

Division of the 1947: Rethinking

Abstract

Since the independence and partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 the relationship between these two states has been the most intractable and the most dangerous political standoff in South Asia. There are several reasons for this continuing tension like the hostility between the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Muslim League prior to independence, hostility that carried over into the post 1947 period, the bloodletting that occurred at partition and etc.

India and Pakistan were founded on two very different ideological foundations. India constituted a secular state, whereby religion would play no part in the body politic. Pakistan founded as a Muslim state, a home for the Muslims of South Asia. The demand for Pakistan was itself based on distrust. Roots of this kind of relationship between India-Pakistan can be seen in the colonial history of Indian subcontinent. There is a fair amount of scholarly agreement that partition occurred not because of Hindus and Muslim could not live together, but because the elite of the two communities could not agree to power sharing. The greatest tragedy was that the deciding feature of this division was religion. The root causes of India-Pakistan rift can be traced back to the days before the division of the subcontinent. Thus following is the analysis of partitioned of India and Pakistan and try to find out the answer the questions like Why India-Pakistan partitioned.

Keywords: Political standoff, Secular state, Colonial history, Religion.

Introduction

Since the independence and partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 the relationship between these two states has been the most intractable and the most dangerous political standoff in South Asia. Since the end of the cold war it is perhaps the most dangerous and unpredictable region in international politics. There are several reasons for this continuing tension like the hostility between the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Muslim League prior to independence, hostility that carried over into the post 1947 period, the bloodletting that occurred at partition, served even further to entrench hostility between them leading both to question the justification and legitimacy of each other and within weeks of independence Kashmir became and remains a continued source of political, ideological and military friction between them. Barry Buzan suggests, "Their historical, geographic and cultural ties do not allow them to ignore each other...but their organization principles pose a permanent threat to each other."¹ India and Pakistan were founded on two very different ideological foundations. India constituted a secular state, whereby religion would play no part in the body politic. Pakistan founded as a Muslim state, a home for the Muslims of South Asia. The crux of these antagonisms has manifested itself in a conflict of self and other with both states questioning the legitimacy of the other. The demand for Pakistan was itself based on distrust. Roots of this kind of relationship between India-Pakistan can be seen in the colonial history of Indian subcontinent. British colonial rules established a tradition by the partition of this subcontinent that creates a chain of struggles, disputes and instability in the region.

Historical Background

The history of Indo-Pak Relations has been mainly a story of conflict and discord, mutual distrust and suspicion. Other than Israel, Pakistan is the only nation in 20th century whose birth resulted from the demand by a religious community for a political structure in which it would be dominant.² In the August, 1947 British India was divided into two parts as decolonization process that was the birth of the two independent nations in the subcontinent namely India and Pakistan. Since, India and Pakistan, became independent it has been rightly stated that Pakistan's foreign policy is made in India but unfortunately India and Pakistan never became good friends and always engaged in conflicts and disputes. There is a fair amount of scholarly agreement that partition occurred not because of Hindus and Muslim could not live together, but

Sanjeet Kumar

Research Scholar,
Deptt. of Political Science,
Central University of Haryana,
Mahendergarh

because the elite of the two communities could not agree to power sharing. The greatest tragedy was that the deciding feature of this division was religion.³ These two nations never come out from the circle of conflicts and disputes since independence. Their relations travel from dispute to peace and peace to dispute subsequently but always remain far from friendship and cooperation. It has resulted from a number of complex factors like legacy, the difference in religion and race, conflicting national interests, ideologies, power struggle.⁴ From the very beginning, the two powers became involved in a conflict ridden relationship over the status of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir and forced immigrate of thousands of Hindu and Muslim into the new countries which affected both emerging countries. The dispute has proved severely opposed to resolution because, at bottom, it is infused with the self-images of the two states. Pakistan deemed its identity as a Muslim homeland incomplete without Kashmir; while India sees its control over this Muslim-majority state as a demonstration of its secular identification. This tense relationship has resulted in three major wars (1947-48, 1965, 1971) and a limited one (1999) and multiple crises⁵ like the question of minorities, evacuee property, sharing of assets, division of military stores, Hadrabad and Junagarh --- the list is endless. A number of promising agreements were made.

Why India-Pakistan Partitioned?

The root causes of India-Pakistan rift can be traced back to the days before the division of the subcontinent. Until the arrival of Muslim traders, missionaries, and armies in the late seventh and early eighth centuries, the population of South Asia was primarily Hindu and Buddhist. By A.D. 1100 a number of Indo-Muslim states had been established and by the sixteenth century the Mughal Empire dominated northern India. The British formally disbanded the empire in 1858, at which time about one quarter of India's population were Muslims. They were concentrated in East Bengal, the Northwest Frontier, Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan, with large Muslim minorities in present day Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Indian Muslim slowly adapted to British rule yet maintained their identity, establishing the Aligarh Muslim University (1875) and the Muslim League (1906). The latter, dominated by wealthy landowners and Muslim professionals, was largely secular in orientation; through a basic concern was the fate of Muslim in mainly Hindu political order. There was no suggestion of a separate Muslim state until 1930, when the Punjabi poet-politician Mohammed Iqbal raised the idea. Three year later a group of Indian students at Cambridge proposed naming it Pakistan. As the prospects of British withdrawal from South Asia increased, the Muslim League, led by the lawyer-politician Mohammed Ali Jinnah, declared its support for the idea of Pakistan in its historic address in 1940 Lahore session that set forth the logic of Pakistan.⁶

The Hindus and the Muslim belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literatures. They neither inter-marry, nor inter-dine together and indeed, they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their aspects on life are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Musalmans derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, their heroes are different, and they have different episodes. Very often the hero of one is a foe of

the other, and likewise, their victories and defeats overlap.

Jinnah turned the "two-nation" theory into an effective political movement by trying to weld together disparate elements of the Indian Muslim community. Another reason behind the partition, a separate status for India's Muslim was became an important milestone on the road leading to Pakistan. Despite the increasing support for Pakistan—whether as a separate entity within India or as a state—many distinguished Indian Muslims rejected the idea, choosing to be loyal to the politically dominant Indian National Congress. What percentage of Indian Muslims favored an independent Pakistan is still unclear, but there is no doubt that the most prominent community leaders wanted a separate state—or at least staked out a claim for Pakistan in the hope of winning concessions in the final round of negotiations. The third towering figure of this group was Allama Iqbal, who in his own way propelled the idea of Pakistan forward as effectively as Jinnah or Sir Syed.⁷

Pakistan has been on the roller-coaster of democracy and dictatorship and a war against India always meant a change in Pakistan. An adventure against India is necessarily the outcome of compelling domestic circumstances. Therefore, Pakistan has always been conscious of its leadership role in Islamic world. This goes much beyond the two nation theory, which fulfilled itself with the partition of India (1947).⁸ On the eve of partition both parties created images of each other which continued to be major elements of the entire conflict. The Indian National Congress maintained that old India continued to exist as an entity, though the secession of some areas was agreed to in the conviction that what remained would be integrated into a strong unified state. On its part the Muslim League stressed that the Muslim majority areas in the northwest and east India constituted into a separate state, would grow into a strong, strategically vital Muslim state. There are two major reasons for the persistence of this kind of conflict, the antithetical nature of Hinduism and Islam, and the other, consequences of Britain's 'cut and run' departure from the subcontinent. Besides the conflict between the competing visions of Islam and secularism, sharp differences could be found in the history and policies of the two major political parties, The Muslim League and The Indian National Congress. To begin with, the issue of separate electorates demanded by The Muslim League was vehemently opposed by the Congress. This type of environment leads the subcontinent towards partition.

The partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan came with a record brutal violence, deaths, and damage after the All India Muslim League (AIML) declared on the Direct Action Day (DAD) on August 16, 1946, to divide India or destroy India. At the time of the partition the world's worst migration of people, who cross borders in Punjab and Bengal, was more than ten million and genocide of communal carnage of almost one million in the subcontinent. The demand for Pakistan was not an ideological revolution but an extremism to set up a new land for Islamist that stoked and fomented communal hatred and bloodshed. The Hindu and Muslim who revolted together in 1857 against the British were killing each other in the 1940s.⁹ At the time of partition the rulers of the nearly 500 odd princely states that were directly under the British were advised to join either India or Pakistan, keeping in mind

proximity, their demographic profile and other factors. Most states were integrated into either India or Pakistan. However there were a couple of states that had a problem. Hyderabad (Deccan), which was ruled by a Muslim Nizam, had a large, mainly Hindu Population, but geographically it was completely surrounded by India. Likewise the state of J&K had a Hindu Maharaja, but the majority of its population were Muslim and, unlike Hyderabad, both India and Pakistan had contiguous borders with it. While both these states set on the fence for quite a while before opting for India or Pakistan, the issue of Hyderabad was settled by a short and swift police action that resulted in its merger with India. J&K was attacked by a large number of tribesmen supported by regular Pakistani troops in 1947-48, while there ruler set on the fence. When Pakistani regulars and tribesmen were within gunshot of Srinagar, he sought India's assistance in exchange for acceding to it. Subsequent event resulted in a ceasefire that over the years and despite two and a half wars has more or less remained in place. One part of the west and north is under Pakistani control and eastern part including the valley, is under India's control. The divider is called the Line of Control (LOC), which was delineated soon after the Simla Agreement was concluded in 1972.

Thus, since 1947 both states have enduring divergences over a number of issues in which their perceptions and images have played a decisive role in shaping their overall policies.¹⁰ Formal partition was only the beginning that implemented on 14 August, 1947, the actual separation between the people of India and Pakistan was a slow process spread over several decades. Few people in India and Pakistan care to remember that things were very different in the early years. Initially there were no passports or identity papers, and no visas. People could easily travel to the other side of the new border; some lived in one country and worked in the other. There were regular train and ferry services in India and Pakistan. Films from one country were freely shown in the other, and film songs were aired by national radio stations without regards to nationality. Cultural exchange like Urdu mushairas (poetry recitals) were quite common because Urdu was still a thriving language in the northern and other parts of India, and was held by Pakistanis as their national language. Indian publications were freely available in Pakistani markets, and vice versa. For a while even Pakistan's currency was printed in India. Until the late 1950s, Pakistani Universities benefited from Indian professors by inviting them to examine students in Pakistan. Some Indian professors would take a night train to Lahore conduct the examination and return by the next night train. Text books written by the Indian scholars were widely prescribed and used in Pakistani colleges and universities.¹¹ Partition and separation were accompanied by state and national identity building, conflicts, crisis and wars. The 1965 war was a turning point in terms of the openness of the countries to each other. Indian films and songs were banned from cinema houses and national radios. Borders were closed, train and ferry services were discontinued, and visa became difficult to obtain. The celebrated India-Pakistan mushairas quickly became extinct. Books, magazines and newspaper from the other country were disappeared from shelves. People and cultures were sealed off from each other.

Conclusion

Today more than sixty five years after independence, the common people as well as the elite of India-Pakistan are questioning the wisdom of maintaining a state of confrontation, and are leaning towards establishing conditions for permanent peace. The power of the old mindset is declining; the momentum for peace is growing. Ordinary citizens in large numbers, peace activists, parliamentarians, cricketers, actors, artists, theater groups, intellectuals, journalists, women, soldiers and professionals are making a mighty contribution to peace effort. They talked for peace but never reached to a permanent solution.

References

1. Duncan Mcleod, "India Pakistan. Friends, Rivals or Enemies?" Pakistan Security Research Unit, Brief 45, November, 2008 at <http://spaces.brad.ac.uk:8080/display/ssspsru/Home>.
2. Kapil Kak, "Pakistan: A Geo-Political Appraisal", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.22, n.8, November 1998, p. 1124.
3. Laxminaryan Ramdas, "Sustaining India-Pakistan peace: Challenges for Civil Society and the Military", Smitu Kothari and Zia Mian with others, *Bridging Partition, People's Initiatives for Peace between India and Pakistan*, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi, 2010, p.316.
4. Rajesh Rajagopalan, "Neorealist Theory and the India-Pakistan Conflict*-I", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.22, n.9, December 1998, p. 1269.
5. Gitika Commuri, *Indian Identity Narratives and Politics of Security*, Sage publication, New Delhi, 2010, p. 152.
6. Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C., 2004, p.5.
7. Ibid., p. 29.
8. V.P. Malik, Rajender Nath(ed.), *Musharraf's War: Foreword*, Strategic Research Center, Chandigarh, p. 250.
9. Nirode Mohanty, *America, Pakistan, and The India Factor*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2013, p.24.
10. Ibid., p. 253.
11. Smitu Kothari and Zia Mian with others, *Bridging Partition, People's Initiatives for Peace between India and Pakistan*, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi, 2010, p. 2.