

## India-Pakistan Conundrum

### What is the issue?

At this moment of great flux in Pakistan comes Sharat Sabharwal's book, India's Pakistan Conundrum (Routledge), to guide us through the country's complexities.

### What is the current issue in Pakistan?

- Pakistan is in the midst of another spiralling political and economic crisis.
- Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif took office in April after the opposition voted out the Imran Khan government.
- The former prime minister is drawing huge crowds as he rails against an alleged U.S. conspiracy that unseated him.
- The Army chief General Javed Qamar Bajwa, is due to retire in November and his successor may well decide the political course over the next five years.

### What are the ground realities in Indo-Pak relation?

- **Dysfunctional state-** Pakistan is a dysfunctional state because of its
  - civil-military imbalance
  - use of jihadi/terrorist groups
- **Role of surgical strikes-** India's tactical military options to deter Pakistan's terror machine ("surgical strikes", Balakot for Pulwama) may carry only temporary impact.
- **Persuasion through trade-** Coercion through trade or water does not work as
  - The volumes are too small
  - It could lead to unintended consequences for India where it is the lower riparian (as with China)
- **China factor-** With the snug China-Pakistan relationship, Pakistan is now part of India's bigger China problem.
- **Nuclear weapon state-** Pakistan too has nuclear weapons and the resulting chaos will not stop at the boundaries of that country.



### How can the relations be improved?

- A pragmatic approach that stresses the region's co-prosperity to make Pakistan realise that it has more to gain by bettering itself economically than pulling India down is needed.
- India's own house has to be put in order,
  - Including in Jammu & Kashmir
  - Rebuilding what used to be the broad national consensus on foreign policy
  - Avoiding competitive show of nastiness towards the neighbor

## References

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/india-pakistan-conundrum-sharat-sabharwal-book-review-8073887/>
2. <https://www.oneindia.com/infographics/a-timeline-of-india-pakistan-ties-since-1947-2935194.html>

