



Invisible Levers

The UAE's Subtle Domination of Pakistan

The UAE plays a significant role in Pakistan through a multifaceted strategy that includes economic reliance, elite influence, infrastructure investments, and cultural outreach. This approach impacts Pakistan's sovereignty and serves as an example of strategic entanglement.

Economic leverage through labour and remittances

Around 1.5 million Pakistani workers live in the Emirates, making their remittances vital for Pakistan's economy. In 2024, over \$7 billion was sent home, with \$4.1 billion in March 2025 alone. The UAE has imposed visa restrictions on 'low-skilled' workers to express political dissatisfaction, prompting Pakistan to adjust its labor export strategy to meet Emirati demands, highlighting the UAE's significant influence.

Economic integration and infrastructure control

The UAE has evolved from a trading partner to an economic powerhouse. In 2023-24, bilateral trade reached \$5.6 billion, but the relationship is imbalanced, with Pakistan exporting low-value goods and importing high-value items from the UAE. During the pandemic, UAE companies profited from inflated vaccine sales to Pakistan. Emirati interests in acquiring stakes in Pakistan International Airlines, Karachi port terminals, and the digital economy indicate a strategic shift toward creating dependencies beyond traditional trade.

Infrastructure imperialism and sovereignty arbitrage

The UAE's strategy to acquire key



infrastructure and real estate in Pakistan exemplifies 'sovereignty arbitrage.' By controlling vital economic assets, the UAE can sway policy decisions without formal political power, using contracts and investments to make the loss of sovereignty nearly invisible to the public.

Elite capture and asset leverage

Pakistani elites own about 23,000 properties worth \$11 billion in Dubai, many of which are undeclared in Pakistan. The UAE's refusal to share asset data with Pakistani authorities, despite existing tax treaties, gives it prosecutorial leverage over influential Pakistanis. This silent threat of exposure or economic reprisal ensures compliance from Pakistan's leadership, allowing the UAE to shape policy outcomes without direct interference.

Political intervention by indirect means

The 2022 removal of Imran Khan, often attributed to U.S. pressure, also involved significant Emirati influence. Khan's independent foreign policy and anti-corruption stance threatened Gulf interests, prompting the UAE to act. The swift suppression of protests by Pakistani expatriates in Dubai and warnings from diplomatic missions illustrate the UAE's control over the diaspora. The subsequent realignment of Pakistani policy under Shabbaz Sharif, especially with respect to Gulf security priorities, attests to the effectiveness of this approach.

Military and security alignment

The UAE maintains deep institutional ties with Pakistan's military, offering post-retirement benefits such as luxury

properties and board positions in Emirati defense firms. These incentives foster a pipeline of pro-Gulf sentiment within Pakistan's security establishment, aligning its priorities with those of the UAE and embedding Emirati influence across generations of military leadership.

Strategic ambiguity in Balochistan

While investing in development projects in Balochistan, UAE also maintains connections with Baloch separatist groups, providing leverage over both Pakistani authorities and regional actors like China and Iran. This dual-track engagement internationalizes what Pakistan considers a domestic issue, transforming Balochistan into a geopolitical prop for control, thus further constraining Pakistan's sovereignty.

Religious soft power and cultural influence

The UAE funds religious institutions and media promoting a 'moderate Islam' that encourages political passivity and respect for authority, targeting influential groups like the Deobandis and Jamaat-e-Islami that threaten the Gulf's political order. By backing non-political Sufism and state-aligned clerics, the UAE is reshaping Pakistan's religious landscape to boost its regional power, using scholarships, financial incentives, and media partnerships to align Pakistani religious leaders with its views.

Foreign Policy realignment

Following the Abraham Accords, the UAE has subtly influenced Pakistan's foreign policy, particularly regarding Palestine and Kashmir. Official rhetoric has softened, and economic

channels between Pakistan and India have quietly reopened with Emirati facilitation. Access to Gulf markets and labor visas is increasingly tied to diplomatic flexibility, leading Pakistan's policymakers to self-censor and moderate their traditional stances due to possible economic consequences.

Influence through State-sponsored NGOs

The UAE Pakistan Assistance Program (UAE-PAP) has funded infrastructure, education, health, and water projects across Pakistan, particularly in sensitive areas like Swat. Other organizations, such as the Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation, Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation, and Emirates Red Crescent, deliver emergency relief, healthcare, and social welfare projects. These NGOs embed Emirati presence in critical sectors, reinforcing the UAE's role as an indispensable partner and stakeholder in Pakistan's development.

Conclusion

The UAE's influence in Pakistan showcases a modern geopolitical strategy. By leveraging economic power, aligning militarily, and exercising religious soft power, the UAE has created dependencies that restrict Pakistan's autonomy while letting it preserve its façade of sovereignty. This model illustrates how smaller, resource-rich states can shape the actions of larger, dependent nations in the 21st century, reflecting a shift towards more sophisticated methods of international influence.

Author: LEA

How to Lose Billions by Picking the Wrong Side

Turkey's Masterclass in Economics



India's comprehensive boycott of Turkish goods and services poses a significant threat to Turkey's fragile economy. In retaliation for Turkey's military support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, India is expected to cost Turkey billions in lost revenue across various sectors, including tourism, trade, and government contracts. The immediate effects are already visible through booking cancellations and contract terminations. Given Turkey's existing vulnerabilities, such as low currency value and high inflation, these losses could worsen its financial crisis and limit access to a rapidly growing Asian market. Here's a breakdown of the key financial impacts.

Economic Losses to Turkey from India's Actions

• Cancellation of \$2.3 Billion Naval Shipbuilding Contract

An agreement between India and the Turkish shipyard Anadolu Shipyard, part of the TAIS consortium, to construct five Fleet Support Ships for the Indian Navy, worth \$2.3 billion, has been terminated.

• Suspension of Çelebi Aviation Holding's Operations

A Turkish firm, Elebi Aviation Holding, has

had its security clearance revoked by India's Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, citing safety concerns. This decision resulted in a 20% decline in Çelebi Hava Servisi AS's share price, wiping out nearly \$200 million in shareholder value and reducing one-third of the company's global revenue.

• Tourism Sector Devastation

The tourism sector in Turkey is experiencing significant losses, particularly from Indian tourists, who contributed around \$350-400 million in 2024. Due to a boycott, bookings from India have dropped by 60%, with cancellations rising over 250%. Companies like ixigo have halted flights and hotel reservations, and MakeMyTrip reports a similar decline. Indian travel agents observe growing reluctance among customers to visit Turkey, fearing their spending may support hostile actions against India. While no formal advisory has been issued, concerns over arms transfers to Pakistan are influencing this avoidance, potentially leading to a prolonged tourism boycott and lasting revenue losses for Turkey's hospitality sector.

• Decline in Bilateral Trade

The trade relationship between India and Turkey is deteriorating, with India's imports

from Turkey reaching USD 3.78 billion in 2023-24. A major shipbuilding deal worth USD 2.3 billion was cancelled, impacting Turkish companies. National security concerns led to the revocation of security clearance for Turkish firms like Çelebi Aviation, which is seeking remedies for operational disruptions. Additionally, the Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) is advocating for higher tariffs on Turkish machine-made carpets, as India's 20% customs duty contrasts with Turkey's 46% duty on Indian goods. This has caused a decline in Indian carpet exports to Turkey, falling from \$17.08 million in 2015-16 to an expected \$6.5 million in 2024-25.

Turkey is facing significant economic losses due to India's comprehensive boycott following Operation Sindoor, affecting tourism, trade, government contracts, and institutional ties. Immediate impacts include hundreds of millions in lost tourism revenue, termination of a \$2.3 billion shipbuilding contract, and exclusion of Turkish companies from Indian markets. Given Turkey's vulnerabilities, like high inflation and currency devaluation, these losses could worsen the financial crisis.

Author: LEA

Afghan

Humanitarian Crisis

UNHCR Appeals for Emergency Response



The repatriation of Afghan nationals by Pakistan and Iran has worsened the humanitarian crisis, leaving Afghanistan in a fragile condition as it struggles to accommodate an influx of returnees, both forcibly and voluntarily displaced.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that in April alone, more than 280,000 Afghans were deported from Pakistan and Iran. On March 7, 2025, Pakistan announced the resumption of the "Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan" (IFRP), which now includes holders of the Afghanistan Citizen Card. As a result, in April, over 144,500 Afghans crossed from Pakistan, with 72 percent being undocumented, and around 30,000 were deported. These numbers represent the highest figures since September 2023, with most arrests and detentions occurring in Punjab province, followed by Balochistan.

The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has intensified its activities recently, and the measures taken may be aimed at curbing these actions. However, the resumption of the International Financial Recovery Plan (IFRP) seems intended to appease the people of Pakistan, especially in light of rising anti-Afghan sentiments during a time of significant economic hardship, as claimed by

Pakistan.

The current situation in Afghanistan poses significant challenges for reintegration efforts, as the nation continues to grapple with stabilizing its economy and infrastructure. Individuals who have been deported are compelled to leave behind their belongings and face an uncertain future. There is considerable concern among many regarding the future of their children, particularly in terms of education and overall welfare. The UNHCR has raised alarms about the situation of women and children returning to Afghanistan, where they encounter heightened restrictions on their rights to work, education, and mobility.

Afghans residing in Iran are currently facing the challenge of potential deportation, a situation that further complicates the circumstances in Afghanistan. Both Pakistan and Iran are hosting over 5 million Afghan refugees and asylum seekers, particularly in the context of ongoing economic downturns. The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is actively seeking emergency financial support from its partners, with an appeal for \$71 million to effectively address the needs of returnees over the next nine months.

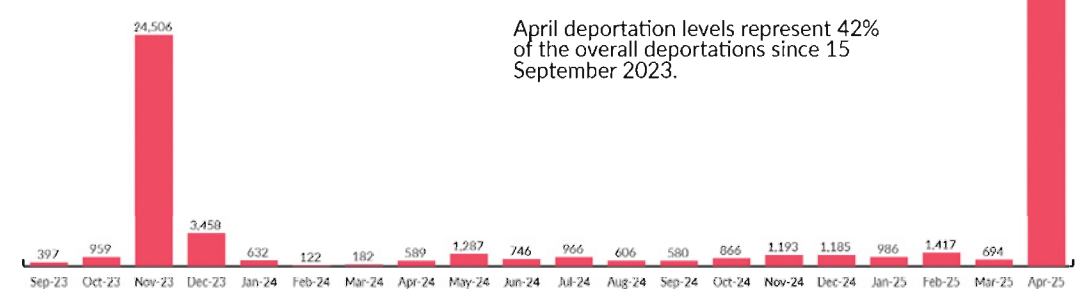
Author: LEA



CORE

PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN > Returns Emergency Response

Deportations since 15 September 2023 (as of 30 April 2025)



April deportation levels represent 42% of the overall deportations since 15 September 2023.

Figure 1. Deportation levels since Sep-23. Source-UNHCR

The Cost of Proxy Warfare Pakistan's Gamble with Terror Groups



Pakistan's association with various militant groups has consistently attracted international attention. Recently, the country's purported control and influence over terrorist organizations such as ISIS-K, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), and Hizbul Mujahideen have surfaced as significant components of its wider regional strategy. These actions are perceived not only as attempts to regulate the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (the Taliban government) and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), but also as a method to reinforce Pakistan's relevance in the changing security dynamics of Central and South Asia.

Pakistan's Use of Militant Groups as Strategic Tools

Containing the Taliban and the TTP

Pakistan's ties to groups like ISIS-K, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, and Hizbul Mujahideen are seen as a way to counter the Afghan Taliban and TTP's influence. After the Taliban's return to power, Pakistan's Northern boundaries are marked by increased cross-border conflicts and a resurgence of TTP attacks in Pakistan. By maintaining relationships with the militant groups, Pakistan seeks to exert pressure on the Taliban and TTP, using them as leverage when necessary.

The "Kashmir Style Infiltration" Tactic

Former TTP commander Ehsanullah Ehsan revealed that Pakistan employs a 'Kashmir Style Infiltration' along the Durand Line. This strategy involves creating distractions through armed clashes with Afghan forces, allowing for the covert movement of allied militants into specific Afghan areas under the guise of military operations. This approach mirrors Pakistan's historical tactics in Kashmir, where similar infiltration and diversion methods have been used to achieve strategic objectives.

Regional Ambitions and the Central Asian Dimension

Post-Crocus Hall Attack Calculations

The March 2024 Crocus Hall attack in Russia, linked to ISIS-K, highlighted the group's rising influence in Central Asia. In response, Pakistan aims to position itself as a key player in combating these transnational threats, like its role during the Global War on Terror, when it was seen as a frontline state against terrorism in Afghanistan, gaining international support. By influencing groups like ISIS-K, Pakistan seeks to enhance its reputation as a vital security partner in the region.

Allegations of State Sponsorship

Afghan Taliban and Iranian officials have accused Pakistan of supporting ISIS-K for territorial gains and destabilization. These claims intensified after ISIS-K announced operations against Baloch freedom fighters, which Afghan authorities interpret as evidence of Pakistani involvement. The perception of ISIS-K as a 'Pakistani phenomenon' is reinforced by its focus on fighting Baloch insurgents, aligning with Islamabad's goals to suppress separatist movements in Balochistan.

Internal Security Challenges and Blowback

Rising Instability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan

In spite of its attempts to influence militant organizations for strategic purposes, Pakistan is currently confronted with serious internal security issues. There has been a notable increase in assaults on the Pakistani army and security personnel in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, leading to considerable casualties and a decrease in morale within the military. The recent propaganda videos announcing the deployment of ISIS-K against Baloch freedom fighters highlight the lengths to which Pakistan's intelligence services are prepared to go in utilizing extremist proxies to suppress

internal opposition.

The Cost of Proxy Warfare

Pakistan's enduring support for militant organizations has resulted in a double-edged sword. Although these groups have acted as instruments for regional dominance, they have simultaneously led to increased instability within the country. The Pakistani military's failure to avert daily casualties in turbulent provinces underscores the dangers associated with this strategy. This predicament is further intensified by the military's declining morale, especially in the aftermath of Operation Sindoor carried out by India in retaliation to the Pahalgam terrorist attacks on its innocent civilians.

Conclusion

By leveraging local terrorist organizations such as ISIS-K and Lashkar, Pakistan seeks to exert influence over the Taliban administration, combat the TTP, affirm its significance in the battle against transnational terrorism, and quell separatist movements domestically. Nevertheless, this strategy has also contributed to instability within Pakistan's own territory, prompting concerns regarding the long-term viability and repercussions of employing proxy warfare as a means of state policy.

Author: LEA

Lalmonirhat Revival of Bangladesh's Airfield

A series of developments in Bangladesh from the sudden revival of a decades-defunct airbase to increased U.S. diplomatic activity has triggered concern in India's strategic and defense circles. Together, these signals point toward a potential escalation in the geopolitical competition for influence in South Asia's eastern theatre, with India increasingly perceiving a strategic squeeze along its vulnerable Siliguri Corridor.

At the heart of the matter is the resurrection of Lalmonirhat airstrip in northern Bangladesh, a move couched in civil aviation language but flagged by Indian intelligence as having dual-use military potential. Located barely 100 km from the Siliguri Corridor: India's "Chicken's Neck" connecting the northeast to the mainland which is the site's revival, reportedly with Chinese technical and financial assistance, has stirred anxiety in South Block.

Simultaneously, U.S. interest in strategic access to the Bay of Bengal appears to be accelerating. High-level diplomatic exchanges and backchannel talks have reportedly discussed forward logistics, ISR infrastructure, and closer cooperation with Bangladeshi maritime forces. Analysts suggest this could evolve into a mini-Quad flank under the radar — not only for China containment but also as a leverage point against India.

Interestingly, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus has emerged as an unlikely node in this geopolitical knot. His ongoing legal and financial disputes with Dhaka's Hasina government are being viewed by some Indian analysts as a soft-pressure vector, possibly used by Western actors to recalibrate Dhaka's foreign policy compass away from Beijing and New Delhi, and back toward Washington's sphere.

For its part, China remains deeply entrenched, quietly bolstering Bangladesh's defense infrastructure, port construction, and digital surveillance ecosystems.



This "string of east" from Hambantota in Sri Lanka to Kyaukpadaung in Myanmar now finds a potential midpoint in Bangladesh.

India is not taking any of this lightly. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma recently issued an unambiguous warning:

"If Bangladesh threatens the Siliguri Corridor, we will target both of its Chicken's Necks."

The message, while not official military doctrine, reflects New Delhi's rising alertness to any encirclement or adventurism in the northeast.

India is already scaling up Bagdogra and Hasimara airbases, deploying advanced ISR assets across the Brahmaputra valley, and reinforcing the Andaman & Nicobar Command to exert maritime control in the Bay of Bengal. Intelligence reports suggest renewed focus on counter-intelligence operations near India-Bangladesh border districts, particularly where foreign NGOs have active ground presence.

With China pressing from the east, the U.S. testing waters in Dhaka, and a volatile cocktail of regional politics brewing, India appears to be drawing a red line in both literally and strategically from Siliguri to Sittwe.

The message from India is clear

Bangladesh is no longer just a neighbor it is a front where the next regional flashpoint may quietly unfold.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

India's Twin Border Challenge

Intensifies After Operation Sindoor Adversaries step up activity as intelligence warns of coordinated escalation

A recent U.S. intelligence report and Indian military briefings have raised alarms over a coordinated military buildup by China and Pakistan along India's northern and western borders, following the high-impact Operation Sindoor earlier this month.

The 2025 U.S. World Threat Assessment identifies China as "the most comprehensive military threat," with Pakistan acting as a persistent destabilizer. Indian defense sources confirm both adversaries are enhancing forward deployments, ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) capabilities, and cross-domain activity near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and Line of Control (LoC).

Pakistan Reactivates Terror Channels

Pakistan's response to Operation Sindoor, which targeted terror launch pads and damaged airbases in PoK, has been a mix of diplomatic outreach and covert escalation. Drone incursions have spiked with Indian agencies confirming the neutralization of over 400 drones this year, many carrying arms and narcotics.

Sources in Indian intelligence say terror infrastructure is being rebuilt in PoK, using newer camouflage and satellite evasion techniques. ISI handlers have resumed contact with sleeper cells in Punjab and Jammu, while hawala networks through Gulf countries are being closely tracked.

Counter-terror operations under Project Trinetra have so far led to the dismantling of over 70 sleeper cells in the last month. Cyber monitoring, biometric sweeps, and AI surveillance are now operational across border towns in Kashmir and Punjab.

China Increases Tactical Pressure

On the eastern front, China has quietly



increased PLA activity across key sectors in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh. Fresh satellite imagery shows new radomes, surveillance posts, and hardened shelters near Demchok, Tawang, and Pangong Tso. The PLA is also reportedly conducting high-altitude logistics drills near the G216 Highway, allowing rapid troop mobilisation.

Recent deployments of J-20 stealth fighters and KJ-500 early warning aircraft to Shigatse and Hotan bases further point to elevated Chinese preparedness, Indian officials say.

China's construction of "Xiaokang" dual-use villages along the LAC also continues, raising concerns of long-term militarization under the guise of civilian settlement.

India Ramps Up Response

India's counter-response has been swift, layered, and increasingly sophisticated. The Indian Army has conducted brigade-level forward mobilizations along both northern and western sectors, with real-time coordination

between Northern and Western Commands now operating under elevated readiness protocols.

LCA Tejas squadrons from Sulur and Gwalior have been rotated to forward airbases in Leh and Pathankot, while Sukhoi-30 MKIs and Rafales maintain increased CAP (Combat Air Patrol) in sensitive corridors. UAV squadrons, including Heron Mk2 and indigenous Tapas drones, are maintaining round-the-clock ISR coverage across the LAC.

In response to China's electronic warfare capabilities, India has deployed mobile signal interception units, jam-resistant communication relays, and dual-layered drone jamming grids in key sectors such as Siachen, Tawang, and Sikkim.

Further, the Ministry of Defence has accelerated the integration of EL/M-2084 multi-mission radars, Swathi weapon-locating systems, and AI-assisted threat analytics platforms to support commanders in forward posts. The Kaveri engine revival project, crucial

for India's future indigenous fighter aircraft under AMCA (Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft), has received renewed funding and strategic focus under DRDO's revised 18-month roadmap. The engine is expected to complete key endurance tests by late 2025, offering long-term self-reliance in military propulsion technology.

Civilian defence preparedness has also been scaled up. Mock evacuation and blackout drills are being conducted in border districts of Punjab, Rajasthan, Ladakh, and Arunachal Pradesh. Local police and SDRF units are undergoing cross-training with Army units in contingency handling and border security reinforcement. India has also suspended the Indus Waters Treaty implementation processes, aiming to bring diplomatic leverage into its broader strategic calculus against Islamabad.

Intelligence Signals Joint Adversary Moves

Indian and U.S. agencies believe China and Pakistan are increasing intelligence-sharing and surveillance coordination, particularly via satellite-based ISR platforms and encrypted communication relays.

"It's not a two-front war in name any more — it's a synchronized, multi-domain challenge," said a senior Indian military analyst.

With summer conditions opening up the high-altitude routes, officials say the next 90 days will be critical, both in terms of infiltration risks and Chinese tactical maneuvers.

Defense officials stress that India is not seeking escalation but remains fully prepared. "Any provocation will be met with calibrated and overwhelming response," said a top defence spokesperson.

The border is quiet for now, but far from calm.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Pakistan's Economic Crisis WLD's High-Stakes Gamble

Pakistan's recent agreement with World Liberty Financial (WLF) amid rising economic turmoil highlights the lengths to which the nation is prepared to go in pursuit of immediate solutions, even at the potential cost of increased instability. This economic gamble comes as the country grapples with internal separatist movements, renewed militancy, and tense relations with Afghanistan and India.

This intersection of economic decline and political disintegration now poses a significant threat to the internal cohesion of Pakistan.

Background of the WLF deal

World Liberty Financial (WLF) is a cryptocurrency firm, reportedly 60% owned by the family of current U.S. President Donald Trump. The collaboration between Pakistan and WLF was finalized in April 2025, with the declared objective of positioning Pakistan as a 'South Asian crypto hub,' concentrating on decentralized finance (DeFi) and blockchain technology.

The deal was signed between WLF and the hastily launched Pakistan Crypto Council, which has appointed Binance founder Changpeng Zhao as an adviser. WLF representatives, including Trump associate Zachary Witkoff, visited Islamabad to meet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and army chief General Asim Munir, raising speculation about the actual intent behind the deal.

Brief on Pakistan's economic challenges

Since 2022, Pakistan has been in a severe economic crisis marked by soaring inflation, a falling currency, dwindling foreign reserves, and rising external debt.

In FY 2024-25, GDP shrank by -1.5%, the lowest in over 20 years. Inflation peaked at 38% in May 2023 before dropping to 0.7% by April 2025, driven precariously by currency devaluation and rising food and energy prices. The industrial and agricultural sectors face a bleak future, worsened by India's latest revocation of the Indus water treaty after the Pahalgam attacks. Poverty has risen, with about 42.3% of the population below the lower-middle-income threshold in the financial year 2024.

Foreign reserves have fallen to \$2.1 billion, barely enough for three weeks of imports, forcing Pakistan to rely heavily on IMF support, including a recent \$7 billion package with strict conditions like subsidy cuts and privatization of state enterprises. Currently, over 60% of federal revenue goes to servicing external debt, trapping the country in an unsustainable loop of borrowing to repay debt.

Implications of the deal with World Liberty Financial (WLF)

Considering Pakistan's challenging situation, the agreement with WLF is perceived by some as a desperate measure to attract foreign investment and enhance its digital.



However, critics contend that an emphasis on cryptocurrency and DeFi initiatives may distract from addressing more pressing structural issues, such as improving tax collection, reducing debt, and stabilizing the currency. Pakistan's tax revenue, incidentally, remains among the lowest in the world.

It is pertinent to note that the WLF's close relationship with the Trump family brings into question the underlying motivations for the deal, suggesting that it may have been influenced more by political connections than by a solid economic rationale. China is reportedly cautious about this development on the US-Pakistan front, additionally having expressed concerns about the potential for cryptocurrencies to undermine financial stability. Any such crisis stands to endanger Chinese infrastructure projects in Pakistan, triggering it to distance itself altogether.

Political unrest by sub-national groups in Pakistan

Pakistan's internal stability is further jeopardized by escalating unrest in Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), compounded by the growing threat from Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the deteriorating ties with the Taliban government in neighboring Afghanistan.

Balochistan has witnessed increasingly sophisticated attacks by outfits like the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), whose operations, such as the high-profile Jaffar Express hijacking in March 2025, showcase their challenge to state authority. In Sindh, protests against the controversial Cholistan canal project have turned violent, and reignited separatist demands for establishing a sovereign state called Sindhudesh. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Taliban government of Afghanistan is outrightly refusing to recognize

the Durand Line and openly supporting the Pashtunistan movement, seeking to unite Pashtun communities along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border into a sovereign state.

The TTP's resurgence is particularly concerning, as it has become the world's fastest-growing terrorist group, with a 90% increase in deaths attributed to its attacks. The group has expanded its operations beyond KP, carrying out attacks in Islamabad, Karachi, and Balochistan, and has reportedly received logistical and financial support from the Afghan Taliban. This alliance has enabled the TTP to sustain and intensify its insurgency, further destabilizing Pakistan's internal security.

In conclusion

Pakistan's internal economic and political turmoil is rapidly eroding national unity. Economic challenges, including rising inflation, shrinking GDP, heavy debt, and dwindling foreign reserves, have hampered the government's ability to deliver essential services and sustain growth. The controversial deal with World Liberty Financial (WLF) underscores Pakistan's misguided attempts to tackle the crisis, diverting attention from the vital structural reforms needed for economic stability. Simultaneously, political unrest fueled by separatist movements in Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, along with the resurgence of groups like the TTP, is increasing internal security threats. These intertwined and mutually reinforcing economic vulnerabilities and widespread political unrest undermine governance, weaken state institutions, and exacerbate public discontent, creating fertile ground for Pakistan's further fragmentation.

Author: LEA

China's Space Advance Enhances PLASSF Role

China's newly tested high-throughput satellite-to-ground data transmission system has far-reaching implications across both civilian and military domains. On the civilian side, the technology can significantly enhance Earth observation and remote sensing by enabling faster transmission of high-resolution imagery for applications in environmental monitoring, agriculture, urban development, and natural resource management.

It also plays a critical role in disaster response, where real-time data downlink is essential for rapid assessment and coordination during emergencies such as earthquakes, floods, or wildfires. Scientific research and space exploration will benefit from the system's ability to handle large volumes of experimental or observational data from space-based instruments, improving the efficiency of missions aboard satellites, space stations, or even lunar and planetary probes.

Furthermore, the system can support meteorological operations by accelerating the relay of weather data, thus improving forecasting accuracy. It also has potential applications in telecommunications, particularly in expanding broadband internet coverage to remote or underserved regions, contributing to the development of digital infrastructure.

On the military front, the strategic value of this innovation is even more pronounced. The system enables real-time reconnaissance and surveillance by transmitting satellite-gathered intelligence swiftly to command centers, allowing for immediate situational awareness. This capability is vital for precision targeting, missile guidance, and coordination of drone or hypersonic weapon systems.

Moreover, it strengthens electronic and cyber warfare operations, particularly those overseen by the People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force (PLASSF), headquartered in Beijing, which manages space, cyber, and electromagnetic domains.

The technology also integrates seamlessly into China's broader Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) framework, enhancing joint force effectiveness and battlefield dominance. As the global race for space-based supremacy intensifies, such advancements signal China's ambition to assert greater control over both strategic communications and information superiority in future conflicts.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

CHINA SETS NATIONAL RECORD WITH BREAKTHROUGH IN SATELLITE-TO-GROUND DATA TRANSMISSION



2,100 Mbps
X-band single-channel

China Ramps Up Naval Pressure on Taiwan and the Region

The timing of China's military surge is no coincidence



In a bold display of military power, China deployed nearly 130 ships which is most of them naval on May 21 and 27, including guided-missile destroyers and frigates. Two aircraft carrier groups, the Shandong and Liaoning, now patrol the South China Sea and waters off southeastern Taiwan, respectively, signaling Beijing's escalating presence along the first island chain—from Japan to Borneo.

Security sources say the Liaoning conducted drills simulating attacks on foreign ships and aircraft in the East and Yellow Seas, in what appears to be a calculated effort to assert dominance along the strategic first island chain, stretching from Japan to Borneo.

"There's a clear attempt to reinforce control over these waters amid global uncertainties," one official noted, pointing to an "obvious" increase in Chinese naval activity in recent weeks.

Beijing has also declared multiple live-fire zones near its coast, including one opposite southwestern Taiwan. Chinese state media broadcast amphibious drills in Fujian Province, while Japan tracked the Liaoning through the southern Japanese islands into the Western Pacific. China clearly wants to show these are its home waters

Japan and Taiwan have responded with increased surveillance and elevated combat readiness. Taiwan's defence ministry confirmed the Liaoning's presence off its coast and pledged to adjust its posture based on threat levels.

While China's foreign ministry claims its operations are in line with international law, regional neighbours remain on alert. Manila accused China of disturbing regional peace with its "illegal presence" in Southeast Asian maritime zones, while Japan vowed to continue close monitoring.

The timing of China's military surge is no coincidence. It comes as Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te marks his first year in office as leader which Beijing labels a "separatist" for his firm stance on defending Taiwan's sovereignty. Since Lai's inauguration, China has launched three large-scale military exercises around the island, each more provocative than the last. These maneuvers are not merely displays of strength; they are political signals aimed at pressuring

Taiwan and warning its international supporters. As regional tensions rise, China's repeated assertions of pursuing a "peaceful rise" on the world stage are increasingly contradicted by its aggressive actions at sea. The widening gap between rhetoric and reality is sending shockwaves through the Indo-Pacific, leaving neighbouring countries and global powers alike questioning Beijing's true intentions.

Author: Shruti Kaushik



Pakistan's Cyber Meltdown A National Embarrassment on Display

Pakistan has once again made global headlines for all the wrong reasons. Over 180 million internet accounts linked to platforms like Google, Microsoft, Facebook, banking systems, and even government portals have been compromised in a massive data breach, according to an official PKCERT advisory.

The leaked data, containing usernames, passwords, emails, and sensitive URLs, was publicly accessible and unencrypted, leaving Pakistan's digital infrastructure not just exposed, but humiliated.

This breach wasn't a one-off. It was orchestrated using infostealer malware, meaning attackers had long-term, sustained access to national systems undetected.

The real concern? Pakistan's military-controlled cyber apparatus completely missed it. A country that prides itself on military vigilance and digital modernization has failed at the most basic level: defending its own cyberspace.

Despite tall claims about cyber capabilities, the truth is clear neither the military nor the IT ministry had a clue. Advising users to "change passwords" after a breach of this magnitude is not just inadequate, it's pathetically amateurish.

And what about China, Pakistan's so-called tech partner? After years of importing Chinese surveillance systems and digital infrastructure under CPEC, this is the outcome? If this is "help," Pakistan is paying the price in sovereignty.

In an era where cyber is warfare, Pakistan has shown it is unprepared, over-reliant, and strategically exposed. The breach is not just a lapse it's a digital self-goal.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

India Eyes Russia's Su-57 Stealth Fighter

A New Chapter in Air Superiority

India's growing strategic and regional security challenges have reignited discussions around advanced fighter jet procurement, and Russia's fifth-generation Sukhoi Su-57 is back in the spotlight. As the Indian Air Force (IAF) continues to modernize its fleet, the Su-57 has emerged once again as a potential solution to bridge the stealth gap in India's aerial capabilities.

What Is the Su-57?

The Sukhoi Su-57 is Russia's premier fifth-generation multirole fighter designed for air superiority and ground attack. Developed by Sukhoi under the PAK FA program, the Su-57 combines stealth technology, super cruise capability, advanced avionics, and high maneuverability. It entered limited service with the Russian Aerospace Forces in 2020 and has since been undergoing gradual deployment with ongoing upgrades.

Why Does It Matter for India?

India had initially partnered with Russia in the Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA) project based on the Su-57 but pulled out in 2018, citing concerns over cost, stealth performance, and technology sharing. However, with China's growing aerial prowess—especially its Chengdu J-20 stealth jets—and delays in India's indigenous Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) program, the conversation is shifting.

Recent reports indicate that Russia has offered India a customized Su-57 variant, with potential local production under "Make in India" if strategic agreements align.

The Road Ahead

While no official confirmation has come from the Ministry of Defence, multiple defence analysts suggest that India is evaluating the Su-57 as part of its long-term fighter roadmap. Given that the AMCA is not expected before 2032, the Su-57 could fill a crucial capability gap in the interim.



Su-57 fighter @UAC

Key features include:

- **Stealth profile** with internal weapons bays.
- **3D thrust vectoring engines** for extreme agility.
- **Advanced sensor fusion** and radar systems.
- **Capability to carry hypersonic missiles** and other advanced munitions.

Strategic and Operational Implications:

- **Counter to China's J-20:** The Su-57 offers capabilities comparable or superior in certain areas, potentially providing India with an edge over its eastern neighbour.
- **Force Multiplier:** Integrated with IAF's current fleet of Rafales, Su-30MKIs, and Tejas, the Su-57 could act as a powerful force multiplier.
- **Technology Transfer:** India's renewed interest could hinge on deeper tech transfer commitments—essential for indigenous defence manufacturing.

However, challenges remain:

- 1. Cost and maintenance**
Russian aircraft are known for higher maintenance demands.
- 2. Operational compatibility**
Integrating Russian systems with India's predominantly Western-origin avionics and weapon systems may require significant adaptation.

Conclusion

For India, acquiring the Su-57 would be more than just a defense deal. It would mark a return to high-level Indo-Russian defense collaboration and a bold step toward shaping a modern, stealth-enabled air force.

As the skies over Asia grow more contested, India must carefully weigh performance, cost, and geopolitical implications before committing to any fifth-generation fighter.

Author: LEA

Feature	Su-57 (Russia)	F-35 Lightning II (USA)	J-20 (China)
Role	Multirole Stealth Fighter	Stealth Multirole Fighter	Stealth Air Superiority Fighter
First Flight	2010	2006	2011
Entered Service	2020 (limited)	2015 (F-35B)	2017
Max Speed	Mach 2.0	Mach 1.6	Mach 2.0 (est.)
Combat Radius	~1,500 km	~1,100 km	~1,200–1,500 km (est.)
Stealth	Moderate (less than F-35)	High (best among the three)	High (rear stealth debated)
Avionics	Advanced, improving	State-of-the-art	Advanced, less publicly known
Weapons Bay	Internal + External	Internal + External	Internal + External
Payload Capacity	~10,000 kg	~8,160 kg	~11,000 kg (est.)
Production Numbers	< 30 (as of 2025)	> 950 (all variants)	~250 (estimated)
Cost per Unit	~\$35–50 million (est.)	~\$80 million	~\$100–120 million (estimated)
Notable Strength	Super maneuverability	Sensor Fusion & Network Ops	Long Range & Stealth

India's Plan to Counter Underwater Mines

India has revived a long-pending defence project to build 12 specialized mine countermeasure vessels (MCMVs), critical for safeguarding ports and maritime trade routes from underwater mines deployed by enemy forces. The ₹44,000 crore proposal is expected to be placed before the Defence Acquisition Council, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, for approval. Once the "acceptance of necessity" is granted, an open tender will invite Indian shipyards to bid.

The urgency stems from increased Chinese

submarine activity in the Indian Ocean Region and Pakistan's expanding underwater fleet, which pose growing threats. India currently has no dedicated MCMVs, relying on makeshift measures like clip-on mine countermeasure suits.

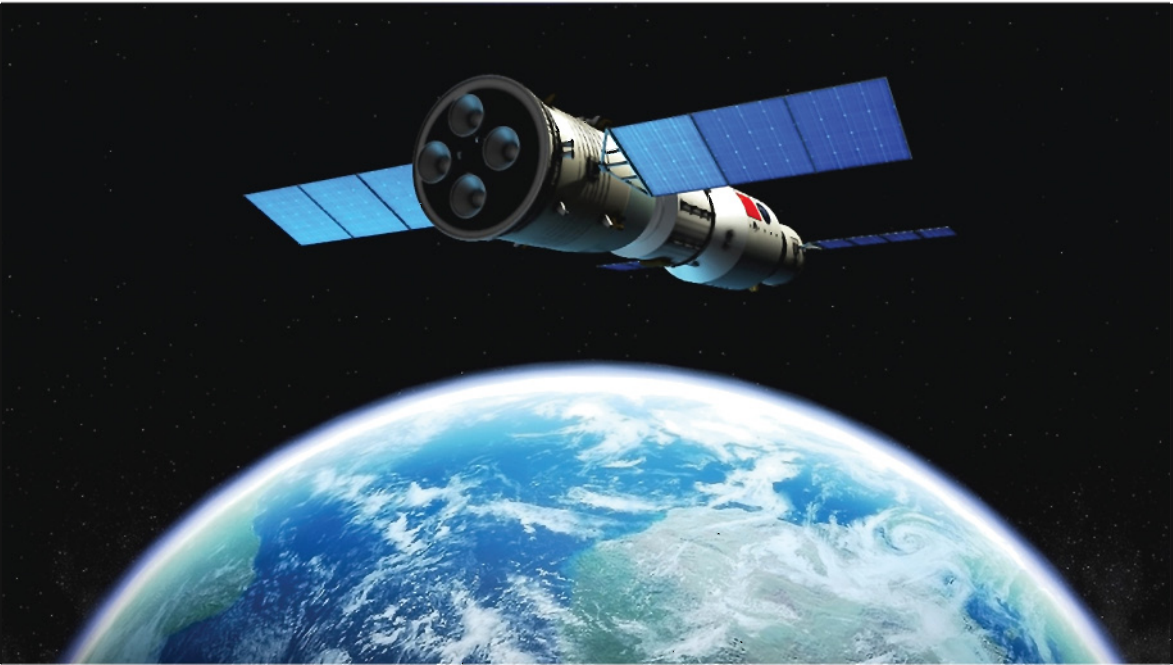
Each new MCMV will weigh 900–1,000 tonnes, feature a non-magnetic hull, and be equipped with advanced mine detection technologies, including HD sonar and remote-operated vehicles. The Navy, which previously scrapped a similar plan in 2017 due

to cost and technology transfer issues, needs at least 24 such vessels to secure India's extensive 7,500+ km coastline.

This move is part of a broader naval modernization push that includes the construction of 60 warships and the commissioning of INS Tamal, a multi-role frigate, next month in Russia. However, the Navy is projected to have only around 160 warships by 2030 due to ongoing delays and recommissionings.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

The Future is 300 Miles Up China's Orbital Computing



China has quietly launched something extraordinary into space. Twelve satellites blasted off from the Gobi Desert, but these weren't ordinary satellites. They were the first pieces of what China calls the Three-Body Computing Constellation – essentially a supercomputer floating in orbit.

When complete, this network of 2,800 satellites will process data faster than almost any computer on Earth, all while circling our planet every 90 minutes. The current dozen satellites are already crunching through 5 million billion calculations per second and storing data equivalent to 15,000 hours of HD video.

Why Space Computing Makes Sense

China has three compelling reasons for this audacious move. First, it's about independence. Every piece of data these satellites process doesn't need to touch the ground. The satellites talk to each other through laser beams, creating a digital network that's literally above earthly concerns.

Second, it's surprisingly green. Earth's data centers will consume more electricity than Japan uses by 2026. In space, solar panels work around the clock, and cooling is free – just radiate heat into the endless cold of space.

Third, it's about speed. When hurricanes form or crises unfold, processing data in space means answers come faster than ever before.

The Real Game-Changer

Subimal Bhattacharjee, a defense expert who's watched tech competitions between nations for decades, doesn't mince words: "This is a game-changer. China just leapfrogged traditional computing in a way that's going to force everyone else to catch up."

Think practically: weather forecasts could

become pinpoint accurate, climate models could run in real-time, disaster response could shift from reactive to predictive. But the same technology that predicts hurricanes can track military movements. Space is becoming another theater for competition.

Harvard's Jonathan McDowell calls orbital computing "very fashionable" but acknowledges this is the first real test of whether it actually works. "China, the US, and Europe will all deploy these systems," he told Chinese media.

India's Challenge

For India, this development is a wake-up call. The country built its reputation on cost-effective space missions, but this isn't about efficiency anymore. "Indian scientists and policymakers need to wake up," warns Bhattacharjee. "We need ISRO thinking about AI-powered satellites, not just launching them cheaply."

India has the talent – its engineers power Silicon Valley, its space program pulls off remarkable feats. The question is whether it can move fast enough, possibly through partnerships with Quad allies.

What's Next

Right now, twelve Chinese satellites are quietly humming 300 miles above us, processing data and proving computing doesn't have to happen on Earth. If they work as promised, expect copycat programs from every major power.

The age of earthbound computing may be ending. As these invisible satellites pass overhead tonight, they're already changing how we think about the future of human intelligence. The race has begun, and it's being run 17,500 miles per hour, 300 miles up.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Golden Dome

The Dawn of a New Missile Defense Era



In March 2025, the United States Ministry of Defense lifted the curtain on a new generation of missile defense technology with the formal unveiling of the **Golden Dome**, a state-of-the-art system poised to become a cornerstone of the country's strategic deterrence and air defense architecture. Far more than a mere upgrade of existing systems, the Golden Dome is a purpose-built response to the evolving dynamics of modern warfare, where traditional threats now intersect with hypersonic missiles, drone swarms, and loitering munitions.

At its core, the Golden Dome is a **multi-layered, AI-enhanced air and missile defense system** designed to intercept a wide range of aerial threats. It combines long-range missile interception with short-range precision targeting, and is uniquely capable of handling

everything from ballistic and cruise missiles to hypersonic glide vehicles and low-flying unmanned drones. Its radar and sensor suite operates across multiple bands, allowing 360-degree situational awareness and real-time threat tracking. Crucially, the system is built with autonomous decision-making at its center powered by artificial intelligence that can instantly assess threats, assign priority, and launch the most effective countermeasure without waiting for human intervention.

Unlike its predecessors such as the Iron Dome or the U.S.-built Patriot system, the Golden Dome is not limited by range or threat category. With an interception capability of up to 1,500 kilometers and optional integration of **directed-energy weapons** like high-powered lasers, the system is designed not just to meet

today's challenges but to anticipate tomorrow's.

Its mobile launchers and modular architecture mean it can be rapidly deployed across varied terrains, and easily upgraded to incorporate future technologies—such as advanced decoy discrimination or even quantum-secure communications.

From a strategic standpoint, the Golden Dome is a response to both technological necessity and geopolitical urgency. Regional tensions, emerging asymmetric threats, and the global spread of hypersonic weapons have prompted a rethink of traditional missile defense strategies. The Ministry of Defense has emphasized that this system is not just a shield, but a platform for layered, integrated defense—capable of working in concert with existing systems and allied networks.

Deployment of the Golden Dome will begin in late 2026, with the first phase focusing on high-priority military zones and critical infrastructure hubs. A three-phase rollout will see the system gradually extended to urban population centers and border regions by the end of the decade. A total budget of **\$5.8 billion** has been allocated for the program through 2030, with \$1.2 billion already invested in development and initial manufacturing. The funding also includes provision for system upgrades and integration into joint-force command frameworks.

While still in its early stages, the Golden Dome has already begun to reshape the defense calculus in the region. Its unveiling sends a clear message: the era of reactive missile defense is over. What follows is a future of preemptive, intelligent, and multi-domain shielding where threats are neutralized not just swiftly, but smartly.

For defense analysts and military strategists, the Golden Dome is more than a technological milestone. It is a bold declaration of preparedness in an increasingly unpredictable world.

Author: Shruti Kaushik