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Third Composite Dialogue AN OVERVIEW OF INDO-PAK RELATIONS IN 2006

Priyashree Andley

INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

B 7/3 Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi 110029, INDIA
Tel: 91-1151652556-9; Fax: 91-11-51652560
Email: officemail@ipcs.org; Web: www.ipcs.org

THIRD COMPOSITE DIALOGUE

An Overview of Indo-Pak Relations in 2006

Priyashree Andley, Research Officer, IPCS

The third Composite Dialogue between India and Pakistan began in January 2006 in New Delhi between Riaz Muhammad Khan, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, and Shyam Saran, his Indian counterpart. The Composite Dialogue launched in September 2004 by the Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan, encompasses Peace and Security including Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), Jammu and Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek, Tulbul Navigation Project/Wullar Barrage, Terrorism and Drug trafficking, Economic and Commercial Cooperation and Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in various fields. This Special Report provides an overview of the third Composite Dialogue and its review by the two Foreign Secretaries on 14-15 November 2006.

CONVENTIONAL AND NUCLEAR CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES (CBMS)

On 18 January 2006, Riaz Muhammad Khan and Shyam Saran formally began the third Composite Dialogue in New Delhi. The two Secretaries agreed to mandate the two expert groups to continue consultations on security and nuclear doctrines for conventional and nuclear CBMs. The mandate was accepted at the fourth round of Expert level talks on Nuclear Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) scheduled for 25-26 April 2006, and the third round of talks on Conventional CBMs on 27 April 2006. Both Secretaries reiterated their commitment to start a bus service between Poonch and Rawalakot and a truck service on the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar route for trade in permitted goods. However, they were unable to reach a negotiated settlement on J&K.



Pakistani Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan gives a speech at the press conferences in New Delhi, capital city of India, on Jan. 18, 2006. India and Pakistan began two days of talks of the third round of their composite dialogue devoted largely to confidence building and finding ways to resolve the difficult Kashmir issue. Source: Daily Times, 19 January 2006

On 30-31 January 2006, an agreement for operationalisation of the rail link between Zero Point Railway station near Khokhrapar (Pakistan) and Munabao (India) was finalized in Islamabad. The Pakistan delegation was led by Mushtaq Khan Jadoon, Additional General Manager (Passengers) Railways. The Indian delegation was headed by Ashok Gupta, Adviser, Traffic, Ministry of Railways. An Agreement was reached on the establishing a rail link via Zero Point Railway Station near Khokhrapar (Pakistan) and Munnabao (India), and various technical modalities for starting the Thar Express. It was decided that the train would run every Saturday and return the same day. The first train with a Pakistani rake was started on 18 February 2006.

On 25-26 April 2006, the fourth expert level dialogue on Nuclear Confidence Building Measures was held in Islamabad. The Pakistan delegation was led by Tariq

Osman Hyder, Additional Secretary (United Nations), Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Indian delegation was led by K.C. Singh, Additional Secretary (International Organizations), Ministry of External Affairs. They expressed satisfaction on signing of the Agreement on Pre-Notification of Flight Testing of Ballistic Missiles in October 2005, and also agreed to operationalize of the hotline between the two Foreign Secretaries.

On 27 April 2006, the third round of expert level dialogue on Conventional Confidence Building Measures was held in Islamabad. The Pakistani side was led by Tariq Osman Hyder, Additional Secretary (United Nations), Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Indian side was led by Dilip Sinha, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs. The first major outcome of the talks was an agreement to work on the finalization of "Border Ground Rules for Implementation along the International Border" between the two countries to avoid conflict. However, new border ground rules have not been finalized. Secondly, Pakistan proposed a redeployment of artillery, guns, missiles and mortars above 120 mm outside the "boundary of Jammu and Kashmir." Thirdly, Pakistan presented a draft agreement on the Prevention of Incidents at Sea to ensure safety of navigation by naval vessels and aircrafts.



Pakistan and India have repeated their commitment to start a bus service between Poonch and Rawlakot (in Kashmir).
Source: Paktribune, 19 January 2006

On 2-3 May 2006, Dilip Sinha, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, India, and Syed Ibne Abbas, Director-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, met in New Delhi. They discussed measures to enhance interaction and cooperation across the LoC. They agreed to start the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad truck service for cross-LOC trade in the first half of July 2006. They also agreed that the Poonch-Rawalakot bus service would commence from 19 June 2006. The formalities would be the same as for the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service.

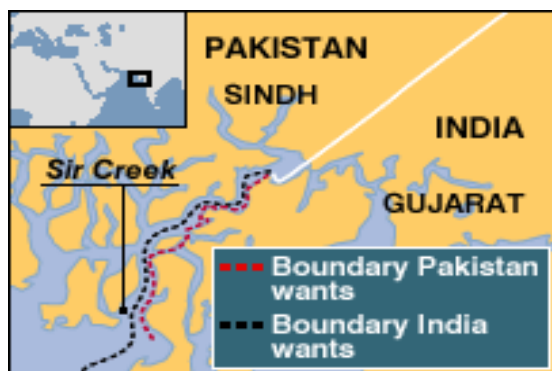
ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION

On 29 March 2006, the third round of talks between the Commerce Secretaries of the two countries took place in Islamabad. The Pakistan delegation was headed by Syed Asif Shah, Commerce Secretary, and the Indian side by S.N. Menon, Commerce Secretary. The outcome of the meeting was a decision to set up a Working Group to discuss the issues relating to joint registration of Basmati rice. However, no significant progress has been made on the issue. Meetings to resolve differences between growers, producers and other stakeholders have been unsuccessful. The two representatives also decided to sign a new Shipping Agreement in New Delhi; and carry forward talks on an Air Services Agreement. India agreed to provide detailed proposals for trade in IT-enabled medical services and export insurance cooperation for consideration by Pakistan. It was also agreed that the laying of an optical fiber on the Indian side would be completed in the near future. The only major outcome was a Shipping Protocol that was signed in December 2006.

SIR CREEK

On 25-26 May 2006, the two countries held talks in New Delhi on the issue of Sir Creek. The Indian side was headed by Maj. Gen. M. Gopal Rao, Surveyor General of India and the Pakistani side was led by Rear Admiral Ahsan-ul-Haq Chaudhri, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Defence. Both sides agreed to carry out a

joint survey of the land boundary in Sir Creek area and the maritime boundary, between November 2006 and March 2007. It was decided that technical experts of the two countries would meet in Pakistan in August 2006 to work out the extent and modalities for the joint survey; and hydrographers of the two countries would discuss modalities and propose options for delimitation of the maritime boundary. However, these talks could not take place as the Mumbai blasts halted Composite Dialogue until the Havana NAM Summit in September 2006.



Source: BBC News, 22 December 2006

Hence, the next round of technical level talks to decide the coordinates for a joint survey of the Sir Creek and adjoining areas were held in Rawalpindi on 22-23 December 2006. The Pakistani delegation was led by Maj Gen Jamil Ur Rahman Afridi, Surveyor General of Pakistan, while the Indian side was led by Rear Admiral B.R. Rao, Chief Hydrographer. It was agreed to commence the joint survey from 15 January 2007 and to verify the outermost points of coastlines of both countries by the equidistance method.

TERRORISM AND DRUG TRAFFICKING

On 30-31 May 2006, the third round of Home Minister-Interior Minister talks were held in Islamabad. Syed Kamal Shah, Secretary, Ministry of Interior, represented the Pakistani viewpoint and V. K. Duggal, Home Secretary, India, represented the Indian viewpoint. After the meeting, both leaders agreed that fishermen and civilian prisoners, who had completed their sentences and were granted consular

access with a verified national status, would be released by 30 June 2006. It was also agreed to exchange lists of civilian prisoners by 15 June 2006 to facilitate consular access by 31 July 2006 and subsequent release. However, on 30 June, Pakistan and India exchanged 57 civilian prisoners. 38 Pakistanis walked through an iron gate at Wagha, and another 19 Indians were freed from Pakistani prisons. New Delhi complained that Pakistan had failed to free 240 Indian fishermen in its jails who had been due to be freed with 19 other prisoners.

Both officials also favoured the early finalization and signing of a MoU between the Anti Narcotics Force of Pakistan and Narcotics Control Bureau of India. However, the MOU to fight narcotic trade in the region which adjoins Afghanistan where a large quantum of heroin and other drugs are produced and smuggled through India and Pakistan is still underway.

On 6-7 March 2007 the first meeting of the joint anti-terrorism mechanism was held in Islamabad, as decided at the Havana meeting and the Foreign Secretary talks in November 2006. K C Singh, Additional Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry, of India, held talks with Tariq Osman Haider of the Pakistan Foreign Office. At the meeting, Pakistan presented evidence of involvement of Indian intelligence agencies in the insurgency in Balochistan. However, New Delhi denied these allegations. On the other hand, the Indian delegation failed to give specific information on the Samjhauta Express blasts and just provided a sketch of a Pakistani who allegedly disappeared in India at that time. India did share information on the Mumbai blasts and hoped for Pakistani cooperation in investigation. Even though no major breakthrough was made in the first meeting, it marks the beginning of a bold initiative towards peace.

The success of this mechanism will strengthen the Composite Dialogue between the two countries and help create

an atmosphere conducive to peace and security. However, it will be difficult for both sides to take each other into full confidence, given years of previous suspicion. Recourse to finger pointing and blame game politics will go against the spirit of this significant move.

PROMOTION OF FRIENDLY EXCHANGES

On 1-2 June 2006, the third round of Secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan were held in New Delhi. Badal K. Das, Secretary, Department of Culture, Ministry of Tourism & Culture represented the Indian side and Jalil Abbas, Secretary; Ministry of Culture represented the Pakistani side. Both officials discussed proposals for cooperation in arts & culture, education, Ayurvedic medicine, archaeology, tourism, youth affairs, sports and media.

HAVANA SUMMIT AND RENEWAL OF DIALOGUE

On 16 September 2006, both India and Pakistan agreed, on the sidelines of the Non Alignment Summit at Havana in Cuba, to jointly tackle terrorism and renew Composite Dialogue that had been halted after the Mumbai blasts of July 2006. Manmohan Singh and Pervez Musharraf decided to establish a joint anti-terrorism institutional mechanism to identify and implement counter-terrorism initiatives and investigations. Both leaders expressed willingness to combat common security threats like terrorism and decided to resume their dialogue. They asked their Foreign Secretaries to meet in New Delhi as early as possible to continue the Composite Dialogue. The two leaders also urged experts to carry out a joint survey of Sir Creek in November 2006.

REVIEW OF THIRD COMPOSITE DIALOGUE

On 14-15 November 2006, Shiv Shankar Menon, Foreign Secretary, India, and Riaz Mohammad Khan, Foreign Secretary, Pakistan, met in New Delhi to review the third Composite Dialogue and discuss outstanding issues. They agreed to set up a 3-member anti-terror mechanism headed

by Additional Secretary (International Organizations) in the Ministry of External Affairs, India and the Additional Secretary (UN&EC) from Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its mandate would be to consider counter terrorism measures, including the regular and timely sharing of information. They agreed to hold a meeting of experts on 22-23 December 2006 to decide the coordinates for joint survey of Sir Creek and adjoining areas.

They also favoured an early signing of the "Reducing the Risk from Accidents relating to Nuclear Weapons" agreement. Both expressed satisfaction over implementation of the "Agreement on Pre-Notification of the Flight Testing of Ballistic Missiles". They agreed on the need for early finalization of an updated visa agreement. It was agreed to expand the list of shrines under the 1974 Bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines. A review was made of the progress in the revision of the 1982 Protocol on Consular Access, and both expressed hope that the Protocol will result in expeditious disposal of consular issues related to prisoners and fishermen on both sides. They welcomed the inauguration of the hotline between the Pakistan Maritime Agency and the Indian Coast Guard on November 14. India and Pakistan agreed to release on 25 December 2006 all fishermen and prisoners of the other country whose national status was confirmed and who had completed their sentences.

At the end of the two day talks, they reiterated keenness to reopen their Consulates in Mumbai and Karachi and reiterated the importance of enhancing mutually beneficial economic cooperation. At their November review meeting, the Foreign Secretaries were unable however to reach any settlement on J&K, Tulbul Navigation Project/Wullar Barrage or Siachen. They agreed to meet in March 2007 in Islamabad to launch the next (fourth) Composite Dialogue and carry out peaceful negotiations on all pending issues.

The third Composite Dialogue led to the launch of two bus services and one rail link between India and Pakistan. These CBMs strengthened people-to-people contacts and provided opportunity for greater flow of ideas, goods and services across the border. Decisions to review the visa agreement¹ revealed the willingness on both sides to encourage greater interaction – governmental or non-governmental. Maritime cooperation was successful with the implementation of the 'Hotline' between the two maritime agencies. The release of fishermen and civilian prisoners on both sides added to the optimism in the air. The agreement to launch a joint survey on Sir Creek was a significant shift from the status quo of the past. The most significant outcome of the dialogue in 2006 was the establishment of the anti-terror joint mechanism between India and Pakistan. The desire to exchange evidence on terrorists and bring them to book was a major shift from the rigid stances adopted by the two sides after every attack blaming each other for the same.

The January 2007 visit of Pranab Mukherjee to Islamabad and the February visit of Khurshid Kasuri, his Pakistani counterpart to New Delhi, have provided greater momentum to the peace process. Discussion of all bilateral issues and the desire to generate good will in both countries was on top of their agenda. Such visits prove that terrorist attacks like the Samjhauta train blasts cannot derail the ongoing dialogue and peace process. With a renewed vigor the two countries

scheduled to commence the fourth Composite Dialogue in Islamabad on 13-14 March 2007.

At the two-day Foreign Secretary-level talks in Islamabad, the two sides will discuss Jammu and Kashmir and Confidence Building Measures like launch of truck service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, easing of visa regime and early release of fishermen and other prisoners. However, on the issue of J&K, India has clarified that only within the parameters of its Constitution; can there be "flexibility" like enhancing people-to-people contact and promoting travel through LoC.

¹ The visa regime in both countries is governed by the provisions of the Indo-Pak Visa Agreement, 1974 (amended from time to time). Initially, under the agreement, the different categories of visas included diplomatic, non-diplomatic, officials, visitor and transit visa were issued. The first three categories of visa were directly issued by the Foreign Office and the later two by the Home or Internal Security Department of the respective countries. The main category of visa that is visitor visa is meant for social visits and also covers businessmen.

COMPOSITE DIALOGUE III: A STATUS CHART

Category	Agreement	Status (As on March 2007)
Conventional & Nuclear CBMs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus service between Poonch and Rawalakot 2. Rail link via Zero Point Railway Station near Khokhrapar (Pakistan) and Munnabao (India) 3. Srinagar-Muzaffarabad truck service for cross-LOC trade 4. Amritsar-Nankana Sahib bus service 5. Agreement to release all fishermen and prisoners in both countries 6. 'Hotline' between the Pakistan Maritime Agency and the Indian Coast Guard 7. Nuclear Risk Reduction Agreement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Running successfully since 20 June 2006 2. Inaugurated on 18 February 2006. Resumed operation in December 2006 after a six month break due to floods. 3. Still not operational. Decision to launch it in June-July 2007 4. In operation since 24 March 2006 5. On 23 December 2006, India released 54 Pakistani prisoners along with 3 children and Pakistan released 70 Indian prisoners. 6. In operation since 14 November 2006 7. Signed on 21 February 2007
Economic & Commercial cooperation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The fibre optic link between Amritsar and Lahore 2. Agreement to liberalize the Visa Agreement 3. Agreement on Shipping Protocol to enhance sea trade 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Became operational on 27 February 2006 2. Still not finalized 3. Signed on 14 December 2006
Sir Creek	Second Joint Survey	Commenced on 15 January 2007. Its results will be discussed in the next round of Composite Dialogue.
Terrorism and Drug Trafficking	Joint Anti-terror mechanism	First meeting held in Islamabad on 6 March 2007 The mechanism is operational
Promotion of Friendly Exchanges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Telemedicine 2. Free flow of journalists 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operational since August 2006. Employed by Holy Family Hospital, Rawalpindi, and Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow, this link enables medical students in the two countries to exchange knowledge across the borders. 2. A three-day 'Pen for Peace' conference (21-23 February 2006) was organised in Jamia Millia University in New Delhi. 50 Pakistan writers, poets, artists, musicians and media persons participated in a bid to further the peace process.