**Time to Replace Brinkmanship with Statesmanship**

**It is time for the leadership on both the sides to take a stock of the situation and resolve their differences.**

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[Opinions](https://www.nation.com.pk/opinions), [Columns](https://www.nation.com.pk/columns), [Newspaper](https://www.nation.com.pk/newspaper)

The unprovoked Iranian drone attack against alleged Jaish ul-Adl bases in Baluchistan prov­ince of Pakistan was not only ill con­ceived but was also based on flawed premise. In less than 24 hours, Iran attacked targets in three countries, Iraq, Syr­ia and Pakistan. Pakistan ex­ercised restraint, but seeing no constructive development from Iran, it responded in kind by engaging seven targets. The de­velopment however, necessitates de­liberation to find reasons / circum­stances leading to this development and the way forward.

Undertaking air attacks in another country are considered an act of war. It is incomprehensible that Iranian leadership made this decision without considering all aspects and possible response. The reasons for this irratio­nal and provocative act could be mul­tiple. Iranian decision makers could have been emboldened by its earli­er offensive acts against many of its neighbours without facing a reprisal, mostly either because of weak militar­ies or domestic compulsions of those countries. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards enjoy unlimited authority and space in decision making. It is high­ly probable that either IRGC prevailed in the decision making process or took an independent decision, suggesting overwhelming clout of the hardlin­ers. Role of infiltrators from countries hostile to Iranian interests in the IRGC cannot be discounted. A contributing factor could be domestic political tur­moil in Iran, though this is also foreign instigated. Indian External Affairs Min­ister’s visit to Tehran just two days be­fore the Iranian attack and instigation for the attack cannot be ignored.

[US maintains genocide charges against Israel 'unfounded' after international court ruling](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Jan-2024/us-maintains-genocide-charges-against-israel-unfounded-after-international-court-ruling)

For Pakistan, not responding to this provocative act and violation of its ter­ritorial integrity was not an option, as this could have set a wrong precedent. Additionally, the interim government would have been under intense do­mestic pressure and criticism. There­fore, the very carefully selected targets which included only Baluch separatist hideouts or training centers were en­gaged by the PAF with precision.

The Iranian attack for unexplainable reasons and Pakistan’s response for ob­vious reasons, do not augur well for the two neighboring countries who have no history of military conflict. It is time for the leadership on both the sides to take a stock of the situation and resolve their differences.

Historically, both the countries have enjoyed friendly to cordial relations in the past seven decades. Iran was the first country to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with Pakistan after its independence. They both were the members of organizations such as Re­gional Cooperation Organization. Pres­ently, both are members of SCO. The air forces and navies of the two countries regularly undertook training exercis­es. Iran supported Pakistan during its 1965 and 1971 wars with India as well as Pakistan’s stance on Kashmir con­flict. Pakistan has also been supportive of Iran on almost all occasions.

[ICJ orders Israel to take 'all measures' to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza, but falls short of ordering cease-fire](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Jan-2024/icj-orders-israel-to-take-all-measures-to-prevent-acts-of-genocide-in-gaza-but-falls-short-of-ordering-cease-fire)

However, after the 1979 Islamic rev­olution in Iran, the relationship saw a dip, but never turned into hostilities. Both the sides have been sounding con­cerns about separatist elements using other side’s soil against the home coun­try. An Indian Naval officer, Kalbushan Yadav who was involved in supporting and inciting acts of terrorism in Paki­stan, was captured by Pakistani intelli­gence agencies. He was in possession of a valid Iranian passport with fake name, suggesting Iranian involvement. Even the press statement by Iranian Foreign Ministry also acknowledged killing of non-Iranians in PAF strikes.

Iran has been under US sanctions for decades. Its relations with the West as well as most of its neighbouring coun­tries are not enviable. Because of sanc­tions, its economy is struggling and the country is facing foreign instigated in­ternal discord. Pakistan at the same time has serious economic problems, domestically it is facing polarization. In addition to a perpetual hostility with India, it is also facing a challenging sit­uation with Afghanistan. However, mili­tarily it is much stronger than Iran.

[Pakistan’s image badly damaged by PTI: Aleem Khan](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Jan-2024/pakistan-s-image-badly-damaged-by-pti-aleem-khan)

In case of a military conflict, both the countries will increase their economic difficulties and become militarily weak. Their respective adversaries will how­ever, benefit from their weakness. For­eign instigated separatist movements will gain momentum posing existential threat to both the countries.

Considering various factors and ground realities, it would be prudent for both to negotiate and resolve their differences. As a first de-escalatory step, Pakistan has announced restora­tion of diplomatic ties. Since the two countries are facing challenges from separatist elements, they must find a way to end this menace once for all. The improved relations will also help both the countries economically. Since Iran is under sanctions, barter trade should be a good option. Being sov­ereign nations, both should continue to exercise their right to interact with other countries respecting each other’s interests. For the betterment of their respective people, leadership in both the countries should strive to replace brinkmanship with statesmanship.

[Modern technology must to curb crimes, says IGP](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Jan-2024/modern-technology-must-to-curb-crimes-says-igp)

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