

Balochistan Think Tank Network



BTTN Monthly Review

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Volume IV

Issue: April 2025

Balochistan Think Tank Network, at BUIITEMS, Airport Road, Quetta. www.bttan.org.pk

About BTTN

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) was established at Quetta, on March 1, 2021. It is an autonomous, non-profit, non-partisan, and multidisciplinary Research Center with a focus not limited to Balochistan only but includes the regional and global dynamics which can influence Pakistan. Broadly, BTTN endeavors to undertake in-depth research of provincial issues with a view to developing the socio, political, and economic status of the province. Its interests also include issues of Energy, Regional Stability, Strategic Stability, Peace and Security, Arms Control and Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology, Conflict Resolution, Regional Connectivity, and Socioeconomic development at the national level. Geopolitically, besides South Asia, BTTN's research areas also include regions of Europe and Africa.

BTTN OP-EDs

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) Faculty of Research has been writing op-eds on a regular basis on different contemporary issues that are published on various international and national platforms. The opinions expressed in this edition are the authors' individual views and do not reflect the official policy of BTTN or any governmental organization. This electronic review is compiled monthly.

SUMMARY OF Op-Eds

The Genesis of The Kashmir Issue: A Conflict Rooted in History

Sadaf Nadeem

April 07, 2025,

The Kashmir issue is a long-standing and complex political, social, and humanitarian conflict that began in 1846 and intensified after the 1947 partition. Its roots lie in the oppressive Dogra rule over a Muslim-majority population without representation. Post-partition wars, the denial of plebiscite, and the revocation of Article 370 further deepened the crisis. Today, the people of Kashmir continue to suffer from political unrest, human rights violations, and lack of control over their own future.

Socioeconomic Justice in The Perspective of The Pakistan Resolution

Atta Ullah

April 07, 2025

The op-ed, Socio-economic Justice in the Perspective of Pakistan Resolution, written by highlights an intense yet often overlooked desire for Socio-economic Justice embedded at the core of Pakistan Resolution 1940. It argues that, understanding this aspect of the resolution is essential to grasp the broader vision that inspired the movement for Pakistan.

Shifting World Order: Dismantling of Voice of America

Shah Meer

April 08, 2025

In an Executive Order, The Trump Administration has shuttered many federal agencies including Voice of America (VOA). The VOA is a news platform that provides news, information and cultural programs to people around the world in more than forty languages, especially in countries where free press is highly restricted. Established during World War II, VOA aired its first broadcast in 1942 with the words: “*The news may be good or bad. We shall tell you the truth,*” as part of efforts to counter Nazi propaganda. During the Cold War, successive US administration effectively utilized the platform to promote American liberal values in authoritarian countries and counter the spread of communism through information and narrative-building.

Initiatives for Development in Balochistan

Hamza Nasir

April 12, 2025

This piece discusses Major infrastructure projects in Balochistan, including Gwadar Airport and upgraded highways, offer significant economic potential for Quetta and the region. However, their success depends on inclusive policies that ensure local communities, not just investors, benefit from the growth.

AI Economics; Lessons for Pakistan

Harsa Kakar

April 21, 2025

In 2025, advancements like DeepSeek and tools from OpenAI accelerated AI’s integration into the global economy, boosting innovation and productivity, especially in developed

countries. AI has enhanced software development, data analytics, and cybersecurity, contributing to cost savings and economic growth, with projections of adding \$15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030. While AI automates tasks and may reduce traditional labor needs, it also creates new roles in tech sectors. Countries like the US, China, and Russia are heavily investing in AI infrastructure, while Pakistan lags behind due to limited research culture, insufficient infrastructure, and lack of clear AI policies. Pakistan's reliance on imported AI applications and minimal local development hinder progress.

Inclusion of Women in Resolving Balochistan Issue

Sadia Zahra

April 24, 2025

The article highlights the growing tension between Baloch women and security forces, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive conflict resolution strategies. It advocates for greater female representation in law enforcement, media, and policymaking to rebuild trust, reduce misinformation, and address gender inequalities. Empowering women in key roles can shift Pakistan's image from a rights offender to a rights protector, fostering a more inclusive and stable society.

Dialogue with Development in Balochistan

Rabia Nadeem

April 25, 2025

Balochistan's mineral wealth offers Pakistan a chance at economic revival, but without inclusive *governance, transparency, and provincial participation, reforms risk deepening mistrust and repeating extractive patterns of marginalization.*

Peace in Balochistan: Not just Roads

Kainat Asmat

April 25, 2025

Pakistan's government plans major development in Balochistan using oil savings, but political unrest, insecurity, and mistrust threaten progress, requiring a holistic, inclusive approach to ensure lasting peace and stability.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Indian Defence: Developments, Regional Implications, and Policy Options for Pakistan

Fizza Mehak Batool

April 25, 2025

This op-ed explores the integration of AI in the Indian defence system, as India is substantially incorporating AI into its military capabilities. Furthermore, the piece brings forward the regional implications of these developments for the region generally and for Pakistan, particularly. Lastly, it provides several countermeasures to Pakistan cope with the rising situation.

The QUAD in the Indo-Pacific: Strategic Realities and Implications for Pakistan

Alamgir Gul

April 26, 2025

The QUAD, comprising the US, India, Japan, and Australia, has emerged as a key alliance in the Indo-Pacific to counter China's influence. Its growing strategic and economic presence poses both challenges and opportunities for Pakistan, especially given Pakistan's close ties with China through CPEC. While QUAD strengthens India's regional role, Pakistan must adopt a flexible strategy—balancing its alliances and exploring selective economic engagement with QUAD members.

AI-Driven Terror and Its Implications for Quetta

Sarina Tareen

April 26, 2025

This piece argues that internet blackouts are outdated and ineffective in the face of AI-driven militancy, which exploits digital platforms to spread disinformation. The Jaffar Express incident highlights how propaganda now shapes public perception in real-time. Instead of resorting to reactive censorship, Pakistan should adopt AI-led, rights-respecting strategies to counter digital threats while protecting civil liberties.

U.S-China Trade War: A Battle with No Real Winners

Sami Ullah

April 26, 2025

The U.S.-China trade relationship, normalized in 1979, saw rapid growth until the 2018 trade war, triggered by U.S. tariffs over intellectual property concerns and trade deficits. Retaliatory tariffs escalated tensions, with both sides imposing levies on hundreds of billions of goods. The 2020 Phase One Deal failed as China fell short of purchase commitments, leaving core disputes unresolved. Renewed tariffs

under Trump's 2024 re-election spiked U.S. levies to 145% by 2025, met by China's export bans on critical minerals. The conflict has evolved into a tech and geopolitical rivalry, disrupting global supply chains and disproportionately harming smaller economies. Despite periodic negotiations, the trade war remains a costly stalemate with no clear resolution.

Realpolitik over Justice: The West's Dark Play in Western Sahara

Shahzadi Irum

April 26, 2025

The Western Sahara conflict highlights the unfinished decolonization in Africa, with Morocco occupying the territory and the Sahrawi people, led by the Polisario Front, still seeking independence. Global powers like the US and France have supported Morocco for strategic interests, sidelining justice for the Sahrawi. Algeria remains a key supporter of the Sahrawi cause, fueling regional tensions. The situation reflects ongoing Western exploitation and betrayal of Africa's postcolonial struggles.

South Asian Nuclear Rivals on the Edge – Again

Usama Khalid

April 28, 2025

The article delves into the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, emphasizing the persistent volatility in their bilateral relations. It highlights how historical grievances, territorial disputes, and mutual distrust continue to fuel the adversarial dynamics between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. The piece underscores the risks associated with their nuclear capabilities, especially in the absence of robust confidence-building measures and effective communication channels. It also points to the challenges posed by emerging military technologies and doctrines that could lower the threshold for conflict. The article concludes by advocating for renewed diplomatic engagement and the establishment of mechanisms to prevent inadvertent escalation, stressing the importance of regional stability for broader international security.

Pakistan: the quest for true sovereignty

Nomeen Kasi

April 28, 2025

The article discusses Pakistan's struggle for true sovereignty, hindered by economic dependence and foreign influence. It argues that ties with global powers limit autonomy. A neutral foreign policy is recommended to prioritize national interests. This would help fulfill the vision of self-rule from the 1940 Lahore Resolution.

Why SMRs are revolutionary in Nuclear Energy

Naseem Sabzal

April 29, 2025

Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) are a safer, cheaper, and more flexible alternative to traditional nuclear power plants. Unlike conventional reactors, they take up less space and don't need to be near the coast. Countries like Russia and China are already using them to bring clean energy to remote areas while cutting carbon emissions. Pakistan, struggling with energy shortages, could really benefit from this technology. By working with global leaders like China and Russia, Pakistan can modernize its energy sector and move toward a cleaner, more reliable power supply.

The Promise of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Sadaf Nadeem

April 29, 2025

CPEC is seen as a transformative opportunity for Pakistan, especially for the underdeveloped province of Balochistan, due to its strategic location and the Gwadar Port. While the project promises infrastructure, jobs, and economic growth, local communities fear exclusion as benefits often bypasses them and external labor is prioritized. Persistent security issues, political mistrust, and lack of local engagement further threaten its success. Experts stress that inclusive planning, skill development, and prioritizing locals in employment are essential. Without genuine community involvement and social investment, CPEC risks becoming another tale of exploitation rather than progress.

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The Genesis of The Kashmir Issue: A Conflict Rooted in History

Sadaf Nadeem

April 07, 2025

The Kashmir issue, which has played a defining role in shaping South Asia, is one of the longest-running and oldest political disputes, with its ripples still affecting millions to this day. This conflict, which has its origin back in 1846 and has been deepened with the partition of British India in 1947 is no mere territorial dispute, but rather a complex struggle encompassing political, social and humanitarian aspects. (To comprehend the Kashmir conflict, its essential to explore the historical and socio-political roots, which date back to the 19th century)

The Kashmir dispute can be historically traced back to Britain handing the territory over to the Dogra rulers via a treaty in 1846 as Britain then allowed Hindu ruling elites, who held no real representation from the Muslim-majority population, to maintain power over Kashmiris. Through the Treaty of Amritsar, the British extinguished the rights of ownership in Kashmir and empowered Dogras to implement discriminatory laws that barred Muslims from holding national level as well as administrative positions. These events left long-lasting feelings of displeasure, which gave rise to underlying resentment that would explode into further insurrections. Yet even amidst state control, the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the rise of political associations through transformative struggles. In this instance, two important organizations that were established in the period for the representation in political field also parented the unity of Muslim population; Anjuman-e-Islamiyya (1888) together with Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir (1905) The establishment of the All – India Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in 1932 allowed for direct participation against ongoing discrimination in a way that had not been possible before.

Partition in 1947 — when the British divided India into two parts — was transformative for everyone involved. At that time Jammu and Kashmir was a Muslim-inhabited princely state, ruled by a Hindu ruler Maharaja Hari Singh. Kashmir was one of the handful of states which remained independent instead of going towards either India or Pakistan. As the situation in Kashmir deteriorated over the course of October 1947, tribal forces from Pakistan crossed into the state to support Muslim Kashmiris fighting the Maharaja's rule.

The Maharaja felt emboldened by this development to seek military assistance from India. This decision of the king, to sign the Instrument of Accession without seeking the consent of Kashmiris made India, Kashmir's formal landlord. The lopsided step made the base for the continuous Kashmir debate between the two nations.

The first war between India and Pakistan in 1947–48 which caught global attention began with a border incident. Potential international interference by way of proposed plebiscites found its way blocked as a result of political conflict on the ground. After this decision, the two pieces of Kashmir were divided by the Line of Control (LoC) and Azad Kashmir came under Pakistani control and Jammu and Kashmir remained in Indian control.

In 1950, the Indian government initiated Article 370, which effectively granted autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, complete with its very own constitution, which allowed the region primary decision powers and an opportunity to retain an identity independent of the Indian state. Pakistan realized that India was trying to consolidate its territorial claim through this development, even while tensions were escalating. The article How the Indian government stripping Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir appeared first on Northeast Now. It continued disturbing the diplomatic relations with Pakistan and stirred severe political turmoil which questioned the democracy. During the second half of the 20th century Kashmir saw the first hints at an insurgency. By 1989, Kashmir handover to Indian rule deteriorated into shooting war. Founded along the lines of independence and Pakistan affiliation, clusters took to the field. It has also emphasized that the state-sponsored heavy persecution of Kashmiri movements too along with human rights abuses made Kashmiri emotions away from their people and turned their youth into actual extremists.

Leaders like Sheikh Abdullah were repeatedly incarcerated, and the growing ethnic and political schism stretched the estrangement between Kashmiris and the government in New Delhi. Political repression had already increased after the revocation of Article 370 in 2019, with the Indian state expanding its crackdown on political voices demanding self-rule and independence.

As of now, the Kashmir matter continues to be unresolved, as both India and Pakistan lay claim to the whole territory. Although international mediation and United Nations linkages have come and gone, peace is still a distant vision. Even more than three decades after the beginning of the armed conflict in Kashmir, the Kashmiri public continues to be plagued by commercial hardship, political discord and human rights violations, with elusive prospects for conference as the situation, possibly, leads to another Kashmir War. This crisis has been sustained by ongoing violence and militarization, which only serves to reinforce a toxic cycle of mistrust and repression.

Kashmir is not just a regional issue; it is an account of historical wrongs, political oppression and a fight for self-determination. The Kashmir conflict depicts the history of this tough people's struggle from repression under the Dogra rule to the political turmoil faced by the region after 1947.

Simply holding regional dialogues among various stakeholders will not suffice; a resolution to the Kashmir issue requires satisfying the age-old concerns of the Kashmiri people, respecting their political goals and ensuring they are part of the conversations surrounding their future. Durable peace will not come from making the conflict invisible nor through lack of trust, but through negotiation — in which there cannot be a compromise on justice for the sake of moving things forward.

As global citizens, let us work for the day Kashmir will be beautiful, guided by lasting peace. Only that can bring peace to the citizens of Kashmir, who deserve to determine their own fate without fear.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/07042025-the-genesis-of-the-kashmir-issue-a-conflict-rooted-in-history-oped/>

Socioeconomic Justice in The Perspective of The Pakistan Resolution

Atta Ullah

April 07, 2025

The Pakistan Resolution (1940) was a significant moment in the history of the Indian subcontinent. While it is often viewed primarily as a statement advocating political autonomy and the creation of a separate homeland for Muslims, a closer examination reveals an intense yet often overlooked desire for socio-economic justice embedded at its core. Recognizing this aspect is essential for fully appreciating the vision driving the Pakistan movement.

Socioeconomic justice refers to the fair and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and social rights. It goes beyond mere equality before the law: it addresses the systemic inequalities that hinder individuals from achieving their full potential due to factors such as social class, caste, religion, or geographical location. The goal is to create a society where everyone has access to basic necessities, education, healthcare, and the opportunity to participate fully in the economic and political life of the nation.

In pre-partition India, the demand for socio-economic justice resonated deeply among Muslims. The British colonial rule, coupled with existing social hierarchies, had created a starkly unequal society. Muslims, in particular, faced significant disadvantages. They were often marginalized when it came to economic opportunities and access to education, and they felt politically powerless in many regions. This situation led to growing discontent and a desire for a system that would guarantee their rights and promote their socio-economic uplift.

The Pakistan Resolution doesn't explicitly outline a detailed socio-economic program, but the principles it embodies, and the context of its emergence strongly imply such an aspiration. This implicitly suggested a rejection of the existing power structures and expressed a desire for Muslims to govern themselves and shape their destinies.

The Pakistan resolution aimed to establish a state where Muslims could thrive. It was grounded in Islamic principles of social justice as an all-embracing code of life standing for non-discriminatory social justice, fair play, equality, and the welfare of the masses. Jinnah's emancipatory vision of sustainable and non-discriminatory socioeconomic

development was shaped by the social decline and economic backwardness of Muslims. Consequently, the social, economic, and political uplift of Muslims became his primary focus throughout the Pakistan movement. He believed that the failure to ensure human well-being within a society ultimately leads to darkness and destruction.

The Socioeconomic Status of a country refers to an individual's access to collectively valued resources, which include material goods, financial assets, power, social networks, healthcare, leisure time, and educational opportunities. Pakistan's socioeconomic status, while showing no signs of significant improvement, remains challenging. Issues such as poverty and inequality persist due to ongoing economic and political instability.

According to the State Bank of Pakistan's recent Socio-economic update, the underdevelopment of human capital is one of the most serious concerns facing Pakistan at present. Presently, besides poor economic performance, performance on other social indicators such as multidimensional poverty and inequality, education, healthcare, gender inequality, and access to basic services is merely worth mentioning.

Human Capital Development is one of the most important indicators of Socioeconomic Justice in a Society. A renowned Pakistani Economist, Mahbub Ul Haq, is credited with pioneering the concept of the Human Development Index (HDI), emphasizing that development should focus on improving people's lives and expanding their choices rather than solely on economic growth.

The other key indicators of socioeconomic justice in a country encompass measures of income equality, poverty reduction, access to education and healthcare, and social inclusion, which contribute to a more just and equitable society. These fall into three broader areas: 1. Income and Wealth Distribution, 2. Access to Basic Needs, 3. Social Inclusion and Equality

Pakistan's current ranking on the Human Development Index (HDI) places it in the low-development category of countries, highlighting the dire need to focus on human capital development. While there are signs of improvement, the country's low rank compared to the rest of the world is concerning.

According to World Bank data, the poverty rate in Pakistan is estimated at 18.7-25.3% based on the lower-middle-income poverty threshold of US\$3.2 per day for FY 2024-25.

The multidimensional poverty Index, MPI expands upon the three major factors such as health, education, and living standard as in HDI, but goes beyond income and identifies multiple deprivations experienced at the household level across 10 different Indicators. Experiencing Deprivation in at least one-third of these indicators means suffering from Multidimensional poverty. Despite encouraging trends in the MPI, Pakistan's overall progress in significantly improving its MPI remains slow.

Social inclusion and equal opportunities for participation in political, economic, and social life are crucial, regardless of class, gender, religion, or ethnicity. This is measured by the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which count significantly the status of women in a society. A higher GDI indicates better outcomes for women, while a lower GII reflects an improvement in gender inequality. Pakistan shows a gradual improvement in both indexes.

The Pakistan Resolution represented a promise of a new beginning. The concept of a separate homeland offered hope for a fresh start, free from the constraints and inequalities of the existing system. It was viewed as an opportunity to create a society built on principles of justice and equality. Human capital development is the key to socioeconomic development. Investing in people and ensuring their well-being is essentially investing in the future of the country. This aspiration for a more equitable and just society should remain a strong force driving Pakistan towards prosperity.

In sum, the significance of the Pakistan Resolution extends beyond the creation of a new nation. It embodies a fundamental desire for socio-economic justice among Muslims- a longing to create a society where their rights and opportunities are protected, allowing them to fully engage in the nation's economic and social life. Understanding this aspect of the resolution is essential to grasp the broader vision that inspired the movement for Pakistan. It remains relevant today as the nation continues to strive for a more just and equitable society. The aspiration for socio-economic justice, rooted in the very essence of the Pakistan Resolution, serves as a guiding light, directing the nation towards a more inclusive and prosperous future.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/07042025-socioeconomic-justice-in-the-perspective-of-the-pakistan-resolution-oped/>

Shifting World Order: Dismantling of Voice of America

Shah Meer

April 08, 2025

In an Executive Order, The Trump Administration has shuttered many federal agencies including Voice of America (VOA). The VOA is a news platform that provides news, information and cultural programs to people around the world in more than forty languages, especially in countries where free press is highly restricted.

Established during World War II, VOA aired its first broadcast in 1942 with the words: “The news may be good or bad. We shall tell you the truth,” as part of efforts to counter Nazi propaganda. During the Cold War, successive US administrations effectively utilized the platform to promote American liberal values in authoritarian countries and counter the spread of communism through information and narrative-building. Over time, VOA evolved into a significant strategic and political tool for combating misinformation and disinformation globally while projecting American soft power. In the post-Cold War era, it became a cornerstone of the American liberal order, symbolizing the principles of free speech and press freedom. The Trump Administration believes in the idea of America First, meaning that the US must pull back on the world stage and concentrate on its domestic issues

There are a mix of reasons why the VOA was targeted. First, the Trump administration is attempting to make sweeping cuts through federal agencies which do not align with the administration’s worldview. Second, some multilateral agencies, as conventional wisdom prevails in the far-right circles in the US, are burden on American taxpayers. Third, Republicans accuse the platform of being infected by left-wing propaganda and lacking factual credibility. Fourth, the Trump Administration believes in the idea of America First, meaning that the US must pull back on the world stage and concentrate on its domestic issues.

Regardless of the reason, dismantling a multinational broadcaster like VOA risks undermining America’s global credibility and weakening the international order it has long championed. Multilateralism, free speech, freedom of media and promulgation of American values such as individualism and inclusivity are at the core of the Liberal International Order. These values are equally important for the democratic process and

economic interconnectivity that underpin American hegemony. These appealing ideas lead other nation-states to join the order and provide the needed legitimacy to function, and the proper functioning of which serves America's long-term strategic and geopolitical objectives. Short-term populist decisions like shuttering VOA will undermine US long-term strategic objectives. "The so-called beacon of freedom, VOA, has now been discarded by its own government like a dirty rag"

The sudden shutdown of international broadcasters may also embolden authoritarian regimes across the world, especially China, which presents an alternative and distinct political system which Chinese portray as more effective than liberal values. In China, platforms like VOA were viewed as 'anti-China' propagating misinformation against Chinese values and challenging the legitimacy of the Chinese political system. Notably, The Global Times, under the auspices of the Chinese Communist Party's flagship newspaper and the People's Daily have declared the shutdown of VOA "The so-called beacon of freedom, VOA, has now been discarded by its own government like a dirty rag". Resultantly, China's efforts to strengthen authoritarian regimes globally and promote its own worldview are likely to be perceived as increasingly appealing and legitimate, which can have serious implications for the American-led world order. The silencing of VOA reflects a broader retreat of democracy's global outreach mechanisms, making space for authoritarian narratives to dominate international information flow. Its silencing will come at the expense of US influence, potentially facilitating the rise of Chinese soft power on the world stage

This development could also undermine the US soft power which has gained renewed significance amid China's growing efforts to project a favorable global image. Beijing employs a range of tools to advance its soft power, including massive investments under Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the establishment of Confucius institutes and the expansion of state-controlled media outlets aimed at shaping international narratives. VOA, as a key instrument of US cultural diplomacy, historically served same purpose by promoting American ideals abroad. Its silencing will come at the expense of US influence, potentially facilitating the rise of Chinese soft power on the world stage. During the crisis of international political change, the synergy of attributes of domestic politics and international affairs carry a parallel link

Thus, at a time when the global power landscape is witnessing significant shifts, new actors are emerging and fierce competition is underway, any domestic or international decision by major powers is likely to have considerable implications for global security and the relative position of the actor. During the crisis of international political change, the synergy of attributes of domestic politics and international affairs carry a parallel link, and any misjudgment, policy fallouts and strategic miscalculations can hinder the long-term national objectives. The muting of VOA is one such instance and many more are expected from the Trump Administration to come soon which can undermine the American stance on the world stage.

<https://stratheia.com/shifting-world-order-dismantling-of-voice-of-america/>

Initiatives for Development in Balochistan

Hamza Nasir

April 12, 2025

Major infrastructure projects are transforming the economic profile of Quetta and Balochistan at present. The new international airport in Gwadar and upgraded Quetta-Zhob and Quetta-Gwadar roads will strengthen regional trade connections. The question of prime beneficiary stands unanswered by these developments. Sustainable economic growth together with better conditions for local communities must be the result of these initiatives rather than having foreign investors receive most of the benefits.

The Gwadar International Airport serves as one of Pakistan's biggest airports following its recent inauguration and offers services for domestic and international flight operations at a \$246 million cost. The Boeing 747 and comparable aircraft find a home at this airport which serves as a strategic trade and logistics hub for Gwadar. Air connectivity improvements will influence Quetta's development as Balochistan's commercial hub along with its administrative center by boosting trade along with tourism flow.

The enhancement of road infrastructure will simplify trade operations and decrease transportation expenses across the board. The Quetta-Zhob highway located on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Western Route is undergoing improvement work covering 331 km at a project cost of Rs 63 billion. Construction on the project will cut the duration of travel between Quetta and Zhob which will boost the flow of commodities and products between those locations. The Quetta-Gwadar highway represents a vital transportation link fighting to establish superior connectivity between Balochistan's prime city and Pakistan's primary oceanic port. According to the National Highway Authority these projects will offer 50 percent faster journey times and lead to lower business logistical costs.

The development brings significant economic potential to the city of Quetta. The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) reported in their research that infrastructure investments boost the country's economic development rate. Intensified road infrastructure combined with enhanced air travel facilities induce investors to bring money into transportation and hospitality services as well as retail ventures. Local businesses will gain advantages from both increased supply of goods and services and

tourist traffic. The resources will create increasing job prospects. Direct and indirect jobs being generated by the construction sector have become one of the primary achievements of the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT) during the last five years.

These promising prospects still face multiple obstacles. Development projects on a large scale in Balochistan historically failed to offer their benefits directly to the people who live there. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data reveals that Balochistan stands as the province with the highest poverty rate after showing that 40 percent of its people live in poverty. Foreign and national investors can experience profits, yet the local population continues to face economic challenges. Adequate policy implementation becomes crucial since improper policies could let project benefits accumulate with a select few while economic gaps expand.

A comprehensive strategic policy that includes all stakeholders must be developed to achieve maximum benefits from these developments across Quetta as well as Balochistan. Local business operations need to become the top priority in government policies. The State Bank of Pakistan reveals that SMEs in Balochistan obtain formal financing at only 5 percent while Punjab's comparable figure reaches 17 percent. Local entrepreneurs can use emerging economic opportunities through enhanced credit accessibility and educational assistance and logistical resources.

All infrastructure development projects need to implement binding provisions for hiring local workers. CPEC projects across different provinces should implement workforce participation rules that require local labour participation at a rate of 30 percent. Organizations should extend their skill development programmes. Each year the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) Balochistan provides technical training to 10,000 individuals but this number needs to rise to fulfill the increasing requirement for a competent labour force in new industries.

Economic expansion should extend its advantages beyond Quetta along with other urban locations. Rural areas that usually miss out on large-scale development plans need to obtain improved transportation and trade possibilities. The government should create

rural connectivity programmes and establish industrial zones in smaller towns in order to spread economic growth uniformly across the region.

Effective management of the current infrastructure expansion across Balochistan alongside Gwadar and Quetta development presents opportunities for the province to become a prominent player in regional commerce. Economic progress leads to success only through sustainable and inclusive development practices which maintain equality for all. The success of current Balochistan infrastructure projects relies on policymakers developing connected local business programmes together with employment targets and environmental regulatory implementation. Through proper implementation Quetta can become a prosperous economic hub from which development enriches all members of the community.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/04/12/initiatives-for-development-in-balochistan/>

AI Economics; Lessons for Pakistan

Harsa Kakar

April 21, 2025

The year 2025 came with new developments in the tech world and changed the course of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its role in the global economy. The coming of DeepSeek and new tools by Open AI has set the path for an AI-driven economic competition globally, increasing innovation and productivity in the global tech industry by bridging AI and economy together. However, in countries where digital innovation and transformation are still in their early stages, this integration of AI into the economy comes with challenges alongside opportunities, like Pakistan. As the world navigates around AI, it is essential to assess Pakistan's standpoint on the same and explore potential policy options to rise as a competitive player in the global AI economy, through integrating AI into its economic policies. According to a report by PwC, AI is expected to contribute up to 15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030

To begin with, AI has brought a considerable increase in efficiency and growth in the global tech industry. AI is playing its role in software development, the formation of data analytics, and establishing stronger cybersecurity for huge role players like Amazon, Meta, Google, Microsoft, etc. These Industries that have invested in AI-powered innovation have experienced increased productivity, cost saving, better customer engagement, and thus increased economic activity. According to a report by PwC, AI is expected to contribute up to 15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030. In developed economies like the US, China, and Russia, AI-driven growth is fueling investments of billions of dollars in cloud computing, semiconductor manufacturing, etc.

Additionally, AI is a champion of automating repetitive tasks which may lead to a reduction in the need for human labor, while on the other hand, it is creating new job opportunities in fields like AI Research, Software Engineering, and data science. Moreover, in developed economies like the US, China, and Russia, AI-driven growth is fueling investments of billions of dollars in cloud computing, semiconductor manufacturing, etc. This has given rise to tech giants such as Google, Microsoft, and Alibaba who are incorporating AI into their mechanisms making more space for AI in the global market.

Pakistan, being outpaced in adopting AI across its industries, faces obstacles in this journey. Among these obstacles, the lack of Research and Development culture in the field of AI stands first. There are close to no large-scale initiatives to promote research on AI technologies in Pakistan, besides most of the applications driven by AI in Pakistan are also imported and not locally developed.

Next on this list is the lack of economic focus on AI infrastructure in Pakistan. There is a huge lack of investment in AI-driven tech, including high computing power, cloud computing, big data capabilities, large language models, and smart software. Moreover, this lack of investment leads to the absence of a clear and concise policy regarding the adoption of AI, its governance, its ethical guidelines, and data protection measures, making it unpredictable for foreign investors. Pakistan needs to consider some important policy alternatives. Among these, firstly there is the dire need to ensure AI-focused degree programs and training. Second is the promotion of the Research and Development culture in the field of AI in Pakistan

For these obstacles to be overcome, Pakistan needs to consider some important policy alternatives. Among these, firstly there is the dire need to ensure AI-focused degree programs and training. Second is the promotion of the Research and Development culture in the field of AI in Pakistan. To ensure this, research hubs and innovation centers powered by AI need to be made, through collabs between educational institutions and tech companies. Also, AI startups need to be encouraged by tax incentives. Industries and enterprises across Pakistan need to be encouraged to adopt AI in their functioning to ensure a smooth transition of technology

Furthermore, a national AI policy needs to be formulated. This must include an ethical framework, regulatory guidelines, and investment priorities that are in alignment with best practices in the field of AI adopted internationally to attract investors. Examples of China and the US can be followed in formulating this policy. Similarly, for Pakistan's AI-driven tech industry to progress smoothly, a reliable AI infrastructure needs to be built. This must include large-scale investments in high-performance computers, cloud service, and open access to AI data settings to first promote research and then facilitate the manufacture of chips and semiconductors locally. Lastly, industries and enterprises across Pakistan need

to be encouraged to adopt AI in their functioning to ensure a smooth transition of technology. AI holds the potential to set the country on the path to progress both economically and technologically in today's AI-driven era

In brief, AI holds the potential to set the country on the path to progress both economically and technologically in today's AI-driven era. Pakistan too has the opportunity and potential to grow and progress through AI. However, Pakistan faces some mentioned shortcomings in this regard which can be overcome by adopting certain policy alternatives through promoting the culture of AI across all fields leading to the functioning of the economy and industries. This will not only lead to the growth of the economy for Pakistan but also its rise as an AI hub in the region. For that, Pakistan needs to act faster and act now!

<https://stratheia.com/ai-economics-lessons-for-pakistan/>

Inclusion of Women in Resolving Balochistan Issue

Sadia Zahra

April 24, 2025

Islam emphasizes protecting and respecting women's roles in society based on religious teachings about women in society. Pakistan supports these Islamic principles in both policy and legislative frameworks as an Islamic state. Furthermore, the traditional norms in KP and Balochistan areas respect women even more but the current situation brings to light a concerning disagreement between Baloch women and security forces. The emerging crisis requires detailed investigations along with effective measures to decrease the increasing lack of trust between parties. Through social media distorted information builds a negative image about the state which stands accused of mistreating women

The female residents in Balochistan use march protests to demand the release of their family members who have vanished into state prisons. These families truly suffer as their members have disappeared without resolution which separates them permanently. These demonstrations have provided space for some people to spark unrest while the main issues remain the focus. Provocateurs take advantage of the exposed mental weakness among these women to push events toward greater conflict that generates confrontations between the women and state authorities. Security personnel who maintain public order come under attack when these events are depicted by various sources. Through social media distorted information builds a negative image about the state which stands accused of mistreating women while further increasing social distrust among different groups.

This unrest creates consequences that affect numerous entities in addition to its initial participants. Road barriers cause major disruption by stopping students and teachers from getting to their residences and educational facilities thus creating heavy traffic delays and interrupting mobile phone access. Fear spreads among residents to such an extent that it ends all movement and productivity while damaging Balochistan's national and international standing. These disruptions primarily impact public society despite the fact that destabilization efforts succeed in creating discord and diminishing state confidence in the population. The low number of female journalists in Balochistan (only 7) reduces their ability to affect narratives and resolve grievances

A conflict resolution approach needs to identify the core factors which sustain this continuing struggle. Pakistan exhibits a large gender gap because women are scarce in all positions that lead to determining national policy as well as resolving conflicts nationally. Women occupy just 7.10% of positions in the Ministry of Interior and 37.31% in the Ministry of Defense during the federal government administration. The police force of Balochistan maintains only 1,000 women employees while the Levies force numbers remain insignificant. Woman participation in decisions remains less than 5% which demonstrates a clear gender inequality issue. The low number of female journalists in Balochistan (only 7) reduces their ability to affect narratives and resolve grievances. Since women participate minimally across all sectors including armed forces and political parties and the media. A male enforcement model of law enforcement hinders security personnel who lack essential training about dealing with women protestors

Female participation in protests and insurgent activities requires immediate adoption of gender-aware methods to handle conflicts. Historically, Balochistan's protests, and insurgency movements were predominantly male-driven. The rising number of female protestors has made the current scenario much more complex. A male enforcement model of law enforcement hinders security personnel who lack essential training about dealing with women protestors while needing an enriched understanding of sensitive needs. No oversight from the state regarding female protestors allows tensions to escalate while simultaneously tarnishing the state's reputation and providing conditions for propaganda attacks targeting state trust. The engagement of female police officers with female protestors is beneficial

Such problems require an inclusive approach for achieving balance in current settings. Women must actively participate throughout law enforcement agencies and as in political leadership and media institutions to achieve effective conflict resolution. The involvement of women at key stakeholder positions becomes vital because they should take leading roles in conflict mediation and strategic planning processes. The engagement of female police officers with female protestors is beneficial because they maintain calmer relationships while lessening both the risks of confrontations and minimizing state disinformation. These measures would build trust while showing the State's dedication to

humane and respectful solutions for grievances. Such a strategy would help the state achieve favorable public recognition for its role as a Rights protector instead of Rights offender

Such strategy implementation produces revolutionary changes. The state could generate trust with grieving Baloch women and establish meaningful dialogue which would minimize the impact of provocation efforts. The state could reduce misinformation through direct involvement of women during these processes. Such a strategy would help the state achieve favorable public recognition for its role as a Rights protector instead of Rights offender. This management approach does not address all aspects of insurgency and missing person crises but provides humane and professional methods for crisis handling that minimizes defamation and supports stability.

The implementation of this strategy provides additional advantages to the entire community after conflict resolution is complete. Relying on women for strategic positions would not only provide them professional power but also give them economic standing and protect their human rights. Women who participate in law enforcement roles alongside their political leadership functions in media would create a more equitable society that addresses gender inequalities. Such transformations will spread new social standards throughout tribal areas to support female involvement in public sector activities. Through this approach Pakistan will create a stronger and more inclusive society that enables women to move from being victims to becoming driving forces of constructive societal evolution.

<https://stratheia.com/inclusion-of-women-in-resolving-balochistan-issue/>

Dialogue with Development in Balochistan

Rabia Nadeem

April 25, 2025

There are moments in a country's history when the untapped potential coincides with the significant national needs—Balochistan's mineral resources represent such an opportunity for Pakistan today. Balochistan is often seen as the treasure trove, blessed with vast mineral wealth, including extensive reserves of copper and gold located in Reko Diq, along with significant resources of rare earth elements, coal, and chromite. The resources in the region have the potential to steer Pakistan's economic revival and elevate its presence in the global mining sector. For that reason, the recently proposed mines and mineral act 2025 intends to modernize the industrial landscape, optimize investment process and enhance transparency in industry that has long been overlooked. Is it possible for these reforms to truly take hold and flourish without integrating political discourse with the interests of each province?

Pakistan faces significant external debt, trade deficits, and economic stagnation. This situation points to the importance of its assets. With the burgeoning concerns for mining security and the growing global demand for rare earth elements, there are opportunities to turn Pakistan's natural resources into significant benefits for the country itself. This program is actively seeking foreign investment and is expected to be a major job creator for long-term sustainable development. However, despite the positive economic outlook, there is still concern. Is it possible for these reforms to truly take hold and flourish without integrating political discourse with the interests of each province? In Balochistan, where people perceive deprivation and disconnection from decisions that significantly impact their land, culture, and future; such an approach is likely to be exploited rather than empowered

As for the timing and structure of these acts, they raise a serious question, especially of Balochistan, a province with long-standing grievances and unrest. Many people in Balochistan see the proposed initiative to delegate authority to federal institutions as a step back from the enhanced provincial autonomy over natural resources established by the 18th Amendment, as it increases uncertainty in the region. In Balochistan, where

people perceive deprivation and disconnection from decisions that significantly impact their land, culture, and future; such an approach is likely to be exploited rather than empowered. Furthermore, the neglect of local perspectives in this spiritually vibrant yet politically unstable province exacerbates the situation. What individuals fear is not the acceleration of development, but rather the absence of transparency, inequitable wealth distribution, and lack of local engagement in both planning and implementation. In the absence of these three essentials, as demonstrated by projects such as Gwadar and Saindak, they ultimately estrange rather than advantage to the local populace. When people are denied a voice, even gold in the mines means nothing

Indeed, the argument for mining reform from an economic standpoint is persuasive, but true prosperity cannot be built on foundations of mistrust and marginalization. When people are denied a voice, even gold in the mines means nothing. Without inclusive consultation, equitable benefit-sharing, and labor safeguards, the act could deepen the divide between the state and Baloch citizens. Development cannot be implemented; it must be co-created.

To harness the vast potential of Balochistan for national progress, the government of Pakistan must complement legislative reforms with political dialogue, ensure inclusive governance, secure community support, provide sustainable employment opportunities, limit federal overreach, and introduce transparent policies for fair revenue sharing. While the potential is indeed enormous, it alone cannot guarantee lasting peace. If managed inclusively and transparently, mineral development in Balochistan could transform the province's socio-economic landscape and strengthen national cohesion

As Government of Pakistan is currently showing a renewed and ambitious interest in extracting its mineral wealth, particularly from Balochistan. However, this ambition risks repeating historical mistakes if it follows the same top-down, forceful approaches of the past. There lies a critical choice: either pursue extractive development that alienates local populations further or adopt a genuinely community-led, participatory model that prioritizes local voices, safeguards livelihoods, and ensures fair distribution of benefits.

If managed inclusively and transparently, mineral development in Balochistan could transform the province's socio-economic landscape and strengthen national cohesion.

But if mishandled, it will deepen existing divides, foster mistrust, and undermine long-term peace. The path Pakistan chooses now will determine whether its mineral wealth becomes a source of unity or a trigger for further unrest.

<https://stratheia.com/dialogues-with-development-in-balochistan/>

Peace in Balochistan: Not just Roads

Kainat Asmat

April 25, 2025

The prime minister of Pakistan recently announced that it would allocate its savings from the global oil price drop, i.e., Rs 300 billion, to major development projects in Balochistan, which include the construction of the N-25 Highway and Kacchi Canal Phase II. The dualization of N-25, which connects Karachi to Kalat, Khuzdar, Quetta, and Chaman, is a necessity, as the poor infrastructure has taken thousands of lives. It holds the potential to increase trade opportunities in Balochistan. While the Kacchi canal project was envisioned two decades ago to draw water from the Indus River through the Taunsa Barrage into Balochistan for a better irrigation system and to provide a water source to the agriculture sector, the promises remain unfulfilled. The federal government's decision to complete the project can revive hope for lost economic opportunities in Balochistan

The federal government's decision to complete the project can revive hope for lost economic opportunities in Balochistan. There is no doubt that such economic projects and initiatives are a long-awaited need of the province, but the current political and social instability in Balochistan can set back the triumph of these economic projects.

The recent events of terrorism have raised security concerns in Balochistan, while Balochistan Yakjehti Committee (BYC)'s protests and rallies continue across Balochistan for Baloch missing persons, causing unrest and chaos in the region. The closure of major highways and routes, which connect Balochistan to the rest of Pakistan, amidst the protest has caused severe disruption for travelers, traders, and the local population, which has caused a shortage of goods across the region, while airfares were raised, leaving people helpless. There is a mistrust and gap between the center and the province; radicalization among youth is growing day by day due to the unheard grievances and political engineering

Certainly, these development projects are essential and a need for Balochistan's economic development and infrastructure, creating better economic opportunities for the people of Balochistan. However, the resolution of Balochistan's current political and social crisis is crucial for the success of the economic projects. It will require a multi-dimensional

approach from the state to resolve the Balochistan crisis, as the social fabric of Balochistan has completely worn out. There is a mistrust and gap between the center and the province; radicalization among youth is growing day by day due to the unheard grievances and political engineering. Moreover, the recent terrorist activities have also caused division among local communities, where one community is being specifically targeted in the region. Such instances have tarnished the region's social fabric. Economic projects like CPEC, which did bring a ray of hope for economic potential in the region for the locals, are dysfunctional today due to lack of acceptance and mistrust among locals

Economic grievances do exist, where locals want better economic opportunities, infrastructure, and their fair share in the resources of the province, but it alone cannot bring stability to the region. These development projects will play a major role in resolving the issues, but that is not the only solution. The government needs to look at and analyze the crisis through more of a broader perspective to address the issue. Economic projects like CPEC, which did bring a ray of hope for economic potential in the region for the locals, are dysfunctional today due to lack of acceptance and mistrust among locals. It raises concerns about every future development project in the region.

Governments have to seek a more comprehensive and inclusive solution to overcome the crisis in Balochistan. Good governance can play a major role in bringing political and social stability to the region by addressing the grievances of the people, engaging in effective dialogue with the locals, resolving the missing person issue, rebuilding trust in order to fill the gap between government and people by bringing transparency and accountability to the system, and increasing local inclusivity in the politics and economy of Balochistan, where they can participate for the betterment of their province. Government and policymakers have to re-evaluate and rethink peace in Balochistan, have a multi-dimensional approach to address the political, social, and economic challenges of the region

Government and policymakers must re-evaluate and rethink peace in Balochistan, have a multi-dimensional approach to address political, social, and economic challenges of the region. If the region is politically and socially stable, then the economy can thrive;

otherwise, all efforts can go in vain. People of Balochistan are now more concerned than jobs, roads, and pipelines; the grievances have grown over time, while security and radicalization are raising concerns of security, a threat to the state. Now, it's high time for the government to engage in peaceful negotiation with people, because the people of Balochistan first need to be seen and heard, then empowered

The crisis has been unresolved for decades now, and many argue that the hard state policies have failed. Now, it's high time for the government to engage in peaceful negotiation with people, because the people of Balochistan first need to be seen and heard, then empowered. The recent projects announced raise the question over government policies: whether the economy alone can reduce the growing radicalization in youth, or whether economic development is enough to restore peace in Balochistan.

<https://stratheia.com/peace-in-balochistan-not-just-roads/>

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Indian Defence: Developments, Regional Implications, and Policy Options for Pakistan

Fizza Mehak Batool

March 25, 2025

The world has seen substantial changes throughout human history, from the industrial, technological revolution to the Artificial Intelligence (AI) revolution. AI, the most vital transformation of the 21st century, is increasingly renovating the world, including the defence systems, providing strategic benefits and threats to the states. The powerful states are integrating AI for defence and military purposes. The US, in 2023, spent around \$67 billion on AI and emerging technologies in its defence sector. According to the Centre for Security and Emerging Technology (CSET) in October 2021, the People Liberation Army (PLA) spent about \$1.6 to \$2.7 billion on AI research. Similarly, India is no exception as it invests in AI research and integration in defence and military purposes by allotting around \$50 million to AI expenditures every year. As a result, many developments have taken place, which exert implications for regional security and strategic stability, particularly for Pakistan, because of the historical events and geopolitical dynamics of South Asia.

Developments

India has been achieving substantial success in integrating AI into its defence structure and military sector, which enables the country to increase its warfare capabilities and operational tactics. AI is incorporated into the three major sectors of the Indian defence, namely Mhow (Army), INS Valsura (Navy), and Air Force Station Rajokri (Air Force). Based on the 'strategic implementation of AI for National security and defence' in 2019, the Indian Department of Defence established the Defence AI Council (DAIC) and the Defence AI Project Agency (DAIPA) to provide AI-based transformation within the Indian military and defence system.

Substantially, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the research and development wing of the Ministry of Defence established in 1958, formed the Centre for AI and Robotics (CAIR) to enhance the technological system of Indian defence for better warfare strategies, which actively conducts research to date to

leverage Indian defence capabilities. Since 2011, the Indian Army's Project Army Integrated Decision Support System (AIDSS) has been operational to integrate AI into all levels of defence in the operational as well as administrative affairs from the unit level to headquarters.

In 2018, the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) declared to transform the defence system of India by adding AI facilities. As a result, around 140 AI-based surveillance systems, mainly cameras, radar feeds, and sensors, have been installed along the Pakistan and China borders. Likewise, the technologies related to atmosphere prediction, imagery analysis, drone-collision avoidance and ship tracking also started in Indian defence. In July 2022, the Indian Ministry of Defence launched 75 AI advanced technologies, including new AI machines for data analysis, logistics, surveillance, and weapons, through the combined efforts of the public and private sectors, research institutions, academia, and newly started start-ups.

Furthermore, India has also pursued autonomous weapons systems in its defence sector, such as drones, unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs), and autonomous fast intercept boats (AFIBs). The crucial developments in autonomous weapons include the Drishti-10 medium altitude long endurance (MALE), MQ-9B Reaper Drone, S-400 anti-ballistic Missile defence (BMD) system, and the remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) of up to 120 kilometres range. In 2021, 75 aerial drones with AI capabilities were enabled by the Indian army to enhance Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. Consequently, AI plays a major role in cyberwarfare and electronic warfare by providing cyber defence against malicious software and adversary attacks. In June 2018, the Ministry of Defence highlighted the significance of AI usage for military preparedness in aviation, land warfare, cyber defence, as well as against nuclear and biological attack.

Regional implications

The enhanced AI incorporation into India's defence system possesses several implications for the South Asian region generally and Pakistan particularly, changing the security dynamics and increasing the security dilemma of the region. The conventional

warfare and military breach between India and Pakistan is increasing due to the investments of India in AI technologies, autonomous weapons, and precision targeting weapons. Further, it increases India's situational attentiveness and steering precision in the conflicts, increasing the security dilemma for Pakistan. In addition, the persisting development of autonomous weapons systems and AI-based technologies increases the offensive capabilities of India, leading other states of South Asia to perceive it as a threat to their security and strategic stability and move towards self-help by increasing their competencies. Likewise, these developments can cause nuclear escalation between India and Pakistan based on Pakistan's threat to its nuclear deterrence due to the AI-based weapons that can easily target nuclear assets. As a result, it destabilises the security situation and power balance of South Asia, triggering a new arms race in the region.

Additionally, the increased dependency on technologies can fuel the decision-making time as more rapid decisions can result in huge catastrophes and maliciousness, specifically during the conflictual situations between India and Pakistan. Resulting in new and modernised forms of warfare such as drone attacks, autonomous weapons bombardment, or cyberattacks. Cyberwarfare can be a major issue in the region, especially between India and Pakistan, because it can threaten the nuclear command and control systems, escalating the menace of unpremeditated conflict. Simultaneously, the advancement of weapons and AI integration raises humanitarian and ethical concerns, mainly due to the autonomous weapons, which cause immense human casualties and collateral damage. Hence, the increased military and AI advancements of India can exert great instability in South Asia, mainly between India and Pakistan, where mistakes or anger can lead to serious impacts.

Policy Options for Pakistan

Pakistan needs to transform its defence system with a comprehensive policy set for countering India's changing security dynamics. Firstly, Pakistan should analyse and assess the status of its military and technological policies, compared with India's AI strategies and their implications. Based on the reviews, Pakistan should bring changes to its military doctrine for integrating AI technologies and taking vital steps to strengthen

its deterrence capabilities. Secondly, a detailed national AI plan should be formulated along with an institution under the administrative control of the Ministry of Defence in Pakistan to ensure research in AI in defence and the implementation of the formed doctrines.

Thirdly, to ensure consistency and accuracy in the conducted AI research and proper and timely execution, a strong collaboration should be accelerated between academia, defence industries, and new start-ups, which will enable AI-based weaponry system development. Fourthly, to enhance its AI capabilities, Pakistan should strengthen its relations with countries, such as China, which possess innovative technological proficiencies. It will help Pakistan in working on shared projects and capacity-building training for producing talented and capable individuals who can support the technological sector. Fifthly, for human security and humanitarian concerns, Pakistan should engage actively in international platforms, mainly for the arms control of lethal autonomous weapons (LAWs), encouraging accountable technological advancements.

The AI development in the Indian Defence system has exerted momentous consequences on the regional security conditions, particularly for Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan must take precautions by framing detailed policies for improving its defence sector with modern technologies and equipment to maintain strategic stability. These steps may involve formulating an AI strategy, capacity building, and international cooperation. Hence, through these ways, Pakistan can increase its defence capabilities, ensuring its strategic stability and national security.

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The QUAD in the Indo-Pacific: Strategic Realities and Implications for Pakistan

Alamgir Gul

April 26, 2025

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), comprising the United States, India, Japan, and Australia, has emerged as a formidable security and economic alliance in the Indo-Pacific. Initially perceived as a loose grouping, QUAD has evolved into a significant force that addresses a range of geopolitical challenges, particularly in countering China's assertiveness in the region. While its primary objective revolves around maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific, its implications extend beyond its direct stakeholders, impacting nations such as Pakistan. For Pakistan, the rise of QUAD presents both challenges and opportunities, shaping its strategic, economic, and diplomatic calculus in the region.

The Indo-Pacific has become the new geopolitical theater where global power dynamics are shifting. The QUAD, originally conceptualized as a response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, has steadily morphed into a strategic alliance aimed at ensuring stability in the region. The key elements of QUAD's engagement in the Indo-Pacific include maritime security, infrastructure development, supply chain resilience, and digital innovation. Central to its mission is countering China's influence, which has been expanding through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aggressive military maneuvers in the South China Sea, and economic coercion.

The goal of the Indo-Pacific strategy is to increase the United States' diplomatic and economic influence in the region. The resulting alliances, like Quad and AUKUS, give India and Australia a bigger role in the region in order to counter China's increasing influence. Given its hegemonic intentions, Pakistan is concerned about India's expanding influence in the area.

From a security standpoint, QUAD members have increased military collaboration through joint exercises like the Malabar naval drills, sharing intelligence, and strengthening regional defense frameworks. Economically, QUAD countries are promoting alternative infrastructure financing to counter China's debt-trap diplomacy, offering developing nations an alternative to Beijing's economic influence.

Pakistan's strong alliance with China, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), puts it at odds with QUAD's objectives. CPEC, a flagship project of China's BRI, is a crucial component of Pakistan's economic aspirations. However, as QUAD actively seeks to limit China's growing influence, the initiative may come under increasing scrutiny, affecting investment flows and project sustainability.

Additionally, India's central role in QUAD is a direct concern for Pakistan. Strengthening Indo-US defense ties, along with broader QUAD cooperation, enhances India's strategic capabilities. This could shift regional power dynamics, compelling Pakistan to reassess its military strategies and alliances. A more militarily assertive India, backed by QUAD, could embolden New Delhi in its regional policies, particularly concerning Kashmir and border disputes.

Pakistan's economic stability remains a persistent challenge, and as QUAD promotes alternative investment avenues to counter China's BRI, Islamabad may find itself in a precarious position. If QUAD-backed projects in South and Southeast Asia gain traction, Pakistan risks being economically sidelined. Additionally, any potential strain on Sino-Pak relations due to intensified US-China rivalry could further complicate Pakistan's economic recovery.

However, there is also an opportunity for Pakistan to engage with QUAD members on selective economic initiatives. QUAD's emphasis on resilient supply chains, digital transformation, and sustainable infrastructure could be areas where Pakistan can find common ground without compromising its relationship with China. Strengthening trade ties with Japan and Australia, for instance, could provide economic benefits that mitigate the risks of overreliance on Beijing.

Pakistan's security calculus is also affected by QUAD's activities. Increased Indo-US military cooperation and Australia's growing defense partnerships with India contribute to the strategic imbalance in South Asia. This could lead Pakistan to strengthen its defense ties with China and Russia, possibly accelerating an emerging bloc rivalry in the region. Moreover, the intensification of QUAD's role could impact Pakistan's naval strategy. As the Indo-Pacific gains greater significance, Pakistan may need to reconsider its maritime

policies, particularly in relation to the Arabian Sea, where QUAD-aligned nations have increased their presence. This could lead to greater regional maritime competition and force Pakistan to modernize its naval capabilities.

The QUAD's growing role in the Indo-Pacific presents Pakistan with both strategic challenges and potential avenues for engagement. While the deepening India-US partnership within QUAD is a major concern for Pakistan, outright opposition to QUAD could limit Islamabad's diplomatic and economic opportunities. A pragmatic approach would involve strategic recalibration, strengthening ties with China and other regional allies while exploring economic cooperation with selected QUAD members.

Pakistan must also work towards diversifying its economic partnerships to reduce reliance on any single power bloc. Engaging with the ASEAN nations, fostering stronger ties with the European Union, and enhancing regional trade mechanisms could help mitigate the economic risks posed by the QUAD's Indo-Pacific strategy.

Ultimately, Pakistan's response to QUAD should be one of strategic flexibility rather than rigid alignment or opposition. By navigating this evolving geopolitical landscape with diplomatic acumen, Pakistan can safeguard its interests while adapting to the shifting regional order.

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AI-Driven Terror and Its Implications for Quetta

Sarina Tareen

April 26, 2025,

In an era of AI-Driven Militancy, can internet blackouts really be a reliable kind of tool against terrorism now? AI was being increasingly weaponized by militants in order to spread disinformation more quickly than ever before. Consequently, officials cut internet access in Quetta, an action that postpones danger briefly but mainly penalizes the public rather than insurgents. Terrorists used AI in order to spread disinformation. Thus, the governments must surely also evolve now. One reliable strategy is unlike complete digital darkness.

Digital platforms have transformed communication and accelerated the transformation of society in a hyper connected world. However, this very connectivity has allowed disinformation to greatly proliferate. The public discourse has additionally strengthened as a result of it too. Artificial intelligence (AI) has turned into being a transformative source as a response for dealing with these growing complexities. Complex global issues are addressed with it, with human well-being and welfare being improved by its recent rapid advancements.

Additionally, AI increasingly applies itself to counter terrorism efforts as well as National security. Pakistan is a context in which national security as well as state stability have been consistently weakened by terrorism. Adaptive threats are confronted through AI's use of it in providing a critical advantage. This represents a broader shift of calculation. Now, policymakers address complex security dynamics.

While AI offers meaningful benefits, the spread and innovation of propaganda are also eased. Facts become twisted as well as propaganda is widely spread by means of outdated visuals. AI generates misleading content, and terrorist groups are now using some of it. The shift to AI tools by militants, who have exploited technology for a long time, signals a worrying stage of propaganda warfare.

With the accessibility of AI tools, violent non state actors introduce new layers of complexity and risk to global security dynamics. To add, AI is emerging as a tool of asymmetrical warfare, when these groups exploit technological gaps to gain strategic

advantage. Generative AI can be weaponized to forge images, fuel misinformation, and spread propaganda through platforms like WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook and similar social media tools.

This pattern was evident in the aftermath of the Jaffar Express hijacking in March 2025. The militant groups used social media to spread misleading content. Branded with their logo a 1:23 minute video, showing a train explosion in a remote mountainous region was widely distributed on various social media platforms. Yet upon verification, subsequent fact-checking confirmed the video was originally uploaded in April 2022 and was unrelated to the current event. In addition, the group circulated fabricated threats of upcoming attacks, fueling paranoia and distrust.

In addition to the earlier case, another fabricated propaganda video surfaced in the wake of the Jaffar Express hijacking. Another video which depicted a massive fire, was circulated on social media with false claims that it showed the Jaffar Express attack carried out by affiliated insurgents. In reality, the footage depicted a blaze near Karachi's Mir Chakar on March 10, 2025. This confirmed that the video was unrelated to the train hijacking incident, which occurred on March

To make matters worse, the Indian media seized the opportunity to amplify the fake content, to project negative narrative of Pakistan internationally. The disinformation campaign was calculated, deliberate acts of digital warfare, designed to disrupt narratives and manipulate public perception. In response, the government of Pakistan enforced unannounced shutdown of internet services in Quetta and surrounding areas of Balochistan during March and April 2025. However, neither the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) nor local officials released any formal statement on the shutdowns.

Pakistan's digital censorship has expanded in recent years, from mobile service suspension in Quetta during Muharram to Nationwide internet blackouts during elections and national events. According to the digital right organization, between 2022 and 2023 Pakistan restricted internet for 694 days. Alarmingly, patterns from 2024 and 2025 suggest a growing normalization of internet shutdowns as a tool for state control.

While these blackouts are quite often justified under the pretext of national security, and also curbing extremist propaganda. Their consequences do extend far beyond that of their stated purpose. Notably for people linked to e-commerce and online education throughout today's digital era. Even with its security rationale, the internet's suspension still legitimately concerns civic society.

Another blackout engulfs Quetta, we must ask if these internet suspension truly proactive security measures, or reactive acts of suspension.

To address these challenges, Pakistan must go past reactive censorship instead, to address these issues, and put into place a clear AI system under independent watch. Initiatives of a relatively low cost, such as real time alerts or verified information platforms, can aid in countering misinformation, without any principles of democracy being compromised. It is time that we put a stop to total suspension and protect digital rights in a legal manner.

Propaganda warfare is dominant at this moment in time, with misinformation spreading rapidly. The Jaffar Express incident showed the manner in which propaganda now dictates the nature of battles. Today, front lines are no longer geographical but digital. In such a context, counterterrorism requires the policymaking process to be one that is considerate of both civil liberties and the national security.

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U.S-China Trade War: A Battle with No Real Winners

Sami Ullah

April 26, 2025

The trade relationship between China and the United States has always been complicated. In 1979, both countries restored diplomatic ties and entered into a trade agreement. Consequently, their trade volume surged rapidly, from \$4 billion in imports and exports in that one year to over \$750 billion by 2022. A significant turning point occurred in 2001 when China became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), facilitating rapid trade growth, making them each other's largest trading partners. Since the 80s, Donald Trump has advocated for tariffs as a means to shield American industries. He argued that the U.S. was being "ripped off" by its trade partners

Nonetheless, several challenges persisted in their trade relationship, including concerns regarding intellectual property violations, technology transfer, and an increasing trade deficit for the U.S. Since the 80s, Donald Trump has advocated for tariffs as a means to shield American industries. He argued that the U.S. was being "ripped off" by its trade partners. Upon his election as the 45th president of the United States in 2017, tariffs became a key element of his trade strategy, particularly targeting China.

The trade conflict between the U.S. and China formally commenced in January 2018. President Trump initiated tariffs by imposing 30-50% tariffs on imported solar panels and washing machines. Furthermore, in March 2018, he imposed 25% on steel and 10% tariff on aluminum imports from many countries, including China were levied. By June 2018, these tariffs were expanded to the European Union, Canada, and Mexico. On July 6, 2018, the United States applied tariffs on \$34 billion worth of Chinese products. In retaliation, China promptly imposed equal tariffs on U.S. exports

However, during the trade war between the United States and China, both countries enacted a series of retaliatory tariffs that heightened tensions. On July 6, 2018, the United States applied tariffs on \$34 billion worth of Chinese products. In retaliation, China

promptly imposed equal tariffs on U.S. exports. This cycle continued and on August 23, 2018, both countries again imposed 25% tariffs on an additional \$16 billion of each other's imports. The trade dispute escalated further in September 2018, when the United States instituted 10% tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports. In response, on September 18, China retaliated with 10% tariffs on \$60 billion of American goods. Furthermore, other countries also reacted. For instance, Canada applied matching tariffs on July 1, 2018, and India intends to implement trade penalties amounting to \$241 million.

Following Trump's re-election in 2024, the U.S-China trade war escalated again in 2025. From January to April, the average tariff imposed by the U.S. increased significantly from 2% to 24%, reaching the highest levels seen in over a hundred years. On April 9, the U.S. raised tariffs on every Chinese import to an astonishing 145%. Furthermore, a 25% tariff was applied to steel, aluminum and vehicles imported from all nations. Although tariffs ranging from 11% to 50% were scheduled for imports from 57 other countries, their implementation was postponed by 90 days, except for those on China. This indicated that the U.S. took a notably tougher approach toward China than it did with other countries. The most notable action occurred on April 11 when China ceased the export of essential minerals and magnets important to U.S. industries, along with announcing stricter regulations on raw materials access

In 2025, China responded proportionally to escalating U.S. tariffs. On February 4, it implemented a 15% tariff on U.S coal and LNG, as well as a 10% tariff on crude oil and agricultural machinery. On March 4, China targeted American food items by imposing 15% tariffs on Chicken, wheat, and corn, and 10% on Soybeans, pork and dairy products. In response to Trump's 145% tariff, China established an 84% tariff on April 9, followed by a 34% tariff on all U.S. goods on April 10. On April 12, it equalled the U.S.'s 125% tariff. The most notable action occurred on April 11 when China ceased the export of essential minerals and magnets important to U.S. industries, along with announcing

stricter regulations on raw materials access, thus shifting the nature of the trade conflict from a fiscal dispute to a competition for strategic resources.

Despite numerous challenges in the trade relationship between China and the USA, these two countries previously made an effort to address those challenges and establish a problem free partnership. Nevertheless, both countries aimed to sustain amicable trade relations. On January 15, 2020, the U.S. and China finalized the Phase One Trade Agreement, which came into effect on February 14, 2020. This agreement emphasized on intellectual property, technology transfer, U.S. agricultural exports, and financial services.

China promised to buy \$200 billion U.S. goods and services by 2021, compared to 2017. But by the end of 2020, China had only reached 58% of its target. Analysts at the Peterson Institute for International Economics called the deal a failure. While the agreement stopped further tariffs temporarily, it did not solve the deeper issues between the two countries. The U.S. China trade war has proven to be costly for both countries

The U.S. China trade war has proven to be costly for both countries. While the original goal was to protect American industries and reduce the U.S trade deficit, the outcomes have been far less positive. Instead of clear benefits, the trade war brought higher prices, supply chain disruptions, and economic uncertainty.

Furthermore, the Phase One Trade Agreement showed that even agreements between superpowers can fail if goals are too high and enforcement is weak. However, COVID-19 pandemic only made the situation worse, highlighting how fragile international trade agreements can be under unpredictable global conditions. The renewed trade tensions in 2025, with high-record tariffs and export bans on essential materials, further escalated the conflict

The renewed trade tensions in 2025, with high-record tariffs and export bans on essential materials, further escalated the conflict. These actions made it clear that the trade war was not just about economics, it had evolved into a broader struggle over technology leadership, national security, and geopolitical influence.

In the end, there are no real winners in this prolonged trade war. The primary victims are small and medium enterprises, consumers, and developing nations trapped between two major global powers. The lesson is clear: trade conflicts between giants often come at a global cost and it is the most vulnerable who pay the highest price.

<https://stratheia.com/u-s-china-trade-war-a-battle-with-no-real-winners/>

Realpolitik over Justice: The West's Dark Play in Western Sahara

Shahzadi Irum

April 26, 2025

Decolonization in Africa is one of the most pivotal global milestones of the 20th century, representing a determined and, in many cases, successful departure from centuries of Eurocentric colonial domination. From 1945 to 1960, country after country emerged from the shadows of colonial empires, raising their own flags and finding their voices on the world stage. This struggle continued for decades, driven by the dreams of millions who longed for freedom. Yet, the road to independence was rarely smooth. It was often bloody, painful, and fraught with repression, leaving behind wounds that many societies still suffer from today. Even so, Africa achieved what once seemed impossible—full sovereignty across the continent. However, one place remains trapped in the past: “Western Sahara.” This arid strip of land on the Atlantic coast, home to around half a million people, still waits for its turn at self-determination. For its people, the promise of independence remains just that promise unfulfilled.

Western Sahara, a disputed territory in northwestern Africa, remains at the center of an intensifying geopolitical standoff between Morocco and Western Sahara. For decades, both nations have been locked in a deadlock over its status, with repeated attempts at resolution proving ineffective. Although Morocco maintains de facto control over much of the region, the indigenous Sahrawi population, under the leadership of the Polisario Front, continues to demand an independent state, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Although the SADR has received limited recognition from several states and holds membership in the African Union, it is not recognized by the United Nations, which still categorizes Western Sahara as a non-self-governing territory.

The Western Sahara dispute traces its origin to 1975, following Spain's withdrawal from the Spanish Sahara, its former colonial possession. In the aftermath of the power vacuum, neighboring Morocco and Mauritania moved to annex and divide the territory among themselves, a move that was met with armed resistance from the Polisario Front against the illegal occupation.

By 1979, after continuing significant military setbacks inflicted by the Polisario, Mauritania abandoned its territorial claims and withdrew from the region. This departure allowed Morocco to expand its sway, consolidating its presence over much of the Western Sahara. In an effort to fortify its position and deter further Polisario offensives, Morocco constructed a massive defensive structure, known as the “Sand Berm,” which now delimits the areas under Moroccan control from those held by the Polisario. Currently, Morocco administers over 80 percent of the territory and regards it as an integral part of the kingdom, while the Polisario Front is confined to the sparsely populated interior zones.

While Algeria, which provides tacit support to Polisario, doesn’t claim Western Sahara for itself, its role in the conflict is far from neutral. Deeply wary of Morocco’s growing influence in the region, Algeria has long supported the Polisario Front politically, militarily, and financially. For Algeria, it’s not just about territorial dynamics but about standing by a movement it sees as fighting for a just cause. The Polisario Front, with Algeria’s backing and recognition from some international actors, continues to press for the Sahrawi people’s right to decide their own future. To them, the struggle is not over—it’s a matter of independence and justice that has yet to be resolved globally.

Over the years, dozens of countries, mostly from Africa, have formally recognized the SADR. But when it comes to the world’s major powers, the tilt is clearly in Morocco’s favor. Many powerful nations, whether openly or behind the scenes, have backed Morocco’s claim to Western Sahara. Even Spain, once the colonial ruler of the territory, has expressed its support for Morocco. A significant turning point came when the US recognized Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara in exchange for Morocco normalizing ties with Israel. The US is organizing a dark chess game, sacrificing Western Sahara like a disposable pawn to crown Israel as a regional monarch. By bribing Morocco with recognition in exchange for political favor to Israel, it is not only altering borders but also making a mockery of Africa’s postcolonial efforts. It is not just about politics—it is a betrayal of African people whose voices are considered noise, not worth hearing.

More recently, France, which holds deep colonial ties with both Morocco and Algeria, has also thrown its weight behind Morocco. Algeria, which strongly opposes Moroccan control over the region, reacted sharply by recalling its ambassador from Paris, highlighting just how deeply this decades-old dispute is still stirring regional tensions and rivalries.

Examined through the lens of realpolitik, France's acceptance of Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara is driven primarily by geopolitical interests and power dynamics. Paris has no interest in justice for the Sahrawi people because they offer nothing to exploit, no strategic alliance to gain, and no geopolitical leverage to offer. In contrast, Rabat provides Paris with a stable ally at a time when its influence in Africa is breaking up. After being booted out of several West African countries and humiliated by the rise of anti-French sentiment in the Sahel, Paris is desperate to gain a foothold on the continent to revive its dying empire at any cost.

In conclusion, the West's dark play in Africa is not a new phenomenon but a continuation of a long history of self-interest and injustice. For centuries, the West has sacrificed Africa's dignity and rights in the pursuit of power and profit, and now, with Western Sahara, it repeats the same cruel pattern. The suffering of the Sahrawi people is just another chapter in the West's ongoing legacy of selling out Western Sahara for its own gain. While Africa struggles to rise, the West is mercilessly kneeling on its neck, denying it the breath of freedom.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2025/04/28/realpolitik-over-justice-the-wests-dark-play-in-western-sahara/>

South Asian Nuclear Rivals on the Edge – Again

Usama Khalid

April 28, 2025

The hotly disputed region of the world, Kashmir, has once more been in the limelight of the global media since April 22, and again because of the worst news of yet another terrorist attack, but this time the target was unarmed tourists. However, the alarming situation unfurled in the immediate post-attack scenario, when the Bollywood-styled mainstream media of India twisted and turned the tragic news story into the dirty blame game on Pakistan without any substantial proof and prior to any thorough investigation. India and Pakistan have been archrivals since the partition of the colonial-ruled subcontinent in 1947

India and Pakistan have been archrivals since the partition of the colonial-ruled subcontinent in 1947. Both the states since then have been in the constant struggle for power over the disputed territories and regions, but above all, the strategically vital mountainous valley of Kashmir has been the longest-standing territorial dispute, which is one of the long-standing issues between the South Asian rivals.

Pakistan and India have fought three wars over this piece of land at different phases in their historical evolution, i.e., in 1948, 1965, and 1999. The former two military standoffs happened when both states did not have nuclear weapon capability, while the third military skirmish took place in the post-nuclearized scenario. The nuclearization of South Asia began in 1974, when India stole the fissile materials from the Canadian nuclear reactor given to India

The nuclearization of South Asia began in 1974, when India stole the fissile materials from the Canadian nuclear reactor given to India. It built the bomb and termed it the peaceful nuclear weapon. How could it be peaceful when both the arch-rivals are on hostile terms and possess the huge conventional military asymmetry? Pakistan had to follow suit after India tested its nuclear weapon capability first in 1974 and later in May 1998. The 2001-02 Indian parliament attack, 2008 Taj Hotel incident, 2016 so-called

Indian surgical strike in the Kashmir valley of Pakistan, and the 2019 Pulwama-Balakot crisis are all major events

However, the post-nuclearized subcontinent is perceived to be one of the dangerous flashpoints of nuclear escalation, looking at their respective eventful history. The 2001-02 Indian parliament attack, 2008 Taj Hotel incident, 2016 so-called Indian surgical strike in the Kashmir valley of Pakistan, and the 2019 Pulwama-Balakot crisis are all major events that took place in the twenty-first century when both states possessed nuclear weapons. At each moment, the threshold had not been crossed, and rationality had prevailed eventually, either by international involvement or by bilateral Track Two diplomatic means in the absence of formal ties. The main highlight this time was India's unilateral decision to suspend the historic Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

However, this time, after the Pahalgam incident, the Indian government acted abnormally and irrationally by severing already limited diplomatic ties with Pakistan under the pretext that this particular incident was carried out from across the border. The main highlight this time was India's unilateral decision to suspend the historic Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), signed between India and Pakistan in 1960 through the World Bank as a third party for the regulation and distribution of water to six different rivers—divided into two sets of three rivers for each party. Additionally, the closure of international border check-posts between the two states and the suspension of visas for Pakistani nationals under SAARC are likely to further exacerbate the uncertainty amid the ongoing security crisis.

The Indian aggressive policy is completely irresponsible and illogical, given the hostile regional dynamics of South Asia. The similar scenario has been observed previously back in 2019, in the aftermath of the suicide attack on the Indian security force convoy in the Pulwama district of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJ&K), when India violated the air sovereignty of Pakistan and dropped the payload in the Balakot region of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The situation escalated to a limited dogfight between India and Pakistan and resulted in the capture of the Indian Air Force's serving officer, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman. Pakistan captured serving Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) officer, Commander Kulbhushan Yadav, from the troubled province of Balochistan

However, the international mediation by the United States and China proved to be beneficial in the de-escalation of the tense situation. Similarly, the leadership of India is once again misusing the Pahalgam tragic incident to operationalize their malign strategy against Pakistan, despite knowing the repercussions. Pakistan has always acted responsibly in such scenarios. Pakistan used the international forums in the absence of bilateral political and diplomatic ties. Like in 2016, when Pakistan captured serving Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) officer, Commander Kulbhushan Yadav, from the troubled province of Balochistan. Pakistan has the potential and capability to conduct targeted strikes inside India, but it has always chosen to be a rational and responsible international actor.

Without having resort to dialogue, the uncertainty and differences between the both nuclear-armed rivals can never be resolved. Indian leadership has to rethink its strategy of madness with regard to relations with its neighboring rivals, because with the inception of nuclear weapons, direct wars between nuclear weapon states are considered to be unthinkable. However, if the leadership has a similar non-political extremist ideology like the current ruling government of India, then anything can be expected.

<https://stratheia.com/south-asian-nuclear-rivals-on-the-edge-again/>

Pakistan: the quest for true sovereignty

Nomeen Kasi

April 28, 2025

23rd March 1940 reflects on a pivotal moment in the history of Pakistan—the Lahore Resolution. This momentous resolution has great importance in the history of Pakistan as it called for the establishment of separate homeland. It reflects to the “Two Nation Theory” of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, leading to an era where Muslims started struggle for freedom, not just against colonizers but also Hindus. The resolution was a direct response to the growing concerns of Muslims regarding their political, cultural, and religious rights in subcontinent. This event had envisioned the creation of Muslim majority homeland, which eventually lead to the creation of Pakistan in 1947.

Lahore resolution attained its meaningful importance as it stated the Muslims demand for self-rule without interference from others while uniting millions in the subcontinent. It was not just a political demand but a demand for the right to decide our own destiny and independent homeland that could safeguard our cultural, social, and religious identities. However, throughout Pakistan’s existence, the events of 1940 raise a fundamental question: what does true sovereignty or self-determination mean?

Self-determination refers to the ability of a state to make decisions free from external influence, a dream that was put into motion during the Lahore Resolution. However, in the current scenario after 85 years, the question arises: can Pakistan truly make its own decisions? Although Pakistan has made significant strides in its institution building, yet the external powers have always influenced its political and social fabric. Mainly the reason being our over-reliance on foreign aids and loans, overshadowing our internal governance. Over the years, the issue of economic dependency has been a major hurdle in realizing full sovereignty. Certainly, economic dependency on IMF and the World Bank is one of the major reasons. On the other hand, strategic and economic ties with countries like United states and China, has placed Pakistan at a position where making independent decisions have been compromised. Dependent economic and foreign policy decisions create an environment which erodes sovereignty.

For instance, the IMF bailout packages, which come with their own set of conditions, has often dictated Pakistan's fiscal policies. These economic prescriptions, aimed at stabilizing Pakistan's economy, limits our financial freedom leaving us vulnerable to economic pressures from global powers. At the same time, our growing ties with major powers, although beneficial in some respects, places Pakistan in a delicate position.

Global geopolitical dynamics undergoes rapid transformation due to the rise of new powers and shifting alliances worldwide. Over the years, Pakistan has made certain strategic decisions such as alliance with United States during the cold war and growing ties with China today. The shifting alliance game has placed Pakistan in a position to make difficult choices, as external powers places immense pressure. In this situation, can Pakistan afford to engage itself in bloc politics?

It is clear that Pakistan cannot entirely ignore bloc politics—not in today's world. However, it does not mean that Pakistan cannot be independent. Pakistan can avoid becoming subservient to any single bloc by adopting a neutral foreign policy. To maintain a balance approach, Pakistan should maintain diplomatic relations with all the states, while ensuring the best interest of Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistan should focus on advancing technology, military capabilities and foster self-reliant economy, to avoid being dragged in unnecessary conflicts. Pakistan must ensure that it doesn't becomes a pawn in geopolitical game.

Admittedly, the world is changing rapidly. Today's complex realities such as technological advancement, globalization, economic interdependence, climate change are shaping geopolitics, as it transcends borders. However, the core principles of Lahore resolution: sovereignty, self-determination and self-governance, are still relevant today. Despite this, managing the affairs becomes challenging. The question which arises is: how do we adapt to the ideals of true sovereignty in a more interconnected world?

This can be best answered by creating a balance between collaboration and independence. To achieve its national interest Pakistan must first develop powerful economic foundations. Additionally, Pakistan should focus on technological innovation to foster its economic growth to break free from the shackles of foreign loan dependency.

Most importantly, Pakistan must invest in its military and technological advancement and ensure independent foreign policy.

In conclusion, Pakistan is at a crossroads with its quest for true sovereignty which begun with the Lahore resolution and is continued to date. Furthermore, we must honor the dreams of our founding fathers along with adapting their vision in accordance to the changing dynamics of the world. Pakistan should focus on building a future where true sovereignty is not just an ideal but a reality. Self-governing enough to make independent foreign, political and economic decisions, along with navigating the complexities of geopolitics. Admittedly, this is a challenging road ahead, however, Pakistan has always overcome every obstacle in its way. We can carve a path that honors the vision of the Lahore Resolution by staying true to the principles of freedom, self-governance, and sovereignty.

<https://strafasia.com/pakistan-the-quest-for-true-sovereignty/>

Why SMRs are revolutionary in Nuclear Energy

Naseem Sabzal

April 29, 2025

Nuclear energy is conceived as a cheap and safe source of energy production with lower carbon footprints and climate risk. Since 1950, commercial nuclear power plants have been in operation in many countries. At the present time nuclear energy contributes to 9% of global energy production with 440 active reactors in more than 50 countries. Pakistan is also among those countries with 6 active conventional reactors, generating 3262 MWe. But the cost of conventional nuclear reactors is much bigger with its requisites. A large area of land, around 640 acres, should be located in proximity to seashores or water bodies for cooling and avoiding environmental impacts of nuclear waste. Conversely, the latest idea of nuclear reactors, the Small Module Reactors (SMRs), are cost-efficient and easy to install

Conversely, the latest idea of nuclear reactors, the Small Module Reactors (SMRs), are cost-efficient and easy to install. With no specific requisites and climate impact factors. One can build an SMR on a mere 34 acres, without the need for a coastal area. These small grid units can be built and deployed in remote areas due to their flexibility. The generating capacity of SMRs is up to 300 MWe with a long-term refueling interval. SMRs are a real game changer regarding the peaceful use of nuclear energy; they are cost-effective, flexible, and much safer in terms of their security.

Currently, SMR is yet in the emerging phase with research and development stages; only Russia and China each have operational SMRs. “Akademik Lomonosov” The world’s first floating nuclear power plant with two modules of 35 MW built on a ship. The size and flexibility of the reactor allows it to mobilize in remote areas where electricity cannot be transmitted and generate power for 200,000 Russians with just a ship-sized infrastructure. China also has one operational SMR the “Linglong One” located in Hainan province. This module reactor can generate power for more than 500,000 people

China also has one operational SMR the “Linglong One” located in Hainan province. This module reactor can generate power for more than 500,000 people. The impressive fact

is this SMR can reduce CO₂ emissions equivalent to 880,000 tons. With the climate impact, it can help the environment equivalent to planting 7.5 million trees, touching on the clean, peaceful use of nuclear energy.

However, more than 15 countries are developing SMRs. The US, UK, and Canada are still in the developmental phase and will probably start operations in the future, followed by Russia and China. The idea of SMR is floating in many countries amidst increasing demand for clean and cheaper electricity. Particularly the countries where a large part of electricity is generated by fossil fuels. Considering the impacts of burning hydrocarbons on climate and the global demand for replacing fossil fuels for energy production. SMRs are a milestone in nuclear energy; they are factory assembled, and their prefabricated modules can be transported to remote areas where large facilities cannot be built

Pakistan faces a severe energy crisis, particularly in urban and remote areas where energy production is a big challenge. The technical and domestic complications possess major restraints for the installation of facilities in areas where energy demand is not met. Six active reactors in Pakistan generate 15% of energy capacity. Pakistan's reliance on fossil fuels and hydropower results in an unstable energy supply due to a lack of water management systems and hydrocarbon imports. Knowing the fact that Pakistan is a climate-vulnerable country and energy insecurity is also escalating each year with consumption and cost. SMRs are a milestone in nuclear energy; they are factory assembled, and their prefabricated modules can be transported to remote areas where large facilities cannot be built. Russia and China are leading in SMR development. Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) can collaborate with Russian Atomic Corporation (ROSATOM) and China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) in the development and deployment of SMR

Pakistan can seek collaboration in the energy sector with both countries for the upgrading of nuclear infrastructure. The technical and strategic collaboration can help Pakistan to fill the energy gap with cheap and feasible ways. Pakistan possesses the technical capability of nuclear energy with existing and operational infrastructure. Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) can collaborate with Russian Atomic Corporation (ROSATOM) and China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) in the development and

deployment of SMR. It will boost Pakistan's peaceful use of nuclear technology program. SMRs are groundbreaking; their low cost and flexibility have revolutionized nuclear energy. This technology can uplift the energy sector of Pakistan with pilot SMRs in remote areas

SMRs are groundbreaking; their low cost and flexibility have revolutionized nuclear energy. This technology can uplift the energy sector of Pakistan with pilot SMRs in remote areas. The development of SMR has to pass many obstacles. The finance, regulatory arrangements, and license of SMR could be a subject of international recognition from the IAEA, the NPT, or the IMF. Yet, Pakistan can initiate cooperation in this area to enhance its power generation capacity by adopting modern energy production methods.

<https://stratheia.com/why-smrs-are-revolutionary-in-nuclear-energy/>

The Promise of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Sadaf Nadeem

April 29, 2025

Over a long period, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been viewed as a game-changer for Pakistan and more specifically to its southernmost, most underdeveloped province, Balochistan.

Gwadar Port, the central jewel of this project, positions Balochistan as a cornerstone for trade & industry. However, as CPEC enters a new phase, one question still lingers: Will the people of Balochistan be able to take advantage of such a grand local opportunity, or will they be pushed more towards the periphery? How can CPEC serve the people of Balochistan, and what hurdles impede its success?

There is no doubt about the significance of CPEC for Balochistan. It has a 750-km long coastline and will receive a great economic boost in future due to Gwadar's strategic importance as an international deep port. Highways, railways, and special economic zones (SEZs) would boost infrastructure and create jobs, lifting a region long-suffering from poverty and development failures. As per the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Balochistan has an unemployment rate of approximately 6.9% against national average of 5.8%.

But the experts have cautioned that the benefits of CPEC may not trickle down for the locals. According to a report published by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics PIDE 2020, although the regional infrastructure projects are progressing, there are still no real jobs for the people of Balochistan. In addition to this, more and more external workforce is being attracted in the wake of Gwadar Port's development projects, further fueling the resentment among provincial residents who feel that they are not reaping enough shares from their homeland.

Balochistan's long-standing political and security problems represent the single biggest threat to the successful implementation of CPEC. The province has been the hotbed of separatist and insurgent movements, and locals remain skeptical that this is another attempt to exploit their resources against their will. For example, Separatist assault on the Chinese consulate in Karachi in 2018 illustrates how precarious CPEC-related projects

have become. Moreover, the fragile security situation often sends negative signals to potential investors.

Addressing these challenges will need an inclusive and transparent process. Local communities should be brought in to plan and execute these projects for the people of Balochistan to benefit from CPEC in the true sense. This includes the opening up of jobs created by CPEC to locals, vocational training programs to help Baloch earn their livings, and the prioritizing of locals in business and economic zones. The workplace quota system must also be ensured under which competent and competitive workers of Balochistan should be preferred over other people in jobs while the unskilled should be trained as per the requirement of the job opportunities this project will create.

China's rural development model is one specific illustration of such an inclusive approach, which has generated tremendous economic benefits for communities. These initiatives stress community engagement, fair allocation of resources, and sustained investment in human capital. Pakistan should also take a leaf out of China's book by ensuring that Balochistan's development is holistic and not just infrastructure led. While China utilizes centralized governance and massive financial resources to eradicate poverty on a large scale, Balochistan must adopt these principles locally by focusing on community engagement and policies that actively involve its population in development projects.

A similar model in Balochistan may help ensure that local populations are not left behind. If CPEC becomes inclusive and transparent, it could serve as an engine of perennial development. But for this to work, the focus needs to be a well-rounded and a mix of infrastructure projects, skills development and empowering communities. While large infrastructure projects are crucial for jump-starting economic growth, sustained progress hinges on skill development through education and access to quality healthcare services. Such an integrated approach would ensure that Balochistan's development is not merely about constructing roads or buildings but about developing human and social capital.

Building roads, ports and infrastructure is undoubtedly important; however, CPEC must go beyond such development alone, it must focus on improving the quality of life for local populations by addressing education healthcare, and social welfare needs alongside infrastructure improvement. For historically marginalized regions like Balochistan in

particular, CPEC should ensure equitable representation for its people while fostering political empowerment.

Ultimately, Balochistan will only see the success of CPEC if its benefits permeate across all segments of its population equitably. There is a significant risk that CPEC could turn into another exploitative if both government and private investors fail to engage local communities in the development process,

Balochistan needs more than roads and ports; it needs its future. By contrast, in areas where infrastructure-led state capitalism has prospered, such as China's under stretched Western provinces, road building was complemented by direct community engagement, alongside vocational training and education investment. If these elements are incorporated into Balochistan's development strategy alongside security measures and education initiatives, CPEC could indeed become the transformative project it was meant to be.

<https://www.wgi.world/the-promise-of-the-china-pakistan-economic-corridor-cpec/>