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PAKSAT-MM1:

ADVANCING PAKISTAN'S DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY
AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION



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EDITORIAL

PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC INTEGRITY AND THE UNJUST U.S. SANCTIONS

In a move that has sparked intense debate and drawn criticism from various quarters, the United States recently imposed sanctions on Pakistan's National Development Complex (NDC) and three associated commercial entities. Citing their alleged contribution to Pakistan's ballistic missile program, this action is part of a broader narrative that unfairly singles out Pakistan's legitimate efforts to strengthen its defense capabilities. These sanctions, which Pakistan has strongly condemned, represent a biased approach to global strategic dynamics and undermine the principles of fairness and equity in international relations.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has categorically rejected these sanctions, terming them "unilateral and politically motivated." Islamabad has reiterated its unwavering commitment to non-proliferation and international peace. The entities in question are engaged in activities within the bounds of international law and adhere to Pakistan's stringent regulatory framework. By targeting Pakistan's missile program, the U.S. is ignoring the reality of Pakistan's regional security environment, which necessitates a robust defense posture to counter persistent threats.

A senior U.S. official's assertion that Pakistani missiles could potentially strike targets within the United States is not only alarmist but also misleading. In fact, strategic needs rather than expansionist ambitions guide Pakistan's missile development. This

rhetoric fuels misconceptions and detracts from the real challenges facing global non-proliferation efforts.

The U.S. has long been criticized for its selective application of sanctions and preferential treatment of certain states. While Pakistan faces punitive measures for developing indigenous defense capabilities, other states with aggressive postures and questionable non-proliferation records often escape scrutiny. This hypocrisy is starkly evident in the South Asian context, where Pakistan's eastern neighbor enjoys unbridled access to advanced military technology and weapon systems without facing comparable restrictions or accountability.

Such an approach undermines the credibility of global non-proliferation regimes. By turning a blind eye to the arms buildup in Pakistan's neighborhood, the U.S. sanctions appear less about curbing proliferation and more about exerting undue pressure on



A Pakistani made ballistic missile NASR is loaded on a trailer rolls down during a military parade to mark Pakistan National Day, in Islamabad, Pakistan (FILE PHOTO)

Islamabad. This selective enforcement erodes trust and reinforces perceptions of bias in international diplomacy.

Pakistan's missile program is an integral component of its national security framework. Surrounded by a volatile region and facing a persistent threat from an adversary with superior conventional capabilities, Pakistan's development of a credible deterrence is a strategic necessity. The country's missile capabilities are not an offensive tool but a means of ensuring stability and deterring aggression.

Over the years, Pakistan has demonstrated its commitment to responsible defense development. Robust command and control mechanisms meticulously govern its missile program to maintain regional balance. Furthermore, Pakistan has consistently advocated for arms control and disarmament initiatives in South Asia, including the establishment of a Strategic Restraint Regime, which has been met with indifference or outright rejection from its eastern neighbor.

The imposition of these sanctions is likely to strain the already fragile U.S.-Pakistan relationship. At a time when global challenges such as climate change, economic instability, and terrorism demand collaborative efforts, punitive measures like these serve to deepen mistrust and diminish avenues for constructive engagement. Pakistan's cooperation has been pivotal in addressing shared challenges, and alienating a key regional player is counterproductive to U.S. interests.

Moreover, these sanctions come when Pakistan actively seeks to diversify its foreign policy engagements. Islamabad's growing partnerships with China, Russia, and other global powers signal a shift towards a more balanced and independent foreign policy. Actions such as these sanctions may accelerate this shift, pushing Pakistan further

into the orbit of alternative alliances.

Pakistan's response to these sanctions has been measured yet firm. By underscoring its commitment to non-proliferation and emphasizing the defensive nature of its missile program, Islamabad has highlighted the unjust and discriminatory nature of the U.S. actions. Pakistan must continue articulating its stance on global platforms and engaging with like-minded nations to counter this narrative.

At the same time, the U.S. must recognize the counterproductive nature of its approach. A fair and balanced policy that acknowledges Pakistan's legitimate security concerns and supports regional stability is essential for fostering trust and cooperation. Addressing the root causes of regional tensions and promoting equitable arms control measures are far more effective pathways to achieving lasting peace than imposing unilateral sanctions.

The U.S. sanctions on Pakistan's missile program reflect a flawed and biased perspective that fails to account for the complexities of regional security dynamics. Pakistan's strategic decisions are driven by the need to safeguard its sovereignty and maintain a credible deterrent against existential threats. By targeting these legitimate efforts, the U.S. risks undermining the very principles it claims to uphold.

Pakistan is a responsible nuclear power, as evidenced by the robust safety measures governing its nuclear program and its consistent efforts to combat terrorism. The imposition of sanctions on Pakistan without credible evidence, while turning a blind eye to the nuclear proliferation by its eastern neighbor, underscores the fact that these sanctions are merely a coercive tactic employed by the United States.

INTERACTION TEAM

TEAM RABITA FORUM INTERNATIONAL VISITS SUPARCO

On December 12, 2024, a delegation from Rabita Forum International (RFI), led by Chairman Nusrat Mirza, visited the Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission Complex in Karachi. The visit aimed to strengthen collaboration and explore SUPARCO's scientific and technological advancements.

The delegation included Mirza Kashif Baig, Executive Director; Zain Ul Abideen, Director of RFI TV; Syed Samiullah, Head of Research Department; Dr. Bushra Batool, Research Officer; Wajeeha Najam, Research Officer; Noreen Khan, Anchor for Urdu; Muhammad Rehman, Anchor for Balochi; Rubina Muhammad Ibrahim, Anchor for Brahui; Rabail Junejo, Anchor for Sindhi; Farmanullah, Anchor for Pashto; and Ahmed Sabir, Social Media Manager.

SUPARCO officials warmly received the team and presented an overview of their achievements, ongoing projects, and strategic goals in advancing Pakistan's space program. The delegation toured facilities, gaining insights into SUPARCO's operations. SUPARCO also hosted refreshments and presented gifts to the delegation as a token of goodwill. At the conclusion of the visit, Mr. Nusrat Mirza expressed heartfelt gratitude to the SUPARCO team. He acknowledged their welcoming demeanor, professionalism, and unwavering dedication to serving Pakistan through groundbreaking scientific endeavors.



SUPARCO officials welcome Team RFI



Experts brief Team RFI during facilities' visit



Group photo of Team RFI and SUPARCO's official

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY

**AD NCA LT GEN KHALID AHMED KIDWAI NI, HI, HI(M)
AT THE LAUNCHING CEREMONY OF THE BOOK
"THE SECURITY IMPERATIVE:
PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR DETERRENCE AND
DIPLOMACY BY AMBASSADOR ZAMIR AKRAM"**

NOTE: On Friday, December 6, 2024, the Millennium Institute of Technology and Entrepreneurship (MITE) hosted the launch of the book "The Security Imperative: Pakistan's Nuclear Deterrence and Diplomacy", authored by Ambassador Zamir Akram. This persuasive book examines Pakistan's strategic defense policies, nuclear deterrence, and diplomatic efforts amidst global challenges.

The event was organized by the Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS) in collaboration with the Karachi Council for Foreign Relations (KCFR). The ceremony featured thought-provoking addresses by prominent figures, including Lt. Gen. Khalid A. Kidwai, NI, HI, HI(M), Advisor Development National Command Authority (ADNCA); Senator (Retd) Javed Jabbar; Ambassador Qazi M. Khalilullah; and the author himself, Ambassador Zamir Akram. Of particular significance was the address by Lt. Gen. Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, whose remarks are shared here for their strategic value and relevance to the readers.



Senator Javed Jabbar, Ambassador Masood Khan, Ambassador and Begum Zamir Akram, Ambassador Qazi Khalilullah, Dr Faisal Mushtaq, Dr Huma Baqai, our

special guests from the Balochistan Think Tank Network Brig and Begum Agha Ahmed Gul along with the BTTN faculty, ladies and gentlemen. Assalam Alaikum.

It's always a great feeling to be in the company of Pakistan's top professionals, renowned intellectuals, colleagues and friends. I am also honoured to have been asked by Dr Nadira Panjwani, who is probably traveling and not here, and Ambassador Zamir Akram, to speak at today's book launch ceremony of Ambassador Zamir's book titled 'The Security Imperative - Pakistan's Nuclear Deterrence and Diplomacy'. In fact I have been honoured for the fourth time with regard to this very important and unique work of Ambassador Zamir.

First, when he asked me a couple of years ago if I would write the foreword for the book, which as you might have seen, I did with the greatest of pleasure. Subsequently, he honoured me by asking to speak at two earlier book launch ceremonies as well, one in Karachi at Dr Masuma Hasan's Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA), and the other time at Baluchistan's premier think tank Baluchistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) at the Baluchistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIEMS) in Quetta. And now for the fourth time the invitation from Dr Nadira Panjwani and the Ambassador himself. Thank you all ladies and gentlemen.

First a bit of a background. I have had the privilege of knowing and working at a professional level with Ambassador Zamir Akram for over two decades now, as indeed I have had the privilege of knowing and working at a professional level with the two other outstanding diplomats and friends present here Ambassadors Masood Khan and Ambassador Qazi Khalilullah for about the same time.

I met Ambassador Zamir for the first time in Washington in June 2001 when he was serving at the Pakistan Embassy and I, as the

Director General of the newly established Strategic Plans Division (SPD), was accompanying the Foreign Minister, an impeccable professional the late Mr Abdul Sattar in the early years of General Musharraf's government. 9/11 had not happened yet and the international world order was fairly sane and stable; it had not transited just yet towards a degree of insanity and instability as we know it today ever since 9/11.

Among much else on the agenda of the visit, briefings to important Washington audiences about the newly established nuclear command and control system in Pakistan in the shape of the National Command Authority (NCA) and the SPD, and the resultant strengthening of the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear assets was a prominent briefing point. Pakistan had only recently then come out of the closet when the nuclear programme transited overnight from being a covert programme for a few decades prior, to an overt nuclear programme through the conduct of six nuclear tests at Chaghi on 28th and 30th May 1998 in response to India's five. The disturbed strategic balance in South Asia, triggered by India's nuclear tests of 11th and 13th May two weeks earlier, had thus been re-established and restored. Pakistan's long standing dilemma of relative conventional forces asymmetry viz India's conventional forces also stood redressed. The Indian sub-continent or South Asia would strategically and militarily never be the same again.

There was nothing classified about the visit. This was open source information which needed to be disseminated in the power corridors of the then sole super power in order to provide reassurances all round that Pakistan's nuclear assets were secure and were being handled professionally. The then

Deputy Chief of Mission Zamir Akram and Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi took us around meeting and briefing whosoever they considered needed to be met and briefed. Amongst many others, two prominent individuals I recall meeting was the then Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Joe Biden, and the then Ambassador at large Mr Zalmay Khalilzad.

This first acquaintance with Ambassador Zamir Akram thereafter gradually transformed into frequent professional interactions on strategic issues which overlapped our respective national responsibilities. International diplomacy and military strategies are two faces of the same coin. These operate best in harmony so as to create synchronized and synergized strategic and policy effects for national security and furthering national interests. As a professional soldier I have never had a doubt that astute diplomacy is and always will be the first line of defence against all types of international threats particularly, in my context, against Pakistan's nuclear programme. This first line of defence can never be allowed to be breached. I take great pride in mentioning that I have had the unique privilege of working in tandem with three of Pakistan's finest diplomat-soldiers who have held that first line of defence up front boldly and solidly never allowing it be breached by an intruder - none other than the Akram brothers Ambassador Munir Akram, Ambassador Zamir Akram, and Ambassador Masood Khan.

Ladies and gentlemen, you can be certain that there was never ever a shortage of international threats especially during the infancy days of the nuclear programme. The programme was always in the eye of the storm and it took special genius, courage and professionalism of the highest order on the

part of our diplomats to keep the hounds away.

Pakistan's nuclear deterrence capability is the cornerstone of Pakistan's security and is central, if I may, to Pakistan's survival. Look around you in the Middle East and you will know what I mean. Non-nuclear Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Palestine, Iran, even non-nuclear Ukraine, drive home the message. You will probably agree with me if I say that this common wisdom is ingrained in Pakistan at the common man's level. The Pakistani street owns Pakistan's nuclear programme; it gets terribly perturbed when it smells the first sign of a potential threat. Follow the social media at such times and you will understand what I mean. Every once in a while, Pakistan's senior leadership needs to come up and issue special statements to dispel the persistent speculations of a compromise on the nuclear programme. Such is the sensitivity and feelings of ownership at the popular level.

At the SPD particularly, Ambassador Zamir would bear me out, we have always till today, for 26 years, considered quality diplomacy and our first rate diplomats as Pakistan's warriors at the frontier. The SPD, the Foreign Office and our key ambassadors in critical capitals work hand in glove to discuss and debate policy issues and take appropriate positions to secure Pakistan's strategic interests. Ambassador Masood Khan and Ambassador Qazi Khalilullah are first hand witnesses to this integrated approach. Little wonder that Ambassador Zamir's great expertise and experience continue to enrich SPD's work as we hang on to him as our Adviser for the last 10 years.

Since Ambassador Zamir and I struck a chord of mutual respect fairly early, it was inevitable that the professional relationship would also transit into personal friendship to

include our families as well. I can say without hesitation that we count the Zamir family amongst our valued friends. Thank you Sadia and Lubna. And this goes even deeper when we count, as I said earlier, Zamir Akram's illustrious elder brother the world renowned Ambassador Munir Akram with whom also I was privileged to work in the early years. You can't find better professionals than the Akram brothers anywhere in the world. They sit at the highest international professional rung. They have done Pakistan proud and the world respects them not only for their professional acumen but for their unflinching devotion to their country and its cause, and of course for being such perfect gentlemen-diplomats.

Ambassador Zamir and I continue to work closely on and off to this day, even as I speak, on subjects of our common professional national responsibilities - he the experienced nuclear diplomat par excellence and the SPD taking care of the robustness of the nuclear deterrence. Both responsibilities converge nicely to create synergized strategic imperatives for Pakistan's national security, strategic stability, and relative peace in South Asia. Hence the title of the book 'The Security Imperative - Pakistan's Nuclear Deterrence and Diplomacy' could not have been more aptly chosen by Ambassador Zamir; the title says it all.

Strategic deterrence and diplomacy go hand in hand. I would like to quote a few passages from the foreword of the book to recall what I had to say there.

"Security Imperative is a fascinating story, professionally told, of how Pakistan's diplomacy and our top rate diplomats - always the first line of defence - provided Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme with an international protective umbrella - the great wall - from its infancy in 1972 to its dramatic

overnight transition from a covert capability to an overt demonstrated capability on the high noons of 28th and 30th May 1998. The earth shaking tremors were recorded accurately in real time at worldwide monitoring sensors including by the intricate network of over 300 monitoring stations of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) where I was shown the graphic records during a visit; it was a proud day in Vienna!

And then from 1998 onwards the resultant diplomatic tremors had to be managed by Pakistan's diplomacy and brilliant minds like Ambassador Zamir Akram for over two decades, through the maze of sanctions and denials, up to the full maturity and operationalization of the programme as a robust, operationalized nuclear deterrent force; a force which has literally outlawed major wars in South Asia and has secured Pakistan from India's kinetic aggressive designs for all times. All through these difficult years, Pakistan's outstanding diplomats were always in the forefront in keeping the wolves away - and Ambassador Zamir Akram, in a variety of appointments whether in Pakistan at the headquarters, at the Prime Minister's Secretariat, or outside Pakistan in Washington or at Geneva, was at the center stage of events as Pakistan's diplomat-warrior. I hope he would not mind if I use a term for him that is being grudgingly applied by the west for the smartest of Chinese diplomats - Wolf Warriors. I think Ambassador Zamir fits the bill! He gave right back to everything that was thrown at him by Pakistan's international detractors - never compromising on Pakistan's interests. He has seen history closely and narrates it superbly from the advantage of not only enjoying a ringside diplomat's seat but also being a critical player at critical periods of Pakistan's nuclear history."

I have further mentioned in the foreword, "There were major professional overlaps between the SPD's work and Ambassador Zamir Akram's diplomatic responsibilities as Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) at Geneva - as the nuclear programme's first line of defence. Our work required the closest of coordination and synergy in order to get it right - despite the entire world except China lined up against Pakistan. There was no room for errors; and right we got it, much of it because of the smart diplomatic circles that Ambassador Zamir Akram wove around the international hounds preying at Pakistan!

Pakistan's crowning success has been at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) Geneva. The prevention of 'commencement of negotiations' on the proposed Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) has been stalled successfully almost single handedly by Pakistan for over two decades for the straight forward reason that the proposed Treaty is not in Pakistan's security interest - period! And for this Pakistan's superb nuclear diplomacy pioneered most ably by Ambassador Munir Akram, Ambassador Masood Khan and Ambassador Zamir Akram, amongst others, deserves the highest accolades," unquote.

There was an entire gamut of strategic-cum-operational compulsions viz Indian military's fast maturing hard hitting Cold Start Doctrine in the period 2005-2015, and Pakistan's linked need, therefore, to produce adequate stocks of the fissile material called Plutonium, which we did not have at the time, for our smaller or tactical nuclear weapons not only in order to plug our inventory gaps at the tactical level but to strengthen the full spectrum of nuclear deterrence comprehensively - we needed time, lots of it, in terms of years and years. If Pakistan were to mindlessly succumb

to international pressures and agree to the commencement of negotiations of the Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty, FMCT, the strategic consequences would have been catastrophic strategically, militarily and politically. That is why every single political government sitting in the National Command Authority had to be briefed anew on change of government, and to the credit of each one of them, they registered and approved the need and without hesitation gave the SPD and the Foreign Office clearance to keep the FMCT at bay. Ambassador Zamir Akram's hand at Geneva, and of those who followed him subsequently, thus stood greatly strengthened and Pakistan's diplomacy never looked back and was that much robust for that.

By 2011, the unquestioned national consensus - the greatest source of strength for the nuclear programme - enabled Pakistan to transit to the policy of Full Spectrum Deterrence while remaining within the broader contours of Credible Minimum Deterrence. By then, we at the SPD had covered all bases: strategic, operational, tactical, land, air, and sea. And in all those difficult years and decades, it were super diplomats like Ambassador Zamir Akram and his fellow professionals who shielded the nuclear programme from international pressures.

Before ending, I would like to place before you the strategic effects that have been generated in the last four decades on the large size Indian military machine by Pakistan's nuclear capability articulated through its robust nuclear policy of Full Spectrum Deterrence. Progressively over these decades the Indian military machine has been neutered to a point of being rendered quite irrelevant in South Asia's war fighting paradigm. Consequently, India's military doctrines have

also been compelled to gradually adjust to the ground reality of a Pakistani Full Spectrum Deterrence nuclear capability visible over the horizon in support of its strong conventional forces duly integrated into Pakistan's deterrence and security strategies.

Similarly, in the last four decades India's political approach towards Pakistan has also slowly but noticeably undergone a change because of the new reality as India's politicians reconciled to the futility of attempting to coerce Pakistan through threats and direct strategies. India eventually had to adopt low cost indirect strategies like hybrid warfare and fifth generation warfare to hurt Pakistan internally in the western provinces, and on the western borders; a deflective reaction to Pakistan's nuclear capability having blocked options on the eastern borders. That Pakistan is finding a degree of in-cohesion and imbalance in responding effectively to the indirect Indian strategies for some years ought to be a matter of serious concern to Pakistan's politico-military leadership.

It was because of Pakistan's developing nuclear capabilities, which are the focus of Ambassador Zamir Akram's work that India's war fighting military doctrines, in turn, started to transit and taper off, in stages. From General K. Sundarji's gung-ho "mechanize, mobilize and hit" doctrine, laid out ever so cleverly in 1986-87 in the deserts of Rajasthan

under the cover of the infamous Exercise Brasstacks, to General V.P. Malik's and General Padmanabhan's "limited war under a nuclear overhang" as in the battle ready but failed Operation Parakaram of 2001-02, to the lukewarm deployments subsequent to the Mumbai attacks of 2008, to the still-born "Cold Start Doctrine" which got neutralized with the first test of Pakistan's Nasr missile as a tactical nuclear weapon in 2011, to the pathetic specter of the late General Bipin Rawat's fake "strategic strike" of 2016.

These military war fighting doctrines were finally reduced to the humiliation of the "Indian Air Force's failed Balakot strategic strike" of 26 February 2019 which was anything but. The resultant IAF losses when the PAF struck back in force the next day through Operation Swift Retort, and Wing Commander Abhinandan's appreciation for Pakistan's fantastic tea, compelled Prime Minister Modi to call it quits, symbolizing and indirectly recognizing the prevalence of a strategic balance in South Asia where the specter of a potential nuclear Armageddon deterred further military escalation.

During these critical decades as Pakistan's nuclear capabilities strengthened generating the aforesaid strategic effects on India, Pakistan was fortunate to have outstanding diplomats like Ambassador Zamir Akram who worked hand in glove with our strategic planners to ensure that the first line of defence would never be breached. For over five decades since 1972, when the nuclear weapons programme was first conceived, Pakistan's diplomats and diplomacy have ensured successfully that the international environments would not create any detrimental effect on the nuclear scientists and engineers as they worked day and night, year after year to deliver on the assigned national



task. Historically and strategically speaking, the reality is that the very basis of the conception and development of Pakistan's nuclear capability ever since 1972 has been to ensure that strategic balance viz India will never again be allowed to be disturbed to Pakistan's disadvantage. That, the bitter lessons of the disastrous 1971 War will be learnt and not forgotten. That, the subsequent asymmetry in favour of the Indian military in certain critical areas of conventional forces will be rendered irrelevant because Pakistan chose to develop a robust nuclear weapons capability at the tri-services level as The Great Equalizer. Pakistan's nuclear programme was and will always remain India-centric.

Today, five decades later, I can say with confidence that Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability has delivered successfully on its essential objective and purpose - deterrence of aggression by India thereby ensuring peace in South Asia. No more disasters like 1971. Resultantly, one can be quite certain that major wars like the ones in 1947-48, 1965, 1971 and perhaps even lesser standoffs like the 1999 Kargil War, stand clearly outlawed in South Asia. However much India may want to attempt to tilt the conventional forces balance in its favour, Pakistan's robust nuclear capability of Full Spectrum Deterrence will keep pace and ensure that the two nuclear powers will exercise restraint and responsibility whenever contemplating the possible employment of the military instrument in pursuit of political policies and objectives. In my judgement both India and Pakistan have seemingly absorbed the relevant strategic lessons of our relatively short history especially post-1971. Prevalence of strategic stability in South Asia ever since is the outcome.

And therefore, when seen against the

gradual erosion and regression of India's politico-military choices, to me it sounds comical and a bit Quixotic to hear India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh threatening every now and then that India will chase infiltrators inside Pakistani territory, and for the born again Hindutva 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 borne out of the frustration of seeing one of the world's largest militaries standing deterred against Pakistan's robust nuclear capability.

There should never ever be a doubt in anyone's mind, friend or foe, that Pakistan's operationally ready nuclear capability enables every Pakistani leader the liberty, the dignity and the courage to look straight into the Indian eye - and never blink.

I would also like to recall that nearly 80 years of geo-political and military history post World War II, reinforces the universal wisdom that nuclear powers do not fight direct wars. The wars in Korea, Viet Nam, Afghanistan, and now in Ukraine for nearly three years, reinforce the universal wisdom that nuclear powers do not fight direct wars. Lately though it seems that the US, NATO and Russia are determined to turn that universal wisdom on its head through the acute brinkmanship in their nuclear dance of death and destruction as the Ukraine War probably heads towards a closure of some kind early next year. In the context of South Asia however, I do not see any reason why India and Pakistan would want to defy that time tested logic and risk Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) of the worst kind.

Continued on page 14

FALL OF SYRIA & THE GREATER ISRAEL PLAN

NUSRAT MIRZA



The Greater Israel Plan, also referred to as the Yinon Plan, the Col. Peter Ralph Plan, or the Joe Biden Plan, represents a longstanding and contentious blueprint for reshaping the geography and political landscape of the Middle East. Originating in 1983 under the vision of Israeli diplomat Oded Yinon, this plan aims to create a religious state akin to the Vatican. However, its implications extend far beyond religious significance, targeting the disintegration of existing nations and the redistribution of territories to align with specific strategic objectives.

THE CORE OBJECTIVES OF THE GREATER ISRAEL PLAN

The Greater Israel Plan aims to establish a robust and strategically advantageous state. According to the plan, this would involve

reshaping borders and redistributing territories in the Middle East.

Central to this vision is creating a Vatican-style Islamic state encompassing Makkah and Madinah, which would be governed by representatives from all Islamic sects rather than controlled by the Saudi royal family. This reorganization seeks to weaken centralized Saudi power, making the region politically and militarily less potent. Additionally, the Khaybar area in Saudi Arabia is proposed to be handed over to Jordan, while the eastern provinces of Al Ahsa and Qatif, known for their significant Shia populations, are suggested to be annexed to Syria. This would fragment Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity and diminish its regional influence.

The Ahwaz region in Iran, home to an Arabic-speaking majority, is also envisioned to become part of Iraq. Meanwhile, the Kurds spread across Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Azerbaijan would be unified



into a single Kurdish state. This unification aligns with the historical admiration for Salahuddin Ayyubi, a Kurdish leader respected in Jewish history for protecting Jewish communities.

GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Greater Israel Plan's scope is not confined to territorial adjustments. It extends to creating new political and economic corridors that could fundamentally alter the region's dynamics. For instance, a plan is to construct a canal through Gaza, reducing dependency on the Suez Canal and undermining Egypt's strategic importance. Israel's ongoing occupation of the Golan Heights is another step towards controlling key areas such as Damascus and securing access to Lebanon via Beirut. This would provide Israel with a direct maritime route and greater regional leverage.

Iran stands as a critical target in this plan. Once considered a formidable opponent, Iran's position has weakened significantly due to extensive espionage activities and the loss of key figures like Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah. This vulnerability has paved the way for more aggressive strategies to fragment Iran into smaller, weaker states. The regions of Sistan and parts of Pakistan's Balochistan are particularly at risk, with the



envisioned creation of a new entity called Greater Balochistan.

THE THREAT TO PAKISTAN

Pakistan, already grappling with internal strife and institutional challenges, is a crucial piece in this geopolitical puzzle. If any part of Pakistan comes under this plan, the instability within its borders will make it susceptible to external interventions.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Greater Israel Plan has deep roots, but its contemporary manifestations have gained momentum. The Sixth Arab-Israeli War in 1967, a 33-day conflict that ended with Hezbollah technically outmaneuvering Israel, marked a significant moment in regional resistance. However, the current geopolitical landscape is starkly different. Israel's objectives appear to be advancing, facilitated by shifting alliances and the weakened state of its adversaries.

President Joe Biden's administration has accelerated these efforts. His declaration of being an "Irish Zionist" underscores an ideological commitment to these plans. Recent events, including the October 7th attack, have consolidated Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's power, silencing opposition and providing a pretext for further

aggressive actions. The occupation of the Golan Heights and the increasing encroachments on Syria and Lebanon signify a strategic buildup for the next phase of this plan.

THE NEED FOR A UNIFIED FRONT

The ramifications of the Greater Israel Plan extend beyond the immediate region, threatening to destabilize neighboring countries like Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. Without a coordinated response, these nations risk fragmentation and loss of sovereignty. A united front involving Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey is imperative to counter this threat. Such an alliance could serve as a bulwark against the disintegration of these states and the realization of the Greater Israel Plan.

A LONG-TERM VISION

The Greater Israel Plan is not a short-term strategy but a long-term vision aiming to reshape the Middle East over decades. Even if the current efforts do not fully succeed, history

suggests that the plan's proponents will persist. Iran's strategic weakening and the internal challenges facing Pakistan and other regional powers create an environment conducive to the plan's gradual implementation.

CONCLUSION

The Greater Israel Plan represents a complex and multi-faceted strategy with profound implications for the Middle East. It seeks to redraw borders, create new states, and weaken existing powers to establish a dominant regional order favorable to Israel. The urgency for regional powers like Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey to unite cannot be overstated. Failure to act decisively risks their territorial integrity and the broader stability of the Middle East. As history unfolds, the trajectory of this plan serves as a stark reminder of the enduring need for vigilance, unity, and resistance in the face of such grand designs.

The author is the Chief Editor of the monthly *Interaction*.

Continued from page 11

PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR DETERRENCE AND DIPLOMACY BY AMBASSADOR ZAMIR AKRAM"

The illogical logic of MAD is as relevant to South Asia as it is to Europe, to Trans-Atlantic, and to Trans-Pacific. The strategic stability paradigm in South Asia has clearly shifted towards a more balanced equation. I think Pakistan can breathe easy and, perhaps, utilize this extended and open-ended "window of peace" to focus on the resolution of its severe internal challenges, foremost being political stability, the economy and terrorism, not at all in that order but simultaneously and in parallel.

To sum up, all in all, Ambassador Zamir Akram's *The Security Imperative - Pakistan's*

Nuclear Deterrence and Diplomacy is an excellent account of Pakistan's superb diplomatic maneuvers of almost the entire journey of the five decades of Pakistan's nuclear programme, linked events and interesting episodes along the way. Ambassador Zamir Akram was fortunate to be invariably there where the action was most of the time throughout his long distinguished career.

As such the authenticity and factual accuracy of the diplomatic history of the programme is assured. I think all Pakistanis owe our smartest salute to this diplomat-warrior for not only being there for Pakistan whenever it mattered but also for putting this historical account together for the benefit of posterity. It is genuinely a valuable addition to an otherwise barren landscape. Thank you Ambassador Zamir Akram.

And thank you ladies and gentlemen.

2024 IN FOCUS: RESILIENCE, CONFLICT, AND TRANSFORMATION



WAJEEHA NAJAM

NOTE: As 2024 concludes, geopolitical tensions reshaped alliances, technological breakthroughs redefined possibilities, and climate crises demanded urgent action. This special draft for the Interaction Magazine offers a glimpse of 2024, capturing a world navigating complexity and poised for transformation in the years ahead.

The year 2024 stood as a defining period in global history, where the interconnected forces of politics, conflict, technology, and economics shaped the trajectory of nations and their people. From the vitality of democratic elections to the harrowing realities of humanitarian crises, the world witnessed both the resilience and fragility of its institutions. Meanwhile, advances in technology, particularly artificial intelligence, and the intensifying arms race redefined the balance of power and the nature of global competition. As emerging economies asserted themselves on the global stage and climate

change litigation broke new ground, 2024 underscored the complex challenges and opportunities of an interconnected world.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

In 2024, over four billion people in 76 countries participated in elections, subjecting democratic institutions worldwide to a rigorous examination of their resilience. While some nations demonstrated progress in their democratic journeys, others exposed vulnerabilities, including susceptibility to authoritarianism, electoral manipulation, and the growing influence of disinformation. The year's elections underscored both the enduring appeal of democracy and the challenges threatening its survival in an increasingly polarized world.

The 2024 United States presidential election emerged as a cornerstone event for global democracy. The potential return of former President Donald Trump sparked intense debates about domestic stability and international relations.

The election's outcomes carried significant implications for global issues such as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, tensions in the Middle East, and shifting power dynamics with China. The rhetoric and policy priorities during the campaign reflected the potential for substantial geopolitical realignments, further highlighting the global stakes tied to American leadership.





India's 2024 election results show Prime Minister Narendra Modi set to win his 3rd term in PM office

In Europe, the rise of far-right parties challenged the stability of the European Union and the core principles of liberal democracy. These parties' growing influence raised concerns about the future of EU climate policies, social integration efforts, and the union's commitment to democratic norms. The surge in populist movements underscored the tension between national sovereignty and collective European values, threatening to reshape the continent's political landscape.

Beyond Europe and the United States, 2024 marked significant political milestones and shifts in various regions. In Mexico, the election of the country's first female president represented a monumental step toward gender equality in Latin American politics. Her victory signaled broader regional progress in diversifying political leadership. In India, a united opposition launched a concerted effort to challenge Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bid for a third term. This development reflected a global trend of political mobilization against entrenched leadership and underscored the vibrancy of democratic engagement in the world's largest democracy.

Sri Lanka underwent profound political

changes through both presidential and parliamentary elections. In September, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, a Marxist-leaning leader, was elected president with 42.3% of the vote, defeating incumbent Ranil Wickremesinghe and opposition leader Sajith Premadasa. Dissanayake's campaign focused on anti-corruption and economic recovery, resonating with a populace weary of economic hardships. Following his victory, the National People's Power (NPP) coalition secured a two-thirds majority in the November parliamentary elections, granting it significant legislative power to pursue poverty alleviation and economic reforms. These results marked a decisive move by Sri Lankan voters toward new political leadership, entrusting the NPP with addressing the nation's economic challenges.

Contentious general elections in Bangladesh led to significant upheaval. Sheikh Hasina's Awami League claimed victory amid low voter turnout and opposition boycotts. Allegations of electoral irregularities and authoritarian governance sparked mass protests, culminating in Hasina's resignation and exile in August. Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus was appointed interim leader, promising electoral reforms ahead of elections planned for late 2025 or early 2026. These events signified a pivotal moment in Bangladesh's political history, with the interim government seeking regional support to stabilize the country.

Pakistan's 2024 general elections represented a critical juncture for its political future. Amid economic instability, military influence, and concerns over governance, the elections tested the nation's democratic maturity. Opposition parties challenged the incumbent government by focusing on corruption and economic mismanagement,

while issues of electoral fairness and transparency became central to the political discourse. The judiciary played a prominent role in overseeing the process, reflecting the growing complexity of Pakistan's political environment. These elections highlighted both the vibrancy of democratic engagement and the challenges of ensuring free and fair electoral processes in a context shaped by powerful military and economic elites.

In stark contrast, authoritarian regimes such as Russia and Venezuela utilized elections primarily as mechanisms to consolidate power rather than as genuine democratic exercises. These elections were often characterized by restricted freedoms, media manipulation, and the suppression of opposition voices. Such practices highlighted the ways in which electoral processes can be subverted to entrench authoritarian rule, underscoring the fragility of democracy in the face of disinformation and state control.

The global elections of 2024 provided a powerful reminder of democracy's dual nature: its enduring strength and its inherent vulnerabilities. While many nations showcased the resilience of democratic participation, others revealed the challenges of safeguarding free and fair elections in an era increasingly defined by polarization, disinformation, and external interference. As nations reflect on the successes and shortcomings of this year's electoral processes, the events of 2024 stand as both a testament to democracy's appeal and a stark warning about the forces threatening its survival.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

The year 2024 saw a series of escalating conflicts and worsening humanitarian crises that devastated affected regions and sent

shockwaves through the global political and economic landscape. The ongoing war in Ukraine remained a central focus of international concern, with severe human, infrastructural, and geopolitical consequences. The protracted nature of the conflict led to significant civilian casualties and widespread destruction, as Russian forces targeted critical infrastructure, including energy facilities and civilian areas.

These attacks exacerbated Europe's energy crisis, leading to severe shortages that strained national economies, particularly in Eastern and Central Europe, while triggering inflationary pressures across the continent. The war also worsened global food insecurity, with disruptions in Ukraine's agricultural output, a major grain exporter, causing a sharp rise in food prices worldwide. These crises highlighted the fragility of international peace efforts, the erosion of governance structures, and the limits of humanitarian intervention, underscoring the urgent need for a coordinated global response.

The Ukraine war also saw the deployment of advanced weaponry, including hypersonic missiles, autonomous drones, and sophisticated cyber warfare tactics, setting a precedent for future conflicts. The conflict



Protesters climb a public monument as they celebrate after receiving news of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasinas resignation in Dhaka

became a testing ground for modern military technologies, with significant implications for global defense strategies and arms development. NATO's support for Ukraine, including the provision of advanced weaponry, highlighted the growing militarization of global alliances and the escalating arms race among major powers.

In the Middle East, Syria witnessed a historic turning point in 2024 as the Assad regime, which had endured over a decade of civil war, finally collapsed. On December 8, 2024, the fall of Bashar al-Assad's authoritarian rule marked the end of an era. This monumental event resulted from a confluence of factors, including persistent internal protests, international sanctions, and sustained military confrontations by the Syrian opposition and allied foreign forces. While the collapse of the regime represented a pivotal moment in the Syrian Civil War, the vacuum left by Assad's departure raised concerns about the future trajectory of Syria and the wider implications for Middle Eastern geopolitics.

Similarly, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza during 2024 reached catastrophic levels, with casualty figures far exceeding initial estimates. By December 2024, reports indicated that the

death toll had surpassed 45,000, while over 106,000 individuals were reported wounded since the conflict began in October 2023. Escalating violence between Israeli forces and Hamas inflicted immense suffering on civilian populations, who bore the brunt of relentless hostilities. Repeated bombardments targeted civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and essential services, plunging communities into extreme deprivation.

The use of advanced precision-guided munitions and urban warfare tactics further complicated the conflict, causing significant collateral damage. International organizations, including the United Nations, faced significant challenges in brokering a ceasefire and facilitating aid distribution. However, the scale of the crisis overwhelmed existing mechanisms, rendering international aid efforts insufficient to meet the urgent needs of displaced populations. These crises underscored the limitations of international diplomacy and the fragility of peacekeeping efforts, emphasizing the urgent need for innovative, coordinated responses to resolve deeply entrenched political and territorial disputes.

In Africa, 2024 was marked by a disturbing trend of coups and political upheavals that deepened existing governance crises in several nations. Countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Sudan experienced the resurgence of military juntas, reflecting the erosion of democratic institutions and the breakdown of political order in fragile states. These events heightened insecurity and plunged populations into economic and humanitarian distress. The coups further impeded efforts to address critical issues such as poverty, disease, and displacement, exacerbating human rights abuses and triggering waves of migration,



An aerial view shows residential buildings that were damaged during the Ukraine-Russia conflict in the southern port city of Mariupol, Ukraine

particularly toward Europe. The instability highlighted the challenges facing the African Union and international organizations in promoting democratic governance and addressing the root causes of political unrest. Additionally, the increased flow of arms into these regions fueled prolonged conflicts, raising questions about global arms control mechanisms and the ethics of international arms trade.

The renewed flare-up of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh further exacerbated global instability, resulting in the large-scale displacement of tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians. Fueled by military confrontations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, this forced exodus exposed the continued failure of international peacekeeping mechanisms to protect vulnerable populations. The conflict saw the use of drones and artillery strikes, reflecting the growing reliance on technology-driven warfare in modern conflicts. Despite mediation efforts, the inability to prevent mass displacement underscored significant gaps in humanitarian protection frameworks and pointed to the need for stronger, more effective mechanisms to address such crises.

Amid this grim backdrop, there were some positive developments in global responses to human rights violations and atrocities. The adoption of the Ljubljana-Hague Convention on International Crimes represented a significant step forward in strengthening international legal frameworks aimed at ensuring accountability for war crimes and human rights abuses. While still in its early stages, this convention offers a potential mechanism for addressing impunity in conflict zones, providing hope for the victims of these atrocities. This development also signaled a growing recognition of the need to hold state and non-state actors accountable for violations of international law. It reflected a

broader shift toward promoting justice and human rights within the context of protracted conflicts, offering a glimmer of optimism amid widespread despair.

However, the crises of 2024 serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need for robust and coordinated international action. As conflicts persist and humanitarian needs escalate, the global community must redouble efforts to uphold international norms, protect vulnerable populations, and promote pathways to sustainable peace. The persistent failure to address these crises in a timely and effective manner risks further entrenching instability, eroding trust in international institutions, and deepening the suffering of millions. To mitigate the human cost of these conflicts and build a more stable and peaceful global order, a renewed commitment to multilateral diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, and conflict resolution is essential. Only through collective action can the global community hope to address the root causes of these crises and foster a future of peace and security.

NAVIGATING THE AI REVOLUTION AND GLOBAL TECHNOLOGICAL RIVALRIES

In 2024, artificial intelligence (AI) reached unprecedented levels, revolutionizing



Israel kills more than 45,000 Palestinians in Gaza, Assad releases first statement



Evolving medical innovations will change our world and lives over the next few decades. Future Tales Lab by MQDC brings you five key innovations for the future

industries like finance and healthcare. Generative AI tools became essential for work flows, enhancing productivity but raising ethical concerns, including disinformation, societal harm, and privacy issues. The EU's AI Act led global regulatory efforts, categorizing AI systems by risk and mandating assessments for high-risk applications. Similarly, the UN's Global Digital Compact emphasized digital inclusion and human rights.

Legal debates intensified over AI accountability, algorithmic bias, intellectual property, and data privacy. AI's role in surveillance and law enforcement sparked civil liberty concerns, while deep fakes and automated propaganda undermined trust in digital content. Balancing AI's transformative potential with ethical foresight and international collaboration remains a pressing challenge.

The US-China technological rivalry dominated 2024, reshaping supply chains and international relations. The US's export controls on advanced semiconductors disrupted global industries, pushing China toward self-sufficiency. This tension extended to 5G rollouts, with Western nations limiting Huawei's role, further fragmenting innovation

and global markets.

In renewable energy, shortages of critical minerals like lithium and cobalt highlighted supply chain vulnerabilities, as the US and its allies sought alternatives to China's dominance. Quantum computing became another competitive frontier, with breakthroughs raising concerns over cybersecurity and encryption. Meanwhile, divergent AI regulations in the US, EU, and China created a fragmented landscape, complicating global compliance.

The arms race in emerging technologies such as AI, quantum computing, and hypersonic weapons further strained global security. Countries invested heavily in developing AI-driven military applications, including autonomous weapons and predictive analytics for warfare. This technological escalation raised ethical dilemmas and heightened the risk of destabilizing conflicts, as nations prioritized strategic dominance over cooperative frameworks.

This era of economic nationalism has driven nations to prioritize technological sovereignty, intensifying the risk of a "tech Cold War." As the Fourth Industrial Revolution



According to Huawei, 5.5G will be an evolution of 5G that will create a better, more intelligent society

unfolds, technological innovation is increasingly shaped by national interests, regulatory pressures, and deepening global rivalries.

THE RISE OF EMERGING ECONOMIES AND SHIFTING GLOBAL POWER DYNAMICS

The expansion of the BRICS bloc to include nations like Saudi Arabia and Iran marks a significant shift in global economic power, reflecting the growing influence of the Global South and the push toward a multipolar world order. By broadening its scope beyond Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, BRICS aims to challenge the dominance of Western-led institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. However, internal divergences ranging from political systems to economic priorities create challenges in achieving cohesion. Tensions between members like Saudi Arabia and Iran further complicate efforts to present a unified front on global issues.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has also shifted in 2024, moving from large-scale infrastructure projects to smaller, sustainable ventures to address mounting concerns over debt sustainability. This recalibration reflects China's response to growing international criticism and domestic economic pressures, emphasizing long-term stability over expansive investments.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has emerged as another pivotal player in fostering regional integration and multilateralism. Pakistan, a full member, plays a critical role in advancing counterterrorism, trade, and energy cooperation while leveraging the platform to deepen ties with China and Russia. Despite facing economic and political challenges, Pakistan sees the SCO as vital for its regional and strategic ambitions.



**BRICS countries:
Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**

Meanwhile, the global reorganization of supply chains is driving opportunities for countries like Mexico and Vietnam. Rising geopolitical tensions, US-China trade disputes, and post-pandemic disruptions have accelerated the trend of relocating production closer to consumer markets. Mexico, with its proximity to the US and trade agreements like the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), and Vietnam, with its competitive labor market, are emerging as key beneficiaries of this shift. However, the redistribution of production networks also poses challenges for less competitive economies struggling to navigate regional rivalries and ensure sustainable growth.

These global economic realignments underscore the expansion of BRICS, China's recalibrated BRI, the rising influence of the SCO, and the restructuring of global production networks. Yet, they also highlight the complexities of balancing diverse national priorities in an increasingly interconnected world. The intensification of geopolitical tensions has also driven increased military spending among BRICS nations, reflecting the role of defense strategies in shaping global

power dynamics. The coming years will determine how these shifts shape global trade, investment, and geopolitical relations.

ICJ'S LANDMARK CLIMATE CHANGE CASE

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is addressing the legal responsibilities surrounding climate change in a historic case, marking its largest hearing with nearly 100 countries and 12 international organizations participating. Initiated by a UN General Assembly resolution in March 2023, the case seeks the ICJ's advisory opinion on two key questions: the obligations of states to protect the climate system from emissions, and the legal consequences for those causing significant harm to the environment. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) played a key role, presenting expert arguments on state responsibilities and climate justice.

The hearings, held from December 2 to December 13, 2024, highlighted the principles of intergenerational equity, state sovereignty, and collective responsibility, with a focus on the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable populations. The expected advisory opinion, while non-binding, could shape future international climate policy, strengthen accountability

mechanisms, and promote greater cooperation. This case underscores the growing recognition of climate change as a legal and human rights issue, reinforcing the need for unified global action.

The outcome of the case is not yet available, with the ICJ expected to issue its advisory opinion in late 2025. Although the opinion will be non-binding, it is anticipated to have significant legal and moral authority, potentially influencing international climate policy, state responsibilities, and future climate-related litigation. The case may provide clarity on states' obligations to protect the global climate system, address trans boundary harm, and uphold the rights of vulnerable populations, shaping global climate governance moving forward.

CONCLUSION

The events of 2024 reflect a world grappling with the dual forces of resilience and fragility. Democratic processes underscored both their strength and vulnerabilities, while conflicts and humanitarian crises highlighted the urgent need for coordinated international action. Advances in technology and shifting economic power dynamics offered both opportunities and challenges, with nations increasingly prioritizing strategic dominance over cooperative solutions. From the halls of international courts addressing climate justice to the battlefields testing advanced weaponry, the global landscape revealed the interconnectedness of its challenges. As we move forward, the lessons of 2024 serve as a clarion call for renewed commitment to multilateralism, innovation, and collective action to navigate the complexities of an evolving world.

The author is a Research Officer at Rabita Forum International (RFI).



International Court of Justice

NEW DOCTRINE SIGNALS SHIFT IN NUCLEAR POLICY: A RESPONSE TO EMERGING THREATS



MIRZA KASHIF BAIG



Vladimir Putin, President of Russia

In the ongoing evolution of global security frameworks, Russia has introduced a provocative new doctrine that reshapes the contours of its nuclear deterrence policy. This doctrine asserts that an attack on Russia by a non-nuclear weapon state aided by a nuclear power will elicit a nuclear response against the aiding nuclear power. The announcement underscores the complexities of modern warfare and signals a recalibration of strategic deterrence in a multipolar world.

CONTEXT OF THE DOCTRINE

The backdrop of this doctrinal shift is the protracted Russia-Ukraine war, which has transformed from a conventional conflict into a theater of geopolitical competition. Western nations, led by the United States, have provided extensive military and logistical support to Ukraine, raising concerns in Moscow about the involvement of nuclear-armed states in a proxy war.

Russia's leadership has frequently pointed to the risks of escalation posed by advanced

weaponry, intelligence sharing, and training programs provided to Ukraine. This doctrine is a direct response to perceived threats emanating from these activities. By expanding the conditions under which nuclear weapons might be used, Russia seeks to establish a deterrent against any state contemplating direct or indirect engagement against its national security.

KEY IMPLICATIONS OF THE DOCTRINE

The doctrine's implications are profound and multifaceted, affecting global security, alliances, and the norms surrounding nuclear deterrence:

1. Redefining Deterrence:

Traditionally, nuclear powers have adhered to the principle of deterrence to prevent attacks on their sovereign territory. This doctrine shifts the focus to indirect threats, clarifying that even indirect support to a conventional conflict could trigger a nuclear



Russia's road-mobile ICBMs that carry Nuclear weapons

response. This broadens the scope of nuclear deterrence to include direct aggression and third-party involvement.

2. Impact on Proxy Wars:

This doctrine challenges the status quo in an era marked by proxy conflicts, where great powers often support opposing factions without direct confrontation. It warns nuclear powers to reconsider their level of involvement in conflicts where Russia is a principal actor.

3. Alliance Dynamics:

NATO, which includes multiple nuclear-armed states, could face new dilemmas. The doctrine implicitly targets the bloc, given its unequivocal support for Ukraine. It might compel NATO to reassess its risk tolerance and approach to aiding non-nuclear allies.

4. Global Nuclear Norms:

The doctrine also raises questions about the erosion of established nuclear norms. While it seeks to enhance Russia's strategic security, it could set a precedent for other nuclear powers to adopt similar policies, potentially increasing the risk of miscalculation and escalation.

RATIONALE BEHIND THE DOCTRINE

From Moscow's perspective, this doctrinal shift addresses critical vulnerabilities in its security architecture. The Kremlin has long argued that Western nations' involvement in Ukraine represents a de facto hybrid war against Russia. The transfer of advanced weapons systems, such as HIMARS and drones, has significantly bolstered Ukraine's capacity to strike deep into Russian-held territories.

This doctrine, therefore, warns against further escalation by deterring nuclear powers from enabling non-nuclear adversaries. It also reflects Russia's perception of its strategic

isolation and the need to leverage its nuclear capabilities as a counterbalance against



Four HIMARS expected in next US \$625 million aid package for Ukraine

superior conventional forces aligned against it.

GLOBAL REACTIONS

The international response to the doctrine has been predictably polarized. Western nations have criticized it as destabilizing and escalatory. NATO officials have expressed concerns that the doctrine undermines decades of efforts to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in global security and could lead to a dangerous escalation of tensions.

Conversely, some analysts in the Global South and non-aligned nations view the doctrine as a defensive measure. They argue that it reflects the reality of asymmetric conflicts, where non-nuclear states backed by powerful allies can pose significant threats to nuclear powers. From this perspective, the doctrine is seen as an attempt to restore a balance of power in an increasingly fragmented international system.

RISKS AND CHALLENGES

Despite its intended deterrent effect, the doctrine is fraught with risks. First and



Deployment of an Iskander-M ballistic missile launcher is pictured during the military drills in Ivanovo region Russia

foremost is the danger of misinterpretation. The ambiguity surrounding what constitutes “aided by a nuclear power” leaves room for differing interpretations, increasing the likelihood of miscalculation.

Second, the doctrine may inadvertently provoke an arms race. Lowering the threshold for nuclear use could incentivize other nuclear powers to adopt similar policies or develop countermeasures, leading to a destabilizing spiral of military build-ups and heightened tensions. Third, the doctrine complicates conflict resolution. In the context of the Ukraine war, it might reduce the willingness of Western nations to engage in diplomatic efforts, fearing that such overtures could be perceived as weakness.

STRATEGIC CALCULATIONS

For Russia, the doctrine represents a calculated risk. It capitalizes on the deterrent value of nuclear weapons while acknowledging the realities of its conventional military constraints. However, the effectiveness of this strategy depends on the willingness of nuclear-armed states to heed its warnings and recalibrate their actions accordingly.

From a broader perspective, the doctrine

reflects the erosion of post-Cold War norms governing nuclear weapons. As the global order transitions to multipolarity, established powers and rising states are redefining the rules of engagement. In this context, Russia's doctrine serves as both a challenge and a call to address the inadequacies of existing frameworks in managing great-power competition.

THE WAY FORWARD

Addressing the risks posed by this doctrine requires a multifaceted approach. Dialogue among nuclear powers is essential to establish clear communication channels and reduce the risk of miscalculation. Reviving arms control agreements and confidence-building measures could help mitigate the destabilizing effects of such policies.

Moreover, non-nuclear states must play a proactive role in advocating for preserving global nuclear norms. By reinforcing the principle of non-proliferation and engaging in multilateral forums, they can reduce the likelihood of nuclear escalation.

CONCLUSION

Russia's new doctrine is a stark reminder of the fragility of the current international security architecture. While it seeks to address legitimate security concerns, its broad implications pose significant challenges to global stability.

Navigating this complex landscape requires a careful balance between deterrence and diplomacy, with an emphasis on preserving the norms that have long prevented the use of nuclear weapons in conflict. As the world grapples with these evolving dynamics, the need for responsible leadership and robust international cooperation has never been greater.

The author is the Editor of the monthly Interaction.

PAKSAT-MM1



Orbital Position	38.2°E
Launch	30 May 2024
Frequency	C, Ku, Ka and L Bands
Life	15 Years

PAKSAT-MM1:



ADVANCING PAKISTAN'S DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

SYED SAMIULLAH



Pakistan's first multi-mission satellite, PAKSAT MM1, under the facilitation of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), has become operational successfully

A satellite, or artificial satellite, is a man-made object designed to orbit a larger celestial body, like the Earth or another planet. Essentially, it is like a tool or machine that we send into space to serve specific purposes. Satellites are used for many practical and important tasks in our daily lives, such as helping us communicate over long distances (like phone calls or internet connections), forecasting the weather, guiding us with GPS navigation, and broadcasting television and radio signals.

They also play a key role in scientific research, helping scientists study Earth and space, and in keeping an eye on our planet for things like climate monitoring. Additionally, satellites are used for military purposes, such as gathering intelligence, providing early warnings of threats, and in some cases,

carrying weapons.

Every major country invests in developing and launching satellites to serve a variety of purposes, such as communication, research, navigation, and monitoring. Pakistan, too, has made remarkable progress in this field, demonstrating its capabilities through a solid record of successful satellite launches. One of Pakistan's notable achievements is the launch of Paksat-MM1, a multi-mission satellite. Here, we take a closer look at this important milestone in Pakistan's space program.

PAKSAT-MM1, or Paksat Multi-Mission-1, represents a significant step forward in Pakistan's journey into space and communication technology. This satellite was



An LM-3B launch vehicle lifted off from Xichang Satellite Launch Center at 20:12, May 30th 2024, sending PAKSAT-MM1 satellite into the predetermined orbit

developed through collaboration between SUPARCO (Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission) and CASC (China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation). Its primary goal is to improve communication networks in Pakistan and support the country's shift towards a more digital future. In line with these advancements, Pakistan has improved its ranking by 14 points in the United Nations E-Governance Development Index, moving from 150 in 2022 to 136 this year. Before its launch, it was known as PakSAT-MM 1R, but during the launch, it was officially named PakSAT-MM 1.

PAKSAT MM 1

PAKSAT-MM1 is an integral part of Pakistan's National Space Program 2047, which envisions launching a series of satellites for communication, remote sensing, and weather forecasting. This ambitious program is designed to strengthen Pakistan's technological infrastructure and ensure self-reliance in space-based services.

A key feature of this program is international collaboration, which has proven instrumental in advancing Pakistan's space capabilities. For example, Pakistan partnered with China on the development and launch of satellites such as PRSS-1 (a remote sensing satellite) and PakTES-1A (a technology

evaluation satellite). These collaborations have not only resulted in successful missions but have also facilitated valuable knowledge and technology transfer, empowering Pakistani space scientists and engineers with the expertise needed for future advancements in the field.

DEVELOPMENT AND LAUNCH

On May 30, 2024, at 12:12 UTC, Pakistan's PAKSAT-MM1 satellite was successfully launched from China's Xichang Satellite Launch Centre using a Long March 3B rocket. This mission was part of China's renowned Long March rocket series, marking the 96th flight of the Long March 3B model and the 524th mission overall.

The launch was attended by Pakistan's Planning Minister, Ahsan Iqbal, who expressed optimism about the future of Pakistan's space program, saying, "The day is not far when we will launch our satellites on our own rockets from Pakistan's Space Launch Centre.

Congratulations Pakistan." Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also extended his congratulations, highlighting the satellite's potential to improve internet connectivity across the country. He stated, "I am particularly excited about the potential impact of PAKSAT MM1 on internet connectivity across Pakistan. With its state-of-the-art communication technology, this satellite promises to revolutionize our digital landscape and provide the fastest internet facility throughout the country."

CHINA LAUNCHES PAKSAT MM1 SATELLITE

Once in its designated orbit, PAKSAT-MM1 underwent thorough in-orbit testing to confirm that all its systems were functioning correctly. By September 18, 2024, the Minister of State for Information Technology and



**Pakistan's first multi-mission satellite,
PAKSAT-MM1**

Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, announced that the satellite had successfully passed all tests and was fully operational. It is now ready to deliver advanced communication services, marking a significant milestone in Pakistan's journey toward technological self-reliance and improved digital infrastructure.

KEY FEATURES OF PAKSAT-MM1

The satellite is equipped with impressive technical features:

- **Platform:** Based on the DFH-4E satellite bus, known for its reliability and adaptability.
- **Weight:** It has a launch mass of approximately 5,400 kilograms.
- **Transponders:** The satellite includes 48 transponders spread across C, Ku, Ka, and L frequency bands, enabling diverse communication applications.
- **Antennas:** It is outfitted with nine antennas to support its operations.
- **Lifespan:** Designed for a service life of 15 years.
- **Orbital Position:** Positioned at 38.2° East in geostationary orbit.
- **Coverage Area:** The satellite provides coverage over mainland Pakistan, nearby regions, parts of the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, East Africa, and even portions of Europe.

CAPABILITIES AND SERVICES

Paksat-MM1 plays a vital role in advancing Pakistan's socio-economic development by offering a range of modern services designed to improve connectivity and bridge the digital divide. Its capabilities are structured to serve various sectors efficiently and effectively:

1. It features high-power transponders in the C and Ku frequency bands, enabling reliable television broadcasting, including High-Definition TV (HDTV). It provides



Satellite to enhance communication and connectivity infrastructure

- extensive regional coverage and ensures direct access to premium cable and direct-to-home (DTH) platforms, even in areas like the UK and mainland Europe.
2. With its advanced Ka-band transponders, the satellite delivers high-speed broadband services across Pakistan. It has a total capacity of 10 Gbps, which is distributed through fixed beams capable of delivering up to 1 Gbps each. This ensures better internet connectivity, especially in remote and underserved areas, supporting the goal of widespread digital inclusion.
3. Paksat-MM1 also includes an L-band Satellite-Based Augmentation System (SBAS), which boosts the accuracy of satellite navigation systems. This feature is particularly useful for sectors like aviation, maritime, and others requiring precise positioning.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

Paksat-MM1 contributes to several key areas: Firstly, it will improve the country's communication network. This means better broadcasting, faster internet services, and support for online education programs, making information and learning more accessible to everyone.

Continued on page 34

NUBIAN CIVILIZATION



NUBIAN CIVILIZATION: A MULTIFACETED LEGACY

INTERACTION TEAM

The Nubian Civilization was located in the heart of the Nile Valley stretching through present-day southern Egypt and northern Sudan. It was one of the cradles of human development and a significant player in ancient history.

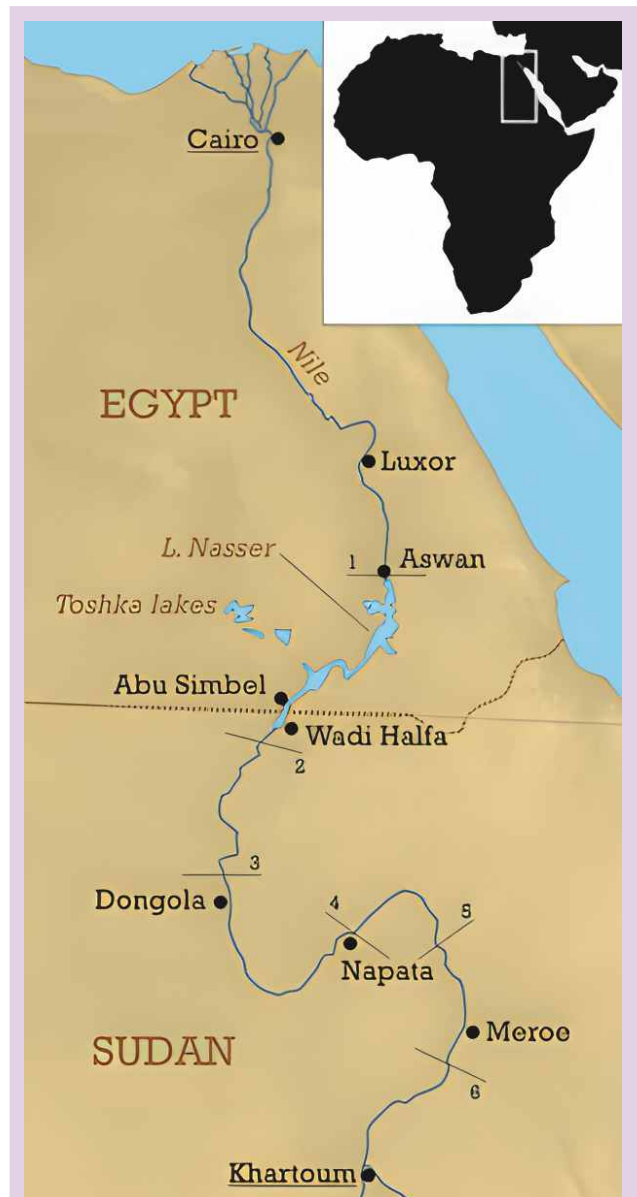
With roots stretching back to prehistoric times and influence lasting well into the early centuries of the Common Era, Nubia's story is one of resilience, innovation, and strategic importance. Known for its linguistic diversity, unique geography, rich culture, and pivotal role in regional politics, Nubia offers an unparalleled look into ancient African achievements.

ORIGINS AND GEOGRAPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Nubia's early history is deeply tied to its geography. Surrounding the stretch of land along the Nile River's cataracts, Nubia was divided into three regions:

- **Lower Nubia:** Between the First and Second Cataracts, this region often became a zone of interaction with Egypt.
- **Middle Nubia:** Between the Second and Third Cataracts, an area of flourishing trade and mixed settlements.
- **Upper Nubia:** South of the Third Cataract, the heartland of Nubian kingdoms and culture.

The Nile's predictable flooding allowed Nubians to practice sustainable agriculture, cultivating crops like barley and wheat while



This map shows the modern-day location of Nubia



The Western Deffufa at Kerma

raising livestock. Its position between sub-Saharan Africa and the Mediterranean made Nubia a natural trade corridor, connecting diverse cultures and facilitating the exchange of goods such as gold, ivory, incense, and exotic animals.

The abundance of natural resources especially gold earned Nubia the nickname "Land of Gold" and attracted traders, artisans, and conquerors throughout its history.

THE NAMES OF NUBIA

The term "Nubia" emerged during the Roman period, but its origins remain uncertain. Some scholars associate it with *nwb*, the ancient Egyptian word for gold, while others trace it to "Noubades," the Greek name for a group that migrated to northern Nubia around the 4th century AD. Prior to this, the region's civilization was known as Kush. The Kingdom of Kush spanned the entire Nile Valley, extending from the Mediterranean Sea to the Ethiopian highlands.

LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

Nubian civilization was marked by linguistic and cultural diversity. Ancient Nubians spoke several languages, including early forms of Nobiin, Dongolawi, and Midob, which are part of the Nilo-Saharan language

family. Some groups in Lower Nubia may have spoken Cushitic languages, emphasizing the region's multi-ethnic character.

The Meroitic script reflects Nubia's intellectual prowess. This early written language, while not yet fully deciphered, symbolizes a society capable of complex administrative and religious communication. Linguistic evolution in Nubia illustrates the blending of indigenous traditions with external influences from Egypt and beyond.

**HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS
THE KERMA KINGDOM
(2500 BCE 1500 BCE)**

One of Africa's earliest urban centers, the Kingdom of Kerma, flourished in Upper Nubia. Renowned for its wealth and monumental architecture, Kerma established itself as a rival to Egypt. Its rulers built large mudbrick temples and royal tombs, while its economy relied on trade, agriculture, and mining. Kerma's cultural identity, distinct yet influenced by Egypt, was visible in its pottery, funerary practices, and military strength.

**NAPATAN PERIOD AND
THE "BLACK PHARAOHS"
(750 BCE 300 BCE)**

The Napatan period marked Nubia's



A man in traditional dress next to a traditional Nubian house, Nubia, Southern Egypt

zenith as a political and religious power. From Napata, the Kushite kings launched a successful campaign into Egypt, establishing the 25th Dynasty. Known as the “Black Pharaohs,” rulers like Piye and Taharqa unified Egypt and Nubia, promoting cultural revival and monumental construction. Napata's temples, particularly at Jebel Barkal, became centers of worship for Amun, highlighting the region's spiritual influence.

THE MEROË KINGDOM (300 BCE 350 CE)

Meroë, further south along the Nile, represented a shift in Nubian focus. Known for its iron production and unique architectural style, including steep-sided pyramids, Meroë developed a distinctive identity. Its rulers expanded trade networks, reaching as far as India and China. The kingdom's decline, precipitated by environmental challenges and competition from the Kingdom of Aksum, marked the end of Nubia's classical era.

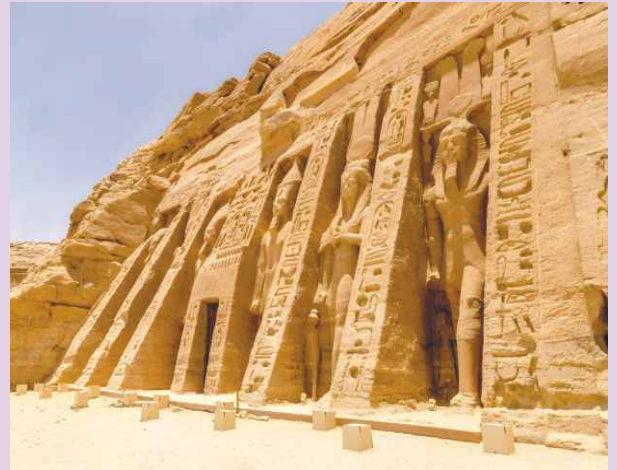
ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND TRADE NETWORKS

Nubia's economy was diverse and robust. Agriculture formed the foundation, with Nubians skillfully harnessing the Nile's resources. Mining activities, particularly gold extraction, became a cornerstone of the economy, increasing trade with Egypt and other regions.

Trade routes through Nubia connected sub-Saharan Africa with the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Goods like ebony, incense, ivory, and exotic animals flowed through Nubian hands. This commerce not only enriched the Nubians but also facilitated cultural exchange, blending traditions from Africa, the Mediterranean, and Arabia.

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Nubian art is distinguished by its liveliness



Abu Simbel, The Rock Temple in Nubia, Southern Egypt commemorating Pharaoh Ramesses II and his wife Queen Nefertari, Egypt, Africa

and innovation. Sophisticated jewelry, ceramics, and sculptures reflect a society that valued beauty and craftsmanship. Nubian architecture, particularly the steep-sided pyramids of Meroë and mudbrick temples of Kerma, showcases their engineering acumen.

While Nubian religion combined indigenous beliefs with Egyptian influences. Deities like Amun (god of the air), Apedemak (a lion-headed god), and Isis (a major goddess) were worshipped. Temples at Jebel Barkal and Meroë served as spiritual hubs, drawing pilgrims and consolidating royal power.

LITERACY AND INNOVATION

Nubian civilization was one of the early cultures to develop writing, mainly for administration, religion, and trade. Early on, they used Egyptian hieroglyphs for monuments and hieratic script for everyday tasks, influenced by their interactions with Egypt.

Later, they created their own writing system, the Meroitic script, around the 3rd century BCE. This unique script, used for royal decrees, religious texts, and trade, highlights

Nubia's cultural and intellectual independence, even though it remains un-deciphered.

STRATEGIC AND MILITARY IMPORTANCE

Nubia's strategic location made it a critical player in regional geopolitics. Controlling key trade routes and natural resources, Nubians wielded significant economic and military power. Their warriors, particularly archers, were highly regarded, earning Nubia the moniker "Land of the Bow."

Throughout its history, Nubia engaged in both conflict and cooperation with Egypt. While the two civilizations often clashed over resources and territory, they also influenced each other culturally and politically. Nubian rulers of the 25th Dynasty exemplified this duality, ruling Egypt while maintaining their Kushite identity.

LEGACY AND MODERN RELEVANCE

Despite Nubia's decline in the 4th century CE, its legacy continues to hold great significance. The region's art, architecture, and cultural traditions have profoundly

influenced later African societies.

Recent archaeological discoveries have shed additional light on Nubia's ancient heritage. Notably, in 2011, the site of Meroe was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This recognition also challenges traditional narratives that have frequently downplayed Africa's contributions to global civilization.



Remains discovered about the brilliant world of ancient Nubia

Continued from page 37

**PAKSAT-MM1:
ADVANCING PAKISTAN'S DIGITAL
CONNECTIVITY AND STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION**

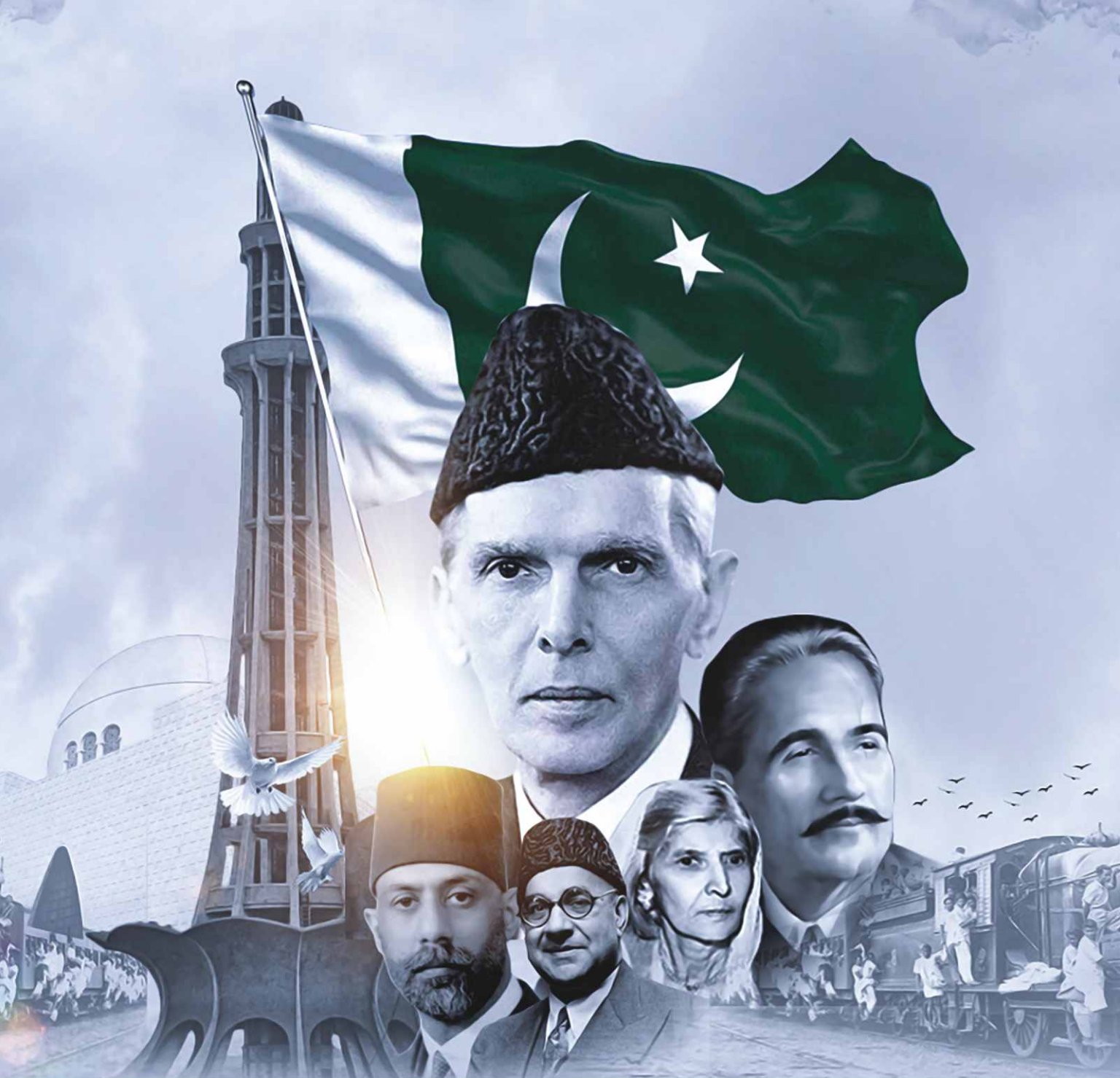
Secondly, it will help bring the internet to rural and remote areas, ensuring that people in these regions can connect to the digital world. This effort supports the government's goal of creating a "Digital Pakistan," narrowing the gap between urban and rural communities in terms of technology access.

Thirdly, the satellite will serve as a backbone for the growth of Pakistan's information technology sector. By providing a solid communication infrastructure, it will help businesses and industries thrive, contributing

to economic progress and creating new opportunities for people. Lastly, Paksat-MM1 will also enhance national security by providing secure communication channels for government and defense use. This adds a layer of safety and reliability to the country's security systems.

CONCLUSION

Paksat-MM1 is a cornerstone of Pakistan's technological advancement, offering essential communication services that foster national development, enhance digital connectivity, and strengthen strategic capabilities. By leveraging its capabilities, Pakistan is poised to achieve significant progress in digital inclusion, economic growth, and security infrastructure.



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.

POST-INDEPENDENCE HISTORY OF PAKISTAN

(1956-1960)

INTERACTION TEAM



Mr. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy,
5th Prime Minister of Pakistan
(12.09.1956 to 17.10.1957)

Though, in March 1956, Pakistan achieved a historic milestone by enacting its first constitution, but the excitement surrounding the new constitution was short-lived. The leadership failed to navigate the complexities of running a federal parliamentary system. Within months, the country was plunged into political turmoil as a series of prime ministers were either dismissed or forced to resign.

This period saw the rapid turnover of governments, a phenomenon that eroded public trust in the political system. Leaders like Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, who envisioned greater cooperation between East and West Pakistan, faced resistance from entrenched

political elites in West Pakistan. His efforts to promote national integration and equitable resource distribution were thwarted, leading to his resignation in 1957. His successors, including Ibrahim Ismail Chundrigar and Feroz Khan Noon, also struggled to maintain political stability, often becoming casualties of factionalism and infighting.

The divide between East and West Pakistan deepened during these years. Despite East Pakistan's larger population, it felt increasingly marginalized in national decision-making. This sense of alienation was further exacerbated by the central government's inability to address the grievances of East Pakistanis, who felt excluded from the corridors of power.

While the political scene descended into chaos, Pakistan's foreign policy took a decisive turn towards the West. The country became a key ally of the United States during the Cold War, joining alliances such as SEATO and CENTO. These alliances brought military and economic aid, bolstering Pakistan's defense capabilities, but they also attracted criticism for aligning too closely with Western powers, potentially compromising the country's sovereignty. Domestically, the benefits of this foreign aid failed to trickle down to the masses, further fueling discontent.

As the political crisis worsened, the influence of the military and bureaucracy grew. President Iskander Mirza, who had risen

to power under the 1956 Constitution, increasingly relied on the military to maintain order and control. This reliance on non-democratic institutions undermined the parliamentary system and set the stage for future military interventions. Mirza's authoritarian tendencies became evident as he dismissed prime ministers at will, bypassing parliamentary procedures and consolidating his grip on power.

By 1958, the political system had become unsustainable. The endless cycle of political instability, combined with economic mismanagement and regional tensions, created a sense of crisis. In a dramatic move, President Iskander Mirza abrogated the constitution, dissolved the National Assembly, and declared martial law on October 7, 1958. This marked the end of Pakistan's first attempt at democratic governance.

To enforce martial law, Mirza appointed General Ayub Khan, the Army's Commander-in-Chief, as the Chief Martial Law Administrator. However, this alliance was short-lived. Within weeks, Ayub Khan forced Mirza into exile on October 27, 1958,

accusing him of conspiratorial tendencies, and assumed full control of the country, ushering in the era of military rule.

In 1959, Ayub Khan's regime embarked on an ambitious path of reform and centralization to cement its hold on power and set the country on a trajectory of economic and administrative transformation. One of the most notable initiatives was the introduction of land reforms aimed at curbing the dominance of large landlords.

These reforms, announced in January 1959, placed a ceiling on land ownership, redistributing approximately 2.5 million acres among landless farmers. While the policy appeared progressive on paper, its impact was diluted by loopholes and strong resistance from influential landowners who managed to avoid many of its provisions.

Concurrently, Ayub's government launched a vigorous anti-corruption drive, seeking to cleanse the political and bureaucratic landscape. Tribunals were established to investigate and prosecute allegations of malpractice, sending a strong message against the entrenched corruption that had plagued the country. However, this campaign was selective in its implementation, often targeting Ayub's political rivals more than addressing systemic issues.

In the same year, Ayub introduced a political framework known as the Basic Democracies System. This system aimed to decentralize governance by establishing a network of local councils in rural and urban areas, ostensibly empowering ordinary citizens. However, the system also served as a mechanism for Ayub to consolidate his control.

The Basic Democracies Ordinance created a tiered electoral structure where local council



The Chiefs of the armed forces with President Iskander Mirza after the 1958 Martial Law. Mirza was soon removed by Ayub Khan and sent into exile

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WILL THE UNITED STATES EVER ELECT A FEMALE PRESIDENT?



BISMAH MIRZA



Donald Trump, the 45th elected President of the United States

The 45th President of the United States of America has been elected, and he is in the White House. The president is not Kamla Harris. There are numerous reasons why Harris lost and Trump won. Top of the list is Former Vice President Kamla Harris herself. Why?

Here so:

1. She is a novice, not battle-tested, in the U.S. Presidential election race, carrying the baggage of the Biden Administration and not willing to change a thing about President Biden administration policies. Trump has been in the presidential election race for the past nine years and has served as President once, compared to Kamla Harris, who has been running for president for 16 weeks.
2. Ms. Harris's election campaign revolved

around a critical issue, the 'Right to Abortion,' as she stated in her campaign, and 'Our daughters know fewer rights than our grandmothers.' Undoubtedly, that is an important issue, but it is not the issue that unites America. Other than that, for Democrats, the second biggest issue was Donald J. Trump. All that could be echoed in Harris's campaign was Trump & Abortion Rights.

3. Trump's campaign, on the other hand, had all the Trump unifying pain cards for Americans: Immigration & Border Issues. Twenty percent of Americans believed that immigration and border issues were important to them. Illegal border crossings have increased in the Biden administration, and they blamed Harris for it.
4. Economy-Despite Democrats' 1992 slogan, 'It's Economy, Stupid!' which Harris should have remembered, Republicans kept it center stage in their campaigns.
5. Americans are tired of overseas war; the suicide rate of veterans is 11 per day in the U.S.A. The economy is crumbling, and U.S. taxpayer money is spent everywhere except on the welfare of Americans. In the previous Trump tenure, he existed from Afghanistan, and Americans hoped he would do the same in the war in the Middle East with his inward-looking approach. This is also one of the assurances Trump

has given to Muslim & Arab Americans in Michigan.

6. Arab & Muslim Voters: For the first time in history, Muslim & Arab Americans have unified over Gaza, and a strong collaborative voice of resilience & force has emerged to vote for a cause, ending a 20-year love affair with democrats. Harris has failed to deliver here. For American Muslims, he is no savior, but a message is sent that a Muslim Vote is crucial & our interest has to be protected. Pakistani Americans- the Imran Khan card was also used during the election campaign to win over Pakistani Americans, leaving no stone unturned.
7. Gender & Race- play an important role in elections. The first time, when President Trump won, it was the white women who had helped Trump to get elected in 2016 (a report by the New York Times). As per the stats in The Nation on September 23, 2023, no democrat nominee has won the majority vote other than Lyndon Johnson since 1965. In current elections, 54% of women voted for Vice President Harris, which is 3% less than the votes former President Biden received in the last



Flags on the National Mall in 2014 representing the 1,892 veterans and service members who died by suicide from that year. The suicide rate among veterans is rising, especially among those who served during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

elections. She has also lost on Latino & Asian votes; Ms. Harris received 6% fewer Latino votes than Joe Biden in 2020. Since gender is essential in how Americans vote, Ms. Harris's gender also worked against her. How? Donald J. Trump has been part of three (3) presidential races and has been victorious in 2 out of 3 bids for president. He has lost to a white man but won twice against his female contender, and the question remains a mystery: Will the U.S.A. ever elect a female president?.

The author is the Executive Editor of the Monthly Interaction.

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POST-INDEPENDENCE HISTORY OF PAKISTAN (1956-1960)

members were indirectly involved in the selection of national leadership, providing Ayub with a tightly managed pathway to secure political legitimacy without the unpredictability of direct elections. Economic development became a cornerstone of Ayub's agenda, with a particular emphasis on industrialization and infrastructure. The government actively encouraged private

investment and sought foreign aid, particularly from the United States, which saw Pakistan as a key ally in the Cold War. Membership in alliances such as SEATO and CENTO further strengthened this partnership, funneling economic and military aid into the country. To institutionalize economic planning, Ayub's administration established the Planning Commission, laying the groundwork for long-term growth strategies that would guide Pakistan's industrial and agricultural development in the years to come.

(Continue)

TOPPLING ASSAD'S REGIME:



END OF A CIVIL WAR TO BEGIN ANOTHER

DR. S. BUSHRA BATOOL

After the fall of Damascus, following the collapse of the final military positions and the resulting paralysis of all remaining state institutions, the Islamist movement Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) has set itself up as the main component of the country's new leadership. Yet, many other armed groups, with, at times, divergent objectives, are still active in Syria. As Syrian cities and provinces fell to rebels led by the Islamist militant group HTS, dancing crowds gathered on the streets to celebrate the end of the Assad regime.

Despite that one phase of Syria's civil war is over, another might begin. The "Islamic nationalists" of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, who have become Syria's new leading force; the Syrian National Army (SNA); Kurdish militias from the country's northeast; the jihadists of the Islamic State (IS) organization: The Syrian

civil war has given rise to a multi-faceted insurgency, whose components often pursue objectives that are antagonistic to each other, operating under the influence of several external parties.

Syria might be entangled in another episode of terror. "Danger of IS resurgence has doubled," Syria's Kurds warn of group's comeback. Senior international correspondent of BBC, while reporting from Al-Sina Prison, North East of Syria, expressed her concerns that the current chaos in Syria could be exploited to release the IS detainees.

This was supported by the members of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a mainly Kurdish militia alliance backed by the US. The organization's Commander General Mazloum Abdi opined that the activity by IS had increased significantly, and the danger of a resurgence had doubled'. His claims are aligned with the fact that the IS now has more capabilities and more opportunities to seize some arms and ammunition left behind by Syrian regime troops, according to intelligence reports.

The chaos since the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad is "paving the way" for the so-called Islamic State (IS) to make a comeback, according to a leading Kurdish commander who helped defeat the jihadist group in Syria in 2019. He says the comeback has already begun. However, the de facto leader of Syria, Ahmed al-Sharaa, has said the country is



A Hayat Tahrir al-Sham militia fighter in the courtyard of the great Umayyad Mosque, in Damascus (FILE PHOTO)



An image of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, riddled with bullets, is seen on the facade of a provincial government office in the aftermath of the opposition's takeover of Hama

exhausted by war and is not a threat to its neighbours or the West.

The new leader seems confident in his approach and it is seen interviewing international media. In an interview with the BBC in Damascus, he called for sanctions on Syria to be lifted. "Now, after all that has happened, sanctions must be lifted because they were targeted at the old regime. The victim and the oppressor should not be treated in the same way," he said. He added that HTS should be de-listed as a terrorist organization. It is designated as one by the UN, US, EU, and UK, among many others, as it started as a splinter group of al-Qaeda, which it broke away from in 2016.

While answering a question about the standards of living and rights of women in Syria, although Sharaa claimed that the future of Women in Syria is and he believed in education for women. "We've had universities in Idlib for more than eight years," Sharaa said, with more than 60 percent of women's ratio in universities in Syria's north-western province that has been held by rebels since 2011.

While categorically rejecting any resemblance of Syria to that of Afghanistan, Sharaa said the countries were very different, with different traditions. Afghanistan was a tribal society. In Syria, he said, there was a different mind-set. The assurances of Sharaa although provide breathing room for the people of Syria, yet not all Syrians believe him. It is only a matter of time before they will decide the kind of country they want Syria to be - and the way they want to rule it.

STAKES OF REGIONAL ACTORS IN SYRIA

The influence of Moscow on Syrian affairs is evident from its military presence in the country. Russia had a significant military presence in Syria during Bashar al-Assad's rule - helping him stay in power after the outbreak of the civil war in 2011.

Its two most significant bases are the port at Tartous, established by the Soviet Union in the 1970s and then expanded and modernized by Russia in 2012, and the airbase at Hmeimim, which has been operational since 2015 and was used to launch air strikes across Syria in support of Assad.

Awarded for a 49-year lease granted to Russia by Syrian authorities, both have become key strategic bases for Russia - giving it easier access to the Middle East, North Africa and the Mediterranean Sea. However, the fall of Assad has raised questions about Russia's future presence in Syria. Moscow is seeking to negotiate with the new regime. Satellite images reveal a build-up of military vehicles at a Russian-controlled port and airbase in western Syria, signalling preparations for a partial withdrawal.

"Russia is now withdrawing units and military equipment that were deployed in nearly a hundred strongholds across the

country before the fall of Damascus," said Anton Mardasov, a non-resident scholar in the Middle East Institutes Syria program. The withdrawal of Russia from Syria would be a great setback for Russia's key objectives had been to assert itself as a global power.

It indicates that although Russia, who had been pouring its resources in the Syrian war for a decade, is not indifferent to what is happening in Syria, however, for Russia, the priority is its own security especially in the context of what is happening in the zone of the Special Military Operation, the war of Russia in Ukraine.

THE US AND THE WEST

The US and the UK had been close observers in the situation and happenings of Syria being a staunch critic of Assad's regime. In the days before the fall of the Assad regime and in the following days, the US and the UK had been in touch with HTS. The British government made clear the Islamist-led rebel group remains a proscribed terrorist organization, despite it beginning "diplomatic contact" with the group. Both want the future of Syria free of Iranian and Russian influence. Although Russia and Iran might have gone to the background, at least to recover from past injuries, many power players are still there in Syria.

IRAN

After the assassination of a former leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah movement, Hassan Nasrallah, Former Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, and the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh along with other top Iranian Generals in Tehran, as recently confirmed by Israel, and Iran's Quds force General Qassem Soleimani, among many other nuclear scientists and leaders, Iran has yet faced with another blow in form of losing a pivotal state and partner in its axis of resistance with the fall

of a key ally, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

THE REGIONAL EQUATION AND THE FUTURE OF SYRIA

In this new equation of changing geopolitics and with the new president-elect Donald Trump coming to power on January 20, 2025, it is yet to be seen whether Iran prepares for a new Donald Trump presidency with a more hard-line approach - or will it renew negotiations with the West. Ayatullah Khamenei, an 85-year-old Iranian Supreme Leader reiterates that "Iran is strong and powerful and will become even stronger." He added that the Iran-led alliance in the Middle East, which includes Hamas, Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthis, and Iraqi Shia militias the "scope of resistance" against Israel would only strengthen. This reflects the continued stance of Iran in the time to come.

Additionally, the regional stability seems to be hardly achievable. With the insane aggression of Israel and the support it enjoys from the US and European allies, seems to have achieved many of their desired targets. As James Jeffrey, a former US diplomat and deputy national security advisor said, "All the dominoes have been falling."

The question about the future of Syria with an upcoming regime is important. Over a decade-long war in Syria and the oppression and subjugation suppressing opposition



Russia extends Syrian Airbase lease by 49 years

voices, in addition to the power tussle and subsequent devastations have grappled Syria into a chaos that is going to take years to recover. In March 2024, the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) estimated that 16.7 million people in Syria were expected to require humanitarian assistance, the highest since 2011 and representing 71% of the population.

This included 3.5 million people in Aleppo and 2.6 million in Idlib. UNOCHA also estimated that 12.9 million people are food insecure. The price of a standard food basket was 133 times higher in 2023 than in 2013. There has been substantial economic disruption. In 2024 the World Bank said the Syrian economy shrank 54% from 2010 to 2021 and Assad government expenditure was 87% lower in 2023 compared with 2010, with reductions in social security and food and gas subsidies.

The country is also still grappling with the aftermath of severe human and material damage from catastrophic earthquakes and aftershocks in February 2023. Years of conflict have forced many children and families to flee to safer areas, resulting in considerable internal displacement.

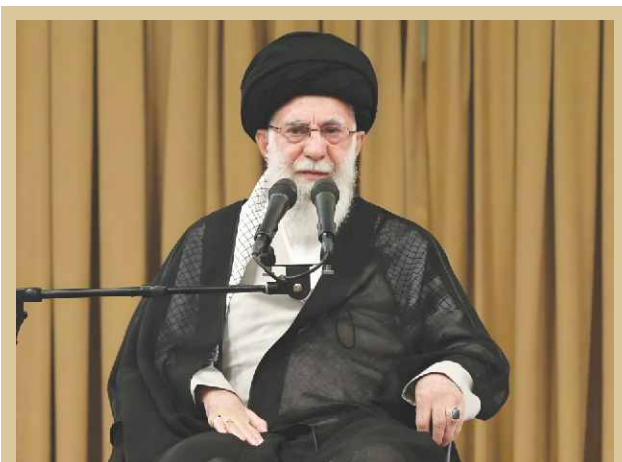
From March 2011, when Syria's government, led by President Bashar al-Assad, faced an unprecedented challenge to its authority with pro-democracy protests erupting throughout the country, to collapsing military support to the government in late November 2024 paving the way to a rapid offensive by opposition forces and the subsequent toppling of the regime, Syria has witnessed so much of pain, destruction, and terror.

The country's protracted civil war saw hundreds of thousands of Syrians killed and nearly fourteen million people more than half the pre-war population displaced. Today, Syria remains a deeply impoverished and fractured state, with large parts of its territory controlled by different armed groups with varying affiliations with foreign powers. Iran, Israel, Turkey, Russia, and the United States were all drawn into the conflict either directly or indirectly over the years.

The Turkey-backed HTS and US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), among other smaller factions going to pose serious threats to the stability of the country and may create another civil-war-like situation. The clashes have already begun in post-Assad Syria. The US-allied Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said five of its fighters had been killed on Saturday in attacks by Turkish-backed forces on the city of Manbij in northern Syria. T

He U.S. State Department said on Wednesday a ceasefire around Manbij had been extended until the end of the week, but a Turkish defense ministry official said a day later there was no talk of a ceasefire deal with the SDF. Moreover, the actions of Syria's new rulers in the next few months will indicate the kind of country they want Syria to be and the way they want to rule it.

The author is a Research Officer at Rabita Forum International (RFI).



Ayatullah Khamenei, Iranian Supreme Leader

PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR ENERGY PROGRAM



A PATH TO SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SECURITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MUHAMMAD USAMA KHALID



The Karachi Nuclear Power Plant unit 2 (K-2) in Southern Pakistan.

The worldwide dependence on hydrocarbons has markedly exacerbated environmental degradation, leading to dire outcomes including flash flooding, glacial melt, elevated sea levels, and altered weather patterns. These difficulties highlight the pressing necessity for cleaner and more sustainable energy solutions.

Nuclear energy, noted for its efficiency and minimal environmental impact, has become a favored solution for these challenges. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the global regulatory authority governing the peaceful application of nuclear technology, aggressively promotes the utilization of nuclear energy as a feasible remedy to alleviate the detrimental impacts of climate change.

Nuclear energy is crucial for fostering sustainable economic growth and improving human well-being in the modern period. It

provides a clean, dependable, and economical energy source that can satisfy increasing energy demands while diminishing greenhouse gas emissions. Transitioning to nuclear energy enables states to ensure a reliable and cost-effective energy supply, thus tackling energy security and environmental sustainability. This underscores the essential need to integrate nuclear energy as a fundamental element in global initiatives to address climate change and foster sustainable development.

Pakistan has historically been a central topic in international discussions as a result of its acquisition of nuclear weapons in 1998, primarily for security purposes. Pakistan's civil nuclear program has its roots in the mid-1950s, underscoring the country's ongoing commitment to the peaceful application of nuclear technology. The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) was established in 1956 as Pakistan's first regulatory authority. Its primary responsibility is to oversee and regulate the country's civilian nuclear programs. Furthermore, Pakistan participated in the Atoms for Peace initiative of U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, which served as an indication of its initial commitment to the application of nuclear technology for the purpose of development and peace.

Civilian nuclear collaboration between China and Pakistan began in the late 1970s and was formalized by an agreement in 1986.

This partnership enabled the advancement of the Chashma Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) projects, greatly enhancing Pakistan's economic and technological capabilities. The establishment of supplementary nuclear reactors is an extension of the 1986 nuclear accord, which precedes China's accession to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). This collaboration has faced criticism from Western academics and officials, who have said that China is contravening the NSG norms.

Pakistan has strategically employed civil nuclear technology to promote socioeconomic development and fit with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This comprehensive strategy has facilitated the utilization of nuclear technology in various essential sectors, such as healthcare, hydrology, energy generation, environmental management, fundamental scientific research, and agricultural advancement. These applications have enhanced the nation's developmental goals and elevated the quality of life for its residents.

A fundamental aspect of Pakistan's civil nuclear program is its dedication to sustainable development via energy security. Pakistan seeks to raise its nuclear energy capability to diminish dependence on fossil resources, thereby tackling energy deficits and environmental issues. This shift highlights the overarching goal of incorporating clean and dependable energy solutions into the national infrastructure, demonstrating Pakistan's commitment to attaining sustainable, long-term economic growth while fulfilling its international responsibilities under the SDGs.

The shift to nuclear energy presents Pakistan with a viable option to address its increasing energy requirements, as nuclear power delivers a clean, dependable, and consistent source of electricity. Data from the Finance Division indicates that Pakistan's

current Nuclear Power Plants (NPPs) produce 2,530 megawatts (MW), contributing roughly 7,076 million units of energy to the national grid during the July-March period of Fy2021.

The projected completion of the Chashma-5 Nuclear Power Plant is estimated to contribute an extra 1,200 MW to the national grid, providing roughly 3,350 million units of power each year. This extension signifies a strategically important enhancement in Pakistan's energy infrastructure. The dedication to international nuclear safety and security standards is demonstrated by Pakistan's 48-year history of producing electricity from nuclear reactors without any known incidents. The IAEA has verified that the country's current civil nuclear reactors comply with the safety criteria established in the Generic Reactor Safety Review (GRSR). The IAEA's evaluation of the ACP-1000 reactor underscores the incorporation of both active and passive safety systems, confirming its adherence to all specified safety standards. These strong credentials highlight Pakistan's commitment to employing nuclear technology solely for peaceful applications.



The 1,100 MW Karachi Nuclear Power Plant unit 3 (K-3)

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THE ROLE OF RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION IN INCENTIVIZING POPULATION GROWTH IN PAKISTAN



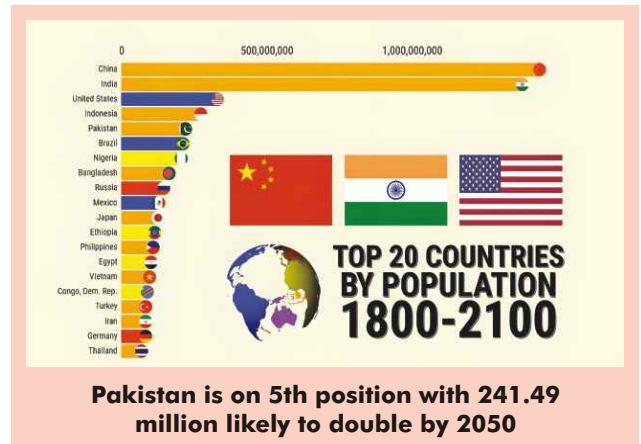
NOMEEN KASSI

The increasing population is an issue that concerns the entire world. It leads to a significant socioeconomic decline in a country and poses a threat to the world's finite resources. It is challenging for a government to manage its resources and population accordingly. States with limited resources prioritize population control initiatives and resource management.

Admittedly, the developed world has implemented its population control policies more accurately, thereby successfully controlling its population. However, developing countries such as Pakistan have flawed policies and implementation mechanisms, leading to a rise in population rather than control.

Pakistan's population is growing at a tremendous speed. Today, Pakistan stands as one of the world's largest countries in terms of population growth, ranking as the fifth most populous country. Currently, Pakistan's population is 241.49 million, a 1.96% increase in 2023. It is seriously affecting the socioeconomic well-being of the population. Regardless of having one of the oldest family planning programs in the country, the population increase is still at a tremendous speed. One of the major contributor is the resource distribution mechanism in Pakistan, known as the National Finance Commission Awards (NFC awards).

The NFC award is the financial formula of



resource distribution between provinces and the federal government. The NFC series were initiated to regulate and control the financial imbalances between the provinces and the federal. It also aimed to equally manage the financial resources of four provinces to meet their expenditure liabilities.

The NFC awards are constituted under Article 160 of Pakistan's constitution. After a series of six economic programs since 1951, the 7th NFC Award was signed on 30th December 2009. Before the 7th NFC Award, population was the sole criterion. The 7th NFC Award introduced the Multiple Indicator Criterion (MIC).

The recent NFC formula is: population 82%, poverty and backwardness 10%, inverse population density 2.7%, and tax revenue/generation 5%. Population indicator having massive weight, incentivizes population growth in Pakistan. Provinces

rather want to have more population to get more resources from the federal than to have population control and receive limited resources. They neglect investments in family planning.

Currently, Pakistan's economy is struggling. The rapidly increasing population is the key driver of the socio-economic backwardness of the country. With the tremendous population growth, Pakistan faces immense pressure on its resources. As a result, provinces want to acquire as many resources as possible. The NFC distribution mechanism also results in unequal distribution between the provinces, causing a rift among them.

Allocations based on a population-dominated formula often lead to economic disparities. Provinces with larger populations receive more funds, enabling better service and infrastructure. Meanwhile, smaller, less developed provinces, such as Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, receive lesser funds and, therefore face underdevelopment.

Additionally, disparities in resource distribution exacerbate regional inequalities as economically disadvantaged provinces struggle to finance infrastructure, health, and education. This uneven distribution hinders balanced economic growth, perpetuating poverty and social issues in the underfunded

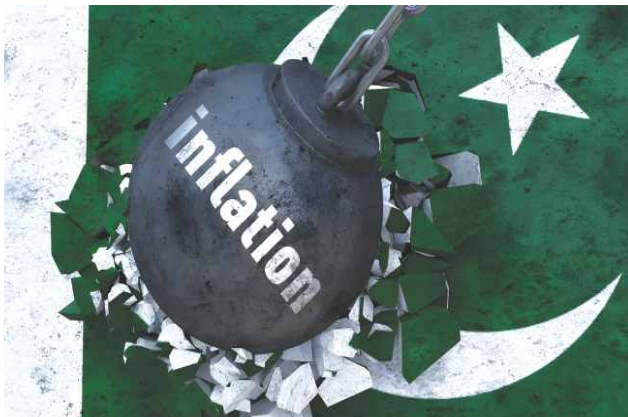
provinces, further widening the gap.

NFC Awards has given massive weightage to the population indicator. Resultantly, provinces are unserious about population control. Consequently, the population in Pakistan is increasing as more population indicates more resources. Also provinces have overstated the population figures to secure a larger fund from the federal. This approach can inadvertently encourage population growth as governments may prioritize larger populations over sustainable development.

Similarly, Population share is not considered a good indicator of fiscal distribution and is used only in a handful of countries. Even the countries that use population share as the criterion for revenue distribution typically record a rather low weightage. Nigeria is an exception as its transfer is 100% based on population. Pakistan too follows in the footsteps of Nigeria, with 82% weight, a huge percentage is dedicated to the population.

A debate on revising the NFC formula is essential to ensure equitable resource distribution. The current population-heavy criterion neglects poverty, backwardness, and infrastructure needs, deepening provincial disparities. Introducing broader metrics like development gaps and resource utilization or even population control can promote fairness and also help in sustainable development by controlling the population. NFC must foster balanced growth and reduce socio-economic inequalities among provinces.

The next NFC award should not only promote efficient provincial expenditure but also incentivize population control by reducing the population indicator to 2040%. Alternatively, the population weightage could remain at 82%. However, it should be divided into subparts such as population growth and



population control. The NFC Award should incentivize population control so that provinces get a share for controlling the population. This will keep a check on the provinces.

Another recommendation is that Pakistan's program and policies regarding population control, has no cost-and-benefit analysis for the individuals. Governments should give incentives to discourage the social behavior of an increased number of children. There should be positive reinforcement for fewer births and punishments for more births, a negative reinforcement.

Governments follow the 'downstream approach', focusing on the individuals. Instead, they should focus on the environment to discourage population growth in the 'upstream approach'. It would promote an environment that discourages population growth. resultantly, the birth rate will decline.

Lastly, development and poverty should be given more weight in the NFC Awards. New indicators, such as area in absolute terms, not

population, should be added. Additionally, infrastructure deficiency and development incentives could be indicators to promote development in the province and end disparities. Another could be population control efforts. Population control indicators would incentivize population control rather than increase.

The NFC Award is an outstanding initiative towards federalism and consolidating the fiscal positions of the federating units. However, it is largely lopsided, where an unreasonable and disproportionate weight is given to the population. It created a much-desired fiscal space for the provinces; however, it failed to redress the provincial disparities, given its skewed concentration on population as a major indicator. The NFC award formula is one of the major contributors to the population growth in Pakistan, thereby, it need to be changed and reduced.

Ms. Nomeen Kassi is a Research Assistant at Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN), Quetta.

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PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR ENERGY PROGRAM

This strategy enhances the nation's energy security while guaranteeing a safe and sustainable nuclear energy program in accordance with international standards. Consequently, Pakistan's growing reliance on nuclear power as part of its broader energy strategy reflects its commitment to securing a sustainable energy future.

By expanding its nuclear power capacity, the country aims to address its increasing energy demands while advancing economic

development and environmental sustainability. However, realizing the ambitious target of generating 8,800 MW of electricity from nuclear energy by 2030 will require substantial international collaboration.

Such support is not only crucial for the growth of Pakistan's nuclear energy sector but also for ensuring long-term energy security and meeting the nation's sustainable development goals. As global energy landscapes evolve, Pakistan's nuclear ambitions offer a promising model for achieving both energy independence and economic prosperity.

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AN ANALYSIS ON SAUDI CROWN PRINCE MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN'S EXPECTED VISIT TO PAKISTAN



KANWAR KHALID ALI KHAN



**Crown prince of Saudi Arabia
Mohammed Bin Salman Al Saud**

The anticipated visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Pakistan is a significant event that could reshape the dynamics of bilateral relations and have broader implications in the regional geopolitical landscape.

Here's a commentary considering various scenarios, including Pakistan's relations with the U.S., developments within BRICS, and the roles of China, Iran, India, and other regional players.

PAKISTAN-SAUDI ARABIA RELATIONS Historical Context

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia share deep-rooted historical ties based on religious, cultural, and economic links. Saudi Arabia has historically supported Pakistan through financial aid, oil supplies, and diplomatic

backing.

Economic Cooperation

The visit is expected to enhance economic cooperation, particularly in sectors like energy, infrastructure, and agriculture. This could lead to significant Saudi investments, which are crucial for Pakistan's economic recovery.

PAKISTAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS Shifting Alliances

Pakistan's relationship with the U.S. has been fluctuating, particularly following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and changing geopolitical priorities. While the U.S. remains a critical partner, Pakistan's increasing reliance on China and Saudi Arabia may complicate its ties with Washington.

Strategic Interests

The U.S. is interested in countering Chinese influence in the region, and Pakistan's strengthening ties with Saudi Arabia could be viewed as a strategic pivot. The U.S. may seek to reinforce its relationship with Pakistan to ensure it remains an ally in counter-terrorism and regional stability.

BRICS DEVELOPMENTS Emerging Economies

The expansion of BRICS, which now includes several emerging economies, presents both opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. As BRICS nations look to enhance economic cooperation, Pakistan might find

new avenues for trade and investment outside traditional Western partnerships.

China's Role

China's involvement in BRICS and its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) could further entrench Pakistan's economic ties with Beijing. However, this might also create a competitive dynamic with Saudi investments, particularly in infrastructure and energy.

CHINA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS Strategic Partnership

Pakistan's close relationship with China, exemplified by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), provides a counterbalance to its ties with Saudi Arabia. However, the challenge lies in managing these relationships without alienating either partner.

Economic Dependencies

While Chinese investment is critical for Pakistan's development, excessive reliance on China could lead to economic vulnerabilities, making diversification of partnerships essential.

IRAN'S PERSPECTIVE Regional Rivalry

Iran views Saudi Arabia as a regional rival, and Pakistan's deepening ties with Riyadh could complicate Islamabad's relationship with Tehran. Pakistan must navigate its historical ties with Iran carefully, especially concerning border security and ethnic tensions in Balochistan.

Potential Cooperation

Despite rivalries, there is potential for cooperation in areas like trade and energy, provided both nations can manage their geopolitical differences.

INDIA'S POSITION Geopolitical Concerns

India closely monitors Pakistan-Saudi

relations, viewing any strengthening of ties as a potential threat. India may respond by enhancing its own relationships with Gulf nations, particularly in trade and security.

Counterbalancing Strategies

India's engagement with Iran and its strategic partnership with the U.S. could be leveraged to counterbalance Saudi influence in the region.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

Strengthening ties with Saudi Arabia could lead to enhanced collaboration within the GCC, providing Pakistan with greater access to Gulf markets and investment. The upcoming visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Pakistan is poised to be a pivotal moment for both nations. It offers an opportunity to strengthen economic ties and enhance cooperation across various sectors.

However, Pakistan must tread carefully, balancing its relationships with Saudi Arabia, the U.S., China, Iran, and India to navigate the complex geopolitical landscape effectively. The success of this visit will depend on Pakistan's ability to leverage its historical ties while adapting to the evolving regional dynamics.



ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN BALOCHISTAN



SADIA ZAHRA

Women in Balochistan, Pakistan's largest yet most underdeveloped province, face significant challenges to economic participation, which remain a critical but overlooked factor in the province's persistent underdevelopment. Despite its wealth of natural resources and strategic geographic position, Balochistan continues to grapple with socio-economic disparities, especially for women.

Deeply ingrained cultural norms, structural barriers, and institutional shortcomings combine to limit women's mobility, educational access, and employment opportunities. These challenges not only marginalize women but also deprive the province of their potential contributions to economic and social progress. Addressing this gap is essential for fostering a more equitable and prosperous Balochistan.

Cultural norms rooted in patriarchal and tribal traditions dictate strict gender roles in Balochistan. Women are expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities, while men dominate public and economic spheres. These roles are reinforced by societal expectations, religious interpretations, and tribal customs, leaving little room for women to engage in formal economic activities.

For many women, stepping out of the home to work or pursue education is seen as defiance against societal norms, leading to social stigma or even punitive actions in

extreme cases. This cultural paradigm severely restricts women's economic participation, reflected in a labor force participation rate of only 7.99%—one of the lowest in Pakistan. A lack of education is a major factor, with female literacy at a mere 27%, compared to the provincial average of 42%.

Rural areas fare even worse due to limited access to schools, cultural resistance to female education, and inadequate infrastructure. Programs aimed at improving literacy often fail to account for these socio-cultural barriers, leaving millions of women trapped in cycles of illiteracy and dependency.

Institutional and structural factors further exacerbate these challenges. Existing laws and policies in Balochistan do little to support gender equality in the workplace. Women face restricted access to financial resources, vocational training, and entrepreneurial opportunities, all essential for professional



Brahui, women from Balochistan working in Sugar a non-profit organization for women's empowerment in Pakistan

advancement. Legal frameworks, where they exist, are poorly implemented, and workplace protections against harassment and discrimination are minimal at best.

The lack of safe public transportation and childcare facilities also discourages women from seeking employment. In urban centers such as Quetta, professional women still encounter workplace harassment and limited opportunities for career progression, while women in rural areas often have no access to formal jobs at all.

A mixed-methods study involving 250 women and 50 in-depth interviews highlights the lived experiences behind these statistics. Participants consistently cited cultural restrictions as a key barrier, with many reporting that societal expectations confined them to domestic roles. Unsafe public spaces and the need to seek male permission for basic activities further compounded their challenges.

Many professional women detailed instances of workplace harassment and a lack of support for career advancement. These narratives underscore how the deeply entrenched social and institutional barriers limit women's economic agency, reinforcing systemic inequality.

The economic implications of this exclusion are profound. Women's



Girls in class at the public school in Lasbela, Balochistan

participation in the labor force is not merely a matter of equity; it has far-reaching consequences for household incomes, community development, and regional growth.

Research shows that when women earn, they invest disproportionately in their families, improving outcomes in education, health, and nutrition. Conversely, excluding women from the economy perpetuates poverty and hinders development. In Balochistan, where poverty rates are among the highest in Pakistan, the economic contributions of women could play a pivotal role in alleviating hardship and fostering resilience.

Overcoming these barriers requires a multi-faceted approach. Education must be prioritized as the foundation of women's empowerment. Increasing access to schools, colleges, and universities, particularly in rural areas, and addressing cultural resistance to female education are essential. Building gender-sensitive infrastructure such as separate facilities for girls and safe transportation options could help overcome logistical barriers. Vocational training programs tailored to women's needs would also equip them with the skills necessary to



enter the workforce or start their own businesses.

Community engagement is equally important in challenging entrenched norms. Awareness campaigns that involve religious leaders, tribal elders, and male allies can promote the benefits of women's economic participation. These campaigns should emphasize how empowering women leads to stronger families and communities, challenging the perception that women's professional ambitions are at odds with traditional values. Engaging men as allies is particularly critical, as they often hold decision-making power in households and communities.

Institutional reforms must also be prioritized. Strengthening gender equality laws and ensuring their effective implementation would create safer and more inclusive workplaces. Policies that promote entrepreneurship, such as access to microfinance and mentorship programs, could provide women with the tools needed to succeed in business. Public infrastructure investments, such as safer transportation systems and affordable childcare, would further reduce barriers to economic participation.

While the challenges in Balochistan are significant, they are not insurmountable. The province's untapped potential lies in its women, who represent half of its population. By addressing the systemic barriers to their economic participation, Balochistan can unlock new opportunities for growth, innovation, and resilience. Investing in women is not merely an ethical imperative; it is a strategic necessity for sustainable development. Inclusive economies are more productive, more innovative, and more resilient to shocks. For Balochistan, integrating

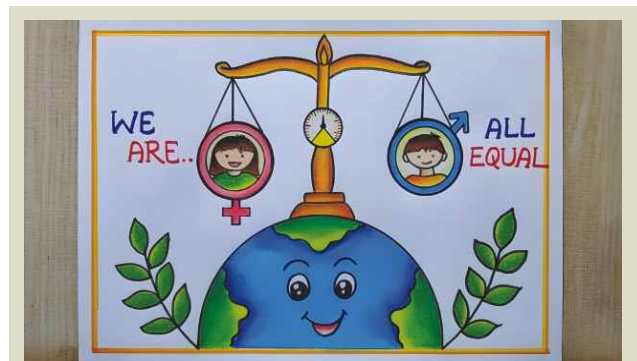
women into the workforce could be a transformative step toward realizing its socio-economic potential.

As policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders, consider the way forward, it is crucial to adopt a holistic and context-specific approach. Solutions must address not only the visible barriers, such as education and employment opportunities but also the invisible cultural and institutional constraints that perpetuate inequality. Efforts should be informed by the lived experiences of women in Balochistan, ensuring that policies are both effective and inclusive.

The path to gender equality in Balochistan will not be easy. It requires dismantling deeply entrenched norms, challenging power structures, and reimagining institutional frameworks. However, the rewards of such efforts are immense.

A more equitable Balochistan would not only uplift its women but also strengthen its economy, enrich its society, and enhance its global standing. As the province seeks to navigate its development challenges, empowering women must remain at the forefront of its agenda.

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The path to gender equality in Balochistan will not be easy. However, the rewards of such efforts are immense

INCOME INEQUALITY IN BALOCHISTAN



SHAH MEER

This article presents the essence of a research paper written by the author.

Income Inequality in Balochistan has widespread implications for the social fabric and economic development of the province. It jeopardizes social cohesiveness and national unity by leaving the populace vulnerable to misleading narratives in a volatile place like Balochistan. Income inequality is a highly ignored issue in Balochistan. Past Studies have mainly focused on the disparities between Balochistan and other provinces of Pakistan or used income-based metrics such as Gini Coefficient to measure the gap between haves and have-nots.

In addition, no study has examined the structural causes of disparities in Balochistan

and offered workable solutions for their mitigation using a strong regression model backed by pertinent theoretical frameworks. The non-income factors that include broader social, political, and economic factors have been left widely ignored. By focusing on the non-income variables of income inequality, this study explores the reasons for income disparity in Balochistan and provides recommendations for its mitigation.

History shows that stratification has been inescapable and omnipresent in all societies. It is one of the key ideas in the study of social thought that although some people continue to be severely impoverished, others benefit enormously from it. Every society has a different system of social stratification. Sometimes society was divided along caste or slavery lines, while other times it was divided along estate lines. As a result, research on social stratification has been around since antiquity and has changed over time. However, the most cited work on stratification was presented by Max Weber.

Class, social standing, and party were the three pillars upon which he built his thesis on stratification. Building on Max Weber's Theory of Stratification which delineates multifaceted reasons for disparities in a society, the study asked 200 individuals from across Balochistan selected through Simple Random Sampling following a well-structured questionnaire consisting of six variables such



as Land Inequality, Digital Divide, Unbalanced Employment Structure, Educational Disparities, Urbanization and Inefficient Economic Policies, and its data was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to identify patterns and correlations.

The study found that most respondents (55%) think that the main cause of income disparity is land inequality, 42.5% point to the digital gap, and 40% blame the uneven job structure. Likewise, 39% mentioned inequalities in education, 37.5% said ineffective economic policies, and 30% mentioned urbanization. As the data reveals that economic disparities in Balochistan are multifaceted, it requires a coherent strategy for its mitigation.

The study proposes Human Capital Theory as the strategy to address income disparities in Balochistan. Basically, Human Capital Theory assumes that the advancements in fundamental science, technology, business management, education, and training that support production are all considered to be part of society's intangible capital. These advancements can be the consequence of intentional individual or group investments for financial gain or unintended byproducts of attempts to accomplish other objectives.

First, the main idea of the study for the mitigation of income disparities as said before pivots around the concept of investment in human capital: its knowledge, education, skills, and digital awareness. The idea also encompasses that for ensuring these dexterities improvements in basic science, technology, business administration, and education and training are needed to enable laborers to attain them. These skills can push people for upward economic mobility. It is also important to integrate Madrasa students into

the mainstream economic activities in Balochistan.

The province has 506 licensed madrasas and 3004 unregistered madrasas, with about 1 million youngsters enrolled. The number of madrasas is growing annually, according to the Directorate General of Religious Education. They only learn religious matters in school, and there is no official system in place to give them skills that will enable them to earn reasonably. After graduating from madrasa, individuals can choose to work as a teacher in a madrasa or as an imam in a mosque because they lack the necessary abilities and dexterity. They make relatively little money in both situations.

Second, Balochistan's land distribution has been skewed in favor of a small elite, with large landholdings concentrated in the hands of tribal chiefs, feudal lords, and a select few powerful families. Due to their reliance on small, dispersed land parcels or labor without property, the great majority of people, especially in rural areas, have had little access to economic mobility. A cycle of poverty and social injustice has been sustained by this unfair land distribution. By redistributing land, the state can reduce wealth inequality and increase the economic agency of



Income inequality in Balochistan has widespread implications for the social fabric and economic development of the province

marginalized communities.

Third, the lack of on-the-job training and capacity building of the existing laborers or employees is another issue that stagnates their economic growth. The chances of upward economic mobility in such conditions become so modest. Compared to corporate services where the chances of exposure are satisfactory, unregulated businesses and government sector jobs provide very meager opportunities for on-the-job training in Balochistan. This area also needs much focus.

Fourth, along with technical skills, the upgradation of soft skills of the laborers and employees is also significant. These skills include communication and leadership skills, teamwork and collaboration, adaptability and resilience, problem-solving, time management, conflict resolution, tolerance, and creativity and innovation. The biggest benefit of these issues is that they curtail innovation and creativity and prevail in a hostile and competitive environment.

Fifth, rural-urban disparities also need attention. The major chunk of the population of Balochistan lives in rural areas where basic amenities, needed infrastructure, and opportunities for economic growth are very meager compared to urban centers where these facilities are in functional form. As a result, the people in urban areas are economically more stable. To reduce this gap, the government must invest in rural infrastructure in the shape of constructing schools, initiating vocational training centers, and introducing reforms in the agriculture sector. It is also needed that the government diversify sources of earnings in rural areas in the shape of E-commerce and other digital platforms.

Sixth, in the digital realm, it is crucial to expand digital infrastructure and access,

improve digital skills, create e-governance services, encourage digital transformation, and protect cybersecurity and rights. On these six principles, the Balochistan Government declared the Balochistan Digital Policy (2021). However, after 2021 till date the policy existed in letter not in spirit, and has not been renewed.

Such initiatives are important for the mitigation of disparities as they equip people with more relevant skills that can bring reasonable wages and increase delivery and services. To conclude, the increasing income disparity demands significant attention from the pertinent parties in a volatile region such as Balochistan. The increasing inequalities in the province are concerning and detrimental to regional development. It might further obstruct national development and progress and leave the populace open to misleading narratives.

Land inequalities, the digital divide among Balochistan citizens, educational disparities, an uneven employment structure, growing urbanization, and extremely inefficient economic policies that cause chaos in the province's economic structure are the most significant and frequently disregarded non-income factors that contribute to the disparities. Therefore, the study advocates the implementation of targeted intervention by the authorities primarily focusing on the development of human capital. Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz rightly puts it, "Development without equity is not sustainable. Inequality is not only a barrier to economic growth but also a source of social instability."

The author is a Research Assistant at the Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) and a graduate of International Relations from the University of Balochistan.

CALENDAR

2025



Happy New Year

JANUARY

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Interaction



ماہنامہ زاویہ نگاہ

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