**Carpe diem**

**[Najm us Saqib](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/najm-us-saqib)**

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India and Pakistan enjoy a peculiar relationship that vacillates between uncertain hatred and measured animosity. In a tense trajectory of relations between the two nuclear neighbouring states, over the years, one has also seen some patches of hope and optimism but only to be dissipated into thin air soon. Even after having real time wars and witnessing the dismemberment of Pakistan, both countries have refused to give up on each other–particularly India which would keep endeavouring to see its western neighbour economically strangled, politically squeezed, diplomatically embarrassed and militarily threatened by utilising both kinetic and non kinetic tools of hybrid warfare. Whether it’s a FATF meeting, NSG discussion table or accepting an invitation to attend a SAARC conference in Islamabad, the Indian mindset never misses out on any opportunity to keep nursing animosity that continually feeds the South Asian ambiance with suspicion, doubt and terror. It is really hard to decide when India will accept the very existence of its western neighbour as an independent sovereign state.

[Manchester Utd end Man City's 21-match winning streak](https://nation.com.pk/08-Mar-2021/manchester-utd-end-man-city-s-21-match-winning-streak)

In the backdrop of belligerent rhetoric and an uneasy, undesirable and unfriendly hiatus from facing each other, the news of agreeing to a ceasefire at the Line of Control (LoC) came as a pleasant surprise. Finally, there were signs of a possible détente between India and Pakistan. The understanding reached between the DGMO’s of India and Pakistan on February 24 to strictly observe all agreements, along with the ceasefire, in the interest of achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders brought a sigh of relief for those who believed in bringing peace and stability in the beleaguered South Asian region. The fact that the two military representatives held the talks in a free, frank and cordial atmosphere momentarily flabbergasted everyone, except those who were privy to the details of the understanding reached.

True, the decision to adhere to the ceasefire at the LoC does not tantamount to any substantive development towards a solution for any major bilateral dispute but isn’t it a good beginning towards a much needed détente between the two South Asian arch rivals? Isn’t it a fact that the reality stricken hapless people of Jammu & Kashmir, the followers of international law and the supporters of human rights were at a loss to understand why India did what it did on August 5, 2019? Isn’t it a fact that, except for going completely against India, Pakistan did not seem to have any credible reaction to the subjugation of Jammu & Kashmir? Isn’t it true that even afterwards, India used every trick in the book to provoke Pakistan, thereby testing its patience and limits?

[US says no decision on Afghan forces after letter leaks](https://nation.com.pk/08-Mar-2021/us-says-no-decision-on-afghan-forces-after-letter-leaks)

Meanwhile, the pessimists are playing the devil’s advocate and fabricating all sorts of conspiracy theories. Was it the realisation that paying the other party in the same coin and taking countermeasures just to follow the principle of reciprocity may not be the best advised policy for all times? Or, was it the result of a number of proactive measures taken by Pakistan in substantiating India’s active involvement through the dossier? Was it the revelations of the EU DisinfoLab that exposed India’s nefarious designs to malign Pakistan through fake websites? Or, was it Pakistan’s unwavering resolve to continue with its principled stand on the final disposition of the state of Jammu & Kashmir, even in the face of a fait accompli handed in by India on August 5, 2019? May be it was the realisation that the West needed to see some kind of détente in South Asia and it wanted for India to take some initiative to break the ice? Or, was it the fact that India could not afford a two-pronged battle and wanted to focus only on its issues with China? Was it the failed adventure of February 2019 at Balakot or some external pressure exerted from some powerful quarters that demanded for both countries to start behaving? Or, was it simply the result of some backchannel diplomacy and the idea of working towards holding a simple agenda-based dialogue after announcing the ceasefire?

[Security Forces launch two IBOs in North, South Waziristan](https://nation.com.pk/07-Mar-2021/security-forces-launch-two-ibos-in-north-south-waziristan)

Overestimating one’s position on the negotiating table is as bad as underestimating one’s enemy’s strengths. Sadly, those who overlook the history of animosity between India and Pakistan, are not aware of the true nature of their troubled relationship or desire only a head-on collision between the two nuclear States are the ones demanding for the reversal of India’s actions of August 5, 2019, before any bilateral talks were held. Floating conspiracy theories at a time when both Pakistan and India have expressed their desire for meaningful engagement, after creating an enabling environment, is not advisable. The positive intent shown by both sides coincides with the desire most recently reiterated by the US and the United Nations for both countries to initiate the long-stalled process of normalisation of relations through meaningful talks.

Instead of searching for the reasons of the much desired ceasefire, wisdom demands facts to be accepted. Even if the announcement of the ceasefire is an Indian ploy for Pakistan to show to the West that it had started normalising relations, there is no harm in enjoying the potential for progress this presents all the while continuing to press India into taking substantive and meaningful steps towards the normalisation of relations. Do not let the buck stop at the ceasefire; to separate the wheat from the chaff and to take advantage of those elements which forced India to offer the olive branch, Islamabad, as a first step, may seek the immediate resumption of the Foreign Secretary level talks or propose a meeting between the two Foreign Ministers at a mutually agreed upon venue. Such a proposal of holding bilateral talks, which must be made through formal diplomatic channels, will serve the purpose for Pakistan both ways. New Delhi may have to bite the bullet and accept the offer because otherwise, it will run the undesirable risk of getting exposed to the world. Carpe diem.