

WEEKLY

# POLICY PULSE



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## OVERVIEW

This week’s *Policy Pulse* highlights critical issues in security, governance, economy, and foreign relations. The KP Action Plan underscores the growing emphasis on civilian agencies in counterterrorism, signaling a strategic shift toward intelligence-driven policing. Simultaneously, the government is setting up Threat Assessment Centres to preempt security threats, though effective coordination remains a challenge. Meanwhile, the deployment of women police in markets on the Punjab Chief Minister’s directive reflects a growing focus on gender-sensitive law enforcement.

On the global stage, Pakistan’s addition to the US export curbs list raises concerns over its tech and defense industries, necessitating a recalibration of economic diplomacy. Economic strains persist, with fiscal pressures intensifying amid inflation concerns. As the government prioritizes drinking water access amid severe shortages, the looming risk of drought, as warned by the Lahore High Court, calls for immediate water conservation strategies and investment in sustainable infrastructure. Climate vulnerabilities remain a pressing issue, reinforcing the need for Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) in urban and rural planning.

International tensions continue to escalate, with Israel’s airstrike on Beirut amplifying regional instability. This development adds complexity to Pakistan’s foreign policy calculus, particularly as the government navigates diplomatic challenges while safeguarding national interests. Amid these geopolitical shifts, Pakistan’s evolving security landscape demands a recalibrated approach to counterterrorism, governance, and strategic alliances.

The overarching takeaway from this week’s policy pulse is clear: Pakistan must adopt a forward-thinking governance model, strengthen institutional resilience, and enhance crisis preparedness. Holistic approaches to security, economy, and environmental sustainability will be key to ensuring long-term stability and development.

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## Terrorism

### KP Action Plan Prioritizes Civilian Agencies in Counterterrorism efforts

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has launched an 84-point Provincial Action Plan to combat terrorism, shifting primary responsibility to the civil administration and law enforcement. This civilian-led approach aligns with military recommendations, allowing security forces to reallocate personnel to other critical areas. The plan is structured around seven core pillars: counterterrorism strategies, political and social initiatives, legal reforms, governance, administration, monitoring, and public awareness.



It outlines 84 measures across 18 key areas, assigning specific tasks to provincial and federal agencies with set deadlines.

### Analysis

The plan takes a comprehensive approach, integrating security and socioeconomic strategies. By enhancing intelligence coordination, strengthening police capacity, and implementing legal reforms and public awareness campaigns, it aims to address both immediate threats and underlying causes of extremism. However, its success hinges on timely execution, inter-agency collaboration, and sustained political commitment. If effectively implemented, it could restore public confidence, reinforce state authority, and promote long-term stability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### Way Forward

- Expedite procurement of advanced weapons, surveillance tools, and forensic equipment while prioritizing specialized counterterrorism training.
- Strengthen anti-terrorism courts with additional staff, digital case management, and fast-tracked trials while ensuring witness and judicial protection.
- Conduct biannual district-level security reviews to reassess threats and adapt counterterrorism strategies as needed.

## International Trade

### Pakistan Added to US Export Curbs List

The United States has imposed export restrictions on entities from China, Iran, and Pakistan, citing national security and foreign policy concerns. A Federal Register notice lists over 50 Chinese firms and others restricted from acquiring U.S. goods and technologies without government approval. The sanctions target firms involved in high-performance computing, AI, quantum technology, and hypersonic weapons. Notably, six subsidiaries of China's cloud computing giant, Inspur Group, were blacklisted for allegedly aiding military supercomputing. U.S. officials argue the move prevents

adversaries from exploiting American technology, while China condemned the decision as trade weaponization and vowed countermeasures.



## Analysis

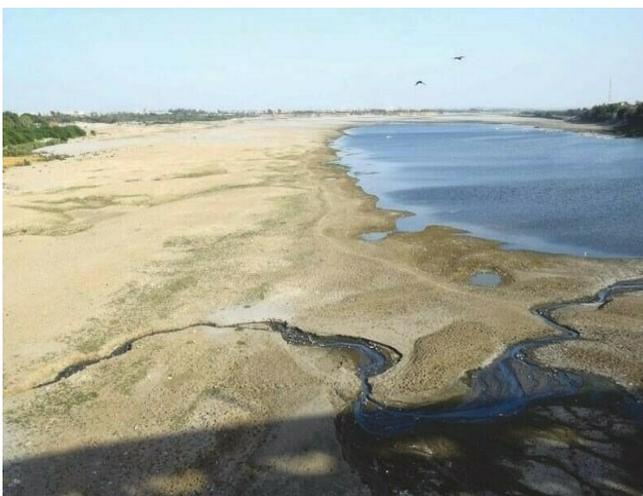
The restrictions aim to curb China’s technological and military growth will risk escalating trade tensions and straining diplomacy. They may slow China’s AI and defense advancements, Beijing may accelerate self-reliance efforts and diversify supply chains. Other affected nations, including Iran and Pakistan, will strengthen ties with China and Russia, countering U.S. influence. These measures may disrupt global tech markets, push restricted countries toward alternative ecosystems, and alienate allies dependent on stable trade with China.

## Way Forward

- Pakistan must take up the matter with the US through diplomatic channels.
- Boost domestic R&D and incentivize local industries to develop AI, semiconductors, and defense technologies, reducing reliance on imports.
- Strengthen trade ties with the EU, Middle East, and ASEAN to offset restrictions.
- Deepen economic cooperation with China under CPEC and explore joint ventures in emerging technologies with regional trade blocs like the SCO and GCC can also help mitigate economic pressures.

## Natural Resources

### Drinking Water Prioritized Amid Severe Shortage



With the Kharif season approaching, an unprecedented water crisis has forced authorities to prioritize drinking water. Reservoirs are empty, river levels are critically low, and minimal snowfall offers little hope for improvement. The Indus River System Authority (Irsa) has, for the first time, shifted to monthly water allocations, approving April’s supply with a 43% shortfall, to be reassessed in May. Sindh and Punjab agreed on allocations but clashed over distribution formulas. The crisis threatens key Kharif crops like rice, sugarcane, and cotton, making efficient water management crucial.

## Analysis

Punjab faces severe drought due to a 38% rainfall deficit since September 2024, with southern districts at highest risk. Sindh and Balochistan are also on high alert as dam levels and river flows hit historic lows.

Rising temperatures could trigger a "flash drought," endangering Rabi crops and drinking water supplies. Authorities must enforce conservation measures, raise farmer awareness, and develop emergency relief plans.

## Way Forward

- Enforce strict water conservation policies, limiting non-essential use.
- Optimize dam water distribution for irrigation and drinking.
- Promote drought-resistant crops and efficient farming methods like drip irrigation.
- Allocate emergency funds for drought relief and timely aid distribution.

## National Security

### Women Police Deployed in Markets on Maryam's direction



On Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's directive, Women Police Squads patrolled markets to ensure the safety of women and children. They operated on foot, bicycles, and motorbikes, particularly during peak shopping hours, to prevent harassment and crime. With Eid shopping in full swing during this period, they were also tackling mobile snatching and theft. Patrols were conducted in major commercial hubs, including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Faisalabad, and Gujranwala.

In Lahore, a special Dolphin Police unit and Quick Response Cycle Squad were deployed at 65 major markets. Over 4,000 police personnel, including women officers, were deployed to secure key areas, especially post-Iftar.

## Analysis

The initiative has made women feel safer in crowded spaces. Deploying women police in markets enhances security while promoting female representation in law enforcement. This initiative empowers women officers, challenges gender norms, and encourages more women to join the force. By creating safer public spaces, it fosters a more inclusive law enforcement system.

## Way Forward

- Provide specialized training to women police in self-defense, crowd control, and crisis response.
- Launch a 24/7 women's safety helpline and a mobile app for real-time assistance.
- Promote gender diversity in policing through recruitment drives, scholarships, and career growth programs.

## Govt to set up Threat Assessment Centres



Federal government plans to create intelligence fusion and threat assessment centers at both national and provincial levels to facilitate swift and effective responses to security threats. This initiative was deliberated during the second meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, presided over by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. Officials were briefed that approval had already been secured for a national intelligence center, while efforts were underway to establish similar units at the provincial level.

Interior Minister guaranteed representatives of all provinces that counterterrorism decisions would be fully made in coordination with the provinces. During the meeting, officials assessed the progress in strengthening the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) across the provinces. Mr. Naqvi underscored the critical need to fully operationalize provincial CTDs for a more effective response to security threats. He also pledged special support for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, recognizing the heightened security challenges in these regions.

### Analysis

Establishment of threat assessment centers is a crucial step in response to the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan. With increasing attacks on civilians and security forces, strengthening intelligence gathering and preemptive measures is essential. This initiative reflects the government's acknowledgment of the threat and its commitment to preventing further violence.

Pakistan has faced similar challenges before, particularly in the early 2000s, when terrorism was rampant. Although significant progress was made in restoring stability, recent events highlight the need for constant vigilance. Intelligence-driven operations and real-time threat assessments are vital to countering terrorism before it escalates into widespread devastation.

### Way Forward

- Fully operationalize well-equipped national and provincial threat assessment centers with real-time intelligence-sharing capabilities. Integrate AI and big data analytics to predict and track terrorist activities.
- Mandate strict implementation of SOPs for foreign nationals' security, ensuring compliance by all institutions.
- Integrate CCTV networks, drone monitoring, and satellite imagery for real-time threat assessment.

## International Affairs

### Israel's Airstrike on Beirut Amid Rising Tensions

Israel launched an airstrike on Beirut's southern suburbs, marking its first major attack in months. The strike, targeting a suspected Hezbollah drone storage facility, came in response to alleged rocket fire from Lebanon. Hezbollah denied involvement in the attack, and Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called the

airstrike unjustified, citing an investigation that found no link between Hezbollah and the rocket launches. The incident further destabilizes a fragile ceasefire reached in November, already strained by Israel's delayed troop withdrawal and prior retaliatory strikes.

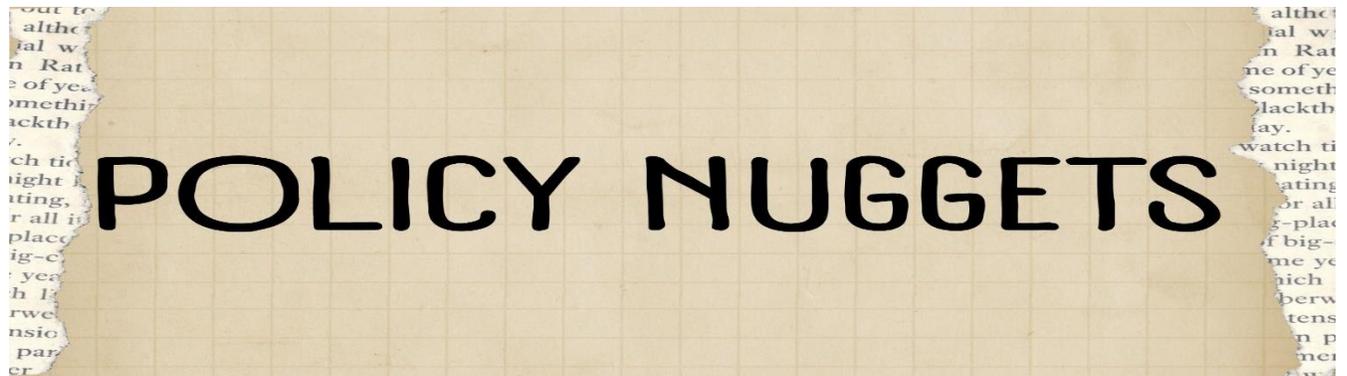


## Analysis

The airstrike highlights the volatility of the Lebanon-Israel ceasefire, which has weakened due to mutual distrust and unresolved security concerns. Israel's actions suggest a shift toward a more aggressive deterrence strategy, while Hezbollah's denial raises questions about whether other groups might be escalating tensions. The delayed Israeli troop withdrawal adds to Lebanese frustrations, potentially undermining diplomatic efforts to maintain peace. If these tit-for-tat attacks continue, the risk of broader conflict increases, threatening regional stability.

## Way Forward

- International mediators, such as the UN and regional powers, should push for renewed ceasefire talks.
- Independent monitoring mechanisms should be reinforced to verify ceasefire violations, ensuring accountability and preventing false accusations.
- Both sides should establish direct communication channels to clarify incidents before resorting to military action.



Incident/News	Impact	Recommendation	Priority
Three policemen, passer-by wounded in grenade attack at Quaidabad	Rising security threats highlight vulnerabilities in urban law enforcement.	Enhance intelligence-led policing and counterterrorism measures; Strengthen community engagement to preempt radicalization and violence.  <i>"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." – Wendell Phillips</i>	<b>Highest</b>

Pakistan to attract major foreign investment within six months: Fatemi	Potential boost to economic growth and job creation through FDI inflows.	Ensure investor-friendly policies with regulatory stability and ease of doing business; Strengthen economic diplomacy to attract sustainable, long-term investments.  <i>"Confidence is contagious. So is lack of confidence." – Vince Lombardi</i>	High
WB injects \$300m to help smog-challenged Punjab breathe easier	Critical funding to combat smog and improve air quality.	Ensure transparent and efficient use of funds for sustainable pollution control measures; Strengthen enforcement of industrial and vehicular emissions regulations.  <i>"The environment is where we all meet; where we all have a mutual interest." – Lady Bird Johnson</i>	High
PM seeks ulema's role in protecting youth from hatred, propaganda	Religious leaders engaged in countering extremism and misinformation.	Develop structured awareness campaigns integrating religious discourse with civic education; Foster interfaith dialogue to promote social harmony.  <i>"The best way to fight an idea is with a better idea." – Edward R. Murrow</i>	High
LHC warns of drought risk, calls for 'water emergency'	Looming water crisis threatens agriculture, urban supply, and livelihoods.	Implement nationwide water conservation policies and stricter groundwater regulations; Invest in water storage infrastructure and climate-resilient water management.  <i>"Thousands have lived without love, not one without water." – W.H. Auden</i>	Highest
Pakistan-US counterterrorism dialogue to be held in June	Enhanced counterterrorism cooperation amid rising security threats.	Strengthen intelligence-sharing mechanisms and capacity-building effort; Ensure diplomatic engagements yield tangible security commitments; Leverage cooperation for long-term regional stability.  <i>"The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." – Thomas Jefferson</i>	Highest
Three killed in blast near police van in Quetta	Renewed violence underscores persistent security vulnerabilities.	Enhance counterinsurgency operations and intelligence-led policing; Bolster community resilience through local security partnerships.  <i>"The security of the people shall be the highest law." – Cicero</i>	Highest

Govt has second thoughts on changes to solar policy	Policy uncertainty risks slowing renewable energy adoption.	Provide policy clarity to attract private sector investment; Expand net metering incentives to accelerate solar adoption.  <i>"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it." – Robert Swan</i>	<b>High</b>
WHO to support Pakistan in establishing global health academy in Jeddah	Potential to improve public health expertise and international collaboration.	Align curriculum with Pakistan's healthcare needs and global best practices; Maximize international partnerships for research and capacity-building.  <i>"Health is the greatest wealth." – Virgil</i>	<b>High</b>
Finance ministry expects inflation to rise next month	Rising inflation threatens economic stability and household incomes.	Implement targeted subsidies for essential commodities; Strengthen monetary policies to curb inflationary pressures.  <i>"Inflation is taxation without legislation." – Milton Friedman</i>	<b>Highest</b>
PECA enforced in FBR	Strengthens cybersecurity and accountability in financial governance.	Ensure PECA implementation balances security with digital rights.; Enhance cyber resilience through training and compliance measures.  <i>"The advancement and diffusion of knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty." – James Madison</i>	<b>High</b>



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