

Systematic Review on India-Pakistan Relationship Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between India and Pakistan has remained one of the most strategically significant and politically sensitive bilateral relationships in South Asia since the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. Characterized by recurring military conflicts, territorial disputes, diplomatic fluctuations, and evolving security concerns, the relationship has attracted extensive scholarly attention across the disciplines of international relations, political science, security studies, and peace and conflict research. This systematic review synthesizes the existing body of literature to examine the historical evolution, principal determinants, and contemporary perspectives of India-Pakistan relations. The review highlights key issues, including the Kashmir dispute, cross-border terrorism, nuclear deterrence, water-sharing under the Indus Waters Treaty, bilateral trade, diplomatic negotiations, confidence-building measures, and the influence of regional and global actors on bilateral dynamics. By consolidating diverse scholarly perspectives, this review contributes to a deeper understanding of India-Pakistan relations, identifies significant gaps in the existing literature. In this article; systematic review on India-Pakistan relationship perspectives were discussed.

Keywords: *India, Pakistan, Relationship, Perspectives.*

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between India and Pakistan remains one of the most significant and complex bilateral relationships in South Asia. Since the partition of British India in 1947, the two nations have experienced a history marked by armed conflicts, territorial disputes, diplomatic tensions, and intermittent efforts toward peace and cooperation. The unresolved issue of Kashmir, cross-border terrorism, military rivalry, nuclear deterrence, and political mistrust have continued to shape their interactions. At the same time, shared historical, cultural, linguistic, and economic ties present opportunities for dialogue and regional cooperation.

Over the decades, scholars from the fields of international relations, political science, security studies, economics, sociology, and peace and conflict studies have examined India-Pakistan relations from multiple perspectives. These include realist, liberal, constructivist, historical, strategic, economic, diplomatic, and humanitarian viewpoints. Existing literature has explored the causes of recurring conflicts, the role of domestic politics, external powers, confidence-building measures, trade relations, people-to-people diplomacy, nuclear stability, and the influence of regional and global geopolitical developments. Despite extensive research, divergent interpretations and fragmented findings have created the need for a comprehensive synthesis of available evidence.

A systematic review provides a rigorous and transparent approach to identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing published research on a specific topic. By systematically examining existing studies, it becomes possible to identify dominant themes, research trends, methodological approaches, key findings, and gaps in the literature. Such a review also facilitates a balanced understanding of the evolving nature of India–Pakistan relations by integrating evidence from diverse academic sources. This systematic review aims to critically analyze the existing body of literature on India–Pakistan relationship perspectives. It seeks to examine the major dimensions influencing bilateral relations, including political, diplomatic, security, economic, social, cultural, and strategic factors. Furthermore, the review identifies emerging trends, unresolved challenges, and future research directions that may contribute to a deeper understanding of bilateral relations and support informed policy formulation, regional peace-building initiatives and sustainable cooperation. The objective of the study is to explore the systematic review on India-Pakistan relationship perspectives.

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ahmed, N. (2024). The rivalry between India and Pakistan has been a significant source of concern for peace in both nations since 1947. Various perspectives elucidate the methodology for achieving peaceful resolutions to such problems. Initially, post-colonial ideas predominated; however, the emergence of constructivism has facilitated the peace-making process. Pakistan, as a smaller state relative to India, has consistently endeavoured to sustain a stable relationship with India for regional security. India's aspiration to establish hegemony in South Asia has led to three wars between the two nations, yet significant issues remain unresolved peacefully. Furthermore, despite India's extensive geographical expanse and its borders with all regional states, it has failed to maintain amicable relations with countries other than Pakistan. An examination of the historical relationship between Pakistan and India indicates that the hostility stems from entrenched disparities in ideas, attitudes, and customs, rather than from material factors. Therefore, constructivist theory offers the most effective framework for addressing the India-Pakistan dispute about Kashmir.

Pathak, M. & Mushahary, J. (2024). Despite India and Pakistan being neighbouring nuclear-capable nations in South Asia with shared geography, history, and culture, their relationship has consistently been adversarial since achieving independence. Although part of the same subcontinent, substantial social, cultural, political, and economic challenges and conflicts have consistently threatened war between India and Pakistan. This study has succinctly analyzed the geographical proximity of the two countries and characterized their relationship as akin to a snake-ladder game. Notwithstanding these hostilities, both nations have executed multiple accords to address and mitigate their disputes and conflicts. This book meticulously analyses the Tashkent Declaration and the Simla Agreement, two pivotal peacebuilding initiatives aimed at maintaining stability in South Asia. Consequently, our research indicates that engaging in robust and consistent bilateral dialogues is essential for attaining enduring peace among these significant South Asian nations.

Rao, C.C. & Sahu, S. (2024). The study seeks to address a research vacuum by examining the precise role of the United States in either exacerbating or mitigating tensions between India and Pakistan. This paper offers a concise overview of the strained relations, ideological disparities, divergences in national interests, initial misconceptions, and fluctuations in the relationship between

the two democracies—India and the United States—during the Cold War era. Following World War II, an ideological conflict known as the "Cold War" commenced between two rival powers: the United States and the Soviet Union. Throughout the Cold War, both nations endeavoured extensively to propagate their ideas in Asia and its surrounding areas. Since the independence and tumultuous separation of India and Pakistan in 1947, relations between these two nations have been characterized by rigidity, conflict, distrust, and a precarious political standoff, both in a worldwide context and specifically within South Asia. Furthermore, both are proximate and neighbouring entities with strong literary, social, and cultural connections, yet they stay significantly apart from one another. The instability and unstable political environment can be attributed to numerous reasons and factors; however, the Kashmir question remains the principal obstacle to the growth of both nations. India and Pakistan have consistently experienced protracted conflicts; however, recent changes in leadership and incidents of infiltration and proxy warfare in the Kashmir Valley have exacerbated their already strained relations. This deterioration has created opportunities for international organizations to intervene in their disputes and affairs. Historically regarded as a "strategic backwater" from the U.S. viewpoint, South Asia has become increasingly essential to fundamental U.S. foreign policy goals in the 21st century. During the Cold War, the U.S. perceived South Asia as a region of limited strategic significance, primarily to counteract communist expansion. The significance of conflict resolution in tackling enduring challenges and promoting a more harmonious relationship between India and Pakistan.

Khanna, A.S. (2023). The India-Pakistan relationship has long been perceived as intractable. This study examines the relationship between the two states from the time of partition to elucidate the conflict. This process cannot proceed without comprehending Pakistan's Kashmir policies since 1947. Its policy centres on the inability to establish a nation for South Asian Muslims, which it considers an integral component, and the failure to achieve their integration. This study analyses the strategic significance of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir for China and its influence on India-Pakistan relations. The primary inquiry of the paper is to ascertain the ideational factors within Pakistan's strategic culture that shape its perception of India, despite the country's current economic challenges, unresolved internal issues, and repeated military setbacks against India. This study ultimately analyses the elements influencing the relations between the two nations and investigates the potential for enduring peace.

Ghaffar, S. (2023). Since 1947, when they achieved independence from British rule, Pakistan and India have sustained a protracted and complex political relationship. Prolonged religious and political strife between the Muslim and Hindu communities resulted in the partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan. The considerable violence and displacement associated with this separation affected the relationship between the two nations from the outset. In the initial year's post-independence, India and Pakistan engaged in multiple conflicts, primarily centered around the contentious Kashmir issue concerning the area of Jammu and Kashmir. The two nations engaged in several conflicts, including the Indo-Pakistani Wars of 1965 and 1971. These wars not only exacerbated animosity between the two nations but also resulted in substantial casualties and property destruction. However, there have been fleeting efforts to enhance relations, such as the

Lahore Declaration in 1999 and the Shimla Agreement in 1972; however, these initiatives have not resolved the underlying issues. The relationship between Pakistan and India is strained due to ongoing confrontations and tensions about issues such as terrorism, nuclear armament, and territory disputes. The historical contexts of these two countries have significantly shaped and will persist in shaping their political ties, notwithstanding intermittent efforts at peace negotiations.

Misson, F.A. (2022). India and Pakistan are rival nations with divergent identities and objectives stemming from their intertwined power dynamics. The rationale of power politics ensnares the two neighbouring nations in enduring rivalry, military geopolitics, and antagonistic national security frameworks, resulting in a perpetual security conundrum. Despite the enduring competition, there have been occasions of partnership where the two countries demonstrated goodwill and engaged in dialogue. This study examines threat perception to ascertain if it is an objective or subjective phenomenon, hence contextualizing the fluctuating state-to-state relationship. The research seeks to elucidate Pakistan-India relations through the use of Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat Theory. To comprehend Pakistan-India relations, Walt defines threat perception as a subjective phenomenon by incorporating the ideational element of "aggressive intentions" into his framework. This facilitates a liberating framework of significance and action that surpasses the conventional and retrogressive reasoning of traditional power politics. The current analysis suggests that the state elites of both nations can alleviate tensions by altering their will and intentions towards more peaceful conduct and outcomes.

Haq, A. U. & Adnan, M. (2022). India and Pakistan possess a protracted history of enmity, visible in their bilateral relations. Defining the politics of security involves formulating a complete concept of security in the context of India and Pakistan, while also generating insights into how threats emerge in all facets of state affairs. The political, economic, and social sectors are linked to security, while the strategic partnerships between India and the United States to oppose China are also critical components of Pakistan's security framework. This research paper aims to provide a contemporary analysis of how evolving relations may impact the strategic landscape of South Asia, particularly regarding Pakistan-India relations, and how the strategic significance of these peripheral states compels them to collaborate with powerful nations for military and economic advantages. The confrontation and strategic ties with dominant powers to sustain the balance of power constitute the periphery cold war.

Ishfaq, U et al. (2021). India, a Hindu-majority nation, and Pakistan, a Muslim-majority nation, emerged as the two new states following the partition of British India. Since inception, India and Pakistan have remained adversarial. Their enmity arises from several factors, including the contested region of Kashmir, water issues, communal violence, and the partition of assets, among others. This affected the positions of India and Pakistan, thus influencing South Asian events and prompting major powers to engage in their political makeover. This paper analyses the bilateral conflict between India and Pakistan, their strategy for sustaining the equilibrium of power, and the influence of major countries. The paper examines the foreign policies of Pakistan and India and their contrasting positions since attaining independence. This study analyses several aspects and prerequisites of BOP through the concept of a balance of power. The study delineates the strategic positions of India and Pakistan in their efforts to sustain the balance of power through qualitative research methodologies.

Shaheen, R. et al. (2021). India and Pakistan possess intricate and significant interactions. Recent developments have fundamentally transformed the relations between the two nations. The media wields significant influence over its audience and can portray both a positive and a bad image of the nations involved. This study aims to determine the frameworks employed by the print media in both countries to portray the relationship between India and Pakistan. Consequently, the study focuses on the essential question: how are the bilateral relations between India and Pakistan depicted in the editorials of the Indo-Pak press? The analysis of qualitative content has yielded valuable outcomes. The research has chosen two publications: the Times of India from India and the Daily Dawn from Pakistan. The research duration extends over two years, from July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2017. The findings indicate that the daily editorials of Dawn regarding the bilateral relations between the two nations were predominantly objective and optimistic. The editorials' frameworks and core themes were optimistic and positive. The Times of India portrayed the bilateral relations between the two states in a slightly unfavourable manner. The predominant frames and editorial topics of the publication were negative and attributed blame to the opposing nation.

Shukla, A. (2020). The historical relationship between India and Pakistan has been marked by distrust, unmet commitments, unresolved issues, and persistent conflicts. Perceptual enmity, pervasive violence during the partition, and other unresolved issues, especially Kashmir, are among the controversial factors that shaped and influenced this relationship. These circumstances have placed the two nations in a challenging situation best described as a two-person, zero-sum game. The author asserts that perceptions profoundly influence the nature of bilateral connections. He proceeds to delineate six unique prisms—three from India and three from Pakistan—that elucidate the nature and evolution of this otherwise complex relationship.

Akhtar, N., Jan, I. (2019). Pakistan confronts a challenging dilemma due to India's ascendancy: to either concede or persist in the longstanding animosity that has predominantly defined the bilateral relationship. Pakistan is encountering a less advantageous national and international landscape compared to a few decades ago. The disparities in performance between India and Pakistan across essential aspects of national life have markedly widened.

Malik, M.S. (2019). India and Pakistan share a significant relationship. Since 1947, they have engaged in three significant wars, besides several minor border skirmishes. Nonetheless, they possess a history of collaborating to resolve conflicts constructively. In reality, they convened for discussions after each major conflict. Three sorts of peace initiatives can be identified: third-party mediations, bilateral peace negotiations, and UN-led initiatives. The study's findings indicate that third-party mediation is more effective and outcome-oriented than bilateral or UN-sponsored initiatives. This article examines the historical context of peace initiatives and conflicts between India and Pakistan through diverse sources. The evidence in the report substantiates the principal assertion that third-party mediations have been more efficacious in resolving disputes between the two governments.

Hussain, E. (2019). In August 1947, India and Pakistan became sovereign states, succeeding British India. Indian customs and the constitution entrench secularity while simultaneously upholding Hindu majoritarianism. Pakistan adopted a predominantly Islamic identity for nation-building and security purposes in opposition to a "Hindu" adversary, partly owing to its diverse ethnonational composition.

Subsequent to independence, India and Pakistan engaged in a conflict regarding the sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir due to their irreconcilable state ideologies.

Pattanaik, S.S. (2019). This article examines the historical development of dialogue to illustrate how the national narratives of various countries have shaped bilateral ties and set reciprocal expectations. Engaging with the principal stakeholders in the India-Pakistan dialogue constitutes the most formidable challenge in the bilateral relationship between the two nations. The extensive securitization of the relationship is the principal factor; hence, security perceives any progress in bilateral ties via a security framework, notwithstanding the existence of several other securities, political, economic, and civil society considerations. In this context, it is essential to analyze the historical influences on the perceptions and narratives of the two nations.

Impiani, D. (2019). This study examines the intensification of the armed conflict between India and Pakistan subsequent to the Lahore Declaration in 1999. The two states persist in military engagements despite having waged several important wars. Previous studies on the India-Pakistan conflict only addressed its causes and conflict resolution efforts. Although this military conflict has been analyzed via three primary lenses—political economics, domestic politics, and security—none of the studies have explored the reasons for its prolonged duration. This study will elucidate the components of the security challenge that have contributed to the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, employing the scenario as an analytical framework. Due to the security issue, both states consider offensive actions more advantageous than defensive strategies. This study asserts that India and Pakistan interpret each other's actions—such as the enhancement of military defense capabilities, the growth of nuclear arsenals, and alliance dynamics—as threats, perpetuating a continuous security dilemma.

CONCLUSION

The systematic review reveals that the India–Pakistan relationship remains one of the most complex and enduring rivalries in international politics, shaped by historical, political, security, economic, and socio-cultural factors. The reviewed literature consistently identifies the unresolved Kashmir issue as the central source of bilateral tensions, influencing diplomatic engagement, military confrontations, and public perceptions in both countries. Cross-border terrorism, border disputes, and recurring ceasefire violations continue to undermine mutual trust and hinder sustained peace initiatives. The review further indicates that bilateral relations have experienced alternating periods of dialogue and conflict. Peace-building efforts, including diplomatic negotiations, confidence-building measures (CBMs), people-to-people exchanges, and trade initiatives, have occasionally improved relations; however, these efforts have often been disrupted by terrorist attacks, political instability, and changes in government policies. As a result, progress toward long-term reconciliation has remained limited and inconsistent. Another significant finding is the role of nuclear deterrence in shaping the strategic relationship between the two countries. While nuclear capabilities have prevented large-scale conventional wars since 1998, they have also contributed to strategic competition, arms modernization, and heightened regional security concerns. The literature suggests that deterrence has maintained a fragile peace but has not eliminated the risk of limited military escalation or unintended conflict. The review also highlights the growing influence of external powers and geopolitical

dynamics on India–Pakistan relations. The involvement of major global actors, evolving regional alliances, and strategic interests in South Asia have affected bilateral diplomacy and security calculations. International mediation efforts have generally been limited, with both countries preferring bilateral approaches while external actors mainly encourage dialogue and regional stability. Economic cooperation between India and Pakistan remains significantly below its potential. The reviewed studies indicate that political tensions have restricted bilateral trade, investment, and regional economic integration despite the mutual economic benefits that enhanced cooperation could generate. Consequently, economic interdependence has not emerged as a strong driver of peace. Furthermore, the review identifies the increasing impact of media narratives, digital communication, and public opinion on bilateral relations. Traditional and social media often reinforce nationalist sentiments during periods of crisis, while civil society organizations, academic exchanges, and cultural interactions contribute positively to mutual understanding. These non-state actors are increasingly recognized as important stakeholders in peace-building processes.

The systematic review of the India–Pakistan relationship reveals that the bilateral relationship has been shaped by a complex interplay of historical legacies, territorial disputes, political ideologies, security concerns, economic interests, and diplomatic engagements. The literature consistently identifies the Kashmir issue, cross-border terrorism, military confrontations, and nuclear deterrence as the principal factors influencing the dynamics between the two nations. Despite periods of dialogue and confidence-building measures, mutual distrust, domestic political pressures, and recurring security crises have repeatedly hindered sustainable peace.

The review also demonstrates that scholars increasingly advocate a multidimensional approach to understanding India–Pakistan relations by incorporating political, economic, strategic, social, cultural, and humanitarian perspectives. Recent studies emphasize the importance of regional cooperation, trade normalization, people-to-people exchanges, and multilateral diplomacy in reducing tensions and fostering long-term stability in South Asia. Furthermore, the role of international actors, evolving geopolitical alignments, and emerging security challenges continues to shape the trajectory of bilateral relations.

The evidence suggests that while the relationship remains fragile and conflict-prone, opportunities for constructive engagement still exist. A durable improvement in India–Pakistan relations will require sustained diplomatic dialogue, mutual confidence-building, effective conflict-management mechanisms, respect for international commitments, and greater emphasis on regional peace and development. Future research should adopt interdisciplinary approaches, incorporate emerging geopolitical developments, and explore innovative policy frameworks that can contribute to lasting peace, stability, and cooperation between the two neighbouring countries.

The systematic reviewed demonstrates that India–Pakistan relations continue to be characterized by a complex interplay of historical grievances, territorial disputes, security concerns, and political ideologies. The reviewed studies consistently indicate that the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 and the unresolved Kashmir issue remain the most significant determinants of bilateral tensions. These historical factors continue to shape foreign policy decisions, public opinion, and national security strategies in both countries, making conflict resolution particularly challenging. A

major theme emerging from the reviewed literature is the persistent trust deficit between India and Pakistan. Although several peace initiatives, bilateral dialogues, and confidence-building measures have been introduced over the years, their effectiveness has been constrained by recurring terrorist incidents, cross-border violence, ceasefire violations, and changes in domestic political leadership. Consequently, diplomatic engagement has often been reactive rather than sustained, resulting in intermittent periods of cooperation followed by renewed confrontation.

This article concluded that sustainable improvement in India–Pakistan relations require continuous diplomatic engagement, effective counterterrorism cooperation, confidence-building measures, expanded economic collaboration, and stronger people-to-people connections. The evidence suggests that although significant structural and political challenges remain, long-term regional peace and stability depend on sustained dialogue, mutual trust, and a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution.

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