

Original Paper

Evaluation of Pakistani Challenge to Indian Hegemonic

Ambition: A Look into History

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Received: March 21, 2022

Accepted: April 19, 2022

Online Published: April 26, 2022

doi:10.22158/jrph.v5n2p1

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/jrph.v5n2p1>

Abstract

South Asia is the largest region in the world in terms of population and India is the most dominant power among the eight member states that comprise the region, two of which possess nuclear weapons. The region is widely regarded as potential conflict zone because of the historic rivalry between India and Pakistan. As the British exited from the subcontinent, India aspired to inherit the hegemonic pole position of the colonial power as its successor. But refusal of nuclear Pakistan, the second most powerful state in South Asia to surrender to the Indian material superiority resulted in the conflict formation during the last seven decades. The enmity between India and Pakistan commenced from the violent partition of British India in 1947. In addition to the three wars that India and Pakistan fought since the British relinquished colonial occupation, there were many other conflicts that could have ignited full-fledged armed confrontation. One of the core reasons for tension in South Asia is the unresolved Kashmir problem. Pakistan's possession of nuclear arms has further dented Indian ambition to establish unchallenged regional hegemonic stability. The nuclearization of the subcontinent in the 90's has benefitted much smaller Pakistan by elevating it to a more potent challenger to the Indian military might. The failure of India to rise above the perennial Indo-Pak confrontation not only has acted against fulfilling its dream of achieving the great power status, but also proven to be a formidable barrier in the creation of favorable environment needed for regional cooperation in order to maintain socio-economic development in the poverty-stricken South Asia. This paper focuses on the root causes of the conflict with chronological history of events.

Keywords

Arms Race, British, Hegemony, India, Kashmir dispute, Pakistan

1. Introduction

India is by far the largest, most populous and economically strongest nation in South Asia. With the population nearing 1.4 billion and an average annual economic growth of above 7 percent from 2005 to 2020, India also is a lucrative market for global investors. The nuclear power regional giant possesses the second largest military manpower in the world with nearly 1.4 million active personnel. According to the global fire-power statistics, India is ranked fourth in the global military power (Note 1). India's importance to the contemporary great powers is also enhanced by the significant geo-strategic advantage: the country is located at the center of South Asia, with its land and maritime borders separating all South Asian nations from each other, except for Afghanistan and Pakistan. In consideration of the geo strategic reality, some analysts describe South Asia as essentially 'India-locked'. Taking advantage of the above demographic, economic, military and geo-strategic superiority, since 1947, India has generally succeeded in dominating all the smaller states of the region except Pakistan, the second largest state in respect to population and land. India does not hide its aspiration to become the undisputed South Asian regional leader and eventually, a major global power and permanent member in the UN Security Council. But, Pakistan, although suffering from asymmetric power comparison, continues to pose a credible threat to the Indian hegemonic dream in the post-colonial South Asia. The success of Pakistan in establishing nuclear parity in 1998 has greatly enhanced its capability to challenge India in the western theatre of the region. The character and intensity of Indo-Pak sibling rivalry cannot be fully understood without referring to the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947.

2. History of Partition

On 23 March 1940, the Muslims of India formally placed demand for full autonomous and sovereign powers of separate Muslim-majority States in India by the adoption of a resolution in Lahore conference of the Indian Muslim League, the political party representing the aspiration of the minority Muslims (one-fourth of the subcontinent's total population) under British India. Although the Indian National Congress expressed initial reluctance to accept the demand, the then prevailing political environment of acute mistrust between the Hindus, the majority population and the Muslims made the ultimate partition of India rather inevitable. Congress leadership eventually, accepted the demand of partition as a disagreeable necessity. British Empire reeling under the post-WWII economic crisis and further devastated by the terrible winter of 1946-47 desired a quick exit from the communal blood-bath in India. Unfortunately, that termination of the British Raj brought tragic and unprecedented orgy of violence that took million lives and displaced tens of millions of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as the price for their freedom from the shackle of colonial occupation. The partition was followed by one of history's largest mass migrations -over 10 million people from both sides- and was accompanied by insane violence. Hasan (2005) narrates the senseless massacre of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, 'Both countries faced an explosion of communal violence. Millions left their homes in Punjab while Hindu,

Muslim, and Sikh fanatics slaughtered each other mercilessly. Communal riots in East Punjab forced more than six million Muslims from East Punjab to migrate to Pakistan. Crowded trains would reach Pakistan with not a soul alive. Hundreds of villages were burnt in both countries, and it is estimated that a million-people died during partition. Approximately seven million people crossed from India to Pakistan and slightly more migrated the other way (Note 2).

Recounting the horror that accompanied the partition, Korbil (1954) blames extensive communalization of the colonial administration, both civil and military, under the British watch, for the terrible human suffering and tragedy. He writes, 'Thus, it was that the long-awaited day of independence, an event that should have produced general rejoicing, reverence, and conciliation, was instead for thousands of innocent people a verdict of death. The British were evacuating their forces and offices; the newly established governments of the Union of India and Pakistan were unable to cope with the situation. Fighting went on in villages and towns, in provinces and Princely States. To a considerable extent this could not be stopped because the administration was similarly divided from top governmental posts down to the last local policeman. The central government became an unworkable team; the civil servants were grouped along the communal lines; the army broke into two hostile fronts bridged over only by a few British generals who tried to save the situation by wise and considerate advice. On local scenes of horror, the constabulary sided with the community according to national and religious allegiances. When the maelstrom of human tragedy had subsided, the Subcontinent was poorer by more than half a million people who had lost their lives in the mass killings. The misery of the displaced persons, fleeing from Muslim to Hindu territories or vice versa, staggers the imagination. Six million fled from Pakistan, 5,800,000 from India' (Note 3).

The communal violence, at the time of the independence, set the stage for a permanent future rivalry between India and Pakistan. The creation of India and Pakistan, in effect, elevated the inter-communal violence in the British colony into an inter-state conflict. Since then, the political history of Pakistan and India is a sad study into enmity and unmitigated confrontation. Neither party took any initiative for confidence building measures which might have healed the deep wound created at the time of the partition. In fact, some of the actions taken by the much larger, more populous and materially superior India further aggravated the animosity. 'In effect, each country has come to view the other as a mortal, duplicitous, untrustworthy, aggressive and irreconcilable enemy' (Note 4). Former foreign secretary of India, Dixit (2002) laments the unfulfilled dream of independence, 'The objective for which Partition was brought about has not been met. The objective was that once those Muslims who wanted a separate homeland got their homeland, the antagonism, apprehension and suspicion that underpinned the demand for Pakistan would disappear. The two countries would live in harmony and peace. This was the aspiration of both Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru, first heads of government in the two countries. Exactly the reverse has happened'. (Note 5)

The nuclear power regional rivals have entered the 21st century bringing upon themselves the challenge of managing the implications of being endowed with enormous destructive power which can

endanger the security of entire South Asia. In order to understand the nature and complexity of the 'enduring rivalry' (Note 6) between India and Pakistan, a brief historical survey of the origins of the conflict is necessary. Among many unresolved issues, I would argue that particularly, three major disputes have made the environment so toxic.

3. Roots of Post-partition Disputes

1) Division of liquid asset in the treasury of Reserve Bank of India as on 14 August 1947

The colonial government's cash balance at the time of the Partition were a little under Rupees 400 crore and Pakistan's share was fixed at Rupees 75 crore, which was inclusive of Rupees 20 crore made immediately available to Pakistan as working balance on August 15, 1947. But the Indian government started putting preconditions with a clear motive to delay the payment of the balance Rupees 55 crores owed to Pakistan which was blatant violation of the tripartite agreement between the British, Muslim League and Congress. Both the then Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and deputy prime minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel thought that this money could be used for purchase of military equipment by Pakistan for its use against India (Note 7). This flimsy excuse in their attempt to delay transfer of Pakistan's legitimate share aroused justified anger in Pakistan whose leadership became convinced that India started conspiring immediately against the very existence of Pakistan as an independent Muslim-majority state.

2) Dispute arising out of boundary demarcation in Punjab and Bengal

The surprising and arguably unplanned haste with which Partition was executed guaranteed that there would be contentious issues to haunt the successor states to the British Raj. Such rapid and traumatic surgery was unlikely to heal without serious complications. British government selected Sir Cyril Radcliff, the Vice-Chairman of the English Bar Council to partition the subcontinent and demarcate the land boundaries of the two future states of India and Pakistan. Viceroy Lord Mountbatten gave instruction to Sir Cyril Radcliffe to complete the geographical demarcation within shortest possible time. Indeed, the British jurist performed a near miracle to complete the job of determining the fate of the subcontinent in mere 'thirty-five' days! Radcliffe arrived in New Delhi on 8 July 1947 and the final award was ready for execution on 12 August 1947 following a preliminary version submitted on 8 August. The speed at which the complicated job was performed could have been applauded if the allegation of conspiracy to favor India by the British government not raised later.

Muslim league leaders felt that they were given a raw deal by the British in partitioning the subcontinent. The agreed basis of the partition was to take place according to communal allegiance; the predominantly Hindu provinces were to form the Union of India, and the predominantly Muslim provinces were to form Pakistan. However, Congress objected to the application of the above formula in the cases of two Muslim-majority strategic provinces, Punjab and Bengal, both of which had significant population of non-Muslims. Congress presently demanded division of both Bengal and Punjab on communal line as a price for accepting Muslim League demand of establishing a separate

and independent Muslim homeland. British imperial government accepted Congress proposal which would ultimately be the major reason for the horrendous bloodshed on the eve of the independence. Furthermore, in the process of partitioning the two large provinces, Lord Mountbatten, the Viceroy allegedly favored India. Muslim majority Gurdaspur in Punjab and Karimganj in Bengal were awarded to India in total disregard of the majority-population principle of the partition. It cannot be a coincidence that Gurdaspur link was vital for India to have access to the princely Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir. Mountbatten has been accused by Pakistan of having participated in this manipulation of Partition with the deliberate intent to favor the interests of India over those of Pakistan (Note 8). Lamb (1991) goes further and raise question, based on credible circumstantial evidence, on the integrity of Mountbatten, “Was the final award of the Boundary Commission influenced in any way by Mountbatten (or his close advisers) for ‘political’ ends? The published documents provide some evidence which, if not conclusive, is certainly circumstantial”.

3) Unresolved status of Jammu and Kashmir

India and Pakistan are the states that are born in disagreement about their border and specifically about the future of Jammu and Kashmir, a princely state in 1947 with overwhelming Muslim majority ruled by a Hindu ruler. Kashmir dispute had its origin in the manner the subcontinent was partitioned. As mentioned before, the concerned parties, i.e., Muslim League, Congress and the British agreed to partition the subcontinent mostly along demographic lines; Hindu majority areas to constitute India and predominantly Muslim areas of the British Indian Empire came to constitute Pakistan. In addition to those areas that had been formally under the aegis of the British Crown, there also remained nearly six hundred ‘princely states’ (Note 9). Lord Mountbatten, the last representative of the Crown, decreed that these states would have to accede to India or Pakistan in accordance to their contiguity and demographic situation (Note 10). However, three princely states objected to Mountbatten formula and demanded independence: Jammu and Kashmir in the north, Hyderabad in the south, and Junagadh in the west. None of states could, however, achieve their goal because of strong Indian objection and subsequent military action.

While the rulers of Hyderabad and Junagadh were Muslims, the majority of their population was Hindu and their accession to India eventually occurred through internal revolt of the majority Hindus against the Muslim rulers and military campaign of India. India justified the forced incorporation on the grounds that its action conformed to the will of the Hindu majorities of the states and the principle of partition. But, Jammu and Kashmir, one of the largest princely states, posed a difficult proposition: it shared borders with both India and Pakistan, had a Muslim-majority population, and a Hindu monarch. Under the principle of partition, irrespective of the wish of the Hindu ruler, the Muslim-majority state should have been integrated with Pakistan. Furthermore, the people of Kashmir were dependent on Pakistan for trade and livelihood. In a complete volte-face on Kashmir, India used exact opposite logic in aiding the Hindu Maharaja against the will of the overwhelming Muslim majority. Sission and Rose (1990) justifiably argue, ‘There are two important differences between the Kashmir and the Junagadh

and Hyderabad cases. First, neither of the latter two states were contiguous to Pakistan and thus, under the imprecise principles of partition, they had no alternative but to accede to India. Kashmir, in contrast, bordered on both states, and the contiguity principle thus did not apply' (Note 11). Adhikari and Kamle (2010) accept the ground reality that it was more logical for Kashmir to join with Pakistan. They write, 'Geographically, Jammu & Kashmir was inclined towards West Pakistan because its contact with the outside world used to be carried forward through Karachi port across the Punjab and the Sind Provinces of the erstwhile British India, now, since these Provinces made up the constituent units of the new Dominion, Pakistan after the partition, there was no option for the Maharaja but to sign the Standstill Agreement with Pakistan (it was signed on August 16, 1947) for commercial and other economic functions, besides access to the outside world (Mayfield, 1955, pp. 178-179). The Maharaja had known that he could not antagonize Pakistan for access to outside world for his people, trade and commerce which, in no way, were possible through India as there was no proper link with India' (Note 12). Alastair Lamb (1991) points finger at the British for creating the dispute in the first place. He writes, 'The logic behind the partition of the Indian Empire into Muslim and non-Muslim portions suggested that Kashmir ought to go to Pakistan—there can be no doubt that had the British made different decisions as to apply and course of action at that time the Kashmir problem might never had arisen, at least in its acutely virulent form' (Note 13).

Accession to India by the Hindu ruler of Kashmir was a violation of the Standstill Agreement which the State had made with Pakistan in August 1947. According to the agreement neither side was to take any unilateral action that changes the status quo. Again, it was Lord Mountbatten who advised Hari Singh, the Hindu King of Kashmir to sign the accession instrument in favor of India. People of Kashmir revolted against the unjust accession that prompted Pakistan to support the mass uprising by sending troops across the border. The first India-Pakistan war started within three months after partition. Pakistan was able to take control of nearly one-third territory of the disputed state before the war on Kashmir ended by the intervention of the United Nations. When United Nations mediation finally achieved a ceasefire in the First Kashmir War, the armistice called for a plebiscite to determine Kashmir's future. The plebiscite has never been held due to opposition from India, and, since 1949, India has been engaged in solidifying its control over two-thirds of Kashmir, while Pakistan has been attempting to reverse the process (Note 14). Notwithstanding its promise of a plebiscite, India quietly took measures to assimilate the state of Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union. It is clear from all the actions of India regarding its Kashmir related policy that International Law and International Legal Instrument (UN Security Council Resolution) or principle of partition of the subcontinent in 1947 (principle of majority) have little value and moral obligation (Note 15). Muslim population in Jammu and Kashmir never accepted accession to India and their resistance continues till now. Majority of them look upon India as an oppressive occupying force. As a result, Kashmir is one of the most heavily militarized places in the world, with estimates of Indian security forces in the region at well over 700,000 (the government of India refuses to release official numbers) to suppress 13 million people in the valley.

The above-mentioned historical baggage never allowed the bilateral relation between India and Pakistan to prosper. On the contrary, apart from the three full-fledged wars, the rivalry has generated repeated near-war scenarios at regular intervals. Thus, India-Pakistan relation has been a story of continually recurring events of bloodshed and crisis management.

4. Brief Historical Record of India-Pakistan War, Conflict, and Arms Race

August 1947: As soon as the demarcation of the two states was formally announced, one of the most tragic migrations in human history began. Millions of Hindus and Muslims commenced perilous journey in opposite directions to leave the land of their ancestors in search of new home and safety. Dalrymple (2015) sadly notes, ‘Across the Indian subcontinent, communities that had coexisted for almost a millennium attacked each other in a terrifying outbreak of sectarian violence, with Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other—a mutual genocide as unexpected as it was unprecedented’ (Note 16).

October 1947-January 1949: The first India-Pakistan war began following the revolt of Muslim majority population in Jammu and Kashmir against disputed accession of the valley to India by the Hindu ruler. On 1 January 1948, India complained to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) against Pakistan alleging that it had been aiding the uprising in Kashmir. The outcome in the United Nations was not exactly what India had hoped for. On 21 April 1948, UNSC adopted resolution No. 47, urging the warring states for ceasefire and to arrange a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir under UN supervision. This was in effect, the international admission of the rights of the Kashmiri people. A ceasefire was arranged on Jan. 1, 1949, and the ceasefire line that was established is now the effective Line of Control between India and Pakistan.

August 1965: The second Indo-Pak war was sparked by a series of clashes again across the border along the line of control in Kashmir. In August 1965, irregular troops of Pakistan crossed the Line of Control into the Indian-administered Kashmir in an attempt to start an insurgency against Indian occupation. Pakistan’s plan (Operation Gibraltar) was to employ guerilla bands to destroy communication system of the enemy and attack strategic points to tie up the Indian army to facilitate full-scale attack (Note 17). On 1 September, Pakistan mounted a major attack with artillery and tanks in the Chamb sector near the disputed border between Pakistan and Jammu; on 6 September, Indian troops crossed the Punjab border in three places in the Lahore sector. The biggest tank battle since World War II had begun (Note 18). The war lasted for seventeen days and ended in a stalemate in which no side could achieve its strategic objective.

December 1971: Under a strange and possibly, untenable geographical arrangement, Pakistan was born in 1947 with two wings, separated by nearly 2,000 kilometers of Indian territory. The third Indo-Pak war took place as the direct outcome of the civil war in Pakistan, arising out of ethnic and linguistic difference and economic grievances, pitting West Pakistani ruling class against East Pakistan. Bengali population of East Pakistan commenced nine-month long liberation war with full and

enthusiastic military and diplomatic assistance from New Delhi. The war was a disaster for Pakistan and their demoralized army in East Pakistan surrendered to the combined force of India and Bangladesh on 16 December 1971 within only two weeks of commencement of formal war. Rizvi (1986) mentions, 'In the end what enabled Bangladesh to break away in less than nine months of civil war was the decisive intervention of India on the side of the Bengalis and a corresponding failure of Pakistan to secure a similar counter-balance against India. The USA and China made gestures but shied back from actual physical involvement, thus leaving India free to tilt the balance in favor of the Bengalis' (Note 19). An independent Muslim-majority Bangladesh was born at the eastern border of India at the end of the war.

May 1974: India successfully tested its first nuclear weapon, code named "Operation Smiling Buddha." The nuclear device was detonated in the Pokhran army base Test Range in Rajasthan, close to the border with Pakistan. Decisive victory in 1971 war against Pakistan followed by the public show of atomic power in 1974 gave temporary preeminence to India in South Asia. However, that Indian pole position would change in 1979 by the Soviet aggression in Afghanistan. The US that mostly abandoned Pakistan after the disastrous 1971 war, felt the necessity of Pakistani help to organize Afghan resistance against the Soviet occupation. Once again, Pakistan became an important factor in the South Asian regional geopolitics.

1986-87: A fresh crisis arose when Indian army decided to conduct a massive military exercise under the codename 'Operation Brass Tacks' in close proximity to the Sind border with Pakistan. At that time, Sikh separatist movement in India was at its peak and India alleged Pakistani conspiracy behind it. In an atmosphere of extreme hostility, the Indian show of force was perceived as an act of potential aggression by Pakistan. The massive scale of Indian exercise convinced Islamabad that the Indians were preparing an operation aimed at dismantling Pakistan again, similar to the one they did in East Pakistan in 1971. Pakistan hastily counter-mobilized and '340,000 troops were facing each other along a 250-mile stretch of the border from the central deserts to the northern mountains, and there was talk on both sides of an accidental war breaking out' (Note 20). Strong diplomatic effort from America persuaded India to limit its exercise. Mutual de-escalation took place by February 1987 and the crisis that once again threatened the region was defused.

1989: Freedom movement in Kashmir transformed to armed resistance against Indian occupation in 1989. Majority Muslim citizens of the valley were demanding either independence or a union with Pakistan. Pakistan supported the movement, calling for the issue to be resolved by the United Nations according to the UNSC resolution 47. India, on the other hand, called for Pakistan to end of what it called a 'cross-border terrorism'. Insurgency operation in Kashmir intensified as the militants felt encouraged by the success of Afghan freedom fighters against Soviet occupation. A leading Indian newspaper summarized 1989 situation as follows:

"In 1989, India found itself on the losing side of the Cold War with hardly a friend in the international community. More so, the international community was negatively disposed towards India vis-à-vis the

Kashmir issue. Pakistan was optimistic after having been part of the alliance that had defeated the Soviet Union in the Afghan war and was confident of its ability and standing in the region. The Kashmiri dissidents, Pakistan and the militants in Kashmir had managed to ‘internationalise’ their cause and garnered significant levels of sympathy for it. India was being pushed into a corner” (Note 21).

May 1998: India and Pakistan both conducted successful nuclear tests in 1998. India first detonated five underground nuclear devices from 11 to 13 May near its border with Pakistan. They selected the same place of Pokhran, Rajasthan where it conducted the first nuke test in 1974. In response, Pakistan conducted six tests in Chagai and Kharan test sites during the period 28 to 30 May. The reciprocal tests put to rest all ambiguity regarding nuclear status of India and Pakistan that earned South Asia a new identification of ‘nuclear flashpoint’. A senior Indian general caution, ‘The security environment of South Asia has drastically changed as a result of Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests conducted in May 1998. From ambiguity, India and Pakistan overtly declared their nuclear capability. The tension between India and Pakistan reached a new height—With overt nuclearisation of India and Pakistan and the unresolved issues, there is a pressing need for institutionalized mechanism to de-escalate tension and to promote regional peace’ (Note 22).

May 1999: A limited and localized conflict between India and Pakistan took place in Jammu and Kashmir’s Kargil district. Independent security analysts believe that it was Pakistan who precipitated the crisis by sending a small army contingent across the border to occupy some strategic positions inside India-controlled Kashmir. The Pakistani army positioned themselves in key locations that gave them a strategic advantage for a short period at the start of the conflict. As the fighting intensified towards a wider conflict between the two nuclear states, President Clinton of USA actively intervened to convince Pakistan to withdraw its troops behind the Line of Control.

2001-2002: Five armed terrorists entered the Indian Parliament building in December 2001. They opened fire killing nine people. Indian security forces were able to neutralize the attackers. India blamed Pakistani-backed Kashmiri militants for the attack, which led to a massive buildup of Indian troops along their border with Pakistan. Indian army chief publicly threatened that he is ready for war and would not hesitate to use nuclear bomb in response of any nuclear attack from Pakistan. The 2001-2002 military standoff between India and Pakistan ‘put into motion the largest military mobilization since World War II’ with ‘over 500,000 Indian troops mobilized in the first stage of deployment’ (Gupta 2016)—The Indian mobilization led to a counter-mobilization of Pakistani forces. This standoff continued until the fall of 2002 when India chose to demobilize its forces. To a considerable degree, the Indian political leadership may have been inhibited from authorizing a full-scale war because of the dangers of potential escalation’ (Note 23). South Asia was saved from a catastrophic war between the two nuclear states.

November 2008: Ten alleged Pakistani nationals associated with the terror group, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba stormed various buildings including a five-star hotel in Mumbai on November 26, 2008, and killed 166

people in four days of battle against Indian security force. Only one of the 10 gunmen, Mohammad Ajmal Amir Kasab survived the counterattack of the Indian security forces. Kasab was executed by the Indian authority in 2012. The government of India publicly blamed Pakistan for the terrorist attack and seriously contemplated military action. However, India eventually decided to maintain restraint after a series of meetings at the highest level in consideration of the danger of Pakistani response and potential nuclear escalation.

February 2019: Kashmiri militants carried out one of the most vicious attacks against the Indian security forces on 26 February 2019. A suicide bomber rammed a vehicle carrying over 100 kg of explosives into the convoy of Indian paramilitary force in Pulwama district in Kashmir killing over 40 officers and soldiers. The attack also left many critically wounded. As before, India immediately blamed Pakistan for the attack although the suicide-bomber was an indigenous citizen of India-controlled Kashmir. Pakistan strongly denied any link with the operation of the Kashmiri resistance fighters. India remained unconvinced and retaliated with air strikes across the Line of Control without any formal declaration of war. Pakistan also responded by bombing Indian territory and shot down an Indian Mig-21 aircraft in a dog-fight on 27 February. Indian pilot of the downed fighter parachuted inside Pakistani territory. Wing Commander Abhinandan was held captive in Pakistan for sixty hours before his release to the Indian authority across the border. BBC reported dramatic capture of the Indian pilot, “Horran’s village chief recounted Wednesday’s dramatic capture in an interview with the BBC. ‘My objective was to capture the pilot alive. I had seen the Indian flag on his parachute and knew he was Indian,’ said Mohammad Razzaq Chaudhry. The 58-year-old said he saw the MiG-21 fighter jet getting hit and falling to the ground on Wednesday morning. He said he had rushed to the spot as other villagers also headed there’ (Note 24). This was a major embarrassment for hyper-nationalist regime of Narendra Modi. The crisis led to the brink of major war. India reportedly contemplated launching multiple conventional missile strikes inside Pakistan. Nuclear power Pakistan also promised an immediate and appropriate response. Fortunately for South Asia, these threats never materialized. Instead, tensions subsided rather abruptly after the release of the captured Indian pilot.

Pakistan and India was born under an environment of extreme bitterness. Turbulent journey of the two largest states in South Asia was made more difficult by a long history of bickering and armed conflict. The unresolved crisis in Kashmir remains a permanent roadblock in any hope of normalization of ties. According to a senior Indian bureaucrat and security analyst, “India’s strong action in integrating Jammu and Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagadh heightened this bitterness and, more important, generated a genuine apprehension that India would try to nullify Partition by subverting the state of Pakistan, by breaking it up or reabsorbing it into what Pakistanis called the Hindu plan of ‘*Akhand Bharat*’. India’s role in the liberation of Bangladesh only reinforced this Pakistani fear psychosis” (Note 25).

5. Pakistani Challenge to the Indian Hegemony

The bitter history of prolonged, sustained and costly conflict between India and Pakistan proves beyond doubt that the latter has refused to concede sole managerial role to India into the affairs of South Asia. India - Pakistan rivalry encompasses two periods: pre-nuclear and nuclear. The first period of rivalry lasted for fifty-one years, 1947-98, and thereafter, twenty-three years of the second period have already passed. As listed above, the rivalry has experienced about a dozen major crises from 1947 until 2021. Only three of these crises escalated to full-fledged wars; 1947, 1965, and 1971. It is to be noted that during the period when conventional wars took place, the rivals were not known nuclear powers. Four severe crises erupted after India and Pakistan became declared nuclear- weapons-capable states. The Kargil crisis (1999), the Parliament attack crisis (2001-02), Mumbai attack crisis (2008) and Pulwama crisis (2019) were all intense and had the potential for military escalation towards a full-fledged war. However, after the two states acquired nuclear status, they avoided a fourth India-Pakistan war through skillful diplomatic maneuver and crisis management. Apparently nuclear deterrent has been at work post-1998 as both India and Pakistan possess sufficient weapons to ensure mutual destruction. Buzan and Rizvi (1986) analyzed the strategic doctrine of Pakistan even before the country achieved nuclear capability, 'More crucially, Pakistan is never likely to accept a subordinate position of acquiescence to India's hegemony in South Asia. Pakistan remains committed to maintaining a balance of power in the sub-continent, even if this policy requires both a permanent arms race, and the drawing in of assistance, much to the chagrin of India, from outside powers' (Note 26). Emergence of nuclear-power Pakistan in 1998 has strengthened its position as one of the poles of the so-called 'lopsided bipolar' sub-system as defined by some scholars. Paul (2005) writes with admiration that Pakistan has been able to overcome its power asymmetry and continues to successfully challenge India's superior material might, 'The India-Pakistan conflict is both enduring and asymmetric, but the power asymmetry is truncated and mitigated by many factors. In particular, the weaker party, Pakistan, has been successful in reducing the asymmetry through strategy, tactics, alliances with outside powers, acquisition of qualitatively superior weapons and nuclear arms since the late 1980s, and, for over a decade, low-intensity warfare. The materially stronger power, India, is not overwhelmingly preponderant in the theater of conflict –Kashmir- and has been vulnerable to asymmetric challenges by the weaker state, Pakistan. Nor is Pakistan too small or incapable of mounting a sustained challenge, as it has proved over half a century' (Note 27). Paul further argues that in the Kashmir theatre, Pakistan in fact, enjoys advantageous strategic position. Both India and Pakistan possess nuclear arsenal delivery capable aircraft, submarines and ballistic missiles. Estimated flight times from Indian and Pakistani missile launch sites to Islamabad and New Delhi are less than five minutes. Political and military leadership of both the countries are aware of this ground reality. Despite their rhetoric, the governments of India and Pakistan apparently, appreciate the costs and risks associated with nuclear war on the subcontinent. In all the four of their post-nuclear crises, India and Pakistan have noticeably restrained their military behavior.

The possession of nuclear weapons has created a de facto no-war zone and both New Delhi and Islamabad have come to the conclusion that a military solution possibly, does not exist.

6. Conclusion

There is no argument among the analysts and scholars that India desires to become a global power and permanent member of the UN Security Council. Indian leaders have been proclaiming the 'greatness' of their country since its independence. Its ambition to achieve great power status is derived from ancient civilization, huge area, massive population, robust material power and stable economic growth. However, Pakistan, also a successor of the same ancient civilization, has consistently refused to give legitimacy to India's claim of regional leadership. Pakistan's policy of balancing the threat from India has remained unchanged in the tumultuous seven decades of separate existence of India and Pakistan in the subcontinent. Since attaining nuclear capability, the key policy goal of Pakistan is to deter Indian threat by maintaining parity in the nuclear arsenal. Pakistani officials maintain ambiguity regarding their nuclear use doctrine to keep India guessing and maintain a strategic balance. This strategy has worked well apparently for Pakistan as India was deterred from taking military actions on multiple occasions post-1998.

Even though the two nuclear-power neighbors continue to fight over Kashmir, their military not only maintain close contact, but continuously work on Confidence Building Measures (CBM) to avoid the crisis to reach that critical level which may cause nuclear war. A senior General in the Indian army acknowledges, 'Military CBMs have become even more essential due to the absence of political reconciliation between the two geographically contiguous, nuclear-capable states. India and Pakistan have signed several agreements to establish ground rules for military exercise with the objective of avoiding the outbreak of an accidental conflict. An Agreement was signed on April 6, 1991 and ratified in August 1992 on Advance Notice of Military Exercise, Maneuvers and Troops Movement. This agreement prevents military maneuvers of the country's (India and Pakistan) land, air, and naval forces in close proximity to or in the direction of their international border. No military activity is permitted within 5 km of the international border' (Note 28). Former Indian army Chief, General Chowdhury conceded in an interview given to Indian leading newspaper the Hindu in 2009 that Pakistan's threat of nuclear use deterred India from seriously considering conventional military strikes (Note 29). Cohen (2013) gives strong emphasis to Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and states that, Pakistan is capable of mortally hurting India through its growing nuclear capability and by rubbing salt in Kashmir's wound (Note 30). The comparatively smaller state has also strengthened its position as a genuine challenger to Indian hegemonic aspiration by forging a long-lasting strategic relationship with China. 'The China-Pakistan strategic partnership is aimed at foiling India's bid to emerge as a major power in the world and to maintaining a balance between the two South Asian rivals' (Note 31). The two South Asian regional powers remain strategic rivals competing for regional influence. In spite of the significant economic progress and military modernization made by India in the 21st century, South Asia

has not changed much from its bipolar security subsystem identified by Buzan and Rizvi in 1986 and repeated by Buzan and Weaver in 2003 (Note 32). India's quest to establish hegemonic stability and control in the western theatre of South Asia has remained elusive and is likely to remain so for foreseeable future. Pakistan surprisingly maintains, against all odds, parity in the prevailing structure of the South Asian security complex.

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Notes

Note 1. Global Fire Power is a popular source of statistics-based and annually updated defense related information, Since 2006 it has provided comparative analytical display of data on 142 nations, Analysts and media generally rely on Global Fire Power and SIPRI for military data.

Note 2. Samar Hasan, "India and Pakistan: Common identity and conflict", *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, UNHCR, Vol. 24, Issue 4, (December 2005): 76.

Note 3. Josef Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954), 53.

Note 4. S. Kalyanaraman, "India and Pakistan: An Eternal Conflict", *Journal of Defence Studies* 9, no. 3, (July-September 2015): 167-180.

Note 5. Jyotindra Nath Dixit, *India-Pakistan in War & Peace*, (London and New York: Routledge), 2002), 2.

Note 6. In their theoretical overview, Paul Diehl, Gary Goertz, and Daniel Saeedi define an enduring rivalry as a strategic competition between the same pair of states over an extended period of time. For details see, Paul F. Diehl, Gary Goertz, and Daniel Saeedi, "Theoretical specifications of enduring rivalries: applications to the India-Pakistan case" in *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An enduring rivalry*, ed. Thazha Varkey Paul (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 27-53.

Note 7. For details see, Anwesha Sengupta, "Breaking up: Dividing assets between India and Pakistan in times of partition," *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 51, no. 4, (October 2014): 529-548 and "Partition and the division of assets", *Pakistan Defence*, (November 2015) <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads>.

Note 8. Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy 1846-1990*, (Hertfordshire: Roxford Books, 1991), 111.

Note 9. During British rule, a large area of the subcontinent remained under the rule of local Nawabs and Maharajas, outside the direct control of imperial authority. The colonial administration ensured that those 'princely states', as they termed them stayed loyal and subservient to the British Crown. British government used to post 'Residents' at the princely courts as guardian to keep a watchful eye so that the rulers are kept in line with the British policy in the subcontinent. It was a kind of limited free sphere of states within the greater framework of imperial authority. Altogether these states covered nearly one third of the subcontinent with a fifth of the total population.

Note 10. For details see, Ian Copland, "The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947", (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Manu Bhagavan, "Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India" (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Note 11. Richard Sission and Leo E. Rose, "War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the creation of Bangladesh", (California: University of California Press, 1990), 39.

Note 12. Sudhepto Adhikari and Mukul Kamle, "The Kashmir: An Unresolved Dispute Between India and Pakistan," *Geopolitics Quarterly*, Volume: 6, No 4, (Winter 2010): 76.

Note 13. Alastair Lamb, "Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy 1846-1990", (Hertfordshire: Roxford Books, 1991), 2.

Note 14. Russell J. Leng, 'Realpolitik and learning in the India-Pakistan rivalry', in *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An enduring rivalry*, ed. Thazha Varkey Paul (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 104.

Note 15. Varun Vaish, "Negotiating the India-Pakistan conflict in relation to Kashmir", *International Journal on World Peace*, Vol. 28, No. 3, (September 2011): 53-80.

Note 16. William Dalrymple, "The Great Divide: the violent legacy of Indian Partition", *The New Yorker*, June 22, 2015 (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/22/the-great-divide>).

Note 17. For details see, Mohammad Ilyas Khan, "Operation Gibraltar: The Pakistani troops who infiltrated Kashmir to start a rebellion", *BBC*, September 5, 2015 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34136689>.

Note 18. Shelton Kodikara, *Strategic factors in interstate relations in South Asia*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1979), 5.

Note 19. Gowher Rizvi, "Pakistan: The domestic dimensions to security", in *South Asian Insecurity and the Great Powers*, ed. Barry Buzan and Gowher Rizvi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), 83.

Note 20. Steven R. Weisman, 'On India's border, a huge mock war', *New York Times*, March 6, 1987, (<https://www.nytimes.com/1987/03/06/world/on-india>).

Note 21. For details read, Happymon Jacob, 'Kashmir Insurgency, 20 years after', *The Hindu*, Dec 24, 2009 <https://www.thehindu.com/.../Lead>.

Note 22. Lt. Gen. Rajiv Bhalla, "Nuclear confidence-building measures in the Indo-Pak relationship", in *India-Pakistan Relations: Issues and Challenges*, ed. Sanjay Kumar, Muhammad Samir Hussain and Dharendra Dwivedi (New Delhi: G. B. Books, 2016), 22-23.

Note 23. Michal Smetana, Sumit Ganguly, Ales Karmazin, and Samia Abdullah, "India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir dispute: unpacking the dynamics of a South Asian frozen conflict", *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 5 (March 2019): 11.

Note 24. For details read, "Abhinandan: Who is the Indian pilot captured by Pakistan", *BBC*, February 28, 2019, Updated March 1, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47397409>.

Note 25. Jyotindra Nath Dixit, "India-Pakistan in War & Peace", (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 332. Literary meaning of 'Akhand Bharat' is undivided India. Indian political leadership apparently nurture a romanticized dream of reintegration of the three independent states in the subcontinent into a single undivided Hindu-majority India.

Note 26. Barry Buzan and Gowher Rizvi, "The future of the South Asian Security Complex", in *South Asian Insecurity and the Great Powers*, ed. Barry Buzan and Gowher Rizvi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), 237.

Note 27. Thazha Varkey Paul, ed., *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An enduring rivalry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5.

Note 28. Lt. Gen. Rajiv Bhalla, 'Nuclear confidence-building measures in the Indo-Pak relationship', in 'India-Pakistan Relations: Issues and Challenges', ed. Sanjay Kumar, Muhammad Samir Hussain and Dharendra Dwivedi (New Delhi: G. B. Books, 2016), 23.

Note 29. For details see, "Pakistan's nuclear weapons deterred India", The Hindu, March 10, 2009 <http://www.hindu.com/2009/03/10/stories/2009031057391200.html>

Note 30. Stephen Philip Cohen, Shooting for a Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum, (New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2013)?

Note 31. Dharendra Dwivedi and Akhilesh Jaishwal, "Time-tested China-Pakistan Strategic Partnership", in 'India-Pakistan Relations: Issues and Challenges', ed. Sanjay Kumar, Mohammad Samir Hussain and Dharendra Dwivedi (New Delhi: G. B. Books, 2016), 169.

Note 32. Read, Barry Buzan and Gowher Rizvi, "The future of the South Asian Security Complex", in South Asian Insecurity and the Great Powers, ed. Barry Buzan and Gowher Rizvi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), and Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, Regions and Powers: The structure of International Security, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)?