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India–Pakistan Relations

Between War and Peace

RAJESH M. BASRUR

India's long drawn-out antagonism with Pakistan has occupied front stage for the best part of its history since independence in 1947. The strings of wars and crises that have erupted in the course of this enduring rivalry have left little room for optimism about its prospects.[1] But after half a decade of continual negotiation and a series of small but significant steps forward in finding common ground, the India–Pakistan relationship shows signs of having reached a new plane. Tracing the evolution of the relationship, this chapter shows how an 'intractable' rivalry has begun to change in substantive ways. In brief, it is argued that the advent of nuclear weapons and the pressures of globalization at the system level, perceptible shifts in national identity and political organization at the state level, and the unprecedented initiatives taken by individual policymakers have combined to alter the trajectory of the relationship. Though a positive outcome is hardly assured as yet, the trend is sufficiently encouraging to evoke expectations of better times. Yet, it will be seen, the process is likely to remain a relatively unhurried and incremental one.

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS AT THE SYSTEM LEVEL

It is important to first distinguish between structure and process in the international system. The former, to present a simplified version of neorealist theory, refers to the distribution of power among states that cannot trust one another because they inhabit an anarchic system.[2] The latter refers to the innumerable interactions that occur continuously among states. The former produces broad patterns of behaviour such as the propensity of states to come into conflicts of interest and power, to form alliances, to engage in arms racing, and occasionally to go to war. The latter, disdained by neorealists

as negating the possibility of elegant theory because of its complexity, does in fact produce some important overarching patterns. For instance, as the neoliberals point out, the transnationalization of the global economy, a central feature of the system in the current era, makes inter-state conflict more costly and therefore cooperation more likely.[3] Moreover, as the pace of technological change accelerates, the premium on efficiency goes up and the cost of eschewing cooperation rises significantly. Mikhail Gorbachev recognized this and went to great lengths to end the Cold War so that the Soviet state might not be left behind.[4] Similarly, nuclear weapons produce strategic interdependence and induce at least tacit cooperation by raising the costs of war (relative to potential gains) to unacceptable levels.[5]

To refine our understanding of the effects of structure and process, it is useful to distinguish between systemic levels. Thus, the term 'international system' is applied here at the global as well as the regional levels.[6] With regard to structure, it is readily evident that both India and Pakistan are relatively weak states in the global system. In contrast, at the regional level, in what may be called the South Asian or subcontinental system, India is a major power, while Pakistan, though no mean contender, has always been much smaller in terms of size, population, economic strength, and military capabilities. Large or strong powers tend to behave differently from smaller, weaker ones. As Michael Mandelbaum shows, weak states submit to strong states only if they have no viable option. Otherwise, they adopt typical strategies.[7]

First, strong states try and draw closer to their weaker counterparts through enhanced political and economic relationships in order to exploit opportunities to use their power advantage. In contrast, through a strategy of 'moat-building', weak states seek to distance themselves politically and economically from strong states in order to reduce their vulnerability. Second, strong states show a marked preference for bilateral engagement, which places them in an advantageous position, while weak states favour a multilateral framework as it enables them to draw on the support of others in the bargaining process. Third, strong states try to exert their power over weak states to bend them to their will. The latter respond by garnering as much military capability as they can through their own efforts, or what we today call 'internal balancing', and by attempting to bolster their defences with the help of other strong states, that is, by 'external balancing'. It follows that if the weak are successful in obtaining significant support, the balance between the two hostile states may be altered, in which case the stronger state will tend to augment its position by means of its own balancing efforts.

During the period 1947–71, the pattern of behaviour in the South Asian system was mixed. On the one hand, India was clearly a much larger

state with all the attributes of a dominant regional power, comprising 73 per cent of South Asia's land area, 77 per cent of its population, and 77 per cent of its gross national product (GNP).[8] Yet, for the first two decades after independence, its actual capacities were limited, whereas the Pakistani military had an exaggerated perception of its relative strength vis-à-vis India.[9] This gave Pakistan the 'false optimism' that caused it to initiate war twice in the expectation of extracting Kashmir by force.[10] The first war, fought in 1947–8, at least partly justified Pakistani optimism, for it left Pakistan in control of about a third of Kashmir. Pakistan's confidence was boosted by its membership of the Cold War alliance system of the United States (US). It became a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1955, which enabled it to obtain American tanks and fighter aircraft. Its success in external balancing did appear to have given it a fleeting advantage. In the wake of India's poor performance in the 1962 war against China, Pakistan was emboldened to attempt another military venture in 1965, but this time to no avail. The post-war Tashkent Agreement (January 1966) confirmed the 1948 division of Kashmir.

In the early 1970s, India's structural position became uneasy with the emergence of a Pakistan–US–China nexus, but it countered by signing a 'friendship treaty' with the Soviet Union in August 1971. Its confidence buoyed, India took advantage of Pakistan's internal squabbles by intervening militarily. Thus, the use of military power worked in the opposite direction when India used their third war to divide Pakistan and create an independent Bangladesh in December 1971.

This was a turning point. Thereafter, till the mid-1980s, the India–Pakistan relationship conformed to the strong state/weak state pattern. In the structure of the regional system, India was the strong state, the 'local superpower' (as one unbiased if exaggerated view put it), Pakistan the weak one.[11] By the mid-1980s, India's military capabilities far exceeded those of truncated Pakistan. Its total military expenditure in 1985 was US$ 8,921 million against Pakistan's US$ 2,957 million.[12] In relative terms, the cost for Pakistan was much higher. In the same year, India's defence expenditure as a percentage of its GNP was 3 per cent, while Pakistan spent 6.9 per cent of its GNP on defence.[13] To offset its weakness, Pakistan turned to a determined quest for nuclear weapons—the 'great equalizer'—which it eventually obtained by the mid-1980s.

Using strong state strategy, India consistently sought to build closer economic and cultural relations with Pakistan. Accordingly, it favoured higher levels of trade with Pakistan, granted most favoured nation (MFN)

status to it in 1995, and welcomed Pakistani cultural figures into India. Pakistan, on the other hand, resisted trade with India, which had declined precipitously from 32 per cent of its imports and 56 per cent of its exports in 1948–9 to a 'mere trickle' by the early 1950s.[14] Official trade, though supplemented by indirect trade and smuggling, was kept to a very low level. By the late 1990s, Pakistan's exports to India were just 0.42 per cent of its total exports and its imports from India only 1.22 per cent of its total imports.[15] In consequence, India's capacity to influence Pakistan was kept to the minimum. Cultural links were shunned. Hindi films and music, popular in Pakistan, were not given access to the Pakistani market. As Pakistani writer Irfan Husain comments, the political leadership 'sought to justify the existence of Pakistan by presenting an image of a country severed from the heritage of culture and history and sealed from the map of South Asia'.[16] But in fact, Pakistan's policy equally reflected the caution of a weak state resisting engagement with a strong one.

Indian bilateralism on Kashmir contrasted with Pakistan's preference for a multilateral approach. India sought to restrict the scope of a possible resolution of the Kashmir question to bilateral negotiations, laying much stress on the Simla Agreement of 1972, which it viewed as a mutual commitment to bilateralism. Pakistan, on the other hand, consistently attempted to drum up support from the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and individual states, notably the US and China.

From around the mid-1980s, two systemic processes affected the strategic equation in South Asia. The advent of nuclear weapons dramatically altered the India–Pakistan relationship, generating a surge of hostility between them. In the opposite direction, and more slowly, the accelerating pace of global economic change created new incentives for cooperation. With regard to nuclear weapons, the debate over the merits and demerits of nuclear proliferation, while interesting and even useful, stops short of understanding the dynamic processes at work when states enter into a nuclear rivalry.[17] The pattern that all nuclear rivalries display is similar.[18] The level of tension initially shoots up, producing a tendency towards crisis, which in turn brings caution owing to the fear of nuclear war, and negotiations follow. Thereafter, the rivals may repeat the cycle, though not necessarily. India and Pakistan, like the US and the erstwhile Soviet Union, did go through a series of alternations between crisis and negotiation before settling down to negotiate seriously.[19] The tension wrought by rising mutual suspicions and fears was exacerbated by Pakistan's strategy of pushing a low-cost option. With a new confidence gained from

the knowledge that India no longer had recourse to war, Pakistan stepped up its support for terrorist groups active in India, especially in Kashmir.[20]

The first crisis occurred in 1990, when both nations were still covert nuclear powers. Both sides mobilized forces, though in defensive configurations, but avoided war. A second crisis took place in 1999, barely a year after both had conducted nuclear tests in the summer of 1998. This time Pakistan pushed the envelope further by sending troops in the guise of *mujahideen* to occupy positions along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir that had been vacated by Indian troops for the winter.[21] Fighting occurred over several weeks from May to July, but both countries exercised restraint at considerable cost. India refrained from crossing the LoC, though this hamstrung its use of air power and slowed down its counter-attack. Pakistan, still claiming that the intruders were 'freedom fighters', did not back up its troops when they were forced to retreat. Both sides took care not to escalate. In December 2001, a third and prolonged crisis broke out when terrorists attacked India's Parliament and an angry India threatened limited war.[22] Both sides mobilized fully along the entire border and resorted to nuclear signalling by carrying out missile tests. The crisis eventually petered out, but left behind a sense of exhaustion. Yet another crisis occurred in late 2008 when a small group of Pakistan-based terrorists ran amuck in Mumbai city, killing some 170 people with small arms.[23] At the time of writing (May 2009), though tension remained, there was a slow drift to normalcy, and the risk of war, which had reared its head again, seemed to have subsided.[24]

Both sides made some gains from the recurring confrontations. India drew the world's attention to Pakistan's risk-taking and its support for terrorism, while Pakistan compelled India to think beyond its status quo approach on Kashmir and come to the negotiating table. Both also saw the limits of their strategies: cross-border terrorism and limited war threats were high-risk gambits that could trigger nuclear war. From this perspective, compromise appeared an acceptable option. In January 2004, India and Pakistan agreed to begin a 'composite dialogue' on a range of issues, including terrorism, nuclear risk reduction, and Kashmir. Most remarkably, they began to think out of the box on Kashmir, abandoning mutually exclusive claims and focusing on the softening of the LoC, expanding communication links between the divided portions of Kashmir, and enhancing trade.[25]

When we turn to the economic aspect of systemic processes, we find developments in the system as a whole had a significant effect on India and Pakistan. The key feature of the system was (and is) what is loosely

referred to as 'globalization', a process that was prominent by the mid-1980s. The movement of goods, services, and money grew phenomenally as a result of what Daniel Bell called the 'third technological revolution', an amalgam of developments in electronics, miniaturization, digitalization, and software development.[26] The prominent features of the globalizing economy included transnational production and greatly expanded flows of trade and money. The value of world trade grew from US$ 244.1 billion in 1960 to US$ 3,846.2 billion in 1980.[27] For developing countries, the old Third World–ism of national protection was no longer viable: to get ahead, states had to shift to more open and competitive economies.[28] India, as Rahul Mukherji has shown in Chapter 14 of this volume, entered the brave new world of liberalization reluctantly, dragged into it by a balance of payments crisis that led it to seek a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which inevitably compelled it to abandon autarky. Thereafter, its economy shifted gear and quickly achieved a high rate of growth. In the changed environment, with a new focus on obtaining foreign direct investment (FDI) for growth, the economic cost of instability generated by India–Pakistan hostility began to be viewed as unaffordable. During the 2001–2 crisis, there was public criticism to this effect.[29] It was brought home to political leaders that the fast-moving world of information technology was unwilling to tolerate the uncertainty arising from regional tensions and the threat of war.[30]

Political tensions, as we have seen, had long confined India–Pakistan trade to a low level because Pakistan sought to protect itself by keeping India at arm's length. It was only after the 2001–2 crisis was behind them that trade between the two countries began to grow. Along with the growing awareness that nuclear weapons had made confrontation a negative-sum game came the recognition that there was much to be gained through enhanced trade. At the time of writing (May 2009), Pakistan had yet to grant MFN status to India, but that was only part of a bargaining process over the terms of opening up, particularly over the Pakistani demand that India reduce its non-tariff barriers.[31] With talks under way, India–Pakistan trade spurted from US$ 521 million in 2004–5 to about US$ 2 billion in 2007–8.[32] The opening of trade between the separated portions of Kashmir in 2008 brought both economic benefit and a lessening of tension. Talks on a proposed Iran–Pakistan–India gas pipeline were intermittently on, though slowed by the tension between the US and Iran over the latter's nuclear ambitions.[33] Simultaneously, there was a gradual opening up of cultural relations between India and Pakistan. Pakistan permitted the entry of Indian films and cultural troupes after more than four decades. In July

2008, the Pakistani film *Ramchand Pakistani* made history when it was released simultaneously in both countries.[34] Though the Mumbai terrorist attacks of November 2008 marked a sharp setback to relations generally, the 2008–9 crisis was less severe than the three previous ones. One encouraging sign was that, notwithstanding the chill, the rising volume of trade stayed on track, with Indian exports of tomatoes to Pakistan actually increasing during this period.[35]

Although nuclear weapons and economic interdependence impose constraints on the exercise of power in the traditional sense, power does play a significant role in other ways. First, economic power enables a nation to exercise influence over its interlocutors, whether by means of carrots or sticks. Here, India's emergence as a major economic player has occurred precisely at the time when Pakistan's economy has struggled to stay afloat, largely as a result of domestic political turmoil. Nowhere is this more evident than in the relationship between the two states and major international institutions. India's stature has risen sufficiently for it to count as an agenda-shaper on critical issues. For instance, the World Trade Organization's Doha Round of talks collapsed in July 2008 when India (in tandem with China) refused to bow to the US and European pressure to agree to jettison tariff safeguards for its farmers.[36] Similarly, the following month, India (again, along with China) successfully resisted efforts by developed nations at Accra in Ghana to impose greenhouse gas emission cuts on developing nations despite their low per capita contribution to global warming.[37] Clearly, India had demonstrated unprecedented institutional and economic power. In contrast, Pakistan by late 2008 was in dire straits, seeking a massive infusion of cash from lenders as its economy struggled to stem capital flight to the tune of US$ 15 billion annually.[38]

Second, political power still counts, for it determines the success or failure of states in negotiating their way through the institutional framework of international politics. On this front, India made a major breakthrough as a global player when, in the autumn of 2008, the US and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) agreed to change their restrictive rules and engage in civilian nuclear commerce with it.[39] Washington's insistence that this was a single exception and that Pakistan would not get a similar deal underscored what has come to be known as a policy of 'de-hyphenating' the neighbours and providing only India with special treatment.[40] In effect, the new dispensation recognized India's status as a nuclear weapons power since it involved the acknowledgement of a plan separating the Indian civilian and military programmes. Beneath the expressions of concern about India's need for nuclear energy lay a structural calculus: the interests of India and

the US, backed by major components of the NSG, converged over the need to hedge against the new superpower-in-waiting, China.[41] Economics counted as well: the Indian nuclear energy market was enormous, with US Assistant Commerce Secretary David Bohigian estimating it at about US$ 100 billion over a decade.[42]

Though Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons gave it military status comparable to India, the latter's combination of rising economic and political power has widened the gap between them significantly. This gap further encourages (but does not necessitate) long-term cooperation between the two countries. India's strategic horizons have spread well beyond the subcontinent and it needs a modicum of stability in its immediate environs to enable it to play a bigger role in Asia. Pakistan, weakened as never before by internal difficulties, has been placed in a position where the economic cost of challenging India is rising rapidly, while the military and economic incentives to cooperate are growing simultaneously.

Thus, at the systemic level, the structurally driven behaviour of yesteryear was altered as a consequence of fundamental changes occurring in the process of the relationship. The synchronized impact of nuclear weapons and economic transnationalization created the conditions for the shift by (i) providing security from attack to Pakistan and thereby reducing its sense of vulnerability; (ii) producing sufficient risk to encourage leaders to rethink their relationship; and (iii) creating stronger incentives to cooperate, both because nuclear weapons brought a mutual interest in stability and because global economic pressures introduced the prospect of higher returns from cooperation.[43] But the change was not predetermined. Rather, it was made through specific decisions in both countries—decisions that need not have been made. We will return to this later.

IDENTITY AND POLITICS AT THE STATE LEVEL

Contrasting conceptions of national identity were deeply embedded in the hostility between India and Pakistan. Torn apart at the moment of independence, the two countries sought to build very different kinds of nation-states.[44] India under Jawaharlal Nehru sought an inclusive identity, which would give its extraordinarily diverse social segments—both horizontal (ethnic) and vertical (caste/tribe/class)—expression in the making of the collective future. Pakistan, created by Muhammad Ali Jinnah's assertion of Muslim separateness, was less sure of itself and tended to swing between modernist and secular versions of an Islamic identity. The violence of Partition, 'a nightmare from which the subcontinent has

not yet fully recovered', persists in the mutual perceptions of the two countries.[45] Its political potency is reflected in the sharply opposing views of ordinary Indians and Pakistanis on Kashmir, the bone of contention between them.[46]

Kashmir remains the symbol of an incomplete parting and a mutually exclusive conception of identity, each country claiming it in its own image. Kashmir's import is multiplied by the centrifugal forces that have threatened to tear both countries apart from time to time. Both, conscious of their internal diversity, fear that the loss of Kashmir will set in motion a process of political disintegration. But while India is relatively status quo-ist, Pakistan has tried hard to alter the status quo. India has been content to retain its portion of Kashmir without making an effort to change the situation on the ground because its control of the Kashmir Valley, a Muslim-majority area, allows it to retain its claim to being a state that can accommodate Muslims. In contrast, Pakistan, always vulnerable and rendered even more so by the breaking away of Bangladesh in 1971, finds the physical alienation of Kashmir deeply hurtful and has repeatedly tried to extract the territory from India by force and by diplomacy. Nowhere has the intensity of the symbolic tug-of-war been more graphically illustrated than in the prolonged military contest for the icy wasteland of northern Kashmir's Siachen glacier, where a hostile geography has exacted a far larger toll than has sporadic fighting since the early 1980s.

Identity is not as straightforward as it is often made out to be. Anthropologists know that ethnic groups are not simply 'etic' or empirically defined aggregations of people with common physical or cultural characteristics, but are more properly 'emic' or self-defining.[47] An individual's sense of affinity with a group is defined externally by the group's separateness from other groups and internally by a sense of belonging arising from participation in the life of the group. Given that a large group is almost always diverse, participation in the collective life of a group (doing) is essential to identification with it (feeling).[48] At the level of the nation-state, this means that a voice, in and therefore a positive contribution to social and political life, is the essential prerequisite of a strong sense of national identity. If the external component of identity is not adequately balanced by the internal, there is an inbuilt tendency to reinforce identity in opposition to a collective external 'other'. In the case of India and Pakistan, this has been all too evident.

The Kashmir issue was, from the beginning, aggravated by domestic struggles over power sharing that kept the internal component of identity weak and made hostility towards the neighbour an important element of

national sentiment. Over time, India's experience was relatively positive. Under Prime Minister Nehru, power was exercised democratically but was nevertheless centralized because of the dominance of the Indian National Congress, which had led the movement for independence under Mohandas Gandhi. Subsequently, Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi (no relation of her namesake above) tried to forestall the weakening of the Congress by centralizing power. But barring the aberration of a period of emergency rule (1975–7), an inexorable process of decentralization set in, making coalition governments the rule by the late twentieth century despite the continuing elevation to premiership of members of the Nehru–Indira Gandhi 'dynasty'.[49]

Though pockmarked by recurrent religious, linguistic, and caste conflicts, the Indian polity gradually evolved into a stable democracy in which political power was decentralized and the periodic transfer of power after elections was smooth. The state responded to regular outbursts of secessionist violence with force, but also with a willingness to negotiate. The democratic structure developed a fairly stable process of articulating and negotiating differences.[50] The fragmented character of Indian society ensured that no serious hegemony was possible. The Hindu right under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which held power from 1998 to 2004, sought with little success to establish Hindutva (or Hindu-ness) as an alternative unifying ethos.[51] Power in India's democratic framework could be attained by even the most powerful groups only through coalitions, which invariably meant compromising political platforms. Since 1989, all general elections have produced multi-party coalition governments.[52] Notwithstanding its multitude of deficiencies, the Indian political system has been built on the participation of an expanding set of players, gradually reaching down towards the most disadvantaged strata. This has engendered the sense of belonging that comprises the domestic element of identity. But the flaws in the system have been evident from its numerous maladies—persistent poverty and hunger, pervasive corruption, a growing Maoist movement in its heartland, and the endless turmoil in Jammu and Kashmir, the last a failure which has intensified the tension with Pakistan.[53] Thus, the internal face of Indian identity is still scarred with a degree of uncertainty and tension.

For Pakistan, the problem was always more difficult because it began with severe handicaps. Grafting a 'fundamentally non-territorial vision of nationality' onto a physically bounded space without the benefit of a history was difficult enough.[54] To attempt it in a society that was ethnically fragmented demanded an effort of Herculean proportions, and neither the leadership (after the early demise of Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan) nor the

institutional framework for this was available. East Pakistan broke away to form Bangladesh in 1971, and other territories became restless. While the army and the mainstream political parties failed to bring enduring stability, their tensions instead provided political space for Islamic extremism and a 'culture of jihad'.[55] Thanks to its fractured polity, Pakistan has been unable to develop the inner confidence that would have permitted a more sanguine approach towards India, especially Kashmir.

The Pakistani state has tottered between civilian and military control.[56] The army under Ayub Khan overthrew a fractious and unstable government in 1958, but, unable to hold the country together, it gave power back to the civilians following the loss of East Pakistan in 1971. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) performed no better, resulting in General Zia ul Haq's takeover in 1977. Zia tried and executed Bhutto and reoriented the Pakistani state towards a more severe form of Islam, but he unleashed fundamentalist forces in the process. Civilian rule returned upon Zia's death in 1988 to perform indifferently under the alternating governments of Benazir Bhutto's PPP and Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League. But Nawaz's attempt to enervate the army brought a coup in 1999 by General Pervez Musharraf, who ran the country first as chief executive and later as president till yet another popular upsurge led to the revival of civilian authority in 2008. Though Musharraf remained president, the focus of power shifted to the PPP, now under Asif Ali Zardari, who took control of the party following the assassination of his wife Benazir. The hegemony of the army has from time to time been embattled, but has nevertheless remained in place. It has tried to strengthen its position by allying with religious parties, by manipulating extremist groups against opponents, and by obtaining financial and political support from the US.[57] But neither direct nor indirect control has worked very long, and Pakistani politics has been dogged by instability.

Driven by systemic incentives, both India and Pakistan have moved away from their zero-sum approaches to the Kashmir problem and sought to build bridges by loosening controls on the cross-border/LoC movement of people and goods. But factors operating at the state level have ensured that the movement towards peace has been a slow crawl. India has been status quo-ist rather than revisionist, but it has also lacked the capacity to move quickly and substantially towards entente with Pakistan. In an era of coalition governments, the task of hammering out a consensus on virtually any issue requiring a significant shift from established policy has been extraordinarily arduous. Additionally, the rise of 'Hindutva' ideology and its hawkish stance towards Pakistan have made political compromise difficult.

The prospects of a 'democratic peace' between India and Pakistan remain limited for the near future.[58] The truism that democracies do not fight one another applies only to developed capitalist societies, and neither is anywhere close to being that. India is still vulnerable to powerful forces prone to manipulate identity issues for electoral purposes. Pakistan remains a 'hybrid' democracy—an uneasy mix of populism and military power—in which democratic parties are prone to 'outbid' each other in appeasing conservative elements opposed to an India–Pakistan rapprochement and the army has a stake in limiting the prospects for peace when its domestic position is threatened.[59] While India has over the years emerged as a relatively 'self-confident state', Pakistan has not.[60] Yet, India's self-confidence should not be exaggerated. The politics of outbidding has not disappeared. Opposition parties remain alert to the aggrandizing possibilities inherent in conflict with the external other by mobilizing protest against compromise. Thus, BJP's Advani asserted in 2004 that 'the BJP alone can find a solution to problems with Pakistan because Hindus will never think that whatever we have done can be a sell-off', adding the unsurprising corollary that 'the Congress can never do this because Hindus will not trust it'.[61] Ultimately, with neither country's government particularly strong, the prospects of a risk-taking breakthrough based on a compromise over Kashmir remain limited for the foreseeable future.

INDIVIDUALS AND LEADERSHIP

The role of the individual in the making of foreign policy is often over-specified or underspecified as analysts tend either to focus largely on personalities or to treat states as the primary actors in international relations. Gauging the effect that individuals have on large events is difficult. Yet we cannot deny that on occasion they do have a powerful influence in shaping the relations between states. A name that quickly comes to mind is that of Mikhail Gorbachev, who is widely credited with having the political courage and the skill to initiate the end of the Cold War.[62]

How have individual leaders affected the course of the India–Pakistan relationship? In the early years, India had powerful leaders who were able to direct the course of foreign policy with a degree of confidence. Nehru, in particular, was a dominant figure in the making of foreign policy, and the direction that Indian policy took was in large part determined by his personality, preferences, and decisions. His policies were characterized by considerable contradiction between idealism and realism.[63] Thus, his penchant for playing a global role on behalf of India was not backed by a realistic preparation of the hard power capabilities to back it up. This

became evident from the Indian army's lacklustre performance against Pakistan in 1947–8 and China in 1962. It took the more realist personalities of Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi to use the military effectively against Pakistan, the former expelling Pakistani forces from India in 1965, the latter decisively defeating and breaking up Pakistan in 1971.[64] Subsequently, till the end of the century, as political power shifted from Congress dominance to a patchwork of coalitions, Indian leaders were too weak to take major initiatives.

On the other side, Pakistan lost its major leaders, Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan, shortly after independence, and the intense competition for power did not permit individual leaders to give decisive direction to foreign policy. The populist Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto did not match in practice the expectations he generated and was central to both the loss of East Pakistan as well as to the return of the army soon after. It was the military as a whole rather than individual commanders that shaped the orientation towards India. General Zia directed much of his political energy towards recasting Pakistan in an Islamic mould and keeping India at arm's length. The last quarter of the twentieth century produced no leader of exceptional capability who might have been able to surmount the constraints imposed by systemic and state-level factors to alter the trajectory of India–Pakistan relations. Both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif aroused high expectations, but they failed to meet them. As the Pakistani state became bogged down in a morass of inefficiency and corruption, the army entrenched itself, and the populace became increasingly disaffected, all of which fed into a growing turbulence.

With the turn of the millennium, the opportunity for individual initiative was provided by the crises that beset their relationship after India and Pakistan officially went nuclear. Having peered into the abyss, leaders on both sides sought to break new ground. To his credit, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had made the effort almost immediately after the 1998 nuclear tests and travelled to Lahore in early 1999 to attempt a rapprochement. But the response had been shallow, producing the Kargil crisis a few weeks later. A mutual effort to come to terms led Vajpayee and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf to confer at Agra in 2001, but nothing came of it. After the 2001–2 crisis had subsided, Vajpayee and Musharraf responded symmetrically and a composite dialogue on major issues of dispute began in 2004. Though he was much vilified in India as the brain behind Pakistan's Kargil adventure, Musharraf revealed a remarkable willingness to discard old shibboleths. Vajpayee's successor, Manmohan Singh, showed similar flexibility. By mid-2007, both had indicated obliquely a new readiness to consider dividing Kashmir permanently.[65]

Singh and Pakistan's Zardari maintained continuity, but the peace process was slowed down by Pakistan's internal troubles as well as by the revival of India–Pakistan tensions over the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks.

As observed earlier, leadership initiative was curbed by state-level constraints. BJP's Advani, now in opposition, attempted to bridge the divide in the summer of 2005, but was compelled to backtrack quickly when his own followers became critical of his going 'soft' on Pakistan. Similarly, Zardari's criticism of 'terrorists' in Kashmir in the autumn of 2008 aroused a storm of protest in Pakistan. Nevertheless, the composite dialogue was sustained by a succession of leaders on both sides and made significant progress towards improved relations. As a result of leadership persistence, a set of informal principles crystallized to mark the new character of the India–Pakistan relationship. It was understood that the LoC would not be altered but in a sense transcended by expanded communication; there would be a new focus on self-governance on both sides; military forces would eventually be reduced substantially; and India and Pakistan would work together to build a mechanism for implementing the process.[66] Most importantly, both countries shed their old inflexibility and agreed not only to negotiate on all major outstanding disputes, but to discard their non-negotiable and mutually exclusive positions on Kashmir. New thinking was not lacking on either side.

However, it takes a leader of exceptional commitment and skill to override the pressures emanating from factors operating at the system and state levels. The likes of Gorbachev (or, on the negative side, Hitler) are uncommon. In the South Asian context, Vajpayee was unusual in that he had a history of attempting good-neighbourly relations going as far back as the mid-1970s when he had been minister for external affairs. His persistence in the 1990s and thereafter, and certainly the positive response from Musharraf after 2003, were more the products of learning from hard experience that the advent of nuclear weapons had drastically narrowed their options. Indian and Pakistani leaders simply lacked the capacity to override the dictates of state-level pressures. In particular, domestic politics—relatively weak government control and strong opposition to major concessions—did not permit dramatic departures from prevailing policy.

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The India–Pakistan relationship was characterized by unremitting hostility from 1947 till the turn of the millennium. For this entire period, systemic, state-level, and individual-level dynamics pushed in the same

direction. Within it, there was one turning point. Till 1971, there was no clear strong state/weak state pattern in the relationship. Though India had the attributes of a strong state, it was relatively cautious. Pakistan was the weaker, yet the more aggressive in initiating war twice. In late 1971, largely owing to the initiative taken by Indira Gandhi, India defeated and broke up Pakistan, thereby producing a well-defined strong state/weak state pattern. This lasted till the late 1980s as Pakistan sought (successfully) to remedy the situation by pursuing the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

By the late 1980s, systemic constraints on conflict and incentives to cooperate gradually began to appear with the covert advent of nuclear weapons and the onset of economic liberalization in the region. Individual leaders, learning from the crises of 1990, 1999, and 2001–2, sought to attune themselves to the systemic changes in progress; major initiatives to break the ice were taken by Vajpayee and Musharraf, with their successors sustaining the new orientation. The setback over the Mumbai terrorist attacks of 2008 significantly slowed but did not derail the peace process. However, state-level politics was not congruent with systemic and leadership shifts. Efforts to build bridges were hampered by the relative weakness of governments, persistent identity politics, and the readiness of powerful groups, such as the religious right in both countries and the army in Pakistan, to block a rapprochement.

Where is the India–Pakistan relationship headed? The systemic pressures for cooperation are powerful and almost certainly cannot be turned back. Individual leaders who have to confront these pressures directly in the process of policy-making are likely to appreciate the need for change and continue to seek resolution. But they are just as likely to be slowed down by state-level politics. Under the existing circumstances, it would take a pair of exceptionally determined and skilful leaders to carry the relationship towards either a high degree of cooperation or the renewal of unremitting hostility. Since it is not in the cards that systemic trends will be reversed, system–state complementarity can only be positive, almost certainly never negative. But for a positive transformation to occur, we will have to await changes at the state level that produce confidence in self-identity and democratization on both sides. The two processes, as we have seen, are closely intertwined. Given the political realities of the subcontinent, they are also likely to be slow-moving. Accordingly, we may expect at worst a persistent but restrained hostility between the two countries and at best incremental and cumulative improvement rather than a dramatic breakthrough in the relationship.

NOTES

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18. Rajesh M. Basrur (2008), *South Asia's Cold War: Nuclear Weapons and Conflict in Comparative Perspective* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), see especially Chapter 2.
19. P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, and Stephen P. Cohen (2007), *Four Crises and A Peace Process: American Engagement in South Asi*a (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press); Sumit Ganguly and Devin T. Hagerty (2005), *Fearful Symmetry: India–Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
20. S. Paul Kapur (2007), *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press). See also Peter Chalk (2001), 'Pakistan's Role in the Kashmir Insurgency', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 September, reproduced on the website of the RAND Corporation at http://www.rand.org/hot/op-eds/090101JIR.html (accessed on 14 February 2003), and Praveen Swami (2004), 'Failed Threats and Flawed Fences: India's Military Responses to Pakistan's Proxy War', *India Review*, 3 (2), pp. 147–70. This support was initiated early by way of backing extended to Sikh separatists fighting for an independent 'Khalistan', but was intensified when a popular upsurge occurred in Kashmir.
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