

## Indo-Pak relations: views of Pakistan's political and religious parties

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### Abstract

The study aims to understand the views of different political and religious parties in Pakistan on the country's relations with India. It also offers a brief history of Pakistan-India relations, touching upon different hostile factors and pro-peace initiatives. The author has consulted latest manifestoes of the parties, along with having interviewed representatives of some of the parties. The paper found that almost all parties in Pakistan support peace with India. Rejecting Indian claims over Kashmir, parties in Pakistan term the issue 'dispute', the resolution of which is necessary for smooth relations. Political parties also welcome moves to open trade with India, but several condition such openness to reciprocity by India.



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## Introduction

The genesis of the soured relation between India and Pakistan dates back to 1947, when the British were leaving the subcontinent. The “threat perceptions” between the two countries have “a physical manifestation in the form of dispute” of princely state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), a central element to Indo-Pak relation from the onset (Siddiq, 2004).

Since then, Pakistan-India relation has seen periodic ups and downs, with three major wars being fought to settle their territorial conflicts (Rizvi, 2011).

Immediately after independence, the two states engaged in a war over the princely state of Kashmir, a Muslim-majority state, whose ruler acceded in favour of India.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, India went to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to resolve

the issue. The UNSC passed Resolution 47, reaffirming the right of self-determination of Kashmiris and asking both the governments for a plebiscite to decide the fate of the formerly princely state of Kashmir. The issues remained unresolved, setting the tone for a bitter relation between the two countries. In 1965, another war was fought, once again touching Kashmir (Siddiq, 2004). Six years later, in 1971, the two countries fought again; the war ended in Pakistan losing its eastern wing. Pakistan blamed India for creating and training Mukti-Bahini's guerrilla fighters to fight Pakistani military (Rehman, 2014). An entrenched security dilemma set in for Pakistan, after the war (Rizvi, 2011).

During this period, even when wars were not fought, the two continued to engage in hostile relations. In 1986, the two countries were on the brink of war when Indian military started

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<sup>1</sup> Details can be seen at <http://www.pakun.org/kashmir/history.php>

major Brass-tacks exercises near Pakistani border, raising alarms on the Pakistani side. 1998 saw the overt nuclearization of South Asia, The next-year's war in Kargil made the entire region a nuclear flashpoint. The bilateral relations also faced dents at the hands of militants launching attacks in India. In 2001, after terrorists attacked Indian parliament, India deployed military forces along Pakistani borders. In 2008, when militants attacked Mumbai, India started pointing fingers at Pakistan and threatened of surgical strikes in Pakistan (Pandit, 2008). Regular border skirmishes too have destabilizing effects on the regional peace and stability (Hashim, 2014). Both countries are spending billions on defences, widening the conventional asymmetry between the two and eventually lowering the nuclear thresholds of Pakistan, which seeks parity with India.

At the same time, several attempts have been made to normalize the relations. After the 1971 war, leaders of the two states, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Indira Gandhi, signed Simla Agreement, which resulted in the release of Pakistani prisoners of war and captured territory in the western part of Pakistan. More than two decades later, in 1999, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited

Lahore to meet Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The two, discussing all outstanding issues including water and the J&K dispute, signed Lahore Declaration, which helped the two countries to further normalize the strained relations. Likewise, in 2001, Pakistani military ruler General Musharraf met Indian PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Agra Summit. Although a ceasefire was announced along the Line of Control (LoC) in 2004, small border clashes continued since then.

Besides high-level talks, dialogue process and state visits, both countries also agreed upon military and non-military Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in the 1980s and the 1990s, to ease tension. The military CBMs include PM-to-PM hotline, military-to-military hotline, declarations on non-use of force, ballistic missile flight-test pre-notification, military exercises, non-intrusion of air space, and several other measures; the non-military ones include regular high-level talks, relaxed-visa requirements, cricket diplomacy, bus service, etc. The two has also signed a major water-distribution agreement, the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), in 1960.

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The mutual trust deficit also hampered bilateral trade. Trade volumes did not expand because of multifaceted problems of “non-tariff barriers, poor infrastructure resulting in costly transportation, poor trade facilitation measures, and restricted visa regime” (Mehta, 2012). Realizing the true potential of economic relations, the two countries are now progressing towards more economic interdependency. India has granted Most Favourite Nation (MFN) status in 1996, whereas Pakistan has yet to do so, given heated debate on the issue (Mehta, 2012).

Presently, attempts are being made to bring back the previous efforts of peace process. After the Mumbai attacks in 2008, the bilateral peace talks were suspended, only to resume three years later in 2011. Because of border clashes in 2014, the relations are, so far, in the doldrums.

Meanwhile, in India, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) won elections in 2014, coming to power after a decade. At the height of cross-border tensions, in 2014, Prime Minister Modi threatened that “this is not the time for empty *boli* (talk), but for *goli* (bullet) by our *Jawans* (*Indian Express*, 2014).” Many in Pakistan think the BJP government seems to have adopted the policy of achieving political objectives by threatening a war with Pakistan.

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Such statements raise fears of rise in ideological extremism. At the same time, religious and political forces retain some say in deciding about Pakistan’s relation with India.

This research aims to understand the stance of Pakistan’s major parliamentary parties on relations with India in the contemporary foreign, defence, and economic arenas. The survey-based study also

tries to encapsulate the strategies, if any, the religious and political parties may have devised in countering the challenges towards normalization of the bilateral relations. The study explored manifestoes of the parties, key news reports, and carried out interviews with party representatives.

The study has tried to explore answers to the following questions:

- What is the party's view on Pak-India relations, and where does India lie in the party's policy?
- What constraints and opportunities exist in Pak-India relations, and how does the party plan to use the opportunities for improved relations?
- How does the party look at the various security issues between Pakistan and India? Issues include:
  - Confidence building measures between Pakistan and India
  - Strategic stability
  - Pakistan's internal security
- What is the party's stance on Kashmir issue and the resolution of the lingering problem?
- What should be Pakistan's foreign policy priorities that best encapsulates the country'

regional security approach towards India?

- How can trade ties between India and Pakistan be improved? What is the party's stance on the following?
  - Formal trade across borders
  - Informal trade (smuggling, drug trafficking)
  - Most Favoured Nation status

### **Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)**

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is currently the largest political party in the parliament, having 188 elected representatives in the lower house and 26 senators in the upper house. A centre-right and socially-conservative party, PML-N is also the largest political entity in the most populous province, Punjab. The party also formed governments in 1990 and 1997.

PML-N thinks that the country's foreign policy has been facing the pressing issues of "social, economic and political schisms" (PML-N, 2013). The party's 2013 manifesto briefly expressed party's willingness in making an independent foreign policy and a comprehensive national security strategy. The party has vowed to bring about comprehensive reviews in national security and

foreign policy, which will also bring about friendlier and better relations with its neighbours, especially with India (PML-N, 2013).

PML-N presses for enhancing efforts to normalize relations with India, foreseeing a peaceful resolution of all outstanding issues. Working on these issues, the party argues, will help it turn challenges into opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

The party has repeatedly rejected India's claim over Kashmir, terming it a bilateral dispute (Wasim, 2013). The party argues that the resolution of J&K dispute should be "in consonance with the aspirations of the people of the territory for their inherent right of self-determination (Wasim, 2013)." The party has endorsed all previous efforts on J&K dispute, including the United Nations resolutions (1948), Simla Accord (1971), and Lahore Declaration (1999), one of the signatory of which was the party's president, Mian Nawaz Sharif.

The party supports better economic ties with its immediate neighbours, including India.<sup>3</sup> In fact, PML-N, considered as a business-friendly

party, firmly believes in the economic prosperity of the region, also achievable through establishing cordial relations with India. The party manifesto called for strengthening of "regional economic cooperation in the forums like SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] and ECO [Economic Cooperation Organization]" and supports free or preferential trade arrangements" (Wasim, 2013).

In 2014, the PML-N government offered New Delhi the Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) status, contingent on the abolition of negative list of 1,209 items. The status award reportedly was an attempt to reduce the political fallout of the border clashes (Khan, 2014).

PML-N believes in maintaining a strategic balance with India. It was during the second tenure of PML-N that Pakistan detonated nuclear weapons in May 1998 in response to India's. The party prides in sticking to its decision of testing the weapons, amid international pressure not to do so.

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<sup>2</sup>Author's telephonic interview with Siddiqui Farooq, PML-N's official spokesperson. March 20th 2015.

<sup>3</sup>Author's interview with Siddiqui Farooq.

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At the same time, the party looks forward to future dialogues and negotiations as important in establishing peace. The party supports strengthening multi-tier military and non-military CBMS with India, as well as the people-to-people contact, cultural relationship, relaxed visa regime, improved trade ties.<sup>4</sup>

### **Pakistan People's Party (PPP)**

Pakistan People's Party enjoys support across Pakistan. Founded by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and later led by his daughter, Benazir Bhutto, and then her spouse Asif Ali Zardari, the party has come into power after winning general elections in 1970, 1988, 1993, and 2008. Currently, the

PPP is the ruling party in Sindh province.

The PPP's 2013 manifesto vowed to end "Pakistan's isolation," by framing "an independent and multi-dimensional foreign policy," which will also focus on "better relations" with the country's neighbours (PPP, 2013).

When it comes to the eastern neighbour, India, the PPP firmly believes in having cordial ties. All outstanding issues with India should be resolved through honest and sincere dialogue, reads the PPP manifesto (PPP, 2013).

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PPP supports cooperation and engagement of South Asian countries, at all levels. Of special interest to the party is having security cooperation and economic

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<sup>4</sup>Author's interview with Siddiqui Farooq.

engagement in the contemporary world. The party manifesto encourages Pakistan's enhanced regional cooperation with its neighbours, by adopting an institutional framework to promote business and investment (PPP, 2013).

Moving beyond South Asia, the party aims for an Asia-wide cooperation, which includes countries like India and multilateral organizations like SCO, ECO, SAARC and ASEAN. To attain this aim, normalization of relations with India is necessary. The party asks for a proactive policy in building trade, social and cultural ties with India, Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Gulf Countries Cooperation (GCC) (PPP, 2013).

The party, however, hopes for the peaceful resolution of the disputes with India. The party believes that if India and China can live in a "tension-free relations" amid all odds on their border, why can't Pakistan and India? (PPP, 2013)

To achieve peace, the party argues, dialogue with India can be opted for.

On Kashmir, the PPP supports the demand of the people of Kashmir to

exercise their right of self-determination under the UNSC resolutions. The PPP manifesto calls for "open and safe borders at the Line of Control to socially unite the Kashmiri people" (PPP, 2013).

Recently, however, the party's chairman criticized the United Nations for failing to resolve the Kashmir dispute, saying that Kashmir was "an example of the failure of the United Nations" (*Dawn*, 2014). He said that "the Kashmiri people continue to await the realization of the promise the world made to them" (*Dawn*, 2014). A party representative, in interview to the author, also endorsed chairperson's remarks on UN inaction on its own resolution.<sup>5</sup>

However, the party understands certain challenges causing friction with India. To overcome them, better build confidence and stability in the region.<sup>6</sup> CBMs can help both India and Pakistan resolve their outstanding issues.

The party understands that the two countries have different positions on the resolution on Kashmir. The party,

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<sup>5</sup>Author's telephonic interview with Qamar Zaman Kaira, PPP's party representative. April 10th 2015.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

however, is hopeful that negotiation and public diplomacy can transform these differing positions into a solution (PPP, 2013).

It was the PPP which recently initiated the process of granting MFN status to India.<sup>7</sup> During its last tenure, from 2008 to 2013, the PPP government announced granting MFN status to India, along with releasing a negative list of 1,206 items including automobile, textile and pharmaceutical products. The process, however, suffered a major setback, as India refused to remove non-tariff barriers on the list Pakistan had provided (Kiani, 2013).

### **Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam)**

Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam), PML-Q, was founded by former party leaders and workers of Nawaz Sharif-led Pakistan Muslim League, after the military coup in 1999. After winning the 2002 elections, PML-Q formed central government and provincial governments in Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab.

The party manifesto emphasizes on an independent foreign policy, "aimed at protecting, promoting and preserving" the supreme interest of the nation at the highest echelon of the nations (PML-Q, 2013). Taking this realism into account, the party says, Pakistan's foreign policy should be aimed at achieving a fair relationship with India. At the same time, the party puts, India should also respect the sovereignty of Pakistan at all levels and it should not undermine the security of Pakistan.

The party believes in maintaining equality in Pak-India relation, so that "balance of power" stays in place.<sup>8</sup> The party strongly believes that India's "regional hegemonic designs" which pivot around the notion of "might is right" should be reverted (PML-Q, 2013).

The party's stance on Pakistan's relationship with its neighbours, especially India, is primarily focused resolution of all disputes through comprehensive and meaningful dialogues. The party argues that Pakistan's relationship with its neighbour India should be

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Author's telephonic interview with Mustafa Malik, PML (Q) Deputy Secretary Information. April 9th2015.

“exemplary,” achievable through resolution of the issue of J&K.

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To the party, the “lingering issue of J&K is a test case for normal relations between two neighbouring countries” (PML-Q, 2013). Terming Kashmir as “core issue,” the party sees in the issue’s resolution as equivalent to respecting the “aspiration and the sentiments of the oppressed people of J&K.” The party supports peaceful resolution of the issue of J&K dispute, stressing upon India to give the Kashmiris their right of self-determination as enriched in the United Nations resolutions.<sup>9</sup>

Efforts should be made, the party believes, to reduce the friction in the bilateral relations, says the party representative. PML-Q believes that constraints in improving Pak-India

relations can be managed and converted into opportunities – if some adequate initiatives are taken.<sup>10</sup> Some such initiatives include a process of regular people-to-people contact, cultural exchange and interaction of business communities on both sides. Likewise, political and religious parties across the border can also be helpful.

The party also supports establishing full-scale Pak-India trade relations, the party’s deputy secretary information said. He asked Indian government to facilitate Pakistani traders in their access to Indian markets. On the other hand, he conditioned Pakistani willingness to grant MFN status to India to its lowering of non-tariff barriers on Pakistani products.<sup>11</sup>

### **Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)**

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) draws political support from Urdu-speakers in Sindh’s urban cities such as Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sukkar.

MQM believes that the cordial relationship with neighbours should

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<sup>9</sup>Author’s interview with Mustafa Malik.

<sup>10</sup>Author’s interview with Mustafa Malik.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

be the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy. This way, regional cooperation will also be strengthened. The party puts that the SAARC forum should be made more active for further regional integration, which will help find solutions to the shared miseries (MQM, 2013).

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A party representative said that "we should seriously consider for a "No War" peace pact between India and Pakistan".

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With India, maintaining good relations should be the primary objective of Pakistan's foreign policy, the party argues.<sup>12</sup> A party representative said that "we should seriously consider for a "No War" peace pact between India and Pakistan".<sup>13</sup>

The party understands that over the past sixty-eight years, the "primary issue" of J&K dispute didn't let to ease out tensions between the two countries. Similarly, all other outstanding disputes, such as over

Siachen glacier and Sir Creek water strip, didn't help in turning the bilateral relation friendlier (MQM, 2013).

Tensions, however, can be lowered through opportunities. The party wants an environment of peaceful coexistence, based on the "live and let live" philosophy (MQM, 2013).

When it comes to resolving Kashmir issue, the party supports the wishes of Kashmiri people. For enduring solution of Kashmir, the party proposes, the Kashmiri leadership should be declared as "third party" in the dialogue process. In yet another party proposal, the area of Jammu and Kashmir, including Azad Kashmir should be demilitarized.

All disputes and conflicts, the party argues, should be resolved through peaceful negotiations. MQM supports military and non-military confidence building measures (CBMs), as well as the process of talks and dialogues with India.<sup>14</sup> The party, in fact, emphasizes on more people-to-people contacts, relaxed visa regime, revival of Munabao-

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<sup>12</sup>Author's telephonic interview with FarooqSattar.MQM'ssenior leader and member National Assembly.April 10th 2015.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Author's interview with FarooqSattar.

Khokhrapar rail link to Karachi, and granting MFN status to India.<sup>15</sup>

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To the PTI, Pakistan's internal politics has driven its foreign policy; thus, wrongs on foreign policy end are a result of internal political instability and weak leadership.

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MQM supports Pak-India cooperation in all fields, especially economy, which, wrote the party's manifesto, will encourage "progress and prosperity to one fifth population of the world living in this region" (MQM, 2013). Trade relation will help improve communication, repositing mutual trust (MQM, 2013).

The party proposes that Pakistan should grant India the MFN status; such a move, the party says, should be reciprocated generously, that is hurdles from the other side should be taken care of.<sup>16</sup>

### **Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)**

Founded by cricketer-turn politician Imran Khan, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vows to fight corruption

and injustice in Pakistan. PTI gained popularity in the last few years, especially in 2013 elections, when it emerged as a strong third force on the national landscape. The party is presently ruling Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province.

To the PTI, Pakistan's internal politics has driven its foreign policy; thus, wrongs on foreign policy end are a result of internal political instability and weak leadership. The party desires of a foreign policy that encompasses Pakistan's "national interests" to make Pakistan a "free and sovereign state." (PTI, 2013)

With India, like other neighbouring countries, the PTI foresees friendly relations of Pakistan.

The party desires for a "peaceful co-existence with India based on sovereign equality, and a just solution of outstanding disputes" (PTI, 2013). The country's vulnerable eastern borders, with India, the party says, are indeed threatening to the sovereignty of the state.

As far as disputes with India are concerned, the party suggests a policy which enables their peaceful resolution. A party representative

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Author's interview with Farooq Sattar.

termed Indian occupation of J&K “illegitimate,” to be permanently revisited as per UNSC’s resolution.<sup>17</sup>

The party “resolutely supports the Kashmiri freedom struggle and promotes resolution of the dispute on the basis of their right of self-determination” under the mandate of UN resolutions (PTI, 2013). Moreover, the party representative said that normalization process with India have to be reciprocated on parallel lines; the party, he said, will not support any unilateral resolution on Kashmir.

The party representative further argued that normalization with India is incumbent upon India coming to the negotiating table, rather just singing the old rhetoric of blaming Pakistan of a proxy war.<sup>18</sup>

The PTI recognizes the importance of CBMs, military and non-military. The party’s central defence secretary blamed India for deliberately delaying the dialogue process and negotiations.<sup>19</sup> He suggested said that a roadmap of CBM process be charted, which makes India

responsible enough in ensuring its implementation.<sup>20</sup>

The party also supports trade relations with India. Pakistan should grant India the MFN status, the party says, but at the same time, asks India to lower trade barrier on Pakistani products.<sup>21</sup>

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, read its manifesto, “recognized the necessity of maintaining and developing an effective” deterrent capability, which will thwart India from any course of action (PTI, 2013). The party is committed to strengthen the country’s nuclear deterrent, which is by and large India-centric. The party is also committed to rationalizing the size and structure of armed forces. The growing asymmetrical nature of Indian conventional forces has forced Pakistan to make its nuclear deterrent more credible to persuade India (PTI, 2013).

### **National Party (NP)**

National Party, a ruling party in Balochistan, is a Baloch nationalist party, headed by Dr. Abdul Malik

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<sup>17</sup>Author’s telephonic interview with Samson Sharif, PTI’s Central Secretary Defence. April 9th 2015.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Author’s interview with Samson Sharif.

Baloch, the current chief minister of the Balochistan.

National Party suggests an independent foreign policy, which should encapsulate the national interest of Pakistan.<sup>22</sup>

The party emphasizes a foreign policy that develops fair ties with neighbouring countries, including India.

Acknowledging the importance of normal relation with India, the party believes that regional progress and prosperity could only be possible in a peaceful co-existence of the region's people. The party discourages the security-centric mind set (NP, 2013).

On Kashmir, the NP's Punjab president said that the people of Kashmir should be given full freedom to exercise their right of self-determination under the UN resolutions.

To resolve all outstanding issues, the party supports creating an environment for Pakistan and India. The party also believes in expediting CMBs through dialogues and negotiations at all diplomatic and

military levels, along with supporting government-level talks. It asks India to reciprocate in the same manner.<sup>23</sup>

The party advocates engaging intellectuals, too, who can play a vital role in erasing the historical misperceptions found in societies on both sides of the border.

Trade could be another instrument to ease the tensions, the party underscored. The party's manifesto stated that the party will promote peace and stability across Pakistan. These, the party believes, will be greatly helped by normalizing trade relationship with India. The party supports more economic integration between India and Pakistan, within the sphere of "decent capitalism."<sup>24</sup>

### **Pakistan Muslim League Functional (PML-F)**

Pakistan Muslim League (Functional) draws support in the interior rural Sindh, especially among the Hurs, the followers of the spiritual leader Pir Pagara, the party's head. The

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<sup>22</sup>Author's telephonic interview with Ayub Malik, NP's president for Punjab. April 8th 2015.

<sup>23</sup>Author's interview with Ayub Malik.

<sup>24</sup>Author's interview with Ayub Malik.

party presently sits on opposition benches in Sindh Assembly.

The party supports good relation with India on equal terms. The party favours peaceful resolution of Kashmir dispute, adding though that Indian intentions and military capabilities have always been threatening to Pakistan (PML-F, 2013).

The party blames India for distrust, given, the party says, Indian interference in Pakistan's internal issues such as Balochistan through Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup>

The party desires of peaceful resolution of all issues impairing peace and stability in the region.

PML-F is concerned over trade agreements between India and Pakistan (PML-F, 2013). Expressing concerns over import of Indian commodities to Pakistan without any duties or regulation, the party argues such a move puts local farmers at severe disadvantages. Without subsidies, these farmers will suffer, should Indian agricultural commodities import into Pakistan (PML-F, 2013).

Likewise, granting MFN status to India, too, will adversely affect the Pakistani farmers. The party, therefore, argues that before inking any trade agreement with India, Pakistani government should award subsidies on the local agricultural commodities (PML-F, 2013).

### **Awami National Party (ANP)**

Awami National Party is a Pashtun nationalist party, popular in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and Pashtun pockets in Karachi. The party is headed by Asfandiyar Wali Khan, grandson of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who, for his non-violent opposition to British Raj in India, was known as "Frontier Gandhi." ANP was a part of the PPP-led coalition government from 2008 to 2013.

The party manifesto underscores the importance of Pakistan's geostrategic location; having borders with China, India, Afghanistan and Iran is a "mixed blessing." While such location can be advantageous to Pakistan, the neighbouring states are also exploiting Pakistan for its vested interests (ANP, 2013).

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<sup>25</sup>Author's telephonic interview with Ghous Bux Khan Mehar, Member

National Assembly and former speaker Sindh Assembly. April 8th 2015.

The party does not perceive India to be a threat to the Pakistan's "independence and freedom of action." One of the key elements of foreign policy, the party manifesto reads, pivots around the principle of "establishing friendly and peaceful relations with all countries particularly with our neighbours" (ANP, 2013). The party firmly believes that India and Pakistan can live in peaceful environment in the larger interest of their people.

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The people of India and Pakistan, the party says, share a lot of commonalities, in culture, civilization, history, traditions, linguistics, and other spheres of life. There is not much difference between a common Indian and a common Pakistani, the party spokesperson

believes, and this gives us hope to resolve our disputes.<sup>26</sup>

The party argues that the "deep-rooted enmity" of India has repulsed efforts towards normalization of relationship, agreeing that similar feelings are found on other side of the border. This situation, the party says, is quite appalling.<sup>27</sup>

As a way out, the two countries should increase non-military CBMs, like people-to-people contacts, cultural exchanges, sports visits, industrial and trade cooperation, etc.

On the question of maintaining strategic stability, the party's spokesperson reiterated party's stance, that the party supports regional and international moves for arms control and abolition of nuclear weapons, on a universal and non-discriminatory basis.<sup>28</sup>

The party affirms its support to the rightful struggle of Kashmiri people against the illegal occupation of India. At the same time, the party supports establishment of peaceful, cooperative and better relations with

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<sup>26</sup>Author's telephonic interview with Zahid Khan, ANP's official spokesperson. April 9th 2015.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Author's telephonic interview with Zahid Khan.

India in all fields. All outstanding issues including J&K dispute, the party says, should be resolved in a peaceful manner and only through meaningful negotiations and open dialogue (ANP, 2013).

The party sees terrorism as a major challenge in attaining regional peace. The “non-state actors” are posing threats to not only Pakistan but also Afghanistan, Iran and India. These violent actors, he said, should be dealt with iron hands.

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According to the party's spokesperson, ANP has a long struggle against militants, which, one way or the other, are still being supported by other states, as proxies. Support to non-state actors has, in the party's view, deteriorated Pakistan's relations with its immediate neighbours. Therefore, the party

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<sup>29</sup>Author's telephonic interview with Zahid Khan.

puts, it is not in the interest of states to interfere in the internal politics of other states.<sup>29</sup>

The party spokesperson also stated that drawing trade relationship with India will not only benefit the people, but also give peace a chance to prevail in the society.<sup>30</sup> Trade cooperation, besides strengthening Pakistan's economy, will “reduce trade deficit to a sustainable level and make special efforts to boost the country's exports and remittances” (ANP, 2013).

### **Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F)**

Jamiat-Ulema Islam (Fazl) is a religious-political party subscribing to Deobandi school of Sunni Islam. The party, headed by Maulana Fazlur Rehman, enjoys support in KP and Pashtun areas of Balochistan.

The party's official spokesperson stresses upon better relations with India, saying that Pakistan always tried to improve its relations with India. Similar words are echoed in the party manifesto, which reads that “establishing friendly relations with neighbouring countries will be our

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

priority” (JUI-F, 2013). The party spokesman asked India to reciprocate in the same manner, to lower the trust deficit between the two states. All disputes, including the J&K dispute, should be resolved through the process of dialogue and negotiations.<sup>31</sup>

Geopolitical challenges are the primary irritants towards improving Pak-India relations. The regional situation is volatile, ever since the U.S. and allied forces have planned their withdrawal from Afghanistan. “Afghanistan’s peace and stability are correlated with peace and stability in Pakistan” (JUI-F, 2013). In this circumstance, Pakistan has to deal with its internal situation as well as threat emanating from its eastern and western borders.

The party’s spokesman argued that India wants to achieve status of regional power, by playing an active role in geopolitics of the region. The party blames India for supporting nationalist insurgents in Balochistan and terrorist activities in Karachi. If the Indian proxy war in Balochistan continues, the spokesperson said, it will further deteriorate an already-

fragile relationship between Pakistan and India.<sup>32</sup>

The party strongly believes that both countries should surrender their policies of fighting the war through their proxies, and should not interfere in each other’s internal issues. This way, more opportunities will appear for improving relations.<sup>33</sup>

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**The JUI-F blames India for supporting nationalist insurgents in Balochistan and terrorist activities in Karachi.**

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Responding to a question on the CBMs process, the party representative argued that so far, CBMs have not worked in improving the relations. Skirmishes along the Line of Control (LoC) and the Working Boundary reveal the obsolescence of existing CBMs. Right now, the spokesman said, there is an urgent need to improve the existing model of CBMs, especially, by establishing hotline between prime ministers and resolving bilateral differences.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Author’s telephonic interview with Jan Achakzai, official spokesperson JUI-F. April 9th 2015.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Author’s interview with Jan Achakzai.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

The party calls for peaceful resolution of Kashmir dispute, supporting the UN resolutions to this end. Both India and Pakistan with utmost seriousness should work to resolve Kashmir issue, as Kashmiris have become disillusioned. India, the spokesman said, should not disappoint Kashmiris. At the same time, the party will continue to support a foreign policy that will support the Kashmiri people on diplomatic, moral and political fronts.

Being an energy-deficient country, Pakistan needs regional energy corridors, the party says. At the same time, India too is banking on energy reservoirs in Central Asia. The party spokesman suggested that multilateral forums like SAARC, ASEAN, and SCO can be used to joint ventures, to meet the future demand of energy in the region, including of Pakistan and India.<sup>35</sup>

The party realizes that progress in today's world hinges a lot on external trade. That is why the party supports more external trade with neighbouring countries. Pakistan can benefit from its trade with India in

such a way that balance is maintained in the trade. As far as granting MFN status to India is concerned, the party says, it would likely be supportive of steps that facilitate India to get MFN status; however, such steps should be linked with a balanced approach in equal economic and trade terms.<sup>36</sup>

### **Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)**

JI, founded by Maulana Maududi, an Islamic scholar, has a well-organized political structure across Pakistan and beyond. Senator Siraj-ul-Haq is the party's present *emir* (leader).

JI desires of peaceful relation with India, to establish peace and stability in the region.<sup>37</sup>

Friendly relations, Jamaat says, will benefit people on both sides. A party official said that most of the expenditures of Pakistan and India are made on "solidifying defences against each other" (JI, 2013). If all disputes, including the dispute of J&K are resolved, then, he said, "our [Pakistan and India] defence expending will be reduced,

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<sup>35</sup>Author's interview with Jan Achakzai.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Author's telephonic interview with Abdul Ghaffar Aziz, JI's Director Foreign Affairs. April 10th 2015.

increasing our spending on our health and education budgets.”<sup>38</sup>

The party, therefore, will endorse all peace-leading efforts.

On disputes, JI desires their peaceful resolutions. It wants end to an environment of “warmongering, jingoism, and war hysteria.”<sup>39</sup>

The party, however, understands constraints in establishing friendlier relations with India –one of the constraints being the hostile geopolitics. The security situation in the region is not favourable, as the Americans and their allies are planning to withdraw from Afghanistan.

Furthermore, the JI representative pointed out, both India and Pakistan are in a desperate mood to find new energy resources, and Central Asian Republics (CARs) have become a new venture of competition among states looking for regional roles. India is a big country with a large desire to get the CAR’s energy resources; as a bigger country, India’s chances of progress are higher.

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The JI supports freedom fighters in Kashmir, and condemns Indian involvement in Balochistan and Karachi.

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But, the unresolved status of J&K dispute will stay as a hurdle for India in achieving the goal, the representative said, reminding that after all, the proposed route goes through Pakistan. Resolution of J&K issue will be in the interest of both the countries, therefore.<sup>40</sup>

The party representative argued that it is “highly plausible” that the J&K dispute will remain “unresolved”. The arms race in South Asia will further expand, reaching an exhausting level.<sup>41</sup>

The “deep-rooted” issue of Kashmir should be solved, the party’s director foreign affairs said. The brute force by Indian forces against Kashmiri freedom struggle has, he said, widened the gulf of mistrust between Pakistan and India.

JI believes that the process of CBMs will lay down the basis of creating

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Author’s interview with Abdul Ghaffar Aziz.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

trust between India and Pakistan. However, little has been done in solidifying the foundation stone of mutual trust between the two countries, he said. Whatever steps were taken in the past to ease the tension, are seen with suspicion from both sides, the member said. Perhaps, this is the reason, he said, why CBMs failed in the past.<sup>42</sup>

The party looks forward to the end of proxy wars in the subcontinent. The party supports freedom fighters in Kashmir, and condemns Indian involvement in Balochistan and Karachi. The party's director foreign affairs reiterated the party's official stance, that elements active in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa enjoy Indian support. Some Indian officials don't hide their open relations with insurgents in Balochistan and militants in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said.<sup>43</sup>

Ji desires of a relationship built on equality and justice, achievable through resolution of Kashmir issue. The doors of mutual cooperation should be open, the party says, adding that India should fulfil all its

commitments in resolving the issue (JI, 2013).

Ji favours cordial trade relations with India. However, a one-way trade relations and granting MFN status to India will be considered illegal, the party says, if India does not lower its trade barriers towards Pakistan. Pakistani products are not allowed to reach large India markets, which is indeed appalling, he said.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

Most of the political and religious parties in Pakistan support bringing Pak-India relations on a smooth track. The parties surveyed for this study support establishing normal relations, achievable through concrete and meaningful dialogue and negotiations on all outstanding issues.

PML-Q, however, believes in maintaining a balance of power with India, whereas MQM calls for a "No War Pact" between the two countries.

Parties call resolution of Kashmir issue, as compulsory for establishing cordial bilateral relations. Most called for peaceful resolutions through

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<sup>42</sup>Author's interview with Abdul Ghaffar Aziz.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Author's interview with Abdul Ghaffar Aziz.

UN's resolutions, reflecting the aspirations and willingness of Kashmiris.

Political parties also support the process of military and non-military Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs), suggesting that cracks therein should be filled. Of special interest to the parties has been the non-military CBMs, like regular people-to-people contact, cultural exchange, interaction between the business communities, relaxed visa regime, improved trade ties, and revival of Munabao-Khokhrapar rail link.

Some parties also linked internal insecurity to Indian interference. Representatives from PML-F, JUI-F and JI strongly condemned Indian involvement in Pakistan's internal issues. They believe that India is supporting nationalist insurgents in Balochistan and Karachi.

On the question of maintaining strategic stability with India, PTI,

PML-N, PPP, JI and JUI-F representatives and party manifestos support a strong deterrent capability to maintain balance of power with India. The ANP's representative vowed to make South Asia a nuclear-free zone.

Political and religious parties also support efforts for regional cooperation, especially with India, such as by engaging forums like SAARC, ECO, SCO, and ASEAN. One of the ways this cooperation can be helpful is by meeting energy needs in the region.

The idea of granting Most Favourite Nation (MFN) status to India was endorsed by many parties, conditioning that India should remove non-tariff barriers on Pakistani products. PML-F feared Pakistan will lose its agricultural market; whereas JI asked India to step ahead in resolving outstanding bilateral disputes with Pakistan.

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