

Into the Nucleus of a Relationship: Indo-Pak Relations Revisited

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“Since war originates in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the seeds of peace be sown.”

India and Pakistan are now engaging the attention of the world by entering into a competitive nuclear arms race, which has been termed as a race for ‘mutually assured destruction’ (MAD), a cliché of the Cold War days. The press reports now reveal that the scientists on the Indian side were waiting for a nod from the government since the early eighties to go for the tests. Ex-President and ex-defence minister Mr. R. Venkatraman, in a letter congratulating Mr. Vajpayee, has said that the plans were afoot to conduct the tests in 1983, during Mrs. Gandhi’s government, but they were subsequently dropped under international pressures. He has also mentioned that he had gone down the shafts to inspect the things for himself. Everybody knows that the second attempt in 1995 was abandoned after the US intelligence gathered information regarding the preparations for the tests and the US administration persuaded India not to go for the test. The newspapers have also revealed that during its 13 days in office in 1996, the BJP government was thinking seriously in terms of conducting the tests. And the ex-defence minister in Gujral government, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav has come out with a statement saying the National Front government had almost cleared the decks for the tests on the eve of its ouster from the office.

In the immediate aftermath of the tests, the craze to associate themselves with the nuclear tests and secrets related to it was so great that one saw a whole lot of current and ex-office bearers claiming first hand knowledge of the nuclear capacity and expressing their approval of the tests. There was a near total unanimity among almost all parties save the Left Front that the tests would take due care of the national security issues especially in the wake of the Ghauri missile launched by Pakistan on 6 April 1998. In the befuddling haze of the euphoria over the tests, the national opposition even forgot to ask the government to spell out the security compulsions that led it to take this step. Nobody thought it wise to question the wisdom of the remarks of George Fernandes that China posed a potential danger to the security of India. Nobody could even suspect that George was only queering the pitch for the tests by unwisely manufacturing an enemy in China through flagrant disinformation campaign that the Chinese were building a helipad in Arunachal Pradesh and installing radio devices in Coco Islands.

The post-Ghauri insecurity syndrome extended through an additional coordinate of insecurity (China) sought both to blur the reactive contours of the nuclear tests and to silence any likely opposition on the national scene. The rationale for the tests was thus worked out in an indirect manner and even after the tests; the government did not think it fit to explain its stand to the people. That the BJP had stolen the winds out of the sails of the opposition parties was quite visible from the way they were silently won over without a purr of protest, as the PM and his vocal assistants strutted about the corridors of the Congress Party office, convincing the Congress leaders about the

necessity of the tests. The opposition parties hardly realised that they were being helplessly sucked into a rightist orbit and were unwittingly endorsing a weltanschauung (world-view) they sought to repudiate all throughout their political career.

The BJP factor

It is pertinent to restate here that the scientists were expecting a go-ahead signal from the PMO since as early as the year 1983. The BJP must have had access to this nuclear secret only during its 13-day tenure in 1996. The nationwide campaign for a deterrent nuclear policy gained momentum, from the BJP platform, only after this aborted tenure. It is surprising on the part of the other parties, especially the Congress and the National Front that they chose to gloss over this fact that BJP's talks of overt nuclear policy started after its access to the PM office. At the electoral level, as such, they should have launched some alternative policy on the nuclear issue to checkmate nuclear card played by the BJP. Perhaps, true to the oath of secrecy, they did not think it fit to launch any debate at the national level over the issue.

Thus the BJP made its intentions very clear on its nuclear issue right throughout its campaign for the elections. And quite in line with its nuclear policy, the coalition government led by it took immediate steps to establish a National Security Council (NSC) to reevaluate the nuclear policy of the government and review the security situation of the country from time to time. A task-force committee was set up to prepare the guidelines for the consideration of the NSC. In retrospect one finds out that the BJP government had already taken the decision to embark on the nuclear path and the preparations for the detonation were carried out in utmost secrecy to avoid any interference, internal or external, in its policy on the issue, while the discussion on the National Security Council were going on at the national level. The fact that there was a widespread consensus on the NSC must have added to the confidence of the BJP in its security (or insecurity) perceptions. It is quite well known that BJP's sense of insecurity stemmed from Pakistan more than from any other source, and after the test-launching of Ghauri in Pakistan, the sense of insecurity must have escalated further. It is true that if one goes by the utterances of different Prime Ministers of India since independence, we find a constant refrain that Pakistan (more than China with whom India fought a discredited war in 1962) has been the prime security concern for India over the years. But the sense of insecurity never assumed that much of intensity as it did this time after the BJP government came to power.

Building up a Rightist base in India

Every political party seeks to impose its own version of nationalism and attendant subjective orientations on the entire system. If the government endures, this imposition tends to become systemic. During the fifty years of independence, when the Congress held sway, the Congress government clung fast, at least theoretically, to a composite version of nationalism, secular and tolerant. The entire system seemed to be responding well to the Congress version, when the compulsions of electoral politics in the post-Nehru period necessitated a regular correspondence between the orthodox Hindu majoritarian version of nationalism, pragmatic and tempered with an ethnic pride in traditional virtues of an 'eternal' civilisation, and the earlier official Nehruvian secular nationalism that sought to underplay religious overtones, even though it could not completely blunt the edge of religious appeal. An umbrella party that it was, the tolerance that

marked its operations ensured the presence of ardent sympathisers of the right wing within its ranks.

All this was tolerated keeping in mind the electoral advantage that would accrue from it. Moreover, the prospect of co-opting the rightist paradigm must have propelled such a policy option during the post Nehru era. But the serious consequences of such a policy were evident in the misunderstandings it sparked off in Kashmir and Punjab, where the Congress version of nationalism was increasingly being viewed with suspicion and disgust. The inability to hold its ideological ground was the root cause of the gradual erosion of its electoral base. The dilutions it accommodated within its ideological framework made its central position weak and suspect. On the one hand, the increasing use of religious imageries boosted the morale of an otherwise weakening rightist position among the Hindus, and on the other, the move to take the principle of tolerance to absurd lengths nurtured a constituency among the Muslims, inherently orthodox and regressive, which, in turn, induced orthodoxy among the Hindus as well.

The non-Congress governments, on their part, did not endure too long to evolve any lasting ideological option for the Indian polity and the entire civil society in India was gradually infected with the virus of narrow sectional chauvinism. The attendant tension was marked in the regular communal convulsions, from the later half of the 1980s, which culminated in the Advani-led rath-yatra, Babri demolition and the Bombay blasts, in the same causal sequence. The communal polarisation in the wake of all this was partially offset by the cross-cutting intra-religious caste divisions within the Hindu fold after the acceptance of the Mandal Commission recommendations by the V.P. Singh government. The National Front coalition under Deve Gowda and Gujral could not survive long to generate confidence among the people in its agenda. Enter the BJP government the resulting instability saw the floating electorate drifting towards the BJP especially after the BJP projected a moderate Vajpayee as its leader. But gain, it could only muster 180 seats after entering into coalition in the elections with various regional parties, spanning from Akali Dal to Trinamool Congress, which brought about explicit changes in its electoral agenda. The BJP-led coalition at the Centre, after the elections, had to further thrash out a common minimum programme, which necessitated compromises from the BJP side on the Ram-temple and Kashmir issue, apart from other issues, held fundamental by its sister wings like VHP and RSS. Immediately after the formation of the government at the Centre, the coalition partners like Jayalalitha and Mamta Banerjee also went pestering the government through their demands to accommodate their interests. Thus, the BJP must be experiencing tremendous pressure from within its ranks, and from without as well, at the time it took its decision to detonate the devices. It is very much probable that the decision to go in for the tests was conditioned by a hope that it would act as a solution to the problems it was facing in the meanwhile.

Popular Approval

What is remarkable, however, is the immediate public endorsement of the nuclear move. In the midst of rejoicing over the tests, the Gallop polls showed that an overwhelming 82 percent of the population approved of the idea of going for instant weaponisation, for that would prove an effective deterrent. Even though the study did not take into account the threat perception of the people, the tests must have been regarded as Pakistan specific by the people at large, despite the diversionary tactics adopted by the defence minister Mr. Fernandes. All this suggested that people

in India, irrespective of their political leanings to the right or left or centre, have a reflexive insecurity complex vis-à-vis Pakistan. It would require little effort to prove this point. It has almost become a truism. But the sense of insecurity never overflowed its banks and stayed within the limits of sanity under other establishment despite regular official allegations of ISI interference in Kashmir and communal riots. The ISI factor in many of the domestic cries in India has been raised so many times in official briefings and media coverage that ISI has acted as a major scapegoat for almost any trouble that is supposed to be divisive of the integrity of India. The role of ISI in orienting electoral support towards the BJP can make an engaging study as well. It is natural that a people fed with regular information regarding the ISI meddling in the internal affairs of India. (spreading its tentacles to areas as deep into Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu and far away into the ethnic cauldron in the Northeast) would carry an inevitable impression that the BJP's aggressive posture against Pakistan is quite justified. And thus its open nuclear policy was welcomed by people as a whole.

Pakistani Politics

Coming to the Pakistani side, its defense policy is entirely India-specific. On the face of it, it is difficult to explain the plaintive mood of the Pakistanis vis-à-vis Indians, especially when the Muslims could manage to carve out a separate homeland for themselves from the British India. The feeling of success against the insurmountable obstacles on the path to the making of Pakistan should have been too great to sweep away all sense of distrust and hostility from the minds of the Pakistanis. But that was not to be. The widespread communal holocaust that gripped the subcontinent is the wake of partition, instead of solving the communal problems after the Direct Action Day fall out, aggravated the inter-communal relations in the sub-continent. The strained subjective impulses have survived in the collective psyche of an entire population of Hindus and Muslims to the present day. The right-wing in India, with the blemish of Gandhi's assassination on its face, could not generate any substantial influence among the masses. Rather many Congress stalwarts known for their orthodox Hindu credentials ensured the flow of sympathy of the constituency that genuinely belonged to the right-wing into the Congress fold. And a Nehru-led coalition managed to blunt the edges of such chauvinism in spite of many of its short-coming on several other fronts.

Continuation of the Congress-League Pattern of Relationship

But on the Pakistani side, the oft-quoted speech of Jinnah, the Qaid-e-Azam, that all Pakistanis-Hindus, Muslims Sikhs and the rest – will cease to identify themselves by their religion and switch over to a secular national identity could not ensue the evolution of a secular polity in Pakistan, Jamiat-I-Islami, led by Maulana Maudoodi, started off from where Jinnah left, with all the nuisances the Jamiatis were capable of. They led the unschooled masses to demonstrations and riots against the Ahmadiyas and sought to establish a pure and unadulterated Islamic polity in Pakistan. And then there was the Kashmir problem in the immediate aftermath of independence that reinforced the antagonism that characterised the Congress-League confrontation during the colonial period, and became an excuse for India-Pakistan rivalry in the succeeding years.

In the post-Jinnah political scene, the civilian democratic polity, through its very anarchic nature provided the army with every possible excuse to step in and impose its rigorous discipline on the

society as a whole. The army led by Ayub Khan sought to perpetuate its rule through sham elections. Ayub also defeated Jinnah's sister, Ms. Fatima Jinnah, in an electoral encounter to establish the first military-led popular government of Pakistan. The bid for power at the surface level always took care to avoid any conflict with the campaign for Islamisation of Pakistani society sponsored by the right wing at the bottom. The Pakistani establishment even indirectly encouraged the rising tide of madrassas in Pakistan. At one level even, as a logical corollary of the right wing campaign, the ruling establishment in Pakistan tried to justify the Islamic leaning of the Pakistani policy by trying their best to prove Indian secularism a hoax. Pakistan could never sever ties with its subcontinental past and the unresolved issue of Kashmir kept the anti-Indian tempers alive in Pakistan. The issue of Kashmir, thus, in a way, ensured the continuation of the legacy of Congress-League encounter and the India-centric insecurity complex became so endemic that India was blamed almost for any and every failure of Pakistan. This sense of insecurity further deepened after the 1965 Indo-Pak engagement when the two countries were seen locked up in a fight over an infertile stretch of marshland in the Rann of Kutch, which spread to the LoC along Kashmir. The subsequent cease-fire and Tashkent agreement in January 1966 saw the rise of the populist Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He played up the Pakistani sense of insecurity vis-à-vis India and claimed that Pakistani military victory over India was foolishly thrown away on the diplomatic table by Ayub at Tashkent. Bhutto, started off in a big way with his famous speech of waging 'a thousand years war' with India. Later he called it a 'philosophical metaphor' embarked upon a course of diplomatic rapprochement with India after the 1971 war.

Mr. Bhutto's anti-India vibes could win him substantial popular support in West Pakistan, but East Pakistan had already started burning. The army action in East Pakistan resulted in a surge of refugee migration into Indian side of Bengal and dragged India into a war, where Indian army came to the rescue of the Shanti Bahini, struggling for independence of East Pakistan. Pakistani Army was summarily defeated and independent Bangladesh came into being. The subsequent Simla Agreement between Mr. Bhutto and Mrs. Gandhi in 1972 managed to restore the diplomatic links but the sense of distrust continued to smolder underneath. The feeling of a total defeat in 1971 war, the division of Pakistan and the subsequent Pokhran nuclear test of 18 May 1974 must have intensified the insecurity complex further.

The fundamental principle of a religion-based nationality championed by the leaders of Pakistan movement suffered a major setback when religion could not keep Pakistan together. This is said to have engaged the attention of scholars and theoreticians in Pakistan who set upon the urgent task of re-establishing the foundational ideologies of the Pakistani state affirming the role of religion as the chief predicator of national identity. And most of these theoretical exercises had to begin with a denial of the Indian contention that secularism could provide a better alternative mode of nation-building. On the other side of the spectrum, the political establishment led by Mr. Bhutto, prepared the country to 'eat grass' and make bombs. In his public appearances, during this time, Mr. Bhutto started withdrawing from the Simla agreement that sought to bilateralise Indo-Pak relations and even went to the extent of saying that it was not ethically binding on a Muslim to honour any agreement with Kafir[1]. He then accused India of adopting a 'hegemonic' stand and threatened in Washington: "We are committed to the idea of a peaceful settlement (of Kashmir issue). But we have not signed a no war pact. It is premature to say if hostilities are likely but if all our peaceful steps are exhausted, then we will have to see"[2]. The prospect of a nuclear India also contributed to the overall sense of insecurity of Pakistanis and at this moment the strategy of

engaging India internally (so that it could not think of attacking Pakistan) could have been evolved by the Pakistani establishment. And that was the gestation period of the nuclear efforts of Pakistan.

Mr. Bhutto, after a brief popular stint, during which he drafted out a democratic constitution for Pakistan, started facing increasing opposition at home for his dictatorial manners. The opposition accused him of having rigged the elections for his success in 1977 and staged huge demonstrations against Mr. Bhutto's continuation in office. At a time when he was trying to negotiate with the opposition, he was removed from office by the army led by Gen. Zia-ul-Haq. General Zia's tenure from 1977 to 1988, when he died in a plane-crash, was blessed with all kinds of help from the US administration, after the Soviet intrusion into Afghanistan in 1979. The US interests could not have been served better under a non-military dispensation and as such, the US authorities, in their bid to counter the Soviet move, provided all kinds of moral and material help to the Zia's regime in Pakistan, which served as a conduit for the arms transfer to the Afghan Mujahideen. After the Iranian revolution and fall of the Shah regime in 1979, there was no other ally in the region, the US could have looked forward to, for help.

Mr. Bhutto, had unwittingly sown the seeds of 'Islamisation' in the Pakistan policy by trying to conform to the demands of the right wing for establishing Nizam-I-Mustafa in Pakistan. He had declared the Ahmadiyas non-Muslim, and called his economic policy Islamic socialism. This popular urge for Islamisation of the Policy of Pakistan was well manipulated by Zia-ul-Haq, who tried to accommodate the Jamiati version in the beginning but later dumped the Jamiatis and started on an Islamisation course which bore a stamp all his own. His Islamisation scheme was received with tremendous popular approval, even against the background of a collateral wave of popular sympathy building up in favour of democracy. However, Zia had his own scheme at work in Pakistan. Unlike Bhutto, Zia was convinced in the virtues of an Islamic polity and geared his efforts sincerely in that direction. An enthusiastic Islamiser that he was, he promoted his own version of Islam through ordinances. He was too clever to disassociate himself from the orthodox section, which initially welcome the military intervention of Zia-ul-Haq. His association with the jamiati Islami fell into a patron-client mould. In the name of patronising the orthodox section, he made its leaders whip up, sympathy in favour of Islamisation. At the same time, activating the levers of official media, he assured the flow of popular sympathy towards him and him alone. In a rare show of popular approval almost 90% of the electorate supported the Islamisation policy launched by Zia-ul-Haq in a referendum. Zia, used his Islamisation policy as a legitimiser of his position in Pakistan and interpreted it as show of popular approval of his leadership.

During the early phase of his presidential career, Zia followed the external policy evolved by Bhutto and talked of 'Big Brother' attitude of India and laid stress on 'Kashmir' issue. But as he mellowed down he advocated a policy of friendship with India. But the popular hysteria generated by his administration in favour of Islamisation had to have negative fall out on Indo-Pak relationship. If one goes through the print-media during the late seventies and early eighties one finds that the reactions of the Pakistani press to the communal riots in India were so harsh and severe that the Indian Foreign Office reacted strongly to such 'vilification campaign against India'. The Pakistani, Foreign Minister, Mr. Agha Sahi, even went to the extent of raising the issue of discrimination against Muslims minorities in India, at the UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 4 August 1979[3]. In 1980, Zia rejected the offer of no-war pact from India saying; 'Simla Pact is a no-war pact after the restrictions were removed'[4]. He also emphasised

upon the resolution of the Kashmir issue for 'no-war pacts were worth nothing, not even the paper on which they are signed, if problems like Kashmir remained unsolved[5]. But very soon, after India started expressing concern about the US arms supply to Pakistan, Zia expressed his readiness to sign no war pact with India. This was rejected by Mrs. Gandhi's government saying that talks of peace cannot synchronise with preparations for war. The issue of Kashmir, Punjab and Indo-Pak troops engagements on Sialkot affected the bilateral relations further in the subsequent days.

This was the time when Kashmir was increasingly being projected as an unredeemed Islamic territory. The link between 'Islamisation' and 'sufferings of fellow Muslims in Kashmir' was deliberately forged to endear the movement to the Pakistani audience. The President of Azad Kashmir (POK) Brigadier, Mohammed Hayat Khan, inaugurating the two-day long Ulema conference in Muzaffarabad on 14 September 80 said that Azad Kashmir shall be the base camp of their movement for accession of the whole state to Pakistan 'with a view to participating in the setting up of an Islamic society which was an article of faith with them'. He expressed his conviction that 'the effort to Islamise the society would revitalise the movement of the Kashmiris'[6]. The domestic press even advised the government to take advantage of the Punjab issue to teach 'Hindus', a lesson, and many even argued that demands for Khalistan proved the logic of 'two-Nation theory'[7].

Against this setting Lt. Gen. (Retd.) A.I Akram who was supposed to be the kingpin in these subversive activities and was a close confidante of Zia-ul-Haq, proffered up arguments in favour of uninhibited exploitation of the Punjab trouble by Pakistan:

"Punjab provides Pakistan with the last opportunity to settle scores with India for giving us a truncated Pakistan, and by the same stroke punishing for their atrocities on Muslims from the days of Hari Singh Nalwa till the Partition"[8].

However, Zia denied any Pakistani hand in Punjab trouble and said that 'Pakistan was India's favourite whipping dog'[9].

General Zia, was not too ill-disposed to the idea of Indo-Pak friendship. During his presidential tenure, he had even sought to pursue things at an informal level. His strategy of coming over to India to see a cricket match, of awarding Morarji Desai with the highest civilian award of Pakistan and later his offer of unconditional non-aggression pact showed that Zia had given serious thought to the issue of normalisation of relationship with India. But his idea of Indo-Pak friendship was only a dictator's fancy. His gestures, even when apparently well-meaning, could not generate any trust across the border in India for there was no popular approval behind any such move. Moreover, in his unguarded moments, Zia himself emphasised on an exclusive Pakistani identity that sought to sever all ties with its sub-continental past. In one of his speeches he said: "Now in this country we call ourselves Deobandis, we call ourselves Barehhlvis, we call ourselves Sunnis, we call ourselves Shias. But 1400 years ago were there Sunnis and Shias? It is alright if you call yourselves Kekis and Medinis... But why associate yourselves with the names of the cities of a country which describes itself to be secular?[10]" This sought to convey that Zia was not prepared to stray the beaten tracks. However, it is difficult to jump to such a conclusion because there was no positive response from the Indian side to his offers of non-aggression pacts.

The point one wants to make here is that, the anti-India and anti-Hindu sentiments got a fresh lease of life after the 1971 war and gathered momentum during the eighties, exactly when the movement in favour of Islamisation was picking up.

Obsession with Islamisation: The negative fallout

By the time the system reverted to democracy after Zia's death in an air-crash in 1988, the Pakistan's system had taken irreversible strides in the direction of Islamisation. The electoral campaigns towards the end of 1988 showed that pro-Zia Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) was generating intense anti-India hatred. Qazi Hussain Ahmed (Chief of Jamiat-i-Islami) in a meeting to launch the election campaign of IDA, reportedly said, in the presence of many office-bearers during Zia's time, that the chief aim of Islamic movement was 'to hoist the flag of Islam on the Red Fort in Delhi', and 'to liberate the people of Kashmir'. After the elections, the Indian ambassador in Pakistan, Mr. S. K. Singh, volunteered to organise a reception committee for the Qazi and asked him at a social function whether he proposed to apply for a visa to do his promised deed (of hoisting the flag) or cross over the border illegally. The Qazi was visibly embarrassed and explained that it was mere 'innocent election rhetoric'[11].

However, the policies of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, who have been competing for power ever since, differ in their interpretation of the content rather than the scope of Islamisation of Pakistani polity. If Benazir was worried about the Clergy's call for banning women's entry into the top position in the government, Nawaz Sharif was worried about the fall out of a rigid orthodox Islamic position the state's economy. But given the emotional temperature the issue produced, the elite of Pakistan was unequivocal in its advocacy of the cause of Islam. People like Benazir and Sharif have succeeded quite well, so far, in wresting the initiative from the orthodox section and forged the issue of Islamisation into their electoral agenda. The rise of an orthodox Taliban in the neighbourhood, in Afghanistan has also induced further zeal for Islamisation in Pakistan, in recent months.

Recent Turmoil within Pakistan

Such national obsession with Islamisation had to have its effect on the entire society of Pakistan. The anti-Ahmadiya and anti-Christian riots in Pakistan in the recent months amply prove this point. Right since independence, the elite of Pakistan, despite their westernized outlook and modern life style, shared the view with the clergy and the laity that Islam was the soul of the polity of Pakistan. The Islamic credo of Pakistan, moreover, has a distinct identity of its own in that it is reflexively anti-India (rather anti-Hindu) and seeks to be defined in contradiction with the ideology of the Indian nation. Thus anti-India and anti-Hindu symbols have found their way into the text-books and the curricular bias against the Hindus has perpetuated a mindset, a psyche that is rooted in the belief that Hindus (or Indians) were conspiring all the while to overrun Pakistan- a mindset that regaled in the glory of Muslim invasions into Hindustan. The issue of Kashmir, the 1971 war, the secession of Bangladesh and the communal riots of the eighties were sure to further ossify such a mindset.

But unfortunately, the urge for Islamisation could not unite Pakistani society and then theological differences among several sects within Islam have come out into the open in Pakistan society.

Shias now feel threatened by the possibility of a majoritarian Sunni version of Islam being thrust upon them, in a bid to homogenize and standardize Islamic values in Pakistani society. The resultant Shia-Sunni riots starting from the occupied Northern Areas (Gilgit and Chitral) to Punjab and Sindh, have engulfed the whole of Pakistan. The popular love for Islamisation could not also wipe out the ethnic and regional division. The non-Punjabi ethno-linguistic categories increasingly perceived the Pakistani administration to be dominated by the Punjabis. The postponement of Census in Pakistan lent credence to such suspicion, as the non-Punjabis believed that the Census would reveal the changed demographic composition of the Pakistani society and numerical preponderance of the Punjabis would be considerably affected thereby. The Census, finally conducted in 1997 by the Army, was resented by the Baluchi people. Against this background, the rising spiral of violence related to the MQM issue, the assertion of Baluchis, Sindhis and Pakthoons for greater equitable share in national resources and their demands to accommodate their separate ethnic identities, posed a serious threat to the unity and integrity of Pakistan. The antidote suggested by the orthodox clergy, all this while, was greater Islamisation. The Sharif administration was ready to oblige the Jamiat-led opposition but held it secondary to the issue of reviving the economy. Moreover, the homogenizing temper of the Islamisation move provoked reactions from the non-Sunni sections of Pakistani society, who suspected that any such step would marginalise their sectional interests. At such a critical juncture, it was natural that the leaders would look for some common denominator that could cement the differences. If love of Islam could not unite Pakistanis, there was a possibility that hatred against India could. As such the elite in Pakistan was busy manufacturing alibis to switch the attentions away from domestic troubles.

Inventing a Scapegoat

In addition to such worsening law and order situation, Pakistan was also facing severe crisis on the financial front. This had forced the Sharif administration to go for total restructuring of economy through the international doctors of economy, the IMF and World Bank. The administration tried its best in the meanwhile, to contain domestic violence to invite foreign investors. However, violence showed no signs of subsiding. Reports of attacks on foreign nationals continued to fill the pages of newspapers.* (on the foreign policy front the initiatives followed by the then Indian premier Mr. I. K. Gujral, which came to be known as 'Gujral Doctrine', must have added to the worries of Pakistan. The way India squared up with regional states like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka and befriended Iran certainly took Pakistan by surprise). The condition was ripe for the invention of a scapegoat. And what else could have served as a better scapegoat than India at such a moment?

It should be pointed out here that inspite of regular allegations from the Indian side that the Pakistani intelligence (ISI) was trying to meddle with the domestic situation in India, the Pakistani official overtures regarding possible Indian hand in Pakistani domestic troubles were rather muted. They were mostly suggestive of possible Indian hands behind the Sindhi Mohajir troubles. But from the year 1997, it was marked that Pakistan alleged Indian involvement in almost all the troubles: Shia-Sunni riots, killing of foreign nationals (Iranians and Americans), and even Baluchi and Pakhtoon assertions[12]. Such official pronouncements had great popular appeal, but still, the decoy did not seem too effective this time. Surprisingly, the bilateral talks initiated by the two countries in June 1997, in spite of such allegations from the Pakistani side, seemed to start quite

well. The Islamabad talks at the foreign secretary level revealed the Indian willingness to discuss Kashmir along with other outstanding issues. This was interpreted as Indian willingness to negotiate its stand on Kashmir issue and as such, the anti-India bogey raised by the administration lost its bite at that point of time. The subsequent hardening of Indian and Pakistani positions on Kashmir led to abrupt suspension of talks and gave a fresh lease of life to the official anti-India proclamations.

Rise of BJP and the changing scenario

The rise of Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition to power in the 12th parliamentary elections in India, with its insistence to review the nuclear option and reconsider the status of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, altered the strategic scenario in the sub-continent. Any assertion of Indian might predicated through the BJP, an avowedly Hindu-nationalist party, was likely to be misunderstood by Pakistan as much as any assertion by Pakistan was likely to be misinterpreted by the BJP government[13].

The elemental distrust, almost paranoid in nature, which characterised the relationship between the two neighbours, rose to the surface in the wake of the Ghauri missile test in Pakistan. The Ghauri test by Pakistan revealed the true nature of Indo-Pak bilateral relationship. The very timing, the naming of the missile after Sultan Mohammad Ghauri, a medieval Muslim invader, who is supposed to have opened the gates of Muslim invasions into the geographical expanse beyond the Indus, known as India these days, showed that the Pakistani mindset had an in-built Hindu bias, which could easily be translated into strong anti-India aversion. Such aversion had perhaps led the nuclear mujahid, Dr. Abdul Qadeer, to confuse the Indian missile Prithvi to be named after the medieval Hindu king Prithvi Raj, who had defeated Sultan Ghauri in his maiden attempt in 1191 AD[14].

It is pertinent to mention here that the undeclared nuclear and missile race between the two countries has been going on since the eighties. The allegations of Chinese assistance have been raised so many times during this period. So the launching of Ghauri, (as were the launchings of its predecessors, the Hatfs,) was not that unexpected. But what seemed to have hurt the establishment in India was its nomenclature. The claims of Abdul Qadeer that he was readying the Abdalis and Ghaznavis[15] were certainly serious affronts to the right wing BJP government in India. The reactions of the BJP government also showed the elemental Hindu distrust of Pakistan. The subsequent popular approval revealed the Indians, as a whole, were ready to endorse the step taken by the BJP government. The playing of the China card, the allegation of US insensitivity and the seemingly rebel attitude of India over the CTBT issue sought to provide India with the rationale to go for the tests. But it could not obfuscate the insecurity complex induced by the launching of Ghauri in Pakistan. More than the missile or the Sino-Pak deals, what angered the establishment in India was the nomenclature of the missile after a medieval Muslim invader. This is where the crux of the matter lies.

Conclusion

The West has, in the meanwhile, isolated Kashmir as the issue bedeviling the relationship between India and Pakistan. But with the lines of distrust running so deep, one wonders whether the

Kashmir issue can ever be resolved to the satisfaction of both the neighbours. And even if the issue is resolved it is doubtful whether they can still be reconciled to each other. Kashmir is just an excuse for continuing the hostilities. One has marked, over the years, how Pakistan reacts to the communal riots in India. One has seen Ayub appealing to the Muslim countries to take notice of the plight of the Muslims of India. His overtures had a distinct anti-Hindu bias: 'Hindus have come to power after hundreds of years; therefore, they wanted to wreak vengeance on Muslims'[16]. Bhutto had no scruples about exploiting anti-Hindu sentiments of the people to serve his electoral purposes: During his campaign for election in 1970, Bhutto clearly stated: "Ideology means service to the Muslims of Pakistan, Well, not only that but also the protection of the Muslims in India, which is possible only when Pakistan is made strong and stable"[17]. During Zia's time one of his close confidantes, Lt. Gen. Akram Khan, let out the mood of the generals in Pakistan. He wrote: "Pakistan stands in the path of India's march to its goal of greatness and this Indian aspiration of greatness is a reaction to 'the millennia of defeat and disgrace for the Hindu... (on our part) we regarded ourselves as the successors of Muslim rulers in India who in spite of being a minority ruled over a large population of Hindus..[18]" In the wake of the Babri demolition (on 6 December 1992) one saw Nawaz Sharif rushing to Dacca to bring out a joint communique with the Bangladeshi premier demanding the reconstruction of the mosque at exactly the same place. The emotion, the empathy exhibited by the Pakistani establishment towards the Muslims in India may have had a utilitarian angle to it. But one can never deny the spontaneity, which marks such responses. Zia, had put it like this: in his interview with M.J. Akbar in June 1982: "I wish that Indian Muslims establish their own identity as Indians and Muslims. It would be a great pride for me to see that Indian Muslims take pride in calling themselves Indians first and Muslims next... There is something common between them and me. And that is Islam itself. So when a Muslim in Pakistan finds a Muslim in India subjected to cruelty because of faith, it hurts... it is only that simple[19].' India has always reacted strongly to the Pakistani overtures on the subject. The right wing Hindu communal organisations in India have been especially sensitive to such overtures and they seek to serve the Indian audience with the Pakistani perception of India regularly. A cursory look at the right wing literature would prove this point. Moreover, it is usually seen that at the height of communal tensions, there is an inevitable slump in Indo-Pak bilateral relations. Reverse is also true: the communal temperature shoots up during the periods of bilateral rivalry. If the Pakistani sense of insecurity borders on paranoia, the Indian distrust of Pakistan borders on pathological aversion.

Against this backdrop, any significant effort at establishing peace between the two neighbours has to begin with what E.H. Carr called the 'imaginative understanding' of the fundamental aversions that have their roots in history. Otherwise, the two neighbours will always look for alibis to fight between themselves. For the vast multitude of people inhabiting the South Asian terrain, languishing in poverty, illiteracy and disease, such combative postures add meaning to their lives. And the elite would like to exploit their innocence to generate antipathies that perpetuate a mindset in them, which would make them reflexively averse to the idea of peace between the two countries. It is irony that, in traditional societies, the instruments of democracy (elections, voting) are likely to be exploited by an entrepreneurial class of politicians that seek to build up their constituency through appeal to the emotions, passions and primordial loyalties of the people. G.M. Syed, the leader of the Jiye Sindh movement in Pakistan, was not wide off the mark when he said that Indo-Pak peace was impossible under democracies. In this context, one has to forcefully argue that the political leaderships in both the countries have a historical role to play. On the face of it, it

seems very difficult to wipe out the thick layer of distrust between the two countries overnight. It is a daunting task indeed. But one has to begin somewhere. The leaders in the two countries ought to try their best to guide popular opinion rather than fall to prey to it. It should all begin with a sincere effort to bridge the inter-communal hiatus yawning between two principal communities in the region. If this becomes a success, then prescriptions for other communal and ethnic divisions in both the countries could easily be remedied. The best way of doing it would be to re-write history and make the division look natural and inevitable on the Indian side. On the Pakistani side, the fundamental animus against the Hindus should be replaced by a sympathetic understanding of the Hindu cultural universe. There should be an effort to develop a common understanding of the History of the sub-continent and to reinstate the historical figures (Jinnah, Gandhi and others) on either side not as infallible demigods but as average individuals who might have erred somewhere. This would wipe out the historic fallacies and reconcile the two countries to each other. If this thing happens, problems like Kashmir would wither away. And so would vanish the clenched fists and belligerent slogans that have so far rent the air. As with individuals so with nations: the drive to commit suicide comes out of a pathological state of mind. As our analysis shows, the present drive that aims at collective suicide only signals a pathological condition. It now falls on us all to diagnose it properly and do our best to evolve the panacea for such collective madness. Otherwise this madness threatens to run its course.

References

1. In 1974, Bhutto in his tour of Gilgit, Hunza and Chitral reacted: 'It is not binding on a Muslim to keep up promises with a Kafir' and told the audience that he wanted 'to make the Pakistani Army the best war machine in the world', reported in *Motherland* quoting Pakistani sources (8 August 1974).
2. Reported in *Times of India* (New Delhi) 7 March 1975.
3. Reported in *The Indian Express*, 5 August 1979.
4. Zia talking to newsmen from India; reported in *Dawn* (Karachi) 7 February 1980.
5. Zia in his interview with Kuldip Nayar, reported in *Indian Express* (Delhi), 31 January 1980).
6. Reported in *Muslim* (Lahore) 15 September 1980.
7. Rana Mohammed Tablish wrote in an editorial page article in *Wafaq...* 'We suffered a great blow in east-Pakistan. The Sikhs have provided us a golden chance to hit back. Pakistan could put forward the same justification for supporting the Sikhs as India had offered for helping Bengali Muslims'.
8. Quoted in an article by Madanjit Singh 'Punjab Problem; in *Times of India* (Delhi) 8 September 1986.
9. Zia in his interview with *Newlife* (London) reported in *Hindu* (Madras) 12 April 1986.

10. (Zia's speech rendered into English by the Foreign Ministry of India, reported in *The Hindustan Times* (Delhi) 13 April 1983).
11. Referred by Rajendra Sareen in *Tribune* (Chandigarh) 9 January 1989.
12. The official contention that Indian intelligence agency, RAW (Research and Analysis Wing), was behind these troubles was received with scorn and scepticism by commentators in the press in Pakistan. Many of them even wrote that Pakistani involvement in armed terrorism in Kashmir in India has come home to roost).
13. It is interesting to note that many commentators in the Pakistani press initially welcomed the rise of BJP to power in India. They argued that it would now be possible for both the countries to assess bilateral relations realistically and settle all disputes between themselves. Many in Pakistan were happy that the success of a Hindu-nationalist party in India proved the Pakistani contention that India was not secular.
14. Many commentators in Pakistan were also waylaid by the logic of the Pakistani establishment that India was responsible for starting this communal semantic by naming its missile after Prithviraj. It shows the extent of anti-India aversion in Pakistan.
15. Mahmud of Ghazni and Ahmad Shah Abdali of Afghanistan had invaded India successfully in eleventh and eighteenth century respectively).
16. Reported in *Dawn* (Karachi) 15 July 1968.
17. Z.A. Bhutto, *Marching towards Democracy: Speeches and Statements*, (Rawalpindi: Pakistan Publications) 1971, p. 37.
18. Akram Khan wrote in *Muslim* (Lahore), excerpted in *Patriot* (Delhi) 23 January 1984.
19. *Sunday* (Calcutta), 13-19 June 1982.