



A Global Politics Publication & Knowledge Hub For
Students, Emerging Writers, & CSS Aspirants

Pakistan's Collective Intellectual Health through a Socio-Political Lens

Abdullah Bin Khalid

The Imperial Lie: Deception by Design

Mir Adnan Aziz

Pakistan's Defining Moment: Advancing from Marka-e-Haq 1.0 to 2.0

Eman Alam

Why No Nation Wants to Replace American Hegemony

Hiba Tahir

Special Service Group (SSG) Pakistan: Shadow Military Unit

Syed Hammad Ali

*The Paradigm Shift Magazine
May '26*

Strait of Hormuz: The Hidden Food- Security Crisis

Dr. Mureed Kazim

The Pleasure of Procrastination

Abdul Basit

The Paradox and Structural Dilemma of India & its Strategic Culture

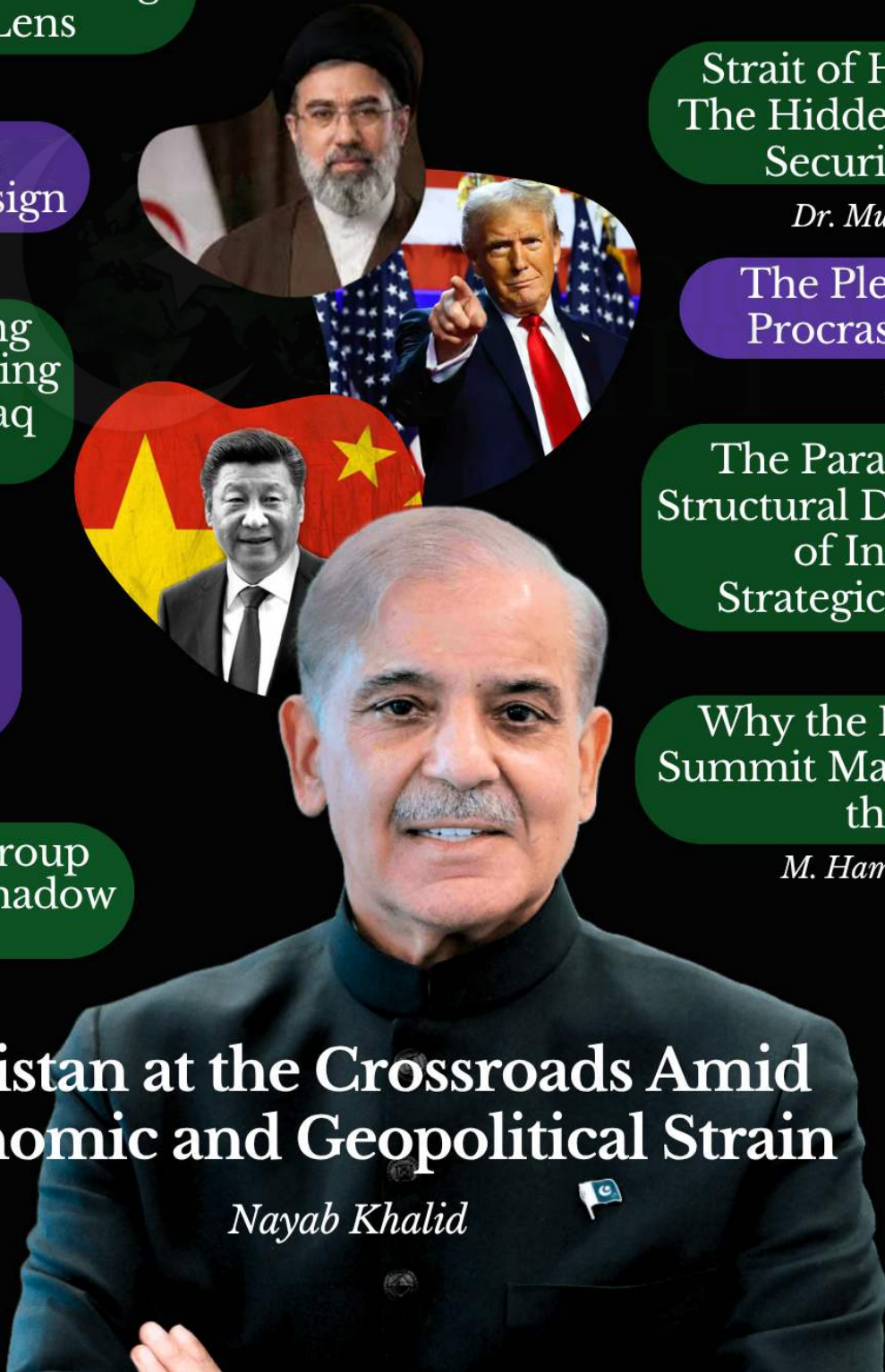
Abdul Haq

Why the Putin-Xi Summit Matters for the World

M. Hamza Tanveer

Pakistan at the Crossroads Amid Economic and Geopolitical Strain

Nayab Khalid



ICEP CSS INSTITUTE

15 YEARS LEGACY OF TOPPERS: 2000+ SERVING BUREAUCRATS



9 MONTHS PRO-PLAN

CSS'2027

30% OFF

ADMISSIONS OPEN MAY SESSION

PLUS 5% OFF (CODE: Paradigm Shift)

Morning & Evening Classes

ONLINE & ON-CAMPUS CLASSES

Foundation to Allocation with ICEP in a First Attempt

DSP DR. FAIZA SODHAR

PROUD TO BE ICEPIANS

ST

1

POSITION



M. SHAFAY IJAZ-PAS
PRIDE OF ICEP

RD

3

POSITION



MOMNA AZHAR-PAS
MEMBER FACULTY @ ICEP

TH

4

POSITION



ALEEM MALIK-PAS
PRIDE OF ICEP

TH

5

POSITION



SADIA ZAHOOR-PAS
PRIDE OF ICEP

CSS'27 - 12TH SESSION

LEARNING PHASES

Phase 1

(1 - 1.5 Months)

Build English foundation, grammar (150+ class-based worksheets), writing, critical reading & 17 FPSC-recommended readings for knowledge base foundation.

Phase 4

(1 Month)

Structured 2 months revision using planners and time management tools.

Phase 2 & 3

(5 - 6 Months)

Complete syllabus prep for all compulsory and optional subjects + MPT. (Daily Home Tasks & Weekly Tests)

Phases 5,6,7 & 8

(Till Final Exam)

Test series (topic-wise to grand mocks) with detailed CSP's feedback (190+ tests) till final exams.



22-B ALI BLOCK
NEW GARDEN TOWN LAHORE

REGISTER NOW ➡



+923012097879

Table Of Contents



Foreword	4
Article: Why the Putin-Xi Summit Matters for the World	5
Article: Pakistan at the Crossroads Amid Economic and Geopolitical Strain	12
Opinion: Why No Nation Wants to Replace American Hegemony	22
Infographic of the Month!	25
Article: The Paradox and Structural Dilemma of India and its Strategic Culture	26
Article: Special Service Group (SSG) Pakistan - Shadow Military Unit	33
Article: Pakistan's Defining Moment - Advancing from Marka-e-Haq 1.0 to 2.0	42
Opinion: The Imperial Lie - Deception by Design	48
Pakistan Unveiled: Saif ul Malook Lake - Where Nature Meets Myth and Magic	52
Article: Pakistan's Collective Intellectual Health through a Socio-Political Lens	59
Opinion: The Pleasure of Procrastination	71
Article: Strait of Hormuz - The Hidden Food-Security Crisis	81



Table Of Contents



Check Out Our Community Forum!	87
Advertise With Us	88
Become Part of the Paradigm Shift Team	89
Our Social Media Platforms	90



Foreword

Welcome to the nineteenth edition of the Paradigm Shift e-magazine. Since starting Paradigm Shift (www.ParadigmShift.com.pk) on **August 14th, 2020**, we have come a long way.

With **350,000 followers** on social media and unique traffic on our website, we are now able to serve a wider percentage of the Pakistani youth. All our pieces are sent in by brilliant writers and researchers, and our gifted editors constantly ensure the quality of our content.

We aim for, and work towards three major goals:

1. To become a comprehensive library with high-quality content on **international relations, current affairs, global politics, and Pakistan**.
2. To provide a **free medium** where individuals can access research from across the globe - and can send in their own work to share their voice with the world.
3. To **showcase Pakistan** in a **positive and factual manner** through our '**Pakistan Unveiled**' section.

We have handpicked **11 special pieces** from our website for this edition, and we hope that you gain some insights from them. For more content on a variety of topics from across the world, please visit www.ParadigmShift.com.pk

We hope that you consider sharing our website and social media with your friends and family so that we can effectively increase our reach. Thank you again for all your support through the years.



Why the Putin–Xi Summit Matters for the World

About the Author



M. Hamza Tanveer is a political analyst specialising in South Asian and Middle Eastern affairs. His work focuses on religious nationalism, regional security, and minority rights. He has been featured in *Stratheia*, *Pakistan Today*, *Pakistan Observer*, and the *Asian Mirror*. He is also working as a research analyst and political commentator for *Paradigm Shift* and contributes to the monthly magazine of *Nearpeer*.

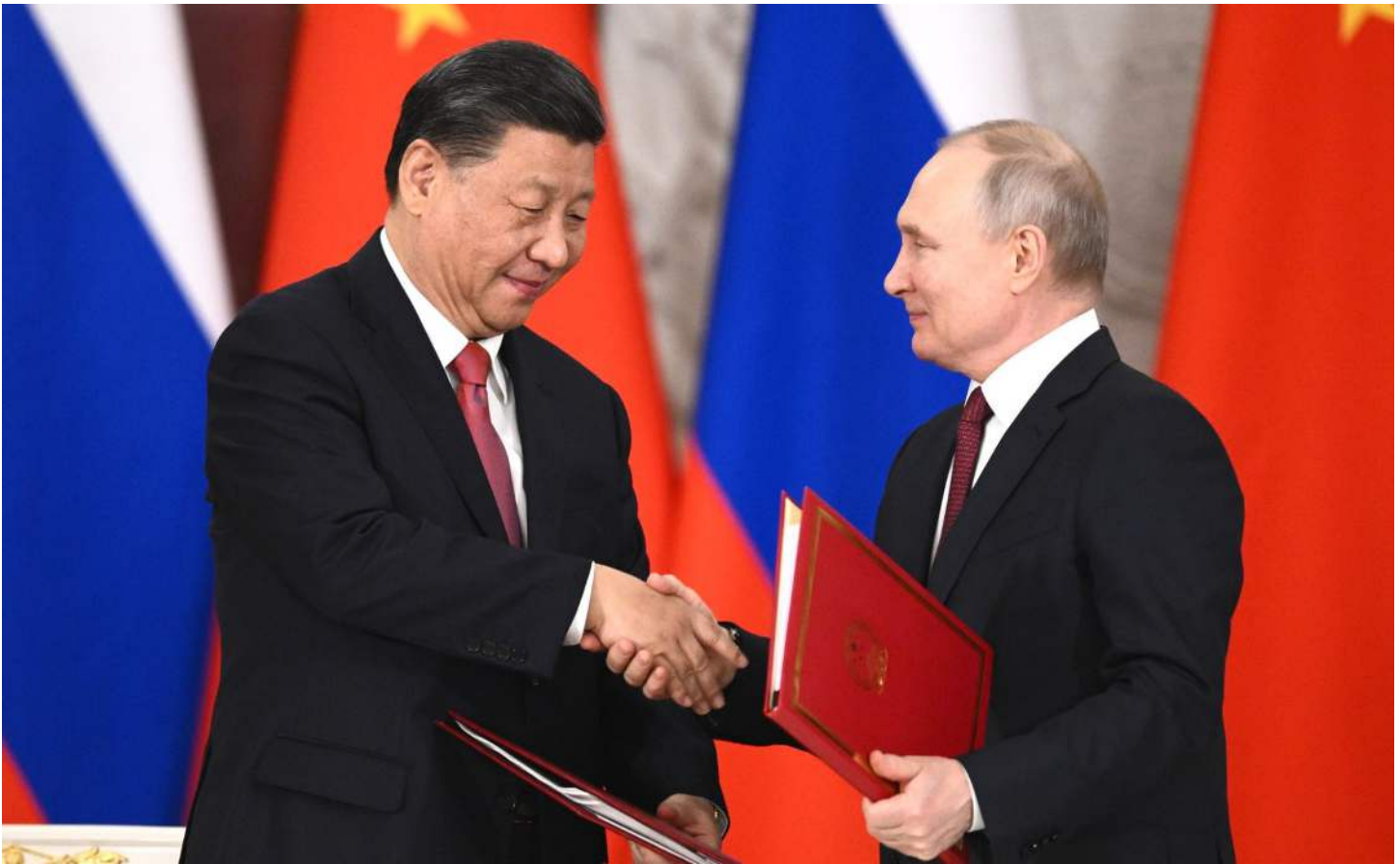
Putin-Xi Ties Deepen at the Beijing Summit



Recently, the world witnessed the apex of Chinese diplomacy when the [Chinese leader Xi Jinping hosted the Russian President Vladimir Putin](#), merely two days after the US President Donald Trump visited Beijing. President Putin was welcomed by the Chinese leader with a guard of honor and gun salute at the Great Hall of the People on Wednesday. President Putin greeted his Chinese counterpart [using a Chinese idiom](#), “One day apart feels like three autumns.” The leaders held a formal meeting on May 20th, 2026.

The significance of this summit was amplified due to its concurrence with the 25th anniversary of the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation (2001), the agreement that institutionalized formal ties between Moscow and Beijing following decades of ideological conflicts, territorial rivalries, and mutual suspicion. Western aggressive policies, Trump’s trade war and sanctions, and an escalating rivalry

between the West and East have pushed Russia and China closer in the past few decades.

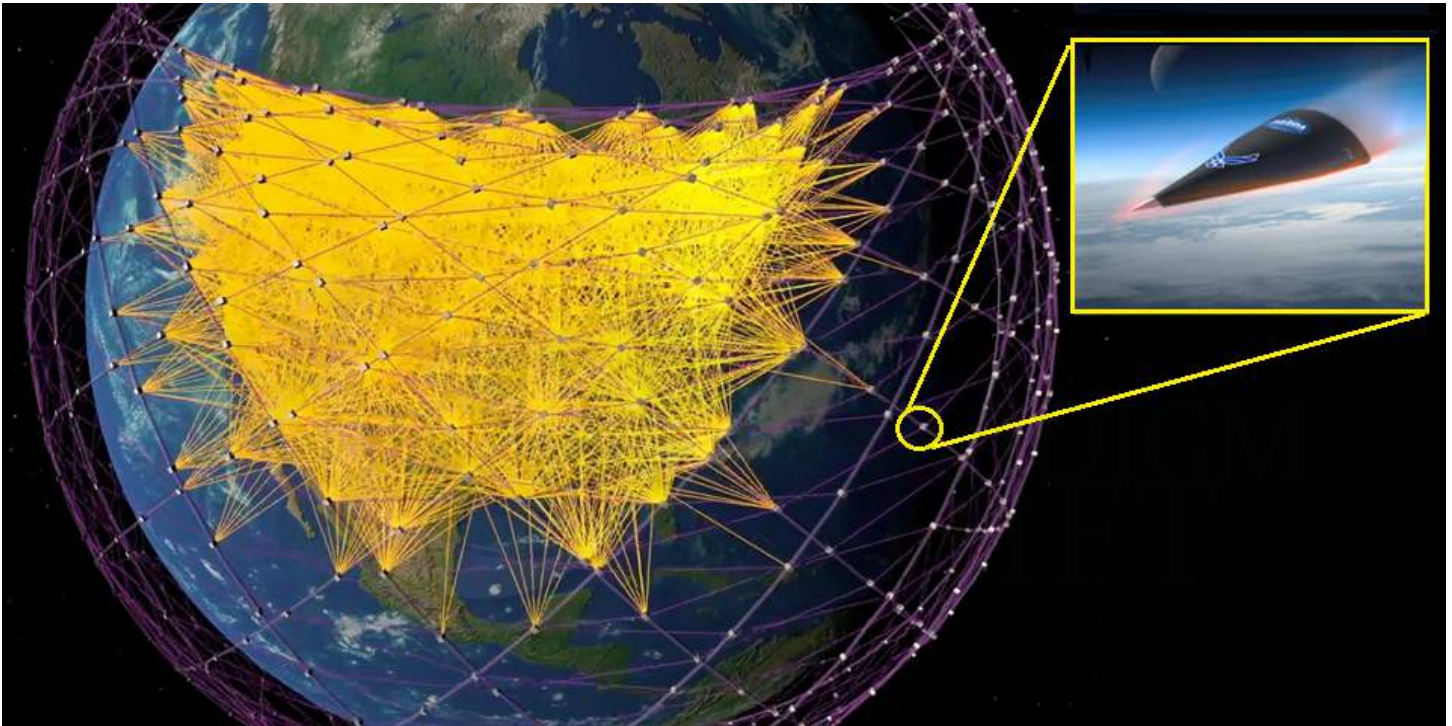


“Putin-Xi meeting (2023) 7” by Presidential Executive Office of Russia is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

Putin-Xi Ties Against the Trump Administration’s Unilateralism

Both China and Russia have long encouraged peaceful global coexistence and articulated their concerns about the United States’ unilateral, aggressive, and interventionist policies in the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East, and South America. During this recent summit between Putin and Xi, the two leaders signed 20 agreements on May 20, 2026. President Xi and Putin [signed 40 documents and issued a 47-page joint statement](#). Through these developments, the two leaders signaled their intention to strengthen further their united front against the United States’ aggressive policies. President Xi, in the joint statement, warned against a global return to the “law of the jungle.” With this warning, the two sides once again [condemned and criticized Washington’s unilateral aggression](#) against its rivals and competitors.

Beijing and Moscow also rebuked Trump's proposed Golden Dome defense system, a [\\$175 bn missile defense project](#), intended to build a new missile field in the United States' Midwest. This defense system will provide Washington with the capability to shoot down missiles in space. Nonetheless, this project risks triggering a new global space arms race between major world powers, imperiling international peace and security.



“Golden Dome, global missile defense system” by Romations is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin also condemned the expiry of the US-Russia arms control deal, which was disregarded by Washington in February this year after President Trump refused Russia's proposal to extend the deal by one year. These developments signal that the United States seeks to escalate the global arms race and tensions with its rivals.

Trump, Iran, and the Strategic Importance of Power of Siberia 2

The Western offensive against Russia in Ukraine and burgeoning tensions in the Middle Eastern region, especially over Iran, have cemented Russia-China ties. Moreover, the disruption of global energy trade through the Strait of Hormuz, a crisis impinging on the global economy and energy markets, has further strengthened Beijing's concerns over the security of its energy imports.

The Chinese economy is heavily reliant on Middle Eastern oil and gas imports. However, this disruption has raised concerns in Beijing over the future of maritime trade. This makes Russia the only viable, reliable, and secure overland energy source for China.

In the recent meeting in Beijing, the two sides have reached a fundamental understanding on the Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline, which is expected to export 50 bcm of gas to China per annum, and its route, according to Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin spokesperson. However, nothing concrete has yet been achieved or decided over the construction of this pipeline, as per the international media reports. Nonetheless, China's seriousness in considering Russia as an alternative energy source could be gauged by President Xi Jinping's remark, in which he underscored the importance of bilateral energy cooperation and resource connectivity by calling it the "ballast stone" of the relationship between the two nations.

Putin-Xi Ties and the Pursuit of a Multipolar World Order

Another major basis of strengthening ties and ideological alignment between Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian President Putin is their pursuit of a new inclusive world order. In the past few years, the US has forced its numerous allies to align their foreign policies with its regional and international interests. However, Russia and China pursue a non-interventionist policy. Over the years, they have demonstrated their belief in an independent foreign policy and non-intervention in the domestic and regional affairs of their allies.

They seek to establish a new global order in which all states, regardless of their size and region, possess equal rights and sovereignty. The two states have pledged to play a "stabilizing role on the global stage." Before the visit, President Putin stated that both countries were poised for bilateral cooperation on the "core interests of the two countries, including the protection of sovereignty and national unity." The West has always attempted to portray the China-Russia alliance as an anti-West coalition; however, the two Eastern powers have repeatedly denied this accusation, stating that their alliance and cooperation are merely to create an inclusive and truly liberal world order.

President Putin once again clarified his perspective by stating, “We are not aligning against anyone, but working for the cause of peace and universal prosperity”. This stance is further reinforced by the non-interventionist and inclusive policies pursued by the two powers, particularly within the BRICS. The ever-rising popularity of this organization among third-world countries also underscores the success and strength of China-Russia cooperation.

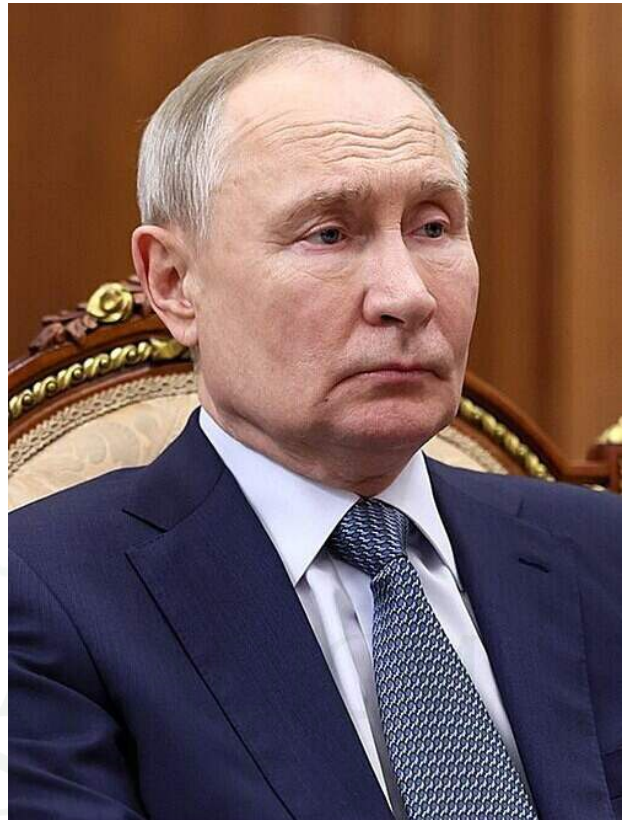
The Xi-Putin summit was also critical for the Global South, particularly the war-torn Middle East. With President Vladimir Putin in Beijing, soon after Trump visited China, the latter signaled its diplomatic strength. This visit reflects a profound understanding among the two sides on regional and international pressing issues, including the US trade tariffs on different nations, the Iran war, the Iranian nuclear issue, the Syrian Crisis, and rising US and Israeli aggression and interventions around the world, especially in the Middle East.

Putin’s visit to China provided new hope to Middle Eastern states as it increased the possibility of a joint and coordinated diplomatic regional intervention by the two powers to de-escalate conflicts and tensions. The inclusive economic model followed by China and Russia also offers greater leverage to third-world states, especially the Middle Eastern nations. Their promotion of mutual trade in local currencies decreases the dependence of the BRICS members on the US dollar, enabling them to diversify their military and trade alliances without succumbing to Washington’s pressure.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, Russian President Vladimir Putin meets Chinese leader Xi Jinping in a highly volatile global environment in Beijing on Wednesday. President Putin’s visit to China, two days after the Trump-Xi meeting, sent a strong message to Washington that the two nations are prepared to bolster their bilateral relations. Moreover, the Xi-Putin summit also highlighted the rising technological, energy, and economic collaboration between Moscow and Beijing.

In addition, China and Russia have categorically rejected the interventionist, unilateralist, and dictatorial attitude of the United States. Through this summit, the two new global superpowers have shown their firm resolve to build an egalitarian and truly liberal world order in which all countries will have equal rights and opportunities. They also seek to provide the world with an opportunity to pursue an independent foreign and domestic policy. This visit was highly significant for the Middle Eastern nations as it enhanced their hope for peace through the China-Russia joint diplomatic intervention in the region. This summit also underscored a joint Eastern front against the US military and economic aggression.



If you want to submit your articles and/or research papers, please visit the [Submissions](#) page.

To stay updated with the latest jobs, CSS news, internships, scholarships, and current affairs articles, join our [Community Forum!](#)

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

You may like: [Thucydides Trap and the Taiwan Issue](#)

Also read: [Why No Nation Wants to Replace American Hegemony](#)

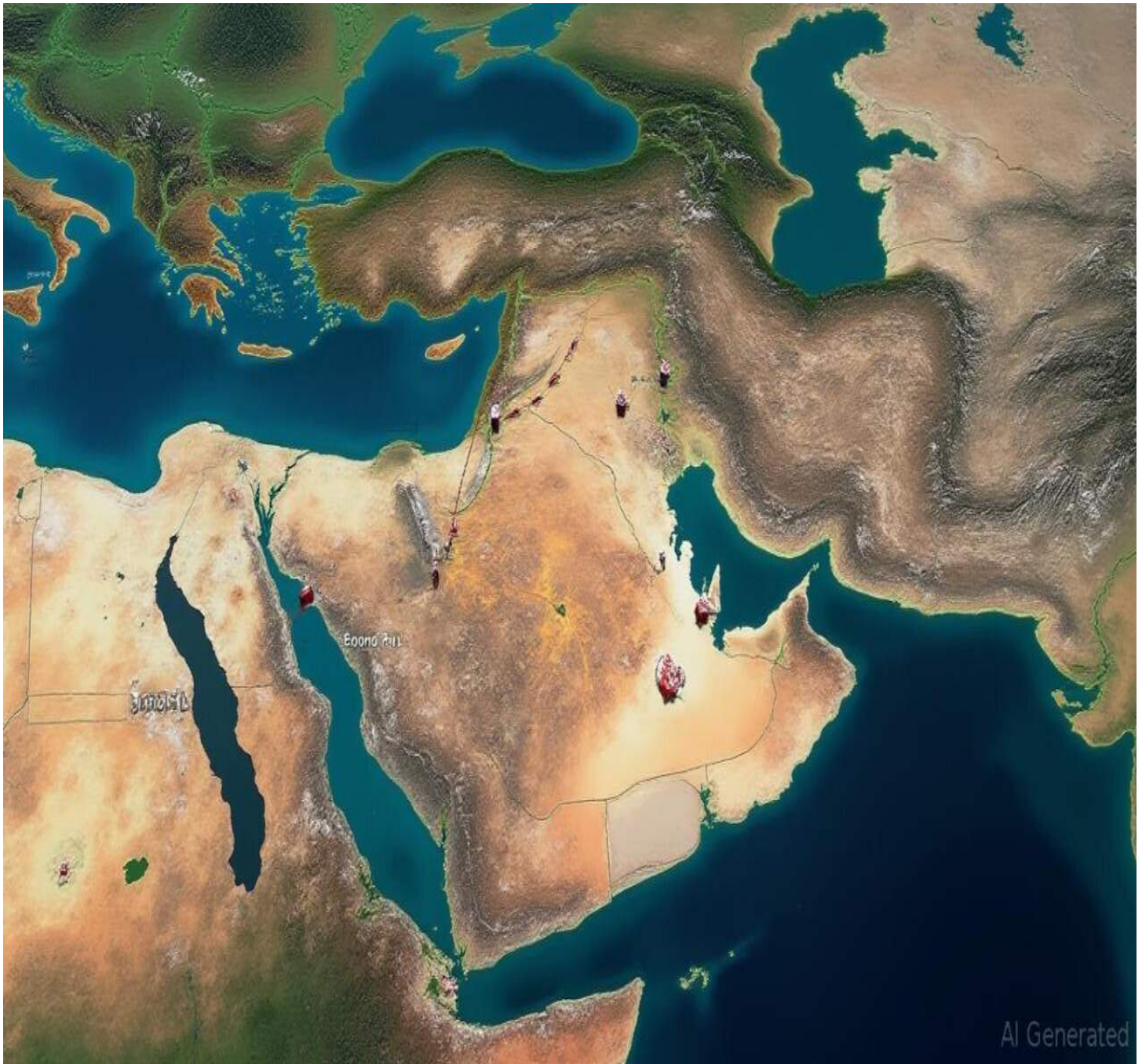
Pakistan at the Crossroads Amid Economic and Geopolitical Strain

About the Author



Nayab Khalid is an economist who pursued a BS and MS in Economics from International Islamic University Islamabad. She is a CSS qualifier and mentor with a keen interest in research, policy analysis, and economic affairs. She has also worked extensively as a writer with various international firms, contributing to analytical and academic projects.

The international order is altering fundamentally. As 2026 unfolds, the old bloc politics of rigid patterns are slowly giving way to flexible, interest-based partnerships that are motivated by pragmatism rather than ideology. The Middle East is at the heart of this geopolitical realignment, a region formerly teeming with unending enmity, but now moving cautiously toward diplomacy, economic collaboration, and strategic equilibrium. This embryonic stability is still fragile, but it does mark a major departure from the destructive rivalry of the previous decade.



"Geopolitical significance can get you in the door, but economic might determines whether you can stay in the room."

This shifting circumstance is both an opportunity and an urgency for Pakistan. On the one hand, Islamabad is in a better diplomatic position with its growing role in regional connectivity, energy diplomacy, and shifting power alignments. On the other hand, external opportunities alone do not ensure long-term growth. Without sweeping institutional changes, economic restructuring, and political stability at home, Pakistan risks wasting a moment that may otherwise reshape its future.

The famous words of the British politician Winston Churchill were, *"The more you can look back, the farther you are likely to see ahead."*

Today, Pakistan is at a crossroads, and in such a scenario, the national policy should be strategy-focused and not survival-driven.

The New Middle East: The Helsinki Phase

After years of turmoil in the Levant and Gulf, countries in the area have been forced to confront a grim reality: permanent animosity costs them economically, politically, and in terms of long-term stability. Even the wealthiest oil nations have understood that permanent crises are expensive, frighten away investors, and put their ambitious growth plans at risk.

A good illustration of this thinking is the growing idea of a possible Middle Eastern Non-Aggression Framework. In the spirit of the 1970s Helsinki Process that helped dial down Cold War tensions, the main regional actors, especially Riyadh and Tehran, are steadily moving towards structured contact and regulated cohabitation instead of unbridled competition.

This is a basic revolution in regional politics. For decades, security in the Gulf depended primarily on external protection, especially in the context of traditional American security. But many of the regional capitals now increasingly believe that long-term stability will have to come from working together in the region. Diplomacy is no longer a sign of weakness or a compromise.

Rather, it is seen as a strategic tool to achieve economic goals, attract foreign investments, and insulate national “Vision” projects from the adverse repercussions of regional conflict. In the words of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, “The way from misunderstanding to understanding is dialogue.” The Middle East, though still fraught with animosity and geopolitical competition, seems to be entering a new era in which the politics of perpetual antagonism are giving way to measured engagement.

Islamabad: A Bridge At A Time Of Shifting Alliances

In the changing sands of international politics, Pakistan is slowly regaining its role as an important diplomatic bridge between contending regional countries. The new relationship emerging between Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, and Pakistan is something new, shifting from the rigid military alliances of the twentieth century to alliances of convenience among big middle powers.

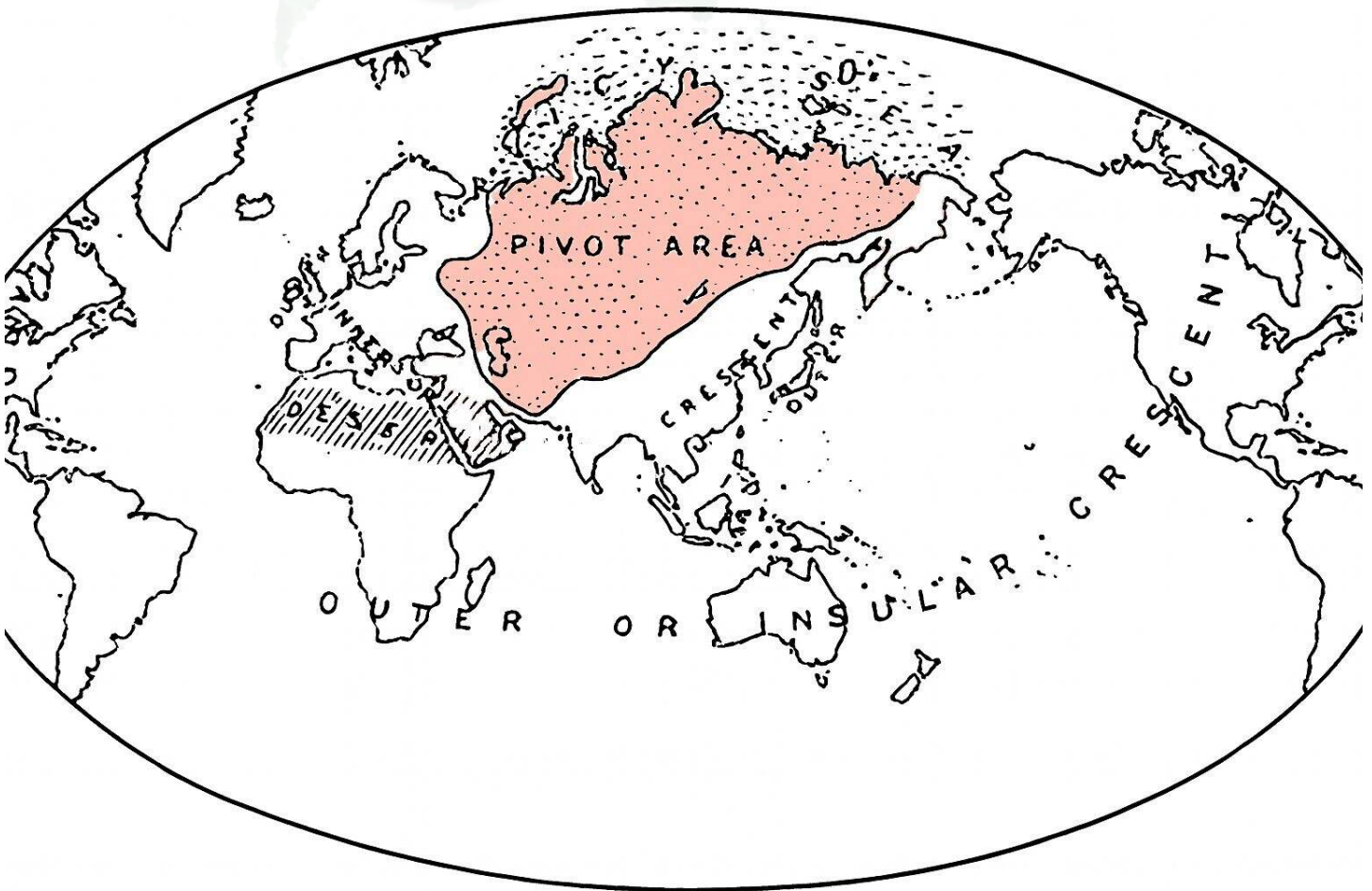
The rising convergence is fueled by a common interest in regional stability, economic integration, and strategic flexibility. Indeed, Islamabad is increasingly seen as a genuine space for discussion and de-escalation between Iran and the Arab world. Pakistan’s neutral diplomacy and long-standing ties with several regional actors have put it in a unique position to assist in creating communication channels in a polarising globe.

The economic side of this relationship matters too. The wider vision is connecting the energy-rich Gulf states with the emerging markets of Central and East Asia through trade routes, infrastructure projects, and investment partnerships. In this regard, the geographical situation of Pakistan has considerable strategic value. Pakistan may be a major transit hub for regional trade and connectivity at the intersection of China’s Belt and Road ambitions and the Gulf’s commercial push into Asia.

Strategic autonomy is another important ingredient of this changing paradigm. Regional powers want to diversify their relationships, not be too dependent on one global power center. The multipolar approach is compatible with a broader global trend where countries prioritize flexibility, economic interests, and regional cooperation over ideological commitments.

This is a historic moment for Pakistan. For decades, the country was mostly seen through the prism of security and geopolitics. Today, however, there is a possibility to redefine its identity – from a frontline security state to a regional transit and connectivity center that can integrate continents, markets, and geopolitical interests.

As the renowned geo-political strategist, Halford Mackinder, said, *"Whoever controls the Heartland, controls the future."*



There is a lot of untapped potential in Pakistan, and in many ways it is not hidden beneath the surface of the earth, but in the very geography of the country.

The Economic Reality: From Extraction Toward Sustainable Growth

Diplomatic prestige alone will hardly calm a shaky economy. While Pakistan's strategic importance might be rising in capitals such as Riyadh and Ankara, its domestic economy is burdened by deep-rooted structural issues. The problem is not merely the absence of a collection of revenues. The problem is the structure of an economic system that unfairly penalizes exactly those industries that produce productivity, investment, and jobs.

The formal sector of Pakistan, comprising the documented industries and enterprises that produce jobs and account for a large percentage of government revenue, continues to be under enormous stress. The climate is becoming increasingly unfriendly to legal companies with the heavy taxation on corporations, the additional super taxes, the unclear withholding levies, and the higher expenses of operations. The conforming enterprises endure among the highest burdens in the sector by 2026, including indirect expenditures and regulatory challenges.

This mismatch has produced a dangerous structural trap. The state continues to rely on taxing the



documented half of the economy to cover the vast illegal part. The productive minority is being compelled to bear the financial load of the whole system. Such a strategy stifles entrepreneurship, erodes

industrial confidence, and drives away capital as more and more investors pick real estate speculation or overseas markets rather than long-term local manufacturing.

Pakistan's frequent appeal to the International Monetary Fund only compounds the problem. The nation has undoubtedly avoided financial collapse with IMF backing at crucial junctures, but the accompanying stabilization measures – particularly high interest rates, subsidy cuts, and currency depreciation – have often constrained industrial development and reduced economic competitiveness. "What gives you short-term financial breathing room comes at the cost of long-



term economic momentum."

To escape this trap, the focus needs to move from externally-driven stabilization to internal economic resilience. This kind of revolution needs extensive and meaningful changes. First, extend the tax base beyond the

customary burden on industries and salaried workers and bring retail, wholesale trade, and large-scale agriculture under a clear documentation framework.

Second, digital governance must replace the inefficient and corrupt bureaucratic structures. End-to-end digitalisation of taxation, customs, and regulatory operations can lower human intervention and increase transparency and compliance. Lastly, there is a desperate need for policy continuity in Pakistan. Local and foreign investors need to be assured that the economic environment, investment incentives, and regulatory regimes will not be modified arbitrarily with every change of administration.

In the words of the brilliant economist John Maynard Keynes, *"The trouble is not so much in making new ideas as in getting out of old ones."*

Ultimately, the economic future of Pakistan will depend on whether we can change from a paradigm of short-term extraction to one that supports creation, innovation, and sustained prosperity.

The Green Frontier: A New Window of Opportunity?

Despite the economic uncertainty, there have been good signs of resilience in Pakistan's economy in the previous several years, and recent developments in 2025 and early 2026 have been no exception. The rapid adoption of solar energy and the sluggish rise of Electric Vehicles (EVs), battery storage, and green technology have been one of the most exciting breakthroughs. These results highlight an often-ignored fact: despite institutional barriers, Pakistan's private sector remains extraordinarily resilient, adaptable, and sensitive to changing global trends.

Renewable energy consumption in households, industries, and small ventures is not only for ecological reasons, but it has become an economic necessity. Investment in solar solutions is being driven by higher power prices and energy shortages, while interest in EV infrastructure and battery tech is a hint of the beginning of a greater industrial revolution. With stable policy and regulatory clarity, these sectors might be the launchpad for a new era of economic growth and technological innovation.

The true opportunity is to bring Pakistan's economy to the global green transformation. Countries throughout the world are investing in renewable energy, sustainable manufacturing, and the digital economy. Pakistan should not be left behind in these changes. The task is not only one of navigating through the next International Monetary Fund review or short-term budgetary challenges. The ultimate goal must be to develop an economy that can carve out a position in future-oriented global marketplaces powered by renewable energy, innovation, and digital services.

And Pakistan is now of immense strategic importance. Its geographic location and diplomatic flexibility have made it a more important player in the evolving security and economic architecture of the Middle East and South Asia. But history has taught us over and over again that location does not automatically bring prosperity. Many governments with strategic advantages have fallen to internal deficiencies.

For Pakistan, the big question in 2026 and beyond is whether its leaders can show the political will to reform institutions, strengthen governance, and lay the basis for long-term economic stability. Strategic importance may win Pakistan a place at the regional table, but only economic strength, institutional legitimacy, and sustainable development can guarantee that its voice will continue to matter in the decades to come.

As a visionary scientist, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam said, *"Actions today create tomorrow."*

Today, Pakistan stands at a crossroads. The decisions we make now – on change, innovation, and stability or the status quo – will influence the country's direction for millennia to come.

Conclusion: From Geopolitical Advantage to Economic Destiny

Today, Pakistan is at a rare moment in history where global realignments are happening faster than local systems can adjust. The shifting Middle East landscape, the emergence of multipolar diplomacy, and Pakistan's revival as a regional bridge are creating a unique geopolitical opportunity.

History tells us that only institutions generate resilience, but it is location that gives relevance. Pakistan's position may win it a seat at the table of global connectivity, but whether it stays there or takes a position of leadership in the new order would depend on its economy, governance, and policies.

And therefore, the real test is within. Is Pakistan a developing, proactive state? Can it rebalance the economy, reform government, and improve productivity beyond structural constraints? These questions will define its economics. And its geopolitics.

Flexibility, interconnectivity, and strategic variety are growing. Pakistan needs to escape the cycles of instability and short-termism. Economic change and diplomatic leverage might convert temporary relevance into permanent effect.

The destiny of Pakistan is not determined by its potential, but by its readiness to progress. The crossroads is a choice, not just uncertainty. And that choice decides whether a state remains strategically relevant or becomes sustainably dominating.

If you want to submit your articles and/or research papers, please visit the [Submissions](#) page.

To stay updated with the latest jobs, CSS news, internships, scholarships, and current affairs articles, join our [Community Forum!](#)

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

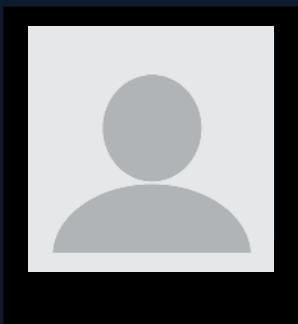
You may like: [The Economy of Pakistan: Can Structural Reset Save Growth?](#)

Also read: [From IMF Dependence to Solar Independence: The Energy Transformation of Pakistan](#)



Why No Nation Wants to Replace American Hegemony

About the Author



Hiba Tahir is a student of applied linguistics at Government College University, Faisalabad. She writes on global politics and international affairs.

Powers have always fallen and risen, but for the first time, the real question is not who rises next, but whether anyone is willing to. The crumbling building of American hegemony waits for someone to step in so it can collapse. Other aspiring candidates for its place seem to know this and are reluctant to trigger it. This is most visible in Gaza, with no other power ready to step in and take responsibility. Additionally, Syria still hasn't found a solid sponsor for its reconstruction, and Sudan, too, waits for a mediator. In short, every place where America used to be, including dozens of international organizations and conflict zones, has begun to face a void.

We in the subcontinent know exactly what happens when there's no strong alternative to a fading empire, even in a small region. We hold the shared memory of the violence and bloodshed that follows when there's no power strong enough to maintain order and stability. When lines are drawn by foreign hands without any regard for human life, the region ends up in continuous wars and destabilization.

The tussle for power between the two nations, India and Pakistan, left us with millions of deaths and over fourteen million displacements. We have lived this before, but the rest of the world is still just beginning to understand the real price we all will have to pay. The only difference is that when our empire withdrew, there were two contestants, and this time, there may be no contestants at all.

While we talk endlessly about China being the next giant of the world, there's a difference between a stable economy and the willingness to stake it for political influence. Despite its massive economy, it does not hold the power to manipulate alliances in its favor permanently. Most of the time, it gives statements to condemn atrocities without showing any honest actions. It funds ports and pipelines without investing in how to keep them intact and safe from interference, making its allies go back and forth between Beijing and Washington.

The recent cancellation of the BRI project in Sri Lanka and Malaysia after pressure from Washington proves its disinterest in maintaining political commitments. And that's the real problem; China does not seem to be building an empire and paying the price of occupying a power vacuum. Instead, it intends to exploit it as it does in underdeveloped regions like Africa.

And despite having no clear alternative, alliances are shifting because the previous one is accelerating its own demise. [Trump's policies](#) might have done the final blow, and the effects are undeniable in the current Iran conflict as America stands alone. Moreover, the Middle East's refusal to fully back America's position on Gaza should not be seen as an isolated decision but as a strategic repositioning before the vacuum fully opens. Saudi Arabia's simultaneous arms deal with Washington and Pakistan, and the UAE holding Chinese tech infrastructure, along with American bases, are the foreign policies for what is coming. They are not switching sides; they are preparing for a world where sides won't matter, ensuring their own survival by moving between powers.

The war is shifting from a [cold war](#) to a military one. And the fears of it exploding prematurely are valid, with no one able to control it, let alone stop it. The weapons are more lethal, the vacuum is bigger, and everyone is trying to hold back, but till when? The temptation to risk it all for the position of power can surface anytime, pushing the world to a point of no return because history never allowed a vacuum to last forever. In this situation, one can't help but return to the prediction famously attributed to Einstein: "I don't know what will be used in World War III, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and rocks."

If you want to submit your articles and/or research papers, please visit the [Submissions](#) page.

To stay updated with the latest jobs, CSS news, internships, scholarships, and current affairs articles, join our [Community Forum](#)!

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

You may like: [Iran at a Crossroad: How the IRGC Is Shaping the Future of the Regime](#)

Also read: [From Sanctions to Spuds: Is Russia Practicing Potato Diplomacy with Pakistan?](#)

Infographic of the month!

Religious Landscape of Pakistan: 2023 Census Highlights

Sindh: The Most Diverse Province

Sindh leads in religious diversity with a **6.43% Hindu** and **2.38% Scheduled Caste** population.



4.26% Christian Population in Islamabad

The capital city holds the highest proportional concentration of Christians in the country.

96.35%

Muslim Majority

Over 231.68 million residents

3.65%

8.77 Million

Non-Muslim Residents

KPK and Balochistan Trends

These provinces remain absolute Muslim majorities with the lowest non-Muslim populations recorded.

Breakdown of Non-Muslim Population by Group Share

Hindu Jati

44.09%

(of non-Muslims)

1.61% of Total Population

Christian

37.63%

(of non-Muslims)

1.37% of Total Population

Scheduled Castes

15.39%

(of Total Population)

The 2023 Census data reveals that Pakistan remains a predominantly Muslim nation, with this group comprising over **96% of the total population**. Outside of the majority faith, **Hindus and Christians represent the most significant religious minorities**, totaling several million residents combined.

Geographically, **Sindh emerges as the most religiously diverse province**, while areas like **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are nearly entirely Muslim**. The demographic report highlights that while urban centers like Islamabad have **high concentrations of Christians**, the overall minority share of the population sits at **approximately 3.65%**.

The Paradox and Structural Dilemma of India and its Strategic Culture

About the Author



Abdul Haq holds an MS degree in International Relations from the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), Jilin University, the People's Republic of China. He currently works as a Research Officer at the Pakistan Strategic Stability Institute (PSSI), Islamabad, Pakistan. He has also served as a Research Assistant for the CCTVES at the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, Pakistan. He is an expert on China, SCO, CARs, and South Asian affairs. He writes on global issues, international politics, international law, peace, conflict, and security studies.

Indian leaders often claim that their foreign policy is based on ancient wisdom. However, India's strategic culture today is a blend of mythical history, strict hierarchy, and cinematic politics, shaped by geography, sectarianism, and self-interest. The idea of India as an enduring civilization-state hides deep contradictions, which are a structural dilemma. India is both a subcontinent that is too big for its own good, a society divided by caste and creed, and a government where Hindu nationalist ideas and myths of expansion have crept into an autocratic administration. This mix makes Indian policy less of a stable grand strategy and more of a reflection of current domestic crusades, with Pakistan always being seen as the enemy in a made-up civilisational struggle.



India's current regime is based on an ideology that apparently asserts a proud civilisational heritage. Nevertheless, the predominant Hindu nation narrative is largely a contemporary construction rather than an enduring reality. Colonial and nationalist thinkers changed history in certain ways to bring people together. In fact, even the most important Hindutva texts are from the 20th century, such as Vinayak Savarkar's Hindutva (1923), which explicitly envisioned India as a unified Hindu Rashtra, generally known as Akhand Bharat, and explicitly anticipated the realisation of the [Zionist dream](#), envisioning India, akin to Palestine, as exclusively Hindu. M. S. Golwalkar, an ideologue for the RSS and the author of We, or Our Nationhood Defined (1939), told India that to learn from Nazi Germany and said that any foreign race meant Indian Muslims should either adopt Hindu culture or be completely subordinated to the Hindu nation. The radical intellectuals who established the ideological foundations of today adopted foreign supremacist models rather than an uninterrupted indigenous heritage.



A map of the concept of Akhand Bharat by Jeet Dev licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

India's land and coastlines affect its strategy, but not always in the same way, since it is both a continental and maritime nation. It is aware of continental pressures due to its long borders with China, Pakistan, and Myanmar. Its Indian Ocean coastline and maritime heritage connect it to naval issues. This makes it hard to find a balance between being too open and being too vulnerable, especially since almost 95% of India's trade goes through open waters. The Indo-Gangetic plains and northwest have also made India vulnerable to repeated threats throughout history, making it an invader's paradise and forcing it to defend long borders at a high cost. Because of this, India's goals are often bigger than what it can afford.

Indian nationalism today is based on extremist ideas from the past. The ruling BJP and its mentor, the RSS, have long admired the Jewish supremacist policy of Israel, where majoritarianism is enshrined in the constitution. Savarkar and other RSS leaders openly talked about making a Hindu Rashtra, which meant a Hindu state and living out their own [Zionist dream](#) on the subcontinent. Israel's exclusionary policies toward Palestinian Muslims, which we see as supporting Hindutva's anti-Muslim bias. The Citizenship Amendment Act ([2019](#)) was even based on [Israel's Law of Return](#), which gives citizenship to non-Muslim immigrants in the same way that Israel gives it to Jews living abroad.

Saffron supremacists want a government that puts Hindus first. In Golwalkar's famous 1939 book, he said that all foreign races in Hindustan should either adopt the Hindu culture or live under the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, not even citizens' rights. This isn't a secret message that Hindutva has always held that Muslims and other groups should be subordinated to the Hindu nation, which is similar to fascist ideas about racial hierarchy.

Hindutva thinkers [glorified](#) Adolf Hitler long before the BJP came to power, and many people saw National Socialism as a good example of disciplined nationalism. Golwalkar himself liked the Nazi race policies. He said that Hitler's annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland showed what a true national community was, and that India should learn from those events. India's right-wing fantasy is based on ideas of Nazi and Aryan purity at its core.

The Modi government openly copies Israel's words and partnerships today. People have called Prime Minister Modi and Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu's relationship the [Bibi-Modi bromance](#) because they are so close. Both share a similar worldview and see their country as a religious refuge "Bibi's Israel. . . a haven for all Jews, Modi's India. . . to keep Hindus safe". The ideological link goes even deeper when the RSS leaders have praised Israel's military strength and democratic appearance, saying it should be a model for India.



image sourced from X account of Israeli Prime Minister

Hindu nationalists now openly use ideas from Zionist and even Nazi playbooks to make decisions. These relations aren't on the edge. Senior BJP ministers and ideologues freely spread hate speech at home and support Israel's actions abroad. In 2021, BJP leader Kapil Mishra yelled at a rally that India should "[goli maaro saalon ko](#)" which means shoot the traitors [Muslims]. This phrase was widely seen as genocidal. Amit Shah, the Home Minister, has even said that the riots in Gujarat in 2002 taught a lesson to Muslims. BJP politicians have gotten used to making public calls for violence like this. These facts, along with a love for foreign supremacist models, lead to a majoritarian, militarised way of thinking in Indian strategy.

India's own internal hierarchy supports this ideological bent. Even after 70 years of independence, the country's upper-caste elites still run its institutions. The upper tiers of the bureaucracy are still dominated by caste elites, just like they were during the colonial era. As a matter of fact, this means that most of India's generals, diplomats, and policymakers are Brahmins, Rajputs, or members of other privileged castes. The same goes for the legal system and academia, as they are both top-heavy. The modern-day maharajas of the bureaucracy still run India's modern state, and they are not very accountable to the public.

This Brahmanical bias affects how they deal with other countries. A governing class made up of people from the same caste tends to project hierarchy outward. It naturally sees other societies as insiders and outsiders, favouring those it sees as culturally similar and suspicious of those it sees as foreign. Unwritten rules still apply, even though there is official equality; few lower-caste officers have ever held high-ranking civil or police jobs. Caste loyalties can also affect the make-up of units and the officer corps in the security establishment. The Indian strategic thought is still very conservative and inward-looking. It doesn't take into account the full range of Indian experiences, but only the narrow view of its ruling classes.

India's strategic culture has changed since 2014. This is called [saffronisation](#) of diplomacy, which means that India is seen as a Hindu nation and institutions are changed to reflect the beliefs of the majority. This also means that the foreign service's old internationalist status is no longer valid. Because of this, Hindu symbols, loyalty to an ideology, and diplomacy that is more openly linked to identity politics than to secular neutrality have become more important. Because of this, Hindutva has more of an effect on foreign policy than a simple calculation of national interest. For Pakistan and South Asia, the result is greater mistrust. India is more often seen through a communal and civilisational lens, which means that Kashmir, terrorism, and regional competition are seen as contests over identity and historical grievances rather than as normal interstate disputes. This makes it harder to reach a compromise and makes the region less stable.

In short, India's current strategic culture is more of a political project for Hindus than a set of timeless civilisational wisdom. Leaders only use history and famous thinkers when it works for them, and they simply don't care about the pluralism and the structural dilemma of contradictions that come with those legacies. Since 2014, Hindu identity has become a bigger and increasingly bigger imperative of foreign policy. Strategic discourse has been influenced by a limited cadre of influential elites, caste dynamics, and the constraints of geography and economics, rather than a coherent grand strategy. People often overstate their strength and downplay the economic gap, weak borders, and internal divisions as structural problems. This highlights the complex dynamic in Pakistan and South Asian societies, characterised by both confidence and concern. India's rise is linked to rigid ideologies, the concept of Akhand Bharat, and a trend of perceiving neighbours as part of a mythical society rather than as sovereign nations. India's strategic culture is based on a genuine paradox as it intends to be a great power through civilisational and ideological assertion, but it is limited by material and geographic factors that have been around for a long time. This creates a structural dilemma between ambition and capacity that still affects how India acts at home and in the region.

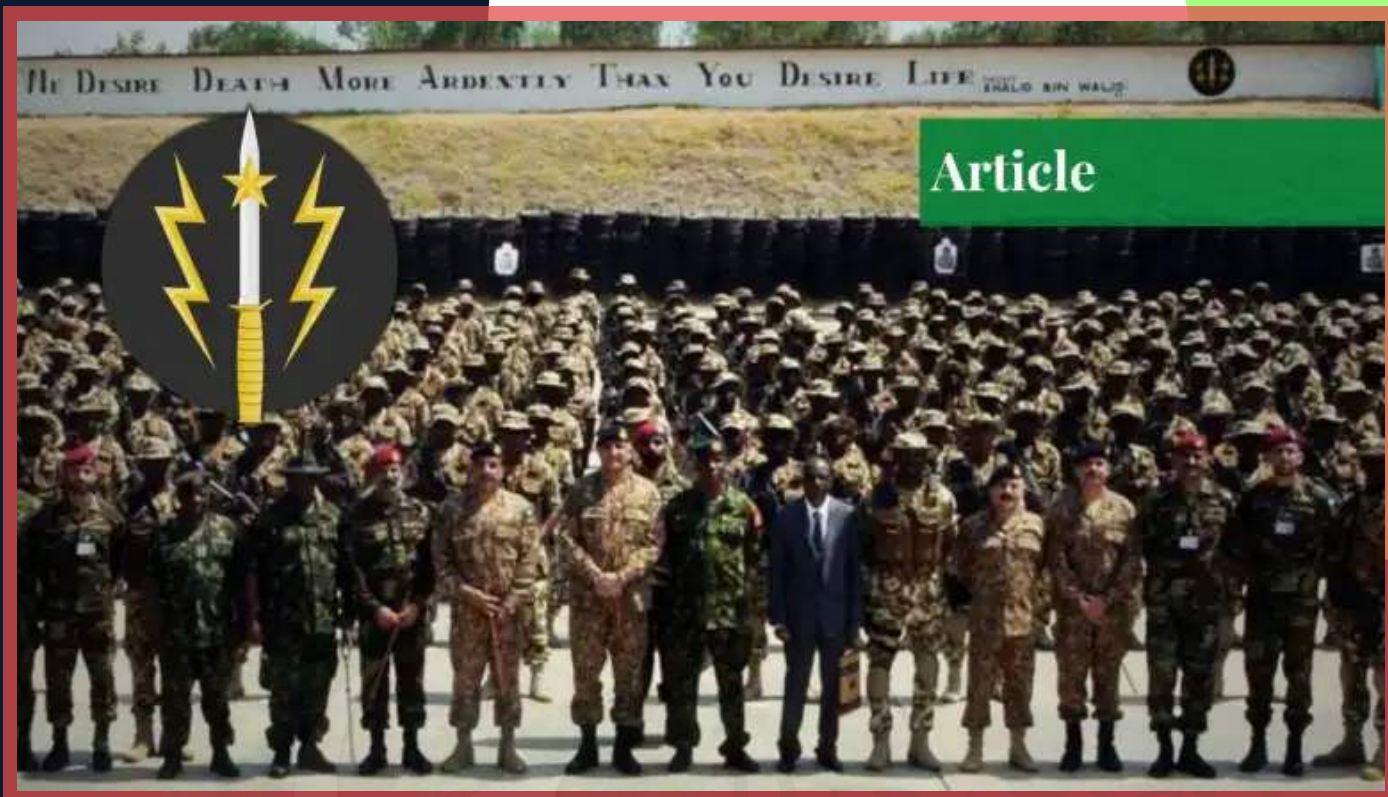
If you want to submit your articles and/or research papers, please visit the [Submissions](#) page.

To stay updated with the latest jobs, CSS news, internships, scholarships, and current affairs articles, join our [Community Forum](#)!

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

You may like: [Saffronisation and South Asian Security: Could Hindu Fundamentalism Ignite Another India-Pakistan War?](#)

Also read: [The Katas Raj Temples of Punjab, Pakistan](#)



Special Service Group (SSG) Pakistan: Shadow Military Unit

About the Author



Syed Hammad Ali is pursuing a BS in International Relations programme from the International Islamic University, Islamabad, and has a keen interest in research works, policy analysis, defence and strategic studies, and conflict resolution.

“Be extremely subtle, even to the point of formlessness. Be extremely mysterious, even to the point of soundlessness. Thereby you can be the director of the opponent’s fate” (Sun Tzu, Art of War). In the modern era, we are living in grey warfare zones, whereby the line between peace and conflict has been blurred. Neither absolute peace nor absolute conflict exists. Even during peacetime, clandestine operations and skirmishes occur every time. Countries are always engaged militarily with their rivals. The modern structure of [warfare](#) is just like an onion, which has so many layers, one after the other.

In the modern era, we are living in grey warfare zones, whereby the line between peace and conflict has been blurred. Neither absolute peace nor absolute conflict exists. Even during peacetime, clandestine operations and skirmishes occur every time. Countries are always engaged militarily with their rivals. The modern structure of [warfare](#) is just like an onion, which has so many layers, one after the other.

On the same note, wars have layers, including unconventional, conventional, sub-conventional, or covert missions. Thus, the role of special forces of a state has now become much more important than ever. Although nearly all states have elite military units, few are regarded as world-class commandos. And Pakistan’s Special Service Group (SSG) lies in this category – one of the best special forces units in the world.

What is SSG?

The Special Services Group is a highly specialized Special Operations Force of the Pakistan Army. They have also been referred to as the “Black Storks” and the “Maroon Berets” and are known under the Codename “SSG.” SSG is led by a Major General. The SSG force, which is a force similar to the Special Operations Forces of the US Army and the SAS of the British Army, is very important in enhancing the regular forces’ offensive power against enemies.

Formation of SSG

The establishment of SSG can be traced back to 1948, when Pakistani northern tribesmen infiltrated into the [Kashmir](#) Valley to fight the oppressive Hindu regime. The newborn Pakistan Army learned similar lessons from the roles played by Germans and allies throughout World War II about the advantages of having a skilled, elite military force capable of carrying out sabotage operations behind enemy lines.



The Pakistan Army was successful in establishing a special forces battalion inside the current Baloch Regiment in 1953–54. After establishing its new headquarters at Cherat, KPK, it was at first classified as the 10th Battalion, but it soon gained promotion to the 19th Battalion in 1956. The first CO of this battalion was Lieutenant Colonel Abu Bakr Osman Mitha.

Role of US Special Forces

As part of a mobile training team, a few special operatives of the [CIA](#) and the U.S. Army's 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) arrived in Pakistan in March 1964 to assist the Pakistani army in establishing its first airborne school in Peshawar. To assist in preparing SSG members for airborne missions, four riggers from the US Special Forces arrived.

The US 'Military Aid to Pakistan' (US MAP) initiative included this help. Additionally, Pakistani SSG officers also received sophisticated training at Fort Bragg and Fort Benning. Because of this close interaction, SSG has adopted similar training methods and operational principles to their American counterparts.

SSG Insignia



The logo of SSG represents a poniard with lightning bolts, which depicts strength, accuracy, and readiness. The motto of SSG is "Faith, Piety, and Jihad for the sake of God."

SSG Commando Uniform

This includes a red beret with a silver-colored metal tag placed on a light blue felt square. The commandos use the United States Army woodland pattern camouflage. Furthermore, there is a golden SSG para-wing that is worn by them on the right side of their chest, which differs for master parachutists and riggers. Also, the SSG badge, which has a dagger encircled by lightning bolts, is placed on the left shoulder. While qualifications are represented on the right shoulder.



ORGANIZATION OF SPECIAL SERVICES GROUP

The Special Service Group (SSG) is renowned for its elite status and specialized operations within the armed forces. Understanding its organizational structure is paramount to comprehending its effectiveness and strategic deployment.



Selection Process

Only individuals who have worked in any division of the [Pakistan Armed Forces](#) for at least two years are eligible for recruitment into the SSG. Additionally, foreign nationals are also chosen via the appropriate international channels. One component of the selection process is a very competitive screening test.



In this assessment, candidates are subjected to a barrage of intelligence and aptitude tests. Following their selection, they are given a three-year assignment inside the SSG. Provided they maintain the rigorous physical routine and maintain a medical status of

“aye,” enlisted men are eligible for indefinite service with the SSG.

Training Modules

Every trainee attends a nine-month foundational commando training program at Cherat. The fundamental SSG course places a strong emphasis on rigorous physical training, such as exhausting forced marches of 58 kilometers that must be finished in 12 hours. Trainees are also required to complete an 8 km run with full equipment on their bodies in less than 40 minutes. All SSG candidates must complete and pass the final four-week para-training course at the conclusion of this nine-month program.

After completing five-day and two-night jumps, SSG commandos eventually earn their wings and the much-sought-after maroon berets. The newly inducted commandos also complete a 25-week advanced commando course after finishing the fundamental commando training. Operators only become indispensable members of the SSG at the conclusion of these two demanding stages.

How do SSG commandos operate?

SSG commandos infiltrate the target area either by land, air, or sea. Land infiltrations occur through cross-border interventions. This is done through civilian-style covert movements as well as utilizing clandestine intelligence networks to penetrate the enemy's mainland. On the other hand, free-fall parachutes are used for performing either a HALO (high altitude, low opening) or an HAHO (high altitude, high opening) jump in air insertions. With a HALO jump, the chute is opened at a low altitude on enemy territory.



But in the case of HAHO jumps, the parachute is opened at a high altitude on the home territory, near the border, and is controlled towards the specified landing zone in enemy territory. Likewise, infiltration via sea is done through small boats or cargo ships landing in

enemy territory. Special Marines can also infiltrate through swimming or diving using special underwater gear and equipment.

SSG-N and SSW

The Pakistan Navy Special Services Group (SSG-N) is the elite naval unit of the Pakistan Armed Forces. It was established in March 1967. It is also known as the Pakistan Navy SEALs. These marines specialize in conducting littoral operations, maritime counter-terrorism, and underwater warfare. On the other hand, the Special Service Wing (SSW) is the elite special operations unit of the Pakistan Air Force. It was established in 1999. Air insertions, aerial strikes, and recovery missions are conducted by SSW operatives. All these [three](#) special services units of the Pakistan Armed Forces, including SSG, SSG-N, and SSW, operate as an integrated battle force to inflict heavy blows on rival forces.

Major Operations

Pakistan International Airlines Flight 544 hijacking (1981)

Pan Am Flight 73 hijacking (1986)

Lal Masjid siege (2007)

PNS Mehran base attack (2011)

Jinnah International Airport attack (2014)

Peshawar school massacre (2014)

PNS Mehran base attack (2011)

Quetta police training college attack (2016)

International Interactions

The Turkish Special Forces, under the “Ataturk” exercises, have been participating in biannual drills with the SSG. Similarly, SSG conducted several similar training drills known as “Inspired Venture” with U.S. Special Forces. In addition to their own training course, the Chinese Special Forces and SSG have a joint [training](#) program dubbed the “Youyi Exercises.” SSG also works with several Middle Eastern special forces units, such as Saudis, Iranians, and Jordanians. These exercises include parachuting, along with mountain fighting, tactics, raids, and ambushes, and weapon handling and use.

Conclusion

The Special Service Group (SSG) not only represents the elite military unit of the Pakistan Armed Forces but also projects the invisible hands of power, deterring enemy attacks even before they emerge on the surface. Unlike regular armed forces divisions of Pakistan, the SSG works behind the scenes, preserving its secrecy while showing signs of its presence behind the enemy lines simultaneously. In essence, it's the spirit of our Armed Forces and Special Operations Units that has enabled our country to touch the heights of strategic competence and a secure future for our people.

If you want to submit your articles and/or research papers, please visit the [Submissions](#) page.

To stay updated with the latest jobs, CSS news, internships, scholarships, and current affairs articles, join our [Community Forum!](#)

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

You may like: [China's Shenyang J-35A and the Remaking of Global Air Power](#)

Also read: [Addition of J-10C Fighter Jets in Pakistan Air Force](#)



Pakistan's Defining Moment: Advancing from Marka-e-Haq 1.0 to 2.0

About the Author



Eman Alam is an International Relations student with a keen interest in global politics, public diplomacy, and international security. Her work focuses on analyzing contemporary geopolitical challenges and their implications for global power dynamics.

There are times in the life of nations when they quietly, but decisively, change their course. Pakistan seems to be at such a point of defining moment today, with the past resilience intermingling with the present opportunity to influence a more confident and assertive future. The achievements of Marka-e-Haq and the positive role of Pakistan in offering an off-ramp in the context of Iran-US tensions have boosted its international profile as well as revived national confidence.

A Turning Phase and Renewed National Spirit

The key to this transformation is the sense of resilience, which is rooted. Pakistan has [encountered terrorism](#), economic pressures, climate issues, and a complicated regional setup. Nonetheless, the country has evolved and survived. This history of endurance is now forming a new sense of direction and conviction, which boosts confidence on a national and institutional level.



Claiming Power and Tactical Self-Confidence

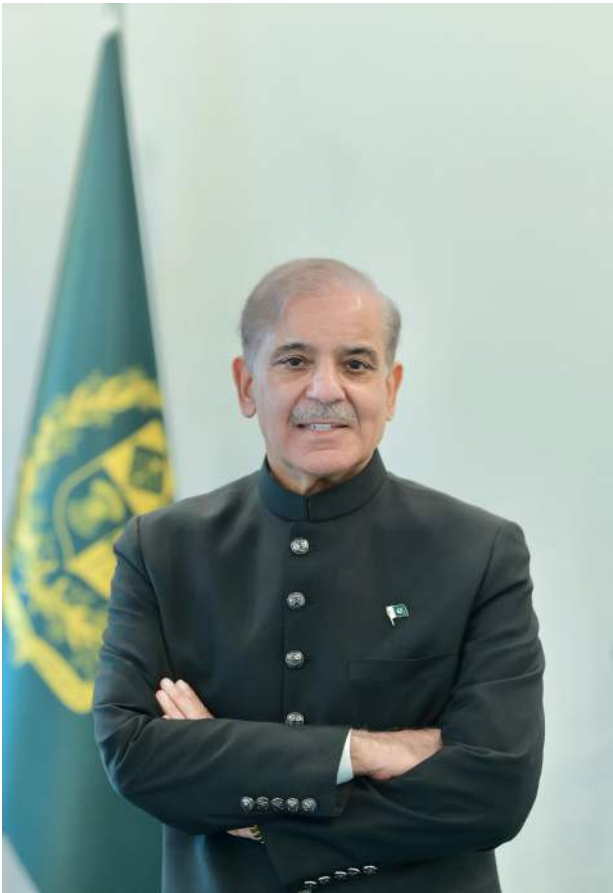
One of the factors that has contributed to this confidence has been the aggressive role of Pakistan in Marka-e-Haq. Pakistan proved to be not only tactically sound but also tactically clear in confronting India, which was bigger and more resourced. This enhanced unity, boosted morale, and enhanced faith in national strength.

With this success nearing its first anniversary, its importance has grown beyond the military victory into the realm of diplomacy, a sign of the emergence of Marka-e-Haq 2.0. This concept of being strong without fighting and yet reaching a goal can be seen in the way Pakistan intervened in the situation between Iran and the United States to calm the situation.

This is an expression of maturity, wisdom, and calculated diplomacy. On the contrary, the move by India to isolate Pakistan in the international system failed to deliver the desired outcomes.



Increasing Diplomatic Bearing and International Confidence



There is a growing trend whereby Pakistan is being perceived as an actor of responsible and credible behavior in international relations. Its capability to involve both Iran and the United States emphasizes trust, balance, and vision. Strategic clarity also represents a progressive and progressive attitude. The fact that Pakistan supports Saudi Arabia adds to its regional obligations and emphasizes the role of diplomacy as the initial defense mechanism.

Notably, the diplomacy of Pakistan has been informed by values as opposed to short-term political interests. The values that continue to influence its peace and reconciliation efforts are based on religion, and this can be seen as an extension of its responsibility to

maintain unity and harmony, particularly between Muslim states.

Managing Internal and External Pressures

Pakistan has demonstrated the capability of handling several challenges simultaneously, too. As it took part in international mediation, it made sure that the domestic supply chains were not disrupted, as they could cause shortages and disruptions. Meanwhile, internal security issues were being solved, especially in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, whose threats have been associated with the Afghan Taliban and militant groups. In economic terms, Pakistan was disciplined and credible, as the three point five billion dollars were repaid to the UAE, meaning a strong message of money responsibility.

Core Strengths and Long-Term Potential

The long-term strength of Pakistan is its geographical location, which links South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. This renders it a natural conduit of trade and connectivity of the region. Natural resources that support this advantage include fertile land, minerals, and energy potential, as well as a young population that is capable. This was evident in the recent events during the tensions in the region, with Gwadar and Karachi ports becoming key points of trade and contact.

There is also a lesson that history teaches. Periods marked by strong national confidence and active diplomacy have often been followed by economic growth. This trend was experienced in Pakistan in the 1960s. Even though the modern world is more complicated, the lesson is that confidence and credibility can enhance the capacity of countries to attract investments and gain in the long-term development.

Future Direction and Policy Priorities

Going forward, Pakistan needs to translate this momentum into sustainable development. This demands uniformity in policy, vision, and a stress on national long-term interests.

- Enhance international relations by preserving a balanced relationship with the key players and the major powers in the region.
- Concentrate on economic stability through reforms, the attraction of investment, and the expansion of trade.
- Increase domestic security and management in order to have confidence that can be maintained in a country.
- Invest in the development of youth and technology to make it competitive in the future.

Conclusion

The establishment of nations is slow and on the basis of trust, transparency, and decisiveness. The transformation of Marka-e-Haq 1.0 to Marka-e-Haq 2.0 in Pakistan is more of a transition between military victory and diplomacy. This is not just a moment of achievement but a moment of responsibility. It requires tactical patience, a steady policy-making, and the capacity to turn short-term advantages into long-term resilience. The present stage gives Pakistan a chance to redefine its position in the world, enhance its institutions, and create a stable economic future. To continue this course, we will need harmony back home, a reputation abroad, and leadership that puts national interest first. Even the greatest momentum can die without continuity and discipline.

History remembers not those who rise briefly, but those who transform their rise into lasting power. Pakistan now stands at that threshold, and the choices made today will determine whether this moment becomes a turning point or a missed opportunity.

If you want to submit your articles and/or research papers, please visit the [Submissions](#) page.

To stay updated with the latest jobs, CSS news, internships, scholarships, and current affairs articles, join our [Community Forum](#)!

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

You may like: [Everything You Need To Know About the 2025 India-Pakistan Conflict](#)

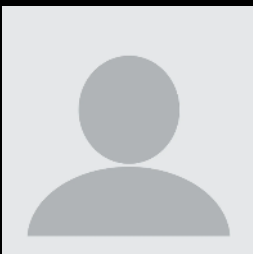
Also read: [Beyond the Ceasefire: The Unrelenting, Perpetual Indian Threat](#)



Opinion

The Imperial Lie: Deception by Design

About the Author



Mir Adnan Aziz is a columnist whose writing explores the forces that shape power, belief, and society.

The imperial lie is the grim, repeating cadence of history. It is a rhythmic pulse of deception that spans time, continents, and decades. From Hitler's fallacious claim that he entered Austria not as a tyrant but as a savior to the modern USA, the rhetoric of security has consistently served as the vanguard for interventions and occupations. This pivot occurred in 1948 when the US Department of War was rebranded as the Department of Defense. This was not a change in mission but a semantic mask for a global footprint that now spans nearly 800 military bases in 80 countries. Purportedly, these outposts ensure order and security. In reality, they anchor a global regulatory regime that dictates Washington's hegemony.

In 1971, Daniel Ellsberg, a former Marine captain and Rand Corporation analyst, shattered the illusion of presidential integrity by leaking the Pentagon Papers. This 7,000-page expose proved that the American executive does not lie by accident; it lies by design. Successive administrations had systematically deceived the public about the Vietnam War. The cost of this specific deception was 3.8 million Vietnamese lives. 58,220 Americans perished; 153,303 were wounded. The veterans still battle psychological scars. The architects of war walked away into lucrative retirements.

This deception did not remain isolated. It became a template. Historians Christopher Kelly and Stuart Laycock note that the US has been militarily involved with 191 of the 193 UN-recognized nations. This is 98 percent of the globe. In his book, *The Ruses for War*, John Quigley dissected 25 post-WWII military actions and concluded that every single one was based on a lie.

Roosevelt repeatedly promised that American boys would not be sent to foreign wars. In fact, war plans had already been finalized. On August 4, 1964, Lyndon Johnson interrupted television broadcasts to claim an unprovoked attack in the Gulf of Tonkin. It was a fabrication. This lie, authorizing a congressional resolution for war, became a template for every US-initiated conflict that followed.

Kennedy promised non-intervention in Cuba but authorized a CIA-planned mission to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba. Known as the Bay of Pigs invasion, it was a failure. Nixon's "I am not a crook" declaration was the desperate gasp of a disgraced presidency.

Bush Sr. deployed troops based on the lie of a planned Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia. Then came the most horrendously blatant lie of them all. Bush Jr. claimed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. The presented evidence was a fabrication. The world watched as, over a decade of terror, a nation was dismantled based on this lie.

Barack Obama won a Nobel Peace Prize for his opposition to the Iraq War. In the office, he predictably morphed into a war president. Syria was targeted because it had rejected an American-backed gas pipeline. The lie to initiate mayhem was that Syria possessed chemical weapons. Out of 22 million people, over 600,000 perished; more than 13 million were displaced. Cities like Aleppo, Homs, and Raqqā were bombed incessantly, erasing cultural heritage and historic neighborhoods. The conflict is called one of the worst modern disasters.

In this horrific tale, the story of Libya is one of erasure disguised as its liberation. Muammar Qaddafi's true sin was his plans for a Libyanized economy. He planned to de-link oil sales from the dollar and create a gold-backed African Union. After his murder, Libya's 150 tons of gold vanished. Today, Libya is a fractured wasteland. Washington backs General Khalifa Haftar, a former CIA asset who lived in Virginia for years. The liberation of Libya, Washington style, was in essence the liquidation of its sovereignty and its treasury.

The moral vertigo of this era is best captured in the disparity of justice. At the Nuremberg Trials, Julius Streicher was tried for crimes against humanity. Streicher was not a soldier or a politician. Publisher of *Der Stürmer*, a newspaper, he had never pulled a trigger or signed an invasion order.

What he was accused of was spreading hatred against the German Jews and inciting public support for the persecution and violence against Jews. He was executed. Saddam Hussein, too, faced the same fate for crimes that dwarfed those of his execution enablers. This is nothing but victor's justice, a masquerade where triumph dictates guilt against the vanquished.

The modern theater of power is a world where those who perpetrate genocides are shielded by the very systems they claim to uphold. The global order has perfected a system where they are immune to even a semblance of accountability. The punishment is reserved for those who lack the muscle to defend themselves. In essence, the only difference between a war crime and foreign policy is the size of the flag that drapes it.

The televised slaughter in Gaza is the most visceral manifestation of this cycle. Cloaked in the rhetoric of self-defense, this genocide has claimed over 80,000 lives, with women and children making up 70 percent of them. This carnage is amplified by the criminal audacity of unprovoked strikes on Iran and the brazen assassination of its leadership.

This calculated provocation is designed to suck the entire region into a vortex of total war. The architects of this bloodbath remain untouchable. Their immunity is ensured by the very international institutions they control. For the Empire, truth is not just a casualty; it is a threat to be liquidated in the relentless pursuit of absolute power.

If you want to submit your articles and/or research papers, please visit the [Submissions](#) page.

To stay updated with the latest jobs, CSS news, internships, scholarships, and current affairs articles, join our [Community Forum!](#)

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

You may like: [Peace in Words, War in Deeds: The Trump Doctrine Unmasked](#)

Also read: [U2 Spy Plane Incident \(1960\): Cold War Espionage Crisis and Pakistan's Foreign Policy](#)



Saif ul Malook Lake: Where Nature Meets Myth and Magic

About the Author



M. Hamza Tanveer is a political analyst specialising in South Asian and Middle Eastern affairs. His work focuses on religious nationalism, regional security, and minority rights. He has been featured in Stratheia, Pakistan Today, Pakistan Observer, and the Asian Mirror. He is also working as a research analyst and political commentator for Paradigm Shift and contributes to the monthly magazine of Ne.



Saif ul Malook Lake, located around 9 kilometers north of Naran city in the Mansehra District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is one of the most magnificent and scenic tourist destinations in Pakistan. Every year, around [200,000 local and international tourists](#) visit this mesmerizing place. This famous alpine lake is located at an elevation of 10,578 feet (3,224 meters) above sea level, making it one of the highest lakes in Pakistan. The peaks of the Kaghan Valley, including Malika Parbat (Queen of the Mountains), that surround the lake enhance the beauty of this famous tourist destination.



Geological Formation of Saif ul Malook Lake

Saif ul Malook Lake derives its primary inflow from glacial melt originating in the encircling peaks. Due to the high altitude, the lake remains frozen for most of the year, with the surface fully thawed only from June to October. The reflection of surrounding snow-capped peaks in the pristine emerald-green waters of the lake creates a spectacular and serene view.



According to some accounts, the lake was created roughly 300,000 years ago during the Pleistocene period. As the glaciers advanced and retreated during this period, they carved large basins into the Earth, which were later filled with meltwater.

Myths and Folklore of Lake Saif ul Malook

The Egyptian Prince and the Fairy

Saif ul Malook also has historical and literary significance, as its name is derived from the name of an Egyptian prince called Saif, who is the main character of the famous "Qissa Saif ul Malook" by the great Sufi saint Mian Muhammad Bakhsh. This poetic tale tells the story of an Egyptian prince who fell in love with a fairy named Badi ul Jamal. Although many take this story in its literal sense, in reality, it reflects the spiritual journey of the soul in quest of divine love, making it an allegory deeply rooted in Sufism. According to many locals, Saif ul Malook Lake is the very site where all the events of this legendary and famous love story transpired.

According to folklore, Prince Saif dreamt of some beautiful fairies of Koh-e-Kaaf standing around a magnificent lake. One of these fairies, Princess Badi ul Jamal, eclipsed them all in beauty. He fell in love with her and started searching for her. During six years of continuous search for the place and the fairy, he even lost himself. This quest turned him into a madman and a beggar roaming around in the streets of Egypt, forgetting his royal roots. One day, he stumbled upon an old, holy man who stated, "I've been waiting for you, Prince Saif."

The old man gave him a cap, advising him never to give up. The cap became famous as the Sulemani Topi. Upon wearing this magical cap, the prince was immediately transferred to Lake Saif ul Malook. The old man also sent a helpful jinn with Prince Saif to help him. The jinn told him that he would have to pray and fast for 40 days to be capable of seeing the fairy Badi ul Jamal. After 40 days, the prince finally saw the fairies coming to the lake. He asked the jinn to hide Badi ul Jamal's wings while she was bathing in the lake. Upon learning that the princess had lost her wings, her friends abandoned her.



“Lake Saif ul Malook Pakistan” by Ayesha.great is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

Meanwhile, Prince Saif mustered the courage to speak to her and confess his love for her. He thoroughly explained everything to Badi ul Jamal. She confessed that she also had the same dream, but also showed concerns over the wrath of Deo Safed, the master of fairies in Koh e Kaaf. However, both decided to stay together. Deo Safed got infuriated upon learning that she lost her wings. He set out on a search for Badi ul Jamal. Due to his giant steps, his footsteps were audible from a long distance. His footsteps caused a great storm on the lake. The couple got scared and started praying to God. With God’s assistance, both of them found a calm, safe, and dry tunnel under the lake. It is said that the couple is still in that tunnel and surfaces on every full moon to commemorate their love.

The Depth Myth

Another famous local myth related to the lake is that the depth of the lake cannot be measured. Locals believe that anyone who tries to measure the depth of this lake meets a tragic death. Many also believe that anyone who tries to swim in this lake will meet the same end. However, no evidence has ever been found of these claims and myths. The commonly cited approximate depth of the lake is around 34 meters (113 feet).

Travel Guide to Saif ul Malook Lake

Lake Saif ul Malook lies in the Kaghan Valley of Pakistan. However, tourists need to book jeeps from Naran to visit the lake. The drive from Islamabad to Naran is around 5 hours. One can easily reach Naran by car. However, it is mandatory to visit the majestic Saif ul Malook. The fare for jeeps from Naran changes every season and depends on fuel prices. As per reports, the fare for a jeep from Naran to Saif ul Malook Lake was around 6,000 rupees. People can also hike a 9-kilometer trek to the lake. However, it could be highly challenging due to high elevation.



“En route to Lake Saif ul Malook” by Aرسالanyahya is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#).

Basic facilities, including shops and hotels, are available at Saif ul Malook Lake. Tourists can also enjoy the boating facility at the lake. Locals also provide horses for riding around the famous lake. Tourists can also trek to Ansoo Lake from Saif ul Malook.

However, due to the harsh terrain, it is advised to book a local tourist guide while trekking to Ansoo Lake.

People visiting Naran Kaghan this summer must enjoy fresh trout fish at Lake Saif ul Malook. National and international tourists must include Saif ul Malook Lake in their travel list this season.

If you want to submit your articles and/or research papers, please visit the [Submissions](#) page.

To stay updated with the latest jobs, CSS news, internships, scholarships, and current affairs articles, join our [Community Forum!](#)

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

You may like: [National Archives of Pakistan: Keeping the Country's Memory Alive](#)

Also read: [Tracing The Soul of Sindh Through Nawabshah](#)



Pakistan's Collective Intellectual Health through a Socio-Political Lens

About the Author



Abdullah Bin Khalid is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in political science at the University of Peshawar. He has a deep interest in technology's impact on politics and political psychology.

There is mostly a difficulty in defining or explaining fundamental concepts, for they form the basis for a plethora of things, whilst lacking their own. A physicist is yet to find out the building block of sub-atomic particles, a biologist, despite having a vast and extensive understanding of life's working mechanism, would find himself wrestling with the concept of life's origin, and a philosopher with the questions related to the temporal dimensions he resides in.

What are the questions I referred to in my most recent statement? They are, certainly, embedded in the social and cultural context one is a denizen of. What's life and its purpose? How did life begin? What is the normative framework for life? These questions have, since humanity's inception, troubled them. And as if it is some natural law, wherever there is an intellectual vacuum, a variety of forces come in to fill the void. That has happened in the aforementioned case.

The Realms Of Knowledge:

There have historically been two major forces trying to fill the vacuum, with each of them trying to degrade the other while standing on solid ground. These two are, namely, science and religious myths, forming two distinct realms of knowledge. Since the beginning of humankind, myths have enjoyed an absolute monopoly over the fundamental questions, with each one being addressed against the backdrop of metaphysical sayings. Science, *sed contra*, emerged initially as a peripheral force, beginning the conquest of the realm of knowledge, and now enjoys a predominant position. That is to say, even religious myths and explanations are now subjected to scientific scrutiny. However, the ultra-rationalistic position of science has created an existential and spiritual void in recent times, which has produced the result of the populace retreating to religion, and the former force is enjoying a resurgence.

However, in the middle of these two realms, therein lies a no-man's land which derives spirituality from religion and rationality from science, serving as an exemplary "golden mean", to employ Aristotle's terms, who happened to be one of the pioneers of this no-man's land called philosophy. This no-man's land has the honour of being the mother of all disciplines, since every discipline commences with asking questions, which happens to be the brain-child of philosophy.

Science answers the fundamental questions in the form of information; religion explains the form of myths; while the third invisible yet powerful force, namely philosophy, consistently interrogates both, the former on humanistic grounds and the latter on rational ones.

Moreover, as previously mentioned, the two forces of science and philosophy are on a quest to occupy the realms of knowledge, creating hostility between the two. This hostility compels them to employ tools to undermine each other, with the former instrumentalising reason to debunk religious myths and the latter, metaphysical scriptures to prove science as heretic. Philosophy, on the flip side, doesn't primarily express hostility to these two and has a chameleon-like characteristic, for its questions take a different shape with the march of time. Natural philosophers of the Pre-Socratic era concerned themselves with the formation of matter, Plato and Aristotle with the state, ideas, and form; Machiavelli with strengthening the ruler, Emmanuel Kant with the peace of Europe, and Karl Marx with the miseries of the working class in the wake of the industrial revolution and subsequent increased working hours.

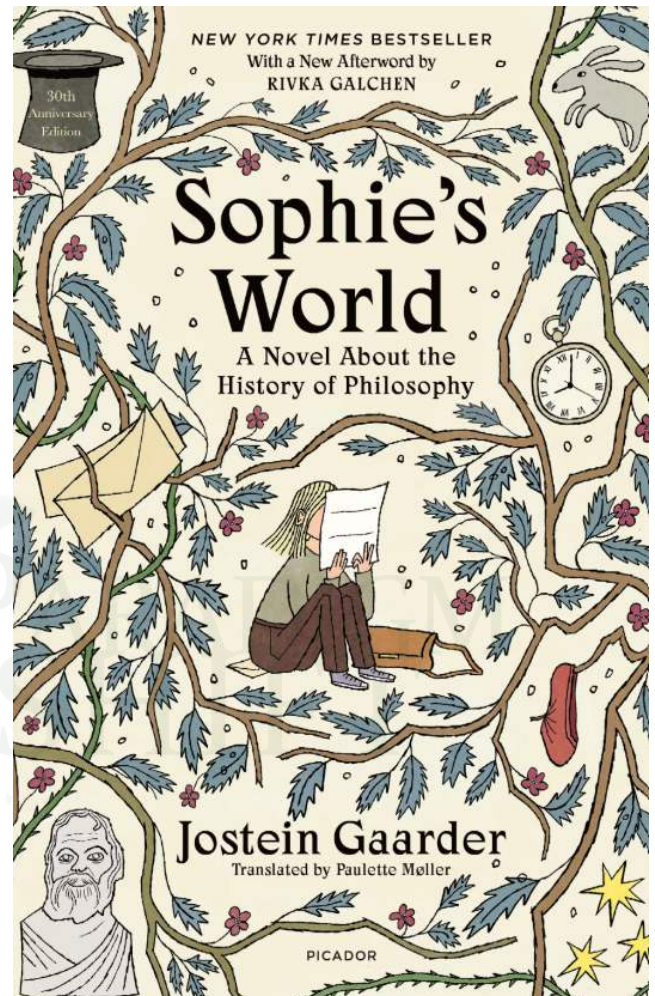
The questions concerning a philosopher of modern times would be combating climate change, preserving nature, finding a "golden mean" to rival structural inequalities, and, not least, suspecting the unchecked sprint of technological proliferation. This characteristic of philosophy projects the impression of how crucial it is, and if viewed microscopically, the importance of contemplative thinking, a virtue that is slowly and gradually fading away.

Plot Of Sophie's World:

In an effort to study the brief history of philosophy, I got my hands on Jostein Gaarder's novel "Sophie's World." The story follows a 15-year-old Norwegian girl who, upon returning from school, finds in the mailbox a letter from an unknown sender who questions her identity, the purpose of life, and the origin of the universe. Sophie is perplexed and surprised at once to see this unexpected encounter. (The same was the case with me, and perhaps every reader. Have you ever interrogated your existence? And it was not the end. The unknown sender, who later turned out to be Alberto Knox, keeps on sending questions like these to stir up curiosity in her student and follows it with an explanation by the relevant philosopher.

In this manner of conflictual dialectic discussion, Sophie is introduced to philosophers from Thales to Karl Marx, scientists like Charles Darwin, and Psychiatics like Sigmund Freud. One might be pondering why the latter two personalities have been incorporated into the table of contents. The explanation is, as I previously mentioned, in the struggle of the aforementioned realms of knowledge to become the "Mr Know-it-all". The boundary walls of these realms of science, myths, and philosophy are fluid, and each of them puts effort into usurping the other realm.

While reading this novel and following the story, I kept pausing repeatedly and asking myself, "Why couldn't I think of all this before?" "Why am I yet to uncover the purpose of my life?" "Why am I yet to know my inner self and identity?" It was this curiosity that convinced me to dig for some insights about why I think that way, am I an exceptional case, or not? This led me to suspect the structure we live in and how culture shapes our beliefs and values.



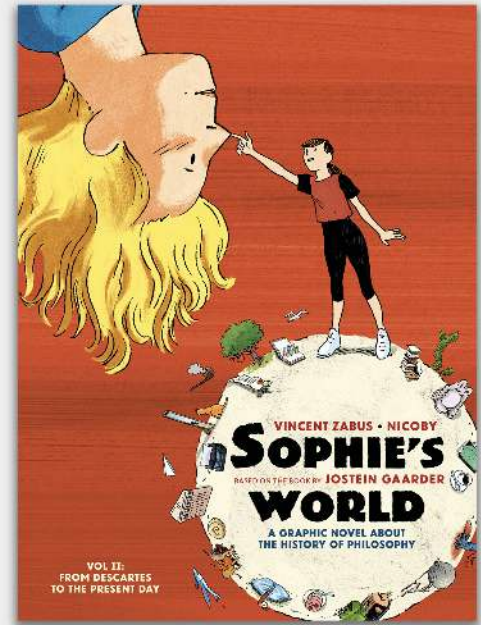
But before that inquisition, an analogy surfaced in my mind from the book, which stated, in an attempt to explain the philosophical quest, that the universe was created by a magician, and the world is like a rabbit.

When we begin our life as a child, we are at the top of this rabbit's hair, staring him in the eyes, interrogating everything else that confronts us. That is why we ask questions. But as life marches onwards, we lose touch with reflective thinking, go deep down the rabbit hole, and adopt some definitions of social realities that we hardly challenge. Encouraged by this analogy, I pondered that I being a university student, may have well went down the rabbit's hair, hence unable to stare in the eyes of that very magician; I turned towards a class 5th student in our vicinity with the hope that he is yet to go down deep into the rabbit's hair and would still be able to stare in the eyes of magician; and asked him his

purpose of life. His answer was, simply unsurprising, "Allah ki Ibadat" (Praying to God).



Now there must be some serious problem in our society. A class 5th student, yet at the top of a rabbit's hair, has the same answer to a fundamental question as that of an undergraduate student and perhaps, as that of a 60-year-old individual. Although my sample size is small, I can speak with conviction that the same answer would resonate in a larger sample. How could such homogeneity of thoughts exist in a population of 240 million people? Or philosophically speaking, how could the essence of all these be pre-determined? There are certain points of origin to this rigid thinking, which I would extend upon subsequently.

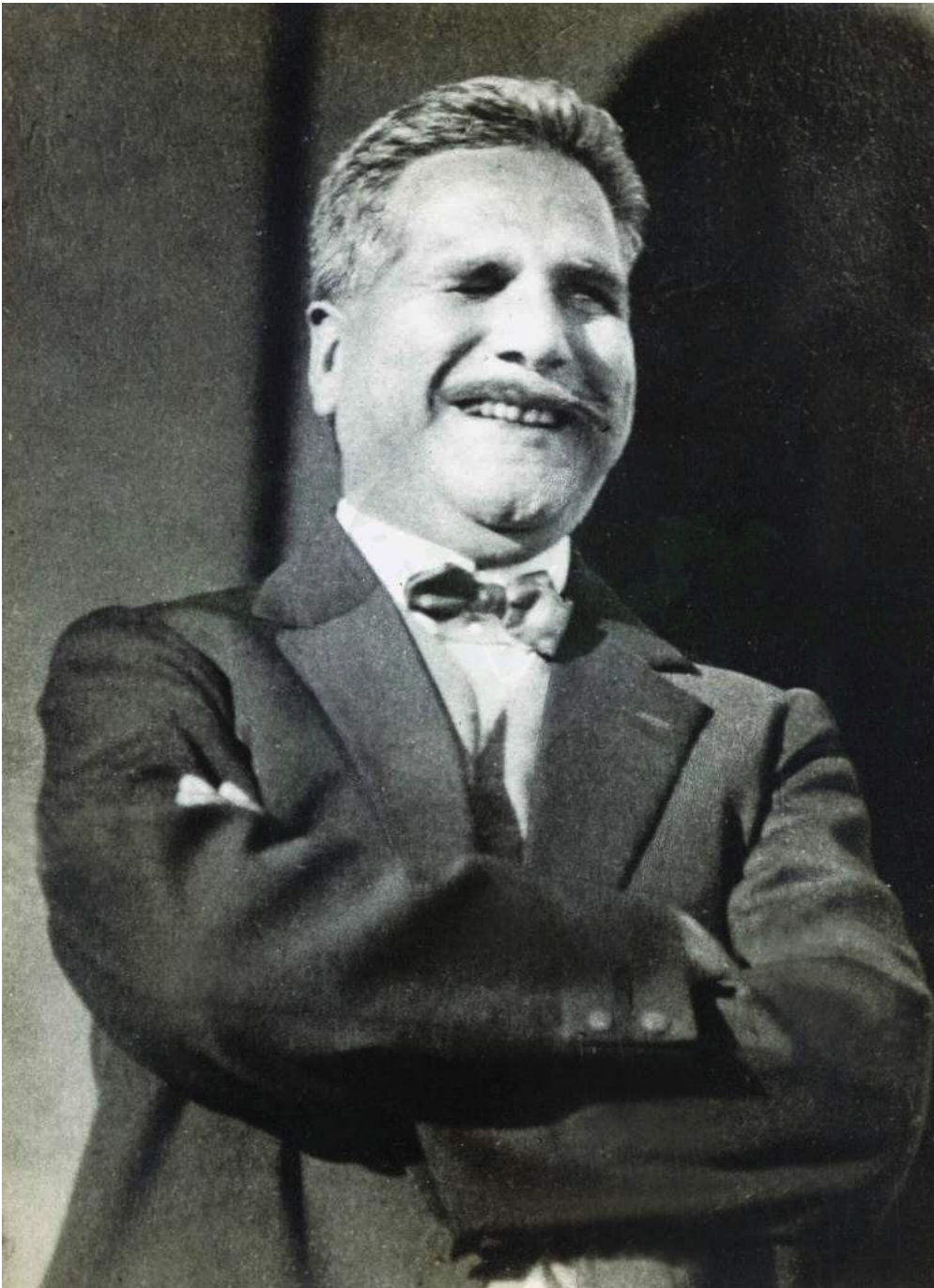


The Case Of Pakistan's Intellectual Health:

The country of Pakistan was formed, according to the state narrative, on the premises of the two-nation theory. Muslims of the subcontinent, after having ruled 'justly' for 1000 years, felt "threatened" by the resurgent Hindus who had joined hands with the ruler Englishmen and sought revenge from Muslims and erected exploitative structures to "marginalise" them, and later, rule India and avenge them. This narrative, while instrumental in forging a sense of common belonging, had strings of problems attached.

When there is a large number of people living in a specific area having at least one thread in common, it reaps the benefit of instrumentalising that singular thread to construct a common identity that unites the populace. With Pakistan comprising the majority of its population of Muslims, the threat of Islamic identity, albeit weak, was strategically employed to ward off the threats originating from geopolitical location and the internal challenges, on which I will elaborate later in my explanation of the term "Strategic Culture".

But on the contrary, the problem that concerns us, that of intellectual stagnancy, emerged. Wherever there is a large populace united by a shared sense and thinking, there emerges an echo



chamber. When you stroll back and forth, you find the same mode of thought, and your psychology will naturally attest your point of view with successive encounters, and resultantly, it is consolidated.

Consequently, any mode of thought that questions the existing structure is labelled as exotic and, in the most exaggerated form, heretic. Worse, in the case of Pakistan, the very principles of "Islamic Unity" and disregard for individualistic ideas like rationalism are structurally and pedagogically discouraged.

We can take, for example, Allama Iqbal, the Islamist philosopher and "poet of the nation" who is repeatedly quoted to consolidate the "indoctrinated identity". Iqbal, in *Bang-e-Dara*, remarked to express distaste for heretic thought

"Don't compare your nation with the nations of the West

Distinctive is the nation of the Prophet of Islam

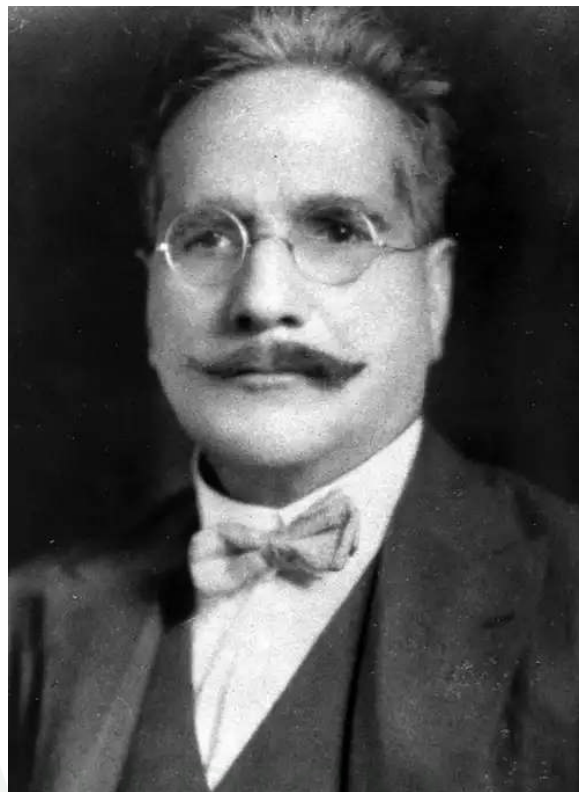
Their solidarity depends on territorial nationality

Your solidarity rests on the strength of your religion

When faith slips away, where is the solidarity of community?

And when community is no more, neither is the nation."

Iqbal in 1935 licensed under public domain



This is a singular example of how first an identity is created and then the literature is curated accordingly to accumulate support for that very identity. Ironically, Allama Iqbal was a product of a Western education. This leads us to a question: why do Pakistan, founded by secular personalities like Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan, etc., have such hyper-religious orientations? Here, I pause describing the reasons for this intellectual stillness and introduce the term "strategic culture".

Strategic Culture Of Pakistan:

An idea put forth by Jack Snyder in the 1970s, strategic culture is defined as:

"A series of general beliefs, attitudes and behaviour patterns about nuclear strategy [that] has achieved a state of semi-permanence that places them on the level of "culture" rather than a mere "policy."

We can further extend this explanation by positing that, unlike strategy, which is described as a rational calculation of means and ends, strategic culture suggests that no state comes to the International Chessboard with a blank mind. Just as individuals have past experiences that shape the onward trajectory of their lives, so has a state. Every nation has a set of inherited traditions, traumas, and myths that shape its decisions, and this amalgam, in turn, formulates the internal set of factors of a state in the form of strategic culture, which is used as a glass through which policies are evaluated, and these collectivity of beliefs are often self-justificatory. In the case of Pakistan, the strategic culture is dominated by the experience of partition, perpetual rivalry with India, and the military's role in national security.

Pakistan, after coming into being, was entangled in several problems and challenges. Weak infrastructure, low political culture, and an important geo-political position paved the way for a relatively well-equipped and modern military to fill the void created at the political level, hence



transforming Pakistan into a “security state” from its very inception, and resultantly, beliefs and norms were shaped in accordance with the requirements of a security state. Now, as previously discussed, the best instrument to curb democratic ideals, a significant rival to the

security state, like individualism and critical thinking, and forge a national identity was Islam. Hence, since the inception, Islamic identity wasn't a cultural expression but a strategic resource to fight the perceived “existential threat” from India and the internal ethnic fragmentation, like that of [then] NWFP.

In the subsequent stages, Islamic identity was not only organic but reinforced through curricula (as mentioned previously), media, and sermons. It was less about cultural flourishing and more about securing loyalty against “threats”. When religion is used as a strategic instrument and not a philosophical project, it is some equivalent of asking intellectual flourishing to leave by the back door. Because identity was framed strategically, the narrowing down of the intellectual horizon was a natural by-product. Everything was seen in black and white. Any inquiry into raw history, pluralism, and alternative traditions was treated as a threat to “security”. Intellectual curiosity was made subordinate to state survival, producing what I called a crisis of intellectual health, conformity marginalising critical thinking. This didn’t end here. Once embedded into the state’s strategic culture, every new policy crisis, like Afghan jihad, the sectarian politics, and the War on Terror, only functioned to amplify its salience. This scheme of things produced an intellectual dilemma; scholars, writers, and students learnt to avoid suspecting state narrative for the fear of being labelled as heretics and unpatriotic.

To sum up, strategic culture instrumentalised Islam as a mechanism of survival, precipitating the unintended consequences of stifling intellectual diversity. As this rigidity continued to get entrenched, any dissenting or pluralistic thought was cast as disloyal and hence, peripheralised.

Explaining Pakistani Society Through “The Authoritarian Personality”:

The embodiment of strategic culture disseminated from the top wasn’t quite forced. Certainly, the lower strata have to be welcoming enough to accept this culture. Any policy or, in this case, set of policies applied from the top could be only embodied after trickling down by the lower strata when conditions are conducive for it. And the Pakistani society provided a fertile ground. I here introduce my second theoretical framework, Adorno’s concept of “*The Authoritarian Personality*”, to discuss the internal set factors of individuals in Pakistani society that became an efficient receptor of strategic culture trickled down.

Theodor Adorno, one of the pioneers of the Frankfurt School (a neo-Marxist tradition that employed Freudian psychoanalysis to evaluate the delay of the Communist Revolution), was funded by the Jewish Scientific Committee of America to trace the origins of anti-Semitism in the Third Reich. Upon examination, Adorno and his fellows discovered some common threads in what they called The Authoritarian Personality. But before I move to discussing the characteristics, here is a brief background. In post-World War 1 Germany, parents trained their children in strict disciplines due to financial strains, which resulted in building resentment among the inter-war period generation, and they sought a “messiah” under whom to gather and project their frustration against a foreign group. Additionally, ethnocentrism had witnessed a surge in this period, which became another underlying personality syndrome of what they called the Authoritarian personality. In these moments of crisis, individuals feel insecure and jump onto any strong bandwagon. And what could’ve been a better bandwagon than Hitler’s Reichstag erected on anti-intellectualism, ethnocentrism, and unquestionable obedience, which culminated in the loss of individualism, critical thinking, and scapegoating Jews.

Notwithstanding the assumption that Pakistan and Hitler’s Germany are cut from the same cloth (there are certainly, various cultural, social and political differences), one can still employ Adorno’s concept or at least, draw some insights from it to explain Pakistan’s intellectual stagnancy, to prove that Adorno’s theory isn’t just a European relic but a living pathology that predominates conventional societies like Pakistan.

In Pakistan, intellectual life is deeply bound by traditions and religious interpretations. Not only that, the educational curricula only filter “approved knowledge”, which effectively marginalises curiosity and exploration, and any deviation from religious and nationalist conventions is stigmatised. Additionally, citizens who challenge prevailing norms, liberals, and dissenting journalists are labelled “foreign agents”. Any act of introspection and emotional nuance is ridiculed as “soft”, while hard certainties, be it religious or political, that limit the cultivation of critical and reflective modes of thought are prioritised.

Although Adorno enlisted 9 major characteristics of an authoritarian personality that abhors intellectualism, I still confined myself, in the preceding paragraph, to conventionalism, Authoritarian aggression, and anti-introspection.

Social problems like poverty, corruption, etc., aren't seen as a structural failure but a foreign conspiracy. This phenomenon of scapegoating blocks honest self-criticism. Additionally, public discourse in Pakistan is disproportionately preoccupied with regulating sexuality and using women as "objects of honour". This obsessive fixation with rigid sexual behaviour signals a repressed society where intellectual energy is diverted towards moral policing of women's dress.

Conclusion:

From this essay, what emerges is not a critique of structure that conspires to keep people subordinate but rather an indictment of the intellectual habits they engender; for a society that persistently subordinates inquiry to conformity, and reflection to survival, not only constrains its present imagination, but gradually relinquishes the very faculties through which it might have once conceived, contested, and perhaps realized, an alternative trajectory.

If you want to submit your articles and/or research papers, please visit the [Submissions](#) page.

To stay updated with the latest jobs, CSS news, internships, scholarships, and current affairs articles, join our [Community Forum!](#)

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift

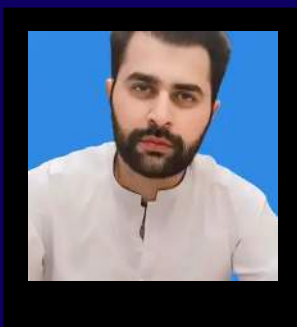
You may like: [Analyzing "The Making Of Pakistan: A Study In Nationalism" by K.K. Aziz](#)

Also read: [The Middle Class in Pakistan](#)



The Pleasure of Procrastination

About the Author



Abdul Basit | MS International Relations | Researching soft power, cultural diplomacy and global politics | Writing on geopolitics, foreign policy and defence affairs.



A procrastinator is a person who keeps putting things off. Their task is always very clear, and yet they do not get started on it. Instead, they make tea. They reorganise a drawer. They follow a thought down a seven-tab rabbit hole on a topic entirely unrelated to the work they should be doing. And in the doing of all this, they feel something that the productivity literature never quite acknowledges: relief. Ease. A not-unpleasant hum of the present moment, uncontaminated by the anxiety of beginning. This sensation, the specific pleasure of putting things off, is not a character flaw dressed up in feeling. It is a neurochemical event, an evolutionary inheritance, and one of the more fascinating puzzles in the contemporary psychology of human behaviour.

The word procrastination carries its reproach etymologically. It derives from the Latin *procrastinare*: *pro* meaning “forward” and *crastinus* meaning “belonging to tomorrow.” The Romans apparently had the same problem. But the moral weight that modernity has attached to the concept, the idea that delay is laziness, that laziness is failure, that any moment not directed toward productive ends is squandered, is a more recent invention, inseparable from the Protestant



work ethic and its secular descendants. It is worth pausing on this before reaching for the neuroscience, because the guilt that procrastination produces is not a natural response to delay. It is a culturally installed response to a culturally defined obligation.

The question of why procrastination feels good is, therefore, also, underneath it, a question about what our relationship to work, pleasure, and time is, and whether the framework we have inherited for thinking about all three is honest.

The brain's role in making delay pleasurable is now reasonably well understood. According to neuroscience [research](#), when a person is confronted with a task, two systems are in constant negotiation: the limbic system, which is old, fast, and concerned only with immediate emotional comfort, and the prefrontal cortex, which is slower, more recently evolved, and in charge of planning, delayed gratification, and abstract future orientation. The limbic system reacts to an aversive task, something that is difficult, uncertain, boring, or that makes one fear doing poorly, as a mild threat and seeks relief. That relief is an evasion. The moment the procrastinator turns away from the task, the discomfort is gone. The brain interprets the disappearance as a reward, releasing a little dopamine into the system.

The brain doesn't know or care if relief is temporary. It records the avoidance as working. It files it as a successful coping mechanism. So the next time the aversive task comes around, the neural pathway toward avoidance is already there and a little more worn.



Dopamine's role in this dynamic is worth examining carefully, because it is widely misunderstood. The popular account of dopamine frames it as a reward chemical, the brain's way of saying "that felt good." The more accurate account, developed by neuroscientist Wolfram Schultz and elaborated by Anna Lembke in *Dopamine Nation*, is that dopamine is primarily an anticipation signal: it fires in response to the prediction of reward rather than the reward itself. This distinction matters enormously for understanding procrastination.

When a person sits at their desk with the task undone and reaches instead for their phone, the dopamine hit they receive is not from the phone's content. It is from the anticipation of distraction; from the moment they decide to look. Every potential scroll, every new tab, every cup of tea represents a micro-reward loop: predict pleasure, receive a dopamine pulse, act, receive slightly less dopamine than predicted, seek the next prediction. The procrastinator is not, in any meaningful sense, relaxing. They are operating a slot machine with their own neurochemistry.

The temporal dimension of this dynamic is captured by what psychologists call [temporal discounting](#); the universal human tendency to prefer rewards that arrive sooner rather than later, even when the later reward is objectively larger. A 2024 study in *Scientific Reports* by researchers at New York University found that individual differences in temporal discounting robustly predicted procrastination behaviour in real-world settings: people who valued immediate rewards over delayed rewards procrastinated more, controlling for conscientiousness, anxiety, and other personality factors.

The finding confirms what one might suspect: the pleasure of procrastination is partly the pleasure of the present tense. The unfinished task is weeks away, abstract, and surrounded by the uncertainty of whether it will be well done. The cup of tea is here, warm and certain. The brain's arithmetic, evolved on the time horizons of immediate survival rather than semester deadlines, consistently chooses the tea.

But procrastination is not always an avoidance of difficulty or aversiveness. One of the more surprising findings in recent research is that people also procrastinate on things they genuinely enjoy, and for a reason that is, in its own way, almost touching. [A 2025 study published in PNAS Nexus](#) by Linda Hagen and Ed O'Brien found that individuals postpone the resumption of enjoyable activities following an absence, in the hope that the return will be more special, more meaningful, more commensurate with the importance the activity has for them. After the COVID-19 lockdowns ended, surveyed Americans said they waited longer to return to restaurants, movie theatres, parties, and family gatherings, not because they didn't want to go, but because they wanted the reunion to feel worthy of the yearning they had accumulated. In another experiment, adults asked to send a brief text message to a friend were less likely to do so the larger they perceived the friendship gap to be. The longer the absence, the higher the threshold for return. This is the same reason we procrastinate on tasks. The imagined version of the thing is, for a time, more satisfying than the actual thing. This is a remarkable finding. It means that procrastination is not simply the avoidance of pain. It is, sometimes, the cultivation of pleasure's anticipatory form; a kind of deliberate longing that heightens the thing by deferring it.

This connects to a broader psychological phenomenon that Neil Fiore explored in *The Now Habit*: the counterintuitive observation that scheduled, guilt-free leisure is not the enemy of productivity but its precondition. Fiore's central argument is that procrastination is not fundamentally about laziness. It is a response to the experience of work as a threat to the self, specifically, the threat of imperfect performance, judgment, and failure. When the stakes attached to a task are high enough, the mind retreats from beginning it because beginning it forces a confrontation with the possibility of doing it badly. Delay preserves the comfort of the unlaunched attempt: the essay not yet written cannot yet be bad. There is, in this framing, something almost protective about procrastination; a self-preserving instinct that, taken too far, becomes self-defeating. The solution Fiore proposes is not willpower but play: the restoration of pleasure to the present tense, reducing the task's monopoly on future identity and making the present moment safe to inhabit without the shadow of performance anxiety.

The LSE's Behavioural Science blog took a similarly sympathetic view in a 2024 analysis, [arguing that procrastination can produce genuine cognitive benefits](#) under specific conditions. Deadline-induced time pressure concentrates attention and can produce a form of focused, rapid cognition, the “last-minute miracle” of its title, that more leisurely approaches sometimes fail to summon. Procrastinators who work in bursts of compressed intensity often describe the quality of their late-stage thinking as sharper than the diffuse, uncertainty-ridden efforts that early starters produce over longer periods.

This is not a universal truth, and the research based on “active procrastination” is contested, but it gestures toward something real: that urgency is itself a cognitive state with productive properties and that the pleasurable deferral that precedes it is not always pure waste. The period of not-working contains percolation, unconscious processing, and the quiet development of ideas that have not yet been asked to perform.

In *The War of Art*, Steven Pressfield refers to the force that causes delay as “Resistance” and makes the case that it is strongest when the task at hand is crucial. He states, “We will feel more resistant toward pursuing a call or action, the more important it is to our soul’s evolution.” There is something psychologically accurate about this observation, even when translated from Pressfield’s somewhat mystical vocabulary into plainer cognitive terms.



Trivial jobs are not the ones that individuals tend to put off the most. They are the ones that are connected to identity, ambition, and anxiety: artistic endeavour, the challenging discussion, the job application, the item that, in the event of failure, reveals something about your identity. Administrative duties are completed.

The novel sits untouched for months. The avoidance is proportional to the meaning, and the meaning produces a dopamine spike of avoidance more reliably than any trivial errand could.

What the longitudinal evidence suggests, however, is that the pleasures of procrastination are not evenly distributed across a life. Procrastination tends to decrease as people become older and take on more defined tasks, according to an 18-year [study published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology in 2026](#), which followed 3,023 people from late adolescence into adulthood.

Individuals who transitioned from school to the workforce had the sharpest declines in delay behavior, not because they became more moral, but rather because the repercussions of delay became more severe and urgent.

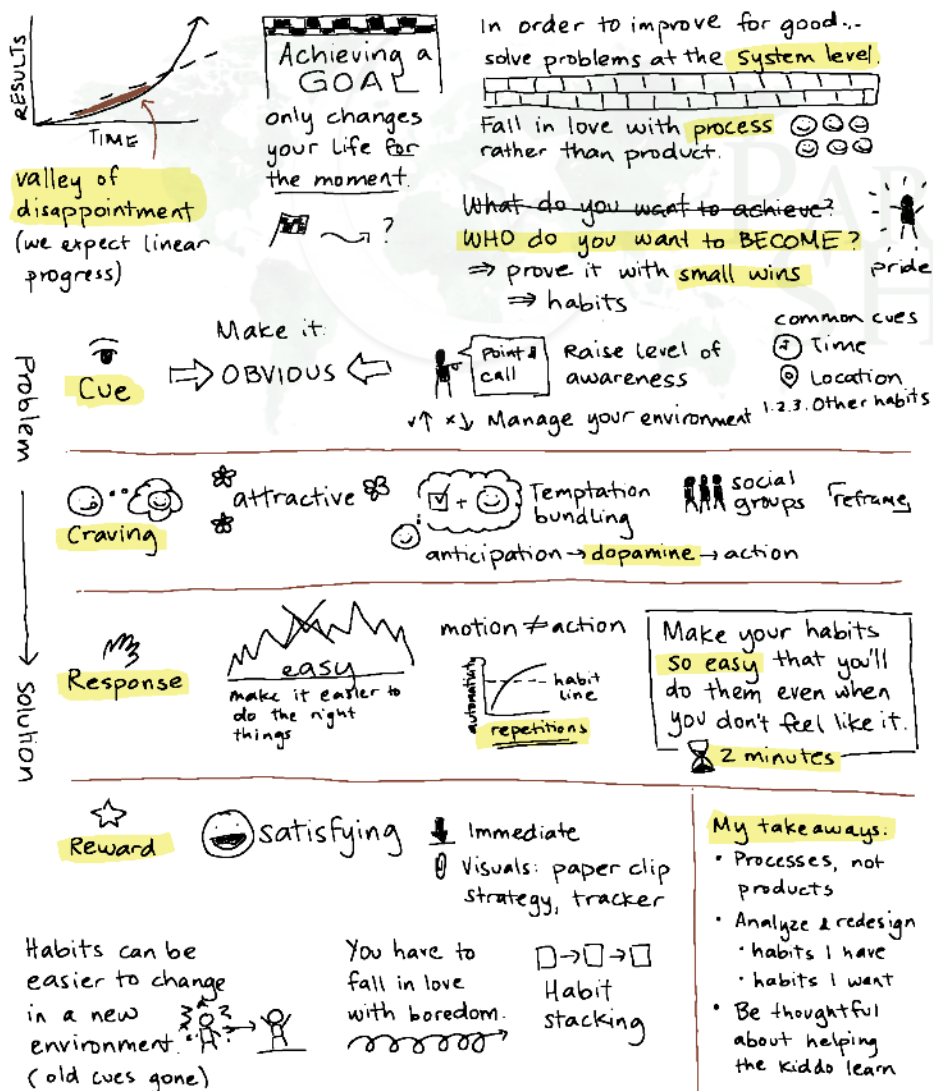
Long-term harm was more startling: over two decades later, lower academic attainment, lower income, fewer promotions, and worse health outcomes were all predicted by higher procrastination in young adulthood. The pleasure of the afternoon drawer-reorganisation compounds, in other words, into a

measurable shortfall in the shape of a life. The brain's arithmetic, always weighted toward the present, misses this entirely.

Atomic Habits

James Clear (2022)

Notes by Sacha Chua 2024-10-21-05



The digital environment has aggravated this ancient dynamic almost beyond recognition. The smartphone is, from the limbic system's perspective, the most perfectly engineered procrastination device in human history: it offers an essentially infinite supply of novel stimuli, each carrying its micro-dopamine prediction, each receding as soon as it is consumed, each demanding a successor. Social media platforms, as James Clear notes in *Atomic Habits*, exploit the cue-routine-reward loop with a precision that no previous distraction technology could approach.

The book you put down when you were bored offered finitude; you could read it through and be done with it. The feed has no end. It is designed for indefinite looping, calibrated to the exact threshold of boredom at which a user would disengage, offering novelty at precisely the rate required to sustain engagement. Against this machinery, the prefrontal cortex's instruments of self-regulation, intention, planning, and delayed gratification are neurologically outmatched. This is not a matter of weakness. It is a matter of engineering.

What emerges from all of this is a picture of procrastination that is considerably more complex and more human than the simple moral failure its cultural reputation suggests. It is a neurological event with identifiable mechanisms. It is an evolutionary strategy repurposed by a modern environment with incentives its designers did not intend. It is, sometimes, a form of self-protection; the mind declining to expose itself to a judgment it fears. It is, occasionally, a form of creativity; the incubation period before the concentrated burst. It is, in its most poignant form, the deferral of pleasure in the hope of making that pleasure more worthy of itself.

None of these things excuses the drawer reorganisation or the seventeen-tab afternoon. But they do suggest that the question procrastination poses is not simply "why don't I just start?" It is the older, harder question: what do I actually want and what am I actually afraid of? Waiting on the desk is rarely just a task. It is a mirror that the procrastinator, in the pleasurable act of looking away, is precisely trying to avoid.

Dopamine Boosters that Can Lead to Addiction



Alcohol



Caffeine



Sugar



Social Media



Video Games



Substance Use



& More



The solution, such as it is, lies not in the elimination of pleasure but in its redistribution. Thibaut Meurisse's *Dopamine Detox* and Anna Lembke's *Dopamine Nation* converge on a similar prescription: that the overstimulated reward system, which has had its sensitivity calibrated by years of instant gratification, cannot be conquered by willpower alone. It must be recalibrated by deliberate reduction; by boring stretches of present-moment discomfort that allow the prefrontal cortex to reclaim territory from the limbic system.

This is neither quick nor enjoyable. But it has the virtue of working with the brain's actual architecture rather than against it. The goal is not to abolish the pleasure of procrastination but to restore the deeper pleasure of the finished thing; to allow the completed task, the sent message, the returned friendship, to deliver the satisfaction it was always capable of delivering, but which the brain had outsourced to the preview and forgotten to collect.

As it has always been, tomorrow is still a mysterious place. Rarely is intelligence, skill, or even discipline the difference between the individual who resides there and the one who returns to the present. It is the readiness to start imperfectly, in a moment that is never as hospitable as the one that is envisioned in the future. The drawer will remain disorganised. The tea will become chilled. If the task is started poorly, it will eventually become something. Ultimately, that is the only pleasure that endures.

If you want to submit your articles and/or research papers, please visit the [Submissions](#) page.

To stay updated with the latest jobs, CSS news, internships, scholarships, and current affairs articles, join our [Community Forum!](#)

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

You may like: [Scroll Fatigue: How Social Media Hijacks Our Attention and Rewires Our Minds](#)

Also read: [Violence and Video Games: Separating Fact from Fiction](#)



Strait of Hormuz: The Hidden Food-Security Crisis

About the Author



Dr. Mureed Kazim is a research fellow at the National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA).

Burning oil infrastructure, disrupted shipping routes, and a sharp fall in maritime flows are only the first visible signs of the current US-Israel-Iran conflict. The next effects may be felt far from the Gulf, in the form of higher prices for wheat flour, edible oil, and fertilizers. For agrarian economies like Pakistan, Hormuz can no longer be seen only as an oil chokepoint. It must now be understood as a food-security risk.

According to [UNCTAD's March 2026 assessment](#), the Strait of Hormuz carries around a quarter of global seaborne oil trade and substantial volumes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and fertilizers. Its data show that, in 2024, about [84% of crude oil and 83% of LNG](#) transported through the Strait went to Asian markets, while one-third of global seaborne fertilizer trade passed through this corridor.

In early March 2026, daily ship transits through Hormuz dropped by 97% from the pre-conflict average. This matters because modern food systems run on energy and fertilizer before they run on grain. Beyond energy, the Gulf is central to the global fertilizer industry: UNCTAD notes that countries in the region account for 13% of global nitrogen exports and 9 percent of phosphate-fertilizer nutrient exports. Hence, the drivers of food security are being compromised by the ongoing conflict.

FAO's Chief Economist cautioned that if the conflict stretches beyond 40 days while input costs remain high, farmers may be forced to use fewer inputs, plant less, or shift to less fertilizer-intensive crops. The [FAO Food Price Index averaged 128.5 points in March 2026](#), up 2.4% from February, while international wheat prices rose 4.3%, partly on expectations of reduced plantings linked to higher fertilizer costs. FAO's own agrifood assessment of the conflict notes that disruptions through Hormuz are raising energy and agricultural input costs worldwide, with fertilizer shortages and higher energy prices threatening crop yields.

In Pakistan and South Asia, this disruption is badly timed. Wheat harvesting is followed by preparation for Kharif crops such as cotton, rice, and maize. Pakistan's Economic Survey [2024-25](#) defines the Kharif season as April-September and notes that fertilizer use is split almost evenly across Rabi and Kharif, with major crops including wheat, cotton, rice, maize, and sugarcane. This is exactly when fertilizer stocks, procurement decisions, and farm credit arrangements become critical.

As Kharif sowing and input planning accelerate, higher fertilizer prices or delayed supply would translate into suboptimal fertilizer application by farmers, delayed sowing cycles, and reduced yields for staple and cash crops, especially rice and cotton. Weakened nutrient management during Kharif can also have knock-on effects for the subsequent Rabi wheat cycle, creating a ripple effect into the next harvest year.

Countries like Pakistan rely on imported fuel to run irrigation systems, transport crops, and power food supply chains. When energy prices spike because of maritime disruption, the cost of producing and moving food rises almost immediately, turning a distant maritime crisis into a very real challenge at the dinner table.

UNCTAD estimates that 27% of Pakistan's seaborne fertilizer imports in 2024 originated in the Persian Gulf region. Pakistan's agriculture sector still contributes 23.5% to GDP and employs over 37% of the labor force. The Pakistan Economic Survey 2024-25 also records that DAP availability for Kharif 2025 was estimated at 687,000 tonnes against the projected demand of 788,000 tonnes, indicating a shortfall of 201,000 tonnes. A prolonged Hormuz disruption would therefore hit not only petroleum costs but also the input chain behind wheat, rice, cotton, and sugarcane.

The conflict also damages food security at the ecological level. UNEP has warned that pollution from uncontrolled fires can enter soil and water, leach into groundwater, and be absorbed by crops, contaminating food supplies; it has also warned that strikes on desalination plants risk catastrophic consequences for communities that depend on them for water. For a region where energy infrastructure, ports, desalination systems, and coastal ecosystems are tightly connected, environmental damage can become food-chain damage.

Pakistan's food security remains structurally vulnerable despite adequate national food production. WFP notes that nearly half of an average Pakistani household's monthly expenditure goes towards food and that 82% of the population cannot afford a healthy diet. It also reports that 18% of children under five suffer from acute malnutrition and around 40% are stunted. This means that shocks such as higher fuel prices, fertilizer unavailability, and increased freight costs do not remain abstract macroeconomic problems; they directly affect affordability and nutrition.



In this scenario, Islamabad should use every available diplomatic channel, the UN, the IMO, Gulf capitals, Tehran, and Washington to push for de-escalation and secure navigation. At home, it should establish a Hormuz contingency cell linking the ministries of finance, commerce, national food security, petroleum, and maritime affairs.

Pakistan's response must begin with urgent economic and logistical preparedness. It should diversify fertilizer sourcing, expand emergency reserves of DAP and edible oil, secure trade-finance and shipping insurance support, and establish a fast-track customs and port-clearance system for agricultural inputs.

The second priority is social protection. The government should prepare targeted support for small farmers if input prices rise sharply and build automatic relief measures for low-income households through existing cash-transfer systems.

The third is maritime resilience: stronger spill-response capacity around Karachi and Gwadar, improved coastal monitoring, and a standing plan to protect fisheries and coastal livelihoods if shipping disruptions worsen.

If instability in Hormuz persists, Pakistan will feel the effects not first in strategic briefings but in the price of food. That is why a maritime crisis in the Gulf must now be treated as a food-security emergency at home.

If you want to submit your articles and/or research papers, please visit the [Submissions](#) page.

To stay updated with the latest jobs, CSS news, internships, scholarships, and current affairs articles, join our [Community Forum](#)!

The views and opinions expressed in this article/paper are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Paradigm Shift.

You may like: [Beyond Hormuz: Mapping Global Maritime Chokepoints](#)

Also read: [Iran and the Strait of Hormuz: Strategy, and the Stalemate](#)





Looking for **jobs and internships**? Or tips to **ace your interviews**?

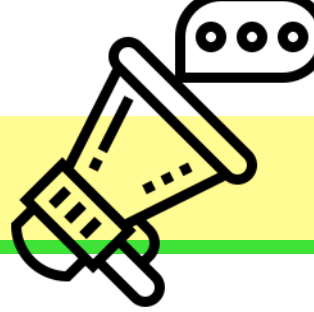
Check out the relevant posts **on our forums!**

Visit:

ParadigmShift.com.pk/community-forum

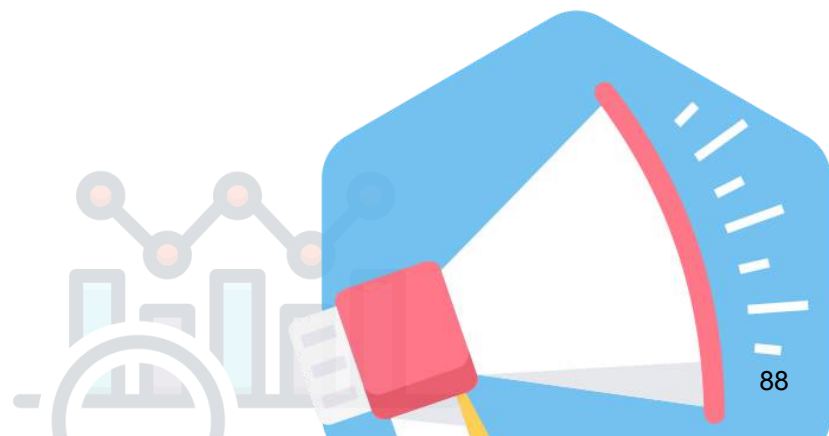


Advertise with Paradigm Shift!



1. Our primary target market is 18–40 years of age.
2. Our social media reach is over 350,000+ & growing.
3. The website has around 50k – 150k monthly hits.
4. Our content has been cited in leading international publications such as The Diplomat, Modern Diplomacy, E-ir.info, Eurasia review, Global Village Space, and more.
5. We receive submissions from the best national & international universities such as QAU, NUST, UoWD, Harvard, LUMS, Warwick, IBA, Queen Mary, University of London, NDU, SZABIST, Aarhus University, University of Hertfordshire, Shanghai University – amongst others

Our Advertisers



Become Part of the Paradigm Shift Team!

Work with us!

Do you want to become part of the Paradigm Shift team?

We are always on the lookout for talented writers, editors, social media specialists, and graphic designers.



[Click here](#) for more details - or simply send us your cv & portfolio at editor@paradigmshift.com.pk for a chance to join our team.



Submit your own work!

Do you want to share your own voice with the world? Are you interested in writing but can't find the right platform? Do you have research work that you haven't published yet?

[Click here](#) to find out how you can become one of our authors!

Strait of Hormuz: The Hidden Food-Security Crisis

