



## India and its Relation with Pakistan

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On the 14th and 15 August 1947, British India gave way to two new independent states, the Dominion of Pakistan and the Union of India, both dominions which joined the British Commonwealth. However, the decision to divide Punjab and Bengal, two of the biggest provinces, between India and Pakistan had disastrous consequences. This division created inter-religious violence of such magnitude that exchange of population along religious lines became a necessity in these provinces. More than two million people migrated across the new borders and more than one hundred thousand died in the spate of communal violence that spread even beyond these provinces. The independence also resulted in tensions over Kashmir leading to the Indo-Pakistani War of 1947, which culminated in an armistice, brokered by the United Nations, and a hitherto unresolved Kashmir dispute. The post-independence political history of Pakistan has been characterised by several periods of authoritarian military rule and continuing territorial disputes with India over the status of Kashmir.

### Indo-Pakistani relations

Relations between India and Pakistan have been strained by a number of historical and political issues, and are defined by the violent partition of British India in 1947, the Kashmir dispute and the numerous military conflicts fought between the two nations. Consequently, even though the two South Asian nations share historic, cultural, geographic, and economic links, their relationship has been plagued by hostility and suspicion.

After the dissolution of the British Raj in 1947, two new sovereign nations were formed—the Union of India and the Dominion of Pakistan. The subsequent partition of the former British India displaced up to 12.5 million people, with estimates of loss of life varying from several hundred thousand to a million. India emerged as a secular nation with a Hindu majority population and a large Muslim minority while Pakistan was established as an Islamic republic with an overwhelming Muslim majority population.

### Seeds of conflict during independence

About half a million Muslims and Hindus were killed in communal riots following the partition of British India. Millions of Muslims living in India and Hindus and Sikhs living in Pakistan emigrated in one of the most colossal transfers of population in the modern era. Both countries accused each other of not providing adequate security to the minorities emigrating through their territory. This served to increase tensions between the newly-born countries.

### Junagadh dispute

Junagadh is one of the modern districts of **Saurashtra**, Gujarat **Junagadh** was a state on the southwestern end of **Gujarat**, with the principalities of Manavadar, Mangrol and Babriawad. The **Arabian Sea** stood between it and Pakistan. The state had an overwhelming Hindu population which constituted more than 80% of its citizens, while the ruler of the state was a Muslim. On August 15, 1947, the ruler of the state, Nawab of Junagadh Mahabat Khan,



acceded to Pakistan. Pakistan confirmed the acceptance of the accession in September 1947. India did not accept the accession as legitimate.

### **Kashmir dispute**

Kashmir was a princely state, ruled by a Hindu king, Maharaja Hari Singh. The Maharaja of Kashmir was equally hesitant to join either India–, because he knew his Muslim subjects would not like to join a Hindu-based and Hindu-majority nation, or Pakistan– which as a Hindu he was personally averse to. Pakistan coveted the Himalayan kingdom, while Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi and Indian PM Jawaharlal Nehru hoped that the kingdom would join India. Hari Singh signed a Standstill Agreement (preserving status quo) with Pakistan, but did not make his decision by August 15, 1947.

### **Bengal refugee crisis**

In 1949, India recorded close to 1 million Hindu refugees, who flooded into West Bengal and other states from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), owing to communal violence, intimidation and repression from authorities. The plight of the refugees outraged Hindus and Indian nationalists, and the refugee population drained the resources of Indian states, which were unable to absorb them. While not ruling out war, Prime Minister Nehru and Sardar Patel invited Liaquat Ali Khan for talks in Delhi. Although many Indians termed this appeasement, Nehru signed a pact with Liaquat Ali Khan that pledged both nations to the protection of minorities and creation of minority commissions.

### **1971 Bangladesh Liberation War**

Pakistan, since independence, was geo-politically divided into two major regions, West Pakistan and East Pakistan. East Pakistan was occupied mostly by Bengali people. In December 1971, following a political crisis in East Pakistan, the situation soon spiralled out of control in East Pakistan and India intervened in favour of the rebelling Bengali populace. The conflict, a brief but bloody war, resulted in an independence of East Pakistan. In the war, the Pakistani army swiftly fell to India, forcing the independence of East Pakistan, which separated and became Bangladesh. The Pakistani military, being a thousand miles from its base and surrounded by enemies, was forced to give in.

### **Nuclear programmes and agreements, talks, and confidence building measures**

In an effort to curtail tensions, the two countries formed a joint commission to examine disputes. In December 1988, Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi concluded a pact not to attack each other's nuclear facilities. Agreements on cultural exchanges and civil aviation were also initiated.

In 1997, high-level Indo-Pakistan talks resumed after a three-year pause. The Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India met twice and the foreign secretaries conducted three rounds of talks. In June 1997, the foreign secretaries identified eight "outstanding issues" around which continuing talks would be focused. In September 1997, the talks broke down over the structure of how to deal with the issues of Kashmir, and peace and security. Pakistan advocated that the issues be treated by separate working groups. India responded that the two issues be taken up along with six others on a simultaneous basis. In May 1998 India, and then Pakistan, conducted nuclear tests.



## Conclusion

Sixty years is too long a time to waste in hostility. During this period, the countries that have been engaged in conflict for centuries have turned a new leaf. This has only been possible because of a genuine desire of the concerned states to make a new beginning and concentrate their energies on progress of their people. Once the states are determined to commit themselves to the future of their people, they find it easy to renounce the excuse they have been holding to justify acrimony. UK and Ireland, Germany a France, Italy and Austria, Japan and Russia, Iran and UAE, Israel and Egypt, and many other neighbouring states have demonstrated that it is possible not to mortgage the future to conflicts of the past. Some of them have found innovative solutions to issues straining their relationship and some have allowed the overall bilateral relations to supercede unnecessary conflicts. India and Pakistan can reach the final settlement and make a new beginning. This is possible if and only if they are determined to restructure their bilateral relations and also restructure and re-orient their internal dynamics. The final settlement between India and Pakistan is essentially about the final settlement of individual identities, power structures and resource management.

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