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

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