

INDIA-PAKISTAN COMPOSITE DIALOGUES: CHALLENGES AND IMPEDIMENTS

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Introduction

In 2014, after the new government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came into power in India, a momentum was built to improve the political relationship between India and Pakistan, but suddenly it lost its sheen. It was not the first time. Since 1950 many times the two countries faced such a situation. After a series of failures, to give a new direction to their bilateral dialogue process in the 1990s, the political leadership shifted from issue-based dialogue to the composite dialogue process because all their issues were interwoven with each other. Until today, they have not achieved any breakthrough.

In May 2014, during the swearing-in ceremony of the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, the head of states from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Mauritius were invited. Afterwards, from many platforms, the Indian prime minister asserted his policy of 'neighbour first' 'cooperation with all', yet nothing substantive happened between India and Pakistan. As usual in 2014-15, also the two countries engaged in severe cross-border fire which stretched for more than a month¹, due to which the scheduled talks between the Foreign Secretaries of the two countries had to be cancelled at the last moment². Even during the serious deluge in both sides of Jammu and Kashmir, they did not cooperate. About their political engagements, India and Pakistan, since 1950, have tried various formats of the negotiations like structured, non-structured, people-to-people contacts and others. However, they have substantially failed to resolve any of their bilateral disputes. In the past, however, there had been moments in 1954, 1963, 1972 and 2007 when the

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two countries, after successful rounds of talks, were almost on the brink of sealing a deal over the Kashmir valley.³ Trying another format in bilateral dialogue, in 1997, they agreed to initiate the 'composite dialogue.' Even this form of dialogue has not yielded any concrete result due to embedded trust deficit, role of domestic institutions and interference of external actors.

This paper surveys the status of progress made in the composite dialogue. It attempts to answer following questions: Why did India and Pakistan fail to move forward in their dialogues? What is the role of domestic institutions and external actors in hindering any result-oriented dialogue between India and Pakistan? This paper is divided into three sections, 1) Composite Dialogue between India and Pakistan: A beginning; 2) Survey of Progress in Composite Dialogue and finally; 3) Composite Dialogue: Challenges and Impediments.

Composite Dialogue between India and Pakistan

This section discusses the origins of the composite dialogue between India and Pakistan emphasizing the programme achieved so far.

According to Oxford Advanced English Dictionary, 'dialogue' is a formal discussion between two groups or countries especially when they are trying to solve a problem, or end a disagreement. Prior to 1997, India and Pakistan were engaged in an issue specific dialogue, in which they attained few successes like the 1950 Nehru-Liaquat pact between then Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and Pakistan's Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan; Indus Water Treaty under the aegis of the World Bank in 1960; the two countries agreed over exchange of information about nuclear weapons in 1988; and even on the Kashmir Issue. As a result of issue-specific discussion there were moments in 1954, 1963, 1972 and 2007⁴ when a deal over it, was almost done, but derailed by the actors, with stakes in the continuity in bilateral conflicts over the Kashmir Valley.

Despite these breakthroughs, India-Pakistan bilateral dialogue did not progress in the right direction. One of the major reasons for the failure of many rounds of their bilateral dialogue was that during negotiations, over specific issues, both parties used to raise their 'core area of concern'. Most of the times, it had been deliberately done to terminate the on-going bilateral dialogue. In a bid to address that problem, India and Pakistan decided to engage into composite dialogue instead of specific issue-based dialogue. The root to India-Pakistan composite dialogue process dates back to May 1997, when at Male, the capital of the Maldives, the then Indian Prime Minister, Inder Kumar Gujral, and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif mooted the idea of a structured or the composite dialogue process.⁵ Based on a compromise approach, the peace process enabled the two countries to discuss all issues including Jammu and Kashmir. India wanted satisfaction on terrorism before talks on other issues could resume. On his part, Nawaz Sharif clarified that Pakistan wanted a dialogue that was comprehensive even if not "composite".⁶ By agreeing to it, India disowned what it had earlier conceived. India's reduction of composite dialogue to a single issue of terrorism gave Pakistan an excuse to revert to the Kashmir.⁷ It was a compromise in the sense that while India agreed to include

Kashmir in the agenda for talks, Pakistan relented to include terrorism, the two major irritants in bilateral relations. The first round of composite dialogue was held in 1998, but it collapsed due to the limited war between India and Pakistan in Kargil sector in 1999.⁸

Due to the war and political developments in Pakistan, for some time political relationship was stalled between the two countries. The silence was broken when in April 2003, then Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee agreed to meet Pakistan's President General Pervez Musharraf. During their meeting they decided upon the following measures:

1. A ceasefire to significantly reduce military incidents along the Line of Control;
2. Memorandum of Understanding on Confidence-Building Measures in military sector (for example, the establishment of a permanent telephone hotline between the Foreign Ministers, joint agreement on the notification of missile tests and demilitarization of disputed territories);
3. Joint agreement on mechanisms and strategies for combating terrorism;
4. Re-opening and expansion of train routes and bus services; and
5. Resumption of bilateral trade, removal of non-trade barriers and establishment of trade association to promote bilateral trade.⁹

In 2004 composite dialogue process was re-established, following a statement by Atal Bihari Vajpayee that all subjects, including Kashmir could be discussed. From 2004 to 2008, four rounds of composite dialogue were held, before a pause, due to terrorists' attack in Mumbai on 26 November 2008. Later on, as a result of a meeting between Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and then Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, on the side-lines of the SAARC summit at Thimpu in April 2010,¹⁰ and upon subsequent limited actions by Pakistan, India announced that it would not insist that Pakistan had to fully satisfy Indian demands on terrorism as a precondition for talks. Earlier, Pakistan had countered by questioning India's responsibility for attacks on the Samjhauta Express, the India-Pakistan train service — there was resumption of dialogue.¹¹ The two states agreed to revive the dialogue without any precondition, and also without the title "composite". The decision was implemented slowly, with Foreign Secretary meetings held in March 2011, meetings of the Home Ministers and then a visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister to India to watch the Cricket World Series Cup semi-final between India and Pakistan.¹² With such goodwill gestures, both states tried to strengthen their economic relationship with the liberal assumption that its spill-over could reduce political animosity between them. In May 2013, democratic transition occurred in Pakistan with Nawaz Sharif took over as the new Prime Minister. A year later in 2014, Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India. The change in India's political leadership led to speculations that tensions could deepen between India and Pakistan but fortunately that did not happen. Yet, both states have not achieved any breakthrough.

Survey of Progress in Composite Dialogue

Though limited steps have been taken to address the disputes, a survey is indeed necessary to understand the India-Pakistan relationship and sketch out its future:¹³

Peace and security including Confidence Building Measures

Once the composite dialogue between two countries began, various Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) were signed between them to ease their bilateral tensions. Historically, the first CBMs between the two countries, was the setting up and working of the Joint Defence Council from 1946 to 1948. During the first Kashmir war¹⁴ in 1947-48, there were a number of examples of how the mutual understanding of the field commanders from both sides (who had worked together until 1947) often helped in sorting out matters and restraining violent actions from both sides. In a way, it laid the very foundations of the entire track of Indo-Pakistan CBMs, which was reflected in a series of bilateral agreements and understandings from time to time.¹⁵ Gradually, both India and Pakistan have managed to put in place some of the most critical CBMs which were in the form of agreements on (a) prohibition of attack against each other's nuclear installations, (b) advance notice for military exercises, and (c) operation of a 'hotline' between the two Prime Ministers.¹⁶

During Vajpayee's visit to Lahore in 1999, various CBMs were announced, including the initiation of a bus-service between New Delhi and Lahore.¹⁷ This was a step towards increasing contacts between the common people from both countries. In April 2005, Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service was started. In 2008, the frequency of the bus service increased between Srinagar-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawalakot. It was to operate weekly not fortnightly.¹⁸ As part of CBMs, train services too, later on began from New Delhi to Attari and Munnabao to Khokrapar. The main aim behind the operation of bus and train services was to increase people-to-people contact to ease the tensions between the two countries.

These CBMs were positive initiatives, but could not yield desired results. One of the problems about India-Pakistan CBMs has been that they consume a lot of time to get implemented. For example, the agreement on the prohibition of attack against nuclear facilities was originally conceived during Rajiv Gandhi-Ziaul Haq summit in December 1985. However, it was not signed until December 1988. Then there was a long delay in ratifying the agreement, which occurred on 27 January 1991. The first list of nuclear facilities in India and Pakistan was exchanged on 1 January 1992 while another list was exchanged on 4 January 1993.¹⁹ Secondly, whenever tensions at the border have erupted, the two governments get under pressure to rescind the measures they took under CBMs. Bus and train services have faced lots of problems. In the past these services were terminated though for a limited time period.

De-militarization of Siachen Glacier

This issue, among others, is considered to be the easiest one to resolve because de-militarization of Siachen favours both countries. Yet it has not been

done. Siachen Glacier is one of the most inhospitable and glaciated regions in the world. It receives 6 to 7 metres of annual snow in winter alone. Blizzards can have a speed up to 150 knots (nearly 300 kilometres per hour). The temperature drops routinely to minus 40 degrees below centigrade.²⁰ The root of this dispute lies in the United Nations mediated ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan in 1949. It delineated the Line of Control until point NJ 9842, after which, it said it would run “thence north to the glaciers”. In 1984, fearful of adverse Pakistani moves, Indian soldiers moved north and eventually occupied the highest points on the glaciers. The ‘Siachen conflict’ was born.²¹ Both sides made claims over the glacier, which are based on their interpretations of the vague language contained in the 1949 and 1972 agreements. Pakistan draws a straight line in a north-easterly direction from NJ 9842 right up to the Karakorum pass on its boundary with China. India prefers a north-north west line from NJ 9842 along the watershed line of the Saltoro Range, a southern offshoot of the Karakorum Range.²²

To address the problem, at a meeting between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Pakistan’s President General Ziaul Haq on 17 December 1985, an agreement was reached to hold defence secretary level talks on the Siachen issue. The first round of talks was held between 10 and 12 January 1986 at Rawalpindi.²³ After a series of talks held in 1992 India and Pakistan had reached a near agreement on the Siachen dispute after Islamabad assented to record the existing troop positions in an annex, but the deal was never done because the Indian political leadership had cold feet. Pakistan’s proposal indicating in an annexure the areas the armed forces of the two sides would vacate and redeploy, found immediate acceptance among the Indian officials.²⁴ The Indian delegation was led by N N Vohra, then India’s defence secretary. ‘We had finalized the text of an agreement at Hyderabad House by around 10 pm on the last day’, Mr. Vohra, who is now the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, told the Hindu. ‘Signing was set for 10 am. But later that night, instructions were given to me not to go ahead next day but to conclude matters in our next round of talks in Islamabad in January 1993’. ‘Of course, that day never came’, Mr Vohra added. ‘That’s the way these things go’, he said.²⁵ After that lost opportunity, until 2014, many more rounds of talks, at various levels, have been held over Siachen but these talks did not yield any tangible results.

Sir Creek Dispute

Sir Creek is a 100km long estuary in the marshes of the Rann of Kutch, which lies on the border between the Indian state of Gujarat and the Pakistani province of Sindh. In 1965, the tribunal, under judge of a Swedish Court, Gunnar Lagergren, was established to demarcate only the northern border of the Kutch-Sindh sector between India and Pakistan. The Sir Creek dispute was a part of the dispute, but was left out of the tribunal’s jurisdiction. The tribunal announced its verdict on 19 February 1968 in Geneva.²⁶ Later on, both sides had resolved to settle this dispute in a speedy manner, given their obligations under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Any delay in the delineation of the maritime boundary, could lead to the continental shelf of both

countries coming under the purview of the International Seabed Authority.²⁷ As it was discovered, underneath the Sir Creek estuary, there is a large quantity of oil and gas available, which complicated the dispute. Both sides wanted to get more and more areas to possess available resources. Surveyors from both countries have held various rounds of talks, but have failed to decide over the demarcation of the marshy land.

Terrorism

Terrorism has remained one of the major irritant between India and Pakistan. The seeds were sown by Pakistan after the end of Afghanistan war of 1989, to bleed India²⁸, but in the longer period, it is Pakistan, which would be teetering on the edge of abyss, due to radicalisation of its society. Both sides blame the other for rising militancy and acts of terrorism occurring in their respective territories. In the past they have 'tried' to talk about the issue, but have failed to build a consensus over the definition of a terrorist.²⁹ Earlier, the Pakistan Army had its regulation over the terror outfits but after Pakistan's decision to become a part of the US led Global War on Terror (GwOT), the groups began to attack the Pakistan Army. In those attacks, many Pakistani citizens have lost their lives. With connivance of their sympathizers, the militants have even attacked various military installations. In June 2011, the army was forced to investigate Brigadier Ali Khan for his ties to the militants of Hizb-ul-Tahrir, a radical organization that seeks to establish a global caliphate and thinks that its mission should begin from nuclear Pakistan.³⁰ Another barbaric act was carried out by the terrorist group Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) on December 16, 2014 when in an attack on Army Public School at Peshawar, 144 students and staff members were killed.

The act committed by the terror groups has affected India-Pakistan dialogue and relations. The mayhem that occurred in 2008 in Mumbai has created fissure between the two countries over the issue of terrorism. India has accused Pakistan for giving shelter to terrorists while Pakistan has responded that India has not provided it with enough evidence. On the contrary, Pakistan too alleges Indian intelligence agency in carrying out terrorist activities within its territory. It claims that India funds the Baluch nationalists from its Afghanistan based consulates at Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kandahar and Jalalabad.³¹ According to a BBC report, Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) militants had been trained by India and the party had received funds for its activities.³² The report lacks substantive evidence to prove its contents, but in the past, Indian spy agency did carry out operations inside Pakistan to stop it from supporting Sikh militancy in India. It is public now that I. K. Gujral, after becoming India's Prime Minister closed down all offensive operations against Pakistan, forcing RAW to close down the CIT cells (J and X) that were used for carrying out these operations.³³ Another incident which created tensions between the two countries was blowing of a fishing boat from Pakistan by the Indian coast guards on 31 December 2014. First fishermen were projected as a part of terror groups on a Mumbai like mission, then it was propagandised that they were smugglers engaged in 'illicit transactions in sea'. They had blown

themselves up. The curtains were removed when the DIG of Coast Guard, B. K. Loshali even accepted that he ordered to 'blow the boat off, we do not want to serve them biryani'.³⁴ Such incidents increase the bilateral trust deficit between the two countries and act as a hurdle to move ahead in their dialogues.

On the positive side, Prime Minister Manmohan and President Musharraf met at the side-lines of Non-Aligned Movement's moot, at Havana (Cuba) in September 2006. They issued a joint statement in which they agreed to create Joint Anti-Terror Institutional Mechanism (JATM) on September 16, 2006, in which both countries pledged to cooperate to deal with terrorism.³⁵ The JATM is yet to be operationalized because of persisting differences between the institutions of both countries.

Jammu and Kashmir

The Kashmir dispute has been the core³⁶ issue behind India-Pakistan conflict. Both of them use this as an excuse not to move further in their bilateral relations. There is no dispute over the status of Jammu and Ladakh. Their demography makes them to be a part of India. The conflict is over the status of Kashmir Valley. Both India and Pakistan claim it to be their part.³⁷ For India, secularism is the guiding principle and it wants Jammu and Kashmir to maintain its secular credentials; while for Pakistan, which was formed in the name of religion, Kashmir is important to complete the promises made to the Muslim population at the time of partition of India. Due to this incompatible goal, the conflict persists and no party wants to compromise on it. Hence, the Kashmir dispute is an ideological, rather than a territorial dispute.³⁸ The two countries have fought three total wars and one limited war to decide the fate of Kashmir, yet it has remained a disputed territory. Since 1990, there has emerged a third group, which demands freedom from both India and Pakistan. In the past in 1954, 1963 and 1972 there were moments when this conflict could have been resolved, but it remained unresolved. In 2007, the two leaders from both sides had almost agreed over a draft regarding Kashmir issue, but at the last minute, they backed off.³⁹ Any formula to resolve this conflict would require compromises and adjustments from both sides. The two countries are not yet ready for compromises, therefore, it is difficult to move ahead over this issue, at least, in the near future.

The disputes in this region have become more complicated after the rise of militancy in the 1990s. Its genesis lies in the result of the 1987 assembly elections in which Muhammad Yusuf Shah was representing a polyglot coalition of anti-establishment groups calling itself the Muslim United Fronts (MUF).⁴⁰ Voting was rigged in favour of National Conference's candidate Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah. Mohammad Yasin Malik, a 21-year-old resident, was his election manager. Yusuf Shah now goes by his *nom de guerre*, Syed Salahuddin, and has since the early 1990s been the commander-in-chief of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, the largest guerrilla force fighting in the valley.⁴¹ This group attracted and still attracts, aggrieved individuals from the Kashmir Valley. However, before this Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) was active in the valley. The JKLF was for a merger of the two sides of the Jammu and

Kashmir and setting up of a buffer state between India and Pakistan. It was led by Amanullah Khan and found its support among the *Mirpuris* living in the United Kingdom.⁴²

In 2014-2015 once again this issue flared up the hostility between India and Pakistan. In 2014, Pakistan raised the issue at the United Nations. The National Security and Foreign Policy Adviser to the Pakistan's Prime Minister, Sartaj Aziz, called on the United Nations to manage the crisis situation in Jammu and Kashmir.⁴³ In 2015, the Pakistan's High Commissioner to India Abdul Basit, in an interview to an Indian media outlet, stressed Kashmir as being the 'core' issue between India and Pakistan.⁴⁴

Wullar barrage Project/Tulbul Navigation

To resolve the water sharing problem over the Indus River System (IRS) India and Pakistan, under aegis of the World Bank, signed Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in 1960. The IRS comprises the Indus, the Sutlej, the Ravi, the Beas, the Chenab and the Jhelum. India and Pakistan, despite having three wars (1948, 1965 and 1971) and one limited war in Kargil sector (1999), adheres to the IWT. The great example of their cooperation on this treaty is that even in the midst of the 1965 war, Indian payments to Pakistan as part of the Treaty, continued uninterrupted, as did the work of engineers of both countries to control the opening and closing of sluices.⁴⁵ Even during the Kargil war and political-cum-military tensions afterwards⁴⁶ India has fulfilled its water commitment with Pakistan. However, now the future of this treaty is a question mark. Growing demand of water due to increasing population has created pressure over this resource. Both countries have been competing to get maximum quantity to secure their interests. This has led to disputes over transboundary water resources. The real dispute is over the multipurpose hydro-projects. In 2007, the dispute over Baglihar was resolved through the mediation process. The fate of Kishanganga project has lied with the arbitration court. According to the provisions of the IWT, any party can move to the arbitration court for getting a solution. Another one is Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation project. Indus Commissioner from both countries has held talks on this project but no concrete result has been arrived at. This project is yet in a standstill mode.

Economic and commercial cooperation

While their political relationship is not improving, India and Pakistan have initiated cooperation in economic sectors. The reason behind economic cooperation is that trade and commerce could generate goodwill which would act as a spill over to address their bilateral disputes. In this they have been guided by successful relations between the west European countries after centuries of war between them. After their economic engagement in various phases, Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Attari became operational in April 2012 for facilitating trade across India-Pakistan border. A study released by the Association of Chambers of Commerce (Assocham) held that with the ICP becoming operational and Pakistan granting the Most Favoured Nation (MFN)

status to India, the annual bilateral trade between the two countries would increase from \$2.6 to \$8.8 billion within next two years. The two countries have decided to have 13 ICPS.⁴⁷

Irritants in economic cooperation are due to commercial and political reasons. Both countries have yet to implement South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA). They are yet to decide the negative list. Then, there is a question mark on Pakistan's not granting Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India. This is a status which members of the World Trade Organisation have given to other members. India has granted this status to Pakistan in 1996.

Composite Dialogue: Challenges and Impediments

This section discusses both the challenges and hurdles to the on-going composite dialogue between India and Pakistan. In 1947, India and Pakistan were born to be conflict ridden.⁴⁸ The enmity between them was born with the partition of India in August 1947. Even though the Boundary Commission demarcated the boundary lines between India and Pakistan, many geographical disputes still exist. To address their disputes soon after the departure of the British from the sub-continent, India and Pakistan agreed to set up a tribunal under Algot Bagge, former member of the Supreme Court of Sweden in 1948. The Tribunal submitted its report on 5 February 1950. Among many of the conflicting interpretations, only four of them came before the tribunal where two regarded the western and two looked at north-eastern part of the boundary of East Pakistan.⁴⁹ The two countries showed reluctance to implement the tribunal's award, where they lost out.⁵⁰ The reason for not acting on the tribunal's report was psychological and ideological, which still dominates in the decision-making process of both the countries towards each other. Partition related violence has dominated the memories of the people from both the countries. Moreover, India-Pakistan relations have also been torn due to the question of identity. Pakistan has feared not only a military defeat by India but the re-absorption of its separate 'Islamic' Pakistani identity within a larger Hindu dominated Indian national identity. Pakistan's threat from India has not only been physical but psychological as well which has been so deep-rooted in the psyche that it has influenced every aspect of Pakistan's foreign and national security policies.⁵¹

These historical, emotional and psychological reasons, have also affected the rational-theoretical process of negotiations between India and Pakistan.

Theoretically, negotiation is a process which passes through four stages:

- (1) Ripeness of Dispute: In the absence of ripeness, negotiations may not only be counterproductive, but they may also lead to disappointment for all sides, which may in turn cause the dispute to further deteriorate.
- (2) Pre-negotiation: Pre-negotiation has two key purposes: defining the problem and developing a commitment for negotiations. These lead the parties to the third stage: arranging the

negotiations. This stage is useful in presenting the leaders with an opportunity to assess how negotiations might unfold without actually entering into them.

- (3) Negotiation: In this stage, the parties will negotiate and discuss all aspects of the dispute(s) on the basis of the information and data gathered and exchanged in the previous stage of pre-negotiation.
- (4) Agreement: Successful negotiations finally reach the fourth stage i.e. signing of the agreement. It is also possible that negotiations may end without having an agreement and therefore will resume on a later date or be scuttled for a long time.⁵²

In the past, a few times, negotiators from India and Pakistan have reached to the last stage but deals have not been reached or the stake holders in both states have refrained them from making any substantial progress. Besides, their method of engagement has also been flawed. There are two existing paradigms of negotiation practiced by the Realists and Liberals respectively: Bargaining approach and Problem-Solving approach. The bargaining approach focuses primarily on states as represented by a group of negotiators who have specific national interests to be achieved. Generally, these interests are assumed to be fixed and unitary while the diplomat's task is to try maximize those national interests that can be achieved. They issue threats and promises concerning rewards and punishment, which are in turn made credible by demonstrating that the states have sufficient capabilities to carry out the punishments and rewards and by establishing a track record that demonstrates their commitment to implement threats and promises. Sometimes, they forgo agreements that will produce benefits greater than the status quo or their next best alternative to an agreement if their potential competitors are perceived to be gaining more than them from the agreement. They will enforce the implementation of the agreement including a unilateral right to renounce and violate an agreement for international institutions in verification and enforcement.⁵³

By contrast, problem-solving approach to international negotiations is generally associated with a more liberal or institutionalist stance on international relations theory. The general argument of this perspective is that the goal of negotiation is to solve common problems that parties face and to try find solution to those problems that will benefit everyone. A metaphor frequently employed by Roger Fish is that 'this perspective views negotiations not as a situation in which the two parties sit on opposite sides of the table facing one against another but rather one where both sit on same side of the table facing their common enemy: the problems that need to be solved'.⁵⁴

During their negotiations, the representatives from India and Pakistan have followed the bargaining approach. The reason for following it is the entanglement of their domestic and foreign policies. Unlike realists, who give importance to structures, liberal theorists maintain that domestic institutions and actors too play a significant role in formulating the foreign policy⁵⁵ of a country.

Most of the foreign policy related decisions are taken after taking into consideration domestic issues and players.⁵⁶

In the case of India and Pakistan, irredentist and anti-irredentist factors, historical memories and their constructions, the domestic players play a vital role in deciding any policy towards the other. Though domestic actors bank upon peace and improvement in bilateral relationships, their backlash at times can stop the political leadership from improving bilateral relationship between the two states. Then there are external actors too, who actively use one against the other to pursue their own interests in the region.

Civil-Society Actors: Civil-Society actors, in various forms and with different agendas, are very active in India and Pakistan. Broadly, they can be categorised into two: Peacenik liberals and Radicals. Peaceniks are represented by many individuals and organizations which are engaged in improvisation of bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan and the establishment of peace between them. They actively support the idea of increasing trade, issuing of more visas to people from both sides and do not want crisis such as cross-border fires. Due to active engagement of peaceniks, people-to-people contacts have been encouraged and many track-II and one-point nine dialogues have begun. Though, the success of this group is limited, yet a significant one. Contrary to this, there are radicals who have a strong stake in the persistence of animosity between India and Pakistan. Jamat-e-Islami (JI), Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) etc. in Pakistan, and Abhinav Bharat in India are active against the other in their respective states. In the past, through their activities, they had scuttled the peace process and bilateral dialogues. Pakistan based groups make cries for carrying out jihad against India. Their acts make Indian right wing to react strongly against holding the dialogues with Pakistan. In 2008, while the composite dialogue was continuing to improve bilateral relations, the terrorist attack in Mumbai occurred. After that, under public pressure, the government of India backtracked from the engagement. Militant Hindu groups have also reacted: Samjhauta Express, the train running between New Delhi and Attari, witnessed bomb blasts carried out by a Hindu group called Abhinav Bharat. Charges against the culprits had been filed and the case was subjudice in Panchkula court.⁵⁷

As a part of civil-society, television channels and newspapers are important institutions in all forms of a given political system. They 'manufacture consent' through dissemination of information and propaganda. In India and Pakistan, the media have played a significant role in creating mass hysteria, generating fear and in increasing tensions. This has been more so in India than in Pakistan because of the presence of large number of private media houses in India. Most of these media houses 'construct' news, according to the taste of their viewers. In 2014, when Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif accepted invitation and attended swearing-in ceremony of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, hysteria about improvisation in India-Pakistan relationship was generated, though some were purported. During tense times, the same media houses behave in a different way by unnecessarily stretching the incidents on the borders. In 2013, when an Indian soldier was beheaded on the India-Pakistan

border, the Indian media unabashedly criticised Pakistan for it and created almost a war like situation between the two nuclear powers. They did such coverage without doing research and analyses of the issue. Barkha Dutt, in her famous essay 'Confession of a War Reporter', first published in *Himal South Asia* in June 2001, illustrated how the Indian soldiers celebrated the beheading of the Pakistani soldiers.⁵⁸

Instead of being and acting as a 'responsible' institution, mass-media in both India and Pakistan reflect the mood of selected people, and terms it 'public opinion'. Then in June 2015, after India carried out an operation inside Myanmar, the media houses started making noises about carrying out similar operations within Pakistani territory. They managed to sell their opinion to the majority of Indians because of the existing historical perceptions about Pakistan. While being vociferous with their views, they had forgotten the fact that unlike Myanmar, Pakistan is a nuclear power.

Reluctant institutions: The state institutions from India and Pakistan are reluctant towards the establishment of peace between the two countries. In Pakistan, the Army is the most powerful institution. By constructing a fear psychosis among the people, it has established its supremacy and has ruled Pakistan for over more than half of its existence as a sovereign country. It always projects itself as the protector of country's national-interests. Even during the civilian regime, it is military which takes the final decision over security-related issues. Under pressure from the military, the civilian leadership is compelled to change its statements or even to give up its policies. In 1999, Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif favoured the establishment of peace with India. He invited then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Lahore, where they signed the famous Lahore declaration. The declaration called for peaceful solution to all bilateral conflicts. The military did not digest it and Kargil occurred. Later on, the disputes between army and civilian leadership resulted in a military coup. Contrary to the military's image, whenever in power, the Pakistan Army has taken steps to improve relations with India. In 2004, General Musharraf pledged to prevent the use of the territory under Pakistan's control to support terrorism in any manner. It was the first direct commitment of this nature since the Pakistani-backed armed insurgency in Kashmir began in 1989.⁵⁹ In India also, the institutions have played a significant role in scuttling the bilateral dialogues with Pakistan. In June 2005, Dr. Manmohan Singh declared that Siachen would be a 'symbol of peace' rather than conflict. Though he wanted to seal a deal on it, he was not supported by the then Defence Minister and Army Chief.⁶⁰

External Actors: External actors and their search for 'strategic depth' against each other have also played a role in the continuation of their bilateral animosity which hinders bilateral talks. During the Cold War era, the then super powers had a stake in keeping the two countries in a state of permanent hostility to serve their own selfish interests. After the end of the Cold War, new actors like individual states and non-state actors have taken over that job. At present, India and Pakistan are engaged against each other in Afghanistan. These developments do not prepare a conducive environment, for bilateral dialogue. In

the past, both these factors have made the two countries either to pull out from engagement or not to conclude the on-going negotiations.

Conclusions

This paper has discussed India-Pakistan composite dialogue stressing the challenges it faces along with the hurdles in its way. It holds that the composite dialogue was aimed to make the bilateral dialogue result oriented but it failed to do so. Many times, both states came close to reaching a breakthrough but the role of civil-society actors or institutions from both countries acted as impediments.

With the change in the government in India and Pakistan, expectations arose that the new governments would take new steps to improve this relationship but they were suddenly stuck in a cobweb of problems. This is largely so because the change in government replaces individuals but does not reform the system. The real test of a government's character is at the time of crisis.⁶¹ In 2008, after Mumbai episode, the Indian government ignored the majority's demand of taking military actions against Pakistan and saved the sub-continent from a nuclear holocaust. The nuclear stability and instability paradox was created between the two countries after the 1998 nuclear tests. Now all crises need to be managed tactfully instead of acting in an irrational way. Although many crises have been averted, bilateral talks have suffered. To make composite dialogue a successful exercise, political will would be absolutely essential. The leadership must be ready to accept compromises, make adjustments and assert its decisions, whenever required. Moreover, the institutions engaged in the bilateral dialogue must be assisted and guided to make composite dialogue successful instead of being discouraged or restrained from concluding the dialogue successfully.

Notes and References

- 1 Firing on India-Pakistan border takes place at regular interval. Who starts the firing is a difficult question to answer. Both sides allege the other for such incident. In the past the two sides did not engage in firing for more than a month but in 2014 winter the cross border firing stretched for more than a month.
- 2 The talk was cancelled because the government in India did not want the Pakistani officials to meet the Kashmiri 'separatist' leaders. Meeting Kashmiri Leaders from Pakistani officials has remained a practice since 1995.
- 3 The bone of contention between India and Pakistan is over Kashmir Valley and not entire Jammu & Kashmir region.
- 4 In 1950s Pakistan's Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad and Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru had bilateral dialogue over Kashmir issue. They agreed on certain points to resolve the conflict, but in 1954 Ghulam Mohammad fell ill and he was replaced by Iskander Mirza. Progress stopped. See M K Jalalzai, *The Foreign Policy of Pakistan*

(1947-2000); (Lahore: Khan Book Centre). In 1963 structured negotiations took place between the representatives of two countries. India was represented by Swaran Singh, while Pakistan was led by Z. A. Bhutto. After five rounds of talks held in India and Pakistan, the two agreed on certain issues and were all set to sign on documents to end the conflict, but at last minute something happened, and issue remained unsolved. Both sides blamed the other for goof up. See Alstair Lamb (1993) *Kashmir :A Disputed Legacy*; (Karachi: Oxford University Press). In 1972 the conflict could have resolved during negotiations at Shimla. See Ramchandra Guha, (2007) *India After Gandhi :The History of World's Largest Democracy*; (London: Piccador). In 2007 there was an agreement between the two leadership over Kashmir issue. As stated by Khurshid Mohammad Kasuri during his interaction with *Times of India* on 24 April 2010 and Jang group's *Aman ki Asha* programme on 23 April 2010. Indus Water Treaty of 1960 was signed due to mediation by the World Bank. Also the two countries resolved their territorial dispute in Sindh-Gujarat border due to mediation from international tribunal.

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