

# Standing Committee Report Summary

## Indo-Pak relations

- The Standing Committee on External Affairs (Chair: Dr. Shashi Tharoor) submitted a report on 'Indo-Pak relations' on August 11, 2017. Key observations and recommendations made by the Committee include:
- **Border management and security:** India shares 3,323 km of its international border with Pakistan. Noting that a volatile situation exists across the border, the Committee recommended that tangible steps need to be taken to strengthen and modernise border security. The Committee expressed concerns towards the poor road conditions across the border. It recommended that the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System be completed in a time bound manner. It further recommended that coastal security and surveillance should be strengthened by establishing high level coordination between the Indian Coast Guard and other agencies. These agencies include the Navy, Central Industrial Security Force, Customs, and Ports.
- **Terrorism:** The Committee recommended that the government should continue pressuring Pakistan to expedite the 26/11 Mumbai attack trials. It further recommended that the military and non-military policy options be spelt out to deal with Pakistani sponsored terrorism. The Committee further recommended that thorough security review of India's security establishments should be ensured.
- **Jammu and Kashmir:** The Committee stated that a part of Jammu and Kashmir has been under the illegal occupation of Pakistan since 1947. It further noted that there is a growing sense of alienation in the Kashmiri youth due to radicalisation and the lack of employment opportunities. It noted that efforts made by the government, in this regard, have not given desired results. The Committee recommended that the government should take measures such as infrastructure and economic development, and preventing radicalisation of the youth, supported by Pakistan.
- **Nuclear and missile programme:** India and Pakistan have signed an agreement on Prohibition of Attack against nuclear installations. The Committee noted that while both India and Pakistan are nuclear armed states, the nuclear doctrines of the two countries are contradictory. India follows the 'no first use of nuclear weapons' policy, and Pakistan does not. Further, there is a growing cooperation between China and Pakistan in missile and nuclear programmes. In this context, the Committee recommended that the government must aggregate its nuclear capability and enhance its deterrence capabilities.
- **Surgical strikes:** The Committee noted that a limited counter terrorism operation (surgical strikes) was carried out by the Indian Army along the Line of Control (LoC) in September 2016. The surgical strikes took place based on intelligence inputs regarding terrorist launch pads across the LoC and overall build-up of terrorist attacks, stemming from Pakistan. The Committee stated that the surgical strikes demonstrate a restrained response, and hence do not indicate a change in India's policy of 'strategic restraint'. It recommended that this policy be continued along with diplomatic outreach to highlight terrorism supported by Pakistan.
- **Economic engagement:** The Committee noted three trends in the economic ties between India and Pakistan. These include: (i) trade between the two countries exhibits great potential, (ii) India has maintained trade surplus with Pakistan over the years, and (iii) SAPTA (SAARC Preferential Trade Arrangement) agreement is an important mechanism for bilateral trade. Under the WTO agreement, India had extended the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to all WTO members, including Pakistan. The MFN principle prohibits discrimination among similar products from different countries. However, Pakistan has not reciprocated the MFN status to India. The Committee recommended that efforts should be made to persuade Pakistan to extend MFN status to India. It further recommended that the government must pursue Pakistan for (i) the removal of trade restrictions on land routes, and (ii) allowing transit of Indian exports to Afghanistan through Pakistan.
- The Committee observed that an Integrated Check Post (ICP) was opened at Attari in 2012 to handle the trade between India and Pakistan. The Committee noted several infrastructural issues regarding the ICP. These include: (i) limited storage space, (ii) lack of mechanised loading/unloading, and (iii) inadequate cargo holding. The Committee recommended that the efficiency of the ICP be improved through technological handling.
- **SAARC summit:** The Committee stated that by blocking major regional development projects, Pakistan has made SAARC dysfunctional. It also noted that in response to Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal withdrew from the proposed SAARC summit in 2016. It recommended that the government should undertake constructive engagements to implement the SAARC Regional Convention on 'Suppression of Terrorism'.

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