



# SPECIAL REPORT

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

At first glance, India and Pakistan today seem closer to peace than at any point in the past several decades. The cease-fire that went into place along the Line of Control in December 2003 has held; terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir has been in steady decline since the two nuclear-armed states almost went to war in 2002; and both countries have succeeded in sustaining a wide-ranging and high-level dialogue process. All this appears to suggest that conditions exist for resolution of one of the world's most intractable and bloody conflicts, the India-Pakistan war over Jammu and Kashmir.

Yet the current détente process between India and Pakistan suffers from the same structural infirmities that led past peace initiatives to collapse. Instead of looking for a resolution of the grand historical conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, peacemakers might do well to focus on the problems of the state's peoples—thus building a base from which creative democratic solutions might eventually emerge.

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**The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policy positions.**

*Praveen Swami*

## Quickstep or *Kadam Taal*? The Elusive Search for Peace in Jammu and Kashmir

### Summary

- Since December 2003, India and Pakistan have maintained a successful cease-fire along the militarily volatile Line of Control as part of a dialogue process that is addressing a wide range of disputes between the two nuclear-armed neighbors.
- A key component of the dialogue centers on the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir, of which both India and Pakistan control a part. (China holds a third part.) Both states claim sovereignty over the entire region.
- The current round of India-Pakistan détente has led to some optimism that the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir, one of the bloodiest conflicts in the world, could be ripe for resolution.
- Pakistan has recently advocated plans for what it believes is a workable final territorial solution to the problem—essentially, a partition of Jammu and Kashmir along ethnic-religious lines. India, however, has rejected these proposals, arguing that such a partition is repugnant to its secular values and could lead to a worsening of tensions elsewhere in South Asia.
- This dissonance in perceptions points to a larger set of problems in the dialogue process, all of which could take several years, if not decades, to work through.
- A second dialogue track, between India and secessionist politicians in Jammu and Kashmir, also appears to have reached stalemate.
- Although Pakistan has helped bring about a significant reduction in terrorist violence within Jammu and Kashmir, much of the infrastructure of terrorism is still intact—and the possibility of crisis-inducing terrorist strikes remains.
- Stalemate between the main actors has meant that the peoples of Jammu and Kashmir have yet to see any gains from the dialogue process and the India-Pakistan détente.
- Rather than wait for a grand resolution of these complex issues, we need to find ways to deliver concrete gains to the peoples of Jammu and Kashmir—principally, though not exclusively, through a cessation of violence. Peacemaking may thus be better served by turning attention away from the “Kashmir problem” to the “problems of Kashmiris.”

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## Introduction

“Spring will return to the beautiful Valley soon,” India’s former prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee promised a Srinagar audience in April 2002, quoting a passage from the Kashmiri poet Ghulam Ahmed Mehjoor, “the flowers will bloom again and the nightingales will return, chirping.” More than two years later, it is beginning to look like the end might indeed be in sight for one of the most bitterly fought conflicts in the world. Both India and Pakistan are engaged in negotiations, their borders are quiet, and some counterterrorist military formations are being withdrawn from Jammu and Kashmir. Is peace, then, somewhere around the corner—or at least not too many blocks away?

One metaphor, favored by optimists, for what is now under way is the proverbial step forward; another, which might meet with the approval of pessimists, is the parade-ground technique of marching vigorously on one spot, known to both Indian and Pakistani soldiers as the *kadam taal*. This report examines the status of two related ongoing processes, the India-Pakistan détente and the efforts by India to engage political secessionists within the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. It looks at the prospects these twin processes have for ending one of the world’s most murderous conflicts—one that has claimed almost forth thousand lives since 1988, one-third of them civilian. Although the current process of dialogue holds some reasons for hope, it suffers from the same structural infirmities that have led past initiatives to collapse. Thus, a wholly new paradigm of peacemaking may be needed to secure abiding gains.

## A View of the Landscape

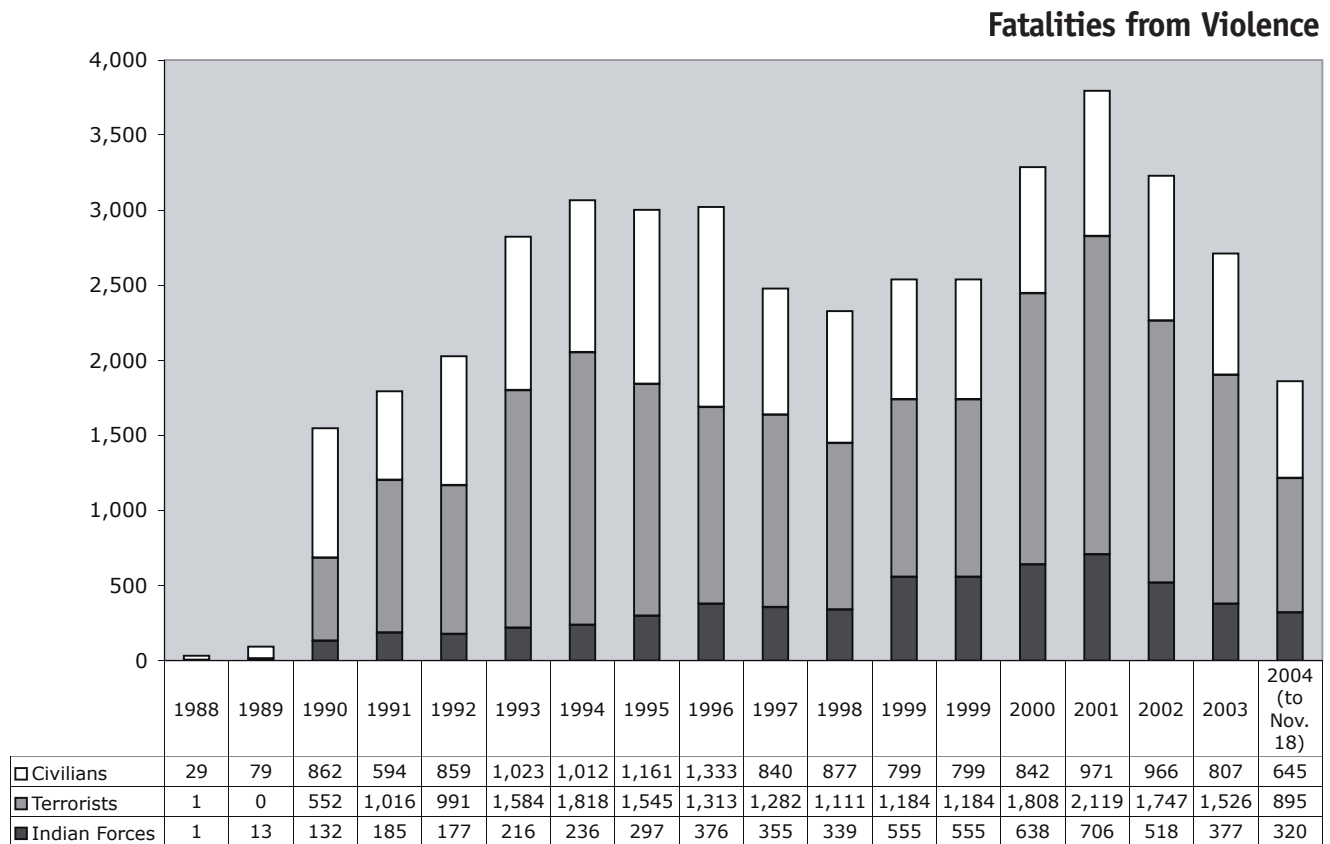
Although it is easy to be pessimistic about the prospects of peace in Jammu and Kashmir—cynics have had an alarming record of success in their prognosis—several features of the current situation are in fact heartening.

India-Pakistan dialogue has survived the coming to power of the United Progressive Alliance government in New Delhi in 2004. Both countries have agreed to open a bus route from Srinagar, in Indian-administered Kashmir, to Muzaffarabad, on the Pakistan-administered side. Even though the service will initially be limited, the symbolic bridging of the Line of Control has generated great public enthusiasm. Dialogue is also under way on issues ranging from watershed management to the activation of a railway line that would speed access between southern Punjab and the industrial hubs of western India. Meanwhile, the national security advisers for both India and Pakistan have maintained regular contact, a process of covert diplomacy that has mirrored the public engagement between the two countries.

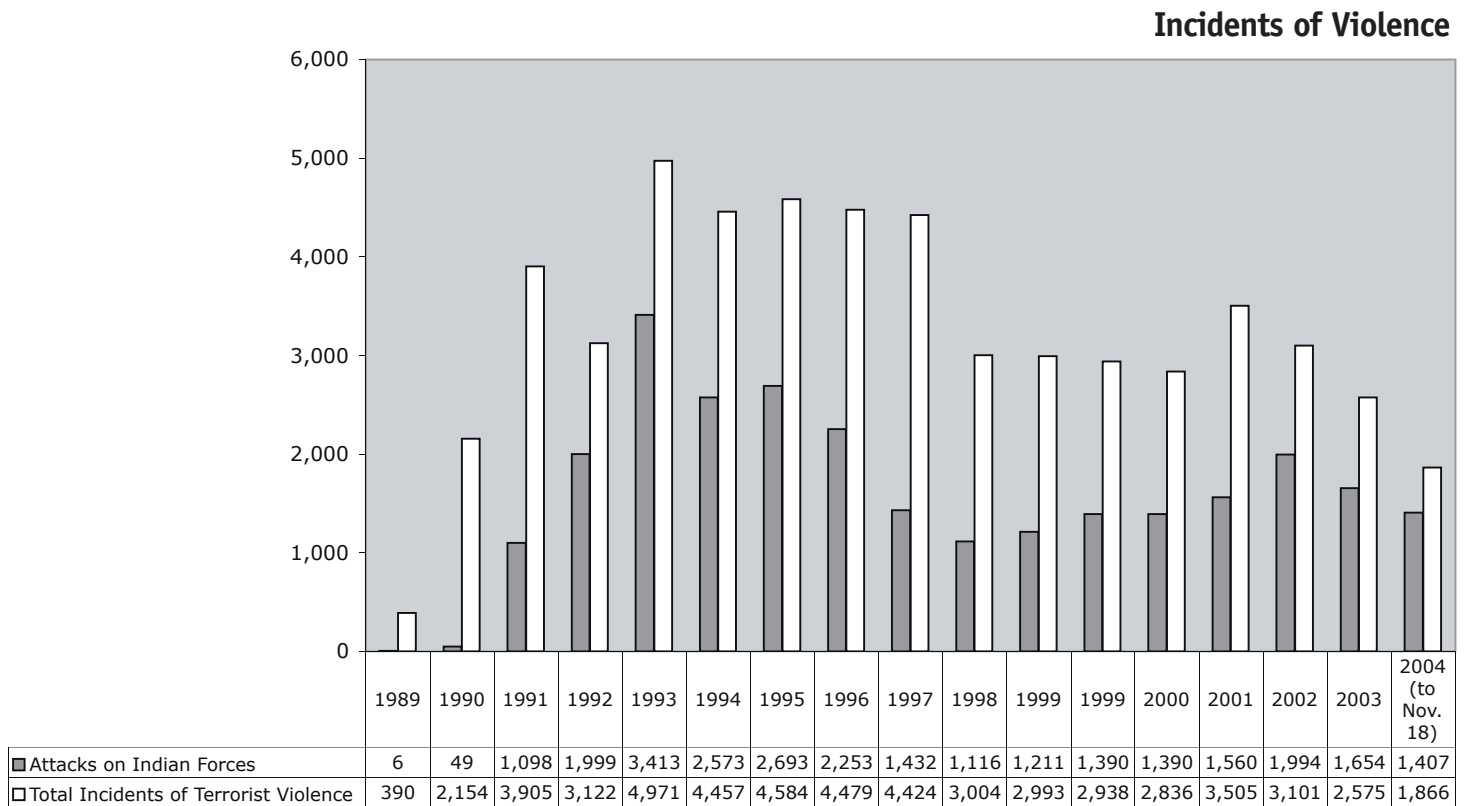
Second, violence within Jammu and Kashmir has been in steady decline since the India-Pakistan near war of 2002. Data from India’s Union Ministry of Home Affairs show that the numbers of fatalities of both civilians and combatants, as well as the overall numbers of violent acts carried out by jihadi groups, have fallen to levels similar to those seen before the Kargil War of 1999, which started an escalatory cycle (see figures 1 and 2). More important, the number of foreign terrorists, mainly Pakistani nationals, killed by Indian forces has dropped to low levels. It is hard to reliably quantify the level of infiltration by jihadi cadres across the Line of Control, but the empirically demonstrated fact that fewer people, whether foreign or Indian nationals, are being killed suggests that General Musharraf has at least partially delivered on his 2002 promise to end cross-border terrorism.

It would be simplistic to give General Musharraf sole credit for the declining levels of violence. The near war of 2002, provoked by a terrorist attack on India’s parliament by the Jaish-e-Mohammad, a jihadi group, may have awakened Pakistan’s military establishment to the perils of maintaining its subconventional offensive against India at the levels

**Figure 1.** Fatalities from Violence in Jammu and Kashmir, 1988–2004. *Source:* Data compiled by author from public and private sources.



**Figure 2.** Incidents of Violence in Jammu and Kashmir, 1989–2004. *Source:* Data compiled by author from public and private sources.



witnessed after 1999. Alternatively, the enormous pressure brought to bear by the United States during the crisis may have prompted rethinking in Islamabad. Furthermore, India, aided by Israel and the United States, has made massive investments in new counterterrorist technology, notably an electronic and physical fence along a large part of the Line of Control. Any or all of these factors combined could account for the reduced levels of violence. Whatever the truth, however, the fact is that violence has declined.

Third, Indian and Pakistani forces have successfully maintained a cease-fire that went into effect along the Line of Control in December 2003. One of India's long-standing complaints was that Pakistani forces provided covering fire to infiltrating jihadi cadre. This has ended. Although Indian officials say some infiltration continues, Pakistani troops no longer seem actively involved in shielding it from interdiction. India's recent efforts to build public confidence in peacemaking have been helped by the reduction of hostilities along the Line of Control, which has paved the way for the withdrawal of some troops engaged in counterterrorist operations in Jammu and Kashmir. No figures are available regarding how many troops India eventually intends to remove, but several thousand soldiers are reported to have been moved out since November 2004.

Fourth, but by no means least important, India has set parameters for dialogue with political entities within Jammu and Kashmir on the state's future relationship with India. During his November 2004 visit to Srinagar, Prime Minister Singh made clear that his government was willing to pursue negotiations with both major secessionist political groups: the centrist Kul Jamaat Hurriyat Conference, also known as the All Parties Freedom Conference (APHC), and the hard-line Tehreek-i-Hurriyat (TH), also known as the Movement for Freedom. New Delhi appears to center these discussions, as well as a parallel track of negotiating with mainstream political parties in Jammu and Kashmir, on widening federal autonomy for the states. Both the APHC and the TH have rejected dialogue on autonomy, which falls well short of their demand for secession from India. However, the important fact here is that N. N. Vohra, a retired bureaucrat who has served the government of India in various capacities and now acts as its official interlocutor with political groups in Jammu and Kashmir, finally has a clear mandate that can be brought to the table.

Together, these four conditions suggest that the environment is favorable for peacemaking. Rarely in recent years has there been a conjunction of regimes with a stated commitment to dialogue, the willingness to scale back border tensions, the ability to reduce violence, and a vision of what political concessions can be made. Although the necessary conditions for a dialogue have been met, however, the question of whether these are *sufficient* to yield a meaningful outcome remains.

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## **The India-Pakistan Dialogue Axis**

As India-Pakistan dialogue proceeds, what are the prospects for both sides arriving at a mutually acceptable vision of Jammu and Kashmir? Speaking at a dinner in Islamabad on October 25, 2004, General Musharraf outlined the contours of new ideas for an eventual resolution of the conflict over Jammu and Kashmir. Based on a partition of the state's territory, the ideas were greeted with considerable enthusiasm by some observers, who saw it as a potentially decisive step forward.

In essence, General Musharraf advocated the division of the territory of the entire pre-independence monarchical state of Jammu and Kashmir. A part of this territory is now administered by India (Jammu and Kashmir), and another part is administered by Pakistan (Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas of Gilgit, Hunza, and Baltistan; a part of the territory administered by Pakistan was unilaterally ceded by it to China). In Musharraf's vision, the seven major constituent geographical units of the region would be offered independence or joint control by India and Pakistan, or, alternatively, be administered by the United Nations. Five of these units are in India—the Kashmir valley

and the Muslim-majority areas of Jammu, both of which lie north of the Chenab River; the Shia-dominated Kargil area; the Hindu-majority areas of Jammu south of the Chenab River; and Buddhist-majority Ladakh. The two other areas, Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas, both of which have a Muslim majority, are in Pakistan.

Musharraf's ideas were summarily dismissed by India, despite the fact that they marked a considerable departure from the traditional Pakistani claim to all the territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Understanding India's reaction to Musharraf's plan is key to a coherent appraisal of the future of détente between the two countries. The idea of partitioning Jammu and Kashmir along ethnic-religious lines was first advocated in September 1950 by UN special representative for India and Pakistan Sir Owen Dixon, who suggested that this could be brought about either through agreement between the two countries or by plebiscite. Sensitive to the consequences of ethnic-religious partitions in South Asia—the division of British India into the states of India and Pakistan had cost more than five hundred thousand lives—the Dixon Plan, as it came to be known, was rejected out of hand by India. Pakistan at first rejected the Dixon Plan, but the idea had gathered some momentum in that country by the early 1960s. Partition is believed to have been discussed in 1963 by the eminent Kashmir leader Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and the foreign minister who served the Pakistani military ruler Field Marshall Ayub Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who went on to become president of Pakistan.

Pakistan seems to have persuaded itself in recent years that India would, sooner or later, come to accept the partition plan in some form or other. In 1999, Pakistan's foreign minister, Sartaj Aziz, called for a districtwide referendum on the future of Jammu and Kashmir, a repackaging of the Dixon Plan that marked a sharp departure from the official position. Aziz's ideas were anticipated in a report by a New York-based organization, the Kashmir Study Group, which argued for the creation of one or two new states from the Muslim-majority areas of Jammu and Kashmir. Together, the Kashmir Study Group said, these would constitute a "sovereign entity but one without an international personality." The new state would have its own legislature, flag, and gendarmerie, but its security would be jointly guaranteed by India and Pakistan.

From the point of view of Pakistan, an ethnic-religious partition seems an eminently reasonable solution to the conflict over Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan came into existence on the basis of the religious affiliation of the majority of its citizens, and advocates of partition-based solutions believe that the same principle should apply to Jammu and Kashmir as well. Advocates of partition-based solutions, by some accounts, have found a sympathetic hearing from at least some elements within the U.S. State Department, perhaps because the idea appears to offer a way out of a stalemate. Critics have noted the impracticability of the idea, however. Nowhere in the world have two nuclear-armed adversaries jointly guaranteed the security of a third state. Among other things, it is unclear how disputes between the new entity and the two states bordering it, both of which would have compelling security interests there, would be mediated.

India's concerns, however, transcend the purely pragmatic—just as, for Pakistan, Jammu and Kashmir is not simply a territorial issue, but a national project. For India, ideologically committed to a secular nation-state, the idea of an ethnic-religious partition is repugnant. State-level leaders in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as senior figures in India's central government, have flatly rejected any movement in this direction, and no change in the Indian position seems likely in the near future. Although General Musharraf was at pains to package his proposal as one founded on geography rather than ethnic-religious identity, the fact is that the two coincide so closely as to render the distinction trivial. India is also concerned about the long-term consequences any ethnic-religious partition might have for the rest of the union. Should its sole Muslim-majority province secede on the basis of its religious identity, the position of Hindu fundamentalist groups seeking to replace India's secular order with a state founded on theocratic principles would be strengthened.

The point here is simple: despite the illusion of forward momentum generated by Musharraf's new ideas (or not-so-new ideas), both India and Pakistan fundamentally

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stand where they have for decades. The two states are far from having a shared vision of the future for Jammu and Kashmir, something that could strain the sustainability of the détente as it proceeds. Second, and perhaps more important, cross-border terrorism has decreased, not ended. As such, it remains a part of Pakistan's negotiating strategy, a disturbing fact with potentially grave long-term consequences for the peace process itself. It is also worth remembering that agreements, *in themselves*, are worth little. India and Pakistan reached negotiated settlements in 1966 and 1973, after all; neither prevented further bloodshed.

## The India-Kashmir Dialogue Axis

If India and Pakistan still have some distance to travel to agreement on Jammu and Kashmir, what about the second component of the peace process—the negotiations between India and secessionists in its part of Jammu and Kashmir?

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As things stand, the status of talks between India and secessionists in Jammu and Kashmir induces less optimism than does the détente with Pakistan. Centrist APHC elements held a single round of direct talks with the National Democratic Alliance regime of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee but have since refused to continue the process. There are several reasons. The most important APHC leader, Maulvi Umar Farooq, and his immediate family came under terrorist attack for defying jihadi injunctions not to negotiate with New Delhi. Because Maulvi Farooq as yet has no male heir, a factor of enormous import to the clerical dynasty he represents, the threat of assassination is all the more grave. Centrist leaders such as Maulvi Farooq are conscious of the potential costs of peacemaking: both his father, Maulvi Mohammad Farooq, and another prominent moderate, Abdul Gani Lone, were executed by jihadi groups opposed to their decision to engage India in dialogue.

To persuade jihadi groups to withdraw their opposition, APHC leaders placed several preconditions for talks with New Delhi, notably permission to visit Pakistan. New Delhi has been reluctant to make such concessions for two major reasons. First, its principal interest in the dialogue process within Jammu and Kashmir is to establish a track of negotiation independent of Pakistan. To involve Pakistan, even symbolically, at the outset of the dialogue would subvert the process itself. New Delhi is also reluctant to give the impression of recognizing the APHC, which is just one of several pro-India secessionist political organizations active in Jammu and Kashmir, as the sole spokesperson for all the people in the state. Opponents of the APHC's demands within the Indian establishment argue that allowing the APHC to visit Pakistan would concede to the organization the de facto status of the representative of a nation.

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Pakistan has good reason to be less than delighted at the prospect of the political process within Jammu and Kashmir actually succeeding. A negotiated settlement between India and secessionists in Jammu and Kashmir would marginalize Pakistan, a fact that has provoked a predictable response from pro-Pakistan parties to the conflict. The United Jihad Council, an Islamabad-based apex body made up of several organizations designated by the United States of America as terrorist, has condemned centrists for even considering negotiations with New Delhi. So has Islamist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who heads the TH. Previously a member of the APHC, Geelani formed the TH to protest, among other things, the decision of some moderate secessionists to contest the 2002 elections in Jammu and Kashmir through proxy candidates. Even if the APHC or other centrist secessionist groups engage New Delhi in dialogue and arrive at a settlement, therefore, the opposition of terrorist groups and the TH make it unclear if this would achieve the aim of peacemaking—an end to violence. Indeed, the Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the parent religious-political organization of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, one of the largest terrorist groups in Jammu and Kashmir, has opposed even General Musharraf's partition idea, arguing in a recent issue of its journal *Voice of Islam* that the proposal is a sign of "cowardice under pressure."

Jihadi threat is not the only factor at work. History suggests that political accommodation, while perhaps desirable, does not in itself secure an end to violence. In November 2004, when Prime Minister Singh visited Srinagar for the first time, two terrorists attempted to attack his rally with rocket-propelled grenade launchers. The officer responsible for the police operation that prevented the attack, Javed Makhdoomi, was cited as a suspect in a 1966 counterterrorism investigation conducted by the force he now commands. So was one of his contemporaries, the current Jammu and Kashmir law minister, Muzzafar Beigh—and some figures who have occupied prominent positions in earlier governments, like National Conference leader Bashir Ahmad Kitchloo. Since the 1950s, India has succeeded in co-opting pro-independence and pro-Pakistan elements; author Manoj Joshi records that the 1966 suspects were brought on board through a well-planned, if covert, process. The recruitment of dissidents to the ranks of the Indian establishment did not stop the emergence of other terrorist groups in the 1970s and 1980s, however. In fact, one can argue that co-optation may have provided the promise of impunity to those considering violence.

The closer the APHC and New Delhi come to reaching a deal, then, the more interest jihadi groups will have in sharpening their knives to slaughter the doves. Evidence that momentum toward peace can, paradoxically, lead to an escalation in killing is not hard to come by. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee declared a unilateral cease-fire in 2000–2001 in an effort to strengthen the hands of moderate elements in the Hizb-ul-Mujaheddin, the largest terrorist group operating in Jammu and Kashmir. Its Pakistan-based leader, Mohammad Yusuf Shah (better known by his nom de guerre, Syed Salahuddin), responded by sharply escalating attacks on both Indian forces and civilians and, in the end, succeeded in forcing India to resume offensive military operations. A similar upsurge in violence and political assassinations was recorded prior to the several elections held in Jammu and Kashmir after 1995. Optimists saw these elections to the state's legislature and India's parliament as elements of a normalization process that would lead to the displacement of armed groups by political forces.

So far, neither APHC moderates nor the Indian establishment have found means to break the impasse created by pressure from jihadi groups, and it is hard to see exactly what might be done unless Pakistan acts to decisively strip terrorist groups of the infrastructure that facilitates their violent operations. India, as it has often done in the past, has responded to the stalemate by pumping in significant amounts of central development aid in an effort to build a mass constituency for peace. The available empirical evidence, however, does not affirm conventional wisdom that there is a causal relationship between jihadi violence and economic deprivation. Contrary to popular perception, the roots of the problem in Jammu and Kashmir do not appear to lie in economic conditions. Jammu and Kashmir are among the most food-secure regions in India and have the lowest percentage of population living below the poverty line of any state in the union. Per capita central development aid since the mid-1990s, not including reimbursements to the state government for security expenditure, is higher than for any other state in India. Although economic development is indisputably a good thing, there is no reason to believe that progress will in itself end violence—particularly because the problem itself is not the consequence of deprivation. Indeed, scholar Sumit Ganguly has pointed out that the rise of terrorism in the early 1980s may paradoxically have been the consequence of growing *affluence*: the result of the frustrations of a new social class that had both education and economic opportunity but that was denied political power. It is worth noting, in this context, that although a decade and a half of violence have retarded economic progress in Jammu and Kashmir, it has not generated the kinds of economic devastation other conflicts of this kind have caused elsewhere in the world. Interestingly, the state's economic backbone, the agricultural sector, has grown steadily through the years of carnage. The emphasis placed by Indian policymakers on economic development as a conflict-resolution measure may risk being a means of avoiding addressing difficult questions of politics and ideology.

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Part of the problem seems to be a failure by Indian policymakers to understand the limitations of their peacemaking paradigm. Writing in 1966, the home minister of Jammu and Kashmir, D. P. Dhar, noted that

Pakistan's attempt to build up a movement of espionage and subversion inside the State of Jammu and Kashmir continues to be an unabated and undeterred menace. . . . While the administrative machinery in general and the law and order machinery in particular have to continue to be vigilant and alert, we also have to take an urgent political view of the situation. In Kashmir, we have to seek and strive for the emotional enlistment of the people with the rest of the country.

Prime Minister Vajpayee or Prime Minister Singh could have authored much the same text. "Emotional enlistment" has, variously, meant the co-optation of dissident formations and the large-scale dissemination of economic aid. What is not clear is whether the current dialogue with secessionists has any greater structural purpose than merely winning over a section of dissidents and throwing money at the state's people—something that has done precious little to halt the bloodshed in Jammu and Kashmir over the years.

The point here is not that dialogue, economic aid, or political accommodation are *bad* things. It is, instead, to suggest that although these instruments are means to achieve certain ends, policymakers must also be acutely conscious of what they *cannot* achieve.

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## **Moving Peacemaking Forward**

Where, then, does the peace process stand?

Making peace is at best a protracted process. Whether Pakistan will be willing to wait the course or to accept a solution that falls short of its expectations is still unclear—and is likely to remain so for some time to come. Given the pressures that have been brought to bear on General Musharraf by Islamist groups, he may see a resumption of full-scale jihad in Jammu and Kashmir as a means of deflecting the attention of those opposed to his pro–United States stance and of rebuilding his religious legitimacy. Although he has cut back on cross-border infiltration, General Musharraf has so far shown a disturbing unwillingness to actually dismantle the infrastructure of terror. Media reports from Pakistan suggest that organizations such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba—designated as terrorist by the United States and charged with some of the worst atrocities against civilians in Jammu and Kashmir—remain free to recruit personnel and raise funds; evidence has even surfaced that some of its cadres have begun to operate in Iraq.

With its eyes focused firmly on Afghanistan and the Middle East, the United States has so far shown little enthusiasm to push General Musharraf to end the activities of such groups—a policy that could end up undermining another key policy goal, a stable South Asia. No great imagination is needed to envision the consequences of a large-scale act of terrorism; the military crisis of 2002 made these clear to even the most obtuse observer. In the short term, the United States needs to ensure that Pakistan moves toward shutting down terrorist organizations, rather than merely containing their activities. The U.S. record on this count is far from heartening. Pakistan is reported to have promised U.S. envoy Richard Gates as early as 1990 that it would shut down terrorist training camps. It did not. Similar commitments made by General Musharraf in 2002 have yet to be met. As Pakistan's principal source of aid, the United States could impress upon Pakistan that violence can no longer be used as a negotiating tool—and that the principal beneficiary of efforts to end violence would not be the Indian state, which has demonstrated its ability to wage an endless war of attrition. Those who would gain most from an end to violence would be ordinary residents of Jammu and Kashmir, the principal victims of a war waged in their name.

Over the longer run, U.S. policymakers need to consider seriously whether their traditional modes of intervention in South Asia have yielded desirable outcomes. It may



be oversimplifying it to say that these interventions have consisted of providing economic and military incentives to Pakistan to alleviate its anxieties about the threat it believes its powerful eastern neighbor poses to its existence as a nation-state. Yet the core idea seems to be that alleviating Pakistan's security concerns will lead it to a more accommodative position. Decades of such incentives have done little to take the edge off Pakistan's anxieties about India. Indeed, the existence of what looks like a blank check from the United States could encourage irresponsible behavior and perpetuate the existence of militarist elements in Pakistan that have a vested interest in continued hostilities with India. In a larger sense, the assumption widespread in Washington that third-party intervention, albeit one conducted behind the scenes, will help break the India-Pakistan deadlock could also use some careful examination. This assumption is founded on the experience of the 2002 crisis, but one could argue that conventional military deterrence, or the threat of nuclear escalation, had a more important role in preventing war than international diplomacy did. The jury is still out on these questions, but history gives no reason for comfort in the usefulness of diplomacy: UN intervention failed to break the India-Pakistan deadlock in 1947–48; the Soviet Union could not bring about a breakthrough during the talks that took place after the 1965 war; years of quiet U.S. intervention since the late 1980s have failed to stave off a succession of near-calamitous crises.

I have no alternate prescription for the things the United States *should* be doing. Instead, I would make the somewhat heretical proposal that this might be a good time *not* to be searching for grand solutions, a good time to *stop* looking for one-shot cures. A decade and a half of seemingly uninterrupted crisis have generated a policymaking climate in which activity and meaningful activity are often conflated. Part of the reason why the problem has proved so resistant to resolution is the search for a *deus ex machina*, a device that will lead a centuries-long history of violence to an instant happy conclusion. It may be useful for policymakers to stop talking about one single Kashmir problem that can be resolved through some free-floating exercise of pure reason. What we call the Kashmir problem is in fact several problems, for which Jammu and Kashmir is only a stage. Among other things, the problem involves irreconcilable ideas about the basis of nationhood, a crisis of religious and ethnic identity, and the still far-from-spent forces that led to the partition of India. For jihadi groups and their supporters in Pakistan's establishment, the war in Jammu and Kashmir is merely part of an ever-larger war, one between Islam and unbelief. And, thanks to the involvement of both public and covert organizations with deep purses, the Kashmir problem is also an *enterprise*: a tawdry business in which there is substantial profit for several actors.

What, then, might an alternate road map look like? The sad truth is that an abiding resolution to the conflict over Jammu and Kashmir may have to wait until India and Pakistan are able to reinvent their relationship, to re-imagine it free of the trauma of partition—a process that could take generations. In the meantime, peacemakers might do well to focus their energies on the problems of Kashmiris—or the many heterogeneous peoples of Jammu and Kashmir—rather than the problem of Kashmir. In some sense, the grand geopolitical narrative called the conflict in Kashmir, on which the world has for decades lavished its diplomatic energies, has displaced the lived experiences of those who form its core. For parents who must shop on Srinagar's streets or send their children to school in Sopore, what the world calls the Kashmir problem is the lived experience of grenades and gunfire. For the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who have had to live with incessant violence and the hardship it brings for fifteen years, sustaining the reduction of violence seen since 2001 may be more important than anything else. Ensuring that the everyday lives of ordinary people become more secure must be a cardinal objective of peacemaking.

For this to occur, however, all parties must understand that dialogue is merely a process—one that does not guarantee any particular outcome. If the contours of a final resolution do not appear clear today, however, there are things that could be done to improve the everyday lives of the peoples of Jammu and Kashmir on both sides of the Line of Control. For one, the United States needs to persuade Pakistan to deepen the process

***This might be a good time not to be searching for grand solutions, a good time to stop looking for one-shot cures.***

***What we call the Kashmir problem is in fact several problems, for which Jammu and Kashmir is only a stage.***

***The sad truth is that an abiding resolution to the conflict over Jammu and Kashmir may have to wait until India and Pakistan are able to reinvent their relationship.***

of military de-escalation by making clear that the use of violence as a medium of political dialogue is unacceptable. Both India and Pakistan need to allow space for a genuine dialogue on greater political autonomy for the regions of Jammu and Kashmir under their control, rather than seeing dialogue as an instrument through which their eventual territorial goals can be realized or obstructed. A wide-ranging dialogue on autonomy would give meaning and content to democracy on both sides of the Line of Control. Collaboration on economic issues is also possible between the two states. In the wake of the December 2003 cease-fire, small-scale barter-based commerce spontaneously erupted along some parts of the Line of Control. Authorities brought this short-lived border enterprise to a quick end, but it served to illustrate the potential that exists. At a larger level, fruit and nuts from Jammu and Kashmir have a market in Pakistan, while grain, cloth, and meat products can flow the other way. In several areas, collaborative use of watersheds would benefit villagers on both sides of the Line of Control. Such interaction would not jeopardize the final territorial claims of either country, but would help develop a grassroots interest in peace. I am not proposing that trade or political dialogue would constitute a resolution of the problem in Jammu and Kashmir; rather, that they might help create conditions from which a resolution could emerge.

One could argue that all these ideas—and others similar to them—are palliatives. In the absence of a cure, though, it seems unreasonable to refuse symptomatic relief. It is also true that even small steps forward involve difficult issues. India and Pakistan both seem to wish to allow greater freedom of movement across the Line of Control, yet negotiations to enable such movement are stalled because of concerns in both countries about the sovereignty implications of the travel documents that will be used to make the journey. Pessimism must be tempered by the very fact that there is *some* sign of movement, however small. General Musharraf's new plans may have been intended to prepare his audience at home for less than what official propaganda has promised for generations. The distance that has been traversed is evident from the fact that in 1950 the governor general of Pakistan, Khwaja Nizamuddin, thundered that "Pakistan would remain incomplete until the whole of Kashmir is liberated." The prime minister of the Pakistan-administered province of Azad Kashmir in turn asserted that the dispute "will be decided only on the battlefield."

No politician can, with any seriousness, suggest that war is any longer an option. Yet, prisoners of their own paradigms, both sides seem unable to move forward. Responses in both countries to an ongoing dispute over a hydroelectric project on the Chenab River are instructive. In early 2005, Pakistan moved the World Bank for the appointment of an arbitrator, claiming India was being intransigent on the question. In India, the Pakistani decision was widely seen as a sinister ruse to force third-party intervention in Jammu and Kashmir. Some commentators in Pakistan, conversely, claimed the dam threatened Pakistan's irrigation networks, and threw out dark hints of the threat of nuclear war. Little public discourse took place in either country on the details of what is, after all, a technical dispute over river-water usage. Both sides were reluctant to give ground, believing it would compromise their positions on India-Pakistan relations in general and Jammu and Kashmir in particular. Both countries urgently need to find ways to break down their dispute into discrete, bite-sized chunks—or risk adding another chapter of failed peacemaking to their tragic history.

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The Kashmir Region

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