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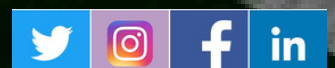
ISSUE BRIEF

IB/05/24

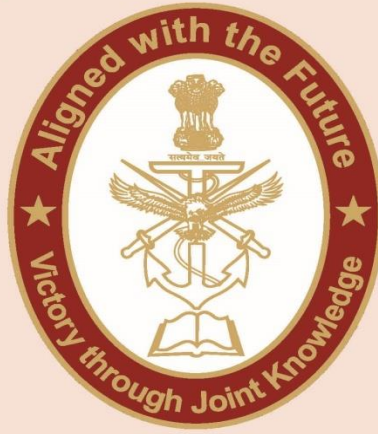
# WHY PAKISTAN IS INCAPABLE OF NORMALISING RELATIONS WITH INDIA

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# CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



## CENJOWS

**WHY PAKISTAN IS INCAPABLE OF NORMALISING RELATIONS WITH INDIA**



**Lt Gen Shantanu Dayal, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (Retd)** commanded a Corps on the Line of Actual Control against China in Arunachal Pradesh during the Galwan crisis and a Division on the Line of Control against Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir.

**A failing Pakistan has no appetite for hard politico-economic decisions, nor does it have leaders capable of undertaking unpopular but essential course corrections.**

By Lt Gen Shantanu Dayal, Retd

*'The parliament that we are sitting in, even the expenses of its proceedings are being paid through loans... Your salary and the salaries of all these people are being paid through loans'*

*'The worst oppression being carried out in Kashmir... this house should also pass a resolution today of strong condemnation and for the rights and freedom of Kashmiris and Palestinians'*

*Excerpts from the speech by Shehbaz Sharif to the National Assembly on 03 March 2024, on being re-elected the Prime Minister of Pakistan<sup>1</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> Arab News, 03 March 2024, Shehbaz Sharif becomes prime minister of Pakistan, nation politically divided and in economic crisis.

## **Abstract**

*An economically weakened Pakistan, which is getting increasingly isolated in the global arena on issues of religious fundamentalism and terrorism, remains adamant in its anti India rhetoric despite growing internal factionalism and political instability. While it is scrounging for aids and grants the world over to overcome its burgeoning debt, lack of real growth has precipitated high inflation and currency depreciation, which in turn is catalyzing societal unrest and internal dissent. There is lackadaisical progress in CPEC and other mega projects undertaken in cooperation with China. Other allies like Saudi Arabia and UAE appear to be developing cold feet in enlarging the aid basket for Pakistan. The traditional benefactors of Pakistan are wary of the growing uncertainties in the country. In such a precarious situation, normal countries generally galvanize for major course correction and where required, jettison the traditional for the contemporary. Pakistan however, remains beleaguered in the past with its pronounced anti-India approach based on medieval ideas and religious beliefs. **At this stage, there is clear lack of coherency in Pakistan's economic and politico-developmental direction, which substantially inhibits any initiative for normalisation of relation with India.***

*Pakistan's refusal to grow into a modern nation state and revise its medieval politico-religious construct has compromised both its politico-diplomatic as well as its security stature, all of which have had a profound and dilapidating impact on its internal beliefs and politico-economic stability. Despite collapsing economy and other politico-security challenges, its artificial notion of politico religious nationhood will ensure that it continues to pursue anti-India Policies. It is not possible for them to ever jettison their Kashmir agenda. In Pakistan's confounding belief system, compromise of its self defeating conviction of superiority over India on the altar of trade / normalizing relation, from a position of humiliating asymmetry is simply not conceivable, neither by the populace and certainly not by the polity and the establishment. **In such an emerging situation, and for economic expediency, while Pakistan may attempt to revive trade and a modicum of relations with India, the same may never translate to normal relations.***

## **Key words**

India Pakistan Relations, Afghanistan, China, Jammu and Kashmir, Trade, economy, growth, Kashmir, Ladakh, South Asia, Security Challenges, Global War on Terror, Strategic Depth,

Islam, Two Nation Theory, terrorism, Pashtoon, Baluch, Sindhi, Islamic fundamentalism, TTP, Haqqani network, jihadi tanzeems, state sponsorship of terrorism, National Security Policy

Failing Economy, Internal fault-lines, Issue of Identity, Conventional Military Asymmetry, Muslim Ummah, Sovereign Default, debt servicing, CPEC, IMF, World Bank, inflation

## **Introduction**

In the emerging environment, where Pakistan appears on the verge of economic collapse, improving relation with prosperous and growing India should have been a rationale policy option, but the same is most unlikely. Pakistan's refusal to grow into a modern nation state and revise its medieval politico-religious construct has compromised both its politico-diplomatic as well as its security stature, all of which have had a profound and dilapidating impact on its internal beliefs and politico-economic stability.

**For economic expediency, while Pakistan may attempt to revive trade and a modicum of relations with India, the same may never translate to normal relations.** Despite collapsing economy and other politico-security challenges, its artificial notion of politico religious nationhood will ensure that it continues to pursue anti-India Policies. It is not possible for them to ever jettison their Kashmir agenda. In Pakistan's confounding belief system, compromise of its self defeating conviction of superiority over India on the altar of trade / normalizing relation, from a position of humiliating asymmetry is simply not conceivable, neither by the populace and certainly not by the polity and the establishment.

## **Historical Context**

From the very beginning, Pakistan was characterised by contradictions and irrationalities. A controlled political irrationality is evident in most activities and articulations of Pakistan. Unlike India which has a long history and deep rooted culture, Pakistan has emerged from a politico-religious aspiration of a small section of pre independence Indian politicians. An artificial two nation theory advocating a separate nation for muslims was the essential driving force. The movement was part of the India's independence movement to start with, but soon started propagating a two nation theory purportedly for protecting the interests of Muslims. The Pakistan movement however, was never a popular movement in present day Pakistan (Baluchistan, Sindh, North West Frontier Province, West Punjab and East Bengal). Pakistan movement was essentially centered in Uttar Pradesh and some other pockets of present day India (which continued to remain with India after Independence). Md Ali Jinnah, Allama Md Iqbal, Liaquat Ali Khan, Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, were some of the leading figures of the movement. **Pakistan movement was therefore not a popular movement in the pre-partition part of India which is now Pakistan, but the result of politico-religious aspiration of few muslim politicians in some 'pockets' of 'central India', driven essentially by perceived notion of muslim nation and political ambitions.**

**Pakistan's Growth as a Nation.** Pakistan's growth as a nation since 1947 has also been defective. Religious extremism advocated as nationalism ensured reduction of the approximately 13 percent minority Hindus residing in Pakistan to mere 1.18

percent<sup>2</sup>, even as the country's total population soared. Once the minorities were made inconsequential in their societal composition, Pakistan's Punjabi Sunni population, which was in majority as also in control of State's instruments of power, turned against other regions of Pakistan and other sects of Islam. The Shias were targeted and the Ahmadiyahs were expelled from Islam. The Balochis were denied their basic rights, the Sindis were denied their water resources. The Kashmiris in the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir including Northern Areas were suppressed. Under the consciously adopted policy of Talibanisation, purportedly to counter the Soviets in Afghanistan, internal faultlines grew exponentially. The women were denied education, further impairing societal balance. To overcome their military inadequacies, Pakistan started pursuing the policy of state sponsorship of terrorism. The Pakistan Army and ISI started exporting terror to India, SE Asia, EU and America. **Pakistan has consequently failed to develop as a progressive nation in sync with the modern emerging world and remained beleaguered as the hub of Islamic terrorism, with poor developmental and societal indices.**

### **The Present Situation**

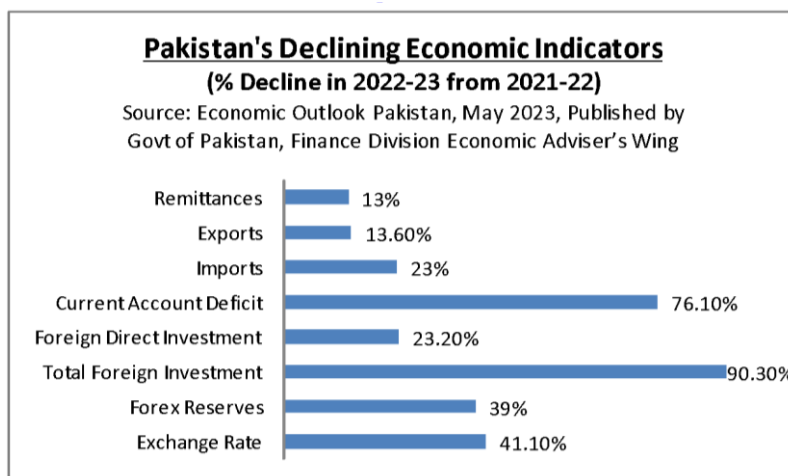
**Essential Security Challenges.** Contemporary Pakistan is facing multitude of security challenges. From the core problem of an unstable politico-ethnic construct, there is acute factionalism in their society based on religious and sectarian beliefs. Their relations with neighbours are strained and often hostile. Despite the religious affinity with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran, Pakistan is yet to establish harmonious diplomatic relationship with these countries. Internally, the Tehriki Taliban Pakistan (TTP) insurgency in Waziristan and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in their North West as also the separatist movement and discontent in Baluchistan is affecting the political contiguity of Pakistan as a State. The emerging discontent in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir is also a matter of grave concern for Pakistan. Against India, it is militarily weak on the borders and relatively compromised along the Line of Control. Growing fundamentalism and extremism in large sections of the Pakistan populace is perhaps the most significant challenge facing present day Pakistan, with no easy solutions. Terrorism in Pakistan is rooted in the State's grand design to exercise control over Afghanistan and wrest Jammu and Kashmir from India. From Zia in the 1980s to the contemporary political dispensation, the state sponsorship of jihadi terrorism has been systemic to Pakistan's polity and establishment (military). In fact, state sponsorship of terrorism emanating from Pakistan has been the root cause of most terrorism issues in the entire South Asia. **With the passage of time and growing realization of non-attainability of aspired results through terrorism, the focus of *jihadi tanzeems* are gradually turning inwards and terrorist related violence is increasing in Pakistan.**

**Failing Economy.** Pakistan's economic decline has been obvious for a long time. While loans and grants from various world bodies and some benefactor countries has

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<sup>2</sup> Press Trust of India, Peshawar, 10 Jun 2022. Pakistan is home to 22,10,566 people from the minority Hindu community, comprising only 1.18 per cent of the country's total registered population. Report by the Centre for Peace and Justice Pakistan.

been keeping Pakistan from defaulting on its debt obligation, the effect of prolonged economic neglect and combination of events like the covid pandemic and floods in 2021 and 2022 finally exposed Pakistan's economic bankruptcy. The economic indicators worsened and its sovereign credit ratings wavered near the negative. The foreign remittances, investments, forex reserves, imports and exports suffered. In 2022 and 2023, Pakistan could survive from defaulting due to special aids and bailout packages from the IMF, China, Saudi

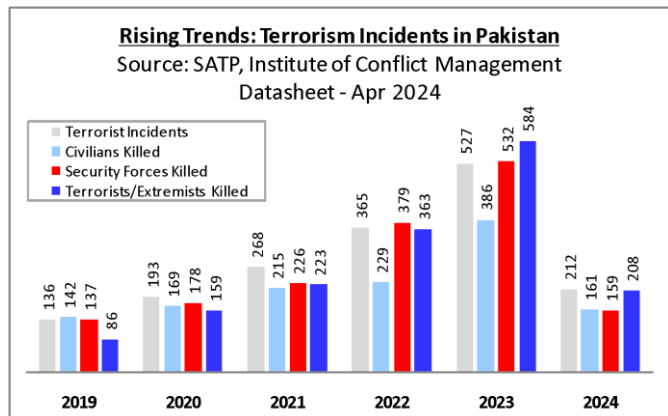


Arabia and UAE. The Budget presented in Pakistan Parliament on 01 July 2023 envisaged an annual revenue / expenditure of PKR 14,484 billion, which translates to mere USD 52 billion as per the current exchange rate in 2023<sup>3</sup>. At approximately USD 260 billion in 2020 (pre Covid), Pakistan's economy is less than 10% of India's and less than 2% of China's. Pakistan contributes less than one percent to Global GDP (approximately 0.8% as per IMF data of 2022). Despite having the fifth largest population in the World, Pakistan is 44<sup>th</sup> (Nominal GDP) and 22<sup>nd</sup> (PPP GDP) in Global GDP ranking. From a weak economy, Pakistan is fast turning into a failing economy with acute levels of inflation, falling value of Pakistan rupee against the USD and dwindling economy. **Unprecedented debt servicing obligation, due to economic mismanagement and an unrealistic 'security' overreach is perhaps the most serious problem facing present day Pakistan.** The present economic situation and debt burden are likely to worsen further in the environment of political uncertainty and the security issues arising due to TTP and BNA insurgencies. To reach out to India for assistance in such a state is considered in Pakistan as 'surrender', especially after Pakistan itself downgraded relations and stopped trade with India post abrogation of Article 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution in 2019.

**Internal fault-lines and the Issue of 'Identity'**. Pakistan has grown with number of misplaced beliefs and ideas, which have affected their emergence as a stable and modern Nation State. The foremost being the issue of identity, which Pakistan attempted to align with the artificial religious construct, rather than their natural inheritance from the Indian sub-continent. Religion based identity precipitated factions and groupings based on various interpretations of Islam. The sub-ethnic factionalism in the Pakistan region also increased owing to biases in distribution of national resources. Pakistan is now beset with *Baluch*, *Pastoon* and *Sindhi* discontent, which has acquired varied forms and intensity ranging from political disenchantment to insurgency and terrorism. Pakistan also sponsored terrorism as an instrument of state policy aimed essentially at Jammu and Kashmir, which resulted in mushrooming of numerous

<sup>3</sup>Federal Budget of Pakistan 2023-24: Budget at a Glance, published by the Finance Division of Pakistan

*tanzeems* and *jihadi* groups with divorced aims and objectives, of which some turned against the Pakistan State itself. There are more than 50 proscribed terrorist groups and terrorist leaders in Pakistan, most of whom have also been banned by the UNSC. More than 15 terrorist groups banned in India are also based in Pakistan<sup>4</sup>. Some of the more active groups include *Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan*, *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen*, *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, *Jaish-E-Mohammed*, etc. Post formation of the Taliban Government in Afghanistan, the activities of TTP has increased in Waziristan and in the areas adjoining the Durand Line. The Taliban led Afghanistan Government has also questioned the validity of the Durand Line itself. The targeting of Pakistan Security Forces by the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) have also increased and they are now openly targeting the Pakistan Army and their posts in the areas adjoining Iran and Afghanistan. Baluchistan, Waziristan, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NWFP and FATA) and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir regions are witnessing serious



terrorist and separatist violence. Many terrorist *tanzeems* have either joined hands with Afghanistan militia or created religious faction based groupings within Pakistan, which are now openly indulging in violence and activities inimical to Pakistan's interests along its border with Afghanistan. There has been more than 100% increase in civilian fatalities and more than 200% increase in security forces fatalities in Pakistan in 2023, as compared to 2019<sup>5</sup>. The unstable situation in PoK has further accentuated by the worsening economic and social welfare indicators. There are frequent protests and demonstrations in PoK against the Pakistan Govt. The security situation is adversely affecting Pakistan's economic activities and numerous CPEC projects in PoK have been stalled or 'put on hold' by China, citing security concerns. **The internal fault-lines appear to be accentuating uncontrollably, leading to further destabilization and factionalization of the Pakistan state.**

**State Sponsorship of Terrorism.** Pakistan's sponsorship of terrorism and use of Islamic terrorism as an instrument of State policy is well established and widely recognized. Pakistan is also now recognised the world over as the hub of *jihadi* terrorism. Terrorist incidents occurring globally can mostly be traced back to Pakistan. Pakistan's misplaced and malicious claim over Jammu and Kashmir, its ubiquitous compulsion to avenge the humiliating defeat in 1971 leading to breakup of Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh, and an all pervasive and self-defeating anti-India outlook has forced Pakistan to unendingly seek parity with India in general and superiority in the military as well as the security domain in particular. Despite making no headway in

<sup>4</sup>MHA, Govt of India internet site on List of Organizations designated as 'terrorist organizations' under Sec 35 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, listed in the 1st schedule of the Act

<sup>5</sup> SATP, Institute of Conflict Management Datasheet on Pakistan – April 2024 (Civilian fatalities from 142 to 386 and Security forces killed from 137 to 532)

its quest for territorial gains in Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan has persisted with terrorism and other nefarious means to change the existing politico – legal status of the State. It has lost more than 13,000 *jihadi* terrorists at the hands of the Indian Security Forces<sup>6</sup>. Post abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, the security situation is normalizing on the Indian side, despite Pakistan's continued sponsorship of terrorist *tanzeems*. On the Pakistan side however, there are early signs of growing political discontent and separatism. One of the major reasons contributing to Pakistan's worsening economic situation is their persistence in *jihadi* proxy war against India. Pakistan's worsening debt situation and dependence on foreign economic assistance, is also perhaps the result of their over indulgence in the proxy war against India. **Seeking assistance and requesting India to restart trade will therefore be tantamount to Pakistan's acknowledgement of defeat in J&K and failure for its long pursued anti India policies.**

**Adverse Conventional Military Asymmetry with India.** Militarily, the Indian Army enjoys a qualitative and quantitative edge over the Pakistan Army; however, India's refrain from actualizing its military offensive capabilities to deter Pakistan in the entire spectrum of conflict has perhaps resulted in Pakistan persevering to compete for parity through sub conventional means. The current Indo-Pakistan military asymmetry, in the conventional domain, is likely to increase owing to India's better economic growth and Pakistan's visible inadequacies in the socio - political - economic domains. In consequence, to overcome the conventional military asymmetry, Pakistan has been seeking leverages in the sub conventional (state sponsorship of terrorism) and nuclear domains. Despite global condemnation of terrorism, Pakistan continues to sponsor terrorism in furtherance of its state policies against India, Afghanistan and many other countries. Pakistan has already built a sizeable nuclear arsenal with requisite delivery means. Regular and well-publicized trials of its long-range missiles and propagating the policy of 'calculated irrationality' are manifestations of the above outlook. Pakistan's reluctance to participate fully in the 'war against terror' on its western borders and take punitive action against 'domestic Taliban' also needs to be viewed in the above context. **Accordingly, Pakistan is unlikely to halt its strategy to seek parity with India through measures aimed at destabilizing India. Pakistan's intransigence in the politico – military domain through terrorism may therefore continue, until the cost of such activities becomes prohibitive and unsustainable.**

**Afghanistan.** Pakistan views Afghanistan as its 'strategic depth' while considering the so-called existential threat from India. There is also ethnic commonality of Waziristan and Swat areas of Pakistan with eastern Afghanistan. However, with the Taliban taking over power in September 2021, the relations between the two countries have deteriorated and the commonality of population on both sides of the border is assuming a liability connotation for Pakistan. The relations worsened in October 2023, when Pakistan ordered 1.73 million Afghan refugees and illegal immigrants to leave<sup>7</sup>. In

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<sup>6</sup> SATP, Institute of Conflict Management Datasheet on Jammu and Kashmir – April 2024 (Terrorists killed in Jammu and Kashmir from 2000 to May 2014: 13,318)

<sup>7</sup>Asif Shahzad, Reuters, 03 October 2023



addition to their 'strategic depth' compulsion, Pakistan has used Afghanistan to hone its terrorism skills and train sub terrorists (*mujahedeen*). These terrorists were thereafter employed by Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir, where it failed persistently. The rapidly evolving situation in Afghanistan and the 31 August 2021 withdrawal of US forces precipitated a new adversarial situation for Pakistan. Its attempt to establish dominance over the newly formed Afghan Government, failed miserably. Despite Pakistan's hold over certain factions of Taliban, notably the *Haqqani* network, signs of fissures and increasing disagreements with the Taliban Government over the nature of governance in Afghanistan and acceptance of Durand Line as the boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan, are on the rise. Frequent clashes between Taliban and Pakistan military, portends strained Pakistan-Afghanistan relation. In the above milieu, India has established a working relation with the Taliban Government based on shared values of development and peace. **In comparison to India's improving relations with the Taliban Govt and the Afghan people, Pakistan's failure offorcibly' assuming the role of Afghanistan's benefactor has elevated India's importance in the Afghan geo-political matrix, which in turn is likely to further strain Indo-Pakistan relations.**

#### **Core Reasons motivating Pakistan's Politics and Diplomacy Against India**

Pakistan's relation with India has been a story of acrimony and hostility. A flawed 'two nation theory' propounded by Md Ali Jinnah, based on so-called 'religious nationalism', led to the partition of India in 1947. The All India Muslim League under Jinnah advocated this theory for seeking a separate state of Pakistan, which was subsequently, adopted as the founding principle for creation of the Islamic State of Pakistan. Till today, religious nationalism as the core of Pakistan's Global outlook, not only persists but has become more stringent and uncompromising. In spite of severance of East Pakistan and emergence of Bangladesh, the belief in the theory that Muslims constitute a separate nation perseveres. Consequently, the ideology of Muslim *ummah* (an Arabic term meaning community, distinguishable from their common ancestry and geography) is nurtured and strengthened in Pakistan by a growing population of religious fundamentalists. Consequently, Pakistan has taken all possible measures to differentiate itself from its natural ancestry in the Indian sub-continent. Attempts to artificially draw ancestry from Arabia, based on religious alignment have therefore yielded only sub optimal results and Pakistan's society continues to battle with its identity. This approach of Pakistan is in direct conflict with the broad based and secular outlook of India and most nation states the world over. Resultantly, **while India is emerging as a modern and forward-looking nation, Pakistan remains beleaguered in its religious past with a very pronounced medieval mindset.**

**Ideological Belief in Muslim Ummah.** Pakistan's demography today is 97% Muslims. The Muslim leadership prior partition, led by Ulama and Jinnah had articulated their vision of Pakistan as an Islamic State. The first formal step to transform Pakistan into an Ideological Islamic State was in 1949 when their first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan introduced the 'Objective Resolution' in the Constituent Assembly, which

declared that sovereignty over the entire universe belonged to Allah alone<sup>8</sup>. Politically in Pakistan, the phrase *Ummah* is interpreted in context of pan-Islamism and appears to draw authority from the ‘Constitution of Medina’, a medieval document of CE 622 which explicitly refers to Jewish, Christians and pagan citizens of Medina as members of *Ummah*<sup>9&10</sup>. Based apparently on such medieval beliefs, Pakistan has been advocating Islam and Muslim causes in various international forums very proactively and exerting to attain the leadership role in the Islamic world. **The world however has moved beyond such antiquated religious thoughts and medieval concepts to a modern, secular, inclusive and developmental outlook, where Pakistan finds itself largely unheard and generally ‘left out’.**

**Failure to amalgamate all ‘Muslim’ Provinces in 1947.** In August 1947, suzerainty of the British over approximately 565 Princely States was to lapse and these states were to choose between India or Pakistan. Over 560 princely states acceded to India by 15 August 1947, except few major ones like Junagadh, Hyderabad and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). These three states after initial dithering, acceded to India at different stages. The Muslim ruler of the Hindu majority Junagadh, initially decided to accede to Pakistan, but the state acceded to India after a referendum following breakdown in law& order wherein the ruler had already fled away to Pakistan. In the case of Hyderabad, the Nizam was compelled to sign the Instrument of Accession after a ‘police’ intervention by India. Pakistan violated the agreement signed with Maharaja of J&K by undertaking a ‘tribal invasion’, which was repulsed by India after the Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession with India on 26 October 1947. Indian Army thereafter entered J&K at the request of the Maharaja to contest the invasion of his state. While the Pakistani raiders were defeated and pushed back, Pakistan still remains in illegal control of some portions of J&K. Larger part of the State and the main Kashmir Valley is now an integral part of India. Pakistan thereafter waged three wars in vain to annex J&K in 1965, 1971 and 1999 and the ongoing proxy war. Growth of fundamentalism and sectarian factionalism, owing to unrealistic focus on the unattainable objective in J&K has been one of the root causes of Pakistan’s deterioration in the economic – developmental fields. **Jammu and Kashmir accordingly remains a core issue for Pakistan and has critically affected its geopolitical outlook and its politico – economic stature. It also continue to remain the main stumbling block in normalisation of relations between the two countries.**

**Anti India Obsession and Struggle to Disassociate from Indian Heritage.** The bitterness of partition and loss of face in various historical events, including the four wars, the adverse economic and military asymmetry, the relative lower diplomatic stature internationally, etc, have contributed to further enhancing their enmity towards

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<sup>8</sup>Preamble of Pakistan Constitution published on 12th April 1973, “Whereas sovereignty over the entire Universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone, and the authority to be exercised by the People of Pakistan within the limits prescribed is a sacred trust....”

<sup>9</sup>Serjeant, RB, 1964, “The Constitution of Medina”, Islamic Quarterly, 8:4

<sup>10</sup>Firestone, Reuven, 1999, Jihad: The Origin of the Holy War in Islam, New York, Oxford University Press, p 118.

India and its culture. Loss of East Pakistan and failure to annex Jammu and Kashmir are two principal reasons nurturing this enmity. Pakistan's antagonism towards India has manifested in a variety of ways, all of which are clearly inimical to their own national interests also. Despite sharing a common heritage and ethnic legacy, it is believed in large parts of Pakistan that they are descendants of '*mughals*' from Central Asia or Arabs from Arabia. The traditional rituals and societal practices from the land of their ancestors (India), are disparaged in favour of alien practices and customs. The medieval 'constitution of Medina' is eulogized over modern and rationale democratic concepts. Alien dress habits, foreign scriptures, medieval judicial practices (*Sariya*), feudalism, etc, are some of the issues getting increasingly advocated and practiced in Pakistan, perhaps consciously and by design, to divorce themselves from their Indian all-inclusive and benign heritage. **The impact of such self-imposed restrictions and handicaps on Pakistan's society and polity has yielded flawed domestic policies and convoluted geo-political outlook with pronounced and adverse impact on their relations with India.**

**Military Defeat in the 1971 War and Birth of Bangladesh.** After partition in 1947, not only did Pakistan grow with an anti-India sentiment but West Pakistan (essentially Pakistan Punjab) also nurtured sentiments of superiority over its eastern half, East Pakistan, both ethnically and politically. In the elections held in December 1970, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman of East Pakistan emerged victorious, but the West Pakistan polity led by General Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was loath to accord premiership to Mujibur Rehman. There were widespread discontent and rioting in East Pakistan leading to imposition of martial law and consequent genocide of the Bengali Muslims at the hands of Pakistan Army. Millions of refugees from East Pakistan sought refuge in India. India was forced to undertake military action to stop the genocide and avoid a larger humanitarian crisis. Pakistan's humiliating military defeat in 1971 and birth of an independent state of Bangladesh not only falsified the 'two nation theory' propounded for the creation of Pakistan but also shattered the artificially created myth of invincibility of the Pakistan's Muslim Army. The surrender scenes of Pakistan's Army on the golf course lawns of Dhaka in 1971 still haunts Pakistan, especially the Pakistan Army. **Pakistan's growth into a military state with pronounced security connotation, can be attributed in large measure to their smarting from the defeat in 1971 War with India.**

**Pakistan's Strategic Depth Obsession.** Post the defeat in 1971, Pakistan perceived the threat from India as an existential threat owing essentially to India's potent conventional military capability as also due to limited depth from the east to counter / hold the perceived deep incursions by the Indian Army. Consequently, Pakistan military started terming Afghanistan as its strategic depth to enable them to 'hold and turn' India's perceived military incursions in Pakistan. Owing to inner factionalism in Afghanistan and the Global War on Terror waged by USA and their allies against the USSR initially, and thereafter against the Al Qaida and Taliban, Pakistan considered it apt and opportune for their strategic depth needs. The politico – security situation unfolding in Afghanistan after August 2021 and the withdrawal of international forces, however, appear to have denied Pakistan the freedom and flexibility to use Afghanistan

soil for their strategic depth aspirations. In fact, the new Taliban Govt does not appear favourably inclined towards Pakistan, which negates and denies Pakistan's protracted security, political and financial investment therein. In fact, the frequency and intensity of clashes between the Pakistan Army and the Afghan Army along the Durand line portends emergence of a second front, especially when considered along with the attacks of the TTP in the hinterland of Pakistan from their safe havens in Afghanistan. **Denied of this perceived 'strategic depth' to their security framework, Pakistan's security assessments appear to be acquiring accentuated complexion, even at the cost of developmental and economic growth needs.**

**Pakistan's All-embracing Dependency on China.** Pakistan apparently lost confidence in the US / West after the defeat in 1971, when the Western Powers failed to deter India from overwhelming their Army in East Pakistan. Pakistan's duplicity in the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan further alienated the West from Pakistan. Vigorous advocacy of Islam in the more liberal global arena contributed to Pakistan's isolation even in the cultural and economic fields. In such an environment, China, which was also facing a measure of isolation from the West, emerged as a natural partner for Pakistan. Consequently, Pakistan drew closer to China and their relations grew into a multidimensional relationship encompassing the security as well as the economic fields. CPEC is an example of such dependency. Pakistan's dependency has grown over the years into a collusive nature of relations enjoining the two nations to desist from "joining any alliance or bloc which affects, security and territorial integrity of the partner country"<sup>11</sup>. **Present day Pakistan is bound in a comprehensive relation and obligation with China, which severely restricts its geopolitical independence and dynamism in national interests.** When analyzed in its entirety, and in light of the fact that Pakistan is devoid of any other major benefactor, its relation with China has acquired a pronounced 'vassal state' complexion! **Contextually, Pakistan's relation with India will also be a function of Pakistan China equations and mutual convenience.**

**Global War on Terror (Afghanistan – Pakistan Region).** In Afghanistan, Pakistan's duplicity has been abundantly established, which in turn has contributed significantly to Pakistan losing its relevance and credibility in the world forums. While Pakistan remained overtly aligned to the US led operations against Al Qaida and perpetrators of 9/11 attacks in USA, it covertly continued to support selected Afghanistan based terrorist factions. The *Haqqani* network, patronized and controlled by Pakistan Army's Inter Services Agency (ISI), was a major Taliban faction fighting against the US led International Forces. Pakistan's duplicity in using US aid and resources to target US interests has been well established. In the context of the larger security dynamics, the regional politico – security concern emanates from varying perceptions regarding the format of global war on terror in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region post August 2021 withdrawal of US led forces. Pakistan's political stance with regard to Taliban, state

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<sup>11</sup>China Pakistan Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good neighbourly Relations, General VP Malik, PVSM, AVSM (ret'd), A Comprehensive Response Strategy to a Collusive and Collaborative Threat from China and Pakistan, 30th USI National Security Lecture, 03 December 2014.

support to selected terrorist groups, motivation for '*jihad*' within the state apparatus and their options in the emergent factionalized milieu are some of the issues exposing Pakistan's duplicity. While Pakistan has been making concerted efforts to align the Taliban dispensation to their regional aspirations, the newly formed Taliban Govt appears to be charting an independent course, which does not seem aligned to Pakistan's approach and vision. Religion based diplomatic approach by Pakistan has also not yielded results in Afghanistan. China has also not ventured to get directly involved in the region, despite the apparent 'vacuum' post US withdrawal. Pakistan's Afghanistan leverage in the emerging geopolitical arena appears to have lost its credibility and relevancy. **While loss of geostrategic relevancy due to loss of credibility of the terrorism leverage, has the potential to propel Pakistan towards India, the same is also linked to Pakistan's leverage in Jammu and Kashmir, with its opposing relevance for India.**

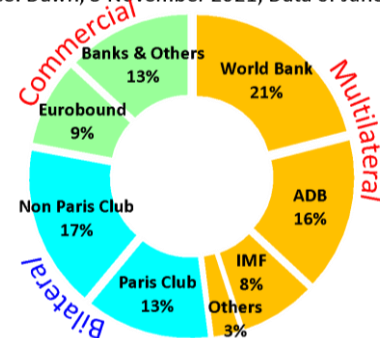
### Pakistan's Economic Decline

Pakistan's economy is facing grave challenges and Pakistan has had to resort to repeatedly taking loans and credits from various global financial institutions and countries to run their Govt. In fact, Pakistan is now emerging as one of the most unstable economies in South Asia. In 2021, Pakistan's total debt to GDP ratio stood at 83.5%, which included domestic debt of 55.1% and external debt of 28.5% of GDP<sup>12</sup>. As per World Bank report of 06 October 2021, Pakistan's public debt, including guaranteed debt was 90.7% of their GDP in June 2021<sup>13</sup>.

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**Composition of Pakistan's External Public Debt**

Source: Dawn, 3 November 2021, Data of June 2021



**"What have we done since independence in the last 75 years when we are economically enslaved by IMF"**

Statement by Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif, 04 Aug 2022, quoted from Pakistan Paper International The News, 05 August 2022

<sup>12</sup> Clarification by Govt of Pakistan, Finance Division dated 06 Oct 2021 on their Ministry of Finance official web page; [finance.gov.pk/](http://finance.gov.pk/)

<sup>13</sup> Pakistan's public debt figures have large variations, even in Govt publications.

<sup>14</sup> Clarification by Govt of Pakistan, Finance Division dated 06 Oct 2021 on their Ministry of Finance official web page; [finance.gov.pk/](http://finance.gov.pk/)

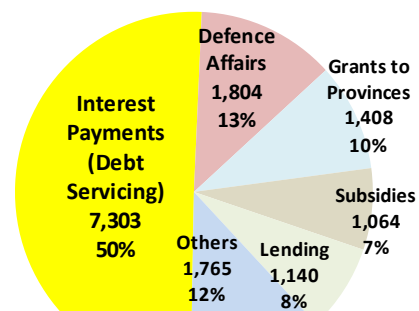
<sup>15</sup> Pakistan's public debt figures have large variations, even in Govt publications.

to-GDP ratio stood at approx 75% in 2022, with external debt reaching \$125.7 billion in March 2023<sup>16</sup>. The debt is likely to increase in the absence of strong measures and structural reforms. When assessed in light of other issues afflicting Pakistan, its debt obligation assumes a precarious complexion. In the 2023-24 budget of Pakistan, the projected revenue collection was around Rs 8.6 trillion to Rs 9.2 trillion, however, debt-obligation exceeded Rs 7.3 trillion (84% to 79% of the revenue), leaving little for essentials like development, governance, salaries, defense, etc<sup>17</sup>. Owing to significant debt burden, the budget deficit in Pakistan is also increasing. Over 80% of bank lending is to the government, increasing the risk of debt trap. Around 70% of direct tax is derived by withholding taxes. Poverty rates in Pakistan have consequently risen, and the middle-class population has shrunk over the past decade. The emerging environment indicates de-stabilisation in the state-citizen social balance and increased societal upheaval. **Current policy of relying on external debts will prove insufficient to rescue Pakistan from its acute economic challenge in the absence of a robust and sustainable economic governance ecosystem<sup>18</sup>.**

**Pakistan on the Verge of Sovereign Default.** There is some realization in Pakistan on the need for strong steps to stabilize economy, but unstable security state and fragile political dynamics, preclude the same. Growing religious extremism also contributes to tardiness in actualization of modern economic systems and processes. In the last two years, Pakistan has been on the verge of sovereign default, but has avoided a major embarrassment due to last minute loans and grants by IMF and some traditional allies like the Saudi Arabia, UAE and China. Pakistan therefore continues to trudge along with a precarious state of economy and poor social indicators. In the current budget of 2023-24, Pakistan's debt obligation has grown to 50% of its GDP. The actual debt-servicing obligation is likely to be higher<sup>19</sup>. With only 15%-20% now balance for real development and welfare of Pakistani citizens in the form of grants to provinces and subsidies<sup>20</sup>, the social indicators are likely to further deteriorate, leading to enhanced political and social unrest. It will take numerous and difficult transformational changes to stabilize the economy. In Pakistan's politico – societal matrix, the implementation of

#### **Pakistan's Budgeted Expenditure 2023-24**

(In Billion Pakistan Rupees and %)



Source: Federal Budget of Pakistan 2023-24, published by the Finance Division of Pakistan

<sup>16</sup>Pakistan's Debt Dilemma, Abdul Wahid, IMF PFM Blog, August 30, 2023

<sup>17</sup>Federal Budget of Pakistan 2023 – 24, published by the Finance Division, Govt of Pakistan

<sup>18</sup>Pakistan's Debt Dilemma, Abdul Wahid, IMF PFM Blog, August 30, 2023

<sup>19</sup> Pakistan Economic Survey 2022-23, Economic Advisor's Wing, Finance Division, Pakistan, Govt of Pakistan Publication of 08 June 2023 (Pakistan's GDP at current market prices PKR 84,657.9 billion in FY2023, Total public debt was PKR 59,247 billion at end-March 2023).

<sup>20</sup> Federal Budget of Pakistan, 2023-24, Finance Division, Pakistan, Govt of Pakistan Publication (Debt Servicing 50%, Defence 13%, Lending 8%, Subsidies 7%. Balance 22% only which also includes other minor expenditures not related to development)

the economic improvements and changes, if any, will be a challenging proposition in an environment of internal dissent, separatist sentiments, political instability, religious fundamentalism and growing isolation in the comity of modern nations. Improving relations with neighbours and reducing non-development or non-revenue generating expenditure, like on defence may also become a critical obligation for Pakistan. **Improving economy will therefore no longer be in isolation but will need to be in concert with other constraining factors like defence expenditure, internal stability, religious inclusiveness, societal harmony and amity with neighbours, including India.**

**Impact of Debt Burden on National Policies.** In addition to demanding additional financial austerity measures, the international donors are now dictating terms which has been perceived in Pakistan as compromising sovereignty. The politico-societal ramification of such austerity measures is grave and has the potential to further compromise Pakistan's internal stability. Increase in insurgent activities and violence in Baluchistan and Waziristan are manifestation of the emerging situation. Against the projected growth at 2.5%, Pakistan's growth may stumble to less than 1%, unless strong ameliorative measures are undertaken. Pakistan's Finance Supplementary Bill 2021 (also called Mini Budget) and the State Bank of Pakistan (Amendment) Bill 2021, passed by their National Assembly on 13 January 2022, aims at netting additional revenue of PKR 343 billion (0.6% of their GDP), through increased sales tax on large number of goods like mobile phones, electric cars, livestock, dairy products, etc<sup>21</sup>. There has also been significant devaluation of Pakistan's Rupee. These fiscal austerity measures were taken to support recent steps by the Pakistan State Bank to contain inflation, apparently at the behest of IMF. The review of laws relating to taxes and duties became necessary to ensure Pakistan's sixth review of 6 billion USD Extended Fund Facility approval by IMF's executive board<sup>22</sup>. The case of an international body (IMF) dictating terms for framing of Pakistan's budget and economic policies is a rare global phenomenon. **Restructuring National tax policies and laws to facilitate loan repayment, is a clear indicator of acute financial and economic difficulties facing Pakistan and a serious inadequacy in their economic domain.**

**Pakistan Compelled to Accord Primacy to Economy over Security.** Consequently, Pakistan appears to be moderating its military and security related expenditure. Initial signs of Pakistan undertaking mid-course correction in their security related and strategic outlook is apparent. **In the National Security Policy of Pakistan of January 2022, geo-economics has been assigned the 'core' status<sup>23</sup>.** Economic security will be the central theme of the new National Security Policy. Pakistan may be moving away from their traditional 'core' issues like Kashmir, leadership of Muslim *Ummah*, and professed superiority over India. The new Security Policy of Pakistan also

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<sup>21</sup>Mubarak Zeb Khan, Mini Budget among 16 Bills bulldozed through National Assembly, Pakistan Newspaper Dawn, 14 January 2022

<sup>22</sup>Amir Washim, Govt in no Hurry to Pass Mini Budget before IMF Meeting, Dawn 02 January 2022.

<sup>23</sup>National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026, Published by National Security Division in January 2022.

envisages peace with neighbours and fostering economic diplomacy. **The Policy advocates trade and business ties with India without final settlement of the Kashmir issue.** The Policy seeks a shift in Pakistan's approach from geo-strategic to geo-economics. Similarly, economic diplomacy and peace with immediate neighbours would be the central theme of the country's foreign policy<sup>24</sup>. Pakistan appears to have been forced to undertake course correction in its security and strategic aims because of inadequate economic means to support the same. The new Security policy is also a tacit acknowledgement of errors and misdirection in its traditional policies and outlook. In Oct 2021, Pakistan PM Imran Khan conceded that rising foreign debt and low tax recovery had become a national security issue<sup>25</sup>. Having to moderate its long cherished national goals and objectives has not been easy and its implementation will be more challenging. **Owing to the emerging precariousness of economy and the threat of sovereign default, Pakistan may be forced to underplay its 'Kashmir' ambition, and their overall anti-India stance.**

### **Analysis of Pakistan's Essential Anti India Policies**

Present day geopolitics of Pakistan is consequently developing in a flawed and convoluted manner, with their religious and traditional views often at conflict with the requirements of modern nation state. Since hardline and fundamental religious views are unacceptable in the modern diplomatic arena, Pakistan has had to resort to half-truths and falsehoods to propagate their political views. When confronted with facts and views, it has resorted to falsehoods on many occasions. For example, Pakistan claims that their country is a victim of terror but in fact Pakistan has been recognised the world over as the hub of terror. Some lies are quite preposterous. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Md Qureshi at the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the UNGA stated that "Pakistan shall never forget the mass murder of more than 150 children in a Peshawar school – that have links with terrorists supported by India", whereas it is a well recognised fact and widely reported in the Pakistan media itself that it was the *Tehriki Taliban Pakistan* (TTP), a home grown *tanzeem* of Pakistan, which carried out the dastardly attack<sup>26</sup>. Conspiracy theories are rampant in Pakistan. The ills and inadequacies of the state, the contradictions and failings of the society and people, the economic miseries and rampant poverty, the internal conflicts and discord, etc, are often ascribed to a 'foreign hand'. **There is accordingly a measure of irrationality and absurdity which is likely to persist in Pakistan's domestic policies and geopolitical outlook, especially those pertaining to South Asia and India.**

On their misplaced claim over J&K and India's failure to conduct plebiscite, Pakistan arguments are largely based on **UN Security Council Resolution No 47 of 1948 dated 21 April 1948. This resolution mandates under para-A.1 for Pakistan to "secure the withdrawal from the state of J&K of tribesmen and Pakistani**

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<sup>24</sup>Kamran Yousaf, The Express Tribune, 13 January 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Business Standard, PTI Islamabad, 24 November 2021.

<sup>26</sup>Ravi Shankar Kapoor, The Sunday Guardian, 06 October 2018.



**nationals not normally resident therein who have entered the state for the purpose of fighting, and to prevent any intrusion in the state of such elements and any furnishing of material aid to those fighting in the state”, as the first step** of the three step process and prior to partial withdrawal of Indian troops and establishment of peace for conduct of plebiscite. Pakistan never withdrew its tribesmen and nationals from the state and consequently the second step of partial withdrawal of Indian troops and the third step of plebiscite could not be undertaken. It is Pakistan which is in defiance to the UN Resolution and not India. Another argument by Pakistan is based on the Muslim majority of J&K. This line of argument is drawn from Pakistan’s propounded ‘two nation’ theory which has no legal sanctity. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 at Para 2 (3) (a) states that “no area not forming part of the territories specified in subsection (territories allocated to Pakistan under the Act), shall be included in either Dominion (India or Pakistan) without the consent of that Dominion (Jammu and Kashmir)”. **Maliciously repeating falsehoods on Jammu & Kashmir, combined with their non-compliances to UN mandate, has eroded the credibility of Pakistan’s politico – diplomatic narrative significantly.**

Pakistan has been an instrument of American State policy for containing and evicting the Soviets from Afghanistan and drew its traditional importance from this strategy of US. However, owing to misplaced beliefs and flawed policies, Pakistan has gradually got isolated in the geopolitical arena. From a member of the US led South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) of 1954 and member of Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) of 1958, Pakistan has reached a state wherein it may be termed a ‘pariah’ state by USA. From an active member of the ‘West’ in the ‘Cold War’ and a frontline state of the US in the Global War on Terror, Pakistan has been repeatedly placed on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list along with countries like Yemen, Syria, Turkey, etc. With the Chinese too, the so called ‘brotherly’ relations are under immense strain owing to a variety of economic and security issues. Loan servicing, payment for CPEC projects, security of Chinese nationals in Pakistan, etc, are some of the challenges facing Pakistan. **Pakistan, which started its geopolitical voyage as an ‘aligned and a frontline’ state, drawing benefits and aid from world powers, now appears isolated and alone in the geopolitical arena, with debilitating impact on their national polity and economy.**

Despite its overstated geo-political beliefs, Pakistan remains an ‘economically impoverished’ state and does not appear to be making any cognizable progress internally or externally. Extreme forms of fundamentalism, feudalism, factionalism and inapt governance, beset with regular interjections of military rule, has precluded worthwhile improvements or sustainable development. Islam and religious focus have failed to generate any improvement in the human, welfare or developmental indicators. Resultantly, Pakistan continues to struggle internally with factionalism, fundamentalism and lethargic economy and externally with its perceived notion of geo-strategic ‘weight’ obliging

*We have had three wars with India, & they have only brought more misery, poverty, and unemployment to the people. We have learnt our lesson, and we want to live in peace with India, provided we are able to resolve our genuine problems.*

Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif in an interview with Al Arabiya TV, Dubai, quoted by Times of India, 17 Jan 2023

unwarranted indulgence in affairs of Afghanistan and India. The aspiration to emerge the leader in the Islamic World has had its adverse repercussion in terms of souring of relations with Saudi Arabia and other OIC members. **India is consequently not obliged to reciprocate on Pakistan's peace overtures, if any, for normalizing relations.**

### **Course Corrections Considered Necessary for Pakistan to Emerge Out of its Present Crisis.**

#### **Review and Revise the Deeply Interned Politico-Religious Belief and Outlook.**

Pakistan was carved out as a separate state based on the belief in Islam and its professed sufficiency in matters of the state and nationhood. There is a large segment of the populace of contemporary Pakistan which still beliefs in the Medina model of governance of the 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia including their erst while Prime Minister Imran Khan<sup>27</sup>. Clearly, this approach has failed but any religious belief course correction has the potential to escalate internal conflicts and fault lines on religious and ethnic lines. These are already manifesting in some measure in the Pashtoon, the Balooch and the Sindhi insurgencies and political discontent. **Pakistan as a state is therefore incapable of correcting this inherent flaw in its nationhood. The inherent contradictions of Pakistan with modernity and economics will therefore persist and Pakistan will remain incapable of maintaining normal relations with any modern Nation State, including India.**

**Economic Turnaround Through Realistic Introspection.** Pakistan has been sliding into a debt quagmire over the years. Owing to the self assumed and acute security compulsions combined with poor economic governance and even poorer fiscal management, Pakistan's debt burden appears unsurmountable. The CPEC and other mega projects undertaken by China has also contributed to this poor state of affairs. As per Pakistan Govt Financial Division Economic survey of 2021-22, Pakistan owes more than USD 24.7 billion out of its total external debt of USD 88.8 billion to China, which is its largest creditor<sup>28</sup>. Other large creditors, the IMF, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, all have questioned and imposed terms for granting further loans to Pakistan owing to the apprehension that the same will be utilised to service loans for China. Pakistan therefore is left with no choice but to undertake immediate course correction. However, since security is still considered a core issue in Pakistan, it has contextualised the exercise of prioritising economy in its security matrix. Pakistan has had to term the economic course correction as an economic security exercise. The National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026, declassified in January 2022, places economic security at the core of National Security. It emphasis the need for a geo-economic vision to supplement geo-strategy<sup>29</sup>. **There appears to be a measure of moderation in Pakistan's traditional and security related self assumed**

<sup>27</sup> Imran's call for making Pakistan 'Madina-like state'. Dawn 29 April 2022

<sup>28</sup> Economic Survey of Pakistan, Debt / Loan Tables 9.1 to 9.7 and the Chapter on Public Debt

<sup>29</sup> National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026, Published by National Security Division, Govt of Pakistan in January 2022.

**compulsions which have been forced to be modulated due to their failing economy.**

**Economic Focus of Pakistan's National Security Policy.** The realisation that security focus of Pakistan has been the main cause of its economic as well as geo-political failings, Pakistan was forced to review its security policies. Pakistan formulated its new National Security Policy in January 2022, which prioritises economic security over traditional and geographic security. Published in January 2022, Pakistan's new National Security Policy places economic security at the core of comprehensive national security, emphasizing a geo-economic vision to supplement the focus on geo-strategy. It recognises that sustainable and inclusive economic growth is needed to increase national resource. The primacy to matters economy and a peaceful neighbourhood based co-existence is very evident in the National Security Vision articulated in the National Security Policy of Pakistan<sup>30</sup>. It has also been explained that **Pakistan's vital national security interests are best served by placing economic security as the core element of national security. However, in context of the politico-societal situation obtaining in Pakistan, these economy improvement measures may never be fully actualised and may achieve only limited success.**

### **Conclusion**

An economically weakened Pakistan, which is getting increasingly isolated in the global arena on issues of religious fundamentalism and terrorism, remains adamant in its anti-India rhetoric despite growing internal factionalism and political instability. While it is scrounging for aids and grants the world over to overcome its burgeoning debt, lack of real growth has precipitated high inflation and currency depreciation, which in turn is catalyzing societal unrest and internal dissent. There is lackadaisical progress in CPEC and other mega projects undertaken in cooperation with China. Other allies like Saudi Arabia and UAE appear to be developing cold feet in enlarging the aid basket for Pakistan. The traditional benefactors of Pakistan are wary of the growing uncertainties in the country. In such a precarious situation, normal countries generally galvanize for major course correction and where required, jettison the traditional for the contemporary. Pakistan however, remains beleaguered in the past with its pronounced anti-India approach based on medieval ideas and religious beliefs. **At this stage, there is clear lack of coherency in Pakistan's economic and politico-developmental direction, which substantially inhibits any initiative for normalisation of relations with India.**

Since Pakistan cannot change its Politico – Religious beliefs, it may be very difficult to review and revise its politico security policies, as a consequence of which its economy will continue to suffer and gradually fail, thereby ensuring further degradation of politico-religious beliefs followed by further weakening of national security and the most obvious economic downfall.

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<sup>30</sup>National Security Policy of Pakistan published in Jan 2022 by the National Security Division of Pakistan.

**DISCLAIMER**

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