

No longer close to war

These changes are subtle and fundamental in style and substance. The Indo-Pakistan relationship now is *not* one of fighting, followed by cease-fire followed by preparation for another war. The history is no longer cyclical. Rather each military crisis has induced re-thinking on both sides and a change in the bilateral power relationship. Since 1971, despite the controversies about US arms to Pakistan, Pakistani and Indian Afghanistan policies, Pakistan's clandestine nuclear program, Siachen fighting, Indian subversion of Sind, Pakistani subversion of Punjab and aid to Sikh terrorists, "Indian hegemony" and so on, the two sides have never been close to a war. It must go to the late President Zia-ul-Haq's lasting credit that despite his military background, his anti-India actions on Kashmir and Punjab and his constant quest for US arms against India, he was never tempted to exercise the military option. The contrast between General Zia-ul-Haq and his predecessors — M.A. Jinnah in 1948, Ayub Khan and Bhutto in 1965, and General Yahya Khan in 1971 — could not be more revealing. General Zia-ul-Haq was cautious and understood Indo-Pakistan military realities. And India knew that he did.

The important point to consider is that despite serious Indo-Pakistan controversies the normalization dialogue has never been lost since 1971. Its principle was laid out in the Simla agreement (1972) which requires conflict management and resolution on a bilateral and a peaceful basis. Neither country has repudiated the Simla accord, despite changes in leaders on both sides. In 1985 they even came close to developing positive linkages in economic, political and military affairs. On December of that year, Rajiv's India and Zia's Pakistan agreed on a time-bound program of action. This had eight components: (1), Indian and Pakistani finance ministers were to meet in January 1986 in Islamabad to consider agreements on the expansion of trade and economic relations; (2), the foreign ministers of the two sides were to meet in Islamabad in January 1986 to continue discussion on a comprehensive treaty of peace and friendship and other bilateral issues; (3), four subcommissions were to meet in early 1986 to finalize their work, and this was to lead to a meeting of the full subcommission by February 1986; (4), both sides agreed to work out the agreement on the non-attack of nuclear installations; (5), a cultural agreement was to be signed by the two countries; (6), as the culmination of the normalization process the Indian Prime Minister was to visit Pakistan; (7), the defence ministers of the two sides were to meet in Pakistan in January 1986 to discuss the Siachen issue; and (8), President Zia-ul-Haq indicated that the Kashmir issue would be put on the backburner.

Trying trade

This time-bound program failed, but the discussions on these issues have continued. In India's approach the key device for normalization was trade, and Pakistan's attitude to Indo-Pakistan trade revealed its political attitude to India and to Indo-Pakistan normalization. India's approach to economic relations with Pakistan was also politically motivated rather than governed by commercial considerations. With this in mind India granted most favored nation treatment to Pakistan and argued that since Pakistan gave this status to Japan, and since India was a lesser commercial threat to Pakistan than was Japan, India should receive reciprocal treatment.

Pakistan balked on the trade question and instead gave negative political signals. In early 1986 the Pakistan Muslim League,

whose President was Prime Minister Junejo, then a Zia man, passed a resolution with two requirements. The first was that there was to be no normalization in Indo-Pakistan relations until the Kashmir issue had been settled (this contradicted President Zia-ul-Haq's stand with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in Delhi on December 17, 1985). The second was that Pakistan should wait and not open up trade with India because it would swamp the Pakistan market. (Here apparently Pakistani business middlemen preferred to sell higher cost imports rather than cheaper Indian imports because their fee was higher.) A few days after the December meeting the Kashmir issue was raised in international meetings. Many of the proposed meetings were held but without any political drive, and hence no agreements were reached or signed. But the framework of negotiations remained intact.

In mid-1988 Pakistan's approach to the critical trade issue crystallized. Pakistan's finance minister agreed to imports of Indian raw materials and semi-manufactured goods but did not accept trade in Indian manufactured goods. This was a slight improvement in Pakistan's attitude but it was not enough to cause a breakthrough. But the dialogue is still on, not only between India and Pakistan, but more importantly within Pakistan government and society. It concerns the need to build the peace constituency in that country which would aid the cause of Pakistani social, economic and political development, as well as stabilize external relations with its neighbors.

Cloudy and fragile

What about the future? With uncertainty in Pakistan's politics after President Zia-ul-Haq's death and uncertainty in Indian politics as Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi faces general elections in 1989, the question mark over Indo-Pakistan normalization is likely to persist. If Pakistani support for Sikh terror in Punjab continues, Rajiv Gandhi cannot risk normalization with Pakistan because Indian public opinion is uneasy about Pakistan (even though strategically China is the bigger problem for India). Furthermore, as the hold of the Pakistan army and intelligence communities on Pakistani politics has continued after President Zia's death, a point may come when these communities will have to make up their minds whether they will share power with civilians. If they feel threatened they may find it necessary to find ways to sabotage party-based elections or to re-declare martial law or to start a military adventure. None of this is expected, but were it to happen the future of normalization would be dim.

Indo-Pakistan normalization prospects depend in part on the balance of power within Pakistan. The Pakistan finance and foreign ministries are the key players in the normalization process, but the key players inside Pakistan are the army and the intelligence authorities; in the upper layers of domestic politics the foreign and finance ministers are peripheral actors. Nonetheless, President Zia's death may have increased the prospects for normalization if the following requirements are met: first, the current debate in Pakistan on Afghanistan policy leads to a softer line on support for a fundamentalist-dominated Afghanistan. Second, the commitment of the post-Zia government in Pakistan to cut aid to Sikh terrorists remains in place (the present signs are encouraging). Third, the Pakistan Army continues to follow the constitutional path that it has thus far since President Zia's death. In sum, the groundwork for Indo-Pakistan normalization has been laid and now it is a matter of energizing the political constituencies on both sides to turn the final screws in their minds to make a deal. □