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Emotional Influences And Mediation Strategies In Religious Conflict

Resolution: Insights From Pakistan - India Relations

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Abstract

Peaceful resolution approaches are vital for disputing parties aiming to mitigate the impacts of conflict, particularly in identity-based and religious disputes where emotions of mistrust, fear, and historic grievances are deeply embedded. This makes the study of emotional dynamics in religious conflict resolution both significant and necessary, as mediation becomes essential in negotiating mutually agreeable solutions while navigating elevated emotional tensions. This research aims to explore how emotions are relevant and pertinent in religious conflict resolution, determine whether the emotions of mediators and disputants influence the process, and identify the specific training and skills required for mediators to effectively manage and leverage emotions, while taking the case study of Pakistan-India relations. Since religious conflicts frequently have strong emotional undertones that necessitate expert mediation, it is imperative to comprehend the significance and influence of emotions in religious conflict resolution. This qualitative study, based on secondary review of literature and primary semi-structured interviews of 11 expert mediators, diplomats, and ambassadors, finds that largely due to the prevalence of majoritarianism based on the radical Hindutva ideology, which feeds animosity towards Islam, there seem to be fewer opportunities for reconciliation in the context of Pakistan-India relations. The findings highlight that emotions significantly shape the mediation process, influencing both barriers and opportunities for reconciliation, while emphasizing the importance of mediator competencies such as emotional intelligence, empathy, and cultural sensitivity. The study concludes that understanding and effectively managing emotional dynamics is crucial for achieving sustainable religious conflict resolution at the international level.

Keywords: Emotions, mediation, religion, conflict resolution, inter-faith dialogue, diplomacy.

Introduction

Peaceful resolution of religious conflicts requires expert mediation due to high-intensity emotions, particularly in international disputes. Mediation is widely regarded as an effective conflict resolution strategy for achieving mutually acceptable outcomes, provided mediators maintain neutrality while managing emotional dynamics. This study aims to examine the prevalence of emotions in religious conflicts and explore mediation strategies for addressing them, in the context of Pakistan-India relations. A qualitative design was employed, involving semi-structured interviews with 11 expert mediators, whose responses were recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed, supported by an extensive literature review and historical context of Pakistan-India relations. Findings highlight emotions as central to mediation processes, influencing trust, communication, and negotiation outcomes, while emphasizing skills such as emotional intelligence and empathy. The study also identifies challenges including entrenched identities, political mistrust, and ideological factors such as Hindutva. It is therefore important to understand the relevance and impact of emotions in the field of religious conflict resolution at the international level.

Conflict

A conflict is a struggle or a clash of interests between social groups, which is usually protracted in nature. Sociologists define conflict as “opposition among social entities directed against one another.”¹ The nature of conflict or disagreement between two parties can be because of various reasons. For example, people from different religions have strong emotions about their

¹ Wright, Quincy. “International Conflict and the United Nations.” *World Politics* 10, no. 1: 24-48. 1957. <https://scihub.se/https://www.jstor.org/stable/2009223>.

beliefs and they are often found unwilling to compromise in an effort to find a middle ground for their sacred sentiments. Similarly, ideologies and theories can also become the source of conflict between two parties, often leading to emotional tensions. The intensity of emotions in a conflict says a lot about the significance of the conflict for the disputing parties.

Conflict Resolution in Peace and Conflict Studies addresses international and national disputes through diplomatic strategies, dialogue, and mediation. Emphasizing peaceful negotiation, it seeks to prevent escalation into violence. International efforts involve treaties, alliances, and organizations, while national conflicts often require inclusive dialogue, policy reforms, and grassroots engagement. The goal is to foster understanding, cooperation, and sustainable peace amid diverse geopolitical challenges. Mediation is a diplomatic process where a neutral party helps the conflicting parties resolve disputes peacefully through facilitated negotiations. A mediator, therefore, is expected to possess the skill set required to handle the emotions of highly charged disputing parties in order to reach to a peaceful settlement in case of religious conflict resolution.

Emotions in Mediation

“Wars,” says the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Constitution, “begin in the minds of men.”² Conflict is created when we feel that there is a threat, whether real or perceived, to our needs, values or beliefs. Individuals and disputing parties experience a wide range of high intensity emotions because of their vulnerable positions in the conflict. Emotion is central in conflict and is clearly central in conflict management practices

² Wright, Quincy. “International Conflict and the United Nations.” *World Politics* 10, no. 1: 24-48. 1957. <https://scihub.se/https://www.jstor.org/stable/2009223>.

including mediation. The American Psychological Association defines emotions as, “Emotions are conscious mental reactions subjectively experienced as strong feelings usually directed towards a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body.”³

Parties come to the table with fear, anxiety, anger, and a sense of urgency as a result of lack of trust for each other and they turn to the process for solace and solution as they show confidence and belief in the mediator to help salvage a desperate situation.⁴ Disputing parties often come forth with emotional masks and only an expert mediator can understand what is behind those masks; for instance, anger may exhibit the hidden vulnerability, defensiveness may be strategically used to hide fear, and parties may resort to denial in order to avoid insult. A mediator requires the proficiency to assess the emotional state of the participants and to fulfil the needs of safety, trust and predictability in the mediation process.⁵

Religious Conflict Resolution

The anthropologists insist, “The individual's concepts of morality and justice develop from the culture, nationality, or religion in which he has been brought up, and thus the moral standards of individuals differ from state to state.”⁶ This difference often becomes the bone of contention between the disputing parties. Religion may not always be the cause of violent conflicts, but it can be an exacerbating factor in it. Religion is sometimes seen as more of an integral component of

³ Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, s.v. “Emotions (n.),” accessed August 22, 2023. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emotion>.

⁴ Evans, Dylan. “Emotion: The Science of Sentiment.” New York: Oxford University Press. 2001.

⁵ De Dreu, C. K.W. “Coercive Power and Concession Making in Bilateral Negotiations.” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39, no. 4: 646-670. 1995.

⁶ Wright, Quincy. “International Conflict and the United Nations.” *World Politics* 10, no. 1: 24-48. 1957. <https://sci-hub.se/https://www.jstor.org/stable/2009223>.

the individual identity as compared to nationality.⁷ Religion also possesses a spiritual and temporal power that adds to the sacredness of the motivation to fight and makes it a holy cause to let God's will prevail.

The involvement of emotions in the mediation process increases when the conflict revolves around religious identity. Religious identity has the tendency to exacerbate the complexity of the conflict, which further complicates the situation for the mediator. According to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the need of "belongingness" is one of the major needs crucial to human existence. The need of belongingness is often a non-negotiable need over which parties are not willing to compromise. Finding a middle ground in such a situation can be extremely challenging for the mediator. The sense of vulnerability felt regarding one's own identity confronting some existential threat can lead to conflicts. Religious identity is often seen as the primary fault line between the groups involved in conflict. Therefore, religion has a tendency to become the bone of contention in a conflict as much as it has the tendency to resolve conflicts.⁸ A mediator is required to be highly sensitive towards the religious sentiments of the disputing parties and strive to find a common ground for peaceful settlement.

In the highly charged religious conflicts, the mediation process is most of the time negotiated between religious scholars. The eminent religious leaders and influential institutions can play a significant role in mediating religious conflicts and serving as a communication link between the opposing sides. The inter-faith dialogue is another form of religious peace-making that seeks to resolve religious conflicts by diffusing tensions through negotiations which are

⁷ Appleby, R. Scott. "Religion, Fundamentalism, and Conflict." In *Gods and Arms: On Religion and Armed Conflict*, 1st ed., edited by Kjell-Åke Nordquist, 1-15. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press. 2013. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1cgdzhw.5>.

⁸ Henne, Peter S. "The Two Swords: Religion-State Connections and Interstate Disputes." *Journal of Peace Research* 49, no. 6: 753-68. 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41721660>.

facilitated by trained mediators.⁹ This type of religious conflict resolution mechanism also requires understanding and navigating the parties' high intensity emotions.

The Process of Mediation

Mediation is a conflict resolution strategy or a diplomatic action to prevent, manage or resolve disputes which involves a neutral third party that impartially mediates or facilitates the negotiation process between the disputing parties in order to reach a mutually agreeable and satisfactory resolution. The role of a mediator is that of a facilitator only, which means that the decision-making powers rest with the disputing parties. The ultimate aim of this process is to come to a win-win solution for all the parties involved in the process so that no one feels at loss.¹⁰

Case Study of the Pakistan - India Conflict

Pakistan and India have a long history of contention since independence. Apart from political and economic discordance, religious differences created a disharmony that resulted in many atrocities at the time of partition. The troubled relations between the two states are deeply embedded in a bitter history and are primarily a story of mistrust, rivalry and a failure to address disputes in an institutionalized manner. Yet, the two states have shown the capacity to manage the escalation of conflicts. The Kartarpur Corridor is one such example where visa-free border crossing is allowed for religious purposes. The crossing allows devotees from India to visit the gurdwara in Kartarpur, Pakistan. This initiative catered for the religious sentiments of people and hence proved successful in mitigating tensions between the two countries.

⁹ Smock, David. "Religion in World Affairs: Its Role in Conflict and Peace." US Institute of Peace. 2008. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12449>.

¹⁰ Wheeler, Michael. "The Art of Negotiation: How to Improvise Agreement in a Chaotic World." New York: Simon & Schuster. WorldCat e-book. 2013.

While expanding the nuclear capability, the two neighbors cannot afford to risk an all-out mutually destructive war. The bilateral relationship often ends in an ideological deadlock which requires institutionalized political and diplomatic contacts to prevent conflicts.¹¹ Since independence, Pakistan and India have fought three major wars and have engaged in various minor skirmishes. The Rann of Kutch War, Sir Creek, Siachen conflict, Operation Brasstacks, Kargil conflict, Twin Peaks crisis, Mumbai attacks, Pathankot, Uri and Pulwama incidents are some of the significant events from the achieves of history that speak volumes on the tensions between the two states.¹² Moreover, the Kashmir dispute lies at the heart of the Pakistan – India tensions and conflict. The solution to this dispute also lies in religious conflict resolution that aims to reduce the emotional tensions between the two nations, without which, no sustainable political settlement can be reached.

One of the 562 princely states, that had the choice of either joining India or Pakistan at the time of partition, was the State of Jammu and Kashmir, which became a disputed territory after the partition of 1947. This landlocked area in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent is the home to a diverse array of ethnicities. The Kashmir Valley's inhabitants were predominantly Muslims, with a small community of Sikhs. Jammu had a Dogra Hindu majority with a significant Muslim component. Despite the 77 per cent Muslim majority in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, the Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh refused to opt for Pakistan against the wishes of the people. The armed revolt by Muslims faced fierce retaliation from the Maharaja. The liberation movement

¹¹ Jacob, Happymon. "Towards a Kashmir Endgame? How India and Pakistan could Negotiate a Lasting Solution." US Institute of Peace. 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25406>.

¹² Ashraf, Fahmida. "Models of Conflict Resolution and the Kashmir Issue: Pakistan's Options." Pakistan Horizon 56, no. 2: 119-33. 2003. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41394026>.

concluded in the formation of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.¹³ On the pretext of the fake letter of accession from Maharaja Hari Singh, India illegally deployed its military in Srinagar in the October of 1947. India later aired the dispute before the United Nations, calling for an international intervention into the matter.

In the April of 1948, the United Nations passed the Resolution 47 to ensure a ceasefire, demilitarization and eventually a plebiscite, which remains unimplemented to date. Military representatives of India and Pakistan signed the Karachi Agreement in 1949 to establish a ceasefire line in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, which later became the Line of Control (LoC) in the Shimla Agreement of 1972. Sir Owen Dixon, the UN Representative who came to the subcontinent pursuant to the Security Council's 1950 Resolution on the Kashmir dispute, got much closer to a solution than any mediator, and proposed the transfer of Muslim-majority regions to Pakistan and Hindu-majority areas to India.¹⁴ Moreover, various international organizations have been taking diplomatic initiatives to resolve this issue, but a comprehensive resolution to the Kashmir issue remains elusive. Sustained progress towards a lasting resolution has been hindered by continued hostilities and divergent stances. Therefore, it is crucial for the mediation efforts in this region to focus on the religious sentiments of the two nations and resolve the emotional tensions in order to improve the bilateral relations. Managing emotions that are present in the core of the religious tensions between the two parties can guarantee the success of mediation efforts.

Mediation efforts can prove helpful in avoiding communication breakdowns if the two nations have an intention to resolve their disputes. The more unwilling the parties are for

¹³ Ashraf, Fahmida. "Models of Conflict Resolution and the Kashmir Issue: Pakistan's Options." *Pakistan Horizon* 56, no. 2: 119-33. 2003. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41394026>.

¹⁴ Ashraf, Fahmida. "Models of Conflict Resolution and the Kashmir Issue: Pakistan's Options." *Pakistan Horizon* 56, no. 2: 119-33. 2003. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41394026>.

negotiation, the greater the chances are that some neutral foreign intervention takes place to prevent the humanitarian crisis that arises due to the escalation of conflict. The United States and the United Arab Emirates have played a significant role in the resolution of Kashmir conflict, but even today the world continues to see the plight of the situation. There have been numerous attempts to improve the relationship, notably the Tashkent Declaration, the Shimla Summit and the Agra Summit, as well as various peace initiatives. Despite those efforts, relations between the countries have remained frigid, following repeated acts of cross-border terrorism. The Tashkent Declaration was signed between India and Pakistan on the 10th of January in 1966 to resolve the Indo – Pakistan War of 1965. Peace was achieved on the 23rd of September through interventions by the Soviet Union and the United States.¹⁵ A declaration was released that was hoped to be a framework for lasting peace by stating that the Indian military and the Pakistani military would pull back to their pre-conflict positions, neither nation would interfere in each other's internal affairs, economic and diplomatic relations would be restored, there would be an orderly transfer of prisoners of war, and both leaders would work towards improving bilateral relations.

After the 1971 War, Pakistan and India made slow progress towards the normalization of relations. In July 1972, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto met in the Indian hill station of Shimla. They signed the Shimla Agreement, by which India would return all Pakistani personnel and captured territory in the west, and the two countries would settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations. In 2001, a summit was called in Agra, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf turned up to meet Indian Prime Minister Atal

¹⁵ Jha, D. C. "Indo-Pakistan Relations since the Tashkent Declaration." *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 32, no. 4: 502-21. 1971. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41854470>.

Behari Vajpayee.¹⁶ The foreign secretaries aimed at preventing misunderstandings that might lead to a nuclear war but the situation remained intensified in the following years due to frequent change of governments on both sides of the border. The negotiations broke down and the process was collapsed; therefore, the Agra Treaty was never signed.¹⁷ In 2006, President Musharraf proposed a Four-Point Formula as a potential framework for resolving the Kashmir issue. The proposal suggested self-governance, demilitarization, joint management, and a phased withdrawal of forces from specific areas in Kashmir. Despite its intentions to provide a structured approach to the resolution of the Kashmir dispute, the Four-Point Formula faced inherent complexities and obstacles that impeded its successful implementation.¹⁸ In August 2019, the Indian government revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, abrogating Article 370 and 35-A, which has further intensified the tensions between the two nations.

Emotions of people on both sides always played an important role in determining the relations between both countries. However Anti-Muslim and Anti-Pakistan sentiment had always been an important dividend in deciding India's national policies and had become a prominent tool for mobilization in India, especially around major electoral periods. According to a BBC World Service Poll in 2017, only 5 per cent of Indians view Pakistan's influence positively, with 85 per cent expressing a negative view, while 11 per cent of Pakistanis view India's influence positively, with 62 per cent expressing a negative view. It is crucial to reach a resolution of ongoing disputes like the Kashmir issue, while catering the high intensity emotions, in order to bring peace in South

¹⁶ Sinha, Dilip. "International Dispute Settlement Mechanisms and India-Pakistan Disputes." *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 12, no. 3: 202-14. 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45341993>.

¹⁷ Yousaf, Zahid, Elahi, Haroon. "War and Peace Framing: The Contextual Analysis of Indo-Pak Relations." *Strategic Studies* 38, no. 1: 128-44. 2018. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48539127>.

¹⁸ Ali, Nadir, and Abdul Ghani Bhat. "General Musharraf's Four Point Formula Can Provide an Effective Roadmap in Kashmir: An Interview with Prof Abdul Ghani Bhat." *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*. 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09271>.

Asia. To ensure lasting peace in the region, religious conflict resolution can prove beneficial if emotions are managed proficiently by the mediators. Many political solutions to the complex dynamics of this region resulted in no improvement in the situation because religion remained a secondary issue and had not been given the due importance in the past.

Research Methodology

The research anchors on the conceptual framework derived from the works of Douglas Noll and Mohammed Abu-Nimer. Since, the conflicts revolving around religion often involve high intensity emotions, Douglas Noll's theory incorporates techniques that can be useful in case of religious conflict resolution. Transformative and narrative mediation processes are highly effective for resolving irrational situations when the emotions of the disputing parties are of a higher intensity. This is precisely where rational thinking of the brain is compromised owing to the emotionally vulnerable state of mind of the disputants. Particularly, *narrative mediation* operates on the premise that conflict represents a reality constructed by the disputants, which can be dismantled and replaced with a new, less conflict-ridden reality. It is likely that the negotiation process becomes challenging when religion is involved in a conflict because no party is often willing to compromise on religious beliefs. The re-construction of a reality can help the parties to understand the situation from a different perspective. *Transformative mediation* aims to re-order the internal perceptions (empowerment) and external perceptions (acknowledgement and recognition of the other). This type of mediation proves to be successful in case of religious conflict resolution when the parties are able to see the conflict from a different perspective while recognizing the core interests of others.¹⁹

¹⁹ Noll, Douglas. "A Theory of Mediation." *Dispute Resolution Journal* 56, no. 2: 1-11. 2001.

Religion can influence conflict resolution processes through a religiously motivated intervener or through the religious nature of the conflict. Abu-Nimer's Model has a great applicability in case of religious conflict resolution. The skills and strategies can be adjusted to fit the participants' intervention context, although the basic assumption of the training process is that religion plays an active role in escalating and de-escalating a conflict because it influences the issues, parties, strategies, outcomes, and interveners.²⁰ Of the two typical training methods, elicitive and prescriptive, the elicitive approach is more effective in training for inter-religious peace-building, because of the nature of participants and their objectives.²¹ The *elicitive mode* relies on the participants' experiences and knowledge of the conflict to conduct the training or intervention, while in the *prescriptive mode* trainers use their expertise and specialized knowledge to teach specific skills and methods to deal with the conflicts.²² The elicitive approach empowers the participants and allows the trainer to draw upon the participants' experiences to construct and facilitate group awareness. Consequently, it becomes less challenging for the mediator to bring the parties to a peaceful settlement.

Given the complexity of religiously grounded disputes, which are often shaped by deep-seated emotions and contextual sensitivities, a flexible and experience-informed framework is particularly suitable for capturing the nuanced realities of mediation practice. Accordingly, the research methodology is aligned with this framework, employing 11 qualitative semi-structured interviews to access both structured insights and experiential narratives. Expert, certified and

²⁰ Abu-Nimer, Mohammed. "Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peace-building." *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 6: 685-704. 2001. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/425559>.

²¹ Abu-Nimer, Mohammed. "Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peace-building." *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 6: 685-704. 2001. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/425559>.

²² Abu-Nimer, Mohammed. "Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peace-building." *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 6: 685-704. 2001. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/425559>.

accredited individuals who satisfy the inclusion criteria, of having participated in some mediation efforts, were made a part of this research. Seasoned diplomats and ambassadors who had been part of negotiations between Pakistan and India were also reached out for the interviews. An informed consent was taken from each participant before the interview. A deliberate effort was made to conduct the interviews in-person, but some interviews were also conducted via Zoom and Google Meet. Interview inventories were carefully designed keeping in mind the thematic underpinnings of the literature review. Interviews were recorded to facilitate data analysis. Finally, the transcription of the interviews was thematically analyzed to add more to the existing literature and highlight the significance of understanding the role of emotions in the mediation process.

Research Findings

The findings of this study show that religious conflict mediation is strongly shaped by emotional dynamics, which influence both disputants and mediators and play a decisive role in negotiation outcomes. Emotional awareness, regulation, and neutrality were identified as essential mediator competencies, alongside the ability to build rapport and establish trust. The data further indicates that inter-faith tensions are intensified by broader ideological and perceptual dynamics, including narratives in India portraying Islam as an antagonistic religion, discriminatory Judeo-Christian biases, and the influence of Hindutva ideology. Diplomatic negotiations between Pakistan and India are often constrained by deep-seated mistrust and identity-based divisions. However, the findings suggest that emotionally informed mediation strategies, supported by visionary leadership, can enhance inter-faith dialogue and contribute to reducing religious polarization and promoting long-term peace.

Understanding Mediation: Structural Processes, Emotional Influences, and Trust Dynamics

Mediation is conceptualized as a process by which a neutral third party intervenes with the aim of facilitating the negotiations between the disputing parties. It is to deal with helping people who are in any kind conflict or disagreement. One of participants defined mediation as a “process” because change happens during a process. Holding individual meetings before joint sessions was identified as one of the key techniques of the mediation process at the international level.

For mediation to be successful, it is important that the change is constructive in nature and there are no communication gaps in the process. This precisely goes in line with what Wheeler (2013) says about mediation that the ultimate aim of this process is to come to a win-win solution for all the parties involved in the process so that no one feels at loss.²³

“Emotions are conscious mental reactions subjectively experienced as strong feelings usually directed towards a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body.”²⁴ For mediation to be successful, it was deemed essential that the emotions of the disputing parties were given due consideration. An advocate shared an interesting statistic that “Family mediation cases and religious mediation cases are 90 per cent based on emotions.” “Conflicts on identity also bring up a lot of emotions” that require the expertise of a mediator who can efficiently handle emotions while maintaining a neutral stance. While elaborating the pertinence of emotions in mediation, an expert practitioner stated that “Their story is always full of emotions. They feel sad, ashamed, stressed, and angry.”

It often happens that the conflicts are resolved at the superficial level and they relapse because of the high intensity emotions that remain unaddressed during the resolution process.

²³ Wheeler, Michael. “The Art of Negotiation: How to Improvise Agreement in a Chaotic World.” New York: Simon & Schuster. WorldCat e-book. 2013.

²⁴ Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, s.v. “Emotions (n.),” accessed August 22, 2023. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emotion>.

Emotions also played a very significant role during the decision-making process happening in the minds of the disputing parties. Positive emotions were reported to lead to constructive decisions, whereas negative emotions often became the cause of termination of the mediation process.

The emotions of the mediator had a great tendency to influence the conflict resolution process in many ways. Positive emotions were said to facilitate the negotiations, whereas negative emotions created a challenging situation. A mediator cannot possibly think without being influenced by his or her own emotions, but it is important for a mediator to practice emotional regulation so that an overt reaction can be prevented. This is because the process of mediation is all about the disputing parties, and not the mediator. Taking scheduled breaks from work was also reported to have positive effects on the mediator's emotional well-being.

The first and foremost step towards the beginning of an engaging mediation process is building rapport and gaining the trust of the parties. "Building trust and rapport with both the parties is very important." This can be achieved through active listening and empathy. "To establish rapport and trust with disputants who have deeply entrenched emotional positions, mediators should demonstrate empathy, impartiality, and genuine interest in understanding their perspectives."

Once the disputants are ready to trust the mediator with their vulnerable positions, the process begins and successful outcomes are expected. According to the experience of the practitioners dealing with inter-state mediation, the more the mediator is able to build trust with the parties, the better are the chances of success.

Religious Identity and Political Ideologies: Interfaith Tensions and Discourses of Power

The dynamics of Pakistan - India relations are highly intricate, owing to the multiple factors at play. Upon being asked to define the relations between Pakistan and India, an ambassador said, “The situation of New Delhi is different, it has been a hate-hate relationship, I must say.” The stories of deep-rooted grievances are as old as the times of partition. This is mainly because of the need of identity that a certain religion promises to its believers. A threat to this need has been a cause of the engagement of high intensity emotions between Pakistan and India. An Ex High Commissioner to New Delhi, identified religion as a force behind this conflict. During the interview, he said, “Why is India against Pakistan? Everything is connected with religion... To an average Hindu, Islam is an antagonistic faith.” The idea of “Bharat” basically comes from the desire of reclaiming the entire continent which was once a home to the Hindu Civilization. The failure to achieve such ambitious desires has bred a lot of emotional upheaval in the conflict, and this has always created hindrance in the reconciliation efforts based on religious grounds.

The Judeo-Christian mindset refers to the set of beliefs or theological doctrines that are common to Judaism and Christianity. This mindset has played a significant role in creating deterrents in the process of religious conflict resolution between Pakistan and India. Upon being asked about the reasons of failed negotiations, an ambassador said, “The point is that the Western Civilization has a venom against Islam in their hearts – and a very deep-rooted one!” The Judeo-Christian people have a soft corner for Buddhism and Hinduism, and that soft corner is missing with regards to Islam. Some Muslims countries, like Bangladesh, refuse to openly declare themselves as Muslim countries for the sole reason or fear of being cornered in the international political arena. This reflects how the emotional needs of the masses are neglected in the pursuit of appeasing the West.

Emotions play a very critical role here. Before coming for any negotiations, the parties already carry a lot of emotional baggage. After coming to the table, if they experience discrimination or if the other party refuses to cooperate, it inevitably generates more mistrust, hatred, and resentment. Subsequently, the entire process of mediation terminates.

The Hindutva ideology promotes Hindu nationalism within India and Hindu hegemony within South Asia. This ideology lies at the very core of India's political and military thinking. "You cannot see any aspect of the Hindu life that operates independent of religion." It also forms the bases of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Bajrang Dal, which are organizations that oppose Muslim demographic growth and western influence in the Hindu culture. The "venom and hatred" has reached to the extent that minority Muslim populations in India are always at a threat of violation of the basic human rights. This is primarily because India is a country of "majoritarianism", and no matter how much it raised the slogans of secularism, the world has seen that it has no place for political or religious freedom. "And the majority has a Hindu mindset, which is very much polluted with mistrust and hatred towards Muslims." This has played a significant role to hinder any efforts for peaceful conflict resolution between Pakistan and India.

The Liaquat-Nehru Pact or the Delhi Pact of 1950 is the only significant effort of negotiations done on religious grounds. The pact was the outcome of six days of talks that aimed to guarantee the rights of minorities in both countries after the partition of the sub-continent. The refugees were allowed to return to dispose of their property, abducted women and looted property were to be returned, forced conversions were recognized, and minority rights were confirmed.²⁵ That was the only effort done with regards to religious negotiations between Pakistan and India.

²⁵ Ghosh, Subhasri. "The Working of the Nehru-Liaquat Pact: A Case Study of Nadia District (1950)." Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 68: 853-62. 2007. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44147893>.

Even minority commissions were set up in both countries to protect the rights of religious minorities. Despite all of these efforts, the minorities in India suffer every day at the hands of Hindu extremists.

The future is that of religious fascism. In such a scenario, it is very challenges to see the possibility of reconciliation between Pakistan and India on religious grounds. “The world is heading in the direction of religious fascism. The world is not heading in the direction of passivism or reconciliation.” The ambassador further added, “It is too early even to think of inter-faith dialogue with the Hindu religion. You might like to do it, but they would not. And this is because of the inbuilt hatred or negativity in them against Islam.” The avoidance approach of India towards the Muslim minority population had been a significant cause of hindrance in the way of reconciliation. Furthermore, the extremist Hindutva ideology had been adding to the intricacy of the cross-border dynamics.

Discussion

The Pakistan - India relations are highly complex due to the multifaceted dynamics that are at play. Negotiations on the basis of religion have not been possible after the Liaquat-Nehru Pact of 1950. This pact was the first and the last effort to promote peaceful coexistence between religious communities in the aftermath of partition. Till date, the minority Muslim populations of India are suffering at the hands of followers of the extremist Hindutva ideology. The core grievance in their hearts is the loss of glory of “Bharat”, which was a result of the conversions that took place in the sub-continent with the advent of Islam. “Indians basically aim to restore or replicate their glorious past that they had in the times of United India.” Various political and strategic concerns have further added to the intricacy of this conflict.

Another aspect that contributed to the failure of negotiations is that of the hatred that India has towards Pakistan, which has its roots buried deep in history. “The anti-Indian sentiment in our people is way less than the anti-Pakistani sentiment in their people. How can negotiations work when we come with such great hatred on the table towards each other?” The discriminatory approach towards conflict resolution process had been a major factor behind the failure of negotiations. This party-driven process cannot move ahead if one party looks down upon the other party. Whereas, mediation is a process that promises equal space and opportunity to every party. Subsequently, Pakistan refuses to make any decisions of compromise because one party alone cannot suffer all the loss in the process. This is where a deadlock situation arises and all efforts to normalize bilateral ties terminates.

The Hindutva ideology is the leading cause of hatred that breeds in the minds of India. Moreover, the West supports this ideology and Muslims are cornered in the process. “Hindu nationalist ideology has full support of the Judeo-Christian mindset of the West. Muslims are always cornered in the global political arena.” This means that these ideologies will gain more momentum in the future, making the road to peace far less approachable. He also said that “It is too early even to think of inter-faith dialogue with the Hindu religion. You might like to do it, but they would not. And this is because of the inbuilt hatred or negativity in them against Islam.” Whenever Pakistan expressed a willingness to sit for a table-talk, the invitation was turned down from India because they were not ready to negotiate over religion. “The vengeance that breeds in the minds of the Indian leadership can make things more difficult for us.” The idea of revenge that breeds in the minds of their leadership has disseminated the message of hate in the masses, because of which the emotional sentiments run very high on the other side of the border. Undoubtedly,

both nations were wronged in their own perspectives, but the only way forward is through negotiations.

The only way forward to promote peace through the process of reconciliation was explored to be found in visionary leadership, which is ready to invest the best of its intellectual resources in the betterment of Pakistan. “The historical emotional baggage that has contributed to the deep mutual mistrust between Pakistan and India has made the possibility of inter-faith dialogue very difficult.” It is almost impossible to re-do the past, but the future is still in our hands. “Only some visionary leadership can build mutual trust and navigate the process of normalization of the Pakistan-India bilateral relations.” Another aspect which was emphasized upon in the interview was to increase the economic dependency of India on Pakistan. This can be done without compromising on any of our core values and interests.

Conclusion

Conclusively, this research demonstrates that emotions are not peripheral but fundamentally shape the mediation process, influencing both barriers and opportunities for reconciliation, and are affected by the emotional states of both mediators and disputants. Conflicts revolving around religion involved high intensity emotions because the need of identity was either threatened or challenged. The emotions of the disputing parties effected their level of willingness to reach a mutually agreeable settlement. An expert mediator was expected to possess the skills required for handling such an intensity of emotions in order to ensure successful outcomes. The dynamics of Pakistan-India relations portrayed a less hopeful image because the world of today is moving towards religious fascism and the possibility of reconciliation with India on religious grounds was found to be very rare. This was mainly because of the majoritarianism that breeds on the extremist Hindutva ideology in India and the hatred that they have for Islam. In conclusion,

while ideological factors such as Hindutva in India complicate prospects for reconciliation, the study affirms that effective training and an understanding of emotional dynamics remain essential for achieving sustainable religious conflict resolution at the international level.