

History of Indo-Pak Bilateral Talks

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The sense of psychological aversion that ineluctably creeps into any Indo-Pak dialogue would baffle any lay observer on the scene. The premeditated mood not to take the other seriously and the habitual refusal to any well meaning gesture that the other might suggest during the course of any dialogue aiming at reduction of tension, which rather makes the issues more intractable, would lead one to wonder as to why do they choose to talk to each other despite such rigid reflexive inhibitions. In fact, such talks only end up as point from which enmity would take a fresh lease of life. As it always takes two to make a quarrel, one cannot put the blame squarely on one or the other. The dialogue, if one were to closely observe the pattern of interaction between the delegates from both the countries at the governmental level, become forums to reiterate their irreconcilable positions and very often they indulge in verbal wars that emit signals as hostile as ones that would emerge from actual war in the field. Both the parties, perhaps, need such intermittent combative diplomatic exercises to assure themselves that they have not become any friendlier in the intervening period between talks, when they refused to talk to each other.

It is necessary as such to study the nature of bilateral relations between the two “distant neighbours” (a phrase used by Kuldip Nayar) in detail, which would help one in putting the bilateral talks currently under way, in the right context.

Initial Interactions

The partition of the sub-continent was occasioned by an imminent threat of civil war even though it was expected to serve as a panacea for any such eventuality. The communal holocaust that enveloped the sub-continent in the wake of the partition of the sub-continent was the worst possible in the history of the mankind. The issue of communal riots had to feature as a major referent in the relationship between the two countries in the initial years as such. Apart from this, the beginning of bilateral relations was marked by the resistance from the Indian side in releasing the claim of the share to Pakistan from the reserves of the Reserve Bank of India and alleged discrepancies in the divisions of armed forces and other resources. It took an expiatory fast from M. K. Gandhi to overcome that initial hitch. However, this initial hiccup would characterise the nature of relationship between the two neighbours in the years to come.

One could observe that how Nehru’s pleas^[1] to Liaquat Ali Khan of planning a joint tour to riot affected areas in East-Pakistan and Bengal were taken as undesirable showmanship and dismissed as unworthy of deserving primary attention. In the meanwhile, the issue of Kashmir cropped up as a major irritant in India-Pakistan relations from October 1947. The Mountbatten-Jinnah talks in the wake of Kashmir crisis, from which Nehru withdrew on the plea of bad health, was indicative of the unwillingness on Indian side to take the state of crisis seriously. The unilateral reference of the issue to the U.N. by India, rather revealed a mood that India could not sort it out with Pakistan on the negotiating table and required a neutral third party as an arbitrator to start with. Against such

back drop, the Nehru-Liaquat Pact on 8 April 1950 was the result of the first serious bilateral talks between the two neighbours which carefully narrowed down the focus to less controversial issues of refugees and set the tone for inter-state interaction in the subsequent years. The Pact indirectly recognised the two countries' rights to express sympathy over the fate of the minorities in both the countries. Liaquat did not survive long to put the pact into actual operation.

During the 1950s, the issue of Kashmir assumed the centre-stage and the Indian Prime Minister, Nehru concluded informal talks with his Pakistani counterpart, Mohammed Ali Bogra, to sort out the issue of plebiscite soon. The Pakistani decision to court membership of CENTO provided the Indian P.M. ground to express his reservations in respect to plebiscite in Kashmir. The military membership Pakistan sought to have with CENTO, Nehru argued naturally dispossessed Pakistan of any right to appeal for solution of the problem through peaceful means.

Mutual distrust marked the relationships until the 1960s when Indo-China war of 1962 burst the myth of the invincible Indian might. This is said to have encouraged the military government of Ayub in Pakistan, to embark on an adventurist course. Thus in 1965, we had the wars over an infertile stretch of marshland in the Rann of Kutch and the subsequent military engagements in Kashmir. The myth of a net-Pakistani success was created assiduously by the government of Pakistan. The subsequent truce mediated by Soviet Union resulting in the Tashkent Agreement, that sought to restore the relationship between the two countries, makes interesting study in the art of diplomacy, but effect-wise, literally, the Agreement was discarded by Pakistani public opinion the moment the ink dried upon the negotiating table. Ayub's trusted foreign minister, Z. A. Bhutto outmanoeuvred him in the art of politics, and the late sixties in Pakistani politics certainly belonged to Bhutto, the demagogue, who raised the bogey of diplomatic betrayal of a redoubtable military victory over India by Ayub, and in the ensuing heat of the controversies Ayub had to leave.

The seventies started with the unrest in East Pakistan and the Pakistani efforts to enforce a military crackdown had unforeseen spill over effects as it forced people to flee across the border into India. This steady inflow of refugees gave India the reason to interfere and engage the Pakistani army in a close fight. The Pakistan army lost the war and had to surrender before the Indian army. The division of Pakistan was complete. Thus the early 1970s saw the golden years of Indian supremacy. Even on Pakistani side, a belligerent Bhutto had to swallow his arrogance and talk sense to an Indian journalist Mr. Kuldip Nayar on the eve of the Simla Agreement of June 1972, which revealed that Bhutto was not averse to the idea of a Trieste kind of solution on Kashmir and freeze the line of control (LoC) as the international boundary between India and Pakistan along Jammu and Kashmir. In the official level we mark that the reactions from Pakistan, thoroughly vanquished in military might after 1971 war and paled to insignificance after India's success in nuclear experiment in 1974, were cautious yet plaintive. The Simla agreement that committed both the countries to bilateralism could not do justice to the spirit of hostility that perpetuated despite any such commitment.

From 1974 onwards, Bhutto was very critical of India's external policies[2], yet concentrated on continuing official level talks on issues of mutual trade, restoration of travel and telecommunication facilities etc[3]. (September 1974 Foreign Secy. Level talks between Kewal Singh and Agha Shahi). Allegations of Indian hegemonism marked the utterances of Pakistani

leaders during this time. Most of the talks during this period were marked by characteristic dilly-dallying from Pakistan side. Bhutto's statements on his U.S. tour that on the issue of Kashmir, Pakistan might not take the Simla Agreement as the conclusive alternative and war as a possibility could not altogether be ruled out[4], as also the vilifying anti-India campaigns in the Pakistani Radio, punctuated the talks that would otherwise have made the pace of normalisation smooth and uniform.

The mid 1970s were marked by domestic troubles in Pakistan. The issue of the Baluchi-assertion,[5] the Indian government's initiatives to establish good relationship with Persian gulf countries, the Indian rejection of Pakistani offer of making the South-Asian region nuclear weapons-free, made the interregnum periods between consecutive talks very tense and unsuitable for negotiations. But still, the talks went on unhindered on the question of restoration of overhead flights (cancelled since 1971), shipping, mutual trade and very many other things. In this context one has to mention the role of media in Pakistan, in fomenting anti-India hysteria among the people in Pakistan. The Indian foreign secretary, Mr. Kewal Singh, wrote to his counterpart Agha Shahi 'to abandon the policy of confrontation and create congenial atmosphere of the talks'[6]. The vilification campaign in the press and the radio had inescapable impact on the overall atmosphere in which the talks were being held. That the talks continued did not make any substantial difference to the attitude of the press and the people. The noted journalist, Kuldip Nayar captured the Pakistani perceptions built through media hype well when he revealed that during his tour of Pakistan 'I was asked whether there was any Muslim graveyard in Delhi left intact'[7].

All this while, the domestic politics in Pakistan was largely left untouched and uninfluenced by the Indo-Pakistani diplomatic rapprochement, and political outfits of all hues, opposed to Bhutto had started donning the confrontationist mantle earlier worn by Mr. Bhutto in 1965 when he authored the policy of confrontation with India, with his famous speech of waging "a thousand years' war". His reply, later that it was 'a philosophical metaphor' made it possible to embark upon a course of diplomatic rapprochement with India but the use-value of the confrontationist stance on the political scene still remained. Bhutto's detractors even questioned the wisdom of Bhutto's policy of 'working towards peaceful coexistence' with India. The Indo-Pak joint talks on restoration of trade provoked reactions, which were reminiscent of the same communal logic of the days of the freedom struggle[8].

The change of government in New Delhi in 1977 seemed to induce some change in Pakistani perceptions because Pakistani political opinion was adverse to Mrs. Gandhi. But this change soon floundered on the issue of Pakistan's building up of arms by recruiting 110 American A-7 fighter planes. The new government in New Delhi was seen expressing the same old concerns that Pakistani acquisition of arms endangered security of India and the sub-continent. New Delhi's offer of 'now-war pact' to inspire confidence in the government of Pakistan was rejected by Pakistan on the ground that such a pact could only follow the settlement of the Kashmir dispute[9]. Bhutto would seek 'joint defence pact and non-aggression treaty among Islamic nations' instead. The late seventies saw the rise of an overwhelming tide in favour of anything Islamic in Pakistan. In order to counter his detractors, who were whipping up a mass-hysteria in favour of '*Nizam-I-Mustafa*', Bhutto too had shifted his gear in favour of 'Islamization'.

Enter the Eighties

The call for Islamization during the closing years of the 1970s had a reflexive anti-India bias in its. Any move to build an identity based on Islam in Pakistan had to begin with an unflinching devotion to the cause of Pakistan, rooted in the movement for Pakistan, which had to be, in turn, defined in contradistinction with the secular identity of India and this, quite inevitably, affected Pakistan's efforts to square up its differences with India. Thus Indo-Pak diplomatic exercises carried on at the official level went on without much enthusiastic backing on the popular front. Against this backdrop, Morarjee's invitations to Pakistan to borrow nuclear technology from India could not cut much ice in Pakistan.

Zia and Indo-Pak Relations

The military take-over of the Bhutto government came as a major surprise in 1977 and the promise of 'commitment to carry Simla Agreement to logical conclusions' and 'working towards the establishment of durable peace in South Asia', by the military administrator, Zia-ul-Haq seemed to launch Indo-Pak relations on a different course, for a martial law administrator was expected not to provoke the Indian government, especially during the phase of consolidation of his power. But he picked up from where the earlier government had left: the very same proclaimed 'eagerness to normalise relations with India' and 'extension of support to right of self-determination to the Kashmiris' and accusation of big-brother-attitude of India or 'Indian hegemonism in the same breath'[10].

Zia was intelligent enough to mark the popular mood building up in favour of Islamization and create confidence in people that he was the person chosen by Allah to complete this task. And with his enthusiasm for Islamization of Pakistani society the rhetoric of the press changed too. Pakistani press which earlier suspected 'Indian hegemonism' in case trade was opened for Indian participation, began to call the whole move a 'Hindu ploy'[11]. The press remained in suspended animation over domestic issues in Pakistan but however, switched over to its favourite hobby of India-baiting and increasing coverage was accorded to the allegations of discrimination against Muslims in India[12].

The confidence building exercises through talks at governmental level suffered a set back in the event of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the Pakistan's elevation to a frontline status, thereby, facilitating flow of arms from U.S.A. This had to have repercussions on the Indian attitude. American assurances[13] would not convince India and thus the approach to bilateral relations from Indian side hardened too. Reports of China and Pakistan pooling their resources in the nuclear field with financial help from oil rich countries so that they could stand up against Israel added to Indian uneasiness. All this led to an inevitable slump in Indo-Pak relations. In the meanwhile against the backdrop of an increasing trail of communal riots in India, Pakistan started harping on the minority issue in international forums. Agha Shahi, the Pakistani Minister for Foreign Affairs, while speaking before UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, on 4 August 1979 observed that minority in India is being discriminated against and the 'Indian government should take steps to preserve the autonomy of educational institutions of various communities, particularly the Muslims'[14].

The issue of Kashmir had its own contribution to make in worsening the atmosphere. And there was a sudden low in diplomatic communication in December 1979 with an Indian embassy official being mistreated by Pakistani intelligence officials on allegations of espionage. The concerned official was allegedly whisked away blindfolded to some unknown place and badly beaten up, when he was going to the market on a scooter. Some days before this incident, a Pakistani embassy official was caught red-handed in Delhi, receiving secret information from a corporal. Hence the Pakistani move was clearly a case of retaliation. This complicated matters for some time and Indo-Pak relations went down further.

The Eighties

By 1980, Mrs. Gandhi was back in the saddles and Pakistani reactions showed that the sense of insecurity had started all over again. Pakistan started connecting the issue of Kashmir with Islam and Islamization and concentrated more on the issue of Kashmir. The reactions from Zia's side seemed to echo the posture adopted by Bhutto, on the issue of no-war pact: 'If there are problems like Kashmir... no-war pacts and no-aggression pacts are worth nothing, not even the paper on which they are written'[15]. The Islamic Conference met in Pakistan in January 1980 and adopted a resolution for restoration of rights of Kashmiris and Palestinians and Zia was laying emphasis on the Muslim Ummah to solve such issues.

At one level, initially, Zia was very sarcastic about the offer of no war pact by India. But by 1981, he was ready for any such pact. Now it was India's turn to say no to it and India viewed it against the backdrop of Pakistan's uninhibited pursuit of military strength through its recruiting of sophisticated weapons from USA. Zia reacted that the Indian retreat made no sense and said that this showed 'she (Mrs. Gandhi) has a vested interest in keeping the India-Pakistan pot boiling'[16]. This period was marked by tension at the diplomatic level too. In November 1981 Pakistan branded four Indian Embassy officials as persona non-grata and India expelled three members of the Pakistani embassy in New Delhi, in retaliation. The brutal treatment to the chauffeur in the Indian embassy in Islamabad, in January 1982 created lot of concern from Indian side.

During 1982-83, India raised concern about the construction of Karakoram Highway that connected Pakistan with China along the strategic borderline in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. The issue of Sikh terrorists being trained in Pakistan in guerrilla camps began coming up as a major irritant in Indo-Pak relations. The issue of Kashmir came up as yet another hitch in the process of normalisation. Agha Hillaly's (Pak representation at UN) remark that Kashmir struck similarity with Palestine in the United Nations, provoked India to cancel the foreign secretary's visit to Pakistan and Pakistan explained its reference as 'a moderate reiteration of Pakistan's stand on J&K as recognised by the two countries'. Zia was apologetic after India's decision to call off the talks and observed that the Pakistani government had not tutored Hillaly to say what he did.

From August 1983, the situation worsened in Kashmir. Bomb blasts became the rule of the day. Mhatre murder by JKLF in London in February 1984 followed by hanging of Maqbool Butt, who was convicted of murder charges, made matters worse. Pakistan launched hostile propaganda all these days. The issue of 'Pakistan's nuclear ambition', 'extradition of hijackers of an Indian plane'

(hijacked by Dal Khalsa men to Lahore on 29 September 1981), seemed to affect the pace of normalisation. The scheduled joint-commission talks in July 1984 were postponed even.

Rajiv-Zia Initiative

The death of Mrs. Gandhi in October 1984, however, inspired sympathy in Pakistan and political analysts suggested that Indo-Pak relations will have a smooth run after a prolonged period of a bumpy ride. The secretary level talks started in early February 1985. Zia-Rajiv meets in Moscow, New York and Muscat in 1985, lent credence to the view that India and Pakistan were squaring up with each other. During this period, Zia extended his hands of friendship and offered mutual inspections of nuclear facilities, or a bilateral nuclear non-proliferation treaty and if that was not acceptable, an international agreement. But Indian government was perhaps reluctant to shake hands with a general whose acceptability in Pakistan was suspect.

From mid January 1986, the issue of Sia-Chen glacier assumed centre-stage. The troops of India and Pakistan were fighting each other from 1984, on the highest altitude in the world, negotiating the worst possible hostile weather. The talks on Sia-Chen were inconclusive and both the parties were reluctant to concede their respective positions. However, the official contacts were allowed to continue but they did not do anything better than perpetuating the adversarial relationships between the two neighbours at a reduced level. Thus we see that the foreign secretary level talks in April 1986 were soon followed by full-scale preparations by Pakistan to raise the issue of Kashmir at the NAM Summit in Harare. The President of POK, K.H. Khursheed, (who was earlier private secretary to M.A. Jinnah) was taken to Harare and introduced to delegates as a leader of Kashmir liberation, which irritated India too much. However, Rajiv-Junejo meet in the SAARC forum ceased up things a little and revealed mutual eagerness to pursue the talks.

It was around this time that periodical army exercises were conducted along India-Pakistan border by the Indian Armed forces, code-named '*Operation Brass-Tacks*'. It led to Pakistan's positioning of amassing of troops all along the border from Pakistan's side, which brought the countries to the brink of a war. Even an otherwise cool Rajiv hinted at India's generosity when he claimed Indian ability to take counter-measures against Pakistan by hard-hitting the training camps across the border, but held that 'we do not want to violate international norms'[17]. But this atmosphere of 'near combative readiness' from both the sides was also synchronised by Home-Secretary level talks (between C.G. Somaya and S.K. Mahmood) to set up a joint Committee of respectable persons at the official level to meet periodically to evolve common strategies in matters concerning defence and security. Even the December talks between the foreign secretaries (A.P. Venkateswaran-Abdul Sattar) sought to explore new avenues for friendship. Yet, these talks failed to bear any effect.

By January 1987, 'Red Alert' was sounded and border was sealed from the Indian side. It resulted in activation of diplomatic links and Pakistan became ready for instant action to pull out its forces for a speedy de-escalation of tension. On 31 January, the Indian Foreign Secretary, Alfred Gonslaves, had meetings with Abdul Sattar and India agreed to moderate the scale of Brass-Tack manoeuvres in response to Pakistani requests. All offensive and defensive forces both the sides agreed to pull out troops to peacetime locations within 15 days. From Indian, side, the pullout was to be effected in Ravi Chenab sector but not in Punjab Sector. India went on with its operation

Brass-Tacks along Punjab, and newspapers reported 'the nightmare is now behind us'. February 1987 saw unexpected eagerness from Zia's side to normalise relations with India. After Rajiv-Zia talks, India agreed to further pull out Brass-Tack-forces from the border. Bilateral issues were discussed and Zia ascribed the whole situation of confrontation to the 'failure of communication'. Rajiv-Zia talks were followed up by foreign secretary level talks and stress was laid on activation of joint-commissions on trade and culture. Zia offered a non-interference package to India to combat terrorism in Punjab. Zia ul Haq, in his characteristic diplomatic style, kept up his much advertised "peace offensive" against India and the talks were continued in May 1988 at Secretary-level (K.P.S. Menon-Abdul Sattar talks) where vital issues were isolated as: Sino-Chinese, Afghan, Punjab, Drafts of friendship and non-aggression treaty. But the response from Indian side was not too encouraging.

Return to Democracy

Zia's death in August 1988 seemed to put Indian hesitations (to negotiate in any substantial way with an unrepresentative general) behind. India looked anxious to retrieve lost grounds in terms of reviving genuine diplomatic channels to embark on a path of hearty relationship. India watched with anxiety the return to democracy in Pakistan. With Benazir Bhutto's PPP assuming power, India-Pakistan relations looked poised for a smooth take off.

On the occasion of the SAARC summit (Dec. 29-31, 1988), in Islamabad, Rajiv went to Pakistan and held friendly discussions with Benazir. After the summit, Rajiv and Benazir signed a pact assuring non-attack of nuclear installations in both the countries. The agreement laid stress on regular foreign secretary level talks for cultural cooperation. But the euphoria caused by this meet did not last long. Benazir, in a bid to retain her popularity and her constituency among the electorate soon joined the fray of India-baiting on the issue of Kashmir and tried to match the idiom of the opposition leaders who publicly denounced Benazir for being too soft on Kashmir issue with India. Moreover, Benazir was not allowed enough political space to implement her policies because the shadow of Zia on military still hung heavy. The foreign minister, Shahabzadeh Yakub Khan, was the army's imposition on Benazir [18] and thus, foreign policy moved along the same old track. But still Benazir's sincerity in the slackening the grip of intelligence over the Punjab issue was appreciable. Once Pakistan involvement was gone, it became highly manageable for the Indian security forces to handle the terrorists in Punjab.

In May 1989, the Home Secretary level talks (between J.A. Kalyani Krishnan and S.K. Mahmud) looked positive. It covered Punjab, J&K, Sindh, question of illegal border crossing and drug trafficking. Simultaneous coordinated border patrolling was agreed upon and laws were to be harmonised for smooth handling of drug trafficking. Rajiv's tour of Islamabad in July 1989 was hailed in the press to have been timed well and 'the right kind of ambience now exists to take up the issues with vigour and determination'. But the talks could do nothing more than arousing temporary good will. The issue of Kashmir, which Benazir raised before the meet, was left untouched.

In September 1989 there were communal riots in India in Assam, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The opposition Islamic Democratic Alliance that was in majority in the Pakistan's upper house passed a resolution condemning the riots and urging a just solution of Kashmir issue. The

resolution, commentators observed looked more like a charter of demands on Indian Government than a survey document[19]. This might have forced the Pakistani Foreign Ministry to express concern about 'loss of innocent lives of Muslims in communal clashes' in India with whom Pakistanis share 'bonds of family, culture and history'. Benazir was also forced to express her opinion about the Ayodhya issue, which she held, was responsible for keeping the communal temperature alive. Indian government protested against such statement and called it unnecessary interference in internal situation.

In October 1989, Pakistan army launched its exercise along the Punjab border, code-named *Zarb-e-Momin*. India felt very concerned about the whole thing and expressed its concern to Pakistan government too. By December 1989, the Indian electorate had disowned Rajiv and put up a coalition government led by V.P. Singh. Initially, V.P. Singh's government looked very accommodative and progressive too. But the atmosphere was pervaded by a sense of distrust, for Kashmir insurgency had the backing of Pakistan and thus India could not wholeheartedly pursue its policy of normalising of relationship with Pakistan.

The Nineties

From January 1990, the turmoil in Kashmir affected domestic politics in both the countries and relationship between them was gravely affected. Towards the end of January, thousands of men tried to march into India from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. The Pakistani government stopped the demonstrators before they came into the firing range of Indian troops. However, the Pakistani Foreign Minister was emphatic about his country's stand on Kashmir, which he expressed during his tour to India:

'It is impossible for Pakistanis not to raise the voice in support of the Kashmiris. Pakistan cannot be cowed down by any pressure or threats and it will continue to support the right of self-determination'[20].

Thus the issue of Kashmir was responsible for the sudden slump in Indo-Pak relations. The violent upsurge in the Valley, substantially incited by Pakistan, assumed more violent form. The reactions from Pakistan side took a qualitative turn in that the nature of upsurge was linked up with the fate of Muslims in general in India and Kashmir was floated as an Islamic issue of enormous important to the Ummah. And we find Benazir joining the Islamicist's bandwagon saying that 'the Muslim-bloodshed in Kashmir will duly outrage the Muslim Ummah the world over'[21]. In India in the meanwhile, the right wing BJP had managed to throw up a sound electoral victory feeding on the communal polarisation occasioned by the Ayodhya issue, and its irreverent posture vis a vis Pakistan had to affect the policy of the coalition government of V.P. Singh whose statements also reflected an uncompromising mood: 'We make it abundantly clear that if any misadventure is attempted (by Pakistan) we will react not only swiftly but decisively. We have the will and the capacity[22].

From April 1990, Pakistan showed readiness for talks, but continued with the same belligerent mood over Kashmir. In one of her most uninhibited statements, Benazir took the cue from her father, and gave a call for 'waging one thousand years' war for Kashmir'[23]. The Indian Foreign Minister, I.K. Gujral, reacted to this in a short and crisp manner, that her bellicose talks of waging a one thousand years' war to free Kashmir 'is her own way of conceding that Pakistan will not be

able to grab Kashmir even in one thousand years'[24]. All this waging of verbal wars made Kashmir situation worse and anti-Hindu riots raised its ugly head in Kashmir: there were bomb blasts on Hindu processions, even head of a cow was thrown at a religious place of worship. The Indian government took the hint well. V.P. Singh was very blunt in his accusations: '(These are) heinous acts committed under directions from across the border... Pakistan is giving directions to the subversives to communalise the situation in Punjab and Kashmir'[25].

It was around this time that US clarified its stand on Kashmir that India and Pakistan should settle down Kashmir issue according to the Simla Agreements on bilateral basis. US Asst. Secy. of State, John Kelly, visited India and Pakistan and urged the governments to normalise their relations. But from Indian side it was conveyed clearly that no summit meet with Benazir was possible and V.P. Singh was adamant:

"The ground language today is that of AK-47, rocket launchers... The flowery language of the Pakistan foreign office does not impress me... It was no good shaking hands across the table and kicking your shins under, at the same time"[26].

Still Pakistan's offer of talks at foreign secretary level was considered by India. The opposition and the ruling party alike were not averse to open up dialogue with Pakistan. A senior politician of the Congress, K. R. Narayanan, who is the current President of the India wrote: 'For India the issue at stake in Kashmir is not territory but the whole concept of India, the secular concept of India without which the nation will fall apart'[27].

From July, the foreign secretary level talks started (between Muchkund Dubey and Tanvir Ahmed Khan). There was no concrete result visible. PoK leader Sardar Abdul Qayum Khan was opposed to Indo-Pak talks at any level and expressed his displeasure vehemently on the issue. The opposition in Pakistan was suspicious and cautioned the government to be 'cautious in its dealing with India'. But still from August Benazir sought to revive friendship with her mango-diplomacy. She sent a special messenger, Mr. Mazher Ali, with gifts of best quality mangoes from Pakistan to meet Mr. V. P. Singh and I.K. Gujral. But within two to three days Benazir was dismissed by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan. Yet the talks continued at the secretary level and the agreements on 'non-violation of air space' and advance intimation of military manoeuvres along the border' showed that chances of any accidental war were sought to be averted through such agreement. The talks aimed more at reducing the prospects of war than creating conditions for friendship to grow in. Quoting inner diplomatic sources newspapers wrote that the talks were of the most abusive kind[28].

Nawaz Sharif's First Term

The Nawaz Sharif's government came to power in Pakistan on Pro-Zia, Islamic *Jamhoori Ittehad* (Islamic Democratic Alliance) platform, in November 1990. There was change of government in India too with Chandra Sekhar replacing V.P. Singh as Prime Minister of India. Nawaz Sharif pursued Zia's policy to perfection. He was never eager to patch up relations with India. He reportedly compared his electoral victory (of IJI) as 'the historic decision in favour of Pakistan movement and the struggle of the Muslim League under the dynamic and bold leadership of Quaid-I-Azam'[29]. Sharif also pledged to 'provide moral political and diplomatic support to the

Kashmiris'[30]. Apparently the contacts established between the two countries in the initial period of his prime-ministership were designed to avert any confrontation so that the exchange of adversarial rhetoric can continue at a safe-level. Thus Nawaz Sharif after the December talks gave a call for observing solidarity with the secessionists in Kashmir. The dialogue at the foreign secretary levels was kept up nonetheless.

In the mean time, elections were held in India and Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated and the sympathy wave put the Congress party led by P.V. Narasimha Rao back into power. But the relations still continued as usual: the talks keeping the temperature down for verbal-wars to be safely waged. The Kashmir issue was ritually raised in the OIC and UN. And amidst all this there were promises made by leaders to embark upon a course of friendship which will be mutually beneficial, and talks on Wullar Bridge, on Sir Creek line showed some improvement. But soon Nawaz Sharif's raising the Kashmir issue in SAARC summit in Colombo dampened the relationship a bit. All through the year 1992, Pakistan raised the issue of Kashmir in every possible international forum. Sharif's style of functioning reminded one of Zia minus his diplomatic guile and calculations.

Immediately after the Rajesh Mittal (an India diplomatic official roughed up by ISI people on the eve of foreign secretary talks) episode, Sharif sent his foreign secretary Shaharyar Khan with proposals for resumption of talks, and inspite of strong opposition from certain quarters the Indian government was ready to oblige Pakistan. The Indian Prime Minister was categorical in not falling a prey to a Pakistan's strategy to 'dampen the enthusiasm with which we approach each other'[31]. The August 1992 talks between the foreign secretaries included evolving a code of conduct for treatment of diplomats, agreements on multilateral verification of chemical weapons, and reduction of military presence in Sia Chen.

The issue of Ram Janmabhoomi was raised in Pakistan from August 1992. On 28 August 1992, the Pakistan National Assembly adopted a resolution on Babri Mosque-Ram Janmabhoomi Issue, urging the Government of India to protect the Mosque at Ayodhya. India called it plain interference in internal affairs and rejected the resolution. In September, in the Jakarta NAM summit, Sharif raised the issue of Kashmir and India lodged strong protest against this. The subsequent visit of Rafsanjani (the Iranian President) to Pakistan and his calling Kashmir 'an Islamic Problem' showed how Pakistan sought to Islamize the issue and win over the major West Asian powers on the issue of Kashmir.

In October 1992, the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Alliance, a sister wing of the ruling IDA disclosed its plan of launching '*Operation Zarb-e-Haider*' in which they would attempt border crossing on a massive scale. Tension mounted on either side of the LOC but ultimately the Pakistan army managed to keep the marchers within limits. Around this time the issue of human rights also plagued the relationship further. The Pakistan National Assembly passed a resolution on the human rights situation in India and urged the UN to send a fact-finding team to India to investigate into the problem. The Pakistani attempt in raising Kashmir issue under the agenda item of self-determination with United Nation Human Rights Commission in Geneva was countered by India's permanent ambassador, Satish Chandra, as unnecessary interference on the part of Pakistan in the internal affairs of India.

The pulling down of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya on 6, December 1992 made Pakistanis more vociferous and aggressive on the issue of human rights. Nawaz Sharif issued a protest call against the demolition of Babri Masjid. An angry mob in Karachi ransacked the house of the Indian Consul Rajiv Dogra while he escaped with his family from being lynched narrowly. In other areas, Hindu temples were desecrated and Hindu houses were burnt. The reaction in Bangladesh was also severe, for which the SAARC summit scheduled to be held in December was postponed. But still Sharif visited Bangladesh and issued a joint statement with Begum Khaleda Zia that 'the Babri Mosque needs to be reconstructed at exactly the same place', which was essential for the maintenance of communal harmony in India and its neighbouring countries.

From December 1992 Indo-Pak diplomatic interaction was also de-intensified. Pakistan asked India to reduce the staff of the Indian consulate General in Karachi from 64 to 20. India also asked Pakistan to recall 40 embassy officials in January '93.

The Bombay Blasts on 12 March 1993 and the suspected hand of Pakistani Intelligence behind it vitiated the atmosphere for holding any meaningful talks. India held that the extradition of Memon Brothers allegedly involved in the blasts was the necessary precondition for holding any bilateral talks. This was P.V. Narasimha Rao's reaction to Sharif's raising the Ayodhya and Kashmir issue in the SAARC summit in Dacca in April 1993. Further, when Sharif's government was pulled down in April by Ghulam Ishaq Khan, India rejected the care-taker government's (led by Bulkh Sher Mazari) move to resume talks with India. Very soon, Pakistan Supreme Court reinstated Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister, declaring the move by the President unconstitutional. Nawaz Sharif sought a reelection afterwards by dissolving the Assembly. But the elections brought back Benazir Bhutto into power.

Benazir's Second Term

Benazir seemed very enthusiastic about reviving the talks after coming back to power. In October, Manmohan Singh, (the Indian Finance Minister) met Benazir in the CHOGM meeting in Cyprus, and the need of restoration of dialogue was emphasised. But the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Farooq Ahmed Leghari, made a scathing criticism of the army-siege at Hazratbal Mosque in Kashmir (which Indian army undertook to nab terrorists hiding there) and said that India's commitment to bilateral talks could be considered only when the siege at Hazratbal was lifted. Soon afterwards all through the year 1993 Pakistan raised the issue of Human Rights violation in various international forums: starting from International Conference of Parliamentarians to UNCHR. Even Pakistan sought to block India's appointment into Security Council as a permanent member in the event of UN restructuring the Security Council. Pakistan took the plea that India's human rights record was not smooth. Pakistan tried to rally the Islamic countries behind it to humiliate India in International forums, like the efforts to move a resolution on the alleged violation of Human Rights in Kashmir in the UNCHR (in Geneva) in March 1994. The Indian diplomatic efforts yielded spectacular results, by winning over Iran to India's side.

The January 1994 talks at the foreign secretary level in Islamabad did not cover much ground for both sides stuck to their stand and neither wanted to make any concession to the other. Then there was the exchange of non-papers outlining the conditions and modalities for further talks. But the papers did not seem to strike any common ground for the reaction to these papers was clearly

discouraging[32]. The closure of Bombay Consulate by Pakistan (which was operating from a five star hotel since it was set up in August 1992) after the Geneva showdown was suggestive of the inflexible attitude on Pakistan's side to hold talks to build up healthy relations with India.

Kashmir as 'the' bilateral issue

Since the beginning of 1994, Pakistan made it clear that any Indo-Pak talk should start with the substantive issue of Kashmir, and India toughened up its stance that India would rather seek to reclaim Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Benazir started echoing the old verbiage, in a televised address to the nation: 'Kashmir is Pakistan's jugular vein and we will not allow our jugular vein to be trampled under the feet of repression. God willing, the day is not far off when Kashmir will be with us.[33]'

In March 1994 Pakistan wound up its consular office in Bombay. In July Foreign Secretary, Mr. R. L. Bhatia and Pakistani Foreign Minister, Aseef Ali met in Dhaka in a SAARC forum, where Mr. Bhatia renewed India's offer for talks. The meeting took place in August amidst the controversies generated by expulsions of diplomats from Pakistan and India on the allegation of espionage. As such the bilateral talks, quite expectedly, revolved around the issue of code of conduct evolved in 1992 between the two countries. The Indian Foreign Ministry handed over a list of 118 specific cases of violation in the year 1993 alone.

In September, Pakistan hosted a meet of the Foreign Ministers of the OIC countries, and called for a Kuwait-like intervention in Kashmir. It took the initiative to form an OIC contact group on Kashmir, which would work, towards tabling a resolution in the UN International Security Committee. But the idea could not work out for lack of support. In November, Indian Foreign Secretary, Mr. K. Srinivasan, went to Islamabad to attend the Common Wealth officials' meeting. But Pakistan announced that there could be no bilateral talks with him. By December, Pakistan had its own problems in Sind. However Pakistan blamed that Indian Consular office at Karachi was acting as a node for intelligence activities by India. Back in December 1992, Pakistan had asked India to reduce the strength of its staff from 64 to 24. But after Pakistan decided to close down its consular office in Bombay in March 1994, it was quite expected that Pakistan might ask India to withdraw its office from Karachi. That is what happened in December 1994, and India had to close down its consulate in Karachi.

In January 1995, India asked Pakistan to scale down its strength of officials to 110. Earlier in 1993, Pakistan had fixed the number at 110 too. After some hiccups, however, in April, we had J.N. Dixit-Shahyr Khan talks. Around this time, Benazir, in order not to be superseded by the opposition in floating the Kashmir issue, announced in Washington that the Pakistani President, Mr. Farooq Leghari, would be sent over to New Delhi to persuade India to accept US mediation. In May 1995, we had the encounter between the militants and the security forces in Kashmir when pro-Pak Kashmiri militants operating from the famous Charar-e-Sharief were holed up inside the holy place. The encounter destroyed the Sufi holy Shrine. It provoked angry reactions from Pakistan. Such incidents kept Kashmir issue in the boil, and emotions in Pakistan over the Kashmir were whipped up considerably. In November 1995, Benazir took the cue from her predecessor in office, Mr. Nawaz Sharif and raised the issue in the NAM summit in Cartagena. India held such

references quite objectionable and declared them as injurious to the health of positive relationship between the two neighbours.

By January 1996, Benazir announced that Pakistan was ready for 'purposeful talks on Kashmir with India'. India was not too anxious to accept the offer. Pakistan's insistence on Kashmir as 'the' issue to be addressed in the talks was the major stumbling block in Indo-Pak bilateral talks. In the meanwhile the media flashed reports of suspected nuclear blast by India in Rajasthan. This forced Benazir to give a call for an Indo-Pak summit on the 'Nuclear' issue. Apart from this, the 210 km, long border fencing along J&K by BSF provoked Pak artillery firing and all this added to the atmosphere of distrust prevailing all around.

The change of Government in India, after the elections in March-April 1996, prompted Benazir to express her willingness to revive talks and she sent a letter to the then United Front Prime Minister, Mr. Deve Gowda, to that effect. Although the letter claimed to support unconditional talks, still indirectly, it held J&K to be the core issue. Deve Gowda responded to the offer in a positive manner, and proposed early resumption of Foreign Secretary level talks. But Pakistan took time to deliberate on the issue, as the response from the Indian PM did not contain any reference on Kashmir. The Pakistani foreign Minister, Mr. Aseef Ali, reportedly told his Indian counterpart, Mr. I.K. Gujral that the Indian offer was no way different from the offer of the earlier government of Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao. Gujral went ahead with his call for increase in the number of the Consular staff and sought Pakistani permission for visit of Indian diplomatic officials to Karachi for disbursement of visas, which was turned down by the Pakistani government. Benazir rather floated her idea of seeking a third party intervention to mediate in Indo-Pak differences in July 1996, to which Indian reaction was predictably in the negative. During the period July-October, there was the issue of ill treatment meted out to diplomatic officials of both the countries. In July, Capt. Asif Humayun, the naval attache in the Pakistan High Commission was roughed up, allegedly by Indian intelligence personnel. Then in September a Pakistani diplomat was expelled by India on charges of espionage and it led to retaliatory expulsion of an Indian diplomat from Pakistan. In late October, there was the case of an Indian High Commission staffer, Mr. Ashok Wahi, being beaten up and his wife being stabbed. This aggravated the situation quite a bit.

By December 1996, the then Indian foreign minister, Mr. I.K. Gujral had already evolved in his characteristic style of providing small concessions for buying lasting friendship with neighbouring states in the region. His relaxed foreign policy posture revealed itself in India's thirty year Ganga Water Treaty with Bangladesh, new trade and tariff agreements, as well as co-operation agreements in hydel projects with Nepal and tariff concessions to Sri Lanka. Apart from this, his efforts to befriend Muslims countries in West Asian region, especially Iran also showed that India was really picking up on the diplomatic front. The media even went to the extent naming such pragmatic approach in foreign policy after Gujral and called it "Gujral Doctrine". This must have caused some worry in Pakistan of it had no reply to such peace initiatives and this was in a way responsible for making Pakistan positively inclined towards Indian offer of friendship for all countries in the region.

Nawaz Sharif' second term and the recent phase

In the meanwhile, the President of Pakistan, Mr. Farooq Leghari, pulled down the government of Benazir Bhutto, on charges of corruption, and inefficiency in dealing with worsening law and order situation. The transitional government set up by the President to oversee the elections seemed intent to start dialogue with India. Shahibzada Yakub Khan, who was the foreign minister in the interim government, had a brief talk with Gujral too. However, the next elections led to the victory of Nawaz Sharif, who swept the polls securing an enviable 135 seats out of 207 seats in the Pakistan National Assembly. After coming to power, Nawaz Sharif promised to base his foreign policy on the principle of 'friendship with all and enmity with none'. Nawaz Sharif had also expressed his desire to open a dialogue with India, which was in cold storage since 1994, during his election campaign. However, ironically enough his pledge to work for improved bilateral relations always went hand in hand with his pledge to his countrymen to intensify Pakistan's 'moral and diplomatic support' for eventual 'liberation of Kashmir'.

However, India's acceptance of the Pakistani proposal for a foreign secretary level meeting in response to Indian PM Deve Gowda's congratulatory letter to the newly elected PM of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, set the ball rolling for Indo-Pakistan dialogue, even though at low key. This culminated in the three days talks in March (28-30) between the foreign secretaries of the two countries, Mr. Salman Haider for India and Shamshad Ahmed for Pakistan, in New Delhi. The two sides discussed all outstanding issues of concern in a frank, cordial and constructive manner. Though neither side expected any breakthrough but 'there was some positive movement'. The immediate outcome of the meeting, however, was the consideration of a proposal to set up joint working groups covering all outstanding issues.

There was a change of government in India and Mr. I.K. Gujral took over the leadership of the ruling United Front coalition in April 1997. The subsequent Gujral-Sharif meet at the SAARC summit at Male strengthened the bilateral relations and opened up possibilities of negotiations between the two states. And as a sign of improvement in the bilateral relations, the hotline between the two Prime Ministers was activated. Subsequently, all civilian prisoners held in each other's custody were released. Both the countries seemed to have overcome their earlier hard-line stance although all other outstanding problems could not be discussed.

The Recent Phase

The Male meet between Gujral and Sharif certainly gave a fresh impetus to the recent talks, which had lost its momentum after the initial meeting in New Delhi in March. The issues of troops engagement along the J&K border, straying of an Indian Army plane into Pakistan territory had started wrecking havoc to the atmosphere of trust created by the March talks. Even after Male meet, the publication of a report in US newspaper of India deploying Prithvi missiles in Jullunder, just 100 Kms away from Pakistan border kicked up a fresh row. The well known Pakistani scientist, A.Q. Khan, was so incensed with the report that he even warned India that Pakistan also had capability to deploy M-11, Chinese Missiles. Subsequently, the Indian PM clarified that Prithvi missiles were simply being moved from the manufacturing site for being stored up and India had no intention of deploying them. Then there was the issue of Gujral's reiteration of the Indian position on J&K as non-negotiable. However, the hotline between the two PMs just restored after the Male meet provided a healing touch, and the talks went on as per schedule with increased vigour, despite the pronouncement of the skeptics to the contrary.

The Islamabad Talks

The Islamabad dialogue, held in June (19-22) 1997, between the foreign secretaries of the two countries identified the core issues and laid emphasis on the need to develop Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and for this purpose the countries agreed to set up separate Joint Working Groups (JWGs) on the separate issues which were supposed to work simultaneously in an integrated manner. The discussion on high priority issues of the development of CBMs and the Kashmir issue, were to be carried out directly under the foreign secretaries, while the membership of other JWGs were to be restricted to officials, to begin with. The modalities of the formation of JWGs were to be worked out in close cooperation, from time to time. The other outstanding issues identified were; demarcation of boundary around Sir Creek line, bilateral settlement of Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project, pulling out of troops from Sia-Chen, easing of restrictions on visas, and the release of civilian detainees.

The outcome of the talks was hailed in Pakistani media as ‘an edifice for peace’. The relaxation of Indian position, from the earlier insistence on adopting a rigid approach and starting from smaller issues (as it succeeded in the case of Sino-Indian relations) and shifting to larger ones, to identifying Kashmir as the foremost issue, impressed the analysts in Pakistan. An integrated approach at solving all the pending issues was regarded as a realistic approach to the problem-solving exercise. The opposition leader in Pakistan Benazir Bhutto, however, started sounding concern on the openness with which Sharif was seeking to befriend India and observed that the outcome of the talks did not signal any perceptible shift in the Indian position. A section of Pakistani business class was not also too sanguine about the prospect of Indo-Pak trade that would come close in the heels. They cautioned that opening Pakistani market to Indian producers would mean swamping the market with cheap Indian products. Then there was another section in Pakistan who would rather hold that Indian decision to accord priority to Kashmir would mean reconsideration of the status of POK too. The reactions in India were also not too heartening. The main opposition party, the BJP, admonished the government to be cautious in its Kashmir policy.

Soon after the talks, Mr. Haider’s remarks that the Islamabad agreement does not contend with the Indian stand on Kashmir, which would, remain non-negotiable despite the talks, provoked angry reactions in Pakistan and the hopes generated by the Islamabad talks faded away very soon. This also led to hardening of the positions on either side.

The Issue of Bilateral Trade

However, in spite of warning from many vested interests in Pakistan, who have traditionally been averse to any kind of trade with India, which they disparagingly call a *baniya* state, the Nawaz Sharif government decided to revive trade with India as a first step towards normalisation of relationship, even though Pakistan was still reluctant to reciprocate on the question of granting Most Favoured Nation status to India. Thus the Pakistani government permitted the import of 14 items from India, which included: tyres, cotton and yarn, wood and wood charcoal, raw and wet blue hides and skins, light weight steel rail up to 20 kg per meter (not manufactured locally), whole chillies, nickel cadmium batteries, cutting dies for shoe uppers, carbon brushes, arc lamp carbons, battery carbons, anti-snake bite venom serum, whole turner, tanning or dyeing extracts, dyes,

pigment and other colouring material, paints and varnishes etc. The Pakistani Commerce minister defended the import of new items from India and said the move will save a lot of foreign exchange and said that there were already 587 items on the list which could be trade between the two countries and the inclusion of few more items would not mar the political or economic interests of the country.

Kashmir: The Sticking Point

But the Pakistani insistence on Kashmir as the major issue, which would be discussed ahead of all other issues, awaiting solution was gradually brought out into sharper policy focus in Pakistan. In the mean time, Salman Haider (the Indian Foreign Secretary during Islamabad talks) reaffirmed that Indian decision to discuss Kashmir did not in any way affect the essential Indian position that Kashmir was non-negotiable. This was reiterated in India over and over again and the India-Pakistan dialogue, resumed after a long gap of three years, although it seemed to get mired in the very same old issue of Kashmir once again. This sense of creeping coldness was observed in the reaction of Nawaz Sharif (who had, in fact, slashed defence spending in relative terms in Pakistan) to Gujral's call for mutual defence cuts on the eve of the celebration for 50 years of independence: "I don't believe in an arms race with any country in the world and for that both India and Pakistan will have to sit down and resolve their differences (which mean Kashmir) and once this is done then we can discuss defence cuts."

At such a crucial juncture, in August there were regular troop engagements along the LoC in Kashmir. And allegedly, the Pakistani troops start arbitrary firings, dragging the Indian troops into a low intensity engagement around this time of the year. These firings basically serve as a decoy for massive influx of Pak-trained militants into Kashmir from across the border, by invariably shifting the attention of the Indian Army to the points of engagement and thus create safe points along the border for the infiltrators to cross over. This time, however, the engagements were slightly more intense than usual. Starting from the third week of August, the artillery duels continued quite for some days and the analysts suggested that this time the strategy of the Pak military could be bi-pronged, i.e., to help infiltration and to stifle the atmosphere of friendliness generated by the initiatives of the PMs of the two countries, especially on the eve of the scheduled Indo-Pak talks in September.

Pak efforts to find a mediator

The press reported in the first week of August that, Pakistan was in a desperate hurry to seek a mediator to solve its differences with India. Its ambassador to the US, Mr. Riaz Khokar, even made it almost clear that Pakistan would welcome US mediation over the issue and some even suggested that Pakistan was in favour of a Camp-David or Oslo kind of summit. This was firmly resented by India and India made her position clear that she would oppose any third party involvement on the bilateral issues affecting Indo-Pak relations.

The New Delhi talks

Against such a backdrop, Indian and Pakistani diplomats ended three days of talks on 18 September, but no progress was reported beyond an agreement to continue the present

negotiations. The foreign secretaries of the two countries met this time to evolve the necessary mechanisms to address these issues as per the joint agreements during the first secretary level meet in Islamabad, after the Male meet between the two Prime Ministers. With India clarifying that the will to discuss Kashmir was no concession and the basic Indian stance that Kashmir was non-negotiable remained as it is and that whatever negotiations were possible had to begin from other seven issues held peripheral by Pakistan. The fate of New Delhi talks was in a sense quite predictable. Pakistan harped on the issue of Kashmir and stressed that any mechanisms to be evolved to take care of Indo-Pak relations should start with Kashmir. Pakistan insisted the Kashmir issue should be settled before expanding trade and economic ties with its neighbours. And the talks foundered on the issue and we saw the Pakistan secretary accusing India of resiling on the core issue. However, the silver lining that emerged out of the present impasse was the willingness to carry on with the talks and it was expected that the talks could receive a jump-start after the meeting between the two Prime Ministers in New York.

Gujral-Sharif talks in New York

The Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, trying to get the dialogue back on track, agreed on 23 September, to take action to end border skirmishes along the LoC. No specific measures were adopted during the closed-door meeting between India's Prime Minister, Inder Kumar Gujral, and Pakistan's Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif. Both Prime Ministers, then in New York to attend the annual session of the U.N. General Assembly, met separately with President Clinton on 22 September, and as was reported in the press, Clinton refused to oblige Nawaz Sharif by conveying his unwillingness to discuss Kashmir issue with Gujral. Gujral-Sharif talks revealed that both of them agreed that the issue in Jammu and Kashmir was the key to restore relations but there was 'a divergence of approach'. In the meeting, Sharif invited Gujral to Pakistan, and the foreign secretaries of both the countries were expected to meet for a fourth round of talks before the end of the year. No date was given for a possible Gujral visit. As such the present Indo-Pak dialogue is now mired on the issue of Kashmir. The decision to go ahead with the formation of JWG's now, in late October 97, suggests that the dialogue may be well continue with fits and starts, but as about the outcome, everybody would rather choose to keep his finger crossed.

Conclusion

While discerning the popular responses in both the countries to the current peace initiatives, be they from the elites or the misguided masses in both the countries, one finds that the reflective urge to misinterpret a well meaning gesture often determines the course of peace talks between the two neighbours. And the leaders in the truest spirit of democracy, never feel like guiding popular opinion, but rather choose to fall unwitting victims to popular passions. And the closely guarded conspiracies of some sections of people (which could be the military and the intelligence in one or both the countries, who thrive on such atmosphere of distrust) to mar the peace processes result in skirmishes, like the one we are having right now since August along the LoC, drive the proverbial first nails to the coffin. For how often these days we have heard the PMs of both the countries reiterating their intransigent positions vis a vis crucial issues, which at one point of time they agreed to resolve? In such an atmosphere of distrust the decision to go for dialogue only reveals the propensity of idealist to hope against hopes.

On the other side of the spectrum, the opposition parties in both the countries have a habit of acting in an irresponsible manner and they tend to differ from the governmental position for the sake of differing with the government and instead of trying to come with any plausible alternative, which could contribute to any sincere effort at normalising bilateral relations between the two neighbours, they choose to keep the adversarial mood alive, for they build their electoral constituency upon rigid and inflexible positions, which tend to sway popular emotions in both the countries, given their long history of hostile relationship. And for both the countries, no issue has been as emotive as Kashmir for it has been woven into the very texture of their being; for India, Kashmir is its 'Secular Crown', for Pakistan it is an unredeemed territory, inhabited by a majority of Muslims, which at the time of the creation of Pakistan should have been ceded to Pakistan. The popular opinions in both the countries have made Kashmir an ideological issue: for average Indian defending Kashmir is like defending the idea of secular India and any concessions on Kashmir might result in irreparable cracks in the secular model of the country and affect the unity and integrity of India; for average Pakistani redeeming Kashmir for Pakistan is a divinely ordained duty, a holy war, a *Jehad*.

Thus, the emotional antipathies that flow from this are quite irreconcilable, and whenever the issue is raised politically, with all possible persuasive (and often combative) exhortations from political outfits, popular opinion tends to crystallise around most inflexible of positions, which the leaders in both the countries cannot afford to ignore. After all they have to keep their electoral prospects in mind. Such antipathies undoubtedly have their roots in history. The communal antipathies that characterised Congress-League relations during the freedom struggle have survived the partition and continue to determine the grooves along which the relations between the two neighbours would move. Until and unless the people in both the countries are convinced that such antipathies only affect their own well-being by shifting the attention of governmental allocations to senseless preparation for war, there is no hope whatsoever of any solution emerging from the present impasse. Thousands of rounds of talks just add up to nothing if there is no right ambience for such talks to occur in. At best, they maintain the adversarial position at a reduced level and never arrive at any worthwhile solution.

References

1. As mentioned in Nehru's letter to Liaquat Ali Khan on 10 March 1950 in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, edited by S. Gopal (Delhi: OUP) 1992, p.98-99.
2. 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' [Reported in *Motherland* (New Delhi) 8 August 1974].
3. Pakistani press reacted positively that 'it was a humanitarian step which might mitigate the sufferings of a large number of divided families', but wound up the argument with: 'but the more we talk about the divided families, the greater becomes the strength of Indian propaganda that the partition of the sub-continent was artificial and unreal. (Reported in *Motherland* quoting the newspaper of *Mushawat* from Pakistan). Semi official newspaper *Mashriq* from Lahore wrote: 'It is intriguing that the Hindu rulers of India appear to be most solicitous about the sufferings of divided Muslim families in India and Pakistan...there must be something highly mischievous behind this concern. It could well be that through expanding communication the Indian rulers may like to damage the very basis of two-nation theory'. [Reported in *Patriot* (Delhi) 25 September 1974]

4. Bhutto said in Washington: 'We are committed to the idea of a peaceful settlement. But we have not signed a 'no-war pact'. It is pre-mature to say if hostilities are likely but if all our peaceful steps are exhausted, then we will have to see'. [*Times of India* (New Delhi) 7 March 1975].
5. In the meanwhile P.N. Haskar, a close aide of Mrs. Gandhi commented that if India were to attack Pakistan, the Indian army would be hailed as liberators and not as an army of occupation. This made Bhutto to react: 'When a country makes such an evaluation to please its own ego or to find a rationale to do something, that is something to worry about' *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta) 30 Jan 1975. Again in June 1975.
6. *Times of India* (Delhi) 10 August 1974.
7. Kuldip Nayar wrote in *Indian Express* (Delhi) 29 January 1976.
8. The Pakistani press reacted that trade with India may make Pakistan too dependent on it, which would affect Pakistan's National interest. Because the Indian State has a tendency to behave like Hindu baniya when it comes to commercial interactions.
9. Bhutto remarked: 'Without a settlement over Kashmir a no-war pact would mean acceptance of the status quo in Kashmir... Pakistan could never consider India's offer of no-war pact, if Kashmir question was either settled or self-executing and mandating machine was provided in the proposed agreement for its settlement' (Reported in *The Indian Express* (Delhi) 9 April 1977).
10. Zia-ul-Haq is reported to have told Atal Bihari Vajpayee during latter's tour to Pakistan in the capacity of Minister of External Affairs: 'You cannot have a big brother and a small brother relationship. When our countries meet they must meet on an equal basis', reported in *Times* (London), 7 February 1978.
11. Pakistan press wrote: '...any hasty action which may ultimately pave the way for the opening up of Pakistan market for unhindered exploitation by Hindu Baniyas should be stopped', *Patriot* (Delhi) 28 May, 1978.
12. A.K. Brohi, the Pakistani Minister for religious affairs said in the London Conference of Islamic Countries: 'Sixty seven million Muslims in India, who constitute twelve percent of the total Indian population, are the victims of discrimination and neglect'. Quoted in *Hindustan Times* (Delhi) 28 July 1978.
13. The U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Robert F. Goheen said in Delhi '... Indian superiority is so great that a limited supply of arms to Pakistan should not cause as much consternation in India... No doubt Pakistan feels more endangered since the leftist take over in Afghanistan.'
14. Reported in *Indian Express* (Delhi) 5 August 1979.
15. Zia in his interview with Kuldip Nayar, quoted in *Indian Express* (Delhi) 31 January 1980.
16. Kuldip Nayar wrote in *Tribune* (Chandigarh) 5 November 1981.
17. Quoted in *Deccan Herald* (Hyderabad) 14 December 1986.
18. It is said that when Benazir mooted the proposal of seeking a political solution to Afghan problem in one of her meetings with the Soviet leader, Yuri Vorontso, Yakub remarked caustically: 'Madam this is the policy of your party, not the country'. Cited in an article by Inder Malhotra in *Times of India* (Delhi) 2 March 1989.
19. *The Times of India* (Delhi) 22 September 1989, wrote in its editorial.
20. Quoted in *International Herald Tribune* (Paris) 1 February 1990.
21. Quoted in *Indian Express* (Delhi) 13 February 1990, in the editorial.
22. Quoted in *Indian Express* (Delhi) 14 April 1990, V.P. Singh in Lok Sabha.
23. Reported in *Indian Express* (Delhi) 10 April 1990.

24. Ibid.
25. V.P. Singh in Amritsar quoted in *New Strait Times* (Kuala Lumpur), 14 April 1990.
26. Reported in *Times of India* (Delhi) 1 June 1990.
27. K.R. Narayanan wrote in *Times of India* (Delhi) 1 May 1990 and on 10 May 1991.
28. Anikendra Nath Sen wrote about the details of the verbal encounter in *Times of India* (Delhi) 7 August 1990. Dubey's (Indian Foreign Secretary) proposals containing 5 points which he thought would clarify India's suspicion about Pakistan's complicity in Kashmir violence was dismissed by Pak Foreign Secretary as 'a paraphrased version of charge-sheet' containing languages which was 'offensive and not strictly in conformity with diplomatic exchanges'. Dubey's 5 points were:
 - i. Open declaration by the political and military leadership dissociating from support to terrorism.
 - ii. Extradition of 10 fugitives.
 - iii. Seizure of arms and terrorists entering India
 - iv. Ending official statement supporting violence in Kashmir
 - v. Closure of official funds supporting Kashmir militancy.
29. Cited in S.D. Muni's article in *Hindu* (Madras) 22 November 1990.
30. Nawaz Sharif to P.S. Suryanaryan of *Express News Services* in Male where he was attending the SAARC summit. Reported in *Indian Express* (Delhi) 26 November 1990.
31. P.V. Narasimha Rao to M.P.s in Rajya Sabha, reported in *The Statesman* (Delhi) 21 July 1992.
32. Pakistan's reaction to Indian non-papers: '(Indian war) intent on skirting around the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir. India appears to be going back on the meaningful and purposeful discussion on J&K issue in all its aspects, which has been agreed upon between the two countries. Indian reaction to this was that it was 'propaganda exercise, camouflaged in diplomatic verbiage'.
33. Reported in *The New Strait Times* (Kuala Lumpur) 26 January 1994.