**Pak-India relations clarified**

[Najm us Saqib](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/najm-us-saqib)

May 08, 2023

[Opinions](https://www.nation.com.pk/opinions), [Columns](https://www.nation.com.pk/columns)

Let us be clear on one thing at the very outset. FM Zardari’s visit to India last week was to attend a regional organization’s event and by no means could it be construed as a ‘bilateral visit’. Regardless of the involved technicalities, his presence in India created quite a stir, sadly, for all the wrong reasons. Never mind what transpired in the SCO CFM, the media made Goa a political colosseum for two diplomatic gladiators to settle scores in the bilateral domain.

Owing to certain obvious constraints, mainly optics, both FMs could not meet one-on-one. However, they found a novel way to spill the beans …... through the media. Certainly, this open but indirect dialogue revealed much more than one could expect from a formal tête-à-tête. One factor must be kept in mind to appreciate the undertones of this spectacular dialogue. On one side, we have a serious looking astute diplomat with a wealth of experience in the field while on the other, there is a casually attired, smiling and comparatively novice politician.

[Machine operator killed during anti-encroachment operation](https://www.nation.com.pk/10-May-2023/machine-operator-killed-during-anti-encroachment-operation)

What happened?

-Pakistan not only shrewdly mentioned the K-word in its official statement but also tactfully admonished India to desist from ‘weaponizing’ terrorism for diplomatic point-scoring. Pakistan was fully aware that by doing so, it would agitate India and any prospects of normalization of bilateral relations would be adversely affected. That is exactly what happened.

-India in its official statement indirectly targeted Pakistan on the T-word while reiterating its known standpoint on cross border terrorist activities. In doing so, India forgot that besides the EU DisinfoLab, there are several dossiers prepared for its own undesirable cross border activities. On Kashmir, India overlooked the fact that as one of the oldest agenda items, the J&K dispute is still believed to be an unresolved issue and that its actions of Aug 2019 have yet to attain legitimacy from the international community.

-Both countries clearly spelled out their policy on bilateral relations particularly the main irritants. ‘There will be no change in Pakistan’s policy towards India till the latter reverted the J&K’s status back to where it was on 4 August 2019’. Hence, the onus is squarely on India to create a conducive environment for talks. India responded: Jammu & Kashmir was, is and will always be a part of India. Victims of terrorism do not sit together with perpetrators of terrorism. They defend themselves, counter acts of terrorism, call it out and delegitimize it. Bottom line? India does not want to sit with Pakistan and talk on any issue. Full stop.

[Korean Mission of UN-Habitat for Pakistan calls on Karachi Administrator](https://www.nation.com.pk/10-May-2023/korean-mission-of-un-habitat-for-pakistan-calls-on-karachi-administrator)

-FM Zardari held his ground and did not lose control while responding to certain unsettling questions. In his discourses, he proved that he stood taller than his Indian counterpart, not only in picture but also in his demeanour and disposition.

What might not have happened?

-Hurling threats on your enemy indicates inherent weakness. In the absence of any ‘action’ since Aug 2019, there was no need to say, ‘obviously we condemn it and at the time we will give such a response that it will be remembered.’

-In order to achieve the stated objectives, one must be clear in mind and avoid paradoxes at all costs. If the objective was to normalize relations, agitating statements needed to be avoided. If ‘most Pakistanis want to live in peace and peace is our destiny’, some solid reconciliatory statements might have been issued to substantiate the desire. Furthermore, if ‘we will create our own history’, why do we need to sit with India to discuss peace and stability?

[Sindh Abadgar Ittehad denounces violation of Indus Water Treaty by Indian govt](https://www.nation.com.pk/10-May-2023/sindh-abadgar-ittehad-denounces-violation-of-indus-water-treaty-by-indian-govt)

-FM Jaishankar had already stated his country’s position on cross-border terrorism at a respectable formal multilateral platform. Therefore, calling a country comprising 235 million people ‘a terrorism industry’ was totally uncalled for. Such uncivilized comments do not suit his stature as the Foreign Minister of the largest democracy of the world. Come on, Sir. A professional diplomat does not use such uncouth vocabulary even in his drawing room let alone in a press conference. Have a heart, Sir. Industry? Clearly, this school boyish remark is going to haunt you forever.

- FM Jaishankar’s statement that ‘Pakistan’s credibility is depleting even faster than its forex reserves’ sealed it. He failed himself as a diplomat as well as his country’s spokesperson. Does he think his country’s credibility will achieve unprecedented heights by bringing into question the credibility of others? On one hand, he thinks Pakistan is ‘irrelevant’ but on the other he makes it so ‘relevant’ by expressing concerns over its ‘credibility’ and depleting forex...!! Secondly, by saying so, he has manifestly exposed the real face of India. Boost your self-esteem by finding faults with others even if you need to make fun of another country’s economic woes. By saying so, he has also admitted that India is the only country of the world that proudly expresses pleasure at other countries’ problems. Sir, kindly allow me to recommend a refresher diplomatic course for you in our Foreign Service Academy. Besides other finer aspects of diplomacy, we will be pleased to refresh your mind on how to treat guests and what exactly the word ‘hospitality’ entails.

[CM bans cultivation of rice crops on left bank of River Indus](https://www.nation.com.pk/10-May-2023/cm-bans-cultivation-of-rice-crops-on-left-bank-of-river-indus)

What next?

Neither India nor Pakistan is willing to blink. Hence, let us forget about any normalization of relations any time soon. Meanwhile, the stakeholders in both countries may avoid flogging the dead horse and mudslinging. Hopefully, the LoC arrangements made in Feb 2021 are followed and there is no experimentation with the Indus Waters Treaty. In the rapidly evolving age of Artificial Intelligence, there is no scope for scoring inconsequential diplomatic points. Let us wake-up before a ‘bot’ sets it in motion.