

Pakistan-India Relations: A Critical Appraisal of Power Politics

Fahad Ahmed Misson*

Abstract

Pakistan-India relations are mired in power politics making the two countries as rivals with competing identities and interests. By the logic of power politics, the two neighbouring countries survive in a condition of security dilemma and are locked in patterns of enduring rivalry, militarised geopolitics and antagonistic national security paradigms. Despite the enduring rivalry, the India-Pakistan relations are also marked by contexts of cooperation where the two sides have exhibited orderly relations and given way for negotiations. In order to give meaning to this oscillating state-to-state relationship, the present study looks into the variable of threat perception whether it is an objective phenomenon or a subjective phenomenon. To this end, the study aims at demystifying Pakistan-India relations from the lens of Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat Theory. By bringing up the ideational component of 'aggressive intentions' in his model, Walt conceptualises threat perception as a subjective phenomenon, which allows for an emancipatory framework of meaning and action that goes beyond the orthodox and regressive logic of traditional power politics to understand Pakistan-India relations. The present study argues that the state elites of the two countries can dial down their tensions by transforming their will and intentions towards more peaceful behaviours and outcomes.

Keywords: Pakistan, India, Balance of Threat, Balance of Power, Threat Perception, Power Politics, Composite Dialogue, Diplomacy.

* The author is an independent researcher and currently pursuing his doctoral degree from School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Email: fahadahmedmisson@gmail.com

Introduction

The present article is a critical undertaking and analytical venture into the dynamics of traditional paradigm of power politics between Pakistan and India. The study purports to expose the analytical construct of power politics as a weak theoretical explanation for India-Pakistan relations and demonstrates the dual, fluctuating and oscillating pattern of conflict and cooperation in their relationship and variation in threat perception. Undertaking a critical view of Pakistan-India relations, the study goes on to ascertain contexts where India and Pakistan pursued cooperative strategies as demonstrated by the ‘composite dialogue.’ The scope of the study spans the first two decades of the twenty-first century. The study hypothesises that Pakistan-India conflict does not persist due to objective facts of international life but rather rooted in flawed security estimations. They can think and act beyond power politics by preferring cooperation as a predominant strategy.

To this end, the study relies on Stephen Walt’s ‘Balance of Threat’ theory to make an attempt to demystify Pakistan-India relations from the deeply flawed reasoning of power politics. In his landmark work, ‘The Origin of Alliances (1987),’ Walt challenges the balance of power theory, arguing that states actually react to perceived threat and not to power and aim to balance it. The article sets out to deliver a critique on theoretical underpinnings of power politics identifying flaws while dealing with the variable of threat perception in interstate hostile policies. The article further attempts to identify peaceful bilateral diplomacy such as composite dialogue where the threat perception by the decision-making class of the two states was minimal, giving way to cooperation, harmony and peace. It is argued that the threat perception between Pakistan-India relations is not due to objective and systemic properties such as anarchy but rather threat perception is rooted in actor-oriented subjectivities.

Pakistan-India relations are hostage of power politics. Predominantly guided by the dictates of power politics, the international scholarship views the struggle for power as the natural explanation to put into perspective the interstate competition between the two neighbouring countries. Power politics breeds suspicion, hostility, and hatred, and “otherness.”¹ By the logic of power politics, the two neighbouring

¹ Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re) Introduction to International Relations* (Lynne Rienner Publishers USA, 1994), 94.

countries are destined to be haunted by demonic forces of anarchy², are doomed to live in security dilemmas³ and locked in patterns of enduring rivalry, militarised geopolitics and endangered national security.⁴ Nevertheless, the tragic vision of power politics does not depict a complete picture of Pakistan-India relational calculus as it presents myopic and tightly squeezed vision of their multidimensional relations. In fact, Pakistan-India relational matrix is a striking manifestation of a paradox. The paradox is encapsulated in both states acting as adversaries at one time and orderly neighbours at the other time seeking economic cooperation, as well as social and cultural ties with each other.⁵ Supported by the balance of power theory and built on the structural dynamic of international system i.e. anarchy, the traditional paradigms of power politics does not account for this orderly and conditioned behaviour in Pakistan-India relational matrix. Fluctuation in Pak-India relations brings into perspective not only the need to explore the interplay of factors other than power to better explain the relations between the two countries, but also identifies the variation in threat perception between Pakistan and India. Furthermore, blinded by power politics, the aspiration and asymmetry of power is considered to be the only source of threat between the two neighbours. But, the logic of power politics in terms of generating threats, causing frictions and inhibiting cooperation between the two, is destabilised by this orderly and cooperative trends and tendencies in the Pakistan-India dyad. Thus, it stands that there could be other sources of threat perceptions as well. Secondly, by the theoretical reasoning of power politics, the threat perception is taken to be an intervening causal variable in the structural theory of balance of power.⁶ But, by the orderly dynamic of Pakistan-India behavioural calculus, threat perception appears to be a subjective phenomenon,⁷ i.e. the states and the states elites of two neighbouring

² Kenneth N Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*(Waveland Press, 2010).

³ John H Herz, "The Security Dilemma in International Relations: Background and Present Problems," *International Relations* 17, no. 4 (2003).

⁴ John J Mearsheimer and Glenn Alterman, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (WW Norton & Company, 2001).

⁵ Farhan Hanif Siddiqi, "The Perils of Regional Connectivity in South Asia," *South Asian Voices*, 2017.

⁶ Raymond Cohen, "Threat Perception in International Crisis," *Political Science Quarterly* 93, no. 1 (1978): 93.

⁷ Vaughn P Shannon, "Threat Perception and the Psychology of Constructivism,"(Blackwell Publishing Ltd Oxford, UK, 2007), 260.

states scale down their threat perception, whenever they demonstrate their will and intentions to cooperate with each other, throwing away the polemical claims of anarchy and security dilemma. Here, it could be assumed that threat perception operates as an independent variable in their dyad, not the power.

In order to plug-in these deficiencies in the structural theory of balance of power and better explain the factors responsible for variation in threat perception between the two neighbouring states,⁸ Stephen Walt's 'Balance of Threat' of theory is a plausible explanation of why Pakistan and India demonstrate such dual, fluctuating and oscillating pattern in their relationship and variation in threat perception i.e. Why Pakistan is heavily focused on balancing strategy against threatening power India?⁹ But at the same time, it is not threatened by the same India and adopts cooperative strategies such as 'Composite Dialogue' with India.¹⁰ The variation in threat perception can be better understood and explained by this theory. Before we further go into the details of the balance of threat theory, theoretical discourse on the threat perception is also discussed under the below heading.

Theoretical Discourse

Threats are largely determined by the reasoning of the two powerful traditions of realpolitik, realism and neo-realism the superstructure of which is erected on the core theory of international politics, i.e. 'the Balance of Power theory.'¹¹ The classical realists and neo-realists share the assumptions that threats are a function of asymmetries in power calculus in an anarchic world and call upon states to adopt balancing strategy to counter these threats for their survival.¹² Classical realists assert that Thucydides elucidates that the increasing power asymmetry was the real reason for war between Sparta

⁸ Stephen M Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," *International Organization* 42, no. 2 (1988): 181.

⁹ Farhan Hanif Siddiqi, "Security Estimations in South Asia," *Strategic Studies* 36, no. 2 (2016): 83.

¹⁰ Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "Analysing the Pakistan-India Peace Process," *Pakistan Horizon* 60, no. 2 (2007).

¹¹ Thazha Varkey Paul, James J Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford University Press, 2004), 7.

¹² David L Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: The Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism*(Stanford University Press, 2006), 17.

and Athens as the latter was growing in its power, causing fear in Sparta. Thus, Sparta and other Greek city states decided to balance Athenian power.¹³ For Machiavelli, threats are function of expansionist desires of human nature and aims to acquire more.¹⁴ For Hobbes, the structural property of the system i.e. anarchy causes the danger.¹⁵ Thus, the accumulation of power by a state creates inherent threats to others. Nevertheless, stepping into shoes of Machiavelli, St. Augustine, and Spinoza, another prominent IR scholar of realist school, Morgenthau comes up with a unique idea of *animus dominandi* in human nature, positing that the drive for power maximisation is ingrained in states.¹⁶ Secondly, states are sceptical about each other capabilities and intentions. Therefore, the states should aim at seeking superiority rather than parity in power asymmetries to ensure security. However, this would result in unending power struggle to achieve hegemony in the international system. Thus, states faced by the greater power would be left with three options: (i) adopt balancing strategy to counter the threat, (ii) bandwagoning with the source of danger or, (iii) exercise neutrality¹⁷.

Just like classical realists, Waltz also identifies that the power asymmetries are a source of inherent threats to states.¹⁸ But, as opposed to Morgenthau, Waltz shifts focus from human nature and his proposition that states attempt to maximise power, causing threats to others. Rather, Waltz asserts that threat is a function of anarchy, which is the structural determinant of international system.¹⁹

In contradistinction to classical realism and neorealism, Stephen Walt, in his classic work, ‘The Origin of Alliances (1987),’²⁰ mounts a critical

¹³ THUCYDIDES Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (BoD–Books on Demand, 2019).

¹⁴ Nicolo Machiavelli, “The Prince,” *YOUTH* 1, no. 3 (2004): 8.

¹⁵ Thomas Hobbes and Marshall Missner, *Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan* (Longman Library of Primary Sources in Philosophy Routledge, 2016).

¹⁶ Hans Joachim Morgenthau, Kenneth W Thompson, and W David Clinton, “Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace,” (1985): 115.

¹⁷ Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: The Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism*, 18.

¹⁸ Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities*, 23.

¹⁹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 117.

²⁰ Stephen M Walt, “The Origins of Alliances,” in *The Origins of Alliances* (Cornell University Press, 2013).

challenge on the balance of power theory, positing that the states attempt to balance perceived threats and power is merely one element in their calculation.²¹ Walt views the development of threat perception from a unique perspective by asserting that threat perception is a function of four elements: aggregate power, offensive capability, geographical proximity and aggressive intentions.²² Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory is termed as a *refinement* of the balance of power theory.²³ He presents the argument that 'balance of power' theory fits well to the configuration of global powers at international system by taking into account their aggregate powers but balance of threat theory better explain the behaviour of the regional states who adopts balancing strategy to counter what they perceive as threats from other regional power.

Furthermore, Walt's incorporation of "aggressive intentions" in his model brings him closer to constructivist theorising by adding an ideational component to the theory.²⁴ The constructivists do not believe that changes in the balance of power will inevitably result in conflict and violence. They assert that threat perception is linked with the perceptions of shared identity, which is in turn a function of cultural similarities, society and domestic discourses.²⁵ According to constructivist logic, identity plays a deterministic role in shaping threat perception, not anarchical structure of international system.²⁶ In words of Alexander Wendt, the "anarchy is what states make of it."²⁷

Thus, Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory appears to account for events that brought Pakistan and India close to each other, demarcating the fact that the two countries possess intentional capacity to think and act beyond power politics by changing their perceptions about the intensity and

²¹ "Alliances in Theory and Practice: What Lies Ahead?," *Journal of International Affairs* (1989).

²² "The Origins of Alliances," 18-19.

²³ "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," 181.

²⁴ Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities*, 10.

²⁵ Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities*, 9.

²⁶ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, vol. 67 (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 319.

²⁷ "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992).

level of threats to each other.²⁸ Furthermore, threats are function of aggressive intentions, which are in turn conditioned by their domestic politics, domestic discourses, decision-making centres, regime similarity, history, culture and political culture and political system.²⁹ Besides, the traditional realist theory frames threat perception as a constant intervening variable in its theoretical reasoning. On the other hand, the latest research shows that threat perception is a socially constructed phenomenon³⁰ and could be studied as an independent variable as the states only proceed to balance against threats, not power.³¹

Identifying Fluctuations in Threat Perception

Viewed through the lens of power politics, the two countries are seen and produced as eternal enemies with two different identities and interests condemned to be in perpetual competition with each other.³² The rationale of power competition is further strengthened through wars and crises that have spoiled the relations between the two states since 1947. However, it must be noted that neither the essential adversarial nor cooperative paradigms can capture the vicissitudes that typify the Pakistan-India relations.³³ In fact, they have often manifested striking pattern of orderly neighbours, if not friends, whenever the conditions and necessities have dictated them. Some authors term this pattern a “cyclic course” in Pakistan-India relationship.³⁴ In the words of Ravi Prasad, the two neighbouring states are “rational actors,” they do not prefer an “anarchic order,” and they are not attempting to “maximise their power.”³⁵ Furthermore, quoting Hensel Goertz and Diehl who analysed twenty three rivalries under joint

²⁸ Sangit Sarita Dwivedi, “Exploring Strategies and Implications of an Opportunistic Alliance: A Case Study of Pakistan and China,” *Asian Journal of Political Science* 21, no. 3 (2013): 325.

²⁹ Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities*, 23.

³⁰ Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities*, 4.

³¹ Walt, “Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia,” 281.

³² Farhan Hanif Siddiqi, “CPEC and Geo-Politico-Economic Trends of the Region: An Appraisal,” *The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad*: 29.

³³ Siddiqi, “CPEC and Geo-Politico-Economic Trends of the Region, 30.

³⁴ Nabiha Gul, “Pakistan-India Peace Process 1990-2007: An Appraisal,” *Pakistan Horizon* 60, no. 2 (2007): 47.

³⁵ Raviprasad Narayanan, “The India-Pakistan Dyad: A Challenge to the Rest or to Themselves?,” *Asian Perspective* (2010): 167.

democracies and non-democratic stint,³⁶ Dr. Huma Baqai asserts that as the democratic spirit has started striking roots in the tradition of people in Pakistan in recent times, the decrease in conflict frequency can be detected under democratic conditions and India-Pakistan rivalry has been less dispute prone under democracy.³⁷

The laws of power politics are absolutely defied by the interlude of peaceful diplomacy and joint efforts at resumption of bilateral dialogues in Pakistan-India dyad. The year 2000 marks a watershed in Pakistan and India relations when the former President Pervez Musharraf embarked on peaceful diplomacy, defying the laws of power politics in the South Asia. The language adopted by the two leaders reinforced the fact that the diplomatic initiatives were not implicated in strategic calculations. In the words of President Musharraf, “time for conflict management has passed and the time for conflict resolution has come,”³⁸ terming bilateral relations with India better than ever before. Earlier, the similar note was earlier struck by the Indian Prime Minister, Vajpayee during his visit to Pakistan when he invoked Pakistan and India shared history and cultural ties during his ‘Bus Diplomacy,’ making reference to lines of the 11th century poet Mas’ud bin S’ad bin Salman to the city of Lahore. Seeking a conciliatory approach to unite Pakistan and India, Vajpayee asserted that “India would rejoice in the progress and prosperity of Pakistan.”³⁹

The spirit of the Lahore Declaration, however, did not endure for long as soon India and Pakistan was mired in a war in Kargil. The peace process followed by the Kargil war captures the bilateral facet of their relations in which cooperation and conflict are both manifest. During the Kargil war, Pakistani troops crossed the LoC entered the Kargil sector of Kashmir and fought their ‘fourth war’ with Indian soldiers, causing large scale violence in the region since 1971. However, the tensions were de-escalated with the US involvement during the crisis. Pakistan agreed to pull out its troops from Kargil under Washington Accord, July 4, 1999.

³⁶ Paul R Hensel, Gary Goertz, and Paul F Diehl, “The Democratic Peace and Rivalries,” *The Journal of Politics* 62, no. 4 (2000).

³⁷ Huma Baqai, “New Trends and Paradigm Shifts in Pakistan and Pakistan-India Relations: Pakistan’s Perspective,” *Journal of International Relations and Foreign Policy* 1, no. 1 (2013): 56.

³⁸ Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (Simon and Schuster, 2006), 302.

³⁹ Priya Chacko, *Indian Foreign Policy: The Politics of Postcolonial Identity from 1947 to 2004* (Routledge, 2013), 185.

After the Kargil flare-up, the two states experienced a complete breakdown in their relationship with withdrawal of their diplomatic staff. Thus, the peace process started in the backdrop of Lahore Declaration dashed to the ground. Later, the series of diplomatic overtures demonstrated by their leadership not only reflected a new outlook in their approach towards each other but also helped the two states mend their relations and lowered their threat perception.⁴⁰

In response to Musharraf's persistent offer for peaceful dialogue and diplomacy, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee extended an invitation to President Musharraf to attend Agra Summit in May 2001. Nonetheless, the Agra talks lost momentum and could not achieve its objectives as the hardliners and hawks in India led by L.K Advani were opposed to inclusion of Kashmiris in peace talks.⁴¹ Musharraf-Vajpayee joint initial efforts at normalisation were viewed differently by the strategic community. While some strategic analysts such as Sumit Ganguly and Devin Hagerty argued that Pakistan's nuclear weapons prevented India from undertaking any hostile actions against Pakistan,⁴² but, other analysts like S. Paul Kapur, having interviewed Vajpayee and Fernandes, believed that their policies were driven by tactical and diplomatic calculations rather than Pakistan's nuclear weapons⁴³ and the Indian leadership wanted to cultivate a reputation of restraint.⁴⁴

Interestingly, the relationship between the two states hit another rock-bottom at the beginning of the 21st century when the two neighbouring nations were at the verge of full scale war and kept their troops in a state of high readiness for at least ten months between late December 2001 and October 2002. An attack on the Indian Parliament building by the terrorists in New Delhi on December 13, 2001 turned out to be an immediate trigger for the massive deployment. Nevertheless, defying the odds of power

⁴⁰ Baqai, "New Trends and Paradigm Shifts in Pakistan and Pakistan-India Relations: Pakistan's Perspective."

⁴¹ Chacko, *Indian Foreign Policy: The Politics of Postcolonial Identity from 1947 to 2004*, 184-86.

⁴² Sumit Ganguly and Devin T Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons* (University of Washington Press, 2012).

⁴³ S Paul Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace: Why Nuclear South Asia Is Not Like Cold War Europe," *International Security* 30, no. 2 (2005).

⁴⁴ Sreeram S Chaulia, "BJP, India's Foreign Policy and the "Realist Alternative" to the Nehruvian Tradition," *International Politics* 39, no. 2 (2002).

politics, the two states who were on the brink of war gave up on aggressive intentions and let the better sense prevail, leading up to the withdrawal of their troops from the forward positions on their shared borders. Thus, the two neighbours averted war between them by bringing modification in their threat perception. It was argued by people such as Ganguly and Kraig that the presence of nuclear weapons deterred India from undertaking any hostile actions against Pakistan, despite having military capability and the intelligence capacity.⁴⁵

In the same way, followed by the Indian Parliament attack, the two countries again demonstrated another non-military approach in ways and means of their dealing with hostile actions by avoiding unnecessary escalation in their threat perception, when the terrorists again attacked at public bus inside an army camp resulting in the death of 23 people near the town area of Kaluchak in Jammu in May-June 2002.⁴⁶ Rather than escalating the incident, India contacted the US, UK, Russia and France, reminding them of their assurance that ‘something will be done by Pakistan about the cross-border terrorism.’⁴⁷ In response, Pakistan moved to ban Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, leading President Musharraf to pledge that the militants will not be allowed to use Pakistan’s soil to target India.⁴⁸ The series of such significant diplomatic moves and peaceful initiatives led Prime Minister Vajpayee to extend the “hand of friendship” in Srinagar where he first time made offer to hold talks with Pakistan on the resolution of Kashmir dispute from a purely humanitarian perspective on April 18, 2003⁴⁹.

Welcoming Vajpayee’s statement, Pakistan responded spontaneously and positively by making immediate offer to hold unconditional talks with India for cooperation in areas of sports, culture and economy. Subsequently,

⁴⁵ Sumit Ganguly and Michael R Kraig, “The 2001–2002 Indo-Pakistani Crisis: Exposing the Limits of Coercive Diplomacy,” *Security Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005).

⁴⁶ Staff Reporter, “Militants Massacre 23 Kin of Army Men,” *Tribune* 2002, <https://www.tribuneindia.com/2002/20020515/index.htm>

⁴⁷ Chacko, *Indian Foreign Policy: The Politics of Postcolonial Identity from 1947 to 2004*, 189.

⁴⁸ “Pakistan Strongly Rejects Terrorism - 2002-01-12,” *Voice of America*, VOA.<https://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-a-2002-01-12-16-pakistan-67406227/383144.html>

⁴⁹ Maria Saifuddin Effendi, “Pakistan-India Peace Process: Summits in Focus (1999-2005),” *Regional Studies-Islamabad* 24, no. 3 (2006): 10.

the two neighbours restored their diplomatic operations, re-assigned their high commissioners, resumed the exchange of foreign missions, over flight operations were permitted, revived the road and railway links as well as Delhi-Lahore bus service, etc. Most significantly, Pakistan also announced a unilateral ceasefire along the LoC in November 2003 to reciprocate Indian diplomatic overtures.⁵⁰

Pakistan-India Composite Dialogue

Nevertheless, the peace process between India and Pakistan in real sense started after the successful conclusion of the 12th SAARC Summit where the two leaders President Musharraf and Prime Minister Vajpayee agreed to revive Pakistan-Indian bilateral talks on all long-standing disputes, including the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir. Both the leaders renewed pledge to recommence the Composite Dialogues in February, 2004.⁵¹ The composite dialogue was split into eight specific baskets in a bid to categorise disputes and demarcate areas where Pakistan and India needed to work simultaneously to bridge the wide gulf of divergence between them or eliminate obstacles to pave the way for stable, cooperative, and peaceful bilateral relations between the two.⁵² The composite dialogue was originally structured and designed to cultivate an integrated approach by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Inder Kumar Gujral during the SAARC Summit at Male the capital of Maldives, in 1997.⁵³ In February 2004, following the foreign secretaries talks breaking the deadlock of three years, apart from original sectors of 'Promotion of Friendly Exchanges,' which was re-titled as 'People-to-People Contacts,' almost all baskets were recalled with same titles.⁵⁴ Both the leaders were confident that the renewed vigour in the peace process would lead to 'peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir.' More importantly, the peace process resulted in the establishment and implementation of a large number of CBM's in military and non-military areas between Pakistan and India. The key component of CBM's was establishment of trade and travel across LoC. The Kashmir bus

⁵⁰ Syed Jaffar Ahmed, "Dr. Riaz Shaikh, Back from the Brink India-Pakistan Ties Revisited," *Pakistan Perspectives* 18, no. 1 (2013).

⁵¹ Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: 1947-2009*, 306.

⁵² Rashid Ahmad Khan, "Pakistan-India Peace Process: An Assessment," *IPRI JOURNAL* 9, no. 1 (2009): 90.

⁵³ Cheema, "Analysing the Pakistan-India Peace Process," 26.

⁵⁴ "Analysing the Pakistan-India Peace Process,"

service from Srinagar to Muzaffarabad initiated its operations from April 7, 2005.⁵⁵ The Poonch-Rawalakote was made operative for travel in June 20, 2006.⁵⁶ The Khokhrapar-Munabao rail links resumed its service from February 1, 2006.⁵⁷ Furthermore, after the meeting of Pakistan-India Joint Working Group, in New Delhi on July 18, 2008, Trans-LoC trade modalities on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawalakot route were finalised, frequency of Kashmir bus service was increased, postal service between the two cities were launched.⁵⁸ A Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism was put in place in March 2007.⁵⁹ The other CBM's included nuclear risk-reduction and early warning on missile tests, the starting of Lahore-Amritsar, Amritsar-Nankana Sahib bus service, increasing frequency of Lahore-Delhi bus service and weekly flights between these two cities, etc.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, no considerable progress was registered in the areas of conflict resolution. The little improvement in conflict resolution in areas of Siachen Glaciers, Sir Creek, Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project was witnessed. The parametres of Pakistan-India relations would have been drastically changed if any progress had been made on these disputes. That would have enabled them to make headways on core dispute of Kashmir. But, these disputes remained unresolved at the end of day with no substantial outcome in the offing.⁶¹ However, the five rounds of composite dialogues resulted in the lessening of tensions between the two countries and a marked a substantial improvement in bilateral relations during 2004-2008.

High Point in Pakistan-India Rapprochement

Pakistan-India entente reached its highest point when President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh vowed to seek amicable settlement of all outstanding disputes between the two neighbouring

⁵⁵ Staff Reporter, "Kashmir Bus Triggers Business Boom," *Al-Jazeera*, June 19, 2002, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/6/19/kashmir-bus-triggers-business-boom>

⁵⁶ Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Rashid Ahmad Khan, and Khalid Chandio, *Pakistan-India Peace Process: The Way Forward* (Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2010).

⁵⁷ Nabiha Gul, "Pakistan-India Composite Dialogue," *Pakistan Horizon* 61, no. 3 (2008).

⁵⁸ "Pakistan-India Peace Process 1990-2007: An Appraisal."

⁵⁹ "Pakistan-India Peace Process 1990-2007: An Appraisal."

⁶⁰ Khan, "Pakistan-India Peace Process: An Assessment."

⁶¹ Cheema, Khan, and Chandio, *Pakistan-India Peace Process: The Way Forward*.

countries.⁶² The two leader's historic consensus also included Musharraf's formula outlining four-fold strategy for the resolution of the Kashmir issue:

- i. The division of Jammu and Kashmir into seven zones, comprising Northern Areas and Shia dominated Kargil area, AJ&K in Pakistan, and the Muslim dominated Kashmir valley, Buddhist area of Laddakh, and Hindu and Muslim dominated parts of Jammu. Identification was meant to bring conflict resolution in these regions.
- ii. Withdrawal of troops will be ensured in a step-by-step manner and freedom movement will be purged of militant's dimensions.
- iii. Regions must have self-rule or autonomy but no independence.
- iv. Pakistanis, Indians and Kashmiris would constitute a joint mechanism to supervise self-governance and deal with residual subjects pertaining to all designated zones and those subjects that go beyond the scope of self-rule.⁶³

The sustained engagement seen during the historic phase of Pakistan-India relations under the leadership of Musharraf and Manmohan Singh was viewed as strategic instrumentality by some voices in Indian side because at that time Pakistan was facing hostilities with Afghanistan on its western border that started taking place since 2001. Thus, Pakistan's actions and peace initiatives was assumed to be leading of necessity to safeguard their eastern border in order to concentrate on the war with Afghanistan on the western border. By contrast, it could be safely argued that had the strategic calculations were imperatives of Pakistan's peaceful diplomacy with India, why was a working formula and methodology was proposed to eternally resolve the core dispute of Kashmir, though it was suggested ironically by Pakistan itself? ⁶⁴ Otherwise, the structured dialogue and workable diplomacy should have sufficed to achieve these strategic mileages and bilateral relations, nonetheless, laying out the afore-mentioned four point formula on Kashmir indicates that Pakistan-India relations were meant more than the instrumental rationale to pursue peace for minor strategic considerations and advantages.

⁶² Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, *Neither a Hawk nor a Dove: An Insider's Account of Pakistan's Foreign Relations Including Details of the Kashmir Framework*(Oxford University Press Karachi, 2015), 179-83.

⁶³ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*, 303.

⁶⁴ Siddiqi, "Cpec and Geo-Politico-Economic Trends of the Region: An Appraisal," 31.

Pakistan-India Peaceful Headways

The peace process between India and Pakistan survived many stressful incidents such as the Mumbai train bomb blasts on July 11, 2006 which scuttled the peace process.⁶⁵ Terrorists planted seven bombs in subway trains that took lives of almost 200 people.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, the two countries despite trading accusations demonstrated a will to not to be held hostage by the forces of disorder and vowed to continue their peace process. The four rounds of talks under composite dialogues were completed in May 2008. Then, the terrorist attack in Mumbai which caused the death of 170 people, marked another episode of high tensions during the post-Musharraf phase with the return of hostility occurring in 2008 and the arrest of Ajmal Kasab who was later found to be residing in a village in Punjab.⁶⁷ All that happened at a time when the two countries were showing immense potential of improving their bilateral relations with the mark of success, but the peace process under composite dialogue during fifth round of talks was disrupted by the November 26, 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks. Condemning the terror attack, Pakistan's President Zardari emphasised "the need for taking strict measures to eradicate terrorism and extremism from the region."⁶⁸

However, the rather hostile posture of India to spew propaganda against Pakistan branding it as a terror sponsoring state to gain increased international attention underwent surprising transformation with assumption of power in Pakistan by Nawaz Sharif's PML-N government.⁶⁹ To the surprise of all strategic pundits, the PML-N government pursued the agenda of regional peace. The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government under Narendra Modi took reins of power with the vision of infusing economic life into India's political community and society.⁷⁰ The commonality of approach and identity of interests of the two parties resulted in the historic visit of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Lahore in December 2015, to attend

⁶⁵ Cheema, Khan, and Chandio, *Pakistan-India Peace Process: The Way Forward*, 2.

⁶⁶ Gul, "Pakistan-India Peace Process 1990-2007: An Appraisal," 58.

⁶⁷ "Ajmal'S Nationality Confirmed," *Dawn* 2009,
<https://www.dawn.com/news/856680/ajmal-s-nationality-confirmed>

⁶⁸ The Telegraph, "Mumbai Attacks: Reaction from International Leaders to Terrorism," *The Telegraph* 2008.

⁶⁹ "Pakistan's Next Prime Minister Wants to End Decades-Old Feud with India," *Guardian*, 2013.

⁷⁰ "India's Narendra Modi Accepts Pakistan Visit Invite," *BBC News*, 2015.

the marriage ceremony of grand-daughter of Nawaz Sharif.⁷¹ It was in this meeting where the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further enhance people-to-people contact and confidence building measures (CBM's) between the two nations.⁷² On reaching India, Modi articulated his vision for the regional order of the South Asia, where he would enjoy "breakfast in Kabul, tea in Lahore, dinner in Delhi."⁷³

Anti-peace forces, once again took ghastly action of terrorism and Pakistan-India rapprochement got struck by dark shadows of ghostly forces.⁷⁴ In a bid to break the momentum towards achieving peace between the two neighbours, terrorists attacked the Pathankot Air Force Base in January 2016. Pakistan condemned the attack, issuing statement by Foreign Office: "Pakistan remains committed to partner with India as well as other countries in the region to completely eradicate the menace of terrorism."⁷⁵

Taking into account the usual trading of accusations and blame-game that embitter the relations whenever the strategic tension ratcheted up between the two nations, Nawaz-Modi interaction was a remarkably important gesture that could have augured well for future cooperation between the two states. However, the peace overtures ended in a state of mutual suspicion and mistrust, hitting to a turbulence in Pakistan and India relations in 2016.⁷⁶ In addition to Pathankot, the assassination of Burhan Wani in Kashmir valley sparked violent protests and riots, laying bare India's failure to satisfy Kashmiris through measures bordering on political reconciliation and its constant use of force in dealing with the people of Kashmir.⁷⁷ This terror attack on Indian Army base at Uri, resulting in the death of 17 Indian troops opened a new chapter of animosity in Pakistan and India relations with doings and denials between them. Pakistan denied

⁷¹ The Indian Express, "PM Modi Lands in Lahore on a Surprise Visit, Meets Pak PM Nawaz Sharif," *India Express*, 2015.

⁷² Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy, 1947-2016: A Concise History* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 309.

⁷³ Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy, 1947-2016*

⁷⁴ Siddiqi, "CPEC and Geo-Politico-Economic Trends of the Region: An Appraisal," 32.

⁷⁵ Foreign Office, "Pakistan Condemns the Terrorist Incident in Pathankot," Press Release, 2016.

⁷⁶ Irfan Haider, "Team of Investigators Probing Pathankot Attack Arrives in New Delhi," *Dawn*, 2016.

⁷⁷ Smruti S Pattanaik, "India-Pakistan Relations: What Lies Ahead?," *Revista UNISCI*, no. 49 (2019): 167.

its involvement and India claimed surgical strikes to destroy terrorist training camps in Pakistan, which was rejected by Islamabad. After Uri, border skirmishes remained high and intensified between the two countries.⁷⁸ In the recent scenario, because of terror attack on India's Central Reserve Police Force in Pulwama, a territory of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir on February 14, 2019, the 2019 Pulwama-Balakot crisis is another high point of escalation where the two neighbours were locked in air combat on February 27, 2019. Nonetheless, later on better sense prevailed on both sides and the watershed moment of 2019 was not allowed to escalate into full-fledge war. Now, certain moves such as Pakistan's neutrality during 2020 Sino-India military standoff, the reactivation of 2003 LoC ceasefire agreement in February 2021, Pakistan's permission to India to transport wheat and essential pharmaceutical supplies to Afghanistan on humanitarian grounds in November 2021. Pakistan granted India permission to transport wheat and essential pharmaceutical supplies to Afghanistan for "exceptional" humanitarian purposes, Pakistan's limited protest on Indian Brahmos Missile crash on its territory in March 2022 and the conviction of Hafiz Saeed by Pakistani courts tell the different story which cannot be explained by the theoretical reasoning of power politics.

Conclusion

Walt's theoretical framework is a significant study to understand the fluctuations in threat perception in Pakistan and India relations. Walt make an interesting argument that the traditional paradigm of power politics — the superstructure of which is erected on the core international political theory of global balance of power only accounts of global powers strategic competition in the international system. Nevertheless, it does not uphold the explanatory framework for regional rivalries and hostilities as regional states adopt balancing strategies to counter perceived threats. Thus, Walt demonstrates that perceptions play a deterministic role in regional rivalries and estimation of threat. By contrast, classical realists and neo-realists argue that threat is a function of power asymmetries in anarchic world. To Morgenthau, the animus dominandi in human nature is a source of threat whereas the Waltz terms international system structural property i.e. anarchy is a source of threat. Thus, viewed through the lens of power

⁷⁸ Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, *India's' Surgical Strike's stratagem Brinkmanship and Response* (2019), 71.

politics, the threat perception emerges to be a constant intervening variable between Pakistan and India, whereas the latest research shows that threat perception is a socially constructed phenomenon⁷⁹ and could be studied as an independent variable in the two countries relations as the states only proceed to balance against threats, not power.⁸⁰ Additionally, the scholars have pointed out that the security architecture of Pakistan and its policies towards India is erected on the basis of perceived threat from India to its very existence.⁸¹ Furthermore, any hope and efforts to bring the two states closer to each other to ensure peace and stability in the region is scuttled and toppled by the relentless struggle for power, aimed at preservation of balance of power between the two⁸² as they think of themselves as threatening powers.⁸³ Therefore, by the dictates of power politics, they are condemned to balance against each other threatening power and watch their relative gains over absolute gains, leading to the inhibition of cooperation.⁸⁴

Thus, the threat emerges to be a core variable in Pakistan-India dyad. But, the variation in threat perception shows that mistrust, broken promises, unresolved issues, hostility and unending conflict are not due to objective and systemic properties such as anarchy but rather threat perception is rooted in actor-oriented subjectivities. The decisions to perpetuate conflict or cooperation are thoroughly made by the actors at unit level. If we see predominance of conflict strategy in bilateral relations, this is because the lead actors flex their minds in politics in obnoxious ways. The millennium of peace in Europe and relentless dynamism of China's economic development have not to be caused by the objective facts of international politics but because it were the humans who made these core decisions to steer their destiny towards a bright future. If the lords of statecraft have a will to war, they are equally possessed with skills set to pursue diplomacy and peace. When they see, the perpetual conflict hurts their interests and does not go in their favour, they embark on the journey of peace and

⁷⁹ Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: The Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism*, 4.

⁸⁰ Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," 281.

⁸¹ Dwivedi, "Exploring Strategies and Implications of an Opportunistic Alliance: A Case Study of Pakistan and China," 325.

⁸² Ashish Shukla, "Theoretical Underpinnings of India-Pakistan Relations," *India Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (2020): 304.

⁸³ Ayesha Siddiq, *Military Inc, inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (Pakistan Oxford University Press 2007), 13.

⁸⁴ Mearsheimer and Alterman, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 52.

harmony. Nevertheless, the time is over to miss the train of socio-economic development and growth in South Asia. It is high time to put in place workable strategy to build relationship on mutual respect and peaceful co-existence on the basis of socio-cultural commonalities and interests. Thus, by deploying creative imagination to create new perceptions in their foreign policies, Pakistan and India can generate confidence to move beyond the power politics in order to secure their future by adopting alternative interpretations to the facts and realities. This is the only way of transforming zero sum logic into positive sum logic of mutual cooperation and benefits.