

16th National Media Workshop

Information - Media - Perception - Power



13-17 July, 2026

POST WORKSHOP REPORT



WORKSHOP SPONSOR

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16th National Media Workshop (NMW)

Institute for Strategic Studies Research & Analysis (ISSRA), National Defence University (NDU) organized 16th National Media Workshop under the overarching theme “Information - Media - Perception - Power” from 13 to 17 July 2026. The Workshop was aimed to enhance awareness of participants about media’s role in contemporary era.

The workshop was attended by 76 participants including personnel from Electronic , Print , Digital / Web Media, Foreign Correspondents, Academia, Government officials and Civil Society. The purpose of the workshop was to exchange ideas and develop understanding of the dynamics of contemporary media and its ability to influence the public opinion.





NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY
Established by the Government of Pakistan
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Islamabad - Pakistan
General Prince Mohammad Ali Jinnah
President of the University of Defence Studies
1974 - 1978





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Welcome Remarks by DG ISSRA





DAY 1

13 July, 2026
Session I

Transforming Global Strategic Landscape



SPEAKERS



Distinguished Visiting Fellow
Mr Ahmer Bilal Soofi



Dr Huma Baqai



Ms Kashmala Kakakhel



Mr Haroon Sharif



MODERATOR
Dr Maria Malik

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The year 2026 marks the most volatile geopolitical period since the Cold War; militarization, an emerging arms race, weakening international law, and rising defence spending as power increasingly replaces rules and some analysts now view geopolitical instability as a more immediate threat than climate change.
- The international system is shifting from a rules-based to an interest-based order, with diplomacy giving way to strategic deference, multilateralism to transactional engagement, cooperation to competition, and soft power to hard power.
- The world is moving toward multiplexity rather than simple multipolarity, as states, non-state actors, technology firms, and international institutions simultaneously shape global affairs and no single power dominates.
- Growing military convergence between China and Russia has intensified US strategic anxieties, with China leading economically and technologically while Russia leverages its energy resources and an assertive foreign policy.
- In the absence of a dominant power, strategic balancing by middle powers has become more important, and Pakistan is emerging as a significant actor able to engage competing blocs without full dependence on any one of them.
- Diplomatic agreements often follow periods of conflict, as states seek stronger bargaining positions before negotiating.
- Climate geopolitics has evolved through three phases; the Era of Blame, the Era of Economics, and the current Era of Control with falling green-technology costs and China's leadership in green manufacturing driving the second phase, and the renewed US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement reflecting fears of losing competitiveness.
- Influence is shifting from petro-states, dependent on fossil fuels, to electro-states, whose power rests on critical minerals, refining, and clean-energy technologies, so countries should pursue green industrialization to avoid "green colonialism."
- Geopolitics strongly shapes economic growth without being the sole factor, leaving trade, investment, and energy markets particularly vulnerable to tensions, shifting alliances, and conflict, while the global financial order undergoes structural change.
- Pakistan's central challenge is to convert its strategic location into sustainable economic gains, with priorities including higher GDP growth, lower debt and energy costs, an improved balance of payments, and jobs for the roughly four million people entering the labour market each year.
- Pakistan should strengthen market intelligence to identify export and investment opportunities and pursue energy-sector reforms, including reconsideration of the Pakistan–Iran gas pipeline, to improve long-term energy security.
- Structural reforms should raise export competitiveness and reduce reliance on external bailouts, complemented by a multilateral climate and development financing mechanism with partner countries.
- Ultimately, Pakistan should pair infrastructure development with comprehensive policy, institutional, and economic reforms to achieve long-term, inclusive growth.

DAY 1

13 July, 2026
Session II

South Asia's Regional Dialogue and Maritime Security



SPEAKERS



Distinguished Visiting Fellow
Amb Abdul Basit



Mr Iftikhar Firdous



Dr Maria Sultan



Mr Ejaz Haider



MODERATOR
Dr Maria Malik

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pakistan's location offers major opportunities through Gwadar and Karachi; safeguarding them requires stronger maritime domain awareness, naval modernization, coastal security, and blue-economy development, with future competition centring on undersea warfare, submarines, cyber resilience, and cable protection.
- Maritime security now extends well beyond naval defence to trade routes, undersea infrastructure, submarine communication cables, and economic connectivity.
- Strategic stability should be understood as an identifiable equilibrium supported by structural mechanisms, not merely the absence of war; it is best judged by how states respond to crises, technological change, and competition.
- Pakistan's western border remains a persistent security frontier shaped by difficult geography, cross-border militancy, and the cumulative effects of the Soviet-Afghan War, the Global War on Terror, and the Taliban's return to power.
- Iran's asymmetric strategy of drones, naval mines, swarm tactics, and coastal missiles has reshaped the environment and underscored the role of cost-effective warfare, while sanctions and the US dollar's role in energy trade drive the wider contest around Iran.
- Terrorist violence intensified sharply in 2026, especially in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with militant groups showing greater coordination and increasingly targeting critical infrastructure to disrupt economic development; making the year one of Pakistan's most challenging security periods in decades; countering it requires integrated border management, intelligence coordination, sustained counterterrorism, and stronger infrastructure protection.
- In South Asia, stability is increasingly undermined by first-strike incentives, battlefield nuclear weapons, and limited-war doctrines, while recurrent India-Pakistan crises reveal weak crisis stability; nuclear deterrence is fundamentally psychological, and overconfidence in limited conventional war under a nuclear umbrella heightened risks during the May 2025 crisis.
- Arms-race stability is deteriorating due to modernization, AI-enabled systems, hypersonic weapons, doctrinal incompatibilities, and weak confidence-building, leaving South Asia structurally unstable and durable peace dependent on addressing the underlying structural drivers rather than crisis management alone.
- Jammu and Kashmir should remain the central issue in any future dialogue and be addressed upfront rather than folded into a broad composite process, and on the Indus Waters Treaty, Pakistan should not rely on legal avenues alone but prepare for all possible options.
- Pakistan's Afghanistan policy should be pragmatic and consistent prioritising regional stability and measured engagement over excessive public rhetoric; since renewed instability would fall hardest on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.
- On Iran, Pakistan should uphold international maritime law and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, guiding foreign policy overall by strategic patience, calibrated diplomacy, consistent messaging, and a clear focus on long-term national interests.

DAY 2

14 July, 2026
Session I

Strategic Communication & Narrative Shaping in the Post Truth Era



SPEAKERS



Distinguished Visiting Fellow
Mr Mosharraf Zaidi



Mr Baker Atyani



Ms Sherry Wong



Dr Roxolana Zigon



Mr Habibullah Khan



MODERATOR
Ms Mahrukh Hameed

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Credible journalism rests on verification, cross-checking, and reliable primary sources; official claims and other outlets' reports must be independently verified, with accuracy always prioritised over speed.
- The post-truth concept emerged in the United States, yet many countries still adopt Western narratives instead of building independent perspectives as powerful states shape perception through ideas and narratives, independent narrative-building has become a matter of national security.
- Disinformation is now a major instrument of modern warfare, targeting sovereignty and public opinion without direct confrontation from Chanakya's statecraft to modern intelligence, rumour, espionage, and psychological manipulation have long been used to weaken societies from within.
- Terrorism, proxy warfare, and digital campaigns are interconnected, combining physical violence with information tactics, while AI and coordinated networks rapidly amplify chosen narratives, suppress dissent, and can damage economies and reputations.
- Modern disinformation ecosystems combine fake accounts, fabricated outlets, coordinated campaigns, and organised networks as social media rewards attention over accuracy, it fuels sensationalism, misinformation, and polarising echo chambers.
- Headlines and selected background are among the strongest narrative tools, so fair reporting demands accurate framing, balanced context, and careful language, supported by greater investment in journalist training and independent media.
- In the post-truth era, public trust and narrative credibility often outweigh factual accuracy, making consistent communication and active counter-disinformation essential for institutional legitimacy.
- Information warfare is a daily reality targeting beliefs and perceptions; resilience is a whole-of-nation responsibility requiring informed citizens, responsible communication, and collective preparedness rather than military institutions alone.
- Pakistan's large youth population and growing online audience create strong potential for its digital-content industry, but creators need sustainable monetisation tools such as marketplaces, memberships, courses, and local payment solutions.
- Effective national communication is audience-specific: different messages, formats, and channels from WhatsApp, radio, and flyers to LinkedIn and regional-language content reach different groups, with data visualisation and AI-assisted translation widening accessibility.
- Countering misinformation depends on early detection, rapid response, and strong fact-checking aided by AI, community reporting, and trained teams with public participation combating falsehoods while preserving freedom of expression and neutral, accurately attributed language.
- Recent global conflicts exposed the dominance of Western media narratives, underscoring the need for the Global South to cooperate, build independent strategic narratives, and make greater use of technology, research, and AI.

DAY 2

14 July, 2026
Session II

Media Landscape of Pakistan



SPEAKERS



Distinguished Visiting Fellow
Mr Akhtar Waqar Azeem



Ms Zebunnisa Burki



Mr Ashfaq Ahmed Khalil



Mr Aijaz ul Haq



Syed Talat Hussain



MODERATOR
Ms Mahrukh Hameed

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The real challenge is no longer traditional media versus digital media, but credible journalism versus unverified content. The survival of journalism depends on preserving accuracy, ethics and public trust across all platforms.
- Credibility remains the strongest advantage of professional journalism. Editorial oversight, fact-checking and responsible reporting continue to distinguish journalism from the growing volume of misinformation online.
- The media landscape is evolving rapidly, requiring organizations to adapt to changing audience behaviour. Digital platforms have transformed how people consume news, making innovation and adaptability essential for long-term relevance.
- Financial sustainability has emerged as one of the biggest challenges facing Pakistan's media industry. Declining revenues, rising operational costs and dependence on advertising continue to affect the viability of news organizations.
- Artificial Intelligence is reshaping journalism in both positive and challenging ways. While it can improve efficiency and content production, it also increases the risks of deepfakes, misinformation and manipulation, making ethical use of AI essential.
- Public service broadcasting continues to play an important role in ensuring access to reliable information, particularly in underserved and remote communities.
- The future of journalism will depend on continuous learning and digital skills. Journalists must embrace new technologies, understand platform-specific audiences and remain committed to professional standards.
- Strong and meaningful content remains the foundation of successful media. Regardless of the platform, audiences continue to value stories that are informative, relevant and authentic over content designed solely to attract attention.
- The growing influence of citizen journalism and social media calls for stronger media literacy and greater accountability. Empowering audiences to distinguish verified information from misinformation is becoming increasingly important.
- Building public trust requires transparency, ethical reporting and responsible use of technology. These principles remain essential for strengthening the role of media in a rapidly changing information environment.
- Narrative building is becoming increasingly important in the digital age. Pakistan's media institutions must strengthen their capacity to communicate the country's perspectives effectively to both domestic and international audiences.
- The discussion underscored that journalism is ultimately a public service. While technology, platforms and business models will continue to evolve, the responsibility to inform society accurately, fairly and responsibly must remain unchanged.

DAY 2

14 July, 2026
Session III

Talk by Minister for Finance and Revenue



SPEAKER



Muhammad Aurangzeb



MODERATOR
Ms Ayesha Sohail

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pakistan recorded the highest-ever remittance inflows in 2025, reaching US\$41.5 billion. This reflects strong external financial support and growing confidence in the country's economy.
- Pakistan is pursuing an export-led growth strategy, with considerable potential in value-added sectors. Although the Pakistan-Afghanistan border closure has disrupted traditional food exports, national security must remain the foremost priority.
- Pakistan's foreign exchange position has improved considerably. Import cover has increased from just two weeks to approximately three months, meeting the global benchmark through coordinated policy efforts.
- Macroeconomic stability should not be viewed as a weak measure of economic progress. It provides the essential foundation for resilient, sustainable, and long-term economic growth.
- The government is broadening the tax base through structural reforms. The Fixed Tax Regime introduced in the FY (2026-27) budget aims to bring retailers into the formal tax system, improve compliance, and strengthen revenue collection.
- Inflation must be assessed within the broader global context. External shocks, particularly the Middle East crisis and energy price volatility, have intensified inflationary pressures, prompting coordinated diplomatic, fiscal, political, and economic responses from the government.
- The regulation of virtual assets has become an important government priority. A formal regulatory framework can reduce financial risks, prevent challenges similar to Pakistan's FATF grey-list experience, and unlock the long-term economic potential of digital assets.
- Export-led growth requires a strong and competitive private-sector ecosystem. Industries must continuously upskill their workforce, expand their capacity, and adapt to emerging technologies, particularly the growing role of artificial intelligence.
- The government is strengthening enforcement and compliance through technology-driven monitoring. Uniform application of regulations across businesses of all sizes has already produced results, including an additional Rs 60 billion in compliance revenue from the sugar sector alone.
- Balochistan's copper belt represents one of the world's most important supply-side opportunities in the global transition to electric vehicles. However, unlocking its full economic potential requires lasting peace and stability in the province.

DAY 3

15 July, 2026
Session I

Technology & Media: Latest Trends



SPEAKERS



Distinguished Visiting Fellow
Dr Sohail Munir



Mr Faizan Siddiqi



Mr Fasi Zaka



Ms Mahreen Aziz Khan



Mr Asad Baig



MODERATOR
Ms Naila Shuja

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Generative AI lacks human judgement, responsibility, and context; it's convincing but sometimes flawed and selectively framed outputs make it a tool, not an independent source of truth, so verification must test framing and implied conclusions, not just isolated facts.
- AI can automate routine tasks such as transcription, translation, summarisation, and data processing, but journalists remain essential for investigation, interpretation, context, and responsible storytelling, and must retain control over selection, framing, verification, ethics, and publication.
- AI outputs depend heavily on prompts, and perspectives with more searchable content especially in English tend to dominate, so Pakistan needs a larger body of credible, structured, multilingual content, alongside local datasets and language technologies supported by diverse information, credible institutions, and transparent governance.
- Uploading unpublished or sensitive material to commercial AI platforms poses editorial and national-security risks, so newsrooms need clear policies on approved tools, permitted data, storage, disclosure, verification, synthetic media, copyright, privacy, and bias.
- AI is both a publishing revolution and a propaganda machine: it lowers costs but also enables deepfakes, synthetic voices, automated accounts, and large-scale disinformation now within reach of individuals and small groups, not only states.
- Recent conflicts, including the 2025 Pakistan-India confrontation, show that memes, humour, music, animation, and short videos can carry strategic messages more effectively than official statements, embedding preferred interpretations through entertainment, while overly polished national narratives read as inauthentic to younger audiences.
- Because platforms are engineered for engagement, emotional and divisive content gains greater visibility than careful reporting, so they are not neutral channels.
- Professional media still funds reporting and verification, but platforms and influencers capture the audiences and advertising revenue, straining journalism's economic base as the line between journalists, influencers, and creators erodes and popularity outweighs expertise.
- Newsrooms and public broadcasters must adapt to platform-specific formats and involve younger creators while preserving editorial oversight, specialist knowledge, legal accountability, transparent sourcing, and verification.
- Without major investment in education and access, AI may deepen inequalities, particularly for women and rural communities, so technology policy should expand their access to devices, connectivity, skills, education, and decision-making roles.
- High-impact AI decisions in areas such as employment, credit, welfare, and policing must remain reviewable, with rights to explanation, human review, appeal, and redress, and genuine digital transformation means redesigning institutions and workflows around citizens, not merely buying technology.

DAY 3

15 July, 2026
Session II

Public Diplomacy: Role of Art, Culture & Heritage



SPEAKERS



Distinguished Visiting Fellow
Jugnu Mohsin



Mr Kamran Lashari



Ms Ilona Yusuf



Syed Jawaid Iqbal



Mr Zulfiqar Jabbar Khan (Xulfi)



MODERATOR
Ms Naila Shuja

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pakistan has strong cultural soft-power potential in music, literature, performances, heritage, crafts, and diverse regional traditions, which can present the country beyond the narrow international focus on security and conflict and build a more balanced global image based on its creativity, diversity, shared humanity, and rich traditions.
- Public diplomacy extends beyond embassies and official statements; music, literature, cinema, theatre, and visual arts can communicate Pakistan's identity more meaningfully, building emotional connection, promoting mutual understanding, and challenging stereotypes by letting audiences experience Pakistan through its people and stories.
- The international success of artists along with initiatives like Coke Studio, has expanded Pakistan's cultural influence and shown that cultural products can challenge stereotypes even without extensive institutional support.
- These individual successes must now be developed into a sustained system for cultural diplomacy, backed by greater investment in artists, writers, musicians, translators, producers, cultural institutions, digital platforms, and international promotion.
- Systematic translation of Urdu and regional literature into English and other international languages can introduce Pakistan's classical and contemporary writers to wider global audiences.
- Quality translation must preserve cultural references, symbolism, historical context, and literary meaning, since word-for-word translation cannot convey the full depth of Pakistan's literary traditions.
- Cultural diplomacy must remain authentic and should not become rigid state propaganda; because excessive control weakens credibility, institutions should fund and facilitate cultural work while protecting artistic independence and freedom of expression.
- Pakistan's cultural history reflects centuries of exchange in ideas, literature, music, and traditions through writers, scholars, traders, travellers, artists, and translators moving across regional boundaries.
- This legacy can be continued through cultural festivals, artist exchanges, literary partnerships, exhibitions, and joint creative projects that strengthen regional connectivity and international understanding.
- Complex regulations and NOC procedures discourage concerts, festivals, exhibitions, and performances; a supportive framework should provide clear procedures, timely approvals, and better coordination while addressing legitimate administrative and security requirements.
- Traditional music, poetry, instruments, languages, crafts, and cultural practices can be integrated into contemporary forms to stay relevant to younger and international audiences, yet popularity should never replace artistic excellence, and master artists and skilled practitioners must be recognised and supported.
- Corporate sponsorship has supported Pakistani music, but cultural development cannot depend on commercial interests alone, so government, academia, cultural institutions, philanthropists, and the private sector should jointly sustain cultural production.

DAY 4

16 July, 2026
Session I

Information Integrity: From Control to Trust



SPEAKERS



Distinguished Visiting Fellow
Mr Javed Jabbar



Ms Ambreen Jan



Mr Muhammad Salman Zafar



Syed Khurram Ali



Dr Muhammad Mukaram Khan



MODERATOR
Dr Maria Malik

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Social media and cyberspace have become critical components of Pakistan's national infrastructure, serving more than 160 million internet users and over 200 million mobile subscribers.
- Short-form video platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram Reels increasingly shape communication, information consumption, and public discourse.
- Pakistan's security challenges now extend into the cognitive domain, where narrative warfare, extremist propaganda, online incitement, and manipulation of public opinion threaten social and political stability.
- The growing influence of digital platforms has made the information environment an important arena of national security, requiring stronger institutional preparedness and public awareness.
- PECA remains Pakistan's principal legal framework for regulating online activity, with Section 37 authorising the removal or blocking of unlawful content.
- The 2025 amendments established a new regulatory authority responsible for online safety, platform accountability, digital rights, child protection, and international cooperation.
- Social media regulation is officially intended to create a safer, more responsible digital environment while protecting legitimate expression and avoiding unnecessary censorship.
- Complaints are assessed under both Pakistani law and platform community standards, with platforms generally expected to respond within 48 hours, or within 12 hours in emergency cases.
- Financial fraud remains the most common form of cybercrime including WhatsApp and bank-account hacking, scam call centres, and fraudulent online investment schemes alongside defamation, online harassment, identity misuse, and child sexual exploitation material.
- The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency faces serious staffing constraints: of its 480 officials, only 132 investigators handle complaints nationwide, and heavy caseloads in Karachi and Islamabad make expanding staff and cybercrime centres essential.
- AI is helping authorities filter large volumes of complaints, identify actionable information, and prioritise cases requiring investigation.
- A new digitally integrated system will enable rapid NADRA-based identity verification, case tracking, and complete digitisation from complaint registration to investigation and prosecution.
- Enforcement is complicated by the borderless nature of cyberspace, as offenders often operate from abroad and extremist groups repeatedly recreate accounts after earlier profiles are blocked.
- Inconsistent platform cooperation, particularly in sharing user data with Pakistani authorities, continues to obstruct investigations, making stronger engagement with technology companies and faster international legal cooperation essential.
- Pakistan's central challenge is to strengthen online security without undermining freedom of expression, privacy, and other legitimate digital rights.

DAY 4

16 July, 2026
Session II

Talk by Minister of Info & Broadcasting



SPEAKERS



Mr Attaullah Tarar



MODERATOR
Ms Faiza Qureshi

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The evolution from print to electronic media, and subsequently to AI and social media, created new regulatory challenges; while a regulatory ecosystem already existed for print media, the AI and social-media transformation occurred too quickly to adapt and was not a natural evolution for which systems were prepared.
- AI has become an active stakeholder in the media ecosystem, but the absence of a clear social-media regulatory framework, combined with the lack of a whole-of-government approach, remains a major impediment to effective regulation.
- PECA was introduced as a regulatory framework and remains vital for the safe use of digital platforms, with work now underway to clearly define the regulatory domain.
- Misinformation and disinformation remain the biggest challenges, while the shift toward reels and visual content has contributed to a decline in research, highlighting the need to return to the basics of communication.
- The media and digital environment is a cross-cutting domain operating across shared platforms and therefore requires a whole-of-government approach, with gaming representing a new frontier in this evolving landscape.
- In an increasingly narrative-driven environment, careful assessment is required on whether a statement should be issued and on the extent of any response, making a calibrated and measured approach important.
- Effective regulation should balance public safety, freedom of expression, platform accountability, and responsible digital participation.
- Regulatory frameworks must be updated regularly to keep pace with new technologies, changing platforms, and emerging digital threats. Digital and media literacy should be strengthened so that citizens can identify unreliable information and use online platforms responsibly.
- Journalists, regulators, public officials, and digital content creators require regular training on AI, platform governance, and information integrity.

VISIT - MOFA



Breakout Sessions

PANEL - 1

HAS PAKISTAN'S COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY EVOLVED ENOUGH TO ADDRESS FUTURE THREATS?



Mr Muhammad
Daniyal Pervaiz
(Coordinator)



Ms Hareem Jadoon
(Co-Coordinator)



Mr Ahmar Khalil



Mr Tayyab Baloch



Mr Saifullah



Ms Tasmia Shafiq



Hon Surg Cdr
Farhan Essa
Abdullah



Ms Fatima Faraz



Mr Muhammad
Kaqbad Alam



Ms Hira Khan



Mr Zaka U Rehman



Dr Muhammad
Haseeb Sarwar



Ms Sidra Mahmood
Sadozai



Mr Shah Nawaz
Khan



Ms Sana Mirza



Mr Asghar Ali

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- National Internal Security Policy (NISP) and National Action Plan (NAP) shifted Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy from a predominantly military response to a coordinated approach involving civilian institutions, law enforcement, intelligence agencies, and the justice system.
- NISP focused on prevention, madrassa reform, de-radicalization, policing, and institutional capacity, while NAP introduced stronger measures against militant networks, facilitators, and terror financing after the APS attack.
- Pakistan has gradually moved from large military campaigns to intelligence based operations using surveillance, intelligence fusion, and precision targeting against specific threats.
- Pakistan has strengthened the Afghan border through nearly 98% fencing, border forts, thermal cameras, surveillance systems, and the One Document Regime for regulated cross border movement.
- Pakistan's future threat environment extends beyond conventional terrorism to bioterrorism, cyberattacks, information warfare, critical infrastructure sabotage, and attacks on water, agriculture, and livestock systems.
- Radicalization increasingly occurs through social media, encrypted platforms, algorithms, and AI generated propaganda, allowing extremist organizations to recruit, influence, and coordinate beyond traditional networks.
- The TTP and BLA use professional videos, drone footage, cultural narratives, disinformation, and gender based propaganda to recruit youth, shape perceptions, and undermine public confidence in the state.
- Provincial CTDs have limited cyber forensic capacity and often depend on centralized laboratories, causing delays in collecting, analysing, and presenting digital evidence.
- Low conviction rates result from weak investigations, inadequate forensic evidence, reliance on eyewitnesses, witness intimidation, and insufficient protection for prosecutors and judges.
- Pakistan must move from reactive operations to preventive counterterrorism by strengthening intelligence led policing, interagency coordination, provincial forensic laboratories, and the capacity of CTDs, police, prosecutors, and courts.
- Digital literacy, online counter extremism, de-radicalization, technology company cooperation, and responses to socioeconomic and political grievances must become central components of national strategy.
- Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy has become more targeted, technology enabled, and multidimensional, but operational gains will remain temporary without stronger civilian institutions and preventive measures.
- Success must be measured not only by disrupted attacks, but by effective investigation, prosecution, conviction, accountability, and sustained deterrence across the entire criminal justice process.

PANEL - 2

HOW CAN PAKISTAN NAVIGATE REGIONAL INSTABILITY WHILE PROTECTING ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS?



Ms Misbah Riaz
Lagharee
(Coordinator)



Mr Mubariz Ahmed
Siddiqui
(Co-Coordinator)



Ms Aisha Naz



Mr Karni Singh
Sodha



Mr Aqeel Tareen



Ms Afnan Shah



Engr Khawaja
Ahsan Shoukat



Mr Muhammad
Shayan Abbasi



Ms Bushra Salam



Mr Imran Mukhtar



Mr Faiz Hanif



Ms Sadaf Hameed



Mr Mustafa Imran
Khan



Mr Noor Ullah

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pakistan's ability to navigate regional instability depends on converting its geography from a security liability into an economic asset. Economic security, as prioritised in the National Security Policy 2022 to 2026, should remain the organising principle of national policy.
- Security and economic development are mutually reinforcing. A secure environment enables trade, investment, and regional connectivity, while a stronger economy provides the resources required to protect traditional and human security.
- Pakistan remains economically constrained because its land, air, and maritime trade routes are either blocked or inefficient. Suspended Afghan trade, sanctions on Iran, halted formal trade with India, and limited access to China restrict exports, weaken domestic sectors, increase costs, and deepen reliance on external financing.
- South Asia's intra-regional trade remains below 5%, compared with about one quarter in ASEAN and over 60% in the European Union. This reflects the region's failure to benefit from geographical proximity and shared markets.
- Pakistan's response to the 2026 closure of the Strait of Hormuz demonstrated the economic value of connectivity. Six transit routes to Iran were opened, while the Gwadar corridor reduced transport time and costs, providing practical proof that geography can generate revenue.
- The transit arrangement with Iran should become a permanent commercial corridor supported by bonded carriers, transit insurance, banking and settlement mechanisms, and rapid customs clearance. A successful corridor requires legal and financial systems as much as physical infrastructure.
- Pakistan should pursue distinct trade opportunities with each neighbour while expanding soft power exports, including media content, information technology, cybersecurity services, tourism, education, and cultural products.
- Pakistan should make greater economic use of its 1,058 kilometre coastline. Value added fisheries, maritime trade, and coordinated market access efforts through the SIFC, trade councils, and business forums could significantly expand exports and investment.
- Regional economic engagement should begin with nearby and commercially accessible markets. The Middle East offers existing relationships, remittance networks, and investment capital, while Gulf partnerships can provide an entry point into wider African markets.
- Strategic diplomacy should be used to restore trade corridors, strengthen regional partnerships, and support a trade focused foreign policy. Bilateral relationships should increasingly be assessed through measurable outcomes in trade, investment, connectivity, and market access.
- Strategic autonomy requires Pakistan to maintain productive relations with competing global powers without becoming dependent on any single bloc. Its diplomatic role between Washington and Tehran in 2026 demonstrated how diversified relationships can increase national influence and policy flexibility.
- Investor confidence requires institutional consistency, enforceable contracts, credible dispute resolution, and policies that survive political transitions. Investors can assess the cost of an unfavourable policy, but they cannot reliably assess constantly changing rules.

PANEL - 3

WHAT STRUCTURAL REFORMS CAN PUT PAKISTAN ON A SUSTAINABLE PATH TO ECONOMIC GROWTH?



Mr Muneeb UI Haq
(Coordinator)



Ms Namrah Tariq
(Co-Coordinator)



Prof Dr Muhammad
Asif Shamim



Ms Javeria Malik



Mr Muhammad
Tanveer



Mr Muhammad
Rizwan Buttar



Ms Uzma Adnan



Mr Salar Khan



Ms Bushra Shoukat



Mr Karim Jindani



Mr Junaid UI Mulk



Ms Sania Kamran



Malik Abdul Rauf
Awan



Mr Waleed Ahsan
Sarwar

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pakistan must move beyond short lived growth cycles driven by external borrowing, emergency deposits, import restrictions, and temporary protection. Sustainable growth requires a productive economy that creates jobs, expands exports, attracts quality investment, and withstands external shocks.
- The reform agenda should focus on mutually reinforcing priorities, including human capital, digital infrastructure, industrial development, agricultural modernization, institutional stability, and productive investment. These reforms must be carefully sequenced so that early progress creates public confidence and fiscal space for deeper changes.
- Pakistan's human capital deficit is a major constraint on productivity. Universities and vocational institutions must shift from theoretical qualifications toward employer driven skills, apprenticeships, recognized certifications, and demonstrable professional capability.
- AI, data literacy, digital tools, quality standards, and emerging technologies should be integrated into education, vocational training, and civil service development. Public spending should increasingly be linked to outcomes such as employability, school retention, child nutrition, and workforce participation.
- Women's economic participation must be treated as a central growth reform. Safe transport, workplace childcare, flexible employment, digital skills, and access to finance can bring more women into the workforce and expand national productivity.
- Digitalization should be developed as national economic infrastructure rather than treated as a limited information technology initiative. Integrated digital identity, signatures, and public service platforms can reduce the cost of registration, taxation, licensing, and regulatory compliance.
- SMEs require greater access to finance through alternative credit scoring, digital invoice financing, supply chain finance, and credit guarantees. Shared testing, technology, certification, and compliance facilities can also help smaller firms meet domestic and international standards.
- Pakistan must shift from exporting raw materials and low value products toward processing, manufacturing, design, branding, and intellectual property. Industrial support should remain time bound, transparent, and conditional on productivity, quality improvement, and export performance.
- Textiles, engineering, automotive parts, sportswear, home textiles, and technical products offer significant opportunities for value addition. Specialized export clusters should combine reliable energy, logistics, skilled labour, laboratories, certification, and efficient customs services.
- Trade agreements and preferential market access will produce limited benefits unless Pakistani firms can meet international standards, rules of origin, quality requirements, and buyer expectations. Export policy must therefore connect market access with firm level capability.
- Agricultural reform must cover the complete value chain, including water management, quality seeds, mechanization, extension services, storage, cold chains, finance, processing, traceability, and food safety certification. Higher productivity and lower post-harvest losses can improve food security, farmer incomes, and export earnings.

PANEL - 4

IN THE DIGITAL AGE, WHO SHAPES PAKISTAN'S NARRATIVE -
AND HOW CAN CREDIBLE VOICES LEAD?



Ms Mahlia Sukhera
Lone
(Coordinator)



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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pakistan's information environment has been fundamentally transformed by social media, artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and decentralized communication networks. Narratives are now shaped not only by the state and traditional media, but also by citizens, digital creators, civil society, academia, the diaspora, online communities, and platform algorithms.
- In this highly competitive environment, influence depends less on the volume of content and more on credibility, speed, relevance, and public trust. Messages that lack evidence or institutional credibility are unlikely to succeed, regardless of how widely they are distributed.
- Pakistan must move beyond one way communication and crisis driven messaging toward continuous and meaningful public engagement. Citizens should be treated as active participants in national conversations rather than passive recipients of official information.
- Effective narrative building requires permanent digital communication infrastructure. This should connect government institutions, media organizations, universities, civil society, professional associations, digital creators, fact checking initiatives, and overseas Pakistani communities.
- Trusted individuals and independent voices play a vital role in communicating national perspectives. Their influence is strongest when they possess public credibility, subject knowledge, community connections, and the freedom to communicate authentically.
- Transparency should be treated as a strategic communication asset rather than an institutional risk. Timely, accurate, and evidence based information strengthens public confidence, reduces speculation, and limits the space available for misinformation.
- Every public institution should maintain verified digital accounts, appoint trained communication leads, and establish clear procedures for digital engagement. Institutional communication should remain coordinated, responsive, accessible, and consistent across platforms.
- Artificial intelligence is reshaping how information is produced, distributed, targeted, and manipulated. Pakistan must develop AI assisted monitoring, early warning systems, misinformation detection, and institutional capacity to respond to rapidly changing digital threats.
- Technological tools alone cannot secure the information environment. Investment in media literacy, digital citizenship, critical thinking, and responsible online behaviour is necessary to help citizens identify manipulation and assess information more carefully.
- Pakistan's provinces, languages, religions, cultures, youth, women, creative industries, sports, tourism, and constitutional values should form a central part of national storytelling. This diversity is not a communication challenge, but an important source of national strength and soft power.
- Inclusive narratives can strengthen social cohesion by ensuring that different communities see themselves represented in the national story. They can also improve Pakistan's international image by presenting the country through its creativity, pluralism, resilience, and human potential.
- Pakistan requires a coordinated National Digital Communication Strategy that defines institutional responsibilities, communication standards, crisis procedures, partnership mechanisms, and safeguards for credible public engagement.

PANEL - 5

HOW CAN PAKISTAN BETTER PROJECT ITS SOFT POWER TO STRENGTHEN ITS GLOBAL IMAGE?



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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pakistan possesses substantial soft power assets in its civilizational heritage, cultural diversity, tourism, sports, universities, creative industries, diaspora, and digital community. The central challenge is converting these scattered strengths into sustained international influence.
- Soft power should be treated as a long-term national capability rather than a series of temporary publicity campaigns. Its purpose should be to build trust, strengthen international relationships, attract tourism and investment, expand academic cooperation, and improve Pakistan's global standing.
- Pakistan's current approach remains fragmented across ministries, provincial governments, diplomatic missions, universities, tourism authorities, sports bodies, and cultural institutions. A national coordination mechanism is needed to align priorities, reduce duplication, and ensure institutional responsibility.
- Pakistan often responds to negative international narratives instead of consistently shaping positive perceptions. A proactive approach should communicate the country's achievements, diversity, creativity, and contribution to regional and global development.
- A Pakistan Soft Power Strategy 2035 should provide the overall national framework. It should be implemented through two five-year phases, supported by annual reviews, adequate funding, measurable indicators, and a comprehensive evaluation in 2030.
- Culture and creative industries should form a central pillar of this strategy. Greater support for music, film, television, literature, fashion, cuisine, crafts, gaming, and digital content can turn individual successes into sustainable cultural influence.
- Government support should focus on improving production quality, translation, international distribution, intellectual property protection, and market access. Creative industries should retain sufficient independence to ensure that cultural content remains authentic and credible.
- Pakistan should launch an International Visitor and Future Leaders Programme for foreign students, journalists, researchers, academics, artists, and digital creators. Sustained alumni engagement can develop long-term networks of individuals with direct knowledge and experience of Pakistan.
- Universities should play a larger role in public diplomacy through scholarships, research partnerships, student exchanges, visiting fellowships, joint programmes, and international conferences. Foreign graduates and academic partners should remain connected through organized alumni networks.
- Digital diplomacy must produce timely, multilingual, accurate, and verified content for different international audiences. AI can assist with translation, monitoring, and content development, but human oversight must protect accuracy, cultural context, and credibility.
- Tourism promotion must be matched by a reliable visitor experience. Transport, safety, digital services, destination management, environmental protection, accommodation standards, and community participation are necessary to turn marketing into positive international advocacy.
- Pakistan should use sports diplomacy more systematically through athletes, coaching programmes, youth exchanges, international tournaments, and sporting partnerships. Cricket provides a strong foundation, while hockey, squash, and emerging sports can broaden the country's international engagement.

Interaction with President NDU & Certificate Award Ceremony













LIGHTER MOMENTS





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