

Towards a Positive Sum: New Dimensions of Indo-Pak Relationship in the 21st Century

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A challenge facing IR students is to make sense of fast-moving events and trends in the region—to determine whether they are favourable or unfavourable to conflict resolution and peace especially in relations between India and Pakistan. Another challenge is to determine how to take advantage of the good trends—or alternately, minimise the damage from the bad ones. There is a need to look at the dynamics at work and then to devise a roadmap that roughly represents the reality, explains casual relationships that influence current events, helps predict the future, prioritises available facts, and shows a path for achieving goals.

For sixty years since independence, the paradigm was very clear-cut. Pakistan's attempt was to forge a military balance with India, first through military alliances and then through armament build-up, including nuclear weapons. The focus was on the State. Trade between the countries was negligible, and there were restrictions on movement of information and people. Politics was a prisoner of fear. All this is now changing. The nodal points of changes are:

- SAFTA has been signed and is expected to come into effect sooner rather than later. Here is now euphoria for a single south Asia.
- The complexity of relationships is not encompassed by balance of power strategy, especially the feelings of the people separated by international boundaries and smarting in social separation and poverty. The political realities symbolised by the phrase *the State vs. the People* has surfaced.
- The globalisation has given a sharp blow to capacities of the political elite to contain the masses, increasingly becoming restless with the policies of their respective governments.

The barriers to conflict resolution are on way out. The conflict has undergone a transformation. The conflict no longer fits into the framework of an *intractable conflict*—the conflicts, which stubbornly resist resolution, even when the best available techniques are applied. The conflict is tractable now. All stakeholders accept it. This has opened up opportunities for forging a nexus between theory and practice for facilitating public peace processes.

There are more options than the *win-lose* outcomes. Scholars like Roger Fisher¹ have popularised the achieving a *win-win* outcome that benefits all parties. Conflict resolution as positive sum in India-Pakistan relations is therefore on the mind of leaders and people in both the countries. This means a totally different context in regional international relations—a context for taking a more proactive approach to conflicts. Peace is seen not just as the absence of violence but a maximisation of mutual gain. The focus is on taking small steps in the direction of confidence building and trust, rather than on settling differences once for all, removing all sources of conflict, and going through a process of reconciliation and stable peace. The focus is on a holistic and multi-pronged strategy. The idea is that if you hit a roadblock, then move over to another lane, so that you keep moving forward. This kind of mindset is now prevalent in both, India and Pakistan.

It is obvious that this approach goes beyond the discourse in IR theory. Take the case of the traditionalists in IR. They regard international conflict as embedded in issues of war and peace. And if war and peace are seen as a function of power, then the problem becomes insolvable, except through war and a post-war peace. The aim is to hurt and inflict injury on the other party. This has been the approach of IR scholars and diplomats for a long time especially during the cold war. What kind of conflict resolution can be achieved through war or through other forms of armed action? Only a *zero-sum* peace. This is a peace between a victor and a loser. It is a peace that comes when the parties get tired of hurting each other. It cannot be the kind of peace that can last. It cannot be regarded as advancing harmony and cohesion among the parties. The goal of achieving a positive sum in conflict resolution leaves this way of thinking behind it. It neither promotes nor feeds on the enemy image of the other party.

The emphasis in conflict resolution is more on practical component in IR than on theory. The scholarly writings (such as the book by Roger Fisher, *Coping With International Conflict*) are a kind of

cookbook step-by-step guides. These scholars feel that they are living in times of intellectual uncertainty and normative commitment. The intellectual uncertainty arises from the changing nature of conflict, may be, under the impact of globalisation. Benjamin Barber speaks of *Jehad vs. McWorld*.² Samuel Huntington³ has written about clash of civilisations. The intellectual uncertainty also arises from the impact of globalisation on the state and its limitations in the face of overlapping problems of violence, order and justice. Hence the new mindset accepts the role of other actors such as IGOs and NGOs. The growing importance of these non-State actors further underlines the normative aspect as these actors use the media to highlight the social consequences of letting the conflict continue. They mobilise popular support in favour of their commitments. Far-reaching changes have thus come about in social consciousness. The society is different and so is its political face. Democratisation and openness have led to a critical understanding of the past, and to a strong resolve to address the problems of today.

The dynamic element in the emerging context is comprised of two complementary developments. First, India has been experiencing steady rates of economic growth. Second, India's economic performance has generated a new awareness among the people and rulers of Pakistan. They feel a sense of urgency in going the India way. The young technocrats in Pakistan are eager to have a decisive say in the affairs of their country. They are determined to follow the dictates of market rationality to put Pakistan firmly on the road to modernity. This makes them see India as a partner. And India is willing to go along. As the process moves forward, the conflicts will be left behind.

Seen in this perspective the new dimensions of mutual relationship between India and Pakistan unravel some positive indicators to address decades old mistrust and suspicion. Recent developments in bilateral relationship now show a new roadmap from conflict to confidence building.

The two major actors of south Asia with historical adversarial relationship mutual mistrust, misgiving and hatred now look forward to harmonise their bilateral ties in the post cold war period. It became all the more imperative for them after acquiring the nuclear weapon capability so that the risk of war in the sub-continent could be averted and a new course of relationship from conflict to confidence building could be started.

The ground for a new era of bonhomie between India and Pakistan

was prepared in the wake of India's new approach to its relations with its neighbours in the 1990s. This was aimed at harmonizing the sub-continent's interstate relationship in the context of new global milieu created by the demise of the cold war. 'The Gujral Doctrine of unilateral measures of friendship, trade concession and initiative on long standing disputes were part of this approach.'⁴

The idea behind such a move was to initiate a route of positive and constructive measures without awaiting reciprocal steps from the other countries. Meanwhile Pakistan had new government under the stewardship of Mr. Nawaz Sharif who assumed power on the manifesto of peace and cordial relationship with its neighbours in response to the yearning for a harmonious and peaceful relationship with its immediate neighbours.⁵ India offered to have a composite round of dialogues, which would consist of all bilateral nettlesome issues including Jammu and Kashmir.

It is against this background of new hopes and aspiration that the process of normalisation of relationship between India and Pakistan started and a new era from conflict to confidence building was in the offing. It may be recalled here that even the popularly elected government of Benazir Bhutto was enthusiastic to improve the bilateral ties but owing to the shadow of armed forces over defense, foreign policy, especially on the matters concerning Indo-Pak relationship, the process of normalization could not progress in desired direction. Secondly, domestic constraints also influenced this process as she was facing enormous challenges from the fundamentalist group. So any dramatic change in Kashmir policy would not have received domestic support although she relentlessly emphasised on the Shimla agreement but at the same time like her predecessors, she lost no chance to rake up the Kashmir issue⁶ on international forum. Even during her second tenure she evinced keenness towards improving the ties. But unfortunately development like the demolition of Babri Masjid in December 1992 and communal riots cast their shadow on Indo-Pak relationship. Additionally, she tried to raise the Kashmir issue at Human Rights Commission in Geneva, which again gave a setback to the process of normalisation of relationship.⁷

However, the agenda for bilateralism was set up by the Indian Prime Minister I.K.Gujral and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. A new enthusiasm was visible during the Islamabad round of foreign secretary's talks in March 1997. Both sides agreed to set up a joint working group to discover modalities for bilateral talks and final

mechanism to address all the issues in an integrated manner. For the first time both sides agreed to an eight point agenda to resume dialogue including Kashmir. These issues were Jammū and Kashmir, Siachin, Wullur Barrage, Tulbul Navigation project, Sir Creek, terrorism and Drug Trafficking. But this optimism proved short lived as Pakistan insisted on addressing Kashmir as a core issue. As a result, a plethora of accusation against the other's non-commitment began to be inflicted.

However, in 1998 New Delhi talks generated some optimism towards improvement of Indo-Pak relationship. Meanwhile the BJP government in New Delhi underscored the need for cordiality in bilateral relationship with Islamabad. It is against this background that the then Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee decided to undertake a historic bus trip to Lahore. The most significant outcome of this visit was the Lahore Declaration. It was the 'acknowledgment of the new geopolitical realities of the post-cold war world'.⁸ An MOU was signed by the Indian Foreign Secretary K. Raghunath and Pakistan Foreign Secretary Mr. Shamshad in which it was agreed that 'the two sides shall periodically review the implementation of existing CBMs and where necessary set up appropriate consultative mechanisms to monitor and ensure effective implementation of CBMs'.⁹ The Lahore declaration proclaimed that both parties were 'convinced of the importance of mutually agreed confidence building measures for improving the security environment. It emphasizes that peace and cooperation will serve the vital interests of the people of India and Pakistan'.¹⁰

Unfortunately, the Lahore process received a serious jolt due to Kargil misadventure during the summer of 1999. There is no denying of the fact that mistrust and misgivings have afflicted bilateral negotiations several times, yet the necessity of dialogue assumed more significance in the post nuclear phase to maintain restraint on rhetoric and avert the risk of nuclear war in the region. Seen in this perspective, Agra Summit, though a failure, marks an important landmark because it was significant for seeking to move forward with Lahore process after the unwarranted Kargil interception. After Kargil, Pakistan also realised that CBM was the only viable way for resolving bilateral issues with India.¹¹

Two important factors merit attention here, which forced Pakistan to look for solutions of issues in bilateral framework. One was Chinese neutrality during the Kargil conflict and second was American posture. 'It was for the first time in the post second world

war history of international relation that China pursued a neutral posture vis-à-vis Indo-Pak conflict. Similarly, Washington also compelled the Pakistan power elite to order retreat from Kargil and restore the Line of Control (LOC) in Jammu and Kashmir.¹² In fact, the motive behind this kind of Sino-American approach vis-à-vis the fourth Indo-Pak conflict was to prevent the escalation of nuclear conflict in the region. Hence their major emphasis was on regional stability. 'Even the message from the international community was quite clear that status quo in Kashmir cannot be changed by use of force'. Again on the question of cross border terrorism there was a considerable pressure on Pakistan to stop terrorism as a means of foreign policy that prevented fifth India-Pakistan conflict after the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament on 13 Dec 2001 and the Kaluchak massacre in Jammu on 14 May 2002. In fact after Kaluchak Massacre, both countries were on the verge of waging the fifth war 'with much more devastating potential than the earlier one'.¹³

Thus, futility of Pakistan's armed adventure to settle Kashmir issue by force and considerable international pressure for regional stability in South Asia provided another opportunity for India and Pakistan to reinitiate sincere efforts for confidence building and seek solution of vexed issues in a bilateral framework.

Driven by its concern for peace and friendship with her neighbours, India took another initiative towards peace building when the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee made peace offer in Srinagar on 18 April 2003. As a result of this gesture, snapped rail and diplomatic links were restored. A 12-point peace offer was made including opening up the bus route between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad and between Manabao and Kokhrapar (Sindh).

Further, in a giant step forward India and Pakistan announced in January 2004 that they would commence the process of composite dialogue. A joint press statement issued saw the Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf reassure India that 'he will not permit any territory under Pakistani control to be used to support terrorism in any manner. This accord raised expectation of a rapid improvement in bilateral relationship with both sides stressing that there were no winners and losers. A win-win situation had been created. Now the two countries seemed to have ended a long period of acrimony and non-contact that had marked their relationship and expressed the hope that positive trends set by the CBMs would be consolidated. General Musharraf said that the need was to not to touch on divergences behind.'¹⁴

Again in a bid to take further CBMs, both sides agreed to restore old shipping protocol of 1975 with new clauses with a view to start cargo and ferry services between the two countries. It maybe mentioned here that under the protocol, Indian and Pakistani ships are allowed to carry cargo only to each other's country and it is considered highly uneconomic. There is great scope for shipping links between both the countries and Karachi port could be used to transport goods to the northern areas of India through Khorpa, which reduces around 400 to 500 Kms. distance, compared to the Mumbai port.¹⁵

After the Congress led United Progressive Alliance came to power in New Delhi, it was feared by Islamabad that peace process would be forestalled. But contrary to this apprehension India reiterated its commitment for furtherance of the peace process. The new government of Manmohan Singh held expert level talks on drug trafficking and Nuclear Confidence Building Measures with Pakistan. Both parties decided to carry out the process of composite dialogue. The India Foreign Minister observed, 'The future of Indo-Pakistan relation... did not lie in the past we can not forget the past neither can we be prisoners of the past. Stressing that past was strewn with booby-traps and high tension wires we want to put an end to that.'¹⁶

In June 2004, India and Pakistan expressed their commitment for implementation of the Lahore memorandum of understanding of 1999. Besides, many CBMs were agreed upon that included immediate restoration of strength of their respective high commission from 75 to 110, and re-opening Mumbai and Karachi consulate.¹⁷ During bilateral negotiations both sides discussed specific nuclear confidence building including upgrading the communication channels towards reducing nuclear risk in south Asia. They also looked at the possibility of putting in place a hotline dealing with nuclear issues in addition to the existing hotline between the Director General of military operation used by them weekly. The External Affairs Ministry maintains, 'Both sides approached the talks in a positive framework, aimed at taking the process forward and making them result oriented. The two delegations identified areas of convergence included in the context of multilateral force. They also exchanged views on their respective security concepts and nuclear doctrines and agreed to elaborate and work towards CBMs'.¹⁸ In a positive gesture, India proposed that Kashmiris be allowed to visit religious shrines in Pak-occupied-Kashmir and build contacts by allowing families from the two Kashmirs to meet on regular basis.

The two Kashmiris could cooperate on forestry management and setting up points along the LOC for trade. These proposals were decidedly a positive step towards improving the bilateral relation.¹⁹ As a part of the composite dialogue process, both the countries decided to hold talks on Baglihar project. This was aimed at accommodating Pakistan concern on the Baglihar dam, which is under construction in Doda district. This project is slated to be accomplished in 2005 and will generate 450 mm power for the northern grid, including Jammu and Kashmir.²⁰

Further at SAARC council of minister meeting in July 2004, India expressed its intention to carry on a sustained and steady dialogue with Pakistan and reviewed several significant aspects of bilateral relation. Both sides reiterated to continue the dialogue in a violence free atmosphere and tackling the scourges of terrorism with renewed vigour.²¹ Again in August 2004, both sides met to address the issue of terrorism. India conveyed its concern over the significant dismantling of terrorist infrastructure as well as infiltration across the LOC whereas Pakistan alleged anti-Pakistan activities of the Indian consulate in the border cities of Afghanistan. However both sides denied the charges and moved on their agenda. A list of wanted persons was exchanged. Both India and Pakistan assessed as positive the increasing co-operation and information sharing between their Narcotics control authorities. It was outcome of the dialogue process that Pakistan declared to release 449 Indian prisoners, majority of them fishermen, detained for allegedly entering the countries' territorial waters. Further it agreed to release 41 Indian prisoners for visa violation.²²

In all these endeavours towards CBMs for building a harmonious relationship between the two countries, the nuclear CBMs talks can be considered as a minor litmus test of their intentions. The minister level talks and summit meetings certainly broadened the scope of discussion.

If we review the impact of current CBMs tried so far in Indo-Pak relations, we may conclude that positive factors outweigh negative factors. Of course, there is no progress on a number of issues such as Kashmir, terrorist infiltration, Balighar project and so on. There is domestic pressure also tending to force the ruling elites in Pakistan to take a tough line in relation with India. But against these factors, continuation of the ceasefire along the LOC and the international border, low level of infiltration,²³ political consensus in India for support of the peace process with Pakistan, increase in non-official

contacts and new look on the Wagah border, growing people to people contacts, reduction of troops along the border and recently agreed proposal to initiate bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffrabad are the positive outcome of the composite dialogue process.²⁴ A new approach in promoting people to people contact and greater trade relationship by promoting open old trade routes between the two Punjab, renew rail connectivity between Rajasthan and Sindh, ferry links between Mumbai and Karachi, offer of moving diesel from Julandhar to Lahore and to have a special day bus service between Amritsar and Lahore is visible. What is important at this juncture is to let the political establishment and civil societies across the border begin an intensive interaction including the exchange between the local chambers of commerce.²⁵

However, given the track record of the past history of Indo-Pak relationship, skepticism is expressed by some analysts. Can New Delhi and Islamabad bridge the potential mismatch between their assumptions and expectations? Further, it is argued that despite a broad range of Confidence Building Measures by India, what we got back was increase in cross border terrorism, Kandhar hijack of 1999, terrorist attack on Parliament, Kargil and Kaluchak massacre. It is also pointed out that it is not worthwhile to deal with military regime of Pakistan, as it is the core of anti-India feelings. But will it be viable for India to wait till restoration of democracy in Pakistan? Can India get the Pakistan army back to barracks? It is possible only through the initiative of the people and political class of Pakistan. Till then the answer to the question of bridging the gap between New Delhi and Islamabad 'rests in mobilizing an unwavering commitments in both capitals to construct a survivable peace process. What is important to note in this context is that the main problem in India and Pakistan has been that outer forms of CBMs have been put in place without their substance. The substance of CBMs is the political compulsion for peace. Until that comes CBMs will continue to inspire hope but are unlikely to turn hopes into reality.'²⁶

Now there is a positive mood across the border to make LoC a bridge of friendship, peace and cooperation between the two countries. So in order to accrue maximum mileage from this mood, it is pertinent to encourage people to people exchange and strengthen the regional forum i.e. South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation.²⁷

To sum up, showing full agreement with H.L. Mencken's view that 'Hope is a pathological belief in the occurrence of the impossible',

it may be submitted that success in the first round of talk as a part of composite dialogue process for betterment of bilateral relationship has shown the silver line. A future bilateral engagement with genuine political will certainly help finding lasting solution to even the most contentious issues that always hamper cordiality between India and Pakistan. It may be remembered that CBMs can become the harbinger of peace and stability in the region. Progressive assertion of civilian control over military establishment, initiative taken by the SAARC Chambers of Commerce taken at the recent Islamabad SAARC meeting to enlarge trade relation, multiplicity of Track 2 efforts and endeavours by common citizen to forge transborder and familial linkages, are some of the positive indicators that encourage optimism that political will can be generated to carry forward the Confidence Building Measures by India and Pakistan. If CBMs can work in Latin America, Southeast Asia and Europe towards reducing tensions, building trust and enhancing cooperation²⁸ then why can't the current initiatives on the part of both India and Pakistan pave the way for a lasting solution of bilateral nettlesome issues? Now it is high time to capitalise this new mood and new dimension from conflict to confidence building in mutual relationship so that both India and Pakistan may write a new chapter of peace, harmony and co-operation in the history of South Asian region in the 21st century.

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