

Significance of Dialogue Process for Peaceful Co-existence between Pakistan and India

Dr. Umbreen Javaid

Abstract

Pakistan and India are two major countries of the South Asian Sub-continent. Unfortunately, since their inception, these nuclear archrivals have been unable to resolve their mutual disputes. This situation makes the region a global flashpoint. It is noteworthy that in their post-independence life, occasionally, these countries have also gone through periods of détente, when they remained engaged in dialogue that sometimes ended with pacts in various fields. These occasional and intermittent dialogues have been helpful in reducing tension between these two neighbors. This situation has also been supportive in promoting peace and stability in the region as well as affecting positively the lives of one quarter of the global population living on the Sub-continent. However, this has not been a permanent feature, as on a number of occasions, there have been frequent suspensions in the dialogue process. Obviously, these disruptions have led to mutual mistrust which adversely affected the poverty stricken general public in both countries. The present regional and global situation urgently demands that both countries need to act in a responsible way. No doubt, this can only be possible by initiating a series of serious dialogues aiming at the reduction of existing tension between these two countries. These efforts will be helpful in diverting the human and financial capital from armaments to the socio-economic development of the populations. These dimensions are the real focus of this paper and, it presents various reflections on such issues.

The Nature and Background of the Issue

The relations between Pakistan and India not only concern the South Asian region but also affect the global scenarios. This situation has become even more serious since the two states went nuclear followed by current regional instability which also has its international dimensions. Unfortunately, since the birth of these two countries, due to various reasons, their relations are marked with mutual mistrust and suspicions which continuously led to promote tension in the region. For this reason, during the post-independence period, they have shown antagonist approach towards each other. This situation caused regional

instability, crises, conflicts and even wars between these two countries. On this pretext, both have been involved in all kinds of arms race, thus diverting huge sums of money on acquiring and developing more lethal weapons in an already poverty ridden region. Both have also accumulated massive amount of weapons which is more than enough to destroy each other.

Pakistan and India are ranked among the ten most populous nations and also carry a huge share of the worlds, economic, political and environmental problems.¹ Amongst the ever growing populations of both Pakistan and India, a large number of population is living under poverty line. One of the major reasons for this immense poverty in the region is the allocation of large expenditures of both governments towards the financing of their armed forces. The sad aspect of this whole situation is that this is being done at the cost of the wellbeing of the people of South Asia. It is a common knowledge that a large section of their population lives below poverty line and thus is deprived of basic necessities of life. Therefore, it can safely be argued that the reduction in military expenditure means provision of clean water, education and hospitals to the deprived segment of population in respective countries.

It has been a continuous demand of the people of this poverty ridden region to allocate more resources for the development of social sector. No doubt, this can only be possible if there is peace in this region. Both the governments are paying more attention towards the traditional security and modernization of military, while neglecting the human security which includes job security, income security, health security, environmental security and security from crimes.²

Table 1: Pakistan and India: Basic Indicators

Variables	Pakistan	India
Population in million (July 2009)	176	1116
Population in world ranking	6 th	2 nd
Population below poverty line (percent) (FY 05/06 est. & 2007 est. Respectively)	24	25
Military Expenditure (percent of GDP) (2007 est. & 2006 est. respectively)	3	2.5
Literacy rate (percent) (2005 & 2001 respectively)	49.9	61
Education expenditure (percent of GDP) (2006 & 2005 respectively)	2.6	3.2

Sources: CIA, *World Fact Book*, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-actbook/geos/pk.html>>, (retrieved on 2nd January 2010).

CIA, *World Fact Book*, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>>, (retrieved on 2nd January 2010).

Unfortunately, nowadays, South Asia is one of the most explosive regions of the world. This situation particularly became worse after the Mumbai attacks, in November 2008, as since then the whole peace process has been derailed between Pakistan and India. Both countries are playing war games with each other and exchanging accusations regarding the terrorists and their respective connections.³ This situation is not helpful for the wellbeing of masses in both countries. Therefore, to lessen the tension and to bring about stability in the region, they would have to bring about changes in their mind sets and attitudes. For the attainment of durable regional peace, a sustained process of composite dialogue has to be initiated. No doubt, this is the need of the day which has to be realized by the leadership on both sides. It is noteworthy that a number of people who argue that there cannot be durable peace between Pakistan and India are ignoring the new climate of good neighborly relations at the popular level. We all know that the exchange of writers, poets, artists and journalists from both sides have played an important role in the reduction of the state of pessimism.⁴

Historical Facts and Analytical Dimensions

Even though at various times in the history of relations between Pakistan and India, there have been negotiations, agreements and pacts signed, these were mostly linked with the issues related to military and diplomatic confidence building measures. An overview of the history of these countries reflects that the actual peace process began after they became nuclear powers and created deterrence in the region. In this perspective, in Lahore during February 1999, the meeting between Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistan's Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif was an important step. The talks between the two leaders led to the signing of historic Lahore Declaration. In this pact, it was agreed upon that both the countries will look for peace and stability between them along with progress and prosperity for their people. Both accepted the principle of co-existence and full implementation of Shimla Agreement for the strengthening of regional security and the confidence building measures.

Table 2: Main Ingredients of Lahore Declaration

Bi-lateral issues	➤ Both countries shall intensify their efforts to resolve all issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir;
Refrain from intervention	➤ shall refrain from intervention and interference in each other's internal affairs;
Dialogue process	➤ shall intensify their composite and integrated dialogue process for an early and positive outcome of the agreed bilateral agenda;
Nuclear issues	➤ shall take immediate steps for reducing the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons and discuss concepts and doctrines with a view to elaborating measures for confidence building in the nuclear and conventional fields, aimed at prevention of conflict;
SAARC	➤ reaffirm their commitment to the goals and objectives of SAARC and to concert their efforts towards the realization of the SAARC vision for the year 2000 and beyond with a view to promoting the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life through accelerated economic growth, social progress and cultural development;
Terrorism	➤ reaffirm their condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and their determination to combat this menace; and,
Human rights and freedoms	➤ shall promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Source: Embassy of India, *Lahore Declaration* : <<http://www.indianembassy.org/southasia/pakistan/lahoredeclaration.html.1.21.2010>>, (site retrieved on 4th January 2010).

With the initiation of Kargil crises in 1999, the ongoing peace process came to an end, leading to tensions, crises and a limited war between two nuclear rivals. This war also became the first case when two new nuclear states went for war with each other. During the Kargil war in June 1999, many Hindu activists openly spoke of the use of the Bomb 'to finish of Pakistan' and many declared that '1999 was the year to wipe of Pakistan from the world map.'⁵

After two years of tense relations between the two countries the situation changed when the Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee gave an invitation to President Musharraf for talks regarding India – Pakistan relations. President Musharraf earlier to this had also extended the suggestions to initiate talks again. This led to the high profile three days Agra Summit which captured the attention of not only the media of the region but also the world media. All eyes were focused on what happens in the summit as there were high expectations that there may be a major break through specially regarding Kashmir issue but the opposite happened and the summit ended without even agreeing on a joint statement by both.

Both the parties fully tried to achieve their diplomatic stance through the media and many believe that this media diplomacy was partially responsible for the failure of Agra Summit.⁶ India's stance was that Musharraf's insistence on Kashmir was responsible for the failure while Pakistan blamed Vajpayee for wanting to talk everything but not Kashmir.⁷ 'President Musharraf considered confidence building measures irrelevant unless the fundamental confidence building measure of a solution of Kashmir problem is not implemented - a solution which should be acceptable to Pakistan.'⁸ In fact, between the two parties, Kashmir became the issue which did not allow them to reach an agreement. Later on, after the summit, the Foreign Ministers of both countries did not totally reject the summit as failure and declare that confidence building measures should carry on, visa issues to be resolved and trade relations and educational exchange to be increased along with nuclear risk reduction measures as well as curtailing of drug trafficking.

Once again, the dialogue process faced a setback and was suspended due to the attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001. India took this attack as an attack on its sovereignty. The Indian government immediately blamed Pakistan for this act of terrorism. It blamed that this terrorist attack was carried out by the Pakistani based groups namely Lashkar-i-Tayyaba and Jash-i-Muhammad. The Indian government further blamed that these groups were supported by Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan. A list of twenty persons was given to Pakistan to be handed over to India. Pakistan even though assured all support but refused to hand over the required persons.

The so discussion reflects that 'Indo-Pak relations present the worst case of terrorism spoiling the bilateral relations.'⁹ Interestingly, without providing concrete evidences, India always stressed upon the Pakistan government to take strong actions against the organizations that it blamed were responsible for the attack and even threatened to take matters into his own hands if Pakistan does not stop cross border infiltration into Kashmir.¹⁰ Addressing the nation, Pakistan's President General Musharraf said that 'Pakistan rejects and condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Pakistan will not allow

its territory to be used for terrorist's activity anywhere in the world. No organization will be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of Kashmir.¹¹ This assurance did not satisfy India and unfortunately the situations became even more tense and serious when on 22nd December 2001, India called back its High Commissioner from Islamabad and then Pakistan also responded in the same manner. This situation even further worsened when India terminated all road and air links along with the Lahore – Delhi bus service and Samjhota Express. Over flights to Pakistan were also suspended.

The break through in the revival of talks came when India drastically changed its stance on bilateral relations and in April 2003, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee extended a hand of friendship by stating that both sides should have good relations and that guns were no solution and these hands of friendship should be extended from both sides. This statement was welcomed by President Musharraf and Prime Minister Jamali. The easing of tension was seen at the 12th SAARC Summit when the Indian Prime Minister visited Pakistan.

During 2003, the Indian and Pakistani governments also showed flexibility on the Kashmir issue.¹² Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee stressed upon the need to control violence, hostility and terrorism as to further carry on dialogue process. Whereas Pakistan assured India that it will not allow its soil to be used by terrorist groups. As to forward the dialogue process, both leaders decided to begin the process of composite dialogue in February 2004. This brought about lot of hope in the resolution of contesting issues and lessening of regional tensions.

The composite dialogue would include eight issues that included: Kashmir, Siachen, peace and security, Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project, Sir Creek, terrorism and drug trafficking, economic and commercial cooperation and promotion of friendly exchanges.¹³ Even though with regard to the nuclear issue, both Pakistan and India have remained inflexible on their respective stands, although there has always been a need to initiate dialogue as to lessen nuclear arms race.¹⁴ Indian and Pakistani Foreign Secretaries met in February 2004 that eventually led to the talks on nuclear CBMs in June 2004. During this consultation, a number of CBMs were discussed and agreed upon which included crises management, risk reduction measures, and the establishment of hot line between Foreign Secretaries of these countries. Both reiterated to hold further discussions and to work for implementation of Lahore Declaration. Fortunately, this dialogue process led to various CBMs carried out in 2005. President Musharraf visited New Delhi, met with his counterparts, i.e., Indian President and Prime Minister, and during his stay, he also watched one-day cricket match. In the same year bus service was started between Sri Nagar and Muzaffarabad. While recalling this time in his memoir, President Musharraf

wrote in his book that 'conflict management has passed and the time for conflict resolution has come.'¹⁵

Even though during the early years of Musharraf government the relations were cold between the two countries, later on lot of encouraging activities were seen at various levels which included track-I, track-II and shuttle diplomacy that eventually brought about better relations between these neighbors. These efforts led to easing of visa restrictions and cross-border travelling, which in fact was a healthy sign for future development. However, soon after this, India became reluctant in furthering the composite dialogue mainly because of the weakening the grip of President Musharraf on his own government. With the coming of a democratic rule in Pakistan, there were high hopes for better future relations among these neighbors. Sadly this did not happen, rather because of Mumbai attacks on 26th November 2008, India made this as the basis to end the ongoing peace process.

In fact, Mumbai attacks brought about tense relations with India as this country went into war hysteria due to which the chances of war between the two nuclear rivals were eminent. However, with the interference of major global players, the immediate danger was averted. This situation reflects that Mumbai attacks have become milestone in the bilateral relations of these two countries. Therefore, it is tragic that the relations between Pakistan and India are not normalizing. At present, although, both countries are not at war with each other, but it is no hidden fact that there is growing apprehension towards each other.

The Contemporary Regional Instability and Significance of Dialogue

While looking at the strategic environment of South Asia, it is clear that India's efforts are towards its recognition as a major international power and Pakistan's security is mostly linked with India.¹⁶ In the last two decades, especially in the previous decade, the economic development in India, the growing friendship between India and America, efforts by India for the status of recognized nuclear power, its efforts to acquire permanent member of Security Council with the help of Western countries and the signing of Civil Nuclear deal with USA along with other major projects has elevated its status and importance of this country in the eyes of the world. At one time India would claim regional hegemony in South Asia but now it behaves like a global power with Pakistan. Pakistan in the last decade, especially after 2001 and again in 2006 with the operation against Taliban, is facing severe economic, political and social crises; it appears that India is exploiting this situation.

In the last few years, India has at times exploited this worsening position of Pakistan when on river Chenab, it started building one by one various dams. This was actually targeted against the agriculture and economy of Pakistan. The lessening of water in Chenab River and the planning of large number of

water schemes have created a big question mark in the minds of Pakistanis over the intentions of India.

In 90s India had to face quite a lot of damage at the hands of the Kashmiri Mujahideen that nearly ended after September 2001. India to take revenge initiated nationalist tendencies in Baluchistan and through Afghanistan, where it encouraged and supported those Taliban which were anti-Pakistan government. It also provided them training and financial support. But in all this, India is forgetting that these Taliban elements will not limit themselves in damaging Pakistan; they will also go further to damage India. An analytical overview of past and present situation reflects that possibly the Indian leadership would not easily come out of its fixed mind set.

It is very difficult for Pakistan's economy to sustain such huge military and financial pressure but it will not be easy for India also to tolerate easily the growing military expenditures. Apparently, the defense budget of India is now less than five percent of its GDP which can be considered sustainable for some time. However, it should also not be forgotten that India has the largest flock of poverty stricken population in the world.

In the present circumstances, it is unclear how to overcome the problem of mutual mistrust between these two countries and how to initiate a sustained process of dialogue. The recent meeting between the two Prime Ministers of these countries held in Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt) which brought about some hopes. However, soon after this meeting, a U-turn was taken by the Indian Prime Minister which clearly shows that the Indian government is under the strong influence of its hardliner politicians and Hind fundamentalist factions.

Presently, India attempts to pressurize Pakistan by increasing its forces on the international borders. It is very crucial that at this time, the proxy war initiated by India should be stopped before it converts into all out war and other methods should also be adopted to curtail growing tensions. India needs to realize that supporting and encouraging the Taliban to damage Pakistan will eventually affect India also if the Taliban over power the Pakistani forces.

Similarly, the water issue if not settled will always remain a permanently contested issue between the two neighbors with a never ending war. India being a major power now needs to behave in a much more responsible manner as to bring about stability in South Asia. It should immediately initiate composite dialogue with Pakistan.

Major Obstacles in the Initiation of Bilateral Dialogue

As to establish enduring relationship between Pakistan and India, mutual hostility has to be replaced by mutual goodwill; and for the achievement of this

objective, no stone should be left unturned.¹⁷ For the establishment of peace and security in South Asia, a cooperative security is much suited than a confrontational model. No doubt, this approach would bring a new momentum leading to diversion of all energies towards the welfare rather than military expenditures.¹⁸ There can be no doubt that the tremendous amount of developmental potential have been lost due to violence ridden society of South Asia.¹⁹ It is not very optimistic when we look upon the past history of Pakistan-India dialogue process. At many times both went for agreements but also failed to comply with. However, in some areas, there have also been successes but again there are a number of issues that have the tendency to derail the whole process. In this perspective, some major issues are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Hawkish mind set: In both countries, there are a number of people with a hawkish mindset. These circles also form a significant part of the population, government and play an important role in politics. In fact, this is a network of hardliner forces which have their predetermined strong ideas regarding each other and do not favor peace between the two countries. With the interaction of people from both sides at all levels will definitely play a role in lessening the number of these hawkish elements that create hindrances in way of the dialogue.

Terrorism: Since the two events of terrorism, i.e., the attack on Indian Parliament in 2001, and Mumbai attack in 2008, India has taken a very stern attitude towards Pakistan regarding terrorism. But it is a hard fact that Pakistan itself is a target of terrorist activities that have engulf the whole country leaving no place safe for any one. Every other day there are blasts which have damaged and destroyed humans as well as property. India while blaming Pakistan for supporting or providing protection to certain fundamentalist groups, should realize that at present Pakistan is the greatest victim of terrorism. This delicate issue should be handled very carefully by both the countries as another attack by terrorists may lead two countries at war.

Water Issue: For both countries, agriculture is a very important sector and water is a necessary component of it. The water problem arises because both countries have to share rivers also. The tension arose in the last few years ago when India started building dams especially on river Chenab thereby draining of the water from river Chenab for Pakistan. Pakistan even though reacted quite late on this issue but this water issue becomes a major hurdle in the way of peace process.

Kashmir Issue: Since their independence, this is a core issue between the two countries which remained unresolved until today. Although both countries are aware of the intensity of this dispute, none

of them is ready to give any concession. Although, the resolution of this issue will not be easy, it does not mean that nothing should be done in this regard. At this time, civil society, human right activists, political forces of Kashmir, Pakistan and India, can stand side by side and demand for the peace in the region by asking both the governments to accept the fundamental rights of Kashmiris.²⁰

Therefore, it can safely be argued that good friendly relations and cooperation between Pakistan and India is the only reasonable and plausible way to bring about peace tranquility and prosperity in the region.²¹

Review and Reflections

The fragility of the peace process can be felt when looked at the disruptions in the last two years regarding the dialogue between these two neighbors. India has never seemed consistent in carrying out the dialogue process with Pakistan and at many times seems that this country creates a pretext to draw itself out of the dialogue process, as seen during 2007 that brought the whole process at stand still. There were high expectations with the coming of an elected political democracy in Pakistan as there will be a boost to the peace process but this could not happen as Mumbai attacks took place and all the hopes vanished. This situation highlights that serious efforts are required to focus on inducing political will, removing rigidity with a view to lessen mistrust and suspicion.²² Therefore, both countries need to adopt flexibility in their attitudes towards each other. The dialogue process must always be adhered to, so that whenever there is a crisis, it does not become a conflict.

The issue of terrorism needs to be dealt by India in a very responsible manner, as India suspended the dialogue process on this pretext. Pakistan military forces are nowadays involved in operation against militant terrorists in tribal area. Therefore, it cannot afford to indulge or face tense borders with India. India should also realize that it is better that the Pakistan army successfully carries out these operations as this will be in the interest of India also, because if these militant terrorists are let lose, they will further go into India and create security problems there also. There is also another important point related to this situation that the growing economy of India would need energy sources and for that it will have to go beyond its borders especially towards Central Asia and Iran for that it needs the passage or corridor through Pakistan, therefore friendly and stable Pakistan is in the interest of India.

'It would be incorrect to presume that the dialogue between Indian and Pakistan can be insulated from trends in the internal developments in both countries, or from the geopolitical situation in the extended neighborhood of both side.'²³ At present, although both India and Pakistan are bogged down in an opposing and hostile position vis-à-vis each other which is due mainly to

domestic regional and international compulsions; but in the long run, the interests of both neighbors lie in cooperation and mutual respect bringing about hope for the revival of dialogue between them. The dialogue process, even on limited scale must be carried on for rapprochement between the belligerent nuclear neighbors. This is the only way through which these countries can learn to co-exist - side by side in a peaceful environment.

References:

1. Robert Wirsing, 'Great-Powers' Foreign Policies in South Asia'. In Davent T. Hagerty (ed.), *South Asia in World Politics*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press), 2006, p.135.
2. UNDP, *Human Development Report*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2004, p. 3.
3. Rashid Ahmad, *Hot Spots: India and Pakistan: Mumbai attacks are one of many threats to peace process*.
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123091459703649349.html?mod=google_news_wsaj>, 10th January, 2010.
4. R.K. Narayanan, *India-Pakistan Themes Beyond Border*, (Delhi: Konark Publishers), 2004, p. 348.
5. Ian Talbot, *Inventing the Nations, India & Pakistan*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2004, p. 177.
6. A. Vanadana and Ashok C. Shukla, *Security in South Asia: Trends and Directions*, (Delhi: APH Publishing Corporations), 2004, p. 269.
7. Ibid.
8. J.N. Dixit, *Indian Regional Developments: Through the Prism of Indo-Pak Relations*, (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House), 2004, p.18.
9. S.D. Muni, 'Terrorism and Inter-state Relations in South Asia'. In Sridhar K. Khatri and Gert W. Kueck (eds.), *Terrorism in South Asia: Impact on Development and Democratic Process*, (Delhi: Shipra Publications), 2003, p. 329.
10. Massarrat Abid, and Qalb-i-Abid, *South Asia, Politics, Religion and Society*, (Lahore: Pakistan Study Centre University of the Punjab), 2008, p. 207.
11. Ibid. p. 209.
12. Ibid. p. 211.
13. Ibid. p. 213.
14. A. Vanadana, and C. Ashok Shukla, op. cit. pp. 238-239.

15. Pervaiz Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, (London: Simon & Schuster), 2006, p. 302.
16. Aditya Pandey. *South Asia Polity, Literacy & Conflict Resolution*, (Delhi: Isha Books) 2005, p. 200.
17. R.K. Narayanan, op. cit. p. 336.
18. M.G. Chitkara. *Indo-Pak Amity, A New Concept*, (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House) 1994, p.130.
19. John Wilson, *Pakistan The Struggle Within*, (India: Observer Research Foundation), **Which Year ???** p. 139.
20. Nayyar N. Khan, *Kashmir Conflict and Prospects of Peace in South Asia*, <[http://iaoj.wordpress.com/2009/11/02/kashmir-conflict-and-prospects-of-peace-in-south-asia/...](http://iaoj.wordpress.com/2009/11/02/kashmir-conflict-and-prospects-of-peace-in-south-asia/)>, 10th January 2010.
21. Chitkara, M.G., op. cit. 252.
22. Umbreen Javaid, *Peace and Security in South Asia: Issues and Challenges*, (Lahore: Pakistan Study Centre, Punjab University), 2006, p.13.
23. G. Parthsarthy, 'India – Pakistan Relations'. In Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta (eds.), *Indian Foreign Policy: Challenges and Opportunities*, (New Delhi: Academic Foundation) (In collaboration with Foreign Service Institute), 2007, p. 629.