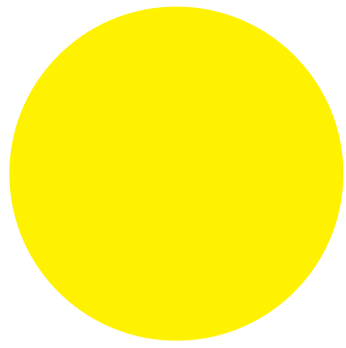


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Pakistan's mediation How Islamabad brought Washington, Tehran to table

By Syed Ali Abbas
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OPINION EXCLUSIVE

As delegations from the United States and Iran convened in Islamabad on April 11 for direct negotiations facilitated by Pakistan, the international community witnessed a development that few had anticipated. Pakistan, which brokered a ceasefire between the two warring parties on April 7, had emerged as the principal intermediary in one of the most consequential diplomatic efforts in history. That both Washington and Tehran accepted Pakistan in this role, at a moment of acute military conflict and deep mutual hostility, reflects a convergence of factors that deserve serious attention. Understanding how Pakistan curved out this position requires a study of the relationships it has cultivated, the diplomatic stance it has maintained, and the structural conditions that made it the only actor simultaneously trusted by both sides.

Foundation of Pakistan's credibility

Pakistan's ability to mediate between the United States and Iran rests fundamentally on the character of its bilateral relationships with both sides. These relationships reflect decades of sustained engagement that have established a degree of mutual confidence not easily replicated by other potential intermediaries. Pakistan's relationship with the United States has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. High-level diplomatic and military engagement, including direct contacts between Pakistan's senior leadership and the Trump administration, established a channel of communication that proved essential when Washington required a credible intermediary to engage Tehran. Pakistan's conduct during its bilateral conflict with India in May 2025, specifically its demonstrated preference for de-escalation and its public acknowledgment of American diplomatic efforts in bringing that crisis to a close, consolidated its standing in Washington

considerably. The personal rapport developed between Pakistan's leadership and President Trump during this period created a foundation of trust that became directly relevant to the mediation effort months later. Pakistan's relationship with Iran operates on an entirely different but equally substantive basis. The two countries share a long border and a history of bilateral engagement that predates the contemporary state system in its cultural and civilizational dimensions. Iran was among the first countries to recognize Pakistan's independence, and that foundational gesture has shaped the quality of the bilateral relationship ever since. Pakistan and Iran have maintained constructive diplomatic ties across periods of considerable regional turbulence, and Islamabad has consistently approached Tehran as a neighboring state deserving of respect and engagement.

Beyond its historical foundations, Pakistan's engagement with Iran also rests on a concrete institutional dimension. As the country that represents Iran's diplomatic interests in Washington, Pakistan possessed a practical channel that no other potential mediator had access to. When the conflict erupted on February 28, Pakistan was able to activate this channel, engaging across multiple capitals within days and putting forward a concrete ceasefire framework that included an immediate halt to hostilities, a two-week negotiation window, and confidence-building measures.

Pakistan's position in the current conflict has been firmly rooted in international law and the principles of state sovereignty, calling consistently for a negotiated resolution and the protection of civilian populations. This stance reflects a broader and longstanding feature of Pakistani foreign policy, that when Muslim states are drawn into conflict with one another or with external powers, Pakistan's role is not to take sides but to work actively toward peace and stability.

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A 2,000-year-old art form shines again on glass canvases in Iran

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'Minab Eyes' installation unveiled in Tehran to honor schoolchildren

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Fortress of Iran emerging after test of direct confrontation

By Sajad Abedi
Political analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

As of April 2026, the Islamic Republic of Iran stands at perhaps the most critical juncture since its inception in 1979. Following the unprecedented military aggression initiated in February 2026 and the subsequent martyrdom of Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the nation has undergone a rapid and profound transition. The appointment of Ayatollah Seyed Mojtaba Khamenei as the new Supreme Leader on March 8 marked the beginning of a

new chapter. Today, the discourse surrounding a "strategic ceasefire" with Western powers is not merely about silencing guns; it is about defining the survival and evolution of the Iranian state in a post-conflict world.

Strategy over sentiment for Tehran

A ceasefire in the current context is viewed through the lens of "strategic patience 2". Unlike previous diplomatic efforts, the 2026 negotiations—largely facilitated by regional intermediaries like Pakistan and Oman—are driven by a "Realpolitik" necessity. The Iranian establishment recognizes that while the military has

demonstrated significant deterrent capabilities (notably in the Persian Gulf and against advanced aerial platforms), the domestic infrastructure and the national economy require a period of "active reconstruction". Therefore, any ceasefire is seen not as a concession, but as a tactical maneuver to consolidate the new leadership's authority and provide much-needed relief to the civilian population without compromising on core ideological red lines, such as the missile program and regional influence.

Domestic consolidation

The future of the Islamic Republic is now inextricably linked to the vision of its third Leader. The transition in March 2026 was remarkably swift,

signaling a high level of consensus within the establishment.

We are likely to see a shift toward a more "technocratic security state". This model prioritizes:

1. Institutional cohesion: eliminating factional infighting to present a unified front to the West.
2. Economic resilience: moving beyond "resistance economy" to a "sovereign integration" model, focusing on deepening ties with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS.
3. Ideological continuity: maintaining the Axis of Resistance while perhaps adopting more sophisticated, less overt methods of regional power projection.

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