

# Pakistan and India: Is Peace Possible?

Written by Ejaz Hussain

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EJAZ HUSSAIN, DEC 2 2015

Pakistan and India relations have been analyzed largely from a realist perspective. The existing body of literature has marked the centrality of territorial issues such as Kashmir, Sir Creek. Nonetheless, there are historical events such as Liaquat-Nehru Pact (1950), Indus Waters Treaty (1960), Simla Agreement (1972), Lahore Declaration (1999), 'Lahore-Delhi Bus Service and, most recently, "Cricket diplomacy", which on the one hand, exposes limits of realism (Chopra 1992: 92-197; Sattar 1997: 62-74; Amin 2000; Singh 2007) and, on the other, urges one to explain such cooperative initiatives from an altogether different perspectives. This article, is an attempt in this regard as it seeks to approach Pakistan-India relations by the use of neoliberalism.

Neo-liberalism is built upon the assumption that states need to develop strategies and forums for cooperation over a whole set of new issues and areas. The fundamental foreign policy problem for any policy maker is to construct a policy that allows the state to gain the maximum benefit for its international exchanges while minimising the negative costs...states simply cannot avoid engaging in relations with others. In the modern world autarky is not an option. Furthermore, while some members of the international system will experience far greater difficulties than others in either exploiting or coping with this interconnectedness, all will experience some sense of 'not being in control' of their own destiny. It is this combination of interconnectedness, plus loss of control, that is the hallmark of interdependence and leads states to seek cooperation with others. (Steans *et al* 2010:42)

The aforementioned contrasts with the core assumptions of both classical realism and neorealism. Classical realism tends to essentialize anarchy at the top of the global political order whereas neorealism replaces it with hegemony. Nonetheless, neoliberal literature, by and large, provides for inter-state cooperation 'after hegemony' (Keohane 1984:52-53). Since the relations between Pakistan and India have been viewed largely from a classical realism perspective, as it has already been mentioned, neoliberalism, which is based on the rational choice theory, is deemed empirically applicable to the case of those countries' bilateral relations. The following sections of the article will be an attempt in this respect.

### Between Wars and Wishes

Pakistan's stated principles for foreign policy during the formative phase were solidarity with the Islamic world and peaceful relations with its neighbours (Rizvi 1993:12-14). Nevertheless, before Pakistan could establish ties with its neighbours, India and Pakistan engaged each other militarily over Kashmir in October 1947. The Kashmir war enabled, for example, the Pakistani civil-military elite to reinforce an anti-India rhetoric at state and societal level (Haqqani 2005:28). On its part, the Indian state too believed in realpolitik vis-à-vis Kashmir. With respect to Pakistan's India policy in the post-war period, the former made some efforts to normalize with the latter. In this regard, Liaquat-Nehru Pact, signed on 8 April 1950, was significant for more than one reason. The Pact emphasised on the creation of atmosphere in which the two countries could resolve their differences.

The foregoing, on the one hand, highlights cooperation between the warring states and, on the other, it exposes the limits of realism. Nevertheless, despite the signing of the Pact, rhetoric prevailed as Karachi started tilting towards the Western bloc whereas Delhi was emerging as a non-aligned state. Unsurprisingly, Pakistan signed a Mutual Defence Assistance Treaty with the US in May 1954 and subsequently entered into SEATO and CENTO (Cheema 2002:58-60). Nonetheless, during the early Cold War period, Pakistan did not face any grave security threats from

## **Pakistan and India: Is Peace Possible?**

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anywhere. Indeed, in 1958-59, Ayub Khan gave vent to entering into a security pact with India. However, the move was restrained by Rawalpindi's Cold War commitments. Nonetheless, Pakistan did succeed to interact with India meaningfully. The two states signed the Indus Waters Treaty in 1960.

Despite the foregoing, and given the cease-fire in Kashmir in 1949, minor incidence of skirmishes across the border and the Line of Control (LoC) became a norm. However, 'the tension between the two countries did not burst into a large scale war until April 1965' that morphed into Rann of Kuch (Rizvi 2000:139). However, before the conflict escalated to other parts of the two states, India and Pakistan agreed to cease fire.

However, after the military de-escalation, the Pakistani side opted, in August 1965, for military operations in Gibraltar and Grand Slam in Kashmir with an explicit objective to annex the India-led Kashmir. However, Pakistan failed in this attempt due to the non-response of Kashmiris, the Indian retaliation, a change of command at acritical juncture, poor organization, lack of coordination, and poor planning. The war lasted for 17 days. Quite strangely, India did not cross the East Pakistan border (Khan 1993:234). Quite contrary to classical realism, which emphasizes on military power and its application to achieve hardcore objective in an anarchic world order, cooperative instinct prevailed and the two states signed a declaration not to use force, and settle their disputes through peaceful means. Moreover, they agreed to withdraw their troops the position prior the conflict.

However, peace making proved temporary as the two sides entered into another military conflict in East Pakistan in early 1971. In this respect, the Pakistani military had already seen the Indian hand in its East problem because of the hijack of an Indian plane in Pakistan in March 1971. Consequently, India had already prevented Pakistani planes, both civil and military, from using its air space. In addition, an explicit Indian involvement was witnessed when a formal war started on 22 November in East Pakistan between the two states. India had ostensibly opted to rescue Mukti Bahini which was struggling against the military operation for the past six months. Thus, as a result of the war, the Pakistan, in the absence of any military support from its allies, had no choice than to accept a de facto independent state of Bangladesh. The foregoing though is explained by realists, the post-war interaction between Indian and Pakistan is left unexplained.

### **Cooperation amid Conflict**

The Bhutto government was able to negotiate with Delhi the terms of the Simla Agreement in 1972 which as a result led to India releasing more than ninety thousand prisoners of war. Furthermore, the two states agreed to resume their diplomatic relations (Hussain 2013:203). What is argued here is realism failure to explain peace-initiation, the negotiations and the Simla agreement between the two states in the post-war period. Alternatively, the Pakistani government at place at that time, considering Pakistan was a weak state, thought it rational to normalize its relations with India post-1971 to minimize the short-to-long term economic and human cost. India, on the other hand, wanted to avoid the involvement of the Cold War superpowers in South Asia.

In the following decade, Pakistan and India did avoid warfare. Though the Kashmir issue was invoked forcefully by the end of the Cold War, the two states thought it rational not to transform Siachin (1984) and Brasstacks (1987) into an all-out war. Paradoxically, General Zia, the self-acclaimed defender of Islam, himself chose to watch a cricket match in India than to declare war against the 'Hindu' enemy. This also highlights the weaknesses in the applicability of realism on the Pakistan-India foreign relations.

In light of the foregoing, it can be reasonably maintained that though Pakistan continued to project India as an enemy and vice versa, in reality, the two states never fought any war during the Bhutto Government and the Zia-led military regime (1977-88); the same comes true to Benazir Bhutto governments (1988-90, 1993-1996) and Nawaz Sharif government (1990-1993). Interestingly, during the analysed period, one can cite cases of cooperation such as the Simla Agreement, 'Cricket Diplomacy', and the Benazir-Rajiv talks that mark cooperation than conflict between the two states.

### **From Kargil to Cricket**

## **Pakistan and India: Is Peace Possible?**

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Nawaz Sharif formed a government after the 1997 elections. His vision of Pakistan's foreign relations was based on economic cooperation with other countries including neighboring India. In this respect, India's Prime Minister visited Pakistan in February 1999 when India and Pakistan signed the Lahore Declaration. This was, by all means, a major breakthrough in the bilateral relations of the two states. Though the two states were somehow able to melt the ice, the Pakistani military, which believes in a revisionist regional order, opted to permanently harm the normalization process by declaring war in Kargil (Siddiqi 2015). However, when the clandestine operation transformed into India-Pakistan war by mid-1999, the situation got out of hand. Ultimately, the military's strategic and general public's concerns were perceived by Sharif to be politically and strategically costly for Pakistan. Hence, Sharif saw a way-out by seeking the US mediation. Consequently, one sees that the two states took the international input seriously and preferred a de-escalation and subsequent end to the war. However, Kashmir's status quo remained.

Nevertheless, the fall-outs of Kargil persisted regarding the civil-military relations in Pakistan. The Kargil war was cognized differently by Sharif and the military. Ultimately, the Musharraf-led military was able to dismiss the Sharif government through a coup in October 1999 (Nawaz 2008: 525). Paradoxically, general-cum-president Musharraf made a historic witnessed visit to India in July 2001. The way the military tried to normalize with India in the post-coup period is an obvious indication of a non-military approach towards resolution of bilateral issues. Moreover, Musharraf's position over Kashmir also registered a sea-change (Hussain 2006).

Nevertheless, Pakistan could not resolve mutual issues with India under Musharraf largely due to mutual misgivings especially between the bureaucracies of the two states. Even the SAARC was seen as a form to express peripheral concerns. The structure of mistrust is so consolidated between the two states that in the post-Musharraf period, the efforts of Zardari-led government (2008-2013) bore little fruit in the wake of Mumbai attacks. With respect to the latter, India under the Congress-led government took a serious view of the attack on its sovereignty. Despite pressure from the rightist media and political parties to 'surgically' attack Pakistan, the Indian state, however, acted quite responsibly and rationally given the nuclear capability of the two states. Moreover, the political and strategic elite of both India and Pakistan availed a regional and international forum, to talk and move forward. Consequently, the Delhi-Lahore Bus Service resumed after 26/11. This further marks the explanatory utility of neoliberal perspective on security and economic cooperation in and around South Asia.

In addition, during their previous governments, both India and Pakistan agreed to ease their visa regime. Mutual direct trade activity, though at a low-scale, could also be witnessed at the Wagha-Atari border. However, it is the present Pakistani government led by Nawaz Sharif that has again viewed India as a huge market. In this respect, Shahbaz Sharif's visit to India, in December 2013, to watch the *Kabaddi* final between Pakistan and Indian was significant as it offered an opportunity to talk peace and trade.

## **Pakistan and India: Is Peace Possible?**

Since 2013, the two countries' armies have indulged in cross-firing at the Line of Control and Working Boundary followed by discontinuation of high-level diplomacy by India in the context of Pakistan's high commissioner's meeting with the Kashmir-based Hurriyat leadership in 2014. Owing to the BJP's stance on Kashmir, the bilateral relations got further strained in terms of expansion and intensification of skirmishes at the LoC and Working Boundary.

Nevertheless, the two states' leadership acted rationally by not waging another war. Importantly, diplomatic services continued and the Delhi-Lahore and Sri Nagar-Muzafarabad Bus Service along with limited bilateral trade via Wahga-Attari, continued. Moreover, in early 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called his Pakistani counterpart and invoked 'Cricket diplomacy' that culminated in the visit of Indian foreign secretary to Pakistan in March 2015. However, as per the oscillatory nature of India-Pakistan relations, the Indian PM, after a couple of months, came down hard on the proposed China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and termed it 'unacceptable'. To make matters worse, in June 2015 in Dhaka, PM Modi invoked anti-Pakistani sentiments while referring to the India's role in the partition of Pakistan in December 1971.

Nonetheless, Modi seems to be aware of his economic and strategic cost of an anti-Pakistan mantra. Thus having

# Pakistan and India: Is Peace Possible?

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realized the hollowness of the India's current foreign policy towards Pakistan, Narendra Modi once again phoned his counterpart on 17 June 2015 in order to extend Ramadan greetings and consequently to give another chance to diplomacy at the Ufa summit. Noticeably the core issue of Kashmir was sub-mentioned in the text as one cannot ignore the regional framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Rather, Indian and Pakistani leadership should learn from regional cooperative frameworks such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) and the expanded Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The South Asian civil-military elite should realize the fact that the emerging world order is grounded in economic, not military, regionalism.

Last but not the least, although the conflict side of India-Pakistan relations reigned high during the recent UN General Assembly session and the prime ministerial visits to the US this year, Delhi and Islamabad are, quite paradoxically, cooperating in terms of small-scale trade, low-level public contact and hosting of bilateral sports events. The recent wrestling event between India and Pakistan – held in India and Pakistan respectively- is a case in point. Finally, having been exposed to the non-utility of anti-Muslims, and anti-Pakistan, rhetoric during the Bihar elections, the Modi administration has an opportunity to revisit its Pakistan policy. To make and sustain peace and prosperity, Pakistan and India need to emphasize on rational choice rather than realism similar to the recent example of China and Taiwan.

Pakistan and India have lot to share with and learn from. Thus, based on the cooperative character of their relationship, Islamabad and Delhi need to talk and negotiate the terms of peace and stability. Policy makers in both the states need to revisit the philosophical foundations of foreign policy discourse. The present and future international relations are gradually tilting towards inter-state economic cooperation under regional cooperative regimes such as the SCO and BRICS. Pakistan and India need to negotiate both core and non-core issues to move in the direction of sustained economic relations bilaterally and multilaterally. After all, more than half of the population in both India and Pakistan is living below the poverty line. They need bread rather than bullets.

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# Pakistan and India: Is Peace Possible?

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**Ejaz Hussain** holds PhD in Political Science from Heidelberg University (2010). In addition, he obtained M.Sc in International Relations from Quaid-i-Azam University (2003) and an M.A. in Asian Studies from Lund University, Sweden (2006). Moreover, as a former DAAD fellow he was affiliated with South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, where his research focused on civil-military relations in Pakistan. Dr Hussain has authored *Military Agency, Politics and the State in Pakistan* (2013) along with contribution to peer-reviewed journals. Moreover, Dr Ejaz has contributed his opinion to Daily Times, The Friday Times, Newline and the BBC. He has previously worked at COMSATS, Islamabad, and Forman Christian College, Lahore. Currently, he is the head of department of social sciences, Iqra University, Islamabad. He tweets @ejazbhatti.