



India and Crises Hit Pakistan

This editorial is based on [Pakistan Spring vs Army's shadow](#) which was published in The Indian Express on 25/05/2023. It talks about the ongoing political crisis in Pakistan and its impact on India.

Prelims: [CPEC](#), [Arab Spring](#), [Chabahar port](#), [International North-South Transport Corridor \(INSTC\)](#)

Mains: Instability in Pakistan, Opportunities and threats for India

The recent arrest of former Pakistani Prime Minister led to massive protests across the country. For the first time, violent mobs, including the supporter of former PM, attacked army and paramilitary installations across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Punjab, Balochistan and major cities of Pakistan. The army was not targeted even in the wake of 1971 liberation of Bangladesh, military coups or even post the assassination of popular leaders such as Benazir Bhutto.

The [instability in Afghanistan](#) has further added fuel to the fire and the instability in Pakistan could in turn further destabilise Afghanistan. The growing instability in the Pakistan could spill over in no time and can affect the stability of the region.

What is the Current Situation in Pakistan?

▪ Political Rollercoaster:

- Pakistan is facing a political crisis since April 2022, when the former prime minister Imran Khan was ousted from his position in a vote of no confidence. He refused to accept the result and launched a series of protests and rallies, demanding an early election. He also faced many legal charges, including terrorism, corruption and [contempt of court](#).
 - The current Pakistani government has accused him of destabilizing the country and undermining democracy.
 - They've accused Imran Khan of becoming opportunistic and destructive by tapping into the anti-army sentiment among the public.
- The turmoil in Pakistan's political discourse could result into a Pakistan Spring (Like [Arab Spring](#)). There are many similarities between the situations in Pakistan and those in the Arab Spring countries. Some of the similarities include political instability, economic grievances, corruption, youth bulge, civil society activism and media freedom.

▪ Rise of Taliban:

- Since the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, the Pakistani army has been under siege and the Taliban supported Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is expanding its footprint across Balochistan and Punjab.
- The emboldened TTP and Baloch groups mounted several attacks against the armed forces.
- The Pakistani army is practically fighting a two-front war (internally with TTP & externally with Taliban) and keeping a tight watch on the Iran border.

- The Pakistani army used to be seen as a strong and capable force that could play a smart game of proxy wars has been exposed to be invincible by Taliban.
- The Taliban is now a major threat to Pakistan, and the army is struggling to contain it. This has led to a loss of confidence in the army, and its aura of invincibility has faded.

▪ **Army under Seize:**

- Street mobilisations after the ouster of Imran Khan have made the army vulnerable. The army today is politically much weaker which may provide a fostering ground for non-state actors like TTP.
- The army's diminished stature became visible, when protesters could access even General Headquarters with some persuasion. Violent mobs targeted the Corp Commander's house in Lahore, the Pakistan Military Academy, the air force base, and army patrols in cities.

▪ **Economic Crisis:**

- The inflation rate in Pakistan is currently over 30%, which is the highest it has been in years. This is making it difficult for people to afford basic necessities, such as food and fuel. The Pakistani rupee has lost over 30% of its value against the US dollar in the past year.
 - Recently, a video circulated over social media showed that Pakistanis in some regions are stockpiling LPG in plastic bags as dealers are curtailing supplies due to a lack of cooking gas cylinders. Moving bombs': Pakistan's LNG crisis sparks dangerous 'bag gas' trade [//](#)



- The country's public debt has grown to a staggering USD 250 billion, and the government has failed to secure a bailout from the [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#) due to its inability to implement the required reforms.
- The country is facing a severe shortage of foreign exchange reserves, which have fallen to a 9-year low of less than USD 3 billion meaning that the country does not have enough foreign currency to import essential goods and services.
- The recent climate disasters have added the fuel to the fire, making their economy more vulnerable.

▪ **Resentment against China:**

- The two provinces (KPK and Balochistan) crucial for [CPEC](#), have become battle grounds for security forces. The army's steadfast backing of CPEC has brought it to the centre of rising public resentment against Chinese investments.
- The sentiment is so perceptible that following his recent visit to Pakistan, the Chinese foreign minister stressed that some forces had fabricated the rumour that China created a ["debt trap"](#) in Pakistan.

What are the Threats to India?

- **Escalation of Cross-Border Tensions:** Pakistan's political crisis may lead to a rise in cross-border tensions, particularly along the [Line of Control \(LoC\)](#) in Kashmir. Pakistan may resort to provoking India by supporting militant groups or violating the ceasefire agreement to divert attention from its domestic problems or to rally public support behind the government or the military.
- **Refugee Crisis:** The economic crisis in Pakistan could lead to a refugee crisis, with millions of Pakistanis fleeing the country. This could put a strain on India's resources and could also lead to an increase in crime and social unrest.
- **Compromised Regional Security:** The current crisis in Pakistan could lead to regional instability,

as Pakistan becomes more dependent on its neighbours for support. This could lead to increased tensions between Pakistan and its neighbours, including India.

- **Nuclear Proliferation:** Any political or economic instability in Pakistan that weakens its control over its nuclear arsenal could potentially lead to concerns about the security and safety of those weapons. This could raise tensions and pose a threat to regional stability.

What are the Opportunities for India?

- **Counterterrorism Cooperation:**
 - Pakistan's political and economic situation can provide an opportunity for India to engage with the international community in addressing the issue of cross-border terrorism.
 - By highlighting Pakistan's support for terrorism, India can strengthen its case for global cooperation in combating terrorism and isolating state-sponsored terror networks.
- **Regional Power Projection:**
 - India can demonstrate its ability to maintain stability and handle regional challenges effectively, contrasting with the internal strife faced by Pakistan.
 - Strengthening **regional alliances and partnerships**, particularly with countries in South Asia and the **Middle East**, could enhance India's position as a responsible regional power.
- **Strengthening Regional Connectivity:**
 - India can capitalize on Pakistan's current challenges by promoting regional connectivity initiatives, such as the **Chabahar port** in Iran or the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**.
 - These projects can bolster India's access to Central Asia, Afghanistan, and beyond, enabling trade diversification and enhancing India's regional influence.
- **Economic Cooperation with Other Countries:**
 - India can position itself as a **stable and attractive investment destination** in the region.
 - With Pakistan facing economic challenges, **India can leverage its economic growth and stability to attract foreign direct investment (FDI)** and foster closer economic ties with other nations.
 - This can lead to increased trade partnerships and collaborations, further enhancing India's economic standing.

What can India do in such a situation?

- "Victims of terrorism do not sit together with perpetrators of terrorism to discuss terrorism". But India can give a chance to desperate Pakistan of formal talks of it agrees to stop terrorism, resolve Kashmir issue Pakistan needs the talks desperately.
- India can use its diplomatic leverage to isolate Pakistan internationally and expose its alleged support for terrorism and human rights violations.
- The crises in Pakistan have shown that the country is unable to effectively govern itself. India can use this to its advantage by pressuring Pakistan to change its behaviour on issues such as terrorism and nuclear proliferation.
- Amidst such a crisis, India must prioritize its border security and enhance its military preparedness to contain insurgencies, cross-border aggression, or provocation from Pakistan.
- India could strengthen its economic and strategic ties with Iran, and other Central Asian countries to counter Pakistan's influence in the region.

Conclusion:

Dealing with Pakistan's establishment that has supported anti-India terrorist groups is unpleasant. Nonetheless, permitting Pakistan to come under the influence of extremist Islamists would present an even graver situation. India must make efforts to stabilize the conditions in Pakistan, as the repercussions such as border tensions and insurgencies will directly impact India.

Drishti Mains Question:

Pakistan is going through one of the gravest political and economic crises. In such a situation, what are

the opportunities and threats for India and how should India respond in such a situation? Discuss.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. "Increasing cross border terrorist attacks in India and growing interference in the internal affairs of several member states by Pakistan are not conducive for the future of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)." Explain with suitable examples. **(2016)**

Q. Terrorist activities and mutual distrust have clouded India - Pakistan relations. To what extent the use of soft power like sports and cultural exchanges could help generate goodwill between the two countries? Discuss with suitable examples. **(2015)**

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