

India-Pakistan Ceasefire Dynamics

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India-Pakistan Ceasefire Dynamics: An Evolving Security Challenge

Context

Following the **April 22, 2025, Pahalgam terrorist attack** that resulted in the death of **26 civilians**, Pakistan has violated the ceasefire along the **Line of Control (LoC)** and **International Border (IB)** for the **8th consecutive night**. The **Indian Army has retaliated in a calibrated and proportionate manner**.

This marks the **most serious ceasefire breakdown since the 2021 Directorates General of Military Operations (DGMOs) ceasefire agreement**. The incident highlights the fragile nature of the ceasefire and demands an understanding of its evolution, nature, and strategic implications.

Evolution of the India-Pakistan Ceasefire

1. Origin and Legal Ambiguity

- The ceasefire line was first established under the **Karachi Agreement (1949)** after the **1948-49 war**.
- It was renamed as the **Line of Control (LoC)** by the **Simla Agreement (1972)**.
- The LoC is **not an international boundary** but a **military control line**.
- The ceasefire agreement is **not a formal treaty** but is based on **military-level understandings** between the two nations.

2. LoC and IB: Legal Interpretations

- LoC

- Extends for **740 km** from **Sangam in Kashmir** to **Point NJ-9842 near the Siachen Glacier**.
- Acts as the **de facto border** between India and Pakistan.

- **International Border (IB)**

- In Jammu, the LoC transitions into the IB for India, as India has **no territorial claims across Pakistani Punjab**.
- Pakistan refers to it as a **Working Boundary** because it claims Jammu and considers the border unsettled.

3. Operational Dynamics

- Both sides maintain a **heavy troop presence** with fortified structures.
- **Seasonal terrain shifts** can affect actual positions and movement.
- Troops are mandated to **prevent infiltration** and **unilateral changes to the status quo**.
- Since **1989**, there has been an increase in **infiltration attempts** and **Pakistan Border Action Team (BAT) raids**.
- Ceasefire violations have occurred frequently but were informally restored, notably in **2003** and **2021**.

Nature and Motivations of Ceasefire Violations

1. Motivations Behind Violations

- Ceasefire violations typically increase during **bilateral crises** to impose military costs on the opposing side.
- Violations have ranged from **small arms fire** to **cross-border raids** and **mortar shelling**.
- Example includes **India's 2016 surgical strikes** targeting terrorist infrastructure in

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

- **Autonomous military factors** also contribute, with local commanders acting independently to boost troop morale, avenge casualties, or test enemy preparedness.
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2. Absence of Formal Rules of Engagement

- There are **no formal rules of engagement** that strictly prevent firing across the LoC or IB.
 - Military operations are governed by **unwritten Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**.
 - Local discretion plays a significant role in decisions to fire or respond.
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3. Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

- **Flag meetings** are held between local commanders to resolve incidents.
 - **Hotline communication** exists between the DGMOs of India and Pakistan in **New Delhi** and **Rawalpindi**.
 - These mechanisms help to **reduce escalation** but do **not prevent future violations**.
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The 2021 Ceasefire Understanding: Significance

The DGMOs of both nations reaffirmed a ceasefire understanding in **February 2021**.

Key motivations for the agreement included:

- For **Pakistan**, managing **internal instability** and addressing challenges along the **Afghanistan border**.
- For **India**, the need to focus on the **China challenge at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Ladakh**.

Positive outcomes of the agreement included:

- A significant reduction in ceasefire violations.
- Improved **civilian safety** in border villages.
- Revival of **agriculture and economic activities** in affected areas.

Despite the **diplomatic freeze since 2019**, military communication channels remained active. Weekly DGMO calls continued, with India raising concerns over violations in the **April 29 call**.

Current Developments and Strategic Outlook

1. Post-Pahalgam Attack Dynamics

- The recent firing by Pakistan may be an attempt to **maintain military pressure** and gain **leverage in negotiations**.
- India's current priorities include:
 - Continuing a **calibrated military response**.
 - Resolving the issue of a **BSF jawan detained by Pakistan** after accidentally crossing the IB on **April 23, 2025**.
- Accidental crossings during tense periods are often used as **leverage** by the opposing side.

2. Risks of Escalation

- Ceasefire violations are **low-intensity yet high-risk events**.
- They often represent the **first military action in a potential escalation ladder**.
- Escalation risks increase under **public pressure, media attention, and political demands**.
- Any miscalculation could lead to a **broader military conflict**.

Conclusion

The ceasefire at the **LoC and IB** remains a **fragile and evolving military understanding**, influenced by **local military dynamics, regional geopolitics, and unresolved political disputes**.

While communication mechanisms such as flag meetings and hotlines help **manage immediate crises**, they are **insufficient for ensuring long-term peace**. Sustained peace will require **political will, diplomatic engagement, and confidence-building measures beyond military arrangements**.



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