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Missing Factors in India's Policy towards Pakistan

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About The Author



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Missing Factors in India's Policy towards Pakistan

Many in India often wonder why don't we have better relations with Pakistan and how long will we keep on bickering and fighting. Many also point to the perils of a miscalculation given that the two countries are nuclear weapons states. The most famous articulation has, of course, been that the bilateral dialogue should be 'uninterrupted and uninteruptible'.

For the last 70 years every political government in India has tried to engage with Pakistan, to develop a policy that would enable us to live like normal neighbours; some of our finest diplomats have spent their careers in implementing such policies; there have been hundreds of back-channels discussions - track 1.5, track 2, track 3 and so on. All such efforts have mostly come to naught. Today, 70 years after India was partitioned, we are still where we were with Pakistan even as the world around us has changed fundamentally. This must compel us to ask a basic question – what is the missing element in our policy formulation and practice that has resulted repeatedly in a one-step forward-two-steps-backwards relationship with Pakistan.

We have possibly ignored one key element on a long-term basis in our approach towards Pakistan. This is whether a positive relationship with India fits into Pakistan's ideological and security narrative based on its perception of India.

Pakistan's perception of India has four components:

- (i) Issue of Identity - how Pakistan uses anti-India sentiments to cement its national identity.
- (ii) Claim for Parity - Why and how Pakistan seeks parity with India.
- (iii) The Kashmir Fixation – How and why the quest for Kashmir is so inflexible.

- (iv) The Pakistani Mind-Set - How the peculiar mind-set developed towards India adversely impacts Indo-Pak relations.

Issue of Identity

Identity was and remains a critical issue in Pakistan for at least two reasons. First, the geographical areas that came to constitute Pakistan in the East and the West had never before existed as a single country. Second, as the newspaper Dawn stated as late as 2000: 'Since its inception Pakistan has faced the monumental task to spell out an identity different from the Indian identity. Born from the division of the old civilization of India, Pakistan has struggled for constructing its own, a culture which will not only be different from the Indian culture but that the whole world would acknowledge.' Thus creating a Pakistani identity required erasing any 'Indian-ness' within Pakistan. As Aparna Pande notes, 'Denying the Indian-ness of Pakistan's identity meant emphasizing the 'Hindu-ness; of India and reinforcing the 'Islamic' nature of Pakistan'². However, into the seventh decade of its creation, Pakistan has yet not been able to establish an overarching 'Pakistani identity'. Created in the name of Islam, its leaders were to find that Islam was not effective glue in either defining a common Pakistani identity or in keeping the country together as it was in creating one. As a result, the alienation of different ethnic groups, despite being Muslims, continues to be a persistent phenomenon in Pakistan.

At its creation, Pakistan inherited four provinces in the west (Balochistan, North West Frontier Province or NWFP, Punjab and Sindh), and one in the east. East Pakistan was the most homogeneous province, ethnically and linguistically. In the west, however, there was considerable ethnic and linguistic diversity. The conundrum that faced Jinnah and all his successors was that these geographical areas that

¹Mubarak Ali, 'In Search of Identity', Dawn, 7 May 2000, cited in Christophe Jaffrelot (ed.), *Nationalism Without A Nation: Pakistan Searching For Its Identity*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2002, p. 7.

²Aparna Pande, *Explaining Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Escaping India*, London: Routledge, 2011, Indian Reprint 2014, p. 44.

came to constitute Pakistan shared only a common religion and little else. There was no common history, culture, language or ethnicity. The challenge for the new state was to weld these disparate ethno-linguistic identities into one Pakistani identity. Jinnah's two-nation theory that was the basis for Pakistan claimed that the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent constituted a separate 'nation' which bore a distinct and potentially sovereign political identity and that religion could bind diverse ethno-linguistic identities. The shaping of a Pakistani identity thus became hinged on Islam. Maulana Azad, incidentally, had pointed out the fallacy of such an argument saying that Jinnah's thesis of religion forming the basis of a state had no sanction of the Koran.

Prof. Waheeduz-Zaman graphically enumerated Pakistan's identity dilemma in these words: "...If we let go the ideology of Islam, we cannot hold together as a nation by any other means. If the Arabs, the Turks, or the Iranians give up Islam, the Arabs yet remain Arabs, the Turks remain Turks, the Iranians remain Iranians, but what do we remain if we give up Islam?"³ A rhetorical answer was given in 1980: 'If we are not Muslims, what are we? Second rate Indians?'⁴ Wali Khan perhaps best exemplified the identity dilemma when he said, "I have been a Pakhtun for thousands of years, a Muslim for 1300 and a Pakistani for just over forty."⁵

The moot question is why, despite the passage of almost seven decades, Pakistan has not been able to develop an overarching national identity. There is no easy answer. In my view, leaving aside the theological argument that was put forward by Maulana Azad, the forging of a unique religion-based Pakistani identity was problematic because it had to be forged in a geographical area that had historical

³Cited in M.J. Akbar, *Tinderbox: The Past and Future of Pakistan*, New Delhi: HarperCollins India, 2011, pp. 251–52.

⁴Michael T. Kaufman, 'Pakistan's Islamic Revival Affects All Aspects of Life', *The New York Times*, 13 October 1980, cited in Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2005, p. 136.

⁵Akbar S. Ahmed, 'Tribes, Regional Pressures and Nationhood', in Victoria Schofield (ed.), *Old Roads and New Highways: Fifty Years of Pakistan*, Karachi: OUP, 1997, p. 14. Wali Khan has also been quoted as saying that he had been a Pakhtun for 6,000 years, a Muslim for 1,300 years, and a Pakistani for twenty five. See Sabel Hilton, 'The Pashtun Code', *The New Yorker*, 3 December 2001, p. 59.

states with significant linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversities. Here people instinctively thought of themselves as Bengalis, Sindhis, Baloch, Pakhtuns, Seraikis rather than as Pakistanis. These areas were pre-dominantly Muslim so Islam or an Islamic way of life was never in danger here. It was not Islam that kept them united but their linguistic, cultural and historic bonds. Islam could not supplant these bonds in the same manner that it could in the Muslim-minority provinces of British India. In these provinces, especially in north India, the fear was that under representative government, where numbers mattered, the Hindu majority would swamp them. Thus, due to their minority status, the Islamic identity in the Muslim minority provinces of British India was very salient.

Unlike India that accepted the principle of 'unity in diversity' Pakistan, by largely ignoring the diversity of its people tried to superimpose a common Islam-based Pakistani identity on the dominant ethno-linguistic identity. This led to the breakaway of East Pakistan to become Bangladesh and bruising insurgencies in Balochistan, the fifth of which is continuing today. The situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Sindh and in Punjab itself is festering and could explode for differing reasons. Failure to acknowledge ethnic diversity in the elusive quest of a national identity was a challenge in 1947. It remains a challenge even after seventy years.

Given the failure to create a national identity by any other means, Pakistan has resorted to the tactic of raising the threat from India - that India would undo partition - as the cement to bind the multiple identities of Pakistan. While this can hardly be the basis of a sustainable national identity, it has implications for Indo-Pak relations. In fact, as soon as India became the negative reference point for defining Pakistani nationalism, there was no way Pakistan could develop a new and positive identity for itself, or develop normal relations with India. It meant that Pakistan would need a 'Hindu' India constantly as an essential reference point for its *raison d'être* and its national identity would continue to be a negative, anti-India narrative.

India, therefore, needs to factor in this element in its approach towards Pakistan that for the Pakistani leadership, especially military, the projection of a hostile India is the *sine qua non* of their own tenuous identity. Without such negative projection of India, there is danger of losing their identity. Thus, normalization of relations with India, let alone friendship, would demolish the carefully crafted and nurtured nationalist narrative since 1947 and erode their sense of self.

Claim for Parity

Identity apart, a crucial element of Pakistan's attitude and policy towards India hinges on one factor: the desire for parity – military, political and regional parity. It is this obsessive and fixated yet elusive search for parity with India that accounts for the trajectory of its defence, security and foreign policies. It also explains the various stratagems that Pakistan has adopted over the decades and continues to adopt unmindful of the consequences for its own survival. The various strands of this strategy consist of: the use of terrorists or non-state actors to inflict 'a thousand cuts', in order to 'soften' India for talks; development of nuclear weapons; use of borrowed power, relatively large expenditure on defense, both conventional and nuclear. This compulsive need for parity harks back to the history of the subcontinent and to the Pakistan movement itself. Believing itself to be the inheritors of a millennia of Islamic rule over the Indian subcontinent, especially of the Mughals, Pakistan feels that its inheritance demands that it be treated as at least equal, if not superior, to India. The core of the Muslim League's demand for a separate Muslim homeland i.e. Pakistan was the quest for parity with the Congress and parity between Hindus and Muslims, despite the Muslims being in a minority. This quest for parity, rather than being buried with the creation of Pakistan, was carried over into the new state and parity with India has become a fixation with its leaders and especially with the Pakistan Army. It is this quest that makes and defines them as Pakistanis. Without assertion of such parity they would be seen to have acquiesced to 'Hindu' subjugation.

Two examples will illustrate the point. First, in the run-up to the May 1950 visit of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan to the US, Finance Minister Ghulam Mohammad met George McGhee, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern, South Asian and African affairs. During the meeting Ghulam Mohammad told McGhee that the US had to appear to treat Pakistan on par with India: it was 'of utmost importance'. McGhee related later that Liaquat was accorded a reception equal to what Jawaharlal Nehru received.⁶ Second, in 1954 the then prime minister of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Bogra, reflected the Pakistani view on Kashmir when he said that "When there is more equality of military strength, then I am sure that there will be a greater chance of settlement".⁷ Six decades later, the tune of parity has not changed. Following US president Obama's visit to India in January 2015, the Pakistan Foreign Office lamented that an India-US partnership would alter South Asia's 'balance of power' and create a 'regional imbalance'. This argument was taken forward during the US-Pakistan talks on security, strategic stability and non-proliferation in Washington in June 2015. Prior to the talks, Pakistan foreign secretary stated that the US nuclear deal with India had affected the strategic stability that existed in South Asia before the deal.⁸

India will have to factor-in this Pakistan obsession for parity in its own approach to Pakistan. The implication is that Pakistan will always act as a spoiler to ensure that India does not get something that it does not get - for example, a seat at the UN Security Council or membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

⁶ George McGhee, *Envoy to the Middle East: Adventures in Diplomacy*, cited in Husain Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the United States and an Epic History of Misunderstanding*, New York: Public Affairs, 2013, p. 45.

⁷ US News and World Reports, 15 January 1954, cited in Aparna Pande, *Explaining Pakistan's Foreign Policy – Escaping India*, London and New York: Routledge, 2011, Indian reprint 2014, p. 48.

⁸ Anwar Iqbal, 'US-India N-deal affected strategic stability, says Pakistan', *Dawn*, 2 June 2015.

The Kashmir Fixation

Complicating matters for Pakistan is not merely the self-imposed quest for parity with India but the fact that since 1947 it has been a revanchist state. For Pakistan, Kashmir was and is the 'unfinished agenda' of Partition. It was the 'K' in the acronym Pakistan. Kashmir acquired greater salience after Bangladesh broke away from Pakistan. Issues of revenge against India apart, the creation of Bangladesh effectively buried the two-nation theory and the use of Islam to weld a national identity. Even though rationalizations were made about Islam not being effectively used by a secularized elite, the fact was that Pakistan needed another crutch as an ideological nationalist narrative. This crutch became the 'Ideology of Pakistan' of which Kashmir was an integral part. Kashmir thus became a 'rallying ground'... and 'No Pakistani leader, present or future, was allowed to ignore the significance of the Himalayan territory, and especially its connection to Pakistan. ... All of Pakistan was made hostage to the Kashmir conundrum.'⁹ As a result, Pakistan's position on Kashmir is frozen in time without an alternative strategy. Its military strategy to wrest Kashmir by force as in 1947, 1965 and 1999 has repeatedly failed. Its semi-military strategy of using terrorists since 1989 to force India to come to the negotiating table in a weakened position has not been successful either. It has failed to develop any coherent political strategy except to intermittently raise the issue of human rights violations. This hasn't worked either.

But despite repeated failure, Pakistan will not relent on Kashmir. Let us see 'Why'.

ZA Bhutto, in 1969, perhaps gave the best explanation in his book, 'The myth of Independence'. He wrote, "Why does India want Jammu and Kashmir?... she retains the state against all norms of morality because she wants to negate the two-nation theory, the basis of Pakistan. If a Muslim majority area can remain a part of India, the *raison d'être* of Pakistan collapses... For the same reasons, Pakistan

⁹ L. Ziring, *Pakistan at the Crosscurrent of History*, Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2004, p. 131.

must continue unremittingly her struggle for the rights of self-determination of this subject people. Pakistan is incomplete without Jammu and Kashmir both territorially and ideologically. Recovering them, she would recover her head and be made whole, stronger, and more viable. It would be fatal if, in sheer exhaustion or out of intimidation, Pakistan were to abandon the struggle, and a bad compromise would be tantamount to abandonment; which might, in turn lead to the collapse of Pakistan. If, however, we settle for tranquil relations with India, without an equitable resolution of disputes, it would be the first major step in establishing Indian leadership in our parts, with Pakistan and other neighbouring states becoming Indian satellites".¹⁰

Though Bhutto was hanged by the Pakistan army, his articulation of Pakistan's relentless quest for Kashmir has been followed assiduously by all subsequent rulers - civil and military. The elements he identified, especially the impact of a Muslim majority province in India on Pakistan's *raison d'être*, are the bed-rock of Pakistan's Kashmir policy. This is despite the fact that the US had realized the futility of such a policy being pursued by Pakistan as early as 13 October 1965 when it informed its ambassadors in New Delhi, Karachi, London and in the UN of the fact that the Pakistan government had refused to admit, even after the stalemate of the 1965 round, that 'Pakistan's policy of attempting to force a Kashmir settlement has failed. Its only hope of getting one lies in reversing its present course and seeking a reconciliation with India, which will simultaneously assure Pakistan's long run security vis-à-vis India. It is a simple fact that no Kashmir settlement is possible when both sides are becoming more antagonistic and more frozen in their positions than the reverse.'¹¹ This assessment remains as valid today as it did in 1965. Thus, when elements in India prescribe talking to Pakistan as a means of coming to grips with the situation in J&K, they are playing into the hands of Pakistan. First, they give Pakistan the veto power over

¹⁰Z.A. Bhutto, *The Myth of Independence*, London: OUP, 1969, p. 180.

¹¹F.S. Aijazuddin (ed.), *The White House and Pakistan: Secret Declassified Documents, 1969-74*, Oxford: OUP, 2002, pp. 42-43.

what is essentially an Indian issue. Second, they present to Pakistan on a platter what it has been seeking to achieve for decades through military and semi-military means – to make India come to the negotiating table for talks on Kashmir.

India would have to inevitably factor in this element in its policy of Pakistan's quest for Kashmir, a quest described again by Bhutto as, "Let it be known beyond doubt that Kashmir is to Pakistan what Berlin is to the west, and that without a fair and proper settlement of this issue, the people of Pakistan will not consider the crusade for Pakistan complete".¹² In fact, it was Bhutto who had always argued that only by sustaining the tempo and degree of tension could the situation be qualitatively altered. "Confrontation, confrontation, confrontation", he claimed, "is the key to the India –Pakistan dispute".¹³ What we see happening on the Line of Control (LoC), for example, is illustration of such a prescription.

The Pakistani Mind-Set

The issues of identity, parity and Kashmir have crystallized into the Pakistani mind-set towards India. At various times, Pakistan has viewed India (seen synonymous to Hindu) as a cowardly 'pushover' adversary because the 'Hindu (i.e. Indian) has no 'stomach for a fight'. As Ayub Khan was to put it so graphically, "As a general rule Hindu morale would not stand more than a couple of blows delivered at the right time and place. Such opportunities should, therefore, be sought and exploited."¹⁴ Forceful and successful Indian reaction has invariably refuted such assumptions and surprised the Pakistanis. For example, led to believe that one Pakistani Muslim soldier was equal to ten Hindu Indian soldiers, the inability to take all of Kashmir in 1965 was a rude awakening for the Pakistani public. Notes British

¹² Statement at Lahore – 14th July 1963, cited in Salman Taseer , Bhutto: A Political Biography, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi 1980, p-58-59.

¹³ Speech in Lahore – 20 December 1970, cited in Salman Taseer , Bhutto: A Political Biography, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi 1980, p-65

¹⁴ Directive from President Muhammad Ayub Khan to Gen Muhammad Musa, C-in-C, Pakistan Army, cited in Brian Cloughley, A History of the Pakistan Army, Wars and Insurrections, Karachi: OUP, 1999, p. 71.

Brigadier Bidwell: "... the repulse of the Pakistanis by the Indians in 1965 was the first reversal of [the unbroken trend of Muslim victories in the subcontinent going back eight centuries] and a truly historic occasion."¹⁵

Such an attitude towards Hindus has been reinforced in the school curriculum. According to a Pakistani study, "Hatred against India and the Hindus has been an essential component of the 'Ideology of Pakistan' because for its proponents, the existence of Pakistan was defined only in relation to Hindus, and hence the Hindus had to be painted as negatively as possible..."¹⁶ It also needs to be noted that the concept of terror has crept into Pakistani thinking and strategy. Based on their perception of the Muslim rule of the sub-continent, Pakistan has held that the Hindu i.e. Indian was submissive. Consequently, through terror alone a decision could be imposed on him. According to Brig Malik's 'Quranic Concept Of War', a compulsory reading in army establishments since Zia's time, once a condition of terror into the opponent's heart is obtained, hardly anything is left to be achieved. In fact, terror is not a means of imposing decision upon the enemy; it is 'the' decision that is to be imposed upon him. It is this belief of 'terror a means of warfare' that has been used to justify covert Pakistani support for terrorist groups operating in Kashmir and other parts of India, a part of which rules that to strike 'terror into the hearts of the enemy' his faith must be weakened. Furthermore, this standard of terror is equally applicable to 'nuclear as well as conventional wars', thus making terror an adjunct to Pakistan's nuclear strategy.

The various elements of the Pakistani mindset towards India has been distilled in a publication titled 'India: A study in profile' by then Lt Col Javed Hassan for the Command and Staff College, Quetta. It is widely read and is prescribed reading in various Army institutions. After an analysis of 2,000 years

¹⁵Brig. Shelford Bidwell, *Modern Warfare: A Study of Men, Weapons and Theories*, Allen Lane, 1973, cited in Ahmed Faruqui, *Rethinking The National Security Of Pakistan: The Price Of Strategic Myopia* Ashgate Publishing Ltd, England 2003, p. 6.

¹⁶A.H. Nayyar and Ahmad Salim (eds), *The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan*, Lahore: Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), 2004.

of Indian history, the study concludes: (i) India has a poor track record at projection of power beyond its frontiers; (ii) It has a hopeless record in protecting its own freedom and sovereignty despite having larger armies; (iii) Dismal performance of the military is matched by the near-total absence of any popular resistance against foreign domination; (iv) The key traits of the Hindu are presumptuousness, persistence and deviousness; (v) India has been unable to exist as a single unified state; (vi) India was unviable, and Pakistan only needed to give it a push and this artificial “Hindu” state would implode.¹⁷

Given his views on Hindus and thus on India, it is hardly surprising that Javed Hassan who by 1999 was a Force Commander Northern Areas (FCNA) was one of the ‘infamous four’ who, together with Musharraf, chief of general staff Lt Gen. Mohammad Aziz, and X Corps commander Lt Gen. Mahmud Ahmad, planned a scheme like Kargil. The whole scheme was based on the assumption, underlined by Hassan, on how the ‘Hindu’ would cave in before a superior power. Such a massive miscalculation, based on half-baked knowledge and a priori assumptions, can have disastrous consequences in the future, given that both countries are nuclear-weapon powers. Such attitudes reflect the Pakistan Army’s cultural hostility towards India. This is unlikely to change in the near or medium term.

Indo-Pak Dialogue

How do these various strands of Pakistan’s perception of Indian impact on Indo-Pak relations? The inability to develop a positive national identity and hence dependence on a negative anti-India identity, the elusive quest for parity with India that dominates Pakistani thinking, the obsession about Kashmir in order to deny India a Muslim majority province and finally the negative mind-set developed about India have all combined to freeze to the grooves of any talks between India and Pakistan. Hence,

¹⁷Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2005 pp. 268–69; C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army’s Way of War*, Delhi: OUP, Indian reprint, 2014, pp. 161–62.

anything that India proposes, any initiative that India takes (like the invitation to the Pakistan PM together with other SAARC leaders to attend the PM Modi's swearing in ceremony or PM Modi's December 2015 visit to Lahore), have ground to dust precisely because they adversely impact Pakistan's ideological and security narrative. By themselves, these one-way initiatives taken by India will not unfreeze these grooves.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Indo-Pak dialogue since 1947 has been characterized by a roller coaster of expectations and disappointments. Whether it was the Nehru–Liaquat talks post-Partition, or the Swaran Singh–Bhutto talks of 1962–63, or the composite dialogue process of the 1990's and the next decade, the results have been the same barring some positive movement on issues like connectivity (road and rail), trade, visas and so on. A major achievement was the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 that has withstood the test of time and war, and the ceasefire on the LoC in the first decade of the new century. But on issues like Kashmir and terror attacks against India, there has been no forward movement. Of late, a noticeable feature of the dialogue has been that whenever they are to begin, or have proceeded for a while, a terrorist incident takes place in India or on Indian interests in Afghanistan that vitiates the atmosphere for the continuation of the talks. Invariably, the footprints of the perpetrators can be traced back to Pakistan.

In reality, there has been no forward movement on contentious issues between the two countries. For Pakistan, Kashmir has to be on top of the agenda on any discussion. However, what do India and Pakistan talk on Kashmir? Ignoring the legitimacy of Kashmir's accession to India, all Pakistan wants is to acquire, at the minimum, the Kashmir Valley on the basis of the two-nation theory. For India, whose nationalism is territorial and not religious, this is just not going to happen. Pakistan's entire foreign and defence policies are geared towards the objective of seizing control of the Valley. That is why it keeps harping on the UN resolutions on the one hand and uses non-state actors on the other to promote

violence to force India to the negotiating table. Of course, for Pakistan, an unresolved Kashmir issue also serves the useful purpose to whip up anti-India public opinion to divert attention from any divisive domestic issue and to cement its identity. And keeping Kashmir on the boil also serves the Pakistan Army well, assuring it the pre-eminent place in Pakistan with the first claim on its resources.

For India, the only thing to talk about is the part of Jammu and Kashmir illegally occupied by Pakistan – the so-called 'Azad' Kashmir and Gilgit–Baltistan (GB) both of which jointly constitute Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (POJK). Pakistan's hold on both these regions is tenuous – GB's status is opaque and 'Azad Kashmir' is hardly 'Azad' or independent. There is a point of view that realistically speaking the only plausible solution is that the LoC becomes the international boundary. However, this would be realistic only on paper. Apart from the constitutional and parliamentary hurdles, the only thing that such an arrangement would do is to allow Pakistan to take GB and so-called 'Azad' Kashmir off the table. Pakistan would continue its meddling in Indian Kashmir and its objective of seizing control of the Valley would remain intact. It would be India that would suffer by losing its claim on POJK without ensuring that Pakistan stops its proxy war in Indian Kashmir.

For India, Pakistan-fermented terrorism since the 1980's is the number one item on the agenda of talks. By dragging its feet on the investigation and trial of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists who planned the 2008 Mumbai attacks and, more recently, the Pathankot, Gurdaspur and Uri attacks, Pakistan has clearly signaled its unwillingness to move ahead on these issues. Claiming to be the victim of terrorism, Pakistan is extremely reluctant to discuss terrorism that it directs against India. For the past few years, Pakistan has been trying desperately to find some evidence of Indian interference in Pakistan, especially in Balochistan and Karachi. By this it could claim equivalence with Indian assertions of Pakistan fomenting terrorism in its territory. It could then come to the negotiating table on terrorism as an equal, and not on the back foot.

As part of this strategy, Pakistan has claimed to have presented 'proof' of Indian involvement in Balochistan, which it presented to the US during the visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in October 2015. While details are not known, Pakistan kidnapped a former Indian naval officer from Iran, showed him as being arrested in Balochistan and attributed a host of crimes to him without any evidence. A clumsily put together 'confession' of the officer was also circulated. Subsequently, the officer was supposedly tried and sentenced to death. India moving the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has stalled any execution of the officer. The directions of the ICJ to Pakistan not to execute him shows what the international community thinks of the case. Thus Pakistan has failed to find any equivalence on the issue of terrorism. Even otherwise, it was highly optimistic of Pakistan to think that an alleged Indian spy could be equated with decades of Pak sponsorship of terrorism in India.

The question that arises then is whether Pakistan's hostility towards India is eternal? Three elements are noteworthy here:

- (i) The reality is that Pakistan has chosen to define its identity as being anti-Indian and this relentless, almost immutable, 'anti-Indianism' has become a part of the very DNA of Pakistan.
- (ii) Pakistan has convinced itself that it can maintain its vital interests only by confronting India until all disputes are 'resolved' to its satisfaction. Till that time, confrontation, that has been defined as 'neither peace nor war', has to continue. Abandoning the struggle or accepting peaceful relations without the settlement of outstanding disputes on its terms would mean capitulation by installments and eventual liquidation.
- (iii) Kashmir is the pivot of the mindset since Pakistan has internalized that to keep alive and rejuvenate the two-nation theory, a Muslim majority state – Kashmir – cannot be allowed to

remain with India since it demolishes the *raison d'être* of Pakistan. Thus, Pakistan has to continue her unremitting struggle for Kashmir.

Under such circumstances, it would indeed be optimistic to imagine that there can be a sustained positive relationship with India. Only when Pakistan re-examines its roots, stops seeking its identity in 'anti-Indian-ness', stops its futile pursuit of parity with India, in a word, drastically changes its psychology and mindset towards India, would there be a possibility of any real progress in bilateral relations. Of course, as neighbours, India and Pakistan cannot help but talk to each other on a host of issues ranging from captured fishermen, people straying across borders, visas, trade etc. This has to continue. However, to imagine a sustained break-through on fundamental issues so long as Pakistan's mind-set does not evolve from its anti-Indian-ness would be much too optimistic.

While formulating a long-term cohesive strategy towards Pakistan, India would need to factor in all these various strands of how Pakistan views us and how a positive relationship with India adversely impacts Pakistan's ideological and security narrative. Given such a scenario what could be contours of such an approach towards Pakistan in the interim and mid-term? For starters, such an approach would have to factor in the harsh reality that for the past seventy years we have not been able to develop a policy that would allow us to live with Pakistan in peace and as neighbours. If we do not craft new approaches today, in all probability, will still be in the same position seventy years from now. One such different approach could be as under.

First of all, we should temporarily freeze our attempts to officially talk with Pakistan on Kashmir and even on terrorism and stall any effort on their part to do so. As soon as the Kashmir issue or terrorism emanating from Pakistan is raised at any official forum or level, the talks get derailed very quickly. More often than not, such derailment is the result of violence perpetrated against Indians. Moreover, by talking to Pakistan on Kashmir we create the impression that Pakistan has the veto power on resolving our

domestic problem in Kashmir. The temporary moratorium on such official talks would be without prejudice to our position on the issues. The moratorium will also be without prejudice to any action – both kinetic and non-kinetic- that we may take in response to a terrorist attack emanating from Pakistan. Such a step is bound to be controversial and contentious and would take a great deal of political courage. However, criticism can be kept within bounds if no policy announcements are made about such a move. Instead an atmosphere should be built up in the media that for seventy years talks, both official and back channel, on Kashmir have resulted in no forward movement. Must we, therefore, persist on a path that is leading nowhere?

Second, it would need to be explained, again subtly, that freezing talks on Kashmir and terrorism does not mean that the two countries will not be talking to each other. On the contrary, these official talks should be replaced by intensive engagement on issues that can remove Pakistan's misgivings about India. The Pakistani mind-set has been elaborated in this paper. Quite possibly, there would be a view in Pakistan about the Indian mind-set towards it. That needs to be articulated and we should be open to discuss it. Thereafter, think-tankers, academics, commentators, journalists, politicians etc. need to actively engage with their counter-parts in Pakistan. This should be done in an open environment and not in secluded back channels that most people don't hear about. This will ensure that discussions have an impact on official and public opinion. Like official talks, back channel talks too do not seem to have progressed to a stage where they can influence policy. The agenda for such engagements should by design not include contentious issues like Kashmir. The focus should be only to address the mind-set of Pakistan about issues of identity, parity, the negative mind-set and so on.

For example, think-tankers and academics should be able to explain why Pakistan needs to develop a positive identity for itself rather than persist with a negative anti-Indian-ness to cement its various ethnic groups into a Pakistani identity. Likewise, the futility of Pakistan pursuing parity, that too military

parity, with India is self-defeating because resources needed in critical areas like water and education are being frittered away on military security. Any illusions that they have about the weakness of the ‘Hindus’ or the non-viability of India too needs to be dispelled.

All this and more would take time and a lot of effort. It will also have to contend with the entrenched thinking of the ‘Establishment’ in Pakistan that represents such a mind-set. Any sort of impact will not happen overnight and it would take persistence, dedicated effort and political will to stay the course. However, by staying such the course we will, in effect, be chipping away at the biggest hurdle in the bilateral relationship, that of Pakistan seeing a positive relationship with India as adversely impacting its ideological and security narrative. Such an approach has far greater chance of success in the medium-long term than the track that we have pursued for the past seventy years. Once misgivings are chipped away and the negative perception about India is reduced, it would be possible to make a fresh start on the really contentious issues.

Image Source:

- <http://www.huffingtonpost.in>

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