

The Kashmir Problem As a Major Factor Affecting the National Identity of Pakistan

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Abstract: The article describes the process of Pakistan's independence and the adoption of Islam as a national ideology in the early years of independence. Also, the impact of the Kashmir problem on the national identity policy of the Pakistani state is revealed.

Keywords: Pakistan, Kashmir, identity, domestic policy, foreign policy, Islam, statehood, independence, India, Great Britain.

INTRODUCTION

The “Two Nation Theory”, which was the basis of Pakistan's struggle for independence, was based on the idea that Hindus and Muslims living in the Indian subcontinent could not live in one country. This was explained by the fact that they belong to a different culture, and thus to different civilizations, and their religious and legal views formed over the centuries are fundamentally different. At the same time, the relations between India and Pakistan, formed on the basis of the religious identity of the two nations, have been in a mood of mutual hostility from the first years of independence until today.

The religious identity that caused the separation of the state of Pakistan from India served as the main idea in the formation of the national identity of the state after independence. As a result, the state's confrontation with India intensified. Also, leaving the territory of Kashmir, the majority of the population of which is Muslim, as a part of India, led to the tense relations between the two countries, which led to armed conflicts several times. Hostility in India-Pakistan relations was not simply the result of Britain's divide-and-rule policy, as was the case in other empires, which was prevalent among the population of post-colonial territories. The conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in the region existed not only before the establishment of British rule, but also before the arrival of Europeans in the Indian subcontinent¹.

In addition, in the first half of the 20th century, in most regions of the modernizing world, people's desire to realize their national identity, especially

their ethnic and religious identity, grew stronger. Ideas aimed at creating collective harmony and social unity on the basis of national identities began to form in India, which joined the processes of globalization by becoming a colony of Great Britain. These ideas caused an increase in the conflict between the members of the two main religious identities in the subcontinent - Muslims and Hindus.

The atmosphere of mutual competition between the two nations worsened with the efforts of regional Muslim leaders such as Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Chaudhry Rahmat Ali, and Muhammad Iqbal to create a separate independent state for Muslims. On August 14, 1947, the Muslim League led by Jinnah declared the independence of Pakistan. A day later, on August 15, India was declared an independent country. Now, the confrontation based on religious identity has turned into an interstate confrontation. In this context, it can be said that the division between Hindus and Muslims in South Asia is not the result of actions related to the principle of "divide and rule", but the mass political culture that dominated the world in the first half of the 20th century, and the two communities were formed during the Middle Ages. was the result of strained relations.

Each nation has an identity that helps unite it. These identities determine the uniqueness of the nation in a certain space and time. Any nation's prospects for survival or development depend on the intensity of its national identity.² Pakistan, which came into existence as a result of the desire of Muslims in British India to decide their own

¹ Axilesh Pillalamarri. “The Origins of Hindu-Muslim Conflict in South Asia”. (19.07.2024) <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/the-origins-of-hindu-muslim-conflict-in-south-asia/>

² Vali Nasr. “National identities and the India-Pakistan conflict”. // Electronic Journal of Social and Strategic Studies. Vol. 3, №1. 2022. – pp. 87-104 (88).

destiny, took Islam as the basis of the state's national identity even after independence.

The migration wave that started after the independence of the two countries in 1947 included 15 million people. Many bloody clashes took place during these processes. There were hundreds of thousands of losses on both sides in the Kashmir conflict.³ These conflicts and the resulting losses remained in the collective memory of the two peoples and served as a basis for subsequent armed conflicts.

The reason for the beginning of the Kashmir conflict, which is the main problem between the two countries, was related to the chain of events in 1947. At that time, although the majority of the population consisted of Muslims, the territory of Kashmir was ruled by the Hindu king Maharaja Hari Singh. During the partition of India, the ruler of the state, Maharaja Hari Singh, did not want to join either India or Pakistan and preferred to remain independent. Despite this, military groups supported by Pakistan were sent to Kashmir. Armed militants invaded Kashmir in October 1947 with Operation Gulmarg to capture Kashmir. As a result, the Maharaja had to ask for military assistance from India. The Governor General of India, Lord Mountbatten, demanded that the Maharaja join India. After that, on October 26-27, 1947, the document on the joining of the two countries was signed⁴. The accession and Indian military aid were supported by the state's political leader, Sheikh Abdullah, who heads the National Conference Party, Kashmir's main political movement.

Pakistan has refused to accept the country's accession to India and has fueled the conflict by providing full support to the rebels and invading tribes. He provided them with weapons and ammunition. Indian troops managed to expel the invading tribes from the Kashmir Valley. But in Kashmir, which is mainly made up of mountains, the onset of winter has limited armed action, making most of the state impassable. In December 1947, India appealed to the United Nations Security Council to prevent the outbreak of a general war between the two new nations. The Security Council adopted Security Council

³ Brad Adams. "India: Impunity Fuels Conflict in Jammu and Kashmir". Human Rights Watch. (19.07.2024)

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2006/09/12/india-impunity-fuels-conflict-jammu-and-kashmir>

⁴ Ilovaga qarang.

Resolution 47 on this issue. According to him, Pakistan should withdraw all its citizens from Kashmir, and India, as a second step, should withdraw the main part of its forces.

After that, it was proposed to hold a referendum to determine the wishes of the people.⁵ India rejected the resolution. As a result, India and Pakistan could not reach an agreement on demilitarization. In response to India's refusal to withdraw its troops, Pakistan transformed Azad Kashmir's rebel fighting force into a 32-battalion army. Thus, these events turned the Kashmir region into a battle ground between the two largest countries of South Asia - India and Pakistan.

A number of conflicts took place between Pakistan and India during the period of independence. The largest of them, as mentioned above, took place in 1947 and in 1965, 1971 and 1999. The main motive of the Pakistani side in these battles was to free the Muslims of Kashmir from Indian oppression. That is, Pakistan emphasized religious identity in motivating the people and the military in the fight against India, which has superiority over it in many ways, including the number of resources, military and military equipment. This, in turn, served to further increase the importance of Islam as the state's national identity.

The Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 - Clashes from April 1965 to September 1965 followed Pakistan's Operation Gibraltar, which was designed to introduce military forces into Kashmir to stage an insurgency against Indian rule.⁶ In response, India launched a large-scale military attack on West Pakistan. The world witnessed the largest battle of armored vehicles and tanks since World War II in the seventeen-day war. The war resulted in thousands of casualties on both sides⁷. The five-week war resulted in thousands of casualties on both sides. Much of the fighting was fought by both sides' infantry and armored forces, with even heavy air and naval support. The hostilities between the two countries ended after the adoption of the relevant resolution of the UN Security

⁵ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/111955/?v=pdf>

⁶ "Kashmiris didn't back Pakistan in 1965: Gohar". The Tribune India. (23.07.2024) <https://www.tribuneindia.com/2005/20050603/main2.htm>

⁷ D. R. Higgins. "M48 Patton vs Centurion: Indo-Pakistan War 1965". – Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2016. - P. 103.

Council⁸ van and the signing of the Tashkent Declaration in 1966⁹.

From independence until 1971, Pakistan was geographically divided into two major regions, West and East Pakistan. Bengalis constitute the majority of the population living in the territory of East Pakistan. In December 1971, a military operation by Islamabad to quell protests in East Pakistan triggered a political crisis in the region, and the situation quickly spiraled out of control. The Indian government led by Indira Gandhi, who correctly assessed the political situation in Pakistan, took part in the war on behalf of the rebelling Bengali people. As a result of a short but bloody war, East Pakistan gained independence. In the war, the Indian Army invaded East Pakistan from three sides, the first offensive operations by the Indian Navy against an enemy port took place. In it, the port of Karachi was attacked twice during operations Trident and Python. These attacks destroyed a significant part of Pakistan's naval forces. Thirteen days after Indian forces invaded East Pakistan, 93,000 Pakistani military personnel surrendered, leaving Islamabad without support. After that, East Pakistan became an independent country of Bangladesh.

Yahya Khan decided to transfer his power to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto against the backdrop of widespread protests in Pakistan after the failure of the war. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto understood that the situation could not be improved without agreements with India. As a result, after the 1971 war, the Pakistani side tried hard to normalize relations with India. In July 1972, Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi signed the Shimla Agreement in India, according to which India would return all captured Pakistani soldiers (more than 90,000) and withdraw its troops from the occupied territories. As a result of the normalization of relations, by 1976 trade relations were also restored. In 1997, high-level talks between India and Pakistan resumed. The prime ministers of Pakistan and India met twice and the foreign ministers held talks. In June 1997, the foreign ministries of the two countries decided to continue negotiations and identified eight "critical issues" that needed to be resolved. Nevertheless, the dispute over the status of Kashmir, which has been a problem since independence, remained the main obstacle in their dialogue. India insists that

the Kashmir region is an integral part of the Indian Union, while Pakistan insists that UN resolutions calling for self-determination of the region's people should be implemented.

In September 1997, the talks broke down when it came to resolving the issues of Kashmir, peace and security. The meeting between the two prime ministers in February 1999 in Lahore was the impetus for restarting the dialogue between the two countries. But as a result of the war that took place this year, the situation between the two countries became more tense.

In 1998 and 1999, the Indian Army, as it does every year, vacated its high-altitude posts in the Kargil sector of Kashmir. Pakistan invaded the control line with its army and occupied the posts. It was only by May 1999 that the Indian Army discovered this. As a result, this led to intense fighting between Indian and Pakistani forces, known as the Kargil conflict. The Indian Army, supported by the Indian Air Force, recaptured many of the posts occupied by Pakistan.

After these events, Pervez Musharraf, who took power in Pakistan, met with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in 2001 in the framework of a summit held in Agra, and managed to ease the situation between the two. After the change of power in India in 2004, the Pakistani side started negotiations with the new government. As a result, both countries agreed to extend the nuclear test ban and establish a hotline between foreign ministers aimed at preventing misunderstandings that could lead to nuclear war¹⁰.

Also, due to several other reasons, in the early 2000s, relations between the two countries improved significantly and violence in the region decreased. First, in 2003, a ceasefire agreement was reached between New Delhi and Islamabad. Secondly, in 2004, the two countries also agreed to reduce the number of troops in the region. Thirdly, the Line of Control was walled by India. Fourthly, under strong international pressure, Islamabad was forced to take measures against training camps of militants in its territory. Also, India and Pakistan started to take a number of measures to strengthen mutual trust in order to ease the tension between them. These could include high-level talks, easing of visa restrictions and the resumption of cricket

⁸ Ilovaga qaranga.

⁹ Ilovaga qarang.

¹⁰ Suhasini Haidar. "Nuke hotline for India, Pakistan." (25.07.2024) <https://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/06/20/india.pakistan/>

matches between the two countries. The launch of a new bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad has also helped bring the two sides closer. Nevertheless, there were circumstances that worsened the relations between the two countries during this period as well. For example, in July 2005, when a group of insurgents tried to enter Kashmir from Pakistan, there was a major clash between Indian security forces and militants. In the same month, Kashmiri militants attacked Ayodhya and Srinagar. Also in December 2010, several Pakistani newspapers published reports about the Indian leadership and its relations with militants in Pakistan. They were based on the documents of US diplomats published first in Wikileaks and later in *The Guardian*¹¹. But the Indian side rejected these reports and after some time, in order to normalize relations, in September 2012, the Indian foreign minister will visit Pakistan for 3 days to continue dialogue with his Pakistani counterpart¹².

In August 2019, after the Indian Parliament approved the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill, which revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir¹³, the situation between the two countries became tense. In the process of suppressing the protest that arose as a result of this law, the gross violation of human rights and the disconnection of the Internet and other communications in the territory of Kashmir for months further angered the Pakistani side. As a result, Pakistan downgraded diplomatic ties with India, closed its airspace to Indian aircraft and suspended bilateral trade with India¹⁴.

Although India-Pakistan relations have been plagued by armed conflicts, diplomatic disagreements, and a sense of rivalry and hostility, both sides have provided humanitarian assistance in the event of natural disasters. For example, after the earthquake in Gujarat in 2001, the President of

Pakistan Pervez Musharraf expressed his condolences to the Prime Minister of India and sent a humanitarian aid plane to India¹⁵.

In 2005, the Indian side provided both material and humanitarian aid to Pakistan to eliminate the consequences of the earthquake that occurred in Pakistan. Not only the government, but also ordinary Indians contributed to the three-party humanitarian movement¹⁶. Also, after the floods in Pakistan in 2022, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi “expressed his deepest condolences to the families of the victims”¹⁷ and announced that humanitarian aid will be provided to the residents of the areas affected by the natural disaster.

Although there has been a strong atmosphere of competition and hostility between the countries of Pakistan and India since independence, there are strong cultural ties between the peoples of the two countries that have been formed for centuries. In particular, the Sindhi people are a local ethnic group of Pakistan's Sindh province, and in 1947, many Hindu Sindhi communities migrated to India and became a large ethnic group in this country. In addition, the millions of Muslims who immigrated from India to the newly formed Pakistan in the early years of independence, mainly in Karachi, were recognized as a migrant ethnic group in Pakistan. These two ethnic groups still have communities that maintain family ties.

Also, after the territorial partition of 1947, the Punjab region, like Bengal, was divided into two - provinces that are part of both Pakistan and India. It is divided into Pakistan, Punjab and Punjab provinces of India. The Punjabi people are the largest ethnic group in Pakistan and North India today. Nankana Sahib, the main shrine of Sikhs, is located in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

¹¹ Declan Walsh. “Pakistani media publish fake WikiLeaks cables attacking India”. (31.07.2024.) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/09/pakistani-newspaper-fake-leaks-india>

¹² “Krishna to undertake 3-day visit to Pakistan from Sept 7”. (31.07.2024.) <https://indianexpress.com/article/news-archive/latest-news/krishna-to-undertake-3day-visit-to-pakistan-from-sept-7/>

¹³ Ilovaga qarang.

¹⁴ “Pakistan sends back Indian High Commissioner Ajay Bisaria, suspends bilateral trade.” (31.07.2024) <https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/pakistan-downscales-diplomatic-relationship-suspends-bilateral-trade-with-india/465213>

¹⁵ “Pakistan leader offers condolences after Indian quake. Call marks Musharraf's first contact with Vajpayee.” (31.07.2024)

<https://edition.cnn.com/2001/fyi/news/02/02/india.pakistan/index.html>

¹⁶ “Indian troops cross LoC to back up relief efforts.” (31.07.2024)

<https://www.dawn.com/news/160975/indian-troops-cross-loc-to-back-up-relief-efforts>

¹⁷ “Pakistan Floods: India Offers Condolences, Several Countries Extend Help As Monsoon Death Toll Crosses 1,100.” (01.08.2024) <https://weather.com/en-IN/india/news/news/2022-08-30-india-offers-condolences-as-monsoon-death-toll-crosses-1100-in-pakistan>

Millions of Indo-Sikh pilgrims visit Pakistan every year to visit the holy Sikh places at Nankana Sahib.

In conclusion, religion played an important role in the escalation of wars between India and Pakistan. The conflict between the two countries was exacerbated by religious differences between Hindus and Muslims, which was a major factor in the partition of India and the subsequent creation of Pakistan. The religious identity of the two nations shaped their national ideologies and identities, the rise of Islamic ideology in Pakistan and Hindu nationalism in India intensified the rivalry between the two countries. The perception of the conflict as a "clash of civilizations" was reinforced by the justification of the struggle in Kashmir as the defense of Muslim brothers from Indian rule. This religious dimension has become an integral part of the ideology in Pakistan. The ongoing rivalry between India and Pakistan has been influenced by domestic political factors, including national identity based on religion.

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