



QUARTERLY

A Periodical of INSIGHTS

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ
TAUGHT MAN THAT WHICH HE KNEW NOT

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Editorial Note

The fourth issue of volume 3, 2024, of E9 Quarterly, a distinctive compilation of ten insights written during the fourth quarter of 2024, 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 provides a comprehensive analysis of the ongoing conflict in Manipur, a tragic consequence of the divisive Hindutva ideology perpetuating violence and oppression. This situation mirrors broader patterns of state-sponsored violence against minorities in India, driven by Hindutva extremism, and poses significant threats to regional stability.

Besides this, the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, with the participation of seventy-five countries offering significant benefits like international cooperation and alignment of national laws with global standards in pursuit of global efforts to combat cybercrime, the Durand Line, established in 1893 between Sir Mortimer Durand and Emir Abdur Rahman Khan, its geopolitical significance and impact on Pak-Afghan relations and Pakistan's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a global agenda adopted in 2015 to achieve sustainable development by 2030 have also been examined.

This issue also delves into the NEOM City project, part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and opportunities for Pakistan, particularly in employment, economic collaboration, and technological advancement, Sino-Indian relations from 2010 to 2020 highlighting a mix of cooperation and conflict characterised by growing bilateral trade ties and prioritising economic interests over political disputes and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and its challenges in achieving significant intraregional trade, which remains at just 8% of its total trade because of

geopolitical barriers, weak institutional frameworks, and inadequate trade policies.

This issue further explores the content of leading Pakistani TV news channels during the first quarter of 2024, revealing a dominant focus on political coverage. This comprises nearly half of all news content and is characterised by overemphasising politics, often coupled with sensationalism and subjectivity. This overemphasis erodes public trust and overshadows other vital issues. The report strongly advocates for regulatory reforms to promote a more balanced and diverse news landscape in Pakistan, a crucial step towards a more informed public and a healthier media environment.

Finally, the issue discusses how social media has fragmented dialogue and increased hostility between groups, making it harder to find common ground and engaging them in unifying activities to promote unity and shared values. Nelson Mandela noted that sports have a unique power to unite people. In Pakistan, sports like cricket can foster national unity and interprovincial harmony, transcending regional differences and bringing people together in a shared experience. Cricket's widespread popularity makes it an ideal catalyst for unity.

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.

India's Manipur: A Victim of the Divisive Hindutva Ideology

Abdul Basit Khan

Abstract

This INSIGHT argues that the ongoing conflict in Manipur is a tragic consequence of the divisive Hindutva ideology, perpetuating violence and oppression. Manipur, home to over 3.3 million people and numerous ethnic groups, has seen tensions escalate between the Meitei and Kuki communities. The BJP's support of Meiteis and unequal resource distribution have marginalised minority groups, fueling unrest. This situation mirrors broader patterns of state-sponsored violence against minorities in India, driven by Hindutva extremism, and poses significant threats to regional stability.

Keywords: Manipur, Metiei, Kuki, Hindutva Extremism.

This insight argues that the ongoing situation in Manipur is a tragic consequence of the divisive Hindutva ideology, perpetuating a cycle of violence and oppression in the state. Manipur is a northeastern state in India, bordering Bangladesh and Myanmar, with over 3.3 million population and home to numerous ethnic groups who are often victims of violence and Hindutva extremism of BJP in India.¹ The Manipur conflict is a decadelong, state-sponsored conflict that deprives its people of their fundamental rights and affects the resource-rich region.²

The state of Manipur is dominated by three prominent ethnic groups: Meitei, Kuki, and Naga. The majority comprises Meitei, an ethnic Hindu group, whereas the minority consists of Kuki, Naga, and other ethnicities. Meiteis and Kukis are Indigenous groups of the state, and both have lived there for decades. Meiteis originally worshipped nature and later converted to the Hindu religion in the 18th century due to a strong Hindu

influence.³ Meiteis have never accepted Kuki Christians as the indigenous population because they migrated from Myanmar. To undermine their strong ties with the region, Kukis have been labelled as ‘invaders’.⁴

This ideology set a precedent of division amongst the state population. Owing to this historic ethnic rivalry, a video went viral on the 4th of May, 2023, displaying abhorrent scenes of abuse against three Kuki women who were dragged on the streets without clothes by Meiteis. This act of brutality further fuelled the decades-old Meitei-Kuki rivalry.⁵

Ironically, the police station was just a few yards from the crime scene. Despite receiving the best police station award in 2020, it did nothing to stop the brutality.⁶ The incident resulted in the burning of 360 churches and left at least 130 killed, 400 wounded, many sexually assaulted, and more than 60,000 taken as refugees.⁷

Another dynamic of the Manipur conflict is the composition of these tribes. The Kuki and Naga tribes comprise 43% of Manipur’s population, who live in the hilly areas and have the status of Scheduled Tribe (ST).⁸ This status enables them to secure jobs through a special quota and protect their land by reserving property rights to only Kukis.

In contrast, the Meiteis are predominantly Hindus and comprise 53% of the population residing in the Imphal valley. They also dominate the state’s legislative assembly with 50 seats, while the minority groups have only 19.⁹ The Meiteis still aspire to attain ST status to increase social and political influence by buying property in Kuki-inhabited areas.

The irony is that Meiteis are involved in atrocities against other vulnerable minority groups in the region backed by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Even the former Chief Minister, Biren Singh, who used to propagate himself as the de facto leader of the Meitei community, vehemently denied the allegations of violence against vulnerable groups in the state.

The Indian central government's hypocrisy does not end here. Minority groups have been marginalised through the lopsided distribution of the development budget. For instance, the 2017-2020 budget for the valley inhabited by Meiteis was INR 21,481 crores, contributing 98%, whereas

for the Kukis, it was only INR 419 crores, less than 2% of the total budget. This unequal resource distribution and political marginalisation of minority groups have fuelled severe grievances in the Manipur state.

Furthermore, the internet shutdown during the Manipur violence created a blackout of outgoing information and left the rest of the country and the world in the dark.¹⁰ This unconstitutional act curtailing the right to freedom of expression raises severe doubts about India's so-called commitment to upholding its citizens' and others' fundamental human rights. It also calls into question India's claim of being the world's largest democracy.

The internet shutdown strategy in India is the government's tried and tested way of building self-created, biased

The divisive Hindutva-based antics of the BJP have polarised the sociopolitical order of India. The successive events of violence against minorities, along with several insurgencies in India, present a perfect recipe for potential implosion and pose severe threats to peace and stability in the region and beyond.

narratives. It is also effectively employed in other states, such as India's Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K).

Moreover, the infamous Gujrat riots of 2002, which were a byproduct of Modi's Hindutva extremism, involved prolonged Hindu-Muslim communal riots and resulted in the death of more than 1,000 Muslims.¹¹

During the investigation of these riots, a senior Gujrat police officer, Sanjiv Bhat, stated in the Supreme Court that the riots were allowed by the Modi administration. The police were provided with data on Muslim-owned properties to be destroyed. This is like the tactics used against the Sikh community in 1984.¹² These multiple cases of violence bear witness to the Indian state-sponsored terrorism against minorities.

Shivasundar, a social activist in India, compared the riots of Manipur and Gujrat and concluded that both were state-sponsored acts of terrorism. The rise of Hindutva ideology in recent years supposedly aims to make India one nation, language, and religion and calls for the demise of diversity of any kind.¹³ In the case of Manipur, the BJP explicitly

supported Meiteis, and Mr Modi remained silent over the burning of Manipur – he had to face a no-confidence vote, which he survived.¹⁴

Due to PM Modi's politics of violence and division, the BJP lost seats in both inner and outer Manipur to the Indian National Congress. However, the BJP still holds the provincial government in coalition with other regional parties. The National Congress party's win can be interpreted as a strong message to the Modi regime that its politics of suppression and hatred are no longer acceptable.¹⁵

The divisive Hindutva-based antics of the BJP have polarised the sociopolitical order of India. The successive events of violence against minorities, along with several insurgencies in India, present a perfect recipe for potential implosion and pose serious threats to peace and stability in the region and beyond. Although BJP's policies are self-destructive, yet Pakistan must watch these developments with due interest and care because the extremist and polarised mindset of the Hindutva-led BJP can constantly shift political rhetoric against Pakistan to divert the attention of its masses from its internal sociopolitical faultlines.

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About Insight and Author

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Budapest Convention: Risk and Benefit Analysis for Pakistan

Maham Ayaz

Abstract

This INSIGHT explores the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and its relevance for Pakistan. Despite its global significance and the participation of seventy-five countries, Pakistan has hesitated to join due to data privacy and sovereignty concerns. The Convention offers benefits like international cooperation and alignment of national laws with global standards. However, Pakistan's reservations highlight potential risks. This analysis suggests that the benefits of joining the Convention, including enhanced cybersecurity and international support, could outweigh the perceived risks, aligning Pakistan with global efforts to combat cybercrime.

Keywords: Budapest Convention, Cybercrime, Cybersecurity, Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe.

The Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe, commonly known as the Budapest Convention, came into force in November 2001. Twenty-three years later, it is the only international treaty on cybercrime. At present, seventy-five countries across the globe are signatories to the Convention and thereby have agreed that certain behaviours are not acceptable in cyberspace.¹ These countries have also incorporated the essence of the treaty in their national laws. In Asia-Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Israel, Japan, Philippines, Türkiye, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan are among its signatories. Pakistan is not a signatory to this Convention. Though there are many benefits of becoming a party to the Convention, but Pakistan is concerned about various risks related to the Convention. This insight will delve into the

benefits and risks and critically analyse whether the benefits outweigh the risks.

Today, the world is globally interconnected; any threat from one part of the internet can put the entire internet at risk.² The Budapest Convention was primarily created to address this jurisdictional issue posed by the evolution of information technology and the internet.³ The Convention proposed a solution that entailed harmonising cybercrime laws worldwide while also assuring the existence of procedural mechanisms to assist the successful prosecution of cyber criminals. The Convention brought forward a mechanism in the form of a multilateral agreement drafted to facilitate international cooperation among states party to the Convention to prosecute cybercriminals.⁴ The Convention's preamble outlines its primary objective: to pursue a standard criminal policy for cybercrimes to protect society.⁵

Table showing countries which are party of Budapest Convention by Council of Europe, July 2024	
Continent	Number of Countries
Africa	10
Asia	9
Europe	41
North America	5
Oceania	5
South America	5

Becoming a party to the Budapest Convention will provide Pakistan with several benefits, the most significant being the facilitation of international cooperation. When Pakistan becomes a party to the Convention, it will gain access to a network of countries committed to combating cybercrimes. Information regarding other Convention parties will be accessible to Pakistan, and it will also be able to conduct joint investigations with other parties. To counter transnational cyber threats,

it is crucial to have international cooperation, and the Budapest Convention is a key platform for this.

To join the Budapest Convention, Pakistan will be required to incorporate the essential features of the Convention into its national laws. Presently, the legislation on cybercrime in Pakistan is the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016. PECA is a comprehensive legislation which reflects the essence of the Budapest Convention. However, if Pakistan becomes a Convention party, it will help the country harmonise its laws with international standards. This harmonisation of

Embracing the Convention allows Pakistan to leverage opportunities for progress and resilience rather than being driven by fears and concerns over sovereignty infringements.

laws will revitalise the country's national laws while equipping them to handle the latest cyber threats. Moreover, by becoming a party to the Convention, Pakistan's law enforcement agencies and judicial bodies will benefit from international expertise and practice, making the country more effective and efficient in prosecuting cybercrimes.

Although becoming a part of the Convention can be beneficial, the State of Pakistan has some concerns regarding the Budapest Convention and thus still has not signed the Convention. One concern the Ministry of Foreign Affairs brought to light during a hearing of the Lahore High Court in 2020 was that the Convention is *'highly intrusive and would compromise data privacy'*. The Ministry did not go into details as to how it would compromise data. Still, it stated that many countries outside Europe, including developed nations like China, Russia, Indonesia, and Singapore, hold the opinion that the Convention severely conceded data sovereignty.⁶

During the same hearing of the Lahore High Court, the Ministry of Interior of Pakistan, in addition to highlighting Israel's presence as a party, also pointed out its concerns about Article 32 of the Convention. This clause allows any member state to access publicly available data without the state's authorisation. The source indicated that this provision could enable hostile countries to retrieve such data, potentially undermining Pakistan's data protection efforts.

The basis for Pakistan's concerns about joining the Budapest Convention is debatable. The primary concern of compromise of data sovereignty is also questionable as the Convention facilitates international cooperation while ensuring respect for the national sovereignty of the states. Article 15 of the Convention mandates countries to implement the Convention within the framework of their domestic law, ensuring respect for national laws. Mutual assistance between countries is to comply with the national laws of the countries involved, as stated in Article 25 of the Convention. Moreover, the countries can reserve the right to mutual assistance when they believe that the criterion of dual criminality is not fulfilled as provided in Article 29 of the Convention. Most importantly, countries can make reservations regarding specific provisions per Article 42 while signing the Convention. This further includes member states' flexibility and allows countries to protect their sovereignty.

Pakistan has also enacted a law in 2020 for mutual legal assistance in criminal matters.⁷ While Pakistan's national legislation embodies principles like the Budapest Convention, it is unlikely that other states will cooperate based solely on national law. However, by joining the Budapest Convention, Pakistan would gain international cooperation to prosecute cybercriminals effectively. Pakistan is already a party to a Convention based on exchanging information and collaboration, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.⁸ Therefore, joining the Budapest Convention would align Pakistan with existing commitments and strengthen its ability to combat cybercrime through enhanced international cooperation.

State policies should not be shaped by fear but by anticipation of opportunities for the country. By joining the Convention, Pakistan can strengthen its international cooperation framework, gain international support, and contribute to global efforts in securing its cyberspace. Embracing the Convention allows Pakistan to leverage opportunities for progress and resilience rather than being driven by fears and concerns over sovereignty infringements.

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The Durand Line: A Legal Perspective and Way Forward

Sheherazade Amin

Abstract

This INSIGHT explores the Durand Line, established in 1893 between Sir Mortimer Durand and Emir Abdur Rahman Khan, as a persistent source of tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Despite Kabul's assertions that the agreement was made under duress and nullified by the emergence of Pakistan, international law, including the Vienna Convention and various UN resolutions, upholds the Durand Line as a legitimate border. Afghanistan's actions, which tacitly acknowledge the boundary despite internal political pressures, indicate a complex interplay between historical agreements and contemporary political strategies. This analysis underscores the geopolitical significance of the Durand Line and its impact on Pak-Afghan relations.

Keywords: Durand Line, Vienna Convention.

The Durand Line, a significant historical marker, has been a major cause of turbulence in the diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Its historical significance, deeply rooted in the region's 19th-century geopolitics, is a crucial aspect that cannot be overlooked.¹

The agreement establishing the Durand Line, signed on November 12, 1893, between Sir Mortimer Durand and Abdur Rahman Khan, the Emir of Afghanistan, is a pivotal moment in the region's history. This agreement, often misquoted and misinterpreted, has been a source of contention, leading to a strained relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The main reason is that some modern Afghanistan elements refuse to acknowledge the Durand Line. Kabul argues that this agreement was

made under duress and, thus, not enforceable. It was meant to be admissible only for a hundred years till 1993. Furthermore, Afghanistan argues '*force majeure*' that the event of independence of the Subcontinent from colonial rule voids all prevailing agreements between the British Government of India and other parties as the British Government of India no longer exists, and there is an emergence of another state altogether, Pakistan.

Under the legal framework of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, specifically Article 62, the Government of Pakistan is bound to uphold all international treaties previously undertaken by the British Indian Government, including the Durand Line Agreement.

Customary International Law, later codified in Article 11 of the Vienna Convention on the Succession of States concerning Treaties, dictates that (a) *the succession of states does not affect a boundary established by a treaty* or (b) *obligations and rights established by a treaty relating to the regime of a boundary*.² Under this, Pakistan, therefore, has no obligation to renegotiate or amend any previous agreements regarding its border with Afghanistan.

Instead of considering this, Afghanistan unilaterally declared on 26 July 1949 that it believed the Durand Line was an '*imaginary line*' and that all agreements regarding this border were void.³ Afghanistan fails to remember that it wasn't just in 1893 that they signed an agreement regarding their border. Still, in 1905⁴, an agreement to continue the prevalent contracts between the British Government and Abdur Rahman Khan was signed due to the passing of the Emir.

Furthermore, in 1919, a detailed contract was signed between the British and Independent Afghan governments, establishing the modern-day border.⁵ It should further be noted that none of these three agreements was signed between the Government of India and Afghanistan but between the Government of Britain and Afghanistan, and when '*force majeure*' did occur, the death of the Emir of Afghanistan or the establishment of the independent government of Afghanistan, the British took it upon themselves to sign a fresh document, even if the

clauses were verbatim, with just the names of the parties changed to reflect changes in the status of Afghani politics and leadership.

Furthermore, Afghanistan cannot renounce the Durand Line Agreement unilaterally due to the principle of *'uti possidetis juris'*. This principle states that post-colonial states like Pakistan should maintain the same borders as the preceding state. In the Durand Line Agreement context, the border established by the agreement should be respected and maintained by the successor states.

Having no legal standing, the Durand Line issue is raised as and when it is politically convenient for the Afghan political regimes to distract domestic public opinion.

The legitimacy of the Durand Line as an international border was further cemented in the Geneva Accords of 1988. This was corroborated in various United Nations Security Council Resolutions, such as Resolution 1267, which recognises the Durand Line as an international border and states that the principle of non-intervention shall apply.⁶

Meanwhile, in Kabul, some believe that any government that recognises the Durand Line would lose the support of the public, which views it as nothing more than a colonial heirloom with no legality or reality.⁷ This highlights the intricate political implications of the Durand Line, which often overshadow its legal, geographical, or ethnic aspects.

This is further emphasised by the fact that after the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Afghanistan never questioned its borders with the newly emerged and independent Central Asian States.

It should be noted that Kabul has never formally launched any initiative to negotiate the current agreement, and Afghanistan has continued to abide by the clauses of the Durand Line Agreement. Afghanistan has never raised the Durand Line issue at any international forum with Pakistan. It has continued to carry out operations along with Islamabad at immigration and customs checkpoints along the so-called “disputed

border”, a testimony that Kabul recognises it as the valid border between states.⁸

Pakistan decided to fence its border with Afghanistan against cross-border terrorism. Under the UNSC Resolution 1373, Pakistan has every right to fence the border with Afghanistan to deny safe haven to those who finance, plan, support, or commit terrorist acts using their respective territories against other states or their citizens.⁹ Furthermore, taking a leaf out of the US Secure Fence Act 2006,¹⁰ Pakistan can also lawfully fence the Durand Line on its side of the border without Afghanistan’s consent, following a similar action taken by the United States of America.¹¹

However, to maintain and build better relations with its neighbour, it is recommended that Pakistan may stop using the term “the Durand Line” to refer to its international border with Afghanistan. The term may also be removed from the national curriculum but remain the same in documents for historical accuracy.

Above in view, it is clear that having no legal standing, the Durand Line issue is raised as and when it is politically convenient for the Afghan political regimes to distract domestic public opinion.

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Sustainable Development Goals and Pakistan

Asim Shafique

Abstract

This INSIGHT explores Pakistan's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a global agenda adopted in 2015 to achieve sustainable development by 2030. Despite the initial commitment, Pakistan's ranking has fluctuated, currently at 137th in 2024. The analysis highlights Pakistan's moderate improvements in some SDGs and challenges in others, attributing inconsistencies to political instability and economic constraints. Recommendations include enhancing political will, institutional frameworks, data collection, and international collaboration. Achieving the SDGs in Pakistan requires sustained efforts, effective governance, and a coordinated approach across various societal sectors.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, Inconsistent Policies, Political Instability.

Member states of the UN, in pursuit of collective sustainable development, agreed to adopt a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. The destination was to protect the planet, end poverty and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. These SDGs are determined by 17 goals, including 169 associated targets and 232 indicators pursued in synchronised international cooperation efforts and national frameworks. The government is independent in taking charge and creating national frameworks to accomplish SDGs, as they are not legally obligatory. Therefore, the interest of international organisations and the effectiveness with which national governments craft programmes to reap the benefits of international support will determine the success of the

SDGs.¹ The accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) serves as the foundation for the SDGs.

Since January 1, 2016, the Pakistani government has been actively implementing the SDGs. The national coordinating entity for this effort is a dedicated section within the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiative. The government has prioritised the 17 goals into three categories, demonstrating its commitment to achieving the SDGs.



Priority 1: Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), Quality Education (SDG 4), Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG 16).

Priority 2: No Poverty (SDG 1), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9), Reduce Inequality (SDG 10), Partnership for the Goals (SDG 17), and Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11).


















Priority 3: Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), Climate Action (SDG 13), Life below Water (SDG 14) and Life on Land (SDG 15).

Pakistan was among the first countries to adopt the 2030 SDGs agenda through a unanimous parliament resolution. Unfortunately, its ranking has fluctuated over the years, showing inconsistent implementation strategies. Initially, Pakistan stood at 122 and moved to 134 in 2020, then came back to 128 in 2023 with an overall score of 58.97, and again moved to 137 recently in 2024. In comparison, we can see that even the smaller neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have a better ranking/score than Pakistan (as shown in Graph).



Source: Sustainable Development Report 2017, 2020 and 2024

In a recent sustainable development report 2024, Pakistan's ranking declined to 137th from 128th in (2023) with an overall score of (57.02).² The table below shows the detailed performance of Pakistan in 2024 and compares it with its performance in 2017 and 2020 in achieving the SDGs.

SDGs	SDGs Goal (Scale)	Performance in 2017	Performance in 2020	Performance in 2024	Over-all Performance
1.	No Poverty (poverty headcount at \$ 2.15/ day)	4.1%	0.9%	3.8%	Moderate Improvement 
2.	Zero Hunger (prevalence of undernourishment)	22%	20.3%	18.5%	Stagnate 
3.	Good Health and Well-Being (Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births))	178	140	154.2	Stagnate 
4.	Quality Education (Literacy rate (% of population aged 15 to 24))	73.7%	74.5%	72.7%	Decreasing 
5.	Gender Equality (Demand for family planning satisfied by modern methods)	52.6%	48.5%	48.5%	Stagnate 
6.	Clean Water and Sanitation (Population having access to basic drinking water services)	91.4%	91%	90.6%	Stagnate 
7.	Affordable and Clean Energy (having access to electricity)	97.5%	70.8%	94.9%	Moderate Improvement 
8.	Decent work and Economic Growth (adjusted GDP growth)	-1.5%	-1.8%	-2.7%	Stagnate 
9.	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (population using the internet)	18%	15.5%	32.2%	Moderate Improvement 
10.	Reduced Inequalities	Information Unavailable	Information Unavailable	Information Unavailable	
11.	Sustainable Cities and Communities (proportion of population access to improved water source (% urban population))	60.9%	51.3%	39%	Decreasing 
12.	Responsible Consumption and Production (municipal solid waste (per day))	0.8%	1.1%	0.4%	Stagnate 
13.	Climate Change (controlling CO ₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion and cement production)	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%	Stagnate 
14.	Life Below Water (protecting key areas in marine sites important to biodiversity)	75.3%	39.3%	14.6%	Moderate Improvement 
15.	Life on Land (protecting key areas in terrestrial sites important to biodiversity)	40.3%	36.6%	34.8%	Stagnate 
16.	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (controlling homicides(per 100,000 population))	7.8%	4.2%	4.2%	Decreasing 
17.	Partnerships for the Goals (Government spending on health and education (% of GDP))	5.1	3.8	2.8%	Moderate Improvement 

Source: Sustainable Development Report 2017, 2020 and 2024.

The Sustainable Development Report 2024 indicates that Pakistan has shown moderate improvement in SDGs 1, 7, 9, 14 and 17. This progress should instil a sense of hope and optimism in the audience. Similarly, Pakistan has stagnated performance in SDGs 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, and 15. Pakistan faces significant challenges in SDGs 4, 11, and 16. However, in SDG 10, the United Nations hasn't received any data from Pakistan.

Pakistan needs political will, clear targets, elaborate timelines, budget allocations, robust regulatory framework, and legal support to ensure accountability to achieve the SDGs.

Pakistan's SDGs ranking has fluctuated since 2015. This is because of inconsistent policies, unstable political situations, economic constraints, etc. Achieving the SDGs requires long-term commitment and cooperation from various segments of society. The financial, sociopolitical, and environmental aspects must converge harmoniously to achieve sustainable development. The following are recommended for Pakistan to achieve the SDGs: -

- Pakistan needs political will, clear targets, elaborate timelines, budget allocations, robust regulatory framework, and legal support to ensure accountability to achieve the SDGs.
- Implementing the SDGs in Pakistan requires a robust institutional framework. This involves collaboration between federal and provincial bodies, government agencies, civil society, businesses, and academia. The complexity of this task underscores the need for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to achieving the SDGs.
- To ensure evidence-based decisions, the government must enhance its data collection, analysis and reporting mechanisms.
- Campaigns to raise awareness about the SDGs should be launched nationwide. Similarly, SDG content should be incorporated into educational curricula to foster a culture of sustainability.
- Pakistan must implement anti-poverty programmes and promote inclusive economic growth to eradicate poverty.
- Collaboration with other nations, active participation in international forums, and partnerships to share SDG implementation knowledge, resources, and technology are crucial.

In summary, Pakistan has made strides in several areas, but social inequality, economic limitations, and political instability prevent the SDGs from being fully achieved. Achieving sustainable development is contingent upon implementing efficient governance, sustained endeavours, and international collaboration.

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NEOM City: Prospects for Pakistan

Ayesha Sohail

Abstract

This INSIGHT discusses the NEOM City project, part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. It presents significant opportunities for Pakistan, particularly in employment, economic collaboration, and technological advancement. Pakistan's skilled workforce, especially in engineering and IT, positions it well to contribute to NEOM's development. However, challenges like visa regulations and skill gaps must be addressed to maximise benefits for both nations.

Keywords: NEOM, Employment Opportunities, Skill Gaps, Visa Regulations.

The project of NEOM City, launched in 2017, is a part of Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030. The initial three letters, neo, mean new, and M stands for the Arabic word mustaqbal, meaning future. The project's total cost is estimated to be US\$500 billion, and the major portion is set to be completed by 2030.¹ The project aims to diversify the Kingdom's economy and reduce its dependency on oil. This insight attempts to analyse the potential success of the NEOM project and its prospects for Pakistan.

NEOM is divided into four key regions: The Line, Oxagon, Trojena, and Sindalah. The Line is a 170 km smart city planned to accommodate nine million people. Oxagon is designed as a port city at the crossroads of three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe. Its primary purpose is to connect ships aimed at the Suez Canal. Trojena is 50 km from the Gulf of Aqaba. This region got global attention when it declared the winning bid to organise the Asian Winter Games 2029. Sindalah aspires to be the top luxury island.

On 23 October 2023, the NEOM Investment Fund (NIF) was announced. It is a strategic investment arm to finance the development and build out of NEOM's 14 sectors, which range from energy, water and food to health, tourism and education.² NIF will develop joint partnerships and schemes with big global businesses and stakeholders to expand Saudi Arabia's economic production of services and goods. Additionally, it will help bring together sustainable models for the state's environmental, health, and urban development. As of May 2024, NEOM's yearly revenue increased to US\$750 million, raising US\$2.7 billion in funds.³



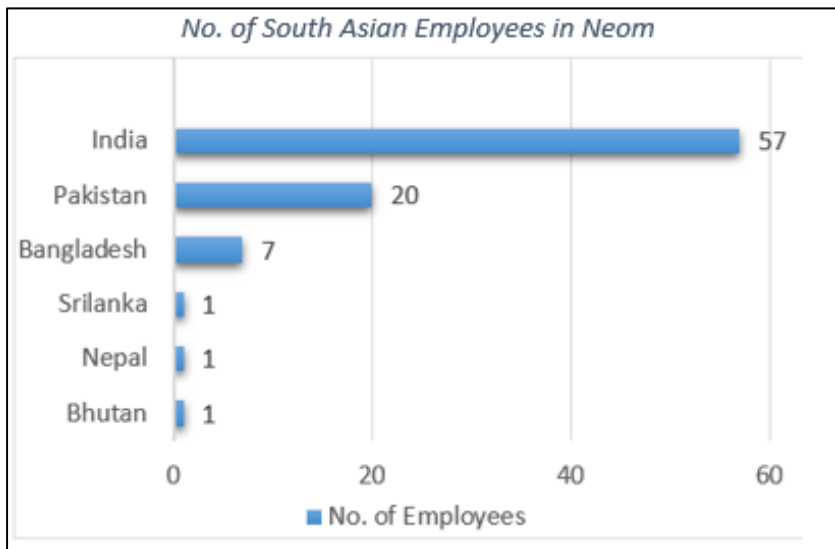
Source: Center of Excellence for NEOM, Research at KAUST

On the other hand, several experts are sceptical about the aspirations of the NEOM city project. Initially, Saudi Arabia intended to finish essential sectors of the mega project by 2020 but still needs to achieve the target. In July 2022, merely two buildings were built, and most of the project area was a desert. By 2024, the initiative was stated to have considerably been scaled back from its initial plan. According to the latest Bloomberg report, the initiative is expected to get 20% less than its target funding.⁴

However, Faisal F. Al-Ibrahim, the Saudi Economic Minister, denied this. He emphasised that the NEOM project would be carried out according to the plan.⁵

According to recent Strategic Gears research, the NEOM project is progressing rapidly. The researchers discovered that non-oil revenue currently makes up around one-third of expenditures, which has increased significantly since 2016. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's overall revenue from non-oil sources has nearly doubled. It was less than 20% between 1970 and 2014, but currently, non-oil revenue makes up about 40%.⁶

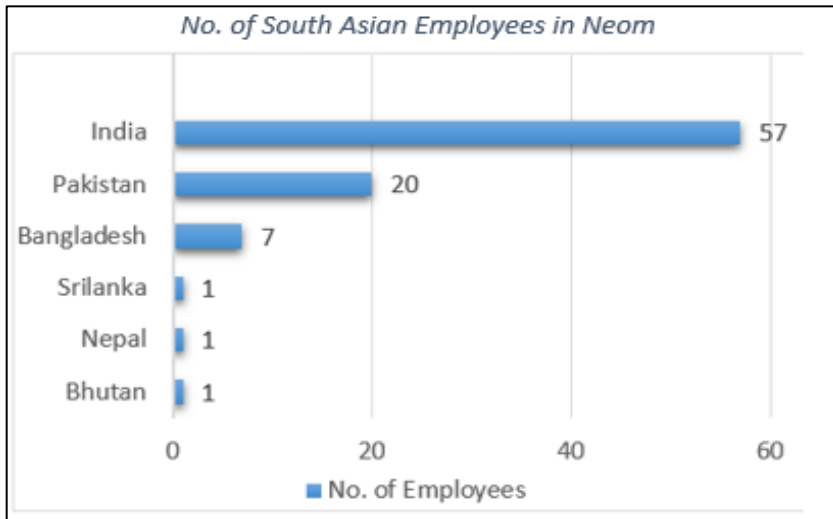
Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have enjoyed brotherly ties from the start. More than two million Pakistani expatriates reside in Saudi Arabia. Both states have supported one another economically and diplomatically in several events. Therefore, Pakistan is in an appropriate position to take advantage of the opportunities the NEOM project offers.



Source: Strategic Gears Management Consultancy

Pakistan's skilled workforce is a potential catalyst for Saudi Arabia's NEOM project. The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human

Resource Development intends to dedicate a separate quota for the mega project's skilled and semi-skilled Pakistani workforce. As of May 2024, twenty Pakistani employees out of eighty-seven representing six South Asian states presently work and live in NEOM.



Source: Self Extract

NEOM's vision demands a diverse skill set encompassing technology, engineering, urban planning, and sustainability. With its burgeoning youth population (64% of the total population), Pakistan is well-positioned to meet these demands. A substantial segment of this youth population has higher education qualifications, and the country boasts a thriving IT industry with a strong talent pool in software development, cybersecurity and data analytics. Pakistan produces graduates in civil, mechanical, electrical, and chemical engineering and has a rich history of large-scale infrastructure projects, providing a skilled construction management and urban planning workforce. Moreover, Pakistan's English language proficiency, particularly among the educated youth, is relatively high (57% of the total population is English-speaking), making them suitable candidates for the NEOM project and a beacon of hope for its future.

Pakistan's chief engineering consultancy, National Engineering Services Pakistan (NESPAK), has been awarded the flagship NEOM project in Saudi Arabia. The acting Managing Director of NESPAK, Mr Zargham Eshaq Khan, announced the landmark. The project highlights NEOM's energy sector and has a budget of 3.7 billion Pak Rupees, equal to 46.5 million Saudi Riyals.

The significant pillar of NEOM is the labour market. CEO of the NEOM project, Mr Nadhmi Al-Nasr, stated that the mega project has approximately 140,000 construction workers working 24/7, and the number of project workers is expected to increase to 200,000 in 2025. Deploying Pakistani skilled labour to NEOM can yield substantial benefits for both countries. It offers a significant employment opportunity for Pakistan, reducing unemployment rates and increasing remittances. Moreover, it can enhance the country's international image as a provider of skilled human capital. For Saudi Arabia, Pakistani workers can contribute to the rapid development of NEOM by providing a cost-effective yet skilled labour force. This can lead to a significant boost in Pakistan's economy and international standing.

NEOM presents new avenues of Saudi-Pak cooperation in the fields of Economy, Human Resource, Education, Engineering and Sports.

The NEOM city has announced the NEOM Sports Club, which will attain the region's extensive sports objectives. Meanwhile, a leading sports goods manufacturer, Pakistan, can do well in the emerging Saudi Arabian sports market. This presents a unique opportunity for Pakistan's sports industry to expand its reach and contribute to the development of the NEOM Sports Club, thereby strengthening the ties between the two countries.

The potential benefits from the NEOM project are substantial, but challenges such as visa regulations, language barriers and labour laws need to be addressed. To maximise the potential of Saudi-Pak collaboration, both countries should invest in capacity building and language training, streamline visa processes for skilled Pakistani workers, and establish joint training programs to bridge skill gaps.

The potential benefits of the NEOM project are substantial and exciting. Pakistan's skilled workforce presents a promising opportunity to contribute to the realisation of Saudi Arabia's ambitious NEOM project. This collaboration can serve as a model for regional cooperation and human capital development, and its potential is genuinely thrilling.

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Sino-India Relations in the Past Decade

Maryam Noor

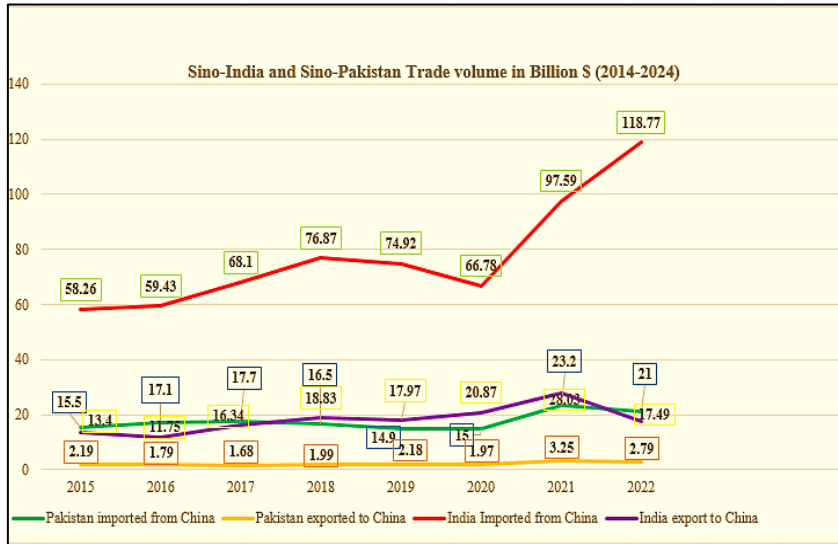
Abstract

This INSIGHT examines Sino-Indian relations from 2010 to 2020, highlighting a mix of cooperation and conflict. Despite border tensions, both nations have expanded their economic ties, with bilateral trade growing significantly. The analysis underscores their pragmatic approach, prioritising economic interests over political disputes. It discusses the broader regional implications, offering lessons for Pakistan's foreign policy.

Keywords: Sino-Indian Relations, Border Tensions, Economic Ties, Bilateral Trade.

For the past decade, the Sino-Indian relationship has been characterized by a complex interplay of cooperation and conflict. As the two world's most populous nations and fastest-growing economies, China and India have a significant role in the region. Their bilateral relations are marked by economic collaboration, geopolitical rivalry, and cultural exchanges. This insight provides a holistic analysis of their relationship over the past decade and lessons for Pakistan regarding its foreign policy.

In 2020, China's GDP stood at a staggering US\$24.27 trillion, securing its position as the world's largest economy, while India's GDP of US\$8.97 trillion ranked it third globally. These figures, accounting for 18.3% and 6.8% of the global GDP, respectively, underscore the economic might of these two nations. Their substantial military expenditures, with China at US\$252.3 billion and India at US\$72.9 billion, further highlight their growing influence on the global stage. This economic and military growth is of particular interest to major powers like the US, which is increasingly challenged by China's rapid ascent. Their bilateral trade in

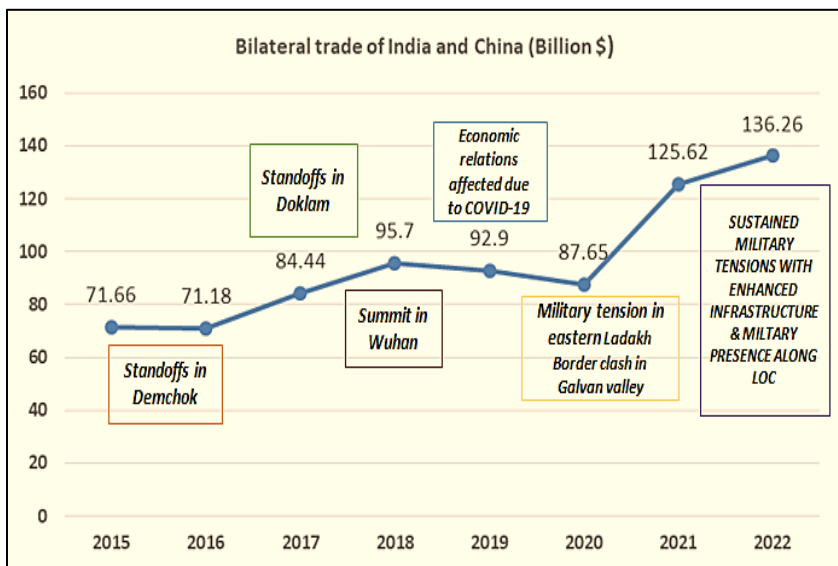


Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity

2022 reached US\$136.26 billion, with China’s trade with Pakistan estimated at US\$23.79 billion.¹



Sino-India relations indicate a rapid growth of bilateral trade over the last ten years despite conflicts between both countries. Notably, in 2015, when India and China clashed in Ladakh, the trade volume slightly increased from the preceding 2014 from US\$70.59 to US\$71.66 billion.² Similarly, despite the Galwan clashes of 2020 and a significant military confrontation in the Galwan Valley of the Himalayas, the trade volume in 2021 continued to grow. It reached a record US\$125 billion, a 43.3% increase from 2020.³ In 2022, China emerged as India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade totalling US\$136.26 billion. This development is a testament to the resilience of their economic relations, which seem to maintain stability despite escalating military tensions.⁴



Source: Compiled by the Author⁵

Amidst this complex relationship, it is crucial to note that India's influence in regional geopolitics, boosted by the US as the 'Net Security Provider' in the Asia-Pacific region, may eventually become a net destabiliser. The US-led West's active support for India, while enhancing its security, also fuels its ambitions to dominate the region, fostering its pursuit of regional hegemony. India is increasingly asserting its influence through participation in initiatives like the QUAD and Asia Pacific

Economic Cooperation (APEC), which focus on maritime security in the Asia-Pacific region. These initiatives are significant as they allow India to align itself strategically and economically with major powers, challenging China's strategic interests.

Over the past decade, Sino-India diplomatic relations have grown significantly, with high-level visits and numerous agreements. This growth in diplomatic relations is a positive sign of the potential for peace and cooperation. In September 2014, President Xi Jinping's visit to India redefined the bilateral engagement, resulting in 16 agreements spanning various sectors. During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to China in May 2015, the two governments signed 24 government-to-government agreements, 26 business MoUs, and two joint statements, including one on climate change. 2016 President Pranab Mukherjee visited China, signing ten MoUs in education and research.⁶ The first Informal Summit between Modi and Xi in Wuhan in 2018 and the second in Chennai in 2019 aimed to manage differences and deepen cooperation. Since June 2020, the two sides have been discussing disengagement at the border areas along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh through the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination (WMCC) and Senior Commander's Meetings (SCM), with 25 WMCC meetings held, the latest on 14 October 2022. On 25th March 2022, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited India and held discussions with External Affairs Minister and National Security Advisor. On 18th May 2022, the 13th Expert-Level Mechanism (ELM) meeting was held virtually to maintain regular exchanges on cooperation in water resources.⁷

Despite their rivalry, India and China have demonstrated the ability to sustain robust economic relations.

Besides diplomatic relations, cultural exchanges are often regarded as a significant soft power tool. In China, Yoga and Indian movies have become popular attractions. Similarly, Chinese films and cultural exports have also gained traction in the Indian market, further strengthening the cultural ties between the two nations.⁸ During the 2nd Sino-India Informal Leadership Summit in October 2019, both sides designated 2020 as the "Year of India-China Cultural and People-to-People

Exchanges”, a significant initiative to foster greater understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures.

The relationship between China and India, marked by cooperation and competition, has demonstrated resilience and a capacity for economic growth. Their ability to maintain and expand bilateral trade despite geopolitical tensions highlights a pragmatic approach to foreign policy, where economic interests often take precedence over political disputes. This practical approach has allowed both nations to navigate rivalry and foster mutual financial benefits, offering a hopeful outlook on the potential for regional cooperation.

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Analysis of Intraregional Trade among ECO Member States and Way Forward for Pakistan

Sulaiman Mueez

Abstract

The Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) faces challenges in achieving significant intraregional trade, which remains at just 8% of its total trade. Despite its potential, geopolitical barriers, weak institutional frameworks, and inadequate trade policies hinder economic integration. The paper highlights the need for structural reforms and enhanced cooperation to unlock the region & economic potential.

Keywords: Economic Cooperation Organisation, Regional Cooperation for Development, Regional Integration.

The Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) was established in 1964 by Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey.¹ Subsequently, in 1985, the organisation changed its name to the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) to promote regional integration of trade and commerce. The number of member states increased from three founding states to ten, including five Central Asian States, Azerbaijan, and Afghanistan. The headquarters of ECO is located in Tehran, Iran.

The ECO region has the advantage of direct land linkages with every member state that shares similar cultural, religious, and historical connections. It covers 8 million square kilometres of land, connecting North to South and Europe to the Arab world. With the increased socioeconomic and political development in global and regional trade, ECO aims to consolidate the multilateral trade potential of member states to enhance economic cooperation. It has subsidiaries like ECO Trade & Development Bank, ECO Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and

Center for Implementing ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA).² They play an important role in the coordination and function of the organisation. Yet, despite these factors, the economy of ECO nations has not experienced a breakthrough comparable to that of its counterpart organisations like the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU). This insight attempts to find shortcomings in the economic integration of the ECO region.

With their vast natural resources and human capital, the ECO member



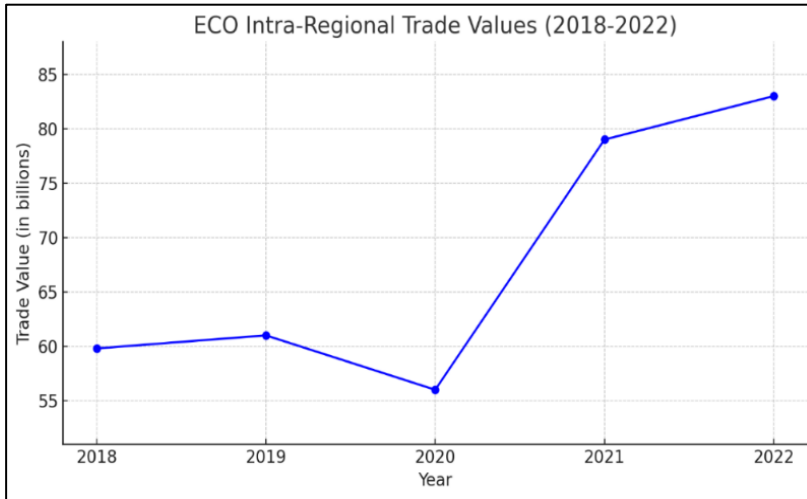
nations hold immense potential for regional economic growth. Regional organisations, with their more efficient and profitable means of trade and economic activity, are a promising avenue for the ECO region. With a population of more than 500 million and a collective GDP of 2 trillion dollars, the ECO region's true potential for intra-regional trade is yet to be fully realised.

Trade is a key factor in economic growth and can potentially advance the economies of the ECO region significantly. However, the current weak regional trade frameworks and relatively low trade volumes compared to other extra-regional nations are urgent issues that must be addressed.

The ECO region, among the least economically integrated regions in the world, must act swiftly to improve its economic integration.

Graph 1 shows an increase in total ECO regional trade from US\$59 billion in 2018 to US\$83 billion in 2022. Although total intra-regional trade has increased steadily from 2018 to 2022, the ECO's collective intra-regional trade is only 8% (US\$83 billion) of its total trade value with the outside world (US\$1037 billion).

Graph 1

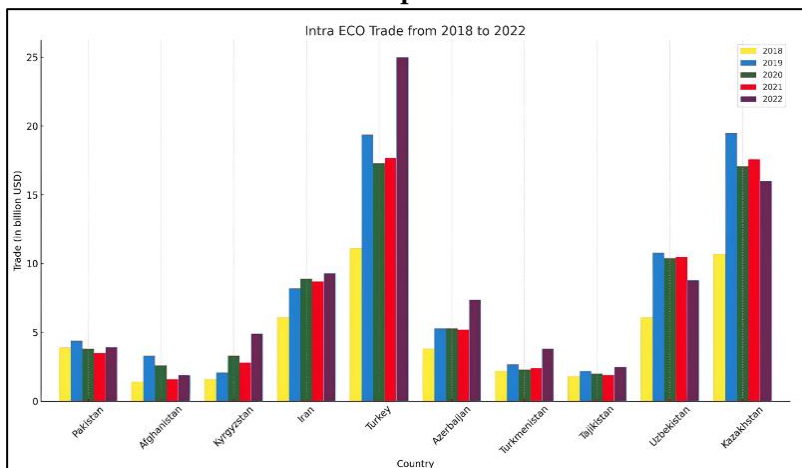


Source: UN Comtrade Data Base

Graph 2 shows the volume of intra-regional trade by each member state from 2018 to 2022. Turkey has contributed the most to the intra-regional trade, followed by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Pakistan only shared around US\$4 billion out of the US\$83 billion total trade of the ECO region, which hardly made 5% in 2022.³

Even though Pakistan is connected through a land route with all the ECO member states, its exports to these countries hardly amount to a substantial percentage. The ECO potential is affected by the US sanctions on Iran and Afghanistan, which prevent substantive engagement in trade agreements. These geopolitical challenges hinder the advancement of broader regional trade integration.

Graph 2



Source: UN Comtrade Data Base⁴

The small size of the intra-regional trade is attributed to many reasons. ECO deals with a weak integrated monetary framework to facilitate tariff-free trade. The absence of an institutional framework creates obstacles in providing policy assistance and implementation for trade. Organisations like ASEAN have established Free Trade Areas (FTA) to facilitate trade, with lower tariffs and non-tariff trade barriers among member countries.⁵ ECO has a fragmented and underdeveloped institutional framework that impedes regional cooperation compared to ASEAN.

ASEAN introduced the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), which established a single market production base, allowing the free flow of goods, investment, and skilled labour. This created a diverse market for regional integration similar to the EU-style common market. ECO economies can employ a similar strategy in diversifying their economy from energy exports to the manufacturing industry by establishing similar community hubs.

ASEAN and ECO regions have diverse economic bases that increase intra-regional trade prospects. In ASEAN, countries like Singapore provide financial services and high-tech industries, Indonesia has natural resources, Thailand focuses on automobile manufacturing, and Vietnam

focuses on textiles and consumer products. Because of this diverse manufacturing industry and demand, there are brighter prospects for intra-region trade in ASEAN. Similarly, in ECO, member states like Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan have an energy resource base encompassing a significant part of their economies. Other members, like Turkey, have a strong manufacturing industry that provides products such as electric machinery and heavy vehicles, followed by Pakistan's agricultural and textile exports. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan possess vast mineral reserves like precious metal ore and gold. This economic base provides an opportunity to improve intra-regional trade by utilising regional resources without importing from other countries.

The ECO member nations possess vast natural resources and human capital. Regional organizations provide a more efficient and profitable means of trade and economic activity than bilateral relations.

To address these issues, especially for improving regional trade among member states, the ECOTA was signed in 2003 to remove bureaucratic hurdles and trade tariffs that would allow greater economic integration.⁶ To integrate trade and transform the region into a Free Trade Area (FTA), there is a need to facilitate the implementation of ECO Vision 2025, a comprehensive plan for the region's economic development, and institutionalise the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA), a key agreement for improving regional connectivity. The TTFA would enable ease of transit route mechanism and provide on-arrival transit visas for drivers and personnel involved in trade operations.⁷

ECO member states are also part of the Transports Internationaux Routiers Convention (TIR), which provides collaboration between government and private sectors in transporting goods within its member countries by reducing customs duties and improving coordination. Compared to ASEAN, which is not a signatory of the TIR Convention, ECO can effectively utilise the TIR mechanism to enhance their existing road networks to increase intra-regional trade.

With the emerging trends in geoeconomics, regional organisations and economic integration, regional cooperation is becoming increasingly

important in global geopolitics. As Pakistan's national security policy has emphasised the importance of geoeconomics, ECO can play a pivotal role in advancing economic integration. The incoming Secretary General of the organisation can guide ECO in addressing structural issues such as improving tariff regulations and regional connectivity. They can also navigate geopolitical challenges like sanctions on Iran and Afghanistan and find viable solutions like the prospects of trading in member nations' currencies, which decreases the cost of exchange rate and reduces the burden on foreign reserves.

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Reporting the Reported: Content Analysis of TV News Channels for the First Quarter of 2024

Faiza Qureshi

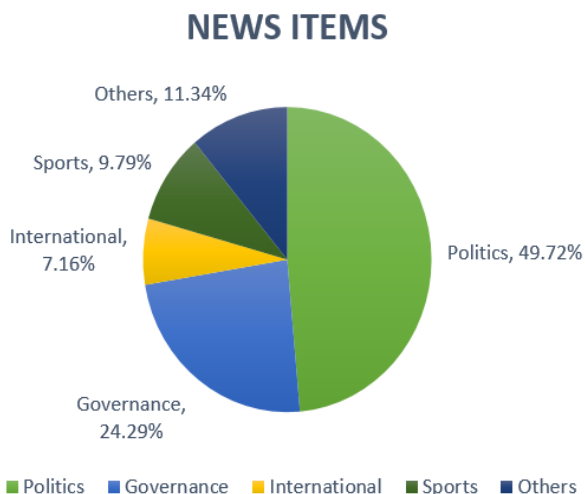
Abstract

This INSIGHT analyses the content of leading Pakistani TV news channels during the first quarter of 2024, revealing a dominant focus on political coverage, which comprises nearly half of all news content. This overemphasis on politics, often coupled with sensationalism and subjectivity, has eroded public trust and overshadowed other vital issues. The report calls for regulatory reforms to promote a more balanced and diverse news landscape in Pakistan.

Keywords: Electronic Media, Political Content, Regulatory Framework.

Electronic Media in Pakistan has developed into a dynamic and influential entity by providing ground-breaking yet real-time coverage. According to Mr Zaffar Abbas, a senior journalist, “24-hour news coverage has changed the country's information landscape, and television has been instrumental in this”.¹ However, there has been a decline in people's trust in the news. Gallup Pakistan's 2023 report showed a 15% decline in media credibility compared to 2013.² Several scholars have suggested that this erosion in credibility is a consequence of increased political coverage on news channels in a highly polarised media landscape.³ One research indicated this content bias, as respondents opined that 83.3% of the air time was consumed by political content.⁴ This insight presents a content analysis of 4 top-ranked news channels for the first quarter of 2024 to dissect this perception of loaded political coverage.

The study used a 'systematic sampling method', a research technique where every 15th item in the population is selected for inclusion. This method was chosen to ensure a representative sample of the news coverage. Under this method, coverage on the 15th day of the selected months was studied. The study excluded repeat telecasts. Only transmissions from 0900 hours to midnight, including news bulletins and talk shows, were studied. Furthermore, data were analysed using quantitative frequency analysis and frequency and percentage methods.



The TV News industry in Pakistan, primarily dominated by private news channels, operates within a capitalist system. This system often shapes content to cater to capitalistic preferences and retain audience engagement. However, during the first quarter of 2024, the major currents in the coverage remained limited to issues of general elections, political alliances and governance (mainly economy and legislation). On average, every news channel aired 24 main news items, out of which a staggering 49.72% of news items revolved around politics. This overwhelming dominance of political coverage left little space for other crucial issues (Figure 1). What's more alarming is that elements of sensationalism and subjectivity often overshadow the news landscape. A review of news coverage for the first quarter of 2024 proves this assertion,

raising serious questions about the trustworthiness of the news we consume and the need for a more balanced and diverse news coverage.

The news channels during **January** mostly covered elections, discussing legal and political issues. On average, 62.9% of the total news content included matters related to general elections. Only 15.4% focused on governance and the economy. Additionally, the prime-time shows displayed a strong inclination towards political content, with four consecutive shows on every channel dedicating 100% of their airtime to the 'election symbol's' case in the Supreme Court, thereby escalating election hysteria.

The coverage during **February** included marathon transmissions on election results, electoral rigging, and some special programs on post-election coalition making. On average, 72.92% of the news content covered elections and politics, whereas only 8.02% covered governance issues. Again, 100% of air time in current affairs programs was given to political discussion. The sentiment analysis of the coverage presented

that the tone used in talk shows had a general tendency to instil despair and erode trust in national institutions. Such is

The news media in Pakistan has a lopsided focus on politics, which alarms for a regulatory overhaul that would redraw content preferences and substitute over-politicization with daily top leads.

attributed to a spike in the hard lead and subjectivity of analysis by the discussants, where 57.1% of the discussants followed a subjective analytical *hard lead*. Moreover, negative tendencies in coverage were found to peak in February, where more than half of the analysis displayed a negative tendency. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that political hysteria and negative tendencies in the news concert together.

March witnessed a shift from politico-electoral discussions to governance. News coverage of politics declined by 30% and was 42.55%. This decline in political coverage in March offers a glimmer of hope for a more balanced news landscape. Notably, with the decrease in political coverage, there had been a steady increase in coverage of governance and international issues (Figure 2). Furthermore, there has been an 85% decline in direct political discussions in prime-time talk shows. Still, the

persistence of political overtones in matters related to governance paved the way for negative tendencies in the news.

April witnessed a transition from the first quarter. Issues of governance and international politics overshadowed domestic politics, leaving its footprint at a mere 20.53% of the total coverage. Despite the decline in political coverage, negative tendencies in current affairs have remained high, which is attributed to the political overtone used by analysts. This asserts that the problem is content preference and presentation, where organisational ethical and regulatory codes must be drawn.

In addition to sensational coverage, a unique feature of analytical framing was observed, where this study found that 39.37% of the news bulletin is an index of analysis over opinion rather than facts. Additionally, while multiple studies have analysed the impact of audio-visuals and expressions in news reporting, this study has identified stark contextualisation of news. On April 15, 2024, a news story on the killing of Amir Tamba (the alleged killer of Indian spy Sarbjit Singh) was reported by TV channels. One news channel presented the story within the international context of Indian state-sponsored offshore killings, whereas another channel framed it within the context of governance failures in Lahore. Such divergent and context-specific reporting generates confusion, fosters despondency, and diminishes trust in news, thereby exacerbating the existing information crisis.

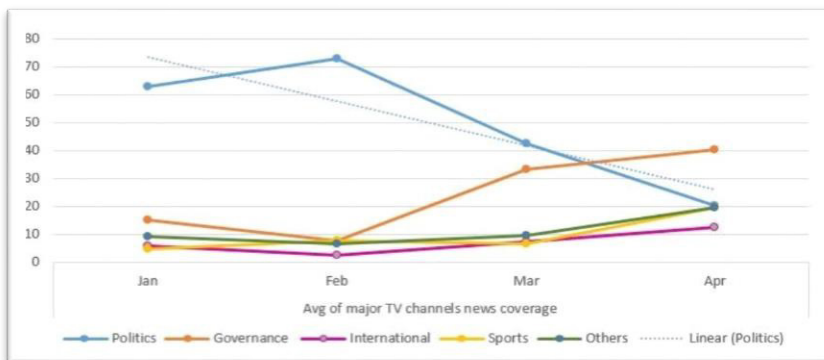


Figure 2: Trend of Political Coverage in News

Furthermore, another question before the selected data set was, ‘Does the news content cater to the public’s information needs?’ The answer was ‘NO’. With immense power to shape opinions, the media must equally represent all segments vital to national development. In contrast, regrettably, a negligible 0.26% of the total news content covered IT, while similar trends were seen for arts, culture, tourism, heritage and allied subjects. For instance, January data shows that only 10% of news coverage is on these subjects. Moreover, their placement at the very end of the bulletin is generally not viewer-friendly.

In light of the above assertions, it would not be wrong to say that news media in Pakistan is architecting its demise, where lack of diversity and innovation is rotting its roots. In the words of Jon Stewart, ‘media sells sensation because it hasn’t tried anything else’. In the presence of many news stories, prioritising the sensational ones decapitates audiences’ informed decision-making.⁵ Under such conditions, there is a clear need for a realistic content preference scheme that reflects accuracy and truthfulness and caters to the citizenry’s information needs. There is an opportunity for positive change in the media landscape. As the prescribed action matrix states, this change can be brought about through concerted efforts by the regulator (PEMRA) and media houses.

Action Matrix

Theme	Solution Pathway
Top Lead	PEMRA must oversee the content preferences, which need to be set to not more than 30% of the total news content.
Subjectivity of Context in News	To discourage the subjectivity of context, PEMRA may leverage its authority to impose fines on the relevant news channel.
Prime Time Management	An amendment in PEMRA COC 2015 (Rule 3 & 4), may prescribe diversity of topics covered in prime time current affairs programs.

Negative Tendency of Context	Although tendency is contextual but clear directives on tendency of content needs to be devised in upcoming media directives. Secondly, Mass informaiton literacy campaigns can also aid managing this crisis, and develop informed citizenry.
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About Insight and Author

This *INSIGHT* was first published on the ISSRA website in August 2024. It can be accessed at <https://issra.pk/pub/insight/2024/Content-Analysis-of-TV-News-Channels/Insight.html>. The writer is a Research Associate at ISSRA, NDU, Islamabad and can be reached at rafajiza@ndu.edu.pk.

South vs North: India's Great Divide

Book Review

Azka Hamid

Abstract

The review of Nilakantan R.S.'s book South vs North: India's Great Divide explores the widening disparities between Southern and Northern India in health, education, and economic development. The book critiques central government policies for undermining the progress of the South despite its higher economic contributions and better governance. It calls for a decentralised governance model to address regional inequalities and empower local governments, highlighting the need for tailored policies that reflect the diverse needs of India's regions.

Keywords: South vs North, India's Great Divide.

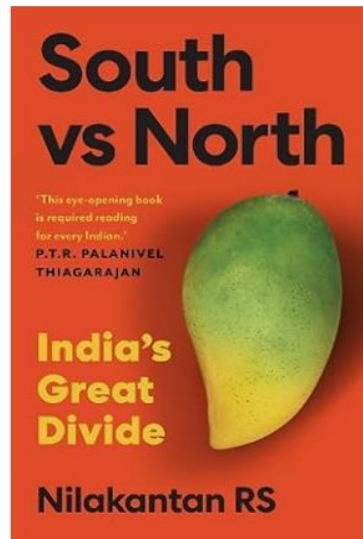
Imagine being born in a region with good education, good health facilities, and a good economy but still suffering because your government is undermining your region's progress. Author Nilakantan R.S., a data scientist, strives to explain this disparity in his book '**South vs North: India's Great Divide**' by giving insight into the detrimental consequences of policies enforced by the BJP government, contributing to the burden on the southern region. This deepens regional inequalities and undermines the overall progress and well-being of the southern states.

The book is thoughtfully structured into three parts. In the first part, the author explores three major indicators: health, education, and economy, comparing the developmental progress of the North and South. The second part critiques the policies that adversely affected the South, while the last part proposes alternative strategies to rectify these issues.

The book asks, “*How far is the North from the South on health, education, and economy?*” It addresses this question by thoroughly analysing the socio-economic disparities between South and North India. The author utilises compelling data to highlight significant challenges India faces in the contemporary era, ensuring the reader is well-informed and enlightened.

To underscore the importance of health, he highlighted the **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)**, explaining how India performs poorly in IMR compared to other South Asian states. For instance, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the southern states, achieved an IMR of 7 and 15, respectively, comparable to the US IMR of 6.

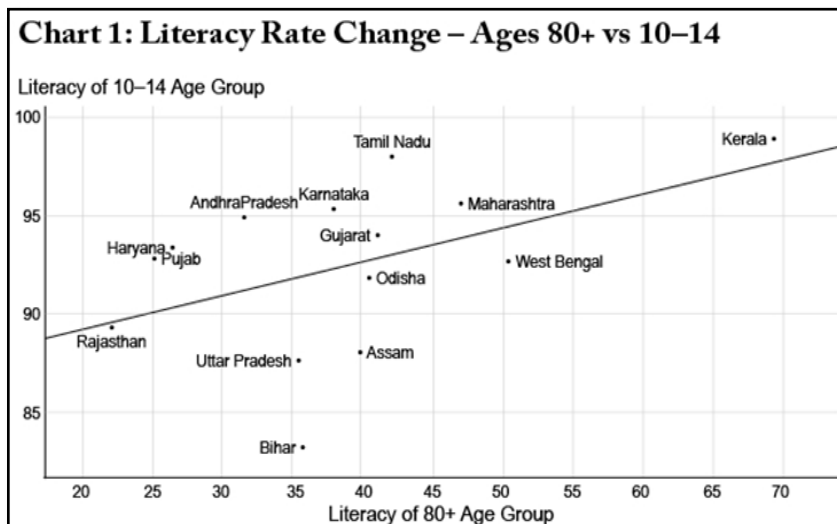
Northern states exhibit significantly higher IMRs, such as Madhya Pradesh, 48, and Uttar Pradesh, 43. These figures are alarmingly close to those observed in war-torn countries like Afghanistan and Nigeria.



Title	SOUTH VS NORTH: India's Great Divide
Author	Nilakantan R.S.
Publishing House	Juggernaut Publication
Publishing Year	2022
Pages	280
Tables	19
Graphs	4
ISBN-10:	9393986347

The book transitions seamlessly from discussing health to exploring the realm of education, skilfully explaining how the education sector in the South is again ahead of the North. The system focuses on getting children to attend school and addressing hunger issues by feeding them. Northern states are still in stage one of improving their learning outcomes, while southern states have progressed to stage two. However, the National Education Policy, which is centrally sponsored, has imposed a standardised approach that inhibits state governments from tailoring education policy to meet the requirements of their specific regions, and such initiatives hinder the development of southern states. The graph represents how nearly every age group in Kerala is literate. Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu has a reasonable literacy rate among young adults and a lower percentage for older people. However, Northern states like Uttar Pradesh and Assam also have significant harmful residuals, indicating poor performance.

The author's main argument is that educational policies in the South are driven by sub-nationalism and a strong sense of local identity, which played a pivotal role in their success.



Source: Book Page 49

The third indicator is the economy; the book analyses how southern states have transitioned from agriculture to industries introduced higher-paying services and improved living standards. The book primarily focuses on southern states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which have attracted investments in the manufacturing and technology sectors, helping them prosper financially. On the other hand, northern states have made very little progress towards industrialisation and remain predominantly agrarian.

In the book's second part, a significant portion is devoted to determining why the Southern states' policy implementation has been more effective. The author discusses **India's federal system**, where the central government controls more money and power. The author has praised the administrative capacities of southern bureaucracies and their ability to formulate and implement effective policies. This section provides a nuanced assessment of the socio-political and historical context that shaped the governance within this region.

“Development divide between South India and North India is pronounced, South's surpassing North due to their efficient strategies and governance but South's development momentum is being stifled”.

Lastly, the book focuses on re-examining the inefficiencies in India's representative system and its power dynamics favouring the central government taking control of the union. Southern states suffer more from such policies, which have politically marginalised them despite their economic contributions. Examining the impending electoral division and its potential impact on Southern political representation at the national level provides essential depth to the analysis.

Therefore, the author has proposed a model of **“gamified democracy”**, which will act as a tool to develop a decentralised system where autonomy will be in the hands of the local governments and citizens can be directly involved in law-making through a regulated and structured process. However, implementing such a system will be under question due to policymakers' inflexible interests and the proposed model's complex structure.

To conclude, “**SOUTH VS NORTH: India’s Great Divide**” is a diligently researched and well-argued book. However, its most compelling argument critiques the central government’s policies under the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party). The author claims that the size-fits-all approach has hindered the southern states’ development and aggravated the regional fault lines. Despite the South being the highest contributor of taxes, they are not receiving a rightful share, and their development in various sectors is being undermined. The government must adopt a more nuanced and impartial approach to policymaking to meet the diverse needs of each state and prevent the marginalisation of the South.

About Insight and Author

This INSIGHT was first published on the ISSRA website in August 2024. It can be accessed at <https://iissra.pk/pub/insight/2024/North-vs-South-Indias-Great-Divide/Insight.html>. The writer is a Research Associate at ISSRA, NDU, Islamabad and can be reached at azkahamid.207@gmail.com.

Cultivating National Unity and Interprovincial Harmony through Sports in Pakistan

Haadia Riaz

Abstract

This INSIGHT explores the role of sports in promoting national unity and interprovincial harmony in Pakistan. While cricket is a unifying factor, sports like hockey and football struggle due to financial and infrastructural challenges. The insight proposes the adoption of franchise-based leagues, like the Pakistan Super League, and implementing nationwide talent hunts to boost participation. It also underscores the urgent and crucial need for a comprehensive national sports policy to coordinate efforts and ensure sustained development, thereby fostering unity through sports across the nation.

Keywords: National Unity, Interprovincial Harmony, Sports Culture.

Zeynep Tufekci, in her book titled 'Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest', argues that social media has led to a breakdown in dialogue and increased hostility between groups, making it more challenging to find a common ground.¹ This is particularly concerning for Pakistan, where over 111 million people use the internet, with 71.1 million active social media users, predominantly between 18 and 34 years of age, making them vulnerable to these effects.² Therefore, it is crucial to engage them in activities that promote unity and shared values among them. Nelson Mandela said, "Sports has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand". Sports, in particular, could be pivotal in fostering national unity and interprovincial harmony in Pakistan.

A prime example is cricket, which brings together people from every corner of Pakistan to experience the thrill of matches. Its widespread

popularity transcends cultural, ethnic, and regional differences, creating a sense of belonging and community. This demonstrates the sport's capability to unite millions during matches. However, this unifying strength is limited to cricket, while many other sports in Pakistan continue to struggle regarding support, attention, and infrastructure. This insight explores how Pakistan can enhance the visibility of different sports, akin to cricket in Pakistan, and use them to cultivate national unity and interprovincial harmony across Pakistan.

One primary concern is the stark financial disparities in sports funding between Pakistan and India. For instance, India's Olympics funding significantly exceeds Pakistan's entire sports budget, i.e. Rs. 16.21 billion³ and Rs. 5 billion,⁴ respectively. Additionally, while the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) generates around Rs. 15.79 billion⁵ in revenue, the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) receives less than Rs. 4 million per year, highlighted by PHF President Tariq Hussain Bugti.⁶ Also, the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) recently declined to fund a training camp for the upcoming Asian U-18 Baseball Championship.⁷ These reports highlight a worrying trend of financial constraints in Pakistan's sports sector.

Sports could serve as a tool to cultivate national unity and interprovincial harmony, provided that sports facilities and training programs are improved across Pakistan.

Furthermore, in 2023, PCB stated that its Category A players get Rs. 4.5 million monthly.⁸ In contrast, Pakistani football players earn Rs. One Hundred Thousand to Rs. Three Hundred Thousand per month.⁹ Hockey players received central contracts in 2021 with salaries ranging from Rs. Twenty Thousand to Rs. Fifty Thousand.¹⁰ Consequently, it discourages young athletes from pursuing careers in sports other than cricket.

Moreover, the lack of structured platforms has further undermined athletes' development and the overall progress of these sports. For instance, the Pakistan Premier League, launched by the Pakistan Football Federation in 2004, has only been conducted once in the last nine years.¹¹ Similarly, hockey, a sport with a rich legacy in Pakistan, has declined significantly, lacking a fully operational domestic league.

Cricket also dominates the media landscape, with the Pakistan Super League (PSL) attracting over 150 million viewers during peak matches. Football struggles to gain similar visibility despite its large fan following.¹² In FIFA World Cup 2022, A Sports attracted over 25 million live-stream viewers on ARY ZAP, with more than 48 million views of match highlights on social media.¹³ This suggests that football can achieve similar popularity in Pakistan; however, domestic football matches are rarely broadcast live. Likewise, hockey, squash, and wrestling also receive inadequate media attention, which hinders investment and sponsorship efforts, thereby leaving federations dependent on insufficient government support.

Table 1: List of Games under Talent Hunt Youth Sports Program

S. No	Men	Women
1.	Badminton	Badminton
2.	Football	Football
3.	Handball	Handball
4.	Hockey	Hockey
5.	Judo	Judo
6.	Squash	Squash
7.	Cricket	Cricket
8.	Volleyball	Volleyball
9.	Table Tennis	Table Tennis
10.	Boxing	Boxing
11.	Wrestling	-
12.	Weightlifting	-

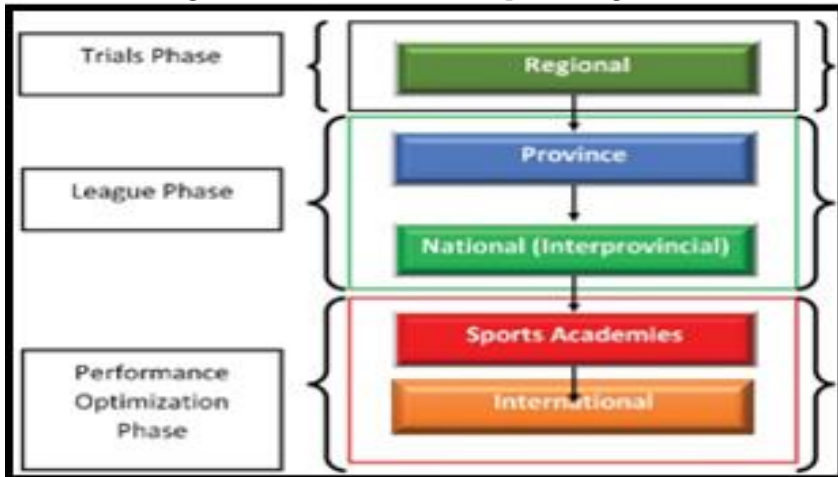
Source: Prime Minister's Youth Programme

Now, here the question arises: considering these challenges, how can Pakistan reshape these sports to serve as a source to foster national unity and inter-provincial harmony, like cricket?

The 'Talent Hunt Youth Sports Program' has been a successful initiative, offering Pakistani youth from diverse backgrounds a chance to access advanced training and gain recognition. In 2023, the government, in

partnership with the Higher Education Commission, initiated nationwide talent hunts in twelve games for men and women (Table 1). This successful program allows them to excel in events like the Youth Olympics and represent Pakistan at national and international sports forums¹⁴ (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Talent Hunt Youth Sports Program



Source: Prime Minister's Youth Programme

Moreover, PSB could enhance the talent pool by allocating resources to schools, colleges, and universities, thereby reducing the burden on federations to start from scratch in identifying and developing talent.

Besides this, a franchise-based PSL representing different cities offers the best model to replicate in other sports in Pakistan. In PSL-2023, more than Rs. 5.62 billion in revenue was generated.¹⁵ By implementing a similar franchise-based model, other sports federations could generate substantial revenue and reduce their over-dependence on government funds.

To begin with, sports with high growth potential - like football, hockey, squash, kabaddi, wrestling, boxing, volleyball, and basketball should be prioritised. For example, Pakistan has a rich history in hockey, marked by three Olympic gold medals and four World Cup titles, yet it declined due

to a lack of infrastructure and investment.¹⁶ Structured franchise-based leagues can revitalise these sports. However, to implement this model effectively, Pakistan needs legislation that empowers the private sector to manage leagues, leveraging their expertise in entrepreneurship and marketing.

Similar to the PSL, other sports' franchise-based leagues can establish teams from major cities like Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, Islamabad, and Multan and expand to include cities such as Faisalabad, Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Abbottabad, and Hyderabad. This approach will diversify participation, attract local talent, and engage a broader fan base, fostering national unity and inter-provincial harmony.

Moreover, the South Korean athlete pension system provides benefits based on their level of achievement, with higher pensions for gold medalists compared to silver and bronze medalists.¹⁷ PSB can implement a similar model by establishing a "Pakistan Sports Excellence Fund," funded by allocating a small portion of prize money awarded to medal-winning athletes. This would not only ensure the financial stability of athletes post-competition but could also encourage youth participation in the sports sector.

The media's push for better facilities for Arshad Nadeem demonstrates how media coverage can prompt government action and address issues of administrative mismanagement. This approach can be applied to all sports federations, where media attention on issues like mismanagement and inadequate resources can drive government reforms and boost support for the sports sector in Pakistan.

To conclude, conducting nationwide talent hunts, adopting franchise-based leagues, and implementing a pension system similar to South Korea's would not only improve Pakistan's sports sector but could also serve as a tool to foster national unity and interprovincial harmony.

However, for these initiatives to succeed, Pakistan must devise a comprehensive national sports policy that aligns all stakeholders — including government bodies, sports federations, and private entities — towards common goals and objectives. The policy should establish a

long-term strategic framework for the next 5-7 years, similar to the model set by Australia's "Sport-2030". This is particularly urgent, given that Pakistan has had no such sports policy since 2005 (the first-ever sports policy was introduced in 2001).

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About Insight and Author

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