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The Repositioning of the Conflict Resolution in South Asia: A Key for Progressive Pakistan

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
<p>History:</p> <p>Received: February 16, 2023 Accepted: February 27, 2023</p>	<p>The growing international concerns and changing dimensions in terms of global strategic interests are introducing the region of South Asia an epicenter of the great games, where the political situation of bordering states like Afghanistan are making the available options less opportunistic for Pakistan to decide where to go and whom to support. Unwillingly or unfortunately after the incident of 9/11, the world politics looked towards Pakistan as a coin of long life without knowing the reservations of its democratic society against the war on terror. Under the leadership of a Democratic President, the United States of America pushed a dictator in Pakistan to legitimize an ambiguous war. It was not very simple for Pakistan to jump into hell but the presence of president Musharraf made it easy for the US to achieve its objectives. The story is not as smooth and easy-going as it looks because as a result, Pakistan had lost a lot of what we have never thought and invested to vanish. It was a step, which affected Pakistan's well-articulated and well-managed policy in the region, particularly for India and Afghanistan. Pakistan's acceptance and support in the US-led war on terror placed a full stop for our future options and opportunities, which eventually opened new avenues for India, a state on the waiting list. India had always believed in the inversely proportional relationship for its progress when it comes to Pakistan and as result, we are suffering a lot. Interestingly and amazingly, this is not an end but a new start for progressive Pakistan. In this paper, I will try to throw some light on the future and possible opportunistic ways for Pakistan to regain its progressive pace to become an 'Asian Tiger' by avoiding traditional conflictual policy with India. For that, I will emphasize and explore the causes, character, prospectus, and nature of the conflict in South Asia. For a brief look at the pace of the issue, this paper will also focus on the emergence and the effects of the nuclear environment in South Asia and possible prospects for conflict resolution.</p>
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1. Introduction

Being a student of international politics and security studies, I believe that everything in politics moves in a circle 'what goes around, comes around. From the seventeenth century, Muslim rule in the region was colonized by Britain and as result on August 17th, 1947 it opened a new political chapter in the region, one that would lead to the start of Hindu hegemonic tendencies. 24 years later the politics of discrimination and hegemony found its way to East Pakistan, separating millions of Muslim brothers and sisters introducing the remaining part as only Pakistan. India did a great job but without knowing that, 'what goes around, comes around (Stonebraker, & Hellerstein,2005). Pakistan is not only a country of more than 160 million patriots but also a strategic land of the lost Muslims initially affected by the British colonial era and latterly by the Hindutva philosophy of politics (Niroula, & Thapa,2005).

South Asia is a conflict-ridden region. From the very first day, India and Pakistan are staring at each other eyeball to eyeball. Soon after the partition, Pakistan and India fought their first war over the state of Kashmir. Mainly territorial, economic disputes made the relations of India and Pakistan worse throughout the decade of the '50s. The Runn of Kutch was another major dispute, which led to an armed confederation between the armed forces of India and Pakistan. 1965 war was once again fought over the issue of Kashmir. After the 1965 war, although USSR tried to resolve Indo-Pak differences through dialogues in long run, the Tashkent accord did not prove fruitful (Wetter,1971).

The role played by India in the insurgency in East Pakistan and later its attack on Pakistan and dismembering it, thickened the clouds of mistrust and differences between the two arch-rivals. A new dimension; nuclear, was added to the Indo-Pak conflicts after the so-called peaceful nuclear explosion of India in 1974. The Bhutto government decided to work on its nuclear program as well. During the decade of '70s especially the latter half of '70s and the decade of 80's when the USSR invaded Afghanistan, it seemed that the age-old dispute over Kashmir has lost its importance but after the USSR withdrawal, the Kashmir episode once again emerged as a root cause of all conflicts between India and Pakistan (Khalid, 2019).

The BJP politics in the political scenario of India gave strength to the rising in Hindu fundamentalism intensifies the ideological conflict between Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India. The nuclearization of South Asia in May 1998 added fuel to the dangerous fire of hatred, mistrust, and rivalry among the two neighboring states. Now, more than ever it is required that these two states should solve their disputes and start a new and fresh start. This is the call of the day will it work under the leadership of confused India or not; is a big question in itself (Vanaik, 2002).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Causes of Conflict in South Asia

After the British withdrawal from the Sub-continent, India and Pakistan have emerged as newborn states with extreme ideological differences. These ideological differences escalated further in the shape of permanent enmity between the two countries, this enmity create mistrust and hyper-nationalism regionalism people in both states (Webb, M., & Wijeweera, 2015). All the disputes that have arisen later on were the result of many factors the imbalance of power between the two countries also created fear of insecurity in the region, especially

from the Pakistan side. Some of the factors and explicit causes of conflict in the region can be numbered as:

- Difference of ideology and religion
- Hyper nationalism
- Mistrust
- Disputes
- Power Imbalance
- Misunderstanding
- Innate enmity

2.2. Difference of Ideology & Hyper Nationalism

The difference of ideology is the starting point, from where the feelings of bad relations have emerged. However, the views from both sides have created further problems for the generation looking for peace in the region. The differences in the national movement and how each one of them defined political freedom are the manners in which the two countries view each other which pushed both India and Pakistan to deal with each other through stereotypes (Ghumman,2021). Such lack of knowledge in the two countries about each other is bolstered by the hostile propaganda on either side. Indian occupation of Kashmir, her role in the disintegration of Pakistan, and its traditional approach towards the Indian Muslims are supporting the vicious circle of reaction in the future of South Asia. It will keep continuing until Indian implements the true spirit of its secular constitution which is still nowhere in the politics when it comes to minorities (Mohan, & Amal,2020).

Ideological difference shaped not only the misunderstanding between the two countries but, the negative propagation of different factors, creating the feelings of Hyper nationalism, between peoples of both countries, such nationalistic emotions is now the matter of their self-esteem. Looking towards the archives of history we found this self-esteem, even, when negotiating deferent further knocked out in full-scale war e.g. failure of to fix the border at the month of sir Creek has blocked agreement on the maritime boundary in Arabian sea preventing the exploration of what could be risk offshore deposits of oil and gas. The dispute had to be armed clashes in 1965 (Misra,2001). Another example of self-esteem and hyper-nationalism we found during the negotiation on Siachen in 1992, when director-general of Indian military intelligence Inder Verma, put paid to Kumar's efforts who was Defense Secretary (Aryal, S. K. (2021).

.... This is our area; we are fully in control. We are dominating it. How can you ask us to vacate this position? He thundered we don't care either about many or the number of cruelties we suffer. We are going to defend our position on Siachen.

These acts show self-esteem even with the officials of the two countries and to explore the political side of self-esteem one needs no fact-finding, as it is present in everyday politics of India.

2.3. Mistrust leading towards Disputes

In an era of globalization, communication, and information technology, around one billion people of India and Pakistan are almost cut off from each other when it comes to developing peaceful relations for the future of South Asia. Regardless of modern interaction in the film and music industries the political behavior in Indian leadership is still not allowing the young generation to think independently. Although understanding between the future generations of both countries is pushing all those hawkish elements that justify the unjustifiable politics only for power (Thoker, & Ramzan, 2021).

At the moment it is understandable that the conditions in which both the countries India and Pakistan got independence, were based on enmity and mistrust. That extreme hostility

resulted in many disputes between the two countries. Disputes caused further tension in the region and a few times resulted in a full-scale war, one of them being Kashmir, which is a 'flash point' in South Asia and will continue to hamper efforts towards peace and co-operation in the region.

2.4. Power Imbalance & Innate Enmity

The hostility of two countries India and Pakistan consist of their ideological deference Nationalism, mistrust, and dispute. The very dominating factor, which is inevitable and is another source of conflict between the two countries, is the quest for a 'balance of power'. All these problems of the region are self-made and animosity is becoming in build in the relations between India and Pakistan. The feelings of hatred for newly born Pakistan by Hindus, at the time of independence, announced that they would try to unite the sub-continent again as they lost their 'Gao-MATA'(Govindrajan,2018). They also claimed that "Pakistan" is a fragile state and soon both states would be united. Pakistan perceived this scenario and thoughts of Hindus as a threat to its sovereignty and security and it started perceiving India as an enemy, which was obvious at that time as India is still a bigger state than Pakistan. So it has a natural fear of security vis-à-vis India and this insecurity led Pakistan to join western alliances and to strengthen its military capabilities. So the innate enmity gets stronger day by day (Woodwell, 2005).

2.5. Misunderstandings

This is another factor, which shaped the nature and character of conflicts in the region. Due to mistrust, innate enmity, ideological differences, etc, various misunderstandings were created between India and Pakistan, for example:

- a) India had always claimed that its military strategy or program is vis-à-vis China but in practicality, its forces are on the Pakistani border, which Pakistan has never accepted as China-specific.
- b) India try to justify its nuclear capability by mentioning the Chinese nuclear program but Pakistan perceived that the Indian nuclear program is against Pakistan.
- c) India refused to sign NPT, CTBT, by asserting global arms control but in reality, India escalated the arms race in the region. Pak did not accept the Indian viewpoint and said that India wants to increase its nuclear stockpile (Ghose,2013).

Many examples can be quoted to explain the ongoing misunderstanding between India and Pakistan but the important issue is not the events, it is the behavior, which is not allowing both sides to avoid such useless confrontation all the time. To explore the conflict, we need to know the character and its nature.

3. Character and Nature of Conflict in South Asia

Two countries India and Pakistan, since their birth arose with innate enmity. Ideological differences and mistrust created animosity between the two states. The most important characteristic of the India – Pakistan conflict is its persistence. The resolution of specific disputes did not lead to peace; new disputes arose to take the place of those that were resolved. The Indus River system dispute, probably the most dangerous dispute between India and Pakistan, was resolved successfully in 1960. The serious territorial dispute over the Runn of Kutch was successfully settled in the mid-1960s. The Tashkent and Simla

agreement, which ended the 1965 and 1971 wars respectively, were expected to provide the basis for a sense of lasting peace in South Asia, but to no avail. Also, the salience of some disputes waxed and waned: between 1965 and 1989 the dispute over Kashmir seemed to disappear from the India – Pakistan agenda, other issues like the Bangladesh rebellion, nuclear weapons, conventional arms race, Siachen dispute, and so on, taking pride of place. By the early 1990s, Kashmir had replaced the other issues as the most important dispute between the two countries (Rupesinghe,1988). This suggests that the specific disputes are only symptoms of a deeper conflict between India and Pakistan, maybe because of behavior, ideology, religion, or something else.

The power imbalance between the Pakistan and India is also a major reason for conflict between the two countries of South Asia. Siachen chart out different reasons for the conflict in South Asia but if examined by a closer look one realizes that the very nature of conflict in South Asia lay in the religious, cultural, and historical differences between the two major nations of South Asia i.e. Muslims and Hindus. These key differences led to confrontation and disputes in South Asia. Their mistrust due to these differences also led to a military confrontation between them in 1948, 1965, and 1971. In short, one can only say that the nature of the conflict between India and Pakistan is the clash of ideas (religious, cultural, and historical), all disputes, confrontation, and conflict are offshoots of it (Mohan,2019).

4. Emergence of Nuclear Environment in South Asia

South Asia is one such area in which security issues are regional, but the involvement of great power on different occasions directly affected military balance and introduced many complications. Interestingly, even the withdrawal of the great powers from the region also radically influenced the military balance (Chapman, 2016). In a strange sense, both the involvement and withdrawal increased insecurity in the region. While India feels threatened by China and to a much lesser extent by Pakistan, the main source of threat for all other South Asians is deemed to be India's ambition to act as hegemony in the region. Undoubtedly India is the dominant power in the region and in consequence, its policies deeply affect the security of its neighbors (Hagerty, 1995). While is true that most security problems are often the products of global, regional, and domestic developments, the major source of security problems in South Asia is the security pursuits of the countries in the region.

For the years both India and Pakistan maintained ambiguous nuclear posture. Neither of them has wanted to give up the nuclear option. From time to time the two countries gave various arguments in support of the nuclear option. In 1974, India detonated its first nuclear device code-named "Smiling Budha" (Murtaza, & Azhar, 2019). The Indian nuclear test added a new and more complex dimension to the already complicated security scenario in South Asia.

Pakistan's response to the Indian explosion was a mixture of frustration and aspiration. Reacting to the Indian nuclear explosion, the then Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, expressed the determination to quickly match the Indian accomplishment and stressed that the people of Pakistan would neither accept Indian hegemony nor succumb to its nuclear balk mail. Pakistan also declared that it would not compromise its position on the right of the people of Kashmir to decide their future. Bhutto had repeatedly expressed the need for Pakistan to acquire nuclear capability even before assuming the office of Prime Minister, the two decisive factors which spurred Pakistan's quest for nuclear capability were the dismemberment of East Pakistan in 1971 and the Indian nuclear explosion of 1974 (Synnott, 2020). Thus Pakistan's determination to acquire nuclear capability was begun by India and Pakistan took up the challenge. Two additional factors further facilitated Pakistan's plan;

- i. First the muted reaction of the great powers to the Indian explosion in Rajasthan in 1974, encouraged India to continue to expand and enlarge its nuclear.
- ii. Second the growing gap between the conventional capabilities of India and Pakistan was also an important factor.

For years, both India and Pakistan remained ambiguous about their progress in the acquisition of nuclear technology for military purposes. However, it was India that conducted the series of nuclear explosions in May 1998, which in turn forced Pakistan's decision-maker to follow suit. The massive allocation of resources to defense, the canvassing to secure a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, and acquiring nuclear weapon status, all fit in the strategy devised to attain the status of great power. Several Indian's earnestly believe that the acquisition of nuclear weapon status that includes the possession of appropriate delivery system would bring international attention and recognition, which in turn would enhance India's international prestige on the one hand and facilitate it's entirely into UN Security Council as a permanent member on the other (Synnott, 2020).

Regardless of the great status which India is looking for herself, Indian nuclear explosions radically altered the security scenario in the region and the Pakistani policymakers highlighted the need to remedy the situation. With the existing imbalance in conventional arms, the Pakistani decision became somewhat understandable. As compared to India who's nuclear and missile development in Pakistan is the product of compelling military security concerns. The establishment of nuclear deterrence is viewed by many as stabilizing factor (Diamond,1998).

5. Effect of Nuclearization on Conflict in South Asia

India and Pakistan have conducted a nuclear explosion in May 1998. With this both, countries have moved away from a policy of ambiguity to a strategy of deterrence. Though both stress the need for minimum deterrence. Both now recognize each other's ability to inflict unacceptable damage and this is strengthening the minimum deterrence relationship between them. The inherent danger of their earlier ambiguous position has been effectively removed. Both recognize that neither of them has an "impregnable" air defense system. India is undeniably equipped with formidable conventional military capabilities, but the advent of nuclear weapons has in many ways, diminished the importance of conventional weapons, eroding India's claims to superiority in defense. Compared to India, Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability is small but in nuclear deterrence, equation numbers do not play too significant a role (Cohen, 2013).

As matter of fact, this mutual deterrence has been in place for quite some time, though one finds a different description of it. Some have called it 'non-weaponized deterrence while others look upon it as deterrence based on capabilities. A dangerous situation, such as in 1986-87 (Brasstacks), the crisis of 1990 (related to the uprising in Kashmir), the Kargil affair, 2002-03 Military Standoff, and recent tensions over Mumbai Terror 2008 did not lead to the outbreak of a full-fledged war, primarily because of awareness of each other nuclear capabilities. If deterrence worked side only logical to assume that with the overt nuclear weaponization the operative deterrence would be further stabilized (Khalid, 2020).

Despite the complexities of Indo-Pak relations, the nuclearization of the two countries has generated a sense of urgency for improving Indo-Pakistan relations, for the greater good of the two nations. As mentioned above, many factors have further convinced the two nations the time has to come to resolve their outstanding disputes. Since the explosion of May 1998, most developments have been on the right track. Admittedly there have been seen some setbacks, but the spirit of the process has not at all been derailed except in the Mumbai case but it's good everything is again taking its trackback. Even outsiders recognize that there have been confidence-building measures, better communication between civilian-military experts, bus lines across the border, trading in energy, and even Kashmir (Cheema & Cohen,2009). India needs Pakistan to grow economically, regionally, and internationally. Pakistan should exploit this opportunity for a better relationship with India without sacrificing its national interest in Kashmir and other core issues

6. Prospects of Conflict Resolution of Nuclear South Asia

The intriguing thing is that even after having recognized that a positive start has been made by both India and Pakistan in the recent meeting at Sharm-ul-Sheikh in Egypt, the world community has not yet taken the desired steps that could strengthen the peace process and also bring these two countries

within overall disarmament framework. The following steps are in dire need to facilitate the ongoing regional peace process but also bring India and Pakistan into the arms control efforts (Zaman,2017).

i. Encourage India and Pakistan to Adopt more Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)

What needs to be stressed here is not just the introduction of additional CBMs, but that those CBMs are introduced that would stabilize the nuclear stature of India and Pakistan and make the region a nuclear safe zone. Secondly, efforts should be directed towards the sincere application of existing CBMs has not been all impressive. India and Pakistan should remember that CBMs couldn't resolve conflict. These can only replace an environment of mistrust and suspicion with trust and harmony, provided steps are taken on a reciprocal basis (Javaid, 2010). Confidence-building will remove irritants and insecurities, which are prevailing at the popular level in India and Pakistan.

ii. Induct India and Pakistan in the Fold of Collective Disarmament Efforts

For creating conditions favorable for talks, India and Pakistan must agree upon meaningful arms, control measures, both conventional and nuclear. This is essential for international security. Already both have continuously demonstrated signs of willingness to go along with the international community if the USA wants to lead the efforts. By denying recognition to the existing realities things are unlikely to improve, efforts should be made to stop the production of nuclear-tipped missiles. India and Pakistan should be given technical assistance to develop more effective mechanisms to control the risks of nuclear war, improve their command and control systems, enhance transparency, introduce verification and resolve their outstanding disputes (Hensman,1999).

iii. Intensify Efforts to Resolve the Kashmir Dispute

To lessen tensions between India and Pakistan, the international community must intensify efforts to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Ever since the Simla agreement was a sign, which stipulated the settlement of India – Pakistan disputes through bilateral negotiation, the international community has been stressing that the Kashmir issue must be resolved bilaterally (Wirsing,2016). However, the world must realize that if a dispute has not been solved for the last 60 years, it is the responsibility of the international community to look into it and to at least try to impress upon two countries to engage in a constructive dialogue. Pakistan has indeed gone out of the way to accept both bilateral as well as multilateral approaches. For the first time, the United States President Mr. Barrack Hussian Obama during his campaigns and after joining the office devoted attention to the Kashmir issue, which still needs a visible action plan to urge the two countries to work collectively towards its resolution. Such efforts also need to undertake at other multilateral forums. In the ultimate analysis, the resolution of regional disputes is the only sure way to reduce the chance of nuclear exchanges (Rauf & Asif, 2021).

iv. Realistic Approach is Required

It is time the international community stopped judging India's and Pakistan's behavior based on their interaction during the last 60 years of their independent existence, during which they fought three wars and engaged in many crises It needs to be stressed that even those wars and crises were perhaps the most restrained encounters. The total ammunition used in all three Indo-Pakistan wars would be at the bottom of the list of all the wars that have taken place since the end of the Second World War. Also, the total number of the bomb dropped on Vietnam by the United States, would alone outnumber any exchange of bombings between India and Pakistan. On the contrary, the world community should not only take into consideration the legitimate security concerns of both India and Pakistan but also should look at the discriminatory aspects of the nuclear regime and try to make it more generally acceptable (Pal,2017). Punitive restraint measures as unlikely to bring about the desired results, whereas a more realistic approach would elicit a better response. Proving Pakistan, a failed state, or irresponsible nuclear state will be completely useless. What the international community should focus on is timely assistance for Pakistan to support its technology for peaceful usage, which is in dire need of Pakistan.

7. Concluding Remarks

South Asia from the very first day suffered from the arch rivalry of its two main countries i.e. Pakistan and India. The mistrust created at the time of partition led to the age and elongation-elongation between the two. The rivalry between India and Pakistan took a new turn in May 1998 when BJP led Hindu fundamentalist government decided to go for nuclear and after the successful nuclear tests in May 1998 proudly claimed that India is now a nuclear weapon state and its neighbors have to reshape accordingly. Pakistan decided to observe the international reaction but to no avail. As a last resort, Pakistan decided to go nuclear as well. Pakistan tested its nuclear devices on May 28, and 30, 1998. This added new dimensions to the Indo-Pak rivalry nuclear dimension. Now more than ever the damages of destruction are looming in South Asia. At the same time, due to nuclear deterrence, the chances of full-scale war have been minimized, Kargil episode is the prime example.

The question which now knows is what will be the nature of any future conflict in South Asia. Experts do agree that due to the nuclear factor the leadership of the two countries will not go for a large-scale war in which the possibility of using the nuclear weapon is imminent, facts like zero warning time strengthen this argument. Therefore, conflicts in South Asia will mainly remain of low intensity, and to save the region from the destruction of the war; initiatives for establishing everlasting peace are required and this is the call of the day.

The ideological differences, mistrust, disputes, misunderstandings, and innate enmity should be addressed to avoid further confrontation so that the Indo-Pak generation should focus on the development of the region rather than enmity. Factors like the imbalance of power should not be considered as the main characteristic of the conflict between the two countries, which will ultimately vanish India-Pakistan from the surface of South Asia. We should make our history quite soft where the series of events, which shaped the relationship between India and Pakistan, will help us to achieve the nature and character of a peaceful environment in the region. To strengthen the measure towards conflict resolution efforts in the region, Pakistan should play its due role to support the Muslims of India while negotiating trade and cultural opportunities as a responsible regional state. In terms of India and Pakistan, both states are equally involved in regional politics. India and Pakistan have to live in this region forever and if they will be labeled as primary or secondary powers of the region then the people of South Asia will suffer in the end. Pakistan can convince Indians; as Pakistani politics is not complex like Indians but the lack of willingness needs to be channelized with progressive solutions so that the equal representation of regional sources should not be disturbed by India at any cost. This is a time to decide the future of South Asia otherwise India and Pakistan will lose everything at the end and the great games will shape their future.

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