

Creating conducive environment

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Transformation from a polluted atmosphere to a cleaner environment is not an easy task. It involves bold decisions to pave the ground for better understanding initially which is to be followed by observing certain number of pre-requisites. If the pre-requisites are not observed then the breeding ground for doubts continues to expand. Many Pakistanis believe that India uses talks to buy time and delays the process. Excuses of varied nature are applied at appropriate stages. The Pakistanis are of the view that dialogue is meant to seek a resolution of the outstanding dispute that has bedeviled the relations between India and Pakistan and consumed an enormous portion of their scarce resources. As such it is imperative that honest and concerted efforts are made to resolve the dispute. To facilitate honest pursuits, it is somewhat imperative to observe and strengthen the related pre-requisites some of which are listed below.

1. Dialogue without preconditions: Setting preconditions for any dialogue reflect a desire for negotiations on one's own terms. Dialogue between the Indian government and the leaders of Kashmir's freedom movement was and continues to be prevented by the conditions set by the Indian government. Similarly if conditions are set before a dialogue is resumed between India and Pakistan and in consequence it affects the chances of dialogue-resumption. Following the offer of a dialogue on April 18, Indian prime Minister Vajpayee attached conditions on the next day that dialogue could only be resumed if the cross border terrorism is stopped and the camps of terrorist are destroyed. The Pakistani responded by denying the existence of any terrorist camps and also forcefully stressed that no infiltration is taking place across the Line of Control. For a while it looked that the initiative would not be able to move ahead. However,

the good sense prevailed and the Indians began to send feelers that dialogue could be resumed even without the often-repeated conditions. While Vajpayee appears to be keen and sincere towards the holding of talks, many of his colleagues seem to be somewhat unsure and unenthusiastic.

2. Realistic assessments of contrived prevalent notions: There exist many unduly promoted notions that were popularised with a view to strengthen Indian claim over Kashmir. All these contrived notions need to be subjected to realistic assessment. Among these theories/notions few need to be mentioned here. First, if Kashmir leaves the Indian Union India's secular identity would be completely destroyed. This only implies that Indian secularism is heavily dependent upon the retention of Kashmir and is so weak that it can only survive as long as the Kashmir stays within the Indian Union. This appears to be an unnecessarily over-projected notion.

Admittedly Kashmir is the only Muslim majority state within the Indian Union but the concept of secularism was not really evolved for the retention of a Muslim state within the Indian Union. The Second popular notion, which is often, projected stresses that if Kashmir were allowed to go its own way, it would establish a dangerous precedent, which could cause trouble for the Indian Union. While theoretically there seems to be some truth in it and Kashmir's departure from the Indian Union can establish a dangerous precedent, but one must make a distinction here between Kashmir dispute and other movements in India. Indeed Kashmir is not just the product of mishandling of the partition processes by the departing British but it is considered to be part of the unfinished agenda of the partition whereas all other similar movements grew out of Indian mal-governance. Third, India wants to use the conflict in order to maintain a consistent economic pres-

sure on Pakistan. Many Pakistanis adhere to this notion. But the current reality seems to indicate more economic burden upon India than on Pakistan. Fourth, some interest groups enormously benefit from the conflict. This can be argued on the basis interplay of the vested groups. This could be true of both countries. Fifth notion revolves around the notion that Kashmir is not the cause of conflict between India and Pakistan but merely a symptom of their irreconcilable difference. The answer the Pakistanis often advance is that resolve the Kashmir dispute and you will see how quickly all other issues are resolved.

3. Recognising the ground realities: To create conducive environment and enabling the two parties to initiate a dialogue and keep the hardliners at bay, it is imperative to recognise and acknowledge the ground realities. As far as Kashmir is concerned both India and Pakistan must take cognisance of existing realities.

4. Establishing a framework for negotiation: For any successful negotiations some form of framework needs to be established. As far as the Kashmir dispute is concerned two sets of frameworks already exist. The United Nations Resolutions not only reflect a multilateral approach to resolve the dispute but also represent the existing UN framework for negotiations. The second principled framework had been established by the Simla agreement. While Simla agreement offered a bilateral framework, it did not specified how long would be the time lag towards the initiation of the bilateral negotiations. The underlying spirit of the last clause of the Simla agreement clearly refers to the start of the future negotiations soon. No one ever imag-

ined that India would take 22 years in order to start negotiations on the Kashmir dispute. Either one of the existing frameworks could be employed or a new one can be worked out

4. Accommodating Sensitivities: For a pragmatic solution both sides need to take into consideration each other's sensitivities. Pakistanis are unlikely to accept the existing partition. In other words making the LoC as the permanent border appears to be totally unacceptable to the Pakistanis. Similarly the Indians are unlikely to give up the entire Kashmir either through plebiscite or negotiations especially districts like Jammu, Kathua, Udhampur, and Leh, which are overwhelmingly non-Muslim. No negotiation is likely to reach its logical conclusion if the two parties are unwilling to accommodate each other over certain sensitive aspects of the issue or dispute. The negotiating parties need to recognise that they may have to step down to their ardently held positions.

5. Recognising the dictates of the time: The ultimate goals of both India and Pakistan should be complete normalisation of relationship and the peace of the region. Indeed both must realise that their persistent antagonism has cost them massive peace dividends. Instead of engaging in process of destabilisation both need to learn to cooperate and strengthen the existing regional organisation. Judicious approaches towards the outstanding disputes are likely to produce much more desired avenues towards peace. The significance of the emerging realities of global politics needs to be adhered to. The need of the time is to help each other and opt for policies of reconciliation and accommodation. Instead of exploiting the situation in Pakistan it would be more befitting to make efforts towards normalisation. Prime Minister Vajpayee's offer and Prime Minister Jamali's quick positive response ap-

pears to be reflective of this desire.

6. Injecting more confidence building measures: Despite the fact that deeply entrenched suspicious and perpetual antagonism continue to bedevil Indo-Pak relations, the importance of CBMs cannot be brushed aside. The primary goal of the CBMs is to contribute or to reduce or in some instances to eliminate the causes of mistrust, fears, tensions and hostilities. Simultaneously CBMs are meant to create climate in which even the most complicated issues are subjected to concerted analysis and discussion aimed to secure their resolutions. CBMs like agreement on not striking each others nuclear installations, preventing air space violations, permitting over flights and landings of military crafts in each others country, advance notice of military exercises and troop movements along their mutual borders, the prior intimation of missile tests etc. have all certainly made substantive contributions in removing some doubts and facilitating the peace processes.

7. Cross-border infiltrations: India has been insisting that Pakistan should do more what they call cross-border terrorism implying that Pakistan has not really checked the alleged infiltrations. It also insists that Pakistan must eradicate the terrorist camps alleged to be inside Azad Kashmir. India does not agree to the presence of international monitors and instead it puts forward somewhat impracticable proposals of joint patrolling and intelligence information sharing. While it has been generally acknowledged that Pakistan has taken effective measures to check the infiltrations but some infiltration still goes on. Some mechanism needs to be devised to check infiltration more effectively if it is still taking place. Pakistan should unilaterally allow anyone who wants to visit and inspect the LoC at any point. In addition it should continue promoting the presence of international monitors.

What is our core issue?

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Is Kashmir our core issue? Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines 'core' as "the basic and most important part of something". If that something is Pakistan then is Kashmir Pakistan's "most important part" (or was East Pakistan our most important part)? In a more commercial sense 'core business' is defined as "the most important or the largest part of a company's business activities which it depends on in order to continue trading". If that business is the good governance of Pakistan then is Kashmir our 'most important or the largest part' and is Pakistan's good governance dependent on Kashmir?

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines 'core' as "a central and often foundational part; a basic, essential, or enduring part." How does that definition apply to Kashmir? What role did the Kashmiris play in the creation of Pakistan and what role did the East Pakistanis play in the creation of Pakistan?

Hamida Khuhro's "Our forgotten commitment" really stimulated my thought process on our 'core issue'. She writes, "We talk of Kashmir endlessly, of mountain peaks that must be secured, of military might that we must ensure in order to be secure but we for-

get the 'core' of our freedom struggle, the reason Pakistan became first a possibility, then a fact." She insists that "in all our arguments for peace and for all our justifications for going to war" we always forget 125.5 million Muslims living in India (The World Fact Book; est July 2002).

How did Pakistan become a reality? Our history books don't stop storming us with the idea that Pakistan was the demand of all Muslims living in India but the same books become shy in admitting that Pakistan's most enthusiastic supporters were Muslims who now live in Bombay, Delhi, Kolkata, Bhopal, Kanpur, Ahmedabad, Allahabad, Hyderabad-Deccan, Agra, Nagpur, Lucknow, Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Sylhet, Jessore and Mongla. In the initial more crucial years of the struggle for Pakistan Muslims living in Muslim majority areas had remained more or less indifferent. The real moving force was the Muslims living in Muslim minority areas.

For the Quaid, the core issue behind the creation of Pakistan was to safeguard the interests of all Muslims living in the sub-continent. The Quaid knew full well that almost as many Muslims would be left behind in India as would inhabit Pakistan. The Quaid, therefore,



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did not want Pakistan to become India's enemy. Right after partition, Miss Fatima Jinnah went on record insisting that she and her brother shall continue visiting the Quaid's favourite home at Malabar Hills in Bombay (Band Stand area of Bombay was also on their favourite list).

In 1948-49, India was Pakistan's most important trading partner. That year, 56% of Pakistan's exports went to India and 32% of all our imports came from India. Some university exam papers came from Indian teachers and some of our papers went back to India for checking. We shared movies and sang the same tunes.

Jawaharal Nehru and Lah Bahadur Shastri remained steadfastly tied to the vision of a multi-religious and a multi-ethnic democracy. Indira Ghandhi, Morarji Desai, Charan Singh, VP Singh and Chandra Shekar did not deviate from the original vision either.

The core issue for the Quaid was to make Pakistan a multi-religious, multi-

ethnic, liberal, progressive and a prosperous democracy. On 9 August 1947, Quaid-i-Azam delivered a speech at the Karachi Club. The Quaid asserted that it is the "sacred duty of the Sovereign State of Pakistan to solve the problem of poverty of the people." As far as our founding father is concerned it is clear that the eradication of poverty was the core issue.

Ghulam Mohammad, Iskander Mirza, Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan, General Mohammad Yahya Khan and General Mohammad Ziaul Haq all deviated from the Quaid's core issue. Those who followed the Quaid as our leaders have been persistently ignoring poverty as the core issue and poverty, as a consequence, has doubled over the past couple of decades (the World Bank had estimated urban poverty in 1993-94 at 17% of the population. Estimates for 2003 are around 34% of the population). In India, poverty over the last decade has declined from 38% of the population to 22% and is projected to go down to 15% by 2005.

Empirical evidence suggests a definite correlation between peace and prosperity. Border disputes and poverty

are also closely related. Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Somalia, Nigeria, Haiti, Mozambique, Mali and Angola are pathetically poor and are all engaged either in an active border dispute, extreme civil strife or civil war.

Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Mozambique, Somalia and Yemen all spend a disproportionately large percentage of their GDP on defence. Yugoslavia is no more. The Soviet Union had 10,000 atom bombs but the country is no more. Split into at least 15 pieces; Russian Federation, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Lessons of history are clear: Countries that spend a disproportionately large percentage of their GDP on defence either split up or become economically insolvent or have an active civil war.

Kashmir lacks a military solution. Even if there were a violent solution it would amount to lending a hand to 10 million Kashmiri Muslims and cutting off the legs of 125.5 million Muslims living in India. Would a brutal Kashmir solution conform to the core reason behind the creation of Pakistan?