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Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab: The Need for a Border States Group

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GUJARAT, RAJASTHAN & PUNJAB

The Need for a Border States Group

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ABSTRACT

INDIA-PAKISTAN ties over the past decade have been a mixed bag. There have been significant tensions, especially in the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks in 2008, and the beheading of Indian soldiers across the Line of Control (LOC) in August 2013. Amid these tensions, however, there have been noteworthy achievements in the realm of bilateral trade, where trade through the Wagah-Attari land route has gone up nearly four-fold from \$664 million (2004) to approximately \$2.6 billion (2012-2013) (Source: Ministry of Commerce).

In addition to bilateral trade, there has been an emphasis on increasing connectivity between border regions, especially the two Punjabs and Rajasthan-Sindh. Some of the important Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) include the Amritsar-Nankana Sahib bus service, and the weekly Munabao-Khokhrapar train service, called the 'Thar Express'. There has been an emphasis on making 'borders irrelevant' as was envisioned by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. It is not just the two Punjabs and Rajasthan-Sindh that have made efforts to rekindle economic and cultural ties, there have also been interactions between businessmen from Gujarat and Karachi.

The aim of the research report "*Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab: The Need for a Border States Group*" by Tridivesh Singh Maini is to examine the approach of the political leadership, as well as the business community, in these three 'border States' towards India-Pakistan ties. It is very simplistic to link the sentiment in a State with one singular factor: economic, political or cultural. This paper has sought to look at a number of factors, which include politics, economics as well as security issues. It has also attempted to get the views of a reasonably broad spectrum of people from different ideological persuasions, including those representing the Union Government and the State governments.

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1. INTRODUCTION

IT has often been argued that India's foreign policy, including that related to links with neighbouring countries, has been excessively centralised, with States being passive spectators.¹ This centralisation of foreign policy has been attributed to many factors. Some of the key ones stem from constitutional provisions, Article 246. The central government has the exclusive jurisdiction to pass legislation on items enumerated in the Union List. Entries 10 to 16 in the VIII Schedule listed below, which are connected with foreign affairs, are part of the Union List.

10. Foreign affairs; all matters which bring the Union into relation with any foreign country.
11. Diplomatic, consular and trade representation.
12. United Nations Organisation.
13. Participation in international conferences, associations and other bodies and implementing of decisions made thereat.
14. Entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries and implementing of treaties, agreements and conventions with foreign countries.
15. War and peace.
16. Foreign jurisdiction.²

In this context, it has been argued, "The Constitution of India gives the Union Government virtually exclusive jurisdiction over matters of foreign and defence policy. In practice too, the central government has exercised overwhelming control over India's external relations since the Constitution came into force in 1950" (Mattoo and Jacob, 2010: 23).

Centralisation of foreign policy cannot simply be attributed to the nature of the Indian Constitution. There are a number of other reasons too for this phenomenon. For nearly two decades after Independence, the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had a strong influence on India's ties with the outside world. This has been ascribed to a combination of factors, which include the fact that in the realm of foreign policy, Nehru was the dominant voice, even though there were dissenting voices like those of Sardar Patel and J.B. Kripalani. The fact that Nehru had a strong worldview influenced significantly by his exposure to the West, as well as the fact that even in the pre-Independence days he was the Congress Party's key spokesperson on foreign policy issues, has often been cited as the reason for his dominance (Brecher

¹ Sridharan, K. (December 2003), 'Federalism and Foreign Relations: The Nascent Role of the Indian States', *Asian Studies Review*. 27 (4).

² See the requisite provisions at <http://www.constitution.org/cons/india/shed07.htm>

1959, Mattoo and Jacob, 2010:25).

In addition to this, the rationale for the dominance of New Delhi on issues pertaining to the neighbourhood was that India had troubled relations with some of its neighbours, specifically China and Pakistan. It has rightly been argued that “a context where strategic and military issues are emphasised, regions have little to say since defence policy remains the exclusive prerogative of central states. There is more room for regions to find their way onto the international scene if cultural and economic issues are more prominent, as regional governments often have, in virtue of the domestic distribution of power, an initial interest and some degree of empowerment with respect to these matters” (Lecours and Moreno, 2006: 6).

It is important to point out that on certain security issues, border State governments have been consulted for long and central and State intelligence agencies, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Crime Investigation Department (CID) respectively, hold periodic meetings.³

Over the past decade-and-a-half, however, New Delhi's stranglehold over foreign policy has diminished due to a combination of factors. The first reason for the views of State governments in foreign policy being given more attention was the absence of one-party dominance at the centre, and the phenomenon of coalition politics, whereby certain regional parties had become indispensable for the running of coalition governments (Sridharan, K. 2003). For example, the Teesta river water agreement, which was to be signed with Bangladesh in 2011, had to be dropped at the last minute because of serious objections by West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, an erstwhile partner of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. Similarly, pressure from regional parties in Tamil Nadu, especially the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) forced the central government to vote against Sri Lanka at the United Nations twice. The DMK also walked out of the UPA coalition accusing the central government of not doing enough to fight for the rights of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka.

In addition to the above, a crucial reason for State governments becoming important actors in foreign policy is the enthusiasm shown by a number of States to woo foreign investors, in the post-1991 phase, where a number of States have reaped the benefits of economic liberalisation and witnessed robust economic growth. While Chandrababu Naidu as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh began the trend of promoting economic diplomacy in the late 1990s and early 2000s, wooing, among other countries, the U.S. State leaders have also become more pro-active in economic diplomacy since they have begun to deal with multilateral bodies like the World Bank. In this context, it has rightly been pointed out, “As the new millennium opened,

³ Interview with Amitabh Gupta, Director General of Police (DGP), Rajasthan (Retd.) who also served in the BSF.

India's State capitals were attracting world leaders. Microsoft founder, Bill Gates and U.S. President Bill Clinton in Hyderabad; Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and Chinese Premier Lee Peng in Bangalore. Clinton's visit capped Andhra Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's relentless efforts to be known as India's most successful Chief Minister. From Dallas to Davos, he promoted his ambitious plans to transform Andhra Pradesh from a middle-rank to a top-rank State" (Rudolph and Rudolph, 2001: 1541-1542).

Chandrababu Naidu	Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh (1995-2004)	Especially proactive in reaching out to the U.S. in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Naidu was able to promote his State, especially the city of Hyderabad, as an Information Technology (IT) hub. President Clinton made it a point to include Hyderabad in his itinerary.
Narendra Modi	Chief Minister, Gujarat (2002-2014) and Prime Minister (2014 -)	Modi showcased Gujarat through the Annual Vibrant Gujarat Summit. He led delegations to a number of countries including China, Japan and Singapore.
Mamata Banerjee	Chief Minister, West Bengal	Opposed the Teesta River Water Treaty, as well as the Land Border Agreement with Bangladesh
J. Jayalalithaa	Chief Minister, Tamil Nadu	Pressurised the central government to vote against Sri Lanka at the United Nations on two occasions, in 2012 and 2013.
Source: Self compiled from <i>The Times of India</i> and <i>The Hindu</i> .		

In recent years, there are a number of instances of Chief Ministers wooing overseas investors, with former Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi having taken the lead, but others like the former Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan, also trying to follow suit. Nitish Kumar even visited Pakistan in November 2012, and met not only provincial leaders of Punjab and Sindh, but also the then Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari.⁴ It is also worth mentioning here that senior foreign dignitaries have made it a routine practice to engage with Chief Ministers. In 2011, then U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, made it a point to visit Chennai and call on Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, J. Jayalalithaa. In 2012, Clinton landed at Kolkata, before landing at New Delhi. This move drew immense attention.⁵

It is important to bear in mind that only the participation of a handful of States in foreign policy draws attention. In the context of relations with the neighbourhood, these States often have larger numbers of seats in the Lok Sabha, such as Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, or are economically strong, such as Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. There is little discussion of the role that other State governments play or seek to play in relations with neighbouring countries.

The specific aim of this report is to look at interventions of three border States—Punjab (which shares borders with the Pakistani Punjab), Rajasthan and Gujarat (which share borders with Sindh Province in Pakistan)— in the context of Indo-Pak relations over the last decade. There are a number of reasons for using these three States as case studies, and one primary reason for the exclusion of Jammu and Kashmir. A discussion of Jammu and Kashmir inevitably gets embroiled in a debate over security issues. In addition to this, there is a lot of discussion about this border with Pakistan, while there is virtually no discussion of trade or potential trade and people-to-people contact via the borders of Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Second, the three States are important case studies because in terms of political influence, they vary. While Punjab has 13 seats in the Lok Sabha, Gujarat and Rajasthan have approximately the same number of seats – 26 and 25 respectively. While Gujarat is governed by a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, Punjab, too, is ruled by an ally of the BJP, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD). The third State, Rajasthan, which was until recently administered by the Congress, is now ruled by a BJP government.

In addition to the varying political strength of the three States, it would be

⁴ *The Hindustan Times*, 'Visit to Pakistan 'successful and memorable': Nitish', November 16, 2012. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/visit-to-pakistan-successful-and-memorable-nitish/article1-960187.aspx>

⁵ Stancati, M, "Why Hillary Clinton went to Kolkata to see Didi", *The Wall Street Journal*, May 7, 2012. <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2012/05/07/why-hillary-clinton-went-to-kolkata-to-see-didi/>

important to mention the varying degrees of connectivity with Pakistan. Punjab is connected to Pakistani Punjab by bus (the Amritsar-Nankana Sahib bus service), train (the Samjhauta Express) and the Wagah-Attari land crossing, which has also witnessed a significant rise in bilateral trade over the past few years. In 2012-2013, the

STATE	LOCATION	ROUTE	STATUS
PUNJAB	Attari Road, Amritsar District	Amritsar-Attari-Lahore Road	Open
	Attari Railway Station, Amritsar District	Amritsar-Attari-Lahore Railway Line	Open
	Khalra, Amritsar District	Patti-Khalra-Lahore Road	Closed
	Hussainiwala, Ferozepur District	Ferozepur-Kasur Road	Closed
GUJARAT	Assara Naka	Via Assara Naka	Closed
	Khavda Naka	Road from Diplo to Khavda	Closed
	Lakhpat	Road leading from Jatti and Rajnadini to Lakhpat	Closed
	Santalpur Naka	Via Santalpur Naka	Closed
	Suigam Naka	Via Suigam Naka	Closed
DELHI	Delhi Railway Station	Delhi-Amritsar-Lahore Railway	Open
		Delhi-Ferozepur-Lahore Railway Line	Closed
RAJASTHAN	Barmer Railway Station, Jodhpur Division	Barmer-Gadra Road-Munnabao- Khokropar Railway Line	Open since 2006
	Munnabao Railway Line	Barmer-Gadra Road-Munnabao- Khokropar Railway Line	Open since 2006
Source: Central Board of Customs and Excise. Web link: http://www.cbec.gov.in/customs/cs-act/notifications/csnt63-94.htm			

Table 3: Other Land Routes Which can be Opened for Trade

Gujarat	Bhuj-Lakhpar road (Kutch, Gujarat) – Badin (Pakistan)	Gandhidham Chamber of Commerce raised this issue with the central government in 2011, but no response so far.
	Bhuj-Khaswa-Sardar post road(Gujarat) – Mithi (Sind-Pakistan) (via Ramki Bazar)	
	Rapar-Bela (Gujarat)-Nagarparkar (Sind)	
Punjab	Sadki (India)-Sahniwal (Pakistan)	Punjab Government has raised the issue with the Government of India, no response so far
Source: Self-compiled from various sources: <i>The Tribune</i> , <i>The Times of India</i> and <i>Desh Gujarat</i> website, along with interviews.		

Table 4: India-Pakistan Bilateral Trade Figures (Figures in \$ Million)

2004-2005	664.00
2005-2006	869.00
2006-2007	1672.00
2007-2008	2232.00
2008-2009	1810.05
2009-2010	1849.26
2010-2011	2,372.05
2011-2012	1,939.21
2012-2013	2,606.66
Source: Ministry of Commerce Website, and DGCIS (Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics).	

level of bilateral trade was well over \$2 billion, as is evident from Table 4.⁶ Rajasthan is connected to Sindh via the Thar Express service from Munabao (Rajasthan) to Khokhrapar (Sindh); however, there is no bus service, and neither has bilateral trade between both regions commenced, though there have been demands for the same. In the case of Gujarat, no land crossing is open for trade, even though the demand has been made on a number of occasions.⁷ There is trade with Pakistan via sea through the ports of Kandla and Mandvi.⁸

⁶ *The Economic Times*, 'India-Pakistan need to take steps to boost trade', January 21, 2014. Taneja et al (2013), "Normalizing India Pakistan Trade", Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) Working Paper No. 267, September 2013.

⁷ Interviews with Members of Gujarat Chamber of Commerce, Gandhidham Chamber of Commerce.

⁸ Telephone interview with an Ahmedabad-based customs official.

Another reason that makes the study relevant is that Gujarat has been extremely active in reaching out to countries outside the SAARC region, including neighbours such as China. Punjab and Rajasthan have not been as aggressive in economic diplomacy with the outside world, though the former has been demanding closer business ties with Pakistan for some time.

In addition to looking at the kind of role these States have played so far, this report seeks to understand whether the central government consults State governments on issues which affect them, such as bilateral trade, people-to-people contact and security.

The broad question that the report seeks to answer is this—has the role of border States changed over the past decade in Indo-Pak relations. In order to answer the question, it shall first provide a historical background, before discussing interactions between the Punjab, Rajasthan-Sindh and Gujarat-Sindh and some of the important trends over the past decade.

II. VARIABLES & METHODOLOGY

FOR answering any specific question, it is important to have well-defined variables and hypotheses, so that this study can have a clear focus and direction. To answer the main question, I shall be using the following independent variables:

- (1) The internal security situation prevalent in the border State.
- (2) Effect of the internal political configuration of a State.
- (3) Interests of business lobbies in cross-border trade through a particular State.

Based on the above variables, some of the hypotheses that can be derived are as follows:

- (1) In the case of States with a history of internal conflict (e.g. Punjab) the central government will be reluctant to give the State autonomy to reach out to the neighbouring country, as they may fear the revival of militancy. On the other hand, in States where there is no such history, the government may be more willing to have porous borders.
- (2) In case a particular State is ruled by the same party that has power at the centre, the State government plays a more proactive role in foreign policy, and is consulted more by the central government.

In case there are strong business interests in a particular State, there will be more of a push for better ties with a neighbouring country. This policy report is qualitative in nature, and is based on structured and semi-structured interviews with government officials, both from the State governments and central government respectively, businesspersons belonging to chambers of commerce, and scholars, who have done specific work on foreign policy related issues. One of the key people interviewed for this report is Jaswant Singh, a former Foreign Minister who hails from Rajasthan, and is one of the key proponents of Indo-Pak peace, apart from being the person who was instrumental in reviving the Munabao-Khokhrapar bus service.

I have made an attempt to balance the views of central government officials with those of officials from State governments, so that the perspective is not skewed. In addition to this, businesspersons and chambers of commerce were extremely important to interview, since trade has been presented as one of the best bets for improving ties with Pakistan. This is especially so in the case of Punjab where trade has risen over the past few years.

In addition to interviews, I also used questionnaires/telephone interviews to solicit the views of certain individuals in Punjab and Gujarat. I focused on the last decade as it was after the January 2004 SAARC Agreement in Islamabad and the thaw

between the two countries, that trade and people-to-people contact sustained despite tense situations like the Mumbai attack and skirmishes across the LOC last year.

One of the major limitations I faced was in the context of Gujarat. While in Punjab, information on trade via the Wagah-Attari border is easily available, it was tough to get figures pertaining to trade with Pakistan via Gujarat, since trade via sea is routed through a third country and a lot of the trade is done individually. Having these figures would have made the comparison between Gujarat and Pakistan even more interesting.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

OVER the past few years, two issues that are closely related to this policy report received immense attention: the influence of State governments in foreign policy, and the role of border States in Indian foreign policy. While participation of State governments in foreign policy has been attributed to a number of reasons, most significantly, the post-1991 economy, where a number of States wanted to strengthen trade ties with the outside world, and, the trend of coalition politics in India, whereby the regional voice in policy formulation (not only foreign policy) cannot be ignored.

The phenomenon of sub-national units becoming crucial players in external ties with outside countries is not restricted to India. The effects of globalization, such as increased economic integration and connectivity, are felt in the other regions of the world, and the participation of sub-national units in external affairs has become an important area of research. Two important concepts that explain the participation of sub-regions in foreign policy are Constituent Diplomacy and Para-Diplomacy.

Para-Diplomacy was initially defined as “direct international activity by sub-national actors (federated units, regions, urban communities, cities) supporting, complementing, correcting, duplicating or challenging the nation-states’ diplomacy” (Soldatos, 1990:17).

A clearer and more holistic definition of Para-Diplomacy was later given to include “non-central governments’ involvement in international relations through the establishment of permanent or adhoc contracts with foreign public or private entities, with the aim to promote socio-economic or cultural issues, as well as any other foreign dimension of their constitutional competences” (Cornago, 1999:40).

‘Para-diplomacy’ is more applicable to the Indian context, since it recognises the fact that in the realm of foreign policy, the central government is more powerful as laid down by the Constitution of India.⁹

If one were to look specifically at border regions in India, one piece of literature that is especially handy is a publication by Dossani and Vijaykumar (2005) where they try to analyse in detail whether the political dispensation in a State has an impact on the intervention of State governments in foreign policy. According to them, being from the same political party, or being an ally of the central government does not necessarily imply that a political party will be able to influence key foreign policy decisions. In fact on the other hand, in certain cases parties, which are not part of an alliance, are able to assert themselves more. This was especially important since one

⁹ For the difference between ‘Constituent Diplomacy’ and ‘Paradiplomacy’, see Kincaid (1990:74), ‘Constituent Diplomacy in Federal Politics and the Nation-State: Conflict and Cooperation’ in eds. Michelmann, H. and Soldatos, P., *Federalism and International Relations: The Role of Subnational Units*.

of the variables which is being used to study the participation of State governments in foreign policy is the political dispensation in the State.

One of the major gaps I noticed is that current literature on India's borderlands is written purely from a security lens, or a historical perspective. There are historical and cultural studies on Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab as border regions, but not enough contemporary literature on these regions as potential connectors with Pakistan. In the context of the two Punjabs, there are a number of articles that focus exclusively on culture and language (Ayres 2006, 2008) or economics, and there are very few interdisciplinary studies. A recent book by Gandhi (2013) was especially useful since it made an attempt to link Punjab's history with current events.

Two pieces of literature were especially useful for the study.

The first is Ohmae's (1993) classification of region-States where he has shown how border regions in other parts of the world have been integrated more with other countries, than certain regions within their own country. He says, "The boundaries of the region State are not imposed by political fiat. They are drawn by the deft but invisible hand of the global market for goods and services. They follow, rather than precede, real flows of human activity, creating nothing new but ratifying existing patterns manifest in countless individual decisions. They represent no threat to the political borders of any nation, and they have no call on any taxpayer's money to finance military forces to defend such borders" (Ohmae, 1993:78). There is scarce literature pertaining to India's borderlands, which tries to look at them as gateways of trade and commerce. As the focus of this study is to look at the role of borderlands from a holistic standpoint, Ohmae's study was extremely relevant.

Martinez's classification of borders into four types, is especially significant for this study as no effort has been made to understand the differences between the types of borderlands in India, and one of the main aims is to look at both the similarities as well as differences between the three border States being examined. Martinez has classified Mexican borderlands into alienated, co-existent, interdependent and integrated. While in alienated borderlands, borders are hostile and there is minimal or virtually no cross-border interaction and communication, co-existent and interdependent borderlands are similar in nature, there is a reasonable amount of interaction and economic linkages, more in interdependent borderlands. Integrated borderlands are those that are dependent upon each other and are the most integrated (Martinez 1994).

The main contribution of this paper will be a comparison of the three very important border States, and the fact that their relations with Pakistan will not be examined from any one singular approach, but an interdisciplinary one. It will try to link the contemporary realities of these States with the past.

IV. THE THREE BORDER STATES & THEIR LINKS WITH PAKISTAN

THIS section will focus on important linkages not just at the governmental level, but also between chambers of commerce and members of civil society on both sides. The aim is to provide a detailed overview, which enhances our understanding of perceptions vis-à-vis Pakistan in these border States, and enables us to respond to the main variables of research.

Punjab

In the aftermath of Independence, ties between the two Punjabs were reasonable, despite bitter memories of the Partition. The level of trade via the Wagah-Attari trade route was significant especially in the aftermath of Independence. This was especially so for the period between 1948 and 1949, where India's share in Pakistan's total global exports was over 23 per cent, and its share in Pakistan's imports was over 50 per cent.¹⁰ Apart from the Wagah-Attari land route, the Hussainiwala-Kasur and Munabao-Khokhrapar routes were open for trade.¹¹

A number of factors resulted in disrupting ties between the two Punjabs. The first was the war of 1965, the second was the total annihilation of Punjabi culture and language by the Pakistani elite, especially during the reign of General Zia Ul-Haq (Ayres, 2008:926), and finally, yet importantly, the period of militancy in the 1980s and 1990s proved to be a big setback to cross-border relations. New Delhi suspected that the ISI provided support to the Khalistan movement and this naturally reduced the scope of interactions between the two provinces.¹² It is with the end of militancy, and the thaw at the national level that the two Punjabs got a chance to interact, as will be discussed in greater detail subsequently.

Over the past decade however, both Punjabs have been enthusiastic to rekindle ties. The key facilitators of greater linkages have been trade and commerce, people-to-people linkages in the form of cultural contacts and religious pilgrimages. The process was initiated by former Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, who visited Lahore in January 2004 for an event organised by the World Punjabi Conference¹³. Current Chief Minister, Parkash Singh Badal was part of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's entourage to Lahore, in 1999, and he had a brief meeting with Shahbaz Sharif, who was the then Chief Minister on the other side of

¹⁰ DGCIS, Calcutta and Federal Bureau of Statistics, Islamabad.

¹¹ <http://irfca.org/docs/international-links.html>

¹² Interview with Amitabh Gupta, Former DGP Rajasthan. Also see Ayres, 2006.

¹³ *The Times of India*, "Amarinder returns from Pakistan", February 1, 2004.

the border.¹⁴ However, there was no potential to push this conversation forward since the relationship between both countries was relatively tense.

Table 5: Visits by Chief Ministers of Both Punjab

Parkash Singh Badal (Chief Minister)	1999	Part of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's entourage. Discussed issues related to trade between the two Punjab, and the upkeep of Sikh religious shrines in Pakistan.
Capt. Amarinder Singh (Chief Minister)	2004	World Punjabi Conference. Capt. Singh took up issues pertaining to the maintenance of Sikh shrines, like Nankana Sahib and Panja Saheb.
Capt. Amarinder Singh	January 2005	Inauguration of Nankana Sahib-Manawala Dual Carriageway Other Outcomes: (1) MoU was signed between the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Lahore Chamber of Commerce. The PHD Chamber of Commerce has been organising an annual expo in various towns of Punjab ever since. (2) Capt. Singh also met with then President, General Pervez Musharraf, and Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz.
Sukhbir Singh Badal	November 2012	Sporting event Other outcomes: (1) MoU was signed between PHD Chamber of Commerce and Lahore Chamber for giving a fillip to Indo-Pak trade. (2) A joint working committee was set up to enhance trade ties between both Punjab.
Source: Self-compiled from sources including <i>The Tribune</i> and interviews.		

Amarinder Singh's 2004 visit to Lahore coincided with a thaw between both

¹⁴ Prasad, KV, "Badal for joint good will mission". *The Tribune*, February 22, 1999. <http://www.tribuneindia.com/1999/99feb22/head.htm>

Table 5 (a) Visits of Chief Ministers from Punjab (Pakistan) to India

Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi	December 2004	All Punjab Games, Patiala.
Shahbaz Sharif Shahbaz Sharif	April, 2012 December, 2013	Inauguration of the Integrated Check Post, Attari Finals of the World Kabaddi Cup at Ludhiana. Sharif also met with the Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and extended an invitation to visit Pakistan. Along with his counterpart Prakash Singh Badal, he also released a joint statement for greater cooperation between the Punjabs.
Source: Self compiled from <i>The Tribune</i> and <i>The Indian Express</i>		

countries not just at the political and commercial level, but also the public at large.¹⁵ A large numbers of Indians went to Pakistan for a cricket series in 2004 and were accorded a warm welcome. It was also decided that the Indian Punjab would host the World Punjab games in December 2004, where sportsmen from both Punjabs would participate. In addition to this, the then Punjab Chief Minister also announced the setting up of a World Punjabi Centre at Patiala (Ayres, 2006).

The focus initially was purely on issues concerning religious pilgrims from Indian Punjab, and people-to-people contact. Yet, both sides also began exploring possibilities of rekindling economic ties between the two Punjabs. In this context, Capt. Amarinder Singh was accompanied by businessmen and members of Chambers of Commerce during his visit in 2005. The inauguration of the Amritsar-Nankana Sahib bus service by the Prime Minister in March 2006 and an olive branch extended to Pakistan during the course of his speech at the event sent a firm message that New Delhi was in favour of closer Punjab-to-Punjab ties.¹⁶

Capt. Amarinder Singh's successor government did not really build on any of his initiatives since Pakistan was going through a major transformation in 2007, and in the end of 2008 the Mumbai attacks derailed the initiatives taken by both governments. Yet, bilateral trade through the Wagah-Attari border did not get seriously impacted as is evident from Table 4.

Two important events at the national level helped in reviving ties even

¹⁵ Taneja et al (2013), "Normalizing India Pakistan Trade", Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) Working Paper No. 267, September 2013 makes a significant point that ever since trade negotiations began in 2004, no major event, including the Mumbai attacks, has had an impact on trade relations between the two countries.

¹⁶ Interview with a retired diplomat.

between the Punjabs. The first was the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's invitation to the erstwhile Pakistan Prime Minister, Yousaf Raza Gilani, to attend the semi-final of the Cricket World Cup 2011 held at Mohali. The next was the Commerce Secretary-level talks between the two countries, which began in April, 2011. The Commerce Secretary-level talks identified specific attainable outcomes, such as the setting up of an Integrated Check Post (ICP) to give a boost to trade. In November 2011, the Pakistan government also stated that it was not averse to granting Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India. It did so in a phased manner by moving from a positive list, i.e. list of goods that can be traded, to a negative one, i.e. list of goods and commodities that are restricted.¹⁷

Punjab-to-Punjab ties also witnessed a revival when in November 2011 a Pakistani delegation was invited to participate in the World Kabaddi tournament. In April 2012, during the inauguration of the ICP at Attari, the Pakistani Punjab CM as well as the Indian CM spoke about the need for cooperation between the two Punjabs in the presence of the then Home Minister, P. Chidambaram, Commerce Minister, Anand Sharma and Pakistan Commerce Minister, Makhdoom Fahim.¹⁸ While the ICP gave a fillip to trade, the speeches of Chief Ministers of the two Punjabs sent a strong message that both sides were ready to carry forward the work of Capt. Amarinder Singh and Pervaiz Elahi.¹⁹

In November 2012, the Deputy Chief Minister of Indian Punjab had a successful visit of Pakistan where he explored new areas of cooperation with his Pakistani counterpart. They also decided to set up a joint group for promotion of business and cultural linkages between the Punjabs. Sharif visited the Indian Punjab in December 2013 for the finals of the World Kabaddi Cup and, along with his counterpart, Parkash Singh Badal, reiterated the need for cooperation between the two Punjabs in trade and commerce, and agriculture and research. It was also decided that the Indian Punjab Government would assist the Pakistani side in setting up a biomass plant.²⁰ Sharif and his counterpart Prakash Singh Badal also released a joint statement for building ties in culture, education, economics and science. The statement said that both sides, during their deliberations, mutually agreed “to promote cooperation for the common interest of peace, harmony, economic growth and leveraging each other’s potential.”²¹

¹⁷ Chengappa, R., “Manmohan, Gilani to write a new chapter”, *The Tribune*, November 11, 2011. <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2011/20111111/main1.htm>

¹⁸ Sharma, S., ‘New checkpost at Indo-Pak border to facilitate trade’, *The Times of India*, April 14, 2012.

¹⁹ Interview with a senior government official who was involved in both these events.

²⁰ *Greater Kashmir*, “Demolish all walls that hinder progress: Shahbaz Sharif”, December 15, 2013. The Sharifs have maintained strong links with residents of Jatti Umrah. In fact, their residence in Pakistan has been named after the ancestral village.

²¹ *The Business Standard*, “Badal, Sharif agree to boost cooperation between the two Punjabs”,

One point that emerges is that in the State of Punjab, there is a consensus between different political parties. C. Rajamohan argues: “In recent years, sentiments for reviving cross-border connections have intensified on the Indian side of Punjab and have strong bipartisan support. Capt. Amarinder Singh, the Congress Chief Minister who preceded Badal, was the first to launch cross-border engagement a decade ago. The current Deputy Chief Minister, Sukhbir Singh Badal, travelled to Lahore last year and outlined an ambitious agenda for cooperation across the Radcliffe Line that divides the two provinces.”²²

During the Lok Sabha election of 2014, this point was once again reinforced. All political parties, including the BJP, have spoken about the need for better economic ties with Pakistan. While the Congress Party has pitched for opening the Hussainiwala-Kasur land route, both the candidates of Amritsar, Capt. Amarinder Singh of the Congress and Arun Jaitley of the BJP, have spoken in favour of accelerating trade ties between India and Pakistan via the Wagah-Attari land route. In addition to trade ties, the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Congress have also fervently advocated easing out of visa regimes and have spoken in favour of easier access to Sikh shrines in Pakistan.²³

The view about there being a consensus for better ties was also echoed by Gunbir Singh, former Chairman of the Confederation of Indian Industry, Punjab: “Absolutely. This is the largest single opportunity [for the two] Punjabs. Commerce, and the fiduciary bonds that ensue thereto can be the surest guarantee to peace in the region.”²⁴

Chambers of commerce and the business community have also been supportive of the State government’s efforts of building closer ties with Pakistan. While talking about how the idea of a negative list was conceived, Singh spoke about his contribution: “The idea of trade on a negative list, protecting the few Pakistan

December 15, 2013. http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/badal-sharif-agree-to-boost-cooperation-between-punjabs-113121500685_1.html

²² Rajamohan, C., “Reconnecting Punjab: Shahbaz Sharif’s mixed signals”, *The Indian Express*, December 16, 2013.

²³ Dhaliwal, S and Singh, J, “SAD promises more routes to boost trade with Pakistan”, *The Tribune*, April 22, 2014. <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2014/20140422/punjab.htm#8>. For Congress demand to open Hussainiwala, see *The Tribune*, “Congress will open Hussainiwala if re-elected”, April 26, 2014. <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2014/20140426/punjab.htm#14>. *The Hindustan Times*, “Bajwa moots exchange of Kartarpur shrine territory with Pakistan”, April 25, 2014. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/amritsar/bajwa-moots-exchange-of-kartarpur-shrine-territory-with-pak/article1-1212108.aspx>

²⁴ Questionnaire sent to Gunbir Singh, CII Punjab Chairman, 2009-2010, and Amritsar based businessman who has been raising important infrastructural issues impacting bilateral trade between the two countries.

industries that need protection, was promoted by me at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce meeting during my visit at Lahore in 2007. It was reiterated with my interaction with the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), who were entrusted with the mandate in 2011, and they saw it through with Pakistan. Enhanced trade infrastructure was pursued through the years and has now come about”.²⁵

The PHD Chamber of Commerce, too, has been playing its role in promoting greater contacts between the Chambers from both sides, in spite of the political uncertainty. According to a Member: “The Chamber has signed MoUs with various Chambers from Pakistan (may be more than seven chambers) in order to promote bilateral trade and people-to-people contacts. We are promoting B2B contact and exhibitions, now started moving towards cluster promotions and delegations.”²⁶

Table 6: MoUs between Indian and Pakistani Chambers of Commerce		
Indian Chamber	Pakistani Chamber	Date
Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)	Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry	March 1, 2004
PHD Chamber of Commerce	Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry	March 1, 2004
Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce	Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry	March 1, 2004
Mumbai Chamber of Commerce	Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry	March 1, 2004
PHD Chamber of Commerce (Punjab Chapter)	Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry	January, 2005 and November, 2012
South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Surat	Karachi Chamber of Commerce	November 30, 2013
Source: Self-compiled from <i>The Tribune, The Times of India</i> .		

In addition to the political players and the business community of the State pitching for a closer relationship, the intelligentsia and civil society on both sides have also made concerted efforts to increase interactions. Two institutions on either

²⁵ See *ibid*

²⁶ Questionnaire sent to Mr. Rupinder Singh Sachdeva, Co-Chairman-Punjab, PHD Chamber of Commerce.

side of the border, the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID), Chandigarh, and the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA), Lahore, have made efforts to get individuals from various walks of life, including journalists, academics and policy makers from the two Punjabs, to search for new areas of cooperation.

There are a number of other groups whose contributions need to be recognised. The first set are groups which have been working for the promotion of a strong Punjabi identity or ‘Punjabiyaat’ on both sides of the divide.

“The Punjabiyaat movement (Punjabi-ness) has brought together civil society groups from Indian and Pakistani Punjab — once a large, unified province, now separated by an international border — in exchanges that leverage an idea of a shared common culture in order to create a more peaceful future.”²⁷

It would also be apt to look at the role of the Punjabi diaspora in the efforts to bring about reconciliation between the two Punjabs. With regard to the contribution of the diaspora in reducing the barriers, it has been argued that “Nostalgia and enthusiasm mark diaspora gatherings in the U.S., the U.K., Europe, Canada and Australia. Thus, the website of the Academy of the Punjab in North America, or APNA, offers access to books and articles in Punjabi (in Gurmukhi and Shahmukhi scripts), Urdu and English, and to albums of Punjabi music...” (Gandhi 2013: 388)

The Punjab model of cooperation, over the past decade, is interesting for having followed a holistic model of cooperation, and also for the reason that there is not much political disagreement with regard to closer ties with Pakistani Punjab.

Rajasthan

Cultural linkages between Rajasthan and Sindh are extremely strong. Rajasthan and Sindh have shared a composite culture, which is especially true of the Tharparker (also referred to as Dhat) belt, which extends from Jodhpur to Umerkot in Sindh.²⁸ An illustration of the strong linkages is the fact that the Maharaja of Jodhpur actually contemplated joining the Pakistani union, and a large number of Hindu Rajput families chose to stay on in Sindh even after Partition, including the erstwhile royal family of Umerkot.²⁹ In addition to cultural commonalities, the topography of the two regions was also similar as a consequence of which farming practices were also not very different.

In the realm of trade, the Rajasthan-Sindh route was especially important as a transit route, because opium trade to China was carried out through Rajasthan. While

²⁷ Ayres, A., “The two Punjabs: A Cultural path to peace in South Asia?”

²⁸ Interview with Mr. Jaswant Singh, Former Minister and Erstwhile BJP Leader.

²⁹ See *ibid.* Intermarriages between Rajput castes from both sides of the border.

initially, the key economic centre was Jaisalmer, this changed with the beginning of the train service from Barmer to Kotri in Sindh (Farooqui, 1998: 149).³⁰

Linkages between Rajasthan and Sindh carried on even after Partition — intermarriages between Rajput castes of both sides were especially common. The Munabao-Khokhrapar train service continued till 1965, and was disrupted after the war. Yet, it would be pertinent to point out that the Rajasthan-Sindh border was only fenced in the 1990s, and till then it was common for individuals to cross over into each other's territory. One of the key reasons for fencing the border was the fact that this route was utilised for smuggling of heroin and weapons like AK-47 into India by people from Pakistan.³¹

The revival of the Munabao-Khokhrapar train service or the Thar Express, which commenced in 2006, was first recommended by former Finance Minister Jaswant Singh in October 2003, who also belonged to Rajasthan.³² The train service was started with the objective of connecting separated families from both regions. While the train has been able to achieve its aim of connecting citizens of both regions, there are certain logistical problems, which passengers have to contend with, such as residents of the Barmer region having to travel all the way to New Delhi to get visas.³³

In the context of trade and commerce between Rajasthan and Sindh, while chambers of commerce on both sides have been making efforts to revive old linkages between the Marwar region and Sindh, not much enthusiasm has been shown by the State government.³⁴ Some of the commodities that can be traded are marble, henna and packaged food items. Interestingly, the central government is keen to open the Munabao-Khokhrapar land route, as well as another train, specifically for commerce and trade in this route. Jaswant Singh, who fought the Lok Sabha elections as an independent candidate from Barmer, has also raised this demand.³⁵

It would also be pertinent to mention that the provincial government of Sindh has been more responsive to the demands of traders and chambers of commerce

³⁰ District Gazetteer Barmer (1962).

³¹ Interview with Amitabh Gupta, Former DGP, Rajasthan.

³² Interview with Mr. Jaswant Singh. Also see, *The Daily News Analysis*, "Exclusive: We tended to think 'Its a bad dream. It'll go away', but 2002 can't go away – Jaswant Singh", April 16, 2014. <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-exclusive-we-tended-to-think-it-s-a-bad-dream-it-ll-go-away-but-2002-can-t-go-away-jaswant-singh-1979030>

³³ See *ibid*

³⁴ Interview with a State government official and a businessman from Rajasthan.

³⁵ Interview with Jaswant Singh. Also see, *The Daily News Analysis*, "Exclusive: We tended to think 'Its a bad dream. It'll go away', but 2002 can't go away – Jaswant Singh", April 16, 2014. <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-exclusive-we-tended-to-think-it-s-a-bad-dream-it-ll-go-away-but-2002-can-t-go-away-jaswant-singh-1979030>

of their province. Recently, the Sindh government requested the federal government to open the Rajasthan-Sindh borders, as has been done in the case of the two Punjabs.³⁶

The State government has not pushed for bilateral trade with Pakistan, nor has it raised the issues, which are impacting the rail service. It has raised the more politically sensitive issue of granting Indian citizenship to Hindu refugees from Sindh. The State government had written a letter to the central government in April 2013 in this regard.³⁷

It is members of the civil society who have been most vocal, however, in raising the demands for granting Indian citizenship to Hindu refugees from Sindh. The Seemant Lok Sangathan, headed by Hindu Singh Sodha, has taken the lead. Sodha, whose family migrated from Pakistan in 1971, has been campaigning for many years, but it is only recently that political parties have begun to pay attention to his demands.³⁸

Gujarat

If one were to look at Gujarat, there has not been much intervention by the State government to promote trade and commerce with Pakistan via the land route. The Kutch region of the State was integrated with Sindh, not just culturally but also economically, in the pre-Partition era. Apart from cultural linkages, there were strong economic linkages between the two regions, with the Kutch region being a trade hub.

The erstwhile Gujarat Chief Minister and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken about the potential of energy cooperation between Sindh and Gujarat, as well as trade.³⁹ A delegation from the Karachi Chamber of Commerce visited Gujarat in December, 2011, and also met with the then Chief Minister. The delegation, which was impressed by Gujarat's progress, urged the Chief Minister for easing out visa regimes, and communications, and also extended an invitation to him to visit Pakistan.⁴⁰

³⁶ *The Daily Times*, 'Call for opening Sindh-Rajasthan border for trade', January 5, 2014. <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/business/05-Jan-2014/call-for-opening-sindh-rajasthan-border-for-trade> also see, *The Nation*, 'Sindh, Centre one on national development plans.

³⁷ Parmar A, 'Rajasthan urges Centre to give Indian citizenship to Pak Hindus', http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-05-07/india/39089772_1_indian-citizenship-pak-hindu-migrants-lok-sangthan

³⁸ *The Economic Times*, 'Pakistan Hindus eager to exercise their franchise in Rajasthan polls'. http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-11-30/news/44596379_1_poll-manifestos-seemant-lok-sangthan-hindu-singh-sodha

³⁹ Rajnath, A., "Narendra Modi invites Pakistani investment, offers energy solutions", *The News*, September 20, 2012.

⁴⁰ Phadnis, A., "Karachi businessman's delegation: Narendra Modi invited to visit Pakistan", *The Express Tribune*, December 11, 2011.

The Pakistan government, too, made its intentions clear when the former Pakistan High Commissioner, Salman Bashir, visited Gujarat and categorically stated that Pakistan was open to drawing power from Gujarat.⁴¹ In one of his last speeches as High Commissioner, he also made it clear that Pakistan would not be averse to doing business with a BJP-led government. Even the current Pakistani Envoy, Abdul Basit, has made it abundantly clear that Pakistan would be happy to do business with a Modi-led BJP Government.⁴²

While Modi may have been cautious in making interventions in economic relations, he has not shied away from upping the ante against the Central Government for not firmly taking up the issue of Indian fishermen in Pakistani jails. The erstwhile Gujarat CM's most important intervention in the context of bilateral ties between the two countries came when he accused the Government of India, specifically Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, of making concessions to Pakistan on the Sir Creek issue, last year.⁴³ Recently, he had also pressed New Delhi to take a more strident stand against Pakistan, on the capture of Indian fishermen of Gujarat's coast. The undefined boundaries between Gujarat and Pakistan have led to a significant problem for the fishermen community of both countries, which is often politicised in the countries. In this context, it has rightly been argued that:

“For the fisherfolk themselves, the concept of sea borders is often difficult to comprehend, as they are often blurred, and the seas, in any case, are intricately linked to their livelihoods. However, they are repeatedly arrested and jailed for several years for transgressing the maritime boundaries between the two countries while engaged in fishing, and are treated almost as prisoners of war. The arrests began as early as 1987, and continue till date.” (Gupta, Sharma 2004: 3005).

Though the Gujarat government may not have not exhibited the same degree of enthusiasm with regard to business opportunities with Pakistan, Chambers of Commerce in the State, however, have evinced interest in building trade linkages. The South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce also signed an MoU with the Karachi

⁴¹ Interview on the condition of anonymity.

⁴² *The Business Standard*, “Very much welcome Modi statement on relations: Pak envoy”, April 23, 2014. http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/very-much-welcome-modi-statement-on-relations-pakistan-envoy-114042301017_1.html

⁴³ Sir Creek is an estuary of 100 kilometres, which is located within the Rann of Kutch. The dispute over Sir Creek, began in 1954 until then movement of fishermen was reasonably free. Both countries have been embroiled in a dispute since nearly six decades. While Pakistan wants a clear demarcation of the boundary along the creek, India wants to resolve the issue of the maritime boundary along the Arabian Sea (Gupta, Sharma 2004:3009).

Chamber of Commerce very recently.⁴⁴

While trade had been going on at an individual level between the traders of Karachi and Surat, it was a consultation organised by ICRIER that played a key role in building an institutional level understanding.⁴⁵ While the two Chambers began to seriously engage nearly a decade ago, there is now a clear appetite for trade between the two sides. One of the strong enabling factors for trade between the two cities has been the old links between the Memon trading community of Surat, and Karachi, as well as the great potential of trade.⁴⁶

There have also been interventions by the business community of the Kutch region.⁴⁷ The Gandhidam Chamber of Commerce has also been urging the Gujarat government and the central government to seriously consider extending the Bhuj-Lakhpar Road of Kutch to Badin in Pakistan, the Bhuj-Khaswa-Sardar post road of Kutch to Pakistan's Mithi (via Ram ki bazar) and the Rapar-Bela-Nagarparker route.⁴⁸ According to a member of the Chamber, five MLAs of the region, along with the MP of Kutch, have been raising the demand for opening up new trade routes, but so far there has been no response from the State government or the central government.⁴⁹ He further stated that even if trade did not start off immediately, there was scope for greater people-to-people contact, especially between separated families.

At an academic and cultural level too, there have been efforts to ensure that linkages between Kutch and Sindh are revived. The Sindhi Community, under the aegis of the Sindhi Council of India, has been inviting poets and artists from Sindh, with a large event being organised in 2011. When asked whether the Sindhi community in Gujarat was keen to explore business ties with Sindhis in Pakistan, an interviewee replied that there was no possibility of the same, and said that trade between the two countries is uncertain. Besides, none of the visitors from Sindh had ever explored business opportunities.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ In the context of Gujarat government's enthusiasm, Thomas, MR, 'Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry signs MOU with Karachi business Chamber to boost trade', Shahnawaz Akhter, 'Gujarat Chamber stresses on reducing Pak-Indo informal trade', *The News*, November 28, 2013.

⁴⁵ Interview with Nisha Taneja.

⁴⁶ Telephonic Interview with Kamlesh Yagnik, President, South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SGCCI).

⁴⁷ In the pre-partition era, Kacch became important for a number of reasons, which included its strategic location. The fact that it was accessible to Sindh, which had emerged as an important centre for trade made it especially attractive. Sindh provided access to the markets of Lahore and Multan, while goods from Lahore and Multan could enter Kacch via Sindh.

⁴⁸ *Desh Gujarat*, "Open three roads between Kutch and Pakistan for commerce", December 2, 2011.

⁴⁹ Telephonic interview with a senior Member from the Gandhidam Chamber of Commerce.

⁵⁰ Interview with a Sindhi businessman based in Ahmedabad. The State is also home to an institute of

V. RESPONSES TO VARIABLES

IT would be an exaggeration to state that any study in the Social Sciences can provide precise answers to questions raised in the beginning of a study. Based on the primary and secondary sources utilised, I shall not only discuss the three variables I used for answering the primary question, but shall also add some of my additional findings.

In the case of the first variable, which is the ‘impact of the internal security situation of a border State’ on the role it plays in India-Pakistan relations, what emerges is that while certain sections of the establishment may be sceptical about opening up borders, especially of Punjab, which suffered insurgency, there are voices within the government that realise that due to the cultural commonalities, business interests in the two Punjabs as well as the Punjabs’ advantageous location with respect to Afghanistan and Central Asia could well make it a connector to the regions and bring about cooperation in new areas, such as energy trade.⁵¹

The fact that there seems to be a genuine yearning within the business community as well as the political class in Pakistan is also visible. The recent visit of Pakistani Punjab CM Shahbaz Sharif is a clear instance of the point that while Islamabad-New Delhi may still have numerous unresolved issues, the Pakistan government does not seem to have too many reservations about cooperation between the two Punjabs, since this will be mutually beneficial for both sides.⁵²

So, while there is no doubt that there is a degree of caution when it comes to granting visas, and a lurking suspicion that Pakistan is trying to instigate militancy in Punjab, a State which has actually been through a violent insurgency is taking the lead in the realm of commerce and is being consulted by the central government.⁵³ In fact, interestingly, one of the points that was made emphatically by almost every interviewee was that Punjab had shown maximum enthusiasm for good relations with Pakistan.⁵⁴

The second variable about the presence of a similar political party in a State being more beneficial to cross-border activity was not really reinforced by facts or conversations with the interviewees. While officials from the central government categorically dismissed this, putting forth the example of how the SAD government in Punjab has only been encouraged to build close linkages with the other side and

Sindhology.

⁵¹ Interview with a retired diplomat, and a senior official in the Ministry of Commerce.

⁵² Interview with an official in the Ministry of Commerce. Rajamohan, C., “Reconnecting Punjab: Shahbaz Sharif’s mixed signals”, December 16, 2013.

⁵³ *The Indian Express*, “ISI trying to revive Sikh militancy: India”, June 5, 2013.

⁵⁴ Interview with a member of The Rajasthan Chamber of Commerce, and officials from the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India.

how officials from the Punjab government have been involved in the trade dialogue with Punjab. A retired diplomat, in fact, remarked: “There is no dissonance between Central and State governments as far as India-Pakistan relations are concerned.”⁵⁵

It would be important to point out, that the first visit by the erstwhile CM of Punjab, Capt. Amarinder Singh, was also undertaken when there was a BJP-led regime at the Centre.⁵⁶

In Rajasthan, the Congress government could not push New Delhi, and it was not consulted on any of the important roadblocks pertaining to connectivity with Sindh or opening the trade route.⁵⁷ It was only in September, 2012 that the Ministry of Commerce proposed another train from Munabao to Khokhrapar specifically for trade, as well as opening up of the land route.⁵⁸

Similarly in Gujarat, while the State government alludes to the central government being partial only to the Congress government, there are other factors that shall be discussed below that are responsible for it not being involved in building trade linkages with Pakistan.⁵⁹

Thus, the political dispensation of a State can clearly be overshadowed by other factors such as the overall vision of the central government, the geographical location, and the overall sentiment in a particular state.⁶⁰

It is often argued that business interests play an important role in mending fences between two countries. Business interests do help to the degree that chambers of commerce take up issues pertaining to the State and central governments from time to time, as is evident from the context of Punjab. Besides, commencement of trade does help in ensuring that even if ties get affected, they are not totally disrupted. Even after the Mumbai attacks and the tensions across the LoC, trade through the Wagah-Attari border continued to grow steadily.⁶¹

Yet, before big business can play a decisive role in pushing forward trade and commerce between the two countries, there are specific business issues that need to be addressed as well (tariffs and land routes). Firstly, until there is MFN status and the tariffs are reduced, there is not much hope of giving a fillip to trade.

⁵⁵ Interview with a retired diplomat who had served in Pakistan.

⁵⁶ *The Times of India*, “Amarinder returns from Pakistan”, February 1, 2004.

⁵⁷ Interview with a businessman from Rajasthan and a government official.

⁵⁸ *The Times of India*, “India looking at opening two border points with Pakistan”, September 5, 2012.

⁵⁹ Interview with a senior functionary of a Chamber of Commerce and an official from the state government.

⁶⁰ Interview with a retired diplomat.

⁶¹ *The Times of India*, “Trade flows between India and Pakistan despite tensions”, August 18 2013.

Some of the important measures that can only be taken by the national governments of both sides are: “Pakistan granting MFN status to India, and in turn India significantly lowering tariff rates for goods of particular interest to Pakistan (such as textiles and agricultural products); Pakistan allowing transit trade from India, which is required by World Trade Organisation rules; facilitating energy trade between the two countries through building gas pipelines and eventually joint energy grids; allowing trade in Information Technology; harmonising Customs procedures; and eliminating obstacles to investments”⁶²

While trade has begun through the Wagah-Attari route, the number of goods that can go are only restricted; very few of these go via Punjab. Until Pakistan improves the infrastructure on its side of the border and has the ability to deal with larger volumes of trade, the increase in trade will be incremental.⁶³

Then there are lobbies that are inimical to business in Pakistan, and those that are not very enthusiastic about trade between the countries.

According to a businessman who has been at the forefront of pushing trade between both countries, “The comfort in Punjabi commerce is pregnant with hope. Unfortunately, the Sindh government of Yousaf Raza Gilani discriminated against Attari-Wagah trade. The very fact that this is the only border in Punjab that does not allow trade via the negative Pakistani list is unfair.”⁶⁴

The role of the business community in promoting trade also depends upon the interest of the State concerned. In the context of Gujarat, it is quite clear that because it has opportunities to do business with a large number of countries outside the neighbourhood, the enthusiasm is not as much as in the case of land-locked Punjab, which would get access to Afghanistan and Central Asia if the trade route opens up.⁶⁵

Finally, having a well defined land route for trade is also important, and this is something that Gujarat lacks at the moment. Even the land crossing at Rajasthan-Sindh border is yet to be opened.⁶⁶ From the case of Wagah-Attari, it is quite clear that once a land route opens up there is more interest and traction.

In addition to the specific variables which I attempted to deal with in the course of this paper, I was also able to come up with some interesting takeaways.

Within a border State, the sentiment for better relation varies significantly

⁶² Response to questionnaire sent to Rupinder Singh Sachdeva.

⁶³ Interview with Nisha Taneja.

⁶⁴ Response to questionnaire sent to Gunbir Singh.

⁶⁵ Interviews with businessmen from Gujarat.

⁶⁶ Interview with a Member from the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Nisha Taneja.

from region to region. In Rajasthan, for example, while there is a strong urge for improving ties in the Barmer belt, the fact that a large number of soldiers and personnel of the Border Security Force are from the Shekhawati belt, consisting of Jhunjhunu, Sikar and Churu, has a negative impact on perception vis-a-vis Pakistan, which the political class of the State cannot ignore.⁶⁷ Similarly, in Gujarat, while there is an interest in Kutch, which has historical linkages with Sindh and Surat, home to a large Memon community, there seems to be no such interest in Ahmedabad where there are other opportunities and which is distant from Pakistan.

In the case of Punjab, however, which is a relatively smaller State, the impact of trade is such that it affects other regions of the State as well. While it is true that border districts are more enthusiastic for trade, even those from other parts of the State are not lacking in enthusiasm since there is a spillover effect.⁶⁸ In 2006, for example, land prices rose not only in Amritsar but also in the surrounding areas once the bus service between Amritsar and Nankana Sahib commenced.⁶⁹

In addition to the economic logic, it would be important to realise that migrants from West Punjab are relatively well spread out in different parts of Punjab and are not merely concentrated in the border districts. Besides this, culturally and historically, a large portion of East Punjab shares a lot with Western Punjab. The same does not hold true for both Rajasthan and Gujarat, where there are certain regions of the State having cultural affinity. While in Rajasthan, it is the Marwar region that has strong cultural bonds with the other side of the border, in Gujarat, it is mostly the Kutch region.

⁶⁷ Interview with a Rajasthan government official.

⁶⁸ Questionnaire sent to Gunbir Singh.

⁶⁹ Roy, Vijay, "Property prices shooting up in Amritsar" *The Business Standard*, January 23, 2006.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

BASED on the research carried out during the course of my project, I would like to make certain recommendations before finally concluding the paper and answering the specific question at hand.

The first set of recommendations is specifically in the context of relations between the central government and State governments of border-States in the context of ties with neighbouring countries.

First, it is important that there is more dialogue between the central and State governments on issues pertaining to foreign policy. While certain States like West Bengal and Tamil Nadu have overstepped their brief intervening on issues that are clearly outside their ambit,⁷⁰ others are not consulted regularly even on issues related to Confidence Building Measures and trade contacts with neighbouring countries, including Pakistan, even though this would be beneficial.⁷¹

This clarity is extremely important since many of the individuals whom I interviewed in State governments as well as the Chambers from the border-States argued that the centre keeps them out of the loop on foreign policy related issues, including ties with Pakistan. Others stated that they did not intervene since foreign policy is a central subject and ties with Pakistan are all the more sensitive.

Second, it is time that New Delhi realises that the overall concept of borders has witnessed a transformation over the past decade and is likely to change even more once bilateral trade with Pakistan grows. Though it is true that New Delhi has been consulting State governments on important issues in recent years, there is a need for a systematic method so that both the central and State governments are on the same page, and issues pertaining to bilateral trade can be addressed.⁷² On the one hand, those in the central government argue that State governments are consulted on trade issues, citing the example of the ICP at Attari where the State government's advice was sought for smooth land acquisition, and of sending the Commerce Ministry delegation to Pakistan where he was accompanied by the Chief Secretary of Punjab.⁷³

⁷⁰ Signing of agreements, as well as issues pertaining to the United Nations are outside the purview of State governments, but in the case of the Teesta treaty and voting against Sri Lanka at the UN, domestic politics clearly took precedence over New Delhi's authority.

⁷¹ Interviews with official from Gujarat and Rajasthan government, as well as Members of Chambers of Commerce from the three States.

⁷² In addition to issues such as land acquisition which is necessary for developing infrastructure on border crossings, there are other issues too such as commodities which need to be included in the list of tradeable items.

⁷³ Interview with officials in the Ministry of Border Management and Commerce.

State governments, including Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat, on the other hand argue that they are not consulted enough on either issues pertaining to trade and commerce or people-to-people contact.⁷⁴

It would be pertinent to mention here that it is not merely on trade that the central government needs to seek the opinion of State governments. In order to ensure that CBMs and people-to-people contact between the two countries are having their desired impact, it would be logical for the central government to do periodic reviews of the performance of CBMs initiated, whether it is the bus services between Amritsar and Nankana Sahib or the train services between Munabao and Khokhrapar. Currently, there is no such review and neither of these services are running to their potential due to logistical constraints.⁷⁵ In the case of the bus service, passengers have to travel to New Delhi to get visas since there is no consulate in Amritsar.⁷⁶ For ensuring that the Amritsar-Nankana Sahib bus achieves its objective of fostering closer ties between citizens of the two Punjabs, it is imperative that New Delhi raises the issue of a consulate at Amritsar and reciprocates by setting up an additional consulate in Pakistan. A similar problem plagues the Munabao-Khokhrapar train service where passengers have to travel nearly 800 kilometres from the Barmer region to New Delhi to obtain a visa.⁷⁷ This is not all; while most of the passengers are from the Barmer belt, they have to board the train from Jodhpur, which is nearly 200 km away.⁷⁸

In addition to reviewing the CBMs discussed above, it is imperative to explore the opening up of trade routes such as Hussainiwala-Kasur (Punjab), Munabao-Khokhrapar, and Tharad, in addition to three points from Kutch with Pakistan.⁷⁹

In addition to central governments, State governments will need to fulfill certain responsibilities in case they need to be considered as serious stakeholders. It is important for the State governments not to lay all the blame on the central government for ignoring them. Border States such as Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab too should make efforts to form a grouping whereby the aim should be not just to learn from each other's experiences but also to raise some of the common demands. For example, passengers of the bus services as well as the railway passengers have to contend with

⁷⁴ Interviews with officials from Gujarat and Rajasthan.

⁷⁵ *The Nation*, 'Dosti Bus arrives, departs with no passenger', January 20, 2014. <http://www.nation.com.pk/national/20-Jan-2014/dosti-bus-arrives-departs-with-no-passenger>

⁷⁶ *The Business Standard*, "Sukhbir seeks opening of Pak Consulate in Amritsar", November 2, 2012.

⁷⁷ Interview with Mr. Jaswant Singh.

⁷⁸ *The Indian Express*, "Running against tide, Jaswant promises to halt Thar Express in Barmer", April 4, 2014. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/running-against-tide-jaswant-promises-to-halt-thar-express-in-barmer/>

⁷⁹ Telephone interview with a Member from the Gandhidham Chamber of Commerce for Gujarat land crossings.

similar problems. Similarly, two important issues that are common to all three States are the need to open up more border points. The second point is about the current trend of issuing city specific visas for tourists.⁸⁰ Coordination will ensure that the three border-States work collectively and do not compete with each other. Currently, for example, Rajasthan and Gujarat often complain that the Central Government is only interested in opening up the Wagah-Attari border.⁸¹

State governments also need to act in a responsible manner and not use foreign policy issues for gaining political brownie points. This inevitably leads to trivialisation of a very serious debate. As Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, for instance, often tried to give the impression that New Delhi was willing to strike a deal with Pakistan on Sir Creek, and while his demand to be kept in the loop was legitimate, as a responsible leader it was also his responsibility not to up the ante, as he did on Sir Creek and the fishermen issue.⁸²

In addition to the political elite, other stakeholders too have their contribution. While the role played by chambers of commerce has already been discussed, other players, too, have an important role to play.

Scholars of political science, international relations and economics should also understand not just the difference between sub-regional diplomacy with countries that are outside the neighbourhood, but also the diplomacy carried out within the South Asian region. There is scarce literature on the issue.

Finally, the diaspora of these three regions also needs to play a proactive role since the instance of Punjab shows that those living on foreign shores have a critical role to play in being bridge builders between both countries. The Sindhi diaspora can learn from the experiences of the Punjabi diaspora and try to play a more constructive role in improving ties between India and Pakistan by pushing for ties between Gujarat, Rajasthan and Sindh.

⁸⁰ Questionnaire sent to Rupinder Singh Sachdeva, Telephonic Interviews with Members of South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce, Gandhidham Chamber of Commerce and Interview with NishaTaneja.

⁸¹ Interview and also see *Desh Gujarat*, “Open three roads between Kutch and Pakistan for commerce”, December 2, 2011.

⁸² *The Economic Times*, “Narendra Modi gives emotive twist to Sir Creek Issue”, December 15, 2012. *The Times of India*, “Modi lashes out at Pak over fishermen issue”, February 2, 2014.

VII. CONCLUSION

IF one were to answer the primary question of whether the role of border-States has changed over the past decade in Indo-Pak relations, it would be fair to say that connectivity between border provinces and Pakistan has definitely been enhanced over the past decade. While the government of Punjab has been proactive in pitching for closer ties in the economic and cultural fields with Pakistan, other State governments have not shown similar enthusiasm. So it would be unfair to blame the Central government.

The business lobbies with Rajasthan and Sindh need to push their respective State governments more and the central government also needs to have more land crossings for trade, which may build traction between the business communities on both sides of the border in other States as well.⁸³ A perfect illustration of this is the Wagah-Attari land route where trade has continued to rise even during times of tension such as 26/11, and the tensions with Pakistan in 2013. Finally, it is important that the State and central governments work together.

⁸³ Mehta, P., “Why Cross-border trade between Rajasthan and Sind?” *Financial Express*, April 5, 2014.

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