



Review Paper

Changing Equations of India-Pakistan Relations: Unresolved Kashmir Dispute as a Decider Factor

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Abstract

Since the independence and violent partition of two South Asian countries India and Pakistan in 1947, relations between these two have been inflexible, conflictual, distrustful and very risky political stand off in global context in general and in South Asia particular. Moreover, both are closest and bordering neighbors with close literary, social and cultural bonds but remained at great distance from each other. It is doubtless that there are many reasons and factors behind such turbulence situations and unstabilized political environment but Kashmir issue remains the primary factor and problematic for the development of two nations. However, India and Pakistan have always been caught in enduring conflicts, but in recent time, there are certain changes took place due to the change in the leadership and misadventures/infiltration/proxy war in Kashmir valley as their relations seem to be bitterer than ever before which give the space to international organizations to intervene in their disputes and state of affairs. In such situation, Kashmir is being seen as decider factor to Indo-Pak relations. In such context, this paper is an attempt to touch various issues especially Kashmir dispute between these two nations including the understanding of changing nature of their relations for many years while highlighting the role of external powers which would contribute to the transitory nature of their dynamic relations to draw analytical inferences. It also tries to explore the future of Indo-Pak relations while examining attempts made in the direction to normalize their relations.

Keywords: India, Pakistan, UN, cooperation and conflicts.

Introduction

Since, India got its independence and partitioned by British government between India and Pakistan in 1947. The relationship between these two countries has been mostly unstable with ever growing distrust on each other. Both countries have fought wars in the South Asia region at different fronts and continue to face problems like border terrorist activities, infiltrations, low intensity wars and intelligence/spy operations that seem unstoppable as both will continue to consider each other as an untrustworthy enemy¹. It is seen that after the end of cold war, it has become one of the most dangerous and volatile regions in the international politics for which several reasons are responsible such as pre-independence hostility between the Muslim League and the Indian national Congress and bloodletting riots in post independence period at the time of partition. Moreover, disputes over waters flowing from India to Pakistan and finally, Kashmir which remains a subject of conflicts and bone of skirmishes between these two countries². However, there are many changes in the field of technology, global political economy and social networks took place particularly after the disintegration of Soviet Union. With this, the controversial and disappointing relationship between India and Pakistan has worsened as both have become nuclear states. The argument of this study is that fluctuation in

relationship between both countries will continue because both have now nuclear weapons which could have unpredictable consequences for South Asia region. For this, the paper analyzes the historical relationship between India and Pakistan including wars and disputes particularly Kashmir issue which would contribute to the transitory nature of their relations to draw analytical inferences. In recent years, infiltration, proxy war and civilian attacks by Pakistan are increasing which is taking both states far away from the negotiation table. So many times, Pakistan took resort to International Organizations to solve the matters which in turn creates space for external powers as well. On the face of it, the study will discuss disputes resolving attempts and the role of external powers while looking forward to Indo-Pakistan's future relations.

Background

It is true that India's history is full foreign invasions and faced their long succession due to its attractive commercial potential which had also become interest of Europeans (the British, the French, the Dutch and the Portuguese) on large scale in the 17th century. British came first time in India as a trading company which was known as East India Company later increased its power influence in South Asia resulted into the disintegration and deterioration of the Mughal Empire³. The victory the

company in the Plessey battle (1857) and Buxar battle (1764) laid the foundation of British Raj India after it took political control over the India's eastern state Bengal and Bihar. Gradually, it took over the control over the whole administration of Indian subcontinent over the next hundred years⁴. In 1858, British Crown took the control of Indian administration from the East India Company as a result the British Government directly became the sovereign ruler of India⁵. It is doubtless that the British Government introduced several reforms in the Indian administration through many Acts such as Indian Council Act 1861, 1892 and 1909, Government of India Act 1919 and Government of India Act 1935 to win over the minds of Indian people and Congress leaders⁶. However, it was noticed that Indians, in practice, realized their feelings of nationalism during the British period as a result of oppressive rule by British Government which led to the emergence of nationalism among Indians⁷. Thus, the British government started exploiting Indian economy as well as Indian peoples.

Before the formation of India and Pakistan as independent states and the end of British regime in 1947, there were many changes took place in the background history of India and Pakistan that caused the partition of India. The Indian National Congress (INC) was founded in 1885 which primarily led the freedom struggle for India spearheaded by prominent political figures such as M. K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru based on the concept of secularism and harmony between all religions particularly between Hindus and Muslims. Nevertheless, disappointment within Muslims due to the fear of living under the Hindu dominant state resulted in the creation of the All India Muslim league in 1906 spearheaded by influential leaders like Allama Muhammad Iqbal and M. A. Jinnah who did not believe in Hindu-Muslim Harmony as it could create hostility between the both communities. All this led the demand of the creation of new state with name Pakistan⁸. It is evident that the divisive policies of British Government had started its strategy to counter nationalistic fervor by making a split between Hindus and Muslims in the wake of growing influence of Hindu nationalist movement so that they could reduce the chances of potential forces against them in the early 1900s. For this purpose, they started supporting All India Muslim League party with an objective to represent the Muslim interests. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was the leader of party. It is seen that the differences between opinions of two then leaders Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru and Muslim leader Jinnah also led to the demand of separate state by Muslim League. However, this was totally against the idea of Nehru for making a socialist planned economy and achieving national unity of India through the process of centralization of power. On the other hand, M.A. Jinnah was a strong believer of the Two Nation Theory for having a Muslim nation in order to save Muslim minority in the future which sowed the seeds of resentment and hostility between these two communities resulted in bloodshed partition⁸ and divided India between two parts.

Thus, the constant differences and lack of coordination between the opinions of both big parties had forced political leadership to

be agreed upon the partition on sectarian lines as a final solution of this conflict. Consequently, Muslim League removing the prefix All India establishes separate Government in the new Pakistan whereas Indian National Congress formed its Government in India.

Kashmir dispute as a decider factor of India-Pakistan relations and the role of external dynamics – an analysis:

It is clear from above that today's society is always product of its past history and decides its future destiny. India and Pakistan both are outcome of such intense rivalries, several forces like socio-political and religious which have history of unique relations in the international politics when slavery rule of British raj came to an end and India got its independence in 1947⁷. In 1947 the British government had left India and Pakistan with many disputes, skirmishes and number of military conflicts and they, as of now, have fought four wars in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999⁹. In this connection, the study looks into their foreign policies to utilize the rivalry between then the two great powers for strengthening their power. For this purpose, Pakistan had tried to accommodate US in its foreign policy with its anti-India strategy. As a result, India also started to seek aid from the Soviet Union. After the cold war, there are certain changes took place in the in this perspectives. The external powers are also responsible for exploiting their relations.

However, this partition created the environment of fear between these two countries because Pakistan's fear was that of India strong force as a threat which could do far better than her. On the other hand, India had fear of Pakistan's growing communal ideological threats as it was claiming the ethnic superiority of Muslim community and imperfect partition especially when it claimed for Hyderabad, Kashmir and Junagarh with Muslim majority areas¹⁰. Because, at the time of partition and independence of the administrative distribution of their provinces was different from as it is today. The British government left two choices to the local rulers of the princely states, either they could join one of the two new independent dominions or are free to be remained independent entities¹¹.

Water division was another source of dispute between India and Pakistan relations. The history of India-Pakistan Water conflicts traces back to the partition of the country into two parts namely India and Pakistan in 1947. Due to geographical partition Indus river system has also been distributed among two nations where India enjoys the position of being an Upstream and Pakistan as downstream country. The Indus Rivers system comprises of six rivers, three of them are western rivers; Indus, Jhelum and Chenab and other three are eastern rivers; Sutlej, the Beas and the Ravi¹². There were several issues in the sharing of Indus and its other rivers water, so in 1960 Indus Treaty brokered by World Bank was signed by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistan President Mohammad Ayub Khan because Pakistani feel that India is upstream country and source of the rivers are in India, it could potentially create the problems due to lack of water like droughts and famines in their country. With

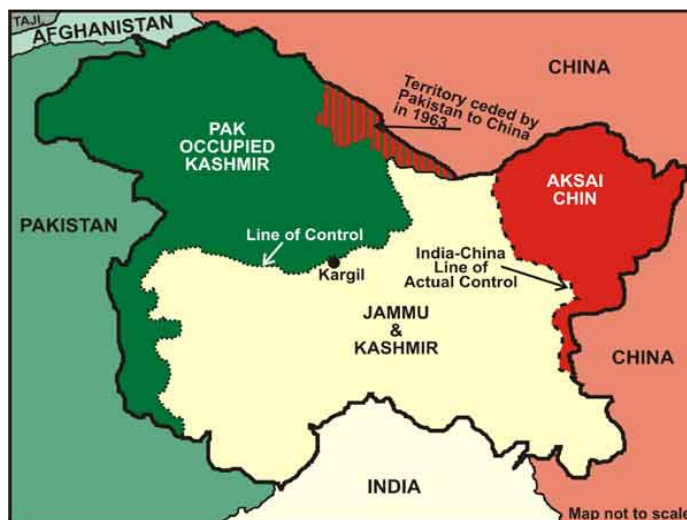
few exceptions, The treaty gives right to India to use all of the waters of the eastern rivers and their tributaries up to the boundary area of Pakistan on the other hand, Pakistan has right over use of the western rivers¹³. But issues such as the Nimoo Bazgo project have been resolved through diplomacy to the date¹¹.

Soon after the end of World War two, the world was divided into two blocks i. the USA led Western Block and ii. the Soviet Union led Communist Block which also influenced the foreign policy of new independent South Asian countries India and Pakistan. In such an environment of cold war, India did not support any of two power blocks and decided to keep itself away from them though it was viewed in the Western assessment that India remained sympathetic towards the Soviet led communist power block during the first five decades of its independence and started Non-Alignment Movement with the cooperation of some of the then great leaders of Egypt, Indonesia and Yugoslavia¹⁴. However, Kashmir has been a notable source of India and Pakistan conflicts. During this time, India and Pakistan have been engaged in various dispute, proxy wars and low intensity conflicts. On its sectarian lines, Pakistan started compelling Maharaja Kashmir to join Pakistan in 1948 that was undecided territory between India and Pakistan. Pakistan invaded Kashmir after it failed in negotiation with Kashmir Maharaja. In response to this, Maharaja took resort to India and Indian Military attacked on Pakistan and also went to United Nations' Secretary General on December 30, 1947 to lodge complaint against Pakistan's unprovoked attack. In this connection, United Nation's Commission on India and Pakistan (UNCIP) was appointed which resulted in an agreement to the ceasefire line 1949 and Pakistan got hold of 5,000 square miles territory of Indian and virtually one million people came under its contro^{7,10}. Apart from, Kashmir dispute remained part of daily newspapers and a long-standing issue between two countries which is supposed to be the decider factor to set the future relationships between India and Pakistan.

Kashmir as an unresolved issue and Decider Factor

It is doubtless that Kashmir has always been a disputed territory between India and Pakistan since their independence. However, Kashmir has always been a major issue of India-Pakistan disputes and contentions. During the partition time, JandK remained independent territory. Newly independent state Pakistan had started infiltration into this territory as it was Muslim majority area claimed by Pakistan. Kashmir decided to merge with India when it found itself in trouble with Pakistan¹⁰. Since then, Kashmir has been an integral part of Indian Union and also has strategic significance for the country. After the first war over Kashmir in 1947-48, India and Pakistan signed a ceasefire agreement on January 1, 1949¹⁵. In spite of first war, India and Pakistan went to war over Kashmir again in 1965, and the resulting line of control divided old Jammu and Kashmir into four political units: i. Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir Valley (Indian-occupied Kashmir; ii. Azad Kashmir (Pakistan-

occupied Kashmir); iii. the Northern Area, administered by Pakistan; and iv. Aksai Chin, controlled by China¹⁶ as the Map 1 is showing. Beside this Indian and Chinese troops clashed in the 1962 Sino-Indian War, leading to the swift annexation by the Chinese of Aksai Chin and the demarcation of the line of Actual Control between Pakistan, India and the Trans-Karakoram tract, now also claimed by china¹⁵ always worried India.



Source: Indian Defence Review

Map-1

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and India Occupied Kashmir

India had put matter of dispute before the United Nations in January 1948 and called for international intervention in the matter¹⁶. In spite of this, UNSC's (United Nations Security Council) adopted resolutions in 1948, 1949 and 1957 respectively, asking for giving the right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir through a plebiscite to decide their destiny choosing to merge with India or Pakistan. Ironically, mainly due to India's unwillingness and lack of sincerity, the implementation of these resolutions still remains unfulfilled¹⁷ which could not bear fruits for both countries.

The denial of the right of self - determination promised by the UN gradually resulted in growing dissatisfaction and alienation amongst the Kashmiri population against India. Consequently, this intensified the freedom movement in India-occupied Kashmir in 1987, followed by its gradual transition into militancy as a reaction to Indian repression. India put allegations on Pakistan to support the movement which were denied by Pakistan by saying that struggle was purely indigenous and result of India's repressive policies and denial of the right of self -determination to the people of Kashmir¹⁷. Thus, it is believed that the UN resolution on Kashmir is no longer important because the plebiscite is not in Kashmiri peoples' interest in accordance with the European Union which was also observed by the Hurriyat Conference in 2003¹¹. The Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf on December 5, 2006, told an Indian TV channel that if India accepted some of its peace proposals and

withdraw troops from the territory, Pakistan would give up the idea of claiming over Kashmir and even ready to the resolution of the UN regarding Kashmir which was not acceptable to India¹¹.

Thus, it is evident that Kashmir is an unresolved and longstanding conflict between the two South Asian nations. Recently, in October 2014 Pakistani troops spread the tension in Kashmir by killing at least four civilians which made the local people homeless as they have to leave for safe places¹⁸. Thus these types of events make the situation worst and instability in the valley has always left the Kashmiri peoples divided and uncertain about their future.

Role of External Powers

The influence of external powers such as China, Russia and western powers including the USA in South Asia region remained a matter of discussion because intense rivalry between two big South Asian powers India and Pakistan always attracted the external power to take advantageous from their rivalry. Therefore, Indo-Pak bitter relations were exploited by external powers by many times during the period of cold war politics. After partition, Pakistan started to counter the suspected Indian threat by engaging herself in military strength build up and maintaining relations with great powers which came on screen when it concluded a Military Security Pact with the US in 1954 which is considered as a dramatic change in the South Asia Geopolitics. The US used Pakistan in its containment policy of communism for which it provided Pakistan with first high performance aircraft including F-86 Sabres and 12 F-104 interceptors and hundreds of World War I and Korean War vintage tanks which was against the interests of India and regional bilateral issues. Prime Minister Nehru perceived the involvement of external forces could result into Cold War politics in South Asia region¹⁰.

In response to this, India had started purchasing arms and ammunitions from anti-American forces. In early years of its independence, India got almost fifteen Ordinary Factories from the British India in 1947 which were outdated and useless. Nevertheless, the UK was the first priority in the list of weapon suppliers and later France because it was easy for India to replace the spare parts from the original source which was believed to be the attribution to its NAM (Non-aligned Movement) Policy of keeping away from joining any alliance either with the USA or USSR^{19,10}. A sudden change came in South Asia's political stability in May 1960 when the Soviet Union Russia shot down U-2 spy plane of America which had taken off from Pakistan base in accordance with some report and resulted in issuance of protest notes by Soviets because the USSR felt that it had a direct threat on their security. It is also believed that the USSR had started taking interests in the region, as a result India and Soviet came closer to each other¹⁰ and India had accepted to purchase arms from the USSR in response to the US arms aid given to Pakistan.

Thus, views of most of senior officials from the West were not favourable for India which made mostly Indian politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals suspicious of the US unusual reaction and intentions on every issue between India and Pakistan in South Asia. Even, during the several discussions on the issue of Kashmir Britain, the US, UN and other western powers supported Pakistan's point of view because of its alliance with SEATO, CENTO military pacts. Not surprisingly, the US was aware of Pakistan's warfare and intentions towards India and always convinced that its weapon supply to Pakistan is not being used against it that has been proved wrong for several times including three wars in 1965, 1971 and 1999 Kargil as it has always helped Pakistan against the Indian interests even today in early twenty first century¹⁴. The second front against India is China who has been supportive of Pakistan on Kashmir issue. China has border demarcation problems with India which led to war in 1962 between them. One side, China is of view that developing its own nuclear weapons is the sovereign right of any nation state in the world but on the other side its reaction was not good when India conducted nuclear tests and wanted the US to take hard steps against this¹⁰. It is doubtless that India, Pakistan and China are the three countries equipped with Nuclear WMD. Pakistan is the only country who insisted for their first use option to complicate the situation but India and China has no such intention and ready for retaliatory usage of these weapons if they are being attacked. China had provided a design of nuclear weapons and also facilitated their testing for satisfying Pakistan's burning desire for an Islamic bomb. Thus, China has become Pakistan's largest supplier of conventional weapons including fighter plane. It is also seen that whenever Pakistan came under international pressure or underwent any problems it always tries to take resort its powerful friend countries like China and USA. It was evident when Pakistan went to China for assistance and advice after it felt pressure of Indian security forces¹⁴. Thus, growing relationship of Pakistan and China and China's increasing infiltration in Ladakh area has now become a matter of concern for India's security.

In context of Russia who always maintained friendly nature towards India has a great influence on Indo-Pak relations. The Indo-Soviet relations resulted into deterioration of China-Soviet and China-India relations. India started purchasing transport planes and helicopters in Indian currency from the USSR in the wake of Taliban uprisings in 1959. During the Sino-India war in 1962, Russia remained neutral as it was in difficult position either to support Communist state China or its democratic friend India. In such situation, the US took side of India against China and sent twelve C-130 Hercules transport planes with the troops for India which were helpful in carrying its army men and materials on the mountainous borders¹⁰. In this way, Russia kept its interest safe in both China and India being neutral.

During the 1965 Indo-Pak war, Russia played a role of peace maker which gave Soviet Russia opportunity to be exposed to

South Asia. The US did not intervene in this war as it was engaged in war with Vietnam. The war ended on 22nd September as a result of Tashkent agreement in which both agreed for making good relations in accordance with the UN charter to reach the pre-war positions. Nevertheless, none of two countries in real sense were happy with the Tashkent agreement due to their different opinions. On the whole, Soviet Union's delicate attempts to develop closeness with the Pakistan after Tashkent agreement remained unfavorable as the given agreement was not liked by Pakistan. Soon after, Pakistan's anti-Bengal policies (then East Pakistan) gave birth to 1971 war¹⁴. During the period of Indo-Pak war in 1971 arising out of Bangladesh liberation issue/East Pakistan, Russia assisted India after failing it to gain support from the US. Consequently, India had signed a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation with Soviet Union Russia which was shocking news for America due to the fear of expansion of Soviet Union in South Asia region and against America's proxy involvement in the war with selfish interests²⁰. Thus, differences in the supportive manners of superpowers in relation to Indo-Pak conflicts affected their relations to a great extent.

It is doubtless that defence expenditure increased tremendously soon after the war as both countries of the South Asian subcontinent started to give more importance to self reliance in armaments and weapons and accrued weapons from all sources available in the world. The US became big supplier of air-craft and air-field equipment to Pakistan to pursue the policy of containment of communism. India, on the other hand became big purchaser of sophisticated weapons from the former USSR. Consequently, Soviet Russia had made its presence in Afghanistan for making its influence in the South Asia region. Apart from this, Pakistan also received inferior weapons from China¹⁰. It is seen that, India has adopted a policy of non-alignment (NAM) and did not join any alliance and not accept American military aid with the US and Soviet Union. Under the system of planned economy, India did not open its economy to the US investment which was changed after it adopted policy of economic liberalization in 1991²¹. It is also noted that the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan did not much affect the shared interests between the US and Pakistan but now the US is more worried about the ever growing interest of China in the region which is inspired by military and economic factors. Similarly, relations between India and the US are also improving in the wake of economic development and liberalization of Indian economy as it could provide a big market for the US companies. Simultaneously, Russian policy in the region is also undergoing some changes as it started to develop its relations with Pakistan too in spite of its pledge to respect the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India²⁰. China is still supposed to be the major player in providing arms to the Pakistan as its dependency on the US arms reduced after the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

It is also seen that, in the recent years relations between India and China are moving towards normalization but its growing

relations with Pakistan in the field of defence is a major concern for India¹⁰. Thus, it creates the complex situation for India to maintain relations with China and Pakistan for regional stability.

Attempts to improve their relationships

There are several attempts have been made to improve their relationships in which both countries failed to build peace and cooperation in the region. Given below the Shimla agreement, Agra agreement and Lahore declaration are some of significant efforts which have been made in the direction to improve their relationships:

Tashkent Declaration: This agreement has already been discussed. It was peace agreement between India and Pakistan which was signed on January 10, 1966, as result of the Indo-Pak war of 1965. The great powers intervened into the agreement and pushed the both nations to a cease fire to bring peace in the region. However, the agreement was criticized in India because it did not contain any renunciation of guerrilla warfare in Kashmir or no-war pact^{11, 22}. Thus, discussions were unsuccessful and no result was achieved during the declaration.

Shimla Agreement: India and Pakistan signed Shimla agreement on July 2, 1972 and ratified by the parliament of both countries in Shimla, the capital city of Indian state Himachal Pradesh which was the result of Indo-Pak war in 1971 leading to the independence of Bangladesh (earlier East Pakistan). The agreement was concluded in order to end the conflict and confrontation which hindered their relations for making peaceful environment in the region. This agreement was also about to promote territorial integrity, political independence, sovereign equality and to respect national security of each other²³. However this agreement failed to prevent their armed conflicts when this agreement was violated by Pakistan during the Kargil War in 1999 and subsequent infiltration made by Pakistan in Indian Territory.

Lahore Declaration: It is a historical bilateral agreement between India and Pakistan's governments which is also called a second nuclear control treaty, signed on February 1999 and also ratified by the parliaments of both countries to overcome the historically strained the bilateral relations²⁴. It also added a joint commitment to take major steps towards the avoiding Kashmir conflict and other confidence building measures such as to avoid the misuse of nuclear weapons leading to nuclear war between two nations in the future. But outbreak of Kargil war in May 1999 further strained their relations which result in the violation of the treaty and exacerbated the doubts over their future relationships¹¹. Thus, the treaty also remained a subject of violation and showed the weak negotiation between both countries.

Agra Summit: This was a two days historic summit meeting between the leaderships of India and Pakistan which was held on July 14-16, 2001 in order to make proposal for resolving

their long standing issues, Kashmir issue, economic cooperation and military confidence particularly to reduce the threat nuclear arsenals and cross-border terrorism. However, the political dialogue failed collapsed because of the difference in the opinions and overzealously between the leadership from New Delhi (P.M. Atal Behari Vajpayee) and Islamabad (President Pervez Musharraf) over certain issues and the treaty remained unsigned²⁵. Thus, due to the absence of sincere talk, this attempt to improve relationship could not succeed.

Role of the United Nations in Resolving their Disputes: It is doubtless that United Nations has been playing a great role in resolving disputes between India and Pakistan since their partition. The UN adopted the resolution on January 5, 1949 in the wake of Indo-Pak war in 1947-48 and brokered cease-fire which ordered Pakistan to withdraw its regular/irregular forces and allowed India to preserve law and order in the state and maintain least amount of its forces. In this line, the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan was deployed for monitoring activities on the ceasefire line which is currently known as the Line of Control¹⁹. Thus, the UN played a decisive role to solve the conflict while following the international norms and the UN charter. The next Indo-Pak war took place in 1965 which is also called a second war over Kashmir after 1947, while following the Operation Gibraltar by Pakistan which was especially planned to penetrate Pakistani forces into the territory of Indian occupied Kashmir against the Indian rule. This war was also ended by the UN intervention while directing unconditional ceasefire orders and the subsequent decision taken on the occasion of Tashkent Declaration¹⁹. Thus, in this war Pakistan was defeated clearly by India as the UN intervened. The United Nations also directed for ceasefire and gave order to withdraw armed forces when India and Pakistan fought third Indo-Pak war in 1971 for which the resolution was introduced by then the US ambassador George H.W. Bush to the United Nations Security Council²⁶. However, it is seen that whenever any conflict occurred between India and Pakistan, most probably Pakistan ran to the United Nations for help. For example in recent infiltration by Pakistan in 2014, which India gave a counter response as a result Pakistan ran to the United Nations Military Observer Group (UNMOGIP, established by United Nations Security Council resolution) over the issue of Line of Control ceasefire violation by India and asked the UN to intervene into the matter. On this matter, India made a comment that UNMOGIP is losing its importance as it was earlier²⁷. It is also seen that many nations and scholar are of view that the issue should be left for the India and Pakistan and they should solve this cooperatively. Nevertheless, past history indicates that India and Pakistan cannot ignore the role of United Nations which continues facilitate uninterrupted peace and cooperation in the region.

Other Peace-building Measures: There is other peace and confidence building measures which have been adopted by the both countries in order to settle down their disputes and conflicts such as Delhi-Lahore Bus Service, Samjhauta Express,

SAARC regional cooperation, Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline (IPI), sports etc. However both countries failed in normalizing and strengthening relations due to their long standing rivalry and unresolved conflicts.

Analysis

It is doubtless that Indo-Pak relations have been undergoing difficulties and tragedies even after more than six decades of their partition/independence. To explore the possibilities of peace and cooperation between two countries remained a big challenge for India. It is also a well known fact that the rivalry between both is not in favour of anyone's advantage and cannot bear fruit. It is seen that confrontation and disputes between India and Pakistan influenced the regional stability and geopolitics as South Asia has become a hub of external powers' involvements/ interventions during the cold war politics as well as after the cold war era. The root causes of India Pakistan conflicts and confrontation are supposed to be its undemocratic partition, territorial disputes and communal antagonism on ethnic lines. Kashmir is believed to be the main source of confrontation between the two countries which is Muslim majority area as being claimed by Pakistan. This is why that non-state actors like terrorist groups are taking advantage of their conflicts. No doubt, several attempts have been taken to restore their relationships such as Tashkent Declaration, Shimla Summit, Lahore Declaration, Agra agreement, Lahore Bus services, Samjhauta Express, etc. and even at the Sports level but both countries remained unsuccessful to achieve their goals and still did not learn from their past. Though, the United Nations has been playing a good role but it needs to be more active in view of rapidly changing equations of Indo-Pak relationship. It is also observed that India and Pakistan are nuclear possessing states but they did not fight any nuclear war as of now as they understand that nuclear war cannot be the sole solution of their bilateral relations other than a big loss for both countries. Both, countries need to learn from the past history as they should avoid the biasness in their relations. It must be determined that India and Pakistan do not let external powers to exploit their relations.

Future of Indo-Pak relations

Both countries need to explore their common areas of interests to bring peace and stability in the region which is the first requirement for developing political-socio-cultural relations, trade and economic development as they have nuclear capability. Intermittent interruption arising out of the actions of non-state actors and fundamentalism can be checked in the region if both countries cooperate with each other by pursuing peace building measures to prevent the conflicts and restore the mutual confidence²⁸ which must be taken as a challenge by both nations.

How to establish a balance between the two nations is a big question in the region which, of course, can only be answered

through peaceful solution of Kashmir dispute as it has been a main source of contention and subject of zero sum game between the two countries since partition. It is also well understood that this is unlikely to be happened soon rather it is very easy to comment on this. It seems that election of Narendra Modi and Nawaz Sharif can be the turning point to Indo-Pak relations as Nawaz Sharif expressed his views on the occasion of Narendra Modi's inaugural ceremony that earnest hope in a brighter future between two nuclear-armed neighbors would normalize their relations and work in harmony²⁹. Even at the recent SAARC meeting, though they did not meet first due to some difference but in the end of SAARC summit both prime ministers met each other warmly. Nevertheless, it is not easy task to create cooperative environment between India and Pakistan as history tells that Pakistan always showed its unwillingness to cooperate with India and India, on the other hand, have been pursuing the strategy to answer the aggression with aggression³⁰. External factors could bring bad results because NATO withdraw from Afghanistan is giving space for India and Pakistan to increase their influence over there from strategically point of view. In such situation the United States could play a decisive role to create conducive environment for cooperation at least in the short run if it maintains the largest promising military presence in Afghanistan and prevents their growing competition²⁹ which is in the interest of maintaining stability in the region.

It is also worth mentioning in terms of energy shortage which both countries are facing very badly. If they take this as their common interest, there are some chances of cooperation²⁸ because both nations have great potential for developing trade relations in this context as they are close to energy rich regions like Central Asia and Middle East. India and Pakistan have signed a natural gas agreement which connects the South and Central Asia through the proposed TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) pipeline which could help India and Pakistan to meet their energy requirements²⁹. Overall, it can be said that future of India-Pakistan relations shall likely to be suffered until both nations come forward for cooperation, less antagonism and harmony.

Conclusion

Hence, it is concluded that the tension and conflicts are historical between India and Pakistan but can be solved through bilateral, multilateral and unilateral relations establishments and continue peaceful dialogue between both countries. However, it is difficult task to investigate the peaceful and confidence building solutions for two nuclear-armed powers in South Asia but Kashmir, due to its geo-strategic location, is going to be the decider factor of either normalizing or destabilizing Indo-Pak relations in the future. It is also evident that the conflictual situation and communal antagonism of the region create space for external powers who have been exploiting Indo-Pak disputes for their selfish interests not only during the cold war period but even today they are taking advantage of this situation because

after the end of cold war the US, Russia and China have experienced a great shift in their policies toward the region. In spite of this, until now several measures have been adopted to settle down and normalize Indo-Pak relations but nothing can be achieved successfully. In this way, if both nations want to achieve the desired situation in the region, they need mutual cooperation putting a stop to internal bottlenecks rather than relying on external factors. If it gets true, then it will be the golden period of South Asia History.

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