



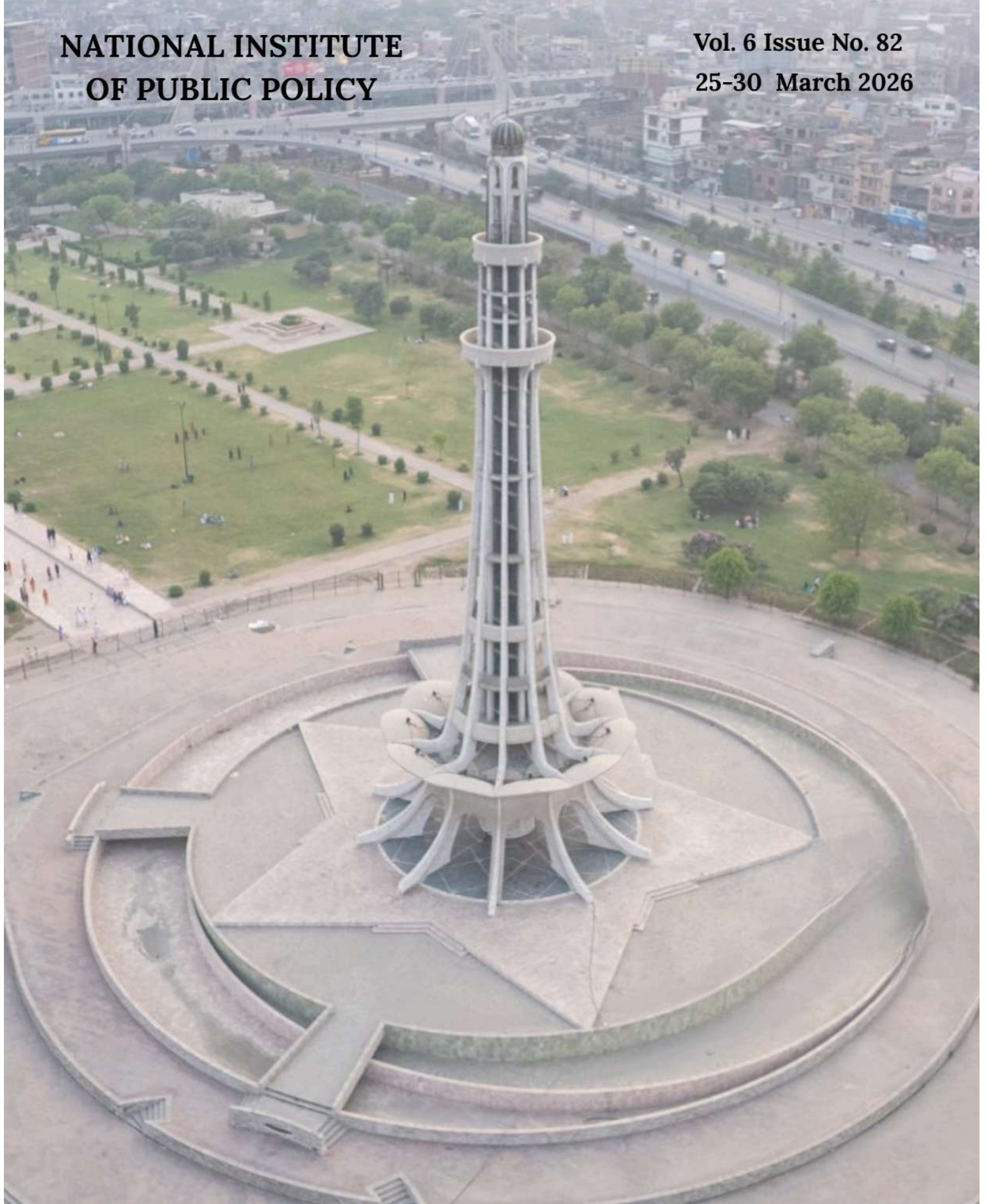
Weekly



POLICY PULSE

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OVERVIEW



This week's Policy Pulse reflects a policy environment shaped by evolving security risks, governance adjustments, socio-economic pressures, and intensifying geopolitical uncertainty. The overarching theme is resilience, strengthening institutional capacity, managing fiscal constraints, and adapting to both traditional and emerging challenges.

In security and law enforcement, warnings of cyber threats to critical infrastructure underscore growing digital vulnerabilities and the need for robust cybersecurity frameworks. The launch of the counter-terrorism helpline (1719) signals a shift toward community-based intelligence and preventive security. Judicial affirmation of an interfaith marriage reinforces legal protections for individual rights, while Pakistan's response to developments in Kashmir reflects continued diplomatic engagement on human rights concerns.

In health, rising undetected tuberculosis cases highlight gaps in surveillance and public awareness despite available treatment. Meanwhile, Punjab's expansion of its stroke management programme reflects progress in improving access to critical healthcare, though effective implementation remains essential.

Socio-economic developments reveal persistent fiscal and governance pressures. Efforts to manage fuel price volatility through provincial burden-sharing highlight energy vulnerability, while calls to regulate private school fees reflect increasing strain on households. Expanding NADRA's authority aims to strengthen national security but raises due process concerns. Concurrently, progress in IMF negotiations signals continued reliance on external financing alongside demands for fiscal discipline and revenue mobilization.

Internationally, escalating tensions involving Iran, the United States, and Israel dominate the global outlook, with risks to energy routes, food security, and regional stability. Pakistan's diplomatic engagement, including its role in de-escalation efforts and positions at the United Nations, reflects a calibrated approach to navigating complex geopolitical dynamics. The policy nuggets emphasize institutional strengthening, fiscal prudence, climate resilience, heritage protection, and proactive diplomacy.

Overall, the week underscores the need for coordinated policy responses to align security, economic stability, and foreign policy in an increasingly uncertain global environment.

Pakistan's diplomatic engagement, including its role in de-escalation efforts and positions reflects a calibrated approach to navigating complex geopolitical dynamics.

SECURITY AND LAW & ORDER

G

ovt warns of cyber threat to critical state infrastructure



Pakistan's National CERT warns that hostile actors can exploit supply chain weaknesses to infiltrate critical sectors like power, banking, and defence through compromised hardware and software. It stresses strict inspections, vendor transparency, and secure system practices.

Analysis:

The advisory highlights the evolving nature of security threats, where cyber risks especially through supply chains can cause systemic national disruption. It reflects the urgent need for robust cybersecurity policies, reduced dependency on single suppliers, and adoption of zero-trust models.

Way Forward:

- Conduct rigorous inspection of hardware and software, and verify vendors' ownership and credibility.
- Develop strict national cybersecurity policies and enforce compliance across public and private institutions.
- Train cybersecurity professionals and strengthen institutional expertise to handle emerging digital threats.

C

ounter Terrorism Helpline 1719 launched



NIFTAC has launched Counter Terrorism Helpline 1719 to enable citizens to report suspicious activities, aiming to improve coordination between the public and law enforcement for early threat detection and rapid response.

Analysis:

The initiative reflects a shift toward community-based security, recognizing public participation as a key tool in counter-terrorism. It strengthens intelligence-sharing and responsiveness, but its success will depend on public trust, awareness, and efficient institutional follow-up.

Way Forward:

- Launch nationwide campaigns to educate citizens on how and when to use Helpline 1719 effectively.
- Integrate AI and data analytics to filter, assess, and prioritize incoming information.
- Equip law enforcement personnel with skills to handle high volumes of public intelligence.

SECURITY AND LAW & ORDER

Federal Constitutional Court upholds validity of Christian woman's marriage to Muslim



The Federal Constitutional Court upheld the marriage of Maria Bibi, a Christian woman who embraced Islam, to a Muslim man, rejecting her father's habeas corpus petition. The court ruled she was of mature age, voluntarily married, and the documentary evidence of her alleged minority was unreliable. The judgement relied on Islamic law, prior Supreme Court precedents, and affirmed that formal rituals are not required for conversion.

Analysis:

The ruling reinforces individual religious freedom and marital rights under both Islamic and Pakistani law, setting a precedent for interfaith marriages involving conversion. It highlights judicial scrutiny of documentary evidence and strengthens the principle that personal consent and self-professed faith are legally decisive. The decision balances protection of minors with recognition of autonomy for adults in matters of faith and marriage.

Way Forward:

- Update guidelines to clearly outline the legal framework for marriages involving conversion, specifying age, consent, and documentation requirements.
- Conduct public awareness campaigns on legal rights regarding marriage, religious freedom, and consent to reduce misunderstandings and conflicts.
- Introduce mechanisms for family counseling or mediation in contested interfaith marriage cases to resolve disputes amicably before reaching courts.

Aasiya sentence erodes prospects for peace in South Asia: IO



Pakistan rejected the life sentence awarded to Kashmiri leader Aasiya Andrabi and 30-year terms to her two associates by an Indian court under the Unlawful Activities Act. The Foreign Office termed it a "grave miscarriage of justice" and part of a broader pattern of politically motivated prosecutions silencing Kashmiri voices. Pakistan urged the international community to hold India accountable.

Analysis:

The sentencing of a prominent Kashmiri woman leader underscores India's continued crackdown on political dissent in occupied Kashmir, further shrinking civil liberties space. Pakistan's strong condemnation aligns with its longstanding diplomatic campaign to highlight human rights violations in Kashmir. The verdict, coming amid regional tensions, is likely to deepen bilateral estrangement and complicate any prospects for resumed dialogue.

Way Forward:

- Pakistan must intensify diplomatic outreach to the UN, OIC, and international human rights bodies to document and raise the Andrabi case and demand a reversal of the ruling.
- Coordinate with Kashmir civil society and legal networks to build international awareness and legal support for detained leaders.
- Document the case thoroughly as part of Pakistan's broader human rights reporting on IIOJK for submission to relevant international mechanisms

HEALTH

Undetected TB cases fuel rising death toll despite free treatment



Pakistan faces a high burden of Tuberculosis (TB), which remains deadly despite being fully curable, mainly due to undetected cases and lack of treatment. Free diagnostics and medicines exist, but awareness, early diagnosis, and surveillance especially for drug-resistant and childhood TB remain inadequate.

Analysis:

The article highlights TB as a neglected public health challenge, emphasizing the urgent need for mass awareness, hospital-based surveillance, political commitment, and community engagement to detect cases early, prevent spread, and reduce mortality.

Way Forward:

- Educate the public about TB symptoms, transmission, treatment availability, and the importance of early diagnosis.
- Monitor and manage Multi-Drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB) through specialized treatment programs and infection control measures.
- Link diagnostics, treatment centers, and follow-up mechanisms to provide seamless patient care and reduce transmission.

Punjab govt to extend stroke management programme to all districts



The Punjab government plans to extend its Stroke Management Programme to all districts, with 14 centres currently operational. The initiative provides costly injections free of charge, with Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz emphasizing that timely medical treatment is a fundamental right. The programme aims to ensure life-saving stroke care within the critical "golden hours" of three to four hours.

Analysis:

Expanding stroke management services district-wide addresses a critical healthcare gap, as timely intervention significantly reduces mortality and disability. Providing expensive thrombolytic medications free of charge removes financial barriers for vulnerable populations. However, successful expansion will require adequate staffing, training, and equipment across all districts to maintain quality standards.

Way Forward:

- Establish a telemedicine network connecting district centres with tertiary care hospitals for remote expert consultation.
- Launch public awareness campaigns on stroke symptoms and the importance of reaching a centre within the golden hours.
- Develop a monitoring framework to track patient outcomes and ensure consistent quality across all districts.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

Centre asks provinces to help shoulder fuel price burden



The federal government has asked provinces to share the cost of keeping petrol and diesel prices stable amid rising international fuel rates, releasing Rs27billion from the PM's Austerity Fund to settle industry claims.

Analysis:

The measure aims to shield consumers from global price shocks while requiring provincial cooperation, coordinated austerity, and energy conservation to manage fiscal and supply pressures effectively.

Way Forward:

- Establish a centralized monitoring system for energy consumption and fuel conservation across federal and provincial levels.
- Continue cost-cutting measures within government departments to maintain the PM Austerity Fund for timely settlement of oil industry claims.
- Implement proper audit and verification mechanisms for price differential claims to ensure accountability and efficient fund utilization.

Child rights body urges cut in private school fees in Balochistan



The Child Rights Movement Balochistan has called on the government to reduce or waive private school fees, citing continued full charges for tuition and transport during school closures and additional costs like textbooks and annual fee hikes.

Analysis:

The situation underscores the socio-economic strain on families, highlighting the need for regulatory oversight on private school fee structures and government-led relief measures to ensure equitable access to education.

Way Forward:

- Introduce clear guidelines and monitoring mechanisms for private school fee structures, including tuition, transport, and additional charges, to prevent exploitation.
- Implement targeted financial assistance or subsidies for economically vulnerable households to sustain education access.
- Establish an emergency education fund to support families and schools during unforeseen closures or disruptions.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

Nadra set to get powers to block CNICs as Senate panel okays bill



The Senate Standing Committee on Interior approved a bill granting NADRA authority to provisionally impound CNICs of individuals, including suspected illegal aliens, for up to two months. The amendments aim to address misuse of CNICs for criminal activity and national security threats, with safeguards including written notice and opportunity to respond. The bill aligns NADRA's legal framework with evolving security requirements.

Analysis:

The legislation expands NADRA's powers to act swiftly against CNIC misuse without immediate court orders, addressing operational gaps highlighted by officials. However, the broad language around "suspected illegal aliens" and "criminal activity" raises due process concerns despite stated safeguards. Balancing national security imperatives with protection of citizens' procedural rights will depend heavily on implementation.

Way Forward:

- Ensure implementing rules clearly define "suspected illegal aliens" and establish robust review mechanisms for impounded CNICs.
- Provide citizens with accessible and timely appeal processes against provisional impounding decisions.
- Conduct parliamentary oversight sessions after six months to assess implementation and address any procedural violations; ensure that the initiative is not used for political marginalisation.

IMF shares key document with govt, paving way for accord



The IMF has shared the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) with Pakistan, advancing toward a staff-level agreement for the third review and release of the fourth tranche under the \$7 billion EFF and \$1.4 billion RSF. The IMF has requested more frequent oil price adjustments beyond the current weekly system and envisages FBR tax collection target of Rs15.08 trillion for next budget.

Analysis:

The MEFP exchange signals progress toward securing critical external financing, though IMF's push for even more frequent oil price adjustments reflects concern over fiscal slippage and subsidy management. The proposed Rs15.08 trillion tax target represents a significant revenue mobilization challenge. PIDE's warning on Middle East conflict risks—\$1.5-2bn export losses and \$4.5bn additional import costs—underscores Pakistan's structural vulnerability to external shocks.

Way Forward:

- Develop a transparent oil price adjustment mechanism that balances IMF requirements with protecting vulnerable populations through targeted social protection.
- Strengthen revenue administration and documentation efforts to meet ambitious tax targets without overburdening existing taxpayers.
- Enhance export competitiveness through trade facilitation and diversification beyond textiles to mitigate potential GCC market disruptions.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

UNSC holds closed-door session on Iran school bombing



The United Nations Security Council held a closed-door meeting at the request of Russia to discuss alleged United States-Israel strikes in Iran, including a deadly school bombing. Several members raised concerns over civilian casualties, especially the killing of children, and called for an independent investigation. The meeting also highlighted fears about broader regional escalation and global economic disruptions.

Analysis:

The incident signals a potential breach of international humanitarian law, intensifying scrutiny on US military actions. Calls for investigation by powers like France and United Kingdom reflect growing international pressure for accountability. If US involvement is confirmed, it could damage its global credibility and fuel anti-West sentiment in the region.

Way Forward:

- Pakistan should actively push within the United Nations Security Council for an independent, transparent investigation into the Iran school bombing to uphold international humanitarian law and reinforce a rules-based global order.
- Pakistan must use diplomatic channels (bilateral and multilateral) to call for immediate de-escalation between Iran, United States, and Israel, emphasizing dialogue over military confrontation to prevent wider Middle East instability.
- Given risks to global trade routes like the Strait of Hormuz, Pakistan should prepare contingency plans for energy security, diversify supply chains, and coordinate with regional partners to minimize economic fallout.

US-Israel war on Iran may increase food prices worldwide: UN



The UN FAO warns that the US-Israel conflict with Iran could disrupt trade through the Strait of Hormuz, raising energy and fertilizer costs, tightening agricultural supply chains, and driving global food prices higher. Vulnerable, import-dependent countries, including Gulf states, face heightened food insecurity risks.

Analysis:

The report highlights the fragility of interconnected energy and agrifood systems, showing how geopolitical conflicts can cascade into global food crises. It underscores the need for coordinated international action, alternative trade routes, domestic agricultural resilience, and strategic policy planning to mitigate short- and long-term food security threats.

Way Forward:

- Pakistan should reduce reliance on single-country imports by sourcing staples and fertilisers from multiple countries to avoid supply disruptions.
- Pakistan should adopt energy-efficient agricultural practices and explore renewable energy solutions to lower production costs.
- Pakistan should coordinate with neighbouring and Gulf countries on trade continuity and crisis management in times of geopolitical conflicts.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

T rump says 'Cuba is next'



US President Donald Trump stated that “Cuba is next” during a speech, hinting at potential future action against the island but without providing any clear plan. The remark follows increasing US pressure on Cuba, including an oil blockade and broader economic measures. Trump linked this statement to recent US actions in Venezuela and Iran, portraying a continuation of assertive foreign policy. The comment was partly downplayed by Trump himself, adding ambiguity to its intent.

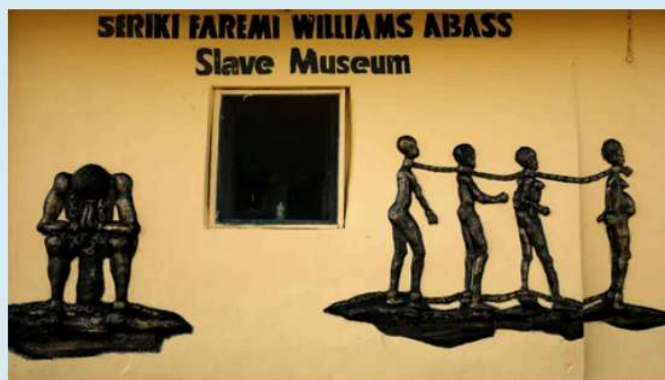
Analysis:

The statement reflects an aggressive and expansionist US foreign policy approach, using strategic pressure to influence regime change in Cuba. However, the lack of clarity suggests more of a political signal than a concrete policy decision. Such rhetoric risks escalating regional tensions in Latin America and raises concerns about international law and sovereignty. It also indicates a shift toward hard-power diplomacy, with potential global geopolitical implications.

Way Forward:

- Pakistan should maintain a balanced stance and advocate for peaceful conflict resolution, supporting dialogue and respect for sovereignty in line with international law.
- Use platforms like the UN and OIC to call for de-escalation and oppose unilateral coercive measures, reinforcing collective global stability.
- Pakistan should avoid overdependence on any single bloc and expand trade and diplomatic ties with Latin America, including Cuba, to safeguard its economic and strategic interests.

U N terms African slave trade gravest crime against humanity



The UN General Assembly officially recognized the transatlantic African slave trade as “the gravest crime against humanity,” with 123 votes in favor, 3 against, and 52 abstentions. The resolution emphasized the enduring legacy of slavery, including racial discrimination and neo-colonialism, and called for restorative justice. Key supporters included UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Ghana’s President John Mahama.

Analysis:

This move marks a historic acknowledgment of slavery’s global impact and signals a push toward reparations and healing for affected communities. It reflects growing international consensus on addressing historical injustices and their contemporary consequences. The abstentions and opposing votes highlight ongoing geopolitical sensitivities surrounding accountability and restitution.

Way Forward:

- Pakistan can endorse UN resolutions recognizing crimes against humanity, reinforcing its commitment to human rights and international solidarity.
- Partner with international organizations to support programs addressing the socio-economic legacies of slavery, such as scholarships, cultural exchanges, and development aid.
- Follow up on UN resolutions and international efforts to ensure that the principles of restorative justice and anti-discrimination are actively pursued.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Pakistan joins UNSC in denouncing illegal Israeli settlements



Pakistan joined seven other UN Security Council members in a joint statement firmly opposing an annexation of Occupied Palestinian Territory and forcible displacement of Palestinians. The statement called for ending Israeli settlement activities, preserving Jerusalem's holy sites status quo, and addressing the humanitarian crisis. Israel's ambassador reportedly disrupted the scheduled press stakeout to assert Israel would continue attacks until objectives achieved.

Analysis:

Pakistan's leadership in delivering the joint statement reflects its consistent diplomatic positioning on Palestine and willingness to coordinate with diverse council members. The timing—amid ongoing US-Israeli war on Iran—highlights persistent international concern over West Bank settlement expansion despite broader regional crisis. Israel's ambassador seizing the microphone before the joint stakeout underscores diplomatic tensions and Tel Aviv's defiance of international consensus on settlements.

Way Forward:

- Continue leading coordinated diplomatic efforts at the UN to maintain spotlight on Palestinian rights amid competing global crises.
- Support concrete council follow-up mechanisms beyond statements to hold Israel accountable for settlement expansion.
- Strengthen coordination with Arab and OIC members to ensure unified messaging and leverage on Palestine issues.

No headway as Iran, US remain entrenched



Iran and the US remain deadlocked despite backchannel diplomacy, with Tehran "responding negatively" to a US 15-point plan reportedly conveyed by Pakistan. Iran laid out five conditions for ending the war, including halt to aggression, war reparations, and recognition of its authority over the Strait of Hormuz. While the White House claimed talks remain "productive," Iran's foreign minister clarified that message exchanges through mediators do not constitute negotiations.

Analysis:

The stalemate reflects fundamental incompatibility between US objectives (curbing Iran's nuclear and regional influence) and Iran's insistence on war reparations and strategic guarantees. Pakistan's role as a message conduit underscores its diplomatic credibility but also the limits of mediation when neither side shows willingness to compromise. Iran's five conditions suggest Tehran seeks a negotiated exit on its own terms, not capitulation.

Way Forward:

- Continue facilitating communication channels between the parties without overcommitting to outcomes beyond Pakistan's diplomatic capacity.
- Coordinate closely with China, Turkiye, and other regional stakeholders to align de-escalation efforts and prevent conflicting mediation tracks.
- Prepare for potential humanitarian and economic fallout if conflict persists, including contingency plans for stranded Pakistanis and energy supply disruptions.

POLICY NUGGETS

1 NSC needs regular institutional role.

Impact

Gaps in continuous national security oversight due to reactive meetings limits proactive policy response.

Recommendation:

Institutionalise the National Security Committee and strengthen analytical capacity for proactive and coordinated decision-making.

"In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." – Dwight D. Eisenhower

4 Rising temperatures are projected to sharply increase mortality risks

Impact:

Strains urban infrastructure and weakens long-term human security and economic resilience.

Recommendation:

Integrate climate risk planning into urban development and disaster management frameworks.

"Climate change is the defining issue of our time." – Ban Ki-moon

7 Pakistan-Led Diplomacy Opens Window for De-escalation

Impact:

Pakistan's mediation role enhances its credibility while opening a narrow window for de-escalation.

Recommendation:

Institutionalize backchannel diplomacy and sustain balanced engagement to convert short-term de-escalation into structured dialogue mechanisms.

"All war represents a failure of diplomacy." – Tony Benn

2 Development budget cut amid Austerity

Impact:

Reflects rising fiscal pressure and shifting priorities, while addressing short-term economic shocks.

Recommendation:

Prioritise high-impact development projects to balance economic stability with long-term growth needs.

"The avoidance of taxes is the only intellectual pursuit that still carries any reward." – John Maynard Keynes

5 Taxila heritage at risk

Impact:

Raises concerns over damage to historical authenticity and potential inclusion on UNESCO's danger list.

Recommendation:

Ensure strict adherence to international conservation standards and strengthen oversight to protect heritage sites.

"When we build, let us think that we build forever." – John Ruskin

8 Continued US-Israeli Strikes Undermine Peace Efforts

Impact

Continued military action despite diplomacy heightens escalation risks and sustains regional instability.

Recommendation:

Reinforce international pressure through multilateral forums to align military actions with ongoing diplomatic initiatives and prevent further escalation.

"You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war." – Albert Einstein

3 Global Trade Disruptions Intensify Amid Energy Shock

Impact:

Rising oil prices are driving a severe global trade shock, straining supply chains and food security.

Recommendation:

Accelerate diversification of energy routes, deploy strategic reserves, and prioritize trade resilience.

"The policy choices made now will determine whether we go down a path that embraces or disrupts international trade." – Ralph Ossa

6 Pakistani universities gain global rankings

Impact:

Increase sustained investment in research funding, faculty development and international collaborations.

Recommendation:

Increase investment in research, faculty development, and international collaboration to enhance global rankings and academic quality.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." – Nelson Mandela

9 Karachi Ranked Among Most Climate-Vulnerable Cities

Impact

Exposes critical gaps in urban resilience, threatening infrastructure, public health, and economic stability.

Recommendation:

Prioritize climate-resilient urban planning, strengthen drainage and water systems, and integrate risk mitigation into city governance frameworks.

"Climate change is the defining issue of our time." – Ban Ki-moon



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