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CSS PLATFORM

CSS Platform –

ISRAEL'S ALLIANCE WITH WASHINGTON: CRACKS IN THE WALL AMID REGIONAL FIRES

Author: Marusha Kamran Hashmi

Summary:

The article highlights significant shift in one of the world's most enduring alliances—the partnership between the United States and Israel. While the Middle East continues to oscillate between conflict and fragile pauses, the recent ceasefire between Washington and Tehran, mediated by Pakistan, has exposed deeper lines beneath the surface. Even as tensions momentarily eased, Israel's renewed military actions signalled that the region was not stepping back from conflict but merely reshuffling its fault lines. Against this backdrop, the once rock-solid US-Israel alliance appears to be quietly drifting, not collapsing outright, but stretching under the weight of diverging priorities.

At the heart of this shift lies a difference in strategic outlook. Israel, driven by a doctrine of pre-emption and deterrence, sees urgency in weakening Iran and its proxies while the window is open. The United States, on the other hand, seems increasingly wary—burdened by global commitments, economic concerns, and a reluctance to be dragged into another prolonged conflict. This divergence is no longer confined to closed-door diplomacy; it is now playing out in public, where Washington's calls for restraint meet Israel's determination to press ahead. The article argues that this is not a rupture but a recalibration, a “managed divergence” where both allies remain formally aligned yet begin to chart their own courses. In this shifting landscape, even middle powers like Pakistan are finding space to step in, subtly reshaping regional dynamics and hinting at a more complex, multipolar order.

Overview:

The article examines the evolving dynamics of the US-Israel alliance, highlighting how changing strategic priorities, regional conflicts, and emerging diplomatic actors are reshaping a historically strong partnership without fully breaking it.

NOTES :

The article analyses the gradual divergence between the United States and Israel within the context of ongoing Middle Eastern conflicts. It highlights how the April 2026 US-Iran ceasefire, mediated by Pakistan, revealed underlying tensions rather than resolving regional instability. Israel continues to pursue an aggressive, pre-emptive military strategy aimed at weakening Iran and its proxies, while the United States adopts a more cautious approach due to global commitments and concerns about economic disruption, particularly energy markets. The divergence is increasingly visible in public discourse, marking a shift from traditionally private disagreements. Despite this, the alliance remains intact due to strong military, intelligence, and political ties. The concept of “managed divergence” is central, indicating that both states are still aligned but pursuing different strategic priorities. The article also emphasises the growing role of middle powers like Pakistan in regional diplomacy, suggesting a shift towards a more multipolar global order.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Topics:

- International Relations: Alliances and shifting global power dynamics
- Current Affairs: Middle East conflict and US foreign policy
- Pakistan Affairs: Pakistan's role in regional diplomacy

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that even strong allies can start to disagree when their interests change. The United States and Israel have long been close partners, but now they are seeing situations differently. For example, Israel wants to

take strong military action against Iran, while the US prefers caution to avoid a larger war. This difference does not mean they are no longer allies, but it shows that their relationship is changing. The article also highlights that countries like Pakistan can sometimes play important roles in global diplomacy, even if they are not major powers.

Facts and Figures:

- April 2026 US-Iran ceasefire mediated by Pakistan
- Israel resumed military operations in Lebanon after ceasefire
- US concerned about impact on global energy markets
- Alliance remains intact due to strong military and political ties
- Emerging role of middle powers in diplomacy

To wrap up, alliances do not always shatter with a bang; sometimes they shift, almost imperceptibly, until the change becomes undeniable. The US-Israel relationship still stands, but it no longer rests on perfectly aligned interests. In a world tilting toward complexity and multipolarity, even the strongest partnerships must adapt or risk strain. What we are witnessing is not the end of an alliance, but its evolution—slow, uneven, and full of consequences yet to unfold.

Difficult Words and Meanings:

- Interludes – short pauses between events
 - Meaning: temporary breaks in a continuous process
 - Synonym: intervals
 - Antonym: continuity
- Turbulent – full of disorder or conflict
 - Meaning: unstable and chaotic situation
 - Synonym: volatile
 - Antonym: calm
- Prudent – showing careful judgment
 - Meaning: wise and cautious decision-making
 - Synonym: judicious
 - Antonym: reckless
- Contention – disagreement or dispute
 - Meaning: argument or conflict between parties
 - Synonym: dispute
 - Antonym: agreement
- Scrutiny – close and critical examination
 - Meaning: careful observation or inspection
 - Synonym: inspection
 - Antonym: neglect
- Jeopardize – to put at risk
 - Meaning: to endanger something
 - Synonym: threaten
 - Antonym: secure
- Orchestrated – carefully planned or arranged
 - Meaning: organized strategically
 - Synonym: coordinated
 - Antonym: disorganized

LIFE BEYOND EVERY FALL

Author: Fatima Jalali

Summary:

The article presents life as a continuous process of falling and rising, emphasizing resilience as the defining feature of human existence. Using the metaphor of a ball, it argues that individuals possess an inner strength that determines how they respond to setbacks. Failure is not portrayed as an endpoint but as a formative experience that builds character, sharpens understanding, and lays the groundwork for future success. While success may inspire, it is failure that truly shapes individuals by revealing their hidden strength and capacity to endure.

The article further explores how resilience is often overlooked and must be consciously recognized and cultivated. It stresses that discipline, hope, and willingness to persist are more reliable than fleeting motivation. At times, individuals may feel exhausted and unable to rise, yet such moments are part of the journey which remind us that resilience must be rebuilt repeatedly. This piece of writing concludes that life is not defined by the number of falls but by the determination to rise again, urging individuals to actively use their potential and seek hope rather than surrender to despair.

Overview:

The article highlights resilience, self-awareness, and perseverance as essential qualities for overcoming life's challenges and achieving personal growth.

NOTES :

The article explains that life's true measure lies in how individuals respond to failure rather than how often they succeed. It uses the metaphor of a ball to illustrate resilience, suggesting that inner strength determines one's ability to rise after setbacks. Failure is presented as a constructive force that fosters learning, adaptation, and growth. The article also emphasizes that resilience is not constant and requires continuous rebuilding through discipline and hope. It highlights the importance of recognizing one's inner potential and actively using it, as unused strength diminishes over time. Furthermore, it discusses how prolonged hardship can create a sense of darkness, but this darkness often results from a lack of effort to seek hope rather than its complete absence. Ultimately, the article underscores the importance of choice—while falling may be inevitable, rising again depends on individual will and determination.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Topics:

- Essay: Failure and success, resilience, human struggle
- Motivation

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that life is full of ups and downs, and everyone faces failure at some point. However, failure is not the end; it helps us learn and become stronger. For example, a student who fails an exam can improve and succeed later through hard work. The article also shows that inner strength is important, but we must use it actively. Even when we feel tired or hopeless, we should keep trying because success depends on our effort to rise again.

Facts and Figures:

- No statistical data provided; the article is conceptual and philosophical in nature

In a nutshell, life's essence lies not in avoiding failure but in mastering the art of rising after it. It suggests that resilience is both a gift and a responsibility that must be nurtured through effort, discipline, and hope. In the end, the strength of a person is not measured by how hard they fall, but by how firmly they choose to stand again.

Difficult Words and Meanings:

- Resilient – able to recover quickly; Synonym: strong; Antonym: fragile

- Unpredictable – not certain; Synonym: uncertain; Antonym: predictable
- Reflection – deep thinking; Synonym: contemplation; Antonym: neglect
- Diminish – to reduce gradually; Synonym: decrease; Antonym: increase
- Discipline – self-control; Synonym: control; Antonym: indiscipline
- Exhausted – extremely tired; Synonym: drained; Antonym: energetic
- Perseverance – continued effort; Synonym: persistence; Antonym: giving up

INSTITUTIONAL DECAY, NOT RESOURCE SCARCITY LIES AT THE HEART OF PAKISTAN'S CRISIS

Summary:

The article argues that Pakistan's crisis is not rooted in a lack of resources but in the steady erosion of its institutions, which have lost their capacity to govern effectively. Once seen as the backbone of justice and administration, these institutions now struggle under corruption, nepotism, and weak accountability. This decay has set off a chain reaction—mismanagement of resources, weakening of the rule of law, and a gradual collapse of public trust. The judicial system falters with delayed justice, educational and health sectors deteriorate in quality, and political interference chips away at merit and efficiency. As governance falters, the state appears less like a steward of public welfare and more like a fragile structure riddled with cracks.

The article further contends that institutional breakdown fuels broader instability, turning governance failures into social and political unrest. Weak accountability breeds corruption, while the absence of rule of law invites anarchy and entrenches feudal practices. Public frustration spills onto the streets, and mistrust deepens as citizens lose faith in elected representatives and state mechanisms. Data from global indices underscores this fragility, with Pakistan ranking poorly in rule of law and governance standards. Ultimately, the article suggests that resource scarcity is merely a symptom, not the disease. Unless institutions are rebuilt on foundations of accountability, transparency, and merit, the country risks remaining trapped in a cycle where crises resurface, no matter how often temporary fixes are applied.

Overview:

The article highlights how institutional decay, rather than resource scarcity, is the primary driver of Pakistan's political, economic, and social crises, emphasising the need for strong governance and accountability.

NOTES :

The article critically examines the role of institutional decay in Pakistan's ongoing crises, arguing that weak governance structures are the root cause of economic mismanagement and social instability. It highlights how corruption, nepotism, and lack of accountability have eroded the effectiveness of key institutions, including the judiciary, education, and health sectors. The weakening of the rule of law has compromised state authority, encouraged feudal practices, and undermined human rights. Poor governance has also led to unequal distribution of resources, fuelling interprovincial tensions and militancy. The article cites data such as Pakistan's low ranking in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index and moderate performance in CPIA governance indicators to support its argument. It also points to declining public trust, with surveys showing low confidence in elected representatives, making society more vulnerable to manipulation and unrest.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs: Governance crisis and institutional decline
- Current Affairs: Political instability and public trust deficit
- Public Administration: Institutional efficiency and governance failure

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that Pakistan's problems are not mainly because it lacks resources, but because its institutions are weak. Institutions like courts, schools, and government departments are not working properly due to corruption and poor management. For example, when courts delay justice or schools provide low-quality education, it affects the whole country. Similarly, when resources are not distributed fairly, it creates conflict among provinces. The main idea is that if institutions become strong and fair, many of Pakistan's problems can be solved.

Facts and Figures:

- Pakistan ranks 129 out of 142 in the Rule of Law Index
- CPIA governance rating: 3 out of 6
- Only 36% of citizens trust the National Assembly (Gallup 2025)
- Weak institutions linked to corruption, poor governance, and unrest

To sum up, The article reminds that without strong institutions, even abundant resources can be squandered. Nations are not held together by wealth alone but by the integrity of the systems that manage it. Until Pakistan strengthens its institutional backbone, every attempt at reform may only scratch the surface, leaving the core issues unresolved.

Difficult Words and Meanings:

- Nepotism – favouritism based on relationships; Synonym: favoritism; Antonym: meritocracy
- Erosion – gradual decline; Synonym: deterioration; Antonym: strengthening
- Accountability – responsibility for actions; Synonym: answerability; Antonym: irresponsibility
- Anarchy – absence of order; Synonym: chaos; Antonym: order
- Mismanagement – poor handling of resources; Synonym: inefficiency; Antonym: organization
- Discontent – dissatisfaction; Synonym: frustration; Antonym: satisfaction
- Militancy – aggressive political action; Synonym: extremism; Antonym: moderation

FIGHTING RADICALISM

Author: Mohammad Ali Babakhel

Summary:

Pakistan's response to extremism since the September 11 attacks has largely revolved around kinetic measures, where force overshadowed ideological engagement. Security operations and peace accords attempted to contain violence, yet the deeper roots of radical thought remained unchallenged. Legal and institutional frameworks stayed reactive, with punishment prioritized over prevention. The article argues that extremism cannot be dismantled through force alone. A diagnostic approach is essential, one that examines causes rather than symptoms. Rehabilitation, reintegration, and deradicalisation must form the core of policy. Civil society, local governments, and non-state actors must share responsibility. Without collective ownership, efforts remain fragmented and ineffective.

The analysis further shows structural weaknesses in Pakistan's counter-extremism strategy. Education systems fail to promote tolerance, while millions of out-of-school children remain vulnerable to radical narratives. Deradicalisation programmes, though present, suffer from weak monitoring and limited scale. Social stigma, distrust, and cultural resistance hinder reintegration of former militants. Online spaces amplify extremist propaganda, while counter-narratives remain weak and scattered. Poverty, injustice, and identity crises catalyze the cycle of violence. The article concludes that only a holistic strategy can succeed, one that blends policy reform, community engagement, digital awareness, and socio-economic uplift. Without such balance, extremism will persist like a shadow that refuses to fade.

Overview:

The article analyzes Pakistan's counter-extremism approach, showing the limitations of security-centric policies. It highlights the need for deradicalisation, community involvement, education reform, and digital countermeasures while exposing structural and societal barriers.

NOTES:

Pakistan's counter-extremism strategy, shaped after the September 11 attacks, relies heavily on force, while ideological roots remain largely untouched, which exposes a critical policy gap. Security operations and peace deals have contained violence to some extent, yet legal and institutional responses remain reactive and punitive rather than preventive. The absence of a diagnostic approach weakens long-term impact, as deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration receive limited focus and suffer from poor monitoring. Education systems fail to promote tolerance, and millions of out-of-school children remain vulnerable to extremist narratives, while fragmented programmes and the lack of a unified national policy reduce overall effectiveness. Social stigma and cultural resistance obstruct reintegration of former militants, and online platforms intensify radicalisation through propaganda. Socioeconomic inequality, political neglect, and identity crises continue to fuel extremism, which reveals that without community engagement, civil society participation, and structural reform, efforts remain scattered and insufficient, allowing extremism to persist beneath the surface.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Topics:

- International Relations: Counterterrorism strategies and non-state actors
- Pakistan Affairs: Extremism, internal security, policy challenges
- Current Affairs: Radicalisation, digital extremism, security dynamics
- Sociology: Social inequality, deviance, community role

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that Pakistan mostly fights extremism through military action, but this is not enough. For example, after operations in areas like Swat, some militants were rehabilitated through training and counselling. However, many programmes fail because society does not accept former extremists. Another example is social media, where false narratives spread easily and influence youth. Millions of children out of school also become easy targets for radical ideas. Countries like the United Kingdom involved civil groups to counter extremism, which shows that community support matters. The key idea is simple. Extremism grows from social and economic problems, so solutions must go beyond force.

Facts and Figures:

- 25.1 million children in Pakistan are out of school
- UK collaborated with 82 civil society organisations in CVE efforts
- Deradicalisation programmes include four phases from selection to monitoring
- Pakistan lacks a unified national deradicalisation policy
- Social media plays a major role in spreading extremist content
- Many programmes rely on donor funding and remain small-scale
- Militancy-hit areas face threats to NGO workers and activists

To sum up, force alone cannot silence an idea. Extremism feeds on neglect, inequality, and ignorance. A narrow lens blinds policy vision. A broader approach lights the path forward. Society must act as a shield, not a spectator. Reform demands courage and clarity. Without unity, efforts scatter like dust. With resolve, peace can take root.

Difficult Words and Meanings:

- Kinetic – relating to motion or force; Synonym: dynamic; Antonym: static
- Deradicalisation – process of reducing extremist beliefs; Synonym: reform; Antonym: radicalisation
- Reintegration – restoration into society; Synonym: inclusion; Antonym: isolation
- Punitive – intended as punishment; Synonym: penal; Antonym: lenient
- Diagnostic – related to identifying causes; Synonym: analytical; Antonym: superficial

HIGH-STAKES DIPLOMACY

Author: Maleeha Lodhi

Summary:

The article highlights high stakes diplomacy between the United States and Iran, with Islamabad emerging as an unexpected but crucial arena of engagement. The writer starts with the significance of talks that, though inconclusive, prevented a total diplomatic breakdown after weeks of war. There was no breakthrough, yet no collapse either, which keeps the door ajar for further negotiations. Both delegations return to their capitals for consultations, while backchannel communication continues quietly beneath the surface. A fragile ceasefire holds for now, but it remains vulnerable to disruption. Pakistan's role stands out as it helped bring both sides to the table, shaping an off ramp from escalation at a moment when the region hovered on the edge of wider conflict.

As the narrative deepens, the article highlights how Pakistan positioned itself as a mediator between deeply divided adversaries. It reflects how the world is shifting into multipolarity, where middle powers influence outcomes once dominated by superpowers. The US and Iran entered talks with sharply opposing demands, ranging from nuclear restrictions to sanctions relief and strategic control issues like the Strait of Hormuz. Despite this gap, both sides showed willingness to continue dialogue, though mistrust remains high. Meanwhile, regional volatility, especially Israel's actions and energy disruptions, complicates stability. Pakistan's diplomatic balancing act between the US,

Iran, Gulf states, and China is described as delicate yet successful. The article concludes that war produced no strategic winner, while diplomacy, though fragile, still holds the only credible path forward.

Overview:

The article examines US Iran talks held in Islamabad and their wider geopolitical implications. It underlines Pakistan's emerging role as a mediator in global diplomacy. It also reflects on shifting power structures in international relations where middle powers now shape outcomes. The discussion blends ceasefire fragility, energy security, and strategic rivalry into a broader picture of uncertain peace.

NOTES:

The article highlights a delicate phase of US Iran diplomacy where Islamabad becomes an unexpected but pivotal platform for engagement after weeks of conflict. It explains that the talks did not produce a final agreement, yet they prevented a complete collapse of dialogue, keeping diplomatic channels alive through consultations and backchannel communication. A fragile ceasefire remains in place, though it is exposed to sudden shocks. Pakistan's role emerges as central, as it facilitated an off ramp from escalation and positioned itself as a mediator between deeply opposed powers. The negotiations reflect a shifting global order where middle powers now shape outcomes once controlled by major states. Despite sharp differences, with the US demanding nuclear restrictions and Iran seeking sanctions relief and strategic autonomy, both sides agreed to continue engagement. The Strait of Hormuz remains a critical pressure point due to its global energy significance, while regional instability, especially in the Middle East, continues to test the durability of peace efforts. Pakistan's diplomatic balancing among the US, Iran, Gulf states, and China demonstrates careful statecraft under complex conditions. Ultimately, the article underlines that no side achieved a strategic victory through war, while diplomacy, though fragile and incomplete, remains the only viable path to prevent further escalation.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- International Relations:
 - Diplomacy and negotiation in conflict zones
 - Multipolar world order and middle power politics
- Pakistan Affairs:
 - Pakistan foreign policy evolution
 - Role of Pakistan in regional and global mediation
- Current Affairs:
 - Middle East conflicts and energy security
 - US Iran relations and global stability

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains how the United States and Iran held talks in Islamabad after a period of war. These talks did not solve everything, but they stopped total collapse of communication. For example, two people in conflict may not agree immediately but still decide to keep talking. Pakistan acted like a bridge between them. Both sides have very different demands. The US wants limits on Iran's nuclear program. Iran wants removal of sanctions. The Strait of Hormuz is important because it carries a large share of global oil, so any disruption affects world prices. Talks continue through indirect channels even if direct agreement is missing.

Facts and Figures:

- Negotiations followed five weeks of conflict
- No formal breakdown of talks reported
- Strait of Hormuz carries major global oil flow
- US and Iran exchanged 10 to 15 key demand points
- Ceasefire still in place but fragile

To sum up, the article presents diplomacy as a narrow but vital bridge over turbulent waters. It shows that even incomplete talks can prevent disaster. Pakistan's role reflects a shift in global influence toward middle powers. Yet peace remains uncertain and fragile. The future depends on patience, dialogue, and restraint rather than force or ambition.

IT'S FAR FROM OVER

Author: Arifa Noor

Summary:

The article explores the aftermath of high level US Iran talks held in Islamabad, where diplomacy paused conflict but failed to deliver a decisive breakthrough. The negotiations conclude without collapse or success, leaving the situation suspended in an uneasy balance. Both sides return to their capitals, while informal communication channels remain active. The writer presents the talks as a developing process rather than a final event, where expectations of instant resolution collide with the slow rhythm of diplomacy. Although no agreement emerges, the continuation of dialogue keeps a narrow window open for future engagement. Pakistan's role is reflected indirectly as part of the broader diplomatic setting that enabled this rare encounter between two long standing adversaries.

As the analysis deepens, the article explores the unresolved sticking points that continue to block progress. These include nuclear concerns raised by the United States, Iran's demand for sanctions relief, and strategic disputes over the Strait of Hormuz and regional ceasefires. Each issue remains a potential trigger for renewed escalation. The writer also highlights how both countries face internal and external pressures that push them toward negotiation despite deep mistrust. Iran struggles with economic strain and post war instability, while the United States faces political and energy related constraints. The wider Middle East remains volatile, with Israel's actions, Gulf anxieties, and shifting alliances adding further complexity. The article concludes that neither war nor diplomacy has reached a clear victory, leaving the region in a state of strategic uncertainty where instability persists and a political settlement remains distant.

Overview:

The article examines the uncertain outcome of US Iran talks held in Islamabad and the fragile state of regional diplomacy. It focuses on unresolved disputes, geopolitical pressures, and the absence of a clear breakthrough. It also reflects on the wider instability across the Middle East and the uncertain trajectory of peace efforts. The narrative highlights how diplomacy remains ongoing but deeply fragile.

NOTES:

The article highlights that US Iran talks in Islamabad ended without a decisive outcome, yet they prevented a total diplomatic collapse and kept communication channels alive. It stresses that negotiations remain a gradual process rather than a quick fix, where expectations of immediate success clash with the slow pace of diplomacy. Key disputes such as nuclear restrictions, sanctions relief, and control over the Strait of Hormuz continue to block agreement, while both sides remain under internal and external pressure to engage. Iran faces economic strain and post war instability, whereas the United States deals with political constraints and energy concerns. The regional environment remains volatile due to Israel Iran tensions and shifting Gulf alliances, which further complicate peace efforts. Despite the absence of a clear victory for either side, diplomacy persists as the only viable path, though the situation remains fragile and uncertain.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- International Relations:
 - Conflict resolution and diplomacy
 - Middle East geopolitics and power rivalry

- Pakistan Affairs:
 - Pakistan role in regional mediation
 - Foreign policy and strategic balancing
- Current Affairs:
 - US Iran relations and global security order
 - Energy politics and Strait of Hormuz significance

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that US Iran talks took place in Islamabad but did not end in agreement. Think of it like two sides in a long dispute agreeing to sit at the same table but not solving the issue. For example, when two students argue but decide to keep talking instead of fighting, the problem is not solved but also not worsened. The US wants Iran to limit nuclear activity. Iran wants relief from sanctions. The Strait of Hormuz is important because it carries a large share of global oil, so any disruption affects prices worldwide. Even without agreement, talks continue through indirect communication, showing diplomacy is still active but fragile.

Facts and Figures:

- Talks held after five weeks of conflict
- No formal agreement or breakdown reported
- Strait of Hormuz carries major global oil flow
- Iran and US exchanged key negotiation demands
- Ceasefire remains unstable but continues
- Multiple regional actors involved in mediation efforts

To sum up, the article shows that diplomacy has not failed, yet it has not succeeded either. The region stands on a thin line where one misstep can reverse fragile calm. Real progress depends on patience and sustained engagement. Until then, uncertainty remains the defining feature of this geopolitical landscape.

BUILDING ON GLOBAL GOODWILL

Author: Ali Tauqeer Sheikh

Summary:

The article argues that Pakistan stands at a rare diplomatic moment, where global goodwill earned through facilitating US Iran engagement can be transformed into tangible regional stability. It frames this opportunity not in abstract prestige but in practical terms, urging Islamabad to redirect its diplomatic capital toward reviving cooperation with India on the Indus Waters Treaty. The writer contends that peace in South Asia carries equal weight to stability in the Middle East, and both depend on structured cooperation rather than episodic diplomacy. The suspension of treaty mechanisms after the 2025 crisis has left a dangerous vacuum, particularly at a time when climate shocks have intensified across the Indus basin. What once functioned as a technical shield against disaster now lies dormant, exposing millions to uncoordinated upstream actions and sudden environmental shocks.

The analysis deepens by linking climate vulnerability with geopolitical inertia. The 2025 floods serve as a stark example of compounded risk, where heatwaves and monsoon surges collided with institutional paralysis. The absence of coordination forced reliance on ad hoc diplomatic signals instead of established technical channels, amplifying damage. The writer stresses that the treaty itself remains legally intact, yet political hesitation blocks its activation. Pakistan, however, now approaches the table with renewed credibility, no longer as a petitioner but as a state that has delivered global diplomatic value. This shift, though temporary, offers a narrow window to propose technical cooperation framed as climate resilience rather than political concession. The article closes with a warning that such openings fade quickly, and failure to act will convert opportunity into regret.

Overview:

The article explores how Pakistan can convert diplomatic goodwill into regional stability through water cooperation with India. It highlights the paralysis of treaty mechanisms, rising climate risks, and the urgency of technical engagement. It presents water diplomacy as a strategic bridge between conflict and cooperation.

NOTES:

The article highlights that Pakistan has earned notable diplomatic goodwill through facilitating US Iran engagement, and this credibility now offers a strategic opening to pursue regional stability through water cooperation with India under the Indus Waters Treaty. It emphasizes that the treaty's mechanisms remain suspended after recent tensions, leaving the Indus basin vulnerable at a time when climate risks are intensifying. The 2025 floods exposed this institutional gap, as the absence of coordinated data sharing and early warning systems increased damage on both sides. Although the treaty remains legally valid, political hesitation continues to block its activation. The article stresses that Pakistan's improved diplomatic standing allows it to approach negotiations from a position of strength rather than dependency, creating space to propose technical cooperation framed around climate resilience instead of political compromise. It further underlines that water security is a shared challenge that transcends borders, and timely coordination on river management, flood warnings, and infrastructure protocols is essential. The key argument rests on urgency, as this diplomatic window is temporary, and failure to act will deepen risks while eroding the goodwill Pakistan has recently secured.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs: Pakistan India relations, Indus Waters Treaty and water disputes
- International Relations: Transboundary water conflicts, Diplomacy and regional cooperation
- Environmental Sciences: Climate change and water security, Disaster risk management
- International Law: Treaty obligations and dispute mechanisms
- Geography: River systems and glacial melt impacts

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains how Pakistan can use its recent diplomatic success to improve relations with India through water cooperation. Think of it like two neighbors who argue often but share the same water supply. If one blocks communication, both suffer during floods or shortages. For example, when heavy rain causes rivers to overflow, early warning systems can save lives. Without cooperation, damage increases. The Indus system connects both countries, so climate change affects them equally. Working together on technical issues like data sharing can reduce risk even if political differences remain.

Facts and Figures:

- Indus Waters Treaty signed in 1960
- Treaty mechanisms disrupted after 2025 tensions
- Three major rivers overflowed simultaneously in 2025
- Himalayan glaciers melting at accelerating rate
- Floods caused by combined heatwaves and monsoon surge
- Millions depend on Indus basin for water security

To wrap up, the article presents diplomacy as a resource that must be invested wisely. Goodwill, if left idle, fades into irrelevance. Water emerges as both a threat and an opportunity, where cooperation can replace confrontation. Pakistan holds a rare strategic card, shaped by credibility and timing. If played with foresight, it may shift the region toward stability. If ignored, the moment will vanish, leaving behind deeper uncertainty.

BACK TO THE TABLE?

Author: Zahid Hussain

Summary:

The article presents a diplomatic moment where fragile engagement between the United States and Iran risks collapse under renewed escalation. It opens with Donald Trump ordering a blockade of Iranian shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, a move that threatens the already delicate ceasefire achieved after weeks of conflict. This decision follows high level talks in Islamabad that, although inconclusive, had preserved the possibility of continued dialogue. The writer argues that such coercive tactics aim to force Tehran into accepting American terms, yet they risk undoing the limited trust built during negotiations. Iran responds with warnings of retaliation, which further heightens volatility and raises the specter of a broader regional confrontation. The blockade also risks drawing external powers into the crisis, given the global dependence on oil flows through this chokepoint.

The discussion then shifts to the substance of the Islamabad talks, described as historic yet incomplete. These were the first meaningful face to face engagements in decades, yet deep divisions remained unresolved. The United States demanded a halt to Iran's nuclear programme and control over enriched uranium, while Iran insisted on its rights under international agreements and refused to relinquish strategic leverage over the waterway. The deadlock reflected entrenched mistrust and rigid positions on both sides. Despite this, the article notes that diplomacy has not fully collapsed, as signals for a second round of talks continue to emerge. Pakistan's role as a mediator enhanced its diplomatic stature, positioning it as a credible facilitator. The article concludes that while hope for dialogue persists, reckless escalation could easily derail progress, leaving the region once again on the brink.

Overview:

The article examines the fragile state of US Iran diplomacy after Islamabad talks and the impact of renewed escalation. It highlights how coercive strategies threaten ceasefire stability and complicate negotiations. It also shows Pakistan's evolving role as a mediator in a volatile geopolitical environment.

NOTES:

The article underlines a tense moment where fragile diplomacy between the United States and Iran risks collapse after Washington imposed a blockade on Iranian shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, a move that threatens the ceasefire achieved after weeks of conflict. This decision followed inconclusive yet historic talks in Islamabad, which had kept the door open for further dialogue, but coercive pressure now aims to force Iran into accepting American demands, particularly on its nuclear programme. Tehran's warning of retaliation has heightened volatility and raised fears of a wider regional confrontation, especially given the global reliance on this critical waterway. Despite the deadlock over key issues such as nuclear restrictions and control of the strait, diplomacy has not entirely broken down, as prospects for another round of talks remain. The article presents Pakistan's role as a mediator as a significant diplomatic gain, yet cautions that reckless escalation could swiftly derail progress and push the region back to the brink of conflict.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- International Relations:
 - Conflict resolution and coercive diplomacy
 - Middle East geopolitics and power rivalry
- Pakistan Affairs:
 - Pakistan's role in global mediation
 - Foreign policy and diplomatic strategy
- Current Affairs:
 - US Iran conflict and ceasefire dynamics

- Energy security and maritime chokepoints
- International Law:
 - Freedom of navigation and naval blockade legality
- Political Science:
 - Power politics and negotiation behavior

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that the United States and Iran are trying to negotiate after conflict, but tension remains high. Imagine two rivals agreeing to talk, but one side applies pressure during the discussion. That weakens trust. For example, blocking a major trade route like the Strait of Hormuz affects not only Iran but many countries that rely on oil. The US wants Iran to stop nuclear development, while Iran wants to keep its rights. Talks help reduce conflict, but harsh actions can restart it. Pakistan acted as a meeting place, helping both sides communicate even without agreement.

Facts and Figures:

- Talks held after six weeks of conflict
- First high level US Iran contact in over four decades
- Strait of Hormuz carries significant global oil supply
- 21 hour negotiation session held in Islamabad
- Two major issues include nuclear programme and waterway control
- Multiple global powers affected by blockade decision

In a nutshell, Diplomacy has opened a narrow path, but power politics threatens to close it. Peace requires patience. One reckless move can undo weeks of effort. The region stands on a thin edge where dialogue competes with confrontation. The choice remains uncertain, but the cost of failure is already clear.

NEW ERA OF PAK-IRAN TIES

Author: Muhammad Amir Rana

Summary:

The article argues that wars rarely yield clear victors, as their true consequences unfold through political shifts and strategic recalibration rather than battlefield triumphs. It places emphasis on diplomacy as the decisive arena where conflicts find closure, noting that Pakistan has attempted to play this role by facilitating engagement between the United States and Iran. However, the writer maintains that such facilitation is only the first step, as deep mistrust and ideological rigidity continue to define Tehran's posture. Iran may have survived the conflict, but survival does not equate to strength, since the country now faces internal strain, economic pressure, and the urgent need for political consolidation. The prospects of restoring past levels of trust appear dim, especially given the entrenched adversarial narrative that shapes Iran's worldview.

The article then expands the discussion to regional implications, suggesting that any progress in US Iran relations could significantly reshape Pakistan's ties with Iran. A gradual thaw could unlock economic opportunities such as the long delayed gas pipeline, enhance border trade, and improve cooperation against militant networks. At the same time, the regional chessboard remains complex, with Israel's response, Gulf alignments, and shifting global power structures influencing outcomes. The writer highlights the emergence of middle powers, with Pakistan positioned as a bridge state navigating competing interests. This evolving order links multiple regions into a fluid geopolitical space. The article concludes that Pakistan holds a rare opportunity to convert diplomatic goodwill into lasting gains, but success will depend on strategic clarity, institutional alignment, and the ability to prioritise long term engagement over short term optics.

Overview:

The article explores the long term implications of the US Iran conflict and Pakistan's mediatory role. It highlights the limits of military success and stresses diplomacy as the decisive force in shaping outcomes. It also examines how shifting global alignments and regional dynamics may redefine Pakistan Iran relations and broader geopolitical structures.

NOTES:

The article highlights that Pakistan's role in facilitating US Iran engagement reflects a broader truth that wars rarely produce decisive winners, as real outcomes emerge through diplomacy rather than force. It stresses that although Iran survived the conflict, it now faces internal political strain, economic pressure, and the need for consolidation, while deep mistrust continues to obstruct progress in US Iran relations. The discussion points out that any improvement in ties between the two could reshape Pakistan Iran relations, opening avenues for economic cooperation such as the gas pipeline, enhanced border trade, and joint counterterrorism efforts. At the same time, regional dynamics remain complex due to Israel's posture, Gulf alignments, and shifting global power structures. The article further underlines the growing role of middle powers, with Pakistan emerging as a bridge state capable of navigating competing interests. It concludes that the regional order is becoming more interconnected and fluid, and Pakistan now holds a strategic opportunity to convert its diplomatic credibility into long term economic and geopolitical gains, provided it demonstrates clarity, consistency, and institutional coordination.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs:
 - Pakistan foreign policy and regional relations
 - Pakistan Iran bilateral relations and border dynamics
- International Relations:
 - Conflict resolution and diplomacy
 - Emergence of multipolar world order
- Political Science:
 - Power transition and role of middle powers
- International Law:
 - Sanctions, treaties, and negotiation frameworks
- History of Pakistan and India:
 - Evolution of Pakistan's regional alliances
- Environmental Sciences:
 - Energy security and strategic resources
- Geography:
 - Strategic importance of maritime chokepoints

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that winning a war is not only about fighting but about what happens afterward. For example, a country may survive conflict but still face economic and political problems. Iran survived the war but now struggles internally. Pakistan helped bring two opposing sides to dialogue, similar to a mediator who helps two rivals talk instead of fight. If relations improve, both Pakistan and Iran can benefit through trade and energy projects. The Strait of Hormuz acts like a narrow gate for global oil, so any tension there affects many countries. The article shows that cooperation can create stability even when trust is weak.

Facts and Figures:

- First direct US Iran engagement in decades facilitated by Pakistan
- Iran Pakistan gas pipeline remains delayed for years

- Strait of Hormuz carries a major share of global oil supply
- Conflict exposed limits of military power in achieving goals
- Regional alliances shifting after recent war dynamics
- Middle powers gaining greater diplomatic influence globally

To sum up, The article argues that power does not always roar through force; it sometimes whispers through dialogue. War may redraw maps, but diplomacy redraws relationships. Pakistan stands at a crossroads where opportunity and responsibility converge. If handled with foresight, this moment may shape a new regional order. If neglected, it may dissolve into yet another missed chance in history's long ledger.

MYTH OF THE CHEMICAL CURE

Author: Murad Moosa Khan

Summary:

The article dismantles the widely accepted notion that mental illnesses stem from chemical imbalances in the brain and that psychiatric drugs restore this imbalance. It argues that this belief, though deeply rooted in public discourse and medical practice, rests more on assumption than scientific certainty. Drawing on the work of Joanna Moncrieff, the writer explains that psychiatric medications do not function like cures for biological defects. Instead, they alter mental and physical states, often dulling emotional intensity or inducing sedation. While such effects may provide temporary relief, they do not address any proven underlying abnormality. The persistence of this narrative owes much to its simplicity, as it offers both doctors and patients a convenient explanation for complex human distress. The discussion then broadens to critique the structural and commercial forces that sustain this myth. The pharmaceutical industry, through strategic marketing, reinforced the idea of chemical correction, shaping global perceptions and clinical practices. In countries like Pakistan, where mental health systems remain fragile, this has led to excessive reliance on medication as the default response. The article highlights how social realities such as poverty, inequality, and violence often lie at the root of psychological suffering, yet these are routinely medicalised. The writer concludes that a meaningful response requires intellectual honesty, balanced use of medication, and greater attention to social determinants, rather than blind faith in a biochemical cure.

Overview:

The article challenges the chemical imbalance theory of mental illness and questions the curative claims of psychiatric drugs. It analyzes pharmaceutical influence, highlights overmedication in weak health systems, and stresses the need to address social causes of distress alongside medical care.

NOTES:

The article challenges the long held belief that mental illness results from chemical imbalance in the brain and that psychiatric drugs restore this balance. It stresses that this explanation is more assumption than proven science. Psychiatric medicines do not correct any confirmed defect but mainly alter mental states, often producing sedation, emotional dulling, or agitation. These effects may reduce distress temporarily, yet they do not cure any verified biological cause. The simplicity of this idea has made it widely accepted in both public thinking and medical practice. The article also highlights how pharmaceutical marketing strengthened this narrative and shaped global treatment habits. In countries like Pakistan, weak mental health systems have increased dependence on medication, often ignoring deeper social causes such as poverty, inequality, and violence. The writer argues that true mental health care requires balance, awareness of social realities, and cautious use of drugs instead of blind reliance on a biochemical cure.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs: Public health system challenges in Pakistan
 - Mental health infrastructure and policy gaps

- Political Science: Role of power structures in shaping public discourse
- Psychology: Theories of mental illness and treatment approaches
- Sociology: Social determinants of health and human behaviour
- Public Administration: Healthcare policy and service delivery limitations
- Gender Studies: Impact of social inequalities on mental health

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that mental illness is not as simple as a chemical problem in the brain. Think of a person who feels sad due to poverty or family issues. Giving medicine may calm emotions but cannot remove the real cause. For example, if stress comes from unemployment, pills cannot create a job. Medicines can help in serious conditions, yet they should not become the only solution. The article teaches that mental health needs both medical care and social support.

Facts and Figures:

- Fewer than one psychiatrist per half a million people in Pakistan
- Antidepressants widely prescribed despite weak scientific backing of imbalance theory
- Fluoxetine marketed in 1980s as correcting serotonin deficiency
- Patients often remain on multiple psychotropic drugs for years
- Side effects include weight gain, metabolic issues and emotional numbness
- Mental health services in Pakistan remain severely underdeveloped

To sum up, The article strips away the veneer of certainty and exposes a fragile truth. Medicine can soothe, yet it cannot solve every wound. Human suffering often grows from social soil, not chemical flaws. A wiser path demands balance, honesty, and courage to confront deeper realities. Only then can mental health care rise above illusion and serve its true purpose.

MIDDLE EAST: A WAR OF ATTRITION

Author: Ambassador M. Alam Brohi

Summary:

The article argues that the ongoing US-Iran conflict has quietly morphed into a war of attrition, where brute force has given way to endurance and staying power. Despite weeks of relentless airstrikes and military escalation, the US-Israel coalition has failed to secure decisive gains, while Iran though battered has managed to hold its ground. The battlefield has shifted from immediate victory to long-term resilience, where the real question is not who hits harder, but who can absorb more and keep standing. Diplomatic efforts, including Pakistan's mediation and ceasefire initiative, have struggled to gain traction due to Washington's impatience and coercive posture, which has only deepened mistrust and stalled meaningful dialogue.

The conflict's ripple effects stretch far beyond the battlefield. Global trade routes are disrupted, energy flows are choked, and the Strait of Hormuz remains a flashpoint with far-reaching economic consequences. Meanwhile, cracks are appearing in traditional alliances, as Gulf states reassess their dependence on US security guarantees and explore new strategic alignments. Public pressure is mounting within the US and Israel, raising political costs for their leadership, while Iran's endurance reinforces its position as a formidable regional actor. In this shifting landscape, Pakistan has found itself thrust into the diplomatic spotlight, but the author cautions that this moment must be handled with care. The real challenge lies not in basking in global attention, but in steering wisely through a volatile geopolitical storm while keeping domestic priorities in sight.

Overview:

The article examines the transformation of the US-Iran conflict into a prolonged war of attrition, highlighting its military, economic, and geopolitical implications, as well as Pakistan's emerging diplomatic role.

NOTES :

The article explains that the US-Iran conflict has evolved into a war of attrition where endurance and resilience matter more than immediate military success. Despite extensive airstrikes and military operations, the US-Israel coalition failed to achieve decisive objectives, while Iran demonstrated the ability to sustain prolonged resistance through asymmetric warfare. Pakistan played a significant role by mediating a ceasefire, although diplomatic progress stalled due to the US's coercive approach and inconsistent messaging. The blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has disrupted global trade and energy supplies, affecting economies worldwide. Gulf states, heavily dependent on oil exports through Hormuz, face increasing vulnerability and are reconsidering their reliance on US security guarantees. Israel has also suffered economic and infrastructural damage, though underreported, and faces growing domestic pressure. Public protests in the US against the war indicate rising political costs for leadership. The article highlights shifting regional dynamics, with Iran emerging as a resilient power and Gulf states exploring alternative security arrangements. It concludes that Pakistan's elevated diplomatic role must be balanced with a focus on internal economic stability.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Topics:

- International Relations: War strategies and conflict resolution
- Current Affairs: Middle East conflict and global energy crisis
- Pakistan Affairs: Pakistan's role in regional diplomacy

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that not all wars end quickly; some become long struggles where both sides try to outlast each other. This is called a war of attrition. For example, even though stronger countries attacked Iran, it did not collapse

because it kept resisting over time. Think of it like a marathon instead of a sprint—winning depends on endurance, not speed. The war is also affecting the whole world because oil routes are blocked, making fuel expensive everywhere. The key idea is that modern wars are not just about weapons but also about patience, economy, and public support.

Facts and Figures:

- Six-week-long war caused heavy destruction on both sides
- Strait of Hormuz carries about 95% of Gulf oil exports
- Protests reported in over 3,000 US cities against the war
- Iran previously sustained an eight-year war with Iraq
- Global trade and energy supplies heavily disrupted

To sum up, The article reminds that wars are no longer won in a flash of firepower but in the slow grind of endurance. It strips away the illusion of quick victories and shows how conflicts drag nations into prolonged uncertainty. In this drawn-out contest, strength lies not just in arms but in patience, resilience, and strategic clarity. For Pakistan, standing at the crossroads of diplomacy and domestic fragility, the moment is both an opportunity and a test—one that demands steady nerves and wiser choices.

PAK-AFGHAN RECONCILIATION

Author: Dr. Tehmina Aslam Ranjha

Summary:

The article grapples with a lingering question that refuses to go away: if the Afghan Taliban claim to have no ties with the TTP, why has terrorism in Pakistan surged since their return to power in 2021? This contradiction sits at the heart of strained Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. Despite repeated demands from Islamabad to sever links with militant groups, Kabul has offered little in the way of concrete action, leaving Pakistan to deal with cross-border attacks while militants find refuge in difficult terrain. Military responses, including targeted operations, have only deepened the diplomatic freeze, turning an already fragile relationship into a tightrope walk between confrontation and cautious engagement.

The article then explores possible pathways to break this deadlock. Confidence-building measures such as reviving trade routes and strengthening existing agreements like APTTA offer one route, while joint border patrolling presents another, more security-focused option. Both solutions run into hard realities—deep mistrust, the contested status of the Durand Line, and the sheer logistical burden of managing a long, porous border. While recent talks facilitated by China have brought a temporary lull in violence, the calm feels more like the eye of the storm than a lasting breakthrough. The article suggests that without genuine cooperation from Kabul, especially on border management, Pakistan will remain stuck in a reactive posture, firefighting symptoms rather than resolving the root cause of instability.

Overview:

The article analyzes the challenges in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, focusing on cross-border militancy, diplomatic tensions, and possible mechanisms for reconciliation such as trade cooperation and joint border management.

NOTES :

The article highlights the resurgence of TTP-led terrorism in Pakistan following the Afghan Taliban's return to power in 2021, raising concerns about alleged links between the two groups. Pakistan has repeatedly demanded that Kabul take verifiable action against militant sanctuaries, but progress remains limited. Military operations like Operation Ghazab lil-Haq targeted terrorist hideouts but also strained diplomatic relations. China has attempted to mediate through informal talks, encouraging de-escalation and confidence-building measures such as reopening

trade routes. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) was designed to regulate trade and curb smuggling, but its effectiveness has been undermined by the porous border. The fencing of the 2,640 km Durand Line has reduced infiltration but created new tensions, as both the Afghan Taliban and TTP reject its legitimacy. Joint border patrolling is proposed as a solution, but political resistance and logistical challenges limit its feasibility. The article emphasizes that unilateral measures strain Pakistan's resources, especially given its security concerns on the eastern border. A temporary lull in violence exists, but long-term stability depends on sustained cooperation and trust-building between the two countries.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs: Pak-Afghan relations and border security
- Current Affairs: Terrorism and regional instability
- International Relations: Conflict resolution and mediation

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains why Pakistan and Afghanistan are struggling to maintain peaceful relations. Pakistan believes that militant groups attacking its territory are operating from Afghanistan, but Afghanistan denies this. Imagine two neighbors blaming each other for problems at the border without trust, it becomes difficult to cooperate. The article suggests solutions like better trade relations and joint border patrols, but these are hard to implement because both sides disagree on key issues like the border itself. The main idea is that peace requires cooperation, and without it, tensions will continue.

Facts and Figures:

- TTP resurgence observed after August 2021
- Operation Ghazab lil-Haq launched on February 26
- Durand Line length: 2,640 km
- APTTA agreement signed in 2010
- Border fencing completed between 2017 and 2023
- China hosted talks in Urumqi to mediate tensions

To sum up, The article reminds that geography binds nations, but trust defines their relationship. Pakistan and Afghanistan stand side by side, yet miles apart in understanding. Until both sides move beyond blame and build genuine cooperation, the border will remain more than just a line on the map—it will stay a fault line of conflict.

WAR ECONOMY

Author: Noor Humair

Summary:

The article takes a hard look at war not just as a clash of arms but as a marketplace of interests, where conflict often feeds economic gain rather than simply resolving political disputes. Taking from historical examples, it argues that wars have repeatedly reshaped global economic structures, often leaving devastation in their wake while simultaneously creating new centres of power. World War I, for instance, crippled European economies through debt, inflation, and destruction, while quietly paving the way for the United States to rise as a financial powerhouse. The ripple effects of that upheaval spilled into the Great Depression, exposing how deeply war had entangled economies in cycles of dependency and fragility. In much the same vein, World War II redrew the economic map again, leaving much of Europe and Asia in ruins but catapulting the US into unprecedented industrial and financial dominance.

Shifting to the present, the article argues that the ongoing Iran-Israel conflict is following a familiar script, with the global economy once again caught in the crossfire. The blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has sent oil and gas prices

soaring, fuelling inflation and squeezing economies worldwide, particularly in the developing world. The consequences are not merely immediate but structural, with millions at risk of slipping into poverty and global growth forecasts taking a hit. The author warns that prolonged conflict could turn the strait into a chokehold on the global economy, amplifying instability far beyond the battlefield. At its core, the piece suggests that wars are rarely accidental economic shocks; they often become self-sustaining systems where destruction and profit walk hand in hand, leaving ordinary people to foot the bill.

Overview:

The article explores how wars shape and distort global economic systems, linking historical conflicts with the current Iran-Israel war to show how economic interests, energy disruptions, and structural shifts define the modern war economy.

NOTES :

The article examines war as an economic phenomenon, arguing that conflicts often generate financial incentives that prolong them. Historical examples such as World War I demonstrate how war-induced debt, inflation, and destruction weakened European economies while enabling the rise of the United States as a global creditor. The Great Depression is linked to structural imbalances created during the war, including excessive borrowing and economic fragility. World War II further reshaped the global economy, leading to massive destruction in Europe and Asia while strengthening the US economy and industrial base. The Bretton Woods system institutionalised a rules-based financial order through institutions like the IMF and World Bank, promoting stability but also embedding Western economic dominance. In the contemporary context, the Iran-Israel war has disrupted global energy markets, with oil prices exceeding \$100–\$120 per barrel due to the Strait of Hormuz blockade. This has triggered global inflation, increased transportation costs, and heightened food prices. The economic fallout could push over 32 million people into poverty, particularly in developing countries. The article highlights the risk of prolonged conflict further slowing global growth and destabilising markets, emphasising the urgent need for ceasefire and restoration of trade routes.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs: Economic impact of global conflicts on Pakistan
- Current Affairs: Iran-Israel war and global energy crisis
- International Relations: War economy and global power shifts

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that wars are not only about fighting but also about money and economic power. When countries go to war, they spend heavily, destroy infrastructure, and disrupt trade, which affects the global economy. For example, when oil supply is blocked, prices increase, making everything from fuel to food more expensive. The current Iran-Israel conflict shows this clearly, as the closure of the Strait of Hormuz has increased oil prices worldwide. The key idea is that wars often benefit some countries economically while harming others, especially poorer nations.

Facts and Figures:

- Oil prices surged to \$100–\$120 per barrel
- Over 32 million people at risk of falling into poverty
- Global GDP growth forecast could drop by 0.3%
- Iran's GDP may decline by more than 10%
- Strait of Hormuz handles a major share of global oil trade

To sum up, The article reminds that war is never confined to battlefields—it spills over into markets, homes, and livelihoods across the globe. History shows that while wars may crown new powers, they also leave deep economic scars that take decades to heal. If the present conflict is allowed to drag on, it may not just redraw political lines but

also fracture an already fragile global economy. Peace, then, is not merely a moral choice; it is an economic necessity.

PAKISTAN NEEDS A CENSUS IN 2027

Author: Dr Kamal Monnoo

Summary:

The article underlines the census as far more than a routine headcount, in essence, it is a mirror held up to a nation's governance, reflecting both progress and persistent gaps. While Pakistan conducted its latest census in 2023, the writer argues that aligning the next one with India's planned 2027 census could offer a rare moment of clarity and comparison at a critical juncture in South Asian history. Unlike Pakistan, where census exercises have often been delayed or entangled in political inertia, India has institutionalised the process, using it as a cornerstone for policymaking, resource allocation, and democratic representation. The census feeds directly into decisions about infrastructure, welfare, and electoral delimitation, making it the backbone of an informed state. Without timely and accurate data, governance risks flying blind, relying more on guesswork than grounded reality.

The article further weaves history into the argument, recalling how the first post-independence census in 1951 exposed stark realities such as widespread illiteracy, forcing policymakers to confront uncomfortable truths. A similar exercise today, the writer suggests, could once again lay bare where Pakistan truly stands—whether it has moved the needle or merely circled back to old challenges in new forms. With modern tools like AI, digital enumeration, and real-time monitoring systems, a 2027 census could be sharper, faster, and more reliable than ever before. Beyond numbers, it could act as a wake-up call, nudging both Pakistan and India to look beyond rivalry and instead measure real human development. In doing so, it may not just count people but also count the cost of missed opportunities—and perhaps point the way forward.

Overview:

The article highlights the importance of conducting a timely and technologically advanced census in Pakistan, emphasising its role in governance, policymaking, and democratic processes, while proposing a synchronized census with India in 2027 for meaningful regional comparison.

NOTES :

The article emphasises that a census is a critical governance tool that provides comprehensive data on population, education, economic activity, and living conditions. Pakistan's census history has been marked by delays, unlike India's consistent census cycle, which strengthens policymaking and administrative planning. Census data plays a key role in electoral delimitation, making it central to democratic representation and institutional legitimacy. The 1951 census revealed severe illiteracy in Pakistan, highlighting how such exercises expose ground realities and guide reforms. Conducting the next census in 2027 alongside India could provide an important comparative snapshot of development trajectories in South Asia. Modern census techniques, including digital data collection, AI-based monitoring, and self-enumeration platforms, can enhance accuracy, efficiency, and transparency. The article suggests that a well-executed census can reveal governance gaps, inform better policy decisions, and encourage regional cooperation rather than competition.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs: Population growth, governance, and institutional development
- Current Affairs: Census policy and regional comparisons

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that a census is like taking a full picture of a country that how many people live there, how they live, and what they need. Governments use this information to plan schools, hospitals, roads, and even elections. For example, if a city grows rapidly but the data is outdated, it may not get enough resources. Pakistan last conducted

its census in 2023, but the writer suggests doing the next one in 2027 alongside India to compare progress. Modern technology can make this process faster and more accurate, helping governments make better decisions for the future.

Facts and Figures:

- Pakistan's last census conducted in 2023
- First census in 1951 showed less than 20% literacy
- India plans its next census in 2027 covering around 1.4 billion people
- Census data influences governance, policy, and electoral boundaries
- Modern census tools include AI systems, digital apps, and real-time monitoring

To sum up, The article suggests that nations cannot improve what they refuse to measure. A census is not just about counting heads but it is about confronting truths. If done right, the 2027 census could become more than a statistical exercise; it could be a moment of reckoning, a chance to recalibrate priorities, and perhaps even a bridge toward a more pragmatic and cooperative regional future.

CSS PLATFORM

The Express Tribune –

PEACE TALKS, PAKISTAN'S DIPLOMATIC COUP AND IRAN'S NAVAL BLOCKADE

Author: Inam Ul Haque

Summary:

Pakistan's role as a facilitator in the US-Iran peace talks marks a significant diplomatic moment, but the outcome reflects the complexity of entrenched geopolitical disputes. The Islamabad dialogue, though historic as the first direct engagement since 1979, concluded without a formal agreement. The United States presented firm demands centred on Iran's nuclear rollback, reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, and broader strategic concessions. However, Iran responded from a position of confidence, rejecting what it perceived as maximalist conditions while insisting on security guarantees and sanctions relief. Therefore the negotiations produced neither breakthrough nor collapse, sustaining a fragile ceasefire and leaving room for further engagement. The episode illustrates that diplomacy, like a slow-burning flame, requires patience rather than premature expectations.

Despite the stalemate, Pakistan emerged as a credible intermediary, reviving its legacy of mediation in global affairs. Still the diplomatic deadlock triggered a sharp escalation as the United States imposed a naval blockade on Iranian ports, intensifying pressure through military and economic means. Iran's strategic reliance on maritime trade particularly through the Strait of Hormuz, shows the gravity of this move. Its ports handle vast volumes of oil and non-oil trade, while alternative mechanisms such as shadow fleets and regional trade routes sustain its economy under sanctions. The blockade, legally framed yet politically contentious, reflects a shift from negotiation to coercion. The article ultimately highlights the fragile balance between diplomacy and force, where negotiations coexist with brinkmanship, and peace remains an elusive horizon.

Overview:

The article examines Pakistan's mediation in US-Iran talks and the subsequent escalation through a naval blockade. It highlights diplomatic engagement, strategic disagreements, and the economic and military implications of maritime control. It also underscores Pakistan's diplomatic significance and the persistent tension between negotiation and coercion.

NOTES:

Pakistan's role in facilitating the US-Iran peace talks in Islamabad reflects a complex diplomatic development, where intense negotiations unfolded without a formal agreement due to deep-rooted disagreements over Iran's nuclear programme, sanctions relief, and control of the Strait of Hormuz. The United States held firm on its strategic demands, while Iran responded with equal resolve, rejecting what it viewed as excessive conditions and insisting on security guarantees. The outcome remained balanced between progress and deadlock, preserving a fragile ceasefire and allowing space for further dialogue which underlines the gradual and layered nature of diplomacy. At the same time, Pakistan emerged as a credible intermediary, reinforcing its historical role in global mediation, but the diplomatic stalemate quickly shifted toward coercive measures as the United States imposed a naval blockade to intensify pressure. Iran's reliance on maritime trade routes, especially through the Strait of Hormuz, makes such actions highly consequential, though alternative channels such as shadow fleets offer limited resilience. The situation ultimately reveals a delicate interplay between negotiation and force, where diplomacy advances cautiously under the shadow of strategic pressure, and peace remains a distant but possible outcome.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- International Relations: Conflict resolution, diplomacy, coercive strategy

- Current Affairs: US-Iran tensions, Middle East geopolitics, maritime security
- Pakistan Affairs: Foreign policy, mediation role, strategic position
- Political Science: Power politics, negotiation theory, international law

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that Pakistan helped arrange peace talks between the US and Iran, but no final deal was reached. The US demanded that Iran stop nuclear activities, while Iran refused and asked for security guarantees and removal of sanctions. For example, both sides agreed to continue talks, showing that diplomacy often takes time. After the talks, the US increased pressure by blocking Iranian sea routes. This is important because Iran depends on the Strait of Hormuz for oil exports, which are vital for its economy. For instance, Iran uses secret shipping methods to bypass sanctions. The key idea is that countries use both talks and pressure at the same time to achieve their goals, and peace is often slow and uncertain.

Facts and Figures:

- Talks in Islamabad lasted 21 hours over two days
- First direct US-Iran interaction since 1979
- Strait of Hormuz spans about 97 km at its mouth
- Iranian ports handled around 235 million tons of cargo
- About 153 million tons were oil-related goods
- Iran earned nearly 74 billion dollars from petroleum exports
- Shahid Rajaei Port handles 85 to 90 percent of container traffic

To sum up, the article presents diplomacy as a delicate craft. Success does not always arrive with signatures. Sometimes, silence replaces agreement. Pakistan's role shines as a bridge, yet the storm persists. Power politics rarely bows to reason alone. Force and dialogue walk side by side. The world watches a tense theatre unfold. Peace remains possible, but only through patience and prudence.

Difficult Words and Meanings:

- Intractable – difficult to manage or resolve; Synonym: stubborn; Antonym: manageable
- Naiveté – lack of experience or wisdom; Synonym: innocence; Antonym: sophistication
- Maximalist – seeking extreme or complete objectives; Synonym: uncompromising; Antonym: moderate
- Postulated – suggested or assumed as true; Synonym: proposed; Antonym: disproved

WHY THE ORIGINAL CONSTITUTION OF 1973 STILL MATTERS?

Author: Dr Syed Akhtar Ali Shah

Summary:

The article presents the Constitution of 1973 as a hard-earned outcome of Pakistan's turbulent past, shaped by crises that exposed the fragility of political order. It recalls the events of 1970–71, when democratic will was denied and power was not transferred to the rightful majority, which led to civil war and the eventual breakup of the country. In the aftermath of this national trauma, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto chose consensus over coercion, despite holding a strong parliamentary majority. He recognized that a constitution imposed unilaterally might stand on paper but would falter in spirit. Thus, through dialogue and compromise among diverse political forces, the Constitution emerged as a collective agreement rooted in inclusion, federalism, and democratic values.

The article argues that the true strength of the Constitution lies not merely in its clauses but in the spirit of unity and restraint that guided its formation. It warns that recent trends of amending the Constitution through sheer numerical strength and political expediency erode that foundational spirit. Such actions may serve immediate interests but sow seeds of long-term instability, as exclusion breeds resentment, and resentment evolves into alienation. Taking from

history, the writer argues that deviation from constitutional principles has repeatedly led to disorder. Hence, safeguarding Pakistan's future requires loyalty not only to the text but also to the underlying ethos of consensus and justice.

Overview:

This article explores the historical significance and continued relevance of Pakistan's 1973 Constitution. It traces its origins to a period of national crisis and highlights how political leadership prioritized unity and inclusiveness. The writer contrasts that era with contemporary practices, where constitutional amendments often lack broad agreement. The central argument emphasizes that sustainable governance depends on preserving both the letter and the spirit of the Constitution.

NOTES:

The Constitution of 1973 emerged as a consensual framework after the dismemberment of Pakistan, shaped by hard lessons drawn from political breakdown and institutional failure. The 1970 elections marked a true democratic milestone, but the denial of majority rule led to civil war and the separation of East Pakistan. In this fragile context, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, despite holding a two-thirds majority, chose consensus over imposition, ensuring that the Constitution reflected collective wisdom rather than unilateral authority. It enshrined key principles such as federalism, parliamentary supremacy, provincial autonomy, and fundamental rights, while its unanimous adoption signified a rare moment of national unity. At its core, the Constitution functions as a social contract that balances authority with accountability and power with restraint. However, recent trends of amending it through sheer numerical strength and political expediency undermine its foundational spirit, as exclusion fosters resentment, which gradually deepens into alienation and weakens the constitutional order. Historical experience shows that whenever constitutional norms are compromised, instability follows, which underscores that the true strength of the 1973 Constitution lies not only in its legal structure but in its enduring commitment to inclusion, fairness, and consensus.

Relevant CSS syllabus subjects and topics:

- Pakistan Affairs:
 - Constitutional development in Pakistan
 - Political instability and its causes
 - Federalism and provincial autonomy
- Political Science:
 - Theory of constitutionalism
 - Parliamentary democracy
 - Role of consensus in governance
- International Relations:
 - State formation and crisis management
 - Impact of internal instability on global standing

Notes for beginners:

The Constitution of 1973 acts as a rulebook for running the country. It came after a major crisis when Pakistan lost East Pakistan. Leaders realized that ignoring people's voice leads to disaster. So they sat together and made rules that everyone could accept. For example, provinces were given rights so they would not feel ignored again. If a government today changes these rules without asking others, people may feel excluded. This can create anger and weaken trust in the system. A simple example is a classroom where only one student makes rules. Others will resist. But if all students agree, the system works smoothly.

Facts and figures:

- The Constitution was passed on 10 April 1973
- It was enforced on 14 August 1973
- The 1971 war led to the separation of East Pakistan
- Around 90,000 Pakistani soldiers were taken as prisoners of war
- Bhutto had a two-thirds majority but still chose consensus

To sum up, The article reminds that nations learn through hardship, yet they often forget those lessons. The Constitution of 1973 stands as a symbol of unity forged in adversity. If its spirit is diluted, history may repeat itself in subtle but in dangerous ways. Stability does not emerge from power alone, it grows from fairness, trust, and collective ownership.

SELF-INFLICTED ENERGY CRISIS

Author: Benazir Samad

Summary:

Pakistan's energy crisis is not born of scarcity but of choices gone wrong. It contrasts two realities—a community-run hydropower system in Chitral delivering affordable electricity, and the national grid charging several times more for unreliable supply—to show how policy failures have turned abundance into vulnerability. Despite possessing vast hydropower, solar, and wind potential, Pakistan tied its fate to imported fossil fuels, particularly coal, under CPEC. These decisions were not driven by necessity but by political expediency, as coal projects offered quick wins within electoral cycles. Meanwhile, regions rich in hydropower potential were sidelined, and long-term planning was sacrificed at the altar of short-term political gain.

The consequences now stare the country in the face. Pakistan pays trillions for idle power plants while millions endure load-shedding. Poorly planned infrastructure, like misrouted transmission lines, has created irreversible inefficiencies, while imported coal plants operate far below capacity yet burden consumers with heavy costs. The rapid shift to solar energy reflects not progress but public escape from a failing system, only to be met with new taxes and restrictions. In essence, the state built an inefficient, expensive energy structure, priced citizens out of it, and is now scrambling to regain control. The article argues that unless Pakistan pivots towards sustainable, well-planned investments in hydropower and renewables while balancing short-term needs, it will remain trapped in a cycle of energy insecurity and economic strain.

Overview:

The article critiques Pakistan's energy policies, highlighting how political decisions, poor planning, and overreliance on imported fuels have created a costly and inefficient energy system despite abundant natural resources.

NOTES :

The article highlights that Pakistan's energy crisis is largely self-inflicted, rooted in political economy decisions rather than resource scarcity. Despite having around 60,000 MW of untapped hydropower potential, major investments under CPEC were directed towards coal-based projects due to their quick completion timelines aligned with electoral cycles. Regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan, which hold nearly 75% of hydropower potential, received minimal investment. Poor planning further aggravated the crisis, with inefficient grid infrastructure and costly transmission errors, as seen in Chitral. Pakistan now has a surplus generation capacity of 10–12 GW, yet consumers pay Rs2.5 to 2.8 trillion annually for idle plants due to capacity payments. Fossil fuels constitute over 30% of imports, with nearly 90% of oil sourced from the Middle East, making the economy vulnerable to external shocks. Renewable energy received only 8% of total capacity under CPEC, reflecting skewed priorities. The rise of solar energy is driven by public necessity rather than policy success, as electricity tariffs

increased by 155% in three years. Government attempts to tax and regulate solar adoption highlight policy inconsistency. The article concludes that governance failures, short-termism, and lack of strategic planning have entrenched the crisis.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs: Energy crisis and governance issues
- Current Affairs: Impact of global energy shocks on Pakistan

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that Pakistan has plenty of energy resources like water, sun, and wind, but poor decisions have caused an energy crisis. Instead of using cheap and local hydropower, the government invested heavily in coal plants that require imported fuel. For example, Pakistan now produces more electricity than it needs, but still faces load-shedding because the system is badly managed. People are also switching to solar panels because electricity has become too expensive. Imagine buying a generator because electricity bills are too high—that's what many households are doing. Wrong planning can turn even abundance into crisis.

Facts and Figures:

- Pakistan has around 60,000 MW hydropower potential
- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan hold 45,000 MW (75% of total)
- 10–12 GW surplus electricity capacity exists
- Rs2.5–2.8 trillion paid annually for idle power plants
- Over 30% of imports are fossil fuels
- 90% of oil imports come from the Middle East
- Electricity tariffs increased by 155% in three years
- Only 8% of CPEC energy capacity went to renewables

To sum up, The article shows how a nation rich in resources can still stumble if it chases quick fixes instead of long-term solutions. The crisis did not creep in overnight; it was built, brick by brick, decision by decision. Until policy shifts from political convenience to strategic foresight, Pakistan will remain caught in this energy maze—running hard, yet going nowhere.

US-IRAN STAND-OFF: CONFLICTING PERSPECTIVES

Author: Inam Ul Haque

Summary:

The article highlights the deadlock in US-Iran peace talks, revealing how both sides remain locked in a battle of positions rather than moving towards compromise. Washington wants a comprehensive deal upfront, tying an end to hostilities with firm guarantees on Iran's nuclear programme, while Tehran insists on a phased approach—first de-escalation, then confidence-building measures, and only afterwards deeper negotiations. This clash of sequencing has turned dialogue into a tug-of-war, with neither side willing to blink first. Trust is in short supply, and with the Strait of Hormuz effectively choked by competing blockades, the conflict has spilled far beyond diplomacy, rattling global energy flows and keeping markets on edge. Pakistan, meanwhile, is trying to bridge the gap, but the path to consensus remains steep and uncertain.

Beyond the negotiating table, the war is reshaping global economic and political dynamics in real time. Oil prices have surged past the \$100 mark, energy giants are cashing in, defence stocks are booming, and investors are flocking to safe havens like gold. Yet beneath this market frenzy lies a deeper unease—rising inflation, strained supply chains, and a fragile ceasefire that could unravel at any moment. Internally, Iran's power dynamics have tilted towards the IRGC, whose hardline stance complicates prospects for peace, while regional actors—from Russia to

Gulf states—are quietly working the diplomatic backchannels. The article paints a picture of a conflict suspended between war and negotiation, where neither escalation nor resolution seems imminent. For now, the world watches with bated breath, knowing that even a small misstep could tip the balance.

Overview:

The article analyzes the strategic deadlock in US-Iran negotiations, highlighting conflicting diplomatic approaches, internal power dynamics, and the broader economic and geopolitical consequences of the ongoing conflict.

NOTES :

The article examines the core disagreement between the US and Iran over the sequencing of peace negotiations, with Washington demanding comprehensive guarantees upfront while Tehran prefers a phased approach starting with de-escalation. It highlights the role of mistrust, intensified by US actions such as the naval blockade and interception of Iranian vessels. The Strait of Hormuz remains a critical pressure point, with blockades affecting nearly 20% of global oil shipments and disrupting LNG supplies, particularly for Asia. Global markets have reacted sharply, with oil prices exceeding \$100 per barrel, benefiting energy companies while increasing inflationary pressures worldwide. Defence and technology stocks have surged, reflecting wartime economic shifts. The article underscores the growing influence of Iran's IRGC, which now dominates strategic decision-making, making compromise more difficult. Backchannel diplomacy continues through regional actors such as Pakistan, Oman, Russia, and Gulf states. The fragile ceasefire persists, but the risk of escalation remains high due to unresolved issues and competing strategic interests. Regional conflicts, including Hezbollah's stance against Israel, further complicate negotiations. The article concludes that the conflict remains in a state of uncertainty, with diplomacy struggling to keep pace with geopolitical tensions.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Topics:

- International Relations: Conflict resolution and diplomacy
- Current Affairs: US-Iran tensions and global energy crisis
- Political Science: Power dynamics and military influence in states

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains why the US and Iran are unable to agree on peace. The US wants everything settled at once, especially Iran's nuclear programme, while Iran wants things to happen step by step. Imagine two people arguing—one wants to solve all issues in one go, while the other says, "Let's fix one thing at a time." This difference causes delay. Meanwhile, the conflict is affecting the whole world. Oil prices are rising, which makes petrol expensive everywhere. Countries and companies are reacting to the situation, and even stock markets are changing. The main idea is that war affects not just the countries involved but the entire global system.

Facts and Figures:

- Around 20% of global oil shipments pass through the Strait of Hormuz
- Oil prices range between \$100–\$109 per barrel
- Operation costs and conflict impacts drive global inflation
- Major energy companies like Exxon and Aramco see increased profits
- Defence stocks (Lockheed Martin, Boeing) show significant gains
- Global markets face instability due to disrupted energy supply

To sum up, The article reminds us that diplomacy is not just about talks, but about timing, trust, and the willingness to bend. When those elements go missing, even the loudest negotiations echo hollow. For now, the conflict drifts like a storm on the horizon—unpredictable, unresolved, and capable of reshaping everything in its path.

THE BLUE ECONOMY MIRAGE

Author: Dr Aneel Salman

Summary:

The article cuts through the hype surrounding Pakistan's much-talked-about Blue Economy and lays bare a familiar pattern: lofty ambitions built on shaky foundations. While the Planning Commission's report under URAAN Pakistan 2026 is forward-looking and long overdue, the writer argues that it blurs the line between potential and reality. Instead of grounding projections in solid economic accounting, it leans heavily on optimistic assumptions, treating untapped resources as if they are already delivering results. Sectors like aquaculture, shipping, tourism, and coastal infrastructure are presented as engines of growth, but the hard truth is that their current contribution to the economy remains modest and uneven. Without a clear baseline, even claims such as the Blue Economy contributing around 1% of GDP begin to look more like educated guesses than concrete evidence.

The article goes a step further by warning that chasing growth without proper checks could backfire. Pakistan's marine economy is deeply tied to natural capital, especially mangroves, which form a significant share of its value. Expanding industries like aquaculture without safeguarding these ecosystems could mean trading long-term sustainability for short-term gains — a deal that may come at a steep environmental cost. The writer stresses that projections of billions in economic gains are not impossible, but they rest on reforms that are yet to see the light of day. In essence, the article calls for a shift from wishful thinking to grounded policymaking, where measurement, accountability, and sustainability take centre stage. Without that, the Blue Economy risks becoming less of a breakthrough and more of a mirage shimmering on the horizon.

Overview:

The article critically evaluates Pakistan's Blue Economy framework, highlighting the gap between ambitious projections and on-ground realities, and emphasizing the need for accurate economic measurement, institutional reforms, and environmental sustainability.

NOTES :

The article examines Pakistan's Blue Economy report for relying on projections without a strong economic accounting foundation. It highlights the absence of a clear baseline for measuring marine economic contribution, making GDP estimates unreliable. The writer notes that Pakistan's marine economy is currently small and heavily dependent on natural capital such as fisheries and mangroves. Fisheries contribute around 41%, mangroves 34%, shipbreaking 14%, and marine transport about 11%, indicating a resource-based structure. The article warns that expansion strategies like aquaculture and infrastructure development could harm ecosystems if not managed carefully. It emphasizes that projections of \$4 billion economic impact by 2030 are conditional on reforms that have not yet been implemented. The writer distinguishes between gross economic flows and actual value addition, cautioning against overstating benefits. Key structural issues include weak port performance, low-value fish exports, limited shipping capacity, and declining shipbreaking activity. The article stresses the need for marine economic accounting, ecosystem valuation, and evidence-based policymaking. Sustainable growth requires balancing economic expansion with environmental preservation and institutional reforms.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs: Economic planning and resource management
- Current Affairs: Blue economy and sustainable development
- Economics: GDP measurement and value addition
- International Relations: Maritime economy and trade

Notes for Beginners: The article explains that Pakistan wants to earn money from its sea resources, like fish, ports, and tourism. But just because these resources exist does not mean they are already making money. For example, if

a country has a beach, it does not automatically mean it earns from tourism unless proper systems are in place. The writer says Pakistan must first measure what it actually earns from the sea and then make careful plans. Also, damaging natural resources like mangroves for short-term profit can create bigger problems later. So, growth should be planned wisely.

Facts and Figures:

- Pakistan's marine economy estimated at \$1.027 billion (FY2023)
- Contributes around 0.34% of GDP
- Fisheries: 41% of marine economy
- Mangroves: 34% contribution
- Shipbreaking: 14%
- Marine transport: about 11%
- Projected Blue Economy target: \$4 billion by 2030

To sum up, the article reminds us that not every glittering opportunity is gold, and not every projection is a promise. Pakistan's Blue Economy holds potential, no doubt, but potential alone doesn't pay the bills. Without solid groundwork, careful planning, and respect for nature's balance sheet, the dream may dissolve into thin air. True progress lies not in chasing illusions, but in building something real, measured, and lasting.

World Bank Blog –

STRONGER AFTER THE STORM: REBUILDING LIVES, REBUILDING PAKISTAN

Author: Kamran Akbar and Yunziyi (Lisa) Lang

Summary:

The article recounts Pakistan's devastating floods of 2022, which submerged a third of the country and disrupted millions of lives. Unprecedented monsoon rains caused immense destruction especially in Sindh where housing losses reached alarming levels. In response, authorities acted with unusual speed and coordination. A Post Disaster Needs Assessment revealed the scale of devastation, which led to swift financial support from global institutions. The World Bank approved major funding, while the Sindh government introduced a fast track mechanism to ensure immediate relief. This early groundwork laid a solid foundation for recovery, which aimed not only to rebuild homes but also to restore dignity and stability.

The recovery model stood out due to its community driven nature and focus on resilience. A major housing initiative empowered affected families through phased financial assistance, which enabled them to construct stronger and safer homes. Advanced digital tools ensured transparency, while local committees strengthened accountability. Special attention was given to vulnerable groups especially women and low income households. With further financial support, the project expanded its scope to rebuild hundreds of thousands of homes and improve water and sanitation systems. The initiative also invested in skill development and institutional capacity. The article presents this effort as a blueprint for future disaster recovery, where inclusion, preparedness, and sustainability shape a more resilient Pakistan.

Overview:

This article highlights Pakistan's response to the 2022 floods and examines how effective planning and global cooperation transformed a crisis into an opportunity for sustainable recovery. It focuses on the role of rapid assessments, financial assistance, and community participation in rebuilding efforts. The narrative underlines the importance of resilience, transparency, and inclusive development in disaster management.

NOTES:

The 2022 floods in Pakistan caused massive destruction, which affected 33 million people and displaced millions, with Sindh suffering the most severe housing losses. A timely Post Disaster Needs Assessment revealed the true scale of damage, which enabled swift financial intervention, as the World Bank approved \$1.3 billion for recovery. The Sindh Flood Emergency Housing Reconstruction Project emerged as the central initiative, which focused on rebuilding homes through a community driven approach that ensured both ownership and accountability. A phased grant system allowed families to construct stronger and flood resistant houses, while digital monitoring tools enhanced transparency and efficiency. Special emphasis remained on vulnerable groups, particularly women, disabled individuals, and low income households, which ensured inclusive recovery. With additional funding, the project expanded its scope to reconstruct up to 770,000 homes, alongside improvements in water and sanitation systems. Training programs for masons and engineers strengthened local capacity which ensured long term resilience, while institutional reforms and community participation reinforced a sustainable and accountable recovery framework.

Relevant CSS syllabus topics:

Pakistan Affairs:

- Climate challenges in Pakistan

- Disaster management and governance
- Socio economic impacts of natural disasters
- Environmental Science:
 - Climate change and extreme weather events
 - Sustainable development and resilience
 - Water and sanitation management
- Current Affairs:
 - Role of international organizations in Pakistan
 - Global climate response and adaptation strategies

Notes for beginners:

In 2022, heavy rains caused severe floods in Pakistan. Many people lost homes and basic facilities. The government, along with global organizations, acted quickly to assess the damage and provide funds. For example, families received money in stages to rebuild their houses, which ensured proper use of funds. Local groups also checked the work, which increased trust. Women and poor families received special support, which made recovery fair. A simple example is rebuilding a house with stronger material after damage, so it does not collapse again. This approach not only repairs loss but also prepares for future disasters.

Facts and figures:

- 33 million people were affected by floods
- Nearly 8 million people were displaced
- Economic losses reached about \$15 billion
- Over 410,000 houses started reconstruction by 2025
- More than 230,000 homes were completed
- Total target increased to 770,000 houses
- Over 152,000 women received housing grants

To sum up, the article presents a story of resilience rising from ruin. It shows that crises can become turning points when handled with foresight and unity. Pakistan's recovery effort reflects a shift from mere relief to sustainable rebuilding. If such models continue, the country can face future challenges with greater strength and confidence.

PAKISTAN'S POVERTY TRAJECTORY: PROGRESS, PERIL, AND THE PATH FORWARD

Author: Christina Wieser and Moritz Meyer

Summary:

Pakistan once turned the tide against poverty and pulled millions out of its grip, as the poverty rate fell sharply from 64% to 22% between 2001 and 2018. This progress did not fall from the sky; it rode on rising incomes in informal work and a shift away from agriculture. Hope began to take root, yet the ground beneath remained fragile. Many jobs lacked productivity and real wage growth stayed sluggish, which left a large share of people hovering just above the poverty line. The engine slowed down after 2015, and what seemed like a steady climb began to lose steam. The illusion of stability started to crack as structural weaknesses lurked beneath the surface.

Then came a series of shocks that knocked the system off balance. The COVID-19 pandemic dealt a heavy blow, wiped out jobs, and hit the informal sector hardest. Inflation ate into purchasing power and left households gasping for relief. The 2022 floods added fuel to the fire, pushed millions back into poverty, and exposed deep cracks in the system. The real issue runs deeper than these shocks; Pakistan's growth model leaned too much on consumption, while investment stayed low and public finances remained strained. Poor service delivery, weak governance, and

unequal access to opportunities kept people stuck in a cycle of vulnerability. The article lays out a clear path forward through structural reforms, stronger safety nets, better public services, and data driven governance, which can help Pakistan bounce back and build a future that stands firm against future shocks.

Overview:

The article traces Pakistan's poverty journey, which moved from rapid progress to troubling reversal. It highlights how temporary gains faded due to weak economic structures and repeated crises. The focus remains on long term reforms that can stabilize growth, reduce vulnerability, and ensure inclusive development.

NOTES:

Pakistan achieved a remarkable decline in poverty from 64% to 22% between 2001 and 2018, largely driven by rising incomes in the informal sector and a shift away from agriculture, yet this progress rested on fragile foundations due to low productivity and minimal wage growth. After 2015, the pace of poverty reduction slowed, which exposed underlying structural weaknesses. A large segment of the population remained just above the poverty line, highly vulnerable to economic shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted livelihoods, hit informal workers hardest, and caused a sharp rise in poverty, while inflation further reduced purchasing power. The 2022 floods deepened the crisis, affected millions, and pushed around 13 million more people into poverty. The core issue lies in a consumption driven growth model, weak investment, high public debt, and poor governance structures. Limited access to quality education, healthcare, and infrastructure continued to widen inequality, especially in rural areas. These conditions trapped many households in a cycle of vulnerability, where even minor disruptions could reverse years of progress, which highlights the urgent need for structural reforms, improved service delivery, and stronger social protection systems.

Relevant CSS syllabus subjects topics:

- Pakistan Affairs:
 - Poverty and economic challenges in Pakistan
 - Socio economic inequality and development issues
- Economics:
 - Poverty alleviation strategies
 - Growth models and structural weaknesses
- Current Affairs:
 - Impact of global crises on developing economies
 - Climate disasters and economic resilience

Notes for beginners:

Pakistan reduced poverty for many years, but the progress did not last. Many people found work, yet those jobs paid little and offered no security. When COVID-19 hit, many lost income overnight. Then floods destroyed homes and livelihoods, which pushed families back below the poverty line. For example, a daily wage worker may earn enough to survive, but one crisis can wipe out savings. Poor infrastructure and weak services make life harder, especially in rural areas. If roads are far, children struggle to reach schools. The solution lies in better education, healthcare, and fair economic policies that give people a stable path forward.

Facts and figures:

- Poverty rate dropped from 64% to 22% between 2001 and 2018
- Real wages grew only 2 to 3% from 2011 to 2021
- Poverty rose to 24.7% after COVID-19
- Floods affected 33 million people
- Around 13 million more people fell into poverty after floods



In a nutshell, Progress without strong foundations cannot stand the test of time. Pakistan's journey reflects both promise and peril, where gains slipped through the cracks due to fragile systems. The road ahead is not blocked. With bold reforms and a clear vision, the country can turn the tide once again and carve out a future where growth lifts all boats rather than leaving many stranded.

CSS PLATFORM

ENERGY SHOCKWAVES: MIDDLE EAST CONFLICTS ARE QUIETLY FUELING PAKISTAN'S INFLATION CRISIS

Author: Mehreen Durrani

Summary:

Inflation in Pakistan has ceased to be a distant concept and now stares people in the face through rising fuel costs and soaring utility bills. While domestic weaknesses often take the blame, the article brings an overlooked factor into sharp focus, which is geopolitical tension in the Middle East. Disruptions in vital routes such as the Strait of Hormuz send tremors across global energy markets, and Pakistan, which imports nearly 90 percent of its oil and relies heavily on LNG, bears the brunt. Higher oil prices inflate fuel costs, while expensive gas imports drive up electricity tariffs. The burden does not stop at energy, it seeps into every sector, as transport costs climb, production expenses rise, and food prices surge, which creates a ripple effect across the economy.

The crisis deepens due to delayed tariff adjustments, which release inflation in waves rather than a single blow, making it harder for households to cope. Pakistan's heavy reliance on external energy sources leaves it exposed, with limited reserves to cushion sudden shocks. Rising import bills widen the current account deficit and weaken the currency, which fuels a vicious cycle of inflation. The article argues that the way forward lies in building resilience rather than reacting to crises. Diversification of energy sources, investment in renewables, better contracts, and improved efficiency can reduce dependence and soften future shocks. Pakistan must shift from a reactive stance to a proactive strategy, or risk remaining at the mercy of external forces.

Overview:

The article examines how geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East quietly intensify inflation in Pakistan through rising energy costs. It highlights the chain reaction from global oil disruptions to domestic price hikes. The focus remains on structural vulnerabilities and the urgent need for long term energy and economic resilience.

NOTES:

Pakistan's inflation is deeply linked with external energy shocks, as the country relies heavily on imported oil and LNG, which makes it highly sensitive to geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. Disruptions in critical routes such as the Strait of Hormuz increase global oil prices, which directly raise fuel and electricity costs in Pakistan. This surge spreads across the economy through cost push inflation, where transport, industrial production, and agriculture all become more expensive, which leads to higher prices of goods and food. Delayed adjustments in energy tariffs create recurring waves of inflation, which prolong economic pressure on households. Rising import bills widen the current account deficit and weaken the currency, which further intensifies inflationary pressures. The lack of strategic reserves and limited diversification of energy sources increases vulnerability, while inefficiencies in the power sector worsen the crisis. These structural weaknesses, combined with external shocks, create a persistent cycle of inflation that highlights the need for internal resilience through better planning, improved efficiency, and reduced dependence on imported energy.

Relevant CSS syllabus subjects and topics:

- Pakistan Affairs:
 - Energy crisis in Pakistan
 - Economic challenges and inflation
- Economics:
 - Inflation and cost push factors

- Balance of payments and current account deficit
- International Relations:
 - Impact of Middle East conflicts on global economy
 - Geopolitics and energy security

Notes for beginners:

Pakistan depends heavily on imported oil and gas. When conflicts arise in the Middle East, oil prices rise across the world. This increase raises fuel and electricity costs in Pakistan. For example, when fuel becomes expensive, transport costs rise, which makes food and goods more costly. Farmers also face higher costs for diesel and fertilizers. Over time, these increases spread across the economy. Pakistan lacks strong reserves, so it cannot easily absorb shocks. The solution lies in using renewable energy like solar power and reducing waste in the energy system.

Facts and figures:

- Pakistan imports about 90 percent of its crude oil
- Energy costs affect almost every sector of the economy
- Rising oil prices directly increase electricity tariffs
- Higher imports widen the current account deficit
- Currency depreciation increases cost of imports

To sum up, the article sheds light on a silent driver of inflation that often escapes attention. It reminds us that Pakistan's economy does not operate in isolation. External shocks travel fast and hit hard when internal systems remain weak. The choice stands clear, either brace for repeated crises or build a shield through smart planning and resilience.

US-IRAN WAR GIVES SYRIA'S GLOBAL ECONOMIC PITCH MORE URGENCY

Author: Charles Lister

Summary:

The article goes against the backdrop of a fierce US Iran conflict, which has rattled the Middle East and sent economic tremors across the globe. Iranian strikes on energy infrastructure and the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz have pushed the global economy toward uncertainty, with fears of recession looming large. Yet amid this storm, Syria appears to turn a corner. After years of civil war and instability, the country has witnessed a sharp decline in violence, with record low casualties in early 2026. Despite past bloodshed and lingering threats from groups like Daesh, the overall trajectory signals cautious stabilization. Syria, once a source of chaos, now begins to shed that image and step onto a path of recovery.

This shifting reality has opened a door of opportunity. Syria now presents itself as a vital corridor for trade, energy, and digital connectivity between Asia and Europe, especially as traditional maritime routes face disruption. Projects like Silk Link and new pipeline networks aim to transform Syria into a hub of regional interconnectivity. Global powers and regional actors have shown growing interest, with billions in investments already secured. However, the road ahead is far from smooth. Internal challenges, governance issues, and threats like unexploded ordnance still cast long shadows. The ongoing regional conflict may both highlight Syria's potential and hinder its progress. The article leaves us with a stark realization that Syria stands at a crossroads, where stability could unlock prosperity, yet prolonged conflict could derail this fragile transformation.

Overview:

The article examines how the US Iran conflict has reshaped regional dynamics while creating unexpected economic opportunities for Syria. It highlights Syria's transition from instability to relative calm and its emerging role as a

strategic hub for global connectivity. The focus remains on the balance between opportunity and fragility in a conflict ridden region.

NOTES:

The article highlights how the US Iran conflict has shaken the Middle East and disrupted global economic stability by targeting energy infrastructure and restricting key routes like the Strait of Hormuz, which has intensified fears of recession and supply chain breakdowns. Amid this turbulence, Syria emerges as an unexpected case of gradual stabilization after years of civil war, with violence and casualties significantly declining by early 2026, despite persistent threats from militant groups and unresolved security risks such as unexploded ordnance. This shift has repositioned Syria from a conflict zone to a potential corridor of regional connectivity, as major projects like Silk Link and new pipeline networks aim to integrate it into global trade, energy, and digital routes linking Asia and Europe. International and regional actors have begun investing heavily, with billions committed to energy and infrastructure development, reflecting growing confidence in Syria's strategic potential. However, the country remains fragile due to governance challenges, internal divisions, and lingering security concerns, while broader regional instability continues to threaten the pace of recovery and investment. Syria thus stands at a critical juncture where its transformation into a hub of economic interconnectivity depends on sustained peace, institutional strengthening, and careful navigation of external geopolitical pressures.

Relevant CSS syllabus topics:

International Relations:

- Middle East conflicts and global impact
 - Geopolitics of energy routes
- Pakistan Affairs:
 - Regional instability and its economic implications
- Current Affairs:
 - Global energy crisis and connectivity projects
 - Post conflict reconstruction and state building

Notes for beginners:

The article explains how war in the Middle East affects global trade and economy. Syria, once devastated by conflict, is now becoming more stable. For example, violence has decreased sharply, which allows investment and development to take place. Syria's location makes it important for trade routes between Asia and Europe. New projects like internet cables and pipelines can pass through Syria, which reduces reliance on risky sea routes. However, challenges remain, such as political instability and leftover explosives from war. If peace continues, Syria can become an economic hub, but ongoing conflicts may slow progress.

Facts and figures:

- Violence in Syria declined by 73 percent in late 2025
- March 2026 recorded only 23 deaths in violence
- Daesh attacks reduced by 50 percent in 2025
- Energy investments in Syria reached 28 billion dollars
- Internet latency may reduce by 30 to 40 milliseconds through Silk Link
- Over 700 people killed by unexploded ordnance since Assad's fall

To sum up, The article shows that how a nation is caught between ruin and renewal. Syria stands like a bridge in a storm, with one end tied to conflict and the other reaching toward opportunity. Its future hinges not only on internal reform but also on the tides of regional politics. If stability holds, Syria may rewrite its destiny, yet if conflict persists, that promise may fade before it fully takes shape.

ALL EYES ON ISLAMABAD

Author: Faisal J. Abbas

Summary:

The article opens with a dramatic diplomatic breakthrough, where Pakistan steps into the spotlight by helping secure a ceasefire just before a major US deadline. This move prevents a full-scale strike on Iran and temporarily pulls the region back from the brink. Yet the calm is fragile, like glass under pressure, as violations surface almost immediately. Iran and Israel continue limited strikes despite the truce, exposing how easily peace can slip through the cracks. The writer points out that war ignites fast, but extinguishing its flames is far more complex. Lebanon becomes part of the wider spillover, where civilian suffering deepens amid unresolved political fault lines and the lingering shadow of armed groups. The ceasefire, though historic, remains shaky and uncertain.

As Islamabad hosts high-level Iran US talks, expectations remain mixed and clouded with uncertainty. The author underlines that neither side would sit at the table unless pushed by necessity, suggesting that both have reached a point where options are running dry. The negotiations are described as a high stakes gamble where outcomes are impossible to predict. Regional powers including Gulf states watch closely, especially as issues like the Strait of Hormuz raise alarms over global trade security. Pakistan's unexpected role as a mediator earns global attention, shifting its image from a crisis prone state to a facilitator of dialogue. Still, the article stresses realism over optimism, warning that success depends on fragile compromises, not grand promises.

Overview:

The article captures Pakistan's surprising diplomatic emergence in brokering a ceasefire and hosting Iran US talks. It reflects on the fragile nature of peace in a conflict heavy region. It also highlights the high stakes of Middle Eastern geopolitics, where negotiations, mistrust, and strategic interests collide.

NOTES:

The article presents Pakistan's unexpected rise as a diplomatic bridge after it helped secure a last moment ceasefire between Iran and the United States, narrowly avoiding a wider regional escalation. However, the situation remains unstable as ceasefire violations continue and Iran Israel tensions persist, showing that peace is fragile and easily disrupted. Lebanon also suffers spillover effects due to ongoing regional rivalries and unresolved armed conflicts, reinforcing the idea that stability in the region is still far from secure. Meanwhile, high level Iran US talks in Islamabad unfold under intense pressure, with both sides engaging out of necessity rather than trust. The negotiations carry high stakes, particularly around issues like the Strait of Hormuz and regional security dynamics. Pakistan's role as a mediator gains global recognition, yet the article stresses that outcomes remain uncertain and dependent on cautious compromise rather than bold declarations.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- International Relations:
 - Middle East conflicts and diplomacy
 - Role of mediation in conflict resolution
- Pakistan Affairs:
 - Pakistan's foreign policy and diplomatic engagement
 - Regional peace initiatives
- Current Affairs:
 - Iran US tensions and global security
 - Ceasefire diplomacy and negotiation challenges

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains a situation where Pakistan helped reduce tension between Iran and the US by supporting a ceasefire. Even though fighting had stopped, small attacks continued, showing that peace was not stable. For example, when two countries agree to stop fighting but still clash at borders, trust becomes weak. Pakistan then hosted talks where major world leaders tried to find a solution. This shows how diplomacy works in real life, where countries negotiate instead of fighting. However, success is uncertain because every side has its own demands and fears.

Facts and Figures:

- Ceasefire achieved just before US deadline
- Iranian attacks reported in at least 12 countries
- At least 37 deaths in regional strikes
- US delegation included top officials like Vice President
- Historical peace deal comparison: 700 days of talks in past agreements
- Strait of Hormuz remains a key global oil route risk zone

To sum up, the article shows how diplomacy tries to hold balance amid chaos. Pakistan's unexpected rise as a mediator adds a new chapter to its foreign policy narrative. Yet peace remains fragile, shaped by mistrust and competing interests. The final message is that success will depend not on grand speeches but on careful compromise and sustained dialogue.

PAKISTAN'S DIPLOMATIC INFLECTION POINT IS NOW

Author: Muhammad Azfar Ahsan

Summary:

The article captures a critical turning point in global diplomacy as structured dialogue between the United States and Iran unfolds in Islamabad. It explains that these early negotiations are not meant to deliver instant results but to lay down the groundwork for a long and delicate diplomatic process. In this phase, silence and procedure matter as much as outcomes. The talks emerge from decades of mistrust, where rigid positions and strategic red lines have long blocked progress. Pakistan plays a central role by creating a neutral space for engagement and helping both sides step away from confrontation toward controlled dialogue. Its coordination reflects alignment among civilian leadership, military institutions, and diplomatic channels, giving the process both credibility and momentum.

As the discussion deepens, clear differences remain between Washington and Tehran. The United States demands strict limits on nuclear enrichment and broader regional restraint, while Iran seeks sanctions relief and protection of its strategic autonomy. Though these positions do not align, the act of dialogue itself signals cautious progress. The article highlights how the Strait of Hormuz adds global urgency, since any disruption there can trigger oil shocks and economic instability worldwide. At the same time, the process remains fragile, vulnerable to regional tensions and internal political pressures. Despite risks, Pakistan's role is evolving from occasional mediator to a more stable diplomatic platform. The central message is that Pakistan stands at a decisive moment where it can transform temporary relevance into lasting strategic influence through consistency and institutional strength.

Overview:

The article explains the initiation of US Iran talks in Islamabad and Pakistan's emerging diplomatic role. It highlights the complexity of early stage negotiations and the global stakes linked to Middle Eastern stability. It also underlines Pakistan's opportunity to become a long term facilitator of regional diplomacy.

NOTES:

The article explains the beginning of structured US Iran negotiations in Islamabad, where Pakistan provides a neutral platform for a long and delicate diplomatic process shaped by decades of mistrust and rigid strategic

positions. It emphasizes that these talks are not aimed at quick solutions but at gradual progress through procedural steps and confidence building. Pakistan's coordinated role, supported by civilian leadership, military establishment, and diplomatic institutions, enhances the credibility of the process and positions it as an emerging facilitator of high level dialogue. The core differences remain clear, with the US demanding limits on nuclear enrichment and broader regional restraint, while Iran seeks sanctions relief and protection of its strategic autonomy. Despite these gaps, continued engagement signals cautious movement forward. The Strait of Hormuz adds global urgency, as disruptions there can trigger energy crises and financial instability worldwide. However, the process remains fragile, exposed to regional tensions and political pressures, even as Pakistan's role evolves from occasional mediation to a more structured diplomatic function that could shape its long term strategic relevance.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- International Relations:
 - Diplomacy and negotiation frameworks
 - Middle East geopolitics and nuclear issue
- Pakistan Affairs:
 - Pakistan's foreign policy evolution
 - Role in regional peacebuilding
- Current Affairs:
 - Iran US relations and global security
 - Energy security and strategic chokepoints

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains how Pakistan is hosting talks between the United States and Iran. These talks are not expected to solve problems quickly but to slowly build trust. For example, countries often meet many times before reaching an agreement, just like planning step by step before building a house. Pakistan provides a safe and neutral place for these discussions. The US wants Iran to limit nuclear activity, while Iran wants relief from sanctions. The Strait of Hormuz is important because most oil passes through it, so any conflict there affects the whole world. Pakistan's role shows it is becoming important in global diplomacy.

Facts and Figures:

- Nearly 20 percent of global oil passes through Strait of Hormuz
- Oil flow estimated at 17 to 20 million barrels per day
- Negotiations described as phased and long term process
- Multiple high level diplomatic engagements in Islamabad
- Pakistan engages with US, Iran, China, and Gulf states simultaneously

To sum up, the article reflects a moment where diplomacy replaces confrontation, yet uncertainty still dominates the horizon. Pakistan's rise as a mediator shows how geography and trust can reshape global relevance. However, influence must be sustained through discipline and stability. The path ahead is not about quick wins but steady commitment. If managed wisely, this moment could mark Pakistan's shift from occasional participant to lasting pillar of regional diplomacy.

THE DURAND LINE: PAIN, POLITICS, PERCEPTION

Author: Naimat Khan

Summary:

The article shows the long standing controversy of the Durand Line, a border etched into history in 1893 yet still burning in political discourse. It opens with a striking remark from Afghanistan's acting defence minister, who

labels the “real pain” as Durand itself, exposing how deeply the issue is woven into Afghan state narrative. The author then peels back this sentiment layer by layer, arguing that what is often framed as historical grievance is also shaped by political convenience. Through archival research and historical documents, it is revealed that the Afghan ruler who signed the agreement was not coerced in the way commonly claimed. Instead, evidence suggests voluntary engagement, repeated confirmations, and formal acceptance of the boundary across different Afghan regimes.

The article further builds its case by highlighting the legal continuity of the border under international law after 1947, when Pakistan inherited the frontiers of British India. Yet, despite legal arguments, Afghanistan continues to reject the Durand Line, tying the issue to identity, sovereignty, and domestic politics. This tension keeps the dispute alive, even as Pakistan treats it as a settled boundary. The author also shifts focus to ground reality, pointing out that the Pashtun population on the Pakistani side has largely integrated into the state framework and shows no broad demand for redrawing borders. In the end, the article suggests that the Durand Line debate survives less on legal ambiguity and more on political narrative, making reconciliation a distant and complex prospect.

Overview:

The article explores the Durand Line dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan through historical, legal, and political lenses. It dissects competing narratives and questions long held Afghan claims about coercion and legitimacy. It also highlights how identity politics continues to overshadow legal clarity. The discussion ultimately reveals a deep gap between historical records and political perception.

NOTES:

The article revolves around the enduring Durand Line dispute, portraying it as a clash between historical record and political narrative. It highlights how Afghanistan’s leadership repeatedly frames the border as a colonial imposition, while Pakistan maintains it as a legally inherited and internationally recognized boundary after 1947. Through archival evidence and historical documents, the piece challenges the claim of coercion in the original 1893 agreement, suggesting that Afghan rulers not only consented but also reaffirmed the arrangement multiple times in the early twentieth century. Despite this legal and historical clarity, the dispute persists because it has been deeply embedded in questions of identity, sovereignty, and domestic politics in Afghanistan. On the other hand, the Pashtun population on the Pakistani side is shown as largely integrated into the state structure, with no widespread movement for territorial reversal. The article ultimately underlines that the issue survives less due to legal ambiguity and more due to entrenched political narratives, keeping reconciliation distant and complex.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs: Pakistan Afghanistan relations Border disputes and territorial issues
- International Relations: Post colonial borders and state sovereignty Role of international law in boundary disputes
- Current Affairs: Pakistan Afghanistan tensions Ethnic nationalism and regional stability

Notes for Beginners:

The Durand Line is a border between Pakistan and Afghanistan drawn in 1893. Afghanistan often claims it was forced, while Pakistan considers it a legal international boundary. For example, when a contract is signed and later inherited by another state, it still remains valid under international law. Many Afghan leaders have historically rejected the border, linking it with national identity. However, people living in Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region are mostly integrated into Pakistan’s political and social system. This shows that ground reality does not always match political claims.

Facts and Figures:

- Durand Line established in 1893
- Approximately 1,600 miles long border

- Multiple Afghan reaffirmations in early 1900s
- 1947 marked Pakistan's legal inheritance of border
- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa shows strong institutional integration within Pakistan

To sum up, The article shows how borders are not only drawn on maps but also in minds. The Durand Line dispute persists not because of legal vacuum, but because of narrative conflict. Until perception shifts, history will continue to echo louder than agreement.

JUST A PAUSE, NOT PEACE: THE PAK–AFGHAN CALM WILL SLIP AGAIN

Author: Dr Syed Kaleem Imam

Summary:

The article captures a tense and fragile moment along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border, where silence replaces gunfire but not suspicion. After weeks of heavy clashes involving artillery, drones, and airstrikes, both sides step back, yet the calm feels more like fatigue than resolution. The writer highlights that trust has been deeply eroded, especially after incidents such as strikes on civilian facilities and rising accusations from both sides. Pakistan approaches the situation largely through a security lens, while Afghanistan responds with assertions of sovereignty and denial, leaving a widening gap in understanding. Despite temporary quiet, the Durand Line region continues to remain a pressure point where old grievances and new attacks overlap.

The article further argues that the core failure lies in misjudged assumptions and a security driven mindset that has replaced meaningful diplomacy. Pakistan once hoped that the Taliban's return in 2021 would help control militant threats like the TTP, but that expectation has collapsed. Instead, attacks have increased, border tensions have escalated, and trade has suffered repeated disruptions. Economic losses, refugee deportations, and repeated border closures have only deepened mistrust and weakened both societies. Even mediation efforts, including China facilitated talks, are seen as fragile pauses rather than lasting breakthroughs. The writer concludes that without sustained dialogue, economic cooperation, and trust building measures, the region will continue to swing between conflict and uneasy silence, like a pendulum stuck in crisis.

Overview:

The article examines the cyclical tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan, where conflict and temporary ceasefires follow each other without lasting peace. It highlights the failure of a security only approach and stresses the need for diplomacy, economic connectivity, and trust building. The narrative underscores how mistrust, militancy, and border politics continue to destabilize the region.

NOTES:

The article presents the Pakistan–Afghanistan border as a space caught in an unending cycle of tension, where temporary silence after clashes is mistaken for peace while underlying mistrust continues to grow. It shows how recent pauses in fighting, following exchanges of artillery, drone strikes, and air raids, reflect exhaustion rather than resolution, as both sides remain locked in suspicion. Pakistan approaches the issue through a security driven lens, whereas Afghanistan responds with assertions of sovereignty and denial over cross border militancy, especially involving the TTP. This divergence has widened the political and strategic gap, keeping the Durand Line region unstable despite intermittent calm. The article further argues that reliance on force and reactive policies has replaced meaningful diplomacy, leading to repeated cycles of escalation and pause. Expectations that the Taliban's return would reduce militancy have failed, as attacks have instead increased, while trade disruptions, border closures, refugee deportations, and economic losses have deepened mistrust on both sides. Even mediated efforts are viewed as short term relief rather than lasting solutions. Ultimately, the article stresses that without sustained dialogue,

economic cooperation, and trust building measures, the region will remain trapped in a fragile loop of conflict and uneasy calm.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Subjects and Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs:
 - Pakistan Afghanistan border issues
 - Internal security and counterterrorism challenges
- International Relations:
 - Regional conflict resolution
 - Role of diplomacy in conflict zones
- Current Affairs:
 - South Asian security dynamics
 - Cross border militancy and geopolitics

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that Pakistan and Afghanistan are going through repeated cycles of conflict and temporary peace. For example, fighting stops for a short time, but tensions return again due to mistrust and militant activity. Pakistan focuses on security actions, while Afghanistan focuses on sovereignty and denial. Trade routes often close during tensions, which harms both economies. Refugee issues also add pressure between the two countries. Even mediation efforts, like China supported talks, cannot fully resolve deep rooted problems. This shows that peace requires more than military action; it needs cooperation and trust.

Facts and Figures:

- At least four major flare ups occurred between 2024 and 2026
- Pakistan closed eight major border crossings in October 2025
- Border closures significantly reduced trade flows
- Cross border attacks increased after 2021 Taliban return
- Multiple drone and artillery incidents reported in recent clashes

To sum up, The article warns bell echoing across a restless border. It shows that silence after conflict is not peace but a pause before the next storm. Without trust, dialogue loses its strength and becomes a fragile bridge over deep divides. Lasting stability will depend not on force but on patience, engagement, and steady cooperation. Otherwise, history will keep repeating itself in cycles of calm and chaos.

POPULATION EXPLOSION: A NATURAL PHENOMENON & ITS IMPLICATIONS

Author: Waqar Hassan

Summary:

The article presents population growth not as an anomaly or crisis born overnight, but as a deeply rooted, almost instinctive human phenomenon tied to survival, identity, and community-building. It argues that from tribal societies to modern nations, the human urge to belong, reproduce, and preserve identity has naturally driven population expansion. Families evolve into communities, and communities into nations, creating a continuous cycle of growth that reflects both biological instinct and social structure. However, while this expansion mirrors humanity's resilience and continuity, it also brings along a tangled web of challenges. The pressure on resources, environmental strain, and social imbalance begin to creep in as growth accelerates beyond manageable limits, making sustainability a pressing concern.

At the same time, the article acknowledges the other side of the coin, where population growth can act as a catalyst for innovation, economic activity, and cultural vibrancy. Larger populations provide labour, fuel markets, and encourage technological and social development, as seen in densely populated regions. The writer warns against blind celebration of numbers, emphasizing that unchecked growth can tip the scales, leading to resource depletion and long-term instability. The real challenge, therefore, lies in striking a delicate balance between expansion and sustainability. The article ultimately underlines that population growth is neither purely a blessing nor a curse, but a force that must be managed wisely to ensure human prosperity without compromising the future.

Overview:

The article explores population growth as a natural and historically rooted phenomenon while critically examining its social, economic, and environmental implications, stressing the need for balance between expansion and sustainability.

NOTES :

The article explains that population growth is a natural outcome of human instincts related to survival, identity, and community formation. It traces the evolution of human societies from tribes to nations, showing how the desire for belonging and security has historically driven population expansion. The writer highlights that family systems play a central role in this process, creating a continuous cycle of generational growth. Population increase is also linked to resilience, as societies tend to rebuild and expand after crises such as wars and pandemics. Advancements in healthcare, sanitation, and disease prevention have reduced mortality rates, leading to unprecedented population surges. The article also discusses the positive impacts of large populations, including economic growth, labour supply, innovation, and cultural exchange. However, it warns that unchecked population growth places immense pressure on resources, creates environmental challenges, and raises sustainability concerns. The writer stresses the importance of balancing population growth with effective resource management to ensure long-term stability and development.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs: Population challenges and resource management
- Current Affairs: Demographic trends and sustainability
- Environmental Science: Population growth and resource depletion

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that population growth happens naturally because humans want to build families and communities. For example, when parents have children, and those children grow up and have their own families, the population keeps increasing. Modern medicine has reduced death rates, which means more people are living longer, causing population numbers to rise quickly. While more people can help an economy grow by providing workers and ideas, too many people can also create problems like shortage of food, water, and space. So, the key idea is to manage population growth carefully so that resources are enough for everyone.

Facts and Figures:

- Population growth follows an exponential pattern (e.g., 2, 4, 8, 16)
- Decline in mortality rates due to medical advancements
- Increase in life expectancy worldwide
- Higher population density linked with economic activity
- Examples of controlled population growth seen in developed countries like Japan and Europe

To sum up, The article reminds that nature itself is both generous and demanding. Population growth, like a rising tide, can carry societies forward or sweep them into chaos depending on how it is managed. It is not growth that is the enemy, but neglect. If guided with foresight and balance, this force can become a pillar of prosperity; if ignored, it may quietly turn into a burden too heavy to bear.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY

Author: Waqar Hassan

Summary:

The article reveals a world where food security hangs in the balance, increasingly threatened by the relentless march of climate change. It argues that access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food is not just a matter of survival but the backbone of social stability and economic resilience. This foundation is beginning to crack. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and extreme weather events are disrupting agricultural cycles, turning once predictable seasons into a gamble. Crops fail, water becomes scarce, and farmers are left navigating a landscape that no longer plays by familiar rules. The writer underscores that climate change is not a distant threat; it is already reshaping food systems and pushing millions closer to hunger and uncertainty.

At the same time, the article highlights that this crisis, though daunting, is not beyond control if addressed with foresight and collective effort. Sustainable agricultural practices, climate-resilient crops, efficient water management, and global cooperation emerge as key lifelines. The writer stresses that adapting to climate change is no longer optional but essential to safeguarding future food supplies. Without decisive action, the ripple effects could extend far beyond empty plates, fuelling economic instability and social unrest. In essence, the article calls for a shift from reactive responses to proactive planning, reminding us that the battle for food security is, in many ways, a battle for humanity's future.

Overview:

The article examines the growing threat climate change poses to global food security, highlighting its impact on agriculture, water resources, and ecosystems, while emphasizing the need for sustainable and adaptive strategies to ensure long-term stability.

NOTES :

The article highlights that food security is essential for human survival, economic stability, and social harmony. It explains that climate change is disrupting agricultural systems through rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and extreme weather events such as floods and droughts. These changes negatively affect crop yields, irrigation systems, and planting cycles, making food production uncertain. The writer points out that global warming has

intensified heatwaves, which damage crops and increase the risk of crop failure. Climate change also disturbs ecosystems, leading to reduced biodiversity, increased pests and diseases, and soil degradation. Water scarcity has become a critical issue, as changing weather patterns make irrigation less reliable. The article further notes that soil erosion and nutrient depletion reduce agricultural productivity, worsening food shortages. Extreme weather events cause immediate disruptions in food supply chains, affecting farmers and consumers alike. The writer emphasizes the importance of climate-resilient agricultural practices, investment in research, improved irrigation techniques, and soil conservation methods. Global cooperation, policy implementation, and public awareness are identified as crucial steps to address the crisis. The article also links food security to global peace, warning that food shortages can lead to conflict and instability.

Relevant CSS Syllabus Topics:

- Pakistan Affairs: Food security challenges in Pakistan
- Current Affairs: Climate change and global food crisis
- Environmental Science: Climate change impacts on ecosystems
- International Relations: Global cooperation on climate issues
- Agriculture: Sustainable farming and resource management

Notes for Beginners:

The article explains that climate change is making it harder to grow food. For example, when rainfall becomes unpredictable or temperatures rise too much, crops cannot grow properly. This means less food is produced, which can lead to hunger and higher prices. Farmers also struggle because water becomes scarce and soil loses its quality. To solve this, countries need to use better farming methods, like saving water, planting crops that can survive heat, and protecting the soil. The main idea is simple: if we protect the environment, we can protect our food supply.

Facts and Figures:

- Approximately 821 million people suffer from undernourishment globally
- 151 million children under five are stunted
- 613 million women and girls face iron deficiency
- 2 billion adults are overweight or obese
- Food systems support over 1 billion livelihoods worldwide
- Climate change is increasing frequency of floods, droughts, and heatwaves

To sum up, The article works as a warning echoing across fields and farmlands: ignore nature, and it will rewrite the rules. Food security is no longer just about growing more; it is about growing smarter in a world that is changing faster than ever. If humanity rises to the challenge, it can turn crisis into opportunity. But if it drags its feet, the consequences may not just be hunger, but a deeper unraveling of the fragile balance that holds societies together.

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