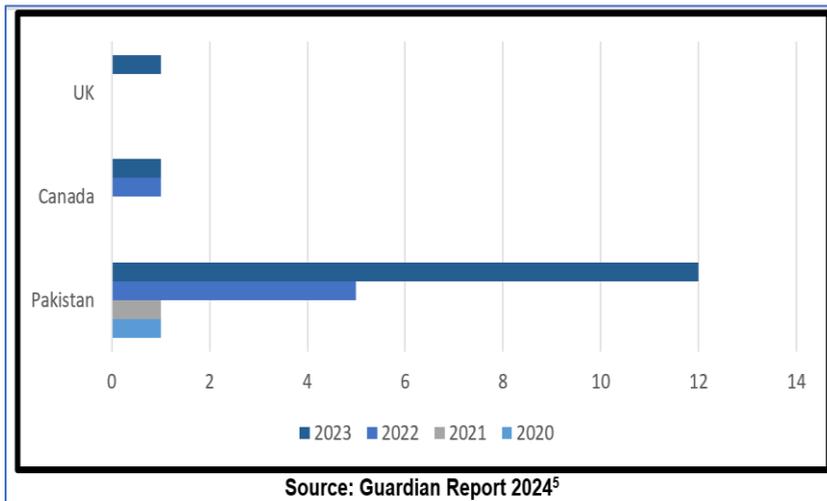
While historical instances of India's involvement in overseas target killings, especially in the West, are limited, the country is now following the lead of the US and

**India's approach to target killings reflects a complex interplay of breaching the national security of different nation-states. The use of such measures highlights the need for clearer international norms and accountability mechanisms.**

Israel while eliminating individuals perceived as enemies in the name of national security. It is done through the agents recruited and trained by India's external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).<sup>2</sup>

In continuation of this new assertive and aggressive strategy, India has repeatedly targeted Sikhs and Kashmiris residing in Pakistan in a series of assassinations, which have raised serious concerns regarding the breach of security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the states like

the US, Canada, and Pakistan.<sup>3</sup> The Indian government often cites national security concerns as a rationale for these assassinations. The following graph shows countries where India has recently targeted individuals.<sup>4</sup>



Despite this phenomenon starting some years ago, it only came to the limelight after the killing of Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, allegedly by India, in Canada and a failed assassination attempt on another Sikh activist in the US in 2023. On 25 January 2024, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary publicly condemned India for carrying out extra-judicial killings in Pakistan in two instances, with more cases under investigation.<sup>5</sup> This implies that India has been involved in more killings in recent years.

Furthermore, the BJP-led government has been taking credit for recent killings, which suggests that it used these incidents for political gains within India's domestic politics. This has also been a slogan during election campaigns in India. These actions also indicate a concerning politicisation of the Indian military and intelligence agencies utilised for domestic political interests. Moreover, the anti-Pakistan rhetoric to garner votes shows the inherent weakness of the Indian political structure, where the country's political elite still relies on Pakistan-centric propaganda to gain popular support.

In an interview with an Indian news channel, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh publicly stated that India would extra-judicially execute anyone perceived as an alleged 'threat' and pursue them even if they were in Pakistan's territory.<sup>6</sup> From his statement, it can be inferred that the Indian government is involved in these extra-territorial assassinations. Furthermore, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, who survived a failed assassination last year, has filed a civil lawsuit against the Indian government and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.<sup>7</sup>

In this way, India's approach to target killings reflects a complex interplay of breaching the national security of different nation-states. As countries navigate the complex landscape of global threats, using such measures highlights the need for more explicit international norms and accountability mechanisms. Without them, the line between legitimate defence and extrajudicial actions will remain blurred, posing a serious risk to global stability and undermining the rule of law.

The repeated occurrence of these killings, as reported in the British newspaper 'The Guardian' (April 2024), raises questions about the performance of our local intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Although there should be an internal investigation for lapses in intelligence, they should also be acknowledged for their ability to establish the links of these assassinations to the mastermind, i.e., India.

Pakistan, being a responsible state, has communicated its concerns to Indian authorities and also approached the countries whose territory India used to carry out these activities. Such incidents create a point of convergence to deepen diplomatic and intelligence channels between Pakistan, Canada, the US, and the UK and bring India to the accountability table.

In this regard, there is a need of time that Pakistan must take India to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and raise such issues at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the United Nations (UN) to expose India's true intentions. While these steps seem feasible theoretically, putting them into practice will be difficult as global organisations have vested interests and international political entities have double standards. Additionally, the unilateral decision by a state to assassinate

an individual in a foreign land raises questions about the rules-based order that the West advocates.

It is also important to emphasise that India's global assassination programme will negatively impact and even disrupt stability worldwide. It has been a year since the assassination in Canada, and still, no concrete action has been taken against the perpetrators. Paying no heed to India's actions will further weaken the fragile world order. The international community must collectively take notice to end such activities to uphold its moral commitments and maintain a just and balanced order.

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