



CRISIS BRIEFING REPORT
 US-Israel-Iran & Afghanistan-Pakistan —
 Integrated Strategic Assessment
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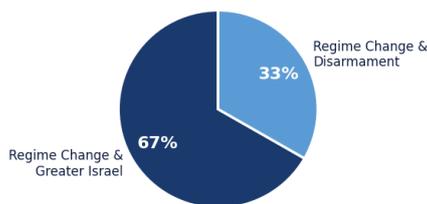
SITUATION ASSESSMENT: MODERATE TO HIGH-RISK ENVIRONMENT: *Pakistan is operating in a challenging and fragile regional environment shaped by two parallel crises: (1) the US-Israel military campaign targeting Iranian strategic capabilities, and (2) an escalating kinetic confrontation with the Afghan Taliban along the western border. While the Iran conflict is not a Pakistan-facing war, its spillover dynamics—energy shocks, refugee flows, sectarian mobilization, border security risks—directly affect Pakistan’s threat environment.*

This briefing draws on a focus group discussion (*n=25*) convened by the BNU Center for Policy Research (BCPR) on 2 March 2026, bringing together security analysts, foreign policy experts, and strategic affairs scholars. Findings are based on a structured discussion covering five themes: the US-Israel campaign against Iran; Iran’s resilience as a coherent state; the Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict and Pakistan’s strategic endgame; great power competition and emerging regional security architectures; and Pakistan’s relations with the US and China, including the risk of entanglement in regional conflict. Aggregated expert insights form the empirical foundation of this briefing.

PART 1 — THE IRAN CRISIS

Expert Panel: *What are the US-Israeli strategic goals in targeting Iran — nuclear disarmament, restricting its missile and drone programme, or outright regime change?*

Q1: US-Israel War Goals



Categories Explained

Regime Change & Greater Israel: Establish Israeli regional hegemony; Iran viewed as the last obstacle.

Regime Change & Disarmament: Degrade missiles, drones & supply networks as primary aim.

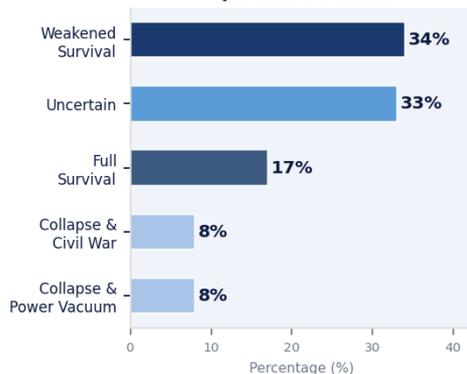
Key Finding:

Two-thirds of experts identify Israeli regional hegemony as the primary objective, with disarmament, that is, degrading Iran’s ballistic missile program, drone systems, and supply networks, as a secondary aim.

Iran's Future as a Coherent State

Expert Panel: *Can Iran absorb these strikes and survive as a coherent state, or are we watching the beginning of regime collapse?*

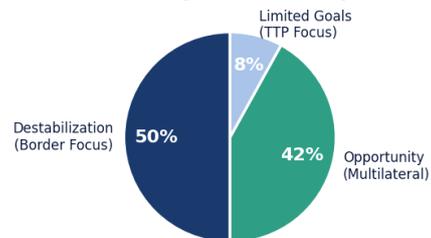
Q2: Iran's Future



PART 2 — THE AF-PAK CONFLICT

Expert Panel: *What does the Pakistan-Afghanistan war mean for regional stability in South Asia? What should Pakistan's endgame be in Afghanistan?*

Q3: Pak-Afghan Conflict Impact



Categories Explained

Destabilization: Protracted instability along the Durand Line; no clear winner.

Multilateral Opportunity: Pakistan builds a regional security framework via China & Gulf partners.

Limited Goals: Narrowly focused on eliminating TTP sanctuaries.

No Military Endgame: Regime change in Afghanistan is dead on arrival — no viable alternative Afghan leadership exists. The endgame must be political.

Key Conflict Drivers

TTP Impasse: TTP's core demand — reversal of FATA mainstreaming and army withdrawal — is impossible for Pakistan to concede.

Taliban Divisions: The Kabul-Kandahar split over harboring TTP is Pakistan's primary leverage point.

India Factor: India is cultivating Taliban ties — political access, covert facilitation, intelligence — as a cost-effective lever against Pakistan.

International Backing: The US/EU are backing Pakistan's fight against the TTP, largely because the TTP is using American-supplied weapons, making it a shared security imperative to neutralize US-origin weapons and the sanctuaries to prevent further regional instability and its potential use against US interests.

Categories Explained

34% Weakened Survival: Regime persists; loses capacity, territory & legitimacy.

33% Uncertain: Outcome too fluid to predict.

17% Full Survival: Regime emerges intact.

16% Collapse: Power vacuum or civil war.

Key Finding: Full regime survival is a minority view (17%). Iran is effectively fighting alone — neither China nor Russia will intervene militarily. Severe economic and military challenges likely yield a weakened or fragmented state.

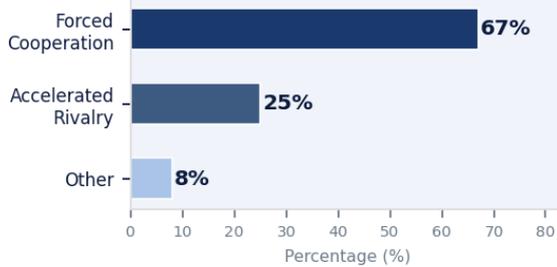
Implications: Collapse of the Iranian state would directly destabilize Balochistan via refugee flows and cross-border militancy (activation of sectarian networks & greater operational space for BLA and associated militant actors)

Pakistan's Path: Exploit Kabul-Kandahar divisions to influence the behavior of Taliban regime. Leverage China's growing economic influence in Kabul to offset India's presence. Seek a political settlement that binds the Taliban into a state-to-state framework. Maintain necessary military operations, but know that lasting success requires political, diplomatic, and social measures. Pakistan's endgame in Afghanistan is a friendly, stable, and strategically aligned Afghanistan that minimizes Indian influence, secures Pakistan's borders, and maximizes Islamabad's regional leverage

PART 3 — GREAT POWER COMPETITION

Expert Panel: *What do the twin crises mean for US-China great power rivalry and the future security architecture of the region?*

Q4: US-China Competition Trajectory



Categories Explained

Forced Cooperation: Scale of crises compels US-China coordination on specific shared issues.

Accelerated Rivalry: Crises become proxy battlegrounds, deepening confrontation.

Other: Alternative trajectories.

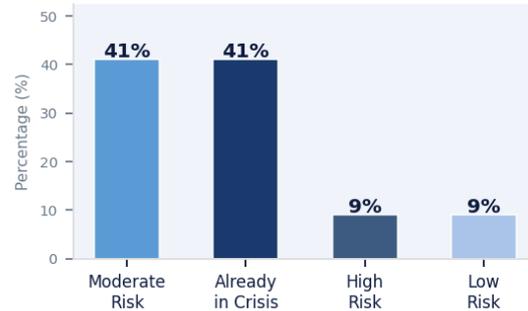
The Corridor War: The twin crises are the violent expression of US-China rivalry. CPEC (\$1.4 trillion, 154 countries) represents an existential Chinese stake in Pakistani stability. Destabilizing Pakistan indirectly paralyzes China's regional strategy.

Critical Insight: Pakistan is at the center of superpower rivalry for the third time in its history. The space for strategic hedging is rapidly narrowing.

PART 5 — PAKISTAN RISK PROFILE (Q5)

Expert Panel: *What is Pakistan's current risk exposure given the twin crises on its borders?*

Q5: Pakistan Risk Assessment



Categories Explained

Moderate Risk: Active border threats; internal vulnerabilities exposed.

Already in Crisis: Pakistan has crossed the crisis threshold.

High Risk: Full multi-front threat materializing.

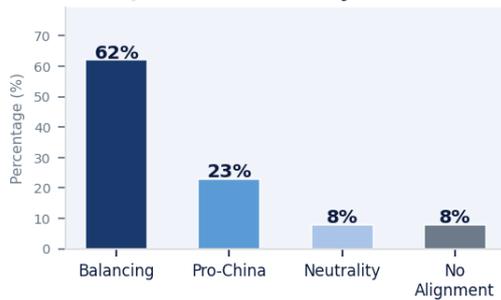
Low Risk: Manageable with existing capabilities.

Bottom Line: Over 80% of experts place Pakistan at moderate-to-crisis risk. The core vulnerability is internal: political polarisation, economic fragility, and instability in KPK and Balochistan, which, once exposed to external threats, can create security-related problems.

PART 4 — PAKISTAN'S LIKELY POSITION (Q6)

Expert Panel: *Is there a danger of Pakistan getting embroiled in the regional conflict? How will these crises impact Pakistan's relations with the US and China?*

Q6: Pakistan's Likely Position



Categories Explained

Balancing: Maintain strategic ambiguity between US and China.

Pro-China: Deepen alignment with Beijing, given CPEC imperatives.

Neutrality: Formal non-alignment on both sides.

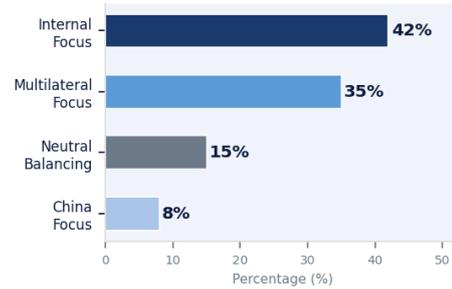
No Alignment: Disengage from both great powers.

Warning: Balancing (62%) remains the expected posture, but experts caution it is increasingly untenable as corridor competition hardens.

PART 6 — RECOMMENDED STRATEGY (Q7)

Expert Panel: *What strategic posture should Pakistan adopt to navigate these crises while protecting its core national interests?*

Q7: Recommended Strategy



Categories Explained

Internal Focus: Stabilize politics and economy before external posturing.

Multilateral: Engage multiple/ diverse regional opportunities

Neutral Balancing: Maintain strategic ambiguity.

China Focus: Full strategic alignment with Beijing.

Key Trend: The majority of experts (42%) calls for prioritizing internal stabilization before external posturing. A multi-vector policy is necessary but cannot substitute for internal cohesion.

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS | Expert Consensus

1. Stabilise Internally First

Economic resilience and addressing KPK/Balochistan grievances are prerequisites for everything else. A fractured state cannot navigate external crises.

2. Deepen China Engagement

Move from rhetoric to real integration on security, technology, and economics. The US relationship is transactional; China is the long-term strategic anchor.

3. Iran — Stay Out

Non-belligerence is non-negotiable. A weakened Iran on the border is far preferable to a collapsed Iranian state.

4. Afghanistan — Political, Not Military

Operations against TTP are necessary but the endgame must be negotiated. Use China's leverage and Taliban's internal divisions to marginalise Indian influence.

5. No 'Two Boats'

Manage US ties transactionally — aid, intelligence, counter-terrorism. Never confuse tactical alignment with strategic partnership.

6. Plan for the Long Game

Both conflicts will persist. Build buffers now for economic disruption, refugee influx, and sustained TTP/BLA pressure — not reactively.

TREND SUMMARY — CRITICAL INDICATORS AT A GLANCE

Iran Regime Survival

34% weakened survival; 33% uncertain; 17% full survival; 16% collapse risk. Iran fights alone — no external power will intervene.

Af-Pak Endgame

50% expect protracted destabilisation along the Durand Line; 42% see a multilateral opportunity; no military endgame is viable.

US-China Competition

67% expect tactical forced cooperation on specific issues; 25% foresee accelerated rivalry. CPEC vs. IMEC is the structural driver.

Pakistan Risk & Strategy

~82% rate Pakistan at moderate-to-crisis risk. 62% expect balancing posture, increasingly untenable. 42% recommend internal stabilization first.