

CHAPTER 18

Increasing Isolation, 1990-2001

If, in the 1980s, Pakistan rose from isolation to a position of international respect and admiration for its courageous role in support of the Afghans struggle against Soviet intervention, the turn of the decade reversed the trend. The process started with a return of the international limelight on Pakistan's nuclear programme and the imposition of sanctions by the United States. The world community, which initially blamed India for repression and gross violation of human rights in Kashmir, became increasingly critical also of Pakistan's interference in the state. Islamabad's declarations that its role was limited to political, diplomatic and moral support for the liberation struggle were openly questioned. Washington took the lead by considering inclusion of Pakistan in the list of states accused of sponsoring terrorism. As the only state that recognised the Taliban regime, Pakistan was saddled with the responsibility for their policies. Poor governance, reckless international borrowing and rampant corruption added to Pakistan's increasing loss of prestige. Stringent international sanctions imposed after the 1998 nuclear tests aggravated the economic plight. The Kargil episode projected Pakistan as an 'irresponsible' state. Intervention by the army and the overthrow of an elected government in October 1999 attracted 'democracy sanctions' that tightened the financial squeeze. To cope with the challenge, General Pervez Musharraf's government began the process of rescuing the state from international isolation. It began with earnest internal reforms and stringent austerity that averted further borrowing even before the government's decision to cooperate with the United States in the war on terrorism after 9/11 rehabilitated the state in the international mainstream.

US Sanctions Again

No sooner did the Soviet forces complete their withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 than the nuclear issue began once again to dominate Pakistan-US relations. Washington asked Islamabad to discontinue the weapons research programme. When it declined, the Pressler Amendment was activated. Adopted by the Senate in 1985, it required the US president to provide an annual certificate that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear weapon, failing which economic and military assistance to Pakistan was prohibited. So long as the Soviet forces were in Afghanistan, President Ronald Reagan had issued the certificate without much fuss. President George Bush did the same in 1989 but then the US became intrusive and demanding about the research the US knew Pakistan had been carrying on for many years, and the president declined to issue the certificate in 1990. The US immediately cut off \$700 million in assistance it was pledged to provide to Pakistan annually during 1988-94. It also declined to permit the transfer of F-16 aircrafts and other military equipment for which the US had earlier cleared commercial contracts with manufacturers and Pakistan had paid a billion dollars in cash. An embargo was even ordered on the return of Pakistan-owned equipment sent to the United States for repairs with costs paid in advance. Predictably, the US decision revived the bitter memories of Pakistan's past grievances of US-refusal to honour commitments. It was manifestly wrong for the United States to renege on the six-year agreement for economic and military assistance. The injustice of refusing to deliver the F-16s for which Pakistan had paid was not rectified until 1995 when President Clinton finally acknowledged it was unfair to keep both the equipment and the cash, and ordered reimbursement of the payments Pakistan had made as well as the return of Pakistan's own equipment which lay aging in the United States.

Fortunately, international financial institutions and bilateral donors, especially Japan, which was providing \$500 million a year, did not follow the US example. Still the economy suffered a severe jolt and the predicament continued to aggravate as the government failed to adjust budgetary policies and was progressively caught in a debt trap.

Support for the Taliban

Pakistan's recognition of the Taliban government in May 1997 provoked international disapproval and criticism, although the decision was not without justification. This included the necessity of conducting official business with the authorities in power in Kabul on matters of travel and trade between people of common ethnicity on both sides of the border. The return of refugees required negotiations with the Taliban who controlled three-quarter of Afghanistan's territory. Many of them, having lived in refugee camps in Pakistan, evinced goodwill and friendship. Islamabad also hoped to influence the Taliban. It could not have foreseen that the Taliban would prove unreasonable and rigid and commit one blunder after another, provoking international outrage.

Islamabad failed to foresee that the Taliban were internationally perceived to be the creation of Pakistan. A Pakistani minister was on the record for calling them 'our boys'.¹ The Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara parties in Afghanistan denounced Pakistan. International opinion believed Pakistan was involved in assisting the Taliban in the internal struggle for control and domination. Uzbekistan was not alone in criticizing Pakistani recognition as 'external meddling'² while ignoring interference by other countries that not only continued to recognise the rump government but also provided large assistance in cash and arms to the opposition factions, thus fuelling the civil war in Afghanistan. As the only friend of the Taliban, Pakistan was blamed for their policies.

Pakistan tried to persuade friendly countries to recognise the Taliban regime but with little success. Not just the United Nations, even the OIC and the ECO refused to accept the Taliban regime. Saudi Arabia and UAE recognised the Taliban but found their anachronistic interpretation of Islam unacceptable. Iran not only denounced Taliban extremism but also enhanced assistance to the opposition warlords. Arab and Central Asian neighbours were antagonised by the encouragement, training and assistance the Taliban gave to their dissident nationals.

Already blamed for alleged political and military support to the Taliban, Pakistan came under mounting US censure for its perceived failure to prevent the Taliban from giving asylum to Osama bin Laden.

and his followers who, Washington believed, were engaged in planning and perpetrating terrorist attacks against the United States. The fact that Pakistan lacked the means and the leverage to influence the Taliban, and the United States itself did little to influence the Taliban, were ignored.

Pakistan, anxious as always to maintain cooperative relations with Afghanistan and cognisant of the Taliban's friendly disposition toward Pakistan, proffered counsel and advice for moderation, which would have helped save them from the predictable consequences of their policies. The first such intercession, suggesting the Taliban restrain Osama Bin Laden, was made by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government in 1998 but with little effect. Convinced of their rectitude and impervious to the remonstrations of other Islamic countries, the Taliban leadership was dismissive of criticism and persisted in its suicidal course. Instead of heeding the Pakistan government's advice, they relied on religious parties in Pakistan for support, and even exported their obscurantist views by influencing Pakistani counterparts, giving shelter to extremists and proclaimed offenders, and facilitating cross-border criminal activities in Pakistan.

Again after 9/11, Pakistan suggested that the Taliban expel Bin Laden. Their refusal to heed the world community's outrage sealed their fate. Within days of the commencement of the coalition attack, the Taliban lost control of the country.

Declining Prestige

Another issue that undermined international goodwill for Pakistan was corruption at high levels. Transparency International, a monitoring organization in Germany, declared Pakistan as the second most corrupt country in the world.³ Poor governance, fiscal extravagance, mounting budgetary deficits and an escalating debt burden pushed Pakistan to the brink of insolvency. By 1999, the accumulated burden of foreign debt amounted to \$38 billion and the annual cost of servicing it to over \$5 billion. With exports stagnant at \$8 billion, the payments gap widened and recurrent scams and defaulted loans of nationalised banks raised the spectre of a deep economic crisis and financial crash.

Nuclear Tests

Pakistan alone was not the target of sanctions after it followed India to carry out tests in May 1998, but its economy was more vulnerable to the aid cut-off by countries that had continued to provide loans after the US terminated assistance in 1990, including Japan which was extending yen credits of \$500 million a year. The government resorted to a freeze of \$11 billion in foreign currency deposits which the state had attracted by the solemn pledge of transferability. The deposits could now be cashed only in devalued rupees, involving a loss of 30 per cent to account holders expecting payment in foreign currency. The default antagonised hundreds of thousands of people who had trusted the government. Remittances from Pakistanis abroad nose-dived.

Pakistan-India Dialogue, 1997-99

Dialogue between Pakistan and India, suspended in 1994 because it proved sterile, was reopened in February 1997 at the level of foreign secretaries. The Indian emphasis was, as usual, on normalisation of trade and travel, though it was willing to discuss all issues. Pakistan underlined the centrality of the Kashmir issue. The gap between the two positions was not bridged when prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and I.K. Gujral held a meeting at Male in May 1997. Gujral reportedly pleaded that his minority government was too weak to make a bold policy shift. Sharif countered by saying that no government in Pakistan, however strong its majority in parliament, could ignore popular opinion in the country.

For the first time since the Kashmir dispute arose, a *hartal* was called by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference in Kashmir when the prime ministers met. A Kashmiri spokesman explained that while the Kashmiri people welcomed these talks, the dispute involved three parties, [and] any attempt to strike a deal between two without the association of the third, would fail to yield a credible settlement.⁴ He also appealed that the world community should promote an initiative toward settlement of the Kashmir dispute in order to end the

bloodshed and suffering of the Kashmiri people, eliminating regional tensions and the risk of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan.

In June 1997, the foreign secretaries of the two countries met in Islamabad and agreed to recommence dialogue on all outstanding issues of concern to the two sides, and to set up working groups for the purpose. The prime ministers met three months later on the sidelines of a UN summit in New York and exchanged mutual expressions of determination to renew and reinvigorate efforts for durable peace.

Lahore Summit. The prime minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, visited Pakistan from 20-21 February 1999, travelling to Lahore on the inaugural run of the Delhi-Lahore bus service. He and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif concluded the most prolific, if not successful, summit with three documents.⁵ In a declaration, the two leaders agreed to undertake 'immediate steps' for reducing the risk of accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons and discuss concepts and doctrines, and in a memorandum of understanding, pledged to 'continue to abide by their respective unilateral moratoria on conducting further nuclear explosions unless either side, in exercise of its national sovereignty decides that extraordinary events have jeopardized its supreme interest.' The two sides further undertook to provide each other with advance notification in respect of ballistic missile flight tests.

The Lahore documents were comprehensive and covered the whole gamut of issues of bilateral interest ranging from commitment to 'intensify their efforts to resolve all issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir', to 'condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations' and to 'undertaking national measures to reduce the risks of accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons.'

The summit was a grand if ephemeral success. Neither the beginning nor the end of the summit proved auspicious, however. It was greeted with vociferous protests in Lahore against India's brutal repression in Kashmir. On return to New Delhi, the Indian leaders downplayed the importance of the commitment to resolve the outstanding issues. In Pakistan, influential sections of opinion criticised the emphasis on bilateral negotiations and the failure to mention even the United Nations' principles for governing bilateral

relations (as in the Shimla Agreement). The 'Lahore process' glorified by the two sides was considered to provide a convenient alibi to world opinion, and especially influential powers, to abdicate responsibility to promote a just settlement of the Kashmir question.

Particularly insensitive was the reference to the 'sanctity' of the Line of Control. It invested this temporary line with a characteristic that applies to international boundaries and departed from Pakistan's view which maintained that the Line of Control 'resulting from the ceasefire of 17 December 1971' was, like the 1949 ceasefire line, a temporary arrangement to be respected by both sides pending a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Kargil Crisis, 1999

A grave crisis erupted following intrusion of armed personnel from Pakistan into the Kargil heights in Kashmir in May 1999. Islamabad denied the facts and attributed the fighting to Kashmiri freedom fighters, recalling that after promising, at the Lahore Summit, to intensify efforts to resolve all issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, Indian leaders in statements on their return to Delhi portrayed insincerity and absence of serious intent. It recalled also that the UN Security Council's call in its resolution of June 1998 for the resumption of dialogue to remove the root causes of tensions, including Kashmir, was not followed up, and that Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani had embarked on a 'proactive' policy, intensified repression in Indian-held Kashmir, resorted to recurrent violations of the Line of Control forcing closure of the Neelum Valley road in Azad Kashmir and subjected the villages to fierce artillery bombardment.⁶ Few foreign countries credited Pakistan's disclaimer, however. Statements issued by the G-8, the United States, Britain and Germany implicitly blamed Pakistan for the 'intruders' in Kargil.

As armed men penetrated the Kargil-Dras sector and seized high ground threatening the Srinagar-Leh road, an artery in the summer months for stockpiling supplies for Indian garrisons in Ladakh and Siachen, India denounced the operation as a violation of the Shimla Agreement and retaliated with a massive air and army operation to

dislodge the guerrillas. Describing them as Islamic militants, Taliban and regular army personnel, India accused Pakistan of aggression.

Indian bombardment targeted not only the Kargil Heights on the Indian side of the Line of Control but also the alleged supply bases on the Pakistan side. Also, duels raged elsewhere along the Line of Control. In an attempt to defuse the situation, the Pakistani foreign minister was sent to New Delhi on 12 June for diplomatic efforts for de-escalation and dialogue. He was accorded a frigid and hostile reception. India took a rigid, no-negotiation stance, insisting on Pakistani withdrawal of personnel from Kargil before discussion on any other issue. Briefing the press after the meeting, the Indian foreign minister used the word 'demand' three times in one minute.

Meanwhile, concern mounted internationally that the fighting in Kargil might escalate and lead to a general war between Pakistan and India, now declared nuclear states. The Group of Eight (industrialised countries) considered 'infiltration of armed intruders' as 'irresponsible'.⁶ The European Union called for 'the immediate withdrawal of infiltrators'. Washington asked Pakistan to withdraw 'its forces' and 'restore status quo ante'. Only the OIC backed the Pakistani position by asking for de-escalation and dialogue. China did not criticise Pakistan and called on both India and Pakistan to 'respect the Line of Control'.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sued for the US President's intercession to defuse the crisis. Clinton received Sharif for an emergency meeting on Sunday, 4 July—US Independence Day. He discussed the situation with Prime Minister Vajpayee over the phone and persuaded Sharif to agree to a joint statement which provided for immediate cessation of hostilities, concrete steps to be taken for the restoration of the Line of Control in accordance with the Shimla Agreement, and resumption of a Pakistan-India dialogue as begun in Lahore in February 1999 for resolving all issues dividing India and Pakistan, including Kashmir. President Clinton promised to take a personal interest in encouraging an expeditious resumption and intensification of the bilateral efforts, 'once the sanctity of the Line of Control has been fully restored.' Military officers of Pakistan and India later agreed on steps for disengagement. The Pakistani personnel withdrew from Kargil by 16 July.

Reading into the Washington joint statement a US pledge of effort to promote settlement of the Kashmir question was not only a spin aimed at misleading public opinion but a self-deception. From authoritative clarifications given by US administration officials it became clear that all that the president had promised, after careful prior clearance with New Delhi, was 'personal interest' in promoting the 'Lahore process.'

A US official compared Sharif's dash to Washington to Yahya Khan's request for US help in the face of a rapidly deteriorating situation in the 1971 war.⁷ Henry Kissinger had then remarked that the US was asked to be in at the crash-landing when it was not in on the take-off! If Pakistan was mercifully spared that biting sarcasm this time, it was partly because all that it asked was the proverbial fig leaf to cover retreat from an impulsive adventure undertaken without forethought.

Most commentators blamed the Pakistan government for losing sight of strategy in a tactical bid to awaken international attention to the festering Kashmir dispute. Given the power disparity, a military solution was obviously out of question. A war that could escalate to the nuclear level was considered inconceivable. One eminent journalist castigated the government saying, '...the original political blunder of approving a strategically flawed and unsustainable plan of guerrilla action was compounded first by diplomatic and domestic mishandling and then by a sudden and inadequately explained policy *volte face*.'⁸ A provident policy had to steer clear of extremes of bravado and soul-destroying capitulation.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf were held 'responsible for approving this misconceived operation.' While some described the operation as 'tactically brilliant' others considered it 'a complete fiasco.' A spokesman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference of Jammu and Kashmir described the Pakistan government's policy as 'unpredictable.'⁹ Another APHC leader said, 'First we were excluded, then betrayed.'¹⁰

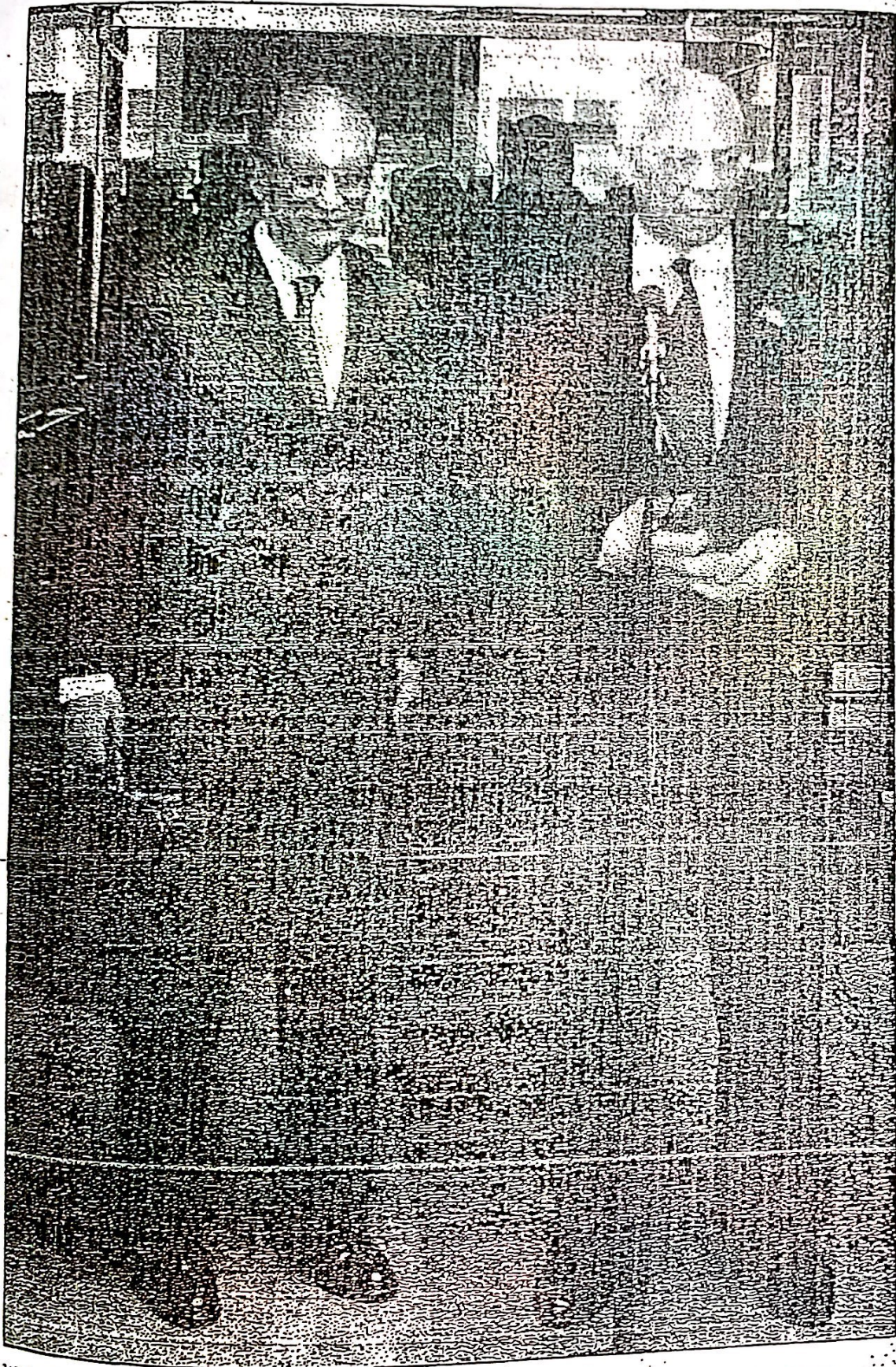
Inconsistent and contradictory statements undermined Pakistan's credibility. Its spokesmen disclaimed knowledge of the Mujahideen operation in Kargil one day and accepted responsibility for their withdrawal the next day. Shallow thinking was manifest also in pendulum swings from naive bus diplomacy to the Kargil gamble;

from glorifying bilateral negotiations in the Lahore declaration to self-deceiving claims of success in inducting American interest in resolving Kashmir. Politics of corruption and crass calculation of immediate political advantage was diagnosed as the main reason for the shallow and myopic policies of the ruling families, along with the absence of long-term thinking and institutional decision-making.

Autopsies of the Kargil crisis by Pakistani commentators underlined agonising dilemmas that Pakistan faced in regard to the Kashmir issue. If it did not act, India claimed to have achieved a final solution; if it did, it incurred the risk of war. Similarly placed were the Kashmiri people: if they did not struggle for freedom, they were considered to have acquiesced in India's illegal annexation; if they did, they were subjected to savage repression, killings, torture and other excesses no human being should have to suffer in a civilised world.

Misconceived policies and actions not only isolated Pakistan internationally, they also gravely damaged the heroic freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people. Focus shifted from indigenous agitation for self-determination to Indian allegations of its Pakistani sponsorship, from inhuman Indian excesses in Kashmir to restraint in limiting response to its side of the Line of Control, from brutality of Indian forces against the Kashmiri people to bravery on the Kargil Heights.

If the Kargil episode exposed Pakistan to international censure it also opened a breach between the prime minister and the Army hierarchy. Nawaz Sharif was reported to have blamed the army for keeping him ignorant of the plan for the Kargil operation. A few months later Sharif dismissed Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf while Musharraf was on his way back from a visit to Sri Lanka, and ordered refusal of landing facilities to the PIA airliner on which Musharraf was a passenger. Musharraf, however, refused to be diverted to another destination and the Karachi corps commander intervened to save the passengers and crew as the plane ran low on fuel. On return, the chief of staff took over the government in a bloodless coup.



With US Secretary of State Colin Powell, Washington D.C., 2001.

Coping with Isolation

General Pervez Musharraf, chief executive of the new government, focused efforts on improving governance and rectification of Pakistan's fiscal predicament. A decision was taken to stabilise the debt burden, which had grown by \$3 billion a year during the 1990s to \$38 billion.¹⁵ Since foreign aid was cut off, exports were stagnant at \$8 billion and remittances had declined, the debt-servicing burden of over \$5 billion a year necessitated austerity and belt-tightening. None of the ministers in the 16 member cabinet asked for replacement of old cars. Even some development projects had to be postponed. Priority attention was given to accountability and recovery of defaulted loans. By the end of June 2001, efforts had yielded a measure of success; exports increased by 10 per cent growth, tax revenues increased and foreign debt remained stable.

Meanwhile, friendly countries maintained solidarity with Pakistan. Saudi Arabia was generous in economic assistance. China and Kuwait provided balance of payments support. Premier Zhu Rongji visited Pakistan in 2001 and announced cooperation in the construction of Gwadar port. Sultan Qaboos of Oman visited Pakistan in April 2001 and extended substantial assistance for economic development apart from taking a 50 per cent share in a joint investment fund. Also, the government's performance persuaded some countries to review sanctions. Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori paid an official visit to Pakistan, announced resumption of suspended aid for development projects and invited the foreign minister to visit Tokyo. The United States appreciated Pakistan's assistance for confidential contacts with the Taliban. President Clinton did not omit Islamabad during his tour of South Asia. The US used its influence for containment of Pakistan-India tension and its officials made a valuable contribution to avert the danger of conflict.¹¹ The International Monetary Fund agreed to provide a loan for balance-of-payments support to Pakistan.

Bound by its rules, the Commonwealth suspended Pakistan's membership but maintained contacts. A Commonwealth ministerial action group delegation was the first to visit Pakistan at the end of October 1999 to meet with the new leadership, if only to encourage them to move towards the restoration of democracy. Privately, some of them recognised the baneful effects of corruption. In a meeting with

the C-MAG in September 2000 in New York, the Pakistan delegation urged the UK to join in efforts to reform bank secrecy laws which encouraged corruption, undermined good governance and siphoned off scarce capital. More than lectures on democracy, reform of these laws in countries like the UK, Switzerland and Luxembourg would help address the root cause of political instability in developing countries like Pakistan. Despite United Nations and World Bank recognition of the problem of corruption, and the adoption of an international convention on cooperation against corruption in 2004, progress towards rectification of bank secrecy laws remained meagre, however.

The Agra Summit

On New Year's Day, 2001, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee wrote an article highlighting the need for India to address two outstanding issues, namely, Kashmir and the Babri-Mosque in Ayodhya. Regarding Kashmir, he went on to suggest a meeting with the Pakistani president. After a delay of nearly four months, evidently a result of internal debate, he sent an invitation for the two leaders to meet at Agra on 15 and 16 July.

The two leaders held several exclusive meetings. They recognised the need to transform the fifty-year-old confrontation into good neighbourly cooperation. To that end, President Musharraf urged earnest efforts to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Around noon on 16 July they called in the foreign ministers and informed them of the understanding they had reached to resume dialogue which should be the basis of a declaration to be issued later that day.

Working on the draft¹² already prepared by the foreign secretaries, the two ministers agreed on a declaration text to be recommended to the leaders. President Pervez Musharraf approved it promptly. On the Indian side, the draft was considered in the cabinet committee on political affairs.¹³ The meeting lasted over two hours, after which External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh sought a meeting with his Pakistani counterpart at 6 p.m. to discuss an amendment to the one-line paragraph on Kashmir. After a short and amicable discussion, the foreign ministers agreed to the substance of the amendment desired

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by the Indian cabinet committee with a slight modification. The apparent hitch thus removed, the Indian conference services officials started making arrangements for the signing ceremony as the Indian minister hoped to obtain formal final approval in 'five minutes'. Once again the cabinet committee held a long meeting. At about 9 p.m. the Pakistan side was informed that the agreement would not be signed. Held in a blaze of global multimedia coverage, the summit ended on an anticlimactic note to the surprise of the media people and the disappointment and frustration of the Pakistan delegation.

Before departing Agra for Islamabad, the Pakistani president was told by the Indian prime minister that it had not been possible to reach agreement in the cabinet committee. He did not explain what the disagreement was about, adding only that 'the time was not favourable' and that he would visit Pakistan later to finalise the proposed agreement.

The prospect of another summit helped contain disappointment. Both sides tried to relieve the gloom. President Musharraf declared, 'I came back empty-handed but the Summit was not a failure.'¹⁴ Prime Minister Vajpayee also underlined the progress that was made 'towards bridging the two approaches in a draft joint declaration'¹⁵ In the same vein, Jaswant Singh said, 'I do not characterise [the summit] as a failure. I do term it as yet another step in our march towards finding lasting peace, amity and cooperation between the two countries,' adding, 'We will pick up threads from the visit of the President of Pakistan.'¹⁶ The Pakistani foreign minister gave a similarly positive appraisal: 'The Agra Summit was *'natamam, not nakam'* (inconclusive, not a failure).'¹⁷

The optimism did not last long, however. The Indian side soon started backtracking on the agreed draft. A spokesperson of the ministry of external affairs said, 'No agreement was reached. There was no closure of an agreement and no subscription by signature.'¹⁸ A week later, Vajpayee said in the parliament: 'Obviously India's concerns in vital areas—such as cross-border terrorism—will have to find place in any document that future negotiations endeavour to conclude.' Actually, this point was already covered in the draft declaration.

Meanwhile, observers on both sides speculated about what had prevented agreement at the summit. Some identified President Musharraf's breakfast meeting with Indian media luminaries on 16

July as having offended the Indian leaders. The videotape of the question-answer meeting telecast by an Indian commercial channel projected Musharraf's persuasive views on the need to address the Kashmir dispute to a spellbound audience in both countries. The Indian side was said to be angry that he had stolen a march over the Indian prime minister. Actually, there was little new in what he said. He had expressed the same view many times previously. Hours after the telecast the Indian side had not raised the issue with the Pakistan side, and even agreed to finalise the draft of the declaration.

As for the Pakistani president's reference to Kashmir as the principal obstacle to normalisation of Pakistan-Indian relations, that was no more than a statement of the obvious. Quite apart from the experience of Pakistan and India, normalisation has seldom taken place between pairs of countries with serious disputes and differences. Recent examples of the causal link include the Portugal and Indonesia, over East Timor, Japan and Russia over the Northern Islands, and USA and Cuba over ideological differences.

Another explanation was later given by Prime Minister Vajpayee in a statement in parliament on 24 July, saying, 'Eventually, however, we had to abandon the quest for a joint document because of Pakistan's insistence on the settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir issue as a pre-condition for the normalisation of relations.' This was factually incorrect, as the text of the draft declaration confirms. At no point in the negotiations did Pakistan present any 'pre-condition.' Similarly unfounded was the allegation that Pakistan's approach was 'unifocal.' The draft provided for dialogue on all issues of concern to both sides, including terrorism.

More interesting was the question as to who in the Indian cabinet committee had objected to the draft. Not until months later did a clue appear in the Indian press. A usually well-informed journal attributed responsibility for obstructing agreement to the deputy prime minister, L.K. Advani, dubbing him 'the saboteur of Agra.'²³ When Vajpayee was asked at a press conference to comment on the report, he did not give a direct reply.²⁵ Four years later, President Musharraf publicly blamed Advani for the failure of the summit. Seven years later, Advani admitted he had torpedoed the summit now giving a new explanation, namely that in a breakfast meeting with Indian editors, the Pakistani leader had 'blasted India's position on cross-border terrorism and

Jammu and Kashmir.²¹ Even this after-thought is hardly convincing. General Musharraf had only made out a case for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute, which most guests appeared to find logical. Perhaps this made Advani unhappy. Otherwise, both Kashmir and terrorism were included among subjects for sustained dialogue at the political level in paragraph 3 of the agreed draft.

Considering that Vajpayee had conceived and canvassed the initiative for dialogue with Pakistan on Kashmir, he was probably disappointed by the outcome and it can be assumed that he was sincere in his intention to visit Pakistan at a more favourable time to finalise the agreement. In retrospect it would have been better for the fulfilment of his ambition to improve relations with Pakistan had he asserted leadership to persuade the one or more members of the cabinet committee who vetoed the declaration.

Another opportunity to change the course of Pakistan-India relations was missed as one more agreement fell victim to internal political battles.²² Three months later, terrorists carried out attacks in New York and Washington that transformed the global situation.

NOTES

1. Cabinet Minister Naseerullah Babar made this factually incorrect remark after ~~the Taliban helped rescue a convoy of Pakistani trucks held up by Afghan warlords.~~
2. Iran and the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan were similarly critical.
3. Transparency International's report is said to be based on surveys of business houses, etc.
4. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Director, Kashmir Center, Washington, in 'Why the world should care?' in *The News*, Islamabad, 21 May 1997.
5. The documents were the Lahore Declaration, Joint Statement and Memorandum of Understanding.
6. The G-8 summit statement of 20 June 1999, read: 'We are deeply concerned about the continuing military confrontation in Kashmir following the infiltration of armed intruders which violated the Line of Control. We regard any military action to change the status quo as irresponsible. We therefore call for the immediate end of these actions, restoration of the Line of Control and for the parties to work for immediate cessation of fighting, full respect in the future for the Line of Control and the resumption of the dialogue between them in the spirit of the Lahore Declaration.'
7. Shirin Tahirkheli, *The News*, Islamabad, 13 July 1999.
8. Maleeha Lodhi, *Newsline*, Karachi, July 1999.