**Unprovoked Iranian Strike**

**This line of action is likely to lead to a wider conflict in a region.**

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The Iranian drone and missile attack in Baluchistan on the alleged Jaish ul-Adl bases is a violation of sovereignty of a state, an act of war and total disregard of international norms. According to Pakistan’s foreign office, this audacious Iranian act claimed lives of two children while injuring another three. The move came on the heels of Iranian missile attacks in Iraq and Syria. Pakistan’s initial response was very measured in which it summoned Iranian Charge de Affairs to lodge a strong protest. This was followed by Pakistan recalling its ambassador from Tehran and expelling Iranian ambassador to Pakistan, clearly indicating Pakistan’s restraint despite public pressure. However, Iran’s failure to render an unconditional apology necessitated Pakistan’s befitting response.

After the start of Gaza conflict, Iran has been increasingly assertive in its posturing against its neighbouring countries. The recent attacks in Iraq, Syria and now in Pakistan are a very clear manifestation of Iranian attitude. This line of action is likely to lead to a wider conflict in a region that is already grappling with fragile balance in the existing rivalries. In addition to its support for dissenting groups in neighbouring countries, the Iranian acts of aggression have reduced the world focus on Palestinian conflict.

[Qinwen to meet Sabalenka in 2024 Australian Open women's singles final](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Jan-2024/qinwen-to-meet-sabalenka-in-2024-australian-open-women-s-singles-final)

In the recent years, there had been multiple developments suggesting improving ties between Pakistan and Iran. The Mand-Pishin Border Sustenance Marketplace, one of six border markets planned for the two neighboring countries’ shared border was jointly inaugurated in 2022. The inauguration of the Polan-Gabd Electricity Transmission Line capable of carrying additional 100MW of electricity from Iran to Pakistan was another such project. There were also plans for increasing the bilateral trade between the two countries.

The developments preceding this attack were also suggestive of absence of any tensions between the two countries. Just hours before the act of aggression, Iranian Foreign Minister had met Pakistan’s caretaker Prime Minister on the sidelines of Davos economic summit in Switzerland. At the same time Iran’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, Hassan Kazemo Qami, visited Islamabad for consultations. Pakistan’s Sind province governor is also visiting Iran.

[Evidence points to India’s role in assassination of two Pakistani citizens](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Jan-2024/evidence-points-to-india-s-role-in-assassination-of-two-pakistani-citizens)

Pakistan and Iran have a history of blaming each other for supporting the hostile elements. Pakistan has, however always been cooperative in addressing Iranian concerns. As a result of Pakistan’s attitude, it was the only country in the neighbourhood with which Iran enjoyed better relations as compared to her other neighbours. In the recent past, Pakistan had even tried for a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, Iran is known for supporting elements hostile to all its neighbours by providing them with weapons, finances and training. Iran has also been supporting forces inimical to Pakistan. Kalbushan Yadav, an Indian Naval officer, who was captured by Pakistani intelligence agencies was in possession of a valid Iranian passport with fake name. He was found guilty of undertaking terrorist acts inside Pakistan. In addition to Indian spies working against Pakistan, many Baloch insurgents also take refuge on Iranian soil.

[Bilawal asks PML-N, PTI workers to vote for PPP](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Jan-2024/bilawal-asks-pml-n-pti-workers-to-vote-for-ppp)

There are multiple communication channels between the two countries; and Pakistan has always been willing to take action against any miscreants. In such an environment, such a provocative act by Iran is not understandable. Timing of Iranian attack makes Indian External Affairs minister to Tehran very intriguing as the visit had concluded just two days prior to this development. Possibility of India prompting Iran for the act cannot be ruled out. Iranian leadership is considered to be rational and pragmatic in its decision making. It understands the regional dynamics and cannot afford to be antagonistic to three neighbouring countries while going thorough hostile relations with the US. The recent developments therefore are suggestive of the possibility of hardliners taking over the decision making in Tehran. In such an eventuality, the decision making process may have relied too much on world’s focus towards Gaza and Ukraine. They may also have considered Pakistan’s focus on forthcoming elections as well as presence of a caretaker government providing them a favourable situation. Indian encouragement may have acted as a catalyst. Regardless of the reasons and decision making process, continuation of this trend, will lead to Iran’s isolation in the region and neighborhood. Additionally, while India would like to see Pakistan embroiled in a conflict, it would also be serving the US interest by weakening Iran.

[PML-N will set wheels of national development in motion once again: Shehbaz](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Jan-2024/pml-n-will-set-wheels-of-national-development-in-motion-once-again-shehbaz)

Pakistan is neither Iraq nor Syria, its policy of restraint cannot be stretched too far. Pakistan is capable of responding in kind, and has proven record of responding effectively against a much larger and stronger adversary. Additionally, regardless of type of government and focus on elections, the nation has always remained united against an external threat. This was once again proven by PAF’s retaliatory precision air strike against Baloch insurgents taking refuge in Iran’s Siestan- o-Baluchistan province.

Pakistan could not take Iranian act of aggression lightly, as it is capable of defending its territorial integrity. Had sanity prevailed, Pakistani response could have been averted through an unconditional apology rendered by the Iranian government. However, Iranian Foreign Ministry’s statement indicated otherwise. Pakistan has exercised its right under the international law. Still, it is time for the Iranian leadership to reconsider its attitude and relationship with the neighbours and adopt diplomacy for resolving issues. Any military standoff between the two countries will hurt Iran more than Pakistan.

[Police will act as first-tier responders followed by Armed Forces: ECP](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Jan-2024/police-will-act-as-first-tier-responders-followed-by-armed-forces-ecp)

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