

After the Crisis

Three Futures for
India and Pakistan



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This is the closing report in the series, and it turns from what has happened to what comes next. It asks where the India-Pakistan relationship is heading a year after the April-May 2025 crisis, now that the relationship has been stripped to almost nothing, with no trade, a suspended Indus Waters Treaty, downgraded missions, and severed people-to-people ties. It works through the forces most likely to shape the next phase: the water dispute, terror attacks as crisis triggers, both sides' growing appetite for escalation, the offense-defense spiral in air defenses, and the surprisingly durable May 10 ceasefire. It then lays out three scenarios that follow from Munir's concentration of power: renewed conflict, a Musharraf-style push for peace, or a preference for the status quo, and closes by weighing the second-order risks for India, from Pakistan's rising standing in the Gulf to the warming of US-Pakistan ties.

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AUTHOR

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Abbreviations

AD — Air Defence
ABM — Anti-Ballistic Missile
BLA — Balochistan Liberation Army
CCS — Cabinet Committee on Security (India)
CDF — Chief of Defence Forces (Pakistan)
CDS — Chief of Defence Staff (India)
COAS — Chief of Army Staff
DG-ISPR — Director General, Inter-Services Public Relations
IBO — Intelligence-Based Operation
IWT — Indus Waters Treaty
J&K — Jammu and Kashmir
LoC — Line of Control
MEA — Ministry of External Affairs (India)
MHA — Ministry of Home Affairs (India)
PTI — Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
RSS – Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
TTP — Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan
UAE — United Arab Emirates
UNSC — United Nations Security Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The India-Pakistan relationship has settled into its lowest point in decades. A year after the April-May 2025 crisis, there is no trade, no functioning Indus Waters Treaty, downgraded high commissions, and almost no contact between ordinary people. This report looks past that wreckage to ask what will actually shape the next phase, and finds that the crisis changed the intensity of the rivalry more than its rules.

Water is the clearest case. India's suspension of the Indus treaty looms large in Pakistani rhetoric, yet India has not rushed to build on the western rivers and still quietly shares flow data each monsoon. As long as that managed suspension holds, the treaty itself is unlikely to start a war. The real danger sits in the river projects it once governed. India's new diversion works on the Chenab, begun in 2026, are read in Islamabad as a breach of Pakistan's stated war threshold, which means water can become a *casus belli* whenever Pakistan chooses, unless the two sides talk.

On terrorism the report is deliberately deflationary. A Pakistan-linked attack remains the likeliest trigger of the next crisis, but 2025 did not invent a new Indian doctrine. India has treated terror as an act of war since 2016, and the "acts of terror are acts of war" language never hardened into formal doctrine, as the muted response to the November 2025 Red Fort bombing and the new PRAHAAR strategy both show. What did shift is appetite. India struck deeper, absorbed Pakistani drone swarms and corrected its early mistakes, so any future response will have to be bigger, and a longer, missile-heavy conflict of the kind now visible between the US and Iran looks more plausible than before.

Most of the report weighs three futures for a Pakistan run by one five-star officer. Munir could engineer another clash, using militant attacks he blames on India. He could, like Musharraf, use his concentrated power to seek peace, though the PTI, the militants and a wrecked judiciary make that harder and Delhi's window to respond is narrow. Or he could bank his gains and hold the status quo, which his tenure to 2030, his Gulf and US openings, and his western-border troubles all encourage. The likeliest path is the last. For India, the status quo is cheap at home, but its second-order costs- Pakistan's new weight in the Gulf and the warming of US-Pakistan ties- are where the real strategic friction now lies.

INTRODUCTION

The India-Pakistan relationship became even more entrenched in its 'minimal' character following the April/May 2025 crisis. This was reflected in a further reduction of people-to-people ties through the elimination of exemptions to visa restrictions, the suspension of the IWT, the downgrading of the High Commissions in both capitals, and a halt to indirect trade through third countries. The prospects for bilateral engagement remain low. The factors most likely to shape the relationship going forward are set out below.

INDUS WATERS TREATY

The Indus Waters Treaty remains a flashpoint, though not an immediate trigger for conflict. India's unilateral suspension of the treaty continues to feature prominently in Pakistan's characterization of the bilateral equation as volatile. Since linking its threshold for war in April 2025 to any potential Indian modification of flows in the Western rivers, Pakistan has issued several threats to New Delhi, warning against adverse actions affecting its share of the Indus waters, while continuing to reject India's suspension of the treaty.

Notably, however, India is yet to substantially follow through with new construction on the three Western rivers (beyond the IWT's limits). India also appears to have continued sharing river data with Pakistan, albeit through the Indian High Commission in Islamabad rather than through the Permanent Indus Commissioners, the treaty's formal communication channel.¹

Hence, as long as the IWT remains in this suspended yet functionally managed state, with India continuing to share river data during each monsoon season, it is unlikely to trigger a new war. However, there are variables related to the Indus itself (which the IWT was meant to address) that continue to hold the potential to trigger future crises. In May 2026, India reportedly began work on two large-scale projects in the Chenab River basin: an 8.7km-long inter-basin water diversion tunnel linking the Beas River to divert surplus water, and a diversion-cum-sediment

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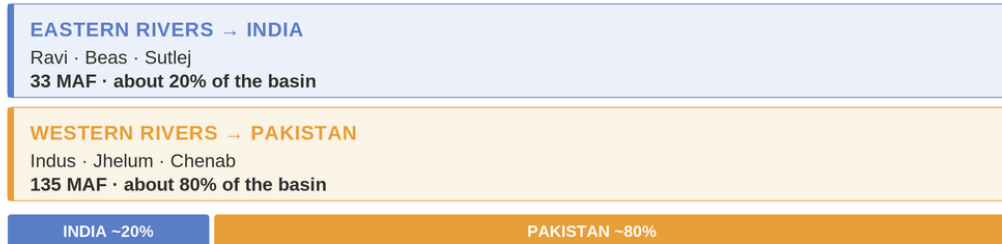
bypass tunnel at the Salal hydroelectric project in J&K.² For Pakistan, the projects represent India’s operationalization of its suspension of the IWT.³ Islamabad sees the Salal project, in particular, as a violation of the 1978 Salal Dam Agreement between the two states (which is integrally tied to the IWT but has not been officially suspended by India).⁴ Additionally, for Pakistan, significant diversions of the Chenab’s waters constitute violations of the now-suspended IWT and risk crossing its war threshold.

THE INDUS WATERS TREATY

Six rivers, split about 80-20 in Pakistan’s favour. It held for 65 years. India suspended it in 2025.

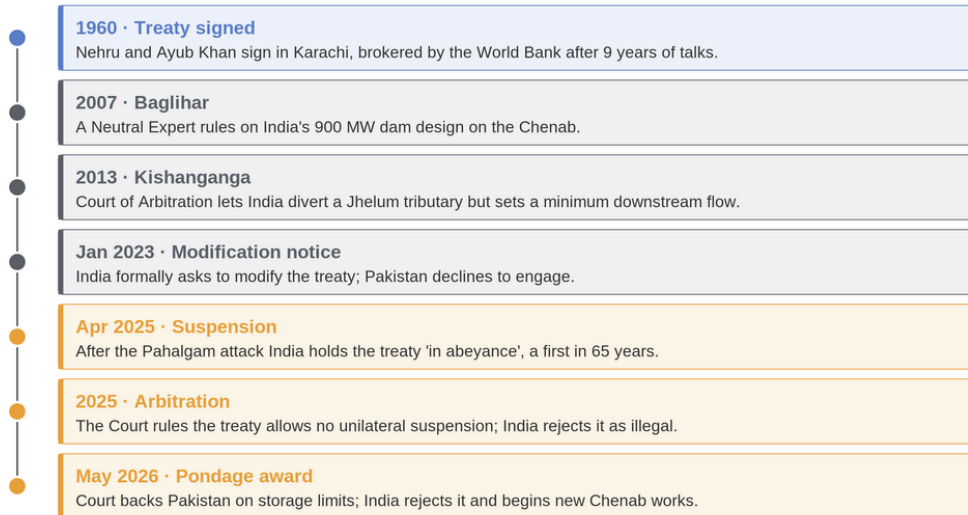
<p>SIGNED 1960 World Bank-brokered, after 9 years of talks</p>	<p>6 RIVERS 3 east to India, 3 west to Pakistan</p>
<p>~168 MAF total mean annual flow of the basin</p>	<p>SUSPENDED 2025 held 'in abeyance' by India since April</p>

HOW THE BASIN IS SPLIT



India may use the western rivers only for limited, non-consumptive run-of-river hydropower, the source of nearly every dispute.

KEY MILESTONES, 1960 - 2026



THE BOTTOM LINE

The treaty gave Pakistan ~80% of the basin and survived three wars. India **suspended it in April 2025** after Pahalgam. Arbitrators say the treaty allows **no unilateral suspension**; India rejects the court, yet still shares flood data. Flashpoint: the Chenab.

MAF = million acre-feet; flow figures are treaty-era means and vary year to year. Percentages approximate.

However, for India, the action can represent both an advancement of its punitive measures against Pakistan since April 2025, as well as the operationalization of Indus-linked measures long deemed necessary to fulfill growing consumption needs, especially in J&K. Note that J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah (from the opposition INDIA Alliance) vociferously supported India's suspension of the IWT in April 2025.⁵

If India's intent is driven by Pakistan-related motivations, then it represents an expansion of India's risk appetite vis-à-vis testing Pakistan's war threshold. However, should it be driven more (if not solely) by consumption needs, it would make potential Indian engagement with Pakistan inevitable, at least over water-sharing.

Even if the IWT were not suspended, the nature of water sharing arrangements globally (notwithstanding the IWT's unique character), climatic pressures, changing consumption patterns, and shifting river flows would necessitate engagement to update existing arrangements. In any case, India's formal actions vis-à-vis the IWT predate the May 2025 crisis by over two years, with India's first notice requesting modification of key treaty provisions sent to Pakistan in January 2023. Pakistan effectively ignored all notices between that month and May 2025. Moreover, India's rejection of decisions issued ex parte by the Court of Arbitration established at Pakistan's request has been based on the same rationale in both the years before and after the 2025 crisis.⁶

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Hence, even if developments related to the IWT itself as a treaty are insufficient to trigger a crisis, non-engagement vis-à-vis the Indus water-sharing issue as a whole leaves Pakistan with the space to declare its own casus belli at any given point in the absence of Indian reassurances. Consequently, regardless of Indian intent and outside of the treaty itself, Pakistan's concerns over the course and flow of the Indus, Chenab, or Jhelum rivers continue to present a potential crisis trigger, unless there is at least issue-based engagement with India (which individuals such as the RSS General Secretary have signaled openness to, alongside an assertive deterrence posture).⁷

TERROR ATTACKS AS CRISIS TRIGGERS

Terror attacks remain the most potent triggers of India-Pakistan crises. However, the April-May 2025 crisis did not generate a new norm in how India responds to a terror attack. Since 2016, India has already set the precedent that it will react conventionally to any sub-conventional trigger, viewing Pakistan-sponsored terror attacks as the first rung of the escalation ladder. The April-May crisis represented a shift within this framework rather than a departure from it, reflecting an expansion in both sides' tolerance for escalation and India's willingness to strike deeper into Pakistani territory to increase Islamabad's costs.

TERROR ATTACKS AND INDIA'S RESPONSE

Major Pakistan-linked attacks in India since 2000, and which ones drew a military response.

11 ATTACKS major, Pakistan-linked, since 2000	~620 KILLED victims across these attacks (approx.)	3 STRIKES cross-border, all since 2016
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drew a military response <input type="checkbox"/> No military response		
1 Oct 2001 J&K Legislative Assembly, Srinagar 38 killed · Jaish-e-Mohammed	No military response	
13 Dec 2001 Parliament, New Delhi 9 killed · JeM / LeT (India's attribution)	Operation Parakram standoff	
14 May 2002 Kaluchak, Jammu 31 killed · Lashkar-e-Taiba (alleged)	Sustained Parakram; no strikes	
29 Oct 2005 Delhi serial blasts 62 killed · Lashkar-e-Taiba	No military response	
11 Jul 2006 Mumbai train bombings 209 killed · LeT + SIMI (alleged)	No military response	
26 Nov 2008 Mumbai attacks (26/11) 166 killed · Lashkar-e-Taiba	No military response	
2 Jan 2016 Pathankot air base 7 killed · Jaish-e-Mohammed	No cross-border strike	
18 Sep 2016 Uri army base 19 killed · Jaish-e-Mohammed	Surgical strikes	
14 Feb 2019 Pulwama (CRPF convoy) 40 killed · Jaish-e-Mohammed	Balakot airstrike	
22 Apr 2025 Pahalgam 26 killed · The Resistance Front (LeT)	Operation Sindoor	
10 Nov 2025 Red Fort blast, New Delhi 15 killed · JeM link; India did not name Pakistan	No military response	

THE BOTTOM LINE

For 15 years India met even the deadliest attacks, 26/11 included, with **diplomacy, not force**. Since the 2016 Uri strikes that restraint is gone: Uri, Balakot and Sindoor **each hit deeper**. The 2025 Red Fort blast, which India chose not to blame on Pakistan, shows **attribution is now political**.

Attributions are India's official or investigative findings; Pakistan denies state involvement. Tolls are victims (excluding attackers), approximate. Major attacks onl

Indeed, the precedent established by the crisis is not that India will respond militarily, but that any future response will necessarily have to be broader and more substantial than its previous round of strikes against Pakistan.

Moreover, the formulation that India will henceforth treat acts of terror as acts of war does not appear to have acquired doctrinal status. While there is no formal norm regarding what a doctrine's articulation should look like, a doctrine's deterrent value is unarguably linked to the degree to which it can convince an adversary of its credibility. Thus far in India at least, doctrines have relied both on comprehensiveness and transparency to achieve this – both political doctrines (such as the Cabinet Committee on Security Note articulating India's 2003 nuclear doctrine) and military doctrines (such as the Army, Navy, and Air Force doctrines).

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This interpretation of the 'acts of terror being acts of war' formulation was reinforced in the months following the April/May crisis. After the Red Fort suicide bombing in November 2025 (which killed 15 and injured more than 20 in the national capital), the Government of India refrained from naming Pakistan or alleging Pakistani involvement. The Cabinet Resolution after the attack attributed it to "anti-national" forces and did not name Pakistan.⁸ At that stage, the formulation's doctrinal value could still be considered if India had identified alternative, non-Pakistan, motivations for the attack. However, that consideration becomes difficult to sustain in light of India's inputs⁹ to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 1267 Committee's Report from February 2026, which highlighted that the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed terror group was linked to the Red Fort blast.¹⁰

Crucially, India's new 'National Counter-Terrorism Policy & Strategy' (PRAHAAR), released by the Ministry of Home Affairs in February 2026, makes no reference to the formulation that acts of terror constitute acts of war.¹¹ Hence, the 2025 formulation appears less a doctrinal innovation than a reinforcement of the norm established in 2016.

GREATER RISK TAKING

During the May 2025 conflict, Pakistan's use of lower-order assets (especially drones meant to have a nuisance value) on May 8/9 or India's high interception rate against them¹² did not prevent India from responding to Pakistan's escalation. Evidently, Indian losses on May 7 did not occur solely/strictly due to a political or strategic choice to restrict the initial strike to terrorist infrastructure and avoid targeting Pakistani conventional military assets (including AD systems). As acknowledged by CDS Anil Chauhan in May 2025, these losses likely resulted from tactical errors that were later rectified.¹³ The IAF's uncontested operations on May 10, striking high-value military targets across Pakistan, showed that India's post-May 7 rectifications were successful enough to allow for higher-order escalation.

The overall pattern of escalation and counter-escalation between May 7 and May 10 shows increased Indian risk-taking appetite. This increases the likelihood that India may, in a future crisis, combine air power with limited ground operations (scaled-up surgical strikes) or demonstrate a greater willingness to target Pakistani conventional military targets at an earlier stage of a conflict.

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Moreover, the US-Iran war has demonstrated that sustained missile exchanges are possible between adversaries, with at least one being nuclear-armed. The protracted nature of that conflict also shows that such stand-off fighting can lead to longer timelines. While India-Pakistan crises have historically been compressed in time (except the 1947-49 war), the rising escalatory appetite evident in 2025 alone raises the probability of a longer and broader conflict in the future.

AIR DEFENSE RISKS

Improvements in AD Systems by both states could, in theory, increase the appetite for escalation. India's overwhelming air defense (AD) success in the April/May crisis arguably gave it greater confidence in its ability to absorb future waves of Pakistani escalation while responding to each.

This experience has prompted Pakistan to pursue more advanced precision-strike munitions, ordnance delivery platforms, and improvements in its own AD systems. India, meanwhile, looks to further bolster its own air defense network (especially through the induction of more S-400 units) and advance its missile program with newer dual-capable ballistic missiles (potentially including the Agni Prime).

The parallel development of increasingly sophisticated AD systems raises the risk that any future crisis could generate dynamics similar to those that pushed the United States and the USSR to negotiate and formalize the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Although the ABM Treaty was part of a broader Cold War framework of nuclear arms control between two superpowers, its fundamental logic remains relevant for any dyad: improvements in missile (or drone) defenses by one side can incentivize the other to develop more capable offensive systems, creating a reciprocal cycle of competition.

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This dynamic is likely to persist regardless of whether India and Pakistan look to emulate the use of lower-order, inexpensive technologies (such as variants of the Iranian Shahed 136 drone) in future crises.

THE MAY 10, 2025, CEASEFIRE

The May 10 ceasefire, though still non-institutionalized, remains firmly in place. Violations have numbered fewer than a dozen over the past year, broadly mirroring the pattern observed between February 2021 and April 2025. Despite the sharp downturn in bilateral ties, the Pahalgam terror attack in April, subsequent military clashes in May, an uptick in hostile rhetoric, and rapid military modernization on both sides, the Line of Control remains largely calm.

The 2021-2025 ceasefire stood in marked contrast to the years preceding 2021, when violations numbered in the thousands annually.¹⁴ That this pattern re-emerged immediately after the most intense/escalated India-Pakistan clash since Kargil suggests that both sides retain a preference for preserving the status quo along the LoC.

PAKISTAN'S CENTRALIZATION OF AUTHORITY – THREE SCENARIOS

Pakistan, under de facto military rule and, since November 2025, with the de jure centralization of supreme military authority in a single officer of five-star rank, could face three scenarios.

The *first* is that of inevitable conflict with India. Field Marshal Asim Munir's consistent leveraging of conflicts (whether internal or external) since 2023 could trigger more clashes with India, with Pakistan-sponsored terror attacks as the trigger. In any case, since the April-May 2025 crisis, Munir has repeatedly threatened India in various ways, often in response to Indian political statements signaling military preparedness for a future conflict. Beyond his August 2025 warning that Pakistan could initiate strikes from India's eastern flank,¹⁵ Munir has continued Pakistan's post-2022 pattern of attributing attacks by Baloch separatist groups and the TTP to India and Afghanistan.

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Since May 2025, the Director General, Inter-Services Public Relations (DG-ISPR) has increasingly used the term “Fitna al Hindustan” to refer to militant groups in Pakistan (characterizing them as Indian proxies) instead of (or alongside) the usual “Fitna al Khwarij” characterization. Should Munir desire another round of military clashes with India, Islamabad/Rawalpindi could test India’s tolerance by either stepping up terror attacks in India or by appropriating India’s counter-terror logic and deeming an attack to be the first rung in the escalation ladder. Regardless of its probability, the possibility of a Pakistani conventional strike (even through the use of lower-order platforms like small/medium-sized drones) across the border after a Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)/Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) attack remains non-zero. Pakistan’s new willingness to engage in conventional conflicts is evidenced by its creation of a new Army Rocket Force Command for conventional missiles, within three months of the May crisis, on 13 August 2025. Moreover, Pakistan is arguably convinced of its ability to force changes to the status quo through sub-conventional and conventional military action, thereby keeping international attention on the India-Pakistan fault line and undermining India’s de-hyphenated posture.

The **second** is the possibility that FM Munir could leverage his centralized authority to push for peace with India. This would follow the precedent set by the Indian and Pakistani effort that came closest to dispute resolution, when Pakistan’s political and military leadership was vested in Pervez Musharraf’s office throughout the early 2000s. This dynamic in Pakistan had ensured military and political ownership of both the Composite Dialogue and the Kashmir Backchannel. Today, with the office of the Chief of Defense Forces (CDF) being vested with outsized powers and a compliant and committed civilian leadership, Munir can theoretically rally sufficient institutional resources and support to engage India.

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He would, however, face greater headwinds than Musharraf did: opposition from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) (which would oppose any policy move by the Chief of Army Staff), intensified threats from militant groups, and the risk of a resurgent lawyers’ movement (given that Munir has demolished Pakistan’s constitutional judicial structures; Musharraf, in his time,

had principally taken issue with a specific Chief Justice). Nonetheless, across his term as Prime Minister (both in the 16th and 17th National Assemblies) with Asim Munir as COAS, Shehbaz Sharif has publicly called on India to engage in dialogue several times. Following the April/May crisis, this trend continued, with Sharif reiterating it in May and September of 2025, stating that Pakistan was ready to engage in dialogue with India on all outstanding issues, including Kashmir, trade, and terrorism.

In September, Sharif called specifically for a “composite, comprehensive and result-oriented dialogue”¹⁶ (with the first word being synonymous with the Composite Dialogue between India and Pakistan in the late 1990s and early 2000s). However, the Overton Window in India for New Delhi to reciprocate is narrow and would need expansion through a positive Pakistani trigger. The original Composite Dialogue was enabled by a confluence of factors: a series of crises (the Kargil war and terror attacks on the Jammu and Kashmir [J&K] Assembly, the Indian Parliament and the Kaluchak Camp which triggered India’s Op Parakram), Musharraf’s commitment to act against terror groups, and sustained engagement between Musharraf and Indian PMs Vajpayee and Singh.

Today, with India and Pakistan sharing no diplomatic, economic, political, or people-to-people ties, the conditions for creating such a window do not exist. Moreover, Sharif qualifies each call for dialogue with a rebuke of India’s Kashmir policy, a demand to roll back the 2019 constitutional changes, and a call for a plebiscite in J&K. This effectively dissuades New Delhi from issuing any meaningful response beyond its standing position that openness to dialogue is contingent on Pakistan halting terrorism.

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The *third* is Pakistan's own preference for the status quo. This draws on Pakistan's amplification of its self-proclaimed victory in the May 2025 conflict and the international reputation it has garnered to build new partnerships. Pakistan can now focus on consolidating economic gains, pursuing new defense partnerships, and rejuvenating its relationship with the United States, even as China remains its primary partner. On this board, CDF Asim Munir has sufficient incentive not to disturb the status quo. In effect, this would reciprocate India's own non-focus on Pakistan politically and its continued belief in de-hyphenation.

Militarily, the Pakistan Army's original logic for agreeing to the February 2021 ceasefire (pressures on the Western border and an internal security crisis) has only been enhanced since. This is amplified by Pakistan being in a state of "open war" against Afghanistan,¹⁷ while waging an extended intelligence-based-operation (IBO)-focused campaign against Baloch militants and the TTP.

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Moreover, given Pakistan's most recent constitutional changes, CDF Munir is likely to remain in office at least until 2030, a year after India's next general elections. While this leaves sufficient space for future engagement (assuming the absence of terrorism-related crisis triggers), it also removes the potential/need for immediate engagement, especially given the extent to which Munir has relied on the 2025 military "victory" to rationalize fresh and unprecedented constitutional changes to consolidate his power.

Nonetheless, Munir's security of tenure, immunity from legal action, and expanded powers make him an ideal candidate to pursue peace with India within Pakistan's layered politico-military landscape. New Delhi, even as it maintains de-hyphenation, would recognize Munir's supremacy but remain wary of the risks that any Munir-dependent engagement poses to sustainability. This is especially due to the long-term effects of the extreme lopsidedness in the Pakistani state's political power distribution, with the increasing weight of the CDF's post

eventually becoming a cause for other political actors to look to balance it out or eliminate it (as had occurred to Pervez Musharraf, even if after nine years in power). Should the preference for the status quo prevail, it would also increase the need for discreet communication mechanisms between the two sides to prevent threats to the status quo from arising. This would imply greater Track 1.5 and Track 2 contact, along with discreet, deniable, and empowered backchannels, without necessarily requiring these channels to eventually turn into broader dialogue processes.

THREE FUTURES FOR INDIA AND PAKISTAN

How Munir's concentrated power could play out after the 2025 crisis. All three paths run through one man.

THE REPORT'S BET		
1 · CONFLICT <i>Munir picks another fight</i>	2 · PEACE <i>Munir turns peacemaker</i>	3 · STATUS QUO <i>Munir banks his gains</i>
<p>THE DRIVER Munir's habit of using crises to force change and keep the faultline in view</p> <p>THE TRIGGER A terror attack, or a strike after a TTP / BLA incident, even with small drones</p> <p>THE ENABLERS New Army Rocket Force Command; militants cast as India's 'Fitna al Hindustan'</p>	<p>THE DRIVER Like Musharraf, one office holding military and civil power could own a dialogue</p> <p>THE OPENING Sharif has offered talks (May, Sept 2025) on Kashmir, trade and terrorism</p> <p>THE HEADWINDS PTI, militants, a revived lawyers' movement; India's window is narrow</p>	<p>THE DRIVER Bank the 2025 'victory': Gulf and US ties, economy; China still the main partner</p> <p>THE LOGIC Mirrors India's de-hyphenation; 2021 ceasefire logic only stronger; Munir secure to 2030</p> <p>THE NEED Quiet backchannels, Track 1.5 and Track 2, to manage the risks</p>
POSSIBLE · RISK IS NON-ZERO	POSSIBLE, BUT NOT YET	THE LIKELY PATH

THE BOTTOM LINE

With Munir secure to 2030 and the conditions for neither war nor peace in place, the report's likely outcome is the **status quo**: a frozen, minimal relationship managed by backchannels, vulnerable above all to a fresh terror trigger.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Materially, the status quo costs India little in economic or political terms. India-Pakistan trade has been virtually non-existent over the past 12 months since the April/May crisis, and there have been no significant adverse effects on India's strategic, political, and economic landscape.

However, the second-order effects of the crisis, Pakistan's significant resurgence on the international stage and its deeper integration into the Arab security architecture, could disrupt India's approach to the Middle East. While India's bilateral relationships with each state have firm economic and political guardrails, built alongside and despite these states' relationship with Pakistan, India's balancing act across the region becomes more challenging if Pakistan becomes a central component of the Saudi-led assertion against the United Arab Emirates (UAE), India's most vital partner in the Persian Gulf.

Beyond the Middle East, the rejuvenated US-Pakistan relationship creates its own second-order effects. Should US President Trump's personal relationship with Pakistani civilian and political leaders deepen further, the strains on the India-US relationship will inevitably increase. This is

especially true if President Trump returns to publicly encouraging India-Pakistan dispute resolution or makes any modifications to the US position on Kashmir.

In the medium to long term, apart from a terror attack-induced conflict, the first sign of a deterioration in the status quo between India and Pakistan would be the resumption of ceasefire violations along the Line of Control. Similarly, the first indicators of a positive change would be the restoration of the diplomatic, political, and economic structures that typically remain in place between disputing neighbors, notwithstanding interruptions during military clashes. The political goodwill generated by such restoration could then facilitate incremental discussions on core issues for eventual dispute resolution.

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ENDNOTES

- [1] "IWT Suspended, India Shares Flood Data with Pakistan on Humanitarian Grounds: MEA." Hindustan Times, 5 Sept. 2025, www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/iwt-suspended-india-shares-flood-data-with-pakistan-on-humanitarian-grounds-mea-101757086860633.html. Accessed 1 July 2026.
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