

India-Pakistan normalization

by Ashok Kapur

The Indo-Pakistani diplomatic and military rivalry is one of the most intense in modern international relations. It has led to four wars: Kashmir (1948); Rann of Kutch (1965); Kashmir and the India-Pakistan front (1965); and Bangladesh (1971). Since 1984 the two countries have clashed repeatedly in the Siachen glacier at 6,000-7,000 meters. Both are diplomatic rivals on the world stage and they clash on disarmament, nonproliferation, Gulf security and Afghanistan policy issues. Both are rivals in South Asia as well. They disagree on issues about India's relations with its neighbors and about small states' security. Both continue to arms race the other. Their visions of regional order clash. India seeks an Indocentric order based on secularism, democracy, nonalignment and acknowledgment of Indian primacy. Pakistan seeks an Islamic order that is based on opposition to "Hindu imperialism" and "Soviet expansion."

With a terrible legacy of military, diplomatic and cultural conflict which spans almost sixty years, is it realistic to speak of Indo-Pakistan normalization? My contention is that out of the crucible of military and cultural conflict, consciousness of the need to normalize bilateral relations has emerged. The policy constituencies on both sides are moving incrementally towards normalization because evolving interests and changing attitudes are driving the normalization process. What are the elements in terms of mental outlooks of the elites, the domestic and external circumstances on both countries, the motives and the methods which are creating a trend towards normalization? What has been the pattern of development of Indo-Pakistan relations in the last 40-odd years? What are the current issues on the policy agenda? Finally, what are the prospects of normalization in a post-Zia Pakistan and in Rajiv Gandhi's or post-Rajiv India?

To become normal

To "normalize" means (1) to act according to established norm, not to deviate from established rule or principle, and (2) to destroy the coarseness and strains in a relationship. The established norm in modern, say in East-West, relations as well as in Indo-Pakistan relations has been to use war, war preparation, military threats, economic measures, intrigue, cultural propaganda, alliance activity, diplomatic talks and peace offensives in inter-state relations. Specifically in the Indo-Pakistan context, the established norm has been to go to war, have a cease-fire, then go through a cold war and prepare for the next war. Thus, there were seventeen years of cold war after the 1948 Kashmir campaign; there were six years of cold war after the 1965 encounters; and finally, another seventeen years after the 1971 war. In the first meaning of "normalization" the ups and downs in Indo-Pakistan relations are normal.

Ashok Kapur is Professor of Political Science at the University of Waterloo in Ontario.

However, it is in the second meaning of "normalization" that my analysis is developed. Indo-Pakistan normalization is now intended to reduce the strains in the relationship and to develop positive and institutional links at the inter-governmental and societal levels. But the history and the process which has developed thus far has nothing to do with the situation and thinking back in 1953 about Indo-Pakistan affairs. In August and September of that year Indian Prime Minister Nehru was willing to agree to a plebiscite in Kashmir and to risk losing the Kashmir valley to Pakistan or to allow it to acquire an independent or buffer status. At that time this approach was frustrated by US arms aid to Pakistan. This is the view of diplomatic practitioners as revealed by Escott Reid in his 1981 book *Envoy to Nehru*. Here normalization required a major Indian concession to Pakistan and to world public opinion. Here the judgment was that such a concession would have led to an Indo-Pakistan "settlement," for in this sense a settlement was the measure of normalization. After the failure of this move, from 1953 to 1971 Indo-Pakistan relations moved in a cycle of war to cease-fire to cold war to war. It meant a relationship of conflict and expectation of perpetual conflict rather than an expectation that strains in the relationship could be eliminated.

Seventeen years of progress

Indo-Pakistan normalization moves have gained ground since 1971. They do not look to the 1953 solution and they reject the premises of North American thinking of the 1950s about Indian foreign policy and Indo-Pakistan affairs. Escott Reid, Canadian High Commissioner to India from 1952 to 1957, contends that Indian foreign policy had failed "since India had failed to achieve the most important goal of any realistic Indian foreign policy, the establishment of good relations with Pakistan." Reid also asserts that "It is reasonable to place the greater share of the responsibility for failure on India, since India is about five times as important as Pakistan" and it had a stable and popular government under a "leader of genius" (Nehru). Finally, says Reid, the stumbling block to "good" Indo-Pakistan relations was Kashmir.

In Indian thinking the most important Indian aim was not "good" Indo-Pakistan relations. Rather the central aims were, first, to strengthen Indian *territorial unity* by bringing border areas under effective government control and by defeating secessionist pressures; second, to maintain the *integrity of India's political system* by strengthening the democratic institutions and by repudiating the religious coloring given to politics in Kashmir and in Pakistan; third, to develop Indian economic and military strength, as these were the prerequisites for successful diplomacy in modern times, that is, to negotiate from a position of strength and to make no unilateral concessions. Here the prem-