

## **India-Pakistan Relations: challenges and Opportunities**

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**Abstract;** *India and Pakistan are the two large countries of South Asia. Since their independence in 1947, the relations between the two countries have been in the state of constant flux. Several decades of armed conflict, bilateral talks and gradually rising trust deficit have become distinctive features of mutual Indo-Pakistani relations. Even though they share linguistic, cultural, geographic, and economic links, their relationship has been plagued by hostility and suspicion. Both India and Pakistan hold different views regarding their conflict; to Pakistan it is Kashmir, where as for India it is Cross-border terrorism across the LOC, supported by Pakistan. The indo-Pakistan conflict has also hampered the development of economic and trade cooperation between them. Time is ripe when both the countries should try to resolve their differences and move towards peace and cooperation*

**Key Words:** *Pakistan-India Rivalry, Kashmir issue, Nuclearization, USA, Terrorism.*

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### **I. Introduction**

It is cliché that a nation can choose its friends but cannot choose its neighbors. India and Pakistan are neighbors with complex problems with each other; that cannot be simply washed away or be forcefully settled down. Ideology, history and geo-politics remained permanent markers in the relations between India and Pakistan.

India and Pakistan were birthed out of a bloody partition that encouraged each to define itself in opposition to the other. Six decades after the tragedy and trauma of partition, a host of issues continue to bedevil India-Pakistan relations and cast long shadows on bilateral ties. Pakistan perceives that India has hegemonic ambition in South Asia. Pakistan is the primary bargainer, has the potential to check Indian dominance or hegemonic aspirations. Pakistan is neither strong enough to assert itself effectively against India nor it is so weak that it can readily submit in a subordinate position. Immediately after partition, there was a lot of confidence in Pakistan that the Muslim countries of the world would draw closer to Pakistan and indeed might move towards a Pan-Islamic grouping of Muslim nations. Islam and Muslim brotherhood appeared to Pakistan the only bond of belonging in whose name she could appeal for other nation's support against India (Narendra Singh, 2007, pp.13-14).

### **II. Pakistan's Security and Nuclear policy**

Since the inception of Pakistan, its main focus has been on national security. Pakistan started its journey as an independent country with a sense of insecurity and a perceived threat from its dominant and rival neighboring India. Since the beginning, Pakistan's decision makers perceived a major threat to Pakistan's territorial integrity from India's superior military capacity and economic power. Pakistan's foreign policy has been conditioned by two interrelated factors i.e., the fear of India and an urge to seek a strategic balance with India. For this purpose, Pakistan joined the United States military alliance- South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), in 1954, followed by its entry into the Bagdad Pact (later CEATO) in 1955, to enhance its own security potential, to escape the nightmare of being crushed by India. (S.R.T.P.S Sugunakara Raju. 2011, P. 34).

Pakistan's nuclear strategy is deeply rooted in its political thinking. The leadership in Islamabad has definitely perceived nuclear weapon as an ultimate guarantor of Pakistan's national survival. Pakistan perceives that India will attack Pakistan, grab territory, split the country or undo partition (Raja Menon 2000, p. 193). The threat became real when India got directly involved in the 1971 crisis aimed to dismember Pakistan. Pakistan lost 340.38 square miles of its territory to India; while India lost only 58.38 square miles to Pakistan (Musa Khan Jalazail. 2003, P.120). After the 1971 war with India, Pakistan became more sensitive for its security issues. The humiliating defeat in that war was the major setback to both Pakistan's 'national ideology' and 'territorial integrity'. Pakistan could realize that it is no match to India militarily. The anti- Indian foreign policy stance and acquiring nuclear weapons became stronger than ever. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then leader of Pakistan, proclaimed: "if India developed an atom bomb, we too will develop one, even if we have to eat grass, leaves, or to remain hungry, because there is no conventional alternative to the Atomic bomb'. Consequently, a

covert nuclear competition began between the two sub continental rivals that ultimately culminated in their overt nuclearization in 1998 (Sanjeev Kumar H.M, 2011, P.69). In pursuit of security, Pakistan has acquired nuclear missile technology and it continues to pursue that, and yet Pakistan seems to have a tremendous sense of insecurity against India.

### **III. The Kashmir Dispute**

South Asia is undoubtedly one of the most war-prone regions in the world with two neighbors engaged in unresolved conflict over Kashmir. Kashmir dispute has created special bitterness in the bilateral relations between India and Pakistan, more than anything else. The geopolitical rivalry between India and Pakistan is rooted in the 1947 communal partition of the subcontinent. For India, Kashmir is an integral part of its union, while for Pakistan, Kashmir is a disputed land. For Pakistan, Kashmir with its Muslim majority state should have acceded to Pakistan according to two nation theory. It describes the Kashmir as an 'unfinished agenda of partition' of the subcontinent in 1947, viz. that the contiguous Muslim-majority areas, like Kashmir, would constitute Pakistan. On the other hand, India is rejecting the philosophy of partition, namely, separation on the basis of religion. However it needs to be highlighted here that such policy was not applied by India in the case of Junagarh and Hyberabad state. India maintains that Kashmir had become a part of India when Kashmir's ruler Maharaja Hari Singh signed the instrument of Accession acceding Kashmir to India. Thus India's claim on Kashmir is based on this legal document. On the other hand Pakistan contends that India is validating its occupation in Kashmir by claiming that the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir had opted for India by signing the Instrument of Accession (Shahid M Amin 2000, P.30). For India, Kashmir is an unfinished "agenda of partition" which can be fulfilled only after the areas of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, Northern Gilgit and Baltistan are integrated with India (Sangeeta Thapliyal. [www.idsa-india.org/an-oct8-8.html](http://www.idsa-india.org/an-oct8-8.html)). Furthermore, from India's standpoint integration of Kashmir is important not only because of its strategic significance but also because its disintegration would have a spillover effect on other states leading to the balkanisation of the Indian Union. For Pakistan, the Kashmir issue is not only crucial for its religious ideology, but is also useful in raising the external threat of India ready to wage an armed conflict because of Kashmir. General Musharraf in a speech on January 12, 2002, summed up the centrality of Kashmir in Pakistan's jihadi policy. He said, "Kashmir runs in our blood. No Pakistani can afford to sever links with Kashmir. The entire Pakistan and the world know this. We will continue to extend our moral, political, and diplomatic support to Kashmiris. We will never budge an inch from our principal stand on Kashmir" (Ashutosh Misra 2010, P.43). For Pakistan, Kashmir has far greater importance for economic, ethnic, and strategic reasons.

The World Community got involved in this matter when Kashmir Issue was referred to the UN Security Council by India as a complaint against Pakistan on 1 January 1948 in the wake of the invasion of tribes men in Kashmir. Pakistan filed a counter-complaint in the UN. In January 1949, the UN Security Council ordered cease-fire and passed resolution for holding a plebiscite in Kashmir to decide the fate of Kashmir (Abdul Sattar 2003, P. 98). Till date plebiscite could not take place in Kashmir. The resolution recommended Pakistan to withdraw all troops from Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir as a pre-requisite for holding a plebiscite; Pakistan ignored the UN mandate, did not withdraw its troops and claimed the withdrawal of Indian forces was a pre-requisite as per this resolution (S.R.T.P. Sugunakararaju. P.78). Kashmir attracts the global community from time to time, but no concrete steps have been taken to resolve the problem. This contested issue remains one of the crucial problems in bilateral relations between India and Pakistan. The unresolved dispute has also been a major drain on the resources of the two countries and has been a stumbling block to normalizing relations between them.

In 1972 India and Pakistan signed Simla Agreement, by which both countries agreed to settle all issues by peaceful means using mutual dialogue in accordance with the UN charter. Pakistan's efforts over the time to internationalize the Kashmir issue were not appreciated by India. India is demanding the issue to be resolved through bilateral negotiations as per the Simla agreement. Any attempt of third party intervention is widely criticized by India. In the post Simla agreement period, for International community Kashmir is rather a bilateral issue to be discussed at the negotiating table by India and Pakistan. The US position has also been to resolve the Kashmir dispute on the basis of the Simla Agreement. However, after the conduct of nuclear tests by both countries, the American Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, said that the US was "re-examining the underlying political problems between India and Pakistan including Kashmir." The dynamics of Kashmir rivalry has entered in to the new escalation-prone phase at the turn of the century. India and Pakistan went overtly nuclear in May 1998 when India conducted five nuclear tests and Pakistan responded by conducting six nuclear tests to match India's number of nuclear explosions.

### **IV. Indo-Pak Relations in the Post 9/11 Era**

In a world forever changed by the infamous September 11 attacks, the most urgent threat to lasting peace is the growing mistrust between Pakistan and India. It is commonly understood that the tribal areas

crisscrossing Afghanistan and Pakistan are a breeding ground for terrorists. India has grave concerns of the spillover of radical extremists from this region crossing into Kashmir region. The US response to the September 11 attacks confronted the political leadership of both Pakistan and India with unique challenges and opportunities. Pakistan had to quickly choose whether it would become an enemy of the U.S. and risk the expected consequences, or side with it, and confront its own Islamic-fundamentalist allies in Pakistan and Afghanistan. It chose to side with the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Pakistan decided to join because of predictable economic incentives, the need to save its strategic assets and salvaging its Kashmir policy from total destruction. India on its part was prompt in offering its support in the hope that it can fight its own cross-border terrorism against Pakistan, under the banner of US led 'Global War on Terror'. India wanted the U.S. to categorize all Islamist resistance groups in Kashmir as "cross border terrorism" and it wanted endorsement for its efforts to crush them. But Indian aspirations were not realized by US to the expectation of India. India watched with concern as Pakistan again emerged as a frontline state in the U.S. led war in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan became the battle ground for the American led "*Global War on Terrorism*", with Pakistan as an important ally of the US in Afghanistan. Tensions between longtime rivals in the region have bubbled beneath the surface in Afghanistan as 'war on terror' has captured most of the attention. India offered unconditional support to the US in the latter's 'War on Terror' in Afghanistan with a view not only to minimize Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan and ensure that Afghanistan does not become a source of terrorism against India but also with long-term geo-strategic interests including peace and security in the region.

India and Pakistan have been locked in a bitter rivalry with decades-old roots that have almost erupted into outright war several times. In the post-9/11 world, the threat is even greater as the conflict has, on multiple occasions, threatened to escalate into nuclear war. With the 2001 terrorist attacks on the Indian Parliament in New Delhi and the Mumbai attacks in 2008, relationship between the two countries got further worsened. India is accusing Pakistan for these attacks. On the other hand, Pakistan is accusing India for internal disturbances and insurgency insurrecting in the tribal areas of Sind and Baluchistan. Both the countries are playing the war of misperceptions. Since 2014, a new terrorist group, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has emerged in the tribal areas of Pakistan to threaten Pakistan's political institutions. The Pakistani leadership has often accused India of supplying arms and funding to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan who are resorting to terrorist acts against Pakistan, because of Pakistan's support to the US war on terrorism. In the wake of recent military tensions between Pakistan-India over cross-border firings, it is of utmost importance to defuse tensions by bringing both sides together to discuss the impasse, leading to a resumption of a peace dialogue which has remained suspended since Mumbai attacks in 2008.

## **V. Role of Extra-Regional powers in Indo-Pak Conflict**

The dynamics of Great Power interests in the Indo- Pakistan conflict can be better understood by the extent to which global and regional powers have used each other to advance their respective political and strategic objectives. The US has played a significant role in Indo Pakistan relations. The US policies towards India and Pakistan are guided by its own interests in the region. During the Cold War period, the US sided with Pakistan on Kashmir to serve its own geo-political cold war interests. The US provided economic and military aid running into billions of dollars to Pakistan to sustain its war in Afghanistan against its rival power - USSR. It looked at the other way while Pakistan used the same money and equipment in sustaining its crusade of cross-border terrorism against India. Most of India's security problems vis-à-vis Pakistan could be traced back to the US tilt towards Pakistan at the expense of India during the Cold War. Its policy towards India and Pakistan has always disrupted the balance of power in South Asia.

After the end of the Cold War and particularly in the post 9/11 era, many friends turned as foes and visa-versa. India came closer to the US. Both the countries felt that there is the need for security cooperation and the greatest threats to their security are defined more by dynamics with weak and failing states than by the borders between strong and aggressive ones. However, the US continued to deal with India and Pakistan separately within the frame work of its own interests in both the countries. On the objections by Pakistan, India was kept at arm's length as far as the security issue in Afghanistan was concerned. India's role in Afghanistan was restricted only to humanitarian assistance and economic development as was desired by Pakistan. The US needed Pakistan more than India because of Pakistan's geographical location.

The U.S. is a fair-weather friend of Pakistan. With the emergence of China as a great power, the U.S. became closer to India. The US strategy is to promote India as a "counter -weight" to China, disappointing Pakistan. Pakistani regime provides pivotal assistance to Washington in securing its interests in Afghanistan- at the cost of turning much of Pakistan's tribal regions into a war zone. Pakistan, which served as a U.S. Cold War proxy, now finds itself reduced to playing second fiddle to the Indo-U.S. strategic partnership. Pakistan is in fact complaining that the U.S. has encouraged India to play a major and growing role in Afghanistan, including in the training of Afghan security forces. The US relationship with Pakistan is looking increasingly fraught even as its relationship with India improves in the wake of the 2008 civilian nuclear deal.

As against US, China is all-weather friend of Pakistan. China provided a huge assistance to Pakistan in becoming a nuclear power. India perceives that the friendship between Pakistan and China is based on common dislike of both the countries for India. China's friendship reached its peak during the Indo-Pakistan War in September 1965. China provided strong support to Pakistan by applying strong military pressure on India to stop the war. China had supported Pakistan on Kashmir which had acted as a second front against India with whom it had a border demarcation problem leading to war in 1962. China's support for Pakistan in its conflict with India is a serious and ongoing source of tension in the Sino-Indian relationship (Shahid M Amin. 2000, P.161). China is helping Pakistan not only militarily, but also economically. Pakistan has secured extensive Chinese assistance to build Gwadar port to secure a gateway for trade with Afghanistan and countries beyond. Islamabad seeks to strengthen its trade links with the CARs by controlling both new infrastructure and Silk Route's traditional Western route that connects Karachi with markets in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan (Larry Hanuer and Peter Chalk, 2012).

## **VI. Recent National Security Adviser Level Talks (NSA)**

India and Pakistan have employed different modes and techniques of conflict management and resolution from bilateral negotiations to mediation and arbitration. None of these measures have helped them resolve their differences. Zartman's ripeness theory suggests a right time to begin negotiations to resolve differences between or among conflicting parties. India and Pakistan in this context seized the moment and tried to seek the suggested way out (negotiations) but could not settle their mutual differences.

There have been numerous unsuccessful attempts and meetings between the two countries at the highest levels to resolve various aspects of their conflict. The continuing conflict between India and Pakistan can be seen through the ripeness model. There have been at least four cases in which India and Pakistan realized that the ripe moment has arrived- the Tashkent Agreement 1965, Simla agreement 1972, Lahore Declaration 1999 and Agra Summit 2001. Measures were taken during these efforts after calculating costs and benefits by India and Pakistan. Both the countries have realized the need to resolve their bilateral conflict. But it could not bring about any long lasting or permanent settlement to their conflict (Chandran Suba and Rizwan Zeb, 2005. P. 21).

India and Pakistan resumed the composite dialogue (Sugunakararaju S.R.T.P, P.31) in June 2004 that covered eight baskets of issues agreed upon in Male in 1997 between the former Indian Prime Minister I.K.Gujral and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The eight baskets of issues are as follows: 1.Peace and Security including CBMs 2. Jammu and Kashmir 3. Siachin 4. Wullar Barrage/Tylbul Navigation Project 5. Sir Creek 6.Economic and Commercial Cooperation 7.Terrorism and Drug-Trafficking and 8. Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in various fields. The outcome of this composite dialogue process has so far not been dramatic, except some progress on CBMs, drug-trafficking, and promotion of friendly exchanges.

Recently, the Prime ministers of Pakistan and India met in Ufa (Russia) on the side lines of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) summit on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2015. The leaders exchanged views on issues of bilateral and regional interest. Both the leaders agreed that India and Pakistan have a collective responsibility to ensure peace and promote development. Both leaders condemned terrorism in all its forms and agreed to cooperate with each other to eliminate this menace from South Asia.

They also agreed on the following steps to be taken by the two sides in Ufa meeting:

- A meeting in New Delhi between the two NSAs to discuss all issues connected to terrorism.
- Early meetings of DG BSF and DG Pakistan Rangers followed by that of DGMOs (Directors General Military Operations).
- Decision for release of fishermen in each other's custody, along with their boats, within a period of 15 days.
- Mechanism for facilitating religious tourism.
- Both sides agreed to discuss ways and means to expedite the Mumbai case trial, including additional information like providing voice samples ([www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), accessed on 20<sup>th</sup>oct, 2015.).

Ufa meeting was followed by the meeting between the foreign security advisors of both the countries in New Delhi on August 2015. But India and Pakistan had a disagreement as New Delhi formally conveyed its objection over Pakistan's National Security Advisor Sartaj Aziz meeting Hurriyat leader in Delhi; one day before NSA-level talks. This put the NSA-level talks in jeopardy, which was agreed upon between the two Prime Ministers in Ufa, Russia.

Pakistani Government officials wanted to meet separatist Hurriyat representatives of Kashmir in New Delhi. India reacted with great opposition. India wanted discussion of conflicting issues between them strictly according to the Simla agreement. For India, any third party on the table goes against Simla Agreement. Both

India and Pakistan are taking what is regarded as an extreme or rigid position at the negotiating table, by which permanent settlement of disputes could never happen between them. Pakistan wanted to talk on all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, but India wants to talk on cross-border terrorism coming from Pakistan ([indianexpress.com](http://indianexpress.com), accessed on October 2015). Pursuant to the meeting between Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Nawaz Sharif in Paris on November 30, 2015 Indian and Pakistani National Security Advisers met for talks in Bangkok on 6 December 2015. This meeting was kept secret till it got over and the discussions covered "peace and security, terrorism, Jammu and Kashmir, and other issues, including tranquility along the LoC." (<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/nsas-meet-in-bangkok/article7956012.ece>).

## **VII. Future of Indo-Pak Relationship**

In the increasingly interdependent and globalized world, the need of the hour is to grab the every opportunity that comes in the way of exploring the possibility of peace in the region. Problems between Nations can be resolved either by war or by diplomacy, but in the case of Indo-Pak relations, neither diplomacy nor war has so far brought about any reconciliation.

Years of mutual mistrust, misperception and hatred has led to psychological barrier between India and Pakistan. Among all the conflicting issues between India and Pakistan, the Kashmir issue is the major bone of contention between the two countries. It is perceived that after resolution of Kashmir issue, India-Pakistan relationship will be cordial. There is variety of opinion about this situation. According to one view, the animosity between India and Pakistan has gone so deep that even if the Kashmir issue is resolved, the suspicion will still remain there. According to a Pakistani strategic analyst, Dr. Ayesha Siddika, even after the resolution of Kashmir issue the relationship will not remain cordial between the two traditional rival (Sudhir Kumar Singh, 2009. P. 216). Pakistan is not ready for cooperation at any level unless political problems (the Kashmir is the core issue for Pakistan) are not resolved between the two countries. India has agreed to discuss Kashmir as part of composite dialogue but it insists that cross border terrorism must come to an end. Over these differences both countries have fought four wars with each other.

The Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in his 2014 visit to India to attend Prime Minister Narendra Modi's inaugural ceremony said that he intended to "pick up the threads" of the Lahore Declaration, referring to a pledge both countries made in 1999 to cooperate more closely to ease tensions in the light of the SIMLA agreement. However, Pakistan has been raising the Kashmir issue at the United Nations General Assembly to remind the global community of their commitment as per the relevant United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) Resolutions of 1948 and 1949. For Pakistan, Kashmir is a core issue at the international level because it has got international recognition as a conflict and nuclear flashpoint, threatens regional peace in particular and world peace in general. India wants to improve relations with Pakistan by economic, trade and cultural exchanges including people- to- people contacts (Chandran Suba and Rizwan Zeb 2005, P.58). Pakistan maintains that Kashmir is the prime controversial issue with India and unless it is resolved, cooperation in other areas is not possible. They see further cooperation and integration between India and Pakistan as putting off negotiations to settle the Kashmir issue.

Simla Agreement, drawn up in July 1972 talked of 'basic issues' and causes of conflict which have bedeviled the relations between the two countries for the last 25 years, shall be resolved by peaceful means, but we have seen those basic issues and causes of conflict still till-date remain pretty intact, unresolved by peaceful means. Unfortunately, a friendly and harmonious relationship had failed to operate before 1972, but equally well also failed to establish, itself since 1972. In November 2003, India and Pakistan agreed to a formal ceasefire along the International border, the Line of Control and the Actual Ground Position Line in Jammu and Kashmir. A former Director-General of Military Operations, V.R. Raghavan, concurred with the view that this was the first time India and Pakistan had agreed to such a comprehensive ceasefire. "Both sides have agreed to give it (the ceasefire) a shot," he said, pointing out that in the past the two countries had agreed to use smaller weapons, but had not really succeeded in putting this into practice (Amit Baruah and Sandeep Dikshit, 2015). It is difficult to predict anything in the foreseeable future. The only realistic solution is to enable people to people contacts, strengthen bilateral economic and social relations. Nuclearization of India and Pakistan sends alarming bells ringing if not in the entire world, at least in the South Asian region as a whole. There is an imperative need to discuss confidence building measures to ensure strategic restraint between India and Pakistan in terms of their nuclear weapons and missile capacities (J.N. Dixit 2001, P.161).

## **VIII. Conclusion**

The relations between India and Pakistan have been in a state of constant flux, ever since their independence. They have fought four wars. Military confrontation between them has been the reason for other

developmental and economic issues being pushed in to the back ground. Needless to say South Asian countries constitute over 40% of the global poverty and need enormous resources and efforts to eliminate the scourge of poverty but unprecedented defense expenditure has prevented both India and Pakistan to do that. Security issues continued to remain the pivot around which countries of the region have shaped their national and regional policies (Shyam Saran 2007, P.115).

In an increasingly interdependent world, we see regional cooperation as the best venue to reduce tension, resolve conflict and to succeed in the competitive markets in our global village. Individual nation-state can only survive and prosper only by integrating into regional cooperation mechanisms. The model of the European Union is an encouraging and inspiring one. We cannot dare to compare the intra trade of SAARC with the European Union. The intra trade of EU is 63.4%, while SAARC internal trade, could not cross the level of 3.4%, due to high tariffs, hostilities between nations, lack of common customs union and absence of harmonized commercial processes (Sudhir Kumar Singh, 2009. p. 222). Replicating the experience of the EU in our region is a huge challenge but not an impossible task. In this context, serious and sustained commitment, planning, and efforts by all countries of the region are necessary. Peace and stability are pre-requisites for economic development, trade and politico-socio-cultural relations.

There is a huge potential for the expansion of bilateral trade between India and Pakistan. The Indo-Pak relationship has not reached a stage yet where the economic logic takes precedence over the political differences between the two countries. The existing barriers that restrict the movement of people, goods and investment within and across the region, need to be dismantled to unlock the development potential of South Asia. It should be possible for the two dominant South Asian countries to convert the entire Indo-Pak border into soft border.

Both countries need to engage in continuous dialogue process so that gradual and steady progress could be made in resolving their contentious and intractable issues. There is no other alternative to continuous dialogue process. Political will and seriousness on both sides of the border is essential to usher in peace between the two countries.

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