



Indo-Pak conflict in South Asia: dynamics of Kashmir issue and the way forward for peace

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India and Pakistan have experienced various military conflicts since their inception in 1947. The Kashmir issue is one of the most pertinent causes of conflict between both nations as they have gone to war in 1948, 1965 and 1999 on the issue of Kashmir. This matter was also brought to the United Nations Security Council for resolution. However, India has categorically refused to seek any international mediation over this issue by terming it as an internal issue of India. Both countries officially joined the nuclear club in May 1998, which posed a severe threat to the security of the South Asian region as it enabled them to use the nuclear option in future. After acquiring atomic status, both countries came close to war in 2001 when armies were deployed on forward positions on international borders and in 2019 when Pakistan shot down the Indian Air Force fighter jet in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Since 2019, especially after India revoked Article 370, relations between the two countries have been dismal. The paper contemplates the background of this conflict and the resultant wars between India and Pakistan and presents confidence-building measures for the pursuit of peace-making in South Asia.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, Peace-making, Arms race, Nuclear powers, Nuclear war, Negotiations, Confidence building measures, International mediation.

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1. Introduction

India Pakistan conflict is not just a bilateral conflict, but it has regional and global implications. Both countries have been globally significant due to their vital geostrategic location. The population of both the countries make them a significant consumer market for the west. Any conflict between these two nations gets the attention of global superpowers (Shamim, 2018). On such occasions, superpowers i.e., USA and Russia have always tried to play a mediating role in order to diffuse the tensions. Since both the nations became nuclear power in 1998, any military conflict between the two nations may go nuclear and shall have devastating impact on the whole world (Karim et al, 2022).

Indo-Pak conflict is one of the most pressing conflict resolution issues in the world as it involves billions of lives directly. The then Pakistani Prime Minister Mr. Imran Khan clearly defined Pakistani policy during his address to the UN General Assembly that any military intervention by India could convert into nuclear conflict. This research provides a basic insight of the reasons and history of India-Pakistan conflict, its historical evolution, regional impacts, and most importantly providing viable recommendations to the policy makers for resolution of this conflict.

2. Literature review

Division of subcontinent was a significant event in the modern state system when the colonial rule of Britishers was on its decline in the whole world. The British government divided the subcontinent and two states namely Pakistan and India were established. Pakistan was created on the popular demand of creating a state for the Muslims while India remained home to the majority of Hindu population but also a sizable population of Muslims choose to remain in India. This partition was the one of the deadliest events of migration in world history as estimated around 2 million deaths occurred on both sides and left 14 million people displaced (Hussain et al., 2019).

India and Pakistan established diplomatic relations right away, but these relations were overwhelmed by the violent memories of the partition and highly controversial disputes over division of territories. Kashmir dispute was the epicentre of all the disputes and wars between Pakistan and India. Both countries went to war in 1948, 1965 and 1999 on this issue. Both countries also sat on negotiation table and dialogues took place especially in Shimla Conference, Agra Forum and Lahore Summit, however, all these efforts were used to be sabotaged (Pramanik & Roy, 2014)

Recently in 2016, when the relations between both countries were going smoothly, the attack on Pathankot took place on the Indian military base killing many Indian soldiers. India accused Pakistan to be behind this attack, which was clearly denied by the Pakistani government, however, this attack proved to sour the relations between both the nations and stoppage of bilateral negotiations. This event led to various insurgency attempts by the Indian forces inside the Pakistani territory with the notion of avenging this attack. New Delhi also withdrew Pakistan's most favourite nation trade status raising customary duties to 200 percent which adversely affected (Ahmad, 2015). In August 2019, Indian Parliament passed the most controversial bill which revoked the special status of Kashmir which sparked mass protests and Pakistan lowered its diplomatic relations with India.

3. Research methodology

This paper has adopted the qualitative research method by exploring and investigating the secondary data obtained for official documents of government, Inter governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, agreements, books, research papers, independent studies and academic research. The data has been analysed descriptive and analytical methods.

4. Wars between India and Pakistan: analysis and discussion

The conflicts between India and Pakistan, which emerged in the wake of their independence from British colonial rule in 1947, have had profound consequences for the entire South Asia. The initial years of these two newly born nations were marred by conflicts, primarily centred on the disputed region of Kashmir. This article delves into a detailed analysis of the major wars between India and Pakistan, exploring their historical context, causes, outcomes, and the broader geopolitical implications.

4.1. First Kashmir War (1947-1949)

The First Kashmir War, which took place from 1947 to 1949, was the starting point of conflicts in the history of both India and Pakistan. It marked the first armed engagement between the two nations shortly after their emergence as independent states. At the heart of the conflict was the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir (Ganguly, 1995). The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh, had to resist with a rebellion by his Muslim subjects in the Poonch region, who wished to join Pakistan. Pakistan's support for local Mujahidin, militia and insurgent forces further complicated the situation. These forces moved towards Srinagar, the capital of Jammu & Kashmir, leading to a military engagement (Kiss, 2019).

The ruler of Kashmir in a bid to protect his princely state, appealed to India for assistance. The Indian government agreed to intervene on the condition that Maharaja accedes to India. An Accession Instrument was signed by the ruler of Kashmir officially handing over the state to India (Ganguly, 1995). The conflict, involving the Jammu & Kashmir Armed Forces and local Mujahedeen supported by Pakistan, gradually solidified along what came to be known as the Control Line (a precursor to the Line of Control). A formal ceasefire was declared on the night of December 31, 1948, becoming effective on January 1, 1949.

4.2. Indo-Pakistani War of 1965

The Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 was an end result of simmering hostilities between the two nations, particularly over the Kashmir dispute. However, this war also involved other border disputes, notably in the Rann of Kutch (Ganguly, 2002). The conflict in the Rann of Kutch began in 1956 when India claimed its control over the disputed region. In 1965, clashes intensified with both countries launching attacks on each other's posts. The tension in the Rann of Kutch was effectively resolved through the mediation of the United Kingdom, led by Prime Minister Harold Wilson. In June 1965, the countries agreed to a ceasefire.

The 1965 war, was primarily focused on the Kashmir region, had underlying concerns. Pakistan believed that India's military capabilities were weakened following its defeat in the 1962 Sino-

Indian War. Pakistan initiated Operation Gibraltar, an effort to incite rebellion in Kashmir. However, this covert operation was unsuccessful. In August 1965, both sides engaged in armed conflict in the Kashmir region. Pakistan launched Operation Grand Slam to capture Akhnoor, a move that prompted India to involve its air force. The war eventually escalated but ended with a ceasefire in September 1965.

4.3. Indo-Pakistani War of 1971

The Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 was different among the conflicts between these two nations as it did not epicentre on the Kashmir dispute. Instead, it was driven by political tensions in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) between the ruling leaders of Pakistan and the aspirations of the Bengali population (Higgins, 2016). The conflict stemmed from the political struggle between Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of East Pakistan, and the West Pakistani leaders, Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. These tensions culminated in Bangladesh's declaration of independence from Pakistan's state structure.

The conflict began with India's intervention in the ongoing struggle for independence in Bangladesh. India supported the Bengali population, who had suffered atrocities during the 1971 massacres in Bangladesh. India attacked East Pakistan on 04th December 1971 and eventually Pakistani armed forces surrendered to Indian army on 16th December 1971 and Bangladesh emerged as a new country.

4.4. Indo-Pakistani war of 1999 (Kargil war)

The Kargil War in 1999 was distinctive for its focus on the Kargil region of Jammu and Kashmir. It followed a long period of relatively fewer overt military confrontations between India and Pakistan (Stern, 2002). The conflict had its origins in Pakistan's covert operation to penetrate forces into the Kargil region, some reportedly disguised as Mujahideen, in a bid to sever India's connection between Kashmir and Ladakh. Pakistan believed that this move would internationalize the Kashmir dispute.

The Indian forces launched a massive operation to push back the infiltrators and regain control of the ridges they had occupied. The international pressure, notably from the United States, played a crucial role in diffusing the major conflict. India and Pakistan were forced to withdraw its forces from the international border (Rehman et al., 2018).

5. Peace-making efforts between India and Pakistan

The relationship between India and Pakistan has been turbulent, marked by conflicts and ongoing efforts at reconciliation through diplomatic initiatives and peace talks.

5.1. Peace agreements

5.1.1. Tashkent Agreement (1966)

After the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, the Tashkent Agreement, overseen by global mediators, aimed to resolve conflicts between the two nations. The Soviet Union was the major mediator in these talks.

5.1.2. Shimla Agreement (1972)

Following the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, the Shimla Agreement established the Line of Control between the Indian occupied Kashmir and Azad Jammu and Kashmir and both countries agreed on resolving disputes through bilateral discussions. Through this agreement, Pakistan managed to secure the release of its 90000 war prisoners from India which were imprisoned after the fall of Dhaka.

5.1.3. Lahore Declaration (1999)

The Lahore Declaration was signed by Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif when Indian Prime Minister made a historic tour to Lahore on the bus. It was considered a significant breakthrough for resolving the issues between India and Pakistan.

5.1.4. Composite Dialogue (2004)

Initiated in 2004, the Composite Dialogue concentrated on multiple disputes, seeking to establish peace and trust through dialogue, especially after the deployment of troops by both countries in 2002 on the international border.

5.1.5. Mumbai attacks and resumption of dialogue (2008)

After the Mumbai attacks in 2008 and worsening of the relations between the two rival countries, the peace dialogue was resumed in 2011, known as the "resumed dialogue," with very little success.

5.2. Events jeopardizing the peace-making efforts

The peace-making initiatives between India and Pakistan have been jeopardized by multiple events and conflicts over the years. There are several incidents which have been hampering the development and sustainability of peace initiatives. Some key events that significantly affected the peace process include:

5.2.1. Kargil conflict (1999)

One of the most notable events that jeopardized the peace process was the Kargil conflict in 1999. This conflict, in the Kargil region in Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir, caused a significant breakdown in relations between the two nuclear armed countries, and region was posed to nuclear war.

5.2.2. Mumbai terror attacks (2008)

The Mumbai terror attacks in 2008 and alleged involvement of a Pakistani local Ajmal Kassab in these attacks broke down the peace-making process again. The incident increased hostilities and dialogues were suspended between both the countries. Although, Pakistan offered intelligence sharing and assistance in finding the involved personnels in these attacks, but India denied the same.

5.2.3. Political instability and leadership changes

The frequent changes in political leadership, both in India and Pakistan, have also contributed to the unsteadiness of peace efforts. Changes in leadership often reflect changes in diplomatic policies, affecting the endurance of peace talks.

5.2.4. Kashmir issue

Kashmir which is the unresolved territorial dispute between India and Pakistan and the same has been the reason for three (3) wars between India and Pakistan. Recently, in 2019, India revoked Kashmir's special status sparking massive protests in Kashmir and Pakistan as well. These events and insistent disputes have diluted the progress in peace talks between India and Pakistan. The relapse of conflicts, political uncertainty, territorial disagreements, and security concerns have jointly contributed in substantial hurdles to establishing lasting peace in the region (Khalid, 2021).

5.3. Leadership role in the peace-making efforts

This section highlights the efforts and initiatives of the Pakistani and Indian leaders who played a significant role in peace-making efforts between India and Pakistan:

5.3.1. General Ayub Khan

As Pakistan's second President, General Ayub Khan made sincere bids to establish dialogue with India. He performed various diplomatic efforts that led to the signing of the Tashkent Agreement in 1966 following the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965. This agreement aimed at restoring diplomatic relations and normalizing the situation between India and Pakistan.

5.3.2. General Pervez Musharraf

General Musharraf, who came into power in 1999 and later became President in 2001 initiated diplomatic dialogue with India. He actively participated in the Agra Summit in 2001 and the Composite Dialogue in 2004 which showed his resolve as a peacemaker.

5.3.3. Nawaz Sharif

Pakistani Prime Minister for three times, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif is known to be a Pro-Indian political personality in Pakistan. He played instrumental role in Indian PM Vajpayee's visit to Lahore and Lahore Declaration where it was decided to reduce hostilities and promote trade and diplomatic initiatives. Again in 2014, in an atmosphere which was filled with hostilities, he chose to participate in the oath taking ceremony of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi which was another successful gesture. Later on, in 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the first Prime Minister after a decade to visit Pakistan when he visited Lahore on the invitation of Nawaz Sharif and met with him at his residence.

5.3.4. Atal Bihari Vajpayee

The India's Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's role has been both positive and negative in

fostering peace relations with Pakistan. India showed reluctant to officially test its nuclear weapons to stay away from nuclear arms race in Pakistan. As soon as Bihari came to power in 1998, he conducted nuclear tests in Pokhran in May 1998 which disturbed the balance of power in the region and prompted Pakistan to also conduct nuclear test and balance the power equilibrium in the region. However afterwards, he made a historic visit to Lahore in 1999 and committed to play a peacemaker's role with Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif.

5.4.4. Indira Gandhi

The Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi played a very critical role in straining Indo-Pak relations. She chooses to involve Indian military in the internal issue of Pakistan i.e. East Pakistan and later on attacked East Pakistan to make it an independent state. Her role shall always be remembered as the leader who could have played a positive role rather, choose to strain these relations and lose this opportunity of peace-making. While involved in significant diplomatic efforts, including the Shimla Agreement, her policies related to the independence of Bangladesh and the subsequent Indo-Pakistani war in 1971 led to strained relations and unresolved issues.

6. Conclusion

India started their nuclear program to gain nuclear supremacy in South Asia and especially getting influence over Pakistan. Moreover, China was also an emerging threat to India especially after the war of 1962, therefore, it also helped India to maintain balance of power in case of Chinese military dominance. Moreover, by becoming a nuclear power, the case of India for the permanent spot of Security Council also got strengthened. On the other hand, Pakistan initiated its nuclear program to counter the security threat from India. Pakistan could not achieve parity with India in conventional warfare, but nuclear capability was the only factor that could allow Pakistan to be on the same stature as India. Therefore, it may be concluded that Pakistan's motive was completely based on achieving power parity in the region. However, nuclear program of both India and Pakistan has been a vital factor in maintaining the balance of power in the region. India is far ahead from Pakistan in conventioner warfare therefore, nuclear capability has proved to be a deterrence factor for Pakistan. After holistically analyse the historical evolution of India Pakistan rivalry and modalities of all the wars between them, the research presents some key recommendations to normalize the ties between both the states:

- A hotline should be established between Indian Prime Minister and Pakistani Prime Minister as per the model of Cold War.
- Both militaries of India and Pakistan should officially initiate intelligence sharing exercise to avoid and control border insurgencies.
- The leaders of both countries should make regular visits of the countries and allow dialogue on the major issues like Kashmir.
- Both the countries should include intellectuals and defence policy experts including academia in the policy making process and allow them to devise a joint peace mechanism to resolve major disputes among them.
- Both countries should allow the sporting events and joint sporting tournaments between India and Pakistan. The teams should regularly visit both countries to promote cultural harmony.

- Both the countries should ease the visa policies in order to allow families to visit their ancestral homes in both the countries.
- The academia and defence experts of both nations should establish a joint consortium/forum where they would promote unbiased research and dialogue on sensitive issues between both the states in a very pragmatic way. The forum should promote interstate dialogue and urge the political leaders to initiate dialogue on major issues.

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