

PAKISTAN



STRATEGIC ANALYSIS REPORT / APRIL 2020

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Predictions on the eternally hijacked



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Pakistan

From Persian, پاك (pāk) ستان (-stān)

1. n. Land of the pure

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this strategic analysis report is to ascertain how geopolitical dynamics in and around Pakistan will evolve in the next few years.

Pakistani relations with the US will become increasingly transactional after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. As the US-India partnership strengthens to face China, the US will lose interest in Pakistan and their priorities will further diverge. In response, Beijing will remain Islamabad's all-weather strategic partner despite claims that the debt-trap could become a hurdle. Trade relations with the EU will continue to expand and Brussels will not use trade leverage to obtain Human Rights concessions from Islamabad. Cooperation in other areas will stagnate, and the EU's neutrality on the Kashmir issue will remain unchanged.

In Central Asia, Islamabad will maintain positive relations with the Central Asian Republics, which will be based on increasing connectivity, trade and energy partnerships, although these may be endangered by instability in Afghanistan. Relations with Bangladesh will remain unpropitious. An American withdrawal from Afghanistan will most likely lead to an intensification of the conflict. Thanks to connections with the Taliban, Pakistan might become Afghanistan's kingmaker. Even if regional powers like Russia and China may welcome the US withdrawal, they will be negatively affected by the subsequent security vacuum. Despite Pakistani efforts to maintain good ties with both Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), if tensions escalate Islamabad will side with Riyadh. Pakistan's weak non-proliferation credentials will be coupled with a risk of Pakistan sharing its nuclear arsenal with the Saudis.

A high degree of tensions will continue characterizing its relations with India, following the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution. Water scarcity will be another source of problems in their shared borders, which will be exacerbated by New Delhi's construction of reservoirs in its territory. Islamabad will continue calling for an internationalization of the Kashmir issue, in search of international support. They are likely to fight localized skirmishes, but there is a growing fear that the contentious issues mentioned above could eventually lead to an all-out nuclear war. PM Khan and Modi will be reluctant to establish channels of rapprochement, partly due to internal dynamics of both countries, be it Hindu nationalism or radical Islam.

A glance inside Pakistan will show how terrorism will continue to be a significant threat for Pakistan. As a result of Pakistan's lack of effective control in certain areas of its territory, the country has been used as a base of operations by terrorist and criminal groups for decades, to perpetrate all kinds of attacks and illegal activities, which will not change in the near future. Risks that should be followed closely include the power of anti-Western narratives wielded by radical Islamists, the lack of a proper educational system and an ambiguous counter-terrorism effort. In the midst of this hodgepodge, religion will continue to have a central role and will be undoubtedly used by non-state actors to justify their violent actions, although it is less likely that it will become an instrument for states to further their radical agendas.

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INTRODUCTION

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a young state, which has faced numerous vicissitudes during the last centuries. During the 16th and 17th centuries its territory belonged to the Mughal Empire. It then became part of Durrani Empire in the 18th century and of the Sikh Empire in the first half of the 19th century. It subsequently became part of the British India, during which some of its current borders began to be drafted. In particular, the controversial Durand Line was established as the international border between Afghanistan and the British India by Mortimer Durand, which today is still a disputed issue according to Kabul. Pakistan finally got its independence in 1947, after the partition of the British India, and it comprised the territories of West and East Pakistan, which were the Muslim-majority areas of the old British India. That partition created Pakistan's modern borders, although East Pakistan eventually gained independence from Pakistan in 1971 and became the modern Bangladesh.

Such partition led to the creation of Pakistan, a country with a unique geographical position. It is located in South Asia, and it borders with India in the East, China in the North-East, Afghanistan in the North and West and Iran in the West. The Himalayas cover the northern part of the country and the Baluchistan Plateau occupies the southwestern region¹. Its southern border faces the Arabian Sea and Oman. In the East, the Thar desert is located between Pakistan and India. The Indus River is Pakistan's artery, which divides the country into two, and provides for the fertile lands of the Punjab, often described as Pakistan's heartland region. Baluchistan, although territorially big, has little population and a tradition of insurgencies and independence movements. The Sindh, for its part, boasts of having Karachi, Pakistan's most dynamic city, whose port is a vital trade hub. Lastly, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is renowned for being a major theatre of terrorism and a porous and mountainous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Apart from the 4 provinces, Pakistan has 2 autonomous territories (Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan) and its capital, Islamabad, which is considered a federal territory.

Pakistan sits at the crossroads of Asia, linking the massively populated Indian subcontinent with the resource-rich Central Asia and Middle East, and China with the Arabian Sea. Surprisingly, its westernmost point is only 340 km away from the Arabian Peninsula. Pakistan's foundational values make it the home of the Muslims in the subcontinent, being the second largest Muslim country in terms of population, with around 215 million inhabitants². More than 95% of Pakistanis are Muslims, and the ethnic diversity is extremely rich: Punjabis,

¹ 'Pakistan,' Stratfor, n.d., <https://www.stratfor.com/region/south-asia/pakistan>.

² 'South Asia: Pakistan,' The World Factbook, n.d., <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html>.

Pashtuns, Sindhis, Balochis, Muhajirs conform some of Pakistan's biggest ethnic groups. Pakistan's economy ranks 42nd by nominal GDP and 24th by PPP. Although the per capita nominal GDP is low (\$1,388), the Pakistani demographic pyramid presents a disproportionate amount of young population, which may give Pakistan the opportunity to climb to the middle-income economies group in the medium term.

Pakistan's domestic and foreign policy is shaped by a major imperative: its enmity with India. The rivalry has existed since Pakistan was born, and has led to 4 wars, skirmishes, military stand-offs and both a conventional and nuclear arms race between New Delhi and Islamabad. Most of these conflicts have started due to cross-border terrorism and tensions related with the Kashmir issue, but there are other problems with a potential for future conflict, like the question of the Indus System of Rivers and the distribution of its waters, which is intimately linked with the Kashmir issue. Most efforts to achieve a lasting peace have been disrupted by internal dynamics of both countries: sometimes it's ideologies like radical Islamism in Pakistan or Hindu nationalism in India, but one may also point to the disproportionate power exercised by Pakistan's army in deciding its foreign policy and national security, which prevents the civil governments in Islamabad from pursuing a pragmatic agenda to achieve peace.

Pakistan was born as an ideological state, something reaffirmed by President Zia ul-Haq in 1981 when he said 'take Islam out of Pakistan and make it a secular state; it would collapse'³. As such, Islam informs the political, social, family and religious life. Its internal instability and the rivalry with India have also shaped Pakistan as a national security state, due to the continuous perceived threats to its territorial integrity, national identity and sovereignty. This allowed the military to become the dominant institution when it comes to making foreign and security policy.

The war in Afghanistan has also been decisive in shaping Pakistan's foreign policy. The 2,430 km border has allowed the Taliban and other factions fighting in Afghanistan to take refuge in Pakistani soil. Simultaneously, Pakistan has a strong interest in preventing India from gaining influence in Afghanistan, which would be a strategically uncomfortable position to be in, for Islamabad. To do so, Pakistan has given refuge and even silently cooperated with the Taliban and other groups, because they are the ideologically closest and would serve best Pakistan's interest in case of an eventual peace settlement. Its support for the Taliban, however, has entailed a rocky relationship with the United States (US), which honours its on-and-off relations dynamic that has been in place since Pakistan's foundation. Being in such awkward position, Pakistan is

³ Dawood Mohammadi, 'Causes of General Zia Ul Haq's Islamization Program,' 2017, https://www.academia.edu/36807237/Causes_of_General_Zia_Ul_Haqs_Islamization_Program.

forced to collaborate with the US War on Terrorism aimed at the Taliban and al-Qaeda, while simultaneously preserving and nourishing them.

When looking at the Middle East, Pakistan has made a huge effort in cultivating good ties with most countries of that region, due to ideological affinity and the acute need that Pakistan has for cheap energy and financial assistance, which is often provided by the Gulf states. But Pakistan's greatest ally of all is the Middle Kingdom. Not only has China provided diplomatic assistance to Pakistan in its struggle against India, but it also has invested huge amounts of money to develop the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a life-injection in Pakistan's economy.

The Pakistani economy is considered a lower-middle income one, with a PPP GDP per capita of \$5,389 in 2019. Although originally, Pakistan used to be an agricultural country, the non-agricultural sectors have seen quick growth, especially in the apparel and textiles, which are all export sectors. Pakistan's major imports include petroleum gas, palm oil and cars. Since its imports surpass by far its exports, Pakistan had a negative trade balance of \$30.9 bn in 2017⁴. The top trading partners are China, the EU, the US and energy-rich Gulf countries. Oil and gas are particularly important to provide power to Pakistan's industries and households, because it lacks energy resources, although it does have a potential of hydro-electric power along the Indus basin. The most economically dynamic areas are located in the Punjab and Karachi, while the rest of the country is less developed. Thanks to millions of Pakistanis working abroad, the country receives a huge amount of remittances which reached \$21.8 bn in 2019⁵.

Despite all this potential, Pakistan has an endemic problem with corruption, which has affected most of its public institutions since the country's birth. Its unstable economy heavily relies on imports, and this has resulted in Pakistan requesting and receiving IMF loans on 22 occasions⁶. The most recent loan was given in 2019, but this time the IMF has asked Pakistan to reform its economy, and now the country is engaged in a privatization process of government-owned companies and economic liberalization, which will (in theory) decrease budget deficit and attract FDI. Despite the GDP growth dropped considerably after the implementation of the reforms, Pakistan is trying to stabilize itself macroeconomically, by decreasing its account deficit, reducing debt, increasing FDI, augmenting the reserves of the State Bank of Pakistan and improving its general image before rating agencies⁷.

⁴ 'Pakistan,' OEC, n.d., <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/pak/>.

⁵ Muzaffar Rizvi, 'Pakistan Remittances Poised to Hit Record \$23 Bn,' *Khaleej Times*, 2019, <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/global/pakistan-remittances-poised-to-hit-record-23b-1>.

⁶ Sabir Shah, 'Pakistan Has Borrowed 21 Times from IMF since Dec 8, 1958,' *International The News*, 2018, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/384713-pakistan-has-borrowed-21-times-from-imf-since-dec-8-1958>.

⁷ Kunwar Khuldune Shahid, 'Is Pakistan's Economy Recovering?,' *The Diplomat*, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/02/is-pakistans-economy-recovering/>.

1. RELATIONS WITH THE US, CHINA AND THE EU

1.1. US-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

1.1.1 Nature of the relations

‘Transactional’ is the adjective that best describes the US-Pakistan relations throughout the recent decades. Both countries have collaborated repeatedly to fight the USSR expansion, its invasion of Afghanistan, and throughout the War on Terror. But at times, the US lost interest in Pakistan, which led to a rise of tensions and even introduction of sanctions on Islamabad, adding more instability to the relations. During the last couple of years, the key issue driving their relations has been the war in Afghanistan. The Trump administration’s willingness to withdraw from Afghanistan, and the need to deliver a foreign policy victory for the 2020 elections have forced the US to ask for Pakistan’s help, again.

To do that, the US severed its ties and accused Pakistan of doing nothing to prevent terrorists use Pakistani territory to launch attacks in Afghanistan and took several measures⁹: it restricted the movement of Pakistani diplomats in the US, suspended military aid, and it put forward a motion to put Pakistan on the terrorist financing watchlist, which eventually succeeded¹⁰. In response, Islamabad halted HUMINT sharing with Washington¹¹. Once Pakistan was under pressure, the US asked PM Khan for help in resolving the Afghan conflict and facilitating the talks, by restraining the Taliban from attacking US forces¹². This was a sweet proposal for both transactional partners: the US would withdraw its troops from Afghanistan and conclude a peace deal. Pakistan would see aid and military programs restored, and most importantly, a weak neighbouring Afghanistan with the friendly Taliban in a strong position, which meant that Pakistan could influence the direction of the country¹³.

Consequently, as Pakistan tacitly accepted, the US restored its military training programs and military aid¹⁴; Washington also used its influence in the FATF to prevent Pakistan from

⁸ Madiha Afzal, ‘The Future of US-Pakistani Relations,’ *Brookings Institution*, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/unpacked/2018/01/12/the-future-of-u-s-pakistani-relations/>.

⁹ Hizbullah Khan, ‘Are US-Pakistan Relations Improving?’ *Columbia SIPA Journal of International Relations*, 2019, <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/are-us-pakistan-relations-improving>.

¹⁰ Sahar Khan, ‘Double Game: Why Pakistan Supports Militants and Resists US Pressure to Stop,’ *Cato Institute*, 2018, <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/double-game-why-pakistan-supports-militants-resists-us-pressure-stop>.

¹¹ ‘Pakistan Halts Intelligence Sharing after US Cuts Aid,’ *PBS*, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/pakistan-halts-intelligence-sharing-after-u-s-cuts-aid>.

¹² Khan, ‘Are US-Pakistan Relations Improving?’

¹³ Mark Mazzetti and Ismail Khan, ‘From the Afghan Peace Deal, a Weak and Pliable Neighbor for Pakistan,’ *The New York Times*, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/05/world/asia/afghanistan-pakistan-peace.html>.

¹⁴ Jonathan Landay, ‘US to Resume Military Training Program for Pakistan: State Department,’ *Reuters*, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-US-pakistan/u-s-to-resume-military-training-program-for-pakistan-state-department-idUSKBN1YO03S>.

being blacklisted and nudged the IMF to give it a new loan¹⁵. Additionally, Trump offered its mediation in the Kashmir dispute. Pakistan, for his part, began designating and arresting terrorists to soothe the US demands¹⁶. The Afghan peace deal was finally signed on March 2020. The withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan (the main goal of the US) has begun, and if successfully accomplished, it will lead to a different relationship with Pakistan. Within a 5-year frame, we could see several scenarios unravelling¹⁷:

1. The US-Pakistan relations may strengthen: both will have stronger shared interests and Pakistan will stop supporting militants. China won't be as influential, and democratic institutions in Pakistan will consolidate. Unfortunately, this is not a very likely scenario.
2. The US may choose to antagonize Pakistan if its interests are adversely affected (e.g. terrorist attack on US citizens). A harsh response could mean diplomatically isolating Pakistan, declaring it as a major terrorist sponsor, revoking its major non-NATO ally status and imposing sanctions. This is not very likely, because Washington has reasons not to antagonize too much Islamabad.
3. The most likely scenario is a US loss of interest in Pakistan, which will have divergent priorities: it will continue influencing terrorist groups, militants and it will grow closer to China. The US will try not to antagonize it, because Pakistan has nuclear weapons.

In this third scenario, the US will retain some minor interests in Pakistan¹⁸: primarily, the prevention of terrorism financing and a nuclear policy under control. As such, the US will try to use any tools at its disposal to influence Islamabad. From an economic perspective, US-Pakistan bilateral trade has slowly increased during the past years up to \$6.7 bn in 2018 (China's bilateral trade in 2018 was \$16.7 bn; see Annex 1), but the US FDI is on a decreasing trend¹⁹. Washington risks repeating its mistake of applying economic pressure to Islamabad on a non-shared priority policy. Unlike the Afghan peace deal, such moves rarely achieve its goals and have often backlashed and brought Pakistan closer to Beijing²⁰. Given the circumstances, it seems that economic pressure won't be useful because Pakistan no longer depends on the US for its trade and military equipment, which means that Washington doesn't run the show anymore. The US

¹⁵ Rahul Tripathi and Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, 'Pakistan to Remain in FATF Grey List, Black Listing Looks Unlikely,' *The Economic Times*, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pakistan-may-be-out-of-fatf-grey-list-next-month/articleshow/73562010.cms>.

¹⁶ Jonah Blank et al., 'Vector Check: Prospects for US and Pakistan Air Power Engagement' (Santa Monica, CA, 2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2107.html.

¹⁷ Some of the ideas for this scenario construction have been extracted from Chapter 4 of this report: Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ 'Pakistan,' Office of the US Trade Representative, 2019, <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/south-central-asia/pakistan>.

²⁰ Shubhangi Pandey, 'No Title,' *Observer Research Foundation*, no. 251 (2018), <https://www.orfonline.org/research/42912-u-s-sanctions-on-pakistan-and-their-failure-as-strategic-deterrent/>.

will likely establish some red lines that Pakistan shall not cross, at risk of receiving a punishment in the form of sanctions or blacklisting in the Financial Action Task Force. As long as the activities of Pakistani-supported militants do not affect US interests directly, the US will probably relent on its pressure about terrorism financing.

The US general loss of interest in Pakistan is attributable to a bigger geopolitical puzzle: the strengthened US-India partnership to face a rising China. As partners in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, India will ask the US to pressure Pakistan and China. Due to the diminished US influence in Pakistan, Washington won't be able to force Islamabad to reject its Chinese partner. Thus, the US may only pressure Pakistan if it is blatantly irritating New Delhi; which in turn will make Pakistan believe that the US is serving Indian interests²¹, especially after the recent \$3 bn weapons sales to India²². Such perception will lead to closer ties between Pakistan and China and a diminished US influence over Pakistan's nuclear policy and militant support, which will in turn reinforce the India-US security partnership.

1.1.2 Military relations

Military relations between the US and Pakistan are likely to weaken. After several hiccups, Pakistan has realized the US is not a reliable ally and has begun looking for better alternatives. An example of this is the 2016 blockage by the US Senate of a \$700 million sale of F-16 jets to Pakistan²³. Another example is Trump's cancellation in 2018 of several training programs for Pakistani officials²⁴, which had traditionally been protected from political tensions. Although the Trump administration later restarted the military programs in December 2019 as part of his strategy to get Pakistan's help for the Afghanistan negotiations²⁵, the consequences of such suspension were far-reaching: Pakistan immediately signed a military training agreement with Russia²⁶, which has further reduced the US influence in Pakistan.

If we project to the future the trend of US weapons sales, the panorama looks bleak. Since 2013, US sales²⁷ have dropped by 76% and the trend will continue downwards. Another way to put it is the following: US arms sales have decreased from \$1 bn in 2010 to \$21 million in 2017,

²¹ Sikander Ahmed Shah, 'US – Pakistan Relations: A Marriage of Inconvenience,' *Just Security*, 2018, <https://www.justsecurity.org/55842/us-pakistan-relations-marriage-inconvenience/>.

²² 'India to Purchase More than USD 3 Bn of Advanced American Military Equipment: Trump,' *The Economic Times*, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-to-purchase-more-than-usd-3-bn-of-advanced-american-military-equipment-trump/articleshow/74300263.cms>.

²³ 'US Senate Rejects Move to Block F-16 Sale to Pakistan,' *The Express Tribune*, 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1063807/bid-to-block-pakistan-f-16-sale-fails-in-us-senate/>.

²⁴ Umair Jamal, 'The Consequences of Shifting US-Pakistan Military Ties,' *The Diplomat*, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/the-consequences-of-shifting-us-pakistan-military-ties/>.

²⁵ Landay, 'US to Resume Military Training Program for Pakistan: State Department.'

²⁶ Jamal, 'The Consequences of Shifting US-Pakistan Military Ties.'

²⁷ Nukhbat Malik and Muhammad Ishtiaq, 'China Outpaces US in Arms Supply to Pakistan,' *VOA News*, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/china-outpaces-us-arms-supply-pakistan>.

and in 2018 they accounted only for a 12% of the total, compared to China's 70% of total supply to Pakistan²⁸. This is a clear sign that technological dependence from the US is not being preserved. Pakistan has already looked at other suppliers including Russia, China and Turkey.

Pakistan signed an agreement in 2014 with Russia that broke Moscow's long-standing and Cold War-era policy of not selling weapons to Pakistan²⁹. Following the deal, Pakistan purchased in 2015 four Mi-35M attack helicopters and some more Mi-171E helicopters. There are rumours that Pakistan will soon acquire the Russian Pantsir surface-to-air missile system and several T-90 tanks in a \$9 bn deal, although there has not been any official confirmation.

China surpassed the US as Pakistan's main weapons supplier recently and the partnership will be strengthened in the coming years, both in terms of traditional arms and modern weapons systems³⁰. Several factors have brought this change: one is the technological and quality improvements in Chinese indigenous equipment, which no longer relies on cheap copies of Soviet or American systems and can now compete with the West³¹. Secondly, unlike the US or the EU, China does not cut supplies over issues like democracy or human rights³². Thirdly, Chinese equipment tends to be more affordable³³. This matters a lot to Islamabad, especially after the US withdrew its military financing and aid to support Pakistani purchases.

As mentioned before, Chinese weapons sales have become more sophisticated. In terms of air power, Pakistan has bought 150 JF-17 Thunder fighters from China and both countries are now jointly developing the JF-17³⁴. Pakistan also acquired 5 Wing Loong I drones in 2015 and has plans to acquire 48 more, due to the US reluctance to give armed drones to Islamabad³⁵. Pakistan further purchased 4 ZDK03 early warning aircraft, 3 WZ10 helicopters and recently started using China's Beidou Satellite Navigation system, a rival to the US GPS. In terms of naval power, Beijing sold 8 Chinese-built Yuan submarines in a \$4 bn deal³⁶ and is now building

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Krzysztof Iwanek, 'Russia's Looming Arms Sale to Pakistan Sets Up a Dangerous Game,' *The Diplomat*, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/russias-looming-arms-sale-to-pakistan-sets-up-a-dangerous-game/>.

³⁰ Manu Pubby, 'China Backs 'iron Brother' Pakistan with Primary Weapons and Complex Exercises,' *The Economic Times*, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-backs-iron-brother-pakistan-with-primary-weapons-and-complex-exercises/articleshow/68418192.cms>.

³¹ Farsan Bokhari, 'Closer Pakistan-China Military Ties Irk West,' *Financial Times*, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/17e67c58-93f3-11e5-bd82-c1fb87bef7af>.

³² Kiran Stacey, 'Pakistan Shuns US for Chinese High-Tech Weapons,' *Financial Times*, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/8dbce0a0-3713-11e8-8b98-2f31af407cc8>.

³³ Bokhari, 'Closer Pakistan-China Military Ties Irk West.'

³⁴ Pubby, 'China Backs 'iron Brother' Pakistan with Primary Weapons and Complex Exercises.'

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Catherine Wong, 'China-Pakistan Military Ties Set to Get Even Closer as 'iron Brothers' Eye New Alliance,' *South China Morning Post*, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2127106/china-pakistan-military-ties-set-get-even-closer-iron>.

4 Type 054A Jiangkai frigates for Pakistan³⁷, some of the most advanced warships developed by China. In terms of land power, Pakistan has bought VT-4 tanks, HQ-16 air defence missile systems and A-100 rocket launchers from China³⁸.

1.1.3 US drone attacks

The Pakistani army and the ISI have traditionally played a double game: while they publicly rejected their support to terrorist groups, they collaborated with them behind the scenes. During the past years, this became a major point of friction between Washington and Islamabad, due to the US’ losses in Afghanistan and its willingness to extricate itself from the conflict.

With the drawdown of American troops from Afghanistan, Washington’s concern with Pakistani support for radical groups will diminish except on the following cases: first, if US citizens or soil are directly affected by terrorist actions. Second, if India suffers big-scale terrorist attack that risks a war between India and Pakistan, thereby affecting US interests. Third, if the US eventually re-engages in the Afghan conflict. Fourth, if terrorist groups are close to acquiring Pakistani nuclear weapons. Assuming that the US will complete its withdrawal from Afghanistan, Washington will see its stakes diminished and will lose interest in the activities of those terrorist groups barring the aforementioned actions.

	S	W	O	T
Reliance in Pakistani military	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No American lives at risk 2. Does not inflame bilateral tensions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pakistan tends to carry out violent operations, leaving terrorist groups untouched. 2. Pakistani officials say they cannot enter tribal regions without notifying tribal leaders. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allow Pakistan make a positive contribution 2. Improve mutual trust 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pakistan intelligence may tip off militants before they arrive to the scene, losing valuable targets. 2. If operations go wrong, the US may react harshly.
Special Operations	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can identify individual targets 2. Protect civilians 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seen as significant violations of sovereignty 2. Serious worsening of relations with Pakistan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Possibility to collect intelligence (computers and documents) about the terrorist organization and plots. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Puts American lives at risk 2. Risk of military escalation and diplomatic repercussions
Drone attacks	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No American lives at risk. 2. Capable of staying aloft over an area for many hours 3. Unmatched in responsiveness for time-sensitive targets 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Worsens relations with Pakistan and US image. 2. Unintentionally kills civilians. 3. Legal question of whether the US government can lawfully target American citizens 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Future elimination of top leaders. 2. Weakening of terrorist groups 3. Creates fear among terrorists and provokes discouragement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Faces increasing scrutiny and criticism. 2. Signature strikes lead to increased tensions.

³⁷ Waseem Mushtaq, ‘Analysis: China’s Growing Military Ambition in Pakistan,’ 2019, <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c200own>.

³⁸ Stacey, ‘Pakistan Shuns US for Chinese High-Tech Weapons.’

Source: elaborated by Albert Vidal, with ideas extracted from the case 'Drones in Pakistan', by the Model Diplomacy – Council on Foreign Relations.

Drone attacks have long been used in both Afghan and Pakistani soil to target terrorists. Although some doubt it, we believe the US will continue its policy of drone attacks in Pakistani territory, albeit with lower intensity. All other policy options have too high of a price. Why drone attacks? Reliance in the Pakistani military has provoked huge military failures in the past and special operations are used only in exceptional occasions. The trend of drone attacks has been on the rise for more than a decade. Whereas Obama launched around 1,900 drone strikes during his 8-year administration, Trump has launched more than 2,200 during his first two years³⁹. He also signed an executive order⁴⁰ in 2019 making drone strikes less transparent by abolishing a rule that forced the Department of Defense to report the number of civilians killed. As such, the use of drones has been a bipartisan policy, recalling Obama's drone war. Thus, the result of the 2020 Presidential election will not change drone policy that much, as democrat candidates⁴¹ have hinted that they will use them.

1.2. CHINA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

1.2.1 Nature of the relations

Since the 1960s, Pakistan-China relations have come to be labelled as an all-weather strategic partnership. The strength of these relations arose from the union to oppose a shared enemy (India) but then evolved and gained depth. China has now become Pakistan's main trading partner [Annex 1] and weapons supplier⁴², a trend that was strengthened after the 2007 Free Trade Agreement⁴³ and the 2015 announcement of the CPEC, the flagship of the Belt and Road Initiative. The CPEC, which for Pakistan means an opportunity to strengthen its economy and solve structural problems, is a strategic corridor to reduce Chinese energetic dependency on the Malacca Strait and shorten the route to the Middle East.

As of today, some argue that the Chinese-Pakistan relations may have passed its peak⁴⁴, because Pakistan has already developed its nuclear arms program and China doesn't need

³⁹ 'Trump Revokes Obama Rule on Reporting Drone Strike Deaths,' *BBC News*, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-47480207>.

⁴⁰ Elise Swain and Jon Schwarz, 'Merry Christmas, America! Let's Remember the Children Who Live in Fear of Our Killer Drones,' *The Intercept*, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/12/25/merry-christmas-us-drone-strikes/>.

⁴¹ Swain and Scharz, 'Merry Christmas, America! Let's Remember the Children Who Live in Fear of Our Killer Drones'

⁴² Stacey, 'Pakistan Shuns US for Chinese High-Tech Weapons.'

⁴³ 'China-Pakistan FTA,' China FTA Network, n.d., <http://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/topic/enpakistan.shtml>.

⁴⁴ Jonah Blank, 'Pakistan and China's Almost Alliance,' *Rand Corporation*, 2015, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2015/10/pakistan-and-chinas-almost-alliance.html>.

Pakistan to smuggle Western technology anymore. But that view misses key aspects of the evolution of relations, namely the massive increase in bilateral trade figures and Chinese FDI in Pakistan, from \$12.4 bn in 2014 to \$16.7 bn in 2019 [Annex 1]. Moreover, in 2019, the China-Pakistan FTA entered its Phase-II, removing additional tariffs and widening market access for both economies⁴⁵. CPEC has had an enormous impact in the Pakistani economy: after all the money invested, the set-up of 9 new Special Economic Zones⁴⁶, and the beginning of the CPEC 2nd and 3rd phases, China will become more involved than ever. Furthermore, China is not just building power plants; it has begun investing in agriculture, healthcare, education and vocational training⁴⁷, which will deepen China's involvement in Pakistan, because these are long-term projects that require not just money but also human capital investment.

There are other factors that may bring Islamabad closer to Beijing: a potential EU suspension of Pakistan's GSP+ benefits would invite China to fill in the gap. And in the likely scenario that the US starts distancing itself from Pakistan, that gap will also be filled by the Chinese.

1.2.2 Debt-trap

Despite all the benefits that the CPEC is supposed to bring, some have pointed to the danger of an incipient debt-trap, as it happened in Tonga and Sri Lanka. The issue of the debt-trap has two different narratives, that use their own sources and data to justify their claims, so it is difficult to ascertain whose claims are right. The secretary of the Economic Affairs Division of Pakistan said, after several accusations to the CPEC being a debt-trap, that out of Pakistan's total foreign debt (\$106 bn), Chinese loans account only for 10% of the total⁴⁸. The remaining 90% belongs to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Paris Club and other Western organizations. In line with this, a statement of the Chinese embassy in Pakistan reaffirmed⁴⁹ it and added that Chinese loans tend to have a much lower interest rate, sometimes interest-free and with a long repayment period. Additionally, more than 80% of CPEC projects' funding comes from Chinese FDI or free aid, and less than 20% from loans⁵⁰.

⁴⁵ Dorcas Wong, 'China-Pakistan FTA Phase-II: Reduced Tariffs, New Safeguard Measures,' *China Briefing*, 2020, <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/china-pakistan-fta-phase-2-reduced-tariffs-safeguard-measures-introduced/>.

⁴⁶ 'CPEC Special Economic Zones (SEZs),' Obortunity, n.d., <https://obortunity.org/cpec-news/cpec-special-economic-zones-sezs/>.

⁴⁷ 'Pakistan and China Diplomatic Relations,' Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of Pakistan, n.d., <http://mofa.gov.pk/pakistan-and-china-diplomatic-relations/>.

⁴⁸ Misbah Saba Malik, 'News Analysis: CPEC Not 'Debt-Trap' but Development Schema for Pakistan,' *XinhuaNet*, 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-05/26/c_138090449.htm.

⁴⁹ Zahid Khan, 'The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,' *China Quarterly of International Studies* 5, no. 2 (2019): 249–65, <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/pdf/10.1142/S2377740019500131>.

⁵⁰ Tang Mengsheng and Li Jingfeng, 'CPEC: Progress and Prospects,' *CPEC*, 2019, <http://cpecinfo.com/cpec-progress-and-prospects/>.

But there is a flipside to this story, one that is widespread in Western media: although there is no clear estimation, most economists believe⁵¹ that around \$19 bn out of a total \$90 bn of Pak's foreign debt is owed to China, which is about 1/5 of it. IMF estimated⁵² in 2019 that Pakistan owed China \$22 bn out of a total debt of \$87 bn. It is now clear how both narratives instrumentalize the data to back their arguments. In any case, official sources like the IMF tend to offer more reliable data.

The potential debt-trap and Islamabad's close relations with Beijing inevitably constraints the ability to conduct a sovereign foreign policy, due to the fear of alienating its all-weather friend. This claim is backed by 3 examples that set the direction of future behaviour: first, Imran Khan's inability to denounce China's repression of the Uighur minority despite presenting itself as the advocate of Muslims around the world⁵³. Second, Pakistan recently cracked down on pro-American elements in its army, in what seemed a People's Liberation Army (PLA) led purges⁵⁴. Third, although not directly related to China, Pakistan's dependence on Saudi oil and economic aid stood clear when in December 2019 some Pakistani officials admitted that Khan had pulled out of the Malaysia summit due to Saudi pressure⁵⁵. In short, Pakistan won't have an independent foreign policy unless it becomes economically independent, it stops being controlled by special interest groups like the military and the ISI, it ends its institutional clash, and it eliminates the irrational side of its Islamic identity which often prevents it from having a sound foreign policy⁵⁶.

1.2.3 Military relations

In line with their strengthened relations, military ties seem to be on an upward trend. This is palpable after seeing the evolution in the areas of weapons sales, exercises and diplomacy. For more than 65 years, China has been Pakistan's largest supplier of weapons, traditionally with low-tech equipment. Some recent developments show how China is moving into the high-tech realm: Islamabad is working with Beijing on the joint development of the JF-17 fighter jet, with

⁵¹ Abdul Khaliq, 'Is Pakistan Falling into CHina's Debt Trap?,' *Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt*, 2018, <http://www.cadtm.org/Is-Pakistan-falling-into-China-s>.

⁵² International Monetary Fund, Middle East and Central Asia Dept, 'Pakistan: First Review Under the Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility and Request for Modification of Performance Criteria', *IMF*, 2019, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2019/12/20/Pakistan-First-Review-Under-the-Extended-Arrangement-Under-the-Extended-Fund-Facility-and-48899>

⁵³ Michael Rubin, 'How China Is Humiliating Pakistan,' *The National Interest*, 2020, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-china-humiliating-pakistan-126101>.

⁵⁴ Michael Rubin, 'China's Chump: Why America Can't Trust Pakistan,' *The National Interest*, 2019, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/chinas-chump-why-america-cant-trust-pakistan-68462>.

⁵⁵ Joseph Sipalan and Stephen Kalin, 'Saudi Arabia, Pakistan Snub Malaysia's Muslim Summit,' *Reuters*, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-muslimalliance/saudi-arabia-pakistan-snob-malaysias-muslim-summit-idUSKBN1YMOG3>.

⁵⁶ Umair Jamal, 'Can Pakistan Pursue an Independent Foreign Policy?,' *The Diplomat*, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/can-pakistan-pursue-an-independent-foreign-policy/>.

the aim of eventually replacing US F-16s⁵⁷. As mentioned in the US chapter, China is building advanced warships and attack submarines for Pakistan, and it regularly works to re-engineer US technology provided by Pakistan.

Not only is China Pakistan's main weapons supplier, but is also its preferred training partner, which is key to develop military interoperability. The PLA Air Force has conducted yearly joint exercises with the Pakistani Air Force since 2011, in an event known as Shaheen⁵⁸. This is remarkable, because the PLA Air Force has few partnerships with other nation's air forces. On the ground, they partake in counter-terrorism (CT) exercises, such as the 6th edition of the Warrior exercise in 2018⁵⁹. Their navies have also held 6 naval exercises⁶⁰, with Sea Guardians-2020 being the most recent one. Other multinational naval drills hosted by Pakistan have also included the PLA Navy, such as the Aman 19 exercise⁶¹.

In regards to diplomatic moves, Pakistan's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization should not be ignored. Besides, in 2018, Pakistan and Afghanistan signed a trilateral MoU to improve trilateral coordination on CT⁶². Also in 2018, General Bajwa (chief of the Pakistani army) met China's top paramilitary force leader to enhance cooperation⁶³. In 2019, Islamabad and Beijing signed an MoU to improve defence cooperation and capacity building of the Pakistani Army⁶⁴. In short, it is highly likely that military relations will continue growing closer.

1.2.4 Impacts for India

Pakistan's close relations with China have some clear upsides in Pakistan's confrontation with India. Noticeably, China has continuously provided Pakistan with conventional weapons, and has helped it develop its ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programs⁶⁵. In diplomatic terms, China has been a loyal supporter of Pakistan in all international forums, with the most recent example being China's approaching to the UN Security Council to address India's

⁵⁷ Wong, 'China-Pakistan Military Ties Set to Get Even Closer as 'iron Brothers' Eye New Alliance,'

⁵⁸ APP, 'Chinese, Pakistani Air Forces Wrap up Shaheen-VIII Joint Exercises,' *The Nation*, 2019, <https://nation.com.pk/10-Sep-2019/chinese-pakistani-air-forces-wrap-up-shaheen-viii-joint-exercises>.

⁵⁹ Ankit Panda, 'China, Pakistan Conclude Bilateral Counterterrorism Exercises,' *The Diplomat*, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/china-pakistan-conclude-bilateral-counterterrorism-exercises/>.

⁶⁰ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, 'China-Pakistan Naval Drills: More Than Just Symbolism,' *The Diplomat*, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/china-pakistan-naval-drills-more-than-just-symbolism/>.

⁶¹ Martin Choi, 'Pakistan and China Build Friendship Ties at Aman-19 Multinational Naval Exercise but No Room for India on the Guest List,' *South China Morning Post*, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/2186181/pakistan-and-china-build-friendship-ties-aman-19-multinational>.

⁶² Panda, 'China, Pakistan Conclude Bilateral Counterterrorism Exercises.'

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Fawad Maqsood, 'Pakistan, China Sign MoU to Further Defence Ties,' *Business Recorder*, 2019, <https://www.brecorder.com/2019/08/27/519899/pakistan-china-sign-mou-to-further-defence-ties/>.

⁶⁵ Blank, 'Pakistan and China's Almost Alliance.'

revocation of J&K's special status⁶⁶. Islamabad is also grateful with China's continued support in the Kashmir issue. Additionally, China's growing military prowess has forced India to devote scarce military resources to its common border away from Pakistan. The CPEC is a key driver for Pakistan's economic development, which will give Islamabad more chances to stay strong in its rivalry with India.

Despite the advantages in its rivalry with India, it is argued that Islamabad's close ties with Beijing are isolating Pakistan in the international community and are alienating potentially needed assistance from the US in case of conflict⁶⁷.

Another consequence of the Beijing-Islamabad friendly relations is the potential dual-use of the port of Gwadar, the flagship of the CPEC. This deep-sea commercial port is operated by China Overseas Port Holding Company on a 40-year lease given by the Pakistani government⁶⁸. Due to its strategic location, many Indian and Western analysts believe that it will soon become a Chinese military base. It could serve as a launching pad for operations near the Strait of Hormuz, as well as counterbalancing India's rise, and it will be helpful in providing intel and combat support for the PLA Navy. Indian strategist Mahadevan says⁶⁹ that Beijing is hiding its intentions under an economic rationale, and the Financial Times listed it as a dual-use port, pointing to the inherent duality in its facilities and the ease with which they can be upgraded to support military undertakings⁷⁰. Although a Pakistani task force is protecting the port, Chinese warships may begin contributing to its security, but this has not been confirmed by the Chinese spokesman⁷¹.

There is another side to the story: Pakistan's minister Ahsan Iqbal said that there is not and there would not be Chinese military presence in Gwadar⁷². For its part, the Chinese government has never admitted that Gwadar will become a naval base⁷³. The geography of Gwadar may show why it is overvalued by many⁷⁴: the port lacks strategic depth to defend from air raids or attacks from the sea, as it is located on a peninsula. Further, the port is faced by the Arabian Sea (with an average depth of 3,000 meters), which allows foreign enemy submarines

⁶⁶ Margaret Besheer, 'UN Security Council Discusses Kashmir Escalation,' *VOA News*, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/un-security-council-discusses-kashmir-escalation>.

⁶⁷ Wali Aslam and Bradley A. Thayer, 'Why Pakistan Should End Its Alliance with China,' *The National Interest*, 2019, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-pakistan-should-end-its-alliance-china-68062>.

⁶⁸ 'Pakistan Gives China a 40-Year Lease for Gwadar Port,' *The Maritime Executive*, April 27, 2017, <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/pakistan-gives-china-a-40-year-lease-for-gwadar-port>.

⁶⁹ Mike Chia-Yu Huang, 'A New Game Started? China's 'Overseas Strategic Pivots' in the Indian Ocean Region,' *China Report* 54, no. 3 (2018): 267–84, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0009445518779164>.

⁷⁰ James Kynge et al., 'How China Rules the Waves,' *Financial Times*, 2017, <https://ig.ft.com/sites/china-ports/>.

⁷¹ 'Pakistan and China Boost Security at Gwadar Port,' *The Maritime Executive*, 2016, <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/pakistan-boosts-maritime-security-at-gwadar-port>.

⁷² Kynge et al., 'How China Rules the Waves.'

⁷³ Chia-Yu Huang, 'A New Game Started? China's 'Overseas Strategic Pivots' in the Indian Ocean Region.'

⁷⁴ Ibid.

to operate comfortably. That is why it is not likely that Gwadar becomes a PLA Navy combat station in the short to medium term; instead, it may be used as a supply station for Chinese vessels, as are the ports of Karachi and Bin Qassim⁷⁵. Despite the low likelihood, India has begun operating and investing in the Chabahar⁷⁶ port in southern Iran, which is key to develop the International North-South Transport Corridor, as it will strengthen its trade links with Iran, Russia and northern Europe without needing to go through Pakistan.

1.3. EU-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

1.3.1 Nature of the relations

Most EU countries have had bilateral relations with Pakistan since its independence in 1947, although the European Commission started its cooperation with Pakistan in 1976⁷⁷. The current relations are based on the Cooperation Agreement from 2004 and the 2019 EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP). Bilateral trade has been growing steadily [see Annex 1], and the EU has played a key role in providing development aid and technical expertise for Pakistan's development. Despite the strong economic relations, the EU does not have a record of meddling into Pakistan's domestic problems or its conflict with India⁷⁸.

1.3.2 Trade, leverage and concessions

As a normative power, the EU has a strong interest in promoting democratic governance, gender equality, and numerous freedoms and human rights abroad. In the case of Pakistan, the EU has the ability to use trade as a leverage to obtain concessions from Islamabad, but it does not have the will to do so. Why so? The EU could use trade leverage because it is one of Islamabad's most important trading partner, accounting for 12.8% of Pakistan's total trade and absorbing 23.7% of Pakistan's total exports. On the contrary, Pakistan is the EU's 41st trading partner and it accounts for 0.3% of EU trade⁷⁹. This means that, theoretically, the EU could cut

⁷⁵ 'China-Pakistan Sea Guardians 2020 Joint Exercise Concludes Fleet Drills,' *Global Times*, 2020, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1176904.shtml>.

⁷⁶ Syed Fazl-e Haider, 'INSTC vs. BRI: The India-China Competition Over the Port of Chabahar and Infrastructure in Asia,' *China Brief Volume* 19, no. 21 (2019), <https://jamestown.org/program/instc-vs-bri-the-india-china-competition-over-the-port-of-chabahar-and-infrastructure-in-asia/>.

⁷⁷ Ballesteros-Peiró, Ana. 'The EU-Pakistan Relationship: Looking beyond the Trading Partnership,' Real Instituto Elcano, 2015.

http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/riecano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/asia-pacifico/ari26-2015-the-eu-pakistan-relationship-looking-beyond-the-trading-partnership.

⁷⁸ 'High Representative Vice-President Federica Mogherini Speaks to the Minister of External Affairs of India Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan Shah Mahmood Qureshi,' EEAS, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp/66286/high-representative-vice-president-federica-mogherini-speaks-minister-external-affairs-india_en.

⁷⁹ 'Countries and Regions: Pakistan,' European Commission, n.d., https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/pakistan/index_en.htm.

its trade with Pakistan without suffering too much, whereas that same act would have disastrous consequences for Pakistan. But the EU does not have the will to do it. It is true that in previous occasions, the EU has used the conditionality levers of GSP+, such as in the case of Sri Lanka, where its GSP+ benefit was suspended. But with respect to the EU, trade officials at the Commission gave three reasons for not suspending Pakistan's GSP benefits⁸⁰: first, any suspension of GSP+ would leave the EU with no leverage in Pakistan. Second, the EU is worried that a diminished EU presence may lead to an even stronger Chinese influence in Pakistan. Third, the EU believes there is a risk that Pakistani workers will join radical and terrorist groups if they lose their jobs⁸¹. Despite having its own strong reasons, maintaining the GSP+ trade benefits with a state accused of serious Human Rights violations threatens the EU's credibility as a global exemplary power.

1.3.3 2019 SEP

The relations between Pakistan and the EU has been strengthening during the past decade, but not uniformly. In the same way, the 2019 EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan is a broad partnership that may lead to strengthened relations in one area and contractions or stagnation in other areas. Economic relations will continue to expand under the GSP+ following the trend of the last 5 years: between 2014-2018, EU imports from Pakistan have grown at an average annual rate of 5.7% and exports at a rate of 8.4%⁸². In the field of peace and security, relations will continue stagnant. Due to its conflict with India, Pakistan has no interest in disarmament⁸³. Also, the insufficient Pakistani efforts to address terrorism financing have brought Pakistan to the Grey List of the Financial Action Task Force in 2019⁸⁴, with the vote of several EU countries. In the field of Human Rights, democracy and good governance, there is still a lot to be done. Pakistan's domestic violence seems to be an endemic social problem that will take many years to witness tangible improvements. Simultaneously, the EU is facing a growing number of internal and external crises (in the MENA region) that may result in a stagnant engagement with Pakistan in most areas except for trade.

⁸⁰ Henri Malosse, 'The Preference of the European Union towards Pakistan,' *The Parliament Magazine*, 2018, <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/preference-european-union-towards-pakistan>.

⁸¹ Malosse, 'The Preference of the European Union towards Pakistan,'

⁸² Directorate-General for Trade, 'European Union, Trade in Goods with Pakistan,' 2019, https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/isdb_results/factsheets/country/details_pakistan_en.pdf.

⁸³ General Secretariat of the Council, 'EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan' (n.d.), <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7857-2019-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁸⁴ 'Pakistan May Remain on FATF Grey List beyond Feb 2020: Report,' *The Economic Times*, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pakistan-may-remain-on-fatf-grey-list-beyond-feb-2020-report/articleshow/71969086.cms>.

1.3.4 EU in Jammu and Kashmir

There are differing views on the role taken by the EU in regards to J&K. On the one hand, Pakistani media have accused the EU of supporting India because the European Parliament called for a bilateral solution while Pakistan repeatedly tried to internationalize the issue⁸⁵. On the other hand, some say the EU is trying to make India uncomfortable through the call for a future vote of an EU resolution on the Citizenship Amendment Act, which has references to Kashmir⁸⁶. Such resolution seeks to remind New Delhi of its duties under the 1992 UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities⁸⁷.

Despite efforts by New Delhi and Islamabad to persuade the EU toward their position as regards the stand-off in J&K, the most likely course of action for the EU is to maintain its long-standing position of supporting a bilateral solution between India and Pakistan over Kashmir that respects the interests of the Kashmiri on both sides of the LoC⁸⁸. The EU will continue calling to avoid tensions and emphasising the importance of protecting the rights of the Kashmiri⁸⁹. In short, the EU will not seek a role as a mediator on the issue of Kashmir and will try to maintain its neutrality. The absence of involvement is reaffirmed in the lack of references to Kashmir in the 2019 EU-Pakistan SEP or in the EU-India Strategic Partnership.

That being said, if the EU were to choose sides, India would be more likely to receive its backing. Why so? The market logic dictates a neutral policy for the EU or, alternatively, a pro-India policy. The EU may release statements condemning some Indian activities in Kashmir and its discrimination of Muslim citizens, but that should not be confused with a pro-Pakistani policy. The likelihood that the EU ends up leaning toward India is higher, simply because India is the EU's 9th largest trading partner, accounting for \$92 bn worth of trade in goods in 2018, compared with Pakistan's \$12 bn worth of bilateral trade⁹⁰. Plus, India is the biggest democracy in the world, which gives the EU a strong incentive to partner with New Delhi.

⁸⁵ Fatih Hafiz Mehmet, 'EU Supports India Calling for India & Pakistan to Resolve Kashmir Issue,' *Muslim News*, 2019, <http://muslimnews.co.uk/news/south-asia/eu-supports-india-calling-india-pakistan-resolve-kashmir-issue/>.

⁸⁶ Geeta Mohan, 'EU Ambassador Likely to Be Part of Second Batch of Foreign Envoys Going to Kashmir,' *India Today*, 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/eu-ambassador-likely-to-be-part-of-second-batch-of-foreign-envoys-going-to-kashmir-1645120-2020-02-10>.

⁸⁷ Staff, 'European Parliament to Debate, Vote on Anti-CAA Resolution, Kashmir; Claims 'dangerous Shift' in India's Citizenship Regime,' *Firstpost*, 2020, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/european-parliament-to-debate-vote-on-anti-cao-resolution-kashmir-notes-dangerous-shift-in-indias-citizenship-regime-7960251.html>.

⁸⁸ 'High Representative Vice-President Federica Mogherini Speaks to the Minister of External Affairs of India Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan Shah Mahmood Qureshi.'

⁸⁹ 'High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini Met with Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Indian Minister for External Affairs,' EEAS, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/66825/high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-met-subrahmanyam-jaishankar-indian_en.

⁹⁰ Directorate-General for Trade, 'European Union, Trade in Goods with Pakistan'; Directorate-General for Trade, 'European Union, Trade in Goods with India'

2. CONFLICT WITH INDIA

2.1. KASHMIR ISSUE

2.1.1 Consequences of repealing Article 370

The biggest source of tension between Indian and Pakistani relations is the Kashmir conflict. Kashmir is a region administered by 3 countries: Pakistan, India and China. It is composed of the areas of Kashmir valley, Jammu, Ladakh (controlled by India), Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan (controlled by Pakistan) and Aksai Chin (controlled by China)⁹¹. Despite the conflicts taking place in Kashmir, it has remained an autonomous state with some functions, like defence, administered by India, Pakistan and China. However, on August 5, 2019, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), annulled Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution, removing the special status enjoyed by the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) valley regions⁹².

On the one hand, under Article 370 the J&K valley had the power to make its own constitution, have its own anthem, flag and state symbol. In addition, under this article J&K did not follow all laws that were formulated by the Indian Parliament. The Indian Constitution and many other Indian regulations were also not fully applicable in J&K and many other laws, including basic human rights, were also not applied at the same level in the state⁹³.

On the other hand, section 35A, authorized the J&K legislature to determine who was a permanent resident and to establish laws restricting the purchase of land, the ownership of property, the ability to vote and the capability to provide education and health services to such permanent residents. Therefore, with its annulment, the regions of Jammu, Kashmir Valley and Ladakh would become a new state of India called Jammu and Kashmir, and its population would follow the same laws than the rest of the Indian population⁹⁴.

This measure, according to the Indian government, would benefit the Kashmiri population. There would be an increase of Indian private investment in the tourism sector, that would create new infrastructure and hotels, as well as in the healthcare field, improving its quality and creating more jobs. In addition, equality among the citizens would improve as the

⁹¹ Stephen Philip Cohen, 'India, Pakistan and Kashmir The Brookings Institution A Paired-Minority Conflict,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, no. December 2001 (2003), <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/cohens20011201.pdf>.

⁹² Bajaj, Richa. 'Annulment of Article 370: Rectification of A Historical Wrong,' no. 1 (2020): 7940–44. <https://archives.ourheritagejournal.com/index.php/oh/article/view/1931>

⁹³ Cohen, 'India, Pakistan and Kashmir The Brookings Institution A Paired-Minority Conflict.'

⁹⁴ Pradip T. Wakode, 'Future Consequences of Abolition of Article 370 of Jammu & Kashmir,' *Global Journal for Research Analysis* 9, no. 1 (2020), https://www.worldwidejournals.com/global-journal-for-research-analysis-GJRA/fileview/future-consequences-of-abolition-of-article-370-of-jammu-and-kashmir_January_2020_1578137251_2705996.pdf.

system of caste would be better regulated and the Kashmiri women would have the same rights as the other Indian women⁹⁵.

Furthermore, the articles had various loopholes and led to unfair privileges that affected the well-being of Kashmiris and Indians. The Article 370 led to a Constitutional ambiguity and set Kashmir apart from the rest of India, providing external actors the possibility for the internationalization of an internal dispute. In addition, if a Kashmiri woman got married with a Pakistani, he would acquire the Kashmiri and Indian citizenship, becoming a risk for Indian security in case he was a terrorist⁹⁶. Finally, due to article 35A, Indians were not able to buy land in Kashmir, but the Kashmiri could buy land in India, because the people who were not permanent residents of J&K didn't have the same rights⁹⁷.

As a result, the people of J&K have lost their faith in the Indian administrative system. In order to repeal those articles permanently, according to the original law, the Indian government would have to pass the resolution in the Assembly of J&K⁹⁸. However, the Central Government has requested the Parliament to repeal Article 370 through the Governor of J&K, who does not represent the people of the constituent state, making this decision unconstitutional. This could be dangerous for the federal system of India. If the Central Government can alter the territory of any constituent state without the consent of that state, in the future there may be a dispute between a constituent state and the Central Government⁹⁹.

Moreover, since August 5, 2019, J&K is in a communications blackout. The lack of internet access and the miscommunication with external sources has raised concerns regarding press freedom and the accuracy of reporting emanating from the Valley and stoking anger among its citizens. Besides, with the entry of Indian citizens to the J&K labour market, it is unclear whether local Kashmiris would be able to compete with applicants from the rest of the country for the highly sought-after jobs in the civil service. Previously, under Article 370, non-locals had been barred from these positions¹⁰⁰.

From the standpoint of Pakistan, this action has deteriorated their relations, because this action has been considered a violation of the Shimla Agreement. By virtue of this agreement, the

⁹⁵ Richa Bajaj, 'Annulment of Article 370 : Rectification of A Historical Wrong,' no. 1 (2020): 7940–44.

⁹⁶ Jain, Monika. 'Articles 370 & 35A Should Be Scrapped: Contemporary Scenario of J & K' Law Journals, 2, no. 2 (2019): 9–14. <http://lawjournals.stmjournals.in/index.php/njrel/article/view/429>

⁹⁷ Bajaj, 'Annulment of Article 370 : Rectification of A Historical Wrong.'

⁹⁸ Pradip, 'Future Consequences of Abolition of Article 370 of Jammu & Kashmir,'

⁹⁹ Surji, 'Original Research Paper Political Science FUTURE CONSEQUENCES OF ABOLITION OF ARTICLE 370 OF JAMMU & Head , Department of Political Science Smt Radhabai Sardas Arts , Commerce.'

¹⁰⁰ Raju Gc Thomas, 'Human Rights Violations of Kashmiri Hindus,' in *Perspectives On Kashmir The Roots Of Conflict In South Asia*, Routledge (Westview Press, 2019), Chapter 9, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780429301483/chapters/10.4324/9780429301483-9>.

issue was supposed to be solved through bilateral negotiations, not allowing any third party to participate in the discussion. Nevertheless, this unilateral decision made by the Indian government has given Pakistan the opportunity to blame India for breaking the agreement¹⁰¹. Pakistan could choose to internationalize the dispute, further raising the tensions between them.

2.1.2 Is an arrangement possible?

Considering the existing treaties between Pakistan and India between 1947 and 2017, it is likely that a possible arrangement when it comes to Kashmir, will be partial and will not involve security issues. Even if cooperation to eliminate terrorist groups would be ideal, given their long-standing rivalry and the lack of trust, confidence-building measures should be sought first, such as trade, telecommunications, technology or transport¹⁰².

In addition, diplomatic relations between Modi and Khan are very tense. The best way to improve them would be through negotiations with a third-party mediation, which has been a great success in previous occasions, such as the Indus Water Treaty in 1960 or the role played by the US in diluting tensions after the attack on the Indian parliament in 2002¹⁰³.

However, as previously mentioned, PM Modi is not in favour of internationalizing this conflict. Therefore, even if the US has close relations with India, its mediation is not very likely as of today. The role played by China in the Kashmir issue should also be highlighted, although not precisely because of its role as a mediator. The three main reasons for China's involvement in this conflict are: the development and implementation of CPEC; the longstanding cooperative relation between China and Pakistan; and its rivalry with India.

Since April 2015, the development of CPEC is the result of the close relations between China and Pakistan. This corridor will bring economic benefits both to China, which would find a shorter alternative to the Malacca Strait, and to Pakistan, which will use it to stabilize its economy¹⁰⁴. It should be noted that the corridor passes through the Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Kashmir regions¹⁰⁵, both administered by Pakistan. However, on February 2020, the Indian

¹⁰¹ Kocis, Kyra et al. 'Repeal of Article 370: Implications for India, Pakistan, and the US,' Atlantic Council – South Asia Center 2019. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/repeal-of-article-370-implications-for-india-pakistan-and-the-united-states/>

¹⁰² Tandon, Aakriti, and Michael O Slobodchikoff. 'Building Trust: Cooperation between Rivals India and Pakistan.' In *Building Trust: Cooperation between Rivals India and Pakistan*, 160–201, 2019. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00358533.2019.1592318?journalCode=ctrt20>

¹⁰³ Malik, Muhammad Sajjad. 'Pakistan-India Relations: An Analytical Perspective of Peace Efforts.' *Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad*, 59–76, 2019. <http://issi.org/pakistan-india-relations-an-analytical-perspective-of-peace-efforts/>

¹⁰⁴ Sajad, Wani. 'China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): India's Concern' *International Journal Research in Social Sciences*, 8:436–442, 2019.

<https://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:ijrss&volume=8&issue=2&article=036>

¹⁰⁵ Sabir Samina, 'CPEC and Azad Kashmir: Prospects and Potential,' *Daily Times*, 2020, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/557512/cpec-and-azad-kashmir-prospects-and-potential/>.

Minister of Foreign Affairs declared before the Indian Parliament that the CPEC was a violation of India's sovereignty and territorial integrity, because the corridor passes through territories that are illegally occupied by Pakistan. The Indian government claimed that such initiatives should be based on universal standards, and that the principles of economic development and transparency should always be used with respect for the national sovereignty¹⁰⁶.

In response to China's address in the UNSC to tackle India's revocation of J&K special status, the Indian government issued a statement calling on China to stop turning an internal matter to India into an international conflict. After observing China's interaction with the actors involved in the Kashmir issue, it can be deduced that Beijing positions itself in favour of Pakistan. If one of the possible scenarios for resolving the conflict had to be through a third-party mediation, we do not believe that India would allow the third party to be China.

2.1.3 Effects of Hindu nationalism

Hindu nationalism has already had strong effects on the reality of the Kashmiris, although this may still be a reversible situation. Since Modi's appointment as president in 2014 until today, Hindu nationalism has been taking a more prominent role, not only in Indian society but also in politics¹⁰⁷. In its early days, the BJP ruled on issues of corruption, caste and Hindu nationalism. It encouraged state institutions to represent the will of the Hindu community, and speeches by BJP candidates hailed 'those who did not vote for Modi should seek exile in Muslim-majority Pakistan'¹⁰⁸. In 2019 the BJP issued a manifesto with zero tolerance against extremism and terrorism.

As for Kashmir, it stated the following: 'We have made all necessary efforts to ensure peace in J&K through decisive actions and a firm policy [...]. We are committed to annulling Article 35A of the Constitution of India as the provision is discriminatory against non-permanent residents and women of J&K'¹⁰⁹. As previously explained, these articles were annulled, and their political and administrative consequences took place. Hindu nationalism has been growing, and with it, not only have policies consistent with this ideology been applied, but they have also

¹⁰⁶ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, 'China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Is Illegal: India,' *The Economic Times*, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-pakistan-economic-corridor-is-illegal-india/articleshow/73974996.cms>.

¹⁰⁷ Kapil Komireddi, 'The Kashmir Crisis Isn't about Territory. It's about a Hindu Victory over Islam.,' *The Washington Post*, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/the-kashmir-crisis-isnt-about-territory-its-about-a-hindu-victory-over-islam/2019/08/16/ab84ffe2-bf79-11e9-a5c6-1e74f7ec4a93_story.html.

¹⁰⁸ Moten, Abdul Rashid. 'Kashmir between India Pakistan: The Unfinished Agenda.' *Intellectual Discourse*, 2 (2019): 577–95. <https://search.proquest.com/openview/2f37c6537b5bfc68e4f06b19617ac3b3/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=826340>

¹⁰⁹ Bharatiya Janata Party, 'Bharatiya Janata Party Sankalp Patra,' 2019, 0–15, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/realtime/BJP_Election_2019_english.pdf.

given rise to feelings of hatred and rejection against Muslim citizens, including those located in Kashmir. These feelings, along with the terrorist attacks, have been reflected in a sense of threat to Indian society. In social networks, Muslims are degraded and stereotyped as sexual predators. Meanwhile, PM Modi never condemned hate attacks on Muslims publicly, despite the murder of 36 Muslims across 12 Indian states from 2015 to 2018¹¹⁰.

Furthermore, in Kashmir the internet connection has been cut off, mobile networks closed and landlines disconnected. The public assembly is suspended, and citizens are subject to a curfew. In addition, soldiers now stand by the homes of Kashmiris and hospitals are overcrowded with wounded demonstrators¹¹¹. This illustrates that Hindu nationalism is gradually increasing, and with it the severity of the measures applied. However, it would be unfair not to mention that the Kashmiris have also suffered HR violations as victims of terrorism. The reporting on HR violations in Kashmir, so far, has been restricted to the alleged excesses involved in administrative actions against terrorism, ignoring the plight of the victims of the continued terrorist violence¹¹².

2.2 NUCLEAR RIVALRY

2.2.1 Nuclear capabilities of Pakistan & India

Since the emergence of India and Pakistan, armed conflicts have been recurrent between them. In February 2019, Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) carried out a car bombing in the Pulwama area of Indian-governed Kashmir. This attack resulted in the death of 40 Indian paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force, becoming one of the bloodiest attacks of the decade¹¹³. India responded with an air strike that killed 300 Pakistani militants¹¹⁴. Modi added that he ‘will return the damage done by terrorists with interest’¹¹⁵. This is one of many examples of the seriousness of the strife between Islamabad and India. Will they be able to resolve their differences without going into nuclear conflict? To answer this question, it is necessary to address other issues of a factual nature, which will help us to lay the foundations.

¹¹⁰ Ming Wai Sit, ‘Hindu Nationalism and Its Impact on Kashmir Monitor,’ *Geopolitical Monitor*, 2019, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/hindu-nationalism-and-its-impact-on-kashmir/>.

¹¹¹ Komireddi, ‘The Kashmir Crisis Isn’t about Territory. It’s about a Hindu Victory over Islam.’

¹¹² Thomas, ‘Human Rights Violations of Kashmiri Hindus.’

¹¹³ Frank O’Donnell, ‘Commitment Traps Make Kashmir De-Escalation Tricky,’ *East Asia Forum*, 2019, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/03/03/commitment-traps-make-kashmir-de-escalation-tricky/>.

¹¹⁴ Shaurya Karanbir Gurung, ‘All about IAF’s SPICE-2000 Bomb Used in Balakot Attack,’ *The Economic Times*, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/all-about-iafs-spice-2000-missile-used-in-balakot-attack/spicy-hot/slideshow/68181991.cms>.

¹¹⁵ Jeffrey Gettleman, ‘Imran Khan Says Pakistan Will Release Indian Pilot, Seizing Publicity in Showdown,’ *The New York Times*, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/28/world/asia/pakistan-india-pilot-kashmir.html>.

The first question is whether both countries have the necessary weapons to conduct a nuclear war. Nuclear warheads are not enough, if they are not loaded on missiles or planes capable of delivering them. On one hand Pakistan has several plutonium production reactors and uranium enrichment facilities. It is thus estimated that Islamabad has around 130-140 warheads¹¹⁶. To launch the warheads, Pakistan has ground based tactical systems like the Hatf I, a short-range rocket, and the Nasr Hatf IX, which can be loaded on mobile quad-launchers. They also count with long range systems like the Shaheen II that can reach up to 2500 km¹¹⁷.

In addition, they possess nuclear-capable aircraft (F-16A/B and Mirage III/V) with a range of 2100 km¹¹⁸, and in cooperation with China they have produced the JF-17 fighters, capable of carrying the domestically produced Ra'ad nuclear Air-Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM), with a range of 350 kilometres¹¹⁹. Pakistan also has anti-missile systems such as the LY-80 (HQ-16) surface-to-air missile units and the IBIS-150 surveillance radar batteries. These models have been developed by China¹²⁰.

Nevertheless, according to the Communication of February 2020 received from the Permanent Mission of Pakistan concerning Pakistan's Nuclear Security Regime: 'Pakistan's nuclear security regime is consistent with and guided by the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its 2005 amendment [...] Pakistan will continue to benefit from, and contribute to, IAEA's work in the field of nuclear security'¹²¹.

On the other hand, India has between 120 and 130 nuclear warheads; however, New Delhi recently acquired land, sea and air ballistic equipment. They also developed their own nuclear submarine, the INS Arihant, capable of firing a dozen K-15 Sagarika submarine-launched ballistic missiles, although their maximum range is 750 km, not being able to reach the main cities in the inland Pakistan¹²². India also counts with nuclear-capable aircraft, including the Mirage 2000H and the Jaguar IS/IB, with ranges up to 1850 km. It has thirty-six nuclear-capable 4th generation Rafale fighters from France with ranges up to 5200 km. The range of

¹¹⁶ Hans M Kristensen and Robert S Norris, 'Pakistani Nuclear Forces,' *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist*, 2016, <https://thebulletin.org/2016/11/pakistani-nuclear-forces-2016/>.

¹¹⁷ Sebastien Roblin, 'Why India-Pakistan's Nuclear Rivalry Is Deadly Serious,' *The National Interest*, 2020, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/why-india-pakistans-nuclear-rivalry-deadly-serious-129087>.

¹¹⁸ Owen B Toon et al., 'Rapidly Expanding Nuclear Arsenals in Pakistan and India Portend Regional and Global Catastrophe,' *Science Advances* 5 (2019), <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/5/10/eaay5478>.

¹¹⁹ Roblin, 'Why India-Pakistan's Nuclear Rivalry Is Deadly Serious.'

¹²⁰ Boyko Nikolov, 'Pakistan Wants to Buy FD-2000 Long-Range Air Defense Missile System from China,' *Bulgarian Military*, 2019, <https://bulgarianmilitary.com/2019/12/10/pakistan-wants-to-buy-fd-2000-long-range-air-defense-missile-system-from-china/>.

¹²¹ International Atomic Energy Agency, 'Communication Dated 10 February 2020 Received from the Permanent Mission of Pakistan Concerning Pakistan's Nuclear Security Regime' (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2020), <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/infcircs/2020/infcirc932.pdf>.

¹²² Roblin, 'Why India-Pakistan's Nuclear Rivalry Is Deadly Serious.'

these missiles allows India to reach all of Pakistan, as well as all of China¹²³. On January 2020, thanks to the cooperation between the Indian Air Force and the Defence Research and Development Organization, New Delhi developed its own ballistic missile defence system¹²⁴.

2.2.2 Strategy towards war

Having confirmed that both countries have the necessary equipment to begin a nuclear war, the next question would be whether they are willing to start it. Pakistan refused to follow the policy of 'No First Use', which means that Islamabad can be the first to use nuclear weapons if it so considers, unlike India, which decided to subscribe to this policy¹²⁵. Because of the superiority of New Delhi's conventional weaponry, Pakistan uses the threat of a nuclear attack as a deterrent to Indian military responses¹²⁶.

Furthermore, despite the relationship between the ISI and the terrorist groups JeM and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Islamabad has at times proven incapable of controlling the actions of both groups. Therefore, there is a high likelihood of terrorist attacks taking place in Indian territory by these groups, against Pakistan's will, as the 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament or in 2009 in the city of Mumbai. This poses a great risk of a counterattack by India¹²⁷.

Although India subscribes to the 'No First Use' policy, it tends to make quick and accurate counterattacks¹²⁸. The main objective of this response is to dissuade Pakistan from using armed tactics; but the main risk of nuclear conflict lies in the possible escalation of these reactions. Therefore, the main question for New Delhi is to find out what action would be the most effective to motivate the Pakistani authorities to develop CT measures and to avoid escalation in response to India's action¹²⁹.

As experience has shown, India's quick response has little effect in changing Pakistan's mindset of hosting terrorists on its territory. Despite the deaths of terrorist members from Indian attacks, the casualties are assimilated as cost of this business. Indian strategists are calling for major attacks to avoid future retaliations, increasing the risk of escalation of the conflict¹³⁰. This

¹²³ Toon et al., 'Rapidly Expanding Nuclear Arsenals in Pakistan and India Portend Regional and Global Catastrophe.'

¹²⁴ Franz-Stefan Gady, 'India's Homemade Anti-Ballistic Missile Shield Ready,' *The Diplomat*, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/report-indias-homemade-anti-ballistic-missile-shield-ready/>.

¹²⁵ Roblin, 'Why India-Pakistan's Nuclear Rivalry Is Deadly Serious.'

¹²⁶ Toon et al., 'Rapidly Expanding Nuclear Arsenals in Pakistan and India Portend Regional and Global Catastrophe.'

¹²⁷ Roblin, 'Why India-Pakistan's Nuclear Rivalry Is Deadly Serious.'

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ George Perkovich and Toby Dalton, *Not War, Not Peace?: Motivating Pakistan to Prevent Cross-Border Terrorism* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹³⁰ Frank O'Donnell, 'Review Essay: Stabilizing Nuclear Southern Asia,' *Asian Security*, 2019, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14799855.2019.1620207>.

potential risk leaves non-violent response as a possible option. New Delhi could use its leverage gained as a new emerging power, and call for action by other international actors for Pakistan's failure to comply with UNSC Resolution 1373 (2001)¹³¹, by which Pakistan must 'refrain from providing any form of support to entities or persons involved in terrorist acts [...] and deny safe haven to those who finance, plan, support, or commit terrorist acts'¹³². Nevertheless, turning to non-violent strategies is not likely to occur with Modi's government, as seen in his manifesto and in the election campaigns, where Modi presents the Indian situation as 'helpless against the face of barbaric terror'¹³³.

2.2.3 IR theories applied

In short, both countries, especially Pakistan, have the means and the context seems to be in favour of the nuclear conflict if it becomes necessary. Will they be able to resolve their differences without going into nuclear conflict? The answer may vary depending on the international relations theories applied as a lens to analyse the conflict.

According to neorealism, Pakistani policies towards India have always been based on its feeling of insecurity towards New Delhi. This mistrust arises because of a conflict of interests with Pakistan, and because of India's military and power superiority and its emergence as a new world power¹³⁴.

To close this gap, Pakistan has devoted a large part of its economic resources to military development, '6% of its GDP during the 1990s'¹³⁵, which was not enough when India achieved nuclear weapons. Therefore, leaders in Islamabad sought help from other actors such as the US and China to face Indian superiority, even if this costed them part of their sovereignty. The use of non-state actors and nuclear deterrence measures to balance the power distribution in the region is noteworthy¹³⁶. Even so, despite the current state of mutual assured destruction, it has not been possible to establish a channel of understanding and rapprochement between the two countries. For this reason, the proponents of this theory forecast a near future of continuation of conflicts and not of cooperation¹³⁷.

¹³¹ O'Donnell, 'Commitment Traps Make Kashmir De-Escalation Tricky.'

¹³² UN Security Council, 'UN Security Council Resolution 1373,' 2001, <https://undocs.org/S/RES/1373>.

¹³³ Bharatiya Janata Party, 'Bharatiya Janata Party Sankalp Patra.'

¹³⁴ Rajagopalan, Rajesh. 'Neorealist Theory and the India-Pakistan Conflict.' *Strategic Analysis* 22 (2008): 1261–72. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09700169808458882>

¹³⁵ Manoj Saxena, 'Pakistan's India Policy in Context of Realism in International Relations,' *South Asia News Review*, 2015, <http://www.southasiannewsreview.com/south-asian-affairs/pakistans-india-policy-in-context-of-realism-in-international-relations#>.

¹³⁶ Sridharan, 'International Relations Theory and the India - Pakistan Conflict,' *India Review* 2 (2005): 103–12, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/232900803%0D>.

¹³⁷ Saxena, 'Pakistan's India Policy in Context of Realism in International Relations.'

According to neoliberalism, the fact that India is a democratic state allowed a peaceful end to the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1965 and 1971¹³⁸. A proof of this is that Pakistan, as a country struggling to achieve democracy, did not count on popular pressure to stop the conflicts, but rather encouraged it due to the political pressure of the terrorist groups that are lodged in the country¹³⁹. Moreover, the economic liberalization policies of both countries in the 90s¹⁴⁰ has allowed for the improvement of relations since they both share the most favoured nation status. They are also members of the World Trade Organization and the South Asia Free Trade Agreement, increasing the economic dependence of both countries and laying the foundation for greater cooperative security¹⁴¹.

Finally, the success of the Indus Water Treaty and the subsequent settlement of the conflicts of Salal Dam (1970s) and Baglihar Dam (2007) happened thanks to the intervention of third parties, showing that multilateralism is key in deterring tension. Therefore, liberal thinkers agree that in those periods when there has been greater structural integration of actors, tensions have been lower¹⁴². Considering that PM Modi is not in favour of promoting agreements between India and Pakistan, according to the liberal theory, the coming years won't see cooperation happening between both countries.

➔ Scenario-building: India – Pakistan

The following scenarios, based on the relations between India and Pakistan, have been developed over a five-year period assuming a 2025 horizon.

The **first scenario** is a nuclear conflict between both countries. The first step would be a terrorist attack in Indian soil because of the harsh measures applied by Modi in J&K based on Hindu nationalism¹⁴³. India finds out that the terrorist attack was partially supported by Pakistan, as it has happened previously¹⁴⁴, and they would response with a severe counterattack in Pakistan soil thanks to their superiority in conventional weapons¹⁴⁵. Due to the devastating effects of the response, Pakistan, in line with its military strategy, decides to carry out a nuclear attack on

¹³⁸ Mehsud, Muhammad Imran. 'Liberalism in India-Pakistan Relations: A Critique of Realism.' *Cambridge Journal of China Studies* 12 (2017): 64–76. <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/274402>

¹³⁹ Gautam Wahi, 'The Common Futures of India and Pakistan: A New Approach,' *Journal of Futures Studies*, 2013, 83–95, <https://jfsdigital.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/182-A05.pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ Ashfaq H Khan, 'The Experience of Trade Liberalisation in Pakistan,' *The Pakistan Development Review* 37, no. 4 (1999): 661–65, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41261076?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

¹⁴¹ Sridharan, 'International Relations Theory and the India - Pakistan Conflict.'

¹⁴² Muhammad Imran Mehsud, 'Liberalism in India-Pakistan Relations: A Critique of Realism,' *Cambridge Journal of China Studies* 12 (2017): 64–76.

¹⁴³ Bajaj, 'Annulment of Article 370 : Rectification of A Historical Wrong.'

¹⁴⁴ Abdul Rashid Moten, 'Kashmir between India Pakistan: The Unfinished Agenda,' *Intellectual Discourse* 2 (2019): 577–95, journals.iium.edu.my.

¹⁴⁵ Toon et al., 'Rapidly Expanding Nuclear Arsenals in Pakistan and India Portend Regional and Global Catastrophe.'

Indian territory¹⁴⁶. After its nuclear attack, the Modi government decides to respond with weapons of the same magnitude. This scenario is not likely to happen because a nuclear intervention by Pakistan would be an unprecedented event.

The **second scenario** would be the continuation of the tension among both countries. According to this scenario, the Indian military in J&K would remain, and the measures established in this region would continue to be effective¹⁴⁷. Pakistan and the terrorist groups like JeM and LeT, would keep encouraging revolts by Muslim citizens¹⁴⁸. At the same time, terrorist attacks and their respective counterattacks by New Delhi continue to take place from time to time. International actors such as the US try to intermediate to reduce tensions, but Modi rejects any external intervention, arguing that this is an internal matter¹⁴⁹. This scenario is very likely as it is based on an extension of the history of relations between the two countries. Pakistan encourages the action of Muslim groups in the region through the means it considers necessary, nuclear armament continues to be effective as a deterrent and Modi continues with its unilateral policy of action.

The **third scenario** would be the improvement of the relations. On the one hand, progress in the development of the CPEC would lead to improvements in the economic stability of Pakistan¹⁵⁰, which would seek to further enhance this situation through economic agreements. On the other hand, Modi seeking political stability, would take this opportunity to establish agreements on exchange and trade; communications and investment¹⁵¹. Although, this would not mean that the Kashmir issue would be solved, it would entail an improvement of relations. This would consequently bring the positions of India and China closer. This scenario is moderately likely to happen because 5 years might not be enough to appreciate the economic benefits of CPEC, and because it doesn't seem that Khan and Modi will improve their relationship.

The **last scenario** is based on an unintended Indian attack on CPEC infrastructure. The first steps of this scenario would be the same as those of the nuclear conflict, but the Indian counterattack, attempting to knock down terrorist bases, would intentionally damage CPEC infrastructure and kill several Chinese workers and diplomatic personalities. In response to the Indian attack, Pakistan with the support of China, would begin an offensive from its administered territory in Kashmir. This scenario is slightly likely because India, aware of the great

¹⁴⁶ Roblin, 'Why India-Pakistan's Nuclear Rivalry Is Deadly Serious.'

¹⁴⁷ Thomas, 'Human Rights Violations of Kashmiri Hindus.'

¹⁴⁸ Cohen, 'India, Pakistan and Kashmir The Brookings Institution A Paired-Minority Conflict.'

¹⁴⁹ Kocis, 'Repeal of Article 370: Implications for India, Pakistan, and the US,' Primer Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill, 'Repeal of Article 370 : Implications for India , Pakistan , and the US,' 2019.

¹⁵⁰ Samina, 'CPEC and Azad Kashmir: Prospects and Potential.'

¹⁵¹ Aakriti Tandon and Michael O Slobodchikoff, 'Building Trust: Cooperation between Rivals India and Pakistan,' in *Building Trust: Cooperation between Rivals India and Pakistan*, 2019, 160–201.

disadvantage that this situation would present, both in terms of military and economic Chinese superiority, would avoid at all costs any potential action that would trigger a direct intervention by China.

SCENARIO BUILDING # 1	A	B	C	D
Drivers	Nuclear conflict	Continuation of tensions (Most likely)	Improved relations	Unintended Indian attack on CPEC- Chinese infrastructure
1. Escalation of terrorist attacks in India	++	+	--	++
2. Increased economic stability in Pak	-	-	+	+/-
3. Increase in hindu nationalist politics	+	+	-	+
4. Escalation of conflict between Pakistan and India	++	+	--	+
5. Increased tensions between China and India	+	+	-	++
6. US consolidation as a mediator	-	--	++	+/-
7. Ethnic and religious polarization	++	+	--	+/-

Legend:

++ → Very positive impact on the plausibility of the scenario

+ → Positive impact on the plausibility of the scenario

- → Negative impact on the plausibility of the scenario

-- → Very negative impact on the plausibility of the scenario

**Scale of likelihood used:* Not at all likely → Slightly likely → Moderately likely → Very likely → Completely likely

2.3. PUNJAB & INDUS WATER TREATY

2.3.1 Punjab: possibility of independence?

After the Indian Independence Act of 1947 (IIA), the territory of Kashmir was not the only one affected by the formation of Pakistan and India: the division of Punjab was also controversial. During the British colonial period, the province of Punjab was inhabited by

Muslim, Hindu and Sikh citizens¹⁵². In 1947, with the IIA, Punjab was divided along religious lines, into eastern Punjab under Indian administration¹⁵³, and western Punjab under Pakistani administration. This forced many Muslim citizens who were in the eastern part of Punjab to migrate to Pakistan, and Hindus who lived in the western part had to migrate to India. These migratory flows generated conflicts and riots¹⁵⁴. Since then, Punjabis in both countries have sought the recognition and independence of the Punjabi nation, but these movements have never been a main issue in the political agenda of both countries, especially for Islamabad.

In India, the Khalistan movement is one of the most famous currents of Punjabi independence, by which the Sikh people seek to create their own state in an independent Indian Punjab. This movement is represented by the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) political party, the largest Sikh representative in the world¹⁵⁵. But the Punjabi independence movements lost their strength long ago. Since the 75th anniversary of the party in 1996, the political priorities of the SAD shifted towards more peaceful activities and cut the connection with its radical branch¹⁵⁶. In fact, in the 2019 elections, the SAD abandoned the idea of federalism and started a long-term alliance with BJP¹⁵⁷.

Meanwhile, in response to the events in J&K and as part of its military doctrine of ‘bleeding India with a thousand cuts’¹⁵⁸, Pakistan is encouraging the gathering of Sikhs and mobilizing the radical sector in the diaspora of its Punjabis, to promote the independence of an Indian Punjab¹⁵⁹. At the same time, the US-based group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), whose aim is to seek secession from Indian Punjab, has encouraged the holding of a Sikh referendum by 2020¹⁶⁰. Nonetheless, and insisting on the above argument, the Punjabi independence movement is not a problem at present for the governments of both countries, nor does the existence of an

¹⁵² Muhammad Abrar Zahoor, ‘Colonialism and the Construction of Religious Identities in Punjab: The Case of Muslims,’ *Journal of History Culture and Art Research* 8, no. 4 (2019): 56–64, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338426950_Colonialism_and_the_Construction_of_Religious_Identities_in_Punjab_The_Case_of_Muslims.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Zahoor, ‘Colonialism and the Construction of Religious Identities in Punjab: The Case of Muslims.’

¹⁵⁵ Amarjit Singh Narang, ‘The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies,’ *The Oxford Handbook Online*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199699308.013.020>.

¹⁵⁶ Ramesh Vinayak, ‘Akali Dal Led by Parkash Singh Badal Break from the Past to Forge a Moderate Agenda,’ *India Today*, 1996, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/special-report/story/19960331-akali-dal-led-by-parkash-singh-badal-break-from-the-past-to-forge-a-moderate-agenda-834735-1996-03-31>.

¹⁵⁷ Deepu Sebastian Edmond, ‘They Do Not Want Delhi to Interfere’: Why Punjab Will Be an Outlier in the India Election,’ *This Week in Asia*, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3008017/they-do-not-want-delhi-interfere-why-punjab-will-be-outlier>.

¹⁵⁸ Sreeram Chaulia, ‘Pakistan Will Regret Stirring up Sikh Nationalism in India,’ *Nikkei Asian Review*, 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Pakistan-will-regret-stirring-up-Sikh-nationalism-in-India2>.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Sehgal, Manjeet. ‘Khalistani Outfit SFJ Wants Greater Khalistan with Headquarters in Pakistan’s Lahore.’ *India Today*, 2020. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/khalistan-outfit-sikhs-for-justice-sfj-headquarters-lahore-pakistan-1641786-2020-01-30>

independent Punjab in the long term seem feasible. In India, the BJP and the SAD they are now political allies. Despite the Sikh population in Indian Punjab, they do not have a strong political representative of the secessionist movement supported by 44% of the Sikh population¹⁶¹. In Pakistan, the previously mentioned actions were not successful¹⁶², and ‘Sikh activists in Pakistan estimate that their community's numbers have shrunk drastically from 40,000 in 2002 to just 8,000 by 2018’¹⁶³.

2.3.2 The future of the Indus Water Treaty

It should not be forgotten that there have been some examples of cooperation between India and Pakistan. The two countries, along with the World Bank, were parties to one of the world's best-known treaties of environmental diplomacy¹⁶⁴: the 1960 Indus Water Treaty (IWT). Through this agreement, Pakistan and India sought to govern the regulation and use of the three ‘Eastern rivers’ (administered by India): the Beas, the Ravi and the Sutlej; and the ‘Western rivers’ (administered by Pakistan), the Indus, the Chenab and the Jhelum¹⁶⁵.

There was no bloodshed in the creation of the IWT, and it survived the 3 wars between India and Pakistan; but this doesn’t mean that it has not been at risk of being broken since then¹⁶⁶. After the terrorist attack in Pulwama in 2019, the Indian Water Resources Minister, Gadkari, declared that measures would be taken to divert the water flow of the Eastern Rivers, which would stop flowing into Pakistan and be redirected to the people of Punjab and J&K¹⁶⁷.

In 2019, India finished constructing Kishanganga Dam on the Jhelum River while the Ratle Dam was being constructed on Chenab River, both in India’s Kashmir. Following Pakistani accusations of a potential act of war, India reiterated that the construction of the dams would not violate the IWT as it didn’t directly affect any of the Western rivers¹⁶⁸. Facing the passivity of New Delhi, Pakistan submitted a complaint to the WB, asking the institution to mediate¹⁶⁹.

¹⁶¹ Edmond, ‘They Do Not Want Delhi to Interfere’: Why Punjab Will Be an Outlier in the India Election.’

¹⁶² Manjeet Sehgal, ‘Khalistani Outfit SFJ Wants Greater Khalistan with Headquarters in Pakistan’s Lahore,’ *India Today*, 2020.

¹⁶³ Chaulia, ‘Pakistan Will Regret Stirring up Sikh Nationalism in India.’

¹⁶⁴ Daniel Haines, ‘The Rivers Run Wild,’ *Newsweek Pakistan*, 2017, <https://www.newsweekpakistan.com/the-rivers-run-wild/>.

¹⁶⁵ Saadat Bilal Khaki, ‘Indo-Pak and Hydro-Politics,’ *Greater Kashmir*, 2018, <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/opinion/indo-pak-and-hydro-politics/>.

¹⁶⁶ Haines, ‘The Rivers Run Wild.’

¹⁶⁷ Devendra Pandey, ‘Work to Stop Water from Flowing into Pakistan Has Started: Govt,’ *The Indian Express*, 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/work-to-stop-water-from-flowing-into-pakistan-has-started-govt-5921953/>.

¹⁶⁸ Mohan, Geeta. ‘India Rejects Pakistan Media Report on Indus Water Sharing.’ *India Today*, 2020. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-rejects-pakistan-media-report-on-indus-water-sharing-1643553-2020-02-05>

¹⁶⁹ Muhammad Saleh Zaafir, ‘Violating IWT India Starts Ratle Dam’s Construction,’ *The News International*, 2019, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/583790-violating-iwt-india-starts-ratle-dam-s-construction>.

The point is that both Pakistan and India are at risk from water shortages ‘as per capita availability of water has dropped by roughly 60%’¹⁷⁰. Climate change is playing a decisive role in the validity of the IWT, since the environmental conditions in which the treaty was signed are not the same as the current ones¹⁷¹. The potential dissolution of the IWT would be very risky considering the nuclear capacity of both countries. The growing demand for water and diminishing resources would only lead to increased hunger and starvation in an unprecedented scale, making the possibility of nuclear war more feasible. Although Pakistan's usual response when the access to water is curtailed from the outside has been to resort to the WB; the tensions that a diminishing supply of water resources could spark might mean that the intervention of the international community will be necessary to prevent a possible nuclear war¹⁷².

¹⁷⁰ Khaki, ‘Indo-Pak and Hydro-Politics.’

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Muhammad Uzair Qamar, Muhammad Azmat, and Pierluigi Claps, ‘Pitfalls in Transboundary Indus Water Treaty: A Perspective to Prevent Unattended Threats to the Global Security,’ *Nature* 22 (2019), <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41545-019-0046-x>.

3. REGIONAL DYNAMICS

3.1. AFGHANISTAN

3.1.1 Outcomes after US withdrawal

Since 2001 and the beginning of the War on Terror, the US has been present in Afghanistan¹⁷³. Some negotiations have been frustrated because the political commitments established as a pre-condition to departure weren't met. The changing circumstances have often forced Washington to recalibrate its position and interests in the country.

The departure of US forces from Afghanistan could either lead to a sort of political settlement or to an intensification of the conflict between the Taliban and the interim Government. There's uncertainty regarding the outcomes of the withdrawal: throughout the past decade, there have been episodes full of hope, such as the peace deal and the fragile elections, but terrorism and violence have continued unabated.¹⁷⁴ A US withdrawal may create a vacuum and attract other regional powers that will try to further their interests.¹⁷⁵ In any case, there are different views on the potential political settlement in Afghanistan:

On the one hand, some think that a political settlement between the Taliban and the National Unity Government (NUG) is possible. The rationale behind it is that the US departure itself won't lead to a settlement. In order to achieve an effective political settlement, peace-building (understood in terms of building strong institutions that pursue to prevent conflict) is the key element. If the departure of the US is done under a formal cessation of hostilities between conflicting parties through negotiations, the political settlement won't be reached.¹⁷⁶ For this, local legitimacy is needed. Moreover, the US withdrawal will put an end to the occupation, which is a key motivational factor for the Taliban to attack. In turn, the Taliban's social support comes from their standing against foreign occupation, from which they build their ideological narrative.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ 'The US War In Afghanistan,' Council on Foreign Relations, n.d. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>

¹⁷⁴ Thomas H. Johnson. 'Afghanistan's Post-Taliban Transition: The State of State-Building after War.' *Central Asian Survey* 25, no. 1–2 (2006): 1–16.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02634930600902991?journalCode=ccas20>

¹⁷⁵ Semple, Michael. 'Afghanistan: Future Scenarios.' CIDOB, 2013.

https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/stap_rp/policy_research_papers/afghanistan_future_scenarios

¹⁷⁶ Haqmal Daudzai, 'Post-Taliban State-Building in Afghanistan' (University of Erfurt, 2019), https://www.db-thueringen.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/dbt_derivate_00046526/daudzai.pdf

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

On the other hand, the most plausible forecast is a complete US withdrawal followed by a military defeat of the Afghan government and the restoration of the Taliban to power.¹⁷⁸ This could happen due to the future vacuum created by the withdrawal, of which ISIS and Al-Qaeda could take advantage of.¹⁷⁹ Thus, US forces may need to return if conditions exacerbate a terrorist hazard in Afghanistan.¹⁸⁰

The Afghan government may see its legitimacy increasingly contested when the US completes its withdrawal: elections could easily provoke a renewed conflict and, due to the increased violence, the Taliban may disrupt the presidential elections. In fact, they have declared their intentions to postpone them if a deal with the US is reached.¹⁸¹ In this sense, the assistance by international actors to parties involved in the conflict in a hypothetical post-election dispute, will be more difficult to achieve.¹⁸² Another potential source of instability is the economy. The political uncertainties and the withdrawal of the international coalition will adversely affect the economy because of the reduction of public investment and consumption.¹⁸³ The Afghan National Army (ANA) is also suffering both from the withdrawal of foreign advisers at the unit level, and from a weakening in equipment and logistics.¹⁸⁴

The outcomes of a possible US withdrawal are converged in the following scenarios. To proceed with the scenario building we have estimated a 5 years prospection, that is, we assume a 2025 horizon for the scenarios to take place. These are the four plausible scenarios:

First, a **civil war** as a consequence of US withdrawal. In this scenario, where there is lack of government legitimacy, the Taliban, ISIS and other groups including the interim government will start to fight to take control of the country. For it to happen ‘the Taliban would have to broaden their support to mobilise sections of the population’¹⁸⁵, continuing their campaign

¹⁷⁸ Abenante, Diego. ‘Afghanistan 2015: The National Unity Government at Work: Reforms, War, and the Search for Stability.’ Asia Maior. *The Journal of the Italian Think Tank on Asia Founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989* Vol. XXVI, (2016). <https://www.asiamaior.org/the-journal/08-asia-maior-vol-xxvi-2015/afghanistan-2015-the-national-unity-government-at-work-reforms-war-and-the-search-for-stability.html>

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ James Dobbins et al., ‘Consequences of a Precipitous US Withdrawal from Afghanistan,’ Rand Corporation, 2019, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE300/PE326/RAND_PE326.pdf.

¹⁸¹ SUSne Schmeidl and Astri Suhrke, ‘Afghanistan – What’s next?’, *The Interpreter*, 2019, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/afghanistan-what-s-next>.

¹⁸² Rubin, Barnett R. & Gagnon, Georgette. ‘The US Presence and Afghanistan’s National Unity Government: Preserving and Broadening the Political Settlement.’ Center on International Cooperation, 2016. https://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/national_unity_government_final.pdf

¹⁸³ ‘Afghanistan 2017. Trump’s ‘New Strategy’, the Af-Pak Conundrum, and the Crisis of the National Unity Government.’ *The Journal of the Italian Think Tank on Asia Founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989* XXVIII / 2 (2018). <https://www.asiamaior.org/the-journal/10-asia-maior-vol-xxviii-2017/afghanistan-2017-trumps-new-strategy-the-af-pak-conundrum-and-the-crisis-of-the-national-unity-government.html>.

¹⁸⁴ Abenante, ‘Afghanistan 2015: The National Unity Government at Work: Reforms, War, and the Search for Stability.’

¹⁸⁵ Semple, ‘Afghanistan: Future Scenarios.’

against Western intervention. The Taliban consider the Afghan President Hamid Karzai to be an American puppet,¹⁸⁶ and even if they change their narrative, they will still target any trace of US presence. If the US completes its withdrawal, this is a very likely scenario that ‘could result from an unsuccessful Taliban bid for power after the security transition’.¹⁸⁷

Second, a **political agreement** after a US withdrawal. If this happens, it is likely that international actors will intervene. China and Russia could be those international actors given their calculations in the conflict. Following the current trends, they will enter the conflict as mediators, since both powers have opted for a low political profile implication. Pakistan will be a key regional force too. The Taliban will choose to negotiate if they have prospects of victory, and if Pakistan continues persuading them of their inability to continue the fight.¹⁸⁸ These three actors have the capacity to influence the Taliban and the Afghan Government to reach a political agreement. The likelihood of this scenario relies on how far are the parties willing to get involved and sustain the agreement. As a consequence, this scenario is slightly likely since history has proven that the parties are neither committed to carry out negotiations, nor to stick to them.

Third, **the continuation of US fight against terrorism** (the current status quo) is a natural scenario with US troops present in Afghan territory. In this situation the conflict continues and occasional terrorist attacks on US take place. Trump is not a predictable actor so even if he wins the elections, he may decide to stay in Afghanistan. The key variable here is the ‘the availability of US funding for the security forces.’¹⁸⁹ The maintenance of the status quo is a moderately likely scenario as peace agreement negotiations are taking place these days. Moreover, the fight against terrorism will continue inasmuch as the Taliban and ISIS expand their power.

Fourth, a **Taliban restoration**. With a US withdrawal, the Taliban will very likely launch attacks (counting on Pakistan’s support) and defeat the National Unity Government. A US withdrawal will enhance Taliban’s capacity to gain power in parts or throughout Afghanistan. This scenario assumes that the existing tribal groups are not able to face the Taliban. This situation could lead to more stability, but the history has shown that ‘the Taliban may lack the capacity to scale up their fight’.¹⁹⁰ It is difficult to make predictions taking these volatile actors into account, but this scenario is slightly likely to occur.

¹⁸⁶ Farrell, Theo & Semple, Michael. ‘Making Peace with the Taliban.’ *Survival*, 2015, 79–110.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284546320_Making_Peace_with_the_Taliban

¹⁸⁷ Semple, ‘Afghanistan: Future Scenarios.’

¹⁸⁸ Farrell, ‘Making Peace with the Taliban.’

¹⁸⁹ Semple, ‘Afghanistan: Future Scenarios.’

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

SCENARIO BUILDING # 2 Drivers	A. Civil war (most likely)	B. Political agreement	C. Continuation of US fight against terrorism	D. Taliban restoration
1.Consolidation of government legitimacy	--	+	-	--
2.Success of US withdrawal	++	++	--	++
3.Increase of Chinese investment	+/-	+	+/-	+/-
4.Pakistani support to Taliban	+	-	+	++
5.Increasing power of ISIS	++	-	++	-
6.Expansion of the Taliban	++	-	++	++
7.Understanding between the Taliban and the Afghan gov	--	++	-	-

Legend:

++ → Very positive impact on the plausibility of the scenario

+ → Positive impact on the plausibility of the scenario

- → Negative impact on the plausibility of the scenario

-- → Very negative impact on the plausibility of the scenario

*Scale of likelihood used: Not at all likely → Slightly likely → Moderately likely → Very likely → Completely likely

3.1.2 The Role of the Pakistani Armed Forces and the ISI

The aforementioned circumstances will enhance the role of Pakistan in managing the outcomes after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. At the basis of the Pakistan-Taliban relations are the cultural and linguistic affinities, which lead to a further understanding between the Taliban and Pakistan.¹⁹¹ Pakistan’s role will be critical given the proximity they have with the Taliban. The past tells us that a civil war or a great amount of violence is more likely than any other scenario; as a consequence, Mr. Haqqani, a former Pakistani ambassador to the US, said that Pakistan’s strategy considers the contentment of the Taliban by having them as proxies.¹⁹² It is in the interest of Pakistan to head the negotiations to guarantee less Indian presence in Afghanistan and to influence the course of action.¹⁹³ Another aspect to consider is

¹⁹¹ Syed, Shabib Haider, Luqman Saeed, and Roger P Martin. ‘Causes and Incentives for Terrorism in Pakistan.’ *Journal of Applied Security Research* 10, no. 2 (2015): 181–206.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19361610.2015.1004606?journalCode=wasr20>

¹⁹² Mazzetti, ‘From the Afghan Peace Deal, a Weak and Pliable Neighbor for Pakistan,’

¹⁹³ Setas, Carlos. ‘Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and the Peace Process with the Afghan Taliban.’ *Revista Del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, 2 (2013). <http://revista.ieee.es/issue/view/40/51>

Pakistan's capacity to intervene in Afghanistan, given their military superiority in respect to the Afghan army, as well as its geographical proximity.

There are two reasons why Pakistan will benefit from having more presence in Afghanistan. First, it will help keep the Taliban as their proxy against Indian influence.¹⁹⁴ Second, Pakistani leaders realised the importance of putting the Islamist violence to an end in Pakistan, especially the one coming from Taliban groups residing in Afghanistan.¹⁹⁵

A glance at the past reveals that the relation between the Pakistani Armed Forces and the ISI with the Taliban will probably evolve positively, by gradually engaging in cooperation, because their interests will become better aligned. The ISI has a past of cooperation with the Taliban to guarantee Pakistan's geopolitical interests in Kashmir and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). This relationship does not only imply a sharing of military means between the Taliban and Pakistan's security forces. Instead, simply letting the Taliban stay in Pakistani territory is a way of supporting the Taliban's cause. Other ways are instrumentalizing the Taliban to shape the outcome of the Afghan conflict.¹⁹⁶

The fact that the Taliban are partly established in Pakistan makes them susceptible to Pakistan's will.¹⁹⁷ This enhances Pakistan's role in potential peace talks with the Taliban, because the Taliban's diplomatic and negotiating skills have proven to be not so smooth, so Pakistan will be pivotal in future talks. However, due to the lack of a consistent governmental policy regarding counterterrorism (CT), execution and management of CT is in the hands of the army.¹⁹⁸

3.1.3 Chinese and Russian interests in Afghanistan

China's main interests in the Afghan conflict fall within three categories: the CPEC, their unease with Afghanistan's proximity to the Xinjiang province, and the role they have assumed in the conflict.

An unstable Afghanistan will negatively affect Pakistan's CPEC development and the infrastructure China has in the country. Interestingly, Afghanistan may be included in the CPEC's plans in the future as well, which may grant China with another passage to Iran and the Indian

¹⁹⁴Daudzai, 'Post-Taliban State-Building in Afghanistan.'

¹⁹⁵Abenante, 'Afghanistan 2017. Trump's 'New Strategy', the Af-Pak Conundrum, and the Crisis of the National Unity Government.'

¹⁹⁶Shaun Gregory, 'The ISI and the War on Terrorism,' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 12 (2007): 1013–31, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10576100701670862?scroll=top&needAccess=true>.

¹⁹⁷Setas, 'Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and the Peace Process with the Afghan Taliban.'

¹⁹⁸Feyyaz, Muhammad. 'Why Pakistan Does Not Have a Counterterrorism Narrative.' *Journal of Strategic Security* 8, no. No. 1-2 (2015): 63–78. <https://henley-putnam.national.edu/journal-of-strategic-security-article/pakistan-not-counterterrorism-narrative/>

Ocean.¹⁹⁹ Afghanistan is part of the South Asian geopolitical scene and China, as its neighbour, plays a relevant role in shaping the future of the country.²⁰⁰ However, China is not necessarily interested in Afghanistan itself, but in the larger geopolitical and economic context; China's calculations in the Afghan conflict have to do with preventing possible security spill-overs into the CPEC and its own border. That is why China is getting involved in it with a low political profile to avoid being entangled in an unwanted conflict if the situation takes a complete turnaround.²⁰¹

China, in its willingness to establish talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan, has adopted a role of facilitator.²⁰² China aims to present itself as a thoughtful neighbour toward the Afghan population by setting in motion inter-connectivity initiatives.²⁰³ China has also attempted to drive negotiations between Afghanistan and Pakistan when a summit was orchestrated in 2017 in Beijing.²⁰⁴ Other Chinese initiatives revolve around promoting regional cooperation by engaging key international actors that have a say in the region, such as Russia, India and Iran.²⁰⁵ Attending to China's new neighbourhood diplomacy, there are three interests that drive its policy in Afghanistan: first, the longing to preserve its strategic partnership with Afghanistan; second, the need to contain the spread of radicalism which threatens Xinjiang province; and third, the need to restrain the stream of drugs from Afghanistan to China.²⁰⁶ In economic terms, Afghanistan serves as a trade and energy hallway from Pakistan to Iran.²⁰⁷ Finally, if Pakistan becomes a decisive actor in the negotiations, having good relations with Pakistan will provide China an opportunity to expand its new model of international development. ²⁰⁸

China's calculation in the Afghan conflict stems from fears of an expansion of Islamic extremism to the region of Xinjiang.²⁰⁹ In fact, the Taliban's rise to power and the subsequent

¹⁹⁹Lo Kinling and Kristin Huang, 'Is China Trying to Play Mediator in Central Asia with Offer to Include Afghanistan in Trade Plan?,' *South China Morning Post*, 2017, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2125879/china-ready-work-afghanistan-counter-terror-threat>.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Reuters, 'China, Pakistan to Consider Adding Afghanistan to US\$57 Bn Economic Corridor,' *South China Morning Post*, 2017, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2125696/china-pakistan-consider-adding-afghanistan-us57-bn>.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴Derek Grossman and Keren Zhu, 'What Next for China-Pakistan Relations?,' *South China Morning Post*, 2018, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2018/02/what-next-for-china-pakistan-relations.html>.

²⁰⁵ Huasheng, Zhao. 'Afghanistan and China's New Neighbourhood Diplomacy.' *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 891–908.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304630768_Afghanistan_and_China's_new_neighbourhood_diplomacy

²⁰⁶ Sharma, Raghav. 'China's Afghanistan Policy: Slow Recalibration.' *China Report* 46, no. 3 (2010): 201–15. https://www.academia.edu/11676509/Chinas_Afghanistan_Policy_Slow_Recalibration

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Grossman and Zhu, 'What Next for China-Pakistan Relations?'

²⁰⁹ Kinling and Huang, 'Is China Trying to Play Mediator in Central Asia with Offer to Include Afghanistan in Trade Plan?'

signs of insecurity were the main reasons that brought China to Afghanistan in the 1990s.²¹⁰ In other words, instability in Afghanistan due to terrorist activity could seriously affect Xinjiang's stability.²¹¹ Another issue that worries Beijing is that drugs and narcotics are trafficked to China mainly through Afghanistan.²¹²

Russia can also benefit from the Afghan conflict, as it wants to position itself as a mediator between the Taliban-US talks and the ensuing implementation of the deal.²¹³ For that reason, Russia invited in September 2019 Taliban leaders to Moscow to talk about the peace negotiations frustrated by President Trump. The underlying cause of the visit was to ask for regional support to force the US out of Afghan soil. ²¹⁴ Russia is concerned about the stability in Central Asia once the US withdraws from Afghanistan, especially because of the security vacuum that might arise. Russia's main goal is to safeguard regional trade and exercise a greater influence in Central Asia.²¹⁵

Russia seeks to strengthen cooperation with Central Asian countries, and they have even tried to mingle Afghanistan with regional frameworks to prevent further insecurity spill-overs.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, Russia's strategic interests are not focused on the achievement of bilateral relations but on concerns about foreign military presence. In a way, these are contradictory interests, because they advocate for a US withdrawal (seeing Western presence as interference) but at the same time, the American presence that tries to stabilize Afghanistan gives Russia an opportunity to focus on other problems.

3.2. IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA

3.2.1 Which is the ally to choose?

As a Muslim country, Pakistan has tried to maintain good relations with its Middle Eastern neighbours. Iran and Pakistan have historically cooperated, despite some hiccups due to sectarian tensions. In contrast, Pakistan has been called 'Saudi Arabia's closest Muslim ally'²¹⁷,

²¹⁰ Huasheng, 'Afghanistan and China's New Neighbourhood Diplomacy.'

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Soldatkin, Vladimir. 'Russia Says Ready to Be Guarantor for Any Afghan Peace Deal between US and Taliban.' Reuters, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-US-afghanistan/russia-says-ready-to-be-guarantor-for-any-afghan-peace-deal-between-us-and-taliban-idUSKCN1VI1ZL>

²¹⁴ Ahmad, Jibrand. 'Afghan Taliban Send Team to Russia after US Talks Collapse.' Reuters, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban/afghan-taliban-send-team-to-russia-after-u-s-talks-collapse-idUSKCN1VZ034>.

²¹⁵ Józef Lang, 'Afghanistan: The View from Russia,' European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2014, https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Alert_10-Afghanistan_view_from_Russia.pdf.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Robert Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia* (New York: Viking, 2009).

which is reflected in its strong economic, military and political relations. In fact, since 1970, Pakistani soldiers have been protecting the Kingdom and training its army²¹⁸. Islamabad's precarious position in the Middle East may not be sustainable in the near future. Its intention of mediating between Tehran and Riyadh has not succeeded and Pakistan might soon have to choose sides, which may adversely affect Pakistan's interests.

What if Pakistan supports Iran? Having a reliable ally in the Western border would be attractive because it allows Pakistan to concentrate its forces in the border with India. But the costs of deteriorated relations with the KSA would be disastrous: billions of USD of investments in energy and infrastructure could be withdrawn from Pakistan, its preferential oil sales would be lost and the economy would suffer a major hit. Pakistan would no longer be allied with a country that is widely recognized as the leader of the Sunni world, which gives its actions some moral legitimacy.

What if Pakistan supports the KSA? As a more likely scenario, Islamabad would secure and probably attract further investment from the KSA, in addition to Riyadh's current aid and investment package which totals \$20 bn²¹⁹, becoming an indispensable piece of Pakistan's economic survival. The needed preferential oil sales would continue and Pakistan would maintain good ties with the leader of the Sunni world and the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques²²⁰. There is a downside to this: Iran's enmity could lead to a stronger India-Iran partnership, which increases the possibility of a conflict on two fronts and Pakistan's need to divide its forces between the Eastern and Western borders. Although in economic terms, worsened relations with Iran wouldn't be too problematic (in 2019, less than \$300 million in bilateral trade²²¹), there is a security issue which cannot be ignored: between 15-20% of Pakistanis are Shia, and some of them could prove more loyal to Tehran than Islamabad itself.

In short, Pakistan may prefer having good ties with both Iran and the KSA. If the tensions escalate, Pakistan may choose to side with the KSA and, despite the benefits brought by the Saudi investments, Pakistan may have to face an increasingly hostile Western neighbour.

3.2.2 Would Pakistan help Saudi Arabia develop nuclear weapons?

Although both Pakistani and Saudi officials have repeatedly denied any nuclear deal, many experts point to it. In particular, a 2003 article²²² in *Global Security* reported that Islamabad

²¹⁸ Bruce Riedel, 'Saudi Arabia: Nervously Watching Pakistan,' 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20120205150154/http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0128_saudi_arabia_riedel.aspx.

²¹⁹ Micha'el Tanchum, 'Pakistan Receives Warning from Iran Not to Join Saudi Proxy War,' *Turkish Policy*, 2019, <http://turkishpolicy.com/blog/29/pakistan-receives-warning-from-iran-not-to-join-saudi-proxy-war>.

²²⁰ Madiha Afzal, 'Saudi Arabia's Hold on Pakistan,' 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/saudi-arabias-hold-on-pakistan/>.

²²¹ Muneer, S. M., 'Trade and Economic Relations between Pakistan and Iran,' *Business Recorder*, 2019, <https://www.brecorder.com/2019/11/15/544423/trade-and-economic-relations-between-pakistan-and-iran/>.

²²² Arnaud de Borchgrave, 'Pakistan, Saudi Arabia in Secret Nuke Pact,' *Global Security*, 2003, https://www.globalsecurity.org/org/news/2003/031022-pakistan_saudi-arabia.htm.

and Riyadh had concluded a secret agreement on nuclear cooperation that would give the Saudis nuclear-weapons technology (in case of a threat by a 3rd party) in exchange for cheap oil.

In any case, several factors point to a scenario where Pakistan would help Riyadh develop nuclear weapons, or even hand them in case of extreme necessity²²³. During the last decades, the KSA has been a close ally of Pakistan, and both have cooperated extensively, in the security, economic and diplomatic domains. Consequently, there is a chance that an agreement in which Pakistan would give nuclear weapons to the KSA exists. Some unverified reports²²⁴ say that the Royal Saudi Air Force has aircrafts in Pakistan ready to bring the bomb to the KSA in case it is requested. Such scenario becomes increasingly conceivable after the 2019 announcement of Saudi investments worth \$20 bn in Pakistan²²⁵. Also, if the relations between the US and Pakistan deteriorate further, Pakistan would have even fewer reasons to respect the non-proliferation norms.

3.2.3 Pakistan's weak non-proliferation credentials

If we look to the past, it is obvious how weak Pakistan's non-proliferation credentials are, and this has earned Pakistan the reputation of being the world's nuclear Wal-Mart. The Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan²²⁶ is said to have contributed to the nuclear programs of several countries, by selling components, know-how and disclosing the Chinese nuclear weapon design²²⁷. It is extremely difficult for a single man to share such secrets, and that's why most western intelligence agencies blame Pakistan and not just Abdul Qadeer. Although Pakistani officials deny any involvement in North Korea's nuclear program, it seems Pakistan participated indirectly by transferring centrifuge technology to Pyongyang. Similarly, Abdul Qadeer assisted Iran in enriching uranium through centrifuges between the 80s and mid-90s. Likewise, he helped Libya by transferring nuclear weapons blueprints, low-enriched uranium, components and centrifuges²²⁸.

²²³ Charles Pierson, 'Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the Bomb,' *Counterpunch*, 2019, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/03/08/saudi-arabia-pakistan-and-the-bomb/>.

²²⁴ Bruce Riedel, 'Enduring Allies,' *Force*, 2011, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1209_saudi_arabia_pakistan_riedel.pdf.

²²⁵ Joseph Hincks, 'Saudi Arabia Is Investing \$20 Bn in Pakistan. Here's What It's Getting in Return,' *Time*, 2019, <https://time.com/5531724/saudi-arabia-pakistan-/>.

²²⁶ Owen Bennett Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm*, 2 edition (Yale University Press, 2003).

²²⁷ Mark Urban, 'Saudi Nuclear Weapons 'on Order' from Pakistan,' *BBC News*², 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24823846>.

²²⁸ Sharon Squassoni, 'Closing Pandora's Box: Pakistan's Role in Nuclear Proliferation,' 2004, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2004-04/features/closing-pandoras-box-pakistans-role-nuclear-proliferation>.

Furthermore, Pakistani officials have stated that Pakistan will not sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) because, as the former Foreign Secretary Chaudhry said²²⁹, it considers it discriminatory. Despite such discouraging statements, Islamabad has taken some steps to improve its non-proliferation credentials. In December 2019, the IAEA's head of Nuclear Security Division applauded the measures taken by Pakistan to improve nuclear security, which were in line with the IAEA's recommendations²³⁰. Also, in February 2020 the Foreign Ministry published a booklet called 'Pakistan's Nuclear Security Regime'²³¹, in an effort to increase transparency and to prove that the program is being managed attentively. It said that 'the regime is based on an extensive legislative and regulatory framework governing the security of nuclear materials, radioactive substances, associated facilities and activities.'²³² Although these achievements do not signal a paradigm shift, the international community should take advantage of the momentum and try building on it by further encouraging Pakistan to improve its transparency.

3.3. CENTRAL ASIA

3.3.1 Pakistan & the CARs: a gateway of opportunities

Central Asia consists of the States of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. The Central Asia Republics (CARs) are rich in resources, particularly energy, and have traditionally acted as a link to Europe and South Asia. Thanks to the cultural ties between the CARs and Pakistan, as well as the latter's early diplomatic recognition of the former Soviet republics, there is a great potential for cooperation²³³.

From a geostrategic point of view, Pakistan is of great interest to the CARs as, due to their landlocked location, they need Pakistan and its ports: Karachi and Gwadar. Pakistan has big economic interests in the CARs. The main one is the CAR's energy resources. As Pakistan has no major energy sources, it is dependent on third countries for supplies, and the CARs have cheap electricity and gas²³⁴.

²²⁹ Anwar Iqbal, 'Pakistan Will Not Sign NPT, Says Foreign Secretary,' *Dawn*, 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1185843>.

²³⁰ 'IAEA Praises Pakistan's Nuclear Security Measures,' *The Nation*, 2019, <https://nation.com.pk/07-Dec-2019/iaea-commends-pakistan-s-measures-for-nuclear-security>.

²³¹ Aamir Latif, 'Pakistan Touts Its Nuclear Security Measures,' *Anadolu Agency*, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/pakistan-touts-its-nuclear-security-measures/1730058>.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Sabah Aslam, 'Pakistan and the -Stans,' *Modern Diplomacy*, 2019, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2019/06/27/pakistan-and-the-stans/>.

²³⁴ Saleem Khan, Sher Ali, and Saima Urooge, 'The analysis of regional bilateral trade between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics,' *Pakistan Journal of Applied Economics* 29, no. 1 (2019): 94–105, <http://www.aerc.edu.pk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Paper-940-SALEEM-KHAN-V-1.pdf>.

As a proof of this, in May 2016 the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade (CASA-1000) was signed. This project, with the financial help of the World Bank, would enable sustainable electricity trade between Afghanistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan and Tajikistan²³⁵. It will transfer the surplus of electricity coming from the hydroelectric plants from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, to supply Afghanistan and Pakistan²³⁶.

On February 2020, the Afghan president announced the beginning of the constructions to create its section of the CASA-1000. In addition, importing energy, one of the main motivations for this project is for Afghanistan to become an energy hub. As such, it will charge fees for the transit of energy through its territory²³⁷. If the project were to go ahead as planned, 5.5 bn KWH of electricity would be exported to Kabul²³⁸. However, there are three major risks to the CASA-1000. First, there are political conflicts between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan that could destabilize the project. The main source of electrical energy for the CASA-1000 is the Rogun dam located in Tajikistan. However, the Uzbek president fears that this dam could lead to water shortages during the summer, or flooding in the winter, as happened previously with Syr Darya river²³⁹. Secondly, in addition to the usual security and scope problems, Afghanistan is currently very unstable. The government's lack of control and its quarrels with Iran, the US and the Taliban, among other terrorist groups, could make it difficult to implement the project²⁴⁰.

Finally, another risk could be the reduction of Pakistan's energy demand to the CARs. As a way of strengthening CPEC, and for the benefit of Punjab's administration of energy, the Punjab Chief Minister met with several Chinese officials, who agreed to export 3.2 GW of electricity to Pakistan²⁴¹.

²³⁵ Press Release. 'Pakistan to Strengthen Human Capital and Regional Connectivity with New Investments through World Bank Support.' The World Bank, 2019. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/05/31/pakistan-to-strengthen-human-capital-and-regional-connectivity-with-new-investments-through-world-bank-support>.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ BNE IntelliNews, 'Afghanistan Launches Works on Central Asia-Led CASA-1000 Power Transmission Project,' *BNE Intellinews*, 2020, <https://www.intellinews.com/afghanistan-launches-works-on-central-asia-led-casa-1000-power-transmission-project-176116/?source=kyrgyzstan>.

²³⁸ Javaid, Faisal and Ali, Ashgar. 'Relations between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics: An Analysis.' *Ma'arif Research Journal*, no. 11 (2016): 67–78.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306033617_Relations_between_Pakistan_and_Central_Asian_Republics_An_analysis

²³⁹ Sasaki Daisuke and Mikiyasu Nakayama, 'A Study on the Risk Management of the CASA-1000 Project,' *Hydrological Research Letters* 9, no. 4 (2015): 90–96, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284205684_A_study_on_the_risk_management_of_the_CASA-1000_project.

²⁴⁰ Rhea Menon and Sharanya Rajiv, 'Realizing India's Strategic Interests in Central Asia,' *Carnegie India*, 2019, <https://carnegieindia.org/2019/12/01/realizing-india-s-strategic-interests-in-central-asia-pub-80576>.

²⁴¹ Daisuke and Nakayama, 'A Study on the Risk Management of the CASA-1000 Project.'

When it comes to gas, there is another project aimed at transporting gas from Turkmenistan to India via Afghanistan and Pakistan, known as the TAPI pipeline²⁴². The project, which officially began in December 2015, planned to begin the construction in December 2018 in Pakistan, but had not yet begun in Afghanistan²⁴³. In February 2018, representatives from India, Turkmenistan and Pakistan met in Afghanistan to celebrate the beginning of work on the project²⁴⁴. However, in January 2020 the project is still being postponed. According to the Afghanistan Minister of Mines and Petroleum, this time it is due to the lack of legal documentation for the acquisition of the land. He said: ‘MPs are busy in (discussing) former decrees by the president. I think it will take six months to pass this phase’²⁴⁵.

In addition, the Afghan – Pakistan border is dealing with two problems that will affect the construction of the TAPI pipeline: first, the Afghan government does not want to recognize the *de facto* border of both countries, known as the Durand Line. Second, there are tribes on this border, which have indigenous land rights and nomadic routes. That means that Pakistan’s construction might be delayed even more²⁴⁶.

For their part, India, Pakistan and the CARs are very interested in the creation of both energy conduits. This would allow the CARs to export more and diversify its consumers, instead of relying only on Russia and China. Both India and Pakistan are dependent on the Gulf for their energy supply, so these projects might be very useful in bringing the governments of Islamabad and New Delhi closer together²⁴⁷.

However, this mutual interest between CARs and Pakistan should not be misinterpreted as an obstacle to both actors’ relations with China. On the one hand, China remains the largest importer of gas from Turkmenistan. In the first half of 2019, Turkmenistan received \$5 bn in exports, of which \$4.4 bn belonged to Chinese gas imports, giving the Asian giant a great leverage²⁴⁸. At the same time, as already mentioned, TAPI is still in the process of being built. On the other hand, as explained in the chapter on relations between China and Pakistan, power

²⁴² IndiaTopNews, ‘Turkmenistan Starts Work on Gas Link to Afghanistan, Pakistan, India,’ *Reuters*, 2015, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/turkmenistan-gas-pipeline-idUKKBN0TW05Q20151213>.

²⁴³ Putz, Catherine. ‘More TAPI Delays, This Time in Afghanistan.’ *The Diplomat*, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/more-tapi-delays-this-time-in-afghanistan/>

²⁴⁴ Catherine Putz, ‘More TAPI Delays, This Time in Afghanistan,’ *The Diplomat*, 2020.

²⁴⁵ Zabihullah Jahanmal, ‘TAPI Pipeline Project Faces More Delays in Afghanistan,’ *Tolo News*, 2020, <https://tolonews.com/business/tapi-pipeline-project-faces-more-delays-afghanistan>.

²⁴⁶ European Institute for Asian Studies, ‘Review of Peace Pipelines: Safe Logistics of the TAPI Pipeline,’ *EIAS*, 2020, <https://www.eias.org/news/review-of-peace-pipelines-safe-logistics-of-the-tapi-pipelines/>.

²⁴⁷ Menon and Rajiv, ‘Realizing India’s Strategic Interests in Central Asia.’

²⁴⁸ Sam Bhutia, ‘Turkmenistan’s Mainline to China,’ *Eurasianet*, 2019, <https://eurasianet.org/turkmenistans-mainline-to-china>.

remains in China's hands thanks to the huge FDI in Pakistan of \$16.7 bn in 2019 and the large investment made in the CPEC²⁴⁹.

In terms of Chinese investment in Pakistan, it is worth mentioning the recently opened and operational Gwadar seaport²⁵⁰. This port, created by both financial and human capital investment from China, offers a much shorter route for the transport of goods to Afghanistan. This new access that allows Afghanistan to engage in the CPEC is the closest point to Western China shipping and is key to the success of the BRI²⁵¹. Of all these projects, those in which China has been actively involved have been successful. This suggests that Pakistan does not have sufficient resources or capacity to carry out big infrastructure projects on its own. As a proof of this, Pakistan had a budget of \$42 bn for the year 2019-2020, but its debt amounts to \$97 bn²⁵². If one adds corruption to the picture, the reason behind such inability becomes even clearer.

3.3.2 Pakistan & Bangladesh: possible rapprochement?

Another regional actor worth mentioning is Bangladesh, who is currently led by the PM Sheikh Hasina and its Awami Muslim League political party, which has a pro-India stance. Due to its pro-liberation ideology, and the Indian support for its independence in 1971, the government in Dhakka is growing closer to India²⁵³.

Nevertheless, much of the population does not share the pro-Indian vision of their government. In December 2019, the Indian Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was passed in India, creating a pathway to citizenship for those illegal immigrants who were Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsee, and Christian and who had arrived from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan for reasons of persecution before December 2014, but it excluded the Muslims²⁵⁴.

To justify the CAA, the BJP made a series of accusations and said that in Bangladesh, there was systematic torture of Hindus, who were forced to take refuge in India. In addition to this, there are Indian Muslim migrants from the state of Assam in India who have migrated to Bangladesh because of persecution. This act has revealed the pro-Indian position of the

²⁴⁹ Directorate-General for Trade, 'European Union, Trade in Goods with Pakistan,'

²⁵⁰ Ayaz Gu, 'China-Built Pakistani Port Begins Handling Afghan Transit Trade,' *VOA*, 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/china-built-pakistani-port-begins-handling-afghan-transit-trade>.

²⁵¹ Adnan Aamir, 'Afghan Transit a Game Changer for Gwadar Port,' *The Interpreter*, 2020, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/afghan-transit-game-changer-gwadar-port>.

²⁵² Finance Division of Pakistan Government, 'Budget in Brief' (Islamabad, 2019), http://www.finance.gov.pk/budget/Budget_in_Brief_2019_20.pdf.

²⁵³ Owen Bennett Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm*, 2 edition (Yale University Press, 2003).

²⁵⁴ BBC News, 'Citizenship Amendment Bill: India's New 'anti-Muslim' Law Explained,' *BBC News*, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-50670393>.

Bangladeshi PM, who has been forced to ask for evidence of the complaints issued by India and to postpone her scheduled visit to India²⁵⁵.

Another example of the contradiction in positions between the Bangladeshi government and its citizens was the event that should have taken place on March 2020. The 100th anniversary of the founding father of Bangladesh took place and PM Modi was invited to attend. In response to this invitation, many Bangladeshis began protesting. Finally, due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the event was cancelled²⁵⁶. At the same time, Pakistan's relations with Bangladesh remain unstable. As mentioned above, Sheikh Hasina's administration remains favourable to India, leaving Islamabad aside. Moreover, many Pakistanis have vivid memories of the events of the 1971 War, and PM Khan continues to demand an apology for the persecution of the Bihari Muslim minority in Bangladesh²⁵⁷.

In a near future, a rapprochement between Pakistan and Bangladesh seems unlikely. Both must make an effort to forget the past quarrels and cooperate to face today's challenges. It seems that sport might be a field where they can begin taking steps towards reconciliation, as the Bangladesh cricket team has recently played in Pakistan for its first test match in the country since 2003²⁵⁸.

²⁵⁵ Sabria Chowdhury Balland, 'CAA Hurts Bangladesh-India Diplomatic Ties,' *Asia Times*, 2020, <https://asiatimes.com/2020/02/caa-hurts-bangladesh-india-diplomatic-ties/>.

²⁵⁶ Najmus Sakib, 'Bangladesh Celebrates Founding Father's Birth Centenary,' *AA*, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/bangladesh-celebrates-founding-fathers-birth-centenary/1769281>.

²⁵⁷ Pakistan Today, 'Pakistan-Bangladesh Relations Thaw,' *Pakistan Today*, 2020, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2020/02/14/pakistan-bangladesh-relations-thaw/>.

²⁵⁸ Associated Press, 'Bangladesh Squad Returns to Pakistan for First Cricket Test Match Since 2003,' *The Diplomat*, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/02/bangladesh-squad-returns-to-pakistan-for-first-cricket-test-match-since-2003/>.

4. TERRORISM, THE JIGSAW PUZZLE OF NATIONAL SECURITY

4.1. JIHADISM

4.1.1 Pakistan as base of operations. Risks associated.

Pakistani territory has long been used as a safe haven by terrorist groups. The probability that this situation continues in the short and medium-term is subject to several risks.

The first risk factor is the historical presence of terrorist groups. They have been operating since the 1980's, which has led to interactions between Pakistani institutions and these terrorist groups. To mention a few of them: the Mujahideen, the Pakistani Taliban and the Haqqani network.²⁵⁹ According to the CIA²⁶⁰ there are 9 terrorist groups based in Pakistan but none of them are the Islamic State. Among them we can find those created in the late 90s such as Lashkar-e-Taiba or Jaish-e-Muhammad or Harakat-ul-Mujahidin (HUM) and Harakat-ul-Jihad Islam, founded in the context of the Kashmir conflict.²⁶¹ Nowadays the prominent focus of the Pakistani CT campaign is Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which is a coalition group formed by Pakistani Taliban, linked to Afghan Taliban which are spread out throughout Pakistani soil. They may work together with other sectarian groups, such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.²⁶² There are also foreign terrorist groups operating in Pakistan such as Al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban [Annex 2].

A second risk associated with the previous one is the ideology and narratives used by the terrorist groups to support their cause. In theory, the ideology of jihad is useful to combat India (Kashmir) but it can backlash against Pakistan, as terrorist attacks have also taken place in Pakistani soil.²⁶³ These groups have two reasons to fight: first, to show, through intimidation, an effective social control in those areas where the Taliban have overshadowed the state authority. Second, as a strategy to dissuade Pakistani authorities to engage in CT campaigns.²⁶⁴ The notion that terrorism is ruining the Pakistani society²⁶⁵ is widely extended, and its citizens expect CT measures to be effective. The 2015 National Action Plan (NAP) was established due to the

²⁵⁹ Jacobo Llovo, 'Pakistán, el país de las dos caras,' *El Orden Mundial*, 2018, <https://elordenmundial.com/pakistan-el-pais-de-las-dos-caras/>.

²⁶⁰ CIA. 'Terrorist Groups- Home Based.' *The World Factbook*, n.d. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/397.html>

²⁶¹ Reinares, Fernando. 'Violencia terrorista en Pakistán actores, acciones y opiniones.' *Anuario Asia Pacífico 1* (2009). <http://www.anuarioasiapacifico.es/pdf/2009/9-FernandoReinares.pdf>

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Madiha Afzal, 'Extremism Watch in Pakistan,' *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, 2017, <https://www.thecairoreview.com/global-forum/extremism-watch-in-pakistan/>.

²⁶⁴ Reinares, 'Violencia terrorista en Pakistán actores, acciones y opiniones.'

²⁶⁵ Waseem Ullah, Asif Salim, and Zermira Baloch, 'Analyzing the Counter Terrorism Policies of Pakistan,' *Dialogue (1819-6462)* 14, no. 4 (n.d.): 21–30, http://www.qurtuba.edu.pk/thedialogue/TheDialogue/14_4/14_4_3.pdf.

ineffectiveness of Pakistani CT efforts, but leaves two issues unaddressed: the freedom of militant activities and the influence of Madrassas.²⁶⁶

The third risk is related to economic and educational progress. Unemployment is one of the factors that contributes to creating conditions where terrorism may arise easily, and it facilitates the recruitment of terrorists. An investigation on the determinants of terrorism concluded that per capita GDP, inflation and poverty are paving the way to terrorism in the medium-term.²⁶⁷ On the side of education, the investigation contemplates Islam as an identity glue for uniting society, resulting in a radicalization of educational syllabus.²⁶⁸ Terrorism has also made education hard, if not impossible, in tribal areas.²⁶⁹ We may not forget that US aid has conditioned Pakistan's foreign policy and its performance against terrorism for decades; which had stirred up instability in the country by polarizing the political elites.²⁷⁰ The lack of proper urbanization and housing facilities and the poor living conditions thereby generated have been the root of a growing sectarianism and terrorist groups expansion.²⁷¹ The last risk that must be addressed by the government is the lack of resources oriented to reconstruction and development programs demonstrated by the lack of a holistic approach. The living conditions of the local population are often ignored, when in reality, they are a key conditioner. To tackle this risk, the government should launch educational and de-radicalization programs.²⁷²

Finally, terrorist groups such as the Afghan Taliban, landed in Pakistan pushed by cultural affinity and geographical proximity. In fact, the existing Pashtunwali law foresees asylum and the procurement of refuge to any incoming migrant. Geography, especially the mountainous and less populated areas, procure shelter for terrorist groups and anti-US militants.²⁷³ In short, terrorism is a hot topic that negatively affects Pakistan's security but that is part of Pakistan's DNA. In other words, even if the already mentioned risks diminish, Pakistani territory won't be released from controversial practices as hosting terrorist groups until an effective CT policy is implemented.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Assad Ullah et al., 'Terrorism in India as a Determinant of Terrorism in Pakistan,' *Asian Journal of Criminology* 13 (2018): 57–77, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11417-017-9257-6>.

²⁶⁸ Syed, Saeed, and Martin, 'Causes and Incentives for Terrorism in Pakistan.'

²⁶⁹ Ahmad, Manzoor. 'Implications of War on Terror for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan.' *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies* 3 (2010).

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312172562_Implications_of_War_on_Terror_for_Khyber_Pakhtunkhwa_Pakistan.

²⁷⁰ Syed, Saeed, and Martin, 'Causes and Incentives for Terrorism in Pakistan.'

²⁷¹ Ibid.

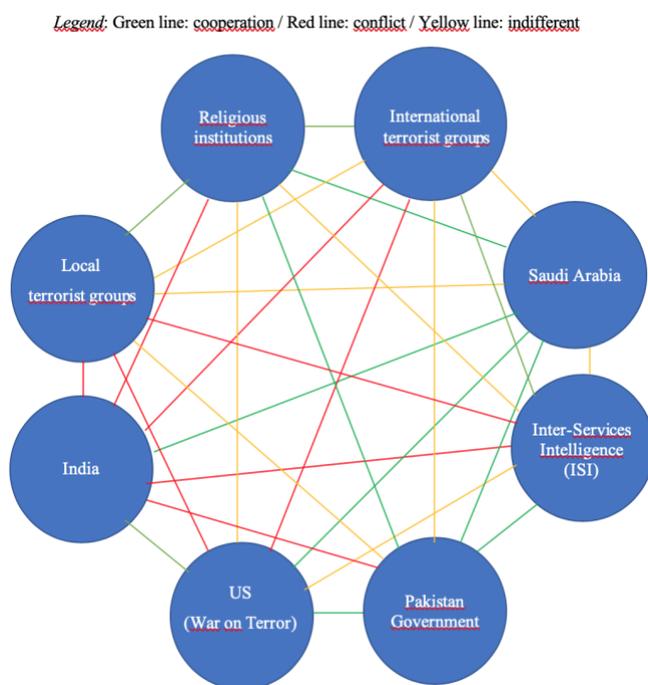
²⁷² Khattak, Masood. 'Strategic Significance of Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Efforts Since 2014' 3 (2018): 138–54.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332422984_Strategic_Significance_of_Pakistan's_Counter_Terrorism_Efforts_Since_2014

²⁷³ Ibid.

4.1.2 Connections between the ISI and radical groups

The relationship between the ISI and radical groups can be traced back in time. Cooperation and links, notably the flow of money and equipment among these actors, took place openly until the 9/11. After the beginning of the War on Terror, the US forced Pakistan to take sides and those connections became increasingly secret.



One caveat is that radical groups in Pakistan are formed by very different types of actors. Since there are many groups hosted in Pakistan, it is argued that they are given some kind of beneficial treatment by the ISI or Pakistani authorities.²⁷⁴ The Pakistani military, which also plays a key role in CT efforts, has a strong interest in maintaining their links with the Afghan Taliban, as they will be key in influencing Afghanistan's path away from India.²⁷⁵ As a result, a deep reform of the relations between the ISI and the Pakistani government and society is needed.²⁷⁶ The following graph illustrates

the map of actors in Pakistan, in the context of terrorism.

4.1.3 Migration to Saudi Arabia and the contagion of extremism

The KSA has historically exercised soft power in Pakistan through the funding of Madrassas, to expand its influence in its confrontation with Iran. The KSA and Pakistan boast of long-standing relations, which have been recently bolstered by a new aid and investment package provided by Riyadh.²⁷⁷ The KSA has also exercised soft power through educational institutions, like the International Islamic University in Pakistan, which hosts many Saudi students and regularly collaborates with Saudi institutions, thereby shaping the thought of Pakistani clerics, which are in turn engaged in the promotion of Islamic values.²⁷⁸ Their relations are no longer

²⁷⁴ Feyyaz, 'Why Pakistan Does Not Have a Counterterrorism Narrative'

²⁷⁵ Ezra Schricke. 'The Search for Rebel Interdependence: A Study of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban.' *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 1 (2017): 16–30. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022343316668570>

²⁷⁶ Feyyaz, 'Why Pakistan Does Not Have a Counterterrorism Narrative.'

²⁷⁷ Madiha Afzal, 'Saudi Arabia's Hold on Pakistan,' *Brookings*, 2019.

²⁷⁸ Ahmed Zahid Shahab. 'Understanding Saudi Arabia's Influence on Pakistan: The Case of the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism.' *Muslim World* 109, no. 3 (2019): 308–26. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/muwo.12259>.

likely to be a possible avenue of radicalization, because the KSA is abandoning its radical interpretation of Islam²⁷⁹, and is now evolving toward a more moderate version, thanks to Mohammad bin Salman. In other words, in the unlikely scenario that migration to the KSA ceases, Saudi religious influence will continue given the mutual support between these two Sunni countries, as well as the KSA's position as the leader of Sunni Islam.

Saudi influence is accepted within Pakistan institutions with little resistance. Moreover, Islamic scholarship in Pakistan is not violent in nature, but contemplates aspects that concern the expansion of the global diaspora, such as religious, cultural and ethnic features.²⁸⁰ Thus, although migration is one of the possible causes of radicalization, it is no longer the major one.²⁸¹

4.2. ROLE OF RELIGION AND ORGANIZED CRIME

Religion in Pakistan permeates most spheres of Pakistani society and politics, and is key in understanding why things are done the way they are. From its inception, Pakistan, and especially its laws, have favoured Islam and the Muslims. The privileges given to Islam create inequalities and promote an unfavourable treatment of other religious minorities. The most powerful religious institutions are the Madrassas, which were established in Pakistan during the Soviet War in Afghanistan to support the Mujahideen cause. This poses a threat to national security because inductees from these religious institutions ended up in the Taliban, particularly the younger ones.²⁸² From a national security perspective, organized crime and illicit trafficking deserve to be mentioned, especially because they are carried out with unusual impunity. The underlying question is whether Islamabad will address such problems in the near future.

To venture if Pakistan will undertake reforms to reduce money laundering activities, some issues need an initial clarification. One of the main reasons why these illegal activities thrive is that Pakistani security policies are centered in India, often forgetting about its own Western borders, which are generally unsafe and are therefore used by criminal organizations.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Nabil Moulane. 'Can the Saudis Break up with Wahhabism?' The New York Times, 2018.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/03/opinion/saudi-arabia-monarchy-wahhabism.html>.

²⁸⁰ Dietrich Reetz. 'Migrants, Mujahidin, Madrassa Students: The Diversity of Transnational Islam in Pakistan.' The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2009. <https://www.nbr.org/publication/migrants-mujahidin-madrassa-students-the-diversity-of-transnational-islam-in-pakistan/>.

²⁸¹ Sharif Shuja. 'Pakistan: Islam, Radicalism and the Army.' International Journal on World Peace 24, no. 2 (2007): 25–35. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20752775?seq=1>

²⁸² Ahmad, 'Implications of War on Terror for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan.'

²⁸³ Farhan Zahid. 'Crime-Terror Nexus in Pakistan.' Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses 10, no. 9 (2018). https://www.jstor.org/stable/26487541?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Crime groups exist, partly because of the lack of a strong government control in cities like Karachi²⁸⁴, which is possible because the government is over-extended and cannot effectively rule the vast extension of Pakistan's territory. Karachi is a city where organized crime has become the new normal; its major port attracts illicit trade, and the mingling of criminal groups with the city's political administrators make this problem even more complex.²⁸⁵

However, since Pakistan was included in the grey list of the FATF, it has pushed different action plans to address organized crime. Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi declared to the UN that Pakistan was working on assuring governmental control of those areas in which drug was being produced, to then implement alternative livelihoods through development policies; and asked the UN to take a role in the process.²⁸⁶ Pakistan will slowly undertake economic reforms aimed at reducing organized crime and illicit trade as long as international aid and leverage continue.

There is a high likelihood in Pakistan remaining a hub for illicit trafficking because the government itself helps illicit actors in an attempt to control the city resources²⁸⁷ and is often guilty of supporting this shady transactions and criminal activities. These chances are also increased due to the closeness to Afghanistan. In particular, Karachi has become internationally relevant thanks to its port and the numerous drug trading routes that cross its territory.²⁸⁸ To conclude, the key elements that sustain these groups and that Pakistan a haven for illicit trafficking are its financing possibilities, the recruitment of vulnerable youth and the absence of government control in the areas in which they operate.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Nazia Hussain, and Louise Shelley. 'Karachi: Organized Crime in a Key Megacity.' *Connections* QJ 15, no. 3 (2016). https://it4sec.org/system/files/15.3.01_karachi.pdf

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ 'Pakistan for Breaking Nexus between Terror, Organised Crime.' *The Nation*, 2019. <https://nation.com.pk/11-Jul-2019/pakistan-for-breaking-nexus-between-terror-organised-crime>

²⁸⁷ Hussain and Shelley, 'Karachi: Organized Crime in a Key Megacity.'

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ 'Pakistan for Breaking Nexus between Terror, Organised Crime.'

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This strategic analysis report has examined Pakistan's regional foreign policy and its relations with key world powers, as well as its conflict with India and its own internal struggle with terrorism and organized crime. Through the predictions that have been made, we hope to provide a useful guide to decision-makers. In the following paragraphs, the central points of each section, as well as some recommendations, will be put forward.

Pakistan's relations with the US will become increasingly transactional, as recent events have shown. The US was struggling to extricate itself from Afghanistan and severed its ties with Islamabad to force its collaboration. In this case, Pakistan agreed to help the US achieve a peace deal because it served its own interests. But the American withdrawal will most likely lead to a US loss of interest and loss of influence in Pakistan, due to increasingly divergent priorities. The bigger geopolitical puzzle will dictate the rules of the game: the US-India partnership will continue to strengthen to face a rising China, while US-Pakistan ties will weaken. As a result, Pakistan will grow closer to its all-weather strategic partner, consolidating its position as the number one trading partner and weapons supplier. The CPEC's first phase success will further entrench China in Pakistan, despite claims that the debt-trap poses an obstacle to their relations.

Trade relations with the EU will continue to expand and, despite having the ability to use trade leverage to obtain HR concessions from Islamabad, Brussels will not do so because of potential negative externalities. Cooperation in other fields will stagnate due to Pakistani indifference and the increasing number of crises that the EU is facing. The EU's position in the Kashmir issue will remain unchanged; it will continue to support a bilateral solution between India and Pakistan over Kashmir that respects the interests of the Kashmiri, while calling to avoid an escalation of tensions. The EU will not seek a role as a mediator and, in the medium to long-term, the EU is likely to take a pro-India stance, due to commercial interests.

In Central Asia, Islamabad will maintain positive relations with the CARs, which will be based on increasing connectivity, trade and energy partnerships, although these may be endangered by instability in Afghanistan. The relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh will continue to be unpropitious, as Sheikh Hasina's administration remains favourable to India. In Afghanistan, an American withdrawal will most likely lead to an intensification of the conflict. Thanks to the connections of some sectors of the ISI, the Pakistani military and the government with the Taliban, Pakistan will have a disproportionate influence in determining the future of Afghanistan. Islamabad will continue seeing the Taliban as the most desirable leadership for Afghanistan, in an effort to counter any attempt of Indian influence. Even if regional powers like Russia and China may welcome the US withdrawal, they will be negatively affected by the

subsequent security vacuum. Pakistan has attempted to maintain good ties with both Iran and the KSA, but if tensions escalate Islamabad will side with Riyadh. Despite official denials, there is a high likelihood that the KSA may have access to Pakistan's nuclear arsenal in case of necessity. Islamabad's historically weak non-proliferation credentials, have been temporarily appeased by its recent positive steps in making its program more secure and transparent.

Pakistan's tensions with India will remain high. Following the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution, Islamabad will continue trying to internationalize the Kashmir conflict in search of international support. Water scarcity will be another source of problems in their shared borders, and the construction of reservoirs by New Delhi will undeniably exacerbate Pakistan's shortages. India and Pakistan will probably engage again in localized skirmishes, but there is a growing fear that if such skirmishes are combined with the contentious issues mentioned above, it could eventually lead to nuclear war. This possibility, although improbable, would be for the rest of the world. PMs Khan and Modi will be reluctant to establish channels of rapprochement, making it harder to deescalate tensions, partly due to internal dynamics of both countries, be it Hindu nationalism or radical Islam.

Lastly, terrorism will continue to be a threat to the country's stability, due to Pakistan's lack of effective control in certain areas of its territory. The country has been used as a base of operations by terrorist and criminal groups for decades, which is not likely to change in the short term. Several risk factors will determine the gravity of future terrorist threats: the power of anti-Western narratives wielded by radical Islamists, the lack of a proper educational system and an ambiguous and somewhat ineffective Pakistani CT effort. Religion will continue to have a central role, as non-state actors will use it to justify their violent actions, although it is less likely that it will become an instrument for states to further their radical agendas in the region.

Recommendations

1. Unless Pakistan and India are willing to cooperate, it is useless to propose fully-fledged solutions. They should aim for a rapprochement through confidence-building measures like increased trade, people-to-people exchanges and joint educational programs.
2. Pakistan should rightfully benefit from the CPEC projects, but seeking an equilibrium with other institutions, to avoid falling into a Chinese debt-trap, is recommended.
3. Pakistan should seize the opportunity presented by the rise of a more moderate interpretation of Islam in the KSA and the UAE, two of its key partners, to de-radicalize its own institutions, especially in the educational sphere. This would bring long-term benefits in Pakistan's fight against radicalism and terrorist groups.

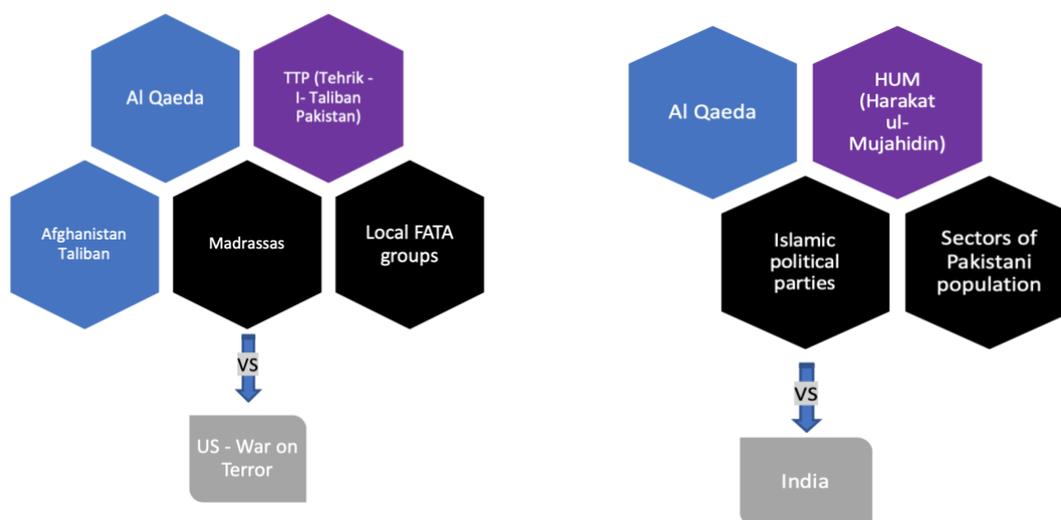
Annexes

ANNEX 1: Bilateral trade with the US, China, the EU and the world.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Trade US-PK	\$5.44 bn	\$5.57 bn	\$5.43 bn	\$6.4 bn	\$6.74 bn
Trade CHI-PK	\$12.49 bn	\$13.32 bn	\$15.69 bn	\$17.17 bn	\$16.71 bn
Trade EU-PK	\$9.6 bn	\$10.53 bn	\$11.6 bn	\$12.8 bn	\$12.6 bn
Trade PK-world	\$72.26 bn	\$66.07 bn	\$67.53 bn	\$79.31 bn	\$83.79 bn

Source²⁹⁰

ANNEX 2: Map of terrorist actors facing the US and India



Source: elaborated by Naiara Goñi.

Legend: Blue: International terrorist groups / Purple: Local Terrorist groups / Black: Pakistan national actors.

²⁹⁰ Directorate-General for Trade, ‘European Union, Trade in Goods with Pakistan’; ‘UN Comtrade,’ n.d., <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>.

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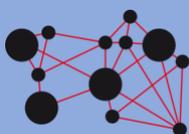
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