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US-IRAN PEACE TALKS: PAKISTAN'S ROLE AS A PEACE MEDIATOR

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Abstract
Pakistan's emergence as a peace mediator in the recent US-Iran conflict has made it a key actor in the global politics. Its role has been applauded by both the US and Iran and the entire world community. The first round of talks between the US and Iran was facilitated by Islamabad on 11th April 2026 but could not reach any possible solution to the conflict. The reopening of the Striat of Harmuz and its re-closure within twenty-four hours has further exacerbated the security situation of the global politics. This study aims at analyzing the US- Iran Peace Talks and Pakistan's Role as Peace Mediator in the global politics as a peace broker. Main findings of the study include the re-opening of the Strait of Harmuz, a 20-year suspension of Iranian suspension in Iranian Uranium enrichment and dismantling of its nuclear program by handing over its more than 400 kilogram of highly enriched uranium to the US.

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INTRODUCTION

The peace talks between United States and Iran ended on 11th April 2026 without reaching any final agreement. Each side blamed the other for the failure of the talks (Lindasy, 2026). Following the outbreak of the US-Israel and Iran conflict on February 28, 2026 the closure of the Strait of Harmuz has resulted in the disruption of trade, business, and supply of oil and petroleum products (Lutz Kilian, 2026). To facilitate the belligerent states in reaching a viable solution to the stalemate, a meeting of the concerned was arranged by Islamabad on 11th April, 2026 (Digital, 2026). The first round of talks between the US and Iran failed to reach out any agreement where the former returned home without a deal while the latter said that it did not expect an agreement in the first meeting (Digital, 2026). The discussion continued for 21 hours of intense deliberations between the delegates of the US and Iran. Vice President of the United States, JD Vance clarified that the talks failed because of Tehran's refusal to accept the final terms of Washington (Digital, 2026). Vance, on the conclusion of the talks remarked that, "The bad news is that we have not reached an agreement and I think that's bad news for Iran much more than it's bad for the United States of America" (Digital, 2026). Despite 21 hours of intensive negotiations, before departing Pakistan, Vance described it as a "final and best offer" for Iran to consider. Iranian media and Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baegaei, said unreasonable, excessive and unlawful requests from the US for the stalemate (Digital, 2026).

Trump has been insisting on the reopening of the Strait of Harmuz as the price for the participation of the US while speaker of the Iran's parliament, Muhammad Bagher Ghalibaf stressed on the halting of the Israel's attacks on Lebanon and

releasing of Iran's frozen assets by Washington (Lindasy, 2026). The Strait of Harmuz still remains closed while Israel continues to strike Lebanon coupled with the US-Iran escalated tension of the ongoing war. The meeting was the first of its kind in face-to-face negotiations between the US and Iran in more than a decade time and highest level talks since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 (Lindasy, 2026). Bringing both the countries to the negotiation table is something a Herculean task that can be made possible by the active role of the Pakistani's Prime Minister, Mr. Shahbaz Sharif and Joint Chief of Defense Forces, Gen. Asim Munir, whose untiring efforts in the peace parleys can lead to a viable solution to the stalemate.

During the war, Pakistan's efforts for peace have been appreciated by the regional and global dynamics on account of its active involvement and emergence as a key mediator in US-Iran conflict by leveraging 'hyper diplomacy' (Iqbal, 2026). Michael Kugelman, a Washington based scholar in South Asian Affairs, is of the view that Pakistan's active involvement in the conflict is a result of the strong ties with all the key actors and regional dynamics; trust from the White House, direct engagement with Iran, and buy-in from Pakistan's ally China and Beijing's close ties and significant leverage with Tehran (Iqbal, 2026). Pakistan's emergence as a key mediator in the current US-Iran conflict led by Pakistani Prime Minister, Shahbaz Sharif and Chief of Defense Forces, Gen. Asim Munir has successfully facilitated initial talks between US and Iran in Islamabad. Pakistan, being a trusted and neutral broker for the regional countries, has played the role of shuttle diplomacy by engaging in intense diplomatic missions, including diplomatic consultations with the government of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and China to gain regional support for peace parleys (Iqbal, 2026).

Reopening of the Strait of Harmuz

An important news came from both the Foreign Minister of Iran, Abbas Aragchi and President of the United States, Donald Trump saying that the 'Strait of Harmuz' is now open for commercial vessels (Aljazeera, 2026). Araghchi declared that the strategic waterway was "completely open" in line with the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon that took effect the day before the agreement was signed (Aljazeera, 2026). US President, Donald Trump also affirmed on social media that the strait has been opened claiming that Iran has agreed to "never close the Strait of Harmuz again" (Aljazeera, 2026).

Restoring the freedom of navigation, France and the United Kingdom hosted a meeting in Paris comprising 40 countries stressing the need for playing a role in reopening the Strait of Harmuz after the end of the US-Israel war on Iran (Aljazeera, 2026). The blocking of tankers by disallowing them through the Strait of Hazmuz has resulted in a global surge since 20% of the world's crude oil flows through it on a routine basis (Aljazeera, 2026). The leaders from across the globe have welcomed the news of reopening the Strait of Harmuz with optimism amid mixed messages from the US and Iran.

US President, Trump while welcoming the reopening of the Strait of Harmuz said that the "The Strait of Hormuz is completely open and ready for business and full passage, but the naval blockade will remain in full force and effect as it pertains to Iran, only, until such time as our transaction with Iran is 100% complete," Trump wrote on Truth Social (Aljazeera, 2026). He further said that the US Navy's blockade on Iranian ships and ports "will remain in full force" until Tehran reaches a deal with the US. Trump told the news agency AFP that a deal to end the war on Iran was "close", saying there were "no sticking points" left between Washington and Tehran. Foreign Minister of Iran, Abbas Araghchi stated that the strait was "declared completely open" and would remain open for the remaining period of ten day Israel-Lebanon ceasefire (Aljazeera, 2026). Some Iranians contradict Aragchi's announcement with a senior military official telling that only non-military vessels would be allowed to transit through the strait. Soon after the reopening of the Strait of Harmuz, it has been welcomed by the global community as a sign of positive development for the plunging down of the oil and petroleum prices in the global markets after Iran's announcement that passage for

the commercial vessels would remain open for a period of ten days.

Pakistan's active engagement in in the US-Iran peace process can lead to the resolution of the conflict since both the US and Iran can be motivated through diplomatic efforts.

Negotiation team from the US and Iran are expected to return Pakistan for resuming negotiations to end the war in the Gulf (Shahid & Bukhari, 2026). Some sources also opine that a proposal had been sent to both Washington and Tehran for the delegations to return to Islamabad for the resumption of discussions. No date has yet been fixed by both the countries for the negotiations but it is expected that both could return to Islamabad as soon as early (Shahid & Bukhari, 2026). Pakistan is in contact with both Iran and the US about the finalization of date for the next round of talks in order to reach out a solution to the conflict (Shahid & Bukhari, 2026).

Officials are looking forward for the second round of talks that could end the US-Iran conflict and bring about peace in the Gulf (Jeyaretnam, 2026). US President, Donald Trump and his team is open to resume the talks in-person as soon as Iran shows willingness to meet his demands (Jeyaretnam, 2026). Besides Pakistan, Turkey that has also been actively involved in the negotiation process is ready to provide help in resolving the conflict. Moreover, Trump has also built up pressure on Tehran to accept their demand by imposing a naval blockade on the vessels transiting through the Strait of Harmuz (Jeyaretnam, 2026). Since the outbreak of the war, Iran has militarized the Strait of Harmuz by allowing only small number of vessels to transit through it. The naval blockade has also raised suspicions amongst the various circles that this may lead to further escalation of tension between the US and Iran as this would be tantamount to violation of the ceasefire (Jeyaretnam, 2026). Trump has stated bluntly that if any Iranian "came anywhere close to our blockade, they will be immediately eliminated, using the same system of kill that we use against the drug dealers on boats at sea" (Jeyaretnam, 2026). On the other hand, Iran has also stated that it wants to maintain control of the Strait of Harmuz even after the end of the war, while imposing toll fees that would serve as war compensation (Jeyaretnam, 2026). The United Kingdom has refused to join the naval blockade of the US, while the NATO allies has already refused for providing military support to secure the Strait.

Israel's recent attacks on Lebanon has killed more than 2, 000 people since March 2, 2026 and has also threatened the possibility of entering into lasting peace between the US and Iran (Jeyaretnam, 2026). Iran has reiterated that any ceasefire must extend to Lebanon and beyond, but both the US and Israel disagreed to the ceasefire. One of the major demands of the US from Iran is the abandonment of its nuclear program, that has been a sticking point for the last few years in the worsening of relations between the US and Iran (Jeyaretnam, 2026). Another important thing is that Trump administration has proposed a 20- year suspension in Iranian Uranium enrichment but the same was countered by the Iranian with a five years suspension which the US rejected to agree to (Jeyaretnam, 2026). America also wants Iran to dismantle is major nuclear enrichment facilities and hand over more than 400 kilograms of highly enriched uranium to the US, which according to them, has been buried underground. Previously the US proposed Iran to stop enriching any uranium for a period of ten years in exchange for paying for its nuclear fuel, which was rejected by Iran (Jeyaretnam, 2026).

Pakistan has been communicating with both Iran and the US for the next round of talks so as to bring an end to the ongoing conflict (Saabah , 2026). The major issue for negotiation is the reopening of the Strait of Harmuz blocked by Iran, which the US has vowed to reopen as soon as possible, sanctions on Iran's nuclear program and the international sanctions on Tehran (Saabah , 2026). Upon the blockade of the Strait of Harmuz, and since the beginning of the Operation Epic Fury, only ships that can pay 'toll' to Iran has been allowed to pass through it (Saabah , 2026). Iran's closure of the Strait of Harrmuz, has led Trump to impose blockade on the strait while creating a situation of "open for all or open for none" in the Gulf region (Saabah , 2026). The reopening of the

Strait of Harmuz will provide both the contending parties as well as the entire regional and international community with benefit since the trade and business of oil and petroleum products across it will have easy accessibility to the world market. Moreover, the process of the oil and petroleum products will come to normal range as the price-hike results in the rising of prices of daily commodities and other products at the global level.

Both Lebanon and Israel will have direct talks in the wake of ongoing escalation of tension since both the US and Iran has shown agreement to reach out a viable solution to the conflict (World, 2026). On account of the US naval blockade of the Strait of Harmuz, little traffic is entering and leaving Iranian ports in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman (World, 2026). Vice President of the United States, Vance has accused Iran of the 'economic terrorism' by closing the Strait and depriving the world of its use for trade and business purposes (World, 2026). But it is also a fact that despite the failure of the first round of talks between the US and Iran, efforts are still underway by Pakistan and has been communicating with both the countries for the resolution of the conflict. The negotiations will benefit all the countries affected by the ongoing tension comprising Iran, the US, Israel and Lebanon. Fruitful dialogues and table talks in-person by the presence of the high-stakeholders from both the parties will lead to a viable solution to the conflict. Once the US and Iran enter into agreement, trade and business amongst the states will be restored besides providing security to the regional dynamics.

Re-closure of the Strait of Harmuz

Iran has again closed the Strait of Harmuz keeping in view the US blockade of the Iranian ports (Burgess, 2026). Marine traffic appears to show no signs of vessels passing through the Strait despite the fact that many may seem anchored around the Gulf and the UAE (Burgess, 2026). Though some marine traffic appeared to pass through the strait on 18th April 2026 yet the traffic slowed down dramatically in the wake of Tehran's announcement of closing down the waterways (Burgess, 2026). The diplomatic message from both Iran and the US has been dominated by the closure of the Strait as each makes the other responsible for the current state of affairs (Burgess, 2026). BBC correspondent Lyse Doucet, while reporting from inside Iran, saying that there is little sign of the peace deal that President Trump keeps hinting at, and even an extension of the current ceasefire is yet to be decided (Burgess, 2026).

The re-closing of the Strait of Harmuz in less than 24 hours of time is again embarrassing for the belligerent states and the regional dynamics. Iran has been criticizing the US as being responsible for the shutting down of the Strait and breach of trust during the ongoing ceasefire (CCN, 2026). Lack of trust and blaming each other for the breach of trust at such a stage when no agreement has yet been entered into between the states would create huge gap in bridging over the conflcit. Both the US and Iran have a long way to go before reaching an agreement (McCluskey, 2026). Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's parliamentary speaker has stated that "On some issues, conclusions have been reached in the negotiations, and on others not; we are still far from a final agreement," (McCluskey, 2026). Iran has also stated that it would close the Strait again citing "repeated breaches of trust" as the US maintained a naval blockade on Iranian ports (McCluskey, 2026). US President, Trump remained very much vociferous in welcoming an announcement from Tehran that the strait of Harmuz, is "fully open and ready for full passage" (Saltman, 2026). Iran's Foreign Minister, Aragchi had suggested that the strait would be fully open again, while Iran could coordinate shipping routes (Saltman, 2026).

Both the US and Israel need to agree upon ceasefire and bring an end to the conflict as this would be in the benefit of the two states as well as the international community. In case of a deadlock and lack of trust, the ceasefire should be extended for a period of 45 days (Syed, 2026). As a matter of fact the ceasefire moves between the US and Iran brokered on April 7, 2026 after weeks of conflict, is yet to expire on 22nd April 2026 (Syed, 2026). The US naval blockade of the Strait of Harmuz, would further deteriorate the

ongoing peace parleys since it would be violation of the ceasefire (Syed, 2026). But both the sides still agree to continue negotiations, while differences also continue on the agenda, objectives, format and venue for the moment (Syed, 2026).

Pakistan's preoccupation with the US and Iran during the ongoing conflict has been very fruitful receiving applause from the world community. Despite the failure of the negotiations in the first round of talks, Pakistan has been busy in communicating with both the US and Iran to reach out a permanent solution to the conflict. The conflict has also affected the regional markets leading to the increase in the process of oil and petroleum products (Javid, 2026). Moscow's exports of crude oil products rose by 32,000 barrels a day in March 2026 to 7.1 million barrels a day (Javid, 2026). Due to surge in the prices of oil and petroleum products the revenue from those exports increased from $ 9.7 billion to 19billion, almost double of the routine expenses.

The first round of US-Iran talks continuing for 21 hours of deliberations, was held in Islamabad on April 11, 2026 failed to reach out any agreement on account of the stiffness of the conditionality posed by the parties. Both the parties thanked the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shabaz Sahrif and Chief of Defense Forces, Gen. Asim Munir for facilitating the talks. But it is important to mention that the two parties have shown their willingness to continue the negotiations for bridging over the gap. A temporary ceasefire for two weeks led to the creation of a sound and positive atmosphere for the regional and global peace. The core purpose of the negotiation focused on the ceasefire agreement, reopening of the Strait of Harmuz and the stopping the attacks on Lebanon by Israel. The closure of the Strait of Hamruz has affected the entire global community on account of the rise in the prices of the oil and petroleum products and halting the trade and business activities across the globe.

Trump has been calling for the reopening of the Strait of Harmuz while Iran remains concerned with the de-escalation of tension by stopping attacks against Lebanon by Israel. It is important to mention that Pakistan's efforts for peace have been appreciated by the regional and global community for its active engagement in the current US-Iran stalemate. Pakistan's role is pivotal to the parties on account of its close ties with the some of the key actors such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and China. Pakistan's role during the current ongoing US-Iran may be termed as a case of 'hyper diplomacy' and shuttle diplomacy as Pakistan has to visit the affected countries using all possible strategic and diplomatic tactics to resolve the issue of the war and reopen the strait of Harmuz. The closure of the Strait has implications for the regional and global dynamics as his may affect the law of navigation and closure of the natural routes of the waterways.

The reopening of the Strait of Harmuz was highly welcomed by the international community as this would bring down the prices of oil and petroleum products across the globe. But it is embarrassing to mention that the Strait of Harmuz was closed down by Iran in less than 24 hours of time. Both the US and Iran have been criticizing each other for the re-closure with the former providing naval blockade on the Iranian ports while the latter making the US responsible for violating the terms of the ceasefire and breach of trust. The US remains more concerned with the re-opening of the Strait of Harmuz, a 20-year suspension in Iranian Uranium enrichment while also dismantling its major nuclear enrichment facilities by handing more than 400 kilogram of highly enriched Uranium to the US.

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