

Violence and the Partition of India: Voices from Pakistan

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Abstract: *This interview, centred on the theme of violence in South Asian history and culture with a particular focus on the partition of India from the perspective of past and present, has been conducted with four persons from different walks of life: Kishwar Sultana Mir, a refugee from Amritsar based in Lahore, who was seven years old when the partition was about to take place; Khawar Kazi, retired Lecturer of English at Kinnaird College for Women Lahore, who was six at the time of the partition; Usman Qasmi, a university professor specialising in South Asian history at Lahore University of Management and Sciences (LUMS); and Ishtiaq Ahmed, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Stockholm University and a Visiting Professor at the Government College University, Lahore. In this interview, Mir and Kazi narrate their first-hand experiences during the partition as Mir's entire family was uprooted from her hometown Amritsar, which became a part of newly created India, forcing her to move to Gujarat and then on to Lahore where she currently lives, whereas Kazi's father was the Commissioner for Rehabilitation in Lahore who was actively involved in accommodating refugees in the newly created Pakistan. Complementing these two first-hand accounts, Qasmi's and Ahmed's scholarly insights lend a refreshing perspective on the legacies of the partition violence in South Asia.*

Keywords: Hindu-Muslim relations, partition violence, forced migration, India-Pakistan conflict

I

Kishwar Sultana Mir was a refugee from Amritsar in Lahore around the time of the partition of India in 1947, where she first settled down in the neighbourhood of Beadon Road before she got married to a professor of English from a Kashmiri family and moved into the walled city of Lahore, called *Sutter Mundi*, one of the oldest historical sites. This move was a cultural shock for her as the walled cities of Lahore are a world of their own, following old cultural and religious norms. After having five daughters and a son, she realised her cherished dream of building a house in a modern locality in Lahore, Pakistan where she has lived since then.

Nadia Butt (NB): What is your first memory of the Partition times? What was the atmosphere like in Amritsar before you fled your homes and moved to Lahore?

Kishwar Sultana Mir (KSM): I was hardly seven years old when India was going to be divided. I remember the spread of Hindu-Muslim riots in our neighbourhood, called *Bhagatawal Darwaza*. As a result, there were often curfews with English soldiers marching around to check that no one was outside their home in our street, named *Pahalwanoo wali Gallee*. My parents had started talking about a lot of bloodshed among the Muslims as they were increasingly being persecuted by the Hindus and vice versa. We were told all the time of imminent attacks in our area. So, my family was advised to leave our homes and hearths as soon as possible. I remember being absolutely frightened and terrified at night. I used to sit by the window as we were told to stay awake as long as possible so that we were able to defend ourselves better. Nights were really appalling. As we did not feel safe any longer, we got on a truck with our sparse belongings and travelled to Lahore before the partition was actually announced. It was a strange feeling leaving not only a home, my ancestral home, but my village behind forever, to which I never got a chance to return. My father, who was a goldsmith, stayed behind to look after his belongings, though. We first arrived in a village *Deona Juliani* near Gujrat and stayed there for a while. Then we lived in an empty house in *Landa Bazar*, Lahore which actually belonged to my maternal uncle whose wife had gone to India before we moved to 23 Beadon Road, to a house with “Om” written on it as it actually belonged to a Hindu family, who was forced to flee to India. At that time, poverty and misery were looming large. We used to borrow utensils, like most needy families, from our more privileged neighbours as we did not have anything. On 15 of August, my father, who was still living in the house in Amritsar, heard an announcement: “Is there any Muslim left behind to get on the last truck leaving for the newly created Pakistan?” He had no chance to pack his belongings, so he left everything and ran away from the back door of his abandoned house to Lahore.

NB: What sticks out in your memory as the most unforgettable event during these turbulent times?

KSM: I do remember an utterly gory event around that time. My father one day came home and told us that a train from India had arrived with dead, mutilated bodies of Muslims at the main railway station in Lahore. The Hindus and Sikhs had apparently taken revenge on the Muslim refugees for allegedly supporting the creation of Pakistan when in reality those innocent people were forced to leave their homes behind in India. My father pointed out that women and children were drenched in blood and were beyond recognition, as they were massacred with daggers and axes in cold blood. This incident was assumed to have changed the mood in Lahore where we had planned to move from *Deona Juliani*. The Hindu-Muslim riots had become the order of the day.

We literally felt as if peace had become a far cry; Lahore did not appear any safer than Amritsar.

In fact, in the wake of the train from India to Lahore carrying only corpses, a series of bloodshed had erupted. I remember one day my father coming home in great panic. He said, *Shah-Alami Gate* or *Shalmi* (as the locals call it) had been set entirely on fire, which was the hub of influential Hindu businessmen. The Hindus were sure that no one would be able to attack *Shalmi* as it was surrounded by solid walls claiming, “*No Mai ka Lal* (no brave son of a mother) can harm us!” But the Muslim gangs entered *Shalmi* through the gutters and set it on fire. This incident made all the rich Hindus leave Lahore and flee to India.

There is yet another incident I would like to share: Before the partition, we first arrived in a village *Deona Juliani* near Gujrat, as I have mentioned before, where lived a young stationmaster Krishan. My mother discovered that the Muslims decided to kill Krishan, who was the only support of his old, frail mother. As the Hindu-Muslim animosity was increasing day-by-day, people in the village argued that murdering a Hindu is a way of avenging the murder of innocent Muslims at the hands of Hindus and Sikhs. My mother intervened and declared that she would not let that happen. Then she helped the young man and his old mother escape from their hometown to India. A similar incident comes to my mind now. In our neighbourhood in Lahore after the partition, there lived a 16-year-old Hindu with his two sisters and a mother whom our neighbours planned to murder. He and his family were living on the upper floor of the house whereas an Englishwoman was living on the ground floor. As soon as the Englishwoman found out that the life of that man was in danger, she immediately made him and his family escape to India secretly.

NB: Why do you think the partition brought out the worst in people? Why was there so much violence and cruelty?

KSM: It is still widely believed that it was a lot to do with the colonial policy of divide-and-rule. But according to my mother, who lived in united India most of her lives, it was a consequence of ethnic and religious prejudices among the Hindus towards the Muslims...

NB: But Hindus and Muslims had been living together peacefully in the same neighbourhood for ages, so why did they suddenly become bitter enemies when the partition was imminent?

KSM: Yes. However, the political decision of dividing India into separate states accentuated the hidden prejudices. My mother often complained that the Hind women at lunch or dinner time often commanded that she as a Muslim woman should look away so that the food is not polluted by the gaze of the ‘unholy’ lookers. It used to annoy her a lot. Moreover, during those turbulent times we did feel that the Hindus manipulated and instrumentalised the Sikhs to a great extent to achieve their ulterior motifs by promising them *Khalistan*, ‘the pure

land for Sikhs.’ Indeed, the Hindus and the Sikhs appeared to be our worst enemies. I do not, nevertheless, claim that the Muslims were innocent either. Whenever they got the chance to kill and attack the Hindus or the Sikhs, they did not refrain from it. I cannot forget the story of Boota Singh whose grave was opened by one of the men in our neighbourhood in Lahore for punishing him for committing suicide, which he claimed to be against the injunctions of Islam.

NB: Do you mean the same character about whom several films have been made too?

KSM: Yes. I mean the same character. People in our neighbourhood were devastated to hear that even after converting to Islam, after losing his Muslim wife to the newly created Pakistan, losing his only daughter, and even after committing suicide, he was punished for being a Sikh. This is heartrending.

NB: Do you think the legacy of violence has somewhat carried on? People on both sides of the political divide do not seem to learn anything from the history of violence?

KSM: As far as we have Kashmir as the bone of contention causing the war of 1965 and 1971 between India and Pakistan as modern nation states, we are not able to learn from our history. I see the same patterns of religious discrimination and ethnic cleansing being repeated as I turn on TV which I actually saw during the partition times. Gangs of “cow protectors” have been implicated in killing at least 10 Muslims in the past two years as the welfare of the animal has become an increasingly charged issue in Indian politics. Similarly, I read about a crowd of Muslims back in 2014, which burnt a Hindu temple and a *dharmashala* in Larkana, Sindh, Pakistan, after unverified allegations of a Hindu youth, desecrating a copy of the Quran, were made public. It is high time we made conscious efforts to change mind-sets, racial and religious prejudice. Above all, we need to elect peace-loving democrats if we wish to ensure peace in South Asia.

II

Khawar Kazi, is a retired lecturer of English at Kinnaird College of Women, one of the most prestigious institutes in Lahore, Pakistan where she taught partition narratives besides English language and literature to undergraduate students. As an avid reader of partition literature and of Bapsi Sidhwa’s works, she has also published a book *Reading Companions to the Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*, which came out in 2014.

Nadia Butt (NB): The partition of India resulted in one of the biggest genocides in the history of South Asia, but people tend not to talk about the atrocities especially against women openly in Pakistan in print or electronic media. The focus is less on

discussing the partition as a violent act than the necessity to protect the rights of Indian Muslims. Why is it the case?

Khawar Kazi (KK): Overall, the people of Pakistan consider the partition to be a highly important historic and necessary event that was supposed to shape their future in a better way. People were and are convinced of the philosophy of partition. So, whatever atrocities that took place, therefore, should be mentioned and understood in that context. However, I don't think that those atrocities are not talked about or mentioned openly; it's just that they are mentioned not directly as an outcome of the partition, but simply as a result of cruel and unfair treatment of the innocent during a mission that they felt and feel even today was righteous and essential. Hence, violence is believed to be not directly associated with the partition but with the unfair circumstances at that historical moment.

NB: What do you think was the role of different ethnic communities in the partition violence?

KK: This depends on different experiences by different people concerned. There was violence everywhere and I don't think one community can be singled out. Every ethnic group suffered. However, there is still a tendency to put blame on a certain ethnic group. A significant number of Muslims, for example, would still claim today that the Sikhs carried out the most horrific crimes against them – from raping Muslim women to killing children and butchering men. But ask someone from the Sikh community and he or she will have an equally harrowing story to reveal. I do remember hearing about men throwing children in the sea after the partition as these children were born to women raped by Sikh men.

NB: As a scholar of partition literature, how do you see the writers address this issue? Has literature contributed to a better understanding of violence or not? How does the current generation of Pakistanis understand it?

KK: Most of the literature (and narratives) about partition, in my view, are the text book version promoted by the governments; hence, it is not the most reliable source for me as it does not sufficiently cover the sacrifices and sufferings of millions of people from different ethnic groups during the partition. This is one of the reasons why the new generation of Pakistan does not fully comprehend the extent of violence that happened. At school they learn some bare facts and figures about the partition without going into its deeper dimensions. Writers of fiction about partition, like Bapsi Sidhwa, have actually tried to give a more original account of the partition by using fiction as a means of expression and documenting 'other' histories that we may not encounter in any government record.

NB: Do you remember your father telling you a story or an event which involved violence?

KK: I was only six years old when partition took place and my father was transferred to Lahore from Simla in 1946. My father was at that time the Commissioner for Rehabilitation in Lahore and was therefore actively involved in accommodating all refugees from India. The stories during the partition times he actually told me much later in my life, which were mostly about the camps he was in charge of. One of the stories I remember is of a woman in a camp, Sakina Bibi, whose entire family was killed by the Sikhs in front of her. Her husband and all her four children were slayed while she lay on the ground. It was a blood bath. She had no relatives in Pakistan and was sent to *Dar-ul-Aman*, a home for destitute women. I do not know what became of her afterwards, but this is the story I have never forgotten.

NB: Did your parents consider the partition a violent political act? It was not just dividing land but people, communities and culture, so how did they feel about the division?

KK: My parents were strong supporters of The Muslim League and Mohammad Ali Jinnah and although they were deeply disturbed by the violence that eventually happened during the partition, they somehow never labelled partition as a violent political act over all. It was considered more as a major sacrifice that people made for something they thought was necessary. Partition was understood as a step to protecting the political and economic rights of Muslims who felt oppressed in united India. So, the Muslims like my parents supporting partition could not imagine violence as dominating a political decision in favour of the Muslims.

NB: Do you think the legacy of violence and hate is still tangible if we look at India and Pakistan relations?

KK: Yes, the legacy of mistrust, hatred and violence sadly still continues between India and Pakistan, at least at the level of the respective governments and armies. Unfortunately, we cannot ignore the fact that our own country is divided and ravaged by religious and ethnic violence, let alone the violence between India and Pakistan; there have been Sunni-Shia violence, causing so many deaths as well as atrocities against the Ahmadis, a religious sect facing persecution since the times of military dictator Zia-ul-Haq in 1977, and the Christian community, the second largest minority group after Hindus. Besides this unrest, we cannot forget the separation of East Pakistan in 1971 on the basis of ethnic differences. However, it seems that the people of both countries are more open to better ties between the two nations and there is an increasing trend of our youth wanting to bury the past and move on in the better interest of both sides.

NB: Your father and in fact your family belonged to an educated, upper-class. Do you think upper classes were not as much victim of the partition as the lower, working classes on both sides of the divide?

KK: Yes, the upper-classes generally fared better than the lower. As an example, the upper-class generally had claim papers based on which they could exchange properties and live in houses similar to the ones they had left behind, whereas the poor had to face a major struggle in this regard. Most of them ended up in refugee camps and later on in places which did not match the comfort and belonging of their life before.

NB: Do you think that the partition could have been avoided?

KK: Given the multi-dimensional socio-political developments in the Indian sub-continent during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, I feel the partition could not have been avoided. However, I do feel that the process of partition could have been managed in a much better way. It was carried out in a very short timeframe, so the time was just too little that was assigned to finish such a mammoth task. People and territories were divided without much thinking, which damaged peace on the entire Indian subcontinent for years to come. A lot of violence could have been avoided if the partition had been carried out more judiciously.

III

Usman Qasmi has been an Assistant Professor (History) at the School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) since January 2012. He received his PhD from the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University in March 2009. Before joining LUMS, he was a Newton Fellow for Post-Doctoral research at Royal Holloway College, University of London. He has published extensively in reputed academic journals such as *Modern Asian Studies*, *The Muslim World* and *The Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies*. He has recently published a monograph titled *Questioning the Authority of the Past: The Ahl al-Qur'an Movements in the Punjab* (2011). Besides these, he has co-edited a volume on Muhammad Iqbal titled *Revisioning Iqbal as a Poet and Muslim Political Thinker* (2011). Dr. Qasmi is also a visiting research fellow in History at the Royal Holloway College, University of London.

Nadia Butt (NB): As a scholar of South Asian history, what is your perspective on cultures of violence in the history of South Asia?

Usman Qasmi (UQ): As I see it, there is a need to understand the sociological roots of violence in South Asia. The current explanatory mode in popular narratives and official reports are strongly embedded in colonial modes of representation. It approaches violence as an inevitable product of clash which stems from irreconcilable religious, sectarian, linguistic or caste differences. This understanding of the Indian society as inherently prone to violence enabled the British to project themselves as neutral arbiters between warring communities and guarantors of peace, stability and the rule of law in this region. There has to be a decoupling of violence from this colonial

understanding of the society to understand the complexity of processes involved in an individual or collective act of violence.

NB: Violence seems to have several forms. What do you think is the worst form of violence practised still today in India and Pakistan? Many claim it is violence against women which is widespread (acid attacks, domestic violence, child marriage, to name a few) whereas some contend that it is violence against ethnic minorities which is more on the rise. So what is your take on this issue?

UQ: It is difficult to rank acts of violence based on any classificatory scheme. The intensity and modes of violence vary as well. Also, the occurrence of violence against women or minorities (defined along various lines) is not unique to South Asia alone. While more visible acts of violence causing physical harm are obviously easier to report, it is difficult to take stock of more pervasive, yet silent, modes of violence. This includes acts which either lack legal or religious/social sanction to be classified as acts of violence (for example, marital rape) or threats of violence which loom large and are a cause of agony, suffering and harassment on an everyday basis. Such a sublimated incidence of violence, which is not tangible yet part of a lived experience on an everyday basis, forces an internalisation of a defence mechanism or survival strategy to ensure protection.

NB: Why do you think religious and cultural differences among different ethnic minorities of the Indian subcontinent has always caused unrest, bloodshed, discontentment and even fear, the examples of which are noticeable in the print and electronic media of both India and Pakistan? Nowadays the Muslim population seems to be targeted under Modi's government in India, whereas the Rohingya Muslims are being brutally killed and expelled by the Burmese government.

UQ: I would disagree with the statement that religious and cultural differences have always caused a great degree of violence in South Asia. There has historically been an appreciation of plurality of traditions which has served to ensure tolerant coexistence. In fact, such widespread has been the incidence of these beliefs and practices that there has been a recent trend in scholarship against secularism as a political ideology embedded in Enlightenment tradition, and calls for an alternative mode of reorganizing state-religion dichotomy which draws upon these religious traditions to ensure religious harmony. In other words, if achieving pluralistic coexistence is at the heart of secularism as a political ideology, it can be better achieved, in South Asian context, through religion rather than a distancing from it. But I do not want to be a nostalgic admirer of pre-modern, pre-colonial era and its religious traditions as an idyllic age of peace and harmony, and simply label the British colonialism and modernity as the serpent which destroyed the eternal bliss of Paradise. There is a pre-history of communal violence as can be seen in eighteenth century

successor states in India. I would say that the histories of both religious pluralism and conflict have been used as tropes to understand Indian history, and both these trends served certain political ends. The supporters of a Nehruvian version of Indian secularism were eager to describe India as a civilisational force which gathered strength from diverse sources. Whereas, to both Hindu and Muslim nationalists, the tropes of difference and violence were preferable since they helped established historical justification and canonisation of a specific idea of nation arising out of violence and resistance against that violence. Again, this propensity to violence as part of a statist project is not unique to South Asia. We seem to be heading, or we already are, towards a situation where, to borrow from Arendt and Agamben, there is a normalisation of camp life where the individual is stripped of all rights, where he no longer has the right to have rights and reduced to bare life. We have seen this happen, in recent years, in Bosnia and now in case of Rohingya among many other places.

NB: Do you think politicians in India and Pakistan tend to use violence as a means of diverting people's attention from bigger problems in both countries such as child labour, violation of women rights and minorities, disease, poverty and unemployment? I mean both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers; they seem to have invested millions in bombs and army but less in the welfare of the common man?

UQ: I believe political motivations do set the larger context in which incitement to or mobilisation for violence is enabled. But it cannot entirely be reduced to the cunning of the state. There have been numerous instances of individuals spurting to violence without state conniving the process. The most horrendous example is that of violence around the partition. One cannot deny the role of certain religious leaders and organisations, but the bulk of violence was carried out by individuals voluntarily coming together to form jathas. They borrowed party and political slogans of that time to masquerade their acts as responsive in nature or crimes of passion. In my understanding of the violence which marred West Punjab in 1947, it is clear that it was motivated by the selfish motive of looting the shops and houses of affluent Hindus and Sikhs and occupying of their agricultural lands and other prized properties. In case of East Punjab, Sikh jathas, at times directly supported by Sikh princely states, wanted to ensure a concentrated majority of Sikhs in contiguous areas. This required emptying East Punjab of its sizeable Muslim population.

NB: Do you think violence has a lot to do with mind-set than cultural, religious and political prejudice among people often causing violent acts? We seem to exercise our national and cultural identity on the basis of our differences with India, as the birth of Pakistan was based on the notion of two-nation theory. I remember my grandfather saying that we need to honour differences and not

similarities. Many of our countrymen seem to have prejudices against Hindus as much as they have against us. So do you think the legacy of violence is rooted not only in our history but also in our mind-sets, the manifestation of which is conspicuous in current hatred against the opposite ethnic group across the border?

UQ: Faisal Devji in his book, *The Muslim Zion* (2013), argues that Jinnah's two-nation theory was based on a denial of history. He argues that for Jinnah, Hindus and Muslim were so deeply intertwined in the past – whether in conflict or harmony – that a disavowal from this past was the only way out. My understanding is completely different: I believe that the idea of Muslim nationhood, especially the one espoused by Jinnah, is grounded in history, albeit a history of conflict. You find the resonation of it in the ideologues of Pakistan's history, such as Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, who approach the history of Muslim community as that of survival and constant vigilance in the face of direct threats posed by 'Hinduism' through violence, or even peaceful assimilation. As I mentioned earlier, there has been a similar trend in case of Hindu nationalism in recent times. Audrey Truschke's recent book on the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and his legacy have caused considerable affront to Hindu nationalists who portray him as an enemy of Hinduism who ordered the destruction of hundreds of Hindu temples. So, there is a sense of the historical formation of the community popular in our times, informed by a sensibility or memory of violence with harrowing results.

Other than history, the lack of communication between people from these two countries is a major reason for the 'otherisation' of Pakistanis in India and vice versa. As studies have shown, the generation which witnessed the horrors of partition was still more amenable to peace and harmony between India and Pakistan. This is because they had first-hand experiences and memories of interacting with people from different communities. It is the present generation, whose entire understanding of the 'other' is based on textbooks and media, which is more violently disposed and shows more aggressive posturing.

IV

Ishtiaq Ahmed is a Swedish political scientist and author of Pakistani descent. He is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Stockholm University and is currently Visiting Professor at the Government College University, Lahore. He was a Visiting Professor at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) during 2013-2015 and a Visiting Research Professor at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), National University of Singapore, from June 2007 to June 2010. He is also Honorary Senior Fellow of the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore. His major publications include *The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed: Unravelling the 1947 Tragedy through Secret British Reports and First-Person Account* (2014), *The Pakistan Military in Politics:*

Origins, Evolution, Consequences (1947–2011) (2013), *The Politics of Religion in South and Southeast Asia* (ed., 2011), and *State, Nation, and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia* (1998).

Nadia Butt (NB): Since the two nations of India and Pakistan came into being after extremely violent events, do you think violence has been somewhat embedded into the past and present of the two nations and communities?

Ishtiaq Ahmed (IA): That is a very correct statement which I fully subscribe to. One can argue that if the partition had been peaceful and orderly the future relations between the two states could have been peaceful as well. However, the evidence suggests that no partition scheme would have satisfied the parties and communities concerned, so it was going to generate anger and frustration, which in turn could take the form of violent action. That it became so violent that more than a million Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were killed and 14-18 million crossed the international border was perhaps not anticipated by anyone.

NB: Why do violent events such as the persecution of Muslims in India in the name of saving cows by the Hindu nationalists or a Hindu being attacked in Pakistan for committing blasphemy continuously occur on both sides of the border in the name of ethnic or cultural difference?

IA: I think this follows logically from your first question and my answer given to it. The partition itself was based on an alleged incompatibility of Islam with Hinduism as well as the cultural differences of Muslim and Hindu, among other issues. That sort of utterly negative and downright diabolic interpretation of partition soon seeped into majoritarian nationalism on both sides of the border, which is clearly noticeable today. The cruel victimisation of minorities from the alleged enemy or opposite group has also its roots in the Two-Nation Theory, which had both Hindu and Muslim proponents. In Pakistan, its proponents came to power in 1947; consequently, they perpetuated the legacy of differences with India than urging peace and harmony. In India, the same scenario is observable. A considerable number of politicians and their supporters have been constantly trying to subvert the secular constitution in practice if not in theory, thus, use the state machinery against the Muslims

NB: Several people claim that the two countries share similar cultural traits despite religious and ethnic differences. But then why is the case that even shared aspects of popular culture such as cricket or Bollywood have failed to shed the animosity between the two nations? In fact, cricket matches and Bollywood films seem to make the situation even worse as they are being increasingly used as political tools to create more tension than harmony?

IA: Well, at times yes, but not always. I can understand that when India and Pakistan are playing cricket, their fans – their nations – would favour their side, but it has also been observed that Indians and Pakistanis if given a chance to meet and watch the match together have found such occasions great opportunities to make friends with one another. About Bollywood the evidence is that most Pakistanis watch Bollywood movies. Most movies are just entertainment, but some are used for preaching hatred of Pakistan – and in Pakistan too once in a while anti-India films are made. On the whole, films and film music have shown that the shared culture is much deeper and stronger than what the ultra-nationalists want us to believe. General Zia apparently had a ‘crush’ on Hema Malini. So, if I fell in love with Nargis when I was just a kid, don’t blame me.

NB: What sort of political leadership would be needed on both sides to resolve this conflict?

IA: We need a strong leadership which seeks peace negotiations to benefit both sides. That would mean a realisation that it is through mutual cooperation and not conflict that both countries are able to prosper at the cultural, political and economic level. Confrontations do not lead us anywhere. War and terrorism and other strong-arm tactics are not likely to resolve any kind of conflict as history has already shown us.

NB: Why do Indian and Pakistani politicians tend to invest more in perpetuating the culture of violence (India and Pakistan are both nuclear powers) than in welfare of the common man as millions of people in both countries are still living in abject poverty?

IA: Well, vested interests on both sides perpetuate the culture of violence because they can claim scarce resources from the national budget which benefit them – that would especially refer to the armed forces and security services.

NB: Why are India and Pakistan still bitter enemies? Is it more to do with Kashmir as a disputed territory, or is it to do more with the lack of strong democratic institutions in both India and Pakistan even though India is considered to be one of the largest democracies of the world?

IA: The Kashmir problem is a symptom of the disease which I call the Partition Syndrome. Democratic institutions are expected to prefer negotiations instead of war but if democracies take an intransigent position on disputes such as that of Kashmir they cannot resolve those disputes. I personally think that the Kasuri plan, as presented by Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri in his book, *Neither a Hawk nor a Dove* (2015), is the only practical way of resolving the Kashmir dispute. Kasuri not only emphasises that the international community should encourage both sides of the divided subcontinent to resolve their differences on Kashmir bilaterally, but also the fact that existing borders cannot be redrawn.

So, they have to be rendered irrelevant. Kasuri argues that the Line of Control should continue to serve as the demarcation of boundary between Azad Kashmir and Indian-held Kashmir, and be reduced to being just 'a line on the map'. Hence, efforts will be directed at building trust over a period of 15 years. During this period, both will cooperate to limit and eliminate terrorism; demilitarisation on both sides will gradually be effected, and trade and travelling be facilitated. To me, it is a win-win solution for India, Pakistan and the Kashmiris. But what remains to be seen is whether or not both sides are wise and mature enough to implement such a peace plan.

NB: Why do even some sincere efforts to curb terror attacks and political and cultural differences between the two countries seem to have failed miserably? I am thinking of Imran Khan inviting Bollywood actors to Pakistan for fundraising for his cancer hospital back in 1989, which made us believe at that time that the two countries had buried the hatchet. But it turned out to be only a momentary phase. I come across such cultural exchanges carried out outside the space of India and Pakistan, particularly staged in Dubai for example, than within the countries because of the fear of terror attacks.

IA: I think this question simply takes up another detail, but as I said if some vested interest has the power to subvert friendly initiatives and abuses that power with impunity then such initiatives cannot become a cumulative movement which can change perceptions and relations between the two nations. Pakistan enjoys global notoriety for harbouring India-centric and Kashmir-centric outfits. Then there are groups which indulge in sectarian terrorism; even in Afghanistan, Pakistan is suspected of being involved in terrorism. Pakistan alleges that India nurtures anti-Pakistan organisations and movements and is very active in Balochistan. It should not be surprising if the Pakistani allegations are correct. In fact, it would be strange if one side let the other get away with terrorism.

NB: After September 18, 2016 Uri attack in Kashmir that left 19 Indian soldiers dead and September 28, 2016 surgical strikes by India on Pakistan terror camps, Indian government had strongly protested against hiring of Pakistani actors by Indian film-makers. Indian politician Bal Keshav Thackeray, who founded the Shiv Sena, a Hindu right-wing Marathi ethnocentric party, had vowed to stop release of a few films in which Pakistani actors are playing roles, including Karan Johar's recent "Ae Dil Hai Mushkil" featuring Pakistani actor Fawad Khan, and Shah Rukh Khan's "Raees" which has cast Pakistani actor Mahira Khan. Do you think it could be possible to continue with cultural exchanges between the two countries when there is still violence on the political front?

IA: Now you pose a question which is purely speculative and normative. To begin with, the two violent incidents from September 2016 were meant to undermine efforts to normalise relations between the two states. I very strongly believe in the ardent need to promote peace and amity between India and Pakistan and would encourage all efforts to continue with such endeavours even if considerable hostility is shown by Shiv Sena and other fascists against Pakistani actors working in Bollywood.

NB: Talking to Pakistanis and Indians at home or abroad as to how to overcome violence in South Asia and win peace, I notice a habit of blaming the other for all kind of troubles. Each countryman seems to blame the other, either the bigotry of the opposing government or the cultural prejudice of people across the borders. Why do you think is the case? Why do we choose to put blame on the other instead of thinking a mutual solution to our cross-border problems?

IA: Because of what we call in social science – socialisation. On both sides, indoctrination against the enemy across the border takes place in many ways. The media, educational system and political entrepreneurs promote one-sided narratives. And don't forget politicised religion is the most lethal instrument to damn those outside the religious group. Demonisation and dehumanisation are best achieved in the name of God and nation. Historically such situations have led to war and resulted in massive killings. It is only after such killings that wisdom about live and let live has dawned upon enemy nations. World wars I and II are examples of learning the hard way. The problem is that since both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers, they may not have another chance to grow wiser after that war, if both resort to their nuclear arsenals to defeat the other side. The dead cannot come back to make peace for the living.

NB: As a political scientist what advice would you like to give to the civil society institutions in winning peace and harmony between India and Pakistan?

IA: Civil society is supposed to keep the state in check so that it does not abuse power and get away with it. That task should be addressed with a vision by accepting the fact of India and Pakistan as two sovereign nations have different political objectives, requirements and goals, but they are ready to act responsibly both in the domestic and regional as well as international spheres. This is a tall order and the civil society in Pakistan is especially very weak while in India efforts are afoot to marginalise it more and more. At present it seems that on both sides the civil society is facing increasing intimidation, but it should hold on to a humanist, secular, inclusive worldview.

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