



## The Road to Reconciliation with Pakistan: Sifting Causes from Consequences

*B. G. Verghese*

### Abstract

This article attempts to delineate the issues that have served as impediments to trust-building and reconciliation between India and Pakistan. The author opines that the idea of Kashmir as the 'core problem' is a misplaced one; the blockades largely ensue from the insecure national consciousness/identity and flourishing infrastructure of radical Islam in Pakistan. The fact that there is growing realization in Pakistan that islamization has negatively impacted its polity provides hope that concerted efforts at paving the path to peace may be undertaken. He makes some suggestions for areas that can be explored for cooperation.

### Author Profile

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He is associated with several NGOs and educational institutions and is a member of Track-II India-Pakistan Neemrana Initiative and other inter-country dialogues. He is a recipient of the Magsaysay Award for Journalism (1975). Mr. Verghese has authored several books on issues relating to water resources, India's Northeast, Asian geopolitics and the media. His most recent books include *First Draft: Witness to the Making of Modern India* (2010); *Rage, Reconciliation, Security: Managing India's Diversities* (2008); *Tomorrow's India: Another Tryst with Destiny* (2006); *A Jammu & Kashmir Primer: From Myth to Reality* (2006); and *Warrior of the Fourth Estate* (2005).

## **The Road to Reconciliation with Pakistan: Sifting Causes from Consequences**

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In recent times, Pakistan has been lurching from crisis to crisis, which perhaps explains why even some of the diehards, including those in the Army, are not averse to talk peace with India. Terrorism, inspired by Islamic fundamentalists and nurtured by the State as an instrument of state policy, especially against India, now increasingly menaces Pakistan itself. That it has taken more lives at home than across the border is possibly true. But that cannot extenuate the Pakistan establishment, cutting across all regimes, for having wilfully unleashed and encouraged this evil. Nor does the plea that Pakistan is a greater victim of terror than India hold any water.

### **Kashmir in Pakistan's consciousness**

To this day, 'Kashmir' is held out as "the core problem". This is a myth now accepted as reality by very large numbers in Pakistan, the facts be damned. As Nehru had repeatedly argued, the Kashmir question was not the cause but the consequence of the Indo-Pakistan stand-off, the roots of which go back to the so-called 'ideology of Pakistan' and the 'Two-Nation Theory'. At independence, the Muslim League felt that it had been cheated by being given no more than a "moth eaten Pakistan".

Kashmir, a Muslim majority princely state contiguous to Pakistan, was independent from 15 August to 26 October 1947, when it acceded to India after being brutally invaded by regular Pakistan forces and tribal raiders. That this was planned and supported by the Pakistan government under Liaquat Ali Khan and led by the Pakistan Army is clearly set out in 'Raiders in Kashmir' by Major General Akbar Khan who retired some years later as Director, Weapons and Equipment, Army Headquarters, Rawalpindi. Those facts have never been controverted but have been confirmed by other sources.

The governing UN Resolution of 13 August 1948 also politely labelled Pakistan the aggressor, called on its tribal lascars and regular military forces to withdraw, and stated that the administration and security of the entire state shall revert to India, under UN supervision in the areas evacuated by Pakistan, pending a plebiscite. Pakistan's obdurate refusal to disarm and withdraw put paid to the plebiscite. That proposition is now dead.

Yet, from the start, Pakistan labelled Kashmir as the "unfinished business of Partition". Despite its insistence on "self-determination" in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), Pakistan has ruled Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PAK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), with little autonomy. Power clearly resides in the Islamabad-based Kashmir Affairs Council headed by the Prime Minister as a simple reading of the PAK and GB Constitutions reveals. The Shia-dominated GB area has also suffered anti-Shia pogroms and demographic change with the induction of Sunni personnel.

## **Two-nation theory, Jinnah's second thoughts**

Linguistic and cultural separatism in Pakistan surfaced as early as 1953 when Jinnah proclaimed Urdu as Pakistan's national language. This sowed the seeds of East Pakistan separatism. But even prior to that, Jinnah realised that by the logic of his two-nation theory, a Muslim majority Pakistan harboured many mini-Pakistan's with Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists indubitably entitled to separate states. Sensing that the two-nation theory could undo Pakistan, Jinnah backtracked. He made a 180-degree turnaround, days before independence in his inaugural address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11 August 1947.

He spoke substantively and passionately affirming that Pakistan must be a truly secular state with equal citizenship, irrespective of faith, forms of worship, caste or colour. These were principles he had vigorously denied and denounced for years in a united India, only weeks before. And he now saw nemesis for Pakistan if the logic of "two nations" and parity for the minority with the majority community was to be pursued. It would have been a great and moving address in another context, but now his audience was greatly disturbed. The speech was played down and then deliberately relegated to some musty closet so much so that even as late as 1966, an official collection of Jinnah's speeches published by the Research Society of Pakistan had altogether omitted it.

Isolated and dismayed, Jinnah made another turnaround. Two months later, on 11 October 1947, he addressed a gathering of civil and military officers in Karachi and was reported as having stated that Pakistan's democracy must be founded on Islamic ideals and principles. He was more categorical speaking to the Sindh Bar Association in Karachi on 23 January 1948, as reported by *Dawn*, when he insisted that Pakistan's constitution would be based on the Sharia "to make Pakistan a truly great Islamic state".

## **Radical Islam's shadow**

Sober elements in Pakistan are today seeking to accord a new centrality to Jinnah's 11 August 1947 speech as reflective of the true spirit of Jinnah's Pakistan that must be restored. But two caveats are in order. First, the radical Islamisation of Pakistan must be rolled back to allow space for restoration of the inclusive Sufi Islam that essentially prevailed over all of South Asia. Secondly, the gross re-writing of its history, geography and culture as evidenced in its officially-produced school texts must be rid of the high quotient of hate of the "other", namely India, in terms of which Pakistan has negatively defined itself.

A well-researched, bold and honest analysis of state school texts by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad in 2003 by a team of 40 scholars, came out with a damning report. To quote from the summary:

*...Our analysis found...*

- Inaccuracies of fact and omissions that serve to substantially distort the nature and significance of actual events in our history.*
- Insensitivity to the actual religious diversity of the nation.*
- Incitement to militancy and violence, including encouragement of jihad and shahadat.*
- Perspectives that encourage prejudice, bigotry and discrimination towards fellow citizens, especially women and religious minorities, and other nations.*

- A glorification of war and the use of force.

and

*The books on Social Studies systematically misrepresent events that have happened over the past several decades of Pakistan's history ... This history is narrated with distortions and omissions. The causes, effects and responsibility for key events are presented so as to leave a false understanding of our national experience. A large part of history of this region is also simply omitted, making it difficult to properly interpret events .... Worse, the material is presented in a way that encourages the student to marginalise and be hostile towards other social groups and people in the region.*

Following publication of the SDPI report, then President, General Pervez Musharraf promised textbook reform. There has been improvement since, though the bias remains as described in a Jinnah Institute (Islamabad) policy brief, 'The Continuing Biases in our Textbooks' which was published in April 2012. The content of official textbooks in the disciplines of History, Pakistan Studies and Islamiyat "stem analytical thinking" and constitute a "curriculum of hatred", and create a mindset of extremism and religious bigotry and "inculcate prejudice against non-Muslims who are depicted as enemies of Islam.... This breeds *jihadis*. Today's extremists are yesterday's children that were raised on a diet of these textbooks".

"The ubiquitous emphasis on ideology and Nazariya-i-Pakistan (Ideology of Pakistan) continues to dominate the tone of the texts and no words are minced in attributing all the ills that ever befell Pakistan to 'Hindus' ... India and the Hindus still have to bear the brunt of the State's historical narrative". The making of Bangladesh is squarely attributed to the villainy of the Hindus of East Pakistan and India.

The teachers themselves are products of hate-the-other tutelage. Bigoted madrassa students "end up managing the pulpits in the mosques".

These are harsh judgements but they paint a picture of a poisoned national consciousness. One must, in fairness, admit that India too has its Hindutva and related ideologies that espouse a narrow, chauvinistic, high-caste cultural nationalism and spew hate for other faiths and people. They too seek to glorify some and denigrate the 'other' in their rewriting of history. Fortunately these elements, minor and aberrant exceptions apart, have not been part of the State or the mainstream and have been stoutly opposed. However, the potential for mischief remains.

### **The growth of jihadi-terror**

The Islamist bias, introduced into Pakistan with its roots in the retrograde two-nation theory, was followed by the cultivation of *jihadi-terror* as an instrument of state policy. The Justice Munir Commission, set up after the anti-Ahmadiyya riots in 1953, asked of the *ulema* of all schools in the country that if the Ahmadiyyas were outcasts then who in Pakistan might be defined as the good Muslim. It is recorded that there were as many answers as there were *ulema*. In 1978, Zia ul Haq launched his drive to bring Pakistan under a truly Islamic order or *Nizam-e-Mustafa* that would make it a truly Islamic state. What followed were regulations and ordinances enforcing prohibition, *hudood* (adultery) laws, blasphemy, Islamic economics including *zakat* and abolition of interest, and the establishment of Sharia courts.

The ideal of the 'good Muslim' was reinforced with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which marked a further lurch towards *wahabi* doctrines and the spread of *madrassas* generously funded by Saudi Arabia. Jihad was propagated. These chickens have come home to roost, causing enormous collateral damage to India through cross-border terror far beyond the bounds of Kashmir; but they have also gnawed at Pakistan's vitals.

However, the Islamic radicalisation of Pakistan cannot be laid solely at Zia's door with effect from 1979. Having abandoned or remoulded its history, heritage, geography and culture to differentiate itself from India, and with nothing but slogans in place, Pakistan denied itself a positive identity. Thereafter, every failure in writing a constitution and in coherent nation-building led to a compensatory, indeed mandatory, lurch towards further Islamisation which became the glue to hold Pakistan together. Ayub, Bhutto and others merely paved the way for Zia and the Afghan war, with American assistance, to spread Talibanisation with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy.

Discerning Pakistanis realise that the country is on a path of self-destruction and that permanent denial offers no antidote. The problem lies within and Kashmir has become an albatross.

### **Pakistan army for peacemaking**

Obsession with a wholly unreal 'threat' from India has made the Pakistan Army and its intelligence wing, the ISI, larger than life, omnipresent and omnipotent as the shield and defender of the 'ideology of Pakistan', and virtually unaccountable—a state within a state. All critical decisions are vetted by the Army—key foreign relations, national and internal security, nuclear policy. A disproportionate percentage of the budget goes towards maintaining a bloated military establishment which now controls a good part of the national economy, as well through various Milbus (military-business) foundations, as Ayesha Siddiqi describes them.

The economy remains feudal and fragile and has been sustained by US military and civil aid, whose flow is only now being controlled by Washington with reference to promise and performance. But for substantial remittance flows, mostly from the Gulf, Pakistan would be in dire straits. The assumption that China, whose "friendship is deeper than the ocean and higher than the mountains" would bail out Pakistan has been belied. The Chinese too are deeply worried about *jihadi* activities in Xinjiang and attacks on their construction workers along the K K Highway and Gwadar. With *jihadi* pressures again mounting in North Waziristan, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani declared that India and Pakistan must live in peaceful coexistence as defence without development is neither viable nor acceptable. The turnaround statement from Pakistan Army Chief, Kayani, came on 7 April 2012 "while on Siachen", after 168 Pakistani armed personnel were buried under an avalanche.

This was obviously a long time back. But if current ground realities have caused a rethink, it is all to the good. The sceptic may say that this is merely a tactical retreat. But the benefits that could flow from a peace dividend, especially trade and investment, with their implications for employment and lower prices, could conceivably transform it into smart strategic policy. This would strengthen the peace and business lobby, win international support and give a fillip to Pakistan's embryonic democratic forces.



Talks with Pakistan would also be desirable, even while simultaneously pressing it to do more expeditious work on dealing with the guilty of 26/11 and cross-border terrorism. While formal visits are in order, they entail a measure of grandstanding and so it might be more advisable to resume quiet backchannel diplomacy. Track-II deliberations are also useful as it is possible to speak quite frankly, float bold ideas and build a climate of trust. Military to military exchanges and discussions on security-related issues would also be most desirable where threat perceptions and security-related responses to alleged provocations from the other side could be addressed.

### **A soft border**

Whatever the history and background, a resolution on Kashmir is essential. However, the facts must be made known as any compromise on the Indian position will only pass muster with political and public opinion in India if we hold the moral high ground and are not seen as bowing to pressure from any quarter. There are three aspects of the Kashmir problem: the external/Pakistan element; a restructuring of internal Centre-State relations, and grievance redressal on a number of human, social and regional counts within the Indian part of J&K. Pakistan can have nothing to do with the latter two issues and must equally be left to mend its own internal relations within PAK and the GB area without interference. The Government of India appointed three-person Team of Interlocutors has sketched a pragmatic road map to follow.

India claims, and the Parliament has resolved, that all of the erstwhile Maharaja's J&K domain, including PAK and GB, are legally and constitutionally part of India. This position has and will be reiterated until a final settlement is reached. Pakistan's position is the exact opposite, though it is willing to give up the Leh *tehsil* of Ladakh and the part of Jammu east of the Chenab. Pakistan has done everything it can to wrest Kashmir from India but knows that it can never succeed. Likewise, whatever the rights and wrongs, India knows that it cannot wrest back PAK and GB without a war that will not be fought, for fear of nuclear Armageddon. Therefore, a solution must lie in restructuring relations across the line of control (LOC). This is what Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah had proposed in 1964 and something that Dr. Manmohan Singh and Musharraf brought back to the table.

It is clear to both sides that there is no other solution barring refinement of the concept of a soft border, greater internal autonomy on either side and the evolution of cross-border institutions and relationships over time. Dr. Manmohan Singh has made it clear that boundaries cannot be changed but can be made "irrelevant" through trans-boundary exchanges. The fact of a boundary matters less than the nature of that boundary—barrier or bridge? The present government of Pakistan has gone back on the 'Musharraf formula' because the ex-president is persona non grata for the Pakistan's People's Party (PPP) that is in power today. Be that as it may, the idea need not be wished away. The bus service and trans-LOC trade are encouraging first steps towards that goal.

Agreement on acceptance of the LOC as the boundary will necessitate a Siachen settlement. This will entail more than just mutual redeployment from the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL). This boundary was created in 1984 when India pre-empted Pakistan's eastward cartographic creep from the last named grid reference, 'NJ 9842, thence (due) north to the glaciers', under the UN-brokered Cease Fire Karachi Agreement of July 1949, reaffirmed under the Suchetgarh

Agreement in 1972. The mischief stemmed with the US Defence Mapping Agency, an international cartographic reference agency, unilaterally hardening a Second World War Air Defence Identification Zone (AIDZ) line between 1964 and 1971 or thereabouts, to depict the LOC as running not north but northeast from NJ 9842 to the Karakoram Pass. All international maps followed suit and Pakistan gleefully adopted this as its LOC line. If the LOC is to be the permanent international boundary then it cannot follow the AGPL, a latter-day military ceasefire line, but the line delineated in 1948 and then converted from a military to a political line in 1972 from 'NJ 9842 thence (due) north to the glaciers', specifically disallowing any non-man's land.

To prevent Pakistan from occupying Siachen, were India to redeploy its forces as part of a proposed Siachen settlement, the inverted triangle from KK Pass-NJ 9842-K2 (a little beyond Indira Col, the terminal point of the AGPL) may be converted into an international peace and climate research park without derogation of the two national sovereignties. If China agreed to include Shaksgam (wrongfully ceded to it by Pakistan in 1963) in such a peace park, that would be so much the better.

### **Ultimate peace peg, joint management of water**

Another major issue that Pakistan has used in recent years as an alternative focal point to Kashmir is – water. The charge is that India has been circumventing the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) by building a series of “dams” that have reduced flows to Pakistan. This could be used in India's favour as an instrument of war, by ponding up water to induce drought downstream or opening the floodgates to mire Pakistani tanks and defences in a marsh. These are utterly fanciful ideas and ignore the fact that either course would first cause great damage to India before any harm comes to Pakistan. Jihadi warriors like the Lashkar-e-Tayeeba's Hafiz Saeed and others have also been harping on the theme that India is clandestinely “stealing” water.

The fact is that hydrological fluctuations in natural flows cannot be blamed on India. Nor is this country as yet fully using its entitlement to either the western or eastern rivers of the Indus basin. The problem essentially lies in Pakistan's own poor water management and delays in augmenting storages, so much so that Sindh does not get its share of lean season water below the Kotri barrage for flushing the Lower Indus and delta. Pakistan took its objections to India's Baghlihar project on the Chenab to the 'neutral expert' but got no comfort. It has now referred India's Kishenganga project to a court of arbitrators and has objected to the just completed Nimmo-Bazgoo run-of-river project on the Indus. Pakistan has also not allowed the proposed Wullar flood retention barrage to the Jhelum to come up, for decades.

India needs Pakistan's cooperation to build storage to use its 3.60 million acre feet (MAF) entitlement from the three western rivers in J&K. Pakistan in turn has been allocated the remaining waters of the three western rivers but cannot utilise this optimally for storage in the upper reaches which lie in India. The answer lies in Article VII of the IWT that speaks of 'Future Cooperation' to secure optimality on either side. This Article would thereby permit both sides to jointly explore, build and manage engineering works and undertake a variety of joint observations and watershed management programs to mutual benefit. Additional storage and power generation on either side of the LOC with respect to the western rivers, namely, the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab, could be shared with Pakistan on an appropriate cost-benefit basis

to mutual advantage. Likewise, India would benefit from drainage outlets through Rajasthan-Sindh to the sea.

Dr. Manmohan Singh has hinted at India's willingness to explore these ideas as a means of making borders "irrelevant" in J&K. Nothing could so comprehensively bind the people on either side of the LOC than such joint management of a critical natural resource. When the dispute over sharing the waters of the Indus first arose after Partition, David Lilienthal, Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the World Bank President, Eugene Black, pleaded with both sides not to partition the waters but to continue managing the Indus irrigation network as originally conceived as a single integrated system. Politics did not permit that to happen in the charged atmosphere of the times. But, 'Future Cooperation' under the IWT, whose time has come, could lead the way to renewed and incrementally more extensive water cooperation, not only in J&K but throughout the entire Indus Basin, confronted as it is by the uncertainties and challenges of unremitting climate change.

### **Conclusion**

Each step forward in such a cooperative endeavour, including trade and investment, would soften the need for ideological rigidity and obviate the need to use religion to differentiate itself from the 'other'. The logic of soft borders in J&K will powerfully influence the softening of the rest of the Indo-Pakistan boundary. The two armies will begin to look outwards and reduced defence expenditure will enable the countries to speed development and give a strong fillip to democratic forces. The SAARC will also come into its own in an arc from Afghanistan to, hopefully, Myanmar – opening out to Central Asia/Iran and to ASEAN to forge a powerful and dynamic geo-strategic and economic entity, able to give muscle to the making of an Asian Century.

Partition was bloody and traumatic. Many believed that once passions had subsided, the estranged brothers would come to embrace one another as two, now three, sovereign entities with a deep, rich, shared culture. The time has come for rage to give way to reconciliation. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh account for some 40 per cent of world Islam; a Muslim people who basically still remain liberal and humanist like their forefathers despite efforts to radicalise them. A sense of victimhood and lost glory has driven much of West Asian Islam to fundamentalism. An Indo-Pakistan-Bangladesh rapprochement in South Asia could be a powerful antidote. It is not beyond imagination that by its example and leadership, South Asia could play a redemptive role in the global regeneration of Islamic élan.

A change in Indo-Pakistan relations may well occur sooner than many imagine. It is therefore important to prepare for that day and build a prior consensus on alternative futures that offer Pakistan a way out. To be taken by surprise and be frustrated by internal wrangles on the appropriate response to a real window of opportunity, that might suddenly open, would be unforgivable.