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Pakistan-Iran Conflict and its Implications

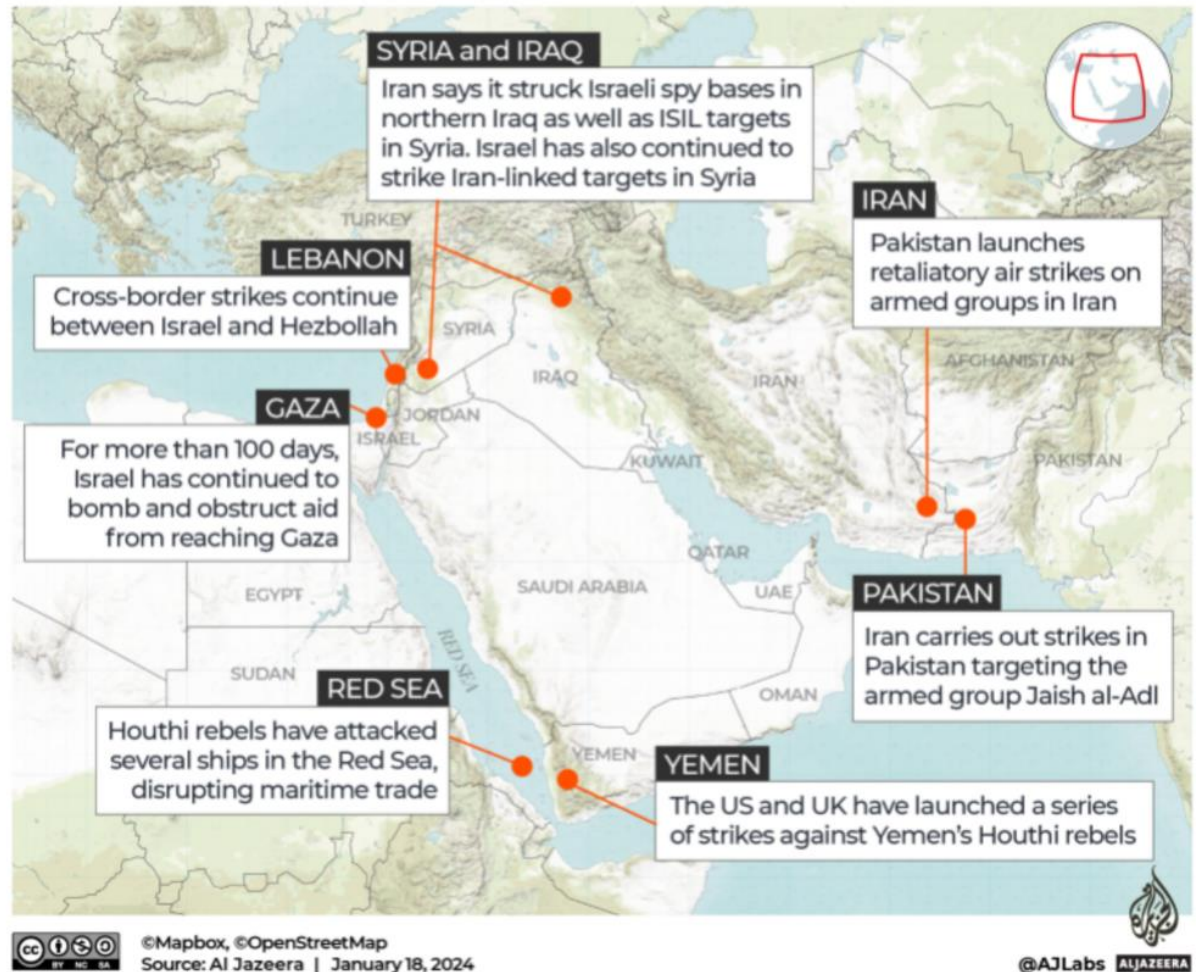
- Iran conducted strikes on Pakistan's Balochistan province – killing two children and wounding several others, on January 16th, according to Pakistani authorities.
- Iran's state-aligned Tasnim news agency said it had been targeting strongholds of the Sunni militant group Jaish al-Adl, known in Iran as Jaish al-Dhulm, or Army of Justice.
- Pakistan struck back two days later with what it called a “series of highly coordinated and specifically targeted precision military strikes” on several alleged separatist hideouts in Sistan and Baluchestan: Operation Marg Bar Sarmachar.
- The day before the strikes in Pakistan, Iran launched ballistic missiles at Iraq and Syria, claiming to be targeting a spy base for Israeli forces and “anti-Iran terror groups.”
- Meanwhile, heavy fighting continues between Israel and the powerful Iran-backed group Hezbollah across the Lebanon border; and the US is fighting Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, who have attacked ships in the Red Sea in the name of revenge for Israel's assault on Gaza.
- Iran attacked Pakistan when:
 - Pakistan-Iran Joint Naval Military Exercise at Strait of Hormuz.
 - Iranian delegation in Pakistan to enhance trade.

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CONFLICT

Tensions rise across the region

A series of recent strikes by several players in the Middle East and beyond has heightened concerns about a wider regional spillover of the war in Gaza.



- **History of Pakistan-Iran relations:**

- Iran was one of the first countries to recognize Pakistan.
- Iran assisted Pakistan in 1965 and 1971 wars against India.
- Pakistan-Iran Friendship treaty of 1950
- Pakistani support to Iran in Iran-Iraq War
- PAK-IRAN Preferential Trade Agreement: 10\$ Billion trade potential: Business Recorder.
- Mand-Pashin Border Sustenance Marketplace
- Close religious affinity.

➤ **Cross Border Terrorism a big strategic divergence between Iran and Pakistan:**



Sources: Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan military spokesperson, CNN reporting
Graphic: Lou Robinson, CNN

- Jundullah, a Sunni militant organisation whose leader was executed in Iran in 2010.
- Tensions escalated significantly between Islamabad and Tehran in April 2017 when Jaish al Adl members killed 10 Iranian border guards and then escaped across the border to the Pakistani side.
- In 2022, Pakistani Baloch insurgents, who are seeking independence from Islamabad, attacked a checkpoint in the Kech district of Balochistan province, killing 10 Pakistani soldiers.
- Hideouts of Baloch Militants and Separatist groups in Iran: BLA, BLF and BRA
- Kulbhusan Jadhav of India, who committed espionage and sabotage, was also apprehended in Balochistan.

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➤ **China, Iran and Pakistan trilateral counterterrorism and regional security consultation: First meeting held in China in 2023.**

Why Iran Attacked Pakistan:

- The root cause of the crisis remains: Each side harbors violent actors that target the other. But for Iran to try to address that w/ a strike on its nuclear-armed neighbor, at a moment when widening instability in ME is already imperiling Iran's security interests=reckless move: Michel Kugelman
- According to Aizaz Chaudhry, former foreign secretary of Pakistan, following are the causes of Iranian attack on Pakistan
- **BRICS Expansion and Iranian muscle fledging.**
- **Saudi-Iran Rapprochement and Iranian confidence boosting.**
- **Chinese Investments in Iran: China-Iran Strategic Partnership: 420\$ billion investment.**
- **Pakistan's aversion to continue Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline:**
 - American Sanctions
 - Blacklisting of Iran by FATF in 2022
 - Mohammad Marandi, a Tehran based political analyst, opined that Pakistan's discontinuity with IP gas Pipeline can be a cause of Iranian attack on Pakistan
- **Pressure on Iranian Leadership due to terrorist activities in Iran:**
 - According to Maleeha Lodhi, burgeoning terrorist activities in Iran compelled Iranian government to take such a step to show its people that Iran is doing enough to counter terrorism.
 - Kerman Incident: 94 people died and 294 injured in Iran due to terrorist attack claimed by IS-K.
- **Indian involvement in Iran:**
 - Chabahar port and Indian Investments

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- In 2016, India signed a deal with Iran entailing \$8 billion investment in Chabahar port and industries in Chabar Special Economic Zone, including an aluminium smelter and a urea making facility, at Chabahar port is being developed was a transit route to Afghanistan and central Asia.
- International North South Transport Corridor.
- Shahid Beheshti port and India: 15th Jan 2024 India and Iran finalized agreement on the development of the southeastern Iranian port city of Chabahar
- **The role of Israel to counter Iran through terror groups situated near Pak-Iran Border:**
 - ISIS, Jaishe al-Adl, Iraqi Kurd separatists.
 - Mohammad Marandi opines it was a message to Israel by Iran.

The Implications of Iran-Pakistan Conflict on Pakistan:

- **Rise of Sectarianism: Shia vs Sunni divide.**
- **Another disturbed border after the Eastern and Western Borders:**
According to Aizaz Chudhary, Pakistan cannot afford one more conflictual border.
- **A halt to Pakistan's Policy of Geo-economics.**
- **India winning the hybrid warfare against Pakistan: isolating Pakistan from the region.**
- **A blow to CPEC-Chabahar port cooperation.**
- **Iran a close ally of China: It will impact China-Pakistan relations.**
- **Eradication of the prospects of Pakistan-Iran Energy Cooperation.**

Regional Implications of Iran-Pakistan Conflict:

1. From northern Iraq to Lebanon to Pakistan to the Red Sea, an array of strikes and counter-strikes is going on:

- The US has carried out strikes against Houthi rebels in Yemen, who have resumed their attacks on container ships in the Red Sea.
 - Iran has struck what it said was an Israeli spy headquarters in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq.
 - Iran targeting anti-Iran militants in Pakistan and Syria.
 - Lebanon, Hezbollah, and Israel have escalated the intensity of fighting across the borders.
 - emboldening the Iran-led "Axis of Resistance" (a military alliance built by Iran over four decades to oppose Israeli and American power in the Middle East)
2. **Damaging the harmony of SCO countries:**
 3. **China balancing ties between Pakistan and Iran.**
 4. **Halt the progress of regional connectivity.**
 5. **Iran-India exacerbating relations.**
 6. **Saudi-Iran rapprochement and the role of Pakistan.**
 7. **It will curb the cause of Palestinian freedom.**
 8. **It can lead to US-Pakistan proximity in the region.**
 9. **It will hurt the Pakistan-China-Russia and Iran collaboration in the region.**

Conclusion.

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