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PAKISTAN AND THE INDIAN SYNDROME:
BETWEEN KASHMIR AND THE NUCLEAR PREDICAMENT

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In May 1998, the open nuclearisation of South Asia sharpened the wedge in the relations between India and Pakistan. While a number of Anglo-American observers considered as very real the risk of the Kashmir conflict giving rise to a nuclear confrontation, most Indian analysts asked why the principle of deterrence which worked between USA and USSR for decades would become less relevant in the South Asian context. A part of the Pakistani commentators endorsed that view, but Islamabad policy-makers were not so unhappy with the dramatisation effect : presenting Kashmir as the most sensitive potential nuclear flashpoint was supposed to help them in internationalising the Kashmir problem, a major objective of Pakistani foreign policy. A decade of insurgency had not draw much attention from the global medias or from the chancelleries. By contrast, Kashmir was suddenly loaded with a new significance, and vindicated the analysts arguing that after the end of the Cold War, regional conflicts would become the most serious factor of geopolitical destabilisation of the new world order, particularly where new nuclear powers were in confrontation. Nine months after the tests, the rapprochement between Pakistan and India, illustrated by the joint Lahore Declaration of their Prime Ministers, made people believe that after all, wisdom will

Pakistan and the Indian syndrome

perhaps prevail under the threat of Armageddon. Last, the military adventure launched by the Pakistan Army at Kargil destroyed this hope in May 1999, and stalled the dialogue engaged. In October, the coup bringing to power General Musharraf brought bilateral relations to a new low.

While it is best to refrain from any suggestion of impending catastrophe, the intensity of the Indo-Pakistani feud is obvious to all. The three open wars of 1947-48, 1965 and 1971, and the Kargil episode of 1999, are just its most acute phases. Beyond these, it is to the armed peace that attention needs to be drawn. The two States maintain diplomatic relations. They are members of a joint regional body, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In the nineties, their Prime Ministers used to meet fairly frequently, more often, it is true, on foreign soil than in their respective countries¹. However, there is still no direct air link between Islamabad and Delhi, nor any direct shipping service between Karachi and Mumbai. Each accuses the other of aggravating local tensions and stirring dissension in its country through its intelligence agencies. India denounces the "proxy war" conducted by Pakistan in Kashmir, through Islamist militant groups instrumentalised by the Inter Services Intelligence, the Army-controlled ISI. Faced by a spread of murders in Karachi and sectarian killings in Punjab, Pakistan, on a subdued note, points to "the foreign hand" — the Indian one.

The genesis of this uneasy peace, the lineages of this cold war in South Asia, go back to an ideological discord prior to the partition of 1947 which was meant precisely to resolve it. In his historic speech at Lahore on 23 March 1940, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Father of the Pakistani nation and its supreme leader (Quaid-i-Azam), who refused the arithmetics advantaging the Hindu majority community within the future independent India, had called for the recognition of a specifically Muslim nation. Once India would be divided into national States, he argued, there would be "no reason why these States should be antagonistic to each other". The States spawned by partition would be able to "live in complete harmony with their neighbours"². The essence of the paradox of Pakistan lies in this very basic fact: born out of a partition chosen by itself, it appears to have found in independence neither the peace, nor the security, nor the freedom of spirit

¹ The diplomatic regional and international calendar offers annual conferences which provide on their sidelines opportunities for "unformal" Indo-Pakistani contacts at the highest level, particularly the meetings of SAARC, of the Commonwealth, of the Non-Aligned Movement and the U.N. General Assembly.

² Presidential Address delivered by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah at the Twenty Seventh Session of All India Muslim League, Lahore, 22-24 March 1940

that would enable it either to live in harmony with India, or to ignore it. It seems impossible for Pakistan to forget India and to get along with it.

This chapter will consider firstly the Indian syndrome —born out of a fundamental dissymmetry— which afflicts Pakistan, and the major strategy elaborated for getting over the dissymmetry challenge, i.e. the nuclear deterrence policy, which came out in the open in 1998, following the Indian nuclear tests. Turning back to the structural dimension of the Pakistani-Indian feud, section two will analyse how the “two-nation theory, which gave birth to Pakistan, found after independence enough subjects of controversy for sustaining a culture of mistrust which sets the tune of the mainstream perceptions about India. Section three will focus attention on the main dispute opposing India and Pakistan : what is called by Islamabad “the core issue of Kashmir”, which has been become more than ever intricated in the nineties. Section four will present the practice of dialogue which has market, intermittently, the official and non-official relations between Pakistan and India. The conclusion will suggest that Pakistan needs today to strike a delicate balance between its traditional perceptions, some of them wrong, some others legitimate, and the new realities which call for a positive adjustment to the growing role India is bound to play in the new world order. In the present context, this challenge raises so many dilemmas in Pakistan itself that it is difficult to imagine a prompt improvement in bilateral relations, despite the culture of peace people of goodwill from both countries try to develop.

THE INDIAN SYNDROME : FROM ASYMMETRY TO NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

One tends too much to forget that Pakistan, with 135 million inhabitants, has the sixth largest population in the world, coming just after Russia. Although its GDP and its Human Development Index make it trail behind, such a size, and the memory of the sultanates, kingdoms and empires the Muslims have built up in South Asia for centuries, give legitimacy to Pakistan’s expectations to stand well in the committee of nations. However, the fiftieth anniversary of the country, in 1997, generated more disturbing introspections than happy celebrations. From many quarters, a feeling of unaccomplishment prevailed. The Islamist forces were unhappy, for the Republic of Pakistan was not Islamic enough according to them. Liberals and most citizens were dissatisfied because the experiment in parliamentary democracy, launched in 1998 after

Pakistan and the Indian syndrome

the death of General Zia ul Haq, has been disappointing : neither the Pakistan People Party of Benazir Bhutto nor the Pakistan Muslim League of Nawaz Sharif offered good governance. In a leading publishing house, books written by academics or by members of the Establishment offered depressing titles : *A Shattered Dream* ; *A Dream Gone Sour*; *A Journey to Desillusionment*, to quote a few³. In October 1999, significantly, Chief Executive General Musharraf sought to legitimise his military coup by advancing a similar rationale : "Fifty-two years ago, we started with a beacon of hope and today that beacon is no more and we stand in darkness". The General then listed the internal parameters of the structural crisis afflicting Pakistan : "our economy has crumbled, our credibility is lost, state institutions lie demolished, provincial disharmony has caused cracks in the federation, and people who were once brothers are now at each others' throat"⁴.

The Indian syndrome and the asymmetry challenge

An additional point might perhaps have been advanced here, a point that no Pakistani leader has ever recognised while being in power : after more than fifty years of existence, Pakistan has not overcome what I would call the Indian syndrome. Born out by partition, Pakistan has been self-defined at its birth time as a Promise Land for the Muslims willing to escape from what the Muslim League defined as the Hindu rule in India. However, its successive leaders have not been able to free the national mind from its Indian obsession — they rather used it deliberately for their own purpose. A feeling of insecurity has been nurtured consistently since 1947, partly by India's real-politik, but perhaps mostly by Pakistan's eagerness to take to task a much larger neighbour.

The asymmetry between the two countries, which became even more pronounced with the secession of Bangladesh in 1971, is striking. In terms of area, population, GDP, conventional forces, India has the advantage of magnitude. Admittedly, India fares less well than Pakistan in term of GDP's per head, but during the 1990's, its new economic policies pushed up the country amongst the ten largest national GDPs in parity of purchasing power. India is now recognised by Washington as a "big emerging market", and voices ambitious designs to become a big power in the XXIst century. Although in the midst of a multi-faceted crisis, Pakistan still tends to define itself as a challenger to India,

³ Ghulam Kibria's *A Shattered Dream* ; Roedad Khan's : *A Dream Gone Sour* ; and Sherbaz Khan Mazari : *A Journey to Desillusionment* have all been published by Oxford University Press, Karachi

⁴ General Musharraf's Address to the Nation, 17 October 1999

just as the Muslim League has been, in the 30s and the 40s, a challenger to the Indian National Congress, as if India were not today, along with China, in a class apart.

Pakistan has tried for long —and still attempts today— to counter this asymmetry by apportioning an overwhelming share of its resources to defence expenditure⁵, and by seeking friends or allies, varying from Washington to Beijing, who were expected to provide military aid, openly or not. India is seen by most decision makers and in many medias as a born enemy. On the one hand, it is considered as being hegemonic, unfair, obnoxious and resolute to weaken or even destroy Pakistan. On the other hand, it is perceived as undermined by its own weaknesses, be it the divisive caste factor for instance, or the *banya* culture as opposed to the virility of the “ martial races” of Pakistan. To quote an influential Pakistani Senator, India could be defined by a contradiction : "large country, small people".

In spite of the heavy military burden Pakistan imposes upon itself, the lack of symmetry has persisted. Hence the nuclear logic that prevailed in Asia. After China's nuclear test in 1964, India intensified its nuclear research programme. India's test in 1974 heighthened Pakistan's resolve to do the same (even were the Pakistanis to be reduced, as Z.A. Bhutto proclaimed, to "eat grass" in order to finance their programme). Under Zia ul-Haq, Pakistan's capability was confirmed but not official. India asserted that it was a widely imported capability and accused the supply of decisive technology and components on China most of all, even if some western companies were also mentioned, and if some Arab countries helped with finances.⁶ This capability enabled Pakistan to retaliate on 28 and 30 May 1998, with six tests, to the five Indian explosions of 11 and 13 May.

For those who accept the policy of deterrence, Pakistan has thus restored a balance of terror in the stand-off with its neighbour, for nuclear deterrence alone, working from the weak to the strong, offers decisive power without requesting symmetry. In the meantime, Pakistan has become the first Muslim State to be nuclearised. What has been

⁵ Defence expenditure and debt repayment account for more than 60% of the State expenditure. In the mid-nineties the defence expenditure ration has declining from 6% to 5% of the GDP in 1996, not counting a part of its military nuclear programme, as against 2.5% for India, with the same reservations. After the nuclear tests of 1998, the Indian government, led by the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, has substantially raised its defence budget. Pakistan could follow suit only at the cost of its basic economic equilibrium and sustainability.

⁶ For Pakistani analyses of the Pakistan's nuclear programme and nuclear policy, see Munir Ahmed: 1998, and Munir Ahmad Khan: 1998. For Indian perspectives, see Sumita Kumar: Pakistan's Nuclear Weapon Programme, and Ruchita Beri: Pakistan's Missile Programme, in Jasjit Singh (ed): 1998, 156-208.

labelled sometime—including in Pakistan itself— as the “Islamic Bomb” is however much more an answer to the asymmetry challenge and to the Indian syndrome, than a tool for ascertaining Pakistan’s supremacy or leadership over the Middle East or Central Asia. To say the least, Islamabad’s support to the Talibans and the financial crisis that it is experiencing have not been very flattering to its image in the “brotherly Muslim countries”. The matters it has to deal with urgently are therefore on another plane: how to sustain the quest for a nuclear balance with India? And how to counter pressure from the U.S. Administration who aim at making it fall into line?

War and peace scenarios

Three hypotheses of a warlike situation and one peaceful hypothesis, need to be examined. The first, MAD (mutual assured destruction), is the most distressing, even if not—hopefully—the most probable one. Islamabad and New Delhi are at a distance of 600 km from each other. Lahore and Amritsar, the major cities of the two Punjab, are very close neighbours. The time needed to react after a strike would be terribly short. This hypothesis assumes obviously that the two countries, after their tests, will have armed and deployed their missiles, which is apparently not the case. The prime requisite remains, on both sides, that of setting up procedures for the safe management of the nuclear arsenal, in order to avoid uncontrolled or accidental launching: all the sophisticated techniques of command, control and dependable information in real time, which cost much more than bombs or missiles. Where Pakistan will find the money for them, and at the cost of which investment for basic development, such as health and education? Whatever India and Pakistan might say, an arm race is not only inevitable, it is already on: Haft 2 Pakistani missile (280 km range), and M11 (300 km range) received from China are to match India’s Prithvi. The test of Ghauri, (1500 km range) in April 1998, was seen by New Delhi strategic circles as a threat, but was itself an answer to India’s Agni. After the nuclear tests, Ghauri II quickly followed the missile test of Agni II. Officially, Islamabad’s goal is not to match India, but to preserve enough poise for sustaining deterrence. But where to stop, as India plans to induct later on nuclear missiles into its upgraded Navy? A future Indian intercontinental ballistic missile is obviously not needed for deterrence against Pakistan, but what Pakistan will do if India build up a neutron bomb?

A second hypothesis advances that deterrence works. As no one would want mutual assured destruction, an intentional nuclear war has no chance to break out. This does not exclude the possibility of an accident, nor that of proliferation by an eventual extremist regime (the Jamiat-i-Islamia pleads officially for sharing nuclear technology with Muslim "brotherly countries"), nor that of a "pocket edition" of a nuclear weapon of sorts falling into the hands of terrorists: shades of Osama bin Laden or of one of his clones are invoked now and then.

There remain two paradigms. One, the third hypothesis of a warlike situation—advanced by Indian analysts—, submits that under cover of an "impossible" nuclear conflict, hawks would take full advantage of deterrence. Pakistan may then pursue the strategy of low intensity conflict aiming at "bleeding India". Hence the proxy war in Kashmir or elsewhere, a war of infiltration and of sedition under the guidance of intelligence agencies. For the Government of India and for most of observers, the Kargil adventure launched by the Pakistani Army in 1999 went even a step further, for it relied upon much more than infiltration of islamists groups. This reading of Kargil suggests than the Pakistani Army opted for direct (if limited) military intervention across the Line of Control, assuming that their level of pressure, supposed to be strong enough for facilitating the internationalisation of the Kashmir issue by foreign powers afraid of a possible nuclear drift, would be in fact controlled enough for not pushing New Delhi to retaliate fully.⁷ The miscalculation was patent. If New Delhi did react in taking great care to avoid a full-fledged war by deciding not to cross the LOC or/and the international border, this restraint turned at the disadvantage of Pakistan, who was clearly blamed by the international community for violating the LOC. The Kargil misadventure offered also the Indian Governement a golden opportunity for strengthening consistently its long-term defence policy.

The last hypothesis is an optimistic one. For some analysts, to move from tacit to open nuclearisation does not change the effective strategic balance, but may help to clear the way for negotiations, in a global context favouring limited disarmament, calling for restraint, and giving emphasis to the command and control imperatives. Peace would then be the only way out. The Lahore Agreement signed between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister A.B Vajpayee in February 1999, along with additional documents

calling for military restraint, would have validated this hypothesis, if Kargil had not followed, destroying whatever trust and hope emerged at that time. The military take-over which brought to power, in October 1999, General Pervaiz Musharraf — seen in India as “the man responsible for Kargil”—, and the sustained activity of the *jihadi* groups in Kashmir which followed, further worsened the bilateral relationship, and stalled the dialogue.

Pakistan and the strategic triangle : India, America and China

Still shocked by the military and diplomatic defeat at Kargil, Pakistan learned about the “Draft nuclear doctrine” released in August 1999, “for public debate”, by the National Security Advisory Board set up by the Indian Government. Once again, Islamabad saw the Indian proposed posture as a threat, whatever could be New Delhi’s statements about “minimal nuclear deterrence”. In fact, New Delhi’s nuclear ambitions in air, on land and at sea, addresses much a wider scope than bilateral relations, but obviously this offers no solace to Islamabad. In any case, there has never been much progress in any strategic Pakistano-Indian dialogue. After Benazir Bhutto-Rajiv Gandhi agreement of 1986, the two countries exchanged (in 1992) the lists of their nuclear installations in order to rule out any strike against them. The same year they signed a mutual information agreement concerning movements of troops and aerial reconnaissance flights at the borders and they issued a joint declaration against chemical weapons. But the Pakistani proposal for the non-nuclearisation of South Asia, formulated for the first time in the seventies, and regularly reiterated afterwards, has been consistently rejected by New Delhi which does not want to delink South Asia from the overall Asian scenario, knowing very well that China would not denuclearise itself if South Asia would do so. Furthermore, India is averse to any international conference in which nuclear powers from outside the region —viz. Russia, China and the United States— would define what India should do in South Asia. Conversely, Pakistan has not responded to the proposal formulated by India after the tests of 1998, suggesting that each of the two countries would take a pledge to not be the first to use the nuclear weapons: this would mean for Pakistan an end to any efficient deterrence and would further widen the gulf in the field of conventional arms. On a more decisive level, Pakistan, being less in control of its strategic destiny than

⁷ This is what Indian defence expert Jasjit Singh hints at when he notes that the nuclear weapon tests gave the Pakistani leadership “a false sense of security that the nuclear umbrella would allow its military strategy

its neighbour, is driven to adopt a nuclear policy basically reactive to the initiatives taken by India. Despite strong and repeated American pressures, Pakistan decided, as India did :

- i)- to reject in 1995 the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT);
- ii)-not to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiated by the international community in 1996, and
- iii)- to conduct nuclear tests in 1998.

In addition, a reactive policy cannot forget the risks of asymmetry. Thus, if the two countries were to end up by simultaneously becoming a party to the CTBT, Pakistan would consider itself in a safe position only on condition of possessing a nuclear arsenal able to deter —even if not equal to— that of India. Similarly Pakistan has accepted to take part to the negotiations on the future Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), but may hesitate to sign on due time, for its stocks of uranium and of plutonium will remain far short of those of India.

This asymmetry favouring India plays a contradictory role in Pakistan's relations with U.S.A. On the one hand, it increases its vulnerability to American pressure, which exercises itself not just on defence matters, but also on the economic field. But on the other hand, Islamabad's policy on nuclear issues being largely reactive to New Delhi's initiatives, Washington's pressure is not always satisfied, when it comes to issues seen as vital by Pakistan. Islamabad knew that economic sanctions would be automatically imposed by Washington after the nuclear tests, and that these sanctions would harm more the crisis-ridden Pakistani economy than Indian interests. It conducted tests nevertheless. The United States is not insensitive to this concern for balance, but what trump card does Pakistan hold to get itself heard for its own value, and not just as a follow-up of New Delhi's choices? It does not seem able to ease significantly the turn of events in Afghanistan, and underplays the influence it may have on the Taliban regime. As has been bandied about even in Islamabad, Pakistan could also gamble on its own crisis, as Nawaz Sharif seemed to have done for getting help. It has not prevented him to be ousted by a coup, despite a U.S. warning. More generally, and whatever be the reservations of the international community about the military regime, General Musharraf's failure would be seen as a grave peril, if it would open the way to radical political Islam. No one —India least of all— wants a "talibanisation" of Pakistan. Washington clearly expects the military regime to control the extremist groups, and has sent strong signals to Islamabad, by engaging an enduring dialogue with India of the problem raised by international terrorism, and on publishing a strong worded assessment of

Pakistan in its *Report on Terrorism-2000*. The different treatments meted out for India and for Pakistan during President Clinton's visit of South Asia, in March 2000, has highlighted the shift in U.S. policy, which recognised India's positions and rationales much better than before. By contrast, the U.S President linked up its willingness to help Pakistan with the return to democracy and clear dedication in the struggle against terrorist groups. In such a context, the "eternal friendship" between Pakistan and Beijing is as precious as ever, but also subjected to China's long term interests. Beijing will certainly pursue its traditional policy of using (and arming) Pakistan in order to counter India's regional power, but Islamabad knows than nothing is to be taken for granted in this regard. Beijing has not supported Pakistan on Kargil and, more generally, avoid to take sides on the Kashmir problem.

The quest for understanding, if not alliances, for matching India's challenge, is today more difficult than before. The global and regional geopolitical parameters have changed with the end of the Cold War, and have altered as well the significance of militant Islam projected during the war of Afghanistan. On the one hand, the old Western anti-communist alliance set up in the Fifties, and even the Washington-Islamabad-Beijing axis have now lost their traditional rationale. On the other hand, *jihad* (not Islam per se as too often argued in Pakistan) is anathema to Washington, Beijing and Moscow, and the correlation between *jihadi* forces active on the borders of Pakistan and national stability has evolved negatively. The need for adjustment is obvious. The policy of adjustment is however not easy to define and still more difficult to implement, because of the Indian syndrome. By focusing simultaneously their propaganda on internal reform and on Kashmir, Islamist forces, in a way, hijack —or outbid—the military regime agenda.

In the new context where radical Islam is considered by many powers as being the latest peril, successive Pakistani authorities have tried to appear as a vector of moderate Islam. The exercise has not convinced many abroad. Observers have taken note on the overtures made from time to time by leading political parties to the proponents of Political Islam. They are aware of the manipulation of extremist armed groups created or sustained by the Army and ISI, starting in 1994 with the Talibans in Afghanistan, and following in Kashmir with the Laskar-i-Taiba and the Harkat-ul Hansar (renamed Harkat-ul-Mujahideen after being defined as a terrorist outfit by Washington). The present situation in Pakistan seems uncertain if not confusing precisely because no one knows how the regime may be able to control the dangerous groups at home, if it believes that it needs

them in Kashmir. To disband them without the approval of their parent bodies would draw the regime into a frontal shock with the parties of Political Islam. It would also imply either putting the Kashmir issue on the backburner, or entering in a genuine political dialogue with India, which precisely sets for that a precondition : to stop the infiltrations in Kashmir... Considering the legacy of half a century of bilateral relations developed on distrust and frustration, only a statesman with vision and strength would be ready for such a change.

BEYOND THE TWO-NATION THEORY : A CULTURE OF MISTRUST

The partition of India in 1947 was seen by the founders of Pakistan as a victory gained with unexpected speed, but not without reservations. Jinnah had to accept reluctantly the divide of Punjab and Bengal provinces — hence the frustrated reference to a “moth-eaten Pakistan”—. He had to adjust to the strategic loss of Gurdaspur and Ferozepur Punjabi districts. After his death, the cease-fire implemented in Kashmir on 1 January 1949 froze till date the divide of a highly symbolic Muslim majority land, stalled Pakistan’s hope of “completing partition”. In 1971 the loss of East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh, was a dramatic trauma. For Islamabad, India had taken advantage of the victory of the Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in the 1970 elections. By openly lending a decisive military support to the secessionist forces, it had taken revenge on the partition of 1947 by, in turn, breaking up Pakistan. Seen from India’s viewpoint, the formation of Bangladesh was proof of the failure of the two-nation theory: Islam had not sufficed to cement together a disparate Pakistan.

The legacy of Partition on mainstream perceptions

At the core of the dominant Pakistani perceptions stands the belief that India has never accepted the *rationale* of Partition, which is correct. The India of Nehru, such as defined in the Constitution of 1950, is pluralistic. Its philosophy of secularism does not place the foundation of the State and the nation on any privileged religious identity. The Muslims are not this other nation defined by Jinnah in 1940. They occupy a recognised place in a Republic of India which has already given itself two Muslim Presidents and whose Central and State governments comprise generally Muslim ministers. Many in Pakistan, on

the other hand, have considered the Indian National Congress as being an essentially Hindu body and recall that this party, under the leadership of Nehru, has rejected coalition ministries with the Muslim League in 1937, has not implemented the Desai-Liaquat Ali Pact calling to form a temporary League-Congress coalition government in 1945, and has finally refused the proposal put forward by the Cripps Cabinet mission of 1946, which had suggested a federation in which the regions having a Muslim majority would have enjoyed a wide-based autonomy. As Independence was approaching, no consonance of views could be achieved through any formula for sharing of power between the Congress and the Muslim League. It was only after the Direct Action Day organised by the Muslim League on 16 August 1946, and the massacres which plunged Calcutta into mourning, that the top rung leaders of the Congress, with the exception of Gandhi, became convinced that partition was the inevitable price to be paid for obtaining the independence being conceded by the British. But many leaders in the Congress party were of the view that the two-nation theory was an artificial one and that it had no future. Vallabhbhai Patel, Nehru's Home minister and Deputy Prime minister, "was convinced that the new State of Pakistan was not viable and that it would not last"⁸ and the All India Congress Committee declared, in the document accepting partition, that it "believed firmly that when the present passions will have abated, the problems of India will be seen in their proper perspective, the false two-nation doctrine being then discredited and rejected by all"⁹. Immediately after partition, the reluctance of Indian authorities to hand over to Pakistan its due share of financial assets and military equipments, and the controversy about the Indus waters added to existing frustrations.

This Indian feeling that partition could have been avoided and that the tensions between Hindus and Muslims cannot obliterate a shared heritage is alien to Pakistan where the Indian questioning of the *logic* of partition is often perceived as a challenge to partition itself. India is constantly suspected, even openly accused, of wanting to put an end to it, either by taking over Pakistan, or by destroying it as a State and a national entity. To those who argue that India is for long reconciled with the existence of Pakistan, the secession of Bangladesh, which occurred thirty years ago, is still advanced as a testimony to its destructive intentions. This negative perception of India does not go as far as distinguishing between the Indian National Congress and its old rival, the

⁸ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (the main Muslim leader of the Congress), in the unexpurgated version of his Memoirs, 1988 :242

communalist Sangh Parivar, although, ironically, the Congress enjoyed for decades, after partition, the electoral support of most of the Indian Muslims. Before and after Independence, the main opponent to Pakistan has been defined as being the Congress, not the Hindu nationalists now in power in New Delhi, for the Congress has been at the helm of affairs for more than forty years, before and after Partition. While Hindu nationalists of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh have labelled the Congress as being pro-Muslims, Pakistan leadership characterizes it as pro-Hindu. In other words, both Pakistan and Hindu nationalists would agree on defining the Congressist practice as being in fact pseudo-secular.

Consider now the growing assertiveness of Hindu communalism during the 1980's, the violences against minority communities instigated by the Sangh Parivar ; the destruction of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992 and the killings which followed ; the Bharatiya Janata Party arriving in power in 1998 with an RSS agenda, and quickly exercising the nuclear option. All these developments comfort the Pakistani mainstream rhetorics which equates India with militant and hegemonic Hinduism, and which recalls that the ideologues who theorized Hindu nationalism have put forward the concept of *Akhand Bharat*, the Greater India extending from the periphery of Afghanistan to the fringes of Burma. The fact that a number of Pakistani policy makers or intellectuals would however make no difference between the Congress and its age-old opponent the Sangh Parivar goes beyond recalling the pro-Hindu leanings of some prominent historical Congress leaders, such as Tilak or Patel, or quoting the intimidating remarks made by Indira Gandhi during the war of secession of Bangladesh. For the dominant Pakistani perspective, Congress and the Sangh Parivar are only two sides of the same coin, and in a way, the BJP is paradoxically safer, for its philosophy is clear, while the Congress leadership is always suspected of deceit.

This mainstream perception does not generate more trust in Indian liberals or in the Indian Left. Every Indian, however conciliatory he may be, who invokes with nostalgia the pre-partition days or conceives, in an undetermined future, of a more politically united South Asia, is seen by many commentators as desiring the annihilation of Pakistan. The doubts expressed now and then in India, outside official circles, on the viability of Pakistan, and the hypotheses foretelling its breaking up into independent provinces, give

⁹ V.P. Menon, 1957 :384

Pakistan and the Indian syndrome

rise to added rancour, even though some Pakistanis themselves also conjure up the danger of implosion of their country.

A feeling of insecurity prevails at the core of the common Pakistani vision, and is fuelled by every event that takes place, and which projects India's leadership —whoever it is— either as bullying or tricky, stubborn or foul. This distrust, this lending of the darkest of intentions to its neighbour, this inability to come to terms with the past, this decisive weight of contradictory perceptions between the two countries, constitute the greatest obstacle to any lasting normalisation of bilateral relations. True, there are also the burden of political strategies, the tactics of politicians and the interests of various groups, starting with the armed forces, in the chalking out of Pakistan's foreign policy, and the concern of the major parties which from time to time have tried to please Islamist movements. The persisting tension with India is not without its advantages: in the context of the multiplicity of dissensions which plague Pakistan, India and the question of Kashmir offer an invaluable subject on which a near consensus prevails. But the reason for the persistence of this charged atmosphere has yet to be explained. Has partition, sought after by the Muslim League, not brought the confidence and security that it was primarily meant to give?

Pakistan's self and the anti-Indian rhetoric

The troubled political life of Pakistan gives us the first rudiments of an answer. As against the long stability of India, governed continuously by the Congress Party from 1947 till 1977, Pakistan presents the image of turbulence and unsteadiness. The ailing Jinnah died in 1948 without having been able to firmly shore up the State or to work out for it a paradigmatic course of policy and practice. Liaquat Ali Khan, a key figure in continuity with his heritage, and Prime minister since 1947, was assassinated in 1951. Six Prime Ministers followed in just five years. Three military regimes (Ayub Khan, 1958-1969; Yahya Khan, 1969-1971; Zia ul-Haq, 1977-1988), marked the first four decades after independence, with Zia, moreover, getting his civilian predecessor, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, hung. On the institutional plane, the first, long delayed Constitution (1956) was never implemented, the second one (1962) was replaced in 1973 by a third text which was extensively amended in 1981.

A second series of queries arises over the nature of Pakistan. Is it a State of the Muslims? A nation State seeking to bring its ethnic diversity under the umbrella of a

religious unity? An Islamic State? All these hypotheses involve, either directly or by way of comparison, a reference to India. Self-defined as a State of the Muslims of the former India, Pakistan has had to make do with half measures: right from 1947, a large part of the Indian Muslims did not join it; in 1971, the secession of Bangladesh deprived Pakistan of the majority of its population. However one may interpret it, the fact remains that Pakistan contains not much more than one-third of the Muslims of the subcontinent.

This being so, what should be its the approach towards the Muslims in India, "a minority in the land of the Hindus"? Attention could be drawn to the harsh treatment meted out to them. Indeed the Pakistani government did not fail to protest against the destruction of the Babri Masjid and the anti-Muslim riots that followed. This is one way of echoing the Pakistani reasoning behind partition, by contending that the Muslims would inevitably be oppressed in a Hindu-majority India. There are also the more subtle overtones of the interpretation of the Hegira as a prophetic justification of the distinction between lands where Islam dominates —*Dar ul-Islam*— and lands where it is dominated —*Dar ul-Harb*—. The refusal by India to give the right of self-determination to the Kashmiris through a plebiscite promised long ago, and the harsh military repression it conducts against them, proffer also a manner of reasoning constantly advanced by Pakistan in favour of the equation India = Hindus and all that supposedly follows as a natural corollary. A temptation might also exist : to help the few Indian Muslim fundamentalists engaged in subversion, and the most resolute militants of all shades disillusioned with the Indian system, as it did during the eighties when it provided support for the Sikh secessionist struggling for an independent Khalistan. The Government of India —not only when led by the BJP— points at the ISI, accused of fishing in troubled waters, from Assam to Tamilnadu, and alleges Pakistani connexions for the Muslim team behind Bombay terrorist bombings after Ayodhya, or the Indian Airlines hijacking in December 1999.

The reasoning behind partition originated in the refusal to see the Muslims of a united independent India subjected to the rule of the Hindu majority. Does this imply that the Pakistani nation is bound to exist as a permanent adversary of India ? The psychological dimension of the divide between the two neighbours cannot be ignored in Pakistan. However, how strong could be the impact of such collective perceptions, they do not exist in a vacuum. They result partly from India's policies, but they also serve specific Pakistani purposes. While the exposure of India's damaging deeds —real or

misconstrued— can be ignored in day to day life, it raises its head every now and then in the conscience of the nation, or at least in the discourse of its leaders, for at least four reasons.

In the first place, anti-Indian rhetoric always serves as a useful rallying point to consolidate national unity in times of crisis or of political difficulty. Gambling on Islamic identity, as Nawaz Sharif did with his failed Shariat bill introduced after the nuclear tests, aims at the same objective without necessarily achieving it better. In the second place, in the parliamentary set-up which existed from 1988 to 1999, the charged political rivalry between the two major forces, Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League and Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People Party, has tended to paralyse whichever of the two was in power, which, whenever there was a slight improvement in bilateral relations, was quickly accused of weakness, if not of sacrificing the national interest. Hence, the hopes raised by the Benazir Bhutto/Rajiv Gandhi talks of 1985-86, and by the Nawaz Sharif/I.K. Gujral exchange of views in 1996-97, were quickly dissipated by the blows dealt by the political adversary of the moment forcing the successive Prime Ministers to harden the stand taken in the face-off with New Delhi.

Thirdly, the influence of the armed forces over the political power has been decisive since 1958—even upon civilian governments—, particularly in matters of international relations, beginning with urgent bilateral issues: Indo-Pakistan relations, Kashmir, Afghanistan. A militaro-bureaucratic complex has evolved, most of whose members have everything to gain by conserving a state of tension with India, as much to justify considerably large defence budgets as to shrink the diplomatic space of political parties in power. The controversial statement of Naiz Naik, former Pakistani Foreign Secretary, said to have suggested in 1999 that the Army has launched the Kargil operation for sabotaging the secret talks conducted with New Delhi on Kashmir, is only the latest occurrence of a structural parameter whose importance cannot be overevaluated. The fourth factor is no less important. It is epitomized in an unsolvable dispute, the crux of the matter being, precisely, the issue of Kashmir.

THE INDO-PAKISTAN DISPUTE ON "THE CORE ISSUE OF KASHMIR"

Right from the first months after independence, mistrust of India was fuelled by a multiplicity of tensions. Added to the massacres which accompanied partition and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, there were many issues of contention: landed properties of refugees, the use of Indus waters, the share of money in the coffers of the Treasury devolving on Pakistan, the distribution of military forces and equipment... At present, the Siachen glacier, the Sir Creek border, the Tulbul waters are that many more among the subjects of friction. Of all contentious issues, the dispute over Kashmir was and still remains by far the most crucial one, constantly defined by Pakistani authorities as "the core issue of Kashmir", said to prevent alone the normalisation of bilateral relations.

Kashmir as a bilateral bone of contention

At the time of partition, Jammu and Kashmir was one of India's largest princely States. Its ruler, the Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh, was tempted to remain independent, while the vocal Muslims were affiliated to one or the other of the two main political parties: the Muslim Conference, which advocated accession to Pakistan, and the National Conference, under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah, which empathized more with India, subject to the latter granting a very substantial degree of autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir. The Poonch uprising against the Maharaja made him vulnerable, all the more so as the Pathan tribals coming from the North were advancing towards Srinagar. Hari Singh finally appealed to India for help. Before sending Indian troops to his rescue, Nehru called upon the Maharaja to sign a treaty of accession to India —Hari Singh did it on 26 September 1947— and undertake to form a government under the leadership of Abdullah. The insurgency turned into outright war with the arrival of regular Pakistani troops in 1948. The cessation of hostilities, on 1 January 1949, under the auspices of the United Nations, delineated a ceasefire line which, with slight alterations, became the "Line of control" (LOC) after the 1971 war. Since 1949, the former kingdom of Kashmir has thus been divided into two main parts, China being in control of a third part¹⁰. The portion of Kashmir to the west and to the north of the LOC is under Pakistan's control (what India calls Pakistan Occupied Kashmir). In Poonch, in the west, the Muslim Conference had proclaimed as far back as in

¹⁰ In the Fifties, China pacifically occupied Aksai Chin, expended it a bit at the cost of Indian Ladakh during the Sino-Indian war of 1962, and exchanged territories with Pakistan, east of the Karakorum, in 1963.

1947 an "Independent State of Jammu and Kashmir" (Azad Jammu and Kashmir). This so-called independent State (with a President and a Prime Minister) is in fact controlled by Islamabad, and provided with a Council presided over by the Prime Minister of Pakistan. To the north of the Line of control, the Northern Territories group together the tribal principalities which had formerly pledged their allegiance to the Maharaja of Kashmir. The Pakistani troops are stationed all along the LOC, which stops at point NJ 9842, at the foot of the Siachen glacier without going right up to the Chinese border. India and Pakistan both claim this glacier which is an enormous reservoir of sweet water, where the two armies have taken positions at a very high altitude, and have been exchanging artillery fire since 1984.

To the south of the LOC stretches the land under India's control (Pakistan calls it Indian Occupied Kashmir) which constitutes Jammu and Kashmir, one of the twenty-five States of the Indian Union. Its jewel is the Valley of Kashmir. To the south-west the Jammu region is in majority Hindu, but some districts have a large Muslim population. To the east, Ladakh has a Buddhist majority in the district of Leh while that of Kargil now has a Muslim majority. The population of the Srinagar Valley is more than 90% Muslim, but is home since centuries to a Brahmin community, the Pandits, who traditionally occupy a place in the Kashmiri identity, known as *kashmiriyat*. Most of these Pandits have fled out of the Vale when the insurrection gained momentum, in 1990. Their fate and the conditions of their resettlement add to the complexity of the Kashmir problem.

Having been the cause of the first Indo-Pakistan war in the days just following independence, Kashmir remains today the most dramatic apple of discord between the two countries. What is at stake here? Over and above its strategic importance —located as it is between China, the Central Asian Republics, India, and the Middle Eastern Muslim continuum ending in Afghanistan—, Kashmir represents, for Pakistan and for India, more than a territory. It stands as a symbol of the idea of nationhood on which each of the two States has been founded. For Islamabad, Kashmir should have belonged to it by right, in line with the very reasoning behind partition: it had, after all, a Muslim majority and was contiguous to Pakistan. New Delhi vindicates its stand by referring to the treaty of accession to India signed by the Maharaja. Among Pakistan's arguments, some are procedural, but there are two which are more valid. The first is the condition laid down by Lord Mountbatten, the first Governor General of independent India, on the acceptance of the choice of the Maharaja, which was given "subject to the condition that the people

would be consulted". Nehru was in agreement with this at that time. The second takes note of the case of the principalities of Junagadh (adjacent to Pakistan) and of Hyderabad (in the heart of India). The two instances, antithetic to that of Kashmir (both had a Muslim ruler with Hindu majority population) were settled to India's advantage, even though the princes had chosen either to accede to Pakistan or to remain independent.

India's way of reasoning is different. Its Constitution is based on the principle that religion is not a factor to be taken into account in national identity. A secular State, India is the home of almost as many Muslims as Pakistan itself. A Muslim majority State can very well exist within its frame, and in fact vindicates the concept of a pluralistic India. India adds to this another historical argument: the Pathan hordes which sought to overthrow Hari Singh in 1948 were simply instruments of the Pakistani authorities (Islamabad denies this, but the role of Pakistani officers is attested) who thus committed a masked aggression against the princely State, before intervening openly through their army. On the legal plane, India maintains that the Security Council distorted the meaning of the appeal that it made to the U.N. against Pakistani aggression. Even though India at the time accepted in principle a plebiscite, as suggested by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (resolution of 5 January 1949), this involved the withdrawal of Pakistan's armed forces —one of the necessary pre-conditions to any consultation for determining the people's wishes (resolution of 13 August 1948)—, and this withdrawal never took place.

While Pakistan insists on the implementation of the U.N. resolutions favouring a plebiscite, India considers these as having become obsolete, for the above reason and for two additional ones. The first is that in the Indian part of Jammu-and-Kashmir a Constituent Assembly was set up, followed by parliamentary regime. New Delhi considers that the repeated exercise of the electoral process by the Kashmiris is a substitute for the plebiscite, and recalls that the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly has renounced, in 1957 and in 1965, to the original special autonomous status. Pakistan challenges, as does also the Security Council (resolution of 24 January 1957), the fact that successive elections could be a substitute for the plebiscite, and in fact denies the fairness of the electoral process, which has certainly be too often manipulated. In the second place, India interprets the Simla Agreement, signed between Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1972, as a commitment to solve disputes within a bilateral framework, and no longer

Pakistan and the Indian syndrome

under the supervision of the United Nations or through third party intervention. Islamabad challenges this interpretation, as well as India's assertion that Bhutto had made in Simla a verbal commitment to work towards the acceptance of the status quo in Kashmir, giving a *de jure* sanction to the division of the former kingdom, permitting to transform the LOC in an international border.

To sum up, India's official maximalist position holds that the entire Jammu and Kashmir —occupied or not by Pakistan or by China— is hers by rule of Hari Singh's accession. Pakistan's official position is more nuanced. It defines Kashmir as "a disputed territory" (a qualification rejected by New Delhi), and does not precise its status before a plebiscite could decide about it. Beyond official statements, India would in fact be satisfied with a settlement confirming the status quo, with minor adjustments, while Pakistan would be ready to abandon to India the districts of Jammu and Ladakh having a non-Muslim majority. As such, the two unofficial "solutions" are unreconcilable, for no party is ready to leave to the other one the cultural and economic heart of Kashmir, the Vale of Srinagar and its surroundings districts.

The third party : the Kashmiris' experience

And now, the Kashmiris themselves —more precisely, the Kashmiris from the state of Jammu and Kashmir effectively under Indian law (for Pakistan has cleverly succeeded in controlling its own side of Kashmir, despite local movements for more rights). The Constituent Assembly of the Indian Jammu and Kashmir, which met in 1951, gave to this State a special status, formalised five years later and recognized through article 370 of the Indian Constitution. This wide autonomy was very quickly suppressed. New Delhi's relations with Sheikh Abdullah turned to the worse, and the charismatic leader of the National Conference Party, suspected to favour in fact independence, spent long years in detention after 1953. Most Indian observers acknowledge that the Government of India, since the Nehru era, is largely responsible for the deterioration of relations with Kashmiris, which were furthermore aggravated after 1982, the year of the death of the Sheikh. The strong sense of identity of the Kashmiris, the errors committed by New Delhi which disrupted the interplay of local politics and offered the Kashmiris neither the plebiscite nor the promised autonomy, and the very progress of education amongst unemployed and

frustrated Kashmiris youth explain for an essential part the feeling of alienation which has grown and led up to insurgency¹¹.

This insurgency has changed the face of things on at least two accounts. Launched in 1989 by the secular and pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), it gave a new tone to the expression of Kashmiri feelings. To be against Indian rule was no more necessarily implying pro-Pakistan leanings. The Kashmiri problem, seen for long as a matter of confrontation between two powers, has become tripartite with the independentist current entering the fray. Pakistan did welcome Amanullah Khan, founder of the JKLF, but quickly preferred to support pro-Pakistan and Islamist Kashmiri militant groups, such as the Hizbul Mujahideen, much more than the JKLF. In 1992 it restrained the JKLF from marching out of Azad Kashmir and openly crossing over the Line of control. The U.N. resolutions being fairly vague in nature, would not be absolutely antagonistic to the "third option", the independence of Kashmir, becoming the subject of a plebiscite along with the two others, accession to India or to Pakistan. But Islamabad does not have a clear-cut attitude on this point, while India rejects any prospect of independence.

Has the containment of the armed groups by the Indian para-military and military forces, accompanied by the human rights violations denounced both Indian and International Human Rights groups, finally led to a normalisation? Is the slow and constrained resumption of the electoral process in Jammu and Kashmir, from 1996 onwards, fully convincing in this regard? Hardly so, but once again, the analysis offered is different in India and in Pakistan.

For Islamabad and for the leaders of Azad Kashmir, the Kashmiris on the Indian side are freedom-fighters carrying on a heroic fight for national liberation and the right of self-determination. They will content themselves with nothing less than the holding of the plebiscite promised in 1947. For New Delhi, the armed revolt by "misguided youths" is in the process of dying out as can be testified by the peace that has been more or less regained (under the deep shadow of the army) in the Srinagar valley. The conflict which continues outside the valley is just the last manifestation of the proxy war that Pakistan is conducting against India. Local militants are said to have surrendered in numbers, the fighting continuing mostly through Pakistani agents or volunteers, veterans of the Afghanistan war, militants fighting a *jihad*, mercenaries fighting for a wage. What Delhi is

¹¹ See Ganguly, 1997.

said to suppress is no more a local insurgency, but foreign-sponsored terrorism. Beyond the propaganda of both sides, Pakistan's involvement, officially denied by Islamabad, is evident. The most active groups, such as the Laskar-i-Taiba and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen are the armed wings of Pakistan-based recognized organisations which recruit and train the *mujahideen*, and celebrate openly the *shahid*, the "martyrs" dead in struggle. In 2000, the appearance of suicide commandos bombing army camps, both in Kashmir and Chechnia, was not missed by observers of transnational radical Islamist movements. On the other side, it is as well established that the repression launched by the Indian forces, has targeted for years not just insurgents, but the local population at large. The figure of 20 000 dead since 1989 is not official. Pakistan puts it much higher. The "tragedy of errors", to quote Indian journalist Tavleen Singh¹², is apparently not coming to a close.

In the early nineties, the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan and the independence acquired by the Republics of Central Asia gave rise to hope, in Srinagar and in Islamabad, that the moment had arrived for big changes to take place in Kashmir. But many have misread New Delhi's rationales and India's resilience. Kashmir is certainly important to India, but not a subject of extreme focalisation as it is in Pakistan. Kashmiri insurgency, stirred by Islamabad, is a sore, and costs Indian Army a lot, but India may afford to stick for long to its policy, how inefficient it is. To put it short, the Pakistani strategy of "bleeding India", as defined by New Delhi strategists, is not operative, for India may afford to wait—or might even boost its national ethos when Islamabad engages itself in a Kargil-like backfiring adventure—.Whatever be the cost of the Kashmir tangle, New Delhi prefers to support it, and to suffer from a negative image on this account (Pakistan's image being not better at any rate) rather than to open the Pandora box of rethinking afresh the status of Kashmir. The Indian political philosophy accepted by all the mainstream parties advances—in unison with the leadership of many multicultural countries, including Russia and China—that the right to self-determination was valid only against colonial states. Kashmir is thus treated in India as a purely internal matter, and New Delhi, whichever be the party in power, will hardly contemplate a plebiscite which would not turn in its favour. Besides the image of a pluralistic nation which is at stake, a victorious secession might stimulate other militant groups in North-East India or elsewhere. With the independentist movements wearing apparently thin, we seem to be back to the original binary scenario, with a difference however: the drift of the nineties

¹² Tavleen Singh, in her book: *Kashmir. A Tragedy of Errors*, Viking, New Delhi, 1996

Pakistan and the Indian syndrome

has not changed the status of Kashmir, but as certainly brought in a militant radical Islam, alien to the *kashmiriyat* tradition, and connected with international networks.

The international dimension of Kashmir

Between 1994, when the local insurgency gave signs of weakening, and 1998, when the nuclear tests projected Kashmir as a potential flashpoint, New Delhi might have believed that time was running in its favour. The greater involvement of radical Islamist groups armed and trained in Pakistan was a challenge, but it did not affect the great transformations India was engaged in, on the socio-economic front. Furthermore, the setting up of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference sent mixed signals. The Conference does voice the anti-status quo perspective in Jammu and Kashmir, but what freedom (*hurriyat*) it struggles for is not defined the same way by its various components. To bring together so different groups, from the Jamiat-i-Islami to the JKLF, does not help to define a clear political perspective, nor to identify any charismatic Kashmiri leader enjoying a global recognition.

Pakistan has not succeeded in internationalizing the Kashmir issue the way it hoped. However, the nuclear tests on the one hand, and the willingness of India to project itself as a country with growing ambitions, has drawn external powers to pay a more focused attention to the Kashmir problem. In the new openly nuclearised context calling for upgrading missile potential, the issue of security in South Asia has acquired an increased relevance. On the other front, the promise of economic development and the definition of India as a 'big emerging market' call for favouring peace and negotiation more than confrontation. The external powers, however, are not much interested by the Kashmir *per se*, and by the fate of the Kashmiris. What they hope for is *any* durable settlement of the Kashmir tangle, not necessarily a plebiscite. This adds to the frustration of many Pakistanis, who denounce the supposed anti-Muslim bias of the international community, and compare its restrained comments on the fate of the Muslims in Bosnia, Kashmir and Chechenia, with its prompt intervention in Timor, for supporting Christian Timorese against Indonesian rule (the Western support to Muslim Kosovars is strangely not recognised as a counterclaim). The Kashmir issue is henceforth not just a bone of contention between India and Pakistan. It feeds in Pakistan anti-Western feelings, the West, and in fact other powers as well, being seen as unprincipled, treacherous, and deeply opposed to Islam. This is obviously something of a paradox, as Pakistan is in the

Pakistan and the Indian syndrome

meantime constantly asking for international mediation for solving the Kashmir problem. Added to the legitimacy of the Kashmiris expectations, the feeling of being unheard or misunderstood generates a self-righteous crispation which helps also to underestimate—or to be deliberately silent about—the extent of Pakistani responsibilities in the military and ideological radicalisation of the Kashmir problem. This, in turn, does not facilitate a fruitful dialogue with India.

In March 2000, the visit of Bill Clinton in South Asia has satisfied New Delhi much more than Islamabad. In a rare speech “to the People of Pakistan” broadcast on Pakistan TV, the U.S. President has asked Pakistan “to reduce tensions with India” and to “intensify its efforts to defeat those who inflict terror”. Two messages were sent to the public opinion, not much in tune, to say the least, with the predilections of the country leadership: i)–“There is no military solution to Kashmir. International sympathy, support and intervention cannot be won by provoking a bigger, bloodier conflict”; ii)– “We cannot and will not mediate or resolve the dispute in Kashmir. Only you and India can do that, through dialogue”. While Pakistan opposes Indian’s expectations to become on due time a permanent member of the Security Council, on the ground that a country not respecting U.N. resolutions cannot reasonably received support for such an upgrading, the U.S. President choose to say not a word about the plebiscite Islamabad put so much forward as the only solution to the Kashmir tangle.¹³

USA might not mediate officially in Kashmir, but it certainly puts pressure on both Pakistan and India. No public statement indicates however what could be the best hypotheses for progressing toward an agreement. Various compromises are imagined, some of them abroad. None seems easy to implement. In any case, the history of negotiations between Pakistan and India is not much encouraging, and it must be also acknowledged, as Pakistan avers, that no policy either imposed by India, or agreed at by Pakistan and India, could be viable if the Kashmiris do not truly accept it.

¹³ The White House. Office of the Press Secretary: *Remarks by the President to the People of Pakistan*, March 25, 2000

INTERMITTENT DIALOGUE : STRAINS AND PROSPECTS

Talk to reach nowhere; that is the protracted story of the Pakistano-Indian dialogue. Furthermore, agreements arrived at often leave a bitter taste. New Delhi contests the turn given by the United Nations to its 1948 complaint and considers, not without reason, that the Tachkent agreement signed through Russian mediation after the 1965 war, has brought nothing concrete. Many believed in Pakistan that the Simla Agreement was signed "under duress". Notwithstanding the worsening of the Kashmir crisis in the nineties, the dialogue, with some interruptions, has continued till the Kargil crisis and the military take-over of 1999. A dialogue mostly of the deaf, in which each party followed the tactics of blow hot, blow cold: the artillery shelling along the line of control often intensified whenever diplomats met. Today the shelling continues, but the official dialogue is at a standstill. General Musharraf's proposal to renew it "anywhere, anytime, at any level" leads nowhere, as long as Pakistan does not satisfy the pre-condition set by India : the end —or at least a significant slackening— of infiltrations of *jihadi* commandos in Kashmir. The open stalemate does not preclude discreet contacts, nor "individual" initiatives (involving recently noted Kashmiris settled in U.S. A.). Whatever the future holds in store, it could be instructive to draw some lessons from past practices of dialogue, and to identify what seems to be the present positions of the different parties involved.

The practice of dialogue : the go-and-stop strategy

The last two recent steps of bilateral relations have offered very quick volte-faces. The first phase started with the nuclear tests of May 1998 and went up to April 1999, when the "Lahore process" was still promising. The second phase started in May 1999 with the Kargil exposure and still runs at the time of writing, in July 2000.

In the context of the deep-rooted reciprocated mistrust which has crystallised decades after decades, there are firstly some questions of method which get formulated. As mentioned earlier, the heads of the Pakistani and Indian governments generally used to meet each other usually in third countries during annual international conferences. After the acid comments generated by the nuclear tests of May 1998, the Indo-Pakistani dialogue was not really stopped. The tones alternated rapidly from being frigid (at Colombo, on the sidelines of the SAARC summit in July 1998) to a little more urbane (at

New York, at the time of the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 1998) with the dialogue often being suspended. While Prime Ministers and Ministers for External Affairs set the tone, it is generally the Foreign Secretaries who negotiate. This procedure restricts the room for manoeuvre and political initiatives.

Even as regards the proposed conduct of the dialogue, the attitudes are divergent. Islamabad insists that progress on the "core issue" of Kashmir is a necessary precondition for moving towards normalised relationship. On the opposite, New Delhi feels that giving priority to Kashmir, which is a matter of major friction, is counter-productive. It argues that it would be better to achieve some progress on the side issues and thus create a better climate for bilateral discussions. Talks are therefore held mostly on what the subject of the talks should be. In June 1997, eight points were retained, the first two within the competence of the Foreign Secretaries, the others pertaining to other officials: Kashmir; peace and security; Siachen; navigation on the Tulbul; the Sir Creek border; terrorism and drug traffic; economic and commercial cooperation; cultural cooperation and reciprocal visits.

Whatever be the Government in power, Pakistan argues that foreign mediators are indeed needed for progressing on Kashmir, as bilateral discussions have failed for years. It recalls that the Indus Treaty, in the fifties, was successfully negotiated thanks to the mediation of the World Bank chief. Islamabad asks also for the Kashmiris being associated to the discussions. It has proposed that India should come forward on the Kashmir issue by making some distinct gestures: withdrawal of a part of the armed forces (600 000 men according to Islamabad, probably less but India does not give figures), recognition of the Hurriyat Conference as the interlocutor representing the Kashmiris, free elections under the supervision of foreign observers. Pakistan insists that a plebiscite is the only way out, and that the fifty years old U.N. resolutions on this regard are still valid. The unofficial suggestion to hold plebiscite at district level is seen at Islamabad at a concession permitting the non-Muslim district of Jammu and Kashmir to remain within India. It does not really open new vistas, for New Delhi objects to any plebiscite on principle, Kashmir being not considered as "a disputed territory", but just an internal problem.¹⁴

¹⁴ The proposed redefinition of the administrative boundaries inside the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir can hardly appear as a step in direction of the Pakistani proposal of holding a plebiscite at district level, although it appears to emphasize the local dimension of religious identities in Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir.

India rejects officially any type of mediation and, whatever be happening behind the scenes, would oppose any mediatic build-up of Camp David style, which would be found offending its status (an Oslo-type procedure would certainly be more acceptable). As far as Kashmiris are concerned, New Delhi maintain contacts with the Hurriyat leaders—whether in jail or free—and certainly try to divide them, as some might be tempted by compromise after a decade of unsuccessful armed struggle. But which type of compromise? Even the loyal Assembly of Jammu-and Kashmir met with a strong rebuttal from the BJP-led Government, in July 2000, when it passed in a resolution favouring the restoration of the pre-1953 full-fledged autonomy. While Pakistan's policy on Kashmir is as vocal as possible, India keeps silence on its options: no official statement on the change of status of the Line of Control, no proposition for granting significant autonomy to Jammu-and Kashmir, which seems however the only way offered for changing eventually the mood of local Kashmiris.

By contrast, India is vocal on Pakistan's intrusion in Kashmir, and on opposing "international terrorism". In this regard, New Delhi has scored some points in its own way, with the American attack on Osama bin Laden's camp in 1998 (which hosted in Afghanistan, but just two steps away from the border with Pakistan, some Pakistani *mujahideen* preparing themselves for operations in Kashmir): it provided a perfect opportunity for calling on the international community to organise a large conference against terrorism which India complains of enduring since a long time, in Kashmir and elsewhere, at the instigation "of one of its neighbours". The new regular dialogue engaged between India and USA on terrorism is another victory of sorts, even if Washington, eager to keep contacts with Islamabad, stops short of defining Pakistan as a terrorist state. The course of events, at any rate, has however added pressure on Pakistan.

The second tract and third tract diplomacy

Other channels, other dialogues attempt to go beyond the often sterile formalism, however indispensable, of official meetings. Many well-meaning persons, whether retired army officers, former high-ranking diplomats and bureaucrats, or academics with political contacts, meet with influential colleagues from the other side, and tests new ideas, with the knowledge of the two Governments, without committing them officially. The Neemrana Initiative has been the most well-known among the instruments of what is

Pakistan and the Indian syndrome

known as the "track two diplomacy". Less close to those in power and much more critical of the authorities in both camps, the "track three diplomacy", this one conducted by NGOs, aims at promoting a people-to-people dialogue; it organises public meetings and annual conferences, alternately in India and in Pakistan, with participants from both countries —if visas are granted. The Pakistan and Indian People's Forum for Peace and Democracy is one of the most active of these. It is encouraging to note that although the official dialogue and the second track channel have been paralysed since General Musharraf's take over, track three has been left open.

Some people express doubts on the effectiveness of such movements which are said to catch the attention of those only who are already convinced. This is a shortsighted assessment. In the context of the general suspicion continuously kept alive since half a century, everything that promotes respect for the other side, every initiative favouring publicised dialogues between concerned citizens from both countries, prepare the ground for possible steps forward, while not necessarily yielding on basic issues. If confidence-building measures have to be decided mostly by authorities in power, the culture of peace is a common good. It would be wrong to underestimate the relevance of Pakistanis who voice appeals for "burying the hatchet", or for "getting back to the right side of History".¹⁵

Geo-economics versus geopolitics ?

There remains the economic channel. Is the geopolitical heritage, replete with strife, sustained by deep-seated ideological differences and by sentiments of identity, instrumentalised by political circles for half a century, ready to yield ground in the face of the geo-economic imperative, in an era of globalisation which necessitates strong regional structures, woven into forceful internal exchanges? The first economic effect of bilateral tensions, and not the least for Pakistan, is its cost in terms of defence budgets. But these tensions have also prevented intercourse which could have contributed to the prosperity of the two neighbours. A number of studies, as well as Chambers of Commerce from both countries (before the nuclear tests!), have stressed on their potential complementarities and have denounced the absurdity of a situation in which indisputable possibilities of

¹⁵ To quote here, amongst many other writings, the titles of two opinion pieces published by *Dawn* one year after the Kargil episode unravelled. Sher Khan's "Time to bury the hatchet" (in *Dawn*, 5.5..2000), contrasts the enduring Indo-Pakistani stalemate with the evolution of bilateral relations between U.S.A and Vietnam,

Pakistan and the Indian syndrome

exchange are nevertheless ignored, or are conducted through indirect or clandestine channels, enriching competitors, intermediaries or smugglers. This is an area holding a vast potential for dialogue, sustained by shared interests, which would in all likelihood strengthen the prospects of regional security. A better relationship between the two stronger pillars of SAARC, India and Pakistan, would help the Association to progress, instead of paying the price of their dispute. As no one knows when the South Asian Preferential Tariff Agreement, SAPTA, will actually give place to a South Asian Free Trade Area, SAFTA, a number of States —India included— devise alternatives, either on bilateral lines or focused on a different core area, such as the Bay of Bengal rim States. For the time being, the Economic Cooperation Organisation, whose members include Turkey, Iran, Azerbaidjan and the Central Asian Republics, does not seem to offer Pakistan much prospect on the short run. It would a victory of geo-economics over geopolitics if Pakistan could one day benefit from the links to be established between India, Iran and Turkmenistan for a regular supply of gas and oil. In between, Islamabad still refuses to grant to India the status of most favoured nation, but will have to yield on this point, since the two countries are members of the World Trade Organisation...

PAKISTAN'S DILEMMA

Nothing illustrates better the dilemma Pakistan is facing than the quick succession of events of 1999. In February, a new symbolic gesture revived hope of an improvement in bilateral links and was accompanied by cordial words on both sides: riding in the first bus linking New Delhi to Lahore, the Indian Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee was received at the border post by the his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif. The two heads of government made an appeal to "remove the bitterness of the past" and to work "towards peace and harmony". Once again, the press, thwarting extremists on all sides, hailed "this moment of history" and laid stress on what the two countries —and their neighbours— would gain from a normalisation of relations. Kargil followed three months later, killing in the bud any prospect of improvement in bilateral relations, and eventually thwarting the discreet dialogue open on Kashmir. As Kargil has been prepared with at least the basic

North and South Korea, Egypt and Israel, etc. Ayesha Jalal's "Getting back to the right side of History" (in *Dawn*, 4.5..2000) will be referred to in more details below.

knowledge of Nawaz Sharif before the Lahore meeting, Indian hawks has all good reasons to repeat that decidedly, no Pakistani leadership might be trusted.

However, the parameters defining Pakistan's policy cannot be simply confined to any collective psychological dimension. The duplicity theory does not bring us very far. True, the traditional perceptions we have defined as "the Indian syndrome" affecting the mainstream Pakistani references and ideology do hold sway over the shaping of bilateral relationship. But even those who think afresh for charting a path out of the present difficulties have no readymade answer to offer. But they may at least raise good questions, and identify stumbling-blocks, some of them being structural (the power structure and the deficit of representative democracy for instance), while others do result from risky strategies implemented since the eighties and nineties (particularly as far as the islamisation of the Kashmir policy is concerned). Ayesha Jalal offers interesting reflections in this regard. She recognises firstly that the "policy of sustaining low intensity warfare against India" cannot succeed in Kashmir, then goes farther, echoing a question one heard more often privately than publicly : "Should the Kashmir cause take precedence over Pakistan's own internal and external security ?". Perhaps "Pakistan can court peace and economic prosperity" if it were to give up Kashmir, but would it be realistic, asks Jalal ? She answers no for three reasons. Firstly, because of the domestic scenario and "the deeply entrenched interests of the Army" and various intelligence agencies. Secondly, because the organizations which train and arm militants for struggling in Kashmir would certainly not reduce the internal security risk they represent for Pakistan, if they were to face such a drastic shift in Pakistan's Kashmir policy. Thirdly, on a less practical and more principled stand, because "Pakistan has a moral responsibility in supporting the freedom struggle of a people so long denied the elementary right of choice in shaping their own destiny". In other words, the officialisation of the LOC is unacceptable, for it would amount to "sanctify territorial borders at the cost of human beings".

Retract from any territorial claim; be ready for all options —including Kashmir's independence— other than the present status quo; stop the *jihad* rhetorics and focus rather on the human rights issue: some of Jalal's proposals go far away from the established paradigm, although calling the international community to "enforce restraint

on India's military war machine"¹⁶ is much more consistent with the standard Pakistani expectations. Whatever could be the degree of representativeness of Ayesha's Jalal analyses, they illustrate how uncertain the road to a settlement of the Indo-Pakistani dispute will be, as goodwill alone does not permit to define a compromise between Indians who reject a plebiscite and Pakistanis who reject the status quo.

On the whole, Pakistan finds itself confronted to many decisive dilemmas. The new configurations of the world order favours India for the time being, but they could favour as well a reformed Pakistan charting a new path towards democracy, peace on its borders, and economic recovery. The core of the problem lies inside Pakistan itself. It has a right to external security, but has also to define —or redefine— a national ideology which serves its internal security as well. It may certainly keep alive the Kashmir issue as a matter of principle, and made proposals for solving it, as long as it does not put oil on fire, and does not sabotage the compromise that India might eventually forge with the Kashmiris, if New Delhi were to choose at last to listen to them. But to define Kashmir as "the core issue" would probably bring to Pakistan no more significant result in the future that it did in the past. More generally, Pakistan has free itself from the Indian syndrome. It has to recognise the fact that India *is* a regional power, which is bound to grow. On the other hand, India has to be, *vis a vis* its western neighbour, the "benevolent power" it argues it is in the BJP electoral manifesto. Benevolence must start in Kashmir, provided that it is more than a mere paternalistic slogan. It must expand to Pakistan which waits for a sign from New Delhi. The 'Gujral doctrine' suggesting to offer to neighbouring South Asian countries facilities without immediate reciprocity must be extended to Pakistan. But how to enlarge it after the Kargil trauma, whose impact on the Indian mind, coming so soon after the Lahore Agreement, is apparently not rightly evaluated in Islamabad ?

The time is not to optimism, nor to despair. Incertitude will prevail till men or women of vision take charge, and would work patiently and dedicately to "remove the bitterness of the past". This will be a time-consuming process. In between armed peace has somehow to be preserved, although threatened by possible relapses. More than a billion human beings live under its wing.

¹⁶ All these quotes are from Ayesha Jalal : "Getting back on the right side of History", *Dawn*, 4.5.2000

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