

ENTREVISTA AL EMBAJADOR DE PAKISTÁN

Por el CN (R) Daniel G. Chaluleu

Hassan Afzal Khan nacido en 1976, ingresó al Servicio Exterior de Pakistán en 2002. Asumió el cargo de embajador de Pakistán en la Argentina el 4 de enero de 2024, acreditado ante Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Perú y Uruguay. Recientemente se desempeñó como Cónsul General de Pakistán en Dubai (2021-2023) y ha prestado servicios en la Embajada de Pakistán en Berlín (2003-2009), en el Alto Comisionado de Pakistán en Pretoria (2011-2014) y en la Embajada de Pakistán en Hanoi (2014-2017).

En la sede central del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Pakistán, el embajador Hassan trabajó como subdirector de Auditoría en 2002, director de Asuntos de la Asamblea Nacional y el Senado (2009-2011), director para Europa (2017-2018) y director de Personal II (2019). Asimismo, ocupó los cargos de director general para la Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), un bloque regional de diez miembros del cual Pakistán es uno de los fundadores, y las Repúblicas de Asia Central (2019), director general de Protocolo (2020-2021) y director general de la División de Comunicación Estratégica (2023).



H.E. Mr. Hassan Afzal Khan (Foto: <https://mofa.gov.pk/>)

Aclaración preliminar

La entrevista fue realizada personalmente por el capitán de navío (R) Daniel G. Chaluleu, en la sede de la Embajada de Pakistán en la República Argentina, durante la misma se utilizó el idioma inglés y se transcribió en dicho idioma a fin de evitar errores de interpretación de giros idiomáticos.

En la entrevista “Una visión generada por IA del conflicto indo-pakistaní”, publicada en el *Boletín N.º 28*, se condensó la visión de la India. Vale aclarar que, aunque el título menciona a un artículo generado por IA, metodológicamente se utilizó para su elaboración los comentarios ya expuestos por una alta autoridad militar de la India, confeccionando una “simulación de entrevista”, esto se debió a que fue imposible la coordinación de las agendas oficiales para efectuar una entrevista directa en tiempo hábil para su publicación. Luego de su confección se realizaron todas las revisiones y aprobaciones correspondientes

por ambas partes para su publicación autorizada. Es decir, la IA fue utilizada como herramienta de simulación, no como generador del contenido del artículo.

Introducción

Vale para esta entrevista una introducción similar a la efectuada en el *Boletín N.º 28* (febrero-marzo del presente año), en la cual se mencionaba que el conflicto indo-pakistaní comenzó con el nacimiento de ambas naciones, en el año 1947. En ese boletín se condensó la visión de la India y, en el presente, la de Pakistán.

La retirada en 1947 de la corona británica, cuyas autoridades habían perdido el control sobre la vasta extensión del subcontinente, precipitó el desorden y el caos entre las numerosas naciones y etnias de la región. Características tales como la diversidad idiomática y religiosa, generaron diferencias irreconciliables que, mezcladas con otras divergencias, se mantienen hasta la actualidad.

Esta retirada dio lugar al surgimiento de la India, Pakistán Occidental (hoy Pakistán) y Pakistán Oriental (hoy Bangladesh). Las fronteras nunca fueron acordadas completamente y, en algunas regiones, en particular Jammu y Cachemira, los caudillos locales (maharajás) decidieron su anexión a uno u otro de los países surgidos sin considerar los deseos o intereses de la población de sus áreas de influencia. Desde entonces, y hasta el presente, India y Pakistán han librado tres guerras, además de numerosas escaramuzas fronterizas. La llamada “Línea de Control”, se mantiene como una frontera *de facto*, transitoria.

Por su parte, China se incorporó como actor del conflicto al ocupar una porción de Cachemira en 1962. Desde entonces, ha consolidado su presencia mediante diversas inversiones en infraestructura, diseñadas para conectarse comercialmente con los puertos del océano Índico. A su vez, Afganistán tiene incidentes limítrofes con Pakistán, agregando un condimento más de inestabilidad a esta región del Indo-Pacífico, poblada por unos 3.250 millones de personas.

Entrevista

Pregunta 1

What do you consider to be the main historical, political or religious factors that triggered the conflict between India and Pakistan in 1947? Do you consider that these factors to remain as important as they were, or has the driving force of the conflict changed?

The conflict between India and Pakistan in 1947 was not caused by one single factor. It emerged from a combination of historical, political, and religious tensions that became much stronger during the final years of British colonial rule. British India had been governed for decades through systems that often separated communities by religion and identity. As independence approached, these divisions became harder to manage, especially because the transfer of power was rushed and the borders were drawn hastily quickly through the Radcliffe Line, with little time for local consultation or an orderly transition.

Religion played a major role because the notion of Pakistan was rightly linked to the belief that Muslims of the subcontinent formed a separate political community. The Two-Nation Theory, associated with Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League, argued that Muslims and Hindus had different political futures and could not be safely represented within in a single state dominated by one majority. Multiple events in the first half of the 20th century confirmed the fears of Muslims regarding their minority status in the sub-continent.

The immediate violence of Partition made the conflict even more intense. Millions of people were displaced, and communal violence on the Muslims caused enormous trauma. These events created historical grievances that continued to shape public memory, national identity, and political narratives in both countries. The Kashmir dispute then became the most important territorial expression of this wider conflict, turning political disagreements into open war soon after independence.

Many of the original factors still matter, especially the memories of Partition, the question of national identity, and the unresolved dispute over Kashmir. However, the conflict has also changed over time. Today it is less driven solely by the original religious logic of Partition and more by territorial control, security concerns, military strategy, domestic nationalism propagated by the Indian politicians, and the reality that both states are nuclear powers. Religion and ideology still shape how the conflict is understood, but the main operational drivers today are sovereignty, security, and strategic rivalry.

Pregunta 2

In your view, to what extent did the decisions made in 1947 regarding the princely states, particularly the right to choose accession to either India or Pakistan, and the specific case of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir choosing to accede to India despite the region's Muslim-majority population, contribute to the outbreak of the Indo-Pakistani conflict?

The decisions made in 1947 regarding the princely states were extremely important because they created a legal and political structure that was unstable from the beginning. When British rule ended, princely states were told that they could accede to either India or Pakistan. On paper this seemed like a clear solution, but in practice it created major problems because the ruler of a state did not always share the religion or political preference of the population. There was also no strong, consistent mechanism to resolve disputed accessions when geography, demography, and political interests pointed in different directions.

Jammu and Kashmir became the most serious case because it contained all of these contradictions at once. It had a Muslim-majority population, but it was ruled by a Hindu monarch, Maharaja Hari Singh. It was also geographically and strategically important because it bordered both India and Pakistan. At first, the Maharaja tried to avoid choosing either side and hoped to remain independent. However, soon after the independence, the Maharaja requested military assistance from India. India made assistance conditional on formal accession, and the Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession to India.

This decision directly contributed to the outbreak of the first Indo-Pakistan war. India argued that the accession was legally valid because the ruler had signed the required instrument. Pakistan rejected this position because it believed the Muslim-majority population should have been decisive, especially given the logic behind the creation of Pakistan. As a result, the Kashmir accession did not simply create a legal disagreement; it transformed an already tense relationship into an armed conflict.

The princely states issue was not the deepest root cause of the India-Pakistan rivalry, since the wider conflict had already been shaped by Partition, communal violence, and competing national visions. However, Kashmir was the decisive spark that turned those tensions into war. Other princely states such as Junagadh and Hyderabad also created disputes, but Kashmir was different because of its location, strategic importance, demographic complexity, and immediate military escalation.

Pregunta 3

From a military and geostrategic perspective, what role has Jammu and Kashmir played as the central point of the Indo-Pakistani conflict?

From a military and geostrategic perspective, Jammu and Kashmir has played the role of the central strategic

theatre in the India-Pakistan conflict. Its importance is not only emotional or symbolic; it is also deeply connected to geography, military positioning, regional access, and water security. The region lies among major mountain systems, including the Himalayas and Karakoram, which gives it great defensive and observational value. Control over high-altitude terrain, passes, and valleys can shape military movement and surveillance across a very sensitive frontier.

The Line of Control has made Kashmir a permanent military front rather than just a past battlefield. Since the first war of 1947-48, the territory has remained divided, and the Line of Control has functioned as a de facto boundary without becoming an accepted international border. This has allowed repeated skirmishes, artillery exchanges, infiltration concerns, and military crises to continue over decades. The region therefore remains one of the most heavily militarized spaces in the world.

Kashmir also matters because it connects the India-Pakistan rivalry to wider Asian geopolitics. The region is close to China, and areas such as Ladakh, Aksai Chin, and Gilgit-Baltistan make Kashmir part of a wider strategic triangle involving India, Pakistan, and China. For India, control over Ladakh and surrounding areas is important for monitoring Chinese movements. For Pakistan, the northern areas are also linked to strategic connectivity, including routes associated with China-Pakistan cooperation.

Water is another major factor. Kashmir is connected to the Indus river system, including rivers that are vital for Pakistan's agriculture and food security. This makes the region not only a territorial dispute but also a hydro-strategic asset. Since both India and Pakistan became nuclear powers, Kashmir has also become the main arena for limited conflict below the threshold of full-scale war. In this sense, Kashmir is the geographic, military, and symbolic core of the rivalry.

Pregunta 4

Do you consider the conflict between India and Pakistan to be primarily territorial, ideological, religious, or a combination of these factors? How have these dimensions evolved over time?

The conflict between India and Pakistan is best understood as a combination of territorial, ideological, religious, and strategic factors. It would be too simple to describe it as only a territorial dispute or only a religious conflict. At its origin, the conflict was strongly shaped by competing ideas of nationhood. Pakistan emerged from the argument that Muslims of the subcontinent formed a distinct political community, while India presented itself as a secular and multi-religious state. This meant that the conflict began with a strong ideological and religious dimension. Very quickly, however, the dispute became territorial through the question of Jammu and Kashmir. The accession of Kashmir to India created a direct military and legal dispute between the two new states. India emphasized the legality of the Maharaja's accession, while Pakistan emphasized the Muslim-majority character of the population. From that moment, Kashmir became the central territorial issue through which the wider ideological disagreement was expressed.

Over time, the conflict became increasingly strategic and security-driven. The wars of 1965 and 1971, the militarization of the Line of Control, and the development of nuclear weapons changed the nature of the rivalry. Religion remained important in public narratives and identity politics, but military planning, deterrence, border security, and domestic nationalism became more central to how the conflict was managed. The dispute was no longer only about the original logic of Partition; it became embedded in state security structures.

Today, the territorial issue of Kashmir remains the core structure of the conflict, while ideology and religion continue to influence how both publics and governments interpret it. The religious dimension is no longer the only or even always the primary driver of policy, but it still shapes narratives of legitimacy and identity. The conflict has therefore evolved from an ideological-religious conflict at Partition into a territorial and strategic rivalry sustained by history, nationalism, security concerns, and nuclear deterrence.

Pregunta 5

How would you describe the nature of the conflict today: is it a frozen war, a hybrid conflict, a conventional rivalry with nuclear overtones, or something else? Are there cases of the so-called grey-zone strategy in this conflict?

The conflict today is not best described as a fully frozen war, because it remains too active and too vulnerable to sudden escalation. A frozen conflict usually suggests a relatively stable ceasefire line with limited daily violence and a low risk of rapid escalation. Kashmir does not fit that description fully. The Line of Control may sometimes be quieter because of ceasefire understandings, but the region continues to experience infiltration allegations, political confrontation, and periodic military crises.

A more accurate description is that the India-Pakistan conflict is a hybrid, nuclear-constrained rivalry. It includes conventional military preparedness, irregular or asymmetric forms of violence, intelligence competition, political pressure, information campaigns, and diplomatic confrontation. The conventional dimension remains important because both states maintain large military forces and have fought wars in the past. However, the nuclear dimension now limits the likelihood of full-scale war and pushes much of the confrontation below the threshold of open conflict.

Grey-zone strategy is clearly relevant to this conflict. Grey-zone actions are measures that fall below the level of declared war but are still designed to create pressure, shape the strategic environment, or test the opponent's limits. In the India-Pakistan context, this can include cross-border militancy allegations, deniable support networks, localized military actions, ceasefire probing, cyber activity, and information campaigns. These actions create pressure without necessarily triggering a full conventional war.

The result is a conflict that is continuous but usually controlled. Full war is avoided because of nuclear risk, international pressure, and the costs of escalation, but hostility continues through limited crises and indirect methods. Therefore, the best description is a hybrid and nuclearized rivalry sustained through grey-zone competition, with Jammu and Kashmir remaining the central theatre.

Pregunta 6

Do you believe that China has had, directly or indirectly, any influence on the development or prolongation of the Indo-Pakistani conflict? In which historical moments has that influence been most evident, if it has existed?

China has had an important influence on the India-Pakistan conflict, mostly indirectly rather than as the original cause. The roots of the conflict lie in Partition, Kashmir, nationalism, and the formation of India and Pakistan as separate states. However, China has strengthened Pakistan's strategic position and has also shaped India's security calculations. This has made the conflict more complex because India has often had to consider the possibility of pressure from both Pakistan and China.

China's influence became especially clear after the 1962 Sino-Indian War. That war changed the regional balance because India now faced a serious northern rival in addition to Pakistan in the West. The China-Pakistan relationship then developed into a strategic alignment, which gave Pakistan an important external partner. The 1963 China-Pakistan boundary agreement was also significant because it involved territory connected to the wider Kashmir dispute and gave China a direct stake in the geography of the region.

In more recent years, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has added a geoeconomic dimension. Modern defence cooperation, including aircraft, missiles, drones, sensors, and naval systems, has also strengthened Pakistan's military posture. China did not create the conflict, but it has become one of the most important

external actors in sustaining Pakistan's ability to balance India and in deepening India's perception of a two-front strategic challenge.

Pregunta 7

Besides China, which other state actors have played a significant role in the Indo-Pakistani conflict, whether as allies, mediators, or regional or global influencers? Could Afghanistan play as an ally of India, especially considering recent tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan?

Several state actors besides China have shaped the India-Pakistan conflict as allies, mediators, or broader strategic influencers. The United States has played one of the most important roles, but its position has changed over time. During the Cold War, it was often closer to Pakistan through military and security arrangements. Later, especially after the Cold War and more strongly after 2000, the United States developed a closer strategic relationship with India. At the same time, Washington has often acted as a crisis manager, especially during moments of high escalation such as Kargil and later military crises.

The Soviet Union, and later Russia, has traditionally been an important strategic partner for India. Soviet support was especially significant during the 1971 war, and Russia has remained a major defence supplier to India. The United Kingdom also has historical importance because British colonial policy and the rushed Partition helped create the conditions in which the conflict emerged. Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia and others, have at times provided financial and political support to Pakistan, while also maintaining economic ties with India.

Afghanistan is a more complicated and indirect factor. Afghanistan and Pakistan have long had tensions over the Durand Line, cross-border militancy, and competing security interests. Recent clashes and airstrikes show that Pakistan's western border can become unstable, which indirectly affects its strategic focus. Before 2021, Afghan governments had close ties with India through infrastructure, aid, and political cooperation. Since the Taliban returned to power, India's relationship with Afghanistan has become more pragmatic and cautious rather than a formal alliance.

Afghanistan could complicate Pakistan's security environment in a way that indirectly benefits India, but it is unlikely to function as a conventional ally of India. The Taliban government has its own priorities, and India's engagement with it is limited by political, ideological, and security concerns. Afghanistan is therefore better understood as a destabilizing regional variable rather than a decisive actor in the India-Pakistan conflict.

Pregunta 8

The Pakistani armed forces are made up almost entirely of personnel who profess the Muslim religion. Do you consider this a factor of strength in the Indo-Pakistani conflict, bearing in mind that India's armed forces are composed of personnel of various faiths?

The religious composition of Pakistan's armed forces can contribute to a sense of shared identity, but it should not be treated as a decisive factor in military strength. Pakistan's armed forces are overwhelmingly Muslim, reflecting the country's demographics and its founding national identity. This can support morale and cohesion because the military can draw on a common religious and national narrative. Religious language may also be used in ideas of sacrifice, duty, and national defence.

However, modern military effectiveness also depends on training, discipline, leadership, logistics, technology, intelligence, planning, and command structure. A shared religion does not automatically produce battlefield success, and it does not remove problems related to strategy, resources, or decision-making.

Pregunta 9

Do you believe that Pakistan's younger generations, particularly millennials and the generation after them, are more secular than their predecessors, as is the case in some Western countries? If so, could that cultural shift help reduce tensions in the Indo-Pakistani conflict?

Pakistan's younger generations show some signs of social and cultural change, but it would be inaccurate to describe them as becoming secular in the same way as younger generations in many Western countries. Religion remains highly important in Pakistan across age groups, and it continues to shape public identity, social values, and national narratives. The differences between older and younger generations may exist, especially in urban and educated circles, but they are not usually as dramatic as in Europe or North America.

At the same time, many younger Pakistanis are more globally connected than previous generations. Social media, international education, migration, and digital culture expose them to a wider range of views. Some younger people may prioritize jobs, economic stability, governance, and personal opportunity over ideological confrontation. This can create a more pragmatic outlook, especially among urban youth, even if it does not necessarily mean a rejection of religion.

Any cultural shift among younger Pakistanis could help reduce tensions only indirectly. The India-Pakistan conflict is not driven mainly by public religiosity. It is shaped by Kashmir, military doctrine, nuclear deterrence, terrorism concerns, nationalism, and the role of the state, especially the security establishment.

In the long term, generational change could create softer public attitudes and more support for people-to-people contact, trade, education, and cultural exchange.

Pregunta 10

In your opinion, what role has international diplomacy played in the Indo-Pakistani conflict? Do you consider it helpful, limited, or even counterproductive at certain times?

International diplomacy has played an important but uneven role in the India-Pakistan conflict. Its greatest value has been in crisis management rather than in solving the underlying dispute. During moments of intense military tension, outside actors have often helped prevent escalation. This has become especially important since both countries developed nuclear weapons, because even a limited crisis can carry serious risks if it is not controlled quickly.

Diplomacy has been useful in creating ceasefires, communication channels, and formal agreements. The United Nations was involved after the first war over Kashmir, and later agreements such as Tashkent and Simla helped create frameworks for dialogue and de-escalation. However, these frameworks did not resolve the core dispute over Kashmir. India has generally preferred bilateral handling of the issue, while Pakistan has often sought more international involvement, which has limited the possibility of a shared diplomatic process.

Diplomacy can also be counterproductive when it creates a sense that outside powers will always step in to prevent full war. This may reduce the perceived cost of risky behaviour during crises. Overall, international diplomacy has acted more like a shock absorber than a complete solution. It has helped prevent escalation and manage dangerous moments, but it has not removed the deeper causes of the conflict.

Pregunta 11

Given the British imperial past in the subcontinent and its role in the 1947 Partition, what historical responsibility, if any, do you attribute to the United Kingdom in the emergence or later development of the India-Pakistan conflict?

The United Kingdom bears significant historical responsibility for the conditions in which the India-Pakistan conflict emerged. British colonial rule shaped the political and administrative structure of the subcontinent for decades, including systems that classified and separated communities by religion and identity. These practices did not invent all communal tensions, but they often hardened them and made religious identity more politically important. By the time independence approached, these divisions had become deeply connected to political representation and state formation.

Britain's handling of Partition was especially important. The transfer of power was rushed, and the border between India and Pakistan was drawn quickly through the Radcliffe Line. The boundary was announced very late, and there was not enough preparation for the mass movement of people or the violence that followed. This created chaos, fear, and trauma for the Muslims, which became part of the long-term memory of the conflict.

The British also left behind an unstable framework for princely states. The decision to allow rulers to accede to India or Pakistan created ambiguity in places where the ruler's identity, the population's religion, and geography did not align. Jammu and Kashmir became the most serious example of this problem. Britain did not directly decide Kashmir's final status, but the structure of decolonization left a major dispute unresolved.

However, the United Kingdom's responsibility is stronger for the origins of the conflict than for its later development. After 1947, the wars, military doctrines, nuclearization, domestic politics, and diplomatic choices were mainly shaped by India and Pakistan themselves, along with other international actors. Britain should therefore be seen mainly as a key architect of the conditions that produced the conflict.

Pregunta 12

How do you assess the influence of traditional media and social media on public perceptions of the Indo-Pakistani conflict, both in Pakistan and India? Does media contribute to polarization, or can it also serve as a tool for mutual understanding?

Traditional media and social media both have a powerful influence on how people in India and Pakistan understand the conflict. Traditional media, especially television, often sets the national tone during crises. News channels and political debates can frame events through language of retaliation, aggression, victory, or betrayal. This can quickly harden public opinion and make compromise appear weak or unacceptable.

Social media intensifies this effect because it spreads information faster and with less verification. Old videos, false claims, emotional posts, and nationalist hashtags can circulate rapidly during moments of tension. Algorithms often reward anger and fear because these emotions generate engagement. This creates echo chambers where people mainly see content that confirms what they already believe about the other side.

At the same time, media can also support understanding. Social media allows ordinary people, journalists, artists, students, and professionals from both countries to interact directly. Shared interests such as music, cricket, film, food, and language can humanize the other side and weaken stereotypes. Independent journalists and fact-checkers can also challenge misinformation and reduce panic during crises.

The effect of media depends on incentives and context. During military crises, both traditional and social media often contribute to polarization because nationalist narratives dominate. In calmer periods, media can create space for dialogue, cultural familiarity, and cross-border empathy. For media to become a tool for understanding, it needs responsible framing, careful verification, less dehumanizing language, and stronger media literacy among audiences.

Pregunta 13

Based on your experience and personal analysis, how do you envision the future evolution of the Indo-Pakistani conflict in the coming decades? Is a lasting resolution plausible?

The most likely future of the India-Pakistan conflict is not full-scale war, but managed hostility. Both states have strong incentives to avoid a major war because of nuclear deterrence, economic costs, and international pressure. However, neither side currently has strong domestic political incentives to make major concessions, especially on Kashmir. This means the conflict is likely to continue through periods of diplomatic freeze, limited military tension, intelligence competition, and occasional crisis escalation.

In the next decade, the most likely pattern is continued volatility. Ceasefire arrangements along the Line of Control may reduce violence for periods of time, but attacks in Kashmir or elsewhere could still trigger rapid escalation. Modern crises may involve not only ground forces but also airpower, missiles, drones, cyber activity, and information warfare. This makes crises shorter and sharper, but also potentially dangerous because they can escalate quickly under public and political pressure.

Over the longer term, a more stable cold peace is possible. This would not necessarily mean a grand final settlement over Kashmir. It could instead involve restored trade, easier visas, stronger hotlines, regular diplomatic contact, counterterrorism understandings, and a tacit acceptance of the territorial status quo without formally abandoning claims. Such an outcome would require political leadership, military restraint, and a shift in public narratives especially in India.

A lasting resolution is plausible, but it is more likely to come gradually through conflict management than through a dramatic peace agreement. A complete military victory by either side over Kashmir is highly unlikely because of terrain, nuclear risk, international pressure, and domestic costs. The most realistic path is therefore slow de-escalation, practical cooperation, and making peace politically safer than confrontation.

Pregunta 14

In the case of Pakistan, the civilian population is overwhelmingly Muslim, unlike India, which has a more diverse religious composition. However, from an ethnic perspective, Pakistan is highly diverse, including Pashtuns, Sindhis, Saraikis, Muhajirs, and Baloch. Do you think that religious or ethnic diversity could contribute to a solution of the conflict, or would it be an obstacle to overcome?

Pakistan is overwhelmingly Muslim, and Islam has often been used as a unifying national identity across different ethnic and linguistic groups. This has created a strong sense of national cohesion, especially on the issue of sovereignty and Kashmir.

Pakistan's ethnic diversity is an asset if it is managed through inclusive federalism, regional economic development, and more pluralistic politics. Different regions may have practical interests in stability, trade, and cross-border connectivity. After the 18th Constitutional amendment in Pakistan, provincial and regional voices have more space in policymaking.

Pregunta 15

What legal or other tools are available to the Government of Pakistan to achieve efficient water sharing with India, considering that both countries form one of the most densely populated regions in the world?

Pakistan's strongest legal tool remains the Indus Waters Treaty, which has historically survived wars and major political crises. The treaty provides institutional mechanisms such as the Permanent Indus Commis-

sion, technical consultation, neutral expert procedures, and arbitration. These mechanisms allow Pakistan to raise concerns about Indian projects, river flows, dam designs, and treaty interpretation without immediately turning the issue into a military confrontation. For Pakistan, defending and using these treaty mechanisms is more effective than abandoning them.

Pakistan can also rely on wider principles of international water law, including equitable and reasonable utilization and the duty not to cause significant harm to downstream states. Even where all treaty systems are not fully accepted by both sides, these principles strengthen Pakistan's diplomatic and legal argument.

Pakistan has been raising the issue in multilateral forums, seek support from the World Bank's treaty-related role, and use international diplomacy to frame water security as a humanitarian, agricultural, and regional stability concern rather than only a bilateral political dispute.

Conclusiones del entrevistador

En primer lugar, quiero expresar mi profundo agradecimiento al embajador de Pakistán en la República Argentina, H.E. Mr. Hassan Afzal Khan, y al personal de su embajada, por haberme recibido de manera tan cordial en su sede en Buenos Aires. Los conceptos vertidos por el embajador han contribuido sobremanera a poder entender el conflicto indo-pakistaní en forma integral e imparcial. En cuanto al contenido específico de la entrevista, se pueden enumerar las siguientes conclusiones:

- Aunque el origen del conflicto fue moldeado principalmente por diferencias que invocaban el factor religioso, hay que destacar que su vez de forma simultánea se generaron divergencias sobre control territorial y los recursos.

- Esto se manifestó en especial en Cachemira. La participación de la corona británica fue determinante, ya que aumentó las tensiones que en algunos casos ya existían entre las diversas comunidades. En el presente, la discrepancia principal ha dejado de ser la de la religión que profesan los contendientes, y ha mutado más hacia el control territorial y de los recursos naturales, la soberanía e incluso la rivalidad estratégica, ya que tanto India como Pakistán poseen armas nucleares.

- La decisión de los líderes de los llamados “estados principescos” (en particular Cachemira) de anexarse a la India (con ayuda militar de por medio) contradijo el principio de separación entre hindúes y musulmanes. En Cachemira, aunque el maharajah Hari Singh era hindú, la población era y es mayoritariamente musulmana. Si bien, la violencia ya se había desencadenado, el tema de los estados principescos fue la gota que disparó el inicio de la guerra de 1947. Otros estados principescos como Junagadh y Hyderabad también generaron sus propias disputas, pero en Cachemira esto fue más patente debido a su ubicación, importancia estratégica y complejidad demográfica, es decir, Cachemira es el centro de gravedad del conflicto por su importancia geográfica y militar, y, particularmente, por su control del agua, de la cual depende la agricultura pakistaní.

- El conflicto indo-pakistaní, que como ya se dijo, fue iniciado por aspectos religiosos y territoriales, es ahora multidimensional, habiendo incorporado además aspectos geográficos, ideológicos y estratégicos. Según la visión pakistaní, una descripción completa sería la de “‘híbrido’, contenido por la amenaza nuclear, combinando enfrentamientos convencionales con violencia irregular y asimétrica, presión política, campañas de desinformación y confrontación diplomática”. Una mención especial debe hacerse al rol de los medios de comunicación masivos y las redes sociales que, en muchos casos y debido a veces

al propio algoritmo que las moldea, contribuyen a exacerbar estas diferencias. Como contraparte, el acceso a la información y las características socioculturales de la juventud podrían, a futuro, contribuir a acercar posiciones y relajar las tensiones existentes.

- El conflicto también se ha internacionalizado, debido a la gran inversión efectuada por China en el Corredor Económico Sino-Pakistaní (CPEC). Además, China ha provisto a Pakistán de variado equipamiento militar, tal como aeronaves, misiles, drones, sensores y sistemas navales. Estados Unidos, por su parte, solía estar más cercano a Pakistán, actitud que cambió luego de los sucesos del 11-S. De todas maneras, juega potencialmente de “moderador” en el caso de escaladas. Rusia ha estado tradicionalmente más cercana a la India, aunque ahora su influencia es menor, dado que debe concentrar más su esfuerzo en el frente ucraniano. Finalmente, Afganistán ha ingresado como un factor de desestabilización que podría beneficiar a la India, aunque no podría ser considerado “aliado” de ese país.

- El tema del uso del agua de los ríos que descienden del Himalaya se mantiene subyacente, pero es fundamental en el conflicto, ya que millones de pakistaníes dependen del agua para la agricultura y la alimentación. El Tratado de las Aguas del Indo (*Indus Waters Treaty*) se mantiene como la principal herramienta legal de Pakistán para garantizar una distribución equitativa del recurso. Cabe destacar que el citado tratado fue suspendido de forma temporal y unilateral por India el 23 de abril de 2025, alegando problemas de seguridad luego de un ataque en Pahalgam, supuestamente perpetrado por grupos pertenecientes a Pakistán (siempre de acuerdo a la versión de India).

- En cuanto a la evolución a futuro, se presenta como un sistema de manejo controlado de hostilidades. Ninguno de los dos países saldría beneficiado de una guerra en gran escala, y ambos tienen las restricciones de la posesión de armas nucleares por parte de su adversario, además de los costos económicos y la presión internacional. En el frente interno, ninguno está en posición de hacer grandes concesiones (particularmente en Cachemira), las cuales no serían aceptadas por sus respectivas poblaciones. El pronóstico es entonces una sucesión de congelamiento de acciones diplomáticas, tensiones militares, probables escaramuzas, acciones para influir en la opinión pública y ocasionales escaladas.