

Notes

Elements of Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pak Relations

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There have been conflicts in South Asia since the birth of India and Pakistan in August 1947. The genesis of these conflicts can be divided into two parts: the incomplete partition (the incomplete delineation of the boundaries between the two nations, including the Kashmir Issue) and the philosophical divide (difference of perceptions, beliefs and practices). Both the countries assert the need for their masses to live separately and are not ready to renounce their multiethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious identity. The first of these conflicts is amenable to a technical solution, while the second can only resolve itself culturally, socially and perhaps economically. Since the latter is unlikely to disappear in a short time, it would be good for both the countries to consider the utility of period of confidence-building measures as a means to lower the intensity of conflict. Although, Indo-Pak wars have been fought without considerable restraint, civilian targets have not been spared, casualties have not been limited and prisoners of wars have not been well treated, Yet the situation between India and Pakistan is not one of unrelenting hostility.¹ Both sides have successfully negotiated a number of agreements intended to limit tensions and avoid unwanted wars. Unlike the high-profile confidence building measures styled by the conference on security and cooperation in Europe, a number of the Indo-Pak CBMs have not been negotiated in intricate detail and have not been publicly released.

Most of the CBMs now in effect were prompted by the 1947-48, 1965, 1971 and 1999 wars punctuated by periods of high tension associated with the military exercises conducted time and again and on the occasion of significant developments in the region. These flare-ups

¹ There are numerous books on these wars but the one that contains a brief and professional account of all the three wars is by General K. M. Arif VCAS (retd.), *Khaki Shadows: Pakistan 1947-1997* (Karachi: Oxford University Press), pp.386-421.

prompted the holding of a series of foreign secretary – level meetings. These to the credit of both sides have produced a number of useful measures. Undoubtedly, several of these and other agreed CBMs were prompted by superpower initiatives or by the encouragement of international or regional organisations. Because documentation on the negotiations and implementation of CBM agreement is scarce, the list that denotes the spheres of CBMs remains fairly incomplete.²

However, various confidence building measures which were pursued at different timings could be listed as follows:

*communication measures, border security measures, transparency measures, notification measures, consultation measures, water-rights measures, declaratory measures, measures regarding the Kashmir problem, Siachen glacier and Sir Creek issue (maritime boundary issue), measures regarding advance notice on military exercises, manoeuvres and troops movements, measures regarding prevention of air-space violations and for permitting over flights and landings by civil and military aircrafts (in case of aerial survey, supply dropping, mercy and rescue missions, air exercises, natural disasters, etc.), measures regarding naval communications, submarine operations, air defense identification zones over the sea, oil spills, hydrography, marine life, marine pollution and prevention of acts likely to cause incidents at sea.*³

Vested interests of the ruling elite in Indo-Pak hostility

Since its very inception as an independent state, Pakistan has suffered from an insecurity syndrome. There was never a period in the first fifty-two years of its history when its security was complete.⁴ The last decade of the 1990s began with the momentous changes in the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe with the ‘cold war’ coming to an end. While, internationally, there was the general mood of reconciliation and compromise in the post-cold war, South Asia, unfortunately, continued to remain a hotbed of deep-rooted mistrust and hostility. A new ‘cold war’ began between India and Pakistan with a sense of competition, particularly in the field of conventional as well as unconventional arms. This shows that while Indo-Pak animosity might have been exacerbated

² See Lawrence Smith (ed.), *Policies and Perspectives 1947-1991* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1996), p.172.

³ *The New York Times*, 25 April 2004.

⁴ See issues of *Monthly Public Opinion Surveys* (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Opinion, 1999).

to some extent by the cold war environment, it was the regional dynamics that mainly accounted for their ongoing mutual tensions.⁵ In view of the mutual distrust and antagonistic competition between these neighbours, it was not surprising to see that, despite some agreements in the early 1990s, efforts towards tension reduction were halted or even destroyed by a variety of forces. The fixation in the minds of both Indian and Pakistani ruling elite proved to be the main cause of contention.

Particularly, the Indian perception about Pakistan during the early years after independence was that it was not a viable state and might not last long. The 1948 war over Kashmir further cemented this hostile attitude.⁶ But even over five decades, the attitude among the Indian elite has not softened and they still seem to be harping on the same old strings. On the other hand, the popular view among the Pakistani elite was that hostility with India is vital for the very survival of Pakistan. It would be appropriate, at this stage, to identify elements in India and Pakistan who have vested interests in the hostility and how they use many an issue as a vehicle to perpetuate this hostility.

The animus between India and Pakistan is the bread and butter for the intelligence services in the two countries, just as it was for the CIA and KGB during the cold war between the U.S. and USSR.⁷ There are mainly two areas in which the hostility is perpetuated – one is internal and the other external. Any Pakistani or an Indian who showed the objectivity for improving relations with the other country was suspected as a potential spy or a subversive element and was kept under watch; was often trailed and sometimes bugged. Notwithstanding its cognisance both in India and Pakistan, the practice is still fairly widespread. Likewise, at the time of issuing visas to visit India or Pakistan, there were unrealistic checks, particularly on persons who were journalists and academicians. All was done in the false belief that they were protecting the ‘security’ of their respective countries. The net result was the creation of very serious obstacles in the way of people to people contact and to foster positive public opinion in the two countries. For example, the India-Pakistan Friendship Society (a registered body in both countries) with a number of well renowned and eminent people could not

⁵ F.C. Clemens, *Arms race in the sub-continent* (Lexington: Jhon Pay & Co., 2003), p.31.

⁶ C.M. Methew, *Détente between India and Pakistan* (Washington D.C: US Government Printing Office, 2001), p.47.

⁷ N.C. Chaudhri in *Hindustan Standard* of August 1996, reproduced Shaheen Gul, ‘Unending Dispute’, *The Muslim*, Islamabad, 19 May 2002, p.13.

serve the purposes for which it was formed due to the establishment's pre-occupied perceptions and tactics.⁸

Intelligence services often create visions of shortcuts to victory through covert operations. Normally, the chief executives of the countries put their most trusted lieutenants at the helm of the external intelligence services. Consequently, it is relatively easy for these heads to sell the shortcuts which are marked as trump cards to be played when necessary or as 'counter pressure points' and so on. The heads of government are busy people, who neither have the time, nor the expertise to analyze and assess these plans. Unfortunately, in a majority of cases, the chief executives are taken for a ride by their intelligence chiefs, because most of the plans, hatched in utmost secrecy, lack a realistic or authentic scrutiny. The Indian and Pakistani intelligence services operate in a similar fashion, with a somewhat higher proportion of fabricated intelligence. However, the worst impact of these services on international relations is in the field of covert operations. The RAW of India got Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister to intervene in Sri Lanka and the ISI of Pakistan did the same in getting their country involved in Afghanistan.⁹ The crux of the matter is that intelligence agencies can thrive only in an atmosphere of hostility and hatred. Hence they have a vested interest in perpetuating cold and covert wars.

Another group who have a vested interest in Indo-Pak hostility are those politicians (religionists as well as seculars) who exploit emotive issues towards their political ends. Almost every ruling political party fits in this category in both the countries. Perspective analysts often argue that wars between India and Pakistan have broken out when political leaders in these countries were in a position to play a significant role to de-escalate the conflict.¹⁰ The Indian ruling elite, by perpetuating myths about the sub-continent (the present SAARC countries), has been denying the right of self-determination to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and in cultivating a hegemonious attitude towards Pakistan, has been successful in building up a phobia that the Indians have a decisive role to play in all matters of the region. Therefore, problems could not be resolved and politicians of both the countries lost many opportunities for reconciliation between the two countries.

There is no denying the fact that the armed forces in the two countries also have a vested interest in expanding the hostility. These two

⁸ *The Economist*, London, 4 September 1998, p.39.

⁹ *Pakistan News Digest*, Karachi, 1 August 1999, p.35.

¹⁰ Satish Chandra, *Indo-Pak Conflict: A Chronology* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1989), p.11.

countries, blinded by their psychopathic hostility to each other, have added a very special feather to their caps. They have adopted the most expensive system of manning their armed forces in the world. They possess almost every latest conventional and unconventional weapons and are busy in developing their 'capabilities'. Over sixty per cent of their defense budgets are committed to manpower – related costs – a luxury which even the richer countries in the world cannot afford.¹¹ Various publications of the International Institute of Strategic Studies have given the position of the military potential of the two countries, which is indicative of the fact that a high percentage of their GNP is being spent on defense.¹² Reconciliation between these two neighbours will be certainly lower the level of their defense expenditures. Moreover, today a stage has been reached when each country is a member of nuclear club and has successfully resisted the pressures of CTBT and the major countries of the world. In their pursuit of various strategic interests, both the countries have not hesitated from embarking upon a nuclear adventure. Even today in the 'atmosphere of rapprochement', the military establishment of these two neighbours is not ready to discard their hang-ups and they still gaze into the past for solidification of their vested interests.

Role of Indo-Pak CBMs in the changing scenario

In recent years, the global political landscape has witnessed profound changes. The post cold-war conditions have given way to the countries to settle inter-state conflicts through dialogue. A new era of cooperation and contention among erstwhile adversaries has been ushered in. A series of significant changes have also taken place in South Asia having far reaching impacts upon the security of both Pakistan and India.¹³ The American invasion of Afghanistan has increased drastically Pakistan's fear of a civil war on its northwestern border belt. The conquest of Iraq by U.S.A has also germinated the anti-American sentiments in Pakistan and Pakistan's assistance to U.S. has been heavily criticised in the public. A complete shift in Pakistan's Afghan policy has made the country a theatre of war and has contributed to the instability in the internal affairs. Iran too, is not as cordial as it was in the past due to the same (Pakistani's Afghan policy). In this hostile political climate, where major western countries have expressed apprehensions about Pakistan as a

¹¹ *Morning News*, Karachi, 22 April 2000.

¹² Report in *Jang*, Karachi, 17 March 2000, p.7.

¹³ Norman D. Palmer, *The Nuclear Threat: The Politics of Vested Interests* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.138-42.

launching pad of transnational Islamic extremism, all the above mentioned developments have favorable implications for India in the region.¹⁴ These developments have coincided with the emergence of an aggressive unipolar world which has a bearing on the overall situation of the region. Though, it is doubtful whether this world remains unipolar or otherwise, nevertheless, the basic security characteristic pertaining to the conflict-prone Indo-Pak sub-continent are essentially regional.¹⁵ Therefore, they need a regional approach to solution.

Undoubtedly, there are practical obstacles to the construction of a viable regional security either in a self-help or under super power-pressure framework. But the success of a third party initiative depends on the nature of the initiative (strategic concerns of the third party), the quality, skill, method and timing of the initiative. Both Pakistan and India are aware of the U.S. 'Clear-cut policy of involvement'.¹⁶ Therefore, attempts at self-help resolution based on shared norms, cultural assimilation, rules and institutionalized principles of security cooperation, can make the parties agree upon a shared concept of legitimate cooperation to end the multi-issue divergent conflicts. Presently, by agreeing to re-start the dialogue on official as well as on non-official levels, both the governments have at least moved a step back from the brink of the precipice. In the given context, inter-country dialogue is the only viable step on the long road to de-escalation, which must be the aim if a more relaxed atmosphere is to be created.

Conclusion

The development of mutually beneficial ties between India and Pakistan has been resisted by one party or the other on insufficient grounds much to the detriment of the cause of peace. A succession of leadership and influential opinion makers in Pakistan and also in India have discounted any possibility of better Indo-Pak relations until the Kashmir issue is resolved. India's application of force to keep the occupation of Kashmir continue and its denial from a meaningful dialogue on the issue has further complicated the problem. Moreover, India has not responded in a manner necessary for a diplomatic dialogue on issues like Baglehar Dam, Kishan Ganga Project, No War pact, Sir Creek, Siachen Glacier and

¹⁴ *The News*, Lahore, 19 September 2003.

¹⁵ For an extended analysis of the concept of CBMs, see J.M. Stewart, *Confidence Building Measures: Changing Patterns of Security in Asia* (New York: Praeger, 2002), pp.163-66.

¹⁶ For details see S.P. Cohen, 'U.S. Weapons and South Asia: A Policy Analysis', *Pacific Affairs*, Spring, Vancouver, 1996, p.86.

other bilateral matters related to security. However, perceptions are gradually changing in both the countries. There is increased realization that continued tension and conflicts are not likely to solve any dispute between the two countries. Today a cross-section of experts, including scholars, jurists, educationists, journalists, social activists, professionals of performing arts, students, politicians, non governmental organisations, sportsmen, tourists and other professionals have been meeting their counterparts across the border to generate a more congenial atmosphere in the Indo-Pak sub-continent. A whole slew of measures could be taken to boost up the largely untapped bilateral trade, including the setting up of branches of banks across the border, opening of more trade-routes, especially a better streamlined Wagah-Attari land-crossing, pushing through a new simplified shipping protocol, more aviation links, liberalisation of visa restrictions, etc. One, of course, has to remain mindful of the fact that growth in trade can be sustainable in the long run only if it is mutually beneficial for both the parties. Presently, issues such as bilateralism, Kashmir, Siachen, security perceptions, nuclear program, economic, social and cultural interactions are being discussed. Such enlightened and dispassionate discussions, both on official and informal levels, can serve as significant inputs for the governmental machinery and build opinion in favour of positive settlement of disputes. Therefore, composite dialogues would certainly go a long way in normalizing relations.

India-Pakistan relations have been a hostage to history and even after partition of the subcontinent, communal feelings were manifested on the national and bilateral levels. Their enormous resources have been spent on defense preparedness. Their unconventional weapons are hanging like the sword of Damocles on the heads of over one billion people. Hence, conflict prevention and resolution must be a paramount policy objective of India and Pakistan. Confidence-building measures (CBMs) are an important instrument in this respect. Confidence-building measures seek to eliminate the possibility of a surprise attack and are designed to ensure the correct interpretation of an adversary's intentions in order to reduce the danger arising from unfounded suspicion which is often the result of prejudice or misjudgment. After heightened tensions built up in the last fifty seven years, people-to-people and cultural contacts moving at cross-purposes with high level official talks between the two adversaries, indicate that the era of pragmatism has truly arrived.

It is worth emphasizing that many protracted Indo-Pak conflicts are not easily split into manageable positions and a solution to the core issue of 'Kashmir' may be unlikely except in the long term, but dialogue and agreement over economic, social, cultural and environmental

interactions and cooperation cannot be placed on a hold for long periods of time. The onus is now on the civil-military leadership of India and Pakistan to break with the history that holds them hostage to continuing hostility. Reconciliation will come only when the elites in both countries realize that domestic well-being requires not only solutions to economic and social woes, but also healing the unwarranted wounds of partition. The present situation in the subcontinent looks quite encouraging for a major breakthrough. Therefore, Pakistan and India should seize this opportunity and adopt CBMs in the problem areas that have eaten into the vitals of their economy and society.