



# Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies



Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies

Opinions and Trends

49/25

Neighbourhood Insights Series

September 2025

## What Lies Beyond CPEC?

*Danish Bhutto | 11 September 2025*

“Seventy-eight years after independence, Pakistan finds itself at a crossroads. The choice before us is stark: we can continue as passive observers in a rapidly transforming regional order, or we can commit to crafting an independent, forward-looking strategy that leverages our geography for our own economic and political benefit.”

Read More: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/09/11/what-lies-beyond-cpec/>

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## Pakistan Strategic Pact with Saudi Arabia is Really About Iran and Blessed by US

*Ayesha Siddiqa | 20 September 2025*

“This agreement is not about Pakistan and Saudi Arabia looking Trump in the eye or Riyadh turning away from Washington. If anything, it can be surmised that the agreement was made with a fair amount of consultation with the Americans, who would have allowed Pakistan this level of proliferation. This could be termed as kosher proliferation.”

Read More: <https://theprint.in/opinion/pakistan-strategic-pact-with-saudi-arabia-is-really-about-iran-and-blessed-by-us/2747247/>

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## **Pak-Saudi Defence Pact**

*Dr Muhammad Ali Ehsan | 21 September 2025*

“Pakistan harbours no aggressive designs; and its strategic alliance with any power, including a major power like Saudi Arabia, cannot be at the expense of its own interests. The most important factor in the defence pact signed between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan is the correct perception about the threat faced by the two countries.”

**Read More:** <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2568001/pak-saudi-defence-pact>

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## **Moment of Truth**

*Maleeha Lodhi | 22 September 2025*

“The Saudis are pursuing a hedging strategy and turning to Pakistan for “joint deterrence against any aggression”. This is another indication of changing geostrategic dynamics and shifting alignments that are fundamentally reshaping the regional and global landscape today.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1943806/moment-of-truth>

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## **Counterterrorism to Counter-Narrative?: BLA Designation and the Return of Re-Hyphenation in South Asia**

*Hely Desai | 16 September 2025*

“Historically, the BLA’s alignment with India on regional flashpoints such as Pakistan-administered Kashmir, coupled with New Delhi’s quiet but discernible sympathy for the Baloch liberation movement, underscores a degree of convergence that Islamabad has sought to spotlight.”

**Read More:** <https://southasianvoices.org/geo-f-in-r-bla-designation-india-09-17-2025/>

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## **Pakistan’s Perilous Gambit: ISKP vs the Taliban and Baloch**

*Priyadarshini Baruah | 24 September 2025*

“It is implausible that Pakistan was unaware of ISKP’s significant presence in Balochistan. Tolerating their presence seems to be a deliberate tactic to gain leverage over Afghanistan. Pakistan can indirectly pressure the Taliban in Kabul, while addressing its grievances over TTP sanctuaries in Afghanistan. This proxy strategy is a well-documented facet of Pakistan’s security doctrine, but it comes with grave risks.”

**Read More:** <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/pakistan-s-perilous-gambit-iskp-vs-the-taliban-and-baloch>

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## **A Recipe for Better Governance**

*Naveed Safdar | 16 September 2025*

“The creation of more provinces in Pakistan is not a panacea, but it is a viable step toward addressing the country’s core governance challenges. If implemented with constitutional safeguards, fiscal planning, and inclusive dialogue, it could strengthen the federation, empower marginalized communities, and unlock Pakistan’s developmental potential.

**Read More:** <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/09/16/a-recipe-for-better-governance/>

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## **Sindh’s Salary Fiasco**

*Abdul Rahman Malik | 17 September 2025*

“Restoring confidence in the system will require more than technical fixes. Streamlining the MPG system with urgency, empathy, and clear communication is not just an administrative necessity—it is a moral imperative. The dignity and financial security of Sindh’s dedicated public servants hang in the balance, and the government must act swiftly to prove that it values their contributions.”

**Read More:** <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/09/17/sindhs-salary-fiasco/>

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## **The \$21bn Question**

*Ahmad Maudood Ausaf | 20 September 2025*

“Crypto is no longer a curiosity. It is a \$21bn reality. About 20 million Pakistanis now hold digital assets, while our finance minister continues to urge citizens to adopt them. The question really comes down to this: when such a vast share of the population already trades in this space, how can the state, as a matter of deliberate policy, afford to look the other way?”

**Read More:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1943368/the-21bn-question>

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## **Weak Government Syndrome**

*Muddassir Rizvi | 24 September 2025*

“Pakistan’s election system has consistently failed to shape a government that enjoys public and political legitimacy. Structural and systemic weaknesses have enabled detractors to question election outcomes that may be legitimate and earnestly won. Such an arrangement has served an ‘omnipresent’ state, which has preferred working with governments having ‘questionable’ or ‘fragmented’ mandates, rather than the one that is clear.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1944287/weak-government-syndrome>

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## **Pakistan's Flood Migration Crisis**

*Syed Mohammad Ali | 26 September 2025*

“Climate change is a relentless force, which combines with governance gaps and public neglect, to repeatedly expose Pakistan to catastrophic flooding. Millions of people and the struggling economy were still recovering from the 2022 floods when the country was battered by floods again this year. It is obvious that Pakistan still lacks an effective flood mitigation strategy.”

**Read More:** <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2568941/pakistans-flood-mitigation-crisis>

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## **The Ups and Downs of Taliban–Pakistan Relations**

*Mohammad Farhad Jalal | 17 September 2025*

“Taliban–Pakistan relations have once again entered a period of turbulence. The current deterioration has coincided with intensified TTP attacks in Pakistan’s northwestern border regions. Media reports suggest that Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistan’s special envoy for Afghanistan, is expected to travel to Kabul soon to deliver a stern message from the ISI to the Taliban.”

**Read More:** <https://8am.media/eng/the-ups-and-downs-of-taliban-pakistan-relations/>

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## **Why Kyrgyz Republic’s Voice Matters in Afghan Affairs**

*Islomkhon Gafarov | 18 September 2025*

“The states of the Central Asian region increasingly regard Afghanistan as an inseparable part of their shared neighborhood. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have actively sought to deepen their engagement with Kabul. Uzbekistan has prioritized humanitarian assistance, the return of Afghan overseas assets to the Afghan people, and the promotion of the Trans-Afghan Corridor. Kazakhstan, views Afghanistan primarily through the lens of economic opportunity.”

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

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## **Bagram: A “Geopolitical Chip” in the Power Game**

*Abdul Nasir Noorzad | 22 September 2025*

“A return to Bagram would not merely be a military operation; it would amount to a redefinition of America’s role in the security architecture of Eurasia and the “new Great Game.” It would be a limited yet directive presence, one that could advance Washington’s geopolitical objectives with minimal political cost and maximum flexibility.”

**Read More:** <https://8am.media/eng/bagram-a-geopolitical-chip-in-the-power-game/>

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## **The Terrifying Spectre of an Internet Shutdown in Afghanistan**

*Hujjatullah Zia | 22 September 2025*

“Shutting down the internet would marginalise Afghanistan at the global level. It would be like implementing a self-imposed embargo on the country, which would have an adverse effect on many public spheres in Afghanistan, especially the already struggling economy. Instead of going to this extreme, Afghanistan should heed the example of China.”

**Read More:** <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2025/9/22/the-terrifying-spectre-of-an-internet-shutdown-in-afghanistan>

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## **Islamist Extremism in Bangladesh Resurges Amid Renewed Ties with Pakistan**

*Bantirani Patro | 26 September 2025*

“Bangladesh’s social media landscape has seen an increase in extremist content, leading to radical preachers seeing a rise in their following. Recruitment efforts by Islamist forces, then, naturally get undergirded by the general atmosphere supportive of religious extremism, with the internet playing a key role, facilitating exposure to radical ideologies.”

**Read More:** [https://capssindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/CAPSS- InFocus\\_BR\\_26\\_9\\_25.pdf](https://capssindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/CAPSS- InFocus_BR_26_9_25.pdf)

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## **Did or Will Whitening Black Money Do Any Good to Bangladesh?**

*Mamun Rashid | 27 September 2025*

“Money whitening schemes have been tried repeatedly and failed repeatedly. Bangladesh cannot afford to let its economy be shaped by shadow finance. The task before the interim government is or was to strengthen institutions, enforce accountability, and build a culture of compliance. That is the only way to shrink the shadow economy and unlock the country’s true growth potential.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/392530/did-or-will-whitening-black-money-do-any-good-to>

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## **The Interim Government’s Troubling Continuity**

*Anu Muhammad | 29 September 2025*

“It is unfortunate that, after more than a year, in almost every single area where we expected betterment, this government has demonstrated not merely incompetence but something that cannot even be explained as inefficiency. It is not clear whether this government is truly serious about these issues, or if it simply lacks the intention to address them.”

**Read More:** <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/the-interim-governments-troubling-continuity-3996826>

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## **The Three Pillars of Fiscal Policy**

*Dr Nadee Dissanayake | 14 September 2025*

“For Sri Lanka, fiscal policy is more than a tool for survival; it is the foundation for transformation. How the nation collects, spends, and borrows will determine whether it achieves sustainable growth, shared opportunity, and prosperity for all. Balanced, disciplined, and transparent management of these pillars is the key to turning challenges into lasting success.”

**Read More:** <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/wxGGTSJiYPPM8o2yrfB2>

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## **‘System Change’: Yet Another Mirage!**

*Dr Upul Wijayawardhana | 16 September 2025*

“It was an earth-shattering event in Sri Lankan politics when the leader of a party responsible for two insurrections leading to huge economic and infrastructure damage, on top of the horrendous human cost, was voted to the highest office, though not by the majority. However, three months later, his mandate was solidified when the voters gave him a two-thirds majority in parliament.”

**Read More:** <https://island.lk/system-change-yet-another-mirage/>

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## **President AKD’s U-Turn: Pre-Poll Propaganda and Post-Election Performance**

*D.B.S. Jeyaraj | 23 September 2025*

“Though Wickremesinghe had ensured the availability of essential items, affordability was an acute problem for most of the people (70%). The cost of living was rising, but salaries were not going up. The rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer. The middle class was becoming extinct. In such a climate, AKD’s pie-in-the-sky pledges were more attractive to the people. His electability increased. Ultimately, AKD tasted success and became President.”

**Read More:** <https://www.dailymirror.lk/opinion/President-AKDs-U-turn-Pre-poll-Propaganda-and-Post-Election-Performance/172-320189>

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## **Why Gen Z-Style Uprising is Improbable in Maldives Despite Democracy Concerns**

*N. Sathiya Moorthy | 20 September 2025*

“No yardstick for ‘democracy revival’ in the Maldives, where no leader is acknowledged now as being more liberal and less autocratic than the other—but then, that has not been the issue on which Gen Z erupted elsewhere in the region—to a predictable pattern once the fuse had been lit, a pattern that owed possibly to external machinations and was sold locally as youth power against corruption and worse.”

**Read More:** <https://www.firstpost.com/opinion/gen-z-uprising-unlikely-maldives-democracy-concerns-13935417.html>

## **Nepali Congress Gone Astray: Democracy on the Brink**

*Dr. Pushpa R. Joshi | 09 September 2025*

“The current government stands as a stark example of how a country should not be governed. Despite being the principal coalition partner, the NC has reduced itself to a mere spectator of the Prime Minister's undemocratic practices and autocratic decisions. Over that, the ministerial representatives of the NC in the government are equally incompetent. The recent move to ban certain social media platforms clearly reflects the dictatorial mindset of the government.”

**Read More:** <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/nepali-congress-gone-astray-democracy-on-the-brink>

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## **Welcome to the ‘Eros Effect’, Gen Z**

*George Katsiaficas | 15 September 2025*

“Nepal’s Gen Z uprising erupted suddenly and dispersed just as quickly, but it did not come out of nowhere, and it will certainly imprint on what comes next. The country has a history of recent uprisings that have helped to transform the government each time. The Jana Andolans (People’s Movements) of 1990 and 2006 finally succeeded in abolishing the monarchy in 2008, but ‘democracy’ could not end corruption and nepotism.”

**Read More:** <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2025/09/15/welcome-to-the-eros-effect-gen-z>

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## **Nepal at the Crossroads: Balancing Foreign Policy in a Shifting World Order**

*Simone Galimberti | 25 September 2025*

“The transition Nepal is facing poses considerable challenges. Prime Minister Sushila Karki and her government will prioritize holding elections, strengthening accountability, and tackling corruption. Yet it is important to remember that foreign policy never pauses, and Nepal will soon need to reassert its interests in the international arena.”

**Read More:** <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/nepal-at-the-crossroads-balancing-foreign-policy-in-a-shifting-world-order-41-63.html>

## **What did Central Asia get out of the SCO?**

*Catherine Putz | 03 September 2025*

“To a certain extent, for the Central Asian states, the SCO has become a venue for deepening relations with China and managing relations with Russia. It also links Central Asia to a wider community of states beyond the China-Russia duo, and provides a forum for Central Asian states to voice their perspectives sans judgement regarding their autocratic tendencies.”

**Read More:** <https://thediplomat.com/2025/09/what-did-central-asia-get-out-of-the-sco/>

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## **When will Central Asia's Regional Integration Achieve Structural Substance?**

*Anjana V.S., Koche Jay Manik and Dr. Bawa Singh | 26 September 2025*

“For regional cooperation in Central Asia to thrive, it must swiftly advance the process of establishing institutional frameworks. Cooperative structures are essential to guarantee that the presidential statements are effectively executed at the national level to make regional cooperation tangible at the societal level and ensure its permanence.”

**Read More:** <https://www.eurasiareview.com/26092025-when-will-central-asias-regional-integration-achieve-structural-substance-analysis/>

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## **From Gas to Gigawatts: Uzbekistan Powers Ahead with Dual Nuclear Deal**

*Bruce Pannier | 29 September 2025*

“Uzbekistan has confirmed it will be building a large nuclear power plant (NPP) with two 1000-megawatt (MW) reactors as the country prepares for a sharp increase in electricity consumption in the coming years. Uzbekistan's state atomic energy company, Uzatom, posted on September 26 that a new agreement calls for both a large and small NPP to be constructed at the same site in Uzbekistan.”

**Read More:** <https://timesca.com/from-gas-to-gigawatts-uzbekistan-powers-ahead-with-dual-nuclear-deal/>

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## **Snapback Sanctions Mark Turning Point for Iran**

*Dr. Majid Rafizadeh | 29 September 2025*

“Iran may still find ways to sell some oil to China or pursue limited trade through unofficial channels, the overall effect will be one of deeper isolation, diminished legitimacy, and greater economic hardship. For a government already facing domestic discontent, financial strain, and geopolitical challenges, the snapback sanctions represent a major setback that will reverberate across its economy, diplomacy, and long-term strategic outlook.”

**Read More:** <https://english.alarabiya.net/views/2025/09/29/snapback-sanctions-mark-turning-point-for-iran>

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## **Operation “Summit of Fire” Another Feather in Airpower's Cap**

*Wg Cdr Akash Godbole | 13 September 2025*

“The conduct of Operation “Summit of Fire” has reaffirmed the growing prowess of dynamic air operations in pursuit of strategic effects. Israel's innovative and audacious use of Air power has transformed the calculus of alliance coordination on the diplomatic front while showcasing tremendous reach and striking capability based on accurate intelligence.”

**Read More:** [https://capssindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/CAPSS\\_InFocus\\_AG\\_13\\_9\\_25.pdf](https://capssindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/CAPSS_InFocus_AG_13_9_25.pdf)

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## REGION IN PICTURES

PM Narendra Modi addressed the 25th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), held in Tianjin, China on 1 September 2025.



Pic Credits: Ministry of External Affairs, India

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Nepal's President Ramchandra Paudel administers the oath of office to Sushila Karki, a former Chief Justice, as Nepal's interim prime minister during a swearing-in ceremony, following violent anti-graft protests, at the president's office in Kathmandu, Nepal on 12 September 2025.



Pic Credits: Reuters

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External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, met with Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud of Saudi Arabia at UNGA on 27 September 2025. Exchanged views on our bilateral cooperation and the regional situation.



Pic Credits: Ministry of External Affairs, India

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Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's Defence Minister Khalid bin Salman, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Pakistan's Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, pose for photographs after signing a mutual defence pact, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 17 September 2025.



Pic Credits: The Wire

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Centre for Aerospace Power  
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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).

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

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