

# **The Five Dangers of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in Pakistan**

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The implementation of the capitalist economic system has brought the economy of Pakistan to a grinding halt. These economic policies have increased the misery of Ummah in Pakistan. The consequences have spared no one, be it the middle and upper-middle income class in the society. The worsening debt trap and interest payments have crippled Pakistan's industries, forcing the visionless governments to impose back breaking taxation. Thus, Pakistan's economy is geared to pay external and domestic debt, leaving little space to fund the military and non-military expenditures like health, education and poverty alleviation. The debt-to-GDP ratio stands at a colossal 72%.

The shrinking of economic resources forced a rethink within the government sector in Pakistan, about reallocation of the budget, and redefining key priorities. This rethink started in Bajwa-Imran regime and continues under the Asim-Sharif regime. Under American guidance, Pakistan's new National Security Policy (NSP) prioritized economic security over military security. Under this new doctrine, Pakistan expressed its intention to abandon its geostrategic ambitions and limit itself to the geo-economic sphere. The policy prioritizes foreign direct investments, foreign remittances and increasing exports to earn dollars, to avoid twin-deficit crisis and prevent potential default.

Since the inception of NSP, the military has been in the driving seat to steer 'economic stabilization'. It is moving away from the core military objective of Jihad in the Path of Allah (swt). Although the military leadership did operate its own economic empire ranging from real-estate sector to agriculture in past, the new National Security Policy (NSP) expanded its mandate to include entire spectrum of economic activity.

Historically, there is little difference between political and military leaderships with regards to broader economy policy. Apart from some domestic disagreement over relocation of financial resources, the broader outline of economic policy remains the same in both military and political leaderships. Both civilian and military leaders subscribe to 'the post-Washington consensus', colonialist financial institutions, high taxation and privatization. The people of Pakistan have suffered in every era, and in every area, as their wealth depletes and the standard of living falls.

The key difference, however, that has emerged recently in terms of economic management is the new consensus: the hybrid model. In this decision-making model, the military leadership is in the lead of economic policy making, while the political leadership provide them the political cover. Both civilian and military leaderships share the economic decision making.

Within this context, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was created in 2023, at the beginning of the Asim-Sharif regime. The council, now a full-fledged ministry, was formed to attract foreign investment in five key sectors, energy, mining, information technology, aviation and agriculture. The current focus on foreign investments stems out of the National Security Policy (NSP) which prioritizes focus of development partnerships with global investors. It would not be an exaggeration to term the SIFC as the actual government, where key ministers and bureaucrats, present their plans for attracting foreign direct investment, and then defer to the military leadership.

Political considerations are now of lesser consideration. This relates to the domestic political interests of ruling coalition especially those of PML-N party. Two key ministers of PML-N led cabinet Mr Ishaq Dar and Mr. Ehsan Iqbal are kept out of economic decision making. Their prime focus has been to provide a degree of relief to masses for electoral purposes, otherwise people will discard them during elections. General Asim ensured that that both ministers are not part of the SIFC. He also ensured the exclusion of the finance ministry. The priority of Asim-Sharif regime is to implement the colonialist economic program and investment policies simultaneously. Whilst the ruling factions profit, Pakistan remains dependent upon the global capitalist vultures.

The Asim-Sharif regime wrongly define economic problem as the shortage of dollars or dollar reserves. It seeks to earn dollars through interest-based loans from the international creditors,

and Foreign Direct Investment. The regime is drowning Pakistan in more debt instead, whilst increasing foreign dominance of the local economy.

The main focus of SIFC is undermining the economic sovereignty of Pakistan. Minerals, energy, information technology, aviation and agriculture are all essential sectors for a strong state. These capital-intensive sectors are up for sale to foreign investors, instead of the state supervising and developing these sectors itself in the interest of people. There already some interest visible amongst the agents of the West that rule the Gulf countries to buy a percentage of ownership in these sectors.

There are five prominent dangers that are emerging for Pakistan as a result of pursuit of American dictated strategic agenda in economic arena:

**Firstly, refocusing the army away from India:** The first danger is changing the orientation of Pakistan's armed forces. By virtue of its location and a strong military, Pakistan has always been a key strategic player in the region. However, it is now solely focused on ensuring economic security, with focus on foreign direct investments. This naturally requires peace on borders and ending regional ambitions of challenging Hindu domination in the region.

**Secondly, paving the way for normalization with the Jewish entity and the Hindu state.** Investors seek to avoid conflict and are concerned about profits. This is the thinking that is being promoted within the Pakistan army. The thinking is that Pakistan must not seek conflict with any state, that it must attract investments from everybody and the country need not to join international camps. This mindset is being pushed from pro-American elements in leadership of army with the aim of diluting hostility with India, and making grounds for recognition of the Jewish entity.

**Thirdly, decreasing the effectiveness of the army:** Key policy making positions within the army are being filled with so-called economic experts. The SIFC itself is manned by army officers whose job is to facilitate foreign investments. This divides the priorities of the army, and weakens its war fighting potential. The cost-benefit framework is increasingly becoming the basis of key decisions, instead of Islamic thought of seeking martyrdom for the sake of Allah (swt).

**Fourthly, increasing economic pain for the masses:** False promises of job creation resulting from Foreign Direct Investment are being made to cool the anger of Ummah, suffering from economic hardships. In reality, the colonialist economic program has ruined local industry and sunk the country further into a debt trap. The fact remains that Foreign Direct Investment has had a negative effect on economy. The private sector investment in power sector, the infamous Independent Power Producers (IPPs), has drowned energy sector in debt. It is the same case with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CEPC). The SIFC merely promises more of the same.

**Fifthly, privatizing strategic assets:** The central focus of the Asim-Sharif economic plan is to privatize key assets: minerals, information, agriculture, aviation and energy sectors. While this focus is not new, the push towards its realization is strong, given the backing of the military leadership. Besides obvious economic disadvantages, the privatization plan will enable foreign investors to influence our foreign policy as well.

**O Muslims of Pakistan and Their Armed Forces!** The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) is a colonialist plan to increase our poverty and reduce our military capabilities before our enemies. It is being implemented aggressively by the agents of America in the military leadership. Abandoning Jihad will only increase our disgrace and humiliation unless we return to our Deen. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, **«إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ بِالْعَيْنَةِ وَأَخَذْتُمْ بِأَنْتَابِ الْبَقَرِ وَرَضِيْتُمْ بِالزَّرْعِ، وَتَرَكْتُمْ** **«If you transact in 'lynah (a type of Riba), follow the tails of cows (tilling the land), become content with agriculture and abandoned Jihad, Allah will send on you disgrace that He will not remove until, you return to your religion.»** [Abu Daud]. Each and every Muslim must demand from his relative and friends in the armed forces to grant their Nussrah to Hizb ut Tahrir for the re-establishment of the Khilafah Rashidah (rightly guided Caliphate) upon the method of the Prophethood.