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India-Pakistan Relations: Problems and Solutions

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Abstract

India and Pakistan have many things common from the geographical, historical, cultural and economic point of view. Before 1947 both were one country. But after the partition the mutual relations between the two have not been cordial due to many factors. Some attempts have been made to improve the mutual relations but any concrete success could not be achieved. There are many problems like the Kashmir Issue, the river water disputes the China Issue, the terrorism problem, creation of Bangladesh, the Siachen Problem, the Nuclear issue etc. have strained the relations. Some solutions have been mentioned to improve the mutual relations.

KEYWORDS: India, Pakistan, problems, relations, solutions

Geographically, historically, culturally as well as economically no other two countries of the world have so much in common as India and Pakistan.¹ In fact the two constituted a single economic and political entity for many centuries before the partition in 1947.² Since 1947 the relations between the two countries have been persistently strained due to many factors.³ These factors and the problems have made the relations complex and hostile. After their independence the two countries have been involved in three major wars and an undeclared war and have been involved in various skirmishes and military standoffs.

Some attempts have also been made to improve the mutual relationship-particularly the Shimla agreement, the Agra Summit, the Lahore Summit and some other confidence building measures like the ceasefire agreements, the Delhi-Lahore bus service and the Samjhauta Express train. But due to many irritants and reasons the relations couldn't be improved much.

Main Problems in Mutual Relations

From 1947 to 2017 many factors caused the straining of relations between the two countries.

i. The Refugee Problem:

Immediately after the partition thousands of people were killed in mutual riots and thousands became homeless. They had to leave their respective motherland and move to other areas. Their resettlement caused the problem for both the countries. Each country blamed the other for this kind of situation and problem. The disputes regarding the properties of these people further worsened the situation.⁴

ii. The Distribution of River Waters:

Initially the two countries tried to amicably resolve the question of sharing the river waters and the Standstill Agreement was signed upon. The Indus Water Treaty of 1960 also tried to resolve the river water issue. The construction of the Ranjit Sagar Dam on the river Ravi in 2001 was also opposed by Pakistan and declared it as the violation of Indus Water Treaty.⁵

iii. Pakistan's Decision to Join Military Alliances:

Pakistan decided to join the military alliances like NATO and India strongly reacted to it. It will result in enormous supply of military equipment and modernization of Pakistan army, posing a serious threat to India's security. The armaments and military expansion in Pakistan necessitates for reaching repercussions in India.⁶

iv. The Pakistan's posing as the Spokesman of the Muslims in India:

The efforts on the part of Pakistan to pose as the spokesman of all the Muslims on the Indian Sub-continent has also greatly created tensions between the two countries. Pakistan has always tried to act as the champion of the Muslims in India and propagating that India was basically a Hindu state and the Muslims in India are being discriminated as second class citizens. It has tried to give even the usual problems between the two countries a communal colour.

v. The Growing Friendship between Pakistan and China:

The emerging closeness between Pakistan and China is also causing problems for India. Pakistan has surrendered a large part of Indian Territory under its occupation to China. The China's presence in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and its approach up to Gwadhar Port, and providing arms to Pakistan has also contributed to the tension and straining of relations between the two countries. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor further created suspicion in India.⁷

vi. The Kashmir Question:

The most important irritant to strain the relations between the two countries is the Kashmir Issue. Immediately after its creation, Pakistan attacked Kashmir and occupied a large chunk of the area there. At the request of the Kashmir ruler Maharaja Hari Singh, India sent its troops and stopped the aggression and the Maharaja signed a letter of accession in favour of India. India submitted the case before the UN. The UN brought about a ceasefire⁸ but substantial chunk of the State of Jammu and Kashmir continued to be under the Pakistani control. The question of Kashmir is a constant soar in the relationship of India and Pakistan. This issue also involved the two countries in two major wars in 1965 and 1971.

vii. The Creation of Bangladesh:

Indian role during the revolt of East Pakistan, which culminated in the creation of Bangladesh also strained the relations between the two. India had to intervene in East Bengal on account of the large influx of refugees from East Pakistan. Meanwhile Pakistan attacked India in the western sector. This obliged India to dispatch its forces to assist the Muktibahini which ultimately resulted in the surrender by Pakistani forces and the creation of Bangladesh.⁹

viii. The Siachen Glacier:

In September 1987, Pakistani troops launched battalion sized attacks on four mountain passes controlling access to strategically important and un-demarcated region of the Siachen Glacier and the infliction of heavy casualties by Indian forces. Ultimately India succeeded in controlling the Siachen Glacier¹⁰ but it caused the further straining of the relations.

ix. Indian Role in Afghanistan:

Afghanistan is a major source of friction. The two countries have long competed for influence there and Pakistan is deeply suspicious of a rise in India's presence there since the fall of Taliban government in 2001.¹¹ Pakistan accuses India of using Afghanistan as a base to create problems inside Pakistan, including backing separatists in Baluchistan province.¹² The emerging role of India in Afghanistan is also responsible for the straining of relations between India and Pakistan.

x. Mistrust between India and Pakistan:

Amidst the deep rooted mistrust between Pakistan and India, it may be difficult to establish the 'factuality' of the terrorism related charges both sides hurl at each other from time to time. The same element of mistrust lends on equal ease to denial of the involvement in subversive acts against the other country.

xii. The Kargil War:

In 1999 the Pakistani army fraudulently occupied the Indian army's vacated posts due to winter in the high peaks of Kargil. This caused an intense fighting between the two. India captured some posts and ultimately Pakistan had to withdraw from the remaining posts due to the international pressure. This war strained the relations very badly.

xiii. The Problem of Terrorism and Insurgency:

Various Pakistan based terrorist organizations are active in India. The 2001 Indian parliament attack, the 2007 Samjhauta Express bombings, the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the 2016 Pathankot attack and various other attacks on Indian Military and para-military bases have been conducted by Pakistan supported and backed terrorists.¹³ These terrorist attacks have strained the relations very badly. These attacks have sparked military confrontation across the LOC and the ceasefire violations and militant attacks have increased in the recent past. Now the bilateral relations have collapsed and there seems no recovery in near future. Previously Pakistan was also sponsoring terrorist activities in Punjab. Pakistan knows that in a direct war it cannot defeat India, so it has chosen the other way of destroying and to economically weaken India through terrorist and insurgency activities.

xiv. Negative Role of Media:

The electronic media in India and Pakistan is also responsible for the straining of relations. For the sake of TRP the media makes small things into sensational news. This creates hatred among the people and escalates the problem. The media has immense power to influence the minds of the people. As, such it has to shoulder the responsibility of presenting what is true and advocate what is necessary and right. As an instrument of social change, economic progress and moral development it should uphold certain values and principles. The media is the mirror of the society and it should not play a negative role that affects the general masses.

xv. Dictatorships and Role of Army in Pakistan:

The political authority in Pakistan has never been dominant. Half the time after independence has been under the military dictatorship and the interference of Pak army and ISI in politics and political matters is well known. The dominant role of army is another stumbling block in the mutual relations of both the nations.

xvi. The Hidden Nuclear Arms Race Between the Two:

The nuclear arms race between the two is also responsible for the deterioration of the mutual relations. The nuclear submarines of China, India and Pakistan in the Indian Ocean are also creating problems for the peace of the area.

SOLUTIONS:-

Although Indo-Pak relations have never been on good terms, but still some efforts can be made to strengthen and improve the relations.

i. Confidence Building Measures:

No talk or negotiation can be fruitful, unless you have faith and trust on each other. So to improve the relations some confidence building measures should be taken¹⁴ by both the countries so that trust and faith can be re-established.

ii. Cultural Exchange Programmes:

Both the countries have a number of cultural similarities. So mutual cultural exchange programmes should be enhanced. The cultural tours, singing, dramas and serials, films etc. should be performed and shown in each nook and corner of both the countries.

iii. The Partition of Kashmir Should be Accepted as It Is:

Both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers and no nation can claim superiority in this context. No nation can take Kashmir from the other by force. So the present situation should be accepted and LOC should be considered as an International border between them.

iv. Strengthen the Sports Ties:

Now there is an undeclared boycott of mutual sports between the two neighbours. Cricket, Kabaddi, Hockey and other sports ties should be restarted as it would help in maintaining good relations.

v. The Political Rhetoricism Should be Stopped:

The political leaders of both the countries should stop political rhetoricism which they do just to appease their own countrymen.

vi. Trade Relations Should be Enhanced:

The direct trade between India and Pakistan is very low. The direct trade routes should be opened and strengthened. It will be very beneficial for both the countries. The Dubai trade route is proving costly for both.¹⁵

vii. Transport Links Should be Strengthened:

The direct transport links through roads and railways should be maintained and strengthened.

It will result in good trade and travelling and ultimately improve the relations.

viii. Social and Matrimonial Links Should be Strengthened:

Many Indian Muslims are married in Pakistan and vice-versa. This brings the society close to each other and results in good mutual relations.

ix. The Diasporic Relations Should be Properly Utilized:

A large number of Indian diaspora and Pakistani diaspora are settled in different countries of the world. They have very good relations there.¹⁶ This link can be used to improve the mutual relations.

x. The Idea of an Indo-Pak Confederation:

Some thinkers and leaders advocated a political confederation of both the countries to end the bilateral conflicts and promote the common interests in defence, foreign affairs, culture and economic development. The Idea does not end the sovereign state existence of either nation.¹⁷

xi. The Problem of Terrorism should be Resolved:

India and Pakistan should jointly address the problem of terrorism and non-state actors through institutionalized mechanisms. Both the countries should try to avoid interfering in the internal matters of each other.

xii. Water Issues Should be Resolved Amicably:

The water sharing related issues can be resolved through the mechanisms provided by the Indus Water Treaty and if needed by making new agreements.

xiii. Interest in Afghanistan of Both Should be accepted:

India and Pakistan need to understand each other's legitimate interests in Afghanistan and pursue them without coming into conflict with each other.

xiv. The Media Should Play a More Positive Role:

The role of media is very important for the improvement of relations. It should play a role that bounds the people and bring them close to each other.

CONCLUSION

The prospects of a breakthrough in efforts to put India-Pakistan relations on an even keel have rarely appeared bleaker in recent decades as they do now- The Line Of Control on fire with nearly daily clashes, political leadership sniping at each other and people to people contacts virtually snapped.¹⁸ It is true that the relations between India and Pakistan are not on good terms, but in a fast changing global world, both cannot afford to remain hostile forever. More diplomatic measures can be adopted to improve the relations. They must move gradually from areas of agreement to those on which they had disagreements and ultimately resolve all the disputes. According to P.V. Narasimha Rao, former Prime Minister of India, "Confrontation-whether political or economic-eats into the vitals of nations, whether they be big or small, rich or poor, and in the ultimate analysis it eats into the vitals of mankind." So it is in the interest of India and Pakistan to end the confrontations and improve their mutual relations.

"We could only solve our problems by co-operating with other countries. It would have been paradoxical not to cooperate. And therefore we needed to put an end to the Iron Curtain, to change the nature of relations," Mikhail Gorbachev.

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