



# **DAILY NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS**

**THE HINDU**

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**Topic: GS2 - IR : India-Pakistan  
relation**



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## A Bridge Across the India-Pakistan Abyss

### Current State of Relation:-

- Ties between India and Pakistan are at an ebb — their lowest in two decades marked by a sustained period of deep hostilities, with diplomatic missions downgraded and travel routes truncated. For example.
  - Since 2015 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Lahore visit in the same year, the leaders of both countries have not met for talks.
  - In mid-2018, the **backchannel diplomacy** between the National Security Advisers of both countries was called off by Pakistan, while in September 2018, India called off a planned meeting between the Foreign Ministers in New York.
  - In the wake of the **Pulwama terror attack** in Jammu and Kashmir in February this year, India attacked terror targets in Pakistan which in turn sent fighter jets to the border.
  - Subsequently, after India moved missiles and deployed submarines, Pakistan raised a full air alert and imposed an airspace ban that lasted till mid-July.
- What has been disconnected from all those tensions are the talks on the Kartarpur corridor.

- The offer from Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan to open the corridor was conveyed first by Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, and accepted by Mr. Modi, **marking a rare moment of coordination between the two nations.**
- That the talks have continued through one of the most difficult years in the relationship is equally remarkable, which aims to ensure both sides complete the infrastructure needed **before November 2019, the 550th anniversary of Sikhism's founder Guru Nanak.**

### **India's Concern with Respect Corridor:-**

- **Trust Deficit and Transparency Issues:** The Kartarpur corridor project is an issue that has been raised by India for several decades, with New Delhi's reasons for wanting the corridor clear. However, in the case of Pakistan, these have **not been as transparent, with the military establishment's surprise backing only raised doubts** on whether Islamabad has **an ulterior motive.**
- **Apprehensions of Separatist Khalistani Groups:** India has its apprehensions over Pakistan allowing separatist Khalistani groups, including those funded by groups based in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, to try and influence pilgrims. Of specific concern is the 'Referendum 2020' plan by the Sikhs for Justice group (banned by India).

- **Issue of Drug Trafficking:** The other irritant is the possible use of the corridor for drugs and arms movement; there are many routes and tunnels at the border between the two Punjab.
- **New Avenue for Terrorist:** The terror threat by Pakistani Punjab-based anti-India groups such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad is also a constant concern
- **Breach of “No Talks without Terror Ending” Foreign Policy:** Agreeing to the Kartarpur corridor means the government has made ***an exception from a matter concerning national policy for a matter of faith.***
  - In the last few years, every avenue has been shut down from those for official, bilateral and regional talks to even those for travel and tourism. Trade too has ground to a halt with cross-Line of Control (LoC) trade route suspension the latest casualty. Indian and Pakistani Ministers do not even hold talks when they meet at multilateral conferences.
  - With such strictures in place, New Delhi’s decision to embark on a course that will need regular and repeated India-Pakistan meetings is nothing short of a breach of its otherwise firm “no talks without terror ending” policy.

### **Significance of Kartarpur Corridor:-**

- **May Create a Mechanism for Broader Conversations:** With the Kartarpur exception to India’s policy on Pakistan now established, it is necessary to see whether it can be built on to create a mechanism for broader conversations between India and Pakistan. The timing of the Kartarpur opening ***may also lend itself to exploring other bilateral engagements.***

- **May Facilitate Other Faith-based Corridor:** The obvious extension from this would be for having other faith-based “corridors” for Hindu, Muslim and Sikh pilgrims in both countries; this would be in addition to the list of 20 shrines (15 in Pakistan, five in India) that were **negotiated under the 1974 Protocol on visits to Religious Shrines.**
- **Show the Way of Immunisation of Relations from Terrorism and Election Rhetoric:** The template that Kartarpur has given both sides is also worth considering for the format of other bilateral negotiations given that the talks have been immunised from both terror attacks and election rhetoric.

### **Future Prospects of Relations:-**

- Ahead of the next plenary of the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** in October, Pakistan will remain under pressure to keep terror groups subdued.
- According to various reports, **infiltration figures at the LoC are significantly lower (a 43% reduction since the Balakot strikes in February)**; officials have marked about 20 terror camps in PoK they believe have been “shut down” recently.
- Civilian and military casualties from ceasefire violations have also reduced.

- Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's government, which has been buoyed by Mr. Khan's U.S. visit and by Pakistan's new-found acceptance in the international community for its role in Taliban talks, and Mr. Modi's government, which has been bolstered by its strong electoral mandate, will also be in the strongest positions politically to forge agreements.

**Conclusion:-**

- Thus, it would be a travesty to waste the opportunity made possible by the Kartarpur corridor to bring both countries back to the table for talks.