



CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

Emerging Geopolitical Alliances and Implications for Pakistan

Analysis Report



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INTRODUCTION

The year 2025 has dramatically reshaped global and regional geopolitics through a series of crises: the India–Pakistan war, the Israel–Iran confrontation, and renewed instability on the Pakistan–Afghanistan border. These events have exposed deep fractures in the international order, most notably the sharp deterioration in India–United States relations due to trade disputes, India’s ties with Russia, and differing assessments of the recent Indo-Pak conflict. This rift has created limited but significant diplomatic openings for Pakistan to re-engage Washington, while deepening partnerships with China and key regional players such as Saudi Arabia.

At the same time, the Israel–Iran war and persistent cross-border challenges with Afghanistan have complicated Pakistan’s security environment, forcing Islamabad to navigate intersecting great-power rivalries and regional fault lines with greater agility.

In this fluid landscape, emerging geopolitical alliances present both risks of entanglement and opportunities for strategic repositioning. The Catalyst Conversation, ‘Emerging Geopolitical Alliances and Implications for Pakistan,’ brought together practitioners to examine these shifting alignments, assess their impact on Pakistan’s security and foreign policy, and identify balanced, forward-looking strategies to safeguard national interests in an era of uncertainty and renewed possibilities.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In his brief *Opening Remarks*, **Air Marshal (Retd) Zahid Mehmood**, Senior Director CASS, provided the strategic context, highlighting 2025 as a watershed year marked by the India–Pakistan war, the Israel–Iran confrontation, and renewed Pakistan–Afghanistan border instability. He underscored the unprecedented strain in Indo-US relations caused by US tariffs, India-Russia energy ties, and differing perceptions of the recent Indo-Pak conflict. This has created limited but valuable diplomatic space for Pakistan to re-engage Washington while deepening ties with China and Saudi Arabia.

In his keynote address, **Ambassador (Retd) Abdul Basit**, began with broad observations on the contemporary international order as a “loose bipolar” world dominated by US–China competition. He mentioned that, no single power achieves all its foreign policy objectives without strategic patience and tactical flexibility. He strongly cautioned against excessive public rhetoric, describing it as anathema to effective diplomacy, and stressed that credible foreign policy rests inescapably on strong governance at home.

Reviewing Pakistan’s traditional foreign policy objectives—regional peace, balanced relations with major powers, special ties with the Muslim world, and socio-economic advancement—the Ambassador offered an insightful assessment of recent performance. He noted that relations with neighbours remain severely strained: the Jammu & Kashmir dispute continues to preclude any meaningful normalisation with India; ties with the Taliban regime have significantly worsened due to diplomatic missteps following August 2021; and recent signals from Beijing have been notably disconcerting. While appreciating the symbolic importance of the Pakistan–Saudi Strategic Defence Mutual Agreement and its role in helping Pakistan regain lost ground in the Gulf, he cautioned against exaggerating its practical deterrent effect. Ambassador Basit strongly advised against any transactional over-engagement with the Trump administration that might undermine relations with China, emphasising that the all-weather strategic partnership with Beijing remains the *sine qua non* of Pakistan’s regional influence and security.



Ambassador Basit observed that India has adeptly capitalised on Pakistan's estrangement from the Taliban, and urged Islamabad to abandon public confrontation in favour of quiet, direct engagement or the reactivation of the Pakistan–China–Afghanistan trilateral mechanism. On Jammu & Kashmir, he cautioned that India's systematic demographic engineering and the irreversible entrenchment of post-Article 370 constitutional changes have rendered a just settlement significantly more challenging. He further noted that Pakistan's historical over-reliance on largely ineffective multilateral platforms has proven counterproductive and advocated a decisive shift toward cultivating deep, substantive bilateral relationships as the cornerstone of future diplomatic success.

In his vote of thanks, President CASS ***Air Marshal (Retd) Javaid Ahmad***, expressed deep appreciation for Ambassador Basit's insightful contribution, noting that it would substantially enrich CASS's annual strategic foresight studies. He observed that Pakistan's 2025 foreign-policy report card revealed persistently low marks across all core objectives and emphasised the urgent need for closer coordination among diplomatic, military and political leadership.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Speaker: Ambassador (Retd) Abdul Basit

- The world is in a “loose bipolar” era dominated by US–China rivalry; no power, including the US, achieves all its foreign policy goals. Diplomacy demands strategic patience, tactical flexibility, and avoidance of excessive public rhetoric.
- Good governance at home is the absolute prerequisite for credible foreign policy; without it, diplomatic success remains elusive.
- Pak-Afghan relations have been badly damaged by post-2021 missteps; India has skilfully exploited the vacuum. Islamabad should drop public confrontation and revive quiet, direct or China-mediated trilateral engagement with the Taliban.
- China remains the bedrock of Pakistan’s strategic strength; recent signals from Beijing are worrying. Any transactional outreach to the Trump administration must not come at the cost of the all-weather partnership.
- Pak–Saudi Strategic Defence Agreement is symbolically valuable and helps regain the Gulf space lost to India, but it is not a real deterrent. Pakistan must prioritise substantive bilateral relationships over ineffective multilateralism and focus on clarity, finesse, and long-term objectives.



CONCLUSION

The catalyst conversation concluded on an insightful note, offering a clear-eyed assessment of the transformed geopolitical landscape of 2025 and its profound implications for Pakistan's national security and foreign policy. The discussions highlighted the unprecedented strains in Indo-US ties, India's diplomatic gains in Afghanistan, emerging concerns in relations with China, and the symbolic significance of the recent Pakistan-Saudi defence agreement, while underscoring the persistent centrality of the Jammu & Kashmir dispute. Participants stressed that Pakistan's ability to capitalise on fleeting opportunities while preserving core interests will depend on disciplined diplomacy, reduced public rhetoric, tactical agility, and, above all, strengthened governance and institutional coherence at home. The event provided actionable perspectives that will meaningfully contribute to ongoing policy discourse and CASS's strategic foresight initiatives as Pakistan navigates this complex era of uncertainty and renewed geopolitical possibilities.

ABOUT CASS

Established in 2018, the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS) in Islamabad is a non-partisan think tank offering future-centric analysis on aerospace and security issues. CASS engages with thought leaders and informs the public through evidence-based research, aiming to influence discussions and policies at the national, regional, and global level, especially concerning airpower, emerging technologies, traditional and non-traditional security.

VISION

To serve as a thought leader in the aerospace and security domains globally, providing thinkers and policymakers with independent, comprehensive and multifaceted insight on aerospace and security issues.

MISSION

To provide independent insight and analysis on aerospace and international security issues, of both an immediate and long-term concern; and to inform the discourse of policymakers, academics, and practitioners through a diverse range of detailed research outputs disseminated through both direct and indirect engagement on a regular basis.

CORE AREAS OF RESEARCH

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