

CHAPTER 5

**KASHMIR: FROM NUCLEAR FLASHPOINT
TO SOUTH ASIA'S BRIDGE OF PEACE?***

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One of the twentieth century's most difficult and bloodiest conflicts has been that of Kashmir. Its roots lie in the partition of the British Indian Empire into the Union of India and the Dominion of Pakistan. Muslim-majority areas were to go to Pakistan, Hindu-majority ones to India. Had India abided by the rules of Partition—whatever one might think of them—Kashmir would likely have become part of Pakistan because, according to the British census of India of 1941, Kashmir had a Muslim majority population of 77 per cent and Hindus were just about 20 per cent.¹ But when British rule ended on 14–15 August 1947 the Hindu ruler of this Himalayan kingdom, Maharaja Hari Singh, opted to accede to India instead of Pakistan.

India's refusal to hold a plebiscite—a solution proposed in 1947 to this conflict by the United Nations—was to bedevil relations between the two newly independent countries and led to one war after another. A secret invasion by Pakistan in 1965, 'Operation Gibraltar', erupted into a full-scale war that ended inconclusively. Although the 1971 Pakistan–India war was about the secession of East Pakistan and unrelated to Kashmir, some in India felt that Pakistan's defeat should have been used by Indira Gandhi at Shimla to make it renounce its claim on Kashmir once and for all. Then, in 1999, Pakistan secretly invaded the Indian controlled Kargil area of Kashmir but was eventually forced out. A status quo prevails today: Pakistan-controlled Kashmir comprises of the Northern Areas and

* The title of this essay is inspired by the remarks of peace activist Karamat Ali contained in the video-documentary 'Crossing the Lines—Kashmir, Pakistan, India', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeBRVfxe5oQ>

Azad Kashmir; India controls the central and southern portion (Jammu and Kashmir) and Ladakh; while China has the north-eastern portion (Aksai Chin and the Trans-Karakoram Tract).

The Kashmir question is among the most vexing ones in the world because it involves both religion and regionalism. Kashmiris are nationalists who subscribe to an eclectic form of Kashmiri nationalism—*Kashmiriyat*. They would prefer independence to being a party of either claimant or, at the very least, greater autonomy. But for India, holding on to Kashmir is more than just a matter about land or even about people having their own way; secession is seen as undoing India's fabric as a secular, pluralistic nation-state.

UNDERSTANDING KASHMIR

How should one analyze a dispute that has consumed so many Kashmiri lives and has brought two nuclear-armed countries repeatedly to the brink of war? What might be some minimum truths to which fair-minded people are likely to agree?

A first, obvious fact is that Pakistan lacks the muscle to wrest Kashmir from unpopular Indian rule. Reciprocally, India cannot win decisively over Pakistan in the difficult, mountainous terrains. India thus remains the status quo power in Kashmir while Pakistan is the insurrectionary one. Pakistan's efforts, spread over many decades, have failed to change ground realities and are likely to fail in the future. Kashmir simply does not have any military solution. Only jihadists, blind to reason and to the value of human life, can think that Kashmir can be wrested from Indian rule.

A second manifest truth is that New Delhi's unconscionable manipulation of Kashmiri politics, and monumental administrative incompetence, is responsible for its progressive alienation from the Muslims of Kashmir. A popular uprising, one that refuses to die down nearly a quarter century later, can be directly traced to the rigging of the 1987 elections by India with the aim of promoting its own candidates. Thereafter, Kashmir was in full-scale rebellion and large numbers of Kashmiri refugees had flowed into Azad Kashmir.

Pakistan could not be blamed for this. India is considered an occupier in the eyes of nationalist eyes, and thus to be resisted.

In 2011 an Indian government human rights commission report corroborated suspicions that thousands of bodies, which may or may not have been those of militants, had been dumped by the security forces into unmarked graves.² Using evidence cited in a report by India's government-appointed State Human Rights Commission, an article in the *New York Review of Books* says:³ Corpses were brought in by the truckload and buried on an industrial scale. The report catalogued 2156 bullet-riddled bodies found in mountain graves and called for an inquiry to identify them. Many were men described as 'unidentified militants' killed in fighting with soldiers during the armed rebellion against Indian rule during the 1990s, but according to the report, more than 500 were local residents. 'There is every probability,' the report concluded, that the graves might 'contain the dead bodies of enforced disappearances,' a euphemism for people who have been detained, abducted, taken away by armed forces or the police, often without charge or conviction, and never seen again.

The iron fist can work—at least for some time. Indeed, Kashmir was peaceful in 2012. Schools were open; tourists were back; and European countries had removed their travel advisories for visiting the Valley. Just two years earlier it had been up in flames, as in earlier years, after Indian security forces had shot dead dozens of young stone pelters. Even seasoned commentators had then predicted that India was on the verge of losing Kashmir to those seeking independence or accession to Pakistan. They were, of course, wrong. But, as in earlier decades, normalcy can be easily confused for peace; the present may be no more than just another low point in repeated cycles of violence.

The present calm encourages some Indian analysts to deny the need for making any basic changes. Reflecting Delhi's current mood of triumphalism, Vikram Sood, former chief of RAW (Research and Analysis Wing), writes:

We need to do a few things to bring normalcy in Kashmir that go beyond tourism statistics. We need to go beyond the tokenism of nomenclature.

We need to keep Pakistan out of the equation . . . we need to ignore this group called the Hurriyat that represents at best themselves but usually Pakistani interests or periodic threats that political space grows from the barrel of a gun. . . . We also make it clear that there is no question of independence to ten districts in the Kashmir Valley on any basis and specially on the basis of religion. So *Azadi* is out.⁴

But New Delhi is fully aware of the tenuous nature of peace in Kashmir and has no intentions of withdrawing the bulk of its troops.

A third truth is that India's unpopularity in Muslim-majority Kashmir has always encouraged Pakistan to translate India's losses into Pakistan's gains. There was not much success in the earlier decades: 'Operation Gibraltar' in 1965, which involved a secret invasion by Pakistani commandos, fell flat because it excited no resonance among Kashmiris. But things suddenly began to look good for Pakistan in 1987. The rigging of Kashmir's elections by Delhi had angered millions, and to quell their protests the Indian Army had responded with extraordinary force. Fortuitously for Pakistan, the Soviets had just been defeated in Afghanistan and mujahideen fighters were aplenty.

Angry and desperate refugees from the Indian side brought local knowledge while the mujahideen were battle hardened and ideologically committed. This situation enabled Pakistan to implement a bleed-India-through-jihad policy. While officially denying involvement, logistical and financial support could be given to militants fighting Indian rule in Kashmir. The military establishment imagined that this low-cost strategy would lead to eventual victory; it was seen as the only practical means to change the status-quo.

COVERT WAR

Pakistan's covert war had two-fold goals. The first was to weaken India by raising the human and economic costs. At some point, Pakistan's military reasoned, it would be too much trouble for the Indians to hang on to Kashmir. The second objective was to internationalize a local dispute by advertising the region's nuclear

instability. This would hopefully draw in western negotiators and force India to the table.

There were some initial successes. The economic costs of Indian occupation, which required maintaining large army contingents, paramilitary troops, and police shot up. The total number of security personnel reached a staggering 600,000 (although this figure is disputed) for a land of only 10 million people. Indian forces, both regular and paramilitary, took punishingly high losses of men and material.

Another success for Pakistan was the creation of a world-wide fear that border clashes would escalate into a nuclear conflagration. Indeed, intense artillery duels across the Line of Control had become commonplace in the mid 1990s, and nuclear threats had been belloped often enough by both sides to make this a possibility. The term 'nuclear flashpoint' for Kashmir soon became commonplace in the international press, particularly after the 1998 tests.

But Pakistan's strategy was doomed to fail. On the one hand it brought a backlash from Indian forces. There was fierce military action against local Kashmiris, leading to thousands of innocent deaths. Anti-Pakistan feelings rose across India. In particular, the 1999 secret Kargil invasion led to a huge swell in Indian chauvinistic national pride and a determination to hang on to '*Bharat ka atoot ung*' (a vital part of India's body). Hindutva forces benefited, with leaders like Praveen Togadia threatening to wipe Pakistan off the map.⁵

Still more disappointing for Pakistan's military was that cross border infiltrations failed to dent India's economy, which simply absorbed the losses and kept booming. Buttressed by its huge reservoir of scientific and high-tech manpower, India continued on its path towards becoming one of the world's largest economies. Indian foreign exchange reserves⁶ stood at over \$289 billion in 2012, and its exports to the U.S. and China have steadily risen. India has penetrated into America's industrial core, providing it with scientists and engineers, and draws work away from U.S. companies into India. Income from just one source—outsourcing and IT services—swelled

to nearly \$60 billion in 2011. Pharmaceuticals added in another \$12 billion. A U.S.–India strategic partnership has emerged, with the agreement on space and nuclear cooperation being one indication of things to come. It is clear that the U.S. no longer regards India as being in the same league as Pakistan, where educational and scientific institutions continue their decline.

The covert war, whatever hurt it might have caused India, had enormously damaging consequences for Muslim Kashmiris. What had earlier been seen as a genuine, indigenous struggle was now seen as Pakistan's war by proxy, leading to a steady loss of international legitimacy for nationalists. Thus, the crimes committed by India's occupation forces in Kashmir, amply documented by various human rights groups, became eclipsed by lesser, but more widely publicized, crimes committed by the Pakistan-based mujahideen. These groups attacked Hindu Pundits and forced them to flee, targeted civilians accused of collaborating with India, assassinated Kashmiri political leaders, destroyed cinema houses and liquor shops, forced women into the veil, and ignited numerous sectarian disputes. The moral high ground held by those fighting occupation was sharply eroded. Attempts to blame many killings on Indian security forces did not always wash. India could thereafter successfully portray itself as a victim of terror exported from Pakistani soil.

Denials by Pakistan that it was not backing the mujahideen fell flat. In an age of television cameras and instant communication, aiding and arming militants came into full public view. In fact, it was hard to see how anyone could accept Pakistan's denials because prior to 9/11, jihadist organizations operated openly. Sometimes visible support was provided by the government. In every city and town of Punjab the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT), Jaish-e-Muhammad, and various other jihadist organizations had placed donation boxes in shops and work places, and went around after the Baqr-Eid festival collecting sacrificial hides. Although they suddenly vanished for some years following 9/11, they resurfaced after Musharraf was forced out in 2008 and are to be seen

openly once again.** So, for example, in July 2012 the Al-Badr Mujahideen, a breakaway faction of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen group, organised a two-day 'Shuhada Conference' in the Swan Adda area of Rawalpindi to seek recruits and raise funds. The group's chief Bakht Zameen Khan told a thousand-plus supporters at the conference that his commanders want resources to keep the 'jihad' going in Kashmir and Afghanistan.⁷

The 'nuclear flashpoint' strategy also failed. This phrase eventually became jaded and faded from use in the international media. It buys little for Pakistan even when it does appear because once the world in general, and the U.S. in particular, had fully assessed the Kashmir situation, the reaction was not at all what Pakistan had in mind. To have Kashmir associated with nuclear Pakistan does not work well any more.

Jihadi leaders feel differently and some call for having a nuclear war over Kashmir. Speaking before 20,000 people on 5 February 2011 (Kashmir Day), Hafiz Saeed of LeT, who is wanted in India for masterminding the Mumbai attack, demanded nuclear jihad against India: 'I want to give a message to (Prime Minister) Manmohan Singh—quit Kashmir or get ready to face a war. . . . The jihad should continue as long as Kashmir remains under Indian occupation.' He went on to say that there would be 'no problem if the fighting leads to nuclear war between Pakistan and India.'⁸

The idea of jihadists active in a nuclear-armed state is deeply alarming all around. It certainly gets no sympathy in Washington, which has declared the largest mujahideen group fighting Indian rule in Kashmir, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, to be a terrorist group. After the Mumbai attacks, the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Muhammad also made it to that list.

** Like other campuses, the Quaid-e-Azam University campus was also plastered with posters and banners from various jihadist groups inviting students to drop their studies and join the jihad, and some of our students did that. But after 9/11 the walls were wiped clean and banners disappeared.

NUCLEARIZING KASHMIR

India's nuclear test in 1974 introduced a new level of complexity in Kashmir. This certainly encouraged Pakistan to acquire the bomb, which it subsequently used in an attempt to change the status quo. Contrary to what is widely believed, it was India and not Pakistan that first made overt references to nuclear weapons in the Kashmir conflict.

Let us wind the tape back to May 1998. A week had passed since India's second Pokharan test. Uncertain of whether it should respond or not, Pakistan had been vacillating. Then, on 18 May 1998, BJP party member and Home Minister, Lal Krishan Advani, made the first ever direct connection between nuclear weapons and the future of Jammu and Kashmir. He declared that India's, 'decisive step to become a nuclear weapon state has brought about a qualitative new state in India–Pakistan relations, particularly in finding a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem. Islamabad has to realize the change in the geo-strategic situation in the region and the world.'⁹ Advani went to add that although, 'we adhere to the no-first-strike principle,' India would deal firmly with Pakistan's hostile activities. Other BJP leaders echoed him: the former Union Minister Madan Lal Khurana inviting Pakistan to join battle 'at a place and time of its choosing' and warned of a fourth war with Pakistan.¹⁰ When Pakistan successfully tested on 28 May 1998, the Indian machismo evaporated.

On Pakistan's side, bringing nuclear weapons out into the open were to provide opportunity for a new strategy in Kashmir. Earlier, throughout the 1980s and even more so in the 1990s, the bomb had been lurking in the background, providing a diffused threat. Pakistani strategy had sought to keep the world alarmed about Kashmir by frequent allusions to a nuclear conflict. This, Pakistani generals calculated, would keep the pot boiling. Fostering a constant high level of tension between two nuclear-armed states would surely alarm the international community—most particularly the United States—and force a recalcitrant India to see reason.

And so a strategy evolved over time: even before the 1998 tests, numerous military and civil leaders deliberately cultivated an image of Pakistan as a defiant, nuclear-armed state ready to go to war over Kashmir. For example, in 1995 General Asad Durrani, a former director of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), who was later Pakistan's ambassador to Germany, put it this way: 'If we were to make it clear that whatever nuclear deterrence we might have is primarily meant to deter the use of nuclear weapons from the other side, then by so saying we will fail to deter a conventional attack.'¹¹ Therefore, he argued, the other side must be led to believe that, 'we are primed, almost desperate to use our nuclear capabilities when our national objectives are threatened, [as] for example, a major crackdown on [the] freedom movement in Kashmir. . . .'¹² It was understood, of course, that a nuclear exchange would be devastating for Pakistan.

The threat of nuclear apocalypse was sufficiently real to keep a steady stream of Western leaders coming to Islamabad and Delhi at the peak of the tensions in 1987 and 1990, and then, after the nuclear tests, again in 1999 and 2001. Pakistan felt pleased that it had forced international attention on Kashmir, and expectations rose that a frightened world would now rush to solve the dispute. That, of course, did not happen. Aggressive diplomatic intervention by the U.S. and UK was perhaps why war did not happen. But it came at a price: Pakistan was seen as reckless and irresponsible, willing to put an entire subcontinent's people at the edge.

The projection of a 'madman' image alternated with Pakistan's other posture, which was that of a calm, assured, and responsible nuclear power. Both Pakistan and India felt they needed to present this impression of responsibility and so, together and separately, diplomats from both countries developed common goals in the background of their nuclear tests. They had been tasked by their respective military-civil establishments with projecting an image of their state as one fully aware of its new status and completely in control of itself. Both countries wanted to show that their weapons were in responsible hands and could be handled by them just as well

as by anyone else, that they sternly opposed proliferation, and that they were victims rather than supporters of terrorism.

The Indian strategic analyst C. Raja Mohan had friendly advice for his Pakistani colleagues:

New Delhi and Islamabad should know that the willingness of the rest of the world to accept them as part of the official nuclear club depends on the ability of India and Pakistan to responsibly manage their own nuclear relationship. . . . If India and Pakistan want to be taken seriously, they must show results from their nuclear talks.¹³

General Jehangir Karamat who was Pervez Musharaf's predecessor as chief of army staff, was particularly keen to show that Pakistan and India are not trigger-happy, while he was ambassador of Pakistan to the United States:

For those who observe South Asia from the outside it is considered a most dangerous place and a region in which a nuclear exchange could be a reality. It is thought that the India–Pakistan confrontations in 1987, 1990 and 2002, as well as the Kargil conflict in 1999, all had a nuclear dimension of some sort. This is not what most South Asians think.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Gen. Karamat did admit that during the Kargil crisis—initiated by Pakistan to change the ground realities in Kashmir—various 'statements and signaling through missile tests could have had unintended consequences.'¹⁵ Indeed, velvet gloves can be rapidly discarded once the going gets rough.

The adversaries, joined in common cause to justify their respective country's nuclear weapons, would even have a nice word or two to say about the other. Officials and experts from both countries frequently meet at arms control workshops and seminars, behave civilly (if not cordially) towards each other, and appear to be rational actors. CBMs (Confidence Building Measures), NRRs (Nuclear Risk Reduction Measures), etc., are part of the standard jargon. The underlying mistrust slips below the surface.

Although they often skate on thin ice, the ploys and stratagems of diplomats can, when combined with immediate needs of other

nations, bring success. Over time, Indian strategists and lobbyists in Washington guided it towards fundamentally changing U.S.–India nuclear relations. Thus the sanctions imposed in 1998 were gradually withdrawn, criticism became inaudible, and a grudging acceptance of India's nuclear status followed.

Pakistan, while not faring quite so well and not being privileged by a similar deal, has also been accepted as a de-facto nuclear power. Thanks to its able diplomats, the safety and security of its nuclear arsenal was reduced to the level of a nagging, low-level worry. However, events have led to a sharp downturn in Pakistan's relations with the West. If another crisis similar to those seen earlier should occur, it is unclear what diplomatic forces will be able to intervene effectively for staving off confrontation.

RESOLVING KASHMIR

As the late Eqbal Ahmad passionately argued, although India's leaders bear much responsibility for Kashmir's tragedy, Pakistan's defective Kashmir policy had repeatedly 'managed to rescue defeat from the jaws of victory.'

Pakistan needs to urgently reassess its position and policy for multiple reasons. First, anti-India covert groups, funded and supported by the Pakistan Army, have helped to bring chaos and bloodshed to Pakistan. Some groups are overtly sectarian and anti-Shi'a. But these are not the only dividing lines and the Punjabi Taliban, engaged in fighting the army in Waziristan and FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), have recruited profitably from groups that earlier on had enjoyed the army's patronage.

Second, international support for Pakistan's position on Kashmir has been sharply eroded because of its proxy war strategy. Muslim countries and the OIC have turned lukewarm to the Kashmir cause, even at the level of passing supportive resolutions. More importantly, signifying that the Kashmir issue is of marginal interest to them, their trade with India is many times greater than with Pakistan. Today Indian workers, particularly skilled ones, are still welcome in the Middle East while Pakistanis are finding it progressively harder.

Even more significantly, Pakistan's immediate neighbours—Iran and China—show little interest in liberating Kashmir through jihad. Rather, they feel threatened by jihadist groups nurtured by Pakistan to fight in Kashmir. These have a nexus with other groups that fight for a variety of Islamic causes. Chinese authorities, naming Pakistan in particular, have accused East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which wants an independent homeland for Xinjiang's Uighurs, of orchestrating attacks in the region on many occasions. The attackers adhered to 'extremist religious ideology' and advocated 'jihad', said the statement. 'The heads of the group had learned skills of making explosives and firearms in overseas camps of the terrorist group ETIM in Pakistan before entering Xinjiang.'¹⁶

Groups that have been active in Kashmir: the Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi are also virulently anti-Shi'a. Together with the Jundullah group, they have targeted Shi'as and Iranian interests in Pakistan. Over 350 Shi'as were targeted and killed in the first eight months of 2012 by these groups. Signalling its displeasure with Pakistan, Iran has held joint military exercises with India. India–Iran defense and military-to-military collaboration in 2005, including energy deals, amounted to over \$25 billion.¹⁷ With India's new alignment with America, there has been steady pressure to cut Indian oil imports from Iran. But, as if to prove their independence, the Indians have only grudgingly acquiesced to small reductions.

While acknowledging that India is winning the propaganda war, Pakistani hardliners continue to insist that Pakistan's isolation on Kashmir is merely the failure of its diplomatic missions. This is untrue. Pakistani diplomats representing the official position in the world's capitals, as well as in Muslim countries, belong to the world's best. But they must fight with one hand tied behind, especially after the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the U.S., when jihad became a notorious word in the political lexicon. Their efforts cannot compensate for the military establishment's failed 'bleed-India' policy.

The Kashmiri leadership, once a source of hope to Pakistan, is also proving less and less capable of delivering anything. The

Hurriyat Conference, originally set up with Pakistani help to mediate disputes between different anti-Indian Kashmiri organizations, has essentially fallen apart and sharply reduced Pakistan's influence on the Kashmiri freedom movement. Kashmiris have realized that although they are more favourably inclined towards Muslim Pakistan than Hindu India, their interests are by no means identical to Pakistan's. This elementary fact has been finally recognized by the Indian establishment. In a belated move, after having stubbornly resisted talking to the Kashmiri leaders for years, the hawkish L.K. Advani and N.N. Vohra—went in for direct talks with Maulana Abbas Ansari's majority faction of the Hurriyat. Pakistan's sole supporter is the smaller hard-line Geelani faction that seeks Shar'ia for Kashmir. Pakistani influence in Kashmiri domestic politics has been further diminished by fencing the LoC, acquiring high-tech surveillance and night-vision equipment from Israel, and increasing pressure on Pakistan to limit infiltration.

KASHMIR—A BRIDGE OF PEACE?

Can the Kashmir dispute ever be resolved? Can it, as peace activists suggest, ever become a link connecting Pakistan to India instead of being a territory disputed between two nuclear rivals?

Plebiscite was indeed the solution mutually agreed upon in 1948. Although it has given various reasons, it is fairly clear that India reneged on a solemn commitment. Still, even if it had been so earlier, plebiscite may not be the best solution today. Changed geopolitical circumstances now demand a reappraisal; plebiscite is now no longer the obvious way of determining the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. For example, it clearly excludes a major section of Kashmiris that would opt for independence today but which, in 1948, may not have wanted it. More frightening is the likelihood of a plebiscite igniting communal passions leading to Gujarat-style bloodbaths across the subcontinent. Moreover, at a practical level there is no agency, including the United Nations, that is equipped and willing to implement a task that all nations (except Pakistan) see as impossibly difficult. Therefore, insisting on

plebiscite is the surest way of guaranteeing that a bloody stand-off continues indefinitely.

Moving away from this insistence, in 2003 General Pervez Musharraf brought a whole set of other proposals on to the negotiating table. It was an extraordinary departure from earlier stands taken by Pakistan. Certainly, the General can be faulted on much else during his nine years of rule, including his haughty dismissal of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry; poor judgment shown in the Lal Masjid crisis; and the double game played in Afghanistan. But on Kashmir, the general deserves an 'A'—this in spite of having played a double game there as well.***

By declaring that, 'we have left aside' the United Nations Security Council resolutions for a solution to Kashmir, Musharraf shattered a long-held taboo.¹⁸ Earlier he had given some confusing hints during his 2001 visit to India and spoken of the need 'to move away from stated positions.' But never before had a Pakistani head of state made an explicit public admission that Pakistan cannot realistically hope for a plebiscite to end the Kashmir dispute and, therefore, is willing to explore other ways. Subsequent attempts by Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri to dilute Musharraf's remarks turned out to be insufficient to control outrage. Accusations of treason were made against him by the Pakistani political and jihadist establishments and whispers of unhappiness in the army were also heard. Interestingly, although the press did report Musharraf's Kashmir speech that day, it was not covered by Pakistan Television which is tasked with following the leaders of the country all over Pakistan. Pakistan's hard-liners still believe that Kashmir can someday be liberated by force.

*** On a personal note: The author twice encountered Musharraf in the Aiwan-e-Sadar (President's House): once in 2003 and then in 2005. Each time the topic was Kashmir. The author gave his observations of a high level of jihadist activity in Kashmir which clearly appeared to have the government's backing. Faced by the clear contradiction with his public position, Musharraf flared up on both occasions. Subsequently, as ex-officio chancellor of Quaid-e-Azam University, he endorsed all other routine time-bound promotions but refused to endorse the author's promotion to the next higher academic post.

Among the proposals offered by Musharraf was one that envisioned two Kashmiri regions, each with its own government and constitution. These two neighbouring entities: one associated with Pakistan and the other with India, would have soft borders allowing for easy transit of people and goods. Musharraf also favoured demilitarization, which was quite at odds with simultaneously maintaining jihadist power and influence in Punjab. But then, politics is never a linear game.

Minus the two obvious ones, Kashmir watchers have counted over thirty possibilities for solving the Kashmir issue. For example, in 1999 the Pakistani and Indian prime ministers, in secret negotiations, had privately agreed to the Chenab river as a natural boundary that could potentially become the international border.¹⁹ The 'Chenab Formula' suddenly became the talk of the town although the plan was first suggested in the 1960s. It envisaged a division of Kashmir along the line of the River Chenab. Pakistan and India both officially rejected it, but India had more reason. The plan would have been difficult for any Indian leader to sell because it would have required giving up much land to Pakistan. It would also have been an agreement for another division on the basis of religion.

A more feasible plan envisages two reconstituted Kashmiri entities, possibly straddling the Line of Control, with their own respective governments and constitutions. These two non-hostile entities, one associated with Pakistan and the other India, would have soft borders allowing for easy transit of people and goods. This calls for a preparatory stage in which inflamed nerves are soothed and the high-pitched decades-old rhetoric is toned down. Subsequently, the Pakistani side of Kashmir and the Northern Areas could be formally absorbed into Pakistan. Negotiations could be conducted with India on an LoC-plus solution that allows for some territorial adjustments and soft borders, and possibly a 10-mile deep demilitarized zone. While the division of Kashmir will be resisted by some Kashmiri nationalists, it is better to accept this reality rather than live with the endless suffering that has consumed over 90,000 lives since 1987.

Post-Musharraf, as yet there is little to suggest that Pakistan has any new game plan. Resistance to change comes from many quarters—a possible backlash from the religious parties and extreme elements within the military, as well as a large standing army that needs an enemy. Inertia and default continue to dominate military planning and design. On the other hand, compared to 20–30 years ago, Kashmir is no longer such an immediate or emotional matter. Trade with India, which accelerated after Pakistan granted India the ‘Most Favoured Nation’ status in late 2011, could bring home the virtues of peace to a large number of people on both sides.

India also needs to reassess its policy on Kashmir. The undeniable fact is that India is morally isolated from the Kashmiri people and incurs the very considerable costs of an occupying power. Its industry, capable of double-digit growth, needs stability to grow. Kashmir remains a thorn in its side, with the prospect of a disruptive conflict breaking out at some point. And—of no small importance—Indian soldiers do not want to die in Kashmir. India, by formally acknowledging Kashmir as a problem that needs a solution; punishing security forces for excesses; releasing political prisoners from Kashmiri jails; and agreeing to a mutual reduction of hostile state-sponsored propaganda, could appropriately acknowledge its part of the deal.

So is there hope for an eventual solution of Kashmir? Yes, but it shall require a spirit of compromise and an emphasis on economic prosperity, social stability, and peace. Logic and pragmatism require India and Pakistan to explore non-maximalist long-term solutions. Positions fixed half a century ago must change. The ‘your loss is my gain’ mentality must be abandoned.

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