

## Conflict Management in South Asia: An Analysis

**\*Dr. Mamta Sharma**

### Abstract

International crisis is not a new phenomenon. From time immemorial, human societies have witnessed crisis of one kind or the other. So long as human species exist perhaps there can be no run away from crises. But we have to evolve a suitable mechanism to deal with them. This is a most difficult task for all those who are involved in crisis management. To remove tensions, a number of theories have been offered. As a result, we may find out appropriate methods to tide over crises that we would deal with in this article.

**Keywords:** South-Asia, conflict, India, Pakistan, Kashmir, Siachen glacier.

### Introduction

This paper has been focused on four main problems that have created regional disorder, instability and insecurity in South Asia. These problems are Kashmir, Siachen Glacier, arms race and the nuclear proliferation. First, two problems are directly related to India and Pakistan. And the other two are concerned with the entire region. However, bilateral issues have impact on the regional environment. At the end, we shall offer alternatives and options. This article is based on psycho-analytical approach to deal with the perceptions and approaches of ruling leaders in South Asia.

At the very beginning, Indian and Pakistani ruling leaders have been cultivating threat misperception towards each other. As a result, situation in the region started deteriorating and continued to deteriorate further. Perhaps the situation could have been avoided had India and Pakistan tried to stimulate each other in a positive and effective manner.

At the regional level, India and Pakistan are two important countries of the Indian sub-continent. After the partition an atmosphere of fear, suspicion and mutual mistrust took place. Hence, their relations could not be friendly and peaceful. In fact peace, stability and order of the region depend on improved and better relations between India and Pakistan.

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**Kashmir Issue**

Kashmir is an important factor in conflict formation between India and Pakistan. Pakistan launched a war in Kashmir in October, 1947 by sending its intruders into the Kashmir valley, which heightened the tension between the two countries. As a result, the problem hanged the Tire. India took this case to the U.N.O. in 1956. It was debated in the security couch', but it did not resolve the problem. On the contrary, 1965 war took place between the two countries. In both the 1965 and 1971 wars, India and Pakistan demonstrated their respective position on Kashmir. India disclaimed that Kashmir should belong to Pakistan on the basis of two nation theory. India foreign policy planners clearly hinted that Jammu and Kashmir had legally, through Instrument of accession become the integral part of India. The Indian Prime Minister Nehru had of course, committed that plebiscite would be heel in Kashmir to determine its future. Pakistan continued to pressure India to settle the issue in accordance with ascertaining the wishes of the people. However. India's former defence minister V.K. Krishnan Menon demolished the plebiscite theory supported by Pakistan. He mentioned in the Security Council in its 1950s debates that Kashmir was an integral and inalienable part of India simply because of the fact that India had already conducted several elections through democratic process which clearly established the fact that India had the only legitimate right over Kashmir and hence, Pakistan must vacate the aggression immediately. The Pakistani Government however, failed to appreciate India's stand on Kashmir and condemned India for seizing over Kashmir for an indefinite period. Besides, Pakistan brought the Kashmir issue on various international regional forums. India criticized Pakistan for debating the issue outside the bilateral forums. This created irritants between India and Pakistan.

During the regimes of Yahya Khan and Z.A. Bhutto, the Pakistani claims over Kashmir almost remained the same. After at the Simla agreement of July, 1972, Mrs. Gandhi and Bhutto agreed that all bilateral issues should be solved within the Simla framework. But after Bhutto's death in July, 1977, President Zia cared little to implement the Simla spirit to solve the outstanding problems between India and Pakistan. As a result, the problem became more intractable. Zia mentioned the Kashmir issue in Islamic Conferences, and raised it in several international forums which were highly objected by India. But gradually, the problem became insolvable.

President Zia's behaviour can be explained psychologically. He was not in favour of democratic order. But on the contrary, he was a hard core fundamentalist. As a matter of fact, he was more interested in preserving his personal rule rather than promoting democratic values. As a result, India and Pakistan could not improve their bilateral ties, which ultimately culminated into bitter hostility.

A climate of change came when Benazir Bhutto became the Prime Minister. Under her democratic leadership, a new understanding started developing between India and Pakistan.

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### Siachen Glacier

It is one of the serious irritants between India and Pakistan. It is essentially a fall out of the Kashmir question, but it assumed importance only recently. The Glacier is 75 km long 2.8 km wide lies in the centre of Karakoram range. It is strategically important to India, Pakistan and China.

It is not a demarcated area and situated North-Eastern occupied - Kashmir. Even during 1965 and 1971 wars, this area never became a zone of conflict. Pakistan tried to occupy it in June 1984. But India punctured its plan. Its efforts could not succeed, In February 1985, fighting lasted 17 days. These conflicts increased tension between India and Pakistan. A serious clash took place on 23 June, 1984 and Pakistani forces were beaten back.

Zia accused India of violating Simla agreement by unilaterally occupying Siachen Glacier and cautioned that it would mar the Indo-Pak relations. Benazir Bhutto too accused Zia of having lost territory to India in the Siachen Glacier area. Relations among states may be conditioned by a variety of patterns and "they are based on pure love and only in a few cases on pure fear and hatred." There are three patterns of relationship conflict, competition and Co-operation. Conflictual and Co-operative processes are inter-connected and to keep the system in action, it is necessary that the conflictual tendencies should be kept at a manageable level.

This discussion shows that mutual distrust which had created dysfunctional syndrome in the elites of both countries, has been strengthened by various subjective and objective exogenous and indigenous environmental factors.

It is usually difficult to find a relationship which is purely conflictual or purely co-operative. It fluctuates from conflictual to co-operation and conflict and then again Co-operation or competition but the Indo-Pakistan relations are characterised by conflictual relationship, sometime the conflict is violent and at the other non-violent. When people of both the countries enjoy fruits of co-operation it will gradually change the perceptions and mis-perceptions.

Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto in SAARC Summit agreed that the Siachen Glacier problem will be solved through discussion and mutual consultation. But soon after that, it has been reported that Pakistan has setup new army post in the strategic sector of the Siachen area. Besides, Pakistan has amassed troops along the area and they have been better equipped and trained to face any threat from India. Due to Pakistan's strong position in the sector, Indians cannot exploit the Siachen issue as a pressure level as it was doing earlier.

### Arms Race

South-Asia crisis is linked to arms-race between India and Pakistan. The extra-regional Powers America, Russia and China are the main suppliers of military aid and weapons to South Asian nations.

When Pakistan entered into SEATO in 1954 and signed mutual security agreement with America in 1959, the security environment in South-Asia became explosive. Pakistan started receiving massive supply of weapons from America. This encouraged Pakistani military rulers to adopt hostile and war-like attitude towards India. This resulted into the wars of 1965-71, In both these wars, America placed embargo on military aid. Pakistan of course, got a serious set back. When the embargo was lifted Pakistan started receiving aid from America specially after the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan 1979. Pakistan became strategically important for America. The Carter administration had committed an aid of 400 million dollar to Pakistan which was described by President Zia as 'Peanut'. However, the Reagan Administration channeled more aid into Pakistan in the form of deadly Weapons like F-16 aircraft, TOW Tanks, artilleries, Copper-fire system and Radars. This spoiled the security environment in the region.

India also sought retaliatory weapons from Russia. India received nuclear submarine and other varieties of weapons which led to a serious arms-race in the sub-continent. Zia called India acquisition nuclear sub-marines as a great threat to Pakistani security and to the security of entire region. Indian policy makers and defence planners also accused America to create conditions of instability in the region. Because Pakistan could use weapons against India. But Pakistani rulers disclaimed it.

On the other hand, they held Indo-Soviet military ties responsible for creating conditions of War in the sub-continent. This resulted into the spoiling of relations between India and Pakistan. Besides, an atmosphere of mistrust also generated following which a war was likely to take place between the two countries. But after the death of Zia, conditions of peace and friendship started developing between the two countries. The new democratic order was inaugurated in Pakistan due to coming of Benazir Bhutto into the power.

This of course improved the political climate between the two countries. Rajiv went to Islamabad to attend the SAARC Summit in December 1988. Both leaders agreed to bring peace and stability in the region. Benazir said very frankly that there would be no mistrust between the two countries. Both of them will work towards mutual understanding and mutual friendship. As a result, they signed three agreements. This of course, inaugurated an era of peace and friendship between the two countries. But on this basis, it is futile to expect a greater change in the existing relations. Because as reported in the newspapers that

Pakistan would be receiving sixty F-16 from America. Harvard Shaffer pointed out that Pakistan needed this type of aid for its security needs and America is committed to give to Pakistan.

This created not only arms in the sub-continent, but also has adverse impact on the relations between India and Pakistan. As a reaction, Russia also set up its arms supply to India. As has been reported in

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the papers, the Russia has given new type submissive weapons to India much in advance. This shows that Russia and America were likely to create condition of adverse relations in the sub-continent.

#### **Alternatives in Present Scenario**

Crises in South Asia are linked with both extra-regional and intra-regional environment. It is more or less the outcome of cumulative factors interacting with each other. Here it should be examined that how crises or conflict ridden situation could be managed at the extra-regional level. The first proposition being advanced in this respect is that three main extra regional powers – America, Russia and China must withdraw themselves from the region. It is due to their military, political and strategic intervention that the region has become highly explosive. It is true to some extent that internal rivalries and mutual mistrust play a major role in creating tensions in the region. At the same time, outside powers endeavour to exploit them in their own national interests. The, provocative acts of super powers would tend to distablize the situation in the sub-continent which undermines the regional co-operation.

#### **Conclusion**

In this article, several aspects of crises in South Asia have been discussed. Main issues confronting the region have briefly mentioned. It has been found that Kashmir issue is not the main reason for irritants between India and Pakistan nor a major factor in the regional conflict-formation though the issue is still alive formally. This might take a long to resolve completely. Peace in the South-Asia will be a co-operative effort and for that, the rulers of all the concerning nations should have serious will to keep this region peaceful.

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