

POST OPERATION SINDOOR

PAKISTAN TOWARDS BECOMING MILITARY STATE

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Post Operation Sindoor, there have been significant changes in Pakistan's approach to its evolving security dynamics, particularly regarding its relationship with India. A variety of critical developments are currently influencing Rawalpindi's policies, affecting not just military strategies but also aspects of governance. The new system has endowed the new Field Marshal of Pakistan, General Asim Munir, with distinct powers that are likely unprecedented in the nation's history. This shift is pivotal, as it enables a level of decision-making and operational authority that can reshape the security framework of the country. In this context, the policy paper delves into the nuances of these developments and explores the potential outcomes they may generate. Such an analysis is essential for understanding how these changes could impact both regional stability and domestic governance in the future. By examining these evolving dynamics, we gain insight into the direction Pakistan might take in addressing security challenges and formulating its regional strategy moving forward.



POWER SHIFTS SINCE OPERATION SINDOOR

The governance mechanism in Pakistan has undergone a significant transformation with the signing of the twenty-seventh Constitutional Amendment Bill by President Mr. Asif Ali Zardari in November 2025. This amendment introduces "*new authority and lifelong immunity*" not only for five-star generals but also for the president of Pakistan. Critics argue that this arrangement represents a disturbing shift, as it effectively restructures the country's judiciary and undermines its power. By delegitimising the judiciary, this move raises concerns about the promotion of an era characterised by authoritarianism in Pakistan. As the implications of this amendment unfold, debates surrounding its impact on democracy, the rule of law, and the balance of power within the government have become increasingly prevalent. Many observers fear that such changes could lead to a concentration of power in the hands of a few, diminishing the systems of checks and balances that are essential for a healthy democratic system. This development also prompts discussions about accountability and the potential erosion of civil liberties, as the independence of the judiciary plays a crucial role in upholding fundamental rights within the nation.

This criticism and concern over the future of Pakistan's judiciary system is also raised by International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)'s Secretary General Santiago Canton on grounds that the new amendment will *"significantly impair the judiciary's ability to hold the executive accountable and protect the fundamental human rights of the people of Pakistan."*¹ Such an arrangement provides power to the top military leaders and *"reduce[s] the mandate of the Supreme Court."*² This sort of arrangement also creates discrepancies between the three services of Pakistan's armed forces, providing undue leverage to one leg of the armed forces: the Army and keeping the Air Force and Navy subservient to the Army: a move detrimental for joint operations.

One development of this amendment is the restructuring of Article 243 of the constitution dealing with the armed forces to create a new post for Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) for a unified command structure.³ Although it seems this has become a concerning factor, as General Asim Munir, who bears a hawkish approach towards security aspects, will be the head of the unified command, and the overall control of tri-services will be in his hands and not in the hands of the president and cabinet. This need for CDF is a domino effect of India appointing its Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) for a unified command structure for swift strategic operations.

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¹ "Pakistan-Dismantling Justice : A Full-Frontal Assault on the Rule of Law," *International Commission of Jurists*, November 13, 2025, <Pakistan - Dismantling Justice: A Full-Frontal Assault on the Rule of Law | ICJ>

² Zainab Malik, "Shifting the Scales: How Pakistan's 27th Amendment Undermines Judicial Independence and Cements Executive Dominance," *Constitution Net*, November 28, 2025, <Shifting the Scales: How Pakistan's 27th Amendment Undermines Judicial Independence and Cements Executive Dominance | ConstitutionNet>

³ "Pakistan brings amendment to create new post of Chief of Defence Forces," *The Hindu*, November 8, 2025, <Pakistan brings in amendment to create new post of Chief of Defence Forces - The Hindu>



The difference between India's Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and Pakistan's Chief of Defence Force (CDF) is significant, particularly in terms of their command structure and the balance of political oversight. In India, the CDS operates under the authority of the president, who serves as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and is also under the prime minister's guidance, especially concerning the matters of India's Strategic Forces Command, which is responsible for the management and administration of the country's nuclear weapons stockpile. This arrangement ensures a clear delineation of responsibilities and a system of checks and balances, allowing for a more collaborative decision-making process regarding national security.

In contrast, the Chief of Defence Force in Pakistan holds a more centralised command role, overseeing both the armed forces and nuclear capabilities with significantly less political oversight. This consolidation of power means that the CDF has the ability to make crucial decisions regarding defence strategies with less input or intervention from civilian leadership. Such a framework potentially limits the checks on military power and raises

questions about the balance between military and civilian control in matters that greatly impact national security and strategic stability in the region. The varying structures not only reflect the political landscapes within each country but also emphasise their different approaches to governance and defence policy. The amendment also draws another concern of nuclear weapons' command now going into the hands of General Munir whose tenure extends at least up to 2030. ⁴



CONCERNS

The concern, however, is not merely centred on the prospect of Pakistan's nuclear weapons and their command potentially falling into the hands of General Munir or the significant implications of the General becoming the primary commander of the tri-services. For many years, Pakistan has actively engaged in proxy operations while operating under the protective umbrella of its nuclear capabilities, which has rendered the notion of regional security somewhat misleading. Regardless of whether a military regime or a political party is in power, Pakistan is likely to continue its proxy wars in various regions. Consequently, changes in the stature or position of

⁴ Sansuti Nath, "Asim Munir Now Controls Pak's All 3 Defence Forces, Nukes: All About New Powers," *NDTV World*, November 27, 2025, <Asim Munir Now Controls Pakistan's All 3 Defence Forces, Nukes: All About New Powers>

any individual within the military establishment make minimal difference to New Delhi's strategic calculations. The complexities of this situation highlight the enduring nature of Pakistan's strategic priorities, which often pursue their objectives with little regard for the broader implications on regional stability.

***Pakistan's** own political **leaders** have sabre-rattled with **nuclear weapons** and have **threatened** their use **rampantly**. Indian decision makers*

Again, Pakistan's own political leaders have sabre-rattled with nuclear weapons and have threatened their use rampantly. Indian decision makers' architect plans in resonance with Pakistan's undeclared 'first-use' policy in nuclear doctrine. The implications of these threats affect not only bilateral relations between the two countries but also have broader ramifications for regional stability and international peace. Nevertheless, Indian decision makers are also aware of the technological gap existing between Pakistan's 'first-use' and the ability to launch a 'first-strike' and chalk out operations in a way that strengthens conventional deterrence and reduces the need for relying on nuclear weapons. There is little benefit of having a 'first-use' policy in nuclear doctrine without a clear 'first-strike' mechanism, especially in the context of India adopting a 'no-first use' doctrine and not a 'no-first strike' doctrine.

There is little basis to support the fact that nuclear weapons under the command of military leaders would be less safe than when they are under the command of political hands. However, nuclear weapons in the hands of military leaders may not be the right approach to mature nuclear governance. This has less to do with the safety and more to do with

protocol. Armed forces are indeed strategic assets of a state, serving vital roles in maintaining national security and stability. Bypassing the government in power on crucial issues such as nuclear security sets a concerning precedent for any nation, undermining the principles of democracy and governance. This situation emphasises the importance of adhering to established protocols and respecting the authority of elected officials.

In Iran, for example, although the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) possesses significant influence over the military and political landscape, it is still required to defer to the decisions of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. This structure illustrates the intricate balance between military power and political authority, reminding us that even amidst a strong military presence, the ultimate decisions rest in the hands of the leadership designated by the state's governing framework. This dynamic further underscores the necessity for a cohesive approach to national security that aligns military actions with the broader interests and strategies determined by legitimate government institutions. This could become a concerning factor for not only Pakistan's own nuclear command nuances but also raise issues for Saudi Arabia, with whom Rawalpindi plans to share its nuclear weapons, considering that Saudi Arabia is a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and hence, must be careful with its nuclear dealings with states that coy with their nuclear command.

What is more concerning is the fact that General Munir's indoctrination of soldiers on religious contexts. A soldier must be motivated for defence and deterrence in the honour of his country first, his unit second and last but not least, his company/squadron (according to the services), but the religious indoctrination of the soldiers clearly implies that Pakistan's leaders, both political and military, have the least to do with the people of Pakistan. Second, Pakistan's military leaders use darbars or sainik sammilan to promote anti-India sentiments. This creates room for concern about the

will of top military echelons to resolve issues pertaining to the welfare of soldiers and their families. Also, a state that motivates itself on grounds of religion rather than statehood often leads its men into a debacle. These indoctrinations are also misinterpreted as sectarian violence in Pakistan is a major internal security concern, with Shias and Ahmadiyya becoming victims of this sectarian violence and also repression.⁵ If such sectarian violence only aggravates, India may have to bear the repercussions of being coerced into granting refuge to Ahmadiyya's and Shias in India.



Also, power accumulation could lead CDF to indulge in unnecessary security breaches in border regions which could be avoided by Pakistan for its own welfare and betterment. For instance, in 1999 Kargil War, under General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistani soldiers had breached the Simla Agreement of 1972. Pakistani soldiers infiltrated critical posts of the Indian Army during harsh winters, as these posts were unmanned owing to the agreement on both sides to vacate inhospitable peaks during extreme winters. Hence, overt accumulation of power with a lack of scrutiny could lead its leaders to take decisions which are detrimental to their own soldiers

⁵ Sushim Mukul, "Celebrate Eid, pay Rs 5lakh as fine: Pakistan to Ahmadiya Muslims," *India Today*, June 4, 2025, <Celebrate Eid, pay Rs 5 lakh PKR as fine: Pakistan to Ahmadiyya Muslims - India Today>

too. The Kargil War of 1999 was considered a misadventure by one-man, General Musharraf, who led to not only winter hazards for both Indian and Pakistani soldiers, but also unnecessary logistical hazards of keeping soldiers on both sides well equipped with basic rations and other necessities. Again, the CDF, who would enjoy judicial immunity, will be appointed by the prime minister, who would not be sheltered from judicial interrogation. Hence, in future, the prime minister could be tried for appointing a CDF who could misuse the powers and his judicial immunity.

Pakistan is also facing the adverse consequences of gun culture, coupled with economic downturn. The recently launched 'Surrender of Illegal Arms Act 2025' offers a 15-day amnesty for unlicensed weapons, but these initiatives would need successful governance for implementation. Amid the debilitating condition of the judiciary in Pakistan, such implementation that could have improved the safety and reduced the prominence of guns, which are inexpensive in the country, could become a daunting task.

At the foreign policy level, Pakistan has signed a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SDMA), with Saudi Arabia, in which any act of aggression against one would be considered as an aggression against both.⁶ But both states have been misled into fallacies driven by shared security concerns. Pakistan skipped contemplating the issues of the shortage of military personnel it could face when committing such strengths for foreign missions. There are reports that Pakistan has sent military troops to the Saudi-Yemen border to protect Saudi Arabia, though such reports have been denied by Pakistan. Whether such reports are true or not, the major concern is whether Pakistan's military echelon should be willing to risk the lives of its military personnel for the defence of another country.

For Saudi Arabia, which has also strengthened its relations with India, it could become a challenge to fight a war against India on the grounds of

⁶ Usaid Siddiqui, "Saudi Arabia signs mutual defence pact with nuclear-armed Pakistan," *Al Jazeera*, September 17, 2025, <Saudi Arabia signs mutual defence pact with nuclear-armed Pakistan | News | Al Jazeera>

mutual defence with Pakistan. Also, *"strengthening joint deterrence against any aggression"* makes Saudi foreign policy choices more complex against India, especially as Saudi defence companies have expressed their interests to foster partnerships in critical areas like shipbuilding, electronics, cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence (AI).⁷ According to the reports, India's investments in Saudi Arabia are approximately USD three billion, and conversely, Saudi investments in India are approximately USD ten billion.⁸

In addition, the US agreed to a waiver of sanctions on Chabahar port in Iran,⁹ a strategic port developed to offset the strategic advantage of Gwadar port, which is a Chinese-funded deep-sea port as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). On the other hand, as of early 2025, Pakistan has struggled to attract commercial activity in the port.¹⁰ The BRI project, in which Pakistan was also a part of has already turned Pakistan into a USD thirty billion debt-trapped economy, including *"high loan interest rates and foreign currency financing."*¹¹ Amid this, Pakistan's leadership must be more cautious not to lead the country to a further destabilising situation. The change in governance mechanism has tough roads to traverse to ensure economic and financial stability, which should be the major focus at this time. Unfortunately, unlike India, in its 'guns and butter dilemma', Rawalpindi seems to have chosen the guns over butter.

A change in the governance system would only make sense if Pakistan prevents itself from falling prey to the domino effect. This domino effect is visible not only in its arms build-up process, but also in its policies and decision-making. For instance, India's conventional rocket and missile forces are proposed to be restructured into the Integrated Rocket Force

⁷ Dinakar Peri, "India, Saudi Arabia exploring joint ventures in defence sectors," *The Hindu*, December 25, 2024, <India, Saudi Arabia exploring joint ventures in defence sector - The Hindu>

⁸ "Where India fits into Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's tighter embrace," *The Economic Times*, September 18, 2025, <Where India fits into Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's tighter embrace - The Economic Times>

⁹ "U.S. Waiver of Sanctions on Iran's Chabahar Port is Good News for Central Asia," *The Times of Central Asia*, December 1, 2025, <U.S. Waiver of Sanctions on Iran's Chabahar Port is Good News for Central Asia - The Times Of Central Asia>

¹⁰ Sarah Zaman, "Pakistan struggles to bring trade to China-built port," *Voice of America*, January 10, 2025, <Pakistan struggles to bring trade to China-built port>

¹¹ Reema Sharma, "Pakistan Under \$30Billion Chinese Debt Burden As CPEC Crawls," *MSN*, December 2, 2025, <Pakistan Under \$30 Billion Chinese Debt Burden As CPEC Crawls>

(IRF) to draw a distinction between its nuclear and conventional weapons. This decision makes sense owing to the fact that New Delhi has minimal desire to develop Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs), and IRF clearly signals that India's nuclear deterrence relies on credibility, which it wishes to derive from its strategic weapons. It also clearly implies that India's reliance on conventional systems for strategic goals is strong.

Pakistan too has formed an **Army Rocket Force Command (ARFC)** to reduce reliance on nuclear-capable missiles and enable its **conventional missiles** to operate under a **unified command**

Pakistan too has formed an Army Rocket Force Command (ARFC) to reduce reliance on nuclear-capable missiles and enable its conventional missiles to operate under a unified command system. But in times of a crisis situation, if ARFC rocket systems and Nasr are deployed together in deserts, or near the Wagah Border, and Pakistan's ARFC rocket systems suffer cataclysm through India's counter-operations, there could be spill-over effects on its Nasr systems, leading to a nuclear fall-out on its own territory that could be difficult for Pakistan to cope with. Presence of TNWs in nuclear arsenals would always keep the scope for use of nuclear weapons high, owing to the low threshold, even when the state is fighting with conventional weapons.

If the new governance wants to focus on strategic stability and wants ARFC to become a strategic success, it must indulge in banning TNWs from the region under a bilateral agreement with India pledging never to focus on TNWs. This would make ARFC a more stable command structure and also make it easier for General Munir, who would be in charge of the entire military to function in a way that would strengthen strategic stability and keep the nuclear threshold high by strengthening conventional deterrence.



CONCLUSION

A state that places a higher priority on its leadership rather than on an independent judiciary creates significant obstacles to growth and development. When the leadership prioritises its own agenda over the rule of law, it undermines the very foundations necessary for a stable and prosperous society. There is no denying that the Supreme Court serves as the ultimate mechanism for upholding law and order, ensuring that justice is meted out fairly and effectively. If the role of this critical institution is diminished or sidelined, it could lead to a situation where leadership operates without accountability. This would not only hinder the enforcement of laws but would also adversely affect the formulation of policies aimed at fostering national development and strategic stability. Instead of pursuing constructive initiatives that promote peace and growth, we might see an increase in tensions, including proxy wars, which can destabilise entire regions. In this way, a balanced approach that respects the separation of powers is essential for a country to thrive and ensure its long-term survival.