



INDIA - PAKISTAN RELATIONS - GS II MAINS

Q. India and Pakistan share linguistic, cultural, geographical and economic links but due to political and historical reasons, the two share a complex relation. Discuss (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *From the trenches: India, Pakistan relations through the prism of diplomacy*

What's in the news?

- “The only ‘normal’ ones, are those you don’t know very well,” famed Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler said about people, but it’s a thought that holds true for India-Pakistan relations as well.

Key takeaways:

- The two countries, that know one another only too well, were separated in a painful birth, and while they have tried to build “normal” relations with each other for decades since, every attempt has failed.
- Former diplomats trace the green shoots that gave rise to hopes for peace between the neighbours and explain the challenges and hurdles to managing a complex relationship with a history of hostility.
- They also rue missed opportunities that Pakistani and Indian leaders have failed to seize.

Areas of Conflict Between the two Countries:

1. Cross-border Terrorism:

- Terrorism emanating from territories under Pakistan’s control remains a core concern in bilateral relations.
- India has consistently stressed the **need for Pakistan to take credible, irreversible and verifiable action to end cross-border terrorism against India.**

2. Jammu and Kashmir:

- Due to political differences between the two countries, the territorial claim of Kashmir has been the subject of wars in 1947, 1965 and a limited conflict in 1999 and frequent ceasefire violations and promotion of rebellion within the Indian side of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **India’s revocation of the special status of J&K:**
 - The relations between the two countries have remained strained for years now and took a turn for the worse in August 2019 when India revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Pakistan’s stand:**
 - In 2019, Pakistan announced unilateral measures, including the downgrading of diplomatic relations, suspension of bilateral trade and review of bilateral agreements with India.



3. China Factor:

- China, who has always **considered Pakistan as its younger brother**, has always helped it by providing it with **military, economic and technical assistance**.
- China has assisted Pakistan in **setting up nuclear power plants** and in various infrastructure projects.

4. Border disputes:

- Since independence, both countries have constantly engaged in border struggles while claiming for various regions in the northern and western sectors such as **Siachen glaciers, Sir Creek disputes**, etc.

5. Indus River dispute:

- The Indus Waters Treaty is the water distribution treaty signed between India and Pakistan, **brokered by the World Bank**.
- According to the treaty, three rivers, Ravi, Sutlej and Beas were given to India for exclusive use and the other three rivers, Sindh, Jhelum and Chenab were given to Pakistan.
- This treaty failed to address the dispute since source rivers of the Indus Basin were in India, having the potential to create drought and famines in Pakistan.

6. Fractured internal dynamics of Pakistan:

- In Pakistan both the army and the political parties failed to bring enduring stability, which provided a political space for Islamic extremism.
- Due to fractured polity, Pakistan could not develop an optimistic approach towards Kashmir and India.
- Also, with the army becoming increasingly entrenched in Pakistani politics, it developed a vested interest in sustaining hostility with India in order to justify its dominance.

Bilateral engagement:

- India has made a number of attempts to **build normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan**.
- The External Affairs Minister's (EAM) also took the initiative to propose a Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue in December 2015.

1. Trade and Commerce:

a. Bilateral trade:

- **2020-2021:** The total bilateral trade between India and Pakistan was USD 329 million in 2020-2021.
- **2021-2022:** This has gone up to USD 514 million in 2021-2022, as per the ministry of commerce, with Indian exports outnumbering imports from Pakistan.

b. Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status:

- India had accorded MFN status to Pakistan in 1996.
- A Pakistan cabinet decision of November 02, 2011 to reciprocate remains unimplemented

2. Humanitarian:

- In 2017, India suggested to Pakistan to revive the mechanism of the **Joint Judicial Committee** which looks into humanitarian issues of fishermen and prisoners in each other's custody.



3. Cultural:

- The visit to religious shrines between India and Pakistan is governed by the Bilateral Protocol on **Visits to Religious Shrines** signed between India and Pakistan in 1974.

4. Kartarpur Corridor:

- Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor in 2019 on the occasion of the 550th birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and flagged-off the first group of pilgrims to Gurudwara Kartarpur Sahib.

5. Political:

a. Lahore agreement:

- Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee travelled by bus to Lahore (newly opened **Delhi–Lahore Bus service**) to meet Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.
- The two signed the Lahore Declaration, the first major agreement between the two countries since the 1972 Simla Agreement.
- Both countries reiterated that they remained committed to the Simla Agreement, and agreed to undertake a number of **Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)** aimed at improving bilateral relations.

b. Bilateral visits:

- On **27 May, 2014**, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in New Delhi. Both sides expressed willingness to begin a new era of bilateral relations.
- In **December, 2015**, on his way back from Afghanistan, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a surprise visit to Lahore on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's birthday and the wedding of his granddaughter.

6. International level:

- **Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline** which originates in Turkmenistan and passes through Afghanistan, Pakistan before reaching and terminating in India can also get huge benefits as it can help secure the National Energy needs of both Pakistan and India, which are potentially growing nations with increasing needs of energy.
- **The Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline** is another project, which is currently stalled. If relations are cordial, then this pipeline can also supply the energy needs of both nations.

Current Events Shaping India-Pakistan Relations:

- The **entire CAA-NRC-NPR issue** is being stirred up by Pakistan not just to create trouble in India but also, internationally.
- The **endgame in Afghanistan** will probably see greater contestation between the two countries, in addition to new alignments.
- **India's engagement with the US** in the Indo-Pacific is being balanced by Chinese increasing engagement and reliance on Pakistan propping it up against India.



- **Russia is opening up to Pakistan** (during 2014-18 Russia was third largest supplier of conventional weapons to Pakistan, naval cooperation, energy cooperation and gas pipeline pact etc.) which is an unprecedented jolt to India.
- **Normalcy in Kashmir:** India should concentrate on restoring normalcy in Jammu & Kashmir, mainstreaming the population, especially the youth, encourages investment in the state. Allaying minority fears in India through informed approach on issues like the NRC, CAA would unarm Pakistan at international forums.
- **People-to-people contacts:** At the ground level public opinion in both countries could be moulded through entertainment channels, media and music. Further cricket diplomacy can play a vital role in boosting such relations.
- **Trade facilitation:** Pakistan is undergoing a severe economic crisis and is on the verge of receiving further international sanctions (FATF grey list). At this juncture, easing bilateral trade restrictions and facilitation of cross border trade could address the trust deficit between two countries.
- **International mediation:** Indirect mediation efforts via countries like US, China and Russia who have called for bilateral dialogue post 370 abrogation may provide the much-needed momentum. Annual summits of SCO, SAARC etc. could be useful in starting a non-adversarial bilateral dialogue between the two.

Issues in Bilateral Relations:

1. Limited economic integration:

- The trade between two enemy countries has been far lower than its potential (around \$2 billion in 2018-19) due to complicated and non-transparent non-tariff and tariff measures.
- Without artificial barriers, this should be USD 37 billion. Cross-border trade usually follows the cycles of terrorist events showing ups and downs.

2. Stalled regional integration:

- Intra-regional trade accounts for a little more than 5 percent of South Asia's total trade while it accounts for 50 percent of total trade in East Asia and the Pacific and 22 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- SAARC and SAFTA are also ineffective due to the conflictual relations between two.

3. Costly arms race:

- In 2018, India allocated \$57.9 billion, or 2.1 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), to support its troops, according to reports from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).
- Pakistan spent \$11.2 billion, about 3.6 percent of its GDP, on its 653,800 troops. This is despite the South Asian region being one of the poorest in human development.
- Also, Both being nuclear weapons states makes South Asia a nuclear hotspot, especially owing to rising terrorism in Pakistan and weak safety measures.

4. Affects India's external interests:

- An unfavourable Pakistan hurts India's long-term engagement with South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia.



- Pakistan is geo-strategically more important in South Asia than India when it comes to issues like Afghanistan stability, Iraq etc.
- It plays an indispensable role for different countries like the US, China and Russia for different reasons.

5. Internationalization of dispute:

- Pakistan is using every available forum – from animal husbandry to climate change – to raise the Kashmir issue and to forward its poisonous propaganda campaign against India in international fora.
- Other issues like capture of fishermen, drug smuggling from the Golden Crescent, fake Indian currencies sneaking through the western borders also looms large.

WAY FORWARD:

1. Reforming Pakistan's political structure:

- Despite the democratic elections in Pakistan, the **military wields real power** in the country. This holds true especially on matters of defence, national security and foreign policy.
- **Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI)**, consisting of personnel from Pakistan Armed Forces, is often accused of supporting and training separatist militant groups operating in India.
- This makes it highly difficult for India to undertake diplomatic relations with the Pakistani government since it is not the decision-maker in the country.
- Thus, a strong political reform in Pakistan, one that focuses on the welfare of the Pakistani nationals is vital to improving its relations with India.

2. People-to-people relations:

- **Propaganda** is currently being used by both sides through the media to justify each other's stand on conflicting issues.
- This is creating **misconception, hatred and stereotyping** among the people of both countries.
- This method is also used for **political gains** of both nations, with the least consideration towards people's welfare and the need for peace.
- Steps must be taken to facilitate travel between the two countries, **ease up visa regimes, provide security for tourists, set up student and faculty exchanges, and invite professionals, intellectuals and artists to events to promote the bilateral ties.**

3. Promote trade:

Steps that can be undertaken to improve bilateral trade include:

- **Remove non-tariff barriers** and bureaucratic hurdles that are currently impeding trade.
- **Cut down duties**
- **Improve customs clearance procedures**
- Proportionate trade is beneficial for both sides and is possible through the right government policies.

4. Promoting soft diplomacy:

- Use of Indus Waters Treaty to promote **hydro diplomacy**. Both nations can come together to **construct a water grid** between their territories to address the water problems in the region.



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- **Cultural diplomacy** can be used through the exchange of ideas, values, traditions, and other cultural aspects to strengthen bilateral ties, enhance socio-cultural cooperation and promote individual national interest.
- **Promotion of Cricket diplomacy** i.e., the use of cricket as a diplomatic tool to overcome differences between the two countries.
- To a certain extent, soft diplomacy improved the **people-to-people relations** between the two countries and eased the tensions on both sides.

