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# CRISIS MANAGEMENT PAKISTAN & INDIA

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Special Paper



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### **Introduction**

A conflict is essentially the existence of incompatible goals. Conflicts are considered intrinsic to human nature. However, conflicts need not always be destructive, societies may be shaped to develop constructive attitudes towards conflicts. Inculcating the notion of tension wisdom- must be a part of one's early years' education- enabling one to absorb counter perspectives and develop creative ways forward. Broad based consultation in decision making is another essential pillar to devise constructive solutions to a conflict- and avoid stagnation stemming from a culture of group think. The presence of apt mediators with effective communication skills- is also necessary to ensure signals between conflicting parties are not misread. On a societal level- enhanced interactions- is an encouraged solution to promote reconciliation and to re-shape perceptions of conflicting parties. At the political level, delinking issues of high politics from low politics- is a recommended path to reconciliation and peace. Enhanced negotiations aimed at addressing common areas of interest are advisable. However, if two conflicting parties continue to maintain coercive positions- escalation becomes inevitable- until the costs becomes evidently imperious.



### Past Conflicts

Pakistan and India maintain years of tense relations- the two countries have engaged in wars and frequent escalated crisis. Dr. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Stephen Cohen and P.R Chari in their book titled 'Four Crisis and a Peace Process' examine the four notable crisis between Pakistan and India namely: The Brasstacks, 1990 crisis, and Kargil crises and 2001–02 crisis. In their view, apart from The Brasstacks crisis- all others received significant global attention. The Brasstacks crisis featured no exchange of fire and no possibility of crossing a nuclear threshold. In a nutshell, it was precipitated by India's military exercises, that became full blown when General Zia ul-Haq and his vice chief of army staff laid out the possibility that Pakistan would counterattack India's vulnerable state of Punjab, and then subsided when India decided not to react to Pakistan's military response. The ultimate motive of those who planned and ran India's Brasstacks exercise still remains unclear. This crisis was perhaps propelled by a very small group of Indian and Pakistani policymakers trying to calculate the moves of the other and prepare a countermove in anticipation.

The 1990 crisis was distinctive in its motives and purpose. It had no clear strategic objective, only a series of faltering military and political responses to changed circumstances, beginning with India's flawed elections in Kashmir, which led to increased Pakistani support for Kashmir cause. India misread Pakistani signals, press reports, and public statements -which created an aura of crisis, especially after elements of the Indian and Pakistani militaries were put on high alert. Although there was apparently no plan for a calculated escalation, Pakistan used the possibility of escalation as a way of freezing any Indian response. Yet it was unaware that India was misreading its signals. The

crisis finally dissipated after dialogue and the US intervention made it evident that neither India nor Pakistan was really interested in further escalation.

The Kargil conflict involved extensive combat, the fear that one or both states might climb several steps up the escalation ladder. Because the actual crisis situation was so heated and widely publicized—many in the region and abroad feared that the conflict might get out of hand.

This was also the case in 2001–02, even though no actual combat took place during that crisis. India’s military preparations for Operation Parakram were so extensive and the provocation so acute that most onlookers took New Delhi’s threat of escalation seriously. ***However, some Pakistanis and a few Indians correctly identified the strategic purpose behind India’s build-up and threatening rhetoric, which emanated from a lesson learned during the Kargil how to coerce the United States to pressure Pakistan and thereby achieve a limited political victory.***

These four crises were not resolved. They were managed, and then they ended, with the underlying causes still unaddressed. None of the crises concluded with a genuine peace, and none were purging events in which both parties came to see that their differences could be resolved peacefully, or even by a long-enduring process of dialogue and compromise.

#### **The Modi Years:**

Ever since the advent of Modi Government- relations between Pakistan and India have been oscillating between bad to worse. The year 2016 was dubbed as one of the worst years for Pakistan-India ties- it was saturated with Indian blame games against Pakistan and several cross-border violations. The dawn of 2016 manifested the Pathankot attacks on an Indian airbase, Indian officials blamed Jaish-e-Mohammed for the attacks and alleged Pakistan’s complicity. The Pathankot issue soon died down and no substantial evidences against Pakistan were revealed. By the month of September 2018, Indian officials once again alleged Jaish-e-Muhammed and Pakistani complicity for the Uri attacks. Forwarding eleven days onwards- India announced that it had carried out alleged surgical strikes on hideouts in Pakistani territories. Tensions between Pakistan and India enhanced, the global audience also offered their views on the incident- it remained unclear what the exact nature of these surgical strikes was-if carried out at all. No evidences of Pakistani complicity in Uri have been presented till date and nor did India accept a third party investigation into the matter. The post Uri days took place at the heels of the UNGA session in September 2016. It is assessed that Indian proactive attempts to malign Pakistan prior to the UNGA session was a meticulously designed scheme to

deflect attention from: 1. the developments that had been taking place in Kashmir ever since Burhan Wani's death in July 8th 2016. 2. Pakistan's capture of the Indian spy Kulbushan Yadav in Balochistan in March 2016. 3. An attempt by the Modi administration to gain political mileage- internally.

### **The Kashmir Factor**

It is well known that the disproportionate use of force by India- in Kashmir- has birthed a new breed and wave of freedom fighters. Several prominent Kashmir political figures have also voiced their concerns regarding the unstructured and vigorous spirit of the new age freedom fighters- who do not hold allegiance to any specific group, nor do they have a specific political end defined- expect for 'fight till death instead of being oppressed'.

India leans on support of global anti-terror sentiments and bigger power rivalries to spin the situation against Pakistan, deflect attention from Kashmir, create favorable regional dynamics for its own aspirations and enhance its military might. The current trend is a continuation of India's 1999 learning of how to maximize benefits from bigger powers.

### **Recent Trends**

India acquired the Russian-made S-400 Triumph air defense system- there is a global silence on implications on of this development- on the strategic balance in South Asia.

Reportedly, last month, India's biennial Army Commanders Conference convened to deliberate upon four major in-house studies. One of these studies on the "Re-organisation and Rightsizing of the Indian Army," made a decision to proceed with forming all arms integrated battle groups (IBG). It is stated that this decision has the potential to completely upset the conventional strategic balance that has prevailed between India & Pakistan for the last four decades. This is so, as the operationalization of integrated battle groups will mark the concrete acceptance by India of the doctrine of Cold Start, whereby India can wage a proactive war against Pakistan even in a nuclear environment.

India continues with its attempts to corner Pakistan at the political and diplomatic end- India had called off the Foreign Ministers meeting scheduled at the sidelines of UNGA in September, within 24 hours after agreeing to it by citing the killings of policemen in Jammu and Kashmir. India also, kept Pakistan out of the recent Indian Ocean Naval Symposium event- which is aimed at addressing matters of regional maritime security.

For now, it is evident that peace with Pakistan is not a lucrative option for India. It is likely for India to maintain the status quo in the foreseeable future. But till what end? It is believed that both India and Pakistan are slowly coming to an understanding that while nuclear weapons can deter the other side's nuclear weapons, they cannot deter other forms of conventional or sub conventional conflict. In this environment, limited conventional conflict may be unlikely to provoke an immediate nuclear confrontation. However, in case a limited conventional confrontation spirals into a full-scale conventional conflict- to what extent is the escalation likely? Pakistan retains its options to counter Indian aggressions militarily, but it is also imperative to devise political and diplomatic responses to Indian narratives - that appear to be creating justifications and a space for future aggressions.

The danger for conflict stems from recent Indian views on the possibility of conflict under the nuclear umbrella. This dangerous line of thought probably originates from Indian perception of its conventional superiority and Pakistan's transient economic weakness. This has led India to ramp up its covert destabilization of Pakistan through Afghanistan and to pressurize Pakistan on the Line of Control. US patronage of India and total disregard for the atrocities India is committing in Kashmir encourages India to continue on a path that may trigger conflict. With the US-India Nuclear Agreement and the strategic relationship with the US behind it India has moved to SLBM capability and Ballistic Missile Defence to deter Pakistan from reliance on its nuclear assets. Pakistan's response has been mature and restrained so far but Pakistan has options to offset the asymmetry with India if push comes to shove. The US and the world need to take note of Pakistans offer of unconditional dialogue and a bilateral strategic restraint regime. Conflict between nuclear armed states is not an option—it is a recipe for disaster.