

## INDIA –PAKISTAN PEACE PROCESS: ROLE OF PERCEPTIONS

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The peace process between India and Pakistan that began in January 2004 is facing rough weather after the Mumbai train blasts on 11 July 2006 that killed 183 people. New Delhi pointed fingers at Pakistan and reacting to the incident, suspended foreign secretary level talks scheduled for end of July to review the composite dialogue. President Musharraf regretted the development stating that stalling of dialogue 'would be tantamount to playing into the hands of the terrorists.'<sup>1</sup> So far, there have been three rounds of talks in which normalisation process has moved forward, where as conflict resolution process made no real progress.

The peace process is taking place in a changed domestic, regional and international environment which was expected to have positive impact on the perceptions of the two traditional adversaries in finding a solution to the contentious issues including the Kashmir dispute that has been straining their relationship since independence. However, a close examination of two and a half years of talks shows that divergent perceptions held by two sides have remained at the heart of the peace process and are going to determine the course of composite dialogue. The major areas where perceptions play a significant role pertain to differing approaches adopted by the two sides, the relative importance given to Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and the divergent perspectives on the solution of the core issue of Kashmir. The two countries have been moving very cautiously as the issues involved are not only sensitive but, the way forward is full of uncertainty and challenges.

The paper would explore the role of perceptions in the current peace process. How perceptions are shaping the Indian and Pakistani approaches to the peace process? How the two sides view the importance of CBMs in the peace process? How their perceptions regarding solution of Kashmir issue are affecting the pace and substance of the talks? Finally, how the two can bridge the

gap between their strong held perceptions and make the peace process a success?

### **Peace Process Setting**

The current peace process between India and Pakistan came in the wake of a 10-month deadly standoff in 2001-02 and mounting pressure from the international community, especially the USA. It is widely assumed that dynamics of war and peace in the region are changing very fast which are pushing both sides to a compromise. There are at least three broad realities that are greatly shaping perceptions of India and Pakistan regarding peace in South Asia. These can be identified as perceptions regarding military/strategic realities, economic realities and political realities.

First, there is a growing perception that military/strategic realities have made the peace process 'irreversible' and in the same vein Kashmir is 'ripe' for a 'final' solution. The nuclearization of India and Pakistan rules out a military solution to political problems and that also applies to the resolution of Kashmir dispute. The two major crises after nuclearization of India and Pakistan- the Kargil conflict in 1999 and military stand-off in 2001-02 clearly demonstrates that the parties to the conflict have reached a real impasse- a 'hurting stalemate'- and none of them can impose a unilateral or military solution on Kashmir. An Indian analyst observes:

Given the transformed geo-strategic environment in the subcontinent and the wind of change shaping global politics, it is inevitable that India and Pakistan have to sort out their differences on Kashmir so that South Asia no longer remains the most dangerous flashpoint in the world.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, there is a growing perception that economic imperatives for the peace in the region are driving both sides to settle their mutual problems. Both countries fully recognize that poverty is their 'common enemy'. Removing poverty and ensuring development is just impossible without having peace or at least managing their security affairs. This is reinforced by the forces of globalisation, which are also pushing them to ensure stability in the



region. If India wants to achieve Chinese-like rates of economic growth, it requires political stability, an inflow of foreign investment and an energy corridor from Pakistan. And for that it needs peace with Pakistan. Globalisation is also putting pressure on Pakistan to end conflict with India and focus more on internal stability and economic development. It is also argued that a rising and increasingly vocal middle class in both societies is becoming more interested in peace and economic opportunity than continuing conflict.

Thirdly, there is a growing perception that both domestic and international political realities are putting pressure on the governments in India and Pakistan to avoid conflict and ensure stability in the region. Domestically, civil society and business community is increasingly becoming vocal for peace. This is combined with the challenges of nation building that these states are facing for pursuing traditional parameters of national security as against human security. It is impossible to ensure human security unless political choices are made to release more resources for the welfare of the people. And for that conflict resolution in the region becomes an essential prerequisite.

Internationally, the political climate has drastically changed after the end of the cold war and more so after 9/11 which has shifted US focus to fighting terrorism, extremism and Islamic fundamentalism, most of the times all linked together. The growing perception is that the international community, especially the US wants stability in the region so as to ensure its political, strategic and economic interests. Thereby, it is strongly supporting the peace process and wants to play an active role as a 'peace maker' in the region. Pakistan seeks US mediation/facilitation over Kashmir, while India is quite reluctant about it. The crucial question is how the perception of new realities and the US facilitation would actually impact on the peace process?

#### **The Peace Process 2004**

The present peace process was set into motion when Prime Minister Vajpayee in his speech from Srinagar on 18 April 2003, offered a 'hand of friendship' to Pakistan, and later in the Parliament

called for yet another effort to resolve Kashmir dispute. Pakistan responded positively and offered unilateral ceasefire on the LOC that India endorsed. As a result a ceasefire on the LoC and Siachen came into effect from 26 November 2003. Meanwhile there was slow restoration of communication and diplomatic links, snapped in the wake of 13 December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament. A flurry of good will visits by civil society groups, cultural exchanges and 'cricket diplomacy' also improved the atmospherics and much postponed SAARC summit took place in January 2004. At the end of the summit on January 6, the two sides signed a joint statement, given lot of importance by both sides. Its operative part said:

Prime Minister Vajpayee said that in order to take forward and sustain the dialogue process, violence, hostility and terrorism must be prevented. President Musharraf reassured Prime Minister Vajpayee that he will not permit any territory under Pakistan's control to be used to support terrorism in any manner. President Musharraf emphasized that a sustained and productive dialogue addressing all issues would lead to positive results.<sup>3</sup>

Significantly, it stated:

The two leaders are confident that the resumption of the composite dialogue will lead to peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides.<sup>4</sup>

In a press conference later Musharraf declared: 'History has been made'.<sup>5</sup> Expressing similar sentiments India's then Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani observed: 'a breakthrough has been achieved in the Indo-Pak relations....'<sup>6</sup> The Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC including the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) welcomed the joint statement and resumption of India- Pakistan dialogue. The joint statement forms basis of the current peace process and reflects the importance attached to the issue of 'terrorism' and 'Kashmir' by India and Pakistan respectively. Before January 6 statement, Pakistan was following a 'Kashmir first' approach while India was linking the resumption of dialogue to the ending of 'cross-border terrorism'. Now, the two accepted the principle of simultaneity. Pakistan agreed to ensure its full cooperation in ending 'violence' or 'terrorism', while India agreed to a 'sustained and productive dialogue' leading to the settlement of



Kashmir dispute. This provided a negotiating framework for the peace process. The issues taken up by composite dialogue at different levels include peace and security, including CBMs, Jammu and Kashmir, Siachen, Wullar Barrage/Tulbal Navigation Project, Sir Creek, terrorism and drug trafficking, economic and commercial cooperation and promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields.

Over last two years of the composite dialogue, there had been a significant forward movement in the normalisation process between the two countries while the conflict resolution process lagged far behind. A number of CBMs, especially in the area of cultural exchanges and people to people contact were agreed, and ostensibly an ambience for dialogue was created to resolve the more complex issues including Kashmir tangle. The divergence of perceptions, however, has been quite evident in the approaches that the two sides adopted regarding the peace process, the significance they attached to the CBMs and the ideas they held regarding the resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

### **Approaches to Peace Process**

The divergence of perceptions held by two sides is most obvious in the approaches adopted by the two parties to the peace process. Broadly speaking, Pakistan is pursuing a 'conflict resolution' approach and is seeking a final resolution of the Kashmir dispute. On the contrary, India is following a 'conflict management' approach and is looking for an end to what it calls 'cross-border terrorism' or 'infiltration' into Indian held Kashmir. A close examination of the three rounds of talks and various statements emanating from the top leadership on both sides clearly show that the two have been unable to narrow the gap between these two dichotomist approaches.

After change of guards in New Delhi in May 2004, certain statements, especially those from India's Minister for External affairs calling on a 'multi-speed dialogue', where Kashmir does not hold up progress on other matters; 'China model' implying putting Kashmir<sup>7</sup> on the back burner and reference to Shimla as a 'bedrock' of bilateral relations clearly indicated that New Delhi had adopted a

‘crisis management’ strategy. This greatly irked President Musharraf who in a statement declared that ‘talks could not begin on the assumption that the LoC [Line of Control] would be made permanent.’<sup>8</sup> This clearly showed that Pakistan was following a conflict resolution approach and hoped for a serious dialogue on Kashmir.

This divergence in approaches has determined progress in the composite dialogue during the last three rounds of talks. In September 2004, after reviewing the progress made in the talks, the foreign secretaries reiterated to ‘carry the process forward in an atmosphere free from terrorism and violence’ and ‘continue with the serious and sustained dialogue to find a peaceful negotiated final settlement’ of the Kashmir dispute.<sup>9</sup> The atmospherics during the talks were more revealing. Indian foreign minister Natwar Singh stated: “differences” in perceptions persisted and India’s serious concerns on cross-border infiltrations remained.’ While, Pakistani foreign minister Kasuri, highlighted: ‘if we wish to put our relations on even keel, we [would] have to tackle with the J&K issue’.<sup>10</sup> Further, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in his meeting with Kasuri called for ‘full implementation’ of the 6 January commitment of not allowing any Pakistani territory for use by terrorists.

The key concerns of both Pakistan and India – ‘Kashmir’ and ‘terrorism’ were also clearly brought out in the joint statement, issued at the end of second round of talks, held in October 2005. It stated:

The ministers reiterated that possible options for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the issue of Jammu and Kashmir should be explored in a sincere, purposeful and forward-looking manner. The ministers reaffirmed their determination not to allow terrorism to impede the peace process.<sup>11</sup>

Pakistan’s growing frustration with the slow pace of dialogue on Kashmir was quite visible during the second and third round of talks. In his meeting with Indian Minister for External Affairs in October 2005, President Musharraf emphasised the importance of addressing the substantive issues particularly ‘Kashmir’ and achieving tangible progress during the third round of



the composite dialogue. Musharraf stressed that both countries should build on the improvement in relations and the confidence that has evolved. For that, he felt, the two countries have to approach the problems with 'sincerity, flexibility and boldness.' Similarly, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in his meeting with Natwar Singh in October 2005, emphasised that progress on all areas of the composite dialogue should move in tandem and lead to early resolution of Kashmir issue.<sup>12</sup> He underscored that Pakistan would not encourage Indian traders till India showed positive signs of moving towards resolving Kashmir.<sup>13</sup> This showed that at the end of second round, Pakistan was becoming wary of the conflict management approach followed by the New Delhi.

In contrast, for India, Pakistan's efforts to curb terrorism have remained unconvincing. This has been despite Pakistan's repeated assurances to India to control terrorism by banning and cracking down on *jihadi* outfits. Further, Pakistan strongly condemned various acts of terrorism in India and Occupied Kashmir. Nonetheless, India continues to point fingers at Pakistan in the acts of terrorism taking place in India or Occupied Kashmir and threatens to suspend the peace process if Pakistan fails to 'dismantle infrastructure of terrorism'. After July 2005, bomb attack in Srinagar, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, he 'would not be able to go against public opinion if acts of terrorism can't be controlled. It affects my capacity to push forward the process of dialogue with Pakistan.'<sup>14</sup> In his Independence Day address in August 2005, he termed Pakistan's steps to curb terrorism as "half-hearted efforts" and stressed, 'it is necessary that entire infrastructure of terrorism is totally dismantled.'<sup>15</sup> He also told President Bush that 'Islamabad still controls the flow of terror' into Jammu and Kashmir,<sup>16</sup> and talked about Pakistani nukes falling into the hands of *jihadis*. Moreover, at New York UN General Assembly session, Manmohan Singh raised the issue of 'cross-border terrorism directed against [India's] unity and territorial integrity.'<sup>17</sup> This implied that India's sole concern was to exert pressure on Pakistan to ensure end of terrorism in India to the satisfaction of the Indian government.

Pakistan has dismissed Indian charges on terrorism and repeatedly emphasized that there was 'no infrastructure of terrorism

anywhere in Pakistan or in territories under Pakistan's control.'<sup>18</sup> In contrast, in an interview with the *Daily Telegraph*, (London- 14 August) President Musharraf stressed on fast pace forward movement on resolving Kashmir, which would help him in dealing with extremism. He said:

I see the sincerity of the Indian leadership. But if we can move faster towards a resolution of Kashmir, my hands will be stronger to deal with extremism...We can only control extremists to a degree. But, there will be nowhere for the extremists to go once there is settlement of Kashmir.<sup>19</sup>

Musharraf also told President Bush that India's troops reduction would unlock a solution to the Kashmir issue.<sup>20</sup> In September 2005, at New York, he highlighted the 'legitimate struggle of the Kashmiri people to exercise their right of self-determination in accordance with the UN resolution.'<sup>21</sup> He urged India, 'if it is genuinely concerned about cross-LoC infiltration to agree to a viable mechanism to monitor this on both sides.' The hardening of postures on both sides, however, dissipated the possibility of any breakthrough at the Musharraf-Manmohan summit at New York in September 2005. As a result the two leaders could agree only to 'continue the hard work and carry forward the peace process'.<sup>22</sup> This showed that the principle of simultaneity adopted in 6 January statement was wearing thin during the second round of composite dialogue. The gap widened during the third round of the talks.

The Mumbai bomb train blasts underscored the divergence of approaches and the fragility of the peace process. Despite Pakistan's condemnation of Mumbai blasts as a 'despicable act of terrorism'<sup>23</sup> and assurance to India 'in tracking down terrorists, or even a particular organisation,' if it gives proof to Pakistan,<sup>24</sup> India unilaterally suspended the composite dialogue. India pointed fingers at Lashkar-e-Toiba and called on Pakistan to take "urgent steps" 'to dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism, act resolutely against terrorist groups and uphold its commitment to end extremism'.<sup>25</sup> On 15 July, Manmohan Singh alleged that his government had 'credible information that terror modules ...[in India] were instigated, inspired and supported by elements across the border'.<sup>26</sup>



In another statement, he demanded firm commitments that 'Pakistan territory is not used to promote terrorist acts directed against India' and urged these commitments needed to be 'backed by action on the ground.'<sup>27</sup> This created lot of uncertainty regarding the future of the composite dialogue.

The Mumbai blasts also had direct bearings on Kashmir. Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee linked the Mumbai blasts with the reduction of troops in Kashmir and questioned: 'How can we reduce [the number of] troops as long as Pakistan does not keep its promise of not allowing its land to be used by terrorists against India'.<sup>28</sup> Voices were also raised in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) camp for 'hot pursuit' of the terrorists which invoked harsh response from Pakistan. President Musharraf warned that any 'punitive' action against Pakistan would be paid back in the same coin. 'Nobody should have this wishful thinking that Pakistan will bear any kind of adventure inside its territory.'<sup>29</sup> However, after a spate of hard talk, the foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan met on the sidelines of SAARC ministerial meeting held in Dhaka on 2 August 2006, and renewed their commitment to the peace process. Although it allayed the fears that the peace process would not be disrupted, however it has not yet led to the resumption of talks.

Another area where divergent perceptions are influencing the peace process is the importance attached by two sides to the CBMs in the peace process.

### **CBMs & the Peace Process**

India and Pakistan vastly differ on the role of the CBMs in the peace process. Although both agree that CBMs create an ambience for the dialogue process, they differ on the ultimate role of the CBMs in the peace process. Pakistan feels that CBMs are means to an end, while India believes that they are an end goal itself. Within this context, India has laid more emphasis on people to people contacts and growth of trade and commerce relations. India argues that a phenomenal growth in these areas would improve the atmospherics that will help in resolving the politically more contentious issues, including Kashmir. This is manifested in India's

outright emphasis on CBMs in communication links, cultural exchanges and people to people contacts. Pakistan on the other hand is interested in parallel progress on Kashmir specific CBMs and considers the resolution of Kashmir dispute as the biggest CBM.

During the last three rounds of talks, positive forward movement in the CBMs was discernable in three areas- strategic sector, the people-to-people contacts and economic cooperation. In the strategic domain, the pre-notification of flight-testing of ballistic missiles agreement along with an earlier agreement on prohibiting attacks on nuclear facilities (1988) were major CBMs between the two countries.<sup>30</sup> There was major progress in facilitating people to people contacts by improving air, rail and bus links. Visas regime was much liberalised than previously and people-to-people exchanges grew exponentially in the last year. The increased communications links are contributing in improving the atmospherics between the two countries. There was release of prisoners by both sides including straying fishermen who are frequently taken in by both sides. In September 2005, India and Pakistan freed 583 prisoners including 371 fishermen and 148 prisoners.<sup>31</sup> In addition, on 30 June 2006, another bunch of 57 civilian prisoners, 38 Pakistanis and 19 Indians was exchanged.<sup>32</sup> In this context, the agreement on memorandum of understanding for the establishment of a communication link between Pakistan Maritime Security Agency and the Indian Coast Guards was expected to pre-empt the taking of such prisoners in future.

There was a reasonable progress in the area of economic and trade relations. A major achievement was the revival of Joint Economic Commission and Joint Business Council. A Joint Study Group was also set up to explore the area of economic cooperation between the two countries. As a result official bilateral trade between India and Pakistan went up from \$ 161 million five years ago to over \$ 1 billion with an increase of \$ 400 million in 2005 alone.<sup>33</sup> Besides, the two sides have looked positively on the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project.

While, there were mixed results on the economic front, there was no progress on the lesser contentious issues, such as Siachen,



Sir Creek, Wullar Barrage, Baglihar, and Kishanganga project. Negotiations on Siachen and Sir Creek are going on but have not made any real progress so far. There were indications that some common understanding would emerge on Siachen, but defense secretaries talks on 24 May 2006 ended in failure. On Sir Creek, the two sides agreed to consider options for the delimitation of maritime boundary between the two countries and to undertake joint survey of the Sir Creek. On Wullar barrage, Baglihar and Kishanganga projects, the talks remained unproductive. On Baglihar, Pakistan was left with no choice but to move the World Bank for arbitration as provided for in the Indus Water Treaty. There were reports that Islamabad was also preparing to take up the Kishanganga issue with the World Bank. Meanwhile, New Delhi has announced to modify Kishanganga hydro-electric project but apprehensions have continued in Pakistan. Experts say that New Delhi has not addressed Pakistan's main objection that the project will divert Neelum River water to the Jhelum through the Madhumati rivulet.

There have been a limited number of Kashmir specific CBMs such as a ceasefire on the LoC, resumption of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service (April 2005), the visits of APHC leaders to AJK and Pakistan, visits of Indian and Pakistani journalists to the two Kashmirs and a monthly flag meetings along the LoC between the local area commanders. India also reopened dialogue with the moderate faction of the APHC, but it has not produced any tangible results. On the contrary, in his meeting with APHC leaders in September 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh linked the reduction in the security forces in Occupied Kashmir to 'ending of cross-border terrorism'. There is also a lot of ambiguity on the participation of Kashmiris in the dialogue process. While Pakistan is for a trilateral dialogue involving Pakistan, Indian and Kashmiris, India wants to deal with APHC bilaterally. Pakistan has also stressed on an extension of ceasefire to Occupied Kashmir, gradual reduction of troops in Kashmir, the release of political prisoners, check on human rights violations. India has linked all these steps to the security situation in Kashmir.

The devastating earthquake on 8 October 2005, led to limited cooperation between the two countries for a while. It was, however,

restricted to relief activities and the opening of five cross-LoC points, which were already under active considerations. The points were opened up to provide relief to the quake victims and facilitate meetings between the divided families. Later, the two sides agreed to Poonch-Rawalakot bus service and a truck service for trade on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route.

The back channel diplomacy has also been playing an active role in breaking deadlocks in the peace process, especially on Kashmir. It has helped in arriving at a compromise on the issue of travelling documents regarding Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service. According to press reports the back-channel meetings are also discussing Musharraf's proposal on 'self-governance'.

### **Perspectives on Solution of Kashmir**

There are vast differences between the two sides regarding the solution of the Kashmir dispute. While, Pakistan has shown remarkable flexibility and imaginative thinking in offering different proposals that can satisfy aspirations of Kashmiris' while taking care of India's and Pakistan's sensitivities in Kashmir. India, on the other has not yet budged an inch from its officially stated position.

President Musharraf taking lead in 'out of box thinking', demonstrated greater 'flexibility'. He talked about going 'beyond stated positions' and offered to drop the demand for a UN-mandated plebiscite in Kashmir and meet India 'halfway' to resolve the dispute.<sup>34</sup> His offer was considered a bold and courageous step and a 'major gamble as far as public opinion [was] concerned'.<sup>35</sup> Musharraf has been advocating a four-stage formula for the resolution of Kashmir. The four stages are : the recognition of Kashmir as a dispute, the initiation of a dialogue, shedding of mutually unacceptable solutions, and securing a win-win situation.

As India agreed to a purposeful dialogue by exploring peaceful options in resolving Kashmir, Musharraf put forward a number of proposals identifying potential options. In October 2004, he proposed a three phased formula. In the first phase seven regions of Kashmir along ethnic and geographic lines would be identified.



They are : Jammu, Rajouri-Poonch, Kashmir Valley, Kargil and Ladakh in India-IHK and AJK and Northern Areas in Pakistan.<sup>36</sup> These would be demilitarised in the second phase and their legal and constitutional status in the third and final phase. This could take many shapes, including options such as a condominium, UN control or any other agreed formula. In another proposal floated in 2005, Musharraf suggested 'demilitarisation and maximum self-governance' for Kashmir. The basic premise of Musharraf proposals is that solution to Kashmir cannot be found in status quo, insistence on plebiscite or converting the LoC into a permanent border but in a creative resolution based on concessions by all sides, yet meeting the aspirations of the Kashmiris.

India has neither responded positively to Musharraf's proposals nor has it shown matching 'flexibility' and 'boldness' as demonstrated by Pakistan. There is no substantive statement coming from the Indian leadership indicating that India is moving away from its stated position on Kashmir that it is an integral part of India. India continues to insist that settlement of Kashmir dispute should be autonomy within framework of the Indian union. In May 2004, in an interview with Jonathan Power, Manmohan Singh responding to a question that how far he would accept a compromise with Pakistan on Kashmir said: '[Short] of secession, short of redrawing boundaries, the Indian establishment can live with anything as far as question of Kashmir and Pakistan is concerned.'<sup>37</sup> He added: 'We need soft borders- then borders are not important... People on the both sides of the border should be able to move freely'. On the question of plebiscite promised by Nehru, he observed: 'a plebiscite would take place on a religious basis. It would unsettle everything. No GOI [government of India] could survive that. Autonomy we are prepared to consider. All these things are negotiable. But an independent Kashmir would become a hotbed of fundamentalism'.<sup>38</sup> This implied that Manmohan Singh was thinking of soft borders as an eventual resolution of Kashmir. In his first address to the nation, as Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh talked about national consensus on the issue which may be threatened by issue of terrorism. He said: 'We recognize that resolution of major issues requires national consensus and accommodation of public sentiment in both countries. It is self-evident that terrorism and violence would

cast a dark shadow over this process.<sup>39</sup> The issue of terrorism has certainly determined the direction and pace of the peace process in the last three rounds of talks. It has also affected dialogue on Kashmir.

Against this backdrop, Manmohan Singh has repeatedly stated that India will not accept any ‘redrawing of boundaries’, or division of Kashmir on ‘religious lines.’ Hence, India rejected Musharraf’s seven-region proposal saying that it constituted a division of Kashmir on religious lines. Manmohan Singh said: ‘any proposal that smacks of a further division of our country on the basis of religion is not going to be acceptable to us’. India has also not responded favourably to Pakistan’s proposal of “self governance” and “demilitarisation” and reaffirmed that there would be no re-deployment of security forces while terrorism, violence and ‘infiltration’ continued.

#### ***Peace Process: Way Forward***

Peace process between the adversaries who have been at loggerheads over half a century, fighting wars, half wars, engaging in military brinkmanship and coercive diplomacy is certainly a difficult process. The hardened perceptions and trust deficit have not only slowed down the peace process but has the potential to disrupt the dialogue process itself. It is in the interest of both countries to remove hurdles in the way of normalisation as well as conflict resolution process. For that both sides need to take Trust and Confidence Building Measures (TCBMs) which would bridge the huge gap between the perceptions held by the two sides regarding approaches to peace process, linkage between CBMs and the peace process and finally the solution of the Kashmir dispute. These may include:

- Consolidation of ceasefire on the LoC by reducing troops on the LoC and within Indian-held Kashmir.
- Extension of ceasefire to the militants in Indian-held Kashmir supported by Pakistan and militants and involving them in intra-Kashmir dialogue process.



- Fast track movement on the resolution of Siachen and Sir Creek disputes.
- Devising mechanism to resolve Baghlihar and Kishengagna water issues.
- Devising mechanism to monitor so called cross-LoC 'infiltration' and sharing of information and cooperation in investigating acts of terrorism in India/Kashmir, where India alleges involvement of elements from Pakistan-based jihadi groups.
- Strengthening intra-Kashmiri dialogue and allowing Kashmiri representatives of all the important constituents and faiths of J&K to explore different options that satisfy their aspirations without impinging on New Delhi's or Islamabad's sensitivities.
- Initiating serious bilateral dialogue on exploring options on resolution of the Kashmir dispute and involving representatives of Kashmiris's on both sides of the LoC in the dialogue process when it is feasible.
- Ending hostile propaganda that can undermine the dialogue process between the two countries.
- Strengthening back channel diplomacy/contacts that can help in breaking deadlocks.
- Expanding economic/trade ties and strengthening of people to people exchanges.

These steps would not only strengthen conflict resolution process but would sustain the peace process and provide impetus to economic and trade relations and people to people contact between the two countries. It would be pertinent here to state that a sustained US support for the dialogue process is a must and would play an important role in the conflict resolution process between India and Pakistan.

### **Conclusion**

Three years of composite dialogue shows that the peace process is moving very slow on the substantive issues. The success of the CBMs is only limited to cultural exchanges and people to people contacts and has not contributed much in resolving the lesser

contentious issues. Kashmir and terrorism continue to dominate the political agenda of the two countries, and divergence of perceptions on both has held back any concrete progress in the composite dialogue. There is an urgent need to strengthen the peace process by addressing the trust deficit and showing greater flexibility and understanding in tackling the issue of terrorism and taking steps to resolve the Kashmir dispute to the satisfaction of Pakistan, India and the Kashmiris.

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