

National Identity and War: The case of India and Pakistan

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Abstract

The paper attempts to study the interrelation of war and national identity. It will establish a theoretical framework for nations, nationalism, national identity and the impact of national identity on war and vice versa. Wars start as a clash of national identities, and the longer it perpetuates it gets absorbed into the identity discourse. Hence, as wars stretch longer, the chances of arbitration grow narrower as nations start identifying the war with their nationhood. The paper further analyses the Indo-Pak conflict within the frame work of clash of national identities. It focuses on demarcating India and Pakistan's national identity and studies the conflict. It concludes that to arbitrate a conflict between nations a historical analysis of the nations in question and a grass roots ethnographic research of war narratives is pertinent.

Keywords: National Identity, War, India, Pakistan, Kashmir, Nations, Indo-Pak Conflict

Introduction

Fascination with war and its multiple facets continues to intrigue scholars around the world. Homer, Thucydides to modern day Tolstoy have written about war. Earlier wars were fought between kingdoms and empires, modern day wars, apart from instances of unconventional war by non-state actors, are fought between nations. Hence, it is pertinent to inquire into nations.

Each nation has identifiers that help bind the nation into a solidarity. These identifiers are dynamic and define the nation at a particular space and time. The survival of any national arrangement depends on the intensity to which the nation identifies with their national identity. This makes national identity an important subject of analyses when discussing war. The paper attempts to analyze how national identity and war impact each other. It will further dwell into the Indo-Pak conflict which continues to perpetuate in the 21st Century. If not hot war, there is a perpetual situation of hot peace between India and Pakistan. Kashmir remains one of the most heavily militarized zones in the world. Hence, on the basis of a theoretical framework, the

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paper will attempt to study the Indo-Pak conflict and endeavor to understand the deadlock in arbitration with a look at their respective national identities

The paper is divided into two sections. The first section will begin by defining national identity. To define national identity an inquiry into nations and nationalism is pertinent. My previous research on nations, nationalism and national identity (Sreevatsa, 2022) will be borrowed to form a conceptual framework. It will further attempt to form a frame work of the impact of national identity on war and vice versa. The second section will proceed to define Indian national identity and Pakistani national identity, before diving into the Indo-Pak conflict and its relation with their national identities. Indo-Pak conflict is of particular importance, as these nations sprung out of a bloody partition and a future potential border conflict that perpetuates to this day. Their post-independence identity is overpowered by the conflict.

I

What is a Nation?

Hugh Seton-Watson (Seton-Watson, 1977) attempts to define a Nation, “Nation is a community of people, whose members are bound by a sense of solidarity”. A nation exists when, not all, but a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation. By virtue of this definition, even social groups based on ethnicity, linguistics, religion come under the ambit of a nation. These social group are also bound by a sense of solidarity and consider themselves as a collective. On the other end of the spectrum, Stalin in his work “Marxism and the National question” (Stalin, 1913) believes,

A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture

But as Stalin asserts, all the elements namely history, community, language, territory, economy, psychology, are a prerequisite to a nation. He states, “It is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation”. This definition of nation by nature is overtly rigid for the contemporary multicultural world. By virtue of this definition, most of modern day nations would cease to qualify as nations. For Benedict Anderson, (Anderson, 1983), a nation “is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”. Imagined because members of even the smallest nation have no ways of interacting with every other member but are still united under the communion

of the nation. Limited as even the largest nations are finite in their territory beyond which lie other nations, and do not imagine themselves “co-terminus with mankind”.

Understanding the distinction between Hugh Seton-Watson’s approach to defining a nation, and Anderson’s definition of nation is crucial. Seton-Watson’s definition better exemplifies a social group. Any group of people, who share a vision of commonality are a social group. According to Omar Dahbour (Dahbour, 2002), group identity is the social seed that forms the foundation of the idea of a nation. These social groups could be associated based on ethnicity, linguistics, religion, history, culture, etc. A nation adheres to Anderson definition, of an imagined communion which recognises its right to self-determination (sovereignty) in a specific territorially demarcated space. Not all social groups are sovereign or recognise their right to self-determination. Modern day multi-cultural nation-states, may constitute under them, numerous social groups, under the overall communion of a nation. In a nation, none of the social groups are sovereign, but their communion, the nation, is sovereign. Dissatisfaction with the national arrangement might lead social groups to recognise their right to self-determination, and hence form a separate nation by way of succession movements.

Nationalism

Nationalism has dual existence, as it precedes and proceeds the nation. It manifests during the national struggle, as a means of social mobilization for the national cause, to realize their rights of self-determination, and during the post-independence period to consolidate the nation. Hence, A. D. Smith (Smith A. , 1983) defines nationalism as,

An ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’

The symbols used to invigorate nationalism could be cultural, linguistic, historical, etc. War and sacrifice are also used as emblems of nationalism. These symbols contribute to the molding of the national identity. Pre- independence nationalism concerns itself with first, delimiting the aspects of the aspiring nation with respect to people as well as territory, second, in empowering the citizenry to their right to self-determination.

Nationalism plays a crucial role in the post-independence consolidation process. But the distinction lies in that nationalism after the formation of the nation is state directed. Han Kohn’s definition of nationalism (Kohn, n.d.) better describes post-independence nationalism, as an

“ideology based on the premise that the individual’s loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests”. Post-Independence Nationalism is a virtue of loyalty to the nation. Hence nationalism, post-independence, is directed towards eroding traditional group loyalties and prescribing to national loyalties. Smith (Smith A. D., 1971) in his work details the aspiration of post-independence nationalism as integrating the nationals into a homogenous unit.

Understanding National Identity

Most nations have under their ambit multiple social groups. Narratives, real or imaginary, have to be construed to give these various social groups, direct stakes, in relation to the nation. These narratives could be drawn historically, culturally, linguistically, religiously, ethnographically, etc. aiding the construction of the National Identity. National Identity can be viewed as an abstract ideologue, dynamic in nature that unites different people of different social groups into an imagined communion of a nation. In diverse societies, constructing a national identity connecting all the diverse social groups to the nation, is a challenging endeavor. In these societies, national identity takes the form of moral values and codes that are humanist in nature. Ideas such as pluralism, secularism, democracy, equality, liberty come under the moral doctrines that bind social groups to the nation. To redeem their right to self-determination, the nation forms a state. The project of nation building involves the state constructing narratives that unites the social groups under the communion of the nation.

National identity is dynamic in nature and changes with time. The changes to the national identity might not be uniformly assimilated across social groups which may lead to frictions. When these changes fall outside the purview of comprehension of social groups, the nation as an entity becomes unstable. The role of the state is to keep track of the changing tides of national identity and constantly construct inclusive narratives.

War and National Identity

The idea of a self-determination is intrinsic to the idea of a nation. When two or more nation’s actions, or interests coincide, a conflict is inevitable. When conflict persists, tensions among nations intensify, which may lead them to go to war. King Gundobald believes war to be an international trial. He states (Park, 1941),

Between civilized nations also war is the form of litigation by which states make their claims valid.

By-product of war, irrespective of the results, is death, destruction and suffering. The nation as a whole, celebrates, grieves and processes the war together which forms the basis of collective memory. Paul M.M Doolan (Doolan, 2021) studies this collective memory. He states,

Collective memory contains no essence, no immutable status or transcendental being. It does not exist in some ethereal sphere waiting to be discovered. Instead, it is a mediated memory that, as Jan Assman suggests, is “stored away in symbolic form”.

Contextualising collective memory to the nation, Amos Funkenstein (Funkenstein, 1989) states,

Nations are meant to remember their heroes "forever"; to perpetuate the memory of a person means to embed it in the collective memory

The state attempts to transform this collective memory into a national identifier by way of museums, national holidays, etc.

Nation-states primary role is protecting the nation’s right to self-determination, with disregard towards others self-interests. Conflicts mobilize the nation and hence is a trial by fire for any nation, representing a test of the strength of their conviction. War is the product of a clash of national identities and with time molds each respective national identity. Samuel Huntington (Huntington, 1996) in his work ‘Clash of Civilizations’ hypothesis the existence of seven, possibly eight civilizations categorized culturally. He predicts future conflicts as a clash among these civilizations. He states:

Nation states are and will remain the most important actors in world affairs, but their interests, associations, and conflicts are increasingly shaped by cultural and civilizational factors.

Huntington emphasis on the identity aspects of international conflicts.

National identity being abstract requires an element of tangibility to proliferate and be considered credible. War as an event brings tangibility to the imagined communion, eventually evolving into a testimony of national identity. War becomes part of the collective memory of the nation and gives a sense of a shared national experience. Victories in war form part of national pride, giving credence to the national identity over others. Loss in war and the human cost of war provides a new life to the nation in search of purpose for their loss. Martyrs become

immortal heroes to be looked upon to find national strength and unity. Ernest Renan believes the nation itself to be defined by its past escapades, victories and losses. He believes national unity is directly related to the national suffering a nation has endured, and regards past glories to be the best social asset. To Renan (Renan, 1990),

A nation is a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of sacrifices that one has made in the past, and of those one is prepared to make in the future.

Renan hence, emphasises the importance of the human cost of war in influencing national identity narratives.

During a war, the nation as a whole is mobilised. National loyalties supersede regional loyalties. In case of a loss, the nation may choose, as a defensive strategy, to blame certain social groups for the loss, to protect the integrity and respect for the nation as a whole. An example of this is post-World War 1 Germany, where the loss of World War 1 was blamed disproportionately on the Jews. Hence, war acts as a great unifier or as an impetus to the eventual breakup of the national arrangement. The importance of national identity in any conflict is clearly postulated by Gareth Evans (Evans, 2011),

The sense of national identity is never stronger than when countries are at war with each other, at imminent risk of war, or remembering war.....it is war, the prospect of war, and the memory of war that has traditionally shaped and defined that collective national sentiment and sense-of-self we think of as being at the core of national identity

By defending oneself, the nation demarcates the “other” and in the process defines itself more concretely.

Wars fought by nations become part of their national identity. The room for arbitration of disputes in the case of ongoing wars grows narrower as nations are sceptical about negotiating with their national identifiers. In this way, negotiations in war threatens the nation as it dilutes their respective national identity. This is more prominent in the case of the losing side since any compromise is seen as a betrayal to the fallen men. Wars have a tendency to perpetuate, to give meaning to the sacrifices of the fallen, and in the hope of avenging them with undisputed victory. The winning side attach a sense of pride with the war further alienating any form of negotiation. Hence, war and it becoming a national identifier, provides the war with a life of its own, perpetuating in continuity. Compromises can be observed when the nations stop

valuing the loss, either in the fear of further suffering or because they evolve away from the premise of the conflict.

II

The case of India and Pakistan

The Indo-Pak conflict is one of the enduring legacies of British Imperialism in the Indian Sub-continent. It is the direct result of the divide and rule policy adopted by the British. The deliberate state action to divide a diverse India under communal lines led to the horrors of the partition. Since independence, India and Pakistan have fought four major wars. Post the Kargil conflict, which saw the world edge dramatically close to a nuclear confrontation, Pakistan has ventured into unconventional warfare. According to Ministry of Home Affairs, (Ministry of Home Affairs, GoI, 2005) Pakistan:

has recruited, trained, financed, armed and Infiltrated terrorist in India.....Pakistan has not yet dismantled the terrorism infrastructure in the territory under its control. This infrastructure is continued to be sponsored and used by Pak-ISI to recruit, train and finance terrorists and infiltrate them into India.

As of 2022, Pakistan has been retained in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Grey List, and has been scrutinized for its role in terrorist financing, money laundering and proliferation financing.

The rest of the paper will analyse the national identities of India and Pakistan. It will delve into the impact of the Indo-Pak conflict on their respective identities.

Indian National identity

A recognition of the diversity of the Indian nation is critical to understand the complexity of Indian national identity. India is an enigma for social scientist. India represents 17.7% of the world population. It has 23 official languages. It is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. Nationhood based on language, ethnicity, culture fall short of explaining Indian nationhood. Shashi Tharoor (Tharoor, *From Midnight to Millennium*, 1997) states:

India embraces the extraordinary mixture of ethnic groups, the profusion of mutually incomprehensible languages, the varieties of topography and climate, the diversity of religions and cultural practices, and the range of levels of economic development.

But, a narrative, constructs an identity that binds this incomprehensible diversity under a single communion. Indian national identity is a product of the interdependence model of nation building as contrast to the integrative model (Gautam, 1985). This model envisioned an interdependence among the diversity.

.... national culture is conceived in composite terms. Culture is associated with land and its people and not with religion. Indian nationalist intellectuals conceived Indian culture as a composite culture in the making of which all religious and social group have made their contribution over time. (Gautam, 1985)

Hence, in the case of India, the definition of nation, has to be altered to,

a multi-ethnic community in which different ethnic groups while retaining their ethnic identity resolve any conflict between national and ethnic identities in favour of the nation. (Gautam, 1985)

India held a centre stage in world trade and pilgrimage through history. This brought India in contact with diverse people and cultures. The Indian subcontinent has been invaded from the north numerous times by central Asian khanates, as well as by the Greek. Culturally, India rarely remained static. Any culture or religion that entered India, was envisioned to have moulded Indian culture, as they were moulded by Indian culture, metamorphosing a unique Indian variant. Recognising Paul Gilroy's (Gilroy, 1995) "melting pot" metaphor, he states,

National identity.... subordinates ethnic, racial, religious and cultural differences to the assimilating logic of a common culture, or the 'melting pot'

Indian nation is better described by, as Shashi Tharoor (Tharoor, What is India?, 2018) states, the "thali" metaphor. Shovana Ray (Ray, 2017) states, "Centuries of Indian civilization and years of amalgamation of various traditions, mould today's Indian citizen". This aspect of the diversity of India forms the bedrock of commonality. The different practices and nuances of culture that are articulated in India are unique to the geography of the Indian subcontinent. Shoyana Ray states, "With all evident diversities, Indians share common components, like, way of life, values, norms, etc."

Among Miller's (Miller, 1995) axioms of nationality, the belief in the existence of a national community and historical continuity stand out in the case of India. The existence of a national community was realised as a product of the national struggle during colonial times. The struggle for Independence bound different groups under a single communion to attain independence and sovereignty. The Indian National Congress, which spear headed the Indian independence movement, focussed on creating narratives that were universally inclusive to bind the nation together. Historical continuity was drawn from the time of the Indus Valley civilisation to colonial times, in a civilizational sense. The unit of continuity, in traditional cases being language, lineage, etc., in India's case, was seen as the whole unit of the Indian geography, which is east of the river Indus. The Indian national movement, constructed inclusive national identifiers as a tool of social mobilisation for the national cause and used a historic perspective and a common struggle to bind the diversity under a commonality. Hence, India realised its civilizational existence and achieved national conscience.

Indian identity adopted humanist moral doctrines to bridge the diversity of norms and cultures. Doctrines such as liberty, equality, fraternity, justice, secularism were adopted as identifying markers as evident from the preamble of the Indian constitution (GOI, n.d.). These ideals are revered across cultures, bridging the gaps between them. To illustrate, the doctrine of equality can be found in the Vedas (considered the bedrock of Hinduism):

The Vedas speak highly of equality and brotherhood... "The entire world is a family" was the motto of Vedic civilization. All had equal opportunity in all walks of life in Vedic civilization. (Pandey, 2014)

Similar doctrine can be found Buddhism which preaches, 'According to Buddhism, equality is not fragmentary and sectional, but complete and universal.' (Biu, 2003). In Islam

...God has given man this right of equality as a birth right. Therefore, no man should be discriminated against on the ground of the colour of his skin, his place of birth, the race or the nation in which he was born. ('Ala Maudoodi, Ahmad, & Khan, 1976)

Adopting the Right to Equality under Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, helps bridge the other differences that arises among Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam by enshrining the equality of all human beings.

Indian national identity is a product of moral doctrines, history of diversity and a process of cultural amalgamation. Constitution of any nation is a document laminating the past and

envisioning the future. India derives and laminates its identifiers in its preamble. All these fragmented identifiers are perfectly articulated by the phrase, “Unity in Diversity”. This provides the tolerant, inclusive doctrine that Indians idealise as an identifier.

Pakistani National Identity

The nation of Pakistan being a part of the Indian sub-continent has shared a common history. While defining their nationhood and national identity, Pakistan had to make a conscious effort to differentiate itself from India. During the colonial struggle, the demand for an Islamic nationhood was under the overall struggle for sovereignty and independence from the imperial. At the dawn of Independence, with the proclamation of partition, Pakistan had a megalith task of defining and differentiating its nationality.

The fear of the Muslim community, being suppressed in a democratic, Hindu-majority nation, led to formulating a two-nation theory. The two-nation theory was antithetical to India’s view of a melting pot culture, where each culture that enters India, changes the existing cultures and gets itself changed in the process. The two-nation theory proposed the existence of two distinct nations in the Indian sub-continent, each with its own values and traditions, isolated, and rarely intermingling. Muhammad Ali Jinnah in his presidential address to the Muslim League (Jinnah, Presidential Address to Muslim League, 1940) states,

The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literature[s]. They neither intermarry nor interdine together, and indeed they belong to two different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions.

Isthiaq Ahmed (Ahmed, 2008) charts Pakistani National identity from the eve of Independence. A commonality based on Islam was constructed, to create a nation which recognizes its right to self-determination. By nature, the Muslim Leagues narrative of nationhood were exclusionary rather than inclusive. But, in the Indian sub-continent, Islam, under its ambit hosts tremendous diversity. During the national struggle, Islam become a social mobiliser for people from Punjab to Bengal. Once independence was realized, the newly formed Pakistan, had to devise methods that shifts loyalty from Islam to Pakistan.

What did the nation of Pakistan represent during the national movement?

300 years prior to the British raj, India was controlled by a series of Muslim dynasties. After the revolt of 1857 and Bahadur Shah II being banished to Burma, the power dynamics changed. The Indian Muslims suddenly realized their minority status. As the INC channeled the national movement with a promise of a democratic independent India, Indian Muslims feared being suppressed by the majority Hindu nation (Kiss, 2013).

The Indian National Congress senior leaders were openly leaning towards socialism as a means to organize the economy upon independence. This made a lobby of landed aristocrats from Punjab and Bengal, who supported the Muslim League's cause for a separate nation, as ways to retain their capital, and in effect their hierarchical supremacy.

There was a network of Muslim clergies, fundamentalist and revivalist who believed, the creation of Pakistan as a nation for Muslims, would preserve the sharia law and the Islamic way of life. Secularism propounded by INC leaders such as M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru was seen as a threat to Islam. This group would later come to play a dominating role in shaping and controlling Pakistani national identity and politics. It is important to mention the lack of unity among this network, with some ullemas and maulvis opposing the demand for Pakistan.

Post-Independence

Muhammad Ali Jinnah attempted to subdue Islam as the identifier post-independence, and envisioned a secular and liberal nation-state. He states (Jinnah, First Presidential Address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 1947),

You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the state. [...] We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state [...]. Now I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but the political sense as citizens of the state.

Arshi Saleem Hashmi (Hashmi, 2009) states,

Despite being an Islamic Republic constitutionally, there was a clear division between politics and religion, as well as a distinction between private and public Islam, at least

in the formidable years after the creation of Pakistan. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, in his inaugural address to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947, clearly stated that religion was a private affair of the individual and highlighted the equality of religions.

Christopher Jaffrelot (Jaffrelot, 2012) analyses Pakistan's post-independent attempt at secularization. He highlights the inclusion of minority rights in the first two drafts of Pakistan's constitution.

...the first two Constitutions of Pakistan did not define Islam as an official religion and recognized important rights to the minorities

But once Islam as a unifier had been established, it resisted any attempt at a change in the discourse. As India celebrated liberty and secularism, Pakistan, to own up to its national claim, was forced to embrace Islam as its moral doctrine. Under Islam, the Ahmediyas has been cast as non-Muslims. (Ahmed, 2008). To homogenise East Pakistan and West Pakistan (the centre of power), Urdu was promoted as the official language. This led to frictions in East Pakistan, where linguistic identity of Bengali, which represented more than just a language but also a continuity of culture, proved to be more decisive than their Islamic identity. This led to the Bangladeshi Liberation War of 1971, and the creation of the nation of Bangladesh.

Post liberation of Bangladesh, Pakistan started a process termed as "Islamization" to consolidate power, in the fear of further succession. Riaz Hassan (Hassan, 1985) highlights the process of Islamization of Pakistani society, making it a central aspect of Pakistani national identity. Any confusion with regards to official state policy being inclined towards Islamic ideology or being aspirational towards a secular state was settled during the period of President Zia ul Haq reign.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the inherent cold war dynamics, saw USA use Pakistan as a base to counter soviet influence. Again Islam was preached as a social mobiliser against soviet communism. This Islam was more fundamental and rigid in nature. This further empowered the fundamental segments of Pakistani society on their righteousness.

Pakistani National identity, as it evolved through time, is still reflective of Islamic morality. Hence, religion forms the predominant identifier and continues to mobilise society.

Indo-Pak Conflict

Kashmir is the central battlefield of the Indo-Pak conflict. This section will analyse the Indo-Pak conflict with Kashmir at its centre. The genesis of the Indo-Pak conflict lies in their respective narratives of nationhood. As Sumit Ganguly (Ganguly, 1995) states,

...can be traced to the profoundly divergent conceptions of nation building that underlie the Indian and Pakistani nationalist movement..... possession of Kashmir, a Muslim-majority state abutting the two nascent states, consequently assumed a significance far greater than a mere territorial claim

Kashmir for India, represents the essence of Indian secularism. It is symbolic of the Indian experiment, where diversity can co-exist in a federal arrangement, and can shine in the global stage. Kashmir for Pakistan, represents the very essence of its nationhood, the belief in Muslim majority states of South Asia to collectivise under the banner of Islam and protect the Islamic way of life and its purity. As Ambassador V. K. Grover (Grover, 2001) states,

Pakistan was a creation of the two-nation theory. The same was reduced to ashes when East Pakistan broke away from its western half. Kashmir remains the last fig of the failed two-nation theory..... Pakistan as an entity cannot give up the Kashmir issue if it is to survive.

Hence, the battlefield is not merely India and Pakistan but secularism and communalism. This aspect of the conflict prevents any form of compromise from either states, in the fear of poking holes in their national narratives.

Another dimension to the lack of conflict resolution can be explained through the sunk-cost fallacy in war. Sunk-cost fallacy is the tendency of agents to continue investing money, men and resources in an endeavour, even after continued disappointments and failures, so the initial investment doesn't seem wasteful. If the conflict remains hot, losses aren't eternal and there is a possibility of retribution. Pakistan still holds narratives of a grand victory against India in the future to rationalise the conflict. This can be seen by the comments of Pakistan's Interior Minister, Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad, on Pakistani Cricket team winning against India as "victory of Islam" (Shams, 2021).

India and Pakistan as nations had their genesis during the partition. Since the partition, India and Pakistan have been at perpetual war, at times hot and at times cold. Hence, the national identity so developed of the respective nations, have been influenced to a great extent by the ongoing conflict, where part of what mobilizes each nation is tensions with the other. Hence, any attempt at arbitration and resolution should take into account the national identity component of the conflict.

Conclusion

The paper started by establishing a theoretical framework of nations, nationalism and national identity. It further ventured into the relation between national identity and war and in this way attempted to study the identity aspect of wars. Is war an independent event or is it intrinsically related to the nation? Viewing wars from a strategic lens or going by state narratives for the war does not comprehensively justify the perpetuation of war. The reasons for continuity of hostility are linked to national identities. War starts and perpetuates as a clash of identities. Any measure of conflict resolution has to take into account the national identifier of the respective state into account. The paper believes any resolution that vows to address a particular conflict without due attention to the underlying identifiers is only a temporary ease of tensions, with the potential to relapse into war in the future. Hence, a study of history of parties to the conflict that evolves from a ground level ethnographic research on war narratives is necessary for concrete solution to end the cause for wars.

The paper took to studying the Indo-Pak conflict through the lens of national identity and found that for both nations, the Kashmir issue represents a test of their national grit. It represents the premise of their respective concept of nationhood. It represents an opportunity for Pakistan to redeem its perceived failures. To India, it represents military glory and the collective strength of the Indian nation against insurmountable odds challenging its sovereign integrity. It therefore follows that any arbitration has to carefully negotiate what Kashmir represents to each nation. Solution to the issue have to manoeuvre through the identifiers to arrive at a compromise where neither India nor Pakistan feel the sense of defeat.

The nations of India and Pakistan have more similarities than they have differences. There are similarities in culture, language, religion, history, etc. Although no formal trade agreement exists, India and Pakistan have an informal trade amounting to USD 4.71 Billion (Taneja &

Bimal, 2016). Focusing and building on such similarities and common interests will ameliorate built-up tensions and help dilute the aggressive war narratives prevalent in each nation. The Indian film industry, especially Bollywood, enjoys a tremendous appeal in Pakistan. Sufi music from Pakistan similarly enjoys enormous patronage in India. These factors indicate ample room for cultural diplomacy as means of reconciliation. If both nations chose to focus on their similarities rather than their differences, India and Pakistan can work towards a more peaceful future.

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