

## Prospects of Indo-Pak Relations: Transcending Parochial Politics

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### Abstract

*The world is moving towards a complex phenomenon of regional connectivity with a revolutionary content in it. The security challenges, collective economic prosperity and stability are all contaminated by the vague strategic calculations with 'equi-probables'. The phenomenon anchors on regional peace, political will mutual trust and economic stability. The assent of India and Pakistan together for the first time, in a China and Russia backed security and economic organization of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as co-members, may help to evade the hard feelings. The incompatibility is nevertheless detrimental to their threat perceptions and objectives. Both India and Pakistan have nursed serious reservations about each other since partition in 1947. How would they overcome their age old acrimony? Their contribution to the pro-peace and pro-normalization process desired for South Asia by the US to Russia and China for a dispute-free, free-trade corridor is vital in regional connectivity and cooperative prosperity. This could help in harmonizing the age old quagmire and bilateral relations on way to regional patriotism and identity.*

**Key Words:** India, Pakistan, parochial politics, SCO, collective identity, regional forum, Kashmir, Ufa summit, counterterrorism, intermediary.

### Introduction

As a recent development, there has been heightened concern shown by both the US and the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon about the continuing sullenness in the relationship of the two nuclear power

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adversaries, India and Pakistan. "I can't speak for how leaders in either country are going to make announcements on their bilateral relationship – or, frankly, their bilateral tensions," said spokesman of the State Department, Kirby, at a briefing in Washington.<sup>1</sup> India-Pakistan relations have been punctuated by the deeply bruised polarizing controversies since the partition of the Sub-continent in 1947. The flashpoint remains the disputed region of Kashmir, the cross border violent exchanges and the legacy of mistrust ever since. Heavy gun fire is traded almost daily at the Line of Control (LoC) even after sixty eight years of partition.

Could these provocative attacks spiral out of control is a question threatening the politics of economic regionalism and counter terrorism, to which Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan, willfully agreed upon, in the sideline meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in the Russian city of Ufa on July 10, 2015. The two had met even in Kathmandu in November 2014 and bilateral talks were held. Earlier, in May 2014, Nawaz Sharif had attended the swearing-in ceremony of Modi on his invitation to all the states of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The bilateral meeting was followed by the exchange of gifts, the sari-shawl diplomacy and the tweets. This had given rise to the hope of improvement in ties. Nonetheless, soon the ties saw a downward swing in the relations with the continuing firing on the border, claiming more than two hundred and sixty lives in 2014-15 including that of the security personnel. In August 2014, foreign-secretary level talks were also called off by India at the last moment on the pretext of Pakistani envoy's meeting with the Kashmiri leaders. During his visit in May 2015, Modi told China to wisp the trade corridor through Pakistan. Similarly, Abu Dhabi is advised by him to come down hard on Pakistan. In his intimate swipe with Bangladesh Prime Minister Hasina Wajid during his visit to Bangladesh, Modi had admitted the covert orchestration of Mukti Bahini's rebellion in 1971, which led to the dismemberment of Pakistan. Efforts are being made to declare Pakistan a terrorist state since 2008. India even tried to isolate Pakistan at the 8th BRICS summit held at Goa on October 16-17 by using the term "mother-ship of terrorism", without naming Pakistan. Threats, rather actual implementation of fantasized

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<sup>1</sup>*Dawn* (Islamabad), August 11, 2015.

"surgical strikes" in September, 2016, at LoC and furious statements of the Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar of "neutralizing" terrorists with terror, are all a sequel of conflict investment in the pursuit of 'enlightened self-interest' of India.

Locked in an unremitting hostility, to establish a non-securitized culture and bring a strategic equilibrium between the two nations under the circumstances, even left the engagement between Modi and Nawaz in Ufa, fragile. A futuristic vision of collective security through conflict resolution is blocked by their parochial politics. How would they team up against the transnational threats and the transnational responses as members of the SCO? On the other hand, it also raises questions on their cooperation and the subsequent role in an international forum such as the SCO. History suggests that the bellicose lessons of political forces, especially nationalism, have largely kept the basic conflict dynamics unchanged between India and Pakistan so far.

Based on the literature review, the paper investigates the possibility of using the SCO forum to focus on the identity of perceptions for the management of conflicts in their bilateral relations. Both India and Pakistan are economically central, politically vital, geographically contiguous and diplomatically cordial to almost all the member states of the forum.

### **India and Pakistan: Litany of Grievances**

One of the characteristics of regional cooperation is strengthening of the moves to seek conflict management. The geo-economic collaboration of the region, with autonomy for individual countries is dependent upon the political and security conditions. Security, for example, conceptualized as comprehensive, has the core objective of achieving the well-being of the region, the nation, the state, the society, the community and the individual. Its dimensions could be military, political, economic, socio-psychological, cultural and ecological.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Carolina G. Hernandez, *PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE POST-COLD WAR ASIA PACIFIC REGION* Professor of Political Science, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City. Selected Papers Delivered at the United Nations University Global Seminar '96 Shonan Session, 2-6 September 1996, Hayama, Japan.  
[www.angelo.edu](http://www.angelo.edu)

Conflicts arise when "one or more actors are pursuing incompatible goals".<sup>3</sup> Hence, comprehensive and collective security between and amongst the states would ensure utterly predictable peace and development.

Affected by the narrator's partisanship, the 'vivisection'<sup>4</sup> of the sub-continent or the making of Pakistan as a result of communal discrimination in 1947, has kept South Asia's collective security an 'incandescent of panoply'. It carries several agonizing controversies for the people of both India and Pakistan. Despite sharing a long struggle against British imperialistic oppression, prejudice and insular nationalism apart from territorial disputes have stampeded the prosperity in the bilateral relations of both the neighbors. It has contrarily become an impetus to security policy in the succeeding decades of the partition for both.

Since the recent past, the relations between Pakistan and India have retrograded. Aggravating impasse in the Indo-Pak relations, accompanied with the situation at the Line of Control (LoC) and the Working Boundary (WB) is worrisome. During the months of July-August, 2015, Pakistan accused India of 70 violations of the LoC and India accused Pakistan of 91 cross border violations. Each summoned each other's diplomats for protest, leading to further deterioration of the relationship.

Taking examples from human history, many bigger states have tried to safeguard their security by influencing, destabilizing and interfering in their smaller bordering states. For example, Poland had immense significance for Russia and Germany in their security policy but remained volatile despite having a geostrategic corridor. Similarly,

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<sup>3</sup>Jolan Gultang & Carl Jacobsen, "Searching for Peace - The Road to TRANSCEND", London Pluto Press, 2000. P.23

<sup>4</sup>Rajiv Dogra, "Where Borders Bleed: An insider's account of Indo-Pak relations", Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd. 2015, New Delhi), p. 32

<sup>5</sup>"Ceasefire violations: India -Pakistan Field Commanders to meet tomorrow", NDTV, Indo-Asia News Service, 20 September, 2015.

India's ambition of driving nationhood across the territorial boundaries of "Greater India" or "Indus Valley Civilization",<sup>6</sup> has often complicated the regional atmosphere. Consequently, this has left a comparatively small and fragile but resilient Pakistan, to struggle through highs and lows in a fear of existential threat, and possible loss of its ideological and territorial integrity. Pakistan had even compromised on its sovereignty during the period of alliances to safeguard itself. Hence, the promise of peaceful coexistence taken at the time of partition was regrettably precluded from the later relationship. The defence of their individual ideals, ambitions and principles has haunted one another into imperceptibly on numerous occasions. This resulted in three bloody military encounters between the two nations of India and Pakistan, loss of the eastern wing of Pakistan (now Bangladesh), and a resource drained nuclear and missile race.

In this relentless confrontation, how would the imperatives of a modern state and a new world order, such as the realization of the political, economic, social potentialities and natural resources of one geographical unit, bear fruit? Where would they start as co-members of the SCO? Who would initiate to challenge the resultant incongruities required in the cooperation, both internally and externally?

To borrow from the Theory of Transcendence for conflict resolution, proposed by Johan Galtung, India and Pakistan have the following three options to respond to the changing world of multipolarity and regional integration:

1. To give up in advance on the outstanding issues,
2. Contenting oneself at the expense of the other,
3. Or reaching to some compromise.<sup>7</sup>

### **Together in the SCO**

Evident satisfaction was expressed by its members, at the end of the protracted expansion stalemate at the SCO summit. Both India and

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<sup>6</sup>Iftikhar Haider Malik, "Modi Machine Moves On: India at its Watershed", *Strategic Outlook*. 2014.

<sup>7</sup>Johan Guatung & Carl Jacobson, P.111.

Pakistan have joined simultaneously. Russia has traditionally been a strong economic and security collaborator of India, while China has always been an ardent supporter of Pakistan. The equation is quite ostensible. Would their membership impart a new momentum to coherent and effective togetherness in conflict management? Is it an opportunity? Or would it deepen their already existing strains and widen their ancient rivalries further afield to Afghanistan and Central Asia? The organization is still very feeble to bear such consequent shocks.

In the words of Michael Fugleman, a senior program associate for South and Southeast Asia at the Wilson Centre in Washington, "India is particularly interested because it lacks direct access to Central Asia, and it sees the SCO membership as a way to get a better foothold in the region. The SCO membership could better position India to benefit from Central Asia's gas riches."<sup>8</sup> Modi, on the announcement of membership for both India and Pakistan in the Ufa Summit July 2015, said that India's membership "reflects the natural links of history... It will also promote peace and prosperity in this vast region that has often been called the pivot of human history."<sup>9</sup> He envisions the ambitious fulfillment of India's dreams as South Asia's regional leader in the SCO.

Facing an intense war against terrorism and as a frontline state, Pakistan has lost more than forty-nine thousand lives in the War on Terror (WoT) since 9/11.<sup>10</sup> Nawaz Sharif's perspective during the SCO conference was very fundamental and more towards building compatibility with the eastern neighbor and ensuring peace in Afghanistan. With its geo-strategic location, Pakistan holds an economic and communication corridor for its South Asian and Central Asian neighbors. The history of its significance goes back to Silk Route times. Nawaz Sharif, therefore, emphasized on 'regional stability and economic integration to achieve the objectives of peace and development'.

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<sup>8</sup>"Michael Fugleman Quotes." Quotes.net. STANDS4 LLC, 2015. Web. 28 Sep. 2015. www.quotes.net

<sup>9</sup>Remarks by Prime Minister at preliminary of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Ministry of External Affairs India, Documents 10 July, 2015. www.mea.gov.in

<sup>10</sup>Ashley J. Tellis, "Pakistan and the War on Terror: Conflicted Goals Compromised Performance", Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 2008.

### **Kashmir: An Apple of Discord**

Unfortunately, the legendary splendor and the salubriousness of Kashmir is blemished by the policing of 700,000 Indian military and paramilitary forces. Today, it is the most densely militarized land on earth.<sup>11</sup> Its 12.5 million population is enduring draconian Indian laws of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), the Disturbed Areas Act (DAA) and the Public Safety Act (PSA), and the Prevention of Terrorist Act (POTA) with valour. The recent murder of more than one hundred unarmed freedom fighters against the curfew ridden atmosphere of Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) is further abating the possibilities of achieving any consonance. Kashmir could be an undermining factor in the credibility required from India and Pakistan to establish international peace and friendship for all the nations as members of the SCO forum. Their conduct needs to be in compliance with the charter of the SCO. The tasks and the goals of the SCO in its Article (1) emphasize on promoting "human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the international obligations of the member states and their national legislation."<sup>12</sup> It urges "mutual respect of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity of States and inviolability of State borders, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force or threat of its use in international relations, seeking no unilateral military superiority in adjacent areas".<sup>13</sup>

The transformation of the regional and global security paradigm amidst the growth of new economic centers also necessitates a qualitative change. The world looks askance at teamwork in countering transnational threats and transnational counter terrorism policies of both India and Pakistan.

Realistically, Pakistan's claim in recognizing Kashmir as a disputed territory has a validity according to UN Security Council's Resolutions 47 and 49. The UNCIP has passed a resolution stating: "The question of accession of the state of Jammu & Kashmir to India or Pakistan will be

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<sup>11</sup>Arundhati Roy, "Listening to Grass Hoppers", (Penguin Books, 2009), P. 164.

<sup>12</sup>The Charter of SCO. [www.sectSCO.org](http://www.sectSCO.org)

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

decided through the democratic method of free and impartial plebiscite".<sup>14</sup>

Article 25 of the UN Charter reiterates the obligatory nature of the UN resolutions and the Security Council. India itself had originally taken the Kashmir issue to the United Nation and the plebiscite was promised. This never met its fate in reality.

In 1974, the Simla Agreement was signed between India and Pakistan. It recognized the LoC, resulting from the ceasefire of December 17, 1971.<sup>15</sup> Both resolved to respect each other's territorial integrity and address the basic issues and conflicts without prejudice. Both sides agreed to ensure the "prerequisites for reconciliation, good neighborliness and durable peace" and "neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally".<sup>16</sup> The issue further got complicated by its longevity. India's resistance to Kashmiri's demand perhaps stems more from the fear that it might enthuse other linguistic, cultural, religious and territorial-based separatists.

The Kashmir issue has deepened within the folds of their historically asymmetrical relations. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 held the provisions for both the majority communities of Hindus and Muslims living in the sub-continent as "the Dominion of India may be regarded as an expression of the desire for self-government of the Hindus in India, and the Dominion of Pakistan as the expression of the desire for self-government by the Muslims."<sup>17</sup> The British had left undivided India with an option given to Princely States, either to join India or Pakistan or maintain their sovereign status. It was a critical

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<sup>14</sup>Wajahat Ahmed, "Kashmir and the United Nations", [www.countercurrents.org](http://www.countercurrents.org) 27 August, 2008.

<sup>15</sup>P R Chari, "Kargil, Loc and Simla Agreement", *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 23 June, 1999. [ipcs.org](http://ipcs.org)

<sup>16</sup>Jaswant Singh, "India at Risk, Mistakes, Misconceptions and misadventures of Security Policy", Rupa Publication, India. 2013. P.17

<sup>17</sup>Indian Independence Bill : HC Deb 15 July 1947 vol 440 cc227-84. [hansard.millbanksystems.com](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com)

decision for about 500 other rulers of princely states as well. The rulers had to affiliate on geographical contiguity or on the religious affiliation of the population. Kashmir was the biggest of all the princely states. Maharaja Hari Singh, a Hindu, was its ruler. He is said to have acceded to India in his letters written to the Indian Union in October 1947, with the condition of receiving Indian military reinforcements. Lord Louis Mountbatten, as Governor of Independent India, on behalf of the Crown accepted the decision but with a condition that "the question of accession should be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people".<sup>18</sup> The first Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was from the Kashmiri ancestry himself. He, in his combination of idealism and realism, envisaged a secular and democratized state of India where the Muslim population from the previous autocratic principalities would also enjoy self-determination. On the other hand, Pakistan took geographically contiguous and majority Muslim Kashmir as its rightful part and vital for its existence. For Pakistan, it is a 'jugular vein' and for India, the state is its integral part. The controversy has become a festering and enduring sore ever since, characterized by both international and internal dynamics. Occupied Kashmir is now victimized by the dual strategy of territorial nationalism adopted by India through the judicial adjustment made in Article 370, and its gradual erosion in order to consolidate it in the mainstream of Indian politics.

The Indian government has become particularly sensitive to the Kashmir issue since the last three years. The meeting of Nawaz Sharif and Modi on the sidelines of the Ufa Summit in July 2015 provided an opportunity to both to resume the stalemated bilateral talks. "They agreed that India and Pakistan have a collective responsibility to ensure peace and promote development. To do this they are prepared to discuss all outstanding issues."<sup>19</sup>

To expect a peace process to succeed is unlikely if the main sources of tension remain unresolved. The conflict of Kashmir is regrettably institutionalized on both sides of the border. By taking only cosmetic measures, the international pressure could perhaps be siphoned off. It

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<sup>18</sup>Arundhati Roy, "Listening to Grass Hoppers: Field Notes on Democracy", P.191. [www.pakistantoday.com.pk](http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk)

<sup>19</sup>Kuldip Nayyar, "The chasm in Indo-Pak relations", *Pakistan Today*, 26 July, 2015

can preserve some mutual interests. However, the implementation of UN resolution must involve more watchful eyes of the world.

### **Internal Dynamics of Occupied Kashmir**

India is a common party to both the aspects of the Kashmir issue, India vs. Pakistan and India vs. Kashmiris. The internal political dynamics of Occupied Kashmir are daunting. The Indian held Kashmir has chosen its own government twice only in the post-partition history; and only a limited democratic development has been witnessed in Kashmir until the late 1970's. By 1988, many of the democratic reforms provided were reversed by the Indian Government.

There had been a serious violation of basic human rights in Kashmir and the state is experiencing proliferation of insurgency. According to the International Commission of Jurists, Asia Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, Amnesty International, and Kashmiri and even Human Rights Organizations, the Vale of Kashmir has seen 'brutal' military operations and heinous human rights violations, such as torture, gang rape, the destruction of property, homes and even entire villages, abduction, and extrajudicial killings. According to the global human rights group, Amnesty International in its report titled Denied: Failures in Accountability For Human Rights Violations by Security Force Personnel in Jammu and Kashmir, "Indian security forces have killed 90,986 civilians in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK), while Indian forces under AFSPA had reportedly destroyed about 105,182 shops and houses in Indian held Jammu and Kashmir. About 3288 innocent Kashmiris have been detained by Indian security forces since 1990."<sup>20</sup> The report has also unearthed the presence of mass graves in IOK, 'generally termed as missing persons'. The stance of Kashmiri people is endorsed by the Amnesty International report. The account on impunity given to the Indian Armed Forces under AFSPA is based on the report on the examination of nearly 100 cases of human rights abuses by Indian security forces between 1990 and 2012 and interviews with

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<sup>20</sup>Amna Razaq, "Human rights violation by India and Amnesty international report", *The Patriot* (Delhi), July 12, 2015.

58 family members of the victims in 2013.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, the Movement for Self-Determination in Kashmir is continuing making the political compromise difficult and the use of military too dangerous to press the case. Both India and Pakistan have also tested their nuclear weapons in 1998.

A new dimension is added to the internal qualms of the people of Kashmir with the growth of religious extremism. Extremist tendencies are more readily acceptable in the Indian society by the coming of Bharitya Janata Party (BJP) and Modi to power. The affiliation of the ruling political party with the communalist militant political Hinduism or Hindutva not only identifies majoritarian rule but also fosters Hindutva doctrine which communalizes the entire country even further. Nehru, in his prophetic remarks had once warned that "if fascism would arrive in India, it would arrive in the form of majoritarian (Hindu) communalism".<sup>22</sup>

### **The Ufa Summit**

With its multi-dimensional characteristics, the Kashmir issue once again overshadowed the Ufa summit held between Modi and Nawaz Sharif. Its agenda fell victim to ambiguity resulting in the scuttle of the dialogue between the National Security Advisers (NSAs) of India and Pakistan scheduled for the 23-24 August, 2015. India tried to restrict the agenda to terrorism, alone. The Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, in fact, had maintained a threatening tone while cancelling the talks against the presence of any third party.<sup>23</sup> This is continuing even today. To deny the participation of Kashmiri representation in any dialogue for the resolution of the Kashmir issue would be more of a travesty of the continuing historical reality and is yet another somersault of the Indian government.

While expressing disappointment on the Ufa summit, Ayaz Akbar, the spokesman of the Hurriyat said "we did not expect any breakthrough

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Dr. Nasir Khan, "Resolving the Kashmir Conflict", *Foreign Policy Journal*, 13 January, 2011.

<sup>23</sup>Dawn, 22 August, 2015.

from the meeting. It was just a diplomatic compulsion for the prime ministers of the two countries." <sup>24</sup>

building has already been reached in the spirit of the SCO. The Ufa Communiqué had the mechanism to achieve the overall objectives of peace and security. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue (CBD) process agreed between the two also encompasses terrorism, Kashmir and other issues in its eight point agenda.

In order to work together on the SCO forum, it is obligatory for its members to enhance 'comprehensive cooperation' and to strengthen peace and ensure security and stability in the region 'in the environment of developing political multi-polarity and economic and information globalization'.<sup>25</sup> In the wake of long drawn misunderstandings between India and Pakistan, cooperation on information sharing and counter terrorism is yet another sour issue.

Pakistan, since the recent ascendance in its relations with Russia, stands the chance of transforming Russia's stance on Kashmir, favorably. It already has an edge of having an accomplished friendship with China and its support on the Kashmir issue, as the two main sponsors of the SCO. On the other hand, the relations between India and Russia have lost its luster. Ever since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, India has espoused itself with the US as a main contender of Asia pivot policy. The proximity of China and Russia is also a thorny issue in their Indo-US relationship.

### **Counter-terrorism and Mutual Trust**

The end of the twentieth century has seen a change in global geopolitics. The weapon of terrorism with its political objectives in sight has been instrumental in using the forces of nationalism, ethnicity, religion, ideology and social class. The focus of the Ufa summit in 2015 has also been largely on counterterrorism. An appeal was made to the United Nations to direct more efforts against terrorism and extremism. The SCO

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<sup>24</sup>"Separatists dismiss Russia dialogue; say India, Pakistan PMs should focus on Kashmir", *The Economic Times*. 10 July, 2015.

<sup>25</sup>SCO Charter.

in its Article 3 urges its member states to develop and implement 'measures aimed at jointly counteracting terrorism, separatism and extremism'.<sup>26</sup>

To forward its apprehensions, India has used terrorism both as a tactic and strategy. Pakistan has been able to unearth the indulgence of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) in the insurgency in Baluchistan and Karachi. According to some official reports, Indian spies are operating through a network of Indian missions dotting southern and eastern Afghanistan, where most of the Baluch insurgents are also based.<sup>27</sup> Pakistan's claims of Indian interference in Baluchistan and patronization of terrorist groups by RAW to destabilize it are quite clear-cut. The recent statement of Modi on Baluchistan and accusation in reference to "they glorify terrorism"<sup>28</sup> is more of an investment in conflict. Earlier Pakistan had given four dossiers after the September 2015 session to the UN Secretary General Ban ki moon.

The mutual mistrust is intractable. Pakistan's Inter-service Intelligence (ISI), on the other hand has been indicted by India for carrying out terrorism in Kashmir. Pakistan bears the onus of the July 2006 Mumbai train bombing, 2001 parliament attack, which almost brought the two nations face to face. Lashker-i-Taiba (LeT) is also widely blamed for the November 2008 attacks on Mumbai. The LeT was banned by Pakistan in 2002, after it was alleged to have carried out an attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001.<sup>29</sup>

In reality, reaction to oppression and an inexcusable Indian abomination, particularly in Occupied Kashmir is sometimes interpreted as terrorism and is regrettably attached to Pakistan. This paradox adds to the uncertainties in the complex relationship of India and Pakistan and swathes it in the debate of terrorism and counter-terrorism. The space thus provided has been invariably used by widespread transnational

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<sup>26</sup>SCO Charter.

<sup>27</sup>Aparna Pande, "South Asia Counter-terrorism & Postures after 9/11". [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org)

<sup>28</sup>Dawn, "People of Baluchistan, Kashmir thanked me: Modi on India's Independence Day", 15 Aug, 2016. <http://www.dawn.com/news/1277670>

<sup>29</sup>M Ilyas Khan, "What lies behind Pakistani charges of Indian 'terrorism'", *BBC News*, Islamabad, May 6, 2015. [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)

terrorists and has kept the South Asian region volatile. There has never been any coherent, consistent and effective policy against terrorism designed by the South Asian countries collectively, even after a welcome start in cooperation after the Pathankot Airbase attack in January 2016. In fact, the counter-terrorism initiatives have primarily found underpinnings in the short-term national interests and realpolitik foreign policy agendas. The wide gap between stance and intent, pledge and action has further complicated the comprehension of terrorism. Mutual assistance and cooperation can certainly provide the best antidote to this threat.

### **Economic Interdependence**

The value of economic interdependence has remained contentious between the liberals and the realists to bring peace in the conflicting nations. The success of economic regionalism is conditioned on political traditions and security relations. Although, economic and trade relations have a distinct role to help evade otherwise political issues, as is seen in the case of India and China, yet, institutional arrangements and the level of integration required for regional economic connectivity have to be established on the foreign policies and relations of the member states. The SCO's economic institutions have not seen any tangible progress. China has unilaterally launched its own Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. It has "adopted and revitalized the Kazak-created Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), which some Chinese aim to make into an influential pan-Eurasian security structure that excludes Japan and the United States"<sup>30</sup> as forward momentum needs similarity in objectives.

In the economic relations of the region, the most basic form is a free-trade area which abolishes or condenses custom duties between members. Then a customs union and common market is established to ensure a greater degree of integration, for example a common tariff on non-members. The third level of economic regionalism is based on economic and currency union, as was seen in the European Union. For

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<sup>30</sup> Andrew Elek, "Welcoming China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank Initiative", *East Asia Forum*, 21 September, 2014. [www.eastasiaforum.org](http://www.eastasiaforum.org)

example "there is a high level of political consensus required between the member states with an objective of complete economic integration through a common economic policy, a common currency and the elimination of all tariff and non-tariff barriers".<sup>31</sup> The economic relations between India and Pakistan, despite being snagged by a plethora of political factors, are making headway.

Historically, the economic interdependence of India and Pakistan was reasonably voluminous. In fact, India's share in Pakistan's global exports and imports accounted to 23.6 percent and 50.6 percent in 1948 and 1949 respectively, which declined to 1.3 to 0.06 percent in 1975-76 respectively, after the breakup of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Similarly, Pakistan's share in India's exports and imports to the international market was 2.2 percent and 1.1 percent respectively in 1951-52.<sup>32</sup> The decline in the economic relationship is most noticeable during the times of political tension. Recent realization of synergy potentials for the peace and development of the region has shown an upward trend in the economic relationship of the two political arch rivals. India granted Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan in 2006 in consonance with the WTO agreement, which is pending for reciprocation from Pakistan. According to the figures, Pakistan's exports to India had recorded at US\$1.735 billion during 2006-7-2011-12, against the imports of 8,363 billion dollars. This leaves the nation to face a loss of 6 billion dollar trade deficit. The balance of trade in favor of India also often overlay for political rhetoric.<sup>33</sup> To see the relationship on the established fundamentals of economic regionalism is perhaps still thinking too far.

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<sup>31</sup>Chung-in Moon, "Economic regionalism; International Relations", *Encyclopedea Britannica*.

<sup>32</sup>Tasneem Noorani, " MFN status and Trade between Pakistan and India", *Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency(PILDAT Report)*, Islamabad, 2012.

<sup>33</sup>The Journal of Commerce, 16 September, 2012, [zeenews.india.com](http://zeenews.india.com)

### **Uni-polarity vs. Multi-polarity: A Delicate Straddling**

Through SCO, China and Russia are building a decidedly multi-polar "Eurasian" point of view. Its strategic aims are to condemn any efforts to achieve "monopoly in world affairs", divide the world into "leaders and followers" and "impose models of social development." This obviously reflects China's insistence on "multi-polar" world as against the US persistence of "uni-polar" international order.<sup>34</sup> It has invariably asserted on common security through mutually beneficial cooperation to foster confidence building and resolve actual and common conflicts within the organization.

To further clarify the spirit of SCO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation gave a statement on June 20, 2001, while obligating the member states of SCO to "strictly abide by the goals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the principle of mutual respect of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, equality and mutual benefit, the solution of all issues through mutual consultations"<sup>35</sup>...and non-use of threat or force against each other and neither would seek unilateral military superiority in contiguous areas.

In its newly found rapprochement, mainly predisposed by China, Russia sees Pakistan as a responsible state committed to counter terrorism contrary to India's calling of Pakistan a "backward rogue state" secretly controlled by the "terrorists". In fact, it is underpinning the Russian plans to ship arms to Pakistan. A joint military exercise was conducted by Pakistan and Russia recently in the month of September-October, 2016. China is also convinced of its co-members of the SCO that India and Pakistan should let go of their historical acrimony. It has urged both to cooperate with the shared multilaterally beneficial vision of enhancing China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and pan-Eurasian connectivity.

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<sup>34</sup>William E. Carroll, "China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Hegemony, Multipolar Cooperation or Cooperation in Central Asia", *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol.1, No.19, December 2011.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid

Nonetheless, the 'trip wire' relationship between India and Pakistan and China and India is a vulnerable point for the organization. For example, the CPEC project which routes through the legitimate Pakistani territory of Gilgit and Baltistan is considered part of the disputed territory of Kashmir. Though the world recognizes it otherwise, India fears that it would permanently tie the region with Pakistan.

Similarly, there is no doubt that India has played a significant role in the promotion of economic and institutional multi-polarity, and has historically rearranged the global trade and financial networks, it has gone contrary to the geopolitical multi-polarity by following the three guiding precepts of its foreign policy for the region:

1. Containing China, as an ardent ally of the US in its policy of "Asia Pivot". It would position India to counterweight China as well as find an alternate strategic partner of Russia. It paradoxically pushes Modi's India into uni-polarity.
2. Confronting Pakistan, with which it has fractured relations ever since.<sup>36</sup>
3. With the continuing human rights violations in Indian Occupied Kashmir, India has been widely criticized by the human rights organizations in the world. Besides, the violation of the UN Security Council resolutions is evident. Its non-compliance makes India's membership of SCO controversial which fundamentally advocates the obligations of the UN charter. These geopolitical advances have more chances of shaking the multi-polar forum since there is very little chance for SCO to intercede in Indo-Pakistan's protracted rivalry.

## Conclusion

Located on the southern extremity of the Eurasian continent, South Asia's continental entrance is both from the accessible passes of the highest mountains of the world, and the borders of the Indian Ocean which opens it to maritime trade since over 3000 years ago. Its strategic location is a favorable trait for Persian Gulf oil flow. The unity in its

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<sup>36</sup>Andrew Korybko, "Modi's game and the true meaning of Multipolarity", *OrientalReview.org*. January 31, 2015.

cultural and geographical diversity, however, has not been able to significantly place cooperation above conflict in the conduct of interstate relations. The region has not been able to achieve complementarity of political interests. The perpetual intra-state conflicts have kept the region preoccupied with the misgivings of individual existence rather than looking for regional solutions. Furthermore, there has been an inextricable connection between the internal and external politics of the regional states. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is perhaps the only regional forum which has not been able to provide a platform for discussing security-related issues. It only recognizes political dialogue for which it is essential to have a political will and problem-solving diplomacy.

South Asians are, therefore, negotiating their place in an arena of global interconnections within the throes of rapid change. Genuine prospects of peace, democracy and cooperative development need to be ensured. To challenge the disputes, especially over Kashmir and terrorism, and ensuing bitterness between the two nuclear powers of India and Pakistan, place them at a decisive crossroads in their history. The present is of critical importance in their way forward.

The bilateral relations between India and Pakistan have been often victimized by vengeance in which even individuals are an entity. It is sometimes a distressing outgrowth of obsession. Many attempts for the resolution of the Kashmir issue have already been exhausted except for Plebiscite. What choices do Modi and Sharif have? The stakes are too high to give up in advance on outstanding issues both internally and externally, and this is so for both the countries. Both are nuclear, so the danger of contending at the expense of the other is suicidal. Compromise is perhaps the only alternative left by exploring the common grounds to progress towards a political resolution of outstanding issues, economic regionalism and have sustained counter terrorism strategy.

SCO provides an opportunity to both to transcend from their parochial politics. It is a Eurasian political, economic and military organization, and has the experience of providing a platform to its

member states to sign such crucial agreements like the Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions and the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation, amongst its member states. The converging interests of the member states of the SCO in South Asia offer an opening to the forum for an effective intermediary role to resolve the Kashmir issue. The presence of unimplemented resolutions in the United Nations has already given it an international status. Kashmir is a 'powder keg'. Inclusive strategies can best be devised with the help of the Kashmiri freedom fighters. In the shifting paradigms of the realization of shared threats and combined counter-terrorism strategies, a mechanism for conflict management and resolution requires collective hard work to ensure peace and prosperity of the region populated by thirty percent of the world population. It needs to facilitate Confidence-building Measures (CBMs) and the management of biased perceptions. Recognizing an expanded number of stakeholders and their goals expands the possible number of creative combinations of interests, which can lead towards solutions and transformed relations. This is the key to a cooperative or collaborative approach to the conflict.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch, Peace Journalism, What is it? How to do? [www.transcend.org](http://www.transcend.org)