

India–Pakistan Relations: Study Analysis

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Abstract

Since achieving independence in 1947, the relations between India and Pakistan have been such that the talks of trade, cooperation and peace have often taken place parallel to the threats of war. They have fought four wars and on more than one occasion mobilised their militaries with a credible threat of war. Since the early 1990s, the insurgency in Kashmir and terrorist incidents in other parts of India have affected bilateral relations in a profound way. Serious terrorist attacks in India causing huge loss of life, such as the Mumbai bombings in 2005 and Mumbai attacks in 2008, have often led to the loss of public support for dialogue with Pakistan. Groups targeting the peace process between India and Pakistan have exploited this reality to the extent of setting up a trend. For the past few years almost every Indo-Pakistan peace initiative has been followed by a terrorist attack. India and Pakistan have always been caught in enduring conflicts, but in recent time, there are certain changes took place due to the change in the leadership and misadventures/infiltration/proxywar in Kashmir valley as their relations seem to be bitterer than ever before which give the space to international organizations to intervene in their disputes and state of affairs. In such situation, Kashmir is being seen as decider factor to Indo-Pak relations. In such context, this paper is an attempt to touch various issues especially Kashmir dispute between these two nations including the understanding of changing nature of their relations for many years while highlighting the role of external powers which would contribute to the transitory nature of their dynamic relations to draw analytical inferences. It also tries to explore the future of Indo-Pak relations while examining attempts made in the direction to normalize their relations.

Abstract: Pakistan, India, Asia, Attack, Kashmir, Indo-Pak, Border

Introduction

These and many other such questions can be raised by any concerned observer of the South Asian region, where the disharmony between the two major players has adversely affected the ability of the region as a whole to attain its true potential, unlike, for instance, the advancements made in the ASEAN region. The continued conflict and tension in the relationship between the two countries, whose rivalry has a nuclear dimension as well, cannot be to anyone's benefit. For the past decade or so, their differences have transcended their common borders and have also played out in Afghanistan. The biggest beneficiaries of this prolonged conflict have been the extremist elements in both countries and, more recently, the non-state actors (NSAs). The NSAs seemingly

have the capability to disrupt and derail any effort towards resolving the outstanding issues between India and Pakistan at will, by perpetrating a violent incident. Major world powers have also promoted their geo-political interests by playing one country off against the other from time to time. Both countries need to explore their common areas of interest to bring peace and stability in the region which is the first requirement for developing political-socio-cultural relations, trade and economic development as they have nuclear capability. Intermittent interruption arising out of the actions of

non-state actors and fundamentalism can be checked in the region if both countries cooperate with each other by pursuing peace building measures to prevent the conflicts and restore the mutual confidence which must be taken as a challenge by both nations.

Causes of Conflict

The tensions between India and Pakistan are deeply rooted in their common history. Their failure to reconcile their differences ultimately resulted in the partition of the Sub-continent. The partition itself was the result of a legal and constitutional process approved by both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. Unfortunately, however, the actual partition was accompanied by mindless blood-letting and lasting acrimony resulting from complaints about the work of the Radcliffe Commission that was entrusted with the demarcation of the boundaries of the two states. The messy procedure adopted by the British for determining the fate of the Princely States, sowed the seeds of the continuing conflict over the predominantly Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The festering Kashmir dispute has bedevilled relations between India and Pakistan. It has caused two wars (1948 and 1965), a serious border conflict (Kargil, 1999) and has brought immense suffering and hardship to the people of the state. This unresolved dispute has also been a major drain on the resources of the two countries and has been a stumbling block to normalising relations between them.

A problem closely related to that of Kashmir is the distribution of the water of the rivers flowing from there into Pakistan. Pakistan has a predominantly agrarian economy and, being a lower riparian state, has naturally been concerned about continuation of an adequate supply of irrigation water. The problem was thought to have been resolved in the early 1960s through the Indus Basin Treaty, mediated by the World Bank. But the problem is far from settled, as Pakistan has raised concerns over some of the Indian hydroelectric projects under construction on the western rivers that will affect waters for which Pakistan has the rights. The water problem has a serious potential to precipitate conflict in the future, given the rising requirements and shrinking supplies.

Consequently, the India-Pakistan debates have been led by belligerent minds, regularly perpetuating the negative narratives that have demonised the enemy and created virtuous self-images. The conflict environment ridden with regular violent incidents has further fuelled such negative narratives, creating a self-sustaining vicious cycle of mistrust, bellicosity and conflict. As a result, a positive cycle of mutual trust, confidence building, peace and stability between the two states, could never gain any foothold.

This article analyses the pattern in which the conflict is evolving since the beginning of this century. It highlights two important factors: the limited military options available to India after the appearance of nuclear weapons and the internal turmoil in Pakistan, which have played an important role in shaping the conflict environment in South Asia. It primarily argues that belligerent attitudes and actions of the past century may not be applicable anymore. Indians and Pakistanis have developed very stereotypical attitudes towards each other, which are rigid and cannot change in a short period. However, as this article makes the case, that given the way the conflict environment is evolving, both Indians and Pakistanis may be forced to rethink their attitudes and change the narratives that perpetuate bitterness and enmity towards each other.

India: Treading the Conflict Terrain – Not a Stroll Anymore

They say that when the going gets tough, the tough get going. However, when the going gets dangerous, the tough should 'rethink his options'. After all, there is a very thin line between being 'brave' and being 'foolish'. There was a time when the Indian Army could march a few kilometres inside Pakistani territory and threaten cities such as Lahore and Sialkot; or the Indian Navy could lay a blockade around Pakistan's only port city Karachi and totally cut off naval and commercial traffic. This doesn't seem to be the case anymore. The times have certainly changed and both sides have a subtle realisation of this fact.

Nuclear weapons and multiple delivery systems have shaped the environment in such a way that any armed conflict now possesses an inherent risk of escalation to a nuclear exchange. Furthermore, the stability in deterrence is questionable because the nuclear thresholds are undefined and a vast difference of perception exists on both sides.

India believes that space exists for a limited conflict where, if the need arises, doctrines such as 'Cold Start' can be executed, drawing the Pakistani army into battle and destroying its war fighting capability. India's stand rests on the premise that while nuclear rhetoric is a good way to build and sway public opinions, empirically speaking the truth and action have generally sided with rationality and pragmatism. Sir Lawrence Freedman (2003) in his book *The Evolution of*

Nuclear Strategy rightly states that due to the destructive power of (even low yield) nuclear weapons, 'when it comes to actual nuclear war planning, all hawks suddenly become doves'.

Pakistan, on the other hand (and despite the above), has adopted a nuclear posture based on Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs), short-range missiles and a highly advertised 'first-use' policy, keeping the red lines vague. Scholars claim that the main aim of this posture is to draw immediate international attention and mediation in case of a crisis and prevent it from escalation to any kind of armed conflict. While this debate carries on, it seems that the 'existential deterrence' has played its role by having a deep impact on the belligerent attitudes, especially of the Indian policy making circles. This is evident from the responses – both actual and rhetorical – to the five major terrorist incidents that occurred during the past fifteen years, as discussed below.

2001-02

When five terrorists belonging to Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed attacked the Indian Parliament building on 13 December 2001, the Home Minister of India LK Advani clearly pointed a finger at the 'neighbouring country and the terrorist organisation active there'. By the time the Kaluchak attacks happened on 14 May 2002, in which 31 soldiers and their families were killed by terrorists belonging to Lashkar-e-Toiba, the Indian army had already been mobilised and the army units were sitting in battle formations awaiting final orders to go to war. A week later while addressing the soldiers posted in Kashmir, Prime Minister AB Vajpayee asked them to 'be prepared for a decisive battle'. The situations de-escalated after Pakistan, under pressure from the United States, made gestures of reigning in the militant groups and their leaders.

2008

After the Mumbai attacks on 26 November 2008, India's then External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee stated that India may indulge in military strikes against the training camps of terrorist outfits in Pakistan. India did not mobilise its troops. Pakistan moved its troops towards the border, albeit only briefly, which were withdrawn after few days of talks. In a recent talk at King's College London, Siddharth Varadarajan, a senior Indian journalist, mentioned that immediately after the Mumbai attacks, the Indian government did seek options from the military, only to be told that there were none.

2015

On 27 July 2015 three terrorists attacked a bus and a police station in Gurdaspur district of Punjab, killing seven people. The only information that the investigating agencies could gather

was that the terrorists were 'Muslim' and they seemed to have come from Pakistan, extracting data from the GPS recovered from them, which did not show any waypoints beyond the border. The case, besides lacking sufficient evidence to hold any particular organisation or state responsible, received an unusual media lacklustre in India.

2016

Most recently on 02 January 2016, terrorists attacked the Air Force Station in Pathankot with an aim of targeting India's 'high-value assets', such as helicopters and aircrafts parked in the station. An operation that lasted nearly three days resulted in all six terrorists dead along with seven security personnel and a civilian. The Indian intelligence agencies linked the terrorists to Jaish-e-Mohammed, based on the evidence tracked from the phone calls and GPS. The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, blamed the 'enemies of humanity, who could not digest India's progress'. Home Minister Rajnath Singh did say that 'if there is any terror attack on India, we will give a befitting reply', albeit only after saying that 'Pakistan is our neighbouring country. We want good relations not only with Pakistan but with all our neighbours'. Almost all debates on the news channels and editorials of newspapers in India pursued the theme that the terrorist attacks should not derail the peace process between the two countries.

These five major terrorist attacks in India (that had originated in Pakistan) show us the changing conflict terrain in nuclearized South Asia during the last two decades. India's response changed from mobilising the army and keeping it in battle ready formations, which also had an inherent risk of 'accidental' start of a war in 2002-03, to a simple rhetoric of blaming the 'enemies of humanity' in 2016.

This implies that the space for an armed conflict in South Asia has definitely reduced. This has forced the leaders, especially Indian, to take less belligerent stances as they are incapable of fulfilling their promises of 'befitting replies' due to limited military options. This, in turn, has paved the way for diplomatic dialogues, both official and unofficial, as a breakdown of diplomacy leaves no option other than military action.

On the other side of the border in Pakistan, terrorism and sectarian violence that has killed more than 50,000 people and cost the economy about \$78 billion since 2001, has forced its leaders to look inwards, taking away their focus from the traditional 'Indian threat'.

Pakistan: The Internal Turmoil – Blaming India Does Not Help Anymore

Since Independence, the Pakistani state has used a number of issues – unequal distribution of resources during partition, accession of Kashmir, division of water, loss of East Pakistan, unrest in Baluchistan – to develop a narrative of an ‘existential threat’ posed by India.

However, after the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Pakistan’s participation in the global war on terror changed the security situation drastically. Militant groups, some of them nurtured and supported by the Pakistani state for its own goals, became self-sustaining in terms of funding and recruitment. Over a period, the groups splintered and some of them turned against the state. During the last two years or so, the Islamic State or *Daesh* has made its presence felt in the Af-Pak region attracting many fighters from the older groups.

Even the groups dormant within Pakistan such as Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Toyiba, which were sometimes referred to as good terrorists, have started showing signs of rebellion. For instance, Masood Azhar, the Jaish-e-Mohammad founder sought by India for the Pathankot and other attacks, has threatened retaliation if Pakistan shuts down terrorist groups operating against India. The civilian and military leadership in Pakistan fully comprehends that the *Salafist* ideology pursued by these groups is a threat to the ‘idea of Pakistan’. The capture of Swat Valley by Taliban in 2007 and 2009; the Lal Masjid operation in 2007; the Peshawar School massacre in December 2014; the Safoora Goth bus attack in 2015; and the Bacha Khan University attack in January 2016 are stark reminders of this fact.

Consequently, the change in narrative seems inevitable and is slowly becoming visible. For the first time in Pakistan’s history, the threat from an internal enemy is dominating the so-called external threat from India. Prominent voices in the media, even those who have been traditionally anti-India, have acknowledged that ‘it was time for tough questions instead of blaming India’. The task of improving relations with India, however, is not easy and there is still a lot of ground to cover. The state power in Pakistan is shared by the civil government, led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the military under the army chief Raheel Sharif. Traditionally, Pakistan’s military has dominated the security and foreign policy, which has been predominantly anti-India. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, on the other hand, has been known for his friendly inclinations towards India.

Diasporic Relations

The large size of the Indian diaspora and Pakistani diaspora in many different countries throughout the world has created strong diasporic relations. British Indians and British Pakistanis,

the largest and second-largest ethnic minorities living in the United Kingdom respectively, are said to have friendly relations with one another. It is quite common for a "Little India" and a "Little Pakistan" to co-exist in South Asian ethnic enclaves in overseas countries. There are various cities such as Birmingham, Blackburn and Manchester where British Indians and British Pakistanis live alongside each other in peace and harmony. Both Indians and Pakistanis living in the UK fit under the category of British Asian. The UK is also home to the Pakistan & India friendship forum. In the United States, Indians and Pakistanis are classified under the South Asian American category and share many cultural traits. In the US, intermarriage between Indians and Pakistanis is common. The British MEP Sajjad Karim is of Pakistani origin. He is a member of the European Parliament Friends of India Group, Karim was also responsible for opening up Europe to free trade with India. He narrowly escaped the Mumbai attacks at Hotel Taj in November 2008. Despite the atrocity, Karim does not wish the remaining killer Ajmal Kasab to be sentenced to death. He said: "I believe he had a fair and transparent trial and I support the guilty verdict. But I am not a supporter of capital punishment. I believe he should be given a life sentence, but that life should mean life.

Conclusion

In the last 65 years, India and Pakistan have been unable to resolve their differences and develop a normal good neighbourly relationship, which could have benefitted people on both sides of the border. There have been several attempts to initiate a sustainable peace process, but most were either stillborn or abandoned in their infancy. India and Pakistan, particularly Northern India and Eastern Pakistan, to some degree have similar cultures, cuisines and languages due to common Indo-Aryan heritage which span through the two countries and throughout much of the northern subcontinent which also underpin the historical ties between the two. Pakistani singers, musicians, comedians and entertainers have enjoyed widespread popularity in India, with many achieving overnight fame in the Indian film industry Bollywood. Likewise, Indian music and film are very popular in Pakistan. Being located in the northernmost region of the South Asia, Pakistan's culture is somewhat similar to that of North India, especially the northwest. The Punjab region was split into Punjab, Pakistan and Punjab, India following the independence and partition of the two countries in 1947. The Punjabi people are today the largest ethnic group in Pakistan and also an important ethnic group of northern India. The founder of Sikhism was born in the modern-day Pakistani Punjab province, in the city of Nankana Sahib. Each year, millions of Indian Sikh pilgrims cross over to visit holy Sikh sites in Nankana Sahib. The Sindhi people are the native ethnic group of the Pakistani province of Sindh. Many Hindu Sindhis migrated to India in 1947, making the country home to a sizeable Sindhi community. In addition, the millions of Muslims who migrated from India to the newly created Pakistan during independence came to be known as

the Muhajir people; they are settled predominantly in Karachi and still maintain family links in India.

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