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INDIA PAKISTAN RELATIONS

After the independence India and Pakistan charted out separate courses for nation building with a hope that there was little left to fight among the two countries. However, the history of India-Pakistan relations since last 72 years has been a mix of aggression-reconciliation.

Background

Phase of active aggression (1947 – 2001)

- The partition caused one of the largest human migrations ever seen and sparked riots and violence across the region.
- In October 1947 the first India-Pakistan war over Kashmir was fought following which Pakistan captured one-third major part of Kashmir (now referred to as Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)). Hari Singh, the then Maharaja of Kashmir, signed the Instrument of Accession with Indian government in return for military help. The war ended in 1949 after UN intervened leading to a ceasefire.
- Indo-Pak talks, initiated in 1963, failed to produce any agreement and two years later, in 1965, the two countries fought their second war. This war also saw a UN mandated ceasefire and in 1966, Indian PM Lal Bahadur Shastri and Pakistani President Ayub Khan signed the Tashkent Agreement agreeing to withdraw to pre-war lines and restoring the economic and diplomatic relations.
- In 1971, India and Pakistan went to war a third time, this time over East Pakistan when the West Pakistani central government refused to allow Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to assume the premiership. India launched a coordinated land, air and sea assault on East Pakistan following which the Pakistani army surrendered at Dhaka. India and Pakistan signed the Shimla Agreement in 1972.
- During the 1970s Pakistan started permitting foreign expeditions in the area of the Siachen glacier to reinforce its claim on it as this area was not clearly defined under the cease fire line between India and Pakistan. In response India launched Operation Meghdoot in 1984 and flew its troops to the Siachen glacier, thus securing an area of approximately 3,300 sq km.
- Pakistan supported the insurgency in Kashmir Valley in 1980s and 1990s by providing weapons and training to fighters and fuelling a large influx of "mujahideen" in Kashmir who took part in the Afghan war against the Soviets in the 1980s.
- During 1998 both India and Pakistan successfully tested their nuclear weapon capabilities.
- In 1999, Pakistani forces and Kashmiri fighters occupied strategic positions on the Indian side of the LoC in Kargil which culminated into the Kargil War in which India pushed the enemy to the other side of the LoC.
- In 2001 the attack on the Indian Parliament in New Delhi by Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad was the last event of this phase of active aggression between the two countries.

Shimla Agreement, 1972

- The Simla Agreement designates the ceasefire line of December 17, 1971, as being the new "Line-of-Control (LoC)" between the two countries, which neither side is to seek to alter unilaterally.
- Both countries agreed to put an end to the conflict and confrontation and work for the establishment of a durable peace in the subcontinent. They agreed to settle any disputes "by peaceful means".

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Phase of reconciliation (2001-2008)

- Even before 2001 there were efforts to improve the bilateral relations. The Lahore Declaration saw the start of Delhi Lahore Bus Service in 1999 during Indian PM’s visit. The Declaration proposed several measures for confidence building (informing each other ahead of missile tests) and it was the second agreement covering nuclear non-aggression. (first was ‘Non-Nuclear Attack Agreement’ signed between Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto in 1988)
- Vajpayee’s principles of insaniyat (humanism), jamhooriyat (democracy) and kashmiriyat (Kashmir’s legacy of amity) further attenuated Indo-Pakistan differences.
- Despite the failure of Agra summit in the aftermath of Parliament attacks PM Vajpayee travelled to Pakistan for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit in 2004 where Pakistan agreed not to allow its soil to be used for anti-India activities.
- The year 2004 is marked as the beginning of the Composite Dialogue Process, in which bilateral meetings are held between officials at various levels of government (including foreign ministers, foreign secretaries, military officers, border officials etc.)
- In 2008, India joined a framework agreement between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan (TAPI) on a gas pipeline project. Also, several trade routes were opened between the two countries in the same year.
- The end of this phase is marked by the Mumbai terror attacks in 2008 which were allegedly planned and abetted by the Pakistani intelligence agencies.

Phase of passive bilateralism (2008 - 2015)

- This phase is marked by low key interactions between the two countries. The dialogue process either remained suspended during this period or was limited to official level talks majorly.
- The phase is marked by post Mumbai attack discussions where both countries were engaged in proving and rebutting the source of attacks.
- At the end of this period in 2014, the new government unveiled its ‘Neighborhood First’ Policy which accorded priority to the South Asian countries in its foreign policy. Prime Minister level visits between the two countries started and good will gestures were shown by both sides (fishermen released by Pakistan, Pakistan PM invited to PM Modi’s swearing-in ceremony etc.).
- Indian PM’s visit to Pakistan in 2015 was first in a decade and was therefore a significant change in India’s approach to Pakistan.

Phase of renewed aggression (2015 - 2019)

- The present phase in India-Pakistan relations is marked by renewed hostility between the two countries.
- China and Pakistan signed the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) infrastructural project in 2015 which was an affront to Indian sovereignty as the corridor passes through the PoK.
- Bilateral relations were dented by the series of attacks which started with Gurdaspur terror attacks in 2015 and included other major incidents like the Pathankot attack (2016), Nagrota attack (2016), Uri attack (2016), Amarnath yatra attack (2017) and finally the Pulwama attack in 2019.
- India responded to the Uri attack by carrying out a ‘surgical strike’ inside PoK and to the Pulwama attack by carrying out the Balakot airstrike in Pakistan and revoking the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan.
- Following the abrogation of Article 370 the diplomatic relations between the two countries have been downgraded. Pakistan launched a global diplomatic campaign to attract international support for Pakistan’s position on Kashmir.

What makes peace elusive between India-Pakistan?

- Kashmir conundrum: The tug of war over Kashmir represented the contest between identities of two nations. While Pakistan tries to alter status quo in Kashmir by force, India is content to retain its portion of Kashmir, without making serious efforts to change the situation on the ground.

Why Siachen is important for India?

- The Siachen glacier demarcates central Asia from the Indian subcontinent, and separates Pakistan from China in the region.
- The Saltoro Ridge of the Siachin glacier serves as a divide that prevents direct linking of PoK with China, stopping them to develop geographical military linkages in the area.
- Siachen also serves as a watchtower for India to keep a deep watch on Gilgit and Baltistan regions of Pakistan.
- If Pakistan gets the location advantage in Siachen, it would become a big threat to India from the west in Ladakh in addition to Chinese threats from Aksai Chin of the east.
• **Fractured internal dynamics of Pakistan**: In Pakistan both the army and the political parties failed to bring enduring stability, which provided a political space for Islamic extremism. Due to fractured polity, Pakistan could not develop an optimistic approach towards Kashmir and India. Also, army becoming increasingly entrenched in Pakistani politics, it developed a vested interest in sustaining hostility with India in order to justify its dominance.

• **Cross-border terrorism**: In order to achieve its ends, Pakistan fuels terrorist activities into India based on the military doctrine of ‘bleeding India with a thousand cuts’ through these separate and scattered terror events. This often leads to violent escalations as witnessed during India’s airstrike and Pakistan’s retaliatory actions which severely limit and disrupt initiatives to build a stable relationship.

• **Boundary dispute**: Apart from Kashmir, India and Pakistan have not been able to come to terms on the exact boundary between the two nations in the north (along the LoC) and in the West (Sir Creek issue).

• **Water dispute**: As a response to the Pakistan based cross-border terrorism India has repeatedly called for abrogation of the Indus water distribution mechanism citing that blood and water cannot flow together. In the wake of the Uri attack, Delhi suspended the bi-annual water talks and promised to ‘fast-track’ projects to use hitherto unutilised water of the eastern rivers allocated to India via three national projects (the multipurpose Shahpurkandi and Ujh dams, and the Beas-Sutlej river-linking project.)

**Fallouts of the above issues**

The core issues discussed above form the basis of conflicts of varying kind between the two nations. The fallouts of the fundamental issues can be witnessed as follows:

• **Limited economic integration**: The trade between two enemy countries has been far lower that its potential (around $2 billion in 2018-19) due to complicated and non-transparent non-tariff and tariff measures. Without artificial barriers, this should be USD 37 billion. Cross-border trade usually follows the cycles of terrorist events showing ups and downs.

• **Stalled regional integration**: Intra-regional trade—accounts for a little more than 5 percent of South Asia’s total trade while it accounts for 50 percent of total trade in East Asia and the Pacific and 22 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa. SAARC and SAFTA are also ineffective due to the conflictual relations between two.

• **Costly arms race**: In 2018, India allocated $57.9 billion, or 2.1 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), to support its troops, according to reports from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Pakistan spent $11.2 billion, about 3.6 percent of its GDP, on its 653,800 troops. This is despite South Asian region is one of the poorest in human development. Also, both being nuclear weapons states makes South Asia nuclear hotspot, especially owing to rising terrorism in Pakistan and weak safety measures.

• **Affects India’s external interests**: An unfavorable Pakistan hurts India’s long-term engagement with South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia. Pakistan is geo-strategically more important in South Asia than India when it comes to issues like Afghanistan stability, Iraq etc. It plays an indispensable role for different countries like the US, China and Russia for different reasons.

• **Internationalization of dispute**: Pakistan is using every available forum – from animal husbandry to climate change– to raise the Kashmir issue and to forward its poisonous propaganda campaign against India in international fora.

• **Other issues** like capture of fishermen, drug smuggling from the Golden Crescent, fake Indian currencies sneaking through the western borders also loom large.

**Current events shaping India-Pakistan relations:**

• The entire CAA-NRC-NPR issue is being stirred up by Pakistan not just to create trouble in India but also, internationally.

• The endgame in Afghanistan will probably see greater contestation between the two countries, in addition to new alignments.

• India’s engagement with the US in the Indo-Pacific is being balanced by Chinese increasing engagement and reliance on Pakistan propping it up against India.

• Russia is opening up to Pakistan (during 2014-18 Russia was third largest supplier of conventional weapons to Pak, naval cooperation, energy cooperation and gas pipeline pact etc.) which is an unprecedented jolt to India.

**India-Pakistan Logjam: Cutting the Ice**

Despite the bilateral relations at their historic low, a ray of hope is presented by events like opening of Kartarpur Corridor where political differences take a back seat and public sentiments are given primacy on both sides. At a
time when Indian government holds that talks and terror can’t go together, political policy with Pakistan is that of complete isolation combined with disruption of bilateral and diplomatic talks the way out seems to be through non-political measures- trade relaxations, people-to-people confidence building measures and international mediation.

- **Normalcy in Kashmir**: India should concentrate on restoring normalcy in Jammu & Kashmir, mainstreaming the population, especially the youth, encourage investment in the state. Allaying minority fears in India through informed approach on issues like the NRC, CAA would unarm Pakistan at international forums.

- **People-to-people contacts**: At the ground level public opinion in both countries could be moulded through entertainment channels, media and music. Further cricket diplomacy can play a vital role in boosting such relations.

- **Trade facilitation**: Pakistan is undergoing severe economic crisis and is on the verge of receiving further international sanctions (FATF grey list). At this juncture, easing bilateral trade restrictions and facilitation of cross border trade could address the trust deficit between two countries.

- **International mediation**: Indirect mediation efforts via countries like US, China and Russia who have called for bilateral dialogue post 370 abrogation may provide the much-needed momentum. Annual summits of SCO, SAARC etc. could be useful in starting a non-adversarial bilateral dialogue between the two.

Instead of looking for any short cuts to peace and tranquility with Pakistan, India should wait for Pakistan to reset itself. Though India has limited control over internal political dynamics of Pakistan, it should not allow Pakistan to define contour of India-Pakistan relationship. India should pursue policy of both containment and negotiation. The best that can happen on the India-Pakistan front is that diplomatic relations are restored fully, trade opens up and there is some easing up on travel.
Summary

- India – Pakistan relations since independence are marked by distinct phases of ups and downs.
- **Phase of active aggression (1947 – 2001):** This phase is marked by post-partition acrimony. The issues between India and Pakistan led to three Wars during this period fought in 1965, 1971 and 1999.
  - This phase is marked by rise in insurgency in Kashmir which was supported by Pakistan.
  - Both countries displayed their nuclear weapon capabilities also during this phase.
- **Phase of reconciliation (2001-2008):** This phase is marked by cordial overtures made by both countries. Permanent ceasefire was agreed by both across the border, confidence building measures were initiated; energy pacts agreed upon, trade and travel routes were inaugurated for the first time by both.
- **Phase of passive bilateralism (2008 - 2015):** Low key interactions take place, India’s ‘Neighborhood First’ Policy unveiled, high levels visits initiated at the end of this period.
- **Phase of renewed aggression (2015-2019):** Cross-border terrorism peaked, several attacks on Indian soil took place, trade plummeted, internationalization of disputes and diplomatic isolation started, complete isolation and disruption of all levels of talks characterize this period.
- India and Pakistan’s historic belligerence is founded on some basic irritants which include the history of partition, Kashmir dispute, water distribution, boundary disputes in some specific sectors and the continuing acrimony of Pakistan’s military establishment for its failure in wars with India.
- Above irritants have been manifested into several face-offs in different domains which include low bilateral trade, separatism in Punjab, creation of external leverages to the detriment of each other, cross-border skirmishes, nuclear arms race etc.
- The international events and shifting of global power balance also effects India-Pakistan relations. It is in the light of these events that India should plan its policy vis-a-vis Pakistan in future.
- Now that the political level engagement is near zero, a start could be made through development of people-to-people level relations, international mediation, using multilateral forums to initiate sideline talks and focusing on development of and bringing normalcy in Kashmir.