

SUMMARY

India and Pakistan gained their independence in August 1947 ending two centuries of British imperial rule. Despite occasional periods of détente, such as the present thaw, their relations as independent nation-states have been frosty and tense. Their hostilities have led them to three wars, the Kargil Crisis, and several near-conflicts. They have sought periodically—without notable success—to achieve friendlier relations through negotiations.

Procedurally, the current normalization effort, which began two years ago, follows a concept called the “composite dialogue” agreed upon in the mid-1990s. This calls for separate, but parallel, talks on different bilateral issues, including the Kashmir dispute. Substantively, the current negotiations have made progress, and India-Pakistan relations are better than they have been in many years. However, the road to full normalization, including a Kashmir settlement, is long and full of barriers. If this study’s review of past India-Pakistan negotiations has any lessons—and history usually does—vigorous, innovative, and sustained leadership will be required of both India and Pakistan to achieve tangible, across-the-board improvement in bilateral relations. Otherwise, at some point the present endeavor will run into the sand like previous efforts.

Given the importance of India and Pakistan as accounting for nearly 20 percent of humanity as well as being nuclear weapon states and having a strained relationship that threatens Asian and global stability, surprisingly little has been written about their negotiating experience. Library shelves sag with the heft of volumes about the Kashmir dispute. There are also weighty tomes about the two countries’ nuclear weapons programs. Numerous accounts regard India-Pakistan conflicts and near conflicts, but no serious analysis exists on how the two nuclear-armed protagonists have negotiated with each other. Under the auspices of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), this study tries to fill the void by providing an overview of six key India-Pakistan negotiations. This analysis will hopefully encourage others to probe the subject in greater depth because the India-Pakistan negotiating experience warrants far more attention than it has received.

HISTORICAL REVIEW

The study begins with consideration of the critical decades before the British left the subcontinent in 1947 and the events of that traumatic year. To understand post-independence India-Pakistan interaction, a solid comprehension of what occurred during British colonial rule is critical, especially the ten decisive years that preceded partition of British India into two independent states. The dramatic and sad events linked to the actual separation in the year 1947 also require close scrutiny. These events cast a long and dark shadow over India-Pakistan dealings. Indeed, a strong argument can be made that post-independence diplomatic failures have largely been a continuation in another form of the impasse between the Muslim League and Indian National Congress in their on-again, off-again negotiations between 1937 and 1947.

ANALYSIS OF SIX CRITICAL INDIA-PAKISTAN NEGOTIATIONS

The study then reviews six of the most important negotiations since independence. These provide valuable lessons and a better understanding of how India and Pakistan have dealt with each other across the bargaining table. Several of the negotiations achieved short-term successes but then failed to effect lasting improvement in relations. The Indus Waters negotiations is the only one that has achieved, and so far endured, its principal objective—to solve the dispute over how India and Pakistan would share the waters of the Indus River and its tributaries. The six negotiations are considered chronologically but are also grouped into the following three categories for analytical purposes:

- ❖ problem-solving negotiations (1960 Indus Waters Treaty and the 1962–1963 talks aimed at solving the Kashmir problem),
- ❖ post-conflict negotiations (1966 Tashkent and 1972 Simla summits), and
- ❖ “Talks about Talks” (1999 Lahore and 2001 Agra summits).

The study concludes with a discussion of lessons learned from these six negotiation patterns and styles, such as the impact of cultural differences, as well as prospects that the current negotiating process will not repeat the two countries' previous lack of success.¹