



Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies



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Opinions and Trends

60/26

Neighbourhood Insights Series

August 2026

Makkah Joint Defence Agreement

Ahsan Ansari 12 August 2026

“The international significance of the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement extends beyond the military domain. The pact reflects a broader trend towards regional self-reliance in security affairs.”

Read More: <https://www.nation.com.pk/12-Aug-2026/makkah-joint-defence-agreement>

Understanding the Alliance of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia & Turkey

Shahid Javed Burki 17 August 2026

“Turkey and Pakistan have the largest armies in the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia has large reserves of oil, making it one of the world’s richest countries. Marrying mineral wealth with large militaries creates a formidable alliance that will dominate the geographic space.”

Read More: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2624247/understanding-the-alliance-of-pakistan-saudi-arabia-turkey>

Mecca Pact Does Not Give Pakistan a Blank Cheque

Shweta Bansal 20 August 2026

“The Mecca Agreement alters the diplomatic geometry of the region. States that have invested substantially in economic and strategic ties with India will not lightly subordinate those ties to Pakistan’s preference for managed instability.”

Read More: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/mecca-pact-does-not-give-pakistan-a-blank-cheque-10841400/>

The Illusion of Ethnic Borders: Why Pashtuns Need Rights, Not Redrawn Maps

Quraysh Khattak 20 August 2026

“This question is particularly relevant to the Pashtuns, whose population is distributed across Afghanistan and Pakistan and, through decades of migration, throughout major Pakistani cities and beyond.”

Read More: <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/20-Aug-2026/illusion-ethnic-borders-pashtuns-need-rights-redrawn-maps>

Between Scrutiny & Slander

Faisal Ahmad 07 August 2026

“It is not that Pakistan has no compliance systems; it is that the audit model itself has a blind spot, which may expose wage theft and harassment, but only if these are supported by documentation and end up on a client’s desk.”

Read More: <https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Aug-2026/scrutiny-slander>

National Security Odyssey

Ali Tauqeer Sheikh 13 August 2026

“The deepest reform available is recognising that Pakistan’s reform agenda does not begin with creating economically unviable administrative units, but with building hubs of performing local government first, units earned through capacity rather than drawn on a map.”

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/2022486/national-security-odyssey>

Pakistan's Security Crisis: United Militants Vs Divided Nation

Mohammad Nafees 14 August 2026

“In Bajaur, where military operations target TTP and Islamic State Khorasan (ISKP) elements, local elders and political representatives have formed mediation jirgas to negotiate directly between militant commanders and state representatives.”

Read More: <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/14-Aug-2026/pakistan-s-security-crisis-united-militants-vs-divided-nation>

Above the Law, By Law

Sarmad Sattar 18 August 2026

“Pakistan's Supreme Court warned Parliament cannot remove judicial independence. Yet the 26th and 27th Amendments curb suo moto powers, shift judge appointments, grant immunity, and create a new court.”

Read More: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/08/18/above-the-law-by-law>

Winds of Change to Where?

Zahid Hussain 19 August 2026

“The collapse of the system is the result of the denial of democratic rights to the people, and the rot cannot be stopped through imposed solutions. A country mired in economic, political and internal security crises cannot afford another contentious issue dividing the people.”

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/2023832/winds-of-change-to-where>

Why Sindh's Food Chain is Collapsing?

Sunila Shaikh 19 August 2026

“Sindh's agricultural landscape, historically recognised as the foundational backbone of Pakistan's economy and the nation's primary breadbasket, is currently facing a catastrophic existential crisis driven by the dual forces of severe climate volatility and chronic governance failures.”

Read More: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/08/19/why-sindhs-food-chain-is-collapsing>

Devolution, Not Division

Mohsin Saleem Ullah 19 August 2026

“What Pakistan has instead is a pattern of provinces treating local government as a threat rather than a partner. Councils get elected, then dissolved before their term is out. Laws get rewritten every time a new political party comes to power.”

Read More: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2624618/devolution-not-division>

From Reactive Cyber Laws to Proactive Cyber Governance in Pakistan

Muhammad Hashnain Raza Khan 19 August 2026

“Pakistan’s digital future cannot be protected only through reactive legislation. As cyber threats keep getting more sophisticated and also more interconnected, the country’s cybersecurity approach has to change, not just in the sense of reacting when incidents happen.”

Read More: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/08/19/from-reactive-cyber-laws-to-proactive-cyber-governance-in-pakistan>

Resetting the System

Ishrat Husain 20 August 2026

“At this critical juncture, Pakistan should avoid experiments in political and economic fragmentation. The priority should be to complete ongoing reforms and strengthen LGs, making them accountable to citizens.”

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/2024064/resetting-the-system>

The Structural Trap: Pakistan’s Lost Economic Decades

M Shaban Uppal 20 August 2026

“The explanation can be found in the cumulative consequences of policy inconsistency, political instability, weak institutions, limited industrial diversification, and an enduring failure to build an export-oriented economy capable of competing effectively in global markets.”

Read More: <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/20-Aug-2026/structural-trap-pakistan-s-lost-economic-decades>

Four Provinces, 250 Million People

Aamir Zulfiqar Khan 20 August 2026

“Pakistan does not need more provinces because it has too many identities; it needs them because it has too many people, too much geographical diversity, and too little efficient and just government within the reach of its citizens.”

Read More: <https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Aug-2026/four-provinces-250-million-people>

Escaping the Past

Zafar Masud 21 August 2026

“Pakistan’s history is not without genuine ‘structural reforms.’ But the term has become a cliché; it earns its meaning against one parameter, ‘productivity.’ At different moments, the state has built its productive capacity, given itself a constitutional architecture that endures, and rebuilt entire sectors to a standard the region envies.”

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/2024274/escaping-the-past>

Governance and Bureaucracy

Dr Syed Akhtar Ali Shah 21 August 2026

“Our bureaucracy is quite adept at colorful presentations, attractive clichés and jargon. Yet, the gap between PowerPoint presentations and the ground realities in the streets is vast. This results in the Sab Achha Hai syndrome, which is counterproductive to good governance.”

Read More: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2625002/governance-and-bureaucracy>

Curing the Cause

Murad Moosa Khan 21 August 2026

“Liberation psychology is highly relevant for Pakistan, where millions live under economic insecurity, unemployment, climate disasters, gender-based violence, displacement, sectarian tensions and political uncertainty. Millions are struggling to meet basic needs.”

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/2024273/curing-the-cause>

Is Afghanistan a Preview of where Global Press Freedom is Heading?

Sana Khan 13 August 2026

“The Taliban leadership has shown no interest in press freedom as a bargaining chip for international recognition, and the shift from verbal directive to codified criminal law suggests an intent to make current restrictions permanent rather than negotiable.”

Read More: <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2026/08/13/is-afghanistan-a-preview-of-where-global-press-freedom-is-heading/>

What the Taliban Achieved and Failed to Achieve in Five Years

Obaidullah Baheer 15 August 2026

“The Taliban’s current stability should not be mistaken for a permanent political settlement. Five years after its return, the movement has secured control of Afghanistan but is yet to resolve the fundamental question of what kind of state it intends to build.”

Read More: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2026/8/15/what-the-taliban-achieved-and-failed-to-achieve-in-five-years>

The Taliban has brought Afghanistan Close to Collapse, but Resistance is Growing

Amin Saikal 18 August 2026

“Most Afghans would be pleased to see the back of the Taliban. But for the opposition to be seen as a viable alternative, it will need to build trust with the people and provide hope for the future. The history of Afghanistan shows how hard this has been to achieve.”

Read More: <https://theconversation.com/the-taliban-has-brought-afghanistan-close-to-collapse-but-resistance-is-growing-289880>

The Taliban and the Collapse of Citizenship Rights: Afghanistan Besieged by Fundamentalism and Authoritarianism

Farhad Farhaad and Abdul Samad Formuli 20 August 2026

“The path to Afghanistan’s salvation does not lie in silencing the voices of its people; it lies in listening to them. Afghanistan’s future must not be built on fear; it must be built on freedom, equality, justice, law, and human dignity.”

Read More: <https://8am.media/eng/taliban-citizenship-rights-afghanistan-fundamentalism/>

The July Revolution and the Reinvention of National Purpose

HM Nazmul Alam 03 August 2026

“Bangladesh’s July Revolution should not become frozen as a monument belonging to one political generation. It should remain an evolving national conversation about citizenship, state power, public accountability, and democratic responsibility.”

Read More: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/longform/416597/the-july-revolution-and-the-reinvention-of>

5 August and Politics of an Unfinished ‘Legacy’

Shahriar Feroze 05 August 2026

“Perhaps its most consequential judgment will rest on a simple question: After leading one of Bangladesh’s most historic and formidable political organisations, did she leave behind a party capable of leading without her?”

Read More: <https://en.prothomalo.com/opinion/op-ed/vfgfft7zl4>

A Democratic Bangladesh Must Make Room for Competing Memories

Anas Ansar 17 August 2026

“A democratic Bangladesh cannot afford an official memory, an opposition memory, and a social media memory existing in permanent combat. It needs a national memory spacious enough for grief, disagreement and even contradiction.”

Read More: <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/news/democratic-bangladesh-must-make-room-competing-memories-4249266>

Is Bangladesh Facing a Resurgence of Militancy?

Sabir Mustafa 18 August 2026

“But for those whose ideology is rooted in extreme extremism, where there is no room for dissent and no value placed on tolerance, the objective—regardless of the political trend—will be to establish absolute dominance over society.”

Read More: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/417792/is-bangladesh-facing-a-resurgence-of-militancy>

Expectations from BNP's Next Secretary General

Mahfuz Anam 21 August 2026

“Tarique Rahman’s desire to build Bangladesh anew must be accompanied by his example of building his own party differently. And it can, and should, start with the appointment of the new secretary general.”

Read More: <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/the-third-view/news/expectations-bnps-next-secretary-general-4252976>

Bangladesh's Green Energy Dilemma: Bold Targets, Slow Grid

Suborna Akther Laboni 21 August 2026

“Bangladesh’s energy crunch this year has been severe: gas constraints alone produced a generation shortfall of nearly 3,900 megawatts in a single month, compounded by another 1,668 megawatts lost to plant shutdowns and maintenance.”

Read More: <https://en.prothomalo.com/opinion/op-ed/23j6aav8hd>

Rohingya Genocide and Bangladesh's Missed Strategic Moment

Dr. Habib Siddiqui 22 August 2026

“The Rohingya crisis is not only a humanitarian tragedy but also a geopolitical moment that could reshape Bangladesh’s regional standing. The question now is whether the new government of Bangladesh will finally listen – and act.”

Read More: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/22082026-rohingya-genocide-and-bangladeshs-missed-strategic-moment-oped/>

From AI Ambition to Global Influence: Bangladesh's Emerging Technology Diplomacy

Md. Al-Amin 22 August 2026

“Bangladesh faces several challenges in adopting and effectively utilising AI, including a shortage of skilled professionals, data protection and privacy concerns, cybersecurity risks, infrastructure limitations, and the need to ensure the ethical use of AI.”

Read More: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/22082026-from-ai-ambition-to-global-influence-bangladeshs-emerging-technology-diplomacy-oped/>

Sri Lanka, South Korea, Jeju Island and the Arctic Route

Sugeeswara Senadhira 21 August 2026

“At a time when South Korea is preparing to enter the emerging Arctic shipping era, Sri Lanka has an opportunity to position itself as the Indian Ocean gateway to an Asia–Arctic–Europe trading network.”

Read More: <https://dailynews.lk/2026/08/21/features/1034847/sri-lanka-south-korea-jeju-island-and-the-arctic-route/>

Ranil's 2023 Law Exposed Political Wealth

KKS Perera 10 August 2026

“After fifty years, Sri Lanka’s asset declaration law may finally be doing what such a law was intended to do from the beginning: making those who exercise public power answerable not only to the law but also to the people.”

Read More: <https://www.dailymirror.lk/opinion/Ranils-2023-Law-Exposed-Political-Wealth/172-347772>

Government Presses Ahead with Judicial Reforms

Lakdev Liyanagama 13 August 2026

“The government displayed its determination to go ahead with its proposal to enact judicial reforms this week despite protests from opposition political parties as well as the BASL, gazetting the relevant legislation and inviting public discussion regarding the issue.”

Read More: <https://dailynews.lk/2026/08/13/features/1033420/government-presses-ahead-with-judicial-reforms/>

Can the NPP Implement the Death Penalty Again?

Mohamed Ayub 13 August 2026

“The NPP’s move to re-introduce the death penalty—going against the first policy declaration of the JVP drafted by its founder leader Rohana Wijeweera and some others in 1973—would never materialise, given the threat it poses to the country’s economy.”

Read More: <https://www.dailymirror.lk/opinion/Can-the-NPP-implement-the-death-penalty-again/172-348019>

Constitutional Amendments in SL: Power Interests of Rulers and the Erosion of Democracy

Veeragathy Thanabalasingham 23 August 2026

“The history of Sri Lanka’s constitutional amendments has revolved in a continuous loop of seizing power, retaining power, reclaiming power, and expanding power, rather than serving as a history of strengthening democracy and good governance.”

Read More: <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/3cMnR97WOI4anoVGBccR>

Sri Lanka’s 2029 Debt Problem: Are We Heading Towards Another Default?

Gayantha Dehiwatte 23 August 2026

“The fundamental problem is therefore not simply whether Sri Lanka can find \$8.5 billion before 2029. The bigger question is whether the country can fundamentally change the way it generates foreign exchange.”

Read More: <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/sXaVYtlpcfrqvKQgO5HF>

Digital is Not the Destination: Nepal’s Next Chapter of Tourism is Not Algorithms, it’s the People

Sudhan Subedi 04 August 2026

“There is no doubt we need better online services, better digital platforms, and smarter destination management. Artificial intelligence will continue to change the way people find and plan their trips. Nepal needs to use these tools.”

Read More: <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/digital-is-not-the-destination-nepals-next-chapter-of-tourism-is-not-algorithms-its-the-people>

Nepal’s Budget Bets on Governance Reform

Nischal Dhungel 11 August 2026

“If Nepal can match reform ambition with strategic prioritisation and transparent monitoring, it could offer a blueprint for countries across the region seeking to translate fiscal ambition into tangible development outcomes.”

Read More: <https://eastasiaforum.org/2026/08/11/nepals-budget-bets-on-governance-reform/>

Democracy's Cruel Paradox: The Systematic Triumph of Takers Over Those Who Serve

Rajendra Bajgain 16 August 2026

"Nepal needs a professional civil service that can survive political transitions. Governments will change. Political parties will change. Ministers will change. But the state must continue functioning."

Read More: <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/democracys-cruel-paradox-the-systematic-triumph-of-takers-over-those-who-serve>

Nepal Wrote the Rules for Climate Adaptation. Its Rivers Never Got the Memo

Nava Raj Baral 17 August 2026

"What is already clear is that designing a strong policy is not the same as delivering one effectively. In the Upper Karnali, the gap between those two goals is reflected in whose voices are heard when adaptation funding is finally spent."

Read More: <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2026/08/17/nepal-wrote-the-rules-for-climate-adaptation-its-rivers-never-got-the-memo>

Who Pays for Nepal's Energy Future?

Sonia Timalsina 19 August 2026

"Nepal's energy ambitions will remain incomplete unless development projects ensure equitable access, meaningful community participation, and justice for the people who bear their social and environmental costs."

Read More: <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/who-pays-for-nepals-energy-future-24-73.html>

The Relentless Cycle of Politics as Usual

Deepak Thapa 19 August 2026

"Shah has finally been convinced that, as the country's chief executive, isolation from the world is not wholly advisable, he has begun occasional parleys. One does wonder, though, what he manages to actually say in private, particularly in meetings with foreign officials."

Read More: <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2026/08/19/the-relentless-cycle-of-politics-as-usual>

Making ‘Made in Nepal’ Work

Shova Gyawali 21 August 2026

“Making “Made in Nepal” a success requires more than prioritising domestic products—it demands investment in production capacity, skills, technology, finance, infrastructure, quality and global market access.”

Read More: <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/making-made-in-nepal-work-43-36.html>

Trump’s New Threat Against Iran Collides with Central Asia’s Economic Interests

Yevgeny Rakhimzhanov 20 August 2026

“Each country has its own reasons for developing these ties, but they share one concern: for landlocked Central Asia, Iran provides one of the few overland routes to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.”

Read More: <https://timesca.com/trumps-new-threat-against-iran-collides-with-central-asias-economic-interests/>

Central Asia Tourism Growth Outpaces Other Regions

Tamila Olzhbaekova 04 August 2026

“Tourism in Central Asia is expanding and generating substantially more revenue. However, visitors from neighboring countries and Russia still dominate the regional market, leaving longer-haul tourism to grow from a comparatively low base.”

Read More: <https://timesca.com/central-asia-tourism-boom-2025/>

New Security Architecture: Future of Abraham Accords and Emerging Strategic Landscape for Kazakhstan

Sapargali Shalgimbayev 11 August 2026

“The strategic opportunity for Kazakhstan lies in turning its early participation into practical cooperation — transforming diplomatic positioning into tangible economic benefits, technological partnerships, and greater geopolitical resilience.”

Read More: <https://astanatimes.com/2026/08/new-security-architecture-future-of-abraham-accords-and-emerging-strategic-landscape-for-kazakhstan/>

Central Asia Unlocked: New Hub for International Investment

Shukhrat Tukhtabayev 12 August 2026

“Among the Central Asian states, Uzbekistan is particularly well positioned to capitalize on the trends, owing to its comprehensive reform agenda and its demonstrated ability to adapt quickly to shifts in the global economic environment.”

Read More: <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/central-asia-unlocked-new-hub-for-international-investment>

Iran Changed the Rules in Hormuz. The Gulf is Changing the Rules for Iran

Mark Pfeifle 10 August 2026

“Iran has used the war to gain leverage over the Strait of Hormuz. Now Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan are building a new security arrangement that would limit how far Tehran can push its advantage.”

Read More: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2026/8/10/iran-changed-the-rules-in-hormuz-the-gulf-is-changing-the-rules-for-iran>

Hormuz after Truce: Washington Hesitates, Tehran Consolidates

Çağatay Balci 18 August 2026

“Iran’s defense strategy has passed from discourse and doctrine to institutional structure and implementing cadres. Washington, in contrast, remains divided between coercion short of war and preparation for a campaign its military planners consider unfinished.”

Read More: <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/hormuz-after-truce-washington-hesitates-tehran-consolidates>

UAE Trade Halt Threatens One of Iran’s Remaining Economic Lifelines

Dalga Khatinoglu 20 August 2026

“The latest available Iranian customs breakdown shows that merchandise trade between Iran and the UAE totaled about \$21.3 billion in just the first 10 months of the previous Iranian fiscal year. But even that figure understates the UAE’s economic importance.”

Read More: <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202608203111>

Iran is Not Anti-Imperialist. It is a State Calculating Survival

Hossein Dabbagh 12 August 2026

“The Islamic Republic speaks the language of principle honoured regardless of cost while governing by calculation of consequence. That gap is not hypocrisy so much as a structural feature of any state that rules in a doctrine’s name, but it leaves a standing problem.”

Read More: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2026/8/12/iran-is-not-anti-imperialist-it-is-a-state-calculating-survival>

Iran’s Leader’s Absence Gives War Camp Room to Shape Policy

Ata Mohamed Tabriz 22 August 2026

“Mojtaba remains physically absent but politically ubiquitous, his name appearing beneath written messages and in the statements of officials who interpret his wishes. The result is a system in which the supreme leader’s authority remains central even as his own voice is absent.”

Read More: <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202608192049>

Iran’s Energy Crisis Opens a Door for Gulf Suppliers

Zaid M. Belbagi 23 August 2026

“Iran’s energy disruptions have opened space in the regional market, but filling that space will depend on more than the size of any individual producer’s reserves. The value of energy is increasingly tied to how much a supplier can offer and how confidently buyers can expect it to arrive.”

Read More: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2655634>

Economic Warfare: Bankrupting Iran will be more Effective than Bombing

Mike Evans 23 August 2026

“The objective is not to destroy Iran. It is to bankrupt the regime that has stolen Iran’s future, financed terror across the Middle East, and kept its own people in chains. The war may not ultimately be decided by the last missile fired.”

Read More: <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-906293>

Fidan's Message from Cairo was Warning to Israel

Muhammed Mazhar Şahin 18 August 2026

"Fidan's statement made it clear that Türkiye could act in coordination with Qatar and Egypt and that the measures he referred to should not be viewed solely through a political or diplomatic lens; they could also have a military dimension."

Read More: <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/fidans-message-from-cairo-was-warning-to-israel>

Can Mecca Pact Deepen its Role in Gulf's Security Structure?

Gökhan Ereli 21 August 2026

"Gulf states do not have to choose between the GCC and the Mecca Pact as rival poles, because the GCC has not delivered the kind of functional, binding security cooperation its charter promises."

Read More: <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/can-mecca-pact-deepen-its-role-in-gulfs-security-structure>

Israel's Election is Approaching, but Candidates are Offering Slogans Instead of Policies

Marc Tobin 22 August 2026

"Israelis deserve a campaign that challenges candidates to present concrete solutions, defend their positions, and explain how they will lead the country forward. Let the ideas compete, let the voters judge, and let the strongest vision for Israel win."

Read More: <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-905972>

Only the Lebanese People Can Make Hezbollah Disarm

Nadim Shehadi 23 August 2026

"External support and external factors will always be important, but it is ultimately an internal matter among the Lebanese. The definitive test of the Lebanese political system is whether it can resolve this politically."

Read More: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2655635>

REGION IN PICTURES

H.E. Mr Saidov Bakhtiyor Odilovich, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, called on the President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 03 August 2026.



Pic Credits: Press Information Bureau, Government of India

Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs meets with the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs in El Alamein, Egypt, on 13 August 2026.



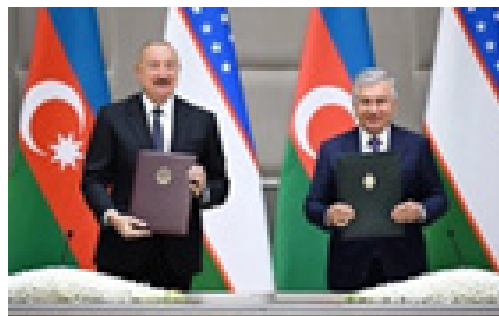
Pic Credits: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Türkiye

Turkish President, Saudi Crown Prince, and Pakistan's Prime Minister, accompanied by their ministers of Foreign Affairs and defence, pose after signing a joint defence agreement in Mecca, Saudi Arabia on 07 August 2026.



Pic Credits: Reuters

Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan signed a "Treaty of Eternal Friendship" at the end of a state visit of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to Tashkent on 23 August 2026.



Pic Credits: Kazinform



**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 Marshal Nagesh Kapoor, SYSM PVSM, AVSM, VM (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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