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PAKISTAN WELCOMES SCO LEADERS FORGING PATHWAYS TO REGIONAL HARMONY AND COOPERATION



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EDITORIAL

THE RISING TIDE OF CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN AND THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

■ The Middle East has again been thrust into the global spotlight as a new wave of conflict erupted on October 7, 2023. The immediate catalyst was a sudden attack launched against Israel by Hamas, a move that shocked the international community. This attack did not occur in a vacuum; it was a culmination of longstanding grievances stemming from the hardships and injustices faced by Gazans and Palestinians.

■ Years of blockades, settlement expansions, and military operations have led to widespread suffering, fueling anger and desperation. In the aftermath, Israel's heavy-handed military response has raised serious concerns about the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza and the violations of international law by Israel.

■ The sudden escalation has intensified regional tensions and posed significant challenges for the region, including Pakistan.



As the situation unfolds, it becomes imperative for Pakistan to reassess its strategic position, understand the underlying motives behind the conflict, and consider forging stronger alliances with regional powers like Turkey and Iran.

■ Additionally, global players such as Russia and China may need to take a more active role in promoting stability, given that they too could be affected by the widening unrest in the region, especially in Baluchistan and KPK. For Pakistan, the escalating conflict in the Middle East is not a distant issue but a development with direct and profound implications.

■ In the context of the Yinon Plana controversial strategy purported to fragment neighboring countries to bolster Israel's regional dominance there is growing concern that Pakistan could be under direct threat if the situation continues to deteriorate. Whether officially adopted or not, the plan suggests a pattern where destabilizing one nation paves the way for targeting the next, thereby reshaping the regional balance of power.

■ If Iran, a significant regional player and neighbor to Pakistan, were to fall or become significantly weakened due to the ongoing conflict, Pakistan could find itself in a precarious position. Iran's destabilization could create a vacuum that might encourage hostile actions towards Pakistan. Given its strategic importance and nuclear capabilities,

there is a legitimate fear that the next target could indeed be Pakistan.

■ The threat may not come directly but could manifest through increased hostilities along Pakistan's borders. The eastern border with India has long been a point of contention, with historical disputes over Kashmir and periodic military skirmishes. Any regional instability could exacerbate these tensions, potentially leading to heightened conflict. Moreover, the western border with Afghanistan poses its challenges.

■ The security situation in Afghanistan remains fragile, and there is a risk that external powers could exploit this instability to undermine Pakistan's security. In such a volatile geopolitical climate, an attack orchestrated from either Afghanistan or India or worse, a coordinated effort from both can not be ruled out. Such a scenario would strain Pakistan's military and economic resources immensely, diverting attention from internal development goals and potentially destabilizing the nation.

■ Furthermore, the proliferation of extremist groups in the region adds another layer of complexity. These groups could exploit the chaos resulting from the conflict to expand their influence, recruit followers, and launch attacks within Pakistan. This not only threatens national security but also poses risks to social cohesion and economic progress. In light of these potential threats, Pakistan must reassess its national security strategies.

■ Strengthening border security, enhancing intelligence capabilities, and fostering unity among political and military institutions are critical steps. Additionally, addressing internal vulnerabilities, such as sectarian divisions and economic disparities, can help build resilience against external threats.

■ The situation underscores the urgency for

Pakistan to forge stronger alliances with neighboring countries that share common concerns. Collaborating with Turkey and Iran could provide a united front to counterbalance destabilizing forces in the region. Such an alliance could facilitate coordinated diplomatic efforts, mutual defense arrangements, and economic partnerships that bolster collective security.

■ Engaging with global powers like Russia and China has also become increasingly important. Both nations have strategic interests in the region and the capacity to influence outcomes. By aligning with these global players, Pakistan can enhance its diplomatic leverage, access support for security initiatives, and contribute to a multipolar balance of power that discourages unilateral aggression.

■ In conclusion, the potential threats posed by the unfolding Middle Eastern conflict require Pakistan to be vigilant and proactive. Understanding the implications of the Yinon Plan/ Col. Peter Ralph plan and the possible consequences of Iran's destabilization is crucial for national security planning. Pakistan can navigate these challenges by taking decisive action to strengthen alliances, enhance defense capabilities, promote internal unity, and safeguard its sovereignty and interests in an increasingly uncertain regional landscape.



NOTE OF APPRECIATION

**BY AD NCA,
LT. GEN. KHALID AHMED KIDWAI
NI, HI, HI(M) (RETD)**

The two magazines, INTERACTION, and ZAVIAH E NIGAH, have shown much improvement in terms of quality of presentation as well as content. My compliments to team RFI led most ably and professionally by Mr. Nusrat Mirza.

Keep up the high standards that you have achieved.

Best regards to team RFI.

Khalid Kidwai.

VISITS TO RABITA FORUM INTERNATIONAL (RFI)



**Nimra Rindh (Social activist),
Zamran Baloch (Educationist) and
Mudassir Ahmed visit RFI and meet
Chairman RFI, Nusrat Mirza along
with Robina Ibrahim Zehri
(Anchorperson),
Rehman Azak (Anchor) and
Zain ul abideen (Director RFI TV)**



**Shama Munshi (Writer),
Syed Ali Zaheer,
Z. H. Khurram (President PPEMF)
meet Nusrat Mirza (Chairman RFI)**



**Intellectuals and media persons from different backgrounds
visit RFI and meet Nusrat Mirza**

THE 23RD MEETING**PAKISTAN WELCOMES SCO LEADERS:****FORGING PATHWAYS TO REGIONAL
HARMONY AND COOPERATION****INTERACTION TEAM**

On October 15-16, 2024, the twenty-third meeting of the Council of Heads of Government (CHG) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) convened in Islamabad, Pakistan. Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chaired the meeting. During the summit, the SCO member states reiterated their commitment to expand cooperation in several areas, such as trade, economics, investment, security, and cultural and humanitarian links, to make the planet Earth secure, prosperous, peaceful, and environmentally clean. Below are some brief highlights of the event:

AGENDA

The summit's agenda centered on improving regional cooperation in various areas, including economics, commerce, the environment, culture, and security. Important conversations were held about regional security, economic integration, and counterterrorism. Moreover, Leaders



evaluated the SCO's performance and made critical organizational choices to improve collaboration among member nations.

PARTICIPANTS

The meeting brought together leaders and representatives from the SCO member states, observer states, and guests, including:

MEMBER STATES

- **PAKISTAN** Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif (Chair)
- **CHINA** Premier of the State Council, Li Qiang
- **RUSSIA** Prime Minister of Russia, Mikhail Mishustin
- **INDIA** Minister of External Affairs, S. Jaishankar
- **IRAN** Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, Mohammad Atabek
- **KAZAKHSTAN** Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Oljhas Bektenov
- **BELARUS** Prime Minister of Belarus, Roman Golovchenko



- **KYRGYZSTAN** Ministers Cabinet Chairman, Akylbek Zhaparov
- **TAJIKISTAN** Prime Minister of Tajikistan, Kokhir Rasulzoda
- **UZBEKISTAN** Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdulla Aripov

OBSERVER STATE

- **MONGOLIA** Prime Minister of Mongolia Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai^[9]

INVITED GUESTS

- **TURKMENISTAN** Deputy Chairman of Cabinet of Ministers, Rashid Meredov
- SCO Secretary-General, Zhang Ming
- SCO RATS Executive Committee Director, Ruslan Mirzayev
- SCO Business Council Chairman of the Board, Atif Ikram Shaikh
- SCO Interbank Union Chairman of the Council, Marat Yelibayev
- Director of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, R.E. Mirzaev.
- Other distinguished observers from Regional organizations like the CIS and CICA.

KEY OUTCOMES

1. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PREVIOUS CHAIRMANSHIP AND CURRENT LEADERSHIP:

The delegations commended Kazakhstan's



leadership of the SCO in 2023-2024 and expressed support for China's chairmanship for 2024-2025. They emphasized the importance of implementing decisions from the CHS meeting in Astana on July 4, 2024.

2. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES OF THE SCO:

The leaders underscored the principles of respect for sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, advocating for non-interference in internal affairs and peaceful dispute resolution. They reaffirmed the right of nations to choose their developmental paths and emphasized dialogue for resolving differences.

3. GLOBAL UNITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

The leaders reiterated their commitment to the SCO's "World Unity for a Just Peace, Harmony, and Development" initiative, proposing its adoption by the UN General Assembly. They emphasized the need for cooperation in creating a harmonious global order and advancing the vision of "One Earth. One Family. One Future."

4. ECONOMIC AND TRADE COOPERATION:

The heads of delegations expressed concerns over global economic challenges, including reduced investments, disrupted supply chains, and protectionist measures. They stressed the importance





of:

- Joint efforts against protectionist trade practices.
- Strengthening a rules-based, non-discriminatory, and transparent multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- Opposing unilateral sanctions that undermine international law and economic stability.

5. SUPPORT FOR CHINA'S OBOR INITIATIVE:

Member states, including Belarus, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, reaffirmed their support for China's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative, aiming to enhance connectivity between the Eurasian Economic Union and OBOR projects.

6. PROMOTING REGIONAL INTEGRATION:

The leaders highlighted the potential for creating a Greater Eurasian Partnership involving the SCO, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and other regional players, promoting regional cooperation in trade, energy, and sustainable development.

7. DIGITAL ECONOMY AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION:

The delegations emphasized the role of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, e-commerce, and innovation in driving economic growth. They advocated for:

- Bridging the digital divide and fostering digital inclusion.
- Establishing mechanisms for cross-border data exchange and cooperation in digital infrastructure.
- Holding regular meetings on e-commerce, with the next meeting scheduled in China in early 2025.

8. ENERGY COOPERATION AND SECURITY:

The heads of delegations focused on energy security and sustainable energy cooperation. They discussed:

- The SCO Development Strategy for Energy Cooperation up to 2030.
- Efforts to develop renewable energy and cross-border energy infrastructure.
- Preparation of a comprehensive plan to attract investment in renewable energy.

9. INVESTMENT AND FINANCIAL MECHANISMS:

Emphasizing the need for financial cooperation, the heads of delegations instructed relevant bodies to accelerate the establishment of the SCO Development Bank, SCO Development Fund, and a potential SCO Investment Fund.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

The heads of delegations reaffirmed their commitment to addressing climate change and environmental protection. They instructed relevant agencies to implement the SCO Green Belt Program and focus on sustainable mountain development and

glacier conservation. They also discussed the creation of a database on innovative environmental technologies and cooperation with international institutions for financing green projects.

11. HEALTH COOPERATION:

In response to global health challenges, the heads of delegations prioritized cooperation in public health, digital healthcare, access to quality medicines, and the development of medical tourism. They also advocated for the establishment of the SCO Medical Association and noted progress in traditional medicine and infectious disease control.

12. POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND AGRICULTURE:

The delegations stressed the importance of reducing poverty through practical cooperation within the SCO framework, highlighting initiatives to support small and medium-sized enterprises and boost trade in agricultural products.

13. CULTURE, EDUCATION, AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

The meeting emphasized the role of cultural exchanges, educational cooperation, and youth diplomacy in fostering mutual understanding among SCO member states. The leaders highlighted the importance of initiatives such as the SCO University and the promotion of youth entrepreneurship



through the SCO Youth Council.

14. SPORTS AND HUMANITARIAN COOPERATION:

The heads of delegations underscored the importance of sports diplomacy and cultural cooperation in building goodwill among member states. They highlighted the success of events like the annual SCO marathon and proposed the organization of the "Silk Road" mini-football tournament in Tehran in December 2024.

15. LOOKING AHEAD:

The heads of delegations expressed gratitude to Pakistan for hosting the meeting and announced that the next CHG meeting would take place in 2025 in Russia.

CONCLUSION

The 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the SCO member states reflected the organization's continued emphasis on promoting regional stability, economic growth, and international cooperation amidst evolving global challenges. With a focus on mutual respect, sovereignty, and collaboration across various sectors, the meeting underscored the SCO's role as a crucial platform for fostering unity, dialogue, and sustainable development in a multipolar world. The delegates' commitment to addressing issues like climate change, economic disparities, digital inclusion, and regional security indicates the SCO's proactive approach in shaping a peaceful, prosperous, and inclusive future.



PAKISTAN REJECTS FISSILE MATERIAL BAN

In the United Nations, Pakistan reaffirmed its opposition to the proposed treaty banning the production of fissile material used as fuel for nuclear weapons, asserting that States that do not need to produce enriched uranium after having already amassed several tons of it in excess are pushing for this discriminatory pact. "A treaty which only results in a cut-off in the future production of fissile material would be a non-starter given that it would perpetuate asymmetries and will have no added value for nuclear disarmament," Ambassador Usman Iqbal Jadoon, deputy permanent representative to the UN, told the General Assembly's First Committee, which deals with disarmament and international security matters.

"The States, which do not need to produce fissile material after having already amassed several tonnes of fissile material in excess, are pushing for cost-free proposals such as quantitative capping of fissile material as 'the next logical step'," he said. In these diversionary tactics, he pointed out they are joined with fervor by the States who rely on others for extended deterrence and nuclear-weapon-sharing arrangements. "If the proponents of the FMCT (fissile material cut-off treaty) are serious in addressing the issue of fissile material production, they should start by rejecting double standards and ceasing nuclear cooperation with a country in South Asia, obviously India, that continues to amass stockpiles outside safeguards and is now on

the path of a major breakout in terms of fissile production," the Pakistani envoy said.

"Short of that, their calls for a moratorium or a cut-off treaty ring hollow," he added. In this regard, Ambassador Jadoon reiterated that FMCT's approach was "flawed" and that its time had long passed. "The relentless weaponization of new and emerging capabilities and its integration and co-existence with the nuclear domain is further convoluting the security landscape," he said, adding that it would negatively impact the security of the States and exacerbate asymmetries. Ambassador Jadoon pointed out that India was the first to introduce nuclear weapons in the region and nuclearized the Indian Ocean. The country refuses to commit to non-testing, threatens aggression against Pakistan, rejects implementation of resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir of the Security Council, where it wants to sit as a permanent member, and spurns dialogue on restraint measures.

Courtesy: The Express Tribune, October 26, 2024.



1965 AIR WAR:

PAKISTAN SCORES BIG, TAKING DOWN 102 INDIAN JETS WITH 34 LOSSES



All of us have read and heard a lot about the Victory of 1965, but this is AWESOME!

General (R) Chuck Yeager (USAF), legendary X-15 Test Pilot writes in his book: "Yeager, the Autobiography".

"The air war in 1965 lasted two weeks and the Pakistanis scored a #three-to-one kill ratio, knocking out #102 Russian-made Indian jets and losing #thirty-four airplanes of their own. I'm certain about the figures because I went out several times a day in a chopper and counted the wrecks below."

"They were really good, aggressive dog-fighters and proficient in gunnery and air combat tactics. I was damn impressed. Those guys just lived and breathed flying."

"As an air defense analyst, I am fully aware that the Pakistan Air Force ranks today as one of the best air forces in the world and that the PAF Combat Commanders' School (CCS) in Sargodha has been ranked as the best



GCI/pilot and fighter tactics and weapons school in the world". As one senior US defence analyst commented to me in 1991, "it leaves Topgun (the US Naval Air Station in Miramar, California) far behind".

~ The famous USAF test pilot, on deputation in Pakistan as US Defense Representative. The PAF remains the only foreign air force in the world to have received Chuck Yeager's admiration a recommendation which the PAF is proud of.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY**LT. GEN. KHALID AHMED KIDWAI, NI, HI, HI(M) (RETD.), AT SVI, ISLAMABAD, ON**

“POST-1998 NUCLEAR MANAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN: INSTITUTIONAL BUILDING, LEGISLATIVE, AND POLICY MEASURES”

NOTE: On October 8-9, 2024, the Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) hosted the "Islamabad Non-Proliferation Conference 2024," bringing together an esteemed group of global experts and scholars for in-depth discussions on key non-proliferation challenges. The conference featured prominent participants from the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IMEMO RAS), the Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS), Russia, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), China, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, US, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), UK, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO-University), Saint Petersburg State University, Shanghai University, Peking University, University at Albany, State University of New York and University of Birmingham etc.

Lt. Gen. Khalid Ahmed Kidwai NI, HI, HI(M), Advisor Development National Command Authority, delivered a pivotal keynote address at the conference, titled *Post-1998 Nuclear Management in Pakistan: Institution Building, Legislative and Policy Measures*. His presentation offers an in-depth analysis of Pakistan's nuclear governance since 1998, emphasizing the evolution of institutional frameworks, legislative progress, and strategic policy directions. Recognizing the strategic importance of his insights, Interaction is pleased to present this notable speech in these pages for the enrichment of our readers.

1. Ladies and gentlemen.
Assalam O Alaikum and good morning.
I feel greatly honored to have been invited by the Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) to speak on a subject that will test my recall abilities from nearly a quarter century ago.
The topic is:

Post-1998 Nuclear Management in Pakistan: Institution Building, Legislative and Policy Measures

2. I think all Pakistanis understand the importance of 28th May and 30th May 1998 as two historic and critical dates for Pakistan's national security. The nuclear

tests conducted by Pakistan's scientists and engineers on these two dates represent the





firm establishment of a strategic balance in South Asia which till then had eluded Pakistan. A covert nuclear capability, whose journey had started in 1972, was now announced to the world as an overt nuclear weapons capability, especially for the benefit of our adversary in the east, to register the implications arising out of the restoration of the disturbed strategic balance and the offsetting of the relative conventional asymmetry.

3. When one looks back at the history of Pakistan's nuclear program since the famous Multan meeting of nuclear scientists called by President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1972, 52 years ago to be exact, one can see a very clear line of separation between the two eras of 26 years each:
 - The Nuclear Program in the pre - 28th - 30th May 1998 era.
 - The Nuclear Program in the post - 28th - 30th May 1998 era.
4. What was achieved by the celebrated Pakistani scientists and engineers in the pre-28th - 30th May 1998 era, 26 years to be exact, and specifically on those two historic days was the culmination of a heroic and dedicated national scientific and engineering effort underwritten by a consistently fierce political will, commitment and national resolve at the government levels, irrespective of the

politics of the day, to make Pakistan a nuclear weapons power. Pakistanis may or may not have eaten grass but the galaxy of Pakistani scientists and engineers through their successful experiments demonstrated to the world on those two days a Pakistani nuclear weapons capability as they responded in style to the Indian nuclear tests of 11th and 13th May 1998.

5. On the other hand, the post-nuclear tests era from May 1998 onwards, again 26 years to be exact, for which Allah Almighty chose some of us to carry forward the good work of the scientists, represents the operationalization, consolidation, strengthening and securing of Pakistan's nuclear capability physically as well as diplomatically according to the policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence initially, and transiting subsequently to the policy of Full Spectrum Deterrence. Today's talk is about the 2nd era.
6. The story of this 2nd era commences with my induction into the Pakistan Army's General Headquarters on 30th May 1998, the day when Pakistan conducted the second series of tests at Chaghi. To begin with, I was tasked to develop a proposal for the establishment of a national command and control system for Pakistan now that Pakistan had declared its nuclear weapons capability overtly. My small team and I, which included my old friend and colleague Dr. Naeem Salik, head of the SVI now, as one of the pioneers with his expertise in arms control affairs, put our heads together to complete the assignment to the best of our professional ability. By December 1998 our proposals and recommendations were approved by the then Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf. Simultaneously, I was

asked to take over as the first Director General of the proposed Strategic Plans Division (SPD), the proposed secretariat to the proposed apex body National Command Authority (NCA). Thus began the journey of over 15 years of my association with the nuclear program, the beginning of what I have referred to as the 2nd era from May 1998 onwards, and in the process, the pursuit of institution building.

7. Before proceeding further, I would like to present before you the basic outline of the command and control management structure that was approved in 1998. I am happy to say that despite the journey of 26 years, the fundamentals of the basic management structure in terms of conception have largely remained intact. Of course, like any dynamic organization, there have been improvements, additions, and deletions, as SPD went about its operationalization business in the ensuing years.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR CAPABILITY

8. Command and Control

Organization: In the post-May 1998 period, the establishment of an effective Command and Control Organization, from scratch, had become a strategic imperative, not only to bring harmony in the command and control mechanism, nuclear policy and development strategy, but also to provide credible stability to our strategic deterrence. Furthermore, its formal announcement was necessary to transmit the right signals at the regional and international level that Pakistan's nuclear capability was being handled in a professional and institutionalized manner under an effective command and control



system. This command and control structure, though in place for over a year, was formally announced on 2 February 2000 and was well received. The Command and Control Organization is structurally grouped under four constituents:-

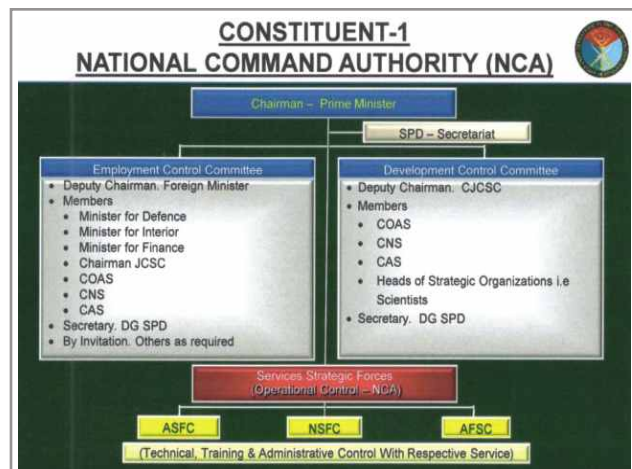
- a. Constituent 1 - National Command Authority (NCA).
- b. Constituent 2 - Strategic Plans Division (SPD).
- c. Constituent 3 - Strategic Force Commands.
- d. Constituent 4 - Scientific Strategic Organizations.

9. Constituent-1: National Command Authority (NCA):

The NCA comprises of nine important decision-makers of the country and includes the political and the military leadership. The Chairman of the NCA is the Prime Minister. The NCA, the apex decision-making body, formulates policy and controls all aspects of Pakistan's nuclear capability including deployment and, if ever necessary, the use / employment of strategic assets. It has two committees: the Employment Control Committee (ECC), and the Development Control Committee (DCC), functioning separately for policy formulation, employment, and development aspects

respectively.

a. **ORGANIZATION OF NCA**



b. **MAIN FUNCTIONS OF EMPLOYMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

- (1) Reviews from time to time the latest information on the strategic threat.
- (2) Is responsible for policy directions during peacetime and has the authority to order, control and direct use/employment of tri-services strategic forces during war.
- (3) Gives policy directions and guidance for evolution of doctrines and employment policy based on technical capability and threat assessment.
- (4) Lays down guidelines for an effective command and control system to safeguard against accidental or unauthorized use.

c. **Main Functions of the Development Control Committee**

- (1) Exercise technical, financial and administrative control on the Scientific Strategic Organizations.
- (2) Oversee the systematic development of strategic weapons programs as per the approved Development Strategy.
- (3) The committee is empowered to raise facilities/ organizations and integrate

existing ones within laid down objectives.

- (4) It has full financial and administrative powers while remaining within the allocated budget.

10. **Constituent - 2:**

Strategic Plans Division (SPD):

SPD is the secretariat to the NCA, and is entrusted with the task of developing and managing Pakistan's nuclear, and space programs in all dimensions. SPD functions directly under the Prime Minister and the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, and is headed by DG SPD. It draws its legal status from the NCA Act 2010. The main functions of SPD:

- a. Formulation of the country's nuclear policy, nuclear strategy and nuclear doctrine.
- b. Formulation of short and long term development strategy and force goals for tri-services strategic forces, within the ambit of national power potential, nuclear doctrine and arms control regimes, besides overseeing its systematic implementation.
- c. Formulation of strategic/operational plans at the tri-services level for movement, deployment and employment of strategic forces.
- d. Formulation of the chain of command/authority.
- e. Undertake comprehensive measures for the safety and security of strategic assets.
- f. Assist the Prime Minister and Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee in exercising control over strategic organizations, and coordinate their financial, technical, developmental and minimal administrative aspects.
- g. Provide military inputs and coordinate with the Foreign Office, CD Geneva, and key ambassadors at Vienna, New York, and

Washington, on arms control and disarmament affairs/strategic issues which impinge upon the nuclear capability.

- h. Coordinate the establishment of a Strategic C⁴I²SR system for the NCA, SPD, and Strategic Forces for command and control of strategic capability ensuring real-time linkages with conventional Services C⁴I²SR networks.

**11. Constituent-3:
Strategic Forces Commands
at Each Service Level:**

Exclusive Strategic Forces Commands have been raised in all three services. The services retain relevant training, and technical and administrative control over their respective Strategic Forces. However, operational planning and employment control rests entirely with the NCA under the overall military direction of Chairman JCSC. SPD coordinates all related aspects with the Services Headquarters. The Army Strategic Force Command, the Naval Strategic Force Command, and the Air Force Strategic Commands have been established.

**12. Constituent-4:
Strategic Organizations:**

This constituent comprises various Commissions and Organizations, commonly referred to as the Scientific Strategic Organizations. These function under the NCA/SPD and deliver on assigned strategic projects.

13. Having given you an overview of the management structures and the institution building during the early years, post-1998, I shall give a broad insight into some of the challenges that we faced as we proceeded on our long journey to operationalization.
14. **First Challenge:** As we settled down in

our new premises in the Chaklala Garrison, the newly created SPD started to find its feet, fill in the necessary manpower, and commence its work in all seriousness with the clear advantage of a confidence that can only come from ignorance. The very first challenge that I would like to mention without any hesitation was that of overcoming our ignorance of matters nuclear whether strategic, scientific, organizational, operational, or even the locations of the various scientific strategic organizations, which were spread far and wide across the country, the important personalities and individuals as to who was who, and in which strategic organization. It was a truly mysterious world out there and the level of secrecy had all along been so high that even asking questions invited hushed answers sometimes in sign language.

15. The other side, by which I mean the community of scientists and engineers, was also not quite sure as to how much of the classified information they could share with the new gentleman placed in charge of Pakistan's nuclear program. It took time to educate and familiarize ourselves with the new environments, with people who had just recently emerged as national heroes, the new and unfamiliar scientific jargon, and most importantly, where stood the program and what needed to be done from here on.
16. One thing was clear that the newly formed SPD, not even fully manned yet, had hit the ground running. There wasn't much time to waste in getting on with the further development and operationalization phases. Nevertheless, patience, persistence, and good manners helped us in bringing down some of the mental

barriers. From there on, we became an accepted part of their team, and the mutual respect, camaraderie, and even friendships developed then exist till today. First challenge overcome!

17. **Developing a Vision:** The next challenge, turned into an opportunity, was based on the early identification and conception of mid-term and long-term visions, as to where we wanted the program to be in a given time frame, in harmony with the needs of the policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence. Thereafter, putting heads down for focused work on seven main segments, and a few supporting ones, all moving in parallel, because most of the work was inter-linked. These seven segments, when gradually integrated into one wholesome tri-services strategic capability, or a "force in being", a term that I learnt from my naval friends at the war college, were to be based on the elements of 'credibility' of the capability as well as the 'minimum' numbers of weapons assessed, which, in our opinion, would radiate the strategic effects of 'deterrence' of aggression on the large military machine of our adversary. Mind you, no staff college or war college prepares one for the challenge of conceiving and developing an operationalized national nuclear capability of a newly declared nuclear power. No ready-made Directing

Staff solutions. All of these had to be based on our best professional judgments and on-job learning. The seven main segments, each of which was a challenge in itself, were:

18. **One: The Establishment of an Institutionalized Nuclear Command and Control Structure.** As explained earlier, it comprised of a National Command Authority (NCA), the Strategic Plans Division (SPD) as a one-window secretariat, the three tri-services Strategic Forces in the field to handle the national nuclear capability, and the Scientific Strategic Organizations. This was based on the approval that had been accorded to our initial proposals that had been presented sequentially, to the COAS, and subsequently to two other forums of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC), and the National Security Council (NSC) of the Federal Government.
19. **Two: The Conception of a National Nuclear Policy with a Specific Vision.** It was necessary to identify as to where Pakistan's nuclear capability ought to be for at least a decade beyond the scientific experiments of May 1998, say, by the year 2010. This was based on the classic military methodology of assessment of the likely geo-political and strategic environments in the coming decade, the nature of the evolving threat with an eye on strategic developments across the border, and own technical, operational, and financial capabilities and capacities.
20. **Three: Based on the Foregoing Assessments, Translation of the National Nuclear Policy, or Vision, into a Robust Force Development Strategy.** It involved the raising, equipping, housing, and training of the



three tri-services strategic forces, as the end-users of the operationalized capability, as per the then-approved policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence.

21. **Four: In Line with the Force Development Strategy, the Tasking to the Strategic Organizations of the Force Goals including Oversight.**

Here was the real-time sweat and hard labor by the strategic organizations to develop and deliver in adequate numbers, in tangible terms, the inventory of the variety of nuclear weapons for the three tri-services strategic forces, including weapons earmarked for the First and Second Strike capability.

22. **Five: Conceiving and Developing a Secure and Efficient C⁴I²SR Capability.** This stands for Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Information, Surveillance and Reconnaissance. The project of conceiving and developing a modern strategic C⁴I²SR system was a technical and operational challenge. As you might note, the acronym C⁴I²SR comprises of eight elements, each one of which is a complete system in itself, to be conceived, developed, tested, integrated, and then fielded within the length and breadth of the nuclear infrastructure to provide fool proof command and control capability to the NCA, SPD, and the Strategic Forces.

23. **Six: The Securing of all of the Foregoing Elements of Pakistan's Nuclear Capability against External and Internal Threats.** One of the most important elements, under the broader rubric of nuclear security, was to plan, deploy and ensure fool proof security for the vast nuclear infrastructure of Pakistan both civil and military. This was one area



where we were very clear that there was no margin for error at all. Pakistan was in a fish bowl and the world was watching intently. You would recall that due to the worldwide politico-military fallout of 9/11, the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the war on terror and its severe internal fallout inside Pakistan, nuclear security particularly became a top priority area. Under the shadow of the then prevailing adverse geo-political environments including the sharp international focus on the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, and the negative international narrative or mantra of the possibility of "Pakistan's nuclear assets falling into wrong hands", further fueled by hostile adversaries, there was zero margin for error. We realized that in those difficult days when internal terrorist attacks including some against Pakistan's conventional military installations were being conducted with relative impunity, any incident in the domain of the SPD, howsoever big or small, would be just the opportunity that the international media and our adversaries might be waiting for to blow out of proportion, and further the purported myth that Pakistan's nuclear weapons were not safe. SPD simply could not afford to assign anything but the highest priority to nuclear security. We

therefore invested much time, effort, and funds in ensuring that the nuclear security of Pakistan's nuclear infrastructure would be as foolproof as was humanly, professionally, and financially possible. Allah be praised, we came out of that particular difficult phase safe and unscathed. Consequently, it was quite satisfying to learn every once in a while some of the influential international voices, which could verify independently through their National Technical Means (NTMs), declared formally that Pakistan's nuclear weapons were in safe hands. For example, just one quote amongst many that I can recall came in David Sanger's book 'Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power, "....the process has impressed as to how seriously the Pakistanis take nuclear security, perhaps more seriously than anyone else in the world." Talking of challenges, well, nuclear security was certainly one of the bigger ones.

24. **Seven: Last but not Least; the Conduct of Nuclear Diplomacy.**

It was vital that the SPD, the Foreign Office, and the relevant Pakistani diplomats especially those at CD Geneva, Vienna, Washington, and New York work in concert with the objective of preventing, and where necessary pre-empting, any adverse fallout of international nuclear diplomacy that might be detrimental to the smooth development of Pakistan's nuclear program and its objectives as per our vision. It was an ongoing challenge that was handled superbly by the Pakistani diplomats year after year, and it continues on and off even now.

25. In the context of nuclear diplomacy, a linked challenge that we turned into an

opportunity, was the never-ending saga, which too continues till today, of layers upon layers of sanctions and denials imposed on Pakistan by the international actors with the clear intent of preventing the further development of Pakistan's nuclear program and squeezing it as much as possible. These sanctions and denials went to the extent of being ridiculous, indiscriminate, and often devoid of any logic in their application. The list of entities that were sanctioned fairly regularly sometimes included universities and private sector companies that were miles away from the nuclear program. The sordid story continues till today. Only last month, some more meaningless sanctions



Pakistan's Strategic Location

were imposed on a Pakistani entity.

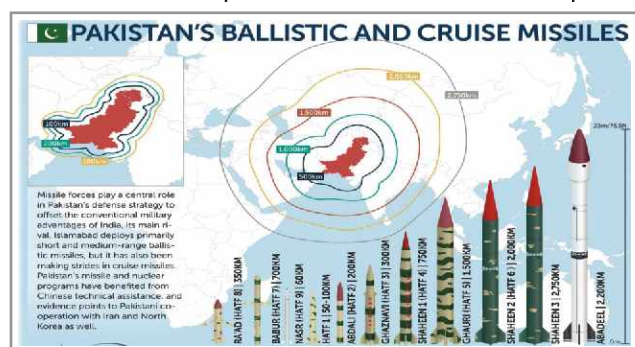
26. What was our response and standard policy? Very predictable and simple. Go indigenous. It took time, funding, and patience but our scientists and engineers at the strategic organizations are professionally in a different class altogether - committed and motivated professionals who love challenges. I do not recall a single project which we decided to develop indigenously and on which they did not deliver. The sanctions and denials invariably worked to our advantage by compelling us to become self-reliant. Amongst many other success stories of our

times, the indigenization of the nuclear infrastructure is one big one. And this is something that was not an SPD effort alone. The story goes back to the earliest days of the commencement of Pakistan's nuclear program. Both the eras that I have talked about, 52 odd years cumulatively, are replete with success stories of projects and facilities being developed locally when compelled by sanctions. Perhaps we owe a small vote of thanks to our detractors who inadvertently enabled SPD in its task of institution-building in Pakistan's nuclear program.

27. I shall now say a few words on policy measures undertaken. By 2011, a little over a decade since May 1998, we had reached a point in our force development strategy when we felt confident enough to transition Pakistan's nuclear policy from Credible Minimum Deterrence to Full Spectrum Deterrence.
28. During the period of this decade-plus, with the development of a variety of ballistic missiles, the tactical nuclear weapon Nasr together with a family of highly accurate low-flying cruise missiles Babur and Ra'ad for a variety of land, air, sea, and under-sea platforms, the long-range Shaheen III with a range of 2750 km, the Ababeel with a Multiple Independently Targeting Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) capabilities, by 2011 the entire spectrum of nuclear weapons

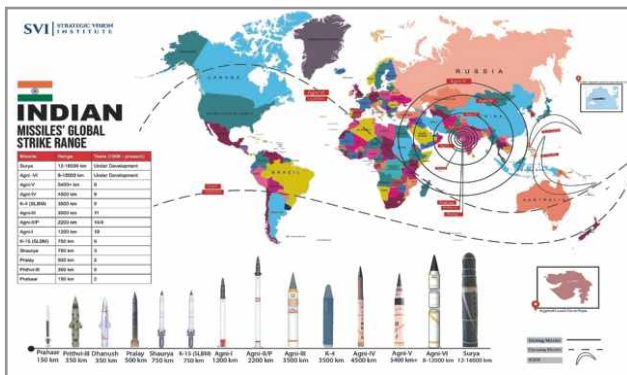
was covered horizontally and vertically. India's vast eastern and southern geographical dimensions, including its outlying territories, were fully covered by Pakistan's various nuclear weapons.

29. Today, Alhamd o Lillah, Pakistan's Full Spectrum Deterrence capability, while generally remaining within the larger philosophy of Credible Minimum Deterrence, comprises horizontally of a robust tri-services inventory of a variety of nuclear weapons, a triad if you may. It is held on land with the Army Strategic Force Command (ASFC), at sea with the Naval Strategic Force Command (NSFC), and in the air with the Air Force Strategic Command (AFSC). Vertically the nuclear spectrum encapsulates progressively increasing destructive weapon yields, and range coverage at three tiers: strategic, operational, and tactical to cover India's vast eastern and southern geographical dimensions, including its outlying territories.
30. Cumulatively, there is an awesome amount of deterrent nuclear power available to the NCA/SPD. It enables Pakistan to effectively deter aggression through smart deterrence strategies in the first and second strike modes. The capabilities enhance Pakistan's response options - both for peacetime and pre-war deterrence, and if ever deterrence is challenged by the adversary, for intra-war deterrence. The development strategy was designed to enable a powerful Full Spectrum Deterrence and on that it has delivered.
31. Specifically, the policy of Full Spectrum Deterrence implies the following:
 - That Pakistan possesses the full spectrum of nuclear weapons in three



categories: strategic, operational, and tactical, with full range coverage of the large Indian land mass and its outlying territories; there is no place for India's strategic weapons to hide.

- That Pakistan possesses a full range of weapons yield coverage, and the numbers strongly secured, to deter the adversary's policy of massive retaliation; Pakistan's 'counter-massive retaliation' will therefore be as severe if not more.
- That Pakistan retains the liberty of choosing from a full spectrum of targets in a "target-rich India", notwithstanding the Indian BMD or the S-400, to include counter value, counterforce, and battlefield targets.



32. By developing Full Spectrum Deterrence capability, we have reinforced deterrence at all levels, and re-restored the disturbed strategic balance, thereby ensuring that peace will generally prevail. Cold Start Doctrine or Proactive Operations have not only been checked but the operational options of the large Indian military have been severely curtailed to a point that now in 2024, five years since the last Indian humiliation at Balakot-Rajauri in 2019, one hears about a Dynamic Response Strategy (DRS) being crafted by the Indian military planners, in an effort to remain

relevant, based essentially on the hackneyed "strategic strikes" formula at the tactical level across the LOC, or even the international borders. In a matter of a few decades, that is a steep climb down from Gen K. Sundarji's blitzkrieg (1986), to Gen V P Malik's limited war (2001-02), and now to meaningless strategic strikes (2016 and 2019).

33. In my opinion, Dynamic Response Strategy (DRS) is a clear reflection of the limits and constraints imposed by Pakistan's robust nuclear capability on India's strategic and operational options, and therefore my preference to call Pakistan's strategic weapons especially the Tactical Nuclear Weapons as 'weapons of peace'.
34. When seen against the reality of the gradual erosion and regression of India's politico-military options in the real world of today's South Asian strategic balance, to me it sounds comical, perhaps Quixotic, to hear India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Defense Minister Rajnath Singh threatening that India will chase infiltrators inside Pakistani territory and, not to be left behind, for the Foreign Minister Jaishankar to say that Pakistan's nuclear capability should be ignored while planning to take Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Such statements at the highest political levels can only fall in the category of political bluster perhaps borne out of the frustration of seeing one of the world's largest militaries standing deterred because of Pakistan's Full Spectrum Deterrence nuclear capability. My humble advice to them would be to recall that Pakistan does not have a No First Use policy; may I repeat for emphasis: Pakistan does not have a No First Use Policy.

I thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

THE LOOMING IRAN-ISRAEL WAR - MUTUALLY ASSURED DESTRUCTION?



AMBASSADOR SYED HASAN HABIB

“Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not”

The above quote amply fits the Israeli Prime Minister. He is limitlessly pursuing the destruction of all possible threats without any plan for the day after. The daily Israeli bombing and military campaign has killed over 45,000 Palestinians. It is starting campaigns that it could not finish. There is a total disregard for human rights and international laws in the Israeli campaign in Gaza and Lebanon. It is not stopping despite a very vocal international civil society as it has few strong supporters. Even European states are openly distancing themselves from Israeli genocide in Gaza and Lebanon. Except for the US which is its strongest supporter and defender, no civilized nation is fully backing it.

Iran's relations with Palestine go back to the late 1970s when the PLO supported the Islamic Revolution against the Shah's regime. It openly extends all possible support to

Hamas. The 1st October retaliation by Iran toward Israel was in response to the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah which was ordered by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu.

The strike was a message and an effective hit on Israeli military and intelligence targets. It was a very effective hit that avoided civil causality and conveyed a strong message of Iran's will and capability. Currently, Israel and Iran are engaged in a competition that involves assassinations and bombing strikes against each other's assets. In that competition, it looks like Israel had the upper hand, up until. The Iranians had promised that they were going to strike in the wake of the 31st July assassination of the Hamas leader Ismail Henia in Tehran. The delay in the response drew criticism and hidden ridicule from some quarters. It looked like the Iranians were very weak. Then came the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah, a close ally of Iran. Unlike the World that regards Hamas, Hizbullah, and Hootis as Iranian proxies, Iran itself considers them as allies.

So they retaliated with 180 ballistic missiles of which a good number got through the Iron Doom, David's Sling, Arrow, and THAAD anti-missile batteries, etc., US and its allies' radars, aircraft, showcasing the Iranians' resolve and technology. The conflict is escalating as Israelis who were earlier winning have now been forced to opt for an unpopular response. The Israelis recklessly targeted civilian



populations, while the Iranians hit the military and intelligence facilities killing only one person that too by falling debris. Sending a clear message to the World to look at what Israel is doing in Beirut, southern Lebanon, and Gaza and to stop the Israeli heavy-handedness.

ESCALATION

The Israelis will retaliate and the Iranians have said they're going to counter retaliate and of course, the Israelis will counter-counter retaliate. One can ask when this is going to stop. It's very important to understand that the Israelis are talking about going after targets like; the leadership, nuclear facilities, oil fields/oil refineries, and maybe civilians. The Iranians made it clear if its oil fields or refineries are targeted, they will attack oil refineries and oil fields throughout the Middle East.

Such a move can have serious consequences for the world economy. The Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in shuttle diplomacy has covered all the regional countries conveying a message that any country providing any support to Israeli or US moves against Iran will be responded to in the same manner. Israel feeling a perfect moment is going ahead into war, it dreams of dragging the US into a war with Iran. That is the worst possible scenario.

IRAN NUCLEAR

The US President Trump pulling out of the

JCPOA provided Iran an opportunity to speed up enough enriched Uranium that is enough few bombs. This would not have happened if the US had stayed in the JCPOA and improved its relations with Iran. The opposite happened due to pressure from Israel, Arabs, and the pro-Israeli lobby in the United States.

Despite the full-blown propaganda about Iran's nuclear program, there is no conclusive evidence of its weapon program. Iranians claim that following a binding Fatwa by Imam Khomeini, they will not make Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

The US, basing its evidence on the dissident Iranian groups, does not accept Iranian claims of following a civil nuclear program. According to US sources, Iran had the nuclear weapons design in 2003. This was revealed when Israel allegedly captured Iran's nuclear archive documents in 2018. It suggests that Tehran's weapons designs were already in advanced form, two decades ago. That design employed characteristics similar to France's AN-52 and was about two feet in diameter. A nuclear warhead of that size could be carried on an Iranian Shahab-3 ballistic missile. This was assumed as clear evidence that Iran was seeking a ballistic missile-deliverable warhead from the start. Yet, we may head towards an Iraq-2-type situation where we destroy a country and do not find evidence of WMD. In the case of Iraq WMD, the evidence was collected through the





dissidents.

The International Atomic Energy Agency determined in 2015 that Iran already had a compacted lightweight weapon design provided by a Russian nuclear weapons designer. This was the Iranian weapon design among other features had "multipoint initiation" an advanced design technique. Iran is accused of having already done preliminary testing of this design more than 20 years ago. According to US sources, Tehran is now in a position to produce and deploy a missile-deliverable weapon in a matter of months, maybe less. After all, they are working in a war-like situation.

Aware of Israeli or US intentions, Iran will protect its nuclear assets making the job as hard as possible. In case of escalation, it may rescind the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Others like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Egypt may follow suit. This will be a major dent in the already fragile disarmament regime.

ENTER RUSSIA

It's a quasi-nuclear option that the Iranians have. As the region is already on the escalation ladder, this could lead to a catastrophe. Iran and Russia are about to enter into a mutual defense pact. The Russians have publicly warned Prime Minister Netanyahu to stay out of Lebanon. President Putin has reportedly declined to take a phone

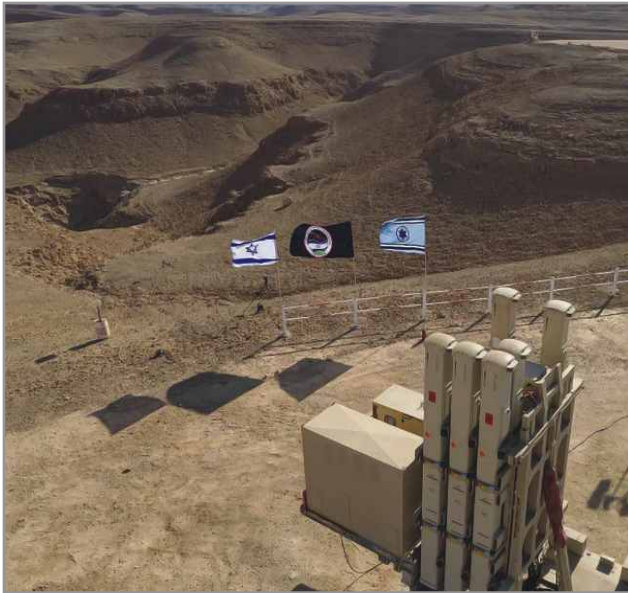
call from Netanyahu. The Russian naval ships in the Mediterranean had intercepted 13 Israeli missiles aimed at Lebanon; maybe they were coming a little too close to the Russian Navy.

The new Russians-Iranians Alliance possibly includes the Chinese and the North Koreans as all these feel threatened by the United States. They're coming closer together as they all understand that they have to play hardball with the United States and with Israel. Russia will probably not like Iran to have the A-bomb but will provide all support to it in case of a defensive war.

US-ISRAELI NEXUS

The United States and Israel are conjoined twins. So on 14th April, when the first time the Iranians struck Israel the US played a key role in fending off Iranian missiles and drones. Again on 1st October the United States clearly again played a strong role in fending off the Iranian attack. It can be easily assumed that a lot of US taxpayer money is used in the Israeli war efforts. After all new fancy missile system costs dear and maintaining them in war-like situations is even costlier.

After the killing of the leadership and cadres of Hamas and Hezbollah, Israel and all its supporters are talking about this great opportunity that's presented itself to remake the Middle East. All the senseless killings are



not going to solve the problem in Lebanon, Hamas and Hezbollah are not going away. In Gaza, as we all know, they have not decisively defeated Hamas they've not even come close. Further, they've not rescued the hostages.

Many in the World think that the US controls Netanyahu. In fact, it is Netanyahu who is controlling Biden. If you look at US-Israeli relations over time, there is a huge amount of evidence that Israel and the United States were at loggerheads on different issues. Not always but sometimes, they had a common interest in pursuing the same policy. But there were many periods in history when both were following diametrically opposite goals. Most of the time Israel won. It was because of the power of the Jewish lobby in the US.

A look at the recent appearance of Netanyahu to the US Congress, where he was applauded and even encouraged for genocide. One may ask, where is the American national interest? Further, one recalls June 1967, when Israeli jets attacked and destroyed the USS Liberty and an American surveillance ship on the high seas and killed 34 sailors and 300 injured. Israel

was let off lightly due to the power of the lobby, pure and simple. President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) could not resist the lobby. It was during LBJ's time that Israel acquired nuclear technology that the US never admitted.

The present World is divided into two camps namely the Good guys and the Bad guys. The US and Israel are the good guys. The rest of the Middle East and Muslims are not good guys.

CONCLUSION

The current situation between Iran and Israel is very tense. Any irresponsible act can push the region into war. Such a war has the potential to spill to a wider region. Netanyahu is clinging to power by the teeth and is fully aware that the cessation of hostility will be his end. Iran is trapped in its revolutionary rhetoric and thus both find it hard to back down. Someone should bring sanity to this chaotic World. There is an urgent need for the UN and peace-loving nations to unite and push for peace.

With Gaza totally decimated the Muslim Ummah is in shock as OIC and Muslim leadership are silent. There is a need by the Islamic bloc to pursue peace proactively and then reconstruction of Gaza.

The writer is Chairman of the Pakistan Council on Foreign Relations and Senior Fellow at the Institute of Business Management, Karachi.



CHINA'S EXPANDING INFLUENCE IN SOUTH AMERICA:

A STRATEGIC CHALLENGE FOR THE UNITED STATES

NUSRAT MIRZA



According to a recent RAND (Research and Development) Corporation report, China's multifaceted expansion into South America poses significant challenges to U.S. interests in the region. China is reshaping alliances and diminishing American influence through increased economic ties, military cooperation, and strategic use of information warfare.

ECONOMIC EXPANSION: A 26-FOLD INCREASE IN TRADE

Over the past 24 years, trade between China and South American countries has surged 26-fold. This economic boom is not merely a byproduct of globalization but a strategic effort by China to secure natural resources, open new markets for its goods, and establish itself as a dominant economic partner in the region. Investments in infrastructure projects, such as ports, railways, and energy facilities, have further solidified China's economic foothold.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has extended its reach into South America, with

several countries signing on to benefit from Chinese financing and development expertise. While these projects promise economic growth, they often have significant debt obligations and increased Chinese influence over domestic policies.

MILITARY INFLUENCE: A GROWING CONCERN

China's military engagement in South America has also intensified. China is fostering closer ties with regional militaries through arms sales, joint military exercises, and training programs. This enhances China's strategic reach and provides opportunities to gather intelligence and establish a presence near U.S. borders.

Establishing China's first overseas military base in Djibouti has raised concerns about potential similar moves in South America. While no official bases have been announced, increased port calls by Chinese naval vessels and discussions about space tracking stations indicate a growing military interest.

THE THREE WARFARES: PSYCHOLOGICAL, MEDIA, AND LEGAL

The RAND report highlights America's concern over China's deployment of the "Three Warfares" strategy in South America:

1. PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE:

China is leveraging cultural exchanges, educational programs, and diplomatic engagements to shape public perception and

promote its image as a benevolent global leader. Confucius Institutes and scholarships for South American students to study in China are examples of soft power tactics aimed at winning hearts and minds.

2. MEDIA WARFARE:

Control over information is a critical component of China's strategy. By investing in local media outlets, providing content, and training journalists, China is influencing the media landscape to favor its narratives. This includes downplaying negative news about China and promoting stories highlighting the benefits of partnership with China.

3. LEGAL WARFARE:

Also known as "lawfare," this involves using international and domestic laws to achieve strategic objectives. China is engaging in legal agreements and treaties that serve its interests, often at the expense of U.S. influence. China gains leverage over other nations by shaping the legal frameworks within which international relations operate.

IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES AND GOVERNMENTS

China's strategies have had a profound impact on both communities and governments across South America. Economically, Chinese investments have created jobs and infrastructure, leading to concerns about labor practices, environmental degradation, and debt

dependency. Politically, China's non-interference policy appeals to governments wary of U.S. criticism of human rights and democratic governance. These dynamics are causing shifts in traditional alliances. Countries that were once steadfast U.S. partners are now engaging more closely with China, sometimes at the expense of relations with the United States. This realignment challenges American military strategies, which rely on regional cooperation and support.

AMERICA'S RESPONSE:

STRUGGLING TO COMPETE

The United States finds itself in a difficult position. China's counter-narrative is strong, emphasizing mutual benefit, respect for sovereignty, and economic development without political strings attached. In contrast, U.S. policies are sometimes viewed as interventionist or conditional, which can be less appealing to South American nations.

Efforts to counter China's influence have included proposing alternative investment initiatives, reinforcing diplomatic ties, and promoting democratic values. However, these measures have had limited success in matching the scale and appeal of China's offerings.

CONCLUSION

China's increased military and economic influence in South America represents a strategic challenge for the United States. China is reshaping the geopolitical landscape in its favor by employing a combination of economic incentives and sophisticated information warfare. The U.S. must reassess its approach to the region, considering both the needs of South American countries and the broader implications for international security and influence.

The author is the Chief Editor of Monthly Interaction.



GLOBAL TO NATIONAL GOVERNANCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE: POLICIES IN PAKISTAN



DR. UZMA SHUJAAT



Pollution remains a persistent and harmful consequence of economic progress, especially in developing nations like Pakistan. With rapid industrialization across Asia, countries are grappling with polluted air, contaminated water sources, waste mismanagement, and increasingly unpredictable weather patterns. Economic activities significantly impact Earth's systems, affecting the atmosphere faster than any other sphere due to its mixing properties. Additionally, human-driven land-use change such as deforestation, urbanization, and agricultural expansion exacerbate environmental issues and are challenging to quantify at a global level, as their impacts are cumulative across local ecosystems.

One of the most concerning trends in Asia is the Asian Brown Cloud, a dense smog layer that forms each winter. Driven by emissions from vehicles, factories, and forest fires, this

haze spans regions from Pakistan to China, reducing sunlight by up to 15% and causing severe respiratory issues, agricultural impacts, and possibly altering regional climate patterns with increased droughts and floods. Despite mitigation efforts, this haze now poses health risks to over two billion people, disrupting agriculture and intensifying regional weather extremes. In 2024, Pakistan's climate vulnerability continues to be underscored by extreme weather events. According to the World Bank, Pakistan is experiencing warming rates higher than the global average, with an anticipated temperature rise of 1.3°C to 4.9°C by the 2090s, relative to historical baselines. This warming exacerbates urban heat, stresses water resources, and intensifies droughts and floods, impacting food security and public health. According to a research conducted by the World Bank Group (WBG) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), over five million people may face flooding by 2035-2044, primarily from increased river floods.

Cumulative environmental degradation is another growing concern globally and locally. Over the past decade, attention to cumulative effects especially regarding climate change has intensified among scientists, policymakers, and environmental advocates. Key environmental issues in Pakistan include air and water pollution, hazardous waste, soil

degradation, deforestation, and climate vulnerabilities. Climate change remains a pressing threat, directly impacting Pakistan's agriculture, water resources, and urban sustainability. The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including floods and heat waves, have risen, with severe flooding events projected to increase the number of affected individuals by five million by 2035.

Air pollution is a pressing concern in Pakistan's urban centers, with cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad consistently recording particulate matter (PM) levels exceeding World Health Organization standards by two to four times. Emissions from fossil fuels, along with industrial pollutants, contribute significantly to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Monitoring efforts are limited, covering only six major cities, which hampers the development of a comprehensive air quality strategy. Heavy metals such as lead, primarily from industrial emissions, also contribute to the health risks in urban areas□

Deforestation in Pakistan, part of a broader global pattern observed by NASA and the Global Precipitation Measurement mission, disrupts carbon storage and rainfall patterns. This loss of forest cover not only affects Pakistan's climate resilience but also leads to unpredictable monsoon patterns that threaten agricultural productivity, especially in



regions dependent on consistent rainfall. Such environmental pressures underline the vulnerability of Pakistan's agricultural sector in the face of climate variability□ Pakistan's water scarcity problem has intensified. Water availability per capita dropped below 900 cubic meters in 2024, pushing the nation further into "water-scarce" status. According to a report of the United States Institute of Peace, the agricultural sector, responsible for 90% of water usage, is vulnerable due to low storage capacity and inefficient irrigation. In addition, approximately 5.7 million hectares of arable land are affected by salinity, as reported in recent assessments.

This growing issue stems from poor irrigation practices and secondary salinization from saline groundwater use. According to the IAEA, the impact of salinization on crop productivity is severe, causing fields to lose fertility and turn barren, thus posing a significant threat to food security. The situation worsens as Pakistan's groundwater management faces challenges in balancing agricultural needs with the limitations of water quality and availability. Moreover, water logging continues to exacerbate agricultural challenges, especially in Punjab and Sindh, where an estimated 20% of farmland suffers from high water tables due to extensive surface water use. Urbanization has surged, with approximately 40.1% of Pakistan's population now residing in urban areas, contributing to environmental degradation through the contamination of water sources with untreated waste. This trend has resulted in increased health issues among urban populations, particularly among low-income communities exposed to polluted water sources□

In response to these environmental challenges, Pakistan has been making strides

since beginning, though not satisfactory but are still encouraging. In 1992, Pakistan initiated the Forest Sector Master Plan to establish a comprehensive framework for managing and expanding forest resources, which has since served as a baseline for various assessments, including the National Forest and Range Resources Assessment Study (NFRRAS). Conducted in collaboration with national and international organizations, the NFRRAS continues to provide insights into deforestation trends, aiming to curb the loss of forest cover. As of recent reports, Pakistan's forest cover remains critically low, around 4-5% of total land area, with continued pressures from deforestation and land-use changes□

Pakistan's National Action Plan for Forest and Landscape Restoration, a collaboration with the FAO, has further strengthened efforts by focusing on sustainable forest management and ecosystem conservation, aligning national policies with international standards. These efforts demonstrate Pakistan's continued commitment to environmental improvement amid challenges posed by climate change and resource limitations□. It established the Ministry of Climate Change on August 4, 2017, which oversees national climate policies. Following the ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2016, Pakistan developed Nationally Determined

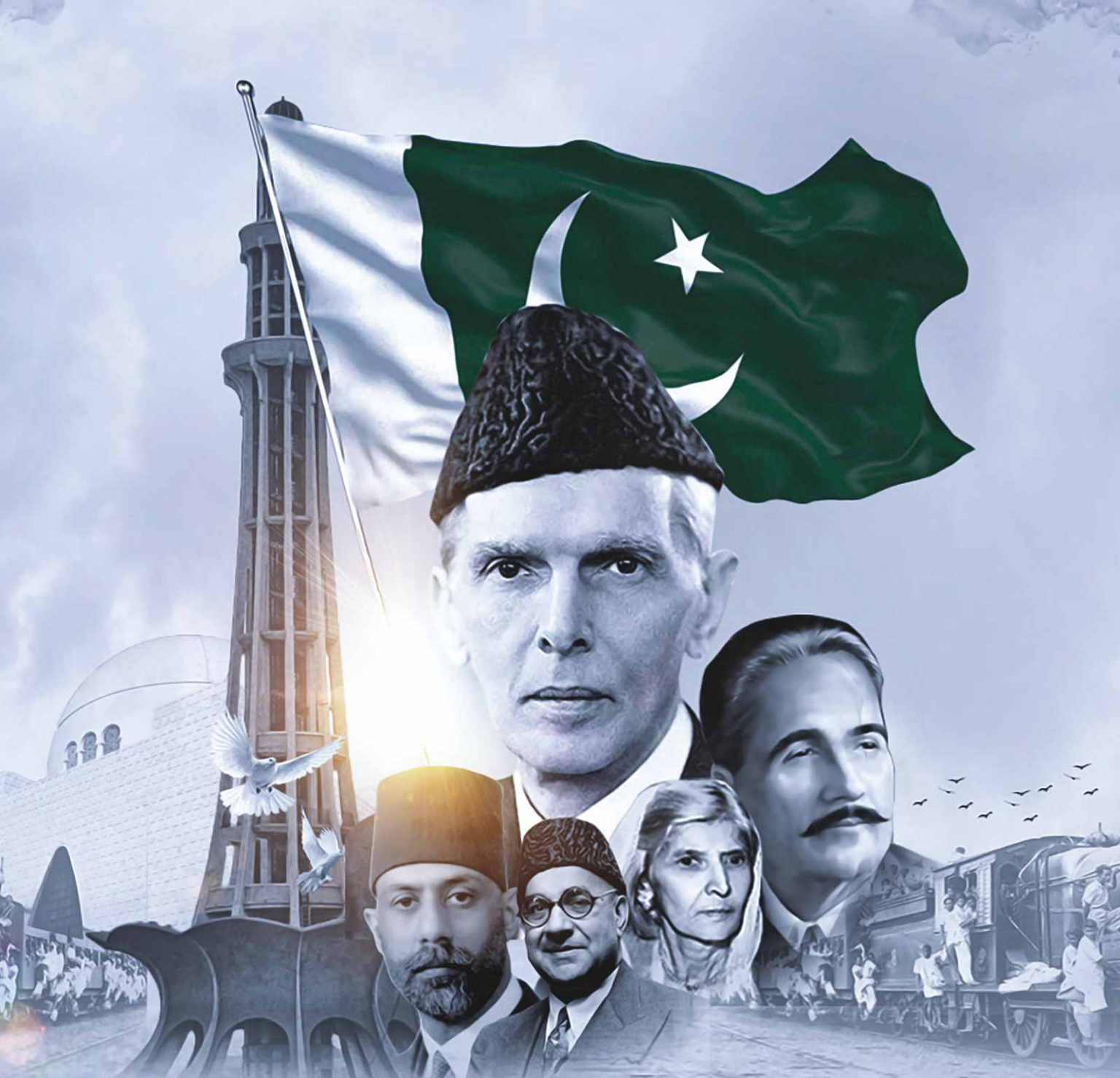


Contributions (NDCs) to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. However, the primary focus remains on adaptation rather than mitigation due to Pakistan's vulnerability to climate impacts. The country has introduced initiatives aimed at enhancing water storage, irrigation efficiency, and conservation. There has been observed another push from the government for afforestation under the "Ten Billion Tree Tsunami" initiative in 2019, to improve air quality, reduce deforestation, and enhance bio-diversity resilience.

Under its updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Pakistan has pledged to cut emissions by 50% by 2030, with international assistance as a prerequisite. The government also aims to shift 60% of its energy mix to re-newables and promote electric vehicle adoption through supportive policies and foreign partnerships. Strategic investments in renewable energy, advanced water infrastructure, and sustainable farming are critical for reducing climate vulnerability. Alongside these efforts, public engagement and awareness campaigns will encourage water conservation and waste management, especially in urban settings. Realizing these ambitions requires a coordinated approach among government, private entities, and global partners to secure a climate-resilient future for Pakistan.



Continued on page 35



PAKISTAN CORNER

Welcome to "Pakistan Corner," a dedicated section in our magazine where we explore the rich tapestry of Pakistan's history, culture, and legacy before and after its independence. This series aims to illuminate the diverse heritages, local languages, various cultures, and unsung heroes of the nation, offering our readers an in-depth look into the different facets that shape today's Pakistan.

PAKISTAN CORNER

PAKISTAN'S EARLY YEARS (1949 TO 1953)

INTERACTION TEAM

In 1949, two years after gaining independence, Pakistan was still in the process of establishing a cohesive national identity and laying the foundations of a stable state. The country faced numerous challenges in terms of political structure, economic stability, and national integration, yet displayed remarkable resilience and determination.

In the economic domain, Pakistan confronted an array of challenges, including a lack of industrial infrastructure and resources, and struggled to support its burgeoning population. Recognizing these limitations, Pakistan initiated policies to bolster agriculture, which was then the mainstay of the economy. Efforts were made to stabilize trade relations, especially in exporting raw jute to the international market. Additionally, Pakistan reached out to international partners for financial and technical assistance.

The diplomatic landscape was another key



focus. Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan's visit to the United States in May 1949 marked Pakistan's first official step toward fostering strategic relations with a major global power. The U.S. offered economic aid and pledged support, establishing a long-term alliance that would shape Pakistan's foreign policy trajectory. This visit also underscored Pakistan's pivot toward the Western bloc amidst rising Cold War tensions.

In 1950, Pakistan emphasized diplomacy and building bridges, both domestically and internationally. On April 8, 1950, Pakistan and India signed the Liaquat-Nehru Pact, or the Inter-Dominion Agreement, to protect the rights of religious minorities in both nations. Communal violence in Bengal and Punjab had persisted since Partition, posing a risk to stability. This agreement, which guaranteed security and fair treatment to minorities in both countries, was a diplomatic victory for Liaquat





Ali Khan, strengthening Pakistan's image as a responsible and inclusive state. It reassured minorities within Pakistan and reaffirmed the state's commitment to communal harmony.

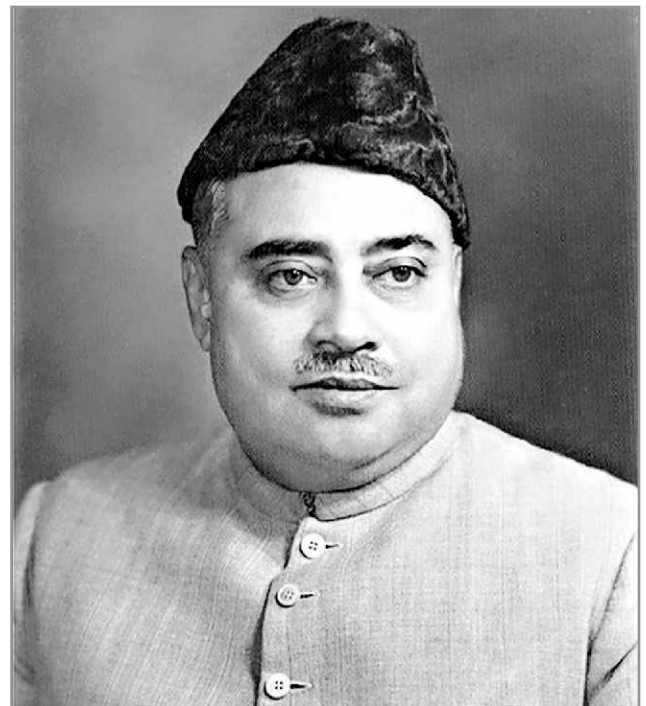
On the domestic front, Pakistan focused on economic stability and self-sufficiency. Karachi, the capital, witnessed rapid development as the government invested in creating a commercial infrastructure that could handle the demands of a growing economy. The First Five-Year Plan was drafted with the aim of transforming Pakistan from an agrarian society into an industrial one. Key industries, including textiles, cement, and food processing, received government incentives and loans to encourage growth. The government encouraged private enterprises to reduce their dependency on imports, thereby fostering a sustainable local economy.

The banking sector was also given importance in 1950. New banking policies were implemented to streamline financial services, facilitating easier access to credit for businesses and individuals. The establishment of financial institutions set the stage for future industrialization and investment.

Internationally, Pakistan's relations with China began to strengthen, leading to the establishment of formal diplomatic ties. Pakistan also engaged in discussions with Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian nations, promoting a vision of Muslim solidarity. This early outreach laid the foundation for alliances that would evolve over the coming decades.

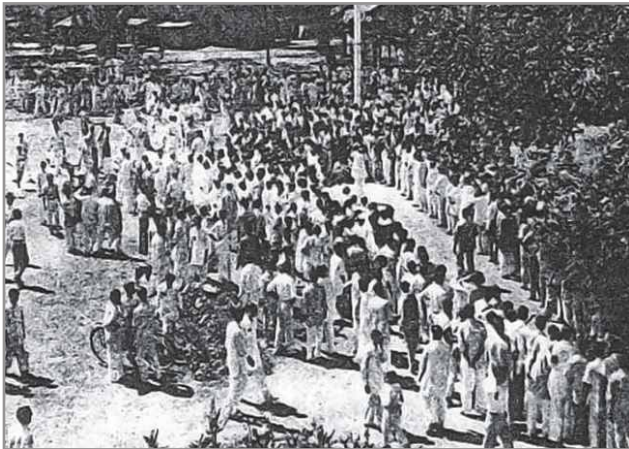
In 1951, Pakistan continued its efforts to expand agricultural productivity. The government launched initiatives to modernize farming practices, improve irrigation, and distribute land to boost agricultural yields. The focus on agriculture aligned with Pakistan's aim to achieve food security and support rural communities, which formed a significant part of the population.

Yet, 1951 is most often remembered for the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan. On October 16, 1951, while addressing a public gathering in Rawalpindi, Liaquat Ali Khan was fatally shot. His martyrdom was a monumental loss for



Pakistan, as he was one of the principal architects of the nation's policies and a unifying figure. This assassination created a leadership vacuum and stirred widespread sorrow and uncertainty. Nevertheless, Khawaja Nazimuddin, then Governor-General, stepped up to take on the role of Prime Minister, providing a sense of continuity and stability during a turbulent period.

In response to this tragedy, Pakistan's leaders rallied to honor Liaquat Ali Khan's vision. There was an increased focus on establishing political order and maintaining the trajectory of development initiatives he had championed.



In 1952, Pakistan faced challenges in managing the cultural and linguistic diversity within its borders. The Language Movement in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) highlighted the need for recognition of local identities. Tensions escalated when the government attempted to impose Urdu as the sole national language, which was seen as unfair by the Bengali-speaking majority in East Pakistan.

On February 21, 1952, students and activists in Dhaka organized protests demanding the recognition of Bengali as an official language. The protests turned violent, resulting in the deaths of several students, a tragedy that deepened resentment and fueled

the movement for linguistic rights. This event became a pivotal moment in Pakistan's history, eventually recognized as International Mother Language Day by UNESCO. The government later acknowledged Bengali as an official language in 1956, marking a significant concession to cultural diversity.

Amidst these challenges, Pakistan joined the International Islamic Economic Conference, an effort to strengthen ties among Muslim nations. This diplomatic endeavor reinforced Pakistan's commitment to Muslim unity and showcased its aspirations on the global stage.

Domestically, Pakistan pursued its economic agenda by advancing its industrial policies. Karachi saw further investment in manufacturing and infrastructure, which not only created jobs but also bolstered the country's economic resilience. Efforts to develop the jute industry in East Pakistan were also undertaken, with plans to enhance jute processing and export capabilities. This helped the eastern region's economy and showed Pakistan's efforts to bridge economic disparities between its two wings.

The 1953 Tehreek-e-Khatm-e-Nabuwwat movement was unforgettable and impactful against the Ahmadiyya (Qadyani) movement. The unfortunate tragic deaths of between 200 and 2,000 protestors made it violent. As the situation spiraled beyond police control, Governor-General Malik Ghulam Muhammad placed the city under martial law on March 6, transferring administrative authority to the army led by Lieutenant General Azam Khan.

Historically, the Ahmadiyya Community had supported the Pakistan Movement and, after independence in 1947, flourished in various high-ranking government and military roles. Their influence remained weighty,

particularly due to their support for secularism, which acted as a counterbalance to Majlis-e-Ahrar-ul-Islam. However, on January 21, 1953, a delegation of ulama from the Majlis-i-Amal (Council of Action), formed by the All-Pakistan Muslim Parties Convention in Karachi, presented an ultimatum to the Prime Minister of Pakistan. They demanded the removal of Ahmadis from top government offices, the dismissal of Zafarullah Khan from the foreign ministry, and a formal declaration of Ahmadis as non-Muslims. When these demands were rejected, violent disturbances ensued.

Following the declaration of martial law on March 6, the military worked to restore order under the leadership of Azam Khan, with Lahore returning to calm within 70 days. During this period, Maulana Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi, Secretary General of the Awami

Muslim League, was arrested and sentenced to death, though his sentence was later commuted. Politically, the events had far-reaching consequences: Ghulam Muhammad dismissed Punjab's Chief Minister, Mian Mumtaz Daultana, on March 24, alleging that he had exploited religious sentiments for political gain. Shortly after, on April 17, Ghulam Muhammad dismissed Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin and his entire federal cabinet, appointing Muhammad Ali Bogra (then Pakistan's ambassador to the United States) as the new Prime Minister. Several leaders, including Abul Ala Maududi, Mawlana Amin Hussain Islahi, Malik Nasrullah Khan Azeez, Syed Naqiullah, Chaudhry Muhammad Akbar Sialkoti, and Mian Tufail Mohammed, were arrested in March 1953 and sent to Lahore Central Jail. (Continue...)

Continued from page 30

GLOBAL TO NATIONAL GOVERNANCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE:

In 2024, the Recharge Pakistan program emphasizes ecosystem restoration and flood resilience, addressing Pakistan's vulnerability to frequent monsoon floods and glacial melt in the north. The Ministry of Climate Change plays a key role in coordinating climate initiatives, but effective inter-provincial collaboration remains essential given the decentralized nature of environmental governance.

Pakistan actively engages in global climate forums like the UN Climate Change Conference and has joined the Global Methane Pledge, signaling its commitment to climate mitigation. However, closing the gap between policy and action requires substantial financial backing, with the government

advocating for increased climate finance from developed countries to support both mitigation and adaptation efforts.

To tackle these challenges, strong local governance and international cooperation are critical. Pakistan's strategy could include district-level environmental management plans, empowering local authorities, and establishing sustainable development funds. On the global front, equitable climate action is essential, with monitoring to ensure fair contributions from all nations in combating climate change. This comprehensive approach, combining national reforms and international collaboration, is crucial for Pakistan to manage the social, economic, and environmental impacts of climate change effectively.

The author is the Acting Director of the Area Study Centre for Europe, University of Karachi.

THE COSMOS - CLASS SUBMARINE

INTERACTION TEAM

The Cosmos-class submarine, officially designated as Cos.Mo.S MG-110 and locally referred to as X-Craft, is a class of midget submarines that have played a significant role in the Pakistan Navy's operational strategy. These submarines are notable for their compact size, agility, and suitability for special operations. They have been serving the Pakistan Navy since the early 1990s, primarily as Swimmer Delivery Vehicles (SDVs) for the Navy Special Service Group's SEAL teams.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND ACQUISITION

The concept for the Cosmos-class submarines dates back to the early 1980s. Between 1983 and 1985, the Italian firm Cos.Mo.S developed this design for the Italian Navy's COMSUBIN (Special Forces), which already operated a substantial fleet of midget submarines. These specialized underwater vessels were intended for covert operations, including reconnaissance, sabotage, and insertion of Special Forces.

In 1990, Pakistan entered discussions with



the Marina Militare (Italian Navy) regarding the acquisition of the Cosmos-class submarines as replacements for the older SX-404-class submarines purchased from Italy in the 1970s. These discussions culminated in an agreement where Pakistan obtained proprietary designs for the Cosmos-class submarines. Engineers from Cos.Mo.S worked closely with the Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works (KS&EW) Ltd. to produce the Cosmos-class submarines locally. This collaboration exemplified Pakistan's growing capacity to manufacture advanced military hardware domestically. The first Cosmos-class submarine was commissioned in 1993, with two additional submarines entering service in the following years.

DESIGN AND SPECIFICATIONS

The Cosmos-class submarines are designed as diesel-electric midget submarines with a primary focus on special operations capabilities. They are approximately 28 meters (91 ft 10 in) in length, though some





sources report a slightly shorter length of 27.25 meters (89 ft 5 in). Their size makes them highly maneuverable and suitable for operations in shallow waters, where larger submarines would face challenges.

The propulsion system consists of a diesel-electric engine driving a single propeller, allowing the submarine to reach speeds of around 6 knots (11.1 km/h) underwater. Its configuration provides a reliable and relatively quiet power source, essential for maintaining stealth during operations. The Cosmos-class has an impressive range of 1,800 miles (2,897 km) when submerged and an endurance of up to 20 days at sea, allowing for prolonged missions without resupply.

In terms of armament, the Cosmos-class submarines are equipped with 533 mm torpedo tubes, capable of launching the Mark 5 torpedo. This armament enhances the submarine's offensive capabilities, making it suitable for engaging small to medium-sized enemy vessels. The design is notably an improvement over its predecessor, the SX-404-class, in terms of both operational range and weapon systems.

ROLE AND DEPLOYMENT

The primary role of the Cosmos-class submarine within the Pakistan Navy is that of an SDV (Swimmer Delivery Vehicle), used to transport special operations personnel, such

as the Navy Special Service Group (SSG) SEAL teams, to their target areas undetected. The midget size and low acoustic signature of these submarines make them ideal for clandestine operations, particularly in coastal and littoral waters where stealth and maneuverability are essential.

Stationed at PNS Iqbal in Karachi, the Cosmos-class submarines have supported Pakistan's special operations forces in conducting reconnaissance, intelligence gathering, and potentially sabotage missions. They also play a role in coastal defense, providing Pakistan with a deterrent against adversaries in close proximity to its shores.

Initially, the Cosmos-class submarines were under the direct control of the Navy Special Service Group, emphasizing their role in special operations. However, in 2005, operational control was transferred to **Commander Submarines (COMSUBS)**. Later, this control was returned to the **Commander of Coastal Areas (COMCOAST)**, with the **Naval Strategic Forces Command** overseeing engineering and maintenance.

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Cosmos-class submarines hold considerable strategic importance for Pakistan. Their ability to operate covertly in shallow waters makes them a valuable asset for asymmetric warfare strategies, where Pakistan's navy may face technologically



superior adversaries. By employing midget submarines, Pakistan can effectively secure its coastal regions, respond to unconventional threats, and exert control over its maritime boundaries.

Moreover, these submarines enhance Pakistan's maritime special operations capabilities. In conflicts or escalations with neighboring countries, the Cosmos-class could be deployed to disrupt enemy activities, conduct sabotage missions on high-value targets, or insert Special Forces for specific operations. Their existence serves as a psychological deterrent, adding an element of unpredictability to Pakistan's defensive strategy.

ENGINEERING AND MAINTENANCE

Another important aspect of the Cosmos-class program is the local manufacturing and maintenance capability developed in collaboration with KS&EW Ltd. By producing and servicing these submarines domestically, Pakistan has gained valuable technical expertise and self-reliance in submarine operations. The Naval Strategic Forces Command manages engineering and maintenance, ensuring that these submarines remain in operational condition and benefit from upgrades when necessary.

CURRENT STATUS AND OPERATIONAL HISTORY

As of 2019, the Pakistan Navy maintains three active Cosmos-class submarines, which continue to serve in the SDV role for the Navy Special Service Group. While specific operational details are classified, the deployment of these submarines in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea indicates their relevance in maintaining Pakistan's maritime security. The Cosmos-class submarines have a limited but effective range and endurance, making them suitable for patrolling coastal

areas, conducting reconnaissance missions, and ensuring rapid response capabilities. Additionally, they provide Pakistan with a unique edge in low-intensity conflicts, where conventional naval assets may be less effective or appropriate.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

While the Cosmos-class submarines serve an essential role, they also face limitations inherent to midget submarines. Their small size restricts operational range, endurance, and payload capacity, making them unsuitable for open-ocean warfare or extended missions far from the coast. Additionally, technological advancements in anti-submarine warfare (ASW) could



potentially threaten the effectiveness of midget submarines, as improved sonar and detection systems make it harder to evade enemy forces.

CONCLUSION

With their compact design, stealth capabilities, and strategic deployment, the Cosmos-class submarines represent a unique asset for Pakistan. While they have limitations, especially in open-sea scenarios, their effectiveness in coastal defense and special operations underlines their importance within Pakistan's naval doctrine. The Cosmos-class submarines not only add to Pakistan's defensive options but also contribute to its maritime security and deterrence capabilities, making them an important component of the nation's military infrastructure.

THE ASSYRIAN CIVILIZATION



CULTURAL CORNER

THE ASSYRIAN CIVILIZATION:

PIONEERS IN WARFARE, GOVERNANCE, AND CULTURE

SYED SAMIULLAH

The Assyrian civilization was one of the most powerful and influential societies in ancient Mesopotamia. It left an indelible mark on history through its innovations in warfare, governance, culture, and religion. Originating as a city-state in 2600 BC around the city of Assur, Assyria eventually expanded into a vast empire spanning the Bronze Age and Iron Age. The civilization's history can be divided into distinct periods: Early Assyrian, Old Assyrian, Middle Assyrian, Neo-Assyrian, and post-imperial, each characterized by fluctuations in power, territory, and political structure. Assyria's influence spread from northern Mesopotamia to Egypt and parts of modern-day Iran.

NOMENCLATURE AND IDENTITY

In the Old Assyrian period, Assyria was referred to as ālu Aššur ("city of Ashur"). When Assyria became a territorial state in the 14th century BC, it was known as māt Aššur ("land

of Ashur"), reflecting its transformation into a regional power. The name Ashur was derived from the deity of the same name, worshiped as the national god. The Greek term Assyria likely originates from Aššur, popularized by Greek historians like Herodotus.

HISTORICAL PERIODS OF ASSYRIA

Assyria's evolution from a small city-state to a vast empire can be seen through several key historical periods:

- **EARLY HISTORY AND RISE OF THE EMPIRE**

The earliest settlements in Assyria date back to the Hassuna culture (c. 6300-5800 BC). Assur itself first appears in historical records during the Akkadian Empire (24th century BC). Under Puzur-Ashur I in 2025 BC, Assur became an independent city-state, marking the start of its recorded history. Erishum I initiated one of the earliest free trade systems, allowing citizens to manage trade rather than the state. This policy led Assur to establish colonies and trading posts, most





notably at Kültepe in Anatolia, which uncovered thousands of clay tablets documenting trade activities.

- **THE MIDDLE ASSYRIAN PERIOD**

The Middle Assyrian period saw the transformation of Assur into a territorial state, driven by kings like Shamshi-Adad I and later Ashur-uballit I, who elevated Assyria to a significant power in northern Mesopotamia.

- **ASSYRIAN EMPIRE: MIDDLE AND NEO-ASSYRIAN PERIODS**

The Middle Assyrian kings embarked on conquests, expanding the empire significantly. Notably, Adad-nirari I and Tukulti-Ninurta I incorporated vast territories into Assyria, establishing it as a dominant force. The Neo-Assyrian period marked the height of Assyrian power, with kings like Tiglath-Pileser III expanding the empire's reach and centralizing governance.

Sargon II established Dur-Sharrukin as a new capital, while his son Sennacherib relocated the capital to Nineveh, which became a center of administration and culture. Assyria reached its greatest extent under Esarhaddon, who conquered Egypt in 671 BC.

- **LATER HISTORY AND DECLINE**

After the death of Ashurbanipal in 631 BC, the empire began to crumble due to internal strife and external pressures. Nabopolassar of



Babylon and the Median king Cyaxares launched a joint invasion, leading to the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC. The last Assyrian king, Ashur-uballit II, was defeated in 609 BC, ending Assyria as a political entity.

Despite the empire's collapse, Assyrian culture survived, especially during the Parthian period when Assur was revitalized as a local cultural and religious center until its final sack by the Sasanian Empire around 240 AD.

GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY

The governance system in early Assyria was oligarchic, where the king acted as a steward under the god Ashur. With Shamshi-Adad I, Assyrian kings adopted the title of "king," and by the Middle Assyrian period, kings were autocrats, representing Ashur's authority. Over time, royal titles grew in grandeur, reflecting Assyrian power.

The Assyrian military was one of the most



advanced in the ancient world, particularly during the Neo-Assyrian period. The army utilized advanced siege techniques, cavalry, and iron weapons, making it the most formidable force in the ancient world. The Neo-Assyrian Empire maintained a central standing army and used a sophisticated communication system for efficient governance and control.

POPULATION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Assyrian society was hierarchical, with a ruling elite of noble families who held key government positions. The population comprised free citizens, semi-free laborers, and slaves. Unlike many societies, Assyrian kings encouraged social mobility for those who served the state. Slavery existed, mainly comprising war captives and debt slaves, but the number of slaves remained relatively low.

Women in ancient Assyria initially enjoyed certain rights, as seen in the Old Assyrian period, where they could own property, inherit wealth, and participate in trade. However, women's status declined during the Middle Assyrian period, and laws began to limit their rights. By the Neo-Assyrian period, royal women wielded more influence, with some queens participating in military campaigns.

ECONOMY AND TRADE

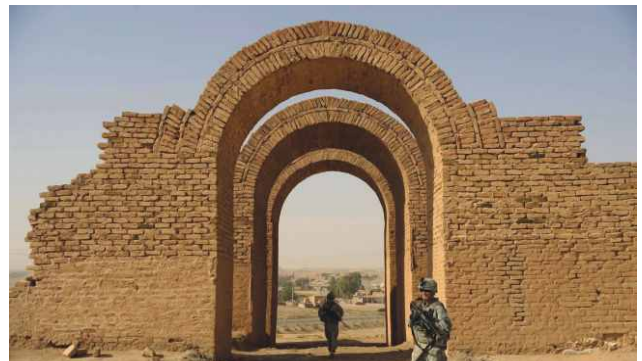
The Assyrian economy was driven by trade, especially during the Old Assyrian period, where Assur established extensive



trade networks across Mesopotamia and Anatolia. In the Neo-Assyrian period, the empire's economy became centralized, with wealth flowing into the state, which owned most resources and industries. However, the private sector continued to thrive, supported by property rights safeguarded by the government.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The Assyrian language, a dialect of Akkadian, developed through Old, Middle, and Neo-Assyrian stages. As the empire expanded, Aramaic became the common language, used for administration alongside Akkadian. In the Neo-Assyrian period, royal libraries like Ashurbanipal's Library at Nineveh preserved important Mesopotamian texts, including the Epic of Gilgamesh. The library contained over 30,000 tablets, representing various literary and scholarly genres.





RELIGION

The Assyrians practiced a polytheistic religion with Ashur as their chief deity, initially seen as a god of agriculture and later as a god of war during the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods. The Assyrian king was considered Ashur's earthly representative, and temples were central to religious life.

Although Assyria did not impose its religion on conquered lands, it retained Ashur as the supreme deity throughout its history. With the fall of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, traditional religious practices persisted in Assur and other parts of Mesopotamia until they gradually gave way to Christianity.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Assyrian art, particularly from the Neo-Assyrian period, was monumental and propagandistic, reflecting the power of the state. The use of relief carvings (stone carvings that depict scenes of battles, hunting, and the king's achievements), lamassu statues (large, protective statues depicting mythological creatures with a human head, the body of a lion or bull, and wings), and architectural innovations like stepped merlons (the irregular, battlement-like structures along the tops of Assyrian city walls and palace facades) became characteristic of Assyrian art. The most notable art form was wall reliefs, often depicting the king's military victories and divine favor.

Assyrian architecture primarily used mudbrick, with significant use of stone in fortifications and water projects. Capitals such as Nineveh, Dur-Sharrukin, and Nimrud housed grand palaces and temples, reflecting the power and prestige of the empire.

ASSYRIAN LEGACY AND CONTINUITY

The fall of the Neo-Assyrian Empire did not mark the end of Assyrian identity. Even under foreign rule, Assyrian culture, language, and religion survived. Assyrians continued to inhabit northern Mesopotamia, gradually adopting Christianity from the 1st century AD onward. Despite being marginalized after the 14th century due to religious persecution, Assyrian identity has persisted into modern times.

CONCLUSION

Assyria's influence on history is undeniable. From pioneering administrative practices to establishing one of the world's first professional armies, Assyria's contributions shaped ancient Near Eastern civilization. The legacy of Assyria's art, literature, and religious traditions also carried forward into later cultures. While the Assyrian empire may have fallen, its cultural and historical legacy continues to endure, making Assyria one of the most remarkable civilizations of the ancient world.

The author is Research Officer at Rabita Forum International (RFI) and Associate Editor of Monthly Interaction.



FORGING A TRIAD:

THE POTENTIAL OF A PAKISTAN-TURKEY-IRAN ALLIANCE



MIRZA KASHIF BAIGH

Regional cooperation has gained renewed significance in an era marked by shifting alliances and emerging power blocs. Strategically positioned at the crossroads of South Asia and the Middle East, Pakistan navigates a complex web of geopolitical challenges and opportunities. Forging a strategic alliance with Turkey and Iran presents a compelling proposition for Pakistan to enhance its regional influence, safeguard its national interests, and contribute to regional stability. Iran has indulged in severe war situations that have seriously affected Pakistan.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND SHARED HERITAGE

In spite of Iran's indulgence in crisis, Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran share deep historical and cultural ties that span centuries. The legacy of the Ottoman Empire, the Persian Empire, and the Mughal Empire has left indelible marks on these societies, fostering a shared cultural and religious heritage. This



common foundation provides fertile ground for mutual understanding and cooperation.

In 1964, the three nations formalized their cooperation through the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), aiming to promote economic collaboration and cultural exchange. Although the RCD was dissolved in 1979, it was revitalized as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1985, expanding to include other regional countries. This history of institutional collaboration underscores the enduring desire for regional partnership.

EXISTING TIES BETWEEN PAKISTAN, TURKEY, AND IRAN

Mutual interests and growing cooperation characterize the current relationships among Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran:

- **PAKISTAN-TURKEY RELATIONS:**

Pakistan and Turkey enjoy a robust friendship rooted in shared cultural values and historical bonds. High-level visits and strategic dialogues have strengthened their ties. Both nations have signed multiple agreements in defense cooperation, trade, and technology transfer. Turkey has consistently supported Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir issue, while Pakistan has backed Turkey on matters concerning Northern Cyprus and other regional concerns. Joint military exercises and training programs reflect their deepening defense collaboration.

• PAKISTAN-IRAN RELATIONS:

Despite occasional tensions related to border security and sectarian dynamics, Pakistan and Iran maintain a relationship based on mutual respect and shared interests. The two countries collaborate on combating drug trafficking and managing border security. The proposed Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline signifies potential economic synergy, aiming to address Pakistan's energy needs while providing Iran with a valuable export market. Both nations also share concerns over the stability of Afghanistan and the threat of extremist groups operating in the region.

• TURKEY-IRAN RELATIONS:

Turkey and Iran have a complex relationship marked by both cooperation and competition. While they have divergent views on certain regional conflicts, such as in Syria, they collaborate economically and engage in dialogue to manage differences. Trade between the two countries has grown, with agreements in the energy, transportation, and tourism sectors. Both nations participate in trilateral mechanisms, including with Pakistan, to address regional issues.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES FOR PAKISTAN

The potential alliance offers Pakistan several strategic advantages:

1. SECURITY ENHANCEMENT:

Collaborative security arrangements can help Pakistan address threats from extremist groups and manage border security more effectively. Intelligence sharing and joint counter-terrorism initiatives can bolster national security. China and Russia's help will be required.

2. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES:

Strengthening economic ties with Turkey and Iran can open new markets for Pakistani goods, attract foreign

investment, and facilitate infrastructure development. Joint ventures in industries like textiles, agriculture, and technology can spur economic growth.

3. ENERGY SECURITY:

Partnering with Iran provides access to its vast energy resources, crucial for meeting Pakistan's growing energy demands. Reviving and securing projects like the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline can diversify energy sources.

4. DIPLOMATIC INFLUENCE:

An alliance enhances Pakistan's diplomatic standing, allowing it to play a more influential role in regional affairs. Coordinated positions on international platforms can amplify their collective voice on issues like the Palestinian cause and regional peace initiatives.

TURKEY AND IRAN:**COMPLEMENTARY PARTNERS****• TURKEY'S GEOPOLITICAL AMBITIONS:**

Turkey seeks to expand its regional influence and has invested in strengthening ties with Muslim-majority countries. Its advanced economy and defense capabilities make it an attractive partner for Pakistan. Collaborative projects in defense production and technology can be mutually beneficial.

• IRAN'S REGIONAL ROLE:

Iran's strategic location and energy resources are significant assets. Despite facing



sanctions, Iran has maintained its regional influence. Cooperation with Iran can help Pakistan secure its western border and access Central Asian markets through transit routes.

OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY THE ALLIANCE

1. ECONOMIC INTEGRATION:

- **TRADE EXPANSION:** Reducing trade barriers can significantly boost intra-regional commerce. Developing transport corridors and logistics infrastructure can facilitate trade flows.
- **JOINT INVESTMENT:** Collaborative investment in sectors like energy, mining, and agriculture can stimulate economic development.



2. DEFENSE COLLABORATION:

- **MILITARY COOPERATION:** Regular joint exercises can improve military readiness and interoperability. Sharing expertise in defense technologies can enhance capabilities involving Chinese and Russian forces.
- **COUNTER-TERRORISM:** Unified efforts to combat terrorism can address shared security threats effectively.

3. CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE:

- **ACADEMIC COLLABORATIONS:** Exchange programs and research partnerships can foster innovation and mutual understanding.

- **TOURISM DEVELOPMENT:** Promoting tourism can strengthen people-to-people connections and generate economic benefits.

4. DIPLOMATIC COORDINATION:

- **UNIFIED STANCE ON GLOBAL ISSUES:** Presenting a coordinated front on international matters can increase influence in global governance structures.
- **CONFLICT RESOLUTION:** The alliance can serve as a platform for mediating regional disputes and promoting peace.

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

Several obstacles must be addressed to realize the full potential of the alliance:

1. GEOPOLITICAL RIVALRIES:

Historical tensions and competition for regional influence, particularly between Turkey and Iran, can hinder cooperation. Diplomatic efforts are needed to build trust and manage differences.

2. EXTERNAL PRESSURES:

- **SANCTIONS ON IRAN:** International sanctions pose legal and financial challenges for economic cooperation. Navigating these requires strategic planning and possibly advocating for sanctions relief.
- **RELATIONS WITH OTHER POWERS:** Balancing relationships with Western countries, Russia, and China is crucial to avoid alienating important partners.

3. SECTARIAN TENSIONS:

Sectarian divides can be exploited to undermine unity. Promoting inclusive narratives and interfaith dialogue is essential.

4. ECONOMIC DISPARITIES:

Aligning economic policies and addressing disparities require careful

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

1. STRENGTHEN DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT:

Initiate high-level dialogues to identify shared objectives and establish frameworks for cooperation. Regular summits and ministerial meetings can institutionalize the alliance.

2. ENHANCE ECONOMIC COOPERATION:

Prioritize infrastructure projects that enhance connectivity, such as road and rail links connecting the three countries. Establish special economic zones to attract investment.

3. EXPAND DEFENSE COLLABORATION:

Formalize defense agreements focusing on technology transfer, joint production, and training. Establish joint task forces with Russia and China to address specific security threats.

4. PROMOTE CULTURAL DIPLOMACY:

Organize cultural festivals, academic conferences, and media exchanges to build mutual understanding and counter negative stereotypes.

5. MANAGE EXTERNAL RELATIONS CAREFULLY:

Continue to engage with global powers and international organizations to maintain a balanced foreign policy. Ensure that the alliance complements existing partnerships.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON REGIONAL STABILITY

A Pakistan-Turkey-Iran alliance could serve as a stabilizing force by:

- **DETERRING AGGRESSION:** A united front can discourage hostile actions from adversaries by increasing the costs of



confrontation with extended cooperation with Russia and China through CPEC and Railroad.

• FOSTERING MULTILATERALISM:

Promoting cooperative approaches to regional issues aligns with international norms and can reduce unilateral interventions.

• ENHANCING ECONOMIC

PROSPERITY: Economic growth driven by regional cooperation can alleviate poverty and reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies.

CONCLUSION

The potential alliance between Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran holds significant promise. It offers strategic depth, economic opportunities, and enhanced diplomatic influence for Pakistan. While challenges exist, they can be mitigated through sustained efforts, mutual respect, and a shared vision for regional prosperity.

Pakistan must proactively pursue alliances that bolster its national interests in an increasingly complex global environment. The proposed triad benefits the member nations and contributes to regional stability and development. The alliance can become a cornerstone of a more peaceful and prosperous region by leveraging existing ties and building on shared heritage.

The author is the Editor of Monthly Interaction.

'ALL WEATHER STRATEGIC PARTNERS' UNDER FIRE: HOW TERRORISM SHAPES CHINA-PAKISTAN DYNAMICS?



KHUSHBOO FARID KHAN GHOURI

China and Pakistan often referred to as strategic brother shared a friendship that is both deep and strategic from infrastructure projects like CPEC to military cooperation. Their partnership is vital to the Region's stability over the decades. Their relationship has grown from the shared interest in balancing Regional Power to a robust partnership that spans economic, defense, and diplomatic spheres. China has invested billions in Pakistan's economy and development while Pakistan serves as a key Ally for the China in the region providing access to the critical sea routes. The relationship between China and Pakistan has been described as a bond of iron, forged through decades of cooperation and mutual trust. From strategic partnerships to economic collaborations, a Pentagon report claims China considers Pakistan as it's only 'all weather strategic partner'.

However, October's deadly terrorist attack in Karachi, marking yet another disturbing

incident in a series of violent attacks targeting Chinese citizens and projects in Pakistan, raises critical questions about the sustainability and security of this strategic partnership. The separatist Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) took the responsibility for the terrorist attack, which has previously targeted Chinese nationals in Pakistan. While the bond between the two nations remains robust, this event reveals underlying tensions that could shape the future of Chinese investments and diplomatic ties in the region.

The recurring attacks, particularly by groups such as the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA), signal that militancy targeting Chinese interests is not a one-off occurrence but a persistent threat. The militants and other ethnic Baloch factions see CPEC as a form of exploitation and a means for Pakistan's government to assert control over marginalized regions such as Baluchistan. As a result, it has repeatedly attacked Chinese nationals in Pakistan, arguing that ethnic Baloch locals were not earning a fair share of revenue from foreign investments in the province and natural resources exploited there. These attacks on Chinese individuals are both the political and financial in nature. These groups aim not only to disrupt CPEC but also to send a message to both Beijing and Islamabad about their discontent with the current state of affairs in the region.

There is no secret that China and Pakistan





have shared a close strategic partnership for decades, one that is multidimensional and anchored in economic cooperation, military assistance, and geopolitical alignment. The cornerstone of this relationship, in recent years, has been the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a \$60 billion infrastructure development project that serves as the flagship initiative of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). For Pakistan, CPEC is essential to boosting its infrastructure, economic development, and energy security. For China, it represents a vital connection between Xinjiang and the Arabian Sea, providing access to critical global trade routes.

Nonetheless, CPEC is also seen as a magnet for various militant groups, particularly Baloch separatists and Islamist extremists, who oppose China's presence in the region. In recent years, a string of deadly attacks have specifically targeted Chinese nationals working on CPEC projects, which highlights a security dilemma that neither China nor Pakistan can afford to ignore.

The killing of Chinese nationals in Karachi brings to the forefront the vulnerability of China's workforce and infrastructure projects in Pakistan. Chinese workers are essential to the success of CPEC, and their security has become a key concern for both nations. While

Pakistan has created a dedicated security force named the Special Security Division (SSD), to protect CPEC projects and Chinese nationals, these incidents reveal gaps in the effectiveness of current security protocols.

For Pakistan, this incident puts immense pressure on its government to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals and safeguard CPEC projects. China's growing economic investments in Pakistan are vital to the country's economic growth, particularly as Pakistan faces a severe economic crisis exacerbated by inflation, external debt, and political instability. Therefore, Pakistan cannot afford to lose Chinese trust or jeopardize these investments.

In the immediate aftermath of such attacks, Pakistan is likely to ramp up security for Chinese nationals and infrastructure, potentially leading to enhanced security cooperation between the two countries. This could include joint counterterrorism measures, intelligence sharing, and even the possibility of a more active Chinese security presence in Pakistan, though such a move would be diplomatically sensitive given Pakistan's domestic security concerns.

Furthermore, Pakistan may be pressured to escalate its military operations against militant groups, especially in Baluchistan, where separatist violence has been a constant challenge. However, this could also create further instability in the region, as heavy-handed responses often fuel grievances among marginalized communities. Balancing the need for security and addressing local discontent will be a difficult but necessary challenge for Pakistan's leadership.

From Beijing's perspective, attacks on Chinese nationals could lead to a reassessment of its investment strategy in Pakistan. While China views Pakistan as a vital

partner in its BRI vision, the constant threat of violence may cause Chinese investors to become more cautious. This is particularly relevant as China continues to expand its global footprint, with other regions competing for Chinese capital and investment.

That being said, it is unlikely that China will scale back its overall investment in Pakistan or abandon CPEC altogether. The geostrategic significance of CPEC for China, including its role in securing energy supplies and enhancing China's access to international markets, remains too important for Beijing to ignore. However, delays in project completion, increased costs due to heightened security measures, and a possible decline in the number of Chinese workers willing to work in Pakistan could slow down the pace of the initiative.

The Karachi attack also has wider geopolitical implications. China's involvement in Pakistan is not viewed favorably by all actors in the region, and its growing footprint through CPEC has attracted the attention of rival powers. India, in particular, has expressed strong objections to CPEC, as it passes through the disputed region of Gilgit-Baltistan, which India claims as part of Jammu and Kashmir.

Additionally, the increased involvement of militant groups targeting Chinese interests could further complicate the regional security environment, potentially drawing in other stakeholders such as Afghanistan's Taliban regime or external powers concerned with rising instability in South Asia.

The killing of Chinese nationals in Karachi is a grim reminder of the complex security challenges facing China-Pakistan cooperation. While the strategic partnership between the two nations is unlikely to be fundamentally shaken, the incident places the



'All-Weather Strategic Partners' under strain and will inevitably force both Beijing and Islamabad to reevaluate their security arrangements and the long-term feasibility of Chinese investments in the region. Moreover, the current wave of terrorism in Pakistan threatens not only the safety of Chinese citizens but also the broader economic and geopolitical cooperation between the two countries. Addressing this security dilemma requires a multifaceted, strategic approach that combines military, diplomatic, intelligence, and economic tools.

For Pakistan, the challenge lies in addressing the root causes of militancy and ensuring that its counterterrorism measures do not alienate local populations further, especially in volatile regions like Baluchistan. For China, the challenge will be maintaining confidence in its investments while pushing for more stringent security measures to protect its citizens and projects.

The future of the China-Pakistan strategic partnership hinges on how effectively both nations can navigate these security challenges without undermining the economic and geopolitical goals that bind them together.

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'STRENGTHENING MULTILATERAL DIALOGUE FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND PROSPERITY,' KEY TAKEAWAYS OF THE SCO MEETING



DR. SYEDA BUSHRA BATOOL



The 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of SCO members was convened successfully in Islamabad, Pakistan in the month of October. As the theme suggests 'Strengthening multilateral dialogue for sustainable peace and prosperity,' the meeting was aimed to enhance collaboration in an increasingly multipolar and turbulent world, addressing a number of issues of mutual concern. Regional security, counter-terrorism, improving security, Fostering connectivity networks, trade, investment, and economic opportunities, and climate change were the key areas of discussion.

The SCO was originally formed in 1996, known then as the Shanghai Five, before officially adopting its current name in 2001. The organization was created to discuss security concerns in Central Asia and the wider region, and over the past two decades, the SCO's mission has significantly expanded. Beyond just border disputes and combating the 'three evils' terrorism, extremism, and separatism, but has also incorporated

economic, scientific, and cultural cooperation.

The government of Pakistan ensured all measures to ensure the security of all the delegates, approximately 900, and deployed about 10,000 paramilitary personnel. This was indeed a great opportunity for Pakistan to host, for the first time, a high-level SCO meeting. Pakistan Assumed the Chair of the Council of Heads of Government of SCO from 2023-24 and successfully organized this event, which even the Indian Minister of External Affairs, appreciated. This SCO summit took place at such a time when the world is experiencing a number of socio-political and security issues. Amid increasing tensions between the US and China and the ongoing Ukraine conflict grabbing international attention, the SCO summit allowed member countries to address these issues and seek ways to uphold peace and stability in the area. The SCO plays a crucial role in allowing Eurasian nations to determine their own course toward lasting peace and prosperity by counterbalancing Western-dominated institutions like NATO.

The Heads of Delegation emphasized the importance of Member States supporting the right of peoples to freely choose their political, social, and economic development, highlighting that mutual respect for sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, as well as principles like equality and

non-interference in internal affairs, are crucial for sustainable international relations.

The visit of Chinese Premier Li Qiang received a special protocol, which was received by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif himself, signalling special relations with China. His visit was meant to be bilateral as well as multilateral, at the same time he was accompanied by senior Chinese officials. Li's visit is the first by a Chinese premier to Pakistan in 11 years. Prime Minister of Pakistan's office said that he and Li discussed economic and trade ties and cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a \$65 billion investment in the South Asian country under Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative. Li also inaugurated the CPEC-funded Gwadar International Airport in the southwestern province of Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran.

In his introductory speech, Sharif strongly favored China's interests, mirroring the enduring friendship between China and Pakistan. The evident shift in dynamics occurred. Once dominated by Russia and China, SCO's power dynamics have shifted as Russia's conflict in Ukraine allows China to gain more influence within the organization. The SCO serves as a vital platform for China to promote the Global Security Initiative (GSI). President Xi Jinping presented the GSI at the SCO summit in Samarkand in September 2022, receiving support from multiple Central Asian countries. This action signifies a deliberate increase in China's security control in Central Asia, a region historically dominated by Russia. China is also demonstrating significant interest in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). Although the Belt and Road Initiative is still China's main project, Beijing is now more interested in INSTC, which includes



Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Iran, and India, among other countries.

While not directly participating, China acknowledges the corridor's potential to boost its influence in Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Perhaps, this is another attempt, in addition to BRI, to revive the traditional silk route which, during ancient times, was used by Chinese civilization to reach up to the Roman Empire crossing Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean Sea in its way.

Afghanistan is an important country in the regional socio-political and security equation but was not a participant in the meeting. Reports indicate that Afghanistan was not invited from the bloc's Secretariat since the Taliban-led administration in Afghanistan has not acknowledged many provisions of the SCO-Afghan agreement. The country's membership in the SCO has been inactive since September 2021; the country has been a point of discussion. The country became an SCO observer on June 7, 2012, but has not engaged actively since its membership was rendered. Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's arrival at the SCO summit signifies the importance of this platform, marking the first time an Indian foreign minister has travelled to Pakistan since 2015. Although Jaishankar did have an informal interaction with his Pakistani counterpart,

Ishaq Dar, India's participation in the SCO summit remained strictly focused on multilateral concerns, avoiding any bilateral discussions with Pakistan, as against the wishes of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and many Pakistani business leaders.

Neither there were acrimonious exchanges between the two sides nor were there any references to Kashmir or India's revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy. These positions are fundamentally irreconcilable. Jaishankar's trip was intended to signal India's commitment to the SCO, not to strengthen ties with Islamabad. Addressing the challenges of achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), however, Jaishankar underscored the burden of debt as a serious concern.

He referred to Article 1 of the SCO Charter, which emphasizes strengthening mutual trust, promoting friendship, and fostering good neighborly relations. Stressing the importance of honest dialogue, he remarked, 'If there is a lack of trust and cooperation, it is essential to address those issues.' Another reason for India's interest in the SCO forum is the opportunity to engage with Central Asia, a region where New Delhi is keen to ramp up ties but faces an inherent constraint with its outreach. India lacks direct land access to Central Asia because Pakistan itself looking to expand ties there denies it transit trade rights. This elevates the importance of any opportunity for Indian high-level engagement with the region. Over the past decade, India has enhanced its strategic and economic relationships with the United States, Japan, and Western Europe. He played a major role in presenting India as a representative of the Global South, pushing for extensive changes in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to give more voice to developing countries. As China increases its influence, Russia is using

the SCO platform to show the West that efforts to isolate Moscow diplomatically have not worked.

Although some narratives suggest that Russia is worried about China's increasing influence in Central Asia, Russian officials have not openly shown any concerns about Beijing's actions. Instead, Russia takes a neutral stance by backing Chinese projects while implementing monitoring measures. Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin showed his support during the summit by suggesting the establishment of a standalone payment system within the SCO to guarantee steady business conditions.

This proposal is in line with China's attempts to decrease dependence on the U.S. dollar. Nevertheless, India's resistance to such suggestions demonstrates the presence of checks and balances. India's reluctance to the de-dollarization, as seen in the SCO as well as during the BRICS summit in the following days, is very obvious. The move to de-dollarize the world economy makes some BRICS members uncomfortable notably Brazil and India who do not want their rapidly expanding club to become solely pro-Chinese and anti-western.

In conclusion, the 23rd meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government highlighted the organization's evolving dynamics, with China's growing influence filling the void left by Russia's preoccupation with Ukraine. During the summit, Pakistan's support for China's strategic objectives, especially concerning Afghanistan and trade routes, was apparent. Yet, there are doubts about the SCO's capacity to promote real multilateral collaboration, particularly given India's restrained involvement in its extensive objectives.

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BEYOND THE POPULIST WAVE:

EXAMINING POPULISM'S COMPLEX IMPACT ON DEMOCRACY

WAJEEHA NAJAM



In recent years, many democracies have experienced what is termed a “populist wave,” credited with disrupting traditional party systems and posing perceived threats to the foundations of democratic governance. The Brexit vote in the United Kingdom and Donald Trump's 2016 election in the United States are often viewed as pivotal moments in this global populist movement, reflecting discontent among citizens feeling alienated by globalization and technological advancements.

However, while populism has undoubtedly made inroads in various countries, its nature, coherence, and influence are frequently exaggerated by media portrayals and political elites. This misrepresentation fosters misunderstandings regarding populism's true implications for democracy.

The metaphor of a “populist wave” suggests a homogenous, unstoppable force

reshaping global politics. However, this portrayal fails to capture the nuanced reality of populism as a varied phenomenon. Populist leaders often appeal to distinct, context-specific grievances, resulting in differing electoral outcomes across regions.

Media coverage amplifies the perception of a “wave” by focusing on populism's successes and ignoring its failures, which can artificially bolster populist parties by portraying them as viable alternatives to the status quo. For instance, media coverage of Spain's far-right party Vox in 2023 emphasized its rise but scarcely acknowledged its electoral setbacks, reinforcing an inflated image of populism's momentum.

This media bias not only influences public opinion but also impacts electoral dynamics by creating the perception that populist parties represent significant shifts in public ideology. In reality, populist success often hinges on factors such as leadership quality and strategic positioning rather than a broad transformation in voters' ideologies.

Populism's appeal does not derive solely from shifts in public opinion but is frequently a top-down development influenced by elite-driven choices. In the United States and parts of Europe, populism has gained traction due to concessions made by mainstream politicians who adopt populist rhetoric in





response to perceived public dissatisfaction. This indicates that populism's influence on democratic systems may be overstated; it is often a reactionary response to grievances and elite maneuvering rather than a transformative grassroots movement.

In Pakistan, for example, populist rhetoric historically thrived in political campaigns through leaders like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Imran Khan, who mobilized support by addressing frustrations around economic inequity and elite corruption. However, once in power, these leaders often faced institutional constraints that moderated their populist agendas.

Globally, populist movements frequently leverage issues like immigration, framing it as a threat to national identity. Yet, evidence suggests a weak correlation between immigration levels and anti-immigrant sentiment. For example, Germany and Sweden, with high immigration rates, remain largely welcoming, while Hungary and Poland, with lower immigration rates, exhibit stronger anti-immigrant views.

In Pakistan, populist rhetoric centers less on immigration and more on foreign interventions and cultural dilution, with political actors using topics such as Afghan refugees or Western influences to evoke fears of identity erosion.

In the United States, generational divides

on immigration show younger Americans generally favor more inclusive policies, indicating that anti-immigrant sentiment may be less widespread and enduring than populists claim. These issues often serve as symbols for broader societal anxieties rather than specific policy concerns, highlighting that the so-called populist wave may better reflect ideological and generational struggles than a unified backlash against immigration or multiculturalism.

The portrayal of populism as a response to economic grievances is pervasive yet often misleading. The 2008 financial crisis is commonly cited as a catalyst for populist movements, but data suggests that populism is not driven solely by economic distress. In Spain, while the economic crisis led to high unemployment, the right-wing populist Vox only gained significant traction later, after economic concerns had waned. Similarly, analyses of Trump's 2016 election reveal that his support correlated more closely with cultural and racial anxieties than with economic hardship.

In Pakistan, economic discontent indeed fuels populist rhetoric, yet such movements often resonate more with frustrations surrounding social inequities and elite dominance. For instance, Imran Khan's 2018 campaign's anti-corruption rhetoric and promises of a welfare state struck a chord with a populace weary of elite privileges and inequality, even though economic distress



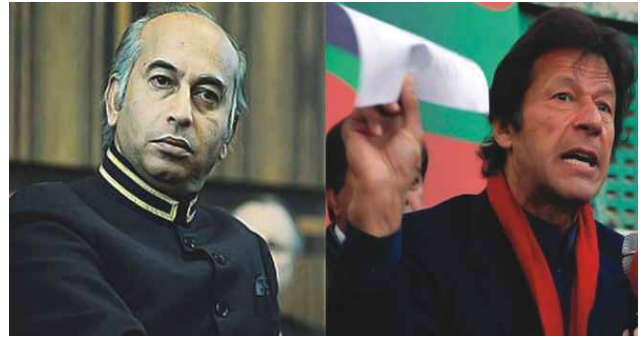
alone was not the primary driver.

Populist parties may attract significant public attention but frequently face challenges in implementing their agendas. In coalition-based systems, populist parties often need alliances with mainstream parties, which usually require policy compromises. Cas Mudde, a political scientist, aptly noted that many populist parties are “dogs that bark loud, but hardly ever bite,” emphasizing their limited impact on policymaking.

In Italy, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, regarded as a populist figure, has tempered her policies to align with coalition partners and contends with the constraints imposed by the European Union. Likewise, in Pakistan, populist leaders face limitations from the military establishment and entrenched bureaucracy, constraining their ability to execute reforms. Imran Khan's tenure exemplified these limitations as he struggled with institutional and economic constraints, tempering his initial populist agenda.

The narrative surrounding populism often equates it with democratic erosion, yet the true threat may lie in elite polarization and autocratic practices. In countries like Hungary and Poland, democratic erosion is attributed more to autocratic leaders like Viktor Orban and Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who consolidate power by weakening democratic institutions. Their rise is not solely a result of populist sentiment; rather, they exploit structural opportunities to entrench their parties in power.

In the United States, elite polarization within the Republican Party has intensified over cultural issues, such as civil rights and national identity, with some elites undermining democratic norms to maintain power. Similarly, in Pakistan, elite conflicts contribute to political instability, where power struggles



among elites often overshadow populist rhetoric as a threat to democratic stability. Such dynamics suggest that the true risks to democracy may stem from concentrated power among polarized elites rather than populist movements, which, while influential, do not typically dismantle institutional frameworks on their own.

In conclusion, the discourse surrounding populism and its impact on democracy often oversimplifies a multifaceted reality. While populism may appear as a formidable force reshaping political landscapes, its influence is contingent upon specific socio-political contexts, elite maneuvering, and institutional constraints. Rather than viewing populism solely as a threat to democratic norms, it is essential to recognize it as a symptom of deeper structural issues, including elite polarization and the erosion of democratic institutions.

The challenges posed by populism should thus be understood within a broader theoretical framework that considers the interplay between grassroots movements, elite actions, and the resilience of democratic systems. This perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of populism's role in contemporary politics and its potential to both challenge and coexist with democratic governance.

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AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN: A COMPLEX AND ONGOING CRISIS



FAIZ AHMED

The migration of Afghan refugees into Pakistan has been one of the world's most significant and prolonged refugee crises. Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, millions of Afghans have sought refuge in Pakistan, driven by conflict, political instability, and economic hardships. This situation has left a profound mark on both Afghanistan and Pakistan, shaping their political, social, and economic landscapes. The issue extends beyond mere humanitarian concerns, presenting a multifaceted challenge that requires a deep understanding of the broader regional dynamics.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF AFGHAN MIGRATION TO PAKISTAN

The influx of Afghan refugees to Pakistan is closely tied to Afghanistan's internal conflicts and Pakistan's geopolitical strategy. The first significant wave of refugees arrived in 1979 after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, sparking a decade-long war. This war displaced millions of Afghans, many of whom fled to Pakistan and Iran. After the fall of the Soviet-backed Afghan government in 1992

and the subsequent rise of the Taliban in the mid-1990s, additional waves of refugees crossed into Pakistan. Pakistan's porous border with Afghanistan, coupled with cultural ties between Pashtun communities on both sides, made it a natural destination for displaced Afghans. Over the decades, millions have sought shelter in Pakistan, with the number fluctuating according to the conflict phases in Afghanistan.

Following the fall of the US-backed Afghan government in 2021 and the Taliban's return to power, concerns about another surge in refugee numbers emerged. As of 2021, Pakistan hosts over 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees, with about 1.7 million estimated to be unregistered. This long-standing refugee situation is not only a humanitarian challenge but also a significant factor impacting Pakistan's security, economy, and social structure. To grasp the complexity of the Afghan refugee issue, it's essential to explore it through various theoretical lenses.

FORCED MIGRATION THEORY

The Afghan refugee crisis is best understood through Forced Migration Theory, which suggests that refugees are compelled to flee their countries due to circumstances beyond their control such as war, persecution, or natural disasters. For Afghan refugees, decades of continuous conflict, including foreign invasions, civil wars, and insurgencies, have rendered Afghanistan unstable, forcing



millions to seek refuge in Pakistan. While Forced Migration Theory explains the causes of migration, it also highlights the difficulties refugees encounter in host countries. Afghan refugees in Pakistan face several challenges. Although Pakistan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which guarantees certain rights to refugees, it has been still hosting millions of Afghans for decades.

However, Pakistan's approach toward Afghan refugees has evolved over time. During the Soviet-Afghan war, Pakistan welcomed Afghan refugees, viewing them as allies against Soviet aggression. However, after the rise of militancy, especially post-9/11, Afghan refugees have increasingly been viewed through a security lens, leading to comparatively more restrictive policies.

CONFLICT THEORY

Conflict Theory, originating from the work of Karl Marx, offers another perspective on the Afghan refugee crisis in Pakistan. It suggests that societal conflicts often arise from the unequal distribution of power and resources. The influx of Afghan refugees has heightened competition for scarce resources such as land, jobs, and healthcare, particularly in areas like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

Most of them are living primarily in informal settlements and often working in low-wage sectors. This has somehow sparked social tensions, with locals at times blaming refugees for unemployment, reduced wages, and economic strain. These economic concerns are further exacerbated by the political implications of hosting such a large refugee population. Politically, Afghan refugees have often been linked to rising militancy and insecurity, especially after the 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan. The porous Afghan-Pakistani border has facilitated the movement of militants, heightening Pakistan's security concerns. As a result, Pakistan had to

impose stricter regulations on Afghan refugees, further marginalizing them within society.

Conflict Theory also sheds light on the power imbalances between host countries and refugees. Afghan refugees, as a vulnerable population, lack bargaining power and face obstacles in accessing basic services or asserting their rights. Pakistan's periodic repatriation campaigns and registration requirements underscore the power dynamics at play.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION THEORY

Social Integration Theory examines how refugees are incorporated into the host country's social, economic, and political fabric. For Afghan refugees in Pakistan, the degree of integration has varied, influenced by factors such as cultural similarities and legal barriers. Cultural and linguistic ties, particularly among Pashtun communities, have fostered a degree of integration in border regions. Many Afghan refugees have established livelihoods, businesses, and strong community networks. However, broader social integration remains limited due to legal constraints and social stigmatization.

Pakistan's refugee policies, driven largely by security concerns, have hindered Afghan refugees' integration. The absence of a legal framework that would allow refugees formal employment, access to education, and freedom of movement has curtailed their ability to fully participate in society. Furthermore, the stigma attached to Afghan refugees, often associated with crime and militancy, has further hindered their throughout acceptance.

REALIST PERSPECTIVE: GEOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

The Realist perspective, focused on state interests, national security, and power, sees

the Afghan refugee crisis as posing significant economic and security challenges for Pakistan. The arrival of millions of refugees has placed considerable strain on Pakistan's public services, including healthcare, education, and housing. This has stretched the country's already limited resources, diverting attention away from its own development needs. Afghan refugees, particularly those working in low-wage sectors, have increased competition for jobs, driving down wages and exacerbating unemployment in certain regions. These economic pressures have fueled tensions between refugees and local populations. Moreover, Afghan refugees have been linked to security concerns, including militancy, drug smuggling, and arms trafficking. The porous Afghan-Pakistani border has allowed militants to cross easily, prompting Pakistan to invest heavily in security, further adding to the financial burden of hosting refugees.

LIBERAL PERSPECTIVE: HUMANITARIANISM AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Liberal perspective, in contrast, emphasizes humanitarian obligations, human rights, and international cooperation. From this viewpoint, the Afghan refugee crisis is not just an economic burden but a humanitarian challenge that requires empathy and global assistance. Liberal theorists argue that Pakistan has a moral responsibility to protect Afghan refugees and provide them with essential services, such as healthcare, education, and shelter. Afghan refugees, as victims of conflict, are entitled to protection under international law.

Addressing the crisis requires multilateral efforts. International organizations like the UNHCR have provided aid to Pakistan, but liberals advocate for increased global support to help Pakistan manage the refugee influx.

They also point out that Afghan refugees, despite posing challenges, contribute to the informal economy in sectors such as agriculture, trade, and construction, and could play a positive role in Pakistan's economic growth if given the opportunity.

SYNTHESIS OF REALIST AND LIBERAL PERSPECTIVES

Both Realist and Liberal perspectives offer valuable insights into Pakistan's management of Afghan refugees. From the Realist standpoint, the security and economic challenges are undeniable. Pakistan's refugee policies are shaped by its geopolitical concerns, particularly its relationships with Afghanistan and the United States.

However, the Liberal perspective emphasizes the importance of humanitarian obligations and the potential positive contributions of refugees to the economy. It also stresses the need for international cooperation to mitigate the impact of the refugee crisis on Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

The Afghan refugee crisis in Pakistan is a complex and multifaceted issue, shaped by decades of conflict, geopolitical interests, and humanitarian needs. Theories such as Forced Migration, Conflict, and Social Integration provide crucial insights into the experiences of Afghan refugees, while Realist and Liberal perspectives highlight the competing priorities Pakistan faces in managing this ongoing challenge. Effectively addressing the Afghan refugee situation requires a balanced approach that considers both humanitarian responsibilities and national security concerns, while promoting policies that benefit both refugees and host communities.

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THE UNWAVERING SUPPORT AND COMPLEXITIES OF NATIONAL INTEREST



HIDAYAT ULLAH



The sentiment "United States works for the entire humanity" is often expressed by the top political leadership of the United States. However, this statement fails when confronted with the national interests of states, whether it is the US or any other nation. According to the Penguin Dictionary of International Relations, "National Interest serves as both an analytical tool for identifying the objectives of foreign policy and a comprehensive concept used to justify specific policy preferences." In both senses, it encapsulates the fundamental determinants that guide state policies concerning the external environment.

Nonetheless, states relentlessly pursue their national interests, even if it entails the sacrifice of thousands of lives, as evidenced by the ongoing genocide of Palestinians, resulting in the deaths of more than 45000 Palestinians, including women and children. Despite this humanitarian crisis, the United States continues to extend military support to Israel by furnishing them with highly advanced

weaponry. Israel receives a staggering \$3.8 billion annually, totaling \$260 billion, surpassing aid to any other country. Interestingly, under the clauses of lethality laws, US-provided weapons are meant solely for defensive purposes, with the law expressly prohibiting military aid to states committed to gross human rights violations. However, when it comes to Israel, the US seems to offer an unconditional endorsement and a blank cheque.

Furthermore, the United States' backing of Israel is deeply rooted in historical, geopolitical, and ideological considerations. The US was the first nation to officially recognize Israel in 1948. The strategic alliance between the US and Israel is often contextualized within the imperative of upholding stability and influence in the volatile Middle East region. The significance of Israel emerged during the Suez Canal crisis when Jamal Abdul Nasir of Egypt got military assistance from the USSR and aligned with the communist bloc.

Conversely, Israel sought military and economic aid from the US, culminating in an agreement in 1962 under Kennedy's administration. Additionally, Israel is perceived as a pivotal ally in a region characterized by political turbulence, terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, the US-Israel relationship is viewed by shared security

interests. Israel serves as a crucial buffer against common adversaries such as Iran and its proxies, who pose substantial threats to regional stability and US interests.

The strategic value of Israel as a bulwark against hostile forces cannot be overstated, fostering extensive military collaboration between the two nations. The complex relationship between the United States and Israel is shaped by strategic, ideological, and domestic political considerations. While the alliance serves mutual interests and reflects shared values, it also raises concerns about prioritizing geopolitical interests over human rights concerns. As the US grapples with its role in the Middle East, striking a balance between strategic imperatives and moral principles will remain a multifaceted and contentious challenge.

However, the continuous support for Israel has elicited controversy and criticism, particularly concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The unwavering backing of Israel's policies, including its expansion of settlements in the occupied territories and military operations in Gaza, has drawn condemnation from human rights organizations and international bodies. Critics contend that US support emboldens Israeli actions that contravene international law and perpetuate the suffering of Palestinian civilians.

The unwavering support of Israel by the US, driven by its pursuit of national interests,



whether through strategic partnerships in the region or shared values, raises profound questions about the prioritization of human rights. This support prompts us to ponder whether the lives of thousands of individuals are deemed less important than the strategic interests of a state. The glaring discrepancy between the United States' mission of working for the betterment of humanity and its actions in the Palestinian context underscores the complexity of the issue. How can we reconcile the United States' role as a champion of democracy and liberalism with its complicity in human rights violations, particularly in the case of Palestine?

Moreover, if states like the US, which uphold democratic principles, are themselves implicated in human rights abuses, it creates a challenging precedent for expecting other nations to prioritize and protect human rights. The disparity between rhetoric and action not only undermines the credibility of states promoting democracy and human rights but also erodes trust in the international community's ability to uphold these fundamental values universally. As such, addressing these contradictions and holding all states accountable for their actions is essential for fostering genuine progress in the protection and promotion of human rights on a global scale.

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FINANCIAL FREEDOM AND LIFE AFTER SEVENTY



NEW GOALS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

KANWAR KHALID ALI KHAN

After reaching the age of seventy and achieving financial freedom, a person enters a new phase of life. This is a time when material needs diminish, allowing the individual to focus on setting new goals for personal growth, family well-being, and contributions to society. In the lines below, I will discuss how failing to set new goals after achieving financial freedom not only wastes an individual's time but also results in the loss of millions of collective hours in society, leading to a significant reduction in productivity.

1. SPIRITUAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:

One of the most important aspects of life after financial freedom is spiritual and personal development. With material concerns no longer a priority, this time can be used for reflection, spiritual journeys, and finding mental peace, adding depth to life. This is also an ideal time to focus on self-awareness and personal growth. Spiritual activities, like meditation or



religious practices, allow individuals to reconnect with themselves and find deeper meaning in their existence. By reflecting on the journey that brought them to financial freedom, individuals can also plan how to use their remaining years in ways that benefit not only themselves but others too.

2. SETTING NEW GOALS:

If individuals do not set new, purposeful goals after financial freedom, they waste precious hours of their lives. At seventy, time is the most valuable asset, and it should be utilized for meaningful activities like social welfare, strengthening family relationships, or sharing knowledge and experiences. When an individual wastes his valuable hours, it doesn't only affect him but also the society he is part of. If millions of individuals in their later years fail to engage in meaningful work, it results in the collective loss of productive hours, diminishing societal progress. Time that could be invested in mentoring younger generations, volunteering for community services, or contributing to important social causes gets wasted.

3. COLLECTIVE TIME WASTAGE AND ITS IMPACT:

When a financially free individual at the age of seventy wastes their precious hours, they are essentially squandering societal resources. The effects of this are far-reaching. For instance, if millions of elderly

individuals do not utilize their time purposefully, it results in immense time loss which could have been used in social, educational, or philanthropic endeavors, contributing to society's growth and development. Wasting this time creates a domino effect, fewer role models are available to guide the next generation, and fewer hands are involved in solving pressing social issues like poverty, inequality, and education. When this demographic, which has both the wisdom and the financial means to make a difference, becomes inactive, the entire society loses out.

4. NEW GOALS AND SOCIAL PROGRESS:

Rather than wasting time, setting new goals is crucial after financial freedom. This time can be invested in social welfare, knowledge sharing, or planning for family legacy. These are all meaningful uses of one's time that benefit society as a whole. Elderly individuals possess vast experience and a lifetime of skills that could benefit the younger generation. By setting goals around mentoring or establishing philanthropic ventures, they can make a significant impact. People, after achieving financial success, dedicated their time to philanthropic work, impacting millions of lives positively worldwide. Additionally, financial freedom opens the door for elderly individuals to invest in long-term community projects, such as funding educational scholarships, supporting health initiatives, or starting foundations that continue their mission long after they are gone. Such initiatives not only ensure a lasting legacy but also contribute to the long-term welfare of society.

5. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE:

After financial freedom, one can use his



time to gain political or social influence. By managing time effectively and investing it in purposeful endeavors, one not only strengthens his or her identity but also contributes to societal development. These efforts can have a trickle-down effect, inspiring others to get involved and creating a ripple of positive change. Nelson Mandela became the President of South Africa after the age of seventy and continued to achieve great success even in his later years. His political and social impact was profound, demonstrating how age and experience can be used as tools for societal betterment. Similarly, in the modern era, many individuals have entered politics or advocacy work in their later years, bringing wisdom and experience that younger counterparts may lack. This infusion of elder leadership in key societal roles ensures that important lessons from the past continue to influence future decision-making.

6. WASTING TIME IS A COLLECTIVE LOSS:

If elderly individuals across society waste their time in non-productive activities, the entire society suffers. Millions of valuable hours, which could have been spent on



educational, philanthropic, or social development, are lost. This collective time loss diminishes a nation's productivity and hampers social progress. The total time wasted by elderly individuals who are not contributing to meaningful activities could otherwise be used to run mentorship programs for young entrepreneurs, teach in community education centers, or lead environmental initiatives. Such activities would not only fill a gap in social services but also increase the overall well-being of the community. In economic terms, the productivity lost through inactive elderly individuals also translates into lost opportunities for the economy. Research shows that elderly individuals who continue to engage in work, volunteerism, or entrepreneurship often help in driving innovation and creativity, as their life experiences give them a unique perspective on solving problems.

7. PERSONAL SATISFACTION AND SOCIAL LEGACY:

By setting new goals and using time for meaningful work, individuals also gain personal satisfaction. This is not merely about staying busy but about feeling fulfilled, knowing that their contributions have a lasting impact on society. It gives a sense of purpose in later life, which is often crucial for mental and emotional well-

being. Leaving behind a social legacy is another powerful motivator. The actions taken in these final decades can cement a person's role as a leader, mentor, and benefactor, ensuring that his name lives on not just in family history but in the broader narrative of their community or country.

8. CREATIVE AND INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENT IN LATER LIFE:

After financial freedom, there's also an opportunity to delve into creative and intellectual pursuits. Many individuals choose to write books, give lectures, or engage in creative arts. These activities not only provide personal fulfillment but also contribute to cultural richness and intellectual capital for society. Similarly, academic contributions, such as researching and publishing papers or giving talks on topics of expertise, can contribute to the pool of knowledge and inspire others in the academic and professional worlds.

9. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ELDERLY ENGAGEMENT:

Engaged elderly individuals have a significant economic impact by remaining active through part-time work, volunteerism, or entrepreneurship, contributing substantially to their local economies, in terms of participating in the workforce or offering their services. They help alleviate the pressure on social services and provide value through their accumulated knowledge. A number of elderly entrepreneurs have started successful businesses, leveraging their experience and networks to create jobs and drive innovation all over the world. With financial freedom, they were better positioned to take risks and pursue ventures.

RFI with Nusrat Mirza TALK



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Interaction



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