



**2nd Pugwash Workshop on South Asian  
Security**  
(in collaboration with GIPRI)  
Geneva, Switzerland, 16-18 May 2003

**Workshop Report  
by Samina Ahmed**

The workshop's primary objective was to assess the prospects for reopening a dialogue between India and Pakistan and continued cooperation to minimize confrontation between the two traditional South Asian adversaries. The workshop included 37 participants from India, Pakistan, Italy, Switzerland, and the United States, and was organized jointly with the Geneva International Peace Research Institute (GIPRI). Both organizations gratefully acknowledge support from the Arbeitsgruppe Gute Dienst und internationale Friedenssicherung (AGDIF) of the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Swiss Ministry of Defense.

This workshop, a continuation of the series of India-Pakistan dialogues held in Geneva (November 2002) and Lahore (March 2003), occurred in the context of initial steps taken by India and Pakistan in late April 2003 to normalize relations, ending the diplomatic and military standoff that had followed the December 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian parliament. Focusing on ways to strengthen the budding normalization process, the workshop's discussions examined ways of minimizing the nuclear threat and discussed immediate

**Recommendations for India-  
Pakistan Dialogue**

Among the various recommendations to come out of the workshop were the following:

- A step-by-step process and a composite dialogue
- An all-inclusive agenda with multiple tracks  
No hostile rhetoric to lower tensions and to improve the climate for negotiations
- No preconditions
- Sustained process
- Create five working groups to discuss:

1. Kashmir issues
2. Terrorism issues
3. Nuclear issues
4. Trade and economic issues
5. Group on all other issues including CBMs
  - a. Each group may determine its working procedure.
  - b. Progress in each group may not be conditioned by the status of other groups.

steps and long-term goals towards addressing the Kashmir conflict, including Kashmiri participation in any peace process, cross-border infiltration and the management of the Line of Control. Identifying opportunities and constraints to a resumed dialogue, the workshop examined agendas and processes that would best sustain a durable peace between India and Pakistan.

### **Breaking the stalemate**

On 18 April 2003, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee offered a "hand of friendship" to Pakistan, ending a diplomatic and military impasse that had, just months before, brought the two nuclear-armed states to the brink of war. Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali welcomed Vapayee's initiative, pledging to constructively engage with India in resolving their many differences.. However, a future dialogue between India and Pakistan hinges on their political will and capability to sustain the normalization process and to move in the direction of peace.

Danger signals are already present. Even as the risk of a hot war recedes in South Asia, India's political and Pakistan's military leadership continues to wage a war of words. With general elections due in 2004, New Delhi is understandably cautious, making any progress towards normalization, let alone the resumption of a high-level dialogue, contingent on decisive Pakistani steps to end the infiltration of militants across the Line of Control in Kashmir. Denying Indian accusations of armed support to militants operating in Indian Kashmir, Islamabad also insists on the centrality of the Kashmir dispute if any future dialogue process is to yield substantive results. Clearly, the two sides still lack the political will and flexibility needed for a solution to a conflict that has resulted in several wars and near-war crises in the past.

The significance of recent developments admittedly lies in the easing of tensions and hence a reduction of imminent armed conflict. The workshop's objective was to examine feasible and concrete near, immediate and long-term steps that could be taken by both sides in a future dialogue by discussing an array of solutions and options that might prove mutually acceptable. While there was little disagreement on the framing of an agenda and on the manner in which a future dialogue should proceed, the workshop's deliberations also revealed the absence of compromise and rethinking on the most contentious of issues, Kashmir and cross-border infiltration. These and other differences, rooted in a long history of war, remain a threat to the budding normalization process and its transformation into a sustained dialogue for peace between India and Pakistan.

## **Initial overtures**

Although the participants differed on the causes and consequences of India-Pakistan differences, they unanimously supported the current normalization process, calling it an important turning point in the relationship. The decision to exchange High Commissioners was welcomed, as was the decision to resume transportation links. Participants pointed out that the initiative had the blessing of all major political parties in India and Pakistan and that the international environment was also conducive to an India-Pakistan détente. However, this optimistic response was tempered by caution. The political environment, said a participant, was one of angst and anger. Reviving trust would not be an easy task. While initial overtures and concessions were promising, said another participant, the objective thus far was modest: to take India and Pakistan back to their December 2001 relationship by removing some of the curbs imposed on communication and diplomatic ties. These modest measures at conflict containment would set the stage for a future dialogue process only if the momentum was sustained. Incentives for all concerned parties were also needed if India and Pakistan were to succeed in their search for viable and sustainable solutions of their many differences. This challenge was more than evident in the discussion of the Kashmir conflict.

## **The Kashmir conundrum**

If the purpose of the workshop was to recommend ways in which the Kashmir issue could be addressed within a future dialogue, including the identification of a roadmap of sorts, that would include immediate steps and long-term goals, the discussions revealed the complexity of the problem and the many stumbling blocs to conflict management, let alone conflict resolution. There were some important points of agreement. Participants agreed, for instance, that any future dialogue between India and Pakistan would have to address the Kashmir conflict. They also believed that fifty-five years of conflict, including three wars and several near-war crises, proved that an over-reliance on coercion had only undermined the security of Indians, Pakistanis and Kashmiris. This realisation that peaceful negotiations alone can resolve the Kashmir conflict is certainly a step forward. However, India and Pakistan have yet to even agree upon a common definition of the conflict, let alone its causes and potential solutions. Participants, for instance, agreed that Kashmir should be a core issue in any future dialogue since it poses a major hurdle in the normalisation of bilateral relations, but there was a wide divergence in Indian and Pakistani views on why it was so important.

India insists that Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is an integral part of the Indian Union. If there is a dispute at all, it only involves the one-third of Kashmiri territory occupied by Pakistan. Militancy in Kashmir undermines Kashmiri and hence Indian security. In

Indian perceptions, despite President Musharraf's pledge, Pakistan has yet to abandon its reliance on a proxy war, conducted through sub-state actors, across the Line of Control in Kashmir. There is, however, a shift in Indian policy from placing all blame for unrest in J&K on Pakistani intervention to an emphasis on internal reconciliation. While India is concerned about Kashmiri alienation, it believes it can be addressed through internal, democratic means, such as elections and other participatory mechanisms. Stressing that the 2002 state elections in J&K have helped in promoting the process of internal reconciliation, a participant called upon Pakistan to end its support for "cross-border terrorism" and to respect the sanctity of the Line of Control in the interests of peace within Kashmir and between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan insists that the Kashmir conflict is both a territorial dispute and a humanitarian issue. Its roots lie in India's forcible occupation of two-thirds of Jammu and Kashmir and its refusal to honour its pledge to implement UN resolutions on self-determination for the Kashmiri people. Denied that right, Kashmiris have been forced to conduct a political and armed struggle for self-determination. India's resort to "state-sponsored violence" has only strengthened the Kashmiri resolve to oppose Indian control. Refuting Indian accusations of Pakistan support for the cross-border infiltration militants in Kashmir, Pakistan insists that the militancy is indigenous, the outcome of Kashmiri alienation, fuelled by India's refusal to accept the Kashmiri right of self-determination and the use of indiscriminate force to suppress Kashmiri political aspirations. However, as a result of international, mainly U.S. pressure to end all support for cross-border militancy, there is a subtle shift in the Pakistani stand. Insisting that the government is taking steps to curb such activities, Pakistan has asked for international and Indian understanding of its domestic constraints. Acknowledging that cross-border infiltration is a very serious issue and that Pakistani denials lack credulity, one participant, for instance, stressed that popular pressures placed limitations on governments changing policies overnight; stressed that the massive Indian troops presence in Jammu and Kashmir had also failed to prevent all infiltration by sub-state actors; and added that Kashmiris, an integral party to the dispute, rejected the sanctity of the LOC.

Given these differing interpretations of the causes and potential solutions of the Kashmir conflict, it is unlikely that the two states will agree to a mutually accepted mechanism on monitoring the LOC. India continues to insist on a bilateral mechanism that would provide, in the words of a participant, evidence of operational changes in Pakistan's policy, stressing that such evidence would help to create the right environment for a productive bilateral dialogue. If infiltration continues, however, and there is yet another major attack, it would jeopardise any progress made thus far. Attributing a recent decline in infiltration to Pakistani concerns about diminishing returns as the result of U.S. pressure, a participant pointed out that, given the political

will, the two sides could easily agree upon a simple but workable bilateral mechanism. It is easy, said a participant, to infiltrate the LOC because of its geography. It can only be stopped if Pakistan demonstrates the political will to stop all infiltration at source by ending all assistance, including recruitment, training and infiltration. Responding to these suggestions, a participant pointed out that the issue of a covert war could not be dealt with in bilateral negotiations unless there was also an understanding of the context of the conflict. Another pointed out that there were two central aspects to the Kashmir problem, the problem of cross-border infiltration and state-sponsored violence. Any mechanism to monitor cross-border infiltration would have to be accompanied by mechanisms to monitor Indian security forces in Kashmir. In any case, Pakistan denies any operational support for cross-border militancy, insisting on international monitoring of the LOC. Hence it would be near impossible to reach any mutually acceptable solution on monitoring the LOC in a future dialogue, unless both sides were willing to demonstrate an unprecedented considerable degree of give and take.

The mutual mistrust and rigidity that mark Indian and Pakistani policies towards Kashmir were amply reflected in the discussion of the workshop. When a participant stressed that the reality of the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination and human suffering cannot be denied, another participant dismissed Pakistan's focus on human rights abuses by Indian security forces in Kashmir as a ploy to gain their withdrawal to advance its objective of annexing Kashmir. India and Pakistan had almost reached an agreement on Kashmir in the past, a participant pointed out, only to be undermined by the Pakistan army. Other participants emphasised that India hoped to exploit international concerns about terrorism to undermine Pakistan's standing and stakes as an equal party to the Kashmir dispute. If militancy in Kashmir was minimised, said a participant, Pakistan was concerned that India would assume that the problem was manageable and hence there was no need to negotiate the dispute with Pakistan.

The gap between the Indian and Pakistani positions on Kashmiri participation in any future dialogue is equally wide. Pakistan has repeatedly supported Kashmiri participation in any India-Pakistan dialogue, and has even implied that it would accede to a Kashmiri demand for independence. But India refuses to renegotiate Jammu and Kashmir's inclusion in the Indian Union, insisting that mechanisms such as internal elections would address Kashmiri grievances and demands. Pakistan too still insists on a plebiscite, according to UN resolutions, to ascertain the accession of the Kashmiri people to either India or Pakistan. Rejecting the territorial status quo in Kashmir, moreover, Pakistan is unwilling to accept the LOC in its current form. In the words of a participant, the LOC is itself a problem and not a solution. In Indian perceptions, however, the solution of the Kashmir conundrum could well lie in the transformation of the LOC into the international boundary. A number of norms have

been strengthened in the 11 September environment, said a participant, including the sanctity of existing borders, which cannot be challenged by any movement for self-determination. Another emphasized that the transformation of the LOC into an international border is the only viable solution, alongside soft borders and mechanisms for managing the LOC. The participant, however, admitted that this solution might be unrealistic in the present state of relations between India and Pakistan. Others warned that there were only two ways of modifying the LOC, through an agreement between India and Pakistan or through war.

The roadmap for Kashmir advocated by the Kashmir Study Group (KSG) calls for a dialogue between India, Pakistan and the Kashmiri people to meet the legitimate concerns of all parties to the dispute. Among potential options for resolving the dispute, the KSG has proposed the reconstitution of an entity (or entities) from the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir: a sovereign entity (or entities) without an international personality, with secular democratic constitution(s), legislature(s) and control over all subjects except defence and foreign affairs, which would be jointly controlled by India and Pakistan. The KSG has also recommended access of the Kashmir region to and from India and Pakistan for the free flow of people, goods and services and continued Indian and Pakistani economic support for Kashmir.

One participant thought the KSG's suggestions were unrealistic, calling instead for an approach based on the reality 'on the ground', in other words, the division of Jammu and Kashmir along the present LOC. Others warned that the KSG's contentious proposals could pose more of a hurdle than a starting point in a future India-Pakistan dialogue. Arguing against a roadmap for a complex issue like Kashmir, a number of participants stressed that there was need first to initiate a dialogue, to find some common ground and then to explore feasible areas of agreement, given the high stakes and limited political will in both states. If a solution were to emerge, it would be through a prolonged process of discussions and negotiations, in which the Kashmiris could be factored in. However, the problems of this approach are also evident. If issues such as the acceptance or modification of the LOC and the degree of autonomy for Kashmir are not even discussed in a future dialogue, the two sides could simply restate well-known positions. Left to fester, the conflict could, as in the past, destabilise India-Pakistan relations.

Conscious that India and Pakistan's differences over Kashmir and cross-border infiltration could derail the normalization process, a number of participants strongly supported an unconditional dialogue. While LOC infiltration was important, said one participant, progress on this issue should not be made a condition for either a dialogue process or cooperation in other, less sensitive areas. Despite the differences of approach and analysis with regards to the Kashmir conflict, there was also general agreement that the conflict in Siachen served no purpose and much support for a

ceasefire as a prelude to an agreement. A resolution of this senseless war, as characterized by one participant, would serve Indian and Pakistani interests in more ways than one, since it would also open the way for progress on other mutually beneficial areas of cooperation. There was also agreement that the best way of addressing contentious issues such as Kashmir and cross-border infiltration would be through a step-by-step approach. Restoring the peace on the LOC and normalizing bilateral relations would create the right environment for a sustained and meaningful dialogue for the resolution of disputes, including the Kashmir conflict.

### **Minimizing nuclear risks**

There was a considerable degree of consensus on the inclusion of nuclear risk reduction measures in a future dialogue process, not surprising since most participants accepted the inevitability of nuclear weapons in South Asia but were also concerned about nuclear dangers in a volatile environment. The greatest threat to regional peace, said a participant, lay in nuclear miscalculation and inadvertent nuclear use and even deliberate nuclear escalation. Since nuclear disarmament might be desirable, said another participant, but was not possible, the two states should focus their attention on stability measures in a future dialogue. While a participant strongly supported a cap on India and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities to minimize nuclear risk, others were far less sanguine about India and Pakistan's ability or will to resist a nuclear arms race. India and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities were determined by an action/reaction syndrome said a participant, stressing that Pakistan would inevitably follow India's example if the latter opted for a nuclear triad. Another participant recommended that India and Pakistan should reexamine nuclear risk reduction measures included in the 1999 Lahore declaration, and identify new ones. Other suggestions included a bilateral agreement on no-offensive use and unilateral measures such as strengthening custodial measures.

Some participants, however, had grave doubts regarding nuclear crisis stability, given that India and Pakistan were willing to resort to conventional force. Did nuclear deterrence hold in 2001-2002, queried a participant, was it nuclear deterrence or U.S. diplomacy that prevented war? Others doubted the efficacy of CBMs, including nuclear confidence building measures, in the India-Pakistan context. While a participant asserted that CBMs, including hotlines between Foreign Secretaries, Directors-General of Military Operations and Prime Ministers were effectively implemented until the Kargil conflict, others believed that most CBMs were implemented in a tactical and not a strategic sense. During the 2001-2002 crisis, for instance, the hotline between the DGMOs had proved ineffective. The effectiveness of CBMs, said a participant, was undermined by mutual suspicions and hostility and compounded by the uneven implementation of CBMs such as prior notification of

missile tests. CBMs, noted others, only build confidence when there is a basic level of trust, which is missing in the India-Pakistan context.

This importance of trust was also stressed in the discussion on the role of external powers in promoting a dialogue between India and Pakistan. Advocating a pro-active US role, some participants pointed out that India and Pakistan had failed to solve their differences through bilateral means in the past fifty-five years. Some participant noted that because of the US presence, there is now pressure on Pakistan and India to talk. If there is genuine interest in peace, then the international community must play a role. Bilaterally India and Pakistan might agree to a solution, but left to ourselves, they might never get around to a process of dialogue. Others, however, disagreed. According to one participant, the United States had not played an honest broker's role in the past in its relations with India and Pakistan. The only change that had occurred now was that the broker's regional interests had changed.

### **Reopening an India-Pakistan dialogue**

Despite divergent views on Kashmir, cross-border infiltration and an imperfect record in implementing past agreements, the participants agreed that India and Pakistan could only resolve their differences through negotiations, not through the threat or use of force. There was also general agreement on an incremental step-by-step process that builds on a foundation of trust. There was little disagreement on an agenda for future talks between India and Pakistan. Most participants agreed that the agenda should cover all issues discussed in previous official meetings and identified in past communiqués and declarations, including the joint statements of the Indian and Foreign Secretaries of 1997 and 1998. The 1997 meeting had, for instance, resulted in agreement on a composite, multi-tracked dialogue. In a future dialogue, issues could be prioritized, recommended a participant, but they should not prevent parallel discussions along various threads. A parallel process along multiple axis and directions would pay dividends, said another participant. Agenda items such as Siachen, expansion of trade ties, joint projects such as pipelines, disputes over river waters, cross-border and cross-LOC flows of people, goods, and services, could thus be raised in tandem alongside other more problematic issues, such as Kashmir and cross-border infiltration. However, a participant warned that the absence of progress on core issues might, as in the past, inhibit the finalization or implementation of other agreements, such as an expansion of trade relations. Most participants believed that preconditions would prove counterproductive. Some, however, warned that any catastrophic event, such as a future terrorist strike, could lead to the resumption of hostilities.

There were some disagreements about the sequence of the talks, reflecting India and Pakistan's differences. India favors a gradual approach, partly due to its past

experiences at counter-productive summits such as Lahore and Agra and also due to its desire to link the pace of negotiations with Pakistani progress in curbing cross-border infiltration. On the other hand, Pakistan would prefer a high-level summit, hoping to regain some of the international credibility it has lost as a result of the militancy in Kashmir. At the workshop, some participants advocated a bottom up approach, with discussion held first at the level of senior middle ranking officials, culminating in a summit level meeting only after concrete agreements had been reached. Such a process, they said, would prevent domestic spoilers from derailing the talks. Others warned that former dialogue processes had made little progress when they were left to officials such as Foreign Secretaries, adding that a summit meeting would provide the political push needed to attain concrete results.

There were also differences on the importance of public participation and the role of public representatives in a future dialogue process. Warning against the destructive pressures of public opinion, a participant believed that legislators would only play an obstructionist role because of a propensity to exploit issues for electoral gains. Others, however, believed that parliamentarians and people-to-people contacts had a constructive role to play in broadening peace constituencies, crediting the recent visits of parliamentarians, under the auspices of the India-Pakistan People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, for their positive impact on media and public opinion. Advocating public education and access to information, a participant also pointed to the reservoir of goodwill among Indians, Pakistanis and Kashmiris.

There was, however, complete agreement on the need to create the right environment for any future dialogue process by toning down hostile rhetoric and then negotiating in earnest on all issues, including Kashmir. There was general agreement that a dialogue process would best succeed if it were preceded by the normalization of relations, the stabilization of the security environment, particularly along the LOC, followed by negotiations to identify and to assess areas of potential agreement as well as sustained talks on remaining issues of discord. A premature blueprint or roadmap would prove counterproductive. Solutions to long-standing problems could only emerge out of a sustained process of negotiations. Unless talks continued and momentum was maintained, a future dialogue process could once again stumble, bringing the two states back to square one.

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