



WEEKLY

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OVERVIEW

This week's *Policy Pulse* presents a dynamic picture of Pakistan's evolving policy environment, spanning diplomacy, security, governance, humanitarian challenges, and technological advancement. Against a backdrop of intensifying regional rivalries and climate-induced vulnerabilities, the issue captures how Pakistan is seeking to safeguard its citizens abroad, strengthen internal resilience, and project strategic capacity on the global stage.

Key developments reveal both diplomatic pressures and domestic vulnerabilities. Over 17,000 Pakistanis imprisoned abroad require enhanced consular coordination, while harassment of diplomats in New Delhi underscores deteriorating India-Pakistan relations. Globally, Israel's attack on Al Jazeera journalists spotlights media safety concerns and press freedom. Domestically, climate disasters like KP's deadly floods expose systemic gaps despite new response bodies, with Gwadar's chronic water shortages prompting high-level intervention. Security developments include the Army Rocket Force Command's launch, bolstering deterrence, and contentious anti-terror legislation raising civil liberty concerns, even as cybersecurity reforms advance against hybrid threats.

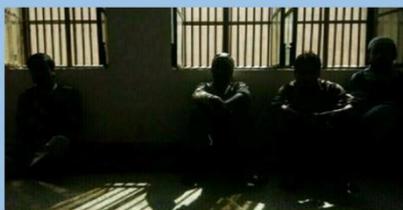
Amid these challenges, there are emergent strategic opportunities. Pakistan's satellite launch enhances Earth observation capabilities through Sino-Pak space cooperation, aiding disaster and agricultural management. In addition, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's reform agenda prioritizes population control, youth empowerment, and energy resilience. The dual narratives of pressing risks and forward-looking initiatives highlight the need for policies that simultaneously address immediate crises while investing in long-term capacity. These dynamics demand navigating complex geopolitical and economic realities. The government's consideration to lift the ban on new gas connections highlights the ongoing oversupply in the gas network, which threatens the integrity of the pipeline system and jeopardizes the country's international commitments.

The Policy Nuggets distill urgent economic and social priorities which range from inflationary pressures faced by traders to the structural imbalances of Pakistan's energy-industrial model, and further to the looming challenge of the youth bulge. Together, these developments underline the country's need for adaptive governance that balances immediate crisis management with long-term reforms, situating Pakistan at the crossroads of resilience, innovation, and geopolitical contestation.

Inside This Issue

- ✚ Over 17,000 Pakistanis imprisoned abroad, Senate panel told
- ✚ Israeli strike kills four Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza
- ✚ India harasses diplomats at Pakistan HC in New Delhi
- ✚ UN urges Pakistan to prioritise disaster risk strategies
- ✚ Hybrid war boosted Pakistan's cybersecurity confidence: Shaza
- ✚ Shehbaz says new Pakistan emerged after India's defeat on May 10
- ✚ NA adopts bill giving law enforcers wide arrest powers
- ✚ Body set up to address Gwadar's chronic water, power issues
- ✚ New 'rocket force' to bolster strike capability
- ✚ KP grieves over 200 lives lost to floods
- ✚ Pakistan's satellite reaches orbit, begins operations
- ✚ Govt may allow new gas connections with fee hike
- ✚ Policy Nuggets

Over 17,000 Pakistanis imprisoned abroad, Senate panel told



The meeting of Senate Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development was held to discuss the problems of under-trial/convicted Pakistanis in different countries of the world. The Senate panel was informed that 17,321 Pakistanis are jailed overseas, with a vast majority of them being detained in the Middle East. It called to expedite efforts to finalize prisoner transfer agreements to help repatriation of innocent Pakistanis trapped in legal cases abroad, and for an urgent need for the enactment of a consular protection to protect their rights.

Analysis

The Senate committee underscored the imperative to streamline coordination, data availability, and bring legal reforms to shield more than 17,000 Pakistanis imprisoned overseas, particularly in the Middle East. It advocated prisoner transfer agreements and a law on consular protection to ensure their rights.

Way Forward

- Establish a real-time public portal, between ministries, to monitor cases and consular assistance of all overseas Pakistani prisoners.
- Establish 24/7 multilingual legal support cells in Pakistani embassies to provide instant representation.
- Create a special fund to pay for legal defence, humanitarian support, and family contact of jailed Pakistanis.

Israeli strike kills four Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza



An Israeli air raid in Gaza shot and killed Al Jazeera journalist Anas Al Sharif and four other colleagues. Israel alleged that Anas Al Sharif headed a Hamas cell and was involved in rocket attacks on Israel whilst the network described it as a targeted effort to silence the press. Last month, UN Special Rapporteur also stated that Israel's claims against him were unsubstantiated. The strike has been widely condemned including by UN and UK. According to the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs Costs of War project, the conflict in Gaza is the deadliest war on journalists in history having claimed 238 lives since October 2023.

Analysis

This strike reflects a dangerous pattern of impunity in Israel's targeting of journalists that erodes press freedom and international law. It also highlights the failure of the global community to act effectively to shield media workers in war zones.

Way Forward

- Initiate an international campaign in coordination with press freedom organizations to condemn Israel's attacks on media personnel and call for protective actions.
- Establish a Pakistan-OIC funded "Media Protection Office" in Gaza to track attacks on media persons and provide real-time reporting to the UN.
- Organize a conference on press freedom with Palestinian media professionals as prominent voices.

India harasses diplomats at Pakistan HC in New Delhi



India began harassing diplomats at the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi by periodically cutting gas, internet and water supply connections and sending vacation notices before the expiration of contract period. In addition, the extension of Indian visas for 17 staff members, including diplomats, is also pending with the Indian embassy. The Pakistani High Commission has reported the cases to its Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Analysis

This situation is a sign of erosion in diplomatic conventions between Pakistan and India, pointing to intentional administrative and logistical stresses on Pakistani diplomats stationed in New Delhi. Such behaviour threatens to escalate bilateral tension and challenge settled diplomatic practices under international law.

Way Forward

- Seek third-party mediation via the OIC or a UN diplomatic channel to de-escalate the situation and ensure safe, lawful treatment of staff.
- Publicize such incidents through formal complaints and media outreach to increase international scrutiny and put pressure on India.
- Submit an urgent demarche to the Indian government citing the Vienna Convention and demand immediate resolution.

UN urges Pakistan to prioritise disaster risk strategies



The UN has called upon Pakistan to urgently implement disaster risk reduction, early warning, and community resilience measures as the nation is under increased risks of floods, glacial lake outburst floods (Glofs), landslides, and other natural hazards. The call follows Pakistan Meteorological Department's (PMD) monsoon rain forecasts from Aug 14-22, indicating elevated urban flooding and disaster risks in susceptible areas.

Analysis

Pakistan's vulnerability to disasters is escalating due to climate change, geography, and poor governance. Hence, the need for proactive risk reduction and building resilience is essential. The impending monsoon spell highlights the need for urgent preventive and preparedness efforts.

Way Forward

- Implement a satellite, weather, and river data-powered AI-driven alert system to issue real-time multi-language alerts through SMS, WhatsApp, and radio.
- Develop subsidized disaster insurance for farmers, small enterprises, and households in disaster-prone areas.
- Conduct nationwide flood evacuation drills twice a year, similar to Japan's earthquake drills.

Hybrid war boosted Pakistan's cybersecurity confidence: Shaza



IT Minister Shaza Fatima described Pakistan's latest hybrid war with India as having bolstered its cybersecurity, with new regulations, infrastructure security, and digital expansion in progress. PTA Chairman emphasized future satellite internet, 5G initiatives, and the importance of protecting data, countering AI abuse, and enhancing connectivity.

Analysis

The hybrid warfare experience appears to have served both as a stress test and a motivational catalyst, accelerating regulatory efforts and infrastructure hardening.

Way Forward

- Foster a partnership between military, civilian, and private sector to create a system which allows detection of attacks in real-time and swift response.
- Establish training centers to teach youth ethical hacking, AI-based security, and digital forensics and have a ready pool of deployable experts.
- Enhance regional cyber diplomacy to construct mutual defense structures with allied states and repel aggressive cyber campaigns.

NA adopts bill giving law enforcers wide arrest powers



Amidst opposition claims of this bill being unconstitutional, the National Assembly passed the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill 2024 on August 14, 2025. The law grants the government and armed forces an authority to detain terror suspects for three months or more based on "reasonable information or suspicion" and has a three-year sunset clause. The government defended the bill as being within the confines of Constitution and being necessary as two provinces are facing heightened security threats.

Analysis

Whilst framed as a tool to preempt terrorist threats, this legislation raises concerns regarding constitutional rights—particularly Article 10 on due process—and civilian oversight, as critics argue it shifts the burden of proof onto the accused and may erode public trust.

Way Forward

- Mandate judicial review of all detentions beyond 90 days to prevent abuse of power.
- Require transparency through regular public reporting on detentions under the new law.
- Establish a bipartisan parliamentary oversight committee to monitor implementation.

Shehbaz says new Pakistan emerged after India's defeat on May 10



PM Shehbaz Sharif issued a warning to India for a resolute retaliation if the water treaty was violated, marked military triumph on May 10, and launched youth, energy, and relief from disasters initiatives. He also suspended all taxes on contraceptives in order to control Pakistan's fast population growth.

Analysis

The address merges tough nationalist rhetoric with practical governing measures, leveraging the May 10 victory to raise national morale while promoting youth, energy, disaster relief, and population control programs. Whilst the tax exemption on contraceptives is a welcome move, the FBR officials have stated that the move would require approval from the IMF.

Way Forward

- Enhance implementation of the Indus Waters Treaty by diplomatic outreach and regional water management collaboration.
- Create AI platforms to predict population growth patterns and improve resource allocation, healthcare, and family planning interventions.
- Establish virtual reality laboratories to replicate natural disaster conditions for experiential disaster preparation training.

Body set up to address Gwadar's chronic water, power issues



PM Shehbaz Sharif has formed a 13-member committee, set to convene on August 15, 2025, with the mandate to find immediate and mid-term solutions for power outages and uninterrupted water supply to Gwadar.

Analysis

The establishment of such a committee signals high-level attention by the government to resolve Gwadar's chronic water and power shortage issues with actionable and implementable solutions.

Way Forward

- Accelerate completion and efficient use of the Gwadar seawater desalination plant to reliably supply clean water.
- Leverage CPEC partnerships to secure Chinese investment in renewable energy for Gwadar's long-term power sustainability.
- Audit and upgrade outdated transmission infrastructure to minimize electricity losses and improve reliability.

New 'rocket force' to bolster strike capability



Pakistan has launched the Army Rocket Force Command, a new military branch focused on enhancing long-range conventional missile strike capability—encompassing ballistic, cruise, and potentially hypersonic weapons—aimed at bolstering deterrence without crossing into nuclear escalation.

Analysis

Whilst not a new concept, the record of missile use is mixed. In recent Iran-Israel conflict, although Iran's missiles inflicted damage, they did not bring any strategic change. Similarly, in Russia-Ukraine war, Russia's missile launches have caused catastrophic damage to the cities, but it has not brought any victory to Russia. Hence, the potential of Pakistan's rocket force remains to be seen.

Way Forward

- Strengthen civil-military oversight mechanisms to ensure the Rocket Force's strategic use aligns with national defense policy.
- Launch indigenous research and development programs to reduce reliance on foreign technology and improve strategic autonomy.
- Integrate cyber and space capabilities with the Rocket Force to further enhance military capabilities.

Pakistan's satellite reaches orbit, begins operations



Pakistan's newly launched remote sensing satellite has successfully reached orbit and commenced operations. The satellite will provide high-resolution imagery to support sectors like urban planning, disaster response, agriculture, and environmental monitoring.

Analysis

This milestone signals Pakistan's growing capability in space-based Earth observation, with the satellite enhancing data-driven development and reinforcing strategic collaboration with China.

Way Forward

- Help local governments use satellite images to spot illegal construction and land use.
- Monitor forests and water sources with satellite data to protect the environment.
- Work with schools and universities to teach students how satellites help in daily life.

KP grieves over 200 lives lost to floods



The recent deluge in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has claimed at least 204 lives—especially in Buner—marking it as one of the deadliest monsoon flash-flood episodes in recent memory. Meanwhile, a special cell has been established at the Prime Minister's Office to maintain round-the-clock communication with the NDMA. Moreover, additional military contingents have been dispatched to help in rehabilitation efforts in KP.

Analysis

The widespread devastation underscores systemic vulnerabilities. The climate-driven intensification of weather events, fragile infrastructure, and strained disaster response mechanisms are converging into a deadly combination in KP.

Way Forward

- Deploy localized early warning systems using SMS and radio alerts to ensure timely evacuation in flood-prone areas.
- Invest in climate-resilient infrastructure such as elevated roads, reinforced housing, and stormwater drains in vulnerable districts.
- Establish rapid-response disaster units with pre-positioned supplies and mobile clinics for quick deployment in remote flood-hit regions.

Govt may allow new gas connections with fee hike



The government may lift the ban on new connections at the price of imported LNG. A summary to this effect has been submitted by Petroleum Division to the Federal Cabinet. It is expected that about 120,000 connections would be allowed in the first year, with gradual increase in the number. These connections would cost almost four times the current connection fee. Priority would be given to applicants who had previously been issued demand notices or had paid the urgent fee but could not get connections because of a subsequent ban.

Analysis

Whilst new connections would be a source of an additional avenue for the gas companies, however, this could further aggravate gas shortages particularly in winter and may lead to higher gas losses and lower revenue recoveries. Moreover, the steep hike in fees could deter lower-income consumers and further deepen circular debt and affordability issues.

Way Forward

- Offer discounted connection packages during winter months to reduce pressure on LPG and wood use.
- Launch a public awareness campaign explaining the fee hike and how it funds better services.
- Allow online applications and tracking to reduce corruption and delays in getting new connections.

Policy Nuggets

1 Pakistan, US reaffirm counterterrorism cooperation

Impact

Strengthens bilateral resolve to combat terrorism through intelligence sharing.

Recommendation

Expand joint training programs; enhance financial tracking of banned outfits; and deepen strategic engagement for regional security.

"Terrorism has no borders, and neither should our resolve to defeat it." — Kofi Annan

4 Government probes nationwide internet slowdown

Impact

Businesses face 30–40% drop in internet speeds, causing financial losses and operational disruptions.

Recommendation

Ensure transparent investigation of connectivity issues; upgrade infrastructure for high-speed internet; and balance cybersecurity needs with uninterrupted digital access to safeguard economic activity.

"Access to the internet should be a basic right, just like clean water and electricity." — Tim Berners-Lee

7 Addressing Pakistan's youth bulge for a sustainable future

Impact

Without targeted action, the youth bulge may exacerbate economic strain and social instability.

Recommendation

Implement population control measures; create large-scale trainee and internship programs; and expand accessible mental health services to equip youth for a competitive future.

"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." — Franklin D. Roosevelt

2 Traders voice concerns over inflation, utility bills

Impact

Inflation dominated business community worries, despite improved trust in government measures.

Recommendation

Implement targeted subsidies for SMEs; stabilize energy tariffs; streamline tax policies; and sustain anti-corruption efforts to strengthen business confidence.

"Economic growth is only sustainable when fairness fuels opportunity." — Christine Lagarde

5 Islamabad, Jakarta to revive sister city ties

Impact

Road naming and reciprocal monuments to strengthen Pakistan–Indonesia cultural diplomacy under the 1984 sister city agreement.

Recommendation

Leverage symbolic exchanges to boost tourism; economic cooperation; and people-to-people links between capitals.

"Cultural exchange is diplomacy in its purest form." — Hillary Clinton

8 Restructuring Pakistan's Energy-Industrial Model

Impact

Chronic fiscal deficits, currency devaluation, and reliance on imported energy are driving persistent electricity price hikes.

Recommendation

Address fiscal imbalance to stabilise currency; phase out unviable energy-intensive industries; invest in renewable energy (solar, battery storage); expand smart metering; and promote less energy-intensive manufacturing to secure long-term energy affordability and economic stability.

"Energy security is not just about keeping the lights on; it's about ensuring economic resilience in a world of finite resources." Fatih Birol

3 Rs34bn collected under Petroleum Development Levy

Impact

Increased levy generated Rs34.87bn in under three months, aimed at funding development projects.

Recommendation

Ensure transparent allocation and public reporting of PDL spending; and prioritize infrastructure development in underserved regions to build equity and trust.

"Good governance is about transparency, accountability, and service." — Ban Ki-moon

6 Karachi aerial firing leaves 95 injured, 1 dead

Impact

Annual celebratory gunfire continues despite bans, causing casualties.

Recommendation

Enforce zero-tolerance policy through stricter penalties, public awareness campaigns, and community policing to curb aerial firing incidents.

"Celebration should never come at the cost of human life." — UNICEF

9 PM launches Chinese-backed special economic zone

Impact

Expected to boost exports by \$400m and deepen regional economic ties, while also seeking stronger relations with Bangladesh.

Recommendation

Ensure timely facilitation of foreign investors; strengthen industrial zones with technology transfer and skills training; and leverage regional diplomacy to expand markets.

"Investment in infrastructure and industry is the foundation of sustainable development and global cooperation." — Xi Jinping



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