



Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies



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Opinions and Trends

61/26

Neighbourhood Insights Series

September 2026

Five Years with the Taliban: A Love Affair that Was Never Linear

Naila Mahsud | 04 September 2026

“Expecting a linear relationship from a non-linear history is naive. Both states can keep running the same cycle, or accept that this will never be simple and learn to manage the complexity instead of each other.”

Read More: <https://www.arabnews.pk/opinion/five-years-with-the-taliban-a-love-affair-that-was-never-linear-3000300>

Customs Reforms Can Open a New Chapter for Pakistan

Syed Jawad Ali Shah | 15 September 2026

“Pakistan now has an opportunity to send a clear message to Chinese industry: Pakistan does not want to remain only a market for Chinese products. It wants to become a partner in producing them.”

Read More: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/09/15/customs-reforms-can-open-a-new-chapter-for-pakistan>

An Eye on Balochistan Border

Muhammad Amir Rana | 20 September 2026

“Pakistan cannot afford further chaos in the border region of Balochistan. Any expansion of the regional conflict in an already fragile security environment could make the country’s internal security dynamics considerably more complex.”

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/2031271/an-eye-on-balochistan-border>

The Pak-Afghan Deadlock

Kamran Yousaf | 21 September 2026

“For Pakistan, the choice is not between diplomacy and confrontation. It continues to keep the door open to dialogue while insisting that its security concerns must be addressed. The problem is that unless there is a visible change in Kabul’s approach towards the TTP and other terrorist groups, there is little basis for expecting a major breakthrough.”

Read More: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2630410/the-pak-afghan-deadlock>

How Far Will Pakistan Go to Defend Saudi Arabia?

Shahmeer Ghiasuddin Khan | 25 September 2026

“One point is already clear: for Islamabad, defending Saudi Arabia is not a new question. What is new is the scale of the security environment in which that commitment now has to be translated into action.”

Read More: <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/how-far-will-pakistan-go-to-defend-saudi-arabia>

The New Great Game: Why Central Asia Matters to Pakistan

Arsalan Ahmed Mahar | 25 September 2026

“A modern ‘New Great Game’ is reshaping Eurasia around trade, energy, digital infrastructure, and economic influence, making Central Asia increasingly important for Pakistan’s economic and strategic interests.”

Read More: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/09/25/the-new-great-game-why-central-asia-matters-to-pakistan>

Pakistan, Turkiye Edge Closer Towards Joining Saudi War Against Houthis

Abid Hussain | 25 September 2026

“Despite the mounting show of support from Pakistan, Turkiye, France and Britain, the Houthis show no sign of easing off in their campaign against Saudi Arabia and the forces it backs in Yemen.”

Read More: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/25/pakistan-turkiye-edge-closer-towards-joining-saudi-war-against-houthis>

Afghan-Based Militancy and the Human Cost for Pakistan

Umair Khan | 25 September 2026

“If militant networks continue to operate from Afghan soil, addressing them becomes essential not only for Pakistan’s security but also for preventing Afghanistan from remaining a base for regional terrorism.”

Read More: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/25092026-afghan-based-militancy-and-the-human-cost-for-pakistan-oped/>

After Kohat: Why Pakistan’s Strikes on Taliban were Needed

Farwa Imtiaz | 25 September 2026

“Islamabad continues to press the international community to hold the Taliban regime to the commitments it made when it took power, chief among them a pledge not to let Afghan soil become a launchpad for attacks on other countries.”

Read More: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/25092026-after-kohat-why-pakistans-strikes-on-taliban-were-needed-oped/>

Can Pakistan’s Foreign Policy Ambitions Survive its Domestic Challenges?

Dr Farzana Shaikh | 01 September 2026

“The increasingly tense domestic political climate and fast-deteriorating security landscape could jeopardize Pakistan’s hard-won geopolitical gains. The government’s tendency to crack down on dissent and its hardline approach to domestic discord risk further stoking tensions.”

Read More: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2026/09/can-pakistans-foreign-policy-ambitions-survive-its-domestic-challenges>

AI Education Interface: What Pakistan Needs to Do?

Rizwan Zeb | 09 September 2026

“Pakistan’s educational sector is currently facing several challenges, including a lack of teaching resources, skill gaps and teacher shortages, as well as administrative and logistical issues. With due consideration and proper utilisation, AI could benefit the education sector.”

Read More: <https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Sep-2026/ai-education-interface-pakistan-needs>

Sugar-Coated Lie: How the State Feeds Pakistan’s Bitter Cartel

Haroon Rashid Siddiqi | 15 September 2026

“Beyond consumer exploitation, this policy carries severe environmental and agricultural consequences. Sugarcane is an exceptionally water-intensive crop, consuming vast quantities of Pakistan’s rapidly depleting groundwater reserves.”

Read More: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2629295/sugar-coated-lie-how-the-state-feeds-pakistans-bitter-cartel>

Foreign Policy Disconnect

Zahid Hussain | 23 September 2026

“A politically stable and economically sound country is what builds an independent policy. And the spectacle of the capital sealed off with containers does not sit well with Pakistan’s high-profile image on the world stage, however fleeting that image may be.”

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/2032020/foreign-policy-disconnect>

Beyond the Battle

Fe’reeha Idress | 25 September 2026

“For Balochistan, we fought bravely and sacrificed immensely. We now need our own Midway moment. A session of thinkers who can reclaim politics, dismantle Sardari control, expose external interference, and present a beautiful, real picture of Balochistan.”

Read More: <https://www.nation.com.pk/25-Sep-2026/beyond-battle>

Container City

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar | 25 September 2026

“Containment of the political and economic freedoms of Pakistan’s teeming masses is what the militarised state apparatus knows best. But building container cities does not make acute contradictions disappear, they only magnify them.”

Read More: <https://www.dawn.com/news/2032518/container-city>

Afghan Democracy Wasn’t Doomed to Fail—The US Broke Promises

William Maley | 07 September 2026

“The Taliban’s aim in negotiating with the US was instead aimed at detaching the Afghan Army from the civilian contractors vital to its survival. And the US negotiating team walked straight into the trap.”

Read More: <https://asiatimes.com/2026/09/afghan-democracy-wasnt-doomed-to-fail-the-us-broke-promises/>

Afghanistan: A New Battlefield as Iran and America Redrew the Taliban’s Role in Regional Power

Farhad Farhaad and Mujtaba Masoumi | 23 September 2026

“The Taliban are suppressing the Khatam al-Nabiyyin complex and the Supreme Commission of Shia Muslims of Afghanistan, even though these movements and institutions once served as the Islamic Republic of Iran’s communication network with the Taliban.”

Read More: <https://8am.media/eng/afghanistan-iran-america-taliban-regional-power/>

Behind the Taliban’s Signature

Arian Nasiri | 19 September 2026

“Afghanistan’s recurring problem is that, with every change of government, part of the country’s administrative memory also disappears. The next government is forced to discover from the beginning who signed which contract, what obligations were undertaken, and which resources were committed.”

Read More: <https://8am.media/eng/behind-the-talibans-signature/>

Mecca Agreement: Will it benefit Bangladeshis in Saudi Arabia in any way?

Selim Reza | 20 September 2026

“Bangladesh’s biggest mistake would be to view the Mecca agreement merely as a symbolic project of “Muslim unity” and assume that the issue of worker protection will somehow be resolved automatically within it.”

Read More: <https://en.prothomalo.com/opinion/op-ed/bw5noq41as>

81st Session of UN: A Rare Diplomatic Opportunity for Bangladesh

AKM Ahsan Ullah | 22 September 2026

“In the 81st General Assembly, Bangladesh faces two platforms. One is visible—the famous green marble rostrum of the UN. The other is behind the scenes—in corridors, bilateral meetings, small conference rooms, and diplomatic negotiation tables.”

Read More: <https://en.prothomalo.com/opinion/op-ed/3pgwcuzuby>

Can the RMG Sector Maintain Its Position in the Global Apparel Market?

Mohammad Rabiul Kabir | 14 September 2026

“To remain globally competitive, Bangladesh’s RMG sector must move beyond compliance-driven sustainability and establish sustainability as a core business strategy. This requires stronger governance, improved reporting systems, and integration of ESG priorities.”

Read More: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/419768/can-the-rmg-sector-maintain-its-position-in-the>

Does Payra Port have any Business Model?

Ahamedul Karim Chowdhury | 21 September 2026

“Payra’s most reliable cargo base is essentially captive cargo—coal for nearby power generation. That creates tonnage, but not yet a diversified commercial port. Payra has substantial physical facilities, including a 650-metre jetty and large backup areas.”

Read More: <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/does-payra-port-have-any-business-model-4278096>

The July Revolution and the Reinvention of National Purpose

Fahmida Khatun | 22 September 2026

“Bangladesh relies heavily on imported petroleum, domestic fuel costs are affected not just by crude oil prices but also by refined product prices, the exchange rate, freight insurance, financing expenses, port and storage charges, and taxes and distribution margins.”

Read More: <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/managing-bangladeshs-latest-fuel-price-shock-4279191>

Iran-US Conflict Puts Sri Lanka's Non-Alignment to Test

Kelum Bandara | 02 September 2026

“As a non-aligned state, Sri Lanka has a strong interest in preventing its territorial waters or territory from becoming a theatre of hostilities between the US and Iran. However, Sri Lanka is responsible for an extensive search and rescue region in the Indian Ocean.”

Read More: <https://www.dailymirror.lk/news-features/Iran-US-conflict-puts-Sri-Lankas-non-alignment-to-test/131-349234>

Bridging Communication Between China and Sri Lanka

Dr. Manoj Jinadasa | 13 September 2026

“China-Sri Lanka cooperation should give greater attention to intercultural communication and cultural intelligence. International public relations professionals should understand not only what to say but also how different audiences interpret what is being said.”

Read More: <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/16qnM6mdFNpHNbWvpED2>

Sri Lanka's Strategic Balancing Act Opportunity or New Geopolitical Trap?

Col. Nalin Herath | 15 September 2026

“Sri Lanka should move away from the old concept of “balancing powers.” Instead, it should pursue a policy of balancing interests. That means asking a simple question whenever a foreign partner offers assistance: What does Sri Lanka gain, what does Sri Lanka commit, and what strategic dependency could emerge later?”

Read More: <https://www.dailymirror.lk/news-features/Sri-Lankas-Strategic-Balancing-Act-Opportunity-or-New-Geopolitical-Trap/131-350325>

Sri Lanka: Time to Look East While Being in Global South

Tissa Mihindupura | 23 September 2026

“Sri Lanka is a country blessed with a strategic position in the Indian Ocean, abutting vital sea lanes that serve as the conveyor belts of transnational trade. The country matters to the whole world as a result.”

Read More: <https://dailynews.lk/2026/09/23/general-opinion/1040657/sri-lanka-time-to-look-east-while-being-in-global-south/>

Evolution and Decline of United National Party

KKS Perera | 10 September 2026

“The trajectory of the UNP highlights a dramatic transition in Sri Lankan political history, from leading the independence movement and establishing parliamentary governance to suffering a complete electoral loss in 2020. Historical prestige alone cannot sustain a political movement.”

Read More: <https://dailynews.lk/2026/09/10/general-opinion/1038207/evolution-and-decline-of-united-national-party/>

From Anuradhapura to Norochcholai: SL's Next Energy Crisis May Be Made at Home

Barath Arullamy | 23 September 2026

“From Anuradhapura’s batteries to Norochcholai’s coal controversy, SL now has enough warning and options to decide whether energy remains a recurring vulnerability or becomes a strategic national asset.”

Read More: <https://www.themorning.lk/articles/o1yphBYfrhhgtP7UD1Xc>

India's BRICS Moment, Nepal's Opportunity

Rishi Suri | 09 September 2026

“India’s swift response to Nepal’s recent floods illustrates how its BRICS leadership is translating resilience, connectivity and development cooperation into tangible benefits for its closest neighbours.”

Read More: <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/indias-brics-moment-nepals-opportunity-23-80.html>

The Rising Threat from the Roof of the World: Nepal's Himalayan Glacier Disaster Demands Urgent Action

Chhatra Karki | 06 September 2026

"The 2026 Rasuwa flood was not an anomaly. It was a preview. 47 glacial lakes in Nepal are now considered potentially dangerous. Each represents a potential catastrophe for downstream communities, hydropower projects, and critical infrastructure."

Read More: <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/the-rising-threat-from-the-roof-of-the-world-nepals-himalayan-glacier-disaster-demands-urgent-action>

Nepal's Hydropower Race Needs a Safety Rethink

Ramesh Baral | 11 September 2026

"The Trishuli disaster exposes a critical gap in Nepal's hydropower development: tunnels designed to generate power must also have reliable emergency access, evacuation, and life-support systems to protect workers when disaster strikes."

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://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/nepals-hydropower-race-needs-a-safety-rethink-38-29.html>

Ideology is Not Dead in Nepal. It Only Changed its Address

Aaditya Karna | 16 September 2026

"Nepal's political class spent a decade and a half teaching its citizens to distrust ideology because those who claimed it did not practice it. But the vacuum that distrust created cannot remain empty indefinitely."

Read More: <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2026/09/16/ideology-is-not-dead-in-nepal-it-only-changed-its-address>

Remittances Built Nepal's Economy for Decades. It's Time for the Next Step

Rashesh Shrestha | 22 September 2026

"Formal skills partnerships with destination countries, which would provide a framework for the partner countries to collaborate and co-invest in building skills within Nepal, can enhance foreign labour migration's contribution to Nepal's development."

Read More: <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2026/09/22/remittances-built-nepal-s-economy-for-decades-it-s-time-for-the-next-step>

The Mandate and the Bench: A Respectful Appeal to Nepal's Institutions

Rajendra Bajain | 23 September 2026

"After years of fragile coalitions and shifting alliances, the people gave a single government a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives. Such a verdict is rare in any democracy. It carried a quiet but unmistakable message: the people wanted change, and they wanted it to be allowed to happen."

Read More: <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/the-mandate-and-the-bench-a-respectful-appeal-to-nepals-institutions>

From National SDGs to Regional Delivery: Central Asia's Next Step

Jakhongir Isaev | 11 September 2026

"Central Asia has entered a new phase of regional cooperation. The question is no longer simply whether the five countries can work together. But can growing political trust be converted into practical institutions, shared measurements and tangible results."

Read More: <https://astanatimes.com/2026/09/from-national-sdgs-to-regional-delivery-central-asias-next-step/>

How Europe Balances Conditions and Interests in Uzbekistan

Aqidakhon Samatova | 14 September 2026

"The EU-Uzbekistan Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, or EPCA, creates a separate mechanism. It makes respect for human rights an essential part of the partnership, and a serious breach can lead to partial or full suspension of the agreement."

Read More: <https://timesca.com/opinion-how-europe-balances-conditions-and-interests-in-uzbekistan/>

B5+Italy Turns Italy's Central Asia Strategy into Working Platform

Sapargali Shalgimbayev and Domenico Palmieri | 21 September 2026

"The launch of B5+Italy may have passed relatively quietly in the international media. But beneath the headlines, a more important process is underway: the gradual construction of a denser network of institutions linking Central Asia with the major economic centers of Europe and Asia."

Read More: <https://astanatimes.com/2026/09/b5italy-turns-italys-central-asia-strategy-into-working-platform/>

Kazakhstan's Kurultai Reform: How AI and Digital Governance are Reshaping Central Asia

Dimitris Symeonidis | 23 September 2026

"Kazakhstan makes over the next phase of implementation an area where its Erasmus+ partnerships and academic cooperation with EU institutions could play a meaningful supporting role."

Read More: <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2026/09/23/kazakhstans-kurultai-reform-how-ai-and-digital-governance-are-reshaping-central-asia/>

Weaponizing Faith - The Cold War Roots of Central Asia's Security Dilemma

Zabikhulla Saipov | 23 September 2026

"Central Asia's later security challenges cannot be attributed to a single foreign policy, ideology, or historical event. They emerged from the interaction of external intervention, domestic political choices, institutional weaknesses, and unresolved regional conflicts."

Read More: <https://timesca.com/the-cold-war-roots-of-central-asias-security-dilemma/>

Sanctions and Bombs Won't End the War in Iran. Trump is Running Out of Options Against an Intractable Foe

Amin Saikal | 01 September 2026

"As pressure mounted from Republican heavyweights and Netanyahu, Trump backed out and launched new attacks. Tehran made no effort to try to save the deal, either – it was in its interest to inflict as much political damage on Trump as possible."

Read More: <https://theconversation.com/sanctions-and-bombs-wont-end-the-war-in-iran-trump-is-running-out-of-options-against-an-intractable-foe-290852>

Tehran Sees Beijing as Potential Bridge to Washington

Maryam Sinaiee | 19 September 2026

“Beijing’s public position remains more cautious than some of the expectations being voiced in Iran: China has offered to play a constructive role in diplomacy, but has stopped short of announcing itself as a mediator between Tehran and Washington.”

Read More: <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202609184967>

Iran’s Attack on GCC Hurt Global South’s Collective Role

Khaled Abou Zahr | 18 September 2026

“Iran has shown little regard for the Global South’s condemnations and calls for restraint. The inability of major Global South powers to push Iran toward restraint highlights the limits of their collective influence.”

Read More: <https://www.arabnews.com/opinion/iranian-attacks-on-gcc-hurt-global-souths-collective-role-3002060>

Who is More Powerful: Saudi Arabia or Iran?

Abdulrahman Al-Rashed | 24 September 2026

“There is no doubt that the war involving Iran, Iraq and Yemen prompts Saudi Arabia to accord greater attention to its defensive capabilities, unless the region awakens to a change that brings an end to its tension and wars.”

Read More: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/24092026-who-is-more-powerful-saudi-arabia-or-iran-oped/>

From Hormuz to Indian Ocean: Iran Threatens to Redraw the Map of the War

Behrouz Turani | 24 September 2026

“Iran has already demonstrated a willingness during the conflict to target regional aviation infrastructure, repeatedly striking Kuwait International Airport and damaging terminals and a radar system.”

Read More: <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202609243363>

War has Shifted How Power Works in Iran

Andreas Krieg | 02 September 2026

“It is important to realize that Iran is making existential decisions about the survival strategy of the Islamic Republic itself. The old vocabulary of reformist against principlist – or moderate against hardliner – no longer reflects the real struggle inside the system.”

Read More: <https://asiatimes.com/2026/09/war-has-shifted-how-power-works-in-iran/>

Countering Iran’s Endgame

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg | 19 September 2026

“Iran’s leverage has grown significantly as a result, as it tightens its grip on regional waterways. The attacks on energy installations and supply lines have deepened the energy crisis around the world. It is likely to press further, unless the international community acts in unison.”

Read More: <https://www.arabnews.com/opinion/countering-irans-endgame-3002352>

Tehran Should Take a Hard Look in the Mirror

Hilal Kaplan | 24 September 2026

“For 15 years, Türkiye’s patience was one of Iran’s most valuable strategic assets. But Tehran spent that capital in Aleppo, in Sanaa and now in the skies over Gaziantep. If it continues spending it in Yemen, Türkiye will not be the one left poorer.”

Read More: <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/columns/tehran-should-take-a-hard-look-in-the-mirror>

Double Choke in West Asia Threatens Another Global Crisis

Col Rajeev Agarwal | 23 September 2026

“The West Asian region is moving from multiple independent theatres of war towards a single interconnected strategic crisis, with Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb creating the possibility of a “double choke” on energy and global trade.”

Read More: <https://www.firstpost.com/opinion/double-choke-in-west-asia-threatens-another-global-crisis-14047886.html>

The Future Saudi Arabia is Building Needs You

Assaf Al-Quraishi | 23 September 2026

“For generations, the world has known the Kingdom for its oil, but beneath its land lies a much broader mineral opportunity, spanning phosphate, gold, copper and bauxite, alongside critical minerals and rare earths. Yet what lies beneath our feet is only the beginning.”

Read More: <https://www.arabnews.com/opinion/the-future-saudi-arabia-is-building-needs-you-3002756>

Gadi Eisenkot and the Palestinian Economy: What Could Really Change if He Leads Israel?

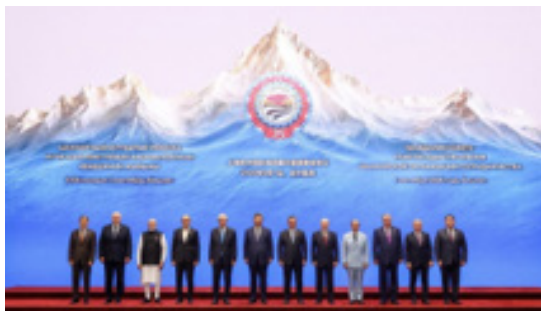
Nabil Kukali | 25 September 2026

“If preventing the collapse of the Palestinian Authority remains part of Eisenkot’s strategic thinking, the test cannot be limited to preventing the final moment of collapse. It must also include whether Palestinian institutions and the economy around them can function before reaching that point.”

Read More: <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-909712>

REGION IN PICTURES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders gather for the family photo at the 26th SCO Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic on 01 September 2026.



Pic Credits: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

PM Narendra Modi joins Leaders of BRICS Member and Partner Countries for the Family Photo at the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi on 13 September 2026.



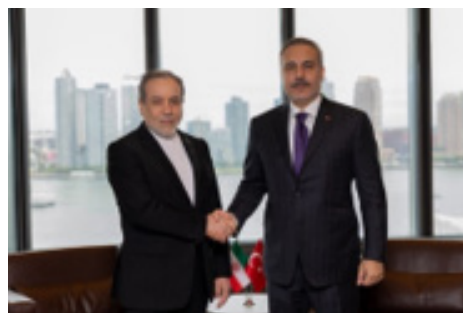
Pic Credits: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, met Sri Lankan President Dissanayake in Colombo on 09 September 2026.



Pic Credits: Ministry of Defence, Government of India

Turkish Foreign Minister met Iranian Foreign Minister on the sidelines of the 81st United Nations General Assembly in New York on 25 September 2026.



Pic Credits: Anadolu Ajansı



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

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