BOOK REVIEW

Muhammad Shoaib Pervez, *Security Community in South Asia: India-Pakistan,* **London: Routledge, 2013.**

Pakistan-India relations represent a classical example of animosity between two neighbouring communities who earlier lived together in the same country for centuries. Both shared a common history and socio-cultural norms. But, after independence in 1947, their hostility resulted in many wars and near-war situations. Furthermore, after the introduction of nuclear weapons in Indian and Pakistan's national security calculations, any miscalculation of threat perceptions or aggression by either side can result in a war with a possibility to escalate into a nuclear exchange. It is an interesting fact that whenever India and Pakistan have tried to promote peaceful and friendly relations, all their efforts would be de-railed by mistrust and by small acts of instability of one or the other. More than 66 years have passed, but their antagonistic attitude has become more volatile than ever. Still, a large number of people in both the countries are hopeful of a peaceful future. However, the question still remains the same as to how it would be possible to bridge this gap of mistrust and end rivalry between India and Pakistan, and to embark upon a path of peace and prosperity.

The current study under review presents an effort to propose a better and prosperous future of India-Pakistan relations. The study is divided into eight chapters which revolve around the author's main argument to develop a 'security community' in South Asia, between India and Pakistan for "promotion of peace and absence of war or the absence of any organised planning of war between the two states." The author tries to construct his model of security community on the basis that potential for peace between India and Pakistan lies in popular socio-cultural norms and practices, and by brining a change in their conflicting identities towards each other. To support his main argument, first of all, the author draws a parallel alternative theoretical framework of 'social constructivism' to the existing materialistic theories of 'neo-realism' and 'neo-liberalism,' for the identification of traditional notions of hostility between India and Pakistan. Secondly, he critically evaluates the social practices of ruling elites in formation of conflicting identities which creates security dilemma between India and Pakistan. It is important to note that the author, for reference purpose, identifies leaders of all political, religious and fundamental parties, key decision making officials and military leadership as 'elites'; and considers their policy decisions, speeches, manifestoes, texts, language and actions as their social practices. Finally, the author identifies hypothetical theoretical framework for the establishment of a security community between both the countries.

To substantiate his argument for an alternative theoretical framework - to identify the traditional notions of hostility between India and Pakistan - the author points out that 'neo-realist' and 'neo-liberalist' arguments to explain the nature of this relationship is inadequate and limited in scope. The "premises of materialistic approaches developed in Western world do not take into account the important aspects of culture in the lives of South Asians." A state's actions and interests are shaped by socio-cultural norms rather than by material considerations, as the neo-realist and neo-liberalist approaches only explain materialistic capabilities and power politics. He advocates that there is a need to go beyond these two traditional theories because they do not fully encompass social-cultural norms, social practices of ruling elites and masses, and cultural identity of states. Therefore, he applies 'social constructivist' theory as an alternative theoretical framework to understand the true nature of India-Pakistan animosity. He successfully manages to support that the social constructivism is better equipped for the explanation of the security dilemma between states and challenge of state-building through their identity formation and their socio-cultural norms.

To prove his point, the author utilises social constructivism theory in totality, and explains that India-Pakistan conflicting identity is formed by elite social practices since independence. He argues that from 1947, the conflicting identity of India-Pakistan was formed by speeches of their founding fathers, by their constitutions, and by the influence of their ideologies. Pakistan's identity was formed by Islamic ideology, the 'Two Nations Theory,' a separate homeland for Muslims, fear of Hindu domination, and the trauma of partition. However, Jinnah's death led to an identity crisis. But, after the 'Objectives Resolution,' a pseudo-religious identity was established because the popular image was to practice Islamic ideology. The fundamentalist religious parties established the inter-subjective hostility with India by referring to trauma of partition. The India-centric approach involved military in politics which increased mistrust and hatred because all major wars were fought during military rule in Pakistan. While on the other side, the Indian identity was shaped by Ghandi and Nehru as a constitutional secular identity to curb the threat of communalism, the actual social practice of Hindu elite diverted it towards Hindu cultural identity, a resurgence of 'Hindutva' which views Muslims as 'others'. Furthermore, the Hindu elite consider Pakistan as a breakaway part of Hindustan and do not accept its existence and malign it at every step. Overall religious ideology, according to the author, plays an important role as forming the confronting identity between India and Pakistan.

Under the influence of social constructivist approach, the author argues that social practices construct reality and this reality constructs structures, which then form the identity of a state. This identity then forms inter-subjective relations with other states. In India-Pakistan case, this conflicting identity and inter-subjective relationship has been constructed by the India-Pakistan ruling elites' social practices of mistrust, which then created a security dilemma. The author brings into focus the Kashmir issue and the nuclear issue as a main source of the security dilemma between India and Pakistan. The identity of Kashmir is used as a social practice by elites of both states, and a territorial dispute has now become an identity crisis. The author believes that rulings elite in Indian and Pakistan have aggravated the Kashmir dispute by denying space to an indigenous 'Kashmiriyat' identity. As a result, Kashmiris are looking for their own identity through their own indigenous culture. The nuclear issue in classic realist terms is a 'survival of the fittest,' but in India-Pakistan case acquiring nuclear capability is a matter of power and prestige and this discourse was based on socio-cultural norms of the elites of both states. The author uses speech references of ruling elites from both side and argues that India's decision to go nuclear was a Hindu elite or ruling BJP's social practice and 'Hindutva norm.' While in Pakistan, going nuclear was projected by the ruling elite as a matter of survival and protection of identity against Indian threat. He also points to the blame game practice as a major threat to increase mistrust between both the states.

Based on his supporting arguments, the author concludes that popular or common socio-cultural norms in India and Pakistan desire peace, whereas elite social practices are aggravating conflicting identities, increasing mistrust and creating a security dilemma between both the countries. He points out that in Pakistan, the Army, because it has ruled Pakistan for over 33 years, is the principal actor to manipulate state politics to counter the Indian threat. Whereas in India, the Hindu fundamentalists, who came into power three times with 'Hindutva' identity and their anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan sentiments, contributed to this hostility. These elites have developed the concept of 'us versus them.' However, the author strongly believes that popular social practices in India-Pakistan can help overcome the security dilemma with the help of a socio-cultural norms-based security community. The author gives a hypothetical framework of how to form such a community between India and Pakistan. He points out that hostile educational policies, rhetorical practice of maligning each other, and censorship policies against Pakistani films since the 1990s and control over the mass media, are negative norms of ruling elites. That should be replaced by positive ones, e.g., nostalgic literary work, reverence towards Sufism, mass media initiatives, 'Aman ki Asha,' easing visa restrictions, and reunion of families from both sides. He believes that these positive norms will lay down a

solid foundation for the formation of a popular security community whereby the formative norms of such a community will promote "we-ness" in India and Pakistan relations.

Overall, the study utilizes a rich variety of classical and contemporary, primary and secondary literature and resources to identify social constructivism as an alternative theoretical framework. The inclusion of social constructivism theory is a novel advance to fill the existing gap in literature to better understand the security dynamics of this region. The critical analysis of conflicting identity, socio-cultural norms and their actual social practices help promote the idea of a security community in South Asia which is much needed to promote peace between India and Pakistan.

However, on a broader regional and international level, both India and Pakistan are a part of the international anarchic system. The role of the traditional theories of power politics cannot be ignored because a wide gap of material capability exists between Indian and Pakistan. Against Indian designs to act as a hegemonic power, Pakistan is left with no choice but to challenge most of the Indian moves as the only plausible solution for its own survival. Thus, without addressing this asymmetry between India and Pakistan, durable peace is elusive in South Asia. Furthermore, a critical approach against ruling elites can be detrimental because the ruling elites are the masters and a security community cannot dominate the social practices of these elites. Without a change in the mindset of these ruling elites, a security community cannot flourish. Therefore, a future study is needed to find a balanced way on how to approach and involve ruling elites in this process of strengthening security community without jeopardising its core values of common socio-cultural norms.

This study is recommended for an expert-level analytical circle which wants to evolve and formulate a constructive peace proposal between India and Pakistan. However, to penetrate the ideas to develop a 'South Asian Security Community,' at the popular level needs a more simple and practical approach or interpretation of such analytical discourses.

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