

THE PAKISTAN STOCK EXCHANGE (PSX) AS A FRONTLINE OF ECONOMIC WARFARE: SAFEGUARDING NATIONAL SECURITY THROUGH MARKET RESILIENCE

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Abstract

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) is not just a criterion for measuring economic health but also a critical part of national security. In a time when economic systems are more often weaponised, the PSX faces fears from cyberattacks, market manipulation, geopolitical burdens, and investment flight, all of which can weaken Pakistan's economy and its security infrastructure. By examining stock market resilience as a national security concern, this article encourages a coordinated effort in which financial policymakers, intelligence agencies, and military strategists cooperate to defend the PSX against emerging threats. A secure and stable stock exchange is not only an economic necessity but also a protection against unseen warfare, safeguarding Pakistan's long-term stability in an increasingly volatile geopolitical context.

Keywords: Economic Security, Pakistan Stock Exchange, Market Resilience, geopolitics, Economic warfare

Introduction

In times of intense geopolitical conflicts, nations are increasingly seeking to undermine their rivals not just on the battlefield but also through economic means. Economic warfare is defined as “the use or threat of monetary means to undermine an enemy’s economy and, by extension, its political and military power.”¹ While conventional tools of economic warfare, such as sanctions, trade embargoes, or capital controls, are well understood,² the digitising of finance and global interconnectedness have unfolded new fronts for war. Financial markets have become a critical infrastructure that enemies can target to induce panic, divert resources, or shake confidence.

As Pakistan’s main equities marketplace, the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has become a strategic asset whose strength is tied to national security. In 2023-24, Market capitalisation on Pakistan’s exchange contributed to approximately 9-10% of GDP.³

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It serves as a main site for domestic savings, corporate financing, and foreign investment. A drop in PSX valuation can accelerate currency pressures and fiscal strain. Furthermore, stock markets are a noticeable indicator of national mood: rapid crashes or persistent bear markets can deepen political turmoil and deteriorate investor trust. For these reasons, governments must regard market resilience as a component of economic sovereignty. A thriving stock exchange not only encourages capital growth, but it also acts as a psychological buffer against external shocks.

Concurrently, financial systems have been weaponised. Cyberattacks on banks and exchanges have escalated in recent years, as adversaries recognise that crippling financial infrastructure may cause widespread damage. Global trends indicate this threat: for example, in 2023, Russian hacktivists launched distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) assaults on the Czech banking network and stock exchange, with the sole goal of disrupting Ukraine's funding.⁴ Similarly, coordinated cyberattacks took down the Warsaw Stock Exchange and government websites in Poland. Such incidents demonstrate that foes will not hesitate to attack market institutions for political reasons. In Pakistan's case, the PSX has already made steps to tighten security: in 2024, it received ISO 27001 certification for information security management, indicating a proactive approach.⁵ Yet the International Monetary Fund advises that many emerging markets still lack a comprehensive national cybersecurity strategy for the financial sector.⁶ To strengthen PSX defences, not just exchange-level actions would be required, but also coordination with other government and defence agencies will be necessary.

Domestic political uncertainty adds to another significant vulnerability. Pakistan's volatile politics and irregular conflicts with neighbours tend to frighten investors. Abstract studies suggest that political stability has a clear beneficial effect on stock returns in Pakistan, but negative shocks (such as terrorism or governmental problems) cause excessive volatility.⁷ In practice, the PSX has seen significant fluctuations during times of crisis. For example, increased tensions between India and Pakistan in early 2019, defined by cross-border airstrikes and escalatory language, sparked one of the market's worst falls in months.⁸ Such events show that geopolitical crises can have a direct impact on economic instability. In rare situations, even direct attacks have hit the market; a 2020 suicide attempt on the PSX headquarters in Karachi attracted international attention, and interestingly, an event study found that the failed attack coincided with a short-term surge in stock prices,⁹ possibly mirroring investors' bets on a strong government response.

Nonetheless, these incidents highlight that the PSX is on the frontlines of Pakistan's economic and security landscape.

Furthermore, regulatory issues remain equally urgent. Pakistan has long grappled with manipulation and insider exploitation. Upholding trading integrity is essential to prevent illicit practices. Recognising this, regulators have now committed to stopping unlawful trade techniques. In 2017, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) proclaimed a "battle" against market exploiters, beginning aggressive investigations into brokers utilising spoofing or misleading orders.¹⁰ Recently, Pakistan attained its first-ever criminal conviction for insider trading in mid-2025.¹¹ A significant action to curb market misuse. These methods seek to raise awareness that unchecked fraud or information breaches can damage trust and create chances for hostile interference.

Overall, PSX is located at a delicate crossroads of economics and geopolitics. Outside adversaries may target it through cyber intrusions, panic, or liquidity crises, while internal actors may use it for illegal benefit. At the same time, larger regional calamities can exacerbate market risk. The purpose of this article is to study the PSX as a possible front in economic warfare and offer governmental remedies to increase its resilience.

Economic Warfare and Financial Systems

Economic warfare is defined as the intentional use of financial and economic tools to weaken, compel, or destabilise an adversary. Economic warfare, unlike traditional military operations, operates through markets, currencies, and financial flows, which are often hidden from the public yet have a significant impact. Scholars characterise it as the strategic use of economic tools, such as sanctions, capital flight, and financial blockades, to achieve political or security goals without open conflict.¹² Stock markets are particularly sensitive nodes in this setting because they collect information, allocate capital, and shape public perceptions of a country's stability. Volatility in equity markets not only reduces investor wealth but can also lead to currency crises, budgetary pressures, and political instability. As early as the Cold War, policymakers recognised that financial shocks might undermine state resilience.¹³ In today's globally connected world, enemies can exacerbate these shocks by using digital tactics, speculative attacks, or manipulating cross-border flows. As a result, exchanges such as the PSX are no longer impartial platforms, but rather strategic battlefields for geopolitical struggle.

Recent worldwide developments have shown how financial systems are being weaponised. The United States, a long-time pioneer in financial sanctions, has frequently utilised its control over the currency and international payment networks to limit foes such as Iran and Russia.¹⁴ In response, Russia accelerated its attempts to safeguard its domestic financial systems from external shocks when sanctions led to unprecedented capital flight.¹⁵ Similarly, China has treated financial resilience as an issue of national security, maintaining strong capital restrictions and employing its state-backed funds to stabilise markets during stressful periods, such as the 2015 equities crash.¹⁶ These attacks demonstrate that PSX might be targeted during geopolitical disputes, particularly considering the country's exposure to regional rivalries.

The distinction between the military and commercial domains has become even more blurred as a result of cyber warfare. Direct cyberattacks on stock exchanges throughout the world have disrupted trading and harmed investor confidence. In 2012, for example, Nasdaq - a stock exchange located in New York - experienced sophisticated intrusions attributed to state-backed groups, forcing U.S. lawmakers to categorise exchange systems as part of the country's critical infrastructure.¹⁷ In 2023, Russian-linked hackers attacked the Czech and Polish stock exchanges amid the Ukraine war.¹⁸ These examples show that enemies see financial markets as legitimate targets in hybrid warfare, similar to electricity grids or communication networks.

For Pakistan, the global backdrop emphasises the importance of protecting the PSX. Its flaws, whether caused by political instability, regulatory deficiencies, or inadequate cybersecurity, can be exploited not only by internal parties but also by hostile foreign entities seeking leverage. Financial instability on the PSX can swiftly spread to other sectors of the economy, such as exchange rate markets and government borrowing prices, exacerbating the consequences of external pressure. As a result, the stock exchange serves a dual purpose: it is both a driver of economic progress and a potential burden if undermined. As a result, protecting its resilience is critical to Pakistan's overall policy of defending national sovereignty in an era when conflicts are increasingly fought by financial rather than military methods.

Significance of the PSX

The PSX is an important part of the country's financial and economic infrastructure. Despite its small size compared to regional competitors such as the

National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) and China's Shanghai Stock Exchange, its significance extends far beyond money formation. It serves as a key component of market sentiment, a means of mobilising both domestic and foreign investment, and a measure of economic health. As a result, volatility in the PSX has the potential to affect monetary strength, fiscal performance, and ultimately national security in Pakistan's larger economy.

By 2023-24, the PSX's total market capitalisation represented around 9-10% of Pakistan's GDP, demonstrating its position as a primary avenue for corporate finance and investment flows.¹⁹ This relationship indicates that fluctuations in stock markets can greatly affect the overall economy, especially in a nation where financial markets are relatively weak and highly influenced by how investors feel. A persistent decline in the PSX can trigger a drop in exchange rates, loss of investment, and significant increases in government risk costs, which all threaten the financial independence of the state.²⁰

The PSX also acts as a gateway for foreign portfolio investment (FPI),²¹ which, while indispensable for liquidity, exposes Pakistan to outside vulnerabilities. Increases in investment from abroad can boost savings and trust in the market when things are stable, but the sudden exit of funds, usually caused by international conflicts or changes in global investors' willingness to take risks, can worsen domestic financial instability.²² For example, in FY2021-22, Pakistan recorded net FPI outflows of US\$78 million, compared to inflows of For example, in FY2021-22, Pakistan experienced net FPI outflows of US\$78 million, contrasting with inflows of US\$2.8 billion the previous year, highlighting the vulnerability of such flows. This "boom-and-bust" cycle of foreign investment emphasises the importance of viewing the stock exchange as a strategic security asset rather than merely a monetary institution. The sequence of foreign investment underscores the need to treat the stock exchange as a strategic security asset rather than a purely monetary institution. Beyond finance, the PSX acts as a psychological meter of national stability.²³ Stock market indexes receive significant media attention in Pakistan and around the world, making them a symbol of trust in the country's leadership and political direction. For example, when the KSE-100 index is shown in a favourable light, policymakers frequently mention it as a sign of the economy's strength, but sharp drops are swiftly seen as signals of doubt.²⁴ This signalling function implies that attackers may attempt to affect market sentiment through cyber breaches,

disinformation, or speculative attacks simply because stock market success corresponds to public and investor confidence.

In comparison, other countries have long understood the strategic importance of bilateral interactions. In Pakistan, this acknowledgement is growing, although it is still imperfect. While the PSX's centrality in economic policy is acknowledged, its security dimension, which links market resilience to national defence, has yet to be fully integrated into state strategy. The exchange is vulnerable to cyberattacks, political shocks, and speculative conduct, all of which can undermine national stability.²⁵ As such, the PSX should be reconceptualised not merely as a financial institution, but as a strategic frontline in maintaining Pakistan's sovereignty.

Threat Vectors to PSX

The PSX faces a wide set of shortcomings, positioning it as a possible frontline in economic warfare.²⁶ These threats, extending from cyberattacks to regulatory loopholes, are not presumed but are embedded in both Pakistan's historical experience and global examples.²⁷ Addressing them necessitates understanding how opponents may harm the exchange in order to undermine greater economic autonomy.

- **Cybersecurity Threats**

Cyberattacks on economic institutions are one of the most rapidly expanding aspects of hybrid warfare. Exchanges and banks are common targets because deactivating them can cause widespread disruptions in national markets.

While obtaining ISO 27001 accreditation represents progress, Pakistan still lacks a comprehensive national financial cyber defence structure.²⁸ This loophole makes the PSX vulnerable to adversarial attempts at digital disruption, such as denial-of-service assaults, malware targeting trading systems, and data breaches aimed at weakening investor trust.

- **Market Manipulation and Insider Trading**

Beyond external cyber threats, insider malfeasance and market manipulation continue to be important hazards. Insider trading and collaboration serve as methods of financial sabotage. In weak regulatory systems, opponents can use loopholes to create false volatility. Pakistan

has long been plagued by problems of manipulation.²⁹ Pakistan's recent criminal conviction for insider trading shows progress,³⁰ but consistent enforcement is needed. During times of political unrest, individuals with insider knowledge may exaggerate panic by organising sales, causing widespread instability. Such flaws could be exploited by hostile foreign investors or internal parties swayed by outside influences.

- **Geopolitical Pressures**

The PSX is also extremely susceptible to global turmoil. Empirical research demonstrates that political upheaval and terrorism increase market volatility in Pakistan.³¹ Concrete examples illustrate this connection: following cross-border military tensions with India in 2025, the PSX crashed by 2,500 points, forcing the PSX to halt trading temporarily.³² Similarly, terrorist acts have consistently undermined investor confidence, even when they do not affect trade operations. These instances demonstrate how adversaries see the PSX as both a symbolic and economic target. Unlike typical market swings, geopolitical shocks tend to undermine long-term confidence, making recovery more difficult.

- **Capital Flight and Investor Sentiment**

Another significant risk is capital flight, particularly through foreign portfolio investment (FPI). While FPIs supply money, their volatility exposes Pakistan to destabilisation. Outflows, such as those seen in fiscal year 2021-22, can erode reserves and undermine currency stability. Global monetary tightening and domestic economic pressure led to a rapid reversal.³³

Sudden capital outflows, generally caused by geopolitical crises or swings in global risk appetite, can cause currency rate depreciation and deplete foreign reserves. The IMF's 2023 Article IV report underlined that Pakistan's reliance on short-term inflows makes it especially vulnerable to rapid reversals during crises.³⁴

Foreign actors could strategically exploit this vulnerability by timing significant withdrawals or spreading misinformation about political dangers, resulting in increased selloffs. In a fragile macroeconomic climate defined by high debt and inflation, such occurrences may worsen into systemic crises, directly endangering Pakistan's security.

- **Structural and Regulatory Gaps**

Finally, structural deficiencies in Pakistan's financial governance exacerbate these risks. Compared to advanced markets, the PSX and SECP have always struggled with weak enforcement powers. Regulatory deficiencies enable manipulation, ineffective surveillance, and insufficient investor protection. While reforms are ongoing, notably the demutualisation of the PSX³⁵ and efforts to digitise trading oversight,³⁶ the system remains susceptible to exploitation. Without improved institutional resilience, Pakistan risks having its stock exchange become a source of economic instability rather than a pillar of stability.

Historical and Recent Case Studies

Understanding the PSX's weaknesses necessitates an examination of specific instances in which political, security, or global developments had a direct impact on its performance. These cases, both domestic and international, show how stock markets may become battlegrounds for economic conflict.

- **Domestic Incidents**

One of the most notable events took place in June 2020, when militants conducted an armed attack on the PSX headquarters in Karachi. Although security personnel quickly repelled the assault, the event demonstrated that the enemy viewed the exchange as a symbolic national target.³⁷ Trading continued without interruption, and the KSE-100 index rose for the day, but the psychological aspect was evident: the stock exchange had become part of Pakistan's security battlefield.³⁸

Previously, political and military tensions with India have frequently destabilised the PSX. In February 2019, amid cross-border bombings and heightened escalation, the KSE-100 saw one of its sharpest single-day declines, as investors priced in the risk of conflict. The index fell roughly 700 points in a day.³⁹ Such incidents demonstrate the close relationship between geopolitical shocks and market volatility in Pakistan. Domestic terrorism and political upheaval also influence investor conduct. A study discovered that terrorism-related incidents considerably enhance market volatility in Pakistan, but periods of political stability are associated with positive returns.⁴⁰ This implies that adversaries attempting to destabilise

Pakistan economically may worsen the consequences by targeting investor confidence through acts of violence or political upheaval.

- **Global Parallels**

Pakistan is not alone in this regard; other countries have seen similar weaponisation of their stock exchanges. For example, during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Western sanctions and capital flight forced Moscow to stop trading on the Moscow Exchange until February 2022. Forbes reported that the suspension attempted to limit panic and safeguard foreign reserves. However, it underlined how financial markets become immediate targets in geopolitical strife.⁴¹

Similarly, China's reaction to its 2015 stock market crash demonstrates how exchanges are viewed as assets of national security.⁴² Beijing deployed state-backed funds and limited selling by major shareholders, effectively militarising financial stability to prevent systemic collapse.

Lessons for Pakistan

These cases illustrate three crucial lessons. First, markets are critical targets in both physical and digital wars, whether through physical attacks, penalties, or cyber breaches. Second, government measures are critical: fast stabilisation actions, such as trading halts or liquidity support, can help prevent panic. Third, symbolism has a significant impact: markets are watched globally, and their performance influences perceptions of national power. For Pakistan, these lessons highlight the need to consider the PSX not only as an economic platform but also as a strategic national asset that requires defence integration.

Policy and Resilience Measures

Recognising the PSX as a crucial component of the country's infrastructure is necessary to strengthen it against emerging threats. Other market experiences show that resilience is based on three key areas: cybersecurity, regulatory enforcement, and institutional coordination.

First, cybersecurity must be prioritised as a critical concern. Financial exchanges around the world are increasingly becoming targets of cyberattacks. Although PSX has received international cybersecurity certification, experts warn that compliance alone does not provide adequate protection without real-time threat

intelligence and collaboration with defence organisations. Pakistan would benefit from formally incorporating the PSX into its national cybersecurity plan, assuring cooperation among regulators, intelligence agencies, and military cyber units.

Second, more stringent regulatory enforcement is required to address vulnerabilities such as market manipulation and insider trading. International experience shows that deterrence necessitates a constant structure of supervision, fines, and judicial enforcement. For example, during the 2008 financial crisis, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) significantly expanded its enforcement division, resulting in high-profile trials such as the conviction of hedge fund manager Raj Rajaratnam for insider trading in 2011.⁴³ Similarly, the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) has standardised penalties across EU member states to ensure that manipulation and abuse are consistently addressed.⁴⁴ Markets such as the United States and the European Union demonstrate that strong regulatory control promotes fairness while also protecting exchanges from hostile financial meddling.

Finally, Pakistan must adopt procedures to keep the market stable amid crises. During instances of high volatility, countries such as China have stepped in with state-backed liquidity injections and temporary restrictions. While such approaches pose certain dangers, they emphasise the need for having instruments like circuit breakers, liquidity buffers, and stabilisation funds on hand to fight panic-driven selloffs. For Pakistan, where external shocks and geopolitical tensions frequently produce unexpected drops, the PSX's lack of these tools renders it more vulnerable than its worldwide peers.

Taken together, these interventions necessitate coordinated governance. Protecting PSX must go beyond financial regulation and include a national security strategy.

Recommendations

The PSX is more than just a financial exchange; it is an integral aspect of the country's economic defence system. If it collapsed during a crisis, the entire economy would suffer. To improve and secure the PSX, Pakistan requires a set of realistic actions that are understood by ordinary individuals, investors, and politicians alike.

- **Establish a Financial–Cyber Fusion Cell**
Create a 24/7 joint team comprised of PSX, the National Clearing Company of Pakistan Limited (NCCPL), the Central Depository Company (CDC), SECP, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the national Cyber Emergency Response Team (CERT), and selected intelligence and defence liaisons. Implement standard incident taxonomies, a single point of contact, and coordinated "first-hour" communications for cyber or operational incidents. This ensures that in the event of a hacker attack or questionable trades, everyone receives the same notice and can respond quickly.
- **Strengthen cybersecurity across the system.**
Utilise PSX's ISO/IEC 27001:2022 accreditation to apply identical control standards to brokers and critical vendors. Experts should test their defences, and businesses must demonstrate that their systems can function continuously even if one component fails.
- **Improve “circuit breakers” to calm panic.**
Markets can tumble just because people panic. To avoid this, Pakistan should implement clear rules: if prices decrease too quickly, trading should be halted for a few minutes. This allows investors time to deliberate, rather than making impulsive movements that exacerbate the crisis.
- **Enhance market monitoring to prevent manipulation.**
Some traders broadcast false news online or place deceptive orders to lure others into buying or selling. New techniques should detect anomalous trade patterns and correlate them with online gossip. Those caught should face swift sanctions, including fines, bans, and possibly imprisonment.
- **Protect whistleblowers.**
People within the system are occasionally aware of unlawful activity. If they report it, they should be protected by the law and compensated. This not only exposes wrongdoing but also prevents others from trying it in the first place.
- **Keep the clearinghouse robust.**
Behind the scenes, a clearinghouse ensures trades are cleared, which means money and shares are properly transferred. If the clearinghouse

fails, the entire market stops. Pakistan's clearing system should be evaluated under "worst-case" scenarios, and the State Bank should be ready with backup funds to avert a chain reaction of failures.

- **Establish an emergency market support fund.**

In difficult situations, such as when foreign investors withdraw substantial quantities of money unexpectedly, the government should establish a fund set up to buy shares in bulk. Previously, this strategy was effective. Hong Kong's 1998 Exchange Fund⁴⁵ intervention prevented a dual currency-equity attack and was fully unwound, and Korea's KRW 10.7 trillion Stock Market Stabilisation Fund (2020)⁴⁶ was capitalised in advance to restore two-sided liquidity. Pakistan can adopt these models by implementing robust governance, sunset clauses, and post-event disclosures. In Pakistan, such a fund would be used only during emergencies, with complete transparency, and would be closed once stability is restored.

- **Treat information operations as a significant market risk**

False rumours might cause a market panic. Pakistan needs a small, committed team to monitor social media, provide immediate corrections, and eliminate fraudulent articles before they spread too far.

- **Integrate resilience into rulebooks and governance.**

Rules should be established in straightforward English so that investors may simply comprehend what is allowed and what is not. Brokers and firms should also be evaluated based on their culture, including whether they handle clients fairly and honestly. The stock exchange should disclose monthly scorecards on how efficiently it protects the market.

Conclusion

The PSX is at a unique intersection of economics and national security. It is more than just a measure of company success or investor confidence; it is an essential component of the country's economic sovereignty. In an increasingly interconnected and conflict-prone global context, hostile actors' propensity to disrupt financial markets emphasises the need to view the PSX as part of Pakistan's key infrastructure. While borders, energy systems, and communication networks are protected from attack, the PSX must also be protected from economic and hybrid threats.

Over the last two decades, global financial systems have evolved into a focal point of modern economic warfare. For example, the 1997 Asian financial crisis demonstrated how speculative attacks might disrupt economies in a matter of weeks, resulting in political instability and long-term developmental impediments. States are now obliged to recognise that the preservation of their financial markets is inextricably linked to the protection of national security. Pakistan, whose economy is always exposed to external shocks, capital flight, and domestic instability, must apply these lessons.

The PSX has already been involved in situations that highlight its sensitivity to both internal and external interruptions. Market crashes triggered by political upheavals, financial outflows due to fluctuations in global interest rates, and terrorist attacks all demonstrate that the stock exchange is not immune to the broader security landscape. Furthermore, emerging dangers like cyberattacks and digital misinformation operations introduce new layers of vulnerability. A hostile actor seeking to harm Pakistan does not need to launch a traditional attack; it can strike at the foundations of confidence in the PSX, wear down the value of Pakistani enterprises, and generate economic anxiety through coordinated market manipulation or misinformation.

Protecting the PSX consequently demands more than ordinary regulation. It necessitates a comprehensive approach that views financial stability as a subject of national security. This includes building strong cybersecurity defences, establishing institutional channels for intelligence sharing between regulators and security agencies, and ensuring that enforcement measures against insider trading and manipulation are trustworthy and consistent.

Similarly, the development of methods to stabilise the market during periods of severe volatility is critical. Circuit breakers, liquidity buffers, and stabilisation funds act as shock absorbers, preventing panic from developing into systemic collapse. Without these capabilities, Pakistan risks allowing momentary instability, whether caused by external shocks, political crises, or targeted economic attacks, to escalate into full-fledged financial crises. The lack of stabilisation tools not only undermines investor trust but also exposes the PSX to manipulation by players who understand that volatility in the market can soon lead to instability in the state itself. In the future, Pakistan must incorporate PSX protection into a larger economic security strategy. This would include establishing permanent organisations, such as

an interagency economic security task force, in which financial regulators, intelligence agencies, and security institutions collaborate to predict, monitor, and respond to threats. Such combinations ensure that stock market vulnerabilities are not considered as isolated financial problems, but rather as national security threats with far-reaching implications.

Finally, the PSX's resilience is about more than just defending investors and company stability; it is about maintaining Pakistan's sovereignty. A strong, firm, and secure exchange rate communicates to both domestic and foreign investors that Pakistan's economy can withstand shocks, combat manipulation, and recover from a crisis. On the other hand, a weak or unstable exchange sends a message of vulnerability that competitors can exploit. As a result, the PSX must be redesigned not as a passive indicator of economic health, but as an active shield in Pakistan's protection against covert kinds of warfare.

Finally, the safeguarding of the PSX must be elevated from an economic goal to a national security imperative. Pakistan may transform the PSX from a source of vulnerability to a symbol of national strength by incorporating resilience into its structures, enhancing institutional coordination, and developing strategic crisis management tools. In an era of increasing financial warfare, sustaining the PSX's stability is not only a matter of financial prudence but also a critical step towards protecting the country's long-term security and sovereignty.

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