

Pakistan-India Relations under Prime Minister Modi's Government (2014-16)

Ayemen Ijaz*

Abstract

Pakistan-India relations are central to peace and stability in South Asia. However, under Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, bilateral relations have remained hostile. Despite efforts from Pakistan, Modi's brutal policies in Kashmir, extremist mindset and anti-Pakistan stance have derailed the prospects of dialogue and resumption of the peace process. The paper provides detailed analysis of Pak-India relations under Modi, covering political, security, economic and socio-cultural aspects. India's belligerent attitude has been explained in the light of Modi's rigid and hawkish personality and by elaborating the factors that impact bilateral relations. The study also sheds light on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) between the two countries, and concludes by highlighting future prospects for this relationship.

Key words: Pakistan-India Relations, Foreign Policy, Kashmir, Narendra Modi, Peace Process, Leadership.

Introduction

Since 1947, Pakistan-India relations have been overshadowed by political differences, the historical legacy of pre-Partition phase, and disputed territorial claims. Both countries have fought three wars (1948, 1965 and 1971) over Kashmir and East Pakistan and were involved

* The author holds an MPhil in International Relations from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Her areas of interest include nuclear non-proliferation, international security, arms control/disarmament, nuclear and strategic studies. She has hosted/coordinated numerous national and international conferences; and contributes regularly to leading national and international dailies.

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in low intensity conflict at Kargil in 1999.¹ However, both have also made efforts for dialogue and Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). The dialogue process that formally started in 2004 was halted due to the Mumbai attacks of 2008.² After resumption of a peace process in 2011, little progress has been made in improvement of bilateral relations. Although there were some developments in trade, but contentious issues such as Kashmir, Siachen and water etc. remain unresolved. Since 2014, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under the leadership of Narendra Modi, came into power, relations have been soured further due to increase in cross-border violations and aggressive statements from Indian government officials. Terrorism and Kashmir remain the focus of Modi's government.

This paper tends to analyse the Pak-India relations under Modi's government, with particular focus on factors such as history, geography, culture, and religion. Modi's personality is also an important factor that continues to shape this bilateral relationship. His personality traits, nature and style of politics versus his BJP predecessor Atal Bihari Vajpayee are, therefore, also examined in the paper. The paper elaborates on the current state of affairs between the two countries and also predicts the future directions of Pakistan-India relations, and offers concrete recommendations for policymakers.

Pak-India Relations: Important Variables

There are multiple factors that impact Pakistan-India relations, from geography, history, religion, culture, domestic politics, leadership and the role of regional and international actors. A few of these variables are briefly discussed in this section:

¹ Maria Saifuddin Effendi and Ishtiaq Ahmad Choudhry, "India – Pakistan CBMs since 1947 A Critical Analysis," *South Asian Studies: A Research Journal of South Asian Studies* 31, no. 1(2016): 187-205 (187).

² Ibid., 187-188.

Geography

Geography has had a deep impact on Pak-India relations and added to the conflict.³ The territorial disputes with India over Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek and water issues have created a security dilemma for Pakistan since its inception. India, given its larger geographical size has more resources and access to water that can be utilised at anytime against Pakistan. The most recent example is Indian aggression over water in the aftermath of the Uri attack.⁴ The physical location of Pakistan also hampers India's capacity to reach other countries in Europe and Central Asia and has direct bearing on its great power aspirations.⁵

History, Religion and Culture

Factors such as history, religion and culture also have negative influence on Pakistan-India relations. Differences in social values, norms and traditions resulted in communal violence between Hindus and Muslims even before Partition. Since its inception, India has not accepted the existence of Pakistan and tried to create hurdles in its growth and development. This deep-rooted animosity towards Pakistan is also reflected in India's foreign policy.⁶

Domestic Influences

Hindutva, or Hinduness, a term coined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1923, is the predominant form of Hindu nationalism in India. The

³ Elizabeth Borneman, "The Geography of India and Pakistan: Cause for Conflict?" *Geography Lounge*, March 2, 2014, <https://www.geolounge.com/geography-india-pakistan-cause-conflict/>.

⁴ "Delhi Decides to Suspend Indus Water Commission Talks," *Dawn*, September 27, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1286293>. The 2016 Uri attack was an attack by four armed terrorists on September 18, 2016, near the town of Uri in Jammu and Kashmir.

⁵ Avinandan Chouhury, "India-Pakistan Relations: Geostrategic Implications for India's Pakistan Policy," *National Views*, September 18, 2015, <http://nationalviews.com/india-pakistan-relations-policy-geostrategy>.

⁶ Kamaldeep Singh Sandhu, "India-Pakistan Relations: A Brief Survey of the Evolving Conflict Terrain," *E-International Relations*, March 21, 2016, <http://www.e-ir.info/2016/03/21/india-pakistan-relations-a-brief-survey-of-the-evolving-conflict-terrain/>.

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Bharatiya Janata Party adopted it as its official ideology in 1989. It is championed by the Hindu nationalist volunteer organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its affiliate organisations, notably the Vishva Hindu Parishad, along with the older term *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu nation).⁷

Since Modi came to power in 2014, the dynamics of relations between Pakistan and India have changed dramatically. The role of RSS has substantially increased in Indian policy formulation. Several high profile Indian government officials, including the General Secretary of the BJP, have direct links with the RSS.⁸ The hatred towards Islam and Muslims is a common feature of *Hindutva* groups that have marginalised Muslims within Indian society and project an anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan rhetoric at the communal and state level.⁹ The Indian military has also adopted an aggressive posture towards Pakistan in recent times with cross-border violations on the rise.¹⁰

Leadership

The current Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi has an extremist, anti-Pakistan¹¹ and anti-Muslim¹² mindset.¹³ He is considered a polarising figure in India because his motivations are primarily driven from the RSS.

⁷ Noor ul Haq, *Management of Pakistan-India Relations: Resolution of Disputes*, IPRI Paper 18 (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2017).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Manzoor Ahmad, "India's Domestic Politics and its Impact on the Regional Integration Process in South Asia: A Study into the Status of Muslims in India," *Journal of Science International Lahore* 27 no. 4, (2015): 3583-3589.

¹⁰ Tooba Khurshid, "Rising Indian Transgression on Line of Control and Working Boundary" (brief, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, 2016), <http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Final-Issue-brief-Tooba-Khurshid-dated-18-11-2016.pdf>.

¹¹ Mahwish Hafeez, "The Anatomy of the Modi Phenomenon – How Should Pakistan Deal with it?" *Strategic Studies* 35, no. 4 (2015): 61-79.

¹² Aditya Chakraborty, "Narendra Modi, a Man with a Massacre on his Hands, is not the Reasonable Choice for India," *Guardian*, April 7, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/07/narendra-modi-massacre-next-prime-minister-india>.

¹³ Harish Khare, "How the BJP used UP's Muslim Population to Capture Hindu Votes," *HuffPost*, March 14, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.in/harish-khare-/how-the-bjp-used-ups-muslim-population-to-capture-hindu-votes_a_21886467/.

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In fact, he ‘bears a responsibility for some of the worst religious violence ever seen in independent India.’¹⁴ He was the Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2002 when the state was engulfed in an ‘orgy of killing and rape’:

On February 27 that year, a train coach carrying Hindu pilgrims caught fire in Godhra station in Gujarat. 58 people died. Within hours and without a shred of evidence, Modi declared that the Pakistani secret services had been to blame; he then had the charred bodies paraded in the main city of Ahmedabad; and let his own party support a state-wide strike for three days. What followed was mass bloodshed: 1,000 dead on official estimates, more than 2,000 by independent tallies. The vast majority of those who died were Muslim. Mobs of men dragged women and young girls out of their homes and raped them.

His appointment to the seat of Prime Minister did not bode well for Pakistan. His election manifesto had a ‘muscular anti-Pakistani narrative.’¹⁵ In fact, according to many Indian analysts, his win in many states primarily rested on making the ‘Hindus see a connection between Muslims and Pakistan.’¹⁶ His hegemonic and dictatorial style of politics and tough anti-Pakistan stance is a definitive part of his leadership traits.¹⁷

Role of Foreign/Major Powers

The role of foreign/major powers is also an important factor that has affected Pakistan-India relations. While China has tried to create strategic balance between the two over their disputes such as Kashmir and urged resolution through peaceful negotiation, the US tilt towards New Delhi after signing a nuclear deal and an agreement of strategic partnership (2008), its declared support of India’s permanent membership to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), favouring its possible inclusion in the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) and recent Indo-US defence

¹⁴ Chakraborty, “Narendra Modi, a Man with a Massacre on his Hands, is not the Reasonable Choice for India.”

¹⁵ Harish Khare, “How the BJP used UP’s Muslim Population to Capture Hindu Votes.”

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Hafeez, “The Anatomy of the Modi Phenomenon – How Should Pakistan Deal with it?”

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cooperation agreement (2016) have disturbed the balance of power in South Asia.¹⁸ Russia and Israel have also been selling advanced conventional weapons to India,¹⁹ which is cause of insecurity and potential arms race in South Asia. China's defence cooperation and bilateral relations with Pakistan have helped maintain some strategic balance, but military and political support of other major powers, have encouraged India in its bellicose behaviour towards Pakistan.²⁰

Ties with Regional Countries

India has been actively pursuing its ambitions of a greater role in the world and the South Asian region by influencing and interfering in smaller regional states, for example, establishment of pro-New Delhi government in Sri Lanka,²¹ implementing economic sanctions/travel restrictions against Male (which is an effective and coercive tool against small island countries with limited resources),²² putting an economic blockade on Nepal after its declaration of a secular constitution etc.²³ India has been

¹⁸ Hanan Hotiana, "Indo-US Defence Agreement of 2016 and Stability of South Asian Region," *Eurasia Review*, September 1, 2016, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/01092016-indo-us-defence-agreement-of-2016-and-stability-of-south-asian-region-oped/>.

¹⁹ Rakesh Krishnan Simha, "Russian Weapons that India could Deploy in War," *Russia Beyond*, September 26, 2016, http://in.rbth.com/blogs/stranger_than_fiction/2016/09/26/russian-weapons-that-india-could-deploy-in-war_633363; Masood ur Rehman Khattak, "Strategic Significance of Indo-Israel Defence Collaboration: Implications for Pakistan's Security," *IPRI Journal* XVI, no.2 (2016): 49-69, <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/4-Masood-ur-Rehman.pdf>.

²⁰ Munir Akram, "The Indo-US Alliance," *Dawn*, April 20, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1252498>.

²¹ Kadira Pethiyagoda, "India vs. China in Sri Lanka-Lessons for Rising Powers," *Brookings*, May 1, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2015/05/01/india-v-china-in-sri-lanka-lessons-for-rising-powers/>.

²² Ankit Panda, "India's Maldivian Headache," *Diplomat*, February 26, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/02/indias-maldivian-headache/>.

²³ Asghar Ali Shad, "Growing Hindu Extremism in India: Implications for Neighbouring Countries" (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2015), <http://www.ipripak.org/growing-hindu-extremism-in-india-implications-for-neighbouring-countries/>.

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trying to isolate Pakistan in the region²⁴ evident in its refusal to attend the 2016 SAARC Summit which was scheduled to be held in Pakistan and by also compelling other member countries like Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Bhutan to decline as well.²⁵ While SAARC Summits were frequently postponed due to prevailing political disputes and hostile relations between member states:

Often, it was India who gave a ‘severe blow’ to the process by causing arbitrary postponement. At least six Summits were postponed because India refused to attend them on one pretext or another.²⁶

New Delhi is also trying to encircle Pakistan by heavily investing in Iran’s Chabahar Port²⁷ and by providing large economic aid to Afghanistan.²⁸

Media

Another important factor that impacts Pakistan-India relations is media. While it has been found that Pakistani media has played a positive role in creating good bilateral relations between the two countries,²⁹ the same cannot be said of India which projects anti-Pakistan propaganda and

²⁴ Syeda Mamoona Rubab, “Is India Isolating Pakistan?” *Friday Times*, May 13, 2016, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/is-india-isolating-pakistan/>.

²⁵ “India’s Efforts to Isolate Pakistan,” *Economic Times*, September 28, 2016.

²⁶ Manzoor Ahmad, “SAARC Summits 1985-2016: The Cancellation Phenomenon,” *IPRI Journal* XVII, no.1 (2017): 43-71, <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Article-No.-3w17.pdf>.

²⁷ Tughral Yamin and Waseem Iftikhar Janjua, “To Join or Not to Join: The Corridor Conundrum for India,” in *CPEC: Macro and Micro Economic Dividends for Pakistan and the Region*, ed. Sarah Siddiq Aneel (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2017), <http://www.ipripak.org/cpec-macro-and-micro-economic-dividends-for-pakistan-and-the-region-2/>.

²⁸ Syed Ghulam Qadir, “Afghanistan and Iran: On Board CPEC’s Lucrative Train,” in *CPEC: Macro and Micro Economic Dividends for Pakistan and the Region*, ed. Sarah Siddiq Aneel (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2017), <http://www.ipripak.org/cpec-macro-and-micro-economic-dividends-for-pakistan-and-the-region-2/>.

²⁹ Saqib Riaz and Saadia Anwar Pasha, “Indo-Pak Relations and Pakistani Media,” *Margalla Papers* (2010), http://www.ndu.edu.pk/issra/issra_pub/articles/margalla-paper/Margalla-Papers-2010/04-Indo-Pak-Relations-and-Pakistani-Media.pdf.

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campaigns.³⁰ Bilateral issues are often sensationalised through false reporting and illogical allegations to gather international sympathy and to create misperceptions in order to defame Pakistan.³¹ Numerous steps can be taken by media and media practitioners to make tangible steps for the improvement of relations between the two nations.³²

Geoconomics

India's belligerent attitude towards Pakistan is also due to the fact that its economy is growing and its military/industrial complex has been strengthened with increase in its defence budget, upgradation and modernisation of its military hardware.³³ India's policy under Modi is to focus on building the capabilities of its Armed Forces by maximising its indigenous defence production and purchasing high quality defence equipment and weapons.³⁴ In this regard, India has signed many joint ventures with the US, Russia³⁵ and Israel.³⁶

India also feels that development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and even the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route threatens

³⁰ Vandana Seth, "Role of Media in India-Pakistan Relations" (paper, Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, Islamabad, 2016), http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/FP/RoleofMediainIndiaPakistanRelations_BackgroundPaper.pdf.

³¹ Saneela Jawad, "The Debilitating, Sensational Role of Media on Indo-Pak Relations," *Pakistan Today*, October 2, 2016, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/10/02/the-debilitating-sensational-role-of-media-on-indo-pak-relations/>.

³² Javed Jabbar, "Prospects of Improving Pakistan-India Relations" (paper, Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, Islamabad, 2012), <http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/FP/ProspectsofImprovingPakistan-IndiaRelationsthroughMedia.pdf>.

³³ Abhinav Dutta, "India's Defence Modernisation: Challenges and Prospects," *Indian Defence Review*, July 7, 2016, <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/indias-defence-modernisation-challenges-and-prospects/>; Sobia Saeed Paracha, *India's Defence Budget and Armed Forces Modernisation: An Analysis*, IPRI Paper 19 (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2017), <http://www.ipripak.org/ipri-paper-19-indias-defence-budget-and-armed-forces-modernisation-an-analysis/>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Dmitry Frolovskiy, "What's Behind Russia's Rapprochement with Pakistan?" *Diplomat*, May 14, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/05/whats-behind-russias-rapprochement-with-pakistan/>.

³⁶ Khattak, "Strategic Significance of Indo-Israel Defence Collaboration: Implications for Pakistan's Security."

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its economic and strategic interests in South Asia as it would cement Sino-Pak relations and also enhance Pakistan's geostrategic and economic outlook.³⁷ While he lost some of his domestic support (indicated by BJP's loss in New Delhi and Bihar Elections in 2015 as well as the 2016 assembly election which were slightly disappointing for BJP),³⁸ he is unable to change his extremist mindset and adopt pragmatic policies with Pakistan. Instead, to deviate the world's attention from Kashmir and to overcome his economic failures at home, Modi has adopted a harder anti-Pakistan strategy to regain domestic support.

Modi's Personality Cult and Administration: Political, Security, Economic and Socio-Cultural Relations with Pakistan

Narendra Modi came into power as Prime Minister of India on May 26, 2014. As a political leader, Modi's personality reflects extremist, ambitious and ultranationalist traits and as an administrator he is known for his authoritative and discriminatory style of politics that benefits the rich and oppresses the poor.³⁹ His past record as the Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2002, when he was involved in the carnage of thousands of Muslims during the Gujarat massacre (as discussed earlier) and his association with RSS, a militant organisation based on Hindutva ideology are proof of his hatred towards Muslims and his extremist mindset.⁴⁰ During his election campaign, Modi adopted the election manifesto that included anti-Muslims and anti-Pakistan agenda, building the Ram temple at the site of the Babri mosque, abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian

³⁷ Talmiz Ahmad, "Who's Afraid of One Road One Belt?" *Wire*, June 3, 2016, <http://thewire.in/40388/one-belt-one-road-shaping-connectivities-and-politics-in-the-21st-century/>; Yamin and Janjua, "To Join or Not to Join: The Corridor Conundrum for India."

³⁸ "BJP Defeat," editorial, *Dawn*, November 10, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1218606>; Roshan Kishore, "Is BJP Emerging as the Primary Opposition in West Bengal," *Livemint*, September 29, 2016, <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/uSmqldubfRnMbL6lmPRrCN/Is-BJP-emerging-as-the-primary-opposition-in-West-Bengal.html>.

³⁹ Hafeez, "The Anatomy of the Modi Phenomenon – How Should Pakistan Deal with it?"

⁴⁰ Javid Husain, "Long-Term Prospects of Pakistan-India Relations," *Criterion Quarterly* 9, no.3 (2014), <http://www.criterion-quarterly.com/long-term-prospects-of-pakistan-india-relations/>.

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Constitution, reviewing India's nuclear doctrine etc.⁴¹ Under Modi's rule, Paki-India relations have deteriorated because his government has projected hawkish, discriminatory and aggressive policies toward Pakistan and particularly to Muslims within India and in Kashmir as compared to his predecessor Prime Minister Vajpayee who had tried to improve relations and acted as a peacemaker within and outside India.⁴² As compared to Modi's ruthless and racist character, Vajpayee had a refined and cultured personality.⁴³

Unlike Modi, Vajpayee, although a BJP leader, had crafted a tough/soft policy with Pakistan without compromising India's security interests. The Lahore Declaration (1999), peaceful resolution of Kargil issue, Agra Summit (2001) and signing of Islamabad Declaration (2004) were initiatives taken under Vajpayee's government.⁴⁴ On the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, Vajpayee made genuine efforts towards a political solution and was even criticised within his party for being obsessed with peace with Pakistan.⁴⁵ He approached the Kashmir issue from multiple dimensions, being guided by the principles of *Humanism, Democracy and Kashmiryat*, seeking to engage both Pakistan and Kashmiri separatists simultaneously⁴⁶ contrary to Modi who has refrained from constructive dialogue and kept both Pakistan and separatists at bay.⁴⁷ In fact, BJP's strategy on Kashmir under Modi has been marked by domination and subjugation of the Kashmiri people using brutal force and money to crush

⁴¹ "Manifesto 2014," *Bharatiya Janata Party*, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://www.bjp.org/manifesto2014>.

⁴² M. Saeed Khalid, "Modi's India: Year Two," *Criterion Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (2015): 214-225; Imtiyaz Gul Khan, "Modern Education System in Afghanistan," *Criterion Quarterly* 6, no.1 (2012).

⁴³ Hussain, "Long-Term Prospects of Pakistan-India Relations."

⁴⁴ Shekar Gupta, "Modi is Wise to Return to Vajpayee's Pakistan Policy," *India Defence News*, December 9, 2015, <http://www.indiandefensenews.in/2015/12/modi-is-wise-to-return-to-vajpayees.html>.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Ali Nekokara, "Homegrown Militancy in Kashmir," *Nation*, October 15, 2016, <http://nation.com.pk/columns/15-Oct-2016/homegrown-militancy-in-kashmir>.

⁴⁶ Alex Perry, "Atal Bihari Vajpayee," *Time*, April 26, 2004, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1970858_1970888_1971081,00.html.

⁴⁷ Jhunik Chaudary, "Narendra Modi's Grand Plan for Kashmir," *Diplomat*, March 12, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/narendra-modis-grand-plan-for-kashmir/>.

the freedom struggle that has led to increase in violence in the Kashmir Valley.⁴⁸

Political Relations

The political relations between Pakistan and India under Modi's government have been marked with periodic diplomatic efforts along with escalating tensions along the Line of Control (LoC). Of late, the BJP government has adopted the strategy of trying to isolate Pakistan at regional and global forums. Soon after coming into power, Modi invited former PM Nawaz Sharif at his swearing in ceremony which was a positive gesture.⁴⁹ However:

India called off Foreign Secretary level talks with Pakistan in August 2014 on the pretext of Pakistan High Commissioner's meeting with Kashmir's Hurriyat leaders in New Delhi. The cancellation of talks by India was the first serious setback to the efforts by Pakistani leadership to normalise relations. Since 2014 to date, the Line of Control (LoC) and Working Boundary have not only remained tense, but also witnessed repeated violations coupled with hostile statements by Indian politicians against Pakistan.⁵⁰

Over the past two odd years, the political and diplomatic relationship between Pakistan and India has swung back and forth like a pendulum. During March 2015, Indian Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar met with Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhury as part of SAARC Yatra at Islamabad and spoke about forging a cooperative relationship with Pakistan.⁵¹ But in June 2015, war of words escalated after Modi's remarks that India had supported East Pakistan separation

⁴⁸ M. Saeed Khalid, "Modi and Kashmir," *News International*, August 14, 2016, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/142343-Modi-and-Kashmir>.

⁴⁹ "Nawaz Sharif Invited for Modi's Swearing-in Ceremony," *Dawn*, May 21, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1107713>.

⁵⁰ Mateen Haider, "India Calls off Foreign Secretary Level Talks with Pakistan," *Dawn*, August 18, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1126123>.

⁵¹ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Pakistan, India Vow to Work Together," *Dawn*, March 4, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1167276>.

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from Pakistan in 1971.⁵² Relations seemed to take a positive turn when in July 2015, Modi and Sharif met on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Ufa and announced holding bilateral security talks, and reinstated their commitment to restart the dialogue process.⁵³ But in August 2015, talks between National Security Advisors Ajit Doval and Sartaj Aziz collapsed after India was angered about Islamabad's invitation to Kashmiri leaders to consult on the talks.⁵⁴ On November 30, 2015, in the wake of Climate Change Conference in Paris, the two leaders again reiterated their commitment to the dialogue process.⁵⁵

During December 2015, the National Security Advisors, Doval and Janjua met in Bangkok⁵⁶ and the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj met former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Sartaj Aziz, former Advisor to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, ahead of the annual Heart of Asia Conference⁵⁷ in Islamabad which was followed by an unscheduled stopover at Lahore by Modi. The meeting created hope that bilateral dialogue would restart. However, relations deteriorated in January 2016, when India blamed Pakistan for the Pathankot attack and suspended dialogue. In April 2016, Indian and Pakistani Foreign Secretaries met at New Delhi,⁵⁸ but again relations became strained when India refused to attend the SAARC Summit scheduled to be held in November 2016 in Pakistan by blaming it for facilitating Uri attack in the last week of

⁵² Mateen Haider and Irfan Haider, "FO Spokesperson Expresses Regret over Modi's Dhaka Speech," *Dawn*, June 9, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1187118>; Haq, *Management of Pakistan-India Relations: Resolution of Disputes*.

⁵³ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Sharif, Modi Meet today in Bid to Ease Tension," *Dawn*, July 10, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1193500>.

⁵⁴ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "NSAs Talks Cancelled over Indian Conditions," *Dawn*, August 23, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1202269>.

⁵⁵ Irfan Haider, "Nawaz, Modi Meet on Sidelines of Paris Climate Summit," *Dawn*, November 30, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1223309>.

⁵⁶ Irfan Haider, "Pakistan, India NSAs Hold Talks in Bangkok," *Dawn*, December 7, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1224563>.

⁵⁷ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Breakthrough at 'Heart of Asia': Pakistan, India to Resume 'Comprehensive' Talks," *Dawn*, December 10, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1225402>.

⁵⁸ "India-Pak Foreign Secretaries Meet: Pakistan Reaffirms Kashmir as Core Issue," *Dawn*, April 27, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1254529>.

September 2016.⁵⁹ Diplomatic relations, which were already strained, became exacerbated after New Delhi and Islamabad decided to expel diplomatic missions on charges of espionage and declaring *persona non grata* and asking diplomats to leave within 48 hours.⁶⁰

Security Relations

Under Modi's government, Pak-India security ties have been characterised by cross-border firing, LoC violations, threat of war and India's propaganda against Pakistan. The disputes over Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek and water remain unresolved and continue to cause friction. The security situation has worsened in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) with an increase in Indian atrocities and human rights violations under BJP's government.⁶¹ Since 2016, more than a 100 people have been killed, with 8587 arrested, and more than 15,000 injured. The Indian Research & Analysis Wing's (RAW) involvement in terror attacks inside Pakistan using Afghan soil as proven by the confession of an Indian spy, Kulbashaan Yadav⁶² arrested from Balochistan in March 2016, has also negatively impacted the security of the region. The recent false propaganda about India's security forces conducting surgical strikes across the LoC has also added fuel to an already fragile situation.⁶³

Economic Relations

On the economic front, no major breakthrough was made from 2014-16 since issues (apart from political ones) that have impeded trade during the

⁵⁹ "India Pulls out of Pakistan-Hosted 19th SAARC Summit," *Dawn*, September 27, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1286460>.

⁶⁰ "Expelled Indian Diplomat Leaves India," *Express Tribune*, October 29, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1214145/expelled-indian-diplomat-leaves-india/>.

⁶¹ IPRI, "Human Rights Violations in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK): Kashmiri Aspirations and Responsibility of International Community," press release, August 8, 2017, <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/prrelease46.pdf>; Sajjad Shaukat, "India's Human Right Violations in Kashmir," *Kashmir Watch*, December 6, 2015, <http://kashmirwatch.com/indias-human-rights-violations-in-kashmir/>.

⁶² "Detained Indian Spy Confesses to RAW's Involvement in Balochistan," *Express Tribune*, March 29, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1074880/dg-ispr-information-minister-to-hold-joint-presser-today/>.

⁶³ Atika Rehman, "What is a 'Surgical Strike'?" *Dawn*, September 29, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1286893>.

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past three decades remain unresolved, such as the issues of tariff and non-tariff trade barriers imposed by India. There has been frequent suspension of trade through Wagah-Attari border and across the LoC due to security concerns or because of Pakistan-India tensions. Bilateral trade between the two countries remained USD 2.6 billion in 2015-16.⁶⁴ Out of India's total trade of USD 641 billion in 2015-16, its trade with Pakistan was a mere USD 2.67 billion. Overall, trade with Pakistan was equivalent to 0.41 per cent of India's global merchandise commerce.⁶⁵ However, it should be pointed out that till July 2016, informal trade was estimated to be USD 4.71 billion. Of this, India's exports to Pakistan were estimated at USD 3.99 billion and imports from Pakistan were only USD 0.72 billion.⁶⁶

Both countries have not held any trade negotiations since January 2014. The Commerce Secretaries' trade talks were held in 2012. In 2015, prospects of granting Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, also termed as Non-discriminatory market access (NDMA), to India also faded due to mutual tensions.⁶⁷ After the Uri attack, Indian traders dealing in the import and export of goods with Pakistan threatened to end PKR 3,000 crore worth of trade with Pakistan through Wagah-Attari border.⁶⁸ Although there were statements from the Indian side regarding revoking of MFN status to Pakistan, no formal announcement was made in that context.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ "Pakistan's MFN Tag May Stay for Now," *Hindu*, September 24, 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/Pakistan%E2%80%99s-MFN-tag-may-stay-for-now/article15002278.ece>.

⁶⁵ "Hardly any Indo-Pakistan Trade; Nation with PM Modi: Assocham," *Indian Express*, November 24, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/hardly-any-indo-pakistan-trade-nation-with-pm-modi-asso-cham-3049129/>.

⁶⁶ Nisha Taneja and Samridhi Bimal, "India's Informal Trade with Pakistan" (working paper no. 327, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, New Delhi, 2016), http://www.icrier.org/pdf/Working_Paper_327.pdf.

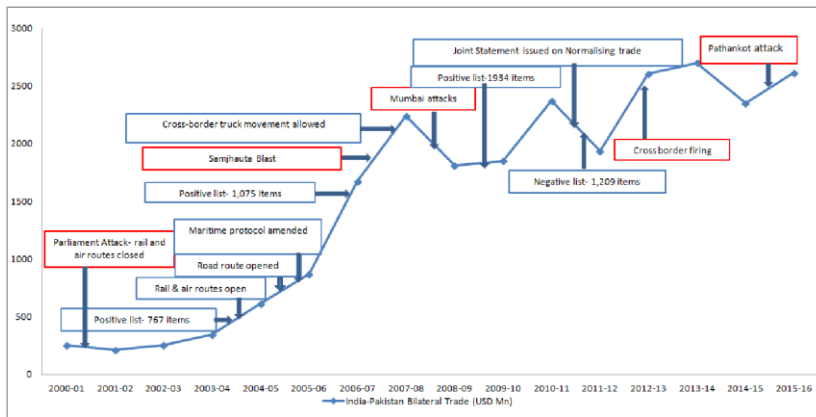
⁶⁷ "India-Pakistan Trade Recent Developments" (New Delhi: Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, 2017, <http://indiapakistantrade.org/recentDevelopments.html>.

⁶⁸ "Rising Tempers: Pak-India Eyeball to Eyeball at Wagah Border after Uri Attack," *Pakistan Today*, September 20, 2016, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/09/20/national/pak-india-eyeball-to-eyeball-at-wagah-amid-uri-attack/>.

⁶⁹ Mansoor Ahmed, "Revoking MFN Status to Pakistan does not Favour India's Trade," *News International*, September 27, 2016, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/152819-Revoking-MFN-status-to-Pakistan-does-not-favour-Indias-trade>.

Figure 1 shows the impact of fluctuating political relations between the two countries on trade from 2000-16:

Figure-1
Impact of Political Relations between India and Pakistan on Trade



Source: Nisha Taneja, Samridhi Bimal and Varsha Sivaram, “Recent Trends in India-Pakistan Trade 2015-16” (datasheet, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, New Delhi, 2015), http://indiapakistantrade.org/pdf/Data%20Sheet_India_Pakistan_2015.pdf.

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Socio-Cultural Relations

Back in 2015, PM Narendra Modi tried to break the ice between the two countries and spoke to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as part of his 'cricket diplomacy', conveying his best wishes to the SAARC leaders whose countries cricket teams were playing in the world cup.⁷⁰ Popular Indian television channel *Zindagi* also syndicated several Pakistani dramas and joint media projects were started⁷¹ such as Pakistani artists being cast in Bollywood movies and Pakistani singers performing at musical festivals and concerts.⁷² But in the wake of the Uri attack (2016), restrictions on cross-border exchange of artists, exhibition of movies and participation in cultural activities and other economic activities were imposed.⁷³ Pakistani actors and musicians were asked to leave India within 48 hours.⁷⁴ Indian artists who showed sympathy for these artists were targeted for supporting Pakistan.

Key Issues between Pakistan and India under Prime Minister Modi's Government

Terrorism, Kashmir, Afghanistan and water have remained central to the present Indian government's portfolio in dealing with Pakistan:

Terrorism

The issue of terrorism continues to haunt bilateral relations between the two countries. On its part, India kept falsely accusing Pakistan of terror

⁷⁰ Shubajit Roy, "Cricket Diplomacy: PM Narendra Modi Opens New Innings with Pakistan," February 14, 2015, *Indian Express*, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/in-cricket-world-cup-season-pm-narendra-modi-opens-new-innings-with-pakistan>.

⁷¹ Seth, "Role of Media in India-Pakistan Relations."

⁷² "Why Pakistani Artists Found Acceptance in India and Bollywood Imports Talent from Across the Border," *Indian Express*, October 5, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/why-pakistani-artists-found-acceptance-in-india-and-bollywood-imports-talent-from-across-the-border-3047848/>.

⁷³ Aadil Nakhoda, "Analyzing the Trade Relationship between Pakistan and India," *Express Tribune*, October 31, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1215385/analysing-trade-relationship-pakistan-india/>.

⁷⁴ "Fawad and other Pakistani Artists Given 48 Hours to Leave India," *Dawn*, September 23, 2016, <http://images.dawn.com/news/1176291>.

attacks such as the one in Pathankot (January 2016) and Uri (September 2016) calling it ‘state-sponsored terrorism’ with continued support to militants in Kashmir.⁷⁵ Hostile statements from the Indian side, such as Home Minister Rajnath Singh’s speech at the SAARC Home Minister’s Meeting in 2016 at Islamabad⁷⁶ or Modi declaring Pakistan the epicentre of terrorism and pledging to isolate Pakistan internationally,⁷⁷ strained relations further, leaving no room for peaceful dialogue. Pakistan too has voiced concerns regarding RAW’s involvement in trying to destabilise Balochistan and causing unrest in Karachi, especially Gwadar Port.⁷⁸ With India refusing to discuss Kashmir, the peace process has remained stagnant.⁷⁹

Kashmir

India, under the Modi-led BJP government, has continued to step up its brutal policies and anti-Muslim strategies in Kashmir by using more than 700,000 security forces coupled with prolonged curfews, crackdowns and pellet guns to maim the Kashmiris freedom struggle.⁸⁰ Highlighting the death of Burhan Wani - the 22-year old Hizbul Mujahideen Commander⁸¹

⁷⁵ Shreerupa Mitra-Jha, “India Accuses Pakistan of Harboring Terrorists as they Spar again at the UN Human Rights Council,” *First Post*, September 27, 2016, <http://www.firstpost.com/world/india-accuses-pakistan-of-harboring-terrorists-as-they-spar-again-at-the-un-human-rights-council-3021600.html>.

⁷⁶ Iftikhar A. Khan, “Rajnath Leaves SAARC Meeting Abruptly amid Bitterness,” *Dawn*, August 5, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1275551>.

⁷⁷ “Modi Threatens to Isolate Pakistan Globally,” *Pakistan Today*, September 25, 2016, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/09/25/national/modi-threatens-to-isolate-pakistan-globally/>.

⁷⁸ Shafqat Ali, “India Sponsoring Terrorism in Pakistan: FO,” *Nation*, September 23, 2016, <http://nation.com.pk/newspaper-picks/23-Sep-2016/india-sponsoring-terrorism-in-pakistan-fo>.

⁷⁹ Syed Sammer Abbas, “India Refuses Talks over Kashmir Issue with Pakistan,” *Dawn*, August 25, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1279895>.

⁸⁰ Shamshad Ahmad, “Kashmir on Fire,” *News International*, August 10, 2016, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/141306-Kashmir-on-fire>.

⁸¹ Saman Zulfqar, “Kashmir: Nature and Dimensions of the Conflict,” *Journal of Current Affairs* 1, nos. 1 & 2 (2016), http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Article4_Saman-Zulfqar-18-Nov-2016.pdf.

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- by former PM Nawaz Sharif at the UN also annoyed Modi.⁸² Since 2014, there has been heavy deployment of weapons and shelling across the LoC in Kashmir with continued Indian blame game against Pakistan.⁸³ New Delhi's main aim remains deflection of the international community's attention from its HR atrocities in Kashmir and from the new phase of *Intifada*, which is a just and peaceful freedom struggle for the right of self-determination by Kashmiris.⁸⁴

Afghanistan

India's relationship with Afghanistan is multi-layered; there is clearly a military and security angle, under which India aspires for stability within Afghanistan and hanging over which is the shadow of its relationship with Pakistan. While growing, the military relationship with Afghanistan remains relatively low-key, though it has the potential to be significantly ramped up dependent both upon developments in Afghanistan and on the actions taken by Pakistan.⁸⁵

Islamabad tends to view Indian presence in Afghanistan as detrimental to its security interests and rightly so due to RAW's involvement in trying to destabilise Balochistan using Afghan soil.⁸⁶ Similarly, the facilitation of negotiations with the Taliban by Pakistan through the Quadrilateral process, of which India is not a member, also worries New Delhi.⁸⁷

⁸² Nidhi Razdan, "India Slams Nawaz Sharif's UN Speech, Says Burhan Wani Reference Shocking," *NDTV.Com*, September 22, 2016, <http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/an-un-nawaz-sharif-talks-kashmir-hails-burhan-wani-1464860>.

⁸³ Syed Sajjad Shaukat, "Reminder of Kashmir Black Day," *Kashmir Watch*, October 26, 2016, <http://kashmirwatch.com/reminder-kashmir-black-day/>.

⁸⁴ Ibid. See also Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

⁸⁵ Gareth Price, "India's Policy towards Afghanistan" (paper, Chatham House, London, 2013), https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Asia/0813pp_indiaafghanistan.pdf.

⁸⁶ "Major Issues between Old Rivals India and Pakistan," *Reuters*, July 26, 2011, <http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-58461420110726>.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

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India is also interested in Afghanistan's lucrative mineral deposits.⁸⁸ Therefore, the former is bent upon developing a strong military influence in Afghanistan to put Pakistan under pressure. To keep a foothold in the region after US pullout from the country, India pledged USD 1 billion in economic aid to Kabul during Ashraf Ghani's visit to New Delhi in September 2016.⁸⁹ While India is highly unlikely to commit troops to a security role following the withdrawal of Western troops, it has announced steps to upscale training for Afghan security forces. C. Raja Mohan notes:

Initial widespread concern in Delhi has now been replaced by a stoic resignation and determination to pursue its enduring interests in Afghanistan on its own steam.⁹⁰

Water

The issue of water shortage has also become a serious threat to Pakistan since India has built several hydropower projects on Chenab and Jhelum rivers and it continues to construct Kishenganga dam on Neelum River in Kashmir, thus, violating the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) of 1960.⁹¹ In 2015, the Pakistan-India Water Commission talks failed and Pakistan is pursuing neutral help to resolve this issue.⁹² However after the Uri attack,

⁸⁸ Price, "India's Policy towards Afghanistan."

⁸⁹ Ankit Panda, "India Pledges \$1 Billion in Assistance to Afghanistan," *Diplomat*, September 15, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/09/india-pledges-1-billion-in-assistance-to-afghanistan/>.

⁹⁰ Price, "India's Policy towards Afghanistan."

⁹¹ Muhammad Nawaz Khan, "Geopolitics of Water in South Asia," *Journal of Current Affairs* 1, nos. 1 & 2 (2016), http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Article5_Nawaz-Khan.pdf; Iftikhar Alam, "Pakistan to Move ICJ over India's Water Aggression," *Nation*, February 9, 2015, <http://nation.com.pk/national/09-Feb-2015/pakistan-to-move-icj-over-india-s-water-aggression>;

⁹² Zia Tanoli, "Kishan Ganga Dam: Pakistan Decides to Opt for a 'Neutral Expert'," *Express Tribune*, October 15, 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/973130/kishan-ganga-dam-pakistan-decides-to-opt-for-a-neutral-expert/>; "Objectionable Designs of 330MW Kishanganga and 850MW Ratle Hydropower Projects," *News International*, August 7, 2015.

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PM Modi suspended Indus Water Commission talks and expedited work on hydropower projects in IOK.⁹³

Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)

Prior to Modi, Pakistan had a long list of CBMs with India that included IWT (1960), Tashkent Declaration (1966), Simla Agreement (1972), prohibition of attack on nuclear facilities, prior notification of military exercises etc.⁹⁴ In September 2015, set of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) were agreed upon by Border Security Force (BSF) of India and Pakistan Rangers to put an end to ceasefire violations and firing along the border⁹⁵ which were constantly violated in 2015 and in 2016. India and Pakistan had agreed to resume structured dialogue through a new ten-point Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue (CBD) in December 2015,⁹⁶ but it was cancelled by India when it blamed Pakistan for the Pathankot attack. In August 2016, in an attempt to promote restraint and responsibility in South Asia, Pakistan offered India a bilateral arrangement on non-testing of nuclear weapons. Pakistan has also proposed simultaneous adherence to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), but no progress has been made by the Indian side.⁹⁷

What's in Store for Pak-India Relations?

The current state of bilateral relations reflects that in the wake of the Uri attack, there is an *impasse* and complete deadlock between Pakistan and India. While there has been emphasis on both sides to establish contact to

⁹³ "Delhi Decides to Suspend Indus Water Commission Talks," *Dawn*, September 27, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1286293>.

⁹⁴ Tahir Ashraf, "The Pakistan-India Conundrum: A Historical Survey," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)* 35, no. 1 (2015): 309-320.

⁹⁵ "Indo-Pak Border CBMs to be Implemented in 15 days," *Hindu*, September 13, 2015, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indiapakistan-border-confidence-building-measures-cbms-to-be-implemented-in-next-15-days/article7648370.ece>.

⁹⁶ Irfan Haider, "Pakistan, India Agree to Restart 'Comprehensive' Dialogue Process," *Dawn*, December 10, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1225246>.

⁹⁷ "Pakistan Offers India Bilateral Arrangement on Non-Testing of Nuclear Weapons," *Express Tribune*, August 16, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1163773/pakistan-offers-india-bilateral-arrangement-non-testing-nuclear-weapons/>.

reduce tensions along the LoC,⁹⁸ and the international community has also been pushing for negotiations and settling disputes through dialogue,⁹⁹ in light of the existing political environment in India, it appears difficult to hold result-oriented dialogue.

Despite intensifying tensions, the visit of Pakistan's former Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Sartaj Aziz, to attend the Heart of Asia Conference 2016 at Amritsar shows that Pakistan has not shunned the dialogue process even though Pakistan's overtures have always been dismissed by New Delhi.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, it is highly likely that the prevailing suspicion and mistrust will continue to lead to serious differences and lack of political, security and economic cooperation between the two countries, and prospects of holding constructive dialogue in the near future remains remote.

Conclusion

The analysis of Pakistan-India relations under Modi's government (2014-to date) indicates that in the near future no significant improvement in bilateral relations is expected. Modi's adamant and rigid approach towards Pakistan, discriminatory policies towards Muslims in Kashmir and his extremist mindset have added to trust deficit, insecurity and misunderstandings between the two countries. Contrary to India's efforts to isolate Pakistan, Islamabad has remained a firm supporter of bilateral, regional and global peace and to resolve disputes through dialogue and negotiations, whether its Afghanistan or India.¹⁰¹ Modi must revise his hard and hawkish approach towards Pakistan and work to create a balanced, peaceful environment for co-existence and for improvement in bilateral relations. ■

⁹⁸ "NSAs of India, Pak Establish Contact, Agree to Reduce Tensions: Sartaj Aziz," *Nation*, October 3, 2016, <http://nation.com.pk/international/03-Oct-2016/nsas-of-india-pak-establish-contact-agree-to-reduce-tensions-sartaj-aziz>.

⁹⁹ "India, Pakistan should Cease Hostilities and Negotiate: USA," *News International*, September 27, 2016, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/153032-India-Pakistan-should-cease-hostilities-and-negotiate-USA>.

¹⁰⁰ Tariq Butt, "Pakistan Outwits India by Attending Heart of Asia Conference," *News International*, December 5, 2016, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/169875-Pakistan-outwits-India-by-attending-Heart-of-Asia-Conference>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.