

Role of the 9/11 and the US-led War on Terrorism in the Normalization of Relations Between India and Pakistan

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India and Pakistan are two important countries of South Asia. Barely, fifty-eight years ago, they together formed the British Indian Empire. In August 1947, both India and Pakistan gained independence as a result of the partition of the subcontinent. They share a 1610 km border, which covers the entire western side of India. The record shows that Indo-Pakistan relations in the past fifty-eight years have been, with very few exceptions, almost persistently characterized by suspicion, acrimony, crisis and wars.

The partition assets of British India, which were inherited by Pakistan as its share, were largely denied to it by India creating a severe handicap for Pakistan at the very outset. Soon after independence, there were serious attempts by India, disregarding existing agreements to block the supply of water in the canals flowing into Pakistan from India, which were so vital for Pakistan's agriculture and could have resulted in famine on a large scale. All of this was obviously done to create the maximum confusion and hardship in the expectation that Pakistan at its very birth would collapse under such burdens.

Pakistan's foreign policy in the past fifty-eight years seems to have been dominated by its security concerns against India. The principal objective of Pakistan's strategic policy has been at least to prevent India from overrunning or subjugating Pakistan and, at the most, to pose as an equal of India. In Pakistan's threat

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perception India has constantly figured as the number one danger to its security and existence. This mindset has been influenced both by ideology and geopolitics, hardened by public postures, all of which have converged to reduce the room for manoeuvrability. It can be said that Pakistan's foreign policy through most of its history has been India-obsessed.¹

Both Pakistan and India present a picture of uncertainty anxiety and prevailing fear about the future. Indigenous problem of rejection of pluralism and diversity still pressurize Pakistan and India. The ethnic and political leaders continue to exploit minorities in the shape of MMA in Pakistan and RSS in India. The founding fathers of India desired to make India a secular state but Hindus' fear of a non-Hindu conspiracy (not only of Muslims' but including also Christians and some Sikhs) has challenged its secular status. Not in constitutional terms, but in actual behaviour the BJP has been exploiting the ethno-religious influence it commands in politics for coming into power. The given constitution has failed to demonstrate the secular domestic character of the state in the face of recent Babri Mosque and Gujarat incidents. Similarly, Pakistan has invested considerable time, energy and prestige in constructing an Islamic state identity but the questions remain unanswered that what is true Islam and who is a true Muslim. Despite constitutional amendments and passing the Shari'a Bill, there is no Islamic government established to fulfil its dreams of becoming an ideal Islamic state. The forces of fear, hate and aggression have been conformed at least five times in just over 58 years; Bloody division in 1947, wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971, the nuclear blasts of 1998 and Kargil episode of 1999. The fundamental problem of security has led both the states to spend more on arms race, which instead of enhancing the security, accentuated the insecurity. The leadership in both countries seems to believe that they can defy the major powers of the world, since both possess nuclear weapons capability. They also believe that with such weapons no major war can take place between them forgetting that even a small scale showdown along the LoC in Kashmir could lead to a major confrontation. which

1 Muhamamd Amin Shahid, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: A Reappraisal* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.165.

could cause the outbreak of a nuclear war in the region, perhaps accidentally. Hence both making the South Asia a nuclear flashpoint.²

Since 1947, India and Pakistan have proved incapable of resolving their differences and living in peaceful co-existence. From Pakistan's perspective India accepted Partition only as a temporary measure. As such, Pakistan has always been apprehensive of being reduced to a client state of India, like the other small countries of the region. India, too, always mistrusted Pakistan and took it for an economic, diplomatic and military burden on it, all because of the Kashmir conflict.

From the geo-strategic point of view Pakistan is situated on the principal land route of India to the northwest that has endangered her unity and integrity from time immemorial. Thus India takes Pakistan as a threat to its security. Pakistan is considered a threat to India's access to the oil reserve routes of the Middle East as well as other Indian interests in the Muslim World. Besides, Pakistan's alliances with the United States, China and major Muslim states, and its Islamic Identity are perceived as a threat by India to its unity and secularism. Pakistan also has the potential of posing an indirect threat to India in the case of an open war with China to open a dual front for India to defend.

The net result of these rigid and emotionally charged attitudes adopted by both India and Pakistan in the past fifty-eight years has been that their bilateral relations have always been under a serious strain, primarily because of the deadlock on the Kashmir issue. The real disease is the traditional antagonism between the Hindus and Muslims of which Kashmir dispute has taken up the shape of a symptom. In every event national egos and considerations of 'loss of face' on both sides have prevented any flexibility. Thus, the two countries keep repeating their respective arguments that invariably fall on deaf ears of the other side. On account of this atmosphere of mutual hostility, both of them have had to pay a very dear price. Large portions of their scanty resources have been diverted to unproductive pursuits of their military buildups at the expense of

2 Ishtiaq Ahmed, "The 1947 Partition of India: A Paradigm for Pathological Politics in India and Pakistan," *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol.3, No.1, March 2002, pp.9-28.

economic development and alleviation of the poverty of their masses. Another painful consequence of the adversarial relationship between India and Pakistan has been the difficulties faced by millions of their citizens belonging to divided families in meeting their kith and kin on the opposite sides of their borders. Even in less acrimonious times, travel between India and Pakistan has generally been difficult, but the situation becomes worse in times of political tensions.

The Indo-Pak conflict seems to be the main obstacle to the prosperity of the people of South Asia. The widening gap between India and Pakistan has been marked with considerable political, economic and social disparities between the two countries. In these circumstances since independence bilateral economic cooperation between India and Pakistan has been very limited. Neither of the two countries imports any of the principal export products manufactured by the other. Moreover, India's credibility has constantly been undermined by its incapacity to put an end to the territorial disputes with Pakistan. It is in this uncertain context, in which neither a worsening of the conflict nor a genuine improvement in the relationship between the two countries has ever been taken for granted.

The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979 was a serious threat to Pakistan. With the 'Red Army' at its doorstep, Pakistan found itself trapped between the Soviet Union and India but the end of cold war could not even make a small crack in the wall of mutual distrust erected by the two countries. Their bilateral relations, as well as regional security complex remained largely unchanged. Several developments that occurred at the end of the eighties, the early nineties and beginning of the twenty-first century have, however, served to modify Indo-Pak perception of their geo-strategic environment.

After September 11, 2001 Pakistan's prominence within the international community increased significantly. Pakistan pledged its alliance with the United States in the war against terrorism. Pakistan has had long-standing close relations with China, extensive security and economic interests in the Persian Gulf and wide-ranging bilateral relations with the United States and the

western countries but constantly difficult and volatile relations with India.

Post September 11 Trends in Indo-Pak Relations

In the aftermath of the September 11, the Indian government adopted an aggressive posture towards Pakistan with the aim of isolating it by using the international campaign against terrorism. The Indian efforts undoubtedly increased pressure on Pakistan. However, Indian efforts to get Pakistan declared a terrorist state did not succeed. Consequently, after 9/11 the relations between India and Pakistan touched their lowest ebb. India was in no mood to de-escalate tension with Pakistan. It wanted the international community to categorically declare Pakistan a terrorist state. As regards the Kashmir dispute, India liked to settle the dispute on its own terms, that is, to get the LoC declared an international border between the two countries. Thus, there was a deadlock between India and Pakistan that continued for the next two years. There was greater need for the international community to play a more constructive role to help defuse the tense stand-offs.

The post-September 11 Indian foreign policy trends showed that the BJP government adopted an aggressive attitude for attaining its two long-term foreign policy goals (a) to attain a hegemonic position in South Asia; (b) to acquire the recognized status of an international actor. India initially took the post 9/11 period as laden with opportunities to isolate Pakistan internationally and more importantly in relation to the Kashmir dispute but miserably failed.

In this context three apparent trends in Indian foreign policy towards Pakistan were worth noting. First, Indian officials issued provocative statements accusing Pakistan of being a terrorists-harboursing state and involved in terrorist activism. The Indian government also tried to convince the United States and other Western countries not to give much importance to Pakistan's role in the war against terrorism. Realizing that after the 9/11 events Pakistan had once again become a frontline state for the U.S. and western countries, the then Indian Home Minister, Advani, in a statement on September 16, 2001 said, "the world cannot disregard the fact that over a decade, Pakistan has been promoting terrorism.

They have been giving refuge and asylum to all those indulging in terrorism.”³ He urged the U.S. not to overlook these facts while formulating any long-term strategy for curbing world-wide terrorism. On October 12, 2001, the Indian Ambassador to the U.S., Lalit Mansingh, referring to U.S.-Pakistan relations said in a statement “India understands that in the present context the U.S. has to use the facilities provided for the war against the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. But if the U.S. goes behind economic aid and supply of arms to Pakistan, India will be concerned.”⁴

As regards the second trend, in the post-September 11, 2001 scenario, there was a significant increase in incidents of violence by unidentified and suspected militant in the Indian-held Kashmir and also in other parts of India. In this context in keeping with its past practice, the Indian government boosted its propaganda campaign blaming Pakistan for cross-border terrorism in the Indian-held Kashmir, as well as for sponsoring violence in other parts of India. On October 1, 2001 a suicide squad attacked the Legislative Assembly building in Srinagar leaving 29 people dead and 60 injured. The Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee immediately wrote a letter to the U.S. President in which he accused Pakistan for the act and stressed that Pakistan must understand that there was a limit to the patience of the people of India.⁵ Later, during his visit to the U.S. in November 2001 there was an attack on the Indian Parliament by unknown elements. India accused Pakistan’s Inter Services Intelligence for masterminding it. On December 19, the Indian Prime Minister declared that India was keeping all its options open on the fight against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism.⁶ Not long afterward, on 31 December 2001 India issued a list of 20 ‘fugitives’ and, as an ultimatum to Pakistan, demanded that they be handed over to India. A bomb attack on the American Centre in Kolkata on January 22, 2002 was also attributed to Pakistan’s ISI. But an independent inquiry held later on ruled out the allegation of any such terrorist attack.⁷

3 *The Hindu*, September 17, 2001.

4 *Times of India*, October 13, 2001.

5 *Asian Age*, October 4, 2001.

6 *Times of India*, December 20, 2001.

7 *Ibid.*, January 29, 2002.

These events were followed by the developments in the Indian state of Gujarat that started from Godhra on February 27, 2002, in which 57 Hindu activists of the VHP were supposedly burnt alive when their bogie caught fire. This led to the worst kind of communal violence in Gujarat perpetrated by Hindu militants of various Hindu religious organizations. The Indian government regarded the Godhra incident also as a Pakistan-sponsored terrorist act.⁸ However, the human rights organization and the Indian Human Rights Commissions in their reports pointed the accusing finger at the state government for fanning the communal violence.⁹

In the same context, in relation to the third trend, the Indian government concentrated bulk of its armed forces along the line of control, as well as on the international border in order to pressurize Pakistan. After the September 11 attacks, the Indian army was put on a red alert along the line of control in the Indian-held Kashmir and on the Punjab international border to thwart any attempt by militants to infiltrate into India as the standardized policy pattern of India. The heavy Indian deployments showed that India definitely had contingency plans of some aggressive action against Pakistan.

Kashmir and Indo-Pak Relations

In the political arena, Kashmir has always occupied the centre stage in the Indo-Pakistan relations. This has remained the crux of the difficulties between the two countries. It seems that both sides viewed it not merely as a territorial dispute or the issue of the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people but there had also been deep underlying ideological antagonisms and centuries-old prejudices and misgivings marring relations between the two countries. Pakistan describes the Kashmir dispute as an “unfinished item on the agenda of the partition” of the subcontinent in 1947, meaning thereby that the contiguous Muslim-majority area of Indian-held Kashmir must be included to constitute a complete Pakistan. It has been the main dispute

8 The Gujarat Chief Minister’s Statement reported by *Hindustan Times*, March 5, 2002.

9 “National Human Rights Commission of India Report,” published by *The Times of India*, March 1, 2002.

throughout between India and Pakistan and the biggest stumbling block in the improvement of relations between the two neighbours. Pakistan has consistently maintained that Kashmir is the core problem between the two countries and without its resolution on the basis of the U.N. Resolutions there could be no durable peace in the subcontinent. India and Pakistan have remained largely inflexible in their positions. Bilateral talks at various levels have been held repeatedly but to no avail. Mediatory efforts by friendly countries have fared no better. In fact, since the 1970s, India has even refused to let any third country use its good offices in the matter. Pakistan's repeated offers to refer the dispute to international mediation or adjudication have also been rejected by India. Thus, the Kashmir dispute has remained unresolved and has been the single most important cause for the deadlock and adversarial relations that have continued between India and Pakistan ever since their independence. In fact, two major wars have been fought over the Kashmir dispute and the energies of the two countries have been greatly consumed over the unending tension generated by this issue.

Defining Terrorism and the Role of the BJP Government

The situation in Kashmir evolved significantly from 1988, when on July 31st the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) launched an armed campaign against Indian occupation of their homeland. Apart from the Kashmiris, both India and Pakistan insist on the fact that control of Kashmir is essential for the defence of their respective countries. So Kashmir has ever remained the core hanging issue between India and Pakistan. Its diplomatic and strategic importance has been fluctuating considerably over the time. Mainly, it has been the cause of the 1948, 1965 and 1999 Kargil wars between India and Pakistan.

The most important and critical task for Pakistan in the post 9/11 period has been to preserve the legitimacy of the Kashmiri's freedom struggle, and not to allow it to fall prey to the new definition of terrorism. In the pre-9/11 period, the use of political violence has been an accepted practice under the U.N. conventions for the people struggling under alien occupation, against racism and for the procurement of the right of self-determination.

Terrorism

Though terrorism has plagued humanity for centuries contemporary terrorism is a unique phenomenon that has emerged as the principal issue in the present international relations. There is need to distinguish between terrorism and struggle for national liberation.

Terrorism is a global phenomenon which is easy to recognize and difficult to define. Defining terrorism is not merely a theoretical issue but an operative concern of the first order. Terrorism is no more a local problem of specific countries but an issue involving a number of international aspects. There are innumerable definitions of terrorism but every definition leaves out some important aspects of terrorism. World over scholars describe it according to their own socio-economic and political conditions. Those viewing it from the perspective of social and economic problems conceptualise terrorism as a conflict between the haves and have-nots. Those who watch the use of terrorist tactics as means to gain political ends consider it a political phenomenon.

Apparently the word terrorism is interpreted differently in accordance with different points of view. But there is yet no comprehensive international convention on terrorism itself. Despite ongoing efforts in the United Nations on the subject and the continuous condemnation of the acts of international terrorism no agreeable definition has been reached upon so far. Until a working definition is agreed upon internationally the state-sponsored terrorism and terrorist vis-à-vis freedom fighter problem will not be resolved. Meanwhile, the U.S. State Department defines terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.”¹⁰

Prof. Martha defines terrorism as a “method or strategy, no matter who uses it for what reason. It should not be identified with any particular political cause. It usually occurs in civil conflicts and we associate its use with the weaker side, thus with groups who want to challenge powerful governments. But governments may also use terrorism against their opponents or against their own

10 Title 22 of the United State’s Code, Section 2656f (d).

citizens.”¹¹ Accordingly, to another definition, “terrorism is any act including the use of force or violence and threat thereof by any person or group of persons whether acting alone on behalf of or in connection with any organization or government committed for political, religious, ideological or similar purposes, with the intention to influence any government or to put the, public or any section of public in fear.”¹²

- State terrorism refers to the situation in which the state employs lethal force against the civilian population so as to break their will to resist.
- State oppression, where social and economic privileges are denied to whole classes, regardless of their support for a regime.
- State repression, where violence is used to create fear and compliance amongst a particular group and segment of population.¹³

President Pervez Musharraf while addressing a summit in New York argued, “The most deadly form of terrorism is state terrorism, which targets people seeking freedom from foreign occupation.” Holding up Indian policies in disputed Kashmir as an example, he added, “Equating their [Kashmiris’] freedom struggle with terrorism is a travesty.”¹⁴

War on Terrorism and the South Asia

Since the September 11 terrorist attacks the focus of the international community has shifted to the South Asian region and Afghanistan. The scale and complexity of the September 11 attacks and the location of the forces that engineered this outrageous act made it necessary for the U.S. to engage South Asia in its campaign against international terrorism being perpetrated in the name of nationalism, ethnicity and religion.

11 www.pbs.org/newshour/forum/august97/terrorism_8-15.html.

12 www.ecis.org/finance/paisdefin.html.

13 Maj.Gen.S.Mohindera, *Terrorist Games Nations Play* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1993), p.22.

14 *Daily Times*, Lahore, September 23, 2003.

The existence of nuclear weapons has seemingly diminished the probabilities of large-scale conventional wars. Consequently, terrorism has apparently now become the most prevalent manifestation of inter-state, inter-cultural and non-state actor role-play confrontations. For its sponsors and perpetrators it may prove a low cost option with a high cost benefit game play. This strategy mostly exploits domestic as well as global discontent and conflicts among the states and the societies. Therefore, terrorism may not be related with any specific religion or nationality. Terrorism is a specific weapon in the struggle for the political power, employed either by extremist political groups or by national minorities and deprived sections of societies in the world.

These realities call for focusing on this issue from two different angles understanding and combating terrorism, in both Pakistan and India by looking into its underlying causes and effects on the regional future. Therefore, the central point of the present study is: are the U.S.-led War on Terrorism and the aftermath of 9/11 incentives enough for a change in policy and normalization of relations between India and Pakistan?

The answer to this question involves the analysing of the correlation between the past and the present developments between the two countries.

1990s and the Indo-Pak Relations

During the 1990s the two countries were entangled in their most violent military clashes since 1948, 1965 and 1971. In 1984, Indian incursion into Siachen glacier and rumours of Indian preparation for attack on Pakistan's nuclear installations at Kahuta, and Indian army operation 'Meghdoot' kept the tensions high between the two countries. The 1986-87 Operation Brasstacks at Pakistan border near Sindh developed into a serious danger of war. On Pakistan's counter-preparations from the Kashmir side the Indian army cancelled the exercise.

India and Pakistan have been engaged in a low-intensity conflict in Kashmir since 1989. Apart from Kashmir, the arms race crisis and other issues also affected the Indo-Pak relations during the nineties. As a result of the Afghan war, the Pakistan military was modernized and India apprehended Pakistan's capacity to

damage her security equation in the region. So, adverse relations between India and Pakistan marked the period. The Indian military buildup, its development of medium-range and long-range missiles and the military potential of its unsafeguarded nuclear programme posed a serious threat to Pakistan's security. The heavy deployment of its forces along Indo-Pak border also served to heighten the tension between the two countries.¹⁵

By 1994 the Indo-Pak relations once again dropped to disturbingly low levels; the bilateral talks that were then in their seventh round were suspended in January, each side expelled diplomats, and the Bombay and Karachi Consulates were shut down in August 1994.

In a post-cold war world the question of power and political profile decreased in importance as compared to the economic achievements. On the other hand, there were reasons enough to doubt the prospects of genuine negotiations. Further, the great powers, by pursuing policies that were designed to safeguard their own global interests, made the solution of the Kashmir dispute more difficult.¹⁶ They appeared to be more interested in keeping the lid on trouble spots than in resolving disputes that might erupt suddenly into war. Both the U.N. and the United States have made bids for optimism in the subcontinent for peace between India and Pakistan. However, as far as the Kashmir dispute is concerned they seem to be of the view that it should be tackled bilaterally by India and Pakistan.

The Kashmir dispute is mainly responsible for the arms race between India and Pakistan. Once the main motive for armament disappears, the two countries would find in economic construction a new device for security, peace and progress.¹⁷

Kashmir was not the only bone of contention being fought over the 1990s. The two sides also engaged in appallingly high altitude conflict over the Siachen Glacier. The glacier runs along north extension of the Line of Control, the delimitation of which

15 Muhammad Amin Shahid, *op.cit.*, p.213.

16 Muhammad Ahsen Choudhry, *Pakistan and the Great Powers* (Karachi: Council for Pakistan Studies, 1970), p.133.

17 *Ibid.*

ends south of the glacier, but is only indirectly related to the fundamental Kashmir problem. Pakistan and India see Kashmir not simply as a piece of moderately strategic real estate, but as the touchstone of their national identities as respectively, Islamic and secular states.

Pakistan expressed its concern over the development of Agni, an intermediate ballistic missile, by India warning that “if its negative implications” in the region were ignored, it would compel Islamabad to undertake similar defensive steps. The then Secretary Foreign Affairs, Shaharyar Muhammad Khan, said at a news briefing that the development of the Agni missile having a range of 2,500 km was not conducive to improving the climate of peace and security in the region.¹⁸

The sharp deterioration in the situation between India and Pakistan became grave due to the ghastly military operation of the Indian forces to drive the Kashmiri people to polling booths against their wishes and aspirations during the fraudulent electoral exercise as a follow-up to the Indian general elections of 1996.¹⁹ According to a report by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) released in Geneva on 2 March 1995, “India is violating human rights in Jammu & Kashmir, Indian Security forces are found to have committed serious abuses of human rights in Kashmir.” In a significant development, the former Pakistan Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, soon after his election proposed the revival of the negotiating process between the two countries.

He sent to Gujral a warm message of congratulations on his new role, and adopted a very conciliatory line towards India. Nawaz Sharif and Gujral met for the first time in Malé, at the time of the annual summit of SAARC in May 1997 and discussed bilateral issues to resolve tension between the two countries. Then, a four-day meeting of Foreign Secretaries was held in Islamabad on 23 June 1997, as a consequence of which a further meeting of the Foreign Secretaries was scheduled for September in New Delhi.²⁰ Nawaz Sharif and Gujral met again, at the U.N. General

18 Rafique Akhtar, *Pakistan Year Book, 1992-1993* (Karachi: East and West Publishing Company, 1993), p.303.

19 *Herald*, Karachi, May 1997, p.240.

20 *India Today International*, New Delhi, August 10, 1998.

Assembly session in September where the former floated suggestion for a No-War Pact between the two countries.

Since the pact was made contingent on the settlement of the Kashmir issue, the matter reported did not even come up in the conversation between the two leaders on the following day, i.e., September 22. They did agree to seek ways to reduce tension along the Line of Control and to extend the “hot line network to include generals at sector level, as well as the respective Director-General of military operations.”²¹

BJP and the Nuclear Power Politics

In March 1998, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as the biggest winner in the national elections and was able to make a shaky government with Atal Behari Vajpyee as Prime Minister. He promised that his government would go the “extra mile” whenever there was the slightest possibility of improving relations with Islamabad.²²

The Indian Defence Minister, George Fernandes advanced the ostensible bogey of the fear of China for justifying the nuclear tests of May 1998, even though Sino-Indian relations had been on the mend for several years. As far as the Indian public especially the majority Hindu population was concerned, they were jubilant. The nuclear explosions were seen as a slap in the face of Pakistan which had earlier boasted about its missiles reaching every major city of India. There was a lot of euphoria and bragging in India following the nuclear explosions. In this environment, the powerful Indian Home Minister Advani started to flex his muscles and used threatening language against Pakistan. He accused Pakistan of conducting a proxy war in the Indian Kashmir. Advani even threatened that India could seize by force the Pakistan held portion of Kashmir.²³

After a considerable debate, the final decision of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was in favour of carrying out nuclear explosions. The armed forces that are always a decisive factor in

21 *Dawn*, Lahore, September 23, 1997.

22 *Herald*, Karachi, March 1999, p. 24.

23 *Times of India*, July 12, 1998.

Pakistan's power structure, evidently also applied strong pressure on the government to go ahead with the proposition.

A senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader maintained, "nuclear weapons remain a key indicator of state power. Since this currency is operational in large parts of the globe, India and Pakistan were left with no choice but to update and validate the capability that had been demonstrated in Pokhran and Chaghi in 1998."²⁴

Following this, the two Prime Ministers met in New York at the UN General Assembly session in October 1998. They agreed on the peaceful settlement of all outstanding disputes, including Jammu and Kashmir, as essential for the restoration of peace between the two countries. This was the first time in Indian history that Indian Prime Minister accepted the fact that the settlement of the Kashmir problem was directly related to the security of the subcontinent and was a subject of dialogue with Pakistan.

The two governments agreed that direct bus service should be restored between New Delhi and Lahore, as a CBM and a token goodwill gesture. The event achieved major symbolic importance when Nawaz Sharif invited Vajpayee to be a passenger on the February 21, 1999 inaugural run and the Indian Prime Minister accepted. Vajpayee came as the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Pakistan after Rajiv Gandhi a decade earlier. Since Jawaharlal Nehru in 1951, Vajpayee visited Lahore, the heart of Pakistan, despite heavy security precautions and some indications that Pakistan Army was less than pleased with the visit. The event was an unexpectedly stunning success. The sight of an Indian Prime Minister standing before the Minar-i-Pakistan was of immense symbolic significance; even more so was Vajpayee's statement that India accepted the reality of Pakistan. "Pakistan does not need my *mohar* (seal)." It has its own *mohar*: *iski mohar chalti hai* (its own seal works).²⁵

The visit concluded with the issuance of the "Lahore Declaration", a document that pledged both sides to expedite the negotiating process in the spirit of the Simla Agreement and

24 *Hindustan Times*, September 22, 1998.

25 *Herald*, March 1999.

committed them to periodic meetings at the Foreign Ministers' level.

Within a year of India and Pakistan's May 1998 nuclear tests, with the Lahore process in abeyance, momentum shifted to the military option. The first allegation came in April, 1999 that Pakistani forces had seized territory across the Line of Control, and fighting grew in intensity in May as the Indians sought to dislodge them. A major escalation occurred when the Indian used aircraft to dislodge the 'intruders'.²⁶

The Indian response was not limited to Kashmir. Indian leaders also ordered their armed forces to prepare for the possibility of war all along the Indo-Pakistan border. In late May US satellites detected these preparations. Says another account, "the message was clear: India was not only preparing to strike hard in Kargil but if needed it could open other fronts and was willing to risk, even a full-scale war."²⁷ India subsequently denied any intention to escalate the fighting claiming that its troop deployments along the international frontier were precautionary in nature.²⁸

As India and Pakistan were prepared for war, the diplomatic manoeuvring intensified between New Delhi, Islamabad, and Washington. Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif spoke by phone several times in the early weeks of the crisis, with Vajpayee telling Sharif that India would do whatever was necessary to drive the intruders back across the LoC.²⁹ Sharif was generally conciliatory, but unwilling to accept Pakistan's responsibility for the Kargil insurgents' operations. At this stage, Washington provided the good offices for Nawaz Sharif's capitulation. Sharif flew to Washington to meet with Clintons on July 4. In a joint statement, the two heads of government expressed the view that "current fighting in the Kargil region of Kashmir is dangerous and contains the seeds of a wider conflict." In return for Pakistan's pledge that concrete steps would be taken for the restoration of the Line of

26 *Ibid.*, June 1999, also in *India Today International*, July 26, 1999, pp.13-20.

27 Raj Chengappa, "Face-saving Retreat," *India Today International*, July 19, 1999.

28 *Hindu*, July 27, 1999.

29 *India Today International*, June 7, 1999.

Control in accordance with the Simla Agreement, Clinton promised to take a personal interest in encouraging an expeditious resumption and intensification of Indo-Pakistani détente, “once the sanctity of the Line of Control has been fully restored.”³⁰

With this face-saving agreement, Sharif’s government urged the insurgents to help resolve the crisis, in order to provide an opportunity for the international community to play an active role in solving the Kashmir dispute.³¹ Although scattered fighting continued, Indian Defence Minister, George Fernandes announced on July 17 “the war in Kargil has come to an end. The last of the Pakistan intruders have vacated our territory.”³² The 1999 Kargil war with its 1100-1200 killed in action brought the overall death toll in Kashmir since 1989 to 1999 to approximately 25,000.

During this crisis, Pakistan found itself relatively isolated internationally which, too, was a triumph for Indian diplomacy. International pressure was mainly being exerted on Pakistan rather than on India. This was a key reason that obliged Pakistan to back away. It is not clear exactly when the movement of armed men into the hills of Kargil began nor is it clear just who these men were?

U.S. President Bill Clinton assured Nawaz Sharif at the Washington meeting that he would pressurize Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to solve the Kashmir dispute according to the UN Security Council’s Resolutions. The United States however, failed to fulfil its promise and India again claimed that ‘Kashmir is the integral part of India’.

When Army chief Pervez Musharraf dismissed the popularly elected government of Nawaz Sharif on 12 October 1999, the Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee criticized it. The Indian Government considered that the Pakistan Army chief, Pervez Musharraf, along with the I.S.I. launched the Kargil Operation in order to sabotage the spirit of the Lahore declaration. After the Kargil issue, the India-Pakistan relations were characterized by suspicion, acrimony, crisis and remained under a

30 *The New York Times*, July 10, 1999.

31 *Ibid.*, July 10, 1999.

32 Reuters, July 17, 1999.

serious strain while India even refused to talk over the Kashmir dispute.

As the Kashmir dispute has always remained the crux of the difficulties between the two countries, Pakistan and India both finally agreed to restart negotiations on the bilateral issues under the international pressure. President Musharraf went to India in July 2000 and both the leaders met at Agra. Musharraf made Kashmir the cardinal test and pre-condition for any improvement in bilateral relations and establishment of a durable peace in the subcontinent. India refused to discuss it and the talks ended meaninglessly. President Musharraf's stance that without progress on Kashmir, there could be no normalization of relations with India and that Kashmir was the core problem and that everything else was peripheral was looked upon as uncompromising by the Indians. After the failure of the Agra summit, the Indian government decided to stop bilateral talks with Pakistan and deployed its army, in 2001, at the border to pressurize Pakistan. Musharraf repeatedly appealed to India to restart bilateral talks to reduce tension in South Asia but to no avail. India continued to accuse Pakistan of conducting a proxy war in Kashmir since the Kargil episode and insisted that "Pakistani infiltrators are behind most of her troubles."³³

During the SAARC summit held at Kathmandu in Nepal, President Musharraf after his speech walked to the seat of Vajpayee and shook his hand but the latter's response was totally cool. Not only that but he also showed his displeasure by refusing to meet with President Musharraf in Kathmandu. In order to take India to the negotiating table, President Musharraf repeatedly stressed his desire to establish durable peace with India, which according to him, could only follow from an equitable resolution of the Kashmir dispute. After the 9/11 incidents, however, Pakistan found itself isolated internationally, which was a triumph for Indian diplomacy. International pressure was mainly being exerted on Pakistan 'to stop the terrorist activities' in Kashmir. India sought to outplay Pakistan diplomatically, leaving Pakistan isolated on the question of Kashmir and unable to secure firm and

33 *Hindustan Times*, Delhi, May 24, 2002.

reliable backing of its Kashmir policy from any powerful member of the international community, including its traditional allies like China, Iran and the United States. Pakistan was in no position to challenge militarily India's possession of Jammu and Kashmir. China changed its Kashmir policy and Pakistan could no longer look for support on Kashmir from China after 9/11. Even the Muslim world was less than enthusiastic. Indian Home Minister, L.K. Advani blamed that Agra talks failed because President Pervez Musharraf kept calling terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir as "freedom struggle" and was not ready to accept that there was any kind of Pakistani hand behind it. He said that from Agra to Almaty the world was united against terrorism and after Almaty the world recognized India's concern that there was Pakistan-sponsored terrorism that was going on in Jammu and Kashmir that must end immediately.³⁴

In September-October 2002, India organized four-phased state assembly elections in the occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The elections were held in the backdrop of post-9/11 changed environment, marked by the US global war on terrorism in the region. A military stand-off between India and Pakistan was triggered by terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001. India immediately after the 9/11 attacks in the US had stepped up its campaign to link and brand resistance in Indian-held Kashmir as 'Pakistan-sponsored terrorism'. As part of this systematic campaign, India tried to exploit terrorist attacks in IHK or inside India to its own advantage through a virulent media campaign expressing fears that the elections would be sabotaged by "Pakistan-sponsored terrorist activity." On the other hand, India projected these elections as a referendum or substitute for a plebiscite in Kashmir to cover her brutalities in the valley and to avoid being considered a terrorist state by the U.S.

The elections were also held under global media glare. The international community was very enthusiastic to see a continuity of electoral process in IHK and urged India to hold free and fair elections there. To this end the US Secretary of State Colin Powell suggested to India to allow outsiders to monitor the IHK elections

34 *The Hindu*, Delhi, June 9, 2002.

but India vehemently opposed any such monitoring by international observers and allowed only New Delhi-based foreign diplomats to visit IHK on the polling days. The electoral process by and large was endorsed by the international community and seen as a positive development. Most of the observers, however, looked upon these elections purported by India as a solution to the Kashmir problem.

On September 13, 2002 speaking at the 57th session of the U.N. General Assembly, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee accused Pakistan of “nuclear blackmail” following India’s effort to stamp out cross-border terrorism. He asserted that India was committed to putting an end to it with “all means at its command”. Alluding to Kashmir Vajpayee stated, “If Pakistan claims to be a crucial partner in the international coalition against terrorism, how it can continue to use terrorism as an instrument of the state policy against India. Those who speak of fighting root causes of terrorism offer help to the terrorists and absolve themselves of the responsibility for the heinous actions, such as the September 11 attacks on the US or the December 13, 2001 attacks on our Parliament.”³⁵

India also tried to bring to bear international pressure on Pakistan to ensure “peaceful electoral process” according to its satisfaction along with stepping up a media and diplomatic campaign against Pakistan on an alleged charge of cross-LoC infiltration. Pakistan adopted a principled position on the election process in IHK and decried Indian allegation of sponsoring cross-border infiltration or terrorism. President Musharraf in his Independence Day speech vowed that he would never compromise on the Kashmiri’s right of self-determination and rejected polls in the disputed state as a bid to legitimize India’s “illegal occupation”. He underlined that the right of “self-determination of our Kashmiri brothers is a sacred trust that would never be compromised.” Pakistan’s Minister of the State for Foreign Affairs Inamul Haq also strongly refuted the Indian charges of cross-border terrorism in categorical terms and said “Pakistan is not sponsoring, encouraging and allowing any terrorism anywhere”. In

35 *Ibid.*, September 14, 2002.

short, Pakistan strongly rejected Indian allegations of cross-border terrorism, infiltration and any form of interference in the so-called electoral process in IJK. The majority of the Kashmiri people boycotted the elections and did not go to the polling booths. The Indian forces tried to drive Kashmiri people to the polling booths against their wishes and merely 10-15 per cent participation could be achieved in the voters' turnout, through considerable exertions of the Indian Security forces.

Change in Policies after 9/11

After the end of the Cold War, the India Pakistan nuclear tests and the incidents of 9/11 brought about a drastic change in India's Foreign Policy in that a new phase of triangular relationship of India-Pakistan-United States vis-à-vis the situation in the Indian subcontinent, came into being which resulted in a heightened competition between India and Pakistan for an alliance with America. Setting aside the years of ideological confrontation, India offered unconditional political and logistic support to America in its war against terrorism in order to isolate Pakistan and make friends with the United States. But the US opted for Pakistan's support as India's direct participation in the operations could not have yielded the same results as expected from the US's alliance with Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistan renounced its earlier Afghan policy, but not the core objectives of its policy in the region.

President Musharraf in his speech to the nation on September 19, 2001 made it clear that India wanted to exploit the new situation to its advantage; hence he thought it prudent to provide total support to the United States in its war on terrorism. Soon after the Pakistan's declaration of cooperation the US lifted the sanctions imposed upon these two countries after the 1998 nuclear tests. This paved the way for an improved Pak-American relationship in the days to come that is going from strength to strength.

Fresh Starts and Rapprochements

After the post-9/11 momentous developments in South Asia, the regional and international community's focus turned to the process of rapprochements between Pakistan and India. After a

deadlock of more than ten months and massive military deployments along India-Pakistan borders from December 2001 to October 2002, the tense situation was finally defused by December 2002 after the withdrawal of troop from the indo-Pakistan borders.

The process of rapprochement and the normalization of relations between India and Pakistan began in April 2003, when former Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee during his speech in Srinagar extended the hand of friendship towards Pakistan. Since then, moving cautiously, both India and Pakistan, took numerous well-coordinated steps to improve the relations. These included the appointment of High Commissioners, exchange of prisoners, resumption of New Delhi-Lahore bus service (in July 2003 after a break of one and half years), ceasefire along the Line of Control (declared unilaterally by Pakistan in November 2003), ceasefire along the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) in Siachen (declared by India in November 2003), and resumption of air links and overflights (in January 2004, before the Twelfth SAARC Summit).

However, it was after the successful SAARC Summit held in Islamabad in January 2004, including the informal meetings between the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India and also the meeting between Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf, held on January 6, 2004 that both sides agreed to resume the composite dialogue process. In the joint statement issued at the end of the Musharraf-Vajpayee meeting, both leaders emphasized that constructive dialogue would promote progress towards the common objectives of peace, security and economic development for our peoples and for future generations.³⁶ Besides, Vajpayee's remark that "one can change friends, not neighbours" was indicative enough of the marked change in Indian policy after 9/11.

Indo-Pak Relations under Congress Government

With the change of government in India in May 2004, after the Lok Sabha elections, there were confusions regarding the continuity of the peace process between India and Pakistan. On May 14, 2004 while congratulating the leader of the Congress (I)

36 *Dawn*, January 7, 2004.

Ms. Sonia Gandhi, on winning the elections, the US State Department's spokesman, Mr. Boucher commenting on the future prospects of the Indo-Pakistan peace process, said that Washington would keep encouraging the two countries to settle their differences through dialogue.³⁷ Similarly, while talking to reporters in Beijing, a senior official of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Mr. Liu Jianchao said, "We hope both Pakistan and India would maintain the momentum of improving their relations."³⁸ Speaking at the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs in Karachi, on May 13, 2004 the Ambassador and Head of the European Commission in Pakistan, Mr. Ilka Usitalo, referring to the dialogue process said, "We very much hope that the surprise results announced today after elections, India would not in any way derail these processes."³⁹ Likewise, Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in an interview published on May 28, 2004 expressed the hope that the new government in India would continue with the framework of peace process between India and Pakistan.⁴⁰

It is important to note here that the composite dialogue process, agreed to in February 2004, is based on the Working Groups already identified during the India-Pakistan Foreign Secretaries' level talks held in June 1997, to discuss all outstanding issues in an integrated manner. The Working Groups thus made were: (i) Peace and Security including CBMs and Jammu and Kashmir (ii) Siachen; (iii) Wullar Barrage Project; (iv) Sir Creek; (v) Terrorism and Drug Trafficking; (vi) Economic and Commercial Cooperation; (vii) Promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields.

It was in this context that during the initial days after coming into power of the Congress (I)-led government in India, there were concerns in Pakistan, and at the regional and international levels, regarding the continuity of the composite dialogue process between India and Pakistan. However, in view of Pakistan's support for the continuation of the composite dialogue process and also the international community's concern and focus on it, the

37 <http://us.rediff.com/election/2004/may/14net.html>.

38 <http://dailymailnews.com/200405/24/news/117.html>.

39 *Dawn*, May 14, 2004.

40 *Ibid.*, May 29, 2004.

Congress government expressed its willingness to carry forward the agreed dialogue process. The Indian Foreign Minister, Mr. Natwar Singh during his first news conference in New Delhi, on June 1, 2004 in an attempt to reverse his earlier image said, "The future of Indo-Pak relationship no longer lies in the past. We cannot forget the past but neither can we be the prisoners of the past."⁴¹ He also announced the new dates for the talks on nuclear CBMs and the Foreign Secretarys' level talks. Therefore, after some rescheduling of dates, which was understandable, as the new government needed time, the Congress government adopted the policy of continuing the dialogue with Pakistan.

Meetings held under the Composite Dialogue Process

1. Talks On Nuclear CBMs
2. Talks on Peace and Security Including CBMs and Jammu and Kashmir
3. Talks On Wullar Barrage/Tulbal Navigation Project
4. Talks on Promotion of Friendly Exchanges
5. Talks on Siachen Issue
6. Talks on Sir Creek Boundary Issue
7. Talks on Terrorism and Drug Trafficking
8. Talks on Economic and Commercial Cooperation

The first phase of the composite dialogue process between India and Pakistan ended on August 13, 2004 with the conclusion of the eight meetings schedule during the third phase having taken place. This was a significant achievement given the resumption of the dialogue process after a gap of six years. However, to expect major breakthroughs in the initial rounds was to expect too much. Given the level of mistrust to be overcome and the complex modalities involved, it is likely to be a lengthy process.

Now that the first phase of the composite dialogue process has ended, there has been some progress as regards the people-to-people contacts and the level of diplomatic relations between the two countries, such as decisions to liberalize visa facility on both sides, release of civilian prisoners, restoration of the strength of

41 *The Daily Mail*, June 2, 2004.

High Commissions in each country and establishing of hot line between the Foreign Secretaries of the two countries. It is pertinent to note that while the composite dialogue is in progress, the developments at the people-to-people level between the two countries have also started effectively with cricket diplomacy. For example, for the first time, in July 2004 a group of Pakistani scouts visited Srinagar to participate in the SAARC integration camp held in Gulmarg, near Srinagar, and on August 9, 2004 India and Pakistan exchanged prisoners of war, held by the two countries since the Kargil conflict. Prominent parliamentarians, chief ministers, opposition leaders, intellectuals and cultural dignitaries have also exchanged visits to mark the changed friendly environment.

During the first phase of the composite dialogue, both sides have expressed support for continuing the process. However, as regards the specific issues between India and Pakistan, keeping in view their respective national interests, there is no change in the official positions as yet. Therefore, progress in the case of issues such as Jammu and Kashmir, and Siachen, Wullar Barrage, Sir Creek, are presently not substantive, though the dialogue process would and must continue. However, the important point to note is that both sides have expressed satisfaction over the developments during the first phase and have renewed their resolve to continue the process. Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesman, Masood Khan, on August 12, 2004 said, "it is a matter of satisfaction that in accordance with the agreed schedule between the two countries all the eight agenda items have been covered in the composite dialogue."⁴² On August 14, 2004 in a speech on the eve of India's Independence Day, Indian President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, said, "I note with satisfaction our continuing efforts towards good neighbourly relations, particularly the sustained progress of the peace process between India and Pakistan."⁴³

Conclusion

Pakistan has managed to safeguard its strategic assets by joining the U.S.-led war on terrorism in the post-9/11 environment.

42 Reported in *The News*, August 13, 2004.

43 *The Times of India*, August 15, 2004.

But the ongoing U.S.-led war in Iraq on the Weapons of Mass Destruction and U.S. watch on the “axis of evil” countries may pose a serious threat to the South Asian regional security in the future. Moreover, in response to the post-9/11 developments, India and Pakistan have shown considerable positive gestures to make joint periodic assessment of the developments in the region and around the world to adjust their effective responses and resources accordingly.

There is a dire need now, more than ever before especially after 9/11, of fresh thinking in both India and Pakistan about their bilateral relationship. The case for re-evaluation becomes irresistible when it is realized that a nuclear war and the present arms race, including the development of short and long range missiles, carries the serious risk of bringing almost mutual destruction. The politics of the status quo may lead towards nuclear destruction and economic ruin. On the other hand, peace and compromise, based on a drastic reduction in armaments, would be definitely more advantageous for both. The common man in the two countries would be the greatest beneficiary. Hence, the establishment of a harmonious relationship in the subcontinent has now become an imperative of the national self-interests as well as that of the humanity at large. As for the Kashmir oriented approach, suffice it to say that the policy of mere dialogue may not serve the purpose. Despite the past two wars on Kashmir and the several rounds of parleys held between the two states and conducting of the nuclear tests, the resolution of the Kashmir dispute remained as distant as ever. Firmly adhering to their respective stances, India and Pakistan did not move an inch towards the peaceful settlement of their conflicts.

The big question is as to how should the two countries proceed to improve their bilateral ties? The political elite and intellectuals in both India and Pakistan may do some real soul-searching and honest self-appraisal to see why things have gone wrong for the last fifty-eight years? They may hold a genuine conviction that the policies pursued so far by them have hurt both countries and that the politics of hate, misrepresentation and inflexibility have been barren, wasteful, and destructive. Neither country has gained in the process. More so, after the acquisition of nuclear weapons

capability and missiles technology by both countries, the situation has taken a qualitative turn for the worse. The policies of the status quo will no longer work since they will lead inexorably towards nuclear brinkmanship and unthinkable destruction. Therefore, both sides have to make a conscious effort to move away from the barren old policies and stereotyped logic.

The U.S. failure in fighting terrorism by purely military means is evident in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq and is a lesson for India-Pakistan and the whole world. Military means would not work in South Asia either. India and Pakistan must study the root causes of their regional conflicts and act accordingly. Even the international community cannot curb terrorism through terrorism. Thus India and Pakistan have no option but to resolve their issues through result-oriented composite dialogue.

The aftermath of the 9/11 and the ongoing U.S.-led war on Terrorism has marked dual effects on Indo-Pak relations: (a) To test the nuclear capability as a deterrence as well as holding effective balance of power, (b) To convince both to resolve mutual conflicts through peaceful dialogue instead of relying on military buildups. Therefore, both countries should try more effectively to find bases for permanent peaceful co-existence by resolving their conflicts through sincere, result-oriented, composite dialogue to promote mutual economic cooperation and peaceful co-existence for regional as well as global peace and prosperity, instead of maintaining the status quo as 'nuclear flash point'.