



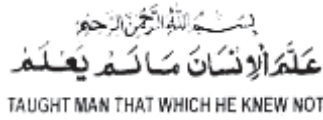
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A Periodical of INSIGHTS

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Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA)  
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## Editorial Note

The second volume of *Eg Quarterly* in hand contains eleven INSIGHTS written during the first quarter of 2023. These INSIGHTS discuss the economic, political and security challenges that Pakistan is facing while highlighting the importance of strategic alignment, domestic institutions, and economic reforms. Pakistan must strengthen its institutions and implement economic reforms to achieve sustained growth. Besides, this issue covers Pakistan's National Security Policy (2022-26) and emphasises the importance of the rule of law and an efficient justice system. Pakistan must address these challenges to realise its full potential.

Moreover, this issue explores the illegal actions of the Indian government in Jammu and Kashmir, which have disrupted the status quo and shown India's disregard for international norms. The revocation of Articles 370 and 35(A) has stripped the people of Jammu and Kashmir of their autonomy. The new domicile law, which allows non-Kashmiris to buy land and property in Jammu and Kashmir, has further undermined the indigenous freedom movement and the right of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to self-determination.

The issue further entails geoeconomics. Pakistan's location presents a unique opportunity to connect significant economic and resource-rich regions in the growing multipolar global environment. However, geopolitics poses a considerable challenge to Pakistan's vision of connectivity. To protect its national interests, Pakistan and regional countries must create their own paradigm for regional trade and connectivity instead of becoming hostage to a regional paradigm due to great power competition.

We hope that this publication will assist readers in keeping up to date with the current strategic landscape and find the analyses informative. We welcome contributions in the form of short pieces of writing offering insights on national security matters.



# Rule of Law as a Priority Objective in the National Security Policy (2022-2026)

*Alamgir Gul*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT discusses Pakistan's National Security Policy (2022-26), aiming to protect citizens' rights and ensure internal security through the rule of law. It highlights that due process should be adopted and enforced uniformly to improve the rule of law. An efficient justice system is also vital. The rule of law should apply to all and given the same importance as the economy.*

**Keywords:** National Security Policy, Rule of Law, Judicial System, Human Security, Human Rights.

**I**nnovative ideas and vision lie at the heart of human evolution and progress. Policies that reflect these contribute to energising national sentiments in keeping with the vision and objectives a nation sets for itself. Pakistan's first comprehensive National Security Policy is a significant development in this regard.

The National Security Policy (2022-2026) includes provisions to safeguard citizens' constitutional rights and to protect them from extremism, crime, terrorism and violence, including war. It comprises eight sections. To highlight internal and human security, the 'rule of law,' narrowly defined in Section VI,<sup>1</sup> is an essential component of state machinery but has not been given due emphasis. The rule of law ensures that the legal system is just, easily accessible, and efficient from the time laws are created through their implementation and eventually to the judicial process. Ensuring the rule of law augments the social contract between the state and its citizens.

Dicey defines the rule of law: "No man may be punished or legally forced to suffer in body or property unless for a specific violation of the law that has been proven in a court of law."<sup>2</sup> Due process of law is defined as "Fair treatment through judicial system, especially a citizen's entitlement to notice a charge and a hearing before an impartial judge." The terms 'Rule of Law' and 'Due Process of Law' are significant. Both guarantee the effective operation of a state's institutions within their respective spheres of influence, foster peace and prosperity, establish a stable social order, and confirm service delivery to a state's subjects, among other things. Pakistan's constitution promotes the rule of law and due process, but the nation has not had much progress in guaranteeing their actual application under the legislation.

Pakistan's constitution specifies the procedure for carrying out the duties of each organ of the state. The law facilitates the governance of a state in accordance with established legal principles, maintenance of peace, provision of rights to all citizens, explanation of duties, imposition of punishment in the event of a violation, and so on. It also serves as a foundation for establishing institutions and developing political, economic, social and cultural structures, among other things. The issue here is not only one of lawmaking but also a matter of effective supervision and implementation. The rule of law in Pakistan has been worsening day by day. A number of factors contribute to it, are:<sup>3</sup>

- Encroachment of one office's jurisdiction over another is a major issue. Interfering with or performing the work of another may result in confusion and chaos.
- It has been observed that a matter is politicised to achieve one's ulterior motives. As a result, the problem remains unresolved, and confusion reigns.
- Delays in delivering justice or providing rights to a state's subjects erode their trust in the state. As a result, people try to resolve their disputes without resorting to the legal system.
- Increased number of laws, but poor enforcement and implementation have had detrimental effects on society and the nation. People now tend to disregard the law. Protection of rights and upholding peace are impossible when the rule of law is violated.

- Personal or group interests have gained priority over national interests. It appears that either people are consciously ceasing to think about national interest or are unaware of it.

Adopting the due process of law and enforcing it uniformly across the board is need of the hour. The rule of law is an essential element for any coherent society, as it is rightly said by Hazrat Ali (R.A.) that "The system of disbelief can work, but not oppression." Investigating the idea of the rule of law is necessary before we can comprehend the concept of law implementation. As per the World Justice Project (WJP), Pakistan is ranked 129 out of 140 in the rule of law index, which is lamentable.<sup>4</sup> The overall low score is due to the following: Low public confidence in the system, unfair dispute resolution processes, weak law enforcement due to resource constraints, low salaries, unfilled positions due to unrealistic qualifications, and a backlog of cases in courts are all factors that contribute to delays in the justice system, high litigation costs, corruption, and a protracted and arduous legal process.

A vigilant and efficient civil and criminal justice system is essential to the rule of law. Speedy justice is a crucial component of the rule of law since it is the traditional method of resolving complaints and bringing criminal charges against people who have committed crimes against society. In order to deliver justice effectively, the system must be simple to use, reasonably priced, devoid of biases and corruption, and free from unwarranted delays. The rule of law is fundamental to human rights and democratic efforts. It seeks justice based on complete respect for human dignity rather than just describing formal legal structures. To ensure the rule of law, there are certain ways to consider:

- Integrating services according to the needs of citizens and standardising the quality of public service delivery.
- Small courts should be established to deal with minor local disputes and to reduce pressure on higher courts.
- Empowering the Jirga system at the government level for rapid justice and to settle local cases.
- Promote public awareness and advocacy campaigns.
- Civil and criminal justice systems must be improved.

Better implementation of the rule of law requires an effective mechanism of law enforcement that needs an independent judiciary, as it is the bedrock of the rule of law. Courts in Pakistan are dealing with a huge backlog of 2.144 million cases.<sup>5</sup> Delay in the judicial process is an antithesis of justice. To overcome such a burden, the government should utilise the Western model of Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR), which is known to be speedier and can assist in enhancing access to justice. Promoting ADR may reduce the number of pending cases in courts. Developed countries like Singapore have made ADR compulsory for citizens, which has proved vital in reducing cases and providing speedy justice.

The rule of law has not been given due emphasis at par with the importance accorded to the economy in National Security Policy (2022-26). The rule of law is suggested to be made a main policy objective under national cohesion as part of the National Security Policy. It should be implemented from top to bottom, applicable to all and sundry, and state and society should collectively work to ensure its implementation. It is also important to enforce laws in a true sense, which will be fruitful for the peace and prosperity of Pakistan.

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## About Insight and Author

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*This INSIGHT was first published in Pakistan Observer in January 2023 and on the ISSRA website in February 2023. It can be accessed at <https://www.ndu.edu.pk/issra/images/issra/Insight-Rule-of-Law.pdf>. The writer is an Intern at NDU and can be reached at [alamgirul321@gmail.com](mailto:alamgirul321@gmail.com).*



# Pakistan's Kashmir Strategy – The Way Forward

*Namra Naseer*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT discusses the Indian government's actions in the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir, which have disrupted the status quo and demonstrated India's disregard for international norms. The revocation of Articles 370 and 35(A) stripped the people of Jammu and Kashmir of their autonomy and divided the region into two Union Territories, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The introduction of a new domicile law, which allows non-Kashmiris to buy land and property in Jammu and Kashmir, has further undermined the indigenous freedom movement and the right of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to self-determination. The international community has largely ignored India's illegal actions, and Pakistan is now considering policy options for Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, including merging Gilgit-Baltistan politically into Pakistan and holding a referendum in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.*

**Keywords:** Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Articles 370 and 35(A), Right to Self-determination, UNSC Resolutions.

**T**he Indian government's illegal actions in the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir and subsequent legislation have disrupted the status quo and demonstrated India's disregard and contempt for international norms. The revocation of Articles 370 and 35(A) stripped the people of Jammu and Kashmir of their autonomy and divided the region into two Union Territories, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of a new domicile law on April 1, 2020,<sup>2</sup> was a part of India's plan to change the demographic character of the occupied territory by allowing non-Kashmiris to buy land and property in Jammu

and Kashmir, which was not allowed before. Under the new law, anyone who has resided in Jammu and Kashmir for 15 years or has studied there for a specific period can apply for residence in Kashmir and will be considered a Kashmiri. It is expected to result in a 30% increase in the number of voters in the region and is a blatant attempt to tilt the balance of political power in favour of the ruling BJP party.<sup>3</sup> The law also allows for the possibility of further BJP-favored seats in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, which could ultimately lead to the permanent integration of the occupied territory into India, in disregard of the Indian constitution. This legislation undermines the indigenous freedom movement and the right of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to self-determination.

The Indian actions have practically set the stage for an altered demographic outlook of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K), where Kashmiris are likely to be reduced to a minority in their homeland. The international community has, by and large, ignored India's illegal actions in occupied Kashmir for a long except for an occasional report by Amnesty International and Genocide Watch, and that too after Pakistan's consistent prodding to jolt their conscience. India has

*The ongoing stalemate in resolving the Kashmir dispute as India continues to take unilateral actions in the disputed region calls for a review of available policy options for Pakistan in respect of the regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir. As such, a careful evaluation of potential risks and challenges is crucial for Pakistan to make informed decisions.*

brushed aside any demands by international organisations and even by the UN Commission for Human Rights and OIC to investigate human rights violations by its security forces.

It has gone for unconstitutional and undemocratic actions to change the demographic makeup of the occupied territory in flagrant violation of the UNSC resolutions, the Simla Agreement Clause 4(ii),<sup>4</sup> and its international commitments. Article 1 of the UN Charter protects the right of self-determination as a fundamental principle of International Law.<sup>5</sup> These actions represent a blatant violation of the principle of self-determination, as outlined in the UN Charter and the International

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a signatory.<sup>6</sup> The UN Security Council has passed 18 resolutions regarding the Kashmir dispute, with resolutions 47<sup>7</sup> and 51<sup>8</sup> granting the people of Kashmir the right to decide their future. However, India continues to ignore these resolutions and take actions that threaten to lend more complexity to a highly charged dispute between Pakistan and India.

Pakistan has consistently maintained a principled stance on the Kashmir dispute based on the UNSC resolutions. However, the ongoing stalemate in resolving the conflict, as India continues to take unilateral actions in the disputed region, calls for a review of available policy options for Pakistan regarding Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. As such, carefully evaluating potential risks and challenges is crucial for Pakistan to make informed decisions. Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi's statement, "There are no risk-free or cost-free policy options for Pakistan on Kashmir," highlights the importance of careful consideration in decision-making.<sup>9</sup> Despite political sensitivity surrounding the Kashmir issue in Pakistan, concrete policy options have not been thoroughly thought through or disclosed.

### **Option 1: Merging Gilgit-Baltistan Politically into Pakistan**

The majority of the people in Gilgit-Baltistan wish to be formally recognised as a province of Pakistan, as evidenced by resolutions passed in the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly.<sup>10</sup> This move towards formal integration is driven by a desire for economic and social benefits and the sentiment that Gilgit-Baltistan should not be considered a part of the disputed State of Jammu and Kashmir. However, this option comes with risks. India is likely to challenge the decision and mount an international campaign to denounce it. Additionally, there may be resistance from the Azad Jammu and Kashmir leadership, and Pakistan may face criticism at the international level. To minimise risks, it is vital for Pakistan to thoroughly assess potential legal issues and ensure consistency with its principled stance and the UNSC resolutions. It will help determine the most feasible and effective course of action for Pakistan to take. While criticism from India and the international community may arise, Pakistan needs to approach this as an internal political matter.

**Option 2: Hold a Referendum in Azad Jammu and Kashmir**

Holding a referendum in Azad Jammu and Kashmir could be a positive move for Pakistan by demonstrating a commitment to democratic processes and giving the people of the region a voice in determining their future. Pakistan could invite international and UN observers to lend legitimacy to the referendum's fairness. The success of such a move would depend on careful planning and management to ensure that the rights of all parties are respected and protected. It would help address any concerns or tensions related to the region's status and potentially lead to a peaceful conflict resolution. However, it risks eliciting strong reactions from the occupied and Azad Kashmir people, who may perceive it as a compromise of their right to self-determination. A careful plan to discuss the proposal will help to allay any unfounded apprehension.

Options 1 and 2 would be exercised on the explicit understanding that the new arrangement is without prejudice to the ultimate resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UNSC resolutions and the wishes of the people of Kashmir.

**Option 3: Keeping the Status Quo**

Keeping the status quo in Jammu and Kashmir involves maintaining the current situation while drawing attention to India's human rights violations in IIOJ&K. The risks of this option include the possibility that the status quo may not result in a resolution to the Kashmir dispute, India may energise efforts to not only "Indianise" Jammu and Kashmir but may indulge in a false flag operation as it has done before, to heighten tensions with Pakistan to claim ownership of Azad Kashmir. The security situation in South Asia will deteriorate, leaving Pakistan with limited options. Anticipating and preparing for India's and the international community's response is crucial, as although Pakistan may have the support of China and perhaps Russia, the international community will play a balancer's act that would suit India more than Pakistan. Waiting for a more favourable opportunity for Pakistan is by itself a risk as the situation may further deteriorate, leaving fewer options for Pakistan in the future.

#### Option 4: Military Action

Military action involves considering the use of limited military force to reclaim parts of the disputed territory in IIOJ&K. This option carries several risks, including the potential escalation of conflict with India, which could result in a full-scale war and a disproportionate response from India. Additionally, military action could result in significant loss of life and damage to infrastructure, as well as potentially damaging Pakistan's relationship with major world powers and its reputation. While the option of military action should not be discarded entirely, it should be approached cautiously. By declaring in 2019 that it will not be pursued, Pakistan may have portrayed a sense of helplessness. However, limited military action in a series of steps to reclaim smaller areas of the disputed region should remain a viable option to exercise at a time of Pakistan's choosing. The decision to use military force should only be made after considering all risks and potential consequences carefully.

In conclusion, to make an informed decision on Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan needs to weigh its options carefully and consider the potential risks associated. These risks can be mitigated and contained by proactively assessing the sensitivities in the context of rising major power competition. The two views about merging Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan must be evaluated, one suggesting a simultaneous merger and the other proposing a step-by-step approach. The latter may be preferable as the merger of Gilgit-Baltistan would face less opposition, while Azad Jammu and Kashmir's leadership may be hostile to such an action. With regard to limited military action, India's potential response could harm Pakistan's image and, therefore, must be thoroughly considered. It is crucial that Pakistan analyses all available options and waits for the right domestic and international conditions before taking any steps to change the status quo in Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

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## About Insight and Author

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# Nexus of RAW with TTP and PTM: Are They Two Bodies with the Same Head and Soul?

## (Part – I)

*Asim Shafique*

### Abstract

*This INSIGHT discusses Pakistan's ongoing fight against terrorism and the recent rise in terrorist incidents, which can be attributed to foreign support to terrorist groups. It also highlights the emergence of political entities like PTM, which further the cause of destabilising Pakistan through propagating 'half-truths'. The insight argues that the nexus between TTP and PTM is becoming increasingly clear, and both organisations work towards discrediting Pakistan's military.*

**Keywords:** TTP, PTM, RAW, Terrorism, Foreign Funding.

**T**ehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is an umbrella organisation of various militant groups formed in 2007 under the leadership of Baitullah Mahsud to unify opposition against the Pakistani military. TTP's stated objectives were the expulsion of Islamabad's influence in the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), neighbouring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province, and the implementation of a strict interpretation of sharia throughout Pakistan. The group also sought to establish an Islamic Caliphate in Pakistan, and the recent demands also include revoking the merger of FATA with KPK.<sup>1</sup> Since 2007, TTP has had a history of conducting terrorist actions in Pakistan, targeting Pakistan's military, law enforcement agencies (LEAs), and the general population, including a cowardly terrorist attack on Army Public School Peshawar in 2016, killing 144 innocent students and teachers.<sup>2</sup> Pakistan's military conducted a series of military operations against TTP, including Operation Zarb-e-Azab, etc., which dismantled the organisation's

infrastructure in Pakistan.<sup>3</sup> The remnants of TTP fled and found refuge in Afghanistan. In the recent past, however, TTP has launched several terrorist attacks against Pakistan's military and LEAs, including a suicide attack on a mosque in Peshawar on January 30, 2023, claiming more than 100 lives and even more wounded.<sup>4</sup>

Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) emerged from the Mehsud Tahafuz Movement in May 2014. It proclaims itself to be a social movement for protecting Pashtun human rights, particularly in KPK and, generally, in Pakistan. PTM claims to be an unarmed and peaceful resistance movement working within the lawful boundaries of the Constitution of Pakistan.<sup>5</sup> During PTM's public demonstrations and sit-ins since February 2018, several demands have been presented to the Pakistani government and military, including punishment to the retired police officer Rao Anwar, a truth and reconciliation commission on alleged extrajudicial killings and missing persons in the country, removal of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) set by terrorists from erstwhile FATA, removal of military check posts, etc.<sup>6</sup>

*The nexus between TTP and PTM is becoming very clear as both are working towards the same ends, i.e., discredit and target Pakistan's military and LEAs.*

Irrespective of the genesis of TTP and PTM, it is interesting to note similarities between the two organisations, although the former has a militant and the latter has a political face.

First, both organisations target Pakistan's military and LEAs in their actions and rhetoric. As per the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), TTP conducted 262 attacks in Pakistan, including 14 suicide bombings in 2022, claiming 415 lives. The number of attacks increased by 25% from the year 2021.<sup>7</sup> Unlike TTP, PTM has adopted the route of a social movement to attack the military and LEAs through hate speeches and social media. Some international media streams also seem to support PTM rhetoric, which creates many suspicions among Pakistan's intellectual and security establishment.<sup>8</sup> In a particular incident on May 27, 2022, in North Waziristan, PTM protesters physically attacked an Army check post, injuring five military personnel.<sup>9</sup>



Second, both organisations do not criticise each other but support each other in words and actions. Interestingly, with the rise of terrorist incidents in Pakistan since June 2022, PTM has not condemned these attacks at all. Instead, it has blamed Pakistan's military for the latest surge in terrorism. A senior member of PTM, Sanna Ejaz, openly targets Pakistan's military and accuses them of human rights violations.<sup>10</sup> A senior member of PTM, Ali Wazir, has consistently delivered hate speeches against military and state institutions, where he also incited people to carry out attacks against them.<sup>11</sup>

Third, both organisations take their manpower support from Pashtun tribes of newly merged districts (NMD) of KPK.<sup>12</sup> Although TTP's rallying cry is more religious in nature than PTM's pro-ethnic leanings, both appeal to the feelings of alleged mistreatment of Pashtuns during the period of military operations in erstwhile FATA. One should not be surprised if TTP adopts a more Pashtun-oriented rallying slogan in the future.

Fourth, both organisations oppose the merger of FATA into KPK and demand the reversal of this policy decision, the removal of check posts from FATA and limiting the number of armed forces present in the area.<sup>13</sup>

Fifth, there has always been irrefutable evidence for support of TTP by the Indian intelligence agency, namely the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). In November 2020, Pakistan shared a dossier with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) containing evidence that India sponsored TTP to conduct attacks in Pakistan.<sup>14</sup> In its latest effort, Pakistan shared another dossier with the UNSC in December 2022, providing concrete evidence of Indian financial and material sponsorship to multiple terrorist organisations operating in Pakistan, including TTP.<sup>15</sup> However, the Government of Pakistan has yet to come out with clear-cut proof of funding to PTM by hostile intelligence agencies. Although, in the past, ISPR has indicated towards RAW-PTM nexus, there is a need for more clarity on the subject from the State of Pakistan.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, the nexus between TTP and PTM is becoming very clear as both work towards the same ends, i.e., discredit and target Pakistan's military and LEAs. They work hand in gloves like two bodies with the same head (mastermind), i.e., RAW. On the one hand, TTP conducts

terrorist attacks against Pakistan's military and LEAs, and when the military conducts operations against terrorists, PTM criticises military action and terms it as illegal and unfair targeting of Pashtuns in the name of violation of so-called human rights. This narrative is also supported and propagated, wittingly or unwittingly, by a group of national and international media streams.<sup>17</sup> All this indicates that RAW is the mastermind behind these synchronised terrorist and social movement actions. It is because only RAW possesses the financial and material resources and motive to carry out such hostile covert actions against the State of Pakistan.

The sole objective of the relationship of convenience between RAW-TTP-PTM is to discredit Pakistan's military and LEAs and thus destabilise the region. It must be understood that the destabilisation of the region remains in the larger geostrategic interests of the US-India nexus within the global context of US-China rivalry. How much facilitation does India get from the US in its support towards TTP and PTM is a question for Pakistani intelligence agencies to answer. It must be noted that RAW not only supports TTP or PTM but also actively supports other terrorist proxies in Balochistan and Gilgit Baltistan, which will be a subject of discussion for another paper. It is no coincidence that TTP and Baloch terrorist groups often target Chinese interests in Pakistan. No wonder, in the recent past, the main target of ISKP in Afghanistan has been the Chinese nationals and their interests.<sup>18</sup>

Pakistan has successfully endured a long and hard fight against terrorism for more than twenty years. Pakistan's military, with the support of the entire nation, has been able to dismantle terrorist networks inside Pakistan.<sup>19</sup> However, the recent rise in terrorist incidents indicates the fact that whereas terrorists' physical infrastructure and large-scale grouping were successfully defeated through a series of military operations, the main source of terrorism, i.e., foreign/ external support to the terrorist groups, could not be dismantled completely. Hence, as soon as foreign funding and support to criminal/ terrorist groups were resumed, post-US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the arrival of new politico-military leadership, the number of terrorist incidents rose sharply in Pakistan.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, the terrorist groups have also morphed into more benign-looking political entities like PTM to further their cause of destabilising Pakistan through propagating 'half-truths' only, making counterterrorism even harder. In the future, several other political entities may be coming to the scene to complicate the matters further. Moreover, the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan has also changed the security paradigm in the region. Therefore, there is a need for Pakistan to re-assess its counterterrorism strategy in KPK and Balochistan. The next part of the insight explains the proposed fresh counterterrorism strategy.

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# Nexus of RAW with TTP and PTM: Are They Two Bodies with the Same Head and Soul?

## (Part – II)

*Asim Shafique*

### Abstract

*This INSIGHT discusses Pakistan's ongoing fight against terrorism and the recent rise in terrorist incidents, which can be attributed to foreign support to terrorist groups. It also highlights the emergence of political entities like PTM, which further the cause of destabilising Pakistan through propagating 'half-truths'. The insight argues that the nexus between TTP and PTM is becoming increasingly clear, and both organisations work towards discrediting Pakistan's military. The author proposes a new counterterrorism strategy that should be political instead of military, as the main threat has also morphed into the political domain while suggesting that district administrations should exercise control in their respective districts as per the existing law of the land and "Riwaj," as deemed necessary.*

**Keywords:** Terrorism, Military Operations, PTM, TTP, RAW.

Pakistan has successfully endured a long and hard fight against terrorism for more than twenty years. Pakistan's military, with the support of the entire nation, has been able to dismantle terrorist networks inside Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> However, the recent rise in terrorist incidents indicates the fact that whereas terrorist's physical infrastructure and large-scale grouping were successfully defeated through a series of military operations, the main source of terrorism, i.e., foreign/ external support to the terrorist groups, could not be dismantled completely.<sup>2</sup> Hence, as soon as foreign funding and support to criminal/ terrorist

groups were resumed, post-US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the arrival of new politico-military leadership, the number of terrorist incidents rose sharply in Pakistan.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the terrorist groups have also morphed into more benign-looking political entities like PTM to further their cause of destabilising Pakistan through propagating 'half-truths' only, making counterterrorism even harder. In the future, several other political entities may be coming to the scene to complicate the matters further. Moreover, the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan has also changed the security paradigm in the region.<sup>4</sup>

The nexus between TTP and PTM is becoming very clear as both work towards the same ends, i.e., discredit and target Pakistan's military. Both organisations work hand in glove, like two bodies with the same head (mastermind), i.e., RAW. On the one hand, TTP conducts terrorist attacks against Pakistan's military and LEAs, and when the military conducts operations against terrorists, PTM criticises military action and terms it as illegal and unfair targeting of Pashtuns in the name of violation of so-called human rights.<sup>5</sup> This narrative is also supported and propagated, wittingly or unwittingly, by a group of national and international media streams.<sup>6</sup> All this indicates that RAW is the mastermind behind these synchronised terrorist and social movement actions.

The sole objective of the relationship of convenience between RAW-TTP-PTM is to discredit Pakistan's military and LEAs and thus destabilise the region. It must be understood that the destabilisation of the region remains in larger geo-strategic interests of the US-India nexus within the global context of US-China rivalry. How much facilitation does India get from the US in its support towards TTP and PTM is a question for intelligence agencies to answer. It must be noted that RAW not only supports TTP or PTM but also actively supports other terrorist proxies in Balochistan and Gilgit Baltistan, which will be a subject of discussion for another paper.<sup>7</sup> It is no coincidence that TTP and Baloch terrorist groups often target Chinese interests in Pakistan. No wonder, in the recent past, the main target of ISKP in Afghanistan has been the Chinese nationals and their interests.<sup>8</sup>

Above in view, there is a need for Pakistan to re-assess its counterterrorism strategy in KPK and Balochistan. This strategy must be based on two basic assumptions: First, the Emirate of Afghanistan (Afghan Taliban) and TTP are separate entities and do not share similar politico-military objectives or funding sources. Second, the Emirate of Afghanistan (Afghan Taliban) does not yet have the capacity or wherewithal to exercise complete control over Afghanistan. They have their internal problems and will take time to become a mature political group with the ability to run the government.

Before outlining the basic contours of the proposed counterterrorism strategy against the TTP-PTM nexus, it is important to understand the evolving domestic and regional environment in which this strategy has to perform. As part of this environment, Pakistan is now confronting a new two-faced terrorist threat, a part of which is political in nature. Whereas TTP (an amalgamation of area-based semi-independent terrorist groups) is a militant organisation, the real threat lies in a more benign political wing represented by PTM and other like-minded groups. Like in the past, if Pakistan continues to adopt a more kinetic-based counterterrorism strategy, it will likely backfire as organisations like PTM supported by selected media streams would term such military actions 'inhumane' and 'violation of human rights'. With no more US forces conducting kinetic operations in Afghanistan, this false narrative propagated by groups like PTM can easily become a propaganda theme for pseudo-human rights activists, especially in Pakistan's unregulated (the law of the jungle) media-savvy environment.

Above in view, the following are key strands of a new proposed counterterrorism strategy:

- The main thrust of the new counterterrorism strategy should be political instead of military (kinetic), as the main threat has also morphed into the political domain. In this regard, district (civilian) administrations suitably assisted by local military commanders (and not vice versa) must exercise control in their respective districts as per the existing law of the land and "Riwaj", as deemed necessary. This arrangement fulfils all the existing legal and constitutional provisions, is sustainable, and would enjoy political ownership. It implies that:

- Provincial CTDs/ LEAs, with the support of FC (MoI) and the intelligence agencies under the overall umbrella of civilian administration, should gradually take ownership of controlling the anti-state political activity (if any) and conducting kinetic operations against terrorists (where required).
- This prong must be accompanied by a decentralised information campaign under district administration to ensure the credibility of LEAs in the eyes of the public.
- The challenge in this prong is the supposedly weak capacity of civilian administration to handle such a difficult task. However, capacity building must be achieved by a gradual and progressive but continuous and swift rollback of excessive military and intelligence agency domination of national counterterrorism efforts.
- The secondary (complimentary) thrust should be kinetic, but its focus should shift from large-scale military operations to covert "intelligence-based selective (small unit) operations." It implies that:
  - Greater focus and investment into organising and coordinating efficient intelligence networks capable of providing actionable intelligence to local security forces commanders for their timely action.
  - The intelligence network should aim to neutralise two 'centres of gravity' of terrorist organisations: suffocate financial support to terrorists and successfully neutralise top-tier terrorist leadership.
  - In this prong, civilian administrations would provide necessary assistance to IBOs as and when required.
- As a safeguard, combined arms military capability must be retained in selective garrisons across KPK to provide timely and necessary reinforcements as and when required.
- Therefore, disregarding the temporary rise in terrorist incidents, Pakistan should gradually but swiftly withdraw its army units from KPK and replace them with LEAs suitably reinforced with units of Frontier Corps.
- All the above steps must also be suitably supported by a coordinated information and media strategy at the political/ state level. Pakistan must expose the nexus of RAW with TTP, PTM, and Baloch terrorists in the media with proof for public consumption.



- At the federal level, the merger of FATA with KPK must be expedited judiciously as a national security imperative. All constitutional hiccups must be removed so that the promised provincial share from the National Finance Commission (NFC) for the development of erstwhile FATA must be deducted "At Source."
- Similarly, with the help of intelligence agencies, all terrorist incidents must be investigated thoroughly. There should be an expeditious "Logical Conclusion" to all terrorist events culminating in the apprehension/ punishment of terrorists in the public domain through extensive media coverage. It will also help restore public confidence in the performance of LEAs and the military. For example, investigations related to a recent suicide attack in Peshawar Mosque and a terrorist attack at Karachi police station and others must be taken to their logical conclusion and progress/ result should be shared in the public domain.
- Externally, Pakistan should refrain from blaming the Emirate of Afghanistan for terrorist attacks inside Pakistan. Instead, Pakistan should offer all kinds of kinetic and non-kinetic support to Afghanistan, in coordination with other friendly countries, to root out the menace of TTP, Baloch terrorist organisations and others, including ISKP, from their soil.
- Moreover, Pakistan should emphasise finding a regional solution to the stability of Afghanistan involving Iran, Central Asian States, China and Russia, especially focusing on its economic development. There is a dire need to replace Afghanistan's "War Economy" with a model of "Economy based upon Trade, Investment and Connectivity."

The above strategy is not without its challenges. The foremost challenge for the military is to change course, not physically but conceptually. It must realise that post-US withdrawal from Afghanistan, it does not enjoy the same freedom of action in border regions of Afghanistan as in the past. Moreover, it has successfully dismantled terrorist group's networks and can return to its garrisons in an orderly and gradual manner. If it does not return now, it might be very difficult to return later in the face of alleged 'human rights violations', which can also occur accidentally or through false propaganda due to large-scale military presence in any civil area.

Moreover, the global appetite for terrorism is waning. Pakistan's military will find it hard to conduct hardcore kinetic counterterrorism operations without international support. The recent rise in terrorist incidents should not distract us from looking at the bigger picture. These incidents might have been designed to keep the new politico-military leadership mired in an unsustainable and confusing security situation. Much to the dismay of RAW and India, perhaps, it is time to re-shift military focus towards Pakistan's eastern borders.

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# Pakistan's Pivot to Geo-economics

*Khadija Younas*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT examines Pakistan's shift towards geo-economic policies, prioritising economic partnerships and connectivity over traditional security concerns. The National Security Policy (2022-2026) outlines three pillars for Pakistan's geo-economic advantage: connectivity, economic partnerships, and peace within and around the country. It also highlights the potential benefits of improved trade relations with neighbouring countries and the role of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in regional connectivity. The author suggests that Pakistan can position itself as a hub for cooperation between powerful states by leveraging its locational advantage and maintaining diplomatic multi-alignment.*

**Keywords:** Geo-economics, Socio-economic Prosperity, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Economic Partnerships, Interdependence.

South Asia claims one-quarter of the world's population, abundant human and natural resources and is regarded as Asia's fastest growing subregion.<sup>1</sup> However, despite its potential, the region has been plagued by unresolved conflicts, keeping it stuck in the quagmire of underdevelopment and poverty, being the world's least integrated region. Amidst the 'Asianisation of world politics'<sup>2</sup> and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI),<sup>3</sup> the region is experiencing connectivity and infrastructure development through economic partnerships, which is contributing to regional growth, especially the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) can become a central cord of regional connectivity.<sup>4</sup> Against this backdrop, the focus on geo-economics as an integral component of Pakistan's national security is well-placed and timely.

The National Security Policy 2022-2026 (NSP)<sup>5</sup> visualises Pakistan's geo-economic advantage with three pillars – connectivity, economic

partnerships and peace within and around the country to create economic interdependence, specifically with the Western neighbours such as Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Türkiye. It equally places economic prosperity at the centre of national security, focusing on the people's economic well-being by leveraging the country's geo-strategic locational advantage. NSP states, "Pakistan is poised to take advantage of its geo-economically pivotal location to operate as a production, trade and investment and connectivity hub...."<sup>6</sup> Pakistan's recent decision to approve appointments of Trade Ministers in several Pakistan missions abroad, including the High Commission of Pakistan in New Delhi and Iran, reflects this pragmatic approach to promoting inter-regional trade.<sup>7</sup>

One of the potential connotations of the policy shift entails that Pakistan, for too long, has been a frontline state for strategic and security reasons. The choice that Pakistan had to make was whether to keep taking the lead in others' battles as a frontline state or serve as a hub for cooperation where synergies of powerful states meet. Pakistan's active cooperation to bring peace to Afghanistan demonstrated its moral and international commitments.<sup>8</sup> In realising the geo-economic paradigm, Pakistan has helped enhance Afghanistan's trade and connectivity by re-energising the Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade,<sup>9</sup> besides enhancing the business environment along the Pak-Afghan border.<sup>10</sup>

*Enabling Pakistan to be a melting pot of great powers' cooperation through facilitating multiple connectivity and infrastructure projects will help in people-centric comprehensive national security.*

Geo-economics, for Pakistan, also calls for a change of mindset vis-a-vis trade with neighbours, including India and Iran.<sup>11</sup> Steady Pakistan-India relations are crucial to unlocking the unexploited prospects of regional transit, trade and connectivity. It may help persuade India to come to the negotiating table for a meaningful, broad-based dialogue to resolve issues peacefully. For now, India's ideology-driven policies<sup>12</sup> are compromising regional connectivity and trade promises. Prospects of transit trade with India, Afghanistan and Iran, if handled well, can bring enormous benefits to all, including Pakistan. Viewing US-China bilateral trade (\$615.2 billion)<sup>13</sup> and China-India trade volumes (\$125 billion)<sup>14</sup> underscore that economic and trade ventures must not be held hostage

to disputes and differences when such ventures ensure greater socio-economic prosperity.

CPEC has contributed to Pakistan's infrastructure, energy and regional connectivity.<sup>15</sup> The project under the geo-economic pivot enables Pakistan to calibrate multi-alignment in its foreign policy<sup>16</sup> and, thus, welcomes Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under the project, irrespective of US opposition.<sup>17</sup> In this milieu, the US and G-7-led Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)<sup>18</sup> also offers financing of projects on climate security, digital connectivity, gender equality, and health security to developing countries, which is regarded as a counter move to BRI. With an initial funding of \$600 billion, PGII will not be able to match BRI's \$1 trillion worth of investments. However, both financing models are viable and allow developing countries to bargain for better deals.<sup>19</sup>

With the spirit of multi-alignment, Pakistan can position itself as a melting pot for these two great powers' cooperation by balancing its relations with the two and leveraging its locational advantage for better economic ventures. Usually, with CPEC, Pakistan is viewed as belonging to the rival camp by the US. However, Pakistan's strategic economic partnership with China is deemed essential for its balance of power with India. Nevertheless, the country has maintained strategic relations with the US for over seventy years and is in tactical cooperation on Afghanistan and terrorism.<sup>20</sup> By working with the US and China, Pakistan has avoided being caught in the crossfire of great power rivalry and must continue with its diplomatic multi-alignment for bilateral and multi-lateral economic partnerships.

Geo-economics also offers Pakistan unique opportunities to be a junction of multiple powers' cooperation for connectivity, trade, and transit for South and Central Asia. Consequently, including Afghanistan in CPEC remains a strategic priority for Pakistan to connect with Central, South and West Asia via energy and trade corridors.<sup>21</sup> It is optimising CPEC through multiple vectors named CPEC-Plus Initiatives, extending its northern vector (Afghanistan) and western vector (Iran) besides east-west routes (from Afghanistan to Central Asia). For example, N-CPEC Plus would help in facilitating multiple energy, power and infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, such as Pakistan-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan

(PAKAFUZ)<sup>22</sup> railway line and Quadrilateral Traffic and Transit Agreement (QTTA), among others. The pivot also complements Pakistan's support for China's 'Persian Corridor' connecting Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan to Iran.<sup>23</sup> In addition, Pakistan's support to the recently established US-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan-Pakistan Quad Regional Support for Afghanistan<sup>24</sup> is unequivocal for the forum's potential in materialising regional connectivity goals, especially the PAKAFUZ railway line for which a trilateral meeting was held last month in Islamabad.<sup>25</sup> Supporting the quadrilateral platform under the pivot also enables Pakistan to facilitate US economic participation in CARs and other regional connectivity initiatives.

Nevertheless, Pakistan is poised to synergise win-win cooperation through its geo-economic pivot upholding the principle of economic cooperation through interdependence and diplomatic multitasking – continuing with CPEC while encouraging it to be inclusive via CPEC-Plus Initiatives and facilitating regional connectivity projects with Afghanistan, Iran, Türkiye, and Central Asia.

Similarly, to explore trade and connectivity dividends towards its western neighbourhood, the recently concluded Pakistan-Iran International Transport Agreement<sup>26</sup> is a case in point. The agreement opens new horizons for economic ventures, especially transiting to and from Pakistan to Türkiye through Iran and onwards to Central Asia and European economic hubs. With the transit agreement, Pakistan-Iran bilateral trade is anticipated to touch \$5 billion – a considerable jump from the current \$1 million, besides granting access to Iranian passengers and goods to China through Pakistan.<sup>27</sup> Operating under the umbrella of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), the first Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) freight train transported cargo, after a break of ten years, from Pakistan to Türkiye via Iran last year, arriving in Ankara in just 13 days.<sup>28</sup>

Most importantly, a pivot to geo-economics starts with reforms at home, including good governance, fiscal management, political stability, continuity of policies, the rule of law and ease of doing business. Pakistan should stop looking for help to put its house in order. Economic development will be inevitable given the need to create approximately 50 million new jobs in the next ten years in Pakistan, as this fifth most

populous country in the world will hit 245 million by 2030.<sup>29</sup> National economic development via regional trade and connectivity under decisive and visionary leadership will help boost Pakistan's GDP to address its development deficits.

Finally, Pakistan's geo-economic pivot demands a shift from its long-standing organisational and bureaucratic interests and mindset. Leading the nation from a position of strength, Pakistan has articulated its new vision while emphasising that the international community should also contribute to understanding and supporting the country as it prepares to affect its transition towards geo-economics.

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# Pakistan's Alternate Economic Paradigm Based Upon Regional Trade and Connectivity

*Dr Muhammad Shabbir*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT examines Pakistan's location at the convergence of the old Silk Route, which presents a unique opportunity for connecting significant economic and resource-rich regions in the growing multipolar global environment. However, geopolitics poses a high challenge to Pakistan's vision of connectivity. To protect its national interests, Pakistan and regional countries must create their own paradigm for regional trade and connectivity instead of becoming hostage to a regional paradigm due to great power competition. It highlights that regional connectivity through Iran and Afghanistan is still not fully operational, and Pakistan's private sector heavily depends on government facilitation and avoids risk-taking. To address these challenges, Pakistan and the countries in its western neighbourhood must adopt a regional approach and work together to complete regional transportation and energy projects.*

**Keywords:** Silk Route, Connectivity, Geopolitics, Economic Cooperation, Investment.

Pakistan's location at the convergence of the old Silk Route makes it a unique hub for connecting significant economic and resource-rich regions in the growing multipolar global environment. However, geopolitics poses a high challenge to Pakistan's vision of connectivity. Of Pakistan's neighbours, Afghanistan is isolated, Iran is under sanctions, Pakistan's relations with China are under scrutiny by the West, and with India's ideological mindset, bilateral relations are unlikely to improve. Moreover, the Asia-Pacific region being the focus of US-China competition, smaller states are being forced to become a part of major

power contestation. So, how should smaller states like Pakistan protect their national interests in the geostrategic environment?

The only option in a transient world of major power contestation is to come together through connectivity, interdependence and partnerships. Pakistan and regional countries must create their own paradigm for regional trade and connectivity instead of becoming hostage to a regional paradigm due to great power competition. To create this paradigm, economic cooperation, investment, and connectivity between Pakistan and Central Asian

*“Pakistan and regional countries must create their own paradigm for economic cooperation and regional connectivity instead of being hostage to a regional paradigm as a result of great power contestation.”*

Republics, Iran, Türkiye and Afghanistan are critical. The National Security Policy of Pakistan (2022-2026)<sup>1</sup> visualises Pakistan's geoeconomic advantage with three pillars: Connectivity, Partnerships, and Peace within and around Pakistan to cooperate and create economic interdependence with its neighbours to the West. The potential for trade and cooperation is such that it will open a whole host of avenues and opportunities for connectivity.

The trade potential between Pakistan and its western neighbourhood, particularly with Central Asian Republics (CARs), is forecasted at several billion dollars by the World Bank and other institutions.<sup>2</sup> The shortest land route to Central Asian states (2600 km) as compared to Iran (4500 km) or Türkiye (5000 km) to a seaport. However, bilateral trade between Pakistan and CARs has remained at less than \$1 billion for several years. Pakistan has expanded its worldwide trade and transit routes after signing the TIR (Transport Internationaux Routiers), a UN Convention, in 2015 and making it operational in 2018.<sup>3</sup> The TIR Carnet is a permission to transport goods and cargo on land/ train routes across international borders. The ECO members are the highest beneficiaries as most TIR Carnets originate from ECO member countries, particularly Iran, Türkiye and Azerbaijan. Pakistan has issued very few (34) Carnets to two Pakistani carriers, one being the National Logistics Cell (NLC), which is transporting goods to Türkiye and Azerbaijan via Iran on a land route that takes about a week. For regional and international trade,

Pakistan and regional countries still have to meet international standards of transport legislation, ensure smooth visa processes and customs procedures at borders and terminals and install a risk management system to identify risky cargo from non-risky ones.

Regional connectivity through Iran is still not fully operational as Pakistan's commercial banks are hesitant to issue import and export forms (essential for clearance of shipping documents under Letter of Credit payments), although the State Bank of Pakistan has clarified that transportation through a sanctioned country does not entail sanctions on the Carrier. Even European countries use the TIR system for transit trade with CARs (approximately \$100 billion annually) through Iran. Thus, reservations about transit trade through Iran are misplaced. Iran itself is a major regional beneficiary of TIR as billions of dollars of merchandise transit through the country for other destinations. After the devastating earthquake in Türkiye and Syria, NLC delivered 21 trucks of relief assistance through Iran on February 25, 2023.<sup>4</sup>

Afghanistan has a natural capacity to become a regional transit crossroad, but it cannot benefit from its potential geographical location without regional cooperation and regional agreements. The security situation in Afghanistan is a challenge, although it has eased after the US troop withdrawal in August last year. CARs are keen to complete regional projects such as TAPI, CASA 1000, and road and railway links through Afghanistan. The only impediment is the non-recognition of the current government. Keeping Afghanistan out of regional transportation networks only serves as the broken link in the connectivity chain. A regional approach will have to be adopted by neighbouring countries of Afghanistan to go ahead with the completion of regional transportation and energy projects.

Yet another challenge is the private sector itself in Pakistan. The business community heavily depends on facilitation by the government and avoids risk-taking. The general lack of will and consensus amongst all stakeholders has kept regional transit trade on the slow track. Lack of information about the potential for regional trade and connectivity is another major issue.

Pakistan and the countries in its western neighbourhood can address these challenges collectively. In this context, the following key measures are suggested:

- Robust implementation of international transport conventions TIR, CMR, ADR, etc., implementation of multilateral agreements ECO-TTFA and QTTA, finalisation of PTAs/ FTAs, transport and transit trade agreements with regional countries, improve systems in place to facilitate cross border trade (sea, air, land), expand warehouse and cold storage facilities and reduce bureaucratic delays and corruption in cross border trade.
- The policy and regulatory environment, high transportation costs, poor infrastructure, and limited customs facilitation at border crossings are all surmountable challenges, as the key transit routes through Afghanistan are presently in reasonably good condition, and the overall customs and trade facilitation are improving.
- The reliance on discretionary risk management and resulting rents lead to over-inspection, delays, additional costs, and cargo damages because of mishandling during physical inspections. A risk management system should be installed at borders to identify risky cargo from non-risky ones, reducing delays.
- Systematic coordination amongst border agencies will also add to border efficiency.
- Export-related economic operations conducted by the private sector require closer coordination and facilitation from public sector regulators, particularly from Pakistan Customs, the Federal Board of Revenue, relevant federal ministries and provincial departments, and the State Bank of Pakistan.
- Public awareness campaigns through road shows and single or multi-country exhibitions within business circles in Pakistan and other countries will help the private sector, especially SMEs, to market and export their products.
- The banking-related challenges can be resolved through bilateral or multilateral agreements establishing uniform banking and trade practices and opening bank branches in each other's territories to promote regional trade.
- Existing border markets on Pakistan's borders with Afghanistan and Iran should be expanded with a facility for barter trade.

- Trade in regional currencies is permitted, but these transactions do not add to a country's foreign reserve unless converted to US dollars. Barter trade and commodity trade are always an alternative to consider as a substitute to dealing in regional currency, and they come with several benefits which should be explored.

Changing Pakistan's direction from geo-strategy to geo-economics has not been easy. Strategic developments in Pakistan's neighbourhood have occupied most of its resources to maintain a regional balance of power. Pakistan cannot afford to enter transactional partnerships once again. At the same time, Pakistan can neither insulate itself from the impact of major power competition nor ignore to focus on building economic relations with new partners whom it shares a cultural affinity with. The recent agreement under China's patronage on March 10 by Saudi Arabia and Iran to resume diplomatic relations after seven years is a welcome development. It offers immense opportunities for Pakistan to realise its geoeconomic vision and consolidate trade and connectivity efforts with countries to the West, including Iran. Therefore, while recognising the challenges, Pakistan must find ways and means to construct its own regional paradigm for economic cooperation, trade and connectivity.

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## Pakistan-Iran Trade Relations

*Ayesha Khalil*

### Abstract

*This INSIGHT discusses the historical and friendly relations between Pakistan and Iran and the potential for enhancing economic cooperation and bilateral trade. However, the Preferential Trade Agreement between the two countries has not led to the expected rise in trade, and high import taxes by Iran on certain goods have hampered Pakistan's exports. Additionally, US sanctions on Iran and pressure on Pakistan to scale down trade ties with Iran have delayed the construction of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline. The author suggests that both countries should work towards prioritising the operationalisation of trade agreements and devising mechanisms to overcome the impact of US sanctions on their trade potential and diversify their trade beyond energy imports.*

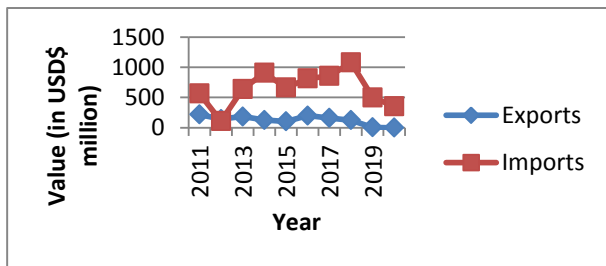
**Keywords:** Pakistan-Iran Bilateral Trade, Preferential Trade Agreement, US Sanctions, Energy Imports, Textile Industry.

Pakistan and Iran share extensive historical, linguistic, cultural, religious and geographical ties.<sup>1</sup> Iran was the first country to recognise Pakistan soon after its independence. Both states have maintained friendly and cordial relations, notwithstanding divergent views like Iran's support for the Northern Alliance and Pakistan's pro-Taliban stance after Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. The leadership of both states are convinced that relations between the two neighbours should be strengthened further. Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, reiterated during his visit to Iran on June 14, 2022, that Iran is an important neighbour of Pakistan<sup>2</sup> and expressed Pakistan's willingness to enhance economic cooperation with Iran.<sup>3</sup> While talking to business leaders at the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Iran's Ambassador Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini expressed similar views that Iran "wants to have free trade with Pakistan."<sup>4</sup>

The 900 km border, largely peaceful, is an opportunity for bilateral trade and connectivity,<sup>5</sup> enhance commercial engagement and expand markets between the two states.<sup>6</sup> However, bilateral trade has been heavily favouring Iran as exports from Pakistan to Iran have gradually shrunk, as shown in the Observatory of Economic Complexity data from 2011 to 2020 (Table 1).<sup>7</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Exports from Pakistan to Iran</b>	<b>Exports from Iran to Pakistan</b>
<b>2020</b>	\$3.2 thousand	\$352 million
<b>2019</b>	\$4.68 million	\$502 million
<b>2018</b>	\$124 million	\$1.08 billion
<b>2017</b>	\$162 million	\$856 million
<b>2016</b>	\$201 million	\$815 million
<b>2015</b>	\$103 million	\$663 million
<b>2014</b>	\$128 million	\$909 million
<b>2013</b>	\$185 million	\$637 million
<b>2012</b>	\$142 million	\$110 million
<b>2011</b>	\$219 million	\$568 million

Pakistan's exports to Iran have decreased drastically from \$219 million in 2011 to \$3.2 thousand in 2020, while Iran's exports to Pakistan in the same period ranged from \$568 million to \$352 million. In 2018, Iran's exports to Pakistan crossed \$1 billion. Exports from Pakistan include metal working machine parts, rice, paper, meat, chemicals, textiles, vegetables and fruits, while it imports petroleum, gas, iron ore, hide and skins and chemical products.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 1 - Graph of Pakistan-Iran Trade 2011-2020**



The Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) signed in 2004 (operational in 2006)<sup>9</sup> has not led to the expected rise in trade as high import taxes by Iran on goods like fruit, vegetables, cereals, leather and footwear hamper Pakistan's exports. Iran removed some goods from its import ban list for trade with Pakistan in December 2021.<sup>10</sup> The Consul General of Iran, Mehran Movahedfar, while talking to the business community at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, stressed the need to make PTA effective.<sup>11</sup>

The absence of banks in each other's capitals has a negative impact on trade. Iran does not allow Pakistani banks to operate in Iran. While Pakistan has acceded to Iran's request to open a branch in Karachi, there has not been a final decision as Iran wants the minimum amount of paid-up capital to be reduced.<sup>12</sup>

To comprehend Pakistan-Iran trade relations, one must consider Iran-US relations.<sup>13</sup> Iran has been sanctioned for its nuclear power programme and other geopolitical reasons. As a result of US sanctions on Iran and US pressure on Pakistan to scale down trade ties with Iran, Pakistan has delayed the construction of its part of the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline. Iran has decided to demand a penalty of \$18 billion if the project is not completed by March 2024.<sup>14</sup> Being an energy-deficient country, Pakistan imported refined and crude oil worth \$6.462 billion in 2020<sup>15</sup> and expensive LNG from around the world worth \$3.4 billion in 2021,<sup>16</sup> mainly from Qatar. Pakistan can import cheaper gas from Iran rather than expensive LNG from Qatar.<sup>17</sup> But for that, the completion of IP gas pipeline construction would have to be prioritised. In a meeting between Pakistan and Iran delegations on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Summit in September 2022, Ambassador Ali Hosseini reiterated Tehran's willingness to offer cheap gasoline, power and natural gas supplies to Pakistan to deal with the deteriorating energy situation.<sup>18</sup>

*Pakistan and Iran are two neighbours and enjoy extensive historical, cultural, and political bonds. But bilateral relations need to be underpinned with trade and commercial ties.*

In the backdrop of Pakistan's policy emphasis on geo-economics, Pakistan's trade relations with Iran should graduate from MoUs and trade

agreements towards prioritising the operationalisation and devising mechanisms to overcome the impact of US sanctions on their trade potential.<sup>19</sup> Apart from energy imports, Pakistan and Iran can potentially diversify their trade. Both states are working on different aspects to enhance bilateral trade and have set a \$5 billion trading volume target.<sup>20</sup> Value-added textiles and grains are possible industries where they can expand trade. Iran is one of the main consumers of denim in the area, and there is a sizable market for Pakistani rice in Iran. Multan's tiles and ceramics and Bahawalpur's embroidery and artificial jewellery will find ready markets in Iran. Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry has a huge opportunity to expand its exports by entering Iranian markets.<sup>21</sup> On January 15, 2023, at the end of a two-day joint border trade committee meeting, 39 MoUs between Pakistan and Iran were signed to ensure collaboration in several areas like travel, tourism, fisheries, mining, and minerals.<sup>22</sup>

Because of US sanctions against Iran, Pakistan's commercial banks are hesitant to conduct financial activities with Iranian banks. The business communities in both countries face hurdles as the lack of a payment mechanism is a significant impediment. These hurdles further lead to illegal, undocumented trade and smuggling across borders.<sup>23</sup> The absence of banking facilities impedes trade.<sup>24</sup> Pakistan and Iran should establish commercial banking channels, especially in their capitals and border cities on either side. Given sanctions on Iran, it is important to explore currency swap arrangements.

Iran is already utilising currency swap facilities and barter trade with other countries. Pakistan also needs to consider barter trade between the two countries and utilisation of local currencies.<sup>25</sup> More border trade markets like Taftan-Mirjaveh, Mand-Pishin, and Gabd-Rimdan will enhance border trade.<sup>26</sup>

The customs procedures at borders are cumbersome and lead to excessive delays. They need to be streamlined through cooperation and discussion between relevant agencies of Pakistan and Iran to facilitate transportation across borders.<sup>27</sup> The introduction of the e-TIR convention is a positive step,<sup>28</sup> and the electronic exchange of customs data and improvement of customs procedures will prevent waste of time due to delays at customs checkpoints.

A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) would be helpful to spur trade between the two countries.<sup>29</sup> The role of the business community and private sectors need to be strengthened through visits to explore markets for Pakistan's exports to Iran.

Pakistan and Iran are neighbours and enjoy extensive historical, cultural and political bonds. But bilateral relations need to be underpinned with trade and commercial ties. Iran offers a big market for Pakistan's exports and transit trade to Türkiye, Azerbaijan and onwards to Europe through land routes. The two countries may have experienced mistrust in the past, but the fact that they share a long and friction-free border provides many opportunities to enhance and strengthen bilateral trade and connectivity. While G2G relations help facilitate commercial ties, the private sector in Pakistan needs to be incentivised to explore the Iranian market for exports.

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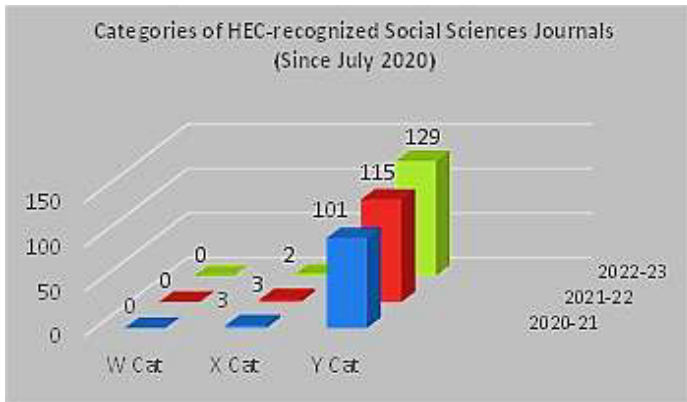
*Syed Taimoor Shah*

### Abstract

*This INSIGHT discusses the challenges faced by research journals in Pakistan due to the revised criteria for accreditation and introduction of Journal Recognition System by the Higher Education Commission. These changes have significantly impacted national journals' credibility and put pressure on academia to meet the accreditation threshold. It also considers the limited opportunities for indigenous research culture and the difficulties faced by faculty promotions and awards of research degrees. To address these issues, the author suggests revisiting the journal accreditation policy, adding more indexing/ abstracting agencies, and providing sufficient time and support to research journals to adhere to accreditation criteria.*

**Keywords:** Journal Recognition System, Accreditation Policy, Social Sciences Research Journals, Scopus, Web of Science.

**H**EC, during its 34th meeting held on August 30-31, 2019, revisited its research journal policy to raise their quality and bring them to par with international standards. It was a significant policy shift. The revised criteria for the accreditation of research journals in the W, X and Y categories were applicable from July 1, 2020. Accordingly, HEC introduced the Journal Recognition System (HJRS) that started listing national and international journals yearly to validate their acceptance at the national level based on Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) parameters. Resultantly, most high-category social sciences journals in the country were downgraded or not even recognised in any category. It was a watershed moment for the credibility of national journals, which had been published regularly for decades and had noticeable impact factors, thus raising concerns and objections.



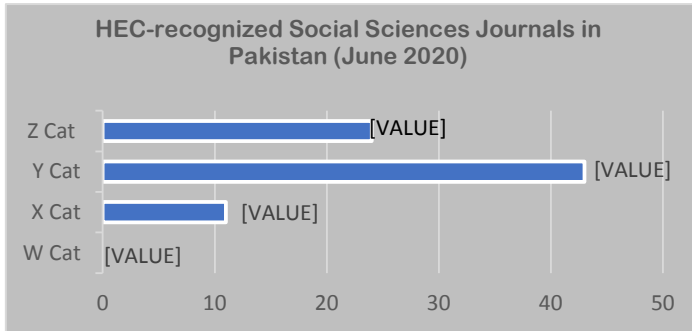
Today, research journals in Pakistan strive to meet the minimum criteria of HJRS accreditation while seeking affiliation with HEC-prescribed indices despite their negligible resources. HEC has set other standards for faculty appointments, promotions, and acquisition of research degrees, which are directly related to publications, thus putting pressure on local research journals to meet the threshold of categorisation without requisite support. Academia is also facing challenges in publishing research work locally due to the non-availability of X-category social sciences journals.

Consequently, publishing a research paper in a high-category international journal is considered more valuable despite its

*HEC should have a balanced approach in its strategy towards choosing indexing and abstracting agencies.*

financial cost (in US dollars) than a free-of-cost journal in Pakistan. It is compromising own intellectual property rights, enticing intellectual colonisation, and affecting the input quality of local research journals, thus diametrically harming knowledge production and reducing the support for promoting the national narrative while seeking its strategic space at home and abroad. In the era of fifth-generation warfare, kinetic and non-kinetic approaches are equally essential to ensure comprehensive national security. Supporting the national narrative through research publications is, in fact, an acknowledgement of academia and intelligentsia of their research work for all-inclusive policy input.

Over the years, the trajectory of students' enrolment at higher education levels has been remarkable. However, efforts to nurture research culture and regulate related policies across the country are not much harmonised. Previously, academia had ample opportunities to get their research published in local journals to meet the criteria for appointments, promotions, and acquisition of research degrees.<sup>1</sup> Today,



research publication space is shrinking relatively due to accreditation limitations as many local journals have been downgraded (not falling in the Thomson Reuters list or JCR). Since 2020, none of the Pakistani journals in social sciences has made it up to category W, and only two out of 2144 HJRS-recognised journals in the X category (2022).<sup>2</sup> Pakistani researchers are not much toned with Journal Prestige Index and Emerging Sources Citation Index measurements.

Similarly, despite efforts, a negligible number of Pakistani social sciences journals have recently been indexed by Scopus and WoS. On the one hand, these indices demand high-quality work and, on the other, approve specific narratives only. Their commercial approach and selectivity in indexing open-access journals are noticeable.

Although HEC has launched several initiatives to improve the quality and standards of research, pursuing a narrow approach towards journal accreditation is becoming a predicament. It limits choices for indexing and abstracting local journals, diminishes chances for developing an indigenous research culture, and causes difficulties in faculty promotions and awards of research degrees. Universities and research institutions have also raised their concerns and offered various remedies. Some of these are:



**First**, as a short-term measure, HEC should revisit its policy for journal accreditation while taking all stakeholders on board and striking a balance between best practices worldwide. Since the world is witnessing strategic alignments and realignments, it is imperative to broaden our scope and prioritise our own strategic choices. We should not be part of one side to lose the other. There are high-quality indices for social sciences journals besides Scopus and WoS. HEC should add more indexing/ abstracting agencies from technologically/ academically advanced countries, such as China, Russia, Turkey, Middle East, Africa, Far East, etc., to its list. It will increase the probability of getting indexed globally for local research journals and help them foster an independent national perspective.

**Second**, frequent downgrading or delisting of local research journals (yearly) is not productive as it puts more pressure on journal accreditation and discourages researchers from contributing locally. Research journals should be given sufficient time (3–5 years) and support to adhere to accreditation criteria.

**Third**, HEC should work on a home-grown research database. Although it is a long-term strategy, it helps to promote the indigenous research system. Pakistani scholars abroad publish their research in international journals by compulsion, thus reducing support and contribution to local journals. Their intellectual prowess must be acknowledged and rewarded as the nation's asset. Millions are spent on PhD scholars abroad by HEC; therefore, the maximum quality output should be extracted from them by recognising and incentivising their work at home.

**Fourth**, due to meagre financial resources, most journals lack substructures and staff, and HEC has already reduced its financial assistance. As a result, they are being pushed to commercial plans and left with no choice but to seek affiliation with prescribed indices on payment. Faculty and students also pay hefty fees to find a place in higher-category journals to meet HEC criteria. Commercialising research journals, especially privately owned ones, would only end up in an intellectual rift, which should be avoided. Research journals published by universities and research organisations/ institutions should be given more weightage and due recognition.

Research Journals are premium products of universities worldwide. They promote their research and national narratives to a vast readership through various databases, thus opening new vistas of research on similar grounds while supporting their national objectives. It is high time to give a chance to academicians to become a productive workforce coping with modern-day challenges. Today's need is to put collective efforts into addressing strategic issues; otherwise, its repercussions would reverberate across knowledge corridors. The indigenous research culture would be more beneficial than depending on others.

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<sup>2</sup> According to the yearly database of HJRS, HEC-recognized national social sciences research journals (post-June 30, 2020) are: 2020-21 (Category X=3 and Category Y=101), 2021-22 (Category X=3 and Category Y=115) and 2022-23 (Category X=2 and Category Y=129). Extracted from <https://hjrs.hec.gov.pk/> (Accessed November 2022).

## About Insight and Author

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## Is SAARC Dead?

*Usama Aziz*

### Abstract

*This INSIGHT discusses the current state of SAARC, established in 1985 to promote regional cooperation and connectivity. However, since 2015, when India refused to attend the SAARC Summit under Pakistan's Chair, the organisation has fallen into limbo. SAARC has failed to achieve its policy initiatives and objectives due to mistrust and tensions between its members, particularly India and Pakistan. The insight states that the failure of the South Asian Free Trade Area and other collaborative mechanisms has also contributed to lethargic regional cooperation. The author concludes that the revival of SAARC appears unlikely as long as relations between India and Pakistan remain hostile.*

**Keywords:** SAARC, Regional Cooperation, Trade and Connectivity, Kashmir Dispute, Economic Integration.

**T**he South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), established in 1985<sup>1</sup> with great fanfare and high expectations for regional cooperation and connectivity,<sup>2</sup> had fallen into limbo since 2015 when India refused to attend the SAARC Summit<sup>3</sup> under Pakistan's Chair.<sup>4</sup> SAARC was launched with the vision to advance cooperation by replacing contradictions, dispelling lack of trust with interconnectedness, and eliminating poverty in the region through economic integration hampered by India's overarching influence.<sup>5</sup> Despite almost four decades since its inception, SAARC has failed to achieve its policy initiatives and objectives. Regional cooperation is often facilitated by an environment of peace and stability and a willingness to coordinate and accommodate each other within an organisation.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, mistrust and tensions create hindrances to cooperation, as has been the case in the context of SAARC. India, the most prominent member and the only one that shares borders with all SAARC members except Afghanistan has played a manipulative role to impose its

hegemony within SAARC. On the other hand, Pakistan has worked to strengthen SAARC as a platform of regional cooperation, trade and connectivity.

The annual SAARC Summit provides a valuable platform for South Asian leaders to exchange views on areas of regional connectivity, address variations, negotiate when required on common concerns, and formalise agreements as a symbol of collective cooperation. While all members adhere to the understanding not to discuss contentious bilateral issues, the Summit provides opportunities for side-line meetings or at the

*Revival of SAARC appears unlikely as long as relations between India and Pakistan are not normalized... Pakistan is looking to create its own paradigm for regional trade, cooperation and connectivity with the countries in its western neighbourhood.*

retreat<sup>7</sup> to create personal rapport and understanding that eventually help to resolve or at least discuss differences/ contentious issues such as the Kashmir dispute. Article III of the SAARC Charter stipulates regular meetings of the heads of member states and governments and all consensus-based decisions.<sup>8</sup> However, the SAARC leaders have repeatedly failed to host a summit. The Summit meetings have had to be invariably postponed because India refused to attend on one pretext or the other.<sup>9</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit in Islamabad under Pakistan's Chairmanship in November 2016 has yet to be held so far due to India's brinkmanship. India used the Uri and Pulwama incidents as an excuse to accuse Pakistan of terrorism and refused to participate in the SAARC Summit.<sup>10</sup> Other SAARC members, who are woefully dependent on India's goodwill, dare not voice any objections; instead, they have towed India's excuses in favour of postponement.<sup>11</sup>

The SAARC story of 38 years shows that the regional organisation has faced many setbacks, evident from frequent Summit postponements and failure of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and other collaborative mechanisms. The underlying factor, however, has been the hostile relations between Pakistan and India. Many analysts in the SAARC member states have talked about the possible or imminent demise of SAARC. Besides the icy bilateral ties between India and Pakistan, the Indian media cite factors such as political chaos,

extremism, insurgencies, economic recession, etc., contributing to lethargic regional cooperation and irregularity in the SAARC Summit.<sup>12</sup> It has been said time and again that South Asia is the least integrated region in the world.<sup>13</sup>

It should be remembered that SAARC members did make substantial efforts to enhance economic and commercial connectivity and social development within the region, as shown by SAARC Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA).<sup>14</sup> SAPTA failed to resolve trade disputes between India and other SAARC nations.<sup>15</sup> Its successor, SAFTA, launched in 2004,<sup>16</sup> was also unable to achieve success due to persistent tensions in the region. It is evident from its diminishing scope as it got reduced to only focusing on intraregional trade, neglecting the interregional aspect of economic cooperation with other regional nations.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, should one conclude that SAARC is dead, or can it still be revived? The spirit of engagement and cooperation at the heart of SAARC has gone amiss. India, the most prominent SAARC member, is no longer interested in South Asian regional cooperation. India has lured SAARC members other than Pakistan into multilateral fora, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). India has distanced itself from SAARC primarily because it wanted to isolate Pakistan within the region. Also, it does not want to be associated with smaller regional powers. With its global aspirations, India perceives itself in the league of major world powers. The US-India strategic partnership, where the US considers India a central actor in its strategy to contain China, has further boosted India's sense of being a major power.

For the present, SAARC is on a ventilator, notwithstanding Pakistan's willingness to revive it. Pakistan has yet to assume its Chairmanship since 2015. Its efforts remain limited to expressions of intent. Thus, the revival of SAARC appears unlikely as long as relations between India and Pakistan are not normalised. If their bilateral relations move towards normalisation in some distant future, it may inject hope for regional cooperation in South Asia under the SAARC mechanism. In the meantime, Pakistan can request Nepal, the current SAARC Chairman, to call for meetings on urgent and pressing issues such as climate change that require regional cooperation among SAARC member countries.

SAARC Art and Culture Festival is another event that can bring SAARC members on a platform of the least common denominator. However, there are very slim chances of India's acceptance of Nepal's proposals. If it does not, Pakistan, having tried several times before to bring SAARC together, can give it another try.

A country's national interests are the driving force underpinning its relations with other countries. When SAARC was launched, it was envisaged as a programme promoting regional integration on lines similar to ASEAN and the EU. However, even after 38 years, multitudes of meetings and institutional mechanisms, SAARC has not been allowed to contribute much to promote inter-regional trade and integration due to enduring conflicts in South Asia. Pakistan has explored other regional organisations and international forums such as ECO, D8 and SCO like other countries. In keeping with the National Security Policy's vision of geo-economic development, Pakistan seeks to create its paradigm for regional trade, cooperation and connectivity with countries in its western neighbourhood. That does not foreclose Pakistan's interest in regional cooperation in South Asia within the SAARC ambit. Pakistan would be willing to revive SAARC under its Chairmanship when that happens in the near or distant future.

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# Geopolitics and Economic Growth Comparison of South Asia

*Ayesha Afgun*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT highlights that Pakistan and India faced similar economic challenges after gaining independence in 1947. Initially, Pakistan's economy grew faster due to foreign aid and alignment with the US but slowed down after the Cold War due to a lack of reforms and a turbulent political environment. India's economy grew faster after the Cold War due to economic reforms and a more stable political environment. It further emphasises that strategic alignment, domestic institutions and economic reforms are critical factors driving economic growth. Therefore, Pakistan needs to build strong institutions and implement economic reforms.*

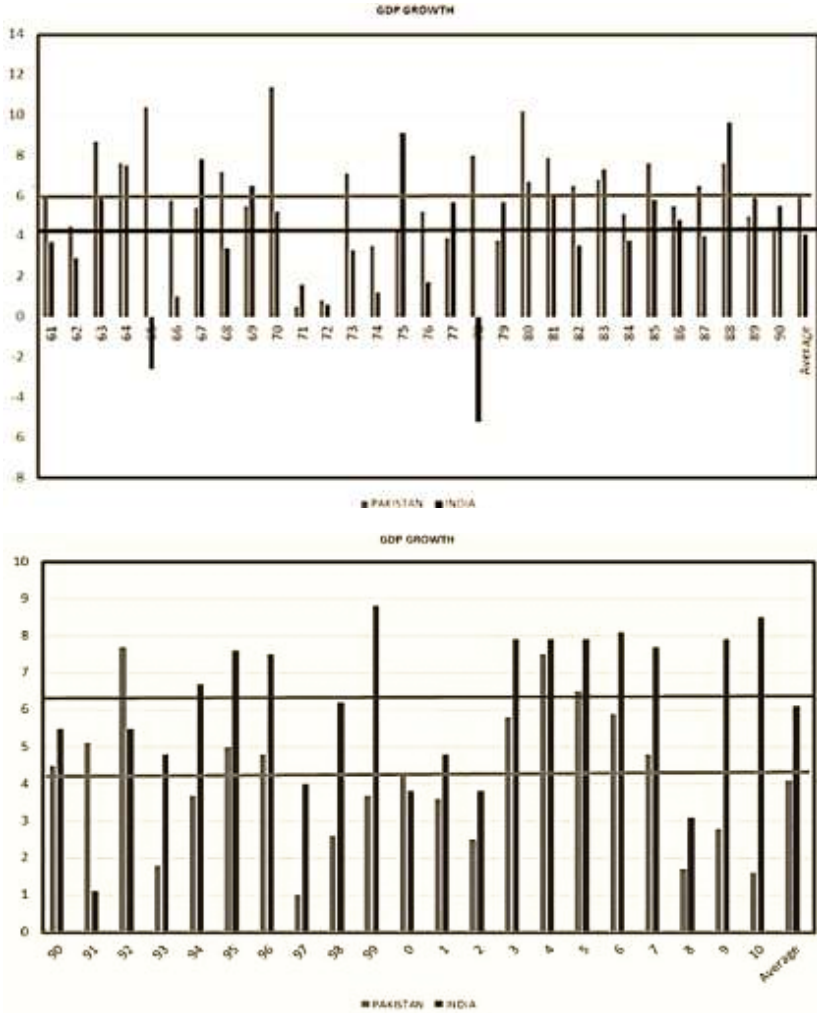
**Keywords:** Pakistan, India, Economy, Foreign Aid, Strategic Alignment.

**P**akistan and India gained independence in 1947, inherited the almost similar economic legacy of underinvestment and neglect, and ranked among the world's poorest nations. Pakistan was not given its total share of wealth and resources, therefore, had relatively more problems.<sup>1</sup> Out of 921 industrial units in undivided India, Pakistan received only 34.<sup>2</sup> Soon after independence, Pakistan was struggling with economic challenges. On January 5, 1948, LIFE magazine reported that Pakistan's economy was on the verge of collapse.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the above assessments, during the first four decades of independence, Pakistan's economy witnessed an average growth rate of 6%, while India lagged behind with 4% average growth rate.

However, with the end of the Cold War, the situation reversed. India surpassed Pakistan's economic growth rate and became one of the world's fastest-growing economies in the past three decades. Today, India is the fifth largest economy in the world. In 1970, Pakistan's GDP per capita was \$226 vs India's \$112, whereas, in 2022, Pakistan stood at \$1400



vs \$2490 of India. Foreign Reserves of India are \$554 billion vs Pakistan's \$8 billion. The history of the economic progress of Pakistan and India can be divided into two distinct periods, i.e., from 1947 to 1990 and 1991 to 2023. It is interesting to assess the impact of changing global order and strategic realignments vis-à-vis the economic growth of both Pakistan and India in this period.



Soon after independence, Pakistan joined the US camp by becoming a member of SEATO and CENTO. Despite initial economic hardships, Pakistan's economy saw an upward trajectory attributed to the flow of financial aid, especially from the US, West and Gulf countries, coupled with better governance. The period from 1958 to 1963 saw significant economic growth, which led to infrastructure building, including dams, canal systems, power stations, industrialisation and land/ agricultural reforms. Pakistan achieved an economic growth rate of almost 10% during this period.<sup>4</sup> Although two wars with India, separation of East Pakistan and nationalisation of industries negatively impacted Pakistan's economic growth during the 1970s, Pakistan started recovering from its weak economic performance from the 1980s onwards. At that time, Pakistan was the front-line state supporting Afghan Jihad with the full support of Americans.

In economic terms, Pakistan's recovery could be attributed to the denationalisation of industries in 1977 and increased remittances from the Middle East. The completion of Tarbela Dam gave a boom to the agricultural sector. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the US and the West provided direct financial assistance to Pakistan as an ally; therefore, till the late 1980s, Pakistan managed to maintain a uniform upward growth.

Things started to change with the end of the Cold War (early 1990s), resulting in a downward trend in Pakistan's economy. During the 1990s, under democratic rule, Pakistan became the most sanctioned ally of the US, and the economic situation was further aggravated post-nuclear explosions of 1998. However, geopolitics took another turn after the incident of 9/11. Pakistan was termed as a non-NATO ally by the US in its Global War on Terror (GWOT). Interestingly, Pakistan's economy showed an upward trend for a short period between 2003 and 2006, with an average growth rate of more than 6%. As soon as Pakistan's relevance to the US vis-à-vis Afghanistan diminished, Pakistan witnessed a deteriorating security situation, especially in FATA and Swat, and a rise in militancy, which restricted foreign investment, resulting in a decrease in FDI. This deterioration of the economy became more prominent once the US left Afghanistan, which continues even today.

Like Pakistan, India's economic growth can also be divided into two phases, 1947-1990 and 1990 to date. During the Cold War, India was proclaimed one of the leading countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, but realistically, India remained in the Soviet camp. In this period, the Indian government adopted an economic model whereby it implemented a protectionist trading strategy and licence regime, which constrained economic growth. During this time, India's average economic growth rate was around 3-4%. High levels of regulation and protection for the industrial sector, inefficient agriculture, and low trade ratios all contributed to a slow-performing Indian economy. Before 1990, sources of capital inflows to India mainly consisted of foreign aid from the US and Russia, commercial borrowings and remittances. India faced a serious balance of payment crisis in the 1990s and approached the IMF for a bailout.<sup>5</sup>

Interestingly, as soon as the Cold War ended, India abandoned the centralised economic policy to open up to the US and West for greater political and economic gains. Indian economic reforms included Liberalization, Privatisation and Globalization (LPG). Indian import and export diversified its outreach to almost all parts of the world. India liberalised trade, lowered tariffs, deregulated industries, abridged controls on foreign trade and investment, and privatised state-owned enterprises, thus making it convenient for local companies to grow, which led to more foreign investment. Reforms were successful because they opened new markets for Indian businesses, increased their competitiveness, and ultimately resulted in a higher rate of economic growth for India as a whole. The result of India's outward-oriented policy and integration into the global economy proved fruitful and aided the country's accelerated economic growth, which continues to date. It is important to note that India, which performed below par vis-à-vis its economic potential in the first 40 years, started performing better when it got a favourable geopolitical wind.

India enjoyed uninterrupted democracy for 75 years, whereas Pakistan witnessed a turbulent political period where military and civilian rule changed hands many times. However, Pakistan's economic growth remained encouraging during the periods (irrespective of the regime type) when it was geopolitically relevant to the US and West during the

Cold War and later. In other words, the economic growth of Pakistan was always less dependent upon indigenous reforms, measures, policies, capacities, etc., and relied primarily upon external monetary support available during periods of SEATO, CENTO, Afghan Jihad, GWOT, etc. These were the times when Pakistan was positively relevant to the US and West in the global order. India, at the same time, despite its democratic credentials, kept struggling in economic terms. The situation did not change until the early 1990s.

However, as soon as the Cold War ended and the US changed its strategic priorities, suddenly finding a new democratic ally in South Asia, the Indian economy started showing signs of recovery and openness. Indian nuclear explosions of 1998 and later entry into the Nuclear Supplier Group, etc., were not meant for Pakistan but primarily to announce India's arrival against China in the evolving global order as the net security provider on behalf of the US. Is it a coincidence that as soon as India became positively relevant to the US, its economy started showing upward growth trends? It also implies that the Indian economic trajectory, like Pakistan's or any other developing country, remains dependent mainly upon its strategic alignment or relevance to the world's leading superpower.

Notwithstanding the above, India was able to develop relatively robust domestic state institutions due to its continued democratic dispensation for 75 years. As a result, Indian economy showed a quick recovery as soon as it received a favourable geopolitical environment. Contrarily, Pakistan could not develop strong state institutions due to turbulent political dispensation. As a result, Pakistan could not fully convert the relatively favourable geopolitical environment of the Cold War into a more robust and sustainable economic model. In fact, the contemporary unfavourable geopolitical environment has really exposed domestic institutional inadequacies, resulting in weak governance, socioeconomic fragility, unbridled media, weak civil-military relations, etc.

Therefore, Pakistan must focus on building institutions if it wants to sustain itself through this challenging time of history where the leading superpower (US) has different strategic priorities in South Asia. Pakistan must recognise its immense geopolitical and economic potential while safeguarding its key national interests to wade through these tough times

without inflicting major self-harm. Learning lessons from the past, state institutions like the military, bureaucracy, judiciary, etc., apart from other important institutions, need to work in their respective spheres and in harmony to achieve a common Pakistani socioeconomic well-being. Moreover, Pakistan's politico-military leadership must continue to discover and explore geopolitical and geo-economic avenues to remain positively relevant to contemporary world powers in an era of changing global order.

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<sup>5</sup> Waqar Ahmed, “The Political Economy and Geopolitical Context of India's Economic Crisis, 1990-91.” *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, vol. 35, no. 2, 21 May 2014, pp. 179-196, 10.1111/sjtg.12061. Pakistan entered the CPEC project with China ink of default. Pakistan has not been able to implement key reforms needed for growth, such as increasing the tax base, addressing energy and infrastructure problems, and abysmal exports. The social indices, including those related to employment, health, and education, do not give a positive picture. Foreign aid has benefitted the vested interests of powerful individuals rather than being used to build the economy. Pakistan enjoyed close relations with the US and China. But, due to policy lags and poor governance Pakistan has not been able to exploit its economic ties to its full potential.

## About Insight and Author

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# Primakov Doctrine and Russian Foreign Policy

*Dr Muhammad Shabbir*

## Abstract

*This INSIGHT explores the Primakov Doctrine that has shaped Russian foreign policy for the past two decades. The doctrine emphasises the importance of a multipolar world order and calls for a trilateral alliance between Russia, China and India to resist the rise of the US as the world's sole superpower. The insight summarises the principles of the Primakov Doctrine, including multipolarity, strategic autonomy, regional integration, pragmatism and non-intervention. It also discusses criticisms and supporters of the doctrine and its impact on Russia's relationships with India and China. Finally, the author explores the imprint of the Primakov Doctrine on Russia's humanitarian policy and its potential implications for Russian politics and religion.*

**Keywords:** Russian Foreign Policy, Primakov Doctrine, Multipolarity, Strategic Autonomy, Regional Integration.

Russian foreign policy has been shaped by several factors, including its geography, history and global power dynamics. One notable approach to foreign policy that has emerged in recent decades is the Primakov Doctrine, named after former Russian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov. This doctrine formed the pillars of Russian foreign policy for about two decades. It emphasises the importance of a multipolar world order, where power is balanced among various great powers, and has significant implications for global power politics. It calls for a trilateral alliance between Russia, China and India to resist the US rise as the world's sole superpower.<sup>1</sup> For many years, the RIC (Russia-India-China) has been held up as the non-Western hub for discourse and collaboration that would usher in a new multipolar order.<sup>2</sup> It also represents a shift away from the pro-Western stance that Russia had taken in the early years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and

instead focuses on enhancing Russia's influence in its own region and beyond.

The principles of the Primakov Doctrine can be summarised as follows:

- **Multipolarity:** Advocates a multipolar world order wherein no single country dominates global politics,<sup>3</sup> implying that power is distributed among several centres of influence, and countries have equal opportunities to participate in international affairs.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Emphasises Russia's right to pursue its own interests and its need for strategic autonomy in foreign policy.<sup>4</sup> Russia should be able to develop partnerships and alliances that serve its national interests without being subservient to any particular country or bloc.
- **Regional Integration:** Stresses the importance of regional integration and cooperation, particularly in the former Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> Russia should strengthen ties with its neighbours and promote regional integration to establish a sphere of influence that reflects its strategic interests.
- **Pragmatism:** Calls for a pragmatic approach to foreign policy based on a realistic assessment of Russia's national interests.<sup>6</sup> Russia to pursue partnerships and alliances when it serves its interests, but should also be willing to act unilaterally when necessary.
- **Non-intervention:** Opposes foreign intervention in the affairs of sovereign states.<sup>7</sup> Russia should respect the sovereignty of other countries and refrain from interfering in their internal affairs. At the same time, Russia should be prepared to defend its national interests and protect its citizens abroad.

Critics of the Primakov Doctrine argue that it represents a return to the aggressive, expansionist policies of the Soviet era. They cite Russia's annexation of Crimea, its involvement in the war in Ukraine, and its support for authoritarian regimes in Syria and elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> They also argue that the emphasis on multipolarity and rejection of Western influence in international affairs has contributed to a breakdown in trust between Russia and the West. However, supporters of the Primakov Doctrine argue that it represents a necessary response to threats posed by the West, particularly the eastward expansion of NATO and the

European Union into what Russia sees as its traditional sphere of influence. In their view, the doctrine has helped to restore Russia's status as a major world power and has given it greater influence in international affairs.<sup>9</sup>

Russia wants better relations with India and China as part of its policy to pursue a multipolar world.<sup>10</sup> Russia is committed to further strengthening its special privileged partnership with India based on shared foreign policy priorities on urgent international issues and enhancing mutually beneficial bilateral ties, primarily in trade and economy.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the summit between President Putin and President Xi Jinping before the Beijing Olympics (boycotted by the US and its allies) in February 2022 was a significant pointer to

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a more robust strategic relationship between Moscow and Beijing. The 5-page Joint Statement covered a whole spectrum of relations and, in its final para, reiterated their desire to expand ties of cooperation within the RIC framework.<sup>12</sup>

The imprint of the Primakov Doctrine can be seen in the concept of Russia's humanitarian policy.<sup>13</sup> The policy calls for more profound relations between Russia and West Asia, Latin America and Africa and increased collaboration with Slavic nations, China and India. Despite its outward appearance as a soft power strategy, the policy serves as a foundation for Russian politics and religion that have been used to justify Moscow's 'Special Military Operation' in Ukraine to defend the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine. Analysts in the West view this policy as a new Russian attempt to "resurrect the Soviet Union"<sup>14</sup> and cite President Putin's actions in Crimea, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, his comments at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2022 that "the Soviet Union is a Russian historical land." This viewpoint is bolstered by the fact that it is reminiscent of the Brezhnev Doctrine of 1968, later disputed by Gorbachev, that legitimised the Soviet Union's right to militarily intervene in other socialist countries – particularly in eastern



and central Europe – if capitalist counter-revolutionaries threatened their governments.<sup>15</sup>

For South Asia, the Primakov-inspired Russian foreign policy approach has important implications. It suggests that Russia does not want to see any power, including the US or China, dominate the region. With this in mind, Russia has strengthened relations with China and consolidated defence and trade ties with India despite India's ever-closer strategic ties with the US. It has improved political, military and economic relations with Pakistan, notwithstanding Indian reservations. Pakistan-Russia relations are no longer acrimonious. Russia recognises Pakistan's rising geo-economic significance due to China's promotion of CPEC as its flagship Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), its importance for stability and economic development in Afghanistan, and the market it provides for Russia's defence industry. Thus, Russia's interest in South Asia is no longer limited to India alone. India's attempts to exercise "strategic autonomy" on the issue of Russia's military operation in Ukraine lends confidence to Russia that in case of any active contestation between the US and China, India would still show the courage to stick to this policy.

Concurrently, the Primakov Doctrine suggests that Russia may seek to expand its influence in broader Asia, particularly in areas where it perceives a power vacuum or finds similar interests with regional powers. For instance, Russia's relations with Iran and North Korea and its interest in playing a larger role in Afghanistan's reconstruction and humanitarian assistance.

Overall, the Primakov Doctrine has significantly impacted Russia's foreign policy and its relationship with other major powers over the past two decades. In the contemporary international geopolitical environment, the RIC concept has come under direct conflict with the US National Security Strategy that prioritises India's pivotal role in its objective to contain China. As Russia continues to navigate a complex and shifting global landscape, it is likely that the principles of the Primakov Doctrine will continue to play a significant role in guiding and shaping its foreign policy.

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## About Insight and Author

*This INSIGHT was first published on the ISSRA website in March 2023 and in South Asia Times in May 2023. It can be accessed at <https://www.ndu.edu.pk/issra/pub/insight/PrimakovDoctrine/PRIMAKOV-DOCTRINE.pdf>. The writer is a Research Fellow at NDU and can be reached at [mshabbirawan@gmail.com](mailto:mshabbirawan@gmail.com).*





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