

How Pakistan and Iran Neatly Tackled Their Terror Threats

There was no escalation. In just 48 hours, Islamabad and Tehran found diplomatic common ground on shared security concerns, disappointing external adversaries seeking a sectarian-flavored, all-out war.

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The week-long melodrama has ended on a happy note, marking a turning point in Pakistan-Iran relations. On Friday, Islamabad extended an [olive branch](#) to Tehran by indicating its willingness to collaborate with them on "all issues." Although Iran's longstanding security concerns were not explicitly mentioned, credible sources reveal a significant development.

Insiders inform *The Cradle* that Pakistan's powerful military has already approved a "combined border surveillance mechanism" to track and engage Jaish al-Adl's anti-Iran operations from Pakistani soil.

In another proactive move from Islamabad, Pakistan's [National Security Committee](#), a civil-military consultative panel, has resolved to address the mutual security concerns of Islamabad and Tehran by re-opening the diplomatic route and bolstering border surveillance and communication systems.

IRGC's missile attacks on Iraqi Kurdistan, Syria & Pakistan



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'Army of Justice'

Cyril Almeida, a seasoned Pakistani journalist and former editor of the *Dawn*, sarcastically [remarked](#) on X that “never have two countries bombed each other and expressed such warmth for each other within 48 hrs ... almost got to wonder ...”

Iran's decision to launch a cross-border operation in Pakistan's restive Balochistan region, targeting the hideouts of Jaish al-Adl militants, was not impulsive. Iran had exhausted diplomatic avenues to convey the imminent threat posed by the group, formerly known as Jundullah, to Pakistan, alleging support from the [US and Israel](#).

Tehran views the Sunni, Baluch organization with secure sanctuaries in Balochistan, near the Iran-Pakistan border, as a terrorist group, a [designation](#) Washington, ironically, also recognizes.

With a [combined force](#) of 1,250,000 active-duty personnel and 900,000 reserved forces, as well as untold missile and nuclear arsenals, Iran and Pakistan would present a formidable military force in West Asia if they collaborated more closely; hence the use of intermediaries like Jaish al-Adl by hostile states to keep the two brotherly nations at odds.

Balochistan on the Brink

The ongoing standoff with Jaish al-Adl has deep-rooted history. The group has claimed responsibility for [multiple attacks](#) against Iranian troops since its first major assault in August 2012. Between 2012 and December 2013, 150 Iranian soldiers were killed in terrorist attacks, with thousands more casualties from the unchecked violence of the terror group in the following decade.

In December, Iran's tolerance reached its limit when an assault on a police station in the Iranian town of [Rask](#), located in the south-eastern border region of Sistan-Baluchestan, resulted in the death of 11 Iranian security officers. This was followed by another attack on [10 January](#) near the town, close to the village of Bidlad Jangal, which left at least one police officer dead.

In response, Iran launched a [missile strike on Pakistan](#) on 16 January, in which Islamabad claims two children were killed and three others injured. While Pakistan charged Iran with a general violation of its airspace, Iranian state media claimed the missiles specifically targeted two sites utilized by the militant separatist group.

The following day, Islamabad officially issued a strong condemnation of the incident and subsequently recalled its ambassador from Tehran.

In retaliation, Pakistan conducted [air attacks](#) on alleged terrorist hideouts in Iran, which it claims led to the deaths of at least nine Baloch separatists.

US-Israel Influence on Pakistan-Iran Dynamics

According to Chris Blackburn, a political analyst specializing in counterterrorism and security issues, Pakistan and Iran previously had a mutual interest in fighting militant groups in the region, particularly in Afghanistan.

But in February 2019, Blackburn tells *The Cradle*, a suicide car bombing by Jaish al-Adl resulted in the death of 27 Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) soldiers, which created a trust deficit between the two countries.

In a stunning interview with Pakistan's GTV News, former Pakistan foreign secretary, UN envoy, and ambassador to Iran, Shamshad Ahmad, declared that [Iran was fully justified](#) in striking Jaish al-Adl inside Pakistani territory. He believes that these organizations serve US and Israeli interests, and have been ignored by Islamabad for too long.

"I have been addressing this issue since I first started dealing with it," he stated, noting that Iran had made numerous attempts to collaborate with Pakistan to address the urgent security threat. However, the Pakistani army and intelligence services persistently offered refuge to separatist groups located in Iran who were responsible for the extensive slaughter of Iranian border forces.

Ahmad alleges that the US and Israel were pressuring the Pakistani army to initiate military offensives against Iran, and that this action is aligned with their strategies to divert attention away from other geopolitical issues:

"Iran is a sovereign nation and possibly the sole sovereign nation in the region that has expelled the US from its territory. The purpose of these clashes among the neighboring nations is to exert pressure on Iran. The Iranian airstrike served as a cautionary message to Pakistan, urging them to avoid being manipulated by the US and Israel."

China's Role in Mediation

In contrast, Daud Khattak, managing editor for Radio Free Europe's Pashto language Mashaal Radio, tells *The Cradle* that Iran and Pakistan harbor mutual distrust regarding extremist groups and are already engaged in border operations, but often in a way that

undermines relations.

For example, Iran has deployed artillery along the border with Pakistan, while the arrest of Indian national [Kulbhushan Yadav](#) in Balochistan was based on Pakistan's accusation that he was conducting operations from the border territories of Iran. "This intelligence game is played as follows. However, launching missiles within Pakistani borders in this manner constituted a direct provocation towards Pakistan," Khattak explains.

Amid the hostilities last weekend, [China](#) offered to facilitate dialogue between Iran and Pakistan, considering its considerable economic and geopolitical interests in both countries. Khattak emphasizes Beijing's concern over South Asian instability and its impact on the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI):

"China was active from day one but Chinese diplomacy could not stop Pakistan from retaliating because a predominantly Sunni Pakistan was targeted by Shia Iran and the Pakistani military had to prove to the people of Pakistan that they are not weak. Additionally, Islamabad was under 'immense pressure' to return a stern reply and, importantly, Pakistan wanted to show the neighbors, especially the Taliban, not to mess with Pakistan."

Was the Standoff Pre-approved?

What is noteworthy is that neither Iran nor Pakistan activated their air defense systems to intercept the rockets that struck their territory. Equally astonishing is the recent revelation that Iranian missiles targeted Iranian individuals, while Pakistani missiles exclusively targeted Pakistani Balochis, with no damage inflicted upon civilian and military facilities in either country.

Moreover, the stalemate was resolved through a mutual gesture of goodwill between the two neighbors within 48 hours, without the need for any external mediation. These aspects fuel suspicions that the events were premeditated.

Dr. Mohammad Marandi, a renowned political analyst and professor at Tehran University, as well as advisor to Iranian nuclear talks, [says](#) that Jaish al-Adl has perpetrated several massacres of innocent Iranian citizens, and that a response was long overdue:

"Due to the poor governance of Pakistan in the regions near the Iranian border, Iran perceived that it had no alternative but to launch an attack on this particular group."

Marandi reveals that, although Pakistan officially denounced the attacks, there exists a deeper level of understanding on the matter between the Iranian and Pakistani governments, as the two states have exceptionally strong relations and engage in ongoing communication.

Likewise, *The Cradle* columnist and West Asian geopolitical analyst Sharmine Narwani [stated](#) on X:

"This week's mutual airstrikes gave Tehran and Islamabad the justification to eliminate these armed extremist groups - for each other - without having to deal with the fallout from the terrorists' foreign funders and their local supporters."

"Both states targeted Baluch separatist militant groups that have long plagued the Iran-

Pakistan border – in the case of Iran, killing thousands of border security guards over the years – which are funded and armed by foreign interests that want the strife to continue,” she adds.

Islamabad and Tehran have demonstrated that adept diplomacy, rather than impulsive brute force, can effectively address local disputes in the region. This is especially the case when dealing with separatist groups susceptible to external manipulation and weaponization.

Both states have wisely chosen not to succumb to provocations, opting instead to prioritize mutual security over hostility. Ultimately, the recognition of shared interests serves the best interests of both Islamabad and Tehran.

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