

WHITE PAPER: A PERSPECTIVE ON PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY ASPECTS

Pakistan's National Landscape: Governance, Institutions
Economy and International Relations - A Review



A Reference Paper on National Resilience, State Institutions, and Regional Engagement

INDEX

1.	Pakistan - India Conflict, Military Operations and Strategic Posture.....	2
	a) Strategies, plan, doctrinal concepts and training aspects which ensured success in Operation Marka-e-Haq.....	
	b) Confirm figures of Indian losses.....	
	c) Military initiative by Pakistan in IIOJ&K and Palestine, similar to Operation Buyan-um-Marsoos.....	
2.	Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and Internal Security.....	6
	a) State action against sectarian violence in Parachinar.....	
	b) Efforts in highlight Baloch Liberation Army (BLAs) and Indian involvement in spread of terrorism inside Pakistan at various diplomatic forums.....	
	c) Kinetic actions against India and Israeli handlers for spreading terrorism in Pakistan.....	
3.	Development, Alienation and Governance in Balochistan.....	10
	a) Alternative livelihoods after border trade restrictions especially Iranian Oil.....	
	b) Need for more administrative units within Baluchistan.....	
4.	Civil - Military Relations, Army's Role in Politics & Accountability.....	13
	a) FM's active role in Diplomacy.....	
	b) What the military says about "the cypher"?.....	
5.	27th Constitutional Amendment, CDF & Democratic Concerns.....	16
	a) Efficacy of CDF structure and inter-services coordination.....	
	b) Lifetime immunity to Field Marshal.....	
6.	Key Strategic Debates and National Considerations.....	18
	a) Pakistan's Defense Pact with KSA (SMDA) Amid the border Saudi-Iran rivalry.....	
	b) Why Pakistan acted as a Mediator in the U.S. - Iran Conflict?	
	c) Is Pakistan backtracking on Quaid-e-Azam stance on Palestine Issue?	
	d) Improved Pak-US Relations - possibility of Pakistan securing the release of Dr Aafia Siddiqui.....	
	e) Impact of SIFC on National Economy.....	
	f) Treatment of Dr. AQ Khan in Pakistan.....	
7.	References.....	25

CHAPTER – 1: PAKISTAN-INDIA CONFLICT, MILITARY OPERATIONS & STRATEGIC POSTURE

Strategies, Plan, Doctrinal Concepts and Training Aspects Which Ensured Success in Operation Marka-e-Haq

Pakistan's military response during Operation Marka-e-Haq, undertaken in the context of renewed tensions with India, was guided by a clearly defined strategic framework and established doctrinal principles. Rather than being an ad hoc response to unfolding events, the operation reflected a structured approach to military planning, with emphasis placed on achieving operational objectives through a coherent strategic design and an organized application of military doctrine.

The execution of Operation Marka-e-Haq was underpinned by the Pakistan Armed Forces acquired and indigenously developed capabilities to address a broad spectrum of security challenges, encompassing conventional, unconventional and sub-conventional forms of warfare. The operation reflected a level of preparedness to conduct coordinated multi-domain operations across land, air, sea, space, cyber, cognitive and information domains. Together, these capabilities illustrated an approach designed to respond to the increasingly complex and evolving nature of contemporary warfare.

Pakistan's response during Operation Marka-e-Haq was focused on measured retaliation and controlled escalation involving strict targeting of military objectives with the view to quickly and firmly re-establish deterrence.

The operation's success is attributed to the convergence of several factors, including blessings of Allah Almighty, a shared national purpose, public resolve and support, and the decisiveness of the country's strategic leadership. Faith in Allah Almighty, institutional preparedness and collective national resolve contributed to the overall conduct of the operation.

The operation reflected close coordination among the people, the government and the armed forces throughout its execution. This alignment of national effort was considered an important element of the operation, collectively referred to as Bunyan-um-Marsoos and Marka-e-Haq, highlighting the emphasis placed on institutional coordination and public support during the

course of the conflict.

Effectiveness of Pakistan's Information Operations (IO) Maneuver

The information dimension of the conflict also emerged as a significant aspect of Operation Marka-e-Haq. Pakistan's public communication strategy was based on verifiable information, emphasized the principle of proportional self-defense, and remained open to independent verification by third parties. This approach sought to maintain the credibility and transparency of Pakistan's public messaging throughout the course of the conflict.

By comparison, the Indian information campaign was relying more heavily on emotionally driven narratives and, in some instances, claims of decisive military success that were subsequently disputed or challenged. According to the given information on different sources, a number of these claims lost credibility following closer scrutiny through satellite imagery, independent fact-checking and assessments by external observers, contributing to competing narratives surrounding the conduct and outcome of the conflict.

Pakistan's effectiveness/ success of IO maneuver highlights the importance of close coordination between Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the Foreign Office and the government in maintaining consistency in the country's public communication throughout the conflict. This coordinated approach ensured that official messaging remained aligned with developments on the ground and contributed to Pakistan's narrative finding broader resonance in the reporting and assessments of sections of the international media, research institutions and multilateral organizations.

Indian Aircraft Losses During Operation Marka-e-Haq

Pakistan's assessment of Indian aircraft losses during Operation Marka-e-Haq was grounded in available evidence, intelligence reports and supporting documentation. In contrast, the official Indian narrative and statements issued by senior military leaders regarding the reported losses evolved over time, giving rise to differing public accounts of the conflict's outcome.

The inconsistencies in the official Indian narrative are illustrated through statements made by senior military officials following the conflict. [The Indian Chief of Defense Staff, General Anil Chauhan, acknowledged that the Indian Air Force remained grounded for 48 hours](#), whereas the Indian Air Force Chief subsequently claimed on 9 August 2025, nearly three months later, that a no aerial kills of Pakistan AirForce had been achieved (Al Jazeera, 2025). The differing content and timing of these statements have raised serious concerns regarding the consistency of the official narrative surrounding the conduct and outcome of the conflict.

Based on the latest intelligence assessments available to Pakistan, the total number of Indian aircraft destroyed during the conflict stood at eight. These included [four Rafale fighter aircraft, one Sukhoi Su-30, one MiG-29, one Mirage 2000, and one unmanned aerial vehicle \(UAV\)](#) (Global Defense Corp, 2025). These figures reflect Pakistan's latest assessment of the reported aerial losses sustained during the conflict.

Military Action by Pakistan in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and Palestine, Similar to Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos

Military Action IIOJK

Kashmir is Pakistan's jugular vein, occupying a central place in the country's national identity and strategic outlook. The dispute has remained a defining feature of Pakistan-India relations, with the two countries having fought multiple wars over the issue. Pakistan has consistently maintained its commitment to safeguarding its national interests and has stated that, should circumstances make it necessary, direct military action would remain an available option.

At the same time, Pakistan's primary approach to the Kashmir dispute remains anchored in the framework of the [United Nations](#) and its support for the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination (UN Security Council, 1948). Kashmir continues to be one of the longest-standing unresolved issues on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council, with existing resolutions recognizing the right of the Kashmiri people to determine their own future. This position reflects Pakistan's continued emphasis on pursuing the issue through internationally recognized legal and diplomatic mechanisms.

At present, Pakistan continues to view legal, diplomatic and political engagement as the preferred and most effective means of pursuing the Kashmir issue. Rather than advocating open-ended cross-border military conflict, emphasis remains on advancing its position through political dialogue, diplomatic engagement and internationally recognized legal avenues.

Military Action Against Israel to Save Palestinians

The proposition that Pakistan should undertake military action in Palestine requires consideration within a broader legal, strategic and operational framework. Before any such course of action could be contemplated, a number of practical and legal considerations would need to be addressed. These include:-

- a. Whether Pakistan possesses any authorization under the United Nations framework to undertake military action in Palestine or against Israel.
- b. Whether neighboring states directly affected by the conflict have formally invited Pakistan to participate or would be willing to provide the territorial access, military bases and logistical support that such an operation would inevitably require.
- c. Whether the Palestinian authorities themselves have issued any formal request for Pakistani military intervention.
- d. Equally important is the question of whether Pakistan's existing security commitments, including counter-terrorism operations along its western border and continuing strategic responsibilities on its eastern frontier with India, would realistically permit the opening of an additional military front.
- e. Beyond these legal and strategic considerations, significant operational challenges would also arise, including whether Pakistan possesses the logistical capacity to sustain military operations in a geographically disconnected theatre where personnel, equipment and supplies would need to be maintained across extended lines of communication far beyond its own borders.

Taken together, these legal, diplomatic, strategic and logistical considerations must be addressed as fundamental factors before any such military option could realistically be considered.

CHAPTER – 2: TERRORISM, COUNTER-TERRORISM AND INTERNAL SECURITY

State Action Against Sectarian Violence in Parachinar

Kurram district, including Parachinar, has experienced recurring episodes of sectarian violence for several decades, with the origins of these tensions traced back to 1961. Over the years, the conflict has evolved into a complex challenge shaped by a combination of long-standing land disputes, external instigation and deeply rooted mistrust among local communities. The interaction of these factors has contributed to repeated cycles of violence and instability, undermining efforts to establish lasting peace in the region. Beyond the immediate security implications, the prolonged unrest has resulted in significant human and material losses, displaced large sections of the local population, disrupted normal economic and social activity, and placed considerable strain on governance and public service delivery. The persistence of these challenges has, in turn, constrained the district's broader socio-economic development and hindered sustained progress towards long-term stability.

Following a renewed outbreak of violence in Kurram in late 2024, the Government of Pakistan, in coordination with the provincial government and security forces, initiated a comprehensive response aimed at restoring peace and stability in the district. The measures introduced were designed to address the immediate security situation while creating conditions conducive to the restoration of law and order, the protection of affected communities, and the gradual return of normalcy. This coordinated approach reflected an effort to contain the violence and support longer term stabilization in the region through a combination of institutional and security measures.

As part of the efforts to restore stability, a series of jirgas were convened, bringing together tribal elders, local notables and community leaders to facilitate dialogue and rebuild trust among the affected communities. These consultative engagements provided a platform for addressing longstanding grievances, encouraging consensus and promoting local ownership of the peace process. The dialogue ultimately culminated in the Fourteen-Point Kohat Peace Accord in January 2025, which marked an important step towards restoring stability and fostering a more structured framework for peace in the region.

Following these developments, a high-level Apex Committee approved a comprehensive Kurram Stability Plan, structured around three sequential phases aimed at restoring security

and creating the conditions for lasting peace and stability in the district: -

- a. The first phase, described as de-bunkerisation, focused on dismantling militant infrastructure through the demolition of 979 militant bunkers, an effort intended to significantly reduce the operational capacity and mobility of hostile groups.
- b. The second phase, de-Weaponization, commenced on 25 April 2025 and concentrated on reducing the availability of illegal weapons, resulting in the recovery of 151 weapons and 79,762 rounds of ammunition.
- c. The third phase centered on securing and sustaining normal movement throughout the district through the establishment of a Road Protection Force comprising 399 former servicemen. Created within a period of three months, the force was tasked with protecting the vital Thal–Parachinar Road corridor, ensuring the safe movement of people and goods, and preventing further attacks on key transport routes. To reinforce these measures and maintain a sustained security presence, 48 additional security posts were also established along strategically important routes to strengthen surveillance, improve area security and support the long-term implementation of the stabilization plan.

Alongside these stabilization measures, the Pakistan Army also undertook extensive relief and rehabilitation efforts to support communities affected by the violence. As part of these humanitarian operations, 388 helicopter sorties were conducted to evacuate 9,290 individuals from conflict-affected areas, facilitating the safe movement of vulnerable populations and those requiring urgent assistance. In addition, approximately 29,140 kilograms of medicines were distributed to affected families to help address their immediate healthcare needs and support relief efforts during the crisis. These measures complemented the broader stabilization process by providing humanitarian assistance to communities impacted by the conflict.

To support long-term peace and stability, the government also initiated 45 development and rehabilitation projects aimed at addressing the underlying socio-economic challenges facing the region. These initiatives covered a broad range of sectors, including solar power installations, irrigation systems, transport infrastructure, solar street lighting and recreational facilities, with the objective of improving public services and local infrastructure. Complementing these efforts were technical training and youth development programmes designed to enhance skills, expand employment opportunities and promote sustainable livelihoods. Together, these measures formed part of a broader rehabilitation strategy intended to strengthen community

resilience and create conditions conducive to lasting peace and socio-economic development.

Efforts in Highlighting BLA and Indian Involvement in The Spread of Terrorism Inside Pakistan at Various Diplomatic Forums

On the question of highlighting the activities of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Indian involvement in supporting terrorism within Pakistan, attention is drawn diplomatically, legally and through media to a body of evidence that has accumulated over several years. This includes public statements attributed to India's Prime Minister, as well as reporting by sections of the Indian state media, have expressed support for the idea of Balochistan's independence. In addition, the capture of an Indian naval intelligence officer operating inside Pakistan is further evidence in support of claims regarding material Indian assistance to terrorist activities in the province. Taken together, these developments form part of a broader pattern that has shaped Pakistan's concerns regarding external support for militancy and terrorism in Balochistan.

Pakistan has consistently raised these concerns at the United Nations as well as through bilateral diplomatic engagements with partner countries. Alongside these diplomatic efforts, emphasis has also been placed on strengthening international counter-terrorism cooperation through enhanced intelligence-sharing arrangements and closer collaboration with relevant partners. These efforts have focused on disrupting militant financing mechanisms and recruitment networks, reflecting a broader approach that combines diplomatic engagement with international security cooperation to address the cross-border dimensions of terrorism.

To support its position, Pakistan has submitted a number of dossiers and other evidentiary material relating to alleged foreign interference, including documentation associated with [the case of Kulbhushan Jadhav](#) (International Court of Justice, 2019), an Indian national convicted in Pakistan on espionage and terrorism-related charges. These submissions form part of Pakistan's broader effort to substantiate its concerns regarding external support for terrorism within the country. Alongside these efforts, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry, its missions at the United Nations, relevant security institutions and diplomatic representatives have consistently engaged with foreign governments and international organizations through diplomatic briefings and official engagements to present these concerns. In doing so, they have sought to highlight the broader regional security implications of the activities attributed to the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) while advocating for its formal designation as a terrorist organization.

The activities of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) have also been documented by independent human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, which have reported on violence in Balochistan, including attacks on civilians attributed to the group, broader patterns of terrorist violence and allegations of human rights abuses committed by non-state actors. These reports have contributed to the wider international understanding of the security situation in the province and have formed part of the broader body of information considered by governments in assessing the group's activities. Over time, these developments have contributed to the designation of the BLA as a terrorist organization by a number of countries and international actors, including the United Kingdom in 2006, the United States in 2019, as well as by the European Union, Russia and China. (U.S. Department of State, 2025) [\[1\]](#)

Kinetic Actions Against India and Israeli Handlers for Spreading Terrorism in Pakistan

Questions have also been raised about whether Pakistan should adopt more direct measures against India, as well as against Israeli intelligence handlers accused of supporting the spread of terrorism within the country. However, terrorism in Pakistan is viewed as being driven by a combination of external sponsorship and internal vulnerabilities, suggesting that focusing solely on external actors cannot provide a lasting solution. Sustainable progress requires addressing both the external dimensions of the threat and the domestic vulnerabilities that continue to be exploited.

Hostile actors are seen to exploit proxies, financial networks and propaganda to advance their objectives. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is closely linked to the existence of internal fault lines and governance weaknesses, which create opportunities for external actors to influence and sustain instability. Addressing these underlying vulnerabilities is therefore an important element in reducing the impact of externally supported threats.

Pakistan already has a counter-terrorism framework, anchored in the National Action Plan (NAP), which adopts a comprehensive approach by combining military operations with a range of non-military measures. Alongside security operations, the framework places emphasis on governance reforms, countering extremist narratives, disrupting terrorist financing networks, and strengthening law enforcement institutions. Together, these measures are intended to address both the security and structural dimensions of terrorism through a coordinated national response.

Any future course of action, whether focused on internal or external dimensions of the threat, is to be pursued within the framework of this broader national strategy rather than as a standalone response. In this context, all policy and operational measures are viewed as contributing to the overarching objective of eliminating terrorism and violent extremism through a coordinated and comprehensive national approach.

Pakistan's long-term security depends not on isolated retaliatory measures, but on the sustained implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) and the continued strengthening of state institutions. Equal importance is attached to addressing the internal vulnerabilities that hostile actors seek to exploit, reinforcing the view that lasting security can only be achieved through a comprehensive, institution-led and long-term approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism.

CHAPTER – 3: DEVELOPMENT, ALIENATION AND GOVERNANCE OF BALUCHISTAN

Alternative Livelihoods After Border Trade Restrictions Especially Iranian Oil

With the tightening of cross-border trade restrictions, particularly those affecting the informal movement of Iranian oil, increasing attention has been directed towards identifying alternative livelihood opportunities for communities that have traditionally depended on this activity for their income. The issue has become particularly significant in border areas where the trade has long served as a source of economic sustenance. Under Pakistani law, however, the cross-border movement of Iranian oil is regarded as a smuggling activity, as the fuel enters the country outside the formal trade framework and without the documentation, customs duties or tax requirements applicable to legally imported goods. These developments have reinforced the need to explore sustainable and lawful economic alternatives for the affected communities.

The arrangements that initially permitted the movement of fuel across the border were intended to serve a limited purpose by meeting the everyday energy requirements of remote communities residing in the border region. These provisions were designed to address local necessities rather than facilitate large-scale commercial activity. Consequently, the transportation and sale of this fuel in urban centers such as Turbat and Karachi extends beyond the scope and intent of the original arrangements, reflecting a shift from meeting local consumption needs to wider commercial distribution.

The informal cross-border oil trade is increasingly viewed as an unsustainable source of livelihood due to its exposure to a range of legal, economic and geopolitical uncertainties. Its continued viability remains vulnerable to law-enforcement actions, fluctuations in market conditions and changing regional dynamics, all of which contribute to an unpredictable operating environment. These challenges are further reflected in the significant decline in the volume of Iranian oil entering Pakistan in recent years, highlighting the diminishing sustainability of continued reliance on this form of trade.

The economic benefits generated by the informal cross-border oil trade are widely distributed unevenly, with a substantial share accruing to intermediaries and organized criminal networks rather than to the local communities directly involved in its transportation. In contrast, local transporters bear the greatest operational and legal risks associated with the trade while receiving relatively limited and uncertain long-term financial returns. This imbalance highlights the limited economic sustainability of the existing arrangement and underscores the disproportionate burden placed on those engaged at the lowest level of the supply chain.

Continued dependence on the informal cross-border oil trade is viewed as a constraint on the transition towards more stable, lawful and productive forms of economic activity. Reliance on an uncertain and gradually declining system not only limits long-term economic opportunities but also reinforces dependency on a livelihood that remains vulnerable to legal, economic and regional developments. A more sustainable path for Balochistan's youth is therefore seen to lie in expanding access to education, skills development and employment within the formal economy. Particular emphasis is placed on opportunities in sectors such as mining, engineering, healthcare, science and technology, and public service, with the objective of promoting long-term economic stability, lawful employment and broader socio-economic development.

Need for More Administrative Units within Balochistan

Calls for the creation of additional administrative units within Balochistan have emerged in the context of broader concerns relating to governance, public representation and the effective delivery of state services. These discussions are also shaped by Pakistan's significant demographic growth, with the country's population increasing from approximately [40 million at independence](#) to more than 250 million today (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023). This substantial increase has placed growing pressure on existing governance structures, public

service delivery mechanisms, infrastructure and the equitable distribution of resources. In this context, the proposal for additional administrative units is viewed as part of a broader effort to strengthen governance, improve administrative efficiency and enhance the state's capacity to respond more effectively to the needs of an expanding population.

The significant demographic and geographic disparities that exist between Pakistan's provinces, with Punjab and Balochistan representing one of the most pronounced examples, have reinforced the need for governance models that are better aligned with local conditions and administrative realities. The vast differences in population size, territorial expanse and developmental requirements underscore the limitations of a uniform approach to governance. In this context, greater emphasis has been placed on administrative arrangements that are responsive to local needs, enabling more effective planning, improved service delivery and governance structures that better reflect the distinct social, geographic and developmental characteristics of individual regions.

In this context, effective governance is increasingly associated with greater decentralization, whereby decision-making authority, administrative responsibilities and the allocation of resources are brought closer to the communities they are intended to serve. Such an approach enhances institutional responsiveness to local needs, strengthening accountability in public administration and improving the efficiency and quality of public service delivery. By empowering local administrative structures, decentralization is also seen as enabling governance arrangements that are better aligned with the diverse social, geographic and developmental realities of different regions.

The Balochistan Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI) is an effort to promote a more localized and community-centered model of development by allocating resources across individual districts in accordance with their specific needs and priorities. A key feature of the initiative is its emphasis on development projects identified by local communities themselves, thereby encouraging greater public participation in the planning process. By aligning resource allocation with locally determined priorities, the initiative seeks to improve the relevance, effectiveness and inclusiveness of development interventions while strengthening local ownership of the development process.

Community participation and the use of local contracting mechanisms under the initiative are intended to strengthen local ownership of the development process by ensuring that

communities play an active role in shaping and implementing projects that directly affect them. This approach is also aimed at broadening economic inclusion, creating employment opportunities and improving the overall effectiveness and sustainability of development outcomes. In the longer term, the province's stability and the strengthening of public trust in state institutions are closely linked to such grassroots empowerment, supported by a more equitable distribution of resources and stronger, more responsive connections between citizens and the institutions responsible for delivering governance and public services.

CHAPTER – 4: CIVIL – MILITARY RELATIONS, ARMY’S ROLE IN POLITICS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Field Marshal’s Active Role in Diplomacy

The increasingly visible diplomatic role of the Field Marshal has generated discussion regarding the evolving relationship between military engagement and civilian authority, particularly in the sphere of Pakistan's external relations. Much of this debate centers on whether such diplomatic engagements alter the constitutional boundaries between civilian and military institutions or represent an extension of the military's institutional responsibilities in matters relating to national security and strategic affairs. Within this constitutional framework, the Armed Forces are recognized as a state institution whose primary obligation is to serve the Constitution and safeguard the national interest.

Their institutional role is therefore directed towards the service of the state rather than any political party, government or individual. The military's participation in diplomatic engagements is framed within the broader constitutional structure of the state, with emphasis placed on supporting national objectives while operating within its defined institutional responsibilities.

Within this framework, the military operates under a constitutional structure established through the democratic process and functions in support of the elected government's constitutional mandate. Its role in aid of civil power is not a routine function but as one exercised under specific circumstances and only upon the formal request of the state. As provided under [Article 245](#) of the Constitution of Pakistan, such assistance may be extended during national emergencies, crises or situations where civilian institutions require additional support to perform their responsibilities effectively (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, art. 245).

In practice, this assistance encompasses areas such as internal security, disaster relief, public health and rescue operations, with the deployment of military resources taking place only at the request of the relevant federal or provincial authorities. This framework underscores the constitutional basis governing military support to civilian institutions while emphasizing that such assistance is intended to complement, rather than replace, the role of the civil administration.

Military diplomacy is described as a well-established and widely recognized component of

contemporary international relations, with senior military leaders across the world regularly engaging their counterparts on matters relating to defense cooperation, regional security, strategic affairs and military-to-military engagement on behalf of their respective states. Such interactions are generally regarded as complementing, rather than replacing, traditional diplomatic channels by facilitating dialogue on issues that carry significant defense and security dimensions. Within this context, the substantial security considerations associated with both the Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement with Saudi Arabia and the regional tensions between the United States and Iran underscore the particular importance of military diplomacy. Given his direct involvement in, and familiarity with, the strategic and security issues associated with these developments, Field Marshal Asim Munir is well placed to undertake such engagements on behalf of the Government of Pakistan. At the same time, the Armed Forces primary constitutional responsibility continues to be the defense of Pakistan, with any additional responsibilities undertaken only in support of the country's national interests and in response to specific requirements determined by the state.

What the Military Says About “the Cypher”

The controversy surrounding what has become known as the diplomatic cypher has remained one of the most debated political issues in recent years, with much of the public discussion centering on differing interpretations of its significance. At the core of this debate is the distinction between the existence of the diplomatic communication itself and the conclusions drawn from its contents. The cypher originated from a diplomatic exchange involving Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States and a relatively mid-level American official, rather than representing a formal statement of United States policy or an official directive. This distinction has remained central to discussions surrounding the nature and interpretation of the diplomatic communication.

Attempts to present the controversy as evidence that Pakistan's military spokesperson's office misled the public conflate two distinct issues that have often been treated as though they were one and the same. The first concerns the existence and authenticity of the diplomatic cypher itself, while the second relates to whether the contents of that communication constituted evidence of a United States-backed effort to bring about a change of government in Pakistan. These are separate questions requiring separate consideration. In this context, the then Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Major General Babar Iftikhar, did

not dispute the existence of the cypher and publicly acknowledged that the diplomatic communication was genuine. At the same time, he stated that assessments by Pakistan's intelligence agencies had found no evidence to support the conclusion that the no-confidence motion leading to the removal of the government of the day formed part of a foreign conspiracy. This distinction between the authenticity of the communication and the interpretation of its contents is central to understanding the broader controversy surrounding the diplomatic cypher.

The official position maintained that the diplomatic cypher was an authentic diplomatic communication and acknowledged that the American official involved had used language considered to be undiplomatic. At the same time, a distinction was drawn between the existence of the communication and the interpretation of its contents. The communication did not constitute an order for regime change, nor did it provide evidence of any covert military diplomacy undertaken outside the constitutional authority of the civilian government. This distinction forms the basis of the position adopted regarding the controversy surrounding the cypher.

Further clarification was provided through a recorded statement made by Pakistan's former Foreign Secretary, [Asad Majeed, under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure](#) (U.S. Department of State, 2019, 2025), in which he stated that the diplomatic cypher itself did not contain the words "threat" or "conspiracy." According to his statement, these characterizations represented political conclusions drawn by the leadership of former Prime Minister Imran Khan rather than language contained in the document itself. As the debate evolved, the controversy increasingly became part of the broader political discourse, where it was used to mobilize public opinion and became closely associated with the political challenges and declining public support faced by the government of the time.

CHAPTER – 5: 27TH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT, CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCES & DEMOCRATIC CONCERNS

The Chief of Defense Forces (CDF) Structure and the 27th Constitutional Amendment

The establishment of the position of Chief of Defense Forces (CDF), together with questions surrounding the lifetime legal protections associated with the rank of Field Marshal, has been the subject of considerable public and constitutional debate following the passage of the [27th Constitutional Amendment Syed](#), B. S. (2025, November 8). Much of this discussion has centered on the implications of these changes for Pakistan's defense management structure and the legal status attached to the newly introduced institutional arrangements. As a result, the reforms have attracted attention within broader debates on constitutional governance, institutional accountability and the evolving organization of the country's defense framework.

The evolving character of modern warfare has increasingly underscored the need for the integrated management of multiple operational domains, including land, air, sea, cyber, space, information and emerging technologies. As security challenges become more complex and interconnected, greater emphasis has been placed on ensuring coordination across these domains through a unified defense structure. Such an approach is intended to facilitate integrated planning, strengthen coordination among the armed services and enhance overall operational effectiveness. It is considered as a means of reducing duplication of effort and enabling more efficient utilization of national defense resources through centralized planning, procurement and resource management.

The Chief of Defense Forces (CDF) model is a widely recognized defense management arrangement that has been adopted by approximately seventy countries around the world. The primary objective of this model is to strengthen coordination, joint planning and unified command across a country's different armed services, enabling them to function in a more integrated and coordinated manner. By promoting greater institutional coordination and a unified approach to defense management, the CDF structure is intended to enhance joint decision-making and improve the overall effectiveness of military planning and command.

The appointment of an army officer to the position of Chief of Defense Forces (CDF) reflects Pakistan's predominantly land-based security environment and the nature of the country's

defense requirements. Given the strategic challenges associated with its geographical setting and security priorities, the decision aligns with the operational realities that continue to shape Pakistan's defense framework. This approach is also consistent with the practice adopted by countries such as India, where similar security considerations have influenced the appointment of army officers to comparable positions within the defense command structure.

Lifetime Immunity to Field Marshal

Existing legal protections for military personnel are provided under Pakistan's constitutional and military legal framework, and the introduction of the new Chief of Defense Forces (CDF) structure, together with the conferment of the rank of Field Marshal, does not create any additional category of legal immunity (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, art. 243). Rather, these institutional changes operate within the existing constitutional and legal framework. The rank of Field Marshal is characterized as an internationally recognized lifetime honor conferred in recognition of exceptional service, reflecting its ceremonial and professional significance. At the same time, both the rank itself and any related defense reforms remain subject to the country's established constitutional and parliamentary processes, reinforcing the principle that such institutional arrangements continue to operate within Pakistan's existing legal and constitutional framework.

CHAPTER – 6: KEY STRATEGIC DEBATES AND NATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Pakistan's Defense Pact with KSA Amid Broader Saudi-Iran Rivalry

[Pakistan's Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement \(SMDA\) with Saudi Arabia](#) is the latest stage in a defense partnership that has evolved over nearly eight decades, founded on a shared sense of brotherhood, Islamic solidarity, common strategic interests and longstanding security cooperation (Arab News, 2025).

The military dimension of this relationship formally began in 1967, (Gulf International Forum, 2025) [4] when the two countries concluded their first defense cooperation agreement, providing the framework for the deployment of Pakistani military personnel to the Kingdom.

During the 1970s, this cooperation expanded considerably, with thousands of Pakistani troops stationed in Saudi Arabia at the Kingdom's request to contribute to the strengthening of its defense architecture. During the same period, Pakistani Air Force pilots also flew Saudi fighter aircraft and played an important role in supporting the development and modernization of the Royal Saudi Air Force.

The partnership was further institutionalized in 1982 through the signing of a comprehensive defense cooperation protocol, which formalized Pakistan's role in training Saudi military personnel, enhancing professional military cooperation and improving joint operational readiness. The depth of this longstanding defense relationship was further demonstrated during the 1990–91 Gulf War, when Pakistan deployed more than 11,000 troops, including both air and ground forces, to assist in the defense of Saudi territory and the protection of the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah (Arab News, 2025).

Viewed in its historical context, the current Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement is therefore a continuation of an established defense partnership that has developed progressively over several decades through sustained military cooperation and shared strategic interests.

The new agreement is a continuation of the longstanding defense partnership between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, rather than a departure from their established pattern of security cooperation. It is intended to further strengthen existing mutual defense arrangements and provide reassurance to both countries in the event of credible security threats, reflecting the strategic importance each attaches to the bilateral relationship. Beyond its defense

dimension, the agreement is also understood to carry considerable doctrinal, emotional and symbolic significance for Pakistan. Given Saudi Arabia's position as the Custodian of Islam's Two Holy Mosques, the partnership extends beyond conventional security cooperation, resonating strongly with both the Pakistan Armed Forces and the wider Pakistani public.

At the same time, Iran remains a neighboring Muslim-majority country with which Pakistan has maintained cordial and cooperative relations across a range of bilateral issues. Within this context, the new agreement is a defense arrangement intended to strengthen Pakistan's longstanding security partnership with Saudi Arabia, rather than as an arrangement directed against Iran or any other state. This position reflects Pakistan's broader approach of maintaining constructive relations with both countries while avoiding alignment against either of them. In this regard, Pakistan's close ties with both Saudi Arabia and Iran provide Islamabad with a unique diplomatic position, enabling it to engage constructively with both sides during periods of regional tension. This role was illustrated during the recent United States-Iran crisis, when Pakistan actively encouraged restraint, dialogue and de-escalation between the parties, with the objective of preventing regional tensions from escalating into a broader conflict involving either of its two longstanding partners.

Pakistan Role as a Mediator in the Us – Iran Conflict

Pakistan's efforts to mediate between the United States and Iran are driven not by the pursuit of material gain or geopolitical advantage, but by concerns over the potentially far-reaching consequences of a military confrontation between the two countries. Such a conflict carries serious implications for regional stability, global security, international energy markets and broader economic prosperity, with effects extending well beyond the immediate parties involved.

Against this backdrop, encouraging restraint, preventing further escalation and promoting a peaceful resolution serve not only Pakistan's national interests but also those of the wider region, the international community and the broader objective of preserving global peace and stability. There was also concern that a prolonged conflict could draw additional regional actors into the crisis, deepen political and sectarian polarization across the Middle East and create divisions among Muslim-majority countries. Such an outcome could weaken regional unity and create conditions that would ultimately benefit only Israel, whose interests may be served by continued instability and division in the Muslim world.

Viewed through both religious and strategic perspectives, Pakistan's approach was informed by the Quranic injunction to promote reconciliation among fellow Muslims and to prevent discord, which provide a strong moral and ethical foundation for its efforts to act as a neutral intermediary during a period of heightened regional tension. At a time when the region faced the risk of becoming the center of a much broader conflict, Pakistan's emphasis remained on encouraging dialogue, restraint and peaceful resolution.

As an Islamic republic with deep religious, historical and strategic ties to the wider Muslim world, together with a profound attachment to the sanctity of the Two Holy Mosques in Makkah and Madinah, Pakistan viewed efforts to reduce tensions between the United States and Iran not only as a strategic imperative for preserving regional peace and stability, but also as a moral responsibility consistent with its broader commitment to promoting unity and preventing conflict within the Muslim world.

By maintaining open channels of communication with both Washington and Tehran, while deliberately avoiding formal alignment with either side, Pakistan pursued a balanced and interest-based diplomatic approach throughout the crisis. This approach reflected an emphasis on strategic autonomy, constructive engagement and the pursuit of dialogue as the preferred means of reducing tensions and encouraging de-escalation.

By engaging with both parties simultaneously, Pakistan preserved its credibility as a neutral interlocutor while reinforcing its independent foreign policy and its ability to maintain productive relations with competing international actors. The willingness of both a global superpower and a major regional power to engage through Islamabad indicates Pakistan's growing diplomatic relevance and international credibility. It also highlights the country's capacity to play a constructive role in promoting dialogue, facilitating communication and contributing to regional and international peace and stability beyond its traditional strategic focus in South Asia.

Is Pakistan Backtracking on Quaid-e-Azam Stance on Palestine Issue?

Pakistan's position on the Palestine issue continues to be based on support for a two-state solution founded on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem (Al-Quds Al-Sharif) recognized as the capital of a sovereign Palestinian state. This position is consistent with Pakistan's longstanding policy on Palestine and does not represent a departure from the vision articulated by the country's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in 1947 and 1948. Rather, it is

continuation of the principle he set out at the time, that Pakistan would support whatever settlement the Arab and Palestinian peoples themselves regarded as just, acceptable and consistent with their aspirations. Viewed in this context, Pakistan's current policy is framed as reflecting continuity in its longstanding support for the Palestinian cause while remaining aligned with the principle of respecting the wishes and political aspirations of the Palestinian people themselves.

When Muhammad Ali Jinnah expressed Pakistan's support for the Palestinian cause in the period immediately following the country's creation, he opposed the unilateral establishment of a Jewish state against the wishes of the Arab population living in Palestine. His position was articulated within the political context of the time, when Palestinian representatives and the Arab League were advocating the establishment of a single, democratic state across the whole of historic Palestine in which Muslims, Christians and Jews could coexist as equal citizens. In this context, Jinnah's position reflected respect for the collective aspirations expressed by the Palestinian leadership and the wider Arab world, reinforcing the principle that the future political settlement of Palestine should be determined in accordance with the wishes of its people rather than through unilateral arrangements.

Over the following decades, the political and security landscape surrounding the Palestine issue underwent significant changes as successive conflicts and the occupation of substantial areas of Arab territory reshaped the realities on the ground. In response to these changing circumstances, both the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Arab League gradually shifted their position in favour of a two-state solution, first through the Oslo Accords (1993) and subsequently through the Arab Peace Initiative (2002). This framework envisages the establishment of an independent Palestinian state existing alongside Israel on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. The evolution of this position reflects the changing political consensus among the Palestinian leadership and the broader Arab world in response to developments over time.

Pakistan's current position on Palestine is therefore consistent with the founding principle articulated by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, namely that Pakistan's policy should reflect the aspirations of the Palestinian people themselves and the broader consensus of the Arab world. As the position of the Palestinian leadership and the Arab states evolved over time in response to changing political realities, Pakistan's policy has evolved in parallel with that consensus

rather than departing from its original foundation. In this context, support for the two-state solution is not a departure from Pakistan's historic position, but as a continuation of the same guiding principle that has informed the country's approach to the Palestine issue since its independence.

Improved Pak-US Relations - Possibility of Pakistan Securing the Release of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui

Regarding the prospects of securing the release of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, a US-Pakistani neuroscientist convicted in the (U.S. Attorney's Office, SDNY, 2010) [\[6\]](#)United States, attention is often drawn to the practical and legal constraints that govern Pakistan's ability to intervene in the matter. As the case falls within the jurisdiction of the United States, all criminal proceedings are conducted exclusively under American law, constitutional safeguards and judicial procedures. Within this legal framework, the authority to investigate, prosecute, adjudicate and determine the outcome of criminal cases rests solely with the United States judicial system, limiting the scope for external intervention. Consequently, Pakistan's ability to influence the legal process is understood to remain subject to the legal and constitutional framework of the United States rather than to unilateral diplomatic or political action.

Dr. Aafia Siddiqui being a US citizen was tried, convicted and sentenced by a federal court in the United States, placing her case entirely within the jurisdiction of the American legal system. Consequently, any modification to her sentence, whether through compassionate release, a presidential pardon, prisoner transfer or any other form of legal relief, would necessarily have to proceed through the relevant judicial or executive mechanisms available under United States law. At the time of her trial, Dr. Siddiqui was a United States citizen and was therefore subject to American law and the jurisdiction of its courts. As such, she was entitled to the same constitutional safeguards afforded to any other United States citizen, including the rights to due process and equal protection under the law. These legal considerations define the framework within which any future action relating to her case would be considered.

Pakistan has consistently conveyed its humanitarian concerns regarding Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's case through diplomatic channels while providing consular assistance wherever possible within the limits of international law. At the same time, Pakistan's ability to directly influence or intervene in judicial proceedings conducted within the United States remains constrained by the principles of state sovereignty and the independence of the American legal system. In this

context, diplomatic engagement is understood to be limited to humanitarian representations and consular support rather than direct involvement in judicial decision-making. It is further noted that foreign governments have historically achieved only limited success in securing the release of individuals convicted in the United States, except in cases where compelling legal, humanitarian or medical considerations have been recognized by the relevant American authorities under their own legal and executive processes.

Impact of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) on the National Economy

Discussion of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and its impact on Pakistan's economy often begins with the broader observation that the country already possesses much of the institutional, administrative and policy framework required to support economic development and investment. The principal challenge, however, has long been associated with implementation, effective coordination among government institutions and the timely execution of policy decisions and development initiatives. It is within this context that the Special Investment Facilitation Council has emerged as a platform designed to strengthen inter-institutional coordination, reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks, facilitate cooperation between civilian and military institutions, encourage domestic and foreign investment, and accelerate the implementation of strategically important economic projects. By improving coordination and streamlining decision-making processes, the Council seeks to enhance the efficiency with which priority economic initiatives are translated into implementation.

The value of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) is lying not in replacing Pakistan's existing constitutional and administrative institutions, but in enabling them to function more effectively through improved coordination, streamlined decision-making and a whole-of-government approach to economic governance. Within this framework, the primary responsibility for governance, economic management and the delivery of public services continues to rest with elected governments and the relevant state institutions. The Council is instead intended to serve as a facilitating mechanism and force multiplier, supporting institutional coordination and accelerating implementation rather than acting as a substitute for broader governance or institutional reforms. In practical terms, it is credited with strengthening investor confidence by providing a single-window platform for investment approvals, simplifying administrative procedures and reducing bureaucratic delays that have traditionally slowed project implementation. This approach is also associated with faster progress across priority sectors, including agriculture, energy, mining, information technology and the wider private sector. More broadly, the Council is contributing to Pakistan's investment environment by promoting greater policy continuity, improving institutional coordination and providing investors with a more predictable and efficient framework for undertaking long-term economic activity.

Treatment of Dr. A.Q. Khan in Pakistan

The treatment of Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, the metallurgist widely credited with developing

Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme, continues to remain a subject of public discussion and national sensitivity. His historic contribution to strengthening Pakistan's strategic and nuclear capabilities is widely recognized and occupies a significant place in the country's national narrative. At the same time, the broader principle emphasized in this context is that the interests, security and sovereignty of the state take precedence over those of any individual, irrespective of personal achievements, public stature or historical contributions. Within this framework, the issue is viewed through the broader lens of constitutional governance, institutional responsibility and the primacy of the state's long-term national interests.

Article 5 of the Constitution of Pakistan establishes loyalty to the state and obedience to the Constitution and the law as fundamental obligations of every citizen, providing the constitutional foundation for the relationship between the individual and the state. Within this framework, individuals entrusted with sensitive national security information are understood to bear both a legal and moral responsibility to safeguard such information and to exercise the highest standards of confidentiality in the discharge of their duties. This responsibility reflects the recognition that any unauthorized disclosure, misuse or action compromising sensitive information has the potential to affect not only specific institutions but also the country's broader security, sovereignty and national interests. The protection of information relating to national security is therefore an important constitutional and institutional responsibility that supports the effective functioning of the state and the safeguarding of its wider interests.

Respect for an individual's past contributions and the application of accountability under the law are complementary rather than contradictory principles. Recognition of an individual's achievements is not regarded as exempting them from the legal responsibilities that apply equally to all citizens. Instead, the rule of law requires that matters relating to national security, the sovereignty of the state and the protection of the national interest remain paramount, irrespective of an individual's personal stature, popularity or historical contributions. Within this constitutional framework, the principle of equal accountability is an essential component of effective governance, reinforcing the idea that the authority of the law and the interests of the state take precedence over individual status or public standing.

References

Al Jazeera. (2025, May 31). India top general admits aerial "losses" in recent conflict with Pakistan. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/5/31/india-top-general-admits-losses-in-recent-conflict-with-pakistan>

Al Jazeera. (2025, August 9). India says six Pakistani aircraft shot down during May conflict. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/9/india-says-six-pakistani-aircraft-shot-down-during-kashmir-conflict>

Arab News. (2025, September 19). Saudi-Pakistan defense pact: A historic strategic alliance. Arab News. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2615833>

Global Defense Corp. (2025, September 18). Pakistan reveals four tail numbers of Indian Rafale jets downed during Operation Sindoor. <https://www.globaldefensecorp.com/2025/09/18/pakistan-reveals-four-tail-numbers-of-indian-rafale-jets-downed-during-operation-sindoor/>

Gulf International Forum. (2025, July 14). The evolving nature of Pakistan's defence cooperation with the Arab Gulf states. <https://gulfif.org/the-evolving-nature-of-pakistans-defence-cooperation-with-the-arab-gulf-states/>

International Court of Justice. (2019, July 17). Jadhav case (India v. Pakistan): Judgment. <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/168>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan. (2019, July 2). Designation of Balochistan Liberation Army by the US administration as Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT). <https://mofa.gov.pk/designation-of-balochistan-liberation-army-by-the-us-administration-as-specially-designated-global-terrorist-sdgt>

National Assembly of Pakistan. (1973). The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (as amended). <https://na.gov.pk/en/content.php?id=75>

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. (2023). 7th population and housing census 2023. Government of Pakistan. <https://www.pbs.gov.pk>

Reuters. (2025, June 26). US talks to Pakistan about promoting "durable peace between Israel

and Iran." Deccan Herald. <https://www.deccanherald.com/world/us-talks-to-pakistan-about-promoting-durable-peace-between-israel-and-iran-3605132>

Syed, B. S. (2025, November 8). How does the 27th Constitutional Amendment Bill change the military leadership structure? Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1953888>

The Express Tribune. (2024, January 23). No mention of "threat" or "conspiracy" in missive. The Express Tribune. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2454170/no-mention-of-threat-or-conspiracy-in-cypher-asad-majeed-tells-special-court>

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York. (2010, September 23). Aafia Siddiqui sentenced in Manhattan federal court to 86 years for attempting to murder U.S. nationals in Afghanistan and six additional crimes [Press release]. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.justice.gov/archive/usao/nys/pressreleases/September10/siddiquiaafiasentencingpr.pdf>

U.S. Department of State. (2019, July 2). Terrorist designations of Balochistan Liberation Army and Husain Ali Hazzima and amendments to the terrorist designations of Jundallah [Media note]. <https://2017-2021.state.gov/terrorist-designations-of-balochistan-liberation-army-and-husain-ali-hazzima/>

U.S. Department of State. (2025, August 11). Terrorist designation of the Majeed Brigade [Press statement]. <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/08/terrorist-designation-of-the-majeed-brigade>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Qasim Ali Shah

Author & Policy Analyst, Policy Wire

Dr. Qasim Ali Shah is a policy analyst and contributor at Policy Wire, writing on national security, governance and regional geopolitics with a particular focus on Pakistan. His work examines the intersection of strategic policy, civil-military relations and international affairs shaping the region today.

ABOUT POLICY WIRE

Policy Wire is a digital publication where data meets storytelling. It brings together analysis, commentary and reporting on the economy, climate change and geopolitics, with a particular emphasis on Pakistan, aiming to foster fresh discourse on the issues shaping policy today.

www.policy-wire.com