

# Geography of Pakistan and India: A major cause of conflict

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## 1. Introduction

India and Pakistan are two sons of a father and divided in 1947 on some issues and after the division, these issues are not resolved. In this paper I want to explore the political conflicts between India and Pakistan which are due to geography of these countries and which affected the people of both countries. Pakistan was born in conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Some of the Muslims and some of Hindus are not interested to leave their motherland. After the division, many Muslims live in India and many Hindu are living in India. After the cruelty on them, they do not want their land. It is clear that social and culture is not the main reason which has divided these two sons of a father.

It is the fact that geography is the sole reason why two countries of world experiences conflict; rather, it is one of many other factors that contribute to wars, political distrust, and a variety of other social ills that serve to cause problems interpersonally and internationally. Not only have geographical formations affected where we choose to live but, in some cases, has also been a factor when it comes to nation building and the drawing of borders. Historically speaking a river, mountain range, or an ocean could keep different people groups separated from each other, leading to a lack of knowledge about the other group and contributing to social factors that cause conflict.

In the modern world of air travel and the internet communications and travel are much more accessible to more people, and yet there are places in this world where the inhabitants still choose not to (or are unable) to move from place to place because of geography. In the case of India and Pakistan (as well as many other nations around the world) there are conflicts, both past and present, which have arisen because of geography.

It is the great truth that geography and physical land formations have contributed to the conflict between India and Pakistan since their creation as separate entities in 1947. To simplify a complicated topic and not go too far down the rabbit hole of history, India was partitioned by the British Empire in August of 1947 which created what we now know as the nations of India and Pakistan. The northern part of Pakistan is an area called Kashmir, which is a disputed zone and has been at the heart of the India-Pakistan conflict since 1947. Both nations claim it as their own while many of the Kashmiris continue to lobby for an independent state of their own.

The India-Pakistan cease-fire line runs from the rocky Karakoram Pass to a point approximately 130 kilometers outside of Lahore to the northeast. The United Nations organized this line after the Indo-Pakistan War of 1947-48 after

the partition sent the two countries reeling. Refugees in India and Pakistan were displaced and contributed to the crisis of identity the two new nations were facing. The north/south border between India and Pakistan is convoluted and highly disputed as certain regions within the Pakistani and Indian states align more closely with those on the other sides of the border.

The geography of India and Pakistan includes the Himalaya Mountains and the Indus River as their defining features; both areas contain high mountain areas and river lowlands near the Indus River. India, due to its size and proximity to the ocean also has lowlands in its southern regions and the Thar Desert in its western half. Both countries share similar geographical features as well as some cultural practices but contain a wide variety of indigenous people groups. Some geographical issues which have contributed in conflicts between these two countries.

## 2. Indus Waters Treaty

The Indus Waters Treaty has minimized the conflicts over water that India and Pakistan have had in more recent years, although in the past there have been conflicts over the use and flow of the Indus River from India into Pakistan. As the populations of both countries grow and the climate continues to change we'll have to see how each country chooses to react to a potential water shortage.

## 3. Sar Creek conflict

Pakistan claims the whole water stream till India's land borders whereas India contends that the issue should be solved as per international standards for riverine systems and hence claims half of the channel with division at the centre. The issue is complicated as it has historic elements attached to it like the Treaty of 1925 regarding its being treated as part of the Sindh province but the maps of the Bombay government demarcating territory in the middle.

The issue remains unsolved even after many rounds of talks as no one is ready to concede their position. Furthermore, the issue has gained significance with the possibility of high quantities of oil and gas in the area which can give a big boost to the energy security of the country which controls it. This makes negotiations further impossible.

But, both countries need to understand that it is in their best interest to mutually solve the issue as only after the dispute is solved, they can mark their EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) and continental shelves, and exploit the rich energy resources. Also, those local fishermen from both the sides who are often caught because of the uncertainty, will get a huge relief. At the same time, amicable solution of the issue

can act as a big Confidence Building Measure (CBM) for both the countries in resolving other issues at hand.

#### 4. Kashmir issue

Kashmir has been a problem for us since our independence. It has a historical background of our failing and betrayals to the nation. The seeds were sown in the unnatural partition of the country. We talked of secularism and accepted the partition on communal lines. The appeasement policy of Indian leaders, started by Mahatma Gandhi, continued after partition. Pakistan lives in our country in every nook and corner. In the cities where Muslims live, Hindu-Muslim riots again and again. These are not riots but are efforts to gain position. Collection of arms has been found in their houses and mosques. The Govt has not been telling the facts to the people. Newspapers have been very idealistic in not showing the courage to call a spade.. The condition in the valley has worsened to the extent that lakhs of Hindus, mostly Kashmir Pandits have left their home land. They have migrated to Jammu, Delhi, Bangalore and many other cities. The reality is that there is nothing like a border between Pakistan occupied Kashmir and this side of Kashmir. Militant Muslim organizations send their members for training to Pakistan while Pakistanis and the trained Indian Muslims enter India. There is an organized conspiracy by Pakistan to occupy whole of Kashmir. ISI of Pakistan has been very active in these efforts. The tragedy is that because of section 370 in our constitution even the President of India cannot purchase an inch of land in Kashmir, while Pakistani Muslims asserting that they belong to India can. There is no alternative military action.

#### 5. Affection of Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a major source of friction. The two countries have long competed for influence there and Pakistan is deeply suspicious of a rise in India's presence there since the fall of the Islamabad-backed Taliban government in 2001. Pakistan accuses India of using Afghanistan as a base to create problems inside Pakistan, including backing separatists in Baluchistan province. India denies the accusations, saying its \$2 billion aid is focused on development. India is worried that negotiations with the Taliban and the US pullout would give Pakistan an upper hand in Afghanistan and offer anti-Indian militants a base. This rivalry is complicating US-led efforts to end an intensifying Taliban insurgency and bring stability to Afghanistan almost 10 years after the Taliban were ousted.

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The US drawdown has also pushed Washington to work harder in getting India and Pakistan to normalise ties.

#### 6. International trade in Indian Sub-continent

Both countries want to develop their resources by enhancing international trade. It is very important for the poor economy. But it is the problem for Pakistan that most of western and developed countries favour India and want to trade with India. Most of the western countries which have invested in Pakistan are leaving this terrorist country. It is also the reason, Pakistan is zealous to India.

#### 7. Siachen Conflict

Indian and Pakistani forces have faced off in mountains above the Siachen glacier in the Karakoram range, the world's highest battlefield, since 1984. The two sides have been trying to find a solution that would allow them to withdraw troops, but India says it is unwilling to bring its forces down until Pakistan officially authenticates the positions they hold. Pakistan has said it is willing to do so but on the condition that it is not a final endorsement of India's claim over the glacier, one source of melt water for Pakistan's rivers. A meeting of defense secretaries of the two nations about the glacier in May was inconclusive and showed that even less controversial issues remain difficult to tackle.

In the case of India and Pakistan the drawing of border was done by the British, who despite their extensive lingering in the region likely paid little to no mind of the cultural and political divides that existed well before India and Pakistan became separate entities. There was also little attention paid to the region of Kashmir which requested in 1947 to become its own independent nation, a neutral Switzerland of sorts in the region. The lack of independence for Kashmir is a major sticking point and cause of conflict for India, Pakistan, and Kashmir today.

Geography may slow down communications and trade, information and cultural knowledge transfer, and pieces of land are frequently fought over by other nations who think they have a rightful claim to that piece of property. When it comes straight down to it geography in and of itself might not be the divisive factor in causing conflict- it is humanities' ideology surrounding land, ownership, and the barriers of geography that truly keep us in conflict with one another.