

THE POLICY DIGEST

INSIGHT. ANALYSIS. PERSPECTIVE.

VOLUME 03

OCTOBER 2026 EDITION

COVER STORY

VERIFIED BDA CONFIRMS PAKISTAN'S SEPT 21 AIRSTRIKES HIT TERRORIST STRONGHOLDS IN AFGHANISTAN

SARAH ADAMS

Former CIA Targeting Officer
& National Security Analyst

02

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

POLICY WIRE
EXCLUSIVE

US-Iran Islamabad Deal: Who Broke It?

Aarathi Krishnan Explains

US-IRAN ISLAMABAD DEAL: WHO BROKE IT?

Aarathi Krishnan highlights Pakistan's historic diplomatic triumph & nuclear mediation.

03

HUMAN RIGHTS

policy wire | EXCLUSIVE

JASVEER SINGH ON THE RSS TOUR, TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION, AND SIKH CIVIL RIGHTS

JASVEER SINGH ON RSS TOUR & SIKH RIGHTS

EXCLUSIVE: SIKH PRESS ASSOCIATE

04

DEFENCE & SECURITY

PAKISTAN AND THE US 25 YEARS AFTER 9/11:

Why Islamabad Still Matters

PAKISTAN AND THE U.S. 25 YEARS AFTER 9/11:

Why Islamabad still matters
in a changing world.

05

MARITIME DEFENCE



PNS/M HANGOR LIVE WEAPON FIRING

PNS/M HANGOR successfully conducted maiden Live Weapon Firing in North Arabian Sea.

06

GEOPOLITICS & ALLIANCES



SAUDI-TURKISH-PAKISTANI PACT RESHAPES REGION

Strategic trilateral defense & diplomatic pact reshaping Middle Eastern security.

CONTENT

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING · OCTOBER 2026 ISSUE

The October 2026 volume of The Policy Digest presents 12 decisive intelligence dossiers and geopolitical assessments. From Sarah Adams’ verified battle damage assessment in Afghanistan to naval deterrence in the Arabian Sea, US-Iran diplomacy, trans-national Sikh human rights, and ex-DIA Officer Nadeem Iqbal’s Gulf chokepoint analysis, this issue provides comprehensive strategic insight.

— Policy Wire Editorial Board | Islamabad · London · Washington

THE POLICY DIGEST EXCLUSIVE

01 CIA Veteran Sarah Adams: Afghan BDA Assessment
By PW Editorial with Sarah Adams
Verified intelligence report detailing Pakistan’s Sept 21 precision strikes in Afghanistan.

02 US-Iran Islamabad Deal: Who Broke It?
By PW Editorial with Aarushi Krishnan
Analyzing nuclear negotiations, diplomatic breakdown, and regional peace mediation.

03 How Jasveer Singh Views the RSS Tour & Sikh Civil Rights
By PW Editorial with Jasveer Singh
Exclusive report from Sikh Press Associate on civil rights advocacy and diaspora security.

04 25 Years After 9/11: US, Pakistan & Afghan Safe Havens
By PW Editorial with Dr. Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas
Re-evaluating Islamabad’s pivotal role in global counter-terrorism & regional balance.

07 Bringing Jagtar Singh Johal Home After 9 Years
By PW Editorial with Sikh Federation UK
British national’s legal breakthrough after 9 years of arbitrary detention.

08 Defence Veteran Nadeem Iqbal on Gulf Chokepoints
By PW Editorial with Nadeem Iqbal
US-Iran escalation, Strait of Hormuz, & Pakistan’s strategic weight in the Gulf.

09 Putin’s Ukraine Talks & Regime Security Strategy
By PW Editorial with Stephen Blank
Moscow’s diplomacy, maneuvers, sanctions-resistant economy, and status.

10 The Afghan Sanctuary Pattern & Human Toll
By PW Editorial with Irina Tsukerman
Analyzing cross-border terrorism networks, border fencing, and human toll.

SECURITY

05 Silent Depths: PNS/M Hangor Undersea Deterrence
By PW Editorial Board
Pakistan’s new weapon firing exercise conducted in the North Arabian Sea.

11 Saudi-Turkish-Pakistani Pact Reshapes Region
By PW Editorial Board
Strategic trilateral defence & diplomatic agreement reshaping Middle Eastern security.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS & DIPLOMACY

06 Why UK Govt Must Act on Anti-Sikh Hate
By PW Editorial with Sikh Federation UK
Parliamentary debate and counter-transnational hate crime

12 Cricket Diplomacy: India’s Foreign Policy Tool
By PW Editorial Board
How New Delhi weaponized international sport and broadcast

The Policy Digest Exclusive

EXCLUSIVE

DEFENCE & SECURITY

EXCLUSIVE BATTLE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT: CIA VETERAN SARAH ADAMS

THE POLICY DIGEST EXCLUSIVE ANALYSIS

VERIFIED BDA CONFIRMS PAKISTAN'S SEPT 21 AIRSTRIKES HIT TERRORIST STRONGHOLDS IN AFGHANISTAN

In an exclusive intelligence update authorized for The Policy Digest by former CIA targeted officer and national security analyst Sarah Adams, verified Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) data confirms the full impact of the Pakistan military's September 21 airstrikes in eastern Afghanistan.



SARAH ADAMS

Former CIA Targeting Officer
& National Security Analyst

INTELLIGENCE UPDATE
AUTHORIZED FOR
THE POLICY DIGEST

"In an exclusive intelligence update obtained by Policy Wire on X with direct authorization from former CIA targeting officer Sarah Adams, the verified battle damage assessment confirms 19 terrorists killed and 11 wounded across three critical operational hubs in Paktika and Kunar Provinces."

EXCLUSIVE

DETAILS PAKISTAN'S PRECISION AIRSTRIKES IN AFGHANISTAN



BY *Policy Wire Editorial with Sarah Adams*

FORMER CIA COUNTERTERRORISM OPERATIVE

The strikes successfully eliminated a dedicated suicide bomber training camp, a former madrassa converted into a combat facility, and a joint operational center shared by Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Islamic State. The dead include 13 members of TTP and affiliated branches, as well as six members of the Islamic State network.

The most senior terrorist confirmed dead is Hanzala Wazir, a senior member of TTP's Military Commission for South Waziristan. The Military Commission represents the organization's primary operational command structure, responsible for directing terrorist campaigns, assigning field commanders, coordinating tactical training, and selecting targets.

THE SEPTEMBER 21 STRIKES

At approximately 2:55 to 3:00 a.m. local time on September 21, Pakistani fighter aircraft executed precise strikes against three high value targets in Paktika and Kunar Provinces. The first target was a specialized suicide bomber training facility in the Torkandi area of Barmal District, Paktika Province. The second target was Farouqia Madrassa in the Rukha area of Paktika. While previously operating as a religious school, the facility had been converted into an active combat training camp for foreign fighters. The third target was located in Patan village in Nurgal District, Kunar Province. This facility was operated jointly by Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and TTP operatives. Terrorists at the site were being trained to manufacture suicide vests, handle advanced explosives, and execute coordinated suicide attacks.

THE NETWORKS OPERATING IN THE REGION

Lashkar e Islam merged with TTP in late 2021 following the death of its founder, Mangal Bagh. On April 11, 2025, Lashkar e Islam became the second-largest component of Ittehad ul Mujahideen Pakistan, a coalition uniting three major Pakistani jihadist networks: • The Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group • Lashkar e Islam • Harakat Inqilab e Islami Pakistan Operational ties between Orakzai networks of TTP and the Islamic State predate the September 21 strikes. Deep personal, tribal, and tactical connections allow fighters, trainers, facilitators, and suicide attack infrastructure to move seamlessly between networks.

POLICY WIRE EXCLUSIVE ANALYSIS & VERIFIED BDA METRICS

In an exclusive intelligence update authorised for Policy Wire by former CIA targeted officer Sarah Adams, verified Battle Damage Assessment confirms 19 terrorists killed and 11 wounded across three operational hubs in Paktika and Kunar.

19

TERRORISTS KILLED

11

FOREIGN WOUNDED

03

STRIKE HUBS

01

HVT NEUTRALIZED

EXCLUSIVE

MORE DETAILS ON STRIKE



THE CONFIRMED CASUALTIES



19

TERRORISTS KILLED



11

FOREIGN TERRORISTS
WOUNDED



THE THREE TARGETS

1

TORKANDI AREA
Barmal District, Paktika



Suicide bomber
training facility

2

FAROUQIA MADRASSA
Rukha Area, Paktika



Converted from a religious
school into a combat
training camp

3

PATAN VILLAGE
Nurgal District, Kunar



Joint ISKP-TTP operational
center (suicide vests, explosives,
coordinated attacks)

STRIKE LOCATIONS

Paktika & Kunar Provinces



STRIKES EXECUTED
SEPT 21, 2025

2:55 – 3:00 AM (LOCAL TIME)



WHO WAS ELIMINATED?

13 TTP & AFFILIATED NETWORKS

1. Hanzala Wazir (TTP Military Commission)
2. Kaka Waziristani
3. Siddiq Umar Muhajir
4. Farooq Madakhel
5. Muawiya
6. Huzaifa Mehsud
7. Abu Zarar
8. Maroot Abu Bakr
9. Ghazi Umar Waziristani
10. Qari Yaser
11. Hafiz Shoaib
12. Muawiya Bajauri
13. Mufti Fayyaz

6 IS NETWORK

1. Azzam al Khorasani
2. Abu Nasr Orakzai
3. Abu Ahmad Bajauri
4. Salahuddin Logari
5. Hanzala al Kunduzai
6. Mufti Nadeem al Badakhshani

Note: These are operational aliases used by terrorists networks to conceal their real identities, nationalities, cross-border movements and family origins.



THE NETWORKS IN THE REGION

- Lashkar e Islam merged with TTP in late 2021 after the death of its founder, Mangal Bagh.
- On April 11, 2025, Lashkar e Islam became the second-largest component of **Ittehad ul Mujahideen Pakistan**, a coalition of three major networks:

1

Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group

2

Lashkar e Islam

3

Harakat Inqilab e Islami Pakistan

- TTP and Islamic State (IS) Orakzai networks have deep, long-standing ties — sharing fighters, trainers, facilitators and infrastructure.
- Many IS fighters and suicide bombers are from ISPP, with leadership and direction tied to ISKP.

THE DEAD & WOUNDED



19

TERRORISTS KILLED



11

FOREIGN TERRORISTS
WOUNDED



The dead and wounded were moved to the former FOB Bostick (Naray), now the National Security Hospital — run by the Haqqani network and linked to the Taliban's GDI. It also houses a Taliban MoD battalion and an al Qaeda madrassa.



THE TALIBAN HUMAN SHIELD DECEPTION

The Taliban knowingly allows foreign terrorists to use civilian homes as safehouses, transit points and staging bases — often by coercion or threat.



Civilians provide physical cover, enabling terrorists to move, assemble and prepare for attacks.



After a strike, the Taliban hides surviving terrorists, claims the site was civilian, and places the deceased family at the center of international messaging.



They parade civilian casualties before UNAMA, foreign media and GDI propaganda channels to accuse Pakistan of indiscriminate attacks.



Civilians are exploited twice — first as physical shields and then as political propaganda.



The Taliban deliberately puts civilians in danger, knowing that civilian casualties generate international pressure on Pakistan and discourage future counterterrorism operations.

POLICY WIRE

THE REALITY IS CLEAR: THESE CAMPS WERE SHARED TERRORIST HUBS.
THE TALIBAN IS NOT A VICTIM — IT IS AN ENABLER.

Source: Sarah Adams (via X)

@sarahadams

EXCLUSIVE

VERIFIED SATELLITE MAP, TARGET LOCATIONS & TERROR NETWORK MATRIX

TARGETS AND CASUALTIES



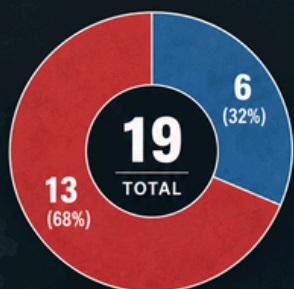
Suicide bomber training facility



Farouqia Madrassa converted to combat camp



Joint TTP-ISKP centre



- TTP and affiliates 13 (68%)
- Islamic State network 6 (32%)



Names are operational aliases.

SEPTEMBER 21 STRIKES: BATTLE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

19
KILLED



11
WOUNDED



3
SITES



NETWORKS BEHIND THE CAMPS | NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

MEDICAL EVACUATION TO GDI HOSPITAL

In addition to the 19 terrorists killed, 11 foreign terrorists were wounded in the strikes. The dead and wounded were transported to the former Forward Operating Base Bostick (FOB Naray) in Kunar Province. The facility now houses the National Security Hospital, operated by the Haqqani network and affiliated with the Taliban GDI eastern zone.

HUMAN SHIELD SYSTEMATIC EXPLOITATION

Civilians provide physical cover, enabling terrorists to move, assemble, and prepare for attacks without attracting attention to formal compounds.

DIPLOMATIC PROPAGANDA & UNAMA EXPLOITATION

Following a strike, civilian casualties are weaponized as political cover. The Taliban rapidly conceals surviving terrorists, claims the site was purely civilian, and parades casualties before UNAMA, foreign media, and GDI propaganda channels.

DOUBLE EXPLOITATION OF CIVILIANS

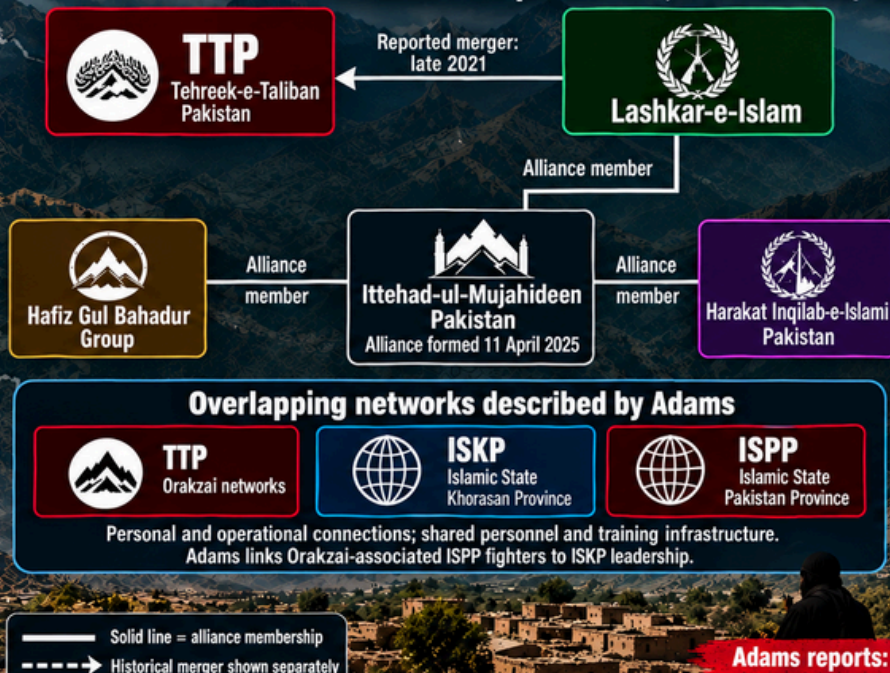
Civilians are exploited twice: first as physical shields and second as political propaganda, generating diplomatic pressure and discouraging future operations.

EXCLUSIVE

VERIFIED SATELLITE MAP, TARGET LOCATIONS & TERROR NETWORK MATRIX

THE NETWORKS BEHIND THE CAMPS

Pakistan's September 21, 2026 strikes | Sarah Adams's assessment



PAKISTAN'S SEPTEMBER 21 STRIKES

SARAH ADAMS'S ALLEGATIONS

- 1** Before strike: Civilian homes allegedly used as cover
- 2** After strike: Civilian casualties presented to UNAMA and media
- 3** Claimed effect: International pressure against Pakistan

Adams reports: 19 militants killed | 11 wounded | 3 sites in Paktika and Kunar

Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan Supporting TTP Terrorists

EXCLUSIVE

EXCLUSIVE: POLICY-WIRE



The Islamabad talks had looked like a breakthrough: a 14-point Memorandum that ended military operations and opened a 60 day window. Her answer on who broke it was that the “question is too blunt to be useful.”

EXCLUSIVE

US-IRAN ISLAMABAD DEAL: WHO BROKE IT?



BY *Policy Wire Editorial with Aarathi Krishnan*

CEO OF RAKSHA INTELLIGENCE FUTURES

- **Founder & CEO, RAKSHA Intelligence Futures.**
- **Former Strategic Foresight Advisor, UNDP & IFRC.**
- **Alumna of Harvard Kennedy School, Berkman Klein Center, and Cambridge Centre for Existential Risk.**

The Policy Wire Editorial team interviewed Aarathi Krishnan, Founder and CEO of RAKSHA Intelligence Futures and formerly of UNDP and the IFRC, on the implications of the US Iran war. Aarathi's RAKSHA Intelligence Futures launched QFP on September 22, 2026, a new platform designed to identify emerging geopolitical fractures before they develop into headline events.

Her perspective on the US Iran visit to Islamabad, particularly on who failed to follow through on the deal or commitments discussed. More broadly, the focus was on how she sees this war ending and what its wider implications could be for Asia and the regional security landscape. The Islamabad talks had looked like a breakthrough: a 14-point Memorandum that ended military operations, began the removal of the US naval blockade, and opened a 60 day window for a final agreement. Weeks later, the framework is in tatters and the fighting has resumed. Who broke it? Her answer was that the "question is too blunt to be useful."

THREE QUESTIONS, NOT ONE

Krishnan argues that responsibility should be split into three parts: who caused the first incident, who escalated afterwards, and why the wider agreement failed to hold. On the first, she notes that public reporting never conclusively attributed some of the early attacks on vessels, so the first material breach is better called disputed than pinned on either side.

What is clearer, in her account, is that both governments ultimately failed to carry out the deal, in different ways and at different stages. Iran did not deliver the dependable, toll-free commercial passage through Hormuz that Washington and Gulf states expected. The United States, for its part, revoked the oil waiver, restored restrictions and resumed extensive strikes rather than working through the Memorandum's own process. The numbers she cites show how thin the relief was: "the oil waiver lasted 20 days, blockade relief 27, and Iran's mine-clearing obligation was never completed."

POLICY WIRE EDITORIAL NOTE & AUTHOR CREDITS:

This piece draws on responses from Aarathi Krishnan, Founder and CEO of RAKSHA Intelligence Futures (ex-UNDP, IFRC; alumna of Harvard Kennedy School, the Berkman Klein Center at Harvard, and the Centre for Existential Risk at the University of Cambridge), to questions posed by Policy Wire.

EXCLUSIVE

US-IRAN ISLAMABAD DEAL: WHO BROKE IT?

A DEAL WITH TWO MEANINGS

Behind the breach sits a deeper problem. The Memorandum asked Iran to use its "best efforts" to secure passage through Hormuz, but it deferred the nuclear dispute and left the meaning of safe passage unresolved. Washington took it to mean a return to normal commercial navigation. Tehran saw it as compatible with an Iranian-Omani management arrangement and possible service fees. Both sides signed, but they did not agree on what they had signed.

Krishnan stresses, Pakistan should not carry the blame. Islamabad convened the talks as a mediator and witness, with no power to compel compliance, and it has continued to present the Memorandum as the basis for renewed talks.

"A mediator can host a deal, but it cannot enforce one."

HOW THIS ENDS?

She does not expect a clear military victory. Neither side can secure all its objectives at an acceptable cost, so she anticipates a long period of intermittent fighting and negotiation. The most workable way back, in her view, is a "narrower agreement: halt attacks on commercial vessels and Iranian territory, suspend the blockade, set up monitored transit through Hormuz, and restore time-limited oil and financial relief. Nuclear monitoring, enrichment limits and enriched material would be negotiated separately, later. Trying to settle Lebanon, sanctions, Hormuz governance, reconstruction and the nuclear programme all at once would make an already fragile deal harder to sustain." Any future agreement, she adds, needs "independent maritime monitoring, agreed procedures for investigating incidents, a working hotline and clear steps for handling breaches."

WHY ASIA SHOULD CARE MOST?

The war's costs do not stay in the Gulf. Ports, tankers, insurance, refineries and pipelines all carry the shock outward. By mid-August, she notes, Gulf crude clearances during the Memorandum window were still at roughly 40 per cent of normal 2025 Hormuz flows. Asia is absorbing much of the damage, through oil, LNG, fertiliser and chemical feedstocks. Pakistan, India, Taiwan and South Korea are especially exposed because Qatari Gas remains a critical component of their energy mix, while India's heavy dependence on imported oil much of it transiting the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz, leaves its energy security closely tied to stability in the region.

She expects governments to respond with wider supplier networks, larger strategic reserves and alternative transport routes, and possibly with more active Asian diplomacy on Gulf security, since their economies are so directly affected. China, she believes, will not enter the war militarily on Iran's behalf. It opposes the US attacks and the blockade but backs open navigation and values its Gulf relationships, so expect diplomacy and limited economic support, and a longer-term push to reduce its Hormuz dependence through overland routes and pipelines. The wider strategic question is what other governments conclude from Iran's experience. Krishnan suggests it may strengthen the argument that being close to a nuclear weapons capability invites military action without delivering the deterrence of an operational arsenal. Analysts have suggested this could harden North Korea's commitment to its programme and add weight to nuclear debates in South Korea, Japan and parts of the Middle East. Gulf states are likely to spend more on air and missile defence and on export routes that bypass Hormuz, while US allies in Asia will watch whether a prolonged Middle East deployment strains American readiness in the Indo-Pacific.

EXCLUSIVE

US-IRAN ISLAMABAD DEAL: SHOCKWAVES

POLICY WIRE | ASIA IMPACT DATA

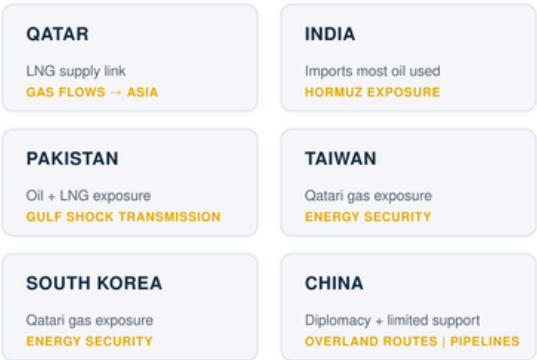
HORMUZ SHOCKWAVES ACROSS ASIA

ENERGY, TRADE AND REGIONAL-SECURITY EXPOSURE

FLOW COMPARISON



COUNTRY EXPOSURE MAP



STRATEGIC WATCHLIST



INPUTS AFFECTED

OIL LNG FERTILISER CHEMICAL FEEDSTOCKS

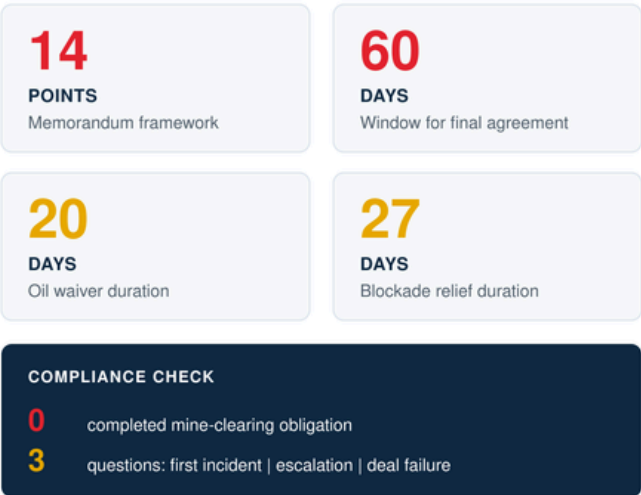
PORTS | TANKERS | INSURANCE | REFINERIES | PIPELINES

POLICY WIRE | DATA BRIEF

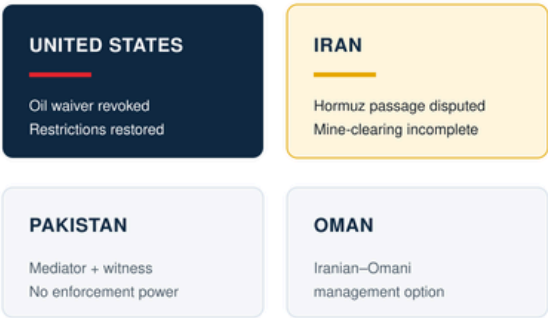
US-IRAN ISLAMABAD MEMORANDUM

NUMBERS, TERMS AND ACTORS

MEMORANDUM METRICS



COUNTRIES & ROLES



OTHER ACTORS NAMED



TERMS LEFT UNRESOLVED: SAFE PASSAGE | FEES | NUCLEAR DISPUTE

EXCLUSIVE

How Jasveer Singh Views the RSS Tour & Sikh Civil Rights

policy wire | EXCLUSIVE

JASVEER SINGH ON THE RSS TOUR, TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION, AND SIKH CIVIL RIGHTS



Despite being welcomed at Shepherd's Bush Gurdwara (West London) since arriving this week (pictured), many other Sikh groups will be protesting the UK tour of Mohan Bhagwat, leader of notorious anti-Sikh Hindu extremist group the RSS.

EXCLUSIVE

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION & SYSTEMIC SUBJUGATION

BY **POLICY WIRE EDITORIAL WITH JASVEER SINGH**

| HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS, SIKH PRESS ASSOCIATION

As the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological parent of India ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), expands its international outreach, RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat global tour has sparked intense debate. Across the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States, Sikh diaspora organizations have staged prominent protests, calling out what they view as a performative whitewashing campaign. To understand the core grievances, political dynamics, and systemic challenges facing Sikhs both in India and across the diaspora, Policy Wire interviewed Jasveer Singh, Head of Communications at the UK based Sikh Press Association.

"We are not sitting here as victims looking for pity; we are making sure the world is fully aware of the plight facing the Sikh community. What we demand from Western governments is simple: fair treatment, equal protection, and an end to empty political pageantry." — Jasveer Singh



EXCLUSIVE

Q&A WITH JASVEER SINGH

POLICY WIRE | JASVEER SINGH Q&A

01 / 03

THE RSS TOUR & DIASPORA PUSHBACK

Policy Wire: To begin with, how has the global Sikh community viewed RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat recent visits and international engagements?

Jasveer Singh: Across the diaspora, whether in Canada, the United States, or the UK, the Sikh community reaction has been overwhelmingly one of strong pushback and protest. Organizations like the World Sikh Organization (WSO) in Canada, Sikhs for Justice in the US, and Dal Khalsa UK have mobilized alongside local congregations (Sangat) to demonstrate against these visits.

The reason for this pushback is simple: Mohan Bhagwat tour is recognized for what it truly is, a high visibility PR exercise and whitewashing campaign. It is designed to soften and rehabilitate the RSS global reputation through formal pageantry, carefully staged events, and diplomatic handshakes. Yet, beneath the presentation, there is zero tangible outcome. There is no genuine dialogue, no willingness to address the RSS documented history of anti Sikh rhetoric, and no accountability regarding their role in state backed discrimination.

INSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS & DAILY SUBJUGATION

Policy Wire: What are the primary institutional concerns and daily challenges currently facing Sikhs living in India?

Jasveer Singh: Sikhs in India are confronting systematic subjugation on multiple fronts. First is the blatant infringement on fundamental religious rights and personal identity. It has become disturbingly common for Sikh students to be barred from entering academic exam halls simply for wearing their articles of faith, such as the Kirpan or Turban.

Second is differential treatment by state authorities and law enforcement. Whenever Sikhs exercise their democratic right to protest, whether during the historic Farmers Movement or university student demonstrations in Punjab, the state response is disproportionately violent and repressive. Sikh led movements are routinely criminalized, heavily policed, and vilified in mainstream Indian media, creating an environment that forces many young Sikhs into seeking asylum abroad.



EXCLUSIVE

Q&A WITH JASVEER SINGH

POLICY WIRE | JASVEER SINGH Q&A

02 / 03

INSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS & DAILY SUBJUGATION

Policy Wire: Beyond direct government policy, what broader social, political, and religious pressures are impacting the Sikh community?

Jasveer Singh: Politically and socially, Sikhs face continuous marginalization and targeted online hate campaigns perpetuated by right wing networks.

Religiously, there is a clear distinction between Sikh humanitarian organizations, such as our Langar groups that feed millions globally, and traditional religious governing bodies. While humanitarian groups continue their vital work, there is deep anxiety over external state interference. We see active attempts by the Indian establishment to infiltrate, corrupt, and manipulate traditional Sikh religious representative bodies to dilute Sikh autonomy and subordinate Sikh history into a broader nationalistic narrative.

DIASPORA SUPPORT & BYPASSING CENSORSHIP

Policy Wire: In light of state censorship inside India, how are diaspora organizations stepping up to support Sikhs on the ground?

Jasveer Singh: The diaspora plays three critical roles in bypassing censorship and sustaining community resilience:

Bypassing Censorship & Narrative Control: India frequently enforces internet blackouts, social media blocks, and media censorship across Punjab. The diaspora acts as a global loudspeaker, broadcasting civil rights violations to the international community.

Direct Humanitarian Aid: Diaspora communities fund and sustain grassroots aid organizations, like Khalsa Aid and Your Seva, which provide direct relief, legal support, and rehabilitation to victimized families in India.

Refusing Normalization: We actively challenge the normalization of discrimination. When a Sikh child in India is forced to strip off their Kirpan to take a test, the diaspora speaks up on international platforms to state unequivocally that this is unacceptable.



EXCLUSIVE

Q&A WITH JASVEER SINGH

POLICY WIRE | JASVEER SINGH Q&A

03 / 03

PARITY & WESTERN GOVERNMENT EXPECTATIONS

Policy Wire: What specific actions does the Sikh community expect from Western governments and international institutions?

Jasveer Singh: We are asking for two fundamental things: parity and genuine engagement.

Parity in Protection: Western nations rightfully dedicate significant resources to combat antisemitism and protect vulnerable communities from hate crimes. Yet, despite paying taxes, Sikhs receive nowhere near equal protection when targeted by hate crimes or transnational repression.

Ending Abandonment of Citizens: Look at the case of Jagtar Singh Johal, a British Sikh arbitrarily detained in India for nearly nine years without trial. Would the UK government allow a white British citizen to be held in a foreign jail under torture for nine years without overwhelming intervention? We doubt it.

Substance Over Pageantry: We are tired of politicians visiting Gurdwaras solely for election photo ops, shaking hands, and then completely ignoring Sikh human rights issues. We expect real political dialogue and concrete commitments to address anti Sikh hate crimes and foreign interference.

SIKH PRESS ASSOCIATION: FUTURE PLANS

Policy Wire: Finally, what are the current priorities and future plans for the Sikh Press Association?

Jasveer Singh: The Sikh Press Association functions as an active, two way bridge between the Sikh community and mainstream news outlets. We ensure journalists receive accurate, contextualized information regarding Sikh practices and issues, while simultaneously empowering Sikh grassroots campaigns to access mainstream TV, radio, and print platforms.

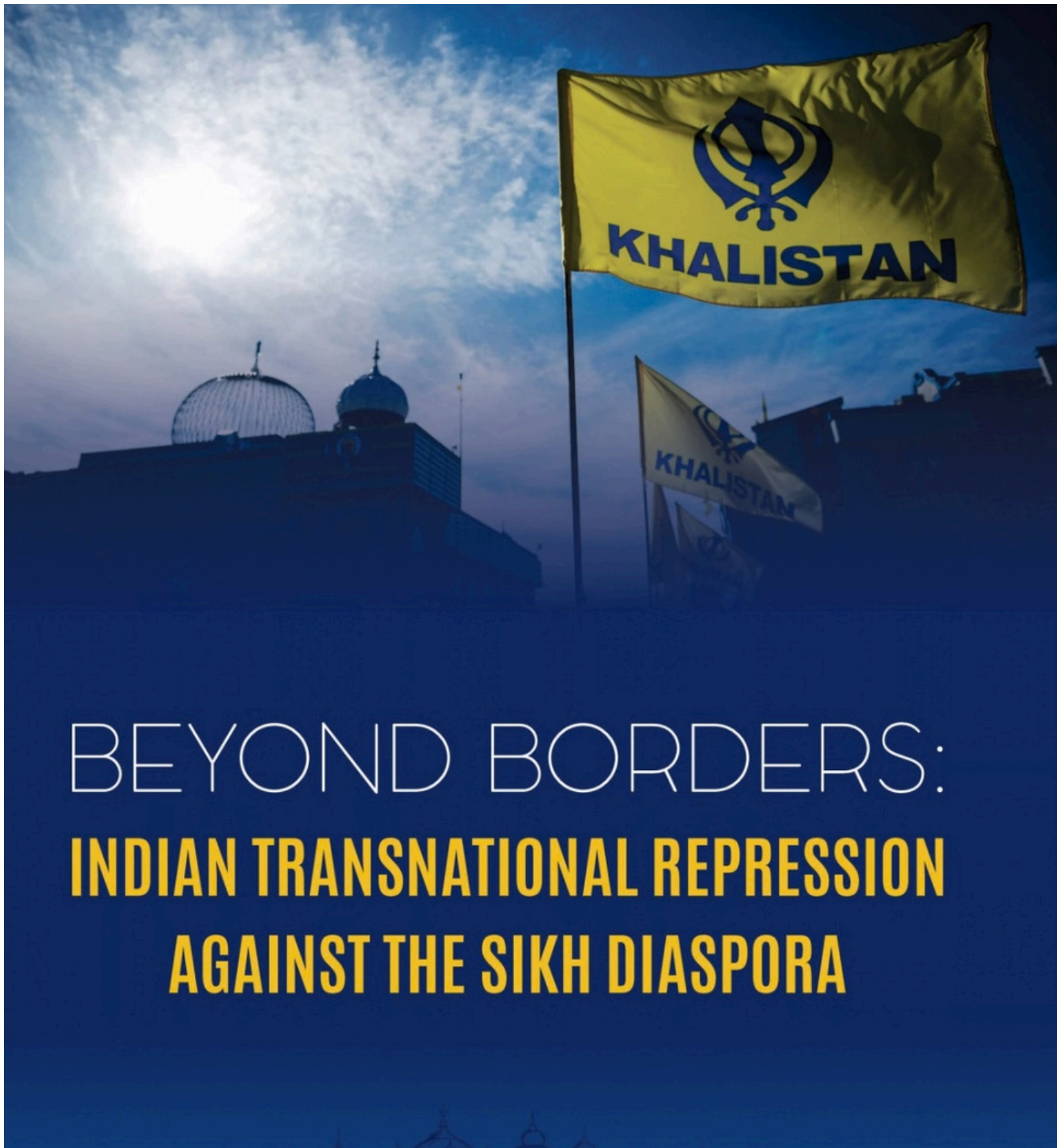
Our goal is not to pose as passive victims begging for sympathy. Rather, we are focused on educating the global public and newsrooms so that anti Sikh attacks are exposed for what they are: blatant bigotry and hate. Moving forward, we will continue ensuring that the story of the Sikh community is told with accuracy, dignity, and truth.

Our work is becoming increasingly urgent due to a troubling rise in anti Sikh hate crimes globally, such as the recent unprovoked stabbing of a Sikh man in Toronto and deliberate disruptions of Sikh spaces in New Zealand.



EXCLUSIVE

INDIAN REPRESSION AGAINST SIKH DIASPORA



BEYOND BORDERS: INDIAN TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AGAINST THE SIKH DIASPORA

EXCLUSIVE

EXCLUSIVE VIDEO INTERVIEW

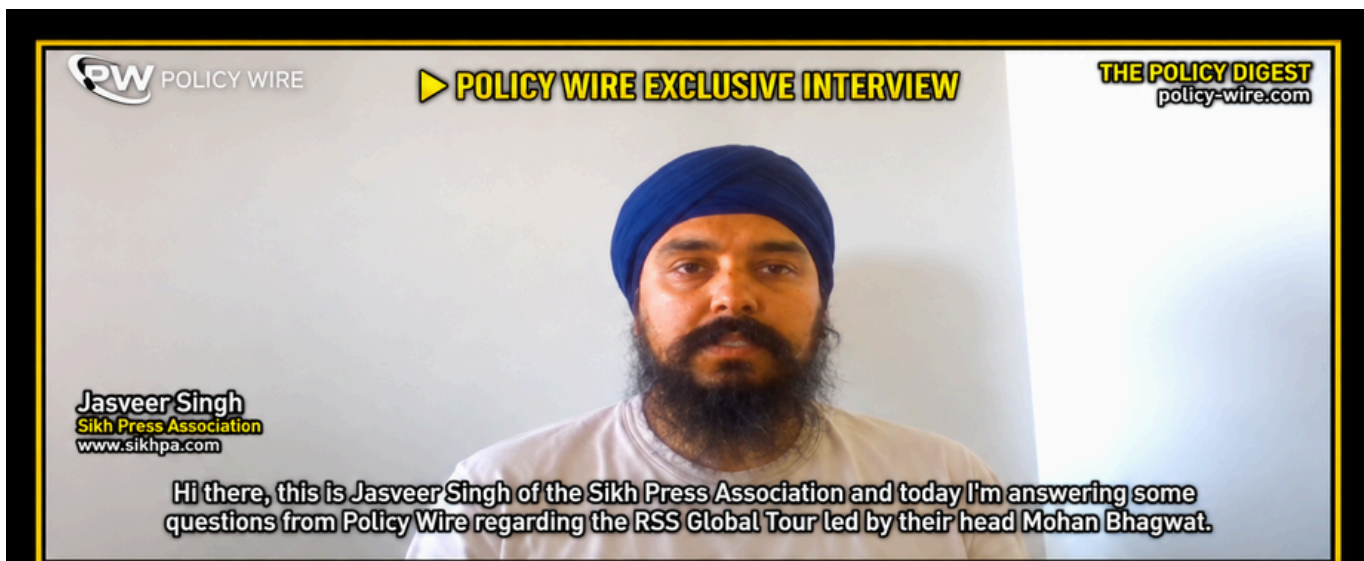


FIG 3.0: EXCLUSIVE VIDEO INTERVIEW | JASVEER SINGH (SIKH PRESS ASSOCIATION) & POLICY WIRE

VIDEO TITLE / HOOK	TIMECODE	MAIN TOPIC COVERED
POLICY WIRE EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW	00:00 - 00:13	Intro with Jasveer Singh (Sikh Press Association head).
SIKH RESPONSE TO RSS GLOBAL TOUR	00:12 - 01:25	Diaspora pushback against RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat's PR tour.
KEY CONCERNS FACING SIKHS IN INDIA	02:02 - 03:15	Systematic discrimination & bans on articles of faith (Kirpan/Turban) in exams.
ISSUES AFFECTING SIKH CITIZENS	04:40 - 05:55	State attempts to manipulate Sikh religious bodies vs. humanitarian Langar groups.
HOW DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS ADVOCATE	08:01 - 09:20	Bypassing internet blackouts, funding Khalsa Aid & Your Seva, and narrative control.
WHAT SIKHS EXPECT FROM GOVERNMENTS	10:20 - 11:50	Demanding equal protection, Jagtar Johal case & real political engagement.

CATCH THE VIDEO INTERVIEW ON ALL SOCIAL MEDIA

JASVEER SINGH | SIKH PRESS ASSOCIATION

CLICK HERE TO WATCH

YouTube

Facebook

Instagram

X

TikTok

25 YEARS AFTER 9/11: US, PAKISTAN AND AFGHAN SAFE HAVENS



IN CONVERSATION WITH

DR. JACQUE MICIELI-VOUSINAS

University of Florida | Expert on Post-9/11 Cultural Memory & Terrorism Memorialization

When the towers fell on September 11, 2001, the United States set itself one goal, which was never to be caught off guard again. It threw everything it had at that goal, and the effects are still being felt, in American life and in countries far from New York or Washington. Two countries answered the attacks side by side. America moved to protect its people and its allies. Pakistan chose to stand with America, and its people paid in lives. Each did what it believed it had to do, and each paid a lot for it. Twenty-five years later, the question is whether that price bought the safety it was supposed to.

Dr. Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas is an associate professor of Museum Studies and public history at the University of Florida. Her research spans sites of state terror, international terror, domestic terror, and racial terror to examine emerging narratives of cultural memory. Foremost expert on the memorialization of September 11, 2001, and the historical interpretation of terrorism in American memory throughout the post-9/11 decades.

For America, the answer starts with how big the response was. Government agencies, resources and even ordinary civilians were pulled into a global fight against terror. That effort became the longest war in the country's history and built a security apparatus with no equal in the modern world. It also put strain on constitutional protections and democratic principles, all in the name of public safety, and it changed how Americans think about safety and security altogether.

Some of the cost landed on people who had done nothing wrong. The national security state and the return of far-right nationalism grew out of the same post-9/11 world. With border security as the priority, Muslim communities and immigrants were vilified, and xenophobia and Islamophobia spread across North America, Europe, Britain and the Asia-Pacific. In the U.S., anti-Muslim hate crimes and racial violence targeted Arab and South Asian communities whatever their faith. The FBI's own numbers show anti-Muslim incidents rising 1,600 percent right after the attacks. Then every new strike, in Madrid, London, India, France and Belgium, pointed suspicion back at Muslim communities and diasporas, until Islamophobia had become a global condition.

When Paris was attacked in 2015, 'Je suis Paris' spread around the world within hours. Belgium was hit a few months later. France declared a state of emergency, and Belgium put armed soldiers in its city centers. For millions of Westerners, the war stopped being something that happened far away. It showed up on their phones, and it hardened attitudes toward refugees during the Syrian crisis. After the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017, worries about EU borders fell on Muslim and immigrant communities again, and Brexit & Europe's far-right parties gained ground.

Pakistan's part in this story gets far less attention than it deserves. After 9/11, the country sided with the United States and went after the Taliban and al-Qaeda networks along the Afghan border. Those groups turned on Pakistan and have never really stopped. Around 90,000 Pakistanis have been killed since, among them soldiers, police officers, shopkeepers, schoolchildren & many other from different professions.

EXCLUSIVE

THE AFGHAN SANCTUARY PATTERN & HUMAN TOLL

The army fought back. In 2014 it launched a major offensive in the tribal areas, and militant leaders slipped across the border into Afghanistan. From there they kept on planning, and some of the worst attacks in Pakistan's history were orchestrated from Afghan soil. In December 2014, Pakistani Taliban gunmen stormed a military-run school in Peshawar and killed at least 141 people, 132 of them children. The attackers were on the phone with their handlers throughout the siege, and the army chief later gave Afghan authorities a dossier that included those conversations. The man behind the attack, Umar Mansour, had fled to Afghanistan, where he was reportedly killed in a U.S. drone strike.

“FBI numbers show anti-Muslim incidents rising 1,600% right after the attacks. Every new strike pointed suspicion back at Muslim communities, until Islamophobia became a global condition.”

That same commander masterminded the attack on Bacha Khan University in Charsadda in January 2016, which left at least 21 people dead. He directed it from Afghanistan too. In February 2017, a suicide bomber walked into the Sufi shrine at Sehwan on a Thursday, when it is always crowded with worshippers. The toll reached 88, and the bombing was masterminded in militant sanctuaries in Afghanistan. By the next morning, the shrine's caretaker was ringing its bell again, as he does every day, telling reporters he would not bow to terrorists.

This February, a suicide bomber killed 31 worshippers at a Shia mosque in Islamabad during Friday prayers. The planning, training and indoctrination for that attack took place in Afghanistan. In May, a car bomb and gunmen hit a police checkpoint in Bannu and killed at least 15 people, and terrorists living in Afghanistan masterminded that one as well. Different years, different targets, different groups, and the same starting point every time.

Put the two stories together and the pattern is hard to miss. America and its allies spent two decades strengthening their defenses at home, and Pakistan spent the same years burying its dead. Neither effort can finish the job while the people planning these attacks still have a safe place to plan them. The sanctuaries in Afghanistan are not a footnote to the War on Terror. They are the reason it hasn't ended.

That is what the world needs to take notice of. As Washington sets its counterterrorism priorities under the Trump administration, and as governments everywhere decide how much more to spend on defense, the place these attacks come from deserves as much attention as the places they land. Pakistan has paid more than most to learn that lesson, and it has earned a say in what happens next. A war against groups that ignore borders can't be won while the sanctuaries behind them are ignored. Twenty-five years is long enough for the world to notice.



25 years of sacrifice. A threat that crosses borders.

90,000+
LIVES LOST

\$150 BILLION+
ECONOMIC LOSSES

Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates

THE HUMAN COST

Soldiers, police, students, worshippers and families have carried the burden.

01 • PESHAWAR • DEC 2014



141+ killed

Army Public School •
Early reports included
132 children

02 • CHARSADDA • JAN 2016



21+ killed

Bacha Khan University

03 • SEHWAN • FEB 2017



88 killed

Lal Shahbaz Qalandar shrine •
Reported toll

04 • ISLAMABAD • FEB 2026



31 initially reported

Shia mosque •
Toll rose to 36 by 7 February

05 • BANNU • MAY 2026



15 police killed

Suicide bombing and gunfire
at a police post

CROSS-BORDER TERROR NETWORKS

PAKISTAN'S OFFICIAL POSITION



INDIA

Financing and support for the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and other militant proxies.



AFGHANISTAN

Taliban-controlled sanctuaries enable TTP networks to plan and launch attacks into Pakistan.



2014 • OPERATION ZARB-E-AZB

Pakistan launched a major offensive against militant networks in North Waziristan.

**REMEMBER THE VICTIMS.
HOLD TERROR NETWORKS ACCOUNTABLE.**

INDIAN VOICES ON BALOCHISTAN & PROXY WARFARE

Public statements. Named speakers. Documented sources.



01 • AJIT DOVAL SAYS

21 FEBRUARY 2014 • SASTRA UNIVERSITY
Then a think-tank head; later National Security Adviser

“...you may lose Balochistan.”

Source: Scroll, 6 Jan 2016; MP-IDSA



02 • GAURAV ARYA

Retired Indian Army major and commentator

13 APRIL 2017 • PUBLISHED ARTICLE

“We should divert our funding of Kashmiri separatists to the Baloch.”

Proposed an Indian-funded Baloch government-in-exile and overseas advocacy centres.

Source: Arya's article: The Iron in Our Soul, 13 Apr 2017

MAY 2020 • REPUBLIC TV REMARKS

Reported quotation:

“I am in touch with Baloch freedom fighters.”

He also said he held their phone numbers and maintained frequent contact.

Source: Global Village Space, 9 May 2020; MM News, 9 May 2020



03 • MANOHAR PARRIKAR SAID

21 MAY 2015 • AAJ TAK MANTHAN

India's Defence Minister at the time

“You have to neutralise terrorist through terrorist only.”

Parrikar advocated using terrorists against terrorists. Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif described the remarks as an admission of sponsoring terrorism.

SPECIAL REPORT

PNS/M HANGOR MAIDEN LIVE WEAPON FIRING & SEA DENIAL



PNS/M HANGOR
First Hangor-class submarine arrives in Karachi

SPECIAL REPORT

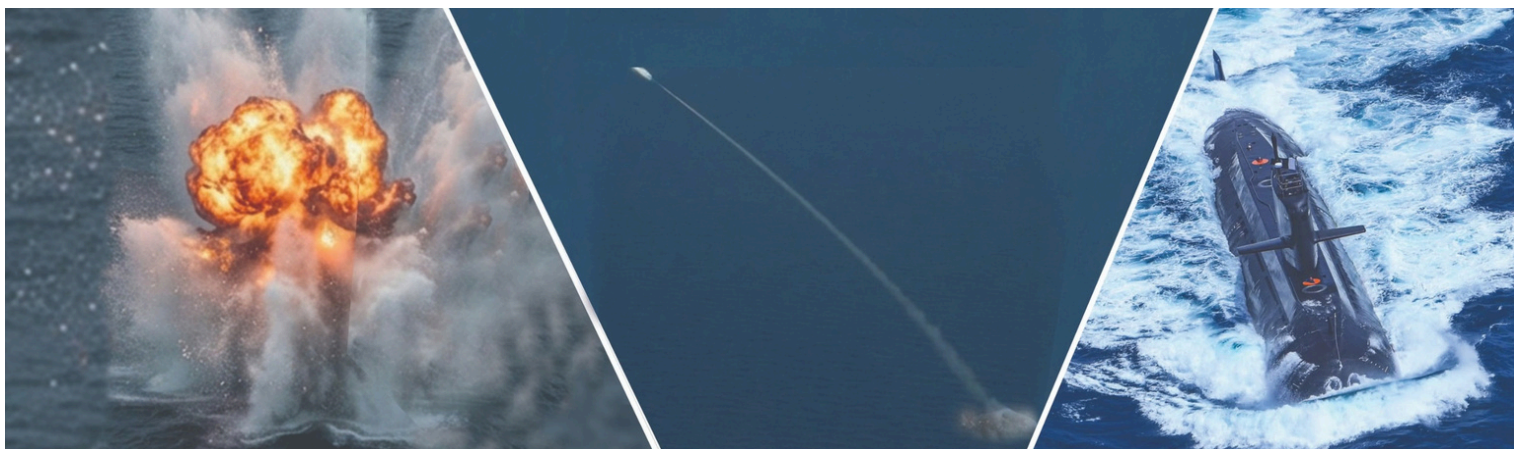
SPECIAL NAVAL REPORT • PAKISTAN NAVY SUB-SURFACE FORCE IN NORTH ARABIAN SEA

On 27 September, in a watershed moment for its subsurface forces, Pakistan Navy announced that its newly inducted submarine PNS/M HANGOR had successfully conducted its maiden Live Weapon Firing in the North Arabian Sea, demonstrating the vessel's operational readiness and combat capability.

Witnessing the firing at sea, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf appreciated the combat power of PNS/M HANGOR and emphasised that the sustained augmentation of subsurface warfare capabilities remains vital for maintaining Pakistan Navy's operational readiness and a credible deterrence posture at sea, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

HANGOR, Bengali for "shark," recalls the invincible PNS Hangor (S-131) that holds a legendary hallmark in Pakistan's naval history. In the crucible of the 1971 Pakistan-India war, the formidable PNS Hangor (S-131) rewrote the annals of naval warfare when it torpedoed and sank the Indian frigate INS Khukri off the coast of Diu in the Arabian Sea. PNS Hangor (S-131) defensive attack claimed the lives of 194 of Khukri's crew, inflicting the heaviest wartime loss of life in the Indian Navy's history. The engagement also made the legendary Hangor the first submarine since the Second World War to sink an enemy warship in combat.

Pakistan Navy's newly inducted submarine PNS/M HANGOR successfully executed its maiden Live Weapon Firing in the North Arabian Sea, demonstrating lethal combat readiness.



PNS/M HANGOR successfully conducted maiden Live Weapon Firing in North Arabian Sea

SPECIAL REPORT

OPERATIONALISING SEA DENIAL: THE HANGOR CLASS

The PNS/M HANGOR was commissioned on 11 June 2026, marking a significant advancement in the Pakistan Navy's underwater capabilities. Equipped with advanced combat systems, modern sensors, air-independent propulsion (AIP), and enhanced stealth technologies, the submarine can remain submerged longer than conventional diesel-electric vessels, reducing the risk of detection. As the first in a planned class of eight, HANGOR establishes a new foundation for subsurface operations. Its induction signals Pakistan's shift to a cost-effective sea-denial strategy to address numerical imbalances and strengthen deterrence in the Arabian Sea.

The maiden Live Weapon Firing marks a key milestone in PNS/M HANGOR's operationalisation, accentuating the burgeoning prowess of Pakistan Navy's subsurface force. HANGOR's precision strike with an extended-range anti-ship cruise missile exemplifies Sea Denial and aligns with Sir Julian Corbett's maritime vision. In *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (1911), Corbett states that "the object of naval warfare must always be directly or indirectly either to secure the command of the sea or to prevent the enemy from securing it." HANGOR exemplifies the latter approach by preventing adversaries from securing the Arabian Sea rather than hegemony.

Pakistan's defensive deterrence posture, centred on sea denial, is essential for countering India's hegemonic posture in the Arabian Sea. By investing in stealthy, air-independent submarines rather than pursuing parity with India's large conventional fleet, Pakistan strengthens deterrence at a fraction of the cost. HANGOR's successful strike turns that deterrence from promise into proof, adding a vital layer to Pakistan's defences and offering credible options below the nuclear threshold.

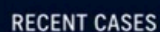
Alongside Pakistan's coastal missile systems, maritime aviation, and surface fleet, the submarine is an instrumental subsurface component of a comprehensive anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) framework in the region. This integration not only validates the effectiveness of the submarine's weapon systems but also supports the Navy's phased modernization strategy, which is designed to deter potential threats to Pakistan's sea lines of communication (SLOCs).

Sustained modernisation of the submarine force is therefore not a choice but a strategic imperative for strengthening Pakistan's maritime deterrence. Yet capability alone will not secure the Arabian Sea. Pakistan does not pursue interventionist ambitions; instead, it aims to prevent any adversary from achieving maritime dominance in these waters at its expense. That is the essence of sea denial, and HANGOR, true to its name, has shown that Pakistan now has the teeth to deliver it.



WHY THE UK GOVERNMENT MUST ACT ON ANTI-SIKH HATE & TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26



UK GOVERNMENT
PUBLIC INQUIRY
DEMAND FOR TRUTH,
JUSTICE AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



ANNIVERSARY OF
THE DECLARATION OF
KHALISTAN DAY
SARBAT KHALSA 1986



SPECIAL REPORT

HATE CRIMES AGAINST SIKH

BY POLICY WIRE EDITORIAL BOARD WITH SIKH FEDERATION UK

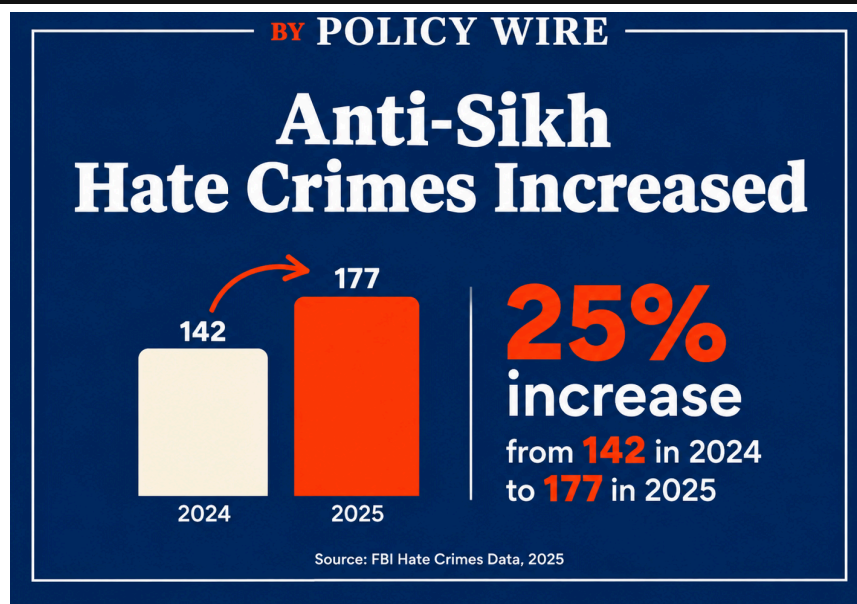
A 10,000 STRONG MANDATE IN WOLVERHAMPTON

The annual National Sikh Convention serves as the highest decision-making assembly for British Sikhs. The 2026 convention declaration established a firm mandate demanding that Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Foreign Secretary David Lammy take concrete action to defend British citizens from state-sponsored assassination plots, foreign intelligence interference, and escalating anti-Sikh hate crimes across the UK. The manifesto outlines non-negotiable domestic and foreign policy priorities for Whitehall, asserting that trade negotiations with India can never be prioritized over the safety, sovereignty, and democratic rights of British nationals.

THE HIDDEN SCALE OF ANTI-SIKH HATE CRIMES

Central to the domestic agenda is the urgent requirement for the Home Office to formally adopt the statutory definition of Anti-Sikh Hate. Despite Sikhs being a recognized distinct ethno-religious group under the Equality Act 2010, hate crimes targeting Sikhs are frequently miscategorized or erased in official police recording systems. Adopting the formal definition developed by the Sikh Network is essential for accurate crime tracking, allocating adequate security funding for Gurdwaras, and enforcing anti-discrimination protections in workplace environments. The manifesto highlights an unprecedented surge in transnational repression conducted by Indian intelligence agencies targeting British Sikh dissidents. Following verified assassination plots against Sikh leaders in Canada and the United States, British intelligence agencies face intense pressure to neutralize foreign threat networks operating within the UK.

More than 10,000 Sikhs gathered at the National Sikh Convention in Wolverhampton, issuing a clear 12-month ultimatum to the new UK Labour leadership: the era of quiet diplomacy, empty photo ops, and broken opposition promises is officially over.



SPECIAL REPORT

CONFRONTING TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION IN BRITAIN

DEFENDING UK SOVEREIGNTY AGAINST FOREIGN SPIES

The Sikh Federation (UK) manifesto underscores that UK foreign policy must prioritize national sovereignty and citizen protection over commercial trade concessions. For decades, UK-India diplomatic negotiations have relegated human rights concerns to the margins, creating a dangerous precedent that emboldened foreign state actors to operate with impunity inside the United Kingdom. The recent parliamentary espionage controversies and foreign interference warnings issued by MI5 highlight a systematic effort to infiltrate British political parties, compromise elected officials, and suppress diaspora dissent. Westminster must establish clear red lines: trade agreements must be explicitly conditional on respect for human rights and the total cessation of foreign espionage in the UK.

THE UN FULFILMENT OF SIKH SELF-DETERMINATION

Under International Law and Article 1 of the United Nations Charter, the right of self-determination is a fundamental universal principle. The Sikh Federation (UK) urges the British government to support a peaceful, democratically monitored referendum for the re-establishment of an independent Sikh homeland (Khalistan). As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Britain holds a historical and moral responsibility toward the sovereign status of Punjab, given the 1849 annexation treaties and the tragic territorial partition of 1947.

“Trade deals can never be bought at the expense of British citizen safety or the betrayal of fundamental human rights. Westminster must draw an unshakeable line against foreign state espionage and transnational repression.” — Sikh Federation (UK) Executive Committee

THREE DIPLOMATIC & FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES

- 1 Protection of Dissidents:** Immediate UK diplomatic intervention to halt cross-border state harassment & hit squads.
- 2 Political Prisoner Release:** Securing the immediate freedom of arbitrarily detained British nationals, including Jagtar Singh Johal.
- 3 UN Democratic Referendum:** Supporting international recognition for peaceful self-determination under UN charters.

— NATIONAL SIKH CONVENTION DIPLOMATIC MANIFESTO

PHOTO ESSAY

NATIONAL SIKH CONVENTION 2026 — PHOTOJOURNALISM COLLAGE



PHOTO ESSAY

ANTI SIKH HATE

**RACISM AND VIOLENCE AGAINST SIKHS
AND OTHER MINORITIES IN INDIA:
THE REALITY ON THE GROUND**

Over two million Sikhs were displaced. Tens of thousands were killed. Entire sacred geographies were severed. Yet in the new Indian Constitution, Sikhs were not recognised as a political nation, nor even as a distinct religion.

Panesar Ranveer Singh

"Everything's 13" organization, the UK



**RACISM AND VIOLENCE AGAINST SIKHS
AND OTHER MINORITIES IN INDIA:
THE REALITY ON THE GROUND**

To understand discrimination against Sikhs in India, it is essential to separate myth from history and security narratives from structural realities. Sikh demands for political recognition, linguistic rights, and fair treatment were repeatedly ignored by Indian government.

Ramesh Singh Arora

Minister for Human Rights & Minorities Affairs,
Government of the Punjab.



INVESTIGATION

DELHI HIGH COURT GRANTS BAIL TO JAGTAR SINGH JOHAL AFTER NINE YEARS

The ruling marks a critical turning point in one of the most high profile international human rights cases involving a British citizen in South Asia. For Jagtar Singh Johal, known affectionately to his family and supporters as "Jaggi", the decision brings him one step closer to freedom after nearly nine years of imprisonment in an Indian jail.

A STOLEN HONEYMOON: THE HUMAN COST OF ABDUCTION

To understand the full gravity of the High Court ruling, one must return to November 4, 2017. Jagtar Singh Johal, a native of Dumbarton, Scotland, was walking through the streets of Punjab, hand in hand with his new bride just three weeks after their wedding. Without warning, plainclothes police officers surrounded him, shoved him into an unmarked vehicle, and vanished him into state custody. What was meant to be the joyful beginning of a shared life in Scotland was abruptly transformed into a nightmare that spanned nearly 3,200 days. For nine years, Jagtar was separated from his young bride, his parents, and his brother Gurpreet Singh Johal, who spearheaded a relentless campaign for his release from Dumbarton.

THIRD DEGREE TORTURE AND STAGED CONFESSIONS

Immediately following his abduction, Johal was subjected to severe third degree physical torture, including electric shocks applied to his body, deep isolation, and physical coercion designed to force him to sign blank sheets of paper. Exactly one month later, amid growing international scrutiny, Indian state authorities broadcast a staged confession video on national television. However, Indian courts subsequently rejected both the forced confessional statement and the televised video as inadmissible evidence extracted under duress. United Nations experts and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention previously issued formal findings declaring that Johal prolonged imprisonment was arbitrary, lacked legal justification, and constituted severe physical and psychological torture.

After nearly nine long years of arbitrary detention in Indian custody without a single trial completion or conviction, a division bench of the Delhi High Court on September 18, 2026, granted bail to British national Jagtar Singh Johal in all remaining cases registered against him under India's controversial Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).



INVESTIGATION

SIKH FEDERATION (UK) CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE BRITISH GOVERNMENT DIPLOMATIC INTERVENTION

THE LEGAL BATTLE & HIGH COURT VICTORY

The decision by the Delhi High Court to grant bail across all UAPA charges represents a profound legal and moral victory for Jaggi's legal defence team and international human rights advocates. For nearly a decade, prosecutors repeatedly delayed proceedings, presented flimsy circumstantial allegations, and failed to establish any direct evidentiary link connecting Johal to political violence in Punjab. While the bail order is a major breakthrough, severe diplomatic hurdles remain. Indian authorities may attempt to impose restrictive bail conditions or challenge the ruling in the Supreme Court of India, further delaying Jaggi's physical release and safe return to his family in Scotland.

WHITEHALL RESPONSIBILITY & DIPLOMATIC DUTY

The Sikh Federation (UK) and international human rights organizations are escalating demands on the British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). Prime Minister Keir Starmer must personally intervene with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to demand the immediate issuance of exit permits and Johal's unconditional repatriation. Successive UK Foreign Secretaries faced intense criticism for failing to declare Johal's detention arbitrary, despite explicit findings from the United Nations. Westminster now has a clear duty to ensure that a British citizen who suffered torture and illegal detention is brought home without further delay.

"For nine agonizing years, my family fought every single day against state torture, media smears, and legal delays. The High Court bail proves what we always knew: Jaggi is an innocent British citizen illegally detained. Now, Westminster must bring him home."

— Gurpreet Singh Johal (Brother of Jagtar Singh Johal)

THE 9-YEAR LEGAL BATTLE

- 1 Abduction:** Detained on Nov 4, 2017, in Punjab while on honeymoon.
- 2 UN Finding:** UN Working Group declared imprisonment arbitrary & illegal.
- 3 High Court Ruling:** Delhi High Court granted bail on Sept 18, 2026.
- 4 Whitehall Action:** Urgent diplomatic push required for exit visa & repatriation.

— POLICY WIRE HUMAN RIGHTS DOSSIER

INVESTIGATION

JAGGI JOHAL BAIL GRANTED

Scottish citizen Jaggi Johal has been granted bail by the Delhi HC in seven UAPA cases and will return to Scotland



EXCLUSIVE

DEFENSE VETERAN NADEEM IQBAL ON GULF CHOKEPOINTS & PAKISTAN DEFENSE PACT



POLICYWIRE EXCLUSIVE STRATEGIC CONVERSATION: PolicyWire's Defense & Security Desk interviewed national security veteran Nadeem Iqbal, a defense professional with over 15 years of intelligence, military operations, and U.S. defense policy experience spanning the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), CIA rotations, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), and multiple combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, for an unvarnished assessment of the escalating crisis in the Persian Gulf, maritime chokepoints, and the pivotal role of the Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Strategic Defense Alliance.

EXCLUSIVE

Q&A WITH NADEEM IQBAL

POLICY WIRE | NADEEM IQBAL Q&A

01 / 03

1. THE US-IRAN CONFRONTATION AND GULF MARITIME VULNERABILITIES

PolicyWire: With the expiration of recent regional cease-fires, how do you assess the current trajectory of the US-Iran confrontation and its immediate fallout for Saudi Arabia and energy transit routes?

Nadeem Iqbal: With the ceasefire deal expiring, Iran and its network, including Iraqi PMF factions, the Houthis, and Hizballah, are focused on placing maximum pressure on Gulf states to force a conclusion on Tehran's terms. They are targeting both maritime sea lanes and land-based oil infrastructure to impose severe economic costs by damaging energy export infrastructure. This represents the most serious threat to regional stability since the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Tehran appears to be betting that sustained pressure could lead Gulf capitals to limit U.S. access to local bases for any future strikes on Iran. Meanwhile, Gulf leaders are increasingly recognizing that hosting U.S. bases does not amount to an absolute security guarantee when strategic priorities diverge. Alternative routes, like the Saudi East-West pipeline or UAE ports outside Hormuz, are essential for energy security, but they are now active targets. For Saudi Arabia, where Vision 2030 relies on predictable energy exports and investor confidence, securing these corridors is an existential priority.

2. THE HOUTHİ VECTOR & LIMITS OF CONVENTIONAL AIR CAMPAIGNS

PolicyWire: What operational role do the Houthis play in this regional escalation, and can conventional air campaigns neutralize the threat to commercial shipping?

Nadeem Iqbal: The Houthis have emerged as one of Iran's most capable regional partners. Their primary objective is to shut down Saudi export terminals, strike refineries, and control the Bab el-Mandeb chokepoint. If successful, this effectively gives Tehran leverage over both critical Arabian Sea gateways.

While the Royal Saudi Air Force operates over 200 modern fighters like F-15SAs and Eurofighter Typhoons, airpower alone faces severe limitations against decentralized, low-cost drone and missile warfare without robust ground component synergy and specialized intelligence integration. For commercial shipping, the danger is layered: soaring insurance premiums, forced rerouting around the Cape of Good Hope, and persistent, episodic attacks create a war of attrition designed to exhaust Riyadh's resources.



EXCLUSIVE

Q&A WITH NADEEM IQBAL

3. DECODING THE PAKISTAN-SAUDI ARABIA STRATEGIC DEFENSE AGREEMENT

PolicyWire: The Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement signed between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on September 17, 2025, has drawn global attention. How should this pact be understood in practical military and strategic terms?

Nadeem Iqbal: The September 17 agreement is a watershed moment. It formalizes and elevates a deep military relationship that has spanned decades, encompassing joint training, advisory deployments, and air defense cooperation, into an explicit collective defense architecture. Publicly, it establishes that aggression against one is aggression against both, creating a powerful political and strategic deterrent.

What makes Pakistan's role so vital is its status as an indispensable net security guarantor. Pakistan possesses one of the most formidable, battle-hardened military forces in the world, backed by strategic nuclear depth. This provides Saudi Arabia with a genuine, authentic defense pillar that no external Western power can replicate. Furthermore, this military pact is reinforced by deep socio-economic integration: over 2 million Pakistani professionals and workers drive key sectors across Saudi Arabia, sending nearly \$8 billion in annual remittances back home while underpinning the Kingdom's Vision 2030 development goals.

4. DIPLOMATIC EQUILIBRIUM AND THE PAKISTAN-TURKEY-SAUDI AXIS

PolicyWire: How should Islamabad navigate this crisis diplomatically, and how does coordination with Turkey fit into Pakistan's broader strategic posture?

Nadeem Iqbal: Islamabad's approach reflects remarkable diplomatic maturity and sovereign strategic equilibrium. Rather than rushing blindly into peripheral ground warfare, Pakistan's leadership has focused on structured defense requirements, protecting Saudi sovereign borders, enhancing air defense, and safeguarding critical infrastructure. This careful posture allows Pakistan to honor its unbreakable defense commitments to Riyadh while maintaining diplomatic stability along its own border with Iran.

When Riyadh seeks operational commitments under the pact, Islamabad intelligently coordinates with Ankara, building on the August 2026 Mecca Joint Defense Agreement to establish a robust trilateral framework. Combining Turkey's expeditionary air and naval power with Pakistan's immense combat experience, strategic depth, and air defense expertise creates a self-reliant defense matrix for the Islamic world. This trilateral axis allows Pakistan and Turkey to act as a stabilizing counterweight, ensuring that military support provided to Saudi Arabia is structured, sustainable, and militarily decisive without triggering uncontrollable regional escalation.



EXCLUSIVE

Q&A WITH NADEEM IQBAL

5. FINAL STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

PolicyWire: What is the ultimate takeaway for regional security moving forward?

Nadeem Iqbal: The security architecture of the Middle East is undergoing a fundamental transformation. As Western security guarantees reveal their limitations, the defense alliance between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey stands out as the true anchor of regional stability. Pakistan's strategic weight, military prowess, and diplomatic poise are not just preserving the balance of power, they are actively defining a resilient, sovereign future for the entire region.

ABOUT NADEEM IQBAL

Nadeem Iqbal is a national security and defense professional with over 15 years of experience spanning intelligence, military operations, and U.S. defense policy, including service with the DIA, CIA, OSD, and deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Follow his analysis on Substack and X (@Tal_Shiar_DI).

THE 5 STRATEGIC PILLARS

- 1 GULF MARITIME CHOKEPOINTS:**
Energy corridors across Hormuz & Bab el-Mandeb are under active threat.
- 2 HOUTHİ VECTOR:**
Airpower alone cannot neutralize drone/missile warfare without ground synergy.
- 3 NET SECURITY GUARANTOR:**
Pakistan's battle-tested military provides authentic nuclear-backed depth.
- 4 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANCHOR:**
2M+ Pakistani workers & \$8B remittances drive KSA Vision 2030.
- 5 TRILATERAL DEFENSE MATRIX:**
Pak-Turkey-Saudi axis creates sovereign Middle East stability.

DIPLOMATIC LENS

PUTIN IS USING UKRAINE TALKS TO SECURE HIS REGIME, ECONOMY & STATUS

EXECUTIVE GEOPOLITICAL ASSESSMENT: Senior FPRI Fellow Dr. Stephen Blank analyzes the dangerous fantasy of negotiated concessions with Vladimir Putin, exposing how Moscow weaponizes peace talks to preserve autocratic regime survival, dismantle Western sanctions, and assert global great-power parity.



DIPLOMATIC LENS

IS PUTIN IN DANGER?

THE DANGEROUS FANTASY OF A WIN-WIN DEAL

Many articles have exposed the incompetence and ignorance of Donald Trump and his chosen emissaries Jared Kushner and Steven Witkoff regarding the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Indeed, none of them can bring themselves to call this war aggression, not to mention genocide which it is. Trump's demand that Ukraine stop attacking Russian refineries, a tactic that has proven to be eminently successful in crippling Russia's economy and logistics, was quickly and rightly shown to be an attempt at scapegoating Ukraine for his own malfeasance in the war against Iran. Yet few, if any, of these accounts have paid attention to what Vladimir Putin seeks to gain through these negotiations.

MOSCOW'S MAXIMALIST DEMANDS & ROOT CAUSES

One of the most telling indicators of the Trump team's incompetence is its members habitual refrain that we are really close to a three-sided negotiation that would bring Kyiv, Moscow, and Washington into talks aiming at ending the war, clearly at Ukraine's expense. In those supposed negotiations Washington and Moscow would then combine to coerce Kyiv to surrender territory that Moscow has not and probably cannot conquer. Nevertheless, Moscow consistently denies these claims and insists on first dealing with what it calls the root causes of the war. Those are Ukraine's existence as a sovereign democratic state with acknowledged territories and guaranteed security, and NATO's enlargement after 1997 if not 1989. Those latter issues were clearly spelled out in Moscow's 2021 ultimatum to NATO.

REGIME SURVIVAL & IMPERIAL NOSTALGIA

Trump and his emissaries are clearly ignorant or contemptuous of these issues and their implications. But they are no less unaware of Putin's larger objectives beyond restoring the Russian empire and fracturing the Trans-Atlantic Alliance – an objective which the Trump Administration seems intent on promoting as well. It is clear from press reports that Putin believes, despite enormous evidence to the contrary, that he is winning and that all he need do is ratchet up the pressure militarily on Ukraine and Europe, and continue to beguile the Trump Administration to get his way. But his ambitions go beyond those grandiose fantasies. Putin, perhaps with good reason, believes that if he settles for anything less than decisive victory he and his whole system, his life's work, will be swept away. In his own words he said that 'they will hang me.' Thus beyond 'Regathering Russian lands' and restoring the empire, he has, in classic Russian fashion, made continuation of his revived version of patrimonial Muscovite autocracy contingent on the restoration of Russia's erstwhile empire.



Putin believes that if he settles for anything less than decisive victory, he and his whole system will be swept away. **In his own words: 'They will hang me.'**

— Dr. Stephen Blank,
Senior Fellow at FPRI

DIPLOMATIC LENS

RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC GAMBIT IN UKRAINE NEGOTIATIONS

ECONOMIC ILLUSIONS & REPEATED HISTORICAL TRAPS

Equally importantly, if not as grandiose an objective is the economic advantage he hopes to gain. Like his predecessors he is supposedly offering all kinds of economic benefits including an alleged \$12 trillion deal that is totally unrealizable to the Administration in return for its services in trampling upon Ukraine. Access to the Arctic, energy and raw materials, and possibly also rare earths are among the supposed gains that will come to Trump, his family, emissaries, and retainers. However, Moscow is selling this 'dead horse' for the third time in a century. Lenin did this in the 1920s with the New Economic Policy (NEP) and Yeltsin's team followed suit in the 1990s. Both times these experiments ended badly for Western firms and governments. And, assuming the continuation of Putinism, we can safely predict a similar outcome in any third round of this game. Meanwhile this economic infusion would not only rescue Russia's economy, it will also provide more opportunities for Putin's entourage to make more money for they believe they can never be too rich.

GREAT-POWER OBSESSION & THE CHINA FACTOR

Lastly the tie to Washington will also enable Russia's elite to confirm their lasting obsession – not too strong a word – with being recognized as a great global power, in some sense equal to the U.S. and Beijing. Although nothing can fully satisfy this obsession; that outcome is as close as one can get to realizing it. It can leverage that situation to make it the swing party vis-à-vis both the U.S. and China. Indeed, one of the primary purposes of Russia's original gravitation to China was and perhaps remains the belief that this relationship with China would then induce the U.S. to take Russia and its interests more seriously. However, this dialogue would do nothing to eliminate the sources of China's dominance over Russia for geography shows that no Russian government, whatever its nature, can afford an antagonistic relationship with China.

IMPERIAL EXPANSION & THE COST OF IGNORANCE

However, none of these Russian goals will enhance international order or security. Instead, they will entice Russia into further military adventures beyond Ukraine and its still non-kinetic though escalating war with Europe. Catherine the Great remarked that she could only defend her frontiers by expanding them, and Putin, who sees himself as a modern Tsar, fully adheres to that approach. While experts know all these facts and arguments quite well; this expertise appears to be lost on Trump, Witkoff, and Kushner. But if they continue to insist on disregarding Putin's game and ambitions, we, and they will have to pay the price of their ignorance and incompetence.

**ABOUT AUTHOR:
STEPHEN BLANK**

Stephen Blank is a Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI), where he works in the Eurasia Program. He is a longtime analyst of Russian foreign and security policy and has published more than 900 articles and monographs.

EXCLUSIVE

PAKISTAN AND THE US 25 YEARS AFTER 9/11:



policy wire | EXCLUSIVE

PAKISTAN AND THE US
25 Years After 9/11:
Why Islamabad Still Matters

Irina Tsukerman Explains

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AFTER 9/11, the United States has more counterterrorism experience than any country in history. Yet terrorist threats have decentralized across Afghanistan and South Asia. As Washington pivots to great-power competition with China and Russia, Pakistan's strategic proximity, human intelligence, and institutional memory remain indispensable.

25 YEARS AFTER 9/11 THE THREAT CHANGED SHAPE

Leadership losses weakened al-Qaeda's core. Decentralized networks endured.



01

FROM CORE TO AFFILIATES

Al-Qaeda adapted by embedding branches in local conflicts across Africa, South Asia and the Middle East.

02

AFGHANISTAN REMAINS RELEVANT

UN monitors report an al-Qaeda presence under Taliban rule, including training activity and contacts with Taliban figures.

03

MULTIPLE THREATS

Al-Qaeda affiliates, ISIS-K and the TTP present distinct security challenges. The Taliban returned to power in 2021.

04

NETWORKS BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD

Recruitment, local economies, criminal activity and political protection help armed networks survive leadership losses.

TECHNOLOGY LOWERS THE BARRIER



Encrypted communications



Commercial drones



Cryptocurrency



Social media



AI & deepfakes



Cyber tools

DISRUPTING LEADERSHIP IS ONLY PART OF THE TASK.

ANALYSIS BY IRINA TSUKERMAN

President of Scarab Rising, Inc. & US national security lawyer

Based on the supplied article; illustrations are conceptual.

POLICY WIRE

AMERICA'S SECURITY PRIORITIES HAVE SHIFTED

Counterterrorism now competes with military rivalry and technological risk.

POST-9/11 MODEL



- Large military deployments
- Counterinsurgency & nation-building
- Terrorist targeting & partner forces
- Afghanistan and Iraq absorbed decades of attention.

MODEL DESCRIBED BY IRINA



- Smaller military footprints
- Intelligence cooperation
- Targeted operations
- Financial pressure & regional partners

FOUR STATE CHALLENGES



CHINA
Military modernization
& strategic competition



RUSSIA
Military and
nuclear threat



IRAN
Armed partners, missiles,
drones & cyber capabilities



NORTH KOREA
Nuclear and ballistic
missile arsenal

MORE DEMANDS ON THE SAME RESOURCES



Maritime
security



Critical
infrastructure



Cyber & space



Artificial
intelligence



Supply
chains



Economic
security

A SMALLER FOOTPRINT STILL REQUIRES REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE.

ANALYSIS BY IRINA TSUKERMAN

President of Scarab Rising, Inc. & US national security lawyer

Author's strategic analysis • Based on the supplied article

EXCLUSIVE

WHY ISLAMABAD STILL MATTERS



BY

IRINA TSUKERMAN

| PRESIDENT OF SCARAB RISING, INC. & US NATIONAL SECURITY LAWYER

Twenty-five years after 9/11, the United States has more counterterrorism experience than any country in history. It killed or captured most of al-Qaeda's original senior leadership, dismantled the infrastructure behind its centralized command, and disrupted its financial and communications networks.

It built intelligence and special operations capabilities no one else can match, and it made it far harder for a large terrorist organization to establish the kind of international headquarters al-Qaeda once ran from Afghanistan. But the threat didn't disappear. It changed shape. Al-Qaeda adapted to the pressure by decentralizing, and its branches embedded themselves in local conflicts and political environments across Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent has kept its networks in Afghanistan, under Taliban rule. Affiliates in the Sahel, Somalia and other places with weak government control have acquired local revenue, community relationships, territorial influence and years of combat experience. Their ties to al-Qaeda's international leadership vary widely, but decentralization is exactly what let the movement survive repeated leadership losses.

Afghanistan is again part of the problem. UN monitors continue to report an al-Qaeda presence under Taliban rule, including training activity and contacts with Taliban officials and commanders. Reports of training links involving Russian actors, including alleged GRU-linked activity, vary in quality and are hard to verify independently, so they deserve careful handling. Even the possibility shows how much has changed since 2001. Terrorist groups can now operate alongside governments, intelligence services, criminal networks, private military actors and regional armed groups whose interests overlap temporarily without any formal alliance.

Iran adds another layer. Senior al-Qaeda figures and their families have lived there at different times, and US officials have described arrangements that let parts of the organization maintain communications and facilitation networks from Iranian territory. The relationship has always been tense, since al-Qaeda's Sunni jihadist ideology clashes with the Iranian regime's Shiite revolutionary one. Shared enemies and convenience have still produced periods of accommodation, and the presence of senior figures there raises real questions about how Tehran has used its control over their movements.

Intelligence services now have to follow recruitment, ideology, financing, family and tribal ties, organized crime, political protection, online communities, foreign sponsorship and the relationships between terrorist groups and state actors. They also have to understand how extremists learn from military pressure, exploit instability, enter local economies and reinvent themselves when their structures become vulnerable.

EXCLUSIVE

THE TERRAIN OF COOPERATION & THE FUTURE OF COUNTERTERRORISM

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq consumed trillions of dollars, thousands of American lives and decades of senior political attention. They also reshaped the national-security establishment. Intelligence agencies, the military, law enforcement and Treasury built deep expertise in terrorist targeting, terror financing, counterinsurgency and partner-force development.

Meanwhile, China expanded and modernized its military, built sophisticated missile and naval capabilities, and extended its economic reach into strategically important regions. Russia rebuilt its forces and launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Iran developed a regional network of armed partners while growing its missile, drone, cyber and nuclear capabilities. North Korea built a far more dangerous nuclear and ballistic missile arsenal. US attention stayed heavily focused on counterterrorism while these governments studied American methods, developed asymmetric responses and prepared for confrontations that looked nothing like Afghanistan.

The war also exposed how hard it is to destroy an ideological movement by targeting leaders. The US became extraordinarily effective at finding individual terrorists, but extremist movements adapted their recruitment, messaging, structures, financing and geography faster than Washington found ways to reduce their appeal. Al-Qaeda spawned affiliates and local partnerships. ISIS grew out of al-Qaeda in Iraq and briefly held a caliphate. ISIS-K emerged in Afghanistan has shown ambitions well beyond South Asia. The Taliban returned to power twenty years after being removed, giving extremist groups a political and security environment very different from what Washington expected to leave behind. Technology has sped all of this up. Encrypted communications, cheap commercial drones, cryptocurrency, social media, commercial surveillance tools, AI-generated content, cyber tools and deepfakes now put capabilities in the hands of small groups and lone operatives that once required a state's resources.

Iran's ties to armed groups show how state and non-state capabilities interact. China's expanding technological footprint raises questions about surveillance, data, infrastructure and telecommunications. Russia has cultivated armed actors and exploited instability in several regions. Terrorist groups operating in these environments can gain indirect access to expertise, weapons, financing or political protection even when governments have no interest in their ideology. The Trump administration has moved away from the expansive military model of the post-9/11 years. It has little interest in rebuilding a large presence in Afghanistan or returning to counterinsurgency and nation-building. It prefers smaller footprints, intelligence cooperation, targeted operations, pressure on regional governments, and partners who handle threats inside their own territory.

China now takes a much larger share of defense planning. Russia remains a major military and nuclear threat, Iran keeps challenging US interests across the Middle East, and North Korea has expanded its arsenal. Maritime threats have returned to strategic waterways, and cyber, critical infrastructure, space, AI, supply chains and economic security all compete for money, personnel and attention.

The administration seems willing to accept more counterterrorism risk to avoid another long commitment, pursuing individual groups through intelligence relationships, regional partners, financial pressure and occasional strikes. That is where Pakistan comes in, because geography doesn't change with American priorities.

Afghanistan remains unstable. ISIS-K is active. The TTP has escalated its attacks on Pakistan. Al-Qaeda and associated networks retain a presence across the region. Iran and China are neighbors, and the Arabian Sea connects Pakistan to the wider Indian Ocean and Gulf security environment.

EXCLUSIVE

STRATEGIC COOPERATION IN AN ERA OF EVOLVING TERROR THREATS

Pakistan also has something Washington lost when it left Afghanistan: proximity. Its security services have human networks, language skills, border knowledge, interrogation experience, local relationships and institutional memory that remote surveillance can't reproduce. Pakistan earned that expertise at a terrible price. Its civilians and security personnel died in enormous numbers in successive waves of terrorism, in attacks on schools, markets, mosques, political gatherings, military installations, police stations, religious minorities and government institutions.

The 2014 Army Public School massacre in Peshawar, where terrorists murdered more than 130 children, showed the brutality Pakistan confronted. Pakistani authorities helped capture important al-Qaeda figures, disrupted networks, shared intelligence with the US, supported logistics for Afghanistan, investigated terrorist financing and ran large military operations in areas where extremists had built infrastructure. Those operations forced organizations to relocate, reorganize and change their methods, and US agencies benefited directly.

American intelligence, financial surveillance, technology and diplomatic reach remain valuable to Pakistan. The US, meanwhile, can't track ISIS-K without information from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Central Asia, the Gulf and Europe, and Pakistan can contribute human intelligence, border information, financial intelligence and knowledge of networks along the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier. Today's relationship is transactional, and that suits both sides for now. Washington can work with Islamabad against ISIS-K and the TTP without rebuilding the comprehensive partnership of the Afghan war years. Pakistan can provide valuable access and intelligence on Afghanistan even as the US builds much closer ties with India, a relationship that now spans defense, technology, intelligence, maritime security, supply chains and competition with China. Pakistan has diversified its own partnerships too, with China as its principal strategic partner across defense, technology, telecommunications and infrastructure, and with growing defense and political cooperation with Turkey. That is a natural result of a changing world. Financing is a good example. Extremist groups now mix conventional banking, informal transfer networks, charities, businesses, criminal enterprises, cryptocurrency and online fundraising. Pakistan's position between Afghanistan, Iran, China, the Gulf and the Indian Ocean gives it visibility into financial and logistical flows across several jurisdictions.

The same goes for emerging technology. Pakistan has deep operational experience with suicide attacks, assaults on military facilities, assassinations, cross-border infiltration and attacks on Chinese personnel and infrastructure, while US agencies bring technological, financial and intelligence capabilities that Pakistan values, including against drones, AI-generated propaganda, deepfakes and cyber threats. The partnership will have to keep adapting. Washington has less reason to organize its regional strategy around Pakistan now that Afghanistan no longer consumes American foreign policy and China and India loom larger in US planning. Future administrations will want clear understandings on how sensitive intelligence is shared and protected, and cooperation will depend on the quality of information each side offers, on mutual trust and on candid communication. Trump may be comfortable managing this through transactional cooperation. His successors will inherit an establishment focused on China, technology and the Indo-Pacific, along with the record of Afghanistan and al-Qaeda's renewed presence there. The question for them will be how much political capital to invest in a counterterrorism partnership with Islamabad. The lesson of twenty-five years is that terrorism rarely respects borders and no country can track it alone. Washington may no longer build its regional strategy around Pakistan, but it will still need a partner that knows the terrain.

PAKISTAN & THE UNITED STATES WHY THE CHANNEL MATTERS

Proximity, operational experience and shared threats keep cooperation relevant.



WHAT EACH SIDE BRINGS

PAKISTAN

- Human intelligence and language skills
- Border knowledge and local relationships
- Operational experience and institutional memory
- Visibility into regional financial and logistical flows



UNITED STATES

- Intelligence technology and analysis
- Financial surveillance and diplomatic reach
- Tools against drones and cyber threats
- Capacity to support international coordination

THREE PRACTICAL PRIORITIES

01 | TRACK NETWORKS

Recruitment, movement and cross-border links

02 | FOLLOW FINANCING

Banking, informal transfers, businesses, crime and crypto

03 | SHARE RELIABLE INTELLIGENCE

Clear safeguards, mutual trust and candid communication

EXPERTISE CAME AT A HUMAN COST

In the 2014 Army Public School massacre in Peshawar, terrorists murdered more than 130 children.

TERRORISM CROSSES BORDERS. COOPERATION MUST TOO.

ANALYSIS BY IRINA TSUKERMAN
President of Scarab Rising, Inc. & US national security lawyer

Based on the supplied article;
illustrations are conceptual.

MAKKAH DEFENCE ALLIANCE



DIPLOMATIC LENS

HOW PAKISTAN BECAME THE GULF'S NUCLEAR DEPTH

On September 17, 2025, at the Al Yamamah Palace, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif signed the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement, declaring that any act of aggression against either country would be treated as an attack on both. Saudi officials described the pact as a comprehensive defensive arrangement encompassing all military means, an unmistakable reference to the fact that Pakistan remains the only nuclear armed state in the Muslim world. Pakistan moved quickly, deploying thousands of troops, fighter aircraft, drones and air defence systems into Saudi Arabia, doing the unglamorous work of guarding Gulf skies while richer partners debated communiques.

The framework widened on August 7, 2026, when Sharif joined the Crown Prince and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Mecca to sign the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, folding NATO member Turkey into a trilateral alliance built on a collective defence clause modeled on NATO's Article 5. A secretariat has since been established in Riyadh, with the first secretary general expected to be Pakistani. Turkey brings NATO's second largest army and a thriving defence industry, and Saudi Arabia brings oil wealth and diplomatic reach, but it is Pakistan, tested by decades of counterterrorism warfare and possessing the bloc's only nuclear deterrent, that gives the alliance its true weight.



That weight was on display again this week. On September 25, 2026, Field Marshal Asim Munir travelled to Riyadh to sit alongside Turkey's Chief of General Staff General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu and Saudi Chief of General Staff General Fayyadh bin Hamed Al Ruwaili, the first such gathering of the alliance's military chiefs since the Mecca signing. The talks, convened amid escalating Houthi missile and drone attacks on Makkah and on Saudi economic infrastructure, focused on deepening intelligence sharing, military coordination and capability integration. Munir followed the session with a separate meeting with Saudi Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman, reaffirming a joint commitment to confront the Houthi threat directly.

What the Makkah alliance has quietly built is more than a defence pact. It has handed Pakistan the standing to do what almost no other regional actor can, speak credibly to every major party in the Middle East at once. Islamabad maintains close military ties with Riyadh and Ankara while never severing its historic religious and economic links with Tehran, a balancing act few capitals in the world can claim. That dual access is precisely what peacemaking requires, and Pakistan has already shown it is willing to use it.

DIPLOMATIC LENS

SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY, MEDIATION PRECEDENT & REGIONAL STABILITY

KEY STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

- 1 TRILATERAL ALLIANCE:** Formal collective defense binding Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan.
- 2 SOLE MUSLIM NUCLEAR DETERRENT:** Pakistan provides the umbrella shielding Gulf airspace.
- 3 RIYADH SECRETARIAT:** First Secretary General designated to be a Pakistani military diplomat.

The precedent runs deep. When the execution of a Shia cleric in Saudi Arabia plunged Riyadh and Tehran into a diplomatic crisis in January 2016, it was Islamabad that shuttled between the two capitals seeking to calm tensions, drawing on decades of trust built with both. That same instinct, backed now by a formal trilateral alliance and a battle tested army, gives Pakistan far greater leverage today than it had a decade ago.

A credible deterrent is itself a tool of peace. By anchoring the Makkah alliance with the only nuclear capability in the Muslim world, Pakistan raises the cost of any strike on Saudi Arabia or Turkey to a level few adversaries would risk absorbing, making restraint the rational choice for Israel, Iran and the Houthis alike. Field Marshal Munir's shuttle diplomacy this month, moving from a trilateral chiefs meeting straight into direct talks with Saudi Arabia's defence minister, shows an army chief positioning Pakistan not as a bystander to the region's wars but as the actor best placed to contain them before they widen.

Should Islamabad choose to press that advantage through the alliance's new Riyadh secretariat, using its Pakistani secretary general to open quiet channels toward Tehran even as it deepens ties with Riyadh and Ankara, it could yet do for the Gulf in 2026 what its diplomats attempted and nearly achieved in 2016, turning a nuclear armed military partnership into the region's most credible path away from full scale war.

CORE CONCLUSION – MAKKAH DEFENCE ALLIANCE

The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement represents a seismic realignment in Middle Eastern security architecture.

By integrating **Pakistan's** battle-tested manpower deterrence, **Turkey's** NATO-grade defense industry, and **Saudi Arabia's** economic capital, the alliance creates an autonomous security shield capable of stabilizing regional conflicts and preventing escalation toward full-scale warfare.

Islamabad's unique capability to engage both Riyadh and Tehran positions Pakistan as the pivotal anchor for long-term Middle Eastern diplomacy and military deterrence.

POLICY WIRE

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

INDIA BROUGHT POLITICS TO THE CRICKET PODIUM

MEN'S ASIA CUP FINAL • DUBAI • 28 SEPTEMBER 2025



Editorial cartoon.



5 WICKETS

India's winning margin against Pakistan.



OVER 1 HOUR

Reported ceremony delay.



3 MEETINGS

India declined handshakes with Pakistan throughout the tournament.

WHAT HAPPENED

01

INDIA'S DECISION

India refused to receive the trophy from ACC president Mohsin Naqvi. The cup was removed from the dais.



02

A POLITICAL REASON

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia cited Naqvi's political position in Pakistan.



03

A PLANNED POSITION

The BCCI said it had informed the ACC beforehand. This was an institutional stance.



PAKISTAN DID NOT CREATE THE REFUSAL

India chose to turn a sporting ceremony into a political dispute.



Naqvi was presenting as ACC president, an office held in rotation by member boards.

INDIA WON THE MATCH. ITS OWN DECISION STOPPED THE TROPHY MOMENT.

POLICY WIRE

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

A SECOND FINAL. THE SAME POLITICAL STAND.

WOMEN'S ASIA CUP • 13 SEPTEMBER 2026

**72 RUNS**

India's victory over Sri Lanka

**NEARLY 1 HOUR**

Presentation delay

**SECOND REFUSAL**

The men's dispute repeated in the women's game.



INDIA FOLLOWED THE BOARD

Harmanpreet Kaur's team declined the trophy. An internal best-fielder medal presentation took place separately.



SRI LANKA ACCEPTED THE CEREMONY

Chamari Athapaththu collected the runners-up cheque from Naqvi and gave her interview.



Amol Muzumdar confirmed that the team stood by the BCCI's position.

AMOL MUZUMDAR • INDIA HEAD COACH



THIS WAS NOT A DISPUTE CREATED BY PAKISTAN

The BCCI and the Indian team repeated a political position at a sporting presentation.



Women's cricket had the chance to set a different example. The board's politics followed it onto the podium.

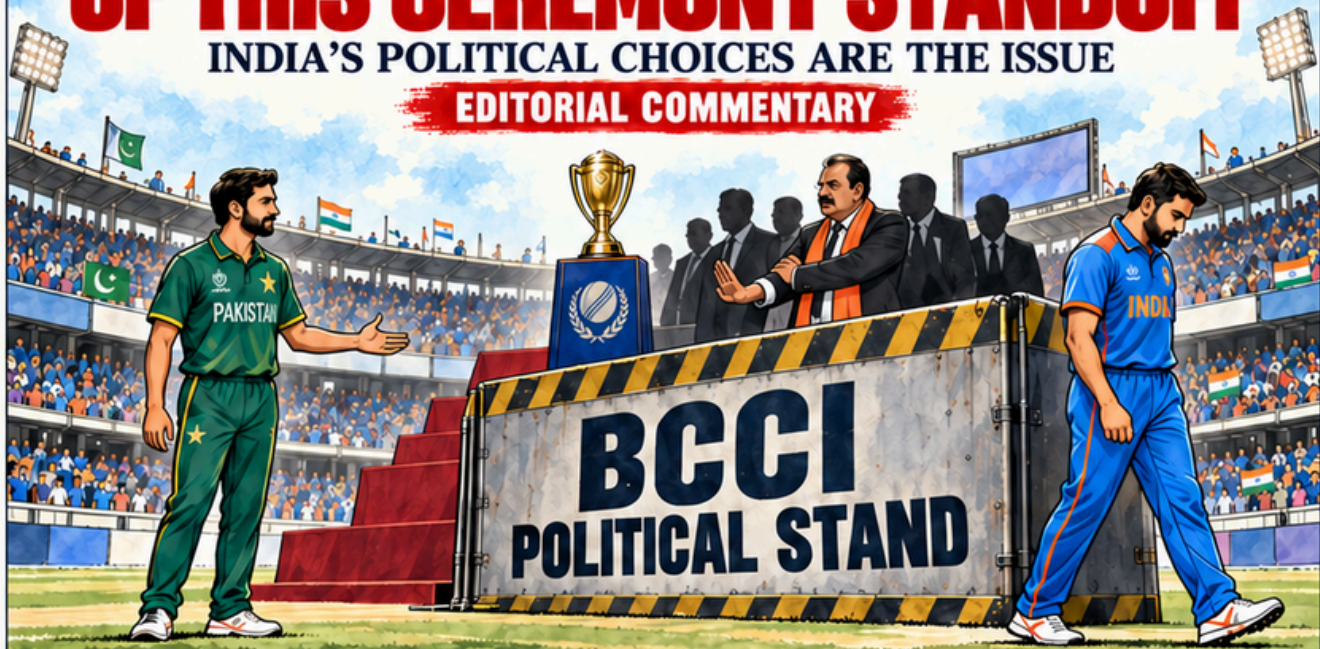
THE TEAM THAT LOST COMPLETED THE CEREMONY. THE WINNERS REFUSED IT.

POLICY WIRE

PAKISTAN IS NOT THE CAUSE OF THIS CEREMONY STANDOFF

INDIA'S POLITICAL CHOICES ARE THE ISSUE

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY



01 POLITICS INSIDE THE BOARD

The BCCI delegation included Ashish Shelar, a BJP politician, and Rajeev Shukla, a parliamentarian. A board with politicians at the table objects to a politician presenting a trophy.



02 PAKISTAN CALLED FOR COURTESY

Mike Hesson and Salman Agha criticised the handshake refusals. Mohammad Yousuf criticised the women's trophy refusal.



03 MONEY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

India's commercial weight raises questions about accountability. The ICC should uphold sporting standards consistently for every board.



EDITORIAL DEMANDS FOR THE ICC



1. Champions should accept their trophy.



2. Keep handshakes free of political bargaining.



3. Apply the same ceremony standards to every board.

RESPONSIBILITY LIES WITH THE SIDE CHOOSING REFUSAL

An ACC president's nationality should not turn the winners' ceremony into a diplomatic veto.

**CRICKET OFFERED COMMON GROUND.
INDIA'S BOARD BROUGHT THE QUARREL ONTO IT.**