

Asim Munir's Hardline Policy: Enabling Other States to Achieve Greatness

(Translated)

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Pakistan and Afghanistan are once again teetering on the brink of all-out war, undermining the ceasefire heavily promoted by China. Pakistan has long accused Afghanistan of harboring the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and elements linked to Pakistani intelligence that carry out attacks within its territory—a claim the Taliban government vehemently denies. Conversely, Kabul has accused Islamabad of launching unjustified military operations that kill Afghan civilians, while Pakistan maintains in its defense that it targets only militants.

However, the stakes extend beyond mere border skirmishes; under US oversight, Islamabad seeks to position itself as a cornerstone of a new regional security architecture linked to Iran, Egypt, Türkiye, and the Gulf States, alongside broader connectivity across Eurasia. Such ambitions require credibility, stable borders, and reliable regional relations—not a deteriorating western front. The recent escalation raises a fundamental question: Has Pakistan lost the ability to manage its neighborhood politically, leaving coercion, mistrust, and geopolitical rivalry to dictate the course of events?

Much of this deterioration has occurred during General Asim Munir's tenure. Since succeeding Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa in November 2022, Munir has adopted an increasingly security-first approach toward Afghanistan. Measures such as the mass deportation of Afghan refugees, tightened border controls along the 2,670-kilometer Durand Line, and repeated military operations against the infrastructure of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) reflect a preference for coercive solutions over political diplomacy.

Munir's security-centric approach is not limited to Pakistan's western neighbor. In May 2025, Pakistan engaged in a conflict with India following unprovoked attacks within its territory; it managed to achieve air superiority over its traditional adversary, prompting India to seek a ceasefire through U.S. mediation. This implicit victory encouraged Trump to assign Munir a greater role in transforming America's failed war against Iran into a political success—facilitated by a new regional security and economic framework that would allow the U.S. to retain its influence in the Middle East.

Pakistan has applied this same security logic domestically as well, with security crackdowns intensifying in Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and—more recently—in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. While these challenges did not originate under the current military leadership, Pakistan's increasingly violent response to genuine dissent has exacerbated existing grievances rather than addressing them.

Pakistan's use of violence to suppress domestic opponents does not signify a strengthening of its power under Munir; instead, it indicates that the state's legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens has reached an all-time low. These same attitudes now

prevail across the border in Kabul, where Afghanistan—once considered Pakistan’s “strategic depth”—has turned against it with a spirit of vengeance.

These developments have not gone unnoticed by Pakistan’s adversaries and allies alike. In its pursuit of an “Akhund Bharat (Greater India),” India has intensified its ties with Afghanistan. It seeks not only to deepen rifts between Kabul and Islamabad but also aims to use Afghan territory to undermine Pakistan’s control over Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. India views Pakistan as a renegade territory that must be severely weakened and reintegrated into “Mother India.” Another party seeking to dismantle Pakistan is the Jewish entity, which views Pakistan as a major threat to its regional ambitions in the Middle East; both it and India share the concern that Pakistan’s strength poses an existential threat to them.

As for Russia, it has officially recognized the Taliban government in Afghanistan and recently signed a military partnership with it. It seeks to keep armed Islamist groups away from its southern borders to safeguard its hegemony over Central Asian states and to restore a form of “Greater Russia” stretching from Central Asia to eastern Ukraine. Russia also strongly opposes Munir’s efforts to establish a new security architecture in the Middle East that would reinforce continued American hegemony.

Washington publicly supports Munir’s efforts to craft a peace settlement that would grant Trump a political victory over Iran, and it has condemned cross-border attacks launched from Afghanistan against Pakistani security forces. However, the political relationship between Washington and Munir is based on short-term interests; its long-term objective is to ensure that Pakistan remains a useful regional partner without posing a threat to “Greater India” or the ambitions of the Jewish entity. When the opportune moment arrives, the United States might sacrifice a weakened Pakistan to bolster India in countering China and to safeguard its own interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

China is arguably the only major power with a genuine strategic interest in the long-term security and survival of the Pakistani state. Pakistan’s stability and capability are essential for safeguarding the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) — particularly the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the initiative’s flagship project. Beyond economics, China views Pakistan as a crucial bulwark against the spread of extremism from Afghanistan into the East Turkestan region, as well as a strategic counterweight to India’s growing influence. Consequently, China’s support for Pakistan is not rooted in sentiment or the strength of bilateral ties, but instead in pragmatic power-balance calculations driven by its long-term geopolitical interests.

Munir may believe that his security-centric approach—both domestic and foreign—lays the foundation for his own enduring greatness. Yet, reality suggests that his hardline stance has merely paved the way for other states to achieve greatness at Pakistan’s expense. He would have been better served by adopting the approach of the Seljuks, Ghaznavids, and Mughals—and the Afghan rulers who followed them—by skillfully managing domestic affairs while keeping foreign powers at bay, thereby ensuring the greatness of Islam in the region.