

ICEP WEEKLY MAGAZINE

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COVERAGE AREAS

ESSAY WRITING

*CURRENT AFFAIRS
PAKISTAN AFFAIRS
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
FOREIGN POLICY
GEOPOLITICS
GLOBAL ISSUES
COMPETITIVE EXAMS*

SOURCES

DAWN

*THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE
THE NATION
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
DIPLOMAT
ALJAZEERA
THE ECONOMIST*

GUIDE FOR READING THIS MAGAZINE

This magazine is designed with column-shaped layouts to accommodate maximum amount of content and enhance the reading experience. Each article is divided into two columns. It is recommended to read all articles by starting from the left column and proceeding to the right column for a good reading flow.

Colours used for highlighting indicates the following:

Used for main ideas/arguments



That contains some important data



Salient features of this magazine:

- ✚ three main sections: Editorials, International, and National articles.
- ✚ Each article is properly deconstructed; main ideas/arguments are highlighted in yellow and green Colours.
- ✚ Outlines of all articles
- ✚ Vocabulary in context
- ✚ Relevant graphics included
- ✚ Proper headings of each article and much more

COMPOSED BY

ICEP Faculty Member

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Editorial Section

All articles are taken from prestigious Pakistan
and world 's newspapers.

No preparedness

DAWN | JULY 6, 2025

OUTLINE:

1. Current Threat

- Swelling rivers, GLOFs, and monsoon forecasts signal another looming flood crisis.
- Recent floods have already caused deaths and destruction.

2. Systemic Failures

- Swat tragedy highlights lack of early warning systems and ill-equipped rescue teams.
- Telemetry and forecasting gaps remain unaddressed.

3. Climate Change vs Governance

- Climate change is real but not an excuse for inaction or poor disaster management.
- Other countries have reduced losses through preparedness.

4. NDMA's Awareness Without Action

- Acknowledgement of risks exists.

- Implementation remains weak due to lack of coordination and investment.

5. Policy and Development Flaws

- Repeated failure to prioritize disaster resilience in national planning.
- Bureaucratic complacency and outdated development models persist.

6. Call to Action

- Urges shift toward investment in flood-resilient infrastructure and warning systems.
- Emphasizes placing vulnerable communities at the center of policymaking.



WITH swelling rivers, the heightened risk of GLOFs and forecasts of heavy monsoon rains, Pakistan is standing on the precipice of yet another flood disaster. Since June 26, scores of lives have been lost to flash floods and house collapses in the country, bringing back painful memories of the devastating 2022 deluge that killed hundreds, displaced millions and inflicted over \$33bn in economic costs. Labelled a “climate catastrophe” by the UN, the floods exposed critical gaps in Pakistan’s flood-warning and disaster-preparedness systems.

The recent tragedy in Swat, where surging river waters swept away several tourists, shows, however, that there

was little effort to plug them. An inquiry report has highlighted the glaring flood telemetry gaps across flood-vulnerable areas, indicating that a functioning early flood-warning system could have predicted the sudden rise in the water well in time to save the tourists’ lives. It also points out that the rescue staff did not have the necessary tools to save them.

Pakistan is among the world’s most climate-vulnerable countries. Extreme weather events such as floods, heatwaves, droughts and heavy rainfall have become more frequent due to the rapid climate change in the last couple of decades. But climate change should not be used as an excuse to explain away the gaps in the early flood-warning systems or the lack of disaster preparedness.

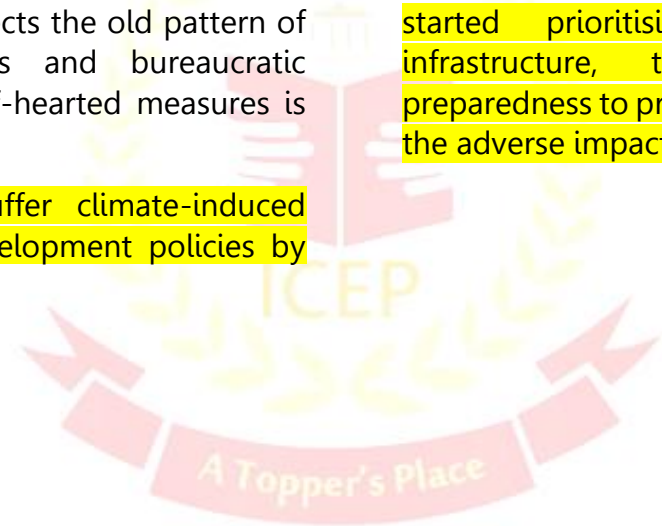
The experience of other countries shows that early forecast and timely messaging can drastically bring down the death toll caused by monsoon floods. Likewise, flood-resilient infrastructure can help cut economic losses. Recently, the NDMA chairman emphasised reducing the impact of disaster by being prepared in advance and issuing timely alerts. He also stressed on coordinated efforts among different government departments and agencies. This shows that the awareness is there. However, it is not being backed by action.

With the frequency of calamitous weather events increasing, Pakistan cannot afford to be in denial after every tragedy. Each year of inaction means putting more lives at risk and increasing the cost of rescue and recovery. Even though the prime minister and other government

officials never tire of highlighting the impact of climate change, the lack of adequate investment in flood-warning systems and disaster readiness reflects the old pattern of misplaced development priorities and bureaucratic complacency. But the time for half-hearted measures is long past.

The country will continue to suffer climate-induced tragedies unless we reset our development policies by

placing vulnerable communities at the centre of the national policymaking process. It is time the government started prioritising investment in flood-resilient infrastructure, telemetry stations and disaster preparedness to protect the people and the economy from the adverse impacts of a changing climate landscape. ■



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VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Precipice** – A dangerous or critical situation; on the edge of disaster.
2. **GLOFs (Glacial Lake Outburst Floods)** – Sudden floods caused by the rupture of glacial lakes.
3. **Deluge** – A severe flood or overwhelming amount of something.
4. **Telemetry** – Remote monitoring and data transmission, often used in weather and flood systems.
5. **Catastrophe** – A large-scale disaster causing serious damage or loss of life.

3. **Disaster preparedness** – Planning and readiness to handle natural or man-made disasters.
4. **Flood-resilient infrastructure** – Buildings and systems designed to resist damage from flooding.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **Standing on the precipice** – Being very close to a dangerous or disastrous situation.
2. **Bring back painful memories** – To recall or relive distressing past experiences.
3. **Plug the gaps** – To fix weaknesses or problems in a system.
4. **Could have predicted** – Was possible to foresee or anticipate.
5. **Drastically bring down the death toll** – Significantly reduce the number of deaths.

PHRASES:

1. **Climate catastrophe** – A large-scale disaster caused by or worsened due to climate change.
2. **Early flood-warning system** – Technology and procedures that alert people in advance of possible floods.

PREPARATION

DECONSTRUCTION OF EDITORIAL

JARGON/TERMINOLOGIES:

Term	Explanation
Early flood-warning system	A mechanism that provides advance notice of impending floods using sensors and weather models.
Flood-resilient infrastructure	Buildings, roads, and public facilities designed to withstand flooding.
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority – the government agency tasked with disaster preparedness and response.
Telemetry station	Stations equipped with sensors to transmit real-time data on weather or river levels.
Disaster preparedness	Planning and capacity-building to reduce vulnerability and respond effectively to disasters.

	- 2022 floods and Swat incident cited as recent devastating examples.
Systemic Failures in Disaster Preparedness	- No functional early warning systems in many vulnerable areas.
	- Rescue teams lack proper training and essential equipment.
Disconnect Between Awareness and Action	- Authorities acknowledge climate risks but lack decisive implementation.
	- Poor coordination between government agencies and departments.
Misallocation of Development Priorities	- Investment neglects vulnerable regions and climate-resilient infrastructure.
	- Budget allocations do not reflect the urgency of climate adaptation.

CORE THEMES:

Core Theme	Key Points
Recurring Flood Disasters	- Increasing risk from monsoon rains, glacier melt, and climate change.

BROADER THEMES & APPLICATIONS:

1. Climate Justice and Vulnerability

- Developing nations like Pakistan bear disproportionate costs of climate change with minimal global responsibility.
2. **Policy Implementation Gap**
 - Frequent rhetoric not translating into ground-level reforms.
 3. **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)**
 - Importance of proactive investment in warning systems and resilient infrastructure under SDG 13 (Climate Action).
 4. **Governance and Accountability**
 - Bureaucratic inefficiency as a major obstacle in climate adaptation.

1. What are the major institutional and technical challenges in establishing effective flood-warning systems in Pakistan?
2. How can Pakistan improve its disaster preparedness in the face of increasing climate-induced extreme weather events?
3. Discuss the role of governance and inter-agency coordination in reducing the impact of natural disasters.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in preventing and mitigating flood disasters.
5. "Climate change is not an excuse for poor governance." Discuss this in light of Pakistan's recent flood management failures.
6. What policy reforms are necessary to integrate vulnerable communities into Pakistan's climate resilience planning?

KEY QUESTIONS:

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Saarc's future

DAWN | JULY 6, 2025

OUTLINE:

1. SAARC Inactive Since 2016

- India boycotted the Islamabad summit.
- Other countries followed, paralyzing the platform.

2. Speculation on New Bloc

- Reports of Pakistan, China, and Bangladesh exploring a grouping without India.
- Created excitement and debate, especially across the eastern border.

3. Pakistan Reaffirms SAARC Commitment

- Rejects alternative bloc for now.
- Supports inclusive regionalism and urges revival of SAARC.

4. India's Role in Obstructing Progress

- India's disengagement is a major hurdle.
- Editorial calls on New Delhi to act responsibly for regional cooperation.

5. SAARC vs ASEAN Comparison

- SAARC failed to emulate ASEAN's success due to political rivalries.

6. Call for Unity Amid Global Challenges

- Regional cooperation vital to face poverty, climate change, and economic uncertainty.
- South Asia must move forward — with or without India.



FOR nearly a decade, Saarc has lain dormant, a victim of India's stubborn refusal to engage with Pakistan. The platform became dysfunctional after New Delhi chose to boycott the Islamabad summit in 2016, and a few other countries followed suit.

But South Asia's vast potential cannot be held hostage forever by India. This is perhaps why recent reports of Pakistan, China and Bangladesh possibly exploring a new regional bloc generated considerable excitement, including across our eastern border, with observers speculating that the three countries may be contemplating a grouping sans India.

Tempting as the possibility may have seemed to some, Islamabad has for now publicly reiterated its commitment to Saarc, signalling that it still believes in inclusive regionalism. Diplomatically, this puts the ball in India's court: it is now up to New Delhi to recognise that reviving

the forum, and not fragmenting the region with its rivalries, is the path to unlocking South Asia's untapped potential. Saarc was a promising platform for economic and cultural integration, but it has decidedly failed to emulate Asean's success, even though that is what it had originally aspired to do.

The platform's charter makes it compulsory for all states to attend summits at the level of heads of government or state. India chose to exploit this when it led a boycott of the Islamabad summit in 2016. Pakistan, on the other hand, has consistently championed Saarc's potential, even in strained times.

Perhaps New Delhi needs a reminder that there was a time in the 1990s when Pakistan was tempted to do what it did in 2016 but chose prudence instead. In 1995, with tensions between India and Pakistan at a high, then prime minister Benazir Bhutto did not wish to attend the Eighth Saarc Summit in New Delhi. The then president Farooq Leghari was nonetheless dispatched in her stead, reflecting Islamabad's commitment to the platform and the process.

Today, Pakistan is reaffirming its dedication to Saarc. It is a vital mechanism to address shared challenges such as poverty, climate change and trade barriers. But if India continues to choose disengagement and obstruct progress, it should reconsider its stance without hesitation. With the global economy experiencing upheaval, and conflict over dwindling resources growing intense, there is strength to be found in numbers. With or without India, South Asia must forge ahead. ■

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Dormant** – Inactive or not currently functioning.
2. **Stubborn** – Unwilling to change one's attitude or position, despite reason or persuasion.
3. **Boycott** – A refusal to participate or engage in an event or with a party as a form of protest.
4. **Tempting** – Appealing or attractive, especially when offering a potential alternative.
5. **Reiterated** – Repeated or stated again for emphasis or clarity.
6. **Inclusive regionalism** – Cooperation that includes all countries in a region regardless of political tensions.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **Put the ball in someone's court** – Made it someone else's responsibility to take the next step or make a decision.

PHRASES:

1. **Lay dormant** – Remained inactive or unused over a period.
2. **Held hostage (by)** – Controlled or limited due to external constraints or pressures.
3. **Put the ball in someone's court** – To make it someone else's responsibility to act or decide.
4. **Champion a cause** – To actively support or advocate for a cause.

DECONSTRUCTION OF EDITORIAL

JARGON/TERMINOLOGIES:

Term	Meaning
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation – aims to promote economic and regional integration in South Asia.
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations – a successful model of regional cooperation in Southeast Asia.
Regional bloc	A group of neighboring countries allied for mutual economic, political, or security purposes.
Heads of government/state	The top executive leaders of countries (e.g., prime ministers or presidents).
Inclusive regionalism	A cooperative approach that involves all countries in a region, regardless of bilateral issues.

CORE THEMES:

Theme	Key Points
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SAARC Dormancy Due to India's Boycott	Forum has remained inactive since 2016 after India refused to attend the Islamabad summit.
Possibility of Alternative Alliances	Speculation about Pakistan, China, and Bangladesh forming a new bloc without India.
Pakistan's Continued Commitment	Pakistan reaffirms dedication to SAARC and inclusive regionalism despite tensions.
India's Role in Obstructing Revival	India's refusal to engage seen as the main hurdle in SAARC's revival.
SAARC's Unfulfilled Promise	SAARC aspired to be like ASEAN but failed due to persistent political rivalries.

BROADER THEMES & APPLICATIONS:

1. **Regionalism vs Bilateral Conflict** – Regional integration is undermined by unresolved political disputes.
2. **South-South Cooperation** – Need for developing countries in South Asia to collaborate on mutual challenges.

3. **Geopolitics and Multilateralism** – How one country's policies (India) can influence multilateral platforms.
4. **Diplomatic Restraint** – Pakistan's historical restraint (e.g., 1995 summit) as a model of maturity.
5. **Collective Action for Shared Challenges** – Regional cooperation crucial for addressing poverty, climate change, trade.

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What are the main reasons behind SAARC's dormancy, and how can it be revived?
 2. How do bilateral tensions between India and Pakistan affect multilateral regional platforms like SAARC?
 3. Can South Asia afford to wait for India's participation to advance regional integration? Critically evaluate.
 4. Compare and contrast SAARC with ASEAN in terms of structure, goals, and effectiveness.
 5. Discuss the potential benefits and risks of forming alternative regional blocs in South Asia.
 6. How can regional cooperation in South Asia help address shared challenges like poverty and climate change?
-

Civil strangulation

DAWN | JULY 4, 2025

OUTLINE:

1. HRCP Faces State Suppression

- Office sealed, bank account frozen, and meetings disrupted.
- HRCP chairperson detained by police—an unprecedented move.

2. Ambiguous Legal Requirements

- No clear law mandates NOCs for routine gatherings.
- Government relies on vague, inconsistent legal provisions.

3. Wider Pattern of Civic Restrictions

- Crackdowns extend to NGOs, media, students, and activists.
- Tools include internet shutdowns, defamation cases, and funding constraints.

4. HRCP's Critical Role

- One of the last credible rights watchdogs in Pakistan.
- Advocates for marginalized groups and holds the state accountable.

5. Call for Democratic Reversal

- Urges government to clarify legalities, stop harassment, and support civic space.



THE HRCP has sounded the alarm about the increasingly shrinking space in which it is allowed to function. In a strongly worded statement, the Commission cited a growing list of state actions that have obstructed its legitimate, peaceful work: the disruption of consultations in Islamabad and Gilgit by individuals claiming to represent security agencies, the illegal sealing of its Lahore office in 2024 along with the removal of its electricity meter, and the freezing of its bank account under a purported State Bank directive that the court later found to be non-existent. Most disturbingly, the HRCP's chairperson was held and interrogated by the Karachi police — a first in the Commission's decades-long history. The HRCP asserts that many of its recent gatherings have been disrupted by officials insisting that a no-objection certificate is required to hold even indoor discussions. Yet there is no clear law mandating NOCs for routine meetings by rights groups. The government,

however, maintains that such requirements fall under standard security procedures, particularly when events involve foreign participants. Officials may have invoked a patchwork of administrative protocols and legal provisions — such as the Charities Registration and Regulations Act, certain Economic Affairs Division rules, and the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance — to justify these restrictions. But these frameworks are often applied inconsistently and without transparency, giving authorities excessive discretion to stifle civic engagement.

This pattern is not unique to the HRCP. In recent years, Pakistan has witnessed a systematic narrowing of civic space, with growing curbs on journalists, NGOs, student unions and human rights defenders. Internet shutdowns, defamation cases, and opaque funding regulations have all contributed to this climate of fear. As things stand, HRCP is perhaps the last bastion of principled rights advocacy in Pakistan — a watchdog that has consistently spoken for those whom the state neglects, marginalises or vilifies. If HRCP is silenced, who will speak for the missing in Balochistan — especially when their disappearance is often linked to actors operating outside the civilian mandate? Who will defend the rights of labourers, religious minorities and trans persons? The state must urgently reverse course. It must clarify the legal basis for requiring NOCs, establish an appeals mechanism against arbitrary denials and ensure rights groups are not harassed or financially strangled. A rights-respecting democracy welcomes scrutiny; it does not fear it. ■

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Sounded the alarm** – Warned urgently about a serious issue.
2. **Shrinking space** – A decreasing ability to operate or express freely.
3. **Obstructed** – Prevented or hindered progress.
4. **Purported** – Allegedly claimed, often without evidence.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **Put up roadblocks** – Create obstacles or resistance (implied).
2. **Under a pretext** – Using a false or weak justification.
3. **Fall under** – Be categorized within a broader rule or authority.
4. **Give authorities excessive discretion** – Allow unchecked power without accountability.
5. **Speak for the missing** – Represent or defend those who have no voice.
6. **Welcome scrutiny** – Be open to oversight or questioning.

PHRASES:

1. **Sounded the alarm** – Issued a serious and urgent warning.
2. **Shrinking civic space** – Reducing freedoms and opportunities for public participation.
3. **Held and interrogated** – Detained and questioned by law enforcement.
4. **A patchwork of protocols** – A loosely assembled and inconsistent set of rules.
5. **Stifle civic engagement** – Suppress public participation or activism.

DECONSTRUCTION OF EDITORIAL

JARGON / TERMINOLOGIES:

Term	Explanation
HRCP (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan)	An independent human rights watchdog that monitors abuses and advocates for civil liberties.
NOC (No-Objection Certificate)	A formal government-issued document granting permission to hold an event or take action.
Economic Affairs Division (EAD)	A government body that regulates foreign funding and project approvals.
Charities Act / MPO Ordinance	Legal tools cited by the state to regulate or restrict civic organizations and public order.
Civic space	The environment that enables civil society to function freely and express itself.
Civilian mandate	The authority granted to elected or civil governance, excluding military or intelligence agencies.

CORE THEMES OF THE EDITORIAL:

Theme	Key Points
State Suppression of HRCP	Office sealed, meetings disrupted, accounts frozen, chairperson detained.

Ambiguity in Legal Requirements	No law clearly requires NOCs for rights meetings; legal tools misused arbitrarily.
Systematic Shrinking of Civic Space	Journalists, students, NGOs face growing pressure through laws, censorship.
HRCP as a Watchdog	Seen as the last defender of marginalized voices and democratic freedoms.
Urgent Need for Legal Reforms	Editorial demands clarity, accountability, and end to arbitrary harassment.

BROADER THEMES AND APPLICATIONS:

- Human Rights and Civil Liberties**
Undermining groups like HRCP threatens democracy and pluralism.
- Authoritarian Governance Patterns**
Use of vague laws and discretionary power to suppress dissent.
- Democratic Backsliding**
Regressive measures indicate erosion of democratic values and institutions.
- Rule of Law and Legal Clarity**
Need for transparent legal frameworks to protect rights groups and NGOs.

5. Freedom of Assembly and Expression

Core constitutional rights at risk due to unchecked security narratives.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What is the role of human rights watchdogs like HRCP in a democracy, and why are they under pressure in Pakistan?
 2. Discuss how ambiguous laws and administrative discretion can be used to shrink civic space.
 3. What legal reforms are needed to safeguard the operations of civil society organizations in Pakistan?
 4. How does restricting civic engagement affect Pakistan's image and governance structure?
 5. Evaluate the impact of NOC requirements on freedom of association and speech.
 6. What steps should a democratic state take to ensure rights-respecting governance and accountability of its institutions?
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UN paralysis

DAWN | JULY 3, 2025

OUTLINE:

1. UN Inaction in Gaza

- Tens of thousands killed or starved; Security Council remains passive.
- Pakistan calls on UNSC to stop acting as a bystander.

2. Credibility Crisis of UNSC

- Council fails to enforce its own resolutions, undermining its legitimacy.

3. Global Examples of UN Ineffectiveness

- Ongoing wars in Ukraine, May 2025 India-Pakistan clash, and Israel-Iran conflict show UN's limited influence.

4. Collapse of the Post-WWII Order

- Rules-based order weakened by selective enforcement and great power politics.

- US repeatedly shields Israel from censure using veto power.

5. Call for a Just Global Order

- Universal application of international law needed.
- Global South must be empowered; new order rooted in justice and humanitarianism is essential.

6. Urgent Priority: End Gaza Slaughter

- Immediate international focus should be to stop mass violence in Gaza.



ALTHOUGH tens of thousands of people in Gaza have been slaughtered and starved by Israel, the UN has been unable to take any practical steps to stop this butchery. In this regard, Pakistan's permanent representative to the UN, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, has urged the Security Council not to remain a "bystander". Mr Ahmad was briefing the UNSC after Pakistan assumed the Council's rotating presidency. He noted that the UNSC's failure to enforce its own decisions "undermines the Council's own authority and credibility". Even beyond the Palestinian occupied territories, in major recent global conflicts, the UN has been unable to play any worthwhile role. For example, the war in Ukraine rages on, while the UN was unable to do much to end hostilities after India attacked Pakistan in May, or after Israel attacked Iran last month. This shows

that the post-World War II 'rules-based' international order is practically dead, and the big powers, particularly the US and its European allies, are to blame for its collapse. The US has been instrumental in vetoing resolutions that have censured Israel at the UNSC. When powerful states protect allies guilty of egregious excesses, there is little the UN can do.

For the international order to be salvaged, the rules must apply to all. Aggressors must be punished, and vulnerable populations protected from genocide and violence. To treat the Russian invasion of Ukraine as an attack on the 'free world', while ignoring the Israeli occupation of Palestine points to the hypocrisy that has helped paralyse the global order. Perhaps a new order — based on justice and respect for humanitarian values — is required, where militarily and financially powerful states are not allowed to bully weaker countries, and where the Global South has a seat at the table. For now, the primary goal of the international community must be to immediately end the Gaza slaughter. ■

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Egregious** – Shockingly bad or outrageous.
2. **Excesses** – Extreme and unacceptable actions or behavior.
3. **Salvaged** – Saved or recovered from ruin or decline.
4. **Genocide** – The deliberate killing of a large group, especially of a particular ethnic or national group.
5. **Hypocrisy** – Claiming moral standards while acting in contradiction to them.

PHRASES :

1. **Take any practical steps** – Do something effective or meaningful.
2. **Remain a bystander** – Refuse to intervene or take responsibility.
3. **Rules-based international order** – A system of global governance based on laws and norms.
4. **Instrumental in vetoing** – Played a key role in blocking a decision using veto power.
5. **Apply to all** – Enforce rules equally without exception.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **Sound the alarm** – Raise a warning about a critical issue.
2. **Undermines the Council's authority** – Reduces its legitimacy or influence.
3. **Play any worthwhile role** – Contribute meaningfully to solving a problem.
4. **Turn a blind eye** – Ignore something deliberately (implied).
5. **Paralyse the global order** – Render international systems non-functional or ineffective.
6. **Shield from censure** – Protect someone from criticism or punishment.
7. **Seat at the table** – Inclusion in important discussions or decisions.

DECONSTRUCTION OF EDITORIAL

JARGON / TERMINOLOGIES:

Term	Explanation
UNSC (United Nations Security Council)	The UN's principal body responsible for maintaining international peace and security.
Rules-based international order	Global system based on adherence to international laws and norms post-World War II.
Veto power	Authority of permanent UNSC members to block any substantive resolution.
Global South	Developing countries with less economic and political influence in global affairs.
Humanitarian values	Principles focused on human dignity, rights, and welfare.
Censure resolution	A formal expression of disapproval, typically used in diplomacy.

CORE THEMES:

Theme	Key Points
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UNSC's Inaction on Gaza	Despite mass killings, the Council remains passive due to political pressure.
Collapse of Rules-Based Order	Inconsistent enforcement of international law weakens the legitimacy of global institutions.
US and Power Politics at the UN	American vetoes protect Israel from accountability, encouraging further violence.
Call for New International Framework	Editorial advocates for an equitable global system with justice at its core.
Need for Immediate Gaza Intervention	Urges global community to act now to end the bloodshed in Gaza.

BROADER THEMES AND APPLICATIONS:

- Imbalance of Power in Global Governance**
The current system favors powerful nations while ignoring weaker ones.
- Failure of Multilateral Institutions**
The UN is increasingly seen as ineffective in preventing war or protecting human rights.
- Humanitarian Accountability and Double Standards**

Selective application of international law (e.g., Ukraine vs. Palestine) exposes global hypocrisy.

4. **Call for Reform in Global Order**

Suggests forming a new, inclusive, justice-based framework with equal voice for the Global South.

5. **Moral Responsibility and Global Solidarity**

Emphasizes urgent need for collective action to stop atrocities and uphold human dignity.

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How has the United Nations Security Council failed to uphold its mandate in recent global conflicts?
 2. Discuss the impact of veto power on the legitimacy of the international rules-based order.
 3. Compare the international response to the Ukraine crisis with the Gaza situation. What does this reveal about global double standards?
 4. What structural reforms are needed in the UN to empower the Global South and ensure fair global governance?
 5. Analyze the role of the United States in shaping international responses to Middle Eastern conflicts.
 6. Can the current international system be salvaged, or is a new world order inevitable? Justify your view.
-

Forced to fly solo

DAWN | JULY 3, 2025

OUTLINE:

1. Massive Rollback of U.S. Aid

- Trump-era cuts to USAID may result in up to 14 million preventable deaths by 2030.

2. Global Humanitarian Fallout

- Clinics closing, vaccines halted, frontline workers laid off in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

3. False Justification of Self-Reliance

- U.S. claims it's about efficiency, but critics call it abandonment, not reform.

4. Ripple Effect: Other Donors Also Withdrawing

- Major aid cuts by UK, France, Netherlands, Belgium.
- OECD predicts global development aid to shrink by up to 17% in 2025.

5. Call for Global Action

- Scale up, not scale back.
- Proposes stopgap funding, WHO-led expansion, and a resilient Global Health Fund.

7. Pakistan's Path Forward

- Reduce aid dependency.
- Build resilient, shock-proof healthcare systems.



ALREADY left reeling by the abrupt, sweeping rollback of American development aid under President Donald Trump, the world now has to come to terms with the possibility that millions may die as a result. A Lancet study estimates that up to 14m preventable deaths may occur by 2030, including 4.5m children, if the cuts are not reversed. This is no speculative warning. It is a projection based on an analysis of past USAID-supported interventions which helped avert nearly 91m deaths worldwide between 2001 and 2021. Before USAID was axed, the country was handling 40pc of global humanitarian aid efforts. It is not hard to imagine how its dismantling will have lethal consequences. Already, clinics are shutting down, medicine supplies are drying up, vaccine programmes have stalled, and thousands of front-line workers have been laid off in LMICs. The US administration defends its stance as a realignment of priorities towards “self-reliance” and “efficiency”. But critics, including former US

presidents, warn this is not reform — it is abandonment. In countries like South Sudan, Bangladesh and the DRC, the withdrawal of aid has left large numbers without access to basic healthcare. In Ukraine, the freezing of humanitarian assistance has disrupted shelter, food and medical relief operations, leaving local NGOs unable to meet growing needs.

To make matters worse, other Western donors are slashing aid budgets: the UK (40pc), France (37pc), the Netherlands (30pc), and Belgium (25pc). The OECD estimates that overall development assistance could fall by 9pc to 17pc in 2025, placing entire humanitarian and development systems at risk of collapse. Combined, these cuts could undo decades of gains in global child survival, maternal health, disease prevention and food security. The study has laid it down simply: now is the time to scale up, not scale back. Leaders across the globe must view this as a preventable disaster. High-income countries must step up and bridge the shortfall by providing stopgap funding, the WHO’s essential health services must be scaled up and the global community must consider creating a Global Health Fund that is insulated from political shocks. Pakistan, for its part, has no option but to reduce its reliance on aid and invest in more resilient health systems if it wants to insulate itself from the ensuing shocks of the announced cuts. It is every man for himself now. ■

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Reeling** – Struggling to cope or recover from a shock.
2. **Rollback** – A reversal or reduction of previous policy or support.
3. **Preventable** – Avoidable with appropriate intervention.
4. **Interventions** – Actions taken to improve a situation, especially in health or policy.
5. **Avert** – Prevent something undesirable from happening.
6. **Dismantling** – The gradual or sudden taking apart of a structure or system.
7. **Realignment** – A shift in policy or priorities.

5. **Front-line workers laid off** – Health professionals and aid workers losing jobs.
6. **Withdrawal of aid** – Stopping or reducing financial or humanitarian support.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **Sounded the alarm** (*implied*) – Issued a warning about a major crisis.
2. **Undo decades of gains** – Reverse the progress achieved over many years.
3. **Step up** – Take responsibility or increase effort.
4. **Bridge the shortfall** – Fill the gap left by missing resources or funding.
5. **Fall through the cracks** (*implied*) – Be neglected or missed due to systemic failure.

PHRASES:

1. **Left reeling by** – Deeply affected or shaken by something.
2. **Come to terms with** – Accept and deal with an unpleasant reality.
3. **Not speculative warning** – Based on fact or data, not just a guess.
4. **Medicine supplies drying up** – Medical resources running out.

DECONSTRUCTION OF EDITORIAL

JARGON/TERMINOLOGIES:

Term	Explanation
USAID – United States Agency for International Development	U.S. government body providing foreign aid and development assistance.
LMICs – Low- and Middle-Income Countries	Economically developing nations, often dependent on foreign aid.
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	Intergovernmental body of wealthy nations that tracks global development aid.
Global Health Fund	Proposed international financial mechanism to ensure uninterrupted health funding.
WHO – World Health Organization	UN agency responsible for international public health.
Humanitarian aid	Assistance provided to people in need, especially during crises like famine, war, or disasters.

CORE THEMES OF THE EDITORIAL:

Theme	Key Points
Impact of U.S. Aid Cuts	USAID rollback under Trump endangers millions of lives, particularly in LMICs.
Humanitarian Crisis Worsening	Clinics closing, vaccine programs halting, health workers laid off globally.
Donor Withdrawal Trend	Other Western nations also slashing aid; systemic risk to global humanitarian programs.
Need for Coordinated Global Response	Scale up funding, empower WHO, propose new mechanisms like a Global Health Fund.
Pakistan's Aid Dependency	Urged to invest in resilient, self-sustained healthcare systems.

BROADER THEMES AND APPLICATIONS:

- Global Health Security**
Cuts in aid undermine health systems in fragile states and risk pandemics.
- Moral Responsibility of Wealthy Nations**
Ethical imperative for rich countries to prevent suffering in the Global South.

3. **Fragility of Aid-Based Models**

Over-dependence on external funding leaves poor nations vulnerable to political shifts.

4. **Health Equity and Development Justice**

Disproportionate suffering in LMICs reflects inequality in access to life-saving services.

5. **Geopolitics and Humanitarianism**

Foreign policy shifts in donor countries increasingly dictate life-or-death outcomes elsewhere.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What are the global consequences of the rollback of U.S. foreign aid under the Trump administration?
 2. Critically analyze how aid dependency affects the sustainability of healthcare systems in LMICs.
 3. Discuss the ethical and political implications of scaling back humanitarian aid in the Global South.
 4. What steps can be taken to insulate global health systems from political shocks?
 5. Should Pakistan continue to rely on foreign aid, or shift toward self-reliant health infrastructure? Justify.
 6. How can a Global Health Fund help mitigate future humanitarian crises?
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International Articles Section

All articles are taken from prestigious Pakistan
and world 's newspapers.

How Imran Khan's All-or-nothing Approach Could Cost His Party Everything

Umair Jamal

DIPLOMAT | July 4, 2025

OUTLINE:

1. Supreme Court Ruling Against PTI

- PTI denied reserved seats, granting ruling coalition a two-thirds majority.
- Court cites independent candidacy as grounds for disqualification.

2. Impact on Parliamentary Strength

- Coalition now has 235 members; PTI down to 98.
- ECP earlier denied PTI election symbol due to internal irregularities.

3. Compounded Legal Challenges

- Lahore High Court links Imran Khan to May 9 violence.
- Opens possibility of trial in military courts.

4. Systematic Isolation of PTI

- Supreme Court appears to view Khan as destabilizing.

- Legislators are defecting under pressure; parliamentary influence declining.

5. Khan's Political Strategy at a Dead End

- Refusal to negotiate isolates PTI.
- Past alliances with the military undermine current stance.

6. Call for Dialogue and Pragmatism

- Lessons from PML-N and PPP: survival through negotiation, not confrontation.
- PTI must rebuild institutional trust and re-enter democratic processes.



Earlier this week, the Supreme Court of Pakistan granted the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP)-led coalition a two-thirds majority in parliament by stripping the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of its share of reserved seats. This will give the alliance the majority needed to amend the Constitution without requiring support from any opposition party.

The controversial decision is likely to have a significant impact on the future of competitive democracy in Pakistan, particularly amid ongoing discussions about potential changes to Pakistan's civil-military balance and constitutional structure.

Reserved seats in Pakistan's legislature are allocated based on proportional representation from among the seats won by officially registered political parties with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

On July 2, the ECP distributed 74 disputed reserved seats among the PML-N, PPP, and other smaller political parties. The top court's verdict has increased the ruling coalition's strength in the National Assembly to 235 lawmakers. The opposition PTI's number, on the other hand, has decreased to 98 lawmakers in the National Assembly.

By denying the PTI reserved seats, the apex court also reversed its earlier decision that had awarded the party the same seats in September last year. In its latest ruling, the Supreme Court stated that PTI, led by jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan, is not eligible for reserved seats in the national and provincial assemblies because its candidates ran as independents in the 2024 national elections.

Ahead of last year's general elections, the ECP removed PTI's election symbol, the bat, due to intra-party election irregularities in January 2024. The ECP argues that PTI was never ineligible for reserved seats because the party's symbol or candidates were never officially on the ballot paper.

Although the ECP never officially banned PTI as a party, its candidates contested last year's general election as independents. After the election, PTI-supported candidates joined the Sunni Ittehad Council, a religious

party, and claimed reserved seats under that party's platform.

The top court's judgement in the reserved seats case is not the only issue compounding the PTI's parliamentary and legal troubles. In a related development, the Lahore High Court ruled on Thursday that Khan was involved in a conspiracy behind the violent events of May 9, 2023, when military installations across Pakistan were attacked by his party workers. This verdict could have serious consequences for Imran Khan and his party. The ruling not only opens the way for his potential trial in military courts but also indicates that Khan's chances of getting relief from the courts anytime soon are low.

The above developments are not mere coincidences.

While the controversial nature of these decisions is debatable, it is clear from the apex court's rulings that it still views Khan as a destabilizing actor in Pakistan's current governance system and aims to further isolate him and his party.

Khan's high-stakes political gamble of confronting the powerful military through street protests and pressure tactics appears to have hit a dead end. Unfortunately, Khan has repeatedly refused to pursue dialogue with civilian forces and elected officials in power in recent years.

After losing power in a controversial no-confidence vote in the Parliament in 2022, Khan has largely dismissed

Pakistan's main political parties as potential allies in strengthening democracy. His claims that the current civilian government is working with the military might be true, but he should not forget that during the 2018 general election, he was also known to have conspired with the then-military leadership to come to power.

With Khan still unwilling to engage in talks and planning more street protests, there is a visible sense of discouragement among PTI supporters. It's likely that after these rulings, dozens of PTI-supported lawmakers will lose parliamentary privileges and may defect to the ruling parties for survival. Some reports indicate that several PTI-linked legislators from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have already defected and joined the ruling coalition. This trend is likely to accelerate after the Supreme Court verdict.

Arguably, a popular party like PTI, whose supported candidates won more seats than any other in the 2024 elections, should not be isolated. It is not good for the country's stability to see hundreds of political leaders pushed out of the parliamentary system simply because their party leader refuses to pursue meaningful negotiations with civilians or has become untrusted in the eyes of powerful institutions.

PTI's leadership should recognize that the parties now ruling the country, particularly PML-N and PPP, have faced similar political marginalization in the past. However, they chose dialogue over confrontation with state institutions

as they understood the limits of their political capital and the risks of overreach.

This pragmatic approach allowed these parties to survive, regroup, and eventually return to power. It is a lesson PTI should consider in its current crisis.

The PTI leadership cannot sustain endless confrontation with state institutions for the sake of Khan's legal case and his restoration to power alone. The party needs to commit to the difficult path of rebuilding institutional trust and engage with the democratic processes it claims to champion.

It may not bring Khan to power, but it would demonstrate his commitment to dialogue with all important actors. Moreover, it might just force the system to take the PTI seriously again, instead of treating it as a movement that aims to destabilize the ruling setup to create political space for itself. ■

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VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Defect** – To leave one's political party or group to join another.
2. **Disqualification** – Removal from eligibility or rights, often legal or electoral.
3. **Marginalization** – Pushing a group/person to the edges of political or social power.
4. **Pragmatic** – Practical and realistic rather than idealistic.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **Viewed as a destabilizing actor** – Seen as someone who disrupts the system.
2. **Pushed out of the system** – Excluded or removed from formal structures.
3. **Lessons to be learned** – Key takeaways or insights from past events.

PHRASES:

1. **Hit a dead end** – Reached a point where progress is no longer possible.
2. **Planning more street protests** – Mobilizing public demonstrations to pressure authorities.
3. **Defect to the ruling parties** – Switch allegiance to those in power.
4. **Push out of the system** – Exclude from political participation.
5. **Commit to the difficult path** – Accept a challenging but necessary course of action.

DECONSTRUCTION OF ARTICLE

JARGON/TERMINOLOGIES:

Term	Explanation
Reserved seats	Seats set aside (often for women/minorities) allocated based on party performance.
Election symbol	Graphic icon used to represent a political party on the ballot.
ECP (Election Commission of Pakistan)	Electoral authority overseeing elections and party registrations.
National Assembly	Pakistan's lower house of parliament.
No-confidence vote	Parliamentary motion to remove a sitting government.
Military courts	Courts operated by armed forces, used for cases involving national security.
Sunni Ittehad Council	Religious political party PTI-backed candidates joined post-election.

CORE THEMES:

Theme	Key Points
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PTI's Parliamentary Exclusion	Loss of reserved seats reduces PTI's strength; ruling alliance gains constitutional amending power.
Legal and Political Isolation	Court decisions and May 9 verdict isolate PTI and its leadership.
Erosion of Competitive Democracy	Disenfranchising a leading party undermines democratic credibility.
Refusal to Engage in Dialogue	Khan's confrontational approach has backfired.
Need for Democratic Re-engagement	Editorial urges PTI to rebuild trust through negotiation, not defiance.

BROADER THEMES & APPLICATIONS:

1. Judicialization of Politics

Courts play a central role in determining political outcomes, raising concerns of neutrality.

2. Civil-Military Imbalance

Ongoing tension between civilian political actors and military establishment.

3. Electoral Integrity and Participation

Loss of party symbols and denial of reserved seats challenge inclusivity of electoral processes.

4. **Political Polarization**

PTI's isolation and refusal to cooperate intensify divisions, weakening democratic resilience.

5. **Institutional Trust and Democratic Norms**

Rebuilding faith in institutions is vital for long-term democratic sustainability.

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How does the denial of electoral symbols and seat allocation affect party representation and electoral fairness?
2. Discuss the role of judiciary in shaping political outcomes in Pakistan. Is this a neutral arbiter or a politicized actor?
3. How does the denial of parliamentary representation through technical or procedural means undermine democratic legitimacy?
4. To what extent can judicial intervention in electoral outcomes affect the balance of power within a parliamentary democracy?
5. Analyze the impact of institutional decisions on the principle of proportional representation in democratic systems.

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ASEAN and the China-US Trade War

Mercy A. Kuo

The Diplomat | JULY 2, 2025

OUTLINE:

1. Rising Protectionism Threatens ASEAN

- Trump's unilateral tariffs provoke regional anxiety; ASEAN condemns moves that fragment global trade.

2. Accelerating ASEAN Integration

- Focus on digital economy framework, FTA upgrades, intra-ASEAN trade, supply chain resilience.

3. Balancing Great Powers

- Southeast Asia remains cautious of U.S.–China deals; wary of being a backdoor for Chinese exports.

4. Industry & Trade Impact

- Garment and export-heavy sectors like Cambodia's facing crippling tariffs; redirection from China adds pressure.

5. Supply Chain Risks & Opportunities

- Strait of Hormuz blockade threat highlights vulnerabilities; companies shifting to value-added goods and new markets.

6. Geopolitical Realignment & ASEAN Strategy

- ASEAN wary of unpredictable U.S. diplomacy; building regional self-reliance and new FDI channels prioritized.



The Diplomat author Mercy Kuo regularly engages subject-matter experts, policy practitioners, and strategic thinkers across the globe for their diverse insights into U.S. Asia policy. This conversation with Sharon Seah – senior fellow and coordinator at the ASEAN Studies Centre, ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore – is the 468th in “The Trans-Pacific View Insight Series.”

Describe the regional vibe at the recent ASEAN Summit toward U.S. President Donald Trump’s tariff threats.

One of the greatest preoccupations of regional leaders since April 2, 2025 has been with the alarming levels of rising protectionism and disruptive actions seeking to undermine the open, free, multilateral trading system.

Southeast Asia has benefited from an open, free, and fair global order for many decades since ASEAN countries’ independence. An open and free global trading system, undergirded by robust and strong international law, has served small states well. Trade is ASEAN’s lifeline. Without trade, ASEAN cannot maintain its relevance with the major partners. Because of these concerns, ASEAN leaders delivered a statement calling out unilateral and retaliatory actions that risk fragmenting the global economic order. They further instructed the officials to track the risks of trade diversions and engage in negotiations with partners, and also reiterated their commitment to maintaining open and secure trade flows and strengthening supply chain resilience.

In the face of such volatility and uncertainty, accelerating ASEAN’s regional economic integration has become a top priority agenda. This includes driving the negotiations for the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework, upgrading ASEAN’s Trade in Goods Agreement, upgrading different ASEAN+ 1 FTAs to future proof and modernize these agreements, strengthening and increasing intra-ASEAN trade (which includes the removal of non-tariff barriers), and creating safety nets for the region’s most vulnerable workers and industries.

Analyze how Southeast Asian capitals are managing relations with Washington while concurrently balancing their countries’ strategic position in the broader China-U.S. trade war.

President Trump's tariffs are currently at the baseline of 10 percent, but the 90-day "pause" on higher rates is set to expire by July 8. The tariffs are causing much anxiety in capitals around Southeast Asia. Some countries like Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos – which are subject to some of the highest levels of tariffs – have yet to conclusively reach a settlement.

The silver lining, at least at the time of response to this question, is that the U.S. has reportedly "reached a deal" with China on the export of rare earth elements and continued acceptance of Chinese students in U.S. higher education institutions. Regional governments know enough, by now, not to take such news at face value. Anything can change overnight.

Conventional knowledge tells us that if the U.S. is more or less happy with the Chinese deal, then perhaps the level of pressure and scrutiny on Southeast Asia would come down. One of the biggest issues under discussion is how Southeast Asia provides a backdoor for Chinese goods to flow through to the U.S. and how the region can help to stem this flow. But these are not conventional times, and everything is fair game to the current administration.

With the U.S. now focusing on the Iran strikes and counter-responses, it's an open question whether there is bandwidth to conclude more trade deals with countries ahead of the July 8 deadline. With the distraction of the Iran-Israel conflict and potential for widening wars in the Middle East, it remains to be seen if President Trump

would pay sufficient attention to the Pandora's box of tariffs.

Examine how Southeast Asian countries are protecting specific industries and trans-shipment capabilities that advance their respective national interests.

Export re-direction from China to Southeast Asia is a real concern. Many Southeast Asian economies are heavily export-oriented so having to deal with the double whammy of tariff imposition from one of their biggest markets (the U.S.) as well as re-direction from one of their biggest trading partners (China) is very challenging. It would mean that domestic manufacturing and export industries will be impacted.

For example, the Cambodian garment industry's biggest export destination is the U.S. but with 49 percent tariffs, it would be difficult for exporters to bear the cost. In effect, the industry will see greater cancellation of orders because U.S. retailers would not be willing to bear this cost either.

Identify supply chain risks and opportunities facing Southeast Asian companies amid China-U.S. trade tensions.

Assuming that the U.S.-Iran conflict can be contained, there is currently the risk that the Strait of Hormuz, where much of Asia-Europe trade transits, could be blockaded. This is the most significant development that can disrupt trade flows and importantly the flow of essential goods such as LNG and petroleum to Asia. U.S.-China trade

tensions, for the moment, will take a backseat to what is happening in the Middle East.

As seen the last few times when the world experienced major blockages of waterways such as the Suez Canal, the business costs of diversifying access markets, halting production, manufacturing, and delaying deliveries are tremendously high. Southeast Asian companies have learned to diversify into different markets and looked for new suppliers that are geographically not reliant on open routes. It is also an opportunity for companies to invest in better R&D to create higher value goods in order to claim a place in the supply chains.

Assess the geopolitical implications of ASEAN states' calculations in negotiating tariffs with Washington.

Even if the conflict in the Middle East recedes, the environment for constructive negotiations on trade has deteriorated, as the recently concluded G-7 summit showed. The outlook therefore for future trade gatherings such as the G-20 in Seoul is dampened, especially if the U.S. representative is distracted and unwilling to negotiate.

The question troubling many trading nations of the world is whether the rate of diminishing returns in pursuing the U.S. for economic deals is worthwhile or whether it would be better to deepen relations with other partners such as China, the EU, Japan, South Korea, etc. The chances of ASEAN leaders getting a meeting with President Trump at this year's ASEAN Summit or on invitation to Washington D.C. have diminished. In fact, from the announcement of

Liberation Day tariffs, few world leaders have managed to speak to President Trump and even if they did secure something of a "deal," may find the terms changing over time.

It would seem the better strategy is to build ASEAN's own economic resilience up by deepening integration, increasing intra-regional trade from the current levels of 22 percent, attracting greater FDI from nontraditional partners such as the Gulf states, and accelerating the adoption of ease of business schemes such as the ASEAN Single Window Plus (which is meant to link ASEAN countries' customs/border systems with those of its major trading partners to facilitate greater ease of transactions) and cross-border e-payment systems etc. ■

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Protectionism** – Economic policy of restricting imports to protect domestic industries.
2. **Undergirded** – Supported or reinforced by something (e.g., laws or institutions).
3. **Retaliatory** – Acting in return, often as punishment or defense.
4. **Fragmenting** – Breaking up or causing division.
5. **Diversions** – Redirections of goods or trade flows from one route to another.
6. **Baseline** – A minimum level or starting point.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **Silver lining** – A hopeful or positive aspect in a bad situation.
2. **Fair game** – Open to criticism, scrutiny, or targeting without restriction.
3. **Pandora's box** – A source of many unforeseen and complex problems.
4. **At face value** – Accepting something as it appears, without verifying deeper intent.

PHRASES:

1. **Lifeline of ASEAN** – Essential for survival and functioning.
2. **Backdoor for Chinese goods** – Indirect trade route used to bypass restrictions.
3. **Double whammy** – Two negative effects happening simultaneously.
4. **Takes a backseat** – Becomes less important or lower in priority.
5. **Claim a place in supply chains** – Secure a valuable role in global production networks.

DECONSTRUCTION OF ARTICLE

JARGON & TERMINOLOGIES:

Term	Explanation
ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations	A regional bloc promoting economic and political cooperation.
Tariffs	Taxes imposed on imported goods to protect domestic industries or punish foreign producers.
ASEAN Digital Economy Framework	Ongoing negotiations to create a unified digital trade and services strategy.
ASEAN+1 FTAs	Free trade agreements between ASEAN and one external partner (e.g., China, Japan, Korea).
Non-tariff barriers (NTBs)	Trade restrictions other than tariffs, like quotas or regulatory hurdles.
ASEAN Single Window Plus	A platform to integrate customs procedures across ASEAN and with major trade partners.
Rare earth elements	Critical minerals used in high-tech and defense industries.
FDI (Foreign Direct Investment)	Investments made by foreign entities into domestic markets or businesses.

CORE THEMES:

Theme	Key Points
Threat of Protectionism	U.S. tariff threats spark alarm; ASEAN urges commitment to open trade.
Strategic Balancing Between Powers	Regional governments wary of U.S.–China conflict spillovers and unpredictable diplomacy.
Intra-Regional Economic Strengthening	Push to reduce dependency by deepening regional trade and integration.
Industrial Vulnerability	Export-reliant sectors threatened by U.S. tariffs and diverted Chinese trade.
Supply Chain Adaptation	Geopolitical risks force ASEAN companies to diversify suppliers and markets.
Evolving Geopolitical Strategy	Regional focus shifting from U.S. engagement to resilience-building and new global partners.

BROADER THEMES AND APPLICATIONS:

1. **Multipolarity and Economic Sovereignty**
ASEAN seeks autonomy in a polarized world through internal economic reinforcement.
 2. **Geoeconomics of Trade Warfare**
Tariff use as a strategic tool disrupts traditional trade alliances and supply flows.
 3. **Small-State Diplomacy**
ASEAN nations leverage collective action to counterbalance major power coercion.
 4. **Supply Chain Decentralization**
From cost-efficiency to risk management, companies rethink global logistics.
 5. **Resilience vs. Dependency in Global South**
Regional cooperation becomes key as Global South countries seek insulation from great-power volatility.
 5. Evaluate the effectiveness of ASEAN's institutional frameworks in promoting trade resilience and regional stability.
 6. To what extent can regional blocs like ASEAN insulate themselves from the geopolitical rivalries of larger powers?
 7. Discuss the role of regional innovation and diversification in strengthening ASEAN's economic sovereignty.
-

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How does rising protectionism by major powers threaten the sustainability of multilateral trade systems in Southeast Asia?
2. Critically assess ASEAN's regional integration strategies as a buffer against external economic shocks.
3. What are the challenges and opportunities for Southeast Asian states in balancing between U.S. and China amid trade tensions?
4. How do tariff wars impact small export-driven economies, particularly in relation to supply chain disruptions?

India, the Quad, and China's Shadow: Building a Coherent Indo-Pacific Strategy

Umair Jamal

DIPLOMAT | June 26, 2025

OUTLINE:

1. Reaffirmation of Quad's Relevance

- Despite initial concerns, the July 1 meeting confirmed strategic continuity under Trump's administration.

2. Support for India Post-Terror Attack

- Strong Quad condemnation of the Pahalgam attack and emphasis on counterterrorism cooperation.

3. Launch of Quad Critical Minerals Initiative

- Strategic move to reduce dependence on China for rare earths and mineral supply chains.

4. Geoeconomic Challenge Posed by China

- Beijing's informal economic coercion and control of global value chains noted as a long-term threat.

5. Maritime Security and ASEAN Centrality

- Quad reinforces support for free navigation and ASEAN unity amid Chinese militarization.

6. Gap in South Asia Strategy

- Critique of U.S. inconsistency in treating South Asia as peripheral despite China's growing presence there.

7. Need for Holistic Strategy

- Call for Quad to become an actionable coalition beyond statements — integrating economic, military, and regional policy tools.



Despite early concerns that a Trump administration might deprioritize Quad engagement due to its highly transactional and unpredictable leadership style, the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held on July 1, reaffirmed the group's strategic relevance.

On January 21 – just one day after President Donald Trump's inauguration – U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio hosted the first ministerial-level Quad meeting of the year in Washington, signaling early continuity. However, in the months that followed, high-level U.S. engagement appeared limited. Instead, the Trump administration focused on crises in Ukraine and the Middle East, launched aggressive trade measures, and reignited burden-sharing disputes with key allies, including tensions

with India over tariffs, technology cooperation, and regional security issues.

During this period, Quad coordination persisted through working-level mechanisms. India hosted a Quad Pandemic Preparedness Workshop from March 17 to 19 in New Delhi, involving all four member states and other Indo-Pacific partners. Engagement also continued in areas such as cybersecurity, infrastructure, health, and counterterrorism.

Although the July 1 meeting in Washington, D.C. had been scheduled in advance – as is typical for such diplomatic forums – it nonetheless marked a significant return to ministerial-level dialogue, especially in the present geopolitical context. With participation from the United States, India, Japan, and Australia, the meeting reaffirmed the Quad's collective commitment to a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific amid intensifying geopolitical challenges.

Condemnation of Pahalgam Terror Attack

One of the key highlights of this meeting was the categorical condemnation of the brutal terror attack in Pahalgam, in the Indian territory of Jammu and Kashmir. India blamed Pakistan for involvement in the attack, culminating in a brief conflict between the two nations in May 2025. The Quad nations sent a strong message on the Pahalgam attack: "We call for the perpetrators, organizers, and financiers of this reprehensible act to be brought to justice without any delay and urge all U.N. Member

States... to cooperate actively with all relevant authorities in this regard.”

They further emphasized: “The Quad unequivocally condemns all acts of terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism, and renews our commitment to counterterrorism cooperation.” This marked a clear signal of solidarity with India and reflected a growing strategic convergence on counterterrorism within the Indo-Pacific context.

Beyond counterterrorism, the Quad reaffirmed its broader strategic agenda — encompassing maritime and transnational security, economic prosperity, critical and emerging technologies, and humanitarian assistance. The group seeks to evolve into more than a diplomatic forum. As Rubio pointed out, the Quad must become a “vehicle for action,” with trade and commercial ties playing a pivotal role in ensuring its long-term relevance.

Quad Critical Minerals Initiative

The highlight of the latest Quad Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was the launch of the Quad Critical Minerals Initiative – a major geoeconomic move aimed at reducing dependency on China’s near-monopoly over rare earth elements and mineral processing. While the joint statement avoided directly naming China, it clearly conveyed the coalition’s worry: “We are deeply concerned about the abrupt constriction and future reliability of key supply chains, specifically for critical minerals... The use of

non-market policies and practices for critical minerals, derivative products, and mineral processing technology undermines global supply chains.”

The joint statement added: “Reliance on any one country for processing and refining exposes our industries to economic coercion, price manipulation, and supply chain disruptions.”

These declarations underscore the Quad’s recognition that the primary challenge posed by China is geoeconomic. Beijing’s dominance over mineral supply chains, global trade networks, and strategic manufacturing has enabled it to cultivate economic dependencies across continents – from East Asia to Africa and beyond. These dependencies have become instruments of political coercion. Countries that challenge China’s positions on issues such as the South China Sea, human rights, or Taiwan often face subtle, targeted economic retaliation.

Unlike formal U.S. sanctions, China’s coercive actions are typically informal, embedded within global value chains, and difficult to counter. Even the United States, despite imposing tariffs and pledging to decouple from China, ultimately signed a trade deal with Beijing due to pressure from domestic industries and consumer markets. This episode exposed the limits of strategic autonomy in the face of deep economic interdependence and highlighted how dependency can undermine geopolitical leverage.

The Quad’s renewed focus on diversifying supply chains is thus a vital countermeasure. Without sustained efforts

toward industrial resilience, technological self-reliance, and enhanced regional cooperation, China's structural power will continue to expand.

If backed by serious investments, regulatory harmonization, and technology transfer, the Quad Critical Minerals Initiative could serve as the economic backbone and set the future direction for similar initiatives within the broader Indo-Pacific region.

Maritime Security and ASEAN Centrality

The Quad also issued a sharp rebuke of Beijing's behavior in the East and South China Seas, again without explicitly naming China. The statement expressed serious concerns over increasing militarization, coercive activities, and interference in offshore resource development, saying, "We reiterate our strong opposition to any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion... including obstruction of lawful maritime operations and freedom of overflight."

This is a strong signal of solidarity with regional actors like the Philippines, Vietnam, and Japan, all of whom have faced intimidation from Chinese vessels and air patrols in disputed waters.

Importantly, the Quad reaffirmed its commitment to the centrality, unity, and leadership of ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific. While this may appear as routine diplomatic language, it carries deep strategic meaning. ASEAN centrality serves as a buffer against Chinese dominance, especially in Southeast Asia. The emphasis on a "united

ASEAN" implicitly resists Beijing's divide-and-rule tactics – particularly its attempts to pressure individual ASEAN states into compliance or silence. By aligning itself with ASEAN principles, the Quad is supporting a rules-based regional order and contesting Beijing's efforts to rewrite norms through unilateralism and coercion.

The Missing Link in Quad Strategy

However, safeguarding Southeast Asia alone is not sufficient. If the Quad aims to counterbalance China's growing influence, it must expand its focus beyond the maritime domain and address the continental dynamics of the Indo-Pacific. China is not only asserting itself at sea but is also making significant strategic inroads into South Asia through infrastructure projects, diplomatic outreach, and new multilateral arrangements. The recently proposed trilateral bloc between China, Pakistan, and Bangladesh clearly signals Beijing's intent to reshape the regional order and challenge India's traditional leadership.

In this context, the Quad must elevate India's role beyond the maritime sphere and recognize South Asia as a critical front in the broader strategic competition. The condemnation of the Pahalgam terror attack was a welcome gesture of solidarity, but deeper, sustained coordination is needed to reflect the region's geopolitical realities.

The United States, in particular, must address contradictions in its approach. While it regards India as essential to countering China, it continues to maintain

close ties with Pakistan – often at odds with India’s security interests – and largely overlooks Beijing’s growing footprint in South Asia. This inconsistency weakens Washington’s strategic goals. Without aligning its South Asia and Indo-Pacific policies, the U.S. risks promoting a fragmented vision that falls short of being a true Indo-Pacific strategy.

If the goal is to empower India to become a net security provider and strengthen its position to counterbalance China, then Washington must support the development of India’s strategic capabilities and its interests in the region – even if that includes some strategic accommodation (such as accepting India’s defense ties with Russia) or flexible trade arrangements. Failing to do so reduces the coherence of the Quad response to what is, fundamentally, a holistic Chinese challenge spanning military, economic, and diplomatic domains. A fragmented approach will not suffice against such an integrated threat.

Conclusion

The recent Quad meeting reaffirmed a commitment to a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, while highlighting the centrality of ASEAN. Yet, statements alone are not enough. If the Quad is serious about countering Chinese influence, it must evolve into a comprehensive geoeconomic and geopolitical coalition.

This means securing supply chains, investing in infrastructure, aligning South Asia policy with the Indo-Pacific vision, and fully integrating India’s strategic

concerns. The Quad must act, not just articulate. Only through such a holistic strategy can it hope to maintain balance in a region where China seeks hegemony not only through warships and missiles but through mines, trade, and economic coercion. ■

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Transactional** – Focused on individual deals or short-term gains rather than strategic relationships.
2. **Reignite** – To resume or reintroduce something with intensity, especially conflict or debate.
3. **Coercion** – The practice of persuading someone to do something by force or threats.
4. **Hegemony** – Dominant influence or leadership, especially by one country over others.
5. **Goeconomic** – Intersection of economics and geopolitics in global strategy.
6. **Monopoly** – Complete control over a market or resource.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **Take center stage** – Become the most important or visible issue.
2. **Falls short of** – Fails to achieve a goal or standard.
3. **Pay sufficient attention** – To give appropriate focus or consideration to an issue.
4. **Miss the mark** – To fail in achieving an intended outcome.
5. **Set the direction** – To guide or establish the future course of action.
6. **Pandora's box** – A source of complex and unforeseeable problems.
7. **At odds with** – In conflict or disagreement with.

PHRASES:

1. **Vehicle for action** – A platform not just for discussion, but for taking tangible steps.
2. **Statement avoided directly naming** – Diplomatic language used to imply criticism without explicit naming.
3. **Economic backbone** – Foundational element supporting a broader policy or system.

DECONSTRUCTION OF ARTICLE

JARGON/TERMINOLOGIES:

Term	Explanation
Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)	Strategic grouping of the U.S., India, Japan, and Australia focused on Indo-Pacific cooperation.
Critical Minerals Initiative	A joint Quad effort to reduce dependence on Chinese-dominated supply chains for rare earths and strategic minerals.
Cross-border terrorism	Terrorism originating from or supported by actors outside national boundaries.
Economic coercion	Use of trade, finance, or investment pressures to influence another state's behavior.
ASEAN Centrality	Principle that ASEAN should remain the core of regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific.
Goeconomics	Strategy where economics is used as a tool of geopolitical influence.
Supply chain resilience	Ability of a logistics and production system to withstand and recover from disruptions.

CORE THEMES:

Theme	Key Points
Strategic Continuity of Quad	Despite initial doubts under Trump, Quad persists with renewed commitment.
Solidarity with India on Terrorism	Strong condemnation of cross-border terrorism signals growing security convergence.
Countering China's Economic Power	Quad recognizes China's informal economic coercion as a major geopolitical threat.
ASEAN's Role in Indo-Pacific	Emphasized ASEAN's leadership and unity as essential for regional order.
Maritime vs Continental Focus Gap	Critique of Quad's sea-based strategy overlooking China's land influence in South Asia.
Call for a Holistic Quad Strategy	Need for integrating military, economic, and political dimensions in Quad operations.

BROADER THEMES & APPLICATIONS:

1. **Multipolarity and Regional Order** – Quad as a response to China's challenge to U.S.-led Indo-Pacific structures.
 2. **Normative vs Coercive Power** – Contrast between rule-based frameworks and informal economic pressure.
 3. **Economic Statecraft** – How trade, minerals, and investment are used as tools of strategic influence.
 4. **Great Power Competition in South Asia** – South Asia as a growing front in U.S.–China rivalry.
 5. **Coalition Politics and Alliance Management** – Balancing national interests while maintaining cohesion in multilateral platforms.
 6. Examine the challenges of balancing economic interdependence with strategic autonomy in regional alliances.
 7. Critically assess the role of counterterrorism in strengthening multilateral security cooperation within the Quad.
 8. How can supply chain diversification act as a geopolitical countermeasure against informal economic coercion?
-

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How has the Quad evolved from a diplomatic forum to a strategic coalition in response to rising Chinese influence?
2. Discuss the role of critical mineral supply chains in shaping the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region.
3. To what extent does ASEAN Centrality serve as an effective buffer against Chinese dominance in Southeast Asia?
4. Evaluate the limitations of a maritime-focused Indo-Pacific strategy in the face of China's growing continental reach.
5. How can the Quad reconcile internal contradictions to build a coherent Indo-Pacific vision?

Are India-US Relations at a Crossroads?

Šumit Ganguly

DIPLOMAT | JULY 03, 2025

OUTLINE:

1. Pahalgam Attack Triggers Conflict

- Terrorist attack on tourists in Kashmir leads to 4-day India-Pakistan military escalation.

2. Trump Claims Ceasefire Mediation

- U.S. President claims to have induced ceasefire via trade sanction threats; India denies U.S. involvement.

3. Optics of Trump's Pakistan Tilt

- Hosting of Pakistan's army chief at White House worsens Indian mistrust.

4. Resurgence of U.S. 'Hyphenation' Policy

- Indian analysts fear revival of Cold War-era strategy linking India and Pakistan in equal terms.

5. Historical Context of De-Hyphenation

- India-U.S. relations strengthened post-1990s with nuclear deal, defense designations, and bipartisan support.

6. Bilateral Strain Under Trump 2.0

- Trade tensions, lack of diplomatic finesse, and mixed signals raise doubts about U.S. commitment.

7. Outlook

- Indian concerns about strategic coherence justified amid Trump's erratic foreign policy behavior.



In the wake of a terrorist attack in late April targeting tourists in Pahalgam in Indian-administered Kashmir, a series of military skirmishes took place between India and Pakistan. These involved extensive artillery barrages along the Line of Control (the de facto international border in the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir), the use of drones and missiles to attack a range of targets, and the use of air power.

Following this four-day conflict, Pakistan alleged that it had shot down as many as six Indian combat aircraft. General Anil Chauhan, India's chief of defense staff, confirmed that the Indian Air Force had lost some aircraft but did not specify the number.

After the hostilities concluded, U.S. President Donald Trump claimed that he had successfully persuaded both India and Pakistan to agree to a ceasefire. To that end, he asserted that he had threatened to impose significant trade sanctions on both countries, thereby inducing them to end the ongoing hostilities.

Pakistan lauded his public remarks and even briefly nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize. (After Trump's decision to attack three nuclear facilities in Iran, Pakistan's political opposition asked its government to rescind the nomination.) India, for its part, has repeatedly and categorically denied that the ceasefire was a product of Trump's intervention.

It is both difficult and unnecessary to adjudicate the veracity of either claim. What matters is that Trump's attempt to insert himself into this latest India-Pakistan crisis has set off alarm bells in New Delhi about the state of India-U.S. relations.

Before Trump proclaimed his role in ending the brief, intense conflict, Vice President J.D. Vance had stated that the India-Pakistan crisis was "none of our business." Trump subsequently claimed the U.S. acted as mediator in defusing India-Pakistan tensions.

The latter statement raised hackles in New Delhi owing to its long-standing aversion to external efforts to resolve its differences with Pakistan. Finally, to New Delhi's dismay, Trump decided to host General Asim Munir, the Pakistan Army's chief of staff, for lunch at the White House.

Although little of substance emerged from the meeting, the optics were a source of considerable misgiving in New Delhi.

Several Indian political analysts and commentators have argued that Trump's statements and actions suggest a return to the much-disliked U.S. policy of hyphenation: linking India and Pakistan in its dealings with the two antagonistic neighbors. Indeed, this had characterized U.S. policy toward the subcontinent during much of the Cold War.

It was only under the late U.S. Ambassador Frank Wisner in the mid-1990s that Washington decided to de-hyphenate its relations with the two countries. Wisner, who served as the ambassador to New Delhi between 1994 and 1997, was able to pursue this strategy because of India's growing economic clout in the wake of its fitful embrace of economic liberalization in 1991. Subsequent administrations, for the most part, adhered to this policy.

Even after the renewal of a Pakistan-U.S. security relationship following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States, Washington maintained a cordial and mostly robust relationship with India. The India-U.S. partnership even survived Secretary of State Colin Powell's maladroitness designation of Pakistan as a "major non-NATO ally" in 2004, despite causing its share of unease in New Delhi.

What, in considerable part, redeemed the India-U.S. relationship was President George W. Bush's monumental

decision in 2005 to pursue the India-U.S. civilian nuclear accord. This accord, for all practical purposes, exempted India from the strictures of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1970 and allowed it to maintain its nuclear weapons program. All prior U.S. presidents had, to varying degrees, sought to cajole, persuade and even browbeat India to eschew its nuclear weapons program and accede to the NPT.

Bush's decision to make an exception for India amounted to what scholars of international relations refer to as a "costly signal" — namely, one that requires the expenditure of significant domestic and international political capital. In its wake, India-U.S. relations had been placed on a far more secure footing.

Subsequent administrations, both Democratic and Republican, steadily built upon the solid foundations that Bush had constructed during his second term in office. The Barack Obama administration, for example, during its first year in office, neglected India. However, Obama visited India in 2010. During the visit, much to the surprise of his interlocutors in New Delhi, in a speech to the Indian Parliament he publicly stated that the United States, at some point, would look forward to including New Delhi as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Since this was a long-standing Indian goal, his announcement came as a very pleasant surprise to the Indian political leadership.

Also, at the initiative of then-Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, the administration designated India as a "Major

Defense Partner,” thereby easing defense acquisitions from the United States.

Even the advent of the first Trump administration did not lead to substantial policy changes. India, it appeared, had for all practical purposes become a mostly bipartisan issue. The Joe Biden administration, despite expressing some misgivings about democratic backsliding and human rights in India, continued to deepen and broaden the strategic partnership, especially because of its concerns about an increasingly assertive, if not downright revanchist, China in Asia.

Trump’s return to office in 2025, however, has seen some disturbing signs, largely because of his propensity to use trade as a weapon or at least a source of leverage. Unlike in the past, perhaps cognizant of Trump’s inclination to exploit the trade deficit with India as a political blunderbuss, the Modi government indicated a willingness to make certain trade concessions. These trade negotiations, though initially promising, have yet to result in an accord.

Meanwhile, Trump’s maladroitness remarks and his hosting of General Munir have cast a pall on the India-U.S. relationship. It is, of course, possible that New Delhi is needlessly tying itself in knots about these ill-advised statements from the White House. They may simply reflect Trump’s proclivity for self-aggrandizement and a degree of policy incoherence.

That said, given Trump’s mercurial disposition, New Delhi’s concerns about the future of the relationship may well be understandable. Much of the progress that has been achieved in India-U.S. relations could suffer a setback owing to Trump’s ill-advised remarks .■

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Difficult Words

1. **Skirmishes** – Minor military clashes or conflicts.
2. **Adjudicate** – To make a formal judgment or decision.
3. **Veracity** – Truthfulness or accuracy.
4. **Hyphenation policy** – U.S. policy of treating India and Pakistan in tandem rather than independently.
5. **Maladroit** – Inept or clumsy, especially in diplomacy.
6. **Revanchist** – Seeking to retaliate or recover lost territory or influence.
7. **Mercurial** – Unpredictable or subject to sudden change.
8. **Pall** – A cloud or feeling of gloom or shadow over something.

6. **Degree of policy incoherence** – Lack of consistency or direction in policymaking.

Idiomatic Expressions

1. **Raise hackles** – To provoke anger or resentment.
2. **Not take at face value** – Not accept something as true without deeper scrutiny.
3. **Bipartisan issue** – A subject supported by both major political parties.
4. **Put in jeopardy** – To endanger or risk something.
5. **Eschew** – To deliberately avoid or abstain from something.

Phrases

1. **Set off alarm bells** – To cause concern or warning.
2. **Tie itself in knots** – To become confused or overly preoccupied.
3. **Cast a pall** – To darken or overshadow something negatively.
4. **Self-aggrandizement** – Exaggerating one's importance or influence.
5. **Costly signal** – A diplomatic gesture that requires political or economic sacrifice to convey seriousness.

DECONSTRUCTION OF ARTICLE

JARGON/TERMINOLOGIES:

Term	Explanation
Line of Control (LoC)	The de facto border between Indian- and Pakistan-administered Kashmir.
Ceasefire	A temporary suspension of fighting, often brokered or agreed upon during conflicts.
De-hyphenation	U.S. policy of treating India and Pakistan as distinct bilateral relationships.
Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)	International treaty aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.
Major Defense Partner	U.S. designation to India that facilitates strategic defense cooperation.
Revanchism	Political policy aimed at regaining lost territory or influence.

U.S. Mediation and Strategic Fallout	Trump's intervention claims raise Indian suspicions about American neutrality.
Revival of Hyphenation	Trump's actions echo past U.S. policies of equating India and Pakistan diplomatically.
Diplomatic Optics vs Substance	Hosting Pakistan's army chief damages India's perception despite no major outcomes.
Strains in Bilateralism	Previous bipartisan momentum in India-U.S. relations now appears vulnerable.
Trade as Coercion	Trump's threat of sanctions as leverage unsettles longstanding strategic partners.
Policy Incoherence and Risks	Erratic U.S. diplomacy may undermine hard-earned trust and investments in the relationship.

CORE THEMES:

Theme	Explanation
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BROADER THEMES & APPLICATIONS:

1. **Great Power Mediation in South Asia** – The risks of external interference in sensitive regional conflicts.
2. **Bilateralism vs Multilateralism** – Shifting from joint India-Pakistan treatment to independent bilateral relations.

3. **Strategic Autonomy and Realpolitik** – India's balancing act amid inconsistent U.S. foreign policy.
 4. **Foreign Policy and Domestic Optics** – How international gestures (like hosting generals) affect public perception and alliances.
 5. **Security Alliances and Trust Deficit** – Strategic partnerships require consistency, not opportunistic maneuvers.
-

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How do external mediation attempts affect the dynamics of regional conflicts such as the India-Pakistan standoff?
2. Critically evaluate the implications of reviving the U.S. 'hyphenation' policy on regional stability in South Asia.
3. Discuss how trade can be used as a tool of political coercion in international diplomacy, with reference to recent U.S. policy.
4. What are the risks of policy inconsistency in strategic partnerships between major and emerging powers?
5. Examine the role of symbolism and optics in shaping the trajectory of bilateral relationships.
6. How has the India-U.S. relationship evolved since the 1990s and what challenges does it currently face?
7. Assess the geopolitical impact of the U.S.–Pakistan rapprochement on South Asian security architecture.
8. To what extent can transactional diplomacy erode the foundations of long-term strategic alliances?

Will China Become Iran's Major Defense Partner?

Nima Khorrami

DIPLOMAT | JULY 03, 2025

OUTLINE:

1. Iran's Strategic Vacuum Post-War

- Needs overhaul of air defense and intelligence systems after 12-day war with Israel.
- War fatigue and internal instability pressure Tehran to renew the social contract.

2. China as Emerging Security Partner

- Rising distrust in Russian hardware prompts Tehran to seek Chinese systems.
- Pakistan's success with Chinese defense tech cited as persuasive precedent.

3. Strategic Incentives for China

- Securing overland energy corridor (Iraq-Iran-Pakistan) to bypass chokepoints.
- Leverage over Strait of Hormuz, indirect deterrent/control role in region.
- Geoeconomic opportunity to outmaneuver India's access to Central Asia via Chabahar/INSTC.
- Familiarity with IRGC-dominated hybrid regime structure, akin to Pakistan.

4. Risks to China's Broader Regional Strategy

- May strain ties with Israel, disrupt innovation/investment cooperation.
- Gulf states (esp. Saudi Arabia, UAE) may view deeper Iran ties as provocation.
- Exposure to secondary U.S. sanctions on dual-use tech or defense exports.
- Risk of Iranian regime volatility, public backlash, or revolution.

5. Projected Path: Quiet, Limited Cooperation

- China likely to adopt proxy-based, discreet engagement model.
- Will avoid overt alliances while gradually building influence and capacity.
- Strategic pragmatism, not ideological alignment, will shape cooperation trajectory



As Iran navigates the aftermath of its 12-day conflict with Israel, the Islamic Republic finds itself grappling with two imperatives: the need to overhaul its shattered air defense system and intelligence apparatus, and the equally pressing challenge of renewing its social contract with a war-weary and deeply anxious population. This recalibration inevitably raises a number of questions as Tehran searches for a partner in the defense and security domain.

Against this backdrop, China is emerging as a potential, perhaps even desirable, alternative to Russia. Recent commentaries in both Iran and China have made the case for closer defense ties and Iranian purchases of Chinese military hardware. These calls often highlight Pakistan's successful use of Chinese air defense systems during its recent tensions with India.

Given Iran's lost trust in the quality of Russian systems and the urgency of rebuilding its air defense system, is closer China-Iran security cooperation on the horizon? That will depend on how policymakers in Beijing assess the costs and benefits.

Benefits of Increased Defense Cooperation With Tehran

One of the most immediate benefits for China in becoming Iran's defense partner would be the ability to consolidate an alternative energy corridor that bypasses traditional maritime routes. By linking Iraq's energy-rich regions through Iranian infrastructure and onward into Pakistan, China could significantly expand its overland energy security. Such an Iraq-Iran-Pakistan corridor would give Beijing a secure and controllable channel to access Middle Eastern hydrocarbons while simultaneously improving the energy security of its ally, Pakistan. If this corridor develops, it would partially insulate China from volatility in maritime choke points like the Strait of Malacca and the Bab el-Mandeb, providing Beijing with long-sought redundancy in its energy supply chains.

More critically, deepening defense ties with Iran would offer China indirect influence over the Strait of Hormuz. Should China become Tehran's main security partner, it is reasonable to assume that Beijing would be better positioned to moderate Iran's behavior in the event of regional tensions, ensuring that the strait remains open and navigable. This is of paramount importance for China's own economic security as well as those of the Gulf Arab states. Increasing leverage over Tehran's strategic calculus

through defense cooperation would thus serve both deterrent and stabilizing functions from Beijing's perspective.

Another core advantage lies in an increased chance of containing Indian influence across Central Asia. Iran's drift away from India began in earnest after New Delhi began adhering to U.S.-led sanctions in 2018 and ceased oil imports from Tehran. The strategic vacuum left by India's retreat has only widened as India has grown closer to Israel – both ideologically, through shared anti-extremism narratives, and practically, via collaborations in defense, cyber, and agriculture. These ties have diminished Iran's value in Indian strategic thinking while India's pro-Israel stance has tarnished its image in the eyes of decisionmakers in Tehran, creating space for Beijing to step in.

If China becomes Tehran's principal defense partner, it would be in a stronger position to frustrate Indian ambitions in Central Asia and the South Caucasus where Iran's geography is pivotal. With deeper Iranian cooperation, moreover, Beijing could synchronize the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) more seamlessly, using Iran as both a transit route and a geopolitical buffer. This coordination could marginalize India's efforts to connect with Central Asia and Afghanistan via the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which hinges on Indian investments in Iran's Chabahar port. Should Iran allow China to assume a stake in Chabahar, the INSTC's viability would be fatally undermined. This would be a double blow to India: denied

strategic access to Central Asia and outmaneuvered in its attempts to counterbalance China's BRI.

Last but not least, the political trajectory within Iran also favors increased alignment with China. As internal rivalries intensify in Tehran, the most probable outcome is the consolidation of a security state led by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). This would replicate, in many ways, Pakistan's civil-military hybrid model in which real power resides with the armed forces. For China, this is a familiar and manageable structure. Beijing has spent decades building ties with Pakistan's military elite and would likely find it easier to engage with a similar power structure in Iran. Additionally, such a configuration could facilitate improved Tehran-Islamabad relations, smoothing the path for trilateral cooperation under Chinese patronage.

Risk Factors

While the strategic rationale for China to expand its defense and security partnership with Iran is compelling, it is not without significant complications. Beijing would have to tread carefully, balancing its ambitions with the risk of antagonizing a constellation of other regional and global actors. Iran may be geopolitically useful, but it is also diplomatically toxic. Any overt alignment with Tehran, especially in the security and military domain, risks exposing China to a series of entanglements that could undercut its broader objectives in the Middle East and beyond.

Foremost among Beijing's concerns is the potential impact on its relations with Israel. Although China and Israel do not see eye to eye on a wide range of issues, their economic and technological cooperation has been substantial. China is invested in Israeli infrastructure, including port terminals and tech start-ups, and values Israel as a hub of innovation. A significant expansion of China's military relationship with Iran would be difficult for Israel to ignore – not least because for Israel the main problem is the Iranian regime's ideology and not its nuclear program per se. Ultimately, this could compel Beijing to weigh whether its long-term interests in Israeli technology and investment partnerships are worth jeopardizing for an enhanced, and potentially lucrative, defense procurement based relationship with Tehran.

Another sensitive arena is China's extensive commercial ties with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. These states have become key economic partners for China in sectors ranging from energy to logistics and transport. Close defense ties with Iran could disrupt these relationships especially if perceived as emboldening Tehran's regional adventurism.

However, this risk should not be overstated. Paradoxically, China's closeness with Iran could also enhance its leverage with the GCC states. By acting as a potential mediator or deterrent influence over Iran, Beijing could present itself as an indispensable regional stabilizer capable of assuring Riyadh and Abu Dhabi that Iran will not escalate militarily or cross the nuclear threshold. In this way, China might

parlay its ties with Iran into a broader diplomatic capital with Iran's southern neighbors.

A further consideration is the exposure of Chinese state-owned enterprises and private firms to secondary U.S. sanctions. Although China and Iran have collectively developed methods, and indeed networks, to circumvent some sanctions, there remains a legal and reputational risk for companies involved in dual-use technologies or defense exports to Iran. At a time when China-U.S. tensions remain high, particularly around technology and trade, Beijing is likely to consider whether the potential gains from a deeper tie with Iran as a defense supplier are worth the cost of even greater friction with Washington.

Also at play is the distant, but all too real, prospect of a regime change, organically or otherwise, in Iran. Although a popular uprising leading to regime change remains unlikely in the near term, as most Iranians are currently focused on day-to-day survival amid the crisis, public sentiment is volatile. As such, there is a risk that China's investment in the regime could backfire should there be a revolution in Iran.

Conclusion

Despite the favorable geopolitical context that appears to support deeper defense cooperation between Beijing and Tehran, the most likely outcome is a carefully managed and limited relationship rather than a full-fledged defense partnership. The institutional scaffolding for closer cooperation is already in place; the China-Iran Comprehensive Strategic Partnership signed in 2021 and

their common membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). However, the implementation of this framework would likely be shaped not by ideological alignment or mutual defense aspirations but by calculation, discretion, and long-term strategic interest on the part of China.

Should China make the political decision to assist Iran in upgrading its defense capabilities, it would seek to do so without assuming the political cost of being seen as Tehran's military backer. Beijing's approach would be pragmatic and quiet. Assistance and sales, whether in the form of air defense systems, cyber tools, surveillance platforms, or drone technologies, will be offered selectively, and in a manner designed to limit visibility and exposure to U.S. sanctions or regional backlash. Chinese companies involved in these arrangements will be insulated through proxies or offshore intermediaries.

This cautious posture, in turn, is driven by China's broader strategic outlook. For Beijing, Iran is neither an ally nor a partner but rather a geopolitical node and a useful check on the United States' desire to pull back from the Middle East. Iran's geographic location, natural resources, and strategic desperation make it a suitable partner for China's ambitions in Eurasian connectivity, regional balancing, and economic expansion. Yet China is acutely aware of the risks of overcommitment in the Middle East. Beijing does not want to become entangled in either regional rivalries or Iran's confrontations with Israel and the United States. To this end, China would likely continue to exploit the ambiguity of its position, keeping defense ties strong

enough to benefit from Iran's vulnerabilities but restrained enough to avoid provoking its rivals. ■

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Recalibration** – Adjustment or reassessment of strategy or priorities.
2. **Apparatus** – A complex structure within an organization or system.
3. **Scaffolding** – Supporting structure used to build upon (figurative in policy context).
4. **Redundancy** – Backup systems to ensure continuity in case of disruption.
5. **Entanglements** – Complicated or difficult situations or relationships.
6. **Proxies** – Third-party entities used to act on behalf of another, often to mask involvement.
7. **Overcommitment** – Taking on more than one can realistically manage or sustain.
8. **Adventurism** – Risky or reckless political or military behavior.

PHRASES:

1. **War-weary population** – Citizens fatigued or demoralized by prolonged conflict.
2. **Assume a stake** – Take an active role or ownership in a project or infrastructure.

3. **Fatally undermined** – Critically or irreversibly weakened.
4. **Geopolitical node** – A strategic location or partner with multiple regional linkages.
5. **Exploit the ambiguity** – Benefit from vagueness or lack of clear alignment.
6. **Political cost** – Negative consequences of a policy in terms of reputation or alliances.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **Tread carefully** – Proceed with caution, especially in sensitive contexts.
2. **Double blow** – Two simultaneous setbacks or disadvantages.
3. **Parlay into** – Turn something (e.g., a relationship) into another advantage.
4. **Backfire** – Produce unintended negative consequences.
5. **Check on** – A restraining force against a stronger power.

DECONSTRUCTION OF ARTICLE

JARGON/TERMINOLOGIES:

Term	Explanation
Strait of Hormuz	Strategic waterway through which a significant portion of global oil passes.
Dual-use technologies	Goods that can be used for both civilian and military purposes.
INSTC (International North-South Transport Corridor)	Indian-led infrastructure route connecting South Asia with Central Asia via Iran.
CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor)	Flagship BRI project connecting China to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan.
IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps)	Powerful military and political force within Iran's governance structure.
Secondary sanctions	Punitive measures targeting third parties doing business with sanctioned entities.

CORE THEMES:

Theme	Explanation
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Strategic Realignment in the Middle East	Iran is repositioning its alliances amid shifting regional power dynamics post-conflict.
China's Pragmatic Expansion	China balances opportunity and restraint in extending influence through limited military cooperation.
Geoeconomics and Energy Security	Infrastructure corridors and resource routes drive defense alignments.
India's Marginalization Risk	China-Iran ties threaten India's regional connectivity via Chabahar and INSTC.
Security-Driven Diplomacy	Civil-military hybrids (Pakistan, Iran) present familiar and exploitable governance patterns for China.
Ambiguity as Strategy	China thrives in maintaining low-profile but high-leverage roles in contested geopolitical arenas.

BROADER THEMES & APPLICATIONS:

1. **China's BRI Diplomacy and Security Expansion** – Combining infrastructure investment with strategic positioning.

2. **Middle East as a Theatre of Strategic Competition** – Iran becomes a leverage point between great powers.
3. **Geopolitical Risk Management in Foreign Policy** – China's careful calibration between opportunity and backlash.
4. **Authoritarian Partnerships and Military Structuring** – Civil-military fusion regimes provide more direct channels for defense cooperation.
5. **The Future of U.S. Sanctions Regime** – Challenges posed by rising great-power circumvention of Western sanctions frameworks.
6. Analyze the significance of hybrid civil-military governance structures in shaping China's defense diplomacy.
7. Discuss how Beijing's quiet cooperation with Tehran reflects the shift from overt alliances to transactional geopolitics.
8. Can China balance defense cooperation with Iran and economic engagement with Israel and the Gulf simultaneously? What would be the implications of failure?

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How does China's defense engagement with Iran reflect its broader regional ambitions in the Middle East and Central Asia?
2. Evaluate the strategic rationale behind China's cautious, limited military cooperation model in volatile regions like Iran.
3. How might increased China-Iran security cooperation affect India's strategic access to Central Asia?
4. What risks and rewards does China face in deepening its defense relationship with a diplomatically isolated state like Iran?
5. To what extent can China serve as a stabilizing actor in the Middle East by leveraging its defense ties with Iran?

National Section

All articles are taken from prestigious Pakistan
and world 's newspapers.

Ecocide & class war

Sajjad Akhtar

DAWN | JULY 4, 2025

OUTLINE:

Introduction: Early Onset of Monsoon Flooding

- Recent images from Swat highlight tragic lack of preparedness.
- Despite climate rhetoric, state action remains negligible.

2. Climate Change and Glacial Melt

- KP and Gilgit-Baltistan face intensifying glacial lake outburst floods.
- Caused by global warming linked to Western industrial capitalism.
- Global call for reparations and fossil fuel phaseout.

3. Domestic Contribution to the Crisis

- Pakistani capitalist practices (deforestation, mining, road-building) worsen warming.
- Lack of political will to protect environment or people.

4. Development, Dispossession & Ecological Damage

- "Primitive accumulation": Infrastructure and mineral extraction displace locals.
- Loss of forests increases flood risk.
- Tourism promoted despite environmental cost (e.g., Luxus Resort sewage dumping).

5. Class Politics Behind Tourism

- Elites benefit; working-class hoteliers scapegoated.

- No alternative livelihoods for locals beyond tourism.
- State development projects deepen ecological and class injustices.

6. Repression of Environmental Activism

- Activists in KP/GB are criminalised.
- Military priorities override ecological or human security concerns.

7. Wider National Context

- Climate injustices extend beyond the north (e.g., Indus plains, Punjab, Sindh).
- Heatwaves and smog worsen annually.
- Superficial policy responses target the poor, not root causes.

8. Lessons from 2022 Floods

- Displacement of ~40 million people was partly man-made.
- No meaningful reforms since; ruling class continues harmful practices.

9. Conclusion

- Status quo entrenched.
- True change requires rethinking development, class priorities, and environmental justice.



THE monsoon season has barely started, and the spectre of flash floods is already haunting us. The images that circulated last week of an entire family being stranded for hours in Swat waiting for a rescue operation that never came were both tragic and farcical.

Despite how much our rulers and the 'experts' alike now deploy rhetoric about climate change, the Pakistani state is not interested in changing very much. In both of the mountainous highlands of KP and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), we have been warned to expect intensification of glacial lake outburst floods, the flash flooding caused by permanent glacier melt. This process has been underway for decades, and every year it becomes more acute.

The rising temperatures that trigger glacier melt are explained largely by the excesses of industrial capitalism in the Western world, including the colonisation of much of Asia, Africa and Latin America. We cannot reverse this history, but some measure of justice can be done by demanding, as most non-Western countries are doing, that the emitters end their addiction to fossil fuels whilst also paying reparations.

But Pakistani capitalism is also contributing to warming temperatures. The fact that our rulers continue to largely externalise the climate crisis is duplicitous; there is no political will to keep large parts of this country habitable for future generations.

There's no political will to keep the country habitable.

The developmental regime that has been championed in KP and GB for too long, and which is becoming even more entrenched, prioritises big infrastructure, including road-building, the felling of forests, and, increasingly, the mining of so-called critical minerals. Marx would call many of these processes primitive accumulation. They dispossess local people of their livelihoods, whilst also exacerbating warming temperatures and eliminating natural protections like forest cover against floods.

Then there is the political economy of tourism, widely promoted by the state only to be selectively vilified when

flood-related disasters take place. There is nothing wrong with ordinary people from mainland Pakistan going up north; the problem is when the authorities facilitate ecocide in the name of tourism. It is often the case that the least well-to-do hoteliers are blamed when floods ravage popular tourist locations like Swat, Naran and Hunza. But what about luxury hotels like the Luxus Resort in Attabad (Hunza) which was caught red-handed dumping sewage water into a fresh lake?

A bigger class story is hidden behind the veil of tourism. Why are there no other meaningful livelihood options beyond tourism in the highlands? By promoting primitive accumulation and dispossessing working people of their traditional livelihoods — including grazing lands, pastures and smallholding agriculture — the mafias that masquerade as our rulers are not only devastating vulnerable ecosystems but also waging class war.

Even those state departments that offered a modicum of public service under the guise of tourism, without ravaging the natural landscape like the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation have been taken over by bodies like the SIFC that operate without any oversight in terms of class and ecological impact. It is also noteworthy that activists in KP and GB challenging ecocide and class war are being criminalised. Meanwhile, drone strikes and targeted killings are proliferating in districts like Waziristan, indicating where the state's priorities lie.

The situation south of KP and GB is a little different. The war on nature and working masses carries on under the guise of development. If there is flooding in the mountainous highlands, the Indus plains are unlikely to be spared. This year's monsoon has been preceded by protracted heatwaves — these too, are becoming more intense and last longer with each passing year.

Every once in a while, like during the smog season in Lahore, there are proclamations that things will change. Ham-fisted closures of brick kilns and rickshaws end up forcing the burden of ecocide onto the working class. If we want farmers to stop engaging in slash-and-burn agriculture, we need to consider how to generate meaningful livelihood alternatives. Meanwhile, sales of SUVs continue to rise, newer roads continue to be built, and behemoths like the Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project continue to be championed.

The 2022 monsoon was said to be a watershed moment. The floods which displaced almost 40 million working people and inundated much of Sindh, eastern Balochistan and the Seraiki belt are now a global case study. That man-made disaster too was at least partially caused by our own militarised ruling class, and three years later, there is no evidence that things are shifting. The status quo is, in fact, becoming even more entrenched. ■

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Spectre** – A haunting or disturbing image or possibility.
2. **Farcical** – Ridiculously absurd or laughably incompetent.
3. **Duplicitous** – Deceitful or dishonest, especially by pretending to act in good faith.
4. **Ecocide** – The large-scale destruction of the natural environment
5. **Entrenched** – Firmly established and difficult to change.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **On the brink of:** Very close to a dangerous or critical situation; nearly experiencing something bad or extreme.

PHRASES:

1. **Start off** – To begin or get underway.
2. **Come across** – To be perceived or interpreted a certain way (note: implied meaning in context).
3. **Give up** – To stop or quit something.
4. **Carry on** – To persist or continue.
5. **Take over** – To assume control or responsibility.
6. **Wipe out** – To destroy entirely.
7. **Blame on** – To assign fault to someone.
8. **Step up** – To increase effort or commitment (implied as lacking in the passage).

DECONSTRUCTION OF ARTICLE

JARGON/TERMINOLOGIES:

Term / Jargon	Meaning
Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)	Sudden floods caused by the rupture of a lake formed by melting glaciers, often in mountainous regions.
Industrial Capitalism	An economic system characterized by private ownership of industry and the prioritization of profit, often linked to environmental degradation.
Primitive Accumulation	A Marxist term describing the process of dispossessing people of land and resources to create a capitalist economy.
Ecocide	The large-scale destruction of the natural environment, especially when done deliberately or as a result of industrial activities.
Reparations	Compensation demanded by or offered to those who have suffered due to injustices, here

	referring to climate-related harm caused by rich nations.
Militarised Ruling Class	A term used to describe elite political or military powers that dominate governance and suppress dissent.
Targeted Killings	The deliberate killing of individuals by state or military forces, often without judicial process.
Slash-and-Burn Agriculture	A method of farming where vegetation is cut down and burned to clear land for cultivation, often criticized for contributing to pollution.

CORE THEMES:

Theme	Description
Climate Change & Glacial Flooding	Highlights the intensifying threat of glacial lake outburst floods in KP and GB due to rising temperatures, worsened by both

	global emissions and local inaction.
State Apathy & Governance Failure	Criticizes the Pakistani state's lack of political will to implement climate adaptation strategies or protect vulnerable populations, despite rhetorical acknowledgment of climate change.
Primitive Accumulation & Development	Describes how infrastructure projects, deforestation, and mining in highlands reflect a form of "primitive accumulation" , displacing locals and accelerating environmental degradation.
Class Politics of Tourism	Explores how tourism is weaponized by the state and elites, often blaming small hoteliers for disasters while ignoring luxury businesses' ecological violations , revealing deeper class inequalities .
Lack of Livelihood Alternatives	Points out the absence of diverse economic options in highland regions, forcing dependence on tourism, and highlights how this is part of a broader class war by ruling elites.

Criminalization of Environmental Activism	Notes how activists resisting environmental destruction in KP and GB are being criminalized , while the state prioritizes militarism over ecological protection.
Development as Ecocide in the Plains	In areas south of KP and GB, development projects (e.g., Ravi Riverfront) are also harming ecosystems and displacing working-class communities, masked as progress.
Empty Promises & Entrenched Status Quo	Emphasizes how even after catastrophic events like the 2022 floods , the state has failed to change course, with climate justice and systemic reform replaced by token gestures .

BROADER THEMES & APPLICATIONS:

1. **Climate Injustice and Global Inequity:** Pakistan bears the brunt of climate change despite contributing little to global emissions, highlighting the need for reparations and global accountability.
2. **State Negligence and Elite Duplicity:** The Pakistani state's failure to respond effectively to climate

disasters reflects a lack of political will masked by empty climate rhetoric.

3. **Primitive Accumulation and Dispossession:**

Development projects in KP and GB dispossess local communities and accelerate ecological degradation under the guise of progress.

4. **Tourism and Class Politics:** The promotion of tourism fuels environmental destruction and obscures deeper class disparities in access to land, livelihoods, and accountability.

5. **Militarised Development and the Entrenchment of the Status Quo:** Despite disasters like the 2022 floods, Pakistan's ruling structures double down on ecologically harmful, elite-driven development models.

4. Why are traditional livelihoods in KP and GB being eroded, and what are the implications of this for both local communities and the environment?
5. Despite the devastation of the 2022 monsoon floods, why has there been little systemic change, and what does this say about the priorities of Pakistan's ruling elite?

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. Why has the Pakistani state failed to meaningfully respond to the growing threat of climate-induced disasters like glacial lake outburst floods and flash floods?
2. In what ways is Pakistan's internal model of development contributing to environmental degradation, despite the global discourse blaming Western industrial capitalism?
3. How does the promotion of tourism in northern areas like Swat and Hunza intersect with issues of class, dispossession, and ecological damage?

No education

Faisal Bari

DAWN | JULY 04, 2025

OUTLINE:

1. Introduction

- Focus on education in the Economic Survey 2024-25 and the 2025-26 budget.
- Education chapter is poorly written and hides more than reveals.

2. Enrollment Trends

- Decline in pre-primary enrolments; slight increase in primary to high school; drop in college/university enrolments.
- No real strategy or plan to tackle the education emergency despite millions of children out of school.

3. Literacy Rates and Disparities

- National literacy rate at 60.5%; big gender and rural-urban gaps.
- Punjab vs. Balochistan literacy disparities, especially low literacy among rural women in Balochistan.

4. Government Spending on Education

- Education expenditure down to 0.8% of GDP, far below UN recommended 4%.
- Spending cut by nearly 30% in FY25 compared to previous year.

- Funds wasted on vanity projects rather than meaningful reform.

5. Higher Education Challenges

- 269 universities exist but public sector universities face severe funding shortages.
- HEC budgets stagnant; some universities struggle to pay staff and pensions.
- New universities launched without adequate support.

6. Political and Structural Issues

1. Lack of political will or resources for medium- to long-term education reforms.
2. Private sector thrives but public education caters mainly to the poor, who lack political voice.
3. Government rhetoric praises education but action is lacking.

7. Conclusion

- Education emergency remains unaddressed; millions of young people suffer.
- Political short-termism prevents real progress; the future of the country is at risk.



WE just saw the release of the Pakistan Economic Survey 2024-25 and the presentation of the budget for 2025-26. There is a lot that can be said about the economy and the budget, but in this article I want to focus on education and what the Survey and the budget tell us about it and this government's priorities. All figures in this article are taken from the Economic Survey 2024-25.

Empty vessels make the most noise, and the Economic Survey section on education is a poorly written chapter, which is clearly meant to hide more than to reveal, as well as to glorify while having nothing to extol. It tells us that enrolments at the pre-primary level have declined over the last year or so while those at the primary, middle and high school level have increased a bit and that college/university enrolments have come down somewhat.

Do these statistics tell a story? Yes, they do, and a very strong one. They tell us that despite the prime minister's declaration of an 'education emergency' and despite the fact that around 26 million five- to 16-year-olds are out of school, the government has neither a strategy for this category of children nor an actual plan that it is implementing. We are seeing trend movements in enrolments. If education was a priority, if there was a strategy, if a plan was being implemented, one would expect to see a strong movement — beyond the trend — in an upward direction. Instead, what we see is the usual drift. This is the story of education for the current government. In this regard, the story is no different from that for most governments of the past: education has not been a priority for any government.

The Economic Survey tells us that the national literacy rate stands at 60.5 per cent only: 68pc for men and 52.8pc for women. The urban literacy rate is 74.09pc — for urban men it is 78.13pc. For rural women, it is only 41.67pc. So, the gender and rural-urban gaps continue to persist. But there is a story hidden in geography as well. Where the literacy rate for Punjab is quoted at 66.25pc, it is 42pc for Balochistan whereas for rural women in Balochistan, it is only 26.59pc, ie, only one in four women in rural Balochistan is literate.

It is clear that governments — federal and provincial — do not want to spend more on education.

The net enrolment rate at matriculation for boys in Balochistan is only 18pc and just 9pc for the girls in the province. And this is supposed to be a federation!

Any government, all governments, any society, all societies, should feel ashamed at these numbers. But we don't. We are celebrating our 'achievements'.

This is a quote from the education chapter in the Economic Survey. "Cumulative education expenditures by federal and provincial governments in FY25 (July to March) were estimated at 0.8pc of GDP. Expenditures on education-related activities during FY25 decreased by 29.4pc...". They decreased from Rs1,251.06 billion to Rs899.6bn. Of course, there will be some spend from April to June but will it be 30pc? Unlikely. So, expenditure on education has gone down in nominal terms too. In real terms, given inflation, the drop would be much larger. And now we are spending only 0.8pc of our GDP on education, whereas UN agencies recommend spending a minimum of around 4pc of GDP on education. And the manifestoes of all major political parties promise that education expenditure will increase to 4pc of GDP.

The figure of 0.8pc includes all vanity projects such as the Daanish schools and the laptop schemes, especially in the federation and Punjab. I am sure it includes a portion of advertising spend of the provinces as well. But if you ask the ministers, the chief ministers or the prime minister, they will tell you, and emphatically so, that education is a top priority for their governments.

The Economic Survey headlines the news that the country now has 269 universities: 160 public sector and 109 private sector universities. But it does not dwell too much on the fact that the Higher Education Commission has not been given more resources for the new public sector universities. Some of the universities, even the older and

bigger ones, are facing severe financial difficulties. Their budgets from the HEC have been more or less stagnant. Some cannot even make payrolls and have to cut pension payments. Some of the new universities in the public sector have not been given any support at all by the HEC. The government has done nothing to address these concerns. But launching new universities has been a priority.

The dialogue on education is quite broken. It is clear that governments — federal and provincial — do not want to spend more on education or on fixing the public sector education system. They believe they do not have the resources for it, nor do they have the patience and, possibly, the ability for medium- to long-term reforms. It is also clear that, given the thriving private sector in education, it is only the poor who depend on public sector provision of education and so, from a political point of view, there is no pressure on the government to fix education either: the poor are even more voiceless in this country than the middle- and upper-income classes.

And yet, in terms of rhetoric and public pronouncements, the government cannot be politically incorrect to admit all of the above. So, it will continue to pay lip service to the 'education emergency' and the 'right to education'. And this game is bound to continue. Who will suffer? The young of the country and, therefore, the future of the country. But, for those in power, hunooz dilli dur ast, reality has not set in and political horizons are too short. ■

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Extol** – To praise enthusiastically.
2. **Manifestoes** – Public declarations of policies or promises by political parties.
3. **Stagnant** – Not growing or improving; staying the same.
4. **Pronouncements** – Official statements or announcements.
5. **Rhetoric** – Persuasive or impressive speaking or writing, often insincere.
7. **Launch into** – To begin something with energy or enthusiasm (e.g., launching new universities).
8. **Glorify without (anything) to extol** – To praise something undeservedly or without substance.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **Empty vessels make the most noise:** *Meaning:* People with the least knowledge or substance often speak the loudest or make the biggest claims

PHRASES:

1. **Pay lip service (to)** – To express support or concern without taking real action.
2. **Set in** – To begin and become noticeable or established (e.g., "reality has not set in").
3. **Drift along** – To continue without direction, purpose, or change.
4. **Dwell on** – To spend time thinking or talking about something, especially something negative.
5. **Come down (somewhat)** – To decrease slightly or to a small extent.
6. **Cut back (on)** – To reduce the amount or number of something, like spending.

DECONSTRUCTION OF ARTICLE

JARGON/TERMINOLOGIES:

Term/Jargon	Meaning
Education Emergency	A declared urgent situation where the education system is in crisis and needs immediate government action — used here as empty rhetoric.
Net Enrolment Rate (NER)	The percentage of children of official school age who are enrolled in the corresponding level of education.
GDP (Gross Domestic Product)	The total value of goods and services produced in a country in a given year. Used to compare national expenditure on sectors like education.
Real Terms	Figures adjusted for inflation, reflecting actual purchasing power or real value.
Vanity Projects	Initiatives that are launched more for image and publicity than actual impact, such as laptop schemes or elite schools.

Higher Education Commission (HEC)	The government body responsible for regulating and funding higher education institutions in Pakistan.
Rural-Urban Gap	The disparity in development indicators (like literacy rates) between rural and urban areas.
Hunooz Dilli Dur Ast	A Persian phrase meaning "Delhi is still far away" — metaphorically implying that real change is still a distant hope.

CORE THEMES:

Core Theme	Description
Lack of Political Will	Successive governments, despite public claims, have shown no genuine commitment to prioritizing or reforming education.
Discrepancy Between	The government declares an "education emergency" but fails to

Rhetoric and Action	follow up with concrete strategies or increased investment.
Underfunding of Education	Education spending has fallen to 0.8% of GDP , well below the internationally recommended 4% , reflecting a serious decline in fiscal commitment.
Inequality and Access Gaps	Stark disparities persist based on gender, geography, and rural-urban divides — especially visible in literacy rates and school enrolment data.
Neglect of Public Education System	The public education system, relied on by the poor, remains broken due to lack of reforms, poor funding, and low accountability.
Misplaced Priorities and Vanity Projects	Funds are diverted to politically motivated but low-impact projects like Daanish Schools or laptop schemes instead of systemic improvements.
Higher Education Crisis	Despite the growing number of universities, many lack proper funding. The Higher Education Commission is under-resourced, affecting even payrolls and pensions.

Lip Service and Short-termism

Leaders continue to make grand promises about education, but these are often symbolic, with no long-term planning or sustained implementation.

BROADER THEMES & APPLICATIONS:

1. **Rhetoric vs. Reality:** Despite declaring an 'education emergency,' the government's actions reflect neglect rather than commitment.
2. **Chronic Underinvestment:** Education spending has dropped to 0.8% of GDP, far below international standards and political promises.
3. **Inequality and Marginalization:** Stark disparities in literacy and enrolment—especially for rural women and provinces like Balochistan—highlight deep systemic exclusion.
4. **Misplaced Priorities:** Vanity projects like laptop schemes are funded while universities struggle to pay salaries and children remain out of school.
5. **Lack of Political Incentive:** With the poor depending on public education and lacking political voice, there's little pressure on leaders to enact real reform.

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What does the declining education expenditure—now at just 0.8% of GDP—reveal about the government's actual priorities, especially when compared to the UN-recommended 4%?
 2. How can the government justify the launch of new public universities when even older, established ones are struggling to meet payrolls and basic operational expenses?
 3. What do the enrolment trends—especially declining pre-primary and tertiary enrolments—indicate about the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the so-called 'education emergency'?
 4. How do the persistent gender and rural-urban literacy gaps, particularly the alarming 26.59% literacy rate for rural women in Balochistan, reflect on the inclusiveness and equity of education policy in Pakistan?
 5. Why is there a lack of political urgency or public pressure to reform public education, and how does the growing reliance on private education deepen existing inequalities?
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ICEP
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PREPARATION

SAARC alternative: myth or reality?

Ali Ehsan

TRIBUNE | JULY 06, 2025

OUTLINE:

I. Introduction

- News about a potential alternative to SAARC gained attention in Pakistan.
- Main idea: Tensions between India and Pakistan have made SAARC dysfunctional.

II. Core Premise

- Proposed alternative may exclude India.
- Central players: Pakistan and China.
- Raises key geopolitical and strategic questions.

III. Geographic & Ideological Challenges

- SAARC = South Asian identity; China is not part of South Asia.
- Regional organisations (EU, ASEAN, Arab League) are rooted in geographic or ideological unity.
- An organisation led by China cannot represent South Asia.

IV. Existing Regional Mechanisms

- SCO already includes China and Pakistan.
- SCO can achieve much of what the alternative SAARC aims to do.

V. Geopolitical Implications

- Risk of deepening regional division: pro-India vs anti-India blocs.

- India's economic and strategic role in South Asia is significant.
- Many SAARC members (e.g., Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka) rely heavily on India.

VI. Afghanistan's Position

- Afghanistan values autonomy and non-interference.
- Strong Indian investment in Afghan infrastructure.
- Difficult for Afghanistan to join an anti-India bloc.

VII. Strategic Importance of India

- India is a rising regional power with naval presence and connectivity influence.
- Excluding India may harm regional cooperation efforts.

VIII. Economic vs Realist Logic

- Economic logic: prosperity through cooperation and trade.
- Realist logic: survival and power come first.
- Realist priorities often override economic incentives in state decisions.

IX. Lessons from EU & NATO

- Economic unity (EU) works under a security umbrella (NATO/US).
- But this leads to loss of foreign policy independence



This week a news item was flashed on front pages of almost all the newspapers in Pakistan. The news was about the possibility of creation of an alternate organisation to replace the dysfunctional regional organisation SAARC. The idea of creating this alternative organisation is probably built on the premise that over the years India-Pakistan tensions have stalled and made SAARC dysfunctional so an alternate organisation be created that should exclude India.

If this premise is right - which I think is so - then it leads to many pertinent questions that must be first correctly answered. Currently, China is a SAARC observer and not a member country but the core of the alternative SAARC organisation being proposed is anticipated to be built around the two nuclear powers in the region, China and Pakistan.

SAARC has a South Asian identity whereas China is not in South Asia but East Asia. China shares a very long border with India and borders with Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan and Afghanistan but geographically China is not part of South Asia. So, to start with, any imaginative alternative organisation led by China that is being considered as a replacement to SAARC will represent a geographic space that can be called anything but representing South Asia. ASEAN, Arab League, OIC and EU are organisations that represent ideological and geographic identities.

Attainment of regional peace, economic cooperation and non-interference in internal affairs are the core concepts around which these organisations are structured and on the basis of which they operate. The ideal goal for all of them is to promote and achieve Arab, South East Asian, Muslim and European unity but essentially all these organisations except OIC represent a region and its priorities.

If China takes a lead to replace SAARC then that imaginative organisation will neither represent association of South Asian countries nor the region of South Asia. In any case SCO as a regional organisation, led by the two great land powers, Russia and China, already exists and much that is being imagined to be achieved by an alternate to SAARC can be achieved under the mandate of SCO.

Pakistan might view the creation of an alternative organisation to SAARC as a win-win situation for it, as this

would indicate a regional dissatisfaction of India's role and may mean a diplomatic victory for Pakistan.

But what about the geopolitical and strategic implications? Geopolitically, there are more chances that the region will be further divided into pro-India and anti-India blocs. India led SAARC as its economic engine and many countries in the region excluding Pakistan depended on Indian aid, infrastructural development and trade.

Strategically, India will contest any attempt by China to interfere in its sphere of influence and disturb the already existing Indian dominance and control.

Countries like Bhutan and Maldives that are heavily dependent on India for their trade and security will not prefer to join any anti-India bloc. It will also be not easy for Bangladesh and Nepal to do the same as both countries have a history of shared interests with India and both share borders with India. Sri Lanka too will find it difficult to become part of an anti-India bloc as it also heavily depends on India for aid, trade and fuel supplies. Sri Lanka was a recipient of \$4 billion aid from India during its economic crisis of 2022-23.

The most interesting is the question about Afghanistan and why it will not like to become part of any anti-India organisation or bloc. Historically, Afghanistan has always stood up to fight any attempts aimed to control it externally. The not so friendly relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan are also built around this core Afghanistan policy concept. Over the years India has

offered development oriented and non-interventionist aid to Afghanistan.

India invested \$3 billion in Afghanistan, building schools and colleges, Afghan Parliament, Salma Dam and roads including Zaranj-Dilaram Highway that connects Afghanistan to Iran. There was news of Afghanistan planning to even have a naval fleet at Iran's Chabahar Port. India has invested in the Iranian port with a view to bypassing Pakistan for trade with Afghanistan.

The Eastern Corridor of INSTC (International North South Transport Corridor) ends in Afghanistan and makes Afghanistan part of this alternate transport corridor against BRI. Afghanistan maintains cordial relationship with India to balance against Pakistan's influence and control; and so, for Afghanistan to join any alternative organisation which is anti-India and led by China and Pakistan will not be an easy decision to make.

Considering that India is a rising power, a land bridge which ensures connectivity of South Asian countries and which also maintains a big naval presence in the Indian Ocean excluding India from any future alternative organisation to replace SAARC will only weaken rather than bolster regional cooperation and problems.

There are both the economic and realistic logics for creating an alternative organisation to replace SAARC. The economic logic addresses the problem of how to get rich, to maximise prosperity by creating organisations that can

promote economic deals and investments with other countries.

However, the first question that states ask as actors in the regional and international system is a realist question and that question is - how best to survive? The economists prefer to get rich but the realists prefer to be more powerful to be able to survive and whenever both the economic and realist logic find themselves in a conflict it is always the realist logic that states prefer.

States prefer to become part of regional and international organisations and institutions. EU and NATO came into existence under the same concept. Over the years, EU has done so well because the US through NATO provided EU the security umbrella and instead of competing for security the EU countries invested in their economies.

But this has come at a cost. EU does what the US asks it to do. EU's collective foreign policy is driven due to its economic and security relationship with the US. Today, most European countries realise that they don't have an independent foreign policy and they are beholden to the US.

Built only on an economic logic, any alternative to SAARC led by China seems to be a bright idea but seen from a realist perspective there are many questions that the states will have to answer related to their foreign policy and overall security. It is by getting right answers to these questions that the very idea of having an alternative to SAARC will either fail or succeed. ■

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Dysfunctional** – Not operating or functioning normally or properly.
2. **Geopolitical** – Related to the influence of geography on politics and international relations.
3. **Bloc** – A group of countries united by a common interest, usually political or economic.
1. **Win-win situation**: A situation in which all parties benefit or gain something positive.
2. **At a cost**: Gaining something but having to give up something else valuable in return.

PHRASES:

1. **Stall out** – To come to a stop or fail to progress.
2. **Build on** – To base an idea or plan on something that already exists.
3. **Stand up to** – To resist or defend against something or someone.
4. **Join in** – To become involved or take part in something.
5. **Depend on** – To rely on someone or something for support or help
6. **Look at** – To examine or consider something.
7. **Come into existence** – To be created or start to exist.
8. **Buildup around** – To be formed or developed based on a central idea or point.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

DECONSTRUCTION OF ARTICLE

JARGON/TERMINOLOGIES:

Term / Jargon	Meaning
SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)	A regional intergovernmental organization of South Asian countries aimed at promoting economic and regional integration.
Observer (in international organizations)	A status granted to non-member states or entities that allows them to attend meetings and participate without voting rights.
Geopolitical	Relating to the influence of geographic factors on politics, especially international relations and strategic decisions.
Strategic Implications	The long-term effects or consequences of an action, particularly in terms of power dynamics and security among states.
Sphere of Influence	A region or domain over which a powerful country exerts

	significant cultural, economic, military, or political influence.
Realist Logic (Realism in International Relations)	A theory that prioritizes national interest and survival over ideals, emphasizing power, security, and state-centric decision-making.
Economic Logic	Decision-making in international relations based on economic gains such as trade, investment, and prosperity.
BRI (Belt and Road Initiative)	A global development strategy initiated by China involving infrastructure development and investments across Asia, Europe, and Africa.

CORE THEMES:

Theme	Description
Dysfunctionality of SAARC	The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has become largely ineffective

	due to ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan, leading to calls for an alternative regional framework.
Proposal for an Alternative Organisation	There is discussion around forming a new regional organisation potentially led by China and Pakistan, aimed at replacing SAARC while excluding India, reflecting political and strategic dissatisfaction with India's role.
Geographic and Identity Constraints	Unlike SAARC which is South Asia-centric, China is not geographically part of South Asia. This raises concerns about the legitimacy and coherence of a new regional body led by China.
Role and Limitations of Existing Organisations (e.g., SCO)	The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), already led by China and Russia, offers a platform for regional cooperation, questioning the necessity of a new organisation.
Geopolitical Fragmentation Risk	Creating a new bloc excluding India risks deepening regional divisions into pro-India and

	anti-India camps, undermining unity and cooperation in South Asia.
Strategic Dependencies of Smaller States	Countries like Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka have strong economic, security, and infrastructural ties with India, making their participation in an anti-India bloc unlikely.
Afghanistan's Complex Position	Afghanistan's historical resistance to external control and its favorable ties with India make its inclusion in a China-Pakistan-led alternative bloc highly unlikely.
Economic vs Realist Logic in Regional Politics	While economic cooperation is desirable, countries prioritize survival and power (realist logic) over prosperity (economic logic), and foreign policy decisions are made based on strategic rather than purely economic interests.

BROADER THEMES & APPLICATIONS:

1. **Regionalism vs Geopolitics:** Creating a regional bloc without India disrupts South Asia's geopolitical balance and may deepen divisions rather than unify the region.
2. **Realism in International Relations:** States will prioritize survival and strategic autonomy over economic gain when joining new regional alliances.
3. **Geographic Identity of Regional Organizations:** A China-led bloc cannot credibly represent South Asia due to its external geographic and cultural positioning.
4. **India's Strategic Influence in South Asia:** India's deep economic, security, and developmental ties make it indispensable for regional cooperation efforts.
5. **Limits of Economic-Only Cooperation Models:** Economic logic alone is insufficient for lasting regional organisations without underlying security and political consensus.
6. **Foreign Policy Autonomy vs Dependency:** Aligning with dominant powers like China risks compromising smaller states' independent foreign policy decisions.

2. Can an organisation led by China genuinely claim to represent South Asian interests and identity?
3. What are the security and sovereignty implications of aligning with China, especially in a bloc that might mimic SCO or BRI-style engagement?
4. Can the alternative organisation provide economic benefits that are substantial enough to counterbalance India's regional economic influence?
5. Will the formation of an anti-India bloc deepen regional divisions and make South Asia more geopolitically unstable?

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. Will member states be willing to jeopardize their existing strategic and economic relationships with India to join a China-Pakistan-led bloc?

India in BRICS: facilitator or spoiler?

Imitiaz Gul

TRIBUNE | July 5, 2025

OUTLINE:

I. Introduction

- BRICS aims to reduce Western dominance via financial integration.
- Launch of BRICS Multilateral Guarantee (BMG) mechanism under NDB.
- Modelled on World Bank's MIGA to lower investment risks.

II. Geopolitical Context

- Rising global instability: Trump-era unpredictability, Israel-Iran conflict.
- Push for BRICS alternatives amid Western sanctions on Russia and China.

III. BRICS Achievements and Trade

- Formation of NDB and \$100B Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA).
- Intra-BRICS trade hits \$1 trillion; projected to reach \$1.2–\$1.3 trillion in 2025.
- China's dominant role in BRICS trade and financial competitiveness.

IV. India's Dual Role and Strategic Dilemma

- India's growing economic power and alignment with Western blocs (G-7, Quad, AUKUS).

- Viewed as a counterweight to China by the West.
- India's contradictory positions (e.g., Israel-Iran conflict) raise trust issues.

V. Trust Deficit within BRICS

- Concerns over India's role as facilitator vs. spoiler.
- Potential obstruction of BRICS objectives (currency swaps, de-dollarisation).
- Suspicion from other BRICS members due to India's Western ties.

VI. Key Questions and Strategic Tensions

- Can India reconcile its Western alliances with BRICS ambitions?
- Will India aid or hinder BRICS's growth?
- How credible is India's commitment to a multipolar financial order?



The BRICS group of developing nations - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - intends to announce a new guarantee fund backed by the New Development Bank (NDB) to reduce financing costs and stimulate investment.

The proposed BRICS Multilateral Guarantee (BMG) mechanism, developed within the NDB, has received technical approval from member states.

This initiative draws inspiration from the World Bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and aims to address uncertainties arising from the unpredictable policies of the Trump administration.

Additionally, the recent Israel-Iran conflict and the associated risks, including transcontinental business disruptions and vulnerabilities in financial markets, have also contributed to the push for alternative solutions.

Notable achievements of BRICS since the inaugural BRIC summit in Yekaterinburg, Russia, in June 2009 include the establishment of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and the \$100 Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) to

provide liquidity support to BRICS members in the event of balance-of-payments crises.

As of June 2025, intra-BRICS trade had reached approximately \$1 trillion, with projections to surpass \$1.2-1.3 trillion by 2025, as reported by Kirill Dmitriev, special representative of the President of the Russian Federation for economic cooperation with foreign countries and head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund.

China continues to be the primary driving force and central trading hub for the intra-BRICS trade, surpassing ¥1.49 trillion (\$210 billion) in early 2025.

Furthermore, China ranks fourth globally in financial competitiveness this year, following the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan, as indicated in a recent report released at the Digital Finance Forum during the Global Digital Economy Conference 2025 in Beijing.

BRICS, established as an evolving alternative to Western-led institutions, seeks to enhance financial and trade integration. This includes exploring alternative payment systems and bolstering the influence of the New Development Bank (NDB), particularly through initiatives such as the BRICS Multilateral Guarantee Fund. However, it remains uncertain whether a larger and more diverse BRICS can effectively coordinate cohesive policies with one of its stakeholders deeply embedded in Western partnerships and alliances.

Meanwhile, the founding fathers of BRICS grapple with significant questions regarding the extent to which BRICS

decisions can influence global trade flows, advocate for a de-dollarised financial system, and adjust to geopolitical alliances in the presence of India, poised to become the third largest economy in a few years.

BRICS presents a compelling alternative to the geopolitically driven world order. However, with India heavily aligned with the US-led, anti-China-Russia Western bloc, can the organisation realistically pursue its objectives, such as currency swaps and non-dollar bilateral or multilateral trade, which US President Donald Trump fears will only diminish the dollar's influence?

The ostracisation and vilification of Russia and China serve as the rationale for the US-led G-7, the Quad, 2+2 (India, US), AUKUS, NATO and other initiatives. These entities, including the US, perceive India as a regional counterweight to China.

In this context, can other BRICS members trust India, which projects an image of arrogance and insensitivity, particularly vis-à-vis smaller nations such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka — a country governed by Hindu extremist ideology?

India's intransigence has effectively crippled SAARC and potentially may hinder the growth of BRICS or even block some initiatives that the US may find detrimental to its dollar interests.

Therefore, a pertinent question arises: Is India a facilitator or a veiled detractor of the BRICS agenda?

Secondly, will India maintain its alliances with the West and permit the growth of a group led by Russia and China, both of which are under US/Western sanctions or restrictions, effectively portraying them as villains for the US?

The Western bias or disinclination towards Russia and China is prevalent in various aspects of work. How can this grouping then allow India to be a partner in promoting BRICS, which is perceived as a brainchild of Beijing and Moscow to counteract Western hegemony?

With great suspicion does the West view BRICS's instruments for trade and financial such as the NDB, trade facilitation mechanisms and the agreement to conduct transactions in their own currencies rather than the US dollar?

Therefore, a pertinent question arises: will India assume the role of a facilitator or a covert spoiler, effectively acting as a mole for the United States? Can BRICS truly thrive when India has interests in both the Eastern and Western blocs? The duplicitous stance India adopted during the Israel-Iran conflict, where it refrained from condemning Tel Aviv for excessive aggression against Tehran, is certainly not lost on other regional powers.

Iranian leadership interpreted this posture as direct support for Israel and, by implication, for the United States. Can New Delhi effectively navigate its position when dealing with G-7 and BRICS and whether other members

will trust it — an essential element for pursuing common goals? ■



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PREPARATION

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIFFICULT WORDS:

1. **Multilateral** – Involving multiple countries or parties working together on a common issue.
2. **Sanctions** – Penalties imposed by countries to influence behavior, often restricting trade or finance.
3. **De-dollarisation** – The process of reducing reliance on the US dollar in international trade and finance.
4. **Geopolitics** – The influence of geography on politics, especially in international relations.
5. **Intransigence** – Refusal to change views or compromise, often leading to deadlock.
6. **Alliance** – A formal agreement or partnership between countries for mutual benefit.

PHRASES:

1. **Draw inspiration from** – Take ideas or motivation from something.
2. **Address uncertainties** – Deal with or manage doubts or unpredictability.
3. **Push for** – Strongly advocate or campaign in favor of something.
4. **Grapple with** – Struggle to deal with or understand something difficult.

5. **Adjust to** – Become accustomed to or adapt to a new condition or environment.
6. **Block some initiatives** – Prevent or stop certain actions or proposals from proceeding.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

1. **Grapple with** – To struggle with or try to overcome a difficult challenge.
2. **Drive a wedge** – To cause division or create conflict between people or groups.
3. **Tread a fine line** – To navigate a situation that requires careful balance to avoid negative consequences.
4. **Cast a pall** – To create a sense of gloom or sadness over a situation.
5. **Call into question** – To cast doubt on something's validity or truth.

DECONSTRUCTION OF ARTICLE

JARGON/TERMINOLOGIES:

Term / Jargon	Meaning
New Development Bank (NDB)	A multilateral development bank established by BRICS countries to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects in member states and other emerging economies.
Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)	A framework by BRICS for providing financial support through currency swaps to countries facing short-term balance of payments problems.
BRICS Multilateral Guarantee (BMG) mechanism	A proposed fund within the NDB intended to provide investment guarantees to reduce financing risk and stimulate cross-border investments.
Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)	A World Bank agency that offers political risk insurance and credit enhancement to investors and lenders in developing countries.

De-dollarisation	The process of reducing reliance on the US dollar in international trade and finance, promoting the use of local currencies or alternatives.
Intra-BRICS trade	Trade flows occurring exclusively between the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).
Geopolitical alliances	Strategic partnerships between countries based on political, economic, or military considerations, such as NATO, AUKUS, or the Quad.
Currency swaps	Agreements between two countries to exchange currencies to facilitate trade and investment without involving a third-party currency like the US dollar.

CORE THEMES:

Term / Jargon	Meaning
New Development Bank (NDB)	A multilateral development bank established by BRICS in 2015 to fund infrastructure and sustainable development projects in emerging economies.
BRICS Multilateral Guarantee (BMG) mechanism	A proposed financial tool backed by NDB to reduce investment risks and financing costs, modeled after the World Bank's MIGA.
Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)	A \$100 billion liquidity pool created by BRICS to provide short-term financial support during balance-of-payments crises.
De-dollarisation	The process of reducing reliance on the US dollar in global trade and finance, often by using local currencies for bilateral or multilateral transactions.
Intra-BRICS trade	Trade conducted among BRICS member countries, aiming to strengthen economic ties and reduce dependence on non-member economies.

Geopolitically driven world order	A global system shaped primarily by political alliances, power dynamics, and strategic interests rather than economic cooperation alone.
Currency swaps	Financial agreements between countries to exchange currencies, helping to facilitate trade and protect against foreign exchange volatility.
Hindu extremist ideology	A political stance often associated with far-right Hindu nationalism in India, criticized for promoting exclusionary or aggressive policies.

BROADER THEMES & APPLICATIONS:

1. **Geopolitical Alignment vs Multilateral Cohesion:** India's simultaneous engagement with the West and BRICS raises trust concerns that could undermine unified policy execution within the bloc.
2. **Institutional Alternatives to Western Dominance:** The BRICS Multilateral Guarantee mechanism reflects the group's strategic ambition to build financial structures independent of Western institutions like the IMF and World Bank.

3. **Trust and Internal Contradictions within BRICS:**

Divergent national interests and political ideologies among BRICS members, especially India, threaten internal coherence and the success of collective initiatives.

4. **The Dollar's Dominance and De-Dollarisation Efforts:**

BRICS's push for local currency trade and alternatives to dollar-denominated transactions directly challenges US economic hegemony and invites global scrutiny.

5. **Strategic Perception and Global Credibility:**

The perception of BRICS as a China-Russia-centric counterbalance to the West complicates India's role and raises doubts about the bloc's neutrality and global acceptance.

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. Is India a genuine facilitator or a covert detractor of the BRICS agenda, given its deepening ties with Western alliances like the Quad, AUKUS, and the G-7?
2. Can BRICS effectively implement initiatives such as currency swaps and non-dollar trade mechanisms while one of its key members—India—maintains strong alignment with the US and its allies?
3. To what extent can other BRICS members trust India's commitment to the group's objectives, especially when India's foreign policy often mirrors Western strategic interests?