

## Indo-Pak relations & Kashmir Issue: A Historical Perspective

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**Abstract:** *In the history of 8 decades, despite being the closest neighboring countries, the relationship between India and Pakistan has been mired in conflicts and war. Although being a secular nation, the majority of population in India follows Hindu religion while Pakistan is a Muslim country. However, until the British regime, India and Pakistan were not a separate nation. The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 against the British rule was fought together by Hindus and Muslims. Later, during the national independence movement, the mutual animosity between Hindus and Muslims broke out rapidly. Thus, before leaving their regime, the British in 1947, divided India into two independent countries: India and Pakistan. This paper conducts critical and comparative study about the impasse that has exists in the mutual relations between India and Pakistan over Kashmir: Based on the primary and secondary source evidences, the article states that the policy of the British to divide and rule had reflected in this dispute.*

**Keywords:** *Lahore convention, Muslim League, Indian National congress, Louis Mountbatten, Maharaja Harisingh.*

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## Introduction

India and Pakistan emerged in August 1947 as successor states of British India with distinctive identities. India has a legally mandated secular government, despite having a Hindu majoritarian government. Pakistan, in part because of its relative ethno national diversity, opted for an overwhelming Islamic character for nation- building and securitization against Hindu enemies, in part because of its relative national and ethnic variety. These conflicting state ideologies made war between India and Pakistan inevitable (Hussain, 2019). The policy of the British to divide and rule had also contributed to this. That is why when the British left India in 1947, they not only divided British India into India and Pakistan on the basis of religion but also kept the Kashmir issue as the seed of a conflict. So that the mutual conflict between India and Pakistan would never be resolved. Because of this, the conflict

between the two countries has not stopped even today. It is a never ending tussle. Thus, the root cause of the problem in the relations between the two countries is the Kashmir dispute. The two countries have fought four wars over the issue till today. Because of this enmity, they have been blaming each other for the terrorist activities that have been taken place against them frequently. However, the two countries are also putting efforts trying to maintain good relations time and again. For example, on the basis of the Shimla Agreement of 1972, the railway service between the two countries was started on 1976 under the name of Samjauta Express (“Samjhauta Express”, 2022). Similarly, in February 19, 1999 the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. Atal Bihari Bajpeyi initiated the friendship through Lahore Bus Journey (Basu, 2019) and in 2014 India’s newly elected Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended a special invitation to Pakistan’s PM Nawaz Sharif for his swearing- in ceremony (India Invites Eight Countries..., 2018). Likewise, in 2004, in Multan, Pakistan, when Indian cricketer Virender Sehwag completed 319 runs, all the spectators in the stadium stood up and applauded him (Ali, 2016). Despite these efforts and incidents, a lasting cordial relationship has not been established between the two. On the one hand, India’s attitude towards Pakistan looks superior because of its separation from itself; on the other hand, the anger of Pakistan over India’s decision to separate Bangladesh by dividing Pakistan territory remains deeper and stronger. It seemed that their struggle will never end. The geo-political situation of India and Pakistan is as follows.

**India** - India is an ancient country, rich in Eastern civilization & culture. According to the world map, India is found in the southern part of the Asian continent, which is called the Indian subcontinent. At present situation, India is one of the most influential countries in the world. Despite its vast geography and large population, India is strong & powerful in every aspect of social, economic, political & strategic life. It is also the largest democratic country in the world. Geographically, it is bounded on the North by the vast Himalayan range and on the South by Indian Ocean, on the West by the Arabian Sea, and on the East by the Bay of Bengal. Due to its geographical location its position in the Asian continent is extremely important. Because of the above mentioned background & reasons, India is playing a leading role in the politics of south Asia in recent time and considered herself as the leader of the politics of South Asia. Even though all the neighboring countries except China are on the same page, they are not able to cope with it. Now nuclear-armed India has become a second most powerful country after China in terms of military power. Its neighboring countries: Pakistan, Afganistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Srilanka, Maldives are aware of this fact. Also India strives to maintain cordial & good relations with each of these neighboring countries (Malhotra, 2014). However, in the past it has annexed Sikkim, deployed troops on Nepal’s northern border, divided Pakistan into Bangladesh, sent troops to Srilanka & Maldives to settle internal affairs, fought four wars with Pakistan over Kashmir issue and unnecessarily intervened militarily in the Doklam border dispute between China & Bhutan, interfered in the Nepali politics. This shows the self-evident of India and depicts a kind of arrogance that India is the decisive force of the region as a whole (India and Its Neighbourhood-Relations, n.d.). That is to say, just as the British ruled over him (India) for almost two hundred years, obsessed with the same colonial thinking & mentality, it is clear that he (India) is also oppressing his neighbors. This might be the reason India does not have good relations with any of its neighbors except Bhutan.

**Pakistan**- India’s closest neighbor is Pakistan on its north-western border. At one point of time in the History, Pakistan was a part of India. In a way, there was no country called Pakistan before 1947 AD. Due to the mutual animosity between Hindus & Muslims in India during the national independence movement, they had to be divided along with gaining independence from the British colonial rule. Looking at its historical background, it is clear that the term of Hindu and Muslim not

only refers two religions, but also to two separate nations. Because the religious beliefs, cultural traditions, customs, social organization, food, language, literature, way of life of both Hindus and Muslims are all different from each other. If a state with two religions has one in the majority & the other in the minority, it would be inappropriate to keep them in the same state. That is why the Muslim League had approved a proposal from the Lahore Convention of 1940 AD to form a separate state by merging the Muslim-majority north-western border provinces of Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan & the eastern border provinces of Bengal & Assam. After this, the Muslims continued to raise the demand for a separate state of Pakistan for themselves. It has been supported in every convention of the Muslim League (Banerjee, 2016: 21-27). For this, they started agitating their people by various means. This led to a situation where by 1946 AD there was no longer any system of governance in India from which the Muslim League could be fully satisfied. After August 1946, the Muslim League began to take direct action (protest, agitation and fights) to meet their demands. As a result, communal hatred, looting, rape, vandalism, arson, murder and violence began to spread throughout the country in which thousands of people were killed and millions became homeless. It was difficult for the government to handle the situation (Banerjee, 2016: 28-29). In that situation, the then Viceroy of India, Lord Louise Mountbatten, as a representative of the British Government, presented a plan, the people of the Muslim- majority province or state want to form a separate Constituent Assembly instead of joining the Constituent Assembly of India formed in 1946 AD and show that they are in favor of the partition of the country, then the partition of India will take place. He also said that a Boundary Delimitation Commission would be formed for this purpose.

Thus, the demand for a separate state of Pakistan sought by the Muslim League was eventually accepted by the Indian National Congress. Because of this communal situation in the country, on June 15, 1947, the Congress had to accept the partition of India and the establishment of Pakistan. After the British Parliament passed the India Independence Bill in July 1947, the same Act of 1947 led to the creation of a separate state in the name of Pakistan on 14 August 1947. As mentioned above, India's north-western Border States of Sindh, West Punjab, Baluchistan, Northwest frontier province (now called Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and East Bengal were included in Pakistan. In addition, a large part of the Muslim-majority district of Sylhet in the state of Assam was placed under Pakistan. The western provinces of Pakistan were called West Pakistan, while East Bengal and other territories were made East Pakistan (Hussain, 2019). It should be noted here that the majority of the people of East Pakistan were Muslim by religion. But they were not uniform in terms of language, race, culture etc. West Pakistani in particular treated East Pakistani as inferior. Also, West Pakistani held almost all the top positions in the state while East Pakistani was like second-class citizens in their own country. They were insulted & despised by the West Pakistanis. That is why they were dissatisfied. Again, geographically there was a distance of more than a thousand miles between these two Pakistan. India was in between these two Pakistan (Hussain, 2013). Thus, even though the sovereignty was the same, Pakistan was divided into two different geographical locations. It was likely that these two states will break at any moment and no doubt, later, the creation of Bangladesh in 1972 turned that possibility into a reality. India support East Pakistani rebels and partitioned Pakistan by creating the Independent state of Bangladesh (Hussain, 2019).

### **Objective of the study**

The main objective of this study is to explore about the root cause of the impasse that has been arising in the mutual relations between India and Pakistan over Kashmir in the history of about 8 decades.

## Methodology

This study is completely based on primary and secondary source materials which include books, news reports, journal articles and research papers. The collected data are interpreted in a critical, comparative and analytical method based on authentic source materials.

## Background

Before the British East India Company ruled on the Indian subcontinent, the whole region was called Bharat-Varsha because it was an empire conquered by king Bharat in auranic period (Aryal, 2017). Later it does not make any sense as Bharat-Varsha was only a geographical expression. There were more than 530 states, small & large, existed in Bharatvarsha. Each state had its own name, but no state was named Bharat (India). The sense of nationalism had not developed; the states were at war with each other, because the sense of narrow localism was prevalent in those states. In any case, before the British rule, India was divided into several states. But after the establishing of British rule, the British expanded their empire by conquering and uniting the various Indian states, which indirectly developed sense of national unity among the Indian people. The feeling of narrow localism ended and the feeling of broad nationalism spread. Thus the British rule in India is very important part in the Modern Indian history. But later, the narrow communal sentiments of Hindu and Muslim began to appear among the people. As it passed, communal riots broke out in whole India between Hindu and Muslims. Thousands were killed and millions were left homeless. Due to the conflict between the Muslim minority and Hindu majority, the British finally separated Pakistan from India before they leaving India. Thus, the situation was supposed to be peaceful after the secession of Pakistan as demanded by the Muslim people but it did not. Instead, the political tensions between the two sides remain high and the main reason for this conflict was and is the Kashmir issue.

Kashmir is a mountainous state, which is located at Northeast of Pakistan and Northwest of India. Kashmir was an independent state even during the British rule in India, the state where the majority of people were Muslims and the king was a Hindu (Asoori, 2020). Therefore, because of religious proximity, the Kashmiri people wanted to join Pakistan, after the partition. But the king wanted the help from India for the Independence of Kashmir. During this period of ambivalence in Kashmir, there were outbursts of riots in certain districts of Kashmir against the ruler. This eventually led to Pakistani tribesmen and militia crossing into Kashmir, in attempt to take over the city of Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, whilst looting and plundering the region. Maharaja Hari Singh, the last king of Kashmir, made a plea to India to aid him against this anarchy and in doing so ceded Kashmir to India. This led to the First Indo- Pakistani war, that war was fought between Indian Soldiers and Pakistani tribesmen. In 1948 Pakistani armed forces entered the war. Towards the end of 1948, both sides solidified their positions in Kashmir. A ceasefire agreement was made and line of control (LOC) was established (Asoori, 2020). Due to the Indian army entered, the Pakistani army could not capture the capital Srinagar. One-third of the Kashmiri territory occupied by the Pakistani army is still under Pakistan's control, while two-third of the territory is under Indian control. Between the two, there is the Line of Control, drawn up by the United Nations after the 1947-48 war. Even after this, there were three other wars between them. At the third war in the 1971, India helped the locals build a new country called Bangladesh by splitting East Pakistan from Pakistan. To avenge this, Pakistan has been supporting the Kashmiri separatists in every possible way to make Kashmir independent from India. Thus these two neighboring countries India and Pakistan have become fiercely antagonistic to each other due to the their own national interests, old resentment, arrogance, humiliation of each other over religion.

## **The Tensed Relationship between India & Pakistan**

Thus, after almost hundred years of struggle, the Indian people became independent from the British colonial rule, but the Indians did not enjoy the freedom and had to accept partition. Pakistan became independent on 14 August 1947 and India became independent on 15 August 1947 as per the plan of partition of India on the basis of British policy. However the disputes between the two countries continue even after the division of ancestral property and the relationship between India & Pakistan has remained tense since the partition of India. The Kashmir dispute seems to be the root cause. Due to this dispute, there have been four wars between the two so far. In fact due to the Kashmir dispute, there has been a hostile relationship between the two from the beginning till now. This bitter relationship is found not only at the state level but also at the grass roots level, as is evident from the occasional international cricket matches between the two. Its victory and defeat are valued by the people of both countries as the life and death situation. In other words, the cricket matches between the countries are considered as a war by the people of both countries (Banerjee, 2016: 99).

Even though both sides are in favor of figuring out a peaceful solution to the Kashmir dispute through dialogues, one has been making many allegations against the other. India claims that it has not backed down from its anti-India activities, especially against Pakistan, and has been directly or indirectly targeting various terrorist organizations with the aim of promoting terrorism in India. India has alleged that the terrorist attacks on the Indian Parliament on 13 Dec 2001 and the 2008 terrorist attacks on the Taj hotel in Mumbai and other places confirm this fact (Banerjee, 2016: 78-79). As mentioned above, the Tashkent Agreement was signed between the two countries in 1966 and the Shimla Agreement in 1972. On the basis of the Shimla Agreement, the railway service between the two countries was started on July 22, 1976 under the name of Samjhauta Express. However, there were no any significant improvements in the relation between them. India has continued its efforts to establish peace. In this context, in February 1999, the then Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee took the initiative of friendship through a bus journey to Lahore. However, again Pakistan betrayed and attacked Kargil. In the battle of Kargil too, Pakistan faced defeat. A passenger plane of Indian Airlines was hijacked shortly after the Kargil war. Both these incidents have adversely affected India- Pakistan relations. In the years that followed, cricket and political relations between the two remained strained. With the declaration of a ceasefire in November 2009, relations began to normalize. In the words of former Indian Foreign Minister Narsimha Rao, the improvement in India- Pakistan relations between 2004 and 2007 was welcome and the overall dialogue was moving in the right direction. As relations improved, a major event took place in 2004 in Multan, Pakistan. What happened was that when Indian cricketer Virendra Sehwag completed his 319 runs there, all the spectators in the stadium stood up and applauded him. But it did not last longer, as the Pakistani army violated the ceasefire more than 200 times in 2010-12. This limit was exceeded when in 2013, the Pakistani army entered the Indian border and opened fire killing two soldiers and cutting their necks. This incident was condemned by the whole world. In 2014, India's newly elected Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated India's peace efforts by specially inviting Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to his swearing-in ceremony. However, sporadic incidents at the border have not stopped. In this, both sides blame each other. According to Indian politicians, Pakistani leaders like Musharraf are saying that Pakistan should support the separatists fighting in Kashmir

## **Kashmir Issue**

Relations between India and Pakistan remain strained due to the Kashmir issue. Due to their own interests, goals, objectives and conflicting policies regarding Kashmir, there is no possibility of

establishing cordial and friendly relations between the two countries. When Pakistan seceded from India in 1947, then Pakistan wanted to annex Muslim-majority Kashmir in the name of religion. So about two months after independence, Pakistani's armed tribesmen entered Kashmir. Seeing this, the last Maharaja of Kashmir also asked for help from India. After the intervention of the Indian Army, the Pakistani Army could not capture the capital Srinagar. One-third of the Kashmiri territory occupied by the Pakistani army is still under Pakistan's control, while two-thirds is under Indian control. Between the two of them there is the ceasefire line (Line of Control) drawn by the United Nations after the war of 1947-48. Although the first UN-brokered war over the Kashmir issue ended, but relations between the two countries remained strained in the days that followed. So after that in 1954-55 Pakistan joined international organizations like SEATO & CENTO to get US support against India and began receiving financial & weapons support from the United States. Meanwhile, in the wake of the communal riots in East Pakistan in January 1964 & the mass exodus of Hindus, Indian socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan said that a rational solution to the country's partition problems had not been proven. In 1965, war broke out again. That war ended with the efforts of the United Nations. An agreement was reached between the two in Tashkent, Russia. In 1971, war broke out again. During this war, India succeeded in splitting East Pakistan from Pakistan & building Bangladesh as a new country. In this war, Pakistan was unable to defend its sovereignty and integrity and suffered a heavy defeat. This was followed by the Shimla Treaty in 1972. Since 1947, India and Pakistan have fought three major wars and one undeclared war over the Kashmir issue ("India-Pakistan Relations", 2022).

### **Importance of Kashmir**

The primary reason for this conflict between the two nations is due to how valuable Kashmir is in terms of national security, geography and natural resources. The largely important Indus River flows through Kashmir. This river is extremely crucial to agriculture in Pakistan, It is especially important in the lower Indus valley region, where rainfall is uncommon. Similarly, India depends on the Indus for Irrigation. Hence, the Indus and its tributaries are highly sought after. The nations that control this region effectively can cut off the water supply to other. The Kashmiri Rivers and water bodies also have the potential to generate hydroelectricity at great magnitudes. Kashmir is also home to a plethora of resources such as uranium, gold, oil and natural gas. From a geopolitical stand point, Kashmir is vital as well because Kashmir serves as a bridge between South Asia and Central Asia. For India, it is the only direct route to Central Asia and through Central Asia to Europe. It also plays a significant role in the Belt and Road initiative. More importantly, it is a key for the China- Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The CPEC is a large-scale bilateral undertaking involving the development of infrastructure in Pakistan, the establishment of transportation networks between China and Pakistan and the creation of numerous energy projects (Banerjee, 2016 & Farooq, 2020). Many of these projects run through the Pakistan administered Kashmir. Pakistan aims at directly connecting itself with both Central Asia and China through Kashmir. Kashmir is a central piece among the three nuclear nations: India, Pakistan and China. At the moment, of the original territory of Kashmir, India has control over roughly 55% of the total area, Pakistan controls 30% of the land and China controls 15% of it (Asoori ,2020). In this way, both India and Pakistan have been giving high priority to Kashmir due to various reasons such as water resources, minerals, geopolitical situation, strategic importance and etc.

### **Conclusion**

India's view on the Kashmir issue is that Kashmir itself has become an integral part of India after the last Maharaja of Kashmir; Hari Singh signed the accession treaty with India. There is no need for

Pakistan to have an issue on this. But Pakistan has said that since Kashmir is a Muslim-majority state, India's Hindu hegemony over its people is utterly unfair. Pakistan's main view is that the people of Kashmir, who have been fighting for independence, should be given the right to self-determination. India has accused Pakistan of sending Kashmiri separatists to fight with them by providing military training and weapons. But Pakistan has been claiming that India's allegations are baseless. Thus, due to its vested interest in Kashmir, relations between them never were smooth and friendly. Based on the above study, it can be concluded that the Kashmir issue seems to be the root cause of the tense relations between India and Pakistan. In its womb the British policy seems to have played a major role. Their policy to divide and rule had perfectly worked in this case. British had ruled the Indian people by force for almost two hundred years. Therefore, if India and Pakistan, that is Hindu and Muslims, unite, they will become powerful. In that case, it was easy to assume that the British were afraid that they will take revenge. Therefore, the British seemed to have left Kashmir as a seed of strife between the two brothers for the purpose of never letting the two countries get along with each other and always fighting. After all, this idea of the British has been proving to be true even today. It is a never-ending process. In fact, in this case, we can see that the British were very intelligent and far-sighted and that is why at some point they were able to expand their empire around the world. Thus, it is almost certain that relations between India and Pakistan will remain tense until the Kashmir issue is resolved peacefully.

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