

INDIA-PAKISTAN PEACE PROCESS DURING UPA GOVERNMENT

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Abstract: India and Pakistan are immediate neighbours. They have a common history; there is close affinity in their culture. They should have the most cordial ties but their relations have remained unfriendly throughout. Despite of deep cultural, social, historical and geographical linkages, anomalous trends of active and passive conflicts between the two South Asian neighbours have effectively kept them alienated and apart. The two societies have by and large, followed mutually exclusive trajectories. Notwithstanding numerous run of the mill peace processes, alongside some very meaningful and robust peace initiatives, core issues sustaining the sour taste in bilateral relationship continue to remain unresolved. India has all along been keen to suggest cooling off measures however the response from Pakistan side has generally been not that welcoming. Today, more than sixty seven years after independence, the common people as well as the elite of India and Pakistan are concerning towards establishing condition for permanent peace. It is no secret now that India and Pakistan are nuclear capable powers. So, it is in India's interest that democracy succeeds in Pakistan so that the dividend of democratic peace can be harvested in South Asia, because improving relations of both the nations is very important for sustaining peace in South Asia. This paper investigates India's peace process with Pakistan and elucidates on the concept of a peace process and its spoilers in the context of India-Pakistan relations. The paper examines that the peace process which started in 2003 has had its twists and turns, but there has been a renewed energy since 2011. In this paper an attempt is made to examine the peace process between India and Pakistan during UPA government.

Keywords: Past Initiatives, Composite Dialogue, Peace Process, Track II Diplomacy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The course of the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan, even since the inception of these two states in 1947, has never been smooth. Differences over a wide range of issues, such as the lack of a mutually acceptable international border, the sharing of resources including water resources, the role and status of religious minorities in the respective countries, and to cap it all the unresolved question of the status of Kashmir, have perennially placed India and Pakistan in an adversarial mould. The two countries have already fought three major and two minor wars since their independence. Moreover, the arms race between the two countries has reached a point where the two adversaries, by exploding nuclear devices in 1998, have transformed the South Asian region into a plausible theatre of nuclear conflict. The ongoing peace efforts through détente between the two countries initiated since the Lahore (1999) and Agra (2001) summits have started showing positive results, as manifested in the resumption of the Delhi-Lahore bus service and growing interaction between the two countries in the domains of culture, sports, economy and trade. Since the beginning of 2004, the two countries have formally set in motion the process of composite bilateral dialogue to promote cooperation and resolve all their outstanding differences, including those over the status of Kashmir, in a time bound framework. A new effort to revive the dialogue process has been initiated by India and Pakistan in 2011. This has brought an end to the suspension of the dialogue by India after the tragic terrorist attacks in Mumbai on November 26; 2008. UPA government has continued the peace process with Pakistan. Several efforts have been made by India to resolve the boundary dispute with Pakistan. The Samjhauta Express, Delhi-Lahore Bus service, Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Bus and opening of a historic trade route across the line of control are the initiatives made by both the countries to create healthy environment of peace process.

II. PAST PEACE INITIATIVES

India and Pakistan have a long history of conflicts and wars since 1947. India suggested amicable settlement of disputes through recognized peaceful methods of negotiations, mediation and arbitration. There are success stories like Tashkent Declaration (1966), Simla Agreement (1972), Agreement on Prohibition of attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities (1988), Agreement on Advance Notification on Military Exercises, Manoeuvres, Troops movement, Agreement on Prevention of Airspace Violation (1991). In addition, some serious disputes were resolved through arbitration. For instance, the dispute over the division of rivers was resolved under the Indus Water Treaty of September 19, 1960 brokered by the World Bank and the dispute over Runn of Kutch was resolved through International Arbitration under the Award of February 19, 1968. Most of these arrangements have stood the test of time and stress of crises; yet the overall evolution of peace process has not graduated beyond pygmy level, whereby a single provocative incident could ruin the hard work of years.[1] In May 1997, at Male, the capital of Maldives, the then Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif mooted the idea of a structured dialogue or the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP).[2] The dialogue process is composite being focused on making progress simultaneously on all the major issues of bilateral dispute. The Foreign Secretary level meeting of June 23, 1997 agreed to constitute Joint Working Groups (JWGs) on eight issues that were identified to be discussed between India and Pakistan. Based on a compromise approach, the peace process enabled the two countries to discuss all issues including Jammu and Kashmir, simultaneously. It was a compromise in the sense that while India agreed to include Kashmir in the agenda for talks, Pakistan relented to include terrorism, the two major irritants in bilateral relations.[3] The Lahore Agreement of February 1999 had reiterated the desire of the two countries to move forward on the path of dialogue. The Kargil War in June-July 1999, the failed Agra Summit in July 2001, the attack on India's Parliament on December 13, 2001 and the subsequent mobilisation of troops on the border led to the difficult phase in the bilateral relations. This phase saw active US and British mediatory efforts whose significance cannot be under-estimated. The differences between India and Pakistan can only be resolved through peaceful means and engagement.[4] After a gap of more than two years, both the countries agreed to revive the process of Composite Dialogue in February 2004. This became possible only after the President of Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf assured Prime Minister Vajpayee that he would not allow any part of the territory under Pakistan's control to be used to support terrorism against India. In a significant move, troops along the border disengaged following the cease-fire along the LOC, International Border (IB) and the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) in November 2003. The idea of a composite dialogue on all disputed issues between India and Pakistan has been on the cards for more than a decade but it is only now that the roadmap is accepted. The new window of opportunity can be linked to an increasing war weariness and conflict fatigue on both sides. The prospect of a sustained peace process is also significantly influenced by recent changes and developments within the security structures of South Asia, particularly the security environment of India.[5]

III. THE COMPOSITE DIALOGUE PROCESS

The Islamabad meeting between then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and then President of Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf in January 2004 resulted in an agreement to start a Composite Dialogue Process (CDP) to settle all outstanding issues between the two countries. It was set into motion later in June 2004. The Composite Dialogue Process consists of Technical-level meetings, Joint Commission and Eight working groups which form the basis for the structural official dialogue between India and Pakistan. The process began with the assurance given by Pakistan that it would not permit Pakistan territory to be used to support terrorism in any manner against India.[6]

The Composite Dialogue Process deals with following eight issues:

- i. Siachen.
- ii. Sir Creek.
- iii. Tulbal Navigation Project.
- iv. Terrorism & Drug Trafficking.
- v. Economic & Commercial Cooperation.
- vi. Promotion of Friendly Exchanges.

- vii. Peace & Security Including Confidence Building Measure (CBMs).
- viii. Jammu & Kashmir.[7]

Each round of dialogue is initiated and reviewed by the foreign secretaries; the overall progress is reviewed at the ministerial level. The fourth round was started in March 2007 and completed in August 2007. Apart from dialogue on the eight issues provided above, technical and expert level talks on Nuclear CBMs, Conventional CBMs, Cross Line of Control (LoC) CBMs, Cooperation between Coast Guards, Narcotics Control Agencies, Civil Aviation, etc are also being held regularly.[8]

IV. PEACE PROCESS

The two countries returned to the negotiating table soon and launched an ambitious peace initiative in early 2004. The peace initiative, commonly known as the 'Composite Dialogue Process', was halted when Pakistan-based terrorists carried out multiple attacks on India's financial capital Mumbai in November 2008.[9] After a couple of years gap, New Delhi and Islamabad tentatively resumed the composite dialogue process in 2011. The resumption of the peace process was short-lived and came to a halt when the forces of the two countries became engaged in border skirmishes along the LoC in the disputed territory of Kashmir in January 2013. The Indo-Pakistani peace process still remains basically frozen, but following the installation of the new government in June 2013 in Pakistan, Islamabad indicated that it was working through 'back channel' to bring the peace process back on track. The prime ministers of the two countries met on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly session in September 2013 and discussed about the re-opening of the stalled peace dialogue. Although the frequent disruption of the Indo-Pakistani peace process highlights the fragility of the process and a high degree of mistrust and suspicion between the two countries, the resumption of negotiations also shows that the fundamental rationale for seeking peace is strong. This point is highlighted in the statements of the Prime Ministers of the two countries. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has stated in an interview: 'I still believe that good relations between India and Pakistan are very essential for this subcontinent to realise its full development potential. Similarly, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has noted: 'We have no option but to live in peace in the interest of the people of Pakistan and India and my government is committed to improving relations with India. Importantly, in the past decade there has been a subtle, but crucial, shift in the attitudes and approaches of both New Delhi and Islamabad regarding the normalisation of the bilateral relationship and the building of peace.[10]

The Indo-Pak peace process has enabled both parties to discuss their bilateral issues. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh not only stated his government's continued commitment to the peace dialogue but efforts were made to intensify the peace process.[11] Several Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) have been taken in this regard which includes: Ceasefire Agreement along the LoC, three bus services running between Lahore-Delhi, Srinagar-Muzaffarabad and Lahore-Amritsar, railway links through Samjhuta Express and Thar Express, increased weekly air flights frequency from 12 to 28, triple-entry cross-LoC permit, frequency of Muzaffarabad-Srinagar Bus service enhanced from fortnightly to weekly, truck route across Wagah-Attari Border, prior notification of Ballistic Missile Tests, establishment of communication links between Pakistan's Maritime Security Agency and Indian Coast Guard, Joint Business Councils and Economic Commissions, Joint Anti-terrorism Institutional Mechanism, Joint Judicial Committees of Judges and regular release of prisoners from both sides etc.[12] There have also been joint ventures in the field of sports and entertainment to enhance interaction and cultural links between the two countries such as Cricket Diplomacy in 2011 and *Aman ki Aasha*, a cultural and people to people exchange programme between *Geo Network* and *Times of India*. Apart from these CBMs, there have been developments in the economic sector as well. A number of rounds of talks have been held pertaining to economic and trade sectors. Establishment of an integrated check post at Wagah-Attari border, liberalization in visa regimes and projects like TAPI indicate a forward movement towards normalization of relations. However, dispute resolution efforts have faced numerous stalemates. Several rounds of talks have been held to resolve the Siachin and Sir Creek issues but there has been no breakthrough. On the agenda item of Peace and Security, the seventh round of talk held in December 2012 could not make any progress on the proposals related to notification of smaller size military exercises/ near-border deployments, Fissile Material Treaty and non deployment of Anti Ballistic Missiles (ABMs). Similarly, the water disputes of Wullar Barrage, Kishanganga etc also remain unresolved. Analysis of the peace process indicates that both the states have not been able to put behind their pre-partition mindset, legacy of bitter past experiences and the historical baggage of deep rooted ideological rivalry and trust deficit. Both have reached a hurting stalemate over the issue of Kashmir dispute and there is no clear understanding at the political level to resolve the issue.[13]

V. TRACK II DIPLOMACY

The primary objectives of Track II diplomacy are three fold: to make attempts to resolve ongoing disputes; to discourage and prevent the emergence of new disputes; and to make efforts to bring two estranged countries and societies closer by introducing CBMs.[14] Perhaps the most difficult task is to resolve the ongoing dispute, especially those disputes that have outlived resolution efforts for many years, such as the Kashmir dispute. Indeed, the recent developments both inside and outside the disputed territory of Kashmir clearly highlight the fact that relations between India and Pakistan will never be normal until the Kashmir dispute is settled. However, while recognising the intensity of the adverse impact of the Kashmir dispute on Indo-Pak relations, the usefulness of CBMs cannot be denied. The introduction of CBMs can ease the tension and may even help in securing better comprehension of each other's perceptions. Indeed, the CBMs can facilitate the communication network among the disputants and also help in maintaining some kind of contact even though it may not appear Very useful. The first two objectives imply that Track II diplomacy should not only explore and provide feasible alternatives for complex issues to governments but should also suggest arresting mechanisms if it is realised that the situation is fast deteriorating. In both pursuits, Track II diplomacy is expected to provide positively orientated alternatives facilitating and enabling the governments to arrest a drift towards adversarial relations.[15]

VI. SUGGESTIONS

India and Pakistan are keen on resolving differences. They must therefore speed up all efforts to move forward on key issues. The top leadership of the two countries should direct their officials in unambiguous terms that they have to evolve mutually accepted solutions to all contentious issues and agree on a framework for bilateral cooperation on mutually advantageous considerations. The following suggestions can be considered as a rough guide map of rapprochement.

1) Liberalised Visa Regime:

Encourage societal linkages between India and Pakistan by liberalizing visa and extending travel facilities. Individuals and organizations should be encouraged to interact. Group tourism should be initiated.

2) Controlling Terrorism:

India has been assigning the highest priority to controlling terrorism since the Mumbai terrorist attack. India and Pakistan should agree on measure to deal with different militant groups, exchange information on terrorist activities and coordinate their counter terrorism strategies.

3) CBMs:

The imperative of security and stability require India and Pakistan to adopt confidence building measures regarding conventional and nuclear security. Some significant steps have been taken in the past and it is hoped that the two countries would continue to increase CBMs so that the threat of conventional war and its escalation to nuclear exchange is averted.

4) Kashmir Issue:

Wars did not resolve any issue in the past. We believe that Kashmir can well become the bridge to peace between the two countries, which has so far been the primary cause of hostility between India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan should continue the peace process and composite dialogue to resolve Kashmir issue.

5) Trade and Economic Relations:

This is another important field where there is a lot of scope has increased over time but it is still a tiny portion of the international trade of two countries. The two countries need to pay immediate attention to deal with the technical, procedural problems and bureaucratic snags that hinder trade and economic relations. Both sides should ask their Federations of Chambers of Commerce and industries to consult each other and make recommendations on expanding trade facilities to their governments.

VII. CONCLUSION

There is both scepticism and hope pinned to the peace talks in South Asia. India and Pakistan need to have trust, confidence and a will to make this peace process into one which seeks a resolution of all conflicts inflicting on their relations. Hardliners need to be uprooted or their ideology ought to be change. Many times the peace process has been derailed due to the presence of the parochial interest of the elites. The world is changing into a global economy, and if policymakers in both India and Pakistan look to their vested interests then the prospects of peace seems very bleak. Let both countries show the courage to resolve all issues and disputes in a civilized manner through negotiation, mediation and arbitration in a given time-frame to restore cordial relations between the two neighbours so that there is normally peace and prosperity in the region. India-Pakistan relations remained well short of their potential and are yet to be fully normalised. India seeks a cooperative and constructive relationship with Pakistan based on trust and confidence in an atmosphere free of violence. India believes in settling all issues, including Jammu and Kashmir through bilateral talks. Towards this goal India has pursued a policy of constructive engagement with Pakistan to establish peaceful, friendly and cooperative relations. In the coming days, it is hoped that the leadership of the two countries would re-start the process and bring peace and prosperity to their people.

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