

Post 9/11 Developments in Pakistan's Foreign Policy

'War against Terror': US-Pakistan Relations

The deadly terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 9/11 (11 September 2001) by Al-Qaeda, an Islamist extremist group, brought about a fundamental change in the global political scenario. American foreign and defence policy took a new shape. President George W. Bush, backed by the US Congress, launched a global 'war against terror' that was directed against Al-Qaeda specifically, but included Islamic extremism in general. An elusive and highly secretive group, Al-Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden, an ex-Saudi national of Yemeni origin, had secured a sanctuary in Afghanistan where the fundamentalist Taliban regime had come to power in 1994. After the attacks of 9/11, the US demanded Osama bin Laden's extradition but this was turned down by the Taliban regime. A month later, the US and allied forces launched a military invasion of Afghanistan and removed the Taliban regime.

Until 9/11, Pakistan had maintained friendly relations with the Taliban regime and, left on its own, it would have stayed out of this war. However, President Bush put a blunt question to Pakistan: 'Are you with us or against us?' Pakistan's military leader General Pervez Musharraf came under intense US pressure to extend support to its military campaign against the Taliban regime. In making a choice, Musharraf had to keep in view three ground realities. Firstly, Pakistan was the only

feasible route for the US forces to attack Afghanistan. Secondly, there was little that Pakistan could do to dissuade the US from invading Afghanistan. Thirdly, opposing the US could have resulted in dire consequences for Pakistan's own security and economic welfare. *Realpolitik* clearly demanded that Pakistan abandon its erstwhile support for the Taliban regime and join the US-led coalition in the war against terror.

The war against the Taliban must also be seen in the background of Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan. Pakistan has always had a history of troubled relations with Afghanistan with which it shares a long, mountainous and largely unpoliced border.

At the very outset, on Pakistan's independence in 1947, the Kabul regime raised an irredentist claim against Pakistan that would bedevil relations between the two neighbours in the years to come. In April 1978, the situation took a new turn when Communists seized power in Afghanistan. An uprising against the Communist regime started soon thereafter with some degree of support from Pakistan. To help the Communist regime remain in power in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union made a military intervention there in December 1979. The Soviet military presence across the Khyber Pass was seen by Pakistan as a direct threat to its own security and it started to extend vital support to the resistance launched by the Afghan Mujahedeen rebels. The US and the West, as well as China, were also opposed to the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan due to their global rivalry with the Soviet Union. Even such diverse countries as Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Japan were against the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. In a classic illustration of the maxim that politics makes strange bedfellows, an active alliance developed between Pakistan, the US and the Islamic fundamentalist Afghan Mujahedeen who were carrying out an armed resistance or jihad against the Soviet military occupation. Osama bin Laden was one of the Arab Jihadists who fought alongside the Mujahedeen against the Soviet occupation.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was achieved in 1989, there was a war of succession amongst the various Mujahedeen groups. The resultant bloodshed and anarchy helped bring to power a new group, the Taliban, who emerged on the scene in 1994 with the promise of peace and Islamic justice. By 1996, they had seized control over 90 per cent of the country. The Taliban were mainly Pukhtuns, the traditionally dominant ethnic group in Afghan society, who live in the south-eastern parts of Afghanistan adjacent to Pakistan. Pukhtuns also live on the Pakistani side of the border and share many things in common with the tribes on the Afghan side. This common ethnic factor and the fact that some of the Taliban (meaning students) had received religious education in Pakistani madrassahs (Islamic schools) gave rise to an impression in some quarters that the Taliban were a Pakistani creation. The reality was that the Taliban had seized power due to their popularity among some sections of the population in Afghanistan. However, there was some degree of covert military support for the Taliban by Pakistan where, during the period 1994–96, power was held by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

The Taliban regime adopted an obscurantist version of Islam and became highly isolated in the world. Pakistan, too, had little ideological sympathy for the Taliban regime. As a moderate and generally pro-US country with a Westernized ruling elite, Pakistan had little in common with the fundamentalist Taliban. However, from 1994 to 2001, it sought to maintain a good relationship with the Taliban regime for three reasons. Firstly, Pakistan shared a long, common border with Afghanistan, with close commercial and people-to-people contacts, and needed to have a working relationship with that country. Secondly, the Pakistani military doctrine had always been that a friendly Afghanistan provided 'strategic depth' to Pakistan *vis-à-vis* India, its traditional rival. Thirdly, the Taliban regime adopted a friendlier attitude towards Pakistan, as compared to the previous Rabbani regime. It is notable that this policy of befriending the Taliban regime was followed by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto from 1994 to 1996; by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from 1997

to 1999; and continued by General Musharraf from 1999 to 2001. In 1996, Pakistan persuaded its close allies, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to extend recognition to the Taliban regime.

Pakistan's friendship with the Taliban regime was based on geostrategic rather than ideological considerations. Islamabad tried to persuade its sceptical friends (e.g. the US, China, Turkey, and, Central Asian neighbours of Afghanistan) that by befriending the Taliban regime, Pakistan would be able to influence it to adopt more moderate policies. That turned out to be no more than an empty hope as the Taliban were highly rigid in their obscurantist views about Islam. They had a paranoid worldview in which they saw themselves pitted in a holy struggle against anti-Islamic forces, led mainly by the USA. The Taliban were also antagonistic towards Russia, India, and Israel.

Osama bin Laden, who had founded Al-Qaeda around 1990, resurfaced in Afghanistan soon after the Taliban took over and made that country his base to launch terrorist attacks against US facilities in East Africa and Yemen. This caused a severe strain on Washington's relations with the Taliban regime, leading to a US missile attack on Al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan in 1998. The US demanded that the Taliban regime should stop giving sanctuary to Al-Qaeda. During this period, Pakistan tried to play a mediatory role and, for the next three years, the US held its hand. However, 9/11 was the last straw and led to the full-scale US invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001.

Under intense US pressure—an American official even threatened to 'bomb Pakistan back to the Stone Age'¹—President Musharraf made the fateful decision to switch Pakistan's policy towards the Taliban regime. This led to far-reaching consequences for the country, both externally as well as internally. The decision to join the US-led war against terror, moreover, generated an unending debate in Pakistan whether Musharraf should or should not have made a U-turn in Pakistan's policy towards the Taliban regime.

Pakistani public opinion has always opposed any attack on a Muslim country, as sentiments of Islamic solidarity and pan-Islamism are ingrained in the Pakistani psyche. Moreover, the

north-western border areas of Pakistan have common ethnic links with the Afghan Pukhtuns. Consequently, the US attack on Afghanistan, and the invasion of Iraq two years later, led to a significant increase in anti-American sentiments, notably in the Pukhtun tribal areas of Pakistan, and an upsurge in jihadist activities. In other parts of Pakistan as well, and among Muslims worldwide, anti-Americanism has been on the rise. Hence, the political opponents of Musharraf of various hues saw an opportunity to oust him because of the widespread public disaffection at the policy shift. Pakistani politicians joined hands in criticizing Musharraf's U-turn in policy towards the Taliban and accused him of betrayal and weakness and for acting, in their view, as an American pawn. The religious political parties were the most vociferous in such criticism. The exception in this exercise was Benazir Bhutto, leader of the PPP, who supported the switch in foreign policy but tried to convince the US that if she were in power, she would be more effective than General Musharraf in the war against terror.

In this politicking and emotionalism, many critics seemed oblivious of the fact that after 9/11, Pakistan had been left with little choice. The deadly terrorist attacks in the heart of America had made the US absolutely determined to punish Al-Qaeda and its head Osama bin Laden. When the Taliban regime refused to hand over Osama, a US attack on Afghanistan became inevitable. Since the only feasible access route for the invasion lay across Pakistan, its geophysical location made continued support for the Taliban, or even neutrality, impossible. Pakistan was also perceived as the only real friend of the Taliban regime. Had Pakistan refused to abandon its support for the Taliban regime, it, too, would have been seen by the US and the West—and by many others in the world—as a supporter of terrorism. Pakistan would have been branded as a terrorist state, with the following resultant consequences. Its aid would have been cut off and trade restricted. In the worst scenario, its nuclear assets could have been attacked by the US or Israel, and India given a free hand to deal with Pakistan. In such an isolated state, Pakistan could not expect to get any meaningful support even

from its traditional friends like China, Saudi Arabia or Turkey, since they were also supporting the US attack against the Taliban regime. In fact, by and large, the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 had the endorsement of the international community including the UN, Europe and Russia.

On the other hand, by making a switch in its policy, Pakistan was able to derive some significant advantages. It came in the mainstream of international diplomacy and instantly occupied a key position on the world stage. This was shown by the stream of Western leaders who started to arrive in Islamabad to express their appreciation of Pakistan's stance. Significant economic and military assistance was extended by the US to Pakistan amounting to \$10 billion over a period of five years.² Military hardware including F-16s was also secured from the US after a gap of several years. A part of Pakistan's foreign debt was written off and a part rescheduled. Pakistan's exports rose by nearly 50 per cent in this period, with the US emerging as its largest market.

Pakistan's close links with the US after 9/11 proved helpful when the news broke in the second half of 2003 that Pakistan's leading nuclear scientist Dr A.Q. Khan had been involved in passing nuclear technology to foreign countries, notably, Iran and North Korea that had been branded by the US as part of the 'axis of evil.' Under intense pressure from the US and the IAEA, President Musharraf carried out a detailed enquiry into Dr Khan's activities which revealed that he had been involved in proliferation from as far back as 1987. However, Musharraf was able 'to assure the world that the proliferation was a one-man act and that neither the government of Pakistan nor the army was involved.'³ This hardly seemed possible as Pakistan's nuclear facilities were in a high security area where unusual activities stretching over a period of fifteen years could not have remained unknown to the authorities. More likely, the US chose to turn a blind eye to the involvement of Pakistani official agencies in the proliferation because any punitive action against Pakistan would have jeopardized its indispensable assistance in the war against terror. Had Pakistan not made a switch of policy

after 9/11, such a disclosure of nuclear proliferation would have blown up in its face.

So far as foreign policy calculations were concerned, Pakistan's switch of policy after 9/11 made eminent sense. However, the internal consequences of the policy shift were quite the contrary. The U-turn away from the Taliban regime and joining the US in the 'war against terror' was not supported by large sections of Pakistani public opinion. Its initial reaction was one of confusion and uncertainty but, later on, the public mood became more and more critical. Thus, a big gap developed between official policy and public opinion. The Pakistani 'street' became increasingly critical of what it saw as a betrayal of Muslims by Musharraf in order to please the West.

The Pakistani religious parties led the way in the hate-America propaganda by portraying the US as the enemy of Islam, mainly for its support for Israel that has been a perennial grievance of Muslims all over the world. In the recent context, the growing anti-American lobby accused the US of killing fellow Muslims in Afghanistan and Iraq. In many mosques all over the country, mullahs severely criticised the government and urged the faithful to join the jihad being waged by the Taliban and Al-Qaeda against the infidels. Citing early Muslim history, some religious zealots asserted that despite the obvious disadvantages in size and resources, Muslims could 'defeat' the US, like the Soviets had been defeated in Afghanistan a few years earlier. The Pakistani news media, particularly the numerous TV channels that came on the air during Musharraf's tenure, also played a part in fanning anti-US feelings through a one-sided projection of events.

Emotionalism and living under illusions has often been a bane in the Pakistani political scene. The anti-American propaganda deliberately ignored the fact that since its independence in 1947, Pakistan had received more economic and military aid from the US than from any other country. Pakistan was able to hold back Indian aggression in the 1965 war because it possessed superior weapons that had been supplied by the US for fighting Communist aggression. It is also a matter of record that the US

had played a key role in preventing India from invading Pakistan on at least three occasions. After the 1971 military debacle in East Pakistan, the US had prevented an Indian invasion of Kashmir and West Pakistan.⁴ The US had dissuaded India from attacking Pakistan during the Kargil crisis in 1999, and during the grave confrontation between Pakistan and India in 2002-2003.

Elsewhere in the Muslim world, the US has helped Muslims in several instances. In 1956, it was the US that had forced the Israeli, British and French withdrawal from Egypt. In 1978, it secured the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai. In the 1980s, the US played a vital role in support of the Afghan Mujahedeen in the jihad against Soviet military occupation. In the 1990s, the US had helped liberate the Muslims of Bosnia and Kosovo.

Although the foregoing facts could have been cited to rebut the one-sided propaganda against the US, the Musharraf regime was unable to effectively counter the emotionally-charged, demonization campaign launched after 9/11. One possible reason could be that some elements in the government and the army itself were said to be sympathetic to the Taliban cause. There have been persistent accusations by the Karzai regime in Kabul and by US and NATO circles that 'rogue' elements in the ISI, the Pakistani military intelligence, acting either on their own or with the tacit support of the Pakistan government, have in some instances colluded with the Taliban.

Clearly, the anti-US sentiments helped the Taliban. Since 2004, there has been a notable resurgence in their activities in the Pukhtun areas bordering Pakistan where Al-Qaeda and foreign militants also became more active. As a result, the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan have come under greater pressure. They have in turn been making accusations that the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and other Islamic militants have been operating from safe sanctuaries in the tribal areas of Pakistan.

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan have traditionally enjoyed a fair amount of autonomy. The tribes have a warlike tradition and most adults carry guns. During the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan in the 1980s, this area had

become awash with guns and ammunition, supplied liberally by the US and others to fight the Soviets. Many foreign jihadists, mainly Arabs, Uzbeks and Chechens, sought sanctuary in FATA and some of them have remained entrenched in this area. There is little doubt that these militants have been launching operations in Afghanistan against the US and NATO forces as well as the Karzai regime. Their supporters/sympathizers in other parts of Pakistan, and even outside Pakistan, have been extending financial and other support to these militants in the tribal areas. The Taliban have also been able to get an increasing number of recruits to their ranks from FATA and other areas in Pakistan. Such cross-border activities have caused serious misgivings between Pakistan and the US and NATO forces as well as the Karzai regime. US 'Drone' aircraft have been involved in surveillance and periodic missile attacks on suspected targets in FATA in which there has been serious loss of innocent civilians. The US forces in Afghanistan have also made a few landings across the border to attack Al-Qaeda and Taliban targets in Pakistan. These operations were undertaken either unilaterally or with tacit Pakistani approval. During the US presidential election campaign in 2008, Barack Obama declared that he would authorize unilateral military strikes against Al-Qaeda elements in Pakistan if the Pakistan government was unable or unwilling to take them out. On the other hand, such US military strikes have enraged Pakistani public opinion and led to tensions in US-Pakistan relations. Pakistan has repeatedly asked the US to respect its sovereignty and stop Drone attacks. Islamabad says any such action against the militants should be undertaken by Pakistani security forces.

There has been growing pressure on Pakistan by the US and NATO to 'do more' to curb the jihadists supporting the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. While Pakistan has a large army contingent deployed in FATA to prevent cross-border operations since 2003, it has not been able to put an end to the activities of the militants. The dilemma that the Pakistan government has been facing is that if it comes down with too heavy a hand against the militants, there are bound to be many casualties, including

collateral damage of non-combatants, leading to public protest that the government is killing its own fellow countrymen in order to please the US and foreign powers. On the other hand, lack of effective action against the militants puts a strains on relations with the US, NATO and the Kabul regime.

Pakistan's involvement in the war against terror has also had a serious fallout on the country's internal situation. In the last few years, Talibanization has started to grow in Pakistan itself, particularly in the Pukhtun tribal belt. Anti-American and pro-Taliban feelings are being whipped up in mosques and madrassahs. A kind of brainwashing is going on in these places using the war cry that 'Islam is in danger' and that it is the duty of every Pakistani Muslim to join the jihad. What is more ominous is that the religious extremists have resorted to terror tactics to intimidate not only their opponents but also the government and society in Pakistan. Public beheading of alleged collaborators and American spies, sabotage, bombing of various targets, kidnappings and, increasingly, suicide bombings has become the trademark of these Islamic militants. They espouse a very narrow-minded version of Islam. One of their main targets has been girls' schools which have been destroyed by the hundreds. They also attack video shops and barber saloons whom they accuse of un-Islamic activities.

Actually, religious extremism in Pakistan, notably in southern Punjab, predates the rise of the Taliban. Pakistan has had fanatical religious groups like the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba for more than three decades. They have been involved in sectarian killings in Pakistan and in covert operations in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

Thus, an internal crisis has been growing in Pakistan's body politic, pitting the religious extremists against the mainstream moderates. This has assumed a more acute shape with the rise in Taliban activities since 2004. There are fears that if the fanatics make headway in the settled areas, outside FATA, and start establishing their control over cities, they would impose a rigid conformity to their brand of Islam and would fight modernism in all forms. The biggest sufferers would be Pakistani

women who would be deprived of education, confined to their homes and obliged to wear the shuttlecock burqas when going outside their homes. Men would be required to keep beards of a certain size, Western-style dress would be prohibited and attendance of prayers in mosques would be made compulsory. If the religious extremists manage to come to power in Pakistan, they would probably impose the kind of oppressive dictatorship as seen in Afghanistan during the Taliban rule from 1994 to 2001. They would change Pakistan beyond recognition. There would be no television, films, videos, radio, music, photographs, and sports. Freedom of expression, assembly, and the press would be severely curtailed. There would be no free elections or representative institutions and everyone would be required to conform to the mullahs' version of Islam. In effect, Pakistan would be taken back from the twenty-first century to medieval times.

Even if the religious extremists do not manage to come in power, the immediate problem that Pakistan faces is the rise in terrorism, particularly the gruesome attacks on military and civilian targets by suicide bombers. This has created a grave law and order problem affecting civil life and damaging the economy and infrastructure. The image of Pakistan in the world has suffered badly and it is seen by many as a lawless country full of dangerous fanatics and terrorists. Foreigners are reluctant to travel to Pakistan and foreign investment is pulling out of the country, adding to its multiple economic woes.

Important political changes took place in Pakistan in 2008. After its success in the general elections, the PPP government came to power in March 2008 and Pervez Musharraf had to quit as president in August. But there was no fundamental change in the foreign policy. The PPP government led by President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani faced a serious dilemma. A modernist party with a pro-West leaning, the PPP government declared its commitment to the war against terror to curb Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. But it had to find a way to carry public opinion with it in this war. In the final resort, ideas had to be fought by ideas. Force should normally

be used only as a weapon of the last resort. The obscurantist ideas of the religious extremists could best be countered by raising public consciousness and by securing the active support of the moderate and more educated *ulema*. Moreover, the government would need to intensify efforts to win over—by negotiations and political means—the various religious extremists and the pro-Taliban, jihadist groups.

After a year in power of the PPP government, during which efforts were made to find some political compromise with the Taliban in Swat and in FATA, talks broke down in May 2009. The government had even accepted the demand for the enforcement of the Sharia in Malakand but the Taliban continued to up the ante. In Swat, the writ of the government was challenged to a point that it seemed that the Taliban had seized control of that area. Consequently, a big military operation was launched in Swat. To avoid being caught in the crossfire, nearly three million people in the affected area had to seek shelter outside Swat. However, the difference between the Musharraf regime and the PPP government has been that the use of military force since May 2009 has been supported by larger sections of public opinion. The government also intends to extend the military operation to Taliban-dominated South Waziristan and other tribal areas.

President Barack Obama, who came to power in January 2009, has remained focused on Afghanistan and the war against Al-Qaeda. The pressure on Pakistan to 'do more' has increased. In some ways, Pakistan is being made a scapegoat for the failure of the Afghan regime and the US and NATO forces to suppress the resurgent Taliban. The truth is that the situation in the Pakistani tribal area is a fallout of the developments in Afghanistan: it is not the cause of the Taliban insurgency there. A durable solution of the problem would have to be found in Afghanistan rather than in FATA. The US has so far relied much more on military means. There are signs of some rethinking in the US about the two-pronged strategy advocated by Pakistan viz. emphasis on development and negotiations with the militants as well as the use of force.

T
mist
with
and
ship
rela
war
wit
unle

Pal

9/11
bor
riva
Pak
Pak
the
gro
figh
Afg
F
sinc
anc
had
to I
fro
and
the
crit
Tal
/ Mi
bec
afte
Isla

The Obama Administration accepts that the US had made a mistake in abandoning Afghanistan and Pakistan after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. It has repeatedly assured Pakistan of durable and long-term ties rather than an off-and-on, one-issue relationship. In spite of such assurances, it seems that US-Pakistan relations for some time to come would remain a hostage of the war in Afghanistan. The likely strengthening of US relations with India would also continue to create misgivings in Pakistan, unless a way can be found to improve Pakistan-India relations.

Pakistan-India Relations after 9/11

9/11 had direct consequences for Pakistan not only on its western border with Afghanistan but also in the context of its traditional rivalry with India. On the one hand, there was a revival of US-Pakistan military and economic ties, as Washington needed Pakistan's support for its military campaign in Afghanistan. On the other hand, India saw an opportunity to strengthen its already growing links with Washington by emphasizing the common fight against (Islamic) terrorism that had a focal point in Afghanistan and the neighbouring tribal areas of Pakistan.

Pakistan-India relations had come under additional strains since 1989 when there was an upsurge in the Kashmiri resistance. In India's view, some Pakistani and other militants who had been fighting the Soviet forces in Afghanistan had shifted to Indian-occupied Kashmir in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. India accused Pakistan of training militants and sending them across the Line of Control. Moreover, after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in 1994, India became critical of Pakistan for having friendly ties with the extremist Taliban regime.

After the BJP came to power in 1998, Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh often contended that Pakistan had become the 'epicentre of terrorism'. India saw an opportunity after 9/11 to draw a parallel between the US action to crush Islamic extremism in Afghanistan and India's own fight against

Kashmiri Muslim militants. It warned that, like the US action in Afghanistan, India could launch a punitive attack against Pakistan whom it accused of sponsoring cross-border operations.

In October 2001, some Kashmiri militants attacked the State Assembly building of Indian-occupied Kashmir, killing thirty-eight people. Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah called on the Indian government to strike at alleged militant training camps in Pakistani-held Kashmir and in Pakistan itself. On 13 December 2001, the Indian Parliament building in New Delhi was attacked by some militants. India asserted that they were Pakistani infiltrators. Parliament was in session at the time and several members of parliament and senior politicians narrowly escaped injury. Making this an excuse, the Indian government, led by Prime Minister Vajpayee, announced a mobilization of troops. It suspended flights to Pakistan, including overflights, and reduced the size of its embassy in Islamabad. It made a demand to Pakistan to hand over twenty individuals accused of terrorism who, it alleged, were hiding in Pakistan. A war fever was whipped up in India, on a much greater scale than seen during the Kargil crisis of 1999.

Hawkish circles in India came out in full cry against Pakistan. According to Stephen Philip Cohen, a US expert on South Asia, hawks in India continue to believe that 'Pakistan is an accident of history, and must be forced to its knees or destroyed'.⁵ Cohen says that the hawks fall into three categories: those who would lure Pakistan into a military confrontation leading to a final triumph over the Pakistan army (the aborted 1987 Brassstacks model); those who believe that Pakistan only needs a push in the form of increased support for separatist forces in Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan leading to civil war and the break-up of Pakistan (the 1971 model); and those who believe that India's greater economic potential will enable it to dominate Pakistan making it a failed state (the Soviet model).

On the other side, Pakistan, too, is not without hawks in its military establishment. There is one school of thought in the military that believes that nuclear weapons possessed by both India and Pakistan deter an all out war in South Asia but provide

the opportunity for a 'limited' war at a sub-nuclear level. However, the soundness of this doctrine was evidently disproved by the 2002 war crisis. The reaction of India to the attack on its parliament was so strident that it raised fears that the two countries were at the brink of a nuclear war. President Musharraf and some Pakistani spokesmen, in public interviews, found it necessary to hint at the possibility of the first use of the atom bomb if the pressure from India became too great.⁶

The US reaction in this context was also noteworthy. Washington was worried by the possibility that its own war on terror would be disrupted by a Pakistan-India war. Secondly, the prospects of a nuclear war in South Asia had unacceptable worldwide implications. Alarmed by the nuclear brinkmanship in South Asia, the US issued a warning to its citizens to leave India. It also airlifted non-essential US Embassy personnel and families from India. This US warning hit the Indian economy. Foreign investment declined resulting in an outcry from Indian businessmen.

In mid-2002, US diplomatic pressure grew on both India and Pakistan to pull back from the brink. The US extracted a commitment from President Musharraf in July 2002 to 'permanently' stop cross-border infiltration. Musharraf secured a commitment from the US to play a more positive role in resolving the Kashmir dispute. The US also put pressure on India. Secretary of State Colin Powell stated on 28 July 2002 in New Delhi that progress on Kashmir was 'on the international agenda' and America would 'lend a helping hand to all sides'.⁷

By the end of 2002, the worst seemed to be over. In April 2003, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee launched his 'last' effort for peace between India and Pakistan and stretched a hand of friendship to Pakistan. In November 2003, Pakistani Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali announced a unilateral ceasefire along the Line of Control in Kashmir.

A historic turning point was reached in January 2004 when India and Pakistan decided to embark upon a journey towards peace. President Musharraf and Prime Minister Vajpayee signed the Islamabad Declaration. It contained two main points. Firstly,

India and Pakistan agreed to resume their composite dialogue which, they were confident, would lead to a peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues including Jammu and Kashmir. Secondly, the President of Pakistan reassured that he would not permit any territory under Pakistan's control (evidently meaning Azad Kashmir) to be used to support terrorism in any manner.

The Islamabad Declaration was signed against the backdrop of nearly two years of eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between the armed forces of the two countries and veiled threats of use of nuclear weapons against each other. The two states seemed to be on the brink of a catastrophe in which millions would have died and the whole region could have been contaminated for decades. Perhaps a belated realization of this doomsday scenario eventually compelled policy-makers in the two countries to pull back from the brink and opt for the path of negotiations and compromise. In this context, international pressure, particularly from the USA, clearly induced the two countries to move away from confrontation.

Though Vajpayee was ousted from power in the general elections of 2005, the succeeding Congress government under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reaffirmed India's commitment to the peace process that was described as 'irreversible' in a joint statement issued in 2005. Since then, the peace process has been jolted and even temporarily halted by periodic terrorist incidents in India, for which India has always shown a knee-jerk reaction putting the blame on Pakistan. But the two countries have not so far abandoned the peace process. There have been detailed and indeed painstaking negotiations between the two countries on the various agenda items of the composite dialogue. After each meeting, the two sides have stressed the positive atmosphere in the talks and reaffirmed their resolve to continue the dialogue. However, the scorecard on the negotiations shows mixed results.

The two sides have made progress in confidence building measures (CBMs) that have facilitated better communication links, easier travel, greater trade, unprecedented cultural

exchanges and a decrease in hostile propaganda. High-level meetings including summits have taken place from time to time. But the dispute on Jammu and Kashmir, which has been the main source of tensions between the two countries ever since their independence, remains unresolved. It can be argued that emotionally charged issues like Kashmir cannot be resolved in a hurry, but there has been little concrete progress even on the less intractable issues viz. Siachen, Sir Creek, cross-border terrorism and a reduction in defence forces. As a result of the continuing impasse between the two big South Asian countries, regional cooperation under SAARC, including the important free trade area project, is making only lethargic progress.

Pakistan has urged that the two sides should move from dispute management to conflict resolution. Some Pakistani analysts believe that India is interested only in the CBMs, particularly in the cultural field. They fear that India would take advantage of the apparent bonhomie by sweeping the Kashmir dispute under the rug and getting *de facto* acceptance from Pakistan of its illegal occupation of the state. These analysts point out that India's main focus seems to be that the insurgency in Kashmir since 1989—which it contends has been due to cross-border terrorism from Pakistan—should somehow be brought to an end. Thereafter, these analysts fear, there would be no pressure left on India to resolve the Kashmir dispute.

In November 2008, Pakistan-India relations had a major setback when there was a spectacular terrorist attack in Mumbai. India immediately put the blame on Pakistan. One of the terrorists was captured alive and turned out to be a Pakistani national. It was said that several terrorists had come by the sea route from Karachi and carried out a highly sophisticated attack. India claimed that the Mumbai attack was organized by the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, a Pakistani militant group involved in the anti-India resistance in Kashmir. India adopted a belligerent stance towards Pakistan with veiled suggestions of war. It suspended the ongoing peace process and insisted that it would not be resumed until Pakistan took effective action to destroy the terrorist network on its soil. Once again, the US played an

important role to mediate between India and Pakistan and the situation gradually eased. Pakistan promised to punish any of its nationals involved in the Mumbai incident. Eventually, the two prime ministers issued a joint statement on 16 July 2009, on the sidelines of the NAM Summit in Sharm El Sheikh (Egypt), agreeing to resume dialogue. This episode, however, showed the fragility of the peace process that could be easily disrupted by terrorist groups whenever they chose to do so. Those responsible for the Mumbai attack probably wanted to disrupt any improvement in Pakistan-India relations. Unfortunately, such anti-peace elements exist in both countries.

Prospects for Peace in South Asia

Clearly, there is a bitter legacy of distrust between India and Pakistan that makes any objective evaluation a difficult exercise since partisanship and emotionalism seem often to cloud any rational judgement. Nevertheless, *four elements that are working for peace and accommodation* can be identified in the scenario that has emerged since the peace process was launched in January 2004, viz. (i) the growing peace lobby in both countries generated by the CBMs; (ii) the geostrategic scenario after 9/11 that has produced a common stance against Islamist extremists; (iii) the emergence of vested economic interests that want peace and stability in Pakistan-India relations to ensure economic collaboration; and (iv) the pressure of the US and West as also many other countries in the world on both India and Pakistan to shun a nuclear war and opt for dialogue and peace.

Firstly, there can be no doubt that the various CBMs have helped improve the bilateral environment. Before 2004, war always seemed a possibility, whereas after 2004, both sides have generally avoided any kind of war talk. Moreover, there has been a remarkable increase in bilateral exchanges including visits by leaders known for their hawkish attitudes. For the first time since 1947, Kashmiri leaders from the two sides have

exchanged visits. Limited travel and trade has also started across the Line of Control.

There is little substance in the allegation made by some quarters in Pakistan that the CBMs benefit India alone. To give an example, easier travel between the two countries has come as a great relief to millions of people belonging to divided families, who are by and large Pakistani and Indian Muslims. Better communication links have made supplies of commercial items much easier. Thus, whenever Pakistan has had a shortage of food items like onions, garlic, pulses, or meat, it has been able to import them from India within a few hours, rather than waiting for weeks to import them from elsewhere. The same benefits are being enjoyed by India. The opening of direct trade reduces smuggling, increases government revenues and makes things cheaper for the average citizen.

The increase in cultural exchanges and reduction of hostile propaganda has resulted in an upsurge in public opinion in support of peace and friendship. There are now strong peace lobbies in both countries that want to bury the hatchet and are keen to open a new chapter of friendship in the subcontinent. Public opinion has influenced political parties in both countries to extend support to the peace process. It is significant that the right wing parties are also supporting the peace process. In India, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that had traditionally taken a hawkish attitude towards Pakistan now wants good relations with Pakistan. The BJP cannot do otherwise since it is itself the author of the Islamabad Declaration, which was signed when it was last in power. The victory of the Congress in the general elections of May 2009 suggests that moderates enjoy greater support in India. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has adopted a relatively more conciliatory attitude towards Pakistan and his re-election would give him a freer hand in dealings with Pakistan.

In Pakistan, the traditionally anti-India religious parties like the JUI and Jamaat-i-Islami support the peace process with India, more so because since 9/11, they have focused on the USA as the main enemy. The mainstream parties, the PPP and the two

Muslim Leagues, (O) and (N), are all for better ties with India and indeed claim to be the original sponsors of the peace process.

This apparent change of heart on both sides is diminishing the traditional pattern of tensions between the two countries and thus lessens the possibility of war. Defence expenditure might still be rising on both sides, but it would have risen much more had there been the previous pattern of tension in relations.

Secondly, Pakistan-India relations are being influenced by certain events in the international arena that have affected the current geostrategic scenario. It is clear that the world has changed since 9/11 in particular and, even earlier, since the demise of the Soviet bloc in 1991. The great international issue seems to be the war against terrorism, mainly against Muslim militants, in which the US is the driving force. But this war also has the support of many countries in the international community, including Russia and China. The focus of this war has been against Al-Qaeda and the resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan and neighbouring tribal areas of Pakistan. However, Islamist fundamentalist groups have also emerged elsewhere who are alleged to be involved in militant or terrorist activities of one kind or the other, in a wide region stretching from Indonesia in the east to Morocco, Europe and USA in the west.

Islamist extremism is becoming a worldwide phenomenon primarily because anti-Americanism has grown in many Muslim circles since the US invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Muslims in general feel aggrieved by what they see as the grave injustice done to their brethren in Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya and other places. This sentiment has mainly contributed to the rise of Islamic extremism and has turned moderates into extremists and some zealots into terrorists.

India itself has some 150 million Muslims. In case these Muslims are radicalized and some turn to extremism, they could pose a grave threat to India's internal security. Some Indian Muslims were recently accused of terrorism in Britain. There have been terrorist incidents in India itself involving Muslim extremists. While India has tended to put the blame on Pakistan's

India
secret
military
service,
the ISI,
for such
terrorist
incidents,
India's
own courts
have found
in many
such cases
that those
involved
were either
Kashmiri
or Indian
or Bangladeshi
Muslims.
There is
increasing
evidence
of emergence
of Muslim
militant
groups
in India.

secret military service, the ISI, for such terrorist incidents. India's own courts have found in many such cases that those involved were either Kashmiri or Indian or Bangladeshi Muslims. There is increasing evidence of emergence of Muslim militant groups in India.

India clearly has an interest in opposing Islamist extremism. There seems to be a greater realization in India that the Pakistan government—headed by Musharraf till 2008 and by PPP's Asif Zardari since then—is a key player in the fight against extremists. Pakistani politicians themselves, notably the PPP's top leader Benazir Bhutto who was assassinated in December 2007, have become the target of Islamist extremists. In fact, all moderate forces in Pakistan are facing a grave challenge from Islamist extremism. Therefore, it would be in India's own interest to strengthen rather than weaken the hands of the moderates in Pakistan. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said on several occasions that a strong and stable Pakistan is in India's own interest. There is realization in India that Pakistan's weakening or disintegration could unleash Islamic extremism on a massive scale and its nuclear assets could fall into the hands of such extremists. Such a realization could become the rationale for bringing about an enduring improvement in bilateral Pakistan-India relations.

The US, which launched the global war against terrorism in 2001, also has a vital interest to support moderate and pro-West forces in Islamic countries. It highly values the role of Pakistan as a key Islamic country with a unique geographic location, being located next to the epicentre of militancy and terrorism, i.e. the Al-Qaeda and Taliban. While Washington saw Musharraf personally as a bulwark against Islamic extremists, the US is more comfortable with the return of democracy in Pakistan under PPP rule. From the US point of view, confrontation or even tensions between India and Pakistan would distract attention from its focus on the war against terrorism. Moreover, the US and the entire world community would be adversely affected by a nuclear war in South Asia or elsewhere. For these two reasons, the US has been using its influence both in India and Pakistan

in favour of peace, accommodation and dialogue. Europe too has a similar approach and the EU has also been involved in a conciliatory role in South Asia. In fact, at present, Russia and China and all other countries favour peace between India and Pakistan.

Thirdly, improvement in relations between India and Pakistan makes it possible to establish long-term economic linkages between the two countries. Trade has already been growing and the two Commerce Secretaries have fixed a target of \$10 billion by 2010. Undoubtedly, proximity is a key incentive for expansion of commercial links between India and Pakistan. Economic cooperation will have political fallout as well. Over a period of time, pressure groups are likely to emerge having vested economic interests in favour of peace and cooperation, since they will stand to lose in the case of war and tension. Of particular importance, in this connection, will be the bilateral trade with Pakistan; transit trade through Pakistan and the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, as also the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. Both India and Pakistan desperately need more energy to maintain their economic growth. Hence, these gas pipelines could become guarantors of peace and cooperation between the two countries.

Both sides are moving towards mutually advantageous cooperation by exploring opportunities in diverse fields, despite political reservations. The advantage of proximity, faster and less costly communication lines as well as awareness of each other's tastes, will continue to foster greater collaboration. This in turn will establish greater confidence in each other and will create vested interests in favour of peace and cooperation. Big business houses that stand to lose heavily if their commercial linkages in the other country are disrupted would use their influence on the two governments in favour of peace and harmony. Similarly, if better relations between India and Pakistan enable SAARC to take off, on the ASEAN model, that too would reinforce the peace process and even make it irreversible.

oo
a
nd
nd
the
an

to
in
an
a
cc
nc
tr:
st
at
fr
A
sl
N
it
or
w
Ji
P
P
h
h
r
C
n
nd
at
it

In sum, the above-mentioned factors are helpful in reducing the traditional distrust and antagonism between India and Pakistan. Against this background, the progress since 2004 on the main political disputes, including the key issue of Jammu and Kashmir, can be examined.

There are some indications that the Kashmir issue is moving towards a Northern Ireland type solution. There has been intensive back channel diplomacy whose details have not been announced but whose contours seem to be the following. Firstly, a solution would not involve a change of border, but a kind of condominium might emerge. There would be maximum autonomy given to the two parts of Kashmir, with easier travel and trade between the two parts.

It is notable that Musharraf's four-point solution had drawn support from All Parties Hurriyet Conference (APHC), the main anti-India political body in Indian-occupied Kashmir, as well as from the top Kashmiri leaders on the Pakistani side like Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan. In Pakistan, better ties with India are supported by the mainstream political parties, the PPP and the Muslim League as also by the religious alliance MMA. Only the hard-line jihadist groups oppose it. The militancy in Indian-occupied Kashmir might gradually decline, leading to the withdrawal of the greater part of Indian troops.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told an audience in Jammu on 15 July 2007 that the time was ripe for a pact with Pakistan and between the culturally and politically diverse peoples of Jammu and Kashmir. He announced his quest for a historic reconciliation with Pakistan for peace and cooperation in Kashmir, including a joint sharing of its water and land resources for the region's benefit on both sides of the Line of Control. He called for a 'historic reconciliation of hearts and minds in our region.' Singh said:

I hope and believe that Jammu and Kashmir can, one day, become a symbol of India-Pakistan cooperation rather than of conflict. As I have stated earlier, borders cannot be changed, but they can be made irrelevant. There can be no question of divisions or partitions,

but the Line of Control can become a line of peace with a freer flow of ideas, goods, services and people.

He said:

I believe it is possible to pursue the development of a United State of Jammu and Kashmir even while respecting and addressing the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of each of the three regions—Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh.⁸

No doubt, apart from the Kashmir dispute, there are also some other unresolved problems between India and Pakistan. On Sir Creek, there is still no agreement despite detailed talks. However, the international deadline for demarcation of the sea limits should induce India and Pakistan to find a compromise.

On the Siachen glacier, the sticking point is Indian insistence to make an official note of the existing line of control. Pakistan contests the validity of the existing line, representing Indian de facto control, as being the result of Indian aggression in 1984. There are periodic hints from both sides that a solution is close. The two countries can possibly overcome this deadlock by using the Simla-like formula that had referred to the Kashmir issue 'without prejudice to the known position of either side'. An additional compulsion for the two countries could be the concern that due to military activities in Siachen for over twenty-five years, snow has started to melt that could lead to an environmental catastrophe due to loss of the glacier itself and resultant flooding. The two countries have a vested interest in managing water resources that is a key to their survival.

Bilateral trade has been on the rise but could grow significantly if political understanding grows. This would also enable SAARC to become more effective.

Fourthly, prospects of peace in the subcontinent are strengthened by the pressure brought on both India and Pakistan by the international community to shun a nuclear war and opt for dialogue and peace. A nuclear war would destroy both countries and kill millions in the subcontinent. Atomic radiation would

spread beyond South Asia and adversely affect others. This is unacceptable to the international community. The West and especially the US, in addition, oppose any diversion from their focus on the war on terror. For these reasons, the international community would continue to remain engaged with India and Pakistan in order to prevent war and continue the peace process.

* * *

While the above-mentioned developments since 2004 have worked towards a long-term betterment of Pakistan-India relations, some elements in the current geostrategic scenario could complicate the situation in South Asia in the future. One of them is internal to Pakistan and the other is global in nature.

Progress in the peace process could be halted in the event that an Islamic fundamentalist government comes to power in Pakistan. In such an eventuality, the US would drop all pretensions of an even-handed attitude in South Asia. It would draw even closer to India and could probably also adopt a common strategy with New Delhi to contain and even weaken Pakistan. A primary concern of these two countries plus Israel in that scenario would be to bring about the denuclearization of Pakistan, for which purpose there could even be use of force.

Secondly, the growing relationship between India and the US could have an adverse impact not only on Pakistan but also on China, its long-standing ally.

Until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, India had enjoyed a special relationship with Moscow, which provided 70 per cent of India's military hardware. In this period, India was also the leading spirit behind the Non-Aligned Movement. India's opposition to the military alliance between Pakistan and the US since 1954 had influenced India to adopt these policies. The US took a dim view of the India-Soviet axis.

After the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, India continued to maintain a close relationship with Russia. But with the coming to power of the BJP government in 1998, India made a paradigm shift in policy to move closer to the USA. Washington responded

enthusiastically for several reasons.. India is the second most populous country in the world and it is an important military, political and economic power. It is a democracy and shares Western values in political and economic spheres. Both the US and India are opposed to Islamist extremism and consider it a serious security threat. This adds to the mutuality of interests at this time that is bringing the US and India closer to each other.

More importantly, the US sees India as a counterweight against China, which not only continues to adhere to a totalitarian philosophy but is also fast emerging as a potential super power. China's spectacular economic progress since 1980 and its growing military strength pose a long-term challenge for the US.

For its part, India has hardly ever concealed its leadership ambitions and sees China as its main Asian rival. China's close friendship with Pakistan since the 1960s had caused serious concern in India. In 1962, India and China fought a border war. Since 1980, Sino-Indian relations have improved a lot but China continues to maintain a territorial claim on the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. India and China have been in competition for influence in Nepal and Burma as also in Southeast Asia.

China is aware that in the last decade, US-India relations have taken a quantum leap. India and the US have developed a 'strategic partnership' which has, notably, led to the signing of a nuclear deal. In March 2005, the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice publicly offered US help to make India 'a major world power in the twenty-first century'. Shortly thereafter, Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee went to Washington and signed a ten-year framework defence agreement. India is planning to purchase top-of-the-range US weaponry worth several billion dollars and has conducted joint military exercises with the US. In an important initiative, the US, India, Japan and Australia met in May 2007 on the sidelines of the Asian Regional Forum in Manila to set up a new 'quadrilateral' grouping. This led to protests from Beijing. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh later said that India was not 'ganging up' against China and that the 'quadrilateral group was not a

most
tary,
ares
; US
; it a
ts at
ther.
ight
itar-
uper
and
r the
ship
lose
ous
war.
hina
le of
ition
1.
tions
ed a
g of
State
ia 'a
rtly
nt to
nce
; US
joint
the
lines
new
time
ging
ot a

military alliance'. This has not satisfied China which fears that the US is fashioning a 'China containment' strategy involving India, Japan and Australia.⁹

The Chinese policy for the past three decades has been one of building bridges with the US, India and others. China wants to concentrate on economic development, where its progress has been phenomenal. At the present rate of growth, China could emerge as a super power by 2030 or so. It would like to see a stable international environment that does not distract it from pursuing its rapid economic growth. But if the strategic relationship between the US and India keeps growing, China might toughen its policy towards India. This could bring China even closer towards Pakistan.

The India-US strategic partnership could, in the long run, also result in Pakistan getting estranged from the US. Moreover, the growing anti-Americanism in Pakistan could at some stage force the government to review its relations with the US. The subcontinent faces an uncertain future in the days ahead.

NOTES

1. Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*, Free Press, 2006, p. 201.
2. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher, *Dawn*, 21 October 2008.
3. Musharraf, op. cit., p. 292.
4. S.M. Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy* (1994), p. 406.
5. Stephen Philip Cohen, *Asian Aftershocks: Strategic Asia* (2002-03), p. 20.
6. Cohen, op. cit., pp. 28-34.
7. Shahid M. Amin, *Realism in Politics* (2005), p. 271.
8. Jawed Naqvi, *Dawn*, 16 July 2007.
9. Praful Bidwai, *Dawn*, 7 July 2007.