

India-Pakistan Relationship: A Case of Perpetual Instability

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Abstract

The study aims to dispassionately analyze what the future holds for Indo-Pak relations. The two sides have maintained strained relations since their independence from the British Colonial rule in 1947. It appears unlikely that India will change its course of action owing to the US support and resultant dismissiveness towards Pakistan's peace overtures. The current security situation between India and Pakistan is presumed to be unprecedented because of Prime Minister (PM) Modi's history of personal involvement in actions against Muslims and Pakistan. Therefore, the improvement in bilateral relations cannot be expected until the time some major compromises are made by the leadership on both sides. The lack of convergence in how each side views its security along with a long history of mistrust, are the root causes of this strained relationship. Although the broader dynamics of the Indo-Pak relationship cannot be analyzed in isolation from the very presence of nuclear weapons in the region; however, the occurrence or non-occurrence of crisis between India and Pakistan is not primarily subject to the presence or absence of nuclear weapons. The actual causes of conflict remain the non-resolution of outstanding disputes. To this end, India lacks a demonstrable and consistent political will to resolve conflicts through a spirit of accommodation, compromise, and reconciliation.

Keywords

India, Pakistan, nuclear weapons, border dynamics

Introduction

Since independence, Pakistan and India have had a very uneasy relationship. The source of conflict largely rests in the territorial disputes amongst which the Kashmir issue has remained the central focus. In terms of resolution of outstanding disputes, Pakistan and India have failed to develop a comprehensive mechanism to address these issues and have rather adopted a security-driven approach leading to at least three wars (1948, 1965 and 1999), along with several crises that had the potential to escalate. This approach has not yielded any favorable outcomes.

Only a few episodes of temporary peace could be traced between India and Pakistan. Until recently, Pakistan was keen to resume the long-stalled peace process and for that, the Pakistani leadership went out of the way more than once. Unfortunately, all have met with rebuffs and hostile statements. The hostility between

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the two has only aggravated in the past several years particularly after the BJP government's coming into power in the year 2014. PM Narendra Modi's pro-Hindu nationalist policies have increased the unfavorable views regarding Pakistan. There appears to be greater hostility towards Pakistan following PM Modi's re-election in 2019.

Unlike India, the resolution of outstanding disputes and resumption of bilateral dialogue with India are seen as common points in the election manifestoes of popular political parties, like Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League (PMLN), in Pakistan. After taking charge as the 22nd PM of Pakistan, Imran Khan emphasized on normalizing relations with India as a top priority (Imran Khan's speech in full, 2018). He vowed to take two steps forward in return for India's one step (If India takes one step, we will take two: Imran Khan, 2018). Initially, the Indian side also manifested a similar desire and recognized the need to pacify the protracted hostility between the two states. However, the expectations were short-lived on both sides.

Once Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and PM Narendra Modi assumed power in Pakistan and India respectively, the two leaders initially shared pleasantries and it was expected that the relations will improve but the Pakistani efforts, later on, were met only with dismissal and hostility. The subsequent events in the later years exposed the differences in agendas that the two countries were pursuing. Similarly, one could suppose that the enthusiastic behavior of the newly formed governments on both sides was more related to formalities, offered lesser substance, and was short-lived.

If the Indian political parties continue to use Pakistan bashing as a recipe to encourage the voters, it will undermine the efforts of Prime Minister Imran Khan to improve the bilateral relations. There were expectations that after re-election, PM Modi led BJP Government would return to dialogue with Pakistan. Such hopes have only waned in the wake of Indian rescinding of Article 370 and 35A on 5 Aug 2019 (India abolishes occupied Kashmir special status with rushed decree, 2019) and the 14th February (44 Indian Security Personnel killed in held Kashmir Blast, 2019) crisis of the same year. These developments have led to Pakistan degrading its diplomatic relations with India and refused to engage in any dialogue with India (No point in talking to India, says Imran., 2019).

With this background of protracted hostility, unwillingness to resolve the outstanding disputes and the worsening security situation between the two countries, the study attempts to qualitatively analyse and explore what the future holds for Indo-Pak relations. The study starts with taking stock of recent developments that have shaped the current state of India-Pakistan relations. Later, the study explores divergent interests that Pakistan and India have over their relationship with the other. Following divergent interests, this study explores the role of nuclear weapons in the transformation of conflicts between India and Pakistan. The study also takes into account the role of the United States in India-Pakistan crises. Before concluding, the study assesses how this relationship can be normalized through Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) leading to conflict resolution.

Current Breakout of Events

i) Rescinding of the Articles 370 and 35A of Indian Constitution

On 5 August 2019, through a Presidential order, India revoked Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution (India revokes occupied Kashmir's special autonomy through rushed presidential decree., 2019). The two articles provided a degree of autonomy to

the disputed Kashmir region under Indian occupation (Kashmir special status explained: What are Articles 370 and 35A?, 2019). Introduced in 1949, article 370 allows the state to have its own constitution, a separate flag, and independence over all matters except foreign affairs, defence and communications (Article 370: What happened with Kashmir and why it matters., 2019).

Article 35A of the constitution, introduced in 1954, allows the legislature of Indian-administered Kashmir to define the state's 'permanent residents' and what distinguishes them. It applies to all of Indian-administered Kashmir. This article primarily prohibited non-Kashmiris from buying property and applying for government jobs in IOK (Article 35A: Why a special law on Kashmir is controversial., 2019).

It was indicated in BJP's manifesto 2019 (BJP Election Manifesto 2019) that once elected into power, the party will eliminate article 370 and 35A. This move of scrapping the articles should be seen in the broader context of BJP banking upon Hindu nationalism and delivering on the promises made during the election campaign.

The move met fierce opposition from Pakistan. While Pakistan did not appreciate the said laws, the illegal unilateral action by India constitutes a clear violation of UNSC resolutions, international law, and the Indian constitution. Unilateral abrogation of the articles deny Kashmiris the right for self-determination and staying an independent territory till resolution of this issue in the light of existing instruments of international law. India's unilateral abrogation of articles 370 and 35A is an attempt to escape from the just resolution of the Kashmir issue. The stance is taken on the 5th of August, however, runs contrary to its own long-standing stance of resolving the issues bilaterally.

ii) Pulwama Crisis

The current security situation between India and Pakistan is hostile at its best in the aftermath of the Pulwama attack and the following LoC incursions by India and Pakistan. Since 1971, it was the first instance of the use of airpower between the two nuclear rivals that could have potentially pushed the two rivals close to war.

India is lowering the threshold of conflict by establishing *new normal* of launching the so-called surgical strikes in response to terrorist attacks inside India (India Claims 'Surgical Strikes' Across Line of Control in Kashmir, 2016). The calculated response from the Pakistani side was warranted to deny India of creating this new normal. Pulwama has made the Indians believe that there does exist a space for conventional war between India and Pakistan. This very belief within India would prove to be detrimental to deterrence stability in South Asia.

South Asia is termed as a nuclear flashpoint by some experts and officials (Krepon, 2017) (Kashmir now a flashpoint, has potential of turning into nuclear war, 2019) primarily because of the lingering Kashmir dispute that has led India and Pakistan to wars and conflicts — often raising the possibility of an eventual nuclear exchange. In situations like Pulwama, India has always blamed Pakistan for such attacks before conduct or completion of any impartial investigation of the incident. Such an approach helps India gain international sympathies and divert the attention of the domestic audience from atrocities that their government has continued in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IoK) for over half a century. This has been part of Indian statecraft for quite some time now. Similar incidents from the past provide insight into the Indian methodology of blaming Pakistan for any terrorist attack in India or on territories illegally occupied by it. Indian approach in the Pathankot attacks, Uri attacks, and expedient trial of Mumbai attacks are very telling.

Both Pathankot and Uri attacks paved way for Indian cancellation of Foreign Secretary-level talks and postponement of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit. These developments in 2016, allowed the Modi government to use anti-Pakistan rhetoric to secure wins in Gujarat elections in the following year (Indian ruling party narrowly wins key state election, 2017). It is otherwise visible that anti-Pakistan card is still relevant in domestic Indian politics.

These episodes indicate a regular pattern in Indian behavior that whenever the environment is conducive for dialogue, BJP government uses such attacks to primarily achieve four objectives i.e. raise terrorism-related allegations against Pakistan to avoid dialogue that will eventually require India to deal with Pakistan as an equal and require resolution of outstanding disputes; delegitimize Kashmiri freedom struggle as terrorism; gaining international sympathies to pursue Pakistan's diplomatic isolation; and serve domestic political ends.

iii) War of Words

The much-anticipated dialogues have been stalled either because of Indian hard-lined stance or because of Pakistan's unwillingness to compromise on its principled stance. The security-driven approach has turned out to be non-conducive even in the contemporary situation where both Pakistan and India have tried to conditionalize the dialogue process and have failed to coerce or persuade the other side to their terms.

After the meetings between the Pakistani and Indian PMs in December 2015, there was an indication of improvement in the bilateral relationship and it was anticipated that the two leaderships might find the way to move forward in a positive direction. However, the Pathankot airbase attacks in January 2016 seemed to hurt the aspirations of the two PMs in normalizing the bilateral relations. Since then the relationship has only become more hostile.

Despite the fact that the new government under PM Imran Khan vowed to take two-steps towards peace in return for India's one, Indian leadership appears to be interested in making short-term gains rather than durable peace and stability in the region. Before the new government could make any effort towards normalization of relations, the Pulwama attack and India's move of 5 Aug 2019 foreclosed any possibility of improving and making the relationship less hostile. This is evident from the statements coming from the leadership on both sides. Following the Pulwama Crisis in Feb 2019, the statements constituting nuclear signaling² have only increased manifold. PM Modi is visibly manifesting nuclear brinkmanship through statements like 'have we kept our nuclear weapons for Diwali?' (Report, 2019). This brinkmanship from PM Modi and Indian defense minister Rajnath Singh is a source of concern. Unchecked and excessive nuclear signalling undermines the environment of confidence building, induces jingoism and carries repercussions for prospective restrained measures between the adversaries.

Pakistan's response to Indian nuclear brinkmanship has been of a responsible nuclear weapon state which has always proposed measures relating to nuclear restraint in South Asia and has eschewed measures that are offensive in nature (India's statement regarding 'no first use' policy on nuclear weapons is irresponsible, 2019). Pakistan has demonstrated its commitment to peace and stability by putting forth the proposal for a Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR), which is premised on three interlocking elements of

² Nuclear signaling constitutes the communication part of nuclear deterrence whereby a nuclear weapon state intends to implicitly or explicitly deliver a message to adversary cautioning it from taking any undesired action.

conflict resolution, nuclear and missile restraint and conventional balance (Pakistan Promotes "Strategic Restraint Regime", 2006).

The exchange of hostile statements has remained a regular feature of the Indo-Pak rivalry. The Pathankot attack was soon followed by Uri attacks in September 2016, inviting a lot of harsh statements from the Indian side mainly labelling Pakistan as a state that sponsors terrorism. The then Indian Army Chief Lieutenant General Dalbir Singh said that 'our men are ready to give a befitting response' (17 Indian soldiers killed in attack on Kashmir base, 2016), and after a few days claimed that 'India has conducted surgical strikes along the LoC to safeguard our nation' (India hits Pakistan terror launchpads in surgical strikes along LoC, 2016). The possible motivation behind the so-called Indian surgical strikes could be either compelling Pakistan or testing Pakistan's threshold. It is important that both India and Pakistan exercise caution. While war might not be an option; Pakistan and India must not take it for granted.

Following the approach of his predecessors, the sitting Army Chief Gen. Bipin Rawat in a move to support the government's decision to call off dialogue with Pakistan, asserted, 'There is a need for another surgical strike.' (There is no need for another surgical strike: Army Chief Bipin Rawat, 2018) This hard-lined stance against Pakistan came in aftermath of the cancellation of proposed talks between the Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of the 73rd session of the UNGA (India calls off foreign ministers' meeting with Pakistan, 2018), suggesting that the Indian military leadership is serving as a tool to further the political agenda of BJP. India has always adopted a dismissive behavior towards the peace initiatives offered by Pakistan. Pakistan in the past has referred to such Indian behavior as irresponsible and imprudent which vitiated the atmosphere and took both the countries further away from the goal of regional peace and stability.

Pakistan should base its relations with India purely on the principles of reciprocity. This particular principle of reciprocity while dealing with India appears to be on the agenda of the PTI government and is evident from the recent statement of Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi where he said, 'If India doesn't want dialogue, then Pakistan also won't be in a haste either. Pakistan extended the offer despite possessing evidence of Indian interference in Balochistan' (Modi govt calls off Pakistan-India foreign ministers' UNGA meet, 2018).

iv) 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

Pakistan's PM at the 74th session of the UNGA reminded it of its duty that 'two nuclear-armed nations almost went head to head in February. And this is why the UN has a responsibility. This is why you came into being in 1945' (Full Transcript of Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech at the UNGA, 2019) It was further asserted at the UNGA forum that 'we both are nuclear-armed countries. If these tensions increase, the world could be in danger. Pakistan would never trigger a war.' (Full Transcript of Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech at the UNGA, 2019) Pakistan is actively pursuing all diplomatic channels at the international level and particularly the UN to keep the issue of Kashmir alive by highlighting brutal acts of Indian occupying forces. Pakistan's main objective should be to delegitimize Indian actions inside Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJ&K) and re-legitimize the Kashmiri freedom struggle. The closed meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on Kashmir after 50 years reflects the gravity of the situation. Despite Indian effort to seek veto at UNSC on Kashmir meeting, UNSC declared Kashmir an international issue instead of India's internal matter (Pakistan Today, 2019). This reflects diplomatic win for Pakistan which will not settle well with India. India will now be looking for strong diplomatic

manoeuvres to make sure that Pakistan is not able to gain much out of this and no such meetings on the Kashmir issue convene again. The international community appears to be unmoved by Indian human rights violations in IOJ&K. Although there have been debates in the US Congress, European Union, United Kingdom, Turkey, and OIC; however, it has not yielded any substantial outcome. Owing to their strategic and economic convergences with India, the international community is artificially trying to balance relations with India and Pakistan and is less likely to take any concrete step with regards to the Kashmir issue. Nonetheless, Pakistan should not lose its space in the international community and surrender its claims. This will help portray India's expansionist ambitions in the region.

Ever since Pakistan has continued to propose SRR in the region for the establishment of durable peace, avoidance of an arms race and enhancing stability. However, India has continued to reject these proposals while attempting to focus on the issue of terrorism alone without going into the root-causes of the phenomenon. Therefore, the lack of reciprocity and political will to engage in any arms control negotiations further widens the gap between the two states, and consequently compel them to follow the security-driven approach. In such an environment of mistrust, the prospects of any meaningful bilateral dialogue between the two states are further minimized.

Despite all the initiatives, Pakistan is still alleged for taking destabilizing actions, without taking into consideration its security concerns. India's dismissive behavior towards the proposed initiatives is one of the major reasons for a deadlock. While Pakistan considers the resolution of outstanding disputes (primarily Kashmir) as a prerequisite for durable peace with India, India, on the other hand, is more focused on addressing the symptoms of this uneasy relationship often manifested in the form of terrorism. Therefore, any attempt to understand the ongoing deadlock between India and Pakistan must consider respective approaches of two states towards entering into diplomatic negotiations.

v) LoC Violations and Terrorism-Related Allegations

The Line of Control (LoC), which divides Indian and Pakistan controlled parts of Kashmir, is at its most volatile phase with intense cross-border firing. Even during the times of relative peace, this front continues to witness frequent skirmishes between the two forces along the LOC. Indian Border Security Force and Pakistan Rangers began skirmishing in mid-July 2014 along the Line of Control (LOC) and the Working Boundary (WB). Since then the skirmishes have become intense re-establishing the old pattern of cross border violations and unprovoked firings along the LOC for many years. The events like Pathankot, Uri and Pulwama have only intensified the situation. Both sides have competing accounts and accuse the other of initiating the hostilities and violating the ceasefire. To foster a better environment between two states, it is also important to address continued and frequent violations of the ceasefire agreement that keeps on adding to the mutual hostilities.

The primary reason that successive political leaderships in India cite for not engaging in dialogue with Pakistan is the latter's alleged involvement in terrorist activities inside India. However, understanding terrorism as a root cause for non-engagement requires a holistic analysis of this phenomenon. The credit for introducing terrorism or sub-conventional warfare in South Asia goes to India which started training, arming and supporting Mukti Bahni in former East Pakistan during the 1960s (Indian forces fought along Mukti Bahini: Modi, 2015). The Indian political leadership expressed pride in helping the creation of Bangladesh (Modi admits India's role in Fall

of Dhaka, 2016) through substantive material support for the insurgents. The recognition of the former US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel that India is financing terrorism inside Pakistan through Afghanistan (India financed problems for Pak in Afghanistan, says US defence secretary nominee Chuck Hagel, 2013), the arrest of Indian Intelligence Officer Kulbhushan Yadev, public statement, admission of TTP Commander Ehsanullah Ehsan (RAW, NDS funded TTP, Jamaatul Ahrar for terror attacks in Pakistan: Ehsanullah Ehsan, 2017) an acknowledgment of Indian strategists like Bharat Karnad (RAW supports Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, acknowledges Indian analyst in top daily, 2017) that India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) has close ties with TTP prove that the employment of terrorism against its smaller neighbours has consistently remained the Indian policy.

The above-mentioned analysis of the events points out to a trend that whenever the two sides are moving towards a détente, Line of Control (LoC) and Working Boundary (WB) flare-up or there is a terrorist incident and the onus is swiftly shifted to Pakistan in a media trial. However, an environment that leads to tangible movement in conflict resolution suits Pakistan more than India, thus suggesting that Islamabad would have little interest in taking actions that undermine this objective.

The confrontation along LOC and WB may also be linked to domestic Indian politics. It is a trend that whenever an Indian government fails in delivering on election promises, it seeks to create a security situation that serves as a useful diversionary effort. In the current scenario, the Indian leadership seems to divert the attention of the domestic audience from Modi's unfulfilled promises of prosperity. In Pakistan's view, keeping the eastern border peaceful and relations with India manageable is more useful for the eradication of insurgency and terrorism from Pakistan's western border than responding to the repeated Indian provocations.

Elections in India

It is difficult to look at Indo-Pak relations in a wholesome manner if we only consider the change in the Pakistani government to influence its relationship with India. As it takes two to tango, the other determining variable has to be the decision-makers on the other side. The two steps forward approach thus relies heavily on that one step which India has to take. Hence it is important to look at differences in Pakistan's India policy and India's Pakistan policy.

The Pakistani approach towards India has been consistent despite changes in the ruling party including the military rule. Therefore, it can be argued that Pakistan's India policy is genuinely security-driven and not personality-driven.

In contrast, India's Pakistan policy has largely remained personality and party specific. Pakistan and India have fought 3 major wars during Congress rule in India. On the other hand, during BJP governments, Pakistan and India have seen serious crises like Kargil, 2001-02, Gurdaspur, Pathankot, Uri, Pulwama and abrogation of article 370 and 35A. Therefore, the Modi factor has only exacerbated the existing tensions between India and Pakistan. However, this current situation is presumed to be unprecedented primarily because Hindutva ideology of aggressive expansionism is driving Indian strategic behavior coupled with PM Modi's fundamentalist approach and history of personal involvement in actions against Muslims and Pakistan.

History suggests that BJP has always used anti-Pakistan rhetoric to win popular support. This pattern also proved to be effective in winning the Gujarat polls in 2017. A similar kind of pattern could also be seen in the 2003 election where Modi managed to win with a clear majority because of the religious riots he crafted in Gujarat in 2002 (Ruling party wins Gujarat poll, 2002). A well-known expert on right-wing

Hindu politics, Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, in an interview, said, ‘Modi’s entire political career is built in 2002. If there were no riots in 2002, Modi would not have won the 2003 elections in Gujarat’ (Ahmed, 2016). The whole Pulwama episode was used for political goal scoring by the BJP government to raise the anti-Pakistan rhetoric prior to the elections.

In the prevalent hostility, the governments in Pakistan and India are less likely to have a very positive impact on the nature of bilateral relations till the time some major compromises are made by the new leadership from both sides. Until and unless both the states see value in cooperating with each other and acknowledge each other’s efforts no solution can be forthcoming.

Divergent Interests

Despite a long history of engagements and a number of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) between India and Pakistan, the two states still stand at the opposite poles when it comes to the settlement and resolution of the outstanding disputes for the greater goal of achieving regional stability. India, being the stronger state as compared to Pakistan in the region, does not view its interests to be better served by resolving its conflicts with Pakistan and hence the dismissive approach *vis-à-vis* Pakistan’s efforts towards conflict resolution. Normalizing relations with Pakistan is not in line with Indian hegemonic designs in the region where it seeks to establish its own dominance at the cost of interests of other states. On the prospects of normalization of relations between India and Pakistan, Stephen P. Cohen, argues that ‘all unofficial dialogues, whether Track II or people-to-people talks are of marginal value if the governments are uninterested in addressing fundamentals.’ (Cohen, 2013).

Each side presents its own view of the causes of failures in normalizing the relationship. Shiv Shankar Menon attempts to describe the difference in how India and Pakistan view each other as;

Indians see Pakistan as a failed state, or worse, as an integrated criminal enterprise, lacking an identity and increasingly Talibanized, perpetually seeking revenge for 1971. Pakistan sees India as hegemonist and expansionist, says the partition of the subcontinent is unfinished – that Jammu and Kashmir should belong to Pakistan as a Muslim-majority province – and believes that India has never reconciled itself to Pakistan’s existence (Menon, 2016).

It is important to identify the actual objectives for normalizing Pakistan-India relations. If Pakistan’s core national interests include human and economic development then it needs to be figured what role a normal relationship between India and Pakistan might play in that regard. Several analysts tend to draw a relationship between Pakistan’s lack of economic growth and human development with the absence of normal ties with India (Kugelman & Hathaway, 2013). However, such connections need to be studied carefully. It is clear that though investment in Pakistan sees slight improvement once the ties between the two states improve. However, some might not be true for the Indian market. It also remains uncertain as to what might be the long term contribution of normal ties between these two states on Pakistan’s economy. These improvements might at best be momentary and may have insignificant to zero impact in the long term. Since there exists unwillingness on the part of India for the resolution of outstanding disputes, Pakistan in the meantime should rather focus on improving its

internal security, economy, education, energy, and soft cultural outlook. All of these areas are not dependent on Pakistan's improved relationship with India.

It is India that has been dictating the terms of this relationship throughout the course of history. If Pakistan continues to agree to Indian terms, India will continue to change the goalposts and Pakistan will be exhausted in accomplishing Indian demands to do more. Pakistan should rather focus on creating an environment that persuades Indian investors and producers of goods to influence their government to change policies toward Pakistan. For instance, the recent opening of Kartarpur Corridor gained Pakistan immense praise not just in India but also at the international level. Pakistan's poor economy, lack of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), energy crisis, minimal human development and so on are not an outcome of Pakistan's rivalry with India. On the other hand, it is evident that despite hostile relationships with their neighbouring states, countries like India and South Korea do not face any uncertainty in their economies.

The Role of Nuclear Weapons in Conflict Transformation

The hegemonic ambitions of India – the largest South Asian state – and its preference for employing coercion, brinkmanship and escalation dominance towards its smaller neighbours, has frequently caused crises. India lacks a demonstrable and consistent political will to resolve conflicts through a spirit of accommodation, compromise, reconciliation.

The overt nuclearization of South Asia helped prevent wars in South Asia and has made war an unthinkable option. However, the recurrence of conflicts between India and Pakistan coupled with Indian aggressive approach vis-à-vis Pakistan has compelled the latter to increase its reliance on nuclear deterrence.

There are varying opinions in the literature regarding the role that nuclear weapons have played in exacerbating or limiting the hostilities between India and Pakistan. Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, in his seminal work on nuclear deterrence, concludes that the employment and signalling of the nuclear deterrent influenced the decision-makers on both Indian and Pakistani sides during the crisis time (Cheema, 2010). The 1986-87 Brasstacks crisis and the spring 1990 crisis over Kashmir are the two examples of workable nuclear deterrent even in the absence of declared nuclear weapons capabilities also known as the era of non-weaponized deterrence (Cheema, 2010). Furthermore, after the overt nuclearization, the employment and signalling of nuclear deterrence played an important role in preventing the Kargil conflict and the 2001-02 crisis from further escalation (Cheema, 2010).

India and Pakistan have a different interpretation of the linkage between nuclear weapons acquisition and conflict resolution. Raj Chengappa asserts that 'the rationale for developing nuclear weapons was not conflict resolution' (cited from Khan, 2009). This view is shared by several other scholars as well. Savita Pande states that 'nuclear weapons acquisition was not supposed to help in initiating negotiations between India and Pakistan (Khan, 2009).' These arguments further Pakistan's narrative that India has been exploring the space for limited war by keeping the conflict below Pakistan's perceived nuclear threshold. This belief is only further cemented by the outcomes of the February 2019 crisis where India believes that there is still space for conventional war between India and Pakistan. As discussed earlier, India is using sub-conventional means of warfare to instill crisis instability. This highlights India's dissatisfaction with a stable deterrence relation with Pakistan. The doctrines like Cold Start where India envisages a limited conventional war under a nuclear overhang further supports such Indian endeavors. In such pursuits, India appears to be risking regional stability as the inadvertent escalation of conflict from conventional to nuclear

level seems likely. This is best explained in Michael Quinlan's words, 'Non-nuclear war is not just appalling in itself. It is also the likeliest route to nuclear war' (Quinlan, 2018).

The role of nuclear weapons in the South Asian region remains debatable because of the peculiar nature of the conflict/crises. The historical overview suggests that deterrence has played an effective role in preventing crises from escalation. However, the occurrence or non-occurrence of crises between India and Pakistan is not subject to the presence or absence of nuclear weapons. The possession of nuclear weapons only influences the decisions of the policymakers while figuring out the response options in the time of crises. The actual cause of conflict remains the non-resolution of outstanding disputes that pre-dates the acquisition of nuclear capability by both states and have shaped the hostile nature of bilateral relationship since partition. Weapons — be it conventional or nuclear — cannot and are not necessarily meant to ensure peace.

Role of the United States in India-Pakistan Crises

The shadows of the US in the South Asian region are only getting darker with time. The US footprint in the sub-continent can be traced back to the Cold war. However, the nature of the US role kept on changing over time. In the prevalent security situation between India and Pakistan, the US has time and again urged both the states to resolve their outstanding disputes bilaterally, observe restraint during crises, and refrain from exchanging hostile statements.

The role of the US regarding conflict resolution is generally restricted only to issuing statements once the security situation between India and Pakistan worsens. For instance, following the Pulwama crisis, the US National Security Advisor, John Bolton, in a telephonic conversation with Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi appreciated Pakistan's efforts to de-escalate the crisis (FM Qureshi, US national security advisor discuss regional security post-Pulwama attack, 2019). On the other hand, while talking to his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval, John Bolton reportedly augmented US support for 'India's right to self-defense against cross-border terrorism' (We support India's right to self-defense': US NSA John Bolton to Ajit Doval on Pulwama attack, 2019). After the Uri attacks in 2016, the press secretary Josh Earnest stated, 'The United States has continued to encourage India and Pakistan to find a way to resolve their differences peacefully and through diplomacy. We continue to be hopeful and encouraging of both sides to try to find a way to resolve their differences and to reduce their tensions through diplomacy and without resorting to more violence' (Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest, 2016). The US role in conflict resolution between India and Pakistan does not go beyond such statements. The US policy appears to be closer to India's stance that all differences between India and Pakistan should be resolved bilaterally and the United States could only encourage them to talk. Despite exerting influence in the region through political and strategic engagements, the unwillingness at the part of the US to mediate the conflict may prove destabilizing.

The US role in the South Asian region is only likely to increase; however, not primarily to resolve the disputes between India and Pakistan. India is seen as a global player in larger US' objectives in the region - especially China's containment — hence the US tilt towards India. Whereas Pakistan is considered relevant only with regards to Afghanistan; a classic manifestation of US de-hyphenation of Pakistan and India. In pursuit of its objective of containing China, the US is building India both economically and militarily to watch China's rise in the region (Joshi, 2015). This discriminatory US approach in the region is only fuelling the asymmetries between India and Pakistan and

eventually results in Indian dismissive behavior *vis-à-vis* Pakistan's genuine efforts and concerns. Vipin Narang, a leading Indian scholar, while arguing about this particular situation in the complex triangular relationship says, 'this could only lower the likelihood of India participating in a dialogue on resolving territorial disputes on equal terms' (Narand, 2014).

Normalizing Relations through CBMs Leading to Conflict Resolution

The introduction of nuclear weapons by India in 1974 and repeated in 1998, which was followed in a tit for tat reaction by Pakistan, stabilized the deterrence relationship between the two neighbors but strategic stability still eludes the Subcontinent because India is interested only in crisis management rather than conflict resolution. Much sought CBMs could play a sustainable role in dispute resolution but would remain ineffective if the roots of instability between the two remain unaddressed. Asma Shakir Khawaja in her recent work on CBMs observes that the chain of recurring conflicts has been one of the key spoilers to the prospects of peace between India and Pakistan (Khawaja, 2018). The inability to manage the spoilers presents even a bigger challenge to peace between the two.

In the past, India and Pakistan have concluded several bilateral agreements or arrangements to reduce the risk of conflict. However, the outcomes mostly remained limited because of poor implementation. CBMs can only play an effective role in regional stability if both the States find value in cooperating with each other thereby reducing the risk of a crisis breakout.

Despite peace initiatives like Shimla agreement and the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), desired outcomes could not be achieved for different reasons. Pakistan's approach has always been not to promote the crises but to mitigate it. Pakistan has continued to propose SRR for the establishment of durable peace, avoidance of an arms race and enhancing regional stability. However, India has continued to reject these proposals while attempting to focus on the issue of terrorism alone without going into the root-causes of the phenomenon.

The process of CBMs between India and Pakistan has always remained jinxed. India has manifested in every possible way that it does not want a peaceful settlement of outstanding disputes with Pakistan and has chosen to remain disengaged. India is unlikely to change its course of action owing to the US support and resultant dismissiveness towards Pakistan.

Conclusion

The differing political agendas of successive governments in Pakistan and India have remained the key constraining factor in establishing a comprehensive mechanism to discuss outstanding issues between the two states. While Pakistan's approach towards its relations with India seems to follow a constant policy, the political interests of the ruling parties and individuals in this regard have generally driven India's approach.

To achieve enduring peace between the hostile neighbors, the two states need to prefer conflict resolution over conflict management. Conflict or crisis management, no matter how sophisticated, is not a substitute for conflict resolution. The negotiations on possible CBMs, in this regard, should be a regular feature of the bilateral relationship even in peacetime. This could help prevent the crisis from occurring instead of heeding to resolve it after it is full-blown. This approach can lead to achieving regional stability in South Asia. A normalized relationship between India and Pakistan can help generate confidence which in turn could reduce the possibility of use of hard power.

Although the onus for conflict resolution, peacebuilding and crisis management is more on the larger South Asian State than its smaller neighbors. However, stability and peace in the region is hostage to Indian leadership's arrogance and unwillingness to peacefully resolve the outstanding disputes and use such terrorist attacks for their narrow political objectives

India is investing far more time, effort and resources in expanding its military capabilities than improving peacebuilding and reviving diplomacy. Excessive preoccupation with the technological or strategic means must not lead us astray from focusing on the actual and more important political ends.

Equal and undiminished security for all is a principle upon which all inter-state relations must be pursued in order to ensure mutual benefits of peace, progress, and prosperity. Unequal distribution of wealth and power leads to less, not more security.

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