



Assessing India-Pakistan Relations in Narendra Modi's Era

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 08-02-2025

Published: 13-03-2025

Keywords:

*Distrustful, Political
standoff, Animosity,
Neighbourhood First Policy*

ABSTRACT

Since the two South Asian countries independence and bloody separation in 1947, relations between India and Pakistan have been inflexible, hostile, distrustful, and a very dangerous political standoff in the global context in general and in South Asia particularly. Furthermore, despite having strong literary, social, and cultural ties and being adjacent neighbours, they have maintained a considerable distance from one another. A long-standing conflict has existed between India and Pakistan, two bordering countries. Their relationship has been marked by animosity rather than camaraderie despite their shared history, cultural affinities, close proximity, and economic interdependence. Their contacts have been enmeshed in a cycle of rivalry, strife, and war ever since they gained independence. Genuine friendship and cooperation have remained elusive despite sporadic periods of peace, which have frequently been replaced by rekindled conflicts. The two countries have fought four full-scale wars and endured protracted periods of Cold War-like conditions. Rare and brief instances of better relations have occurred. The current Narendra Modi Government wants to have normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan in accordance with its "Neighbourhood First Policy." India has consistently maintained that any disputes between it and Pakistan should be settled amicably and bilaterally, in a setting free from violence and fear. It is Pakistan's responsibility to establish such a



favourable atmosphere. India has made it clear that it will not compromise on issues of national security and will take forceful, decisive action against any attempts to compromise its security and territorial integrity.

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15031401>

INTRODUCTION:

India and Pakistan continue to have one of the most fierce bilateral rivalries in the current world system. In South Asia, India as well as Pakistan are two highly active nations that differ in a wide range of ways, including political, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious basis. These two independent legal bodies are vying with one another for regional political clout. Additionally, they diverge in terms of technology, economy, and military force capability. Both nations have fought multiple wars since 1947 and have attempted to outmanoeuvre one another diplomatically in international fora. Armed with nuclear weapons and more sophisticated delivery systems since the late 1990s, both countries have employed conflict behaviour on multiple fronts, ranging from conventional warfare to unconventional tactics like terrorism and nuclear threats. The politics of India-Pakistan relations have been regularly influenced by extra-regional superpowers such as the US, the USSR (during the Cold War), and China, which has made matters more complicated. Although there have occasionally been suggestions for ways to resolve the rivalry, there are enough spoilers on both sides to rule out any prospective agreement or *détente*. The stability of South Asia and the global order in general may suffer significantly if India-Pakistan relations are managed badly.

India-Pakistan relations are extremely tense on several levels. The bilateral relationships between the two nations are not trusted. The political competition for influence in the region and the territorial division of those nations are the main causes of this issue. Terrorism is another important factor contributing to the instability. Other reasons that contribute to the strain in ties between India and Pakistan include social issues, corruption, organised crime, poverty, the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illegal immigration, and instability in the functioning of state institutions. The region's international relations are changing very rapidly, and South Asian nations have turbulent direct ties with one another that could result in armed conflict. The world community is mainly concerned with the situation in the region with respect to India and Pakistan's military, economic,



nuclear, and religious rivalry because all of these issues have the potential to endanger global security, especially the security of other South Asian countries. Examining the complex connection between India and Pakistan in the present is the aim of this article.

According to the well-known quote by former Indian Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a nation may change its friends but not its neighbours. As a result, India and Pakistan have fought four wars, although India has consistently demanded that their relationship be improved. After being elected in May 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stance on Pakistan underwent a dramatic shift in the middle of his term. From his initial enthusiasm to his impromptu visit to Lahore in December 2015 and his following "surgical strikes" against terror facilities based in Pakistan in September 2016, PM Modi's approach to Pakistan has undergone a radical transformation. Indo-Pakistani ties appear to have reached a point of no return, with a highly tense border in Jammu & Kashmir, and an increase in terror attacks against India. Escalation of a conflict is still a serious and ongoing possibility. This conversation will look at how the two nations got to this risky standstill and what if any, efforts could be taken to bring them closer together. The Modi Government's strategy towards Islamabad is to contain terrorism by hook or crook. Initially, Narendra Modi's government tried its best to develop cordial relations with Pakistan through high-level visits and unilateral goodwill gestures, however, Pakistan did not reciprocate in a considerate manner, and continued unabated support of terrorism. As it was obvious that, the Indian government hardened its approach in dealing with Pakistan.

The Theoretical framework and Methodology:

This article uses a qualitative method to examine how India's policy towards Pakistan has been effective through time. It aims to investigate how India's policy has changed in emerging situations and what internal, structural, and personal causes motivated such a geostrategic move to counter external aggression and unrest in the Kashmir Region. To explain how the evolution of relations evolved. This paper analyses India's foreign policy towards Pakistan using data from primary and secondary sources. The text of signed treaties, official government communiqués, and remarks made by members of the ruling regimes in each of these nations are examples of primary sources. Notable examples of secondary sources are academic journals, editorials, and news articles that frequently discuss India-Pakistan ties. The neo-realist theory of international relations has been used to analyse the geostrategic evolution of these two countries. Its effect on India's geostrategic and geoeconomic elements has been evaluated.



A changing approach to combating transnational terrorism

Since gaining independence in 1947, India and Pakistan, two neighbours with nuclear weapons, have had a turbulent relationship. Their bilateral relationship has been characterised by a complicated web of geopolitical factors, high tensions, and brief periods of tranquillity. Under the aegis of PM Modi, it is the calculative strategy towards Pakistan which has changed significantly since 2014, characterised by strong posture and forceful measures.

India has long charged that Pakistan supports and harbours terrorist organisations that strike Indian territory. India's tolerance for these accusations started to wane once Modi gained power. Following the 2016 incident in Uri, the administration implemented its zero-tolerance policy towards cross-border terrorism. India claimed to have carried out "surgical strikes" against terrorist launch sites in Pakistan-administered Kashmir that were located across the Line of Control. This represented a dramatic departure from India's customarily tactful reactions to perceived provocations.

India's stance towards Pakistan has become more rigid under PM Modi. In August 2014, he called off planned foreign-secretary-level negotiations because of a meeting between the Hurriyat group, a separatist group from Kashmir, and the Pakistani high commissioner to India. It was evident that PM Modi and his colleague Sharif were at differences during the November 2014 SAARC conference in Kathmandu. After India made it clear that the visiting Pakistani advisor would not be permitted to meet with the Hurriyat leadership or discuss anything other than terrorism, the planned discussions between the two nations' national security advisors were cancelled just hours before they were set to begin in August 2015.

A Step Towards Normalization of Relations in The Beginning:

In May 2014, Prime Minister Modi invited Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to a swearing-in ceremony in New Delhi, demonstrating his affirmative stance, this was really a pragmatic move to foster ties after long decades of hostility, there has been a bilateral meeting between these two leaders besides inauguration ceremony. At this meeting, however, PM Sharif showed statesmanship and did not raise the issue of Kashmir. The issue of terrorism from Pakistan's side has been strongly raised by the Indian side.



Negotiations at Shanghai Cooperation Summit at Ufa, Russia:

Nawaz Sharif, the prime minister of Pakistan, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Ufa, Russia on 10 July 2015 and discussed the various issues on the sidelines of the SCO Summit. At the meeting, Pakistan had urged India to provide "additional evidence" on the Mumbai assault case in the joint media statement during the UFA negotiations, but the two countries ultimately decided to forego it. Rather, the announcement stated that India had received voice samples from those involved in the 2008, 26/11 incident, which claimed 166 lives. Following this, New Delhi terminated the dialogue process with its neighbour to the west. Another significant development at the two prime ministers' meeting was the decision to keep their foreign offices out of border management issues and instead leave them to those who handle the situation directly on the ground.

The meeting had five outcomes, and Pakistan came up with three of them: a meeting between national security advisers; a meeting between the directors general of the BSF and Pakistan Rangers, followed by a meeting of the directors general of military operations (DGMOs); and the facilitation of religious tourism. The Indian side proposed speeding up the 26/11 trial and freeing fishermen from each other's jails. India has often expressed its disapproval of Pakistan's drawn-out trial of Zaki-Ur-Rahman Lakhvi, the mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

External Affairs Minister Visit to Islamabad in Heart of Asia Conference:

In November and December of 2015, four consecutive meetings at the highest levels of political leadership and bureaucracy marked the culmination of India-Pakistan ties. PM Modi and Prime Minister Sharif first met on the sidelines of the climate change meeting in Paris and they decided to continue their bilateral conversation. Second, national security experts convened in Bangkok to address a variety of topics, including Kashmir, peace, and security.

Smt. Sushma Swaraj, the External Affairs Minister of India, led the nation's delegation at the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, which took place in Islamabad from December 8–9, 2015. She visited Pakistan's prime minister, Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, and had a conversation with Mr. Sartaj Aziz, the prime minister's adviser on foreign affairs

The adviser and the EAM agreed to work together to eradicate terrorism. They took notice of the two NSAs' fruitful discussions on security and terrorism-related matters in Bangkok and agreed that the NSAs would keep tackling all terrorism-related matters. The Indian side was promised the measures



being taken to expedite the early conclusion of the Mumbai trial. Both sides consequently consented to a Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue, and the Foreign Secretaries were given the task of deciding on the structure and schedule of the dialogue's meetings. Peace and security, CBMs, Jammu & Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek, the Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project, commercial and economic cooperation, counterterrorism, drug control, humanitarian issues, people-to-people exchanges, and religious tourism are some of the topics that will be discussed at these meetings.

On his way back from Afghanistan, PM Modi made a surprise detour to Lahore to celebrate the wedding of his granddaughter and the birthday of PM Nawaz Sharif in an effort to patch things up with his neighbour. Since it was the first time an Indian prime minister had visited Pakistan in eleven years, the visit was significant. Prime Minister Sharif made a remarkable gesture by arriving at the Lahore airport to greet his Indian counterpart, defying tradition. Both neighbours decided to begin foreign secretary negotiations during this visit in order to settle the bilateral dialogue's future course between India and Pakistan. India spoke with Pakistan throughout the first two years of Modi's Prime ministership, but it was made clear that New Delhi was more interested in discussing terrorism than Kashmir.

India hardened its approach towards Pakistan after the Pathankot Air Base attack:

Relations between these two nations start deteriorating rapidly at the beginning of 2016. A terrible and fatal episode in India's war against terrorism occurred on January 2, 2016, when a group of militants assaulted the Indian Air Force's Pathankot Airbase. At least six soldiers and several attackers were killed in the strike, which was carried out by militants affiliated with Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed following a 17-hour battle. The airbase, which was an essential part of India's Western Air Command, saw intense combat that affected India-Pakistan ties for a long time.

The already tense connections of these two nations were exacerbated by the incident. Tensions of both the nations were further heightened by evidence discovered at the scene of the attack that suggested the militants most likely entered India via Pakistan. The assault also sparked worries that it was an attempt to sabotage peace negotiations intended to mend the shaky diplomatic ties between the surrounding countries. The attack on Pathankot serves as a sobering reminder of the persistent threat that terrorism poses. Increased examination of the security protocols at Indian military sites and the relationship between India and Pakistan was another effect of the incident. As of 2023, the attack's effects are still felt in the dynamics between the two nations, and relations are still mainly unresolved.



The joint investigating team was not allowed to visit Pakistan in connection with the Pathankot airbase attack, at this point of time, India took a tougher stance and cancelled the dialogue going to be held in the near future. India took more drastic measures by calling off the external affairs ministers' meetings in New York that were planned to take place in September 2018 on the fringes of the UN General Assembly.

Shahid Latif, a well-known Jaish-e-Mohammed commander and the alleged mastermind of the plot, was slain by unidentified gunmen in Pakistan in October 2023, highlighting the complex and ongoing nature of conflicts related to terrorism in the region as India toughened its stance towards Pakistan.

Worsening relationship between India and Pakistan under the Imran Khan Government:

During the tenure of Imran Khan in Pakistan and PM Modi in his second term, India-Pakistan relations are notably at their rock bottom in the past ten years. After a string of terrorist attacks that targeted India's military and civilian assets as well as instability in Kashmir succeeded in sabotaging political ties between the two nations, the downhill spiral started in 2016. Since then, there have been more ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LOC) every year, reaching the four-figure mark

As cross-border trade connections have been terminated and official avenues of communication between the two governments remain closed, the bilateral relationship has further collapsed in 2018 and 2019 against a backdrop of increased political and military tensions. Following Pakistan's expulsion of the Indian high commissioner in protest over the Indian government's effective revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, diplomatic ties further soured in August 2019. At the moment, the international community is also not very interested in mediating the India-Pakistan conflict. Indo-Pak ties remained strained in 2018 despite Prime Minister Imran Khan and the newly elected, army-backed PTI government hoping for a breakthrough in the form of dialogue and the opening of the Kartarpur corridor, a long-standing desire of the Indian Sikh population. Ahead of the next Indian election season, the Modi 1.0 administration adopted a more circumspect approach and abstained from initiating its overtures in overtures with Pakistan. The corridor proceeded according to plan, but the Indian side declined to hold official negotiations again. If a change in bilateral ties is expected following the mid-2019 elections of India, the crisis in February of this year prevented that from happening. The bilateral relationship was shaped by the Pulwama-Balakot dispute in several ways. The Pulwama tragedy not



only gave India's accusation of cross-border terrorism coming from Pakistani territory greater credibility, but it also cast doubt on the Imran Khan government's competence and commitment to handle anti-Indian outfits supported by the deep state in Pakistan. Additionally, the Balakot airstrikes confirmed India's willingness to employ force in response to major terrorist attacks orchestrated and executed by groups based in Pakistan.

The Modi government began a vast and well-planned campaign to expose Pakistan at the United Nations and other international platforms since it has long been supplying weapons, training, financing, and intelligence support to numerous terror groups operating in the several areas of Jammu and Kashmir. The Modi administration has repeatedly accused Pakistan of aiding terrorism. The Modi government used the "tit for tat" tactic to attack Islamabad for failing to stop the export of terror to India and other countries after PM Imran Khan , brought up the Kashmir issue in his speeches to the UN General Assembly in 2019, 2020, and 2021 and vehemently denounced the New Delhi government for violating human rights. India also pushed for Pakistan to be included in the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) blacklist for failing to control the funding of terrorism. Major nations supported India's full-scale campaign.

India stands on Balochistan:

PM Modi brought up abuses of human rights in Gilgit-Baltistan and POK in his Independence Day speech on August 5, 2016. He continued by discussing Pakistan's abuses of human rights in Balochistan. Other than bringing up human rights abuses by Pakistan in Balochistan at the UN, on some occasions, including under the Right of Reply, India hasn't done anything since. "Pakistan has systematically abused and violated the human rights of its own citizens, including in Balochistan," India said on 7 June 2017, at the UNHRC in Geneva. By not equating PoK with Balochistan, India has done the right thing. Pakistan is unlawfully occupying Indian territory, known as the PoK. India, however, does not support Pakistan's annexation of Balochistan. As of right now, this appears to be highly mature politics and diplomacy.

India Revokes MFN Status to Pakistan

In an attempt to send a clear message to Pakistan following the Pulwama terror attack on 14 February 2019, the next day India made a significant diplomatic move by removing the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) designation that had been granted to Pakistan. India granted the MFN status to Pakistan



way back in in 1996, but the neighbouring country has not yet retaliated. Following deadly ambush on CRPF officers in Jammu and Kashmir, and Pulwama by Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorists, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the government had revoked Pakistan's World Trade Organisation "most favoured nation" status. This decision was made following the conclusion of a cabinet committee on security. Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), a group based in Pakistan, took credit for the tragedy and made public a video recording of the suicide bomber, a "commander" named Adil Ahmad Dar, who was allegedly shot before the young man attacked Lethpora, which is around 30 km away.

Abrogation of Article 370 and Pakistan stand

On August 5, 2019, the Indian government abolished the special status, or autonomy, that was granted to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Indian constitution. On August 5, 2019, the Government of India (GoI) announced that Article 370 of the Constitution will be abolished and that the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) would be split into two union territories. This sparked an unparalleled worldwide response, especially considering the restrictions imposed in the wake of the decision. Just one day after the Indian government announced its intention to remove Kashmir's special status, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan called India's decision "unconstitutional" and warned that it could lead to another Pulwama-style situation during a specially called joint session of parliament. PM Imran Khan criticised the Modi administration and said that Pakistan would retaliate if India used violence against it. PM Khan presided over a meeting of the national security committee in Islamabad the following day to discuss bilateral agreements with India. In reaction to the events in Kashmir, Islamabad stopped bilateral trade and lowered diplomatic contacts with India. It ousted the Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan and stopped the recently appointed Pakistani High Commissioner to India from departing. Pakistan's foreign minister, Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, gave a speech during an emergency meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The foreign ministers of the OIC Contact Group on Kashmir later released a statement in which they expressed their alarm about the condition of affairs in Kashmir and asked India to "rescind" the actions it had taken. Since then, by imposing a lockdown on the area, Pakistan has persisted in its attempts to portray India as an aggressor in Kashmir. Islamabad may have to move soldiers from the Afghan border to the Kashmir boundary, according to the ambassador of Islamabad to the United States, who has gone so far as to associate Kashmir with the US-led peace process in Afghanistan.



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to Pakistan at the SCO Summit:

EAM Dr S Jaishankar travelled to Pakistan regarding the SCO Summit on 15-16 October 2024 in Islamabad. He did not hold any formal bilateral meetings with Pakistan. Islamabad views Jaishankar's trip to Pakistan as a step in the right direction for India. For the first time in over nine years, India's foreign minister travelled to Pakistan, even as tensions between the two countries remained high because of the Kashmir issue and cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan. The final Indian EAM member to visit Pakistan was Sushma Swaraj. To attend the 'Heart of Asia' conference on Afghanistan, she took a plane to Islamabad on December 8 and 9, 2015. Following the Pulwama terror attack in February 2019, India's aeroplanes bombarded a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist training camp in Balakot, Pakistan, severely straining relations between the two countries. Following New Delhi's revocation of Article 370, Pakistan's diplomatic relations with India were downgraded. India has maintained that it wishes to have regular neighbourly relations with Pakistan and that Islamabad should be in charge of creating a safe environment for these kinds of exchanges. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar concluded a "productive" Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit hosted by Pakistan.

Conclusion:

The analysis of the study indicates India-Pakistan challenging relations, India will continue to be preoccupied with difficult relations with Pakistan and will not have much motivation to reduce tensions between the two neighbours that possess nuclear weapons. Two significant problems have resulted in both nations being mired in animosity, which includes terrorism and Kashmir. Nonetheless, it was anticipated that both nations would think about normalising their relations going forward making South Asia a stable region. It appears challenging to have a result-oriented conversation between the two nations in the current political climate. Given Pakistan's steadfast stance towards India, no appreciable change in bilateral ties is anticipated. It's a challenging relationship, to be sure, there aren't many trade or economic ties with Pakistan. Numerous attempts to reach out to Pakistan for peace and understanding have failed, and political relations are still tense and unclear. Pakistan's developments are of India's security worries. Over the past several decades, cross-border terrorism has grown to be a serious menace, and there are no indications that it will slow down. Dealing with Pakistan takes a lot of political, diplomatic, and military effort and focus. Problems are becoming intertwined. Since 2016, efforts have been made to isolate and expose Pakistan in the eyes of the world community in order to put pressure on it to alter its actions. It is obvious that India is not going to adopt a soft approach in dealing



with Pakistan and will continue its harder stance against it and will try to expose its double overture in the region of South Asia in general and at the world level in particular.

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