
U.S. Strategy of Preventing Conflicts in South Asia

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Abstract

Crisis preventive diplomacy is an enduring idea in international politics referring to the crisis preventing efforts by an organization, or a nation or a group of nations to avert the escalation of a conflict between other nations. Crisis preventive diplomacy evolves and refers specifically to diplomatic action taken at the earliest possible stage likely, to obviate dispute from up surging between parties, to thwart existing clash from escalating in to a conflict and to limit the spread of the latter when it occurs. The preventive diplomacy lingers highly relevant along the entire conflict spectrum. It is presumed that the third party involvement in a conflict can be effective, and if it is not applied, conflict can expand and be more hazardous.¹

The United States being the most effective global power has the means and capacity to play a third party role in a conflicting situation, to limit the crisis from taking dangerous proportions. In the case of South Asia, the United States used crisis preventive diplomacy successfully in tense situations emerged from time to time between Pakistan and India. Otherwise the two states could be dragged to a full-fledged war that could employ nuclear weapons.

War Scare of 1984

In the backdrop of insurgent movements in Indian occupied Kashmir and Indian Punjab, Pakistan-India relations were adversely affected. India accused Pakistan of supporting and providing arms and training to Kashmiri and Sikhs separatists. Indian noted writer V. D. Chopra wrote:

The Pakistan Intelligence establishments were actively involved in training of the anti-India terrorists in specialized camps in Pakistan, which began to operate in the early eighties. This has been collaborated by the terrorists operating in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab...After the completion of training, which included the use of sophisticated weapons and ammunition and organizing 'hate campaigns against India,' these terrorists were smuggled into Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir from various points for carrying out operations. Arms and ammunition were also smuggled into India from the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.²

Chopra further argued that the Kashmiri leaders had close contacts with the leaders of Khalistan movement, in Punjab. He accused the United States for encouraging the Indian separatists. He observed that "Jagjit Singh Chauhan (Sikh dissident leader) had links with various organizations in the U.S. and that Ganga Singh Dhillon (Sikh dissident leader) had maintained liaison with U.S. Senators."³ The Indian major political party- All India Congress-I in its publication entitled 'Conspiracy exposed' also accused: "Pakistani agents disguised as Sikhs were trained in Kasur area of Pakistan, by a Brigadier of the Pakistan artillery regiment."⁴ This publication also pointed out a number of cities of Pakistan where training camps were set up. It mentioned Emnabad (Gujranwala District), Rahim Yar Khan, Sheikhpura as well as in Attock fort and Daud fort in Pakistan.⁵ The Congress document claimed about the U.S. collaboration with Pakistan: "It is believed that American CIA agents helped the Pakistan intelligence in imparting

this training. The CIA agents worked as station chief or as second in command."⁶ It further said:

The most of those trained in these camps and training centres were smugglers, proclaimed offenders and criminals generally operating on the international border.... After completion of their training, which included use of sophisticated weapons, the terrorists were inducted into Punjab from various points in Jammu, Rajasthan and Punjab to conduct 'operation' against the Indian security forces.⁷

Denying all these charges, Pakistan responded that these accusations were part of India's efforts to cover up its domestic political disorder, chaos and mismanagement.⁸

After building up a hostile propaganda campaign against Pakistan, India mobilized its troops along the Pakistani borders in the Indian Punjab and Line of Control (LoC) and occupied a big part of territory in Siachen Glacier valley.⁹ The intense situation had reached to such a point of seriousness that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in its report, published in September 1984, indicated that a war between India and Pakistan could breakout any time. It also reported that there was a chance that India could launch a preemptive attack on Pakistan's nuclear installations.¹⁰ This situation was a matter of serious concern for Washington. Pakistan was close ally of the United States in war against the Soviet occupation forces in Afghanistan and had become a front line state. Threats from India could shift Pakistan's attention from its western borders. Nevertheless, America repeatedly assured Pakistan for its security.¹¹ The U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Dean R. Hinton said: "His country was strongly committed to safeguard the territorial integrity of Pakistan and in case of aggression from east or west the United States would not remain neutral."¹² The American Under Secretary of State James Buckley also echoed this U.S. commitment.¹³ The 'National Security Decision Directives'

(NSDDs), released in 1983, regarding the U.S. policy towards South Asia in 1980s said: "India-Pakistan war would pose grave dangers to American interests."¹⁴ Another NSDD 147, released on October 11, 1984 affirmed: "There was still a possibility of an Indian pre-emptive strike on Pakistani nuclear facilities which would probably lead to an all-out war."¹⁵ The directives were meant for "strategic support for Pakistan" and to give it a "sense of security."¹⁶ It also urged for development of "contingency plans" in case of a "preemptive attack" by India on nuclear installations of Pakistan or in the event of an all-out battle. The directives recommended a dialogue with India to avert the crisis.¹⁷

Subsequently, the United States started a diplomatic maneuvering in South Asia that led a number of American officials including the Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Howard B. Schaffer and Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy to visit the area.¹⁸ The American Officials conveyed the U.S. concern on the South Asian security situation to the Indian leaders and persuaded them to exercise restraint and patience and resume talks with Pakistan.¹⁹ The U.S. Secretary of State, George Shultz, also brought up the subject with the Indian leaders, during his visit to Delhi to offer condolences on the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.²⁰ George Shultz's visit was followed by a four-member Senators' delegation led by Mr. Sam Nunn. The Senators assured the Indians about the U.S. support for the independence and prosperity of India and insisted that the American military aid for Pakistan was vital from the viewpoint of containing the Soviet Union. They argued that India had no reason to feel fear from Pakistan and rearming Pakistan was in the larger interests of India and the region on the whole.²¹ Consequently, the tension ceased, but India remained adamant to its stance regarding Pakistan's backing of the separatists in Indian-held Kashmir and Punjab. New Delhi also had some reservations on United States-Pakistan military relations, which, in Indian view, had direct bearing on India's relations with America as well as the regional security.²² During their meetings with the American officials, the Indians

raised particularly concerns over the statement of the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, in which he described India as a potential threat to Pakistan and declared the U.S. commitment to help Pakistan, if it became a victim of external aggression.²³

The U.S. actions successfully prevented crisis from escalating further to an armed conflict. However, the threat of an Indian strike on Pakistan nuclear facilities at Kahuta remained. Based on the American intelligence reports, the French Newspaper *Le Monde* reported on January 28, 1985 that Indian government had prepared to attack the Pakistan's nuclear facilities in a manner, similar to the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor in June 1981.²⁴

Soviet Intimidation of 1985

In perspective of the Afghanistan crisis, the expanding military collaboration between Pakistan and the United States had irked the Soviet Union, which had viewed the United States–Pakistan strategic partnership as harmful for Russia–Afghanistan–India axis. Ironically, the Soviet's desperation with Pakistan resulted in frequent and intense raids on Pakistan territory, air violations and artillery barrages from Afghanistan.²⁵ The pressure on Pakistan's eastern and western borders had put Pakistan in a risky position.

Assessing the gravity of situation, United States tried to keep India away from coordinating its policy with the Soviet Union, to undermine Pakistan.²⁶ The Americans also tried to dispel the Indian impression that the U.S. military aid to Pakistan aimed at encircling India. The U.S. officials specially turned focus on the nuclearization of South Asia and danger attached to any conflict between India and Pakistan.²⁷ They encouraged both countries to take initiatives, at regional level to address the nuclear controversies, as well as discuss other matters of mutual concern, Kashmir in particular.²⁸ Holding a meeting with the Indian leaders, in September 1985, the U.S. Under–Secretary of State for political Affairs, Michael Armacost, underscored the U.S. concern on the nuclear proliferation in South Asia and assured them for sincere efforts for promotion of a non-nuclear

proliferation regime in South Asia.²⁹ During his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in New York on October 24, 1985, the U.S. President Ronald Reagan assured that Washington wanted to avoid a nuclear arms race in the Indian subcontinent.³⁰

The U.S. efforts to reduce tensions between Pakistan and India, resulted in an understanding between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq that finally led New Delhi and Islamabad to reach an agreement of 'not to attack each other's nuclear facilities,' on December 17, 1985. It was a significant breakthrough. Both states also started a dialogue process for the normalization of relations. Satisfied with the outcome of its successful diplomacy, the U.S. was pleased on the resumption of the talks. The State Department spokesman commented that the "confidence-building measures such as the reported agreement not to attack one another's nuclear facilities are important to build the mutual trust, required for a meaningful dialogue, on the South Asian nuclear dilemma."³¹ Following up the Zia-Rajiv parleys held in October and December 1985, both sides' officials from defense, foreign and finance Ministries held meetings.

It was the American diplomacy that successfully brought Pakistan out of serious conflict situation emerged as a result of Soviet-India axis. The Americans were also mindful about the Soviet hostile intensions towards Pakistan. The U.S. Secretary of State, George Shultz, during a debate in the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee for Asian and Pacific Affairs on February 9, 1985 said that "it is vital that we help ensure the security of Pakistan in the face of Soviet intimidation."³² The Deputy Assistant Defense Secretary, Major General Kenneth Burns, noting the Soviet troops' operation near to Pakistan borders, also emphasized development of "Pakistan's air defense to counter cross-border attacks."³³

Nuclear Controversy and Soviet Threat-1986

The Secretary level parleys held between India and Pakistan in January 1986 could not achieve meaningful results. The main

reason for the failure of this dialogue process was India's harsh attitude towards Pakistan. India continued its policy of leveling charges on Pakistan for interfering in the Indian internal affairs.³⁴ The Indian External Affairs Minister, B. R. Bhagat, declared in the Lok Sabha that "we have hard evidence" of Pakistan's assistance to the extremists in India.³⁵ He said that "as long Pakistan continued to be involved in activities inimical to India-such as training and arming of Indian terrorists in special camps and otherwise assisting them-there cannot be any improvement in Indo-Pakistan relations. ...And the process initiated towards that objective could not make progress."³⁶ Instead of creating an environment to settle the nuclear controversy in South Asia, particularly after signing the agreement for not to attack each other nuclear facilities, India continued its hawkish approach towards Pakistan's nuclear programme. India also saw Pakistan-China military cooperation with suspicion. The Indian sentiments were reflected in the Indian Defense Ministry report, published on March 31, 1986. It said: "Pakistan's endeavor to have a nuclear bomb, and China's programme to modernize its armed forces have a bearing on India's stability."³⁷ Pakistan-China nuclear accord signed on September 15, 1986 further increased Indian opposition to Pakistan's nuclear programme. An Indian writer, Ranjan Gupta, commented on the implications of Sino-Pakistan nuclear cooperation for India:

The Sino-Pakistan axis is the most pressing challenge to India's foreign policy. Its sole purpose is to curb the economic growth of India and prevent India from becoming one of the big Asian powers along with Japan and China. In recent months the Sino-Pakistan alliance has taken on a sinister shape with the Chinese attempts to help the Pakistanis develop a nuclear bomb. There is no doubt that the Pakistanis just do not have the skills to develop a nuclear bomb, but they want one at all cost just to keep up with the Indians. So enter the Chinese.... Nevertheless, with considerable Chinese help, the

Pakistanis may finally have their bomb. To be precise, it will be a Chinese bomb painted in Pakistani colours.³⁸

Pakistan's every step to meet for its defense needs increased Indian anxiety. For instance, the construction of two airports at Muzaffarabad and Rawalkot in Azad Kashmir multiplied the Indian apprehension that these airports could be used to target the Indian military installations in Indian-controlled Kashmir.³⁹ Sharing the Indian concern regarding Pakistan's strategic and nuclear matters, the Soviet Union once again sided with India. Moscow sent a de'marche to Islamabad in mid-1986 threatening Pakistan for taking "retaliatory steps if Pakistan were to acquire a military nuclear capability."⁴⁰ The Soviet warning to Pakistan further increased the regional tension. A weekly mouthpiece of Bhartiya Janata Party, *Organizer*, revealed that the Soviet Union and India had planned to take some joint action against Pakistan. It said that the aim of Russia-India joint action was to "weaken Pakistan in view of the situation being created in the subcontinent by U.S. arming of Pakistan and Pakistan's prospects to have a nuclear bomb."⁴¹ It further noted: "The aim of the joint action will be to cut off Sind and North West Frontier Province from Pakistan as East Pakistan was cut off fifteen years ago." The newspaper further commented in support of that action:

Such action is thought necessary presumably to preempt further mischief by Pakistan. As it is, almost the entire western border from Siachin to Kutch is getting hot day by day. In Siachin particularly and elsewhere in Jammu & Kashmir, Pakistan has stepped up hostilities recently. Reports of feverish military activities like building of roads, helipads and radar stations and exchange of fire all along the border have been appearing frequently. More and more sophisticated equipment and military aid is pouring in from USA and China. The latest acquisition is the laser-guided anti-tank missile which seeks out the targets automatically.⁴²

The Soviet threats once again alarmed the Americans about the Pakistan's territorial integrity and its military and nuclear strategies. The U.S. naval forces in the area were put on alert. The U.S. ship *Enterprise* along with five other units of the U.S. 7th Fleet visited the Karachi port in March 1986.⁴³ Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo's visit to the United States in July 1986 was a significant gesture to uphold Pakistan's position. American President Ronald Reagan lauded Pakistan's courage in standing up to Soviet pressures through its occupation of Afghanistan. The President pointed out that Pakistan was a symbol of peace and stability in South Asian region and stressed on the U.S. commitment to strengthen further Pakistan's military capabilities in the face of Soviet pressures from Afghanistan.⁴⁴ Subsequently, a high-level defense team led by the Secretary of Defense, Casper Weinberger, came to Pakistan on 14-17, October 1986 to discuss the agenda of U.S. security assistance to Pakistan and other areas of military cooperation with Pakistani leaders. Mr. Weinberger reaffirmed the U.S. "unshakeable support to Pakistan in the event of Soviet attack."⁴⁵ Weinberger's visit was followed by a 11-member delegation of the U.S. Armed Services Committee of the House of Representatives and a high level delegation led by Mr. Roy Dyson in November 1986 and also a high level delegation led by Stephen Solarz, Chairman, House of Representatives Sub Committee on Asia and Pacific Affairs, in December. These delegations also worked out details for the U.S. aid to Pakistan.⁴⁶

In view of Pakistan's vulnerability to the Soviet designs, the Americans reevaluated the U.S. policy towards Pakistan that broadened the scope of U.S.-Pakistan military cooperation between the two countries. The policy was based on the following conceptions:

1. In view of Pakistan's vulnerability to the Soviet Union, the "consistent U.S. support would keep it in the conflict in Afghanistan, since there was strong domestic Pakistani opposition to the war."

2. "Pakistan could not end its nuclear programme for domestic political reasons, but official reassurances that 'we will not embrace you' could be taken at face value."
3. "The U.S. military aid programme had to be kept at a level high enough to keep Pakistan in the war-a level of support that would, hopefully, keep Pakistan from advancing its nuclear programme beyond various 'red lines' agreed upon by the two states – but not exaggerate Pakistan's own judgment about its ability to take on India's superior numbers."
4. "In the meantime, various regional efforts at furthering India-Pakistan normalization would be pursued. The efforts included new CBMs, support for India- Pakistan dialogue, an elaborate public information and education programme on conflict resolution, and the 'opening' to India so that the United States could better serve as a channel of communications between Islamabad and New Delhi. Such measures, if they succeeded, would presumably make it easier for Pakistan to slow the pace of its nuclear programme, because the Indian threat would be reduced. If they failed, however, then the administration would find it easier to explain away Pakistan's nuclear programme to Congress, where most of the nonproliferation pressure came from."⁴⁷

The U.S. involvement in the South Asian affairs on the side of Pakistan effectively averted the Indo-Soviet threat of an attack on Pakistan's nuclear facilities. However, on the whole, the regional security environment did not improve.

Brasstacks Crisis 1986-1987

Ever since the insurgency started in Indian Kashmir and Indian Punjab, the Indian leaders insisted that Pakistan supported the

various insurgent groups. As a result of this Indian approach, mistrust and suspicion prevailed between the two countries, and the signs for reconciliation diminished. The meeting between the Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo and his Indian counterpart Rajiv Gandhi, on the sideline of second SAARC summit held in Bangalore in November 1986, could not dispel the clouds of distrust and suspicion. In a press conference on November 17, after meeting with Junejo, Rajiv Gandhi highlighted the Indian concern over Pakistan's nuclear programme, U.S. arms for Pakistan, and drug trafficking from Pakistan to India, and infiltration of terrorists from the Pakistani side.⁴⁸

India's massive military exercise held in November 1986 with code-name Brasstacks along the Pakistan-India borders in the Rajasthan and Punjab regions added new dimension to the deterioration of relations between the two states. The Brasstacks exercise comparing to the largest NATO and Warsaw Pact exercises engaged bulk of Indian Army concentrated on Pakistan's sensitive border areas.⁴⁹ The exercise was an unusual in its size as well as duration that costed about \$250 million.⁵⁰ Instead of usual five weeks, it was stretched to five months and for the first time, the Indian army tested its mechanized infantry and "India's ability to launch an invasion on Pakistan in the event of war."⁵¹

The mobilization of Indian forces within some 50 miles from Pakistan's borders, without any advance notice was regarded in Pakistan as a preemptive measure for the purposes of a surprise attack. Consequently, Pakistan immediately alerted its forces and moved two armoured division near the borders with India, in the strategically important area of Ravi- Beas corridor. The movement of Pakistani troops in December 1986, alarming the Indians, raised worries for them that the mobilization of Pakistani forces along Punjab and Kashmir borders, could result in "cutting off Amritsar and Ferozpur" in Punjab and blocking "Indian access to Kashmir."⁵² The spokesman of the Indian Ministry of the External affairs contended that the forward movements of the Pakistani forces "have compelled us to take correspondingly

defensive measures we consider necessary."⁵³ On January 23, 1987, Indian forces took up forward position in Punjab sector, sealed the border, and army and air force were put on full alert. The concentration of troops and armor was also reinforced in the Rajasthan-Sind sector. The readiness of troops of the two sides, facing each other in full dress position, a minor incident could have easily escalated into a full-fledged war. Towards the end of January 1987, Indian government converted the Brasstacks exercise to 'Operation Trident,' in view of rising possibility of a war.⁵⁴

However, amid this dangerous situation Pakistan, on its part, retained the diplomatic initiative for de-escalation of the precarious situation. Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo, taking an initiative talked to the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, on January 27, 1987 on the phone and expressed readiness to enter any form of consultations, at any level for the return of normality.⁵⁵ The positive response by Rajiv Gandhi encouraged Pakistani and Indian Foreign Secretaries, Abdul Sattar and Alfred Gonsalves respectively, to hold negotiations in New Delhi from January 31 to February 4, 1987 and signed an agreement. The Sattar-Gonsalves agreement emphasized "a sector by sector approach for the pull out of troops." Both sides agreed not to attack each other and "exercise a maximum restraint to avoid all provocative actions along the border."⁵⁶ The agreement was brought to an immediate implementation. On February 19, both sides completed the first phase of withdrawal of forces from the borders stretched between the Ravi and Chanab rivers.⁵⁷ Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq's 'cricket diplomacy' further accelerated the de-escalation process. Zia-ul-Haq's brief visit to India on February 21 was not to watch a cricket match but in fact it was an expression that Pakistan was ready for talks and diplomatic contacts. Rajiv Gandhi declared the 'cricket summit' a success for de-escalation of tension and improvement in India – Pakistan relations.⁵⁸

The U.S. officials closely monitored the crisis, and called Brasstacks a 'provocative exercise.'⁵⁹ In view of tension escalating

to a dangerous point, they got alarmed that if conflict went unchecked, it might turn in to a full-fledged war that could pose a nuclear risk.⁶⁰ The intensity of crisis heightened the U.S. concern that finally made the U.S. government to play a role in the situation where it had to avoid numerous risks. The U.S. role to defuse the crisis surfaced in January 1987 when the U.S. Ambassador to India, John Gunther Dean, held 'crucial' talks with Pakistani and Indian authorities. He urged both sides' leaders to seek a regional approach to calm the situation.⁶¹ The United States also shared information with the intelligence of both countries to monitor the movement of troops. This intelligence sharing continued till the withdrawal of forces in March 1987.⁶² The State Department specially arranged for day-to-day American response to the crisis. On February 14, 1987, the United States provided both countries with a list of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) with an offer of sending an 'appropriate expert in CBMs.'⁶³ Some sources revealed that President Reagan himself intervened and had telephonic talk with Zia-ul-Haq and Rajiv Gandhi, urging them to end the calamity.⁶⁴

Settlement of Brasstacks crisis noticeably generated calm in the area, but it set a fierce dimension in South Asian nuclear dilemma. The statement of Pakistan's nuclear scientist Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, amid the Brasstacks crisis, revealing that Pakistan having success in enrichment of uranium, had capability to test an atomic bomb in a laboratory simulator added new dimension to the overall debate on South Asian nuclear impasse. The A. Q. Khan's interview by famous Indian journalist, Kuldip Nayar, appeared in the London based *Observer* on March 1, 1987. It generated controversy over Pakistan's nuclear programme. In fact, the interview conveyed a message that if the Indians crossed Pakistani borders, they would be facing a nuclear response. Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan said: "Pakistan will not use (a nuclear weapon), but if driven to the wall, there will be no option left in that eventuality. Nobody can undo Pakistan to take us for granted. We are here to stay and let it be clear that we shall use the bomb if our existence is threatened."⁶⁵ Dr. Qadeer Khan's declaration

about Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear bomb was confirmed by President General Zia-ul-Haq in a interview appeared in *Time* magazine⁶⁶ Dr. Khan's interview effectively helped in preventing the Indians from adventurism against Pakistan and finally tension deescalated. It is believed that it was for the first time in the history of South Asia that nuclear deterrence was invoked.⁶⁷

The self-admission of Pakistan regarding the development of its nuclear capability added new dimension to the Americans' concern over Pakistan's nuclear programme. The U.S. Congress furiously took the matter and moved to call for the termination of aid to Pakistan and imposition of sanctions against the country. That time, Pakistan was engaged in fighting against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Thus, the Regan administration was very cautious that pressure on Pakistan with regard to its nuclear programme could harm the U.S. interests in Afghanistan, affecting Pakistan's determination to support the U.S.-covert operation against Soviet forces in Afghanistan.⁶⁸ During a debate in the House of Foreign Affairs Sub-committee on South Asia and Pacific Affairs, held in March 1987, regarding the \$4.02 billion aid package for Pakistan, the officials highlighted the strategic importance of Pakistan in the Indian Ocean and argued for the development of a close and friendly relationship with Pakistan, based on long-term security interests in the area. It was also pleaded that any restriction on U.S. aid to Pakistan could finally shrink the prospect of U.S. non-proliferation goals in South Asia. It was put forward that the continuation of economic aid would secure a reliable security partnership with Pakistan, strengthening the U.S. influence on Islamabad's nuclear policy.⁶⁹ Consequently the U.S. House Sub-committee approved \$4.02 billion aid package for Pakistan, wavering the Symington amendment of 1977 for two years, which had prohibited any direct American aid to a country that had embarked upon nuclear armament programme. However, the release of economic aid for Pakistan was made conditional to the annual clearance from the American President to the Congress assuring that Pakistan was not producing highly enriched uranium or separated plutonium. In fact, the aid to Pakistan was

unequivocally linked up with the Afghanistan issue and Pakistan's nuclear programme could any time be used as a pretext for suspension of aid. So, once the U.S. interests were reduced in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces, reports against Pakistan's nuclear programme started to appear in the U.S. media campaigning that Pakistan had proceeded beyond the limit in developing its nuclear capability. Pakistan was believed to have acquired the capability to produce more than 75 kilograms Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) annually, enough for three nuclear weapons.⁷⁰ The U.S. annoyance with regard to Pakistan's nuclear policy increased further when Pakistan and France decided in February 1990 to enhance nuclear cooperation. During his visit to Pakistan, French President Francois Mitterand pledged to "authorize the sale of a French nuclear power plant to Pakistan."⁷¹

The U.S. State Department strongly reacted against the French decision. In a statement, it was said: "France has apparently agreed to sell a nuclear power reactor to Pakistan without requiring that Pakistan accept full-scope international Atomic Energy Agency safe-guards., i.e., safe guards on all nuclear activities in Pakistan, not just on the item being exported."⁷²

In the mid of 1990, the U.S. intelligence sources reported that "Pakistan had enriched uranium far above the limit agreed between the two governments and Pakistan either owned some kind of a nuclear device or had reached a stage where it could make a bomb without any difficulty."⁷³ Following such reports, the U.S. President George Bush, in September 1990, refused to certify Pakistan's non-indulgence in pursuing a nuclear weapon programme. The U.S. policy makers were of the opinion that the possession of disassembled components of a nuclear explosive device was even objectionable under the Pressler Amendment.⁷⁴ On October 1, 1990, the U.S. government ceased the economic and military aid to Pakistan, worth between U.S. \$ 564 million and \$ 578 million. The U.S. action to curb Pakistan nuclear programme partially spoiled the U.S. policy for achievement of a non-nuclear proliferation regime in South Asia.

Kashmir Uprising and Nuclear Alarm of 1990

The Indian leaders always claimed that electoral process in the Indian part of Kashmir had successfully produced a genuine people's representative government in the state. This claim was exposed in 1987 State Assembly elections, which were massively rigged. The results of elections in the shape of victory of National Conference and Congress (I) achieving 87 percent of the total seats in the State Assembly increased frustrations amongst the people of the state.⁷⁵ The rigged elections made the Kashmiri people realize that Indian attitude was that of a colonial power and this fraudulent electoral process was just to send message to the international community that Kashmiris were governed by their own representatives. The frustrated Kashmiri people launched an agitation that soon turned in to an armed struggle against the Indian occupation. A renowned Kashmiri political leader, Abdul Ghani Lone, described the aftereffects of the 1987 election results:

It was this that motivated the young generation to say 'to hell with the democratic process and all that this is about' and they said 'let's go for the armed struggle.' It was the flash point. The thought was there, the motivation was there, the urge was there, the demand was there, and the opposition was there. The situation became ripe, and then a flash point.⁷⁶

Subsequently, 1989 Lok Sabha elections proved to be a futile exercise for India. More than 80 percent of the Kashmiri people boycotted the elections and only 20 percent voters went to the polling stations.⁷⁷ It was in fact a verdict demanding an end to the Indian harsh method of occupation.

The Kashmir movement speedily gained momentum. In January 1990, Srinagar witnessed the biggest ever mass demonstration, when more than one million Kashmiri men, women and children tuned in the streets of Srinagar, protesting against the Indian occupation.⁷⁸ Kashmiri freedom fighters were

now in open rebellion and a full-blown secessionist insurgency erupted. This new rising tide of insurgency shocked the Indians. Inderjit Badhwar, a leading journalist of India and former executive editor of *India today*, after having witnessed the boiling situation in Kashmir, observed that "the state (Kashmir) is festering like a sensitive gumboil. Touch any part of it and there's painfully violent eruption."⁷⁹ *The Times of India* wrote:

Kashmiris, particularly the younger generation, is undergoing a revolution of sorts with most people believing that liberation is round the corner....The liberation struggle has entered its final phase and any time the Indian government will succumb under pressure from the mounting public support in the valley and favourable international opinion and arrange a plebiscite.⁸⁰

The massive deployment of Indian forces in the state used all methods of repression and terror. Following Indian blame that Pakistan had sponsored the Kashmir insurgency, a round of hot words was initiated between India and Pakistan. Pakistan constantly said that the popular uprising was part of Kashmiris' freedom struggle, and it was indigenous and intrinsic in character.⁸¹ The harsh tones from Islamabad and New Delhi could any time entirely alter the situation. However, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's participation in the fourth summit of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held in Islamabad in December 1988 gave new impetus to relations between their countries. Meeting between Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi on the sideline of the regional summit, resulted in a breakthrough and both sides signed three mutual agreements including 'not to attack each other's nuclear installations and facilities' directly or indirectly- was related to an understanding reached between President Zia-ul-Haq and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1985, and the other two agreements were related to the avoidance of double taxation and cultural exchanges. These agreements, particularly the agreement dealing with the prohibition of attack on each other's nuclear installations, were referred as a positive step in right direction to keep up the relations. The Americans praised the Indian and Pakistani leaders'

efforts to encourage nuclear restraint in South Asia, and commented that “the gradual establishment of a peaceful working relationship between India and Pakistan would reduce the propensity of both countries towards nuclear weaponization.”⁸² The agreement was ratified and implemented in January 1992. Under this agreement both countries have been exchanging annually lists of sites of their nuclear-related facilities. This exercise ensured both states about the safety of listed facilities.

After interval of six months, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi again came to Pakistan, as a guest of the government of Pakistan. It was a significant attempt to promote understanding between both sides’ leaders but divergent perceptions with regard to the Kashmir issue and Pakistan’s nuclear programme retained things unaltered.⁸³

Pakistan’s military exercise, code-named *Zarb-i-Momin*, held in December 1989 caused serious misperceptions on the Indian side. *Zarb-i-Momin*, a largest exercise in Pakistan’s military history, was held in an area close to Indian Punjab and Kashmir borders.⁸⁴ India perceived that Pakistan’s military exercise was to provide the backup support to Sikhs and Kashmiri militant activities.⁸⁵ The Indian military planners further assessed:

The exercise was held within the Indus-Jhelum *doab*, where the rivers run in north-south directions, this could enable an attack upon Indian-administered Kashmir during the monsoons when these rivers would be in spate and an Indian offensive across them would become very difficult.⁸⁶

According to General V.N. Sharma, then Indian Chief of Army Staff, the Pakistani forces remained in exercise area and “did not return to their peacetime stations” even after the exercise was over. He claimed that Pakistani forces were prepared to provide a “backup support” to the rising terrorist acts on Indian territory across the border and this way they could take “full advantage of terrorist successes to support military intervention.”⁸⁷ Various

Indian strategists had observed that Pakistan viewed India as "strategically unbalanced" and estimated that "the time was propitious for an 'adventure,' calculating that Kashmir had joined Punjab and other Indian regions that had become hotspots."⁸⁸ The Pakistan's military sources, however, disagreed with the Indian claims and accentuated that Pakistani troops had returned to their peacetime positions "within five weeks" after the exercise was concluded.⁸⁹

The Indian assessments of *Zarb-i-Momin* exercise finally led New Delhi to strengthen the counter-insurgency network in Kashmir. India increased number of security forces and beefed up deployment of troops on borders with Pakistan. The mobilization of Indian forces was alarming for Pakistanis. They perceived that "India might be preparing for an attack on Pakistani Kashmir on the pretext of destroying Kashmiri freedom fighters' training camps."⁹⁰ While the Indian analysts also assumed that "a simultaneous attack might be launched into Sindh province, where the only road & rail links between north & south Pakistan is located about 40 km from the Indian border."⁹¹

War theater was ready. By mid-April 1990, the forces of both states were in eyeball-to-eyeball position, facing each other along the international border and LoC in Kashmir.⁹² Indian had deployed five divisions of forces near LoC. In Punjab, two Indian army divisions moved forward towards the Lahore sector. One division and one armored brigade had been alert in the Ferozepur sector along the northwest frontier between the Indian Punjab & Sutlej river. Three divisions of Indian army were stationed in Rajasthan sector. Pakistan was also reported to mobilize its forces. The air forces of both countries were also put on high alert.⁹³

The mobilization of troops on the international borders in a state of high alert deteriorated the regional security environment and war rhetoric of Indian and Pakistani leaders further multiplied the situation with regard to the preparedness of both states for a decisive war. The tough messages from New Delhi and Islamabad created an impression that military confrontation between the two states might escalate to a nuclear conflict. The most notable study

of 1990 crisis entitled 'On the Nuclear Edge' by a noted American writer, Seymour M. Hersh, described that Pakistan and India had reached on the brink of a nuclear war in 1990 and because of the intervention of the United States, the disaster was warded off. Hersh wrote: "Bush Administration became convinced that the world was on the edge of a nuclear exchange between Pakistan and India."⁹⁴ The U.S. intelligence sources noticed that "Pakistan had put together at least six and perhaps as many as ten nuclear weapons and ... some of those warheads had been deployed on Pakistan's American-made F-16 fighter planes."⁹⁵ Richard J. Kerr, who as Deputy Director of the CIA monitored the May 1990 security situation in South Asia, said: "it was the most dangerous nuclear situation we have ever faced since I have been in the U.S. Government. It may be as close as we have come to a nuclear exchange. It was far more frightening than the Cuban missile crisis."⁹⁶

The nuclear dimension of crisis accelerated the U.S. concern. The activation of a crisis preventive policy mobilized the U.S. Ambassadors in New Delhi and Islamabad, William Clark and Robert Oakley respectively, to make the situation clam in the region.⁹⁷ In January 1990, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Robert Kimmitt, visited South Asia. After reviewing the events and assessing the mood of both countries, Robert Kimmitt observed that "there is a growing risk of miscalculation which could lead events to spin dangerously out of control."⁹⁸ He suggested that both India and Pakistan needed to take measures urgently to lower the level of tension. Mr. Robert Kimmitt also suggested for initiating a dialogue series to address the issue.⁹⁹ The heightened concern of the U.S. government on South Asian security situation pushed it to dispatch a high-level delegation to South Asia known as 'Gates Mission.' The Gates Mission consisted of the Deputy National Security Advisor, Robert M. Gates, Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asia, John Kelly and Senior National Security Council Staffer responsible for South Asia, Richard Haass. The primary objectives of this mission were to prevent situation from further

deterioration and pursue India and Pakistan to work together to restore calm and peace and security in the area. The Mission spelled out its aims as:

Our major objective is to help both sides avoid a conflict over Kashmir, which would entail great loss of life, and damage to both countries, and to begin the sort of political dialogue which would not only reduce tension but could lead to a peaceful and permanent resolution of the Kashmir problem, as called for under the Simla Agreement.... We are urging both sides to restrain their rhetoric and to take confidence-building measures on the ground to lower tension.¹⁰⁰

The Mission landed in Islamabad on May 20, 1990 and held negotiations with Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Army Chief General Aslam Beg. While convincing the Pakistani leaders to refrain from escalating the tension with India, the Gates team warned that war would bring disastrous results for Pakistan. The Mission also notified the Pakistani authorities that in case of a war, United States would terminate its military aid and there would be no expectation for future assistance.¹⁰¹ The Gates team emphasized the following points, in Islamabad:

1. Washington had thoroughly war-gamed a potential India-Pakistan military conflict, and Pakistan was the loser in every scenario. This exercise had been carried out by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.
2. In the event of a war, Washington would provide no assistance to Islamabad.
3. Pakistan must desist its policy of supporting terrorism in Indian-occupied Kashmir.
4. Pakistan must avoid war rhetorics and evade military deployments that could be seen by India as threatening and menacing.

5. Both sides needed to adopt CBMs that had already been agreed by them. This way the crisis would be swiftly defused and prevented in future.
6. Gates team offered U.S. intelligence support-based on its own "national technical means" to verify a confidence-building regime involving limitations on deployment near the border-if India and Pakistan concluded such an agreement and were to withdraw their forces from near the border.¹⁰²

The discussions of the Gates team with Pakistani authorities contemplated over that any war with India would bring more disastrous results for Pakistan than India. Seymour M. Hersh pointed out that in a meeting with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the Gates team indicated that if Pakistan continued its war-pronged strategies, United States would also take a harsh initiative towards the Pakistan's nuclear programme, based on evidence United States had "acquired," that Pakistan had went over "the nuclear line."¹⁰³

In New Delhi, Mr. Robert Gates and his delegation met with Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and Army Chief General Sharma and Minister of State for Defence Raja Ramanna. According to an Indian source, Gates team advised the Indians to avoid provocative activities, such as interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan, giving particular reference to the Sindh province. The Mission also urged the Indian leaders to stop their oppressive policies in Kashmir and improve the human rights situation.¹⁰⁴ *Hindustan Times* referred that the Indian authorities were warned of "long-term costs" if they went to war.¹⁰⁵ B. G. Deshmukh, an Indian political analyst, building a story on Gates Mission's visit to India, exposed that Mr. Gates and his team, convincing the Indian leaders to reduce the temperature and enter in to a peace dialogue process with Pakistan, guaranteed in New Delhi that "Pakistan had agreed to close training camps for terrorists."¹⁰⁶

The Gates Mission stayed in South Asia from May 19 to 21, and eventually the crisis started to be defused. India declared to withdraw its forces from borders and proposed some measures for confidence building. These measures were: Sharing of information regarding "military exercises," sharing of information over "field firings" to reduce the risk of "civilian casualties across the border," increasing communications between "local commanders" of both sides, "joint border patrolling," prevention of "airspace violations," "exchange of delegations to reaffirm these arrangements."¹⁰⁷ In response, on June 7, 1990, Pakistan also agreed to put in place the confidence - building measures and suggested, to initiate a dialogue between the Foreign Secretaries of both countries over the Kashmir issue.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, the Foreign Secretary-level talks commenced on July 17, 1990, had seven rounds, stretching out to January 2, 1994. These lengthy talks remained captive to the Kashmir dispute. However dialogue brought two countries away from a horrible war. J.N.Dixit who was part of this dialogue process as Indian Foreign Secretary, said: These discussions did not result in any forward movement towards a practical solution to Kashmir issue, but they proved useful in putting in place a number of political confidence-building measures. These involved both sides giving advance notice of military exercises, being restrained in flights of air force planes and patrolling by their respective navies, completing procedural formalities for bringing into force the Indo-Pakistan agreement on not attacking each other's nuclear installations, and so on.¹⁰⁹

Credit went to Gates Mission that saved South Asia from a nuclear holocaust. The Gates Mission was regarded as a unique demonstration of the U.S. preventive diplomacy. Mr. Gates himself described:

There are a few-very few, to be sure-instances where a third party has been able to prevent conflict by simply identifying the danger of war and its consequences. This can work only when neither party really wants war but needs a face-saving device to stand down. This was the

case in defusing rising Indo-Pakistani tensions in May 1990. President Bush sent me that month to both Islamabad and New Delhi to convey our worry that the two sides were blindly stumbling toward a war neither wanted. I was armed with detailed information about the military capabilities and postures of both countries, along with the suggestions for easing the tensions ... confidence-building measures (CBMs). ... I privately told the Pakistani President and Army Chief of Staff that our military had war-gamed every possible scenario for Indo-Pakistani conflict, and that there was not a single scenario in which Pakistan won. I told the Indians the consequences for them of a war, including that it might go nuclear. Neither side really wanted war, both sides acted rationally and the role played by the United States was to give them a way to retreat with no loss of face and to adopt bilaterally a number of CBMs to keep border tension under control. The evidence of potential disaster for each was compelling. But these propitious circumstances for preventive diplomacy are all too rare.¹¹⁰

Regarding the success of Gates Mission, an official of Bush administration said:

At worst, you could say what we did was unnecessary....I think that at the risk of sounding self-serving, it was a success...my instincts are we slowed it down, we forced people to face up to the consequences...we may have ... affected the internal debates. What matters is sometimes that when you leave town, the internal debates that took place on either side were affected by what it was we said. We knew we had given arguments to certain people. And my hunch is again we may have stabilized it by simply what we said...we certainly did not make the situation worse, and my guess is we made it better. The facts speak for themselves. If

one looks at what South Asia was like, says June 15, it looked a lot better than it looked May 15.¹¹¹

The Pakistani perception is best described by former Foreign Minister of Pakistan and career diplomat, Abdul Sattar:

I think that what is important is not what was happening in the months of January and February, but the projection of what might happen if the trends in motion were not arrested. And I think it is here that the American diplomacy deserves credit. ...What happened in the spring of 1990 is an illustration of good, useful preventive diplomacy.¹¹²

Given the detail of war situation between India and Pakistan in 1990, it is clear that if the conflict between the two countries was not curtailed, it could have taken a turn for the worst, even deploying the nuclear arsenals. It was the timely intervention of the United States that defused the situation and South Asians were spared of a nuclear catastrophe. *The Sunday Times* reported:

American spy satellites have photographed heavily armed convoys leaving the top-secret Pakistani nuclear weapons complex at Kahuta, near Islamabad, and heading for military airfields. They have also filmed what some analysts said were special racks designed to carry nuclear bombs being fitted to Pakistani F-16 aircraft.¹¹³

The *Far Eastern Economic Review* also commented that "Gates was told by Pakistan's President Ghulam Ishaq Khan that in the event of a war with India, Pakistan would use its nuclear weapons at an early stage. Gates subsequently relayed this to New Delhi."¹¹⁴ An American Political Scientist, Devin T. Hagerty, who was National Security Fellow at Harvard University's John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, supported the theory of deterrence, in the case of India-Pakistan nuclear conflict.

Hagerty's thesis titled "Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: The 1990 Indo-Pakistani Crisis," presented that during the military standoff in 1990 between Pakistan and India, the recognition of each other's nuclear weapons capabilities deterred both the states from a war.¹¹⁵

On these occasions when both countries came too close to the brink of war with strong fears of use of nuclear arsenals, it was a time when nuclear prospect of South Asia was not clear. The nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan were not determined. Many experts believed that after passing through such crisis that could easily turn in to a nuclear holocaust, in absence of a articulated nuclear deterrence doctrine, India and Pakistan would have to be prepared to settle their problems, Kashmir dispute in particular, that had been widening hostility. Both countries must go to work jointly to stop the nuclear proliferation in the region, so that any such event could not again breach the security of the region. But things were not put on right track. Nuclear race proceeded and Kashmir dispute was there to generate more calamities, and even in an era of overt nuclearization of both states after nuclear detonations in 1998, Kargil conflict in 1999 and military standoff in 2000-2001 brought them to a nuclear clash. During these crises, the U.S. diplomatic intervention also functioned timely to ward off disaster. Following these nuclear infuriating events, explicit nuclear deterrence postures and policies emerged unfeasible, usually driven by events and reactions to each other's conduct in crisis contexts.

Kargil Conflict

The 'bus diplomacy' furnished a turning point in India-Pakistan relations. The 'Lahore Declaration' as a result of Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee's two-day visit to Pakistan in February 1999 established a new understanding to normalize the relations. It was widely appreciated as "a right step in a right direction."¹¹⁶ The Lahore Declaration emphasized to "take the immediate steps for reducing the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons and discuss concepts and doctrines with a view to

elaborating measures for confidence-building in the nuclear and conventional fields, aimed at prevention of conflict.”¹¹⁷ Kashmir dispute was figured high on the agenda of talks and the Lahore Declaration called upon both signatories to intensify their efforts to resolve the issue.¹¹⁸ The United States hailed the Declaration as helpful to “improve relations” between the two rivals and “lessen the likelihood of conflict.”¹¹⁹ The U.S. President Clinton commended Nawaz Sharif and Vajpayee for “demonstrating courage and leadership by coming together and addressing difficult issues that have long divided their countries.” He further said: “South Asia - and, indeed, the entire world - will benefit if India and Pakistan promptly turn these commitments into concrete progress. We will continue our own efforts to work with India and Pakistan to promote progress in the region.”¹²⁰

The Lahore Declaration was breaking ground in India-Pakistan relations, but the eruption of an armed conflict in the Kargil and Drass sectors along the LoC damaged the whole spirit of the agreement. The clash had brought the two rivals on verge of a nuclear war. The United States which later played a very significant role to prevent combat from intensifying further and finally ceased the conflict, called the situation as “most serious” and “risks spinning out of control.”¹²¹ The occupation of 29 peaks in Kargil and Drass sectors by militants with full support of Pakistani forces overlooking the national high way that connected Leh with Srinagar, provided Pakistan’s military planners a strategically important position to check the Indian army movements in the area. It posed a serious threat to the India’s supply routes to its armed forces stationed in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir.

Kargil crisis raised so much alarm worldwide and it was perceived as an extension of International Islamic terrorism. The world powers were convinced that the Kargil conflict had shaken the regional peace and security, secondly, it could disturb the status quo on the LoC and thirdly, the Kargil like situation could intensify the religious extremism that would dominate the

political decisions of Pakistan leading to the 'Talibanization' of the country.¹²²

Pakistan came under fire for initiating this conflict through a secret military operation in the area with the help of militants belonging to the Taliban militia and other Islamic militant groups fighting in Kashmir.¹²³ The United States built pressure on Pakistan to defuse the situation through withdrawal of the militants from Kargil area. The U.S. State Department spokesman said that "we believe that all those who are fighting in Kargil are persons who crossed over from the Pakistani side and we want them back."¹²⁴ President Clinton in a telephonic talk on June 15, 1999 urged Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif to pull out from Kargil.¹²⁵ The Clinton administration even warned for stoppage of installments of IMF loan to Pakistan, in case Pakistan did not step up to ask infiltrators to vacate the Kargil heights.¹²⁶ The U.S. Commander-in-Chief of CENTCOM General Tony Zinni came to Pakistan in later half of June and extended some kind of warning that "if you do not pull back, you are going to bring war and nuclear annihilation down on your country. That is going to be very bad news for everybody."¹²⁷

On July 1, 1999, the U.S. Congress Committee for Foreign Relations adopted a resolution denouncing Pakistan for precipitating Kargil conflict and urged President Bill Clinton to oppose the release of IMF, World Bank and Asian Development Bank loans to Pakistan unless Pakistan-backed forces were withdrawn. Condemning Pakistan for financial and military support to armed incursions into Jammu and Kashmir, the resolution also endorsed Indian military response to push back the terrorists and Pakistan military forces and asked the U.S. Administration to work for the withdrawal of the Pakistan-backed intruders.¹²⁸ The United States also accepted the Indian option to cross the international border in case of Pakistan's failure to withdraw adventurists from Kargil.¹²⁹ The U.S. line of thinking over the Kargil issue gave diplomatic jerk to Pakistan, and finally derived Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to hold meeting with President Clinton in Washington on July 4, 1999. Both the

leaders signed 'Washington Declaration' which focused on the cessation of fighting on Kargil heights and restoration of respect of LoC and revival of bilateral dialogue in the spirit of Lahore Declaration to resolve the contentious issues, including Kashmir.

President Clinton's assurance for taking personal interest in intensifying the bilateral efforts to resolve the Kashmir dispute was greater development that the Pakistanis accepted cheerfully but the Indians who had not acknowledged the linkage between the Kargil crisis and Kashmir issue showed dismay over Clinton's pledge to promote India-Pakistan dialogue to seek some solution of the Kashmir issue. They perceived Clinton pledge as a base for some kind of mediation.¹³⁰ However President Clinton himself cleared: "We want to be a force for peace, but we cannot force peace. We cannot impose it. We cannot and will not mediate or resolve the dispute in Kashmir." He added that only Pakistanis and Indians "can do that through dialogue."¹³¹ The Kargil clash was the first military confrontation in a nuclearized South Asia. It not only transformed the strategic environment in the region, but demonstrated that Kashmir was a dangerous issue that would persistently continue as a nuclear flash point, providing ground for Kargil like conflicts. Kargil crisis made things worse for Pakistan. As the international community did not support Pakistan's adventure in Kargil region, the whole connotations of Pakistan's case on Kashmir accordingly were spoiled. Pakistan appeared as an aggressor, intruder, and a state that sponsored terrorism across the borders. While on the other side, Kargil conflict had profound impact on India-United States relations. Bruce Riedel, a U.S. leading expert on U.S. national security stated: "Doors opened in New Delhi to Americans that had been shut for years. The Indian elite-including the military –and the Indian public began to shed long held negative perceptions of the United States. The stage was set for the unprecedented back to back summits between President Clinton and Prime Minister Vajpayee in 2000".¹³²

By late December 1999, the forces of the two countries had not yet been completely withdrawn from the borders, the Kashmiri rebels hijacked an Indian Airline plane. The Indian

government accused Pakistan for orchestrating the hijacking. Hijackers landed in Afghanistan and demanded the release of Kashmiri militants imprisoned in Indian jails. Consequently, the release of Maulana Masood Azhar, a leader of *Harakat-ul-Mujahideen* (HUM) a Pakistan-based radical Kashmiri group, took place and hijacking drama was finally ceased. The United States also confirmed the involvement of HUM in the hijacking.¹³³ Tension soared between Pakistan and India. Their forces once again were put on red alert. The cross-border firing increased unabatedly. The clash along the LoC had escalated the tense situation that could lead to an open war, involving the nuclear weapons. The murder of 35 Sikhs in Anantang district in Indian occupied Kashmir on March 20, 2000 by unidentified militants increased violence in the area.

Since the end of Kargil conflict, India had gained much on diplomatic front. On the other side Pakistan's policy of supporting the Taliban militia and Kashmiri insurgents had received an adverse response on world level. Pakistan was termed as a sponsor and promoter of terrorism, while India was described as a victim of it. The formation of a U.S.-India joint working group on terrorism in February 2000 was a substantial development against tendency of terrorism in South Asia.

The U.S. President Clinton's visit to South Asia in March 2000 represented a strategic shift in the U.S. policy towards the area, by marginalizing Pakistan, and courting India. The 'US-India Vision Statement for 21st century' gave an upbeat direction to Washington-New Delhi relations. President Clinton's tour of South Asia also sketched out an exclusive policy to address the Kashmir issue. This U.S. Kashmir policy was based on 'four Rs' strategy: 'restraint' by India and Pakistan, 'respect' for the LoC, 'rejection' of violence, and 'renewal' of India-Pakistan dialogue.¹³⁴ Evolving the U.S. Kashmir policy, President Clinton called Kashmir region "the most dangerous place in the world",¹³⁵ and said that it was "a stark truth" that there was no "military solution to Kashmir".¹³⁶ Clinton further added that there must be a "process by which the Kashmiri legitimate grievances are

addressed". He affirmed his support to such process, but ruled out the U.S. intervention in the dispute. He said in this regard: "I am not going to be dragged in to something that India's does not want us to be part of".¹³⁷ He also supported India's stance of involving Pakistan in cross-border terrorism, and said: "I believe that there are elements within the Pakistani government that have supported those who engaged in violence in Kashmir".¹³⁸

Kargil conflict had been terminated but tension had not been lowered on borders. The U.S. diplomacy once again functioned successfully to bring temperature down in New Delhi and Islamabad, and create a conducive climate to revitalize the stalled peace process. Accordingly developments appeared including Indian government's declaration of a six –month long unilateral ceasefire, halt to offensive military operations in Kashmir and commencement dialogue process with Kashmiri militant groups. Pakistan also announced that its forces deployed along the LoC would observe "maximum restraint".¹³⁹ This course of actions finally culminated in persuading New Delhi and Islamabad for resumption of talks.

Agra Summit held between President Musharraf and Prime Minister Vajpayee in July 2001 broke two year deadlock but could not make progress because of Kashmir dispute. For future agenda of talks, Pakistan wanted to include Kashmir as a main issue, while India refused to acknowledge the centrality of Kashmir dispute to future talks, and instead, stressed on cross border terrorism. As both leaders could not even find a common ground for future agenda of talks, summit was over without a joint declaration.

The unproductive summit turned the regional security situation gloomier. The tragic events of terrorist attacks on the State Assembly building in Srinagar on October 1, 2001 and the Indian parliament on December 13, 2001 brought the India-Pakistan relations to the lowest ebb. India blamed Pakistan-based militant groups for these actions. India called back its High Commissioner from Pakistan and terminated rail and bus links. India also moved its forces to the forward position along the borders with Pakistan. Pakistan reciprocated in the same manner.

The military standoff had generated dangers of an all-out conflict.¹⁴⁰

Since the United States had started a hot pursuit of terrorists involved in terrorist attacks in Washington and New York on September 11, 2001, India also tried to exploit the world mood against Pakistan, portraying a Kashmir-Taliban-Osama-Pakistan nexus. India argued that this nexus had launched a terrorist upheaval in Kashmir that was largely linked up with religious fanatic Taliban movement in Afghanistan, and other militant groups based in Pakistan. Holding Pakistan-based militant organizations, *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* and *Jaish-e-Muhammad* in particular, which were fighting in Kashmir, responsible for attacks on the Jammu and Kashmir state assembly and the Indian parliament, Indian government asked the U.S. government to deal with Pakistan in the same way as Afghanistan, for harboring terrorist organizations, inimical to India. The U.S. government appeared to acknowledge the Indian viewpoint, but it did not support the Indian military adventure against Pakistan. The ultimate reason was engagement of Pakistan in war against terror, combatting in Afghanistan and on Pakistan's western borders.¹⁴¹ However, on Indian demand, the United States declared *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* and *Jaish-e-Muhammad* as terrorist organizations under the U.S. law and blocked their assets.¹⁴² The U.S. government piled diplomatic pressure on Pakistani government to curtail the free movement of militant groups in Pakistan. Pattern of Global Terrorism 2000, the annual report of U.S. State Department on terrorism, mentioned about the militant groups fighting in Kashmir which operated freely in Pakistan. The report also cited *Lashkar-e-Tayyiba*, and *Jaish-e-Muhammad*.¹⁴³

The report of U.S. National Commission on Terrorism titled 'Background and Issues for Congress,' released on February 6, 2001 described that Pakistan provided "safe havens to terrorists, and moral, political, and diplomatic support to several groups engaged in terrorism."¹⁴⁴ Similarly report of Congressional Research Service Study (CRS) titled 'Terrorism: Near Eastern Groups and State Sponsors, 2002,' issued in February 13, 2002,

described the Pakistan's links with radical organizations including *Hakat-ul-Mujahideen*, *Jais-e-Muhammad*, *Lashkar-e-Tayyiba*, and *Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami*. The study said that these organizations based in Pakistan were fighting in Kashmir to "seek the end of Indian control" of the region. These groups were "composed of militant Islamist Pakistanis and Kashmiris, as well as Arab veterans of the Afghan war against the Soviet Union who view the Kashmir struggle as a jihad"¹⁴⁵ However, the Indians were not satisfied with the U.S. policy of persuading Pakistan to crackdown on the terrorists groups operating on Pakistan's soil. So they constantly had been piling pressure on U.S. government 'to do more.'

The Military standoff between India and Pakistan had wider spectrum of a nuclear conflict. The United States again played a crucial role to prevent the clash from escalating further. The American officials including Secretary of State Collin Powell worked largely in this regard.¹⁴⁶ Pakistani President Musharraf's pledge in speech of February 12, 2002 to reign in the militant organizations indulged in "terrorism in the name of Kashmir," and declaration of ban on *Jais-e-Muhammad*, and *Lashkar-e-Tayyiba*, even could not cool down the Indian sternness. Therefore the mounting heat on borders could not be reversed. India also rejected Pakistan's offer of unconditional talks. However, the U.S. efforts finally succeeded to bring slight ease in the tense situation.¹⁴⁷ Though the clouds of war started to be thinned, the prospect of peace in the region was precarious, with regard to diplomatic standoff on Kashmir dispute.

Conclusion

The threatened South Asian security situation always alarms United States whose strategic interests in the region are centered on stable and peaceful region. The divided South Asia by the decades' long traditional hostility between the two nuclear rivals- Indian and Pakistan- put the regional security constantly at risk. Following its interests in the region the, the normalization between the two major South Asian states remained important

concern for the American policy makers and they persistently attempted for it.

United States has firm stance on Kashmir that it is disputed between India and Pakistan, and consistently encouraged both countries to resolve the issue. Though it shifted its position on Kashmir dispute according to swing in its security interests, the central point of U.S. stand on the issue remained same that both parties must take initiatives to solve the issue on bilateral level. Since U.S. took inclination towards India and developed a strategic and nuclear partnership with it, consequently the U.S. has been toeing the Indian line on security matters of South Asia. It mostly sees Kashmir dispute and developments in Indian –held Kashmir through Indian eyes. However it terms Kashmir as a disputed area and takes stand for a bilateral settlement of it.

The US security designs in fact have always been attached with the South Asian peace and stability. The security deficit and divided South Asia could never be supportive to the U.S. security strategies in the region. So the Indian factor was never excluded from the U.S. strategic milieu in South Asia. The Americans always wished to keep both South Asian powers on board.

The Kashmir dispute remains a flash-point of tension between the world's newest nuclear powers. Pakistani and Indian troops continue to confront each other on the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir and along the Siachen glacier. Repression in occupied Kashmir continues to provoke violence and retribution. Both sides recognize the dangers of nuclear confrontation arising from the Kashmir dispute, but the risks of escalation through accident or miscalculation cannot be discounted.

The Kargil crisis of 1999 was but the latest example of escalatory exchange along the LoC, which began with the Indian occupation of the Siachen glacier in the mid-1980s

Washington constantly tried to push Islamabad and New Delhi to mend their relations. There is a long record of the U.S. efforts to defuse tension between the two neighbours and bring them to dialogue for peaceful settlement of contentious issues, Kashmir in particular.

The fact that Bill Clinton took an active personal interest in establishing a strategic partnership with India in the waning days of his presidency might have given him the self-assigned role of a "crisis manager". But it is also prudent to speculate that Clinton was using the Kargil crisis less for the purpose of crisis management and more to persuade both South Asian nations to reconsider, or even abandon, their decision to weaponize. He might have even been envisioning his role as an actor who could persuade both India and Pakistan to cap their nuclear programs a la Brazil, Argentina and South Africa.

In Pakistan's view, US relations with our region should not be characterized by a zero-sum outlook. At the same time, these relations ought not to be pursued or built with one state at the expense of another. The improvement in relations between Washington and New Delhi can be instrumental in encouraging responsible Indian behaviour and in constructing an effective security architecture in the region.

The United States can assist the region by broadening and balancing the scope of its economic engagement with all South Asian countries, in order to promote overall economic growth and prosperity in the entire region. With regard to Pakistan, such engagement can ensure the success of its ongoing critical efforts for economic revival and national reconstruction. This, in turn, would enhance Islamabad's ability to construct a viable and durable security architecture to promote future security in South Asia as well as to overcome its domestic difficulties.

The Bush administration should take a longer term strategic view of American interests in South Asia and its adjacent regions. Both US national security and economic and trade interests are dependent primarily on promoting and preserving structures of peace and stability at the global and regional levels. The Bush administration can and should play an active role in promoting durable peace and stability in the world's major crisis areas, including South Asia. In doing so, it could move the past approach of crisis management to effective and timely preventive diplomacy. A new US policy paradigm towards Pakistan should

be evolved within the framework of broad US objectives and priorities, not only in South Asia but also Central Asia and the Persian Gulf —three regions in which Pakistan can play an influential role given its geopolitical location.

The nub of the matter is that peace and stability in South Asia will remain elusive unless addressed comprehensively. India and Pakistan must develop some sort of strategic restraint regime, eliminate the conventional imbalance, and resolve the core conflict over Kashmir. Economic and trade innovations will work to solidify progress in these areas.

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- 2 V. D. Chopra, *Genesis of Indo-Pakistan Conflict on Kashmir*, (New Delhi: Patriot Publications, 1990), 113. See also *The Statesman*, Delhi, August 24, 1984, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, August 24, 1984, *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, February 9, 1985.
- 3 Ibid. See also *Pakistan Horizon*, Karachi: The Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, Vol. 37, No.3, (Third Quarter 1984,) 175. The Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, speaking in Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Indian Parliament) also said that Pakistan was supporting the anti-India demonstrations held in Canada and America and other countries as well. See *The Statesman*, Delhi, August 24, 1984.
- 4 *Patriot*, New Delhi, September 4, 1984.

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- 5 Ibid.
 - 6 Ibid.
 - 7 Ibid. A Sikh leader, Harchand Singh Longowal said that Sikh separatist Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala had no link with Pakistan. He said: "Sant Jarnail Singh had never depended on Pakistan for any support whatsoever. He was also not league with that country." See *The Tribune*, Chandigarh, February 17, 1985. Mr. Harchand Singh Longowal also disclosed in an exclusive interview with *Indian Express* on July 9, 1985 that the Soviet intelligence agency, KGB, and Indian intelligence agency, RAW, were behind communal violence in Punjab. He said that the Soviet government was displeased with Pakistan over the Afghanistan issue, therefore, KGB aggravated tension on the Pakistan-India borders. See *Indian Express*, New Delhi, July 10, 1985.
 - 8 *Dawn*, Karachi, June 18, 20 and August 25, 1984.
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 - 31 Ibid., 325-326.
 - 32 Ibid., 303.
 - 33 Ibid.
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See *The Statesman*, March 31, 1986. The annual report of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs 1984-1985 recorded Pakistan deep involvement in Indian affairs by helping and encouraging the terrorists. See *The Hindustan Times*, April 2, 1985. Likewise, the annual report of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs 1985-1986 also emphasized the Pakistan's assistance to separatists in India. The Indian Minister for external affairs B. R. Bhagat, presenting this report in the Lok Sabha in March 1986, strongly criticized Pakistan for interference in the internal affairs of India, see *Indian Express*, March 21, 1986., *The Statesman*, March 31, 1986.

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- 41 'Indo-Soviet Joint Action Against Pakistan Likely,' *The Organizer*, New Delhi, August 31, 1986.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 39, No. 1, (First Quarter 1986), 222.
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- 45 *The Muslim*, Islamabad, October 18, 1986.
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- 47 Kanti P. Bajpai, et.al., *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia*, 78-79.
 - 48 *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 39, No.4, (1986), 10.
 - 49 'Brass Tacks,' *Global Security, Org*, available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/b-rass-tacks.htm>. See also Kanti P. Bajpai, et.al., *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* 28. The Indian army comprised of nine infantry, three mechanised, three armoured and one air assault divisions, and three armoured brigades under four corps HQ with all the paraphernalia for a real war. It was also reported that 54 divisions were allocated to Southern Command, and 57th Mountain Division and 8th Mountain Division were inducted in Punjab state for internal security duties to counter Pakistan's possible reaction.
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 - 51 *Time*, New York, February 16, 1987.
 - 52 *India Today*, New Delhi, January 25, 1987.
 - 53 *Indian Express*, January 15, 1987.
 - 54 Kanti P. Bajpai, et.al., *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia*, 28-29.
 - 55 *Ibid.*, 170
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- occasion on April 10, V. P. Singh warned Pakistan: "Our message to Pakistan is that you cannot get away with taking Kashmir without a war. They will have to pay a very heavy price and we have the capability to inflict heavy losses....those who talk about 1000 years of war should examine whether they will last 1000 hours of war." See *The Muslim*, March 14, 1990. P. R. Chari, et.al., *Perception, Politics and Security in South Asia: The Compound Crisis of 1990*, 74. Devin T. Hagerty, "Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: The 1990 Indo-Pakistan Crisis,"11.
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