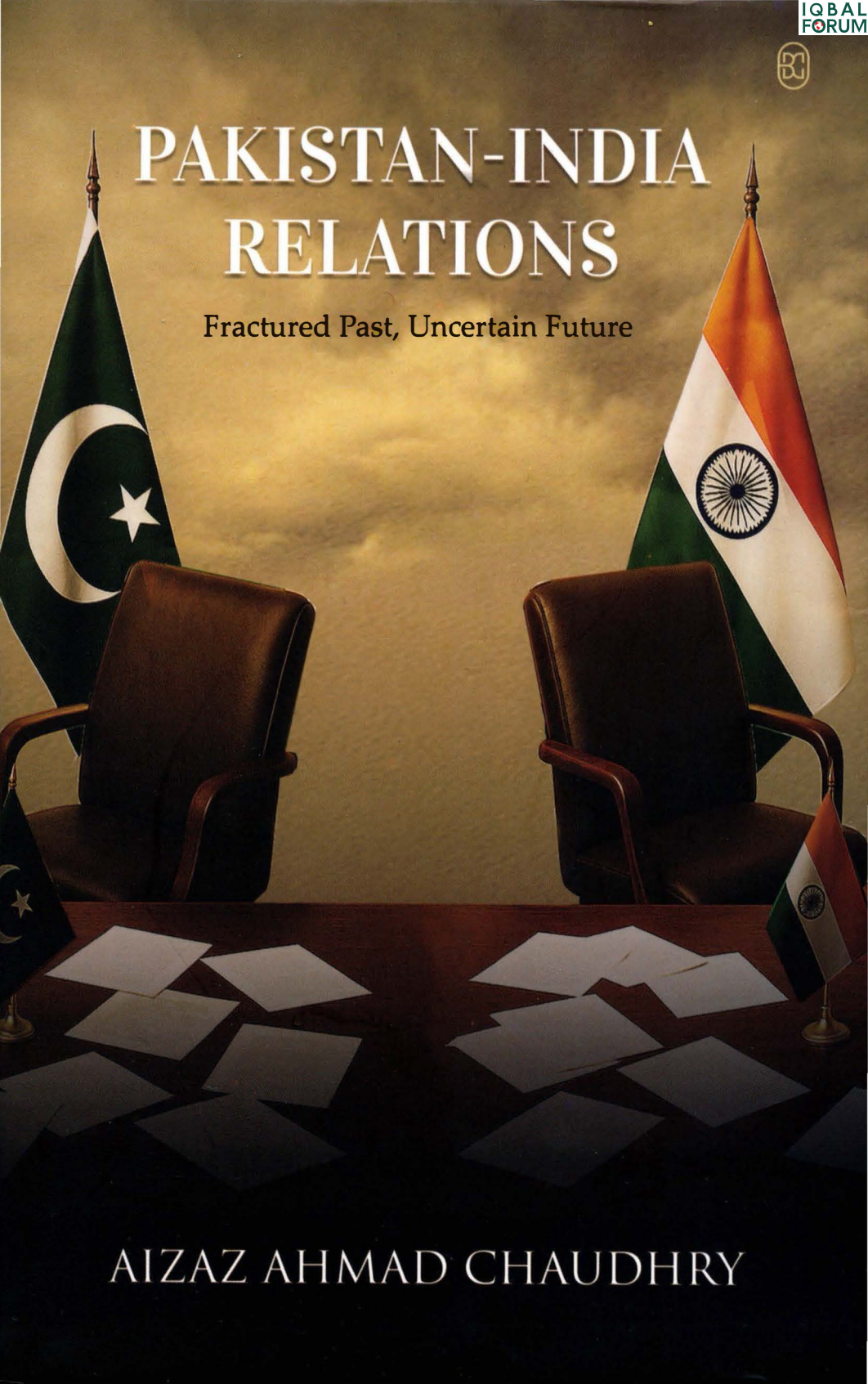
IQBAL FORUM

PAKISTAN-INDIA RELATIONS

Fractured Past, Uncertain Future



AIZAZ AHMAD CHAUDHRY

IQBAL FORUM

Looking at Pakistan's foreign policy since 1947, one theme stands out with unmistakable clarity: the sheer weight of geography and history in its relationship with India. It is plain to see how the proximity has been both a source of strategic anxiety and a wellspring of unrealized potential. So many of Pakistan's policies derive from being a neighbour of India. The hopes, the misgivings, the overtures toward peaceful coexistence, and the opportunities and concerns that emanate from it – all seem to orbit around one question: *Pakistan and India have remained stuck between a fractured past and an uncertain future.* Is it because they could not resolve disputes or is there a larger obstacle to peace? This book is an attempt to answer that question. It examines the missteps of the past and explores whether a different and more hopeful future might yet be in reach.

IQBAL FORUM

Pakistan India Relations
Zizaz Ahmad Chaud

9 789696 626220
1995.00 PKR

Saeed Book Bank
Leading Importers, Exporters, Distributors, Booksellers & Publishers of Pakistan.
F-7, Islamabad, Pakistan. Ph: 92-51-2651656-9
E-mail : info@saeedbookbank.com
Web : www.saeedbookbank.com

IQBAL FORUM

IQBAL FORUM

PAKISTAN-INDIA RELATIONS

Fractured Past, Uncertain Future

IQBAL FORUM

PAKISTAN-INDIA RELATIONS

Fractured Past, Uncertain Future

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry



BOOK CORNER
JHELUM, PAKISTAN

IQBAL FORUM



Published by Book Corner Pakistan
Opposite Iqbal Library, Iqbal Library Road, Jhelum, Pakistan

Copyright © Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry 2025

All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the author, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

ISBN 978-969-662-622-0

Printed and bound in Pakistan.

Genres: Politics · International Relations · South Asian History · Current Affairs

Cover and book design by Dr. Mubeen Ahmad

Sale center:
Book Corner Showroom, Opp. Iqbal Library, Iqbal Library Road, Jhelum, Pakistan
00 92 544 621953, 00 92 544 614977 00 92 314 4440882, 00 92 321 5440882
bookcornerjlm /bookcornershowroom /bookcorner
bookcornerjhelum info@bookcorner.com.pk
bookcorner.shop

IQBAL FORUM

Contents

List of Acronyms 7

Preface 9

Introduction 15

Chapter 1 – Historical Overview 23

Emergence of Muslim and Hindu nationalism in India 24
Towards 1947 30
The Nascent Years 34
Between War and Peace 43
The Modi Era 68

Chapter 2 –The Leadership Factor 79

Early Choices, Lasting Impact 80
The Widening Gulf 88
Peace Endeavours 91
Reckoning 102

Chapter 3 – The Kashmir Dispute 105

Genesis 106
Review 116
Perspectives 132

Chapter 4 – Shadows of Terrorism 140

Combating Terrorism 165
Reflections 171

Chapter 5 – Geopolitical Crosswinds 177

Nine Eleven 179
Afghanistan 183
US-China Competition 191

Chapter 6 – May 2025 Confrontation 202

An Epochal Moment 213

Chapter 7 – Cold Peace: The Struggle for Peaceful Coexistence 224

Perceptions Versus Reality 228
Breaking Barriers 231

Chapter 8 - Forging a New Dawn? 244

Peace and Security 246
Strategic Stability 256
Confidence-Building Measures 261
Trade, a peace builder? 263
Sharing Waters 272

Concluding Thoughts 277

Annexes 291

The Simla Agreement, 1972 291
The Lahore Declaration, 1999 295
Indus Water Treaty (1960) 296

Index 298

Notes 300

List of Acronyms

AIML	All India Muslim League
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CASA	Central Asia-South Asia
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FIA	Federal Investigation Agency
GWOT	Global War on Terror
INC	Indian National Congress
IWT	Indus Waters Treaty
JeM	Jaish-e-Mohammad
LeT	Lashkar-e-Tayyiba
LoC	Line of Control
NIA	National Investigation Agency
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
QUAD	Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization

SIPRI Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

TAPI Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (gas pipeline)

UNCIP United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan

UNMOGIP UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan

UNSC United Nations Security Council

UNSCR United Nations Security Council Resolution

IQBAL FORUM

Preface

The inspiration to write this book first took root when I was completing my memoir, 'Diplomatic Footprints' in 2021. Writing that book gave me an opportunity to reflect on the deep currents that have shaped the broader arc of Pakistan's evolving place in the world. Through that in-depth look at Pakistan's foreign policy since 1947, one theme stood out with unmistakable clarity: the sheer weight of geography and history in our relationship with India. It was plain to see how our proximity has been both a source of strategic anxiety and a wellspring of unrealized potential. So many of Pakistan's policies derive from being a neighbour of India. The hopes, the misgivings, the overtures toward peaceful coexistence, and the opportunities and concerns that emanate from it – all seem to orbit around one question: *Pakistan and India have remained stuck between a fractured past and an uncertain future. Is it because they could not resolve disputes or is there a larger obstacle to peace?* This book is an attempt to answer that question. It examines the missteps of the past and explores whether a different and more hopeful future might yet be in reach.

My personal association with the Pakistan-India peace processes relates to the ones that were initiated in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. I have witnessed the quiet breakthroughs, the promising moments of possibility, and the recurring waves of disappointments. Regrettably, notwithstanding the positive intent of the political leadership on both sides, none of the attempts for peace could put the two countries on

the path of good neighbourliness. Despite repeated efforts, some sincere, and some symbolic, our two countries have failed to transform proximity into partnership. While political leaders have, at times, embraced the language of peace, two issues of critical import have nearly always impeded any forward movement towards peace. The first is India's continued reluctance to engage meaningfully in resolving the Jammu and Kashmir dispute – an issue for Pakistan that sits at the very heart of our bilateral tensions. The second, and perhaps more striking, factor is the perception that India's approach with regards to its region has prioritized strategic dominance over fostering mutually beneficial relations grounded in sovereign equality and mutual respect. There is no question that India is South Asia's largest country and one that has experienced significant economic growth. However, rather than using this economic prowess to uplift the region it calls home, India has frequently shunned opportunities to engage meaningfully with its neighbours. In the case of its relations with its western neighbour, India has used the mantra of the so-called cross-border terrorism to constantly remove any prospects of dialogue with Pakistan that can allow for long lasting peace. On its part, Pakistan has consistently asserted, with evidence, that it does not allow its soil to be used for cross-border terrorism and that it has taken monumental steps towards eradicating militancy within its borders. Pakistan has also consistently raised the fact that it is itself one of the biggest victims of terrorism and has been fighting a war against terrorism for decades. This is, of course, notwithstanding Pakistan's own set of complaints about Indian-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan, particularly as evidenced in Balochistan. These are not just talking points, but rather wounds deeply felt and rarely acknowledged with empathy.

The last decade in particular has been witness to a steep free fall in bilateral ties between the two countries. In 2016, India decided to cut off all interaction with Pakistan, and then, in 2019, the relationship deteriorated further when India carried out a surgical strike in the Pakistani city of Balakot. Just a few months later, the Indian government decided to abrogate the statehood of the Indian-Occupied

Kashmir and embarked on demographic and electoral engineering to change its Muslim-majority status. For Pakistan, these actions were a violation of the UNSC resolutions, which prohibited any material change in the status of the disputed territories. Thus, the two countries entered a new chapter of cold silence and growing public hostility. Relations thereafter remained stalemated for years until another jolt brought them to a new low. The May 2025 kinetic confrontation, involving missiles, drones, and air attacks, has further diminished hopes for a peaceful South Asia.

I have often wondered why every attempt for peace-making has ultimately failed, and why is it that every few years, the two countries find themselves embroiled in military confrontations? The May 2025 standoff and the war of words that preceded has made me suspect that perhaps there is a larger dynamic at play here, one where India pursues an objective of regional dominance or even the creation of a united India or Akhand Bharat, and in that light perhaps views Pakistan as the chief obstacle to this goal. When I read the opinion article written by a Congress member of parliament in April 2025, calling for the "permanent extinction" of Pakistan, it immediately brought to mind the well-documented evidence of how Nehru and Patel had hoped to "bankrupt" Pakistan by escalating the Kashmir war and by withholding Pakistan's share of financial dues. They anticipated that Pakistan would soon "fold up" under its own economic weight and pave the way for Nehru's wish to create a united India. I also recalled Jinnah's interview to Reuters in October 1947, where he asserted that the killings on the eve of the partition were well-planned to "paralyze" the new-born Pakistan. Ever since, many Indian leaders have opposed Pakistan at every step and lamented the vivisection of the so-called 'Mother India'. In 1992, when the Babri mosque was demolished, the process of Hinduization of India took a new, more potently violent form. As late as June 2023, India installed a map in its newly inaugurated parliament building showing the territories of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and even Myanmar as part of United India, or 'Akhand Bharat' as termed by a BJP minister. The

underlying message appears to be that Pakistan must either fall in line, or face the military might of India. Could this mean that there can be no peace in South Asia until the Modi government gives up the goal of establishing India's regional dominance?

Yet, in the midst of this growing mutual mistrust and worsening climate for bilateral relations, my enthusiasm to write on this subject has not waned, primarily because I believe there are enough good men and women in both countries who cherish peace and long for shared prosperity for our peoples. This book is for them. It is also for the many observers, students, and readers – in South Asia and beyond – who want to understand why one of the world's most important bilateral relationships continues to oscillate between dialogue and deadlock. I believe it is our onerous responsibility to strengthen those voices by offering perspectives which signify strategic benefits of good neighbourliness, as opposed to hegemonic and populist considerations that have neither served India nor this region.

Before I began the process of writing, I sat down to review the extensive literature that had already been written on the subject. I came across several books written by Indian authors focused on portraying Pakistan through a singular lens, fixated on one fault line of Pakistan or the other. Western scholars, particularly from the United States and the United Kingdom, contributed with varying degrees of nuance and detachment. Some offered valuable analyses, while others filtered the region's complexities through a prism of their own foreign policy frameworks. What struck me the most, however, was the relative absence of Pakistani voices. Among those who did write, few had attempted to present the narrative with equal weight to Pakistan's perspective. I felt there was space, and pressing need, for a different kind of book: one that was grounded in personal experience, informed by history, but also one that was willing to ask uncomfortable questions about India's vision of the region as a whole. One that did not treat peace as a naive idealism, but rather as a hard-earned goal worth pursuing. For this reason, I quickly became convinced of the need to contribute towards literature that presents a

more balanced but realistic perspective of how both countries arrived at this impasse, and whether there lay a genuine path forward towards mutual prosperity.

Another argument that persuaded me to write this book was the reality that times change. Today's acute hostility in bilateral relations between the two countries is not the end-state. It is important to document Pakistani as well as Indian perspectives to see and appreciate the reality as it is and not just as we would like to see it, so that together we ensure a more mutually beneficial outcome for both sides. It has been my unwavering conviction that a day would come when the leadership and other stakeholders in India and Pakistan would simultaneously become convinced of the need for peaceful coexistence, and the future of South Asia as a region would be brighter than it appears today.

'Diplomatic Footprints' captured my personal observations on the evolution of Pakistan's foreign policy over the decades, including its relationship with India. This book, however, is not a memoir, nor is it solely a reflection of my perspective alone. While every author brings their own lens to a subject, I have made an effort to provide the Pakistani perspective that is so often left out of the commentary while evaluating the dynamics underpinning this conflictual relationship, drawing from insights of practitioners, diplomats, scholars, and analysts who have spent years studying and shaping this space.

I am grateful to have received tremendous support from several academics and former practitioners who contributed by sharing their perspectives on vital dimensions of this important relationship, particularly Vali Nasr, Jalil Abbas Jilani, Fakir Aijazuddin, Raja Amer Iqbal, Salman Bashir, John Gill, Masood Khalid, Christine Fair, Naeem Khalid Lodhi, Pravin Sawhney, Moeed Yusuf, Elizabeth Threlkeld, Khurram Abbas, Qamar Cheema, Khan Hasham, Shaukat Javed, Khurram Dastgir, Raza Muhammad, Jauhar Saleem, Kaleem Imam, and Raja Qaiser Ahmed. Their contributions added depth and dimension to this narration.

I am grateful to Mubeen Ahmad, my elder son, for designing the book cover, and Sameer Ahmad, my younger son, for editing the book.

The road to peace is long and uneven, but it is not closed. The past may be fractured, and the future may be uncertain, but between the two lies a fragile space where dialogue can still lead to something better. This book is my modest contribution in keeping that hope alive.

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry
Lahore, July 2025

IQBAL FORUM

Introduction

The seeds of conflictual relationship between India and Pakistan were sown even before the two countries appeared on the world map as independent states. The movement that Mohammad Ali Jinnah had launched to safeguard the interests and rights of the Muslims of India was driven by the concern that given the majoritarian democracy established by the departing British, the fate of Muslims of India, who were in minority, could perpetually be at the mercy of the Hindu-majority. It was argued that the Muslim way of life, their faith, and their culture could be best protected if Muslims of India either had a separate state or acceptable constitutional safeguards in a united India. The two-nation theory was essentially a means to achieve an end: protect the political, economic and cultural rights of the Muslims of India.

Much has been written on how and when the Muslims of India began to view themselves as a separate nation. Before the British came to India, there was considerable communal harmony amongst the people of all faiths, ethnicities, races and creeds. Yet, Hindus and Muslims have always remained distinct and separate from each other in terms of their religio-cultural identity, customs, traditions, and even cuisine. After a widespread uprising against the rule of Britain's East India Company in 1857, which is sometimes referred to as the First War of Independence, the British began to view Muslims as their potential competitors, for it was the Muslim rule in India that they had

toppled. A discriminatory attitude by the British against Muslims began to accentuate the feeling of dispossession amongst the Muslims of India. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was the first one to recognize that the Muslims of India needed to fundamentally change the way they had lived thus far. He devoted all his efforts for the educational and political awakening of Muslims to adapt to the changed environment. The consciousness of Indian Muslim nationalism thus began to take roots, and within decades morphed into a movement for a separate homeland.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, fondly called Quaid-e-Azam[1] by the Muslims of India, emerged on the scene, first as an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity, and later as the leading proponent of the political rights of Indian Muslims. He could envisage that once the British left India, the parliamentary form of governance would situate the Muslims of India at the receiving end. It was also felt that Hindu values and traditions would dominate the life of an independent India, creating conditions for a Ram Raj replacing the British Raj. After considerable struggle and many twists and turns of history, Pakistan eventually came into being in August 1947 as a separate state for the Muslims of India.

Since the leaders of the Indian National Congress (INC) had vehemently opposed the creation of Pakistan, a thick layer of acrimony and mistrust settled into the minds of the leadership of both the INC and All-India Muslim League (AIML). This acrimony continued to cast a dark shadow on relations between the two countries well after 1947. For over seven decades, both countries have struggled to find a way to live together in peace and harmony. Wars have been fought, and many peace attempts have been made. However, a state of lasting friendship or even peaceful coexistence that comes easily to most neighbours could not be established. This book seeks to examine whether and how the inherent bad faith, an uncompromising mindset, and India's quest for regional dominance have marred the prospects of a good-neighbourly relationship between India and Pakistan.

The first chapter offers a historical overview—not merely as a retelling of events already chronicled by several authors, but as an analysis of how mutual mistrust evolved before and after the partition of British India, ultimately becoming the primary obstacle to lasting peace between Pakistan and India. The chapter seeks to understand as to why geographical compulsions, the shared past, and the deep civilizational connect have not been able to overpower mutual distrust and acrimony between the two countries. This chapter would also examine in greater detail how several notable attempts for peace failed. Issues of core concern to both countries have been discussed in detail. Of central importance in this context was the Jammu & Kashmir dispute, which despite several resolutions by the United Nations and Indian pledges at the highest level, could not be resolved. The war of 1965 further deepened mutual mistrust. In the 1971 crisis, India opted to intervene in East Pakistan to secure a break-up of Pakistan. In 1998, both sides tested their nuclear devices, thus establishing a deterrence regime that was meant to enable the two sides to attain strategic stability. Post-nuclearization, several peace initiatives were taken, including the 1999 Lahore Declaration, the 2001 Agra summit, the composite dialogue of 2004-8, and the 2015 agreement to resume dialogue. However, none of these peace initiatives reached their logical ends. The year 2019, when India abolished the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir, and 2025, when India embarked on a large-scale missile and drone attack against Pakistan with the latter responding in kind, have further pushed the two countries further apart. India's unilateral suspension of the IWT in April 2025 has also fuelled the downward spiral in the relationship. There are lessons that both nations could learn from this checkered history, not only to better handle crisis situations in future, but also to seize the opportunities for peace that may arise.

The second chapter examines the role that political and military leadership played, or could have played, in preventing acrimonious bilateral relations. The ideological underpinning of governance in both countries has also been discussed. Mountbatten, M.K. Gandhi, J.

Nehru, Jinnah and Liaqat were dominant figures of the time when both countries attained their independence in 1947. During the times of General Ayub Khan, Indira Gandhi, and Zulfikar Bhutto, the gulf between the two countries widened. Zia-ul-Haq, Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi sought to work for peace, but achieved limited success. Some tangible peace initiatives were taken during the times of Atal Behari Vajpayee, Nawaz Sharif and Pervez Musharraf. In recent times Narendra Modi and Nawaz Sharif succeeded in making a breakthrough, but that was short-lived. There were few milestones to note during the rule of Imran Khan or Shahbaz Sharif, because since 2016, Narendra Modi had closed all doors for bilateral contact. This chapter reviews the imprint of key political and military leaders on bilateral relations between India and Pakistan.

The third chapter casts an in-depth look at the core concern of Pakistan: the Jammu & Kashmir dispute. For Pakistan, India's refusal to resolve the Kashmir dispute has been the major reason that has bedeviled bilateral relations all these years. Pakistan regards it as an unfinished item of the partition process, as Jammu and Kashmir being a Muslim-majority state should have been allowed to join Pakistan. However, India manoeuvred to occupy the state, and ever since, has not given Kashmiris their right to self-determination, despite the interventions of the United Nations calling for a plebiscite. In recent times, the issue has been further complicated as India chose to cause a material change in the status of disputed territories by abrogating Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and dividing the Indian-Occupied Kashmir into two Union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh (5 August 2019). Since then, diplomatic relations between the two countries have been downgraded and bilateral trade has stopped. Pakistan believes that its stance on Kashmir is legally and morally correct, and that Kashmiris must be given a right to self-determine their political destiny. India believes that the UNSC resolutions have been overtaken by subsequent events. India has proactively suppressed the voices of Kashmiris refusing to live under occupation. So, the Kashmiri struggle continues while the attempts to

resolve the dispute have met a dead end. Why is this issue so intractable and how could the two countries find a solution which would be acceptable to all parties? This chapter seeks to address this question.

The issue of terrorism is the subject of the fourth chapter. India has repeatedly accused Pakistan of sponsoring terrorism, especially since 9/11, and it has in particular used the issue of cross-border terrorism to malign the Kashmiri freedom struggle in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Pakistan has pointed out that India continues to ignore that its use of excessive force to suppress Kashmiri resistance breeds indigenous militancy. India further alleges that Pakistan has not acted against anti-India militant organizations. However, this allegation overlooks the reality that few countries have been a bigger victim of terrorism than Pakistan, which has borne the brunt of terror after terror attack since the days of the Afghan jihad, and has taken decisive action against organizations suspected of indulging in terrorism anywhere. Pakistan's effective counter terrorism operations against terrorist organizations are well documented in the reports of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the US State Department, and other sources. Pakistan has also prosecuted dozens of terrorists, and seized their assets and sources of finance, but India has been reluctant to even acknowledge Pakistan's efforts to fight terrorism, and certainly has not collaborated in earnest to tackle the issue together by providing actionable evidence of its allegations. Consequently, there is increasing perception in Pakistan that India has been exploiting the issue of cross-border terrorism to undermine Pakistan's international standing and coerce Pakistan into accepting Indian dominance in the region. Accusations of sponsoring terror have not flowed one way - Pakistan has called out India for its extended covert support to anti-Pakistan elements such as BLA and TTP to destabilize Pakistan. Further, Pakistan claims that India has carried out a spate of killings in Pakistan through its state operatives, and has launched kinetic attacks directly into Pakistan on the pretext of cross-border terrorism. This chapter explores this topic further, examining why the two

countries have not opted to confront the menace of terrorism in a cooperative spirit and what must be done at a minimum to address each other's concerns on cross-border terrorism.

The fifth chapter of the book looks at the recent history of bilateral relations in the light of three key geopolitical crosswinds of the 21st Century: 9/11, Afghanistan, and the US-China competition. It is discernible that each of these developments was dexterously used by India to its narrow benefit, which deepened estrangement between the two countries. India used the terrorist attacks of 9/11 to characterize itself as a fellow victim of what President Bush called 'Radical Islam'. It initiated steps to project the Kashmiri struggle as a manifestation of terrorism abetted by Pakistan. With a view to consolidating this narrative, India's approach in the past has been to immediately suspend the peace process with Pakistan whenever there was a militant attack or terrorist incident. The second development of phenomenal import in this Century was the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. A two-decade long war between the US-led NATO forces and the Taliban ensued. While Pakistan suffered the consequences of the war on terror, India used the opportunity to maintain an over-sized presence in Afghanistan, which it then used to destabilize Pakistan. Finally, the continuing strategic competition between the US and China has also greatly impacted Pakistan-India relations. While India became a partner of choice for America's China-containment policy, it sought to leverage the US partnership to pursue regional dominance in South Asia. In recent years, strategic alignments in South Asia have become even sharper as China stood in complete solidarity with Pakistan. The chapter would look at how these geopolitical crosswinds have further widened the gulf between India and Pakistan.

Recently in May 2025, India took a unilateral step of attacking Pakistan without any investigation or presenting any evidence of Pakistani involvement in the Pahalgam incident. A kinetic confrontation took place, involving missiles, drones and aircraft. Within four days, the

self-assumed myth of Indian conventional superiority over Pakistan was shattered. India failed to persuade the international community of the legitimacy of its kinetic actions. The US mediated a ceasefire at India's request and offered to facilitate talks at a neutral venue. The US president offered his help to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Has this incident humbled the Indian government and made it realize that there is no alternative to peaceful coexistence between the two countries is the question that sixth chapter seeks to answer.

In the seventh chapter, the book looks at whether the two countries can attain peaceful coexistence and manage negative perceptions of each other. It also examines the ways by which the two can break barriers to living together in peace and good-neighbourliness. The final chapter explores ways in which both countries could forge a new dawn by learning from the past and looking towards the future. The focus specifically is on the unsettled issues between the two countries as well as the avenues available to them to work together and reverse the cycle of perpetual hostility. The chapter offers doable recommendations on issues that have long been on the agenda of bilateral dialogue: peace and security issues, the Kashmir dispute, counter terrorism, bilateral trade, water sharing, and people to people contacts. The chapter also examines whether the concept of geoeconomics can be applied in South Asia for the larger good of both countries and the region. The entire discourse in this chapter is subject to a realization in India that the best course of action is to strive for peace and not rush towards the use of force in the way it attempted, first in February 2019 and then in May 2025.

The book benefits from not only the research work already published on the subject, but also from the views of prominent personalities who have dealt with or written about the relationship. The inputs from the academia and former practitioners have brought together a variety of perspectives on how the relationship can be rebuilt on firmer foundations and how mutual mistrust can be reduced, if not

overcome. The research illustrates a sad reality that differences have often been pushed to the point of dehumanizing the enemy. The book seeks to explore if a major revamp is possible to re-humanize this relationship and bring it to a level of mutual respect and neighbourliness.

Chapter 1 – Historical Overview

One often wonders why it is that the last seven decades have failed to persuade India and Pakistan to establish good neighbourly relations, considering elsewhere in the world bitter foes of the past have found ways to coexist peacefully? A deeper dive into events prior to 1947 might provide answers. It took less than a hundred years for Muslim nationalism in India to transform from an idea to a movement and eventually a state. Hindu nationalism in India also took roots at around the same time, though it remained hidden under the veneer of secularism for a greater part of the twentieth century.

Once Pakistan came into being in August 1947, the nascent years of the country were consumed by a search for security against the threatening rhetoric and posture of the Indian leadership. India and Pakistan fought wars in 1948, 1965, 1971, and limited wars in 1999, 2019, and 2025. Several peace attempts were also made, most notably the Lahore peace process of 1999 and composite dialogue of 2004-8, both of which were disrupted. Another peace attempt made in 2015 stalled before it could even take off. From 2016 onwards, there was virtually no contact between the two countries at any level, accentuating the mutual distrust to an all-time high level and casting a dark shadow on the geopolitics of South Asia. The year 2025 witnessed a kinetic confrontation at a scale not seen since 1971. This chapter seeks to review the historical evolution of Hindu-Muslim

antagonism and its influence on the politics of British India in the run up to 1947 and also well after the independence of the two countries.

Emergence of Muslim and Hindu nationalism in India

Muslims had ruled India since the end of the twelfth century. Starting with the invasion of India by Muhammad of Ghor, several dynasties ruled northern parts of India with Delhi as the seat of government, including the Mamluks, Khaljis, Tughlaqs, Sayyids, and Lodhis. In 1526, Zaheeruddin Babur, a descendent of Timur, hailing from Ferghana Valley in present day Uzbekistan, founded the Mughal empire, which lasted over three hundred years. When Islam mingled with Hindu tradition, an Indo-Islamic culture began to appear in language, cuisine and art. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Mughals had lost control of much of the empire, and the subcontinent was being governed through countless quasi autonomous principalities. The British, who had entered the subcontinent in the eighteenth century as East India Company, a trading house in the Indian Ocean region, gradually gained control of the greater part of India. After the 1857 war of independence, which the British refer to as the sepoy mutiny because it was initiated by Indian troops in the service of the Company, the British Crown assumed direct control of India through Government of India Act 1858. The British began to administer the subcontinent, which had always had a broad range of ethnic and linguistic groups of people, as one unit, much like what the Mughals had done, though there remained hundreds of principalities enjoying virtually full autonomy. In 1885, the Indian National Congress (INC) was founded in Bombay (now called Mumbai) as a partial platform for dialogue amongst English-knowing Indians who were familiar with British political thinking. Later, the INC became the principal political party seeking freedom of India from the British.

It was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of Delhi, who could foresee that Muslims were likely to remain a minority in the Hindu-dominated country, and he reasoned that parliamentary institutions would only favour the majority. He further felt that if the British continued to perceive Muslims as disloyal, their future as a community would not be secure. In his works, therefore, he urged the Muslims of India to befriend the British and devote their energies on educating their lot as the only way to secure political and economic emancipation. Politically, Sir Syed advised Muslims not to join the Indian National Congress, as he thought that Congress would demand Indianization of policies and administration which would virtually mean Hinduization because the Muslims were not only a minority community but also lagged behind in education. Further, if representative institutions were created through democracy, which is the rule by majority, the minority would find itself in perpetual subordination. As a result of his efforts, Muslims of India, who were passing through a traumatized and despondent time, began to view themselves as a separate community, a thought that could be deemed as the first signs of Muslim nationalism in India. He is the first among Indian Muslims who insisted that Muslims must engage in western science and philosophy and not get consumed by self-pity or lost in past Islamic glories.[2] Many writers like Maulana Hali,[3] Shibli Naumani,[4] Nazir Ahmad Dehlvi,[5] Syed Ameer Ali,[6] and others went on to build upon the work of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his Aligarh movement to consolidate Muslim nationalism in India.

When the twentieth century dawned, Muslims of India began to recognize the need for political action to protect their rights as a separate entity within the subcontinent. The partition of Bengal in 1905 was welcomed by Muslims, as they would get to self-govern a Muslim-majority province, but the action was deeply resented by Hindus, who managed to get the partition reversed six years later. Conscious of the need to start a political movement to protect their rights, the All-India Muslim League (AIML) was formed in 1906 in Dacca (later called Dhaka), which wanted to work for separate

electorates for Muslims in the otherwise Hindu-dominated representative institutions. The Indian Councils Act of 1909 accommodated the idea of communal representation, and further strengthened the thought that Muslims were a separate political entity. For the next three decades, anxieties grew in both communities, Hindus and Muslims, about the political future of India and how they would coexist in peace and harmony.

For a brief period, particularly in 1916 in Lucknow, the AIML and INC joined hands to put up a common front to the British. The AIML endorsed the Congress view but also presented three conditions, including adequate Muslim representation in Councils and no displacement of Persian characters from Urdu language.[7] It was around this time that Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a young barrister from Bombay, rose to prominence and first made his mark as an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. However, soon, he, too, realized that in the British majoritarian democratic institutions, Muslims would always remain a minority and would need to find a way to protect their political and cultural rights.

During this time, the concept of Hindu nationalism was also taking roots. The idea had taken birth with a powerful movement, the Arya Samaj, a reform movement to revive the Vedic way of life. In 1915, Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha was established as a Hindu nationalist political party to advocate the interests of orthodox Hindus before the British and the Indian National Congress. In 1922, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a Hindu nationalist, wrote a book 'Essentials of Hindutva', published in 1923 under the title 'Hindutva: Who is a Hindu', which described Hinduism as not just an ethnic, cultural or religious identity but also as a political characterization. He defined Hindus as those who regard India as their Fatherland (the land of their ancestors) and Holyland (the land of origin of their religion). In 1925, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was founded to provide character training and instil 'Hindu discipline' to unite and strengthen Hindu community and establish a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation). Founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in Nagpur, the RSS was

inspired by the thoughts of V. D. Savarkar's *Hindutva* that was published in 1923. Sarvarkar was seeking to give shape to Hindu nationalism. Addressing a session of the Mahasabha in Ahmedabad in 1937, Savarkar said that there are "two antagonistic nations" living side by side in India: the Hindus and the Moslems.[8]

Sarvarkar opposed the philosophy of secular nationalism adopted by the Indian National Congress. He drew a distinction between Hinduism as a religion and Hindutva, which was essentially a political phenomenon of mobilizing Hindus into a nation. Savarkar's vision was that India belonged to Hindus, and that they should rule it. In one of his presidential addresses to Hindu Mahasabha, Savarkar is reported to have said that "We are Indians because we are Hindus and vice versa... India must be a Hindu land, reserved for Hindus... [who] are not only a Rashtra (nation), a Jati (race), but in consequence of being both, own a common Sanskriti (civilization)...."[9] Some Hindu leaders also initiated a movement to convert Muslims to Hinduism.[10] In time, Hindutva became the core ideology of Hindu Mahasabha, and later RSS, and many years later, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

As opposed to the followers of RSS, the INC did not share the Hindutva philosophy and claimed to work for a secular India. Jawaharlal Nehru, the leading figure of the INC, wrote a book 'The Discovery of India', in which he elaborated his understanding of what Hindu or Hindustan mean. Nehru wrote that the word Hindu does not occur at all in our ancient literature." He reasoned that the word "Hindu means a people and not the followers of a particular religion." He argued that the term Hindu was "used by the people of western and central Asia for India, or rather for the people living on the other side of Indus River," and that the word is "derived from Sindhu, the old, as well as the present, Indian name for the Indus,." According to Nehru, from this Sindhu came the words Hindu and Hindustan, as well as Indus and India.[11] Nehru argued that the Indus Valley civilization was highly developed and predominantly a secular civilization. In his view, religious element was present but did not dominate the polity.

On Hinduism, Nehru explained that the old inclusive term for religion in India was Arya dharma, which in his view was not limited to religion but rather something that holds together. It is an ethical concept that includes the moral code, righteousness and the whole range of man's duties and responsibilities. Arya dharma encompasses all the faiths (Vedic and non-Vedic) that originated in India. Nehru would argue that "Hinduism, as a faith, is vague, amorphous, many-sided, all things to all men." It is "hardly possible to define it, or indeed to say definitely whether it is a religion or not, in the usual sense of the word." It embraces "many beliefs and practices" that are "often opposed to or contradicting each other" and that its "essential spirit seems to be to live and let live."[12] In the countries of Western Asia, he argued, India has always been referred to as 'Hind' and everything Indian is called 'Hindi'. He asserts that "Hindi has nothing to do with religion, and a Moslem or Christian Indian is as much a Hindi as a person who follows Hinduism as a religion."[13] Jawaharlal Nehru, thus, argues that it is incorrect and undesirable to use 'Hindu' or 'Hindustan' for Indian culture. A Christian or a Moslem could, and often did, adapt himself to the Indian way of life and culture, and yet remained in faith an orthodox Christian or Moslem. He had Indianized himself and become an Indian without changing his religion. Bharat Mata, Mother India, was essentially these millions of people, and victory to her meant victory to these people. It is evident that Nehru's definition of who is a Hindu differed grossly from Savarkar's view of Hinduism.

Although many Muslim leaders were attracted to the secular credentials of INC and its leaders, there was a lingering concern about the possible rise of far-right Hindu nationalism and its potential impact on governance arrangements in India. A sense of alienation had, therefore, already begun to set in the Muslims and contributed to further consolidating Muslim nationalism in India. Allama Mohammad Iqbal, the philosopher poet, in his speech at the annual session of the All-India Muslim League in Allahabad in 1930, expanded on the concept of Muslim nationalism in India. Arguing

that the Muslims of India were a nation and had a right to prosper in accord with their own cultural values, he said that he would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind, and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state for self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire. Iqbal further argued that "possessing full opportunity of development within the body politic of India, the North-West Indian Muslims will be the best defenders of India against a foreign invasion...." Iqbal did not envisage a partition but proposed a Muslim state within an Indian federation.[14] The idea of partitioning British India along religious lines had been floated earlier, including by Lala Lajpat Rai, one of the founders of Hindu Mahasabha, in 1924, but these ideas did not receive as much attention as Iqbal's proposal in 1930 did.[15] Around the same time, a group of Muslim students, led by Chaudhari Rehmat Ali, who coined the term Pakistan[16] in 1933, formed a Pakistan National Movement and proposed the formation of an independent Muslim state in the north-west of the Indian subcontinent.

One major milestone in the consolidation of Muslim nationalism in India was the experience of Congress ministries in seven provinces, pursuant to the Government of India Act 1935. The Indian National Congress had emerged as a leading party in the elections, and in 1937, formed governments in seven provinces, including UP, Bihar, and NWFP. The Muslim League, despite separate electorates, could not form a government in any province. The Congress ministries worked till October 1939. During this time, Bande Mataram,[17] which was later interpreted as a Hindu revolutionary poem and its two verses were adopted as a sort of a national anthem by the Congress and were recited at its meetings despite Muslim protests.[18] The Muslims were further alienated and pushed towards the idea of a separate state by the conduct of the Congress in running these ministries. Symbols of Hindu Raj and culture were adopted, including the use of Hindi in place of Urdu. Schools were obliged to salute the Congress flag, sing Bande Mataram, and worship Gandhi's portrait.[19] The Muslims began to fear that a united India would subject them to the discrimination

and coercion of majority Hindus. The concept of having a separate state for Muslims of India, thus, began to appear on the political horizon as an imperative.

The Congress continued to deny the growing Muslim concern about the discrimination and coercion they could face in a majoritarian state, and instead would blame the British for creating a communal rift. While some historians have interrogated the perceived British policy of instigating communal divide, many authors now hold Congress responsible for the intensification of Muslim nationalism, eventually leading to the idea of Pakistan. Jinnah called upon Indian Muslims to observe 22 December 1939 as the 'Day of Deliverance' from Congress. Despite the gathering evidence of Congress essentially speaking for Hindus, it continued to claim that it spoke for all Indians. While some Muslim individuals and organizations did support Congress, their political objective was limited to the goal of independence from the British and not towards advocating for the dominance of Hindu ideology.

Towards 1947

On 23 March 1940, the All-India Muslim League held its annual session at the then Minto Park in Lahore, and on the second day of the session it adopted a Lahore Resolution, later named as Pakistan Resolution, demanding that "the areas in which Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent states...," in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign. This resolution marked a turning point for Muslim nationalism in India, as Muslims now wanted a territory of their own. Building on this Resolution, Jinnah began to demand a sovereign state for the Muslims of India.[20] Clearly, the opposition to the idea also stiffened. Jawaharlal Nehru, who was opposed to the partition of British India, elaborated his thoughts in his book 'The Discovery of India' that he wrote when

he was in prison between 1942 and 1945, arguing that "if India is split up into two or more parts,... there will be the inner psychological conflict between those who wish to reunite her and those who oppose this."[21] Some nationalist Indians, like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Khaksar Movement's Allama Mashriqi, Khudai Khidmatgar leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and Deobandi ulama led by Husain Ahmad Madani also did not favour the partition of India or creation of a separate state for Indian Muslims. Indian nationalist Muslims advanced several arguments in favour of their view: nations are formed on geographic basis rather than religion or ethnicity. They argued that Muslims and Hindus had lived peacefully in India, and that Muslims of an undivided India would form a robust minority and would be better positioned to defend their interests in a secular India.

The issue of minorities weighed heavily on the minds of nearly every political leader of the time. Nehru's concern was that huge minorities would remain in each geographical area. Jinnah was of the view that minorities belonging to different faiths living in both countries would not cease to be citizens of the respective states just because they belonged to a particular faith, religion or race.[22] An independent state of Pakistan would be obliged to safeguard its non-Muslim minorities and an independent state of India was expected to safeguard the Muslim and other minorities. It is important to recall here that the Pakistan Resolution of 1940 had also dealt with this issue and recommended mandatory safeguards for the minorities in both Pakistan and Hindustan (India was mostly referred to as Hindustan at that time). The idea was that by the creation of Pakistan comprising Muslim majority areas, the area of conflict between Hindus and Muslims would be reduced and both countries would have an equal interest in protecting the minorities within their borders.[23] No one envisaged the swap of populations or people being displaced from where they were living.

Historians have spent considerable time on understanding Jinnah's concept of Pakistan and his rationale for demanding a separate state for Muslims of India. What we know for certain is that Jinnah wanted

a political arrangement in India that would help the Muslims to preserve their culture and identity and secure their fair share of administrative and economic resources. He knew well that there would be sizable minorities in both states. This, in his view, was a perfect solution to the communal problem of India, as both countries would have majority and minority communities living side by side with honour and dignity. Jinnah never envisaged mass movement and displacement of people from their homes. As if to demonstrate his mind on this matter and to underline the need to protect all communities, Jinnah had nominated Jogendra Nath Mandal, a member of the Scheduled Caste, as one of League's nominees for the interim government 1945-46.

One argument that is often advanced against the two-nation theory is that a Hindu Punjabi is similar in physical appearance to a Muslim Punjabi and different from a Hindu Bengali or Tamil. The counter argument could be that if race was the basis of a nation, Europe would be one large country.[24] On the eve of Independence, Jinnah spoke to the constituent assembly on 11 August 1947 to dilate on, among other subjects, the role of religion in politics. Jinnah wanted Pakistan to be a liberal democracy with equal rights for all its people regardless of religion, caste or creed. Another criticism of Jinnah that is sometimes cited is that India's Muslims did not know what their state would look like and how it would be run. It is understandable that Jinnah maintained ambiguity on the shape of Pakistan because there were several other actors in the partition process, particularly the British, who were in the driving seat. Further, the future of two major Muslim-majority provinces, Bengal and the Punjab, was unclear at that time. Jinnah also wanted to maintain unity of various segments of Muslim leadership, which was only possible by keeping ambiguity on the final shape of Pakistan.

Some scholars have raised the question on whether partition was worth the price? There is no doubt that partition could have been handled better. Several factors are responsible for the mayhem that engulfed the subcontinent on the eve of the partition. The primary

responsibility for the smooth implementation of the partition plan rested with the British, who were still in charge of the administration, and should have acted firmly to prevent the displacement of people and stop violence and bloodshed that accompanied it, particularly when neither Jinnah nor any other leader wanted people to be displaced from their ancestral homes. That said, achieving a separate homeland for Muslim-majority areas of British India was no small feat. It provided a territory where Muslims could live a life according to their own social and cultural ethos. If partition had not happened, Muslims of India, who were already lagging behind in every walk of life, would have had to live at the mercy of the majority community. To understand what it would have meant, it suffices to look at India of 2014 onwards under the Modi-led BJP rule. Hate speech, anti-Muslim riots, mob lynching, cow vigilantism, and marginalization of Muslims in nearly every walk of life became order of the day.

Throughout the Pakistan movement from 1940 onwards, Jinnah remained flexible to accept various governance arrangements, as long as any one arrangement did not deprive Muslims of their right to live a life according to their own faith and cultural traditions. Jinnah accepted, for instance, the Cabinet Mission plan that the British proposed in 1946 to keep India united – a 3-tier administrative set up, with a federal union and three groups of provinces in eastern, central, and northwestern parts of India. Some scholars have interpreted Jinnah's flexibility to mean that the demand for Pakistan was essentially a bargaining chip to secure the political rights of Muslims. It would be important to note that Jinnah was ready to accept the Cabinet Mission plan, because the Mission's plan contained an option for the separate unit of Muslim provinces to seek secession if the experience did not go well, and thus keeping Pakistan possible.[25]

When Jawaharlal Nehru decided to give his own interpretation to the key provisions of the Cabinet Mission plan vide his presser of 10 July 1946, the creation of Pakistan became an imminent reality. In 'India Wins Freedom', Maulana Abul Kalam Azad contends that it was the Congress leadership, in particular Nehru, that derailed the possibility

of a united India.[26] Why did Nehru sabotage the Cabinet Mission plan? Perhaps he expected Pakistan to fold up soon because of economic pressures. He was, thus, not interested in a compromise, and instead, was guided by creating conditions to hasten Pakistan's early demise, an objective that he could not achieve. Akhund describes this in his own unique way by asserting that Nehru wanted to be the Great Mogul with the communal roles reversed.[27]

In December 1945 - January 1946, elections were held to elect members of the legislative councils of the provinces, who would then elect a new Constituent Assembly to frame a constitution for an independent India. Of the total number of seats, the Congress won 58.2%, including 90% of the general non-Muslim seats. The League won 26.8% of the total seats including 87% of Muslim seats. For the League most seats came from Muslim-minority provinces, where the fear of Hindu majority was greater, as well as from the traditional centres of power like landowners and religious elite in Muslim-majority provinces. The Muslim League thus emerged as the sole representative of the Muslims of India, while Congress continued to contend that it spoke for the entire population of India. Religious slogans and the term 'Pakistan' were used in the election campaign. A coalition government of the INC and AIML was formed. The experience of this government turned out to be bitter for all sides. There was little meeting of minds. It was becoming evident that the two communities would not be able to live together in peace. The leaders, who held cabinet portfolios, carried with them the bitterness of the experience of this government when the two countries became independent the following year.

The Nascent Years

When Pakistan eventually achieved independence on 14 August 1947, there was considerable acrimony already in place amongst the leadership of the two newly established countries. Hostile rhetoric and tactical point-scoring made headlines. Indian leaders continued

to oppose Pakistan, lamenting the vivisection of the so-called 'Mother India'. They also nursed a hope that Pakistan would soon cease to exist and join back the united India.[28] For many Indians, a united India (Akhand Bharat) or Mother India (Bharat Mata) was a dream that had been shattered by the creation of Pakistan, even though the Indian subcontinent has never been a unified entity and was always home to scores of empires, kingdoms, and tribal groups. The two countries were, thus, from the very start, considered to be what an Indian scholar-politician termed "sworn adversaries from birth."[29] In Pakistan, there was considerable excitement about the new homeland for the Muslims of India and a determination to build a strong country. However, there was a lurking concern about possible undoing of Pakistan. Accordingly, the leadership and people of the nascent state put in a massive effort to piece together a rudimentary state infrastructure and security apparatus.

The most daunting challenge for both countries was to settle millions of refugees who had crossed the newly created borders. Jinnah had opposed the division of the Punjab and Bengal, both Muslim-majority provinces, as he feared this could lead to dislocation of millions. In his scheme, both countries would assume responsibility for protecting the minority so that there was no need for any dislocation. Sadly, the two provinces were ultimately divided. In fact, once the partition neared, a panicky population swap erupted, accompanied by fratricidal bloodshed. The refugees brought with them harrowing details of how their loved ones were killed brutally and how they escaped to the safety of Pakistan. Similar were the stories for Hindus and Sikhs who crossed into what became the Dominion of India.

Though Pakistan lacked a proper state infrastructure, the excitement and the feeling of gratitude for having found a country of their own helped manage the settlement of refugees. India was better placed to handle the refugee crisis, as it had inherited the Raj state infrastructure. Yet it also found it difficult to stop the violence, as passions were running high. Wolpert describes how when Gandhi, who was genuinely upset at the communal killings and did his best to

stop them, spoke out against the mistreatment of Muslims, some Hindu fanatics called him "Jinnah's stooge!" and 'Mohammad Gandhi'. There were difficulties within the Indian government as well. When Nehru urged Vallabhbhai Patel, who oversaw Delhi, to apprehend Hindu RSS thugs who were terrorizing Muslims, Patel ignored the call. Azad records in his book 'India Wins Freedom' that Patel had not only failed to give protection to Muslims, but he also dismissed lightheartedly any complaint made on that account.[30] Upon receiving reports of Indian Muslims being attacked in northern India, Jinnah was in great agony. In an interview to Reuters correspondent Duncan Cooper on 25 October 1947, Jinnah said that these killings were "well-planned, well-organized and well-directed and the object of it all, it seems to me, was to paralyze the new-born Dominion of Pakistan." He reiterated that the Plan of 3 June was "accepted by the two major nations in successor authorities" and that under the terms of the Indian Independence Act of 1947, "solemn declarations" were made both by the Congress and the Muslim League that the minorities of both States would be given "a fair deal and that safeguards for them should be secured specially for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights in consultation with them."[31] For his part, Jinnah ensured that Muslim League would sincerely implement the 3 June Plan. He, however, lamented the partisan role that the Congress leadership had played. In a speech at a rally at the University Stadium Lahore on 30 October 1947, Jinnah said that "History will also record its verdict on those whose treachery and machinations let loose forces of disorder and disruption in this subcontinent causing deaths of lacks, enormous destruction of property and bringing about suffering and misery to many millions by uprooting them from their hearths and homes and all that dear to them."[32]

The birth pains were accentuated for the new and fragile state of Pakistan when it was denied its due share of finances, military stores, and other assets. In December 1947, it was agreed between the two governments that Pakistan would get Rs. 750 million as its share of the

cash balances of British India. The government of India paid Rs. 200 million, but started delaying the remaining amount on the pretext that Pakistan might use it to prosecute the war in Kashmir,[33] which had started since the last week of October 1947. Seeing the hesitance of the Indian government, Gandhi used his influence to prevail on the Indian government to give Pakistan its share of cash balances.[34] It speaks of Gandhi's ability to think strategically rather than be guided by the myopic pursuit of starving Pakistan out of resources. Wolpert concludes that Gandhi "understood that Nehru and Patel hoped to bankrupt Pakistan" by escalating the Kashmir war and by continuing to withhold overdue payments of a substantial sum of money India owed to Karachi's treasury, which were kept in Delhi's Central Bank."[35] When Gandhi urged the Indian government to remit those funds, since it was "not honourable to withhold promised payments", the Hindu far right became so agitated that an RSS activist Nathuram Godse assassinated Gandhi on 30 January 1947.

Likewise, the division of armed forces was a complicated operation as the division was being done on a communal basis. Jinnah had earlier proposed that Mountbatten could become a super Governor-General over the two Dominions, which would each have their own separate Governors-General. This was to ensure that the British Crown's Representative would have arbitral powers to supervise the partition process, particularly the division of the Indian army.[36] Mountbatten refused to become an arbiter, though he wanted to remain Governor-General of Pakistan as well as India. Jinnah was ready to accept the division of armed forces on the basis of citizenship, as he had affirmed that all those who lived in Pakistan would enjoy equal rights regardless of creed. However, the Partition Council decided that a Muslim from Pakistan did not have the option to join the armed forces of India and non-Muslims from India could not serve in the armed forces of Pakistan. There were also immense time pressures. Chaudhri Muhammad Ali recalls that the headquarters of army, air force, and navy as well as ministry of defense were in New Delhi. India also had the advantage that all ordnance factories, and nearly all military store

depots were located in the territories that became independent India. Therefore, the process of division and reorganization of the armed forces was far more complex for Pakistan than for India. Indian leaders were determined not to let Pakistan get its share of stores. Chairman of Armed Forces Reconstitution Committee Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck reported to the British government on 28 September 1947 that the Indian Cabinet was obstructing the work of partition and that Pakistan was reasonable and cooperative because Pakistan had practically nothing of her own and had to get from the reserves of stores lying in India.[37]

Consequently, when the headquarters of the Commander in Chief of the British Indian Army (redesignated as Supreme Commander) was closed on 30 November 1947, despite Pakistani request to complete the division of armed forces, Pakistan did not get its share of weapons depots, military bases, ammunition, equipment and installations. Ayub Khan recalls in his political memoir that India denied Pakistan its share of financial resources and "dishonoured solemn agreements for the supply of our [Pakistan's] share of stores and equipment." This in his view was a manifestation of India's "unmitigated hostility" towards Pakistan with a view to cripple the latter at birth.[38]

Pakistan also did not have much industry, and markets for its agricultural produce were mostly in India. The control of the systems of banking, currency, financial institutions, railways, ports, posts and telegraphs was in the hands of the government of India. Central government archives and records were in Delhi and the Imperial Library in Calcutta. Nehru knew these facts well as he had mentioned in his book The Discovery of India that Muslim majority areas could suffer from partition because the predominantly Hindu areas have greater industry and mineral resources.[39] B.R. Ambedkar, the lead author of India's constitution, also noted that India actually benefited from the creation of Pakistan because the subcontinent's wealth remained in predominantly Hindu India and made Pakistan a weak state because of a poor resource base.[40]

The refugees had left behind their urban and agricultural property. The governments of India and Pakistan had to not only rehabilitate the incoming refugees but also take care of the properties left behind by the outgoing refugees. The only solution was to use the evacuee properties to accommodate refugees. Initially, there was considerable argument about the evacuee properties on either side, but eventually the issue settled down. On 01 April 1948, India stopped waters that were flowing to the canals in Pakistan from the headworks located in India. Although this was resumed a month later, it raised alarm bells in Pakistan's leadership about the intent of the Indian government. These birth pains further deepened the mutual hostility of the Pakistani and Indian leadership of the time.

Within two months of the partition, a dispute erupted over the State of Jammu and Kashmir, which under the terms of the Partition Plan of 3 June 1947 was expected to join Pakistan being a Muslim-majority state contiguous to the territories that would become Pakistan. India managed to elicit a controversial instrument of accession from the ruler of Kashmir and occupied Jammu, Ladakh and the Valley of Kashmir. Both countries fought their first war over this dispute, which was a heavy burden for a nascent state struggling to build state infrastructure. The dispute has lingered on ever since because despite several UN resolutions calling for a plebiscite to determine the wishes of the people of Kashmir, India has never honoured the pledges it had made to do so. Like Kashmir, there were over 560 other princely states in British India which had enjoyed considerable autonomy in their governance. Nearly a year before independence, Nehru and Sardar Patel gave clear signals that the princely states would not retain their autonomy and must join the constituent assembly. Sardar Patel with the assistance of V.P. Menon, a senior civil servant, managed to convince the rulers of most princely states to accede to India. Junagadh, ruled by a Muslim Nawab, opted to join Pakistan, but India sent its forces and occupied it. Later it was integrated with India after a referendum in 1948. Hyderabad, another state with a Muslim

Nizam, wanted to stay independent. This state, too, met the same fate as Junagadh, and was incorporated into the Dominion of India.

In terms of political governance, right from the outset, India, under Nehru's leadership, embarked on the path of a secular democracy. India adopted its constitution in November 1949 (effective 26 January 1950), making India a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic Republic. The first general elections were held between October 1951 and February 1952, in which Congress party won 364 seats in a house of 489 in Lok Sabha. Nehru embarked on a series of economic reforms, focusing on industrialization, particularly establishment of heavy industry and import substitution, with considerable subsidies and protection to local investors. In the social sector, the reforms focused on rights of women and the reform of the caste system. Nehru led his party to two more electoral victories in 1957 and 1962. He served as India's prime minister for seventeen years till his death in 1964.

In the case of Pakistan, Jinnah, as country's first governor general, elaborated his vision for the future of Pakistan and provided useful guidance to the first constituent assembly on 11 August 1947. Jinnah's demise so soon after the creation of Pakistan was an enormous setback to the country. Further, Liaqat Ali Khan, the first prime minister was assassinated in 1951, which set in a period of great instability. The country had its first constitution in 1956, nine years after independence. However, that constitution was short-lived as it was abrogated by President Sikandar Mirza in October 1958, who was deposed by General Ayub Khan the same month. India and Pakistan, thus, started off on different political trajectories right from the beginning.

It would be pertinent to look at how global geopolitics of the time was evolving, and in turn widening the gulf between India and Pakistan. On the eve of the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, the world was reeling after the effects of the Second World War. Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan had been defeated. Out of the colossal death and destruction had emerged a new world order, predicated on

the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states, non-interference in each other's affairs, and resolution of differences through peaceful means. These principles of inter-state conduct were embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, adopted in 1945. With Europe weakened by war, the United States emerged as the strongest country of the world. The US began to encourage the process of decolonization based on the UN Charter's principle of self-determination. Worldwide, independence movements erupted challenging the European colonial powers. The European powers were not in position to hold onto those "possessions", which they had exploited to the hilt. The membership of the United Nations, which stood at 73 in 1945, swelled. The Soviet Union, which had also played a decisive role in defeating Nazi Germany, emerged as the other superpower. It show-cased communism as an alternate model of governance, to which many newly independent developing countries were attracted. A Cold War started between the US and the Soviet Union, and the many countries of the world ended up joining either of the two mutually opposed camps: the US representing capitalism and liberal democracy, while the Soviet Union espousing communism and centralized economies.

The Cold War began to deeply affect the region of South Asia as well. India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had a socialist bent of mind, and was inclined more towards the Soviet Union than the US, which it regarded as an imperialist power. Yet, India did not want to be a part of the camp politics, and in 1961, India's Nehru, Yugoslavia's Tito, Egypt's Nasser, Ghana's Nkrumah, and Indonesia's Sukarno met in a conference in Belgrade to start what was termed the 'Non-Alignment Movement', based on the principles of peace and amity laid down by key leaders of Afro-Asian countries at the Bandung conference of 1955. Initially, Pakistani leadership was also hesitant to get involved in the conflict of ideologies or big power politics. However, Pakistan ultimately decided that there was no harm in forging alliances based on common interests.

Given the acute sense of insecurity borne out of India's hostile attitude, Pakistan began to cultivate a closer relationship with the US, the major military and economic power of the time. The US also saw an opportunity to woo Pakistan for its own strategic goals viz a viz the Soviet Union. In 1953, the US, which had not acceded to India's request for wheat in 1951, decided to send large quantities of wheat to Pakistan to meet acute shortages. For its military needs, Pakistan signed a Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement with the US in 1954. The same year, Pakistan became a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a collective defence arrangement in South East Asia. In September 1955, Pakistan joined the Baghdad Pact, later named as Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Pakistan had thus firmly entered the US-led camp. There has been a view that Pakistan did not benefit much by joining the US-led defence arrangements because the help it received was not to be used against the main threat to its territorial integrity coming from its eastern border.

Although the alliances did bolster Pakistan's military capabilities, over-dependence on the US embittered Pakistan's relations with Arab Muslim countries, Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union. India, too, reacted negatively to Pakistan joining these alliances, even though India itself had also received millions of dollars of grants and loans from the US, which it had spent on building up its armed forces. Nehru made derogatory statements in the media, speculating that the whole of Pakistan would become a military base.[41] Pakistan's Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Bogra, who was the main architect of US-Pakistan relations in the 1950s, retorted that Pakistan could not remain weak in the face of a domineering India. His contention was that the main threat to peace in Asia arose not from Pakistan's wish to strengthen her defences but from the continuation of the Kashmir dispute.

Around this time, India and China grew ever closer and showcased their friendship as a bond to promote '*panchsheel*' - the five principles of inter-state relation: respect for each other's territorial integrity and

sovereignty; non-aggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence. Nehru projected these to the world as an alternative to military pacts. Many analysts termed these as a pious doctrine but not a policy. The 1962 war between India and China demonstrated that mere expressions of peace were not enough, and the country required robust military capabilities and settlement of borders and other disputes. For China, this war raised questions on India's reliability as a strategic partner. In some ways, this war became a turning point for Sino-Pak relations as both countries began to forge a closer partnership.

Nehru used the excuse of the US military assistance to Pakistan to renege from his promises on holding a plebiscite in Kashmir and argued that India would now keep forces and military equipment in the Indian-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. India also expedited the process of Kashmir's integration with it. In February 1954, the so-called constituent assembly of Kashmir accepted the recommendation that Kashmir should remain acceded to India. The Banihal tunnel, inaugurated in December 1956, provided India an all-year-round access to Kashmir. Indian leaders started making open statements distancing from their earlier commitment to hold a plebiscite. Pakistan took the matter to the UNSC again in 1957, where the Council affirmed, by a unanimous vote (with Soviet Union abstaining), the previous resolutions that the final disposition of Kashmir would be made by a plebiscite under the UN auspices. India reacted by taking the position that it was no longer bound by her promise to hold a plebiscite in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir.

Between War and Peace

The first war between India and Pakistan broke out soon after the two countries had attained independence. The primary reason was the dispute over the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which being the Muslim-majority state was to join Pakistan as per the understanding underpinning the partition process. Seeing the Maharaja (ruler) of

Kashmir prevaricate in deciding to join Pakistan, and in the face of atrocities committed by Maharaja's government, the residents of Poonch rose against the Dogra forces. When the news of this uprising reached tribal areas through the refugees and ex-soldiers from Poonch, who had gone there to purchase arms, the tribesmen of the frontier region also joined the resistance to the Maharaja's rule. The tribal lashkar overpowered the state forces and by 26 October reached the vicinity of Srinagar. Sensing trouble, the Maharaja fled to Jammu, and requested help from India, which asked the Maharaja to accede the state to India, and then brought its forces in Kashmir on 27 October 1947.

India escalated the matter to the United Nations to have the international community condemn what it described as aggression from Pakistan. When the matter was debated, global attention focused on the issue of right to self-determination that had been denied to Kashmiris. The Council called for ascertaining the wishes of the people of the state of Jammu and Kashmir through a plebiscite under the UN auspices. Both India and Pakistan agreed. The Indian side pledged to honour the UNSC resolutions. Prime Minister Nehru made a statement on 5 March 1948 iterating India's "unilateral declaration that we would abide by the will of the people of Kashmir as declared in a plebiscite or referendum." However, years later, India repudiated its commitment to holding the plebiscite when the UNSC took up discussion on Kashmir in April 1962.[42] The promised plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the people of Kashmir could never take place. Had Indian leaders thought more strategically and fairly, they could have resolved the Kashmir dispute right there by allowing this Muslim-majority state to decide its political destiny through a plebiscite. Both countries could have saved so much of what they lost in human lives and treasure. This subject has been discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

The 1948 war ended with a ceasefire on 31st December 1948, and vide Karachi Agreement of 1949, the state was practically divided between India-held Kashmir and Pakistan-held Kashmir (Azad Jammu and

Kashmir and Northern Areas, later renamed as Gilgit Baltistan). In late November 1949, both countries endeavoured to conclude a No War Declaration, which could not be agreed upon because of disagreement over the formula for a fair settlement of disputes. Pakistan's argument was that if disputes were allowed to fester, both countries ran the risk of another war.

When Ayub Khan took over the reins of the government in 1958, his primary focus was on ensuring the economic development of the country. He was also keen to conclude a treaty with India on apportionment of waters of the Indus River basin. With the facilitation of the World Bank, both countries signed the Indus Waters Treaty in 1960. Considering the acute hostility between the two countries, the signing of this treaty was a major achievement. In retrospect, however, the Treaty caused considerable damage to the ecological system of Pakistan, because the waters of three of the basin's eastern rivers, Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi, were completely allocated to India. The areas irrigated by two of these rivers (Ravi and Sutlej) had to be compensated by constructing link canals from Chenab and Jhelum rivers. As it is, waters are apportioned and not rivers. Nevertheless, the Treaty did function well even during wars and periods of heightened tensions until 2025, when India decided to unilaterally hold the Treaty in abeyance, for which there was no provision in the Treaty. This topic is discussed further in later chapters of this book.

Ayub Khan's young and ambitious foreign minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was not impressed with Ayub's pro-West tilt, and wanted to pursue a more independent foreign policy that would lean towards China. This did not sit well with the Americans, who became more circumspect about their economic and military support to Pakistan. With a deterioration of its relations with the US, Pakistan began to evolve a new foreign policy, one in which China featured as an important friendly country. In 1962, India and China went to war. Pakistan chose not to use the opportunity to create a two-front situation for India in the larger interest of peace in South Asia. Pakistan and China started negotiating a border agreement in 1962,

which was signed in 1963 as a provisional agreement subject to final settlement of the Kashmir dispute. India raised its objection that Pakistan had surrendered 2,000 square miles of Kashmiri territory to China. This viewpoint has been challenged by historians and scholars who believe that the boundary had followed the main watershed deviating only to give to Pakistan 750 square miles of territory that had grazing grounds and salt mines on the other side of Shimshal Pass, which was already in the actual possession of China.[43]

Throughout this time in 1962-63, talks were held between India and Pakistan at the foreign minister level with a view to making another attempt to resolve the Kashmir dispute. In order to ensure the success of these talks, Ayub Khan declared publicly that Pakistan would be open to compromise and prepared to consider a solution other than plebiscite if Nehru had one in mind.[44] Bhutto reiterated the call for plebiscite, while Swaran Singh opposed it, arguing that introducing religion into the issue could trigger another exodus of minorities.[45] Notably at the third round of these talks, which took place in Karachi, India provided a working paper on partitioning the state, accepting Pakistan's possession of Azad Kashmir and giving some areas of the Valley. Pakistan proposed giving some areas of Jammu district to India, while the rest would be allocated to Pakistan. Nehru later withdrew this offer. On Pakistan's behalf, Bhutto also rejected the idea of partition.[46] When all efforts to resolve the dispute under the UN auspices failed, and bilateral efforts, too, hit a dead end, the two countries began to drift towards another hot conflict.

Meanwhile, the situation in Indian-Occupied Kashmir deteriorated sharply when a sacred hair of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was stolen from Hazratbal mosque near Srinagar in December 1963, sparking riots and disturbances. This came in the wake of an announcement by Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad, the prime minister of Kashmir, that the state would be amalgamated with India. Pakistan raised the matter in the UNSC again, but the debate led to no particular pressure on India, as most members wanted India and Pakistan to resolve their differences by negotiations. India also

blocked any role by the UN Secretary General to assist the parties in their negotiations. Sensing the trouble brewing in Kashmir, Prime Minister Nehru released Sheikh Abdullah from prison, who then came to Pakistan. Abdullah had fancied the idea of an Indo-Pakistani condominium, in which India and Pakistan would share their sovereignty over Kashmir. This idea, however, did not take root, as Abdullah had to return to India because of Nehru's death.

The policy makers in Pakistan were frustrated that India was obfuscating every attempt to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Kashmiri protests against the Indian occupation of the state gathered momentum. On 17 May 1965, Indian troops occupied three Pakistani posts in the Kargil area,[47] ostensibly to protect the Srinagar-Leh highway. Under American and UN pressure, India vacated these posts in June but reoccupied them in August. Indian troops launched several assaults across the line and captured nine important Pakistani positions in Azad Kashmir. It was in this backdrop that Azad Kashmir forces embarked on a military manoeuvre, code-named Operation Gibraltar, and crossed the ceasefire line to occupy Indian posts in the Chhamb area. India chose to enlarge the theatre and attacked through the international border near Lahore on 6 September. The armed forces of Pakistan managed to defend the city and the country and repulsed India's attack. Indian generals were surprised because they were not expecting such stiff resistance. The 1965 war lasted seventeen days. A ceasefire was agreed with the help of the international community, followed by the Soviet-sponsored peace talks in Tashkent in January 1966.

The 1965 war turned out to be a reality check for both countries. India, despite the advantage of its size and resources, was unable to defeat Pakistan in a conventional war. The latter, despite its ideological zeal, could not liberate Kashmir from India's hold. Pakistanis were dejected that the US, which Pakistan considered as a close ally, did not come to Pakistan's aid. There were also some miscalculations made on the Pakistani side. Bhutto as foreign minister had assured President Ayub in a letter on 12 March 1965 that India would not be in a position to

risk a general war.[48] There was also an expectation that the same scenario that occurred in Rann of Kutch, where an international arbitration had successfully resolved the dispute, would be the case in this war as well. The assessment that following the August 1965 operation, communications would be disrupted and a revolt or uprising would break out in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir also turned out to be inaccurate. Regardless, the war galvanized the morale of the nation, though it had an adverse impact on the country's path to economic progress. After the 1965 war, Nehru's successor Lal Bahadur Shastri, who had negotiated the Tashkent Agreement brokered by the Soviet Union, died only one day after its signing. Some analysts sensed an alleged foul play causing Shastri's death, but the Indian government played down the conspiracy angle. Upon nomination by the Congress party, Indira Gandhi took over as the next prime minister of India.

President Ayub Khan's prestige plummeted at home and in the West, which suspended assistance to Pakistan. Bhutto, who had separated from the Ayub Khan government, formed his own party, and led a mass agitation against Ayub Khan on the grounds that he had lost the war on the negotiating table in Tashkent. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the most popular leader in the eastern wing of the country, began to demand greater autonomy for East Pakistan. Amidst growing political instability and chaos, Ayub Khan resigned in 1969. In retrospect, during his ten year rule, Ayub Khan had taken two decisions that to him appeared as tactically gainful, but time showed that these were strategic blunders. First, he had not allowed for free and fair elections in 1965, when Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah, sister of the Quaid-e-Azam, was running for political office. Taking the steps to ensure a fair election could have brought the country back to democratic governance. Secondly, he handed over power to another General as opposed to democratic leaders, which ultimately led to imposition of martial law and paved the way for the 1971 debacle.

General Yahya Khan, who assumed charge after Ayub Khan, organized the general elections in December 1970, which were by all

accounts free and fair in their own right. However, he did not convene the national assembly that would have elected as prime minister of Pakistan the leader of the majority party, Sheikh Mujib, whose party, Awami League, had won the majority seats (160). Bhutto, who had won 81 seats (highest number of seats in West Pakistan), also played his part in delaying the convening of the national assembly. This delay led to public agitation in East Pakistan. As civil unrest grew in intensity, the Yahya Khan government opted for a military action on 25 March 1971. The following day, Sheikh Mujib declared independence for East Pakistan, terming the new country 'Bangladesh', and was promptly arrested. This evoked massive uprising from the people of East Pakistan. A guerrilla resistance movement emerged to fight for liberating Bangladesh, called Mukti Bahini.

India saw this upheaval as an opportunity to play on the civil disturbances in East Pakistan, and started supporting Mukti Bahini. Later, India militarily intervened in East Pakistan leading to a war between the two countries in both wings, East and West Pakistan. By December 1971, Indian forces had made significant advances towards Dhaka. Under these hostile conditions and with its headquarters a thousand miles away, with a ban on overflights and virtually no way to ensure reinforcements, Pakistani forces had no chance. The UN Security Council, which had been debating the issue throughout the crisis, was unable to agree on a ceasefire because of relentless filibustering by the Soviet Union, providing crucial few days in the second week of December for Indian troops to surround Dhaka. An Anglo-French draft seeking ceasefire, withdrawal of troops, and political settlement was tabled with a realistic chance of passing, but the threat of Soviet veto killed the initiative. As it was, the Anglo-French draft was already too late, as the ground situation in East Pakistan was rapidly deteriorating. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had been sent by the government to plead Pakistan's case at the UN. Frustrated by the endless proceedings of the Security Council, Bhutto walked out of the Council on 14 December. The following day, a Polish draft was

tabled, ostensibly to redeem the image of the Soviet Union which had killed every proposal for ceasefire, but by then ground situation in Dhaka had slipped out of Pakistani hands.

Indian leaders have often gloated about this victory, but they fail to acknowledge that their act was a blatant violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan. Indian leaders have continued to parade the picture in which General Niazi is seen to be signing a surrender document in Dhaka's Paltan Maidan, but have not realized that these antics will only foster feelings of acrimony amongst Pakistanis, who were hurt by India's blatant display of hostility and intervention in an internal issue. Indira Gandhi was keen to extend the war even to West Pakistan but a warning from the US leadership in coordination with the Soviet Union checked her aggressive designs. The 1971 war further widened the gulf between the two countries. After the war, Indian leaders contended that the two-nation theory had been proven false, but this is an erroneous conclusion. Bangladesh and Pakistan were born out of the same ideology. Bangladesh is a Muslim-majority country that has asserted its right to govern the country according to its own socio-cultural ethos. It has not joined India, nor is ready to accept Indian hegemony. However, there is a view in Pakistan that while the two-nation theory did serve its purpose before the partition of British India, it had to be critically re-evaluated after the creation of Pakistan to take into account the diversity of people within the country. The creation of Bangladesh forced this re-evaluation to adopt a more inclusive discourse that embraces the pluralistic nature of the society in both Pakistan and Bangladesh. Yet another view is that the Indian subcontinent has always been inhabited by dozens of nations, and it was British ingenuity to divide this vast area and population into two nations: Hindus and Muslims. Once this logic enabled the creation of Pakistan, it remained relevant even when Bangladesh was established as a Muslim-majority nation.

Why did Pakistani leadership not handle the electoral dispute in 1971 politically and instead resorted to military action? From the time of

the announcement of the results of December 1970 elections, there was nearly a year to reach a political settlement. Since Sheikh Mujib had won the elections, he should have been given the opportunity to become the prime minister of Pakistan. Secondly, Pakistani leadership failed to anticipate the extent of Indian military intervention into East Pakistan. The Pakistani leadership had also not factored in the reaction of the Soviet Union, which held ideological differences with China (China and the Soviet Union did not get along well at that time). Pakistan also depended far too heavily on potential US help. In time, many Pakistani historians and analysts have also recognized that because nations are strengthened by the bonds of geography, language, culture, and history, Pakistan should seriously focus efforts on consolidating a sense of an inclusive nationalism that embraces the ethnically and linguistically diverse people inhabiting the lands of Pakistan.

After East Pakistan became Bangladesh and West Pakistan retained the name of Pakistan, the focus of Pakistani leaders shifted towards addressing the fall out of the country's dismemberment. Issues of immediate concern included the return of tens of thousands of prisoners of war and civilians held under protective custody in India in violation of the Geneva Convention, the exchange of territories occupied by either side, and the recognition of Bangladesh. For Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who had become president and chief martial law administrator of the remaining Pakistan, one of the earliest responsibilities was to boost the morale of an injured nation. He led Pakistan's delegation to Simla (later named as Shimla) in 1972 for an agreement with Indira Gandhi. The Simla agreement formally ended hostilities and converted the Ceasefire Line of 1949 into the Line of Control (LoC) of 1972. Both countries affirmed that the principles and purposes of the UN Charter would govern the relations between the two, and that both countries would settle their differences by peaceful means and through bilateral channels. Since then, India has treated the Kashmir dispute as a bilateral issue, while Pakistan does not agree to that interpretation and feels that the dispute should be settled

through the framework provided by the relevant UNSC resolutions. India also held the view that with the conversion of the multilaterally-negotiated ceasefire line into bilaterally-negotiated line of control, the role of UN observer mission to monitor ceasefire should cease, a point that Pakistan contested. In the meantime, the UN observer mission continues to function.

After the 1971 war, Bhutto began to take steps to distance Pakistan from the US, leaning towards the People's Republic of China, which was still struggling under Mao's cultural revolution that concluded with Mao's death in 1976. Bhutto also reached out to the Muslim world and hosted the historic second Islamic summit of Muslim countries in 1974 in Lahore, where Sheikh Mujib participated as the leader of an independent state, Bangladesh. Bhutto initiated work towards Pakistan's nuclear programme after India had carried out a nuclear detonation in 1974, which Indira Gandhi's government termed as 'smiling buddha'. Bhutto, who is reported to have said after the 1965 war that Pakistan would "eat grass, even go hungry, but will get one of its own bombs", initiated necessary steps in that regard. In a way, Indira Gandhi and Bhutto placed India and Pakistan on the path of acquiring capabilities to develop nuclear weapons.

Indira Gandhi was emboldened by her role in the dismemberment of Pakistan, but at home, she was facing turbulent politics with agitation in Gujarat and Bihar, a railway strike, and a ruling of Allahabad high court declaring her election from Rae Bareli in 1971 elections as invalid. The supreme court's stay on the high court ruling enabled her to continue as the prime minister, but her rule was running low on legitimacy. On a reference by Indira Gandhi, the President declared emergency for internal reasons, which lasted from June 1975 to March 1977. In the elections that followed, Congress lost elections and Morarji Desai of the Janata Party formed the government. The Congress party, led by Indira Gandhi, returned to power in 1980. Around that time, discontent had begun to spread in the Sikh-majority state, Punjab, and calls were made for greater autonomy. In June 1984, Indira Gandhi ordered a military operation against Sikh militants led

by Bhindranwale, who had taken refuge in the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The operation led to the death of many Sikh fighters as well as pilgrims. She faced accusations that the operation, which was named Operation Blue Star, was used for self projection, and on 31 October 1984, she was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards. Massive reprisals against Sikhs ensued.

In Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who had a socialist bent of mind, announced a new labour policy that enhanced workers' rights and powers of the trade unions. His biggest achievement was the framing of a consensus constitution for the country, adopted with unanimous approval in 1974. However, his decision to nationalize all major industries in 1972 broke the backbone of the economy and depleted investors' confidence. He also introduced sweeping civil service reforms, ostensibly to break the grip of civil servants on levers of power, but in the process, he inadvertently opened doors for politicization of the bureaucracy. Bhutto organized the 1977 elections, which were widely perceived to have been rigged. Massive street protests erupted throughout the country. General Zia-ul-Haq imposed martial law to control the situation. Bhutto was tried for a controversial murder case and hanged in April 1979. In the 11 years that he ruled, Zia undertook a campaign to Islamize the laws of Pakistan. In so doing, Zia was using Islam as a rallying cry to legitimize and prolong his rule. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 provided Zia the ripe opportunity he was seeking. The US, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia joined hands to help the Afghans fight the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. A concept of Afghan jihad was cultivated to evict Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Zia also used the opportunity to consolidate Pakistan's nuclear programme and adopted the policy of nuclear ambiguity to ward off international pressure.

Zia's foreign policy remained focused on the western front and did not have much engagement with India, except briefly in 1981 and then 1987. In 1981, when the Israeli air force attacked the Iraqi nuclear programme, Pakistan became concerned about the possibility of India

carrying out a similar attack against Pakistan. The concerns of Pakistan peaked in 1986-87, when India carried out a massive military exercise, called Brass-tacks, near the Pakistani border. The perception in Pakistan was that India could potentially strike deep into central Pakistan as an attempt to destroy Pakistan's reserve strike corps and slice the country into two by severing lines of communication.

The exercises and the personality of Indian army chief, General K. Sundararajan, popularly known as Sundarji, generated fears of nuclear warfare, as speculation was rife that India was planning a fourth war essentially to destroy Pakistan's nuclear facilities.[49] General Zia visited India in February 1987, ostensibly to watch a cricket match, and met Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on the sides - a visit that came to be known as cricket diplomacy in action. One month later in March 1987, India reduced the number of troops in Kashmir and the desert area bordering Pakistan. Tensions receded. For India, the Brass-tacks was just a military exercise, but for Pakistan, it was a serious provocation. A tactical move by India could have become a strategic disaster for both countries. A year later, both countries agreed not to attack each other's nuclear facilities.

The decade of the 1980's was a turbulent one for both India and Pakistan. In India, the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 had catapulted her son, Rajiv Gandhi, to the office of prime minister. Rajiv's immediate challenge was to manage the anti-Sikh riots that had erupted in Delhi. His reputation was tarnished by the scandal of alleged payoff by a Swedish arms company Bofors, though he was acquitted posthumously. Rajiv Gandhi visited Islamabad first in December 1988 for the SAARC summit, and later in July 1989 for a state visit. Rajiv and Benazir Bhutto, who had been elected following Zia's death in a plane crash in 1988, met and agreed in principle to resolve the dispute over the Siachen glacier. The Rajiv-Benazir understanding was reaffirmed in the 1992 meeting of defence secretaries. However, the Indian side had a change of heart, because the Indian army, which had occupied Siachen glacier and the surrounding areas, including the Saltoro Ridge, through its 1984

Operation Meghdoot, refused to withdraw its troops from the higher grounds of the Saltoro Ridge. This became a major impediment to negotiations and attempts to resolve the dispute. The Indian side would insist on authentication of present actual positions to precede disengagement and redeployment. For India, this may have appeared to be a tactical win at that time, but the strategic objective of keeping Siachen glacier demilitarized was defeated. Had there been a larger focus on strategic gains, this rare opportunity to build mutual confidence and set the stage to resolve the Kashmir dispute would not have been lost.

As the decade of the 1990s dawned, both countries took steps to liberalize their economies and attract foreign investments. In Pakistan, newly elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, a businessman from Lahore, embarked in 1990 on a policy of economic liberalization to benefit from the opportunities of the then globalizing world, and pushed forward the process of privatization, which helped to partially reverse the impact of Bhutto's nationalization of industries. In India, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and his Finance Minister Manmohan Singh felt that the Nehruvian socialist model of economy had run out of time (from 1947 to 1991, the economy had grown at the meagre rate of 3%, whereas population growth was around 2 to 2.5%, causing the per capita income to remain static). The reforms envisaged by Finance Minister Manmohan Singh and Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia in 1991 to liberalize trade and unshackle the private sector, jettisoned the economics of permits and licenses, and attracted foreign direct investments. These policies were continued by the BJP government that followed in 1996. Since 2000, India has registered a high annual growth rate of 6-7 percent and emerged as a leading economy.

In 1991, both countries could have also joined hands to explore avenues of economic cooperation. However, three factors impeded any prospects of cooperation. One, in 1990-91, Indian-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a surge in resistance by freedom fighters from Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which was

responded with excessive use of force by the Central Reserve Police. Tensions escalated, particularly in the Kashmir Valley. Insurgency picked up momentum, to which India responded with ferocious use of force. Kashmiris became even more alienated from India. Internationally, pressure started growing on India for excessive use of force against Kashmiris, though it was not enough to oblige India to accept Pakistan's demand for holding a plebiscite in Kashmir. India decided to release some pressure by offering to Pakistan talks on Kashmir at the level of foreign secretaries. There was an opportunity for the two countries to find a solution to the Kashmir dispute and create space for working together in the economic realm. However, it became clear that the decision of the Indian leadership to reach out to Pakistan was guided only by the consideration to release pressure and not the desire to resolve the conflict. Tactical considerations had once again prevailed over strategic interests of the region.

The second development that impeded any possibility of two countries joining hands for economic cooperation was the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, UP in 1992 by the far-right Hindu nationalist forces, which were encouraged by the BJP leadership, particularly L.K. Advani. The Babri mosque, which had been built in 1528-29 during the rule of Mughal ruler Zaheer Uddin Babar, was perceived by Hindus to be the birthplace of Rama.[50] Hindu zealots had vowed to construct a Ram Mandir at the site of the mosque. In Pakistan, there was a strong reaction to the demolition of the Babri mosque. (Years later in 2024, a Ram temple constructed on the site of the mosque was inaugurated by BJP Prime Minister Narendra Modi).

The third reason was that the economic liberalization process initiated by the Nawaz Sharif government in 1990 could not reach its logical end in Pakistan because of political instability that hit the country during the decade of 1990s. Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif served for two terms each, but both could not complete their terms. In India, on the other hand, the path of economic growth that had started with the opening of its economy by Narashimha-Manmohan duo in 1991 was steadfastly pursued by all subsequent governments with no

deviation, despite the fact that there was considerable political instability in India in the mid-1990s. An important opportunity was, thus, lost for both countries to join hand for mutually beneficial economic cooperation.

In India, following the general elections in 1996, the BJP had emerged as the largest party in the parliament, but it lacked majority in the lower house, Lok Sabha, and though its leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee formed the government, his term was brief and he was replaced by Janata Dal's nominee Deve Gowda and later I.K. Gujral. The latter was prime minister for a brief period from April 1997 to March 1998, but he exhibited a discernible desire for improving relations with Pakistan as part of his Gujral doctrine of peace with neighbours. BJP returned to power in the general elections in 1998 and formed the government with Vajpayee as the prime minister.

For Pakistan, the decade of the 1990s witnessed not just political instability but also a few other challenges. First, the US imposed sanctions on Pakistan in 1990 under what is called the Pressler Amendment. It proposed a US ban on most economic and military assistance to Pakistan unless the US president certified on an annual basis that Pakistan does not possess a nuclear explosive device and that the proposed US assistance program would significantly reduce the risk that Pakistan will possess a nuclear explosive device.[51] Some scholars regard the Pressler amendment as a blessing in disguise, because as compared to the Cranton-Glenn amendment, the language used in the Pressler amendment provided enough space to the administration to continue economic and military assistance to Pakistan.[52] However, the wider view is that the US had largely ignored these sanctions for as long as it required Pakistan's help to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. Indeed, as soon as the Soviets withdrew their forces, these sanctions were imposed. The second challenge that Pakistan came to face at that time was that the US started alleging that Pakistan was supporting terrorism by the so-called Islamist groups, and in 1992 even threatened to designate Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism. Notwithstanding Pakistan's

clarifications that the non-state actors, which essentially were a legacy of the years of Afghan jihad, were acting on their own, the US continued to apply pressure, even though it did not resort to any practical measures against the country.

In May 1998, India tested its nuclear devices, followed promptly by Pakistan. Given the conventional asymmetry between the two countries, nuclearization restored the balance of power in South Asia. In Pakistan, India's pursuit of nuclear and missile technologies was seen as an attempt to enhance India's prestige and status as a regional and global power. Indians, however, could argue that their strategic calculus required factoring in the perceived threat from China as well. Nevertheless, for Pakistan, the nuclear capability was intended only to deter possible aggression from India. There was no other purpose except deterrence. Therefore, any talk of the so-called 'Islamic bomb' was vehemently denied by Pakistan.

Soon after the nuclearization of South Asia, it became clear that war was now unthinkable. With that backdrop, Prime Minister Vajpayee decided to give peace another chance. It speaks to his strategic and long-term vision that he decided to reach out to Pakistan for a hand of friendship. His initiative was fully reciprocated by Nawaz Sharif, who had also established his reputation as a leader who wished to see friendly relations with India as well as other neighbours. Vajpayee travelled by bus from Amritsar to Lahore and was warmly welcomed at Wagah-Attari border. The two leaders met in Lahore and signed the Lahore Declaration, a roadmap for bringing the two countries onto the path of peaceful coexistence. The Lahore peace process of February 1999 was a rare opportunity where both leaders, Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif, demonstrated their conviction that a friendly and cooperative relationship was the best way forward for the two countries. There were sceptics on the India side who did not want Vajpayee to take the bus trip from Amritsar to Lahore, trying to be tactically smart but strategically myopic. This was no different on the Pakistan side.

Around the same time, a covert military manoeuvre had been planned in the Kargil heights, code named Operation Koh Paima. The military operation secured a number of posts across the LoC to interdict Srinagar-Leh Road and regain the Kargil heights that were originally part of Pakistan-held Kashmir but were occupied by India just before the 1965 war. From a military perspective, this was a good tactical manoeuvre, which was also a rebuttal to India's occupation of Chorbat La in 1972, Siachen in 1984, and Qamar in 1988 – all three in violation of the 1972 Simla agreement. General Musharraf wrote in his book that this was intended to stop any further ingressions by India and to bring the Kashmir dispute into limelight. However, the timing of the Kargil crisis left much to be desired. This initiative jeopardized the Lahore peace process which would have benefitted Pakistan as well as India.

Later, a controversy erupted over whether the political leadership had known about the military operation in Kargil. General Musharraf contended in his book that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was briefed about this initiative on 29 January, 5 February, 12 March, and 17 May.[53] Nasim Zehra describes the first three briefings as "deceptive", because no details of Operation Koh-Paima were given.[54] Even in the 17 May briefing, she writes, there was no mention of Pakistani troops crossing the LoC.[55] She explains that the main thrust of the 17 May briefing was to inform the elected leadership of the army's achievements along and across the LoC.[56] Sartaj Aziz in his book also took the position that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had not known the full details of the Kargil operation.[57] Regardless of this debate, there are two dilemmas that Pakistan faced in the wake of the Kargil crisis, which Abdul Sattar has outlined in his book: "If it [Pakistan] did not act, India could claim to have achieved a final solution; if it did, it incurred the risk of war. Similarly placed were the Kashmiri people: if they did not struggle for freedom, they were considered to have acquiesced in India's illegal annexation; if they did, they were subjected to savage repression, killings, torture, and other excesses no human being should have to suffer in a civilized world."[58]

The crisis over Kargil was defused by the meeting of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif with US President Clinton in Washington on 4 July 1999, in which it was agreed that the Line of Control in Kashmir would be respected by both parties in accordance with the 1972 Simla Agreement. During these talks, President Clinton was in constant touch with Prime Minister Vajpayee. The statement of 4 July was generally not received well in Pakistan. As one leading Pakistani journalist framed it, the Kargil operation was a "prelude to the military coup" that General Musharraf pulled a few months later.[59]

In early 1999, the National Democratic Alliance, a Vajpayee-led governing coalition of several parties, lost its majority in the parliament. In fresh elections, Vajpayee's BJP secured a larger presence in Lok Sabha. Vajpayee resumed his second term as the prime minister of India. In Pakistan, on the other hand, the democratic process was disrupted once again, this time by General Musharraf, who pulled a military coup against the elected government of Nawaz Sharif in October 1999. India and Pakistan entered the 21st Century with bilateral relations scarred by the Kargil war and a military government in Pakistan. On the economic front, both countries were moving in the same direction but with different speeds. Vajpayee continued the economic policies set out by Narasimha Rao a decade earlier, thus ensuring continuity of economic vision. In Pakistan, as mentioned earlier, the policies for economic liberalization that were started in 1990 could not be continued because of unstable politics throughout the 1990s, culminating in yet another military rule.

General Musharraf's first two years were consumed by legitimacy issues, as he had removed a democratically elected prime minister. His support to the ultra-conservative, anti-American Taliban regime had isolated him in the international community as well. Keen to expand his diplomatic choices, General Musharraf reached out to the Indian government. Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf met in Agra in July 2001 (A month earlier, Musharraf had taken over as the president of Pakistan after the resignation of Rafiq Tarar). The meeting was held under an air of hope, and the two leaders

came close to an agreement. A draft joint document was worked out, but the Indian side had second thoughts and started backtracking on the agreed draft. India's Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani is widely believed to have sabotaged the Agra summit. He himself admitted to this, arguing that Musharraf's public conversation with Indian editors had "blasted India's position" on cross-border terrorism and Kashmir.[60] Another view is that India could not accept a new framework for bilateral relationship that omitted references to Simla Agreement or Lahore Declaration.[61]

Jaswant Singh, who was the external affairs minister at that time, has recorded two reasons in his book, 'India at risk': one, that General Musharraf's interaction with the editors on 16 July was seen in India as a kind of "grandstanding" that aroused great "indignation" through the country, because General Musharraf came across as "too belligerent;" and two, that the collective view of the relevant Indian Cabinet colleagues was that "without a sufficient and clear emphasis on terrorism" there could not be any movement on issues that were of concern or priority to Pakistan.[62] Abdul Sattar, who was Pakistan's foreign minister, has noted in his book that there was "little new" in what President Musharraf had said to the editors and he had expressed the same view many times previously.[63] Whatever the Indian assessment, another opportunity for peace was lost, primarily because one side perceived the press conference of the other as some "grandstanding". As in the years before, tactical considerations trumped strategic interests.

Then came 9/11, the eleventh day of September 2001, when terrorists struck the world trade centre's twin towers in New York as well as the Pentagon building in Washington DC. Global priorities were hurriedly rearranged, with transnational terrorism rising to the top of the list. The US held Osama bin Laden and his terrorist organization Al Qaeda (AQ) responsible for the terrorist attacks on 9/11. Afghanistan's Taliban regime came under sharper focus because of the refuge it had provided to Al Qaeda. The US attacked Afghanistan in November 2001 and arm-twisted the Musharraf government to join

the US-led Global War on Terror. Pakistan eventually joined this war, and launched an extensive manhunt to apprehend AQ operatives. Hundreds of thousands of troops were deployed on the western front to interdict movement of militants. Musharraf also provided a base to the US inside Pakistan. General Musharraf justified his decision by arguing in his book that India had offered its bases to the US, and if Pakistan had not stepped in, India could have strengthened its position viz Kashmir, and that his decision helped protect Pakistan's strategic assets and economic infrastructure.[64] In retrospect, while Pakistan's decision to join the US-led war on terror may have delivered economic and security assistance and raised the country's profile in the international arena, it also had serious implications, as the adverse effects of the war started impacting Pakistan. The US carried out relentless bombings in Afghanistan, particularly in the Tora Bora mountains, which led some of the militants to cross over to the tribal areas of Pakistan, pulling the country deeper into the war against terrorism. Interestingly, Musharraf, who was once criticized by the West, was now heaped with praise by all Western countries. Since Pakistan had now deployed the bulk of its troops on the western frontier, it was getting concerned about the exposure on its eastern border. Musharraf was, therefore, getting increasingly inclined to lowering tensions with India.

For its part, India, too, quickly adjusted its priorities to the post-9/11 world. One, it started projecting itself as a fellow victim of the so-called Islamist terrorism. Two, it used the global consensus against terrorism to portray the freedom struggle in Indian-Occupied Kashmir as terrorism perpetrated by Pakistan-based militants. An attack on the state legislative assembly building in Srinagar in October 2001, followed by another one on the Indian parliament building in Delhi two months later, were used by India to argue that it was a victim of cross-border terrorism. It is not clear how the militants broke through tight security perimeters around these important facilities, nor is it clear why the perpetrators could never be found, though one person, Afzal Guru, was hanged years later to satisfy the collective

conscience of society. Either way, India used these terrorist attacks to project itself as a victim of terrorism perpetrated by militants based in Pakistan. These events also provided India an excuse to intensify its propaganda that the Kashmiri freedom struggle was nothing but cross-border terrorism sponsored by Pakistan-based militant groups.

In reaction to the attack on the Indian parliament, India mobilized thousands of its troops to the Line of Control and border with Pakistan. The latter, too, responded with its own troops. For ten months in 2001-2, both sides faced the harrowing prospect of a war. A realization sank in on how dangerous it would be to ignite a war, which could plausibly escalate to a nuclear level. Vajpayee decided to offer a hand of friendship to Pakistan and in April 2003, he announced in his public address in Srinagar that India was willing to talk to Pakistan for the resolution of all issues. He further announced that he was ready to resolve the Kashmir issue on the basis of *insaniyat, jamhooriyat, and kashmiriyat*. His speech was positively received in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir and Pakistan. A few months later, Pakistan decided to reciprocate as it announced in September that the country was ready for a ceasefire at the LoC. This was a win-win for all sides. Pakistan could now focus more on the western frontier, which was welcomed by the US, while India came to appreciate the dividends of peace by adherence to ceasefire. After some back channel work and urging of the US and UK, India agreed to attend the SAARC summit in Islamabad in January 2004. At the suggestion of Pakistan, a sideline meeting was held between Musharraf and Vajpayee. Conscious of the need to reduce tensions on the eastern front, President Musharraf agreed to give a commitment that Pakistan would "not permit any territory under Pakistan's control to be used to support terrorism in any manner".[65] The Indian side welcomed this commitment's reflection in the joint statement of 6 January 2004, and agreed to resume the composite dialogue to discuss all issues of bilateral interest and concern, including Jammu and Kashmir. In retrospect, Prime Minister Vajpayee seems to have been convinced of the need to normalize relations with Pakistan, perhaps out of a larger

consideration that this would help make India a regional power, unobstructed by its neighbours. For President Musharraf, this may have started as a necessary tactical adjustment to ward off a two-front situation, but it morphed into a welcome opportunity to resolve the Kashmir dispute through more innovative ways. The peace process expanded quickly to include numerable areas of cooperation, and at one time, it seemed irreversible.

In the 2004 elections in India, BJP lost the government to an alliance led by the Congress party. The peace process with Pakistan that was initiated by Prime Minister Vajpayee in January 2004 was continued by the Congress government led by Dr. Manmohan Singh. By 2007, the peace process had picked up considerable momentum. Both sides were satisfied that the issues of their respective concern were being discussed in a comprehensive agenda that spanned eight segments of the dialogue. The progress was tangible and it appeared at times that the dialogue was now irreversible. However, there was a lingering concern on the Pakistani side that while both countries were making progress in friendly exchanges and bilateral trade, not much could be achieved to resolve the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir. As Kashmir was central to Pakistan's stance, the leadership of the time decided to deal with the subject in a back-channel format away from the media glare. The designated envoys for the back-channel contacts held dozens of meetings, mostly in neutral venues, to build a plausible solution for the Kashmir dispute around four points that Musharraf had suggested. This compromise solution, which came to be known as the four-point formula, included elements that both sides could plausibly accept. The formula was to be formalized during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's proposed visit to Pakistan in the Fall of 2007. However, in the Spring of 2007, Musharraf's sacking of the chief justice of the supreme court sparked a public protest that lingered on for months and weakened Musharraf's hold on power. A desperate Musharraf imposed an emergency in November. Amidst this chaotic environment in Pakistan, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's proposed but unannounced visit was called off. That was the end of

the most serious effort to resolve the Kashmir dispute because for the rest of his time in power, Musharraf's influence and hold on political office was waning.

During the composite dialogue, the two countries also came close to resolving another dispute over a creek flowing into the Arabian Sea, called Sir Creek. This issue was easily solvable as not much was at stake in terms of the territory involved in the Creek, and a resolution would have made available hundreds of miles of exclusive economic zone in Arabian Sea to both states for exploration. Yet, India refused to accept the historically established green line on the eastern edge of the creek as the border, and preferred instead to keep the issue lingering. There were also attempts to revive the understanding on the Siachen dispute that the prime ministers of the two countries had reached in 1989. However, no progress could be made for the reasons discussed in Chapter 8 in detail.

During the years 2006 to 2008, both countries faced a spate of terrorism. In India, out of many terrorist incidents, the most lethal attacks occurred in 2006, which included three synchronized terrorist attacks in Varanasi in March killing 28; bombings in Mumbai trains in July killing 209; and Malegaon bombings in Maharashtra with 40 casualties in September. In February 2007, the Samjhauta Express explosions killed 68 in Haryana while bombings in Hyderabad killed 42 in August. In May 2008, Jaipur suffered nine bomb blasts killing 71, and in July, there were 17 serial bomb blasts in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, killing 56. In September, five bomb blasts hit Delhi markets killing 21, and bombings in Maharashtra killed 10. These and many other terrorist incidents brought tremendous pressure on the Indian government to act and deal with the issue. The situation in Pakistan was much worse. In 2006, 657 incidents were recorded having killed 907; in 2007, 1,515 terrorist attacks killed 3,448, while the year 2008 witnessed 2,148 terrorist attacks with 2,267 casualties. These included some massive blows like the October 2007 attack on the convoy of Benazir Bhutto when she returned to the country. Although she survived that attack, she lost her life in a major attack at a rally in

Rawalpindi. While both countries suffered from the menace of terrorism, the reactions offered by them presented a contrast. The tendency in India was to immediately blame Pakistan, though later many of the above-mentioned attacks in India were found to have been perpetrated by the internal elements in India, as discussed in detail in Chapter 4. For its part, Pakistan would refrain from blaming India until investigations had been completed. This was a conscious policy decision by Pakistan in the larger interest of peaceful relations with India.

With this backdrop of terrorist incidents, general elections were held in Pakistan in February 2008, and the Pakistan Peoples' Party assumed power. The new government in Pakistan wanted to engage with India with renewed enthusiasm. Dr. Manmohan Singh's government, which had survived its first vote of no confidence on 22 July 2008, also reciprocated. Both sides wanted to steer the composite dialogue towards some achievable results, particularly in the domains of trade, people to people contacts, and Kashmir related CBMs. However, India promptly decided to suspend the dialogue after the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008. The two prime ministers met in July 2009 on the sidelines of the summit meeting of Non-Alignment Movement in Sharm El Sheikh, and agreed to cooperate with each other to deal with the threat of terrorism. While the Indian prime minister stressed the need to bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks to justice, the Pakistani prime minister mentioned that Pakistan has some information on threats in Balochistan and other areas.

The two countries resumed the dialogue in February 2010, covering all eight segments of the composite dialogue as well as on the cross-LoC confidence building measures (CBMs), which had been put in place in 2008. Notable progress was made during the following year for resumption of bilateral trade. A dedicated trade gate was opened on Wagah-Attari border and India created an integrated check post in Attari to facilitate trade and travel. Pakistan also decided to expand bilateral trade by doing away with the restricted positive list of tradeable items and allow trade in all items except a negative list.

Pakistan also decided to consider granting non-discriminatory market access to India to correspond with India's MFN status to Pakistan. Achievable proposals like the one to open the Munabao-Khokhrapar railway crossing point for trade were also made during this time. Despite this progress, there were lingering concerns in India regarding terrorism, and in Pakistan on the lack of progress and intent in resolving the Kashmir dispute. Talks came to a halt in early 2013 following intense firing at the line of control.

Around this time, global geopolitics was rapidly evolving. The US decided to pivot its focus towards Asia. Under this strategy, India became its preferred partner. The US signed a civil nuclear deal with India in 2005 and facilitated a waiver from Nuclear Suppliers Group for India in 2008 to enable it to engage in nuclear commerce. Ironically, it was India's act of nuclear testing in 1974 which had become a catalyst for the formation of the NSG, and it was the same NSG that was now being obliged to grant a waiver to India. These developments led Pakistan to complain that the US was following double standards on its rhetoric of nuclear non-proliferation. Regardless, the US continued to invest in India's economic, military, and strategic interests in order to prepare it as a counterweight to China. For Pakistan, this approach presented tough choices, and in a way boosted Pakistan's effort to speed up its in-house capacities in the strategic domain as well as in facilitating a deeper partnership with China.

In the 2013 general elections, Nawaz Sharif led his party PML (N) to a resounding victory and became the prime minister of Pakistan for the third time. As per his well-known stance, which was also reflected in the party manifesto, Nawaz Sharif was keen to normalize relations with India. At that time, intense exchanges of fire across LoC had brought the ongoing cooperation to a halt. The prime ministers of India and Pakistan met in New York in September 2013 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly and agreed to reduce tensions, which had risen due to constant ceasefire violations at the LoC and disruption of the composite dialogue. The American interlocutors had also embraced the Indian narrative because it tallied with their own

demands on Pakistan to stop alleged support to the Haqqani network, a militant organization founded by Jalaluddin Haqqani in Afghanistan.

The Modi Era

In the April-May 2014 elections for Lok Sabha, the BJP cruised to victory, and formed a government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who invited South Asian leaders to join his inauguration. This was perceived as a signal of his intent to follow a region-first approach. There was some debate in Pakistan regarding whether the prime minister should attend. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had no such apprehensions, and readily accepted the invitation, as he wanted to use the occasion to resume the peace process. On the sidelines of the inauguration event, the two prime ministers met and decided to mark a new beginning in bilateral relations. A few months later, the two met again on the sidelines of the SAARC Summit in Kathmandu. Two draft agreements were presented at the summit: the SAARC motor vehicles agreement and the SAARC railways agreement. These agreements were meant to allow free movement of vehicles and railways across borders in South Asia and help speed up economic integration of South Asia. However, Pakistan declined to sign the agreements, as it had security concerns and was also not ready with customs, police and other infrastructure that was required for this purpose. The Indian leadership was put off by this, and no further contacts took place during the year.

Since Nawaz Sharif was keen to normalize relations with India, he approached Modi on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Ufa, Russia in July 2015, and the two had a constructive meeting. The Indian side was ready to issue a joint statement but was not willing to include a clear reference to the Kashmir dispute, citing that it was covered under the term outstanding issues. The deadlock persisted on the draft joint statement until it was time for the delegations to depart

from Ufa. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif ultimately decided to give concession and move forward with the language as proposed, and the joint statement was adopted. Sharif's perspective was that if the talks ended without a joint statement which had outlined further steps to normalize relations, then there would be no talks on Kashmir either. He reasoned that if Pakistan gave some concessions on this topic and allowed for the adoption of the joint statement, then the peace process would be resumed, including a dedicated segment on the Kashmir issue. This is exactly how the scenario played out. This was a remarkable display of strategic thinking – a tactical concession for a larger strategic gain. But at home, he was criticized severely, as if he had compromised on Pakistan's position on the Kashmir dispute.

In any case, as guided by the joint statement, the national security advisors and foreign secretaries of the two sides met in Bangkok to discuss the way forward. A short joint statement was adopted, this time mentioning Kashmir, but not the Mumbai terrorist attack. This partially helped mollify the concerns of those who were uncertain of Sharif's initiatives for friendly relations with India. India, too, had its own share of hardliners who would obstruct every effort to move towards peaceful relations with Pakistan. Nevertheless, the process gathered momentum, and in December 2015, India's external affairs minister came to Islamabad for the Heart of Asia meeting and on its sidelines agreed to resume the composite dialogue, which was renamed, at India's request, as the comprehensive bilateral dialogue, with all eight areas of discussion, including one segment on Jammu and Kashmir.

To give further boost to the peace efforts, Prime Minister Modi paid an unscheduled and surprise visit to Lahore on 25 December to attend the wedding of the granddaughter of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. A brief meeting took place in Raiwind, near Lahore, which was intended to accord further momentum to the anticipated peace process that was to start on 15 January 2016 with a meeting of the foreign secretaries of the two countries. This author was present in the meeting, and found the interactions to be cordial and constructive. Both sides pledged to

work together to eliminate war, fight against poverty, and revive SAARC.[66] Regrettably, only six days later, on the New Year eve of 2016, some militants attacked a station of the Indian air force in Pathankot. India alleged that this was perpetrated by Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). Nawaz Sharif held a meeting of Pakistan's national security committee and issued a statement that indicated a resolve to cooperate with the Indian side in apprehending the culprits. This time, the Indian side also decided to provide time for investigations. This was a departure from the earlier Indian practice of blaming Pakistan within hours of any terrorist incident in Indian-Occupied Kashmir or mainland India. Pakistan's intelligence team visited the site of the attack, but the investigations did not make much progress. By April 2016, India decided to stop any peace moves towards Pakistan, and cut off all avenues of interaction with Pakistan. In July, India announced that it would not attend the SAARC summit that was to take place in Islamabad in November, and even mobilized other SAARC members to announce that they would also not join the summit in Pakistan.

From 2016 onwards, relations spiralled downwards at an unprecedented pace, and India began to pursue a no-contact policy with Pakistan. To make matters worse, India ratcheted up its high-handedness in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Burhan Wani, a young freedom fighter, was killed in July by Indian forces. The killing of Wani sparked further protests by Kashmiris in Indian-Occupied Kashmir, leading to another crackdown by Indian forces. Soon thereafter in September, an Indian army base in Uri came under attack by militants. There were suggestions in Pakistan that this could be a false flag operation, firstly to counter the anticipated statement of the prime minister of Pakistan in the UN General Assembly, which was to focus on Kashmir, and secondly, to create a justification for surgical strikes across the LoC, as India claimed that militants based in Pakistan were carrying out attacks from bases in Azad Kashmir. Pakistan rejected these claims as an "illusion."[67] The Pakistani stance was firm in stating that there were no terrorist camps on the Pakistani

side of LoC, and that the Indian action was probably a despatch of some troops across the LoC as a limited show of force to satisfy its own domestic audience. There were reports of the Pakistani side having also retaliated to Indian moves across the LoC. The Indian commentators started speculating that these strikes have created a 'new normal' in India-Pakistan relations.[68] Once again in this troubled relationship, a peace process stitched together through a year-long effort to establish friendly relations was torn apart within months.

Pakistan entered another phase of political instability when Nawaz Sharif was removed from power in 2017 by a controversial judgement on the Panama scandal (the judgement was overturned some years later). Shahid Khaqan Abbasi took over as the prime minister for the remaining term. Meanwhile, tensions remained high at the LoC. The Indian army bombed Pakistani check posts in Nowshera along the LoC claiming that it was trying to prevent infiltration of terrorists. The violence across LoC continued well into 2018 until both sides agreed in May to implement the 2003 understanding on cross-LoC ceasefire. The UN office of high commissioner for human rights issued a UN report in June detailing human rights abuses committed in Indian-Occupied Kashmir. A sequel of this report came out in 2019. Meanwhile, Imran Khan's party, Tehreek-e-Insaf came to power in Pakistan after a general election held in 2018. As a peace gesture, Pakistan had agreed to build a corridor to enable Indian pilgrims to travel visa-free to the gurdwara in Kartarpur, the final resting place of Guru Nanak Dev. The corridor was opened in November 2019 on the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev.

The year 2019 was eventful for several reasons. On 14 February, a suicide bombing in the Pulwama city of the Indian-Occupied Kashmir killed 40 members of the Central Reserve Police Force. Alleging that this attack was committed by JeM, India retaliated by withdrawing MFN status and imposing 200% tariffs on all imports from Pakistan. Days later, on 26 February, India carried out a surgical strike in Balakot, claiming that it was targeting some JeM's training camp. The bombs fell in an empty area as there was no such training camp.

However, since this was an attack on the mainland, the Pakistani military retaliated forcefully on 27 February, shooting down two Indian aircraft, which had intruded into Pakistani side, and capturing an Indian fighter pilot, Abhinandan. India on its part made an unverified claim to have shot down a Pakistani F-16.[69] The information from the US defence officials and the manufacturers of F-16 contradicted the Indian claim. To defuse tensions and as a goodwill gesture, Pakistan released the captured pilot shortly thereafter. However, instead of appreciating the gesture, India claimed that Pakistan had done so under pressure from the US or for fear of Indian retaliation. With the relationship having hit a new low, cross-LoC firing continued in subsequent months. That the two nuclear armed neighbours were often embroiled in high-risk military confrontations became a matter of growing international concern.

The downturn in relations was all happening at a time when significant changes were occurring on the world stage. By the time Donald Trump came to power in January 2017, right wing ideals and tendencies were on the upswing in the United States. In December 2017, the National Security Strategy of the US was announced, and the major power strategic competition with China and Russia emerged as America's top priority. The world order that was created in 1945 at the end of the Second World War was now demonstrably in disarray. The forces of unilateralism were ascendent, undermining the principles of inter-state relations encapsulated in the UN Charter. Multilateralism was on the retreat, and the UN receded into the background as far as issues of peace and security were concerned. With the invasion of Iraq by the US in 2003, the concept of pre-emptive strikes had already been introduced in world affairs. In Afghanistan, where the US had launched a retributive attack in 2001 to punish Al Qaeda, a stalemate persisted for years before the US decided to start negotiations with the Taliban which eventually culminated in the February 2020 agreement. These developments were also affecting dynamics in South Asia.

In the May 2019 elections, the Modi-led BJP was re-elected to power. Soon thereafter, in August 2019, the Modi government decided to

abrogate Article 370 of Indian constitution, which had given Jammu and Kashmir a special status, and also Article 35A, which allowed non-Kashmiris to buy property in Kashmir and attain voting rights. It also dissolved the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir and converted the state into two union territories: Jammu & Kashmir; and Ladakh. Pakistan reacted by voicing complete solidarity with the Kashmiris, and also took some direct steps in downgrading its relationship with India, including the withdrawal of its high commissioner from New Delhi, and the suspension of bilateral trade. Following the May 2020 border confrontation with China in the Galwan Valley, India reached out to Pakistan's military for reaffirming ceasefire at the LoC, ostensibly to avoid a two-front situation. Pakistan responded positively, and in February 2021, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to maintain ceasefire along the LoC. The timing of this reaffirmation of the ceasefire generated some debate. While there was a criticism that Pakistan lost an opportunity to create a two-front situation for India, some welcomed the Pakistani decision as a strategic imperative of peace with India.

In his second term, Prime Minister Modi felt more confident to mount a vigorous campaign to create a Hindu Rashtra,[70] with a view to reviving the Hindu glory of India. He himself had been trained as a *pracharak* or worker of the RSS, and believed in the Hindutva ideology. Given that India is a Hindu-majority state, this was of little concern to the world. However, this ambition placed Indian minorities, particularly Muslims, in harm's way. Muslim institutions and icons, especially mosques, were at the risk of demolition on the grounds that these were allegedly built on the places where once Hindu temples stood. Later, in a ceremony widely televised, Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the newly constructed Ram Temple in Ayodhya at the site where once the centuries old Babri Masjid stood. The Congress and other parties, which upheld the principles of secularism and pluralism, resisted the Modi government's Hindutva ambition. The annual report of the US State Department on religious freedom for 2021 also criticized India for restricting religious freedom to

Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindu Dalits, and other minorities living in India.[71] Cow vigilantism and mob lynching of Muslims scared not just Muslims, but also other minorities. Under Prime Minister Modi, India was moving away from the path of a secular democracy towards a Hindu nationalist state. The Citizenship Act was amended, which was widely criticized as discriminatory towards Muslims.[72] Towards the end of Modi's second term, a few other fault lines also began to emerge in Indian polity, including in particular the concerns of the five southern states, which alleged that their revenues were being used to support the less efficient northern states. There was also a prolonged restiveness of farmers. Besides these developments, America's continued tilt towards India and its desire to make India a net security provider[73] in South Asia created a sense of alarm for Pakistan and others in the region.

All this while, Pakistan continued to face political instability. The Imran Khan government failed to survive a no-confidence vote in April 2022, and a coalition government led by Shahbaz Sharif took power amidst a weakening economy. In the general elections of February 2024, Shahbaz Sharif returned to power as the head of a coalition government. His foreign minister indicated the possibility of reopening India-Pakistan trade, at least in those items which Pakistan was importing from far off lands. However, the Indian side did not respond to these signals.

In the May 2024 elections, the Modi-led BJP won an electoral victory, but with a reduced majority. As compared to the 2019 elections, where BJP had won 303 out of 543 seats of Lok Sabha, BJP won only 240 seats, contrary to its expectation reflected in its slogan '*ab ki bar, char so par*' (this time we would cross 400 seats). It was obliged to form a government with two partners in the National Democratic Alliance. The disappointment arising out of the decline of BJP's electoral sweep, was quite discernible. The election results initially generated the impression that the Hindutva-driven agenda had not been accepted by India's mainstream public opinion, giving some solace to India's minorities, who were quite concerned about a two-thirds majority that

the Modi regime was targeting. However, the key cabinet portfolios of the new coalition government led by BJP did not change. It was clear that Modi's third term will also not see any change in foreign policy, particularly regarding Pakistan. When Pakistan hosted the heads-of-government conference of Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Islamabad in October, the Indian external affairs minister attended the conference, though he ensured that there was no bilateral meeting with his Pakistani counterpart. Meanwhile, BRICS had expanded to include five more countries and was actively engaging with dozens of partner countries. Pakistan could not join the expanded BRICS owing primarily to opposition from India. In early 2025, there was a faint opportunity for the Indian cricket team to visit Pakistan for the Champions trophy that Pakistan was hosting. However, that did not come to be, as the Indian team was not allowed to visit Pakistan. It became evident that the third term of the Modi government would continue the policy of hostility-laced disconnect with Pakistan.

It was when some tourists came under attack in Pahalgam in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir in April 2025 that the situation dramatically turned for the worse. As usual, India instantly blamed Pakistan for the attack, without providing any evidence. It also promptly suspended the Indus Waters Treaty, which it later used to manipulate water flows towards Pakistan by de-silting two of its reservoirs and then filling them. At dawn on the 7th of May, India fired off a number of Brahmos missiles towards several locations in Pakistan, targeting mosques and allied schools, killing 31 civilians. Pakistan's air force planes scrambled rapidly and downed five Indian aircraft, including the French-made Rafale. The next day on the 8th of May, India launched multiple armed drones towards various Pakistani cities, which too were effectively neutralized by Pakistan. With fears of an all-out war spiking, Indian forces further attacked three bases of the Pakistan air force. Pakistan, which until then was acting with restraint and trying to resolve matters through diplomacy, retaliated with its own strikes

across a wide range of military targets, particularly those from which attacks against Pakistan had been mounted.

Pakistan's emphatic counter attack appeared to have taken India by surprise, and within hours of Pakistan's response, the Indian side requested the US to broker a ceasefire. President Trump announced the ceasefire, while Secretary Rubio tweeted that both sides would meet in a neutral venue. Trump further announced that he was ready to mediate on the Kashmir dispute. All this created a rather embarrassing situation for the Indian government, which had maintained all along that it would not accept third party mediation. It even continued to deny on several occasions that the US had brokered the ceasefire. The Indian media, which had sprung into hyper-nationalist overdrive and remained so throughout the crisis, now faced questions internationally regarding its own credibility. Prime Minister Modi addressed the nation that evening and announced that its military operation was to continue and that only a temporary pause in fighting had been agreed.

What hurt the Indian narrative considerably and did not allow it to prevail in Western media was that India had not provided any evidence of Pakistan's involvement in the Pahalgam incident. Criticism since then grew steadily within India against the Pakistan policy of Prime Minister Modi. On the other hand, Pakistan was praised by many political and defense analysts for having fought this round of confrontation with remarkable poise and an impressive sense of coordination amongst various arms of the government. Regardless, the dangerous episode had caused the bilateral relationship to hit an all-time low. More details about the impact of the Indian military operation 'Sindoor' and Pakistan's response operation 'Banyanum Marsoos' are discussed in Chapter 6.

India's repeated aggressions against Pakistan, particularly the recent ones in February 2019 and May 2025, have brought mutual mistrust

to an all-time low. As was evidenced by the May 2025 confrontation, Pakistan has the capability to respond effectively to any military adventure by India. As it is, wars rarely resolve issues. India's policy to fight full-fledged conventional wars below the nuclear overhang is a high-risk strategy that can land both countries in an unmitigated disaster one day. Modi's new doctrine that India alone would decide to retaliate against terrorists and their backers will also not work because he knows well that many of these attacks, when investigated, have had internal Indian hands. Moreover, India must also accept that the world no longer blindly accepts the Indian allegations of cross-border terrorism without any evidence. And of late the people of India and the world at large have learned that terrorism was being perpetrated by Indian state operatives in Pakistan and other countries. The world also recognizes that Pakistan has fought against transnational terrorism with courage and perseverance, and is continuing to take stern actions against anyone suspected of committing terrorism anywhere.

India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty has generated a message of grave hostility towards the people of Pakistan, and is being viewed as an act of war and an assault on Pakistan's food and water security. The government of Pakistan has made it clear that this would never be acceptable to Pakistan, considering the direct impact it has on people and vulnerable populations. It would therefore be in the mutual interest of both countries to fully restore the Treaty and resolve related issues peacefully because any attempts to stop or divert rivers allocated to Pakistan would certainly lead towards a devastating conflict. A better and constructive option is to engage in talks to address the water-related issues that have come up over the years and negotiate a way out. The two countries must also recognize that both are highly vulnerable to the forces of climate change. Environmental disasters borne out of climate change do not see borders, and therefore both India and Pakistan would be wise to join hands to mitigate the adverse impacts arising out of the melting of glaciers due to rising temperatures, extreme weather events, sea-level

rise, and environmental degradation taking a toll on ecosystems and biodiversity. These are gravely serious threats to the people of both countries, and spending time, resources, and energy on joint actions against such challenges that imperil the very existence of people inhabiting this subcontinent would be a far more productive exercise.

Chapter 2 –The Leadership Factor

There is no denying the fact that leaders play a pivotal role in shaping the political destiny of a nation. Leaders derive their power from political structures or institutions that reflect the priority needs and aspirations of the nation. These political structures are either created by them, or they simply utilize the existing ones. A successful leader is one who aligns with what the nation aspires to, articulates a clear vision, chalks out a strategy, builds required coalitions, and then leads the movement to achieve the vision with determination and perseverance. In both India and Pakistan, there have emerged leaders who not only appreciated the weight of history, but also understood the contours of their nation's key interests. Through a blend of personal charisma, ethical conviction, ethos, and clarity of purpose, some leaders have been able to break the status quo and shape public discourse towards the desired goal of peaceful coexistence.

Many of the leaders of Pakistan and India have led from the front and prioritized peace over conflict. However, the capabilities of such leaders were frequently constrained by diverse voices from within their coalitions. It is unfortunate that there never was a moment of broader consensus amongst the leaders, institutions and civil society of both countries to secure durable peace. In the absence of such consensus, mutual distrust and grievances prevented the leadership of both sides from steering the two nations towards a peaceful and

prosperous future for both countries. Nevertheless, the role that each leader played is important and merits honest reflection, for better or for worse.

Early Choices, Lasting Impact

The primary responsibility of leaving behind a conflictual relationship between India and Pakistan rests with the British, who as the incumbent rulers with all levers of power at their disposal, could have ensured a smooth partition, rather than allow for the death and displacement of millions. It started with Lord Mountbatten, who was handed the responsibility to oversee the final year of the British Raj in India. He arrived in India in March 1947 following the announcement by Prime Minister Attlee that the British would leave India by June 1948. Mountbatten held talks with Indian leaders and concluded that India could not be kept united. Azad, however, is of the view that Mountbatten spent his time and effort "to impress on both the Congress and the Muslim League the inevitability of Pakistan."[74] Mountbatten also decided to advance the date of departure of the British from India to August 1947, which turned out to be a fatal mistake and cost both countries millions of lives. This hasty departure gave the leadership of INC and AIML only a few months to manage the partition of a large subcontinent. Consequently, the subcontinent witnessed unprecedented population swaps, with millions losing their lives. Winston Churchill termed it a hurried scuttle and a 'shameful flight', a term that Stanley Wolpert used for the title of his book that describes the last years of the British empire in India. Prime Minister Attlee, too, realized the "dreadful mistake" he had made by relying on Mountbatten's "inept judgment" to accelerate the timetable of Britain's withdrawal from South Asia.

Alastair Lamb believes that the Mountbatten plan adopted in May 1947 brought about a partition of British India "so drastic and so rapid that the resulting wounds in the subcontinent still fester."[75] He is

convinced that the responsibility for this grave human tragedy lay on Mountbatten, whose decision for a hasty withdrawal had tragic consequences of the partition of Punjab, the Punjabi holocaust,[76] in which millions of people were displaced and killed. Lamb's argument was that less haste could have generated less acrimony between Muslim and Hindus/Sikhs, which in turn cast a dark shadow on the subsequent course of Indo-Pakistani relations. H.M. Seervai, a noted Indian jurist and constitutional expert, has documented how Mountbatten's "suppression" of the Punjab Award was a "great betrayal", as he delayed its publication and concealed it from the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League, which increased the risk of disorder. Further, he went back on his "complete assurance" to Azad that once partition was accepted, there would be no bloodshed or riots, as he would call in the army and use tanks and aircraft if necessary.[77] A measured pace of British withdrawal could have reduced the scale of atrocities and the newly created Dominions could have had a better grip on developments within their respective domains.[78]

Mountbatten's "hyperactive passion" for speed led not only to refugee chaos, loot and slaughter, but also an "ever-escalating war over Kashmir." Akhund shares a similar assessment in his memoir that when a definitive history of the events of 1947 is written, Mountbatten would be held responsible for the chaos and bloodshed that accompanied the partition.[79] In Ispahani's view, Mountbatten mishandled the partition process, particularly by influencing the Radcliffe award to give India land access to Kashmir and thus sowing the seeds of a conflict that has cast a long dark shadow on relations between India and Pakistan ever since.[80] Some would even argue that Mountbatten's decision to accelerate the partition of British India was intended to promote British and American geopolitical interests. Wolpert believes that Kashmir's Himalayan Valley would remain a bitter legacy of Great Britain's hasty, shameful flight.[81]

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who is fondly remembered by millions as Mahatma Gandhi, was a nationalist Indian leader, whose

emphasis on nonviolence, empathy for the poor, and protection of civil rights defined his legacy of resistance against British rule. Gandhi envisioned independent India to be a united, secular, and pluralistic state. Gandhi did not agree with the concept of Indian Muslim nationalism or the partition of British India to create a separate state for Muslims of India. He was also deeply anguished by communal violence that accompanied the partition. Azad writes in detail how grieved he felt when Muslims were subjected to murder and arson, and how he had started his fast till peace was restored.[82] However, Gandhi was probably the only Indian leader of the time who graciously accepted Pakistan once it had been created and even pushed the Indian government to give Pakistan its financial and other dues. He paid a heavy price for this, because an RSS devotee Nathuram Godse assassinated him. Jinnah expressed condolences on Gandhi's death, paying tribute and referring to him as 'one of the greatest men'. Pakistan declared a day of mourning on 31 January 1948 and government offices remained closed that day.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a barrister of great repute, started his political career as an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity, but soon became disillusioned with the Indian National Congress, and started working actively for the political, economic, and cultural rights of Muslims of India. Dr. Sikandar Hayat, in his book 'The Charismatic Leader', examines how prominent scholars assessed Jinnah's role.[83] Some scholars held the view that Pakistan could not have come into being but for Jinnah's leadership. Others felt that Jinnah became the undisputed leader because at that time, there was no other leader of his stature available to lead the Muslims. Some others, like Stanely Wolpert, believe that Jinnah emerged in Muslim politics because Gandhi, Nehru and other Congress leaders adopted an uncompromising attitude towards him. Jaswant Singh, a BJP leader who was not a member of RSS and was known for his intellect, described Jinnah as a pragmatic politician in his 2009 book 'Jinnah: India-Partition-Independence'. The book generated considerable controversy in India, and the BJP disassociated itself with the book.[84]

The indisputable fact is that Jinnah was a legal mind, and waged the Pakistan movement through legal and constitutional methods. Though he was a pragmatic politician, he was never prepared to compromise over his principles.[85]

Jinnah's political narrative was of great appeal to Indian Muslims, particularly the students, the ulama, and the women. Wolpert paid him the ultimate tribute by saying that Jinah not only altered the course of history and modified the map of the world but also created a nation-state. On the other hand, some scholars have faulted Jinnah for not presenting a clear vision of Pakistan before the partition. This view of him is not fair as it does not take into account the fact that the real purpose of Jinnah was to protect political and cultural rights of the Muslims of India. He, therefore, remained flexible on the shape of Pakistan, which was essentially a means to an end. That is why he had accepted the Cabinet Mission plan. On the eve of independence, when communal violence broke out in Punjab and Bengal, Jinnah was deeply saddened. He had opposed the division of these two provinces and his concerns about this division had been vindicated. Some scholars, however, argue that the Punjab and Bengal were divided along communal lines because the whole of India was divided on that basis. It must be understood that Jinnah's version of the partition was based on the minorities staying where they were and acting as a guarantee for respect for minorities by both countries.

While Jinnah continues to enjoy a high esteem amongst the people of Pakistan, who fondly call him the *Quaid-e-Azam* ("Great Leader"), most Indian leaders, however, have often taken a harsh view of his political struggle. American author Stanley Wolpert does not find merit in this criticism. He held Jinnah in high esteem and writes in his book that Jinnah envisioned a liberal, egalitarian and democratic polity governed by law and equal opportunities for all regardless of colour, caste or creed. Jinnah's vision is well-documented in his speech of 11 August 1947 as president of Pakistan's constituent assembly, in which he clearly stated that everyone living in Pakistan would be a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges, and

obligations regardless of the colour, caste or creed. "You are free; you are free to go to your temples; you are free to go to your mosques or any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan.... You may belong to any religion or caste or creed.... We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens of one State...."[86] He echoed similar thoughts in an interview to Reuters correspondent Duncan Cooper on 25 October 1947 when he said that "Minorities belonging to different faiths living in Pakistan or Hindustan do not cease to be citizens of the respective States by virtue of their belonging to a particular faith, religion or race." He added that "Every citizen is expected to be loyal to the State and owe true allegiance to it."[87]

After independence, Jinnah wanted Pakistan to have a foreign policy based on friendliness and goodwill towards all nations of the world.[88] He envisaged a cordial relationship with India, "an association similar to that between the US and Canada."[89] He made this remark in response to a question posed to him by the first US ambassador to Pakistan. Likewise, Jinnah in his congratulatory message to Rajagopalachari on his appointment as the Governor-General of India expressed the hope that under his guidance, "will come real friendship between the two Dominions. It is no less essential to India than to Pakistan."[90] Many from the Muslim gentry wanted to retain homes in India and envisioned normal relations between the two states. Indeed, Jinnah kept his residence in Bombay after the partition and many Pakistanis and Indians thought they would move freely between the two states.[91] Jinnah did not believe that India and Pakistan would enter into open conflict. However, he did not live to see his vision of peaceful coexistence between the two countries implemented. Jinnah's demise so soon after independence was a huge setback for Pakistan. After his passing away, Pakistan suffered a period of sustained political instability. Had the man who led the entire movement constitutionally and legally remained alive for a few more years, Pakistan would have stabilized its democratic polity much sooner.

Liaqat Ali Khan was also a leading figure in the struggle for Pakistan and a prominent companion of Jinnah. In the 1946 coalition government, he served as the finance minister, and after independence became the first prime minister of Pakistan. His major preoccupations were to put in place a state infrastructure, resettle the flood of refugees streaming in from India, secure Pakistan's dues from a reluctant India, and manage the Kashmir war. His foreign policy tilted towards the United States, which at that time had the ability to extend the much-needed economic and military assistance to Pakistan. He coordinated closely with the Indian leadership, particularly Nehru, on a host of issues, including the Liaqat-Nehru pact to protect each other's minorities and create minority commissions. A 1949 agreement was also concluded under his watch to establish a ceasefire line in Kashmir. Internally, he introduced Objectives Resolution in 1949 to assert Pakistan's Islamic moorings. This Resolution embodied principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice as enunciated by Islam.[92] Some scholars believe that this Resolution pushed Pakistan towards becoming an Islamic ideological state and triggered a debate about the role of religion in Pakistan. Unfortunately, Liaqat Ali Khan lost his life to the bullet of an assassin in Rawalpindi in 1951. He was succeeded by six prime ministers in seven years: Khawaja Nazimuddin (1951-53), Mohammad Ali Bogra (1953-55), Chaudhry Mohammad Ali (1955-56), Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy (1956-57), Ibrahim Ismail Chundrigar (1957), and Feroze Khan Noon (1957-58). This acute political instability in the formative phase of Pakistan's life inordinately delayed the formation of a constitution and holding of general elections.

Jawaharlal Nehru is the most prominent Indian name, besides Gandhi, amongst those who played a decisive role in securing India's independence from British rule. He led the INC with unquestioned authority before, during, and after the partition. Under his leadership, the INC won the 1937 provincial elections and formed ministries in several provinces. Later, in 1946, Nehru led the INC-AIML coalition

government, which turned out to be a bitter experience for the two parties. After independence, Nehru remained engaged with Liaqat Ali Khan on a host of bilateral issues, particularly the settlement of refugees who had crossed borders and protection of minorities in both countries. Nehru also worked with Ayub Khan to negotiate and then sign the Indus Waters Treaty in 1960. However, on the Kashmir dispute, which had erupted within months after the partition, Nehru never redeemed the pledges he had made to the people of Kashmir for the UN-administered plebiscite. He used Pakistan's membership of SEATO and CENTO as a pretext to renege on his promise to allow a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir. Alastair Lamb believes that a solution to the Kashmir dispute might have been agreed but for the profound emotional involvement of Nehru with his ancestral land.[93] Nehru was a fertile mind, with considerable grasp of the historical origins of the Indian subcontinent. He contended that the word Hindu means a people and not the followers of a particular religion.[94] Although Nehru was opposed to the RSS philosophy of a Hindu state, he knew that he would be obliged to appease the Hindu-majority to retain power. So, he kept India secular in name, but Hindu in essence. Little did he know that one day India would feverishly move towards becoming a Hindu state under BJP's Narendra Modi.

Vallabhbhai Patel, a conservative, and nationalist Indian leader, was also an active player in the independence movement of India. Based on his experiences of the 1946 coalition government, in which he was the home minister, he had come to realize that partition was inevitable and persuaded Congress leaders to accept this reality. Sardar Patel, according to Azad, can be regarded as the founder of the partition.[95] He was also convinced that the new state of Pakistan would not last and collapse in a short time.[96] He fiercely opposed Jinnah's idea that Punjab and Bengal should not be divided and should be a part of Pakistan being Muslim-majority provinces. After independence, Patel became India's deputy prime minister and home minister and lobbied with and succeeded in getting accession of all princely states to India except Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagadh. It was on Patel's orders

that the Indian army occupied Junagarh. On Hyderabad, a much bigger state that included parts of the present-day Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra, Patel was keen for the Nizam to accede to India. Hyderabad was invaded on 13 September 1947 and occupied by India. Patel also helped found the Indian administrative services. He was generally opposed to releasing financial assets owed to Pakistan for which he was reprimanded by Gandhi. After Gandhi's assassination by an RSS zealot, Patel arrested key RSS leaders and placed a ban on the organization, which was lifted a year later when the RSS leader Golwalkar undertook loyalty to India's Constitution.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a prominent INC leader and a versatile personality, was supportive of Gandhi's non-violent freedom struggle. As a Muslim nationalist, he was keen on Hindu-Muslim unity and opposed the two-nation theory. He was criticized by Muslim leaders for accepting a system that would be dominated by the Hindu-majority. However, he contended that in an undivided India, Muslims would form a sizable minority and could defend their interests better. Keen to see India remaining united as a federation, he proposed that if the constitution of a united India gave maximum autonomy to provinces, "this would eliminate from the minds of Muslims all fears of domination by Hindus."[97] Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his book 'India Wins Freedom' held Lord Mountbatten, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel responsible for the partition of British India. He lamented Nehru's decision to reject the Cabinet Mission Plan.[98] Post- independence, Azad made strenuous efforts to stop communal violence, particularly against Muslims. He was disappointed to see home minister Sardar Patel pay little attention to the murder and arson of Muslims. In his book, Azad writes that "one thing that weighed heavily on Gandhiji's mind was the attitude of Sardar Patel."[99] Azad served as the education minister of India and worked for the education rights of rural poor. He is also credited for setting up Indian institutes of technology that were to play an important role later in modernizing India.

Sikhs were also anti-partition, mainly because that would mean that many of their holy sites would be located within Pakistani territory. Master Tara Singh, a right-wing leader of Akali-Dal Sikhs which had considerable representation in the Punjab Assembly, wanted a separate Sikh nation-state (Sikhistan or Khalistan) within Central Punjab, even though they did not have a clear majority in any one district. When the partition became imminent, the Sikh leaders took a militant, anti-Pakistan line. Tara Singh planned to blow up Pakistan-bound trains and to kill Jinnah.[100] On the eve of the partition, enormous violence and bloodshed ensued in the Punjab, precipitated by all sides, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, which continued well after the two Dominions were created. In later years, a segment of the Sikh community sought to develop positive relations with Pakistan, motivated by the desire to continue an association with their religious sites located in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

The Widening Gulf

Ayub Khan was the commander-in-chief of the Pakistan army for nearly seven years (1951-58) before he took over the reins of power, and then went on to rule the country for over ten years. During his time, the country consolidated its military and economic relations with the US, and achieved enviable economic and agricultural development. Ayub Khan can be credited with considerable industrialization, high economic growth rates, a water-sharing formula with India, and projects of hydro-power generation. However, some critics of his policies say that Ayub Khan went too far in appeasing the US, and excessively allowed the US access to bases in Pakistan. It should be noted, however, that some years later and particularly in the wake of India-China border war in 1962, Ayub Khan became increasingly disenchanted with the US. One major reason behind this disenchantment was the supply of US arms to India, ostensibly to enhance India's military capabilities against China. Ayub Khan viewed this as an unfriendly act, as the bulk of

Indian military deployments were against Pakistan. During the early years of his rule, Ayub Khan maintained contact with Nehru and managed to resolve the issue of transboundary waters but could not persuade him to resolve the Kashmir dispute. The year 1965 was a turning point for Ayub Khan's rule. At home, his manipulation of the presidential election in January, where Fatima Jinnah was his competitor, disillusioned the nation about his intentions and sincerity towards a democratic future for the country. The war with India in September severely impacted the process of economic development that was the top priority for Ayub Khan. His own foreign minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was an ambitious man, who parted ways with him after the war. Alleging capitulation, he criticized Ayub Khan's handling of the outcome of the 1965 war, the Tashkent declaration, and started mass agitation. He formed his own party, the PPP, and succeeded in bringing an end to the government of Ayub Khan.

Indira Gandhi, the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, ruled India as its prime minister from 1966-77 and 1980-84. She took a strident approach towards Pakistan, playing a key role in the dismemberment of the country in 1971. Under her watch, India signed a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in 1971, which in some ways abandoned Nehru's non-alignment policy. After the 1971 war, she signed the Simla Agreement with Bhutto in 1972, paving the ground for India to claim that in future bilateral issues would only be resolved bilaterally. She also steered India towards nuclearization by deciding to carry out India's first nuclear test in 1974. This prompted Bhutto to expedite the country's ongoing efforts for building its nuclear capability towards a nuclear weapons programme.[101] Continuing her hawkish tilt, she took a belligerent position against the Sikhs in her second term and authorized the 1984 military operation in Golden Temple, the Sikh holy place in Amritsar, which deeply incensed the Sikh community. She was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards the same year. Other than the Simla Agreement, Indira Gandhi never took any steps to mend ties with Pakistan.

General Yahya Khan, who had taken over the reins of power from Ayub Khan in 1969, organized general elections in December 1970, which are widely regarded as free and fair. However, subsequently, he did not handle the statecraft well. Firstly, he delayed the convening of the national assembly, which prompted Sheikh Mujib to launch his six-points movement for greater autonomy for East Pakistan. As civil unrest spread, Yahya Khan made his second mistake of authorizing a military operation. To an extent, Bhutto, too, shared the responsibility for the crisis because he stalled every effort to hold the session of the national assembly that would have elected Mujib as the prime minister. The launch of a military operation in East Pakistan in March 1971, instead of pursuing a political solution to the crisis, cost the country disintegration and humiliation. One notable piece of diplomacy that goes to the credit of the Yahya Khan government was the role it played in enabling the US and China to normalize their estranged relationship.

After the dismemberment of Pakistan in December 1971, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the president and later the prime minister of Pakistan. To his credit, he negotiated with Indira Gandhi under difficult circumstances but managed to get Pakistani prisoners released via the Simla agreement of 1972. Given the conventional asymmetry with India, Bhutto felt that further aggression from India could only be prevented by Pakistan going nuclear. Husain Haqqani evaluates Bhutto as a leader of great qualities but as one who believed in continued confrontation with India until it granted self-determination to the people of Kashmir and stopped its persecution of Indian Muslims. Bhutto would present himself as a leader who could thwart India's designs. He was ready for cooperation with India, but was not ready to accept India's domination in South Asia. In his domestic policies, he projected himself as a champion of the poor. Bhutto can also be credited for getting Pakistan's first consensus-based constitution in 1973, though he ruled the country like an autocrat. He faced massive public agitation on the allegations of rigging in the 1977 elections. General Ziaul Haq used the political unrest as a reason to

pull a military coup against the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was later convicted through a controversial judicial trial.

President Zia focused all his energies on "Islamizing" the laws and practices of Pakistan. He was so consumed by the fight against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan that he found no time or energy to initiate any major initiative for peace with India. However, in the wake of Brass-tacks military exercise by India close to Pakistani borders in 1986-87, Zia did display deft diplomacy by visiting India ostensibly to watch cricket, met Rajiv Gandhi, and helped defuse tensions. Throughout his rule, Zia did not let the tensions with India flare up to the point of a kinetic war. Zia lost his life in a plane crash in 1988. Benazir Bhutto, who served as prime minister for two incomplete terms (1988-90 and 1993-96), also wanted to have cordial relations with India but could not initiate any peace process with India. However, she did engage with Rajiv Gandhi to reach an understanding on a resolution of the dispute over Siachen glacier. The Indian side later reneged on this understanding.

Peace Endeavours

Nawaz Sharif became the prime minister of Pakistan in 1990. Hailing from a business family, he recognized the economic value of peaceful relations with India. This desire for peaceful relations with India complemented his government's top priority to initiate a programme of economic reforms and liberalization at home. A year later, in 1991, the Narasimha Rao government in India also embarked on the process of economic liberalization. While India's 1991 reform agenda was carried forward by successive governments, Pakistan's 1990 economic reforms were interrupted by frequent changes of government. As for peace with India, Nawaz Sharif's first term (1990-93) was cut short before he could initiate any peace process. In his second term (1997-99), Nawaz Sharif succeeded in engaging with Atal Bihari Vajpayee, widely known as a man of peace, to agree in principle on starting the

process of composite dialogue, covering eight areas of discussion, including a segment on Kashmir. Vajpayee was a veteran politician and had been elected to Lok Sabha ten times and to Rajya Sabha two times. Though he was a member of the RSS and co-founder of the BJP, he would always respond positively to any prospects of peace with Pakistan. Interestingly, it was during Vajpayee's second term as prime minister that India became a covert nuclear weapon state in May 1998. Pakistan, led at that time by Nawaz Sharif, decided to follow suit and carried out nuclear explosions. With nuclear deterrence established, Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif decided to make another attempt for peace between the two countries. Vajpayee's bus ride from Amritsar to Lahore in February 1999 helped these two men of peace to conclude a forward-looking Lahore Declaration, which envisaged a peaceful and cooperative relationship. The Kargil crisis of 1999 put a halt to the peace process. General Pervez Musharraf toppled the government of Nawaz Sharif and became the chief executive and later president of Pakistan.

Musharraf has been widely criticized for his 1999 adventure in Kargil heights. He, however, defended the operation as a tactical military manoeuvre to regain the Kargil heights that Pakistan had lost in early 1965. He may have a point there, but the timing of the Kargil adventure left much to be desired, as it killed the Vajpayee-Sharif peace initiative. Vajpayee, though frustrated that his bus diplomacy had failed in 1999, was still keen to get some success with Pakistan as he wanted to leave his legacy as a leader who managed to establish peaceful coexistence with Pakistan. He invited Musharraf to Agra in 2001, which, regrettably, failed as the Indian side backed off at the last minute. Mutual mistrust was too wide to be bridged. Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, Musharraf was co-opted by the US as a partner in its war on terror. Having deployed a bulk of Pakistani troops on the western frontier, Musharraf was keen to ease tensions on the eastern front. Following an attack on the Indian parliament in late 2001, Vajpayee felt obliged to deploy hundreds of thousands of troops on the border with Pakistan. Musharraf handled

the crisis with fortitude until nuclear deterrence worked and the troops deployed on both sides for nearly ten months were ordered to stand down.

In 2002, Musharraf took steps that seem to have bolstered the confidence of the Indian leadership. On 12 January 2002, Musharraf announced measures to limit the activities of militants at home, including a ban on some militant groups and declared that he would not allow terrorism even in the name of Kashmir.[102] This was in line with Pakistan's policy to condemn terrorism in every form while recognizing that militancy against occupying forces by people under occupation was covered by international law. These actions and statements may have encouraged Vajpayee to reach out to Pakistan. On the sidelines of the SAARC summit in Islamabad in January 2004, Vajpayee and Musharraf agreed to resume the composite dialogue. The peace process began promisingly, but Vajpayee could not oversee it as he lost the 2004 elections. In some Pakistani circles, Vajpayee is remembered and recognised for his wisdom, cool-heartedness, and an enlightened approach towards Pakistan.[103]

Dr. Manmohan Singh, an economist, bureaucrat, and politician, served as India's first Sikh prime minister from 2004-14. Born in what is today's Pakistani Punjab, Manmohan Singh made genuine efforts to establish peaceful relations between India and Pakistan. He continued the composite dialogue process set out by Vajpayee as well as back-channel negotiations to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Pervez Musharraf and Manmohan Singh can both be credited for making a serious attempt in 2007 to resolve the Kashmir dispute by evolving, through back-channel diplomacy, a potential solution, often referred to as four-point formula. This was essentially a recognition of the status quo but would have made the LoC irrelevant and brought comfort to the Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC. The internal political trouble in Pakistan prevented the signing of this formula. Asif Zardari replaced Musharraf as the president of Pakistan in 2008. He was also keen for peace with India, but during his term, there was no breakthrough as the peace process first halted in 2008, resumed in

2010, and halted again in early 2013. Nawaz Sharif's party returned to power in the 2013 elections. True to his conviction of peace with India, he quickly managed to reach an understanding with India to restart bilateral trade. However, before the bilateral trade agreement and visa agreement could be concluded, the Congress government lost the 2014 elections and a new government led by BJP took power with Narendra Modi as the prime minister.

Before becoming prime minister in 2014, Modi, a follower of the RSS from an early age, had served as chief minister of Gujarat from 2001-14. He has been widely criticized for the 2002 massacre of Muslims that took place in Gujarat state under his watch. In 2003, Khushwant Singh had predicted that the carnage in Gujarat in early 2002 and the subsequent landslide victory of Narendra Modi in the elections will "spell disaster" for India.[104] In May 2014, when Prime Minister Modi invited the leaders of regional countries, including Pakistan, to his inauguration ceremony, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif accepted the invitation despite reservations from some in the country that Modi, with his RSS background, might wish to assert India's regional dominance. Modi and Sharif met again the following year in Russia, and agreed to resume the peace process. Sensing progress, Modi paid a surprise visit to Lahore on 25 December 2015, but the peace process stalled due to an attack on the Indian air force station in Pathankot. Modi gave up any further efforts for peace with Pakistan, and instead began to focus his efforts on his election promises of reviving Hindu glory and creating a Hindu state. Nawaz Sharif was upset with the Pathankot incident and wanted a serious investigation as to who caused Pathankot and why. However, before any results of the investigation came out, India decided to completely disconnect with Pakistan. Nawaz Sharif himself was ousted from his office in 2017 by a controversial court decision. It goes to the credit of Nawaz Sharif that throughout his three terms as prime minister of Pakistan, he never wavered in his commitment to secure peaceful and friendly relations with India.

Imran Khan led his party to electoral victory in the 2018 elections. As prime minister for the years 2018-22, Imran Khan came face to face with a serious crisis in relations with India in February 2019, when India carried out a surgical strike in Balakot following a militant attack in Pulwama. Pakistan captured the pilot of an Indian fighter aircraft that had been downed by the Pakistan air force. As a gesture of restraint and peace, the Imran Khan government decided to release the pilot to de-escalate the crisis, though the Indian side did not appreciate the goodwill gesture and continued with its hostile rhetoric. A few months later, in August, when the Modi government abrogated Articles 370 and 35A as well as the special status of Indian-Occupied Kashmir, the Imran Khan government interpreted the move as India's demographic engineering to change the Muslim-majority status of Kashmir. Imran Khan decided to downgrade diplomatic relations with India and stop bilateral trade. With considerable use of force, and favourable decision of the Supreme Court of India, Modi consolidated his hold on the occupied territories. His ministers openly started calling for occupying Pakistan-held Kashmir. During Imran Khan's term as prime minister, the intelligence agencies of the two countries were in contact with each other and arrived at a broader understanding for peace between the two countries. However, not much came out of this initiative except a reaffirmation of the ceasefire at the LoC announced in February 2021.

In his second term (2019-24), Prime Minister Modi's attempts to create a Hindu state gathered pace, entailing increased discrimination against minorities, particularly Muslims. Christophe Jaffrelot, who is a research director at the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), Professor of Indian Politics and Sociology at the King's India Institute, and global scholar at various US universities, has documented how under the rule of Prime Minister Modi, Muslim representation in civil services, police or even representative bodies hit a new low.[105] Throughout Modi's second term as prime minister of India, the two countries remained estranged. No attempt was made by either side to improve bilateral relations. Shahbaz Sharif succeeded

Imran Khan after the no-confidence vote against the latter in April 2022. He stayed on as prime minister after winning the general elections in March 2024. In early 2024, when Modi went into election campaign for his third term, he again used his Hindutva card and upped his rhetoric against Pakistan as well as Indian Muslims. He called the opposition Congress party trying to loot Hindus' wealth to give that to Muslims. He took India far away from the values of secularism and pluralism on which the founding fathers of India had tried to erect the state of modern independent India. Modi's rule was criticized by the opposition as a decline of democratic values, suppression of independent opinion, and damage to India's pluralistic credentials.

When tourists came under attack in the Pahalgam area of Indian-Occupied Kashmir, Modi blamed Pakistan without any investigation and prepared for war with Pakistan. Between 7 and 10 May 2025, a limited war took place mostly by missiles, drones and air combat. Indian media hit a frenzy exhorting its government to a full war with Pakistan. Since Prime Minister Modi had continued his policy of complete disconnect with Pakistan 2016 onwards, there were no bilateral means available to defuse the crisis except weekly calls between two DG MOs. Following a robust response from Pakistan, and with the US mediation, a ceasefire was declared on 10 May. While Pakistanis were elated that Indian attacks had been busted effectively, the Modi government continued its hostile rhetoric. This incident and its ramifications are analyzed further in Chapter 6.

It follows from the above discourse that at no point in history, political leaders in either of the two countries could simultaneously develop a broad consensus amongst diplomats, civil and military officials, and media for normalization of relations between India and Pakistan. Every stakeholder had his or her own definition of the dynamics governing the bilateral relationship. In the early years, the bitterness that had germinated during the independence movement impeded any effort for normalization of relations. It is quite evident that many Indian leaders were upset that their dream of a united India could not

materialize, and that they put the blame on Pakistan and Pakistani leaders for this. Later, some leaders on both sides, who could see the benefit of a normalized relationship, did take initiatives to break the status quo. However, they could not succeed because they were unable to bring all stakeholders in their respective countries onboard.

Another takeaway from the above discussion is that most leaders of India, barring a few, opted for hawkish positions against Pakistan, rather than thinking strategically for the common benefits of peaceful living that could have accrued to both sides. As a result, successive Pakistani governments have also had to resort to military strategies and spending to defend themselves. Three examples would illustrate the point. Nehru did not care that politically, legally, and morally, the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which was a Muslim-majority state contiguous to the territories of what would be Pakistan, should have been a part of Pakistan. He made sure that the state stayed with India, knowing full well that this would lead to direct confrontation with Pakistan. Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, embarked on a war with Pakistan by intervening in the 1971 East Pakistan crisis against international law and norms and played a role in dismembering Pakistan. She then sought to humiliate Pakistan by widely flaunting the photograph of the signing of the surrender document, which did not win her any favors in Pakistan. Years later, Narendra Modi violated every international law by launching kinetic strikes against Pakistan in 2019 and 2025, even as his policy of aggression was met with retaliation by Pakistan.

Another issue has been the short-term approach and knee-jerk decisions that were taken by the leadership of the two countries, more so on the Indian side, in dealing with each other. When Mumbai was attacked by terrorists in 2008, India stopped the four-year long peace process, which was a strategic blunder because it directly benefited the forces that never wanted to see peace in South Asia. In response to subsequent militant or terrorist attacks too, the Indian leadership would invariably resort to knee-jerk reaction of blaming Pakistan and then abandoning bilateral dialogue. Some Indian leaders have also

used incidents of militancy or terrorism to pursue their political goal of building a case against Pakistan at the international level. On the Pakistani side, Musharraf's decision to launch the military manoeuvre in Kargil heights has been seen less as a clever military tactic and more as an error of judgement because it compromised the Lahore peace process. In recent years, Prime Minister Modi has pursued an ambitious agenda of making India a Hindu state, which ordinarily should evoke no objections from Pakistan, because India is a Hindu-majority country. However, in the process, he went on to further demonize both Pakistan as well as Muslims in India, particularly during election campaigns, cutting off possibilities of a rapprochement between the two countries. This may have served Modi's short-term interests of getting votes for his party, but it has undermined the strategic objective of projecting India as a country that can lead South Asia to prosperity.

As part of the process of writing this book, several accomplished persons who had dealt with India in their professional lives were approached to find out which leaders of India and Pakistan, in their view, were able to think strategically to build a future of shared peace and prosperity for the two countries and the region. As expected, the answers varied, though there were some common threads.

John Gill,[106] Adjunct Professor at the NESA (Near East South Asia) Center for Strategic Studies in Washington DC, identifies at least three key obstacles to build on the inclinations of the Indian and Pakistani leaders: (i) when one side was ready, the other was not; (ii) leaders who seemed ready to take significant steps either lacked the domestic political strength to pursue these steps over entrenched opposition or subsequently allowed themselves to be persuaded by domestic factions to retract their openings. For instance, the seeming Bajwa/Imran Khan opening to trade that was quickly quashed or when once, perhaps twice, a deal on Siachen seemed possible, only to be stymied when Indian political leader(s) reneged after being convinced of the glacier's (supposed) strategic importance (the Chinese intrusions into Ladakh over the past 5–10 years have now

made any Siachen agreement highly unlikely). Sir Creek could, however, still be an option; and (iii) the actions of non-state actors with/without state urging, such as the attacks in the aftermath of Modi's surprise Lahore visit (not to mention Mumbai). Gill concludes that each side, of course, accuses the other of not doing enough. Thus, Modi's surprise Lahore visit alone was not enough for Pakistan; the on again, off again seeming restraint of jihadi groups by Pakistan "not enough" for India.

Salman Bashir,[107] former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan and High Commissioner to India, recognises Nawaz Sharif and Vajpayee as two leaders who were guided by the strategic objective of building a lasting peace between the two countries. In his view, the 1999 Lahore Declaration and the MoU on nuclear matters were a "landmark achievement". Bashir feels that both leaders had inferred a sound lesson from the nuclear tests that territory could not be adjusted using force. He recalled that he and his Indian counterpart had even drafted a consensus document of a non-aggression pact, which did not receive due consideration or approval.

Jalil Abbas Jilani,[108] former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan and caretaker Foreign Minister, noted that most Pakistani leaders desired peaceful relations with India. Amongst the list of Indian leaders, he particularly commended Vajpayee for his peace initiatives. He recalled, for example, Vajpayee's statement in Srinagar on 18th April 2003 that "we [Indians] are willing to talk to Pakistan to resolve the issues; India will be willing to resolve the Kashmir issue in accordance with *Insaniyat, Jamhooriyat, and Kashmiriyat*" (Humanity, Democracy, Kashmiri Identity). This, in Jilani's view, was an extremely bold and visionary statement in the wake of a highly charged atmosphere. Christine C. Fair,[109] professor of security studies at Georgetown University, Washington DC, is of the view that arguably the Sharif-Vajpayee process "exemplified a strategic thinking."

Raja Qaiser Ahmed,[110] Director of the Centre for diplomacy and international relations at the Oxford Business College, United

Kingdom, expressed his view that several leaders did demonstrate strategic thinking at different points, but internal political constraints, external pressures, and trust deficits hindered long-term progress. In his view, Liaqat and Nehru achieved a milestone by agreeing to a pact that helped protect religious minorities in both countries. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Indira Gandhi can be credited for signing the 1972 Simla Agreement that has provided a diplomatic framework that both countries still refer to, though this agreement could not resolve the Kashmir dispute itself. Raja Qaiser commends Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif for the 1999 Lahore Declaration as a visionary attempt at peace, prioritizing diplomatic engagement and nuclear confidence-building measures (CBMs). He regards the peace initiatives by Pervez Musharraf and Manmohan Singh between 2004 and 2007 as the most serious and structured diplomatic engagement between the two countries. Raja Qaiser feels that Imran Khan exhibited brinkmanship in the aftermath of the 2019 Balakot airstrike, but could not garner anything substantive in terms of policy shift amid cold posturing by the BJP-led Hindu nationalist India.

Masood Khalid,[111] former Ambassador of Pakistan to China, is of the view that most Pakistani leaders had made sincere efforts for normalcy in relations with India. Ayub Khan even offered a defence pact to India. On the India side, he recognizes Vajpayee for the most tangible forward movement in improving relations with Pakistan, particularly when he became the first Indian leader to visit Minar-e-Pakistan in 1999. At Agra too, Vajpayee followed up his peace drive, but the detractors from within India sabotaged the process. Masood Khalid regrets that Prime Minister Modi has taken an inexplicably hostile stance towards Pakistan, even though his Lahore dash in 2015 was a significant peace gesture, which also went to waste.

Moeed Yusuf,[112] Vice Chancellor of Beaconhouse National University Lahore and former National Security Advisor of Pakistan, noted the efforts made by Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif, and Pervez Musharraf on Pakistan side and Rajiv Gandhi, Manmohan Singh, and Vajpayee on the Indian side to look for space to establish peaceful bilateral

relations. However, none of those efforts reached a successful end. Naeem Khalid Lodhi,[113] The former Secretary Defence of Pakistan, believes that from the Indian side, Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Vajpayee were all strategic thinkers but for peace with Pakistan, Vajpayee was probably "most sincere". As for Pakistani leaders, most of them except Zulfikar Ali Bhutto recognised the dividends of peace with India. He added that General Musharraf also had "the vision and could see the benefits of rapprochement". Khurram Abbas,[114] Director of India Study Centre at the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad said that it was Atal Bihari Vajpayee from India and Nawaz Sharif from Pakistan who seem to have made "the sincerest effort" to resolve issues between the two countries. However, both could not succeed because of entrenched mistrust on both sides. Fakir Aijazuddin,[115] a noted historian and author, recognizes Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for his "adept handling" of the Simla talks, arguing that while Indira won the 1971 war, Bhutto won the peace. As for other leaders, Aijazuddin noted Nawaz Sharif for his "largely passive but timely reception" of Vajpayee's bus yatra initiative, while General Musharraf is recognized for his back-channel diplomacy conducted by Tariq Aziz and S. K. Lambah.

It follows from the above discourse that most Pakistani leaders took several initiatives for peaceful relations with India. This was in accord with the guidance that Jinnah, the founder of the country, had given. However, while extending a hand of friendship with India, the Pakistani leadership endeavoured to protect the country's position on Jammu and Kashmir, which Jinnah had described as the jugular vein of Pakistan. On the Indian side, the approach was essentially coercive. Pakistan was viewed as a country that had shattered the dream of a united India and as a country that continues to challenge Indian dominance in South Asia. It was only Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh who tried a different approach. They sought peace because peaceful relations with its neighbours in their estimation would enable India to build its political, economic, regional, and international profile. This approach would have achieved the same objective that other Indian

leaders wished to fulfill, but through peaceful means and not through strategic coercion of neighbours. Nevertheless, none of the efforts by leaders in both countries came to fruition because of the deep mutual mistrust that had developed in the circumstances in which both countries attained their independence and the failure to bridge that mistrust in subsequent years.

Reckoning

A noted political scientist, Christopher Clary, has presented in his book, 'The difficult politics of peace: Rivalry in modern South Asia', the leader primacy theory, which argues that for peace to be sustained between India and Pakistan, strategic incentives to build peace should exist and there must be leaders in both countries who enjoy primacy in their domestic political structures so that hardliners and detractors can be sidelined.[116] That means only those leaders can engage in durable peace initiatives who have consolidated authority over foreign policy within their governments. He elaborates his argument by noting that domestic politics of rival states gets transformed by the rivalry, and thus further abets conflictual relationships. It follows that if national politics within a rival state is not aligned with the need to have peaceful relations, then rivalry would be protracted. By this logic, India and Pakistan would achieve peace only if all stakeholders in both countries are convinced of the need to have peaceful relations. A leader would not only have to carry along the major spectrum of the political and military leadership, but also address the sub-national space which can be exploited by insurgents or other detractors to weaken the hands of the peace makers.

Seen in this light, it appears that at no point in time during the past eight decades did the leadership in India and Pakistan have primacy in their domestic political structures. Nor were the leaders able to create strategic incentives for peace that would have ensured that both countries benefited from each other through cooperation rather than

confrontation. A resolution of the Kashmir dispute could have been one major strategic incentive that might have forged peace between the two countries. However, Indian leaders chose not to honour the pledges that India had made to ascertain the wishes of the Kashmiris through the UN-administered plebiscite, and instead opted for using excessive force to suppress the wishes of the people of Kashmir. Consequently, the conflict over Kashmir remains a major bone of contention.

In the past three decades since the dawn of the 21st Century, particularly since 2014, the Indian leadership has also resorted to using cross-border terrorism as a twin-goal policy instrument for maligning the Kashmir cause and for strategic coercion of Pakistan. Had the two countries opted for a cooperative and collaborative approach to dealing with the shared threat of terrorism, the gulf in relations between the two countries would not have increased to the point it did. The lack of success can also be attributed to the policy of regional dominance that many Indian leaders, particularly Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Modi, pursued throughout their terms. This approach impeded forward movement because Pakistani leaders were reluctant to accept any peace agreement unless predicated on mutual respect. Consequently, despite the initiatives by leaders like Vajpayee, Nawaz Sharif, Manmohan Singh, Musharraf, and some others, the goal of good-neighbourliness could not be achieved.

It is evident that many leaders from both India and Pakistan have endeavoured to establish peaceful relations between the two countries. However, none could succeed partly because the pre-requisites that Christopher Clary has mentioned above (namely strategic incentives to forge peace and the ability of the leaders to enjoy consolidated authority over foreign policy within their own governments) were not in place. Neither Vajpayee nor Nawaz Sharif, nor any other leader for that matter, enjoyed primacy in their respective political structures. Nor were they able to adequately address the sub-conventional space in which much of detraction was taking place. Even when the opportunity arose, many of them opted

for short-term tactical benefits rather than serving the long-term strategic goal of a peaceful South Asia. Yet, more often than not, whenever bilateral relations took a positive turn, it was because of the positive stimuli that the leaders of the time provided. The role of the leadership, thus, remains central to achieving peaceful and friendly relations.

Could the future hold a moment when leaders of the two sides finally rise together to embrace the vision of peaceful coexistence? At the time of writing, such a prospect feels distant and faint. Yet we also know that history is full of twists and turns amongst friends and rivals, and even this entrenched hostility may one day give way to a different, more hopeful reality.

IQBAL FORUM

Chapter 3 – The Kashmir Dispute

A dispute over the state of Jammu and Kashmir erupted barely two months after Pakistan and India gained independence from British rule in August 1947. Numerous attempts have been made over the decades to resolve the dispute bilaterally as well as multilaterally through the United Nations. India and Pakistan have also fought fratricidal wars over it. Yet, the dispute remained intractable. Meanwhile, the cost of continuation of this conflict has been borne by the people of both countries, and South Asia has paid a heavy price in terms of economic and regional integration. The heaviest price, of course, has been paid by the Kashmiris themselves.

Had India and Pakistan approached the Kashmir dispute with an eye on the strategic benefits for both countries and the region, the past would not have been so fractured and the future not so uncertain for South Asia. Finding solutions to protracted problems is never easy. It requires courage to stand up to opposing forces within your own ranks who project any concession given in the process of negotiation as a defeat. It also requires political will, flexibility, and wisdom to see the bigger picture. It is now self-evident that the non-resolution of the Kashmir dispute has held back the full potential of a cooperative relationship between the two countries. While Pakistan has demonstrated its flexibility to adopt bilateral or multilateral channels to resolve the dispute, India remains adamant on its position that

Kashmir is an integral part of India. The Indian position violates the relevant UNSC resolutions, which prohibit any material change in the disputed nature of the state of Jammu and Kashmir until its political future is decided by a UN-administered plebiscite.

Several attempts have been made in the past to find a solution acceptable to both countries as well as to the Kashmiris. However, the inflexible approach by successive Indian leaders failed to untangle this knot while all three parties – India, Pakistan, Kashmiris - suffered. Even the fourth party, the international community, has lost credibility in this process, as over a dozen resolutions that the UN Security Council has adopted since 1948 remain unimplemented. On one occasion in 2006-7, the two countries did display political will to address the issue and made modest progress. However, the effort never reached its logical end. Other than this attempt, stubbornness nearly always trumped pragmatism. This chapter seeks to carry out a deeper scrutiny of the Kashmir dispute to better understand what has made this dispute so intractable. It also seeks to answer two fundamental questions: Why did this issue become a dispute in the first place, when it was clear that under the terms of the Partition Plan of 1947, Muslim-majority areas contiguous to Pakistan would join Pakistan? And, why is it that the dispute has been so difficult to resolve?

Genesis

The princely State of Jammu and Kashmir had an overwhelming Muslim majority population of 77 percent in 1947 as per the 1941 census. In the Kashmir Valley, the ratio of Muslim population was 93.6 percent. It was expected that the State would join Pakistan. Mountbatten wanted the Hindu Raja of the State, Hari Singh, to decide by 15 August 1947 whether he wanted the State to join India or Pakistan. However, the Maharaja had other plans. He proposed standstill agreements with both Dominions, ostensibly to try to keep

the State as an independent country. He was not a popular leader, and when he delayed his accession to Pakistan, Muslim peasants in the district of Poonch, who faced harsh taxation, rebelled in early October 1947.[117] Faced with the persecution by forces of the Maharaja, some of the peasants fled to Pakistan's tribal areas, likely to band together and buy arms. Hearing their stories, the Pathan tribals decided to support their Muslim brethren. Together they invaded Kashmir on 22 October 1947, and captured Muzaffarabad. On 24 October, a government of Azad Kashmir was set up with Sardar Ibrahim Khan as its president. Azad Kashmir forces under the command of Major Khurshid Anwar made advances along the Jhelum Valley Road towards Srinagar. At some point, individual soldiers in the Pakistan army felt it their duty to help. Colonel Akbar Khan, pseudonym General Tariq after Tariq bin Ziyad, the Muslim conqueror of Spain, assumed senior staff responsibility with the Azad Kashmiri forces. The situation in the State became chaotic. Seeing things getting out of hand, the Maharaja fled to Jammu on 26 October. Fast-unfolding events ensued. V.P. Menon, Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of the States, brought to the Maharaja an instrument of accession, which he refused to sign. Curiously, Nehru and Patel had already ordered to keep more than 100 civil and military transport planes ready to fly India's forces to Srinagar on 26 October. These forces reached Srinagar on 27 October, a day that is marked by Kashmiris and Pakistanis as a Black Day. Meanwhile, Azad Kashmir forces led by Khurshid Anwar, which included men from the old Poonch revolt, former members of the 4th Jammu and Kashmir Rifles, and number of Pathan tribesmen from NWFP, continued their advance and around 31 October, they reached Patan, close to Srinagar. They had made some progress and had captured some weapons from the Jammu and Kashmir State Forces. However, by that time, the forces were exhausted and with no reinforcements, Khurshid Anwar had to abandon his advance on Srinagar.

India maintains that Indian forces entered Kashmir once Maharaja Hari Singh agreed to sign the instrument of accession. However, it is

unclear whether Hari Singh actually signed the instrument of accession on 26 October 1947, or at a later date. Alastair Lamb has compiled a well-documented chronology of events of those fateful months. He argues in his book, 'Birth of a Tragedy – Kashmir 1947', that by the evening of 26 October, there was no completed instrument of accession and that "the actual Indian intervention in Srinagar took place before the Maharaja had signed anything indicating his intention to accede to India."[118] This could mean that the Maharaja was forced to sign the instrument later under duress, because the Indian forces had occupied his capital. Given its legal implications, Indian official accounts took the line that the Maharaja had indeed signed an Instrument of Accession before the Indian intervention. The Indian legal narrative has been that the Indian forces were in Kashmir at the request of the ruler who had acceded to India, while tribals and Pakistani forces were violating the State's territorial integrity. This legal position was important for India to prevent the British soldiers in the Pakistan army from joining the tribal invasion. Alastair Lamb concluded that "...and we have no direct evidence as to when the Maharaja's letter was actually signed (if, indeed, it ever was) but we can be sure that it was not on 26 October."[119]

This raises a serious question. Does this mean that India had already decided that regardless of outcome, it would occupy the State of Jammu and Kashmir? M.J. Akbar, in his book, 'Nehru: Making of India' seems convinced that "Nehru and Patel were both firm that they would send the army into Kashmir whether the dithering Hari Singh formally requested it or not."[120] According to Alastair Lamb, Nehru's interest in Kashmir was "largely emotional" because of his family affiliation, while Patel had a "cold geopolitical" approach about the future of the State. Patel also saw Kashmir's value as a "lethal weapon against Pakistan." Even a month before the agitation in Kashmir, Indian military aid was given to Dogra rulers with Patel's approval and around the second week of October, Delhi had decided to send actual troops, arms and equipment to Kashmir.[121] Nehru also

had full support from his friend Sheikh Abdullah, the Kashmiri leader, particularly over sending troops to Kashmir.[122]

That Delhi was determined to get Kashmir at every cost gets credence from the way the Radcliffe award was handled. The controversy arose because the Radcliffe Punjab Award deviated from the principle of the integrity of Muslim-majority districts. It gave India three tehsils of Gurdaspur, a Muslim-majority district, which provided India with a practicable access to Kashmir by the Pathankot railhead. Stanley Wolpert is convinced that Radcliffe did follow his mandate to divide the Punjab based on Muslim versus non-Muslim majority districts. However, Nehru and Mountbatten wanted that from within the Muslim-majority district of Gurdaspur, the Muslim-minority sub-district Pathankot should not go to Pakistan because India could lose direct road access to Kashmir.[123] M.J. Akbar also recalls that in the months before the partition, Nehru insisted that the road link to the Kashmir valley through Gurdaspur would have to be kept in Delhi's control.[124] Eventually, three sub-districts (Muslim-majority Ferozepur and Batala and Muslim-minority Pathankot) went to India, while Muslim-majority Shakargarh was given to Pakistan. Wolpert then adds that though Mountbatten never admitted as such, there are reasons to believe that he told Radcliffe to change his initial Punjab award because the maps were altered, and that Mountbatten kept the award under his personal embargo until after 15 August 1947.[125]

Alastair Lamb is also convinced that Radcliffe was influenced by Mountbatten in the Gurdaspur decision.[126] The Congress leadership feared that if India did not get access to Kashmir via Gurdaspur, the Maharaja may start looking towards Pakistan. Another reason why Nehru may have been keen on an amendment to the initial Punjab award was the issue of water flows. According to Wolpert, Radcliffe was ready to recommend joint Indo-Pak control of the canal system and electricity generated in the state of Bikaner, which fed power to Ferozepur, Montgomery (later Sahiwal), and Lahore districts. When Nehru learned of the initial award in early August, Nehru sent an urgent message to Mountbatten that "from the strategic and irrigation

point of view," Ferozepur must not go to Pakistan. He was keen to keep all areas east of the Sutlej with India and he wanted to avoid any joint control of electricity. When Prime Minister Liaquat learned on 11 August 1947 that the Muslim-majority Gurdaspur district was being awarded to India, which would give India a highway access to Kashmir, he was utterly disappointed and contacted Viceroy's chief of staff, Ismay, that his country would deem this as a "political" rather than "judicial" decision[127] and a British "breach of faith."[128]

On 28 October, Nehru sent a wire message to British Prime Minister Attlee, conveying that the Maharaja had appealed for help and wanted to accede to the Indian Union, and that India had to send troops to save Kashmir from unmitigated disaster. He again assured him that "...the problem of accession should be decided amicably and in accordance with the wishes of the people.... Our military intervention is purely defensive in aim and scope." The same day, Nehru also reassured Liaquat that "the action Government of India had taken had been forced upon them by the circumstances of imminent and grave danger to Srinagar, and that the Indian government had no desire to intervene in the affairs of Kashmir State after raiders have been driven away."[129] The occupation of the State by Indian troops contradicted the assurance that Nehru had given to Attlee. The latter then proposed to hold a tripartite conference between India, Pakistan, and the Maharaja. However, Nehru avoided contacts with Pakistani leadership during the crucial days of 25 to 28 October, as if India had already decided to resolve the Kashmir question by force.

Nevertheless, Mountbatten met Jinnah in Lahore on the 1st of November. Nehru did not accompany him, pleading "diplomatic illness"[130] as he did not want to discuss this issue with Pakistan and his Cabinet had already expressed general opposition to the Lahore meeting. Jinnah could see that the Indian side was playing for time.[131] Jinnah said to Mountbatten that the State of Jammu and Kashmir, with its massive Muslim majority, "belonged to Pakistan as of right as an essential element in an uncompleted partition process."[132] Some

Indian authors have recently claimed that it was Jinnah who first turned down the idea of a plebiscite and not Nehru. However, they conveniently overlook the fact that Jinnah knew that India was not sincere about holding a free plebiscite and was only using it as a future electoral ploy to secure Hyderabad. He also knew that any plebiscite held under the Indian army and Sheikh Abdullah, who maintained a close friendship with Nehru, would not be free and fair. So, the dispute was not whether the plebiscite was to be held, but rather how it should be conducted to ensure its fairness. Jinnah's proposal was that the two Governors-General take charge of the plebiscite. Mountbatten, however, did not agree to the proposal.

Meanwhile, Gandhi had consistently maintained that "the people of Kashmir should be asked whether they want to join Pakistan or India. Let them do as they want. The ruler is nothing. The people are everything." When Kashmir's Prime Minister Mahajan planned to meet Jinnah to discuss a ceasefire in Kashmir, Nehru wrote to him in early November 1947 that India had sent in troops "at a tremendous cost," and that there was very little to discuss because "a plebiscite cannot take place till complete law and order have been established."[133] Gandhi also offered to go to Pakistan to diffuse tensions, but Nehru refused to agree. To allay opposition at home and abroad regarding his precipitous kinetic action in Kashmir, Nehru sent a wire message to British Prime Minister Attlee to assure him that "aiding Kashmir in this emergency is not designed in any way to influence the State to accede to India. Our view ... is that the question of accession in any disputed territory of the State must be decided in accordance with wishes of the people, and we adhere to this view."[134]

Patel, unlike Nehru, had no particular attachment to Kashmir. Being a realist, he saw no benefit in a potentially escalating war with Pakistan and was leaning towards a settlement whereby a fair plebiscite could be held in Kashmir under arrangements to be agreed by India and Pakistan. However, he wanted a neutral supervision of the plebiscite, with no role for any external mediators. Ultimately Nehru's view prevailed. It is often said citing different references that

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had made an offer to swap Kashmir for Hyderabad to secure all other princely states. However, according to Akhund, there is no hard evidence that this specific offer was made by Patel.[135] As it was, Nehru was never going to give up Kashmir and had worked hard with Mountbatten to secure his sympathy for this. When the Muslim majority district of Gurdaspur was split to give India access to Kashmir, it became clear that this was being done at Mountbatten's instigation.

The Pakistan army troops were unable to get involved with the war as it was still under a British commander in chief, General Douglas Gracey. The latter would only dispatch patrols to find out what was happening and to rescue stranded British officers. When the issue was not getting resolved through talks, the matter headed towards a war over Kashmir, which Jinnah had termed as Pakistan's jugular vein. Jinnah tried to send two brigades of Pakistan's regular army into Kashmir to fight India's army there, but Field Marshal Auchinleck, who was the Supreme Commander of all British Forces in South Asia, refused to let any British officer in the Pakistan army to fight, including General Douglas Gracey. Considering how Nehru had stalled meetings with Jinnah and Mountbatten on this issue, Jinnah was left disappointed, and at the end of October 1947, he expressed at a meeting in Lahore's University stadium that "we have been the victims of a deeply-laid and well-planned conspiracy executed with utter disregard of the elementary principles of honesty, chivalry, and honour."[136] Had Jinnah not accepted Auchinleck's threat to withdraw British officers from the Pakistan army, the British government would have been in a difficult position, because they would then have had no option but to withdraw all British officers from India as well. So, the British would have been compelled to impose some negotiations that Nehru was trying to avoid during this period. In retrospect, argues Alastair Lamb, this was a lost opportunity for Jinnah.[137]

At the strong suggestion of Mountbatten, the Indian Cabinet decided on 20 December 1947 to appeal to the United Nations to force Pakistan to withdraw the tribesmen. As if to build his legal case, Nehru wrote

a letter to Liaqat on 22 December, in which India formally accused Pakistan of assisting the tribals and Azad Kashmiri forces, whom the letter termed as "raiders" in Kashmir, and requested Pakistan to refrain from aiding them in any way. On 1st January 1948, India filed a unilateral complaint under Article 35 of the UN Charter, under which actions by the United Nations would be essentially of an advisory nature. The Council could look into the matter and suggest ways to defuse tensions. However, by implication, the Indian request expected the Council to indict Pakistan as an aggressor in "sovereign" Indian territory. It was not a "sovereign" Indian territory because the letter did not say that the Maharaja had acceded to India, but that he had requested that he be allowed to do so. It is evident India did not want the chronology of accession to come under scrutiny of the Security Council.[138]

When the UN Security Council took up the matter, it chose to take a broader view of the case. The delegates to the Council began to see Pakistan as having a moral edge over the matter, as Pakistan was a Muslim country and Kashmir was a Muslim-majority State. To India's disappointment, the "quality and content of the dispute" totally changed.[139] Meanwhile, the Pakistan army, which had joined the war in Kashmir essentially to counter the Indian offensive, managed to take over much of the northwestern part of the State. This war, which came to be known as the first Indo-Pak war over Kashmir, was unique because the armies of both countries were being commanded by British officers. Pakistan could not secure Kashmir at that time because not only was the control of its forces not in its own hands, but the tribal levies had also not been able to secure or disable Srinagar airport, even though it was within their sights. However, the army managed to prevent the Indian army from running all over the State.

After much deliberation, the UN Security Council successfully persuaded both countries to stop the war, and the ceasefire came into effect on 31 December 1948. A ceasefire line was formalized later by India and Pakistan in the Karachi Agreement of 1949. The Council adopted a series of resolutions, notably UNSCR 47 of 21 April 1948,

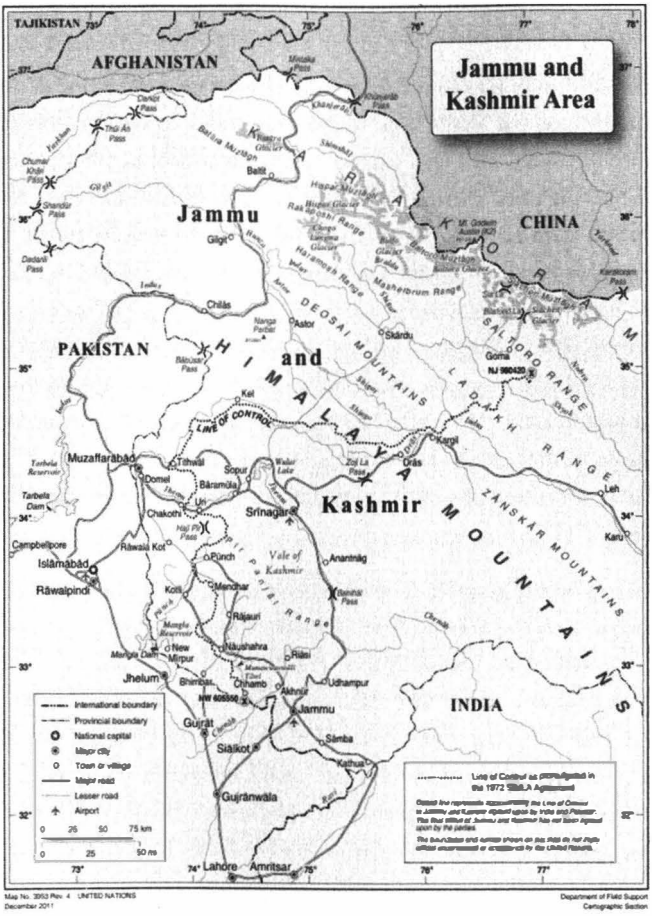
which required both countries to demilitarize the State and arrange for holding a plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the people of the State whether they want to join India or Pakistan. Although Pakistan was required to withdraw tribesmen and Pakistan nationals from the State, India was allowed to keep a minimum strength of troops for the purposes of maintaining law and order. Regardless, India did not agree to implement this resolution nor many others that followed in subsequent years.

Prime Minister Nehru kept on reiterating his promise of honouring the wishes of the people of Kashmir by a plebiscite, ostensibly to provide moral justification for his military action in Kashmir and to buy more time till India consolidated its ground position in the State. In this regard, considerable correspondence is on record between Sheikh Abdullah, Nehru, Patel, Ayyangar, and others in 1949 on the drafting of special provisions for the Indian Constitution regarding the special constitutional arrangements of the Jammu and Kashmir State with India.[140] In November 1952, Article 370 was incorporated into the Indian constitution, accepting the right of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to have its own separate constitution, state flag, and internal administrative autonomy. In the years that followed, the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah facilitated the formation of the constituent assembly of the State and its constitution, and negotiated with the Indian leaders the provisions under which Kashmir would be a part of India. Several issues arose around governance, firstly because Kashmiris did not accept that Maharaja's heir Karan Singh should be the Sadar-i-Riyasat. Secondly, Shaikh Abdullah wanted maximum autonomy for the State and was upset that despite assurances, the Indian government was contemplating the imposition of financial obligations on the State. This frustrated Nehru, who wrote a letter in April 1953 to Sheikh Abdullah complaining about the slow progress in giving formal shape to the relationship of Kashmir with India. In August 1953, Karan Singh dismissed Sheikh Abdullah and appointed Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad as the prime minister of Kashmir. In subsequent years, a

constitution of the Indian-Occupied State of Jammu and Kashmir was drafted and promulgated in 1957.

Sheikh Abdullah was now being viewed as an obstacle to India's plans of integrating the State with India. He was accused of conspiring against the state, and was placed under detention in 1953, where he remained till 1964. During these eleven years of his detention, Sheikh Abdullah seemed to have realized his mistake and he never again pledged his loyalty to India. On his release, he was invited to Pakistan by Ayub Khan to explore possible solutions to the Kashmir dispute. He travelled to Pakistan, but had to return without any result when Nehru died that year. By then Sheikh Abdullah had figured out that India would never give what he had always wanted – autonomy for Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah wrote a letter to Ayub Khan that "the use of force was now the only way left to end India's occupation of Kashmir."[141]

Summing up the genesis, it can be seen that for Pakistan, the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India remains illegal and against the terms of the partition of British India. The State of J&K, which had clear Muslim-majority areas and was contiguous to Pakistan, should have joined Pakistan. The economies of Kashmir and Pakistan were also closely linked. All essential road and communication links from Kashmir were in the direction of what became Pakistan. The waters of Indus, Jhelum and Chenab rivers flowed from Kashmir to Pakistan and were a lifeline for the latter's agriculture. For all these reasons, Alastair Lamb, in his work 'Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy 1846-1990', builds a strong argument that the State of Jammu & Kashmir should have acceded to Pakistan and that the partition plan should have awarded the greater part of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan.



1 United Nations map of Jammu and Kashmir Area

https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/718165?ln=en&v=pdf

Review

Having reviewed the genesis of the Kashmir dispute, it would be useful to examine the reasons that have made this issue so intractable.

Firstly, Prime Minister Nehru consciously made every conceivable effort to ensure that Kashmir remained with India. First, he influenced the process of partitioning British India to ensure geographical access to Kashmir (except the tehsil of Shakargarh, the rest of the Muslim-majority district of Gurdaspur was given to India instead of Pakistan). Second, Nehru bought time by assuaging the concerns of Pakistan as well as the international community by repeatedly pledging his commitment that the political fate of Kashmir would be decided by its people. Two telegrams that he sent to his Pakistani counterpart in October and November of 1947 attest to that pledge. In the 27 October telegram, he affirmed that "the question of accession in any disputed territory or State must be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people and we adhere to this view."[142] Then again, the following month on 03 November, he wrote that "we have agreed to an impartial international agency like the United Nations supervising any referendum (Jammu & Kashmir)."[143] At the same time, he befriended Sheikh Abdullah, a prominent Kashmiri leader of the time, to persuade Kashmiris to join India. This also helped find space and time for Indian forces to consolidate Indian occupation of the state.

Once Nehru's goal of consolidating Indian occupation of Jammu and Kashmir had been achieved, his government refused to cooperate with the United Nations. General A.G.L McNaughton of Canada, who was delegated by the UNSC to find an innovative solution, had mooted a proposal for equal demilitarization and a plebiscite which were rejected by India. Owen Dixon, who was Australian chief justice and diplomat and had served as a United Nations mediator in the Kashmir dispute, built on the idea to say that various regions could be disposed of based on the results of the regional plebiscites. That would have meant Jammu and Ladakh going to India while Baltistan, Poonch, and Kashmir Valley coming to Pakistan. However in the face of Nehru's consistent opposition to all these ideas, Owen Dixon observed, after his arduous work, that "in the end I became convinced that India's agreement would never be obtained to demilitarization in any form or to provisions governing the period of plebiscite...."[144]

Wolpert also expressed a similar assessment as he writes that "...whenever the United Nations Security Council's Commission on India and Pakistan (UNCIP) sent its three most distinguished chairmen to India to ask Nehru to agree to a plebiscite in Kashmir, supervised and monitored by the UN, he always adamantly refused. Nehru finally withdrew any pretence of supporting the UN-supervised plebiscite, arguing that India's "elections" in Kashmir were as "valid" as such a plebiscite.[145]

Nehru knew well that the Indian stance on Kashmir was not tenable on legal and political grounds. It appears that his strategic calculus persuaded him to keep Kashmir in the Indian Union. Nehru and Patel believed that the war over Kashmir would swiftly bankrupt Pakistan. In November 1947, when the Indian high commissioner to Pakistan hinted to Mountbatten that for the sake of peace all round, India could hand over Kashmir to Pakistan, Nehru wrote to the high commissioner that "...Kashmir is going to be a drain on our resources, but it is going to be a greater drain on Pakistan."[146] In one of his messages to Sheikh Abdullah, Nehru wrote that "what happens in Kashmir will affect the rest of India." He added that "for me Kashmir's future is of the most intimate personal significance...."[147] Nehru took pride in hailing from Kashmir, though his Pandit ancestors had abandoned Kashmir nearly two centuries before he was born in 1889 in Allahabad. Nehru would speak of Kashmir as his "family home." It is evident that Nehru's personal passion for Kashmir affected his judgments and he spent his own time and his country's considerable resources on Kashmir without ever asking the people of Kashmir if they wanted to live with India.

Secondly, the Indian leadership of the time had started working on the legal grounds of their case well ahead of the partition. The British Cabinet Mission's statement on 16 May 1946 had not dealt with the future of the Indian States, but it stated clearly that the paramountcy would neither be retained by the British Crown nor be transferred to the new governments of India and Pakistan. Based on the verbal assurance of these States to cooperate with the new constitutional

structure, the Cabinet Mission did not deal with the States in detail. There were three options available to the States: either join India, or Pakistan, or remain independent. This meant that the rulers of the Indian States had to engage closely with the two new Dominions to decide on their political future. This space was then used by the newly formed Dominion of India to create a provision under the India Order (Provisional Constitution) of 15 August 1947 (that adopted The Government of India Act, 1935), which stated that "an Indian State shall be deemed to have acceded to the Dominion if the Governor-General has signified his acceptance of an Instrument of Accession executed by the Ruler" and the Ruler on behalf of the State "declares that he accedes to the Dominion....".[148] This provided legal cover to Mountbatten as Governor-General of India and to Nehru as Prime Minister of India to persuade Maharaja Hari Singh to accede to India just by signing the Instrument of Accession.

From a legal perspective, the Nizam of Hyderabad and other states could have also opted for independence, but Patel used every means possible, including the use of force, to get them inducted into Indian Dominion. It is on the same legal basis that Jinnah had accepted the accession of the ruler of Junagadh to Pakistan. A question is often posed as to why Jinnah, who wanted a separate state for the Muslims of India, would accept a Hindu-majority state (Junagadh) into Pakistan. The answer lay in Jinnah's concept of Pakistan, where minorities would live as equal citizens, and that there would be no rupture between Hindus and Muslims living wherever they are.[149] Stephen Cohen has also rightly assessed that Jinnah wanted a homeland for Muslims, but not necessarily a nation made up entirely of Muslims.

Thirdly, the United Nations has not been able to oblige India to resolve the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UNSC resolutions. These resolutions were adopted under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which calls for peaceful settlement of the dispute through methods mentioned in its Article 33: negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, or resort to regional

agencies or arrangements. The successive governments of India did not engage in any meaningful negotiation with Pakistan or cooperate with UN-mediation to resolve the dispute. After the signing of the Simla Agreement in 1972, India began claiming that the Kashmir problem would have to be resolved bilaterally. India's interpretation was that the UN resolutions became irrelevant once the ceasefire line negotiated under UN auspices had been converted into a line of control that was negotiated bilaterally. India further claimed that the language from the agreement - "that the two countries are resolved to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them" - had limited the realm of conflict resolution to bilateral means. Some Indian observers have further noted that Indira Gandhi had received assurances from Bhutto that when the environment of relations improved, the vexed Kashmir issue could be resolved by formalizing the status quo.[150] There is, however, no documentary evidence to support this claim.

In Pakistani circles, it is widely believed that under the Simla Agreement, both sides had agreed that the principles and purposes of the UN Charter "shall govern relations between the two countries" and that "pending the final settlement of any of the problems between the two countries, neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation." Pakistan's view all along has been that UN resolutions on the Kashmir dispute remain valid because they have neither been implemented nor superseded, and that the people of Jammu and Kashmir must be given an opportunity to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination granted to them under the UNSC resolutions. India on the other hand argues that the people of Indian-Occupied Kashmir have already exercised their right to self-determination by joining a series of State assembly elections. The end result is that India has taken every measure possible to block consideration of this case by the UNSC. India has also not been cooperative to the military observer group (UNMOGIP) that was constituted with a limited mandate to keep peace on the ceasefire line, and later the line of control.

The issue remains on the agenda of the UNSC, but there is no demonstrated political will of the international community to get India to implement the resolutions. After India annexed the occupied territories on 5 August 2019, the Security Council met because a material change had occurred to the disputed territories, but the Council could not agree on any statement. Given that India had become a prominent geopolitical player and a large commercial market for the world at large, no major power made any effort to hold India accountable for its violations of the UNSC resolutions. Most countries would hedge themselves behind an argument that this matter be resolved bilaterally.

It is pertinent to mention that the UN was never meant to be the world parliament or world police; it was only a diplomatic forum where issues should be resolved by collective decision-making. Ever since the UN took up the consideration of the Kashmir problem, long speeches have been made by the delegates of both countries, such as Krishna Menon's five-hour long speech, to which Sir Zafarullah Khan responded with a six-hour presentation. Several serious attempts at resolution were made by UN appointed envoys like McNaughton and Own Dixon. However, there was always the threat of Soviet veto. Consequently, most countries preferred to leave the matter to bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan. It is ironic, then, that, while India insists on pursuing the bilateral route for conflict resolution, it has not been willing to engage in any meaningful bilateral effort to resolve the issue. Since the bilateral route has not worked for decades, it would logically follow that the help of third parties could and should be sought. However, India does not wish to see any involvement of a third party either, even though it does invoke international interventions whenever it suits it, such as after wars or other kinetic confrontations between the two countries. All this, however, does not mean that the UN and its resolutions are not relevant. On the contrary, these resolutions have expressed the collective will of the international community. It falls on the concerned

states to implement them in earnest. For Pakistan, these resolutions continue to provide the legal basis to resolve the dispute.

Fourthly, India opted early on for a military solution to the Kashmir dispute through consistent use of force against Kashmiris, despite the fact that the Kashmiris have proven to be far more tenacious in their demand for freedom than Indian leaders had expected. In many ways, the wish of the Kashmiris to live a life according to their own ethos and Islamic moorings predates the partition of British India. For five hundred years, the people of Kashmir have embraced Islamic thought from the time of Shah Mir in 1349 CE to Mughal rule to Afghan Durranis and even during the Sikh rule under Ranjit Singh. After Gulab Singh purchased Kashmir from the British in 1846 for 7.5 million rupees, he founded the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The Kashmiris never quite accepted the Dogra rule (1846-1947). In July 1931, Muslim protestors clashed with Dogra forces, leading to the martyrdom of 21 Kashmiris. The following year, Sheikh Abdullah, Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas, and Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah founded 'All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference', renamed in 1939 as 'All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference'. Ghulam Abbas parted ways with Abdullah after the latter became a close associate of Nehru, and revived the Muslim Conference. After the Indian occupation of the State in 1947, the Indian leadership failed to correctly read the deep imprint of Islam on the Kashmiri masses, and ever since has tried to impose its will on the Kashmiris. Indian security forces have often used excessive force, leading to gross violations of human rights of Kashmiris documented in reports issued by several human rights organizations, Genocide Watch,[151] and the UN Human Rights Commissioner in 2018 and 2019.[152] The discovery of unmarked mass graves[153] and the use of pellet guns[154] to blind young protestors attained a particular notoriety.

Fifthly, the evolution of global geopolitics following 9/11 and the launch of the US-led global war on terror afforded India a self-serving opportunity to project the indigenous Kashmiri struggle for self-determination as Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. Since the terrorist

incidents of 9/11 had blurred the distinction between freedom fighters (by people under occupation) and acts of terrorism, India tried to build a case against militant resistance to Indian rule in Indian-Occupied Kashmir with a view to deflecting global attention away from the atrocities being perpetrated by Indian authorities against Kashmiris. The incidents of terrorist attack on the assembly building in Srinagar (October 2001) and another one on Indian parliament in New Delhi (December 2001) were used by India to justify the use of force by Indian forces against the indigenous freedom struggle in the occupied territories. Pakistan continued to extend diplomatic, political and moral support to the Kashmiris on the grounds that Jammu and Kashmir was an internationally recognized disputed territory and Kashmiris had every right under international law to wage armed resistance to Indian occupation of the State. For its part, India continued to allege infiltration of militants across the LoC. Pakistan's view was that it was a common responsibility to stop infiltration, and Pakistan had done its best to fulfil its part. More importantly, Pakistan believed that it was important to address the root causes of this militancy, and argued that the militant groups in Kashmir and in Pakistan were active because of three reasons: the government-to-government talks between India and Pakistan had not yielded any result in resolving the dispute, which could be used by militants as a reason to pick up arms; the people of Kashmir had been deeply grieved that the close linkages between them and the people of Pakistan have been severed by force; and the disproportionate use of force by India was evoking violent reactions by militants against Indian forces.

Sixthly, India has hardened its position since 5 August 2019, when Article 370 and Article 35 A of its constitution were abrogated and the State was annexed as two Union territories of J&K and Ladakh. Nearly 8 years prior to that, in 2011, A.G. Noorani in his book on Article 35 and Constitutional History of Kashmir had cautioned that "but for Article 370 of the Constitution of India, there is no provision contained in the Constitution of India which applies per se to the State of Jammu

and Kashmir." He had opined that those clamouring for abrogating this Article of the Constitution were overlooking this fact. He further argued that Article 1 of Indian Constitution could not provide for a permanent accession of the State to India as India at that time had "declared publicly that she was bound morally, legally, constitutionally, and internationally, by her commitment to hold a plebiscite in the State of Jammu and Kashmir to determine the will of the people on the question of accession...."[155] The matter went to the Supreme Court of India, which, somehow, decided to uphold the abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35A by the Modi government.

Through the actions of 5 August 2019, non-Kashmiri subjects were provided the rights to purchase property and to vote. Pakistan characterized these developments as attempts towards demographic engineering by India so that it could change the Muslim-majority status of the State, details of which are given in the footnote.[156] A year after the 5 August 2019 action, Arundhati Roy, a noted author, described the brutality of the crackdown of Modi's government in the run up to the annexation of the Indian-Occupied Kashmir.[157] She further noted that the new Domicile Law had opened "floodgates" for non-Kashmiri subjects to get a right of residence in Kashmir, characterizing this process as a "cultural erasure" of Kashmir. She also compared how Kashmir's new Domicile Law was a cognate of India's "blatantly anti-Muslim" Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) that was passed in December 2019 and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).[158] In many ways, these steps illustrated the fact that the Modi government's approach was a negation of the assurances given by Prime Minister Vajpayee who had announced that the Kashmir issue would be resolved through the principles of *'Insaniyat, Kashmiriyat, and Jamhooriyat'*.[159] The Kashmir-related CBMs - ease of travel across the two sides of LoC, crossing points, bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, and intra-Kashmir trade - that had been conceived during the peace process of 2004-8 continued for some years, before coming to a complete halt.

Finally, there never was a time when the leadership of both countries could build a consensus within the stakeholders of their respective countries to agree on any framework to resolve the dispute. It was well known that each side would have to make some compromise on its formal position. It could be deduced that the apprehensions of losing one's position prevented both sides to take a leap forward and find a mutually acceptable solution for the larger strategic gain for both sides and indeed the region. The only time the two countries came close to resolving the issue in recent years was in 2007, when both sides were able to agree on the broad contours of a possible solution. The internal problems in Pakistan prevented the formalization of this informal understanding. This is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

The above discussion demonstrates that India has always viewed the State of Jammu and Kashmir from a strategic perspective, particularly viz Pakistan. India played for time and filibustered every possible attempt to resolve the dispute. In the early 1950s, negotiations were held at the prime minister level. Then in early and late 1960s, foreign ministers of the two countries met several times but without any result. Talks were also held after the Simla agreement of 1972 for delineation of the line of control in Kashmir. The bilateral route picked up speed in the 1990s, and a segment was allocated for discussion in the composite dialogue. However, no solution emerged out of any of the formal bilateral dialogues on Kashmir. India was not receptive to international mediation either, like the McNaughton Plan, Dixon Report, and Graham Mission. Meanwhile, the freedom struggle continued in the territories occupied by India, which was mostly crushed by force. The continuation of the status quo suited India and it has been able to sustain that because of being a larger party in terms of political and economic weight.

If India was not willing to settle this dispute right from 1947 and both the multilateral and bilateral approaches had succeeded, would it ever be possible for the two countries to find a solution to the conflict over Kashmir?

As described previously, Pakistan believes that its position is correct from legal, political, and historical perspectives. Legally, the UNSC resolutions had clearly called for a reference to the people of Kashmir to determine their political choice of joining India or Pakistan. India, too, had also pledged to implement these resolutions, though it reneged on its promises later. Politically, the dispute is a legacy of the partition process as being a Muslim-majority state, Kashmir should have been a part of Pakistan. Historically, there are deep-rooted socio-cultural ties between the people of Pakistan and the people of Kashmir, which cannot be severed by seven decades of forced separation. As a result, three generations of Kashmiris have suffered. Pakistan has, thus, continued to pin hopes on finding a peaceful solution of the dispute while making attempts to bring much-needed relief to the lives of ordinary Kashmiris, particularly those with divided families across borders, through the Kashmir-related CBMs.

It is in Pakistan's core interests to have peace and tranquillity on the line of control, which has continued to witness continual exchanges of fire, leading to civilian deaths and injuries, particularly on the Pakistan side, as the civilian population here does not live far from the line. It is, therefore, not surprising that Pakistan, for the larger strategic objective of peace for the Kashmiris, readily accepted the ceasefire 'understanding' of 2003. Further, Pakistan has been fighting a war against terrorism on its western front and logically would wish to avoid a two-front situation. By and large this understanding on ceasefire at the LoC has been respected, though on occasions heavy exchange of fire has been witnessed. In February 2021, the ceasefire understanding was reaffirmed, though the May 2025 confrontation witnessed another intense exchange of fire across the LoC.

Bilaterally, the Kashmir issue could have been resolved right in the early years. One real possibility was for the leaders of Congress and Muslim League to agree on Kashmir, a Muslim-majority state, ceding with Pakistan while Hyderabad, a Hindu-majority state, to be integrated with India. Since then, there have been several rounds of discussions, albeit with no result. In the recent past, on two occasions,

the two countries came to a stage when prospects for finding a solution brightened. Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to Lahore in February 1999 helped create an enabling environment to address this lingering issue. The then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has claimed that Vajpayee had mentioned to him his intent to propose a solution of the Kashmir dispute that Pakistan would not like to decline.[160] This offer, however, remains undocumented, and, therefore, cannot be verified. What is documented, though, is that both sides agreed to intensify efforts to resolve all outstanding issues, including Kashmir, and keep channels of communication open for a structured dialogue. The prospects of both countries addressing this issue dimmed following a clash on the Kargil Heights. The other, more vigorous attempt to resolve the issue, was in 2007, when after years of work in the back-channel, the two countries informally agreed on what came to be known as the so-called four-point formula.

The four-point formula of 2007 envisaged two units of Kashmir, comprising roughly of the areas administered by India and Pakistan, which would enjoy self-rule in finance, law & order, judiciary, elections and other matters of governance; a gradual de-militarization with a visible reduction of forces from the urban centres and end to terrorism; a joint mechanism on matters where there was inter-dependence of the two units, such as travel, tourism, culture, trade and disaster management; and defence of the two units would be the responsibility of India and Pakistan respectively.[161] This interim arrangement was to be monitored and reviewed after a decade or two. Details of the elements of this formula can be found in the books by S.K. Lambah and Khurshid Kasuri. The latter writes in his book 'Neither a Hawk, Nor a Dove' that after resolving the outstanding issues, both sides could work towards a permanent peace by signing a Treaty of Peace, Security, and Friendship.[162] Of course, it never came to that stage, as the four-point formula was not formalized.

What had prompted the two governments to engage in discussions on the four-point formula? Pakistan has always been keen to find a solution to this dispute because it is an unfinished item from the

partition process and a solution would bring peace and stability for itself, Kashmiris, and the region. For India, a solution would have opened up possibilities to further build up its regional and global standing. However, in his book, S.K. Lambah took a very different line, arguing that Musharraf was keen on this four-point formula because he was aware of Pakistan's reluctance to pursue the plebiscite route under the UNSC resolutions, and that on four occasions in the past, Pakistan had declined the plebiscite option.[163] This interpretation is incorrect and contrary to facts, and the well-known Pakistani position that UNSC resolutions provide a perfect framework for which all conditions mentioned in the resolutions must be met. Pakistan certainly wants the plebiscite to be held under the UN auspices. What Pakistan did not want was a plebiscite manipulated by India. It is on record that Pakistan has never shied from engaging in discussions to resolve the dispute both bilaterally and multilaterally.

It is worth observing that the four-point formula was quintessentially a formalization of the status quo, with softening of the LoC as a de facto border. Given the wide gulf in the positions of the two countries, this formula represented a breakthrough. It would have brought relief to the lives of Kashmiris and removed the main obstacles that lay in the way of normalizing relations between Pakistan and India. The two countries could have moved towards the concept of collective security, as other regions and geographic blocs at that time were doing. However, it is indeed regrettable that domestic issues in Pakistan in 2007 prevented further movement on formalizing the understanding worked out through back-channel diplomacy. The following year witnessed a complete breakdown of talks between the two countries. Ever since, no special effort has been made to resolve the issue. After Prime Minister Modi came to power in 2014, there was some chatter in the track 2 circles to attempt a reincarnation of the four-point formula in some modified form, but this was never discussed either in formal or back-channels.

With such a checkered history, how should the two countries resolve this dispute and move on? There are four parties to this conflict:

Pakistan, India, Kashmiris, and the international community. Given the congruences of history, culture and geography, Pakistan is likely to continue to extend its political, diplomatic, and moral support to Kashmiris to attain their right to self-determination. Indian leadership, on the other hand, has repeatedly announced that they regard Kashmir as India's integral part and are not ready to part with the state. Kashmiris, who have every right to decide their own political future, have shown tremendous courage in the face of ruthless use of force by Indian forces to secure their right to self-determination. Most Kashmiris wish to join Pakistan, while some political parties are willing to stay with India. There are also segments within the Kashmiri community that call for an independent state. As for the fourth party, the international community, it had taken a principled approach by adopting a series of resolutions calling for a plebiscite under UN auspices. While the UNSC resolutions are still on the books, the international community, having failed to oblige India to implement the UNSC resolutions, has effectively left the matter to be resolved bilaterally between India and Pakistan. Stephen Cohen believes that most governments are now tired of urging both countries to resolve the dispute and only pay lip service to normalization.[164]

The actions of the Modi government on 5 August 2019 and abolition of statehood were a big setback to the Kashmiris, as the very identity of Kashmiris had come under assault. This seems to have united the Kashmiri leadership, as each one of them would like to see the statehood restored. Prime Minister Modi and his colleagues kept promising that statehood would be restored, which was also ordered by the Supreme Court of India, but it was not clear what shape restored statehood would take. In the State elections held in September-October 2024, the National Conference together with Congress and the Communist Party of India won the majority (49 out of 90 seats), and formed a government, though being a Union territory the real powers continued to rest with the lieutenant governor of the state. The legislative assembly passed a resolution in November calling for a restoration of the special status of the State. The Kashmiri

diaspora has also been protesting and raising this issue in countries accepting universal jurisdiction for human rights issues.

For Pakistan, the restoration of Article 370 was effectively a non-issue, as Pakistan had never accepted the jurisdiction of the Indian Constitution over the State of Jammu and Kashmir, which remains a disputed territory as per the UNSC resolutions. If India restores statehood, it might satisfy the pro-India Kashmiri factions, but the dispute would still remain unresolved and could possibly oblige India to maintain constant deployment of its forces in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir and the region its peace and tranquillity.

Should Pakistan integrate Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as a provisional province is a question that has often been discussed. The short answer, in the view of this author, is that it should, because the people of GB had already decided to become a formal part of Pakistan. It would be recalled that the Maharaja had leased Gilgit Wazarat on the right bank of the Indus and most of Gilgit Agency and hill states like Hunza, Nagar, Yasin, and Ishkuman to the Government of British India to be administered by a political agent. Maharaja's rights there were nominal. Security was provided by Gilgit Scouts. With the lapse of British paramountcy, this area was to return to the Maharaja on 1st August 1947. The local people, however, did not wish to go back to Maharaja's rule. On 1st November, the Governor of Gilgit, Brigadier Ghansara Singh surrendered to the Gilgit Scouts and signed an instrument of surrender on 3rd November. Major Brown, the commandant of Gilgit Scouts, who knew that his men would not accept a Hindu ruler as they had their own way of life and cultural imprint, told his troops on 3rd November that they now served Karachi, as the only help he could get to keep control was from the Government of Pakistan. The people of GB, thus, proclaimed Gilgit as a part of Pakistan and hoisted Pakistan's flag. Major William Brown was awarded posthumously Sitara e Pakistan in 1993 for his role in the liberation struggle of Gilgit-Baltistan. Skardu was reportedly liberated a year later on 14 August 1948 when Lt. Col. Thapa of 6th

Jammu and Kashmir infantry along with 250 soldiers surrendered to liberation forces.

Nearly 77 years later, the people of GB are now keen to get formally integrated with Pakistan. The GB Assembly adopted a resolution in March 2021 expressing the will of its people to join Pakistan as a provisional province.[165] The word 'provisional' was kept in the assembly's resolution in order to preserve Pakistan's formal position on the Kashmir-related UN resolutions. In Pakistan too, there is broad consensus that GB should be integrated with Pakistan with the status of a provisional province, subject to final settlement of the Kashmir dispute. The GB committee established by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had recommended that GB be given a status akin to a province of Pakistan. In January 2019, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had ordered greater autonomy and rights to GB similar to that of other provinces. Soon thereafter, Prime Minister Imran Khan announced in November 2020 the decision of his government to grant provincial status to GB. Though the people of GB have not yet received the status of a provisional province, they enjoy administrative autonomy and have practically been integrated into every walk of Pakistani life.

As for Azad Jammu and Kashmir, it had been established on 24 October 1947 in the areas of the State liberated from the Dogra rule, and has since then functioned as a nominally self-governing territory administered by Pakistan. In the wake of the Indian decision to abrogate the special status of Indian-Occupied Kashmir, there were suggestions that Pakistan should consider integrating AJK with Pakistan. However, the dominant view was that this could undermine Pakistan's legal stance, and, therefore, if the integration of AJK with Pakistan was considered, this should be a part of the final settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. Meanwhile, the people of AJK have also become a part of the polity of Pakistan.

Perspectives

Over decades, the dispute over Kashmir has been explained and understood from multiple lenses. Some describe the issue through the lens of the Partition and its handling by the British, or the manner in which the Radcliffe Punjab Award was manipulated to give India land-access to Kashmir. Some point to the strong emotional attachment that Nehru had with Kashmir and his keenness to get Kashmir into Indian Union, while others view it through historical perspectives of actions undertaken - the inability of the tribals to take over Srinagar, the nexus that Shaikh Abdullah formed with Nehru, and of course the perpetual failure of India and Pakistan to arrive at an acceptable solution. The reasons are now history, but the issue remains alive and has cost both nations and their people immeasurable material and human resources to maintain their respective positions on the Kashmir dispute. They could have made a genuine attempt to resolve the issue and reap the benefits of peace and tranquillity for all parties – Kashmiris, Pakistanis, and Indians. What makes the problem of Kashmir doubly more difficult is the animosity between India and Pakistan in the nuclear environment.[166]

It was only the four-point formula of 2007 that came closest to getting a broad agreement of both sides being the most realistic way forward to address the Kashmir issue. However, since then, considerable water has flown under the bridge. Is it possible for both countries to pick up the thread, and stitch together a new formula with some adjustments and modifications necessitated by updated ground realities? This author is of the view that this should be possible provided there is a demonstrated political will on both sides to resolve the dispute. The status quo is a lose-lose for all parties. The Kashmiris have been robbed of their distinct identity, or *Kashmiriyat*. The presence of Indian forces is a constant hurt to their dignity. Meanwhile, the Indian government does not appear to be ready to engage in any talks with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue or for that matter on any other issue.

If the Indian side were to ever realize that the benefits that would accrue to it from a resolution of the Kashmir dispute far outweigh the status quo, which entails constant friction with Pakistan and excessive use of force in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir, there could be an opportunity to cast a fresh look at the immensely valuable work done by the drafters of the so-called four-point formula and work on it to evolve a solution that all parties could live with. In that sense, the four-point formula would not be the end point, but a reasonable starting point for evolving a permanent solution to the Kashmir dispute.

This would require two prerequisites: One, both countries would need to be convinced that a resolution of the Kashmir dispute would open up enormous opportunities for regional peace and development. Since compromising on positions is hard, there is a tendency to stay put and not give in. Diplomacy is about finding compromises where neither side wins entirely nor loses completely. Looking back, it appears that this must have been the spirit guiding the negotiators of the four-point formula. Secondly, the two countries would need to establish an authorized back-channel with a clear mandate from the principals in both countries to explore a similar formula based on the contemporary realities. With perseverance and a bit of luck, both countries could develop a consensus on the basic contours of a possible agreement. In such a scenario, the people of Kashmir would have to be taken onboard, and all major stakeholders in both countries would also have to be appropriately sensitized.

Several scholars, former practitioners, and other notable persons from academia and civil society were consulted to ascertain whether both sides should make an attempt to reincarnate a modified version of the 2007 four-point formula to resolve the Kashmir dispute. If so, how? And would back-channel diplomacy help again like it did last time? Elizabeth Threlkeld,[167] Senior Fellow and Director of the South Asia program at the Stimson Center in Washington DC, agrees that the 2007 four-point formula represented "one potential framework for progress on the Kashmir issue. It has the advantage of having been developed through previous rounds of dialogue such that future

negotiators would not have to start from scratch. That said, it is not the only possible way forward in Kashmir. What matters just as much as the form an agreement ultimately takes is the process through which it is reached". She agrees that back-channel diplomacy and track 2 dialogues can help to generate the much-needed trust that will be critical for ensuring an agreement is implemented successfully and endures. Pakistan's former Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani found "a willingness to look at the four-point formula with some modifications" when he interacted with the Indians in a track 2 setting. However, the Indians would like to see it "repackaged while retaining the spirit" of the four-point formula. Backchannel, in his view, was helpful earlier, and generated some serious and workable ideas. Jilani is convinced that a revival of the back-channel would be essential to making progress. Former Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir also agrees that the four-point formula offers the best approach, but he is not sure it would find any takers now on the Indian side. Back-channel may help, but there is no point having it in the absence of a front channel. Both countries must at least have their respective high commissioners in place, he said.

Former National Security Advisor Dr. Moeed Yusuf is of the view that whenever an attempt to resolve the dispute is made in the future, this would most likely be around the four-point formula. He recalls that this formula was not meant to be the final solution, but was deliberately articulated as a "temporary solution", because the final signing on the dotted line might never happen. Author Raja Qaiser Ahmed feels that revisiting a modified version of the 2007 four-point formula could provide "a workable solution". Although political conditions in both countries have changed since 2007, the core idea of moving beyond a zero-sum approach "remains relevant." He advises an "incremental approach," starting with non-controversial aspects like cross-LoC trade and people-to-people contact before gradually addressing political and security issues. Confidence-building measures, such as military de-escalation and joint humanitarian initiatives, can help build trust. Raja Qaiser feels that third-party

mediation in a limited capacity could be explored through trusted interlocutors or Track 2 diplomacy. Backchannel diplomacy has proven effective in past negotiations, as public diplomatic initiatives are often vulnerable to domestic politics and media pressures. John Gill of NESA Center is of the view that the so-called four-point formula of 2007 might serve as a "useful non-paper" to get a conversation going in a backchannel setting. He adds that the backchannel diplomacy between the two sides "can be effective if it is regular and institutionalized". At the same time, the respective interlocutors must enjoy full confidence of the leaders on each side. Gill advises that putting the respective high commissioners back in the two capitals would be a tremendous step—perhaps that could serve as a "cover" for initiating a backchannel dialogue, not involving the high commissioners, but using their return to distract the public eye and restore a dialogue at the open level simultaneously.

The above views notwithstanding, some academics and practitioners are not so optimistic about the relevance of the erstwhile four-point formula to the new ground realities, especially since 2019. Professor Christine Fair was of the view that the four-point formula was "no longer viable." She elaborated that India was now seeing the Kashmir dispute in fundamentally different ways under the BJP. Fakir Aijazuddin was also of the view that the four-point formula was "now history." He wondered if Prime Minister Modi would accept even a modified version of his predecessor's ideas. He was also not certain as to who in Pakistan would implement the formula, and how. Naeem Khalid Lodhi cites the present disparities between India and Pakistan to argue that India is "not likely to concede an iota of concession" on any issue including Kashmir. Khurram Abbas notes that India's unilateral abrogation of Articles 370 and 35-A has "significantly diminished" the prospects of implementing this formula. Javid Hussain[168] believes that given the growing disparities between the power potential of India and Pakistan, the final settlement of the Kashmir dispute should be left to some "opportune time" in the future when the necessary conditions for such a settlement are available.

Pravin Sawhney[169], a noted Indian analyst, is of the view that Pakistan's core concern - Kashmir - has acquired a new status: from a regional and bilateral issue between India and Pakistan, it is now "a global and trilateral issue between India, Pakistan and China." He elaborated that with global geopolitics having shifted to Asia Pacific, all issues including Kashmir have global implications since the three great powers (the US, China, Russia) as key drivers are shaping and stabilising the new world order here. For this reason, when China's President Xi Jinping met Prime Minister Modi in Chennai in October 2019, he told Modi that for the development of South Asia, "triangular peace" between India, Pakistan and China was essential. India rejected China's suggestion and instead sought the US' support to compete with China - seen as the main rival - in South Asia. Consequently, the Kashmir issue, while remaining Pakistan's core concern, "metamorphosed into a challenge for China" after Beijing declared Ladakh as its territory in 2020.

The above perspectives illustrate that the views profoundly vary on how the Kashmir dispute could be resolved. While some feel that a reincarnated version of the four-point formula might stand a chance of success, others are less optimistic. However, nearly everyone does recognize the need to find a creative but mutually acceptable solution to the issue as early as possible, because it continues to weigh adversely on the prospects of a future of peace and prosperity for both countries. The detailed discourse in this chapter makes it evident that for decades, the Kashmir dispute has remained the chief impediment to normalization of relations between India and Pakistan, and its early resolution would help make the future of the subcontinent more peaceful and cooperative. Three generations of Kashmiris have resisted Indian occupation and there is no guarantee that the future generations of Kashmiris would accept Indian rule. True, there are some Kashmiri political parties which have reconciled to the ground reality and prefer to find a solution within the status quo. However, even these Kashmiri parties were quite upset at losing their statehood, which they consider as integral to their identity as a people. It is in

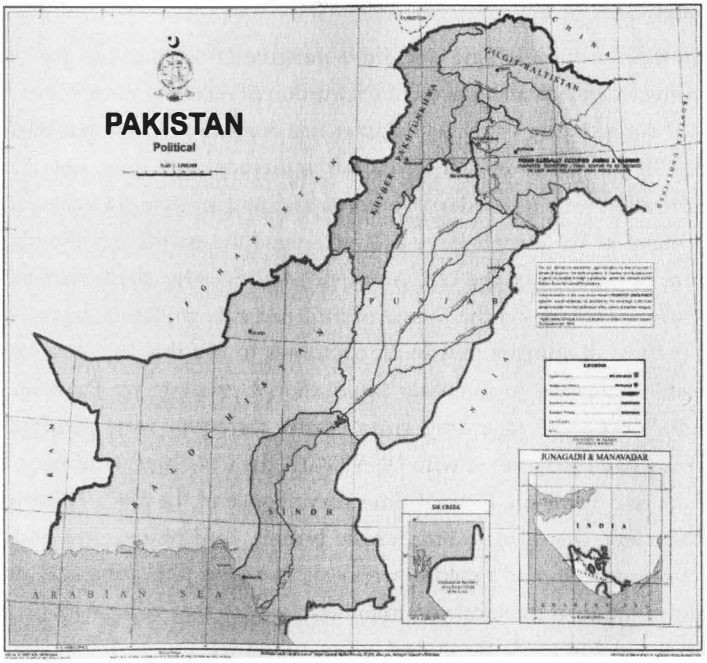
India's larger interest, and that of the region's, that a serious attempt is made to find a solution.

A reincarnated four-point formula compatible with ground realities could be a plausible option provided the interests of all parties, India, Pakistan, and above all Kashmiris, are kept in mind. Further, as in the past, this would stand a chance only if India and Pakistan normalize their bilateral relations and create an environment conducive enough to address this issue. Meanwhile, the two countries need to make concerted efforts to avoid the risks associated with a crisis situation that could erupt any time, just like what happened in February 2019 and May 2025. Since both countries are nuclear weapon states and are developing missiles, drones, and other technologies, they need to swiftly evolve a risk reduction and risk management mechanism.

Absence of any dialogue can have dangerous implications for both countries. Indian allegations of infiltration of militants across the LoC hold depreciating value, as Pakistan has demonstrated with evidence that it has made efforts to curtail militancy and does not allow infiltration from its borders. To a certain extent, even India knows this, as many of its officials have acknowledged the efforts made by both sides to ensure that the LoC is not violated. So why, then, does India continue to harp on the theme of infiltration of militants every now and then? It appears that India continues to use this as a part of its hostile narrative to maintain international pressure on Pakistan. If India's concerns regarding cross border terrorism were genuine, it would have cooperated with UNMOGIP, the UN observer mission for India and Pakistan, for real time surveillance of the LoC. To further allay any fears regarding cross border infiltration, the Indian government should explore proposals like joint patrolling and close coordination at the local commanders' level so that infiltrators do not cross the LoC. All these and more measures are in the realm of possibility, provided this begins with India recognizing that a peaceful future with Pakistan as its sovereign neighbour is possible, and that the process runs through dialogue, collaboration, and lack of

impulsive finger-pointing, predicated on mutual respect and neighbourliness.

Meanwhile, the official maps of Pakistan (updated by the Survey of Pakistan since March 2021) also now reflect the ground realities. A red dotted line represents approximately the line of control in Jammu & Kashmir, which moves north from point NJ 9842 up to Karakoram Pass. The GB has a regional boundary with the rest of J&K. The AJK has been shown as Azad Jammu & Kashmir as defined in the AJK Interim Constitution Act, 1974. The map key shows that the State of Jammu & Kashmir and its accession is yet to be decided through a plebiscite under the relevant UNSC resolutions, thus preserving Pakistan's legal stance on the dispute.



2 Official Map of Pakistan

Source: Survey of Pakistan, Ministry of Defense, Government of Pakistan

The updated map has addressed a longstanding concern that in the absence of authentic Pakistani maps, all kinds of maps were circulating in the digital space, including those by India which illegally showed the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir as a part of India. However, some entities such as the UN, BBC, National Geographic, etc. have used maps that show the ground situation i.e. Indian-administered, Pakistan-administered, and China-administered Kashmir.[170] The updated Pakistani map now reflects not only Pakistan's formal position but also the situation on ground. As for India, its official maps show the Indian-Occupied Kashmir as an integral part of India. Of late, its leaders have intensified their rhetoric to take over the Pakistan-held Kashmir. Of course, Pakistan would never let that happen, and so, the only thing this rhetoric results in is to vitiate the bilateral environment further.

All that we are witnessing today in terms of the Kashmir dispute goes back to 1947. It is a tragic chapter of subcontinental history that both sides started their journeys as independent nations with such a high degree of mutual hostility that it cast a dark shadow on the future attempts for peace between the two nations. Whenever there was an initiative to give peace a chance, one or both sides would adopt positions that appeared tactically sound and popular, but strategically not beneficial to either country. The mutual mistrust has kept distracting both countries away from the path of looking for win-win options. The Jammu and Kashmir dispute is an example of this trend. Had the matter been referred to the people of Kashmir right at the beginning to decide which country they chose to join in accordance with the principles of Indian Independence Act 1947, the issue would have been settled a long time ago and saved both countries so much time, energy, and resources. Alas, a far more contentious path was chosen.

IQBAL FORUM

Chapter 4 – Shadows of Terrorism

The issue of terrorism has cast its dark shadow on the subcontinent ever since India and Pakistan gained independence. Mahatma Gandhi was murdered in 1948 by an RSS zealot. Liaqat Ali Khan was assassinated by an unidentified man in 1951. In the 1980s, Indira Gandhi was murdered by her Sikh bodyguards and Rajiv Gandhi by a Tamil militant. Zia-ul-Haq was killed in a plane crash, presumed to be an act of terror. Benazir Bhutto lost her life in a terrorist attack in December 2007. These acts of terrorism notwithstanding, widespread violent extremism did not peak in the subcontinent until the 1990s, when it simultaneously surfaced in various other parts of the world. For the US, domestic terrorism as well as non-state transnational terrorism increased, particularly during the period 1993 to 2001. The shootings at CIA headquarters in Langley Virginia (1993), the bombing of World Trade Centre in New York (1993), the Oklahoma City bombing (1995), the truck bombings in US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya (1998), and the USS Cole bombing (2000), to name a few, raised the terror alert the world over.

This was a time when Al Qaeda and some other terrorist organizations had begun to spread their tentacles from the Middle East to Central, South and East Asia. Many of these organizations had cloaked their mission with a self-styled interpretation of the concept of jihad. In South Asia, jihad has historically been used to wage war against those they perceived as enemies of Islam; for example, as Sayyid Ahmad of

Rai Bareilly and Shah Ismail did when they both fought against the Sikhs and were martyred in the city of Balakot in 1831. In recent times, the practice took roots during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s when a religiously-motivated military struggle raged against the Soviet forces. This came to be known as the Afghan jihad. A decade later, in the 1990s, militancy began to intensify in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir to resist the occupation of the State by Indian security forces. Although it was largely an indigenous struggle, Indians believe that considerable support came from the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM). Ayesha Jalal in her book, 'Partisans of Allah – Jihad in South Asia', contends that in South Asia, the concept of Jihad, which is an element of Islamic faith and ethics, had assumed the dimension of a political injunction to wage war against the enemies of Islam.[171]

The issue of transnational terrorism was catapulted to the top of the global priorities after the twin towers in New York came under attack on September 11, 2001. The UN Security Council adopted resolution 1373,[172] obligating all states to take myriads of measures to curb terrorism. This resolution strengthened the sanctions regime already in place vide UNSC resolution 1267,[173] which required action against Al Qaeda, Afghan Taliban, and their associates. The sanctions regime against terrorists was further reinforced by UNSC resolution 1540,[174] which called upon states to establish domestic controls in order to prevent non-state actors from getting access to weapons of mass destruction.

India, which had been struggling to address the sharp rise in Kashmiri resistance to Indian occupation throughout the 1990s, found an opportunity in the events of 9/11 to malign the Kashmiri resistance to Indian occupation of the State, project itself as a victim of the so-called cross-border terrorism, and malign Pakistan for its support to the Kashmiris's right to self-determination. This narrative may have been intended to find resonance with the US leadership, which was already on the cusp of launching its war on terror to fight what President Bush termed as radical Islam.[175] Two incidents provided further space to

India to project its narrative: a militant attack on the state legislative assembly in Srinagar (October 2001), and an attack on the Indian parliament building in New Delhi (December 2001), which, according to India, were carried out by the LeT and JeM. Sympathies poured in from the world over for India being a victim of terrorism. Pakistan also condemned the attack, but demanded evidence about the involvement of Pakistani groups before India took any further action. Pakistan's demand was ignored as India promptly began to build a case for war against Pakistan. Consequently, tensions between the two countries started mounting, eventually leading to a military standoff. For a while, it appeared that India had succeeded in projecting itself as a victim of terrorism allegedly sponsored by Pakistan. However, in time, questions began to arise around the Indian story about the attack on the Indian parliament. After years of hearing the case, the Indian Supreme Court sentenced Afzal Guru, a Kashmiri from the Baramola district of Indian-Occupied Kashmir, to hanging, while admitting that the evidence against Guru was only circumstantial. The Court cited that Guru was being punished to satisfy the "collective conscience of society."[176] Years later, it was further revealed that one Davinder Singh, a police officer, was arrested, who had apparently tortured Guru and even coerced him to come to Delhi. India Penguin published in 2016 a book[177] containing essays with introduction by Arundhati Roy on the controversial hanging. In retrospect, clearly, the link to Pakistan claimed in the early days of the incident was a knee-jerk reaction by India.

India's allegations about Pakistan's unproven involvement in the 2001 attack on parliament had followed a strikingly similar pattern that had been adopted a year earlier in the case of two terror incidents in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir (Chittisingpora and Pathribal). Foreign militants had been blamed initially, but in due course the facts unfolded differently. In March 2000, days before President Clinton's visit to India, a dastardly terrorist attack killed dozens of Sikhs in a town called Chittisinghpora. Initially two Pakistani nationals were blamed. However, both were acquitted years later in 2011 as the

allegation was not proven.[178] The reality, according to an interview of former Lt. General KS Gill, was that some surrendered militants and lower rank army personnel had plotted to kill these Sikhs.[179] A noted journalist recalls[180] that President Bill Clinton, in an introduction to Madeleine Albright's book, 'The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs', had asserted that Hindu militants had murdered these Sikhs on the eve of his visit to India.

That same month of March 2000, seven people were killed in the village of Pathribal for being alleged perpetrators of Chittisinghpora, only to find much later that they were wrongly implicated by falsifying DNA samples. Local residents protested these killings, and many of these protestors were also tragically murdered in what came to be known as the Barakpora massacre. The police found out that the Pathribal victims were indeed local residents when their bodies were exhumed. The Central Bureau of Investigation carried out an investigation and indicted some army officers for a fake encounter and cold-blooded murders. Curiously, the Indian army later closed[181] the investigation against four of its officers and a junior commissioned officer involved in this fake encounter citing lack of sufficient evidence.[182] The then chief minister of Indian-Occupied Kashmir expressed his disappointment. In retrospect, it can be seen that these two terrorist incidents and the parliament attack had been wrongly attributed to foreign militants, perhaps to project the freedom struggle in Kashmir as cross-border terrorism and cast Pakistan in a bad light.

After 9/11, General Musharraf decided to take on the militant infrastructure, much of which had been left over as a legacy of the war against the Soviets. Strict measures were taken against the militants at home and their organisations, many of which were proscribed. He was convinced that curbing terrorists and militants was in Pakistan's own interest. However, there was a scathing blowback from the militants. Pakistan's own society and culture began to experience a devastating impact, including the fear of an onslaught against pro-Western elements inside Pakistan. The youth of Pakistan was the main

casualty of this fight against terrorism, as militant organizations began to recruit them for their so-called jihad. The people of Pakistan steadfastly fought back. As the law enforcement authorities initiated actions to flush the terrorists out of their hideouts, scholars supported the efforts by questioning the politicized use of the concept of jihad, as this was being exploited by the terrorists to justify their violence. Though the fight against terrorism cost Pakistan enormous human and financial resources, it became obvious to the world that Pakistan was a victim of transnational terrorism and that the claims by Indian politicians about Pakistan being a supporter of terrorism were baseless.

Although there was no evidence of any linkage of the attack on Indian parliament to Pakistan, and there remained huge question marks on the way the case was investigated, India decided to mobilise hundreds of thousands of troops on the line of control and international border with Pakistan. For Pakistan, this deployment presented a two-front situation, as the country was heavily occupied on the western front dealing with those militants and terrorists pouring into the Pakistani side of the border who were escaping from the bombings by America in Afghanistan. While the rest of the world viewed the attack on the Indian parliament as the reason for the two countries to come to the brink of war,[183] Pakistan could see a familiar pattern that India was following: blame Pakistan instantly, investigate later, and hush up if local elements were involved. Internal problems were being externalized by India. After nearly ten months, better sense prevailed as the deployments were de-mobilized.

Meanwhile, both India and Pakistan continued to face terrorist attacks throughout 2002: the Kaluchak massacre in Jammu (14 May), the attack on Akshardham temple in Gujarat (24 September), a grenade attack on a church in Islamabad (17 March), a bus bombing in Karachi that killed eleven Frenchmen (8 May), and a car bomb near the US Consulate in Karachi (14 June 2002) to name a few. Since the attacks in Pakistan were targeted mostly against foreigners and faith-based entities, Pakistan strongly suspected some forces were trying to create

a wedge between Pakistan and the West or to instigate sectarian strife in the country. General Musharraf sought to initiate a peace process with India in order to inject calm into the eastern border. He even went to the extent of giving an assurance to India in 2004 that Pakistan would not permit its territory to be used to support terrorism. Although talks had begun with India under the rubric of composite dialogue, tensions remained, as terrorist incidents were occurring in both countries without any relent.

In the years following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, while much of the world, particularly the West, had put their focus on so-called Islamic extremism or terrorism, there was also another phenomenon on the rise in India; elements of Hindu extremism, often referred to by the name of "saffron terrorism." For example, late in the night of February 18 2007, the Samjhauta Express train that operated between Delhi and Lahore was bombed, killing 68 people, including 43 from Pakistan. Pakistan condemned the attack and the issue came up in the joint anti-terrorism mechanism, but India did not agree to joint investigation, nor did it agree to share the report of its investigation with Pakistan. India's own investigations indicated later that the attack was perpetrated by Hindutva extremists, including prime suspect Naba Kumar Sarkar alias Swami Aseemanand, an RSS associate. He was tried but later acquitted by a special NIA court in March 2019 along with three others on the pretext that the prosecution was not able to prove the allegations.[184] The government of Pakistan termed it a travesty of justice.

As it were, the Samjhauta blast was part of a series of terrorist attacks committed by Hindu extremists in 2006-7, including the September 2006 explosion at a Muslim cemetery in Malegaon that was initially blamed on Muslim militants, but later Swami Aseemanand allegedly confessed to the bombings;[185] the May 2007 Mecca masjid blast in Hyderabad that was attributed to a Hindu extremist group by the NIA, but curiously, the group was acquitted 11 years later for "lack of evidence;"[186] and the October 2007 bomb attack at Ajmer Dargah, Rajasthan. The Maharashtra ATS chief Hemant Karkare, who was

investigating these cases, had found the role of many Hindu extremists in these terrorist attacks, and also exposed the likely involvement of Lt. Colonel Prasad Shrikant Purohit in the Samjhauta train blast. Purohit was tried for allegedly supplying explosive material for the 2008 Malegaon blast. He spent nine years in jail. Karkare was attacked by Hindu nationalists and severely criticised, including by Mr. Modi, who as chief minister of Gujarat called him *Deshdrohi* or anti-national, and by Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, BJP's member from Bhopal known for her Hindu nationalist rhetoric. Karkare's courage to expose the truth cost him his life. Pakistan has consistently called upon the Indian government to bring the perpetrators of terrorist attacks on Samjhauta train to justice.

In the year 2006, when the India-Pakistan peace process had gathered momentum, an incident involving Indian covert support to Baloch insurgents came to light. Deepak Kaul, a suave and well-spoken operative who served in the Indian high commission in Pakistan, had maintained regular contact with the leadership of Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and other insurgent groups in Balochistan. He would also supply them financial resources to carry out destabilization in Pakistan. In 2006, he called a BLA activist from his UK sim using his pseudo-Muslim name, and asked him to visit Islamabad. When the BLA activist asked Deepak the venue of the meeting, he told him to take a cab from Islamabad airport to Chakri and check into a rest stop at the Chakri service area on the Islamabad-Lahore motorway, and that he would see him the next morning. Deepak had earlier sought permission from the Pakistan foreign office to visit India by road. On the designated day, Deepak met the BLA activist in Chakri service area to hand over large amounts of money to be passed on to the leadership of BLA and BRA. Since Deepak Kaul's calls were being monitored on the 5 sims being used by him, Pakistan's security authorities were able to record his entire meeting with the BLA activist. As soon as money was handed over to the BLA activist, Pakistani authorities moved in and apprehended the two

from the Chakri rest stop. The matter was brought to the notice of the Pakistan foreign office.

According to the director general of the foreign office dealing with South Asia at that time, the foreign secretary spoke to President Musharraf, who was on a state visit abroad. The President took the view that making these findings public at this time might jeopardize the peace process. It was decided to hand over Deepak to the Indian high commission with the direction that he must leave the country within 24 hours. The newspapers carried the news of Deepak's expulsion, but did not know the true cause. The Indian high commission was informed that the reason for expulsion was not being made public so as not to disrupt the peace process. This incident, for which documentation is available in the foreign ministry of Pakistan, revealed how India was continuing to instil destabilization in Balochistan, even though it always blamed Pakistan for disrupting peace initiatives. This is an example of the Indian government indulging in what it accuses Pakistan of doing, a kind of double gaming.

Undeterred, the composite dialogue continued, as firstly there was sufficient political will in the leadership of the time in both countries (Manmohan Singh and Pervez Musharraf) to not let this opportunity for peace lapse; and secondly, mechanisms were already in place to discuss these matters. A segment of the composite dialogue was dedicated to the subject of terrorism for discussions between the respective home/interior secretaries. A joint anti-terrorism mechanism (JATM) had also been formed in 2006 to cooperatively deal with the menace of terrorism. This mechanism, however, did not prove to be effective. The peace process got a heavy jolt in July 2008, when India blamed Pakistan for an attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul. Pakistan's foreign minister condemned the bombing, and stated that the menace of terrorism negates the very essence of human values. Pakistan was quite satisfied with the progress of the peace process and found no reason to be involved in such a terrorist attack. It even

offered its cooperation for investigations. Yet, the Indian side decided to place a pause on the peace process.

In November 2008, the city of Mumbai came under a terrorist attack that killed hundreds. Pakistan's foreign minister was in Delhi at that time for talks to start the fifth round of the composite dialogue process. In the aftermath of the attack, the Pakistan foreign minister expressed sympathy with the government and people of India, and decided to stay on to complete his visit as a gesture of solidarity with India. However, India decided to react in the manner that had become a familiar pattern by then. It chose to completely halt the peace process without waiting for investigations. As if on cue, the media in India started spewing fire against Pakistan. This knee-jerk reaction not only raised tensions between India and Pakistan but also caused irreparable damage to the modestly rising levels of trust between the two countries. India shared with Pakistan a dossier on 5 January 2009 containing some information about the attacks. The details of the dossier were also made available to Indian papers for publication the following day. While the anguish of the government and people of India was understandable, it appeared to Pakistan that India was playing to the gallery rather than making a serious attempt to help prosecute the suspects. Nevertheless, Pakistan set up a FIA-led task force to scrutinize the information material that India had provided on 5 January 2009 with a view to registering a case against the accused LeT operatives.

The Western countries also wanted Pakistan to take decisive action against the Mumbai suspects, but refrained from accusing the government of Pakistan or its intelligence agencies of involvement. Within 48 hours of the Mumbai attacks, the CIA Director Hayden told the Pakistani ambassador in Washington that CIA intelligence showed no direct ISI link, while President Bush himself called the Indian prime minister to inform him that the new Pakistani government was not involved.[187] The Western world also recognized the need to address the root causes of tensions – the Kashmir dispute.

The UK foreign secretary, David Miliband, argued in his article in the Guardian published on 15 January 2009 that if the Kashmir dispute was resolved, it would "help deny extremists in the region one of their main calls to arms."[188] This in his view would enable Pakistani authorities to focus more effectively on tackling the threat on their western borders. During his visit to India in January 2009, he stated before the press that "he did not believe that the attacks were directed by the Pakistani State."[189] These remarks infuriated the Indian government. The British Foreign Office nevertheless stood by Miliband's statement, saying that these views were "fully consistent with Britain's stated view" that any conflict likely to be exploited by terrorists must be resolved quickly.[190] India was not willing to take any such advice and continued to crush the freedom struggle in Indian-Occupied Kashmir with ruthless force, leading the struggle to become militant.

Based on its perception that Pakistan was supporting terrorism, India started a comprehensive campaign to malign Pakistan at home and abroad, and Indian leaders indulged in hostile rhetoric and war hysteria. Fortunately in this instance, India did not disconnect its bilateral diplomatic channels with Pakistan, which enabled both sides to remain in constant touch. For its part, Pakistan as part of its commitment to eradicate terrorism and violent extremism, initiated actions against leaders of LeT and Jamaat ud Dawa' (JuD), including placement of many of them on Schedule IV of the Anti-Terrorist Act of 1997 and a freeze on their accounts.

Pakistan was willing to cooperate further with the investigations, but asserted that it needed more authentic and actionable evidence from India to make progress in the trial of Mumbai suspects. India's dossier did not have enough answers to certain questions: For instance, how did the Indian Coast Guard and Indian Navy, which ordinarily spot and capture any foreign fishing boat straying into Indian waters, miss a boat carrying attackers with ammunition? How is it that the attackers kept firing for over three days without replenishments? Other similar questions remained unanswered. As the incident had

occurred in one country while the trial was taking place in the other, Pakistan required from India more legally tenable information. After repeated requests to allow the visit of a judicial commission to record the statements of prosecution witnesses, India allowed the visit in March 2012, more than three years after the incident.

Meanwhile a few additional question marks emerged on the narrative India had built around the Mumbai terrorist attack, such as the ones raised by the book 'Who killed Karkare?'[191] Another book 'The Betrayal of India – Revisiting the 26/11 Evidence',[192] also raised several unanswered questions on India's description of what had happened. India continuously dismissed all these questions. As such, the lack of full information and evidence led to considerable delays in the Pakistani trial for over 16 years, even though it was presented by the Indian government to its public as Pakistan's reluctance to take action against terrorists. It is regrettable that the two countries were unable to deal with the challenge of transnational terrorism in a cooperative spirit. The result is obvious. One, the mistrust between the two governments had now permeated to the people of the two countries. Two, every time both countries have since tried to resume dialogue, militants, terrorists or detractors of peace have sprung into action. The only way to break this cycle by both countries would have been to engage in an uninterruptible dialogue and form a joint front against terrorists.

On the western frontier, the US-led NATO made considerable progress in eliminating the Al Qaeda elements, thanks in large part to the vital support that Pakistan had extended. Once the bulk of Al Qaeda had been destroyed (except for Osama bin Laden, who was still in hiding), the US shifted its goal post and started warring against the Taliban who had retreated to the mountains after the US invasion of Afghanistan. Despite its military superiority, the US was making limited progress, and began to point the blame at Pakistan for its lack of success. With negative global attention on Pakistan, India joined the chorus of voices coming from the US and other Western countries and started complaining that Pakistan was also not reining in the militants

that targeted India. At this point, India scaled up the pitch of its narrative by taking the position that Pakistan was using terrorism as an instrument of policy, and was, therefore, not a reliable partner for the US-led war on terror. The US and Western countries also began to empathize with India's narrative, because the US itself was complaining about the safe havens that the US thought Pakistan had extended to the Afghan Taliban and Haqqanis.

By 2009, the TTP-backed and other militants had managed to build hideouts inside Pakistan. In recognition of this fact, President Obama, who assumed the US presidency in January 2009, changed gears and decided to build up Pakistan's military and economic resilience through the Kerry Lugar Berman bill. In parallel and to allow for it to focus on its western front, Pakistan made fresh attempts to restart the peace process with India. The prime ministers of India and Pakistan met in Sharm El Sheikh on the sidelines of a NAM meeting on 16 July 2009. Both agreed that terrorism was the main threat to both countries. In the joint statement, the Indian prime minister reiterated the need to bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks to justice and his Pakistani counterpart assured that Pakistan will do everything in its power in this regard. At the same time, the statement also mentioned that Pakistan had some information on threats in Balochistan and other areas.[193] In Pakistan, this was perceived as a recognition of the fact that India was involved in Balochistan's instability. (It was only a few years later in 2016, when Kulbashan Jadhav, an Indian spy was arrested, that full facts came to light on Indian involvement in Balochistan. More about this later in this chapter). Both prime ministers agreed to share "real time, credible and actionable information on any future terrorist threats." It was agreed in Sharm El Sheikh that action on terrorism should not be linked to the composite dialogue process. This provision was inserted because in the past India had been using terrorism as an excuse to stop the peace process.

All this while, Pakistan continued its military operations against terrorists, first in Swat in 2009, in South Waziristan in 2012, and then in North Waziristan in June 2014, when a comprehensive and

carefully coordinated military operation called *Zarb e Azb* was launched against the militants holed up in Pakistan's tribal areas. In what appeared to be retaliation for these operations, in December 2014, the TTP attacked an Army Public School in Peshawar, killing 141 persons, 132 of them children. This shocked the Pakistani psyche, and considering that the vast majority of the victims were innocent children, there was a massive uproar in Pakistan and cries for decisive revenge against the TTP and other terrorist organizations. Shortly thereafter, the government of Pakistan launched a National Action Plan, a comprehensive set of policies and actions which included reform of madrassas, the proscription of the entities engaged in acts of terror, and the launch of intelligence-based operations.

A year later, when India and Pakistan were making yet another attempt to normalize relations, including a surprise visit to Lahore by Prime Minister Modi on 25 December 2015, India's air force station in Pathankot came under attack on the night between 1st and 2nd January 2016, killing 7 soldiers and 1 civilian. The meeting of the two foreign secretaries that was scheduled for mid-January was called off. In June, the Director General of India's National Investigation Agency (NIA), Mr. Sharad Kumar, in an interview to CNN News 18, stated that there was no evidence of the involvement of Pakistan or its agency in the Pathankot attack.[194] This was reported widely, but under pressure, the NIA distanced itself from his remarks. As expected, India continued blaming Pakistan for every incident that was occurring in India or the Indian-Occupied Kashmir.

Meanwhile, Kashmiris were relentlessly waging their freedom struggle in the face of brute force unleashed by Indian security forces. In July 2016, India killed Burhan Wani, a tech-savvy Kashmiri youth, evoking further resentment against Indian occupation of the State. The Indian government alleged that he was a commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen. Wani had been active on social media and used it to advocate publicly for the Kashmiris' right to self-determination, and as such, he was perceived as a threat to the Indian government. Was Burhan Wani a freedom fighter or a terrorist? For Pakistan, he had

every right under international law to fight the occupying forces. Pakistan thus described him as a shaheed (martyr) in the Prime Minister's speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2016. India resented this, because it had a totally different perspective of the issue. The debate on who was a terrorist and who was a freedom fighter dragged on. The same month, when the Indian army came under attack in Uri, India blamed the militants based in Pakistan for the attack, and once again without the provision of evidence, carried out what it called covert surgical operations across the LoC. This was perceived in Pakistan as an attempt by India to create a new normal of violating Pakistan's sovereignty on the pretext of striking a militant camp.[195] The two countries had now entered a dangerous zone of pre-emptive strikes, something that the US had done to Iraq in 2003 on the suspicion that it had weapons of mass destruction.

By that time, the debate around the term 'state terrorism' had started gaining momentum, and although India had perpetually accused Pakistan of using terrorism as a tool of its foreign policy, which Pakistan would deny, Pakistan too had complaints against India and its involvement with terror groups in the region. One evident case of state terrorism by India had already come to light in March 2016, when in a counterintelligence raid in Balochistan, Pakistan arrested a person carrying the fake passport of one Hussain Mubarak Patel. Following interrogation, it turned out that this person's true identity was Kulbhushan Sudhir Jadhav, a serving Indian naval officer, who was in Pakistan as a spy of the Indian intelligence agency RAW. India accepted his identity, but alleged that he was abducted from Iran. By his own confession,[196] Jadhav was involved in subversive activities in Balochistan and Karachi with the goal of destabilizing Pakistan. There were indications that he was entrusted to strengthen a separatist movement in Balochistan. The home minister of Balochistan, Sarfraz Bugti, also confirmed that Jadhav "was in contact with Baloch separatists and terrorists fuelling sectarian violence in Pakistan and Balochistan."[197] It turned out that Jadhav was operating through one Haji Baloch to provide financial and logistic support to Baloch

separatists. He was also the mastermind of the Safoora bus attack killing 45 passengers. Jadhav's arrest enabled Pakistan to apprehend a large number of undercover operatives who were working with him to perpetrate terrorism. Ostensibly and in the larger picture, his objective appears to have been to sabotage the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).[198]

Jadhav's confessional statement made headlines once he revealed the details of his mission in Pakistan. Jadhav confessed that he commenced an intelligence operation in 2003 and established a small business in Chabahar, Iran under his fake name of Hussein Mubrak Patel. He was directing activities in Balochistan and Karachi under the guidance of Anil Kumar Gupta, a joint secretary of RAW. He developed contacts in the Balochistan Student Organization, and held meetings with Baloch insurgents to carry out the killing and maiming of Pakistani citizens. He also professed to be in knowledge of RAW activities related to the Baloch liberation movement within Pakistan and the region, including financing of criminal activities around the ports of Gwadar, Pasni, Jewani, and various installations in Balochistan. The purpose was to create a criminal sort of mindset within the Baloch liberation elements, leading to instability within Pakistan. On 3 March 2016, when he was caught crossing over into Pakistan from the Saravan border in Iran, his mission was to hold a meeting with Baloch separatists in Balochistan and carry back the messages which he had to deliver to Indian agencies. The Indian high commission in Islamabad wanted consular access to Jadhav, which was denied as this was a case of the breach of national security. The Indian media reacted by calling it Pakistan's "perfidy." The Indian narrative was mostly speculative, as it was argued that Jadhav might have "strayed in Pak waters" or he could have been "abducted."[199] Jadhav was tried and sentenced to death in April 2017 by a Field General Court Martial.

In June 2017, Jadhav made his second confessional statement,[200] dishing out more details of his activities in Pakistan. He had visited Karachi on two occasions in 2005 and 2006 for gathering basic

intelligence on Naval installations and the landing sites around Karachi. His area of operation was around the Makran Coast, Karachi, Turbat, Quetta and Balochistan interior. He said that he was stationed in Chabahar, running a business under the name Kaminda Trading company. His operations were non-embassy based and meant exclusively to hold meetings with Baloch insurgents to conduct terrorist activities within Balochistan and to convey to RAW officials the requirements that these terrorists had. This time, the purpose of his visit to Pakistan was to meet the basic leadership of Baloch sub-nationalists, the BLA, or the BRA, and infiltrate around 30 to 40 RAW operatives along the Makran Coast to financially support Baloch sub-nationals and help them with arms, weapons, and ammunition to carry out precision attacks against military targets. He said that the idea was also to open a sea front for the Baloch sub-nationals so they could be landed across suitable points in Makran Coast. Another purpose was to distort and disrupt CPEC and other economic activities. Money poured in through hundi and hawala operations from Delhi and Mumbai via Dubai. He cited an important transaction of USD 40,000 transferred to Baloch sub-nationals via Dubai. Some finances came through Indian consulates in Jalalabad, Kandhar, and Zahedan. He said that the targets included Hazaras and Shias to fan sectarianism, and FWO workers on various construction sites, including the use of IEDs. Mr. Anil Kumar had specifically asked him to get SSP Chaudhry assassinated. The TTP and Afghan anti-Pakistan terrorist groups were also financially supported. Some of the attacks mentioned by him were on Mehran Naval Base, radar installation, and the Sui gas pipelines. An attack was also planned against the Pakistani consulate in Zahedan. He further disclosed that RAW was sponsoring the setting up of a modern website run through Nepal to fan the Balochistan movement. India took the case to the International Court of Justice, which rejected, in July 2017, the Indian appeal for Jadhav's release, but stayed the execution and ordered a review of the process of trial and conviction and provided India with consular access to him. Pakistan allowed the consular visit to Jadhav. Later his mother and wife also visited him.[201]

Although India continues to deny many of these charges, all that Kulbhushan revealed in terms of terrorist activities he coordinated in Balochistan appeared as the practical manifestation of what Ajit Doval had said in January 2014 at Sastra University before he became Modi's national security advisor: ""When you change the engagement from the defensive mode, because in the defensive mode you throw 100 stones on me and I stop 90, still 10 will hurt me. And I can never win. Because either I will lose or there is a stalemate...Once they know that India has shifted its gear from the defensive mode to the defensive offence, they will find that it is unaffordable for them. You can do one Mumbai, you may lose Balochistan."[202] This came to be known as the Doval Doctrine,[203] which sought to pursue a 'defensive offense' approach, which means attacking the place from where offense is coming. Practically, it meant the intent to penetrate deep inside Pakistan's territory to attack sensitive sites. This approach seems to have been vigorously implemented by the Modi government since 2014.

For years, the main conduit for India's efforts to destabilise Balochistan has been Afghanistan. Avinash Paliwal, in his book 'My Enemy's Enemy' explains in detail how Indian intelligence collaborated with Afghan intelligence over the decades to "stir trouble in Balochistan", and that India's increased "covert footprint in Balochistan was a driver of India's relations with Pashtun political figures in Afghanistan".[204] Ehsanullah Ehsan, former spokesman for Taliban, claimed in a video-taped confessional statement in 2017 that Afghan security forces and Afghan intelligence agency, NDS, had worked with India's spy agency to support cross-border terrorist attacks against Pakistan.[205] Earlier, Chuck Hagel, US Secretary of Defense from 2013 to 2015 in the Obama administration, had made a statement in 2011 in his speech at the Oklahoma University that India has over the years "financed problems for Pakistan" in Afghanistan. He said that India was taking advantage of tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan to foment troubles in the areas that border Afghanistan.[206] The Indian side of course rejected the claim, but this

was not the only time Indian involvement in stirring trouble in Balochistan had come up. It is well known that India has maintained close contact with Brahamdagh Bugti, the leader of an insurgent group in Balochistan, which is accused of violence and terrorism in the province. There have been reports of Bugti getting finances and Indian identity papers.[207] The BLA terrorists touched a new low when they hijacked the Jaffar Express train in March 2025 near Bolan Pass in Balochistan, taking over 440 passengers hostage, and killing 26 passengers before they were overpowered by law enforcement authorities.

All these years, the debate has continued in Pakistan on how to rein in the militants who were causing enormous security issues internally and sometimes externally. The law enforcement authorities of the country continued to take firm and kinetic action against terrorists. At the meetings of the Financial Action Task Force, India and the US appeared to have teamed up to build further pressure on Pakistan, which was struggling to come out of black and later grey list (Pakistan came out of the grey list in 2022 when FATF noted the significant progress that Pakistan had made in anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing framework). For Pakistani authorities, the FATF process provided a useful opportunity to take stern action not only against money laundering but also against the financial sources of terrorists. Many militants suspected of having committed terrorism anywhere were placed behind bars for extended periods of time. Under the National Action Plan, scores of intelligence-based operations were conducted to apprehend suspects of terrorism and prosecuted.

In mid-February 2019, an Indian police convoy came under attack in Pulwama area of the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Around 40 soldiers of India's central reserve police force were killed. India blamed the attack on a local Kashmiri youth backed by JeM. Yet again, India wasted no time in putting the blame on Pakistan. Hostile rhetoric against Pakistan shot up. Prime Minister Modi said that India would give a befitting reply. Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley warned that

those responsible would have to pay a heavy price and that New Delhi would do all it could to ensure complete isolation of Pakistan. India also took steps to impede bilateral trade by imposing 200 percent duties on all Pakistani goods, and withdrew the MFN status given to Pakistan in 1996. Pakistan was surprised at the categoric allegations by Indian leaders of Pakistani involvement, once again without any evidence. For Pakistan, it made no sense to have anything to do with the Pulwama attack, especially when it had its own commitments under the FATF and was also engaged in the high-profile visit of the Saudi Crown Prince to Islamabad at that time.

Considering the uptick in war rhetoric by India, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan advised the Indian government to stop blaming Pakistan without any proof or evidence, urged India to share actionable intelligence, and not launch any kind of attack, because Pakistan would retaliate. As a gesture of positive intent, Pakistani authorities also cracked down on JeM's madrassas and facilities, even if no evidence was presented of its involvement. All this did not prevent India from going ahead with a surgical strike on Balakot, KPK province of Pakistan on 26 February 2019. The Indian foreign secretary claimed that "a very large number of JeM terrorists, trainers, senior commanders, and groups of jihadis, who were being trained for *fidayeen* action, were eliminated".[208] Soon, it became clear that the Indian claim of having bombed a building housing "a very large number" of terrorists could not have been true, because the strike had merely hit some trees in a jungle. The pictures of the site were splashed all across the media. For the Indian government, this was an embarrassment, as it had violated the principle of territorial integrity based on flawed intelligence. Later, India back-tracked and argued it was the Indian media and social media that had calculated the unconfirmed figures of terrorists.

With doubts growing about whether there were any casualties at all, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that the Indian government would "not share proof that a very large number of militants were reportedly killed."[209] India's air force chief also announced that his force was "not

in a position" to clarify how many were in the so-called camp, although he stuck to the claim that his force had hit the target. This statement came a day after the BJP president Amit Shah claimed that "more than 250" militants were killed in strikes on "training camps of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)".[210] Pakistan called in India's acting high commissioner to protest the violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Pakistan also contemplated lodging a complaint against India at the UN for eco-terrorism.

By this point, Pakistan was used to this routine; an attack in India, followed by finger pointing at Pakistan; war rhetoric and hysteria; and refusal to provide evidence. However, India carrying out strikes within Pakistan based on unfounded claims was not something Pakistan was prepared to accept. As such, Pakistan responded to the Indian strike on Balakot by commencing 'Operation Swift Retort', with strikes on Indian positions across the LoC in the Rajouri sector of the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. An air battle ensued. India claimed that it had downed a Pakistani F-16, but was unable to provide any evidence of this - (US sources later confirmed that no such plane had been downed). On the other hand, the Pakistan air force downed an Indian MiG-21 and captured its pilot, Abhinandan Varthaman. Pakistani aircraft had locked several targets but exercised restraint in order not to escalate. The same night, Prime Minister Imran Khan sought to speak to Prime Minister Modi to try and de-escalate, but the latter did not take the call. So for good measure, on 28 February, Prime Minister Imran Khan addressed the parliament and indicated publicly Pakistan's readiness to investigate the incident, assuring the world that Pakistan's soil would not be used for terrorism against any country. As a gesture of goodwill and to reduce tensions, Pakistan decided to release the captured pilot. Some Indian analysts claimed that Pakistan had done so because of India's coercive diplomacy.[211] A few weeks later, Prime Minister Modi boasted in an election campaign that if the pilot had not been sent back, it would have been *qatal ki raat*, a night of bloodshed.[212] Clearly, the level of relations had collapsed in

such a manner that the two countries could not agree on anything, not even on goodwill gestures like the release of the pilot by Pakistan.

Former secretary of state of the US, Mike Pompeo, in his memoir, 'Never Give an Inch: Fighting for the America I Love' claimed that India and Pakistan came close to "spilling over into a nuclear conflagration in February 2019" and that it was American diplomacy which helped defuse the situation.[213] He wrote that he was awakened by his Indian counterpart to say that Pakistanis were preparing their nuclear weapons for a strike and that India was also contemplating its own escalation, but when he contacted the Pakistani army chief, he found out that this was not true.

There is little doubt that the situation was grim and there was a real fear of escalation. Pakistan had intelligence information that India was preparing for a possible missile strike against it while India was worried that Pakistan might respond in kind. An Indian submarine spotted in Pakistani waters also raised alarm bells. The then Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj did call US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, as both sides had engaged in considerable diplomacy to apprise the world of their perspectives. Even if India utilized the good offices of a third party, it preferred not to acknowledge it publicly. Ajay Bisaria, who was Indian high commissioner in Islamabad at that time, writes in his book that Pompeo seemed to have overstated the case, both of fears of escalation of the conflict and of the US role in defusing it.[214]

A year later, alluding to a remark of a Pakistani parliamentarian, the Indian prime minister insinuated Pakistan's involvement in the Pulwama attack. Pakistan rejected Indian allegations in a strongly worded statement on 31 October 2020, arguing that India's ill-conceived misadventure of 26 February 2019 was a violation of the UN Charter and international law, and that it was the BJP's electoral strategy to raise the Pakistan 'bogey'. It contended that "the biggest beneficiary of the February 2019 Pulwama attack was the BJP

government, as it resulted in BJP's landslide victory in Lok Sabha elections following their virulent anti-Pakistan electoral campaign."[215]

Here it is pertinent to mention that given Pakistan's categorical denials and the refusal of India to show evidence of Pakistan's involvement, there were increasing questions around how such an attack in Pulwama could have even taken place so deep into Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Frontline magazine reported that its investigations revealed that 11 intelligence inputs warning of the Pulwama terrorist attack of 14 February 2019 were ignored. The magazine raised questions as to who was responsible for the oversight, which resulted in the death of 40 CRPF personnel, the Balakot surgical strike, and ultimately the thumping electoral victory of the BJP?[216] The then governor of Indian-Occupied Kashmir, Satyapal Malik in an interview with the host of The Wire news, Karan Thapar, said that he was asked by Modi to "keep quiet" over alleged security lapses.[217] Malik said that he realized that all the onus of the attack will be put on Pakistan "to reap electoral benefits." It so turned out that Prime Minister Modi did cite the Pulwama attack repeatedly in his election campaign to woo voters in the 2019 general elections that year, which partially enabled him to return to power with a larger majority.

In December 2020, the EU DisinfoLab, an organization based in Brussels that focuses on combating disinformation, had revealed a report titled 'Indian Chronicles'[218] about the 15-year operation run by a New Delhi-based entity, Srivastava Group, targeting Pakistan and the adversaries of India in the EU and the United Nations. This group had taken direct control of many NGOs accredited to the UN Human Rights Council, operated hundreds of website domain names, ran fake media in Brussels and Geneva, created over 750 fake media in 116 countries, and indulged in impersonation of EU institutions. The identity of a renowned dead professor and hundreds of fake media outlets were used to malign Pakistan. This was the largest, deepest network of disinformation that DisinfoLab had exposed.

Around the same time in 2020, news broke about Indian intelligence operatives who had become active in extra-territorial killings in Pakistan. The Pakistani side started a massive operation to collect evidence of the killings being done on Pakistani soil sponsored by Indian operatives. It was in January 2024 that Pakistan's foreign secretary announced that India had engaged in a "sophisticated and sinister campaign of extra-territorial and extra-judicial killings inside Pakistan."[219] He claimed that the Pakistani side had credible evidence of links between Indian agents and assassination of two Pakistani nationals on Pakistani soil. He termed these as killings-for-hire cases involving multiple jurisdictions. He stated that Indian agents had used technology and safe havens on foreign soil to commit assassinations in Pakistan. Indian media and social media accounts glorified these killings as successful retribution against "enemies" of India. Potential assassins were recruited, using social media and fake Daesh accounts.

The Pakistani foreign secretary shared detailed information on two such cases, those of Shahid Latif and Muhammad Riaz. Shahid Latif was killed on 11 October 2023 outside a mosque in the city of Sialkot. The killing was managed by an Indian agent, Yogesh Kumar, who was based in a third country. Local criminals were recruited in a third country to locate and trace Shahid Latif. However, the killers-for-hire had to make several attempts before one Mohammad Umair succeeded in carrying out the execution. The killer was apprehended when trying to flee the country and revealed details in a confessional statement. The second case was that of the assassination of Muhammad Riaz, who was assassinated during Fajr prayer in a mosque in Rawalakot on 8 September 2023. This assassination was carried out by one Mohammad Abdullah Ali, who was recruited using social media and guided by Indian agents Ashok Kumar Anand and Yogesh Kumar. The killer received payments through middlemen and was provided with arms and weapons. He as well as his facilitators and supporters were all apprehended by Pakistan law enforcement

authorities. A few other cases of similar gravity were being investigated.

The Pakistani foreign secretary's press conference revealed how different characters had conspired and acted to carry out these extra-territorial killings. The cases highlighted the bold and covert nature of terrorist operations linked to Indian state actors in Pakistan.

In fact, these acts of extra-territorial killings were a breach of international law as these violated the sovereignty of Pakistan. The killings in Pakistan also bore resemblance with the cases of murders or attempted murders in Canada and the United States. For instance, the alleged operatives of Indian intelligence killed Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Sikh separatist leader, outside a Sikh temple in Surrey, British Columbia on 18 June 2023. The Canadian government reacted sharply, but the Indian government continued to deny these charges and even started maligning the Canadian prime minister. In October 2024, the US government pressed charges against an Indian government employee for his failed attempt to kill Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh leader and supporter of a separate homeland for the Sikhs.

Independent of the Pakistani official statement, the British daily newspaper The Guardian also collected information from Indian and Pakistani intelligence operatives and concluded that the assassinations by Indian government operatives were a part of a "wider strategy to eliminate terrorists living on foreign soil."[220] The paper noted that for the first time Indian intelligence personnel had discussed their alleged operations in Pakistan. The detailed documentation also alleges RAW's direct involvement in the assassinations. Citing information obtained from senior officials of two separate intelligence agencies of Pakistan, the paper noted that India was involved in up to 20 killings in Pakistan. The Guardian further notes that "according to the evidence gathered by Pakistan, the killings were regularly coordinated out of the UAE, where RAW established sleeper cells that would separately arrange different parts of the operation and recruit the killers." Indian agents also allegedly

recruited jihadists to carry out the shootings, making them believe they were killing "infidels." Investigators alleged that payments to local criminals or poor Pakistanis to carry out assassinations were mostly done via Dubai and that meetings of RAW handlers overseeing the killings reportedly took place in Nepal, the Maldives, and Mauritius. The Guardian also noted that India has been accused publicly by Washington and Canada of involvement in the murders of dissident figures on foreign soil.

In August 2022, Qatari police arrested eight former Indian naval officers and sentenced them to death on charges of spying for Israel.[221] The speculation was that they had passed on sensitive submarine-related information to Israeli intelligence. The Indian government was given consular access to the accused. Later, the government of Qatar decided to drop charges and released them, and details about their arrest, sentencing and commuting were not divulged. Earlier in 2020, the government of Australia apprehended a 'nest of spies' that the Modi government operated in Australia and expelled them from the country.[222] This nest was disrupted by the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO). These spies were trying to steal secrets about sensitive projects and airport security, monitor Indians living in Australia, and develop close relationships with politicians, a foreign embassy, and a state police service. The director general of ASIO detailed how this nest of spies had cultivated and recruited an Australian government security clearance holder with access to sensitive details of defense technology. It was found out that India's foreign intelligence service was responsible for this nest of spies. Incidentally, the Washington Post had also reported that two members of RAW had been expelled from Australia in 2000 after being busted in a ASIO counter-intelligence operation. This news created considerable alarm among Western allies about the actions of the Modi government on foreign lands. The head of ASIO, Mr. Burgess had referred to this episode in his Annual Threat Assessment report, saying that in some instances espionage was conducted by countries

they consider friends – "friends with sharp elbows and voracious intelligence requirements."

The above discourse clearly illustrates that India has much to explain on why its intelligence agency is violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan and other countries.

In April 2025, tourists in the Pahalgam meadow in Indian-Occupied Kashmir came under attack by some unknown gunmen. Without waiting for any investigation, India blamed Pakistan, suspended the Indus Waters Treaty to manipulate waters flowing towards Pakistan, and waged a war against it from 7-10 May, to which Pakistan responded with a multi-pronged attack on 10 May. India sought the US help for a ceasefire, which came into effect in the evening of the same day. This was the most lethal military confrontation between the two countries in this century. The episode has such far-reaching political, military, technological, economic, water-related, regional and global implications, that a separate chapter (Chapter 6) has been added to provide details of the event and its fallout.

Combating Terrorism

Terrorism manifests in various forms, and ranges from sectarian, ethnic, or ideological terrorism to state terrorism. South Asia has unfortunately witnessed nearly every form and manifestation of terrorism. Given its negative implications for any society, it is a common threat, requiring a cooperative approach to eradicate this menace to humanity. As both India and Pakistan have suffered from terrorism, it is important for both countries to find a new approach for dealing with this common enemy in a manner different from what has been done in the past several decades. Considering the aforementioned examples of India using the mantra of terrorism as a policy instrument to finger-point and isolate Pakistan, India must also realize that Pakistan can easily point to piles of terror incidents within its borders that can be attributed to India. For its part, Pakistan must

also continue to ensure that violent extremism and terrorism on its soil are dealt with an iron hand. A cooperative approach to dealing with terrorism can be much more effective.

The Indian side has been voicing its concerns regarding the alleged cross-border terrorism, but is reluctant to constitute any mechanism or framework to address this issue. The only way to address Indian concerns on terrorism, which it alleges emanates from Pakistan-based entities, is to collaborate and work in a coordinated manner to deal with this threat. Instead, India relies exclusively on using the mantra of terrorism to coerce Pakistan bilaterally and internationally. As was evident from the outcome of the May 2025 kinetic confrontation, the coercive approach has not worked. Moreover, Pakistan, too, has its own concerns about Indian-sponsored terrorism in various parts of Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan. In these circumstances, what steps can both take to address this serious problem? This question was posed to several thought leaders, who offered useful suggestions and recommendations.

Pravin Sawhney offers a unique perspective by saying that cross-border terrorism is the only option available to India and Pakistan to flex muscle, since credible strategic d conventional war deterrence exists on both sides. For example, in all of the wars fought between them, the military line created on 1 January 1949 could not be obliterated by India. Salman Bashir finds cross-border terrorism as something that India has consistently used to undermine Pakistan's case on Kashmir. He advises that while the Pakistani side should continue to ensure that there is no infiltration from the Pakistani side, the Indian government needs to stop support for insurgencies in Balochistan and erstwhile tribal areas of Pakistan. It is only through dialogue that this can happen. Christine Fair observed that "both sides use proxies because they have armies that can't win wars decisively with nuclear weapons." She does not see this changing.

Some respondents felt that at this stage, nothing would satisfy India on its concerns about terrorism allegedly flowing from Pakistan, and

vice versa. Fakir Aijazuddin is certain that "nothing Pakistan does will satisfy the Indians because they regard terrorism as state-sponsored by Pakistan. They will always keep this Damocles' sword hanging above Pakistani heads." Moeed Yusuf also agrees that "nothing will satisfy the present Indian government because this is the bogey they use to isolate Pakistan." He elaborated that for India, the legitimacy of their stance to diplomatically isolate Pakistan comes from the terrorism narrative. The Indian side knows full well, he adds, that Pakistan is not sponsoring any terrorism. Yusuf advises that both agencies need to sit together and decipher each case of reported cross-border terrorism. Naeem Khalid Lodhi finds it unfortunate that "Pakistan is at the receiving end [of India-sponsored terrorism] at a time when it had purposely dismantled its own capabilities under immense external pressures." This, in his view, "has placed Pakistan at the mercy of India and its friends." Lodhi advises that "unless Pakistan picks up the courage to counter this by inflicting some degree of pain, Indian intransigence would not stop cross-border terrorism."

Elizabeth Threlkeld recognizes the view that there was no easy formula for either side to erase the other's deeply-held concerns about cross border terrorism. "India points to a long history of attacks it has suffered carried out by or in coordination with Pakistan-based groups. Pakistan, in turn, holds India responsible for sponsoring attacks in Balochistan, though its allegations have not found similar purchase among international observers." Threlkeld advises that in view of these perspectives, the two sides could "start with candid, private conversations about their concerns, buttressed by coordinated track 2 dialogues" to further deepen understanding. Among other objectives, these discussions could helpfully result in the development of a list of "so-called costly signals that would go some way toward building trust if undertaken." The most critical element is that no major attacks take place that would scuttle this engagement, as has happened in the past. Threlkeld had given these views shortly before the four-day limited war between India and Pakistan in May 2025. Her advice, however, remains valid, in that both countries need candid, private

conversations to address each other's concerns. Khurram Abbas recalls that both sides have "clearly articulated expectations" from each other. India continues to demand that Pakistan should take decisive action against groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), ban these organisations, and extradite their leaders. Pakistan contends that India should refrain from politicizing cross-border terrorism and instead focus on collaborative mechanisms to address the challenge effectively, such as joint investigations into terrorist attacks in India to ascertain the involvement of cross-border elements and ensure accountability. However, India has often refrained from engaging in such joint efforts and has instead "utilized the issue of terrorism to advance its domestic political narratives."

John Gill is of the view that the challenge of cross border terrorism is greater for Pakistan than it is for India. He elaborated his point by observing that in India's case, there is no network of embedded extremists that threaten the Indian state as well as its neighbours or the larger world. Without confirming anything, Gill shared his observation that "as per news reports, actions undertaken by India are under state control, accentuating existing grievances among the Baloch in particular and likely affording violent groups more latitude to act (they would do so with or without India, but alleged Indian support likely gives them greater scope, most likely with funding more than anything else?)." Gill draws the concomitant conclusion that the Indian state could more or less "turn off the tap with relative impunity should it be incentivized to do so." As for Pakistan's case, Gill believes that it is "much thornier." Citing the 'Frankenstein's monster' analogy, Gill felt that "the presence of tens/hundreds of thousands of radicalized and organized men (and some women) with arms and narrow, nihilistic ideological worldviews is a direct threat to the Pakistani state and Pakistani society writ large as well as a danger to India and the larger world." Gill expressed his concern that "the madrassah pipeline continues to pump recruits into these groups." Gill thought the "Indians understand this, but they also need to see some *concrete* steps against such groups and especially against

some high-profile individuals (Masood Azhar for instance, even Dawood Ibrahim)." He elaborated that concrete steps do not mean bulldozing Muridke tomorrow, but it does mean visible, irreversible steps that reduce the threat to India, take account of past crimes (Mumbai above all), and simultaneously reduce the menace these outfits pose to Pakistan's prospects for political stability, economic viability and basic human security for its burgeoning population". Gill had given this interview before India bombed Muridke in the early hours of 7 May 2025. What India and the world discovered was that there was no militant infrastructure; just a mosque and its associated school. However, Gill's advice that the issue of cross-border terrorism could be a good topic for backchannel intel-intel interactions is valid and could be usefully employed by both countries.

Jalil Abbas Jilani would like both countries to create a "credible, discreet and candid mechanism" to fight terrorism. He recalls that a mechanism was established in 2015 and under this mechanism, Pakistan shared information in 2016 with regards to reports of some militants planning to infiltrate into India to carry out terrorist attacks. India was able to apprehend all the terrorists identified by Pakistan. Unfortunately, the process was disrupted. However, the main dilemma, in his view, is the Indian "unwillingness to discuss Kashmir" with Pakistan. He advises the establishment of a back-channel and feels that allying each other's concerns on terrorism would perhaps modify Indian position on Kashmir being part of the agenda. Shaukat Javed,[223] a former inspector general of police in Pakistan, is concerned that India is continuing with its three-pronged approach to dealing with acts of militancy and terrorism: to suppress the Kashmiri resistance by force, to blame Pakistan for every incident to isolate it internationally, and to support anti-Pakistan elements to destabilize Pakistan. This approach, in his view, will not lead to peace and stability in the region. Dialogue, engagement and constituting a mechanism to discuss the issues of cross-border terrorism is the only way to address each other's concerns. He is convinced that India and

Pakistan being two nuclear-armed states cannot resolve the issues militarily. He advises both sides to exercise restraint and end war-mongering statements.

Raja Qaiser Ahmed believes that to address India's concerns on cross-border terrorism, Pakistan must "tighten control over non-state actors." While steps have been taken against groups like LeT and JeM, ensuring a "complete crackdown and legal action" will enhance credibility. Judicial reforms for counterterrorism cases, including transparent legal proceedings against individuals involved in cross-border terrorism, will help address Indian concerns. Raja Qaiser proposes a joint intelligence-sharing mechanism to track non-state actors operating across borders. A strong government-led narrative against all forms of militancy, rather than selective condemnation, will also demonstrate intent. As for actions by India, Raja Qaiser advises that India must take steps to address Pakistan's concerns, including respect for Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and ending its support for separatist groups in Balochistan. Establishing "verifiable mechanisms" to address these allegations can help reduce tensions. Preventing anti-Muslim rhetoric from influencing bilateral ties is also important, as rising communal sentiments in India often fuel hostilities. He adds that institutionalizing structured dialogues on counterterrorism cooperation can serve as a platform for intelligence-sharing and joint strategies. Both countries need to adopt a security-centric approach based on verifiable commitments rather than rhetoric-driven diplomacy.

The above views expressed by a cross-section of thought-leaders illustrates one common strand: Terrorism is a menace that has affected both countries, but has also been used as a pretext to undermine many of the recent attempts by both countries to normalize bilateral relations. An attack on tourists in Pahalgam meadow of the Indian-Occupied Kashmir is a case in point. India alleged Pakistani involvement even before it had time to investigate. The incident created such a hostile environment that both countries ended up in a limited war of May 2025. Clearly, war is not a solution to mutual

grievances on terrorism, nor is there a military solution to the problem in Kashmir. India's excessive use of force in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir and its denial to the Kashmiris their right of self-determination would continue to evoke resistance from Kashmiris. Some militants even resort to violence and terrorism. India's response to the resistance movement in Kashmir is through sponsorship of terrorism in Balochistan province of Pakistan. This state terrorism, perpetrated in the name of Mr. Ajit Doval's 'offensive defence' doctrine, or Mr. Manohar Parrikar's warning *kante ko kante se nikalna hei* (committing terrorism to counter terrorism) can never resolve the issues. The only effective way forward is for both countries to join hands against terrorism rather than fight each other.

Given the prevailing high levels of tension in bilateral relations, it might be more advisable to let the back-channel discuss this important issue, especially at the intelligence level. Many thought-leaders have also advised setting up some joint anti-terrorism mechanism, initially in the back-channel, and later formally, to address each other's concerns. However, the starting point has to be the readiness of both countries to engage in a dialogue. Shying away from a dialogue is not a constructive option. A proactive approach to address each other's concerns has far more to offer in terms of peace for both countries as well as the region than a confrontation approach that currently defines India-Pakistan relations at the moment.

Reflections

India claims that the issue of cross-border terrorism is the core area of contention with Pakistan. The latter feels that India is sponsoring anti-Pakistan entities to perpetrate terrorism in Balochistan and its state operatives are carrying out target killings in various parts of the country. It, therefore, is logical that both sides should sit down to discuss the issue of terrorism. Pakistan has consistently indicated its readiness to discuss this matter. India has not, particularly since 2016,

when India decided to significantly reduce its interactions with Pakistan. Why was India not ready to discuss this issue with Pakistan, and instead started resorting to military actions against Pakistan? One argument that Indian diplomats often invoke is that historically talks and frameworks like joint anti-terrorism mechanisms have not worked. This is not correct. Whenever India showed any signs of sincerity in talks with Pakistan, there were results. In 2015, it was on the information provided to India by Pakistan at the level of national security advisors that some potential terrorist incidents were averted. Another argument that some Indian diplomats present is that whenever India provided evidence of the involvement of Pakistan-based elements, nothing was done. This is also not factual. India rarely provides information that could stand legal scrutiny. The Mumbai trial is a case in point, which could not make progress because India never provided legally tenable evidence. On the other hand, India uses every incident of militant resistance or terrorism to malign the name of Pakistan internationally.

The unspoken truth is that for quite some years now, India has been under the illusion that its military and economic might was enough to dominate the entire region and act as a 'net security provider', and expected every South Asian country to fall in line. It has failed to see that nearly every country in South Asia would go to any limit to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Bilateral dialogue is not a concession by one country to the other. It is a normal diplomatic instrument used by neighbouring states to boost cooperation in areas of common interest and address issues where they differ. However, for India, talking to Pakistan is presented as a concession that India would grant if Pakistan were to accept Indian allegations of the so-called cross-border terrorism. This is not acceptable to Pakistan. Consequently, since 2016, both countries have largely remained disengaged, even on the issue of terrorism that has affected both countries adversely.

Then there is the issue of state-terrorism in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. In recent times, it goes back to the policy that India adopted

right after 9/11, when the term terrorism came to be defined more in the framework of war as the US launched the so-called global war on terror. This provided an opportunity to some states to use extensive force against people under their occupation and justified it in the name of counter terrorism. Likewise, many states began to deal with insurgencies within their territories in the name of counter-terrorism. There was a difference though. It has been seen that counter terrorism was generally dealt through a military response, while counter insurgency required a broader socio-economic and governance response.[224] Post 9/11, India, too, started calling freedom struggle in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir as terrorism, thus justifying its acts of repression.

The fact of the matter is that freedom struggle by people under foreign occupation is not terrorism, because under international law, the occupied people have the right to wage a struggle against foreign occupation "by all available means, including armed struggle" (Para 2 of UN General Assembly Resolution 45/130).[225] Further, an occupying power is bound by international humanitarian law and human rights law to respect the rights of people under its occupation. India further politicized the Kashmir resistance and used it to justify its policy of disengagement with Pakistan. Since India and Pakistan have not been able to resolve the dispute bilaterally or multilaterally, militants engaged in the Kashmiri freedom struggle tend to take the matter into their own hands to protect their Kashmiri brethren from Indian repression. It was in that context that Pakistan has been arguing that resolution of the issue would remove the very cause for militants to join the Kashmiri armed resistance. However, instead of recognizing this reality and engaging with Pakistan to resolve the issue, India prefers to place the onus on Pakistan to act more firmly to stop the pro-Kashmiri entities from rising up against India. Simultaneously, India continues its heavy-handed approach towards any acts of resistance in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. From Pakistan's perspective, state terrorism by India against people under its occupation is the most reprehensible form of terrorism.

This chapter has illustrated clearly that the issue of cross-border terrorism, which is a challenge for both sides, could have been addressed better, through cooperation, not confrontation. Instead, successive Indian governments chose to hurl accusations against Pakistan each time there was a militant or terrorist activity. From the 2000 Chittisinghpura attack in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir, in which some militants and Indian army personnel were involved, and the 2002 massacre of Muslims in Gujarat, which took place under the watch of Chief Minister Modi, to the attack on Samjhauta train (2007), in which Hindu extremists were involved, and the Pahalgam attack (2025) attributed to unknown gunmen, India never focused on investigating the possible involvement of internal elements, including Hindutva extremists. Instead, India adopted a more coercive approach against Pakistan first by blaming the latter and simultaneously stoking terrorism in Balochistan, and then agitating the issue in international forums, particularly FATF, where it made every effort to make life difficult for Pakistan, even if with little success. Regardless of whether India ever chooses to opt for a cooperative approach, Pakistan, for its part, needs to keep the doors for dialogue open. Pakistan should also continue its crack-down on terror and militancy and also comply with FATF regulations to deprive terrorists of any sources of finance.

Both countries have also a lot to learn from their own history as well as the experience of other countries in overpowering the phenomenon of terrorism, including state-terrorism and cross-border terrorism.

It would be pertinent to end this chapter with some prudent and sound advice by Syed Kaleem Imam,[226] PhD and a former inspector general of police in Pakistan. Having served in law enforcement for over three decades, both in Pakistan and on international peacekeeping missions, Kaleem has seen firsthand how trust between nations can be eroded, and, with effort, how it can also be rebuilt. He finds the ongoing cycle of accusations between India and Pakistan over cross-border terrorism not only troubling but damaging to the

very idea of durable peace. Referring to the Pahalgam incident, Kaleem lamented that the two countries went to war without knowing who did it, which only shows how quickly such events can escalate into dangerous territory. Before the facts are even fully established, the narrative often spirals into heated accusations and public outrage, fuelled more by politics than by principles. Citing his time in five UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, Kaleem recalls how he worked closely with colleagues from India, and enjoyed respectful, cooperative relations with them, standing together against excessive responses from other countries. These experiences reminded him that the majority of professionals on both sides want the same things: dignity, safety, and peace. Extremists and hardliners exist, but they do not speak for everyone.

Kaleem Imam is of the view that no responsible state ever wants war. Most people want a better life, not a loud fight. Unfortunately, there are always a few—politicians, ideologues, vested groups—who benefit from prolonged hostility. That is what must be countered, not just with words, but with action. On the way forward, Kaleem shared some steps rooted in practical optimism, grounded in both policy and values: (i) Keep talking—even when it's hard. Dialogue is a sign of strength, not weakness; (ii) Work together at the borders—regular briefings, clear communication, and crisis coordination can prevent missteps; (iii) Use third-party observers—forums like the UN or OIC, who can play a quiet but valuable role in easing mistrust; (iv) Let soft diplomacy continue—religious visits, academic programs, and medical ties should never be politicized; (v) Collaborate on shared threats—natural disasters, drugs, or environmental issues are common ground the two countries can build on; and (vi) Condemn terrorism in all forms—but with care, clarity, and without vilifying entire nations.

For Kaleem Imam, security is not just about weapons or defense—it is also about wisdom, empathy, and fairness. Indians and Pakistanis are not just neighbours with shared borders; they are civilizational

cousins, with centuries of intertwined culture, language, and history. To let a handful of voices drown out the desire for peace would be a failure of leadership and a betrayal of our people. It is important not to allow politics to overshadow people, and let leaders lead with maturity, reason, and responsibility.

IQBAL FORUM

Chapter 5 – Geopolitical Crosswinds

The 20th century witnessed two devastating World Wars, a Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union that polarized the world into two mutually exclusive camps. It also saw a rise in decolonization, leading to the emergence of dozens of new states, including India and Pakistan. The last decade of the century saw the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, which ended the Cold War and firmly established America's global dominance. America's unipolar moment coincided with the emergence of a new era of economic interdependence, often referred to as globalization. The world began to resemble a village, one where cooperation and collaboration would supplant conflicts between states. Many in the Western world concluded that the ideology of liberal democracy and market economies had prevailed as the nirvana of political science. Some went to the extent of characterizing this phase as the end of history.[227] In the late 1990s, a Washington Consensus emerged calling for trade liberalization, privatization, and deregulation of markets. No region benefited from this globalized environment more than the emerging economies of East Asia, nicknamed as Asian Tigers, and China.

South Asia, too, could not remain unaffected by this positive global environment. Pakistan and India, having announced their economic liberalization programs in 1990 and 1991 respectively, moved swiftly towards opening their economies to the outside world. Seeing that China and East Asian states had now prioritized geoeconomics over

geopolitics, pushing their bilateral conflicts to the back burner, India and Pakistan followed suit, and in 1997 decided to engage in a comprehensive process called composite dialogue, which envisaged broad-based bilateral cooperation. The following year, first India and then Pakistan tested their nuclear devices. The nuclearization of South Asia established a new balance of power. Conventional wars now appeared redundant. Vajpayee visited Lahore at the invitation of Nawaz Sharif in February 1999 to start a peace process, which, if not for the Kargil crisis, held the seeds of lasting peace in South Asia.

As the 21st century dawned, no one could have predicted how swiftly the dark clouds of transnational terrorism, a perverted form of globalization, would appear on the horizon and decimate the euphoric spirit of budding globalization. With deadly terrorist attacks in New York and Washington DC on September 11, 2001, the world woke up to the destructive power of violent non-state actors. A wounded and angry America rearranged its priorities and launched the so-called global war on terror that yanked the world away from the short-lived era of globalization. The first casualties of the global war on terror were the principles of inter-state conduct that had been evolved out of the lessons learned from the two world wars. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003, launched merely on the basis of suspicion, set the stage for pre-emptive strikes with complete disregard for the principles of respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference and non-intervention, and peaceful settlement of disputes.

In this backdrop, three geopolitical crosswinds unleashed by the 21st century had profound implications for South Asia. Firstly, the terrorist attacks of September 2001 (9/11) brought the issue of transnational terrorism to the core of global geopolitics of the time. Distinction between terrorists and freedom fighters became blurred. The freedom fighters of yesteryears were now branded as terrorists. This had serious implications for the freedom struggle in Indian-Occupied Kashmir. The second development of mammoth consequences for the world and South Asia was the US decision to invade Afghanistan in

2001 and the start of what became its longest war. Under the fire and fury of relentless US bombings, terrorists escaped Afghanistan and spread all over South and Southeast Asia, causing havoc, most of all in neighbouring Pakistan, and to an extent in India. Millions of Afghans moved into Iran and Pakistan, where they stayed for decades as refugees. The third major development that shook the world in the first two decades of the 21st Century was China's meteoric rise and America's strategic pivot to Asia, eventually entering into a competition with China. These three developments, each of which had serious implications for Indo-Pak relations, are discussed in this chapter with a view to assessing the extent to which these developments widened the already existing gulf between the two countries. On occasions, it appeared that global geopolitics might oblige both countries to settle their conflict once and for all. Yet, both countries went the other way, seeking to exploit global dynamics to their own narrow tactical gains, spending their time and energy in fighting each other, and in the process undermining the prospects of achieving a peaceful, inter-connected, and prosperous South Asia.

Nine Eleven

On the morning of September 11, 2001, just as businesses were about to commence their routine work, a group of terrorists hijacked a commercial airplane and slammed it into one of the two towers of the World Trade Center located in south Manhattan, New York. A short while later, another plane banged into the second tower. The third hijacked plane crashed into the Pentagon building in Washington DC while a fourth plane was downed in the plains of Pennsylvania. Since 1993, there had been reports of an increased frequency of terrorist attacks in various parts of the world, including against the United States assets in foreign lands. But never had the world seen a terrorist attack of this magnitude on the mainland of the United States perpetrated by non-state actors. It was clear that the US, which was

surrounded on both sides by huge oceans, was no longer as safe and secure as it thought it was.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 were not only shocking because of the scale of the attack but also because of the global context which had made everyone complacent. A decade earlier, the Soviet Union had been dissolved, the Cold War had come to an end, and a new phase of global interdependence had emerged. The United States had become the sole superpower of the world, and it appeared that the liberal democracy and market economy model practiced in the US and the Western countries had prevailed. The world had become one large interconnected village; it was widely believed. A new set of global priorities had taken roots, including a massive effort spearheaded by the United Nations to forge a common socio-economic normative framework for the whole world. No one had anticipated that this world view would be shattered so quickly and so dramatically by the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Addressing transnational terrorism, perpetrated by non-state actors, became the new top priority of the world community. The US scrambled to initiate multi-pronged actions. Its first move was to forge an international consensus against transnational terrorism and bind all states of the world to cooperate in apprehending terrorists via UN Security Council Resolution 1373. It then embarked on a global war on terror with the support of NATO and several other states. As a part of this war, the US invaded Afghanistan as it suspected that the 9/11 attacks were committed by Al-Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden (OBL), who was then based in Afghanistan. The US invasion of Afghanistan and relentless bombings forced the elements of Al Qaeda and other extremist outfits to flee towards Pakistani tribal areas bordering Afghanistan.

The emerging international consensus to act against terrorism, and the US invasion of Afghanistan forced Pakistan and India to also rearrange their priorities. Pakistan, which was under pressure for having supported the Taliban regime, decided to willingly accept

additional obligations under UN Security Council resolution 1373 to act against terrorists found within its own territory. Pakistan also decided to join the US-led global war on terror, which created some positive and many negative effects for the country. On the positive side, Pakistan earned the respect of the West and the rest of the world for firmly acting against terrorists and making the world safer. On the negative side, Pakistan became a legitimate target of the militants at war with the US. India, too, adjusted to the fast-evolving global situation in the wake of 9/11 and used the opportunity to build pressure on Pakistan by accusing it of harbouring anti-India elements that were active in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. India's argument that it was also a victim of the so-called Islamist terrorism found sympathetic ears in the US and the West.

Post 9/11, could India and Pakistan have acted differently from the way they did? In the midst of an international consensus to unite against transnational terrorism, Pakistan did well to join this global undertaking, though the decision landed it right in the eye of the storm, the words used by General Musharraf as the title of his book. Pakistan itself became a victim of violent extremism and terrorism. There is a view that Pakistan could have bought more time from the US to consider whether it should join the American war on terror. The matter could have gone to the parliament of Pakistan, for instance, before a decision was made. The hurried way in which the Musharraf government accepted becoming a partner of the US was the first major step towards bringing the so-called war on terror to the territories of Pakistan. However, the blame for this war coming to Pakistan cannot be placed on the Musharraf government alone. All governments since the so-called Afghan jihad of the 1980s could have realized early on that the militant groups, especially those which had been cultivated for the purposes of the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, should not have been allowed the kind of space that they eventually found in Pakistan. In retrospect, the actions that Pakistan later took to protect its citizenry could have been taken earlier on to prevent the loss of life and the treasure that it had to spend in its own war on terror

in Swat, South Waziristan, and finally in North Waziristan in 2014. Although much of the militancy and terrorism that Pakistan had to face in recent decades was a legacy of the Afghan jihad, there arose in time some of these non-state actors that had deep concerns for their Kashmiri brethren fighting Indian occupation in Kashmir. Since bilateral engagement between India and Pakistan had not yielded any positive resolution of the Kashmir dispute, some pro-Kashmiri militants were inclined to help Kashmiris in their freedom struggle.

As for India, it opted to use the post 9/11 environment to build pressure on Pakistan, instead of engaging with the latter to deal with the menace of terrorism in a coordinated and concerted manner. Further, as mentioned earlier, had India been more inclined to resolve the Kashmir dispute, there was no reason for any non-state actor to pick up arms against India. Some of the Western politicians had well understood that the rationale for the existence of militants was the unresolved Kashmir issue. India came around to accept this logic in 2004, when Vajpayee and Musharraf decided to start a peace process, which created an environment conducive to settling the Kashmir dispute.

What was the motivation of Vajpayee undertaking this venture? By most accounts, Vajpayee's move can be characterized as strategic in nature, as that would have helped his country attain the status of an undisputed leader of South Asia. It was, therefore, not surprising that his successor from the Congress Party, Manmohan Singh, also continued the process that led to what is referred to as the four-point formula. Was Musharraf being tactical or strategic in his rapprochement towards India? Given that Musharraf was occupied with the war on the western front, it made good tactics for him to attain peace with India to ease the two-front situation that Pakistan was facing at that time. Despite the failure of the Agra summit, he continued his efforts and finally succeeded in January 2004 when he willingly undertook a commitment that Pakistan's territory would not be used for terrorism in any other country. As the peace process

gained momentum, Musharraf's initiative gained a strategic effect in terms of seeking a peaceful South Asia.

The US-led war on terror against transnational terrorism initially experienced huge successes in Afghanistan, which at that time had become a safe haven for terrorist entities, as Al Qaeda and many other militant groups had found refuge there. Thanks to cooperation by Pakistan, a large number of Al Qaeda operatives were apprehended. However, contrary to the US expectations that its invasion of Afghanistan would be a walk over, it turned out to be the longest war of the United States with its own set of severe implications; perhaps mainly for Pakistan, which has continued to fight this war to date. India also did suffer from the wave of terrorism that was sweeping through the region in the first decade of the 21st century, but managed to overcome this challenge through a clear advantage that it was geographically detached from Afghanistan. In fact, Pakistan acted as the buffer for India against the Afghanistan-based terrorist forces. Over two decades after 9/11, the region remains embroiled with the fall-out of the US war in Afghanistan, which is once again under Taliban rule, and where terrorist entities are regaining grounds. It would, therefore, be important to discuss how the situation in Afghanistan would affect the future of South Asia, and particularly the relationship between India and Pakistan.

Afghanistan

Over the past millennium, scores of invaders from Afghanistan, Central Asia, and other regions have ridden through the mountains between Afghanistan and present-day Pakistan to enter the Indian subcontinent—some seeking plunder, and others aiming to make it their permanent home. Consequently, the kingdoms and sultanates that ruled northern India did include, on occasions, the territories of Afghanistan right up to Kabul. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the British viewed Afghanistan from the lens of its own

rivalry with Russia. Afghanistan emerged as a kind of buffer zone between two great empires of that time - Britain and Russia. After 1947, it fell upon the newly-created Dominion of Pakistan to adjust to the fact that it was now bordering Afghanistan, and it essentially had to inherit the uneasy relations that Britain had with Afghan rulers right up to 1947. Yet, it was felt that Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan could open up new opportunities of cooperation, as the two countries shared bonds of history, culture, and faith. However, both countries could never fully benefit from this solid foundation to build a strong bilateral relationship. As for India, its leaders began to view Afghanistan quite differently from the way the country had always been seen in the subcontinent. It was now a country that could be a potential partner for creating difficulties for its rival, Pakistan. Avinash Paliwal characterized the Indo-Afghan relationship in his own unique way: 'My Enemy's Enemy'.[228]

Why has the Pak-Afghan relationship largely remained hostile since 1947? One major reason is that the successive governments of Afghanistan have refused to accept the Durand Line as the international border with Pakistan. The Durand Line was agreed as the border between British India and Afghanistan in 1893 by Sir Mortimer Durand of the British Indian government and Abdur Rahman Khan, the ruler of Afghanistan. This was duly endorsed by subsequent Afghan rulers for half a century as the agreed frontier between Afghanistan and India.[229] Since 1947, some Afghan governments have entertained irredentist claims on the territories of Pakistan in the province of KPK (previously NWFP) right up to the Indus River. With this background in mind, it came as no surprise that the Afghan government of the time decided to cast a negative vote on the admission of Pakistan into the United Nations in 1947. Although the vote was later withdrawn, the relationship assumed an adversarial tone right from the start. In the UN and other relevant documents, and for all practical purposes, the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is regarded as an internationally recognized border.

Afghan rhetoric of calling it the Durand Line does not change the legal position or the ground reality.

Another sore point in this bilateral relationship was the issue of Pashtunistan, which erupted on the eve of the partition, when Congress, in a bid to prevent the North West Frontier Province from joining Pakistan, tried to include the option of an independent state in the referendum that was to be held in NWFP. There is a view that this issue was raised as a distraction because Nehru and Bacha Khan, a Pashtun leader whose brother Dr. Khan Sahib was the chief minister of the Congress Ministry in NWFP at that time, could not swing the NWFP towards the Congress viewpoint and the referendum became imminent. However, when the referendum was held, the people of NWFP overwhelmingly voted for joining Pakistan. Since then, several Afghan governments have become self-styled advocates for the rights of Pashtuns living in western part of Pakistan and have used the issue of Pashtunistan as a bargaining chip in their dealings with Pakistan on a host of issues, including cross-border easement rights and transit trade through Pakistani ports.

Despite these grievances, when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, and the country was caught up in the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union, the people of Pakistan chose to stand with the people of Afghanistan. Pakistan became a frontline state against the communist onslaught. In the process, millions of Afghans headed towards Pakistan and became refugees. Pakistan willingly accepted and hosted them for decades, even though this brought with it considerable economic and security pressures on the provincial governments of KPK and Balochistan. One silver-lining was that the issue of Pashtunistan has not been raised ever since. However, the war in Afghanistan left huge implications for the polity of Pakistan and played havoc with the norms and ethos of Pakistani society. In retrospect, while the partnership with the US on Afghanistan may have appeared to be a gain for Pakistan at that time, it came at a huge cost for its own society. The US also did not realize that helping the likes of Osama bin Laden would blow back one day, or that arming

warlords in Afghanistan could produce havens for terrorists. The border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which was already porous enough, became a freeway for militants as well as smugglers on both sides. Much of the transit trade goods meant for the Afghanistan market were dumped in or smuggled back into Pakistan, causing enormous economic injury to the country for decades.

Towards the end of the 20th Century, the Taliban rose to power in Afghanistan, introducing a strict faith-based rule and providing refuge to operatives of Al Qaeda and other extremist organizations. Pakistan had supported the Taliban earlier only because after the Mujahideen infighting, they brought hope for peace in Afghanistan. However, as soon as the Taliban gained power, Pakistan lost its influence with them and could not stop them from committing serious human rights abuses. After 9/11, Pakistan unsuccessfully tried to persuade Mullah Omar, the head of the Taliban, to surrender Osama, who had been accused by the US of masterminding 9/11. Not only the US, but Arab regimes also became sceptical about the Taliban for giving refuge to Al Qaeda, which wanted to topple governments in Muslim countries that he deemed apostate.[230] India, which had a soft corner for Afghans from the northern states, also maintained its distance from the Taliban government.

The US-led war in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021 became a source of considerable misgivings between Pakistan and the US as well as the Afghan governments of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani. The US and Afghan governments had concluded that it was the safe havens available to the Taliban in Pakistan that had denied the US a clear military victory. Pakistan constantly denied this on the grounds that the Taliban would visit Pakistan because of their families and medical treatment, but their main fighting cadre remained in Afghanistan. Pakistan had already paid a huge price for joining the US-led global war on terror following the 9/11 and was not prepared to reignite the war with Taliban inside Pakistan. Another allegation of the Afghan-US duo was that Pakistan was not doing enough in the war on terror. The term 'Do More' was interpreted in Pakistan as America's blatant

pressure tactic, and it was widely felt that it ignored all that Pakistan had done to fight terrorism. For Pakistan, the focus of its partnership with the US was to eliminate Al Qaeda, an objective that could not have been achieved without Pakistan's help. Pakistan had deployed thousands of its troops in antiterrorist operations, and arrested key operatives of Al Qaeda. According to General Musharraf, Pakistan had captured 672 Al Qaeda members and handed over 369 to the United States.[231]

Once the US was reasonably assured that Al Qaeda had been eliminated from Afghanistan, it shifted its goal post and started fighting the Taliban, who had no ambitions outside Afghanistan. As the war dragged on, the US, the Afghan government, and the world at large started accusing Pakistan of providing safe haven to the Taliban, a group which was already under UN sanctions. India joined the chorus for its own reasons of putting pressure on Pakistan and isolating it internationally. The governments of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani unleashed intense propaganda against Pakistan, thus not only bruising Pakistan's image in the world but also building an anti-Pakistan narrative amongst the people of Afghanistan. In doing so, they had also coopted India, which lent them full support. India invested heavily in Afghanistan in those years, particularly in road infrastructure and cultural affinities, and this provided India a unique opportunity to create a two-front situation for Pakistan.

Pakistan did not wish to take on the Taliban kinetically, as that would have brought the Afghan war right into Pakistan heartlands. Pakistan's counsel to the US, therefore, was to look for a political solution rather than to chase a military victory. The US ultimately came to accept that logic and after extensive negotiations, signed an agreement with the Taliban in February 2020 to end the war, often called the Doha agreement. This agreement enabled the American forces to pull out of Afghanistan, and Pakistan's counsel was validated. However, the US ignored the second advice by Pakistan, which was to withdraw its troops responsibly. What transpired was effectively the exact opposite. The US withdrew its troops rather

hurriedly in August 2021, most probably owing to domestic pressure that was building up against American involvement in distant wars. Since the withdrawal of forces was abrupt, there were severe implications for Afghanistan, as it could not get an inclusive government and Taliban started to behave in a 'winner takes it all' mode. The withdrawal of the US troops also marked the inglorious fall of the Ashraf Ghani government and the melting away of the Afghan National Army.

The second term of the Taliban in power did not turn out to be much different from their first term, as it failed to fulfil the set of expectations that the international community had from them: to form an inclusive government so that Afghanistan does not descend into another civil war; to accord girls the right of education and women the right to work; and to ensure that Afghan soil was not used by terrorist entities for terrorism anywhere. Accordingly, no government in the world, including Pakistan, granted formal recognition to the Taliban government, though every country started dealing with them as the de facto government in Afghanistan. Of biggest concern to Pakistan was the space and support that the Taliban government had started to provide to the TTP, which was continuing its raids on the Pakistani border posts and targets inside Pakistan. It is possible that for the Taliban, it was difficult to say no to the TTP, who were their ally throughout the US-led war on terror and could otherwise potentially join anti-Taliban forces. Nevertheless, Pakistan expected the Taliban government to restrain the TTP in the larger interest of peace between the two countries. The situation changed once the Chinese government came into the picture in early 2025. China was keen to make economic cooperation the centre-piece of their engagement with the Taliban government. In parallel, the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan also decided to boost their cooperation and manage their differences by uninterrupted engagement, particularly on the issue of terrorism being perpetrated by the TTP against Pakistan from Afghan soil. China, Pakistan, Russia,

the Central Asian Republics, and other countries began to focus more on the economic dimension of their relations with Afghanistan.

The above resume of Pak-Afghan relations indicates that the two countries have actually never been able to establish peaceful and friendly relations on a sustainable basis. From 1947 to 1979, the issues of Durand Line and Pashtunistan cast a dark shadow on the bilateral relationship. After 1979, Afghanistan was caught in the midst of global geopolitics and became a safe haven for terrorist entities from around the world. Pakistan suffered immensely from the turmoil that Afghanistan went through in subsequent decades. All along, Pakistan's attempts to have a friendly government in Afghanistan was motivated by two factors. One, Pakistan did not wish to see a hostile government on its western frontier, lest it was used by India to effectively create a double squeeze against Pakistan. Two, most avenues of Pakistan's connectivity to Central Asia and beyond went through Afghanistan. However, Afghan rulers viewed Pakistan from their own interests and perspectives. For them, exploiting pressure points against Pakistan could help them negotiate better terms for their country's national interests. This may have been a sound tactical move from the Afghan perspective, but this was a huge strategic error because the Afghans could have benefitted much more through a positive relationship with Pakistan.

For India, the conflictual issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan were a welcome opportunity to strengthen relations with Afghanistan. Indian movies and Bollywood songs dominated the Kabul cultural scene. India invested heavily into every walk of Afghan society, and Afghans were given incentives to visit India for studies, medical treatment and tourism. There was no reason for Pakistan to be concerned about a positive development of relations between India and Afghanistan if it benefited the people of Afghanistan. The only expectation that Pakistan had from both the Afghan and Indian governments was to not allow the use of Afghan soil to institute a two-front situation against Pakistan. Since Pakistan's concerns were never

addressed to its satisfaction, Indian tactics may have won, but strategic interests of a peaceful coexistence between India and Pakistan, and thereby South Asia, were lost.

Has the competition that India has posed to Pakistan inside Afghanistan during the past two decades served the people of Afghanistan well? To an extent, the Afghans did benefit from the investments by India and Pakistan, but these investments were well short of what the Afghans needed. Moreover, by treating Pakistan as their common adversary, India and Afghanistan lost the very physical link that is critical to broadening their cooperation. The approach taken by Indian leadership and Afghan rulers created distance between the peoples of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has put at risk the future of Pak-Afghan ties. Even many of the Afghans who had lived in Pakistan, and were educated here, became influenced by the propaganda of Afghan governments and viewed Pakistan demeaningly. With the advent of the Taliban in Kabul, the situation has become even more complex. If all three countries were to continue the policies that suited their narrow interests, time would show that no country would be able to win in strategic terms. The people of Afghanistan have suffered and are continuing to suffer. The people of Pakistan and even the other neighbours of Afghanistan are also the victim of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan. It would be in the interest of Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan not to let the gulf between them deepen any further than it already has. Of late, China has emerged as the glue that might fill this gulf. The prospect of extension of CPEC to Afghanistan has opened up prospects for economic growth and prosperity for the people of Afghanistan. The trilateral meeting between Afghanistan, China, and Pakistan in Beijing on 21 May 2025 was a good starting point. If this cooperation gathers momentum, and India gives up its permanent hostility with Pakistan, the North-South connectivity being developed could embrace East-West connectivity and also benefit India.

US-China Competition

The end of the Second World War witnessed the emergence of the US as the most powerful state of the world. Sooner than expected, the US confronted a challenge from the Soviet Union, which ignited the Cold War and ultimately led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991. The US became the sole superpower and led the phase of globalization. Interconnectedness and interdependence emerged as the defining features of the world economy. However, American global priorities underwent a major shift with 9/11, and a period of military interventions started. Not having learned much from its costly war in Vietnam, the US invaded Afghanistan in 2001 to chase Al Qaeda, which had taken refuge there. Then came the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, a country that had no role in 9/11, on the mere suspicion of possessing weapons of mass destruction. This was part of a reported ambitious plan of 'seven wars in five years', seeking to attack Muslim-majority countries of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia, and Sudan.[232] The Arab Spring that followed in 2011 destabilized several countries in the Middle East, ending up as Arab Autumn. Meanwhile, at home, American public opinion started turning against the US involvement in distant wars.

While the US was preoccupied with these costly wars, China was quietly and peacefully raising its economic profile pursuant to a direction given by its leader, Deng Xiaoping in 1978. With this ground-breaking turn from centralized economy towards a liberal market economy, China rapidly climbed the economic ladder. Early in the 21st Century, the US began to see the economic rise of China as a threat, fearing it could endanger US dominance of the Asia Pacific. The US announced its pivot to Asia in 2011, which did not necessarily entail a sharp turn away from other regions, but rather to rebalance US foreign policy towards Asia Pacific. This was complemented later through a national security strategy adopted by the Trump administration in December 2017 under which the strategic competition with China and Russia formally became the top global priority for the US.

A lively debate ignited among American scholars and the think tank community on how serious a threat the rising China would pose to US's global dominance. Some predicted a possible war invoking what is often referred to as Thucydides trap.[233] Graham Allison wrote a book 'Destined for War' arguing that if the US and China fall into a Thucydides trap, they would end up in war, a scenario that in his view must be strictly avoided. He cites Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, who was a keen watcher of China and had conversed extensively with the Chinese leadership, as saying that "the size of China's displacement of the world balance is such that the world must find a new balance. It is not possible to pretend that this is just another big player. This is the biggest player in the history of the world".[234]

The US went on to embark on a broader Indo-Pacific Strategy, which was announced in February 2022, outlining its vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific. However, it was largely perceived as an attempt to counter China's rise. The US, Australia, India, and Japan formed a coordination group called the QUAD to work together on keeping sea lanes open in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and cohere their strategies viz China. There were indications that this could move towards quasi-military cooperation.[235] The US also initiated a trade war by raising tariffs on certain imports from China and imposing export controls on certain American exports to China. The US was concerned that its industrial base had eroded, and manufacturing and supply chains of critical goods had become China-centric. As a part of its multi-pronged strategy to counter China's growing influence, the US chose India as its partner of choice. Through a series of agreements, the US empowered India's military and economic capacities. This boost to Indian economic and military strength was not only aimed at countering China at the 'line of actual control' but was also perceived in Pakistan as a threat to its national security.

The first two decades of the 21st century witnessed growing security cooperation between the US and India. The US and India had signed Agreement 123 on civil nuclear cooperation in 2005, followed up by a waiver for India from the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2008 to enable

India to engage in nuclear commerce. Both countries also signed LEMOA (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement) in 2016 to allow each other the use of military logistics. Another significant agreement signed between the US and India in 2018 was COMCASA (The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement), which enabled compatibility of encrypted communication equipment. Next came BECA (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement), signed in 2020, an agreement of strategic significance which enabled both countries to share geospatial intelligence. Meanwhile, India was also enhancing its naval outreach in pursuit of its Sagarmala vision in the Indian Ocean. Despite the US tilt towards India, the country continued to exercise strategic autonomy of maintaining independent postures in its foreign policies. For instance, India refused to distance itself from its traditional partner Russia, which was engaged in a war with Ukraine that was being fully supported by the West. India also did not completely toe the US line on relations with China and maintained a flourishing economic and commercial relations with its northern neighbour despite hostilities at the border. With increased wealth at its disposal, India became a large military spender, as documented by the annual reports of SIPRI. With its economic and strategic standing enhanced, India envisioned a new role for itself: a net security provider[236] in the region, a role that most other South Asian states were not comfortable with.

India has always had a complex relationship with China. The two countries started off well in the early 1950s, under a popular banner: *Hindi-Cheeni bhai bhai* (Indians and Chinese are brothers), and chose to work together for Afro-Asian solidarity, which represented much of what was later referred to as the Global South. However, a dispute erupted soon over the border separating Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, leading to a war in 1962. Pakistan, which was deeply frustrated with the constant strategic coercion by India, could have chosen to initiate a war against India at that time to help China. However, Pakistan's leadership chose not to do so as a conscious strategic decision to not expand the circle of war, lest it unleashed

destruction for the whole region. Pakistan's decision also helped keep doors open for positive engagement with India. The 1962 Indo-China war also provided a rationale for Pakistan to settle its own border with China. Accordingly, in 1963, Pakistan and China signed a border agreement, to which India objected. Was Indian objection to the 1963 Sino-Pak border agreement a tactical move or a strategic choice? It appears that India chose not to endorse the Sino-Pak border agreement because it did not want to dilute its claim that the state of Jammu and Kashmir in its entirety was a part of India, knowing well that its position violated international law and UN Security Council resolutions. Had India taken a broader view and made a genuine move towards settling the Kashmir issue with Pakistan, it was possible that the border issues would never have arisen between India, Pakistan and China.

The role that the major powers played in the two wars that India and Pakistan fought in 1965 and 1971 also demonstrated how profoundly global geopolitics impacted the India-Pakistan equation. Pakistan's war with India in 1965 prompted US sanctions on both countries, which for Pakistan was a rude awakening because it felt that as an ally of the US, it should have received American support rather than sanctions. The US had its own reasons to do this, because its support to Pakistan was to fight the Soviet Union and not India. This was perhaps the first time Pakistan learned that its relations with the US would always be transactional. China did not interfere in the 1965 war, though it indirectly supported Pakistan by maintaining an aggressive stance towards India and accusing it of aggression on the China-India border.[237] This helped Pakistan, as India was unable to redirect its troop formations from the Chinese border towards Pakistan. During the 1971 war, the US had a favourable view of Pakistan because the latter was serving as a conduit for the US to the People's Republic of China. While the Soviet Union solidly stood with India during the war in East Pakistan, China was confronted with a difficult choice. It decided not to intervene militarily in favour of

Pakistan, owing to its own limitations and the fact that at that time China did not enjoy good relations with the Soviet Union.

A few years after the 1971 crisis, global geopolitics witnessed an infusion of geoeconomics when China in 1978 and India in 1991 decided to open up their economies to the outside world and registered enviable economic growth. Both also stayed engaged with each other in the commercial and investment domains. Pakistan missed out on the economic bonanza, despite embarking on economic liberalization in 1990. Pakistan's energies were first consumed by the Afghan jihad against the Soviets during the 1980s, and then a decade of political instability in the 1990s. Following the nuclearization of South Asia in 1998, Pakistan became more confident that its nuclear capability had offset its conventional military asymmetry with India. Facing a new round of US sanctions, Pakistan drew even closer to China. However, the relationship remained largely political, grounded in mutual goodwill. An opportunity to expand the economic dimension of the Sino-Pak relations emerged in 2015, when President Xi Jinping became President of China and launched the Belt and Road Initiative, of which the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) became an integral part. Pakistan, having suffered from the impact of global war on terror for years, found a welcome fillip to its economic life. The largely political Sino-Pak relationship had now transformed into a more comprehensive strategic partnership. Much of the motivation for Pakistan to develop this partnership was a result of India's strategy to team up with the US and Afghanistan to diplomatically isolate Pakistan. This obliged Pakistan to further deepen the north-south economic corridor, linking up to China, Central Asia, and the Eurasian landmass. Geopolitical alignments in South Asia, thus, started getting sharper. Unsurprisingly, the US (and India) did not take kindly to CPEC.[238] Although the Pakistani leadership mindfully intensified its cooperation with China, Pakistan was also keen to maintain a positive relationship with the US, because the latter was a large trading partner and offered bright prospects for cooperation in the fields of education, health, agriculture, and

information technology. It was clear that global geopolitics had, once again, obliged India and Pakistan to follow divergent trajectories in their foreign policies.

There was yet another important dimension of the China, India, Pakistan triangle. This pertained to the fact that all three countries were nuclear armed neighbouring states. Though nuclear deterrence provided a degree of assurance that these countries would not engage in an all-out war, there existed a sense of urgency to avoid any accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, and ensure proper controls over the lethal missiles being developed by all three sides. The basic purpose of nuclear weapons was to deter aggression and avoid large-scale wars. However, kinetic confrontations below the nuclear overhang continued. There was, thus, a danger of conflict situations spiralling out of control to a nuclear level. The US and other Western countries would also elaborate their concerns about inside theft or transfer of nuclear technology to other countries. The proliferation network reportedly involving Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan and nationals of Switzerland, Holland, Britain, and Sri Lanka, with the base in Dubai, was a setback. Nevertheless, Pakistan learned its lessons well and adopted in 2004 an Act to control the trade of strategic items of dual use and established a strategic export control division. Ever since, Pakistan's track record on nuclear safety, nuclear security, export controls and command and control has been impeccable and well appreciated. While India and Pakistan had intermittently engaged in the expert level discussions from 2004 to 2011 on nuclear CBMs to lower the risk of nuclear confrontation, India began to lose interest in any further discussions on the subject. For India, its nuclear programme had to now factor in what it perceived to be a threat from China.

In South Asia, tensions had continued to mount since 2016, as India had cut off all links with Pakistan as a reaction to the Pathankot attack and made SAARC dysfunctional by refusing to attend the SAARC summit that was scheduled to be held in Pakistan in November 2016. Earlier too, India had sought to make SAARC as a platform that would

operate only if India so decided. For instance, when China expressed its interest in becoming a dialogue partner and enhancing its cooperation under the umbrella of SAARC, India did not agree. The situation became more complicated in August 2019 when the Modi government dissolved the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan reacted by downgrading diplomatic representation and bilateral trade. China stood with Pakistan on its stance that the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir be resolved keeping in view the relevant UN resolutions. However, when it came to Ladakh, there was also a bilateral dimension for China as it wanted to settle this issue in the context of its border dispute with India.[239] The differences between India and China on the border in the Ladakh area came under a renewed limelight in August 2023, when India objected to China's release of the 2023 edition of its standard map which showed Aksai Chin as its part.

In 2020, China and India clashed again on their borders, this time in the Galwan valley. The tense episode led to the deaths of many Indian and Chinese soldiers. Around the same time, India and Pakistan were negotiating to reaffirm the 2003 understanding of ceasefire on the LoC, which culminated in an agreement in February 2021. This provided space for India to move some of its troops to its border with China. Why did Pakistan not seize the opportunity to create a two-front situation for India? It is likely that Pakistani leadership took a broader strategic view of the situation out of consideration that a wider war would harm the entire region. The ceasefire also helped avoid civilian casualties. Incidentally, the Chinese, too, did not permit the confrontation with India to go out of control, consistent with their policy in recent times to avoid conflicts with neighbours and maintain undisrupted focus on its economic growth and international stature. In due course, notwithstanding the strategic rivalry between India and China and their unsettled border, both countries decided to let the conflict co-exist with their mutually beneficial economic relationship. Was this a strategic decision by both? Most probably, it was. It helped India maintain its strategic autonomy of sustaining relations with all

major powers, including the US, Russia and China. For its part, China also wanted to maintain economic, commercial, and investment relations with India to keep the latter away from fully leaning towards the US.

With the advent of Donald Trump's second term as the American president in January 2025, the US reduced its military assistance to Ukraine in the latter's war with Russia, with the bewildered Europe struggling to save the trans-Atlantic alliance that was the anchor of the post 1945 world order. The global geopolitics witnessed proliferation of armed conflict around the world, with massive military build-ups by most major powers. In the Middle East, Israel's assault on the people of Gaza left thousands dead, and its conflict with Iran severely undermined international law, particularly international humanitarian law. In the economic and commercial domains, Donald Trump's presidency shook the very foundation of the global trading system, which had nurtured free international trade for decades, as the heavy tariffs that the Trump administration imposed were not only against China but also the rest of the world, including America's longstanding allies like Canada and European countries. The tariffs were intended to protect American economic interests, but the uncertainty created in the world's capital markets and global trade regime created ripples that began to affect America itself. The breakdown of world economic order hastened, with every country now scrambling to protect its own interests.

Interestingly, while global geopolitics had sharpened divisions in South Asia, in one sense India and Pakistan were pursuing similar approaches in their respective foreign policies. Both wanted to maintain the option of strategic autonomy in pursuing their respective relations with all major powers. For instance, despite its close relations with the US, India continued to buy Russian oil and gas, despite the West's clear sanctions against Russia. Pakistan, too, in line with its policy of maintaining friendly ties with all major powers, upkept its outreach to Russia, including an official visit to Moscow in April 2022, which coincided with Putin's decision to invade Ukraine on 22 April

2022, creating considerable speculation on all sides. Both India and Pakistan abstained on the resolution in the UN General Assembly that condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russia's invasion and capture of a part of a relatively smaller neighbour's territory was a dangerous precedent, and the principle of territorial integrity of Ukraine had been violated. At the same time, NATO's continued expansion in eastern Europe was perceived by Russia as provocation enough to secure its national interests. In the wake of the war in Ukraine, prices of essential commodities spiked. Pakistan was obliged to import basic vegetables from Iran and Afghanistan rather than India, with which border trade through Wagah had been suspended ever since India had taken away the special status and statehood of the Indian-Occupied Kashmir on 5 August 2019. This could have been an opportunity for the two countries to resume trade for mutual benefit, but neither side took any initiative in this regard.

While India and Pakistan, as indeed the rest of the world, were busy finding ways to adjust to the rapidly changing global geopolitics, a limited war broke out in the subcontinent in May 2025. Pakistan's response to Indian aggression was emphatic and forced India to seek US help to broker a ceasefire. India insisted that the ceasefire was brokered bilaterally. Nevertheless, President Trump continued to repeat that his administration had brought in a ceasefire and an agreement to hold talks at a neutral venue. President Trump also offered to mediate on the Kashmir dispute. All this placed India in a tight spot, but there was not much it could do against its strategic partner, the US. Meanwhile, details emerged on how China had silently but effectively helped Pakistan by providing requisite intelligence support and state of the art equipment. The perceived iron-brother relationship between Pakistan and China was reinforced. As damage control, India decided to send out envoys to explain its narrative to the rest of the world, which had not supported India in its unilateral military strike of 7 May 2025. Pakistan too sent out its envoys to ensure that facts were understood. The battle of narratives ensued, with China clearly standing with Pakistan in protecting

Pakistan's legitimate interests of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Throughout the past eight decades, India and Pakistan have found themselves on the opposite sides of the major-power competition. The fall-out of the competition between the US and China in the second and third decade of the 21st Century was no different from this trend. Even so, the Chinese side kept its channels with India open. On the eve of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and China, President Xi sent a message to his Indian counterpart that the two countries should work closely together and the relationship should take the form of a "Dragon-Elephant tango."[240] It is not yet clear whether India would like to engage in such a 'tango' because it seems to have placed a much higher priority on its relations with America, particularly at a time when the latter has vastly expanded the ambit of its competition with China. Before the May 2025 clash, the Pakistani leadership had sent signals to India to normalize bilateral relations, particularly in the realm of bilateral trade. However, India continued to maintain a total disconnect with Pakistan. Given that China, India and Pakistan are nuclear-armed states, all three must work on ameliorating the prevailing environment of tensions and mutual distrust. Any further kinetic confrontation can have disastrous consequences for the entire region.

It is a reality that China's economic footprint has expanded to all regions of the world, including South Asia. Not only Pakistan, but all other states of South Asia, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Maldives, have expressed a willingness and interest in benefiting from the economic opportunities created by their relationship with China. However, India has often been seen as not only applying pressure on its relations with other states in South Asia, but also creating a zero-sum situation for the relations of these states with China. While India is struggling to maintain its troubled ties with other countries in South Asia, it has reserved special hostility for Pakistan. Some scholars have argued that it is neither in the interest of the US nor India to destabilize Pakistan, as Pakistan is critical to regional stability.[241] Conscious of the

enormous potential that Pakistan represents, the Trump administration has taken steps to engage positively with Pakistan, particularly in the economic and commercial domain. Had India and Pakistan decided to work together to avoid the polarizing impact of the major-power competition, the north-south connectivity would have been complemented well by east-west connectivity that in turn would have ushered in economic bonanza for the economies of Central, West and South Asia. However, owing to India's consistent efforts to destabilise and isolate Pakistan, this strategic interest has been forsaken.

Chapter 6 – May 2025 Confrontation

As if the tense estrangement between Pakistan and Modi-led India since 2016 was not enough, a deadly terrorist incident in Pahalgam, Indian-Occupied Kashmir, pushed the two nations into a limited but lethal conflict. On 22 April 2025, some unknown gunmen opened fire on tourists in the Pahalgam meadows, killing 26 people before fleeing the scene. Reportedly, no security forces were present in the vicinity - a major lapse in security for such a sensitive region.

Within minutes, Indian media outlets began blaming Pakistan, fueling a fiery surge of nationalist fervor and war rhetoric. As happens in the fog that surrounds such incidents, disinformation spread rapidly. Unconfirmed reports alleged that the gunmen checked the religion before killing mainly non-Muslims. Emotions quickly ratcheted up as the Indian media continued to engage in fervent war-mongering. Meanwhile, some muted criticism also surfaced against Indian authorities for failing to secure the area, despite the presence of hundreds of thousands of Indian troops stationed throughout Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Prime Minister Modi vowed to bring those behind this heinous act to justice. There was widespread condemnation of the incident by most countries, and Pakistan also expressed its concern over the tragic loss of innocent lives.

On the Pakistan side, the initial reaction was one of surprise, swiftly followed by anger. There was surprise because Pakistan had no

involvement in the Pahalgam attack. It made no strategic sense for Pakistan to permit any group or person to cross over the heavily guarded line of control or border and undertake such a heinous attack on civilians - an act that would only tarnish the Kashmir cause and provoke international backlash. In recent years, Pakistan had taken visible, stern measures against any militants involved in violent extremism, cracking down on proscribed entities operating within Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan itself was grappling with cross-border terrorism being perpetrated by the TTP and BLA, allegedly with covert support from Indian operatives and media amplification for groups like the BLA. Anger had also deepened in Pakistan, because the Indian government had announced yet again, without giving any evidence or waiting for any investigation, a series of punitive steps, including a decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance and a downgrade in the size of diplomatic missions. This suspension was illegal as the Treaty does not provide for unilateral suspension. Within a month, India began taking steps to manipulate water flows from rivers allocated to Pakistan under the IWT. This sparked profound concerns across Pakistan, as speculation grew that India might divert river waters essential for the survival of 240 million Pakistanis. Pakistan wasted no time in announcing that any attempt to stop or divert these waters would be considered an act of war.

In response, the government of Pakistan announced that it reserved the right to hold all bilateral agreements, including the Simla Agreement, in abeyance "till India desists from its manifested behaviour of fomenting terrorism inside Pakistan; transnational killings; and non-adherence to international law and UN Resolutions on Kashmir." Cross-LoC firing resumed, effectively breaking the February 2021 ceasefire agreement, and both sides promptly started mobilizing troops. The region braced itself for the possibility of another military clash. Indian media and politicians exhorted their government to take even more decisive actions than it had in 2016 and 2019.

IQBAL FORUM

As India continuously refused to share any evidence, suspicion deepened within Pakistani circles that the incident might have been orchestrated by India's deep state, either directly or through some outlawed outfit. Many speculated whether India was attempting to influence the visiting US Vice President by showcasing alleged "Pakistani terrorism"? Was the strong anti-Pakistan stance intended to stoke nationalist fervor and serve as a rallying cry for the forthcoming elections in Bihar in November? Or was it to justify the presence of hundreds of thousands of security forces inside Kashmir, where Kashmiris were expressing their dismay at losing their statehood? Some also wondered whether it was meant to distract from the growing international concern on alleged target killings, or attempts that of, or spying by Indian state operatives in Canada, the US, Australia, Qatar, and Pakistan? All manner of theories circulated in public discourse. Even the term false flag was being used in Pakistan, as many observers pointed to almost a play by play pattern of Indian government's responses in such situations: Blame Pakistan; get popular votes; investigate; and if local elements were involved, the cases are buried and the culprits released.

A review of the last 25 years, already discussed in chapter 4, illustrates the point: In 2000, days before President Clinton's visit to India, a dastardly terrorist attack killed dozens of Sikhs in a town called Chittisinghpora. Later, it turned out that some junior rank officers of the Indian army were involved along with surrendered militants. That same month, seven local residents of Pathribal village were killed on the grounds that they were foreign militants. The truth emerged later that they were wrongly implicated by falsifying DNA samples. Some army officers were indicted for a fake encounter and murder, but the army decided not to press charges citing insufficient evidence. The attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001 was blamed on JeM and LeT, but questions arose later on the dubious manner in which the police had fabricated evidence and extracted false confessions. A few years later, a spate of terrorist incidents occurred in 2006-7, with similar patterns. An explosion in a Muslim cemetery in Malegaon was

initially blamed on the Students Islamic Movement of India, but was actually committed by a Hindu extremist group, Abhinav Bharat. Several Hindu extremist elements, who were behind a blast in the 400-years old Mecca Masjid in Hyderabad in 2007, were later acquitted. The investigations into the Samjhauta train blast of 2007 revealed that this heinous act was committed by Hindutva extremists, including Naba Kumar Sarkar alias Swami Aseemanand, who was later acquitted. A year later, the city of Mumbai experienced a major terrorist attack. Several unanswered questions remain there too about the involvement of internal hands, some of which were discussed in the books: 'Who killed Karkare?' and 'The Betrayal of India'. Six months after the Pathankot attack of January 2016, DG NIA admitted in a television interview that there was no evidence of Pakistan's involvement, yet the Modi government chose to use the occasion to launch a massive campaign to isolate Pakistan.

So it is not any surprise, considering the pattern of the last 25 years, that the Pakistani leadership, as well as its people, feel a sense of growing resentment and weariness over this narrative of blaming Pakistan within minutes of any given attack. So was the case for Pahalgam, even though the vast majority of the Pakistani nation expressed deep condolences for innocent lives lost. Instead, television screens across Pakistan showed that India's police had determined within just ten minutes that foreign hands were involved, and as if on a cue, the Indian media whipped up war hysteria and called for strikes against Pakistan. All within minutes, with not even an intent of investigation or any provision of evidence. Nevertheless, the Pakistani prime minister called for a neutral and transparent investigation of the incident and offered Pakistan's willingness to participate in it. Some in Pakistan scowled at this offer for joining in neutral investigations, branding it as appeasement, but the majority felt that offering to take part in investigations would call India's bluff. If the investigations did not find Pakistan involved, then India's entire narrative would come crashing down. It soon became clear that India was not going to carry

out any independent neutral investigation, and it would only use this incident to continue its policy of bashing Pakistan.

Then why, it must be asked, does India continue to assert that Pakistan is involved in these terrorist incidents, even if it holds no evidence as such? One possible explanation lies in the political narrative that the Modi government has constructed over the years. Since 2019, New Delhi had sought to project that by abolishing statehood, annexing Jammu and Kashmir as a Union territory, and deploying hundreds of thousands of security personnel to keep law and order, the final solution to the Kashmir problem was in hand. The Pahalgam incident exposed that the conflict remained unresolved and that even the presence of 700,000-strong security forces had failed to maintain peace. Accordingly, the policy makers in India thought it fit to deflect attention from their failures in Indian-Occupied Kashmir and attribute it to a wider conflict with Pakistan. Another explanation is what Yashwant Sinha, the former Indian foreign minister, described as a "drama" for political mileage.[242] In an interview to a local media outlet, Sinha suggested that Pahalgam was orchestrated for electoral gains with upcoming Bihar elections in mind. He recalled how the Pulwama incident had similarly occurred ahead of the previous elections, contributing to Modi's overwhelming electoral victory. Interestingly, a former governor of Indian-Occupied Kashmir also expressed a similar view, explaining that the Pulwama incident had been exploited by the Modi government to reap electoral benefits.

Comments from Pakistani political figures echoed deep scepticism over India's motives. Senator Sherry Rehman and Tariq Wasim Ghazi, in remarks published on the website of Jinnah Institute Islamabad, broadly reflect the Pakistani sentiment in the face of India's war-mongering and intensifying rhetoric.[243] Sherry argued that India's launch into escalation of hostilities was "a troubling policy infantilism" for a nuclear-armed country, and that "India's hair-trigger response confirms that stridency on steroids is the new normal policy." She put it aptly that "reflexive finger-pointing at Pakistan has long been New Delhi's boilerplate response to abject security failures

at home. India is seldom able to control, manage or negotiate a way out of its hundred ongoing mutinies, let alone handle a terrorist attack without setting the neighbourhood on fire." She further added that many in Pakistan perceived the attack as a false flag operation, considering the several precedents in the past. Her cautionary note was stark: "It is very easy to tumble into a bad place for India and Pakistan, but it is not at all easy to go back, once you unleash the dogs of war." Former Lt. General of the Pakistan Army, Tariq Waseem Ghazi, who had also served as Defense Secretary of Pakistan, went even further, contending that Modi and Amit Shah were guilty of the genocide, ethnic cleansing, human rights abuses, mass dislocation of populations, rapes, and massacres in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. He characterized the Pahalgam incident as a deliberate distraction from the atrocities committed in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Ghazi expected Pakistan's relations with India to "undergo yet another test of nerves, but the low ebb to which they have fallen under Modi means that there is not much more to lose." He advised the Pakistan leadership to "anticipate and prepare to counter the coming Indian barrage of falsehoods through effective diplomacy and political unity."

Contrary to India's expectations, the international community, while condemning the incident, refrained from blaming Pakistan. It is plausible that they had their own sources to contest Indian allegations. Moreover, it appears that Pakistan's calls for a neutral investigation also resonated well with the international community; after all, had Pakistan been involved, it would have never called for a neutral and transparent investigation. Since the Modi government had scaled up war-like rhetoric so much in the immediate aftermath of the incident, it became hostage to the heightened expectations of India's elite that India must carry out a decisive kinetic operation against Pakistan. Prime Minister Modi left it to India's military leadership to decide as to where and how Pakistan was to be attacked. Simultaneously, India began to take steps to disrupt the flow of waters towards Pakistan, like

using waters from the Chenab river to fill up the reservoirs of dams such as Baglihar and Salal.

As anti-Pakistan rhetoric in India reached fever pitch, even some of the normally moderate Congress members of parliament got carried away by this storm of hate and anger. Take for instance, an article written by a Congress MP Manish Tewari in 'The Tribune' titled 'India must prepare for Pak endgame'.[244] The title itself speaks for the kinds of radical measures suggested against Pakistan. He urged India to plan for "the permanent extinction of this artificial state... irrespective of the cost in terms of blood and treasure." He even aspired to an Indian state whose boundaries are till the eastern bank of Indus and a state of Pashtunistan from the western bank of Indus onwards.

Days after relentless speculation of an impending Indian attack and in the dead of night between 6 and 7 May, India launched what it called Operation Sindoor, carrying out missile strikes against six non-military sites in Pakistan: Muridke and Bahawalpur in the Punjab province and Muzaffarabad and Kotli in Azad Kashmir. The strikes killed 31 innocent civilians, including children. India promptly claimed that these sites held terrorist infrastructure of LeT and JeM, which Pakistan completely denied. A former inspector general of police of the Punjab province confirmed to this author that Pakistan had already taken stern action against these two banned entities years ago, and so for them to be operating in those areas was out of the question. In fact, these sites were only mosques and their associated schools.

Regardless, Pakistan Air Force had been intensively preparing for such an attack, and instantly scrambled its J10C aircraft, shooting down five Indian fighter aircraft, including 3 expensive Rafaels, 1 SU-30, and 1 Mig 29, as well as a Heron Unmanned Aerial System. India neither confirmed nor denied losing planes but in due course, mounting evidence suggested that it had indeed lost these planes. Later, General Anil Chauhan, India's chief of defence staff, admitted

that an unspecified number of its jets were shot down during the conflict with Pakistan.[245]

As dawn broke and people world over struggled to comprehend the night's sensational events, many speculated that, as after the post-Pulwama military confrontation in 2019, tensions might cool. After all, Pakistan had successfully blunted the Indian air attack and brought down several Indian fighter jets. Pakistan again reiterated calls for an independent investigation to try and calm the situation. However, India chose to escalate, pressing on with its kinetic operations. On 8 May, India unleashed a swarm of armed drones targeting multiple locations across Pakistan, ostensibly aiming to cripple Pakistan's radar installations and air defense systems. These unmanned harbingers of destruction were Israeli-made Harop drones, designed to loiter above their targets before diving in with lethal precision. The conflict had entered unchartered territory, and in a rather deceptive move, India claimed its drone strikes were retaliation for Pakistani drone incursions—allegations Islamabad vehemently denied. Meanwhile, all world powers and the international community at large issued urgent appeals for restraint, alarmed at the specter of full-scale war between two nuclear-armed nations.

India's aggression regrettably did not end there. A third wave of attacks followed, this time in the form of missile strikes against three key Pakistan Air Force bases, including the strategically crucial Nur Khan base near Islamabad. By this time, Indian media was in total frenzy. Television studios pulsed with fervent energy as defense analysts predicted catastrophe for Pakistan. A euphoric chorus echoed across channels, proclaiming that Pakistan would not withstand the might of India's military onslaught, and some reported that Indian forces were well underway in an invasion of Pakistan.

By this time, the mood in Pakistan had considerably soured, and calls from every corner of Pakistan insisted on retaliation. It had anyway become clear that diplomatic outreach was not ending Indian

aggression. So in the early hours of 10 May, Pakistan decided to retaliate. In a coordinated attack involving missiles launched from aircraft as well as ground- and air-based systems, Pakistan carried out Operation *Bunyanum Marsoos*—a Quranic phrase meaning "Wall of Steel." The operation targeted multiple strategic and military sites across India in a sophisticated, integrated, network-centric and multi-domain offensive. Pakistan's platforms across air, land, sea, and cyberspace operated in seamless synergy, striking precisely chosen high-value targets with calculated force. Specifically, Pakistan's response employed long-range Fatah series missiles F1 and F2 of the Pakistan Army, precision munitions of PAF, highly capable long-range loitering killer munitions, and precision long-range artillery. The attack explicitly targeted only those 26 military facilities that were used to kill Pakistani citizens, and those sites that were fomenting terrorism in Pakistan. According to Inter-Services Public Relations,[246] the targeted air and aviation bases included those at Suratgarh, Sirsa, Bhuj, Naliya, Adampur, Bhatinda, Barnala, Halwara, Awantipura, Srinagar, Jammu, Udhampur, Mamun, Ambala, and Pathankot. The Field Supply Depot at Uri and Radar Station at Poonch were also attacked. The military command headquarters of 10 brigade and 80 brigade at KG Top and Naushera were completely destroyed. Intelligence units and forward field elements at Rajouri and Naushera that had been used for perpetrating terrorism against Pakistan were also destroyed.

Apart from multiple Indian air force and aviation bases, BrahMos storage facilities that had fired missiles on Pakistan were also targeted and S-400 battery systems were also neutralized. Targets included select field supply depots, radar stations, brigade headquarters, and other field elements. Intense fire across the LoC also targeted Indian logistic bases and artillery positions until the Indian side raised white flags for restraint. Pakistan also sent armed drones to multiple sites across a wide range, symbolizing its response to Indian drones. Comprehensive cyber operations were carried out to temporarily cripple and degrade critical infrastructure and services used by Indian

Armed Forces. Although India predictably denied much of the above, the spokesperson of India's army admitted that Pakistan's retaliatory attacks damaged Indian bases, equipment, and personnel. There is evidence that India did cause considerable damage to civilian facilities, including killing 31 people. However, India's claim that it had caused damage to several Pakistani air bases was exaggerated, as an analysis by the New York Times found the damage limited, even if precise. India's claim that it had shot down an unspecified number of Pakistan's aircraft also could not be independently verified.

Regardless of what one may see as unverified claims and counter-claims on both sides, what seems clear is that India was not anticipating Pakistan's swift and lethal response. As such, hours following Pakistan's response, India approached the US, which was already in active dialogue with both sides, and sought to arrange a ceasefire. President Trump tweeted on 10 May that "after a long night of talks mediated by the United States," he was "pleased to announce that India and Pakistan have agreed to a full and immediate ceasefire." This announcement of ceasefire was also reiterated by Secretary Rubio, and then by Pakistani and Indian sides. Rubio further announced that both sides had agreed to "start talks on a broad set of issues at a neutral site." While Pakistanis were jubilant because their strikes had forced India to back down, the mood in India was largely one of disappointment, as this was not an outcome being predicted (as was evident in the sensationalist headlines just hours prior to the Indian invasion of mainland Pakistan).

The Indian government was visibly upset that their long-held position that there would be no foreign mediation had been questioned. Their policy of not engaging in any talks with Pakistan since 2016 was also being challenged, and India was getting re-hyphenated with Pakistan. To accentuate the surprise, President Trump issued another tweet, saying that he was ready to work with both sides to find a solution concerning Kashmir. For all of India's decades long effort to remove attention from the Kashmir dispute, the crisis had brought the Kashmir dispute right at the centre of Indo-Pak conflict. India's first

official reaction was to announce that the ceasefire was brokered bilaterally through the channel of DG MOs, implying that this was not secured through US intervention. To India's chagrin, President Trump continued to publicly boast that his country had brokered a ceasefire and helped avoid a potential nuclear war.

As domestic criticism of the handling of war by the Modi government increased, Prime Minister Modi took on an even more strident position against Pakistan. He announced that Operation Sindoor was to continue, and that the ceasefire only represented a pause in the military operation. He also declared a new doctrine of deterrence guided by three principles: India alone would decide about the manner of its retaliation; it would not tolerate nuclear blackmail; and it would not make any distinction between terrorists and the states that back them. It seems that it would be difficult for India to implement this doctrine, as in any future confrontation both states could climb the ladder of escalation rather rapidly with implications for the whole region. Secondly, given the grim situation in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir, there can be no guarantee that acts of resistance would cease. It would not be prudent for India to keep plunging into a military conflict with Pakistan without addressing the ground realities created by its occupation of Kashmir. Thirdly, Prime Minister Modi's doctrine of deterrence runs the risk of giving effective control of India's foreign policy towards Pakistan to militants who could spark an incident at any time of their choosing and trap India into a military confrontation with its western neighbour.

In Pakistan, while the robust response to Indian aggression was widely appreciated, there was an expectation that Indian involvement in terrorism in Balochistan must also be called out. Accordingly, when India announced to send delegations abroad to explain Indian perspectives, Pakistan, too, decided to send out its representatives to explain to the outside world its perspectives on four issues: First, that India has acted in haste without investigation and without providing any evidence of Pakistan's involvement, and that India continued to refuse even an independent and impartial investigation., Second, that

Pakistan is a victim of India-sponsored terrorism in Balochistan, for which ample evidence was available. Indian state agents are also recruiting killers to target certain personalities inside Pakistan. Third, that any attempts to stop Pakistan's waters to starve 240 million Pakistanis would be an act of state-terrorism and an act of war, for which Pakistan reserved the right to act in an appropriate manner. And fourth, the root cause of the conflict is non-resolution of the Kashmir dispute, and that Pakistan was open to take up the offer of the American president for a third-party mediation to resolve the conflict.

In parallel, the Indian narrative that its envoys carried with them revolved around their allegations that Pakistan supported terrorist groups that commit terrorism in India and Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Leading the delegation sent to the US was a Congress MP, Dr. Shashi Tharoor, who had publicly accused the Modi government some years ago of injecting "toxin of hate" into India's body politic.[247] One challenge for Indian envoys remained throughout these discussions, where it had to somehow convince the world that without the provision of any evidence or attempts at investigation, it had jumped to the conclusion that Pakistan was somehow connected to the Pahalgam incident and on that basis began a confrontation that threatened to spiral out of control.

An Epochal Moment

In many ways the events of May 2025 represented a turning point for the geopolitics of South Asia. That Pakistan had the capability to put up an emphatic and robust defence against aggression from its much larger eastern neighbour seemed to have imbibed a new resolve in the Pakistani nation as a whole. Pakistan's partnership in China paid off, and China once again proved that it was the most reliable friend of Pakistan. India's Hindutva-driven BJP government began facing a backlash from within the country, though it continued to deny facts.

The people of India had been fed false and untested assumptions that Pakistan could be strategically coerced. Indian media propagated lies and projected fictional scenarios and, in the process, lost credibility before the international community. The United States played a constructive role to defuse the situation. India's expectations that the US, Russia, and the rest of the world would voice support for its allegations against Pakistan were dashed. India was further surprised to learn that no country was ready to unequivocally stand by it, whereas at least three countries, China, Turkiye, and Azerbaijan, openly and solidly stood by Pakistan. India's propaganda for the past nine years that Pakistan was isolated met a reality check.

What was perhaps most telling about the four-day military confrontation was that it removed the myth of Indian conventional dominance - bringing the region towards a balance of power - and that too with the conflict staying under the nuclear threshold. However, despite the ceasefire that began on 10 May, there was little hope for peace to return to South Asia, as India declared that it could resume Operation Sindoor at any time. Indian muscular posture was meant to convey that it can "punish" other countries at will and without the need to provide a reason. The announcement by the US Secretary of State that both countries would meet for talks at a neutral venue and the offer by President Trump that he was ready to mediate on the Kashmir dispute have frustrated India, which had for years stated adamantly that it would not engage in any talks with Pakistan, nor discuss the issue of Kashmir.

In a working paper published by Stimson Center, Christopher Clary[248] regards the Indo-Pak military confrontation as the "most significant" in several decades. He elaborates that the military action "crossed previous thresholds in geographic reach, systems employed, and impacts produced" and "concluded with significant diplomatic engagement, primarily by the United States." It also generated "unprecedented levels of mis- and disinformation," which continues to cloud a common understanding of what actually transpired between May 7-10. Clary draws some notable political conclusions:

India-Pakistan relations will remain crisis-prone, and these crises will continue to escalate in severity over time. Since both sides lost lives and military equipment, they could exercise "some caution in the near-term." Overt nuclear signaling was lower than in prior crises, but any future crisis under the shadow of nuclear use could make South Asia "the most likely theater" for nuclear war. The encouraging factor is that "both sides demonstrated ability to manage escalation." Some third parties played a role in crisis diplomacy, but it was the US role that worked most effectively to defuse the crisis. All countries have watched with keenness the performance of modern Chinese weapons that were on display during this conflict, notably the HQ-9 air defense system, the PL-15 air-to-air missile, and the J-10 fighter aircraft.

Looking ahead, while it may be difficult to predict precisely how the situation will evolve over the coming months and years, it is critical for both countries to draw the right lessons from the May 2025 military confrontation. Khan Hasham,[249] the former Vice Chief of Pakistan Navy, believes that militarily, a highly dangerous precedent has been set, as both sides engaged in a widespread targeting of key defense installations, which, in future confrontations, might graduate to targeting economic targets, causing mayhem in both countries. Even the slightest miscalculation or misadventure could plunge the region into catastrophe, considering the lethal arms both countries possess. Secondly, the two countries would likely also resort to the use of non-kinetic means (cyber warfare etc.) for achieving politico-military ends, thus endangering the safety and security of their major defense and economic installations. Thirdly, the character of war has changed, with greater use of technology and autonomous lethal weapons such as armed drones. The propensity to use these weapons is higher because there is little human contact. Fourthly, classical conventional wars no longer take place in detached or far-off areas, but feel much closer to each individual, given widespread access to real time information from 24 hour news outlets and social media. Finally, the importance of diplomacy has perhaps scaled even higher and needs utmost prioritization if any nation wants to avoid or avert expensive

and debilitating wars. Admiral Hasham advised that in the light of the experience of May 2025 confrontation, Pakistan would need to: (i) restructure its war-fighting capabilities with a view to employing newer technologies and air power rather than relying on the classical warfare of tanks and foot soldiers of yesteryears; (ii) optimally use diplomacy by constantly monitoring global and regional developments and projecting the country's view point; and (iii) invest in media and social media to project the country's narrative through linkages with key regional and global media outlets.

Politically, after the May 2025 confrontation, the prospects of both countries returning to the path of peace and dialogue have further dimmed, at least, for as long as Prime Minister Modi is in power. Touqir Hussain,[250] a former Ambassador and presently adjunct professor, Georgetown University, and Visiting Senior Fellow, National University of Singapore, has shared his assessment that under Prime Minister Modi, India-Pakistan relations are now in a very different place. He is treating Indian Muslims, Kashmir, and Pakistan, like no other Indian prime minister has done. Modi is, therefore, not likely to talk to Pakistan. But if he does decide to talk to Pakistan, it will be different from the way other Indian prime ministers have done. There will be no 'composite' or 'comprehensive' dialogue, nor will there be any joint mechanism on counter-terrorism. Touqir Hussain adds that for a variety of reasons, Modi has made terrorism the defining feature of India-Pakistan relations. Jaishankar's remarks and statements are notable not so much for what India will talk about but for what India will not talk about. Jaishankar has said if India talks, it will only be about terrorism. The underlying message is that India will not talk about Kashmir; and secondly it will only talk about 'Pakistan-sponsored terrorism'. Touqir Hussain reckons that for Modi and Jaishankar, the issue of terrorism is more than just about terrorism. It is about domestic politics; it is about Kashmir (principally); and it is about isolating and weakening Pakistan. Mechanisms and frameworks are a thing of the past. They bind India's hands. The terms of reference under Modi have changed. It is basically a power

disparity issue and the dizzying heights India had gone to internationally to isolate Pakistan. Trump has brought it a notch lower but the basic status will still remain high. Touqir Hussain reckons that sooner or later India might realize that it cannot keep ignoring and isolating Pakistan. However, if a crisis like the 7-10 May confrontation happens again with similar results, the world would begin to wonder that if India cannot manage the region how was it going to become the global power it aspires to be.

To what extent will the May 2025 confrontation impact BJP's electoral prospects in the forthcoming elections in various states of India? Pakistan has always been an electoral issue in India, and perhaps always will be. However, under Prime Minister Modi, this has embodied a totally new character. The Modi regime has cultivated the image of Pakistan as an "enemy", and actively cultivated feelings of animosity amongst the people of India against Pakistan. This was demonstrated mostly vividly before, during, and after the May 2025 confrontation. Dr. Qamar Cheema,[251] Executive Director of the Islamabad-based independent think tank Sanober Institute, agrees that the emerging challenge for Pakistan is that it has become a domestic issue in India to such an extent that Congress and BJP are now competing with each other as to who attacked Pakistan more frequently in the past. This competition, in his view, is intended essentially to increase their vote bank. Indian media, in Cheema's view, would remain a hurdle to peace as its business model is heavily dependent on government advertisements. He recalls that historically Indian political leaders had used foreign policy and diplomacy to whip up their election campaigns. Under Modi, however, foreign policy is being used much more aggressively for the twin goal of enhancing Modi's image and winning elections. Qamar Cheema contends that Pakistan should now accept the reality that "the legacy of Prime Minister Modi is confrontation, and not peace and harmony." He suspects that since Modi's foreign policy has failed to isolate Pakistan in the wake of May 2025 limited war, and support for him and his policies is dwindling, Modi would likely become even more

aggressive towards Pakistan by engaging further in jingoistic rhetoric in an effort to muster the support of his base. Modi will also likely take measures to keep the Hindus and Muslims divided within India as well as in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Qamar Cheema is convinced that as long as Modi stays in power, the region of South Asia would remain "hostage to the Hindu nationalist approach" pursued by the Modi regime.

Javid Husain also agrees[252] that the debacle India recently suffered in its clashes with Pakistan in May 2025 is not likely to persuade it to give up its "overarching strategic goal" of establishing its hegemony in South Asia and around the Indian Ocean. This factor, in his view, is likely to remain at the core of the tensions between the two countries for the foreseeable future. He, therefore, advises Pakistani leadership to focus on its economic and technological development, which will play a "decisive role" in determining the outcome of the "long-term contest" between the two countries. If this is the case, what policy choices does Pakistan have? Qamar Cheema advises that Pakistan should work towards creating an alternative institutional block to replace SAARC, where all like-minded nations that feel strategically coerced by India should unite. In Cheema's views, with the May 2025 limited war, Pakistan has "liberated the region from jingoism and strategic arrogance of India," and it should be possible for the countries of the region to connect with each other without India. The world is watching with concern India's growing "strategic arrogance" and would need to play an assertive role to prevent a major clash in the region or even a possible nuclear war. India's multi-alignment is turning into a non-alignment, and in the process Modi and his External Affairs Minister Jaishankar are losing public confidence.

As the dust settles and both countries are engaged in a diplomatic offensive to explain their respective perspectives to the rest of the world, the Indian agenda would face some tough questions. The primary reason for this is that its stance is predicated on weak grounds of not having any evidence of Pakistani involvement in what happened in Pahalgam. Pakistan, on the other hand, is feeling far

more confident in its diplomatic push because it knows that the Indian allegation is factually false. An Indian media outlet[253] raised five questions that Indian parliamentary delegations sent abroad to rally support for Indian viewpoint should expect from their foreign interlocutors: Where is India's evidence on the Pahalgam Attack? Why is there no clear accounting of India's military losses, including downed aircraft? Why is there a lack of transparency at home, but briefings abroad? What is the truth about the ceasefire? Was there a US role that India accepted (meaning thereby whether India accepted the third-party mediation for ceasefire)? And is Modi's new counter-terror doctrine credible and consistent with being a responsible democracy?

There needs to be more introspection in India regarding the answers to these five questions. Jumping to the same old narrative of there being some sort of historical pattern of Pakistani involvement in terrorism in India will not make these questions go away. As discussed in this chapter, and Chapter 4 before it, there have been so many incidents of militancy and terrorism that India had initially attributed to Pakistan, but later were found to actually have been perpetrated by internal elements, particularly anti-Muslim Hindu extremists. India's narrative gets further discredited by a constant spree of terrorism by Indian operatives in Pakistan, from the 2016 arrest of Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadav in Pakistan to the 2025 terrorist attack on Jaffar Express.

Pakistanis are sometimes puzzled as to why there is so much anger and hate in India towards Pakistan. Although Pakistani people acknowledge the troubled history that the two countries share and the animosity that is derived from the past, the vitriol and toxicity with which much of Indian media, pundits and commentators reacted after the Pahalgam took even peaceniks in Pakistan by surprise. The answer perhaps lies in the nature of the Modi regime, which for years has been on a carefully cultivated path of establishing the ideological supremacy of the Hindutva-driven state in India. Secondly, Pakistan, and to some extent other South Asian countries, are viewed as an

obstacle to the Indian ambition to create a united India or Akhand Bharat. While to some this intent on India's part may seem outlandish, the reality regrettably is that in May 2023, Prime Minister Modi inaugurated a mural map installed in the new building of Indian parliament, which showed the territories of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and even Myanmar as part of United India. India's minister for parliamentary affairs, Pralhad Joshi, described the mural as a map of the Akhand Bharat, which was described as a right-wing fantasy of creating a Hindu nation in the subcontinent. Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal expressed their strong displeasure over this mural.[77] Former Major General of Pakistan army, Dr. Raza Muhammad,[254] who headed an Islamabad-based think tank, is convinced that Akhand Bharat is an "unrealistic dream" but it serves well to whip up ultra nationalist sentiment for political objectives. Can India adopt a posture of mutual respect to carry its neighbours along on the path of region-wide peace and development is a question that the Indian leadership would have to address one day. The Indian government must appreciate and recognize that India's prosperity cannot come without a stable region and without abandoning its attitude of trying to assert dominance over its neighbours.

However, the Modi regime does not define India's past and future. As it is, he is receiving considerable domestic criticism for the manner in which he had dealt with the issues of Kashmir, cross-border terrorism, relations with neighbours, and India's secular identity. For long term prosperity in South Asia, it is important that future governments of India be more amenable to review the Modi legacy and bring India back to its original self. A new government might find merit in peaceful coexistence and keeping channels of communications open with its neighbours. Whenever it is that the two sides eventually decide to resume their normal bilateral contacts, one first step could be to give each other assurances of the kind that President Musharraf extended to India in the 6 January 2004 statement, so that both sides feel assured that the other side would not use terrorism as an instrument of state policy. Beyond these formal statements, both

countries would need to proactively take steps that can enhance mutual confidence on actions taken to suppress forces that propel terrorism in both countries.

It is encouraging that Pakistan has curbed sources of financing for terrorists by meeting the requirement of the Financial Action Task Force, and also acted firmly against any non-state entity that might have an extra-territorial agenda. For its part, India must shun the tendency to blame Pakistan for every act of terrorism that occurs in mainland India or Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Further, India must also not use Pakistan as an alibi to suppress the people of Kashmir, and recognize that India's overwhelming military presence in Kashmir leads to much anguish amongst Kashmiris and creates the kinds of conditions that lead to attacks on its forces or bases. This is the bare minimum agenda that can bring the two countries towards dialogue for resolving their outstanding issues.

Overall, from India's Operation Sindoor and Pakistan's Operation Banyanum Marsoos, both countries have gleaned their respective lessons and insights. India has likely realized that its conventional superiority is not enough to overwhelm Pakistan, and the latter has come away encouraged that its conventional capability is robust enough to defend itself against Indian aggression. Both countries also embarked on a novel framework of war fighting. Missiles and drones were used extensively, but ground forces of neither country crossed borders or the LoC. Pakistan's investment in cyber and space domains coupled with support from China helped blunt India's aggression and inflict sufficient punishment on it to ask for a ceasefire. India also discovered that its attempts to isolate Pakistan have not succeeded, as no country endorsed Indian allegations of Pakistan's involvement in Pahalgam attack, even if everyone condemned the terrorist attack. The Western countries discovered the scale and depth of Chinese military and air technologies as refined and employed by Pakistan. India's strategic partnership with the US came to be tested when the latter offered to mediate the Kashmir dispute. Although both countries have not yet mobilized their full force and war potential, they were able to

size up each other's military capabilities. Pakistan discovered a new zeal and national spirit that it was capable of withstanding aggression from its much larger neighbour. Many in Pakistan have expressed the view that this moment could be leveraged to bring about political stability and economic revival of the country. For India, the events of May 2025 underscored the need for it to reevaluate the relationships it has with its neighbours and hopefully introspect over how it can aspire to lead the South Asian region without addressing the grievances of these neighbours.

The attention of the world did not stay on South Asia for too long a period of time, as in June 2025, Israel attacked Iran with missiles and armed drones. Iran responded in kind. At one point, the US also joined the Israeli effort, and bombed three nuclear installations in Iran. The latter shot back at a US base in Qatar, which prompted intense diplomacy by the US and Arab states of the Gulf, ultimately leading to a ceasefire. The 12-day war in the Middle East and 4-day war in South Asia had some parallels. Firstly, both Israel and India have always nursed larger objectives. Israel wants to eliminate Iranian resistance to its goal of Greater Israel while many Indian leaders, especially in the Modi government, view Pakistan as a hurdle to their larger goal of creating a United India. Secondly, in both conflicts, air power, missiles and drones were the principal means of war. Thirdly, in both cases, the victims of aggression, Iran and Pakistan, managed to blunt the aggression. That's where the similarities end. The situations were also different in many other ways. Pakistan, unlike Iran, is a declared nuclear power. Pakistan also did not suffer the kind of intelligence failures that Iran did at least in the beginning of its confrontation with Israel. A welcome outcome for Pakistan was that Iran discovered the true extent of the Indo-Israeli nexus, while it stood in great appreciation for the political and moral support that Pakistan had expressed for Iran's fight against Israeli aggression.

The world is experiencing a breakdown of the rules-based order that had governed inter-state relations since 1945. In these uncertain times, nations are increasingly relying on building up their military and

economic strengths, as opposed to focusing on multilateral coalitions or security alliances. Until the contours of a new world order emerge, true safety for each nation relies on a safe and conflict-free region. It is therefore vital that India aligns its policies with these changing times and contributes towards making this region safe. India should avoid placing conditions on normalization of its relations with Pakistan, give up the idea of thinking of dialogue as a 'concession', and embrace the path of reason and dialogue. Trying to isolate Pakistan at the regional and global levels is not serving the purpose it may think it is. Pakistan is a large country that has been a sovereign state for nearly eight decades, with considerable military might; any line of thinking that it would accept any attempt by India or anyone else to infringe on its sovereignty through coercive means needs to be reevaluated. Similarly, other South Asian states also expect to be viewed through a lens of mutual respect for their sovereignty, free from interference, blackmail or threats. Should India determine that it can leverage its geography for win-win options for itself and its neighbours, it will find that there is appetite across the region for strengthening cooperation across the board, much like the way in which the EU and other regions function. For its part, Pakistan should always remain ready for dialogue with India on all outstanding topics, including issues of Indian concern, as a conduit to establishing peaceful coexistence in South Asia.

Chapter 7 – Cold Peace: The Struggle for Peaceful Coexistence

As the world moves from a unipolar to a multipolar world, most countries are reconfiguring their alignments to protect their interests in a world order that is increasingly in disarray. One alarming trend is for the major powers to act unilaterally, bypassing the principles of inter-state conduct enshrined in the UN Charter. Multilateralism is increasingly marginalized, at least in the domain of international peace and security. Amid this disorder, major-power strategic competition is intensifying, especially between the US and China, as discussed in Chapter 5. During the time of the Biden administration, the leadership of the US and China repeatedly assured each other and the world that their competition would not veer towards conflict. Under the Trump administration, the competition has manifested itself in a trade and tariff war, with serious concerns about the global trade regime and supply chains. There were lingering concerns that the US-China competition might increase even further in the years ahead and the world may get further divided into camps.

Amidst this polarized global environment, there is an urgent need for India and Pakistan to create conditions that protect the region from the adverse impacts of the emerging geopolitical rivalries and geoeconomic disarray. Since both India and Pakistan desire to exercise strategic autonomy in maintaining relations with all major powers,

considerable space can be created for both to act in harmony for the larger interest of regional peace and prosperity. The issues over which both countries had quarrelled in the past are resolvable, provided they take a strategic approach in dealing with bilateral issues. The reality of a globalized world is that there are conveyor belts that take ideas, tourists, migrants, emails, weapons, dollars, viruses, greenhouse gases, and much more across borders.[255] In today's world, a complete disconnect is neither possible nor desirable, and the two countries can be much better poised to deal with reciprocal obligations and challenges if they maintain regular contact through multiple channels.

Several wars (including limited wars) have made it abundantly evident to both India and Pakistan that wars and military confrontation would not resolve any issues between India and Pakistan. Before the May 2025 confrontation, saner voices in both countries had often called upon their governments to resume contacts with each other. During the launch event in New Delhi in April 2023 for the posthumously published book by Satinder Kumar Lambah, who served as the Indian Prime Minister's special envoy for back-channel talks with Pakistan, the ex-National Security Advisor, Shivshankar Menon, and former Indian High Commissioners to Pakistan—T.C.A. Raghavan, Sharat Sabharwal, and G. Parthasarathy—expressed unanimous agreement that the door for diplomacy with Pakistan should stay open.[256] Shivshankar Menon remarked that both India and Pakistan are embedded in each other's domestic politics, and suggested that India should try and promote people-to-people contacts, and enhance trade aspects, even if larger and more complex geopolitical issues remain unresolved. In an opinion piece for Hindustan Times, TCA Raghavan,[257] a former high commissioner of India to Pakistan, observed that the Indian stand continues to be a preference for holding Pakistan at arm's length and keeping interactions to a minimum. He advised his country to rethink India-Pak ties in the new global context. He wrote that "the minimum relationship with Pakistan as it presently exists is insufficient for promoting greater stability in our region. If the latter is in our overall

interest, then an arm's length policy with Pakistan needs also to be reassessed." Likewise, there were signals from the Pakistani side, even at the level of foreign minister, that both countries should find ways to resume trade and gradually build mutual confidence. However, the Modi government has chosen not to engage with Pakistan through any dialogue, and preferred to keep the relationship in a freeze, many notches below normalcy.

It is often said that to understand the future, look at the past. While this is true, past events by themselves can provide only limited guidance, as the future presents its own unprecedented twists and surprises. Of greater relevance is to carry out an accurate assessment of the evolving global and regional situation and internal developments in both countries that would together shape the politico-economic future of South Asia. The drift of global dynamics is such that a breakdown of the post-1945 world order is now imminent. Powerful states are violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of relatively less powerful states with impunity. Xenophobia is rising in nearly every society, as is anti-immigrant sentiment. Walls of protectionism are being built, choking the flow of free trade. Military spending is rising worldwide, and as a result of evolving geopolitics, each country feels obliged to fend for itself. Alongside bolstering their military might through investing in technologically advanced and unmanned weapon systems, major powers are bolstering their economic strength and socio-cultural reach. Accordingly, geoeconomic interests are driving geostrategy in different parts of the world. Many countries have settled historic quarrels with old enemies and are gearing up for new geostrategic competitions and multi-alignments. It is remarkably tragic that while much of the world has moved forward in adapting to this new world order, South Asia remains stuck in the past with little ambition or political will to make the future different from its muddled past.

With quiet certainty, both India and Pakistan are also witnessing societal transformations. India had started its life as a secular state, where Hindus, Muslims and other communities intermingled.

However, the BJP government appears to be asserting India's Hindu credentials, with space shrinking for minorities. Whether a Hindu Rashtra is created for a Hindu-majority country is a matter for the people of India to decide. However, maintaining regional peace and stability will require that this goal not be pursued by spreading hatred against Pakistan or demonizing the historical bonds of Islam that have greatly influenced modern day India. As South Asia is home to more than half a billion Muslims, any tendencies towards Hindu-Muslim tensions must be immediately addressed. Events like the construction of the Ram temple in place of Babri mosque are the kind of actions that are best avoided. Likewise, for Pakistan, which was created to protect the political and cultural rights of Muslims, all efforts must be made to ensure that its minorities are treated as equal citizens in accord with clear constitutional provisions and Islamic injunctions. It is imperative that the two nations step out of the shadows of their fractured past, learn from history, identify patterns of xenophobia and otherism, and open up to a common, peaceful, pluralistic, and prosperous future for all nations living in South Asia.

It is not that the nature of the India-Pakistan conflicts is somehow inherently unresolvable. History has plenty of examples of states, even those considered the most bitter of rivals, that have learned to manage their differences. And yet, despite knowing all about the benefits that can be reaped through friendly bilateral relations, India and Pakistan remain stuck at deciding whether even a peaceful coexistence is possible. In fact, it feels at times that if peaceful coexistence cannot be achieved by India and Pakistan, the least they can do is to live in a state of 'resentful coexistence' without resorting to war. The question is whether this resentful coexistence is the only future reserved for these more than one and a half billion people, or whether they can work through their differences to craft a more cooperative future that can help move beyond the acrimonious past they had inherited. Arguably, with the support of visionary leaders who are guided by good sense, the two countries should strive to

create a better understanding at the government-to-government level, particularly by leveraging the people-to-people contacts.

In many ways, India and Pakistan have touched a rock bottom of their bilateral relationship, with a total suspension of bilateral dialogue. Some scholars have expressed "conditional pessimism"[258] about the future of India-Pakistan relations on the grounds that domestic events in one state affect the other and there are continual cross-border issues that push the countries farther apart. Others believe that growing disparity in economic weight and military power potential has placed India at the global table while Pakistan was losing its relevance due to its political and economic problems. This was a strategic illusion, as many in India discovered to their own surprise how Pakistan was able to thwart the Indian military, air, missile, and drone attacks in May 2025. Many now expect India to take a more pragmatic view of Pakistan's power potential, essentially as a favour to itself, because that would help avoid war, stop the fleeing investments, and provide space and resources that India could benefit from for its internal development.

Perceptions Versus Reality

It is well established that the people of India and Pakistan share a common past, having lived together for centuries. Those living in one country have had family relations in the other. Holy places in one country are of reverence to the people of the other. Sports, healthcare, education, cultural commonalities are some of many areas in which the people of both countries take great pleasure in interacting with each other. However, nearly all areas of cooperation depend on how the governments of two countries view each other. If mutual hostility and mistrust continue, the richness of their common history and culture is dulled.

In India, there are different schools of thought about relations with Pakistan.[259] One category of Indians would like to normalize ties with

Pakistan, as that in their view would help build India's regional and global profile. This group of Indians would like to incentivize Pakistan to focus on shared benefits and thus view India in a more cooperative light. However, another category of Indians does not subscribe to this approach. They would prefer a hardline approach to coerce Pakistan to fall in line and acquiesce to India over issues of disagreements and disputes. Their argument is that Pakistan is no longer relevant for a growing power like India, and that India should focus more on challenges emanating from China. The strategy behind this line of thought is that just like the US engaged in an arms race with the Soviet Union until the latter collapsed, India should develop a covert coercive capability to force an arms race on Pakistan and then wait patiently until Pakistan collapses under the weight of its serious internal issues, particularly its weakening economy. Then there is the third category of Indians: super-nationalistic hardliners, who deeply resent Pakistan and its calls for the right to self-determination for the people of Indian-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. They would like to respond by destabilising Pakistan through third countries, such as Afghanistan and providing support to Pakistani dissidents in Balochistan or other parts of Pakistan, often referred to as 'defensive offense', a doctrine employed by India's national security advisor Ajit Doval. Many in the present leadership of BJP and Indian establishment tend to hold this view. The extremist Hindu nationalists go to the extent of seeking to break up Pakistan or at least make it a client state of India. Across all political lines, Pakistan is a major electoral issue in India, but it appears it is more so for BJP leaders.

It may come as a surprise to some, but for Pakistan, India has never been a major electoral issue. It rarely ever comes up as an issue in the election campaigns of any political party. However, it is also true that India is generally viewed as an enemy state that has never accepted the creation of Pakistan and always works against the interests of Pakistan. The recent disconnect in relations imposed by the BJP government since 2016 has further reinforced this view. The hostile statements, mostly by BJP leaders, such as 'water and blood cannot

flow together'[260] or *kante ko kante se nikalna hei*,[261] or *'qatal ki raat'* [262] have been steadily driving Pakistan further away from India in the public perception. The sharp anti-Pakistan steps taken by India merely on suspicion of being behind the Pahalgam incident, including the holding of the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, have further inflamed Pakistani sentiment about India's hostility. Most Pakistanis believe that such hubristic behaviour by India is a high-risk approach in the nuclear environment as this could have serious implications for both countries as well as the region.

Interestingly, there are still many perennial optimists, who are convinced that both countries would one day shed their mutual hostility and live peacefully. This school of thought has often launched initiatives like *'aman ki asha'*.[263] They resent the display of hostility at the Wagah border every evening, and instead light candles of peace on the eve of Independence Day. A noted American scholar believes that on balance Pakistan has been "far more proactive" in making offers to normalize relations, and that its elite and public opinion endorse that view.[264] However, most Pakistanis are also aware that given India's larger political and economic clout, repeated Pakistani attempts to reach out to India might encourage Indian leadership to expect concessions by Pakistan on core issues of concern to the country, such as its Islamic identity or stance on Kashmir. Given the strong attachment of the people of Pakistan to these causes, no government in Pakistan would ever like to compromise on its core national interests, but most would be willing to engage in ways to find peaceful coexistence.

In both countries, there are attempts to rewrite history to instil in new generations a partisan view of the circumstances surrounding the partition of British India. While Pakistani governments introduced the subject of Pakistan studies, the BJP governments have tried to portray Muslim rulers as "bigots", and Pakistan as a "medieval, antimodern" state. More recently, the Muslims in India, who have been facing marginalization, have either been linked to Pakistan or projected as a "green threat" to rally Hindu votes. Many areas that were Muslim

majority have lost a considerable segment of their Muslim population. There is a concern that Kashmir might also meet the same fate. During the Indo-Pak military clash of May 2025, a Madhya Pradesh BJP Minister labelled the spokesperson of the Indian army, who happened to be Muslim, as "sister of terrorists."[265]

In the face of the grim and bitter reality that both countries hold a broadly inimical view of each other, how would India and Pakistan overcome mutual hostility and forge a new dawn? Some practical ideas have been discussed in the next chapter. It is imperative that a conscious effort is made in both countries to transform each other's perception from being 'enemies' to simply as 'neighbours'. Peaceful coexistence is the only option available to both sides because the path of strategic coercion of each other will never deliver peace. Before 2016, there were two mutually exclusive approaches followed by both sides. Pakistan had believed that if major obstacles like unresolved disputes, particularly Kashmir, were removed, doors for a cooperative future would open up. India contended that it would be prudent to pick the low hanging fruit first, and once confidence was built, then to aim for resolving the difficult issues. The composite dialogue, which was a compromise between the two approaches, was tried. Although the dialogue did not reach its logical end of creating peaceful coexistence, it did demonstrate that there were many areas of cooperation which could build common stakes for both countries in a future of peace and prosperity. It would be in the interest of both countries, and especially their people, to resume the composite dialogue process whenever the circumstances permit. Given the hardline BJP position that India has taken to completely disconnect with Pakistan, which is now reciprocated by Pakistan, this might not be easy to do.

Breaking Barriers

How would India and Pakistan break the current deadlock which has lasted longer than any estrangement in the past? Historically, the

breakthrough nearly always occurred from the top when leaders broke the barriers of mutual hostility and took steps to build confidence. According to Nicholas Wheeler, interpersonal trust between leaders can be applied to the building of trust between the states that perceive each other as enemies. He argues in his book 'Trusting Enemies' that face-to-face interaction between leaders enables them to build trust and a bonding where both begin to accurately interpret signals from each other. In this regard, Wheeler cites[266] Ronald Reagon's assessment that it was his face-to-face meeting with Gorbachev that helped break down the barriers of mistrust and that they had to begin by establishing a personal relationship before their respective states could accurately interpret each other's intent and signals. Wheeler, however, recognizes that this method of interpersonal trust leading to inter-state trust does include a real risk of disappointment and betrayal, particularly in cases where one of the leaders lacks the capacity to live up to the trust reposed by the other leader. In that regard, he cites the Munich meeting of British Prime Minister Chamberlain in September 1938 with German Chancellor Hitler, who used the face-to-face meeting to lull Chamberlain into believing that Hitler had no expansionist designs.

Wheeler then examines how trust was built between Nawaz Sharif and Vajpayee in a face-to-face meeting in September 1998 in New York and how both began to interpret each other's intent accurately, which in turn helped them form a bonding that led to a positive result in the Lahore summit of February 1999. He further points out that while the two leaders were interpreting each other's signal positively, their officials continued to apply what is called Holsti's 'inherent bad faith' model of suspecting each other's intentions, without realizing that their own actions might appear threatening if viewed from the adversary's point of view.[267]

It is true that in the past, cycles of estrangement were broken by high level diplomacy, like Zia's visit to Delhi in 1987, Vajpayee's bus *yatra* to Lahore in 1999, Musharraf's dash to Agra in 2001, or Modi's surprise visit to Raiwind in 2015. Notwithstanding good intentions or

at least tactical consensus, these initiatives also did not work in the end. There is a view that this time, it may be a good idea to build up confidence from bottom up rather than top down. Small steps could be taken at the start, graduating to higher levels of contact as mutual confidence is built. However, in the wake of the skirmishes in May 2025, there may not be any takers for this approach either. India has suspended decades-old waters treaty with Pakistan, which will remain a major point of contention unless India reverses its decision. Diplomatic missions have been further downsized with posts of defence attaches abolished. Likewise, bilateral trade has now completely halted, with the Wagah-Attari border sealed. The visa regime has also been totally shut, even for Pakistani religious pilgrims or those visiting India for medical treatment. In the absence of people-to-people contacts, the approach of taking small steps to build confidence has no potential to deliver normalization of relations. That said, the two countries may still have to interact on unavoidable issues like the release of fishermen on humanitarian grounds and those prisoners who have completed their term. They might also be constrained to cooperate, even if not formally, on mitigating the regional impacts of climate change.

The point is that the approach of taking small steps to build confidence can only work if there exists a willingness to resume bilateral contacts with a result-oriented approach. In that case, as confidence builds further, contacts at a high level of political engagement could also resume. All along this gradient, the larger picture must be kept in mind, and both must approach the peace process with flexibility to genuinely accommodate each other's core concerns. Given that global geopolitics could deepen mutually antagonistic alignments in South Asia, both countries would need to make an extraordinary effort to avoid the temptation of pursuing tactical gains at the expense of the strategic goal of creating a politically peaceful, economically integrated, and collectively prosperous South Asia.

Having compared Wheeler's view that breakthroughs nearly always occur through mutual trust at the leadership level versus the small

steps approach, it appears that in South Asia as well, the breakthrough can only come in a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. When leaders hold face-to-face meetings and make genuine attempts to build trust and confidence, they must also ensure that there is broad support amongst their domestic stakeholders that understands and endorses the initiative. It might be relevant here to mention the conclusions that late S.K. Lambah deduced in his book on why the negotiations on the four-point formula were successful. He cites three ingredients for the success: firstly, mutual trust and understanding between negotiators and the ability to understand the mind of the interlocutor; secondly, access of negotiators to the top leadership in complete confidentiality; and thirdly, discussions were more open than in official channels, as there was no written record of discussions.[268]

In order to have a broad-based perspective, a cross-section of practitioners and academics were interviewed whether in their opinion India and Pakistan would be able to normalize their relations in the foreseeable future. Vali Nasr,[269] a noted academic, political scientist and professor at the Johns Hopkins University Washington DC, offers a cautiously optimistic note, arguing that "the two could arrive at a peaceful coexistence. In Pakistan at least, and in his view in India too, there is "popular support" for this. If France and Germany or Korea and Japan could bury the hatchet after gruelling wars, India and Pakistan can as well. Peace will have to "come in steps with successful negotiations over discrete issues" that can build trust and generate momentum towards peace. He advises that perhaps Kashmir "should not be the first step," and the two sides should circumvent it and set it aside for now. Opening borders to people-to-people engagement and definitely greater volume of trade will help. Pakistan will have to "end anti-India terrorism", and both countries will have to change their respective public discourse regarding the other. They can also benefit from the good offices of "intermediaries both sides trust—Saudi Arabia and/or UAE are the only obvious choices, given

that they have interest in peace between the two countries and have leverage with both sides."

Some analysts and commentators in the West still believe that Pakistan is abetting anti-India terrorism, a stereotype that India has crafted since 9/11. As discussed in this book, much of the militancy and terrorism in India was found to be on account of internal elements in India and the Indian-Occupied Kashmir, and not attributable to Pakistan. The question is how to achieve normalcy in relations while India continues to propagate the false narrative of Pakistani involvement in terrorism. Pravin Sawhney contends that normalcy between India and Pakistan is "not possible" for three reasons: One, the present Modi government in India with its Hindutva (right wing) election winning ideology sees Muslims in India as the "others"; this implicitly makes Pakistan an enemy nation. Two, in the evolving new global order, India has decided to play the US' geopolitical game in the Indo Pacific (the US' name for Asia Pacific), in which Pakistan and China are on the other side. And three, with a "zero-sum mindset", India, which is projecting itself as China's rival, cannot make peace with Pakistan "on equal terms".

Fakir Aijazuddin also agrees that India and Pakistan cannot engage in an uninterruptible dialogue "as long as PM Modi and his BJP are in power." Christine Fair also does not believe that India and Pakistan could engage in an uninterruptible dialogue "unless Pakistan can accept India's hegemonic position and there is little likelihood that Pakistan will ever acquiesce to Indian hegemony however imminent in the future."

Javid Husain in his book 'Pakistan and a world in disorder' takes the argument a step further and expresses the view that just like every emerging great power seeks hegemony, India, too, would act aggressively in the South Asia and Indian Ocean regions. He further believes that several factors have worked in India's favour in the pursuit of its hegemonic ambitions: faster economic growth, growing military strength, a stable democracy, and the US strategic tilt towards

India to contain a rising China. Javid Husain is, therefore, convinced that India cannot be persuaded to not pursue its hegemonic policies in South Asia "even if Pakistan offers expressions of friendliness and cooperation". Under Prime Minister Modi, who has been a lifelong member of RSS, India's strategy to deal with Pakistan, according to Javid Husain, is influenced by the teachings of Kautilya's Arthashastra written around 300 BC for the benefit of Chadragupta Maurya. He recalls that Kautilya had recommended that a wise ruler should "choose his allies from among his neighbour's neighbours – something that India seems to have followed." Javid Husain further believes that India is adopting Kautilya's concept of "silent war," where a ruler outwardly promotes peace but covertly uses agents to assassinate prominent leaders in the rival state, create internal divisions, and spread propaganda and disinformation to subdue the adversary.

In light of these arguments, Javid Husain is convinced that there would be "no dramatic breakthrough" in Pakistan-India relations. He, therefore, cautions that Pakistan should "keep its guard" but also "avoid adventures like Kargil crisis or any other provocation like actions of Jihadi organizations that could aggravate tensions" between Pakistan and India. Javid Husain believes that India might engage Pakistan in "an arms race," which could make Pakistan "fritter away its resources" that otherwise could be spent on strengthening its economy. While recognizing the strategic imperative of peace between Pakistan and India, Javid Husain believes that genuine friendship between the two countries will "remain elusive in the foreseeable future."[270]

'Diplomatic Divide' is a short book co-authored by Dr. Humayun Khan of Pakistan, a former high commissioner of Pakistan to India, and Ambassador G. Parthasarathy, a former Indian high commissioner to Pakistan. While Humayun Khan calls for efforts by both countries to remove mistrust, Parthasarathy places the onus for improving relations on Pakistan. He argues that "Pakistan can either choose the path of giving primary importance to issues of economic

and human development or continue with its present policies of confrontation with India, advocacy of jihad and worldwide Islamic causes...."[271] He is also of the view that Kashmir is "merely a symptom" of the problem of Pakistan's "continuing hostility towards India."

The views expressed by G. Parthasarathy represents a mindset in India that places blame on Pakistan for every confrontation with India. The fact is that it was Pakistan which had to face acute hostility from the Indian leadership ever since independence of the country in 1947. Despite that, Jinnah is on record for having repeatedly expressed the desire to have a friendly and cooperative relationship with India. In an interview to Reuters correspondent Duncan Cooper on 25 October 1947, Jinnah expressed that his view that since the division of India had been agreed upon by both Dominions, they should "now bury the past and resolve that despite all that has happened, we shall remain friends.", which in his view would raise their prestige in the comity of nations.[272] Throughout the political history of Pakistan and India, every government in Pakistan has followed Jinnah's guidance and sought friendship with India, while hostility towards Pakistan has been the defining feature of election campaigns in India, particularly by the BJP.

Salman Bashir is convinced that as neighbours, India and Pakistan have "no other option than to learn to live together" respecting each other's territorial integrity. While the terms of engagement may differ according to circumstances, there is no doubt that the future must be one of peace and prosperity. He observes that on the Pakistan side, there has historically been broad-based support for establishing peace with India. On the Indian side, the situation varies, depending on politics and leadership. He advises the hawks on both sides to realize that "only by mutual accommodation can the two countries enter an era of peace." Referring to the deep mistrust between India and Pakistan, Masood Khalid believes that this has become a "very complicated relationship," with each positive step forward seemingly followed by four steps back. Khalid is of the opinion that the

compulsion of geography, as well as common challenges of poverty and climate risks should in fact be the overwhelming factors in unfreezing their relationship. He advises the leadership of both sides to take the initiative to come back to the dialogue table for discussions on all contentious issues in a structured format and in a sustained manner. Masood Khalid advises both sides to work on "give and take basis." It cannot be 'the winner takes it all approach'. He cautions that there will be no magic solutions, and the process can be long-winded and cumbersome, fraught with risks of failure, but there is no alternative to dialogue. He adds, however, that any dialogue sans Kashmir will be a non-starter; so, India has to climb down from its present position.

Moeed Yusuf feels that the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan is "unfortunately deadlocked." When one country is ready to move forward, the other is not. According to him, the Indian side is currently displaying "utmost hubris." They make no pretence about their disdain for Pakistan. Some in the BJP regime would even want to undo partition. The situation in India at this time is as anti-Pakistan as it can get." He believes that Pakistan is still ready for bilateral engagement but is not ready to do so on India's terms. Yusuf feels that both countries need "visionary leaders" to take the relationship out of this stalemate. He also says that if the leadership is willing to take any peace initiative, the people of both countries would support it, because "it is the states that create narratives." Naeem Khalid Lodhi believes that "with BJP in power, Pakistan is likely to face more pressure," especially at a time when a struggle for independence and autonomy is being suppressed in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Lodhi is also of the view that as a relatively smaller state Pakistan "cannot expect a fair deal."

Elizabeth Threlkeld is more hopeful in her assessment that India and Pakistan "can engage in an uninterruptible dialogue." She recalls that the two countries had come close by laying the groundwork in the past. Historians like Pallavi Raghavan remind us that in the years immediately following the partition, both sides managed to achieve

productive working relations on a range of important issues, despite reeling from the devastating violence that had unfolded in 1947. She is, however, concerned that as the generations who remember an undivided India gradually pass away, new generations without those shared memories will emerge, increasing the risk that the "distance between the two sides will continue to grow." In her view, therefore, what is needed is "a new vision for what a more positive future for India and Pakistan — and indeed wider South Asia — could mean for the two billion people who call the region home." She further suggests that "leveraging the natural connections between people on both sides" will be critical, and initiatives like the Kartarpur Corridor demonstrate one means of starting the process of rebuilding familiarity.

Jalil Abbas Jilani feels that despite the erosion of whatever trust was built during the peace process of 2004-08, "the people of both countries still wish to see peace." He agrees with the view that the "leadership has the ability to mould public opinion." He recalls that when Prime Minister Vajpayee made a statement on 18 April 2003 relating to Kashmir, many anticipated a negative reaction from the public and the opposition parties in India. Instead, most people welcomed his statement. There were editorials in most Indian newspapers in support of Vajpayee's vision. Jilani is convinced that if India allays Pakistani concerns related to Indian support to BLA, BRA, TTP etc., and if Pakistan also addresses India's concerns, the relationship can improve.

Khurram Abbas is of the view that the possibility of cooperation between India and Pakistan "remains an open question, influenced by political will and public sentiment" in both nations. He is convinced that in Pakistan, there exists a favourable public narrative and political inclination towards mending ties with India. However, the current political environment in India reflects a lack of reciprocal intent. This suggests that "positive change is unlikely unless Indian leadership agrees to take the lead" in improving bilateral relations. Additionally, under the BJP government, India has actively sought to isolate

Pakistan regionally and globally, further hindering prospects for cooperation. Even if the Indian National Congress is to regain power, "the entrenched anti-Pakistan narrative, which has now been institutionalized within Indian society, would require significant time to dismantle." Abbas concludes that while the potential for a different trajectory in bilateral relations exists, it is "contingent upon conducive political settings in India."

Major General Raza Muhammad (Retired), former President of Islamabad Policy Research Institute, observes that the animosity between India and Pakistan is embedded in history. Firstly, Muslims ruled India for centuries, and while they were mostly benevolent rulers, the Hindu nationalists never accepted them as legitimate rulers and projected them as an impure intervention in Bharat Mata. Secondly, the partition process was handled in a manner that engendered a restive relationship between the two countries. However, there is hope for a peaceful future provided the Indian side agrees to engage in a serious dialogue to resolve issues on the basis of mutual respect. Interventions by third parties could also help, noting that India did accept some level of mediation in the past to resolve critical issues.

Jauhar Saleem,[273] President of Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad, shared a comprehensive analysis of why India and Pakistan have failed to normalize relations, and whether there is any hope for them to engage in an uninterrupted dialogue. He identified six key factors behind the persistent failure of India and Pakistan to coexist peacefully are:

a) Deep-rooted mistrust, stemming from centuries-old civilizational conflict between Hindus and Muslims in the subcontinent. This mistrust was intensified by the traumatic circumstances of Partition and further exacerbated by Nehru's determined pursuit of Kashmir's forced accession to India leaving behind a festering wound that continues to shape bilateral relations.

b) India's inability to acknowledge and adequately address the legitimate security concerns of other South Asian states—especially Pakistan—has led to perceptions of hegemonic ambitions. These fears are particularly heightened in Pakistan, given its experience of the 1971 dismemberment, which would likely not have occurred without Indian involvement, including direct military intervention.

c) Although Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear capabilities may have mitigated some existential threats, India's pursuit of the 'offensive defence' doctrine has maintained a climate of insecurity. This perpetuates a threat perception that makes sustained dialogue toward durable peace exceedingly difficult.

d) The tendency of political elites to externalize their internal failures and blame the adversary serves as a recurring obstacle to peace. In both countries, but more so in India, politicians often resort to hostile rhetoric to deflect attention from domestic inadequacies and unmet public expectations.

e) The resurgence of fundamentalist ideologies that promote narratives of perpetual hostility further impedes progress. While the concept of 'Akhand Bharat' is often viewed as a political gimmick with little likelihood of actual pursuit, such ideas still fuel suspicion in Pakistan.

f) Wars, military confrontations, and proxy conflicts in the past have entrenched animosities. Peace initiatives, when attempted, have repeatedly faltered due to deep mistrust and a lack of political will to make necessary concessions at the negotiating table.

Jauhar Saleem concluded that in the short term, it is difficult to see any light at the end of the tunnel. In fact, a heightened risk of conflict and increasing hostility appears more probable. In the medium to long term, however, political and societal evolution in both countries may open the door to more constructive bilateral engagement. This could eventually lead to an uninterrupted and meaningful dialogue aimed at resolving longstanding disputes and fostering mutually beneficial

economic cooperation. Greater encouragement from the US and key European and GCC countries in that direction could help the process, along-with more meaningful Track 2 diplomacy and cross-border civil society engagement. Both countries could also find incentive in climate cooperation and counter-terrorism mechanisms. At the same time, a more dystopian outlook would foresee a catastrophic conflict as a logical end point of the current trajectory of bilateral relations unless corrective measures are taken.

John Gill says that he always tried to look for hopeful signs, but they "are sparse and have been sparse for a long time." He advises both sides to accommodate each other's concerns, "make cross-border terrorism a thing of the past and not a supposed lever against the other side." Gill feels that "political will is certainly required to override encrusted assumptions and decades of negative history." He agrees that people meeting one another can be helpful but that hope crashes up against "visa regimes based on fear," which is not entirely illegitimate but is much exaggerated, and is based on "petty and entrenched tit-for-tat attitudes." Gill is of the view that "a start could be made in how each country portrays the other in its educational system otherwise children's minds are poisoned from the start. This is even evident in military education".

Raja Qaiser Ahmed points out the complex history of conflict between India and Pakistan and missed opportunities for peace, and argues that while leaders on both sides had periodically attempted to establish cooperative frameworks, "deep-seated mistrust, domestic political constraints, and structural challenges" had prevented lasting progress. He advises a "shift toward pragmatic engagement, sustained dialogue, economic cooperation, and backchannel diplomacy" for the two nations to move beyond the hostility of the past. He further suggests "strategic leadership, institutionalized mechanisms, and a commitment to long-term peace" as essential pre-requisites for building a future different from the past. He adds that both countries need "a shift in their respective priorities, move beyond reactive policies and recognize that long-term regional stability

benefits them both." Noting that the failure of peace processes was largely due to the absence of continuity, he makes three suggestions to build a constituency for peace: (i) institutionalize "a permanent conflict-resolution mechanism" which should function across individual governments; (ii) "reframe" the Kashmir dispute through an approach based on economic cooperation, autonomy for Kashmiris, and CBMs. This step could help both sides move beyond entrenched positions; and (iii) promote bilateral economic cooperation as increasing trade and business ties builds confidence. He further advises "de-hyphenation of domestic politics from bilateral relations," as electoral cycles in both countries often use hostility toward the other as a political tool, which, in his view, should be countered by civil society engagement and institutionalized peace processes. While admitting that historical baggage is heavy, Raja Qaiser is certain that "a pragmatic and interest-based approach" can shift the trajectory toward cooperation.

The diverse range of perspectives shared above underscores a common aspiration in both countries to achieve the strategic goal of building a cooperative and stable bilateral relationship. Relations between neighbours need not always be perfect, yet it is essential for both India and Pakistan to cultivate a practical framework for peaceful coexistence—collaborating where their interests align and respectfully navigating differences where they diverge. Many thought-leaders firmly believe that neither side should shut the door on dialogue, as doing so only deepens misunderstandings and traps both nations in cycles of stalemate and deadlock. Instead, both countries should boldly embrace the wealth of proposals and initiatives developed over the years to rebuild connections and chart a path toward lasting peace and harmony. The people on both sides of the border yearn for a relationship defined by friendship and normalcy. Should India and Pakistan adopt a citizen-centric approach to their bilateral ties, they may discover unexpected and transformative benefits—not only for themselves but for the stability and prosperity of the entire region.

IQBAL FORUM

Chapter 8 - Forging a New Dawn?

That India and Pakistan should come out of the shadows of the checkered past to craft a new future where both can live in peace and harmony is a shared desire. However, both countries have differing expectations from each other. For Pakistan, India must not behave as a domineering power with no regard for the concerns for its neighbours; resolve the lingering disputes, particularly over Kashmir; engage in an uninterruptible dialogue; not use proxies to destabilise Balochistan; and stop isolating Pakistan regionally and internationally. India meanwhile expects that Pakistan should clamp down on any use of terrorism as a tool to destabilise India; apprehend the suspects of various terror attacks in India, particularly the Mumbai attacks of 2008 and Pathankot attacks of 2016; accept the new ground realities in Jammu and Kashmir, which India regards as its integral part; take steps to stop infiltration of militants across the LoC to support militancy in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir; and create genuine incentives for India to engage with Pakistan, such as giving transit rights towards West Asia.

It is natural that the two might not find it possible to fulfil the entirety of each other's wish-list. However, what is not insurmountable is the ability for them to remove many of the misunderstandings and reduce the risks of military confrontations simply by talking to each other. It is only a matter of common sense that any two neighbours, however estranged they may be, would need a minimal level of possible

common space to work with each other within the constraints of their formal positions. Yet, Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar have opted for completely disconnecting with Pakistan since 2016. In the wake of Operation Sindoor of May 2025, Prime Minister Modi has announced that India would act militarily if any terrorist attack occurred in India. That means any militant or terrorist could plausibly stage an act of terrorism and make India hostage to its own rhetoric. It would be prudent for India not to fall into such a commitment-trap.

Nevertheless, if uninterruptible dialogue is not a possibility for India, the least both countries could do is to find a modus vivendi for living side by side in peace and tranquillity. They can either get help from a third party, which India does not want, or work out the differences bilaterally, which is what India claims it wants to do but on its own terms, i.e. by way of strategic coercion. All indications from informal contacts with Indian scholars suggest to this author that, at this point, India is looking for a minimalistic relationship with Pakistan, with some sustainable features. It appears that dialogue is shunned because of concern that Pakistan might use the premise of bilateral dialogue to try to bring the situation in Jammu and Kashmir on the agenda, or worse, attempt to change the status quo in that state. Some Indian scholars believe that contacts between the national security advisors of the two countries could be acceptable to help defuse any serious crisis situation. Normalization of relations, in their view, cannot take place unless there is a firm commitment by Pakistan not to support anti-India entities. Pakistanis meanwhile believe that terrorism is hurting Pakistan far more than it is hurting India, including the kind carried out by Indian state operatives, and therefore are concluding that India is only using this as a policy instrument to demonize Pakistan. Further, for Pakistanis, any attempts by India to disrupt water flows towards Pakistan is an existential threat, and relations cannot normalize until India restores IWT. Consequently, for the moment, there appears to be limited common ground for the two sides to normalize relations at any level.

Should the winds of change blow through the region and a future government in India chooses to re-evaluate its policy of disengagement with Pakistan, there lies a deep reservoir of work - proposals, negotiations, ideas and initiatives - from which both nations can draw in order to forge a pathway towards peaceful coexistence. It would be an enormous mistake to discard the immense investment of time, energy, and goodwill that both countries have poured into resolving longstanding disputes, fostering mutual understanding, nurturing people-to-people connections, and launching projects of tangible, shared benefit.

It is with the hope that brighter horizons await that this chapter seeks to revisit the many efforts undertaken in recent years to bring India and Pakistan closer together as responsible neighbours. This author remains steadfast in the belief that one day, both nations will recognize how vital it is to forge a new dawn—one that secures peace, stability, and prosperity for the future generations of South Asia.

Peace and Security

Of prime importance are the issues of peace and stability, which should be of high priority to both sides. Decades ago, both countries had examined concepts of common defence, collective security, and no war pacts, though no agreement could ever be fully realized. Now that both countries are armed with nuclear weapons that would assure mutual destruction, it would appear that there already lies an effective deterrent for an all-out war. Following this logic, it can be concluded that in essence, a de-facto no war pact exists. Yet, it must also be acknowledged that space for limited war is still there and that space has been exploited, even while staying below the nuclear overhang. The challenge is that in war, escalation can occur at a breathless pace. Some scholars regard a major war between India and Pakistan an "ever-present possibility", particularly at this time when the two are not even trying for a détente.[274] Given the unresolved

conflicts and lingering mistrust, any war leading to a nuclear exchange would undoubtedly be devastating for both countries.

To minimize the risks of a kinetic confrontation that could escalate to nuclear level, a three-point sequential agenda of bilateral engagement should be adopted by both countries in their own larger interest, subject of course to India agreeing to resume formal dialogue with Pakistan:

a) In the immediate context, maintaining ceasefire and tranquillity at the LoC and the border is important for both sides. To this end, effective communication holds the key. It is encouraging that DG MOs continue to connect with each other through a secure line, though they normally confine their contact to routine activities. A case in point is the landing of a BrahMos missile in Pakistan in 2022. The Indian government called it an accidental launch, but the Pakistani view was that this should have been communicated by India in a timely manner. Had Pakistan misunderstood it to be some kind of strike by India, the implications could have been dire for both sides. It is in such situations that the channel of DG MOs, being the only one operational at that time, could have been used to alert Pakistan in real time. The BSF and Pakistan Rangers should also meet regularly with authority to determine the frequency of their contacts. Likewise, contacts between Indian and Pakistani coast guards should be maintained to avoid any incident in maritime space.

b) In the medium term, both countries should take steps towards enhancing their understanding of each other's perspectives on issues deemed critical for both sides. For that, besides making optimal use of the diplomatic channels, a greater political will must be demonstrated by both sides to increase interaction amongst parliamentarians, academia, think tanks, national defence universities of both countries, religious tourism outlets, print and electronic media, and the film industry. The underlying presumption is that these and other people to people contacts would enjoy the broad support of the masses in both countries,

and therefore political leadership should have little difficulty in enabling such steps. Realistically, however, this will not be easy to achieve, because since the Mumbai attacks, the Indian government has cultivated a hostile public opinion about the state of Pakistan, branding it as an enemy of India. This in turn has had a mirror image effect on the Pakistani side. During the May 2025 confrontation, the Indian media further stoked feelings of hate for Pakistan. Nevertheless, considering the historic and cultural ties between the two peoples, it is not an impossible task to normalize relations; with an opening of the people-to-people contacts and early harvest of low hanging fruits, a favourable public opinion on good-neighbourliness of the relationship can be shaped.

c) The long-term interests of both sides lie in peaceful coexistence, for which both countries must address what the two countries consider as the core issues of bilateral concern: Jammu and Kashmir dispute from Pakistan's perspective and cross-border terrorism, which both countries now regard as a major obstacle to peace. Both countries regard these two issues as the key reason for the festering disputes, occasional armed conflict, or even deep mutual grievances. The experience of previous peace processes has shown that addressing these two issues is a critical prerequisite for creating an environment of peaceful coexistence. Accordingly, a two-pronged course of action could be pursued simultaneously, one on the Kashmir dispute and the other on cross-border terrorism. Before dilating upon the short and medium-term proposals for bilateral engagement, these two core issues, being the top priority for one side or the other, are discussed below in further detail.

An early resolution of the Kashmir dispute would serve well the interests of all three parties to the dispute: For Kashmiris, it would provide welcome relief to their daily lives and there would remain little reason or incentive for militants to pick up arms. Pakistan would be able to devote its energies and resources towards economic development. For India, a dispute settlement with its neighbour can

help it fulfil its regional and global aspirations. A version of the four-point formula that was close to finalization in 2007 should, therefore, be modernized and contemporized to make it acceptable to all sides. To that end, an authorized back-channel should be established, which could pick up the thread from where it was left in 2007. Given that the Indian National Congress was closely associated with the proposal in 2007, it might welcome further work on this formula. As for the BJP, some of the track 2 consultations indicate that a modified version of the formula (with a different name) might be acceptable provided it takes into account the "new realities." By that, they refer to the changes that have occurred since 2019, when the government of India decided to abrogate Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which had granted a special status to Jammu and Kashmir. It is pertinent to mention here that Kashmiris of all political inclinations remain upset with the change of status of their state, likening it to an assault on their identity. It might be hard for the Indian government to resist the across-the-board demand for restoration of statehood. However, even if that were to happen, there is a possibility that the restoration of statehood might be restricted only to J&K, and not include Ladakh.

The BJP leaders have taken a public position that if talks were to be held with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, these should only be about the territories of Kashmir under Pakistani control. Realistically, this merely represents a rhetorical position, as the BJP knows well that Pakistan would never let that happen, even if India tries it by force. For its part, Pakistan has also stood firm through all these decades in its political support for the Kashmiris' right to self-determination, and is not likely to give up this position, which it believes is embedded in strong legal and moral foundations. Pakistan also believes that the actions of the Indian government in effecting material change to the disputed territories of Jammu and Kashmir are a violation of the UNSC resolutions which remain valid. Clearly, the respective formal positions of the two sides are poles apart. Not surprising, then, that all dynamics - efforts by the United Nations, the Indo-Pak wars, prolonged agitation by Kashmiris, and bilateral peace attempts - have

not managed to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Therefore, the only way out is an out of box solution like the one that was attempted in 2007.

Should India decide to normalize relations with Pakistan and agree on addressing the Kashmir dispute in earnest, this book proposes that the four-point formula could be re-defined such that all three major parties to the conflict find this as the best possible compromise. This compromise may not fully satisfy every party, but it could apportion equal satisfaction or dissatisfaction to all three parties. The larger gain that peace returns to South Asia would theoretically compensate for all the pains through which the evolution of a new version of the four-point formula would pass. The first step in this regard is to set up an empowered back-channel with direct access to the principals or chief executives of the two countries. Secondly, both sides would need to agree that whatever is decided would be provisional and subject to the final settlement of the dispute so that both sides can negotiate without the overhang of giving up their formal and longstanding positions.

As for terrorism, it is important for both countries to find ways to do whatever they can within their respective domains to address each other's concerns. The underlying presumption here is that if one side takes concrete actions on issues of concern to the other side, the latter too would reciprocate. India's often voiced argument is that there is no moral equivalence in India's case on terrorism and Pakistan's case is not a valid basis to work from. If India has concerns that Pakistan is not doing enough to rein in anti-India militants, Pakistan expects India to not use terrorism as an instrument of policy to malign Pakistan's name and also rein in its state operatives, who have extended support to anti-Pakistan insurgents and also coordinated at least 20 extra-judicial and extra-territorial killings of Pakistani nationals inside Pakistan in 2023.

The reality is that both countries have been victims of terrorism, and regardless of how both sides approach this issue, terrorism must be treated and dealt with as a common enemy of both countries and their

people. Although the joint anti-terrorism mechanism formed earlier did not work effectively for a variety of reasons, this mechanism still has an important function. However, it can be redesigned differently to obtain desired outcomes. For example, the redesigned joint anti-terrorism mechanism should not be at the official or diplomatic level, but rather composed of the authorized representatives who should meet in back-channel format to deal with the issue away from the media's glare. This mechanism would have to deal with two key issues where opinions are sharply divided: One, how to deal with allegations of terrorism committed by state operatives and agencies. This can be done by a firm written commitment by both governments to fight terrorism cooperatively. This commitment would need to be under witness by one or more third parties, say the US and China. India's argument that it does not wish to involve third parties does not hold much substance because it has used third parties whenever it suited its interests, such as the US help to defuse tensions both in 2019 and 2025. Two, both sides would also need to deal with the definitional issues. For Pakistan and Kashmiris, the acts of resistance by Kashmiris against the military or paramilitary forces in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir are covered by international law (This does not include attacks against civilian population, which is outright terrorism). The acts of resistance by people under occupation cannot be dubbed as terrorism.

Keeping the above discussion in view, as and when both sides decide to open bilateral dialogue, a package could be conceived of two parts. One part would relate to the above-discussed contemporized version of the four-point formula for resolving the Kashmir dispute, while the second part would comprise mutual commitments to cooperate in apprehending and prosecuting culprits that commit terrorism in the other country and bring the two countries to the verge of war. The two countries could even contemplate a peace treaty as a sequel to the resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

Efforts to resolve the Kashmir dispute and address cross-border terrorism issues could be expanded to include two more issues that

have adequately been discussed in the past and can be resolved if both sides muster political will and think in strategic terms rather than tactical gains. These are Sir Creek and Siachen. Both sides are well aware of each other's position on these two issues. Over the past three decades, several serious attempts were made to resolve the issue of Sir Creek, which is a small strip of Indus River delta that divides the province of Sindh in Pakistan from the state of Gujarat in India. It is a marshland that swells with water from June to September every year. In 1914, a map of the Creek had been prepared, called B-44, pursuant to the boundary agreement of 1907-8 between the Kutch state and Sind (Sind was re-named Sindh in 2013). This map showed the boundary as a green line on the eastern bank of the Creek. Pakistan's contention was that the Rann of Kutch tribunal award of 1965 had already decided that map B-44 of 1914 was the most authentic document for demarcating the land and maritime boundary. India's view was that the boundary lay mid-stream of the Creek and not on its eastern bank. What complicated the matters was that the Creek had shifted its course since then. Talks were held in 1969 to resolve the dispute, but bore no result. There was no contention with regard to the placement of the horizontal line from the top edge of the Creek to the border between the two countries. A survey conducted during the composite dialogue process in 2005 found the remaining pillars that had been planted there in 1922-24. The dispute was related to the vertical line in the Creek, which also meant that the maritime boundary also could not be determined, because the boundary point on the coastline was not decided. This further meant that both countries also could not determine their respective Continental Shelf or Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

During the composite dialogue, the Indian side informally proposed[275] a midstream formula to divide the area in dispute equitably. It was further proposed to determine the maritime boundary, splitting the area from the seaward side to the agreed point on the coastline. Both sides were to have navigation rights in the creek and the boundary was to be fixed in terms of geographical coordinates so that the

boundary remained firm, even if the creek's course shifted in the future. Legally, the midstream formula proposed by India informally did not correspond to the B-44 map, where the boundary lay on the eastern bank of the creek rather than in the middle. Within the creek, the area in dispute was only 61 square kilometres. In the maritime context, the area in dispute was 1495 square kilometres, including the difference in EEZ. The Indian side wanted a concession from Pakistan, even though it already possessed thousands of kilometres of coastline and a few square kilometres of this marshland and some area in the EEZ would have been marginal for India. Had further negotiations been held, and if the Indian side was ready to take a strategic perspective of the issue, it could have agreed to a line as close to the line shown on the B-44 map as possible. If the bilateral dialogue opens again at some point in future, it would be worthwhile for both countries to agree on a compromise, rather than sticking to their hardened positions. The compromise could be to determine the line to be as close to the eastern bank as possible. This would have enormous benefits for both countries, as they would be able to exploit the riches of their respective extended continental shelf and EEZ. This of course would involve some concession from the Pakistani side. In return, India could show flexibility and accept the Pakistani position on the Siachen dispute, the details of which are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The Siachen glacier became a point of dispute when India occupied it in 1984 in violation of the Karachi Agreement of July 1949, which had demarcated the Ceasefire Line up to the map coordinates NJ 9842, beyond which, as per paragraph B 2 (d) of the Karachi Agreement, the boundary was to proceed "...thence north to the glaciers." The Indian occupation of the Siachen glacier in 1984 was a violation of the Simla Agreement of 1972, which had converted the ceasefire line into the line of control demarcated up to point NJ 9842. Why was the boundary not demarcated beyond the point NJ 9842? One rational explanation could be that no one expected a dispute over the frozen, barren, and uninhabitable glaciers in the north. The Pakistani side believed that

beyond NJ 9842, the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) should move northwards to the Karakoram Pass. From this perspective, the Siachen glacier falls in Pakistani territory. It is a historical fact that Pakistan was controlling trekking permits for the area until 1984, when India unilaterally moved to occupy the 70 km long Siachen glacier. Stephen Cohen believes that India seized the glacier fearing that Pakistani expeditions might lead to an expansion of Pakistani position.[276]

Whatever be the intent, the fact remains that these heights were controlled and managed by Pakistan. India's position is that the AGPL should move northwards to Indra Koli Pass, which then keeps the Siachen glacier in Indian control. Another point that Pakistan makes is that the 1972 Simla Agreement clearly states that "in Jammu and Kashmir, the line of control resulting from the ceasefire of December 17, 1971 shall henceforth be respected by both sides as a Line of Peace. Neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations. Both sides further undertake to refrain from the threat or the use of forces in violation of this Line." It was further agreed that the two sides would discuss the modalities and arrangements for the establishment of durable peace and normalization of relations, including a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir.[277] Accordingly, the issue came under discussion, and in 1989, there were reports of an agreement in principle between Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi on disengagement and redeployment of troops from Siachen glacier. Three years later in 1992, this understanding was affirmed in the talks between the defence secretaries of the two countries. However, the Indian side later had second thoughts and wanted the authentication of the present actual positions before disengaging or redeploying their troops. The Pakistan side could not accept this, because that would entail Pakistan's acceptance of India's 1984 occupation of Siachen glacier as legal before the glacier is demilitarized. Pakistan proposed that disengagement, redeployment, and a monitoring mechanism that includes timeline of occupation and redeployment could be a package

formula that partially addresses India's demand of authentication at past, present, and future positions. If Pakistan accepts the Indian position on Sir Creek, India could accept Pakistan's position on Siachen as a quid pro quo. The glacier could then be a jointly administered area where tourism related and other activities could flourish. This will save both countries enormous amounts of resources that they spend on troops positioned in such an inhospitable environment.

As for the Line of Control, the ceasefire has been largely maintained pursuant to the understanding reached in 2003, which was reaffirmed in February 2021, despite a political disconnect between the two countries. On occasion, both countries did exchange fire across the line, most recently being during the May 2025 military confrontation, but the understanding has been held up for the most part. To avoid any untoward incident imperilling peace and security of both countries, both sides need to continue regular interactions at the level of DG MOs. The two sides should also conduct quarterly flag meetings in selected sectors as a crisis prevention measure. It would also be good for the BSF and Pakistan Rangers to resume their regular annual meetings. Discussions could also be held on the scope and implementation of Border Ground Rules (BGRs) 1961 to improve cooperation and coordination. The issues relating to possible infiltration across the LoC, the use of drones for smuggling of weapons and drugs, and other illegal cross border activities should be addressed through bilateral consultations, preferably at the diplomatic level. Granted that there is no dialogue between the two countries at this point in time at a diplomatic level, these consultations could also be undertaken through the above-mentioned military channels until diplomatic dialogue is resumed.

Over decades, the two countries have concluded a series of agreements which have been upheld, demonstrating that consensus on certain topics is possible. Likewise, a large number of confidence-building measures (CBMs) were agreed and implemented. Such CBMs should either be strengthened or at least maintained until the

political will enables the two countries to win each other's optimal confidence. For instance, both countries had signed an agreement in 1991 on prevention of air space violations and for permitting over flights and landings by military aircraft. This agreement has also been upheld by and large. In the same year, it was agreed to operationalize a hotline between Indian Coast Guards and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, which too has worked reasonably well. The two countries had also discussed a draft agreement on prevention of incidents at sea. This agreement can also be easily finalized, as there is not much difference in respective positions on the scope of the agreement (whether it be confined to high seas, and whether naval vessels should include vessels of the coast guards as well).

Another useful agreement that was signed in 1992 pertained to the provision of advance notice on military exercises, manoeuvres, and troop movements. For drug demand reduction and prevention of illicit trafficking in narcotics drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals and related matters, an agreement was signed in 2011. The two countries signed an agreement in 2013 on the speedy return of inadvertent line crossers. For humanitarian reasons, this agreement must be implemented with compassion. There have been many tragic stories, where an inadvertent line crosser had to go through prolonged incarceration and harsh punishment. Finally, the exchange of visits of commandants or delegations of national defence universities, and the convening of joint seminars between think tanks focusing on strategic or defence studies should be encouraged, especially in an environment where defense related issues are paramount to both nations.

Strategic Stability

Another subject of vital importance for the peace and security in South Asia is the question of strategic stability, which has been intermittently debated ever since both states detonated their nuclear

devices in May 1998. While both sides agree on the need for strategic stability in South Asia, they have different definitions for what the term strategic stability means. Most Indian analysts regard strategic stability as the removal of incentives for the use of nuclear weapons or a nuclear arms race. Pakistan would not like the nuclear discourse to be de-linked from the wider spectrum of threat perception, arguing that if space existed for armed conflict because of either existing unresolved disputes or grave mutual grievances, there would be a material risk of conventional war leading to a nuclear conflagration. So, in Pakistan's view, strategic stability is an environment in which there is no key outstanding dispute or armed conflict.

Meanwhile, India is now more concerned about its own nuclear equation with China and is therefore reluctant to engage with Pakistan bilaterally on nuclear risk reduction or even CBMs beyond what has already been agreed and implemented. This author is of the view that since neither India nor Pakistan wish to see any conventional confrontation escalating to a nuclear level, both sides must engage in meaningful talks to resolve their disputes, lest a crisis erupts and then spirals out of control that both sides would come to regret later. India's surgical strike on Pakistani city of Balakot in February 2019 and its attack on various sites in Pakistan in May 2025 both created a situation where things could have gone completely out of control. Hence, a broader definition of strategic stability would serve the larger interest of stability in the region.

Hypothetically, should both sides wish to have a trilateral engagement with the inclusion of China, then the latter might wish to include the US as its own threat perception emanates from the major-power competition. The US in turn might wish to involve other nuclear weapon states. This would be an unending argument. Therefore, the best course for India and Pakistan is to work bilaterally towards evolving a common approach to strategic stability in the region. Ideally, both sides should not just talk of crisis-management but the larger spectrum of crisis-avoidance.

India's nuclear doctrine, released in 2003, envisaged "massive retaliation" in case an adversary uses a nuclear weapon,[278] and also called for a posture of no first use of nuclear weapons (NFU) even as some aggressive statements by political leaders appeared to dilute this commitment. Pakistan does not subscribe to NFU because of conventional asymmetry. However, the Pakistani side has maintained that it does not wish to use nuclear weapons and that these are only weapons of deterrence. Both countries have sizable missile development programmes. There is some international concern about the missile ranges. While Indian missiles could reach way beyond Pakistan or China, Pakistan has restricted its range to 2750 kilometres (Shaheen III) because Pakistan's nuclear and missile programme is only in response to threats emanating from India. To counter any attempts by India to dent Pakistan's nuclear deterrence, the latter has opted for Full Spectrum Deterrence[279] that would enable the capabilities to meet a full spectrum of threats, nuclear and conventional, without indulging in nuclear arms race and maintaining its avowed intent of credible minimum deterrence.

Given the phenomenal technological developments, it would be in the larger interest of both countries to resume the process of confidence building in the nuclear realm. Reviving the experts' group that had met seven times to evolve nuclear CBMs could be a good starting point. This group had been set up pursuant to a memorandum of understanding that was signed between the two countries during a visit of Prime Minister Vajpayee to Lahore in 1999. Most provisions of this MOU on nuclear CBMs have been implemented.

A decade before India and Pakistan tested their nuclear devices in 1998, the two countries had signed an agreement in 1988 on prohibition of attack against each other's nuclear installations or facilities. Both countries have respected this agreement so far. However, the ambit of the agreement could be expanded to include a separate protocol on prohibition of any attack against the command-and-control systems. This would serve the larger public interest of keeping South Asia safe and secure. Another area of common concern

is prohibition of cyber-attacks against each other's nuclear facilities. Some kind of understanding, even if it is informal to begin with, needs to be considered.

In 2005, the two sides entered into an agreement on advance-notification of flight testing of ballistic missiles. Since both countries now have developed cruise missile systems, at some point, as mutual confidence builds further, they could consider including cruise missiles in the ambit of this agreement through a separate protocol. Two years later in 2007, both countries signed an agreement on reducing the risk from accidents relating to nuclear weapons. Since accidents could relate to not only nuclear weapons but also nuclear facilities, the ambit of this agreement would also need to be reviewed through an additional protocol.

There has been talk of creating some kind of nuclear risk reduction centre. In that regard, the policy makers of the time thought it fit to establish a hotline between the two foreign secretaries. This was done in 2007 when the peace process was in full swing and the two foreign secretaries could pick up a regular phone and talk to each other. This hotline was, thus, not used. Another reason why this hotline could not be used was the complications in encrypting the process. An argument can be made that the two countries need a dedicated hotline which is monitored round the clock so that any nuclear emergency is better handled and no misunderstanding is created. The office of foreign secretary was chosen for this purpose because this office has access to the principals in the civil and military leadership and is manned round the clock. In any case, both countries need to agree on some mechanism for timely and secure notification of nuclear-related emergencies.

As and when bilateral dialogue resumes, the two countries could consider forming a mechanism for regular exchange of information on peaceful uses of nuclear energy, especially in the fields of medicine, industry, and agriculture. The two countries could also learn from each other by exchange of information and experiences on safety in

their respective civil nuclear facilities. They could also hold bilateral consultations on security, disarmament and non-proliferation issues in multilateral fora. Another possible idea is a possible bilateral declaration on non-deployment of anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs) though India is not likely to accept this at this stage as it has procured S-400 missiles from Russia. Pakistan had proposed a strategic restraint regime, which entailed nuclear restraint, conventional balance, and conflict resolution. The Indian side never engaged on this proposal. As the use of outer space for military purposes is gaining momentum, the two countries could engage with each other on non-use of outer space for military purposes taking into account the ongoing multilateral consideration of the subject. As of now, both sides are observing a unilateral moratorium on conducting nuclear tests. However, both sides have not signed CTBT, and thus in theory retain the option of further nuclear tests.

Both nuclear powers, sharing a common border, need to have a better clarity on each other's nuclear policy or doctrines. Several terms have since entered the nuclear jargon which need to be understood in the right perspective. For instance, both sides claim that their nuclear programmes are guided by credible minimum deterrence. Some would interpret the term to mean credible deterrence at the minimum level (so that an arms race does not start) while the adversary knows that the threat (of the use of nuclear weapons) is sufficient for the adversary to know that this would cause unacceptable damage. Then the question is what is unacceptable damage? This might vary depending on how prepared the adversary is. Even the term credible is up for interpretation as it is linked to many factors, including political will, technological developments, financial capacity of the state, etc. Having a ballistic missile defence could also affect the capabilities of the other side. In the case of India and Pakistan, both sides are using the term credible minimum deterrence, but the context is different. For Pakistan, deterrence is India-specific. For India, the China factor comes into play. The point is that both sides need to enhance their understanding of the terms, policies, and doctrines to

eschew any miscalculation by either side. As and when the bilateral dialogue resumes, both sides should consider to set up a mechanism or simply revive the previously existing experts-group to avoid any situation that could lead both sides to either a conventional war or worse a nuclear conflagration

Confidence-Building Measures

While conflict resolution and even avoidance of confrontations have proven so problematic, the two countries have often succeeded in evolving measures to promote mutual confidence, mostly through people-to-people contacts. Cohen thinks that CBMs is a good idea but if these measures were not implemented, there is a political cost to pay.[280] That is true, but this must not prevent both countries from making efforts to evolve measures that can help build mutual confidence. Of particular significance is religious tourism, which had continued even during the times of tension and conflict. Gurdwara Nankana Sahib, Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Gurdwara Dera Sahib, Kartarpur Sahib, and Samadhi of Ranjit Singh are some of many places of great reverence for Sikhs. Likewise, for Hindus, places like Katas Raj temple, Varun Dev temple, Shaktipeeth Shri Hinglaj Mata Mandir, Kalka Cave temple, Umerkot temple, Jagannath temple would attract pilgrims from India. Large groups of Pakistani visitors like to visit Ajmer Sharif Dargah, Nizamuddin Dargah, and other places deemed holy for them. The protocol on visits to religious shrines agreed in 1974 has remained intact though proposals have been made to liberalize the regime of religious tourism. Traditionally, the *yatrees* (visitors) travelled in groups. If the bilateral relationship becomes normal, there can be individual visas for such religious tourists. Regrettably, the Modi government has stopped this avenue of people to people contact after the Pahalgam incident of April 2025.

Visas for Pakistanis visiting India for medical treatment have also been stopped. Sports contacts have dwindled over the years, but could

be the easiest to revive should the two countries decide to change course from confrontation to cooperation. A revised visa agreement had been negotiated in 2008 but could not be implemented due to Mumbai attacks. It was taken up again in 2011 and signed, but its implementation is still held up. Liberalizing the visa regime could go a long way in promoting people-to-people contacts. In 2019, the government of Pakistan took a welcome step by opening a corridor for Sikh pilgrims to Kartarpur. Owing to restrictions by the Indian government, even this avenue is also grossly under-utilized.

A bus service between Delhi and Lahore, which had operated since 1999, is not operational any more. When the two countries eventually decide to move towards normalization of their ties, this bus service must resume being an affordable medium of transport for the people. Likewise, a train service for nationals of both countries had operated on Khokhrapar – Munabao route since 2006. There is a need to revive this service and expand it to transport cargo so that the people of Rajasthan could use Pakistani ports for their exports and imports. The Samjhauta Express has operated intermittently between Delhi and Lahore since 1976. It has suffered closures several times, especially whenever tensions between the two countries went up. It also met a tragic accident in 2007 for which Pakistan continues to demand from India a full investigation report because dozens of Pakistanis lost their lives. It is important to resume this service as soon as the two countries normalize their ties as this too is an affordable medium to connect the divided families.

Another issue which must be handled with compassion is the release of fishermen and prisoners in each other's jails. Sometimes, the delays in their release are inordinate. Some prisoners continue to languish in jails well beyond the completion of their term. The two countries regularly exchange lists of prisoners, but the lists are mutually exclusive and difficult to reconcile. The real roadblock is that it takes a long time to confirm the national identity of the prisoner. Given the space constraints in prisons and for humanitarian considerations, the issue requires expeditious processing of cases, particularly for those

who have completed their term. India and Pakistan had also signed a Consular Access agreement in 2009, which has not been put to full use.

During the peace process of 2004-8, it was felt that three generations of ordinary Kashmiris had suffered, and, therefore, some CBMs were instituted to bring the much-needed relief to Kashmiris. In 2005, a number of meeting points were agreed where Kashmiris could meet. Likewise, both sides agreed to ease the travel of Kashmiris across three points along the Line of Control. A bus service started between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar for travel by Kashmiris. The chambers of commerce of AJK and Srinagar met, which was followed up by the meeting of governments of India and Pakistan to start trade between Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC. Regrettably, with the discontinuation of bilateral contacts since 2016, all these CBMs have been suspended. As soon as bilateral relations improve, the Kashmir-related CBMs must be resurrected given their importance for ordinary Kashmiris.

One area in which bilateral cooperation has become imperative is climate change given that both countries, and indeed the entire region, is suffering from climatic impacts. In many ways, the greatest threat to the region is an ecological change. In August 2008, at a SAARC Summit, the Colombo statement was adopted, which envisaged close cooperation amongst all SAARC countries to mitigate the effects of climate change. The spirit of cooperation, which has since dried with the breakdown of relations between India and Pakistan, must be revived to be able to adapt national policies at the regional level to address this existential threat for the region.

Trade, a peace builder?

It is often argued that trade is a prodigious confidence builder and acts as a constituency that contributes to preventing wars and promoting welfare and prosperity of people across borders. Traders from trading countries receive access to each other's vast markets leading to win-

win options for them. When India and Pakistan started their life as independent countries in 1947, intra-regional trade was at its peak. Given the hostile bilateral environment between India and Pakistan at that time, bilateral trade began to shrink drastically.[281] It is unfortunate that India and Pakistan could not learn from the experience of other regions, where trade has historically contributed significantly to building peace and relationships. According to a 2018 study by the World Bank, Pakistan's trade with South Asia, which accounted for only 8 percent of its global trade, can rise by eight-fold.[282] The report pointed out that intraregional trade in South Asia was about 5 percent of total trade whereas this figure was much larger in East Asia and the Pacific. Apart from political reasons that undermine intra-regional trade in South Asia, the costs of trade are also higher in South Asia and average tariff in the region is more than double the world average.

The only time bilateral trade picked up pace was in 2006-7, when the two countries were engaged in a comprehensive peace process, rising to a relatively high mark of USD 3.6 billion. It was felt at that time that trade would grow rapidly because of lower transportation costs, certain complementarities, and similar consumer preferences. The informal trade through third countries like UAE, Sri Lanka, or Singapore could also get diverted to bilateral channels. Some studies carried out then, including one by the State Bank of Pakistan in 2004, had shown that there was considerable potential for growth of bilateral trade. Both countries were considering to harmonize customs procedures, facilitate visas for business persons, evolve a mechanism to remove non-tariff barriers on the Indian side, grant most favoured nation status or its equivalent to India by Pakistan, and start banking and insurance services, and transportation facilities, particularly shipping services, road, rail, and air connectivity. Besides bilateral trade, suggestions were made for two countries to consider allowing the transit of their goods to third countries from each other's territory with a view to opening up several more areas of cooperation, generating employment and building mutual confidence. The agriculture sector of two countries was also noted as a beneficial area

of cooperation because of many complementarities that were brought out by the joint work of Farmers Association of Pakistan and Chandigarh-based Centre for Research and Rural Industrial Development (CRRID). Investments into each other's economy were considered as another area of great promise. Both sides were also considering ways to ensure effective implementation of the SAARC preferential trading arrangements. Despite positive momentum, the full potential of bilateral trade could not be exploited because the peace process was interrupted by India due to Mumbai attacks in 2008.

The next milestone was in 2013-14, when the two countries came close to resumption of normal bilateral trade between the two countries. However, this, too, turned out to be a missed opportunity. One key issue at that time was India's demand that Pakistan should give India the MFN status, which means the same trade advantages like lower tariffs as Pakistan extends to other members of the World Trade Organization. India had granted MFN status to Pakistan in 1996. Pakistan came close to granting non-discriminatory market access (NDMA), an equivalent of MFN, to India in 2014. That would have meant Pakistan phasing out its negative list while India was to reduce its SAFTA sensitive list to 100 tariff lines thereby reducing tariffs on Pakistan's textile products. The then Pakistani minister for commerce confirmed to this author that this understanding came very close to being implemented and became a draft agenda item for a meeting of Pakistan's federal cabinet in March 2014. Due to lack of consensus in Pakistan on the terms of trade with India, however, the cabinet meeting was postponed. There were concerns that the non-tariff barriers that India had imposed were impeding Pakistani exports to India, making the balance of trade heavily in India's favour.

In February 2019, following a militant attack in Indian-Occupied Kashmir, India withdrew the MFN status and imposed 200 percent duties on all imports from Pakistan. Direct bilateral trade through Wagah border came to a halt. Much of the trade started taking place through third countries, which only benefited the third countries and

worked against the consumers of the two countries. In August, following Indian abolition of Kashmiri statehood, bilateral trade trickled to a minimum. In due course, the Pakistani side indicated its willingness to resume trade, but India was not ready. The May 2025 military confrontation brought to a complete halt whatever little trade was occurring between the two countries.

After this brief scan of the history and potential of commercial cooperation between India and Pakistan, it would be pertinent to ask whether bilateral trade could bring the two countries closer and dissipate the prevailing estrangement. A related question is: if trade is such a peace builder, why has it not worked until now, particularly when other regions, especially EU and East Asia, have done so well. In order to understand as to why the logic of trade as a peace builder has not worked in South Asia, several knowledgeable persons were approached. The responses varied from those convinced that under the present circumstances, trade will not build peace between India and Pakistan to those who are optimistic about the prospects of trade acting as a stimulus for a thaw in relations between the two countries.

Moeed Yusuf believes that "trade alone would not build peace" because it does not make either side so dependent on the other that their economies would not survive. The real game changer, he says, is "investment and connectivity." Positive interdependence could come from connectivity projects, like CASA, TAPI, and even CPEC if it gets connected to the East-West corridor. He argues that if millions of Indians were using gas passing through Pakistan, then that can change the way the two countries view each other. Pravin Sawhney also agrees that "bilateral trade by itself would not help bring peace" between India and Pakistan. Elaborating his point, he says that "lasting peace requires a secular government in India which sees the merit in India and Pakistan working together for development of both nations through connectivity and indivisible security by availing the global geopolitical opportunities."

Fakir Aijazuddin's view is that international trade is premised on bilateralism. The real yardstick to start trade would be what could Pakistan offer India and what could it take from India without affecting Pakistan's own economic sovereignty. A relevant example would be the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline project. Had this project been implemented, it would have built each other's stakes in stability. He adds that bilateral trade could "not be left to the private sector alone until clearly defined policies are promulgated by both governments." Jalil Abbas Jilani also agreed that "bilateral trade on its own doesn't build peace." Citing the examples of US-China, China-India, and China-Japan, he argues that bilateral trade could help build lasting peace only if alongside there is movement on substantive issues. Javid Hussain is in favour of trade with India but only based on a "level playing field" and mutual benefit, while keeping in mind the health of Pakistan's economy.[283] He is also opposed to any South Asian Economic Union, which, in his view, would capitulate Pakistan.[284]

Then there are others, like Salman Bashir, who acknowledge the importance of trade in strengthening bilateral relations. Salman Bashir argues that many countries, including China and India, had "kept economic interests separate from political relations." He adds that the idea of a "permanent enemy" was outdated and was not borne out by history. In this regard, he cites the example of France and Germany, which had shed each other's blood in fratricidal wars, but were now good economic partners. He advises that Pakistan should switch over to economic strategies to rejuvenate and stabilize itself. Naeem Khalid Lodhi also agrees that bilateral trade could be economically good for both countries and the region, and should be pursued to ease up tensions and improve working relations. However, substantive gains could only be made if realpolitik was also sufficiently addressed. Elizabeth Threlkeld has a positive appreciation of trade as an area of significant potential in the relationship, and one that could make its benefits tangible for the people of both sides. She adds, however, that what's proven challenging to overcome, among other issues, are the

"vested interests within business communities" that seek to protect their market-share and limit competition. A more productive framing in her view was to recognize the potential for trade to act as a rising tide that lifts all boats, and to identify areas where those prospects are greatest.

Raja Amer Iqbal,[285] who has served as the president of Rawalpindi chamber of commerce, also agrees that free and fair trade between India and Pakistan could be beneficial for both countries, but in his view, it has been "hindered by the Kashmir dispute, non-tariff barriers, and other restrictive economic policies." In Masood Khalid's view, a healthy business and commercial relationship could generate peace constituencies within both countries. However, trade between Pakistan and India was a victim of their bilateral rivalry as well as false narratives and unscientific analyses that are being projected deliberately to highlight economic injury to one or both countries. He acknowledges that there is a genuine concern in Pakistan about the non-tariff barriers in India, which impede a healthy trade relationship. He suggests that mutual recrimination in terms of grant of MFN should be dispensed with in favour of mutual obligations under WTO. He further suggests that trade could be resumed based on negative and positive lists and in parallel, a dialogue between respective chambers and trade bodies should be considered. Khurram Abbas acknowledges the role that trade can play in stabilizing relations between countries. However, in the case of India and Pakistan, while bilateral trade has historically existed, it has not been sufficient to create meaningful stakes that would deter either side from jeopardizing the relationship. Further, the volume of trade has remained minimal, with balance of trade heavily in India's favour. This means that both countries would not regard trade as an element of strategic or economic importance. He argues that without a realization of the costs associated with losing such economic ties, there is little incentive to sustain them. Accordingly, he concludes that a robust trade relationship, underpinned by substantial stakes such as infrastructure, investments and joint border markets in Punjab and

Sindh, could contribute to long-term peace. In contrast, a paltry trade would fail to generate the necessary incentive for either side to ensure stability in bilateral relations.

John Gill finds the question whether trade is a peace-builder "baffling." The short answer, he says, is "yes: bilateral trade *should* be an excellent pillar supporting durable peace and normalized relations." However, he understood that some segments of the Pakistani business community "might fear being disadvantaged/swamped" and these complaints had been heard from both sides more than once. On balance, Gill believes that the arena of bilateral trade seemed "potentially very lucrative for both business and stability" as this would reestablish the natural commercial linkage rather than through Dubai or any other third party. He recalls that some suggestions were made to start with just the two Punjabs, which, to him as an outsider, "sounds reasonable." He says that this could be a way to "push commerce in the cooperative direction with national approval but without engaging in a national debate." He adds that visa regimes would also have to change under such circumstances, which would be a major step forward by itself. He also regards climate change as another area of cross-border cooperation though getting changes inside either country was hard enough.

Raja Qaiser Ahmed also shares the assessment that bilateral trade "has the potential to create economic interdependence" which could contribute to long-term peace. However, he reminds that "political obstacles had prevented its success in the past." In his view, trade could "create economic stakeholders" who would have a vested interest in maintaining stable relations. Increased business and commercial ties could encourage both countries to "prioritize economic gains over military confrontations." He substantiates his point by recalling that in other regional conflicts, economic integration had played a key role in reducing hostilities. Raja Qaiser cautions that it must not be forgotten that "political and bureaucratic barriers," such as restrictive trade policies, excessive security concerns, and lack of transportation infrastructure, had hindered trade relations between

India and Pakistan. The absence of MFN status and frequent disruptions in trade agreements further exacerbate the problem. Additionally, public sentiment in both countries was "often manipulated to oppose trade, making economic cooperation politically costly." Raja Qaiser advises a phased approach to trade normalization, including preferential trade agreements and business-to-business engagement, to help rebuild confidence. He proposes the establishment of special economic zones along the border and investments in joint ventures for long-term economic benefits. He further advises that economic diplomacy should be prioritized as a means of reducing hostility, ensuring that trade is insulated from political fluctuations.

Khurram Dastgir,[286] former cabinet minister for commerce of Pakistan, had no doubt that trade on reciprocal terms "will benefit both countries and, in the short-run, will benefit Pakistan more than India." As for the question whether trade can build peace, Khurram Dastgir is of the view that this depends on two undetermined variables. First is the length of time trade continues; the longer the duration of uninterrupted trade, the greater the inertia towards peace. The second variable is courage plus vision in the leadership on both sides of the border to use trade as a confidence-building measure towards long-term peace. Trade is measurable and thereby constitutes reliable evidence of benefits that can be shown to both nations. Khurram Dastgir adds that trade has not worked as a peace builder so far because it has not been tried in any substantive manner. It has been vulnerable to the vagaries of events and prejudices of the leadership.

As is evident from the above discussion, trade is a peace-builder but only if there is a conducive political environment for it to flourish and is allowed to continue uninterrupted for a longer period. The experience of bilateral trade reaching relatively higher levels during the peace process of 2004-8 is a case that illustrates the point. Bilateral trade grew because the political leaders of the time were willing to create an enabling environment. The private sector of the two countries did the rest. Once trade got going, mutual stakes in stability

were beginning to consolidate as traders from both sides were finding the dividends of peace beneficial. However, the constituencies that had been built could not deliver peace because the dialogue process was interrupted by the Mumbai attacks.

If and when dialogue resumes in the future, it would be useful to pick up the thread from where it was left in 2014. Pakistan should resume bilateral trade based on a negative list, which means all items are tradeable except those in the negative list. Over time, both countries should consider reviving the MFN-NDMA arrangement that they had come close to adopting.

There is little doubt that India would like to transit its goods to Central Asian Republics via Pakistan. The transit trade through Pakistan would be as valuable to India as Indo-Pak bilateral trade if not more. Even China might find it useful as the East-West connectivity could link up to North-South connectivity, particularly CPEC, subject of course to India giving up its hostile rhetoric toward Sino-Pak cooperation. It must be remembered that most countries vie to become a transit state because that brings considerable dividends for the country. The East-West connectivity could also help implement the projects of TAPI (a pipeline bringing natural gas from Turkmenistan to South Asia) and CASA-1000 (to bring hydel energy from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan).

There is a view that trade and investment be kept separate from political differences. Some examples are instructive. China has issues with the US, Japan, and India, but does not allow those differences to weigh in on its economic and commercial relationship with these three countries. It must also be noted that not having trade with Pakistan does not give India any particular leverage on Pakistan, which has a fairly flourishing trade with the rest of the world. Likewise, not having trade with India does not give Pakistan any advantage as opportunities for cheaper goods from India are lost. It, therefore, makes perfect sense for Pakistan and India to have trade, which of course should be enhanced gradually. This, however, is not possible

until India realizes that politics of strategic coercion that India is pursuing is counter-productive.

As and when a subsequent Indian government recognizes the need for reviewing its regional policies, and a formal dialogue with Pakistan resumes, a back-channel contact could discuss and work out the modalities of resuming bilateral trade. Another medium could be SAFTA but that would work only if SAARC becomes functional again. Yet another platform is Pakistan India Joint Business Forum, which could draw up mutually beneficial modalities for opening trade. In the ultimate analysis, both countries would be able to make the best of this neighbourhood if the region moves towards regional economic integration. A related point is whether Pakistan should accept investments from India. The relationship has not yet reached the level of cooperation where each other's investments could be accepted. However, should the circumstances change, Pakistan could accept Indian investments, and India should accept Pakistani investors in its market. Cross-border investments are an additional layer of deterrence. No one bombs its own factories. It is like Germany and France having built projects of common ownership in both countries in order to avert aggressive designs of one against the other.

Sharing Waters

Waters from the three western rivers of the Indus River basin are a life-line for the people of Pakistan. In April 1948, less than a year after independence, when India stopped waters from canals feeding Pakistani lands, a decision that was reversed within a month, it became evident that the two countries must evolve a stable water-sharing arrangement. After painstaking negotiations with the help of the World Bank, both countries managed to sign the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960, which has survived periods of heightened tensions for the past six decades. Of late, however, the Treaty came under tremendous pressure after a deadlock over two hydroelectric power

projects that India had undertaken: Kishanganga and Ratle. India wanted the Neutral Expert to resolve the dispute, which in its view was a technical issue. In Pakistan's perspective, this was a legal issue and the Court of Arbitration should settle the dispute. Both remedies are mentioned in the Treaty. For years, there was a deadlock. India, being the upper riparian, used the deadlock to complete and inaugurate Kishenganga. The World Bank, being the custodian of the IWT, initiated both dispute resolution remedies. While Pakistan cooperated on the Neutral Expert, India boycotted the Court of Arbitration. There was a concern that if two contradictory judgements came into play, there could be a serious deadlock threatening the Treaty itself.

While the deadlock was persisting between the two countries on the interpretation of the Treaty over Kishenganga and Ratle projects, India notified Pakistan, first in January 2023 and later in August 2024 to initiate negotiations for a review of the Treaty citing demographic changes and environmental challenges. In August 2024, India also made the Treaty dysfunctional by its decision not to hold the meetings of Permanent Indus Commission, which means India would not provide information about its activities concerning the three western rivers. These actions reflected the mindset of Indian Prime Minister Modi who had pronounced in September 2016 that water and blood cannot flow together at the same time.

In April 2025, India decided to hold the Treaty in abeyance using the Pahalgam attack as an excuse. This was a major setback to the water-sharing arrangement that had survived wars and was often cited as an example in the rest of the world. There was no provision in the Treaty that allowed unilateral suspension by one party. Indian action was a blatant violation of the Treaty. The IWT clearly restricts India from developing a control over the waters of the western rivers subject to the uses permitted to India under the Treaty. India knows well that the Treaty delineates the rights and responsibilities of both countries and specific safeguards for Pakistan being the lower riparian. These safeguards ensure predictability of the flows of the western rivers that

are the major source of water for Pakistan's agriculture and other water needs. Since three eastern rivers of the Indus basin were allocated to India, waters from the western rivers were shared by canals with those areas that were previously fed by eastern rivers.

It is widely understood that India cannot stop waters allocated to Pakistan because that requires capital-intensive and time-consuming engineering and environmental adjustments. An 'Explainer' by Jinnah Institute indicates that building storage might cost equivalent to "30 Tehri Dams every single year" assuming that each Tehri-scale dam takes a decade to construct (Tehri is a large dam on a tributary of the Ganges in Uttarakhand, India).[287] Even diversion of water would be a major challenge as huge channels and tunnels are required over unstable terrain. These projects could also cause flooding upstream and destroy the ecosystem of local areas.

This, however, does not mean that India cannot harm Pakistan by its decision to hold the Treaty in abeyance. Firstly, it is possible that India has some undeclared storage not known to Pakistan. Secondly, it can manipulate seasonal releases to disrupt Pakistan's crop cycles, crop yields, irrigation system, and hydropower production, especially during the dry season. Thirdly, de-silting Indian reservoirs can also affect the capacity of Pakistani reservoirs downstream. Hence, Indian decision to suspend the Treaty is a matter of life and death for 240 million Pakistanis. The government of Pakistan has accordingly announced that stopping or diverting Pakistani share of waters in western rivers would tantamount to an "act of war."

The Pakistani side began contemplating its legal options. Since water is a critical need for agriculture in Pakistan and is the lifeline of the country, India's action of holding the Treaty in abeyance was interpreted in Pakistan as a hostile act of state-terrorism, Pakistan has reserved the right to act in any manner deemed necessary to respond if Pakistan's waters were stopped or diverted. Pakistan had accepted the compromise solution in 1960 to avoid perpetual conflict with India, and here it was that water was now being weaponized to settle political scores with Pakistan.

How could Pakistan prevent India from stopping or diverting Pakistani waters? First, unilateral suspension violates international norms, and must be challenged at whatever legal avenues are available. The World Bank, being the facilitator, can play a useful role. On 27 June 2025, the Court of Arbitration on Kishnenganga and Ratle projects announced a supplementary award, noting that the Court was not open to India to unilaterally suspend the IWT or hold it in abeyance. The Court noted that the Treaty did not provide for unilateral abeyance or suspension and continued in force until terminated with mutual consent of India and Pakistan. The Court affirmed that the unilateral action by India of suspending the Treaty did not deprive the Court of its competence to adjudicate the issue. Pakistan welcomed the decision while India dismissed the award. With the illegality of India's actions having been firmly established by the Court of Arbitration, other legal institutions could also play a role in resolving this matter, including the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Even if India chooses to boycott or refuses to accept their jurisdiction, it would still face mounting international pressure to reverse its unlawful decision. The United Nations Security Council could also take up the issue, as restricting water flows impinges on the human security of the people of Pakistan and thus imperils regional peace and security. The United Nations General Assembly offers another platform where member states of the UN can express their concerns - particularly those nations engaged in their own water sharing arrangements who would be unwilling to see such a perilous precedent being set. Beyond legal considerations, this is fundamentally a human rights issue, given that the lives of 240 million Pakistanis depend on these critical water flows.

Secondly, unless India reverses its decision, it risks paying a heavy diplomatic price, as water regimes are delicate matters that most countries are sensitive to. After all, weaponizing water is universally accepted as a form of terrorism, as also stated in the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism. India's actions would equate to "water terrorism" and would carry a deep stigma. It would also erode India's diplomatic credibility in the eyes of other

neighbours like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh - all of which have water sharing arrangements with India. Thirdly, India must consider the existence of a strategic deterrent posed by China, which could employ the same excuse to manipulate waters flowing from Tibet towards India, e.g. the Brahmaputra, which accounts for a major supply of India's freshwater. The Jinnah Institute Explainer reminds us that in the aftermath of the 2017 Doklam standoff, China blocked several tributaries of the Brahmaputra and withheld hydrological data as retaliation for border tensions. Domestically, it would be important for Pakistan to adopt modern conservation techniques to ensure the efficient use of the water it receives. Pakistan would also have to boost its water storage capacity by constructing more dams and water reservoirs.

If and when India decides to reverse its decision of suspending the Treaty, and reopens dialogue with Pakistan on this issue, Islamabad should be ready to engage constructively. A viable path forward could involve negotiating an Optional or Additional Protocol to the Treaty which would address some of the demographic, environmental and other issues that have arisen since the Treaty was first signed in 1960. This approach would not only help maintain the Treaty, but strengthen it by addressing any gaps, including any issues that India deems important. However, if India persists in its rigid stance and refuses to cooperate, there looms a serious risk of war. Such is the gravity of this issue that Pakistan would be prepared to escalate quickly in the event of a water crisis.. It is worth recalling that American envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, had already cautioned in 2010 that the mounting tensions over water issues could "trigger a complete collapse" of the uneasy peace and could "very well precipitate World War III."[288] The sooner India recognizes that blocking Pakistan's water supply would be the gravest provocation yet, the better it will be - for the future of both nations and indeed of South Asia.

IQBAL FORUM

Concluding Thoughts

Seventy-eight years after the partition of British India in 1947, a diverse range of scholars, authors and v-loggers are revisiting the complex dynamics that led to the creation of Pakistan and India as two independent states. Podcasts are proliferating across internet platforms, analysing and dissecting the roles of key actors who have played decisive roles in shaping the decisive years and events between 1940 and 1947. Shelves in libraries are filling up with almost a separate genre on the topic of the partition and the devastating manner in which it was executed. Some tend to dispute the rationale behind the two-nation theory, while others argue that religion was a foundational and coherent basis for nationhood.

The first chapter of this book has delved into these questions and invites the readers to study how and why Muslim nationalism evolved in India, starting in the nineteenth century with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and nurtured by the brilliant minds of the likes of Syed Ameer Ali, Agha Khan, Allama Iqbal, and M. A. Jinnah. Of course, the latter is credited the most for taking the movement that was already

underway to its culmination, the creation of Pakistan. However, we find that it is three actors in particular who have been the subject of recent scrutiny: Jinnah, Nehru, and Mountbatten. For Jinnah, the primary motivation was to protect the political, economic, and cultural rights of the Muslims of India once the curtain closed on the British Raj. The underlying concern was that in a one-man, one-vote democracy, the Muslim-minority could be in perpetual subservience to the Hindu-majority. As long as this concern was addressed, Jinnah was flexible on the shape and arrangements of the political future of India. Some authors contend that had there been no Jinnah, Pakistan would not have come into being, while others feel that he was using the concept of Pakistan only as a card in pursuit of the larger objective of securing the political rights of the Muslims of India. Jawaharlal Nehru, the other dominant figure during the partition process, has also been held responsible for the partition of British India, as he had rejected the Cabinet Mission plan of 1946, which had envisaged a united India. He may have had several reasons for this rejection, possibly borne out of the bitter experience of the coalition provisional government of 1946-47.

What is certainly relevant in the context of the study of these two politicians (Jinnah and Nehru), is the role the British played in the lead-up to the partition, and how they seemed to have systematically sowed seeds of mistrust between Muslims and Hindus. Once it became evident that British India would be divided, Mountbatten's decision to advance the date of British exit from India left the leadership of the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League ill-prepared to handle the swap of population, particularly in the Punjab and Bengal. Jinnah's Pakistan envisaged neither the division of these two Muslim-majority provinces nor the uprooting of families from the lands where they had lived for centuries. His scheme envisaged that large religious minorities in both countries would be a compelling and robust reason for peaceful coexistence between India and Pakistan. Nevertheless, the partition happened, and it happened in the most chaotic and unforgiving way.

After the creation of Pakistan, it was Jinnah's hope that the two countries would live peacefully side by side, much like the US and Canada had done. In fact, he intentionally did not sell his property in Mumbai, a city in which he had spent much of his professional life, with the expectation that he would visit frequently. It is Pakistan's misfortune that Jinnah, who waged a successful political and constitutional struggle in pursuit of the idea of Pakistan, died so soon after the nation's birth. In India, on the other hand, Nehru lived on as the prime minister of India for seventeen years till his death in 1964. Jinnah's absence from the political landscape of Pakistan destabilized the civil-military equation, and importantly, also delayed the adoption of a constitution for the country. In India, by contrast, the constitution was adopted in 1949, and first elections were already held in 1951-52. Regardless of the divergent paths the two countries took in their constitutional journey, both sides coordinated closely to manage the settlement of refugees, protection of minorities, and a host of other issues that erupted soon after the partition. On some thorny issues, this engagement was acrimonious, such as the dispute over Kashmir, division of finances, and sharing of waters. The hostility and rancour that had accompanied the partition of British India continued unabated in the decades that followed. Ever since, the two countries have struggled all these years to behave as normal neighbours. Every attempt made for peace has ended in disappointment. The wars they fought have further accentuated mutual misgivings and have not resulted in a resolution of those major issues.

So, why is it that every attempt to establish a friendly and cooperative bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan failed to reach a successful conclusion? The answer may lie in the fact that many Indian leaders since 1947 have viewed Pakistan as an obstacle to the Indian dream of creating a united India, Akhand Bharat. Since this dream is unrealistic, given the history of the subcontinent, the practical manifestation of this dream has been India's quest for regional dominance. The ambition to act as a regional hegemon has cast its dark shadow on India's relations with nearly all its neighbours. Under

Modi-led BJP rule, there has also been a pivot towards making India a Hindu Rashtra, with policies that sought to undermine the rights of minorities, particularly Indian Muslims. Besides this ideological divide, on most occasions, the leadership of one country or the other has opted for tactical gains, as opposed to a sincere pursuit of strategic interests that could mutually benefit both countries and the region at large. Only on a few occasions did the two countries converge on the strategic choice of a peaceful and mutually respectful relationship. However, even in such cases, efforts to sustain those choices were short-lived, disrupted by hostility and disagreement.

Over the past seventy-eight years, both countries often appeared to be negotiating positions rather than seeking shared interests. There was never any dearth of tangible and achievable proposals to nudge the two countries closer, but politics and mutual distrust mostly prevailed. Early on, Jinnah as the Governor-General of Pakistan proposed that Pakistan and India should jointly defend their frontiers, both on land and sea, against any foreign aggression. This idea of joint defence was echoed by successive Pakistani leaders, including Governor-General Nazimuddin, Prime Minister Muhammad Ali Bogra, Prime Minister Feroze Khan Noon, and President Ayub Khan, though the latter two conditioned it to resolution of basic disputes, particularly Kashmir.[289]

Likewise, Prime Minister Nehru proposed a no-war pact to Pakistan in 1949. Pakistan was ready to accept this, provided a clause on the fair settlement of disputes was added on the ground that a dispute if allowed to fester could lead to a war.[290] Pakistan's view has consistently been that the renunciation of the use of force is not effective if it is not backstopped by channels of conflict resolution. India iterated this proposal subsequently as well, most notably in the third round of India-Pakistan talks in 1963. Ayub Khan notably had offered in 1959 a 'joint defence' arrangement, but the idea was killed by Nehru, who instead offered a no-war pact which was not accepted by Pakistan.[291] When Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad explored the possibility of converting the ceasefire line (later LoC) to

IQBAL FORUM

an international border in 1954, Nehru rejected the proposal, and when Swaran Singh proposed the same idea during India-Pakistan talks of 1963, Pakistan rejected the proposal.[292] Even in cases where a mutually beneficial proposal was made by one side, the aura of mutual distrust frequently clouded acceptance.

Were the two countries only defending their respective positions rather than pursuing common strategic interests? Stephen Cohen believes that many of these proposals were driven by tactical aims - to impress outside powers of India's or Pakistan's sincerity in dispute management. It is regrettable that energies were wasted on undercutting each other rather than cultivating the broader benefits of cooperation. Sir Creek is one such example where tactics overwhelmed strategic interests of both countries. A resolution of this issue would have made available to both sides the riches of their exclusive economic zones in the Arabian Sea. India, however, was not ready to accept the historically verified boundary line in the Creek, despite the insignificance of the coastal area compared with India's extensive coastline. This zero-sum mindset hindered any progress that could have been made in building mutual confidence.

The Composite Dialogue was an innovative and constructive attempt at overcoming the zero-sum mindset by addressing issues of concern and interest to both countries. However, progress in one segment often became hostage to stagnation in the other. Both sides failed to appreciate the bigger picture and gave way to tactical upmanship against each other. A detailed discussion on the vicissitudes of the relationship can be found in Diplomatic Footprints, a memoir by this author, who dealt with this subject as Pakistan's Director General for South Asia and later as Foreign Secretary.[293]

Chief among unresolved issues remains the Kashmir dispute, a persistent flashpoint and source of tensions since 1947. This has been discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this book. Pakistanis believe that their country has a sound legal and political basis to demand that Jammu and Kashmir, being a Muslim majority state, should have

joined Pakistan as per the understanding underlying the partition process. However, India did everything within its power to ensure that Jammu and Kashmir stayed with India. It did not care for the illegality of its position or the UN Security Council resolutions that had called for holding a plebiscite in the State to ascertain the wishes of the Kashmiri people. The closest both countries ever came to finding a solution was the 2007 formula worked out through back-channel diplomacy. Then, in 2019, India abolished the statehood status of Kashmir, which disappointed even the traditionally pro-India Kashmiri politicians, because not only was the very notion of Kashmiri identity under assault, but there were concerns of non-Kashmiri subjects being settled into the State, thus manipulating the demographic balance of the territory. India never considered Pakistan's argument that a resolution of the Kashmir dispute would open up vast opportunities of cooperation between the two countries. Nor did India take into account the historical fact that the people of Kashmir and northern Punjab had been connected to each other for centuries, and severing those contacts was tantamount to going against the historical process.

For its part, India maintains grievances that in a series of terrorist attacks in Indian-Occupied Kashmir and sometime mainland India, non-state actors based in Pakistan were involved and that Pakistan was not doing enough to rein in these militants. This narrative also seems to have been adopted by a large segment of India's population and diaspora. However, this is neither a fair nor correct assessment, and perhaps the conversation around why Pakistan asserts this does not have to rely on taking Pakistan's statements at face value, but can also be aided by looking at more neutral or objective indicators. One such indicator is the report of the FATF, which, after an extensive evaluation process that ran for years, recognized the "significant progress" that Pakistan has made in countering terror finance, and strengthening its anti-terrorism regime. The report states that having "met all its commitments," Pakistan is "no longer subject to FATF's increased monitoring process."[294] Pakistan regularly carries out

assessment of terrorism and terror finance threats for remedial actions. It has proscribed 78 terrorist organizations under the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 and closely monitors them to ensure that they remain dismantled and inactive. Several prominent militants and terrorists have been prosecuted and convicted, while the assets of many banned organizations have been frozen. Also relevant to note is that in his first address to a joint session of US Congress in March 2025, President Trump thanked Pakistan for arresting the alleged perpetrator of the deadly bombing at Kabul airport in August 2021. A few months later in June 2025, at a hearing in the House Armed Services Committee, CENTCOM commander General Michael Kurilla lauded Pakistan as a "phenomenal partner" in the fight against terrorism, citing Pakistan's struggle against terrorism in Balochistan and terrorist groups like IS-K.

Considering the international community's overwhelmingly positive acknowledgement of Pakistan's efforts in combatting militancy and terrorism, combined with an endorsement by the FATF, it is puzzling for Pakistanis to understand just why India continues to ignore the myriad of actions that Pakistan has taken against the militants and terrorists at enormous human and financial costs and instead blame Pakistan for any and all incidents without any credible or actionable evidence. This was perhaps especially true following the Pakistan-India clash of 2025, when India carried out unprovoked strikes against Pakistan, despite Pakistan's condemnation of the Pahalgam attacks and its public offer for a neutral investigation and promise of full cooperation.

As detailed in previous chapters, accusations of state sponsored terror have flowed both ways, and Pakistan also has its own grievances viz India on the issue of cross-border terrorism. Firstly, Pakistan complains that while India is always quick to cast the blame for any terrorist incident on Pakistan or Pakistan-based elements, it rarely provides evidence that can stand legal scrutiny. Secondly, there are discernible Indian fingerprints on terrorism being perpetrated inside Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan, where a spy named Kulbhushan

Jadhav was caught red-handed. Thirdly, there is mounting evidence that Indian state operatives are now involved in carrying out target killings in Pakistan. Since India has maintained a complete disconnect with Pakistan since 2016, and its anti-Pakistan rhetoric has also continued unabashedly, it appeared to Pakistan that India was not ready to seriously discuss or cooperate with Pakistan to address any of these concerns. India claims that it would like to talk to Pakistan only on its concerns over cross-border terrorism, but it refuses to engage in any mechanism or framework or talks on these issues. As a result of this refusal to engage with each other meaningfully, the larger goal of a peaceful South Asia remains elusive.

It would be fair to note that Pakistan is not the only country in South Asia that is frustrated in its relations with India. Nepal suffered India's economic embargo many times, latest in 2015, besides losing a part of its territory to India. The people of Bangladesh were frustrated with the Indian security establishment's regular interference in the country's domestic politics and support to Sheikh Hasina, who was ousted in August 2024. Maldives' President Mohamed Muizzu won the elections in September 2023 on the popular appeal that he did not wish to see India's military personnel on Maldivian soil. No self-respecting nation wants to live under the hegemonic umbrella of another country. Sovereign equality and respect for territorial integrity are the very foundation on which the present world order was established. When these principles are violated, frictions germinate that lead to confrontations and ultimately irreconcilable hostility.

India's unilateral violations of the territorial integrity of Pakistan are therefore a matter of grave concern to the latter. India claimed to have carried out a surgical strike across LoC in 2016, and three years later carried out a strike against what it alleged was a militant training camp in Balakot, a Pakistani city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In 2025, India resorted to unilateral attacks against multiple locations inside Pakistan, claiming that this was its response to the terrorist incident in Pahalgam in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. India was

adamant that it was under no obligation to provide any evidence of alleged Pakistani involvement in terrorist incidents in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir, where a freedom struggle has been suppressed for seven decades. Pakistan initially showed restraint, but days later, responded in kind. India's Operation Sindoor found a formidable match in Pakistan's Operation Banyanum Marsoos. This broke many myths about India's self-assumed image of being invincible in conventional superiority, technological edge, and dominance in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir. While the kinetic confrontation halted after four days, India's suspension of the IWT and manipulation of water flows towards Pakistan posed a serious and existential threat to the lives of millions of Pakistanis. There was also a concern that a desperate Modi-led government might contemplate another kinetic operation, especially in the run up to elections in key Indian states.

The evolving global geopolitics has also not favoured the prospects of peace between Pakistan and India, as divergent alignments provide fodder for conflict. From the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union to the US-led global war on terror, India and Pakistan have mostly been found standing on opposite ends. More recently, in the context of the US-China competition, the US and India have been working together to restrain the rise of China, which has been a close economic and strategic partner of Pakistan. As a result of these dynamics and as major power competition intensifies, multi-alignments are emerging across regions, such as the SCO and BRICS. Although India is a member of these groupings, it is often finding itself in an awkward spot because of its desire to maintain strong partnership with the US at the same time. Historically, India had sought a space for itself by assuming the leadership of non-aligned nations during the Cold War years. However, at the present times, the leadership of the Global South rests with China, with which nearly all developing countries wish to remain engaged for their economic development. India under Prime Minister Modi is thus struggling to maintain its strategic autonomy while its hubris is beginning to isolate it from the rest of the world.

While India and Pakistan are members of the SCO, Pakistan's membership of BRICS is blocked for now, essentially by India. BRICS has now expanded to include Iran, UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Indonesia, along with dozens of partner countries. Given that three of Pakistan's four neighbours are members of BRICS, Pakistan is a natural candidate for the membership of BRICS, which sooner or later will materialize once India relents on its opposition to Pakistan's membership. Global geopolitics took another turn after Donald Trump began his second tenure in the White House in 2025. Within weeks of his tenure, he sparked a tariff war, shattering the fundamental principles behind the rules-based free international trade. His biggest target, perhaps unsurprisingly, was China. Sensing the newfound circumstances, India quickly began wooing the Trump administration and started distancing itself from any retaliatory actions by BRICS, such as challenging the hegemony of the US dollar. But India was in for a rude surprise from its preferred strategic partner. Following the May 2025 Indo-Pak military confrontation, President Trump offered to bring the two countries to table in a neutral venue and also mediate the Kashmir dispute. India's policy of de-hyphenating itself from Pakistan suddenly found itself in hot waters. India rejected the offer of third-party mediation, while Pakistan embraced it. Indian leadership continues to refuse what is rather clear to the rest of the world, that the Kashmir dispute remains the root cause of the instability in South Asia, and for a sustainable peace, this must be addressed and resolved. Indian diplomacy received further setbacks when it unsuccessfully tried to stop IMF support to Pakistan, prevail on FATF to place Pakistan in the grey list, or use SCO to malign Pakistan.

President Trump's offer to mediate on the Kashmir dispute was an opening for India to seriously consider third-party intervention to help bridge the divide where bilateralism had failed. Pakistan on its part has remained open to any constructive role for third parties on select issues, such as the Kashmir dispute, but has simultaneously kept the bilateral channels operational to secure peace with India. The

latter, however, resents any role for third parties. As it is, it would be challenging to find an honest, objective and sincere third party, because any major power wishing to act as a mediator could either be partisan, or be expected to pursue its own interests first. Worse, they could even fuel or exploit the fault lines between the two countries. It is with this in mind that Pakistan's first preference has always been for the United Nations to serve as a credible interlocutor. Given that India has never implemented UNSC resolutions or accepted the compromises proposed by UN mediators in the past, the prospects of any third-party intervention to resolve conflict between India and Pakistan remain dim. As for conflict management, there will always be space for third parties to defuse tensions and avert kinetic confrontation, as was amply demonstrated in the crises of 2019 and 2025, when the US played a leading role in defusing tensions and restoring ceasefire. If India shows flexibility in its rigid position, it might find it useful to engage credible third parties for its own long-term ambitions, as well as for regional peace.

The bigger question that has bogged down the political leadership of both countries for over seven decades is whether and how the two countries can turn their political destinies around and build a future different from the past? At the time of writing these pages, there appears no interest on the part of India to normalize relations with Pakistan. Bilateral trade has been weaponized, even when trade has proven to be a source of collaboration across peoples in various other regions. India is also reluctant to reopen sports links, which have historically served as a useful tool to reduce tensions. In a public statement in September 2024, the Indian external affairs minister expressed his view that "the era of uninterruptible dialogue with Pakistan was over."[295] India has now pushed the differences to the point of dehumanizing the relationship. Prime Minister Modi has continued to threaten Pakistan in his public statements, such as the ones made in May 2025,[296] in particular his threat that the people of Pakistan should either eat 'roti [bread]' or his 'bullet'. These provocative statements were a clear violation of the UN Charter,

which urges member states to settle their disputes peacefully and refrain from use of force. Such naked threats might fetch some additional votes for BJP, but it certainly overlooks the strategic interest of making South Asia peaceful. The most critical area of concern for Pakistan is the Modi government's decision to hold IWT in abeyance. Pakistan would have to respond in multiple ways: legal remedies, diplomatic pressure, and internal measures to make efficient use of water. What is indubitably certain is that unless India restores IWT, relations between India and Pakistan are unlikely to be normalized.

Despite India's current stance of refusing any sort of dialogue with Pakistan, history shows that times can change. Should such a change occur, and India rekindles its interest in normalizing relations, several practical ideas – outlined in Chapter 8 – could serve as a roadmap for progress. However, what is of quintessential importance is that the leadership of both countries must act decisively to arrest the slide down the slippery slope of mutual mistrust. Both sides must adopt a strategic rather than tactical mindset when addressing bilateral differences. They need to move beyond negotiating positions rather than strategic interests. Equally crucial is the need to view their national security with a wider lens, recognizing that true security encompasses not only military strength but also economic resilience and human development. Encouragingly, Pakistan has shown some positive signals in this direction.Pakistan's national security policy, unveiled in January 2022, views national security more broadly and argues that Pakistan is safest when its citizens are empowered by economic and human security. Accordingly, the policy has defined national security as a composite of traditional defence, economic resilience, and human security, with primacy given to economic aspects and geoeconomics. In contrast, since 2014, Modi-led India has pursued a policy centered on building a Hindutva-led Hindu state – a marked departure from its historic secular and pluralistic identity. Although BJP's modest victory in 2024 elections was a moment of reckoning, the momentum towards Hindutva-led governance has shown little signs of slowing. Externally, while India claims to attach

importance to its relations with neighbours, in practice, it has experienced continuous friction with most of them.

Considering the above, is it realistic to expect that one day both India and Pakistan will simultaneously and sincerely embrace and implement a 'Neighbourhood First' approach? If such a policy shift was to occur in Pakistan, it remains likely to receive the support of the people, as the broader sentiment in Pakistan is to have cordial and cooperative relationship with India, provided it is grounded in mutual respect. Unfortunately, under Prime Minister Modi, India has completely shut its doors for any dialogue with Pakistan and also significantly lowered its expectations for economic relations with Pakistan, pivoting instead toward deeper ties with Central Asia and Eurasia via the Iranian port of Chabahar. Notably, however, India's apparent alignment with Israel during the 12-day war between Iran and Israel in 2025 is likely to strain its relations with Tehran, adding another layer of complexity to its regional calculus.

Persisting with a policy of compulsive hostility towards Pakistan serves neither India's security interests nor its long-term interests. As South Asia's largest nation, India aspires to act as a net security provider for the region. However, to fulfil this role credibly, its foreign policy needs to adopt a strategic vision that includes bringing its smaller neighbours along rather than pushing them away. Ultimately, it is essential for India and Pakistan to recognize a fundamental truth: a zero-sum mindset cannot pave the way for lasting peace. The historic and cultural ties shared by both countries have immense power in bringing the countries closer, and must be prioritized over the forces that push them apart. The future of South Asia and the well-being of its more than 1.5 billion people depends on whether its two largest nations can summon the courage and wisdom to choose cooperation over conflict.

With the world order in disarray and the signposts of an emerging multipolar order offering little reassurance, the road ahead appears uncertain, unpredictable, and fraught with instability – at least in the

short term. These global upheavals only reinforce the pressing imperative of regional cooperation. Both nations must work in concert to protect and advance their shared interests. India's aspirations for a prominent global profile cannot materialize without first stabilizing its own neighbourhood. Nor can India benefit from the fruits of connectivity to West Asia and Eurasia if its relations with Pakistan remain turbulent. For its part, Pakistan must prioritize effective governance and leverage the promise of geoeconomics by cultivating stronger, more constructive ties with its neighbours. It is evident that both countries must commit to overcome the perennial mistrust and infuse greater confidence to bilateral efforts for resolving their outstanding issues and craft a future that brings prosperity to the entire subcontinent.

Above all, India and Pakistan must recognize the ultimate reality that one can change friends, but not neighbours. They simply must find a modus vivendi for peaceful coexistence. Should this realization take root, particularly within Indian public consciousness, the transformative power of geoeconomics will unfold and serve the long-term interests of both countries. South Asia need not remain shackled by the label of a turbulent, volatile and tough neighbourhood, nor be viewed as a liability for the world. Instead, it has the potential to become a dynamic hub, linking diverse subregions of Asia.

Ultimately, it is the people of Pakistan and India who have borne the heaviest burden of this prolonged hostility. It is high time to view bilateral relations not through the lens of rivalry and enmity, but through the prism of what truly best serves the enduring interests and aspirations of its citizens. The road to a peaceful and prosperous future demands that both nations reimagine one another – not as adversaries, but as neighbours bound by geography, history and the grand possibility of shared destiny.

IQBAL FORUM

Annexes

The Simla Agreement, 1972

1. The Government of India and the Government of Pakistan are resolved that the two countries put an end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred their relations and work for the promotion of a friendly and harmonious relationship and the establishment of durable peace in the sub-continent, so that both countries may henceforth devote their resources and energies to the pressing task of advancing the welfare of their peoples.

In order to achieve this objective, the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

(i) That the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations shall govern the relations between the two countries.

(ii) That the two countries are resolved to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them. Pending the final settlement of any of the problems between the two countries, neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation and both shall prevent the

IQBAL FORUM

organization, assistance or encouragement of any act detrimental to the maintenance of peaceful and harmonious relations.

(iii) That the prerequisite for reconciliation, good neighbourliness and durable peace between them is a commitment by both the countries to peaceful co-existence, respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.

(iv) That the 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.

(v) That they shall always respect each other's national unity, territorial integrity, political independence and sovereign equality.

(vi) That in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, they will refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of each other.

2. Both the Governments will take all steps within their power to prevent hostile propaganda directed against each other. Both countries will encourage the dissemination of such information as would promote the development of friendly relations between them.

3. In order progressively to restore and normalize relations between the two countries step by step, it was agreed that:

(i) Steps shall be taken to resume communications, postal, telegraphic, sea, land, including border posts, and air links including overflights.

IQBAL FORUM

(ii) Appropriate steps shall be taken to promote travel facilities for the nationals of the other country.

(iii) Trade and cooperation in economic and other agreed fields will be resumed as far as possible.

(iv) Exchange in the fields of science and culture will be promoted.

In this connection delegations from the two countries will meet from time to time to work out the necessary details.

4. In order to initiate the process of the establishment of durable peace, both the Governments agree that:

(i) Indian and Pakistani forces shall be withdrawn to their side of the international border.

(ii) In Jammu and Kashmir, the line of control resulting from the ceasefire of December 17, 1971 shall be respected by both sides without prejudice to the recognized position of either side. Neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations. Both sides further undertake to refrain from the threat or use of force in violation of this line.

(iii) The withdrawals shall commence upon entry into force of this agreement and shall be completed within a period of 30 days thereof.

5. This agreement will be subject to ratification by both countries in accordance with their respective constitutional procedure and will come into force with effect from the date on which the instruments of ratification are exchanged.

IQBAL FORUM

6. Both Governments agree that their respective Heads will meet again at a mutually convenient time in the future and that, in the meanwhile, the representatives of the two sides will meet to discuss further the modalities and arrangements for the repatriation of prisoners of war and civilian internees, a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir and the resumption of diplomatic relations.

(Signed) Indira Gandhi	(Signed) Zulfikar Ali Bhutto
Prime Minister, Republic of India	President, Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Simla, the 2nd of July, 1972

The Lahore Declaration, 1999

21 February 1999

The Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India:-

Sharing a vision of peace and stability between their countries, and of progress and prosperity for their peoples:

Have agreed that their respective governments:-

Shall intensify efforts to resolve all issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir.

Shall refrain from intervention and interference in each other's internal affairs.

Shall intensify their composite and integrated dialogue process for an early and positive outcome of the agreed bilateral agenda.

Shall take immediate steps for reducing the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons and discuss concepts and doctrines with a view to elaborating measures for confidence building in the nuclear and conventional fields, aimed at prevention of conflict.

Reaffirm their commitment to goals and objectives of SAARC and to concert their efforts towards the realization of the SAARC vision for the year 2000 and beyond with a view to promoting the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life through accelerated economic growth, social progress and cultural development.

Reaffirm their condemnation and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and their determination to combat this menace.

Shall promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

IQBAL FORUM

Indus Water Treaty (1960)

Article IX

Settlement of Differences and Disputes

(1) Any question which arises between the Parties concerning the interpretation or application of this Treaty or the existence of any fact which, if established, might constitute a breach of this Treaty shall first be examined by the Commission, which will endeavour to resolve the question by agreement.

(2) If the Commission does not reach agreement on any of the questions mentioned in Paragraph (1), then a difference will be deemed to have arisen, which shall be dealt with as follows:
(a) Any difference which, in the opinion of either Commissioner, falls within the provisions of Part 1 of Annexure F shall, at the request of either Commissioner, be dealt with by a Neutral Expert in accordance with the provisions of Part 2 of Annexure F;
(b) If the difference does not come within the provisions of Paragraph (2)(a), or if a Neutral Expert, in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 7 of Annexure F, has informed the Commission that, in his opinion, the difference, or a part thereof, should be treated as a dispute, then a dispute will be deemed to have arisen which shall be settled in accordance with the provisions of Paragraphs (3), (4), and (5):
Provided that, at the discretion of the Commission, any difference may either be dealt with by a Neutral Expert in accordance with the provisions of Part 2 of Annexure F or be deemed to be a dispute to be settled in accordance with the provisions of Paragraphs (3), (4), and (5), or may be settled in any other way agreed upon by the Commission.

(3) As soon as a dispute to be settled in accordance with this and the succeeding paragraphs of this Article has arisen, the Commission

IQBAL FORUM

shall, at the request of either Commissioner, report the fact to the two Governments, as early as practicable, stating in its report the points on which the Commission is in agreement and the issues in dispute, the views of each Commissioner on these issues and his reasons therefor.

(4) Either Government may, following receipt of the report referred to in Paragraph (3), or if it comes to the conclusion that this report is being unduly delayed in the Commission, invite the other Government to resolve the dispute by agreement. In doing so it shall state the names of its negotiators and their readiness to meet with the negotiators to be appointed by the other Government at a time and place to be indicated by the other Government. To assist in these negotiations, the two Governments may agree to enlist the services of one or more mediators acceptable to them.

(5) A court of Arbitration shall be established to resolve the dispute in the manner provided by Annexure G:
(a) upon agreement between the Parties to do so; or
(b) at the request of either Party, if, after negotiations have begun pursuant to Paragraph (4), in its opinion the dispute is not likely to be resolved by negotiation or mediation; or
(c) at the request of either Party, if, after the expiry of one month following receipt by the other Government of the invitation referred to in Paragraph (4), that Party comes to the conclusion that the other Government is unduly delaying the negotiations.

(6) The provisions of Paragraphs (3), (4), and (5) shall not apply to any difference while it is being dealt with by a Neutral Expert.

IQBAL FORUM

Index

Ayub Khan, 18, 38, 40, 45, 46, 48, 86, 88, 89, 90, 100, 115, 280
Benazir Bhutto, 18, 54, 56, 68, 91, 100, 140, 254
BJP, 7, 11, 27, 33, 55, 56, 57, 61, 64, 68, 73, 74, 75, 82, 86, 92, 94, 100, 135, 146, 159, 160, 161, 213, 217, 227, 229, 230, 231, 235, 237, 238, 239, 249, 280, 288
China, 6, 7, 20, 36, 42, 43, 45, 46, 51, 52, 57, 67, 72, 73, 88, 90, 100, 136, 139, 154, 177, 179, 188, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 213, 214, 221, 224, 229, 235, 236, 251, 257, 258, 260, 267, 271, 276, 285, 286
Congress, 7, 11, 16, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 33, 34, 36, 40, 48, 52, 64, 73, 80, 81, 82, 86, 94, 109, 126, 129, 182, 185, 208, 213, 217, 249, 278, 283
CPEC, 7, 154, 155, 190, 195, 266, 271
FATF, 7, 19, 157, 158, 174, 282, 283, 286
FIA, 7, 148
Four-point formula, 64, 93, 127, 128, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 182, 234, 250, 251
Gandhi, 17, 29, 35, 36, 37, 81, 82, 85, 87, 111, 140, 144
Hari Singh, 106, 107, 108, 119
Imran Khan, 18, 71, 74, 95, 96, 98, 100, 131, 158, 159
Indira Gandhi, 18, 48, 50, 52, 54, 89, 90, 97, 100, 101, 103, 120, 140, 294
Jinnah, 11, 15, 16, 18, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 40, 48, 82, 83, 84, 86, 89, 101, 110, 111, 112, 119, 237, 274, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280
Line of control, 7, 51, 52, 60, 63, 67, 120, 125, 126, 138, 144, 203, 253, 254, 255, 263, 293

IQBAL FORUM

LoC, 7, 51, 59, 66, 67, 70, 71, 72, 73, 93, 95, 123, 124, 126, 128, 134, 137, 153, 159, 197, 203, 210, 221, 244, 247, 255, 263, 280, 284
Manmohan Singh, 55, 64, 66, 93, 100, 101, 103, 147, 182
Mountbatten, 17, 37, 80, 81, 87, 106, 109, 110, 111, 112, 118, 119, 278
Musharraf, 18, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 92, 93, 100, 101, 102, 103, 128, 143, 145, 147, 181, 182, 183, 187, 220, 232
Muslim League, 7, 16, 25, 28, 29, 30, 34, 36, 80, 81, 126, 278
Nawaz Sharif, 18, 55, 56, 58, 58, 59, 60, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 91, 92, 94, 99, 100, 101, 103, 131, 178, 232
Nehru, 11, 18, 27, 28, 31, 34, 37, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 55, 82, 85, 86, 87, 89, 97, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 114, 115, 117, 118, 119, 122, 132, 185, 240, 278, 279, 280, 281
NIA, 7, 145, 152, 205
Patel, 11, 36, 37, 39, 86, 87, 107, 108, 111, 112, 114, 118, 119, 153, 154
QUAD, 7, 192
RAW, 7, 153, 154, 155, 163, 164
RSS, 7, 26, 27, 36, 37, 73, 82, 86, 87, 92, 94, 140, 145, 236
SAARC, 7, 54, 63, 68, 70, 93, 196, 197, 218, 263, 265, 295
Sardar Patel, 39, 86, 87
Vajpayee, 18, 57, 58, 60, 63, 64, 92, 92, 93, 99, 100, 101, 103, 124, 178, 182, 232, 239, 258
Zia, 18, 53, 54, 90, 91, 140. 232
Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, 45, 49, 51, 53, 89, 90, 91, 100, 101, 294

Notes

[1] The honour for giving Jinnah the title of Quaid-e-Azam goes to Maulana Mazharuddin Ahmad, who published this in his Urdu newspaper Al-Aman on 10 December 1938.

[2] Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Pakistan: Origins, Identity, and Future* (Folio Books, 2023), 102.

[3] Altaf Hussain Hali (1837-1914) wrote, among others, Musaddas e Mud o Jazr which inspired Muslims to rise up for their rights. He also wrote a biography of Sir Syed.

[4] Shibli Nomani (1857-1914) was an Islamic scholar, author and philosopher. He taught at Aligarh for sixteen years. He shared Sir Syed's mission to advise Muslims to work towards reviving their lost heritage.

[5] Nazir Ahmad Dehlvi (1836-1912) is noted for his reformative work, including girls' education. He translated the Holy Quran into Urdu, and remained engaged in Sir Syed's political work. As a noted orator, he spoke at Muhammadan Educational Conferences.

[6] Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928) was a jurist and author. He was a founder member of All-India Muslim League, and played a key role in securing a separate electorate for the Muslims of British India.

[7] K.K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A study in nationalism* (Sang-e-meel Publications, 1999) 34.

[8] Ishtiaq Ahmed, *Jinnah: His successes, failures, and role in history* (Vanguard Books, 2021) 120.

[9] Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Pakistan: Origins, Identity, and Future* (Folio Books, 2023), 338.

[10] Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (Research Society of Pakistan, 2009), 20.

[11] Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Centenary Edition (Oxford University Press, 1985), 74.

[12] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 75.

[13] Nehru, 76.

[14] K.K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A study in nationalism* (Sang-e-meel Publications, 1999) 54.

[15] Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (Research Society of Pakistan, 2009), 25.

[16]The alphabets of the term Pakistan represented roughly the areas of North-West subcontinent: P for Punjab, A for Afghania or NWFP, K for Kashmir, S for Sind, and TAN for Balochistan.

[17]Bande Mataram, also pronounced as Vande Mataram, is a poem by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who wrote it in 1875 as an ode to Bengal in the words "I praise thee, Mother". Congress later realized that most Muslims were opposed to the reference to Goddess Durga, and therefore decided to sing only the first two stanzas of the poem. This decision came under criticism when the BJP government's home minister Amit Shah stated in 2018 that Congress's appeasement of accepting incomplete Bande Mataram in 1937 led to the partition of British India.

[18]K.K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A study in nationalism* (Sang-e-meel Publications, 1999) 82.

[19] Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (Research Society of Pakistan, 2009), 29-30.

[20] Sikandar Hayat, *The Charismatic Leader* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 203-4.

[21] Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Centenary Edition (Oxford University Press, 1985), 526.

[22] Ishtiaq Ahmed, *Jinnah: His successes, failures, and role in history* (Vanguard Books, 2021), 523.

[23] Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (Research Society of Pakistan, 2009), 40.

[24] Iqbal Akhund, *Memoirs of a Bystander: A Life in Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 19.

[25] Sikandar Hayat, *The Charismatic Leader* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 293.

[26] Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedoms* (Orient Longman, 1988), 170.

[27] Iqbal Akhund, *Memoirs of a Bystander: A Life in Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 21.

[28] S. M. Burke, *Mainsprings of Indian and Pakistani Foreign Policies* (University of Minnesota Press, 1974), 9.

[29] Jaswant Singh, *India at Risk: Mistakes, Misconceptions and Misadventures of Security Policy* (Rupa Publications, 2013), 16.

[30] Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Orient, (Longman, 1988), 235.

[31] Ishtiaq Ahmed, *Jinnah: His successes, failures and role in history* (Vanguard Books, 2021), 524.

[32] Ahmed, *Jinnah*, 526.

[33] Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (Research Society of Pakistan, 2009), 183.

[34] S.M. Burke and Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 1990), 13.

[35] Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 189.

[36] Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Sang-e-meel, 2010), 291.

[37] Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (Research Society of Pakistan, 2009), 191.

[38] Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, (Oxford University Press, 1967), 48.

[39] Iqbal Akhund, *Memoirs of a Bystander: A Life in Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 529.

[40] Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan Between Mosque and Military* (Vanguard Books, 2005), 32.

[41] S.M. Burke and Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 1990), 221.

[42] Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2019: A concise history, Fifth Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 74.

[43] Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, 292.

[44] Burke, 281.

[45] Iqbal Akhund, *Memoirs of a Bystander: A Life in Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 45.

[46] Akhund, *Memoirs of a Bystander*, 46-47.

[47] S.M. Burke and Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 2nd ed* (Oxford University Press, 1990), 328.

[48] Iqbal Akhund, *Memoirs of a Bystander: A Life in Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 87.

[49] Feroz Hassan Khan, *Eating Grass: The making of Pakistani bomb* (Stanford University Press, 2012), 222.

[50] The controversy over Babri Masjid had raked up since 1853, according to Britannica. In 1949, a Hindu devotee of Ram placed an idol of Ram inside the mosque. The site was declared disputed. Later, a Hindu nationalist organization started a movement to build a temple at the site of the Masjid. The BJP used the opportunity to champion this cause. In 1992, Ram Temple activists charged the mosque and hacked it down with axes and hammers.

[51] Congressman Larry Pressler and two other Republican legislators had proposed an amendment to the US Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, Section 620 E (e), which was approved in 1985 and came to be called the Pressler Amendment. This amendment had superseded the Cranston-Glenn amendment of 1984 which had also required a presidential certification that Pakistan did not "possess" a nuclear explosive device and that it was neither "developing" nor "acquiring" a nuclear explosive device.

[52] Rabia Akhtar, "The correct narrative on Pressler," *Dawn*, 29 May 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1335979

[53] Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 96.

[54] Nasim Zehra, *From Kargil to the Coup: Events that shook Pakistan* (Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2018), 133.

[55] Zehra, *From Kargil to the Coup*, 159.

[56] Nasim Zehra, *From Kargil to the Coup: Events that shook Pakistan* (Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2018), 160.

[57] Sartaj Aziz, *Between Dreams and Realities: Some Milestones in Pakistan's History* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 258.

[58] Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2019: A concise history, Fifth Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 261.

[59] Suhail Warraich, "The Verdict of History," *The News International*, July 06, 2018), https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/337933-the-verdict-of-history

[60] Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2019: A concise history, Fifth Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 267.

[61] This view was expressed by G. Parthasarathy in the book Diplomatic Divide. Dr. Humayun Khan & G. Parthasarathy, *Diplomatic Divide* (The Lotus Collection, 2004), 83.

[62] Jaswant Singh, *India at Risk: Mistakes, Misconceptions and Misadventures of Security Policy*, (Rupa Publications, 2013), 224-227.

[63] Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2019: A concise history, Fifth Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 267.

[64] Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (Simon & Schuster, 2006), 202.

[65] "Pakistan, India Joint Statement," *Dawn*, January 7, 2004, http://beeta.dawn.com/news/403801/pakistan-india-joint-statement.

[66] Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, *Diplomatic Footprints: A Memoir* (Sang-e-meel Publications, 2021), 413.

[67] Ms. Sabeen Malik's review of the book by Dr. Jaspal. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "India's 'Surgical Strike' Stratagem: Brinkmanship and Response," *CISS Insight Journal*, 7(1), 109-112, 15 July 2019, https://journal.ciss.org.pk/index.php/ciss-insight/article/view/9.

[68] Rakesh Sood, "Does Balakot Define a New Normal?," *Observer Research Foundation*, March 22, 2019, https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/does-balakot-define-a-new-normal-49198

[69] Islamuddin Sajid, "India's claim of downing jet in 2019 standoff 'pure fantasy': Pakistan," *Asia Pacific*, November 23, 2021, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/indias-claim-of-downing-jet-in-2019-standoff-pure-fantasy-pakistan/2428397#:~:text=US%20defense%20officials%20also%20debunked,by%20US%20firm%20Lockheed%20Martin.

[70] "How Narendra Modi Is Remaking India into a Hindu State," *The Economist*, May 14, 2022, https://www.economist.com/asia/2022/05/14/how-narendra-modi-is-remaking-india-into-a-hindu-state.

[71] "Annual Report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom - 2021," *Washington D.C.: U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom*, April 2021, https://www.uscirf.gov/publication/2021-annual-report

[72] Harrison Akins, "The Citizenship (Amendment) Act in India," *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom*, February 2020, https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2020%20Legislation%20Factsheet%20-%20India_0_0.pdf

[73] David Brewster, "India: Regional Net Security Provider," *Ministry of External Affairs*, November 5, 2013, https://mea.gov.in/articles-in-indian-media.htm?dtl/22468/India+Regional+net+security+provider.

[74] Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Orient, (Longman, 1988), 197.

[75] Alastair Lamb, *Birth of a Tragedy: Kashmir 1947* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 14.

[76] Lamb, *Kashmir 1947*, 166.

[77] H.M. Seervai, *Partition of India: Legend and Reality* (Eminem Publications, 1989), 130.

[78] Alastair Lamb, *Birth of a Tragedy: Kashmir 1947* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 166.

[79] Iqbal Akhund, *Memoirs of a Bystander: A Life in Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 17.

[80] M.A.H. Ispahani, *Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah as I knew him*, (Elite Publishers 3rd edition, 1976), 241.

[81] Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 188-193.

[82] M.A.H. Ispahani, *Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah as I knew him*, (Elite Publishers 3rd edition, 1976), 232-33.

[83] Sikandar Hayat, *The Charismatic leader: Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Creation of Pakistan* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 6-14.

[84] Jaswant Singh was expelled from the party for writing this book, which was banned in Gujarat under Chief Minister Modi. Earlier even L.K. Advani also faced anger from the BJP when he visited Pakistan in 2005 and called Jinnah secular and a great leader. Krzysztof Iwanek, *Judged by the Cover: Remembering the Controversy around Jaswant Singh's book on Jinnah*, (The Diplomat, September 30, 2020), https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/judged-by-the-cover-remembering-the-controversy-around-jaswant-singhs-book-on-jinnah/

[85] Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Sang-e-meel, 2010, 8.

[86] Sikandar Hayat, *The Charismatic Leader* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 168-169.

[87] Ishtiaq Ahmed, *Jinnah: His successes, failures and role in history* (Vanguard Books, 2021), 523.

[88] M.A.H. Ispahani, *Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah as I knew him* (Elite Publishers 3rd edition, 1976), 257. Jinnah shared his guidance on foreign policy in his broadcast talk to the people of the USA in February 1948.

[89] Waqar Mustafa, "Jinnah, Gandhi wanted us to move past the hostilities," *Khaleej Times*, August 14, 2017, https://www.khaleejtimes.com/uae/jinnah-gandhi-wanted-us-to-move-past-the-hostilities?botrequest=true

[90] "Real friendship with India: Jinnah's ideals," https://www.jinnahspakistan.com/real-friendship-with-india

[91] Stephan P. Cohen, *Shooting for the Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 105.

[92] Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (Research Society of Pakistan, 2009), 386.

[93] Alastair Lamb, *Birth of a Tragedy: Kashmir 1947* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 175.

[94] Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Centenary Edition (Oxford University Press, 1985), 74.

[95] Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Orient, (Longman, 1988), 198.

[96] S.M. Burke and Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 2nd ed.* (Oxford University Press, 1990), 9.

[97] Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Orient, (Longman, 1988), 147-48.

[98] Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 164.

[99] Azad, 232-234.

[100] Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 166.

[101] Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan's nuclear bomb: A story of defiance, deterrence, and deviance* (Penguin Random House, 2018), 66.

[102] Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan Between Mosque and Military* (Vanguard Books, 2005), 303.

[103] Dr. Humayun Khan & G. Parthasarathy, *Diplomatic Divide* (The Lotus Collection, 2004), 35.

[104] Khushwant Singh, *The End of India* (Penguin Books, 2003), 3.

[105] Christophe Jaffrelot, "Indian Muslims in an Era of Hindu Majoritarianism," *MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University*, January 16, 2024), https://macmillan.yale.edu/southasia/events/2024-01/christophe-jaffrelot-indian-muslims-era-hindu-majoritarianism

[106] John Gill, interview by author, February 11, 2025

[107] Salman Bashir, interview by author, November 30, 2024

[108] Jalil Abbas Jilani, interview by author, February 1, 2025

[109] Christine Fair, interview by author, November 25, 2024

[110] Raja Qaiser Ahmed, interview by author, February 8, 2025

[111] Masood Khalid, interview by author, November 29, 2024

[112] Moeed Yusuf, interview by author, January 15, 2025

[113] Naeem Khalid Lodhi, interview by author, November 27, 2024

[114] Khurram Abbas, interview by author, January 22, 2025

[115] Fakir Aijazuddin, interview by author, January 14, 2025

[116] Christopher Clary, *The difficult politics of peace: Rivalry in modern South Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2022), 30.

[117] Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 181.

[118] Alastair Lamb, *Birth of a Tragedy: Kashmir 1947* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 96-97.

[119] Lamb, *Kashmir 1947*, 100.

[120] M.J Akbar, *"Nehru: Making of India"*, (Viking (The Penguin Group), 1988), 443.

[121] Alastair Lamb, *Birth of a Tragedy: Kashmir 1947* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 70-71.

[122] M.J Akbar, *"Nehru: Making of India"*, (Viking (The Penguin Group), 1988), 443.

[123] Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 167.

[124] M.J Akbar, *"Nehru: Making of India"*, (Viking (The Penguin Group), 1988), 438.

[125] Stanley Wolper , *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 168.

[126] Alastair Lamb, *Birth of a Tragedy: Kashmir 1947* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 31-32.

[127] Alastair Lamb, *Birth of a Tragedy: Kashmir 1947* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 36.

[128] Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 168.

[129] Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*, 185-186.

[130] Wolpert, 138.

[131] G. Allana, *Quaid-e-Azam* (Ferozsons, 1988), 498.

[132] Alastair Lamb, *Birth of a Tragedy: Kashmir 1947* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 138.

[133] Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 185-187.

[134] Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*, 184.

[135] Iqbal Akhund, *Memoirs of a Bystander: A Life in Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 37-38.

[136] Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 186.

[137] Alastair Lamb, *Birth of a Tragedy: Kashmir 1947* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 133.

[138] Lamb, *Kashmir 1947*, 160.

[139] M.J Akbar, *"Nehru: Making of India"*, (Viking (The Penguin Group), 1988), 448.

[140] A.G. Noorani, *Article 370: A Constitutional History of Jammu and Kashmir* (Oxford University Press, 2011, 50-87.

[141] Iqbal Akhund, *Memoirs of a Bystander: A Life in Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 85.

[142] "Telegram sent by Prime Minister Nehru to British and Pakistani prime ministers," *National Assembly of Pakistan*, https://www.na.gov.pk/en/print.php?content.php&id=87 This website contains various commitments made by Indian leaders.

[143] "Nehru's statement in New Delhi," *All India Radio*, November 3, 1947, https://www.na.gov.pk/en/print.php?content.php&id=87

[144] "Report of Sir Owen Dixon," *United Nations Digital Library S/1791/Add.1, 1950*, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/486273?ln=en&v=pdf

[145] Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 186.

[146] Wolpert, *Shameful Flight*, 189.

[147] Wolpert, 184.

[148] A.G. Noorani, *Article 370: A Constitutional History of Jammu and Kashmir* (Oxford University Press, 2011, 136.

[149] Iqbal Akhund, *Memoirs of a Bystander: A Life in Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 39.

[150] This view was expressed by G. Parthasarathy in the book Diplomatic Divide. Dr. Humayun Khan & G. Parthasarathy, *Diplomatic Divide* (The Lotus Collection, 2004), 78, 82.

[151] Gregory Stanton, "Genocide Alert for Kashmir, India," *Genocide Watch*, August 15, 2019, https://humanrightscommission.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/humanrightscommission.house.gov/files/documents/GenocideWatch_Kashmir.pdf.

[152] "Update of the Situation of Human Rights in Indian-Administered Kashmir and Pakistan-Administered Kashmir from May 2018 to April 2019," *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, July 8, 2019, https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/update-situation-human-rights-indian-administered-kashmir-and-pakistan

[153] Cathy Scott-Clark, "The Mass Graves of Kashmir," *The Guardian*, July 9, 2012, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/09/mass-graves-of-kashmir.

[154] Ahmer Khan, "What Pellet Guns Have Done to Protesters in Kashmir," *Dawn*, September 28, 2016, http://www.dawn.com/news/1282022.

[155] A.G. Noorani, *Article 370: A Constitutional History of Jammu and Kashmir* (Oxford University Press, 2011, 322-323.

[156] Maleeha Lodhi and the Contributors, *Pakistan: The Search for Stability* (Oxford University Press, 2024), 347-348. These pages give notable details: The Modi government introduced the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Order 2020 (an adaptation of state laws) on March 31, 2020, through an executive order. As per this domicile law, those who have resided in Jammu and Kashmir for a period of 15 years and students having spent seven years and appeared in class 10 or 12 examinations, would be eligible to become a permanent resident of the State. Additionally, children of central government officials, who have served in Kashmir for 10 years, would also benefit from this law. The Modi government has, thus, removed all hindrances for outsiders to come and settle in Kashmir. On 17 August 2022, India announced that voting rights were granted to any Indian citizen living temporarily in Kashmir. That means adding around 2.5 million voters to the existing voter list of 7.6 million, a 30 percent increase. The people of Kashmir reacted with

expressions of anger and fear that, yet another attempt was being made by the Hindu nationalist government to change the demography of the Muslim-majority region.

[157] Arundhati Roy, "India's Day of Shame" *The Progressive International*, 12 August 2020, https://progressive.international/wire/2020-08-12-arundhati-roy-indias-day-of-shame/en

[158] Arundhati explains in her above-cited 12 August 2020 article that the precious State Subject Certificates of Kashmiris are now legally void except as backup evidence to bolster their applications to the Indian government for domicile status in their own homeland. Those whose applications are rejected can be denied residency and shipped out. She further contends that Kashmir's new Domicile Law is a cognate of India's new blatantly anti-Muslim Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) passed in December 2019 and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) that is supposed to detect 'Bangladeshi infiltrators' (Muslim of course) who the home minister has called 'termites'. In the state of Assam, the NRC has already wreaked havoc. Millions have been struck off the citizens register. While many countries are dealing with a refugee crisis, the Indian government is turning citizens into refugees, fueling a crisis of statelessness on an unimaginable scale." She adds that the CAA, NRC and Kashmir's new Domicile Law require even bona fide citizens to produce a set of documents approved by the state in order to be granted citizenship.

[159] "'Insaniyat, Jamhuriat and Kashmiriyat': The Vajpayee Doctrine to Resolve the Kashmir Crisis," *Times Now*, August 16, 2018, https://www.timesnownews.com/mirror-now/in-focus/article/insaniyat-jamhuriat-and-kashmiriyat-the-vajpayees-doctrine-to-resolve-kashmir-crisis-vajpayee-passed-away-vajpayee-dead-former-prime-minister/239122.

[160] Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, *Diplomatic Footprints: A Memoir* (Sang-e-meel Publications, 2021),139.

[161] Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, *Diplomatic Footprints*, 192.

[162] Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, *Neither a Hawk, Nor a Dove: An Insider's Account of Pakistan's Foreign Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 347.

[163] Satinder Kumar Lambah, *In Pursuit of Peace: India-Pakistan Relations under six prime ministers*, (Penguin Random House, 2023), 276.

[164] Stephan P. Cohen, *Shooting for the Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 56.

[165] Jamil Nagri, "GB Assembly unanimously adopts a joint resolution demanding interim provincial status," *Dawn news*, March 9, 2021, https://www.dawn.com/news/1611556

[166] Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Pakistan: Origins, Identity, and Future* (Folio Books, 2023), 556.

[167] Elizabeth Threlkeld, interview by author, January 18, 2025

[168] Javid Husain, *Pakistan and a world in disorder* (Palgrave McMillan, 2016), 65.

[169] Pravin Sawhney, interview by author, December 30, 2024.

[170] "Kashmir profile," *BBC*, 19 December 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11693674

[171] Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia* (Sang-e-meel Publications, 2008), 281.

[172] "Resolution 1373 (2001), *United Nations Security Council*, 28 September 2001, https://www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/terrorism/res_1373_english.pdf

[173] "S/RES/1267, *United Nations Security Council*, 15 October 1999, https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/s/res/1267-%281999%29

[174] "Resolution 1540 (2004)," *United Nations Digital Library*, 28 April 2004, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/520326?ln=en&v=pdf

[175] Douglas Little, *Us versus Them: The United States, Radical Islam, and the Rise of the Green Threat* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 15-52.

[176] Gowhar Geelani, "Looking back at Maqbool, Afzal hangings at Tihar," *Deccan Chronicle*, 12 February 2020, https://www.deccanchronicle.com/opinion/op-ed/120220/looking-back-at-maqbool-afzal-hangings-at-tihar.html

[177] Arundhati Roy, *Hanging of Afzal Guru: And the Strange Case of the Attack on the Indian Parliament* (India Penguin, 2016).

[178] Express News Service, "Chhattisinghpora: Court acquits 2 Pak nationals," *The Indian Express*, August 11, 2011, https://indianexpress.com/article/news-archive/web/chhattisinghpora-court-acquits-2-pak-nationals/

[179] "Sikh massacre in Kashmir exposed by Lt General KS Gill," *Reddit*, 22 March 2023, https://www.reddit.com/r/Sikh/comments/1k866tt/sikh_massacre_in_kashmir_exposed_by_lt_general_ks/. This account was later suspended, but the story and the interview are still available on the internet.

[180]Imtiaz Gul, "Pahalgam: Indian blame game and ground realities," *The Express Tribune*, 28 April 2025, https://tribune.com.pk/story/2542287/pahalgam-indian-blame-game-and-ground-realities

[181]Zulfikar Majid, "Army closes Pathribal encounter case," *Deccan Herald*, 25 January , 2014, https://www.deccanherald.com/india/army-closes-pathribal-encounter-case-2172773

[182] "Pathribal: Indian army says no evidence against officers in Kashmir killings," *BBC*, 24 January 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-25874125

[183] Alex Stolar, *To the Brink* (The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2008), 9.

[184] NIA court acquits Aseemanand, 3 others in Samjhauta train bombing case," The Hindu, 20 March 2019, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/nia-court-acquits-aseemanand-3-others-in-samjhauta-blast-case/article26592008.ece

[185] Vineet Khare, "Indian Muslims blamed for 'saffron terror' want justice," *BBC Hindi*, 27 January 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12224230

[186] "Indian court frees five men in 11-yr-old mosque blast case," *Xinhua News*, 16 April 2018,http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/16/c_137115132.htm

[187] Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars: The Inside Story* (Simon & Schuster, 2010) 46.

[188] Swatee Kher, "Miliband says settle Kashmir issue, Delhi says no," *Financial Express*, 16 January 2009, https://www.financialexpress.com/archive/miliband-says-settle-kashmir-issue-delhi-says-no-advice/411450/

[189] Krittivas Mukherjee, "Miliband says Pakistan State not linked to Mumbai attack," *Reuters*, 13 January 2009, https://www.reuters.com/article/world/miliband-says-pakistan-state-not-linked-to-mumbai-attack-idUSTRE50C2XB/

[190] Staff Reporter, "Miliband Kashmir remarks consistent with UK policy," *The Nation*, 24 January 2009, https://www.nation.com.pk/24-Jan-2009/miliband-kashmir-remarks-consistent-with-uk-policy

[191] S.M. Mushrif, *Who Killed Kurkare?: The Real Face of Terrorism in India* (Pharos Media & Publishing Pvt Ltd, 2009).

[192] Elias Davidsson, *The Betrayal of India: Revisiting the 26/11 Evidence*, (Pharos Media & Publishing Pvt Ltd, 2017).

[193] "Joint Statement Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh and the Prime Minister of Pakistan Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani," *Ministry of External Affairs Government of India*, July 16, 2009, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/4855/Joint+Statement+Prime+Minister+of+India+Dr+Manmohan+Singh+and+the+Prime+Minister+of+Pakistan+Syed+Yusuf+Raza+Gilani

[194] PTI, "NIA Chief's Remark denying Pak govt's hand in Pathankot attack sparks row," *Hindustan Times*, June 3, 2016, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/nia-chief-s-statement-denying-pak-involvement-in-pathankot-attack-sparks-row/story-CVVD3MQaFZB3siP9uibwoI.html

[195] Annie Gowen, "India's 'Surgical Strike' on Pakistan Territory Hints at New Era for Nuclear-Armed Rivals," *Washington Post*, September 30, 2016, sec. Asia & Pacific, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/indias-surgical-strike-on-pakistan-territory-hints-at-new-era-for-nuclear-armed-rivals/2016/09/30/98dadbc1-7528-4892-bc09-9ecaafebb301_story.html.

[196] Associated Press of Pakistan, "Transcript of RAW agent Kulbhushan's confessional statement," *Dawn*, 30 March 2016, https://www.dawn.com/news/1248786

[197] Mohammad Zafar, "'Raw officer' arrested in Balochistan," *The Express Tribune*, 24 March 2016, https://tribune.com.pk/story/1072455/terror-purge-forces-nab-indian-spy-in-balochistan

[198] Mateen Haider, "RAW runs special cells to sabotage CPEC, says secretary defence," *Dawn*, 13 April 2016, https://www.dawn.com/news/1251860

[199] Amar Bhushan, "Arrest of Indian 'Spy' in Balochistan Exposes Pak Desperation," *The Quint News*, 29 March 2016, https://www.thequint.com/opinion/arrest-of-indian-spy-in-balochistan-exposes-pak-desperation.

[200] "What did Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav say in his latest confessional video," *Dawn*, 22 June 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1341090.

[201] Mubashir Zaidi, "Kulbhushan Jadhav meets his mother, wife; meeting a humanitarian gesture, says Pakistan," *The Hindu*, 01 December 2021, https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/kulbhushan-jadhav-meets-his-mother/article61594968.ece

[202] "Watch Ajit Doval saying if Pakistan does 'one Mumbai it may lose Balochistan," *Scroll.in*, 6 January 2014) https://scroll.in/video/801447/watch-ajit-doval-say-if-pakistan-does-one-mumbai-it-may-lose-balochistan

[203] Shailaja Neelakantan, "When NSA Ajit Doval outlined India's new Pak strategy – defensive offence – perfectly," *Times of India*, October 4, 2016, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/when-nsa-ajit-doval-outlined-indias-new-pakistan-strategy-defensive-offense-perfectly/articleshow/54670600.cms.

[204] Avinash Paliwal, *My Enemy's Enemy: India in Afghanistan from the Soviet Invasion to the US Withdrawal*, (C. Hurst & Co., 2017), 22-26.

[205] Ayaz Gul, "Ex-Pakistan Taliban Spokesman Claims India, Afghanistan Targeting Pakistan," *Voice of America*, April 26, 2017, https://www.voanews.com/a/ex-pakistan-taliban-spokesman-claims-india-afghanistan-target-pakistan/3826095.html

[206] Andrew North, "Chuck Hagel stirs up India-US storm over Afghanistan," *BBC*, 27 February 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-21601120

[207] "Baloch leader seeks Indian ID, travel papers," *The Hindu*, 17 November 2021, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Baloch-leader-seeks-Indian-ID-travel-papers/article60558907.ece?__cf_chl_tk=qGSPGawqTn8JnOF9BgyPWFyMNNiUVjT4vQp6eXiSbPw-1751881023-1.0.1.1-GTjNJj.sB9s85ek_EW.mlVd_OCXAlbFOdSuX8F0ZQjI

[208] "Statement by Foreign Secretary on 26 February 2019 on the Strike on JeM training camp at Balakot," *Media Centre, Ministry of External Affairs of India*, 26 February 2019), https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/31091/Statement_by_Foreign_Secretary_on_26_February_2019_on_the_Strike_on_JeM_training_camp_at_Balakot#:~:text=The%20Government%20of%20India%20is,desire%20to%20avoid%20civilian%20casualties.

[209] "No casualties in Balakot strike, concedes India," *The Express Tribune*, 4 March 2019), https://tribune.com.pk/story/1922397/no-casualties-balakot-strike-concedes-india.

[210] "Indian Air Force not in a position to count casualties," *Dawn*, 4 March 2019, https://www.dawn.com/news/1467586

[211] Ajay Bisaria, *Anger Management: The Troubled Diplomatic Relationship between India and Pakistan* (Aleph, 2024), 418.

[212] Sachin Parashar, "'Qatal ki Raat': How PM Modi declined Imran Khan's midnight call," *Times of India*, 8 January 2024, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/qatal-ki-raat-how-pm-modi-declined-imran-khans-midnight-call/articleshow/106617355.cms

[213] Soutik Biswas, "India and Pakistan came close to a war: Pompeo," *BBC*, 25 January 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-64396138

[214] Ajay Bisaria, *Anger Management: The Troubled Diplomatic Relationship between India and Pakistan* (Aleph, 2024), 418.

[215] "Rejection of Indian Prime Minister's remarks insinuating Pakistan's involvement in Pulwama attack," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan*, 31 October 2020, https://www.mofa.gov.pk/rejection-of-indian-prime-ministers-remarks-insinuating-pakistans-involvement-in-pulwama-attack

[216] Anando Bhakto, "Eleven intelligence inputs warnings of Pulwama attack were ignored," *Frontline*, 21 February 2021, https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/pulwama-attack-intelligence-inputs-ignored-national-security-leak-compromise-balakot-bjp-win-2019/article64755942.ece

[217] Abid Hussian, "Pakistan reacts to ex-Kashmir governor's revelations on Pulwama," *Aljazeera*, 17 Apr 2023, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/17/pakistan-reacts-to-ex-kashmir-governors-revelations-on-pulwama

[218] EU DisinfoLab, *Indian Chronicles*, December 2020, https://www.disinfo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Indian-chronicles_FULLREPORT.pdf

[219] "Remarks by the Foreign Secretary on India's Extra-Judicial and Extra-Territorial Killings in Pakistan," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan*, 25 January 2024, https://mofa.gov.pk/news/indian-extra-territorial-killings-in-pakistan

[220] "Indian government ordered killings in Pakistan, intelligence officials claim," *The Guardian*, 4 April 2025, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/04/indian-government-assassination-allegations-pakistan-intelligence-officials

[221] "Qatar releases former Indian navy officers after dropping death sentences", *Aljazeera*, 12 February 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/12/qatar-releases-eight-ex-indian-navy-officers-after-commuting-death-sentence

[222] Andrew Greene, "India's Modi government operated 'nest of spies' in Australia before being disrupted by ASIO", *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, 30 April 2024, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-04-30/modi-government-operated-nest-of-spies-in-australia-/103786892

[223] Shaukat Javed, Interview with the author, 27 June 2025

[224] Moeed Yusuf Editor, *Pakistan's counterterrorism challenge* (Georgetown University Press, 2014), 3.

[225] "A/RES/45/130", *United Nations General Assembly*, 14 December 1990, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-184801/

[226] Syed Kaleem Imam, interview with author, 27 June 2025

[227] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History," *Center for The National Interest*, Summer 1989.

[228] Avinash Paliwal, *My Enemy's Enemy: India in Afghanistan from the Soviet Invasion to the US Withdrawal*, (C. Hurst & Co., 2017)

[229] S. M. Burke, *Mainsprings of Indian and Pakistani Foreign Policies* (University of Minnesota Press, 1974), 85.

[230] Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (Simon and Schuster, 2006), 219.

[231] Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (Simon and Schuster, 2006), Back cover.

[232] General Wesseley Clark, a former NATO commander in Europe, revealed the plan of waging seven wars in five years in his book 'The Clark Critique'. This was reported widely in the media. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2003/9/22/us-plans-to-attack-seven-muslim-states

[233] The term 'Thucydides Trap' was used by author Graham Allison to describe a situation where an established power feels threatened by a rising power, and both end up in a war. Thucydides was a Greek historian who wrote a detailed account of the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) between Greek city states of Sparta and Athens.

[234] Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China escape Thucydides' Trap?* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), 6.

[235] Ravi Buddhavarapu, "The Quad's New Maritime Initiative Has Potential to Spur Militarization of the Indo-Pacific," *CNBC*, June 9, 2022, https://www.cnbc.com/2022/06/09/quads-maritime-initiative-could-spur-militarization-of-indo-pacific.html.

[236] Samir Bhattacharya, "India is Embracing a 'Net Security Provider' Role in the Indian Ocean Region," *The Diplomat*, March 11, 2024, https://thediplomat.com/2024/03/india-is-embracing-a-net-security-provider-role-in-the-indian-ocean-region/

[237] Monish Tourangbam, "The China-India-Pakistan Triangle: Origins, Contemporary Perceptions, and Future," *Stimson Center*, June 25, 2020, https://www.stimson.org/2020/the-china-india-pakistan-triangle-origins-contemporary-perceptions-and-future/

[238] "Pakistan Defends Chinese Investment after U.S. Official's Criticism," *Reuters sec. Business News*, January 23, 2020, , https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-cpec-criticism-idUSKBN1ZM23W.

[239] Reuters, "China says India move on Kashmir violates its territorial sovereignty," *Dawn*, August 6, 2019, https://www.dawn.com/news/1498428

[240] "Xi says China and India should strengthen ties in 'Dragon-Elephant tango'," *Reuters*, 01 April 2025, https://www.reuters.com/world/xi-says-china-india-should-strengthen-ties-dragon-elephant-tango-2025-04-01/

[241] Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A hard country* (Penguin Books, 2011), 477.

[242] "India's ex-foreign minister calls Pahalgam attack political drama by Modi", *Samaa web desk*, 22 May 2025, https://www.samaa.tv/2087333828-india-s-ex-foreign-minister-calls-pahalgam-attack-political-drama-by-modi

[243] "The Pahalgam Crisis", *Jinnah Institute*, 25 April 2025, https://jinnah-institute.org/feature/the-pahalgam-crisis/

[244] Manish Tewari, "India must prepare for Pak endgame," *The Tribune India*, 25 April 2025, https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/india-must-prepare-for-pak-endgame/

[245] "India general admits jet losses in clash with Pakistan: Here's what he said," *Aljazeera, 1st June 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/1/india-general-admits-jet-losses-in-clash-with-pakistan-heres-what-he-said*

[246] "Marka-e-Haq - 22 April 2025 to 10 May 2025," *ISPR*, 12 May 2025, https://ispr.gov.pk/press-release-detail?id=7283.

[247] Shashi Tharoor, "The Toxin of Hate," *India Today*, April 22, 2022), https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20220502-guest-column-by-shashi-tharoor-the-toxin-of-hate-1940307-2022-04-22.

[248] Chritopher Clary, "Four Days in May: The India-Pakistan Crisis of 2025," *Stimson Center*, 28 May 2025, https://www.stimson.org/2025/four-days-in-may-the-india-pakistan-crisis-of-2025/

[249] Khan Hasham, interview by author, 30 May 2025

[250] Touqir Hussain, interview by author, 25 May 2025

[251] Qamar Cheema, interview by author, 29 May 2025

[252] Javid Husain, "Modi's religious nationalism as foreign policy," *The News*, 29 May 2025, https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1316240-modi-s-religious-nationalism-as-foreign-policy

[253] The Wire Analysis, *"Five Questions That Indian MPs May Have to Face Abroad," The Wire*, 21 May 2025, https://thewire.in/politics/five-questions-that-indian-mps-may-have-to-face-abroad

[254] Raza Mohammad, Interview by the author, 6 July 2025

[255] Richard Haass, *A World in Disarray* (Penguin Press, 2017), 227.

[256] "At launch of Lambah's book, ex-diplomats call for maintaining contact with Pakistan," *Express News Service*, April 13, 2023), https://indianexpress.com/article/india/at-launch-of-lambahs-book-ex-diplomats-call-for-maintaining-contact-with-pakistan-8553408/

[257] TCA Raghavan, "Rethinking India-Pak ties in the new global context," *Hindustan Times*, 25 March 2025, https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/rethinking-india-pak-ties-in-the-new-global-context-101742910996013.html

[258] Stephan P. Cohen, *Shooting for the Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Brookings Institution Press, xii-xiii.

[259] Stephan P. Cohen, *Shooting for the Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 73 to 83.

[260] In September 2016, Modi is reported to have said to Water Ministry officials that water and blood cannot flow together at the same time. This was a reference to potential action against Pakistan in respect of the Indus Waters Treaty.

[261] In 2015, Indian defence minister Manohar Parrikar made a remark that *kante ko kante se nikalna hei*, which means using terrorists against terrorists. This was interpreted as an admission of India acting as a state sponsor of terrorism.

[262] Referring to American reports of India having deployed 12 missiles against Pakistan, Modi made a statement in an election rally in Gujarat that on 27 February 2019, if Pakistan had not returned the captured Indian pilot then this would have been the night of massacre.

[263] *Aman ki Asha* was a joint peace initiative by The Times of India and the Jang Group of Publications to promote better understanding and exchanges between the two countries in the areas of business, trade, and investments, and cooperation in media, culture, and people to people contacts. It was launched on the new year eve of 2010.

[264] Stephan P. Cohen, *Shooting for the Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 108.

[265] "Madhya Pradesh BJP Minister sparks row with remarks on Col. Sofiya Qureshi; party's State unit says 'no one has right to say anything'", *The Hindu*, 14 May 2025, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/madhya-pradesh-bjp-minister-sparks-row-with-remarks-on-col-sofiya-qureshi-partys-state-unit-says-no-one-has-right-to-say-anything/article69574567.ece

[266] Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 1-2.

[267] Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies*, 201.

[268] Satinder Kumar , *In Pursuit of Peace: India-Pakistan Relations under six prime ministers*, (Penguin Random House, 2023), 321-322.

[269] Vali Nasr, interview by author, 21 November 2024

[270] Javid Husain, *Pakistan and a world in disorder* (Palgrave McMillan, 2016), 57-65.

[271] Dr. Humayun Khan & G. Parthasarathy, *Diplomatic Divide* (The Lotus Collection, 2004), 136.

[272] Ishtiaq Ahmed, *Jinnah: His successes, failures, and role in history* (Vanguard Books, 2021), 522.

[273] Jauhar Saleem, President Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad.

[274] Stephan Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Vanguard Books, 2005), 294.

[275] This was proposed by the Indian side informally in June 2008 at the Foreign Secretary level. However, since there was no agreement, it was not formally proposed by India. Details are given in Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, *Diplomatic Footprints: A Memoir* (Sang-e-meel Publications, 2021), 180.

[276] Stephan P. Cohen, *Shooting for the Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 53.

[277] Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2019: A concise history, Fifth Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 366.

[278] Manpreet Sethi, "India's Nuclear Doctrine: The Basis for Credible Deterrence," *Air Power Journal*, Summer 2007, https://capsindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Manpreet-Sethi-3.pdf

[279] In a statement of Pakistan's nuclear command authority on 9 September 2015, the term full spectrum deterrence was used, which essentially was meant to convey the message that Pakistan would wish to deter all forms of aggression by India, including conventional or nuclear. This was a response to conventional asymmetry as well as to deter all forms of aggression.

[280] Stephan P. Cohen, *Shooting for the Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 159.

[281] Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, *Diplomatic Footprints: A Memoir* (Sang-e-meel Publications, 2021), 200-203.

[282] "Glass half-full: The Promise of Regional trade in South Asia," *World Bank*, December 5, 2018, https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/12/05/pakistan-could-boost-trade-with-south-asia-eight-fold

[283] Javid Husain, *Pakistan and a world in disorder* (Palgrave McMillan, 2016), 65.

[284] Hussain, *Pakistan and a world in Disorder*, 63.

[285] Raja Amer Iqbal, interview by author, November 25, 2024

[286]Khurram Dastgir, Interview by the author, 7 July 2025

[287] "Blood and Water Cannot Flow Together: India's Attempt to Start a Water War", *Jinnah Institute*, 30 April 2025, https://jinnah-institute.org/feature/blood-and-water-cannot-flow-together/

[288] Ronan Farrow, *War on Peace: The end of diplomacy and the decline of American influence* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2018), 97.

[289] S. M. Burke, *Mainsprings of Indian and Pakistani Foreign Policies* (University of Minnesota Press, 1974), 55.

[290] Burke, *Indian and Pakistani Foreign Policies*, 48.

[291] Stephan Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, (Vanguard Books, 2005), 63.

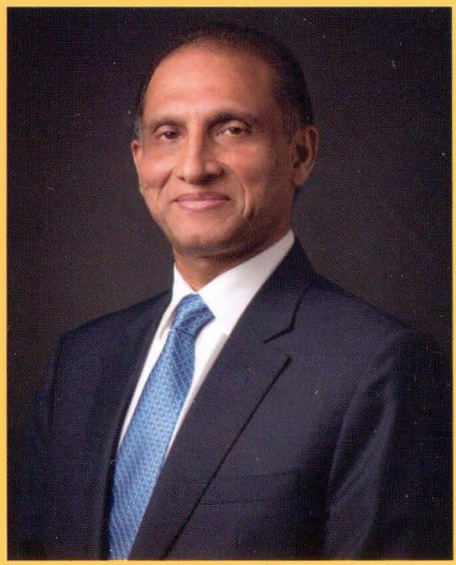
[292] Stephan P. Cohen, *Shooting for the Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 159.

[293] Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, *Diplomatic Footprints: A Memoir* (Sang-e-meel Publications, 2021), Chapters 13-18 and 29.

[294] "Jurisdictions No Longer Subject to Increased Monitoring by the FATF," *FATF*, 21 October 2022, https://www.fatf-gafi.org/content/fatf-gafi/en/publications/High-risk-and-other-monitored-jurisdictions/Increased-monitoring-october-2022.html

[295] Divya A, "Jaishankar: Era of Uninterrupted Dialogue with Pakistan is Over," *The Indian Express*, 31 August 2024, https://indianexpress.com/article/india/era-uninterrupted-dialogue-pakistan-over-eam-s-jaishankar-9541417/

[296] Prime Minister Modi remarked in a public gathering in Gujarat that "the youth of Pakistan should step forward, live a life of peace, eat your bread or else my bullet is there (... *sukh chain ki zindagi jiyo, roti khao, warna meri goli to hai hi*...)".



Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry has served as a member of the Foreign Service of Pakistan for 37 years. He served as the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan from 2013-17. His last diplomatic assignment was as Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States of America. He also served as Ambassador of Pakistan to the Netherlands, Foreign Office Spokesman, and Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York. As Director General for relations with South Asia, and later as Foreign Secretary, he remained closely associated with India-Pakistan peace process. After his retirement from the Foreign Service, Ambassador Chaudhry served as the Director General of Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad for over four years. Presently, he is Chairman of Sanober Institute Islamabad, a private sector think tank. He has authored three books and numerous research articles, including his memoir 'Diplomatic Footprints' that discusses the intricacies of foreign policy making in Pakistan.

IQBAL FORUM

PAKISTAN-INDIA RELATIONS | Fractured Past Uncertain Future

Bound by a fractured past and facing an uncertain future, the relationship between Pakistan and India has been defined more by mistrust than by meaningful engagement. The May 2025 military confrontation marked yet another inflection point, a chilling reminder that the true cost of conflict is not measured in missiles or summits, but in the opportunities lost for generations to come. Deterrence may have prevented a full-blown conflict, but the confrontation further widened the diplomatic gulf between the two neighbours.

Since 1947, India has sought a more prominent role in regional and global affairs, and has often viewed Pakistan as a challenge to its regional assertiveness. Under the leadership of the Modi-led BJP, this approach has assumed a higher intensity, with national security and identity-based narratives featuring more prominently in domestic politics. Critics argue that such dynamics have complicated diplomatic outreach and reinforced existing tensions between the two nuclear-armed states.

From Pakistan's perspective, the lack of substantive dialogue on the Kashmir dispute lies at the heart of mutual distrust and acrimony, and is the chief obstacle to improved relations. India, on the other hand, cites cross-border terrorism as a primary concern and a precondition for re-engagement, while Pakistan has raised concerns about Indian involvement in destabilizing activities in Pakistan.

Despite the stalemate, pathways toward cooperation remain possible—if both sides demonstrate the political will to pursue them. A shift away from zero-sum thinking and toward a framework based on mutual respect could offer opportunities for peaceful coexistence. Achieving such a transformation would require both countries to look beyond entrenched nationalist narratives and focus instead on building a relationship grounded in stability, mutual respect, and long-term regional prosperity. This book is an endeavour to reimagine this troubled relationship, worn thin by time and turmoil.

PAKISTAN-INDIA RELATIONS
ISBN: 978-969-662-622-0
Rs.1995.00

Visit
bookcorner.shop

bookcorner
BookCornerJlm
bookcornerjhelum
bookcornershowroom
info@bookcorner.com.pk