

Pakistan's Geopolitical and Military Security: Challenges, Strategic Interests and Future Prospects

Abstract

Pakistan occupies a strategically important position at the intersection of South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and the Indian Ocean region. Its geopolitical location provides significant economic, diplomatic and strategic opportunities, but it also exposes the country to complex security challenges. Pakistan's security environment is shaped by its rivalry with India, the unresolved Kashmir dispute, instability along the Afghanistan border, militant organizations such as the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), water disputes concerning the Indus Waters Treaty, and competition among major global powers. The India–Pakistan military conflict of May 2025 further demonstrated the dangers of escalation between two nuclear-armed states. This research paper examines Pakistan's geopolitical and military security through historical, regional, economic and strategic perspectives. It analyses Pakistan's geostrategic location, conventional and nuclear deterrence, internal security challenges, relations with China, the United States, Afghanistan and Iran, and emerging threats such as hybrid warfare, cyberattacks, drone technology and climate-related insecurity. The paper argues that military strength remains essential for Pakistan's territorial defence, but sustainable national security also requires economic stability, political continuity, effective diplomacy, internal cohesion, improved governance and regional conflict-management mechanisms.

Keywords: Pakistan, Geopolitics, Military Security, National Security, Kashmir, TTP, BLA, Indus Waters Treaty, India–Pakistan Conflict, South Asian Security, Strategic Stability

1. Introduction

Geopolitical and military security are central components of Pakistan's national security framework. Since its establishment in 1947, Pakistan has faced a challenging regional environment shaped by territorial disputes, strategic competition, ideological conflicts, terrorism, economic vulnerabilities and changing international alliances. Its location has made it an important state in South Asian, Central Asian, Middle Eastern and Indian Ocean geopolitics.

Pakistan shares borders with India, Afghanistan, Iran and China and has access to the Arabian Sea. It is situated near important trade routes, energy corridors and maritime routes connecting the Middle East with South and East Asia. The country's strategic importance has increased due to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the development of Gwadar Port, the changing security environment in Afghanistan and growing competition in the Indo-Pacific region.

However, Pakistan's geopolitical importance is accompanied by serious security challenges. The unresolved Kashmir dispute remains the most significant source of tension between Pakistan and India. Relations with Afghanistan have been affected by cross-border militancy, border-management disputes and the activities of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). In Balochistan, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and other militant groups have posed threats to internal stability, infrastructure and foreign investment.

The water dispute with India has also become an increasingly important national security concern. The Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 historically provided a framework for the distribution of the Indus river system between India and Pakistan. However, tensions following the April 2025 attack in Indian-administered Kashmir and the subsequent military conflict led India to announce that it would hold the treaty in abeyance. The World Bank has historically described the treaty as a durable agreement that survived several wars and crises.

The military confrontation between India and Pakistan in May 2025 further highlighted the fragility of regional stability. The conflict involved missile, drone, air and artillery exchanges and lasted approximately four days before a ceasefire was announced on 10 May 2025. Analysts described it as one of the most serious military crises between the two nuclear-armed countries in decades.

This paper analyses the major geopolitical and military security challenges facing Pakistan and explores policy options for strengthening national resilience, strategic stability and regional peace.

2. Research Objectives

The major objectives of this research paper are:

1. To examine Pakistan's geostrategic importance.
2. To analyse the major external and internal security challenges facing Pakistan.

3. To assess the impact of India–Pakistan rivalry, Kashmir and the 2025 military conflict on regional security.
 4. To examine the security implications of the TTP and BLA.
 5. To evaluate the strategic importance of the Indus Waters Treaty.
 6. To analyse Pakistan’s defence capabilities and strategic partnerships.
 7. To identify emerging threats, including hybrid warfare, cyberattacks and drone technology.
 8. To recommend measures for improving Pakistan’s geopolitical and military security.
-

3. Research Questions

This paper addresses the following questions:

1. How does Pakistan’s geographical location influence its geopolitical and military security?
 2. What are the major external and internal security threats facing Pakistan?
 3. How do the Kashmir dispute and India–Pakistan rivalry affect Pakistan’s national security?
 4. What are the security implications of the TTP, BLA and cross-border militancy?
 5. How has the 2025 India–Pakistan conflict changed the regional security environment?
 6. What is the importance of the Indus Waters Treaty for Pakistan’s national security?
 7. How can Pakistan strengthen its security through diplomacy, economic resilience and defence modernization?
-

4. Conceptual Framework

4.1 Geopolitical Security

Geopolitical security refers to the protection of a state’s strategic interests in relation to geography, territory, borders, resources, alliances and international power competition. A country’s geographical location can create both opportunities and vulnerabilities. States located near conflict zones, major trade routes or competing powers often face greater strategic pressure.

For Pakistan, geopolitics is influenced by:

- Its location between South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East
- Its proximity to China and India
- Its access to the Arabian Sea
- Its relationship with Afghanistan and Iran
- Its role in regional connectivity projects
- Its position in major-power competition

4.2 Military Security

Military security refers to a state's ability to protect its territory, population, sovereignty and strategic assets against external and internal threats. It includes:

- Conventional military capabilities
- Air and maritime defence
- Border security
- Intelligence capabilities
- Nuclear deterrence
- Counterterrorism operations
- Defence technology
- Strategic communication

4.3 Relationship Between Geopolitics and Military Security

Geopolitical developments directly influence military planning. Regional rivalries can increase defence expenditure, border deployments and military modernization. Similarly, military developments can reshape diplomatic relations and regional alliances.

Pakistan's military security cannot therefore be understood separately from its relations with India, Afghanistan, China, the United States, Iran and other regional actors.

5. Pakistan's Geostrategic Location and Its Importance

5.1 Pakistan's Position in South Asia

Pakistan's location gives it considerable strategic importance. It is situated beside India, one of the world's largest states and a major regional power. Its western borders connect it with Afghanistan and Iran, while its northern border connects it with China.

This location places Pakistan at the intersection of several strategic regions:

- South Asia
- Central Asia

- The Middle East
- Western China
- The Arabian Sea
- The wider Indo-Pacific region

Pakistan's location makes it important for trade, energy connectivity, defence cooperation and regional diplomacy. At the same time, it exposes the country to border tensions, militant movement, refugee flows and regional power competition.

5.2 Arabian Sea and Maritime Security

Pakistan's coastline along the Arabian Sea is important for trade, energy imports and maritime defence. Karachi Port, Port Qasim and Gwadar Port provide access to international maritime routes.

Maritime security is important because Pakistan depends heavily on sea routes for:

- Oil and gas imports
- International trade
- Industrial raw materials
- Export activities
- Strategic connectivity

Threats to maritime security may include naval competition, piracy, terrorism, disruption of shipping routes and attacks on ports or offshore infrastructure.

5.3 Gwadar Port and CPEC

Gwadar Port and CPEC are important elements of Pakistan's economic and strategic planning. CPEC connects Pakistan with China through infrastructure, energy, transport and industrial projects.

However, CPEC also creates security responsibilities. Infrastructure, Chinese personnel, transport routes and energy projects require effective protection. Attacks on foreign workers or development projects can damage Pakistan's international reputation and discourage investment.

5.4 Connectivity with Central Asia

Pakistan's geographical position offers potential access to Central Asian markets.

Through Afghanistan, Pakistan can potentially connect Central Asian states with Arabian Sea ports.

However, this opportunity depends on:

- Peace and stability in Afghanistan
 - Improved regional infrastructure
 - Border management
 - Trade agreements
 - Energy cooperation
 - Reduction in terrorism and political instability
-

6. Historical Evolution of Pakistan's Security Policy

6.1 Early Security Challenges After 1947

Pakistan faced major security challenges immediately after independence. These included:

- The Kashmir dispute
- Border disagreements
- Refugee and population displacement
- Economic and institutional weaknesses
- Limited defence infrastructure
- Regional uncertainty

The Kashmir dispute became a central feature of Pakistan's foreign and defence policy and contributed to repeated military confrontations with India.

6.2 Pakistan During the Cold War

During the Cold War, Pakistan developed close security relations with the United States and became part of Western-led regional defence arrangements, including SEATO and CENTO.

Pakistan's strategic importance increased because of:

- Its location near the Soviet Union
- Its proximity to Afghanistan
- Its relationship with China
- Its rivalry with India
- Its role in regional containment strategies

However, dependence on external alliances also created challenges, particularly when the priorities of Pakistan and its partners diverged.

6.3 The Soviet–Afghan War

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 significantly affected Pakistan's security environment. Pakistan became a frontline state in the conflict and experienced:

- Refugee inflows
- Weapons proliferation
- Growth of militant networks
- Religious extremism
- Border instability
- Economic and social pressures

The long-term consequences of the Afghan war continued to influence Pakistan's internal security after the Soviet withdrawal.

6.4 Post-9/11 Security Environment

After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, Pakistan became a major partner in international counterterrorism efforts. The country faced serious internal consequences, including terrorist attacks, suicide bombings, militant violence and displacement.

Pakistan conducted several counterterrorism operations and developed new security institutions and strategies. Nevertheless, militancy remained a persistent challenge, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

7. India–Pakistan Rivalry and Strategic Competition

7.1 The Kashmir Dispute

The Kashmir dispute is the most enduring conflict between India and Pakistan. Pakistan refers to the region as Indian-occupied Kashmir or Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, while India regards Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of the country.

The dispute has several dimensions:

- Territorial claims
- Political representation
- Human rights concerns
- Military deployment
- Cross-border violence
- Water resources
- Regional identity and self-determination

The Line of Control remains heavily militarized. Periodic ceasefire violations, militant attacks and political developments in Kashmir can rapidly increase tensions between the two countries.

The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) continues to exist in connection with the India–Pakistan dispute and the monitoring of ceasefire-related developments.

7.2 India's Constitutional Changes in 2019

India's decision in August 2019 to revoke the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir and reorganize the territory intensified political and diplomatic tensions with Pakistan.

Pakistan opposed the decision and raised the Kashmir issue at international forums. India, on the other hand, described the move as an internal constitutional matter. The disagreement has continued to affect bilateral relations.

7.3 Military Balance and Deterrence

India and Pakistan maintain significant conventional military capabilities and nuclear arsenals. Nuclear deterrence has reduced the likelihood of a full-scale conventional war, but it has not eliminated the risk of limited conflict.

The strategic environment is complicated by:

- Short warning times
- Missile development
- Airpower competition
- Drone technology
- Cross-border militancy
- Political pressure
- Public nationalism
- Misinformation during crises

Nuclear deterrence may prevent total war, but limited military exchanges can still produce serious escalation risks.

8. The 2025 India–Pakistan Military Conflict

8.1 Background of the Crisis

The 2025 India–Pakistan conflict followed a deadly attack on tourists in Pahalgam, in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, on 22 April 2025. Twenty-six people were killed in the attack. India attributed responsibility to Pakistan-based militants, while Pakistan denied involvement and called for an impartial investigation.

The incident triggered a rapid deterioration in bilateral relations. Diplomatic measures, travel restrictions, trade-related actions and water-related decisions were followed by military escalation.

8.2 Military Escalation in May 2025

On 7 May 2025, India launched military strikes against targets it described as terrorist infrastructure. Pakistan rejected India's claims regarding the nature and legitimacy of the targets and responded militarily.

The conflict involved:

- Air strikes
- Fighter aircraft
- Missiles
- Drones
- Air-defence systems
- Artillery exchanges
- Attacks on military-related infrastructure

The conflict continued for approximately four days, from 7 to 10 May. It was widely described as the most serious military crisis between the two nuclear-armed neighbours in several decades.

8.3 Ceasefire and Diplomatic De-escalation

On 10 May 2025, India and Pakistan announced an agreement to halt military operations. Both sides subsequently presented different interpretations of the conflict and its outcome. India emphasized its stated military and political objectives, while Pakistan highlighted its military response and claims of successfully defending its territory.

The ceasefire reduced the immediate risk of escalation, but it did not resolve the underlying disputes related to:

- Kashmir
- Cross-border militancy

- Water-sharing
- Military doctrines
- Diplomatic mistrust
- Information warfare

8.4 Strategic Lessons from the 2025 Conflict

The 2025 conflict revealed several important lessons:

1. Crisis escalation can occur rapidly.

A single terrorist incident can trigger military confrontation between nuclear-armed states.

2. Airpower and drones are becoming increasingly important.

Modern conflicts involve precision strikes, unmanned systems, surveillance and air-defence competition.

3. Information warfare influences public perception.

Both sides used strategic messaging, while competing claims were difficult to independently verify.

4. Nuclear deterrence does not eliminate limited conflict.

Nuclear weapons may discourage total war but do not necessarily prevent short military exchanges.

5. Communication channels are essential.

Military hotlines, diplomatic engagement and third-party de-escalation efforts can reduce the danger of uncontrolled escalation.

6. Water disputes can become security disputes.

The Indus Waters Treaty became part of the broader crisis, demonstrating how environmental and economic issues can acquire strategic significance.

9. The Indus Waters Treaty and Water Security

9.1 Background of the Indus Waters Treaty

The Indus Waters Treaty was signed in 1960 by India and Pakistan with the assistance of the World Bank. It allocated the eastern rivers—Ravi, Beas and Sutlej—primarily to India, while the western rivers—Indus, Jhelum and Chenab—were allocated primarily to Pakistan, subject to specified provisions.

The treaty created mechanisms for:

- Water allocation
- Information sharing
- Hydrological cooperation
- Dispute resolution
- Technical discussions
- Neutral Expert proceedings
- Arbitration under specified circumstances

The World Bank describes the treaty as one of the most successful international water-sharing agreements and notes that it survived wars and prolonged political tensions.

9.2 Importance of the Treaty for Pakistan

The Indus river system is vital for Pakistan's:

- Agriculture
- Irrigation
- Food security
- Hydropower generation
- Drinking water
- Industrial activity
- Rural employment

Pakistan is heavily dependent on the Indus Basin. Any major disruption or uncertainty in water flows could create serious economic, social and political consequences.

9.3 India's 2025 Decision to Hold the Treaty in Abeyance

Following the April 2025 Pahalgam attack, India announced that it would place the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance. Pakistan rejected the move and argued that the treaty does not allow unilateral suspension.

The World Bank's position has historically emphasized the treaty's legal and institutional framework. In 2025, reporting also highlighted that the treaty contains no straightforward provision allowing one party to unilaterally suspend it.

9.4 Water Security as a Strategic Issue

The Indus Waters Treaty is no longer only an environmental or technical matter. It is connected to:

- National security
- Agricultural productivity

- Food prices
- Energy generation
- Climate resilience
- Diplomatic relations
- Regional stability

Pakistan should pursue water diplomacy while simultaneously improving domestic water management. External diplomatic efforts are important, but Pakistan must also reduce water wastage, improve irrigation efficiency, expand water storage where environmentally and technically appropriate, and develop climate-resilient agriculture.

10. Internal Security Challenges

10.1 Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan is one of the most serious militant threats to Pakistan's internal security. The group has carried out attacks against civilians, security forces, government institutions and public places.

The TTP's activities have been associated with:

- Terrorist attacks
- Suicide bombings
- Assassinations
- Attacks on security personnel
- Threats to public institutions
- Cross-border militant movement
- Displacement of local populations

The United Nations Security Council sanctions framework identifies Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan as a listed entity associated with terrorism and Al-Qaida-related sanctions mechanisms.

10.2 TTP and the Afghanistan Factor

The security situation along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border is a major concern. Pakistan has repeatedly raised concerns about militant sanctuaries and cross-border attacks originating from Afghan territory. Afghan authorities have rejected or disputed various Pakistani allegations.

The TTP issue is complicated by:

- The difficult geography of the border
- Tribal and family linkages
- Refugee movements
- Weak border coordination
- Political tensions between Islamabad and Kabul
- Differences over the Durand Line
- Regional militant networks

Pakistan's approach requires a combination of border security, intelligence cooperation, diplomacy, counterterrorism operations and socioeconomic development.

10.3 Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA)

The Balochistan Liberation Army is a separatist militant organization operating primarily in Balochistan. It opposes the Pakistani state and has targeted security forces, government installations, infrastructure and foreign nationals.

The BLA's activities have included:

- Attacks on security personnel
- Attacks on transport routes
- Attacks on infrastructure
- Threats to CPEC-related projects
- Attacks on civilians and ethnic communities
- Hostage-taking and coordinated militant operations

Recent reporting has highlighted the continued presence of BLA-led violence in Balochistan, including coordinated attacks in 2025.

10.4 Causes of Balochistan's Security Problems

The security situation in Balochistan cannot be explained only through militancy. It also involves longstanding political, economic and social concerns, including:

- Unequal development
- Unemployment
- Limited public services
- Political marginalization
- Disputes over natural resources
- Missing persons and human rights allegations
- Weak civilian institutions

- Lack of trust between communities and the state

A purely military response may suppress violence temporarily but cannot eliminate the underlying grievances. Sustainable stability requires political dialogue, constitutional rights, transparent resource distribution, local participation and effective public services, alongside lawful security operations.

10.5 Relationship Between the TTP and BLA

The TTP and BLA have different ideological backgrounds and political objectives. The TTP is primarily associated with militant Islamist objectives, while the BLA is a separatist organization linked to Baloch nationalist militancy.

However, some analysts have observed possible tactical convergence between militant groups, particularly in terms of opposition to the Pakistani state, propaganda, logistics and operational interests. A 2026 academic analysis examined the evolving relationship between the TTP and BLA and described their possible cooperation as pragmatic rather than based on identical ideologies.

Pakistan should therefore monitor potential links between militant networks without treating all groups as identical. Counterterrorism policy must be based on evidence, intelligence and group-specific analysis.

11. Other Internal Security Threats

11.1 Extremism and Sectarian Violence

Sectarian violence and extremist narratives threaten Pakistan's social cohesion. These challenges can:

- Create fear among communities
- Damage national unity
- Encourage recruitment into militant organizations
- Undermine economic activity
- Increase pressure on law-enforcement institutions

Countering extremism requires education reform, responsible religious discourse, effective law enforcement, financial monitoring and community engagement.

11.2 Political Instability

Political instability can weaken national security by reducing policy continuity and institutional coordination. Frequent political crises may affect:

- Foreign policy
- Economic planning
- Counterterrorism strategy
- Defence procurement
- Relations with international partners
- Public trust

A consistent national security policy should be based on long-term national interests rather than short-term political competition.

11.3 Cybersecurity and Information Warfare

Pakistan faces growing cyber risks involving:

- Government databases
- Financial institutions
- Energy systems
- Military communications
- Telecommunications networks
- Critical infrastructure
- Public information systems

Disinformation and misinformation can also intensify social polarization and damage diplomatic credibility. Cybersecurity must therefore be treated as a national security priority.

12. Pakistan's Military Capabilities and Defence

Preparedness

12.1 Conventional Military Capabilities

Pakistan maintains significant conventional military capabilities through:

- Pakistan Army
- Pakistan Air Force
- Pakistan Navy
- Air-defence systems
- Missile forces
- Intelligence institutions
- Strategic communication systems

The primary objectives of these capabilities are territorial defence, deterrence, counterterrorism and protection of national sovereignty.

12.2 Pakistan Air Force

Airpower is essential because of the geographical proximity and military competition between India and Pakistan. The Pakistan Air Force focuses on:

- Air defence
- Fighter aircraft
- Surveillance
- Airborne early warning
- Precision strike capabilities
- Pilot training
- Joint exercises
- Airspace monitoring

The 2025 conflict demonstrated the importance of airpower, air-defence systems, electronic warfare and situational awareness in modern regional conflicts.

12.3 Pakistan Army

The Pakistan Army remains responsible for:

- Land defence
- Border security
- Counterterrorism operations
- Internal security support under constitutional and legal arrangements
- Disaster relief
- Strategic infrastructure protection

The army faces a complex operational environment involving conventional deterrence on the eastern border and counterterrorism responsibilities in the west.

12.4 Pakistan Navy and Maritime Security

The Pakistan Navy's responsibilities include:

- Coastal defence
- Protection of sea lanes
- Maritime surveillance
- Port security
- Protection of offshore infrastructure

- Naval deterrence
- Cooperation with regional maritime partners

The importance of the Arabian Sea is increasing because of global energy routes, commercial shipping and Indo-Pacific competition.

12.5 Nuclear Deterrence

Pakistan's nuclear capability is primarily linked to strategic deterrence against India. Nuclear deterrence is intended to prevent large-scale aggression by raising the potential costs of war.

However, nuclear deterrence also creates responsibilities:

- Secure command and control
- Prevention of unauthorized access
- Strategic communication
- Crisis management
- Risk-reduction measures
- Avoidance of dangerous rhetoric

Nuclear weapons cannot resolve political disputes. They may deter certain forms of aggression, but long-term peace requires diplomacy and conflict resolution.

12.6 Defence Production and Technological Self-Reliance

Pakistan has developed defence-production capabilities in areas such as:

- Aircraft manufacturing
- Armoured vehicles
- Small arms
- Unmanned aerial systems
- Missiles
- Naval platforms
- Defence electronics

Domestic defence production can reduce dependence on foreign suppliers, support employment and improve strategic autonomy. Nevertheless, technological self-reliance requires sustained investment in research, education, engineering and industrial capacity.

13. Pakistan's Strategic Partnerships

13.1 Pakistan–China Relations

China is Pakistan's most important strategic partner. The relationship includes:

- Defence cooperation
- Economic investment
- CPEC
- Diplomatic support
- Infrastructure development
- Energy projects
- Technology cooperation

China's support is important for Pakistan's economic and military planning. However, the safety of Chinese nationals and projects has become a major concern. Attacks on Chinese personnel can negatively affect bilateral trust and investment.

13.2 Pakistan–United States Relations

Pakistan–United States relations have historically included cooperation in:

- Defence
- Counterterrorism
- Regional diplomacy
- Trade
- Education
- Development assistance

The relationship has also experienced disagreements over Afghanistan, terrorism, nuclear policy and regional strategic priorities. Pakistan's future policy should seek pragmatic cooperation with the United States while avoiding excessive dependence on any single external power.

13.3 Pakistan–Turkey Relations

Pakistan and Turkey maintain close diplomatic and defence relations. Cooperation includes:

- Defence production
- Military training
- Naval cooperation
- Aviation
- Diplomatic coordination

- Counterterrorism discussions

Turkey is an important partner for Pakistan in defence technology and strategic cooperation.

13.4 Pakistan–Iran Relations

Pakistan and Iran share a long border and have common interests in:

- Border stability
- Trade
- Energy
- Counterterrorism
- Regional connectivity
- Refugee management

However, militant activity and occasional border incidents create tensions. Both countries need stronger mechanisms for intelligence sharing, border coordination and diplomatic crisis management.

13.5 Pakistan and International Organizations

Pakistan participates in several international and regional organizations, including:

- United Nations
- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
- Organization of Islamic Cooperation
- Economic Cooperation Organization
- South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

Multilateral diplomacy can help Pakistan raise issues related to Kashmir, counterterrorism, water security, climate change and economic development.

14. Economic Security and Military Security

14.1 Economic Constraints on Defence

Military security depends partly on economic capacity. A weak economy can affect:

- Defence procurement
- Military modernization
- Training
- Research and development
- Border infrastructure

- Welfare of security personnel
- Strategic preparedness

Pakistan's fiscal pressures, debt burden, inflation, energy shortages and foreign-exchange constraints can limit long-term defence planning.

14.2 Economic Stability as National Security

Economic security is not separate from military security. A country with weak economic foundations may struggle to sustain defence capabilities and respond to crises.

Important areas include:

- Energy security
- Food security
- Industrial development
- Foreign-exchange stability
- Export growth
- Infrastructure
- Employment
- Public health
- Education

14.3 Security and Foreign Investment

Foreign investment requires a stable security environment. Terrorist attacks, political instability and uncertainty can discourage investors and delay development projects.

Pakistan's security policy should therefore protect:

- Industrial zones
- Ports
- Highways
- Energy projects
- Digital infrastructure
- Foreign workers
- CPEC projects
- Mineral and agricultural investments

14.4 Balancing Defence and Development

A responsible national security strategy requires a balance between defence needs and socioeconomic development. Education, healthcare, infrastructure and employment

contribute to long-term national resilience and reduce the conditions that may facilitate extremism and instability.

15. Emerging Security Threats

15.1 Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare combines conventional military pressure with:

- Cyberattacks
- Disinformation
- Economic pressure
- Political interference
- Psychological operations
- Proxy groups
- Diplomatic isolation

Pakistan needs an integrated strategy that combines military preparedness, public communication, cyber defence, economic resilience and diplomatic engagement.

15.2 Drone Warfare

Drones are increasingly used for:

- Surveillance
- Border monitoring
- Intelligence gathering
- Targeted attacks
- Battlefield coordination
- Infrastructure observation

The 2025 India–Pakistan conflict demonstrated the growing role of drones and air-defence systems in regional military calculations. Pakistan should invest in both drone technology and counter-drone capabilities.

15.3 Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence can improve:

- Intelligence analysis
- Border surveillance
- Cybersecurity
- Military logistics

- Early-warning systems
- Disaster response
- Defence research

However, AI also creates risks related to autonomous weapons, misinformation, surveillance, cyberattacks and strategic miscalculation.

15.4 Cyber Warfare

Cybersecurity is becoming an essential element of national defence. Pakistan needs to protect:

- Military communication systems
- Banking networks
- Power grids
- Water infrastructure
- Airports
- Telecommunications
- Government databases

A national cyber strategy should include public-private cooperation, specialized training, incident-response mechanisms and international partnerships.

15.5 Climate Change and Security

Climate change is increasingly linked to national security. Pakistan is vulnerable to:

- Floods
- Droughts
- Heatwaves
- Water scarcity
- Glacier melting
- Agricultural losses
- Food insecurity
- Internal displacement

Climate-related stress can increase competition over resources, worsen poverty and create social instability. Water and climate security should therefore be integrated into Pakistan's national security planning.

16. Major Policy Gaps and Challenges

16.1 Lack of Long-Term Policy Continuity

Changes in political governments and institutional priorities can affect the continuity of foreign and security policy. Pakistan needs a long-term national security framework supported by political consensus.

16.2 Weak Regional Cooperation

Regional cooperation remains limited because of mistrust, territorial disputes and political rivalry. The absence of strong regional mechanisms makes it difficult to address:

- Terrorism
- Water disputes
- Trade
- Refugees
- Climate change
- Cross-border crime

16.3 Economic Vulnerability

Economic weakness limits strategic autonomy. Pakistan's dependence on external financing and imported energy can create pressure during geopolitical crises.

16.4 Governance and Institutional Coordination

Effective security requires coordination among:

- Federal government
- Provincial governments
- Armed forces
- Police
- Intelligence agencies
- Parliament
- Judiciary
- Civil society
- Private sector

Poor coordination can weaken counterterrorism, crisis management and public trust.

16.5 Human Rights and Public Trust

Security policies must be implemented within the framework of law and constitutional rights. Allegations of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial actions and discrimination

can weaken public trust and provide propaganda opportunities to militant organizations. A sustainable security policy must protect civilians, ensure accountability and address legitimate grievances.

17. Policy Recommendations

17.1 Develop a Comprehensive National Security Strategy

Pakistan should formulate and regularly update a national security strategy that integrates:

- Military defence
- Diplomacy
- Economic security
- Water security
- Cybersecurity
- Climate resilience
- Internal stability
- Public communication

17.2 Strengthen Regional Diplomacy

Pakistan should pursue dialogue and confidence-building measures with neighbouring countries, particularly India, Afghanistan and Iran.

Important measures include:

- Military hotlines
- Border coordination
- Intelligence cooperation
- Diplomatic crisis-management channels
- Trade and transit discussions
- Humanitarian cooperation

17.3 Improve Border Management

Pakistan should modernize border security through:

- Biometric systems
- Surveillance technology
- Legal crossing points
- Border fencing where appropriate

- Joint coordination mechanisms
- Better customs systems
- Cross-border trade regulation

17.4 Address the TTP Threat

Countering the TTP requires:

- Intelligence-based operations
- Border security
- Counterterrorism financing measures
- Regional diplomacy
- Deradicalization programs
- Police capacity-building
- Protection of civilians
- International cooperation

Pakistan should continue diplomatic engagement with Afghanistan while clearly communicating that its territory must not be used for attacks against Pakistan.

17.5 Address BLA-Related Violence Through Security and Development

The BLA threat requires lawful counterterrorism measures, but military action alone is insufficient. The government should also:

- Improve public services in Balochistan
- Increase local participation in development
- Ensure transparent resource distribution
- Address unemployment
- Strengthen provincial institutions
- Investigate human rights allegations
- Encourage peaceful political participation
- Protect civilians and infrastructure

17.6 Strengthen Water Diplomacy

Pakistan should:

- Defend its rights under the Indus Waters Treaty through legal and diplomatic channels
- Engage international institutions

- Improve hydrological data and technical expertise
- Modernize irrigation systems
- Reduce water wastage
- Improve water storage and conservation
- Develop climate-resilient agriculture

17.7 Improve Cyber and Information Security

Pakistan should establish stronger systems for:

- Cyber threat detection
- Protection of critical infrastructure
- Digital forensics
- Public awareness
- Media literacy
- Strategic communication
- Countering disinformation

17.8 Invest in Defence Technology

Pakistan should prioritize:

- Indigenous research and development
- Artificial intelligence
- Cybersecurity
- Electronic warfare
- Satellite technology
- Drone and counter-drone systems
- Air defence
- Maritime surveillance

17.9 Strengthen Economic Resilience

Economic security should be improved through:

- Export diversification
- Energy-sector reforms
- Industrial development
- Fiscal discipline
- Human capital investment
- Food security planning

- Regional trade
- Foreign investment protection

17.10 Maintain Strategic Stability with India

Pakistan and India should maintain military communication mechanisms and explore risk-reduction measures, including:

- Crisis hotlines
 - Advance notification of military exercises
 - Avoidance of inflammatory rhetoric
 - Dialogue on nuclear risk
 - Respect for ceasefire arrangements
 - Mechanisms to investigate incidents
 - Protection of civilian populations
-

18. Conclusion

Pakistan's geopolitical and military security is shaped by a combination of geography, regional rivalry, internal instability, economic vulnerability and global power competition. Its location provides access to important regions and trade routes, but it also exposes the country to security pressures from India, Afghanistan, Iran and wider geopolitical competition.

The Kashmir dispute remains a central challenge in Pakistan–India relations. The 2025 India–Pakistan military conflict demonstrated that tensions can quickly escalate into air, missile and drone exchanges, even between nuclear-armed states. The conflict also highlighted the importance of crisis communication, strategic restraint and diplomatic engagement.

The TTP and BLA represent major internal security threats, but their causes and operational structures differ. The TTP is primarily associated with militant Islamist violence, while the BLA is linked to separatist militancy in Balochistan. Countering these threats requires a combination of intelligence-based security operations, border management, political engagement, socioeconomic development and protection of civilian rights.

The Indus Waters Treaty is another critical component of Pakistan's national security. Since Pakistan's agriculture, food security and energy production depend heavily on the

Indus Basin, any disruption in water cooperation could have serious consequences. Pakistan must therefore combine international legal and diplomatic efforts with domestic water conservation and climate adaptation.

Military strength and nuclear deterrence remain important for Pakistan's defence, but security cannot be sustained through military means alone. Economic stability, political continuity, institutional coordination, technological innovation, regional diplomacy and internal cohesion are equally necessary.

Ultimately, Pakistan's future security will depend on its ability to move from a crisis-response model toward a comprehensive national security strategy that combines defence preparedness with economic resilience, responsible governance, diplomacy and long-term regional stability.

References

1. World Bank. *The Indus Waters Treaty 1960 and the Role of the World Bank*.
[World Bank: The Indus Waters Treaty 1960](#)
2. Stimson Center. *Four Days in May: The India-Pakistan Crisis of 2025*.
[Four Days in May: The India-Pakistan Crisis of 2025](#)
3. Reuters. *India and Pakistan Exchange Fire Despite Ceasefire Agreement*.
[Reuters: India and Pakistan Exchange Fire Despite Ceasefire Agreement](#)
4. United Nations Security Council. *Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan Sanctions Listing*.
[United Nations Security Council: Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan](#)
5. United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan. *UNMOGIP Official Website*.
[UNMOGIP Official Website](#)
6. Associated Press. *Balochistan Security Situation and BLA-Related Militancy*.
[Associated Press: Balochistan Security Situation](#)
7. National Journal of International Politics and Security. *Analyzing the Evolving Relationship Between TTP and BLA*.
[Academic Study on TTP and BLA Relations](#)
8. Congressional Research Service. *India-Pakistan Conflict in Spring 2025*.
[Congressional Research Service: India-Pakistan Conflict in Spring 2025](#)
9. Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. Research publications on Pakistan's foreign policy, national security and regional strategic affairs.

10. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Research and data on military expenditure, arms transfers and global security trends.