

India-Pakistan: Regional Developments Shine a Glimmer of Hope for Real Peace

by Ramtanu Maitra

Aug. 4—The depth of animosity and mistrust that has dominated India-Pakistan relations over the decades exasperated international political observers long ago, and most have concluded that establishment of peace between India and Pakistan is virtually impossible. In degrees of difficulty, the task perhaps rests on a par with that of establishing peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, and is considered a generous notch above landing astronauts on the Moon.

However, notwithstanding such apparently insurmountable difficulty, it is evident that peace between India and Pakistan would not only serve both countries well, but would also enhance the security of the now-developing Eurasian region.

As of now, there is no indication that authorities in either Islamabad, or New Delhi, are deeply involved in working out measures for an all-around peace between the two countries as one of their urgent priorities. Yet, there may be a glimmer of hope on the horizon in light of some changes that have taken place in the region. And that includes the change of guard in Islamabad through its National Assembly elections last month. Although the new Prime Minister, Imran Khan, leading the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-based Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI), has not formed his coalition government

at the time this article was written, media reports indicate he has the support of Pakistan's all-powerful military. That could be a positive factor, if, and when, efforts are made to establish a meaningful peace between the two countries.

To carefully assess the potential for progress in Indo-Pakistani relations today, it is first necessary to set the context.

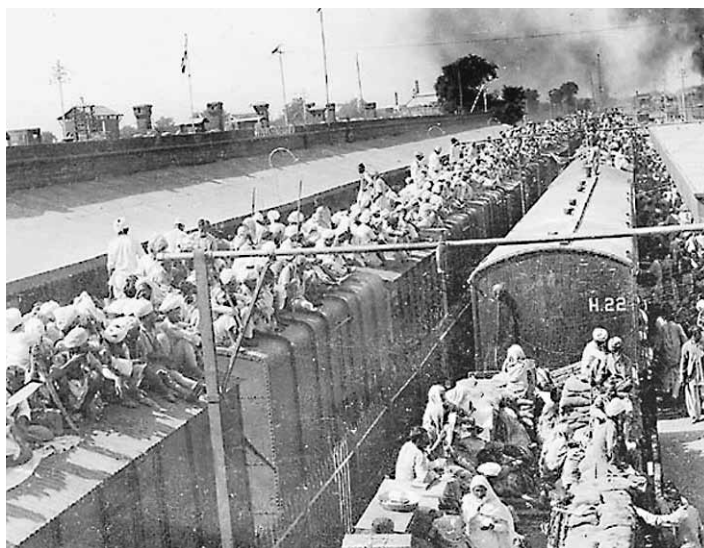
The British Colonial Curse

The seven-decade-old animosity between India and Pakistan began in 1947, on the very day the British Raj left the subcontinent after almost 300 years of the divide-and-rule policy that sharpened the division between subcontinent's two major religious groups, Hindus and Muslims. As a departing kick, British officials drew the borders in 40 days, using out-of-date maps and dated census materials to partition the subcontinent on the basis of religious demography, thus creating within it a nation for the Muslims—Pakistan—in two parts, East and West, separated by about 1,000 miles of Indian territory.

Having thus plunged the entire subcontinent into chaos and violence, the departing colonials handed



Refugee trains bringing Muslims from India to Pakistan, and Hindus from Pakistan to India during Partition in 1947.



over the reins to newly formed India and Pakistan. Compounding the chaos, the colonials left 565 independent princely states, whose lands comprised two-fifths of the subcontinent with a population 99 million at the time. The rulers of these princely states were given the option to join either India or Pakistan.

The violent riots between Hindus and Muslims that the British had nurtured to break up the subcontinent, got worse following the partition, and began to metamorphose from hostility between the Hindus and Muslims into that between India and Paki-

stan—not altogether an unexpected fall-out, since one of the nations was formed for people belonging to a particular religion. Israelis and Palestinians, or Irishmen for that matter, well know the type of conflict that carving out a religious state from the body of a country sparks and perpetuates.

Neither should it have been surprising that this state of impassioned chaos was quickly transformed into full-fledged war between the two new nations. One of the princely states, situated between India and Pakistan in the north, Jammu and Kashmir, became the first major battlefield. In October 1947, Pushtun tribesmen, accompanied by Pakistani troops wearing the garb of tribesmen from Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province (renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by Islamabad in 2010), invaded the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Troubled by the increasing deterioration in law and order and by earlier raids, which culminated in the invasion of the “tribesmen,” the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, signed the Instrument of Accession to merge the state with India, and requested armed assistance from India.

Indian troops stopped the Pakistani troops from advancing, but did not push them back to where they had come from. Thus the divided and disputed state of Jammu and



Kashmir was born. Since Islamabad did not recognize the Instrument of Accession, it continues to claim that the state belongs to Pakistan on the basis of its Muslim majority; and for years, Islamabad has deployed well-armed terrorists to weaken Indian control there.

Since that first war over the state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947, animosity has become more pronounced. India and Pakistan have fought two more wars—the last, in 1971, resulted in the separation of Pakistan’s eastern wing from its western

wing to become an independent nation-state, Bangladesh.

Beyond Simla: How Pakistani Terrorism Was Born

Following the 1971 war, on July 2, 1972, the late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the late Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed the Simla Agreement. It begins thus:

The Government of India and the Government of Pakistan are resolved that the two countries put an end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred their relations and work for the promotion of a friendly and harmonious relationship and the establishment of durable peace in the subcontinent so that both countries may henceforth devote their resources and energies to the pressing task of advancing the welfare of their people. (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Simla Agreement*, July 2, 1972)

On the status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the agreement states:

The line of control resulting from the ceasefire of December 17, 1971, shall be respected by both



Sir Hari Singh, Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, in 1944.

sides without prejudice to the recognized position of either side. Neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations. Both sides further undertake to refrain from the threat or the use of force in violation of this line.

The Cold War greatly strengthened the Pakistani military's hand. Pakistan was an important geopolitical ally to undermine the Soviets and their allies, including India. beholden to Saudi Arabia, Britain, and the United States, the Pakistani military was "used" to serve the anti-Soviet "democrats" and Islamists. The Islamist mob was recruited, armed and provided guidance. Their alliance with the anti-India jihadis within Pakistan was viewed by the anti-Soviet West as a mere blip on the radar screen. The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and its decade-long floundering there, allowed the West and the Saudis to build up Pakistan as a hub of armed orthodox Islamists who "hated" everyone with passion, including the Hindus of India.

At the same time, the British curse continued to plague India-Pakistan relations. Britain harbors politicians, bureaucrats, immigrants and Islamists who spare no effort to stoke the fires of the Kashmir conflict, organizing those who are ready to lay down their lives to establish an independent Kashmir. Even if such efforts



Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi signing the Simla Agreement. Simla, India, July 2, 1972.

Bhutto.org

were met with little success, London's empire-servers needed the conflict to maintain its influence over the area and to prevent India and Pakistan from working together for the development of their respective countries. As a result of hundreds of years of involvement in the Indian subcontinent as colonial rulers, during which time they "educated" a stream of the Indian and Pakistani elite, London has assets on both sides of partitioned Kashmir. Some are old assets, who have kept the pot boiling all this while; and some are new, and decidedly more violent.

Understandably, the shadow of the past wars has made it difficult to push ahead with an admittedly feeble peace process. Still, efforts were made over the years; but, repeatedly sabotaged, those efforts failed to lay a firm foundation for a real peace process to mature.

Progress and Setbacks

A landmark date in efforts to lay the foundation for peace between the two countries was Feb. 21, 1999, when the Prime Ministers of the two countries—Atal Bihari Vajpayee of India and Mian Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan—signed the Lahore Declaration. This committed India and Pakistan to intensify their efforts to resolve all issues.



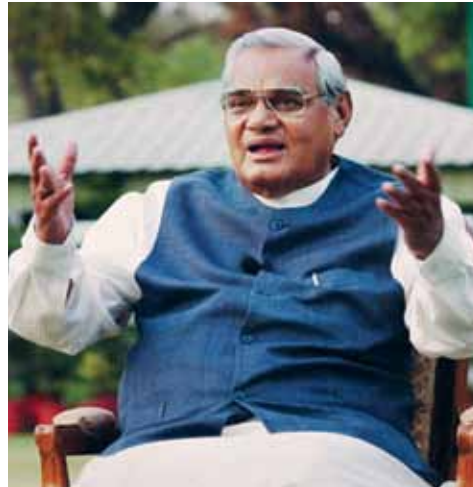
RIA Novosti/Yurii Somov

Soviet forces in Afghanistan in 1986.



swiss-image.ch/Remy Steinegger

Pervez Musharraf, President of Pakistan, speaking at the World Economic Forum, January 24, 2008.



CC/Deccan Herald

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Indian Prime Minister, 1998-2004.

“cross-border terrorism” in the Kashmir Valley. In his breakfast meeting with Indian media, Musharraf said that the Kashmir dispute remained central to ending enmity with India. (Umbreen Javaid and Khushboo Ejaz, [“The Agra Summit: A Critical Appraisal,”](#) June 2017) Within months, however, on Dec. 13, 2001, Pakistani terrorists attacked the Indian Parliament in New Delhi.

At that point, the prospect of resuming a fresh round of peace talks seemed unattainable. Nonetheless, the potential of a stalemate in the protracted crisis once again led the two sides to sit at a

However, just three months after Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee’s symbolic ride on the inaugural bus trip from New Delhi to Lahore, the promises of that declaration were abandoned when military-backed Pakistani infiltrators triggered a limited war in the Kargil region of Kashmir. That infiltration was organized by Pakistan’s then Chief of the Army Staff, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who soon took over the reins of Pakistan in a military coup in 2000. Musharraf had kept Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif mostly in the dark while the latter was discussing resolving various issues with his Indian counterpart. (Nasim Zehra, *From Kargil to the Coup: Events that Shook Pakistan*, 2018)

Still, Vajpayee did not throw in the towel. In July 2001, he held a summit in Agra with Pakistan’s then Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf, who had been instrumental in the Lahore Declaration’s demise. Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee and Musharraf had one-on-one talks for more than eight hours during the two-day summit. The talks covered many bilateral issues, but concentrated on the Kashmir dispute. Pakistan insisted that Kashmir was the core issue, while India wanted a more broad-based dialogue including

negotiating table in 2004. The resulting Composite Dialogue lasted for five years, during which public diplomatic gestures by Indian and Pakistani leaders facilitated discussion and softened attitudes among civil society and the media on both sides. More important, closed-door dialogues made substantial progress in drafting the conditions for peace. In addition to confidence-building measures, including the resumption of a New Delhi-Lahore bus service, and a number of concessions on the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir, those back-channel negotiations launched in February 2004 brought India and Pakistan somewhat closer to agreement on Kashmir, the Siachen Glacier and Sir Creek, the key outstanding territorial issues.

But, true to the oscillatory nature of the India-Pakistan relationship, the progress of the Composite Dialogue was derailed after the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks. It was not until the “cricket diplomacy” between Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the March 2011 Cricket World Cup semifinal between India and Pakistan, that the two sides agreed to resume talks. (Stephanie Flamen-



CC/Nicholas (Nichalp)

Nariman House, a one of eight synagogues in Mumbai, after terrorists attacked on November 26, 2008.

baum and Megan Neville, [Optimism and Obstacles in India-Pakistan Peace Talks](#), United States Institute of Peace, July 15, 2011)

Since the monstrous November 26-29, 2008 attacks in Mumbai, Pakistan-deployed terrorists have carried out a number of attacks on Indian security forces. One such notable attack took place on January 2, 2016, on a forward airbase near Pathankot, Punjab. This attack is significant because less than three weeks earlier, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on his way home from Kabul, had stopped in Pakistan. “Officials in Delhi and Islamabad told *The Hindu* that Mr. Modi had telephoned Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from Kabul to greet him on his birthday, and during the call, made plans to travel to Lahore to wish him personally a few hours later.” (Suhasini Haidar and Kallol Bhattacharjee, “PM Goes to Lahore, Makes a Christmas Date with History,” *The Hindu*, Dec. 25, 2015) That was a major gesture, but Islamabad had no compunction in letting that one to go to waste, as well.

Despite those setbacks—and the sabotage organized by Pakistan’s military, exploiting Pakistan’s weak and fragile political system—there was no dearth of attempts to start talks between the two to ease tensions. A true peace, of course, was never on the horizon, since one party was aiding and abetting terrorist attacks against the other as the means to secure control over all of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Trust Issue

None of the peace efforts succeeded in easing tensions to the level at which serious discussions could take place. Perhaps the main ingredient missing was trust. Pakistan’s governments, which fell under military domination soon after the country’s inception, could never get past the knowledge that the breakup of the subcontinent was not acceptable to most Indians. This paranoia was spread throughout Pakistan by the military



archivepmo.nic.in
Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani in Mohali, March 30, 2011.

and later by the Islamic jihadis. It has been used to justify the Pakistan military’s retention of the levers of power, and to argue that a democratic form of government under weak political elites would endanger the nation’s existence. The Pakistani military has never stopped chanting this mantra.

As American academic Ashley Tellis noted in a 2017 paper for the U.S.-based think-tank, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had addressed this paranoia during his historic 1999 visit to Lahore. He used

oratory and poetry to convey a significant message to the people of Pakistan when he visited their Minar-e-Pakistan national monument, boldly stating: “A stable, secure and prosperous Pakistan is in India’s interest. Let no one in Pakistan be in doubt. India sincerely wishes Pakistan well.” (Rakesh Sood, “To Talk or Not to Talk . . .,” *The Hindu*, Jan. 14, 2016)

Quoting Daniel S. Markey, a well-known American analyst of the subcontinent who stated, “most Indian



PIB of India
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at Sharif’s home in Raiwind. December 25, 2015.

strategists see Pakistan as a huge mess, not one India would want to inherit even if it had the military tools to sweep across the border unobstructed,” Tellis sums up:

India merely wants to be left alone: it desires that Islamabad and Rawalpindi [army headquarters] concentrate on their own domestic challenges and, recognizing the futility of pursuing an unattainable parity with New Delhi, permit India to advance its great-power ambitions in ways that will not undermine Pakistan’s security, given its possession of nuclear weapons.” (Ashley J. Tellis, [Are India-Pakistan Peace Talks Worth a Damn?](#) Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2017)

Some analysts are even blunter, arguing that, in fact, Pakistan has no legitimate claim at all against India. In a 2016 article, American academic C. Christine Fair, an associate professor at Georgetown University’s Security Studies Program, succinctly summarizes why Pakistan continues to disregard peace with India as a necessity. Says Fair:

Indians and the rest of the world must understand that the Pakistan army will always be a spoiler of even the most well-intended peace overture from Pakistan’s beleaguered and besieged civilians. Once one realizes this, one must confront the very real question of the ultimate aim of this dialogue, because it cannot produce peace. . . .

In fact, there is no territorial dispute in which Pakistan has any defensible equities. Neither the Indian Independence Act of 1947 nor the Radcliffe Boundary Commission accord Pakistan any claim to Kashmir. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 averred that the sovereigns of princely states could choose which state to join. As is well-known, Maharaja of Kashmir Hari Singh only acceded to India after Pakistan dispatched irregular forces to seize the terrain by force. In fact, Pakistan makes this claim based



Pakistan Army troops on parade.

www.pakistanarmy.gov

upon the Two Nation Theory, its communally bigoted founding ideology. (C. Christine Fair, “Denying Pakistan the Dividends of Terror,” *Open* magazine, Sept. 23, 2016)

Changes in the Regional Environment

With that as background, conventional wisdom says that peace between India and Pakistan is well-nigh impossible. However, conventional wisdom has limitations grounded in time and environment. Global political situations, particularly in the region, have changed, although those changes have yet to be fully reflected in Pakistan’s domestic political environment.

Changes in the region during the last few years have been extensive. Barring any unforeseeable event that may engulf the region in the coming years, these changes could bear healthy fruit. To begin with, the rise of China and India as major economic powers and their close relations with Russia, could make the Eurasian zone, along with Southeast and East Asia, the motor for development in the coming decades.

While India has done very well in maintaining, and even upgrading, its relations with these two areas of future prosperity, Pakistan has also made some progress. What makes India’s success particularly laudable is that it has brought under its umbrella of economic partnership such important East Asian countries as Japan and South Korea, and to its west, almost all of the Gulf nations, including Iran. India’s success with the Gulf countries and Iran—all Muslim nations—obliterates another piece of conventional wisdom, expressed mostly in the West—namely, that India is allergic to

Muslims.

There is, however, still one major caveat in the Eurasian zone (minus the Middle East)—and that is Afghanistan, a bordering neighbor of Pakistan, where hostilities continue with no solution in sight. This particular situation has also created a rush of bad blood between India and Pakistan, because the Pakistani military is actively involved in preventing any large-scale interaction between Afghanistan and India, contrary to the needs and the wishes of those two countries. Many Indian analysts and officials believe Washington is biased toward helping Pakistan—an old U.S. ally against the erstwhile Soviet Union—virtually ignoring all recent U.S. overtures toward India on Afghanistan.

The late U.S. diplomat Richard Holbrooke's efforts in 2009 to include India in his Afghanistan-Pakistan portfolio were not only rejected by President Obama, but looked at suspiciously in New Delhi as well.

Among the environmental changes, topmost on the list is the growing prowess of Russia, India and China within the five-country BRICS organization—Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Although domestic problems within South Africa and Brazil have stymied the growth of the BRICS as a major economic powerhouse, the continuing growth of Russia, India and China has not slowed their economic and political interactions.

In addition to the BRICS, interaction between Russia, India and China has been given a boost in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO was originally formed as the Shanghai Five—China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan—in 1996. Following its inclusion of Uzbekistan as a full member in 2001, it was re-founded in Shanghai in 2001 and renamed the SCO. In 2017, India and Pakistan became full members. The SCO also has six dialogue partners, including Afghanistan and Iran.

After it was set up as a confidence-building forum to demilitarize borders, the organization's goals and agenda have since broadened to include increased military and counter-terrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing. The SCO has also intensified its focus on regional economic initiatives such as the recently announced integration of the China-led Silk Road Economic Belt and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union.



Xinhua/Liu Tian

Sahiwal coal-fired power plant in Pakistan's Punjab province, the first major energy project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, inaugurated July 3, 2017.

The potential for the SCO to be effective is manifold. By including Pakistan as a full member, and having Afghanistan as an observer, the “Big Three”—Russia, China and India—have created an opportunity to deal with terrorism and drug-trafficking issues which, if not handled with firm determination, could affect the developmental plans of the “Big Three” and weaken their ability to play a global role.

Terrorism already affects all three directly. In India, the terrorism instigated and orchestrated from Rawalpindi and Islamabad in the Indian part of Jammu and Kashmir continues, despite various measures undertaken by New Delhi. In addition, heroin/opium moving in from Afghanistan through Pakistan in the west, has bolstered the financing of the terrorists in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, and unleashed a drug epidemic in the Indian state of Punjab.

In Russia, particularly in the northern Caucasus, Islamic jihadis have established their presence over the decades. Among the most affected areas are Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia and North Ossetia; but the terrorists have reared their heads in Tatarstan as well.

Work Cut Out for China

For China, a terrorist-free Eurasian zone is the key to making its visionary Silk Road Economic Belt (henceforth identified as the Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI program), viable and beneficial for the host and recipient countries. The BRI runs through the Central Asian countries to Russia and Europe, and also to the Gulf countries through Iran. China has invested heavily in this enterprise to make these transport corridors a

success. However, if China does not step up to the plate in dealing with the drug traffickers and terrorists who roam virtually free in these sparsely populated areas, Beijing's dream of interlinking China through roads and railways with Central Asia, Europe and the Middle East could end in tatters.

China has also invested heavily in Pakistan, where terrorists, some of whom operate under the protective umbrella of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), remain active. China is planning to invest some \$60 billion in Pakistan to upgrade roads and railways, to build a port in Gwadar City on the Arabian Sea close to the Iranian border, and to build hydro- and coal-based power plants. This scheme, which is very much underway now, is known as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and one of its arteries passes through secessionist and terrorist-infested Balochistan Province to Gwadar—a key destination of China. The BRI is not a one-shot deal—its utility will be realized on the basis of its 24/7 operations spread over the coming years. That means that the entire area around these installations has to remain terrorist-free and stable.

Another Positive Development

Another noticeable change in the area that could help start a real peace process between India and Pakistan, is what could be described as the apparent “rapprochement” between Russia and Pakistan. During the Cold War, Moscow considered Islamabad a facilitator of its adversary (for good reason). Pakistan had surreptitiously provided the United States a base in Peshawar to carry out surveillance on the Soviet Union. That was exposed in the 1960 U-2 spy plane incident. Then, following the Red Army's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and throughout its decade-long stay in that country, Pakistan was a conduit for the West and Saudi Arabia to recruit, train and arm Islamic jihadis brought in from Arabia and beyond, to fight and kill Russian military personnel.

Although the Soviet Union ceased to exist in 1991, the bad blood between Moscow and Islamabad continued to flow for almost another three decades. But today that seems to have changed. Lately, Russia has extended a friendly hand toward Pakistan. Since 2015, the chiefs of Pakistan's Army, Navy and Air Force have traveled to Russia. The flurry of high-level exchanges



Serviceman of Russia and Pakistan storm a base as part of their joint military exercise Friendship-2016. Cherat range, Pakistan.

mil.ru

between the two nations resulted in the signing of a deal for the sale of four Mi-35 attack helicopters to Islamabad. In September 2016, about 200 troops from the two countries were involved in a two-week military drill named “Friendship 2016.” A Russian ground forces contingent came to Pakistan to participate in the first-ever joint military exercises. (“[Russian Troops Arrive in Pakistan for First-Ever Joint Drills](#),” PTI, Sept. 23, 2016)

Equally significant is the recent visit to Russia of Pakistan's Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Kaleem Shaukat. Just now, on July 31, Shaukat met Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Federation Navy, Admiral Vladimir Ivanovich Korolyov, at the Central Naval Museum in St. Petersburg. They discussed professional matters, bilateral naval collaboration, and the security environment in the Indian Ocean region. Admiral Shaukat also attended the main naval parade on the occasion of Russian Federation Navy Day, besides visiting a naval shipyard and the frigate *Admiral Makarov*. (“[Pakistan, Russia Sign MoU for Naval Cooperation](#),” *The Nation*, July 31, 2018)

If the Russia-Pakistan “rapprochement,” which is still in an early stage, does, indeed, materialize, it would help India. It would mean that Russia, a well-wisher of India, alongside China, can bring full-court pressure on Pakistan to stop aiding the anti-India terrorists, and act as a responsible nation by accepting the basic principles on which an India-Pakistan peace process could begin.

Tell-Tale Signs

There is no guarantee that the changes mentioned above will automatically create the environment for starting a peace process. On the ground, there is no such indication yet. Only recently, Pakistan refused to adhere to the 2003 ceasefire understanding to not use its violations at the LoC to provide cover for infiltration. The Indian government says that in 2018 alone, there have already been more than 1,000 violations of the 2003 ceasefire agreement between New Delhi and Islamabad, by the Pakistani side. ([“India Asks Pakistan to Adhere to 2003 Ceasefire Agreement,”](#) TNN, Jun. 8, 2018)

These violations are clear indications that the Pakistani military wants to continue its anti-India jihad, throwing caution to the wind. On the other hand, some of the recent statements by top Pakistani military officials indicate a subtle shift in tone. In April, Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, invited Sanjay Vishwasrao, the Indian military attaché, and his team to the Pakistan Day military parade in Islamabad. The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI, a British defense and security think tank, whose director is Karin von Hippel, former chief of staff to U.S. General John Allen, special presidential envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter-ISIL) described the gesture as “historic,” noting:

And, in a sign that ties between the two foes are warming up, Javed Bajwa followed this two weeks later by saying that the Pakistan military wanted peace and dialogue with India. (Kamal Alam, [“Pakistan’s Military Reaches Out to India,”](#) RUSI, May 3, 2018)

As RUSI also pointed out,

Bajwa himself, speaking at RUSI last year, announced that “the Pakistan army is now no more insecure and feels confident of its future,” and that he welcomes Indian participation in Pakistan’s flagship infrastructure project, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Another statement issued recently by Pakistan’s military spokesman is also significant. Speaking at a press briefing on June 4, military spokesperson Major-General Asif Ghafoor said he wished for all issues be-

tween the nuclear-armed neighbors to be resolved through dialogue. “War is a failure of diplomacy,” Ghafoor said. “We are two nuclear states; there is no space for war. So dialogue continues. India has always been the one to back out from dialogue, not Pakistan.” (Asad Hashim, [“Pakistani Military Says ‘No Space for War’ with India,”](#) PTI, June 4, 2018)

Do these statements imply that the paranoia, the policy of bleeding India, and the siege mentality that have driven Rawalpindi’s policies for decades have begun to wane? It would be naive to assume that that has happened.

Some wonder if the arrival of Imran Khan as the new leader of Pakistan’s weak political system will help the peace process. Imran Khan has very little experience in dealing with international and domestic security, and economic and political affairs. Moreover, he will have to preside over an economy that is badly in debt, and a currency that is falling rapidly. Until such time as he emerges as a leader who is in control of the Pakistani political minefield set up by veteran Punjabi and Sindhi politicians, while still able to retain Rawalpindi’s confidence, that question cannot be answered.

Conclusion

In concluding, a note on border disputes of the kind that exist between India and Pakistan, is in order. These border disputes should not be allowed to perpetuate animosity and hostility. Look, for example, at Sino-Indian relations. India and China have a longstanding, fundamental dispute over their borders. Both sides understand that these border disputes will not be settled in the near term. Yet Sino-Indian relations are developing in many other directions. Economic interactions, as well as bilateral trade and promises of cooperation in security matters, are growing.

Finally, it is also important to note that the mere cessation of hostilities, or simply ceasing fire along the borders, are not the entire definition of “peace.” While cessation of hostilities is the necessary first step, what makes “peace” worthwhile, is developing interaction between the two countries at every level—ensuring security, strengthening economic relations, engaging in joint innovative projects, setting up transport corridors, and enhancing bilateral trade.

To make India-Pakistan peace worthwhile, both sides need to embrace the whole process.