

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA – PAKISTAN RELATIONS

Dr. Anupama Saxena

Associate Professor, Political Science

S.P.D.M. Govt. Girls College

Kotputli – 303108

(Rajasthan)

India and Pakistan occupy an important place in the South Asian region. Both are the leading powers of this region, and both have nuclear capability. The enmity between both these countries is as old as they themselves are. Peace keeping in South Asia depends to a large extent on the mutual relations between both these countries.

The independence of India on 15th August 1947 also resulted in its partition on the basis of religion, and the birth of the state of Pakistan. Since then, and up until today, the relations between India and Pakistan have always remained tense. Whether it be the question of exchange of fire on the borders or of nuclear weapons, whether it be of terrorism or of the unscrupulous statements of Pakistani politicians about India, tension between India and Pakistan has always been present in one form or the other.

The fundamental problem for Pakistan as an independent nation is to demonstrate its independent identity for which it enlists the support of religion and fundamentalism, and adopts an anti-India stance. Whereas on the other hand the main problem for India is the maintaining at secularism, basically the fundamental conflict in ideologies gives rise to the various differences between India and Pakistan. These differences can be seen in the wars of 1948, 1965, 1971 and the conflagration of 1999.

The foreign policy of any country is probably an extension of its internal politics. From this point of view India and Pakistan are no exceptions.

The 65 years of Pakistan's history have been replete with political incertanity. The consequence of political instability was manifested in an anti-India stance because this seems to every ruler of Pakistan to be the easiest means to proving his legality. The longest period of political instability, as also of greatest political uncertainty, was between 1947 to 1958. During

this period Pakistan was governed, under extremely critical circumstances, by four Governor Generals, one President, and seven Prime Ministers. In October 1958 the then Military Administrator General Ayub Khan usurped power from President Iskander Mirza, and remained President of Pakistan until 1968. In 1968 General Yahya Khan became the President and Chief Martial Law Administrator.¹ After the interregnum of Bhutto's so called democratic rule, General Zia-ul-Haq was President of Pakistan from 1977 until 1988. In the November 1988 elections the P.P.P. emerged as the largest single political party. After that General Pervez Musharraf has usurped power, by displacing Nawaz Sharif. General Pervez Musharraf has announced there will be no change in matters of foreign policy, since Pakistan's foreign policy is largely India centric which means that there no real surprises instore for New Delhi.²

India's internal politics has also seen quite a few ups and downs. From December 1989 until April 1997 Indian Politics remained, on the level of individualistic values, in a confused state. During these years Indian politics was governed by V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, P.V. Narsimha Rao, A.B. Vajpayee and H.D. Devegowda; even then the objectives of India's foreign policy remained almost constant, and there was no special change in its fundamental structure.

When A.B. Vajpayee became Prime Minister in March 1998 at the head of a coalition of 13 political parties, no positive contribution had been expected of him in the area of foreign policy because of the internal political situations. The new government had also not hinted at making any fundamental changes in India's foreign policy. As before, it continued to oppose the comprehensive test Ban treaty in spite of all international pressures. Efforts were also made towards improving relations with neighbouring states. This situation continued until 11th May 1998 when India's internal security was threatened due to the successful testing of its missile Gauri by Pakistan, and Pakistan's announcement of plans for the development of another missile, Ghaznavi. On the one hand America and China were not really openly opposing these activities of Pakistan, and on the other India had lost ally like the former Soviet Union.

Under these circumstances India was forced to use the nuclear option for its own safety, and by making nuclear explosion on 11th May and 13th May 1998, it demonstrated its nuclear capability to the world. Thus for the first time since 1974, there came about a change in India's

nuclear policy, but continuing its unending efforts at maintaining peace despite being a nuclear power, India reiterated its proposal of rediscussion of, and signature on the comprehensive test Ban treaty.

One fact of India's continued efforts for peace was Prime Minister Vajpayee's journey by bus to Lahore. On 20th February, 1999 Vajpayee travelled the 37 km. from Amritsar to Vagha border by the bus that would travel twice in a week between Delhi and Lahore. Vajpayee's Lahore bus journey had raised the hopes of a new chapter beginning in India – Pak relations. On this occasion the Prime Minister of both countries signed the historic Lahore Declaration which, among other things, condemned all kinds of terrorism, and resolved to settle amicably all issues between the two countries including the Kashmir issue.

The Lahore declaration raised hopes of the beginning of a new chapter in friendship between two neighbouring states, but even during the course of this journey certain bad indications had begun to emerge.³ The Pakistan Army had given an indication of its negative attitude with regard to Prime Minister Vajpayee's journey. At the reception ceremony of Indian Prime Minister at the Vagha border, the three Service Chiefs were conspicuous by their absence. Such behaviour of the Army Officers cannot be ignored because, in Pakistan politics, the Army occupies an extremely important position. As such, if the Army had adopted negative attitude towards Prime Minister Vajpayee's journey, it called for serious review. The Prime Ministers failed to take meaningful steps to address the security problems that have emerged after the May 1998 nuclear tests. The Lahore declaration talked in general terms with both sides confining themselves to recognising that the nuclear dimension of the security environment of the two countries adds to their responsibility for avoidance of conflict. It also reiterated that both countries were committed to the objectives of universal nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.⁴ India made a fundamental mistake in not announcing the negative attitude of the Pakistan army and by not giving it due importance, which ultimately had its culmination in the form of the Kargil crisis.

Side by side with the diplomacy of the bus journey, Pakistan was also making military preparations to convert the Actual Line of Control in Kashmir in its favour.⁵ Pakistan had

possibly crossed the line of control as early as in March, and made preparations for extensive infiltration into the Kargil, Dras, Batalik etc. areas of Kashmir. There are areas of the line of control which became totally inaccessible in the winter months, and thereby remained comparatively free from infiltration. This made the Indian Army and Intelligence agencies careless, which was taken advantage of by the Pakistan Army and Pakistan trained infiltrators.

One reason for the Pakistan infiltration was the desire to take control of the Sri Nagar – Leh highway and to change the line of control, whereas the line of control had been clearly indicated in at least a dozen maps in 1972. In this context Pakistan's other main interest was that the possibility of a war resulting from the Kargil crisis would be cause of concern for the world community, specially the major powers, and might even force them to intervene. This would give to Pakistan an opportunity to represent the Kargil problem as a part of the larger Kashmir problem and to internationalise it. Additionally, Pakistan wanted to enlist the support of, and to receive help from, Islamic Nations by waging, in the guise of infiltration, a war against India in the name of Islam.

India had fixed 16 July 1999 as the cut-off date for the withdrawal of the Pakistan Army from the Indian areas near the line of control in Kargil, which deadline was then extended to 17th July 1999. At the expiration of the time limit the Indian Army began to re-establish control over the points taken over by the Pakistan Army. On 26 July 1999 India made it clear that the aim of Operation Vijay had been achieved, and that the Indian areas were totally free from infiltrators. Pakistan policy approach vis-à-vis India has been drawn up with the concurrence of military for a long time now. It used to be done behind the scenes but after the October 12 coup it will be done up front. In fact de facto reality has acquiesced in de jure legality.⁶

In this context, it is important that Pakistan had to face a double failure. On the one hand it had to beat a retreat on the military front, and on the other it failed also on the diplomatic front. The blame for the Kargil crisis was generally put on Pakistan. Even China did not criticise the Indian military action, and said that the Kashmir issue should be solved by mutual dialogue between the two countries. France and Russia exerted pressure on Pakistan not to create a war – like situation in Kashmir – America openly criticised Pakistan for being responsible for this war

- like situation, and refused to mediate on this issue. Prime Minister Vajpayee had summed up the Kargil war in an advertisement on Independence Day “Militarily the Kargil conflict has been a splendid victory. Diplomatically, it has been an unprecedented success. But we have also had another even greater triumph – the manifestation of Indian Unity”.⁷

In 1999 democracy came to an abrupt halt in Pakistan when Pervez Musharraf the Military Administrator, evicted the democratically elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. As a result India postponed all dialogue with Pakistan. But in the year 2001 India invited the Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to our country in order that normalcy with Pakistan may be re-established. The process of fresh dialogue between India and Pakistan began in the form of Agra Summit talk when the Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf visited India. However this positive initiative by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee could not lead to positive result.

The Pakistani President made negative and hard statements against India in the Press Conference itself; and alleged that India alone was responsible for the division of Pakistan. The Pakistan President tried to give legitimacy to his own military rule by making anti India statements.

In September 2001 there was a terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in America. In the same year in December there was a terrorist attack on Indian Parliament which India termed as sponsored terrorism by Pakistan. Under operation Parakram the NDA Government deployed Indian military on our country's borders. India further asked America to declare Pakistan as a terrorist state. India also opposed the American stance of establishing double standards in the war against terrorism because Pakistan had become an ally of America in the war against terrorism. India said that a country that promotes terrorism cannot itself become an ally in the war against terrorism.

After December 2001 the issue of war against terrorism became a very important element in India's Foreign Policy; and post 2001 rail transport with Pakistan came to a stop. In November 2003 both countries agreed to a ceasefire along the line of control leading to a period of relative calm. In 2004 the composite dialogue process was initiated, addressing various bilateral issues including Kashmir, trade and terrorism.

In the year 2008 discussions including proposals for visa free travel to religious sites like Kartarpur Sahib took place. But in the same year terrorist attacks in Mumbai, carried out by Pakistani based Lashkar e Tiaba, resulted in over 160 deaths. The attacks led to a significant deterioration in relations with India demanding action against those responsible.

In 2013 a series of armed skirmishes along the line of control in Kashmir led to casualties on both sides, marking the worst fighting in the region in nearly a decade.

In 2014 Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to his swearing in ceremony, signalling a potential thaw in relations. General elections in Pakistan brought Nawaz Sharif back to power, who publicly spoke in favour of better ties with India. However subsequent border incidents and lack of progress on key issues continued to strain ties.

The seed of the present problem in Kashmir lies in the principle of Pakistan's creation; hence Pakistan keeps retracting from the Simla Agreement, or the Lahore Declaration. Looking at the present scenario it seems unlikely that there would come about a dramatic change in the relations of the two countries in the near future. What is needed at the present time is that both countries should pay heed to the progress and well-being of their people and that they use their resources not to encourage or to face terrorism but towards nation building and for the public good. This can be possible only when both countries resolve for a bilateral and unanimous solution of the problem, and enter into a new phase of friendship and good will.

In the context of Kashmir probably the best solution is that the present line of control between the two countries be considered as the ultimate line of division. India shall have to lay aside its constitutional claim with regard to entire Jammu and Kashmir, and Pakistan shall have to give-up its claim of being the leader of the Muslims of the entire Indian sub-continent. Both countries should sign a mutual war-ban treaty. Both countries should keep away from the possible intervention of the super powers in their internal and bilateral issues. And both should exert whatever possible pressure on their respective governments to take the lead on this issue. The establishment of military rule in Pakistan has only made the possibility of normalcy in India-Pakistan relations more difficult, because its attitude is even more anti-India.

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