

# THE MOSAIC

JOURNAL  
2025-2026



DEPARTMENT OF  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
UNIVERSITY OF PESHAWAR

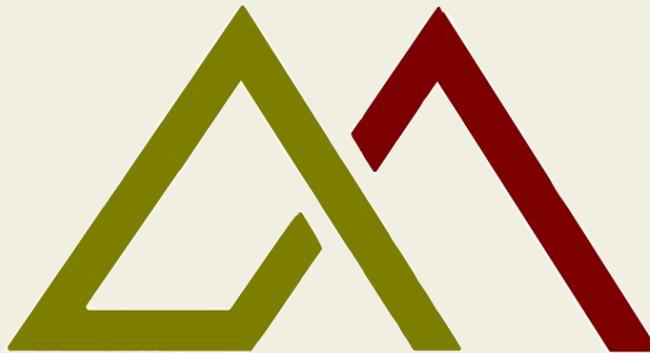
2025-2026

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# THE MOSAIC

Volume 5, Issue 1

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**Ideas grow stronger when they are shared,  
challenged, and refined**



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# Message

*from the*

# Vice Chancellor



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Dear Readers, Colleagues, and Students

It is with great enthusiasm that I inaugurate this latest issue of Mosaic Journal, a beacon of intellectual curiosity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and academic rigor at the University of Peshawar. Mosaic exemplifies the harmonious blend of diverse perspectives—from the arts and humanities to the sciences and social sciences—that drives innovation and enriches our collective pursuit of knowledge for the betterment of society.

In this issue, you will find a vibrant array of scholarly contributions that tackle pressing contemporary challenges and timeless questions alike. Featured articles delve into the frontiers of quantum computing applications in healthcare, the socio-economic impacts of renewable energy transitions in developing regions, and nuanced examinations of postcolonial literature in the digital age. Readers will also encounter empirical studies on mental health resilience among youth in urban settings, ethical frameworks for gene editing technologies, and creative works exploring identity and belonging through multimedia narratives. Each piece is underpinned by meticulous research, original insights, and a commitment to fostering dialogue across boundaries.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to the dedicated editors, contributing authors, diligent peer reviewers, and support staff whose expertise and passion have shaped this edition into a true mosaic of excellence. Your efforts align seamlessly with our university's core mission: to produce transformative knowledge, cultivate critical inquiry, and promote civic engagement that extends far beyond our campus.

To our global community of readers—faculty, students, partners, alumni, and beyond—I invite you to immerse yourselves in these pages, reflect on the ideas presented, and contribute to the conversations they inspire. Share your thoughts through submissions, feedback, or discussions, and help Mosaic illuminate paths toward a more informed, equitable, and innovative future.

With warmest regards,  
Prof. Dr. Johar Ali, Vice-Chancellor,  
University of Peshawar

# Message

*from the*  
**Dean**



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Dear Readers

It gives me immense pleasure and honor to write my view point on Mosaic. It is a matter of fact that the Department of International Relations has proved as an Excellent Department in the Faculty of Social Sciences in both Curricular and Extracurricular activities. The journal Mosaic is a students oriented and a lot of explorations and resolutions of various International issues can be observed in it.

As a Dean, I believe besides the academic teaching learning, the creative exploration and writing skills of the students. The Mosaic journal is providing such a platform to flourish the inner capabilities of the students and come up with meaningful creative writings in the shape of articles published in Mosaic Journal.

The Mosaic is addressing Global, National and Regional Thrilling issues. The Scholars of the International Relations are highlighting these issues like Pak-Afghan, Pak-China, Pak-Iran, Pak-Arab, Pak-India, Pak-US Relations and so forth. Wars among different nations and diplomatic relations are debated in a scholastic way like Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Palestine, and India-Pakistan.

I am pleased to admit and witness the students understanding, and intellectual ability to comprehend the contemporary world. The Mosaic is the outcome of the dedication, hard work, and continues efforts of the students and guidance of the faculty.

I am proud of the students and faculty of the Department of International Relations for such an amazing effort, a day will come that the Mosaic will touch the essence and apex of the Excellence in the world of Research on Global level. It proves that the students are having abilities and potentialities to achieve any goal in their life.

Best Wishes and Regards  
Prof. Dr. Anwar Alam  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
University of Peshawar

# Message

from the

# Chair Person

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Dear Readers

It gives me great pleasure to present the *Mosaic Edition 2025–26*, marking the fourth consecutive launch of this student-led academic initiative. Mosaic has grown into a meaningful platform that reflects the intellectual spirit, academic engagement, and creative energy of the Department of International Relations. Each edition not only documents the scholarly contributions of our students but also demonstrates their evolving capacity for research, critical thinking, and academic writing.

I am pleased to see how Mosaic has become an integral part of our departmental culture, offering students the opportunity to express their ideas, refine their skills, and actively participate in academic dialogue beyond the classroom. The consistent quality and continuity of this publication stand as evidence of the dedication, discipline, and collaborative effort invested by the students who lead and contribute to it.

I commend the Editorial Team, the Newsletter Wing, and all organizers for their hard work and commitment in bringing this edition to completion. Their teamwork and enthusiasm have ensured that Mosaic continues to progress each year with greater maturity and academic strength.

I extend my best wishes to the entire team and hope that Mosaic will continue to inspire our students and further enrich the academic landscape of the department in the years ahead.

Best wishes,  
Minhas Majeed Khan Marwat, Ph.D  
Chairperson  
Department of International Relations  
University of Peshawar

# Message

*from the*

# Editorial Head



Dear Readers

Mosaic embodies an academic vision committed to cultivating inquiry, reflection, and intellectual growth among students of the Department of International Relations. It serves as a meaningful scholarly forum where emerging researchers critically engage with contemporary debates, refine their analytical skills, and contribute to broader academic conversations within the discipline. By encouraging rigorous writing, methodological clarity, and informed perspectives, Mosaic strengthens student's academic trajectory and enriches the department's research culture.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the entire Mosaic team, The Editor (Rahyma Noor Awan), Deputy Editors, Newsletter Head (Hafsa Ali Khan), Content Writers, Graphic Designer (Maryam Afridi) and Organizers, whose professionalism and academic dedication have ensured the quality and continuity of this publication. Their coordinated efforts reflect both discipline and a shared commitment to advancing student scholarship.

Mosaic stands as a collective academic endeavor that nurtures intellectual discipline, promotes research-led learning, and provides students with a credible platform to articulate their ideas with scholarly precision. I look forward to witnessing its continued growth and the expanding contributions of our talented students.

Best regards and pleasant readings,  
Dr. Saima Gul  
Editorial Head, the Mosaic  
Lecturer, Department of International Relations  
University of Peshawar

# Message

*from the*  
**Editor**



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Dear Readers

It is a privilege to present this edition of MOSAIC, a journal that reflects the dedication, curiosity, and scholarly strength of the students of the Department of International Relations. Serving as its editor has allowed me to witness firsthand the commitment our students bring to research, discussion, and the exploration of global and regional affairs.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to Prof. Dr. Minhas Majid, Chairperson of the Department, whose guidance and encouragement continually uplift the academic standards of our discipline. I am equally grateful to Dr. Saima Gul, Head of the Editorial Board, whose insight and steady supervision have shaped this publication with clarity and purpose.

I would also like to extend a special thank you to Malak Rizwan Latif (Deputy Editor), Maryam Afridi (Graphic Designer), and Abdul Salam (Organizer), whose additional efforts played an essential role in bringing this publication to life. Our teamwork embodies the collective spirit that defines the journal and reflects the strength we hold as a department.

MOSAIC stands not only as a publication, but as a shared achievement one made possible through collaboration, guidance, and the passion of everyone involved. It is my sincere hope that each page inspires dialogue, reflection, and a deeper appreciation for the discipline we proudly represent.

Warm regards,

Rahyma Noor Awan

Editor, MOSAIC

Department of International Relations

University of Peshawar

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The background features several large, overlapping geometric shapes. On the left, there are two large teal shapes: a circle at the top and a rounded rectangle below it. On the right, there is a teal L-shaped element. In the center and bottom, there are orange shapes: a large circle behind the main text and a smaller circle at the bottom. A grid of thin orange lines is positioned in the lower right quadrant.

# RESEARCH ARTICLES

**Fresh Voices, Bold Ideas, Real Impact**

**SECTION  
I**

**GLOBAL POWER  
SHIFTS  
AND  
STRATEGIC  
COMPETITION**

# Balancing Giants: Pakistan's Tightrope Between Beijing and Washington



## Abstract:

*The title *Balancing Giants: Pakistan's Tightrope between Beijing and Washington* encapsulates the central concern of this study. It reflects Pakistan's enduring challenge of managing relations with two dominant global powers whose strategic interests often diverge. Much like a tightrope walker navigating a delicate path, Pakistan must carefully maintain equilibrium between China and the United States to safeguard its own national interests. China represents a long-term partner through economic projects such as the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor, while the United States continues to play a critical role in providing financial assistance, market access, and international legitimacy. The expression “balancing giants” underscores the asymmetry of power in these relationships, highlighting Pakistan's position as a relatively smaller state compelled to maneuver cautiously between competing great power agendas.*

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## Introduction:

Pakistan stands at a unique crossroads in the global order. Geographically positioned at the heart of South Asia, bordering China, India, Afghanistan, and Iran, and with close access to the Arabian Sea, Pakistan holds undeniable strategic importance. Its location alone makes it a valuable player in global politics, but its history, alliances, and economic needs have further drawn it into the competing spheres of influence of two of the world's most powerful nations: the People's Republic of China and the United States of America.

The relationship between these two powers is increasingly defined by rivalry. As China rises economically and militarily, and the United States works to maintain its global leadership, their competition spans over multiple arenas, including trade, technology, military influence, and diplomatic outreach. For

Pakistan, this rivalry presents both opportunities and dangers. China offers long-term investment, infrastructure development, and political support particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Wolf, 2019). The United States provides access to Western markets, military training, and influence in global institutions such as the IMF and World Bank (Markey, 2013).

This paper explores Pakistan's delicate balancing act between these two powers. It examines the historical background of Pakistan's relations with both China and the U.S., analyzes the strategic and economic dimensions of these partnerships, identifies the risks involved, and suggests ways in which Pakistan can adapt its foreign policy for the future. The goal is to provide a clear understanding of how Pakistan can safeguard its sovereignty, ensure economic stability, and maintain security while navigating one of the most complex rivalries in modern geopolitics.

## **Historical Background:**

Pakistan's relations with the United States date back to its early years after independence in 1947. During the Cold War, Pakistan aligned itself with the U.S. to gain security and military assistance against India. This partnership was cemented through Pakistan's inclusion in alliances such as SEATO and CENTO (Haqqani, 2013). The U.S. saw Pakistan as a useful ally in its containment strategy against the Soviet Union. In return, Pakistan received military and economic aid, which strengthened its armed forces but also created a dependency that shaped its future relations (Markey, 2013).

Pakistan's ties with China developed in the 1960s after its relationship with the U.S. became strained. Following the 1965 war with India, Pakistan realized that Washington's support was conditional and unreliable (Paul, 2014). This prompted a turn toward Beijing. China and Pakistan found common ground in their shared rivalry with India. Over time, this relationship deepened, especially after the 1971 Bangladesh crisis, when the U.S. again disappointed Pakistan by not intervening strongly in its favor (Small, 2015).

The historical background of these relationships is marked by cycles of trust and betrayal, particularly with the United States. During the Afghan-Soviet War of the 1980s, Pakistan was once again elevated to the status of a frontline state. Billions of dollars in aid flowed into the country, strengthening the military and intelligence apparatus (Haqqani, 2013). However, once the Soviet Union withdrew and the Cold War ended, U.S. interest in Pakistan rapidly declined. Sanctions followed due to Pakistan's nuclear program, leaving Islamabad isolated at a time when it needed support. This reinforced the perception in Pakistan that the U.S. is an unreliable partner, driven by temporary strategic interests rather than long-term commitments.

In contrast, China maintained a steady trajectory of support. Beijing provided Pakistan with diplomatic cover, military technology, and later, significant economic investment. For instance, the transfer of nuclear technology and assistance in defense manufacturing signaled China's willingness to empower Pakistan in ways the U.S. was reluctant to do. Over decades, this nurtured a sense of trust in Beijing's consistency, contrasting with the fluctuating relationship with Washington.

The post-9/11 period again highlighted these historical trends. After the attacks on the United States, Pakistan became a key ally in the War on Terror. While this led to renewed U.S. aid and engagement, it also brought tremendous domestic challenges, including terrorism, militancy, and public resentment over Pakistan's perceived subservience to Washington. Once U.S. priorities shifted toward India and countering China, Pakistan found itself marginalized again (Haqqani, 2013). These repeated cycles of engagement and abandonment explain why Islamabad increasingly leans toward Beijing while still recognizing the necessity of maintaining functional ties with Washington.

### **Strategic Analysis:**

From a strategic standpoint, Pakistan's importance to both Beijing and Washington lie in its geography, security role, and regional influence.

For China, Pakistan is a key link in its westward expansion strategy. CPEC not only gives China shorter access to Middle Eastern energy supplies but also reduces its dependence on vulnerable sea lanes in the South China Sea. Pakistan also serves as a reliable partner in countering Indian influence in the region. This is especially important given ongoing border tensions between China and India. Militarily, China and Pakistan maintain close cooperation, including joint exercises, technology transfers, and co-production of fighter jets such as the JF-17 (Small, 2015; Wolf, 2019).

For the United States, Pakistan's value has historically been linked to security interests, first in containing the Soviet Union, then in supporting counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan and beyond. Even as U.S. attention shifts to countering China in the Indo-Pacific, Washington still sees Pakistan as an important player in regional stability, nuclear security, and peace in Afghanistan (Markey, 2013).

However, Pakistan's military ties with both powers require careful handling. While U.S. assistance often comes with conditions related to counterterrorism and governance reforms, Chinese aid is less politically demanding but may carry long-term strategic costs, such as deepened dependency or loss of bargaining power.

Diplomatically, Pakistan has attempted to position itself as a bridge rather than a battlefield. It has offered to mediate between the U.S. and China in areas of shared interest, such as peace in Afghanistan, counterterrorism, and climate change cooperation (Menon, 2020). Yet, this balancing role is becoming harder as mutual suspicion between Beijing and Washington grows.

### **Economic Dimension:**

Economics plays a decisive role in Pakistan's tightrope walk. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), particularly through the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), has positioned Beijing as Pakistan's largest source of infrastructure investment. Roads, ports, and energy projects funded by China aim to transform Pakistan's connectivity and economic potential.

The U.S., while less involved in direct infrastructure, remains crucial for Pakistan's financial survival. U.S. influence in international institutions like the IMF and World Bank directly affects Pakistan's access to bailouts and financial support. Without U.S. approval, Pakistan's economic crises would deepen, given its recurring balance-of-payments issues and debt obligations (Markey, 2013).

CPEC is often presented as a game changer for Pakistan, promising industrial growth, improved energy supply, and job creation. However, critics argue that the heavy reliance on Chinese loans could trap Pakistan in unsustainable debt. Transparency concerns and local opposition to some CPEC projects also complicate its implementation. Still, for Islamabad, China's willingness to invest contrasts sharply with the U.S., which often conditions aid on reforms or counterterrorism cooperation (Small, 2015).

Meanwhile, the U.S. remains Pakistan's top export destination, particularly for textiles, which are vital for Pakistan's economy. This means Pakistan cannot afford to alienate Washington without risking access to critical markets. At the same time, China has not emerged as a major market for Pakistani goods, raising questions about whether CPEC truly benefits Pakistan's trade balance. This uneven economic relationship reinforces Pakistan's dependency on both giants in distinct but equally important ways.

Additionally, remittance flows to Pakistan from expatriates in the U.S. and other Western countries contribute significantly to the country's foreign reserves. These financial links give Washington indirect leverage over Pakistan. In contrast, China's contribution is more in the form of long-term loans and infrastructure, which, while valuable, increase Islamabad's obligations. As a result, Pakistan finds itself juggling short-term survival dependent on Washington and long-term development tied to Beijing.

## **Risk and Challenges:**

The balancing act between China and the U.S. carries significant risks. Aligning too closely with Beijing risks alienating Washington, leading to diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions. On the other hand, leaning toward Washington could undermine Pakistan's strategic partnership with China, which is vital for its security and regional standing.

One key challenge is the growing intensity of U.S.-China rivalry, which increasingly forces countries to take sides. For Pakistan, neutrality is becoming harder to maintain. U.S. pressure to limit Chinese influence in South Asia clashes with Pakistan's economic dependence on Beijing. Similarly, Chinese expectations for loyalty, conflict with Pakistan's desire to keep channels open with Washington.

Another challenge is domestic politics. Within Pakistan, there is debate over the costs and benefits of both relationships. Critics argue that reliance on foreign powers has stifled Pakistan's ability to develop an independent foreign policy. Political instability, corruption, and weak institutions make it harder to manage these external relationships in a consistent manner. Changes in government often lead to shifts in foreign policy emphasis, weakening Pakistan's credibility in the eyes of both Washington and Beijing (Paul, 2014).

Economic instability further compounds these risks. Pakistan's recurring financial crises mean it is often negotiating with the IMF, where U.S. influence is strong. At the same time, dependence on Chinese loans raises fears of debt entrapment. This double vulnerability makes Pakistan highly exposed to external pressures, leaving little room for maneuver (Wolf, 2019).

Finally, regional dynamics add another layer of complexity. India's growing partnership with the United States and its rising economic power threatens Pakistan's strategic calculations. Meanwhile, China's close ties with Pakistan may provoke stronger Indo-U.S. cooperation, further isolating Islamabad. These regional shifts make Pakistan's balancing act increasingly fragile and uncertain.

## **Pakistan's Adaptive Foreign Policy for the Future:**

In the years ahead, Pakistan's foreign policy will require careful balance, strategic foresight, and adaptability. The country is located in one of the most competitive geopolitical regions in the world, where both China and the United States see South Asia as vital to their strategic goals (Paul, 2014; Menon, 2020). The challenge for Pakistan is to maintain strong relations with both powers without becoming overly dependent on either side. Achieving this balance will require a shift from short-term, security-driven strategies towards a broader, long-term vision that integrates diplomacy, economic growth, and national resilience.

Historically, Pakistan's approach to foreign policy has often relied on military alliances and security partnerships to address its vulnerabilities. While these have provided short-term advantages, they have also created cycles of dependency. In the future, Pakistan will need to place greater emphasis on diplomacy, economic cooperation, and diversified partnerships. By expanding its engagement beyond the traditional security focus, the country can build a more stable foundation for international relations that does not hinge on crises or external conflicts (Haqqani, 2013).

A key part of this strategy is ensuring that major projects, such as regional infrastructure and connectivity initiatives, deliver broad economic benefits for the population. Such projects should not only serve strategic purposes but also create employment, boost industry, and improve living standards. Effective governance, transparency, and public accountability will be essential to ensure that these ventures strengthen the national economy rather than deepen dependency on a single partner.

Another important priority is to broaden engagement with the United States beyond security cooperation. Pakistan should promote dialogue and collaboration in areas such as trade, education, technology, climate adaptation, and health. This would help avoid the repeated pattern of intense cooperation during times of crisis followed by neglect when immediate security needs fade. A broader relationship would make bilateral ties more predictable and less vulnerable to political changes.

Pakistan must also approach its partnerships with realistic expectations. Setting clear and achievable goals will help prevent cycles of disappointment that have often followed overly ambitious promises. This requires an honest assessment of mutual interests and the capacity of each side to meet commitments.

In addition, the rapidly changing global environment demands flexibility. The competition between major powers, economic instability, and emerging security threats mean that Pakistan must be ready to adjust its policies as circumstances evolve. This includes building stronger ties with other regional actors such as the Gulf states, Turkey, and Southeast Asian economies, creating multiple channels for trade, investment, and strategic support.

Economic self-reliance will also be central to an adaptive foreign policy. Attracting investment from a variety of partners, strengthening domestic industries, and ensuring that foreign-funded projects align with national priorities will help reduce vulnerability to external pressure (Wolf, 2019).

## **Conclusion:**

Pakistan's position between China and the United States is both an asset and a challenge. Its geography, history, and economic potential make it an important player in global politics, but also expose it to the risks of great power rivalry. The lessons of history show that dependence on a single partner leads to vulnerability, while balanced and diversified engagement strengthens sovereignty.

By pursuing a foreign policy based on flexibility, transparency, and self-reliance, Pakistan can turn its unique position into a strategic advantage. In a world increasingly divided between Beijing and Washington, Pakistan's success will depend on its ability to remain relevant, independent, and stable, a true tightrope walk, but one worth mastering for the sake of its future.

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**Mian Abdurrouf**

**Semester: 7<sup>th</sup> (Evening)**

**2022-2026**

**Department of International Relations**

**University of Peshawar**

# Selective Sovereignty and Strategic Hypocrisy: How Great Powers Manipulate Global Norms



## Abstract:

*Sovereignty is a fundamental norm of the international system. However, in practice, great powers selectively invoke and manipulate the concept of sovereignty to achieve their geopolitical goals. This purposeful deceit undermines the universality of international law and erodes the credibility of global organizations. This study investigates how global powers such as the United States, Russia, and China employ selective sovereignty to justify operations, defend allies, and punish adversaries, all while avoiding accountability themselves. Using case studies such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine, NATO's intervention in Libya, and China's behavior in the South China Sea, the article demonstrates how global norms are manipulated in international relations. Drawing on realism, critical international relations theory, and postcolonial theory, it contends that power dynamics disguised as legal and moral rhetoric shape global governance more than shared principles. This trend has serious consequences for the legitimacy of international institutions, the sovereignty of weaker states, and the viability of multilateralism.*

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## Introduction:

“If I must choose the policy of blood and iron and one of milk and water... why, I am for the policy of blood and iron. It is better not only for the nation but, in the long run, for the world.”  
Theodore Roosevelt “

The idea of sovereignty, as stated in the UN Charter, is intended to guarantee state's territorial integrity and political independence. However, its application in global politics is neither universal nor consistent. Instead, powerful states frequently utilize sovereignty as a flexible instrument invoking it to defend their own actions

while denying it to others. This dichotomy has given rise to the concept of strategic hypocrisy, in which powerful governments exploit international norms, laws, and institutions to advance their geopolitical goals. The same states that call for a “rules-based international order” often break those rules under the guise of exceptionalism, humanitarian intervention, or national security.

## **Theoretical Framework:**

### **Neorealism**

The international system is characterized by anarchy, meaning there is no central authority to regulate the affairs of states. Neorealists emphasize that no external power will rescue a state in times of crisis. Therefore, states prioritize their national interests above all else. According to John Mearsheimer, powerful states adhere to international law only when it aligns with their strategic interests (Mearsheimer, 2018). In this view, sovereignty is not a moral ideal but a strategic tool.

### **Critical Theory and Postcolonial Perspectives:**

Stephen Krasner’s concept of organized hypocrisy emphasizes how sovereignty has historically been applied selectively, particularly in the Global South (Krasner, 1999). Antony Anghie’s postcolonial critique reveals how international law was developed to legitimize European domination over non-European states, thereby reinforcing structural inequalities in the global legal order (Anghie, 2005).

## **Strategic Hypocrisy in Action: Case Studies:**

### **1. The U.S. Invasion of Iraq (2003)**

The United States bypassed the UN Security Council and invaded Iraq under the pretexts of disarming weapons of mass destruction and promoting democracy. Both justifications were later discredited. Nevertheless, the U.S. claimed legitimacy by invoking “exceptional circumstances.” Iraq’s sovereignty was effectively ignored, and regime change was carried out without international consensus.

“If we need to act, we will act, and we will do so alone if necessary.” President George W. Bush, 2002

This case highlights how the norm of sovereignty was overridden in the name of moral obligation and national security, despite the absence of a direct threat to U.S. territory (Byers, 2005).

### **2. Russia in Ukraine (2014, 2022)**

Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and invaded Ukraine in 2022, citing the protection of Russian-speaking minorities and “historical ties” to the region. These actions violated both the UN Charter and Ukraine’s sovereignty. Ironically, Russia had previously emphasized non-intervention and state sovereignty particularly when criticizing NATO’s actions in Kosovo and Libya.

Realism plays a role here as well: Ukraine’s desire to join NATO a military alliance caused serious concerns to Moscow. As a result, Russia launched an invasion to prevent such a scenario. Put simply, Russia aimed to avoid being attacked from the European front for a third time in history.

“We are not violating international law. We are defending our interests and our compatriots.”  
Vladimir Putin, 2014

Russia’s use of legal and historical justifications mirrors Western rhetoric, illustrating that strategic hypocrisy is not exclusive to the West (Charap & Colton, 2017).

### **3. NATO Intervention in Libya (2011):**

NATO’s 2011 intervention in Libya began under the UN-authorized Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. However, the operation quickly shifted from civilian protection to regime change, leading to the collapse of the Libyan state.

The manipulation of R2P undermined trust in humanitarian interventions and raised questions about the true motives of powerful Western states (Kuperman, 2013).

### **4. China in the South China Sea:**

China’s claim over vast areas of the South China Sea—despite an international arbitration ruling against it in 2016 demonstrates another form of strategic hypocrisy. While China strictly opposes foreign involvement in its internal matters (e.g., Hong Kong, Taiwan), it unilaterally disregards the sovereignty of its neighbors.

#### **Case Study: South China Sea Arbitration and Sovereignty:**

China’s claim of “historic rights” within its “nine-dash line” in the South China Sea directly breaches the sovereignty of its neighbors, notably the Philippines. In 2016, an international arbitral tribunal under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) ruled that China’s claims had no legal basis and that its actions such as constructing artificial islands and interfering with Philippine fishing violated the Philippine’s sovereign rights and exclusive economic zone (Permanent Court of Arbitration, 2016).

Despite this binding ruling, China has consistently rejected it and continued its assertive actions, demonstrating a clear disregard for international law and the sovereignty of other states, while simultaneously emphasizing non-intervention in its own perceived internal matters. China presents itself as a defender of non-intervention, but its actions show otherwise.

### **Undermining International Institutions:**

Strategic hypocrisy extends beyond military action. Great powers frequently manipulate international institutions for political ends:

**UN Security Council:** Permanent members (P5) use their veto power to shield allies and avoid accountability. The P5's veto power in the UN Security Council allows them to block resolutions, effectively shielding allies from sanctions or condemnation regardless of their actions. This enables great powers to manipulate sovereign nations by ensuring impunity for favored regimes or, conversely, by threatening punitive measures against states that don't align with their interests, undermining national sovereignty and international accountability.

For example, Russia's repeated vetoes of Syrian resolutions have insulated the Assad administration from accountability for atrocities (UN Security Council Records, 2017). This allowed the government to continue its activities with impunity, undermining Syria's sovereignty and the UN's ability to enforce international law and provide relief thus controlling the conflict's trajectory.

**International Criminal Court (ICC):** The U.S. Russia, and China are not parties to the Rome Statute, yet they support ICC prosecutions against weaker states. This reflects a double standard that erodes the legitimacy of the ICC and its mission (Kersten, 2016).

**World Trade Organization (WTO):** Economic rules are selectively followed, with powerful states imposing unilateral sanctions and tariffs under the guise of national security (Bown & Keynes, 2020).

These practices damage the credibility of international institutions and foster cynicism in the Global South.

### **Consequences of Strategic Hypocrisy:**

1. Norms lose legitimacy when applied selectively.
2. Undermining Multilateralism: International cooperation weakens when institutions serve powerful interests (Ikenberry, 2011).
3. Encouragement of Imitation: Other states may follow the lead of great powers in violating

sovereignty.

4. Global Resentment and Division: Weaker states grow disillusioned with the global system and seek alternative alliances (Acharya, 2017).

## **Conclusion:**

The global order claims to be governed by universal principles but in reality, strategic interests override legal norms. Great powers continue to invoke sovereignty, human rights, and international law only when it suits their objectives (Dunne & Hanson, 2017). This strategic hypocrisy corrodes trust in global governance, weakens the rule of law, and exposes the inequality embedded in international relations.

To move toward a more just and effective global system, great powers must be held to the same standards as smaller states. The international community must commit to the consistent application of norms. Until then, sovereignty will remain a privilege of power, not a right of all nations.

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# Global South Rising: BRICS, Multipolarity And The Decline of Western Hegemony



## **Abstract:**

*A decade of rolling crises from financial shocks and pandemics to sanctions and great power rivalry has accelerated shifts in the distribution of influence in world politics. This article examines the BRICS coalition (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and its recent expansion now including Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia as a key arena where the Global South is testing a more multipolar order (Reuters, 2025a, Reuters, 2025b). The central argument is deliberately modest, BRICS is not replacing Western institutions rather, it is widening the menu of choices for developing states financing, standards and political voice thereby eroding the exclusive influence of the post-1990s Western “unipolar moment.”*

*This article explores how the expanded BRICS group is quietly reshaping global politics not by overthrowing Western institutions, but by giving developing countries more choices and more room to negotiate. As new members join, BRICS offers alternative paths for financing, standards and political voice, softening the dominance of the post-1990s unipolar order. Overall, the article argues that the world is moving toward a more layered, “thickened” multipolarity in which states especially in the Global South use multiple institutions to hedge, bargain and secure better outcomes.*

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## **Introduction:**

### **From Unipolarity to Options:**

For thirty years, Western led institutions framed the “rules of the game” in finance, trade, and security. Today, that dominance is contested less by a single challenger and

to this turn after admitting Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE in 2024 and Indonesia in early 2025, it convenes a sizable share of global population and resources and crucially, a louder collective voice on institutional reform (Reuters, 2025a Reuters, 2025b). Brazil's 2025 chairmanship underscored reformist priorities while navigating geopolitical headwinds, including tariff escalations and Middle East tensions (AP News, 2025; CFR, 2025).

Our baseline claim is straight forward, BRICS is changing global politics by expanding the feasible set for the Global South. That does not require a BRICS currency, a defense pact or a unified ideology. It requires credible alternatives in finance, payments, standards and diplomatic coordination even if imperfect or partial.

### **Concepts and Measures: What Counts as Multipolarity?**

Multipolarity is often treated as a tally of GDP or missiles. But power in today's order hinges on three linked layers:

1. Material capabilities that is growth, trade networks, commodities, finance.
2. Institutional voice includes seats, voting shares, and the ability to set agendas.
3. Switching costs, how easily states can move between systems—currencies, payment rails, legal forums, and capital sources.

BRICS' significance lies primarily in layers 2 and 3. Even where material power lags, more voice and lower switching costs can dilute hegemonic leverage.

### **The BRICS Toolkit: From Summits to the NDB**

**Summit Diplomacy and Membership:** Following the 2023 invitation wave, four states joined in January 2024. Indonesia's accession in January 2025 deepened BRICS reach into Southeast Asia (Reuters, 2025a). Saudi Arabia's posture evolved after months of hesitation, reporting around the July 2025 Rio summit reflected an expanded grouping that included the Kingdom in joint deliberations, though the pathway to full, formalized membership had been politically sensitive (Reuters, 2025c; FT, 2025). This flux illustrates a broader pattern, states extract value from engagement even before institutional status fully settles.

**The New Development Bank (NDB):** The NDB has become BRICS most concrete instrument. Under President Dilma Rousseff, the bank has prioritized local-currency lending, domestic capital-market development, and partnerships with other NDBs (NDB, 2025; BRICSGov. of Brazil, 2025). These steps matter less for headline numbers than for learning by doing building pipelines, legal

templates, and market infrastructure that reduce over reliance on the dollar in project finance.

**Payment Alternatives and De-Dollarization:** The rhetoric is bold, but the practice is incremental. A 2024 assessment found little meaningful erosion of the dollar's centrality in reserves and cross-border settlements, even as BRICS leaders championed local currency trade and explored new rails (Reuters, 2024). Brazil's 2025 agenda explicitly deprioritized a common BRICS currency while focusing on practical steps that reduce dollar dependence at the margins swap lines, clearing, and invoicing in national currencies (Reuters, 2025d).

## **Current Arenas Where BRICS Matters:**

### **1) Trade and Tariffs: Policy Space Under Pressure:**

The 2025 Rio Summit condemned rising tariffs and supply chain fragmentation, reflecting broader Global South frustration with greatpower trade brinkmanship (AP News, 2025). Regardless of one's politics, tariff shocks tighten fiscal space in import-dependent economies and raise the value of South–South hedging. BRICS' response coordination rather than confrontation signals a preference for bargaining leverage over bloc confrontation (AP News, 2025; FT, 2025).

### **2. Finance : Debt Relief and Green Transition:**

Debt distress remains the tightest constraint on policy autonomy. The Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable (GSDR) co-chaired by the IMF, World Bank, and South Africa reported incremental progress in 2024–2025 on restructuring playbooks, standstills during negotiations and information sharing (IMF, 2025; Reuters, 2025e; G20, 2025). BRICS members have used this forum to push for faster timelines and more predictable burden sharing including with non-Paris Club creditors. Parallel efforts by the NDB to extend local currency finance for infrastructure and energy transition complement (rather than replace) Bretton Woods channels (NDB, 2025; BRICS—Gov. of Brazil, 2025).

### **3. Energy Geo economics: Gulf Leverage Meets Asian Demand:**

With the UAE a BRICS member and Saudi Arabia deepening engagement, hydrocarbon producers and Asian consumers now meet inside the same political club. That may not rewrite OPEC+ arithmetic, but it does create new spaces to settle energy trade in local currencies, pilot new clearing arrangements, and coordinate on petrochemicals and downstream investments especially during tariff cycles and sanctions episodes (Reuters, 2025c CFR, 2025). The practical test is transaction level uptake, not communiqués.

### **4) Digital and Payments: Quiet Plumbing, Big Effects.:**

The most important changes are unglamorous interlinking instant payment systems, increasing FX

swap lines, and harmonising KYC/AML for cross border retail remittances. As these rails mature, switching costs fall. Even modest shares of local currency invoicing can matter for SMEs and public sector buyers whose budgets are exposed to dollar swings (NDB, 2025; CFR, 2025).

### **5) Diplomacy: Middle East, Ukraine, and Non-Alignment 2.0:**

BRICS statements on Gaza and tariff escalation in 2025 reflected a calibrated tilt toward restraint and humanitarian framing, alongside continued discomfort with sanctions as a default policy tool (AP News, 2025). The absence or virtual participation of some leaders at Rio also underlined internal differences, another reminder that BRICS is a bargaining platform not a bloc with a single foreign policy (FT, 2025).

## **What BRICS Is and Isn't Changing:**

### **Is changing:**

**Agenda setting power:** The presence of new members from Africa, the Gulf and Southeast Asia broadens issue ownership from food security to digital trade and complicates any single power's ability to dictate terms (Reuters, 2025a; CFR, 2025).

**Financing options:** The NDB's push for local currency lending plus co-financing with national development banks raises competition and creates learning effects for borrowers and regulators (NDB, 2025).

**Narratives:** "Reform, not rupture" is resonating, most Global South governments prefer to pressure legacy institutions to adapt rather than abandon them (IMF, 2025; G20, 2025).

### **Isn't Changing:**

**Dollar centrality:** Network effects, deep U.S. capital markets, and legal infrastructure still anchor the greenback (Reuters, 2024).

**Internal contradictions:** Strategic divergences India–China rivalry, sanctions exposure for Russia, Iran, and Gulf states. Western partnerships slow collective action (FT, 2025).

**Rule making capacity:** BRICS has not yet delivered a coherent alternative to WTO style disciplines though technical work on standards and payments is advancing.

Three constraints will shape the next five years:

**1. Diversity of regimes and interests:** Democratic and authoritarian systems co-exist within BRICS, consensus costs time and dilutes ambition (FT, 2025).

**2. Macroeconomic and debt overhang:** Many developing states face thin fiscal buffers without credible debt relief and concessional finance, rhetoric outpaces execution (IMF, 2025 Reuters, 2025e).

**3. Western adaptation:** If the G7 modernises NDBs, reforms IMF quotas and disciplines tariff politics, some of BRICS' appeal could be absorbed into a reformed core. Signs of such adaptation are mixed (CFR, 2025; FT, 2025).

## **Scenarios to 2030: Three Paths:**

### **1. Thickened Multipolarity:**

more clubs, more rails, more co-financing. Dollar stays dominant, but local currency niches grow in energy, infrastructure, and regional trade. NDB scales cautiously debt reform proceeds in fits and starts (NDB, 2025; IMF, 2025).

### **2. Blocification:**

Tariff wars escalate and sanctions widen settlement splits harden duplication of institutions raises costs and fragments standards (AP News, 2025; FT, 2025).

### **3. Recentralization:**

A large shock re-validates Western institutions and capital markets, drawing Global South borrowers back under tighter conditionality. This would require rapid Western policy coherence that recent experience does not predict.

## **Conclusion:**

### **From Hegemony to Bargaining Power:**

BRICS is not building a mirror image of Western hegemony. It is building bargaining power for the Global South by expanding options; financial, diplomatic, and technical. The West's influence is not vanishing but it is being diluted by the simple fact that developing states now have places to go when the traditional system disappoints them. That pluralization is the essence of contemporary multipolarity not the rise of a rival pole but the rise of choice. Over the long run, choice more than confrontation is what erodes hegemony.

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**SECTION  
II**

**SOUTH ASIAN  
SECURITY  
AND  
REGIONAL  
DYNAMICS**

# The Centrality of India: Existential Threat and Its Enduring Influence on Pakistan's External Relations



## **Abstract:**

*Pakistan's foreign policy has been persistently shaped and influenced by its existential fear of India, influencing its relationships with Afghanistan, Muslim countries, China, and the United States, and creating a security-centric strategic culture that has both advanced and constrained its national interests. Studying this India centric approach is vital for understanding both for Pakistan's diplomatic patterns and its implications.*

*The paper examines that Pakistan relationship with Afghanistan, Muslim countries, China and us is influenced by a perceived existential threat from India and Pakistan's strategic imperative to counterbalance India. The paper draws on a qualitative approach to examine the centrality of the India factor in Pakistan's external relations. It is based primarily on secondary sources, including books, scholarly articles, and policy reports. Findings show that Pakistan's India centric approach has resulted in some of political, economic, military and diplomatic benefits for Pakistan, like Pakistan become successful in creation of a large and disciplined army through external help especially in its early years which is capable of defending its borders against potential Indian aggression. Also it has gain some economic help as well, and utilized its multilateral engagements to support its stance on Kashmir like OIC resolutions. But this approach also lead to Pakistan's dependence on limited actors, hindered regional integration, lost economic opportunities and sacrifice of Pakistan development over defense. The paper recommends reducing dependence on limited partners, promote regionalism and economic interdependence with India to make war costly, and shift from security first to economy first approach by prioritizing trade, investment, technological development and regional integration as main foreign policy goals.*

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## **Introduction:**

Centrality of Indian factor in Pakistan external relations have its roots in pre-independence struggle, and the violent partition of 1947, which led to mass migration and resulting communal violence promoted hatred and insecurity in both nations from each other. The worst consequence of partition was the undecided destiny of Kashmir state which led to 1948 war, between both nation and since now this disputed territory is bone of contention between both nations, and determining factor behind continuous Indian centrality in Pakistan's external relations. Another problem of partition was the division and transfer of assets, the Reserve Bank of India held the Pakistan government's monetary assets, and given the atmosphere of hostility between Congress and Muslim League partisans, the division and transfer of assets was by no means a smooth process. Pakistan's earliest government officials feared their new country's economic strangulation and saw a "Hindu design to force Pakistan to its knees (Haqqani, 2013)

Statements achieved by Indian nationalists and specially Hindu maha Saba to undo partition also created fears of Indian designs to undo Pakistan, like the statement "India is one and indivisible and there will never be peace unless and until the separated parts are brought back into the Indian Union and made integral parts thereof" (Pande, 2011). These views have always caused a lot of fear in Pakistan.

Indian annexation of Hyderabad and Junagadh are cited in Pakistan as Indian imperialist adventures at the time of partition and Goa and Sikkim as the continuation of the same a few years after Independence. India's treaties of friendship with Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan was also seen as evidence of an Indian desire for the subservience of its neighbors. This only increases the Pakistan's desire to break out of this Indian region and seek security. India's close ties with Afghanistan have also been cited as an attempt by India to spread its wings. In Pakistan, all these events led to the solidification of the fear of Indian hegemony. Therefore soon after partition Pakistan in order to counterbalance Indian superiority in resources and military, Pakistan formed alliances with west to gain military, economic and diplomatic support, so it can achieve parity with India and secure its freedom.

India Pakistan wars of 1948, 1965, 1971 (which resulted in loss of east Pakistan) greatly reinforced Pakistan perception of India as hegemonic and existential threat and this remain central to this date in Pakistan's formulation of its external relations. Additionally kargil crisis 1999, 2001 – Indian Parliament Attack & Standoff triggered the largest military mobilization since World War II, and it occurred less than four years after India and Pakistan's 1998 nuclear weapon tests. (STOLAR, 2008) It reinforced Pakistan belief of its vulnerability against immense Indian might and it further reinforced mutual mistrust. 2008 Mumbai attacks and 2019 – Pulwama Suicide Bombing & Balakot Crisis resulted in security oriented policies, deep distrust and minimum trade and strand relations between both nations. Recent 2025 Pahalgam Attack and Operation Sindoor, resulted in border clashes and intense confrontations between both neighbors in which Pakistan reportedly destroyed

some Indian fighter jets.

Each major incident from Kargil to Sindoor exemplifies how recurring crises reinforce Pakistan's India-centric security paradigm and its influence on its overall external relations.

The persistent India centric world view has developed a security first strategic culture in Pakistan. The pursuit of military parity, especially with India, and developing a credible deterrent capacity are features of Pakistan's strategic culture (Kiran, 2024).

Pakistan major external relations have been designed to help Pakistan secure strategic depth against India (involvement in Afghanistan), break away from the shared history with India (cordial relations with Muslim world and emphasize on Islamic identity), contain and achieve parity with India (alliances with us and partnership with China to gain military, economic and diplomatic support). Though beneficial to Pakistan, symbolically and in the economic and military fields, these ties have rarely helped Pakistan resolve its basic fear. While Pakistan's international partners have consistently refused to view India from Pakistan's perspective.

## **Analysis:**

### **Pakistan's Major Foreign Relationships through the Lens of India:**

#### **1. Afghanistan search for Strategic Depth:**

The most consequential regional competition for influence in Afghanistan is the contest between India and Pakistan (Constantino, 2020)

Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan has been deeply influenced by its security concerns about India. Due to troubled relations with India and some Indian aggressive actions Pakistan has always feared encirclement by a hostile India via Afghanistan. Despite Pakistan's physical proximity to Afghanistan, the two have not always enjoyed the most cordial relations thanks to differences over the Durand Line (Howenstein, 2010). Pakistan believed that India via its occupation of parts of Kashmir and, by building on its pre partition ties with leadership of NWFP province (Bacha Khan party) and supporting Afghan government is encircling Pakistan and feared a pincer movement where both India and Afghanistan can simultaneously attack Pakistan. Given Pakistan's elongated shape and lack of any defensible borders with India (mostly plain easy for invasion). Pakistan's military planners feared that, in the event of an Indian attack, Pakistan would be unable to withdraw into its own territory, absorb an initial thrust and still save its key cities. Therefore the need for a pro Pakistan regime in Afghanistan that was opposed to "Hindu" India was deemed crucial to the foreign and security policy of Pakistan (Pande, 2011).

Dawood overthrew King Zahir Shah in 1973 and launched modernist reforms, triggering opposition from a growing Islamist movement. His crackdown on Islamists forced many—including future

mujahedeen leaders—to flee to Pakistan, where they gained support from Pakistan because of Dawood’s support for Pashtunistan and Baloch separatists. (Nawaz, 2008)

An Afghan cell was created in Pakistan foreign office in July 1973. Between 1973 and 1977, Afghanistan and Pakistan fought what can best be described as a low-intensity proxy war. Sardar Muhammad Dawood supported Baloch rebels in Pakistan, while Pakistan backed the Afghan Islamist insurgents based in Peshawar (Haqqani, Pakistan between Mosque and military, 2005 ). It reflected the long term Pakistani interest in the affairs of Afghanistan.

When the Soviet troops moved into Afghanistan, the military dictator of Pakistan General Zia-ul-Haq established a chain of Deeni Madaris along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The objective was to create a body of religious oriented students who would fight the Soviet troops in Afghanistan (Roy, 2014).

To secure strategic depth and a friendly regime in Afghanistan, Pakistan supported various mujahedeen factions during the Soviet war and later backed the Taliban—both overtly and covertly after the end of Soviet war till 9/11 attacks. Whole of Pakistan involvement in Afghanistan is only one major rationale to deny India influence in Kabul to prevent encirclement and support for regimes and groups friendly to its Pakistan’s interests.

## **2. Muslim Countries and Pan-Islamism:**

Pakistan has emphasized its Muslim identity since its independence. In early years of independence Pakistan has made several attempts to organize Muslim countries into some kind of grouping to secure political, economic, and diplomatic objectives (Baba, 2023).

Pakistan pan Islamism is a two fold strategy rooted in realist thinking. First Pakistan wanted to create a distinct identity for itself separate from India based on Islam and, to prevent any form of cultural or civilizational reabsorption, and to create unity in its heterogeneous society compromising various ethnicities. This can only be done by closer and cordial relations with Muslim world and their acceptance and legitimacy. Secondly Pakistan wanted military and economic parity with India, for which it need political, military, and diplomatic support from the Muslim world. Thus, for Pakistan, pan-Islamism has been about seeking security through military alliances and economic development (Akbarzadeh, 2023).

Pakistan had achieved some limited diplomatic, economic, and military gains from its pan-Islamist orientation and involvement in OIC. Like Islamic development bank has financed over 1200 projects, including railway rebuilding in Pakistan. In 1994, the IDB partially financed the Ghazi

Barotha Power Project, contributing USD 200,000 (Akbarzadeh, 2023)

Pakistan has also benefitted from OIC support for its Kashmir stance and many Muslim countries have given loans, grants concessional oil purchase and even financed Pakistan's arms purchases. But pan Islamism has limitation's, many Muslim countries have close relations and economic collaboration with India, some often don't view India with a Pakistani lens, and some even prioritize there Indian relations over those with Pakistan.

### **3. China – Strategic Counterbalance:**

Pakistanis strategic cooperation with China is driven by its necessity to balance India and gain political, economic, military and diplomatic support. Following the logic of legendary Indian strategist Kautilya and his Mandala theory, China and Pakistan have emerged as natural strategic partners, seeking to counterbalance India (Harsh V. Pant, 2025).

The partnership originated following the India-China border war 1962 in which Pakistan realized the Chinese potential and it was solidified by Pak-China border agreement 1963 and subsequent Pakistani disillusionment with their western partners, therefore Pakistan needed another ally.

The most important part of China and Pakistan's strategic cooperation is remembered in the form of China's support for Pakistan's nuclear development in the 1980s as it was crucial for Pakistan to achieve strategic parity with India (Azeem Gul, 2021).

Today, Pakistan and China enjoys a comprehensive strategic partnership, there collaboration in joint defense production and Chinese defense imports are crucial for Pakistan defense. According to SIPRI, China accounted for 81% of Pakistan's military imports from 2019–2024, making Islamabad the main recipient of Chinese arms (Mathew George, March 2025).

In economic domain, the relations are in the era of economic interdependence since the beginning of CPEC (China Pakistan economic corridor). It is a flagship project which will contribute to infrastructure development, improved logistics and defense capabilities of Pakistan as it would make defense mobilization much quicker.

To sum up Pakistan China collaboration had gone beyond the military exercises to the recent battlefield coordination, and intelligence sharing as exemplified by Chinese help in recent Indo-Pak clashes in May 2025. This relationship shows how Pakistan has utilized its China relations to achieve strategic parity with India and compensate its conventional inferiority.

### **4. United States – Tactical Ally:**

The tragic partition, its aftershocks, the hostile statements made by Indian leaders, disputes over the distribution of financial assets, and India's hegemonic actions convinced Pakistani leaders that they were surrounded by a hostile environment. Believing that, to withstand the threat posed by a larger India, Pakistan needed strong military and economic resources, they began seeking alliances to counterbalance a hostile India (Sattar A, 2010).

The early decades of Pakistan's relationship with the US revolved around a singular objective. The US wanted to maintain its hegemony in the region to curtail the expansion of communism while Pakistan looked at the US as a means to overcome its security dilemma and balance of power vis-a-vis India. Pakistan's security dilemma and Washington's strategic objectives gave rise to the element of dependency as the building block of Pak-US relationship. Low level of economic development pushed Pakistan to rely and depend on the US not just to overcome its strategic shortcomings but also to sustain itself economically. As a result, Pakistan got compelled to move into the US bloc in order to meet its security needs, which led to its membership of Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) (Khan, 2020).

Pak-US relationship saw very ups and downs due to converging interests and overemphasized mutual expectations. Relationship strengthened during Afghan war where Pakistan became frontline state against communism and joined US in anti communist actions. Pakistan decision to side with USA was influenced by Pakistan desire to sought strategic depth in Afghanistan in order to prevent encirclement by India, and also to get military, economic, and diplomatic support from USA to compensate Pakistan's material weakness in comparison to India.

Pakistan again choose to side with USA after 9/11 with similar reasons to get military and economic support as well as to protect its strategic investment in Taliban covertly.

Despite periods of cooperation, Pakistan's alliance with the U.S. has been marred by mistrust and conflicting priorities. While Pakistan sought steady backing against India, Washington often favoured broader regional stability and closer ties with New Delhi. As a result, the relationship remains tactical and transactional, leading Pakistan to increasingly rely on China and the Muslim world for support.

### **Limitations of India centric foreign policy:**

Pakistan India centric foreign policy has significant limitations, although it had short term gains but it has also lead to long term strategic dependencies.

It has resulted in missed economic opportunities with India. India is region's largest market, it is best for comparatively cheap and affordable imports, and have huge potential for Pakistan exports. Pakistan-India trade has the potential to grow from \$2 billion to \$37 billion. However, political and non-tariff barriers continued to impede trade between the two countries (Sher Ali Kakar, 2023).

Pakistan's India-centric foreign policy has created overdependence on few actors. Over 81% of its defense imports come from China, causing a trade imbalance, while reliance on Gulf aid and U.S. support continues. Globally, Pakistan's alleged involvement in terrorism in Indian—held Kashmir—framed domestically as a security response to India—damaged its international image, led to its placement on the FATF grey list, and discouraged foreign investment. Regionally, Indo-Pak tensions have paralyzed SAARC, unlike Europe's success with the EU. Most critically, constant counterbalancing of India has forced Pakistan to prioritize defense over development, with huge budget allocations to the military at the expense of progress. Thus, the policy has compromised Pakistan's economy, image, and growth.

### **Recommendations:**

Pakistan's India-centric foreign policy needs recalibration to address changing global and regional dynamics. Pakistan should treat India as a market for Pakistani goods and industries rather than solely as an adversary, maintaining trade even during political tensions. Foster deep trade links so that both Pakistan and India become economically reliant on each other, making war an unaffordable option and pushing both nations toward peaceful dispute resolution. Pakistan must work to initiate Indian transit trade to central Asian markets to build economic interdependence to ensure Pakistan get leverage over India, once the Indian reliance is developed on low cost Pakistan transit routes and Indian businesses and industries become reliant on Pakistan then it would increase Pakistan's bargaining power offering leverage on political disputes, controlling India's regional mobility, and promoting long-term peace.

Pakistan should also strengthen its multilateral engagement in SAARC, SCO, and other multilateral forums and should stop looking everything from an Indian lens, Indo-Pak collaboration in SAARC can result in immense benefits for all South Asian region, but it can only be done by Pakistan shift from security first to economy first approach by prioritizing trade, investment, technological development, and regional integration as main foreign policy goals.

Pakistan should also maintain strategic balance in its great power relations to avoid over reliance on one. Additionally Pakistan should also diversify its diplomatic and economic partnership reducing reliance on limited partners and strengthening its ties with South East Asian and Central Asian countries beyond its Indian influenced relations with China, US and the Muslim world.

### **Conclusion:**

Pakistan's foreign policy has been persistently shaped and influenced by its existential fear of India, influencing its relationships with Afghanistan, Muslim countries, China, and the United States, and

creating a security-centric strategic culture that has both advanced and constrained its national interests. Pakistan's each major relationship have been designed to help Pakistan secure strategic depth against India (involvement in Afghanistan), break away from the shared history with India (cordial relations with Muslim world and emphasize on Islamic identity), contain and achieve parity with India (alliances with USA and partnership with China to gain military, economic, and diplomatic support). Though beneficial to Pakistan, symbolically and in the economic and military fields, these ties have rarely helped Pakistan resolve its basic fear. Pakistan's international partners have consistently refused to view India from Pakistan's perspective.

Pakistan's India centric foreign policy has significant limitations it has led to long term dependence on external actors, resulted in missed economic opportunities of trade with India which has the potential to grow from \$2 billion to \$37 billion. It has paralyzed regionalism in South Asia, if promoted then it will have immense benefits for whole region. (And also this paralyzation sacrificed Pakistan development for defense.)

Pakistan must stop to view everything from an Indian lens and should promote regionalism, strengthen multilateral engagement, reduce reliance on limited partners, and promote economic interdependence with India to make war costly and promote peaceful dispute resolution.

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# From Terror to Tensions: The 2025 Pak-India War and Geopolitical Reset



## **Abstract:**

*The 2025 Pakistan-India conflict, sparked by the deadly Pahalgam attack, ushered in a new episode of regional hostility, diplomatic fallout, and international attention. It was not only a traditional military confrontation but a multi-dimensional geopolitical episode involving water crises, surgical strikes, information warfare, and global diplomatic reshuffling. The fast escalation from a terror incident to near war conditions challenged regional stability and put long standing treaties, such as the Indus Waters Treaty, at high risk. Two critical military operations, India's Operation Sindoor and Pakistan's counter Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos altered perceptions of capability and resolve on both sides. While the global media played a key role in shaping narratives, the eventual ceasefire, facilitated by international mediation, marked a strategic turning point. Pakistan emerged diplomatically strengthened, while India faced criticism and diplomatic setbacks. This article, rooted in primary and secondary sources, evaluates the conflict's origin, conduct, and consequences while analyzing how it reset the geopolitical dynamics of South Asia.*

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## **Introduction:**

The relations of India and Pakistan has been tense and conflict-driven since both countries became independent in August 1947. The underlying causes of their rivalry lie in the violent partition of British India, territorial disputes notably over the Kashmir region and opposing national identities. Over the decades, these differences have led to many full-scale wars (1947–48, 1965, 1971, and 1999) as well as many border clashes and diplomatic standoffs. While there have been moments of dialogue and joint efforts, like Lahore Declaration in 1999 or trade talks in the early 2010s, these have often been derailed by fresh outbreaks of violence or political alienation .

The Kashmir dispute particularly, has remained the most perilous flashpoint. Located in the Himalayas and asserted by both nations, it has been the place of insurgencies, military positioning, and repeated terror attacks. Even when the guns have been silent along the Line of Control (LoC), the political discourse and military alertness on both sides have kept insecurities high. International mediation has occasionally helps ease crises, but no lasting resolution has reached.

In this long-standing context of antagonism, 2025 saw another sharp intensification. On April 22, the serene tourist town of Pahalgam in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir was attacked by a deadly suicide bombing, killing scores of Indian soldiers and civilians. The attack shocks India and quickly became the center of a intense political and media storm. Indian official alleged Pakistan-based militant groups of planing the bombing, Pakistan denied any engagment and offered international investigations to elucidate its position.

What followed moved far beyond a simple interaction of threats. Within weeks, the situation widened into complicated and multifaceted confrontation. It included aggressive military actions on both sides, high-stakes diplomatic negotiations, threats to the long standing Indus Water Treaty, unified media campaigns, and strong responses from the whole global community. This was not just another border skirmish, it was an emergency that tested the political will, military capabilities, and diplomatic expertise of both countries .

Unlike earlier confrontations, the 2025 crisis ends with a notable shift in regional perceptions. Pakistan's calculated responses focus on international law, and diplomatic outreach earned it increased global reliability. India, on the other hand, faced condemnation over civilian casualties, its approach to water diplomacy (IWT) and its denial to allow neutral investigations. This article traces the events from the Pahalgam attack to the eventual cesafire, examining how this episode became more than a security crisis it became what many analysts now call a “geopolitical reset” in South Asia.

### **Pahalgam Attack:**

On April 22, 2025, the peaceful town of Pahalgam, place of the Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir area, became the site of a devastating terror attack. A convoy transporting paramilitary staff was attacked by a suicide bomber using an blast-laden vehicle. The explosion resulted in the deaths of 26 civilians and left over 20 wounded. The attack bore a terrifying similariy to the 2019 Pulwama attack and was quickly criticize across the political range in India.

Indian intelligence services linked the attack to Jaish-e-Mohammed, allegedly operating with safe havens in Pakistan—a claim immediately and strongly refuted by the Pakistani Foreign Office.

According to the Pacific Forum (2025), India's initial response was not only shaped by the strategic shock but also by political strains from within Prime Minister Modi's BJP-led coalition. Calls for counter attack surged across Indian media.

Pakistan responded with moderation, offering UN-overseen investigations and suggesting third party mediation. However, frictions continued to escalate.

### **The Indus Waters Treaty Crisis:**

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), signed in 1960 between India and Pakistan under the auspices of the World Bank, is often hailed as one of the most resilient examples of cooperation between adversarial states. Despite three major wars and countless border skirmishes, the treaty has remained intact for over six decades. It allocates the three eastern rivers Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej to India, and the three western rivers Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab to Pakistan, with India permitted limited use of western waters for non-consumptive purposes such as irrigation, hydroelectric power, and transport (United Nations, 1960).

In the wake of the 2025 Pahalgam attack, India began signaling its intent to reconsider the IWT, invoking national security and regional stability concerns. Senior Indian ministers hinted at “reassessing the generosity” of the treaty in light of what they alleged to be Pakistan's continued support for cross-border terrorism. This marked the first time India linked water access directly to counterterrorism policy—a significant deviation from its long-standing position of treating the IWT as apolitical and technical in nature (Britannica, n.d.).

India's rhetoric soon translated into action. On May 3, 2025, Indian media reported that New Delhi had accelerated the clearance of three upstream hydroelectric projects on the Chenab River—Kiru, Pakal Dul, and Bursar. While these projects were legally permissible under the treaty's limited-use provisions, their sudden approval during a time of heightened conflict alarmed Islamabad. Pakistan feared that India's upstream storage capacity could one day be manipulated to control water flows downstream, threatening its agriculture-dependent economy and national water security. As Abdul Sattar (2010) notes, Pakistan has historically regarded the western rivers as its lifeline, with any tampering interpreted as an existential threat.

Reacting swiftly, Pakistan's Foreign Office issued a diplomatic demarche to the Indian High Commission in Islamabad and simultaneously appealed to the World Bank—the IWT's guarantor—to intervene. Pakistan's position was that any unilateral modification or interpretation of the treaty terms, especially during a conflict, would constitute a breach of international law. The Pakistani media, civil society, and government launched a coordinated campaign warning of “water warfare,” a

term that began trending globally (Dawn, 2025).

At the United Nations, Pakistan's Ambassador addressed an emergency session of the Security Council, framing India's actions as not only a violation of bilateral trust but a potential crime against environmental stability. China and Turkey echoed Pakistan's concerns, with Beijing even hinting at supporting Islamabad in a legal challenge if the matter escalated (The Diplomat, 2025).

India, for its part, attempted to downplay the developments. Indian officials insisted that no violations had occurred and that their actions were within the scope of permissible water use under the treaty. However, the political framing of water as a strategic tool—repeated in speeches by Indian leaders—undermined New Delhi's argument. As Aparna Pande (2020) observes, India's evolving foreign policy in recent years has been more assertive and nationalist, often prioritizing short-term strategic posturing over long-term institutional commitments.

The situation escalated further when Indian think tanks began circulating white papers advocating for “rebalancing water entitlements” to reflect India's growing need for water and energy in light of population growth and climate change. These arguments were interpreted in Pakistan as pretexts for treaty abrogation. The fear that India could “turn off the taps” gained ground, especially in Punjab and Sindh provinces, where livelihoods are closely tied to river irrigation systems fed by the Indus basin.

International actors, including the World Bank, United Arab Emirates, and United States, mediated to defuse the crisis. In mid-May, special delegates from the UAE met with both Indian and Pakistani officials, leading to a joint technical commission being proposed suggested to revisit issues about dam designs and water flow supervision. While this mechanism temporarily eased tensions, the strategic fallout had already been done: for the first time in 65 years, the IWT was seen not as a symbol of stability but as a tool of coercive diplomacy.

This development has triggered many to call for an update of the IWT agreement, to tackle new obstacles such as environmental shifts, glacier melt, upstream water storage, and new innovations like satellite monitoring. Experts now warn that water—once a rare area of bilateral collaboration—may become the next battleground in South Asia's hybrid conflict environment.

In hindsight, the 2025 crisis around the Indus Waters Treaty revealed how common assets can become tools of power politics when confidence deteriorates. It also highlights the urgent need for organizational protections and international supervision to avert environmental interdependence from transforming into geopolitical vulnerability.

## **Operation Sindoor:**

Operation Sindoor was a elevate aerial campaign that India launched on May 7, 2025, across the Line of Control (LoC). The purpose was to target what it claimed were militant training camps in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. More than 40 combat aircraft took part, including Israeli made drones, Sukhoi-30s, and Mirage 2000s. This strike was one of the largest to hit India in recent memory. India used precision-guided munitions and said it destroyed three key militant camps. The operation was presented as an important step in counterterrorism policy, according to the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT, 2025).

Soon after, information emerged that raised questions about India's story. Several of the targeted locations included civilian infrastructure such as roads, schools, and clinics, based on local reports and satellite images. Independent observers stated that the total number of casualties exceeded 100. However, Pakistani sources reported 36 civilian and 28 soldier deaths, while Indian officials claimed that over 70 militants had been killed (ICCT, 2025).

In Pakistan, the strikes faced widespread condemnation. Al Jazeera reported that officials described them as a violation of sovereignty and an unprovoked act of aggression. Pakistan's leaders promised retaliation and labeled the attack as an escalation that threatened regional stability (Al Jazeera, 2025).

Operation Sindoor was not just a tactical military move; it marked a larger escalation in the 2025 conflict. India presented the operation as a key moment in its battle against cross-border terrorism. However, it faced criticism for the civilian casualties and raised concerns about India's long-term strategy. The strikes gave Pakistan a reason to launch its counter-attack, Bunyan-al-Marsoos, which occurred a few days later.

### **Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos:**

Operation Bunyan al-Marsoos, Pakistan's retaliatory campaign, was initiated on May 10, 2025, as a forceful reaction to Operation Sindoor by India. This operation demonstrated Pakistan's shift toward a more active and technologically advanced military strategy in contrast to previous defensive actions. The operation targeted two forward airstrips in Ladakh and Jammu, three significant fuel depots, and seven Indian border installations, according to The Nation (2025). In order to weaken Indian defenses, Pakistan used multi-domain strategies, including cyberattacks on air traffic networks, electromagnetic techniques to interfere with Indian radar systems, and stealth drone incursions.

The strikes caused severe destruction: two Indian radar units and four artillery systems were destroyed, and five strategic fuel reserves were ignited. The casualties were also considerable. It was

reported that more than 120 Indian soldiers were wounded, in addition to dozens of dead at the forward bases that were targeted by the strikes (The Nation, 2025). While Pakistan did not write own casualties, independent assessments conclude that Pakistan's forces encountered minor casualties given the firm's precision and pre-emptive nature of the strikes.

In addition to the direct military results of it, Operation Bunyan al-Marsoos had larger strategic and doctrinal significance. Analysts characterized it as “doctrine-defining” emphasizing its focus on precision targeting, hybrid warfare, and credible deterrent factors. According to Daily Parliament Times (2025), the operation demonstrated Pakistan’s capacity to shift from a purely defensive position to one of a calibrated offensive stance to re-establish balance in the strategic environment. Lessons learned from the campaign highlighted the efficacy of combining cyber and electronic warfare with conventional strikes, providing evidence of Pakistan’s preparedness for future hybrid conflicts.

In the end, Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos did not just neutralize India's prior aggression—it also altered the narrative in the region. Pakistan showed strength by achieving its objectives, while ensuring no mass civilian deaths, thus improving diplomatic standing and demonstrating to both domestic and international audiences that Pakistan had both the will and capacity to guard its own sovereignty (Daily Parliament Times, 2025).

## **The Global Media War :**

Alongside military confrontations, the world was battling a narrative war both traditionally and digitally in several media spaces.

India had the humanitarian high ground at the beginning as the world's sympathies were firmly on India's side following the Pahalgam attack story. However, Indian aggressive rhetoric and preemptive strikes without an international mandate caused sympathy to shift monolithically in Pakistan's favor—even Indian western media commenced to question India's preemptive military actions which appear to have violations of human rights and sovereignty (see BBC, Reuters, and The Washington Post).

Pakistan executed a sophisticated media strategy. In *Paradigm Shift* (2025) authors note that Islamabad retained several diaspora influencers, think tanks, and UN affiliates to provide balance to India's media on strategic engagements. Key media talking points included:

- Offering third parties investigations of Pahalgam
- Do not break the Indus Waters Treaty.
- Highlighting Indian human rights abuses in Kashmir.

Several European parliamentarians voiced their concerns about India's actions, and Pakistan's

Foreign Office gained traction in Geneva and New York.

### **Ceasefire :**

After weeks of increasing pressure, a ceasefire was negotiated by the UAE, China and the USA on May 27, 2025. The ceasefire agreement accounts from Al Jazeera (2025) reported the following terms to the agreement:

- Both sides pulling back from positions on the front,
- No further strikes,
- A disinterested third-party would monitor movement in disputed areas,
- Pakistan chose to reaffirm its commitment to the Indus Waters Treaty,
- UN investigation into the events at Pahalgam.

According to Dawn (2025), the ceasefire was largely being upheld as both governments faced economic pressures and international scrutiny. Stock markets in New Delhi and Karachi began stabilizing and civilian life was coming back to some semblance of normalities.

While India's Defence Ministry presented the ceasefire as a tactical pause, Pakistani officials referred to the ceasefire as a tactical victory, attributing it to confidence that legitimate trust in Pakistan's peaceful diplomatic presence in the conflict.

### **Pakistan's Rising Power and India's Diplomatic Setback:**

The 2025 conflict signified a crucial change in South Asian geopolitics, as Pakistan successfully maintained its strength on the world stage and India faced even a rare, yet evident, diplomatic loss. In past crises, Pakistan appeared to be in a defensive posture, but this episode revealed Islamabad's ability to apply restraint, engage in proactive diplomacy and develop an advanced military strategy to change the regional narrative.

#### **Pakistan's Rising Power**

Pakistan's rise to prominence in the 2025 confrontation was based on the simultaneous projection of hard and soft power. Militarily, Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos demonstrated a new doctrine of a calibrated offensive rather than a defensive posture, reflecting coordination, precision, and sophistication in the technology used. In Pakistan's targeting of Indian fuel storage, radar, and forward airstrips, India avoided mass civilian casualties, demonstrating credibility in deterrence (The Nation, 2025a; Parliament Times, 2025) and enhanced Pakistan's reputation as a military power modernizing, and prepared for hybrid war.

Diplomatically, Pakistan took the initiative to honour the option of joint investigations of the

Pahalgam attack; reaffirmed its commitment to the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) and highlighted India's refusal to permit neutral monitoring of water sharing. This positioned Pakistan as a responsible actor allowing for accountability from the perspective of International Law and humanitarian standards. According to Paradigm Shift (2025), by actively coordinating its diplomatic efforts through the OIC and UN, as well as working with friendly capitals like Beijing, Ankara, and Kuala Lumpur, Pakistan was increasing its credibility as a responsible actor. The ambassador's framing of the crisis in highly visible terms in international media also received substantial positive media coverage - humanitarian and legal perspectives.

This diplomatic approach yielded concrete results. Global actors including the UAE, China and the US endorsed Pakistan's calls for de-escalation. The UAE then announced a \$1.2 billion infrastructure investment in Pakistan, citing its "stable regional posture" (Paradigm Shift, 2025). These outcomes made it clear that Islamabad had successfully turned a crisis into an opportunity for international recognition and monetary value.

### **India's Diplomatic Defeat:**

In contrast, India's strategy was marred by contradictions which undermined its credibility. New Delhi's initial sympathetic reaction to the Pahalgam attack was quickly negated by its unilateral military escalation in Operation Sindoor, which caused numerous civilian casualties in Azad Kashmir. Independent verification (which included satellite imagery) showed the amount of destruction imposed upon schools and clinics and led to international outrage (ICCT, 2025; Al Jazeera, 2025).

India also alienated international actors by politically manipulating the Indus Waters Treaty and threatening Pakistan's water security. The Diplomat states that India had created a troubling precedent and broke with decades of treating the treaty as an apolitical tool of stability. Pakistan leveraged this opportunity by raising the issue at the UN Security Council, with China and Turkey supporting its position, and casting India in the role of the destabilizer.

The costs of the international backlash were clear. India's stock market dropped 4.5% during the conflict, and important defense deals, like the Rafale aircraft contract with France, were delayed (The Nation, 2025b). A New York Times editorial quoted in The Nation even labeled India's response as "a diplomatic blunder" that threatened its global ambitions. Domestically, opposition parties in the Indian Parliament criticized the government for its "disastrous retaliation" and its inability to meet strategic goals.

Most damaging, India's goal of gaining a permanent seat on the UN Security Council faced renewed doubt. Its refusal to permit third-party investigations and its breach of international standards

weakened its claim to being a responsible global power (The Diplomat, 2025).

## **Geopolitical Reset :**

These events together led to a geopolitical reset in South Asia. Pakistan emerged as a nation that could blend military innovation with diplomatic restraint, while India, despite its military and economic strengths, faced reputational harm. The crisis of 2025 changed conventional thoughts: Pakistan was now seen as a stabilizing force, while India received heavy criticism for its forceful approach to diplomacy in an interconnected world.

## **Conclusion :**

The 2025 Pakistan-India crisis was an important event that went beyond just a military clash. This crisis marked a major turning point in geopolitics, highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of diplomatic strategies, legal frameworks, and media narratives for two nuclear nations.

In this conflict, arising from the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack, a transformation occurred that shifted perceptions. Pakistan's progress was characterized by restraint and smart diplomacy. India's path, however, was clouded by a series of setbacks, showing the limits of forceful diplomacy in today's interconnected world. Looking to the future, this crisis could provide a model for reducing tensions. It might even trigger much-needed discussions on Kashmir, the sustainability of shared water resources, and peace in the region.

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# Gray Zone Warfare in South Asia: Dynamics of India–Pakistan Rivalry



## Abstract:

*The concept of the “gray zone” describes activities that lie between peace and open war, where states seek to achieve political or military goals without crossing the threshold into conventional conflict. While gray zone strategies are not new, they have gained increasing attention in recent years as rising or dissatisfied powers—such as Russia, China, and Pakistan—use them to challenge stronger adversaries without provoking direct wars. This article explores the idea of gray zone warfare through different scholarly definitions, showing how it operates in political, economic, informational, and military domains. The study then applies these ideas to South Asia, where the long-standing rivalry between India and Pakistan illustrates the dynamics of gray zone conflict.*

*India, as the dominant regional power, maintains escalation superiority in conventional terms, while Pakistan, as the dissatisfied challenger, relies on gray zone methods such as proxies, irregular fighters, cyber operations, and information campaigns. The stability–instability paradox is central: nuclear deterrence reduces the chance of full-scale war but makes low-level conflict more frequent and dangerous. The article also examines the May 2025 Pahalgam crisis, which demonstrated how ambiguity, deniability, and contested narratives keep India–Pakistan tensions within the gray zone while still risking escalation. Finally, the paper argues that gray zone warfare in South Asia is both a strategic tool and a dangerous trap, since actions often spiral faster than intended under the nuclear shadow.*

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## Introduction:

The term “gray zone” first appeared in the 2010 Quadrennial

Defense Review (QDR). It broadly depicts multi-dimensional activities aimed to alter adversary behavior while remaining below the threshold of conventional military employment (Hoffman 2016, 26). Assertive Chinese actions in the South China Sea and its involvement in clandestine activities to tailor the international political and economic landscape to its own ends are also manifestations of gray zone warfare.

### **Defining gray zone strategy:**

A gray zone strategy can be understood as a set of efforts that go beyond routine deterrence and reassurance but stop short of the large-scale, overt use of military force. The goal is to secure one's objectives without crossing the threshold into open war. In simple terms, gray zone activity deliberately operates in the space between peace and war, where influence and coercion can be applied without triggering conventional conflict.

### **The threshold between war and peace:**

Although drawing a strict line between gray zone coercion and open warfare is difficult, scholars have emphasized that these activities take place “below the threshold of war.” Frank Hoffman describes gray zone activity as being “just below the threshold of aggressive use of military force.” Hal Brands reinforces this view, suggesting that gray zone coercion is “deliberately designed to remain below the threshold of conventional military conflict and open interstate war.” General Joseph Votel similarly explains that gray zones involve “competition more fervent in nature than normal steady-state diplomacy, yet short of conventional war.”

These views suggest that an identifiable threshold separates peace from war. Yet Carl von Clausewitz reminds us that “war is merely the continuation of policy by other means.” For him, the concept of “absolute war” exists only in theory, since in practice wars vary widely in intensity—“ranging from a war of extermination down to simple armed observation.” Conflict, in other words, always lies on a spectrum, and gray zones occupy an important middle space on this continuum.

### **Scholarly perspectives on the gray zone:**

Several modern scholars have highlighted this in-between character of gray zones. Nathan Freier insists that “gray zone challenges lie between ‘classic’ war and peace.” Charles Cleveland, Shaw Pick, and Stuart Farris emphasize that gray zones are found between “peaceful interstate political competition and open war.” Likewise, the U.S. Special Operations Command underscores that these challenges “fall between the traditional war and peace duality.” Collectively, these views highlight ambiguity and overlap, rather than rigid categories.

## **Defining conventional war:**

If gray zones blur the boundary, defining “conventional war” becomes equally important. During the Cold War, conventional war was often contrasted with nuclear war. John Mearsheimer provides a concrete definition of the conventional battlefield as “one on which two large armies directly face each other and, if war breaks out, directly engage each other in a relatively large amount of space.” Across the literature, conventional war is typically seen as involving three key elements: regularly equipped militaries, large-scale conflict, and states as the central actors. By this measure, large-scale state-on-state combat falls outside the gray zone.

## **The domains of gray zone conflict:**

Analysis of these definitions shows that gray zone warfare takes place across multiple domains: informational, economic, political, and military. Its defining principle is to remain below the threshold of conventional war while still exerting pressure. Common tactics include cyber operations, the use of proxy groups, and *fait accompli* strategies, where rapid gains are achieved and presented as a new reality before opponents can respond.

For this study, the most precise and comprehensive definition comes from the U.S. Special Operations Command, which states that gray zone challenges are “competitive interaction among and within state and non-state actors that fall between the traditional war and peace duality.” They are marked by “ambiguity about the nature of the conflict, opacity of the parties involved, or uncertainty about the relevant policy and legal frameworks” (Bratton, 2020, p. 42). This definition highlights the diversity of actors involved and the blurred boundaries that make gray zone conflicts so complex.

## **Thresholds, escalation, and constraint:**

Despite their intensity, gray zone conflicts remain constrained by their very nature. Most scholars agree that they operate beneath the threshold of open war. As Hal Brands observes, gray zone strategies are designed to achieve aims “without escalating to overt warfare, without crossing established red lines, and thus without exposing the practitioner to the penalties and risks that such escalation might bring.”

This careful management of escalation often involves “Schelling points,” described by Thomas Schelling as “finite steps in the enlargement of a war or a change in participation recognizable stopping places or dividing lines.” These points act as conventional thresholds that both sides can recognize, helping them limit escalation. Schelling further notes that “skillful diplomacy, in the absence of uncertainty, consists in arranging things so that it is one’s opponent who is embarrassed by having

the ‘last clear chance’ to avert disaster.”

### **Why gray zone conflict gains attention:**

Gray zone conflict is not a completely new idea, but in recent years it has become very important in global and regional politics. This is because dissatisfied or rising powers find gray zone strategies useful for changing the status quo without crossing the threshold of open war. Major powers like China and Russia, for example, use these methods because they want to revise parts of the international order but avoid direct confrontation with the United States, which has clear military superiority (Brands, 2016; Mazarr, 2015).

This can be explained by the stability–instability paradox. Nuclear and conventional stability makes full-scale war unlikely, but this very stability gives space for small, ambiguous conflicts below the war threshold. In simple words, because nuclear weapons stop states from going into total war, they feel more freedom to test boundaries through limited actions, cyber operations, proxies, or propaganda (Jervis, 1989).

### **The dissatisfied challenger:**

Gray zone strategies are usually employed by states that are unhappy with the existing order. This dissatisfaction may come from feeling that their rising power is not reflected in influence, or from a belief that the system is biased against them. For example, China feels that U.S. alliances in Asia and military patrols near its coast are unfair intrusions. Russia sees NATO expansion as a threat to its security. Such states do not always call themselves revisionist; instead, they present their actions as “restoring” past influence or “correcting” injustices (Freier et al., 2016). Domestic nationalism makes compromise harder and pushes leaders toward incremental gray zone tactics.

### **The Role of the Dominant Power:**

Gray zone conflict also depends on the presence of a dominant power. For example, because the United States has overwhelming military and nuclear superiority, challengers like Russia and China prefer not to start direct wars. Instead, they use ambiguous, deniable actions to push boundaries without provoking large-scale escalation (Chambers, 2016). The dominant power’s strength thus locks in the order, but also unintentionally encourages challengers to operate below the threshold.

### **Gray Zone Conflict in South Asia: India–Pakistan Dynamics:**

South Asia provides a strong regional example of how this global logic works. Since 1947, Pakistan has acted as the dissatisfied challenger. The unresolved Kashmir dispute remains the main source of its dissatisfaction. Because Pakistan is conventionally weaker than India in terms of military and economy, it has often relied on gray zone strategies such as supporting insurgents, intelligence operations, and ambiguous cross-border activities (Bratton, 2020). With nuclear weapons on both sides, Pakistan knows that India cannot easily escalate to full-scale war, which makes gray zone methods even more attractive.

India, on the other hand, plays the role of the dominant regional power. Its conventional superiority and growing global position allow it to uphold the status quo. However, India faces the classic problem of how to respond to gray zone provocations. If India escalates too much, it risks war under the nuclear shadow. If it does not respond strongly, it risks appearing weak. Its “surgical strikes” in 2016 and the Balakot airstrikes in 2019 were examples of limited responses, but they also showed how risky such actions can be, as Pakistan quickly retaliated (Tellis, 2019).

### **The Stability–Instability Paradox in South Asia:**

The stability–instability paradox is very visible in South Asia. At the nuclear level, both India and Pakistan avoid total war. At the conventional level, India’s superiority deters Pakistan from launching large wars. But at the lower gray zone level, Pakistan feels encouraged to act through proxies and deniable actions, while India uses calibrated strikes and information campaigns.

Events such as the 2001 Parliament attack, the 2008 Mumbai attacks, and the 2019 Pulwama bombing demonstrate how Pakistan (from India’s perspective) used proxies to pressure India without triggering full-scale war. Each time, India replied with limited strikes or diplomatic isolation, but then both sides de-escalated quickly, showing how nuclear stability allows space for gray zone opportunism (Fair, 2020).

From Pakistan’s perspective, however, these actions are not seen as “revisionist,” but as support for Kashmiri self-determination and unfinished partition. India, by contrast, views them as illegitimate terrorism that threatens its sovereignty. This clash of narratives is central: one side sees justice, the other sees destabilization.

### **The May 2025 India–Pakistan Crisis: Gray Zone Ambiguity in Action:**

The May 2025 Pahalgam attack, which killed more than 100 Hindu pilgrims and security personnel, highlighted how gray zone ambiguity works in South Asia (Stimson Center, 2025). India quickly blamed Pakistan-based militant groups, while Pakistan denied any involvement and argued that India was politicizing the incident.

Because there was no conclusive evidence, the crisis remained in the gray zone—neither side could prove its case fully. For India, blaming Pakistan strengthened its narrative of cross-border militancy. For Pakistan, denial gave it plausible deniability and allowed it to accuse India of unfair blame. India launched Operation Sindoor, involving limited precision strikes on alleged militant sites. Pakistan responded with Operation Bunyan al-Marsus, a controlled retaliation that avoided escalation but signaled resolve. International actors like the U.S. and China stepped in, urging restraint. After four tense days, both sides de-escalated without major war, but ambiguity about responsibility remained unresolved. Ambiguity itself becomes a weapon, letting both sides claim victory while avoiding decisive resolution.

## **Instruments and Practice of Gray Zone Warfare in South Asia:**

Gray zone warfare is a term used for strategies that lie between peace and open war. These strategies rely on ambiguity, deniability, and gradual actions to achieve political or military goals without crossing the threshold of full conflict. Many instruments are commonly discussed in the literature, such as the use of “little green men,” *fait accompli*, salami tactics, proxies, cyber warfare, and information operations (Hoffman, 2016; Jackson, 2019; Wirtz, 2017). While these ideas often come from European or Middle Eastern contexts, they can also be observed in South Asia, especially in the long rivalry between India and Pakistan.

### **• Little Green Men and Irregular Fighters**

The concept of “little green men” refers to fighters or agents without uniforms, insignia, or clear state connections. Russia’s operation in Crimea (2014) is the most famous example (Bensahel, 2017). In South Asia, a similar pattern can be seen in Kashmir, where unmarked militants and irregular fighters operate. India often accuses Pakistan of supporting these groups, while Pakistan describes them as local resistance movements. The ambiguity makes it hard to prove responsibility, and this uncertainty reduces the chance of immediate retaliation. Events like the 2024 Pahalgam encounter and the 2025 attack on pilgrims illustrate how unidentifiable actors complicate attribution and responses.

### **• Fait Accompli and Sudden Actions**

*Fait accompli* means making a sudden move that changes the reality before the opponent can react. This forces the defender to either accept the new reality or risk escalation (Mazarr, 2015). In the South Asian setting, India’s surgical strikes in 2016 and the Balakot airstrikes in 2019 represent this approach. Militants have also used sudden attacks on security forces in Kashmir in a similar way. During the May 2025 crisis, India debated quick military responses (Operation Sindoor), but such actions were risky because Pakistan might see them as an escalation. *Fait accompli* therefore works as a bold tactic, but in South Asia the nuclear shadow makes it extremely sensitive.

### • **Salami Tactics on the loc**

Salami tactics involve making small changes step by step, which individually seem too minor to justify war but collectively shift the balance (Wirtz, 2017). Along the Line of Control (LoC), both India and Pakistan have practiced this by carrying out frequent ceasefire violations, infiltration attempts, and artillery exchanges. These steps slowly normalize higher levels of tension. However, the risk is miscalculation. For example, a small clash like the March 2024 Pahalgam firefight can be interpreted differently by each side, leading to rapid escalation.

### • **Proxy Warfare and Criminal Networks**

Proxy warfare is one of the most visible gray zone tools in South Asia. Armed groups and insurgents in Kashmir are often at the center of accusations. India claims they are proxies backed by Pakistan, while Pakistan views them as freedom fighters. At the same time, India has been accused of quietly supporting groups in Balochistan. This shows that both sides may use local grievances to weaken each other indirectly. Criminal networks also play a role, by supplying weapons, smuggling, or spreading fear through killings and intimidation (Chambers, 2016). Their knowledge of local systems makes them effective gray zone actors.

### • **Cyber Warfare in South Asia**

Cyberspace offers anonymity and deniability, making it a useful gray zone tool. Both India and Pakistan have accused each other of hacking government websites, banking systems, and even targeting infrastructure. In the May 2025 crisis, cyber and disinformation campaigns were active in real time, spreading rumors and increasing nationalist tensions. Like in Estonia 2007, cyber operations in South Asia show how states can compete and cause disruption without open war.

### • **Information Operations and Narrative Battles**

Information operations are another central part of gray zone warfare. By shaping narratives and spreading propaganda, states try to influence populations and international opinion (Chekinov & Bogdanov, 2013). India and Pakistan both use media and social platforms to project their own versions of events. After the May 2025 attack, India quickly blamed Pakistan, while Pakistan rejected this and accused India of misinformation. These competing narratives drew in international actors like the U.S. and China, showing how controlling information is as important as military moves.

## **Critique of Gray Zone in South Asia:**

While gray zone warfare explains many actions in South Asia, it also has limitations. The India–Pakistan rivalry is not only about tactics but also about deep historical, religious, and political roots going back to Partition in 1947. Labeling all actions as gray zone may ignore these deeper causes (Arquilla, 2018; Brands, 2016).

Another issue is that gray zone strategies in South Asia often fail to remain limited. Unlike China's small steps in the South China Sea, South Asian actions frequently trigger retaliation. The Pulwama–Balakot crisis of 2019 is a clear example: India's limited airstrikes led to a direct Pakistani response, bringing the two sides close to war. The May 2025 crisis again showed how ambiguity, accusations, and calibrated strikes can spiral toward escalation.

Finally, the nuclear factor makes South Asia unique. The stability–instability paradox suggests that nuclear weapons make large wars less likely but encourage smaller conflicts. Gray zone warfare fits into this paradox: both India and Pakistan use it to compete under the nuclear shadow. However, the risk of misjudging thresholds remains high. This makes South Asia a region where gray zone warfare is both useful and dangerous at the same time.

## **Conclusion:**

Gray zone warfare offers India and Pakistan tools to compete without going to full war. Tactics like irregular fighters, *faits accomplis*, salami slices, proxies, cyber attacks, and information campaigns all play a role. Yet these same tactics create confusion, mistrust, and frequent risks of escalation. Unlike some other regions, South Asia's nuclear dimension and historical rivalry make gray zone competition especially unstable. For both sides, the challenge is how to use these instruments without triggering unintended wars.

The India–Pakistan rivalry demonstrates why gray zone conflict gains so much attention. Pakistan, as the dissatisfied challenger, uses gray zone strategies to offset its conventional weakness. India, as the dominant power, tries to defend the status quo but struggles to punish low-level provocations without risking escalation. The stability–instability paradox ensures that nuclear deterrence prevents all-out war, but also makes lower-level competition persistent and dangerous.

As long as Pakistan rejects the Kashmir status quo and India maintains escalation dominance, the gray zone will remain the default mode of their rivalry. The May 2025 crisis confirmed this reality: ambiguity, denial, and limited retaliation continue to define South Asian security, making gray zone conflict both a strategic tool and a serious danger.

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# From suspension to RE-engagement: US-Pak relations in Trump's first term (2017-2021) and early second term (2025)



## **Abstract:**

*This article examines U.S.–Pakistan relations during Trump’s first and second terms, emphasizing a transition from strict conditions to more pragmatic engagement. The first term featured aid suspensions and restrictions focused primarily on counterterrorism, which contributed to a climate of mistrust. In contrast, the second term opened up opportunities for dialogue in trade, security, and energy, driven by the U.S. need for stable supply chains and Pakistan’s strategic geographical position.*

*This article concludes that while there are opportunities for collaboration in mineral, energy, and counterterrorism, sustainable benefits for Pakistan will rely on value addition and technology transfer, effective management of Iran-related sensitivities, and a structured, trade-focused approach rather than dependence on discretionary aid.*

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## **Introductions:**

Since the 1950s, Pakistan and the USA have had a fluctuating relationship characterized by cooperation and mistrust. The US viewed Pakistan as a strategic partner, especially during the Cold War and post-9/11, and Pakistan received billions of dollars in economic development and military assistance. The US imposed sanctions in 1990 over Pakistan's nuclear program and a military coup, reinstating aid after 9/11 as Pakistan serves as a frontline ally of the US against terrorism, which further deepens the military ties. But Americans were frustrated due to Pakistan's selective targeting of militant groups in the war on terror. The Barack Obama administration recalibrated that partnership, and Pakistan received billions of dollars in civilian development and military assistance through the Kerry- Lugar-

Berman Act (2009), but declined after the 2011 raid that killed Osama-bin-Laden, leading to accusations of Pakistan's 'double standard.' Relations soured as Drone strikes intensified in the tribal areas of Pakistan, which caused domestic backlash and anti-American sentiment.

In this environment, Donald J. Trump assumed the presidency in January 2017, introducing an unconventional approach to foreign policy marked by his "America First" agenda. He expressed limited interest in foreign interventions, withdrew from various global agreements, and implemented strict immigration policies. His "stick and carrot" strategy involved offering incentives for cooperation while employing threats to discourage non-compliance. Besides this, President Trump, in his second term in 2025, is in a relatively early phase of transforming the rules of international relations in ways that are surprising for an isolationist president whose main concern is his ultra-nationalist voter base. He has used the threat of tariffs and the weaponization of trade to come down hard on everyone he believes is taking advantage of the US.

### **Rupture and Realignment of US-Pakistan Relations:**

Upon assuming office, President Trump's primary initiative was to withdraw United States forces from Afghanistan. The relationship between the Trump administration and Pakistan deteriorated during the initial two years due to allegations that Pakistan provided refuge to militants, particularly Al-Qaeda. The Trump administration adopted a stringent and overtly confrontational stance towards Pakistan, which included reductions in foreign aid and support for measures to keep Pakistan on the "Grey list" for terrorism financing. Nonetheless, President Trump acknowledged that a withdrawal from Afghanistan could not be achieved through military victory alone. Consequently, he required Pakistan's assistance, while Pakistan perceived this as an opportunity to improve its relations with both the United States and the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan has positioned itself as a conduit between the United States and the Afghan Taliban peace process, leading to a new phase of reconciliation in the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the United States. (Evaluating the Trump Administration's Pakistan Reset | Brookings, n.d.)

### **The punitive Dimensions of Trump policies:**

The previous administration approached its relationship with Pakistan through conditionality, but the Trump administration decisively shifted to a stronger stance. It suspended all security assistance to Pakistan until the country took substantive action against militants recognized as security threats to the USA. This suspension is not permanent and specifically excludes civilian assistance, as clearly stated by State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert. In January 2018, Trump boldly asserted in a tweet, "The US has foolishly given 33 billion in aid over the last 15 years to Pakistan and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of us leaders as fools. They have given the terrorist a haven, which we hunt in Afghanistan with little help, no more!" (Bloch, 2018). According to the

Congressional Research Service, from 2002 onward, total aid assistance to Pakistan has amounted to \$34 billion, with over \$1 billion allocated in 2016 alone. This clearly underscores the significant financial support provided to Pakistan over the years.

### **Diplomatic and Economic Hardline Measures toward Pakistan:**

During the mid-2016, U.S. policy toward Pakistan was increasingly shaped by congressional pressure. In the National Defense Authorization Act on Afghanistan, Senator John McCain introduced an amendment that sought to combine military pressure with political incentives — a strategy designed to impose costs on Pakistan while keeping the door open for cooperation. Around the same time, Senators Dana Rohrabacher and Ted Poe advanced Amendment 609, which, along with other proposals, placed Pakistan directly in the spotlight. These measures tied American defense funding to Islamabad’s progress in counterterrorism, particularly against the Haqqani Network. Failure to show “satisfactory progress” meant the risk of losing crucial financial support. The push went even further, with some lawmakers calling for Pakistan to be designated a state sponsor of terrorism or stripped of its major non-NATO ally status. The financial impact soon became clear: in 2016, Pakistan was slated to receive \$900 million in reimbursements, but only \$550 million was delivered. Congress blocked \$300 million, and the Pentagon withheld another \$50 million after the Secretary of Defense declined to certify Pakistan’s actions against the Haqqani Network. In total, Pakistan lost nearly \$350 million, highlighting how political and security concerns directly translated into financial consequences.

### **Multilateral pressure via FATF:**

In 2018, the United States, along with the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, successfully pushed for Pakistan to be placed on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list due to its failures in addressing terror financing. This grey-listing imposed significant economic pressure by restricting Pakistan's access to international finance and loans. FATF introduced a 34-point action plan that mandated essential reforms in Pakistan's financial and legal systems. The decision was influenced by geopolitical factors, with the U.S. leveraging FATF pressure regarding Afghanistan and India, highlighting cross-border terrorism. Notably, the move bypassed standard FATF procedures, revealing its political motivations. While this approach serves the interests of major powers, Pakistan continues to face structural challenges that impede its ability to fully comply with FATF demands. As a result, Pakistan remained on the grey list until October 2022 (Microsoft Word - FATF Oct 2022 Write-up (1).Docx, n.d.; Shah, 2021).

### **Impact of “stick” policies on US-Pakistan relations:**

The Trump administration's policies significantly impacted Pakistan's domestic and foreign relations, fueling anti-American sentiment among elites due to criticisms and aid suspensions (Ali, 2025a). U.S. officials expressed frustration with Pakistan's insufficient action against militant groups, while Pakistani leaders reiterated their dedication to regional peace and counterterrorism.

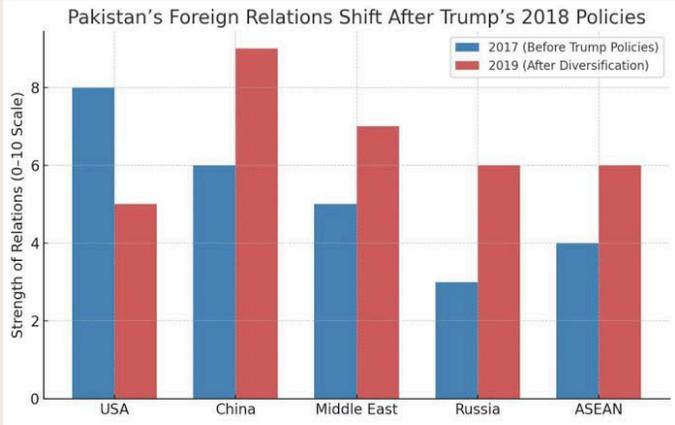


Figure 1.1: Sources: Shah (2021); Ali (2025); Council on Foreign Relations (n.d.); Brookings (n.d.)

As tensions grew, Pakistan shifted its focus towards strengthening ties with China and Russia, moving away from reliance on the U.S. This shift was evident in the enhanced relationship through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which aims to drive investment and infrastructure development. Pakistan also pursued military cooperation with Russia. In response to the Trump administration's business-centered approach, Pakistan sought to diversify its strategy and protect its interests in a changing global landscape.

These two graphs figure ( 1.1) and ( 1.2) illustrate that the relations and trade volume of Pakistan with the USA did not decline. But Pakistan efficiently managed and diversified its economic and political relations with such countries. Although Pakistan has not detached itself from the USA, it's quietly diversified its ties with other countries and reduced its dependency on the USA.

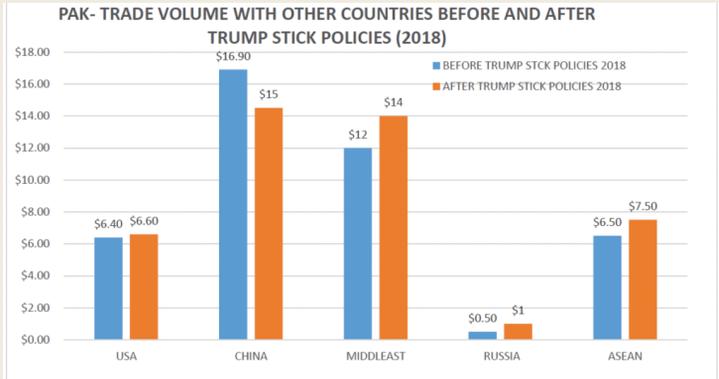


Figure 1.2

Afghan peace process was a turning point. After months of strained ties between the USA and Pakistan and a near-complete freeze on US security assistance in early 2018, the Trump administration has now gradually shifted towards conditional incentive, or “carrot” to regain Pakistan's cooperation regarding counterterrorism and the Afghan peace process. In July 2019, Prime Minister Imran's visit to the USA was a pivotal moment that transformed the relationship into a dynamic and powerful partnership, paving the way for a new era of collaboration and mutual benefit. The USA had accepted Pakistan's long-standing position that there is no military solution to the war in Afghanistan, and the USA should focus on recognizing the Taliban as a political entity in Afghanistan. Trump called for drastically strengthening trade ties between Pakistan and the USA and said the USA is the biggest destination of Pakistan's exports. Moreover, July 2019: At a public rally in Houston, Trump referred to Imran Khan as a “great leader” and himself as a “friend” of Pakistan—an unmistakable shift in tone and signaling all-around diplomatic warmth. Trump also offered mediation between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue. Trump also said to Prime Minister Imran Khan that the USA has never been closer to Pakistan than the current administration of America (Hashim, n.d.; “Pakistan–United States Relations,” 2025).

### **Strategic Re-Engagement in 2019: The "Carrot" Phase:**

During a meeting with Donald J. Trump in the Oval Office, Washington reopened the military aid plug to Pakistan within a week of Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit. The Pentagon has approved \$125 million in support for Pakistan's F-16 jets, including monitoring with 60 U.S. contractors. It also proposed \$670 million for India's C-17 aircraft, seen as a signal of U.S. ties to both countries. Analysts say Imran Khan visited to encourage Pakistan's help with the U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

### **Resumption of the military aid program to Pakistan:**

The Trump administration has confidently resumed Pakistan's participation in the US military training and education program, a vital part of the \$2 billion security aid to the country. The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program allows foreign military officers to study at leading U.S. institutions. Pakistan was suspended from IMET in July 2018 due to an abrupt directive issued by Trump, pressuring the nation to act against Islamic militants, which led to the cancellation of 66 opportunities for its officers. The U.S. military recognizes that these educational connections yield significant long-term benefits, and the Trump administration has acknowledged Pakistan's crucial role in the peace process regarding the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan (U.S. to Resume Military Training Program for Pakistan: State Department : R/Pakistan, n.d.).

### **Trump's second term in the early months, or “Trump 2.0” (2025):**

By the end of Trump's first term, U.S.-Pakistan relations shifted from punitive measures to reinstating the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, highlighting Pakistan's vital role in the U.S.-Afghan peace process. While promising, this new balance remains fragile and influenced by regional developments. The Biden administration shifted focus, viewing South Asia, particularly Pakistan, as less relevant after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. The emphasis on countering China in the Indo-Pacific impacted Pakistan, especially regarding its partnership with Beijing through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Upon Trump's return to power in January 2025, discussions about U.S.-Pakistan relations were reignited. His second term, known as “Trump 2.0,” has prioritized strategic, transactional engagement, emphasizing mutual benefits in trade, security, and energy.

### **The key factor behind Islamabad's success in winning over Trump:**

In March 2025, Pakistan decisively established a Crypto Council, appointing Bilal Bin Saqib as its minister. By April, the council boldly signed an agreement with World Liberty Financial, a company with significant backing from the Trump family. During a prominent crypto event in Las Vegas, Saqib praised Trump, acknowledging him as a pivotal supporter of the cryptocurrency sector. Moreover, General Asim Munir’s visit to the United States culminated in a productive lunch with Trump at the White House, taking place against a backdrop of rising tensions in the Middle East. The day after their meeting, Trump lauded Munir as “a very influential and great person.”

Additionally, a Pakistani official nominated Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize due to his instrumental role in brokering a ceasefire between India and Pakistan in their recent conflict. Besides that, Pakistani intelligence captured Sharifullah near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and extradited him to the US to face charges. Sharifullah was involved in the suicide bombing at Abbey Gate Airport, which resulted in the deaths of 13 US troops and 170 Afghan citizens. On March 5, 2025, the Trump administration thanked Pakistan and described Pakistan as a “phenomenal” counter-terrorism partner.

### **Collaboration in the economic, security, and energy sectors:**

In July 2025, Pakistan and the USA concluded a bilateral trade agreement, which Trump called a "historic" energy partnership, while Prime Minister Shabazz Sharif deemed it a "landmark deal.” The agreement was made amid shifting geopolitical dynamics in South Asia and rising trade tensions with India. It included the reduction of US import tariffs on key Pakistani exports like leather goods and textiles, while Pakistan eliminated a 5% digital services tax to facilitate access for US firms.

A notable aspect of the deal is the exploration of Pakistan's oil reserves in Baluchistan and other

regions, with Trump suggesting the possibility of selling this oil to India. The agreement also enhances the US-Pakistan cooperation on counter-terrorism, particularly regarding the Baluchistan Liberation Authority (BLA).

### **“Strategic bargain; from mineral wealth to regional leverage and diplomatic concessions”:**

Pakistan's increasing significance during the early months of Trump's second term (2025) goes beyond economic relations; it encompasses a broader strategic partnership. The recent surge in the US-China tariff conflict saw tariffs climb to 145% on each side. In reply, China pressured the US to reduce these tariffs by limiting exports of rare earth minerals, which are vital for electronics and aerospace industries. As a result, the U.S. is strategically aiming to diversify its supply chains and is now looking toward Pakistan, known for its large reserves of critical minerals. This shift is mainly driven by the potential of Pakistan's mineral sector. Beyond natural resources, Pakistan's location adds significant strategic value. Situated at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asia, and East Asia, Pakistan is well-positioned to support US efforts in limiting Iran's nuclear ambitions and countering China's expanding influence. The US might consider setting up air bases in Pakistan near the Iran border in Baluchistan to improve surveillance of Iran's nuclear activities. However, this transactional approach could also entail diplomatic expectations and concessions. Analysts suggest that the USA could pressure Pakistan to normalize relations with Israel, marking a notable change in its foreign policy.

### **Recommendations:**

Considering the U.S.'s growing interest in Pakistan's minerals, it's clear that numerous significant geopolitical challenges lie ahead. Pakistan is at crossroads and should focus on developing robust, independent policies that do not overly rely on U.S. support. The strategic landscape mandates that the country aims to forge strong partnerships with other nations, such as China, the EU, and others, to prevent an overreliance on the U.S. Any inclination toward aligning more closely with the U.S. could jeopardize Pakistan's relations with other crucial allies like Saudi Arabia and China, particularly in regions where there are substantial Chinese investments.

Moreover, minerals should be treated as powerful tools for strategic negotiations; they must not be handed over easily or without adequate consideration. Pakistan needs to establish clear, transparent, and open policies that not only attract foreign investment but also ensure that it retains control over its invaluable resources. The historical precedent set by the U.S. in resource-rich countries, such as Afghanistan and various parts of Africa, demonstrates that foreign involvement can often lead to conflict and instability. Therefore, Pakistan must invest in training initiatives and support systems for local miners, creating sustainable jobs and ensuring that resource extraction remains stable and responsible.

## Conclusion:

The U.S.-Pakistan relationship is far from consistent. Donald Trump's approach to Pakistan varied significantly between his first term (2017-2021) and the initial and early months of his second term (2025). In his first term (2017–2021), he employed punitive measures like suspending security assistance and pushing for Pakistan's placement on the FATF grey list. However, the need for cooperation during the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan led to a temporary thaw in relations.

In his second term of early months (2025), Trump's approach became more pragmatic, characterized by softened rhetoric and resuming limited cooperation while maintaining conditionality on security commitments. This shift reflected a transactional relationship focused on immediate strategic needs rather than long-term trust. Ultimately, the potential for sustained cooperation depends on how both nations address regional security challenges. The contrasting experiences of Donald Trump's first and second terms provide a foundation for collaboration in trade and energy. To effectively navigate this unpredictability, Pakistan must develop a foreign policy that capitalizes on its geography and resources, negotiating from a position of strength. The key lies in transforming short-term agreements into long-term benefits by diversifying partnerships, safeguarding sovereignty, and ensuring that cooperation aligns with Pakistan's own interests.

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**Semester: 7<sup>th</sup> (Evening)**  
**2022-2026**  
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**SECTION  
III**

**PERCEPTION  
IDENTITY  
NARRATIVE**

# Narrative Warfare: Who Tells the World's Story?

*“In war, truth is the first casualty.” — Aeschylus*



## **Abstract:**

*In the twenty-first century, wars are no longer fought solely with militaries and economies; they are increasingly fought with stories, myths, and narratives. The collective stories we tell about who is the victim in a case, who is the aggressor and most importantly, who is legitimate, and who is not, have become critical in shaping the current international order. As Joseph Nye strongly argues, “the ability to establish preferences tends to rest on the resources of soft power” (Nye, 2004). Even as Foucault states, every claim of truth is bound to power. So precisely, those who command the narrative often have the true power on the outcome as well.*

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## **The Rise of Narrative Power:**

From the very beginning, international relations have always been moulded by meaning-making. Benedict Anderson (1983) calls nations as ‘imagined communities’ which are held together more by shared stories and less by material structures. As we look around in today’s world preoccupied with social media, 24/7 news updates and artificial intelligence generating content in milliseconds, we draw the conclusion that the contest over stories is faster, fiercer and more global. We pick out that narratives have become more like weapons of legitimacy which are allowing states not only to defend their actions but also to project a certain level of moral superiority as well.

In order to better grasp the concept of narrative warfare, below are the real-time case studies for a better understanding.

## **Case Study I: Ukraine and the Contest of Legitimacy**

Taking the case study of Russia and Ukraine war which clearly demonstrates the potency of narrative warfare, Ukraine frames itself as a state that is courageously fighting for its survival and democracy. Nothing less, nothing more. While on the other hand, Russia justifies its invasion in Ukraine as a preemptive strike and a defensive act against the very expansion of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) or to be more precise, Russia intends to safeguard itself from the encirclement by West which is the legacy of Cold War trauma. In this context, if we closely go through the addresses delivered by the President Zelensky of Ukraine in the Western parliaments, we find that such addresses have the language of shared values and collective memory from history. And this is what illustrates how narrative in rhetorical terms can secure material aid in real time from the international community, too. In this case study, this is the edge where we point out the power of discourse; the constant resistance by Ukraine is not only about the military resilience; however, it exceeds to controlling global empathy as well.

## **Case Study II: Belt and Road, or Debt and Dependency?**

When we speak of the potential that any discourse in the world carries, it is to be noted that it is not only limited to wars or whatsoever for this involves the infrastructure projects too, such as the most prominent in the 21st century by China known as Belt and Road Initiative. BRI boosts the vision of shared prosperity and connectivity drawn on the Silk Road trajectory and a collective future in the international arena. The critics from the West, however, strongly argues against China's BRI for they assume it as an initiative which is far more darker than it seems naming it as "debt trap diplomacy." Critics emphasize that though China is portraying this huge infrastructure project as a 'win-win cooperation' for all member states involved however, this is at core level China expanding its control and most importantly, maximizing its power via economic dependency. To observe this from the narrative warfare lens, it is fair to state that the railway lines or ports matter far less as compared to the actual perceptions attached to it. And such perceptions, is what actually compels states to either embrace or resist engaging with China in the long-run.

## **Why Narratives Triumph Over Force:**

Narratives to all intents and purposes hold power for three major reasons. First, narratives simplify complexity of matters as the messy and sophisticated reality of geopolitics is reduced into digestible frames. Think of democracy versus authoritarianism, freedom versus oppression and so on. Second, narratives mobilize emotions. While rational arguments may persuade elites, compelling emotional stories move the public; it is the public that pressures the leaders. Third, narratives outlast actual wars. We see that long after treaties are signed and declarations take place, what remains only is the story; engraved in textbooks, monuments and national memory. As Foucault (1980) reminds us, "power and knowledge directly imply one another."

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Thus, discourses are precisely of this intersection because they produce knowledge that legitimizes power and in return, power reproduces those narratives as truth.

Yet, we notice that narratives are not solid invincible. They fracture subtly when the rhetoric framework collides with the real world. For instance, the narrative of the United States to a large extent is championing democracy; however, it is weakened by alliances with authoritarian regimes and supporting aggressive states. And in the same way, the ‘win-win cooperation’ project is considered as fishy when the member states struggle with real-time debt. Therefore, discourse or any sort of narrative is fragile. It acts like a polished glass that dazzles, yet the same narratives can brutally shatter when exposed to a propaganda or contradictory realities.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, it is valid to state that narrative wars are the silent battles that define legitimacy, alliances and futures for states in an age of multipolar disorder. Now, the fight is no longer merely over territory or resources but over the meaning and actual truth. As states vie for influence around the globe, it is to be noted that the ultimate battlefield is our minds and our perception of the world around us. As a matter of fact, it can be fair to say that wars will end, borders will shift; however, the stories remain, carved into stones of history. Therefore, the real victors of the twenty-first century are not those who master the art of power in absolute Sun Tzu terms, but those who champion the art of narrative.

*“Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.” — George Orwell, 1984*

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# Global Perception of Pakistan's Foreign Policy in Post 9/11 Era: Narratives and Shifts



## Abstract:

*This article explores the key global narratives surrounding Pakistan since the post 9/11, focusing on its shift and relations with Afghanistan, India, U.S, and China. This examines the backdrop of the War on Terror (WoT), China-Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC), perceived betrayals, disinformation campaigns, regional tensions, and internal security dilemmas.*

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## Introduction:

Post 9/11 was an era with greater opportunities, consequences, and dual narratives. During this period, Pakistan's foreign policy shifted heavily, faced criticism due to alleged duplicity and inconsistent strategic choices. Its engagement saw a mix of successes and failures, while it was beneficial at the same time these interactions complicated the situation.

It evolved from security concerns with Afghanistan, lukewarm relations with U.S in the so called War on Terror (WoT), India's effort to diplomatically isolate Pakistan, and deepening ties and complication with China under China-Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC). It reflects the complexity of Pakistan's foreign policy. This article delves into the misunderstood aspects such as misinterpretation, internal security issues, and external pressures that shaped Pakistan's global standing.

## 1. Pak-Afghan Fragile Relations:

The policy shifts between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been both complex and consequential. From opposing Afghan during the Cold War to supporting the Mujahideen and later the Taliban (1996-2001). Pakistan's strategic stance dramatically shifted once more with its alignment in the post 9/11 War on Terror (WoT). A decision that brought significant shifts in domestic and regional stability.

Pakistan's policy decisions, particularly post 9/11, sparked significant backlash. The Taliban grew dominant in FATA, changing lives there irreversibly. The roots of Afghanistan's longstanding resentment partly lie in Pakistan's foreign policy, where a single decision gave rise to multiple terror attacks. However, Pakistan feared an India-U.S alliance that could simultaneously threaten Afghanistan and itself, leaving it with limited strategic options.

Moreover, huge assistance to American war was provided by Pakistan in the shape of providing air base facility, intelligence sharing, and installing troops at Pak-Afghan border in order to resist Taliban and Al-Qaida from penetrating in Pakistan. Similarly, Pakistan's decision of playing front line role in GWOT was also justified under United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution no. 1373 and under Article no.51 of UN charter. As these UNSC could take military action against the state that refuses to cooperate US and its allies as GWOT is an important step to counterterrorism (Baloch, n.d.).

FATA faces the impact of Pakistan's alignment in War on Terror. Trade was disrupted, civilians were displaced, and services fell under militant control. In 2014, Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched to limit Taliban presence in North Waziristan. While the operation achieved some success, many military networks remained active. The most devastating retaliation came in the form of the 2014 Peshawar Army Public School attack, in which dozens of students and staff were killed and the incident was mourned internationally.

While Pakistan alignment in the War on Terror was controversial, it brought immediate economic relief. U.S sanctions on Pakistan were lifted by President George W. Bush. Pakistan secured a new three year, \$2 billion IMF program, and the Paris club extended debt relief. Custom duties were reduced, significantly benefiting Pakistan's trade and textile sectors.

American assistants also expanded beyond economics. Initiatives were launched in education, health care, child labor elimination, food support, border security, and law enforcement. Thus, despite the internal toll Pakistan gained substantial external support. Yet, accusation of playing a "double game" with the Taliban damaged Pakistan's global image and economic standing. Although Pakistan was compelled to join the war, its attempt to negotiate cooperative frameworks often failed. Today

Pakistan continues to face blame for attacks in Afghanistan or India regardless of its involvement. Some healing of past damage is now visible. As of May 2025, trilateral cooperation has emerged through the extension of CPEC into Afghanistan signaling a step towards economic connectivity and reconciliation.

## **2. India Discourse Pakistan a State of Sponsoring Terrorism:**

No country can survive in complete isolation today; states are interdependent across economic, social, political, and technological purposes. Pakistan too holds potential to rise as a stronger state particularly if it strengthens collaboration with neighbors like India and Afghanistan. However, Pakistan-India relations have remained with persistent distrust since partition primarily due to the unresolved Kashmir issue. Despite three wars, large scale conflict has been avoided due to Pakistan's strategy of "minimum credible deterrence."

Post 9/11 relations fluctuated sharply. India always blamed Pakistan of harbouring Kashmir insurgents and Taliban. The 2001 Indian parliament attack led to military mobilization on both sides but the fear of nuclear escalation forced a withdrawal. In 2004 both signed a "No War Pact" to prevent misunderstandings and resist nuclear tests. Multiple diplomatic efforts like the 2008 trade dialogue between President Zardari and PM Singh, were halted after the hotel Taj attacks. From 2009 to 2016, ceasefire violations, cross-border tensions, and terrorist incident hindered the trust. According to Khan (2017) in 2009, the Pakistani government admits that the Mumbai attacks may have been partly planned on Pakistani soil, while vigorously denying allegations that the plotters were aided by Pakistan's intelligence agencies. In January, Pakistani and Indian forces exchange fire across the LoC in Kashmir. In 2013, India and Pakistan trade accusations of violating the cease-fire in Kashmir. In late 2015, meetings were held between the foreign secretaries and the national security advisers of both nations, at which both sides agreed to thoroughly discuss hurdles remaining in the relationship. In 2016, a terrorist attack on an Indian military base in Indian-administered Kashmir, the deadliest such attack in years. India's claim that the attack had been orchestrated by a Pakistan-supported jihadist group was denied by Pakistan. Therefore, these insights shows us that the diplomatic efforts between India and Pakistan have been sinking with each year. Moreover, India's participation in multilateral organization like G20, BRICS, and SCO expanded after 2015, but its engagement with Pakistan declined. Bilateral summits were frequently cancelled, and the efforts of dialogue diminished.

India even started to set up anti Pakistan narratives in 2020. Under Manmohan Singh, India initiated a campaign to isolate Pakistan globally, painting it as a hub of terrorism. This narrative was perpetuated by the BJP government, which followed this strategy even more aggressively. India capitalized on global concerns about terrorism and strategically highlighted Pakistan's internal struggles with militancy, using forums like the UN and FATF to isolate its neighbor. India's covert

influence operations became more evident with the exposure of the EU DisinfoLab in 2020, which revealed a 16-year-long campaign by Indian entities to discredit Pakistan internationally. The operation involved creating fake media outlets, NGOs, and even resurrecting dead journalists to push anti-Pakistan narratives within European institutions. This elaborate disinformation campaign was part of India's broader strategy to marginalize Pakistan on the international stage and damage its credibility, especially in Europe (Commentary, 2024). Pakistan in contrast maintains these narratives as politically motivated. Despite being a victim of terrorism itself it is routinely blamed for regional incidents without evidence.

A well-researched account of Christiane Fair had revealed in early 2009 that Indian Mission in Iran was pumping money into Pakistan's province of Baluchistan. On India-TTP links, an Indian analyst, Bharat Karnad had acknowledged that TTP was an active Indian card in Pakistan. The RAW-TTP link was also revealed by former TTP commander Ehsanullah Ehsan upon his arrest in early 2017 (Tabinda Siddiqui And Arif Mahmood, 2020). Track two initiatives like "Aman Ki Asha" and Kartarpur Corridor offered temporary hope, but events like Pulwama attack, Article 370 revocation, and ongoing violence have kept tension high. Both states are trapped in security first, realist mindset. Recent incidents such as Pahalgam attack, triggered a conflict responded by both sides.

In response to the Pahalgam attack, India started an operation leaving no alternate choice for Pakistan but to answer back, that was tit for tat. Its retaliatory strikes reportedly downed five state-of-the-art Indian fighter jets, including those protected by the much-vaunted S-400 air defense system, and hit a major Indian missile depot (Klasra, 2025). They must have to shift toward diplomatic engagement, back channel talks, and cooperation. Joint solutions on issues like Baluchistan, CPEC disruption, and water sharing like Indus Water Treaty could prevent future hostilities. To avoid further escalation, both countries must halt mutual accusations of terrorism and resume constructive dialogue. Media narratives and strategic disinformation must also be addressed to restore credibility and mutual trust.

### **3. U.S-Pak: A Game Within A Game:**

For decades U.S and Pakistan ties have fluctuated between strategic cooperation and deep suspicion. Pakistan transitioned from a U.S ally to facing scrutiny for alleged double dealing during the War on Terror. Still, for U.S its utmost priority is its national interest.

There is no doubt that 9/11 tragedy was a paradigm shift event for the whole global security environment, not just for Americans but also for other countries (Muhammad & Muhammad, 2008). Pakistan's political, economic, and military institutions have undergone instability due to repeated coups and inconsistent policy. Despite lessons from Cold War, Pakistan once again aligned heavily with U.S counterterrorism efforts granting U.S logistical access, and intelligence sharing. Due to its

strategic location, Pakistan became crucial to U.S as Taliban turned to Pakistan as a safe haven. Though often misperceived narratives, still Pakistan has also earned global appreciation as well. President Musharraf faced an ultimatum of either withdraw from supporting Taliban or face the risk of isolation, leaving no choice but to be a front line partner. This shift triggered widespread militant backlash, including insurgency in Swat and terror strikes directly into Pakistan.

The 9/11 Commission Report states: Pakistan actively assisted: its authorities arrested more than 500 al-Qaeda operatives and Taliban members, and Pakistani forces played a leading part in tracking down Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, Abu Zubaydah, and other key al-Qaeda figures (Muhammad & Muhammad, 2008). Still, Pakistan maintained informal ties with Afghan Taliban fractions, driven by its strategic concerns about a potential India-U.S alliance. It views India as existential threat, and Pakistan has often leaned on sub conventional forces support due to its conventional inferiority. For Pakistan's military it was challenging to fight and stand against every single militant group in this counterterrorism operation due to its concerns about losing the sub conventional support at any peril. Therefore, the military designed a selective policy against them by categorizing them into two groups. First, with the low threat militant groups Pakistan's military remained neutral, since they did not harmed the state and its security in return, they were tolerated. The second was the high threat military group that were dealt strictly as they threatened the state and pursued their evil ideological goals first. The policy posture was not fixed against them but fluctuated with the changing scenarios. In long run, Pakistan's strategic choices were hedged.

George W. Bush administration believed that the Taliban vanquished in Afghanistan and in disarray in Pakistan would be dismantled by Musharraf (The Decades-Long "Double-Double Game," n.d.). From US perspective, the goal was clear to dismantle al-Qaeda. But under President Obama, confidence in Pakistan declined. By 2009, Pakistan limited its counterterrorism efforts while continuing to share some intelligence. The 2011 marked a turning point when the founder of al-Qaeda was killed in Abbottabad in a U.S raid, it strained the mutual trust as he was located near to base of Pakistan military. Nevertheless, the partnership had strategic gains, the operation in terms was consistent because Pakistan have dismantled terrorist operations as top al-Qaeda group members were killed.

In 2021, the Taliban regained their control in Afghanistan which ended the operation. However, the collaboration between the wars was never a failure, but the counterterrorism efforts were quite successful. Pakistan and U.S were able to capture the prominent al-Qaeda figure such as Younis al-Mauritani before he could execute a deadly plan in Western Europe. The ISI even prevented Afghan Taliban getting access to deadly weapons. Moreover, some evidences suggests that with the help of Pakistan the attack on U.S and its personnel were limited during this period. While Pakistan is not

fully recognized for its role in the War on Terror due to certain conditions, there is no doubt that the U.S was able to achieve its goal as there were no militant attacks on U.S since the operation started. So the counter terrorism operation was somewhat effective.

Recently, in 2025 the counter terrorism partnership appears to be revived once again as dialogue has been held between U.S and Pakistan. If committed strongly the engagement can promote stability and peace. Ultimately, the War on Terror was a layered game, where each side persuades its own agenda. Relationship succeeded tactically but failed strategically.

#### **4. Pakistan And China: Strategic Partner Or Regional Pawn:**

A friendship described as “higher than the mountains and deeper than the oceans”, but the question remains is Pakistan truly a partner or merely a pawn? This relationship has endured through decades of shifting geopolitics. This section focuses on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a shift towards economic modernization.

Beyond shared interests, both countries express a genuine desire to broaden their partnership. Pakistan deems its relationship with China as the cornerstone of its foreign policy, reciprocated by China, considering it a top priority. Mutual trust is evident in their support on crucial national issues, with Pakistan backing China on various global matters (*Pakistan-China-Relations-in-a-Changing-Geopolitical-Environment.Pdf*, n.d.). Launched in 2015, CPEC promises significant benefits in energy, transportation, and telecommunications, while also aiming to boost agriculture, industry, and technology. For Pakistan, China brought major switch in its foreign policy by standing as a strategic friend through largest investment and trade partnership. Though, Pakistan requires loans from China for the project the debt trap concerns seems constructive. There’s no way it can disturb the long term stability of Pakistan. Pakistan as a state never takes decision blindly but the benefit always weighs more than the cost. It is even clarified by Pakistan that the loans comes with low interest. The project outcomes are promising for Pakistan as it promotes the regional development, aims at overcoming the security challenges such as extremism leaving no choice for dependency.

Pakistan was amongst the first countries to join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As a pilot project of the BRI, the CPEC boasts of tangible outcomes in about six years of its life. First, it has helped Pakistan overcome its persistent energy shortfall. Some major energy projects have been completed in record time and more are in the pipeline, in keeping with Pakistan’s strategy to diversify its energy mix. Chinese companies have used super critical technology in coal-based power plants to prevent environmental pollution. Also, some key infrastructure and transportation projects, including the upgrading of Karakoram Highway and Gwadar Port have been undertaken. Work is also picking up on three priority Special Economic Zones. China has so far invested about US\$26 billion in these

projects, generating about 75,000 local jobs. Chinese investment in the CPEC is expected to grow with the addition of new projects (Pakistan-China Relations in a Changing Geopolitical Environment – NUS ISAS, n.d.). However, structural vulnerabilities threatens this partnership. Pakistan instability often requires bailouts from China. Western critics warns of a “debt trap” where default could lead to Chinese control over the whole project. Still Pakistan maintains that while loans exist if projects succeed future ownership transition will restore national stability.

Critics argue that media narratives are also under the control of China. The pattern followed by Pakistan media was from the Chinese media houses. They also covered the “10 years of CPEC” topic with the three major themes: changing landscape, backbone of economic development, and benefit the people (Rana, 2023).

The positive portrayal of CPEC by Pakistan was eye catching for Indian media outlets, narratives were set against it by calling it as a corridor of corruption. India even claimed that CPEC threatens and violates its sovereignty in Gilgit Baltistan which is seen a part of Kashmir.

A more serious challenge arises from Baluchistan unrest, but they are considered as fake as China calling it, denying the claims and setting it as a “western propaganda” and compels Pakistan to set this narrative. Media is a fragile tool treating it as a weapon and mishandling can result in serious escalations. The development work is being initiated in Gwadar but it faces continuous economic negligence, being rich in resources but still remains underdeveloped receiving minimal or no benefits. The tension among the people is persistent as the locals receive no profits and are deprived from the jobs. The disappointment took the shape of protest against the Pakistani government and China as their involvement is taking away the basic rights and peace of the locals. Most of them earn using fishing and border driving which was disrupted by the CPEC initiative. The benefits of CPEC must be equally distributed. Ignoring the demands of Baluchistan poses serious threats and risks to the prosperity, as they stand against as a pillar which can cause disruption for the project. CPEC can be a game changer, however the several terrorist attack killing Chinese nationals, then suicide bombing targeting Chinese engineers in 2024 is alarming for Pakistan. Rather than controlling Baluchistan through military, there is a strong need for joint solution in order to deal with the nationalist sentiments and internal strife.

The challenges requires well planned strategies and negotiations. Militant groups justify targeting CPEC until their demands are met. While the debt trap poses risks, the threat posed by Baloch unrest is a more immediate concern requiring urgent and targeted measure from the Pakistani government.

## Conclusion:

Pakistan's post 9/11 foreign policy struggled to balance strategic alignment while avoiding international scrutiny. Despite of pressures Pakistan stood brave against the heated political narratives. By prioritizing diplomacy, mutual trust, and strategic dialogue can reduce the intense relations between the states. Today, Pakistan is more focused on its social development as is gradually shifting towards economic diplomacy, moving away from security first approach.

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# Islamophobia In International Society Impacting Muslim Lives



## **Abstract:**

*Can we call Islamophobia an issue of today's world? What are the factors behind the misunderstandings between Muslims and Judeo-Christians and why are the anti-Muslim narratives rising in the world? Islamophobia is not limited to someone's personal beliefs but is affecting social activities of the people. It is because of Islamophobia that Muslims are not considered as a part of community. This article explores how Islam is seen as an intolerant and violent faith and how the happenings after 9/11 has changed the whole perspective of world's population about Islam. The article further delves into the stereotypical mindset of people that perceives Muslims as terrorists and violent individuals. Even the people who have never met a Muslim believes such stereotypes. The role of media in spreading false news against Muslims and Islam is well explained. Nations spreading Islamophobia and false accusations on social media are calling it 'freedom of speech'. The article also explains the effects of Islamophobia on public attitudes, policy making and the thinking of young people.*

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## **Introduction:**

Islamophobia is a multifaceted discourse, which distinguishes Islam and Muslims as a perceived threat to Western societies, ideals and security. This discourse tends to be based on stereotypes, fallacies and simplification, as well as divides most Muslims as one collective group that has an indelible linkage to extremism and terrorism, amongst other things (Halliday, 1999). The studies indicate that such representations are the causes of the wide-spread prejudice, discrimination and marginalization of Muslims in diverse courses, including education, employment and media (Allen, 2010). This discussion often disregards the dynamic nature of Muslim

community has played in society. It is important to note that by supporting fear and mistrust, Islamophobia may also result in severe impacts on the social inclusion and well-being of Muslims, and more generally societal unity.

The spread of Islamophobia in terms of the phenomenon momentum and outreach, is particularly alarming these days. In an era where Muslims are mistreated and are constantly being targeted because of Islam, Islamophobia can be called as newly emerged form of racism. The discriminations against Muslims in different sectors including education, healthcare and jobs, as well as the hate crimes against Muslims are all well documented. The gendered prospect of Islamophobia also comes forward when we see how Muslim women are being targeted on the basis of mode of their dress. The misguided and inaccurate belief about this is that these Muslim women are forced to dress up like this and that they need to be saved and protected from such oppression. Islamophobia has entered into the political spheres because some countries are making the fear and hate against the Muslims more official through laws and policies. This is indeed worrisome. The role of digital media in highlighting Islam in a negative way is revealed by the studies in Europe and many other states. The right-wing political parties use Islamophobia for electoral gain. To create hate towards Islam, the political groups in many countries (Europe and the US) associate Islam with anti-refugee and anti-immigration views. Western media platforms are fueling false accusations about Islam and its believers. But it must be known that Islamophobia is not an issue only in the West but many parts of the world perceive Islam as a violent faith and Muslims as dangerous people.

### **Eliciting Definition:**

If one wants to know the literal meaning of Islamophobia, it can be called as an excessive fear against Islam, Muslims, Mosques, Islamic Centers, Holy Quran, Hijab or any other thing that is associated to the religion. Islamophobia is a mindset. The attitudes of the people manifest Islamophobia. Islamophobic mindset becomes more visible through the violent actions of the people such as burning mosques, vandalizing properties, abusing women wearing scarf, or insulting Prophet or sacred symbols of Islam. Islamophobia does not always show itself through incidents but is identifiable through xenophobic perspectives, statements, and even gestures. One cannot notice the Islamophobic behavior and attitude of a person, since it can hide in the mind and heart of the people (Semple, 2015).

### **Islamophobia on the world stage:**

The reason behind the rise of Islamophobia is greatly influenced by several major events that take place worldwide. We have been observing such anti-Muslim events that have captured international attention and stirred public debates. Following are some of the notable incidents related to the topic.

## **1. The Rohingya Crisis; The culminating point of intolerance against Muslims:**

The Rohingya are a Muslim ethnic minority in the Rakhine State of Myanmar, who are victimized by violence, discrimination and lack of citizenship since decades. In August 2017, the increasing persecutions of Burmese authorities forced almost one million Rohingyas to flee their country. It led to the involvement of international community. The situation was called “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing” by the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Many Muslim countries immediately responded to the situation. As per Gambia’s claim, “clearance operations” against Rohingya had been started since 2016 and this was a “genocidal act” during those operations. These atrocities, including mass killing, sexual violence, and burning inhabited houses intended to annihilate the Rohingya from the planet. The denial of legal rights of Rohingya and supporting hate campaigns against Rohingya were the actions that identified Myanmar’s intent to commit genocide (Population Structure of the OIC Member Countries, n.d.).

On January 23, 2020, the International Court of Justice took a landmark step by directing Myanmar to immediately cease any acts that could amount to the genocide against the Rohingya Community. The court also stressed the importance of safeguarding all the relevant evidence and required Myanmar to provide a detailed report on its compliance within four months. In another meaningful development, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) described Rohingya as a distinct ethnic community indigenous to the State of Rakhine openly defying the long held Myanmar narrative of refuting their identity and citizenship. The court concluded that the evidence presented was sufficient, at least in preliminary sense, to indicate possible breaches of the 1948 Genocide Convention. It further warned that the remaining Rohingya in Myanmar continued to face grave threats to their safety.

This judgement was widely seen as a diplomatic breakthrough, especially for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and its member states. The case initiated by Gambia on the behalf of the OIC, reflected a rare and unified effort by Muslim majority nations to seek justice for persecuted Muslim minorities. The ruling of the ICJ not only had legal connotations but very strong symbolism of an international community being obliged to take action against mass atrocities and protecting vulnerable communities.

## **2.The Introduction of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) by the Indian Government:**

The Citizenship Amendment Act was adopted by India on 12th December 2019. The sole purpose of this act was to grant Indian citizenship to undocumented Hindus, Christians, Sikh, and Buddhist who had left their countries due to the violation of their rights and the atrocities they were facing. The Act granted citizenship to the believers of all other religions except Islam. Anyone entering the country after 31st December 2014 was a subject to deportation, as that was the cutoff date for citizenship

eligibility. The omission of Muslims was justified by the Indian Government claiming that the non-Muslims needed protection from the persecutions they faced, while the Muslims were already in majority in three neighboring countries.

In reality, the Citizenship Amendment Act could be called as an Islamophobic Law because Indians did not accept Muslims in their country and allowed non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The hunt for illegal migrants happened in Assam. The Government of India mostly questioned the citizenship of the native Indians. The establishment of foreigner tribunals and detention centers was accelerated by state authorities. The Indian government suspected hundreds of people of being illegal migrants and were then arrested. The ruling party of Modi made a bigger plan of promoting an idea of Hindu Nationalism which led to the marginalization of Muslims. Following the Hindu nationalist agenda, Indian Government declared 4 million people, mostly Muslims, of being foreigners by early 2020, that challenged the country's nationalist tradition (Segelbaum & Ruland, 2019).

### **3. Terrorist Attack against Muslims in New Zealand:**

Islamophobia has spread throughout the whole world and anti-Muslim sentiments have risen in the southeastern part of the world. The terrorist attack against Muslims in New Zealand stands as a prominent example. It happened during a Friday prayer on 15 March, 2019, when two mosques in Christchurch, Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre, were targeted by extremists, causing 51 deaths and 41 injuries. This event showed that far right extremists are linked with each other. The focus of European politics shifted towards spreading anti-Muslim ideas. With success in elections to the European Parliament in 2019, these far-right xenophobic parties linked arms to stir up hatred against Islam. Far-right groups have gain strength since 9/11, and anti-Muslim prejudice is not limited to one country now.

### **4. Repeated Insults against Prophet Mohammad (PBUH):**

Knowingly insult something sacred to Muslims is a form of Islamophobia. In September 2020, Charlie Hebdo, a French magazine republished caricatures of Prophet (PBUH). Publishing the same cartoons led to a terrorist attack in Paris in 2015, killing 11 staff members of Charlie Hebdo. This appalling act was done at the same time when court trial was going on for those involved in 2015 Paris attack. These publications again provoked extreme anger among the Muslims. The French Council of the Muslim Faith, the main organization representing the French Muslims, asked the Muslims not to pay attention to these publications in order to avoid violence. This organization also cautioned that terrorist attacks in the name of Islam go against Islamic teachings. The non-Muslims in France supported these publications and justified disrespect against Muslims by calling it "freedom of expression". President and Prime Minister of France also expressed support for these acts. President Emmanuel Macron stated: "There is freedom of press in France, and the president should never

judge the editorial choice of the journalist.”

Similarly, the Prime Minister Jean Castex wrote in a twitter post “Always Charlie”. President Macron unfairly targeted Muslims by introducing new rules. These increasing anti-Muslim sentiments throughout the France caused Muslims to start protests and boycott French products. The French Foreign Ministry said that these boycotts were caused by a small group of extremists, and they were baseless (Steiner, 2019). Soon after this, attacks began in France and French leaders made many efforts to stop Islamism.

### **Islamophobia in United States of America:**

The exaggerated fear of Muslims and Islam started in America after the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and this fear intensified after 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. Media played a big role in portraying Muslims as violent and aggressive people. Americans also lacked the basic understandings of Islam which increased their hate. The conditions of the Muslims in America today are very different from post 9/11. Now, Muslims focus more on their safety and Islamic scholars share safety tips with them, such as “Walk in groups after dark.” “Stay alert at all times” etc. Muslims are following all the tips to protect themselves, but the violence has still not stopped (ABC13 News, n.d.).

Different religious groups in America have different views about Islam and Muslims. According to a survey by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, the White Evangelicals are more Islamophobic with 44% expressing negative views about Muslims while 13% of American Jews express anti-Muslim sentiments. Hispanic and Black Americans have some positive views about Muslims. In case of White Americans, 40% of them have no opinion at all while the rest 60% are half-and-half with positive and negative opinions (ABC7 News, n.d.).

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) declared that Islamophobia in America is more systematic because the American charities gave \$125million to the groups that were spreading hate and fear of Muslims among the Americans. CAIR further stated that America is spreading Islamophobia through large groups pretending to be cultural hubs but in reality, these organizations are linked together, forming an Islamophobic network. Muslims also face unfair treatment of housing in America. With the same income and education, they are deprived of the houses in developed areas. In case of Black Muslims, the situation is even worse, they are 30% less likely to live in the areas that are safer as compared to Black non-Muslims (Campbell, 2019). Islamophobia has been observed in many ways in America, such as, when Americans deliberately wrote upsetting statements on Muslim-owned shops like “No Muslims! Go away to Hell,” or when Tim Hortons worker disrespected a Muslim couple by saying “Go back to your country” (Padilla, 2019; Daily Sabah News, 2020). These patterns illustrates that Islamophobia has deeply embedded in social, cultural and political lives of

Americans.

## **Islamophobia in Europe:**

In the past few years, there has been an upsurge of anti-Muslim sentiments in different regions in Europe, with major political reorientations. This is not a very surprising turn of events, as a lot has been happening in European countries regarding high levels of unemployment since the 2008 economic crisis. The chalice has elicited heated debates in these countries concerning immigration, foreigners, national identity and assimilation. Such debates have been accentuated by the influx of refugees in Muslim-majority countries and the series of terror attacks that have been taking place in the U.S. Collectively, these factors have fostered an environment conducive to the ascendancy of right-wing politician, despite the EU's advocacy for integration. As a result, anti-immigration groups and anti-Muslim forces have become extremely popular and antipathy toward Muslims has reached epidemic proportions in Europe.

A survey conducted by YUGOV (April 26 – May 1, 2019) among 6118 UK adults via Hobnob head's reporting showed that anti-Muslim sentiments permeated even among middle class and liberal demographics. Muslims were viewed more unfavorably compared to adherents of other religions. Roughly, 31% perceived Islam as a threat to British lifestyle. About 18% harbored intensely negative perceptions of Muslims. Among conservatives, 26% expressed strongly negative views of Muslims – the highest among political affiliations. Nearly half of the conservative voters (44%) deemed Islam a threat, with merely 22% believing it could assimilate into British society.

## **Islamophobia in China:**

China has a population of about 25 million Muslims, which makes up a small fraction of the huge Chinese population (1.4 billion). The predominant Muslim groups are the Hui and Uyghurs. Uyghurs are primarily located in Xinjiang, whereas the Hui are dispersed nationwide (Earnshaw, 2019). Until early 2020, Xinjiang was a focal point of global attention, which then shifted temporarily to Wuhan following the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **Situation in Xinjiang**

- Since 2018, international accounts have alleged that hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs were interned in extensive "re-education camps" purportedly to counter extremism.
- Reports suggest that detainees were forced to undergo political indoctrination and limited in religious beliefs such as praying, wearing Islamic modes of dressing as well as making foreign connections. Certain records observed fatalities and contravention of human rights in these detention centers.

## **Possible Ways to Combat Islamophobia:**

To combat Islamophobia is a complex multidimensional approach, which includes education, the change in policies, creating accountability in the media, and creating interfaith dialogue.

I. The most important thing is education because it was discovered that when people know more about Islam and Muslim communities, their prejudices and stereotypes drastically decline (Imhoff & Recker, 2012).

II. Anti-discrimination policies must be reinforced by governments and institutions, reporting of hate crimes should be encouraged, and general and comprehensive measures are needed to protect the rights of Muslims (UNESCO, 2021).

III. The aspect of media is also significant given that biased media freezes and media framing influence the public opinion regarding Muslims unfavorably; thus, to reduce the effects outlined, it is crucial that fair portrayal and an increase in the media coverage of the voices of Muslims should be fostered (Poole, 2019).

IV. Inter-faith Harmony projects and involvement of the communities can also be used to develop bridges and trust and alleviate fears of others (Ali, 2018).

V. On the international front, the United Nations has called on member states in an effort to work unitedly against Islamophobia, imploring solidarity and cooperation to curb religious intolerance as a matter of human rights (United Nations, 2022).

However, the problem of Islamophobia cannot be solved merely at individual level but should entail solidarity efforts on an institutional and international scale to establish more inclusive and respectful communities.

## **The role of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC):**

Through a dedicated unit within the OIC General Secretariat, which is the Islamophobia Observatory, such mandate is being implemented mainly by;

I. Monitoring events and incidents on daily basis; scanning the minds, public feelings, incidents, and everything that serves as possible indicator of Islamophobia.

II. Reporting to Member States on regular basis (Monthly, Three-monthly, Annually)

III. Initiating counter-measures against Islamophobes/Xenophobes such as initiating dialogue for projecting the true/peaceful values of Islam.

IV. Raising global awareness of the phenomenon; by spreading the basic tenets of moderation and modernization in Islam; and by empowering communities around the world to meet the challenges related to the Islamophobia (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - January 31, 2010 & UN Headquarters, New York 24 September 2010).

## **Conclusion:**

Between 2019 and 2020, Islamophobia surged globally, fueled by rising far-right ideologies, heated immigration debates, and skewed media portrayals of Muslims. This toxic atmosphere manifested in violent attacks, discriminatory laws, and restrictions on Islamic practices. Global events like the Christchurch massacre, Sri Lanka bombings, and Rohingya crisis further exacerbated tensions. However, the COVID-19 pandemic brought a brief respite, as mask-wearing became a universal norm. Amidst these challenges, Muslim communities, governments, and organizations have joined forces to combat Islamophobia and protect religious minorities. To build a more harmonious future, ongoing dialogue, inclusive policies, and responsible media representation are crucial in promoting tolerance and understanding.

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# From Question Mark To Exclamation Mark Problematizing Pakistans Collective Intellectual Health



## **Abstract:**

*Critical and reflective thinking is an essential virtue of humanity. To inquire, suspect and contemplate is to fit the definition of “Sapiens” meaning “the wise ones”. However, humanity, in recent times has quite lost touch with this mode of thinking and is engaged in what Aldous Huxley in his book *Brave New World* called “centrifugal bumble puppy” that means doing some activity so repeatedly that you lose touch with contemplation. Modern world projects such picture painted by Aldous Huxley, reducing reflective thinking to a luxury. In this essay, I discuss the importance of philosophy as a cornerstone in rational thinking, which interrogates the existing definitions of social realities followed by a brief overview of a novel on history of philosophy namely, *Sophie’s World*. Driven by curiosity produced by this read. I later on, analyze the reasons of intellectual rigidity in Pakistan. I employed Jack Snyder’s concept of *Strategic Culture* to explain how state cultivated seeds of dogmatism and Theodor Adorno’s concept of *The Authoritarian Personality* to explain the fertile ground provided by Pakistani society to embody anti-critical values. The limitation of this essay is providing practical solutions to combat this tailspinning of intellect and hence, I relied on offering idealistic solutions derived from history.*

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## **Introduction:**

There is usually a difficulty in defining or explaining fundamental concepts, for they form the basis for a plethora of things whilst lacking their own. A physicist is yet to find out the building block of sub-atomic particles, a biologist, despite having vast and extensive understanding of life’s working mechanism, would find himself wrestling with the concept of life’s origin, and a philosopher with the questions

related to the temporal dimensions he resides in.

What are the questions I referred to in my most recent statement? They are certainly, embedded in the social and cultural context one is a denizen of. What is life and its purpose? How did life begin? What is the normative framework for life? These questions have, since humanity's inception, troubled them. As if it were some natural law, wherever there is an intellectual vacuum, a variety of forces come in to fill the void. That has happened in the aforementioned case.

### **The Realms of Knowledge:**

There have been historically two major forces trying to fill the vacuum, with each of them trying to degrade the other while standing on solid grounds. These two are, namely, science and religious myths, forming two distinct realms of knowledge. Since beginning of humankind, myths have enjoyed an absolute monopoly over the fundamental questions, with each one being addressed against the backdrop of metaphysical sayings. Science, sed contra, emerged initially as a peripheral force, beginning conquest of the realm of knowledge and now enjoys a predominate position. That is to say, even religious myths and explanations are now subjected to scientific scrutiny. However, the ultra-rationalistic position of science has curated an existential and spiritual void in the most recent times which produced the result of populace retreating back to religion, and the former force is enjoying resurgence.

However, in the middle of these two realms, there in lies a no-man's land that derives spirituality from religion and rationality from science, serving as an exemplary "golden mean", to employ Aristotle's terms; who happened to be one of the pioneers of this no-man's land called philosophy. This no-man's land has the honor of being mother of all disciplines, since every discipline commences with asking questions that happens to be the brainchild of philosophy. Science answers the fundamental questions in the form of information, religion provides explanation in the form of myths; while the third invisible yet powerful force, namely, philosophy consistently interrogates both; the former on humanistic grounds and the latter on rational ones.

Moreover, as previously mentioned, the two forces of science and philosophy are on the quest of occupying the realms of knowledge, creating hostility between the two. This hostility compels them to employ tools to undermine each other, with the former instrumentalizing reason to debunk religious myths and the latter, metaphysical scriptures to prove science heretical. Philosophy, on the flip side, doesn't primarily express hostility towards these two and has a chameleon like characteristic, for its questions take a different shape with the march of time. Natural philosophers of Pre-Socratic era concerned themselves with the formation of matter, Plato and Aristotle with state, ideas and form; Machiavelli with strengthening the ruler, Immanuel Kant with the peace of Europe and Karl Marx

with the miseries of the working class in the wake of Industrial Revolution and subsequent increased working hours. The questions concerning a philosopher of modern times would be combating climate change, preserving nature, finding a “golden mean” to rival structural inequalities and not least, suspect the unchecked sprint of technological proliferation. This characteristic of philosophy projects the impression of how crucial it is and when viewed microscopically, the importance of contemplative thinking, a virtue which is slowly and gradually fading away.

### **Plot of Sophies World:**

In an effort to study the brief history of philosophy, I got my hands over Jostein Gaarder’s novel “Sophie’s World”. The story follows a 15 years old Norwegian girl who upon returning from school, finds in the mailbox, a letter from an unknown sender who questions her identity, purpose of life and origin of the universe. Sophie is perplexed and surprised at once to see this unexpected encounter. (Same was the case with me, and perhaps every reader. Have you ever interrogated your existence?). And it was not the end. The unknown sender who later turned out to be Alberto Knox, kept on sending questions like these to stir up curiosity in his student and follows it with an explanation by the relevant philosopher. In this manner of conflictual dialectic discussion, Sophie is introduced to philosophers from Thales to Karl Marx, scientists like Charles Darwin and Psychiatricians like Sigmund Freud. One might be pondering why the latter two personalities have been incorporated into the table of content. The explanation is, as I previously mentioned, in the struggle of the afore mentioned realms of knowledge to become the “Mr. Know it all”. The boundary walls of these realms of science, myths and philosophy are fluid and each of them put efforts in usurping the other realm.

While reading this novel and following the story, I kept on pausing repeatedly and asking myself, “Why couldn’t I think of all this before?” “Why am I yet to uncover the purpose of my life?”, “Why am I yet to know my inner self and identity?”. It was this curiosity that convinced me to dig for some insights about why I think that way, am I an exceptional case or not? Which led me to suspect the structure we live in and how culture shapes our beliefs and values. But prior to that inquiry, an analogy surfaced in my mind from the book which stated, in an attempt to explain philosophical quest, that the universe was created by a magician and the world is like a rabbit. When we begin our life as a child, we are at the top of this rabbit’s hole, staring him in eyes, interrogating everything else that confronts us. That is why we ask questions. But as life marches onwards, we lose touch with reflective thinking, go deep down the rabbit’s hole and adopt some definitions of social realities which we hardly challenge. Encouraged by this analogy, I pondered that I being a university student, may have well have gone the rabbit’s hole, hence unable to stare into the eyes of that very magician; I turned towards a class 5th class student in our vicinity with the hope that he is yet to go down deep into the rabbit’s hole and would still be able to stare in the eyes of magician; and asked him his purpose of life. His answer was simply unsurprising, “Allah ki Ibadat” (Praying to God).

Now there must be some serious problems in our society. A 5th class student, yet at the top of rabbit hole, has the same answer to a fundamental question as that of an undergraduate student and perhaps, as that of a 60 years old individual. Although my sample size is small, I can speak with conviction that the same answer would resonate in a larger sample. How could such homogeneity of thoughts exist in a population of 240 million people. Or philosophically speaking, how could be the essence of all these, pre-determined? There are some certain points of origin to this rigid thinking, which I would extend upon subsequently.

### **The Case of Pakistan:**

The country of Pakistan was formed, according to state narrative, on the premise of two nation theory. Muslims of the subcontinent, after having ruled ‘justly’ for 1000 years, felt “threatened” by the resurgent Hindus who had joined hands with the ruling Englishmen and sought revenge from Muslims and erected exploitative structures to “marginalize” them, and later, rule India and avenge them. This narrative, while instrumental in forging a sense of common belonging, had a string of problems attached.

When there is a large number of people living in a specific area having at least one thread in common, it reaps the benefit of instrumentalizing that singular thread in constructing a common identity that unites the populace. With Pakistan comprising majority of its population of Muslims, the thread of Islamic identity, albeit weak, was strategically employed to ward off the threats originating from geopolitical location and the internal challenges, on which I will extend upon later in my explanation of the term “Strategic Culture”.

But on the contrary, the problem that concerns us, that of intellectual stagnation, emerged. Wherever there is a large populace united by a shared sense and thinking, there emerges an echo-chamber. When you stroll back and forth, you find the same mode of thought, and your psychology will naturally attest your point of view with successive encounters and resultantly, it is consolidated. Consequently, any mode of thought that questions the existing structure is labelled as exotic and in the most exaggerated form, heretic. Worse, in the case of Pakistan, the very principles of “Islamic Unity” and disregard for individualistic ideas like rationalism are structurally and pedagogically discouraged. We can take, for example, Allama Iqbal, the Islamist philosopher and “poet of the nation” who is repeatedly quoted to consolidate the “indoctrinated identity”. Iqbal, in one of his poems remarked to express distaste for “heretical thought”:

“Don’t compare your nation with the nations of the West. Distinctive is the nation of Prophet of Islam. Their solidarity depends on territorial nationality. Your solidarity rests on the strength of your

religion. When faith slips away, where is the solidarity of community? And when community is no more, neither is the nation.”

This is a singular example of how first an identity is created and then, the literature is curated accordingly to accumulate support for that very identity. Ironically, Allama Iqbal was a product of Western education. This leads us to a question, why does Pakistan, founded by secular personalities like Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan etc., have such hyper-religious orientations. Here, I take a pause in describing the reasons for this intellectual stillness and introduce the term “strategic culture.”

### **Strategic Culture of Pakistan:**

An idea put forth by Jack Snyder in 1970s, strategic culture is defined as:

*“A series of general beliefs, attitudes and behavior patterns with regard to nuclear strategy [that] has achieved a state of semi-permanence that places them on level of “culture” rather than a mere “policy”.*

We can further extend this explanation by positing that unlike strategy, which is described as a rational calculation of means and ends, strategic culture suggests that no state comes to the International Chessboard with a blank mind. Just as individuals have past experiences that shape the onwards trajectory of their lives, so has a state. Every nation has a set of inherited traditions, traumas and myths that shapes their decisions, and this amalgam in turn, formulate the internal set factors of a state in form of strategic culture which is used as a lens through which policies are evaluated and these collectivity of beliefs are often self-justificatory. In case of Pakistan, the strategic culture is dominated by the experience of partition, perpetual rivalry with India and military’s role in national security.

Pakistan, after coming into being, was entangled within several problems and challenges. Weak infrastructure, low political culture and important geo-political position paved way for a relatively well equipped and modern, military to fill the void created at political level, hence transforming Pakistan to a “security state” from its very inception and resultantly, beliefs and norms were shaped in accordance with the requirements of a security state. Now, as previously discussed, the best instrument to curb democratic ideals, a significant rival to the security state, like individualism and critical thinking; and forge a national identity was Islam. Hence, since the inception, Islamic identity wasn’t a cultural expression rather a strategic resource to fight the perceived “existential threat” from India and the internal ethnic fragmentation, like that of [then] NWFP.

In the subsequent stages, Islamic identity wasn’t only organic but reinforced through curricula (as mentioned previously), media and sermons. It was less about cultural flourishment and more about

securing loyalty against “threats”. When religion is used as a strategic instrument and not a philosophical project, that is the equivalent of asking intellectual flourishing to leave from the backdoor. Because identity was framed strategically, narrowing down of intellectual horizon was a natural by-product. Everything was seen in black and white. Any inquiry into raw history, pluralism and alternative traditions was treated as a threat to “security.” Intellectual curiosity was made subordinate to state survival, producing what I called crisis of intellectual health, with conformity marginalizing critical thinking. This didn’t end here. Once embedded into state’s strategic culture, every new policy crisis like Afghan jihad, the sectarian politics and the War on terror only functioned to amplify its salience. This scheme of things produced an intellectual dilemma; scholars, writers and students learnt to avoid suspecting state narrative but of fear of being labelled as heretics and unpatriotic.

To sum up, strategic culture instrumentalized Islam as a mechanism of survival, precipitating the unintended consequences of stifling intellectual diversity. As this rigidity continued to get entrenched, any dissenting or pluralistic thought was casted as disloyal and hence, peripheralized.

### **Explaining Pakistani Society Through “ The Authoritarian Personality:”**

The embodiment of strategic culture disseminated from the top wasn’t entirely enforced. Certainly, the lower strata have to be welcoming enough to accept this culture. It is obvious that any policy or in this case, set of policies applied from the top could be only embodied after trickling down to the lower strata when conditions are conducive for it. And the Pakistani society provided a fertile ground. I here introduce my second theoretical framework, Adorno’s concept of “the Authoritarian personality” to discuss the internal set factors of individuals in Pakistani society that became an efficient receptor of strategic culture trickled down.

Theodor Adorno, one of the pioneers of Frankfurt School (a Neo-Marxist tradition that employed Freudian psycho-analytics to evaluate the delay of Communist Revolution), was funded by Jewish Scientific Committee of America to trace the origins of anti-Semitism in the third Reich. Upon examination, Adorno and his fellows discovered some common threads in what they called The Authoritarian Personality. But before I move to discussing the characteristics, here is a brief background. In post-World War I Germany, parents trained their children in strict disciplines due to financial strains which resulted in building resentment among the inter-war period generation and they sought a “messiah” under whom to gather and project their frustration against a foreign group. Additionally, ethnocentrism had witnessed a surge in this period which became another underlying personality syndrome of what they called the Authoritarian personality. In these moments of crisis,

individual feels insecure and pursue jumping to any strong bandwagon. And what could've been a better bandwagon than Hitler's Reichstag erected on anti-intellectualism, ethnocentrism and unquestionable obedience, which culminated in the loss of individualism, critical thinking and scapegoating Jews.

Notwithstanding the assumption that Pakistan and Hitler's Germany are cut from the same cloth (there are certainly, various cultural, social, and political differences), one can still employ Adorno's concept or at least, draw some insights from it to offer an explanation of Pakistan's intellectual stagnancy, to prove that Adorno's theory isn't just a European relic but a living pathology that predominates conventional societies like Pakistan.

In Pakistan, intellectual life is deeply bound by traditions and religious interpretations. Not only that, the educational curricula only filter "approved knowledge", which effectively marginalize curiosity and exploration, and any deviation from religious and nationalist conventions is stigmatized. Additionally, citizens who challenge prevailing norms; liberals, dissenting journalists are labelled "foreign agents". Any act of introspection and emotional nuance is ridiculed as "soft", while hard certainties, be it religious or political, those limiting the cultivation of critical and reflective modes of thoughts are prioritized.

Although Adorno enlisted 9 major characteristics of an authoritarian personality that abhors intellectualism, I still confined myself, in the preceding paragraph, to conventionalism, Authoritarian aggression and anti-introspection. And now I end my project of explaining Pakistani society through Adorno's prism with the two most relatable characteristics of his hypothesis to Pakistan. Let's ask a series of questions and then answer it in accordance with public response. What was the pre-dominant explanation of polio vaccines while they were being provided in Pakistan? "It is a Jewish conspiracy." Who actually Imran Khan is? "a Jewish agent" (this answer doesn't reflect my political views). Why Pakistan and other Muslim countries are underperforming? "Because Jews run the whole world". What caused Covid? "Covid was a scam, a Jewish Conspiracy."

Did you notice a pattern in these questions and their respective "explanations". Now we change the theme of questions and move to a different topic and some explanations. "General Zia ul Haq was a great leader because he put an end to "Behayai." "Covid was spread because women of our country started wearing Western jeans". "Ladies parks should be banned because it promotes "Behayai". These are some recurrent cliches in general public discourse. Behayai this, Behayai that.

These aforementioned set of sentences and "explanations" are some of the most recurrent ones used in discussions in an attempt to offer answer to some of the most serious questions that confronts us. In the first set of sentences, an exotic entity is made the scapegoat, while in the latter, women. These

sentences have the virtue of making Adorno most relevant to Pakistani society. He argued that people project their fears towards outwards. Social problems like poverty, corruption etc are not seen as a structural failure but a foreign conspiracy. This phenomenon of scapegoating blocks honest self-criticism. Additionally, public discourse in Pakistan is disproportionately pre-occupied with regulating sexuality and using women as “object of honor”. This obsessive fixation with rigid sexual behavior signals a repressed society where intellectual energy is diverted towards moral policing of women’s dress.

## **What, Next, Then?**

The preceding paragraphs discussed how both the strategic culture of Pakistan and society’s own incompatibility with intellectual curiosity due to some internal set of factors in the culture cause intellectual rigidity. The state of Pakistan, shaped by past traumatic experiences, shaped the strategic culture in a manner that served its function as a security state at the expense of intellectual curiosity. While at the society level, the cultural and social paradigms provided with a fertile ground for stagnancy of intellectual thought. Having “problematized” the collective intellectual health, a normal writing will naturally flow towards offering solutions. However, I hope I will not offend anyone if I say that I have a pessimistic view of scenario at hand and the future of intellectual inquiry. And there are reasons for it.

Firstly, the intellectual decline is a universal phenomenon, not confined singularly to Pakistan. This most recent statement can also imply the meaning that perhaps reflective, sagacious thinking has become relic of the past and the modern changing world requires us to think fast; and we are simply romanticizing; its like preferring candles to electric lights, or cabs to aero planes. But here, I am not making a case for relativism. Certainly, some forms of thinking are better than the other. And this makes the case of rapid thinking different from slow, thorough contemplation of “past.” It was wise thinking, not quick thinking that made us “sapiens.” It was this wise thinking that reaped the outcomes of enlightenment, humankind’s greatest episode, while quick thinking has only proceeded in making us a cog in the large wheel of capitalist market. This makes the case for this “romanticism” or rhetorically speaking “sentimental archaism” of reflective thinking, stronger and more justified.

By downsizing the discussion to Pakistan, it gets even more difficult to offer solutions, and the pessimism gains more altitude. How we can cultivate seeds of reflective thinking in a nation with strong conventionalism and rigid ideological education. The systemic inertia, both at the state and society’s level, limits our spectrum of solutions giving to only idealistic ones. What follows is an inventory of “idealistic solutions,” to the state of Pakistan, and populace in general.

## **To The State of Pakistan:**

There is a saying that all children enter school as a question mark and leave as a period. This caption encapsulates how schooling converts a child into a finished product. The beauty of this sentence lies in the fact that it can be used in various forms, across various institutions. For example, one can say that all nations begin their journey as a question mark and finish as an exclamation mark. This is to imply, all nations construct their identity from struggle for independence to coming into being in a manner that only results in self-aggrandizement. In case of Pakistan, the coming into being and the subsequent metaphor of “Islam’s fort” made the country, in our perceptions, an exclamation mark, a finished product that doesn’t need any more refining. This rhetorical employment, while conducive to the aforementioned strategic culture, bargained reflective thinking. The slogan “There is no power in the world that can undo Pakistan” gives another name to dogmatism. Another example, “Pakistan is light and light doesn’t have a decay”, is simply, a consolidation of the exclamation mark hypothesis. Can one imagine that the great Roman empire would’ve ever thought of their permanence? And even Romans, perhaps the greatest empire, witnessed their downward spiral at the hands of small groups and internal divides.

To combat this, I suggest the idea of Pakistan as a perpetual question mark, and not an exclamation point. It is questions that begins argumentation and it is in turn, the argumentation that invites reflective thinking. If we are able to question the utility of existing policies, values and institutions; and not see them as an exclamation mark, we would be able to generate debate on prevailing issues of our time and as a result, go past the stagnation, both materially and intellectually.

We have, as an example, the evolution of Britain, the mother of democracy. The first argument began when people put a question mark on the absolute power of monarch, which facilitated the signing of Magna Carta in 1215, a document that provided some protection against monarchy. But Britain didn’t become an exclamation mark with this achievement, the argument continued, and later argument transformed it into a constitutional monarchy; and with further argument, universal suffrage was granted in the early 20th century. The other of democracy, till date, remains a question mark.

“He who cannot draw upon 3000 years of history lives hand to mouth” ~ Goethe

Unfortunately, I expect this is not an exaggeration to say that Pakistan acquired the status of an exclamation mark very soon. Dogmatism about identity occupied a pre-dominate position, pushing intellectual reflective thinking to the margins. Had we remained a question mark, the specters that haunted us periodically at different stages would’ve been addressed effectively.

### **To The Populace:**

To the populace, in general, since intellectual decline is a universal phenomenon and a perpetual downward trajectory, I offer another idealistic solution. By not drawing from history, as I mentioned

referring to Goethe previously, makes us live from hand to mouth. So here I offer another example from history as an idealistic solution. We have two forms of ancestors to draw upon at this stage of humanity, namely Athenians and Visigoths. Athenians, who, lived about 2500 years ago in Greece, are the pioneers of art, reason, rationality and humane politics. Visigoths, a people dwelling in what we now call Germany, were excellent horse riders, and that was the only good thing that history tells us about them. they plundered Europe and destroyed what came their way. For Visigoths, material pursuit was the significant objective, regardless of its moral or humanistic considerations. Now, that doesn't mean that in modern day, one can be a perfect Athenian who roams around in the streets of Athens and wander, or a Visigoth who goes around and kill, plunder for material pursuit. To be this or that is to live your life around a certain set of values and ideas. To be an Athenian is to love the pursuit of knowledge and make it your primary objective; to contemplate and reason. While to be a Visigoth is to instrumentalize knowledge for material pursuit. being Athenian demands from you to have keenness in public life and have concern about others, while being Visigoth demands self-centeredness. To be the former is to appreciate art and use your reason and imagination to draw lessons from artistic expressions. To be the latter is to exploit art, or simply reduce art to popularity, make it all about masses; which is unsurprisingly, normal of the day, evident from the substance and the quality of content we produce today. (Imagine calling a 15 seconds reel, a work of art. This is abuse of art, to be precise).

The era we live in, is filled with entertaining stuff and amusement. This makes, as one may have observed, hard being an Athenian, and embodying Athenian values. But I have certainly eased my responsibility calling my solutions "idealistic" and the topic "problematizing" Pakistan's intellectual health.

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## Notes:

- (i) Bertrand Russell, "Introduction," in *History of Western Philosophy* (Routledge, 1946).
- (ii) Jostein Garder, *Sophie's World*, trans. Paulette Moller (Phoenix House, 1995), <https://www.rcboe.org/cms/lib/GA01903614/Centricity/Domain/2820/sophies%20world%20full%20text.pdf>.
- (iii) Muhammad Iqbal, *Bang-e-Dra (The Call of the Marching Bell)* (Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1924).
- (iv) Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, R-2154-AF (RAND Corporation, 1977), <https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R2154.html>.
- (v) Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (Harper & Brothers, 1950).
- (vi) Neil Postman, "The American Experiment," *EducationWeek*, September 6, 1995, <https://www.edweek.org/education/opinion-the-american-experiment/1995/09>.

- (vii)Jostein Garder, Sophie's World.
  - (viii)Joe Carter, "Athenians and Visigoths: Neil Postman's Graduation Speech," First Place, June 26, 2009, <https://firstthings.com/athenians-and-visigoths-neil-postmans-graduation-speech/>.
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# Generation Z: Redefining Identity and Global Engagement in the Digital Age



## **Abstract:**

*Generation Z, broadly defined as those born between 1997 and 2012, represents a generation that grew up in an age of constant digital exposure, rapid globalization, and expanding social awareness. This paper explores how technology, diversity, and global consciousness have shaped Gen Z's values, attitudes, and engagement patterns. Drawing on the works of Jean Twenge and Corey Seemiller, along with reports from the Pew Research Center, this paper argues that Generation Z embodies both opportunities and challenges for the modern world, from redefining education and work to reshaping governance and civic engagement.*

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## **Introduction:**

Every generation is shaped by certain social, technological, and political circumstances that define its worldview. Generation Z has grown up in a world where the internet, smartphones, and social media are not innovations but integral parts of daily life. As Twenge (2017) notes, this generation is “connected yet isolated,” deeply aware of global events but often anxious about their place in those events.

This article aims to understand Generation Z through three main aspects: their digital upbringing, their focus on inclusion and diversity, and their approach to learning, work, and global engagement. It also reflects on how these traits make Gen Z an influential force in reshaping governance, institutions, and civic life.

## **1. The Digital Experience:**

For Generation Z, technology is not simply a tool but a

social environment. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube serve as spaces for learning, communication, and even political expression. This access to information gives them confidence and independence but also exposes them to constant comparison and digital pressure. Twenge (2017) argues that the rise of digital culture has changed how young people experience friendship, privacy, and self-worth. Gen Z's daily life often balances between connectivity and vulnerability, a theme that defines their collective experience in the 21st century.

## **2. Diversity And Inclusion:**

Another key trait of Generation Z is their strong belief in equality and representation. They have grown up in a more diverse and open social environment than any previous generation. Issues like gender rights, racial equality, mental health, and climate justice are not secondary topics for them, they are central to their worldview.

According to Seemiller and Grace (2016), Gen Z expects educational institutions and workplaces to reflect fairness and transparency. This inclusive mindset is pushing traditional systems to adapt to new standards of participation and respect. For many Gen Z students, belonging and acceptance are not privileges but rights

## **3. Education, Work, And Purpose:**

Gen Z's relationship with education and work is shaped by economic uncertainty and a strong desire for purpose. Unlike earlier generations, they value flexibility, creativity, and meaningful impact more than rigid hierarchies or material success. Seemiller and Grace (2016) observe that this generation prefers learning that connects theory with real-world challenges.

They also bring a critical attitude toward institutions, expecting them to act responsibly, provide mental health support, and encourage open dialogue. Their search for "authenticity" reflects a deeper generational shift from ambition to awareness.

## **4. Global And Political Awareness:**

Gen Z's political behavior shows a move from traditional party loyalty to issue-based activism. They tend to mobilize around causes like climate change, gender equality, and digital rights rather than align with fixed ideologies. Online spaces have allowed them to build transnational movements and engage with global issues directly.

Their activism, as seen in the climate strikes led by Greta Thunberg, illustrates how social media can transform into a tool for civic participation. This demonstrates that Gen Z's political identity is shaped less by geography and more by shared global concerns.

## **5. Challenges and Contradictions:**

Despite their progressive outlook, Generation Z faces serious emotional and social challenges. Constant connectivity often results in digital fatigue, misinformation, and anxiety. Many struggle to balance personal identity with the pressure to maintain a perfect online presence.

As Twenge (2017) highlights, “never has a generation been so aware yet so uncertain.” Their global awareness does not always translate into confidence about their own future, which is an important area for educators and policymakers to address.

## **Conclusion:**

Generation Z is reshaping how society communicates, learns, and governs. Their values of inclusion, digital fluency, and global engagement are transforming institutions and political discourse. However, their struggles with mental health, information overload, and trust in systems reveal the complexities of living in a connected yet unstable world.

As students, leaders, and citizens, understanding Generation Z means understanding the future, a future where dialogue, diversity, and digital literacy will define progress.

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**Malak Rizwan Latif**

**Semeste: 7<sup>th</sup> (Evening)**

**2022-2026**

**Department of International Relations**

**University of Peshawar**

**SECTION  
IV**

**CLIMATE  
SECURITY  
GLOBAL  
RESPONSIBILITY**

# Green War in a Brown World

## The New Scramble for Critical Minerals



### **Abstract:**

*Clean energy is traditionally classified as an environmental project but now it has gained the status of a geopolitical strategic sphere. Although the international community is on the path to achieve the joint goal of decarbonisation, a complex interconnection of geopolitical contest, deep-rooted inequalities, and hidden economic expenditures still exists. In the heart of the landscape, there are Critical Raw Materials (CRMs), like lithium, cobalt and a group of rare earth items, the absence of which precludes the functioning of any emerging technology, and therefore the target of a ruthless rivalry. The current review outlines the changing system of global relations that has been reconfigured by the green transition. Thanks to a cross-disciplinary angle, it brings together views collected in 20 scholarly articles, policy writings, and institutional documents (2017 to 2025), offering a multi-pronged international angle on how the climate-security nexus is transforming patterns of power and adjusting justice expectations. Indigenous people possessing strategic resources but often marginalized through political constraints come to bear negative externalities of the extraction process with little or no input in the decision-making process. There are also similar trends showing a new geopolitical competition. The rivalry between the United States and China to win the CRM supply chains is growing high, turning clean technology into one of the tools of influence, reliance, and competition. Unless these underlying faults in the structure are addressed the clean energy revolution threatens to reproduce known hierarchies in different technological clothing. The review outlines an alternative model of thinking based on multilateral cooperation which introduces a meaningfully inclusive voice of indigenous peoples; the implementation of the paradigm of the circular economy and governance practices to match with equity instead of exploitation.*

## **Introduction:**

The deserts of Chile are brightened with the lithium encrusted salt pans. In the Democratic Republic of Congo children are digging cobalt with naked hands. In other places, innovation in clean-technology can be seen in Berlin, and the hybrid cars are on the roads of San Francisco. At first glance, these separate contexts seems disconnected, but altogether they guide the history of the changing course of the twenty-first century energy transition (Agarwal, 2024; Leonelli, 2025).

Global movement towards renewable energy is much more than climate policy; it is political, financial and ethical transformation all at once. As much as it dreams to become decarbonized, it can continue the structural inequalities and extractivisms associated with the fossil-fuel age (Fravel & Heginbotham, 2024; Zahnnow et al., 2025).

The reason for this change is Critical Raw Materials (CRMs), such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earths, which are vital to electric vehicles and renewable-energy structures (Ali et al., 2023; Zhou & Månberger, 2024). Industrialized countries are in a rush to commodify them, remapping trade flows, reorganizing monopolies and externalizing the environmental and social costs of production to the Global South (Nakano, 2021; Chivvis, 2024).

The present review critically analyzes how the growing demand in CRMs is not only further driving strategic competition but also disrupting the supply chain and pushing Indigenous communities and those of lower income further to the margins of making global decisions (WEF, 2024; Qi, 2024). Besides the fact that the present review employs the approach to interdisciplinary qualitative methodology of reviewing, it is particularly aimed to revisit 20 scholarly articles and policy papers published during the period between 2017 to 2025. The literature has been arranged in five primary thematic areas; climate-security nexus, technological competition, leadership gaps, ethical sourcing, and policy change.

Critical thinking shows that, unless there is substantive effort to eliminate the unjust systems and unethical actions that have been deeply embedded in the present energy transformation, the clean energy agenda becomes one that reproduces history of prejudice- inequality, exploitation and social marginalization (Agarwal, 2024; Khan & Roberts, 2023). We can achieve a better and fairer future when we build universal partnerships, ensure that “First Nations” have stronger voices, and focus on creating equitable policies rather than competing to make laws (Forner & Díaz, 2024; Zahnnow et al., 2025).

## **Methodology of Review:**

This paper provides a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach to discuss the geopolitical, geoeconomics, and ethical elements of the worldwide shift to clean energy, characterized by specific

attention to the Critical Raw Materials (CRMs). An academic literature search was made through scholarly databases such as JSTOR, ScienceDirect, Web of Science and GoogleScholar along with 20 peer-reviewed articles, institutional reports and policy briefs from 2017-2025 according to relevance, credibility and geographical diversity.

The review includes not only the reports of large global organizations (e.g: IPCC, IRENA, UNCTAD) but also regional case studies. Priority was given to literature that brings out the experiences and voice of marginalized groups such as Indigenous people and interests of developing countries. The review combines recurrent themes, including technological rivalry, leadership inequality, environmental justice and policy challenges in a wider study. The identification of gaps, anomalies, and ethical tensions which result in shaping the dynamic environment of contemporary global energy transition was employed through comparative approach.

### **Climate-Security Nexus:**

“We are not only facing an environmental crisis, but a crisis of peace, justice, and humanity.” António Guterres

The climate-security nexus affirms that climate change can no longer be viewed as an environmental issue only; it has also turned out to occupy a determining role in the peace and conflicts dynamics. Warmer weather, amplified weather cyclones, extended droughts and sea-level rise are causing the dearth in resources, the displacement of large masses of people and economic imbalance, most significantly in weak and vulnerable states.

Climate change is acting more as a “threat multiplier.” It is not a direct cause of wars, but it exacerbates other conflicts, including poverty, the lack of food, and political strains on the other. The loss of water environments and destruction of arable lands has further escalated conflict and migration in areas such as Sahel and South Asia (Gilmore, 2017; Nicoson, 2021). To small island states, a significant threat is the increase of the sea level (IPCC, 2022).

As the energy competition in the world shifts out of oil toward renewables, a new strategic conflict is forming, not between fossil fuels but critical minerals, clean technologies and space to locate solar and wind farms. Scholars are referring to this as a “GREEN WAR.” characterized by unequal resource control and disproportionate exploitation of the Global South, often at the expense of environmental justice and human rights.

Climate change is currently considered a national security concern by institutions like NATO and the Pentagon (Rothe, 2022), but most of their approach is still military, seeing it as an opportunity to use its capabilities and capitalize on the result of the crisis by only looking at the visible part of the

problem.

Nevertheless, the nexus provides a reason to be optimistic based on equitable adaptatio, participatory climate governanc, and long-term international collaboratio, which will chnage climate-induced conflict into the climate-redilient peace.

## **The New Geopolitics of Mining and Critical Minerals:**

“Energy transition without equity is not progress, it’s a repetition of power, just in greener clothes.”

Damilola Ogunbiyi

Critical Raw Materials (CRMs) such as lithium, cobalt, graphite, and rare earth elements have taken a strategic role just like oil in earlier decades as the world race toward clean energy gains momentum. All these resources are vital to the current green technologies including electric cars, solar-based systems and wind power plants. However, there is also a quieter and just as strategic struggle over power, which is concealed in a seemingly progressive transformation, where the winners in the supply chains exert new realms of geopolitical power.

According to the data presented by The Diplomat (2024) and the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2023), China is now the end producer of rare-earth magnets, lithium chemicals, and refined cobalt since it refines 90 percent of the elements, creates 65 percent of the chemicals, and owns 77 percent of the processed cobalt. Major risks are created by such imbalances:

- 1. Strategic control of Supply chains:** In the U.S. the recent Inflation Reduction Act makes climate policy a question of national policy and denies collaboration with Chinese entities regarding some clean-tech tax credits.
- 2. Regulatory Fragmentation:** Different policies taken in the United States, the European Union and Canada have caused destabilization of CRMs supply flows.
- 3. Resource Nationalism:** Indonesia is one of the states that are using export of nickel as a bargaining chip, whereas China is limiting its own sources of nickel.
- 4. Green Colonialism:** Sovereign nations such as Greenland and Malawi are selling their mining permits where international investors are taking precedence over locals.
- 5. Disempowerment:** The majority of African countries are unable to process local minerals themselves and the situation is engraved in dependency.
- 6. Native resistance:** Extractive enterprises are becoming subject to protest in Greenland and Africa by indigenous populations.

Unless global systems are put in place that enhance local benefit-sharing and the rights of Indigenous people, the green transition will only reprise the injustices that characterized the fossil-fuel world. The

choice between being co-creators of a better world and victims of greener exploitation is upon Africa which is replete with CRMs, but lacks processing capabilities.

## **Green Technology and Strategic Rivalry:**

The dynamic nature of the environmental crisis issues made green technology an tool of foreign policy. Now, global power politics is acquiring another level of domination that focuses on the main spheres of clean innovation: solar panels, electric vehicles (EVs), lithium-ion batteries, semiconductors, and artificial intelligence (AI) in which both the U.S. and China are failing to exert their power (Chivvis, 2024). “Whoever leads in green technology will not just dominate markets, but shape the very rules of global order” (Chivvis, 2024).”

China is not found its current dominant position by coincidence. Its policies on incentives like Made in China 2025 and Belt and Road Initiative have forced it to become the supplier of majority of global solar PV and lithium-ion batteries (more than 60 percent and more than 80 percent respectively) (Bergsten, 2024). China has a huge soft power, having the potential to export cheap green technologies and infrastructure to the Global South, most importantly sharing data platforms and financing. It is expected that it will increase its influence even more geopolitically (Fravel & Heginbotham, 2024).

The U.S, in its response, has reactivated its industries by the CHIPS Act and by the Inflation Reduction Act. Washington sees the progress of China in the clean energy technologies, including smart grids and AI-powered efficiencies, not merely as an economic threat, but also as the threat to global stability.

The competition extends even to international standards bodies such as ISO, the ITU and IEC, who, in the future may influence the green trade laws. The fragility of international supply chains was revealed by Chinese controls of export of gallium and germanium in 2023 (Fravel & Heginbotham, 2024). However, the idea of decoupling in an interdependent world is unrealistic despite the competition. Similarly, as Chivvis (2024) remarks; “Climate partnership became a non-choice but the key to international security.”

This underlines the fact that green technology competition must not overshadow the shared global responsibility toward sustainability.

## **Global Inequality and Climate Injustice :**

**Climate justice is not a luxury idea, but a necessity:**

Climate change constitutes not merely an environmental crisis; it represents a concurrent crisis of inequality, injustice, and defunct promises. Global architecture of leadership in climate governance is marked with severe spatial divisions. Even though most climate disasters occur in the Global South, the Global North still holds all the absolute power and financial responsibility. This gap in structures cuts across various levels of governance of climate issues.

### **The Inequality of the Access to Renewable Energy:**

Many nations that have vast amounts of solar and wind energy resources but are energy poor. Limited funds available in climate financing and the prohibitive nature of green technologies (high entry barriers and strong patents) makes clean energy a commodity instead of a universal right.

### **Neo-Colonialism in Green Economy:**

This dynamic can be seen in the example of the Democratic Republic of Congo cobalt extraction. Cobalt is considered a non-negotiable input to electric-vehicle batteries, but the outcome is toxic waste, child labor, and low economic gain on local communities. The sources of revenue as during colonial days go away.

### **Unrealized Prosperity of Climate Finance:**

The goal of the developed countries to provide 100 billion dollars in climate finance has not been met as promised each year. In addition, a substantial portion of funding provided is distributed in the form of loans, which impairs affected states into debt cycles. The natural disaster in Pakistan in 2022 demonstrated the existence of such bare vulnerability since the International Monetary Fund limits became a barrier to the delivery of disaster relief in a timely way.

Decision-makers might forego intellectual property rights, give more focus to grant-based finance, and strengthen South-South cooperation. This is inherent in a just transition, in which all the states will have a chance and enjoy the benefits of climate action instead of an exclusive group of privileged participants.

### **Gaps in Literature :**

Although a lot has been researched about the connection between climate change and security, several gaps still exist. The direct implications of climatic stress, notably, lack of water and forced migration, have been widely discussed but the secondary effects of the climatic stress on resource supply chains, especially of the critical raw resources (CRMs), have relatively little attention. This is an imbalance, which hides emerging weaknesses amid insufficiencies in digital best surveillance systems, increased cybersecurity exposures to energy infrastructure and the loosening chain of global economic dependencies.

Contemporary geopolitical studies of rivalry in the shift to green innovation have mainly focused on United States and China, with relatively less systematic studies on the role of powerful global standards bodies, especially the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). The existing institutional order thereby contributes to erecting structural imbalances so that the voices of the Global South are marginalized.

Complementary shortages are present in the area of climate financing, where researchers point out again and again that funds are postponed until later time and the developing countries are piling debts. There is lack of details, however, as to specific tools of monetary relief. Limited analytical attention is also given to the complementary policy measures e.g. flexible regimes of intellectual property and intensified South-South cooperation. In addition, the limitation of interdisciplinary communication of the interconnection of climatic justice with the framework of emergent technology regulation remains deep-rooted in the literature, which, in turn, can hinder the impulse of a just energy shift and further strengthen socio-environmental inequalities.

## **Recommendations:**

Policymakers should strike a balance between security of critical mineral supply and ESG, ethical and geopolitical risks, particularly in high risk areas.

### **1. Due diligence at the law making level:**

Governments are encouraged to institute legally-binding due-diligence laws that do not fall below the OECD standards and global regulatory frameworks and laws including the European Union Corporate Due Diligence Directive, which would assist in the transparency, and observance of human rights in the supply chain. Those companies which use greenwashing or do not follow international laws should be punished by restrictions in imports, prohibitions, and fines. Most importantly in high-risk regions and especially in the Democratic Republic of Congo where child labor, poor working conditions, and organized-crime activities that have infiltrated the mining industry, companies need to prove that they are accountable and ethically sourced.

### **2. International collaboration and Global South:**

It is essential to apply multilateral cooperation by using organizations like the G7 and G20, Global South countries need to gain access to decision-making tables, i.e. to the IEA, to climate financing mechanisms and green-industrial development funds should be ensure to resource-rich countries in terms of decision-making. The aim is to change the dynamics of the conventional supplier-buyer relations towards labor protection and technology transfer. Such efforts as green-refining activities of the United States and China would not only reduce rivalries but also promote joint environmental goals. It is also important to empower the locals by employing better taxation formats and the

sharing of technology.

### **3. Circular Economy:**

Promotion of circular economy models that minimize the need of primary mineral extraction should be the principal concern of the policymakers. These entail improved recycling facilities, material replacement as well as green mining. Conservation by indigenous people and AI-based monitoring, such as the Inuit-led ecological system, should be expanded. It will help to make resource management more sustainable and diminish the environmental damage.

### **4. Governing Artisanal Mining:**

Targeted training programmes, formalization of legal rights and direct market access as well as directing revenue into local development efforts are some more factors which can be utilized to make the regulation of the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) more efficient.

### **5. Critical Mineral Treaty League:**

A treaty of critical minerals issued by the International community under the authority of the United Nations can align the iron systems of regulation and address disputes and enhance indigenous community transparency and protection.

### **Conclusion:**

It reveals how the world demand in the use of critical minerals (CRMs) has re-established the contours of worldwide politics, environmental governance, and financial interdependence. As nations rush to be providers of a green technology and major sectors, issues of justice, ethics and sustainability have come to the limelight. The increasing race linked strongly to the US or China threatens to marginalise the Global South where all the resource extraction is being actively pursued whilst communities tend to get the worst of the lot. For the sustainable future the CRMs governance must go beyond competition but into collaborative work. Transparency should be promoted in the policies, due diligence and citizens should be part of the decision making process. Circular economies, just alliances, and multilateral solutions can change the existing exploitive model into the one that is aimed at gaining mutual benefits, ecological sustainability, and survivability. Until the CRM governance is brought to be full of ethics at the global level, there will be a mismatch of similar injustices that have been experienced during the fossil fuel era in the energy transition. Energy security should not be the only way forward, but social justice and caring of the environment. The ecological transformation of energy globally should not recreate the colonial dynamics of the fossil fuel age and reconstitute a world order based on sustainability, responsibility, and inclusion.

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**Muska**

**Semester: 5<sup>th</sup> (Evening)**

**2023-2027**

**Department of International Relations**

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# Pakistan's Climate Change Mitigation Strategies: Policy Alignment with SDGs 7 and 13



## **Abstract:**

*Pakistan's geographic and climatic conditions make it highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including water scarcity, extreme weather events, and agricultural instability. In response, the government has introduced strategies such as the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to guide mitigation and adaptation efforts. Despite these frameworks, progress remains limited due to weak institutional capacity, insufficient financing, and competing development priorities, resulting in gaps between policy formulation and implementation. This article critically examines to which extent Pakistan's climate change mitigation policies align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and 13 (Climate Action). Adopting a qualitative approach, it draws on document analysis, through the Hybrid Model of Policy Implementation, which integrates top-down and bottom-up perspectives. The findings reveal partial alignment of national policies with (SDGs) targets, but highlight significant institutional, governance, and financial barriers that obstructs effective implementation. The study concludes that while Pakistan has demonstrated policy commitment to global climate objectives, meaningful progress requires stronger institutional coordination, enhanced financing mechanisms, and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Strengthening these areas will be critical to advancing policy coherence, improving climate resilience, and supporting a sustainable energy transition.*

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## **Introduction:**

The impacts of climate change extend far beyond just environmental harm, affecting economic stability, social

welfare, and national security, making it one of the most urgent global challenges of the 21st century. The threat of extreme weather events, unpredictable rainfall patterns, and the melting of glaciers have already influenced global development agendas. According to Khan & Masud (2023) developing countries, heavily depending on climate-sensitive sectors, have limited capacity for adaptation and face fragile economies, making them especially susceptible. Pakistan, despite contributing minimally to the global greenhouse gas emissions, is one such nation where climate change poses a significant existential threat (Ahmad et al, 2019).

According to the Global Climate Risk Index, Pakistan is currently ranked 5th with a CRI score of 29.00 in 2021, making it one of the top ten countries most affected by climate change (Germanwatch 2025, Climate Risk Index). Its geographical and ecological characteristics, which range from delicate glacial ecosystems to dry plains, render it especially vulnerable to disasters. In the last twenty years, Pakistan has experienced catastrophic floods, recurring droughts, glacial lake outburst floods, and severe heatwaves, all of which have led to widespread displacement, economic losses, and damage to infrastructure. The floods of 2010, for example, impacted over 20 million individuals and exposed shortcomings in governance and disaster response. While these incidents highlight the country's significant vulnerability, they also illustrate how climate change exacerbates existing issues like poverty, food insecurity, and dependency on energy (Germanwatch, 2021).

Pakistan's dependency on fossil fuels for energy production exacerbates the situation. Over fifty percent of its greenhouse gas emissions originate from the energy sector, with transport, industry, and agriculture making significant contributions as well. Simultaneously, these sectors are highly susceptible to climate-related shocks, setting off a detrimental cycle of vulnerability. For instance, agricultural productivity is directly impacted by water scarcity, whereas unpredictable rainfall limits hydropower capabilities. In addition, reliance on imported fossil fuels imposes a substantial financial strain on the national economy, hindering investments in renewable energy options. This combined challenge of significant vulnerability and heavy reliance highlights the necessity for effective mitigation and adaptation strategies (Kamal et al, 2021).

In response to these challenges, Pakistan has implemented various policy initiatives. The National Climate Change Policy (NCCP), initially introduced in 2012 and revised in 2021, represents the country's inaugural comprehensive effort to tackle climate change. It outlines approaches for mitigating disaster risks, promoting renewable energy, increasing afforestation, and enhancing institutional capacity. Additionally, Pakistan has made international commitments through its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as part of the Paris Agreement, vowing to cut projected emissions by up to 50 percent by 2030, contingent upon receiving international financial and technical support. Other efforts, including the Alternative and Renewable Energy Policy (2019), the National Electric Vehicle Policy (2019), and the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme further

illustrate a commitment to synchronize national strategies with global climate initiatives (Abbas, 2021)

Even with these promises, the main problem is still putting them into action. Coal, oil, and natural gas still make up most of Pakistan's energy mix. Renewable energy only makes up a small part of the total. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has put coal-fired power plants at the top of its list of projects. This has led to worries that the development priorities are not in line with the goals of sustainability. Weak governance and a lack of coordination between institutions make progress even harder. The 18th Constitutional Amendment gave provinces more power over environmental issues, but it also made it harder for different levels of government to work together, led to duplicate efforts, and made it harder for some levels of government to do their jobs. These problems are made worse by a lack of funding, old infrastructure, and a lack of involvement from stakeholders, all of which make it harder to put climate policies into action (Akram et al, 2023).

Pakistan's policy commitments are most closely related to SDGs 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and 13 (Climate Action) within the global framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While SDG 7 aims to provide universal access to modern, affordable, and dependable energy systems, SDG 13 highlights the need for immediate action to combat climate change and build resilience. These two objectives are closely related. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions requires a shift to renewable energy, and energy sector reforms are necessary for effective climate action. For Pakistan, coordinating national policies with these international goals is essential to both national survival and international responsibility (Ahmed et al, 2020).

Therefore, the gap between commitments and results rather than the lack of policies is the main problem. Pakistan's climate policies are frequently bold on paper but fall short in reality because of lack of funding, imitative institutions, and conflicting development goals. Scholars have argued that rather than being proactive and strategic, the nation's climate response has been reactive, frequently brought on by disasters. The gap between policy design and implementation is likely to continue in the absence of strong monitoring systems, efficient resource mobilization, and significant stakeholder participation.

By critically examining Pakistan's climate change mitigation strategies and their alignment with SDGs 7 and 13, this study fills this gap. It assesses how national commitments are translated into local actions using the Hybrid Model of Policy Implementation, which combines top-down and bottom-up approaches. This viewpoint is especially pertinent to Pakistan, where local actors lack the institutional support and resources necessary to carry out policies successfully, and centralized policymaking frequently ignores provincial realities.

This article aims to offer an understanding of both advancements and shortcomings by examining

Pakistan's climate governance through the prism of the Sustainable Development Goals. It draws attention to the areas where alignment has been attained, the gaps that still exist, and the changes that are required to close the gap between practice and policy. In the end, improving Pakistan's climate response calls for inclusive governance, strong institutions, sufficient funding, and ambitious policies. By pinpointing the crucial areas where change is most urgently required, this analysis helps achieve that objective.

### **Assessing Policy Alignment through the Hybrid Model:**

The Hybrid Model of Policy Implementation, which combines top-down directives with bottom-up adaptation, is used in this study. The hybrid model engages communities, private actors, and civil society while emphasizing the necessity of coordination across governance tiers, in contrast to traditional approaches that emphasize one or the other. This framework works well for evaluating the efficacy of climate policies in Pakistan, where they are developed at the federal level but implemented at the provincial level.

According to this perspective, Pakistan's climate policies partially corresponds with SDGs 13 (Climate Action) and 7 (Clean Energy). A roadmap for adaptation and mitigation is provided by the National Climate Change Policy (2012; updated in 2021), which emphasizes renewable energy sources and incorporates climate into planning. A 50% reduction in emissions by 2030 is promised by Pakistan's updated NDCs (2021), subject to international assistance. However, strategic pledges have not always been fulfilled. With coal under CPEC undermining mitigation, the energy mix is still heavily reliant on fossil fuels.

Clean technology is promoted by policies such as the Alternative and Renewable Energy Policy (2019) and the EV Policy (2019), but progress is sluggish because of funding shortages, institutional disarray, and provincial capacity limitations. SDG 13 is in line with reforestation initiatives like the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami, but sustainability and monitoring issues arise. The hybrid model demonstrates that weak bottom-up mechanisms are the cause of these gaps. There is little community involvement, lack of resources, and experience in provincial institutions. Therefore, even though policies appear to be in line with the SDGs, their actual efficacy depends on inclusive participation, stable funding, and stronger multi-level governance.

### **Climate Change:**

The term "climate change" refers to long-term shifts in regional or global climate patterns that are mostly caused by human induced activity, increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Unquestionably, the climate crisis is being characterized by rising global temperatures, glacial retreat, sea level rise, and extreme weather events. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change (IPCC) has repeatedly issued a warning that global warming will surpass critical thresholds and increase the risks for vulnerable populations unless there is an immediate and substantial reduction in emissions (IPCC, 2021).

Climate change is a lived reality for Pakistan rather than a far-off or abstract idea. Over the past few decades, the nation has experienced devastating floods, extended droughts, heat waves, and glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs). Millions have been displaced, significant financial losses have been incurred, and vital industries like energy, water, and agriculture have been weakened. Pakistan is particularly vulnerable due to its geographic location, heavy reliance on agriculture, and delicate ecosystems. Pakistan continuously ranks among the countries most impacted by climate change, even though its contribution to global GHG emissions is less than 1% (Germanwatch, 2021).

Pakistan's climate is changing in many ways. The Indus River system and water supply are in danger due to the retreating Himalayan and Hindu Kush glaciers. Nearly 40% of the workforce is employed in agriculture, which is impacted by rising temperatures and erratic rainfall. Vector-borne illnesses and heat-related illnesses are problems for health systems. Energy security and hydropower are also weakened by decreased river flows. These interconnected effects demonstrate that climate change poses a threat to human welfare, security, and sustainable development in addition to the environment.

### **Mitigation:**

Efforts to lower or stop greenhouse gas emissions are referred to as mitigation. According to the UNFCCC, it includes tactics like low carbon technologies, afforestation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainable planning. Mitigation seeks to prevent climate impacts, as opposed to adaptation, which concentrates on coping with them. It is essential to global accords such as the 2015 Paris Agreement, which aims to keep warming below 2°C and uses Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as the primary instrument for national pledges. Mitigation is crucial and challenging for Pakistan. The largest contributor to emissions is the energy sector, which is followed by industry, transportation, and agriculture (Allen et al, 2018).

The energy mix is dominated by fossil fuels, despite the enormous potential of wind, solar, and hydropower. Although policies like the National Electric Vehicle Policy (2019) and the Alternative and Renewable Energy Policy (2019) acknowledge this, their implementation is still lacking because of a lack of funding, a lack of institutional capacity, and the reliance on coal in CPEC projects. Co-benefits are another advantage of mitigation. Clean energy improves energy security, lowers emissions, eases power outages, and generates green jobs. Smart Climate farming increases resilience while reducing emissions. Therefore, mitigation is necessary to reduce Pakistan's climate vulnerability and promote sustainable development.

### **SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy):**

All people should have access to modern, affordable, dependable, and sustainable energy, according to Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7). Universal access, increased shares of renewable energy, increased efficiency, and increased international collaboration on clean technologies are among its goals. Access to energy supports sustainability, poverty alleviation, and economic growth globally. However, 770 million people still do not have access to electricity, primarily in developing nations (IEA, 2020). Heavy reliance on fossil fuels worsens climate change and creates economic and health costs, making SDG 7 crucial to the low-carbon transition. In Pakistan, energy access is a persistent issue, especially in rural areas (Khan et al, 2016).

Rapid industrialization and urbanization have increased demand, but supply is still insufficient, resulting in shortages on a regular basis. Fossil fuels, especially imported LNG and oil, make up a large portion of the energy mix and put pressure on foreign reserves. Renewables only account for a small portion, despite their enormous potential. While the National Electric Vehicle Policy (2019) aims to reduce transportation emissions, the Alternative and Renewable Energy Policy (2019) sets a 2030 target of 30% renewable energy and 30% hydropower. Although there are financial gaps, technological obstacles, and a reliance on fossil fuels, these actions partially align with SDG 7. It will take significant investment, institutional changes, and improved policy coherence to achieve SDG 7 (Akram et al, 2023).

### **SDG 13 (Climate Action):**

By strengthening institutions, integrating climate measures into policies, and enhancing resilience, Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG 13) calls for immediate action to combat climate change. As climate action supports advancements in poverty alleviation, food security, health, and sustainable cities, it is cross cutting, unlike many other SDGs. Through the National Climate Change Policy, revised NDCs, and programs like the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami, Pakistan has committed to policies that support SDG 13. Strong strategic alignment is demonstrated by the NDCs' commitment to reduce projected emissions by 50% till 2030, subject to international support.

But there are still implementation gaps. Progress is hampered by weak governance, institutional fragmentation, financial shortages, and inadequate federal-provincial coordination. There are few monitoring systems, insufficient funding for climate change, and development priorities such as coal-based energy under CPEC frequently conflict with mitigation objectives. SDG 13 must be advanced in spite of these obstacles. Vulnerable populations are protected by increasing resilience to floods, droughts, and heat waves, and adaptation is improved by incorporating climate change into urban planning, agriculture, and health. Additionally, taking effective action enhances Pakistan's reputation internationally and establishes it as a partner in sustainability (Aziz et al, 2021).

## Challenges to Effective Policy Implementation:

Despite Pakistan's commitment to climate mitigation and adaptation, several barriers hinder progress. Institutional fragmentation is a key obstacle: devolution under the 18th Amendment was meant to empower provinces but instead created overlapping mandates, inconsistent priorities, and weak federal–provincial coordination, limiting accountability. Financial constraints are equally pressing. Pakistan's NDCs note that meeting 2030 mitigation and renewable targets requires both domestic and international resources. Only 15% of investment about \$101 million is projected domestically, while 35% nearly \$365 million depends on international aid. Reliance on external funding makes climate action uncertain, as delays or shortfalls threaten renewable and mitigation projects.

Dependency on energy makes things even more difficult. Clean energy goals are undermined by the continued dominance of fossil fuels, including coal under CPEC, despite policies like the Alternative and Renewable Energy Policy (2019) and the EV Policy (2019). The problem is made worse by weak implementation capacity, which includes insufficient knowledge at the federal and provincial levels, poor enforcement, and poor monitoring. Last but not the least, insufficient involvement from communities, civil society, and the private sector limits efficacy and causes a disconnect between national promises and actual conditions on the ground. Pakistan runs the risk of failing to meet its climate and SDG 7 and 13 targets unless coordination improves, funding stabilizes, fossil fuel dependence decreases, and participation increases.

## Conclusion:

With the NCCP, NAP, AREP (2019), and updated NDCs, Pakistan has demonstrated a strong commitment to climate mitigation in line with SDGs 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and 13 (Climate Action). However, insufficient stakeholder participation, institutional fragmentation, implementation gaps, and financial constraints compromise efficacy. The transition to clean energy is further delayed by a heavy reliance on fossil fuels, especially coal projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Support from both domestic and foreign sources is needed to meet the 2030 climate goals. The NDCs project about 15% domestic investment (\$101 million) and 35% conditional funding (\$365 million) from international partners.

Deployment of renewables and emissions reduction are still impossible without outside funding. Stronger institutional coordination, improved monitoring, climate finance mobilization, and inclusive community and private actor engagement are all necessary to close the gap between ambition and practice. Pakistan can achieve SDGs 7 and 13 and can create a more resilient future with better governance and sustainable funding.

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# National Interest Redefined: Why Pakistan Must Treat the Climate Crisis as a National Security Threat



## **Abstract:**

*Pakistan, a country especially vulnerable to climate change, faces a growing and existential threat that is often covered by traditional security concerns, particularly its rivalry with India. While Pakistan's national interests have traditionally been defined by a neorealist security paradigm focusing on military might and territorial integrity, this limited focus is proving untenable in the face of non-military threats. The frequency and severity of climate-induced disasters, such as the severe floods of 2010 and 2022, have caused massive economic devastation, widespread relocation, and social instability, directly endangering the state's survival. According to this study, climate change is more than just an environmental issue for Pakistan; it also poses a direct national security threat. It contends that the state's traditional security strategy, while vital for deterring external aggression, has resulted in a severe disregard of climate adaptation and disaster preparedness. Drawing on the environmental security concept, the paper demonstrates how the linked nature of environmental, social, and economic crises, such as water scarcity, rapid urbanization, and resource depletion, undermines state stability from within. The conclusion highlights that for long-term survival, Pakistan must broaden its definition of national security and to include climate resilience. This involves a transition towards a more comprehensive policy that prioritizes public awareness, institutional reform, and resource allocation for climate adaptation, so enhancing the country's fundamental ability to protect its people and safeguard its future.*

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## **Introduction:**

The climate crisis is no longer just an environmental issue but it is going to be the greatest challenge for the states

survival. Pakistan, the country most vulnerable to climate change, had already been feeling adverse effects in recent times. Survivability refers to the ability of an organism, system, or organization to withstand, endure, and recover from adverse conditions, threats, or disruptions while maintaining essential functions. In the context of International Relation, especially under Neo-Realism (Anarchic World), it emphasizes the survival of the state through balance of power, national interest, geopolitics and power politics. According to Neo-Realism the ultimate goal of the state should be self-preservation, which can be achieved through power, military strength and geopolitical strategies. This traditional security paradigms somehow undermine non-military threats like climate change and its impacts like mass displacement, economic challenges and state instability which directly weaken the nation's ability to survive.

Proponents of Environmental Security stress that climate change, natural disasters, and pollution can pose huge and significant threat to country stability, safety and survival. Human beings are the core component that runs and constitutes the state. People are one who form and sustain the state, run state machinery, and upon whom the states depends. Therefore, climate crisis must be recognized not just an environmental issue, but as a direct National Security threat. If the people of a state are at risk, the state itself is ultimately at risk.

Pakistan foreign policy objectives shaped by global politics, largely driven by the fear of India. However, the country tends to overlook internal threats, particularly climate change. This issue requires serious attention and comprehensive strategies at both the national and international levels. The Pakistani public and politicians feel strong urgency when it comes to geopolitical issues like India or sometimes Israel, However, when it comes to climate change there is lack of awareness and understanding. In Pakistani society traditional security threats dominate non-traditional security threats.

### **Research Question:**

Q- How climate change is posing National Security threat to Pakistan?

### **Theoretical Concept:**

**Neo-Realism:** In the mid-twentieth century, neo-realism evolved as a counter to classical realism. While classical realism relates state behavior to human nature and leadership objectives, neo-realism focuses on the structural restrictions of the international system. It contends that the anarchic nature of the international system and the allocation of power among states are the primary motivators of state activity. This idea holds that the basic purpose of all states is survival against aggressive designs of other states, because there is no one to rescue you in anarchic world.

**Environmental Security:** Environmental security is seen as the ability of individuals, groups, or states to adapt to, mitigate, or avoid environmental change without critical adverse effects that significantly degrade the integrity, values, or well-being of states, communities, or individuals. The definition incorporates elements of the original, state-focused definition of environmental security, but also includes important elements of human security (that affect community or state security) (Read, 2024).

### **Climate Change As A Security Threat:**

“What is certainly true is that if floods and other ecological disasters on this scale become regular events as a result of climate change, then Pakistan will be destroyed as a state and an organized society.” (Lieven, 2011).

Lieven warning came after the disastrous 2010 floods in Pakistan. This environmental calamity displaced 20 million people, caused 10\$ billion damage to Pakistan economy and about 50,000 sq km were submerged (Kiami, 2022). A decade later in 2022 Pakistan suffered another wave of climate brutality this time the more severe. The floods in 2022 claimed lives of 1700 people. Pakistan suffered 40\$ billion dollars of economic losses from floods alone (Hussain, 2025). Can a state that already have huge population, limited resources afford to have economical disasters of this scale or even worse in the future?

As a society the only thing that have the capability of destroying Pakistan is not India, nor Israel but climate change (Shah, 2025). It is not only floods that displaced people and troubled Pakistani economy. Most recently Pakistan experienced the worst heatwaves in its history. Temperature have soared up to 50° celsius. In plain areas of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, relative humidity make the case even worse, most recently in Peshawar, provincial capital 38° celsius felt like 53 due to heat index a combination of humidity and environmental temperature.

Pakistan has over 7000 glaciers, the most in the world after Antarctica. Unfortunately, these glaciers, which are a significant source of fresh water for the country, are melting rapidly due to rising global temperatures associated with climate change, resulting in the formation of numerous glacial lakes (Qutubuddin, 2023). Due to rising global temperatures Pakistan is also feeling the strong impacts of these changes. The melting of glaciers in the region has accelerated by 65 percent over the past 10 years. Many people living in the high altitude area will be forced to leave the area because the place will become uninhabitable in the near future (Wahla & Baig,2025).

### **Environmental Insecurity As An Social Problem:**

Environmental insecurity is both a social and an environmental problem. Many Pakistanis confront

a twofold vulnerability: first, due to poverty and limited resources, and second, because climate change disproportionately impacts them, exacerbating their pre-existing difficulties. The implications of climate change exacerbate security issues, as an increasing number of people lose the ability to feed their families or obtain housing (Naeem, 2023). Climate-related disasters have destroyed or damaged hospitals, schools, highways, and sources of income throughout the country, hastening rural-urban migration (Latif, 2019). This lead to rapid urbanization results in uncontrolled city expansion, which strains infrastructure and resources. As a result, cities are under increased pressure, which leads to higher crime rates and inefficient resource distribution.

### **Importance of Traditional Security:**

Pakistan's search for security understood in the classical realist sense involves the politics of national survival, territorial integrity, military empowerment, and an excessive, if not exclusive, concern with threats (Siddiqi, 2020). Since its inception, traditional security considerations have largely driven Pakistan's national security orientation. Traditional security focuses on military aspects of national security, addressing the domain of direct strategy. Contextually, traditional imperatives such as the Indian factor, nuclear domain and conventional dimension have been the dominant themes of the country's national security architecture (Awan, 2023). The main key driver of Pakistan tilt toward traditional security approach is hostile neighbor, Pakistan feel threaten that India never really accepted Pakistan partition and want to encircle Pakistan and undo partition the fear still exist (Pande, 2011). Pakistan has acquired sufficient nuclear weapons to counter a potential threat from nuclear India and potentially enhanced the nuclear dimension in the region. Moreover, Pakistan initially adopted the policy of minimum credible deterrence but upgraded its deterrence to a full spectrum posture because India increased its nuclear weapons and development. Pakistan is facing grave security challenges from India which can change its nuclear posture during any crisis (Akbar & Abbasi, 2021). Pakistan is somehow successful in preventing full scale war with India, but this somehow let to the neglect of non-traditional security approach, which is more disastrous in the upcoming decades.

### **Hurdles Implementing Climate Change Policy:**

The lack of political commitment and policy prioritization represent one of the main obstacle. Pakistan has to implementing climate change policy. However due to instability in politics and sudden changes in administration, and conflicting views or thinking, climate change programs get less attention and funding. The short term of political cycles long term planning and interfere with implementing of climate change policy. Further more weak institution ability and multiple government department are also responsible for the ineffective implementation policies of climate change policies. Pakistan has also faced difficulties due to lack of education, scarce human and financial resources as well as technological expertise. In Pakistan funding for climate change

initiative and projects is adequate due to budget limitation and conflicting development goals. Because resources for climate projects are made worse due to greater demands in Industries like healthcare, education and poverty alleviation. It is essential to acquire enough fund / money for climate initiatives and project and investigate options in order to overcome these obstacle. The implementation of climate change strategies in Pakistan is further complicated due to socio economic issues and lack of knowledge and awareness in the general population as well as multiple government stakeholders (agencies, Department) etc, which hinders the effective implementation of policies. (Khan, Asad, & Murtaza, 2023). Some important steps have been taken by Pakistan, like the National Security Policy in 2022, but there is further need for quick and emergency preemptive steps.

## **Conclusion:**

Ultimately, Pakistan does not need to abandon its neo-realist approach to security, which is necessary given its geopolitical landscape. Instead, it must expand its definition of national interest to include the non-military, existential threats posed by climate change. Pakistan need to promote policies to manage industrial waste, reduce vehicular emissions, and regulate the rapid, unplanned growth of cities, overpopulation, pollution and deforestation. There should be awareness in the young population at school level, the crucial role of education and public campaigns also need to be considered. People at the local level need to understand the risks and be empowered to take action, from planting trees to conserving water, by addressing these non-traditional threats, Pakistan is not weakening itself but in fact strengthening its long-term survival capabilities. A state that is economically stable, and socially cohesive is inherently a more secure state.

By prioritizing military and geopolitical concerns, Pakistan has failed to adequately invest in climate adaptation, disaster preparedness, and water management. The result is that while the state is secure from external military invasion, it is increasingly vulnerable to internal instability, mass displacement, and economic collapse caused by environmental disasters. If Pakistan fails to adapt, climate insecurity will erode its sovereignty from within, in a way no external enemy could achieve. This vulnerability highlights the central argument of the environmental security framework: for a state to survive, it must protect its people and their fundamental access to resources, which are now directly threatened by changing climate.

Countries around the world are increasingly prioritizing disaster preparedness, learning from nations like Japan, which is routinely hit by devastating earthquakes and tsunamis. Japan has created resilience via constant research and smart preparation, minimizing turmoil, reducing damage, and saving lives during calamities. While Pakistan may not yet have Japan's technology or financial capabilities, critical actions such as raising public awareness, reducing unnecessary damage, and implementing risk-

sensitive planning are still feasible. Traditional security concerns dominate Pakistan's foreign policy and national interest, but there is an urgent need to focus on non-traditional risks such as catastrophe risk reduction. Without such preemptive steps, the societal and economic consequences will be unsustainable. The time to act is now.

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**SECTION  
V**

**BOOK REVIEW**

# How to get Filthy Rich in the Rising Asia

## By Mohsin Hamid.



### Introduction:

*If you have bought this book as a guide for getting rich, we are already cut from the same cloth, part of middle-class carrying aspirations of improving our financial status in an underdeveloped or developing country. However, the general wisdom has a piece of advice to offer us that posits “never judge a book by its cover.” Anyone aspiring to read this book should keep in mind the literal meaning of the afore mentioned proverb.*

*Mohsin Hamid’s “objective self-help book” discusses various political themes that convinced me to write a review of an otherwise literary work. It perfectly pictures how life in a developing country looks like. There in lies an underlying message about how self-help books ignore the context, ground realities and systemic inequalities of the audience while offering generic advices of “hard work” and “perseverance” for pursuit of dreams, which, to employ Karl Marx’s terms, inculcates a false consciousness in the hard worker of a less developed setting. The book contains, as I mentioned, certain political themes which served as a rationale for me to write this review. I will review the book from the perspectives of neo-liberalism, structuralism, consumerism, post-colonialism and feminism. I will assess how these thought systems intersect to perpetuate rich aspirations in people while being shallow at the core, but I will enlarge upon these themes and relate the novel to it after providing a brief synopsis of the book.*

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### Plot:

Mohsin Hamid employs a second-person narrative to chart the life of an unnamed protagonist born in a rural village on

the periphery of a large, unnamed urban center, arguably Karachi, given contextual clues such as slum settlements, clean water scarcity, weak governance, and the presence of religious student organizations. The protagonist's family, already economically strained, relocates to the city in pursuit of better opportunities, eventually settling in a single-room dwelling within a slum. This move introduces the protagonist to the contradictions of urban life, fostering a desire for socioeconomic advancement.

Benefiting from his position as the youngest child, the protagonist receives an education up to the university level. In the meanwhile, he develops a romantic interest in a similarly ambitious young girl, referred to as the “pretty girl” who eventually departs from the slums to pursue a career in the modeling industry. The protagonist, after a confrontation with a student religious group, discontinues his education and starts work, first as a salesman, then as an entrepreneur. His business, built around the sale of adulterated bottled water, grows rapidly through systematic bribery and informal networks. As his enterprise expands, the protagonist faces violent threats from competitors, prompting him to hire criminal protection, given the weak law and order situation, which culminates in death of the threatener. He marries a significantly younger woman, fathers a child, and eventually divorces due to emotional disengagement. In old age, after delegating management to a trusted relative who later absconds with his wealth, the protagonist is left alone and socially isolated. His son is studying in the West, his former wife has remarried, and his extended family has perished.

Parallel to his trajectory, the “pretty girl” also ends up alone, estranged from her family and forgotten by the public. Their paths cross once more in the later stages of life, and having recognized their shared solitude, they choose to live out their remaining years together. She precedes him in death.

### **A Political Read:**

“You read a self-help book so that someone who is not yourself can help you, that someone being the author”. This is one of the starting sentences of the book which not only captures the contradictions in self-help books, that is providing generic solutions to problems entrenched in cultural and historical contexts, but also offers a broader explanation of the world, where generic solutions ignore structural forces like colonialism, class structure and capitalism. What follows is a synoptic inventory of episodes of political themes covered by the story.

1. The novel effectively challenges the contradictions of neo-liberal ideas. Neo-liberalism is a body of thought that argues that individuals are equal and grow in stature (the stature too defined in consumerist terms, as elaborated later) by individual efforts and sheer hard work. While instrumental in providing formal equality, fails to recognize the structural inequalities inherent in developing nations to pursue social equality as well. Hence, to pursue “growth in stature,” one may de-rail from

ethical frameworks and employ corrupt instruments of growth, as the novel pictures the protagonist, where deception leads him to economic growth. The factors leading to this mentality are explained in the subsequent arguments.

2. Neo-liberalism puts a great deal of responsibility on individual. It requires the individual to be rational, and “self-sufficient”. The latter requires you to take care of your own health and education, which happen to be public goods but privatized to offload the state. This liberal myth of “minimum state” denies the structural differences, leaving the poor deprived of basic needs. In a developing country, where you need the state to save you from rent-seekers and cronies, privatization destroys the poor strata. In this novel, the protagonist desires quality education to rub shoulders with the well off and good health facilities for his mother, but his financial status and privatization put constraints on him.

3. A student of social science needs not to exert himself on learning about the class structure of World. The developed countries are called First World while the developing and under-developed, as Third World. The First World exploits Third World by using cheap labor and raw material, while the third world continues to dream of emancipation, out of “false-consciousness.” This theoretical framework not only provides explanation on the global level but can be applied to societies too. The class structure provides the rich with cheap labor, and the poor with false hopes of economic mobility through “hard work.” This dynamic is clearly reflected in the novel, people of the slums work hard, gets exploited and barely increase their wealth arithmetically, while the rich see cheap labor in them and grows richer exponentially, entrenching “Internal Third Worldization.” Consequently, the hegemonic myth of “growth as a prerequisite to structural reform” is debunked, since economic growth evidenced at the upper strata doesn’t trickle down, and social welfare and structural reforms remain dream for the poor who function as machinery of the system, yet witness alienation.

4. Neo-liberalism serves as justification for capitalism, and capitalism, in return is solidified by yet another philosophy called “consumerism”. It is a philosophical belief that aggrandizes consumption. In other words, happiness is equated with consumption. Hence, happiness is measured by the parameter of material usage, something in contradiction with the notion of happiness, an essentially abstract concept.

The title of novel, as it turns out, is itself a loaded one. Being “filthy rich” is glorified, happiness is measured in terms of whether the protagonist has more cars, apartments or other luxuries, and not on basis of a moral standing or respect in society. The dream of protagonist, which happens to be being ‘filthy rich’, compels him to give backseat to ethical considerations.

5. I will now extend on the point mentioned above. When the parameters of happiness are

transformed from respect to material consumption, an individual often shuns off moral considerations and embarks on track of material pursuit. On the way, he breaks off ties with family and friends, or if not, de-prioritize them. This provides with instant pleasure, but as life sprints forward, one realizes the magnitude of his blunder when left all alone at the last years of his life.

In the novel, the protagonist, after spending a life of “happiness”, is deserted by his wife, left alone by his son as he stands on the precipice of his life. This characteristic arc from slums to being “filthy rich” and then alienated in illness, reveals the shallow core of consumerism and capitalist triumph, even in “success.”

6. Capitalism and patriarchy are two forces that have historically marginalized women. The former exploits them as cheap labor while the latter denies their existence and will. The surge of feminism has been instrumental in elevating their status. However, patriarchal culture, as evident, has a great deal of inertia, since an “object” of “subject’s honor” demands equity and bridging gap of exponential disparity. This inertia has a greater magnitude in developing countries where any foreign idea is seen as exotic, thus empowerment being viewed pejoratively.

But when these two forces join forces, specifically in a post-colonial context, that is the time when women feel suffocation in the system. Capitalism makes demands of “self-sufficiency” while patriarchy infringes responsibility of “honor” onto women. Navigating this challenge becomes an elephantine challenge.

In this novel, the “pretty girl” dreams of a life in showbiz industry where she could be “self-sufficient”. Her pursuit comes at the cost of severed family ties and living independently throughout life. The pursuit of “self-sufficiency” provided her freedom, while honor culture, an essential element of patriarchy, caused being deserted by family. In addition, she was consistently objectified throughout her career, since in a patriarchal structure, diversion from family values is equivalent of being characterless. Hence, the “pretty girl” can be evidenced steering her ship of life while facing objectification and hypersexuality in the afore mentioned nexus.

## **Conclusion:**

As I argued in the introduction “never judge a book by its cover”, this book may not be the perfect guide to be rich, but efficiently captures what being rich means. It’s less a guide than a mirror, reflecting the pressures, illusions and hard choices that define life in a rapidly urbanizing Global South. The novel also explores the dilemma of two philosophical views while embarking on trajectory of becoming rich, deontology and instrumentalism. The former justifies an action if it seems right

from an ethical perspective, while the latter rationalizes actions on how “happy” it makes you. While becoming rich in a developing country may be justified from an instrumental perspective, deontology is likely to take a marginalized position. For readers willing to look past the title, it offers a deep political meditation on the costs of playing by the rules of a game already rigged.

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# Editorial End Note

As we conclude this edition of The Mosaic, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the authors, reviewers, and contributors who have enriched this issue with their scholarly insights. Your dedication to advancing knowledge and fostering meaningful discussions continues to inspire us.

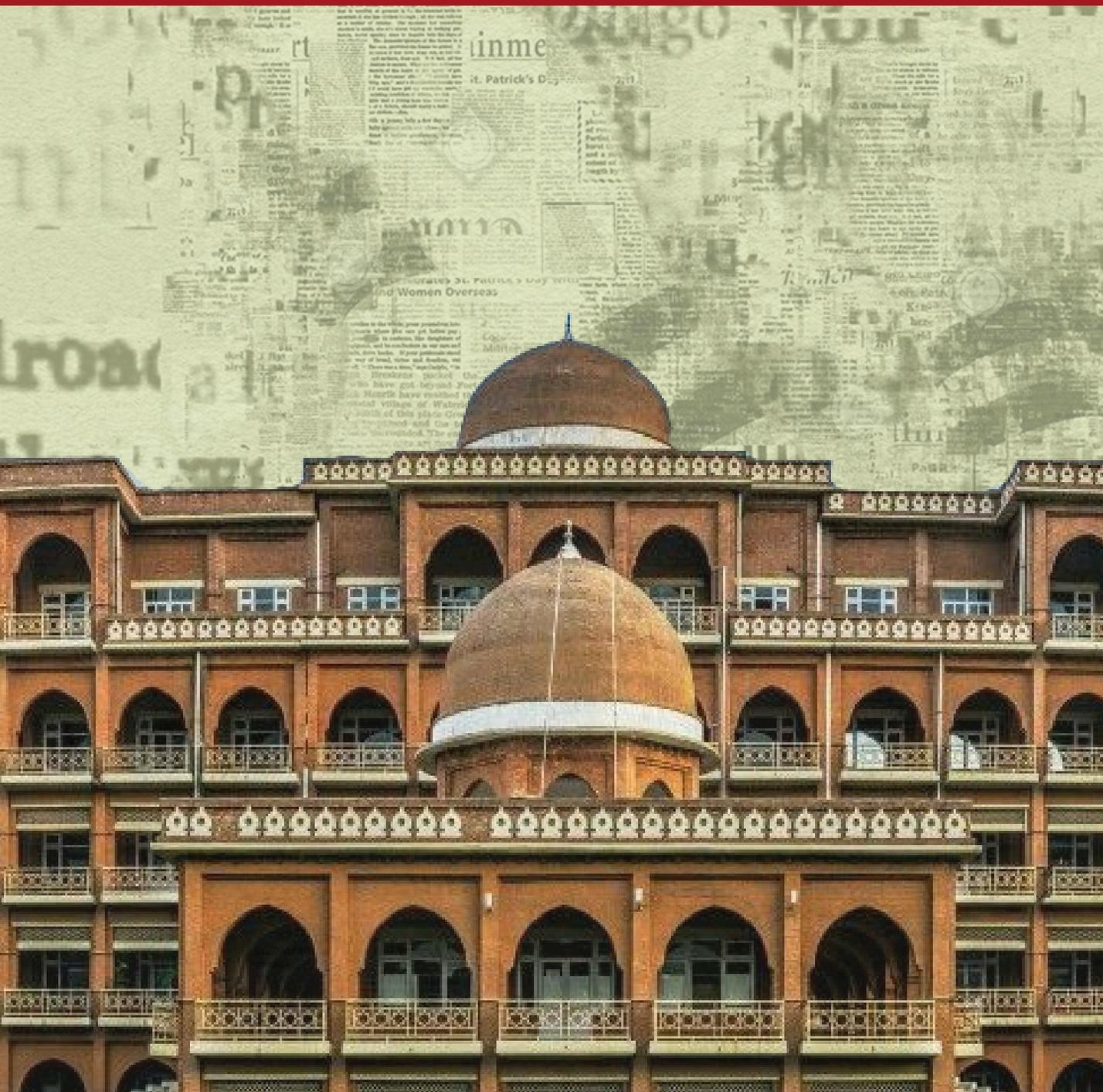
This issue reflects our commitment to addressing contemporary challenges, exploring emerging perspectives, and encouraging critical inquiry. We hope the articles within not only inform but also inspire further research and dialogue among academics and practitioners alike.

Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our mission to provide a platform for intellectual exchange and innovation. We invite readers and researchers to contribute their work to future issues and join us in our collective pursuit of excellence.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Warm regards,  
Editorial Team  
The Mosaic

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