



# Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies



## REGIONAL OPINIONS AND TRENDS

Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies

Opinions and Trends

48/25

Neighbourhood Insights Series

August 2025

### Enigmatic Ties?

*Touqir Hussain | 26 August 2025*

“The relationship has become a factor in many of Trump’s ongoing manoeuvres, with an uncertain future. And that’s not the only factor lending uncertainty to the future of Pak-US ties. Pakistan’s rare earth minerals lie at the centre of Washington’s new attraction. But its viability as an economic partner remains untested, because of the security situation in Baloch-istan and KP, where the critical minerals are located. And Pakistan’s economy continues to rely on IMF bailouts and debt rollovers.”

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1937281/enigmatic-ties>

\*\*\*

### Paradigm Shift in China, India Relations

*Dr Moonis Ahmar | 26 August 2025*

“Famous foreign policy dictum that there are no permanent enemies and allies but permanent interests suit the current shift in the Sino-Indian ties. The roar of the “China, India brothers” slogan that was famous during the formative phase of the Sino-Indian relations faded because of the border conflict between the two giant neighbours and the growing ties between China and Pakistan. From early 1960s till 2024, India and China remained as adversaries despite their huge trade relations.”

Read More: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2563183/paradigm-shift-in-china-india-relations>

\*\*\*

## **China and Shifting Geopolitics**

*Zahid Hussain | 27 August 2025*

“There seems to be a clear understanding in Beijing about the transactional nature of the new ties between Islamabad and Washington and that it would not in any way impact its strategic partnership with Pakistan. But we need to be careful as we try to balance these two relationships. It’s extremely useful to have good relations with the most powerful country in the world, but one has to be cautious about the ‘business deals’ given Trump’s impetuousness and unpredictable policy approach.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1937497/china-and-shifting-geopolitics>

\*\*\*

## **Pakistan’s War on Women: Honour Killings Expose a Nation Built on Misogyny**

*Tehmeena Rizvi | 17 August 2025*

“A state that cannot protect its women inside their own homes offers them no place of safety anywhere. In this land, every wall becomes a prison, and every street a threat. For countless women, Pakistan is no longer a country to live in, but a graveyard that buries their voices, their dignity, and their very existence. As the late scholar Nawal El Saadawi once said, ‘The home, the family, and the state are often the most dangerous places for women’.”

**Read More:** <https://www.firstpost.com/opinion/pakistans-war-on-women-honour-killings-expose-a-nation-built-on-misogyny-13925516.html>

\*\*\*

## **Errors in Counterterrorism**

*Muhammad Amir Rana | 03 August 2025*

“KP is one of Pakistan’s most critical provinces. It is grappling with severe governance challenges and widespread political discontent. The political outlook of the majority in KP often diverges from that of the power centres in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, fostering a sense of alienation and suspicion. Several districts in the province have become ungovernable due to persistent militancy. In such a context, nothing can replace the value of a consensus-based CT strategy, one that is locally rooted and politically inclusive.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1928421/errors-in-counterterrorism>

\*\*\*

## **Rinse and Repeat**

*Arifa Noor | 12 August 2025*

“It appears that in parts of KP, we are back at the ‘clear’ stage of the ‘clear, hold and build strategy’ of COIN; a strategy that fell apart in the country next door. But how will the ‘hold and build’ stages work this time around? No one knows. And how will ‘clear’ ensure that the TTP doesn’t just escape across the border again? This should be of great importance. Especially because, in the aftermath of the previous phases of displacement, the anger of the local populace increased after they returned.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1930334/rinse-and-repeat>

## **Climate Challenges for CPEC Corridor**

*Dr Asim Farooq | 26 August 2025*

“Ultimately, even when clear, preventable causes are known and viable technological solutions are within reach, attributing every tragedy solely to “God’s will” can become a way to avoid responsibility. Technology alone cannot resolve these issues unless there is a collective willingness to adopt it, invest in it, and act with foresight. The future of the Silk Route, the safety of its travelers, and the stability of regional connectivity all depend on our ability to transform intention into action.”

**Read More:** <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/08/26/climate-challenges-for-cpec-corridor/>

\*\*\*

## **Correcting Course**

*Rashid Amjad | 28 August 2025*

“Living under the IMF’s tutelage is a reality that we must accept for the next two to three years at least with a strong chance of the ongoing programme being extended or a new one replacing it. Our economic team must deliver on the promises made to the IMF to ensure macroeconomic stability and implement structural reforms. But it must also identify the key shortcomings of the existing IMF programme, especially its adverse impact on the poor, in order to build up a strong case for the lender to make suitable but urgently needed corrections in the ongoing programme. Let us hope the Fund will listen.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1937814/correcting-course>

\*\*\*

## **Our Industrial Stagnation in a Region of Growth**

*Durdana Najam | 29 August 2025*

“Pakistan-China relations are often discussed with pride and optimism, hailed as a model of strategic partnership, especially under the banner of CPEC. Yet a crucial question remains largely unasked: has Pakistan ever seriously tried to understand what fundamentally makes China rise to the forefront of global industrial power while Pakistan stagnates or falls behind? In the emergent global race for technological and industrial growth, Pakistan’s choice is stark. It can cling to fractured governance and policy inconsistency, or muster the collective will to build a resilient industrial base inspired by its closest neighbours.”

**Read More:** <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2563593/our-industrial-stagnation-in-a-region-of-growth>

\*\*\*

## **Are the Taliban Helping Pakistan Suppress the TTP in Exchange for Blocking an Opposition Meeting?**

*Kazim Homayoun | 27 August 2025*

“The Afghan Taliban and Pakistan may indeed have struck a covert bargain one in which the Taliban agreed to block a planned gathering of their political opponents in Islamabad in exchange for providing Pakistan’s ISI with intelligence on TTP sanctuaries. In the short term, this strategy benefits the Taliban by preventing their opponents from gaining legitimacy in a regional capital. But in the long term, the risks are profound: by turning against their longtime ideological allies in the TTP, the Taliban erode part of their traditional support base while deepening their dependency on Pakistan.”

**Read More:** <https://8am.media/eng/are-the-taliban-helping-pakistan-suppress-the-ttp-in-exchange-for-blocking-an-opposition-meeting/>

\*\*\*

## **Afghankhwa—A Situational Analysis**

*Inam Ul Haque | 29 August 2025*

“True to its dynamics, Afghanistan keeps Afghan watchers and Afghanologists busy. If the recent events in the country and the adjoining Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan—collectively referred as Afghankhwa—are any guide, Afghanistan is at the cusp of major changes. Winston Churchill's 1939 famous description of Russia as ‘a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma’ would fit today's Bakhtar or greater Afghanistan.”

**Read More:** <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2563592/afghankhwa-a-situational-analysis>

\*\*\*

## **Will Russia’s Diplomatic Recognition of the Afghan Taliban Government Have a Domino Effect?**

*Rahul Roy Chaudhury | 08 August 2025*

“The next significant country to officially recognise the Taliban regime is likely to be from Afghanistan’s neighbourhood. This decision will be based on national priorities and geopolitical interests amidst a delicate balance between regional security requirements and international commitments. For many in the region, the Taliban regime is a powerful reality that is here to stay without any likelihood of an internal uprising or externally backed regime change. For those sharing land borders with Afghanistan, this factor becomes significantly more important.”

**Read More:** <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2025/08/will-russias-diplomatic-recognition-of-the-afghan-taliban-government-have-a-domino-effect/#:~:text=As%20a%20result%20of%20growing,in%20Kabul%20in%20March%202025.>

\*\*\*

## **The Taliban in Afghanistan**

*Lindsay Maizland | 14 August 2025*

“Under Taliban rule, Afghanistan’s economy has floundered. Malnutrition has soared, and more than half a million jobs have been lost. Most women and girls over twelve have been banned from working and from attending school. The Taliban maintain close ties with al-Qaeda. Analysts are concerned that the Taliban could provide the group with safe haven and allow it to launch international terrorist attacks from Afghan soil.”

**Read More:** <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan#:~:text=UN%20Security%20Council%20monitors%20reported,home%20of%20a%20Taliban%20aide>

\*\*\*

## **The Taliban’s ‘Independence’ Charade**

*Rastakhiz Shula | 23 August 2025*

“The Taliban stand at a position defined by unprecedented contradictions. For years, they shouted slogans of “jihad against the infidels,” sacrificing thousands of young Afghans in pursuit of this cause. Yet now, the very same movement stretches out its hand to those very “infidels,” begging for money and recognition. The same rulers who have stripped Afghan women of their right to education and work, and silenced every voice of freedom, are behind closed doors appealing to the international community for legitimacy and cash. This blatant hypocrisy reveals that in the Taliban’s lexicon, “independence” is not a political reality but a propaganda tool.”

**Read More:** <https://8am.media/eng/the-talibans-independence-charade/>

\*\*\*

## **Chinese Game in Bangladesh Mirrors Beijing’s Pakistan Playbook**

*Raja Muneeb | 23 August 2025*

“China’s advance into Bangladesh is largely its mirrored policy from Pakistan. What Pakistan represents for China in the west as a proxy state that espouses Islamist ideology and a mindset of perpetual conflict with India, Bangladesh appears to be taking on a similar role in the east. Both countries harbour significant Islamist movements that share a worldview inclined towards hostility with India, envisioning endless conflicts rooted in ideological, religious, and geopolitical grievances.”

**Read More:** <https://www.firstpost.com/opinion/chinese-game-in-bangladesh-mirrors-beijings-pakistan-playbook-13927393.html>

\*\*\*

## **Rohingya Crisis: Why Does the Resolution Remain So Complex?**

*Umme Wara | 25 August 2025*

“In the present reality, the voluntary repatriation of the Rohingyas remains uncertain, while it has also become nearly impossible for Bangladesh alone to shoulder the responsibility of such a vast population. The Rohingya crisis is exerting long-term political and economic pressure on Bangladesh and is generating growing discontent among the local population. Umme Wara writes about the role of international powers and the associated complexities in the Rohingya crisis.”

**Read More:** <https://en.prothomalo.com/opinion/op-ed/ww2mee65td>

\*\*\*

## **Modernising Bangladesh’s Defence is a Strategic Necessity**

*Mamun Abdullahi, Tamim Muntasir, and Afsana Rahman | 19 August 2025*

“Under Forces Goal 2030, the Bangladesh Army has acquired modern Russian BTR-80 and Turkish Otokar Cobra APCs, along with Chinese MBT-2000 and VT-5 tanks, and advanced artillery. Yet significant gaps remain: limited armoured fleets lack advanced networking, older APCs reduce survivability, and artillery and cyber capabilities are underdeveloped. Modern warfare demands advanced air power, yet the Bangladesh Air Force remains constrained by outdated MiG-29B and F-7 interceptors, with limited radar range, payload, and endurance, and no in-flight refuelling capacity. The non-homogeneous fleet complicates maintenance.”

**Read More:** <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/modernising-bangladeshs-defence-strategic-necessity-3966016>

\*\*\*

## **Debt Restructuring: Progress and the Path Ahead**

*Nelie Munasinghe | 03 August 2025*

“The IMF has informed Sri Lanka to expedite the process and complete the debt restructuring process. The Government must finalise the process promptly. While the country has finalised most of the process, prompt finalisation of the rest of the foreign process is extremely important. Once the Government finishes, there will be economic stability, in addition to the economic outlook by other countries turning positive. Sri Lanka is expected to increase its GDP by more than 7% and reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio by more than six percentage points over 10 years. In light of these targets, achieving debt sustainability is key for Sri Lanka.

**Read More:** <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/sCn5mlaHXinj7SnQLtiT>

\*\*\*

## **A Thorium-Based Path to Sri Lankan Energy Sovereignty**

*Vinod Moonesinghe | 05 August 2025*

“Sri Lanka’s National People’s Power (NPP) government plans to phase out coal and embrace nuclear power in its 2025–2044 energy strategy. Although it is capital-intensive, the government views nuclear energy as essential for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. It targets 70% renewables, nuclear supplementation, and a 500 MW HVDC interconnection by 2030. Legal frameworks are pending, while public engagement and long lead times remain key challenges.”

**Read More:** <https://island.lk/a-thorium-based-path-to-sri-lankan-energy-sovereignty/>

\*\*\*

## **Strategic Blueprint for Offshore Bunkering in SL**

*Shashi Dhanatunge | 10 August 2025*

“With global shipping lanes intersecting just south of its coastline, Sri Lanka holds a pivotal location in the Indian Ocean. Despite this geographic advantage, Sri Lanka’s marine fuel (bunkering) sector remains underdeveloped. The country currently handles an estimated 1.2-1.5 million MT of marine fuel annually, a fraction of its potential. A transformation in policy, regulation, and technology modelled on Singapore’s globally admired reforms could change that.”

**Read More:** <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/MaIWxLnoLY3vDgixPK24>

\*\*\*

## **The Silent Sufferers: A Strain on Nepal’s BFIs**

*Dr. Krishna Sharma | 05 August 2025*

“The financial landscape for Banks and Financial Institutions (BFIs) in Nepal has become increasingly challenging in recent years. While the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted global and local economies, Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) – the country’s central bank – introduced a series of proactive and accommodative measures to safeguard the real economy; however, without providing direct relief or compensation to BFIs. Much of the financial and operational burden of these interventions was shouldered by the BFIs themselves, resulting in prolonged stress on their profitability, asset quality and overall financial health.”

**Read More:** <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/the-silent-sufferers-a-strain-on-nepals-bfis>

\*\*\*

## **The ‘Ghost’ in the ‘Republic’**

*Alisha Sijapati | 21 August 2025*

“Nepal today stands amid an internal struggle—a tug-of-war between the impulse to reconsider monarchy, the frustration with a corrupt republic and the demand for a better alternative. Hridayendra’s emergence should be understood as a symptom of this systemic failure rather than a singular threat to democracy. For a thoughtful political discourse, Nepalis must demand accountability from their leaders, welcome new voices and apply a critical lens to everyone who seeks to lead. The path forward remains unclear, but it is defined by a deep need for a system that can finally deliver on its promises.”

**Read More:** <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2025/08/21/the-ghost-in-the-republic>

\*\*\*

## **Nepal Needs a Comprehensive Data Protection Law: To Prevent Digital Data from Manipulating Us**

*Samir Sitaula | 28 August 2025*

“Nepal, meanwhile, is stuck in a "collect now, worry later" mindset. With over 39 million mobile connections and 14 million social media users, the country's digital landscape is expanding rapidly, but legal protections aren't keeping pace. As cross-border digital transactions with India grow and more Nepalis embrace online services, the risks of data misuse and breaches only increase. The way forward is clear: Nepal needs a comprehensive data protection law that defines personal and sensitive data, requires explicit consent, and gives users the right to access, correct, and delete their information.”

**Read More:** <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/nepal-needs-a-comprehensive-data-protection-law-to-prevent-digital-data-from-manipulating-us>

\*\*\*

## **Armenia-Azerbaijan Deal: Will India’s Interest Be Compromised?**

*Abhinav Pandya | 23 August 2025*

“This situation is further complicated by recent strains in India–US relations, which could impact Armenia’s ties with India. The US government is now likely to discourage Armenia from deepening its partnership with India, particularly given Washington’s perception of India as a close partner of Russia. Furthermore, India’s growing ties with China are unlikely to be well-received by the American establishment. Many of Trump’s initiatives have historically been volatile and fragile in nature, and whether this deal will endure remains uncertain.”

**Read More:** <https://www.firstpost.com/opinion/armenia-azerbaijan-deal-will-indias-interest-be-compromised-13927382.html>

\*\*\*

## **From Reform to Rights - Strengthening Uzbekistan's Legal Foundations**

*Akmal Saidov | 25 August 2025*

“New Uzbekistan is pressing ahead with democratic reforms while pursuing a pragmatic foreign policy, deepening dialogue with the international community, and rolling out reforms that reinforce guarantees for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Within the framework of the Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy—now paired with the State Program, ‘Year of Environmental Protection and the Green Economy’—the authorities are upgrading legal safeguards and institutional mechanisms aimed at protecting citizens’ rights.”

**Read More:** <https://timesca.com/opinion-from-reform-to-rights-strengthening-uzbekistans-legal-foundations/>

\*\*\*

## **‘Looking East’: How Can Kazakhstan Secure Favourable Mining Contracts with Foreign Investors**

*Saulet Tanirbergen | 27 August 2025*

“Kazakhstan seeks new investments from abroad into its mining industry, which has been cited as a “pillar of economic growth.” The International Energy Agency (IEA) predicts that demand for critical minerals is set to triple by 2030 and quadruple by 2040. Moreover, growing tensions with China, which produces 60% of all critical minerals and processes 85% of them, has led Western countries to turn to Central Asia to diversify their supply. Astana is trying to meet this demand by attracting more foreign investors, which is necessary due to the huge upfront costs of new exploration and extraction.”

**Read More:** <https://astanatimes.com/2025/08/looking-east-how-can-kazakhstan-secure-favourable-mining-contracts-with-foreign-investors/>

\*\*\*

## **Attacking Iran and Tempting Fate**

*Mark Fitzpatrick | 01 August 2025*

“Although Israel and the United States did considerable damage to Iran’s nuclear facilities, Iran may be able to produce the fissile material required for about ten nuclear weapons within half a year. How long it would take Iran to fashion it into a weapon is unknown. The loss of the 11 nuclear scientists and engineers by assassination has undoubtedly lengthened the timeline. But Iran has more talent in the pipeline, as well as blueprint-based knowledge. Much of its weapons-development work had already been completed two decades ago, as detailed in the copious documents Mossad acquired in its January 2018 raid.”

**Read More:** <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/survival-online/2025/08/attacking-iran-and-tempting-fate/>

\*\*\*

## **Where Did Iran's Arab Supporters Disappear?**

*Abdulrahman al-Rashed | 18 August 2025*

“What has befallen Iran is no small matter; its military losses and nuclear facilities are immense, facilities that cost billions of dollars and much blood and sweat to build. To its ballistic and nuclear losses, we can add the loss of the popular current it had cultivated across the region, from Iraq to Morocco. When the Lebanese government took its bold decision to confiscate Hezbollah’s weapons, the response was limited to just a few dozen motorcycles roaming Beirut’s streets in protest! So what happened to the human waves, the millions who once flooded the streets at a mere gesture from the party’s leader or from Tehran?”

**Read More:** <https://english.alarabiya.net/views/2025/08/18/where-did-iran-s-arab-supporters-disappear->

\*\*\*

## **Blow After Blow, Losing Ground: How Iran's Regional Influence is Unravelling**

*Dr. Majid Rafizadeh | 20 August 2025*

“Iran’s government has faced a relentless succession of shocks over the past year with each one eroding a pillar of its power. Assad’s fall dismantled regional logistics; Hezbollah’s weakening reshaped deterrence; the 12-Day War exposed vulnerabilities in command, nuclear capability, and air defense; and the advancing water crisis threatens the social compact at home. The cumulative pattern is unmistakable: the axis appears structurally fraying. Absent dramatic reversals like a resurgent proxy bottom line, breakthrough alliances, or transformative internal reform what we’re witnessing may be the beginning of a thaw that Washington and Jerusalem have long aspired toward.”

**Read More:** <https://english.alarabiya.net/views/2025/08/20/blow-after-blow-losing-ground-how-iran-s-regional-influence-is-unravelling->

\*\*\*

## **Lebanon Needs Clarity, Not Casino Diplomacy**

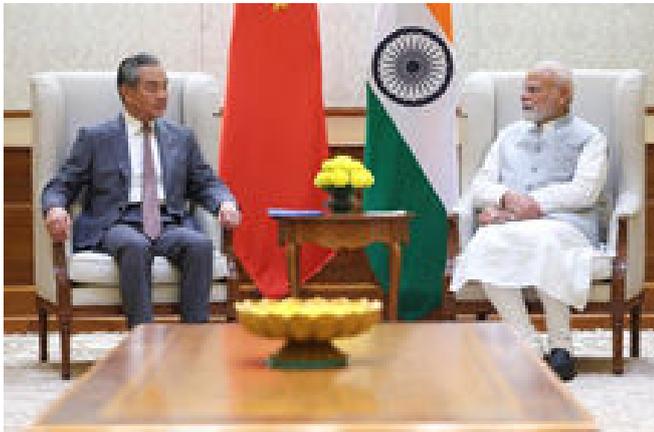
*Makram Rabah | 25 August 2025*

“As Lebanon faces the choice between disarmament and disintegration, the message from Washington and beyond must be unambiguous. Hezbollah’s weapons are incompatible with Lebanon’s survival. Sovereignty comes first, before elections, before economic recovery, before anything else. But sovereignty will not be delivered from outside; it must be seized at home. Only when the Lebanese themselves decide that enough is enough will clarity triumph over casino politics, and Lebanon finally find a path back to life.”

**Read More:** <https://english.alarabiya.net/views/2025/08/25/lebanon-needs-clarity-not-casino-diplomacy>

## REGION IN PICTURES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in New Delhi, India on 18 August 2025.



Pic Credits: Al Jazeera

\*\*\*

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir met Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine in Tampa, Florida on 10 August 2025.



Pic Credits: Dawn

On 21 August 2025, Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar met Russian President Vladimir Putin at Kremlin.



Pic Credits: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

\*\*\*

Foreign Ministers of Pakistan, China and Afghanistan pledged closer anti-terrorism cooperation, in a meeting held in Kabul on 20 August 2025.



Pic Credits: Daily Sabah



**Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies**

The Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies (CAPSS) is an independent, non-profit think tank that undertakes and promotes policy related research, study and discussion on defence and military issues, trends, and development in air power and space for civil and military purposes, as also related issues of national security. The Centre is headed by Air Vice Marshal Anil Golani (Retd).

Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies  
P-284, Arjan Path, Subroto Park, New Delhi 110010  
Tel: +91 11 25699130/32, Fax: +91 11 25682533

**NOTE: *Regional Opinion and Trends* aims to capture prevailing opinions in South Asia and West Asia.**

Editor: Dr Shalini Chawla e-mail: shaluchawla@yahoo.com

Compilation and Designing: Ms Anadi, Ms Priyadarshini Baruah and Mr Rohit Singh

The views expressed in this brief are those of the author and not necessarily of the Centre or any other organisation.