



Drexel GPS: Geopolitical Update

Iran's Regional Anxiety Fuels Attacks into Pakistan

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This week's geopolitical backdrop closes out amid increased tensions between Iran and Pakistan. The two countries conducted airstrikes against targets in disputed territories along the border shared between the two neighbors.

Israeli President Netanyahu's comments opposing the establishment of a Palestinian state as part of any postwar scenario punctuates the policy divide between Israel and the U.S. over the necessary conditions for a ceasefire of the Israel-Hamas war. The U.S. has ramped up its offensive strikes against Houthi rebel sites in an attempt to dissuade the group from continuing its attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

Here's what we know:

- On Tuesday, Iran launched a series of strikes on Balochistan province in Pakistan, resulting in multiple fatalities and injuries according to Pakistani authorities.
- Iran claims it targeted Iranian terrorists on Pakistani soil and that no Pakistani nationals were harmed. However, the attack has caused outrage in Pakistan, with the country calling it "an egregious violation of international law and the spirit of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran."

- Iran's state-aligned Tasnim news agency stated these strikes were aimed at strongholds of a Sunni militant group in Iran known as *Jaish al-Dhulm*, or *Army of Justice*.
- Two days later, Pakistan launched a series of what it describes as “highly coordinated and specifically targeted precision military strikes” on several alleged separatist hideouts along the Iranian border cities of Sistan and Baluchestan.

Drexel GPS Assessment:

The conflict between Pakistan and Iran against separatists operating on either side of their border is not a new phenomenon. The turbulent border has been the site of deadly confrontations that have occurred regularly over the years.

- What is noteworthy is that both sides circumvented established precedent by attacking each other’s territories without giving prior notice, which is highly unusual.

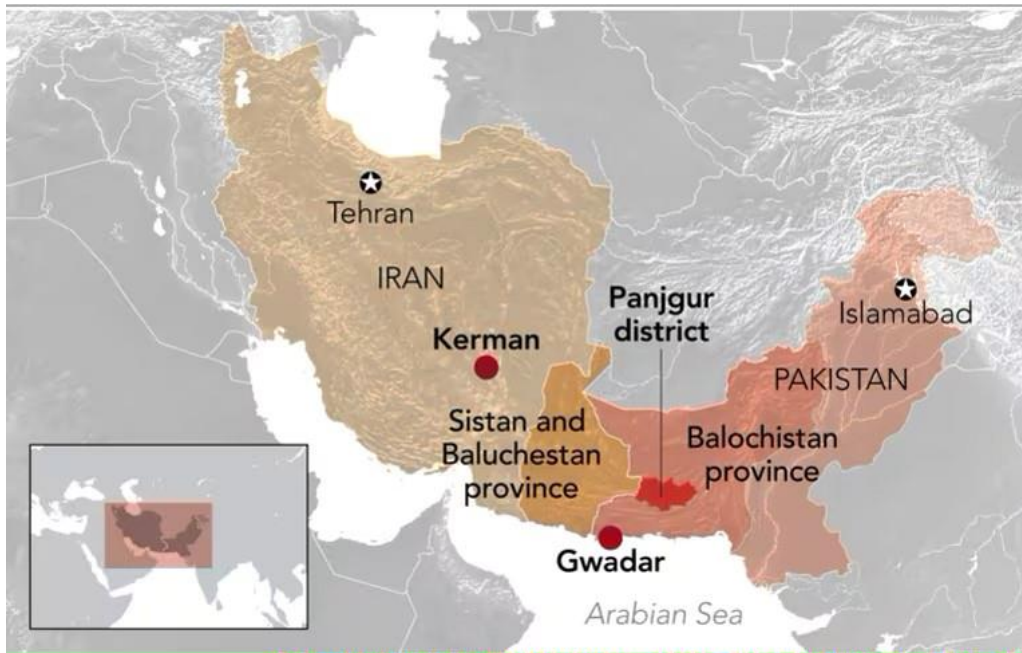
Drexel GPS Assessment: Why Did Iran Attack Pakistan Now?

With so much attention and focus on Iran’s proxies, it is often easy to forego sight of Iran's geographically large size. For perspective, Iran is roughly the size of the United States prior to the Louisiana Purchase. As a byproduct of its sheer size, Iran has multiple geographic stress points for conflict with many of its neighbors such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.

Iran is a powerful actor in the region and much of its influence is derived from funding and support to proxy groups. Additionally, this influence comes from both global and regional perception about Iran's capability. The regime in Tehran is hyper-aware and sensitive to any changes in that usurp the status quo (e.g., [The Abraham Accords](#)).

- As the status leader of the so-called “axis of resistance,” Iran does not possess the capability to completely control its proxies in the region or dictate the strategy employed by these groups. Iran’s attacks may be an attempt to distract the world from seeing this.
- For example, Hezbollah is not going to stop attacking Israel simply because Iran has ordered to do so; Hezbollah has its own agenda and history of war with Israel.
- While Iran does wield considerable influence with these groups (Hezbollah, Hamas, Houthis, etc.), it does not possess the power to come to the rescue of Palestinians in Gaza directly.
- Iran is capable of manipulating pressure points in the region, and it will likely continue to do so.
- There are misconceptions of what Iran claims it's capable of, versus what it is willing to do in the region. The Iranian regime is extremely concerned about the optics of its inability to shape the theatre in the region, especially in Gaza. This is why Iran has engaged its proxies in “support” of the Palestinians, yet it is careful to avoid direct confrontation with the U.S.
- Regional instability is viewed as a positive development for Tehran.
- We expect Tehran to engage in more acts designed to showcase its strengths and ability to “force project” across its sphere of influence away from Gaza, such as this week’s attack in Pakistan.

Iran/Pakistan Engaged in Cross Border Airstrikes



Drexel GPS will continue to monitor this situation as it develops.

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