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LAHORE, PAKISTAN

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NEWS | ANALYSIS | PERSPECTIVE | FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

ISSUE 18

September 13 - September 19, 2026

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Austerity returns as the Gulf War reaches the pump.

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Part I covers seven National Affairs stories; **Part II** covers seven International Affairs stories. Coverage window: 13-19 September 2026. Figures are attributed to the outlet or institution named in each article; developments after 19 September are not included. Wherever a figure is an estimate or leaked, the article says so.

THREAD TRACKER

Live stories followed across issues, with the nearest verified historical echo. Where no verified echo was retrieved, the table says so.

Thread	This week (13-19 Sep)	One Year Ago / nearest echo
28th Amendment / new provinces	Still no bill tabled; Sindh Assembly's unanimous 3 Sep resolution invokes Article 239(4); lawyers' bodies split (N-06)	Nearest verified echo: 27th Amendment approved by cabinet 8 Nov 2025, assented 13 Nov 2025
IMF EFF and fuel shock	Austerity revived 17 Sep; fourth-review mission expected in coming weeks (N-01)	IMF mission for the second review ran 24 Sep-8 Oct 2025
Makkah pact / Saudi defence	Houthi attacks on Saudi cities; DG ISPR calls commitment unconditional; APC on Haramain 19 Sep (I-01)	17 Sep 2025: Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement signed with Saudi Arabia
Balochistan operations	No new large ISPR announcement verified this week; latest verified: 11 killed in Kharan/Washuk, 2.9 tonnes explosives (9 Sep); 115 militants killed in Balochistan in August	Aug 2025: security forces killed at least 100 militants nationwide (PICSS)
Pakistan-Afghanistan / TTP	Kohat police-lines mosque attack claimed by Ittehadul Mujahideen (N-02)	Aug 2025: 143 militant attacks, 194 dead - deadliest month in over a decade (PICSS)
Monsoon 2026	183 deaths by 11 Sep; PMD warning 12-17 Sep (N-07)	By 10 Sep 2025 the NDMA toll stood at 929; final 2025 toll 1,037
Gaza disarmament / ISF	Force generation slow; Kosovo and Albania pledged (I-03)	Sep 2025: Gaza plan discussed with Arab and Muslim leaders on UNGA sidelines; presented 29 Sep 2025
Strait of Hormuz	Salalah GCC-Iran meeting postponed 14 Sep; Brent about 106.69 dollars (I-01)	Pre-war baseline: Brent above 72 dollars in late Feb 2026
Sudan / El Obeid	Army claims 11 areas in North Kordofan; Guterres on arms suppliers (I-05)	12 Sep 2025: Quad joint statement and roadmap
Ukraine-Russia talks / sanctions	Graham Act signed 18 Sep; next round may be October (I-04)	Mid-2025: Trump's 50-day secondary-tariff ultimatum; Graham-Blumenthal bill with 82+ co-sponsors
Section 301 tariffs	Excess-capacity tariffs delayed until after 24 Sep summit (I-07)	Two years ago: final Section 301 increases announced 13 Sep 2024, effective 27 Sep 2024
UN Secretary-General race	Third straw poll 18 Sep; Grynspan 9-5-1 (I-06)	Ten years ago: 2016 selection went through six straw polls before Guterres emerged
AJK internet shutdown	Passed 100 days on 15 Sep (N-03)	No verified one-year-ago echo retrieved

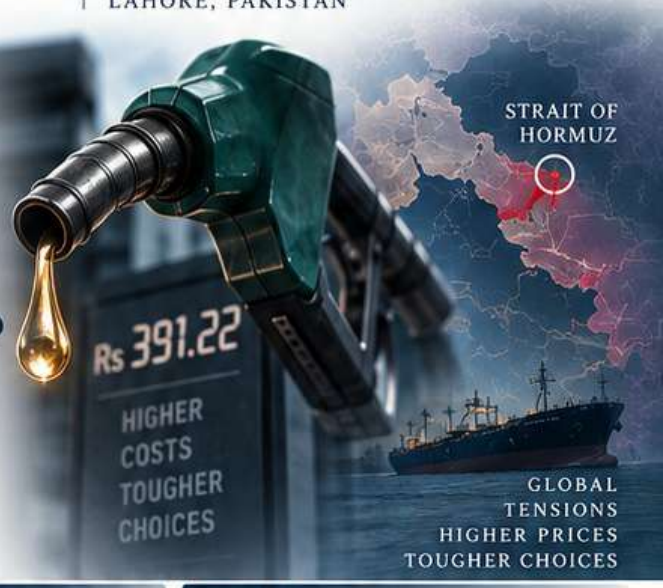
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ISSUE 18
SEPTEMBER 13 – SEPTEMBER 19, 2026
NATIONAL AFFAIRS N-01
FOR CSS / PMS ASPIRANTS
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

Rs391 Petrol and a Conservation State

Austerity Returns as the Gulf War Reaches the Pump

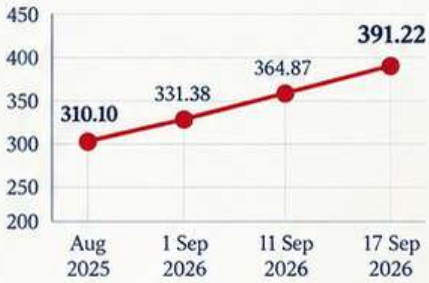
Rising fuel prices, a renewed austerity drive and a volatile Middle East are forcing Pakistan to revisit its economic choices, as the government reimposes conservation measures and seeks to protect a fragile economy from external shocks.



FUEL PRICES ON THE RISE

Petrol price has increased by Rs80+ per litre since August 2025, reaching Rs391.22 on 17 Septemhiec 2026.

Petrol Price (Rs per litre)



26%
Increase
since Aug 2025
(Rs81.12)

LATEST PRICE (17 SEP 2026)

Petrol
Rs391.22
(+ Rs6.88)

Diesel
Rs421.45
(+ Rs5.62)

KEY DRIVERS

- **Escalation of the Gulf War**
  Disruption in global oil markets and risk to the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Rise in international oil prices**
  Brent around $106.69 per barrel (on 14 September).
- **PKR depreciation**
  Rupee under pressure, increasing import bill.
- **IMF conditionalities**
  Austerity measures and fiscal consolidation.

GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

- Nationwide austerity and energy conservation campaign.
- 50% cut in fuel allocation for government vehicles (3 months).
- Ban on purchase of new government vehicles.
- Reduced non-employee expenditures by 5% for FY2026-27.
- Consideration of compressed working hours and remote work.

IMPACT ON PAKISTAN

- **Higher transport costs**
  Inflationary pressure across the economy.
- **Increased production costs**
  Affecting industry and exports.
- **Public burden**
  Reduced purchasing power for households.
- **Austerity measures**
  Cut in non-essential expenditure (e.g., 50% reduction in fuel for government vehicles, 5% cut in non-employee budget).

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT



The Middle East conflict, which began on 28 February has constrained shipping and pushed oil prices above $100 per barrel, with implications for energy-importing countries like Pakistan.

> *The government has opened consultations on relief measures, but no major compromise on fiscal discipline is expected.*

THE BIGGER PICTURE

- War-induced global uncertainty is reshaping energy markets.
- Pakistan's import-dependent economy remains vulnerable to external shocks.
- Conservation measures may buy time, but structural reforms are essential for long-term stability.

THE ROAD AHEAD

1. Short-term relief through subsidies or targeted support.
2. Accelerate energy diversification (RE, hydropower, LNG).
3. Improve efficiency and reduce import dependence.
4. Maintain fiscal discipline to retain IMF support.



N-01 | NATIONAL AFFAIRS | ECONOMY & ENERGY SECURITY

Rs391 Petrol and a Conservation State: Austerity Returns as the Gulf War Reaches the Pump

PRIORITY	HIGH - Current Affairs, Pakistan Affairs (economy), Essay
CONTINUITY	Continues the IMF fourth-review and Strait of Hormuz threads from Issue 17; this week the external shock turned into domestic policy - austerity revived, relief targeted.
ESSAY TOPIC	Energy security is national security: can an import-dependent economy survive a chokepoint war?
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 17 September 2026 Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved a nationwide austerity and energy-conservation campaign on the same day that petrol was notified at Rs391.22 per litre and high-speed diesel at Rs421.45, increases of Rs6.88 and Rs5.62 respectively. The package is a return to a playbook the government had largely retired in June: a 50 per cent cut in fuel allocations for government vehicles for three months (ambulances, fire brigades, law-enforcement and essential-service vehicles exempt), a 5 per cent reduction in the non-employee-related expenditure budget for FY2026-27, a ban on buying new government vehicles, a freeze on procuring durable goods other than IT equipment, and a rule that shops, markets and malls close by 9 pm.

The reversal was abrupt. As late as 15 September, government sources told reporters that austerity remained suspended even as prices climbed; two days later it was back. In between, the KSE-100 fell 1.5 per cent (2,541 points) on 14 September as investors read the oil signal, and the Information Minister confirmed that the Prime Minister had opened consultations on which measures to revive.

The relief side of the policy is a subsidy of Rs100 per litre for motorcycles, rickshaws and vehicles up to 800cc, limited by a monthly quota and registered by SMS. Implementation has been rocky: petroleum dealers initially refused to sell under the scheme, the registration SMS had to be made free, and older vehicles (20-year-old bikes and autos) were later added. On 18 September the pricing mechanism trimmed petrol by Rs1.65 and diesel by 88 paisas for the short window of 19-21 September, a sign that prices are now being reset in very short intervals.

The cause is external. The Middle East war that began on 28 February has constrained shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil moved in peacetime, and Brent has hovered above 105 dollars. Pakistan is an import-dependent economy: it needs Gulf crude, Gulf LNG and Gulf remittances. The IMF warned in March that the war would weigh on growth, inflation and the balance of payments, and that the State Bank should stand ready to tighten and let the exchange rate act as a shock absorber. Islamabad's own finance ministry had then projected no major implications, a forecast the last six months have not vindicated.

For the CSS candidate the story covers three exam themes: external vulnerability and Pakistan's energy mix; subsidy design (targeted versus untargeted, and the capacity to deliver); and the political economy of austerity, where symbolic cuts sit beside far larger structural problems. The IMF's Extended Fund Facility of 7 billion dollars is still running, about 4.8 billion dollars has been disbursed under it and the Resilience and Sustainability Facility, and a mission for the fourth review is expected shortly. The deeper lesson is that conservation measures buy time, not resilience: real insulation comes from diversification of supply, storage, efficiency in transport and power, and a tax-and-subsidy system that protects the poor without draining the budget.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- The price shock is imported, but the vulnerability is domestic: heavy dependence on Gulf oil, LNG and remittances turns a distant chokepoint war into a Karachi pump price.
- Austerity is a signalling device as much as a saving: a 5 per cent cut in non-ERE spending and a halved vehicle fuel quota matter less in rupees than in telling citizens and the IMF that the elite shares the burden.
- Policy whiplash - suspended on 15 September, revived on 17 September - damages credibility more than any single measure helps it.
- A Rs100-per-litre subsidy capped by monthly quota is better targeted than an across-the-board price freeze, but only if registration, verification and dealer compliance actually work.
- Dealer refusal and the need to make the SMS free show that subsidy design fails at the last mile, not at the announcement.
- Extending relief to 20-year-old bikes and autos widens coverage but also raises leakage and fiscal-cost questions.
- Short pricing windows (19-21 September) increase transparency in theory but make budgeting harder for transporters and small businesses.

- Fuel prices are the fastest transmission belt from external shock to inflation because transport costs feed food, goods and service prices.
- The equity question is sharp: motorcyclists and rickshaw drivers spend a larger share of income on fuel than car owners, so the poor are exposed first and the relief window is politically essential.
- Shop closing hours at 9 pm are cheap to announce and hard to enforce; enforcement capacity, not the rule, decides whether electricity savings materialise.
- The IMF programme narrows fiscal choices: any relief must be funded within agreed targets, and the Fund has explicitly expected exchange-rate flexibility.
- The stock market reaction (KSE-100 down 1.5 per cent) shows that investors price geopolitical risk through Pakistan's current-account exposure.
- Structural answers - LNG and crude diversification, strategic storage, public transport, rooftop solar, circular-debt reform - take years and must be funded now.
- The same war tests Pakistan's energy supply and its Makkah-pact commitments (see I-01).

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Economic

- Price pass-through is immediate: petrol and diesel drive transport, agriculture and food prices, so second-round inflation is the main risk flagged by the IMF.
- Fiscal space is thin: the EFF and RSF impose targets, so relief must be offset by savings elsewhere.

Political

- The government must balance visible sacrifice by officials with delivery to voters; the reversal on austerity handed opponents an easy critique.
- Provinces and federal government must coordinate market timings and subsidy enforcement.

Social

- Motorcycle, rickshaw and small-car users are the target group; women and rural commuters who rely on public transport are largely outside the subsidy.
- Early shop closure and possible school or office compression alter daily life and informal-sector incomes.

Strategic and International

- Hormuz diplomacy (Oman, Qatar, Pakistan as mediator) is now a direct national-interest issue, not only a foreign-policy one.
- Gulf remittances and Saudi financing are exposed to the same conflict.

Institutional

- The Petroleum Division's short-window pricing, the Information Ministry's fact-checking and the PM Office's austerity decisions show a government running crisis management by press release; the legislative and audit dimensions are missing.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

Rs391.22	50%	Rs100	1.5%
Petrol per litre from 17 Sep (up Rs6.88)	Cut in fuel for official vehicles, three months	Per-litre relief for bikes, rickshaws, cars up to 800cc	KSE-100 fall on 14 Sep (2,541 points)

- Petrol was notified at Rs391.22 per litre from 17 September 2026, up Rs6.88 (Gulf News).
- High-speed diesel rose Rs5.62 to Rs421.45 per litre on the same date (Gulf News).
- On 11 September petrol had risen Rs3.05 to Rs370.80 and diesel Rs5.37 to Rs398.04 (The Nation).
- For 19-21 September petrol was cut by Rs1.65 and diesel by 88 paisas per litre (Petroleum Division release, 24 News HD).
- Petrol has risen from 0.93 US dollars per litre in February to 1.15 dollars in March 2026 (Trading Economics/PSO data).
- A record increase of Rs55 per litre earlier in the war preceded the first austerity round (Gulf News explainer).
- The KSE-100 fell 1.5 per cent, shedding 2,541 points, on 14 September (Whalesbook).
- Government vehicles' fuel allocation is cut 50 per cent for three months, with emergency services exempt (PM Office via The Pakistan Times).
- The non-employee-related expenditure budget for FY2026-27 is cut 5 per cent (PM Office).
- Purchase of new government vehicles is banned and durable-goods procurement frozen except IT (PM Office).
- Shops, markets, malls and general retail must close by 9 pm (Gulf News).
- Relief of Rs100 per litre applies to motorcycles, rickshaws and vehicles up to 800cc, subject to a monthly quota (PM statement).
- Brent traded at 106.69 dollars on 14 September (FinanceFeeds market report).
- About one-fifth of world oil supply moved through Hormuz in peacetime (Al Jazeera).
- The IMF EFF is a 7 billion dollar, 37-month arrangement from September 2024; the RSF is 1.4 billion dollars over 28 months (Arab News).

■ Pakistan has received about 4.8 billion dollars under the two IMF arrangements (Business Recorder).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*shock absorber*"
>
> - IMF staff report, 2026 - on the exchange rate's role in absorbing external shocks

> "*raising their standard of living*"
>
> - Constitution of Pakistan, Article 38(a) - the social-welfare duty behind targeted relief

> "*The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.*"
>
> - Thucydides, Melian Dialogue - on how power imbalances shape who bears a shock

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Austerity	Deliberate reduction of public spending to control deficits	The government revived austerity after the fuel price spike.
Pass-through	The extent to which a cost change reaches consumer prices	Oil-price pass-through raised transport fares within days.
Subsidy	Financial support that lowers a price for a target group	A Rs100 per litre subsidy targets motorcyclists.
Chokepoint	A narrow passage whose closure disrupts global trade	Hormuz is the world's most sensitive oil chokepoint.
Conservation	Planned reduction in resource use	Early market closure is a conservation measure.
Leakage	Benefits reaching people outside the intended group	Adding older vehicles raises leakage risk.
Fiscal space	Room in the budget to spend without breaching targets	The IMF programme limits fiscal space.
Exogenous	Originating outside the system	The oil shock is exogenous to Pakistan's economy.
Volatility	Rapid and unpredictable price movement	Volatility forced three-day pricing windows.
Circular debt	Chain of unpaid dues across the power sector	Circular debt limits energy-sector reform.
Import dependence	Reliance on foreign supply for essential goods	Import dependence makes fuel prices political.
Stopgap	A temporary measure that does not fix the cause	Austerity is a stopgap, not a strategy.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

Expect this in Current Affairs as a two-part question: causes of Pakistan's vulnerability to oil shocks and a critical evaluation of government response. Strong answers separate the external shock from domestic structure, give two or three numbers (Rs391.22, 50 per cent, Rs100), discuss targeted versus untargeted subsidy, and end with structural reforms (diversification, storage, public transport, solar, circular debt). Avoid one-sided criticism; credit targeting where it exists. In Essay, use it under energy security, economic sovereignty or crisis governance.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Critically examine how the closure of the Strait of Hormuz affects Pakistan's economy and what policy options are available.

Q2. Are targeted fuel subsidies more effective than austerity measures in protecting the poor? Support with examples from 2026.

Q3. Discuss the role of the IMF programme in shaping Pakistan's crisis response.

Q4. Short note: The political economy of austerity in Pakistan.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

Gulf News - Pakistan unveils sweeping austerity measures
https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/pakistan-unveils-sweeping-austerity-measures-as-fuel-prices-soar-1.500678327

The Nation - Petrol price increase, 11 September
https://www.nation.com.pk/10-Sep-2026/pakistan-raises-petrol-price-rs3-05-diesel-rs5-37

24 News HD - Petrol cut for 19-21 September
https://www.24newshd.tv/18-Sep-2026/petrol-cut-rs1-65-diesel-88-paisas-per-litre

Business Recorder - IMF mission for next review
https://www.brecorder.com/news/40439040/imf-mission-to-visit-pakistan-in-coming-weeks-for-next-review

ICEP's
CSS Weekly
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ISSUE 18
SEPTEMBER 13 – SEPTEMBER 19, 2026
NATIONAL AFFAIRS N-02
FOR CSS / PMS ASPIRANTS
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

Kohat Mosque Attack:

When the Police Lines Themselves Become the Target

A suicide car bomb inside the police headquarters compound in Kohat has once again exposed the persistent and evolving threat of militancy, even in high-security zones, and raised serious questions about Pakistan's internal security and counter-terrorism strategy.



"An attack on a place of worship is an attack on our collective values."

WHAT HAPPENED?

Date	12 September 2026 (Friday)
Location	Police Lines Mosque, Kohat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
Modus Operandi	Suicide car bomb rammed into the entrance during Friday prayers
Casualties	**At least 31 killed** (including 16 police personnel and a 4-year-old child) **Over 100 injured**
Responsibility	A faction of Ittehadul Mujahideen claimed responsibility

WHERE IS KOHAT?



- Strategic location near the Afghan border
- Historically a militancy-affected district
- Key route for TTP and other militant groups
- Frequent target of security forces and state installations

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1:30 pm	Car packed with explosives rammed into the mosque entrance.
Immediately after	Gunmen opened fire and exchanged fire with security personnel.
Within hours	Security forces cordoned off the area and launched a clearance operation.
Later	Officials confirmed 31 deaths and over 100 injuries.
Same day	A militant faction claimed responsibility.

A RECURRENT PATTERN

Major mosque attacks in Pakistan (recent years)

Year	Location	Casualties (approx.)
2013	Peshawar (Police Lines)	87 killed
2023	Mastung (Balochistan)	60+ killed
2023	Mohmand	30+ killed
2024	Bajaur	40+ killed
2025	Bannu	20+ killed
2026	**Kohat**	**31 killed, 100+ injured**

Places of worship, especially within or near security installations, remain high-value targets for militant groups.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- **Security breach** — Attack inside a high-security police compound raises questions about intelligence and internal vulnerabilities.
- **Psychological impact** — Targets morale of security forces and aims to create fear among the public.
- **Resilient militant networks** — Shows that TTP and affiliated groups retain operational capacity despite state operations.
- **Regional dimension** — Linked to the wider Afghanistan-Pakistan security dynamics.

KEY CHALLENGES

- **Evolving tactics** — Shift from remote areas to urban and fortified targets.
- **Cross-border support** — Continued safe havens and external backing.
- **Intelligence gaps** — Failure to pre-empt despite visible threats.
- **Need for local consensus** — Counter-terrorism requires political unity and community support.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Strengthen intelligence gathering and inter-agency coordination.
- Enhance physical security of sensitive installations, including places of worship.
- Address root causes through political engagement and development in merged areas.
- Deepen regional cooperation with Afghanistan to curb cross-border militancy.

> *"The protection of places of worship is not just a security responsibility, but a test of the state's commitment to its people and their faith."*

KEY TAKEAWAY

The Kohat attack is a stark reminder that militancy remains a long-term challenge. A comprehensive response — combining security, intelligence, regional diplomacy and socio-economic measures — is essential to prevent recurrence and restore public trust.

N-02 | NATIONAL AFFAIRS | INTERNAL SECURITY & COUNTER-TERRORISM

Kohat Mosque Attack: When the Police Lines Themselves Become the Target

PRIORITY	HIGH - Current Affairs, Pakistan Affairs, Essay (terrorism)
CONTINUITY	Continues Issue 17's Pakistan-Afghanistan/TTP tensions and Balochistan operations threads; this week the violence hit a police headquarters mosque in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
ESSAY TOPIC	Terrorism and the state: why does militancy persist despite sustained counter-terrorism operations?
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Friday 18 September a car packed with explosives was rammed into the entrance of a mosque inside the police headquarters compound at Kohat, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa near the Afghan border, as worshippers gathered for Friday prayers. Gunmen then tried to storm the compound and exchanged fire with officers. At least 31 people were killed, including 16 police personnel and a four-year-old child, and well over 100 were reported injured. Police said at least six attackers were killed in the gun battle, and later reports put the number of dead militants higher. A faction known as Ittehadul Mujahideen, linked to the Taliban commander Hafiz Gul Bahadur and operating in the TTP orbit, claimed responsibility. The compound housed counter-terrorism police who had conducted operations across the province in recent years.

The attack came one day after a roadside bomb in Hangu killed six soldiers and a day on which troops killed ten militants, which shows how compressed the cycle of attack and counter-operation has become. The pattern is also historically familiar. Mosques inside security compounds were hit at Peshawar Police Lines in January 2023, and mosque bombings at Mastung (2023) and in Mohmand (2016) killed dozens; earlier this year a suicide attack on a Shia mosque in Islamabad on 6 February killed about 31 and was claimed by the Islamic State's Pakistan branch. Kohat is different in target rather than method: it is a strike on the police, the institution that is supposed to be the first line of internal security.

The numbers explain the tempo. The Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies recorded 199 militant attacks in August, up 38 per cent from 144 in July, but with 158 deaths against 268 the previous month, a 41 per cent fall in fatalities. July was the deadliest month of 2026, with at least 606 killed across attacks and operations. In August, security forces' operations killed 203 militants (211 deaths in total), including 115 in Balochistan, 56 in mainland Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 32 in the merged districts. The merged districts saw 52 attacks in August, a 126 per cent rise. Only three suicide attacks were recorded in August versus eight in July. In other words, the state is killing many militants and still absorbing frequent, lower-casualty strikes punctuated by mass-casualty events like Kohat.

Three analytical lessons emerge for exam use. First, kinetic pressure alone has not restored security: attack frequency is rising even as operations intensify. Second, the geography of violence, along the Afghan border and in Balochistan, is inseparable from Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, where Islamabad accuses the Taliban government of sheltering the TTP and tensions remain high. Third, counter-terrorism requires political consensus: local assemblies and communities have questioned the cost of repeated operations, drone activity and displacement, and calls for a more inclusive strategy are growing. A durable answer combines intelligence-led policing, police modernisation, border management, prosecution and rehabilitation, and diplomatic pressure on Kabul, with the National Action Plan as the framework that needs to be actually implemented rather than restated.

The immediate policy questions are whether the police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have the equipment, protection and intelligence support to defend their own compounds, and whether the federal and provincial governments can align on a common strategy. Kohat will be read as a stress test of both.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- The target choice matters: striking a mosque inside a police headquarters attacks both a symbol of the state and its operational capacity, and maximises civilian and morale damage.
- A high kill count for militants does not equal security: August saw 203 militants killed yet attacks rose 38 per cent.
- Fatalities fell 41 per cent between July and August, but a single event like Kohat can reverse the statistical trend in a day.
- The merged districts' 126 per cent rise in attacks shows that pressure in one theatre displaces violence rather than ending it.
- Police are the most exposed institution: they hold local intelligence and local presence but often lack heavy protection compared with the military.
- The TTP ecosystem is fragmenting into factions such as Ittehadul Mujahideen, which complicates negotiations, deterrence and attribution.

- The Afghan dimension is central: safe havens, border movement and the Taliban's unwillingness to act against the TTP drive Pakistan's diplomatic and military posture.
- Repeated mosque attacks - Peshawar 2023, Mastung 2023, Islamabad 2026, Kohat 2026 - show that sectarian and anti-state violence overlap in method.
- Counter-terrorism legitimacy depends on local trust; recurring operations, displacement and drone activity can alienate the very communities whose intelligence is needed.
- The National Action Plan (2014) already contains the right pillars, but implementation has been uneven, especially on prosecution, madrassa and financing reforms.
- Provincial police capacity - training, equipment, forensic and intelligence units - is the missing link between military operations and durable order.
- Media and political narratives that blame India or Afghanistan without accountability for internal lapses can delay institutional reform.
- Economic stress from the energy shock reduces fiscal room for police modernisation precisely when it is needed.
- Terrorism also feeds the economy negatively through investor risk perception, so security and economic stability are one policy problem.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Security

- Tempo of attack and counter-operation is high; mass-casualty events punctuate lower-level violence.
- Police compounds need layered protection, standoff barriers and rapid-response coordination.

Political

- Federal-provincial coordination is uneven; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's political leadership and the centre differ on operations.
- Public trust in the security narrative depends on transparency and compensation.

Regional

- Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, including border management and TTP sanctuaries, are the largest external driver.
- The Kohat attack complicates any diplomatic track with Kabul.

Legal and Institutional

- Anti-terrorism courts, forensic capacity and witness protection determine whether arrests convert into convictions.
- NACTA and provincial CTDs need clear mandates and funding.

Social

- Civilians, worshippers and children bear the cost; communities in border districts face displacement and fear.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

31+	199	606	203
Killed in Kohat attack incl. 16 police, 18 Sep	Militant attacks recorded in August (PICSS)	Killed in July, deadliest month of 2026	Militants killed by security forces in August

- At least 31 people were killed in the Kohat attack, including 16 police personnel (AFP via Al Jazeera, ABC).
- More than 100 were reported wounded (ABC/AP; earlier reports of 50-75).
- Attackers rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into the mosque at the police headquarters during Friday prayers (Al Jazeera).
- At least six attackers were killed in the initial gun battle; police later reported more dead (AP, Outlook).
- A roadside bomb killed six soldiers in Hangu the previous day (AP).
- PICSS recorded 199 militant attacks in August, up 38 per cent from 144 in July (Dawn).
- August attacks killed 158 people and injured 181; July's 144 attacks killed 268 and injured 216 (Dawn/PICSS).
- Deaths from attacks fell 41 per cent and injuries 16 per cent month on month (Dawn/PICSS).
- Security operations killed 211 people in August, including 203 militants, with 26 suspected militants arrested (PICSS).
- Militants killed in August: 115 in Balochistan, 56 in mainland KP, 32 in merged districts (Dawn/PICSS).
- Merged districts recorded 52 attacks in August against 23 in July, up 126 per cent (Dawn/PICSS).
- Three suicide attacks in August against eight in July (Dawn/PICSS).
- July 2026 was the deadliest month of the year: at least 606 killed and 232 injured (PICSS).
- Security forces killed 988 militants in the first four months of 2026 (PICSS).
- The Islamabad Shia mosque bombing of 6 February 2026 killed 31 and injured over 169 (Wikipedia summary of news reports).
- The 2023 Mastung Eid Milad-un-Nabi bombing killed about 60 (Wikipedia summary).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*War is a mere continuation of policy by other means.*"
>
> - Carl von Clausewitz, On War - a reminder that counter-terrorism is political as well as military

> "*a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force*"
>
> - Max Weber, Politics as a Vocation - the state defined by its monopoly of legitimate force

> "*No person shall be deprived of life or liberty save in accordance with law.*"
>
> - Constitution of Pakistan, Article 9 - the standard to which counter-terrorism must conform

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Insurgency	Organised armed rebellion against an established authority	The TTP insurgency is concentrated near the Afghan border.
Sanctuary	A place where militants are safe from pursuit	Militants seek sanctuary across the border.
Kinetic	Involving direct military force	Kinetic operations alone have not reduced attacks.
Attrition	Gradual wearing down through repeated losses	The campaign has become one of attrition.
Faction	A subgroup within a larger organisation	Ittehadul Mujahideen is a TTP-linked faction.
Sectarian	Relating to divisions between religious sects	The Islamabad bombing had a sectarian motive.
Compound	A secured, enclosed complex of buildings	The attackers targeted a police compound.
Displacement	Forced movement of people from their homes	Operations caused displacement in border districts.
Deterrence	Discouraging action through fear of consequences	Deterrence has weakened against suicide attackers.
Legitimacy	Public acceptance of authority as rightful	Legitimacy rises with transparent operations.
Resilience	Ability to recover from shocks	Police resilience depends on training and equipment.
Reprisal	Retaliation for an earlier act	The attack was seen as a reprisal for operations.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

Terrorism is a perennial Current Affairs and Pakistan Affairs theme, so prepare a compact frame: causes (Afghan spillover, governance gaps, sectarian and ethnic grievances), response (military operations, NAP, police reform) and recommendations. Use the PICSS numbers to show the paradox of high kills and rising attacks. Strong answers distinguish TTP, Baloch separatists and ISKP/ISPP, and treat the Afghan dimension diplomatically rather than rhetorically. In Essay, use Kohat as a contemporary illustration, not the whole argument.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Evaluate the effectiveness of Pakistan's counter-terrorism strategy in the light of the 2026 attack data.
Q2. Discuss the role of police in counter-terrorism and the reforms required.
Q3. How do Pakistan-Afghanistan relations shape internal security?
Q4. Short note: National Action Plan - achievements and gaps.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

Al Jazeera - Bomb attack at Pakistan mosque kills at least 31
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/18/bomb-attack-at-pakistan-mosque-kills-at-least-15-injures-50

ABC News - Pakistani Taliban claims responsibility
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-19/pakistani-taliban-claims-responsibility-for-bomb-attack/107171900

AP via Local10 - Bombing at mosque near police offices
https://www.local10.com/news/world/2026/09/18/bombing-at-mosque-near-police-offices-in-pakistan-kills-at-least-16/

Dawn - PICSS August report
https://www.dawn.com/news/2026645/terrorist-attacks-increase-but-fatalities-decline-during-august-picss

PICSS - August 2026 assessment
https://www.picss.net/latest-reports/militant-attacks-increase-but-human-impact-declines-in-august-amid-sustained-ct-pressure-picss/

PICSS - July 2026 deadliest month
https://www.picss.net/press-release/militant-attacks-security-operations-make-july-deadliest-month-of-2026-picss/

ICEP's CSS Weekly
NEWS | ANALYSIS | PERSPECTIVE | FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

ISSUE 18
SEPTEMBER 13 – SEPTEMBER 19, 2026
NATIONAL AFFAIRS N-03
FOR CSS / PMS ASPIRANTS
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

AZAD KASHMIR

100 Days in the Dark:

The Azad Kashmir Internet Shutdown and the Politics of Refugee Seats

For over 100 days, Azad Kashmir has remained without mobile internet, deepening the region's isolation, disrupting livelihoods and education, and intensifying a political debate over refugee seats and representation.



KEY FACTS

100+ days
Internet shutdown continues (since early June 2026).

Complete suspension
Mobile internet services across Azad Kashmir.

Millions affected
Students, businesses, professionals and ordinary citizens.

Official reason
Cited on grounds of "security concerns" amid regional tensions.

Services disrupted
Education, e-commerce, freelancing, online banking, communication with diaspora.

A REGION CUT OFF



TIMELINE OF DEVELOPMENTS

- **Early June 2026** — Mobile internet suspended across Azad Kashmir.
- **June – August 2026** — Shutdown continues with no clear timeline for restoration.
- **Political reaction** — Civil society and business community raise concerns.
- **Refugee seats debate** — Renewed calls to address representation of Kashmiri refugees in legislative assemblies.
- **September 2026** — 100 days since the shutdown; demand for restoration grows louder.

HUMAN IMPACT

Education
Online classes, research and admissions severely disrupted.

Economy
Freelancers, traders and small businesses incur heavy losses.

Social life
Families cut off from relatives inside and outside Pakistan.

Essential services
Access to telehealth, online banking and government services severely limited.

THE REFUGEE SEATS ISSUE



- Kashmiri refugees demand constitutional and political representation.
- Debate over allocation of refugee seats in national and regional assemblies.
- Seen as a long-pending commitment to address displacement since 1947.
- Issue has regained momentum amid the current crisis.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Is the prolonged shutdown proportionate and effective as a security measure?
- What are the economic and social costs of keeping a region offline for 100+ days?
- How can the state balance security concerns with citizens' right to connectivity?
- Will the refugee seats issue finally see a concrete resolution?

> *A population cannot be asked to live, work and learn in the 21st century while being deliberately disconnected from the world.*

THE WAY FORWARD

- Immediate restoration of mobile internet with clear communication to the public.
- Transparent policy on security-related restrictions, with defined timelines.
- Serious engagement on the refugee seats issue to ensure inclusive representation.
- Long-term confidence-building measures to strengthen governance and public trust in Azad Kashmir.



N-03 | NATIONAL AFFAIRS | FEDERALISM, RIGHTS & DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

100 Days in the Dark: The Azad Kashmir Internet Shutdown and the Politics of Refugee Seats

PRIORITY	HIGH - Pakistan Affairs, Current Affairs (governance, Kashmir), Essay
CONTINUITY	New thread this week, linked to Kashmir coverage from earlier issues; the trigger is electoral reform in AJK, the consequence is a prolonged digital blackout.
ESSAY TOPIC	Digital rights and the state: can a government justify prolonged internet shutdowns?
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 15 September Al Jazeera reported that mobile data and broadband services in Pakistan-administered Kashmir had been suspended for more than 100 days, a partial internet blackout that began on 5 June and, according to the monitor NetBlocks, has continued through elections and the formation of a new government. Online banking apps remain unavailable, businesses are hit, and the academic year has been disrupted, with entrance exams postponed. A high court has reportedly ordered restoration, yet the blackout has persisted, and the security caveat that authorities invoke gives them room to delay.

The trigger was a dispute over representation. Azad Jammu and Kashmir has a legislative assembly of 45 seats, of which 12 are reserved for refugees from Indian-administered Kashmir who live elsewhere in Pakistan. The Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee, a grassroots umbrella body, demanded the abolition of those 12 seats, arguing that they distort local representation. On 5 June the authorities banned the committee and imposed the shutdown. On 7 June the AJK Supreme Court held the refugee seats constitutionally protected, meaning they cannot be abolished without a constitutional amendment. Protests turned violent, culminating in deadly clashes on 27 July, the day local elections had first been scheduled. Residents and local estimates put deaths above 50, including seven law-enforcement personnel, though these figures cannot be independently verified; protest leaders claim more than 60 civilians.

Elections were then held in three staggered rounds, the last on 10 August, with a boycott call and limited internet access. Voting did not take place in certain protest strongholds, including the area around Rawalakot, for security reasons, but a government was formed on results from the rest of the territory. The result is a legitimacy problem: a government formed by a partial electorate in an information blackout.

Why does this matter for CSS? First, it is a federalism and constitutional-status case. AJK is governed by its own interim constitution, with a prime minister and assembly, yet its security, communications and finances are closely tied to Islamabad. Second, it is a rights case: an indefinite shutdown touches freedom of expression, access to information, education and commerce, and the standard of necessity and proportionality. Third, it feeds the Kashmir narrative: Pakistan's diplomatic critique of India's own internet shutdowns and rights record in Indian-administered Kashmir is weakened when a comparable measure continues on its own side of the Line of Control. Foreign Office briefings continue to highlight Indian repression, which makes consistency an issue.

The way out is procedural and political rather than technical: restore services, publish a clear legal basis and end date, open a credible inquiry into the deaths, and reopen the debate on the 12 refugee seats through a lawful process. Without that, the shutdown becomes a template for governing dissent by disconnecting it.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- A hundred days of blackout cannot be defended as a temporary law-and-order measure; necessity and proportionality tests fail when a shutdown outlasts the emergency.
- The 12 refugee seats are a legacy of the Kashmir dispute, and the AJK Supreme Court's 7 June ruling means change requires a constitutional amendment, not street pressure.
- Banning the JKJAAC on 5 June escalated a representation dispute into a security problem.
- Elections held in staggered rounds, with strongholds excluded, raise legitimacy questions even if legally valid.
- The unverified death toll (over 50) makes an independent inquiry essential; disputed numbers are themselves a governance failure.
- Economic harm is broad: banking apps, small businesses, freelancers and students are the main casualties, not the organisers of protest.
- The exam postponement shows that internet policy is also education policy.
- Reported court orders for restoration test the executive's respect for judicial authority.
- AJK's semi-autonomous status means constitutional, federal and local authority overlap, blurring accountability for the shutdown.

- Pakistan's criticism of Indian internet shutdowns in Indian-administered Kashmir is weakened by a long shutdown at home.
- The dispute shows that Kashmiris on the Pakistani side also seek representation, transparency and rights, not only a foreign-policy cause.
- NetBlocks and similar monitors have become de facto evidence sources; states need transparent legal bases to answer them.
- Restoring services with safeguards (for example, phased restoration and published criteria) is preferable to an open-ended ban.
- The case links to the 28th Amendment debate: any new federal arrangement must address the status and rights of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Constitutional

- AJK's interim constitution, the 12 refugee seats and the AJK Supreme Court ruling define the legal battlefield.
- Any change to the seats requires a formal constitutional route.

Rights and Digital Governance

- Freedom of expression, access to information and education are all affected; the standard is legality, necessity and proportionality.
- Blanket shutdowns rarely meet the proportionality test.

Political

- Banning the JKJAAC and holding staggered elections deepened polarisation and a boycott mood.
- The new government's legitimacy depends on restoring services and starting dialogue.

Economic and Social

- Online banking, commerce and education are disrupted; the cost falls on ordinary users.
- Trust deficits raise the cost of future reform.

International

- Consistency with Pakistan's Kashmir diplomacy is at stake; India uses such incidents in its own narrative.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

100+	12 of 45	50+	10 Aug
Days of partial internet blackout since 5 June	Seats reserved for refugees from Indian-administered Kashmir	Estimated deaths in unrest (unverified local counts)	Final phase of staggered elections

- The partial internet shutdown has lasted more than 100 days since 5 June 2026 (Al Jazeera, NetBlocks).
- The AJK assembly has 45 seats, of which 12 are reserved for refugees from Indian-administered Kashmir (Al Jazeera).
- The JKJAAC was banned on 5 June 2026 (Al Jazeera).
- On 7 June the AJK Supreme Court held that the 12 seats are constitutionally protected (Al Jazeera explainer).
- Deadly clashes occurred on 27 July, the date elections were originally scheduled (Al Jazeera).
- Residents and local estimates put deaths above 50, including seven law-enforcement personnel; protest leaders claim over 60 civilians (Al Jazeera).
- Elections were held in three staggered rounds; the second round was on 2 August and the final on 10 August (Al Jazeera).
- Voting did not take place in some protest strongholds, including around Rawalakot, for security reasons (Al Jazeera, dpa).
- Entrance exams were postponed and online banking access remained unavailable (Al Jazeera).
- Officials had advised non-residents not to travel to AJK between 5 and 20 June (Al Jazeera).
- A high court order demanding immediate restoration of telecom services has reportedly not been implemented (Outlook India via Streamlinefeed).
- Pakistan's Foreign Office on 10 September criticised India's treatment of Yasin Malik and minorities, showing that Kashmir rights language remains central to its diplomacy (MOFA briefing).
- The 2026 AJK election campaign was contested amid a boycott call (Al Jazeera).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.*"
>
> - Louis Brandeis, 1913 - on transparency as a check on power

> "*Justice delayed is justice denied*."
>
> - Attributed to William Gladstone - on the cost of unimplemented court orders

> "*The dignity of man... shall be inviolable*."
>
> - Constitution of Pakistan, Article 14

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Shutdown	Deliberate disruption of internet or mobile services	The shutdown lasted over 100 days.
Proportionality	Legal test that a restriction must not exceed its aim	Blanket bans fail the proportionality test.
Legitimacy	Public acceptance of authority as rightful	Partial elections raise legitimacy questions.
Boycott	Refusal to participate as protest	Groups called for an election boycott.
Stronghold	An area where a group has strong support	Voting did not occur in protest strongholds.
Semi-autonomous	Self-governing in some matters but tied to a larger state	AJK is a semi-autonomous territory.
Refugee seats	Reserved assembly seats for displaced Kashmiris	The 12 refugee seats sparked the protests.
Electoral reform	Changes to how elections or representation work	Protesters demanded electoral reform.
Blackout	Total or partial loss of communications	The blackout hit online banking.
Curfew	Restriction on movement, usually at night	Curfews accompanied earlier unrest.
Redress	Remedy for a wrong	Citizens sought legal redress for the shutdown.
Grassroots	Originating at the community level	The JKJAAC is a grassroots body.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

This story sits at the intersection of Pakistan Affairs (federalism, Kashmir), Current Affairs (digital governance, human rights) and Essay (state power versus liberty). Structure answers as: background, legal issue, impact, comparison and recommendation. Use the 100-day figure and the 12-of-45 seat fact. Do not present unverified death counts as fact; say estimates. Link to Pakistan's Kashmir diplomacy for extra marks.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Discuss the constitutional and political issues behind the unrest in Azad Jammu and Kashmir in 2026.
Q2. When, if ever, is an internet shutdown justified? Evaluate with reference to AJK.
Q3. How do internal rights practices affect Pakistan's Kashmir diplomacy?
Q4. Short note: Refugee seats in the AJK Legislative Assembly.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

Al Jazeera - Internet shutdown crosses 100 days
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/15/internet-shutdown-crosses-100-days-in-pakistan-administered-kashmir

Al Jazeera - AJK elections and protests explainer
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/8/3/pakistan-administered-kashmir-elections-and-protests-all-you-need-to-know

Daily Sun - 100 days of restrictions
https://www.daily-sun.com/world/898502

Pakistan MOFA - Press briefing, 10 September
https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/pakistan/2026/pakistan-260910-pakistan-mfab01.htm

ICEP's
CSS Weekly
NEWS | ANALYSIS | PERSPECTIVE | FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

ISSUE 18
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NATIONAL AFFAIRS N-04
FOR CSS / PMS ASPIRANTS
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

Suspended, Released, Re-arrested:

The Imaan Mazari Case and the Limits of Judicial Relief

The Imaan Mazari case has reignited debate over freedom of expression, the use of legal provisions against dissent, and the limits of judicial relief in Pakistan's evolving political landscape.



WHO IS IMAAN MAZARI?

- Lawyer, activist and daughter of former federal minister Shireen Mazari.
- Known for her vocal stance on human rights, democracy and rule of law.
- A frequent critic of government policies on social media.
- Her case has drawn widespread attention from civil society, lawyers and rights organisations.

KEY EVENTS TIMELINE

Early 2026	Criticised government policies through social media posts.
Arrested	Taken into custody under cybercrime and related provisions (over alleged "anti-state" content).
Suspended	Initially suspended from custody following judicial intervention.
Released	Granted release by the court (on bail).
Re-arrested	Taken into custody again shortly after release on new or additional charges.
Ongoing	Legal proceedings continue; case highlights limits of judicial relief and concerns over misuse of legal provisions.

LEGAL PROVISIONS INVOKED

Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA)
Alleged online content deemed against state institutions.

Other legal provisions
Multiple FIRs and charges in different jurisdictions.

Judicial relief
Courts granted relief, but re-arrest shows continued use of legal mechanisms.

PUBLIC & INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

Civil society
Condemned repeated arrests; called it a shrinking space for dissent.

Legal fraternity
Raised concerns over misuse of laws and selective accountability.

International observers
Viewed the case as part of a broader pattern of curbs on free expression.

WHY IT MATTERS?

Freedom of Expression
Raises questions about the space for dissent in Pakistan.

Rule of Law
Highlights the tension between judicial orders and executive actions.

Political Context
Seen as part of a wider crackdown on critics and activists.

International Image
Impacts Pakistan's democratic credentials and human rights record.

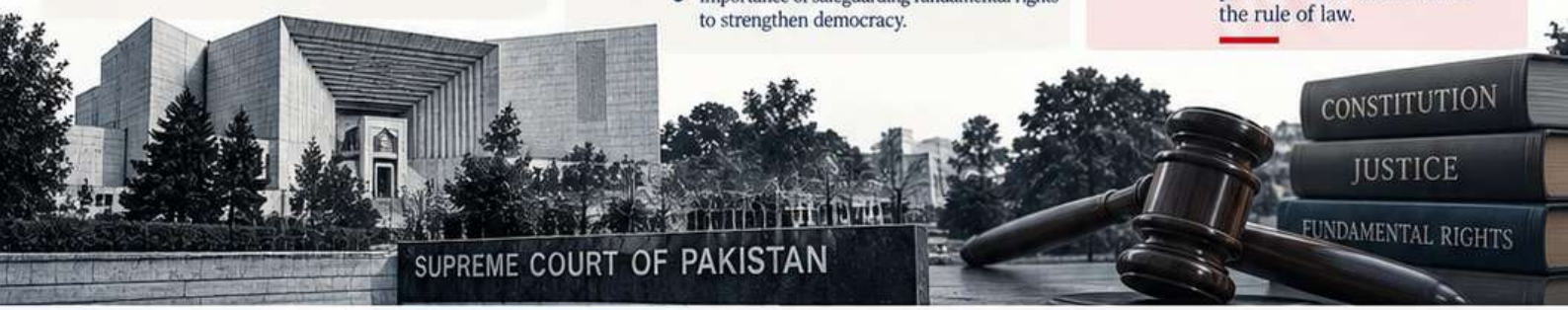
> *"The test of a democratic society is not how it treats its friends, but how it treats its critics."*

THE BIGGER PICTURE

- Growing use of cyber laws against dissent.
- Blurred line between national security and political criticism.
- Need for legal reforms to prevent misuse.
- Importance of safeguarding fundamental rights to strengthen democracy.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The Imaan Mazari case is a reminder that sustainable democracy requires tolerance for dissent, transparent legal processes and adherence to the rule of law.



N-04 | NATIONAL AFFAIRS | JUDICIARY, PECA & CIVIL LIBERTIES

Suspended, Released, Re-arrested: The Imaan Mazari Case and the Limits of Judicial Relief

PRIORITY	HIGH - Pakistan Affairs (judiciary, fundamental rights), Current Affairs, Essay
CONTINUITY	New thread this week; connects to Issue 17's constitutional-reform coverage through the role of courts after the 27th Amendment.
ESSAY TOPIC	Freedom of expression and national security: where should the law draw the line in a digital age?
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Thursday 17 September 2026 a two-member bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan with Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, suspended the 17-year prison sentences of human-rights lawyer Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and her husband Hadi Ali Chattha in the social-media posts case and granted them bail against surety bonds of Rs200,000 each, pending the Islamabad High Court's final decision on their appeals. Within hours of leaving Adiala jail, both were taken into custody again by Islamabad police in connection with another case, produced before an anti-terrorism court and sent to jail on judicial remand. Lawyers and journalists called the sequence a mockery of justice.

The case began with a complaint filed on 12 August 2025 by an official of the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency, alleging that the couple's tweets sought to incite divisions on linguistic grounds. They were booked under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, indicted on 30 October, and, on 24 January 2026, a sessions court in Islamabad sentenced each to a combined 17 years: ten years for cyberterrorism, five years for glorification of an offence and two years for spreading false information. The sentences came a day after their arrest in a different case. They challenged the verdict in the Islamabad High Court in early February, and the High Court declined to suspend the sentences. On 12 May the Supreme Court directed the High Court to decide the sentence-suspension applications expeditiously, preferably within two weeks. According to counsel Faisal Siddiqui, the matter kept being adjourned and even an early-hearing request was rejected by the registrar's office. The additional attorney general argued that the High Court remained the appropriate forum under Section 426 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and had passed no adverse order. The Supreme Court disagreed on the facts of delay and granted relief, observing that both were lawyers and that it was upholding their dignity, while reminding them to respect the decorum of the court.

There are four layers here. The first is the law: PECA offences such as cyberterrorism, glorification of an offence and false information are broadly worded, and the 2025 amendments added a false-information offence that critics say can be used against speech. The second is process: a 17-year sentence within a day of arrest in another case, and a suspension application pending for months, raise fair-trial and due-process concerns under Articles 4, 9 and 10A of the Constitution. The third is institutional: the Supreme Court used its supervisory role to correct delay, but the executive's re-arrest shows that judicial relief can be neutralised administratively. The fourth is political: the accused is a prominent critic, and the case is read as part of a wider pattern in which digital speech is policed through criminal law.

For the exam, the significant point is the difference between bail, suspension of sentence and acquittal. The Supreme Court did not decide guilt; it suspended execution of the sentence while the appeal is pending. The re-arrest does not overturn that order but shows how multiple cases can keep a person in custody. A balanced answer acknowledges the state's legitimate interest in preventing incitement and disinformation, while insisting that criminal law must be precise, proportionate and applied with due process. It should also note that the final word rests with the Islamabad High Court.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- The Supreme Court order shows that apex-court supervision can correct delay in high-court appeals, but it does not decide guilt.
- Suspension of sentence is different from acquittal: the conviction stands until the appeal is decided.
- Re-arrest on another case within hours neutralised the practical effect of the bail order and undermines confidence in judicial relief.
- PECA's cyberterrorism, glorification and false-information provisions are broadly drafted, which gives investigators wide discretion.
- Sentencing 17 years within a day of arrest in a separate matter raises fair-trial questions under Article 10A.
- The alleged offence - inciting division on linguistic grounds - links speech regulation to ethnic politics, particularly the Baloch and Pashtun debates.

- The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency's role shows the centralisation of cyber enforcement after the FIA's cyber wing was replaced.
- Delay by the High Court despite a Supreme Court direction of 12 May illustrates weak case-management discipline.
- A judge's remark that lawyers deserve dignity is welcome, but rights should not depend on professional status; ordinary citizens need the same protection.
- Article 19's free-speech guarantee is subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of security and public order; the debate is about what counts as reasonable.
- Criminalising speech through multiple overlapping cases creates a chilling effect on journalists, lawyers and activists.
- Legislatures should define offences narrowly, require intent, and prescribe proportionate penalties.
- The executive's use of anti-terrorism courts for remand shows how the anti-terror framework extends into political and speech cases.
- Public confidence in courts rests as much on enforcement of orders as on the orders themselves.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Legal

- PECA sections 9, 10 and 26A were applied; questions arise on breadth, intent and proportionality.
- Suspension of sentence under Section 426 CrPC pending appeal is a recognised remedy.

Constitutional

- Articles 4, 9, 10A and 19 frame due process, liberty, fair trial and speech.
- The Supreme Court intervened after repeated High Court adjournments.

Political

- The case is read as part of the state's response to dissent and criticism.
- Re-arrest signals executive resistance to judicial relief.

Institutional

- NCCIA, sessions courts, IHC, SC and ATCs all played roles; coordination and accountability are unclear.
- Case-management reform could reduce delay.

Social

- Lawyers' bodies and journalists' unions condemned the re-arrest; civil society sees a wider chilling effect on speech.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

17 yrs	Rs200,000	17 Sep	Hours
Combined sentence: 10 + 5 + 2 under PECA	Surety bond for each of the two accused	Date of SC order suspending sentences	Time before re-arrest outside Adiala jail

- The Supreme Court suspended the sentences on 17 September 2026 (Dawn).
- Bail was granted against Rs200,000 surety bonds each, pending the Islamabad High Court's final decision (Geo, Dawn).
- The sessions court sentenced the couple on 24 January 2026 to a combined 17 years (Dawn, UA.News).
- Ten years were for cyberterrorism, five for glorification of an offence and two for false information (UA.News/Dawn).
- The NCCIA complaint dates from 12 August 2025 (UA.News).
- Charges were framed on 30 October 2025 (News Beep/Geo).
- The couple had been in custody since 23 January after arrest in another case (UA.News).
- The Islamabad High Court refused to suspend the sentences in February (Dawn).
- The Supreme Court directed the High Court on 12 May to decide expeditiously, preferably within two weeks (Quetta Voice/Dawn).
- The bench comprised Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim (Dawn).
- The couple were re-arrested outside Adiala jail hours after release and remanded by an anti-terrorism court (Dawn).
- The FIR alleged an attempt to incite divisions on linguistic grounds (Geo).
- Sections 9, 10, 11 and 26 of PECA were invoked (Geo).
- The additional attorney general argued Section 426 CrPC makes the IHC the proper forum (Quetta Voice).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*Both are lawyers; we are upholding their dignity.*"
>
> - Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, 17 September 2026 (as reported by Geo)

> "*a fair trial and due process*"
>
> - Constitution of Pakistan, Article 10A

> "*Those who would give up essential Liberty... deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.*"
>
> - Benjamin Franklin, 1755 - on trading liberty for security

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Suspension of sentence	Halting a punishment while an appeal is pending	The court ordered suspension of sentence.
Surety bond	A guarantee of appearance, secured by money	Each accused furnished a surety bond of Rs200,000.
Judicial remand	Custody ordered by a court during investigation	They were sent on judicial remand.
Cyberterrorism	Use of digital means to create terror, as defined in law	The law carried ten years for cyberterrorism.
Glorification	Praising an offence or offender	Glorification of an offence carries five years.
Chilling effect	Self-censorship caused by fear of punishment	Broad laws create a chilling effect on speech.
Due process	Fair legal procedure before deprivation of liberty	Due process is protected by Article 10A.
Indictment	Formal framing of criminal charges	The indictment was on 30 October.
Adjournment	Postponement of a hearing	Repeated adjournments delayed the appeal.
Decorum	Proper conduct in court	The bench reminded them to respect decorum.
Pending	Awaiting decision	The appeal is pending in the IHC.
Proportionality	Penalty matching the seriousness of the act	Critics say the sentence lacks proportionality.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

Frame this as a fundamental-rights and judiciary question. A high-scoring answer explains bail versus suspension versus acquittal, identifies the PECA offences, cites Articles 9, 10A and 19, and discusses the tension between security and speech. Balance is essential: include the state's case (incitement, false information) and the critics' case (vagueness, chilling effect, due process). Avoid personalising the argument; focus on institutional lessons.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Critically analyse PECA as an instrument of speech regulation in Pakistan.

Q2. What is the difference between bail, suspension of sentence and acquittal? Illustrate with the Mazari-Chattha case.

Q3. Discuss the role of the Supreme Court in supervising delays in High Courts.

Q4. Short note: Article 10A - right to fair trial.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

Dawn - SC suspends sentences, orders release
https://dawn.com/news/2030611/sc-suspends-imaan-hadis-sentences-in-controversial-social-media-posts-case-orders-their-release

Dawn - Re-arrest hours after bail
https://dawn.com/news/2030845/mockery-of-justice-journalists-lawyers-condemn-imaan-hadis-rearrest-hours-after-bail

Geo News - SC suspends sentences
https://www.geo.tv/latest/682453-sc-suspends-imaan-mazari-husbands-sentences-in-controversial-tweets-case

Quetta Voice - Bench and arguments
https://quettavoice.com/2026/09/17/sc-suspends-imaan-mazari-hadi-chattha-sentences-orders-release-on-bail/

Daily Pakistan - No relief despite bail
https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/17-Sep-2026/no-relief-for-imaan-mazari-hadi-chattha-despite-supreme-courts-bail-order

ICEP's
CSS Weekly
NEWS | ANALYSIS | PERSPECTIVE | FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

ISSUE 18
SEPTEMBER 13 – SEPTEMBER 19, 2026
NATIONAL AFFAIRS N-05
FOR CSS / PMS ASPIRANTS
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

PIMS FIRE TRAGEDY

Fourteen Newborns:

The PIMS Fire Inquiry and Pakistan's Culture of Unverified Safeguards

The deaths of fourteen newborns in the PIMS neonatal unit have exposed a disturbing pattern of negligence, weak implementation of safety standards and a culture of unverified safeguards in Pakistan's public hospitals.



SAFE HOSPITALS STRONGER PAKISTAN

These were not just numbers. They were new beginnings.

KEY FIGURES

- **14** newborns died
- Several others injured
- Incident at **PIMS Islamabad** (Neonatal Unit)
- **Trigger:** Fire in the neonatal ward

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Late night	Fire broke out in the neonatal unit of PIMS.
Within minutes	Smoke spread rapidly across the ward.
Rescue operation	Babies shifted to other units; emergency response initiated.
Death toll	Fourteen newborns confirmed dead; several injured.
Inquiry ordered	Government constituted a high-level inquiry committee.
Ongoing	Detailed investigation and accountability process underway.

POSSIBLE CAUSES (UNDER INQUIRY)

- Electrical fault or short circuit
- Oxygen supply system malfunction
- Poor maintenance of equipment
- Failure to comply with safety standards
- Negligence and weak oversight
- Delay in emergency response

SYSTEMIC ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED

- Aging infrastructure in public hospitals
- Poor maintenance and lack of regular audits
- Non-implementation of fire safety protocols
- Shortage of trained staff and emergency drills
- A culture of "compliance on paper" rather than real safeguards
- Repeated incidents across hospitals show a systemic failure

PAST INCIDENTS (A PATTERN)

Year	Hospital	Incident	Casualties
2012	Islamabad (Same Hospital)	Fire in neonatal ward	3 newbrons
2017	Khyber Teaching Hospital	Fire in children ward	10+
2021	Sialkot District Hospital	Oxygen supply failure	11
2024	Rawalpindi Hospital	Fire in ICU	Several
2026	**PIMS, Islamabad**	Fire in neonatal ward	**14**

Despite repeated tragedies, little has changed. The same lessons remain unlearned.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Strict implementation of hospital safety codes and regular audits
- Modernisation of infrastructure and equipment
- Training and capacity building for hospital staff
- Independent monitoring and third-party safety inspections
- Fixing accountability for negligence
- A national policy to ensure patient safety in all public hospitals

> *A society is judged by how it protects its most vulnerable. The loss of fourteen newborns is a collective failure we cannot afford to repeat.*

KEY TAKEAWAY

The PIMS fire is not an isolated accident but a reflection of a deeper governance and implementation crisis. Real change requires moving from inquiries and condolences to concrete reforms, accountability and a zero-tolerance approach to lapses in patient safety.



N-05 | NATIONAL AFFAIRS | HEALTH, GOVERNANCE & PUBLIC SAFETY

Fourteen Newborns: The PIMS Fire Inquiry and Pakistan's Culture of Unverified Safeguards

PRIORITY	MEDIUM-HIGH - Pakistan Affairs (governance), Essay (social sector), Current Affairs
CONTINUITY	New thread this week; the inquiry report emerged on 17 September, three weeks after the fire.
ESSAY TOPIC	Institutional failure and public safety: why do preventable tragedies keep recurring?
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An official inquiry into the fire at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences in Islamabad, which killed 14 newborn babies on the morning of 26 August 2026, has found that the neonatal unit had no working fire alarms, smoke detectors or sprinklers, and that escape routes were locked or obstructed when firefighters arrived. The report, dated 7 September and seen by AFP on 17 September, describes a case of systemic and institutional failure: an electrical fault, most likely in the cable supplying an air-conditioning unit, started the fire, but the absence of safeguards turned that spark into a catastrophe. In the words of the report, the spark explains how the fire began, while the institutional system explains why it became a catastrophe.

The details are harrowing. Fifteen medically fragile newborns, several dependent on oxygen or respiratory support, were housed in a 10-bed unit staffed by two doctors and two nurses at the time. CCTV footage from the corridor shows a nurse running for help at 06:38 and returning seconds later with a security guard; within a minute dense smoke had obscured the camera. A firefighter told the BBC that doors were locked and rescuers had to break windows to get in. Only one baby survived. The committee, headed by a retired senior civil servant, also found that no adequately documented or rehearsed fire-evacuation procedure existed for the nursery and that safeguards were absent, weak, delayed or never verified.

The story matters beyond one hospital because PIMS is the capital's premier public hospital, located within sight of the federal government. If the flagship facility lacks alarms and sprinklers, the situation in district and tehsil hospitals across the provinces can be imagined. The failure is not technical ignorance: fire codes, electrical inspections and evacuation drills are well understood. It is an accountability failure in which building safety, equipment maintenance and staffing norms are checked on paper rather than in practice. A comparable tragedy occurred in November 2024 at Jhansi Medical College in India, where ten newborns died in a neonatal ward fire and parents said installed alarms did not activate, which suggests a regional pattern of neglected safety systems in public hospitals.

For policy, the following questions arise. Who is accountable: the hospital management, the Ministry of National Health Services, the Capital Development Authority's fire and building inspectors, or the electrical maintenance contractor? Will the report be published and implemented, with named responsibility and time-bound action? Will there be an audit of all neonatal and intensive-care units in federal and provincial hospitals for detection, suppression, evacuation routes and staffing ratios? And does the budget process reserve funds for safety maintenance rather than only new construction?

For CSS aspirants the case is a governance case study: it links the right to life under Article 9, the quality of public-sector management, the culture of inquiry reports that are written but not acted upon, and the social-sector deficits, especially maternal and child health, that appear in both Pakistan Affairs and Essay papers. A strong answer concludes with an accountability chain, a safety-audit programme and a publicly tracked implementation timetable.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- The inquiry's central finding - systemic and institutional failure - shifts blame from a single electrical fault to the missing safeguards.
- A flagship federal hospital lacking alarms and sprinklers indicates that safety compliance is checked on paper, not verified in practice.
- Locked or obstructed escape routes turn a fire into a trap; door management is a basic operational discipline.
- Staffing of two doctors and two nurses for fifteen critically fragile newborns reflects a resourcing and staffing-norm gap.
- The lack of a rehearsed nursery evacuation plan shows that emergency preparedness was not treated as a clinical responsibility.
- Reports become meaningful only when they lead to named accountability and time-bound reforms.
- Article 9 (right to life) is engaged when the state fails to provide safe facilities in public institutions.

- Regular electrical inspection and preventive maintenance of air-conditioning and wiring are cheaper than the human and reputational cost of failure.
- The tragedy is a maternal-and-child-health issue: neonatal mortality is already a development priority, and avoidable deaths worsen it.
- Fire departments, building authorities and hospital managements need coordinated protocols including access for rescuers.
- The Jhansi fire in India (2024) shows similar regional patterns: alarms installed but ineffective, and slow response.
- Budget priorities should include recurring safety maintenance rather than only new wards and equipment.
- Whistleblower protection and staff safety reporting channels are needed so that hazards are flagged before disasters.
- Public disclosure of the inquiry report and an implementation dashboard would strengthen accountability.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Governance

- Responsibility is spread across hospital management, health ministry, building and fire authorities; no single owner of safety.
- Inquiry findings need enforcement, not just publication.

Health System

- Neonatal units require detection, suppression, oxygen safety and rapid evacuation planning.
- Staffing ratios and clinical training in evacuation are part of patient safety.

Legal

- Article 9 and negligence law provide grounds for accountability and compensation.
- Building and fire codes must be enforced through periodic certification.

Economic

- Preventive safety spending is small compared with the cost of a disaster and loss of public trust.
- Insurance and audit systems can create incentives.

Social

- Families lost newborns; grief and anger reflect a broader public expectation of safe public services.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

14	15	2 + 2	0
Newborns who died on 26 August	Infants in a 10-bed unit	Doctors and nurses on duty	Working alarms, smoke detectors or sprinklers

- Fourteen newborns died in the fire at PIMS Islamabad on 26 August 2026 (Arab News/AFP).
- Fifteen infants were in a 10-bed unit; only one survived (The Independent).
- Two doctors and two nurses were immediately available (The Independent).
- The report is dated 7 September and was seen by AFP on 17 September (Arab News).
- The probable cause was a faulty air-conditioning cable or unit (Arab News, The Independent).
- The unit had no working smoke detectors, alarms or sprinklers (BBC via Daily Mirror).
- CCTV first shows a nurse running for help at 06:38 (BBC).
- Within a minute dense smoke had obscured the camera (BBC).
- Firefighters reported escape routes and doors locked or obstructed (BBC).
- No adequately documented or rehearsed nursery-specific fire and evacuation procedure existed (The Independent).
- The investigation committee was headed by a retired senior civil servant (BBC).
- The report describes systemic and institutional failure (Arab News, Dawn).
- Jhansi Medical College fire in India in November 2024 killed ten newborns (PBS/Al Jazeera).
- In the Jhansi fire, parents said installed alarms did not activate (PBS).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*systemic and institutional failure*"
>
> - Inquiry report on the PIMS fire, reported by AFP and Dawn, September 2026

> "*It may seem a strange principle... that it should do the sick no harm.*"
>
> - Florence Nightingale, Notes on Hospitals, 1859

> "*No person shall be deprived of life or liberty save in accordance with law.*"
>
> - Constitution of Pakistan, Article 9

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Neonatal	Relating to newborn babies, especially in the first month	The neonatal unit lacked alarms.
Sprinkler	Automatic fire-suppression system	No sprinkler system was installed.
Evacuation	Organised removal of people from danger	A rehearsed evacuation plan was missing.
Negligence	Failure to take reasonable care	Negligence can create legal liability.
Systemic	Rooted in the whole system rather than one part	The report found systemic failure.
Accountability	Obligation to explain and accept responsibility	The public expects accountability for the deaths.
Safeguard	A measure that protects against harm	Safeguards were absent or unverified.
Audit	Systematic inspection against a standard	A national audit of ICUs is needed.
Compliance	Following rules and standards	Compliance was checked on paper.
Contractor	A firm hired to perform a service	The maintenance contractor's role is under scrutiny.
Catastrophe	A sudden disaster causing great damage	A spark became a catastrophe.
Inquiry	A formal investigation	The inquiry report was dated 7 September.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

Use this as a governance and social-sector case. Do not reduce it to a fire; show the chain from spark to systemic failure. Structure: incident, findings, causes, accountability gaps, reforms (audit, budgets, enforcement, disclosure). Cite Article 9 and mention comparative Jhansi. Avoid sensational language; precision and numbers (14 deaths, 15 infants, 10 beds, 4 staff) carry weight.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Analyse the PIMS fire as a failure of governance rather than of technology.

Q2. What reforms are required to make public hospitals safe? Suggest an accountability framework.

Q3. Discuss the relationship between the right to life and state responsibility for public facilities.

Q4. Short note: Neonatal mortality and patient safety in Pakistan.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

Arab News - Maternity ward fire was institutional failure
https://www.arabnews.com/world/pakistan-maternity-ward-fire-was-institutional-failure-inquiry-3002073

The Independent (via Yahoo Singapore) - Locked doors and no alarms
https://sg.news.yahoo.com/pakistan-hospital-where-14-babies-071141855.html

BBC (via Yahoo) - No fire alarms or sprinklers
https://www.yahoo.com/news/world/articles/no-fire-alarms-sprinklers-pakistan-220345377.html

BBC (via Daily Mirror) - CCTV timeline
https://www.dailymirror.lk/international/No-fire-alarms-or-sprinklers-at-Pakistan-hospital-ward-where-14-babies-died--report-finds/107-350552

PBS NewsHour - Jhansi hospital fire, 2024
https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/ten-infants-killed-in-fire-that-engulfed-a-hospital-ward-in-northern-india

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28TH AMENDMENT DEBATE

Redrawing the Map: The 28th Amendment Debate, New Provinces and Sindh's Red Line

The proposal to create new provinces has reignited the 28th Amendment debate, triggering political contestation, provincial fears and a constitutional showdown. While supporters see it as a step towards better governance, Sindh and several stakeholders view it as a threat to the federal balance and provincial rights.

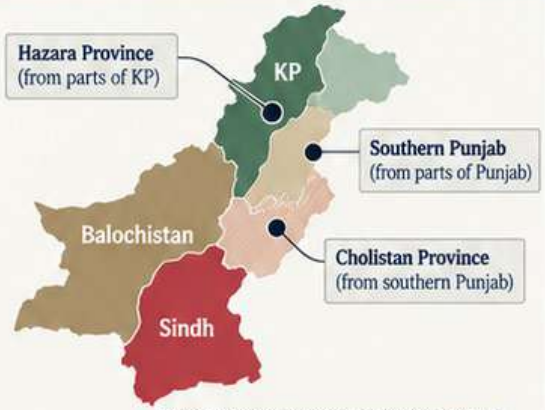


"A durable solution requires consensus, not confrontation."

WHAT IS THE DEBATE?

- Discussion on the 28th Constitutional Amendment includes proposals to create new provinces.
- Supporters argue it will ensure better governance, administrative efficiency and greater representation.
- Critics, especially in Sindh, see it as an attempt to weaken their political, economic and demographic position.
- The debate has triggered intense political, legal and constitutional discussions across the country.

PROPOSED NEW PROVINCES (UNDER DISCUSSION)



Note: These are proposals under discussion and not yet approved. Boundaries are illustrative.

SINDH'S POSITION

Sindh Assembly's unanimous 3 September resolution invokes Article 239(4) and rejects any move to create new provinces without its consent.

- Fears loss of resources, political voice and share in NFC awards.
- Demands constitutional protection of provincial rights.
- Calls for a national consensus before any structural change.

CONSTITUTIONAL DIMENSIONS

Article 239(4)
No new province shall be formed without the consent of the concerned provincial assembly.

28th Amendment (proposed)
Seeks to initiate legal and procedural changes for province creation.

Raises questions about federal balance, provincial autonomy and the spirit of the 18th Amendment.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Federal Government
Argues restructuring is needed for improved governance.

Provincial Governments
Divergent positions; Sindh opposes, others show conditional support.

Political Parties
Deep divisions; potential impact on national politics.

Civil Society & Experts
Call for evidence-based debate and wider consultation.

International Observers
Watching for implications on stability and federalism.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

Administrative
decentralisation and improved service delivery (if implemented effectively).

Possible reallocation of resources and impact on NFC.

Political realignments and changing power equations.

Risk of increased provincial tensions and political instability.

Test for Pakistan's federal structure and constitutional maturity.



KEY TAKEAWAY

The 28th Amendment debate is not just about map changes — it is a test of Pakistan's federal compact. Lasting solutions lie in dialogue, constitutional compliance and a genuine political consensus.



N-06 | NATIONAL AFFAIRS | CONSTITUTION & FEDERALISM

Redrawing the Map: The 28th Amendment Debate, New Provinces and Sindh's Red Line

PRIORITY	VERY HIGH - Pakistan Affairs, Current Affairs, Essay (federalism, governance)
CONTINUITY	Continues Issue 17's 28th Amendment thread; this week the fight moved to Sindh's Article 239(4) veto, the lawyers' bodies and the political street.
ESSAY TOPIC	Federalism in Pakistan: would more provinces mean better governance?
PAST PAPER ECHO	CSS 2024 Current Affairs, Q2: asked whether the creation of more provinces would be beneficial or harmful (per published solved-paper listing).

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 28th Constitutional Amendment remains an idea rather than a bill, yet it has dominated the political week. No draft has been tabled in Parliament; as of May the Law Minister said he saw no indications of imminent movement and that any bill would follow consensus in the spirit of the 18th Amendment. What circulates is a mix of ministerial statements and background reporting: the creation of new provinces or administrative units (versions of the proposal range from splitting Punjab into several units to carving out Karachi and Gwadar, with claims of up to 12 new provinces that remain unofficial), the return of some devolved subjects to the federation, a more flexible National Finance Commission share, fiscal empowerment of local governments, and delinking election delimitation from the census. One investigative report suggested the package could touch as many as 117 articles.

The political signal came in July, when the Interior Minister said the current system of governance had collapsed and needed new administrative units, and the DG ISPR was widely reported to have said that if good governance requires an administrative reset, it should happen. Those back-to-back remarks were read as the establishment's blessing for a restructuring. The response has been sharp. On 3 September the Sindh Assembly unanimously passed a resolution rejecting any change to the province's territorial limits, declaring that Sindh is one and shall remain one, and invoking Article 239(4) of the Constitution: a bill altering a province's limits cannot go to the President for assent unless the provincial assembly passes it by at least two-thirds of its total membership. The Pakistan Peoples Party, whose coalition support is vital to the federal government, fears the separation of Karachi from the rest of Sindh. On 7 September PPP's Sharjeel Memon described federal ministers as products of Form-47, while the Interior Minister said new units would only be formed if the people voiced support, and a PML-N parliamentarian ruled out an immediate referendum. The legal community is split: the Supreme Court Bar Association has endorsed the push, while the Pakistan Bar Council insists on strict constitutional process and consensus.

The wider politics is turbulent. A PTI convoy reached Karachi on 6 September with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister alleging obstruction by Sindh authorities, the party's secretary general Salman Akram Raja was detained for about four hours on 17 September, and Islamabad's shutdown over a PTI march was publicly ruled out on 15 September. Against that backdrop, any constitutional package will be read through the lens of legitimacy: the 27th Amendment of November 2025 had already restructured the judiciary with a Federal Constitutional Court and revised military command arrangements.

The academic debate is old. Supporters argue that smaller units improve service delivery, reduce distance between citizens and government, and recognise ethnic and linguistic identities such as Seraiki and Hazara; critics warn that new provinces can inflame ethnic politics, fragment the NFC, multiply administrative costs, and be used to weaken strong provinces. History adds caution: One Unit (1955-70) and the later East Pakistan crisis show how boundary engineering without consent can backfire. For examination purposes, the safest line is that governance improvement depends less on the number of units than on empowered local governments (Article 140A), fair NFC formulas and rule-based service delivery.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- There is no tabled bill: the debate is about intent, signals and drafts, not a settled text.
- Article 239(4) gives every province a veto over changes to its limits through a two-thirds vote of its assembly, so Sindh's unanimous resolution is a legal roadblock, not just a political statement.
- The 27th Amendment (2025) shows that the government can pass large constitutional packages, but the 28th touches identity and territory, which need higher consent.
- Statements by the Interior Minister and DG ISPR signal establishment interest in an administrative reset, which raises concern about civilian ownership of reform.
- The PPP's stake is decisive: its coalition role, Karachi's status and Sindh's territorial integrity make it the veto player.
- Supporters point to service delivery: smaller units can bring administration closer to citizens.
- Critics point to ethnic mobilisation, administrative cost and fiscal fragmentation.

- Historical memory - One Unit and 1971 - makes boundary change a sensitive subject.
- Local governments under Article 140A are the least contested route to better governance and are often neglected by provinces.
- Fiscal empowerment of local governments and a flexible NFC formula could improve delivery even without new provinces.
- Delinking delimitation from the census would change how representation is calculated and needs transparent justification.
- Referendum talk shows that legitimacy is being debated, though a referendum is not the constitutional mechanism.
- The split between the Supreme Court Bar Association and Pakistan Bar Council reflects wider disagreement about process and consensus.
- Political turbulence - PTI marches, the detention of a senior PTI figure - reduces the chance of national consensus.
- Any restructuring must address the special status of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan and the ongoing AJK unrest.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Constitutional

- Article 239(4) requires two-thirds votes in the affected provincial assembly; Parliament also needs a two-thirds majority.
- The 18th Amendment's consensus is the model; the 27th's speed is the counter-model.

Political

- PPP, PML-N, PTI and the establishment each read the 28th differently; Sindh's opposition is the strongest.
- PTI's street politics adds volatility.

Administrative

- New units bring new capitals, secretariats and police forces; costs and capacity are real constraints.
- Local governments are the alternative reform path.

Fiscal

- NFC share flexibility and the debate over returning subjects to the federation affect provincial autonomy.
- Energy shock and IMF targets limit fiscal room for new structures.

Historical and Social

- Ethnic and linguistic identity claims (Seraiki, Hazara, Karachi) are genuine but can be politicised.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

2/3	3 Sep	117	0
Provincial assembly majority needed to alter a province's limits	Sindh Assembly's unanimous resolution	Articles reportedly touched by the draft package	Bills tabled in Parliament (as of May 2026)

- No 28th Amendment bill had been tabled in Parliament as of May 2026 (Wikipedia summary of reports).
- The proposed package could touch as many as 117 articles (reported by Zahid Gishkori, cited in Wikipedia).
- The Sindh Assembly passed its resolution unanimously on 3 September 2026 (ThePrint/Express Tribune).
- Article 239(4) requires not less than two-thirds of a provincial assembly's total membership (Constitution).
- The 27th Amendment: cabinet approval on 8 November 2025 and assent on 13 November 2025 (Wikipedia).
- The 27th Amendment created a Federal Constitutional Court and revised Article 243 on military command (Wikipedia).
- Claims of up to 12 new provinces circulated on social media and were reported by The Nation as under discussion (unofficial).
- Some reports suggest Punjab and Sindh into five units each and KP and Balochistan into four (Substack analysis; unofficial).
- The Interior Minister said in late July the governance system had collapsed and needed new administrative units (ThePrint).
- PPP's Sharjeel Memon spoke on 7 September of ministers being products of Form-47 (The News).
- A PTI convoy reached Karachi on 6 September (The News).
- PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja was detained for about four hours on 17 September (The Nation).
- The Supreme Court Bar Association has endorsed the push; the Pakistan Bar Council insists on consensus (Daily Pakistan).
- Article 140A requires provinces to establish local governments (Constitution).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*Sindh is one and shall remain one.*"
>
> - Sindh Assembly resolution, 3 September 2026 (as reported by ThePrint)

> "*not less than two-thirds of its total membership*"
>
> - Constitution of Pakistan, Article 239(4)

> "*The most dangerous moment for a bad government is when it begins to reform itself.*"
>
> - Attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville - a caution on reform driven from above

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Devolution	Transfer of powers to lower levels of government	The 18th Amendment devolved many subjects.
Delimitation	Drawing of electoral constituency boundaries	Delimitation is tied to the census.
NFC Award	Formula for sharing federal revenue with provinces	The NFC share may become flexible.
Veto player	An actor whose consent is necessary for change	Sindh is a veto player on boundaries.
Territorial integrity	Preservation of existing borders	Sindh invoked its territorial integrity.
Consensus	General agreement among key actors	The 18th Amendment rested on consensus.
Administrative unit	A subdivision created for governance	New administrative units are proposed.
One Unit	1955 scheme merging West Pakistan's provinces	One Unit remains a cautionary tale.
Subsidiarity	Decisions at the lowest competent level	Subsidiarity supports local government.
Referendum	Direct popular vote on a question	A referendum is not constitutionally required.
Centralisation	Concentration of power at the centre	Critics fear centralisation.
Legitimacy	Rightful acceptance of authority	Legitimacy depends on process.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

This is the year's most exam-relevant constitutional story, and CSS 2024 Current Affairs already asked whether more provinces would be beneficial or harmful. Prepare a balanced, two-sided answer with a clear verdict. Cite Article 239(4), the 18th and 27th Amendments, Article 140A, and historical cases (One Unit, 1971). A recommended thesis: administrative reform is legitimate, but it must be consensual, local-government-centred and fiscally realistic. Avoid speculating on undisclosed drafts as if they were facts.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. The creation of more provinces is a persistent demand in Pakistan. Is it beneficial or harmful? Justify with evidence.

Q2. Discuss the constitutional hurdles to altering provincial boundaries.

Q3. Evaluate the role of local governments as an alternative to new provinces.

Q4. Short note: The 27th Amendment and its implications.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

The Nation - 28th amendment fuels debate over new provinces
https://www.nation.com.pk/06-Sep-2026/28th-amendment-fuels-debate-creation-new-provinces

ThePrint - Sindh's boundaries stand in the way
https://theprint.in/world/28th-amendment-for-pakistan-sindhs-boundaries-stand-in-way-of-munirs-gamble-to-expand-power/3037403/

Daily Pakistan - The 28th Constitutional Amendment
https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/11-Sep-2026/the-28th-constitutional-amendment-new-provinces-and-federal-restructuring

Wikipedia - Twenty-Eighth Amendment
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty-Eighth_Amendment_to_the_Constitution_of_Pakistan

Wikipedia - Twenty-seventh Amendment
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty-seventh_Amendment_to_the_Constitution_of_Pakistan

The News - National news, 6-9 September
https://www.thenews.pk/update/national

MODEL ANSWER BLUEPRINT

Question. The creation of more provinces is a persistent demand in Pakistan. How do you see the creation of more provinces: beneficial or harmful for the people? (CSS 2024 Current Affairs, Q2, applied to the 28th Amendment debate of September 2026.)

Why this question is highest-yield. Highest-yield analytical question of the issue: it has verified past-paper precedent, a live trigger (Sindh's 3 September resolution and the unresolved 28th Amendment), and it draws on constitution, federalism, fiscal and historical analysis.

Model answer (164 words). Creating more provinces is neither a cure nor a curse; its value depends on process and purpose. Supporters argue that smaller units bring administration closer to citizens, recognise identities such as Seraiki and Hazara, and improve service delivery in oversized provinces. Critics counter that new boundaries can harden ethnic politics, multiply administrative costs and fragment the National Finance Commission pool when the IMF programme and the energy shock leave little fiscal room. Constitutionally, Article 239(4) requires a two-thirds vote of the affected provincial assembly, which makes Sindh's unanimous resolution of 3 September a genuine roadblock. History warns against boundary engineering without consent: One Unit and 1971 show the cost. The stronger reform path is Article 140A, since empowered and funded local governments deliver most of what new provinces promise without redrawing the map. New provinces can therefore benefit citizens only if they emerge through consensus, respect Article 239(4) and follow a fiscal-capacity assessment; otherwise they are more likely to damage cohesion than improve governance.

HOW TO BUILD THIS ANSWER IN THE EXAM HALL

- **Opening (2-3 lines).** State that the answer depends on process and purpose, then name the two sides you will weigh. Do not announce a verdict yet.
- **Case for.** Service delivery, identity recognition (Seraiki, Hazara), smaller units closer to citizens. One example each; avoid unverified claims about how many provinces are planned.
- **Case against.** Ethnic mobilisation, administrative cost, NFC fragmentation, and the fiscal squeeze from the IMF programme and the fuel shock (N-01).
- **Constitutional anchor.** Article 239(4): two-thirds of the affected provincial assembly. Cite Sindh's unanimous 3 September resolution as the live test.
- **History.** One Unit (1955-70) and 1971 show the cost of boundary engineering without consent. One sentence is enough.
- **Way forward.** Article 140A local governments, a fair NFC formula, and consensus-based process. Close by tying the verdict back to the opening.
- **Common mistakes.** Presenting a rumoured provincial map as government policy; ignoring Article 239(4); treating the question as a yes/no; forgetting to mention the 2024 paper asked this question.

Timing. In a three-hour paper with five questions, allow about 30-35 minutes per answer: 3 minutes to plan, 25 to write, 3 to check. A 150-200 word model answer is a scaffold; in the exam, expand each block by two or three lines and add one data point per block.

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The Monsoon Ledger:

183 Deaths, a Lighter Year Than 2025, and the Lessons Not to Miss

With 183 deaths reported by 11 September 2026, this year's monsoon has been less devastating than 2025, but it still reveals deep vulnerabilities in Pakistan's disaster management, urban planning and climate resilience.

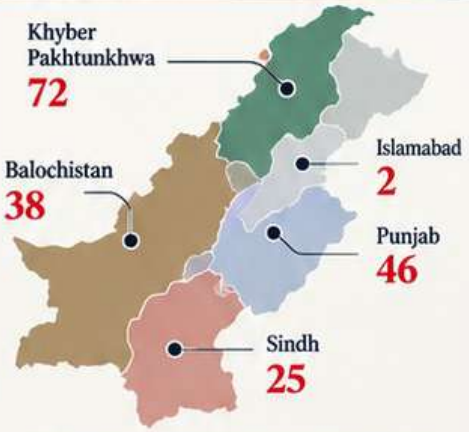


"Floods are a test not only of infrastructure, but of our collective preparedness and political will."

KEY FIGURES (AS OF 11 SEP 2026)

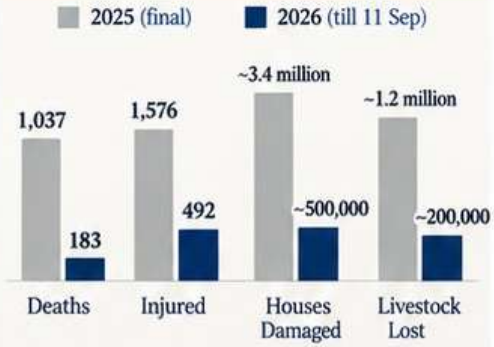
- **183** Deaths
- **492** Injured
- **Thousands** Houses partially or fully damaged
- Large-scale losses to livestock and crops
- Multiple roads and bridges affected
- More rains expected (12–17 September)

PROVINCIAL BREAKDOWN (REPORTED DEATHS)



Note: Figures are rounded and based on reports up to 11 September 2026.

HOW 2026 COMPARES



While 2026 has been significantly less severe than 2025, the recurring losses highlight Pakistan's continuing vulnerability to extreme weather events.

KEY FACTORS THIS YEAR

- Above-normal monsoon rains in several spells
- Heavy rainfall in upper catchments and glacial melt
- Urban flooding due to poor drainage
- Landslides in hilly areas
- Weak implementation of preparedness measures

AREAS OF CONCERN

- Vulnerable communities in flood-prone regions
- Critical infrastructure (roads, bridges, irrigation)
- Agriculture and food security
- Displacement and rehabilitation of affected families
- Risk of water-borne diseases after floods

THE WAY FORWARD

- Strengthen early warning systems and community alerts
- Invest in climate-resilient infrastructure
- Improve urban planning and drainage systems
- Ensure timely relief, rehabilitation and livelihood support
- Mainstream climate adaptation in national policy

"Disasters will keep testing us, but better planning, stronger institutions and a focus on the most vulnerable can turn resilience from a slogan into a reality.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The lower toll in 2026 is a relief, but it should not breed complacency. Pakistan must learn from recurring floods and invest in long-term resilience, because the next extreme weather event is not a question of if, but when.



N-07 | NATIONAL AFFAIRS | CLIMATE, DISASTERS & RESILIENCE

The Monsoon Ledger: 183 Deaths, a Lighter Year Than 2025, and the Lessons Not to Miss

PRIORITY	HIGH - Current Affairs, Pakistan Affairs (environment), GSA, Essay
CONTINUITY	Continues Issue 17's monsoon 2026 thread; this week the season entered its final spell with fresh PMD warnings.
ESSAY TOPIC	Climate change and Pakistan: from disaster response to resilience
PAST PAPER ECHO	CSS 2024 Current Affairs, Q8 offered Climate Change as an option (per published solved-paper listing).

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pakistan's 2026 monsoon is drawing to a close with a toll of 183 deaths and 515 injuries between 26 June and 11 September, according to the National Disaster Management Authority. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded the highest number of deaths at 74, followed by Punjab with 64, Sindh 17, Azad Kashmir 16, Balochistan 8, Islamabad 3 and Gilgit-Baltistan 1. The Pakistan Meteorological Department warned of heavy rain, thunderstorms and flooding between 12 and 17 September, and Punjab's disaster authority cautioned about urban flooding, flash floods and landslides. Rawalpindi declared a holiday and some Islamabad schools closed as Nullah Lai rose in early September.

The numbers deserve careful reading. The 2026 toll is far below 2025, when floods killed more than 1,000 people (1,037), displaced about two million and killed millions of livestock. Yet the composition of deaths is telling: as of 3 September, children accounted for 82 of 180 deaths, roughly 46 per cent, and about half of all fatalities were caused by house or roof collapses. Drowning caused 17.2 per cent of deaths, flash floods 14.4 per cent and lightning 6.1 per cent. NDMA recorded 1,716 damaged houses (589 destroyed, 1,127 partially damaged), 1,483 livestock lost, about 34.56 kilometres of roads and 41 bridges damaged, and more than 10,650 people rescued or evacuated. Gilgit-Baltistan alone accounted for 535 damaged houses and 910 livestock losses, a reminder that glacial and mountain hazards do not track the national headline number.

Why was 2026 lighter? The sources do not offer a single verified explanation, and the responsible answer is caution: a lower toll may reflect rainfall patterns, better early warning and evacuation, or luck, and one season should not be treated as a trend. What can be said is that Pakistan's vulnerability is structural. Poor housing that collapses under saturated ground, settlements in flood paths, weak urban drainage and glacial-lake outburst risks remain. The country also faces overlapping stress this year: a war-driven energy shock, a fiscal programme with the IMF, and security pressures in the same provinces, KP and Balochistan, that suffer flood damage.

Policy links are direct. The IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Facility of about 1.4 billion dollars is supposed to support climate reforms, and the Fund has noted that recent floods highlight the need to consistently implement resilience policies. Effective adaptation involves land-use enforcement, resilient housing standards, drainage and river-management investment, glacier and GLOF monitoring, impact-based forecasting and community evacuation drills. It also requires fiscal planning: disaster spending is usually reactive and ad hoc, competing with debt service and energy subsidies.

For CSS, climate and water security are among the most consistently examined environmental themes, and CSS 2024 Current Affairs listed climate change as an option. A strong answer avoids generic climate statements. It uses Pakistan-specific numbers (183 deaths, 46 per cent children, half from collapses, 1,037 in 2025), distinguishes mitigation from adaptation, and discusses governance: NDMA and provincial PDMAs, local government role, and financing. The takeaway is that a low-toll year is a window for reform, not a reason to relax.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- The 2026 toll (183) is lower than 2025 (1,037), but one season does not prove improved resilience.
- House and roof collapses cause about half of deaths, so housing standards are a life-safety issue, not just a development goal.
- Children are 46 per cent of deaths, indicating vulnerability of the young to collapses, drowning and flash floods.
- Gilgit-Baltistan's high share of damaged houses and livestock shows the concentration of mountain hazards.
- Urban flooding in Islamabad and Rawalpindi shows that capital-region drainage and encroachment on nullahs remain unresolved.
- Impact-based forecasting and timely PMD and NDMA alerts matter only if provincial and district administrations act on them.
- Evacuation numbers (more than 10,650 rescued or evacuated) demonstrate that response capacity works at scale but is reactive.
- Damaged bridges (41) and roads (34.56 km) reveal infrastructure exposure and the cost of delayed maintenance.

- Livestock losses (1,483) hit rural livelihoods and food security.
- Overlapping crises - energy, fiscal, security - compete for the same limited budget and administrative bandwidth.
- The IMF's RSF anchors climate-reform conditionality, tying resilience to macro policy.
- Local governments are the missing layer in disaster preparedness; without them, provincial agencies cannot reach every settlement.
- Glacier melt and GLOF risk are a northern-Pakistan issue requiring monitoring and early-warning networks.
- Climate justice arguments (Pakistan's low emissions, high exposure) support international financing but do not replace domestic reform.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Environmental

- Monsoon intensity, glacier melt and GLOF risk drive hazards; adaptation matters more than blame.
- Season-to-season variation can mislead policy.

Economic

- Losses in housing, livestock, roads and bridges add to fiscal pressure.
- Reactive relief competes with energy subsidies and debt service.

Governance

- NDMA, PDMAs, PMD and district administrations must align warnings and evacuation.
- Building codes and land-use enforcement are the strongest preventive tools.

Social

- Children, women and the poor face the highest risk; housing quality and location are decisive.
- Community drills and early-warning literacy save lives.

International

- Climate finance, IMF RSF resources and multilateral support are part of the picture but require credible domestic plans.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

183	515	46%	1,037
Deaths, 26 June - 11 Sep (NDMA)	Injured in the same period	Of deaths were children (82 of 180 by 3 Sep)	Deaths in 2025's floods, for comparison

- 183 people died and 515 were injured in monsoon incidents between 26 June and 11 September 2026 (NDMA via Pakistan Today).
- Deaths by region: KP 74, Punjab 64, Sindh 17, AJK 16, Balochistan 8, Islamabad 3, GB 1 (NDMA).
- As of 3 September: 180 deaths and 509 injuries (Pakistan Link, Dawn/NDMA).
- Children accounted for 82 of 180 deaths, about 46 per cent (NDMA).
- Half of deaths were caused by house collapses (NDMA).
- Drowning accounted for 17.2 per cent, flash floods 14.4 per cent and lightning 6.1 per cent (NDMA).
- 1,716 houses were damaged: 589 destroyed and 1,127 partially (NDMA compilation).
- 1,483 livestock were lost (NDMA compilation).
- About 34.56 km of roads and 41 bridges were damaged (NDMA compilation).
- More than 10,650 people were rescued or evacuated (NDMA compilation).
- Gilgit-Baltistan recorded 535 damaged houses and 910 livestock losses (NDMA compilation).
- The 2025 floods killed 1,037 people (Al Jazeera, Wikipedia).
- In 2025, about two million people were displaced (Al Jazeera).
- By 10 September 2025 the toll then stood at 929 (NDMA via ADRC).
- The PMD warned of heavy rain from 12 to 17 September 2026 (Pakistan Today).
- The IMF RSF is a 1.4 billion dollar, 28-month arrangement (Arab News).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*"
>
> - Benjamin Franklin, 1735 - written about fire safety, equally true of flood safety

> "*Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed.*"
>
> - Francis Bacon, Novum Organum - adaptation begins with respecting natural hazards

> "*No person shall be deprived of life or liberty save in accordance with law.*"
>
> - Constitution of Pakistan, Article 9

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Monsoon	Seasonal wind and rain pattern in South Asia	The monsoon runs from late June to September.
Flash flood	Sudden flood from intense rain in steep terrain	Flash floods hit upper KP.
GLOF	Glacial lake outburst flood	GLOF risk is rising in the north.
Resilience	Capacity to withstand and recover from shocks	Resilience requires housing and drainage reforms.
Adaptation	Adjusting to climate impacts	Adaptation includes early warning.
Mitigation	Reducing greenhouse gas emissions	Mitigation is a global responsibility.
Nullah	A drain or stream channel	Nullah Lai flooded Rawalpindi.
Evacuation	Organised removal from danger	More than 10,650 were rescued or evacuated.
Livelihood	Means of earning a living	Livestock losses hit livelihoods.
Encroachment	Illegal occupation of land or waterways	Encroachment worsens urban flooding.
Contingency	Plan for a possible future event	Contingency planning must precede the season.
Vulnerability	Susceptibility to harm	Poor housing raises vulnerability.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

Prepare climate answers with Pakistan-specific data and a clear mitigation-versus-adaptation distinction. Do not claim that one lighter monsoon proves success. Use the NDMA breakdown (183 deaths, 46 per cent children, half by collapses) and compare with 2025 (1,037). Recommend housing codes, drainage, GLOF monitoring, local-government preparedness and financing (RSF, climate funds). Link to the IMF programme and to the energy shock for an integrated Current Affairs answer.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Assess Pakistan's vulnerability and preparedness for monsoon floods in the light of 2025 and 2026.

Q2. Distinguish between climate mitigation and adaptation; which should Pakistan prioritise and why?

Q3. Discuss the role of NDMA and provincial disaster authorities and the reforms required.

Q4. Short note: Glacial lake outburst floods in northern Pakistan.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

Pakistan Today - PMD warns of heavy rains, toll reaches 183
https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/09/12/pmd-warns-of-heavy-rains-flooding-as-monsoon-toll-reaches-183

Pakistan Link - Monsoon death toll reaches 180
https://www.pakistanlink.org/Headlines/Sep26/04/03.htm

Al Jazeera - Monsoon toll tops 100 (27 July)
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/27/death-toll-from-pakistan-monsoon-rains-floods-tops-100

Arab News - Heavy rains flood Islamabad and Rawalpindi
https://www.arabnews.pk/pakistan/heavy-rains-flood-parts-of-pakistans-capital-as-rawalpindi-declares-holiday-2656496

Wikipedia - 2025 Pakistan floods
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_Pakistan_floods

IMF - Press release 25/345 (recent floods and reforms)
https://www.imf.org/en/news/articles/2025/10/14/pr-25345-pakistan-imf-agree-on-2nd-rev-for-ext-arrange-eff-and-1st-review-for-arrange-rsf

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FOR CSS / PMS ASPIRANTS
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

I-01 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Securing Sea Lanes for a Stable Region

Two Chokepoints, One Pact:
The Houthi Front, Hormuz Diplomacy and Pakistan's Makkah Commitments

Renewed Houthi attacks, a postponed Salalah meeting and Pakistan's reaffirmation of its Makkah commitments have brought the Gulf's twin chokepoints — Bab el-Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz — back into global focus, with far-reaching implications for regional security, energy markets and Pakistan's foreign policy.



KEY DEVELOPMENTS (13–19 SEP 2026)

- **ONGOING** — Houthi attacks on Saudi cities continue, targeting critical infrastructure.
- **14 SEP** — Salalah GCC–Iran meeting postponed amid rising tensions.
- **19 SEP** — DG ISPR calls Pakistan's Makkah commitment "unconditional".
- **19 SEP** — All Parties Conference (APC) on Haramain convened in Islamabad.
- **REGIONAL** — Diplomatic efforts continue to de-escalate tensions and secure maritime routes.

THE CHOKEPOINTS



Disruption at either chokepoint can trigger global energy shocks, higher shipping costs and wider economic instability.

WHY IT MATTERS

Global Energy Security
Together, the two chokepoints handle nearly 30% of the world's oil trade.

Economic Impact
Disruptions can lead to higher oil prices, inflation and slower global growth.

Regional Stability
Escalation risks a wider conflict, drawing in major powers and affecting the entire Gulf region.

Pakistan's Stakes
Energy imports, overseas Pakistanis and strategic ties with Saudi Arabia make stability in these sea lanes a direct national interest.

KEY ACTORS

Pakistan
Reaffirms Makkah commitment; advocates regional peace.

Saudi Arabia
Targeted by Houthi attacks; key partner in Pakistan's defence commitments.

Iran
GCC–Iran meeting postponed; central to de-escalation efforts.

Houthi Movement
Continues attacks on Saudi cities and regional infrastructure.

VOICES FROM THE REGION



"Pakistan's commitment to the defence of the two Haramain is unconditional."

DG ISPR
(19 September 2026)



"The security of the Gulf is a collective responsibility and requires cooperation, not confrontation."

GCC OFFICIAL
(Recent statement)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The Houthi conflict remains a major threat to regional and global energy security.
2. Diplomacy, not escalation, is the viable path forward.
3. Pakistan's Makkah commitments enhance its strategic profile but also require careful balancing.
4. Stability in the Gulf is essential for Pakistan's economic and foreign policy interests.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

- ✔ A more volatile Middle East can disrupt global supply chains and slow economic growth.
- ✔ Great power competition (US, China, Russia) is intensifying in the region.
- ✔ Pakistan can play a constructive role as a bridge-builder and a voice for stability.
- ✔ Long-term peace requires addressing root causes, including the Yemen conflict and regional security architecture.

UNDERSTAND TODAY. LEAD TOMORROW.

STABILITY
DIPLOMACY
SHARED PROSPERITY

I-01 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS | MIDDLE EAST SECURITY & ENERGY

Two Chokepoints, One Pact: The Houthi Front, Hormuz Diplomacy and Pakistan's Makkah Commitments

PRIORITY	VERY HIGH - Current Affairs, Pakistan Affairs (foreign policy), IR optional, Essay
CONTINUITY	Continues Issue 17's Strait of Hormuz and Mecca-pact threads; this week the Houthi front opened on Saudi Arabia and the Salalah talks collapsed into postponement.
ESSAY TOPIC	Collective defence in the Muslim world: what does the Makkah pact require of Pakistan?
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gulf war that began on 28 February with joint US-Israeli strikes on Iran is now in its seventh month, and this week it acquired a second maritime front. Pakistan mediated the April ceasefire and hosted the Islamabad Talks, yet the United States has kept a naval blockade on Iran since April and the Strait of Hormuz remains contested. On 11 September drones struck a pumping station on Saudi Arabia's East-West pipeline, the main route bypassing Hormuz, and the kingdom shut the line. Diplomacy stalled the same week: Oman postponed a Salalah meeting between Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers and Iran on managing Hormuz shipping, and Iran said the delay came at the request of some regional countries. A CNN report noted that Saudi Arabia had submitted amendments because the draft language might create a new status quo, including a possible fee arrangement for Iran and Oman, that it could not accept. Brent traded at about 106.69 dollars on 14 September, and Saudi Arabia is rerouting crude through dark shipments and ship-to-ship transfers off Sohar in Oman.

Meanwhile the Houthis of Yemen escalated missile and drone attacks on Saudi cities. Debris from an intercepted drone killed a Yemeni national in Taif on 17 September, more than 80 people have reportedly been wounded in recent attacks, and Saudi air defences destroyed a drone launched south of Makkah on the evening of 15 September. Market reports also spoke of a Houthi advance towards Mocha and the seizure of Perim Island at the mouth of the Bab el-Mandeb, and Saudi shipments through Bab al-Mandab were reported disrupted. The chokepoints that matter to the world economy, Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb, are now both under pressure.

For Pakistan this is a test of new obligations. The Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement with Saudi Arabia was signed on 17 September 2025, and the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement of 7 August 2026 extends the principle to Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkiye: an armed attack on any is an attack on all. The Foreign Office had said last week that no military response was under discussion, but on 17 September the DG ISPR told Arab News that Pakistan stood with the kingdom diplomatically and physically and would go to any extent, calling the commitment unconditional and including Makkah and Madinah. On 19 September the religious affairs minister and leaders of major religious parties met at an All Parties Conference on the protection of the Haramain, pledged support, and said Islamabad was prepared to meet its commitments. The operational terms of the pacts have not been published.

The strategic dilemma is real. Pakistan is a mediator between Washington and Tehran, shares a 900-kilometre border with Iran and has a large Shia population; it depends on the Gulf for energy and remittances; and it faces domestic security pressures. Precedent offers a guide: in 2015 Pakistan's parliament unanimously declined to join the Saudi-led Yemen campaign but pledged to defend the kingdom's territorial integrity and the holy sites. That formula, defend the homeland of the Haramain, avoid offensive war in Yemen, is likely to shape the calibration now.

Exam angles include the meaning of collective defence, the difference between treaty language and political will, Pakistan's balancing between Riyadh and Tehran, energy-chokepoint geopolitics, and the risk of entrapment by an alliance whose text is secret.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- The Gulf war has become a war of chokepoints: Hormuz in the Gulf and Bab el-Mandeb in the Red Sea, each able to disrupt global oil flows.
- Striking the East-West pipeline removed Saudi Arabia's principal Hormuz bypass, showing that alternative routes are themselves targets.
- Oman's postponement of the Salalah meeting shows that regional diplomacy depends on security conditions, not only on negotiated text.
- Saudi objections to a possible fee arrangement reflect a principled concern about creating a new status quo over the freedom of navigation.
- Ship-to-ship transfers off Sohar are a workaround, not a solution, and add legal and safety risks.

- The Houthi front extends the war's geography and puts Makkah and Madinah, not only oil facilities, in the target frame.
- The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement and the 2025 SMDA convert historic ties into treaty commitments with unpublished operational details.
- The DG ISPR's stronger statement than the Foreign Office's earlier line shows different institutional emphases on how far commitments go.
- Pakistan's 2015 parliamentary resolution on Yemen is a template: defend the kingdom's territory and holy sites, avoid offensive war.
- Pakistan's mediator role between Iran and the United States depends on perceived impartiality; deeper alliance with Riyadh could erode it.
- Domestic sectarian sensitivities and the 900-km Iran border make any active military role politically costly.
- The energy shock (N-01) and the alliance shock are linked: the same war hits Pakistan's prices and Pakistan's commitments.
- Collective defence texts are only as credible as the capacity and political will behind them; entrapment and abandonment are both risks.
- A negotiated Hormuz arrangement, with security guarantees for shipping, remains the only path that lowers oil prices durably.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Strategic

- Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb are twin chokepoints; a disruption in either raises prices worldwide.
- Attacks on infrastructure (pipeline) and holy cities alter Gulf security calculus.

Diplomatic

- Oman, Qatar and Pakistan are mediators; the Salalah postponement shows how fragile the framework is.
- Saudi concerns about fee regimes shape the legal bargaining.

Legal

- Freedom of navigation and transit passage principles (UNCLOS) are at stake; any toll regime would be contested.
- Treaty texts of the Makkah pact and SMDA are not public.

Economic

- Oil above 105 dollars, rerouted Saudi exports and higher freight cost feed Pakistan's austerity (N-01).
- Gulf remittances are exposed.

Domestic (Pakistan)

- Parliament's role in war and alliance decisions is uncertain; the 2015 precedent stands.
- Sectarian balance and the Iran border limit options.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

7 Aug	80+	11 Sep	14 Sep
Makkah Joint Defence Agreement signed	Wounded in recent Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia	Drone strike on Saudi East-West pipeline station	Oman postponed the GCC-Iran Hormuz meeting

- The war began on 28 February 2026 with US-Israeli strikes (Wikipedia summary).
- Pakistan mediated a two-week ceasefire in April and hosted the Islamabad Talks on 10-11 April (Wikipedia).
- The US imposed a naval blockade on Iran on 13 April 2026 (Wikipedia).
- A drone attack on 11 September hit the East-West pipeline pumping station; Saudi Arabia closed the line (CNBC).
- Oman postponed the Salalah GCC-Iran meeting scheduled for 14 September (CNBC, CNN).
- Brent traded at 106.69 dollars on 14 September (FinanceFeeds).
- In peacetime about one-fifth of the world's oil moved through Hormuz (Al Jazeera).
- One person was killed in Taif on 17 September by debris from an intercepted drone; more than 80 wounded in recent attacks (Arab News).
- A drone launched by the Houthis was destroyed south of Makkah on the evening of 15 September (Arab News).
- The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement was signed on 7 August 2026 by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkiye (Arab News).
- The Pakistan-Saudi Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement was signed on 17 September 2025 (Wikipedia).
- Pakistan shares a 900-kilometre border with Iran (Wikipedia).
- In 2015 Pakistan's parliament unanimously passed a neutrality resolution on Yemen while pledging support for Saudi Arabia against threats to its territory and holy sites (Gulf News archive).
- The DG ISPR called the commitment unconditional on 17 September (Arab News).
- An All Parties Conference on the Haramain was held on 19 September (Arab News).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*We will go to any extent.*"
>
> - Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, DG ISPR, 17 September 2026

> "*continuous and expeditious transit*"
>
> - UNCLOS Article 38 - the standard for transit passage through straits

> "*The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.*"
>
> - Thucydides, Melian Dialogue

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Chokepoint	Narrow strategic passage	Hormuz is a chokepoint.
Collective defence	Alliance principle that an attack on one is an attack on all	The Makkah pact embodies collective defence.
Entrapment	Being dragged into a war by an ally	Alliance entrapment worries planners.
Blockade	Naval closure of ports or coasts	The US blockade continues.
Transit passage	Right to pass through international straits	UNCLOS guarantees transit passage.
Bypass	Alternate route around an obstacle	The East-West pipeline is a Hormuz bypass.
Proxy	A group acting on another power's behalf	Analysts call the Houthis an Iran-aligned actor.
Escalation	Increase in intensity of conflict	Escalation risks are high.
Haramain	The two holy mosques in Makkah and Madinah	Pakistan pledged to defend the Haramain.
Shuttle diplomacy	Mediation by moving between parties	Pakistan practised shuttle diplomacy.
Calibrated	Carefully adjusted response	A calibrated response avoids offensive war.
Status quo	Existing state of affairs	Riyadh fears a new status quo in Hormuz.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

A likely Current Affairs question asks whether Pakistan's defence pacts with Saudi Arabia and Turkiye serve national interest. Write a two-sided answer: benefits (security, finance, deterrence, Ummah ties) versus risks (entrapment, mediation credibility, sectarian and Iran border sensitivities, secrecy). Use dates (17 September 2025, 7 August 2026), the 2015 precedent and the energy link. A safe conclusion: honour defensive commitments, avoid offensive wars, keep mediation channels open.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Critically evaluate the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement from Pakistan's national-interest perspective.

Q2. Why are Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb central to global energy security?

Q3. Discuss Pakistan's role as a mediator in the US-Iran conflict and its limits.

Q4. Short note: The 2015 parliamentary resolution on Yemen.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

Arab News - Pakistan will go to any extent to defend Saudi Arabia
https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2026/09/18/pakistan-will-go-to-any-extent-to-defend-saudi-arabia-dg-ispr

Arab News - All Parties Conference on the Haramain
https://www.arabnews.pk/pakistan/pakistan-religious-leaders-condemn-houthi-attack-near-makkah-pledge-support-for-saudi-arabia-3001739

CNBC - Saudi pipeline shut, Hormuz meeting postponed
https://www.cnbc.com/2026/09/13/oil-price-iran-war-strait-hormuz-saudi-pipeline.html

CNN - Iran-Gulf talks postponed
https://www.cnn.com/2026/09/13/politics/iran-gulf-countries-strait-of-hormuz

Al Jazeera - Tracking Saudi Arabia's alternative oil routes
https://aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/17/from-yanbu-to-sohar-tracking-saudi-arabias-alternative-oil-routes

Wikipedia - Pakistan in the 2026 Iran war
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan_in_the_2026_Iran_war

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I-02 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Collision at Sea:
The India-Pakistan Naval Incident and the Fragility of Crisis Management

Calm Seas Need Stronger Communication



The recent India-Pakistan naval incident in the Arabian Sea has revived old rivalries and exposed the fragility of crisis management mechanisms in a nuclearised environment. The episode underscores the need for effective communication, risk reduction measures and a renewed focus on maritime confidence-building.

KEY EVENTS (SEPTEMBER 2026)

- **EARLY SEP** — Increased maritime surveillance and deployments by both sides in the Arabian Sea.
- **MID SEP** — Close naval interaction between Indian and Pakistani vessels; risk of collision reported.
- **LATE SEP** — Both sides issued contrasting accounts; no casualties reported.
- **DIPLOMATIC RESPONSE** — Backchannel communication helped in de-escalation.
- **ONGOING** — Calls for stronger maritime CBMs and crisis management mechanisms.

LOCATION OF THE INCIDENT



WHY IT MATTERS

Escalation Risks
Even a limited naval incident can quickly escalate in a nuclearised context.

Maritime Security
The Arabian Sea is vital for trade, energy supplies and regional stability.

Crisis Management
Highlights the absence of robust communication channels and incident management mechanisms.

Regional Stability
Underscores the need for renewed dialogue and confidence-building measures (CBMs).

BOTH SIDES' POSITIONS

PAKISTAN

- Maintains it was a routine operation and acted in a responsible manner.
- Calls for unbiased investigation and adherence to international maritime norms.
- Stresses the importance of avoiding provocative actions in sensitive waters.

INDIA

- Accuses Pakistan of unsafe and aggressive manoeuvres.
- Claims its vessels acted in self-defence.
- Calls for greater international attention to Pakistan's maritime activities.

INTERNATIONAL REACTION

United Nations	Urged restraint and adherence to international law.
United States	Called for de-escalation and stability in the region.
China	Stressed dialogue and peaceful resolution of disputes.
Regional Actors (Gulf states)	Highlighted the importance of freedom of navigation and maritime security.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Incident shows the fragility of crisis management between two nuclear-armed states.
2. Stronger maritime CBMs and direct communication channels are urgently needed.
3. The Arabian Sea's strategic importance makes stability a shared regional interest.
4. Dialogue and risk reduction mechanisms can prevent unintended escalation.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

- ✓ Growing competition in the Indian Ocean region.
- ✓ Increased role of external powers in South Asian maritime security.
- ✓ Need for a sustained framework of maritime confidence-building measures.
- ✓ Stability in the Arabian Sea is essential for global trade, energy security and regional peace.

Preventing Miscalculation. Ensuring a Safer Tomorrow.

STABILITY
DIALOGUE
SECURITY
SHARED SEAS

I-02 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS | SOUTH ASIA SECURITY & MARITIME LAW

Collision at Sea: The India-Pakistan Naval Incident and the Fragility of Crisis Management

PRIORITY	HIGH - Current Affairs, Pakistan Affairs (foreign policy), IR optional
CONTINUITY	New thread this week; it is the first direct India-Pakistan military encounter since the four-day conflict of May 2025.
ESSAY TOPIC	Nuclear-armed neighbours: how can unintended incidents be kept from becoming wars?
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the evening of 15 September, a Pakistan Navy ship and an Indian Navy warship collided in the North Arabian Sea, roughly 120 to 130 nautical miles east of the Omani coast. According to Indian defence ministry sources, the Pakistani vessel closed in at high speed on a larger Indian warship that was on a regular surveillance mission and manoeuvred unsafely, causing the collision; no structural damage to the Indian ship was reported. On 16 September India's Ministry of External Affairs summoned Pakistan's charge d'affaires in New Delhi, Saad Ahmad Warraich, to lodge a strong protest, calling the conduct of Pakistani naval units unacceptable and unprofessional and citing a violation of Article 10 of the 1991 Agreement on Advance Notice of Military Exercises, Manoeuvres and Troop Movements. Islamabad blamed the Indian vessel, and reports say Pakistan cited the same 1991 framework, including a requirement that warships keep at least three nautical miles apart in international waters. Al Jazeera described it as the first direct military encounter between the two nuclear-armed neighbours since their four-day conflict of May 2025.

The incident is a textbook example of the risk of unintended escalation. Neither government has claimed it was deliberate, and it took place in international waters with no reported casualties. But the public rhetoric was immediate: an Indian officer quoted in media said the navy would respond appropriately to hostile acts, and Indian coverage tied the event to the tension that followed Operation Sindoor. Historical precedent exists: in 2011 the Indian frigate INS Godavari and a Pakistani vessel had an encounter at sea, and fishing-boat collisions in Pakistan's exclusive economic zone have produced casualties in the past. What is new is the timing, because bilateral trust is very low and communication channels are thin after the May 2025 conflict.

Legally, the frameworks are clear in principle. The 1972 international regulations for preventing collisions at sea (COLREGs) govern conduct of vessels, while the 1991 bilateral agreement on advance notice of exercises and manoeuvres provides confidence-building rules. UNCLOS guarantees freedom of navigation on the high seas. Determining responsibility requires facts, such as bridge logs, radar tracks and AIS data, which are unlikely to be jointly examined in the current climate.

The strategic context matters. Both navies are deployed in the Arabian Sea because of the wider Gulf war and the Houthi disruption, so crowded waters and heightened alert make accidents more likely. Pakistan is simultaneously managing a rebellion in KP and Balochistan, an energy shock (N-01) and its Saudi commitments (I-01); India has its own pressures. Neither has an interest in a maritime crisis, yet both face domestic audiences that reward toughness.

Practical lessons: activate a naval hotline or DGMO-level channel for incidents at sea; agree a joint technical inquiry or exchange of data; reaffirm the 1991 rules and consider updating them with an incidents-at-sea agreement; and avoid social-media escalation. For CSS, the story links confidence-building measures, nuclear stability, maritime law and the post-May 2025 relationship.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- Collisions in crowded, militarised waters are a predictable risk when two navies operate near each other in a tense theatre.
- The competing narratives, each side blaming the other under the same 1991 agreement, show that facts are disputed and trust is thin.
- India's use of a diplomatic summons converts a military accident into a diplomatic incident, raising the political stakes.
- The rarity of direct military contact since May 2025 makes this event a barometer of post-conflict stability.
- Neither side has alleged intent, which leaves space for de-escalation if it is used.
- COLREGs and the 1991 agreement provide the legal rules; the missing element is a joint fact-finding mechanism.
- Nuclear-armed states need reliable communication channels; the absence of a dedicated naval hotline is a gap.
- Media framing in both countries can turn technical incidents into nationalist tests.
- The wider Arabian Sea deployment linked to the Gulf war raises the density of naval traffic and the risk of accidents.

- Pakistan's multiple pressures - energy, security, alliance commitments - mean it has strong reasons to avoid a maritime crisis.
- Past incidents (2011 Godavari encounter, fishing-boat clashes) show that incidents at sea recur and can be managed.
- Third-party diplomacy (Gulf states, US) may help, but bilateral channels are better for speed and sovereignty.
- Confidence-building measures should be updated for the maritime domain, including AIS practices and incident notification.
- Restraint in official statements is itself a form of crisis management.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Military and Strategic

- Both navies operate in a busy Arabian Sea theatre; accident risk is high.
- The May 2025 conflict raised sensitivities and lowered thresholds.

Legal

- COLREGs, UNCLOS freedoms and the 1991 agreement provide the rules; Article 10 was cited by India.
- Determining fault needs technical evidence.

Diplomatic

- India summoned Pakistan's charge d'affaires; Pakistan contested the account; both used the 1991 framework.
- Confidence-building tools need reactivation.

Political

- Domestic audiences reward firmness; leaders have incentives to avoid appearing weak.
- Restraint is necessary to prevent spiral.

Nuclear and Regional

- Nuclear-armed neighbours face greater consequences for miscalculation; maritime incidents are a new domain of risk.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

15 Sep	120-130 nm	1991	May 2025
Collision in the North Arabian Sea	East of the Omani coast (Indian sources)	Bilateral agreement both sides cite	Last direct military encounter

- The collision took place on the evening of 15 September 2026 in the North Arabian Sea (Business Standard, Mediabias).
- The location was roughly 120-130 nautical miles east of the Omani coast, according to Indian defence sources (Business Standard).
- No major damage was reported (Business Standard).
- India summoned Pakistan's charge d'affaires Saad Ahmad Warraich on 16 September (Hindustan Times/Business Standard).
- India cited Article 10 of the 1991 Agreement on Advance Notice on Military Exercises, Manoeuvres and Troop Movements (Business Standard).
- Pakistan cited a 1991 requirement that warships stay at least three nautical miles apart in international waters (Al Jazeera via Yahoo).
- It is the first direct military encounter since the four-day conflict of May 2025 (Al Jazeera via Yahoo).
- India's Ministry of External Affairs used the words unacceptable and unprofessional conduct (Business Standard).
- The Indian vessel was described as larger and on a regular surveillance mission (Business Standard).
- A similar encounter involving the Indian frigate INS Godavari occurred in 2011 (Indian News Network).
- Indian coverage tied the incident to tensions following Operation Sindoor (Mediabias/India Today).
- Left- and right-rated Indian outlets both reported the diplomatic protest and the 1991 agreement (Mediabias).
- The COLREGs, adopted in 1972, govern collision avoidance at sea (IMO).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*unacceptable and unprofessional conduct*"
>
> - India's Ministry of External Affairs, 16 September 2026

> "*Supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.*"
>
> - Sun Tzu, The Art of War - the value of avoiding needless clashes

> "*refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force*"
>
> - UN Charter, Article 2(4)

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Collision	Contact between vessels at sea	The collision occurred at night.
Charge d'affaires	Diplomat heading an embassy without an ambassador	India summoned the charge d'affaires.
Confidence-building measure	Step that reduces mistrust and misperception	Advance notice is a CBM.
Unintended escalation	Escalation not planned by either side	The risk is unintended escalation.
Surveillance	Close observation of activities	The ship was on a surveillance mission.
International waters	Waters beyond national territorial limits	The collision was in international waters.
Manoeuvre	Planned movement of forces	The 1991 agreement covers manoeuvres.
Exclusive economic zone	Coastal state's resource zone up to 200 nautical miles	Fishing incidents occur in the EEZ.
Hotline	Direct communication link for crises	A naval hotline would help.
Brinkmanship	Pushing a dispute to the edge of conflict	Brinkmanship risks accidents.
Protest	Formal diplomatic complaint	India lodged a strong protest.
Restraint	Deliberate self-limitation	Restraint reduces escalation risk.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

For Current Affairs, treat this as a case study in crisis stability, not a nationalist story. Answer structure: incident, competing claims, legal frameworks (COLREGs, 1991 agreement, UNCLOS), risks, recommendations. Do not assign fault; say the facts are disputed. Link to the May 2025 conflict, nuclear deterrence and CBMs. A concise, balanced answer with dates and two legal references scores well.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Discuss the risks of unintended escalation between India and Pakistan in the maritime domain.

Q2. Evaluate the role of confidence-building measures in South Asia.

Q3. What legal frameworks govern naval conduct at sea, and how do they apply to the September 2026 incident?

Q4. Short note: The 1991 India-Pakistan agreement on advance notice of military exercises.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

Al Jazeera via Yahoo - India-Pakistan navy ship collision
https://www.yahoo.com/news/world/articles/india-pakistan-navy-ship-collision-132525884.html

Business Standard - Pakistani naval ship collides with Indian warship
https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/india-pakistan-navy-ships-collision-north-arabian-sea-mea-protest-126091600516_1.html

Mediabias - How each side covered it
https://mediabias.news/conflict/indian-and-pakistan-naval-ships-collide-in-arabian-sea

Indian News Network - Naval collision heightens tensions
https://www.indianewsnetwork.com/en/naval-collision-arabian-sea-heightens-india-pakistan-tensions-20260917

Pakistan MOFA - Press briefing, 10 September
https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/pakistan/2026/pakistan-260910-pakistan-mfab01.htm

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CSS Weekly
NEWS | ANALYSIS | PERSPECTIVE | FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS I-03
FOR CSS / PMS ASPIRANTS
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

I-03 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Gaza After the Guns:
Disarmament, the Stabilization Force and the Politics of Sequencing

From Ceasefire to a Viable Peace



As the guns fall silent, Gaza's future hinges on a difficult sequence — disarmament, security, governance and reconstruction. International efforts are moving toward a stabilization force, but deep differences remain over the timing, mandate and political roadmap.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS (13–19 SEP 2026)

- **ONGOING** — Ceasefire holds, but sporadic violations continue.
- **MID SEP** — Discussions on a multinational Stabilization Force (ISF) gain momentum.
- **17 SEP** — Hamas reiterates opposition to disarmament without a political horizon.
- **18 SEP** — Security Council consultations on post-war arrangements.
- **19 SEP** — Kosovo and Albania pledge troops for the stabilization force.

THE CORE CHALLENGE

- **DISARMAMENT** — How, when and by whom will Hamas disarm?
- **STABILIZATION FORCE** — Mandate, composition and rules of engagement.
- **GOVERNANCE** — Who will administer Gaza in the interim?
- **RECONSTRUCTION** — Mobilising resources for a devastated economy.
- **POLITICAL ROADMAP** — A credible path to a two-state solution.

KEY ACTORS & POSITIONS

ISRAEL	Demands full disarmament of Hamas and strong security arrangements.
HAMAS	Rejects disarmament without a political process and an end to occupation.
UNITED STATES	Supports a phased approach; backing for an international stabilization force.
ARAB & MUSLIM STATES	Support Gaza's reconstruction and a political solution; engaged in diplomatic efforts.
UNITED NATIONS	Working on a stabilization force framework and humanitarian access.
EUROPEAN UNION	Supports reconstruction, institution-building and a renewed peace process.

PROPOSED STABILIZATION FORCE (ISF)

- **Role:** Maintain ceasefire, support security, protect civilians and assist in institution-building.
- **Composition:** Troops from Muslim and other friendly countries (Kosovo and Albania have pledged).
- **Mandate:** Still under discussion at the UN; details on size, rules of engagement and duration pending.

THE BIGGER PICTURE



HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

- Massive civilian displacement and destruction of infrastructure.
- Urgent need for food, water, healthcare and shelter.
- Humanitarian access remains critical for recovery.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Disarmament, security and political progress must move in a balanced sequence.
2. A credible stabilization force can prevent a return to large-scale conflict.
3. Reconstruction and humanitarian relief are essential for long-term stability.
4. Lasting peace requires a two-state solution and regional consensus.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

- Hamas' refusal to disarm without political guarantees.
- Differences among international actors on the mandate of ISF.
- Risk of ceasefire collapse and renewed violence.
- Governance vacuum and legitimacy concerns.
- Securing long-term funding for reconstruction.

> *"A just and lasting peace in Gaza is not just a regional necessity, but a global responsibility."*



I-03 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS | PEACEKEEPING, TRANSITIONAL GOVERNANCE & PALESTINE

Gaza After the Guns: Disarmament, the Stabilization Force and the Politics of Sequencing

PRIORITY	HIGH - Current Affairs, IR optional, Essay (Middle East)
CONTINUITY	Continues Issue 17's Gaza disarmament/ISF thread; this week the focus is force generation and the sequencing of disarmament versus withdrawal.
ESSAY TOPIC	Peace by design: can external administration deliver lasting settlement in Gaza?
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Almost a year after the October 2025 ceasefire, Gaza's future rests on a framework whose hardest parts remain unfinished. The plan that Donald Trump presented on 29 September 2025 was accepted by Israel and Hamas on 8 October and authorised by the UN Security Council through Resolution 2803 on 17 November 2025. It envisages a Palestinian technocratic committee governing Gaza under a US-led Board of Peace, a Palestinian police force, the disarmament of Hamas, the withdrawal of Israeli forces in stages and an International Stabilization Force. On 30 July 2026 the Board of Peace and mediators from Egypt, Qatar, Turkiye and the United States announced that Hamas and other factions had agreed a staged disarmament document; the precise roadmap was to be prepared within 14 days, subject to an international verification body. Hamas insisted that it would implement no step unless Israel met its own obligations.

September brought the practical work of force generation. A Long War Journal report on the Board of Peace said it had secured commitments from Kosovo and Albania for the ISF, that the Kosovo Security Force had been leading planning on logistics, civil affairs and unexploded-ordnance clearance since spring 2026, and that contributions overall have been minimal. High Representative Nickolay Mladenov told the UN Security Council on 26 August that Hamas and other armed groups had agreed to disarm. The Israeli army continues operations in Gaza, and Al Jazeera reports that more than 1,200 Palestinians have been killed since the ceasefire came into force, with Israeli forces seizing more territory and restricting movement of people and goods.

The critical debate is sequencing. Early versions of the plan linked incremental disarmament with gradual Israeli withdrawal. An analysis in Eurasia Review argues that the August meeting broke the impasse by settling on a model in which the Israeli forces withdraw only after Hamas has disarmed, with withdrawal tied to agreed standards, milestones and timeframes as the ISF establishes control; an Israeli security perimeter might remain until Gaza is judged secure. Under the full text of the roadmap, the ISF is a temporary force deployed to separate Israeli forces from areas controlled by the Palestinian national committee, and it is not supposed to carry out police missions; police duties fall to a new Palestinian force trained with ISF and Egyptian support.

Why does the design matter? Peacekeepers require a peace to keep; countries are reluctant to send troops into a place where they might be asked to disarm a militia by force. Hamas rejects what it calls international guardianship, while the Palestinian Authority says it remains committed to reforms. Israel insists on security guarantees and retains freedom of action. The Board of Peace itself is unusual: a US-led body chaired by Donald Trump with a UN mandate but not a UN organ, which raises questions of accountability and legitimacy.

For a Pakistani candidate the exam relevance is threefold: Palestine is a core element of Pakistan's foreign policy and OIC diplomacy; the ISF raises the question of Muslim-country troop contributions; and the process is a live case of transitional administration, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and the limits of UN authority. A strong answer stays sober: the framework is real, the implementation is thin, and the sequencing dispute could decide whether the ceasefire holds.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- Resolution 2803 gives the framework international legal cover, but the Board of Peace is not a UN body, which creates a legitimacy and accountability gap.
- Agreement on paper (30 July) is not disarmament in practice; the 14-day roadmap deadline and verification mechanism are the real tests.
- Sequencing is the crux: Hamas wants withdrawal and guarantees first, Israel wants disarmament first, and the emerging model favours disarmament before full withdrawal.
- Force generation is slow: minimal contributions, with Kosovo and Albania named, show reluctance among larger states.
- Troop contributors fear mission creep, especially any implied duty to disarm by force.
- The ISF's mandate is a buffer and a monitor, not a police force; Palestinian police must be recruited, trained and trusted.

- Continued Israeli operations and civilian deaths during the ceasefire (more than 1,200) erode confidence and give Hamas justification to delay.
- The technocratic committee's authority depends on Palestinian legitimacy, which requires a political horizon and eventual link to the PA's reformed institutions.
- An amnesty and reintegration path for fighters is essential to any DDR programme.
- The role of Egypt, Qatar and Turkiye as guarantors gives regional ownership but also competing interests.
- Humanitarian access and reconstruction funding are the incentives that make disarmament attractive to ordinary Gazans.
- External administration, however well-designed, cannot substitute for a political settlement on statehood.
- Pakistan's position is shaped by its Palestine policy, OIC commitments and its Gulf ties; troop contribution would be politically and militarily sensitive.
- The Gaza process interacts with the Iran war: regional escalation can derail the ceasefire framework.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Legal

- UNSC Resolution 2803 endorses the plan; the Board of Peace and ISF derive authority from it.
- Verification through an International Verification Committee is proposed.

Security

- Disarmament requires trust, verification and safeguards; ISF acts as a buffer.
- Continued strikes and territorial seizures complicate the process.

Political

- Hamas rejects guardianship; the PA seeks reform credit; Israel demands guarantees.
- Sequencing disputes could stall implementation.

Humanitarian

- Access, reconstruction and policing depend on progress in the security track.
- Civilians bear the cost of delay.

Regional

- Egypt, Qatar and Turkiye are guarantors; the wider Iran war shapes the environment.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

2803	30 Jul	14 days	1,200+
UNSC resolution endorsing the plan (17 Nov 2025)	Board of Peace disarmament agreement	Deadline set for disarmament roadmap	Palestinians killed since ceasefire began (Al Jazeera)

- The Trump plan was presented on 29 September 2025; Israel and Hamas accepted it on 8 October and the ceasefire began on 10 October (Wikipedia).
- UNSC Resolution 2803 was adopted on 17 November 2025 (Wikipedia).
- On 30 July 2026 Hamas and other factions agreed a staged disarmament document (Al Jazeera).
- The roadmap was to be prepared within 14 days, with extensions subject to verification body approval (Al Jazeera).
- More than 1,200 Palestinians have been killed since the ceasefire came into effect (Al Jazeera, 30 July).
- High Representative Nickolay Mladenov briefed the UNSC on 26 August (Long War Journal).
- Kosovo and Albania have pledged contributions to the ISF (Long War Journal).
- The Kosovo Security Force has led ISF planning on logistics, civil affairs and ordnance clearance since spring 2026 (Long War Journal).
- ISF contributions overall have been minimal (Long War Journal).
- The ISF is described as a temporary force to separate Israeli forces from committee-controlled areas and not to perform police missions (Times of Israel full text).
- An International Verification Committee (IVC) will certify compliance before Phase 2 (Times of Israel full text).
- Mediators are Egypt, Qatar, Turkiye and the United States (Al Jazeera).
- The ISF's current commander is a US officer, Jasper Jeffers (Wikipedia).
- Hamas has been described as controlling roughly half of Gaza (Wikipedia).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*to maintain international peace and security*"
>
> - UN Charter, Article 1 - the purpose behind any stabilisation mandate

> "*a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force*"
>
> - Max Weber, Politics as a Vocation - why disarmament is central to any state-building

> "*The state of peace among men living side by side is not the natural state.*"
>
> - Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Disarmament	Removal of weapons from armed groups	Hamas agreed to staged disarmament.
Demobilisation	Disbanding armed units	DDR begins with demobilisation.
Reintegration	Returning fighters to civilian life	Reintegration needs livelihoods.
Sequencing	Order in which steps are taken	Sequencing is the crux.
Technocratic	Governed by experts rather than politicians	A technocratic committee will govern Gaza.
Guardianship	Supervision by outside authority	Hamas rejects international guardianship.
Buffer	Force separating adversaries	The ISF acts as a buffer.
Verification	Independent confirmation of compliance	Verification builds trust.
Mission creep	Expansion of a mission beyond its mandate	Contributors fear mission creep.
Guarantor	State that vouches for an agreement	Egypt is a guarantor.
Ceasefire	Halt to fighting by agreement	The ceasefire is fragile.
Withdrawal	Removal of troops from an area	Withdrawal depends on disarmament.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

Prepare a compact frame on the Gaza settlement: origins (Oct 2025 ceasefire, UNSCR 2803), institutions (Board of Peace, committee, ISF, IVC), obstacles (sequencing, force generation, violations, legitimacy), and outlook. Avoid one-sided rhetoric. Show awareness of the DDR concept and of Pakistan's stance on Palestine and the OIC. Use dates and the 1,200 figure carefully with attribution.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Critically examine the Board of Peace framework and the International Stabilization Force for Gaza.

Q2. Why is sequencing between disarmament and withdrawal so contentious?

Q3. Discuss the role of regional guarantors in the Gaza settlement.

Q4. Short note: Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR).

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

FDD Long War Journal - Board of Peace and the ISF
https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2026/09/board-of-peace-focuses-on-international-stabilization-force-for-gaza.php

Al Jazeera - Hamas reaches disarmament agreement
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/30/trump-says-board-of-peace-reaches-agreement-on-disarmament-of-hamas-in-gaza

Times of Israel - Full text of the Board of Peace deal
https://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-of-board-of-peace-deal-for-hamas-to-disarm-israel-to-withdraw-from-gaza/

INSS - Hamas disarmament agreement
https://www.inss.org.il/publication/hamas-disarmament-agreement/

Eurasia Review - Disabling Hamas
https://www.eurasiareview.com/05092026-disabling-hamas-oped/

House of Commons Library - Gaza 2026
https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10492/

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS I-04
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LAHORE, PAKISTAN

I-04 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Graham Act:

Secondary Tariffs, Stalled Ukraine Talks and the Weaponisation of Trade

The US has passed the Graham Act, authorising sweeping secondary tariffs on countries that continue to buy Russian energy, intensifying economic pressure on Moscow. As Ukraine talks stall, the move signals a new phase in the use of trade as a geopolitical weapon, with far-reaching implications for global markets and diplomacy.



KEY DEVELOPMENTS (13–19 SEP 2026)

- **15 SEP** — US Senate passed the Graham Act with bipartisan support.
- **16 SEP** — House approved the bill; awaited presidential assent.
- **18 SEP** — President Trump signed the Graham Act into law.
- **19 SEP** — Next round of Ukraine talks may be held in October, no breakthrough yet.
- **ONGOING** — US to consult allies on implementation; global oil markets remain volatile.

WHAT IS THE GRAHAM ACT?

- Authorises secondary tariffs (up to 500%) on countries that continue to buy Russian oil, gas or uranium.
- Gives the US President discretion to impose, waive or adjust tariffs.
- Aims to cut Russia's energy revenues and increase pressure to end the war in Ukraine.
- Backed by a bipartisan group of senators, including Lindsey Graham and Richard Blumenthal.

TARGETED SECTORS & COUNTRIES

- **Key sectors:** Oil, natural gas, refined petroleum products, uranium and related services.
- **Major buyers at risk:** China, India, Turkey and others continuing significant imports from Russia.
- Could affect shipping, insurance, energy trade and financial transactions.
- May lead to secondary sanctions on banks and companies facilitating these imports.

STAKEHOLDERS' POSITIONS

UNITED STATES
Use economic leverage to end the war; no business as usual with Russia.

EUROPEAN UNION
Supports the objective but seeks coordination to avoid harm to European economies.

UKRAINE
Welcomes the move; calls for faster and stronger implementation.

CHINA
Opposes unilateral sanctions; warns of negative impact on global trade and energy security.

RUSSIA
Condemns the Act as "illegal" and vows to find alternative markets.

INDIA
Calls for a balanced approach; engages with US on energy security concerns.

RUSSIAN ENERGY FLOWS (STYLISED)



IMPLICATIONS

Global Markets
Higher oil prices, increased volatility, risk of supply disruptions.

Ukraine War
More pressure on Russia, but peace talks remain uncertain.

Global Trade
Risk of trade fragmentation and retaliatory measures.

US Credibility
Demonstrates resolve, but tests relations with key partners.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Trade is increasingly being used as a tool of coercive diplomacy.
2. The Graham Act marks a significant escalation in economic pressure on Russia.
3. Its impact will depend on implementation and the response of major energy importers.
4. Sustained diplomacy is still essential for a durable peace in Ukraine.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

- Enforcement and monitoring of secondary tariffs.
- Risk of higher global energy prices and inflation.
- Managing allied unity and avoiding collateral damage.
- Possibility of retaliatory measures by Russia and targeted countries.
- Achieving a credible and inclusive peace process.

> *"Economic power is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Lasting peace requires dialogue beyond sanctions."*



I-04 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS | SANCTIONS, TRADE & EUROPE

The Graham Act: Secondary Tariffs, Stalled Ukraine Talks and the Weaponisation of Trade

PRIORITY	HIGH - Current Affairs, IR optional, Essay (economic statecraft)
CONTINUITY	Continues Issue 17's Ukraine-Russia talks thread; this week the US signed a sanctions law that turns energy trade with Russia into a tariff risk.
ESSAY TOPIC	Economic sanctions and secondary tariffs: instruments of peace or of coercion?
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 18 September 2026 President Donald Trump signed into law H.R. 5334, the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026. The law expands statutory sanctions on Russia's leadership, energy sector, defence collaborators and shadow-fleet tankers, extends existing Iran sanctions for five years, and authorises the President to impose tariffs of up to 100 per cent on countries that are among the top five buyers of Russian oil and gas. China and India, which buy roughly 70 per cent of Russia's energy exports between them, are the obvious targets. The Senate had passed the bill 86 to 11 on 7 August, and the House passed the Senate version 262 to 159 on 16 September after clearing a procedural vote 214 to 211. The bill was originally introduced in April 2025 by the late Senator Lindsey Graham and Senator Richard Blumenthal, and momentum had slowed in the House amid disputes over its tariff clauses. Countries that take less than 15 per cent of Russia's natural gas exports and are taking significant steps to reduce their imports may be exempted. Crucially, the 100 per cent rate is a maximum, not an automatic tariff: the administration retains discretion.

The context is a peace process that has moved little. After a six-month hiatus, US envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner held separate talks in Moscow and Kyiv in early September, with European national security advisers attending part of the Kyiv round. Kushner described the aim as creating a peace package with European partners. Commentators, including in the Russian media, judged the talks to have achieved little. Ukraine's Kyrylo Budanov said on 13 September that the next Ukraine-US-Russia round may take place in October; Russia said it does not rule out talks but refuses to stop attacking during negotiations; and Zelensky called on 17 September for stronger US sanctions, even as Ukraine struck the Yaroslavl refinery and a Russian airfield. Kyiv has proposed three elements for ending the war: a ceasefire, a free economic zone and security guarantees involving the EU and NATO. Bloomberg reported in July that Putin does not plan to resume talks until Russian forces seize the rest of Donbas. The war is now in its fifth year.

The Act reflects a shift in coercive design from sanctions on the target to tariffs on third countries, known as secondary tariffs. It rests on the logic that Russia's war is financed by energy exports and that pressuring buyers is cheaper than direct confrontation. Critics respond that tariffs of that scale on China or India would raise US consumer prices and disrupt supply chains, that buyers cannot switch overnight, and that the law's legality and enforceability depend on discretionary application. It also complicates an already crowded trade picture: the US Supreme Court struck down the emergency IEEPA tariffs in February, and the administration has rebuilt tariffs under Section 301 (see I-07).

Pakistan's interest is indirect but real. Islamabad is not a major buyer of Russian energy, but the law is a precedent for using market access as leverage, and a US-India or US-China tariff clash can reshape South Asian trade, remittance and IMF-financed policy. Pakistan's own energy crisis (N-01) also shows how sensitive import-dependent states are to sanctions-driven price swings. For exam use, the story illustrates economic statecraft, extraterritorial measures, the limits of sanctions and the difficulty of ending the Ukraine war.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- The Act shifts pressure from Russia to its customers, turning trade with Moscow into a US tariff risk for third countries.
- The 100 per cent rate is an authority, not an automatic penalty, so implementation will be a political bargaining tool.
- Targeting the top five buyers, and exempting those below 15 per cent of Russian gas exports that curb imports, builds in a compliance incentive.
- China and India together account for about 70 per cent of Russia's energy exports, so enforcement would hit two of the world's largest economies.
- Extending Iran sanctions for five years links the Ukraine and Gulf files in a single statutory package.
- The 86-11 Senate vote and 262-159 House vote show broad bipartisan support despite House doubts on tariff clauses.
- The peace talks have produced little; sanctions are being used as leverage while diplomacy is stalled.

- Russia's refusal to stop attacks during talks and Ukraine's continued strikes on refineries show that both sides still seek military leverage.
- Kyiv's three-element framework (ceasefire, free economic zone, EU/NATO-backed guarantees) is a bargaining position, not an agreed deal.
- Europe's involvement, with three national security advisers attending part of the Kyiv round, signals the importance of a European buy-in.
- Secondary tariffs raise questions under WTO rules and international law on extraterritorial coercion.
- India's balancing between Russian energy and US trade ties is a test case for non-alignment in a sanctions era.
- High oil prices from the Gulf war (I-01) make it harder to reduce Russian energy volumes, weakening the sanctions effect.
- Sanctions rarely change regime behaviour quickly; their record is mixed and usually requires accompanying diplomacy.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Economic

- Tariffs up to 100 per cent could disrupt trade and raise prices; buyers cannot switch overnight.
- Oil-market tightness reduces the room to cut Russian volumes.

Legal

- Extraterritorial and secondary measures raise questions of WTO consistency and sovereignty.
- The law gives the President discretion, limiting automatic effect.

Strategic

- The Act targets Russia's revenue base; Moscow may adapt through discounts and new routes.
- China and India are pivotal.

Diplomatic

- Peace talks resumed in September but with little progress; the next round may be in October.
- European partners want a role.

Regional (South Asia)

- India faces the most direct policy dilemma among South Asian states.
- Pakistan is exposed through trade, energy prices and IMF programme dynamics.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

18 Sep	100%	86-11	262-159
Law signed by the US President	Maximum tariff on top buyers of Russian energy	Senate vote (7 Aug)	House vote (16 Sep)

- Trump signed the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act (H.R. 5334) on 18 September 2026 (White House via Outlook India).
- The Senate passed it 86-11 on 7 August (ANI, Upstox).
- The House passed the Senate version 262-159 on 16 September (Upstox, Outlook).
- A procedural vote cleared 214-211 on 15 September (The Week).
- The bill authorises tariffs of up to 100 per cent on the top five purchasers of Russian oil and energy (Yahoo/AP, Upstox).
- Countries importing under 15 per cent of Russia's natural gas exports and reducing imports may be exempt (Upstox).
- China and India buy roughly 70 per cent of Russia's energy exports (Yahoo/Politico, Reuters via Yahoo).
- The Act extends the Iran Sanctions Act for five years (Outlook India).
- The Graham-Blumenthal bill was first introduced in April 2025 and had at least 82 Senate co-sponsors by mid-2025 (Reuters via Yahoo).
- Talks in early September followed a six-month hiatus (House of Commons Library).
- Budanov said on 13 September that the next round might take place in October (Kyiv Independent).
- Zelensky urged stronger US sanctions on 17 September (Kyiv Independent).
- Ukraine struck the Yaroslavl oil refinery and a Russian airfield (Kyiv Independent).
- The war is now in its fifth year (Vatican News).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*creating a peace package*"
>
> - Jared Kushner, September 2026, on the US approach to Ukraine (House of Commons Library)

> "*complete or partial interruption of economic relations*"
>
> - UN Charter, Article 41 - the Charter's own description of sanctions

> "*it is the maxim of every prudent master of a family, never to attempt to make at home*"
>
> - Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations, Book IV - on why trade ties nations together

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Sanction	Penalty imposed to change behaviour	The Act expands sanctions on Russia.
Secondary tariff	Tariff on a third country for trading with a target	Secondary tariffs target buyers.
Shadow fleet	Tankers evading sanctions with opaque ownership	The law targets the shadow fleet.
Extraterritorial	Applying beyond a state's borders	The measures are extraterritorial.
Leverage	Power to influence outcomes	Sanctions are used as leverage.
Discretion	Freedom to decide whether to act	The President has discretion.
Bipartisan	Supported by both major parties	The law was bipartisan.
Hiatus	Pause	Talks resumed after a hiatus.
Statecraft	Skilful conduct of state affairs	Economic statecraft is central.
Compliance	Adherence to rules	Exemptions reward compliance.
Non-alignment	Refusal to join power blocs	India invokes non-alignment.
Coercion	Forcing action through threats	Critics call it coercion.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

For IR or Current Affairs, use the Act to discuss economic statecraft: types (primary, secondary), effectiveness, costs and legality. Link to Ukraine talks and to the Section 301 story (I-07). Be precise: 100 per cent is a cap, not an imposed rate. Mention the effect on India, China and, indirectly, Pakistan. Conclude that sanctions work best alongside diplomacy and realistic exit conditions.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Evaluate the effectiveness of secondary tariffs as an instrument of foreign policy.
Q2. Discuss the prospects for peace in Ukraine in the light of the September 2026 developments.
Q3. How might the Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act affect South Asia?
Q4. Short note: The shadow fleet and sanctions evasion.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

Outlook India - Trump signs Russia sanctions law
https://www.outlookindia.com/international/trump-signs-russia-sanctions-bill-india-and-china-face-100-tariff-threat

Upstox - House passes bill, key provisions
https://upstox.com/news/business-news/latest-updates/russia-sanctions-bill-passed-by-us-house-india-china-could-face-tariffs-of-up-to-100/article-200396/

The Week - Bill advances in House
https://www.theweek.in/news/world/2026/09/16/us-house-representatives-russia-sanctions-bill-india-tariff.html

House of Commons Library - Ukraine: a new push for peace
https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-12198/

Kyiv Independent - Peace negotiations tag
https://kyivindependent.com/tag/peace-negotiations/

Vatican News - Russia leaves door open to talks
https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2026-09/russia-leaves-door-open-to-new-ukraine-peace-talks.html

ICEP's
CSS Weekly
NEWS | ANALYSIS | PERSPECTIVE | FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS I-05
FOR CSS / PMS ASPIRANTS
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

I-05 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Kordofan Is the Front Line:
Sudan's War, Foreign Weapons and the Quad's Stalled Truce

As fighting intensifies in North Kordofan around El Obeid, Sudan's war delves deeper, fuelled by foreign weapons and regional rivalries. Despite international efforts, including a Quad initiative, a ceasefire remains elusive, with civilians bearing the heaviest cost.



KEY DEVELOPMENTS (13–19 SEP 2026)

- **13 SEP** — Intense fighting reported around El Obeid in North Kordofan.
- **14 SEP** — Army claims control over 11 areas; RSF denies and claims counter-attacks.
- **16 SEP** — Civilians face heavy shelling; reports of mass displacement.
- **18 SEP** — UN Secretary-General warns against foreign arms flows.
- **19 SEP** — Quad initiative remains stalled; calls for renewed diplomacy.
- **ONGOING** — Humanitarian crisis deepens across Darfur and Kordofan.

THE CONFLICT MAP



KEY ACTORS & POSITIONS

- **SUDANESE ARMED FORCES (SAF)** — Claims advances in North Kordofan; seeks to restore state authority.
- **RAPID SUPPORT FORCES (RSF)** — Denies setbacks; continues offensive operations.
- **UNITED NATIONS** — Urges an immediate ceasefire and end to foreign arms supplies.
- **AFRICAN UNION** — Supports the Quad initiative and regional dialogue.
- **THE QUAD (US, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt)** — Working on a ceasefire roadmap, but progress remains limited.
- **NEIGHBOURING STATES** — Concerned about spillover, refugee influx and regional instability.

FOREIGN WEAPONS AND EXTERNAL INVOLVEMENT

- Continued reports of foreign weapons supplies to both sides, prolonging the conflict.
- Arms reportedly coming from regional and extra-regional actors despite UN embargo.
- The flow of weapons is increasing the scale, duration and brutality of the war.

HUMANITARIAN IMPACT

- Millions displaced across Sudan, with North Kordofan among the worst affected.
- Severe shortages of food, water, healthcare and shelter.
- Civilians, including women and children, remain the biggest victims.

WHY IT MATTERS

- **Regional Stability** — The conflict threatens to destabilise the wider region, including the Sahel and the Red Sea.
- **Global Security** — Foreign arms flows and proxy involvement risk turning Sudan into a long-term security hotspot.
- **Humanitarian Imperative** — The deepening crisis demands urgent international action to prevent a lost generation.
- **Test for Multilateralism** — The stalled Quad initiative highlights the challenges of translating diplomacy into a workable ceasefire.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. North Kordofan, especially El Obeid, has become the new epicentre of Sudan's war.
2. Foreign weapons continue to fuel the conflict despite international warnings.
3. The Quad's ceasefire initiative remains stalled, requiring renewed commitment.
4. A durable peace in Sudan requires a combination of regional diplomacy, arms embargo enforcement and humanitarian relief.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

- Continued foreign interference and arms supplies.
- Risk of further fragmentation of Sudan.
- Weak implementation of international commitments.
- Humanitarian access remains constrained.
- Need for a credible and inclusive political process.

> *"Sudan's people have suffered enough. The time for a ceasefire is now."*
> – United Nations Secretary-General
> (18 September 2026)



I-05 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS | AFRICA, CONFLICT & HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Kordofan Is the Front Line: Sudan's War, Foreign Weapons and the Quad's Stalled Truce

PRIORITY	MEDIUM-HIGH - Current Affairs, IR optional, Essay (humanitarian intervention)
CONTINUITY	Continues Issue 17's Sudan/El Obeid thread; this week the army claimed gains in North Kordofan and the UN chief demanded accountability for arms suppliers.
ESSAY TOPIC	Forgotten wars: why does the world fail to stop civil conflicts in Africa?
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sudan's war, which began on 15 April 2023 when the army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) fell out over integrating their forces, has settled into a grinding contest for the Kordofan region. On 17 September the Sudanese army said it had retaken 11 areas in North Kordofan after fierce clashes with the RSF along the Forty Days Road corridor. The day before, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for accountability for foreign states supplying weapons to the warring factions, saying outside interference is driving devastating attacks on civilians even though the parties bear core responsibility. On the same day, at least 82 people were killed when an artisanal gold mine collapsed in Nuhud, the largest city in RSF-controlled West Kordofan, a reminder that the war economy runs through gold.

The strategic geography is a country split into two blocs. The army and its allies control the east and centre, including Khartoum, while the RSF consolidated Darfur after capturing El Fasher in October 2025 following an 18-month siege. Human-rights groups say more than 6,000 people were killed in the first three days of that capture, and Amnesty International concluded in July 2026 that the RSF committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, calling for an immediate ceasefire and an international protection force. Kordofan is the hinge between the two blocs: control of El Obeid, capital of North Kordofan with over half a million residents and at least 100,000 displaced people, would let the RSF reconnect its Darfur base with the centre. UN human rights chief Volker Turk said in July that El Obeid had faced siege-like conditions for 18 months.

Diplomacy has failed to keep pace. In September 2025 the Quad, made up of the United States, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE, proposed a three-month humanitarian truce, then a permanent ceasefire and a nine-month transition to civilian rule. The RSF accepted the humanitarian truce in November 2025 and then declared a unilateral three-month truce, while army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan rejected the proposal as biased, objecting in particular to the UAE's role given accusations that it arms the RSF, which Abu Dhabi denies. The army insists that the RSF must withdraw from civilian areas and disarm first. A Sudan tribune report and independent analysts describe a military impasse in which neither side can win decisively, while weapons keep arriving from external backers.

The human cost is enormous. Sudan tops the International Rescue Committee's emergency watchlist and is described as the world's largest displacement and hunger crisis; the World Food Programme had reported more than 24 million people in acute food insecurity in late 2025. Both sides have been accused of striking civilians, with drone warfare a defining feature.

For exam purposes, Sudan illustrates several themes: the dangers of parallel armies, the role of external patrons in prolonging wars, the limits of mediation without leverage, and the doctrine of the responsibility to protect (R2P). It also connects to Pakistan indirectly: Saudi Arabia and Egypt are Quad members, both are Pakistan's partners, and Pakistan's own UN Security Council membership (2025-26) means it votes on Sudan resolutions. A strong answer would stress that accountability for arms suppliers, a credible monitoring mechanism and access for humanitarian aid are more realistic near-term goals than a comprehensive settlement.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- The army's claimed recapture of 11 areas signals momentum in North Kordofan but does not end the siege dynamics around El Obeid.
- Kordofan is the hinge between the RSF-held west and the army-held east; whoever controls it shapes any partition scenario.
- Guterres's call for accountability for foreign arms suppliers points to the central problem: external patrons keep the war supplied.
- The Quad's structure is compromised because one member, the UAE, is accused by one party of backing the other.
- Burhan's demand that the RSF withdraw from civilian areas first and the RSF's declared truces show incompatible sequencing.
- Gold and mining economies fuel both sides, and the Nuhud mine collapse shows the human cost of a war economy.
- The fall of El Fasher demonstrated that sieges of major cities can end in mass atrocity when international protection is absent.

- Amnesty's call for an international protection force highlights the gap between R2P rhetoric and deployment.
- Drone warfare has spread the war beyond front lines, exposing civilians in cities far from ground fighting.
- A country splitting into east-west blocs would be hard to reunify and would create parallel governments.
- The humanitarian crisis (displacement, famine conditions) is driven by both violence and access denial.
- Sanctions on individuals have limited effect without control of arms flows.
- Regional actors - Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Chad, Libya's factions - each have interests that complicate mediation.
- Pakistan, as an elected UNSC member, has a stake in Council action on accountability and humanitarian access.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Military

- Contest is now for Kordofan; both sides use drones and rely on external supply.
- Neither side can win decisively; stalemate persists.

Humanitarian

- Sudan is the world's largest displacement and hunger crisis; famine conditions reported in parts of Kordofan.
- Siege conditions in El Obeid threaten a repeat of El Fasher.

Diplomatic

- The Quad roadmap (truce, ceasefire, transition) stalled over sequencing and impartiality.
- UN calls now emphasise accountability for arms suppliers.

Legal

- Amnesty found crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing; the ICC's Darfur mandate is relevant.
- R2P is invoked more than applied.

Regional

- Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are Quad members with different alignments; Chad and Libya are transit and border factors.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

11	82+	6,000+	500,000+
Areas the army says it retook in North Kordofan (17 Sep)	Killed in Nuhud gold-mine collapse (RSF-held West Kordofan)	Killed in El Fasher's first three days (Oct 2025)	Residents of besieged El Obeid

- The war began on 15 April 2023 (Wikipedia).
- The army said on 17 September 2026 that it retook 11 areas in North Kordofan (Sudan Tribune).
- Guterres on 16 September demanded accountability for foreign weapons supplies (Reuters via CFR tracker).
- At least 82 people died in the Nuhud gold-mine collapse, with more than 50 injured (BBC via CFR tracker).
- The RSF captured El Fasher in October 2025 after an 18-month siege (Democracy Now, Al Jazeera).
- More than 6,000 people were reported killed in El Fasher's first three days (Human Rights Research Center).
- Amnesty concluded in July 2026 that the RSF committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing (Amnesty).
- El Obeid has over half a million residents and at least 100,000 displaced (Volker Turk, 3 July 2026).
- Siege-like conditions in El Obeid have lasted about 18 months (UN human rights chief).
- The Quad roadmap of 12 September 2025 proposed a three-month truce, a permanent ceasefire and a nine-month transition (US State Department, Wikipedia).
- The RSF accepted the humanitarian truce on 6 November 2025 (Al Jazeera).
- The RSF announced a unilateral three-month truce on 24 November 2025 (Al Jazeera).
- More than 24 million people faced acute food insecurity in late 2025 (WFP via CBC).
- Sudan tops the IRC emergency watchlist as the largest displacement and hunger crisis (HRRC).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war*"
>
> - UN Charter, Preamble

> "*Justice delayed is justice denied*."
>
> - Attributed to William Gladstone - on the cost of delayed accountability

> "*solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short*"
>
> - Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan - life without a functioning authority

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Paramilitary	Armed force organised like a military but not part of it	The RSF is a paramilitary force.
Siege	Encirclement to force surrender	El Obeid faces siege-like conditions.
Humanitarian truce	Pause in fighting for aid access	The Quad proposed a humanitarian truce.
Responsibility to protect	Norm that states and the world must prevent mass atrocity	R2P is often invoked but rarely applied.
Impasse	Deadlock	The war is in a military impasse.
Patron	External backer of a party	External patrons prolong wars.
Displacement	Forced movement from home	Sudan has the largest displacement crisis.
Ethnic cleansing	Systematic removal of a group	Amnesty documented ethnic cleansing.
Corridor	Strip of land used for movement	Fighting occurred along the Forty Days Road corridor.
Famine	Extreme scarcity of food	Famine conditions were reported in Kordofan.
Accountability	Being answerable for actions	Guterres called for accountability.
Partition	Division of a country	Analysts fear de facto partition.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

Frame Sudan under civil wars, R2P and external intervention. Use dates (15 April 2023, October 2025, 12 September 2025 Quad roadmap) and key figures carefully. Balance: both sides accused of abuses, external patrons on both sides. Recommend arms-flow accountability, protection of civilians and humanitarian access. Note Pakistan's UNSC seat for extra marks.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Analyse the causes and consequences of Sudan's civil war and the obstacles to peace.

Q2. Evaluate the Quad initiative and the role of external actors.

Q3. Discuss the responsibility to protect with reference to El Fasher.

Q4. Short note: Kordofan's strategic importance.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

Sudan Tribune - Army recaptures 11 areas
https://sudantribune.com/article/318891

CFR Global Conflict Tracker - Sudan
https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/power-struggle-sudan

Amnesty - RSF atrocities in El Fasher
https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2026/07/sudan-rsf-atrocities-in-el-fasher-a-stain-on-the-conscience-of-humanity-new-report/

Human Rights Research Center - UN calls for ceasefire
https://www.humanrightsresearch.org/post/un-human-rights-chief-calls-for-an-immediate-ceasefire-in-sudan

Al Jazeera - Army and RSF locked in impasse
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/4/16/after-three-years-of-war-sudan-army-and-rsf-locked-in-military-impasse

Al Jazeera - RSF unilateral truce
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/11/24/rsf-announces-unilateral-three-month-humanitarian-truce-in-sudan

ICEP's
CSS Weekly
NEWS | ANALYSIS | PERSPECTIVE | FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

ISSUE 18
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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS I-06
FOR CSS / PMS ASPIRANTS
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

I-06 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Choosing the Next UN Chief: Three Straw Polls, Two Frontrunners and a Veto Looming

As António Guterres's term ends in 2026, the race for the next UN Secretary-General has entered a decisive phase. Three straw polls have narrowed the field to two frontrunners, but with great power rivalries and the veto in play, consensus remains uncertain.



KEY DEVELOPMENTS (13–19 SEP 2026)

- **13 SEP** — First informal straw poll held; two candidates ahead of the field.
- **15 SEP** — Second straw poll shows similar trend; regional divisions persist.
- **17 SEP** — Third straw poll confirms two frontrunners.
- **18 SEP** — P5 consultations intensify amid reports of possible veto threats.
- **19 SEP** — Member states call for a transparent, merit-based and inclusive process.
- **ONGOING** — Final decision expected by year end 2026.

THE FRONTRUNNERS



CANDIDATE A (Chile)
Former President, widely respected for multilateralism, climate action and global solidarity. Seen as a consensus-builder with broad support among developing countries.



CANDIDATE B (Netherlands)
Former Prime Minister, known for administrative experience, financial reform and a rules-based international order. Strong support among Western states.

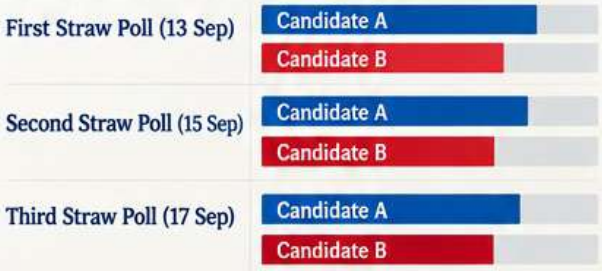
OTHER PROMINENT CANDIDATES

Egypt	Brings regional balance (Arab world).
Kenya	Advocates for reform and Greater Africa's role.
Barbados	Focus on climate justice and small states' concerns.
Costa Rica	Known for disarmament and peace-building.

THE P5 FACTOR

- **USA** — Likely to back Candidate B.
- **CHINA** — Preferred candidate unclear; seeking assurances on UN reform.
- **RUSSIA** — May veto certain candidates.
- **UK** — Supports a transparent process.
- **FRANCE** — Open to either frontrunner, with conditions.

STRAW POLL RESULTS (INDICATIVE TREND)



Note: Straw polls are informal and non-binding. Exact vote tallies are not disclosed.

KEY ISSUES IN THE RACE

- **UN Reform** — Making the UN more effective and representative.
- **Climate Action** — Leadership on climate change and loss & damage.
- **Global Conflicts** — Ukraine, Gaza and other protracted crises.
- **Financial Sustainability** — Addressing the UN's funding shortfall.
- **Representation** — Greater voice for the Global South and women in leadership.

WHY IT MATTERS

- **Leadership at a Critical Time** — The next SG will inherit multiple crises — war, climate change, debt and declining trust in multilateralism.
- **Future of Multilateralism** — Will shape the UN's credibility and effectiveness.
- **Impact on Global South** — A chance to address long-standing demands for fairer representation.
- **Pakistan's Interest** — A stronger, more effective UN aligns with Pakistan's consistent call for multilateralism and a rules-based international order.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Two frontrunners have emerged after three straw polls.
2. The final outcome will depend on P5 consensus and possible vetoes.
3. The next UN chief must prioritise reform, peace and climate action.
4. A transparent and merit-based process is vital for the UN's credibility.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

- Deep divisions among P5.
- Risk of veto blocking a widely supported candidate.
- Balancing regional representation and merit.
- Managing expectations of the Global South.
- Delivering real reforms, not just symbolic change.

> *"The United Nations remains our best hope for a more peaceful, just and sustainable world."*
> — António Guterres
> (UN Secretary-General, 2026)



I-06 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS | MULTILATERALISM & GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Choosing the Next UN Chief: Three Straw Polls, Two Frontrunners and a Veto Looming

PRIORITY	HIGH - Current Affairs, IR optional, Essay (UN reform); Pakistan votes as a Council member
CONTINUITY	New thread this week, timed with the UN General Assembly's high-level week starting 22 September.
ESSAY TOPIC	The United Nations at eighty: reform, relevance and the choice of its next Secretary-General
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UN Security Council held its third informal straw poll on 18 September to choose the successor to Antonio Guterres, who steps down at the end of 2026 after two five-year terms. According to leaked results, Costa Rica's Rebeca Grynspan, currently head of UNCTAD, led with nine votes to encourage, five to discourage and one no opinion. Guyana's ambassador to the UN, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, followed with eight encourage, six discourage and one no opinion. Argentina's Rafael Grossi received five encourage and eight discourage votes. Reports said Michelle Bachelet and Ivonne Baki fared worst, with double-digit discourage tallies, and that Macky Sall also recorded more discourage than encourage votes. The Council's president for September, France's ambassador Jerome Bonnafont, confirmed the vote took place without disclosing results.

The race is fluid. In the first poll on 30 July Grynspan led with ten encourage votes and Rodrigues-Birkett had nine; in the second, on 21 August, they swapped, with Rodrigues-Birkett on eight and Grynspan on seven. In the third, discourage votes rose for both, leading an International Crisis Group analyst to say the race has two clear frontrunners but that neither has enough support to escape the spectre of a P5 veto. The next poll is likely right after the high-level week, and later rounds are expected to use colour-coded ballots that reveal how the permanent members voted, as in 2016. A candidate needs at least nine of the 15 votes and no veto from any of the five permanent members, the United States, China, Russia, the United Kingdom and France. None has publicly endorsed or vetoed a candidate; a US State Department official told The National that Washington wants a practical, driven and reform-focused candidate.

Why does it matter? Under Article 97 of the UN Charter the Secretary-General is appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. Two long-running debates frame the contest: no woman has ever led the UN, and five of the eight candidates this year are women; and Latin America has held the post only once, through Peru's Javier Perez de Cuellar (1982-91), yet six of the eight candidates come from Latin America or the Caribbean. The organisation the winner inherits is also under strain: budget and staff cuts began in 2025, wars in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and the Gulf are unresolved, and the UN is asked to steer AI governance and climate action.

Pakistan has a direct connection. As an elected non-permanent member of the Council for 2025-26, Pakistan is one of the ten members whose support any candidate needs. The Council's elected members matter because, in the words of an analyst, the permanent members cannot recommend a candidate without some support from the E10. For a state that emphasises multilateralism, Pakistan's vote also signals its priorities: a Secretary-General attentive to South Asia, Palestine and the development agenda.

For candidates the exam significance is threefold: the procedure (straw polls, Article 97, General Assembly resolution 69/321's push for transparency), the politics (regional rotation, gender, P5 veto) and the reform agenda. A good answer ends with the choice facing the Council between a compromise candidate acceptable to all P5 and a candidate with stronger reform credentials.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- The formal power to appoint lies with the General Assembly, but the practical power lies with the Council, especially the P5's veto.
- Straw polls are informal and secret, yet leaks and campaign groups shape perceptions of momentum.
- Grynspan and Rodrigues-Birkett are frontrunners, but rising discourage votes for both suggest a compromise candidate could emerge.
- Colour-coded ballots in later rounds will reveal P5 preferences, turning private vetoes into visible signals.
- Latin America's claim to the post rests on rotation norms and on the fact that it has held the office only once.
- The first woman Secretary-General is a strong symbolic and political demand, with five of eight candidates women.
- Washington's preference for a reform-focused candidate aligns with budget cuts and efficiency drives begun in 2025.
- Russia and China will weigh candidates on views of sanctions, sovereignty and the Ukraine and Taiwan questions.

- The E10 matter because nine votes are needed; the P5 cannot recommend a candidate without some elected-member support.
- Pakistan's Council seat gives it real influence over the outcome and a platform to state priorities.
- The next Secretary-General inherits crises (Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Gulf) and institutional stress from budget cuts.
- Transparency reforms after 2015 (candidate dialogues, public nominations) improved openness but not the veto structure.
- Time pressure matters: Guterres leaves at the end of the year, so the Council needs a recommendation well before then.
- The selection is a barometer of great-power relations; deadlock would signal deeper paralysis.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Procedure

- Article 97: appointment by the General Assembly on Council recommendation; straw polls guide the Council.
- A candidate needs nine votes and no P5 veto.

Political

- P5 preferences, E10 support, regional rotation and gender all shape outcomes.
- Compromise candidates often emerge late.

Institutional

- The UN faces budget and staff cuts and mandates in several wars.
- The next chief will manage reform and legitimacy.

Regional and Gender

- Six of eight candidates are from Latin America and the Caribbean; five of eight are women.
- No woman has led the UN since 1945.

Pakistan

- Pakistan votes as an elected member in 2025-26 and can shape the outcome.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

9-5-1 Grynspan: encourage, discourage, no opinion	**8-6-1** Rodrigues-Birkett's third-round result	**8** Candidates in the race	**9** Council votes needed, with no P5 veto

- The third straw poll was held on 18 September 2026 (The National).
- Grynspan received 9 encourage, 5 discourage and 1 no opinion (Reuters via Newscord).
- Rodrigues-Birkett received 8 encourage, 6 discourage and 1 no opinion (Reuters via Newscord).
- Grossi received 5 encourage and 8 discourage votes (The National).
- The first poll was on 30 July and the second on 21 August (SocialNews/Xinhua, The National).
- In the first poll Grynspan had 10 votes to Rodrigues-Birkett's 9; in the second the order flipped, 8 to 7 (SocialNews).
- Eight candidates are in the race (The National).
- Five of the eight candidates are women (Rio Times).
- Six of the eight candidates come from Latin America or the Caribbean (Rio Times).
- Javier Perez de Cuellar (Peru) is the only Latin American Secretary-General so far, serving 1982-91 (Rio Times).
- A candidate needs at least nine of 15 Council votes and no P5 veto (Rio Times).
- Guterres steps down at the end of 2026 after two five-year terms (Reuters via Newscord).
- France holds the Council presidency for September; Jerome Bonnafont is its ambassador (The National).
- Guterres began budget and staff cuts in 2025 (Rio Times).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*a practical, driven, and reform-focused candidate*"
>
> - US State Department official, as told to The National, September 2026

> "*appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council*"
>
> - UN Charter, Article 97

> "*the most impossible job on this earth*"
>
> - Attributed to Trygve Lie, first Secretary-General

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Straw poll	Informal non-binding vote	The Council held a straw poll.
Veto	Power to block a decision	A P5 veto ends a candidacy.
Encourage vote	Positive signal in a UN straw poll	Grynspan received nine encourage votes.
E10	The ten elected Council members	The E10's support is necessary.
P5	Five permanent Council members	The P5 hold the veto.
Recommendation	Formal proposal to the General Assembly	The Council makes a recommendation.
Rotation	Regional turn-taking norm	Latin America invokes rotation.
Colour-coded ballot	Ballot marking P5 votes for visibility	Colour-coded ballots reveal veto intent.
Compromise candidate	Acceptable to all major players	A compromise candidate may emerge.
Mandate	Authority to act	The UN has broad mandates.
Multilateralism	Cooperation among many states	Pakistan favours multilateralism.
Incumbent	Current holder of an office	Guterres is the incumbent.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

Expect a question on UN reform or on the selection process. Cover Article 97, straw polls, P5 veto, GA resolution 69/321, regional rotation and gender debate, and the crises the new chief inherits. Use the third-poll numbers with attribution as leaked. Mention Pakistan's Council seat. Avoid predicting a winner; discuss scenarios.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Discuss the process of selecting the UN Secretary-General and the reforms needed to make it more transparent.

Q2. Should the next Secretary-General be a woman or from Latin America? Evaluate the arguments.

Q3. Assess the challenges facing the United Nations at eighty.

Q4. Short note: The role of straw polls and the P5 veto.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

The National - Third straw poll
https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/us/2026/09/18/un-security-council-holds-third-straw-poll-in-race-for-next-secretary-general-ahead-of-unga/

The National - Second straw poll
https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/us/2026/08/21/security-council-holds-second-secret-straw-poll-for-next-un-chief/

Rio Times - Grynspan leads third straw poll
https://riotimesonline.com/rebeca-grynspan-un-secretary-general-straw-poll-2026

Newscord - How outlets framed the poll
https://newscord.org/article/rebeca-grynspan-narrows-lead-in-un-secretary-general-straw-poll-ahead-of-carolyn--Story_20260918_RebecaGrynspanganala7fda7ea3

SocialNews/Xinhua - Third straw poll
https://www.socialnews.xyz/2026/09/18/un-security-council-holds-3rd-straw-poll-on-secretary-general-candidates

Wikipedia - 2006 UN Secretary-General selection (comparison)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_United_Nations_Secretary-General_selection

ICEP's
CSS Weekly
NEWS | ANALYSIS | PERSPECTIVE | FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

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FOR CSS / PMS ASPIRANTS
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

I-07 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Summit Before Tariffs:
The Trump-Xi Meeting and America's Rebuilt Section 301 Wall

As the US and China prepare for a high-stakes meeting, Washington has delayed new Section 301 tariffs, signaling a tactical pause. The summit could stabilise relations, but deep structural rivalries and trade restrictions keep the risk of renewed confrontation high.



KEY DEVELOPMENTS (13–19 SEP 2026)

- **14 SEP** — US announces delay in imposing new Section 301 tariffs on Chinese goods.
- **16 SEP** — Formal confirmation of Trump-Xi meeting on the sidelines of a multilateral forum.
- **17 SEP** — Both sides signal readiness for talks on trade, fentanyl and regional stability.
- **18 SEP** — US officials indicate existing tariffs will remain in place during talks.
- **19 SEP** — Chinese media call for 'mutual respect' and a 'balanced outcome'.
- **ONGOING** — Technical teams working on possible framework understanding.

WHAT IS SECTION 301?

A US trade law (Trade Act 1974) that allows the President to impose tariffs on countries engaging in unfair trade practices.

Covers intellectual property theft, technology transfer, and other discriminatory policies.

Since 2018, used extensively against China, leading to tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of goods.

The current delay suggests a tactical pause, not a rollback.

KEY ISSUES ON THE AGENDA

- **Trade and Tariffs** — Future of Section 301 and possibility of phased relief.
- **Technology Competition** — Chips, AI, 5G and export controls.
- **Fentanyl Cooperation** — US seeks stronger action against precursor supply chains.
- **Regional Security** — Taiwan, South China Sea and broader Indo-Pacific stability.
- **Climate Change** — Scope for cooperation despite strategic rivalry.

US-CHINA TRADE AT A GLANCE

- **$536 billion** — US imports from China (2025, approx.)
- **$199 billion** — US exports to China (2025, approx.)
- **~19%** — Share of total US imports (from China)
- **Major imports** — Electronics, machinery, consumer goods, pharmaceuticals
- **Major exports** — Agricultural goods, energy, aerospace, semiconductors

KEY ACTORS & POSITIONS

- **UNITED STATES** — Seeks fairer trade, reduced dependence, and stronger enforcement on intellectual property rights.
- **CHINA** — Opposes additional tariffs, seeks removal of existing measures, and calls for mutual respect.
- **REGIONAL PLAYERS** — Closely watching for implications on global trade, supply chains and regional security.
- **GLOBAL MARKETS** — Hope for stability, but remain cautious about long-term uncertainties.

WHY IT MATTERS

- **Global Economy** — Affects trade flows, supply chains and economic growth worldwide.
- **Strategic Rivalry** — Reflects the broader competition for global influence.
- **Pakistan's Interest** — Impacts trade opportunities, investment flows and regional strategic dynamics.
- **Rules-based Order** — The outcome will shape the future of international trade norms.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The summit is a chance to stabilise relations, not a quick fix.
2. Section 301 tariffs are delayed, but existing tariffs remain.
3. Deep structural issues — technology, security and influence — will persist.
4. A managed competition is more likely than a comprehensive deal.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

- Risk of breakdown in talks.
- Domestic political pressure in the US.
- China's reluctance to make structural concessions.
- Uncertainty over Taiwan and regional flashpoints.
- Potential for renewed tariffs if talks fail.

> *"A stable US-China relationship is not just a bilateral necessity, but a global imperative."*
> — Inspired by recent commentaries



I-07 | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS | GLOBAL ECONOMY & GREAT-POWER TRADE

Summit Before Tariffs: The Trump-Xi Meeting and America's Rebuilt Section 301 Wall

PRIORITY	HIGH - Current Affairs, Economics, IR optional, Essay (globalisation)
CONTINUITY	Continues Issue 17's Section 301 tariffs thread; this week the excess-capacity tariff announcement was postponed until after the 24 September summit.
ESSAY TOPIC	Globalisation under stress: are tariffs the new architecture of world trade?
PAST PAPER ECHO	No direct past-paper precedent yet.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States has postponed announcing new tariffs on alleged excess industrial capacity until after President Donald Trump meets Chinese President Xi Jinping in Washington on 24 September, according to a Bloomberg report carried by the Korea Herald and others. The tariffs stem from a Section 301 investigation opened in March into 16 economies: China, the European Union, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Vietnam, Taiwan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Singapore, Switzerland and Norway. The administration had earlier intended to publish a report before the summit that would recommend a 7.5 per cent tariff on Chinese products. The reason for the delay is unclear, though the summit is expected to cover trade, the Iran war and possible safeguards on artificial intelligence, and top US and Chinese officials are due to meet in New York beforehand. This will be their first meeting since one in Beijing more than four months ago.

The tariff architecture itself has been rebuilt after a court defeat. In February the US Supreme Court struck down the country-specific emergency tariffs imposed under IEEPA. The administration replaced them first with a 10 per cent Section 122 tariff, which is limited to 150 days and expired on 24 July, and then with Section 301 actions. On 24 July the United States Trade Representative began a new forced-labour duty under Section 301: 10 per cent for countries that have committed to ban forced-labour imports and 12.5 per cent for those that have not, covering about 60 economies. China, which received no country-specific exemptions, faces 12.5 per cent, effectively raising its overall tariff by 2.5 percentage points. Earlier Section 301 tariffs on Chinese goods remain, ranging from 7.5 per cent to 100 per cent depending on product, including 100 per cent on electric vehicles and 50 per cent on solar cells and semiconductors. Around 178 product exclusions have been extended to 10 November 2026 following the previous Trump-Xi meeting.

Why is the delay significant? First, it shows that tariffs are being used as bargaining chips: the announcement is being held back to preserve goodwill and leverage before the summit. Second, it shows the legal route: because the Supreme Court limited emergency powers, the administration must rely on lengthy investigations under trade statutes, which creates predictability but also a pipeline of actions that can be timed politically. Third, it reveals the interaction with security issues: on the summit agenda are the Iran war and AI safeguards alongside trade.

For Pakistan, the effects are indirect but material. Pakistan is not on the excess-capacity list, but it exports textiles and other goods to the United States and competes with several listed economies, including Bangladesh, Vietnam and India. Tariffs on rivals shift competitive positions; the forced-labour tariff framework applies country-specific rates based on commitments. Pakistan's IMF-supported reform programme also assumes a stable external environment. Meanwhile, the US law on secondary tariffs on Russian energy buyers (I-04) shows that trade policy has become an instrument of coercion and diplomacy.

For CSS students, the exam frame is globalisation and de-globalisation, the WTO's weakened role, and the shift from multilateral rules to bilateral bargaining. A balanced answer should note the costs (higher prices, supply-chain disruption, uncertainty) and the political logic (industrial policy, security of supply, leverage). It should also present the summit as a test of whether managed rivalry is possible.

B. KEY ARGUMENTS

- Postponing the excess-capacity announcement shows tariffs are timed as leverage around diplomatic events.
- The Supreme Court's February ruling on IEEPA tariffs forced the administration to shift to slower, statute-based instruments.
- Section 122 tariffs were temporary by design (150 days), which explains the swift move to Section 301.
- The forced-labour Section 301 duty (10 per cent or 12.5 per cent) links trade access to labour-standards commitments, a novel use of the statute.
- China faces layered tariffs: earlier Section 301 rates, a new forced-labour duty and product-specific Section 232 measures.
- Extended exclusions for 178 products until 10 November show a managed, negotiated approach to reduce disruption.

- The 16-economy excess-capacity probe includes US allies and partners, showing that trade policy targets more than China.
- The summit agenda mixing trade, Iran and AI safeguards shows the interlinking of economic and security issues.
- Tariffs raise costs for US importers and consumers and can prompt retaliation, so both sides have incentives for a deal.
- China's tools - rare-earth export controls, agricultural tariffs and entity lists - give it counter-leverage.
- The WTO has been sidelined as bilateral bargaining and domestic trade statutes dominate.
- For Pakistan, competitor countries facing higher tariffs may create export opportunities but also market volatility.
- Sanctions-driven trade measures (Graham Act, I-04) and tariff measures (Section 301) together form a US economic-statecraft toolkit.
- A managed-rivalry outcome would lower uncertainty; a breakdown would deepen supply-chain fragmentation.

C. ANALYSIS: FIVE LENSES

Legal

- Supreme Court limits on IEEPA moved policy to Section 122 and Section 301.
- Section 301 requires investigation, findings and procedure, which affects timing.

Economic

- Layered tariffs raise input costs; exclusions soften the impact.
- Uncertainty affects investment and prices.

Strategic

- Summit diplomacy links trade to Iran and AI issues.
- China holds counter-leverage through critical minerals.

Multilateral

- The WTO's role is diminished; unilateral measures set the pace.
- Trade blocs may reconfigure.

Regional (South Asia)

- India and Bangladesh are on the excess-capacity list; Pakistan competes with them in textiles.
- Trade diversion effects are uncertain.

D. STATISTICS AND DATA

24 Sep	16	12.5%	178
Trump-Xi summit in Washington	Economies in the Section 301 excess-capacity probe	Forced-labour Section 301 duty on China (from 24 July)	Exclusions extended to 10 November 2026

- The Trump-Xi summit is scheduled for 24 September 2026 in Washington (Korea Herald/Bloomberg).
- The Section 301 excess-capacity investigation was opened in March and covers 16 economies (Korea Times, Yahoo).
- The report was expected to recommend a 7.5 per cent tariff on Chinese products (Bloomberg via Korea Herald).
- The Supreme Court struck down IEEPA country-specific tariffs in February 2026 (Korea Herald).
- The 10 per cent Section 122 tariff expired on 24 July 2026 after 150 days (Portless, China Briefing).
- A new Section 301 forced-labour duty took effect on 24 July 2026: 10 per cent or 12.5 per cent (China Briefing, Portless).
- The forced-labour probe covers about 60 economies (Korea Herald, Shapiro).
- China faces 12.5 per cent and no country-specific exemption (Portless).
- 178 product exclusions were extended to 10 November 2026 (China Briefing).
- Earlier Section 301 tariffs range from 25 per cent to 100 per cent for strategic products, including 100 per cent on EVs (China Briefing, USTariffRates).
- Solar cells and semiconductors face 50 per cent Section 301 tariffs (USTariffRates).
- The previous Trump-Xi meeting was in Beijing more than four months ago (Korea Times).
- US and Chinese top officials are to meet in New York before the summit (Bloomberg via Investing.com).
- Trump said he expects a very good meeting with Xi (Yahoo/Bloomberg).

E. VOICES AND QUOTATIONS

> "*never to attempt to make at home*"
>
> - Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations, Book IV - the classic argument for trade

> "*Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.*"
>
> - Louis Brandeis - on the value of transparent trade rules

> "*The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.*"
>
> - Thucydides, Melian Dialogue

F. VOCABULARY: 12 WORDS

Word	Meaning	In context
Tariff	Tax on imports	New tariffs were postponed.
Excess capacity	Production exceeding domestic demand	The probe targets excess capacity.
IEEPA	US emergency powers law used for tariffs	The Court limited IEEPA tariffs.
Section 301	US law against unfair trade practices	The USTR used Section 301.
Exclusion	Exemption from a tariff	Exclusions were extended.
Leverage	Bargaining power	Delay preserves leverage.
Retaliation	Response in kind	China can retaliate.
Forced labour	Work extracted under threat	The duty targets forced-labour imports.
Supply chain	Network producing a good	Tariffs disrupt supply chains.
De-globalisation	Reduction in global integration	Some see de-globalisation.
Trade diversion	Shift of trade to other suppliers	Tariffs can cause trade diversion.
Managed rivalry	Competition with agreed limits	The summit tests managed rivalry.

G. EXAMINER'S PERSPECTIVE

Economics-oriented Current Affairs answers should cover the legal shift from IEEPA to Sections 122 and 301, the layered China tariffs, the excess-capacity probe and the summit. Use dates (24 July, 24 September, 10 November) and cite the 16-economy list. State clearly that the postponement is reported by Bloomberg and its reason is unclear. Link to Pakistan's competitiveness and to the WTO's diminished role.

H. QUESTION BANK

Q1. Evaluate the impact of US tariffs on global trade and on developing economies like Pakistan.

Q2. How did the Supreme Court's IEEPA ruling change US trade policy?

Q3. Discuss whether the WTO remains relevant in an era of unilateral tariffs.

Q4. Short note: Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH STUDY

Korea Herald - Excess-capacity tariff delayed until after summit
https://www.koreaherald.com/article/10877969

Korea Times - Trump-Xi summit and tariffs
https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/foreignaffairs/20260918/us-expected-to-delay-new-excess-capacity-tariff-announcement-until-after-trump-xi-summit-report

Yahoo/Bloomberg - Second tranche of Section 301 tariffs
https://www.yahoo.com/news/politics/articles/second-tranche-section-301-tariffs-215420489.html

China Briefing - US-China tariff rates
https://www.china-briefing.com/news/us-china-tariff-rates-2025/

Portless - Section 301 changes for China in 2026
https://www.portless.com/blogs/section-301-tariffs-china

Morgan Lewis - US rebuilds tariff program under Section 301
https://www.morganlewis.com/pubs/2026/07/us-administration-rebuilds-global-tariff-program-under-section-301

CONFUSABLES CORNER

Pairs that examiners and students routinely blur, drawn from this issue's stories.

Term A	Term B	The distinction	Where it matters
Ceasefire	Truce	A ceasefire halts fighting under an agreement; a truce is usually shorter and more limited, often humanitarian (Sudan, Gaza)	Use precisely in Gaza and Sudan answers
Armistice	Ceasefire	An armistice is a formal agreement ending hostilities with terms; a ceasefire may be temporary	Korean armistice vs Gaza ceasefire
Bail	Suspension of sentence	Bail applies before or during trial; suspension halts a sentence after conviction while appeal is pending	Mazari case (N-04)
Suspension of sentence	Acquittal	Suspension leaves the conviction standing; acquittal overturns it	Mazari case (N-04)
Devolution	Decentralisation	Devolution transfers powers by law to lower governments; decentralisation may be administrative only	18th Amendment, local governments (N-06)
Province	Administrative unit	A province is a constitutional federating unit; an administrative unit may be created by law without that status	28th Amendment debate (N-06)
Internet shutdown	Throttling	A shutdown cuts service; throttling slows it; blocking targets specific sites	AJK case (N-03)
Blockade	Embargo	A blockade is a naval or military closure of ports; an embargo is a legal ban on trade	Iran, Hormuz (I-01)
Sanction	Secondary tariff	Sanctions target the offender; secondary tariffs penalise third countries trading with it	Graham Act (I-04)
Peacekeeping	Stabilisation	Peacekeeping monitors an agreed peace with consent; stabilisation may involve broader security tasks in unsettled conditions	ISF in Gaza (I-03)
Disarmament	Demobilisation	Disarmament removes weapons; demobilisation disbands units; reintegration follows	DDR in Gaza (I-03)
Mitigation	Adaptation	Mitigation cuts emissions; adaptation reduces harm from impacts	Monsoon and climate (N-07)
Flash flood	GLOF	A flash flood follows intense rain; a GLOF comes from a glacial lake bursting	Northern Pakistan (N-07)

FPSC-PATTERN ESSAY OUTLINE

Topic: Crisis is the examination of the state: institutional resilience in an age of overlapping shocks

Why this theme. Across this issue's 14 articles the recurring theme is state capacity under stress: an energy shock (N-01), terrorism (N-02), a digital blackout (N-03), a courts-versus-executive clash (N-04), a hospital safety failure (N-05), a contested constitution (N-06), a monsoon (N-07), and outside Pakistan a chokepoint war, a maritime collision, Gaza's transition, sanctions, Sudan, UN leadership and trade wars (I-01 to I-07).

Thesis statement. States are judged less by the shocks they face than by the institutions they have built to absorb them; Pakistan's 2026 record shows both real capacity (targeted relief, evacuation, judicial correction) and persistent gaps (enforcement, accountability, consensus).

I	Introduction: define resilience; hook with the 26 August PIMS fire or the 17 September petrol price; state the thesis.
II	Conceptual frame: shocks versus structure; capacity, legitimacy and accountability as three pillars; Weber on legitimate force; Article 9 as the constitutional floor.
III	Pakistan's economic shock absorbers: Rs391.22 petrol, austerity and the Rs100 subsidy; IMF programme; the lesson of policy whiplash (N-01).
IV	Security and rights: Kohat, 199 attacks in August and the PICSS paradox; AJK's 100-day blackout; the Mazari case; why legitimacy matters for counter-terrorism (N-02, N-03, N-04).
V	Public-service and disaster institutions: PIMS report (14 deaths, no alarms); monsoon 183 deaths versus 1,037 in 2025; prevention versus relief (N-05, N-07).
VI	Constitutional resilience: 28th Amendment, Article 239(4), Article 140A; why consensus is a source of strength (N-06).
VII	The external mirror: Sudan and Gaza (institutions failing or being rebuilt), the UN's leadership race and trade-war unpredictability (I-03 to I-07).
VIII	Way forward: safety audits, targeted subsidies, local governments, independent inquiries, published legal bases for emergency powers, energy diversification.
IX	Counter-arguments: crises justify extraordinary powers; resource constraints; answer with proportionality and sunset clauses.
X	Conclusion: resilience is built before the crisis; link back to the hook.

Quotations to deploy. Weber (monopoly of legitimate force); Franklin (an ounce of prevention); Article 9 of the Constitution

Data points. 199 attacks (Aug); 183 monsoon deaths; 14 newborns; Rs391.22; 100+ days blackout

50-QUESTION MCQ BANK

Choose the single best answer. Answers and explanations follow on the Answer Key page.

1. Petrol was notified at what price per litre from 17 September 2026?
(A) Rs370.80 (B) Rs384.34 (C) Rs391.22 (D) Rs421.45

2. By how much was fuel allocation for government vehicles cut under the austerity plan?
(A) 25% (B) 50% (C) 75% (D) 100%

3. The relief subsidy for motorcycles, rickshaws and cars up to 800cc is per litre:
(A) Rs50 (B) Rs75 (C) Rs100 (D) Rs150

4. Under the conservation rules, retail outlets must close by:
(A) 7 pm (B) 8 pm (C) 9 pm (D) 10 pm

5. The Kohat attack took place on:
(A) 15 September (B) 16 September (C) 17 September (D) 18 September

6. The faction that claimed the Kohat attack is:
(A) Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (B) Ittehadul Mujahideen (C) ISKP (D) BLA

7. PICSS recorded how many militant attacks in August 2026?
(A) 144 (B) 158 (C) 199 (D) 268

8. Which month was the deadliest of 2026 so far according to PICSS?
(A) May (B) June (C) July (D) August

9. The AJK partial internet blackout began on:
(A) 5 May (B) 5 June (C) 27 July (D) 10 August

10. How many of the 45 AJK assembly seats are reserved for refugees from Indian-administered Kashmir?
(A) 8 (B) 10 (C) 12 (D) 15

11. The final phase of the AJK elections was held on:
(A) 2 August (B) 10 August (C) 27 July (D) 5 September

12. The combined PECA sentence handed to Imaan Mazari and Hadi Chattha was:
(A) 7 years (B) 10 years (C) 17 years (D) 20 years

13. Suspension of a sentence pending appeal is sought under which provision of the CrPC?
(A) Section 144 (B) Section 426 (C) Section 497 (D) Section 302

14. The Supreme Court granted bail against surety bonds of:
(A) Rs100,000 (B) Rs200,000 (C) Rs500,000 (D) Rs1 million

15. How many newborns died in the PIMS fire?
(A) 10 (B) 12 (C) 14 (D) 15

16. The PIMS fire broke out on:
(A) 6 August (B) 26 August (C) 7 September (D) 17 September

17. The inquiry attributed the PIMS fire's escalation to:
(A) Sabotage (B) Systemic and institutional failure (C) Staff strike (D) Flood

18. Which article requires two-thirds of a provincial assembly to alter a province's limits?
(A) 140A (B) 239(4) (C) 243 (D) 51(5)

19. The Sindh Assembly passed its resolution against changing provincial limits on:
(A) 3 September (B) 6 September (C) 7 September (D) 17 September

20. The 27th Amendment created which body?
(A) Federal Constitutional Court (B) National Security Council (C) Senate Committee (D) Election Tribunal

21. Article 140A of the Constitution concerns:
(A) Free education (B) Local government (C) Right to information (D) Federal Shariat Court

22. The NDMA's monsoon death toll to 11 September 2026 was:
(A) 107 (B) 147 (C) 183 (D) 1,037

23. Which region recorded the most monsoon deaths in 2026 (NDMA)?
(A) Punjab (B) Sindh (C) KP (D) Balochistan

24. Roughly what share of monsoon deaths were children (by 3 September)?
(A) 10% (B) 25% (C) 46% (D) 70%

25. The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement was signed on:
(A) 17 September 2025 (B) 7 August 2026 (C) 28 February 2026 (D) 10 April 2026

26. Which three states signed the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement?
(A) Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt (B) Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye (C) Pakistan, Iran, Turkiye (D) Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkiye

27. The Pakistan-Saudi Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement was signed on:
(A) 17 September 2025 (B) 7 August 2026 (C) 28 February 2026 (D) 29 September 2025

28. The Saudi pipeline struck by drones on 11 September is the:
(A) Trans-Arabian (B) East-West (C) Baku-Tbilisi (D) Kirkuk-Ceyhan

29. The India-Pakistan naval collision occurred on:
(A) 10 September (B) 13 September (C) 15 September (D) 18 September

30. Which bilateral agreement did India cite in protest?
(A) Simla Agreement 1972 (B) 1991 advance-notice agreement (C) Indus Waters Treaty (D) Lahore Declaration

31. India summoned whom to protest the collision?
(A) Pakistan's High Commissioner (B) Pakistan's charge d'affaires (C) Pakistan's foreign secretary (D) Pakistan's navy chief

32. The UN Security Council resolution endorsing the Gaza plan is:
(A) 1701 (B) 2334 (C) 2803 (D) 242

33. Which two states pledged troops to the ISF according to the Long War Journal?
(A) Kosovo and Albania (B) Egypt and Jordan (C) Indonesia and Malaysia (D) Poland and Greece

34. The ISF's mandate in the roadmap includes:
(A) Police duties (B) Buffer separating forces (C) Disarming Hamas by force (D) Running Gaza's government

35. The Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act was signed on:
(A) 7 August (B) 16 September (C) 18 September (D) 24 September

36. The maximum tariff authorised on top buyers of Russian energy is:
(A) 25% (B) 50% (C) 100% (D) 500%

37. The Senate passed the Graham sanctions bill by:
(A) 62-38 (B) 86-11 (C) 75-25 (D) 91-9

38. The Sudan war began on:
(A) 15 April 2023 (B) 15 April 2021 (C) 1 January 2024 (D) 25 October 2021

39. The Quad mediating Sudan comprises the US and:
(A) UK, France, Germany (B) Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE (C) Turkiye, Qatar, Oman (D) China, Russia, India

40. El Obeid is the capital of which Sudanese state?
(A) Darfur (B) North Kordofan (C) Blue Nile (D) Khartoum

41. Who led the third UN straw poll for Secretary-General?
(A) Rafael Grossi (B) Michelle Bachelet (C) Rebeca Grynspan (D) Macky Sall

42. To be recommended, a UNSG candidate needs at least:
(A) 7 votes (B) 9 votes and no veto (C) 11 votes (D) 15 votes

43. Under which Charter article is the Secretary-General appointed?
(A) Article 27 (B) Article 51 (C) Article 97 (D) Article 99

44. The Trump-Xi summit is scheduled for:
(A) 18 September (B) 24 September (C) 1 October (D) 10 November

45. Emergency IEEPA tariffs were struck down by the US Supreme Court in:
(A) January 2026 (B) February 2026 (C) April 2026 (D) July 2026

46. The new Section 301 forced-labour duty on China is:
(A) 7.5% (B) 10% (C) 12.5% (D) 25%

47. Pakistan's term as an elected UNSC member is:
(A) 2024-25 (B) 2025-26 (C) 2026-27 (D) 2027-28

48. The only Latin American UN Secretary-General so far is:
(A) Kofi Annan (B) Javier Perez de Cuellar (C) Boutros Boutros-Ghali (D) Ban Ki-moon

49. How many economies are covered by the Section 301 excess-capacity probe?
(A) 10 (B) 16 (C) 27 (D) 60

MCQ ANSWER KEY

No.	Ans.	Explanation
1	C	Rs391.22 (up Rs6.88); Rs370.80 was the 11 September price and Rs421.45 is diesel.
2	B	A 50% cut for three months, with emergency services exempt.
3	C	Rs100 per litre, subject to a monthly quota.
4	C	Shops, markets and malls close by 9 pm.
5	D	Friday 18 September 2026, during Friday prayers.
6	B	Ittehadul Mujahideen, linked to Hafiz Gul Bahadur.
7	C	199 attacks; 144 was July's count.
8	C	July, with at least 606 killed.
9	B	5 June 2026, when the JKJAAC was banned.
10	C	Twelve seats.
11	B	10 August, after three staggered rounds.
12	C	10 + 5 + 2 = 17 years.
13	B	Section 426 CrPC was argued as the basis.
14	B	Rs200,000 each.
15	C	Fourteen; fifteen were in the unit and one survived.
16	B	26 August 2026; 7 September is the date of the report.
17	B	The spark was electrical, but safeguards were absent.
18	B	Article 239(4).
19	A	3 September 2026, unanimously.
20	A	A Federal Constitutional Court.
21	B	Provinces must establish local governments.
22	C	183 deaths; 1,037 was the 2025 toll.
23	C	KP with 74.
24	C	82 of 180 deaths, about 46%.
25	B	7 August 2026, by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkiye.
26	B	Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye.
27	A	17 September 2025.
28	B	The East-West pipeline bypassing Hormuz.
29	C	The evening of 15 September, in the North Arabian Sea.
30	B	The 1991 agreement on advance notice of military exercises, manoeuvres and troop movements.
31	B	Charge d'affaires Saad Ahmad Warraich.
32	C	Resolution 2803 of 17 November 2025.
33	A	Kosovo and Albania.
34	B	A temporary buffer, not a police force.
35	C	18 September 2026.
36	C	Up to 100 per cent.
37	B	86-11 on 7 August.
38	A	15 April 2023.
39	B	Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE.
40	B	North Kordofan.
41	C	Rebeca Grynspan with nine encourage votes.
42	B	Nine of 15 and no P5 veto.
43	C	Article 97.
44	B	24 September in Washington.
45	B	February 2026.

No.	Ans.	Explanation
46	C	12.5%, effective 24 July 2026.
47	B	2025-26.
48	B	Peru's Javier Perez de Cuellar (1982-91).
49	B	Sixteen economies; 60 is the forced-labour probe.

CONSOLIDATED VOCABULARY

The first ten words from each of the 14 articles (140 words), listed in order of appearance.

Word	Meaning	Article
Austerity	Deliberate reduction of public spending to control deficits	N-01
Pass-through	The extent to which a cost change reaches consumer prices	N-01
Subsidy	Financial support that lowers a price for a target group	N-01
Chokepoint	A narrow passage whose closure disrupts global trade	N-01
Conservation	Planned reduction in resource use	N-01
Leakage	Benefits reaching people outside the intended group	N-01
Fiscal space	Room in the budget to spend without breaching targets	N-01
Exogenous	Originating outside the system	N-01
Volatility	Rapid and unpredictable price movement	N-01
Circular debt	Chain of unpaid dues across the power sector	N-01
Insurgency	Organised armed rebellion against an established authority	N-02
Sanctuary	A place where militants are safe from pursuit	N-02
Kinetic	Involving direct military force	N-02
Attrition	Gradual wearing down through repeated losses	N-02
Faction	A subgroup within a larger organisation	N-02
Sectarian	Relating to divisions between religious sects	N-02
Compound	A secured, enclosed complex of buildings	N-02
Displacement	Forced movement of people from their homes	N-02
Deterrence	Discouraging action through fear of consequences	N-02
Legitimacy	Public acceptance of authority as rightful	N-02
Shutdown	Deliberate disruption of internet or mobile services	N-03
Proportionality	Legal test that a restriction must not exceed its aim	N-03
Legitimacy	Public acceptance of authority as rightful	N-03
Boycott	Refusal to participate as protest	N-03
Stronghold	An area where a group has strong support	N-03
Semi-autonomous	Self-governing in some matters but tied to a larger state	N-03
Refugee seats	Reserved assembly seats for displaced Kashmiris	N-03
Electoral reform	Changes to how elections or representation work	N-03
Blackout	Total or partial loss of communications	N-03
Curfew	Restriction on movement, usually at night	N-03
Suspension of sentence	Halting a punishment while an appeal is pending	N-04
Surety bond	A guarantee of appearance, secured by money	N-04
Judicial remand	Custody ordered by a court during investigation	N-04
Cyberterrorism	Use of digital means to create terror, as defined in law	N-04
Glorification	Praising an offence or offender	N-04
Chilling effect	Self-censorship caused by fear of punishment	N-04
Due process	Fair legal procedure before deprivation of liberty	N-04
Indictment	Formal framing of criminal charges	N-04
Adjournment	Postponement of a hearing	N-04
Decorum	Proper conduct in court	N-04
Neonatal	Relating to newborn babies, especially in the first month	N-05
Sprinkler	Automatic fire-suppression system	N-05
Evacuation	Organised removal of people from danger	N-05

Word	Meaning	Article
Negligence	Failure to take reasonable care	N-05
Systemic	Rooted in the whole system rather than one part	N-05
Accountability	Obligation to explain and accept responsibility	N-05
Safeguard	A measure that protects against harm	N-05
Audit	Systematic inspection against a standard	N-05
Compliance	Following rules and standards	N-05
Contractor	A firm hired to perform a service	N-05
Devolution	Transfer of powers to lower levels of government	N-06
Delimitation	Drawing of electoral constituency boundaries	N-06
NFC Award	Formula for sharing federal revenue with provinces	N-06
Veto player	An actor whose consent is necessary for change	N-06
Territorial integrity	Preservation of existing borders	N-06
Consensus	General agreement among key actors	N-06
Administrative unit	A subdivision created for governance	N-06
One Unit	1955 scheme merging West Pakistan's provinces	N-06
Subsidiarity	Decisions at the lowest competent level	N-06
Referendum	Direct popular vote on a question	N-06
Monsoon	Seasonal wind and rain pattern in South Asia	N-07
Flash flood	Sudden flood from intense rain in steep terrain	N-07
GLOF	Glacial lake outburst flood	N-07
Resilience	Capacity to withstand and recover from shocks	N-07
Adaptation	Adjusting to climate impacts	N-07
Mitigation	Reducing greenhouse gas emissions	N-07
Nullah	A drain or stream channel	N-07
Evacuation	Organised removal from danger	N-07
Livelihood	Means of earning a living	N-07
Encroachment	Illegal occupation of land or waterways	N-07
Chokepoint	Narrow strategic passage	I-01
Collective defence	Alliance principle that an attack on one is an attack on all	I-01
Entrapment	Being dragged into a war by an ally	I-01
Blockade	Naval closure of ports or coasts	I-01
Transit passage	Right to pass through international straits	I-01
Bypass	Alternate route around an obstacle	I-01
Proxy	A group acting on another power's behalf	I-01
Escalation	Increase in intensity of conflict	I-01
Haramain	The two holy mosques in Makkah and Madinah	I-01
Shuttle diplomacy	Mediation by moving between parties	I-01
Collision	Contact between vessels at sea	I-02
Charge d'affaires	Diplomat heading an embassy without an ambassador	I-02
Confidence-building measure	Step that reduces mistrust and misperception	I-02
Unintended escalation	Escalation not planned by either side	I-02
Surveillance	Close observation of activities	I-02
International waters	Waters beyond national territorial limits	I-02
Manoeuvre	Planned movement of forces	I-02

Word	Meaning	Article
Exclusive economic zone	Coastal state's resource zone up to 200 nautical miles	I-02
Hotline	Direct communication link for crises	I-02
Brinkmanship	Pushing a dispute to the edge of conflict	I-02
Disarmament	Removal of weapons from armed groups	I-03
Demobilisation	Disbanding armed units	I-03
Reintegration	Returning fighters to civilian life	I-03
Sequencing	Order in which steps are taken	I-03
Technocratic	Governed by experts rather than politicians	I-03
Guardianship	Supervision by outside authority	I-03
Buffer	Force separating adversaries	I-03
Verification	Independent confirmation of compliance	I-03
Mission creep	Expansion of a mission beyond its mandate	I-03
Guarantor	State that vouches for an agreement	I-03
Sanction	Penalty imposed to change behaviour	I-04
Secondary tariff	Tariff on a third country for trading with a target	I-04
Shadow fleet	Tankers evading sanctions with opaque ownership	I-04
Extraterritorial	Applying beyond a state's borders	I-04
Leverage	Power to influence outcomes	I-04
Discretion	Freedom to decide whether to act	I-04
Bipartisan	Supported by both major parties	I-04
Hiatus	Pause	I-04
Statecraft	Skilful conduct of state affairs	I-04
Compliance	Adherence to rules	I-04
Paramilitary	Armed force organised like a military but not part of it	I-05
Siege	Encirclement to force surrender	I-05
Humanitarian truce	Pause in fighting for aid access	I-05
Responsibility to protect	Norm that states and the world must prevent mass atrocity	I-05
Impasse	Deadlock	I-05
Patron	External backer of a party	I-05
Displacement	Forced movement from home	I-05
Ethnic cleansing	Systematic removal of a group	I-05
Corridor	Strip of land used for movement	I-05
Famine	Extreme scarcity of food	I-05
Straw poll	Informal non-binding vote	I-06
Veto	Power to block a decision	I-06
Encourage vote	Positive signal in a UN straw poll	I-06
E10	The ten elected Council members	I-06
P5	Five permanent Council members	I-06
Recommendation	Formal proposal to the General Assembly	I-06
Rotation	Regional turn-taking norm	I-06
Colour-coded ballot	Ballot marking P5 votes for visibility	I-06
Compromise candidate	Acceptable to all major players	I-06
Mandate	Authority to act	I-06

Word	Meaning	Article
Tariff	Tax on imports	I-07
Excess capacity	Production exceeding domestic demand	I-07
IEEPA	US emergency powers law used for tariffs	I-07
Section 301	US law against unfair trade practices	I-07
Exclusion	Exemption from a tariff	I-07
Leverage	Bargaining power	I-07
Retaliation	Response in kind	I-07
Forced labour	Work extracted under threat	I-07
Supply chain	Network producing a good	I-07
De-globalisation	Reduction in global integration	I-07

INDEX: REPORTS, ORGANISATIONS AND PERSONALITIES

Reports and Documents

Name	Note
PICSS Monthly Security Assessment, August 2026	Think-tank tally: 199 attacks, 158 deaths from attacks, 203 militants killed in operations
NDMA Monsoon Situation Reports 2026	Official deaths, injuries and damage figures from 26 June
PIMS Fire Inquiry Report (7 Sep 2026)	Finds systemic and institutional failure behind the death of 14 newborns
IMF Staff Report, Third EFF Review (2026)	Warns on energy imports, remittances and exchange-rate flexibility
Board of Peace Roadmap on Gaza Disarmament (30 Jul 2026)	Staged disarmament, verification body, ISF buffer role
UNSC Resolution 2803 (17 Nov 2025)	Endorses the Gaza plan and the ISF
Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026	Sanctions and up to 100 per cent secondary tariffs; signed 18 Sep 2026
Amnesty International Report on El Fasher (Jul 2026)	Concludes RSF committed crimes against humanity
Quad Roadmap on Sudan (12 Sep 2025)	Three-month truce, ceasefire, nine-month transition
Section 301 Excess-Capacity Investigation (Mar 2026)	Probe of 16 economies; report delayed past 24 Sep summit

Organisations

Name	Note
NCCIA	National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency; registered the Mazari-Chattha case
JKJAAC	Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee; banned 5 Jun 2026
NetBlocks	Independent monitor that documented the AJK shutdown
Ittehadul Mujahideen	TTP-linked faction that claimed the Kohat attack
PICSS	Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies
NDMA / PMD	National Disaster Management Authority / Pakistan Meteorological Department
PIMS	Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, Islamabad
Supreme Court Bar Association / Pakistan Bar Council	Lawyers' bodies split on the 28th Amendment
Board of Peace / ISF	US-led Gaza governance body and the International Stabilization Force
Quad (Sudan)	United States, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE
SAF / RSF	Sudanese Armed Forces / Rapid Support Forces
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development, led by Rebeca Grynspan
USTR	US Trade Representative, which runs Section 301 actions

Personalities

Name	Note
Shehbaz Sharif	Prime Minister of Pakistan; approved austerity drive
Asim Munir	Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal
Mohsin Naqvi	Interior Minister; said governance system had collapsed
Azam Nazeer Tarar	Law Minister on the 28th Amendment
Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry	DG ISPR
Imaan Mazari-Hazir	Lawyer and rights activist; PECA case
Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan	Led the Supreme Court bench in the Mazari case

Name	Note
Salman Akram Raja	PTI Secretary General, briefly detained 17 Sep
Sharjeel Memon	PPP leader from Sindh
Iva Petrova	IMF mission chief for Pakistan
Antonio Guterres	UN Secretary-General, leaves end of 2026
Rebeca Grynspan	Costa Rican candidate; led third straw poll
Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett	Guyana's UN ambassador; UNSG candidate
Rafael Grossi	IAEA chief and UNSG candidate from Argentina
Nickolay Mladenov	High Representative for Gaza
Abbas Araghchi	Iran's foreign minister
Badr Albusaidi	Oman's foreign minister
Kyrylo Budanov	Ukrainian official; said next talks may be in October
Steve Witkoff / Jared Kushner	US envoys in Ukraine talks
Volker Turk	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Abdel Fattah al-Burhan	Sudan army chief
Xi Jinping	Chinese president; summit in Washington 24 Sep

20 ESSAY TOPICS FOR PRACTICE

1. Energy security and national sovereignty in an age of chokepoint wars

2. Terrorism and the state: why do attacks persist despite operations?

3. Digital rights and the limits of state power

4. Freedom of expression and national security

5. Institutional failure and public safety in Pakistan

6. Federalism and provincial autonomy after the 18th Amendment

7. Climate change and Pakistan: from relief to resilience

8. Collective defence and Pakistan's foreign policy choices

9. Crisis management between nuclear-armed neighbours

10. Peace by design: external administration of conflict zones

11. Economic sanctions: instruments of peace or coercion?

12. The responsibility to protect and the failure in Sudan

13. The United Nations at eighty: reform and relevance

14. Globalisation under stress: tariffs and the new trade order

15. The role of the judiciary in a democracy

16. Good governance and the civil servant's role in crisis

17. Austerity, subsidies and social justice

18. Local government as the missing tier of Pakistan's federation

19. The media, disinformation and public trust

20. Multipolarity and the future of the Global South

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