WILHELM VON POCHHAMMER MEMORIAL LECTURE

ADDRESS BY

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"INDIA-PAKISTAN: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT"

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Dear Friends,

This is a very personal narrative of an Indian who lived three of his best years in Karachi, albeit 33 years ago, and has since seized every opportunity that has come his way to visit Pakistan, meet his old friends and make new ones. In this last year itself, this is my fifth visit to Pakistan. I hope I can maintain the momentum as Pakistan is my magnificent obsession.

I suppose I have read very much less about Pakistan than any scholar of Pakistan studies. And although I came here initially as an officer of the Indian Foreign Service and have visited Pakistan several times in an official capacity, as a member of our delegations, or accompanying Indian Ministers, even thrice in the entourage of the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, and also as Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas to push forward the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline and later as Minister of Panchayati Raj to intensify interaction between our respective local self-government representatives, I have had strangely little to do with the political dialogue between our two countries. Almost all of my interaction with Pakistan and Pakistanis has been at the personal level. Hence I can do no more than bring a very personal perspective to bear on matters of great pith and moment.

Perhaps for that very reason the perspective has its value – although one of my closest Indian friends, former High Commissioner to Pakistan, later Foreign Secretary and later still National Security Adviser, J.N. (Mani) Dixit, said he could not abide my Pollyanna view of our neighbour. Perhaps not. But there are so many Indians who have their grave reservations about Pakistan and its intentions towards us that there might be some value in listening to a more sympathetic Indian view of Pakistan.

I came to Karachi as India's first-ever Consul General on 14 December 1978, 13 years after Pakistan's capital moved to Islamabad, around the time of the 1965 war, leading, first, to a downgrading of the High Commission followed by the Assistant High Commission being closed down at the start of the 1971 war. Thus Karachi, refuge of the Mohajir community, those who had left or fled India at the time of Partition or

soon after, leaving behind in India, however, vast numbers of memories, friends and relatives, was thirsting for the resumption of an Indian visa office to facilitate their all too human desire to go back to the land of their forefathers – and at that time, for many, the land too of their birth. I used to be astonished at their evocation of the filthy gullies of Bans Bareilly and Sambal as if they were talking of Paris in the Spring! But perhaps their sentiment was best summed up by Rais Amrohvi's *"O! Hind Jane Wale Mera Salaam Leja"*:

Jab se bichhad gaye hain us khuld-e-rangabu se
Mehroom ho gaye hain, dil shauk-o-aarzu se
Baaz aayenge musafir kya zauk-e-justaju se
Ab tak wahi hai rishte, Dilli se Lucknow se
Ajdaad ke watan tak itna payam le ja
O! Hind jane wale mera salaam le ja.

My very first afternoon was a revelation. The phone rang. It was the Deputy Commissioner of Sukkur on the line. He said he had a major problem on his hands: a Hindu *sant* had been given permission to revisit Sukkur for the first time after the 1965 war and his Muslim *mureeds* wanted to pay their respects to him. Would I grant them permission to do so? Of course, I replied, rather grandly giving my instant assent – but rose from my desk completely confused. Like all Indians I had been brought up to believe that Pakistanis were ardent, even fanatical, Muslims for, after all, had they not broken my country on the ground that Hindus and Muslims did not constitute two communities but two nations, incompatible and, therefore, incapable of living together under one democratic roof? That, in fact, it was democracy that was the problem because democracy rests on majority rule and would not that majority in an independent India be decided on communal rather than political grounds? Yet, here I was being asked – and by no less a dignitary than the head of one of Sind's most important districts – whether Muslim spiritual aspirants might seek the blessings of a Hindu holy man?

(Later, after Makhdoom Amin Fahim became a close personal friend, I asked him whether it was true, as I had heard, that the Hindu followers of his father, the Pir of Hala, who had fled to India at Partition, still sought the Pir's blessings when there was a birth in the family or a wedding or

some such auspicious occasion? Makhdoom sahib confirmed that this was indeed so. But, said I, was it not a fact that the Pir's blessings could not be validated without a *nazrana*? Of course, came the reply. But how do they send it, I asked? By the same route, he disingenuously replied, that they send their requests for a blessing – through the smugglers! God is clearly no respecter of political boundaries.)

That introspective introduction to Pakistan on Day One was reinforced the following evening at my first social occasion when I found myself seated next to an unknown Pakistani with whom I began the conversation by asking, in an utterly banal manner, whether he had been to India. "Yes," he replied somewhat taciturnly. To encourage further conversation, I asked where he had been. "Meerut," came the curt reply. "Oh, really," I said, "and how long were you there?" "Two and a half years," he slowly responded – and it dawned on me with growing horror that I was talking to one of our 1971 Prisoners of War! Seeing the highly embarrassed expression on my face, my interlocutor smiled – indeed, beamed - and enquired if my wife and I would care to dine with them at the Sind Club the following evening? It turned out to be a most convivial evening and walking back to Hindustan Court after dinner my wife shook her bewildered head and asked whether we had come to an enemy country or what? I shared her bewilderment.

That initial hospitality flowered over the next three years of our stay in Karachi into a bouquet of friendships stretching across the entire political spectrum from the PPP at one end to the Islam-*pasand* parties on the other; on the geographical spectrum from Clifton to North Nazimabad; on the socio-cultural spectrum from affluent Defence Housing Society homes to the *rehriwalas* of Sadar; on the business front from petty shop-keepers to industrial and commercial barons; on the intellectual level from academics like Sharif-ul-Mujahid and Hafeez Pasha to the poets and poetasters of the Pak-Hind Prem Sabha; to journalists of every hue from sophisticates like M.B. Naqvi and Sultan Ahmed and Brig. A.R. Siddiqui to the editor of *Jasarat*, the mouthpiece of the *Jama'at-i-Islami*, and even *Nawai Waqt*. My attitude was, I am a foreigner, why take sides in Pakistan's internecine quarrels?

We – me, my wife, my children, my officers, my staff of over one hundred - to go by their present nostalgic remembrances, all had a ball. But on my very last night in Karachi – we were sailing to Bombay next afternoon – I suddenly had a very disturbing thought. What if my euphoric high was only the consequence of my being flattered out of my mind by heading a huge establishment at the age of under forty, the welcome I had received not being to an Indian but to a Consul General who could pull a visa out of his pocket like a magician pulling out a pigeon?

I sent for one of my assistants, a man who had reached Karachi the same day as I had and whose personal experience of the city was co-terminus with mine. I asked whether he had experienced any discrimination, any abuse, any invective, even any discourtesy, during his three years in the city. He thought for a while, then shook his head to say No, he hadn't. But, I persisted, no one could tell merely by looking at him whether he was an Indian or a Pakistani, what about his wife and her give-away *bindi*? He said no one had ever been rude or nasty to her although she always sported a *bindi*, neither in the bus she took from the Indian Consulate ghetto of Panchsheel Court, a dead give-away of national origin, nor in the shopping marts of Sadar. That led me to ask him to confirm a rumour I had heard as Consul General – that shopkeepers in Sadar invariably offered discounts to Indian, and especially Indian Consulate, customers. Reluctantly but unambiguously, he confirmed that this was indeed so. Thus, his three years had been remarkably like mine. I, therefore, enquired whether he thought we should improve relations with Pakistan. Astonished, he replied, but how could we, were they not all Mussalmans?!

That is the central problem: the communalization of the mind, looking at our neighbours not as one of us, but as the Other, indeed, the Enemy Other.

The communalization of mindsets was the root cause of the division of the country as the price to be paid for Independence. Now that there are two countries, independent since six decades, is there no way the communalization of the mind can be eased in the direction of also recognizing the complementarities in our respective national destinies?

For we live in the same South Asian geographical space. Although many Pakistanis would deny it, we also occupy much the same civilizational space, diversity of every kind – racial, linguistic, ethnic, cultural, religious and even sectarian – being woven into the warp and the woof of our nationhood. History may have divided us, but geography binds us, and a shared inheritance holds as much the potential to keep us apart as to bring us together. The choice is for us to make.

For most of the last six decades, the best and the brightest of our countries – *sants* and *ulema*; ideologues and propagandists; terrorists and cerebral communalists; politicians and statesmen; scholars and the media; diplomats and the military - have done all they can to render us asunder. They have not entirely succeeded. For we remain hyphenated in the eyes of the world because we remain hyphenated in the minds of our people. And we remain hyphenated because we are hyphenated; we share too much to just turn our backs on each other and hope the other will go away. Siamese twins are not free to roam except with each other, even if they keep pulling away from each other.

There are four sets of factors that stand in the way of reconciliation. I would classify these as:

- generic;
- institutional;
- endemic; and
- episodic.

Generic

Some in India and many in Pakistan would argue that the very reason for Partition having been the religious incompatibility between Hindus and Muslims, it is inevitable that the two nations would also find it incompatible to live together as good neighbours. The argument goes that the underlying hostility is generic, built into our genes as it were, and if it were not Partition would not have happened.

That, perhaps, is a somewhat fundamentalist way of putting it and, therefore, the point is generally made with greater sophistication and nuancing as not so much a fundamental civilizational incompatibility but a

lack of convergence in national interest or even a belief that hostility being the underlying reality, it is not so much a question of promoting friendship as protecting oneself from hostile intent.

Yet, there are several levels at which this argument breaks down. First, the Indian Muslim community: are they not living in harmony with their Hindu brethren? If there were no compatibility, how is it that almost every icon of India's 85% Hindu youth is unabashedly Muslim: the four Khans – superstars Shah Rukh, Aamir, Salman, and Saif; leading ladies like Katrina Kaif following Madhubala, Meena Kumari and Nargis of yore and Waheeda Rahman and Shabana Azmi more recently; the golden voice of Mohd. Rafi and Talat Mehmood; the lyrics of Sahir Ludhianvi and Javed Akhtar; music director A.R. Rahman (who was born Dilip Kumar and converted to Islam, where his renowned predecessor in the run-up to Partition, Dilip Kumar, the actor, was born Yusuf Khan in Peshawar and converted to Bollywood under an assumed Hindu name); the makers of *Peepli Live*, Mehmood Farooqui and Anusha Rizvi, India's sure-fire entry for this year's Oscars; *ustads* such as Bismillah Khan, Vilayat Khan, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Amjad Ali Khan and tabla maestros, Allah Rakha and Zakir Hussain; cricketers like Tiger Pataudi and Azharuddin, and tennis star, Sania Mirza, whom we share, besides a whole galaxy of highly influential opinion-makers of whom I need mention only three – the Group Editor of the India Today stable, M.J. Akbar; columnist Saeed Naqvi; and historian Mushirul Hassan, Director of the National Archives – and business barons, Aziz Premji and Anu Agha. The point needs no labouring.

Except that the Justice Rajinder Sachar report will immediately be thrown at those who suggest that the lived experience of secular India shows no incompatibility between the two alleged "nations" of Hindu and Muslim. Yes, indeed, in many, many respects the denizens of the Muslim community are worse off than their non-Muslim counterparts in northern India. Equally undeniable is that while the North Indian Muslim elite largely took off for Pakistan at Partition, the vast majority of the ordinary Muslims voted with their feet to remain where they were. Deprived of a middle-class and a political leadership, the community has striven to raise itself by its boot-straps and while there are success stories there is much leeway to be made up. This points to the need for more affirmative

action; it emphatically does not mean that Hindu and Muslim cannot live under one national roof.

Moreover, it needs to be recognized - in Pakistan, of course, but much more in India – that where population transfer did not take place, as in South India, the Muslim community is doing quite exceptionally well - and is not resented by the majority community for doing so.

I do not want to make a polemical point. I simply want to assert here on Pakistani soil that whatever might have been the argument for a Muslim-majority State on this South Asian sub-continent at the time of Independence and Partition, now that Pakistan has been in existence for sixty years and more, the generic argument for Hindu-Muslim incompatibility has lost its sheen and transmuted more into national hostility than communal animosity.

In this context, I'd like to share a story with you about what happened when I addressed a Jung Forum meeting in Karachi a few years ago. I was asked from the audience how I could claim to be a friend of Pakistan when I rejected the Two-Nation theory. I replied that whatever the merits of the theory in the period leading up to Independence and Partition, it was time now to recognize that the Two-Nation Theory had given way to the Three-State Reality, and that if we continued to advocate the Two Nation Theory, it would have to mean that the 15 crore Muslims in India are traitors to their country. At this, the questioner, delighted with my answer, bounded on to the stage, embraced me, and handing over a visiting card describing him as the Vice Chairman of the Karachi Marriage Hall Owners Association, whispered in my ear that when I got married again, he promised me a marriage hall for free! That, I regard, as the highest compliment I have ever received. My wife, however, disapproves – I wonder why?

Reciprocally, it is little known in India, and little bruited about in Pakistan, how many members of Pakistan's non-Muslim minorities hold positions of distinction and responsibility in Pakistan, not only in the higher echelons but in the grassroots institutions of local government, in the civil services, in the judiciary, in agriculture, in business and the arts. Partition over, as

the Quaid-e-Azam said before Pakistan was suddenly and unexpectedly emptied of its minorities in the fortnight after its creation:

> "You are free; your are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion, caste or creed, that has nothing to do with the business of the State...Now I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State."

It could have been Nehru speaking!

Moreover, in numerous countries across the world, where Indian and Pakistani immigrants live and work together, while some do indeed carry their communal baggage with them overseas, by and large there is tolerance, even cordiality, between the two communities. Nothing in either Islam or Hinduism makes for incompatibility. Our syncretic history, our symbiotic past of over a thousand years, beginning with Mohammad bin Qassim arriving on our shores in 711 AD, points rather to a composite heritage than to one that is irretrievably divided.

I would, therefore, emphatically repeat that it is not communal animosity but national hostility that keeps India and Pakistan apart: a matter to be addressed by political and diplomatic action, not theology. Indeed, if religious differences were the root cause, how does one explain Pakistan's excellent relations with the only avowedly Hindu nation in the world, Nepal, or India's excellent relations with virtually every Muslim country – except Pakistan?

The generic argument does not hold, but are the scars of history impossible to raze? Those who became Pakistani on 14 August 1947 had been Indians till the previous day. Therefore, there were many in India who argued, Prof Sisir Gupta perhaps most persuasively, that since nothing in language or literature, culture or cuisine, history or even religion distinguished a Pakistani from an Indian, the only way a Pakistani could distinguish himself from an Indian was by asserting that he was

emphatically not an Indian, by building the national identity of Pakistan not with positive building blocks but negatively by stressing that, above all, Pakistan was not India and Pakistanis were Pakistanis precisely because Pakistanis were not Indians.

I do not know whether this argument was always a parody, but today, more than sixty years after Pakistan became a reality, those who began life as Indians are a rapidly diminishing breed. I would imagine that some 90% of Pakistanis today have never known any nationality other than their Pakistani nationality, even as 90% of Indians have never known Pakistan as an integral part of India. Thus, history itself is taking care of history. There is no reason why the nationhood of contemporary Pakistan needs to be built with the cement of anti-Indian or anti-Hindu sentiment. And that, indeed, is the reason for the affection with which most Indians are received in Pakistan – and, to a large if not reciprocal extent, Pakistanis are received in India. The political reality of 21st century India and Pakistan has substantially replaced the grievances that separated sections of the Hindu and Muslim community in pre-Partition India, especially after the outbreak of communal riots in the Turbulent Twenties of the last century.

Therefore, I see no reason in principle why generic or historical factors need necessarily stand in the way of reconciliation between the two countries. If nevertheless progress in the direction of reconciliation has been slow, then does the problem lie in institutional hurdles on the road to reconciliation?

Institutional

From the Indian perspective – and perhaps also the perspective of a majority of Pakistanis – the overwhelming role of the military in Pakistan's approach to India is often held to be the principal institutional block to reconciliation. The argument goes that so long as the army, abetted by a complaisant civil service, is the effective political power in Pakistan, and so long as the *raison d'etre* of the huge Pakistani military establishment and what Ayesha Siddique calls Pakistan's Military Inc is founded on the assiduous propagation of the threat from India - so the argument goes – the Pakistani military will never permit hostility between the two countries

to be undermined for that would be to cut off the branch on which the Pakistani defence forces are perched.

On the other hand, here in Pakistan it is often claimed that revanchist sentiment in the entire Indian establishment, including the Indian military, is so strong and persistent that the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 was only the prelude to the destruction of the rest of Pakistan, whenever this might prove possible; hence the need for eternal vigilance as the price to be paid for Pakistan's liberty.

Both these views appear to me to be a case of the wish fathering the thought. I don't believe that the actual course of India-Pakistan relations validates the view that India cannot deal with the Pakistani military; or that India is still hankering after a restoration of Akhand Bharat.

Let us take first the Indian view of the Pakistan military. It is rooted, I think, in Gen. Ayub Khan's coup of 1958. Please remember that in 1958, half a century ago, almost all top officers of the Indian military were either General Ayub Khan's contemporaries or his seniors in the predecessor British Indian army. India, understandably, did not want Bonapartism to spread from the Pakistan army to their Indian counterparts. Gen Thimayya's resignation at about the same time as the Ayub coup was considered – perhaps erroneously – as an ominous and dangerous straw in a wind that blew no one any good.

But it was the Ayub regime that in its earliest days suggested a "Trieste" solution to Kashmir – that is, let the *status quo* lie and postpone resolution to a future generation - if I am to credit the story recounted to me here in Karachi by India's High Commissioner to the Ayub Government, Rajeshwar Dayal. And it was indubitably during the Ayub regime that the Indus Waters Treaty was signed, a Treaty that has weathered three wars and continues to offer a forum for the resolution of water disputes, as witness the recent spats over Baglihar and now Kishangana. Moreover, it was during that regime that Sheikh Abdullah, Jayaprakash Narayan and others were, by all accounts, on a successful or, at any rate, promising peace mission to Pakistan when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru suddenly died. Yes, the battle in the Rann of Kutch in April 1965, and Operation Gibraltar in August that year, followed by the

September war, took place in the Ayub dispensation, but much of that seems to have been stoked as much by civilian political forces as by the armed forces. In any case, it was President Ayub Khan who signed the Tashkent agreement, disagreement having been registered principally by his civilian colleagues.

Later, it was during the period of Zia-ul-Haq that, whatever might be one's reservations about his domestic policies, there was a new impetus given to people-to-people relations, the most important having been the opening of the Indian Consulate General in Karachi. And when in the winter of 1986-87 the temperature started building up over Operation Brasstacks, it was in Zia-ul-Haq that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi found a most effective partner in defusing the threat of war.

And although Gen Pervez Musharraf's coup was almost universally looked at with deep disapproval and suspicion in India, coming as it did in the wake of Kargil 1999, eventually it was under his aegis that the composite dialogue made more progress on the Tariq-Lambah back-channel than at perhaps any other stage of India-Pakistan relations.

Equally, of course, the Nehru-Liaquat Pact of 1950, the Simla agreement of 1972 and the Lahore Declaration were the handiwork of civilian governments.

Hence, I do not think the objective record makes for any insuperable difficulty in India dealing directly with the Pakistan military or in dealing with a civilian government that has the military breathing down its neck. In any case, if Pakistan cannot get itself out of the military shadow, what can India do about it? We have to deal with whoever is in power in this country and while we certainly sympathise with the widespread Pakistani desire to become a full-fledged democracy, we have to make do with whatever is on offer – and I do not think we in India should postpone any amelioration in our relations with Pakistan till that nebulous day when we will have in Pakistan a democratically elected political authority that keeps its military in check. Peace is an imperative now, not a consummation to be postponed indefinitely.

On the other hand, the regrettably widespread view in Indian circles that Pakistan is a "failed" State or a "failing" one also needs to be countered. I do not think any nation, let alone Pakistan, which is so firmly anchored in history, civilization, ideology and spiritual belief as is Pakistan, with one of the largest populations in the world (even if relative to India somewhat small), with the high degree of political and philosophical sophistication which one encounters in this country at every turn, a resilient economy and a burgeoning globalized elite, a strong bureaucracy and a stronger military, and an extremely lively and informed media, can ever be a pushover. When the Taliban was said to have arrived at Buner, a hundred kilometres from Islamabad, there were those in India who feared (or even wished) for the collapse. The fear was always unrealistic, the wish beggared. And was shown to be so when the security forces moved into action and pushed back the insurgents, as they had when in July 2007 firm action was taken at the Lal Masjid in the heart of Islamabad. Pakistan, six decades after its foundation, is no war-time Afghanistan swirling in chaos at the time of the Soviet and American withdrawal and the political vacuum that followed the end of its socialist phase, and, thus, sucked inexorably into the vortex of religious extremism assiduously egged-on from outside. Yes, you have your difficulties. But so do we. So any strategy built on the assumption that Pakistan cannot hold is misconceived, misplaced and dangerously misleading. And, therefore, bound to be disproved. Equally unrealistic are doomsday prophecies of Pakistan falling into the maw of fanatical terrorists or disintegrating irretrievably into a congeries of nations. Pakistan is here to stay and it would best to deal with it on those terms. While it is the duty of the intelligence community to conjure up far-fetched scenarios and prepare for them, statesmen are required to handle the here and now. And that calls for an engagement with a Pakistan that will last, not a Pakistan on its last legs.

That accounts too, in my view, for no one in India harbouring any illusions any more about a return to Akhand Bharat. That was a slogan in the immediate post-Partition period, a cry from the heart of those who had been deprived of their hearths and their homes. That generation has gone, the refugee in India is well-integrated into India society, and there is no nostalgia for return except perhaps in the fading memories of some eighty-to-ninety year olds. Moreover, what on earth are we going to do

with 15 crore seriously angered malcontents if ever anything so stupid happened as the end of Pakistan? No, there is nothing, nothing at all, to be gained by promoting any disintegration of neighbouring Pakistan, and I would advise any Pakistani who doubts us on this score to consider how steadfast a series of Indian governments, of every hue and colour, were in standing up for the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka through thirty years of a vicious civil war caused by gross discrimination against the Tamil minority despite the strong ethnic links that bind the Sri Lankan Tamil to the Indian Tamil.

There being no insuperable institutional obstacle to a sustained Indo-Pak effort to resolve simmering differences, let us now turn our attention to those differences, which, for convenience, I have divided into the "endemic" and the "episodic".

Endemic

The endemic issues between Pakistan and India are, from a Pakistani perspective, Kashmir and water; from an Indian perspective, doubtless it is cross-border terrorism based on Pakistani soil.
I have no readymade answers. I doubt that anyone has. But is that cause enough to despair of any solution ever being found?

The historical record would appear to disprove any military solution to the argument over Jammu & Kashmir. The attempt to annex the Maharajah's state when he and Sheikh Abdullah were readying to through their lot in with India failed; so did Operation Gibraltar; so did the attack on Akhnur that followed; as did the hostilities on the Western Front in 1971; as did the Kargil misadventure; as did the proxy war of the Nineties. And while there are those in India who maintain that the war of 1948 should have been pressed forward to a conclusion, I think Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was sensible in listening to wiser counsel. There is no military solution, and subversion will not work.

On the other hand, is jaw-jaw impossible? The United Nations, once the forum for grand forensic battles between Krishna Menon and Feroze Khan Noon and, later, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Swaran Singh, has in effect washed its hands of the issue; the Question of Jammu and Kashmir

remains on the UN agenda but lies dormant ever since India and Pakistan agreed at Shimla in July 1972 to discuss bilaterally all issues related to J&K. Notwithstanding the Naysayers – and there is no dearth of them in either country – progress has indeed been made. These issues are an integral part of the Composite Dialogue initiated in 1997. And, to go by available records, a framework for resolution had reached an advanced stage under the aegis of President Musharraf and Dr. Manmohan Singh through the Lambah-Tariq back-channel. Even if that progress is not being acknowledged now, it does seem feasible to hope that the resumption of back-channel contacts (made public by the Pakistan Minister of Kashmir Affairs, according to reports appearing in the Indian media) might yet move matters further forward. But whether or not the back-channel has, indeed, been reactivated, the two countries have demonstrated that, when the waters are not muddied, they can talk to each other even on Jammu & Kashmir and inch towards an agreed settlement. Neither military action nor encouragement to cross-border terrorism can do that.

As for waters, when I was in Pakistan in March last year, the drying rivers of the Indus basin were on everyone's lips; when I was last here in October, devastating floods were on everyone's mind. Water is a most serious issue and upper and lower riparians, whether within our respective countries – such as Punjab and Sind, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, for example - or between our respective countries, will have to find answers in 21st century technology, not in the polemics of the 20th century. The total availability of water has run so low that where India and Pakistan started in the 1950s with a per capita availability per annum of about 5000 cubic metres, water availability in both countries has since declined to under 2000, in Pakistan rather more sharply than in India, down to about 1200 as against India's 1800. The problem of water shortage is, however, common to both of us and is, indeed, a global problem common to virtually every country in the world. Some would call it the most important universal challenge of our times. Israel has shown the way to the conservation of water through drip and sprinkler irrigation and I imagine that it is in such technology rather than in the 19th century technology of large dams and command area channels that the answer lies.

But while technology may hold the secret, there is no denying the fact of water deprivation or the politics that flow from it. That is where the Indus Waters Treaty has proved its immense worth. The numerous mechanisms it has for finding acceptable ways of resolving agonized issues, as was demonstrated over Baglihar recently and as is being demonstrated over Kishangana now, are solid examples of India and Pakistan being able to discover forums of settlement in preference to the vapid aggravation of real problems and real issues.

I now turn, with some trepidation, to the Indian priority issue – terrorism. Till 9/11, cross-border terrorism was one of several subjects under discussion in our bilateral composite dialogue notwithstanding the proxy war in Kashmir nor the *jehadi* strategy of bleeding India with a thousand cuts. The attack on our Parliament on 13 December 2001 led to the armed confrontation of Operation Parikrama but did not stall either the Agra summit or the Islamabad Declaration of January 2004 or the dramatic progress made between May 2004 and March 2007 when the going was never better.

Meanwhile, the Al-Qaeda attack on the Twin Towers brought the American retaliation to the borders of Pakistan. Ever since, terrorism has become a global issue, perhaps the most important issue before the international community. In that war against terrorism, Pakistan, willy-nilly, has become a front-line state, with horrific consequences for itself. No state has suffered as much from terrorism as Pakistan itself. I think there needs to be much wider appreciation in India than there is at present of how terrible is the daily threat of terrorism striking any day and anywhere in Pakistan and, therefore, how steely is the will of the Pakistani people to not let their country be taken over by suicide bombers and pathological killers. I do believe that while the Pakistan establishment might at one time have been complaisant regarding terrorism directed at the West or terrorism directed against India, while being extremely vigilant against terrorism directed at Pakistan, there is now an increasing realization that all thee networks are inter-connected and, therefore, the counter-attack on terrorism has to be holistic, taking on all three components without distinction.

Indeed, that is the message that came through in President Zardari's initial reaction to 26/11. That brief flicker of hope of a joint India-Pakistan front against those undertaking, sponsoring or abetting terrorism was snuffed out over the offer, first made and then withdrawn, to send the ISI chief to India to initiate a cooperative approach to the joint threat of terror. However, subsequent developments over the next two years have been far from encouraging. Bluntly speaking, the Indian establishment and almost all Indians remain unconvinced that India-directed terrorism is, indeed, seen in Pakistan as an unmitigated evil that must be stamped out. But while that hurdle looms large on the road to the resumption of normalcy in our mutual dialogue, I do believe only a joint strategy to counter terrorism will enable both India and Pakistan to overcome what is, in effect, a joint threat to both our peoples. We either hang together or hang separately. The challenge is to set the stage to being together on this issue instead of languishing in confrontation, thus giving the edge to the terrorist. There is little sign of this happening, but I remain persuaded that the threat to both of us is so great from what is in practice a single undifferentiated source of extreme danger to both countries that sooner than later a joint process will have to be set in motion.

EPISODIC

In a relationship as turbulent and accident-prone as that between India and Pakistan, it is only to be expected that there would be diurnal disturbances to any equilibrium we might establish or strive to establish. There are any number of issues on which troubles arise. If not tackled, they persist - and when they are resolved leave one wondering what all the fuss was about.

Take, for example, for it is the example closest to home, the opening of the Indian Consulate-General when I arrived here 33 years ago. It was expected that a Pakistani Consul General would soon land in Bombay. That was delayed. A year later, elections in India led to a change of government. Jinnah House was no longer on offer. Three decades on, there is still no Pakistan CG in Mumbai. And the Indian CG in Karachi was closed down 17 years ago. I sneaked into 63, Clifton some years ago with my daughter born in Karachi. It was heartbreaking. Who has gained? I do

not know. But I do know who have lost. Ordinary, very ordinary Pakistanis and Indians.

If an Indian Consulate could run in Karachi for 15 years without a counterpart Pakistan facility in Mumbai, why not now? And as for a Pakistani visa office in Mumbai, I am told by successive Pakistan High Commissioners that they have searched and searched but are unable to find a single Mumbai landlord willing to lease his premises to the Pakistan government; while the Indian side tells me that all efforts they have made to make space available to Pakistan have been rebuffed. You and I will never know the full story till Wikileaks makes it available to us. But amazing is it not that neither of us seems to have the wit to find a mutually satisfactory answer? Or is it just that our authorities do not want to?

Episodic disturbances are par for the course in almost everything that affects the life of the *aam admi*: from visas to newspapers to cultural exchanges to pilgrimages to trade, to investment. I would also add as a casualty of "episodic" disturbance the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline which I initiated as Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, but which is, alas, withering on the vine. The initiation of the TAPI pipeline, that is the gas pipeline running from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and thence to India, shows, I think, that there are no insuperable political or security concerns relating to transit through Pakistan. If TAPI is acceptable, then why not IPI? India needs every cubic metre of gas it can lay its hands on if it is to sustain its high rate of GDP growth. The stalling of the IPI, especially when the Iran-Pakistan sector now stands agreed, needs to be overcome with all deliberate speed. For the loss on this account and, cumulatively, the loss to both countries on account of all episodic disturbances is huge, almost incalculable. Yet, we persist in scratching at the scab. This is called diplomacy.

At the same time, there are also larger political issues: Siachen; Sir Creek; the Wullar Barrage or what we call the Tulbul navigation project. In the frozen wastes of Siachen, General Frost Bite kills hundreds of jawans in the never-ending battle which both armies wage against Nature. Siachen has almost been almost solved several times. It awaits no more than signatures on a piece of paper readied virtually 20 years

ago between Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto. The Lambah-Tariq back-channel seems, by all available accounts, to have reached near conclusion on all important issues, including J & K, till, first, the stand-off between the judiciary and the Presidency took these issues from the back-channel to the back-burner and 26/11 then extinguished the back-burner.

What does this show? That engagement leads to solutions; stand-offs lead nowhere but to the aggravation of problems. This too is called diplomatic strategy.

So where do we go from here?

Uninterrupted and Uninterruptible Dialogue

Fifteen years ago, in a book called my "Pakistan Papers", largely comprising a long despatch I wrote in my last days in Karachi, which I was surprisingly permitted to publish as representing my "personal views", not those of the Government, I had first suggested a process of "uninterrupted and uninterruptible dialogue" as the only way forward. My suggestion had no takers then. It has no takers now. Yet, I see no alternative to structuring such a dialogue if we really are to effect a systemic transmogrification of our relationship.

I hope what I have argued so far shows that such a systemic transformation is both desirable and feasible. I know that most in the Establishment of both countries would seriously disagree. They would argue that differences are so fundamental and intentions so hostile that to be tricked into talking without knowing where such talk would lead to would amount to compromising vital security concerns, jeopardizing national interests and rendering diplomatic initiative hostage to a meandering dialogue from which there would be no escape. Better to keep the guard up, look reality squarely in the face, and leave romanticism to soft-hearted poets.

There is also the other argument, growing more strong in India by the day, and possibly here too among the younger generation in Pakistan, that we have lived in simmering hostility for the last six decades and can

do so indefinitely, there are other things to do than engage in fruitless interchange, best to let matters simmer while we get on with other things.

I belong to that minority that thinks there are three compelling reasons why India should pro-actively engage with Pakistan. First, for the domestic reason that a tension-free relationship with Pakistan would help us consolidate our nationhood, the bonding adhesive of which is secularism. Second, for the regional reason that regional terrorism can be effectively tackled only in cooperation with Pakistan and not in confrontation with it. Third, for the international reason that India will not be able to play its due role in international affairs so long as it is dragged down by its quarrels with Pakistan.

Equally, I believe it is in Pakistan's interest to seek accommodation with India for three counterpart reasons. First, the Indian bogey has harmed rather than helped consolidate the nationhood of Pakistan. Second, Pakistan is unable to become a full-fledged democracy and a sustained fast-growing economy owing to the disproportionate role assigned to alleged Indian hostility in the national affairs of the country. And, third, on the international stage, Pakistan is one of the biggest countries in the world and instead of being the front-line in someone else's war perhaps deserves to come into its own as the frontline state in the pursuit of its own interests.

As for just turning our backs on each other, I have already said that Siamese twins have no option but to move together even when they are attempting to pull away from each other.

So, what is the way forward from today's impasse? I do not think the impact on the Indian mind of 26/11 is fully comprehended in Pakistan, even as I do not think Indians are sufficiently aware of the extent to which Pakistanis are concerned about terrorism generated from their soil, whoever the target might be, India, the West or Pakistan itself. I suspect that the least positive movement in the direction of determinedly going after the perpetrators of 26/11 will generate a disproportionately positive reaction in India, enabling the stalled peace process to resume its forward movement. I do not know what positive movement is politically or

judicially possible in Pakistan, nor do I presume to dictate to Pakistan what is in its best interest, but I do wish to stress that being mired in legal abstractions carries little conviction; what is needed is the will to go beyond 26/11 by going after those involved in 26/11.

Should the Pakistan government assist the Indian government in this manner to return to the negotiating table, then the first task would be to consolidate the gains of 13-year old Composite Dialogue. Irrespective of whether progress on the back-channel is acknowledged or not, the official position of the two governments has grown so much closer to each other's than has ever before been the case that even by returning to the front table and taking up each component of the Composite Dialogue, including, above all, issues related to Jammu & Kashmir, we could dramatically alter the atmosphere in which to pursue the outstanding matters, even outstanding matters relating to the Composite Dialogue.

In such a changed atmosphere, it would be essential to immediately move to the next phase of what I hope and pray will be an "uninterrupted and uninterruptible" dialogue. This means that even as we proceed with consolidating the outcomes of the Composite Dialogue, we get on with "talks about talks" to structure the "U&U" dialogue.

Let me place before you, in outline, what I envisage as the essential elements to be structured in to an "uninterrupted and uninterruptible" dialogue:

One, the venue of the dialogue must be such that neither India and Pakistan can forestall the dialogue from taking place. Following the example of the supervision of the armistice in Korea at Panmunjom for more than half a century, such a venue might best be the Wagah-Attari border, where the table is laid across the border, so that the Pakistan delegation does not have to leave Pakistan to attend the dialogue and the Indians do not have to leave India to attend.

Two, as in the case of the talks at the Hotel Majestic in Paris which brought the US-Vietnam war to an end, there must be a fixed periodicity

at which the two sides shall necessarily meet. In the Hotel Majestic case, the two sides met every Thursday, whether they had anything to say to each other or no. Indeed, even through the worst of what were called the "Christmas bombings" – when more bombs were rained on Vietnam than by both sides in the Second World War – the Thursday meetings were not disrupted. In a similar manner, we need to inure the India-Pakistan dialogue from disruption of any kind in this manner.

Third, the dialogue must not be fractionated, as the Composite Dialogue has been, between different sets of interlocutors. As in the case of Hotel Majestic, where the US side was led by Kissinger and the Vietnamese by Le Duc Tho (and both of them won the Nobel prize), Ministerial-level statesmen should lead the two sides with their advisers perhaps changing, depending on the subject under discussion, but the two principal interlocutors remaining the same so that cross-segmental agreements can be reached enabling each side to gain on the swings what it feels it might have lost on the roundabouts. Thus, the holistic and integral nature of the dialogue will be preserved.

Fourth, instead of there being an agenda agreed in advance, which only leads to endless bickering over procedure, each side should be free to bring any two subjects of its choice on the table by giving due notice at the previous meeting and, perhaps, one mutually agreed subject could thereafter be addressed by both sides.

Fifth, half an hour should be set aside for each side to bring its topical concerns to the attention of the side. This will persuade the general public in both countries that the dialogue is not an exercise in appeasement.

Sixth, there should be no timeline for the conclusion of the Dialogue. This will enable both sides to come to considered, and therefore, durable conclusions without either feeling they have been rushed to a conclusion against their better judgement.

Seventh, and finally, as diplomacy requires confidentiality, there will, of course, have to be some opaqueness in the talks; at the same time, we cannot afford to swing the other way and bring in total transparency; so, what I would suggest is a translucent process where spokespersons of the

two sides regularly brief the media but without getting into public spats with each other. Dignity and good will must be preserved to bridge the trust deficit.

I commend this seven-point programme to your consideration. I cannot guarantee that such a dialogue will lead to success, but I do guarantee that not talking will lead us nowhere.

Let us give peace a chance. We have nothing to lose but our chains. We have a world to gain.

Thank you

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