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Zardari and Shehbaz Address Pakistan's Political and Security Challenges

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President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met on July 15, 2025, to address Pakistan's mounting political, economic, and security concerns. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring national stability and strengthening institutional coordination.

The meeting took place at Aiwan-e-Sadr and was reported by *The News* on July 16, 2025. Discussions focused on the country's volatile political climate and worsening security situation. With terrorism resurging, especially in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, they reviewed progress on Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, a state-led counterterrorism effort launched in June 2024 to combat groups such as the banned Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Prime Minister Sharif also updated President Zardari on major economic initiatives, including the Uraan Pakistan plan. Introduced in late 2024, the five-year roadmap aims to achieve 6 percent annual GDP growth and 60 billion dollars in exports by 2028. The plan is based on the "Five Es" strategy: Exports, E-Pakistan, Environment, Energy and Infrastructure, and Equity and Empowerment, according to government and media sources.

Although inflation dropped to 3.5 percent in May 2025, public dissatisfaction remains high. Many households are still struggling with rising costs. The government's decision to reduce LNG imports, which led to extended loadshedding, has drawn criticism for ignoring basic energy needs. President Zardari stressed the importance of including meaningful relief measures in the upcoming federal budget, as reported by *Business Recorder* on June 2, 2025.

The coalition government, formed by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), continues to face skepticism. Allegations of election rigging in the February 2024 general elections and the exclusion of key figures like Ishaq Dar from senior posts have raised questions about the alliance's effectiveness and independence. Some analysts suggest that growing reliance on the military may be limiting the coalition's decision-making power.

Security concerns are not limited to domestic threats. Tensions with India have increased since the April 2025 Pahalgam attack, which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based groups. Islamabad denied the allegations, but the incident has added to regional strain. During the meeting, Zardari and Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to defend its sovereignty. The attendance of Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi highlighted the seriousness of the issue.

As Pakistan faces internal challenges and external pressures, the government's ability to maintain coalition unity, manage economic recovery, and ensure national security will be critical. The July 15 meeting marked an attempt to chart a path forward, though many obstacles remain.