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**Pakistan-India Relations - Composite Dialogue
Process (CDP): Current State and Future
Prospects in Bringing Peace to the Sub-Continent**



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Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad

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Pakistan-India Relations - Composite Dialogue Process (CDP): Current State and Future Prospects in Bringing Peace to the Sub-Continent

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Preface

Writing a research paper is both labor intensive and a journey of discovery, but leads to a most rewarding exercise. While writing the research paper on “Pakistan-India Relations–Composite Dialogue Process (CDP): Current State and Future Prospects in Bringing Peace to the Sub-Continent”, was one such topic worth the effort which was put in and which I can call, an exercise of discovery, which also made me more wiser on the relationship of these two neighbours.

The research lasted three months, all spent to dig deep into all the possible sources aimed to arrive at some conclusion and also suggest certain course corrections in the policies of both Pakistan and India, which all point towards the path of peaceful co-existence. Neighbors have little leeway, but to learn to co-exist, so that they spend their energies and resources in improving the lives of their people. In the case of Pakistan and India, the populace cries out for improving their health, food security and purposeful education of their children. Given a chance to choose between war and peace, the people of Pakistan and India, would willingly stretch their hands across the border to clasp a similar hand, as war fatigue has set in both the neighboring states. If the US, the sole Super Power is feeling the war fatigue, a luxury it once could afford, Pakistan and India have hardly the stomach for such a luxury.

As Pakistan-India relations have taken an ugly turn in wake of the Indian Government decision to revoke the special status accorded to Indian-Occupied Kashmir in its constitution, the most far-reaching political move on the disputed region in nearly 70 years, which seems to have boomeranged, Ambassador Aizaz A. Chaudhry, DG ISSI and Mr. Andreas Duerr, Director HSF are to be commended for their foresight in having chosen the “Pakistan-India Relations – Composite Dialogue Process (CDP): Current State and Future Prospects in Bringing Peace to the Sub-Continent”. The strained relationship of Pakistan and India is a global hot topic. Pakistan and India coming to the table, either sooner or a little later to thrash out their misgivings and issues of concern are not out of the realm of possibility; Prime Minister Imran Khan’s had all along

chosen the path of talks and Prime Minister Modi may also spring a surprise to reciprocate, as reflected in his recent talks with President Trump on the sidelines of G-7 Summit in France when he assured that, *“India and Pakistan were together before 1947 and I'm confident that we can discuss our problems and solve them, together”*.

I am most appreciative of Ambassador Aizaz, DG ISSI and Mr. Duerr, Director HSF to have reposed their trust in me to undertake the research and to have also guided me as the research paper took shape. I also most grateful to Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman ISSI who chaired a lengthy session of researchers at ISSI during which I defended both the outline of the research paper and the contents of the research so far done. My appreciation would not be complete if I do not mention Mr. Najam Rafique, Director Research at ISSI for having painstaking looked at my drafts and guided me. Mr. Abid Hussain, Library Officer's generosity in loaning me the books and always with a smile is to be commended. I also extend my appreciation to the input of a group of ISSI researchers with whom I had a fairly lengthy session.

Ambassador Shahid Masroor Gul Kiani, Fellow
Islamabad, 26th August, 2019

Abstract

Since the creation of Pakistan and India, the relationship of these two states has been adversarial. The continued antagonism of these neighboring states have also been an enigma for many who have kept a close watch on the developments in the Sub-continent; Pakistan and India have not only fought wars, but also realized the sagacity to search for peace. The fact that both the states are nuclear armed, may have weighed heavily on the minds of the leaders of Pakistan and India, pushing them to explore ways for normalizing relations. In searching for peace, the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP) since its inception in 1997, has proven to be a most encouraging vehicle in visibly improving the relations between Pakistan and India. The usefulness of the Composite Dialogue Process can also be gauged by the fact that it allowed leaders of both the states to also use back channel diplomacy to find solutions to the Jammu & Kashmir dispute, which is the thorniest and the most intractable issue of the process. The efficacy of the Composite Dialogue Process can also be assessed from the fact that the process faced interruption many a times and was revived again.

A significant part of this paper on the Composite Dialogue Processes raises questions on the subject matter and also attempts to respond to the various queries, which have arisen. This paper while also giving a comprehensive background of the reasons for the mistrust and enmity between the two states, including the serious issues, not only looks at the progress made during the various Composite Dialogue Processes, but also lays emphasis on urgently reviving the process and the dividends the efforts shall contribute. The dangerous standoff between Pakistan and India in February 2019, in the wake of the killings of Indian Para-military soldiers in Pulwama (IOK) which triggered a surprising and a worrying tension indeed, seems to be abating. The standoff necessitates the urgency of the leadership of the two nuclear armed states, which are otherwise impoverished and have other challenges on the table to grapple with, the need to sit across the table to at least talk as neighbors. While the Pakistani leadership viewed the Pulwama incident as Modi Government's vote garnering tactics, Prime Minister Imran Khan conquers over dismay, as he looked with

confidence that post elections Modi's return to power shall pave the way for restarting the talks. In the meantime, the world sits on the edge praying for sanity to prevail within the leadership and among the populace of Pakistan and India, who definitely have other priorities to focus on, other than planning to kill each other.

This paper suggests workable recommendations as part of the Composite Dialogue Processes which shall augment efforts to improve Pakistan-India bilateral and people-to-people contacts. Extensive relevant primary and secondary sources which were identified have been used in the proposed research paper.

Keywords: Pakistan, India, Composite Dialogue Process, Resolution, Peace, Bilateral Ties

The research paper seeks to answer the following questions which have arisen as the attempt is made to strengthen the argument for the revival of the Composite Dialogue Process, inspite of the obstacles and difficulties the efforts shall face in the path of its revival:

1. Can Pakistan and India, the two nuclear armed neighbors afford to remain incommunicado?
2. Why the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP)? Is not there any other process?
3. Composite Dialogue Process over the past. What lessons can be learned?
4. Composite Dialogue Process and mistrust. Can any progress be made in this scenario?
5. The road to peace ahead. What are the fears, concerns and misconceptions, skepticism, and obstacles. Are all responded to as logically as possible?
6. Do Russia, China and the US have any role and influence to push Pakistan and India to move towards the peace process?

7. What new opportunity is coming in the way of the two states once the peace process is revived?

The Historical Mistrust

There is a deep mistrust between Pakistan and India, especially within the political and military leadership. The military has its own priorities; the various wars that the two armies have fought should not spring any surprise over the hardening of their stance. The negativity, bolstered by media and political propaganda has also impacted on a segment of the public in both the countries. This has, in recent times, resulted in a complete breakdown between the two countries in communicating the desire to improve relations. Despite Pakistan-India watchers who have studied these two states for decades, and who are not very hopeful of any permanent resolution in the short term, the CDP was, and still remains the most effective vehicle. There seems to be no incentive, especially for India, a bigger power led by a leadership whose ascendancy to power is imbedded in having convinced a major segment of its electorate that only Pakistan is to be blamed for the problems India was facing, but also that Pakistan was not getting away 'free'. Well-known South Asian watcher Moeed Yusuf points out that, "on all conflicts and crisis with Pakistan, India has won all crisis...from wars to Kargil and Mumbai attacks...tarnishing Pakistan's image – thus they are already winning."¹ The seeds of this enmity between Pakistan and India are not only well-documented, but at the same time surprising to some extent, keeping in view that the commonalities of language and culture of these two neighboring states should have been the glue to keep them together. "Pakistan and India have the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and historical commonalities, as well as economic complementarities which should have been an important factor for bringing the region together and promote co-operation."² However, the opposite happened soon after the creation of Pakistan and India; the result is propagation of literature based on history of the Sub-continent which has more to do on the enduring rivalry

¹ Moeed Yusuf, Personal Interview, Islamabad, 14 October, 2018. (He is Vice President of Asia Centre, United Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C)

² Gupta Archana, *India & Pakistan: The Conflict Peace Syndrome*, (Kalinga Publications, Delhi, 2005), p.248.

between India-Pakistan, which continues to fester due to factors such as: unsettled territorial issues, political incompatibility, and irreconcilable positions on national identity. “At the heart of the mistrust lie the unresolved disputes, which not only adversely affect regional peace and security, but also hinder economic development and efforts to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, and disease in the two countries.”³ Raghavan, a seasoned Indian diplomat, known for his sane and balanced analysis, adds his voice to the history of acrimony of these two neighboring states, “Evidently, there is the all-encompassing bitterness associated with the violence and displacement of partition....By any standards and for any period of history, India and Pakistan started with a background and an inheritance which could not have been worse.”⁴ In addition, the absence of significant economic and trade relations between the two states, which is a people-centric activity - all cause the mistrust and rivalry to persist.

The result of this animosity has impacted the Sub-continent, and since the partition, it has witnessed four wars and a number of serious interstate crises. On almost every issue that arose in relations with India, Pakistan found itself faced with New Delhi’s refusal to resolve the differences on the basis of principle of law and justice.⁵ Looking at decades of Pakistan-India visible hostility, late US President Nixon summed up, “The Indo-Pakistan conflict is one of the most tragic examples of senseless military spending in post-war history.”⁶ He again echoes the same analysis, “Two of the poorest in the World – India and Pakistan – spent more than \$11 billion a year for the purpose of waging a future war.”⁷ Just as much that India continues to occupy successive Pakistani governments since the inception of the country, one cannot also dispute that, “South Asia, India’s immediate periphery, will perhaps remain

³ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, *Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*, (Oxford University Press, 2015), p.148.

⁴ T.C.A.Raghavan, *The People Next Door: The Curious History of India’s Relations with Pakistan*, (Harper Collins Publishers India ,2017), p.40

⁵ Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan’s Foreign Policy-2005: A Concise History*, (Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2007), p.33.

⁶ Richard Nixon, *The Leaders*, (Sidgwick & Jackson, Great Britain, 1982), p.272

⁷ Richard Nixon, *Beyond Peace*, (Random House, New York, 1994), p.161.

critical to every Indian Prime Minister and every Indian administration.”⁸ The question which continue to haunt the people of Pakistan and India include: Are wars, antagonism and politics based on sheer bigotry necessary or a need for sanity and deep reflection; for jointly pooling of energies and resources which positively impacts the teeming millions in both the countries?

Why the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP)

Among the peace initiative undertaken between Pakistan and India, the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP) tops the list and shall also continue to attract sceptics to cast their gloominess and misgivings; they are convinced that Pakistan and India regrettably are determined not to learn from history and shall pay no heed to the fact that once rivals, France and Germany, United Kingdom and France, Thailand and Laos, Russia and China, known to be at loggerheads for years , have now in the larger national interest or in pressing public interest, ‘buried the hatchet’. As one discusses this regional competition, the two Koreas, known arch rivals, are reaching out to each other. China and India, these two adversaries are not only managing their differences inspite of a serious border dispute going back to the creation of modern India and China, but also visibly enlarging bilateral economic and trade relationship. In this scenario, are Pakistan and India to be the solitary states condemned to spend another seven decades emulating ‘Don Quixote's fight with the windmills’? Or the current leadership of both the neighboring countries have the courage to turn a new page in their chequered and sad history, and shall demonstrate maturity and tutor their population that wars have never been the solution in resolving the differences which exist between these nuclear armed states.

The counter argument to the sceptics of Composite Dialogue Process is, if not this process, then what other process is there to resolve or make efforts to bring at least ‘normalcy’ to the relationship of these two neighboring states, whose ‘unmanageable’ population are crying out for an end to conflicts and to be allowed a

⁸ Aparne Pande, “*From Chanakya to Modi: The Evolution of India’s Foreign Policy*”, HarperCollins Publishers India, 2017), p.89.

semblance of normal living. Despite the natural animosity, “India and Pakistan recognize each other’s right to exist; they have regular diplomatic relations, and they periodically engage in diplomatic negotiations such as the “composite dialogue” attempting to settle their disputes.”⁹

The Composite Dialogue Process encompasses a whole range of issues of bilateral concerns, ranging from security, terrorism, trade, commerce, to territorial disputes, including Kashmir. The record of the process reflects positivity, “Nevertheless, despite all the posturing, suspicion and doubt, progress was made in that it was agreed that all the eight subjects identified would be discussed as part of a comprehensive package known thereafter, as the Composite Dialogue.”¹⁰ Aziz Khan, a former senior diplomat adds, “... there can be no substitute to Composite Dialogue or Comprehensive Bilateral Process (CBD), or any other name which the two countries agree to call. It was once a very dynamic process and made tangible progress.”¹¹

Thus, it is imperative for the two countries and for the region that prodding continues for a resolution of the issues. Pakistan and India are not unique globally in their history of rivalry, nor of the brutal conflicts, but certainly exceptional in the ‘longevity’ of the rivalry in the modern era. It seems that in the very recent past, successive leadership of both states have somehow been ‘compelled’, for their own myopic domestic reasons, to put on the back burner any thought or prospect to resolve their differences through peaceful means. The consequences could be grim in a most challenging scenario: The nuclear tests by Pakistan and India in May of 1998 steered the deeply-fissured conflict dynamics of South Asia to a new dimension and is fraught with possible repercussions of any deliberate or inadvertent crisis generation in a nuclear environment.

⁹ Mario E. Carranza, “*India –Pakistan Nuclear Diplomacy: Constructivism and the Prospects For Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament in South Asia*”, (London: Rowman & Littlefield: 2016), p.201.

¹⁰ T.C.A. Raghavan, *The People Next Door: The Curious History of India’s Relations with Pakistan*, op.cit. p.226.

¹¹ Aziz Khan, former Pakistani Ambassador. Personal interview in Islamabad. October 28, 2018).

Thus, there can be no alternative for Pakistan and India, but continue to negotiate, as remaining incommunicado is not an option.

The change in the leadership in Pakistan offers an opportunity to Indian Prime Minister Modi to reciprocate Prime Minister Imran Khan's desire to re-start the dialogue. Even though many leaders of both the countries may be carrying some historic baggage, but Imran Khan is an exception, being new to politics and statecraft, free from such negativities, and thus offers some hope. Experience shows that if Prime Minister Modi makes a peaceful overture to Imran Khan, the embers of hope which are still glowing, await the fresh wind in the same positive tone and tenor to bring to life the fire of optimism. This glimmer of hope of better ties between Pakistan and India were ignited as a result of the 2018 general elections in Pakistan which gave Imran Khan a major share of seats in the National Assembly. Soon after, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi telephoned Imran Khan, congratulating him over his party's victory in the general elections and conveying best wishes for Pakistan. India official media quoted Prime Minister Modi to having stated, "We are ready to enter a new era of relations with Pakistan."¹² Reference was made to Imran Khan having thanked the Indian Prime Minister for his good wishes and responded in the same tenor, "The solution to conflicts should be found through dialogue... Instead of answers to conflicts, wars and bloodbath give birth to tragedies."¹³ The positive atmosphere received the desired 'oxygen' as Prime Minister Modi sent his felicitations to Imran Khan in March 2019 ahead of Pakistan Day and Imran Khan responded to the warm gesture, "as both countries emphasized peace and prosperity in the region."¹⁴ The friendly signals resonated globally as they came in the backdrop of tension which ensued during and after the February 2019 Pulwama incident had taken place. These gestures of leaders do lend a hand to the commencement of peace process between the two states. However, the peace process can only move forward, if apart from the usual issues coming under focus, ways are instituted to cooperate

¹² "Modi phones Imran Khan, says 'ready to enter new era of ties with Pakistan': PTI", Fahad Chaudhry | Naveed Siddiqui, (Dawn, 30 July, 2018).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "Imran, Modi trade peace messages", Baqir Sajjad Syed (Dawn, 23 March, 2019).

in areas far less contentious, which shall not only garner public support on both sides of the divide, but also attract huge global support. The fourth generation in both Pakistan and India are in fact looking for a better deal and saying no to the same 'recipe of hate', and may well be praying for the revival of the peace process, which may be given any name, be it Composite Dialogue Process (CDP), Composite Dialogue Process or any nomenclature, as long as both the countries keep themselves away from their 'powder keg!'. Staying on the path of peace by both Pakistan and India has been summed up very eloquently by a sane Indian voice, "A durable peace cannot come from preening ourselves on our mindset. It must begin with an understanding of the mindset of the other side, not with a view to mocking that mindset or using the revelation to validate one's own hostility, but with a view to understanding the other side's concerns, its anxieties and apprehensions, its aspiration."¹⁵

Globally, most states are not comfortable with Pakistan-India remaining at odds, inspite of the creation of these two neighborly states going back more than seven decades; they strongly favor a dialogue between these two adversarial nations. The international community, particularly the US, have felt uneasy about the continued tension between two nuclear powers in South Asia.¹⁶ While the Western states, who are also development partners of Pakistan and India, are not specific about the mode of talks between the two neighbors, Composite Dialogue somehow sits most comfortable with them, especially on account of the spread of subject matter and issues which are discussed, and the positive results that these talks have mostly brought about.

¹⁵ Mani Shankar Aiyer, *The Imperative For Dialogue: Pakistan in a Changing Strategic Context*, Ajay Darshan Behera & Mathew Joseph C (eds), Knowledge World in association with CENTRE for Strategic and Regional Studies, University of Jammu, Jammu, 2004), Chapter 21, p.321)

¹⁶ S.C. Sharma, "*Composite Dialogue Between India and Pakistan*" - *India-Pakistan Relations: Courting Peace From The Corridors of War*", (Edited by P.M Kamath, VPM'S Centre for International studies, Mumbai), p.279.

Composite Dialogue Process (CDP): Progress in the Past

Pakistan-India watchers point towards December 1985 as the year when a dialogue between the two states commenced, and the set of issues which the dialogue was seized with. This later took the shape of composite dialogue between Pakistan and India. The occasion was the visit to India of President Zia-ul-Haq's who was returning to Pakistan on his way back from the SAARC Summit at Dhaka. It was at this meeting that the two leaders agreed upon a four-pronged dialogue process to discuss: Siachin; Sir Creek; Commercial relations; and issues related to terrorism/ immigration and people-to-people contact. Four committees were established to work on these issues. These committees were headed by different secretaries to deal with the relevant issues. During the foreign secretaries meetings, gradual progress was made in these areas. Consequently, at the SAARC Summit at Male in 1997, Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif decided to restart the dialogue process during which eight issues were agreed upon to be discussed under the Composite Dialogue Process which included: Peace and Security including confidence building measures (CBMs); Jammu and Kashmir (J&K); Siachen; Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project; Sir Creek; Economic and Commercial Cooperation; Terrorism and Drug Trafficking; and, Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in various fields. 1997 turned out to be a busy year for the Pakistani and Indian leaders, who kept on bumping into each other and exchanging notes at New York in September and in London in October. The Indians blamed Pakistani officials for not allowing any progress in the talks, as they made discussion on the Jammu & Kashmir dispute part of any bilateral talks.

Later in the 1990's, when at the Foreign Secretaries meeting, the Jammu & Kashmir issue was highlighted, India was adamant that there was nothing to discuss about Kashmir except the 'illegal occupation of the Indian Territory by Pakistan'. This naturally resulted in the stagnation in the bilateral relationship and the dialogue process came to a grinding halt. Subsequently, the dialogue process became a victim to the May 1998 nuclear tests. Post nuclear tests reflected a most matured handling of the bilateral relationship

by the leadership of both the countries, who reached out to each other, having understood that war was not an option between the two nuclear armed neighbors. In a few weeks' time, Prime Ministers Nawaz Sharif and A.B. Vajpayee agreed that the forthcoming SAARC Summit would provide the venue for a meeting and both evidently had made up their mind to prove the doomsayers wrong.”¹⁷ Historically, India – Pakistan relationship is not admirable and the concern globally in the post-nuclear tests was genuine and not just a knee jerk reaction, “the May tests brought the Pakistan – India conflict squarely onto the center-stage of global security concerns. The international community viewed the tests as directly undermining regional and global peace, security and stability.”¹⁸

Soon after, a peace process was initiated in February 1999 when Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee visited Pakistan, known as the ‘Lahore Process’ and had discussions with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The sheer symbolism consciously and unambiguously attached to the visit makes it stand apart from past initiatives –Rajiv Gandhi in 1989 or Jawaharlal Nehru in 1960 ‘Bus Yatra’ as it was called - and seemed to herald that an inflection point has been reached in South Asia.”¹⁹ The talks between the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India led to the much acclaimed Lahore Declaration and a MOU which, “... dealt with nuclear issues and committed both sides to adopt a wide-range of confidence building measures aimed at avoidance and prevention of conflict.”²⁰ The representatives of the two Prime Ministers later held backchannel discussions, which specially focused on the ways to come to an understanding on the Kashmir dispute. An important witness to the Lahore Process later recalled, “The process started by Prime Minister Vajpayee, through the Lahore bus journey of 1999

¹⁷ T.C.A Raghavan, *The People Next Door: The Curious History of India's Relations with Pakistan*, op.cit, p.228

¹⁸ Nasim Zehra, *From Kargil to the Coup: Events That Shook the World*, (Sange-Meel Publications, 2018), p.58.

¹⁹ T.C.A. Raghavan, T.C. A, *The People Next Door: The Curious History of India's Relations with Pakistan*, op.cit., p.230

²⁰ Syed Talat Hussain, “The India Factor”, *Pakistan: Beyond the Crisis State*, edited by Maliha Lodhi, (Oxford University Press, 2011, p.3227.

continued to move forward, to gather pace and to be accepted by all.”²¹

Regretfully, this dialogue process became victim to the 1998 Kargil conflict, which sprang a surprise to the bonhomie created by the Lahore Process and scuttled a sincere desire to lay the basis for burying the embittered past. The operation to launch the Kargil operation in Pakistan, and code named ‘Koh Paima (Operation KP)’ was known to a very small circle of senior army officers. Operation KP had suddenly surfaced in the news only weeks after the Nawaz-Vajpayee Lahore Summit, which had ended with the Lahore Declaration in which both governments had decided to open discussions on the perennial and intractable Kashmir dispute.²² One cannot also ignore that at the back of the minds of the Kargil planners in Pakistan was also the fact that neither the 1948 Kashmir War, nor the 1965 War had added to Pakistan’s oft repeated stand that India needs to adhere to the promise it made to the UN for holding a plebiscite, and that Kashmir is an ‘unfinished agenda of the partition’, “throughout the 1950’s, India fudged on its promise of plebiscite in Kashmir while also refusing Pakistan’s offer for a settlement on Kashmir.”²³ However, the mode used in Kargil to internationalize the dispute or gain global attention, neither had the institutional transparency, nor the desired political backing and, as later events proved, a very serious mistake. UN Secretary General too was alarmed and harked back to the positivity of the Lahore Peace Process, “The process initiated in Lahore needs to be put on track as there are serious grounds for concern, not least because of the dangers of an escalation in a Sub-continent in which nuclear devices have been tested.”²⁴ Kargil also damaged Pakistan’s interest in the context of foreign policy, as it provided the US, to whom Pakistan had directly requested for its intervention to end the conflict, an opportunity it was waiting to enlarge its relationship in a region which was fast coming under its focus, “The breakthrough in

²¹ Jaswant Singh, “A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India”, Rupa & Co, New Delhi, 2006), p.269. (The author has served as the Foreign and Finance Minister of India).

²² Nasim Zehra, Nasim, *From Kargil to the Coup: Events That Shook the World*, op.cit., p.11

²³ Ibid. p.16.

²⁴ Ibid, p.381.

US-Indo relations was to be crowning glory of the Clinton era. The US now had the chance of a life time to show the Indians that they meant business as friends of India.”²⁵ Indian hands naturally stood strengthened.

After a hiatus of few years, which included a change in government in Pakistan, Prime Minister Vajpayee invited President General Pervez Musharraf to hold talks in Agra, India. It was at the Summit in Agra of 2001, at which a reference was made to Jammu & Kashmir dispute and to terrorism. However, differences within the Indian cabinet on the contents of the ‘Joint Draft Deceleration’ caused the break down in the negotiations and the process collapsed. The Agra treaty was never signed. Nevertheless, the desire of the leadership of both neighbors to sit across the table and talk seems not to have ‘worn’ out as reflected on April 18, 2003, at which Prime Minister Vajpayee showed willingness, “to extend a hand of friendship to Pakistan.”²⁶ Pakistani leadership was not found to be wanting and responded with the same warmth and enthusiasm and, “it was decided that Pakistan would offer a series of CBMs to India to initiate the dialogue ... Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali welcomed the announcement of April 18, 2003 and invited Prime Minister Vajpayee’s to visit Pakistan.”²⁷ Pakistan offered a basket of initiatives which ranged from resumption of train and bus services, sporting links, to release of fishermen which set the stage for the resumption of high level contacts.

In 2003, Musharraf took a practical initiative and there was the famous Vajpayee-Musharraf ‘golden handshake’. This ultimately led to a bilateral meeting at the sidelines of the 12th SAARC Summit, held at Islamabad in 2004. In that meeting, a most significant declaration was made that Pakistan territory would not be used by any terrorist in the light of India’s concern of cross border terrorism emanating from Pakistan. President Musharraf reassured Prime Minister Vajpayee that he will not permit any territory under Pakistan’s control to be used to support terrorism in any manner.²⁸ It

²⁵ Ibid.,p.307.

²⁶ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, *Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*, op.cit. p.162.

²⁷ Ibid, p.164

²⁸ Ibid, p.170.

was also agreed between the two leaders, “to commence with the process of the Composite Dialogue in February 2004.”²⁹ It is significant that the India –Pakistan Joint Press Statement of January 6, 2004 in Islamabad specifically mentioned Jammu & Kashmir as one of the bilateral issue to be resolved peacefully to the entire satisfaction of both the sides. The discussions also started on the Kashmir issue at the level of the Foreign Secretaries.

As the record of the bilateral relationship since the inception of Pakistan and India has clearly shown, there have been periods of steps taken to move the dialogue process forward, followed by a ‘ghastly’ incident or incidents in either of the two neighboring countries, leading to two steps backward and thus putting to a freeze, the whole process of engagement into a uncharted future! The anti-government lawyers’ movement and the assault on the extremists groups holed up in the Lal Masjid (mosque) in 2007, weakened President Musharraf’s ability to take crucial decisions. This was followed by the cowardly bombing on the Samjutha Express Train in India (which carries Pakistani & Indian nationals to each other’s countries) on February 18, 2007 and the Mumbai carnage of November 26, 2008 which naturally impacted on the bilateral relationship and added to the already present mistrust between the two countries. The 2008 elections in Pakistan brought a political government for whom any initiative having taken by a military-led government, even though a positive one and in the long-term interest of the country was termed ‘anathema’ and thus rubbished. Such is unfortunately, the nature of politics in South Asia.

Composite Dialogue Process and the Mistrust Factor: Can Any Progress Be Made?

One at times is forced to ponder as to why baby steps or bigger steps to even minutely improve atmospherics in the Sub-continent are thwarted. Navjot Singh Sidhu, former Indian cricketer and politician, was among the special guests present at Imran Khan’s oath-taking ceremony in Islamabad at the Aiwan-e-Sadr (the

²⁹ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, *Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*, op.cit. p.162. p.170.

President House) in August 2018, and where he expressed his sincere desire that, “his friend Khan's accession to the prime minister's post will be good for Pakistan-India peace process.”³⁰ General Qamar Javed Bajwa, COAS who was also present at the ceremony hugged Sidhu and both chatted briefly. This brief interaction created a furor in some segments of the Indian society and was termed as ‘act of disloyalty’ towards India. In the not so distant past, the symbolic gestures of the two leading figures of India during their visit to Pakistan also kicked up a storm; The then Bharatiya Janata Party President Lal Kirshana Advani in 2005 paid homage at the mausoleum of the founder of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, becoming the most senior Indian politician ever to do so since the Sub-continent's partition. He sought to disassociate himself from the Sangh Parivar's pet ‘Akhand Bharat’. He wrote in the visitor’s book “There are many people who leave an inerasable stamp on history. But there are a few who actually create history. Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was one such rare individual.”³¹ In a similar gesture, the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had paid homage at Lahore’s ‘Minar-e-Pakistan’ following his historic bus journey in 1999. Two months after India’s Hindu nationalist party chief Lal Krishna Advani lauded Pakistan’s founder as a “great man,” the fire-storm which ensued damaged his standing within the party. He did not regain his control of the party leadership, especially after BJP’s defeat in the general elections. Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, Former Foreign Minister commended Advani for standing tall in his efforts to promote peace between the two neighbors and for not relenting, inspite of a barrage of criticism he had to face in India. “We in Pakistan, therefore, were very unhappy at the price he had to pay on his return.”³² Advani felt not the slightest regret for his courageous efforts to acknowledge one of the leaders who led the struggle to free the then undivided India from the British colonial rule. Advani sought to bridge the divide in the post-colonial period, “Let us not remain prisoners of the past. Rather, let us solve the problems of the present in order to seize the

³⁰ “Sidhu returns from Pakistan after attending Imran Khan’s Oath taking ceremony”, *Khaleej Times*, India, August 19, 2018.

³¹ L.K. Advani, *My country, MY Life*, (Rupa. Co, 2008), p.813.

³² Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, *Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*, op.cit., p.221.

immensely beneficially possibilities of the future for one fifth of humanity that reside in South Asia.”³³

Peace Road Ahead: Fears, Concerns and Misconceptions

History is a testament to unfortunate developments in South Asia; at any given time, even if there is a whiff of Pakistan and India attempting to talk, hardliners and sceptics on both sides of the divide open up their ‘volley of cannons’, to shoot down the dove which had dared to tread a different flight. “There are Pro-India and anti-India lobbies in Pakistan. However, India has never been a factor in Pakistan’s elections, whereas anti-Pakistan bashing is a continuous factor in Indian elections, witnessed in the last, and the present one.”³⁴ In the past and at present, fears and concerns of the hardliners have prevented leaders in both the neighboring countries in taking any fresh or out of the box initiative which could push them towards sitting across the table to thrash out the issues. However, history is replete that these fears and concerns later turned out to be mere misconceptions.

There can be no doubt that when the time comes to study the course of Indo-Pakistan relations minutely and dispassionately, a distinct pattern will reveal itself, showing how statesmanlike moves on either side have been willfully frustrated or, at any rate, how attempts at frustration made their automatic appearance.³⁵ In this backdrop, in India, the so-called Pakistani experts and gurus leave no stone unturned to demonize the so-called military establishment in Pakistan who are blamed for creating difficulties which India was facing. One cannot rewrite history and Pakistan’s history is no exception and is replete with the military playing a dominant role during its different phases. One also cannot ignore that the military establishment when in power, took initiatives to normalize relations with India, or supported political governments to keep the eastern border silent and safe. In other parts of the world, history is also

³³ L.K. Advani, *My country, My Life*, op.cit., p.832

³⁴ Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry, former Pakistan Foreign Secretary. Personal interview. March, 19, 2019.

³⁵ Herbert Feldman, *Revolution in Pakistan: A Study of Martial Law Administration*, (Oxford University Press, 1967), p.188.

witness to leaders who were highly conservative and known hard liners, but took initiatives to create a peaceful world, baffling everybody. It was President Richard Nixon, known for his strong anti-Communist views and the one who also reached out to Communist China. Who could have imagined Soviet leader Gorbachev feeling most comfortable with Western leaders. Of recent, President Trump is an apt example of a conservative and who had no qualms in embracing North Korean leader, whom he once vilified as the “rocket man”.

Pakistan-India Relations Under Military Rule

President General Ayub Khan’s Period

President Ayub, a graduate of Aligarh University, India, had fond memories of his stay in the then undivided India, and had developed a close working relationship with his soldier comrades in the newly created India. As he progressed in his career, he had no rancor with any counterpart in India and desired that both the neighboring states to co-exist, progress and resolve all issues peacefully, “in January (1959) President Ayub Khan repeated his belief in the necessity for joint defense with India..... In July, 1960, he again expressed a wish for friendship with India, and, in September, a desire to see old bonds revived.”³⁶ Use of water can be a matter of life and death for any state. Pakistan found this to its predicament a few years after its creation that the source of water was located in the possession of a state with which it has adversarial relationship. As fate would have it, it fell to the mantle of the military government in Pakistan to find a permanent solution through a peaceful process, offered by the World Bank and actively supported by the US, who negotiated with Pakistan and India leading to the historic Indus Water Treaty (ITW) of 1960. Historian Feldman summed up “the best that can be said is that nothing was done that will either exacerbate ugly situations or prejudice the position and the claims in any future negotiation with India.”³⁷ Ayub’s exuberance to continue finding ways for Pakistan-India to

³⁶ Herbert Feldman, *Revolution in Pakistan: A Study of Martial Law Administration*, (Oxford University Press, 1967), p.188.

³⁷ *Ibid*, P.193.

co-exist is reflected in his statesman like decision to visit India and meet Prime Minister Nehru on September 1, 1959, after the provocative incident of January 1959 in which an Indian Air Force aircraft entered Pakistani airspace and was subsequently shot down, “this provided the opening for more futuristic ideas to be discussed. Among those, for instance, was the supply of gas from the recently discovered Sui gas fields in Bugti, Balochistan to Gujarat and East Punjab.”³⁸

President General Zia Ul Haq’s Phase

President General Zia ul Haq, another soldier head of state, was schooled in the undivided India and had happy memories of studying at the prestigious St. Stevens College, Delhi. He could recall some of his colleagues who had then attained high positions in the new state of India. He too harbored no ill will and strongly favored a peaceful resolution of all issues with India. Zia’s desire for the two countries peaceful co-existence can be gauged by his instructions to Niaz A Naik, the then Foreign Secretary, to work with his Indian counterpart on a “treaty of peace” and “good neighborliness” including a no war pact.”³⁹ Regretfully, due to certain external pressures, no progress could be made. The December 1985 visit to India by President Zia-ul-Haq after attending the SAARC Summit at Dhaka laid the foundation of the dialogue process which later took the shape of Composite Dialogue between Pakistan and India. On another occasion, when the borders of Pakistan and India became ‘hot’, General Zia chose to use a ‘peaceful weapon’ to defuse the situation, “With Indian troops amassed along the Pakistani border in early 1987, the morning of February 21, 1987, presented an altogether different surprise: a Pakistan Air Force jet landed at Delhi airport, with the visitor none other than Pakistan President General Ziaul Haq.”⁴⁰

³⁸ T.C.A. Raghavan, *The People Next Door: The Curious History of India’s Relations with Pakistan*, op.cit., p.61.

³⁹ “Pak-India no war pact revealed”, (*Daily Times*, May 8, 2018) (quoting Rasgotra, former Foreign Secretary of India).

⁴⁰ “A leaf from history: Cricket diplomacy checks war pitch”, Dawn, November 15, 2015.

President General Pervez Musharraf's Era

President General Pervez Musharraf, even though belonged to a generation who had little recollection of the partition, having been an infant when he came to the newly created country, but by sheer coincidence, he too shared a similar past. His father who worked for the government owned a house in Delhi, India and later migrated to Pakistan. His late father had happy memories of his stay in undivided India. Musharraf, a soldier should have been the last person to make the efforts he made to reconcile with the past and doggedly followed a path of serious rethinking the perpetual Pakistan-India enmity syndrome. It was the same Musharraf who made the terrible mistake of waging the Kargil War, but also the statesman who made the historic course correction and clasped the outstretched hand of the then Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee. This event was the turning point in modern Pakistan-India relations. Subsequently, a visible change was noticed in the manner state to state official contacts are made and conducted, followed by discussion on contentious issues, people-to-people contact and sporting links. The 2004 Musharraf–Vajpayee meeting on the sidelines of the 12th SAARC Summit in Islamabad opened up opportunities for public and back door diplomacy, which South Asian watchers still consider worth ‘picking up the thread’ to move forward!. “India and Pakistan resumed their stalled peace process in February 2004. This has yielded tangible, but varying degrees of progress on all eight issues that had been on the agenda.”⁴¹

Post Pulwama Incident and Pakistani Military Leadership

“Imran Khan has earned plaudits internationally and at home for his statesman-like act that has prevented a full-blown conflagration between Pakistan and India.”⁴² This is how Zahid Hussain described the reaction of Pakistani leadership to the developments in the post Pulwama period. The military leadership’s response was measured and mature. The military understood the limits of a nuclear state’s response and to keep all peaceful options open for a dialogue, “The

⁴¹ Dr. Syed Rifaat Hussain, “The India Factor”, Pakistan: Beyond the ‘Crisis State, op.cit., p.330.

⁴² “*Pulling back from the brink?*”, Zahid Hussain, Dawn, March, 06, 2019).

argument that Pakistan's security establishment doesn't support the civilian government's recent initiative to improve ties with India doesn't stand for two reasons: One, it is Pakistan's security establishment that is interested in developing a workable relationship with New Delhi and it has clearly owned the current government initiatives in this regard. Two, if Pakistan's security establishment wants to undermine the elected government's efforts of reaching out to India, the former doesn't need to support an incident of such magnitude."⁴³ General Bajwa, the COAS of Pakistan is consistent in calling for peaceful ties with India, even during the post Pulwama tension. "It is our sincere belief that the route to peaceful resolution of Pakistan-India disputes – including the core issue of Kashmir – runs through comprehensive and meaningful dialogue."⁴⁴ Indian sceptics may thus find it hard not to agree that there is enough willingness within the political and military leadership in Pakistan to refrain from jingoism and respond in a positive manner to any peace overture from India.

In the same vein, hardliners in Pakistan who remain sceptical about peace overtures of Indian leaders', especially those who belong to BJP with a RSS past, may have been disappointed when senior leaders of the BJP showed the same courage as that of their counterparts on the other side of the divide to leave the past and carve out a path of co-existence for the future of the two neighboring states. Among the two Indian leaders who stand tall as statesmen are late Vajpayee and Lal Krishan Advani, the former Deputy Prime Minister.

⁴³ "Understanding the Origins of the Pulwama Attack Inside Pakistan: Who benefits from the Pulwama attack?", Umair Jamal, *The Diplomat*, February, 2019.

⁴⁴ Umer Farooq, "Army's willingness to negotiate with India is a message to the world", *Herald*, June, 11, 2018.

Pakistan-India Relations Under Indian Leadership: Confidence Building Measures

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee: Personality and Peacemaker

Late Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, started his political career affiliated with the RSS and Jan Sangh, right wing Hindu organizations, but gradually transformed himself as a middle of the path politician, who mastered the art of reconciling the differences between various groups of BJP, a party he founded with likeminded politicians. “His political roots lay with the right-wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu nationalist organization from which India's governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) draws its ideological roots.”⁴⁵ How much Vajpayee had changed was reflected when he reached out to Pakistan in his famous ‘Lahore Yatra’ of 1999, “It might be true that the Lahore Agreement captured the world's imagination because it followed the prime minister's personally riding a bus to Lahore.”⁴⁶ A leading Indian daily summed up his visionary leadership, “But even within that short tenure, Vajpayee left a mark by conducting nuclear tests in Pokhran and starting a diplomatic dialogue with Pakistan at the same time.”⁴⁷ There is no doubt that late Vajpayee had left an indelible legacy of his positive contribution in building a relationship of trust. Thus, Prime Minister Imran Khan’s tribute at the passing away of Vajpayee was not unexpected “Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a tall political personality of the Sub-Continent. His attempt for betterment of Indo-Pakistan relationship shall always be remembered. Mr. Vajpayee even as a Foreign Minister took responsibility in improving India-Pakistan relations.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ “Atal Behari Vajpayee: A mercurial moderate”, Kingshuk Nag,, *BBC*, August 16, 2018.

⁴⁶ “The Peace Zygote”, Malini Parthasarathy, *The Outlook*, January 8, 2001.

⁴⁷ “The Peacemaker Departs”, *The Hindu*, August 16, 2018

⁴⁸ “Imran Khan, Shiekh Hasina Pay Tributes to Vajpayee”, *Times of India*, August 16, 2018.

Lal Krishan Advani, the former Deputy Prime Minister

Lal Krishan Advani more or less mirrored the career of late Vajpayee; he was too affiliated with the RSS and Jan Sangh, right wing Hindu organizations. Advani spent his childhood and early youth in Karachi, in the then undivided India before migrating to the newly created state of India. Advani, like late Vajpayee transformed himself from an ultra-right ideologue to a strong supporter of peace and co-existence and which was reflected in his advice to Vajpayee, “Atal Ji, why don’t you invite the General to come to India for talks? It does not matter, if your Lahore initiative failed. It was highly appreciated both at home and abroad. Similarly, your invitation to him will be welcomed as an act of statesmanship, both in India and abroad.”⁴⁹ Advani had to face serious criticism for praising Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, during his visit to his mausoleum in 2005 and which in a manner seriously undermined his political career, but he remained unrepentant in his strong belief of Pakistan–India charting a policy of peaceful co-existence, “For the future that should be discussed is not so much Jinnah, but the future of Indo-Pak relations in the context of a new vision of peace, inter-religious harmony, and inter-state cooperation in all of South Asia.”⁵⁰

Prime Minister Narinder Modi

Prime Minister Narinder Modi had the same mooring as that of Late Vajpayee and Advani, except that Modi’s image is tainted. He has not been able to shake off the allegation of being complicit to the 2002 ‘bloody’ Gujarat riots, when he was the Chief Minister. During the 2019 election campaign, Modi tried to cash in on the Indian Air Force claim of ‘destroying’ a terrorist camp in Balakot, in Pakistan “But the crucial question is how far the Balakot airstrikes influenced voters. Surveys say that Modi’s popularity graph had gone up following the strike, and consequently, did play a vital role in the electoral outcome. At the same time, there is a sizeable number who say that the government’s Balakot claim was like many of its other policies: announced with a bang only to stutter and

⁴⁹ L.K. Advani, “*My Life, My Country*”, op.cit. p.697.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.832.

collapse.”⁵¹ However, the challenge is that Pakistan shall have to deal with Modi who has convincingly won the 2019 elections. Prime Minister Imran Khan has not been overtly critical of his Indian counterpart and can probably be considered as a sagacious decision, as demonstrated by his deft handling of the Pulwama incident. In fact, both Pakistani and Indian Governments contained the crisis, leaving enough space for possible talks in the future. In the past, Modi had developed a fairly good rapport with Nawaz Sharif, former Prime Minister of Pakistan, but one has to await the post-election period, possibly six months to a year to gauge his working relationship with Imran Khan, although both leaders have exchanged warm messages.

What Next: Time for a More Matured Approach by Both States and Their Leadership

Whenever there is a “change of guard” at the highest leadership level in either Pakistan or India, even the most pessimists on either side of the divide see a glimmer of hope of the two states possibly making a ‘course correction’. This in fact means giving the needed impetus to the two states in living like normal neighbors? That optimism seems to have been ignited at the ‘change of guard’ in Pakistan; Prime Minister Imran Khan had received the desired positive feelers from Prime Minister Modi on his assumption of office, and Imran Khan has also reciprocated in the desired positive manner. Imran Khan had earlier stressed upon the need for the resumption of the comprehensive dialogue process between the two countries and assured that if, “India takes one positive step towards Pakistan; it shall be reciprocated by two similar steps.”⁵² The positivity seems to be in the air and both states are expected to ‘grab the opportunity’ at the earliest, before the usual ‘jinx’ experienced in the past, takes control.

There can be no denying that the Composite Dialogue Process needs to be rejuvenated and given the importance it deserves in the

⁵¹ “India Strikes on Pakistan, A make or Break for Modi’s Government”, K.S. Dakshina Murthy, *TRT World*, April 10, 2009.

⁵² PM Khan responds to Modi ‘in positive spirit’ to resume talks, resolve all issues”, *Dawn*, Pakistan, September 20, 2018

context of normalizing relations between Pakistan and India. In the recent past, there was a brief change of heart in New Delhi when the intriguingly long handshake between the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers at the COP 21 Climate Conference at Paris on December 1, 2015, widely covered in the Pakistani and Indian media hopes that the brief surprise meeting, "may help ease tensions – including cricketing ties."⁵³ This brief interaction led to the meeting between National Security Advisers (NSAs) of the two states. The Modi–Sharif meeting in Paris was credited to the then President Obama's discussion with Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines of UNGA in 2015. In a quick follow-up, the National Security Advisors (NSAs) of India and Pakistan met in Bangkok on December 6, 2015 and issued a joint statement about the resumption of Indo-Pak bilateral dialogue on peace, security, terrorism, Jammu and Kashmir and tranquility along the Line of Control (LOC) and other issues including 'religious tourism'. Modi's Government insists on calling this process "Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue' (CBD) process. It hardly matters as to whatever name the two states give to the process, as long as it seriously addresses the issues which hinders bilateral normalization.

The First Step: Reviving the Composite Dialogue Process

For Pakistan especially, regional peace is absolutely imperative. The same could be true for India. Pakistan is faced with a myriad of challenges; from security to stabilizing economy and attracting investment. These are linked to providing jobs to the continuing 'youth bulge'. To achieve this objective, Pakistan needs peace on its borders. India tops the priority with which Pakistan will have to find ways to reconcile its differences, irrespective of the difficulties which it shall face. This was aptly summed up "Pakistan has consistently advocated resumption of the Composite (now Comprehensive) Dialogue with India. And while it was preoccupied with fighting terrorism within its territory and from across its western border, it made strategic sense for Pakistan to seek a calm eastern frontier."⁵⁴ The obstacle could be their personal egos. Many

⁵³ "Nawaz, Modi meet on sidelines of Paris climate summit", Irfan Haider Dawn, November 30, 2015

⁵⁴ Munir Akram, "Normalising ties with India", *Dawn*, May 27, 2018.

a times, leaders have to overcome their egos in the larger national interest; late President Nixon and Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf all overcame their egos. Celebrity status in India and credibility in general are two advantages that Prime Minister Imran Khan can use to convince his Indian counterpart that it is most opportune now to engage in a dialogue for regional peace. Late Vajpayee and Advani the top leadership of the BJP, the ruling party in India whose policy is known to be a hard-line one to any peace overtures to Pakistan, are also on record to have put aside their rigidities and made serious efforts in the past to mend fences with its western neighbor.

A whiff of optimism is definitely in the air; it can be a coincidence that the Kartarpur Corridor, whose foundation was laid in 2018, has the potential to positively impact the people on both sides of the divide and contribute in the revival of talks between Pakistan and India.

Kartarpur Corridor

The Kartarpur Corridor, whose foundation was laid in 2018, offers an excellent opportunity for Pakistan and India to utilize it as an ‘out of the box solution’ to restart the bilateral talks, which in time can lead to the commencement of the Composite Dialogue, “Considering the current hostile situation between the two neighbors after the Pulwama attack, Kartarpur corridor can serve as a peace gesture and confidence building measure between India and Pakistan.”⁵⁵ The news about the possibility of building the Kartarpur Corridor at the swearing ceremony of Prime Minister Imran Khan in July 2018 was no less then electrifying to the Sikhs all over the world. This was hinted by General Bajwa, COAS of Pakistan in his brief interaction with Navjot Singh Sidhu, former Indian cricketer turned politician who, “clarified that his visit was not intended for politics, but to celebrate the success of his cricketer friend, to which he extended that the hug was an ‘emotional’ moment as General Bajwa had told him about their efforts to open the corridor from

⁵⁵ Shahroo Malik, “Kartarpur Corridor: A Hope for Peace”, *Issue Brief*, March, 7, 2019, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad.

India's Dera Baba Nanak to the Sikh shrine of Kartarpur Sahib.”⁵⁶ Karatarpur Corridor is a border corridor being constructed between the neighboring nations of India and Pakistan, connecting the Sikh shrines of Dera Baba Nanak Sahib (located in Punjab, India) and Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur (in Punjab, Pakistan). When completed, the 4.7 kilometers (2.9 miles) corridor is intended to allow religious devotees from India to visit the Gurdwara in Kartarpur, Pakistan without a visa. The thrust of the corridor is people centric, which mostly impacts the Sikhs, who are one of the most prominent and vocal minorities in India. Sikhs who are residing all over the world regularly visit their holy shrines in India and Pakistan. These Sikhs can become the vehicle of peace and a bridge between the two neighboring states. It is also a fact that people of other faiths from India shall travel through this Corridor; Baba Guru Nanak is revered by all faiths and in time, public pressure to lessen tension shall grow. During the construction of the Corridor and later to manage it, the two governments shall be bound to hold regular talks. The reason for a regular interaction is based on the fact that the Corridor is unique in South Asia, not only because of its location being away from the normal internationally recognized border for entry and exit of visitors and trade, but also due to the new arrangement of entry of visitors without visas, which is indeed very sensitive by any standard in the context of Pakistan – India relations. Therefore, it shall be incumbent and sensible for the representatives of the two governments to regularly meet, discuss each other’s concerns and iron out the differences which shall arise out of a new arrangement of people from one country to enter and exit without visas.

The nature of the regular meetings on managing Kartarpur Corridor shall be attended by representatives of a number of government agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in fact is leading the ongoing negotiations. This in time can create the desired rapport and trust to enlarge the issues and subjects of interest. The two governments shall gradually realize that it would be propitious to commence the Composite Dialogue, as many subjects in that process are also people centric and can pay

⁵⁶ “Sidhu lauds Pakistan for opening its Kartarpur corridor to Sikh pilgrims”, *The News International*, September, 2018

dividends in terms of keeping the border secure and peaceful. Positivity spurted in the air, as India reached out to Pakistan when Venkaiah Naidu, the India's Vice-President while laying the foundation stone for the construction of the Corridor expressed the desire that, "The corridor will become a symbol of love and peace between both countries."⁵⁷ Some felt the step would help in normalizing the strained relations between India and Pakistan that have taken a nosedive in recent years.⁵⁸

Prime Minister Imran Khan, two days later, responded in the same tenor while laying the foundation stone of the Corridor on Pakistan's side and reached out to India, "The leadership of Pakistan and India must break free from the shackles of the past. Peace cannot be attained unless both the sides looked towards the future instead of dwelling on what has happened. It would be madness to think about a war between two nuclear powers."⁵⁹ While the Indian Prime Minister was upbeat on the Corridor, he "Likened the decision by the two countries to the fall of the Berlin Wall, indicating that the project may ease simmering tension between the two countries."⁶⁰ Ironically, the comments of the Indian Foreign Minister on the same day can best be described as disappointing, "Kartarpur Corridor is not connected with dialogue process with Pakistan as "terror and talks can't go together."⁶¹ The disappointment stemmed from ignorance of ground realities, possibly on purpose as a policy; Pakistan, its people and the security forces understand terrorism far better than any country globally. Pakistan continues to be a victim of terrorism and is fighting the terrorists for the last one decade and its soldiers continue to pay the price of eliminating terrorists from the country. It is another matter if the Indian

⁵⁷ "India's vice-president lays foundation stone in Gurdaspur for Kartarpur corridor", *Dawn*, November, 26, 2018.

⁵⁸ Kartarpur Corridor: Can India and Pakistan bring down their 'Berlin Wall'? (Quoted from Deutsche Welle), *Daily News*, *Daily News*, Egypt, November, 28, 2018.

⁵⁹ "Pakistan and India must break free from the shackles of the past: PM Imran", *The Express Tribune*, November, 28, 2018.

⁶⁰ "Kartarpur Corridor may become harbinger of Indo-Pak peace initiative: Residents", *The Indian Express*, November, 28, 2018.

⁶¹ "India Won't Participate In SAARC Summit, Pak Must Stop Terror First: Sushma Swaraj", *Outlook (India)*, November, 28, 2018.

Government mixes up the unrest in the Indian Occupied Kashmir with terrorism. As a matter of principle, Pakistan continues to offer moral and political support to the Kashmiris and nothing more. If terrorism is brought on the table for discussion, then it shall be a two way affair; both sides have their own axe to grind. Pakistan's economy has sustained a colossal loss of \$252 billion owing to the US-led war against terrorism which is nearly eight times more than the financial assistance given by Washington to Islamabad.”⁶² If the Western media, who has for decades been the leading critic of Pakistan's fight against terrorism can gauge the extent of economic hemorrhage that Pakistan has sustained, it would be naïve or outright 'hostility' by less than Pakistan's sympathizers to put the blame of terrorism in the region on Pakistan.

US, Russia and China: Role and Influence

The alliance forged between the big powers during the crucial Second World War crumbled soon after the end of the war. United Kingdom, a dominant colonial power found itself economically sapped and unable to play its traditional role in important parts of the globe. The vacuum was filled by the US. It was no surprise to see US dominating the politics of South Asia, a period during which Pakistan became a US ally during the Cold War and beyond. US-Pakistan relations took another dimension in the wake of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the calamitous 9/11 events. Both these events provided the US to get directly involved in Afghanistan and also brought Pakistan in the forefront of US policy in the region. Subsequently, whenever tension arose between Pakistan and India and there was a danger of the two nuclear armed neighbors tension going beyond a certain limit, US overtly and behind the scenes made efforts to reduce tension, “it would be appropriate to mention here that the US was attempting to bring India and Pakistan closer together.....Subsequent developments continued to demonstrate America's sustained interest in promoting peace between Pakistan and India.”⁶³

⁶² “Economist estimates Washington's war against terror cost Pakistan \$252bn”, Shabaz Rana, *The Economist*, April, 03, 2019.

⁶³ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, “*Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*”, op.cit., p.584.

US role in defusing tensions between Pakistan and India during 2001-02 should not really cause surprise, as the great powers have always been involved in the region due to its strategic significance.”⁶⁴ Within ten days of my visit to meeting with Powell in Washington, he came on a whirlwind tour of India and Pakistan in a bid to lower tension between our two countries following 12/13 and ‘Operation Parakram.’⁶⁵ President Trump who was in Hanoi holding crucial talks with the North Korean leader during the post Pulwama crisis spoke to the press, “It’s a very dangerous situation between the two countries. We would like to see it stop.”⁶⁶ Later, details of the intervention were released to the media about the US’s crucial and timely brinkmanship to defuse tension between the two neighboring countries, “the US maintained a high level contact with the government of both countries. The Secretary of State Mike Pompeo led the diplomatic engagement directly, when he spoke with the Indian Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj, National Security Adviser Doval, and Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi... The secretary’s involvement played an essential role in de-escalating tension between the two sides.”⁶⁷ “We made a lot of effort to get the international community involved in encouraging the two sides to de-escalate the situation because we fully realized how dangerous it was, said a senior Trump official.”⁶⁸

However, in the region, there are now ‘new boys’ who exercise the required influence to coax Pakistan and India to come to the negotiating table; Russia which enjoys close historical ties with India, and of recent, enjoys improved ties with Pakistan, while China, whose strong ‘all weather friendship with Pakistan’ is well-known, has not only managed its difficult relations with India, but also visibly improved its economic and trade ties with it. There is an opinion that, “Russia and China may continue to tolerate Pakistan-India rivalry and tension, short of a conflict, as nuclear

⁶⁴ Ibid.,p.182.

⁶⁵ L.K. Advani, “*My Life, My Country*”, op.cit., p.653.

⁶⁶ “Trump Calls India –Pakistan Stand Off Very dangerous’, *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, February22, 2019.

⁶⁷ Syed Wajid Ali, “US played role in defusing Indo-Pak tension”, *The News International*, May, 14, 2019.

⁶⁸ “US Pulled Back India and Pakistan from the Brink of war”, *The Hindu*, March, 17, 2019.

armed states can ill afford to go to war.”⁶⁹ It is for this reason that China has gone on record, “As a friendly neighbor of both India and Pakistan, China pro-actively promoted peace talks and played a constructive role in easing the tense situation.”⁷⁰

Both Russia and China have publically voiced and supported normalization of Pakistan–India relations. What has compelled Pakistan and Russia to join hands are apprehensions that the United States may not be interested in bringing stability to Afghanistan for its own strategic interests. These fears have now opened up the possibility of an alliance between Pakistan, Russia and China in an unprecedented development that will shape the future of this volatile region. While Russia has preferred to remain out of the ‘big news’, as part of Putin’s diplomacy, Russia did play a significant role in dousing the indented fire from spreading further “During the crises, Russia remained in touch with both with Pakistan and India. A day after Pakistan shot down two Indian warplanes and captured one of its pilots; Russian President Vladimir Putin telephoned Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to show restraint.”⁷¹

Stability and security is also a top priority for both Russia and China, “The expansion of the SCO to include South Asian states follows China’s push to create the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism (QDDM), a counterterrorism organization consisting of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and Tajikistan—a clear indication of Beijing’s concern that instability coming from the broader region’s most vulnerable states could impact China, and that it may need to act on its own to prevent instability from South Asia from crossing into China itself.”⁷² Pakistani and Indian soldiers dancing together on the sidelines of the military drills in Russia on August 15, 2018 was a rare sight during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization drills. India and Pakistan participated in military drills

⁶⁹ Moeed Yusuf, Personal interview, October 14, 2018, Islamabad.

⁷⁰ “China says played ‘constructive role’ in reducing Pakistan, India tension”, *Reuters, The Economic Times*, March, 19, 2019.

⁷¹ “Russia’s ‘unnoticed’ efforts helped defuse Indo-Pak tensions”, Kamal Yusuf, *The Express Tribune*, March, 24, 2019

⁷² “Cooperation & Competition: Russia & China in Central Asia, the Russian Far East and the Arctic”, Stronski, Paul & NG, Nicole *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*, February, 28, 2018, Paper.

for the first time since becoming full members of the SCO in June 2017. Even though this was a symbolic gesture, it may have met the aims and objectives of Russia and China in bringing these two countries under one roof, especially soldiers who are trained from the outset to consider each other as opponents. “For South Asian people, China’s rise and geo-economics projects should not be a source of fear. On the contrary, they might be the best chance for a better regional future.”⁷³

The active US brinkmanship in the post–Pulwama period was welcomed and the sobering role of Russia and China, two leading regional powers with Pakistan and India was indeed a positive development. However, China and Russia for obvious reasons may not be able to fully replace the ‘preponderant’ influence of the US, the sole Superpower, who needs to be kept in the loop, especially by Pakistan as it seeks the intercession of Russia and China. Pakistan can ill afford to increase US’ ire, which is already has serious disagreements with Pakistan on various issues. Thus, it would require all the diplomatic finesse on both the sides to smooth the ruffled feathers. Both sides need each other, more so Pakistan. To move Pakistan–India dialogue, Pakistan should not only look towards India, if it shows reluctance to reach out to it for talks. Instead, Pakistan’s leadership may aggressively employ a diplomatic offensive with US, China and Russia selling its narrative of peaceful co-existence and resolving all issues through a dialogue.

The Colonial Factor: Britain’s’ Responsibility and Role of the Expatriates

United Kingdom should share the blame for the enduring tragedy of the state of relations between Pakistan and India, which primarily centers on the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute, which has rendered the bilateral ties, regrettably, to a less than normal state “Mountbatten could hardly disguise his partiality for the congress or act as an honest broker in the matter of accession of

⁷³ “The Rise of China and Shift from Geostrategy to Geo-economics: Impact on South Asia”, Didier Chaudet, (Regional Dynamics and Strategic Concerns in South Asia, International Conference by Islamabad Policy Research Institute & Hanns Seidel Foundation, November, 2017), p.94.

the states. He shifted his stance from time to time essentially to suit Indian's interest.....in a volte-face he subsequently suggested that the rulers take into account geographical compulsions in deciding which dominion to accede to.”⁷⁴ The Pakistani media reflected a balanced opinion on prodding the two neighbors, “It is high time that the international community should come forward to break a stalemate between India and Pakistan and to bring them on dialogue table to decide in the collective good of the regions stability and prosperity.”⁷⁵

However, the question is whether United Kingdom (UK), the colonial master for over two centuries, has any duty to mediate between Pakistan and India, and is there is any precedence in the past of UK having intervened to prevent a conflict from widening between the two neighboring states? On April 28, 1965, the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson on being informed of the danger of Rann of Kutch conflict worsening, sent messages to the leaders of Pakistan and India, offering to mediate, “he felt concerned that of the possible ramifications of the conflict spreading along the Punjab border, leading to all-out war.”⁷⁶ While no one can disagree or doubt US’ global power and reach, but at the same time, it is also a fact that the United Kingdom has been able to maintain its global influence, even though much diminished, as compared to the past; UK’s voice is still heard in the countries it had ruled once, provided the countries are able to use it to their advantage and in this case Pakistan and India if they are convinced that they need UK’s mediation to settle issues which mostly had arisen out of a ‘botched’ decision to leave the Sub-continent with its ‘bloody consequences’. British citizens of Pakistani and Indian origin are not only very well-established in the UK, but also hold important positions in the government, parliament and businesses. There are around three dozen British MPs of Pakistani and Indian origin. They are, therefore, well-placed to use their influence with the UK

⁷⁴ “An Historical Overview of the Accession of Princely States”, Attiya Khanam, *Journal of Historical Studies* Vol. II, No.I- January-June 2016, The Women University, Multan, p. 87

⁷⁵ “India-Pakistan: Settling the blame game”, Amna Tauhidi, *The Nation*, Lahore, May 08,

⁷⁶ Farooq Bajwa, “From Kutch to Tashkent: The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965”, (Pentagon Press, New Delhi, 2014), p.82

Government to contribute in whatever manner in improving Pakistan-India relations and can prod Pakistan and India to take the Composite Dialogue path to resolve their bilateral issues. This optimism stems from the fact that British citizens of Pakistani and Indian origin are living in complete harmony in the UK for decades.

The Second Step: Reaping the Two “Low Hanging Fruit”

It would be prudent that Pakistan and India choose relatively less contentious issues for discussion. The Siachen and Sir Creek issues fall into that category. They were considered settled and only their implementation was left at that time. These issues can be resolved in the spirit of the Indus Waters dispute and the Rann of Kutch dispute. There is now a publicly stated consensus between the government, opposition and the military in Pakistan that the Siachen, the world’s highest theatre of conflict, should come to an end. It was on July 19, 1989 that Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India agreed to the implementation of the Siachen Agreement, but it was rebuffed by the top Indian leadership, who cautioned its political leadership against it.”⁷⁷ This fact is buttressed by another authentic source, “I said that Indian commentators often accuse the Pakistan Army of political interference, but in this case, it was abundantly clear that the Indian Army Chief was interfering in matters exclusively within the domain of the political government.”⁷⁸ Since then, India has been unwilling to accept the futility of keeping troops in Siachen, even after the tragedy in Siachen in April 2012, where Pakistani soldiers and several civilians are believed to be buried under enormous amounts of rubble and ice. This tragedy should have been a wakeup call. “Siachen and Sir Creek issues were considered settled and its implementation was left to be done and called “a low hanging fruit” by the Pakistan side. However, India does not agree with it all and will counter anything to discuss it.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Aziz Khan, former Pakistan Ambassador, Personal interview, October 28, 2018.

⁷⁸ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, “*Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*”, op. cit., p.280.

⁷⁹ Moeed Yusuf, Personal Interview, October 14, 2018, Islamabad.

Indian Army too experiences fatalities in Siachen. According to the Indian media, “nearly a thousand soldiers have died guarding Siachen since the Indian Army took control of the glacier in April 1984, almost twice the number of lives lost in the 1999 Kargil war.”⁸⁰ It would, therefore, be in India’s interest too, that the Siachen Issue is settled sooner than later. The continuous fatalities of Pakistani and Indian soldiers in Siachen could have been the motivating factor propelling the two sides to move towards talks and implementation. Regretfully, this may not be happening any time soon. Sir Creek issue falls in the same category of ‘low hanging fruit’ and which could be settled without much difficulty. According to an analyst, “of all the bilateral disputes between Pakistan and India, Sir Creek has the simplest solution and can be resolved as a confidence building measure (CBM), paving the way to settle the more complex ones.”⁸¹

The Third Step: Revival of SAARC

Any effort to normalize Pakistan-India relations would be incomplete without bringing SAARC to life. This premier regional organization provides ‘effortless’ opportunity to leaders of member states to discuss on the sidelines, complex and even thorny bilateral issues, “Notwithstanding SAARC’s lack of dispute resolution or conflict prevention mechanism, the SAARC Summit meetings have been useful in enabling the heads of state and government of member states and government of member states, as well as their foreign ministers to meet bilaterally on the side lines.”⁸² It is unfortunate that the future of South Asian Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has been in limbo due to the difficult Pakistan–India relationship, the regional organization’s two major member states. Not for the less than normal relationship of Pakistan and India, this regional organization would have made admirable progress, as it holds immense promise of ‘peace, amity, progress and prosperity of all people of South Asia and working together to efficiently lift people out of backwardness, poverty, illiteracy, disease.

⁸⁰ “Of 1000 soldiers died, only 220 fell to enemy fire”, Rahul Singh, *Hindustan Times*, February, 12, 2016.

⁸¹ “Sir Creek, Way Out?”, S.M. Hali, *The Nation*, June, 27, 2012).

⁸² Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, “*Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*”, op. cit., p.373.

Efforts to revitalize SAARC should be a parallel endeavor, independent of the efforts to revive the Composite Dialogue Process. The advantage of a SAARC Summit can be gauged from the successful bilateral meeting of Pakistani and Indian leaders on the sideline of SAARC Summit, held at Islamabad in 2004. Some quarters in India have raised concerns regarding Pakistan's preference to use the multilateral forum to discuss contentious issues, "The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) with all its limitations, too, has served a useful purpose. Pakistan feels more assured in such a multinational rather than a bilateral association."⁸³ In the Islamabad 2004 meeting, a declaration was made that Pakistan territory would not be used by any terrorist in the light of India's concern of cross border terrorism emanating from Pakistan. Therefore, in 2004, the dialogue process between India and Pakistan resumed in the form of the composite dialogue. The discussions also started on the Jammu & Kashmir dispute at the foreign secretary's level. There was normalization of relations, development in peace and security and several CBM's were made that included starting of bus services from Sri Nagar-Muzaffarabad, trade, and facilitation in cross border travel, but that too is not devoid of difficulties "The bus service is underused, limited to divided local families, and the process of obtaining permits to travel remains tedious".⁸⁴ Nevertheless, both Pakistani and Indian leaders may not be cowed by the challenges they may face and would have to pick up the thread from where it was left off.

Revival of holding SAARC Summits is the need of the hour. While reaching out to India, Pakistan must also work with other member states to breathe life into the SAARC, emphasizing that the regional organization benefits all. India has to share a major blame in scuttling efforts by Pakistan to host SAARC Summit. However, India, not surprisingly refuses to accept blame for not allowing Pakistan to host the SAARC Summit. In this scenario, sitting and

⁸³ "The Imperative For Dialogue: Pakistan in a Changing Strategic Context", Mani Shankar Aiyer, Ajay Darshan Behera & Mathew C. Joseph (eds), Knowledge World in association with CENTRE for Strategic and Regional Studies, University of Jammu, Jammu, 2004, p.339.

⁸⁴ "Kashmir Line of Control and Grassroots Peacebuilding", Pawan Bali and Shaheen Akhtar, *United States Institute of Peace*, Washington, DC, SPECIAL REPORT 410, July, 2017.

waiting for a miracle to jolt SAARC to life, may not happen. Prime Minister Imran Khan can undertake a visit of other SAARC member countries for the purpose of exchanging views with his counterparts, on regional development and correcting the narrative on the failure to hold SAARC Summit and the advantages of the meeting of the minds. These series of visits must take place, sooner than later. Naturally, and given the importance for regional peace, an informed spade work would need to be done before these visits can take place.

Within SAARC, Pakistan and India can look to cooperate on non-traditional issues many among which include:

- Poverty alleviation
- Population stabilization (Members can learn from their individual experiences.)
- Empowerment of women (top priority of most states)
- Mobilize the youth bulge (a common challenge)
- People-to-people contact (vehicle for building trust)
- Human resource development (Improve skills to make useful citizens)
- Promotion of health and nutrition (pre-requisites of useful citizens)
- Protection of children (Key to the welfare and well-being of all South Asians)
- Environment: States in South Asia are vulnerable to natural disasters. It is important to undertake and reinforce regional cooperation in the conservation of our water resources, environment, pollution prevention and control as well as our preparedness to deal with natural calamities
- Food Security (basis of the survival of any population)

The Fourth Step: Take Stock of Unresolved Issues

The Jammu & Kashmir Dispute

Former Indian External Affairs Minister and Foreign Secretary, Natwar Singh hits the nail on the head, “Indo-Pakistan relations have been, and are, accident prone. The future of Pakistan-India relations lies in the past, and Kashmir is the ultimate hurdle. We

have to deal with Pakistan in a pragmatic manner if we are not to make a mess of the relationship.”⁸⁵ The Jammu & Kashmir dispute is indeed the core issue, and tops the list of serious issues which needs urgent attention and discussion in the Composite Dialogue Process, even though India considers it as one of the ‘irritants’ between the two neighboring states. This issue alone has caused deaths of thousands of people on both sides of the divide, more so in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK), where no end seems to be in sight to the wanton killing by Indian paramilitary forces. Global human rights organizations continue to document and share these Indian atrocities; regretfully, the Indian Government remains in a denial mode. On the contrary, Pakistan’s record on the Kashmir dispute has been more positive “In the matter of the Kashmir dispute, Pakistan has been comparatively more flexible than India.”⁸⁶ A former Indian General, who had also served in Modi’s cabinet, shares a serious thought, “The Jammu & Kashmir imbroglio cannot be resolved by military means or militancy. Any attempt to resolve a complex political problem in a hurry, without carrying the people of the two nations, could lead to violence on both sides of the border or the LoC.”⁸⁷ Sane Indian voices at times acknowledge Pakistan’s legitimate demand, “The internal dynamics of Pakistan permit favoring an engagement between the two countries provided Kashmir is on the agenda as a special and priority item of discourse.”⁸⁸

Not surprisingly, history records the basis of this tragedy which was bound to happen; there have been extensive literature by eminent historians on the Indian Government’s double dealing on the principle of accession of princely states, Junagarh and Kashmir. Farooq Bajwa, a writer on South Asia, adds ”The fate of Jammu & Kashmir was to prove the one issue which poisoned relations between India and Pakistan from their independence and still remains one of the great unresolved dispute of international

⁸⁵ Natwar K. Singh, “*One Life is Not Enough- An autobiography*”, (Rupa, New Delhi, 2014), p.187.

⁸⁶ S. M. Burke, *Pakistan’s Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1973), p.388.

⁸⁷ V. P. Malik, “*Kargil: From Surprise to Victory*”, (HarperCollins Publishers India, 2006), p.399.

⁸⁸ Mani Shankar Aiyer, “*The Imperative For Dialogue*”, op. cit., p.327.

politics.”⁸⁹ While the usual ‘cold rebuff’, has been the norm in Pakistan–India relations for decades, rationality and pragmatism has, on many occasions, taken the center stage in the bilateral relationship of these two neighboring states. Leaders of both the states have risen to the occasion and have taken bold steps for a peaceful co-existence. The ‘Lahore Yatra’ of 1999 was one such bold stroke which ‘electrified’ the region. Based on a compromise approach called the Lahore Process in February 1999, the then Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India discarded the ‘Kashmir first’ approach and followed a ‘middle-path,’ wherein progress on all issues could be sought in tandem. It was a compromise in the sense that while India agreed to include Kashmir in the agenda for talks, Pakistan agreed to include terrorism. These problems were the two major irritants in bilateral relations. The back channel was initiated by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart Vajpayee to seek a solution of the Kashmir dispute.

General Musarraf, who was accused of a having derailed the Lahore Process of 1999, himself picked up the thread where it had been left in the post Kargil period whose results paved a new path in resolving this thorniest of bilateral issues, “President Musharraf and Prime Minister Singh fundamentally agreed upon four points: One, Jammu & Kashmir could not be made independent; Two, borders could not be redrawn; Three, the LoC could be made irrelevant; Four, a joint management for both parts of Kashmir could be worked out.”⁹⁰ This proposal was discussed through the back channel and the subjects were kept away from the media and the public until a final agreement could be reached. The fruit of the back channel diplomacy between India and Pakistan during 2004 was for all to see, “By the end of 2004, most positive developments in Pakistan-India relations had taken place including the commencement of the second round of Composite Dialogue, an Experts’ Meeting on nuclear and conventional CBMs relating to LoC in Kashmir.....and the initiation of a bus service between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar. The hope was that these CBMs would go a long way towards creating a peaceful environment in the

⁸⁹ Farooq Bajwa, “*From Kutch to Tashkent: The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965*”, (Pentagon Press, New Delhi, 2014), p.3

⁹⁰ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, “*Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*”, p.302.

region.”⁹¹ Most of the progress in visibly improving Pakistan-India relations owe to the back channel diplomacy. Pakistan was represented by Tariq Aziz. He was a close confidante of President Musharraf ...Tariq Aziz dealt on the backchannel with Brajesh Mishra, J.N. Dixit, and Ambassador S.K, Lambah, the three India negotiators during the five year tenure of our government.”⁹²

Without compromising the stated stand of Pakistan and India on the Jammu & Kashmir dispute, the four-point formula pertaining to the Jammu & Kashmir dispute has the potential to be a practical and workable solution to the thorniest of the bilateral issue. But nothing substantial could be achieved. Finally, the whole peace process came to a standstill owing to Samjhuta Express Bombings of 2007 and Mumbai attacks of 2008. Ultimately, the peace progression went into a cold storage after Musharraf and regrettably, successive political governments ignored the positive steps which had been taken to move the Kashmir issue forward.

As the situation in the IOK worsens, it would be timely that Pakistan and India use the second track diplomacy or back channel to end the blatant human rights violation in the IOK. Extensive recent writing on the Jammu & Kashmir dispute confirms that only a back channel negotiation, which is naturally secret, can move a sensitive issue like Kashmir. Encouraging progress made on the dispute during the tenures of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and General Musharraf, is a positive reflection of that process. However, the present Indian leadership continues to ignore any need to talk to Pakistan on this very contentious issue. “Pakistan leadership has, by and large, begun to understand that despite the undoubted international character of the Kashmir dispute; it will need to be resolved bilaterally. It will also be resolved peacefully... we do have a basic framework for Kashmir, negotiated over many years through the backchannel.”⁹³ Backchannel has worked in the framework for a Kashmir settlement evolved through backchannel diplomacy during, especially 2005-2007. Endemic problems between the two countries can only possibly be addressed by such diplomacy. Henry Kissinger,

⁹¹ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, “*Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*, p.201.

⁹² *Ibid.*,312.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.402.

in his many writing, has stressed its importance, that in resolving complex international crises, “the test is not absolute satisfaction but balanced dissatisfaction”. In brief, a sane Indian voice summed it up, “No doubt Kashmir is a difficult issue that bedevils the relationship between the two countries. Surely, however, there is a sufficient goodwill and statesmanship in both the countries which can find a way out of this particular impasse.”⁹⁴ Since the coming of Modi’s Government, it has been using unprecedented strong arms tactics to break the will of the Kashmiris in IOK, threatening to repeal the special status given to IOK in the Indian Constitution, and other unethical steps have been taken which can indeed have far grave consequences then what the Indian Government can contemplate, “Permanently altering the ethnic makeup of Indian- Occupied Kashmir, which could eventually result in ethnic cleansing, would also be a serious violation of international law.”⁹⁵ Sanity should prevail in India to sit with Pakistan to find a workable solution to the Jammu & Kashmir dispute and avoid spilling innocent blood of the Kashmiris, “No conflict rooted in the people’s sentiment can be crushed by force.”⁹⁶

The Fifth Step: Visibly Improve Bilateral Ties

“The civil society in Pakistan must be kept engaged and people-to-people contact strengthened.”⁹⁷

1. Increase People-to-People Contacts – Exchange of:

- Media and Journalists (Pen mightier than the sword)
“Moving forward, the media, particularly the electronic media, could play a major role in influencing public opinion in the two countries.”⁹⁸

⁹⁴ “*India –Pakistan: Themes Beyond Borders*”, Nikhil Chakaravartty, (selected/Edited), (Konark Publishers Pvt Ltd., Delhi, 2004), p.348.

⁹⁵ “A New Strategy”, Sikander Shah, *Dawn*, April, 20, 2019.

⁹⁶ “Kashmir Matters”, A.G. Noorani, *Dawn*, March, 16, 2019.

⁹⁷ V. P. Malik, “*Kargil: From Surprise to Victory*”, op. cit., p.398.

⁹⁸ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, “*Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*”, op. cit., p.378.

- Intellectuals and Poets (they have always advocated peace and amity)
- Entertainment Industry: Bollywood & Lollywood joint ventures in making movies (While Indian stars are no doubt a household names in Pakistan, Pakistani movie stars and singers have also earned accolades in India for their performances).“Exchange of films, music and troupes are parts of the entertainment industry and has little effect on the political views of the people.”⁹⁹
- Persons working for charities & the deprived (Empathy is their hallmark, transcending boundaries)
- Cultural Exchanges: Commonality of language/culture (Theatres/Films/TV Dramas and Documentaries and visits of actors).These are powerful tools of conveying messages, “The composite culture which Hindus and Muslims of India inherited was duly acknowledged by Sir Syed Ahmed, Allama Iqbal and Quaid – I- Azam, even while demanding the protection of the Muslim interest.”¹⁰⁰
- Students: The youth are the carriers of friendship/affection/sympathy, “Between India and Pakistan, tourism is strictly disallowed. Indians and Pakistanis visiting each other’s country as tourists would be an important part of cultural exchange”¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ “Composite Dialogue Between India and Pakistan”, in *India-Pakistan Relations: Courting Peace From the Corridors of War*, S.C. Sharma, Edited by Kamnath, *VPM’s Centre for International Studies*, (Promilla & Co., Publishers, New Delhi & Chicago, 2004), p.281.

¹⁰⁰ “Cultural Idom in the Indo-Pak Conflict”, in *India-Pakistan Relations: Courting Peace From the Corridors of War*, Manseesha Tikekar, Edited by Kamnath, *VPM’s Centre for International Studies*, p.199.

¹⁰¹ “Cultural Idom in the Indo-Pak Conflict”, in *India-Pakistan Relations: Courting Peace From the Corridors of War*”, Manseesha Tikekar, Edited by Kamnath, *VPM’s Centre for International Studies*, p.204.

- Veterans (Soldiers abhor Wars -They carry the best messages of friendship)
- Senior citizens from all walks of life (They yearn to visit places they had either read or heard from their elders)
- Religious scholars (inter-religious dialogue aimed at overcoming bigotry- leading cause of serious misunderstanding)
- Religious tourism (Both countries have Impressive religious sites to offer; presence of Muslim Sufi Shrines, significant Hindu & Sikh temples in both countries are big attractions; in this regard, Kartarpur Corridor is a pioneering effort)
- Exchange of known specialists in the field of medicine and scientists of repute (using their skills to strengthen specialized centres in hospitals catering to calamities, disasters, emergencies and containing infectious diseases (Hospitals on the borders shall be welcomed & shall contribute in bilateral empathy). Doctors from Pakistan and India are the backbone of UK and US medical services and given an improved environment, can volunteer their services to this noble cause)
- Empathy & Compassion: Hundreds of Pakistani and Indian prisoners are languishing in each other's jails and those who are serving jail terms for minor offences or those who had completed their sentences be released. These acts of empathy shall generate immense public goodwill on both sides of the divide

The recommendations so shared are the need of the hour! The forces of extremism and bigotry are working 24/7 on either side of the divide, and the way to counter the ensuing misconceptions, hatred and mistrust is to get the people in touch with each other in a

manner unfettered and unfiltered by media biases. If physical boundaries between Pakistan and India cannot go down, the walls can be softened; the two governments should facilitate traveling between the two countries by liberalizing the visa regime. Let the innovative visa free Kartarpur Corridor lead the way for its emulation in other visa regime sectors.

The Sixth Step: Trade as a Vehicle of Peace, Security and Stability

Trade has the potential in playing an extremely important role in creating peace and stability between Pakistan and India. Even though both countries are members of the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA), established in January 2006 as a successor to the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), trade between the two countries is unnaturally small and the opportunity for gains from increased trade is correspondingly large. It hardly makes any sense for both the neighboring states to hold investment and trade conferences abroad, but deliberately ignore trading next door, “A favorable trading regime that reduces the high costs and removes barriers can boost investment opportunities that are critically required for accelerating growth in the country.”¹⁰² Trade’s contribution in fostering peace between the two countries is summed up by the World Bank, “trust promotes trade, and trade fosters trust, interdependency and constituencies for peace... the opening of the Kartarpur Corridor by governments of Pakistan and India would help minimize trust deficit.”¹⁰³

“Food trade should not suffer – even when they search for peace.”¹⁰⁴ Pakistan-India negotiations on border disputes and purpose of establishing peace are critically important, especially in promoting trade between the both nations. Trade is a soft and positive way to reduce the conflicts. Openness to international trade is a significant driver of liberal peace. States which have an

¹⁰² “Pak-India trade much below full potential - World Bank”, Mubarik Zeb Khan, *Dawn*, December 6, 2018

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, *Dawn*.

¹⁰⁴ “Let us not cut on food trade with India”, *Dawn*, March, 18-24, 2019 (Business & Finance).

impressive economic and trade relations can ill afford to strain bilateral ties, let alone going to war. China and India, have lived with a serious border dispute, but continued to enlarge their bilateral economic and trade ties, and which presently stands at \$71.45 billion. This is a fine example in the region worth emulating. In 2002, Pakistan and India signed a number of important agreements on facilitating trade, but its implementation fell victim to the off and on tension between the two states, “ I believe that the real hurdle to Pakistan–India trade liberalization is unpredictably of their relations due to political disputes, and not just a presumed threat from a larger Indian economy.”¹⁰⁵ The need of the hour is for both the states to overcome hurdles, both political and trade related, in the interest of the public, who most willingly buy any product, as long as the price is competitive. Even economists have linked Pakistan–India trade with the Composite Dialogue, “Remain committed to the Composite Dialogue process. If this negotiating process is sidelined, critics of trade normalization in Pakistan would be emboldened, because they could argue that Pakistan’s principled positions on political and territorial issues have been sacrificed for purely material gain. Such critics could also assert that more trade does nothing to resolve these core issues.”¹⁰⁶ In brief, “Another potent link with Pakistan could be among the business community. Its self-interest should be allowed to assert itself in achieving liberalization of mutual trade, even through unilateral measures. For business and trade do not respect political animosities and prejudices.”¹⁰⁷ For the Governments of Pakistan and India, cost effectiveness and similar tastes should be the priorities when making decisions on trade related matters. It makes sense for Pakistani traders to import pulses and certain vegetables from India, than from far off Western countries, and similar is the case for India to import sugar and cement from Pakistan.

¹⁰⁵ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, “*Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*”, op. cit., p.376.

¹⁰⁶ “*Pakistan-India Trade: What Needs To Be Done? What Does It Matter*”, Michael Kugelman Robert M. Hathaway (Ed), (Wilson Center, 2013), p.13

¹⁰⁷ Balraj Puri, “A Multi –Layered Policy For India-Pakistan Relations”, *Pakistan in a Changing Strategic Context*, op.cit., p.339.

The Seventh Step: Sports

Pakistanis and Indians share a common British colonial past, especially in sports: Cricket, hockey, football, volleyball, kabaddi, squash, tennis, polo, snooker, bridge. Sportsmen of both states enjoy competing with each other for decades and receive full public support. A Pakistan-India sport event is an enormous crowd and money puller globally, especially cricket, and to some extent, hockey. Why not play each other more often then? And not just on the professional level. Get youth from the academies, schools and colleges to participate in games between the two countries. The governments must facilitate and make visa regime more liberal to allow the participation of the public as much as possible. Sports over powers politics; ping pong diplomacy paved the way for bridging the yawning gap of decades between US and China, and Pakistan and India cricket series in certain phases of Pakistan-India relations reduced the mistrust in that period. With Prime Minister Imran Khan, a known super sports star is the ideal person to lead the way in reviving not only cricket series, but also hockey and other sports with India. In the recent past, India has discouraged sport teams to take part, even in international competitions. It may be a good idea for Imran Khan leading a Pakistan veteran's super star cricket team to play few charity matches in Delhi, Mumbai and Calcutta, and on the sidelines, meet his counterpart. This shall be an excellent opportunity to bring down the temperature which has gone up since the Pulwama incident.

The daily crowd puller event of changing the guards on the Wagah/Attari Pakistan-India border can be converted into a regular place for healthier activities, like the youth on both the sides holding sports events; the euphoria of the competing teams and the cheering and enthusiasm so generated can prove to be the bedrock of peoples' emotions resonating with their counterparts, overcoming the physical and mental divide, "In antagonistic politico –military relations between the two countries, people-to-people contacts and cultural exchanges often provide an alternative route towards the normalization of bilateral relations."¹⁰⁸ It has also been summed up,

¹⁰⁸ Archana Gupta, "*India & Pakistan: The Conflict Peace Syndrome*", (Kalunga Publications, Delhi, 2003), p. 224.

“Removing or reducing the yawning trust deficit will undoubtedly promote normalization of relations and help guide the peace process to its logical conclusion. It is essential that Pakistan and India try to enlarge areas of common and converging interests. History bears testimony to the fact that conflicts between peoples, families, tribes, and nations, can be mitigated or eliminated by creating commonality of interests.”¹⁰⁹

The Eighth Step: Fighting Food and Health Insecurities

Food Security

Pakistan and India are twins as far as challenges both the countries face in terms of food security and health related issues. There is wide spread poverty in the South Asian Sub-continent and is ranked low merely above the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in most of the development and food security indicators. South Asia's record in reducing malnutrition is one of the world's worst. Rising food costs can have major impact on vulnerable households, pushing those least able to cope further into poverty and hunger. Punjab provinces of Pakistan and India are known for being big granaries. These provinces can lead the way in working together in the way wheat, rice and other food items are harvested. It is known that the Indian Punjab Province uses far better methods to harvest crops in arid regions, amid growing reduction in rain, and other climatic changes. Pakistan can learn from India to feed its growing population. Food security should transcend political cleavages and resources and efforts need to be pooled. Both the countries have reasonably well staffed agricultural research institutes, who can put their best minds to improve the yield per acre of important agricultural crops and for which the developed world, leading international organizations, especially FAO and IFAD shall willingly cooperate in a joint search to finally eliminate hunger from this region.

¹⁰⁹ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, “*Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*”, op. cit., p.366.

Looking after Health

According to a reliable survey, “Infectious diseases are a major cause of death in South Asia, with children incurring a disproportionate share of the burden. Over two thirds of the estimated 3.7 million deaths in children in South Asia in the year 2000 were attributable to infections such as pneumonia, diarrhea, and measles. Serious effort should be devoted to the control of infectious disease if South Asian countries are to meet their sustainable development goal of two thirds reduction in child mortality.”¹¹⁰ A majority of the people of Pakistan and India struggle to meet their daily needs of keeping their body and soul together; finding savings to look after their health is thus an uphill task. To add to this challenge is hygiene, which is a serious issue in Pakistan and India. With a low literacy rate and a population bursting at the seams, the governments are confronted with the twin challenge of inadequate resources and atrociously bad planning. In this scenario, pooling resources by both the countries can be the way forward; including setting up state centres of excellence in various sectors of health, particularly infectious diseases close to both sides of the border for easy access by the people on both sides of the divide. These health centres can easily be funded by wealthy expatriates and doctors of both the countries, who can give some of their time when they visit their homeland every year. The expat doctors are known to have set up charities and devote some of their time when visiting their countries of origin. These health centres situated on the border can be easily accessed by the population on both sides of the border, by system of entry/exit cards, more or less like the intended Kartarpur Corridor. These centres in time can also prove to be a cost effective means of ‘infecting good will and bonding friendships’.

The Ninth Step: Afghanistan - The “elephant in the room”

The tyranny of geography has always defined the foreign policy of the countries bordering each other. Pakistan and Afghanistan are geo-politically and geo-strategically interlocked with each other.

¹¹⁰ Anita K M Zaidi, Shally Awasthi, and H Janaka deSilva, “*Burden of Infectious Diseases in South Asia*”, (BMJ. 2004 Apr 3; 328(7443): pp. 811–815.

The growing Indian influence in Afghanistan, particularly in the post 9/11 period is a matter of grave concern for Pakistan. It may sound odd to suggest that Afghanistan be included in the Composite Dialogue Process, however, the reasons for its inclusion stems from the intense rivalry between Pakistan and India over Afghanistan, “India’s Afghanistan policy is not driven by ideological or humanitarian concerns. It is driven by a desire to limit Islamabad’s influence in Afghanistan.”¹¹¹ This competition has intensified in the post 9/11 period, which witnessed the Taliban, who were close to Pakistan, being pushed out of power and replaced by the Northern Alliance, who were known to be close to India. Going back in history, Pakistan and India have been vying for power in Afghanistan and they have been locked in a zero-sum struggle there since the inception of both the countries in 1947. Pakistan’s losses in Afghanistan are considered India’s victory and vice versa. The animosity between the two adversaries has manifested itself in a competition on the soil of Afghanistan for having a political clout, reminiscent of the competition and rivalry between the Tsarist Russia and then its successor, the Communist Russia, and the British Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries, respectively, generally known as the ‘Great Game’. The antagonism between Pakistan and India has been so strong and deep that both the countries lose no opportunity to checkmate each other on the Afghan soil. India has very close ties with Afghanistan in all spheres and this relationship is encouraged by the US, the present occupying power. If Pakistan-India relations are to improve, both the counties will have to put their cards on the table, which means listening to each other’s legitimate concern relating to Afghanistan.

Afghan trade with India through Pakistan can be considered as an impediment in the improvement of Pakistan - Afghanistan relations. In order to address this serious irritant between the two neighbors, it may be in Pakistan’s interest to accept Afghanistan’s recurring demand of direct two-way trade with India, with certain safeguards, using Pakistan’s territory. “The core of the Afghan demand is relatively straightforward: access to Indian imports into Afghanistan via Wagah rather than the Karachi port. The land route

¹¹¹ Harsh V. Pant, Avinash Paliwal, “India’s Afghan Dilemma Is Tougher Than Ever”, Foreign Policy, February, 19, 2019.

is quite obviously cheaper and quicker, but Pakistan only permitted Afghan exports to India to be trucked overland to Wagah — Afghan imports from India are not allowed via Wagah.”¹¹² Notwithstanding Afghanistan’s demands, Pakistan’s concerns pertaining to security related issues have to be factored and cannot be wished away or brushed off, “For long, Pakistan viewed Afghanistan as significant component of her area of influence, Islamabad for this very reason does not allow India to gain footing in Afghanistan and impose strategic encirclement on Pakistan defying her policy of ‘strategic depth’.”¹¹³ Pakistan has been consistent in sharing its concerns with Afghanistan about India’s blatant interference inside Baluchistan from Afghanistan, “Pakistan’s concerns regarding India’s support from Afghanistan to militants in Baluchistan, as well as its interference in FATA (Federally –Administered Tribal Areas) should not be a secret , at least for those who have been in the government. This issue, as noted above was forcefully raised in our many conversations with President Karzai.”¹¹⁴ Concerns about Indian interference were regularly shared with the US, the occupation power in Afghanistan; Pakistan point of view was centered on India to reduce its presence in Afghanistan and put an end to interfering in Baluchistan. Pakistan has also voiced its serious concern about RAW, the Indian intelligence agency, of sending intelligence personnel into Afghanistan under the pretext of engineers and doctors, and of providing armed support to a militant group, the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA), which has been responsible for its attacks on Pakistani civilians and security personnel.

Thus, no matter which ever issue between Pakistan and India are discussed, if it does not include an understanding over Afghanistan, the Composite Dialogue will come back to square one. Therefore, it may be extremely helpful if, “Good bilateral ties between India and Pakistan can serve the trilateral collaboration between India, Pakistan and Afghanistan to boost trade and access to Central Asian

¹¹² “Transit Trade Spat” (editorial), Dawn, September 12, 2016.

¹¹³ “Indian Influence in Afghanistan and its Implications for Pakistan”, Prof. Dr. Umbreen Javaid & Rameesha Javaid , JRSP, Vol. 53, No. 1, January-June, 2016, p.1-2.

¹¹⁴ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, “Neither a Hawk nor a Dove”, op. cit., p.549.

resources. For the long-term cooperation in Afghanistan's reconstruction and help in building up her economy, transparency and confidence building measures are required between India and Pakistan.”¹¹⁵

The Tenth Step: Resolving the Water Dispute

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) brokered by the World Bank and with full support of the US was signed in 1960 between Pakistan and India. This treaty which has survived major and minor wars between the two South Asian neighbors has of recent not only come under stress, but experts on both the sides have found common ground to resolve serious deviation of the terms of the treaty. For Pakistan, any disruption of the flow of the water of the rivers can throttle the lives of the majority of its people who survive on agriculture, and which in turn contribute significantly to the country's economy. Pakistan and India had been involved in intractable discussions to resolve the dispute regarding construction of two hydroelectric power plants namely Kishanganga and Ratle being built by the latter in violation of the provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty. Wullar Barrage, the Kishanganga Project, Baglihar Dam, and dozens of other small and medium hydroelectric and irrigation projects are a few examples of Indian projects that obstruct the Pakistani share of water, “At a time when New Delhi is facing a number of water sharing disputes, reviewing a long-settled water-sharing formula with Pakistan would be a harmful option to experiment with. Instead of invalidating existent water-sharing procedures, India should try to find a mutual workable arrangement that could assist all, thus avoiding a water war.”¹¹⁶

Despite having one of the world's largest glaciers, Pakistan is at risk of water scarcity and is among the 36 most water-stressed countries in the world. This alarming situation increases the urgency to safe guard its right given to it by the Indus Basin Treaty and, therefore, this issue should figure in the Composite Dialogue. “Experts at the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) complain that

¹¹⁵ Prof. Dr. Umbreen Javaid & Rameesha Javaid, op.cit.p.11.

¹¹⁶ Mohammad Daim Fazil, “Why India Must Refrain From a Water War With Pakistan”, *The Diplomat*, March 8, 2017.

India has been constructing huge water storages on all six Indus basin rivers, not just on the three under its full control.”¹¹⁷ The meeting of Pakistani and Indian water experts in 2018 ended on a relatively positive note. India has agreed to allow Pakistan to inspect the projects in the Jhelum basin, including Kishanganga hydroelectric project, in the near future and Islamabad will allow New Delhi to carry out inspection of the Kotri Barrage over the Indus under Article VIII (4) (c) of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). This should be the spirit to resolve all bilateral concerns, as ‘throttling’ water sources has the real potential of igniting a war between these two nuclear armed states. Pakistan’s concern on the violation of the IWT has been summed up, “Water is and could become even a greater source of friction between the two countries. Water poses an existential threat to Pakistan, since two thirds of its population relies on water from rivers coming from Kashmir.”¹¹⁸ In 2004, Pakistan-India watchers had vouched that, “India had agreed to accommodate Pakistan’s objections by reducing the height of the barrage (Wullar) and restricting the discharge rate from the sluice gates.”¹¹⁹

Conclusion

The seeds of the animosity between Pakistan and India can be traced to the very birth of these two states and was reflected in terms of the size of the two states’ population and territory. When compared to India, Pakistan was dwarfed when measured by any standard, “Pakistani insecurity that flowed from the asymmetrical positioning of the two neighbors was further reinforced after the Indian intervention in 1971 that facilitated the breakup of East Pakistan.”¹²⁰ Pakistan, in the 1960’s, did succeed in reducing the gap by an impressive economic performance, but lost the race in the long run, especially due to lack of institutional building and political

¹¹⁷ “We will stop 'our share of water' from flowing into Pakistan, says Indian minister”, *Dawn*, February 22, 2019.

¹¹⁸ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, “*Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*”, op. cit., p.343.

¹¹⁹ S.C. Sharma, “Composite Dialogue Between India and Pakistan”, *India-Pakistan Relations: Courting Peace From the Corridors of War*, (Promilla and Co, New Delhi, p.283.

¹²⁰ Nasim Zehra, “*From Kargil to the Coup: Events that Shook Pakistan*”, (Sang-e-Meel Publications; 1st edition, 2018, p.30.

stability, of which long tenures of non-democratic dispensations was a prime cause. In spite of massive human rights violations of minorities in India, the state was able to sell its counter narrative as it galloped in building its constitutional institutions by holding successive elections and peaceful transfer of power. These developments, however, gave a false sense of pride to India, bordering on arrogance to ignore its western neighbor. In time, the yawning gap increased and decades had to pass before sense prevailed on the leadership of these two states to seriously ponder the importance and urgency of co-existence, “The nuclear tests had proven to be the trigger for revival of the dialogue, but leaders were needed to actually take it forward,”¹²¹ The two states cannot expect another catastrophe of the magnitude of 1998 nuclear tests to end the incommunicado, even though the nuclear tests was the defining moment for Pakistan, “Arguably, after committing the strategic misstep of testing nuclear weapons and provoking Pakistan to do the same, India was forced to recognize Pakistan’s right to exist as a sovereign state.”¹²²

Prime Minister Modi has led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to a second successful win in the 2019 elections. The county went through a very divisive election campaign, in which anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim rhetoric was the hall mark of Modi’s campaign speeches, undermining the professed secular values in the Indian constitution which are so much trumpeted by the Indian Governments, “It has led to the tragic defeat of a progressive and secular dream-which may have been more inspirational or even pretense than reality.”¹²³ In his post-winning speech, Modi has called upon his party workers to reach out to all minorities as his government is ‘all inclusive’. Muslims make up over 14% of India’s population and who by any standard could be loyal citizens, like other citizens in the country who profess different faiths. Uniting the nation now may be an uphill task, as confidence once shaken,

¹²¹ Nasim Zehra, “*From Kargil to the Coup: Events that Shook Pakistan*”, (Sang-e-Meel Publications; 1st edition, 2018), p.60.

¹²² Mario E.Carranza, “*India-Pakistan Nuclear Diplomacy: Constructivism and the Prospects for Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament in South Asia*”, (London: Rowman & Littlefield: 2016), p.204.

¹²³ Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, “Modi Won. Has India?” *Dawn*, May 26, 2019.

takes a time for such wounds to heal. Considering Muslims outside the pale of the Indian national dream has serious ramification to the region, particularly SAARC member states, which has three Muslim majority states. The question is what message has Modi's Government sent in the neighborhood, in which he doubts the intention of its own Muslims, but reaches out to other Muslim states, which is a troubling scenario indeed. Nevertheless, the people of India have spoken and given Modi-led BJP Government a new mandate to rule the country. The results of the elections in India have far more significance for Pakistan, as compared to other countries in the region. Prime Minister Imran Khan has not only congratulated Modi, but also personally spoken to him over the telephone, expressing his desire for both countries to work together for betterment of their people and, "Reiterating his vision for peace, progress and prosperity in South Asia, the prime minister said he looked forward to working with Modi to advance these objectives. Earlier, Modi had responded to Khan's congratulatory tweet after the BJP-led NDA swept the election."¹²⁴ Those who have been involved actively in negotiating with India from Pakistan at the highest level have not allowed the pessimism of the sceptics to cloud their faith in the optimism regarding Pakistan-India relations under Modi, "Every Indian leader, I have spoken to or have been my interlocutor has said to me privately, 'let us make history'. How can Narinder Modi be an exception to that?"¹²⁵

As Modi's Government flushed with an impressive second mandate settles down, it shall focus on its people and their pressing problems of health, jobs and education. Ignoring Pakistan may not be very palatable for Modi, as certain compulsions for emerging economies are peace within and on its borders; this reassures investment partners that unpredictability shall be minimized, as post Pulwama incidents cannot become the norm of Pakistan-India relations. Prime Minister Modi shall have to chalk out his own vision of a peaceful co-existence in the region with his smaller neighbors, especially Pakistan which continues to reach out to India. Concerns shared with Pakistan by many countries, which include

¹²⁴ "Pakistan PM Imran Khan calls Narendra Modi", *Khaleej Times*, May 27, 2019.

¹²⁵ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, "*Neither a Hawk nor a Dove*", op. cit., p.405.

India, on extremists' group's activities in Pakistan, have been addressed most effectively by Pakistan.

Imran Khan's desire to restart a dialogue with India should be taken by Modi on its face value to reengage Pakistan to enlarge the dialogue. Major Powers, particularly the US, the sole superpower has her own agenda in keeping Pakistan under pressure, and India may well not emulate this policy. Pakistan and India are two neighboring states and not some unknown 'extraterrestrials' who are to be discovered, "India and Pakistan recognize each other's right to exist; they have regular diplomatic relations, and they periodically engage in diplomatic negotiations such as the 'Composite Dialogue', attempting to settle their disputes."¹²⁶

Cultural and linguistic commonalities, love for same music, and sports have bonded them whenever the atmospherics in South Asia were conducive for people-to-people contact. People on both sides of the divide do not have the appetite for negativities and hunger to latch on to even a shred of good news, for which leaders of Pakistan and India need to put their ears to it, "Indian leaders have coveted improved relations with Pakistan as their potential legacy. Given the record of discord and acrimony between the two neighbors, the idea of making history by resolving that conflict appeals to Indian politicians. Modi too started his first tenure by reaching out to Pakistan, hoping to write a new chapter in the troubled India-Pakistan relationship."¹²⁷ A known Pakistani diplomacy practitioner and a realist counsel's, "If Modi's diplomacy remains obdurate and uncompromising, Pakistan's diplomacy should present a study in principled contrast. If Modi is more accommodating, Pakistan should not shy away from probing possibilities for a principled longer-term relationship."¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Mario E.Carranza, "India-Pakistan Nuclear Diplomacy: Constructivism and the Prospects for Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament in South Asia", (London: Rowman & Littlefield: 2016), p. 201.

¹²⁷ Aparne Pande, "From Chanakya to Modi: The Evolution of Indian Foreign Policy", op.cit , p.89-90.

¹²⁸ "Modi won. Has India?", Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Dawn, May 26, 2019.

Prime Minister Modi's decision not to avail the shorter route to Bishkek over flying the territory of Pakistan to attend the SCO Summit and not to meet Prime Minister Imran Khan on the sidelines of the summit are not conducive to the aims and objectives of SCO which calls for 'strengthen relations among member states and safeguarding regional peace'. Earlier, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi reached out to his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and congratulated him on being appointment as the new Foreign Minister. In his letter to his Indian counterpart, Qureshi expressed Pakistan's desire to hold talks with India on all important matters for establishing peace in the region. Both gestures have failed to evoke any positivity.

In the spirit of coexistence, Imran Khan continues to reach out to Modi; his address at the SCO Summit and press interaction was reflective of his peace overtures, and this was inspite of Modi's relentless efforts to paint Pakistan as an unfriendly neighbor. Imran Khan's efforts are also being supported by saner voices in the Sub-Continent who believe in the sagacity of co-existence and harmony "Pakistan must continue its efforts for the resumption of Pakistan-India dialogue and the normalization of relations between the two countries while remaining firm on principles of sovereign equality and mutual respect and safeguarding its national interests."¹²⁹

Notwithstanding this gloom and doom, the silver lining for the two squabbling neighboring states is reflected in the not so distant past; If they can agree on a highly sensitive subject of annually sharing their nuclear sites so that they are not attacked, and pledge not to attack or assist foreign powers to attack on each nuclear installations and facilities, then agreeing to reopen the Composite Dialogue Process would take lesser efforts. 'Cricket crazy' public in Pakistan and India are praying that their teams play in the Cricket World in the United Kingdom on Sunday, the 14th of July, 2019. 'Peaceniks' in both the countries are not praying for the match to take place, but also for Imran Khan and Modi to be sitting side by side, watching the clash and reflecting on the possibility, a real one, to revive the Composite Dialogue Process.

¹²⁹ "Hindu extremism in India", Javid Hussain, (The Nation, June, 11, 2019).

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