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**EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

# Why There Is No Track-2 with Pakistan

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

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# Why There Is No Track-2 with Pakistan

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## THE LIFT LINE

India's position is settled and consistent: terrorism and talks cannot go together. Until Pakistan verifiably ends cross-border terrorism, there is no space for composite dialogue and little domestic legitimacy for Track-2 back-channels. Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the entire *erstwhile* (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/erstwhile/>) princely state of Jammu and Kashmir are integral parts of India.

## WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

India-Pakistan relations are a perennial Mains theme testing your grasp of bilateralism, terrorism as a foreign-policy instrument, and the domestic constraints on diplomacy.

**GS Paper 2:** India and its neighbourhood relations; *bilateral* (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/bilateral/>) agreements involving India; effect of policies of neighbouring countries on India's interests; security challenges and their management in border areas.

**Prelims angle:** Shimla Agreement (1972), Lahore Declaration (1999), Article 370, composite dialogue, Line of Control, Track-1 versus Track-2 diplomacy.

**Mains angle:** Whether back-channel diplomacy retains value, the legacy framework of India-Pakistan agreements, and India's post-2019 stance.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Track-2 diplomacy refers to unofficial, informal engagement between non-governmental actors, retired officials, academics and experts, meant to build understanding when official (Track-1) channels are frozen. India-Pakistan relations have a long documented framework. The Shimla Agreement of 1972 committed both

sides to settle differences bilaterally and peacefully, and converted the **ceasefire** (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/ceasefire/>) line into the Line of Control. The Lahore Declaration of 1999 sought confidence-building and a peaceful resolution of all issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, bilaterally.

That framework has repeatedly been undercut by cross-border terrorism. The composite dialogue process has been frozen after successive terror attacks, because dialogue conducted in the shadow of continued terrorism rewards the very behaviour it seeks to end. India's post-2019 position is clear: the abrogation of Article 370 is an internal matter, and any talks must be strictly bilateral and free of the atmosphere of terror.

## THE CORE ARGUMENT / ISSUE

### Why terror and talks cannot coexist

The central Indian argument is one of principle and of incentives. To negotiate while terrorism continues is to signal that violence extracts concessions. This normalises the use of terrorism as a bargaining instrument and undermines the credibility of any agreement that follows.

### The bilateral principle

India insists that all outstanding issues be resolved bilaterally, consistent with the Shimla Agreement, and rejects third-party mediation. Internationalising the dispute or inviting external arbiters would violate this framework.

FRAMEWORK / STANCE	YEAR	CORE COMMITMENT
Shimla Agreement	1972	Bilateral, peaceful resolution; Line of Control
Lahore Declaration	1999	Confidence-building; bilateral settlement
Post-370 position	2019 onward	Article 370 an internal matter; talks bilateral and terror-free

### The lost legitimacy of Track-2

Back-channel and Track-2 diplomacy once served as a pressure valve. But repeated terror attacks emanating from across the border have drained it of domestic legitimacy. Public and institutional opinion in India now views unofficial engagement, absent a verifiable end to terrorism, as premature and counterproductive.

## HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (ANALYTICAL FRAME)

Analyse this through the frame of preconditions versus process. Some schools argue that dialogue should be unconditional and continuous, insulating peace-building from spoilers. India's position inverts this: a verifiable end to cross-border terrorism is a **precondition** (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/precondition/>), not an outcome

to be negotiated. The frame to apply is credible commitment: talks are meaningful only when both sides can credibly commit, and a state that sponsors or tolerates terrorism against its interlocutor cannot credibly commit to peace.

## THE DIAGRAM IN WORDS

Picture a bridge between two banks. The Indian bank is willing to build, but insists the far bank first remove the explosives (terror infrastructure) planted at the crossing. Every time construction begins, an attack detonates and the bridge is pulled back. Track-2 is the scaffolding used to design the bridge; but scaffolding erected over live explosives cannot hold, so it has been withdrawn until the far bank clears the charges.

## WAY FORWARD

- Maintain the consistent, principled position that terrorism and talks cannot proceed together.
- Keep engagement strictly bilateral, in line with the Shimla Agreement, and reject third-party mediation.
- Reserve any resumption of dialogue for a demonstrable, verifiable end to cross-border terrorism.
- Continue firm counter-terrorism and border management while keeping diplomatic channels dormant rather than permanently closed, so genuine change can be met.

## PYQ LINKAGE AND PRACTICE

Relevant PYQ threads: 2015 GS2 on Shimla Agreement and its relevance; 2017 GS2 on cooperation and conflict with neighbours; questions on cross-border terrorism as a security challenge.

**Practice question (15 marks, 250 words):** “Talks and terror cannot go together.” Examine this principle as the cornerstone of India’s contemporary Pakistan policy, with reference to the Shimla Agreement and the post-2019 position.

*Sources: The Indian Express (<https://indianexpress.com/>)*

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