

# Pakistan-Afghanistan: Military tensions will remain elevated amid fragile ceasefire | Credendo

## Event

In October, Pakistan was alleged to have launched military cross-border strikes against senior representatives of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) – the most important Pakistani terrorist group – in Afghanistan, before Kabul retaliated. Dozens of civilians and soldiers were killed. Islamabad has long been accusing Kabul of harbouring TTP militants on its soil, allowing them to regularly launch attacks against Pakistan. A fragile ceasefire was reached mid-October, and negotiations are continuing under Turkish mediation.

## Impact

Ever since the Taliban returned into power in Kabul in 2021, the once close bilateral relations with Islamabad have significantly deteriorated. Over the last two years, Pakistan has ordered the mass deportation of more than one million undocumented Afghan refugees (who fled the country in 2021), and recently extended the order to registered Afghans. These soured relations culminated in the latest cross-border fighting of October. Crucially, this strike occurred in a year of record terrorist attacks in Pakistan, mainly perpetrated by the TTP, against which the Pakistani army has launched a new war. Until now, Kabul has denied sheltering TTP militants, whom Pakistan accuses of operating from Afghan soil, probably due to their ideological proximity but also to the difficult task of reining them in from remote mountainous areas located far from Kabul. Pakistan's strikes against Afghanistan also send a signal to India, which recently took rare steps in improving ties with Afghanistan, notably by symbolically re-opening its embassy in Kabul. These events take place in a context of fast-changing geopolitical environment, high tensions with Pakistan and worsened security environment, the region being still marked by the four-day conflict of last May between the two nuclear powers.

Looking ahead, since Islamabad wants to move forward in fighting the TTP, tensions and the risk of resumed hostilities will remain elevated until Kabul commits to act against the TTP on its soil. However, despite Pakistan's military superiority and the rising political power of Army Chief Munir, at this point, Islamabad is unlikely to engage in a lasting war given the persisting difficult economic context, vulnerability resulting from the political illegitimacy of its government and overall popularity of the Afghan Taliban. The outlook for the MLT political risk (7/7) and political violence risk (6/7) is stable, and remains in the highest risk categories.

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