

Pakistan and Potential Security Risks to the United States

Evidence-based overview — September 2026

Executive Summary

Pakistan is not accurately described simply as an enemy of the United States. It is a strategically important country with which the United States continues to cooperate, including on counterterrorism. At the same time, U.S. government reporting identifies several significant security concerns involving Pakistan: terrorist organizations operating from or in Pakistan, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and missile capabilities, regional instability involving India, and Pakistan's increasingly close military relationship with China.

1. Terrorism and Militant Organizations

A Congressional Research Service report states that Pakistan remains a haven for numerous Islamist extremist and terrorist groups and notes that U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations operate on or from Pakistani territory. The report identifies a resurgence of the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) and continued activity by Islamic State Khorasan Province (IS-K) as important security concerns.

2. Nuclear Weapons

Pakistan possesses nuclear weapons and continues to develop delivery systems. The Congressional Research Service has described the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, materials, and technologies as a top-tier U.S. concern. The principal concern is not that Pakistan is preparing to attack the United States, but that nuclear weapons, materials, or technology could be affected by terrorism, internal instability, proliferation, or a severe India-Pakistan crisis.

3. China-Pakistan Military Relationship

Pakistan has a deepening strategic and military relationship with China. Recent congressional testimony noted that Pakistan accounted for a large share of China's arms exports and described Pakistan as an important testing ground for Chinese military equipment. This relationship is relevant to U.S. strategic planning because China is a major U.S. strategic competitor.

4. Russia

Pakistan has also expanded economic, diplomatic, and security contacts with Russia. However, cooperation with Russia should not automatically be interpreted as Pakistani support for Russian military operations against the United States or as evidence that Pakistan is a Russian military ally. Any claim that Pakistan is materially supporting Russia's war effort should be evaluated

separately using evidence of specific weapons, technology, financing, logistics, or government assistance.

5. Relationship with the United States

The relationship remains mixed rather than openly hostile. The United States and Pakistan continue to cooperate on counterterrorism and selected military matters, while Washington also maintains concerns about terrorism, nuclear security, missile development, and regional instability.

Bottom Line

The strongest evidence supports describing Pakistan as a complicated U.S. security partner that presents real risks, rather than as a U.S. enemy. The most significant concerns are terrorism and militant groups, nuclear security and proliferation, the possibility of India-Pakistan conflict, and Pakistan's growing military relationship with China. These facts do not establish that the Pakistani government directs or controls particular people or organizations in the United States. Such a connection requires separate, specific evidence.

Sources

Congressional Research Service, Pakistan and U.S.-Pakistan Relations

https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/PDF/R47565/R47565.9.pdf

Congressional testimony, U.S.-India relations and Pakistan security issues (2025)

<https://www.congress.gov/119/meeting/house/118737/witnesses/HHRG-119-FA19-Wstate-JaishankarD-20251210.pdf>

U.S. Department of State, Countries of Particular Concern / Special Watch List

<https://www.state.gov/countries-of-particular-concern-special-watch-list-countries-entities-of-particular-concern>