

India – Pakistan Conflicts

History and origin of the conflict – Just before independence, the British had taken large tracts of land, which belonged to the ruler of Kashmir, Hari Singh on a 60 year lease. This land was to ostensibly provide a buffer to Soviet influence.

On independence, Hari Singh steadfastly refused to accede to either India or Pakistan, asserting instead his right to independence.

To force him to accede to Pakistan, Pakistani tribesmen invaded the kingdom from the west. Hari Singh appealed to India to help. Sardar Vallabhai Patel, insisted that the help would be conditional to accession to India. Hari Singh accepted and Sardar Patel, sent the Indian Army into Kashmir to defend it.

The acceptance of this accession is still controversial. India and Pakistan has previously signed an agreement not to unilaterally intervene in Kashmir. With no proof of Pakistan's direct involvement in the invasion, India expressed inability to help Kashmir until it agreed to be a part of India.

Pakistan has always maintained that the instrument of accession was signed under duress and hence the earlier agreement on India's non interference in Kashmir stands. India's position is that Pakistan's unprovoked invasion of Kashmir and the accession itself has rendered any earlier agreement null and void.

The resulting war –**the First Kashmir War**, raged till the end of 1948. Invading forces brushed aside the thinly spread and poorly equipped forces of Kashmir state and almost overran Srinagar. However timely intervention by Indian forces, stopped the advance.

In this war, the primary loss of territory was due to the mutiny by the "Gilgit scouts", a local regiment stationed at Gilgit. Further the tribesmen were helped by the forces from the princely state of Chitral, where the local ruler had joined Pakistan.

The matter was referred to the UN Security Council. The UN ordered a ceasefire and ordered Pakistan to withdraw. This never happened. The UN further ordered a plebiscite in Kashmir. This has never happened either. India lost a lot of territory in the Higher Himalayas region.

In 1962, India again lost a lot of territory to an invasion by the Chinese. The Indian side was taken totally by surprise.

The Second Kashmir War 1965 - This war was the culmination of skirmishes between the border police on both sides of the Rann of Kutch, the Border security force and the Indus Rangers. However this quickly escalated and Pakistan soon advanced into India, gaining about 350sqkm.

Ayub Khan, who was the military dictator in Pakistan, believed that India would now be demoralized following its defeat against the Chinese. In "Operation Gibraltar" he planned an invasion of Kashmir.

Indian troops invaded Pakistan Occupied Kashmir on August 15th 1965. Whether this was unprovoked or a response to reconnaissance information is disputed. War broke out and both sides made gains into each other's territory.

Pakistan then made a concerted attack in the southern sector, in Punjab, deploying technologically superior Patton tanks. The Indians were outmatched and taken by surprise. Pakistan made gains into Indian Territory.

However the tables' changes, when India started using its Air force against the tanks. India then launched a counterattack crossed the Ichhogil canal and almost marched into Lahore.

However Pakistan bombed the Advancing Indians and forced a withdrawal.

Pakistan's tank deployments in India were crushed at the Battle of Asal Uttar. The war resulted in minor gains for both countries and a stalemate ensued.

This war is generally believed to be a consequence of complacency on both sides. Pakistan grossly underestimated the will of the armies in Kashmir, and also regarded its Patton tanks as "unstoppable" India however was able to stop them, using vastly inferior Sherman and Walker tanks.

India also was guilty of neglecting security along the Punjab. This left Amritsar open to invasion.

The Third Kashmir War 1971 –This was a consequence of the situation in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. Sheik Mujibur Rehman won the election and claimed independence. However Zulfikar-Ali-Bhutto denied him that right and had him arrested. President Yahya Khan then called in the military and clamped down on Dhaka.

Then sensing that control was slipping, he ordered mass arrests and martial law.

A guerilla group of pro-Bangladesh fighters, the Mukti-bahini was formed. India opened up its borders, formed refugee camps and trained and supported Mukti bahini fighters.

The US remained loyal to West-Pakistan and continued supply of weapons.

Troops were amassed by both sides along the borders as war became inevitable. Inspired by the Israelis and their preemptive strike in the six day war against the Arabs, Pakistan tried the same tactic on India. This failed and the Indian Air Force achieved complete Air superiority. The advance of the Pakistan Army was stopped and the Indian army gained territory. This land was returned to Pakistan in 1972 as a gesture of goodwill.

The Indian forces began a coordinated attack on East Pakistan. The small contingent of the Pakistani Air Force was destroyed and jubilant Bangladeshis cheered as the Indian tanks rolled into their cities.

General Niazi, in command of the Pakistani forces of East Pakistan, surrendered after a fortnight. Pakistan suffered heavy losses and almost 90000 soldiers were captured as Prisoners of war by India.

The independent nation of Bangladesh was proclaimed, under Sheik Mujibur Rehman.

This war proved a major loss-of-face for Pakistan. It suffered humiliation at home and for some time was shunned by other countries. The US however continued support in spite of reports of atrocities, war crimes and genocide.

The Kargil Conflict – Armed insurgents backed by Pakistani regular troops invaded Kashmir, at the Drass and Kargil sectors. They occupied mountain tops and other strategic positions.

India launched Operation Vijay with 20000 troops against 5000 infiltrators. It elected not to enter Pakistan occupied Kashmir fearing an escalation in the war. Pakistan then ordered a climb-down.

India believes that the Kargil strike might have been in planning since the early 90s. Pervez Musharraf is believed to be the force behind the invasion, and might have contributed to his coup. Premier Nawaz Sharif is generally believed to have been kept in the dark by the army.

The Kargil conflict destroyed the confidence between the two countries and the trust built up by the Lahore Declaration and Vajpayee's initiatives.

It was later revealed that both sides had readied nuclear warheads for strike if it had been deemed necessary. The US was alarmed and Clinton spoke to Sharif regarding the missiles. Sharif, it is said, was "surprised" by the question.

Author : B Arvind (PGP-1 IIM Calcutta)

Email : arvindb83@gmail.com

Disclaimer : The views expressed above are solely those of the student who has written the article . For any clarifications or corrections to the article please contact Arvind at the above email-id .