



Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies



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Opinions and Trends

54/26

Neighbourhood Insights Series

February 2026

Strategic Sino–Pak Partnership

Muhammad Zahid Rifat | 16 February 2026

“Such high level exchange of bilateral visits surely and certainly promote, strengthen and further deepen the existing relations between China and Pakistan whose ongoing strategic partnership in a mutually beneficial manner was quite enviable for many countries around the globe, to say the least please.”

Read More: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/02/16/strategic-sino-pak-partnership>

Enduring Ties Between Pakistan and Bangladesh

Reema Shaukat | 17 February 2026

“Although all major parties participating in the elections were aspirants of having good relations with Pakistan, the BNP emerged victorious with a two-thirds majority. Its success is therefore a good omen for Pakistan as it will ensure continuity in closer relationship between Pakistan and Bangladesh.”

Read More: <https://www.nation.com.pk/17-Feb-2026/enduring-ties-pakistan-bangladesh>

Flare of Terrorism

Dr. Tehmina Aslam Ranjha | 10 February 2026

“Pakistan seeks solutions by adopting the posture of a hard state, relying on coercive force to assert authority. The problem with the hard state approach is its yearning for homogeneity, which is unrealistic in a society divided along ethnic and sectarian lines and striving for democratic relevance.”

Read More: <https://www.nation.com.pk/10-Feb-2026/flare-terrorism>

Pakistan's Climate Crisis and the Youth-Driven Path to Green Growth

Dr. Saima Hashim | 12 February 2026

“The ambition to solve Pakistan's problems should remain confined to a narrow pragmatic corridor. And this would be my advice to those running the country: focus on a few things that can be done, where success carries the promise of cascading change, where known metrics for success can be developed.”

Read More: <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/12-Feb-2026/pakistan-s-climate-crisis-youth-driven-path-green-growth>

Terrorism, Memory and the Politics of Simplification

Dr Syed Akhtar Ali Shah | 13 February 2026

“Militancy in Pakistan is the outcome of a complex interplay of historical state policies, regional geopolitics, governance failures and ideological radicalisation. External factors, including developments in Afghanistan, do matter, but reducing the debate to accusatory soundbites neither advances policy nor improves security outcomes.”

Read More: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2592230/terrorism-memory-and-the-politics-of-simplification>

Beyond Aid: Rethinking Pakistan's Development Partnerships

Suleman Zia | 16 February 2026

“Pakistan's next growth phase will depend less on the generosity of partners and more on its ability to define what partnership means. A development strategy built on clarity, accountability, and credible regulation can attract sustainable investment even in difficult times. The shift from aid to agency is not rhetorical, it is the only path toward economic sovereignty.”

Read More: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/02/16/beyond-aid-rethinking-pakistans-development-partnerships>

Eye of the Storm

Arifa Noor | 17 February 2026

“For the system to be more stable, it is not enough to quieten politicians such as Sharif or Khan and then revel in the decline of their popularity. For real stability, the anger of the people will have to be understood and then addressed through a more equitable economic system and by giving them a voice.”

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1973841/eye-of-the-storm>

The Solar Trap

Nadir Nabil Gabol | 17 February 2026

“While the center debates how to squeeze more money out of solar users, the Government of Sindh has taken a very different route. We believe that if the grid is too expensive for the poor, the solution isn't to force them to pay up; the solution is to give them independence.”

Read More: <https://www.nation.com.pk/17-Feb-2026/solar-trap>

Need for an Alternative Baloch Leadership in Balochistan

Inam Ul Haque | 19 February 2026

“Those clamouring for ‘Political Solution Only’ in Balochistan, when sizeable Baloch lands are under active insurgency aimed at seceding from Pakistan, conveniently overlook the overall construct of COIN in modern times. In a situation akin to Baloch lands, the political process would naturally follow the kinetic process, or at best be parallel to it, situation permitting.”

Read More: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2593319/need-for-an-alternative-baloch-leadership-in-balochistan>

Jinnah's Pakistan and the Long Shadow of Power, Poverty, and Misgovernance

Ambassador M. Alam Brohi | 19 February 2026

“They have abandoned hope of any improvement in their social and economic conditions and have resigned themselves to the Benazir Support Programme and occasional dole-outs by rulers. This class is hungry and angry. The country sits on a heap of keg powder. Any small spark could cause an explosion.”

Read More: <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/19-Feb-2026/jinnah-s-pakistan-long-shadow-power-poverty-misgovernance>

From Policy to Practice: Punjab's Governance in Contrast

Rizwan Ahmad | 19 February 2026

"Punjab does not reward symbolism alone. It demands leadership capable of aligning institutions, protecting farmers, strengthening cities, and delivering measurable outcomes. In the contrast between assertive oversight and passive administration lies the story of Punjab's current political moment."

Read More: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/02/19/from-policy-to-practice-punjabs-governance-in-contrast>

Tax Truths

Ehsan Malik | 20 February 2026

"Pakistan does not need fewer taxes; it needs better taxes. Broadening the base, lowering marginal distortions, honouring past commitments and prioritising predictability would raise more sustainable revenue. A country seeking growth, exports and employment cannot tax its way to prosperity by punishing the very activities it wishes to promote."

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1974526/tax-truths>

Eyes Wide Shut

Zafar Mirza | 20 February 2026

"The underlying systemic problem is not just medical; it is also political. The eye affliction is underpinned by a widespread political infection yet to be addressed. It is affecting every sphere of life in Pakistan. As a result, people are becoming poorer, hapless and hopeless. Foreign direct investment is nowhere to be seen."

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1974529/eyes-wide-shut>

India's Multidimensional Approach to Enhancing Trade and Connectivity with Central Asia and Afghanistan

Fayazuddin Ghiasi | 04 February 2026

"The closed Pakistani borders and Afghanistan's fragile situation elevate the importance of alternative routes, yet economic and political pressures from tariffs impose serious limitations. Hence, overcoming these challenges requires multilateral cooperation, smart diplomacy, and investment in regional infrastructure."

Read More: <https://8am.media/eng/new-u-s-tariffs-on-iran-and-consequences-indias-multidimensional-approach-to-enhance-trade-and-connectivity-with-central-asia-and-afghanistan/>

Afghanistan and Central Asia – Security Without Illusions

Aidar Borangaziyev | 11 February 2026

“The common flaw in many approaches to Afghanistan is the tendency to treat it as a project, whether political, economic, or integrational. Afghanistan is not a project for Central Asia. It is a permanent geopolitical factor. It cannot be “switched off” from regional dynamics. The task for Central Asia is not to solve Afghanistan but to coexist with it.”

Read More: <https://timesca.com/afghanistan-and-central-asia-security-without-illusions/>

Afghanistan and UN Report: Beyond Denial and Blame

Durdana Najam | 12 February 2026

“If militant groups are operating in Afghanistan, the responsibility of the Afghan authorities is clear: they must prevent their territory from being used against other countries. This is a basic principle of international law and state sovereignty. Seeking international recognition while failing to address cross-border militancy weakens Kabul’s credibility.”

Read More: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2592031/afghanistan-and-un-report-beyond-denial-and-blame>

“Cooperation Within Our Means”: The Taliban’s Ambiguous Message to Iran and the United States

Kiomars Samadi | 18 February 2026

“The Taliban’s choice is clear. They are unlikely to sacrifice the prospect of improved ties with Washington, whose greatest potential dividends would be formal recognition and sanctions relief, for the sake of alignment with Iran, a partnership that carries substantial costs.”

Read More: <https://8am.media/eng/cooperation-within-our-means-the-talibans-ambiguous-message-to-iran-and-the-united-states/>

Afghanistan’s Structural Crisis: Recalibrating The Centralized State

Saima Afzal | 19 February 2026

“Afghanistan’s tragedy is not a shortage of rulers, ideologies or external attention, but the persistent misalignment between its diverse social fabric and the centralized political container imposed upon it. Until that mismatch is addressed, no volume of aid, sanctions or diplomatic engagement will produce lasting peace.”

Read More: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/19022026-afghanistans-structural-crisis-recalibrating-the-centralized-state-oped/>

Air Power Musings When Structure Lags Strategy: The Theatre Command Fallacy

Gp Capt VP Naik | 13 February 2026

“Theatre Commands should have been created two decades ago, when the demands of the situation and technological imperatives dictated them. Unfortunately, that ship had already sailed. But there’s another one on the way, and India must catch it before bureaucracy and a false sense of security make India miss this one too.”

Read More: <https://capssindia.org/air-power-musings-when-structure-lags-strategy-the-theatre-command-fallacy/>

Why the Trade Agreement with the US is Problematic

Kallol Mustafa | 17 February 2026

“This agreement is against the national interest and violates Bangladesh’s independence and sovereignty. An agreement signed by a temporary interim government while keeping the people of the country in the dark cannot be considered legitimate. According to Article 6.6 of the agreement, it is supposed to come into effect 60 days after the completion of all legal processes.”

Read More: <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/why-the-trade-agreement-the-us-problematic-4107546>

The Future of India–Bangladesh Relations

Mamun Rashid | 19 February 2026

“The BNP should respond positively to India’s constructive initiatives, pursue a balanced foreign policy, and take more effective measures against cross-border smuggling and illegal migration. Steering bilateral relations in the right direction and transforming them into a source of stability will require Bangladesh to take India’s security concerns into account.”

Read More: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/403680/the-future-of-india-bangladesh-relations>

Bangladesh in Transition, Not Crisis: Power, Leverage, and the Post-July Political Order

Dr Sreoshi Sinha | 11 February 2026

“Bangladesh is at a delicate turning point, as it stands at a moment of structural rupture rather than routine political change. The exclusion of a major political force from the electoral process has weakened the representative character of the system and shifted legitimacy away from purely electoral settlement toward negotiated and mobilised authority.”

Read More: <https://capssindia.org/bangladesh-in-transition-not-crisis-power-leverage-and-the-post-july-political-order/>

National Election 2026: Was Jamaat's Defeat Sealed by Women Voters?

Hasan Ferdous | 17 February 2026

“Rather than promising to “sacrifice life for women’s dignity”, Bangladesh’s male-dominated political leadership might better serve the nation by recognising women’s rightful status as equal citizens. If it does, the country may yet advance a few steps further.”

Read More: <https://en.prothomalo.com/opinion/op-ed/ghv9rh8o0m>

Changing Tides of Extradition

Munzer Ahmed Chowdhury | 18 February 2026

“While the outgoing interim government led by Muhammad Yunus initiated the preliminary steps and charges against Tulip, often echoing the demands of allies like NCP and Jamaat-e-Islami, an elected government has different priorities. Tarique Rahman’s challenge is no longer just about ensuring accountability, but about rebuilding a political environment scarred by sanctions, crackdowns, and mob justice.”

Read More: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/403660/changing-tides-of-extradition>

The New Prime Minister Faces Tough Tests Ahead

Zillur Rahman | 19 February 2026

“Tarique Rahman’s decades-long political career has been marked by exile, controversy, and polarising rhetoric. Now, as prime minister, his personal transition from opposition figure to head of government will be closely scrutinised. He must demonstrate inclusive leadership, institutional respect, and governance competence.”

Read More: <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/the-new-prime-minister-faces-tough-tests-ahead-4109596>

Terrorism, Trade and a System of Preferences

Kusum Wijetilleke | 15 February 2026

“The Government must either meet previous commitments, or make new commitments; more window dressing through rushed legislation that neither enhances security, repairs Sri Lanka’s image, nor satisfies the EU GSP+ regime would be a waste of everybody’s time and will guarantee further economic headwinds.”

Read More: <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/lG3sCG8HRN7ZCBImgHdp>

Why Sri Lanka Needs to Preserve Culture to Survive Post De-Globalized World?

Indika Hettiarachchi 16 February 2026

“Sri Lanka’s current political regime is attempting to change existing socio-cultural fabric which is deeply rooted in Buddhist heritage. Moreover Sri Lanka’s fast expanding tourism industry is also deeply rooted in country’s existing cultural foundation and attempts to change it could impact tourism industry negatively.”

Read More: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/16022026-why-sri-lanka-needs-to-preserve-culture-to-survive-post-de-globalized-world-oped/>

The Strategic Paradox: Why the 2002 Peace Process was the LTTE’s Beginning of the End

Maj. Gen. Dr. Boniface Perera | 16 February 2026

“Sri Lanka’s recovery remains fragile. Economic indicators may improve, but trust takes longer to rebuild. Nonviolence is the bridge between reform and legitimacy, between recovery and resilience. The choice is not between order and chaos, or strength and softness. The real choice is between short-term control and long-term stability.”

Read More: <https://www.dailymirror.lk/opinion/The-strategic-paradoxWhy-the-2002-peace-process-was-the-LTTes-beginning-of-the-end/172-333042>

SL’s Future: Multi-Partisan Consensus Bodes Well

Dr. Jehan Perera | 17 February 2026

“Sri Lanka’s experience shows that institutions function best when guided by restraint, mutual respect and a shared commitment to the public good. In the case of the AG, consensus has enabled democratic authority and constitutional oversight to be reconciled. That balance is difficult to achieve, but, it remains essential if constitutional governance is to endure and command public confidence.”

Read More: <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/4zW6z2u1Toh5Ed3S32l6>

The Maldives' Chagos Claim: Implications for India

Aditya Gowdara Shivamurthy | 13 February 2026

“The Maldives’ policy shift on Chagos has once again highlighted a critical challenge in Muizzu’s foreign policy: naivety and a tendency to prioritise political goals. While this stance may serve as a short-term electoral move, it carries significant implications for the future of the Indian Ocean region.”

Read More: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-maldives-chagos-claim-implications-for-india>

From Threat Perception To Shared Opportunities: Toward a New Nepal-China Narrative

Ashis Adhikary | 18 February 2026

“Nepal needs a recalibrated narrative in its relations with China. It should firmly reaffirm its commitment to the One-China policy while recognizing the longstanding historical, cultural, and religious linkages between certain Nepali communities and the Tibet Autonomous Region.”

Read More: <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/from-threat-perceptions-to-shared-opportunities-toward-a-new-nepal-china-na-97-25.html>

Nepal’s 2026 Election: A Battle Between Fact and Manufactured Doubt

Purna Bahadur Pokhrel | 10 February 2026

“As the data suggests, Nepal is on a stable path toward March 5; the only true threat is the potential for the public to be exhausted by manufactured doubt. By prioritizing verified facts over viral rumors, the electorate can ensure that these forces of instability remain irrelevant.”

Read More: <https://reviewnepal.com/articles/nepal-s-2026-election-a-battle-between-fact-and-manufactured-doubt.html>

Political Stability as an Economic Issue

Urja Singh Thapa | 15 February 2026

“The Gen Z movement has shown that public pressure matters. What voters demand from coalitions shapes how those coalitions behave. If the electorate continues to reward short-term promises over long-term credibility, parties will continue to treat governance as a bargaining chip.”

Read More: <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2026/02/15/political-stability-as-an-economic-issue>

Nepal's Crisis Demands Democratic Renewal, Accountable Leadership, Not Romanticised Monarchy

C.K. Peela | 16 February 2026

"The ghosts in the valley will always whisper, but Nepal's path lies ahead, not behind. The country must reject sentimentality and embrace responsibility. Even a flawed democracy is still the only inheritance worth protecting."

Read More: <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/nepals-crisis-demands-democratic-renewal-accountable-leadership-not-romanticised-monarchy>

AI for Inclusive Growth: New Frontier in India–Kazakhstan Cooperation

Y.K. Sailas Thangal | 19 February 2026

"Cooperation in AI represents more than technological progress it embodies the shared strategic vision of India and Kazakhstan to place human welfare at the centre of innovation. As trusted strategic partners enjoying strong political goodwill and expanding collaboration across sectors, both countries are uniquely positioned to translate their partnership into tangible benefits for their citizens."

Read More: <https://astanatimes.com/2026/02/ai-for-inclusive-growth-new-frontier-in-india-kazakhstan-cooperation/>

Turning Rivalry into Opportunity: Kazakhstan's Strategic Autonomy

Kasija Bulatovic | 18 February 2026

"Through a careful balancing strategy, Kazakhstan has worked to avoid firmly aligning itself with any one geopolitical camp. Rather than choosing sides, it has chosen options. However, when pressure from one power arises, Astana's response has rarely been resistance for its own sake, but rather negotiation and taking advantage of the opportunities that power can offer it."

Read More: <https://timesca.com/turning-rivalry-into-opportunity-kazakhstans-strategic-autonomy/>

Trump's only Iran Option

Bilal Saab | 03 February 2026

"At this point, given what Trump has asked for, what he has threatened with, and what he has dispatched to the region in terms of combat power, the only acceptable outcome is an advantageous deal, reached peacefully or violently, that verifiably and permanently ends Iran's path to nuclear weapons, limits its missile arsenal, and terminates its links with proxies."

Read More: <https://en.majalla.com/node/329477/politics/trumps-only-iran-option>

Why Tehran Sees War as a Survival Strategy

Hooman Abedi | 06 February 2026

“Iran’s leadership is edging toward a war scenario not because diplomacy is necessarily collapsing, but because confrontation is increasingly seen as the least damaging option for a ruling system under intense internal and external pressure.”

Read More: <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202602054833>

Iran at a Crossroads After 47 Years of Revolution

Hassan Al-Mustafa | 17 February 2026

“The political and economic changes are testing the Iranian state’s ability to redefine its legitimacy, from legitimacy rooted in revolutionary mobilization and external confrontation to legitimacy based on delivering development, prosperity, and social stability. This transformation is not a luxury; it is a necessity imposed by economic and social realities and shaped by the structure of conflict with the US and Iran’s network of regional relationships.”

Read More: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2633361>

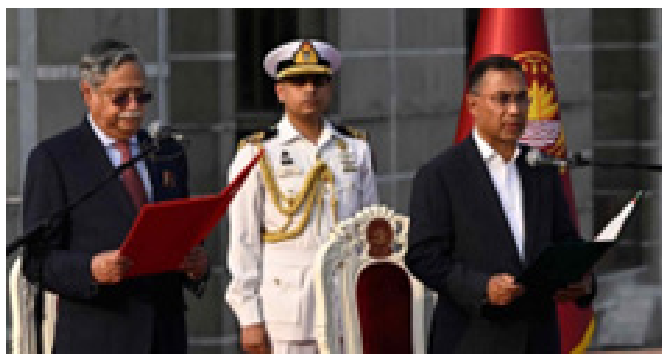
REGION IN PICTURES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 19 February 2026 joined heads of state and government for a family photograph at Bharat Mandapam during the India AI Impact Summit 2026.



Pic Credits: Mint

Tarique Rahman, Chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, takes oath as Prime Minister of Bangladesh from President Mohammed Shahabuddin at the National Parliament in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 17 February 2026.



Pic Credits: The Hindu

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi with his Omani counterpart Sayyid Badr Albusaidi during their meeting prior to Iran and the U.S. negotiations, in Muscat, Oman on 6 February 2026.



Pic Credits: The Hindu

The program of the working visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, to the city of Washington began with a meeting with the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Howard Lutnick on 18 February 2026.



Pic Credits: Uzbekistan president's office



Centre for Aerospace Power
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