

# Democracy and Democratization: Analyzing the Conflicts Between India and Pakistan

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## 1. Introduction

India and Pakistan are up today stagnated in a mode of conflict. Ever since their very existence as independent states they are involved in several conflicts with one another (Dixit, 2002: 19). In this paper the impact of domestic politics on the conflicts between India and Pakistan is examined through academic theories and empirical data in order to understand the influence of domestic features on the bilateral relations between these two countries. By doing so, a better understanding of their ongoing dispute is provided. This understanding is of the utmost importance in order to focus on potential ways to overcome the disputed relation between these two countries. Potential conflict resolution, based upon domestic politics, is worth examining bearing in mind the civilian lives these conflicts already cost so far (Lyon, 2008: 82).

Background information on the domestic politics of India and Pakistan is provided in the subsequent section. With this information in mind, theories on democracy in relation to conflicts are outlined in the third section. Through these theories on democracy, the regimes of both India and Pakistan are examined in order to explain their mutual influence on each other. The next and fourth section of this paper addresses theories on democratization. Through these theories, domestic features of India and Pakistan are once again researched and

used in order to explain the tensed bilateral relations of these two countries. This paper is concluded through section five in which the abovementioned sections are summarized and followed through. Moreover, in this final section potential conflict resolution, as based upon the gathered insights on domestic politics, is provided.

## **2. Background Information**

As background information on the India Pakistan conflicts is considered as common knowledge, this section is delineated to background information only focussed at the extent to which both countries have been democracies since their independence.

### **2.1 Background Information on India's Domestic Politics**

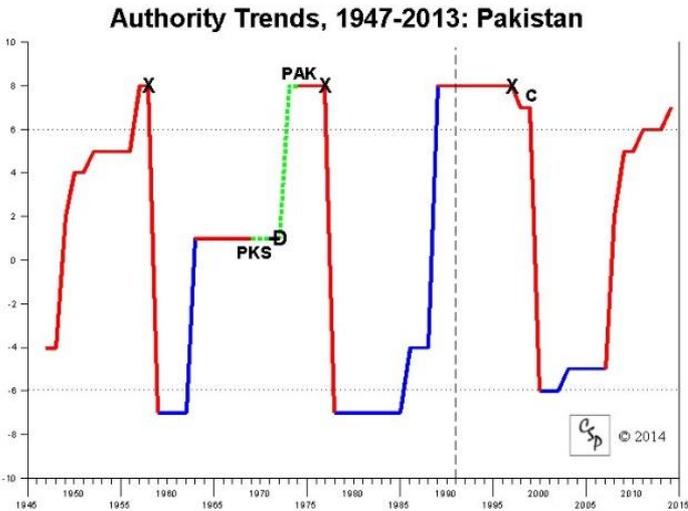
While India in general is considered as a democratic state, Pakistan fluctuated in its extent of democratic ruling throughout its history after colonization, and was faced with periods of autocratic governance. To wit, India's democracy, directly implemented after British ruling, is known for its adult suffrage and civil rights based upon equality. Despite military invasions and its severe socioeconomic differences, which led to domestic political tensions, India was able to withhold its democracy ever since its independence (Mitra, 2014: 18-26).

### **2.2 Background Information on Pakistan's Domestic Politics**

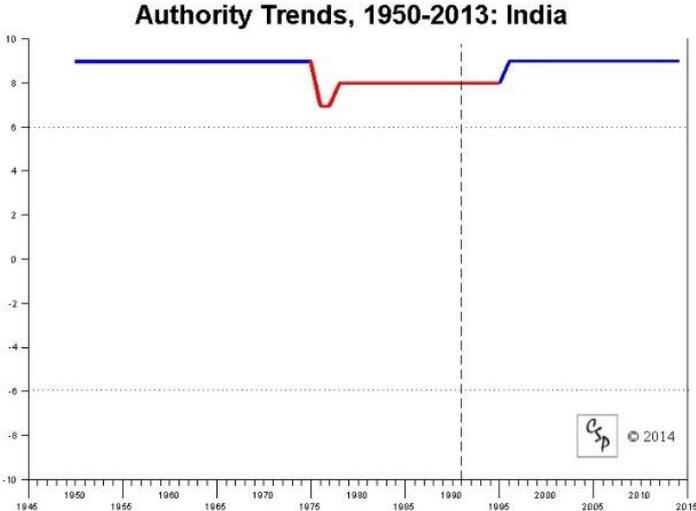
Pakistan, on the other hand, is known for its unstable democratic governing. It has been ruled by military governed, and military controlled regimes from its beginning as a sovereign state. This country is considered as a democracy in four different timeframes. The first phase occurred right after its independence and remained till 1956. The second phase was from 1972 till 1977, followed by a democratic ruling from the year 1988. From 2008 till today, Pakistan's fourth democratic phase is witnessed (Hashim, 2014, *online source*). Current movements of civil society are an important factor when explaining Pakistan's latest attempt to restore to a democratic regime (Ahmed, 2014: 50).

**2.3 Empirics**

The graphics from below provide with an overview of the extent of democracy within Pakistan and India’s political ruling. A score of six or higher on the vertical axis indicates the presence of a democratic regime. Figure 1 supports the abovementioned statement on Pakistan’s four phases of democratic ruling. Figure 2, in its turn, confirms the notion of a stable democracy within India since this country never hit a score below seven on the vertical axis, and thus India is considered a democracy ever since the year 1947.



**Figure 1:** Authority trends within Pakistan (Marshall, 2014, *online source*)



**Figure 2:** Authority trends within India (Marshall, 2014, *online source*)

### 3. Democracy and Conflict

In this section the democratic peace theory is explained and applied to the conflicts between India and Pakistan. The information from the previous section serves to better understand the domestic politics of both countries. This information is now used in order to understand to which extent the regime types of both India and Pakistan contribute to their bilateral disputes.

#### 3.1 Democratic Peace Theory

The democratic peace theory contains the assumption that countries with liberal democratic ruling do not fight wars against each other, and this theory is almost considered as empirical law in the study field of international relations (Levy, 1988: 661). Figure 3 provides with empirical data that confirms this theory since no two democratic countries fought a war against each other within the researched timeframe.

**TABLE 3.1**  
**The More Democratic Two Regimes,**  
**The Less Intensely They Fight Each Other**  
**1988-1988**

Dyadic Democraticness	Dyadic Dead[a]	Number of Regimes
democracy-democracy	0	[b]
democracy-authoritarian	567,108	66
democracy-totalitarian	940,796	107
authoritarian-authoritarian	1,664,220	40
authoritarian-totalitarian	2,560,202	11

a. This is the mean of the sums of battle dead for regimes of the given regime type that fought each other in wars.

b. There was no war between any democracies

**Figure 3:** Democratic peace theory between the years 1900 and 1980 (Rummel, 1997, *online source*)

A liberal democracy is defined as “a state that instantiates liberal ideas, one where liberalism is the dominant ideology” (Owen, 1994: 89). Liberalism *inter alia* underscores the importance of civil rights and competitive elections (Ibid.). Three main features define liberal democracies. *First*, the country and its inhabitants need to be enlightened and aware of their interests. Moreover, they need to know how to secure these interests (Ibid.:94). *Second*, “people must live under enlightened political institutions which allow their true interests to shape politics” (Ibid.). It however is disputed what these enlightened institutions are, but

agreement has been reached on the fact that these institutions should be based upon regular and competitive elections. This enables citizens to subject their officials to public scrutiny, which ensures that authorities will try to respect the rights and preferences of its people. Freedom of press and freedom of speech, therefore, are cornerstones of liberal democracies (Ibid.: 89-99). *Third*, if a state wants to enjoy the benefit of the democratic peace theory (which mainly is safety), it should be perceived as a liberal democracy by other states. Otherwise its peer state will not treat it as one of them and chances of war still remain higher (Ibid.: 96).

Since these democratic states respect norms such as civil rights and freedoms on domestic level, they project these norms into their foreign politics with like-minded regimes too. Therefore democracies are reluctant to fight each other (Ibid.: 90). Due to similar political institutions and socioeconomic features of other liberal countries, cooperation between liberal states is highly likely (Moravcik, 1997: 525). This leads to a sustainable bilateral relationship, based upon shared commitments, which secures peace between states (Layne, 1994: 9).

Liberal states, however, do desire to be confronted with states they consider illiberal due to their clashing norms (Owen, 1994: 100). Democratic regimes, namely, differ very much from authoritarian regimes due to their liberal outlook on freedom norms. As liberals believe in peace, they only are willing to wage war in order to promote peace elsewhere (Ibid.: 90). Based upon this democratic peace theory, it is assumed that the spread or promotion of peace will lead to global peace and security (Mansfield and Snyder, 1995: 5).

### **3.2 Democratic Peace Theory and the Conflicts between India and Pakistan**

As India and Pakistan were involved in four wars with each other, it is interesting to research these conflicts bearing in mind the democratic peace theory. The first armed conflict took place in 1947, the second war occurred in 1965, the third one took place in 1971, and an undeclared war took place in 1999 (Mitra, 2014: 18-26). According to the democratic peace theory, chances are higher that conflicts occurred in timeframes where Pakistan was not considered as a liberal democracy, due to clashing norms between the two countries.

As figure 1 shows, Pakistan indeed was not governed by democratic regimes during its four wars with India. In fact, it was ruled by autocratic regimes during the last three conflicts

(Hashim, 2014, *online source*). According to figure 2, and as previously mentioned, India is considered a democracy ever since its independence. Moreover, its democracy is based upon the core premises of liberalism due to its free elections and respect for civil rights (Mitra, 2014: 18-26).

Bearing in mind the democratic peace theory, one might state that the bilateral relations between India and Pakistan only will be better when Pakistan becomes a liberal democracy too (Banerjee, 2014: 264). This, in fact, will lead to mutual respect between India and Pakistan, as based upon shared political norms. In order to achieve this, Pakistan's polity should be organized through the three features of a liberal democracy. It therefore is interesting to research Pakistan's current polity since this, according to the democratic peace theory, is the root cause for its disputed relation with its neighbour India.

*First*, due to the social movements Pakistan currently knows, its civil society is considered as empowered and aware of its interests (Ahmed, 2014: 50). Also, the polity itself seems more enlightened than before since figure 1 shows an increase towards democratic ruling.

*Second*, Pakistan's institutions, however, are described as tools for military bureaucracy (Oldenbrug, 2010: 98). Especially the press has never been free from political interference and was very restricted during Pakistan's autocratic regimes (Ibid.:84). Its institutions, thus, are not considered as enlightened.

*Third*, despite Pakistan's current status as a democracy, as seen in figure 1, India does not perceive Pakistan's democracy as a stable one. To wit, in 2009 India's Prime Minister stated that they welcomed the emergence of democracy in Pakistan, but they doubt its sustainability due to Pakistan's lack of proper institutions to address its terrorist-related issues (Singh, 2009, *online source*).

Pakistan, thus, should invest in liberalising its institutions since it then will meet the three conditions to be regarded as a liberal democracy, as India will then consider Pakistan's democracy as sustainable.

### **3.3 Sub-conclusion**

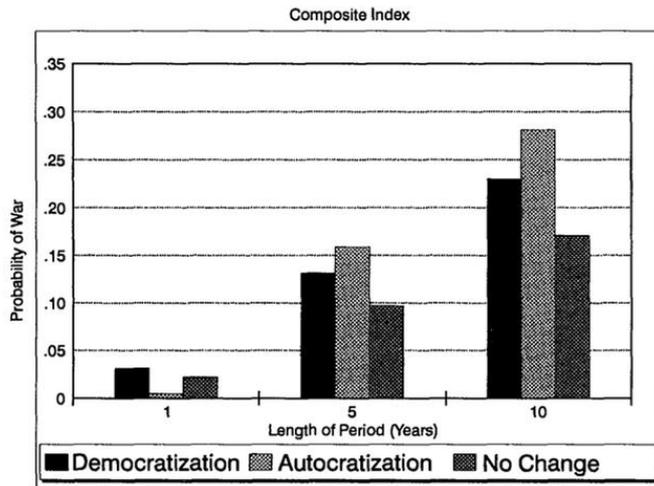
To conclude, the fact that Pakistan is not considered a liberal democracy due to its illiberal institutions, might contribute to a high extent to its troubled relation with India. India's regime, based upon core premises of liberalism, is incompatible with suppressive features of Pakistan's polity. If Pakistan would become a sustainable liberal democracy too, the chance of future wars with India will decrease due to their, by then, mutual norms and interests.

## **4. Democratization and Conflict**

In the previous chapter the effects of both India's and Pakistan's regimes on their tensed bilateral relation is analyzed. According to the democratic peace theory, it is assumed that Pakistan's illiberal regime influences this relation, and thus, it is recommended to Pakistan to liberalise its institutions. In this section, however, the effects of regime change are outlined. Theories on democratization in relation to conflicts are outlined, and subsequently applied to Pakistan's shifting regime types. By doing so, the effects of transitional phases of Pakistan's domestic politics are explained in relation to its conflicts with India.

### **4.1 Theories on Democratization and Conflict**

“The establishment of stable, liberal democracies yields important benefits, but the early stages of democratization can be perilous” (Mansfield and Snyder, 2002: 547). States undertaking democratization, and thus are faced with a regime transition, are more likely to be involved with wars, which is shown in figure 4. According to the composite index, states undertaking democratization are three times more likely to go to war than states not involved with this polity transition.



**Figure 4:** Democratization and conflict (Mansfield and Snyder, 1995: 14)

While the democratic peace theory states that liberal democracies do not fight each other, the transitional phase towards this type of polity is considered as a potentially risky process. Especially countries shifting from autocratic ruling towards democracy are prone to violence (Mansfield and Snyder, 2002: 529). However, “not ... all democratic transitions are dangerous. Those that occur in the context of strong, stable domestic institutions are often quite peaceful” (Mansfield and Snyder, 2012: 723). These institutions should be built upon liberal features such as the rule of law, competitive political elections, and an independent press. Nonetheless, when their institutions are fragile “[s]tates risk nationalist violence when they attempt to transition to democracy without institutions of public accountability” (Mansfield & Snyder, 2005: 2).

The foundation for this potential to nationalist politics and conflicts during the process of democratization is threefold. *First*, state leaders might have the tendency to outline ethnic differences within their society in order to polarize it. This creates support amongst their own (ethnic) grassroots, which strengthens and legitimizes their position. *Second*, militant groups can acquire power when regimes are weak. It, thus, can be in their interest to assure that these regimes remain weak. *Third*, elite groups can use nationalistic discourses to gain support. By accusing foreign rivals of wrongdoing, domestic support and thus legitimacy is built (Mansfield & Snyder, 2005: 245-249).

## 4.2 Democratization and the Conflicts between India and Pakistan

As seen in figure 2, India did not experience phases of democratization since it remained a democratic polity ever since its independence. Figure 1, on the other hand, shows processes of democratization regarding Pakistan's polity. When applying the theory on democratization relating to the increased chances of conflicts, the following is witnessed through figure 1:

During the first conflict in 1947, Pakistan indeed faced democratization. During the second conflict, which happened in 1965, Pakistan was stagnated in a democratization process that took place between approximately 1950 and 1972. During the 1971 war, Pakistan was involved in an active process of democratization. Finally, during the fourth, undeclared war of 1999, Pakistan was running up to its current democratization process. Thus, the theory on democratization and its increased chance of warfare is to a fair extent applicable to the wars between India and Pakistan.

This observation can *inter alia* be explained through Pakistan's lack of free press (Oldenbrug, 2010: 84). To repeat, this important institution serves public accountability of governments (Mansfield & Snyder, 2005: 2). Without such liberal institutions, violence and nationalism are more likely (Ibid.). The three characteristics that feed violence and nationalism during the process of democratization are therefore analyzed regarding Pakistan's domestic politics.

*First*, Pakistan's Islamic authorities outlined different ethnicities right after its independence. West Pakistan, which inhabited Muslims, dominated over East Pakistan, which inhabited the Bengali people. Subsequently, this led to the rise of liberation movements in the East since its people no longer wanted to be culturally and economically suppressed. This is an example of domestic politics in which people are polarized, based upon ethnicity. Eventually, this led to a civil war in 1971, and subsequently to a conflict with India. It thus fits the first characteristic on the theory of democratization and conflicts (New World Encyclopedia, 2012, *online source*).

*Second*, after its independence in 1947 Pakistan had to form its army. This developing institution resulted in the overrepresentation of ethnic groups from West Pakistan, while ethnic groups from East Pakistan, who already were suppressed, were only for one percent represented in the national armed forces. In 1971 this resulted in cruelties based upon

ethnicity, conducted by the army, which eventually led to the independence of Bangladesh. Moreover, during these internal political struggles, Pakistan, as mentioned, fought another war with India (Fair, 2014: 62). This is an example of how militant groups gain power during processes of democratization, in order to protect their status as powerful forces.

*Third*, despite the excessive force used by West Pakistan against civilians in East Pakistan, Pakistan blamed India for fanning and inciting the independence of Bangladesh. It accused India of supporting ethnic groups living in this region. Till today, this left a permanent scar on the bilateral relations between the two countries. This is an example of how foreign states are accused of wrongdoing during democratization, as Pakistan blames India for its lost of territory, which impeded nationalistic tendencies within Pakistan (Khan, Shaheen and Yusuf, 2009: 135).

These three characteristics, which are features of nationalism and potentials for war waging during democratization processes, thus, are all witnessed within Pakistan and relate to its conflicts with India.

#### **4.3 Sub-conclusion**

According to the above, it can be assumed that periods of democratization in Pakistan to a fair extent had an effect on its conflicts with India. Due to its domestic politics, which are up today *inter alia* characterized by illiberal institutions such as lacking free press, a rise of nationalist and war prone tendencies is witnessed. If Pakistan does not invest in the development of liberal institutions, it is expected that during the current process of democratization, Pakistan will remain in the stagnated mode of conflict with its neighbour. This is unbeneficial to both states. It therefore is of the utmost importance that Pakistan will invest in the creation of liberal institutions, in order to mitigate its conflicted relation with India.

## 5. Conclusion

To summarize, it might be expected that India's liberal norms are incompatible with Pakistan's illiberal institutions, which exacerbates their tensed relation. The fact that Pakistan has gone through several periods of autocratic ruling, and therefore is not considered as a stable democracy, might have fuelled its conflicts with India. However, phases in which Pakistan went through a regime change towards a democratic polity are characterized by exacerbated war prone tendencies. To wit, due to again its illiberal institutions such as government-controlled press, nationalistic trends are witnessed within Pakistan. These domestic politics might have negatively influenced its troubled relation with India.

Conflict resolution, based upon domestic features of politics, might be achieved if Pakistan would become a liberal democracy, just like its neighbour India. This would mitigate their tensed relation since they, by then, would share mutual norms and interests. In order to become such a democracy, Pakistan should invest in its institutions in order to liberalise them. If Pakistan fails to achieve this, its current process of democratization might be characterized by war prone tendencies, which will only exacerbate the tensions between India and Pakistan. It thus, is highly recommended to Pakistan to invest in the development of liberal institutions.

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