**A new vision of peace in South Asia**

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May 08, 2021

In the context of a fast-changing regional scenario and new moves in the global power game, Pakistan has projected a new vision of peace in South Asia which promises to usher in a new era of harmonious relations among neighbouring states. The ‘Islamabad Security Dialogue’ (ISD) recently held in the Federal Capital successfully projected Pakistan’s “new strategic direction based on a comprehensive security framework” encompassing regional connectivity and development partnerships across the region. The conclave was important for charting a new path for the realisation of Pakistan’s regional and global aspirations for peace and development.

It is clear that Pakistan, rejecting the ossified policies of the past, has moved on from the old notion of ‘national security’ based on conventional and nuclear firepower, and embraced a more comprehensive—and modern—idea of security comprising economic progress, technological advancement, regional connectivity, knowledge sharing and political stability. Army Chief Qamar Jawed Bajwa articulated the new concept of national security in these words “The contemporary concept of national security is not only about protecting a country from internal and external threats but also providing a conducive environment in which aspirations of human security, national progress and development could be realised.”

[Gaza death toll from Israeli attacks hits 227, including 64 children](https://nation.com.pk/20-May-2021/gaza-death-toll-from-israeli-attacks-hits-227-including-64-children)

It is now universally acknowledged that national security is no longer an exclusive domain of the armed forces. National security in the age of globalisation, information explosion and connectivity is premised on a nuanced interplay of a variety of internal and external factors, including internal peace, stability and developmental orientation as well as global and regional environments.

It is important to note here that the Islamabad moot raised Pakistan’s national security discourse to a new level which is in line with the demands of the twenty-first century. The new security narrative, which is inclusive in its scope and thrust, is aimed at ensuring lasting peace within and outside, non-interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries and promoting intra-regional trade and connectivity for the benefit of all.

In the context of the game changing CPEC, the element of economic connectivity in the region is pivotal to Pakistan’s new security doctrine. CPEC is the core of Pakistan’s economic growth plans, and it is now looking to connect the project to Central and Western Asia as an energy and trade corridor connecting the entire region. The expansion of CPEC to the West will also energise the Afghan-Pakistan transit trade, besides opening new windows of opportunity further West.

[KP reports 28 death, 186 newly infected cases of COVID-19](https://nation.com.pk/19-May-2021/kp-reports-28-death-186-newly-infected-cases-of-covid-19)

Experts agree that Pakistan’s new security doctrine, based on the notion of a comprehensive regional economic growth strategy, will go a long way in changing its image in the outside world—from that of a terror stricken country to one planning to transform itself into a hub of economic activities and an engine of growth for the whole region.

Unfurled at a crucial juncture, Pakistan’s new security doctrine should persuade the big powers, especially the US, to realign their perspectives with regard to the issues of peace and security in South Asia and surrounding regions. The aggressive Hindu nationalist BJP government, which has been trying to push on with its expansionist designs in the region with the illegal annexation of occupied Kashmir, first suffered a serious setback at the hands of China in Ladakh and then was rebuffed by Nepal when it encroached upon the latter’s border territory. India’s relations with Sri Lanka too are going through a rocky phase. It is also no secret that New Delhi has left no stone unturned to keep the pot boiling in Afghanistan.

[PSL 6 likely to be postponed indefinitely](https://nation.com.pk/19-May-2021/psl-6-likely-to-be-postponed-indefinitely)

In sharp contrast to this, Pakistan has chosen the path of peace, reconciliation and good neighbourliness as evidenced by its positive role in furthering the peace process in Afghanistan and reaching out to Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in a bid to make South Asia a zone of stability and prosperity for all. Over the last two years, the prime minister of Pakistan has several times offered a hand of friendship to India. Pakistan is all for turning SAARC into a vehicle for regional cooperation for growth, but New Delhi has remained unresponsive.

Islamabad wants to be no part of the US-China rivalry for global supremacy. While maintaining and building its good neighbourly ties with China, it has constantly strived to nurture a working relationship with Washington. On the other hand, New Delhi has become a close ally of America in support of its China-containment policy. To this end, India has joined the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD, also known as the Quad) which includes Australia, Japan and the United States. Pushing its global agenda, India has portrayed itself as a counterweight to China in the region.

[Russia voices concern over civilian casualties in Jerusalem, Gaza](https://nation.com.pk/19-May-2021/russia-voices-concern-over-civilian-casualties-in-jerusalem-gaza)

By adopting a new security paradigm, Pakistan has broadcast its message to the world loud and clear that it wishes to be no part of the New Cold War heating up in the Indo-Pacific region. CPEC is a game changer for Pakistan which wants to pursue its plans of economic transformation in peace. As articulated time and again by its leadership, Pakistan is also in favour of widening the scope of CPEC to include neighbouring countries. Such a development will be a win-win situation for all and usher in a new era of peace and cooperative development for all regional states.