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[Home](#) > Dealing with Pakistan

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By A.K. Verma

History since inception of Pakistan shows that dealing with Pakistan has always been a frustrating experience.

Pakistan makes promises but immediately violates them without exception both in spirit and action. Not counting the wars of 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999 (Kargil) which were all surprises sprung on India, the diplomatic dialogues, Havana, Sharmal Sheikh, Lahore and Ufa which have been the most recent ones, saw the commitments disowned once the Pakistani leaders returned to their country after the dialogues. What lies at the roots of this long mystery needs to be identified.

Kashmir is not the cause. Sir Owen Dixon, an Australian jurist, appointed UN representative by Security Council in 1950 had reported that India was not unfavorable to the idea of partitioning of J&K State with the fate of the Valley being decided by a plebiscite. Pakistan finally rejected the proposition as the terms of the plebiscite were not acceptable to it.

Even if Kashmir issue gets resolved the enmity that Pakistan feels towards India would continue. This enmity is born from the civilizational and philosophical differences between the Hindu and Islamic streams that have made their presence felt over the past millennium. The two religions have coexisted largely in peace but the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims never ceased. The Muslims always sought the re-establishment of the glory of Mughal empire. Partition of India did not end the craving of the Muslims in Pakistan for this glory for the whole of India.

The truth of the matter is that Pakistani military leadership believes war is the only solution to Kashmir. Addressing the Pakistan Professional Forum at Dubai in 2000 General Jehangir Karamat, former Pakistan Army Chief, had said that "no peace process has ever

been started between India and Pakistan which could decide against a military option and in favour of peace". This doctrine seems to be holding up till today. Proxy war is being already waged. Warnings about a war and the nuclear backing to it are routinely issued from Pakistan.

The Pakistan establishment has been preparing the people of Pakistan to be ready for a war with India since a long time. The entire education system in Pakistan from primary schools to higher institutions has been geared to represent India as inimical to Pakistan with the result that at the ground levels there is little goodwill for India. The armed forces are similarly made India-centric, with the military credo including Jihad as a fundamental constituent of military planning. The young cadets passing out as officers from their Academies are required to take an oath that they will finally avenge the defeat of 1971 against India.

At the time of partition the civilizational values on both sides of the new borders drew inspiration from the British liberal traditions and therefore had much in common. With Islam accepted as the national ideology in Pakistan, the ethos of Pakistan started changing rapidly. Citizens, through educational channels and otherwise, were made to forget their Hindu and Buddhist heritage and sub-continental links. They were encouraged to look towards West Asia to seek a new identity. Advent of radical Islam in Pakistan and its speedy spread, besides the official nod to look westwards, has brought about a transformational change in the psyche of the average Pakistani. He hates to be reminded about his Indian background. He has also got convinced that India is the real enemy of Pakistan.

There are liberal elements in Pakistan who are disturbed by these developments. Such elements are scattered sparsely among the academics and media that are observed to be boldly articulating their views but the wider intelligentsia and the powerful military brass appear totally deaf to their importunities. Sometimes, some persons belonging to this bold group are taken to task for holding such views. The Judiciary which itself has shown signs of boldness has however generally proved ineffective in ensuring them personal security and safety.

Some sections of political democracy in Pakistan can be given the benefit of doubt that the trends in Pakistan towards totalitarian Islam is causing concerns to them and they would like to see less of military control and more of civil liberties in Pakistan. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who has himself in the past been a victim of military excesses could perhaps be counted as belonging to this persuasion. If this view can be considered valid, his conduct at Ufa where he agreed to an NSA meet of India and Pakistan just to discuss terrorism can be explained. He was perhaps trying to convey that some in Pakistan are ready to go beyond the red lines imposed by the Pak military in dealings with India, to reach a modus Vivendi. He would also know that he would be over ruled but he apparently wanted a message to go that elements are emerging in Pakistan that want to start on a clean slate with India.

It is pertinent to point out at this stage that the several Track 2 dialogues between India and Pakistan have proved to be no more than social occasions when people from the two sides, once holding powerful positions but now without any influence whatsoever, meet in five star surroundings to exchange ideas. Some of these dialogues have been going on for years with no tangible results. No Pakistani general, now

on retirement, has been heard articulating views similar to Gen. Jehangir Karamat mentioned earlier.

The official dialogues between India and Pakistan can be rightly called as those between the deaf. The Indian diplomats and political leaders talk with their Pakistani counterparts, despite knowing that the Pakistanis are in no position to influence the military thinking and their deliberations would be coming to naught. Sixty eight years have gone by without the Indian authorities finding a way to reach the military establishment which is the real power in Pakistan controlling all key issues of foreign and defense policies.

A new track now needs to be considered. A recent revelation has disclosed that India and Pakistan were closest to resolving their problems when the Intelligence Chiefs of the two countries had been directed to meet and suggest the way out. Such a channel has the ability to reach out to the military establishment with a great deal of transparency and can remain completely deniable and secretive. Perhaps a time has come to try this out.

(The author is a former Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat)

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[Pakistan](#) [1]

[India-Pak Dialogue](#) [2]

Category:

[Papers](#) [3]

Countries:

[Pakistan](#) [4]

Topics:

[Terrorism](#) [5]

[Political](#) [6]

[Intelligence](#) [7]

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- [4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/pakistan>
- [5] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/terrorism>
- [6] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/political>
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