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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

# The Islamabad Channel — Why India Should Support Peace Regardless of Who Brokers It

INDIAN EXPRESS

9 April 2026 · GS2

CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

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# The Islamabad Channel — Why India Should Support Peace Regardless of Who Brokers It

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2 tags

## CONTEXT

The **Indian Express** editorial responds to Pakistan’s successful mediation of the US-Iran ceasefire through the “Islamabad Talks” — a diplomatic elevation that creates pressure around India-Pakistan relations. The editorial argues India should reorient its stance: supporting peace processes regardless of whether Pakistan is the mediator, and abandoning the dogmatic insistence on broker-free bilateral dialogue with Islamabad.

## THE EDITORIAL ARGUMENT

### 1. The Islamabad Talks as a Test Case

Pakistan’s successful mediation of the 2026 US-Iran ceasefire demonstrated Islamabad’s capacity for high-stakes diplomatic facilitation. The editorial notes that India was conspicuously absent from the talks — despite having larger economic stakes in Gulf peace (energy, diaspora, IMEC) than Pakistan. This absence reflects India’s longstanding reluctance to engage multilateral forums that include Pakistan in an elevated role.

### 2. India’s “Bilateral Exclusivity” Problem

India has historically insisted on:

- **Bilateral-only** dialogue with Pakistan — no third-party facilitation
- **Preconditions** — Pakistan must end cross-border terrorism before talks can resume
- **No engagement through Pakistan-affiliated forums** — avoidance of SAARC etc.

The editorial argues these positions, while understandable given Pakistan’s conduct, have become **self-defeating**. The practical result is that there is no dialogue at all — and the absence of dialogue has not prevented terrorism or improved security outcomes.



### 3. The Argument for Flexible Engagement

The editorial draws on the framework of **strategic patience** — engaging Pakistan where possible (trade, water, people-to-people) without conceding core positions on terrorism. Key arguments:

- **Peace benefits India more than Pakistan** — India’s growth requires regional stability; Pakistan’s economy is weak enough that instability actually reduces domestic pressure on Islamabad
- **Broker legitimacy should not determine Indian participation** — if Pakistan brokers US-Iran talks, India’s objection to Pakistan’s elevated status is a side issue, not a reason to be absent from peace architecture
- **Multi-party frameworks are not weakness** — India engages with China, Russia, US simultaneously in forums where Pakistan is also present (SCO, SAARC)

### 4. The India-Pakistan Sub-Angle of the Ceasefire

The editorial notes calls from multiple commentators for India to “use the Islamabad Channel” — to leverage Pakistan’s momentary diplomatic credibility to open back-channel conversations. The editorial stops short of endorsing this but argues India should not reflexively oppose Pakistan-facilitated dialogue frameworks.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

### GS Paper 2 — International Relations

- India-Pakistan relations — bilateral dialogue framework, preconditions, terrorism nexus
- SAARC — India’s role, Pakistan factor, connectivity
- Multi-alignment — India’s strategic posture in South Asian geopolitics

### Mains Angle

“India’s insistence on bilateral exclusivity in India-Pakistan dialogue has become a structural obstacle to regional peace. Critically examine the argument for more flexible engagement frameworks.” (GS2)



## FACTS CORNER

ITEM	FACT
Pakistan's role	Primary mediator in 2026 US-Iran ceasefire (Islamabad Talks)
India's position	Not part of the Islamabad Talks
India-Pakistan dialogue status	Suspended since 2019 (post-Pulwama, Art. 370 revocation)
SAARC last summit	2014 (Kathmandu) — no summit held since
India-Pakistan trade	Near-zero since 2019 MFN suspension
SCO membership	India and Pakistan are both SCO members since 2017
Core Indian precondition	Pakistan must end cross-border terrorism before talks resume
Article 370 revocation	August 5, 2019 — India revoked J&K special status; Pakistan downgraded ties

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