



FROM DIALOGUE TO DEADLOCK: EVALUATING THE FAILURE OF CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

India-Pakistan relations are currently locked in a strategic deadlock, characterized by deep-rooted mistrust, ongoing disputes, and a lack of genuine political commitment to achieving meaningful progress or reconciliation. This complicated and predominantly adversarial relationship is shaped by a long history of intertwined political developments and pivotal historical events that continue to influence dynamics between the two nations. India and Pakistan's relationship has been profoundly influenced by the violent legacy of the 1947 partition, the ongoing dispute over Jammu and Kashmir, and repeated military confrontations. While diplomatic relations were formally established shortly after independence, the deep scars of partition and conflicting territorial ambitions quickly undermined any prospects for stable ties. Since their separation, the two nations have fought three major wars and have been involved in frequent border clashes and military standoffs, with the Kashmir issue serving as the primary source of friction in the majority of these conflicts. In an effort to manage tensions and promote peace, both nations have periodically engaged in Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) aimed at fostering communication, reducing the risk of military escalation, and creating an environment conducive to dialogue. Despite these efforts, CBMs have largely failed to deliver lasting results. This paper examines the implementation, effectiveness, and eventual breakdown of Indo-Pak CBMs, with a specific focus on the underlying factors contributing to their ineffectiveness. Central to this analysis is the unresolved Kashmir dispute, which continues to serve as a major obstacle to trust and cooperation.

Key Words

Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), Composite dialogue, Summits, Indo-Pak conflict, dispute, stability, mutual trust, military escalations.

Introduction

Since their emergence as independent countries in 1947, India and Pakistan have experienced a turbulent relationship marked by war, mistrust, and deep-rooted hostility. Their relation has been heavily dominated by the Kashmir conflict and a successions of military and political skirmishes. In an effort to reduce tensions and prevent open confrontation, both countries have time and again pursued Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) aimed at promoting dialogue, transparency, and reducing the risk of escalation.

These initiatives or confidence building measures have taken various forms, ranging from military agreements and trade talks, cultural exchanges and people to people contact. The Confidence Building Measures have been persistently seen as the best means to reduce the tension and develop friendly ties between India and Pakistan. CBMs are designed to foster a sense of trust, which is a psychological condition in which parties are willing to accept vulnerability and take risks, based on the expectation of goodwill and constructive



behavior from the other side, (**Mason and Siegfried, 2013**).

Trust is a critical issue in mediation. Attempts to resolve conflicts often fail where the parties are deeply suspicious of each other. Confidence building Measures are suggested to build trust between the parties of dispute. The concept of CBMs is currently being discussed solely within the field of international conflict resolution, where mediators are employing CBMs to de-escalate conflicts between states. Confidence Building Measures aim to lessen anxiety and suspicion by making parties' behavior more predictable.

CBMs are agreements between two or more parties regarding the exchange of information and verification, typically with respect to the use of military forces and armaments. Some measures attempt to make military capabilities more transparent and to clarify the intention of military and political activities. Others establish rules regarding the movement of military forces as well as mechanisms for verifying compliance with such rules. Such agreements are meant to build trust among the conflicting parties and limit escalation, (**Ahmar, 2001**).

Despite several promising starts, most CBMs between India and Pakistan have failed to produce lasting results. They have often collapsed under the weight of political volatility, public scepticism, and major security incidents, such as cross-border terrorism and military provocations. The lack of sustained political will, entrenched strategic mistrust, and the centrality of the Kashmir issue have consistently undermined these efforts, leading to a cycle where dialogue begins with optimism but ends in deadlock.

This paper seeks to critically evaluate the trajectory, challenges, and ultimate failure of Indo-Pakistan CBMs. By analysing the historical context, key initiatives, and the factors contributing to their breakdown, the study aims to understand why these measures have been

largely ineffective and what this reveals about the broader dynamics of conflict and cooperation in South Asia.

Exploring the concept of Confidence Building Measures

In international relations, a confidence-building measure is an initiative that demonstrates goodwill or a willingness to share information with an opposing party. These measures aim to reduce misunderstandings, tensions, fear, and the risk of conflict by promoting trust and preventing the escalation of hostilities. Traditionally associated with warfare, national security, and peacekeeping efforts, confidence-building measures have increasingly found relevance in broader political and diplomatic contexts (**Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025**).

The Henry L. Stimson Centre in Washington, D.C., categorizes confidence-building measures into four key types, including communication, constraint, transparency, and verification.

Communication measures aim to prevent crises by easing tensions, often through tools such as presidential or military hotlines, regional communication hubs, and official consultations.

Constraint measures seek to limit the scope and application of power, typically in the military context, by reducing troop deployments in sensitive areas, especially near borders and by providing advance notice of military operations.

Transparency measures promote openness and trust by requiring the prior disclosure of activities and the sharing of relevant information between parties. **Verification measures** are designed to reduce mistrust and enhance a sense of security. In military contexts, this may involve the use of aerial and ground surveillance technologies, while in diplomatic settings, verification can be established through formal agreements, third-party monitoring, inspections, and international treaties, etc, (**Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025**).

In the immediate term, confidence-building measures seek to correct misperceptions



between parties regarding each other's intentions and to prevent misinterpretations of military activities or policies that could otherwise trigger conflict. Gradually, these measures can contribute to more stable political and diplomatic relationships, shift how parties perceive their security requirements, and potentially foster efforts to recognize and address mutual security interests (**Holst, 2001**).

Types of Confidence Building Measures

In their handbook designed for African Union peace process practitioners, Mason and Siegfried identify three main goals of confidence building measures

- 1) To stop conflicts from intensifying
- 2) To create momentum for peace talks and strengthen negotiation efforts, and
- 3) To support the continuation and long-term success of the peace process and its outcomes, (**Mason and Siegfried, 2013**).

Confidence building measures come in various forms, and several key types are outlined below.

- 1) **Military or Security CBMs:** Military or security related confidence building measures can vary depending on whether the conflict is between nations or within a single state. Their primary goal is to minimize misinterpretations of military activities that might otherwise escalate tensions. Examples of such measures include: establishing direct communication links (hotlines), sharing military mapping data, conducting joint training exercises, providing updates on troop deployments, exchanging military officers, creating demilitarized buffer zones, coordinating joint patrols along borders, enforcing no-fly zones, and forming collaborative teams to monitor ceasefires (**Mason and Siegfried, 2013**).
- 2) **Political CBMs:** Political confidence-building measures are designed to foster mutual trust between conflicting parties, with the goal of reaching political

resolutions. These measures may involve holding negotiations in a neutral, distraction-free setting; facilitating both formal and informal dialogues; organizing joint activities; arranging reciprocal visits; and launching shared media initiatives, such as issuing joint press releases to highlight progress made (**Holst, 2001**).

- 3) **Economic CBMs:** Economic confidence building measures help strengthen ties between nations and communities by encouraging economic cooperation, which in turn fosters trust. In today's globally competitive environment, economic factors play a vital role in shaping relationships both among states and within them, as mutual dependence often leads to more constructive and beneficial interactions. Parties involved in such economic partnerships are generally less likely to risk their financial stability or survival by engaging in conflict. Additionally, trade between countries or communities can open channels for dialogue and promote a collaborative approach to resolving shared challenges, (**Syed, 2020**)
- 4) **Environmental CBMs:** Environmental confidence-building measures involve joint planning and training efforts to address both natural and human-induced disasters. Natural events such as earthquakes, floods, and prolonged droughts, along with human-caused incidents like fires and chemical spills, fall within this scope. Shared natural resources such as cross-border water systems and forests also serve as key areas for cooperation. Initiatives that establish trans-boundary points of contact between states or communities can function as effective CBMs when



they emphasize mutual dependence and provide incentives for collaboration. Since environmental issues are typically viewed as non-sensitive, they offer a politically safe platform for fostering cooperation, (**Brauch et al., 2011**).

- 5) **Societal CBMs:** These involve a range of people-to-people interactions, dialogues, and collaborative efforts that foster mutual understanding and promote compromise. These measures may include exchanges between educators and media professionals, joint initiatives focused on curriculum development and academic research, participation in educational forums, and the exchange of students, public personalities, and professionals from various sectors. They also encompass engagement among civil society organizations, religious and ethnic communities, neighbourhood groups, and the implementation of travel agreements between nations. Advances in modern technology have significantly reduced physical and communication barriers, effectively transforming the world into a more interconnected global community, (**Ahmed, 2007**).
- 6) **Cultural CBMs:** The main objective of cultural CBMs is to reflect a government's openness to indigenous traditions and its admiration for established cultural institutions. This includes avoiding repressive policies related to language or religion, honouring the diversity of ethnic minority communities, recognizing their native languages, etc. History offers numerous examples of such diplomacy. Individuals such as travellers, merchants, scholars, artists, and tourists have historically served as informal cultural ambassadors. Anyone who has

been in contact with diverse cultures, either in the present or the past, has the potential to encourage cultural interaction and exchange. Figures like actors, writers, musicians, athletes, scientists, entrepreneurs, and political leaders are all capable of acting as cultural diplomats, (**Pajtinka, 2014**).

- 7) **Humanitarian CBMs:** Humanitarian CBMs refer to actions undertaken by a state purely out of concern for human welfare and dignity, without any underlying political or strategic motives. These initiatives are intended to alleviate human suffering and promote compassion and solidarity among nations.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to analyse the implementation, effectiveness, and eventual breakdown of Indo-Pak Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs), with particular emphasis on identifying the underlying factors that have limited their success. This study specifically aims to assess how the unresolved Kashmir dispute functions as a persistent barrier to trust and cooperation between India and Pakistan.

Literature Review

While reviewing the existing literature on Indo-Pak confidence-building measures (CBMs), it becomes clear that these initiatives have been explored from multiple angles: historical, political, military, and societal. While many studies acknowledge the value of CBMs in reducing immediate tensions and improving communication, they also point out that such measures have struggled to create lasting trust between the two countries. A recurring theme in the literature is that deeper structural issues, especially the unresolved Kashmir dispute, consistently limit the impact of these efforts. This literature review brings together some of the major studies to trace the development of



Indo-Pak CBMs, assess their successes and failures, and identify the core factors that continue to weaken their long-term effectiveness.

Hanif, Mustafa, and Nawaz (2025), in their study “An Analysis of Confidence-Building Measures in India-Pakistan Relations: Pre-1999 Perspectives,” analyse the evolution of CBMs from the post-partition era up to the 1999 Kargil crisis. They highlight early initiatives such as the Tashkent Agreement, Simla Agreement, and Lahore Declaration, focusing on military communication (e.g., hotlines) and diplomatic engagements. However, they argue that such CBMs were fragile due to political instability, terrorism, and enduring mistrust (Hanif, Mustafa, & Nawaz, 2025). The study examines the significant initiatives, obstacles, and circumstances that influenced the process of building trust between India and Pakistan.

Another study, “THE ROLE OF CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES IN THE EVOLUTION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND INDIA” by **Haider and Azad (2021)** provide a foundational analysis of confidence-building measures (CBMs) between India and Pakistan, arguing that CBMs between the two countries must be comprehensive and integrated, encompassing political, military, economic, environmental, and social domains to overcome deep seated mistrust rooted in their conflict history. They emphasize that both states still face spoilers like non-state actors, terrorist incidents etc, that repeatedly undercut CBM progress.

During the tenure of Pervez Musharraf the CBMs between the two countries intensified again and looking at the same yet another study by **Hanif, Mustafa, and Nawaz (2025)** “Confidence building measures between India and Pakistan: A critical analysis of Pervez Musharraf era” critically examine this era, noting both achievements such as ceasefire agreements along the Line of Control,

resumption of trade, and high-level dialogue and serious limitations particularly the vulnerability to terrorist provocations and breakdowns in dialogue following major incidents.

Exploring how CBMs assumed new importance in the post-nuclearisation era of South Asia, **Tufail (2025)**, in his study “Confidence-building measures in the post-nuclearisation era of South Asia”, argues that nuclearisation raised the stakes of Indo-Pak conflict, thereby increasing the urgency of CBMs. The study maintained that the unresolved Kashmir issue remains the central structural barrier to peace between the two nations, while CBMs help manage immediate tensions.

Shamshad and Khan (2022), in their study “Confidence-building measures between Pakistan and India: The way forward”, examined the pitfalls and shortfalls in CBM implementation. Their study, based on CBMs between India and Pakistan, argues that CBMs often fail due to a lack of continuity, political mistrust, and the absence of mechanisms to insulate them from crises such as terrorism or leadership changes. Importantly, they assert that the Kashmir dispute acts as a persistent structural headache.

Methodology

This study is based entirely on a detailed examination of existing academic literature concerning Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) between India and Pakistan. The research process involved systematically exploring various scholarly sources, including peer-reviewed journals, books, and research reports, to gather insights into the importance, practical examples, and future outlook of CBMs in bilateral relations.

The information obtained from these secondary materials was critically reviewed, organised, and integrated to create a well-structured and coherent analysis. It is essential to note that this research does not include any original data collection or field-based investigation, as it is



exclusively dependent on previously published materials.

Assessment of Confidence Building Measures between India and Pakistan

Confidence-building measures (CBMs) between India and Pakistan have long been seen as important tools for reducing hostility, preventing conflicts from escalating, and creating a foundation for ongoing dialogue between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. These measures are rooted in a history of wars, territorial disputes, and deep political mistrust. They aim to promote transparency, encourage communication, and establish practical methods that minimize the chance of misunderstandings or unintended confrontations. Evaluating the effectiveness of CBMs is essential, not just for reviewing past efforts but also for figuring out how future actions can support regional stability, mutual trust, and lasting peace in South Asia.

The following is a list of the main agreements between the two nations and the possible reasons for their failure.

The Karachi Agreement

The Karachi Agreement of 1949 was one of the first serious efforts to put a formal ceasefire in place between India and Pakistan after the first Kashmir War. Facilitated by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP), it outlined the Ceasefire Line (CFL) across Jammu and Kashmir in the hope of creating a stable boundary and reducing the chances of renewed fighting. Yet, many scholars argue that the agreement ultimately fell short, largely because of structural weaknesses, political uncertainties, and the changing strategic environment in the region.

A major concern raised in the literature is the ambiguity in how the territory was demarcated, especially beyond the point known as NJ9842. The agreement vaguely stated that the line would continue “north to the glaciers,” a phrase that later opened the door to competing claims. Authors like **Lamb (1991)** and **Schofield (2010)**

have shown how this ambiguity played a direct role in the emergence of the Siachen dispute, which became a significant source of conflict in the 1980s.

Another important point raised by scholars is the agreement’s failure to address the underlying political question, i.e the final status of Jammu and Kashmir. As **Korbel (1954)** and **Dasgupta (2002)** noted that the agreement was essentially a military arrangement and did not offer any pathway toward a long-term political resolution. This left both sides distrustful and more inclined to push the boundaries of the ceasefire line.

Researchers also highlight weaknesses in monitoring and enforcement. While UN observers were deployed, they lacked the authority to enforce compliance, making it difficult to prevent violations (**Wirsing, 1994**). Over time, as the role of UN personnel diminished, so did the strength of the agreement. The literature further suggested that the broader geopolitical environment further complicated matters. During the Cold War, Pakistan’s involvement with Western alliances such as SEATO and CENTO shaped its strategic expectations, making the ceasefire terms harder to sustain (**Schofield, 2010**). These political shifts fed into rising tensions that eventually erupted in the 1965 war.

Overall, the literature suggests that the Karachi Agreement did not fail because it lacked purpose, but because it was unable to resolve deeper political and territorial issues, lacked strong oversight, and was overtaken by changing regional dynamics. Its limitations set the stage for later conflicts and underscored the need for more comprehensive, enforceable mechanisms for peace between India and Pakistan.

The Indus Water Treaty

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) has been widely examined within the fields of international water governance, hydro-politics, and South Asian security studies. A consistent finding across the literature is that although the Treaty has



demonstrated remarkable durability since its signing in 1960, many scholars now argue that it is increasingly ill-equipped to address the complex challenges of the twenty-first century.

Facilitated by the World Bank, the Treaty allocated the three eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) to India and the three western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) to Pakistan and was celebrated as a pioneering model of trans-boundary water diplomacy. However, contemporary scholarship suggests that the foundational assumptions of the IWT are being undermined by evolving political, environmental, and institutional dynamics.

A dominant theme emerging from recent studies is that the Treaty was designed for a historical context that no longer reflects current hydrological realities. Climate change, in particular, has been identified as a major challenge not anticipated by the drafters. **Qamar (2019)** emphasises that the IWT contains no provisions for addressing climate variability, despite increasing evidence that glacial melt, erratic monsoons, and altered flow regimes pose severe risks to the Indus Basin's stability. Similar findings are highlighted by **Nax (2016)** and **Desai (2021)**, who argue that the growing unpredictability of river discharge necessitates more adaptive mechanisms, such as flexible water-sharing arrangements and enhanced hydrological data exchange. Without such reforms, the Treaty's resilience is expected to weaken.

Institutional rigidity is another significant concern identified by scholars. **Bhatnagar (2009)** and **Rao (2016)** note that the Treaty lacks a sunset clause or any formal review mechanism, resulting in a governance structure that has remained largely static for over six decades. This rigidity is increasingly problematic as demographic pressures, technological advancements, and environmental uncertainties reshape water needs on both sides of the border. Further critiques highlight

limitations of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC). **Hafeez and Kausar (2022)** argue that while the PIC has facilitated communication between India and Pakistan, it does not possess the authority or technical capacity required to address emerging challenges such as groundwater depletion, extreme hydrological events, and basin-wide ecological degradation. Political tensions between India and Pakistan also constitute a persistent strain on Treaty implementation. The literature consistently shows that water disputes are deeply intertwined with broader geopolitical conflicts, particularly those related to Kashmir. **Shah (2025)** observes that disagreements over India's hydropower projects on western rivers, including Kishanganga and Ratle, have increasingly been politicized, with each side interpreting Treaty provisions through securitized lenses. As a result, cooperative water management is often overshadowed by mistrust and competing national narratives.

Overall, the literature indicates that while the IWT has historically functioned as a robust conflict-prevention mechanism, it now faces multiple stressors that challenge its long-term effectiveness. Across scholarly analyses, the key factors contributing to the Treaty's perceived decline include climate-change impacts, institutional rigidity, geopolitical tensions, etc. Consequently, many authors advocate for modernisation of the Treaty through legal amendments, enhanced institutional capacities, and adaptive, climate-resilient management approaches.

The Tashkent Agreement

The Tashkent Agreement of 1966, signed between India and Pakistan under the mediation of the Soviet Union, marked an attempt to restore peace following the 1965 war. Intended to normalize relations, the agreement required both countries to withdraw forces to pre-war positions, resume diplomatic ties, and commit to non-interference in each other's internal affairs.



While hailed internationally as a diplomatic achievement, scholars widely argue that the agreement's effectiveness was limited, fragile, and short-lived due to deep-rooted political, strategic, and domestic constraints, (**Devotta, 2002**) and (**Ganguly, 1994**).

A recurring focus in the literature is that the treaty failed to address the core political dispute between the two countries regarding the status of Jammu and Kashmir. Analysts such as (**Wolpert, 2008**) and (**Raghavan, 2013**) note that by avoiding any substantive negotiation on Kashmir, the agreement merely restored the status quo without reducing the drivers of conflict. As a result, both states continued to interpret the accord through the lens of their entrenched national narratives, which weakened its long-term relevance.

The agreement also suffered from domestic political backlash in both countries. In Pakistan, the Tashkent Declaration was widely viewed as a diplomatic defeat, with political opponents accusing President Ayub Khan of conceding military gains without securing political advantage (**Sayeed, 1980**). This domestic opposition undermined Pakistan's willingness to pursue further negotiations. In India, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's sudden death in Tashkent complicated the follow-up process, and his successor faced competing pressures that affected continuity in policy (**Ganguly, 1994**).

Another major issue highlighted in the literature review was the absence of enforcement mechanisms or confidence-building provisions. Unlike later agreements, such as the Simla Accord, the Tashkent Agreement lacked structured frameworks for long-term dialogue or mechanisms for monitoring compliance. According to **Hilali (2001)**, this deficiency allowed political tensions to re-emerge quickly and made the agreement vulnerable to derailment during crises.

Taken together, the literature shows that the Tashkent Agreement struggled to achieve lasting

peace because it did not address the underlying political conflict, lacked domestic legitimacy, provided no institutional mechanisms for dispute resolution, etc. As a result, its impact remained short-term, setting the stage for renewed tensions in the years that followed.

The Rann of Kutch Agreement

The Rann of Kutch Agreement of 1965 was intended to resolve a long-standing border dispute between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch, a marshy area in the western part of Gujarat. Following skirmishes in 1965, the agreement, facilitated by British mediation, sought to establish a boundary and restore peace between the two countries (**Ganguli, 1987**) and (**Chandra, 2006**). While it temporarily reduced immediate hostilities, scholars argue that the agreement's impact was limited and it ultimately failed to prevent future conflicts, particularly the Indo-Pakistani War later in 1965.

The literature highlighted that the agreement did not address the underlying political and strategic tensions between India and Pakistan. Authors like **Lamb (1991)** and **Ganguly (1994)** note that although the boundary line was demarcated, the agreement left many ambiguities about control of specific salt marsh areas and water channels. These ambiguities allowed both sides to maintain conflicting interpretations, undermining the treaty's effectiveness.

Another significant factor highlighted by scholars is the lack of institutional mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement. Unlike later agreements, the Rann of Kutch Agreement relied on mutual goodwill and third-party mediation without establishing a permanent framework to handle disputes or verify compliance, (**Wirsing, 1998**). This absence of oversight made it easy for disagreements to escalate once political tensions rose elsewhere, particularly over Kashmir.

Domestic political pressures also played a role in limiting the treaty's effectiveness. Both governments faced nationalist expectations to



appear strong in defending territorial claims. According to **Sayeed (1980)**, this domestic audience constrained leaders from fully implementing the terms or making concessions, which further reduced the agreement's practical impact.

Finally, scholars argue that the broader regional context contributed to the treaty's failure. The Rann of Kutch agreement was overshadowed by the ongoing Kashmir dispute, the rising Indo-Pakistani rivalry, and the growing alignment of Pakistan with the United States and India's ties with the Soviet Union, (**McMahon, 1994**).

In summary, while the Rann of Kutch Agreement temporarily eased hostilities, its failure stemmed from unresolved strategic disputes, ambiguous territorial demarcation, weak enforcement mechanisms, domestic political pressures, and broader regional tensions. The literature suggests that such limitations highlight the difficulty of achieving lasting peace through short-term agreements in South Asia.

Direct Communication Link

The Direct Communication Link (DCL), often referred to as the "Hotline" between India and Pakistan, was established in the early 1970s as a Confidence Building Measure (CBM) to prevent misunderstandings and manage crises between the two nuclear-capable neighbours. The system aimed to facilitate immediate communication between military and political leadership, particularly during periods of heightened tension, allowing both sides to clarify intentions and reduce the risk of inadvertent escalation, (**Kumar, 2006**) and (**Wirsing, 1994**). While the DCL was a step toward structured dialogue, scholars argue that it largely failed to achieve its objectives due to structural, technical, and political limitations.

A significant issue highlighted in the literature is the limited scope and accessibility of the communication channel. The DCL was primarily designed for military-to-military

contact, often bypassing political leadership in urgent moments. According to **Ganguly (1994)** and **Pant (2010)**, this restriction reduced its effectiveness during crises where rapid political decision making was critical. Moreover, the lack of clear protocols for use, especially during ambiguous or sudden conflicts, often resulted in delays and miscommunication.

Another major reason for the DCL's limited success was political mistrust and reluctance to fully utilize the channel. Literature revealed that both countries were hesitant to appear vulnerable or concede strategic information through the hotline, particularly during periods of intense rivalry such as the 1971 war and subsequent tensions over Kashmir, (**McMahon, 1994**) and (**Kumar, 2006**). This lack of trust meant that the hotline was rarely used proactively, undermining its purpose as a preventive tool.

Technical and infrastructural limitations further constrained the DCL. Early communication technology was slow, unreliable, and subject to misinterpretation, which scholars argue reduced confidence in its utility, (**Wirsing, 1994**).

Finally, the literature emphasizes that broader geopolitical factors limited the DCL's effectiveness. Regional crises, domestic political pressures, and shifting alliances during the Cold War often overshadowed technical communication tools, reducing the impact of the DCL in averting conflict, (**Pant, 2010**) and (**Ganguly, 1994**).

In summary, while the Direct Communication Link of the 1970s represented a pioneering CBM for India and Pakistan, it failed to fully achieve its objectives due to limited access, political mistrust, technical shortcomings, and an absence of broader institutional support.

The Simla Accord

The Simla Accord of 1972 was a landmark attempt by India and Pakistan to stabilize relations after the 1971 war and the creation of Bangladesh. Its key achievement was converting



the ceasefire line in Jammu and Kashmir into the Line of Control (LoC) and emphasizing bilateral negotiations as the preferred method for resolving disputes, rather than relying on third-party mediation (**Ganguly,1994**) and (**Raghav,2013**). According to them, this framework helped reduce immediate tensions and provided a structured platform for dialogue between the two countries.

One of the Accord's major strengths was its focus on bilateralism and formalizing boundaries. By establishing the LoC, both nations gained a clearer sense of territorial limits and a mechanism to manage conflicts without external interference. Authors like **Wolpert (2008)** and **Hilali (2001)** argue that this approach helped create periods of relative calm along the border and gave India and Pakistan a degree of control over their dispute management.

Despite these successes, the literature also highlights significant limitations. The Accord did not tackle the core political issue of Kashmir, leaving both sides to interpret the agreement in ways that suited their interests. **Ganguli (1987)** and **Sayed (1980)** noted that this ambiguity has contributed to recurring skirmishes and conflicts along the LoC, including the Kargil crisis in 1999.

Another challenge was the lack of monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. While the Accord emphasized dialogue, it provided no independent institutions to ensure compliance or resolve disputes when tensions escalated. **Wirsing (1998)** argues that this gap made it easier for minor provocations to spiral into larger confrontations. Domestic political pressures in both countries also limited leaders' flexibility in implementing the agreement fully.

The Non-Nuclear Aggression Agreement

The Non-Nuclear Aggression Agreement (NNAA), signed between India and Pakistan in 1988, was a confidence-building measure aimed

at preventing hostilities and reducing the risk of accidental or deliberate nuclear conflict. The agreement sought to establish commitments that both countries would not attack or support aggression against each other, particularly with regard to nuclear and strategic facilities (**Perkovich, 2002**) and (**Kumar, 2006**). It represented a step toward stabilizing the nuclearized South Asian environment, especially after both nations had begun developing nuclear capabilities.

Studies recognize that the NNAA was significant as it formally acknowledged the need for restraint in a nuclearized context. According to **Pant (2010)** and **Wirsing (1998)**, the agreement was an early attempt to introduce rules of the game in the region, providing a framework to prevent miscalculations and inadvertent escalation between two historically hostile neighbours.

Despite its intentions, the literature points to several limitations and failures. One major critique is the lack of verification and enforcement mechanisms. Unlike treaties in other nuclear contexts, the NNAA relied heavily on mutual trust and diplomatic communication, with no independent monitoring to ensure compliance. This limitation made it difficult to determine whether either side had breached the agreement during periods of heightened tension, (**Perkovich,2002**) and (**Ganguly,1994**).

Another significant factor was persistent political mistrust. Scholars acknowledged that deep-seated strategic rivalry between India and Pakistan undermined the NNAA's effectiveness. This distrust prevented proactive engagement or confidence in the agreement's utility.

In sum, while the NNAA was a noteworthy attempt at limiting nuclear and strategic aggression, its failure stemmed from structural weaknesses, lack of enforcement and political mistrust.

DGMO Frequent Hotline & Diplomatic Protocols



Established in the year 1990, the Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) hotline is yet another CBM which is considered to be one of the most lasting confidence building measures between India and Pakistan. The hotline was envisioned to provide a direct, secure, military to military communication channel to prevent accidental escalation between the two countries.

The hotline operates under routine and crisis protocols. Under routine protocols, organized weekly calls are held to evaluate border incidents and maintain a minimal level of operational transparency. Under crisis protocols, either side may initiate immediate contact to clarify intent or convey warnings, thereby reducing the probability of misinterpretation, **(Ganguly and Hagerty, 2005)**.

Despite its recognized endurance, scholars have repeatedly questioned its effectiveness, especially during periods of heightened conflict. Studies indicate that the hotline has often been underutilized or futile during severe crises, such as the 1999 Kargil war and subsequent military standoffs. During such periods, political mistrust overshadows crisis communication needs **(Ganguly and Kapur, 2010)**.

Krepon (2014) notes that hotlines tend to function best in low-intensity environments but are frequently sidelined when leaders fear that communication may be interpreted as weakness. The literature highlights that one of the key weaknesses of the hotline is the lack of genuine trust between the parties. Even when communication takes place, continued ceasefire violations have weakened confidence in the mechanism. As scholars note, in the absence of strong verification arrangements and sustained political commitment, messages exchanged through the hotline tend to remain symbolic statements rather than enforceable commitments **(Zia, 2017)**.

This points to a wider challenge in India–Pakistan relations, where confidence-building

measures function amid unresolved territorial claims and big ideological differences, which significantly reduces their ability to promote lasting stability.

Male Summit

The Male Summit took place in May 1997 on the sidelines of the 10th SAARC Summit in Male, Maldives. The summit brought together Indian Prime Minister I. K. Gujral and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at a time of prolonged diplomatic strain. Scholars commonly view this meeting as an important confidence building measure at the highest political level, intended to reopen channels of dialogue and ease tensions that had built up over several years of difficult relations.

The summit resulted in an agreement to resume composite dialogue, covering contentious issues such as Kashmir, peace and security issues, economic cooperation, and people to people contacts **(Ganguly and Hagerty, 2005)**. Therefore, the Summit functioned as a political CBM, designed to restore communication and trust at the leadership level.

Although the Male Summit raised hopes for improved relations, but it did not lead to sustained trust or long-term stability. Scholars explain this outcome by pointing to several interconnected factors. The understandings reached during the meeting were largely informal and lacked institutional backing, leaving them exposed to political changes and emerging crises, **(Krepon, 2014)**. Moreover, the dialogue failed to deliver meaningful progress on the Kashmir dispute, which continued to dominate India-Pakistan relations and erode mutual trust, **(Ganguly and Kapur, 2010)**. Domestic political constraints further weakened the sustainability of engagement, as leaders in both countries faced internal pressures, particularly civil-military tensions in Pakistan and persistent scepticism toward Pakistan in India that limited their room for diplomatic maneuvering, **(Raghavan, 2010)**. Finally, any



confidence generated at Malé was quickly undermined by subsequent strategic shocks, including the nuclear tests of 1998 and the Kargil conflict in 1999, which effectively reversed the gains of the summit, (**Perkovich, 2018**).

The Lahore Declaration

Signed in February 1999 during Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to Pakistan, the Lahore Declaration represented a major attempt to stabilize relations between the two countries following their nuclear tests in 1998. The declaration was accompanied by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlined concrete confidence building steps to be taken by both countries, particularly in the nuclear and security domains. Scholars view it as a landmark political CBM because it combined symbolic reconciliation, most notably Vajpayee's "bus diplomacy" with commitments to dialogue, restraint, and nuclear risk reduction, (**Ganguly and Hagerty, 2005**).

Despite its initial optimism, the Lahore Declaration failed to yield lasting stability. The most immediate reason for its failure was the Kargil conflict later in 1999, which primarily undermined trust and raised serious concern about Pakistan's commitment to the agreement (**Ganguly and Kapur, 2010**). The crisis exposed a deep civil and military divide within Pakistan, where the military's actions appeared disconnected from the diplomatic commitments made by the civilian leadership, (**Raghavan, 2010**).

Literature review also discusses that, like earlier CBMs, the Lahore Declaration lacked vigorous enforcement mechanisms, making compliance largely dependent on political will, (**Krepon, 2014**). Moreover, while the declaration addressed nuclear risk reduction, it did not resolve underlying political disputes like the Kashmir conflict, which continued to fuel

confrontation and limit the durability of confidence building efforts, (**Kapur, 2007**).

Agra Summit

The Agra Summit was held in July 2001. The summit took place between Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. It was an effort to revive bilateral dialogue after the setbacks of the Kargil conflict. The literature views the summit as an ambitious attempt at confidence building, aimed at improving relations and restoring trust through direct engagement between top leadership, (**Ganguly and Hagerty, 2005**).

The summit intended to address core issues in India-Pakistan relations, including Kashmir, cross-border terrorism, nuclear risk reduction, and peace and security. It was seen as a confidence-building signal, particularly given the strained environment following Kargil, (**Raghavan, 2010**).

Despite discussions, the summit ended without a joint declaration, making it one of the most notable diplomatic failures in bilateral relations. The literature identifies several reasons for this outcome. Important among them was a fundamental disagreement over framing the Kashmir issue. **Ganguly and Kapur (2010)**. Additionally, domestic political constraints and bureaucratic resistance on both sides limited flexibility during negotiations, while deep mistrust following Kargil further narrowed the space for compromise, (**Kapur, 2007**).

Islamabad Summit

The Islamabad Summit marked a major turning point in India-Pakistan relations after years of hostility following the Kargil conflict. The Summit was held in January 2004 on the sidelines of the 12th SAARC Summit in Islamabad. The meeting between Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf resulted in a joint statement committing both sides to resume a composite dialogue. Pakistan also assured that



its territory would not be used for terrorism against India. In the literature, this summit is often seen as one of the most substantive political confidence-building measures, as it combined dialogue, restraint, and explicit security assurances, (**Ganguly and Hagerty, 2005**)

This Summit helped restore diplomatic engagement and led to several follow up CBMs, including renewed talks on Kashmir, expansion of people-to-people contacts, and the 2005 Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service. Literature review finds that, unlike earlier summits, Islamabad succeeded in producing a clear framework for sustained engagement rather than a one-time symbolic gesture, (**Krepon, 2014**).

Despite these achievements, the confidence generated proved difficult to sustain over the long term. The literature identifies several reasons for this limitation. While Pakistan's commitment to curb cross-border militancy was central to the summit's success, India remained sceptical about its implementation, and periodic militant attacks continued to undermine trust, (**Ganguly and Kapur, 2010**). At the same time, the progress on core political disputes, particularly Kashmir remained slow, reinforcing perceptions that dialogue was managing tensions rather than resolving them, (**Kapur, 2007**).

Cross LOC Trade Initiatives

The Cross LOC trade initiatives launched in 2005 are widely viewed in the literature as an innovative economic and people-centric confidence building measure. These initiatives were taken as part of the broader Indo-Pak peace process following the Islamabad Summit. It allowed limited trade and travel across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, most notably through routes Srinagar–Muzaffarabad and Poonch–Rawalakot. Researchers emphasize that the primary objective was not economic gain but the symbolic and political value of reconnecting divided communities and fostering trust at the grassroots level, (**Krepon, 2014** and **Zia, 2017**).

The initiative treated the LOC as a softened border, enabling interaction without formally altering territorial claims. Trade was conducted through a barter system, avoiding customs duties and currency exchange, reflecting the sensitive political context of Kashmir, (**Ganguly and Hagerty, 2005**).

The literature suggests that cross-LOC trade had limited success. One major constraint was the absence of banking facilities, standardized customs procedures, and legal dispute resolution mechanisms which severely restricted trade and sustainability, (**Krepon, 2014**). Security concerns also played a central role, as periodic allegations of misuse for smuggling or infiltration led to frequent suspensions, undermining trust between the two sides, (**Zia, 2017**). Additionally, broader political tensions and episodic crises in Indo-Pak relations repeatedly disrupted the initiative, demonstrating how CBMs tied to Kashmir remain vulnerable to shifts in the overall bilateral relationship between the two nations, (**Kapur, 2007**).

The Agreement on Nuclear Accident Risk Reduction

Signed in February 2007, this agreement was one of the most technically significant confidence building measures between India and Pakistan in the nuclear domain. The agreement took place nearly a decade after both states conducted nuclear tests in 1998 and it reflected a shared interest of the two countries in nuclear risk management. The initiative was the most realistic form of cooperation possible under prevailing political conditions, (**Krepon, 2014**). The literature review suggested that this CBM was aimed at preventing any accidental or inadvertent escalation. An agreement was signed to notify each other immediately of any accident related to nuclear weapons, potentially preventing a radioactive or nuclear escalation. It was therefore designed not to resolve political disputes, but to manage the dangers of nuclear proximity in a hostile environment.



Under this agreement, both countries were committed to immediate notification in the event of a nuclear accident that could have trans-border radioactive consequences to minimize the effects of radioactive fallout and prevent panic or misinterpretation. It made it mandatory to use the existing communication channels, including designated diplomatic and military hotlines, to ensure rapid contact. The agreement was notably humanitarian in its orientation, acknowledging that nuclear accidents would affect civilian populations regardless of national boundaries. This aspect distinguishes it from purely strategic CBMs, highlighting concern for human safety rather than military advantage, (**Perkovich, 2018**).

One of the most cited reasons for the limited effectiveness of this agreement was the absence of independent verification mechanisms. The agreement relies entirely on voluntary compliance and mutual trust, which is largely absent in Indo-Pak relations. Literature finds that without third party verification or monitoring arrangements, such agreements remain symbolic rather than confidence enhancing, (**Kerr and Nikitin, 2015**); (**Krepon, 2014**).

Shanghai Cooperation Organization Meeting

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting was held in Ufa, Russia, in July 2015. This meeting marked a significant moment in South Asian diplomacy, as India and Pakistan were formally admitted as full members of the SCO. Literature review views this development as a multilateral confidence building measure (CBM) rather than a bilateral one, offering both states a shared institutional platform, (**Aris, 2016**).

At the time of the summit the relations between the two countries were strained due to recurring border tensions and unresolved disputes, particularly Kashmir. Against this backdrop, the SCO provided a neutral diplomatic space where leaders from both countries could engage indirectly, reducing diplomatic isolation and

showing willingness to cooperate within a multilateral setting, (**Pantucci, 2017**). However the deep rooted mistrust persisted outside the multilateral setting. While leaders exchanged handshakes and statements of cooperation, bilateral relations soon reverted to hostility, highlighting the gap between symbolic engagement and substantive confidence building, (**Pantucci, 2017**).

The literature noted that India and Pakistan entered the SCO with different expectations. Pakistan viewed the organization as a means to internationalize its security concerns, while India emphasized counter terrorism cooperation and economic engagement, creating mismatched priorities that limited cooperation, (**Kavalski, 2019**).

The literature highlighted that the SCO meeting functioned more as a diplomatic signal than a substantive CBM. It demonstrated willingness to coexist within a regional framework but failed to alter threat perceptions or build lasting trust. As a result, the SCO has served as a platform for coexistence and not reconciliation in Indo-Pak relations.

Kartarpur Corridor

The Kartarpur Corridor, inaugurated in November 2019 by Pakistan, is widely regarded in the literature as one of the most human-centred confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan. The corridor allows Indian Sikh pilgrims visa-free access to the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur, Pakistan, one of Sikhism's holiest sites. Literature views the initiative as a rare instance where religious sentiment and humanitarian concern temporarily overrode geopolitical hostility, (**Chopra, 2020**).

The literature highlights the corridor's emotional resonance. For many pilgrims, Kartarpur represents not diplomacy but closure, faith, and healing of Partition-era wounds. Analysts argue that such people to people CBMs carry greater emotional weight than formal agreements



because they directly affect lived human experiences, (**Kapur, 2021**).

Despite its strong humanitarian symbolism, the Kartarpur Corridor has failed to evolve into a broader confidence building measure because it remains narrowly scoped and isolated from wider Indo-Pak engagement. The literature argues that both India and Pakistan have treated the corridor as an exception rather than a precedent. Pakistan was using it to project religious tolerance and diplomatic goodwill, and India was carefully insulating it from any spillover into political or security dialogue, (**Pant and Joshi, 2020**).

Strict security protocols, administrative hurdles, and periodic suspensions, particularly during heightened bilateral tensions have further diluted its trust building potential, (**Kapur, 2021**). Most importantly the persistence of strategic hostility, unresolved disputes, and terrorism-related crises has prevented the corridor's emotional goodwill from translating into sustained political confidence, reinforcing the broader pattern in Indo-Pak relations where humanitarian Confidence Building Measures survive but fail to transform the underlying conflict, (**Haider and Azad, 2021**).

Conclusion

The literature review clearly reveals that while India and Pakistan have instituted a broad spectrum of confidence building measures from early times since the partition, like the ceasefire lines, nuclear risk-reduction agreements, diplomatic declarations and people to people initiatives but the efforts have been partial and fragile. Confidence Building Measures have frequently succeeded in preventing escalation and creating temporary zones of cooperation, but they have not been able to transform the deeper structural distrust. Lasting confidence, the literature suggests that the two countries require institutionalization of CBMs, consistent political engagement beyond episodic crises, and a commitment to addressing core disputes through

sustained dialogue. Therefore, although CBMs play an indispensable role in conflict management, they remain tools for mitigation rather than resolution in the complex Indo-Pak relationship.

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