The Kashmir Factor in Indo-Pakistan Relations: Politico-Security Implications

Ehsanul Haque

Introduction
One of the hurdles that stand in the way of cordial and friendly relations between India and Pakistan is the conflict over the Kashmir issue. This single question has been dominating their relations since independence in 1947. The dispute is entangled with strategic, political, economic, and religious considerations which added a significant dimension to the conflictual pattern of Indo-Pakistan relations. The two traditional foes fought three wars over this largest bone of contention and both sides recurrently apprehend that a fourth and perhaps final conflict will erupt, if diplomacy and conciliation fail. In fact, the Kashmir imbroglio, *inter alia*, has cumulatively stabilized the enemy images between India and Pakistan and now it is considered by many not as a cause but a "symptom" of the Indo-Pakistan conflict. The dispute had appeared to have been put to rest in the 1970s and early 1980s, but in the late 1980s it became a political flashpoint. Today, Kashmir has become one of the most insecure land, not only in India, but perhaps in the whole world which portrays the perilous character of the conflict.

In this paper an attempt is made at evaluating the Kashmir dispute, specially the latest Kashmiri uprising and the factors which are fuelling it. The study suggests that the Kashmir factor badly aggravated and continues to aggravate Indo-Pakistan relations. It also examines the possibility of Indo-Pakistan war, adverse effects of religious fundamentalism, the role of extra-regional great powers, and concludes with some observations on the prospects.

The genesis of the Kashmir problem may be dated back to
1947 when India and Pakistan achieved independence from Britain. According to the independence plan, it was decided that Muslim majority areas would form Pakistan and Hindu majority areas would remain in India, while the princely states were given the right to accede to either of the two newly emerging dominions or to opt for self-rule. While taking this important decision the rulers of each state were advised to consider the influence of geography, economics, and the composition of the population.\(^1\) In view of this directive, the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir Hari Singh was thinking in terms of the possibility of an autonomous or independent Kashmir — the Switzerland of Asia. But Maharaja's desire for an independent Kashmir was unacceptable to both Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammad Ali Jinnah.\(^2\) Pakistan asserted a moral claim to Kashmir based on the state's Muslim majority population and borders, which abutted what would become Pakistan's western wing. Between August and September, 1947, the situation hastily worsened when the Muslim rebels rose in an open revolt against the Maharaja and were soon joined by fellow Muslim tribesmen from the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Out of fear, the Maharaja sought the military assistance of the Indian government to ward off the rebels. India agreed to provide assistance but only after Kashmir formally acceded to the Indian Union. Under this compulsion, the Maharaja offered accession on October 26, 1947, which was accepted by the Indian government the following day. The Indian army then took over and established military control of the greater part of Jammu and the Valley of Kashmir. The introduction of Indian troops into the Kashmir Valley led to war with Pakistan in 1947. However, the war was ended by a ceasefire through the United Nations' mediation which came into force on January 1, 1949. Then the division of Kashmir along a ceasefire line was completed. By the time the ceasefire was agreed upon, India was in complete control of over two-thirds of Jammu and Kashmir, only the "least desirable" one-third remained in Pakistan's control, presently known as 'Azad' (free) Kashmir. Apart from this, the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) resolutions were passed on August 13, 1948 and January 5, 1949 in which the two countries have agreed that the future of Kashmir would be
The state of Jammu and Kashmir comprises an area of 2,22,236 sq. km. out of which 1,01,387 sq. km. is currently in Indian possession. Pakistan has occupied 78,114 sq. km. while it ceded an additional area of 5,180 sq. km. to China for the Sino-Pak strategic link road of Karakoram highway. After occupying Tibet, China itself has grabbed an area of 37,555 sq. km. in the Aksai Chin region of Kashmir so as to link China with Tibet.

Under the Indian constitution, Jammu and Kashmir was deemed in Article 370 to be an integral part of the Indian Union, while Article 370 provided it with a special status which effectively limited the powers of the Indian parliament to defense, external affairs, and communications. It was confirmed in Article 152 of the 1956 version of the constitution. In India's view, if a plebiscite were held and the Kashmiris were offered an alternative in terms of acceding to Muslim Pakistan or Hindu India, it would fan the flame of communal passions which could engulf the entire subcontinent. India further argued that, the changing international realities, which came in 1954 with the United States' extension of military assistance to Pakistan and conclusion of various security arrangements with it, have added to India's image of Pakistan as Washington's "client state" and that under the changed circumstances an impartial plebiscite in Kashmir was no longer conceivable.

In 1965, India and Pakistan engaged in the second war over Kashmir. It was a Soviet initiated resolution in the U.N. which resulted in a ceasefire. In the Simla Agreement, concluded between Islamabad and New Delhi in 1972 following the liberation war of Bangladesh, a new 'Line of Control' replaced the old 1949 ceasefire line and both sides agreed not to resort to force in Kashmir. The Agreement also provided the framework for dialogue between the two parties. Since the conclusion of the Simla Agreement, Pakistan has preferred to keep the issue on the back burner.

The Nature of the Current Uprising and the Outside Interference
With the eruption of a mass movement for self-determination
and independence in the Indian part of Kashmir in the late 1980s, the issue has risen to the forefront of the India-Pakistan agenda. The magnitude of the latest uprising in Kashmir is such that neither India nor Pakistan may be able to control the situation effectively. Perhaps the statesmen of both the countries could have realized the dangerous ramifications of the problem long ago and thereby the Kashmir problem was rightly termed by Jawaharlal Nehru as "pandora's box" — not wise to open and by the former Secretary General of the U.N., U Thant as a "time bomb" — to be defused as quickly as possible.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir consists of three ethnically separate geographical regions — a Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley, a Hindu-majority Jammu and a Buddhist-majority Ladakh (see Table). Indian Kashmir's 65% overwhelmingly Muslim people want to determine their own future. Their objectives are: to bring Indian rule to an end and to hold a plebiscite on the future of Jammu and Kashmir. There are more than a dozen Kashmiri rebel groups who are divided into two factions: (i) those favoring accession to Pakistan; and

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<th>% of State Population</th>
<th>% Muslims</th>
<th>% Hindus</th>
<th>% Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kashmir Valley</td>
<td>3,134,904 (52.36%)</td>
<td>94.96</td>
<td>4.59</td>
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<td>Jammu</td>
<td>2,718,113 (45.39%)</td>
<td>29.60</td>
<td>66.25</td>
<td>4.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ladakh</td>
<td>134,372 (2.24%)</td>
<td>46.04</td>
<td>2.66</td>
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<td>Total State</td>
<td>5,987,389 (100%)</td>
<td>64.19</td>
<td>32.24</td>
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* Buddhist.
(ii) those demanding independence under a secular government. Only a small minority of the Kashmiris want to remain in India. The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), one of the largest and oldest of the militant groups and the foremost champion of Kashmiri independence, advocates that both the Kashmirs should be reunified and made an independent state as they perceive two types of threat from both India and Pakistan: (i) threat to their Islamic identity from India; and (ii) threat to their Kashmiri identity from Pakistan.6 The JKLF insists strongly on the secular character of its struggle, rooting its demands for national liberation in a concept of ‘Kashmiriyyat’ (being a Kashmiri), which would include Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. The Hizbul Mujahideen, another militant group seeks accession of Kashmir to Pakistan and merger of Pakistan with an international Islamic bloc.

The JKLF began its struggle in a pamphlet form which included the following facets of militancy:7
- joining anti-Indian demonstrations, anti-establishment acts, boycott of Indian norms, such as Friday being the weekly holiday as against Sunday; Pakistan standard time being adopted as opposed to Indian standard time, and so on;
- refusal of the government employees to join work on the plea of lack of security for them and their families. The consequence was the near-paralysis of the administration;
- closing down of all official medias and militant-controlled media became the quasi-official mouthpiece; and
- killing selectively unarmed, unprotected government employees to generate anti-government hysteria.

By such activities the militants plan to control the masses and put up the facade of a continuing revolution by the people. It reveals that in order to have their objectives fulfilled the JKLF tries to exert an indomitable pressure on the Indian government.

Now it is very usual to pose a question that after almost two decades why has the Kashmir issue re-emerged so prominently in the regional agenda in recent months? Which factors persuaded the Kashmiri rebels to strengthen movement for their right of self-determination? Perhaps at least the following four driving forces led the Kashmiris to launch their struggle:6

- Prime Minister V.P. Singh’s government in New Delhi
may have been perceived as being so weak as to allow them to start their movement;

— following the ordeal of the Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Mosque controversy — which induced Hindu-Muslim communal conflict in November, 1989 the Kashmiris may have found the new coalition government (elected in 1989) heavily backed by the Hindu fundamentalists, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In view of this sudden development, the Kashmiri Muslims considered their fate to be in jeopardy in the sense that their long-cherished dream of the right of self-determination might fade away with the rise of the Hindu fundamentalists in Indian politics;

— in view of the changing global political scenario, specially the hastening demise of socialism in East Europe and consequent diminution of Soviet global influence, they may have judged their demand for self-determination to be proper at that time; and

— the Kashmiris were forced to launch their independence movement when they realized that neither was India ready to agree to a plebiscite, nor Pakistan was in a position to force New Delhi in holding the plebiscite, or the U.N. willing to get its resolutions implemented.

The Kashmiris have always regarded themselves as a distinctive entity. Developments of the last few years have glaringly exposed their alienation from the center. Alienation of the Kashmiris stems from an indoctrinated sense of frustration caused by the non-accommodative attitude of the government. The present crisis is the direct result of decades of "political manipulation" by India. There is hardly any doubt that long years of neglect of Kashmiri sentiments and aspirations for greater political, economic, and social benefits and indifference and wrong policies of the government seem to have led to the alienation of a large number of Kashmiris. The Kashmiris have endured more than four decades of "opportunistic regimes" of Sheikh Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad G.M. Shah and Farooq Abdullah who contributed very little to the improvement of the lot of the common people. Political strangulation is followed by ruthless economic exploitation. The loss of fruit trade and tourism — two main industries which had played an important role in bringing economic prosperity to this once
prosperous people — are two instances of the continuous economic depression. The economy of the state has also been shattered by the drying up of the agricultural sector and the consequent sharp fall in the sale of handicrafts.

The major causes of mass alienation and the grievances of the people of Kashmir (as viewed by the Kashmiris) which brought about the situation to such a stalemate may be summarized as follows:

— fear of erosion of Article 370 of the Indian constitution and consequent loss of Kashmiri identity, culture, and language due to constant clamor in India to remove this clause has been a major cause of bitterness and alienation;

— Indian government does not permit free and fair elections in the state and installs "puppet regimes" and leaders who do not represent the people;

— there are no civil liberties in Jammu and Kashmir and India treats the state as a military-occupied territory;

— communal unrest in India shows that Muslims of Kashmir cannot live with honor in India;

— all central aid and subsidies are cornered by the "puppet regimes" and their favorites and a common Kashmiri is ignored;

— there are no plans for industrial development of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the Valley;

— Kashmiri Muslims have the largest population of 'educated unemployed' in the state, yet very few avenues are open to find employment. There is a deliberate neglect of Kashmiri youth by various employment agencies;

— central government employees are foisted from outside to deny Kashmiris their due share in higher posts. Kashmiri Muslims have no more than 6% share of higher posts. Moreover, sensitive posts are given to non-Kashmiris;

— the national investment in public sector undertakings has been of the order of Rs. 86,000 crores in the past four decades of which Kashmir has received only a share of 0.03%. In spite of abundant potential for hydel resources there has been no development in this direction;

— there are no plans for development of communications in Jammu and Kashmir. Roads and highways have been developed primarily for the use of the army;

— corruption is rampant right from the top to bottom in all
government departments;
— constant denigration of the Kashmiri way of life and their culture and offending of their respected leaders by central agencies and national newspapers are alienating people;
— government has done nothing to open direct routes to Azad Kashmir to enable Kashmiri Muslims to meet their relatives and friends who have been trapped on the other side of the Line of Control;
— the brutality of the Indian police and army in the state alienated the people. Human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir by the security forces seemed to be a major issue; and
— there is a constant shortage of essential commodities, specially during the winter.

The ex-Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Jagmohan has recently written an awesomely documented book on Kashmir and in that book he tried to portray that everything that India expected to get done in Kashmir proved to be an illusion. In his work, Jagmohan has shown, quoting a formidable array of examples and statistics, that the people of Kashmir have got very little indeed from the Kashmiris that have ruled them for forty-five years. Jagmohan writes: "The vested interests of a few families had acquired a stranglehold on the social, economic, and political framework of the state. These interests controlled the police, dominated the administration, the High Court, the judiciary, the bar, the business and the industries. The vested interests of the small coterie of the ruling elite had been the biggest obstacle in bringing the state to the mainstream... ."

The Kashmiri militant groups seem to have been continuing their movement with success. Their achievement of aims can be viewed in different perspectives: (i) the militants have achieved their aims of isolating the population in Kashmir; (ii) the aim of demoralizing state authority, paralysing administration and subverting intelligence and police forces of the state has been achieved to a large extent; (iii) the militants have proved that they have the capability to survive strong action by security forces and continue to mount attacks on selected targets; (iv) by creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear the terrorists have successfully brought all political processes to standstill; and (v) they have created an environment in which they can induce mass protests and prolonged confrontation between the
people and the state at will.

The next question to be put is—what is the source of strength of the Kashmiri rebels? Can it be denied that they are abetted and aided by any external powers? The issue needs a thorough analysis.

The Pakistani connection in Kashmir can hardly be ignored. There is a repeated Indian allegation that Pakistan provides weapons and military training to Muslim insurgents in Kashmir. Pakistani policy-makers express solidarity with the people of Kashmir in the form of extending full political, diplomatic, and moral support to their struggle for self-determination, but deny that the Pakistani government provides any material support to them. Islamabad considers the present uprising as "spontaneous and indigenous". The Kashmiri rebels also deny Indian charges, but claim that they are assisted considerably by their units in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and even Libya. According to Alan Cranston, U.S. Senate Majority Whip, Saudi Arabia and Iran's involvement is deeper in fomenting trouble by way of providing funds and arms to the militants. In their overzealous nostalgia, the Iranians even refer to Kashmir as 'Iran-e-Shagir' (Little Iran). It sufficiently proves that the Kashmiri militants have external linkage to some extent. But indisputable evidence of direct Pakistani engagement in the training and arming of the insurgents is difficult to establish. However, on the basis of some documents it might be proved that at least Pakistan has some passive linkage in the Kashmiris' struggle.

One of the serious allegations against Pakistan on the question of its association with the Kashmiri militants is that in April, 1988, at a top-level meeting, it unfolded a plan codenamed 'Operation Topac'. The alleged meeting was attended by selected corps commanders, top officials of the powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the Afghan Mujahideen and JKLF leaders and the late Pakistani President General Ziaul Haq. Authentic transcripts of that meeting appeared in several military journals. A brief outline of the three phases of the 'Operation Topac' will indicate its scope and intensity. Phase I would see the organization and training of subversive elements in Azad Kashmir, with groups being infiltrated into the Kashmir Valley. In Phase II, maximum pressure would be
exerted on the outlying areas of Siachen, Kargil, Rajouri and Poonch to force the Indian army to deploy its reserves outside the Kashmir Valley. In Phase III, the Pakistani President elaborated plans for the liberation of the Kashmir Valley and the establishment of an independent Islamic state.

According to Indian and U.S. intelligence sources, some 63 Pakistani-operated training camps for the Kashmiri militants have been functioning at various times during the past few years, roughly half being located in Azad Kashmir and half in Pakistan. Pakistan's involvement was openly acknowledged by the former Army Chief of Staff Lt. General Mirza Aslam Beg who in an interview with an American journalist in November last year admitted that "thousands of Kashmiris" recruited and trained by Islamabad's ISI Directorate had fought in the Afghan war and now "form the core" of the insurgent movement. A large number of militants of the JKLF were gradually infiltrated into the Valley after 1987, when the Indian Army had committed the best part of four divisions (about 60,000 troops) into Sri Lanka in order to fight the Tamil guerrillas.

The Continued Confrontation and The War Hysteria

Generally, in its dealings with Pakistan, India always prefers to emphasize bilateral approaches rather than multilateral approaches, whereas Pakistan follows a two-fold strategy: (i) to bring its outstanding conflicts to the attention of the international community; and (ii) to mobilize its friends among the Islamic world and fellow alliance members. Pakistan's strategy is thus designed to garner the support of the international community and in particular the Islamic world in its favor. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Islamabad has attempted to move its internationalization efforts into high gear by trying to raise the Kashmir issue at every conceivable Islamic forum. The latest attempt was at the recent Dakar summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) where in an attempt to shore up its position on Kashmir, it lobbied vigorously. Pakistan's attempted use of the OIC to serve as a 'base camp' for its internationalization efforts began at the 1990 foreign ministers' conference. In order to include the Kashmir issue, delegations from Azad Kashmir were sponsored to these
The former foreign minister of Pakistan Shahabzada Yakub Khan visited fourteen Islamic countries to drum up support for Pakistan. The Pakistani rulers every now and then harp on the Kashmir issue. They cannot underplay the issue because of their domestic compulsions which are aggravated by the contending forces, such as military, bureaucracy and political parties. It is clear that no party or government in Pakistan, civil or military, can afford to forget Kashmir at this stage in the evolution of Pakistan. If the Pakistani political leaders fail to whip up this issue properly, the military, which still continues to dominate the Pakistani political scene, may be tempted to stigmatize the government leaders. The bulk of Pakistan's populace are also acutely interested in keeping the Kashmir issue alive as it is one issue that unites the Pakistani people, by evoking memories about Pakistan's troubled relationship with its principal adversary, India. The Pakistani political leaders from Mohammad Ali Jinnah to Nawaz Sharif have used Pakistan's long-standing claim to Kashmir to rally domestic support for their own political interests. There are two views in Pakistan on the Kashmir question: (i) if the Kashmiris have any grievances against India, it is for the Kashmiris to settle them; and (ii) the dispute on Kashmir could as well be left for future generations to resolve. The second view suggests the Pakistani desire toward the prolongation of the issue.

On the Indian side, New Delhi does not raise the Kashmir issue internationally, but does use the dispute in its domestic politics or in relations with Pakistan. India considers that since the Kashmir question is a bilateral problem, it should be settled under the aegis of the Simla Agreement. Clause I (ii) of the Simla Agreement states that "the two countries are resolved to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them". The Indian government views this clause as a clear indication that the two sides agreed to settle the Kashmir dispute without external interference. So it appears that India has perhaps the apparent legal ground not to internationalize the Kashmir issue. In fact, the Simla Agreement recognized Kashmir as a dispute solely between India and Pakistan and thereby bilateralized the problem.
As a counter-response to Pakistani policy, India also tries hard to convince the Muslim world. New Delhi considers it vital to solicit the support of the Islamic states or at least to make them agree to maintain their neutrality on the Kashmir issue. Such a policy is considered imperative both to demonstrate to the Muslim population of Kashmir external Islamic support for the Indian government's handling of the Kashmir problem, as well as, to retain the confidence of the large Muslim minority in India. New Delhi is well-aware that massive Muslim support for Pakistan could make India's Kashmir policy vulnerable. As a consequence, India always vehemently speaks for the Arab role on the Palestine question. Interestingly, the Indians perceive Pakistan in much the same way that the Arabs usually perceive Israel, and they consider Pakistan's occupation of part of Kashmir as akin to Israel's post-1967 control of the West Bank and Gaza.

The current Indian dilemma in Kashmir derives from three major factors. First, Pakistan, which seemed to have been removed from the Kashmir equation by the Simla Agreement, has once more become a major factor in the situation. Second, the increasing instability of the Indian authority in Kashmir has obliged India to revise its policy repeatedly, each modification serving to unsettle an already precarious balance of forces. Third, following the Iranian revolution in the late 1970s, a new Islamic fundamentalism emerged which did not leave the Muslims unscathed.

The rise of Hindu fundamentalism in India and Islamic fundamentalism all over the world, have some impact on Kashmir. Both India and Pakistan manipulated the situation at least to some extent. The rise of BJP in Indian politics is an alarming issue. India's 110 million Muslim minority is frightened by its rise. The BJP's recent Ekta Yatra (Unity March) program toward Jammu and Kashmir generated a new wave of concern among the Kashmiri Muslims in particular and the Indian Muslims in general. The BJP believes that the roots of Indian nationalism lie in the common cultural ethos of Hinduism and it is a unifying factor in India. The liberal nationalism of the Congress party, on the other hand, is based on the concept of "unity in diversity". The BJP, during its forty-five days of Ekta Yatra attacked this particular concept of the
Congress. The BJP claims that its Ekta Yatra had two objectives: (i) to get Article 370 of the Indian constitution abrogated because this article has allowed Kashmir to stay away from the national mainstream and it gives a privileged status to the state; and (ii) to build public opinion against secessionist movements. The BJP says that the abolition of Kashmir's special status would encourage Hindus to migrate there, eventually changing it to a Hindu-majority state. An opinion poll of Delhi residents indicate that 56% clearly endorsed the *Ekta Yatra* and an overwhelming 64% rejected Article 370. A very logical question is that how can Article 370 be withdrawn at a time when there is acute crisis of confidence and the people of Kashmir are feeling much more alienated than ever before? In fact, the BJP's flag-hoisting show in Srinagar, as a part of Ekta Yatra, indirectly helped to advertise to the world the alienation of the people of Kashmir from India. As a counter-measure, the JKLF militants attempted a march across the Line of Control but it was prevented by the Nawaz Sharif government of Pakistan. The JKLF's immediate aim was clear — to create a new crop of martyrs on the ceasefire line which may ultimately devastate India's moral claim to Kashmir in the eyes of the world.

The rise of the six independent Muslim republics in Central Asia and the Islamic upsurge in the Middle East offer new possibilities to Pakistan in its hostile competition with India. Specially, recent developments in Central Asia have serious implications for Kashmir. The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), formed in 1985, seems to offer Pakistan a unique opportunity to drum up its support for its position on Kashmir. At the ECO summit in Tehran in February, 1992, the members declared their support for the "self-determination of the Kashmiri people". Moreover, Tajikistan has already claimed that Kashmir is a part of Central Asia. Besides, the Commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Major General Mohsen Rezai, in an interview, defined the Islamic worldview that Iran has been propagating. He is reported to have said that the Revolutionary Guard's international role includes "helping Muslims everywhere since we are an Islamic Army". The second aspect of Islamic worldview, according to Rezai, is the creation of a "strategic relationship with countries
like Pakistan" and "if there is unity between Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, this will strengthen Muslim solidarity and enable the peoples of Central Asia and Kashmir to join in". These developments added a new impetus to the Kashmiri Muslims' struggle.

In the wake of the latest uprising in Kashmir, war-clouds have once more started gathering over the subcontinent. But will India and Pakistan wage another war over the Kashmir issue? Three wars of 1947, 1965 and 1971 have sufficiently shown the futility of attempting to change the status quo in Kashmir by force.

It is unlikely that both India and Pakistan will risk an open war. Pakistan has little interest in waging a war with India. Although substantial U.S. assistance to Pakistan has helped modernize its armed forces during the last decade, Pakistan's army remains militarily weak in comparison to India's. The financial costs of starting a war also appear frightening. In a recent issue of India Today, two Indian journalists estimated that a single day of fighting against Pakistan would cost India approximately $400 million. Given Pakistan's considerably smaller economy, the cost would be even more onerous. A number of domestic factors are also likely to confound India-Pakistan's war-making capacity. Both the countries have been increasingly plagued by ethnic violence and sub-national separatism. It forces them to concentrate more on the domestic political scene and makes them less interested in "war phenomenon". At maximum, both Islamabad and New Delhi, exchange war-of-words with each other when the level of conflict rises at its peak. Besides, both the parties are aware that an open warfare would gravely hamper their practice of democracy and development.

Even if another Indo-Pakistan war erupts, it will serve a speck in India's foreign relations. It has been observed that in any dispute involving India, the Arab states have traditionally provided Pakistan diplomatic and moral support. They are unlikely to reverse their past policy in the event of another war. Apart from diplomatic isolation, the Arab world could easily impose other material costs on India. Presently, India is in the throes of a severe energy crisis. It is spending over a third of its foreign exchange earnings on imported oil, the bulk of which
comes from the Arab world. Hence, India would not jeopardize its position by dissatisfying the Arab world. 29

If another Indo-Pakistan war breaks out, it would bring catastrophes for the region. It might not be one affecting only the two armed forces, as in the past. It may involve damage and destruction on civilian and population centers of both the countries on an unprecedented scale. The new and advanced type of weapons and missiles developed by both would make it a much more tragic war. However, war between India and Pakistan is likely to be a swift and decisive operation inasmuch as the extra-regional powers would not like them to enter into a war of attrition a la Iran-Iraq war. Both the countries at war would not be able to sustain it were it to prolong for a long time. Moreover, the various power centers would not like to see its escalation in other areas of the region and would probably squeeze both the belligerents by 'starving them'. 30

The Role of Extra-Regional Great Powers

The context in which the Kashmir issue is now set is quite different from what it was a few years back. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the devaluation of Pakistan in Western esteem, the relentless application of the Pressler amendment to Islamabad, and the new equation that has been established between the West and India, have together created a totally distinctive environment.

Now the extra-regional great power interests merge on two crucial points: they agree on the need to preserve the peace and on the wisdom of a bilateral settlement of problems between India and Pakistan. A South Asian conflict would upset their current priorities as well as larger and long term objectives. The U.S. has been playing a vocal role on the Kashmir question while the erstwhile Soviet Union remained preoccupied with its intra-bloc and internal political situation. In fact, when the present uprising began in Kashmir, Moscow had a little scope to pay heed to this problem.

For the U.S., the Kashmir issue had been a complex and baffling one, which largely complicated its efforts to develop satisfactory relations with both India and Pakistan. Now Washington has reversed its previous policy on Kashmir and adheres to a laissez-faire policy toward the issue. It has advised
Pakistan not to provoke India by engaging itself in Kashmir and has made strong demarches to New Delhi over the need to avoid military provocations. The current U.S. policy in Kashmir can be viewed from five different perspectives. First, despite its support for Pakistan, should a war now break out between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue, Washington would be unlikely to side with Pakistan. Second, the U.S. seems to oppose any Pakistani effort to internationalize the Kashmir issue. Third, the U.S. no longer supports a plebiscite in Kashmir. Fourth, should the U.S. find any direct evidence of Pakistan's involvement in the Kashmiri uprising, it may perhaps have a direct bearing on the U.S. military and economic assistance to Pakistan, since under the current U.S. anti-terrorist law such support by Islamabad for the pro-independence Kashmiri people would amount to state-sponsored terrorism. Washington even threatened during April-May, 1990 to cut off aid to Pakistan if Islamabad was found to be supporting Kashmiri rebels. Fifth, Washington accepts the Kashmiris as the third party in the issue.

With the Soviet Union and communism extinct as the enemy, Islamabad has lost the patronage of Washington. For the U.S. ruling interests the Islamic world fundamentalism is now being presented as the greatest danger. For this, the U.S. no longer treats Pakistan as a reliable partner. Therefore, now the U.S. is more interested in India to pursue its politico-economic designs in the region. Thus, the reversal of U.S. policy toward Pakistan affected the latter's Kashmir Policy.

China is Pakistan's most reliable and trusted ally. In the last two Indo-Pakistan wars, Beijing backed Islamabad by providing economic and military assistance. But now there is a perceptible shift in China's Kashmir policy along with signs of some improvement in Sino-Indian relations. After the re-emergence of the Kashmir tangle, Beijing urged both the parties to settle the dispute through peaceful means. It indicates that China also has reversed its previous tilt toward Pakistan and therefore, skillfully managed to keep itself away from the incidents of Kashmir. Following the Sino-Indian rapprochement, now China is less enthusiastic to support Pakistan's Kashmir policy as Beijing thinks that such kind of support might harm its relations with India.
Outlook for the Future

Now, what about the future prospects? A few things are clear. Interestingly enough, there is one thing India and Pakistan have in common with regard to Kashmir. Neither is ready to concede independence to the Kashmiris. In other words, neither India nor Pakistan wants an independent Kashmir. The West is also unlikely to welcome the creation of a Muslim fundamentalist state close to Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.

Pakistan has consistently opposed the idea of an independent Kashmir. The JKLF’s demand that independence be included as an option in the plebiscite was also supported by Pakistan. Although the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had been reported earlier in the Pakistani press as indirectly endorsing the "Third Option", i.e., the independence option, in a recent interview he ruled that out, saying that the U.N. resolution spoke only of accession to either India or Pakistan and hence the Kashmiris would have to decide whether to "join India or Pakistan".31

Increasing numbers of Kashmiris have begun to favor independence. There is a new upsurge for independent Kashmir even in the part occupied by Pakistan, i.e., Azad Kashmir. The JKLF demands that the projected new state encompass not only Indian-held areas of Kashmir and Azad Kashmir but also Pakistani-controlled Gilgit, Hunza, and Baltistan, north of Azad Kashmir, as well as pockets of territory ceded by Pakistan to China. An independent Kashmir is unpalatable to the ruling interests of both India and Pakistan. Besides a loss of respectively held parts of the rich and strategic Kashmir, both fear other consequences.

Reasons behind Pakistan’s opposition to an independent Kashmir might be viewed from four different perspectives: (i) half of Pakistan’s hydroelectric generating capacity and the headwaters of the Chenab, one of its major rivers, would lie within the new entity i.e., independent Kashmir; (ii) creation of an independent, Muslim-majority Kashmir would invalidate Pakistan’s own raison d’être as the homeland for the subcontinent’s Muslims (a rationale already undermined by the independence of Bangladesh); (iii) creation of an independent Kashmir would cut off Pakistani access to China: 32 and (iv) it
might inspire different nationalities in Pakistan for independence from the central rule.

On the other hand, Indian opposition to an independent Kashmir may be attributed to the following reasons: (i) an independent Kashmir would be a setback to the Indian hegemonistic designs in South Asia; (ii) it would take away the plank of India's secular professions; and (iii) India fears it to become a fillip to the urges for autonomy or even independence among its diverse nationalities, which have already erupted.

It is now clear that under no circumstances India and Pakistan are likely to grant independence to their respective parts of Kashmir. It will be a suicidal attempt for them. No government in India and Pakistan could possibly survive with such a move. Both the parties ignore the majority of the Kashmiris' demand which suggests the prolongation as well as the stalemate of the issue.

The failure to defuse tension in Kashmir has important domestic consequences for India and Pakistan as well as ramifications for the entire subcontinent. For Pakistan, a continuing insurgency and concomitant repressive Indian policies in Kashmir will provide a useful rallying theme for any regime, civilian or military. For India, a failure to reach political accommodation in Kashmir and dependence on the army to maintain law and order could lead to a degradation of its democratic institutions. The Indian army has long been apolitical, but it is now being increasingly called on to restore public order in secessionist states and there is a widespread apprehension that it may not remain politically neutral for an indefinite future.  

The nature of the uprising reveals that the Kashmiris would continue their struggle until their objective is achieved. They are guided by high morale and have been showing their courage against the redoubtable Indian military forces since they began their demonstration.

In view of the end of the Cold War, "low-intensity conflict" has become a dominant military motif of the 1990s, especially at the regional level. According to the U.S. President's report to the Congress, "low-intensity conflict is political-military confrontation between contending states or groups at a level below conventional war but above routine peaceful competition.
among states. It involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies, and its manifestations range from subversion to the use of the armed forces. It is waged by a combination of political, economic, international, and military instruments.... "34 Outbreaks of regional conflict pose incipient threat to world security in this decade. The U.S. Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci observed in a 1989 Pentagon report that, internal wars, border struggles, police actions, and other types of brushfire combat represent the principal form of conflict in the world today, and will likely remain so in the foreseeable future.35 His statement reflects that in the ensuing days regional conflicts will replace the superpowers' phase of confrontation of the past four decades.

Low-intensity conflict is a double-edged weapon. Unlike war, it has no specific finality. If it goes on and on both lose a lot of blood and risk being bled to mutual paralysis. While applying the notion of low-intensity conflict to the Kashmir issue, one may presume that if tension over Kashmir is not reduced, Islamabad and New Delhi may perhaps engage themselves in sporadic border skirmishes which will cause deaths of soldiers and civilians on both sides. With the continuing diffusion of modern weapons, insurgent groups will find it easier to obtain arms with which to challenge the national authority. Because such action will threaten not only internal security but also international credibility, governments are likely to react with extreme vigour and brutality36—a tendency that is now visible in the Indian response to the pro-independence Kashmiris. Brutal oppression by the Indian armed forces has already alienated the entire Muslim population of Kashmir and turned Kashmir into an internal war zone.

Concluding Observations

The much older and potentially more explosive dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir has never been formally resolved and is still a subject of intense and often flamboyant debate in both countries. Any long term effort for normalization of the Indo-Pakistan relationship meant to bolster regional stability cannot succeed leaving the problem unresolved, which has cost the subcontinent three major wars and numerous skirmishes.
The effort to integrate Kashmir into the Indian mainstream has been a costly drain on the Indian exchequer — the central government pours money, resources, and men into the Valley, which brings it nothing but insecurity, frustration, and daily loss of lives. In the past two years the moral, political, economic, and international costs of India's Kashmir policy have been only too apparent. A scholar has suggested four options for India in regard to Kashmir.37

First, India could seek to invade and annex the part of Kashmir occupied by Pakistan. It is impractical. International condemnation of India and support for Pakistan would be massive and decisive. Nor could India exercise normal control over a large and hostile Kashmiri population indefinitely.

Second, to maintain the status quo. This is to persist in a demonstrably unsatisfactory situation. This option will pose a threat to the fabric of Indian society, economy, and polity.

Third, to submit the Kashmir dispute to international adjudication or arbitration. This would set an invaluable precedent for resolving all of India's bilateral disputes with smaller and larger neighbors alike and allow India to reclaim the high moral ground in world affairs.

Fourth, to withdraw troops from Kashmir, stop treating the problem as a law and order issue and tackle the political roots of the conflict: let the people of Kashmir decide their own fate in an honorable plebiscite. An honorable democratic solution to Kashmir would strengthen the Indian state, underline its political values, and cement the cohesiveness of Indian society.

However, the following options may be considered in order to break the stalemate over Kashmir:

— let the people of Kashmir determine their own future, i.e., to grant them full freedom of choosing either independence or merger with India or Pakistan. The very logic of the option lies in the fact that since Kashmir is a problem primarily involving the Kashmiris, it could be resolved by giving the people the right to decide their fate freely;

— declare Kashmir an independent state which would remain a buffer between India and Pakistan, maintaining the policy of equi-distance from both Islamabad and New Delhi.

— neutralize the state which would completely prohibit
India and Pakistan's involvement in Kashmir;
— allow the U.N. play a greater role in respect of convening a conference on Kashmir to which India, Pakistan, and Muslim separatists should be represented in order to develop techniques for the adjustment and settlement of the dispute. It must be within existing parameters, specially as set out in the Simla Agreement;
— arrange a referendum among all Kashmiris, in both India and Pakistan, for a singular option of 'Yes' or 'No' for independence;
— withdrawal of Indian and Pakistani troops under U.N.-supervised arrangements while retaining the right to reintroduce them under specified circumstances; and
— convert the present Kashmir ceasefire line into an agreed international border.

Some analysts, while arguing that the Kashmiris be allowed to exercise their right of self-determination, suggest that the status of Kashmir might conceivably be settled at some future stage by Kashmir becoming a separate entity within a confederation of South Asia (defined as a development of SAARC). Even some Indian scholars raise a question that in case a plebiscite is held and the Kashmiris opt to accede to Pakistan or remain independent instead of staying on with India, does India have any right to hold them against their will? They also contend that if the former Soviet Union can grant independence to all its 14 states and yet retain a commonwealth type of status, India should not be afraid of a totally unwilling state to choose its own independent way of life.

As long as the Kashmir issue continues to dominate Indo-Pakistan relations, the prospect of stable peace and security in South Asia appears to be dim. It is to be conceded that the nature of politics in both India and Pakistan serves as an impediment toward an easy solution of the Kashmir problem. Of course, there is hardly any room for wishful thinking about an immediate breakthrough.
Notes and Reference

6. Interview by the JKLF Chairman Amanullah Khan to weekly Time's correspondent, *Time* (February 5, 1990).
24. Swapan Dasgupta, "India has become the I-Word", *The Telegraph* (February 8, 1992).
29. For further elaboration, see, *ibid.*, pp.67-71.
30. Lok Raj Baral, *op. cit.*