



India-Pakistan Tensions Key Developments & Future Risk Part 2

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For us this means to strengthen people to people ties on the basis of a shared vision and shared values, to deliver better governance through institutionalisation of combined best ideas of governance and economic architecture. We want to forge a partnerial ecosystem for a collective sustainable future to protect all sentient beings on our planet, underpinned by a robust ability to defend our collective and mutual interests.

We work with government officials, political leaders, policy influencers, and businesses to build trust, cooperation, and market architecture.

We do this as a platform that brings together experts to provide the latest research and insights for our clients and members. We work with them to turn their vision into reality.

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Latest updates: India-Pak Tensions

This section provides the latest developments in the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, highlighting key military, diplomatic, and security updates. It aims to inform policymakers of evolving risks and strategic considerations on both sides.

Drone and Missile Attacks, and Cross-Border Firing

From India:

In a significant escalation, the Pakistani military initiated a coordinated offensive late Friday night, targeting multiple Indian Air Force installations across the country. The information was shared by the Indian Foreign Secretary during a press briefing on 10 May.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said Pakistan specifically targeted civilian areas in Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab, including health facilities and schools. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah confirmed that shelling in Rajouri killed the Deputy Commissioner.

Col Sofiya Qureshi of the Indian Army stated that 300-400 drones were deployed across 36 locations by Pakistani Army along India's northern and western borders. Preliminary assessments suggest the use of Turkey's SONGAR drones in the operation.

Pakistan launched drone and missile attacks targeting military sites across northern and western India on the night of 7-8 May 2025. India confirmed that all incoming threats were neutralised by its Integrated Counter-UAS Grid and Air Defence systems. Debris has been recovered from multiple locations.

India reported intensified cross-border firing by Pakistan along the Line of Control, involving mortars and heavy artillery in the Kupwara, Baramulla, Uri, Poonch, Mendhar, and Rajouri sectors of Jammu and Kashmir, describing the activity as "unprovoked."

The Indian Army has confirmed that the death toll from Pakistani cross-border firing in the Kashmir region has risen to 16, including three women and five children.

In retaliation, India targeted air defence radars and systems at multiple sites in Pakistan, including near Lahore.

Reports suggest that two Pakistan fighter jets have been shot down. Government confirmation is awaited.

Explosions near the port in Karachi were reported, but without official government confirmation.

Indian Navy sources state that the Western Naval Command had deployed INS Vikrant and several destroyers in the Arabian Sea, signalling India's preparedness to escalate if further provoked.

Satellite Imagery Orders: A Cause for Concern

Between June 2024 and February 2025, Maxar Technologies saw a sharp rise in satellite imagery orders for Pahalgam—site of the recent terror attack—with 12 orders placed within just three weeks. This surge coincided with Maxar's partnership with Pakistan-based Business Systems International (BSI), linked to Obaidullah Syed, previously convicted for exporting technology to Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), which is involved in nuclear weapons and ballistic missile development. Maxar's portal, accessed by ThePrint, also showed imagery requests for Pulwama, Anantnag, Poonch, Rajouri, and Baramulla—areas of military significance—raising concerns over potential military or non-state actor use.

From Pakistan:

On May 10th, Pakistan's military said India targeted three bases, though most missiles were intercepted. Earlier, it reported launching Fateh missiles at Indian sites in Pathankot and Udhampur.

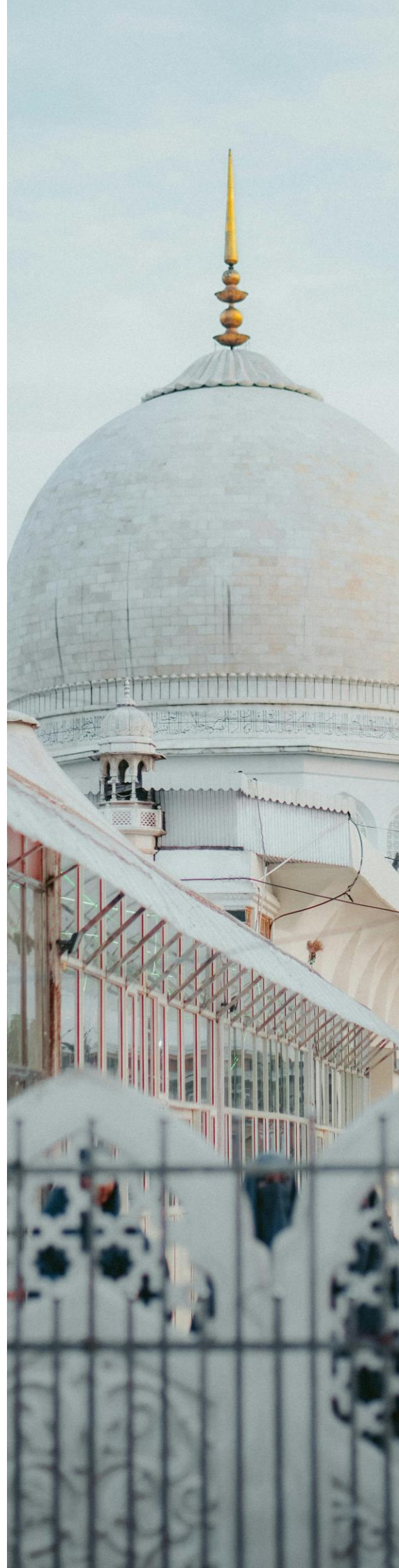
In response to rising tensions, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with Pakistan's Army Chief General Asim Munir, urging de-escalation between the two countries, according to the State Department.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio previously spoke with Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif, stressing the need for immediate de-escalation. He called on Pakistan to take concrete steps to end support for terrorist groups.

Reliable sources indicate with high certainty that India lost two fighter jets. No official confirmation has been issued by India.

It has been reliably reported that at least one air defence system in Lahore was destroyed. Further details on the number of sites targeted, their exact locations, and the overall operational effectiveness remain undisclosed or unverified at this time.

Pakistan reports that 31 people have been killed and 57 injured as a result of Indian air strikes and cross-border firing along the Line of Control.





Overall Military Capacity

If the conflict escalates, it will become increasingly asymmetrical, as India holds clear superiority over Pakistan across all key metrics from military hardware, personnel strength, financial resources, energy security, and international support, thereby positioning it to sustain and prevail in any prolonged confrontation.

Defence Industrial Base:

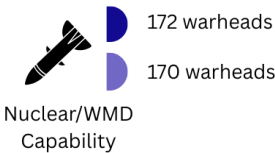
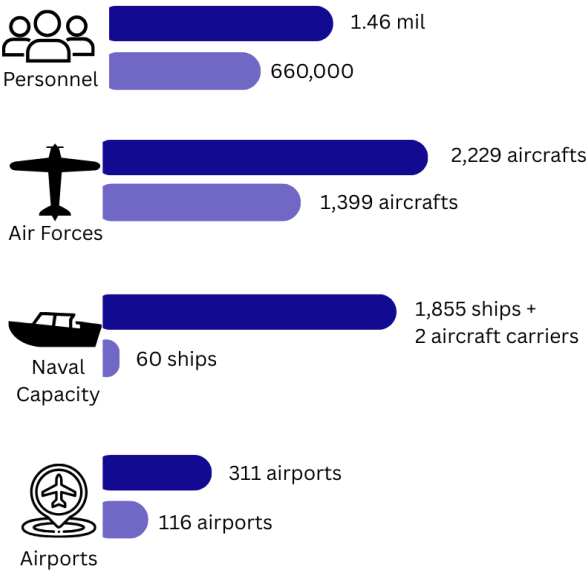
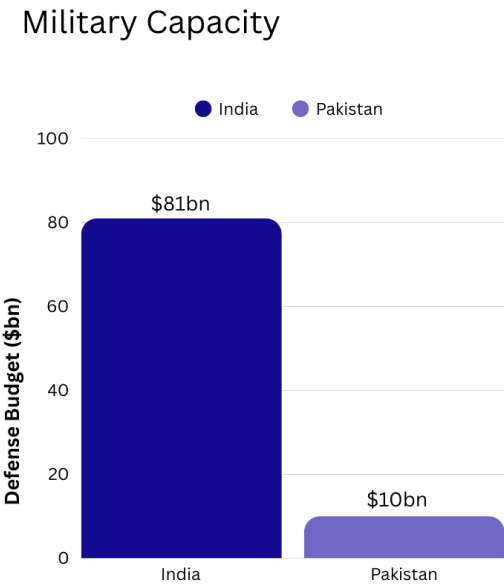
India has a much more diverse defence industrial base and supply chain than Pakistan, coupled with significant investment from the private sector. Despite being the second largest importer of arms globally, domestic production is growing, and exports have surged by 78% in the first quarter of 2024-2025. India has strong incorporation of AI in defence, including a \$12m annual budget for Defence AI Project Agency.

Pakistan's military supply chain is reliant on China and domestic production is largely limited to ammunition. There are recent unconfirmed reports of new funding to integrate AI within military technology; innovation is likely driven by the threat of India's growing capability.

There are recent reports of new funding allocated to integrate AI and IOMT, yet it is not confirmed that Pakistan uses AI in military defence. These R&D trends suggest that innovation in Pakistan's defence sector is driven by the threat of growing capability in India.



Benchmarking India and Pakistan



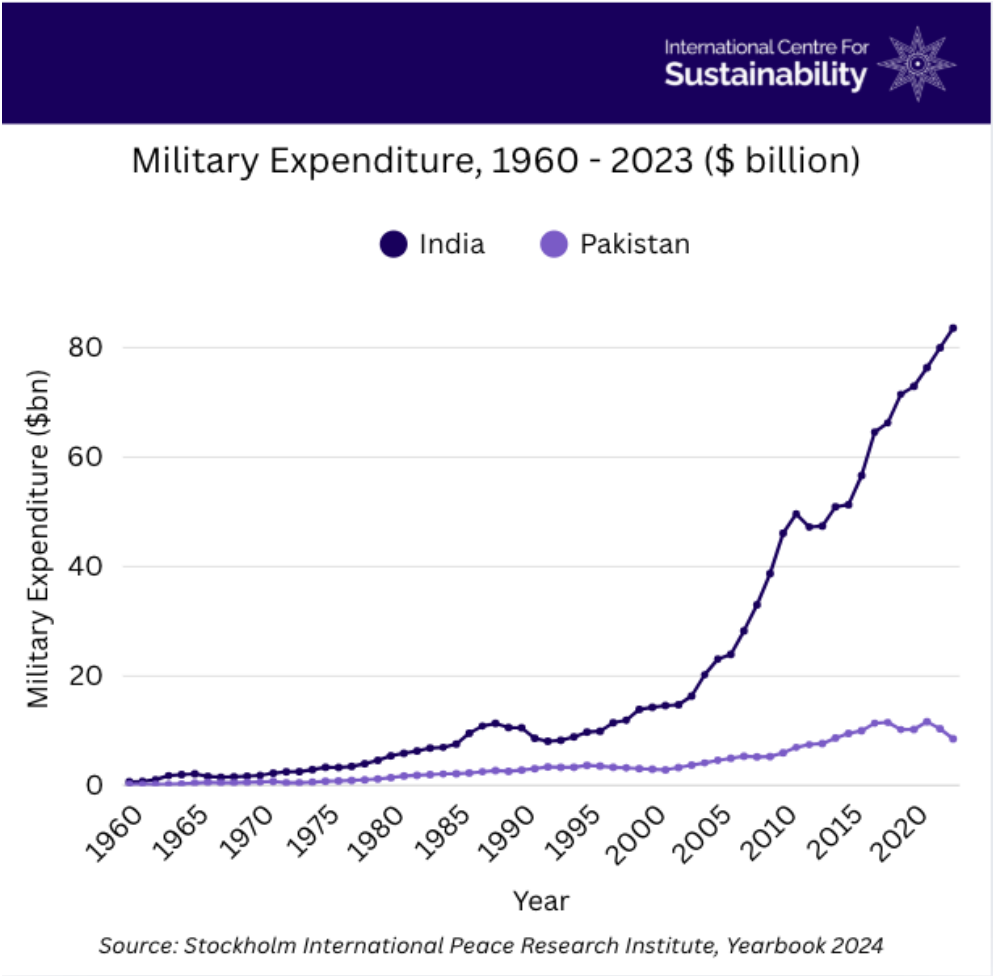


Economic Capabilities

India, a major military power, spends significantly more than Pakistan does, with a notable upward trend in the last decade. India's large and diversified economy offers greater fiscal space for defence and crisis response, while Pakistan's smaller, debt-laden economy limits its budgetary flexibility. India's relatively stable inflation and foreign reserves allow for more sustained financial resilience, whereas Pakistan's high debt, inflation and low reserves constrain its long-term capacity to endure conflict.

Cyber:

India has significantly invested in cyber capabilities for intelligence collection, defensive, and offensive operations. There is scarce evidence of India's ability to conduct offensive cyber operations in practice, though this capability reportedly exists. Pakistan remains firmly against the militarisation of cyber space, yet has targeted vital infrastructure, military networks, and government websites in India through cyber-attacks, with limited effect.





Counterspace:

India's space capability has only militarised relatively recently, with growing sector prioritisation by the Indian Air and Space Force (IASF) emphasises growing sector prioritisation. India's terrestrial monitoring systems have been in place since 2005, allowing close monitoring of infrastructure developments along the India-Pakistan border. Ballistic missile defence technology led to development of direct ascent anti-satellite missile capability, demonstrated in March 2019. Though the use of kinetic space weapons is unlikely here, India holds the balance of power. Pakistan remains dependent on foreign technology for remote sensing and Earth observation, lacking its own counterspace capability

Disinformation & Psychological:

India and Pakistan's ability to wage a disinformation war is on a more even footing. Both engage in low-level degradation and website defacement. India is ranked the highest globally for spread of misinformation and disinformation, with Pakistan 5th. India has been accused of using psychological operations and direct intervention to manipulate the regional balance of power, which has been ignored by the international community. Pakistan has been accused of launching a 'full-blown disinformation offensive' after Operation Sindoor. Both India and Pakistan maintain tight control over public narratives during crises through state-run or military media apparatuses, censorship, and nationalist messaging.

Large-scale media blackouts have followed Kashmir-related crises in India and Pakistan has moved toward a national firewall to shutdown access to specific apps.

Geopolitical Positioning and Alliances

Both India and Pakistan maintain diverse bilateral and multilateral partnerships. India has significantly more bilateral strategic partnerships and participates in more multilateral defence initiatives such as the Quad. India has broader and more formal access to global military bases, while Pakistan relies on regional partners for occasional logistical support. Both India and Pakistan face strategic vulnerabilities due to their shared border. Pakistan also faces challenges on its borders with Afghanistan and Iran, whilst India is vulnerable in the Siliguri Corridor to its north-eastern states.

India is relatively politically stable but socially and religiously diverse, while Pakistan faces structural instability due to military dominance, power struggles and ethnic divisions. National identity, historical traumas and militarised patriotism underpin a strong will to fight in countries, though rooted in differing ideological frameworks. Anti-Indian and anti-Pakistani sentiment are pervasive amongst both publics.

Both India and Pakistan have established civil defence frameworks with training programs and emergency facilities, aiming to enhance civilian preparedness during wartime. Indian civil defence infrastructure is substantially more developed, with a successful mock drill conducted across 244 districts on 7 May 2025.



Energy Security

India holds a clear resource advantage over Pakistan in its oil production and proven oil reserves (4.6 billion barrels to Pakistan's 540 million). Pakistan leads in natural gas production, though India consumes much more (58.8 vs. 46.4 billion cubic meters) and holds larger reserves (1.38 trillion vs. 592 billion cubic meters). Crucially, India also controls 6.9 million metric tons of rare earth elements (REEs), ranking third globally, while Pakistan's \$6 trillion in estimated mineral wealth remains largely untapped. When viewed collectively, Pakistan's capacity to sustain a prolonged conflict with India remains highly asymmetrical, marked by significant strategic, economic, and diplomatic disadvantages.

Equipment and Technology

India possesses a total of 2,229 aircraft, 4,201 tanks, and 293 naval vessels, which include two aircraft carriers. In contrast, Pakistan has 1,399 aircraft, 2,627 tanks, and 121 naval assets. India's enhanced financial capabilities have facilitated the modernization of its military forces and the expansion of procurement from France, Israel and the USA. Pakistan continues to rely significantly on arms from China. India has more than 11,000 artillery units, compared to Pakistan's approximately 4,600. Though India's air force is larger and better equipped, Pakistan has more military training aircraft.

India's naval fleet positions it as a formidable blue-water navy with extensive global capabilities. Pakistan has a primarily green-water force. India's more extensive network of roads, ports and airports provides a logistical edge that benefits it in prolonged military engagements.

India subscribes to a 'No First Use' nuclear policy, whereas Pakistan retains the option for early nuclear engagement as a form of deterrence. India's missiles also offer a significantly extended strike range (8000km) to Pakistan's 2750km, though Pakistan's tactical nuclear arsenal is a strategic deterrent to counterbalance India's conventional military advantages.



Pakistan Army and Civilian Governance

The Pakistan Army exerts deep influence over the country's politics, economy, and national security. Since independence, no democratically elected Prime Minister has completed a full five-year term, with leaders frequently deposed via military coups or court disqualifications—often under military influence. Economically, the Army shapes defence spending and oversees a vast business empire spanning banking, healthcare, education, and real estate.

While traditionally Pakistan's most trusted institution, the Army faces growing public criticism—particularly on social media—for political interference, suppression of dissent, and media censorship. Recent surveys indicate shifting public sentiment: 64% of Pakistanis now favour democracy over military rule, and 69% of young voters support improved ties with India. The arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, following his fallout with the military, underscores ongoing challenges to the Army's political dominance.

Internal division within Pakistan Army

Tensions are reportedly escalating between Army Chief General Asim Munir, Pakistan's most powerful decision-maker, and General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee since 2022. These reports, corroborated by Indian military intelligence and Pakistan experts in London, suggest a leadership rift. Munir's reference to Kashmir as Pakistan's "jugular vein" prior to the Pahalgam attack indicates a provocative stance, contrasting with the more conciliatory approach of former Army Chief General Bajwa.





Implications and Trajectory

Pakistan is in a highly precarious position in the current conflict, facing both internal and external vulnerabilities. India possesses the democratic legitimacy and likely the diplomatic capital to press its advantage—including potential moves to destabilise Pakistan by reclaiming Pakistan-occupied Kashmir—at a time when Pakistan is already grappling with a growing separatist insurgency in Balochistan.

Democratic Capital in India

There is cross-party and cross-religious support for the Government of India's and the Indian Army's activities. Rajya Sabha Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge stated that all parties are on the same side. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor warned of the danger of religious arguments that support Pakistan's territorial claims.

Asaduddin Owaisi, the leader of the All India Majlis e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), a prominent Muslim political party, has been heavily critical of the invocation of Islam by Pakistan-based terrorist groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammed, arguing that Pakistan must be re-instated on the FATF 'grey list' that monitors the financing of terrorism.

The primary risk to this democratic capital is government control over the media and information spaces. The Global Government Affairs team at X claims that executive orders from the Government of India have required it to block 8,000 accounts in India. An advisory from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting states that live coverage and real-time reporting of defence operations is not permitted. Access to one media platform, The Wire, has been blocked by the Ministry.





India's Diplomatic Capital

The USA is unlikely to engage in mediating the conflict. China, despite its regional influence, is not well-positioned as a mediator due to the risk of jeopardising its substantial trade surplus with India if perceived as favouring Pakistan. Hard diplomatic barriers to any Indian move on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir are also unlikely to come from Saudi Arabia or the UAE—both of whom maintain strong commercial ties with India—as well as from Australia or Israel.

The UK remains in dialogue with both parties. With the agreement of the FTA and recent bilateral economic cooperation, its ties to India are strong. It has sizeable Indian and Pakistani diasporas, numbering over 1 million in each case. The majority of the Pakistani diaspora is from Mirpur, in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir. This places the United Kingdom in a strategically advantageous position to actively encourage de-escalation through viable back channels.

Consequences for Kashmir and Balochistan

India's Home Minister re-affirmed India's territorial claims over Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir in April 2025. The control India is likely to gain over the Indus waters as a result will further destabilise Pakistan. In addition, Pakistan faces issues on a second front, in Balochistan. The Baloch Liberation Army, a separatist insurgent group, claimed an IED explosion on 7 May 2025 that targeted the Pakistan Army. Pakistan's former Prime Minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, claims that Pakistan lacks full control over Balochistan, contrary to the views of Army Chief Asim Munir.

Pakistan is at risk of losing both Kashmir and Balochistan, giving it little incentive to escalate its conflict with India. It already faces pressure from China because of the Chinese workforce and investment in the Gwadar port. This will only intensify should Balochistan secede.

Domestic Implications in the UK

There is an ongoing risk to community cohesion from the linking of geopolitical alignment and religious loyalty, through equivalence drawn by Muslim influencers between Hindutva and Zionism. Robert Carter, a journalist for 5 Pillars, brands this as a "global war against Islam" and urges Pakistan to "warm up the Islamic bomb". This offers a religious justification for further escalation and violence. Subboor Ahmad has framed the Kashmir conflict explicitly as a religious one between Muslims and Hindus, who are to be brought to Islam.

There is a further risk from misinformation spread by British Muslim platforms. A video shared by 5 Pillars depicting the flags of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan being trod on in India frames the incident as disrespect towards the Islamic declaration of faith. This has the potential to further mobilise Muslims, alongside 5 Pillars' promotion of a protest outside the Consulate General of India in Birmingham.

The ICfS received as yet unverified reports of potential non-crime hate incidents directed against Hindus in the UK following the strikes on 7 May 2025. Further investigation is required to substantiate them. There are also ongoing risks of non-crime hate incidents directed against Muslims, from the Israel-Gaza conflict and the Southport riots in 2024.



Recommendations

1. Uphold Information Integrity:

Policymakers, media, and the international community must prioritise credible, verifiable sources in all public statements and reporting. Public commentary and diplomatic engagement should be informed by balanced, evidence-based analysis.

- a) Support Digital Oversight: Monitor social media platforms in order to counter the spread of misinformation related to the conflict.
- b) Encourage embassies and diplomatic missions to verify claims before relaying or endorsing any information received from host countries, especially in conflict zones.
- c) Collaborate with credible research institutions and independent think tanks to ensure access to nuanced, on-the-ground analysis.

2. Sustained Diplomatic Dialogue:

The UK and USA should play an active role in de-escalation through sustained diplomatic engagement and strategic back channels.

- a) Leverage UK-Pakistan ties: The UK should utilise its extensive diplomatic, defence, and intelligence relationships, developed over decades with Pakistan to privately convey the futility of pursuing an asymmetrical conflict with India. British interlocutors should emphasise that such a strategy is strategically counterproductive and risks long-term national harm.
- b) Highlight Strategic Risks: Both the UK and USA should underscore to Pakistani policymakers the severe strategic costs of relying on non-state actors and maintaining terrorist infrastructure, including international isolation, economic repercussions, and erosion of regional stability.
- c) Coordinate with Allies: Align with partners in the EU, Gulf states, and regional actors to reinforce unified messaging, ensuring Pakistan receives a consistent international stance on the unacceptability of proxy conflicts.



3. Highlight Strategic Challenges:

The UK should maintain balanced engagement with both India and Pakistan, while privately reinforcing the strategic realities facing Pakistan.

- a) **Emphasise Lack of Incentives for Escalation:** Clearly communicate to Pakistani policymakers that escalation offers little strategic benefit and carries significant risks, particularly given Pakistan's internal vulnerabilities in Kashmir and Balochistan.
- b) **Underscore Internal Fragilities:** Highlight the potential for internal destabilisation if conflict escalates—stressing that unrest in Balochistan and ongoing tensions in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir could be exacerbated by external military entanglements.
- c) **Maintain Dual Engagement:** Continue engaging India constructively to affirm the UK's commitment to regional peace, while using diplomatic channels with Pakistan to deter aggressive posturing.

4. Domestic Monitoring and Community Cohesion:

The UK Home Office should maintain vigilant oversight of potential threats to community cohesion arising from international tensions.

- a) **Closely track incidents involving the glorification of terrorism, incitement of violence, and the spread of religiously polarising narratives linked to the India–Pakistan conflict.**
- b) **Track Non-Crime Hate Incidents:** Strengthen monitoring of non-crime hate incidents that may signal rising community tensions, ensuring timely interventions to prevent escalation.
- c) **Equip Frontline Stakeholders:** Provide updated guidance and resources to schools, safeguarding teams, local authorities, and community leaders on identifying and responding to hate incidents and safeguarding vulnerable individuals.
- d) **Coordinate with Law Enforcement:** Ensure police forces are adequately briefed and resourced to manage potential protests and gatherings sensitively, protecting both freedom of assembly and public order.



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