The background of the cover features a dark blue world map. Overlaid on the map are several data visualization elements: a line graph with a yellow line and blue dots in the upper left, a bar chart with blue and yellow bars in the lower left, a circular diagram with concentric lines in the upper right, and a network of hexagons in the lower right. The text is primarily in white and yellow/gold colors.

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Research & Development: Exampen.co Research & Policy Analysis Division

Dawn

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Express tribune

Top Express Tribune Editorials on Pakistan Economy (Jan-Feb 2026)

Express Tribune's Jan-Feb 2026 editorials highlight Pakistan's economic pivot needs, unemployment risks, and reform urgencies amid IMF ties. They offer critical insights for CSS/PMS essays on fiscal policy and growth strategies.

S.No	Article Title	Author	CSS Relevance	Page/Location
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3	Navigating 2026	Editorial	High – GDP growth (3.2%), reserves fragility (\$14.5bn), tax base/SOE reforms	28
4	Indo US Reset	Editorial Board	editorial illustrates strategic diplomacy, regional realignments, energy security, and multipolar geopolitics,	30
5	US-Iran tension	Editorial	US-Iran tensions peak as naval drills military build-up threaten overshadowing nuclear talks	31
6	Pak- BD reset	Kamran Yousaf	Pakistan–Bangladesh bilateral trade and diplomacy; regional relations, foreign policy, economic cooperation.	25
7	Taliban 2.0's dilemma	Editorial	High – Afghanistan instability (factional rifts, TTP/Al Qaeda/ISKP threats), Doha pledges breach, impact on Pakistan's security/geo-economics	32

Usage Notes

These editorials stress structural shifts from aid dependency to private-led growth, ideal for topics like "Pakistan's Economic Revival" or "Youth Unemployment Challenges." Cross-reference with Dawn's Lodhi pieces for geopolitics-economy links in essays

Dawn

OIC's Abject Failure

Thematic Overview

The editorial “OIC’s Abject Failure” critiques the Organization of Islamic Cooperation by examining its persistent inability to act decisively in response to humanitarian crises affecting the Muslim world, most notably the war in Gaza. The central theme revolves around the erosion of the OIC’s moral authority and credibility as a collective voice for Muslims. The article frames this failure as systemic, attributing it to internal political fragmentation, divergent national priorities among member states, and a reliance on rhetoric over actionable strategies. It emphasizes that the organization’s inaction undermines its core purpose of protecting oppressed Muslim populations and projecting solidarity in times of crisis.

Strategic Summary

The editorial situates the OIC’s shortcomings within the broader international context, highlighting how the International Criminal Court has taken proactive steps in pursuing accountability for alleged war crimes, contrasting sharply with the OIC’s muted response. The article underscores that while global institutions demonstrate the capacity to uphold legal and moral norms, the OIC continues to operate largely symbolically, issuing statements without accompanying enforcement mechanisms or coordinated diplomatic pressure. The editorial suggests that the organization’s failure reflects not only poor governance and structural inefficiencies but also the competing interests of member states, which hinder unified action. This strategic gap diminishes the OIC’s relevance in international affairs and erodes confidence in its ability to protect human rights and justice for Muslim communities.

Exam-Oriented Notes

From an examination perspective, the editorial highlights several critical points relevant to CSS and PMS syllabi. It identifies institutional weakness, lack of enforcement capacity, and political disunity as structural barriers to the OIC’s effectiveness. The article demonstrates the contrast between moral authority and operational capability, showing that rhetorical condemnation without practical action undermines credibility. It also emphasizes the importance of aligning regional organization with international law and justice mechanisms. For students, this editorial can be linked to questions on international organization, human rights, the role of multilateral diplomacy, and global governance, illustrating how institutional design and political will determine effectiveness.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial provides a comprehensive critique of the OIC's failure by contrasting its rhetorical posturing with the decisive legal action taken by international institutions such as the International Criminal Court. It argues that the OIC's inaction in response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza represents a structural and systemic deficiency rather than an isolated diplomatic oversight. The article attributes this failure to internal political fragmentation, competing national interests among member states, and the absence of enforceable mechanisms, which collectively prevent the organization from acting coherently and decisively. By situating the discussion within the framework of international law and moral responsibility, the editorial highlights the dissonance between the OIC's stated objectives and its operational outcomes. It concludes that unless structural reforms, stronger coordination, and a commitment to moral and strategic leadership are undertaken, the OIC will continue to lose credibility and fail in its foundational mandate, leaving the Muslim world without a coherent platform to advocate for justice and human rights.

More than a Number

Thematic Overview

The editorial "More than a Number" reframes Pakistan's population debate by moving it away from numerical alarmism toward an institutional and governance-centered understanding. It argues that population size, in itself, is neither a crisis nor a guarantee of development; rather, it is a strategic variable whose impact is determined by the quality of governance, policy integration, and human capital investment. The central theme of the article is that Pakistan's demographic challenge is fundamentally a failure of state capacity and policy execution, not an unavoidable consequence of population growth.

Strategic Summary

Pakistan's emergence as one of the most populous countries in the world has intensified concerns regarding economic sustainability, social cohesion, and environmental stress. The editorial challenges the assumption that population growth automatically leads to underdevelopment and instead contends that mismanagement and weak institutional responses are the real sources of strain. While recent efforts to improve population data systems, reproductive health services, and youth engagement suggest a growing recognition of demographic realities, these initiatives remain insufficient in scope and coordination. Consequently, population growth continues to magnify existing socio-economic weaknesses rather than being transformed into a productive demographic advantage.

Exam-Oriented Notes

From an examination perspective, the article underscores several critical analytical linkages relevant to CSS and PMS syllabi. It conceptualizes population as a policy-dependent variable whose outcomes are shaped by governance quality and fiscal design. The editorial highlights how poor social indicators, particularly in maternal health, family planning, and women's rights, directly influence fertility patterns and labour productivity. It also introduces a fiscal critique by pointing out that Pakistan's resource allocation mechanisms prioritize population size over development outcomes,

thereby discouraging improvements in health, education, and human capital formation. These arguments make the article particularly useful for questions related to governance failure, demographic transition, and sustainable development.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial critically re-frames Pakistan's population debate by rejecting demographic determinism and locating population outcomes within the realm of state capacity, governance quality, and development planning. It argues that population growth does not inevitably lead to decline; rather, its consequences reflect political choices and institutional effectiveness. While acknowledging modest improvements in population data and reproductive health focus, the article underscores that weak implementation and fragmented policy making continue to limit meaningful progress.

The analysis highlights social and gender-related constraints as central to population governance. Persistent maternal mortality, early marriages, inadequate family planning, and gender-based violence are presented as structural barriers to economic growth and demographic stability. By linking women's health and empowerment with labour participation and productivity, the editorial aligns population policy with human development theory.

The article further critiques Pakistan's fiscal and governance framework for privileging population size over development outcomes, thereby discouraging provincial investment in health, education, and human capital. It concludes that population growth will remain a liability unless fiscal incentives, governance structures, and human development priorities are strategically aligned, in which case demographic size can be transformed into a national asset.

“National Agenda for 2026”

Thematic Overview

The editorial emphasizes that Pakistan stands at a critical juncture in 2026, where political instability, economic fragility, social underdevelopment, and security challenges intersect. It argues for a **comprehensive and inclusive national agenda** that transcends partisan divides and short-term political gains. The central theme is that sustainable progress depends on cohesive planning, institutional reform, and the alignment of policy priorities across political, economic, and social spheres. Without such an agenda, the country risks perpetuating cycles of governance inefficiency, economic stagnation, and social inequity.

Strategic Summary

The editorial identifies political stability as the foundation for economic growth and social development. Opportunities for dialogue between the government and opposition, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Pakistan People's Party factions, are highlighted, but past patterns of exclusionary politics, demonisation of dissent, and erosion of democratic norms are criticized. Economically, short-term stabilization under IMF support and external financing is acknowledged, yet the editorial stresses that long-term structural reforms are crucial, including tax reform, expenditure

rationalization, energy sector efficiency, and investment stimulation. Human development is central to this agenda; poor literacy, inadequate health services, high poverty, and rapid population growth are presented as structural challenges that undermine productivity and national progress. Security concerns, particularly militancy and terrorism, are framed as multidimensional problems requiring not only military action but also socio-political and community-based solutions. The editorial underlines that addressing these areas collectively is essential to safeguard Pakistan's stability and future growth.

Exam-Oriented Notes

From a CSS/PMS perspective, the editorial integrates multiple core themes: political governance, economic reform, human development, demographic management, and security strategy. It demonstrates the interplay between **inclusive political dialogue** and institutional credibility, contrasts **short-term macroeconomic stabilization** with the necessity of **long-term structural reforms**, and highlights the role of **human capital and population planning** in sustainable development. Security analysis reflects the importance of a **comprehensive counter-terrorism approach**, combining enforcement with social and political measures. The piece also stresses leadership, consensus-building, and policy coherence as prerequisites for national resilience, making it highly relevant for essay questions on governance, national agendas, and development planning.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial "A National Agenda for 2026" presents a structured framework for Pakistan to confront interlinked political, economic, social, and security challenges. It begins by emphasizing that political polarization and institutional mistrust have undermined governance and public confidence, and calls for dialogue between government and opposition factions to establish consensus-driven policies. Economically, the article recognizes stabilization achieved through IMF programmers and external financing but argues that without reforms in taxation, expenditure management, energy efficiency, and long-term growth planning, these gains remain fragile. Human development deficits, including millions of out-of-school children, low literacy, poor health indicators, and rising population pressures, are identified as fundamental barriers to national progress. The editorial stresses that sustainable solutions require **integrated planning**, linking population management, education, and health reforms to economic growth. Security challenges from militancy are also highlighted, with the recommendation that responses combine military, socio-economic, and political strategies, supported by community engagement. The editorial concludes that a **cohesive, forward-looking national agenda**, implemented with political will, institutional reform, and social inclusion, is essential for stability, growth, and resilience in 2026 and beyond.

Pre-monsoon audit

Thematic Overview

The editorial “Pre-monsoon audit” underscores the imperative of moving from **reactive warning to proactive risk mitigation** in Pakistan’s approach to natural disasters, particularly monsoon flooding. It situates the National Disaster Management Authority’s (NDMA) decision to launch a nationwide infrastructure audit ahead of the monsoon season as a **necessary shift toward accountability and pre-emptive planning**. The central theme is that the country’s vulnerability to extreme weather events and their associated human and economic losses arises not from the inevitability of nature, but from **institutional neglect, poor enforcement of safety standards, and inadequate infrastructure readiness**. This editorial thus frames disaster management as a matter of governance efficacy, public accountability, and risk governance, rather than mere meteorological inevitability.

Strategic Summary

The editorial begins by welcoming the NDMA’s nationwide infrastructure audit programme, which signals a policy shift from issuing routine cautions to undertaking actual inspections of buildings, roads, and facilities that face high risk during the monsoon. It draws on recent history, pointing to the devastating floods in 2022 and destructive monsoon episodes in 2024, to illustrate that extreme weather is no longer sporadic and that the government must institutionalize a culture of preparation. It argues that losses are frequently caused by structural weaknesses — unsafe construction, poor maintenance, and inadequate public infrastructure — which could be identified and addressed before disaster strikes. The piece criticizes Pakistan’s chronic implementation gap: plans are announced, but follow-through at provincial and district levels is weak, drains remain blocked, encroachments persist, and evacuation plans are not enforced. The editorial emphasises that the audit will only be meaningful if its findings translate into **timely, enforceable decisions, backed by accountability mechanisms, clear timelines, and political will**. Urban centers such as Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar are cited as examples where infrastructural inertia has compounded monsoon risk.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial highlights key concepts relevant to CSS/PMS syllabus areas such as governance, disaster risk management, public policy implementation, and institutional accountability. It reflects the principle that effective disaster management requires **anticipatory governance**, including infrastructure resilience, legal enforcement of safety standards, and audit mechanisms for public assets. The piece contrasts mere **policy announcements with implementation realities**, illustrating the classic governance challenge of policy execution in Pakistan. It implicitly critiques systemic administrative weaknesses — gaps between federal directives and provincial/district action — and calls for **accountability frameworks with clear timelines**. It also intersects with discussions on urbanization and risk, noting that cities with unregulated construction and strained public services are particularly exposed. The editorial can be linked to broader themes in national development: institutional reform,

decentralized disaster preparedness, and strengthening local governance structures to translate policy into practice.

Full- Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “Pre- monsoon audit” articulates a policy critique rooted in Pakistan’s ongoing vulnerability to climatic hazards and institutional apathy. It begins by endorsing the NDMA’s decision to conduct a nationwide infrastructure audit before the onset of the monsoon season, interpreting this initiative as a welcome departure from the traditional cycle of issuing warnings followed by reactive relief operations. The article draws on recent history — the devastating floods of 2022 and the destructive monsoon episodes of 2024 — to argue that extreme weather events are becoming more frequent, and that Pakistan’s failure to prepare adequately exacerbates human and economic losses. It identifies the root causes of disaster impacts not as natural forces alone but as **unsafe construction practices, lax enforcement of building codes, poor maintenance of critical infrastructure, and blocked drainage systems** that fail under predictable stress.

Living in Intresting Times

Thematic Overview

The editorial “Living in interesting times” reflects on the **complex and turbulent international environment** and the implications of these conditions for Pakistan’s foreign policy and domestic order. By invoking the well- known phrase that suggests periods of upheaval and uncertainty, the article situates contemporary geopolitics — marked by shifting power balances, conflicts in the Middle East and Europe, and transactional dynamics among major powers — within a framework that challenges traditional norms and compels states to recalibrate their strategic postures. Within this overarching theme, Pakistan’s diplomatic positioning, its relations with major world powers, and its internal governance dynamics are all examined as products of the volatile “interesting times” in which the world currently lives.

Strategic Summary

Against a backdrop of prolonged conflict in the Middle East, including the Gaza war and broader regional dynamics involving Iran, Lebanon, Yemen, and the Horn of Africa, the editorial argues that global power relations are being reshaped in ways that render established rules- based orders increasingly tenuous. It highlights actions by major powers, notably the United States under changed administrations, that have recalibrated diplomatic and military commitments, such as shifting support patterns in Ukraine and signalling reduced backing for European defence. Amid these trends, Pakistan’s foreign policy is presented as having performed relatively well, maintaining relationships with key global actors — including the US, China, Russia, and Gulf states — while responding assertively to regional security pressures like missile attacks from India. The article further suggests that international turmoil may influence how states perceive and manage domestic dissent, referencing parallels in the handling of public protests and governance approaches. It concludes by

acknowledging that while the old global order appears to be fracturing, the shape of what will replace it remains uncertain, underscoring the need for strategic adaptability.

Exam- Oriented Notes

The editorial intersects with major CSS/PMS themes such as **foreign policy analysis, international relations theory, power transition, and strategic autonomy**. It illustrates the concept of a **fluid international system**, where traditional alliances and normative frameworks are challenged by **transactional diplomacy and great-power competition**. The piece also highlights the importance of **balancing relations with multiple major powers** — the United States, China, and Russia — as a strategic imperative for smaller and medium powers like Pakistan, thus engaging with realist perspectives in international relations. It further explores how **regional conflicts and shifting global priorities**, such as reduced Western engagement in Ukraine or renewed Middle East confrontations, reshape security environments. The editorial also touches on the **domestic implications of international dynamics**, suggesting that global trends in managing dissent can echo within domestic political practices, making it relevant for questions linking foreign policy with internal governance challenges.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “Living in Interesting Times” examines the turbulence in global politics and its implications for Pakistan. It highlights escalating Middle East conflicts, particularly Gaza, and broader regional instability in Lebanon, Yemen, and the Horn of Africa, while noting shifts in US engagement and transactional diplomacy that challenge the established rules-based order. Amid this volatility, Pakistan’s foreign policy is presented as relatively successful, maintaining balanced relations with major powers and responding to regional security challenges such as missile attacks. The piece also notes domestic resonances, observing that governance approaches to dissent reflect global trends in managing public protest. The editorial concludes that the global order is fragmenting, creating uncertainty and requiring Pakistan to adopt strategic adaptability, a clear vision, and calibrated foreign and domestic policies to navigate these “interesting times.”

Donroe doctrine’ in action

Thematic Overview

The editorial critiques the United States’ recent interventionist policy in Latin America, particularly targeting Venezuela, framing it as a **revival of the Monroe Doctrine in a modern guise**, which the author terms the *Donroe Doctrine*. The piece argues that the Trump administration’s strategic approach emphasizes **unilateral military and economic intervention** under the pretext of democracy promotion and countering foreign influence, primarily China and Russia. It situates the issue within the broader theme of **hegemonic power projection**, highlighting how resource-rich nations in the Western Hemisphere, especially Venezuela with its oil reserves, are vulnerable to external coercion. The editorial underscores the implications of such unilateralism for **international norms, sovereignty, and regional stability**,

suggesting that the US is prioritizing geopolitical leverage over multilateral engagement and legal frameworks.

Strategic Summary

The article begins by noting that the US military and political actions against Venezuela — including the targeting of President Nicolás Maduro and the imposition of sanctions — illustrate a **strategic assertion of hemispheric dominance**. It argues that the approach aligns with the so-called *Trump corollary* to the Monroe Doctrine, where Washington seeks to exclude non-Hemispheric powers and secure control over key resources, rather than merely addressing security or democratic deficits. The editorial highlights that while the US frames these actions as promoting democracy and regional stability, they **risk escalating conflict, undermining international law, and alienating regional partners**, particularly Latin American states wary of direct intervention. The piece contextualizes this policy within historical patterns of US intervention in Latin America, illustrating a **continuity of hegemonic practices** that prioritise power and resources over diplomacy or consensus. It concludes that short-term tactical gains may be achieved, but the long-term strategic consequences could include heightened instability, erosion of US legitimacy, and intensified regional distrust.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial is relevant to CSS/PMS themes such as **international relations, great power politics, regional security, sovereignty, and US foreign policy strategies**. It demonstrates the use of historical analogies (Monroe Doctrine) to frame contemporary interventions, highlighting the persistence of **hegemonic approaches under new administrations**. The piece provides insight into the **geopolitical dimension of energy security**, the strategic rivalry with China and Russia, and the implications of unilateral actions for multilateral norms. It also offers examples of **international pushback** via the UN and regional actors, making it pertinent for essays or answers discussing the **limits of power, conflict escalation, and global governance challenges**. Understanding this editorial aids in connecting theory — such as realism, hegemony, and power projection — with contemporary global events.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “‘Donroe doctrine’ in action” examines the United States’ interventionist approach toward Venezuela as a modern reinterpretation of the **Monroe Doctrine**, emphasizing unilateral action to maintain hemispheric dominance. It argues that the Trump administration’s strategy prioritizes **control over resources and geopolitical leverage** rather than strictly adhering to security or democratic principles. Actions against President Nicolás Maduro and the Venezuelan government reflect an attempt to exclude non-Hemispheric powers like China and Russia, highlighting the US’s enduring interest in energy security and influence in the Western Hemisphere. The editorial situates this policy in a historical continuum of US interventions in Latin America, noting that while short-term tactical objectives may be achieved, long-term consequences include **regional alienation, potential instability, and challenges to international law**. The piece concludes that such unilateral assertiveness, framed as promoting democracy or security, risks undermining both

regional stability and the credibility of global norms, reinforcing the enduring tension between **power projection and sovereign autonomy**. (dawn.com)

Blaming the IMF

Thematic Overview

The editorial “Blaming the IMF” critiques the tendency of Pakistan’s political leadership to attribute the economy’s chronic underperformance to the conditions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme rather than confronting domestic governance failures. It argues that while structural constraints in Pakistan’s economy are real and longstanding, using the IMF’s stabilization conditions as a scapegoat for lack of reform sidesteps the true issue: the state’s **inability and unwillingness to implement tough, rules-based structural reforms**. The article frames the debate within the broader theme of **governance accountability versus external blame-shifting**, challenging narratives that blame external factors for internal policy failures.

Strategic Summary

The editorial begins by referencing a government-appointed panel tasked with devising a strategy to exit the IMF programme by boosting export revenues. Although the panel’s diagnosis of economic constraints — including high energy costs, policy inconsistency, distorted taxation, and logistics bottlenecks — is familiar, the editorial notes that these issues have persisted across successive policy cycles because they reflect deeper governance and institutional weaknesses, not merely external impositions. It then critiques the implicit suggestion by some officials that IMF conditions are the primary reason for Pakistan’s sluggish economy, clarifying that IMF programmes are designed for **fiscal and macroeconomic stabilisation** rather than directly driving growth. The article emphasises that while the IMF may set broad fiscal benchmarks, it does not prevent the government from undertaking or implementing comprehensive structural reforms, such as broadening the tax base or rationalising public expenditure. Blaming the IMF, therefore, obscures the **state’s own dereliction of duty** in delivering reforms that could underpin sustainable economic performance.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial intersects with key CSS/PMS syllabus topics, particularly **economic governance, state capacity, accountability, and the role of international financial institutions (IFIs)**. It illustrates the conceptual difference between macroeconomic stabilization — often the focus of IMF programme — and structural transformation, which is squarely within the domain of national policy implementation. The article demonstrates how governance failures can be misattributed to external conditions, releasing political leadership from accountability. It also highlights how the IMF’s constitutionality, while contested in policy and ideology, are aimed principally at fiscal discipline rather than growth—contrary to some public perceptions. This makes it relevant for questions on economic reform, the function and limitations of IMF

programmers, the importance of structural reforms (taxation, regulatory clarity, institutional coherence), and the political economy of blame-shifting versus performance.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “Blaming the IMF” provides a **critical examination** of how Pakistan’s political leadership depicts the IMF programme as a principal culprit for the economy’s moribund state, rather than acknowledging the state’s own failures in governance and reform implementation. It opens with reference to a panel, led by the planning and development minister, tasked with proposing strategies—including “urgent ease of doing business reforms”—to more than double export revenues and facilitate departure from IMF assistance by the end of the programme. The editorial notes that while the panel’s identification of constraints such as volatile energy costs, policy unpredictability, distorted taxation, logistics bottlenecks, and institutional fragmentation is accurate, such problems are longstanding and have featured in multiple donor reports and internal policy documents without resolution. The persistence of these hurdles underscores that the challenge is **not one of diagnostics** but of **political will and implementation capacity**.

Spiraling crisis

Thematic Overview

The editorial “Spiralling crisis” examines the escalating political and economic turmoil in Iran and its **global and regional repercussions**, highlighting how internal strife combined with external interference has transformed a domestic issue into an international problem. The article underscores how prolonged protests, a harsh state response, and the involvement of major powers — notably the United States and Israel — have deepened instability, with broader implications for global oil markets and geopolitical balance. The central theme challenges simplistic narratives about protest movements and external influence, stressing that crises of this scale require **multilateral engagement and respect for national agency** rather than unilateral punitive measures. The editorial situates the situation in Iran as a case study of how **domestic instability can spiral into a wider geopolitical and economic crisis** if mishandled by both internal actors and external powers.

Strategic Summary

The editorial opens by noting the complexity of Iran’s unfolding crisis, where economic grievances have merged with political indignation, making it difficult to discern whether protests seek governance improvements or radical political change. Tehran’s communications blackout and violent crackdown on demonstrators have obscured clarity, allowing the Iranian government to brand dissent as a national security threat. Meanwhile, strategic actions by external actors — particularly the United States and Israel, which have previously conducted airstrikes on Iran — have intensified tensions. A recent US tariff on nations engaging economically with Iran adds an economic dimension to the crisis, with potential repercussions for global oil

prices and trade partners including China, India, the UAE, Turkey, and Pakistan. The editorial criticizes punitive measures that exacerbate hardship and asserts that sustainable resolution requires inclusive negotiation that recognizes the Iranian people's dignity and sovereign decision-making, rather than policies that compound suffering and destabilization.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The piece intersects with CSS/PMS topics in **international relations, conflict analysis, global economics, and foreign policy strategy**. It highlights how **internal socio-economic discontent** can escalate into geopolitical instability when compounded by **external pressures and interventionist tactics**. The discussion illustrates how tariffs and sanctions — tools of economic statecraft — can deepen suffering and affect global commodity markets, including oil, with knock-on effects for interconnected economies. The editorial also underscores the importance of **sovereignty and agency** in crisis resolution, challenging foreign powers' inclination toward punitive policies. This narrative is relevant to questions on **global governance, the ethics of intervention, and the macroeconomic implications of geopolitical crises**

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “Spiralling Crisis” examines Iran’s escalating political and economic turmoil, where domestic protests over governance and economic hardship have intensified under harsh state crackdowns and external pressures. Actions by the United States, including tariffs and past military interventions, have compounded instability and risk wider repercussions for global oil markets and regional security. The editorial stresses that unilateral punitive measures worsen suffering and fail to resolve underlying issues. Sustainable resolution requires **multilateral engagement, respect for Iran’s sovereignty, and inclusive negotiation** that protects citizens’ rights while stabilising the region, highlighting the interconnected nature of domestic unrest and global geopolitic

Multipolar South Asia

Thematic Overview

The editorial argues that South Asia’s geopolitical landscape is undergoing significant transformation as the longstanding uni polar influence of India is challenged by the emergence of multiple regional pillars. It situates the idea of a “multi-polar South Asia” not as a simple rise of equal powers, but as a **dilution of India’s structural dominance** through the strategic relevance of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China. The central theme is that shifts in internal politics, external alignments, and economic engagements are reshaping the balance of influence in the region, creating opportunities for alternative centers of power to constrain unilateral dominance and promote a more distributed regional order.

Strategic Summary

The editorial begins by noting that in the early 21st century India consolidated structural influence in South Asia due to relative economic growth and external backing, but this dominance is no longer uncontested. It highlights a changing regional environment in which Pakistan seeks to reclaim its strategic agency, Bangladesh asserts greater independence in policy, and China expands its footprint through economic and strategic engagement, particularly under the Belt and Road Initiative framework. Islamabad perceives this evolving environment as conducive to a **multipolar regional balance** where no single state — especially India — can unilaterally shape outcomes. The editorial clarifies that South Asian multipolarity does not mean the emergence of several equal great powers, but rather a strategic configuration in which Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China operate as consequential poles alongside India, thereby reducing structural asymmetry and offering alternative alignments for smaller states seeking diversified partnerships.

Exam-Oriented Notes

From an examination perspective, the editorial touches on key themes in **international relations and regional geopolitics**. It illustrates the application of the concept of **multipolarity** in a regional context, contrasting it with hegemonic or unipolar influence. The piece engages with strategic balance, alliance dynamics, and regional diplomacy, showing how states attempt to mitigate domination by a single power through economic, military, and diplomatic initiatives. It also underscores the role of external powers like China in enabling shifts in regional order, as well as intra-regional assertiveness by countries such as Bangladesh. This makes it relevant to questions on **balance of power theory, regional security complexes, foreign policy strategy, and Asian geopolitics**.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “Multipolar South Asia” assesses the evolving strategic architecture of South Asia, arguing that the region is shifting away from historical Indian dominance toward a more distributed balance of influence. It observes that Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China are each expanding their strategic relevance, thereby creating a regional environment in which India’s structural centrality is diluted. Islamabad views this as an opportunity to promote multipolarity, defined not as equal great powers but as **multiple consequential poles** that can collectively check unilateral influence and foster a more diverse strategic order. The editorial notes that China’s economic engagement, particularly under initiatives like the Belt and Road, and Bangladesh’s assertive foreign policy contribute to this shift, while Pakistan seeks deeper defence and technological cooperation with regional partners. The piece concludes that multipolarity in South Asia emerges from these intersecting developments, offering smaller states agency in choosing alignments and reducing unilateral dominance — a configuration that has significant implications for regional stability, influence patterns, and the future of diplomacy in the subcontinent.

Trumpian imperialism

Thematic Overview

The editorial “**Trumpian imperialism**” critiques the United States’ recent **military intervention in Venezuela** and broader foreign policy actions under President Donald Trump, portraying them as manifestations of renewed imperialism that violate **international law and national sovereignty**. The piece argues that the abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife reflects a broader pattern of interventionist behaviour aimed at securing strategic resources, particularly oil, and exerting dominance rather than advancing legitimate security or humanitarian objectives. The theme underscores how such actions undermine the **global rules-based order**, erode respect for sovereignty, and raise serious concerns about the ethical and legal foundations of international conduct.

Strategic Summary

The article begins by highlighting the **extraordinary image** of Maduro being blindfolded and taken to New York, calling it emblematic of contemporary imperialism. It frames the US action in Venezuela not as a fight against drug trafficking — as officially claimed — but as a strategic move to control the country’s **oil wealth** and other resources, noting that Trump openly stated the US would maintain a presence in Venezuela “as it pertains to oil.”

The editorial traces a historical pattern of US involvement in Latin America, including sanctions under past administrations and earlier attempts to remove left-leaning leaderships, arguing that the latest intervention represents an escalation from coercive diplomacy to **blatant military force**. It criticises the invocation of the Monroe Doctrine — rebranded by Trump as the self-styled “*Donroe doctrine*” — as outdated and dangerous in the 21st-century geopolitical context, warning that such unilateral policies risk serious global repercussions.

The piece also highlights the **silent or tacit support** by some Western countries, which, despite paying lip service to international law, have justified or downplayed the intervention on the grounds of Venezuela’s contested political legitimacy. The editorial concludes that Trump’s actions demonstrate an arrogance that disregards international norms and peace, potentially drawing the world toward greater instability.

Exam-Oriented Notes

This editorial is directly relevant to CSS/PMS themes in **international relations, global governance, power politics, and international law**. It engages with concepts such as **imperialism, sovereignty, the rules-based order, and geopolitical resource competition**. The article provides a contemporary case of how powerful states may use military force to pursue strategic advantages, illustrating realist notions of power politics and critiques from normative international legal perspectives.

The piece also offers material on how historical doctrines like the **Monroe Doctrine** are reinterpreted in modern policy and the implications of such reinterpretations for regional security in Latin America and beyond. Furthermore, the editorial's emphasis on the **political legitimacy narrative** and the reaction of other states is relevant to discussions on multilateralism, ethical foreign policy, and the limits of intervention.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial "**Trumpian imperialism**" sharply criticises the United States' unilateral military intervention in Venezuela under President Donald Trump, framing it as a brazen act of imperialism that violates international law and undermines the sovereignty of nations. It uses the image of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro being blindfolded and taken to New York as symbolic of a broader pattern whereby the US pursues regime change to secure strategic resources — particularly oil — rather than genuine security interests. The article traces this intervention to ongoing US geopolitical behaviour in Latin America, arguing that previous sanctions and political pressure have now culminated in direct military action. It highlights Trump's explicit assertions of controlling Venezuela's oil and the rebranding of the 19th-century Monroe Doctrine into what he calls the "*Donroe doctrine*", criticising it as anachronistic and dangerous in today's global context. The editorial also notes the **complicit silence** of some Western nations, which rhetorically support international law while tolerating actions that contradict it. Concluding that such imperialistic ambition risks destabilising global peace and eroding respect for international norms, the piece warns that continued unilateral interventions will have **serious global consequences**, underscoring the need to uphold sovereignty and legal frameworks in international relations.

Trump's overplayed hand

Thematic Overview

The editorial "Trump's overplayed hand" examines the **United States' military intervention in Venezuela** under President Donald Trump, arguing that it represents not only a continuation but an escalation of **unilateral coercive power politics** in the Western Hemisphere. It situates Washington's actions within a broader historical pattern of intervention aimed at securing **strategic resources** and maintaining influence in the region, while highlighting the growing role of **BRICS and allied resistance** as a strategic counterweight. The theme underscores how such interventions can overreach, misjudge local realities, and risk **strategic backlash** when powerful external actors underestimate internal resilience and the limits of unilateral force.

Strategic Summary

The editorial opens by questioning the assumption that removing Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro would create a power vacuum and swiftly collapse the Bolivarian Republic; instead, it notes that **strong external investment and internal cohesion** backed by Russia, China, and Iran have sustained the regime's resilience. It frames Trump's intervention as driven by **fear of the perceived BRICS challenge** — particularly Venezuela's role in anti-imperial solidarity and resource sovereignty —

and compares the 2026 operation to historical interventions linked to oil interests. The editorial highlights resistance to the intervention, including protests in Bangladesh and muted diplomatic responses from regional powers, portraying Trump's strategy as **overambitious and miscalculated**, with the potential to undermine broader US influence as it attempts to use military might to resolve domestic political challenges.

Exam-Oriented Notes

This editorial engages with core CSS/PMS syllabus themes in **international relations, power politics, geopolitics of resources, and regional security complexes**. It provides a case study of how **unilateral military interventions** — justified by strategic threats or economic narratives — can misjudge the **resilience of targeted states** and the influence of alternative multilateral blocs such as **BRICS**. By linking Venezuela's resistance to broader systemic shifts in global power balances, the article illustrates how **great-power competition** extends beyond rhetoric to operational outcomes and unintended consequences. It also underscores the limits of coercive strategies, the role of external economic backing, and the importance of understanding local political dynamics when interpreting foreign policy outcomes. This editorial is relevant to discussions on **hegemonic decline, resistance to unilateralism, and the geopolitics of energy resources**.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial "Trump's overplayed hand" assesses the United States' military operation against Venezuela — including the capture of President Nicolás Maduro — as indicative of **an overextension of American unilateral power** in pursuit of strategic objectives. It argues that the assumption of a power vacuum collapsing Venezuelan resistance was flawed because long-standing support from **Russia, China, and Iran** has strengthened the Bolivarian Republic's resilience. The piece situates the intervention within historical patterns of resource-driven foreign policy, suggesting that the action was as much about securing **Venezuela's oil and strategic position** as countering political ideology. It highlights regional reactions — including subdued official responses and public protests abroad — as reflective of broader unease with hegemonic military interventions. The editorial concludes that Trump's decision to use force to address **domestic and geopolitical anxieties** reflects a misjudgment that risks diminishing US credibility and influence, particularly as rising multilateral platforms like **BRICS** challenge traditional sanctions and coercive tools.

Maleeha Lodhi

A Disordered World

Thematic Overview

The editorial argues that the post- Cold War international order is unraveling due to **unilateral power politics, erosion of international norms, and weakened multilateral institutions**. It contends that powerful states increasingly prioritize strategic competition and self- interest over cooperation, legal frameworks, and collective decision- making, creating a global environment marked by volatility and weakened governance.

Strategic Summary

The piece identifies a shift away from a rules- based global order towards one dominated by **great- power rivalry and unilateral actions**. It highlights how assertive policies, especially under an “America First” approach, have accelerated this trend, undermining confidence in institutions such as the United Nations. Contemporary conflicts — including military engagements related to Gaza, Ukraine, and strikes on Iran — demonstrate that powerful states operate with limited accountability. The editorial also underscores a new phase of **strategic competition for critical resources** and intensified regional rivalries, particularly in the Middle East, which further destabilize the international system. It asserts that traditional norms and multilateral frameworks are losing relevance as power politics drive outcomes rather than shared rules.

Exam- Oriented Notes

The editorial engages with core CSS/PMS themes in **international relations and global governance**, especially the decline of the rules- based order and the rise of **realpolitik**. It illustrates how **unilateralism** and **great- power competition** challenge collective global action and weaken multilateral institutions like the United Nations. The piece’s emphasis on resource competition (e.g., rare earths and oil), geopolitical rivalry, and regional contestation has relevance for questions on **geoeconomics, strategic autonomy, balance of power, and evolving global norms**. It also provides a contemporary lens on how ideological shifts in major powers influence the stability and predictability of international relations.

Full- Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “A Disordered World” asserts that the international system is increasingly fragmented as powerful states pursue **unilateral actions and strategic competition**, undermining established norms and multilateral institutions. Policies prioritizing national self- interest, particularly under an “America First” framework, have weakened confidence in a rules- based order, enabling major powers to engage in military and strategic actions — such as conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine, and strikes on Iran — with little accountability. Multilateral institutions like the United Nations are depicted as ineffective in constraining such behaviour, largely because geopolitical

rivalries prevent coordinated responses. The editorial also highlights a new era of **resource competition** for strategic assets, including rare earth minerals and energy resources, as central to the current disorder. Additionally, regional power contests — especially in the Middle East — reflect how the retreat of traditional security guarantors has created vacuums filled by competing actors, further intensifying instability. In conclusion, the world is depicted as navigating an era of **geoeconomic confrontation and geopolitical fragmentation**, where power and self-interest increasingly determine global outcomes.

Board of contention

Thematic Overview

The editorial examines the controversy surrounding the **proposed “Board of Peace”** introduced by former US President Donald Trump as part of his second phase peace plan for Gaza. It highlights how key structural elements of the plan marginalize Palestinians — excluding them from meaningful decision-making while placing international actors in positions of governance authority. The theme centers on **legitimacy, sovereignty, and the politics of international intervention**, arguing that the board reflects externally imposed governance arrangements that lack authentic representation and risk undermining existing international institutions.

Strategic Summary

The article begins by outlining the governance framework proposed for Gaza, noting that Trump placed himself as head of an executive council composed predominantly of pro-Israel figures with no Palestinian representation. It then expands on the international **“Board of Peace”**, which was publicly pitched as a more ‘nimble’ alternative to existing global security institutions but has been widely criticised for excluding Palestinians and overstepping legal norms. The editorial details how the board’s leaked charter positions it to rival the UN Security Council while granting the US chairman sweeping authority and veto power, raising questions about legality, accountability, and long-term viability. It also discusses the weak turnout among invited countries at the board’s launch and global scepticism about its objectives and legitimacy, suggesting that the initiative serves more as political theatre for the Trump administration than a credible peace building mechanism.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial intersects with **international relations, global governance, peace processes, and legitimacy of external intervention**. It criticizes the exclusion of primary stakeholders — Palestinians — from frameworks created ostensibly for their benefit, emphasizing the importance of **representation and legitimacy** in peace governance. The discussion reinforces how externally imposed institutional constructs, especially those perceived as serving narrow geopolitical interests, struggle to gain global acceptance and can weaken established multilateral bodies like the United Nations. The piece is relevant for essays on peace building, **international law, sovereignty, and power politics** in global governance.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “Board of contention” critiques the Trump administration’s controversial Gaza peace plan, particularly its creation of a **Board of Peace** that sidelines Palestinian representation and centralizes decision-making authority in the hands of international actors led by the US. By positioning itself above existing institutions such as the UN Security Council, the proposed body raises serious questions about **legal legitimacy, accountability, and the marginalization of the people most affected by conflict**. The article highlights that the board’s charter grants sweeping powers to its chair and envisions roles beyond Gaza, further intensifying global scepticism. The lukewarm attendance at its inauguration and widespread criticism from states and rights groups indicate that many view the initiative as a geopolitical instrument rather than a genuine peace mechanism. The editorial concludes that without meaningful inclusion of Palestinians and clear legal grounding, such externally driven frameworks risk undermining **sovereignty, international norms, and the prospects for a just and sustainable peace**.

Age of strategic adjustment

Thematic Overview

The editorial “**Age of strategic adjustment**” argues that in an increasingly **multipolar, fractious global environment**, states — especially middle powers — must recalibrate their economic, diplomatic, and strategic approaches to navigate pressures from dominant powers without being coerced or marginalised. It presents systemic shifts in global trade patterns and geopolitical alignments as evidence that traditional dependency on unipolar or Western-led orders is eroding, compelling nations to diversify partnerships, expand South-South cooperation, and leverage collective agency to secure their interests.

Strategic Summary

The piece begins by referencing Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney’s remarks at Davos on the necessity for middle powers to resist coercion by powerful states and act with collective strength. It then illustrates how states are already adjusting: the European Union has diversified trade with China, and China itself has reduced reliance on the United States, boosting exports to Southeast Asia and Europe. South-South trade has grown significantly, reflecting economic realignment beyond traditional Western markets. The article also highlights geopolitical adjustments, including the rise of organization such as BRICS and increased multi-alignment strategies among emerging powers. Western alliance structures, undermined by transnational policies like those of the United States, have accelerated these shifts. The editorial concludes that such strategic adjustments are essential for states to maintain agency and influence in a world where power is increasingly diffused.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial is relevant to CSS/PMS themes of **global politics, shifting power balances, strategic autonomy, and multipolarity**. It illustrates the decline of unipolar dominance, emphasising how middle powers are pursuing **trade diversification, geopolitical re-balancing, and new regional arrangements** to protect economic and political interests. By documenting expanded South-South

cooperation, rising BRICS influence, and attenuated Western strategic cohesion, the piece reflects real-world examples of how states adjust to structural changes in the international system. It also links economic adjustments — such as diversification of trade — with broader strategic autonomy, making it pertinent to questions on **international relations theory, foreign policy adaptation, and the transforming global order.**

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “Age of strategic adjustment” argues that the world is undergoing profound structural shifts that demand re-calibration by states, particularly middle powers, to avoid being marginalized by dominant powers. It cites trade realignments — such as the European Union’s growing engagement with China and the rapid expansion of South-South trade — as evidence that global economic dependencies are shifting. These patterns indicate that countries are diversifying markets and partnerships as a strategic response to tariff wars and geopolitical pressures. On the geopolitical front, entities like BRICS and regional multilateral organization are gaining salience, highlighting emerging centers of influence. The editorial also notes that traditional Western alliances have been weakened by transnational policies, prompting states to pursue multi-alignment strategies and collective coordination. It concludes that strategic adjustment — economic diversification, diplomatic re-calibration, and collective agency — is essential for states to retain relevance and resilience in a **multipolar global order** characterized by shifting balances of power and economic influence.

The elements of power

Thematic Overview

The editorial “The elements of power” argues that global competition is increasingly shaped by control over **critical minerals and rare earths**, which have become indispensable to modern technology, defence systems, and the emerging energy economy. It emphasises that geopolitical influence in the 21st century is not determined solely by military might or economic size, but by command of the raw materials — including lithium, cobalt, and other metals — that power digital devices, batteries, electric vehicles, and industrial technologies.

Strategic Summary

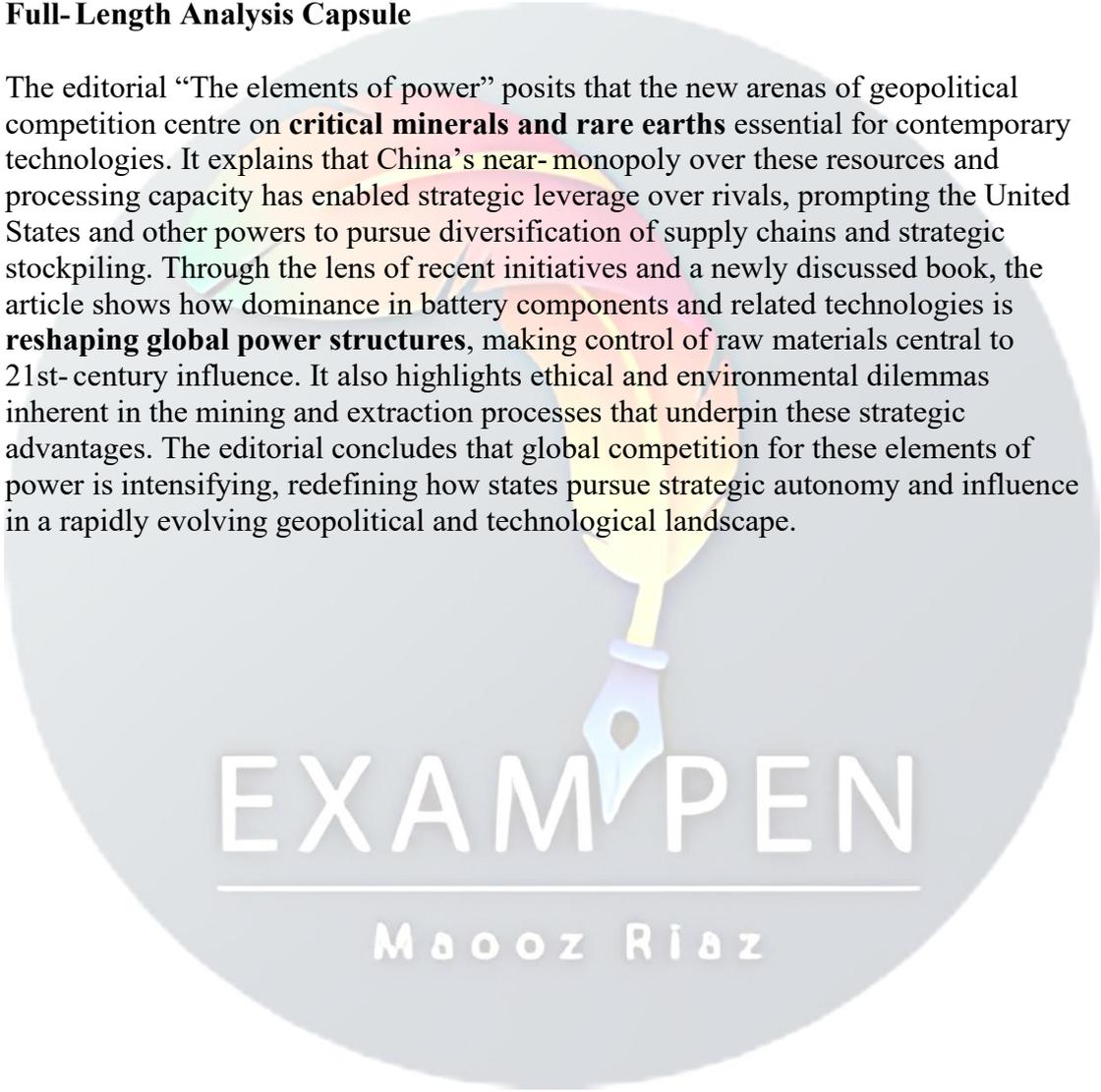
The piece begins by noting China’s dominance in the extraction and processing of rare earth minerals — a position that has driven technological leadership and strategic leverage. It contrasts this with US efforts to diversify supply chains, reduce dependence on China, and build a strategic stockpile of critical minerals. The editorial discusses how competition for these resources is intensifying among major powers, drawing in diplomatic initiatives and trade blocs aimed at securing supply and influence. It also references a new book that shows how battery technology and its supply chains have become pivotal to geopolitical competition, exposing both **strategic rivalries** and ethical dilemmas associated with resource extraction.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial is relevant to CSS/PMS themes such as **geopolitics of resources, global value chains, strategic competition, and technology diplomacy**. It highlights how control over critical minerals confers **economic leverage, technological capacity, and strategic advantage**, shaping power dynamics beyond traditional indicators like nuclear arsenal or GDP. The piece illustrates great-power competition in a resource-driven era, with supply chain resilience and diversification becoming national strategic priorities. It also links economic strategy with ethical concerns over exploitation and environmental impact, making it pertinent to discussions on sustainable development and international political economy.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “The elements of power” posits that the new arenas of geopolitical competition centre on **critical minerals and rare earths** essential for contemporary technologies. It explains that China’s near-monopoly over these resources and processing capacity has enabled strategic leverage over rivals, prompting the United States and other powers to pursue diversification of supply chains and strategic stockpiling. Through the lens of recent initiatives and a newly discussed book, the article shows how dominance in battery components and related technologies is **reshaping global power structures**, making control of raw materials central to 21st-century influence. It also highlights ethical and environmental dilemmas inherent in the mining and extraction processes that underpin these strategic advantages. The editorial concludes that global competition for these elements of power is intensifying, redefining how states pursue strategic autonomy and influence in a rapidly evolving geopolitical and technological landscape.



EXAMPEN

MAOOZ RIAZ

The Express Tribune

Pak-BD Reset

Thematic Overview

The editorial “**Pak-BD Reset**” addresses the recent *reset* in Pakistan–Bangladesh relations, marking a significant diplomatic thaw after years of stagnation. It frames the renewed bilateral engagement as a strategic opportunity to overcome historical animosities rooted in the 1971 separation and emphasises the importance of moving beyond past grievances towards practical cooperation. The piece highlights how political change in Dhaka and reciprocal political will in Islamabad have created a conducive environment for re-establishing ties, suggesting that diplomacy rooted in mutual interests can help reshape regional relationships. ([The Express Tribune](#))

Strategic Summary

The editorial begins by noting the symbolic significance of the resumption of commercial aviation links after a 14-year hiatus, reflecting improved bilateral sentiments. It attributes this shift to the political transition in Bangladesh and Islamabad’s willingness to “write a new prologue” of bilateralism. The piece argues that both countries should now focus on expanding cooperation in areas such as trade, tourism, people-to-people links, and cultural exchanges while easing visa regimes to facilitate interaction. It points to a 20 per cent increase in trade and emerging accords in technology, industry and medical science as early indicators of a more vibrant relationship. The editorial also urges both governments to address lingering political and humanitarian issues — including the legacy of abandoned Biharis — in a nuanced, composite manner to heal long-standing wounds. Finally, it proposes that deeper engagement could contribute to broader regional cooperation, including attempts to revitalise SAARC free from perceptions of hegemonic influence.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial touches on key CSS/PMS themes in **foreign policy, regional cooperation, and reconciliation frameworks**. It underscores the role of *political will and leadership change* in resetting frayed bilateral relations. The piece highlights **economic diplomacy**, noting increased trade and new MoUs as catalysts for stable engagement, and emphasizes **soft power elements** such as tourism, education, and cultural exchange in building resilience in bilateral ties. Importantly, it situates reconciliation within the context of **historical grievances and identity politics**, indicating that unresolved socio-political issues — such as the status of Biharis — must be integrated into diplomatic discourse for holistic normalization. The editorial also makes a case for **regional cooperation**, aligning bilateral rapprochement with broader South Asian institutional cooperation.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “Pak-BD Reset” documents a renewed phase in Pakistan–Bangladesh relations following years of limited engagement. It highlights that after a long suspension of aviation links — a metaphor for the diplomatic disconnect — both countries have shown willingness to move past decades of estrangement. Triggered by political changes in Dhaka and Islamabad’s reciprocal openness, this reset has manifested in expanded trade, the resumption of direct contacts, and emerging agreements in technology and medical cooperation. The editorial notes that facilitating **connectivity, visa liberalization, and people-to-people links** are essential for deepening trust and consolidating this progress. It also calls for a constructive approach to unresolved issues, such as the concerns of Bihari communities and shared historical legacies, suggesting that addressing core humanitarian and identity issues is vital for durable reconciliation. Beyond bilateral ties, it proposes that an improved Pakistan–Bangladesh relationship can contribute to **broader regional amalgamation**, including efforts to rejuvenate SAARC in a manner free from hegemonic perceptions. If sustained through practical cooperation and political sincerity, this reset could lay the foundation for stronger, forward-looking South Asian engagement.

Pakistan Must Choose Growth

Thematic Overview

The editorial argues that **2026 is a defining year for Pakistan’s economy**, presenting a pivot point where the country must transition from mere macroeconomic stabilization to **inclusive, sustained growth** that benefits households and closes the development gap with regional peers. It emphasizes that past stabilization, while necessary, has not translated into broad-based prosperity, and highlights the need to unlock structural potential in industry, agriculture, services, governance, and global integration.

Strategic Summary

The piece begins by noting that while stabilization in 2025 helped contain inflation and ease external vulnerabilities through low global commodity prices and record remittances, growth has barely kept pace with population expansion, leaving real incomes stagnant and weakening reform momentum. To shift into a growth phase, the editorial identifies four interconnected priorities: revitalizing industry and agriculture beyond low-value production; reducing the government’s inefficient footprint in key services; deepening integration with global markets; and confronting deep-rooted governance weaknesses. Specific opportunities include expanding exports in higher-value engineering goods, leveraging CPEC Phase-II for industrial upgrading, and reforming agricultural support towards high-value crops and livestock. It also advocates for private-sector-oriented reforms in telecom and power sectors and ambitious engagement with regional trade blocs to raise Pakistan’s low trade-to-GDP ratio. Effective execution of these priorities, the article argues, would require sustained macroeconomic management combined with bold structural reform.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial is highly relevant to CSS/PMS themes on **economic policy, structural reform, growth strategy, governance, and global integration**. It distinguishes between short-term stabilization and long-term growth, illustrating how macroeconomic stability alone is insufficient without structural diversification and productivity enhancement. It highlights policy areas such as industrial detoxification from low-value textiles, agricultural reform to unlock export potential, privatization and efficiency in services, and deeper participation in global trade frameworks such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Importantly, it also underscores the role of **governance deficits** and the need for effective execution mechanisms — a key theme in public administration and economic governance discourse. (

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “2026: Pakistan Must Choose Growth” assesses Pakistan’s economic trajectory, arguing that the main challenge of the year is to convert **fragile stabilization into broad-based prosperity**. It notes that while recent macroeconomic improvements — supported by low commodity prices, strong remittances, and improved investor sentiment — provide a window of opportunity, long-term growth requires structural transformation. The article prioritizes revitalizing industry and agriculture; reducing the state’s inefficient footprint in services such as telecom and energy; deepening global economic integration to overcome isolation; and confronting entrenched governance weaknesses that stifle reform and investment. It highlights opportunities in higher-value manufacturing, export-orientation, and participation in regional trade frameworks, while calling for governance reforms as identified by the IMF’s diagnostic assessment. The editorial concludes that if Pakistan pursues sound macroeconomic management together with bold, targeted reforms — unlocking potential in farms, factories, services, and global linkages — then 2026 can mark a **turning point towards inclusive prosperity** rather than a year of cautious optimism.

Unemployment woes

Thematic Overview

The editorial argues that Pakistan’s long-touted demographic advantage in the form of a “**youth bulge**” is at risk of becoming a socioeconomic **liability rather than a dividend** unless urgent and sustained job creation addresses chronic unemployment. It highlights that the mismatch between a rapidly expanding labour force and insufficient employment opportunities threatens economic stability, social peace, and human capital retention, challenging prevailing optimism about demographic benefits. ([The Express Tribune](#))

Strategic Summary

The piece begins by invoking the warning of a leading international development figure that Pakistan must create **25–30 million jobs over the next decade** to avoid rising unrest and emigration. It notes that millions of young Pakistanis are entering the working age in an economy that has struggled with macroeconomic instability, policy uncertainty, and stunted expansion. Evidence of professional brain drain — such as nearly 4,000 doctors leaving the country in a single year — illustrates the depth of the

problem. The editorial observes that Pakistan’s current IMF stabilization programme and a forthcoming World Bank partnership framework recognize private sector primacy in job creation, but also acknowledge limited fiscal space. It stresses that without a thriving private economy and targeted focus on **labour-intensive sectors** such as infrastructure, healthcare, tourism, and agriculture, the scale of job creation required is simply unattainable. The article warns that failure to act will deepen inequality, accelerate emigration, and erode Pakistan’s human capital base.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial is relevant to CSS/PMS topics on **demographic economics, employment policy, human capital, and economic governance**. It poignantly addresses the concept of the **demographic dividend** — where a large working-age population boosts growth — and explains how this potential can be lost without sufficient employment opportunities. The piece emphasizes the need for **private sector-led job creation** in labour-intensive sectors and underscores how **policy uncertainty and macroeconomic stagnation** inhibit expansion in employment. It also refers to international development frameworks and macroeconomic programmes interacting with domestic labour market realities, making it pertinent to discussions on **economic reform, social stability, labour markets, and migration pressures**.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “Unemployment woes” highlights how Pakistan’s demographic advantage — its large youth population — is turning into a source of socioeconomic risk due to insufficient job creation. Citing an authoritative warning that the country must generate **25–30 million jobs over the next decade** to stave off unrest and outward migration, the piece notes that a stagnant economy beset by policy uncertainty and macroeconomic pressures is failing to absorb a growing workforce. The editorial points to the high outflow of skilled professionals as evidence that even well-educated individuals find few incentives to remain. It recognizes that Pakistan’s IMF stabilization programme and a forthcoming multi-year World Bank financing framework underscore the limited fiscal space and identify the private sector as the principal job engine. The article emphasizes that without a thriving private economy and targeted policy support for labour-intensive sectors like infrastructure, healthcare, tourism, and agriculture, the ambitious job targets cannot be met. It concludes that failure to create adequate employment opportunities will deepen inequality, drive emigration, and dissipate human capital critical for Pakistan’s development trajectory.

Navigating 2026

Thematic Overview

The editorial “Navigating 2026” places Pakistan at a **critical crossroads** as the country enters 2026, underscoring that economic and structural challenges intersect at a moment of fragile stabilisation. It argues that while there are promising signs of recovery, longstanding structural deficits in governance, economic fundamentals and productive capacity risk undermining progress unless addressed with strategic clarity.

The piece frames the year not as one of certainty but as a **navigational test** requiring balanced policy choices to sustain stability and unlock growth potential.

Strategic Summary

The article begins by acknowledging the modest economic stability achieved in recent months, with growth projected at around **3.2 per cent** for the current fiscal year, though this remains largely dependent on **external financing and assistance** rather than robust domestic expansion. It notes that Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves, while present, are not supported by a strong export base, leaving the economy vulnerable. Deep-seated structural issues identified by the IMF and local economists — including weak industrial competitiveness, high reliance on public sector basket cases, and inefficient governance — continue to threaten the stability achieved. The editorial suggests that navigating 2026 successfully will depend on **strengthening domestic economic drivers, reducing structural vulnerabilities, and maintaining disciplined policy continuity** amid global and internal uncertainties.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial intersects with key CSS/PMS themes in **economic governance, structural reform, macroeconomic stability, and policy prioritization**. It highlights the concept that stabilization **must be converted into sustainable growth**, not merely accepted as an end in itself. The piece emphasizes Pakistan's dependence on loans and foreign assistance as a structural weakness, illustrating the importance of **building domestic financial resilience and export competitiveness**. It also refers to IMF-identified structural bottlenecks, making the article relevant to discussions on **reform implementation, governance accountability, and economic diversification strategies** for developing economies.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial "Navigating 2026" assesses Pakistan's economic and policy trajectory as the country enters a year marked by **fragile stabilization and structural challenge**. It recognizes that recent economic stability and projected growth of approximately 3.2 per cent provide a modest foundation, but notes that this stability is still heavily reliant on foreign loans and assistance rather than a robust domestic economic turnaround. The article highlights that foreign exchange reserves and growth optimism offer a basis for progress, but that **persistent structural deficits identified by the IMF and local experts — including weak export performance, inefficient state-owned enterprises, and slow industrial dynamism — continue to threaten economic resilience**. It suggests that navigating the year successfully will require not only sustaining macroeconomic stability but also addressing these foundational weaknesses through **strengthened governance, policy coherence, and enhancement of domestic productive capacity**. Failure to address structural constraints, the editorial warns, could erode fragile gains and undermine the country's ability to leverage 2026 as a year of sustainable progress.

Indo-US reset

Thematic Overview

The editorial “**Indo-US reset**” discusses a recent strategic agreement between India and the United States, interpreted by commentators as a **reset in bilateral relations** amid evolving geopolitical priorities. It highlights the emphasis on trade, energy security, critical minerals and broader strategic cooperation, while also drawing attention to the **ambiguities and domestic political concerns** surrounding the pact in India. The piece situates this development within the context of larger realpolitik considerations in South Asia, especially as Washington recalibrates its engagement with New Delhi in light of shifting global power dynamics.

Strategic Summary

The editorial notes that India and the US have concluded an agreement aimed at unlocking new economic and energy opportunities, covering areas such as critical minerals, energy security, QUAD cooperation, and nuclear issues. Both sides have maintained considerable secrecy about the deal’s specifics, prompting domestic pushback in India, where critics demand detailed scrutiny in Parliament. Reports suggest that India may be purchasing oil from the Atlantic, potentially straining longstanding energy ties with Russia. The outline indicates that the US has moderated its tariff stance on India — reducing potential tariffs from earlier threats — while India has agreed to lower barriers for a range of American goods, fostering expanded market access for US exports. Despite these moves, key Indian sectors like rice, sugar and dairy remain protected, reflecting **political sensitivities** in trade negotiations. A statement from Moscow denying knowledge of India’s oil plans adds further uncertainty. The editorial frames this package as a **reset of relations**, with implications for New Delhi’s strategic position vis-à-vis Washington, Beijing, and traditional energy partners.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial intersects with CSS/PMS themes on **international relations, trade diplomacy, balance-of-power dynamics, and strategic alignment**. It illustrates how major powers engage in transnational diplomacy that blends economic cooperation with broader geopolitical signaling. The piece highlights how **trade deals are often accompanied by strategic calculus**, influencing energy dependencies, tariff policies, and geopolitical affiliations. The hesitancy to disclose details reflects **domestic political accountability** issues within India, illuminating how international agreements can become subjects of internal debate. The editorial also points to **realpolitik considerations** — especially potential divergence from Russia — underscoring how shifting global alignments impact traditional partnerships. This makes it relevant for questions on **shifting global orders, alliance dynamics, and economic diplomacy**.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial “Indo-US reset” examines a recently announced strategic agreement between India and the United States, seen by observers as signaling a **reset in**

bilateral relations against the backdrop of shifting global geopolitics. The deal covers cooperation on critical minerals, energy security, QUAD initiatives and nuclear issues, but both governments have been reticent about disclosing concrete details, generating **domestic political critique in India**. Critics have demanded greater transparency, particularly concerning reports that India might shift energy sourcing towards the Atlantic at the expense of its long-standing relationship with Russia. Broadly, the outlines suggest a loosening of trade barriers for American goods in the Indian market while India maintains protections in key agrarian sectors. A statement from Moscow denying awareness of Indian plans to redirect oil imports adds complexity and diplomatic uncertainty. The editorial positions this agreement as a **reset of India-US relations**, reflecting Washington's evolving engagement in Asia and New Delhi's strategic recalibration amid economic and geopolitical incentives. Whether this reset endures and translates into meaningful structural cooperation remains unclear, given political sensitivities and the broader strategic environment.

US-Iran tension

Thematic Overview

The editorial examines the **escalating tensions between the United States and Iran**, cautioning that the combination of military build-ups, naval exercises, and geopolitical posturing in the Persian Gulf threatens to overshadow emerging diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the nuclear dispute. It situates the crisis within the broader theme of **military brinkmanship versus the imperative of diplomacy**, highlighting how regional instability and competing strategic interests could precipitate a confrontation with far-reaching consequences.

Strategic Summary

The piece begins by noting that while the United States has amassed aircraft carriers, including the USS Abraham Lincoln, in the Arabian waters as a show of force, Iran has responded with large-scale naval drills in the **Strait of Hormuz**, a strategic chokepoint for global energy flows. These manoeuvres, coupled with reports of **military reinforcement from Moscow to Tehran**, risk a direct military duel between Washington and Tehran. The editorial underscores the paradox that such preparations for conflict are unfolding even as both sides agree — at least in principle — to engage in **nuclear talks**, with Iran's foreign minister publicly stating that missiles and defence systems will not be on the negotiation table. President Donald Trump's mixture of threats and diplomacy, recalling previous strikes such as **Operation Midnight Hammer**, presents a "carrot and stick" approach that could either push Iran to the negotiating table or escalate hostilities further. At the same time, domestic unrest in Iran and broad regional apprehensions, including Saudi Arabia's refusal to allow its airspace to be used in a strike, underline the **complex interplay of military threat and diplomatic signalling** that currently defines the situation.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial intersects with CSS/PMS themes of **international security, diplomacy versus deterrence, balance of power, and regional geopolitics**. It illustrates how **strategic posturing** — naval deployments and wargames — can undermine

diplomatic efforts, reflecting realist notions of conflict dynamics in an anarchic system. The article also touches on the role of **third-party states** such as Turkiye in facilitating talks, and the influence of external actors (e.g., Moscow's support to Tehran) in altering perceived balances. Its reference to energy security, particularly the **Strait of Hormuz**, connects military tensions with economic vulnerabilities in the global order. These points are relevant for exam questions on **crisis diplomacy, nuclear negotiations, regional security architectures**, and the **limitation of coercive pressure in achieving negotiated settlements**.

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial "US-Iran tension" presents a sober assessment of the mounting geopolitical confrontation between Washington and Tehran, warning that aggressive military posturing — from U.S. aircraft carriers in the Arabian Gulf to Iranian live-fire exercises in the **Strait of Hormuz** — risks overtaking nascent diplomatic efforts to resolve the nuclear impasse. The piece highlights that both sides are engaged in a dual strategy: sustaining a show of force while publicly maintaining that **nuclear negotiations**, potentially with Turkiye's involvement, remain on the agenda. Tehran's firm stance that missiles and defence capabilities are non-negotiable and Washington's warnings of decisive consequences if diplomacy fails encapsulate an environment where **coercive signals and dialogue coexist uneasily**. The editorial also notes that Iran's fragile economy and internal unrest add pressure to the regime, which might influence its strategic decisions. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's refusal to allow airspace use against Iran points to regional actors' desire to avoid a wider conflagration. The article concludes that although there are **signs of diplomatic thaw**, the prevailing tension and military build-up threaten to derail negotiations, underscoring the fragile balance between war and peace in one of the world's most volatile strategic theaters.

Taliban 2.0's dilemma

Thematic Overview

The editorial argues that **Taliban 2.0's rule in Afghanistan has deteriorated into a governance crisis**, marked by internal factionalism, policy incoherence, and growing alienation from neighbouring states. It frames the Afghan regime's failure as rooted not only in ideological rigidity but also in **deep political divisions and strategic miscalculations**, which undermine both domestic stability and regional security. The piece places these developments in the context of commitments made under international agreements such as the Doha Accords, suggesting that the regime's inability or unwillingness to honour these pledges has eroded its legitimacy and effectiveness.

Strategic Summary

The editorial begins by noting the **internal fissures within the Taliban leadership**, particularly between figures aligned with the Haqqani network and other religious-military factions, which have weakened governance and intensified power struggles. These divisions have contributed to a breakdown of effective statecraft and have

exacerbated ethnic and tribal tensions, deepening Afghanistan's social fragmentation. The article criticises the regime's hardline domestic policies and authoritarian governance, which have alienated significant segments of the Afghan population and eroded popular legitimacy. It also highlights the regime's **diplomatic missteps**, including strained relations with traditional neighbours like Pakistan and unilateral outreach to India, suggesting that such foreign policy behaviour has bred regional distrust and diminished Afghanistan's role as a cooperative partner. The piece calls for a return to the pledges made under the 2020 Doha agreement, including forming a more **inclusive government and combating terror groups**, but notes that the presence of outlawed organisations such as the TTP, Al Qaeda and ISIK remains a serious indictment of the Taliban's governance.

Exam-Oriented Notes

The editorial is relevant to **CSS/PMS themes of state failure, governance legitimacy, regional security, and counter-terrorism**. It illustrates how **intra-elite factionalism** can undermine a regime's capacity to govern and maintain social cohesion. The piece also underscores the importance of honoring **international commitments** (e.g., Doha pledges) for credibility and cooperation. The editorial highlights how the Taliban's selective engagement with neighbour and reluctance to address terrorism concerns — particularly the continued safe haven for groups hostile to Pakistan and others — affects regional stability and bilateral relations. The discussion aligns with topics on non-state actors, insurgency management, and the nexus between domestic governance and foreign policy outcomes. (

Full-Length Analysis Capsule

The editorial "Taliban 2.0's dilemma" argues that the Afghan Taliban's second incarnation has failed to deliver effective governance, with internal factional rivalries and doctrinal inflexibility weakening state institutions and undermining public confidence. Deep divisions between powerful factions, including Haqqani affiliates and other Kandahar-based leaders, have fragmented political authority and heightened tribal and ethnic tensions, eroding any cohesive national vision. This internal paralysis has been compounded by high-impact missteps in foreign relations, such as damaging ties with Pakistan and unilateral outreach to India, which have generated regional distrust. The regime's authoritarianism and hard line domestic policies have further alienated a broad spectrum of Afghan society. The editorial stresses that reversing this governance crisis requires a return to the **Doha Accord commitments**, including the formation of an **inclusive government** that represents diverse constituencies and a decisive crackdown on **terrorist organizations** operating within Afghan territory. The presence of groups like the TTP, Al Qaeda, and ISIK is highlighted as symptomatic of Kabul's inability to uphold security obligations, undermining both internal stability and regional security. Unless the Taliban leadership realigns its domestic and foreign policy priorities toward inclusive and counter-terrorism, the editorial warns that Afghanistan will remain mired in dysfunction, with negative implications for peace and cooperation in South and Central Asia

Overall Monthly Analysis – January 2026

January 2026 reflects a month of **critical junctures and strategic re-calibrations**, both for Pakistan and the broader international system. Domestically, the discourse has revolved around the **limitations of economic stabilization, the urgency of structural reforms, and the challenge of translating macroeconomic gains into inclusive growth**. Recurring themes such as unemployment, population pressures, governance deficits, and institutional inefficiency highlight that while stabilization provides temporary respite, sustainable development requires **policy coherence, private-sector engagement, and effective human capital utilization**. Editorials also underscored the importance of capitalizing on demographic advantages and the need for proactive policy to convert youth bulges into productive potential rather than socioeconomic liabilities.

At the regional and global level, editorials reflected a **complex and transnational world order**, with shifts such as the **Indo-US reset, Pakistan-Bangladesh rapprochement, and evolving South Asian alignments** juxtaposed against flashpoint like **US-Iran tensions and Taliban governance challenges**. These developments illustrate how states are re-calibrating strategies to protect national interests while navigating multipolar pressures, highlighting the interplay between **economic diplomacy, strategic realignments, and regional security dynamics**.

A cross-cutting insight from the month is that **governance remains the decisive variable**. Whether addressing domestic economic reform, foreign policy, or regional stability, outcomes are shaped less by external constraints and more by political will, institutional efficacy, and strategic clarity. For CSS and PMS aspirants, January 2026 provides a rich analytical framework linking domestic governance, economic policy, and foreign relations, emphasizing that **Pakistan's challenges are not inevitable but contingent, and that sustained reforms, strategic foresight, and inclusive policy-making are essential for shaping a resilient and prosperous trajectory**.

In conclusion, January 2026 demonstrates that Pakistan's trajectory is shaped as much by **policy decisions, institutional strength, and governance quality** as by external factors. While domestic challenges such as unemployment, weak institutions, and population pressures demand urgent reform, regional and global developments — including strategic realignments, emerging multipolar dynamics, and evolving security threats — require a **proactive, coherent foreign policy**. Success in this period will depend on Pakistan's ability to translate **short-term stabilization into long-term structural resilience**, leveraging demographic potential, economic reforms, and regional engagement to achieve inclusive growth, social stability, and strategic influence. The month underscores that **sustainable progress is contingent, not inevitable**, and that deliberate, forward-looking strategies are essential to secure both national development and regional standing in an increasingly complex world.

Message from Exampen.co

Brain Bank Journal – Fourth Edition

It is a matter of great pride and satisfaction to present the **Fourth Edition of the Brain Bank Journal**, a carefully curated compilation of the most relevant and high-impact current affairs for **CSS, PMS, and other competitive examination aspirants**.

In an era marked by information overload and rapidly evolving global dynamics, aspirants require more than scattered news—they need **reliable, structured, and exam-focused analysis**. This journal has been designed to meet that very need by distilling complex developments into coherent, exam-relevant insights.

The Fourth Edition focuses on **key political, economic, social, and international developments of November**, selected and analyzed strictly in light of **FPSC and PPSC exam patterns, recurring themes, and contemporary analytical demands**. Each topic has been framed to enhance conceptual clarity, critical thinking, and effective answer presentation—skills that are indispensable for success in competitive examinations.

We encourage readers to use this journal not merely as a reading resource, but as a **strategic tool for revision, opinion-building, and analytical refinement**. Remember, success in competitive exams depends not only on the volume of information acquired, but on **depth of understanding, clarity of expression, and the ability to connect issues logically and critically**.

We hope this Fourth Edition becomes a valuable companion in your preparation journey and contributes meaningfully to your intellectual growth. May your perseverance, discipline, and focused effort bring you ever closer to your aspirations.

Wishing you clarity in thought and excellence in performance.

Maooz Riaz