**[Time to let Pak-India ties wait](https://www.dawn.com/news/1869975/time-to-let-pak-india-ties-wait)**

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THERE’S a time for everything, as the saying goes, which includes canvassing for better ties between India and Pakistan. Their relations since inception have been marked by ups and downs, and today they are looking more stuck than threatening on their rusty slide.

Savour the [description](https://www.dawn.com/news/1667564) that former foreign minister Jaswant Singh offered after the Vajpayee-Musharraf summit ended fruitlessly in Agra: “The caravan of peace has stalled, not overturned.” A viable suggestion to let the ties mature unhurriedly.

There was a time in the 1960s when the wounds of partition had barely healed, and trainloads of Pakistanis and Indians were crossing the border every day. Some travelled from Karachi for the flimsiest of reasons — on one occasion to watch Dilip Kumar romance Madhubala in a movie that played on the memory of Mughal grandeur. Cousins would look out for Rubia voile fabric in the crowded lanes of Karol Bagh market where they were warmly received by Punjabi shopkeepers still struggling with the trauma of 1947.

There was a time too when [prime minister Vajpayee](https://www.dawn.com/news/amp/356540) instructed his cricket team to win hearts in Pakistan. Indians who came to Lahore to watch the long overdue one-day international in 2004, found themselves lavished with warmth they had never imagined. There was amazing hospitality everywhere. Many returned home loaded with gifts and fond memories of free rides in taxis and exotic food courts that didn’t charge them a paisa.

There was a time too when young Pakistanis were taught to see India as an enemy country and Indians were taught with the state’s help to respect their brethren everywhere. A four- or five-year-old cousin from Pakistan told us in the Ayub era how he wanted to become a pilot and drop bombs on India. Today, it is India’s turn to indoctrinate its masses to hate Muslims, among them Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. This, ironically, when everyone barring the extremists in Pakistan seek improved ties with India.

Give the hacks half a chance and they would muscle their way through the most urgent topics to frame a discussion on India-Pakistan troubles.

Mani Shankar Aiyar, the incorrigible optimist and campaigner for India-Pakistan friendship, [wrote recently](https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/mani-shankar-aiyar-writes-a-congressmans-personal-tribute-to-s-jaishankar-9627539/) that he saw an opening for better days ahead in the [visit to Islamabad](https://www.dawn.com/news/1865737) by India’s foreign minister, who represented Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the SCO summit last month.

Aiyar spoke of a few ideas about connectivity and prosperity in Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar’s address to the Shanghai club. The SCO charter, however, also speaks of good neighbourly relations, which Jaishankar perhaps unknowingly skipped.

Aiyar sees improved ties with Pakistan as paving the way for happier tidings for Indian Muslims. The question then needs to be asked: if the horse befriends the grass what would it eat? Why would a patently communal government stop hating Muslims?

If keeping bad relations with Pakistan is an element in the political drive to target Muslims, which the Hindutva clan has benefited from, then the hatred has to be first exorcised at home. Or, as the cynics would say, give Adani or Ambani a share in a gas pipeline project in Pakistan, to override Hindutva’s communal necessity. That would reset the ties to a new high, though the people on both sides would not be integral to such rapprochement.

Wasn’t there an Indian tycoon lodged in a Lahore hotel with a missive from PM Modi not too long ago? Either way, it doesn’t make sense to clamour for India-Pakistan ties in which the people don’t have a central role. The Nobel Peace Prize went to Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin, but to what avail? Genuine peace needs to be rooted in the people’s interest, not the tycoons’ or the ever-lurking foreign strategy minders’.

It is curious, therefore, to see the [Indian media](https://www.dawn.com/news/1851156) that spouts vitriol against Pakistan being always ready to broach the status of the ties. The world is teetering on the brink of an unutterable catastrophe, but Indian journalists rarely fail to undermine the grim reality. For them, it’s India-Pakistan ties come what may, replete with their overt or covert slant.

A former ambassador to Islamabad went a step further. He claimed in his memoirs that India was planning to shoot missiles into Pakistan had it not promptly returned the air force pilot it had captured after shooting down an Indian warplane. And Pakistan would have sat on its haunches? What else can it be called other than puerile propaganda and obsessive one-upmanship between two nuclear upstarts?

Give the hacks half a chance and they would muscle their way through the most urgent discussions on the table, say, on the collapsing political world order, the sapling planted by BRICS to challenge the dollar’s hegemony, apocalyptic environmental degradation, the unspeakable massacres underway in Gaza, Congo, Ukraine, and, above all, the eerie [Israel-Iran spiral](https://www.dawn.com/news/1869690/truce-can-soften-response-to-israel-irans-president), to frame a discussion on India-Pakistan troubles.

The Maldives was hosting a summit of the Saarc nations in 1997 where it underlined the threat to its existence by global warming as the rising ocean would swamp it. But the Indian and Pakistani prime ministers entered the room, and the topic turned to their tango.

In a similar spectacle recently, the Iranian ambassador in New Delhi was being interviewed by an Indian journalist. While the Middle East is on fire, her concern focused on why Iran’s supreme leader mentioned Kashmir to target India. The seasoned ambassador benignly let the female TV anchor grind his delicately woven Persian carpet in the room with her nail-head heels. As a parting shot, though, he let her know that India had ongoing run-ins with other countries, for example, the US or the UK over Sikh expatriates. But it scantly affected their stable ties.

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has since the Lahore summit [favoured talks](https://www.dawn.com/news/1865875) with India. On a day when he should have held forth on the importance of the SCO summit underway he was expressing hopes for better ties to a visiting Indian journalist even as the world was exploding not far away.

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