Throughout the journey that I undertook in the form of this work of research, I was supported, encouraged and intellectually stimulated by many. I owe the successful completion of this work to those special few around me who steadfastly kept me going. They deserve much more than a mere ‘acknowledgement’ for their contribution to my work. However, this is the least I could do to convey my gratitude to those who believed in my work and led me to a destination that I had vied for.

To begin with, I express gratitude to my parents Dr. Preeti Niranjan and Dr. Niranjan Shendurnikar for bearing my tantrums throughout and letting me be ‘me’. During my PhD years, I have totally lived their dream. Mom and Dad – not only was this work impossible without both of you, it would have been meaningless without you being by my side. Also to that one person who put in immense love and thought to this work and whose relentless sacrifice made it possible for me to work long hours – my friend cum husband – Tushar Tere, I hereby declare you as the “Best PhD Husband”, and shall always remain indebted to your support throughout. This was a dream that we saw together and today as I am set to achieve it, I feel elated in acknowledging your role in it. To my mother-in-law, Mrs. Suchita Tere who stood like a rock behind me – a big Thank You!

The seed for this work was sown by Prof. Amit Dholakia, my research guide and I can never thank him enough for placing his belief in my abilities and providing me the opportunity to work under him. Sir, it is my dream to emulate you and become an academician as you are. Constant interactions with my mentor Prof. Dilip Mohite have shaped my analytical and research related abilities, for which I feel extremely fortunate. The Department of Political Science has played a crucial role in facilitating the entire process of this research for which I am immensely grateful to all teaching faculties, especially Prof. P.M.Patel, Head of the Department. I also acknowledge the contribution of The Faculty of Journalism and Communication and its Dean Dr. Niti Chopra in providing the interdisciplinary touch to this work.

A special person who has been a constant source of inspiration, a rock solid support during ‘thick and thin’ – the one who motivated me when I was low and with whom I have had innumerable cherished academic interactions – Ms. Deepti Acharya, Asst. Prof at Political Science deserves a special mention.

I cannot forget the time spent and insights gained during the Ph.D. course-work at the University as well as the Department. My friends from the course-work Bhakti Gala, Suruchika Chawla, Jahnvi Andharia, Meera Subramaniam, Manisha Pathak and Asit Purohit made the experience all the more substantial. My Ph.D colleague at the Department – Ms. Palak Vyas enriched my subject knowledge as she nudged me to brainstorm on several aspects related to research and methodology. This work would have been incomplete without her guidance and support.
I met and interacted with scores of people while carrying out this work, some of whom provided me with academic and logistic assistance. Among those, I am deeply thankful to Rehman Ilyas (Founder, Romancing the Border), Beena Sarwar (noted Pakistani journalist), Sehyr Mirza and others from the Aman ki Asha forum, Anil Mishra (researcher at The Mahatma Gandhi University), Mr. Zaffar Abbas (Editor – Dawn, Pakistan), Mr. Prathap Das and others at Proquest and Team Aaghaz-e-Dosti (Devika Mittal & Ravi Nitesh) to whom I offer my salutes for the amazing work that they carry out for India-Pakistan peace. I also acknowledge their Pakistani counterpart - The Catalyst for permitting me to use relevant data for this research. I am equally grateful to Chintan Girish Modi, founder of Friendships Across Borders: Aao Dosti Karein for allowing me access to content on the FAB forum as also for his relevant insights on the study topic.

I visited several libraries in Delhi to source relevant material, and thereby acknowledge the cooperation of these institutions in facilitating my endeavours in Delhi. The American Library (Mumbai), The Institute of Regional Studies (Islamabad), The Library of Congress (Washington DC), Gujarat Vidyapeeth (Ahmedabad) and our very own Hansa Mehta Library served as treasure troves of knowledge for this work. Mr. Ashok Butani (Founder & CEO, Bibliophile South Asia) and Tejas Patel (Amnesty International, India) were instrumental in guiding me for tasks related to procurement of relevant literature for the study. For my very fruitful stay in Chandigarh, Prof. Sanjay Chaturvedi (Panjab University) & Mr. Raj Kumar (Archival section of The Indian Express) should be given the credit. For critical and timely inputs towards this work, Dr. Orijit Bhattacharya, Asst. Prof. at the Dept. of Political Science, University of Burdwan (Kolkata) deserves much applause. At the same time, it is necessary to acknowledge and appreciate the role of The News International (Pakistan) and The Aman ki Asha forum for their unrelenting commitment to peace. I consider myself as fortunate to have developed an association with both.

This thesis is a product of four years of consistent and committed research at the end of which I have with me, not just some conclusions to boast about but friends for lifetime. A life changing vision is what this research leaves me with. At this point in time, it is difficult to describe and explain what I encountered within the realm of terms like ‘methods’, ‘hypothesis’, ‘conclusions’. To confine friendships within the boundary of a 250 page thesis is certainly a task that I feel less prepared for. To my Pakistani friends, especially those from the Building Peace Project group – Sehr, Salma, Uzair and Sheharyar, thank you for introducing me to an altogether new world and I thank Kirthi Jayakumar (Red Elephant Foundation, Chennai) for making this possible. Your friendship makes this work all the more memorable. We shall continue to build on and work for friendship, cooperation and harmony between India and Pakistan.

And finally to those experts who provided their inputs on the study topic, to the University Grants Commission (UGC) for funding this research, to students at The Department of Political Science (Nishi, Imtiyaz, Riddhi, Aparna, Himmat, Shikha, Pritika, Helly, Shivani and Nehali) whose brightened faces made my life easier; to Jay Pachchigar, Kiran Bhatia and Nalanda Tambe for valuable and irreplaceable research assistance – I remain forever obliged.
To Rohini, Radhika, Neha & Nibha – thanks for being loving sisters; to Ruchita, Arpan, Neelam, Anubhuti, Falguni, Vijay, Shefali, Nitu and Kalpana – there can never be friends like you!

- Nidhi Shendurnikar

Senior Research Fellow (UGC),
Department of Political Science