Pakistan's Approach to Kashmir Since the Lahore Agreement: Is There Any Change?
Ashok K. Behuria
Published online: 06 Jun 2009.

To cite this article: Ashok K. Behuria (2009) Pakistan's Approach to Kashmir Since the Lahore Agreement: Is There Any Change?, Strategic Analysis, 33:3, 433-449, DOI: 10.1080/09700160902790126

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09700160902790126

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the “Content”) contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions
Pakistan’s Approach to Kashmir Since the Lahore Agreement: Is There Any Change?

Ashok K. Behuria

Abstract: In Lahore, in 1999, Pakistan dropped its ‘Kashmir first’ approach and agreed to discuss it with India along with other issues. Later, under Musharraf, there was an offer to move beyond UN resolutions and adopt a four-step approach to resolve the Kashmir issue. Musharraf’s proposals were taken seriously and widely hailed as a sign of flexibility and pragmatism from the Pakistani side. This paper critically analyses these approaches since Lahore and argues that they were occasioned by the changing global political context and that they were more apparent than real. At the official level, there is hardly any departure from the core stance of Pakistan on Kashmir. The civilian government in Pakistan today has retained the process of dialogue initiated by Musharraf but is yet to spell out its approach to Kashmir. The paper argues that even if there is a realization that the policy of subversion and militancy has backfired, the temptation to retain jihadis as the last option will continue to play havoc with the process of dialogue aimed at finding a solution to Kashmir in the days to come.

From the Lahore Agreement in 1999 until the restoration of civilian rule in Pakistan in February 2008 and the Mumbai attacks in November 2008, much water has flown down the Indus. There is a perception within as well as outside Pakistan that the Lahore Agreement marked the beginning of a process that led to a perceptible shift in Islamabad’s approach towards Kashmir. The leadership in Pakistan shed its emphasis on Kashmir as the ‘core issue’ and went on to show greater flexibility by offering to set aside UN resolutions and proposing innovative solutions in the subsequent years. Was it for real? Was there any sincere effort to find a solution or was it mere showmanship? Was it sincere and genuine? Was there political consensus behind such an approach or was it the fancy of the top leadership? Will it last? Or alternately, is there an unalterable core to Pakistan’s Kashmir policy which persists in spite of such apparent shifts in policy? This paper seeks answers to such questions and critically analyses Pakistan’s approach to Kashmir in recent years.

Pakistan’s official policy towards Kashmir

Pakistan’s official policy towards Kashmir has been centred on the 47th resolution by the UN Security Council on April 21, 1948, which sought to resolve the Kashmir problem through a free and impartial plebiscite, to be conducted under the auspices of...
Pakistan derives its stance from its own perception of history, based on the following premises:

(a) Kashmir is the core issue between India and Pakistan.
(b) The Muslim-majority princely state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) should have naturally formed part of Pakistan following partition of British India on communal lines.²
(c) India has occupied this territory by force and fraud against the wishes of its people. India has reneged on its pledge to hold a plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the people of Kashmir.
(d) The UN resolutions recognize the Kashmiri people’s right to self-determination.
(e) The Simla Agreement does not supersede UN resolutions. It is only a means to secure the grounds for their implementation, through bilateral negotiations. It also does not foreclose the possibility of third party mediation.
(f) Pakistan is obliged to provide diplomatic and moral support to Kashmiris fighting for their ‘freedom’ and for realizing their ‘right to self-determination’.

The Foreign Office of Pakistan has also woven its defence of Kashmir policy largely around the above arguments. However, there are other important elements that are left unsaid or under-emphasized, which indicate the limits of its Kashmir policy. They are:

(a) The territory to be negotiated may not include Northern Areas (NAs)³ (Gilgit, Baltistan, Hunza, and Nagar), which were part of the princely state of J&K at the time of partition.
(b) The term ‘Kashmiri’ is also not clearly defined as to whether it includes the populations from the whole of the J&K state, as it was obtained during the rule of Hari Singh, or denote only the people from the Kashmir valley.
(c) The Kashmiris will exercise their ‘right to self-determination’ only to determine Kashmir’s accession to either India or Pakistan. They do not have the right to independence.
(d) If India and Pakistan cannot settle the issues between themselves, Pakistan is free to invite external mediation.
(e) Kashmir is a nuclear flash-point and the international community should wield pressure on India to resolve Kashmir.

India and Pakistan: difference of perception

In clear contrast to Pakistan’s assertions, India considers accession of Kashmir to the Indian Union final and irrevocable. The 1994 resolution in Indian Parliament⁴ clearly declared the whole of Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India and asked Pakistan to vacate the areas it had occupied through aggression. There is an ongoing unresolved debate within India on turning the Line of Control (LoC) into an international border. The origin of the debate can be traced back to the Simla Agreement, when the earlier Ceasefire Line (CFL) was renamed as the LoC.⁵ As a secular state, India does not accept the argument that as a Muslim-majority state, Kashmir has to go to Pakistan. It is committed to settle all issues bilaterally through dialogue as per the Simla Agreement and regards UN resolutions as inoperable under the changed circumstances.⁶

However, Pakistan has displayed its aversion towards bilateral negotiations, both at official and unofficial levels.⁷ Instead, it has since 1948 steadfastly advocated
resolution of the Kashmir issue through UN resolutions in every possible international forum in complete disregard of the changes on the ground brought about by both the governments. In view of such a wide hiatus in perception and approach, it is necessary to understand how and why both the countries came together at Lahore to discuss Kashmir along with all outstanding issues, just nine months after they went nuclear.

Background to Lahore

**Pakistan’s approach to Kashmir: Zia-ul-Haq, Benazir, and Nawaz Sharif**

In the 1980s, Zia-ul-Haq underplayed Kashmir in bilateral relations and focused rather on the non-aggression pact or an Indian offer of peace, friendship, and cooperation. The Indo-Pak Agreement of March 1983 kick-started a dialogic process through a secretary-level joint commission. This is not to deny, however, that as a shrewd leader, Zia continued to raise the Kashmir issue indulgently in international forums. When the valley of Kashmir erupted after the 1987 elections, the Zia-ul-Haq regime took full advantage of the situation and encouraged Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) militants, even accommodating their vociferous demand for independence in an effort to hide its sponsorship.

Benazir Bhutto came in as a democratically elected Prime Minister after Zia’s death in an air crash in 1988. After an initial bonhomie with Rajiv Gandhi, which saw the signing of an agreement on non-attack of nuclear facilities (December 1988), Benazir returned to India-bashing, following the lead of the military establishment, which continued to control the defence, security, and foreign policy of Pakistan. Around this time, Pakistan shunned the pro-independence JKLF, and turned towards Islamist militant organizations, who favoured Kashmir’s final accession to Pakistan.

Perhaps to match the army’s obsession with Kashmir, in May 1990 Benazir went beyond her father’s promise and assured Kashmiris that she would fight ‘a thousand years’ war’ with India on Kashmir. She also called Kashmir the ‘jugular vein’ (shehrug) of Pakistan. It was during her first tenure (December 2, 1988–August 6, 1990) that the army planned the large-scale military exercise close to Indian borders, code named Operation Zarb-e-Momin (Sword of the Believer) in November–December 1989, which together with the surging militancy in Kashmir drew both the countries to the brink of a war, compelling the United States to activate its diplomacy to defuse the tension. During her second tenure as Prime Minister (1993–1996), the Indo-Pak talks could not progress because of her hardline stance on Kashmir and other issues.

Nawaz Sharif, during his first stint as Prime Minister (1990–1993), also tried to pande to pro-Kashmir sentiments in his own way. As a Punjabi of Kashmiri origin, Nawaz even went to the extent of offering independence to the Kashmiris if India rescinded from its non-negotiable position. Sharif also gave the call in 1991 to mark February 5, as the day of solidarity with the people of Kashmir. Under pressure from the military establishment, both Nawaz and Benazir were seen to be trying hard to outdo each other and the army in projecting themselves as hardliners on the Kashmir issue.

From ‘Kashmir First’ to composite dialogue

Despite the high-pitched rhetorical statements by political leaderships, the talks went on at an official secretary level until 1994. Instead of irregular meetings at the foreign secretaries’ level during the 1980s, the two countries agreed to have a regular
‘mechanism’ for dialogue. Between July 1990 and August 1992, six rounds of such talks took place. Interestingly, Pakistan invoked the Simla Pact on July 14, 1992, and asked for ‘negotiations on the settlement of Jammu and Kashmir in terms of Article 6 of the Simla Agreement’. The then Indian Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, expressed his readiness to discuss ‘all matters of mutual concern, including issues related to Jammu and Kashmir’. In November 1993, both sides agreed to discuss ‘all aspects of Jammu and Kashmir’.\(^9\) A schedule of meetings was even fixed for discussion on six issues, including Siachen, Sir Creek and Wular, and Confidence-building Measures (CBMs).

However, the seventh round ended in failure in Islamabad in January 1994. The talks could not make any headway because of Pakistan’s insistence that India should accept Kashmir as a ‘dispute’, and as the ‘core issue’ between India and Pakistan, and discussions on it should precede any other. By then, the jihadis from Punjab and the Frontier province had made their mark in Kashmir militancy. Pakistan had more control over them than the Kashmiri component in the overall militant activities. The sweep of pro-Pakistani jihadi groups boosted the morale of Pakistani leadership, which considered this an opportunity to force India to accept Kashmir as the core dispute.

**Build-up to Lahore: changing political context**

Nawaz Sharif made several attempts to revive the peace process with India during his second tenure (1994–1997). The possible reasons for this could be the following: the international community had taken note of the covert nuclear capability of Pakistan and that is why there was pressure on Pakistan to start dialogue with India; the Kashmiri component of the jihad was showing signs of fatigue by the mid-1990s; as a businessman, he also expected that peace with India would have a beneficial impact on the sagging economy of Pakistan.

In fact, by the mid-1990s, the political leadership in both countries was fast realizing that they needed to talk. It was increasingly recognized in Pakistan that the jihadis had a serious impact on the internal security situation.\(^{10}\) Nawaz Sharif’s cabinet even appointed a committee to take stock of the internal security situation in November 1997, which submitted its report in May 1998. The report held that ‘it was imperative for intelligence agencies to keep track of the possible linkages between the militant training imparted by various political groups for jihad in Kashmir and Afghanistan, and acts of terrorism committed in Pakistan’.\(^{11}\)

For the leadership in Pakistan, at this juncture, the Kashmir issue presented itself as a challenge. It revolved around the question of how best to leverage a declining insurgency in Kashmir to secure a diplomatic concession from India. New Delhi refused to oblige and the talks floundered on Kashmir. However, there was a precipitate will on both sides to move on. It is very interesting to observe how the foreign offices moved inch by inch, playing a cautious game of words to accommodate the views of both countries. India had moved from its stand on ‘no-negotiations on Kashmir’ to ‘discussion on all issues related to Kashmir’. Pakistan, still harping on the centrality of Kashmir, was inclined to climb down to accept Kashmir as one of the issues to be discussed with India.

In their meeting on June 23, 1997, the foreign secretaries thrashed out a tentative agreement that outlined eight issues, including Kashmir, to be discussed separately through joint working groups. India dithered over Pakistani insistence on a separate foreign secretary-level talk on Kashmir. The Indian position was that the foreign secretaries from both countries would deal with Kashmir as well as peace and security (the first two issues listed in the Islamabad communiqué), while the other six issues\(^{12}\)
may be discussed by other officials. It is important to note that both countries stuck to their respective positions despite the agreement. India said Kashmir was not a dispute and it would not discuss the status of Kashmir with Pakistan. If anything was to be discussed, it would be Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and the northern areas illegally annexed by Pakistan.

The next round in September 1997 proved inconclusive over the composition of the working groups and the methodology to be adopted for discussions. Pakistan appeared to favour the idea of according the working group on Kashmir some priority, which was not acceptable to India. The Indian Prime Minister, I.K. Gujral, reportedly suggested simultaneous discussions on all issues, including Kashmir. Pakistan went on pressing for separate and exclusive discussion on Kashmir. It was at this juncture in March 1998 that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government led by Atal Behari Vajpayee came to power.

**Nuclear tests of May 1998**
The BJP-led coalition government chose to ‘cross the Rubicon’ and test nuclear bombs in May 1998. Nuclear tests by Pakistan followed in June. A bomb-heavy South Asia attracted international attention, ranging from non-proliferationists in the United States to pacifists like Nelson Mandela. In his address to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) meeting at Durban, Mandela urged all nations to lend their strength to resolve Kashmir. However, a nuclear Pakistan appeared even more resolute to push its Kashmir-first agenda through diplomatic dialogue.

**Domestic reactions in Pakistan**
If one studies the reactions from civil society in Pakistan during that period, one is amazed by the lack of moderation on the part of even seasoned commentators on the issue of Kashmir. Many of them argued that the primary thrust of Pakistan should be to keep the West’s attention fixed on Kashmir and that ‘settlement of Kashmir should precede the process of normalization with India and not the other way round’. However, some of the major English language dailies advised caution and argued that Pakistan should be happy with India climbing down from its earlier position not to discuss Kashmir with Pakistan and move on. There were some other saner voices that advocated that Pakistan should learn from the Chinese experience and carry the process forward.

It is important to underline here that a lot of the opposition to Nawaz Sharif’s peace initiative arose out of widespread opposition to his personalized and dictatorial style of functioning. With his brute majority in the lower house, he disregarded the sanctity of important institutions like the judiciary, army, and the legislature, and sought unbridled power. Immensely unpopular, he thought he could perhaps compensate for his unpopularity with a breakthrough in Pakistan’s relationship with India, without realizing perhaps that his unpopularity could have a negative impact on the peace process. It is well known that the United States, overly concerned about the nuclear dimension of the conflict, had engaged both countries and was quietly nudging them towards dialogue.

**From Lahore to Kargil**
The spectacle of an Indian Prime Minister from a party perceived to be having hard-line views on Pakistan boarding a bus to Lahore for high-level bilateral dialogue was
of high news value. And the euphoria surrounding such a visit hid the wave of antipathy that rose against Nawaz Sharif’s efforts to befriend India.19 His unpopularity had inevitably rubbed off on his India policy. More importantly, the then Army Chief Pervez Musharraf stayed away from the reception at the Wagah border. Opposition political parties, even if they did not directly oppose the initiative for dialogue, were sceptical about its consequences.20

The Lahore Agreement at best secured a pledge from both governments to ‘intensify their efforts to resolve all outstanding issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir’. This was the middle path that the two governments had carved out during their long deliberations since 1991. For Pakistan, this was the most it could extract from India. The government attributed its success to its pro-active policy and promised to keep India engaged on the Kashmir issue. Sharif had activated the back-channel, following the agreement through ex-Foreign Secretary Niaz Naik to make some meaningful advance on Kashmir.21

The Kargil episode, hardly three months after the Lahore Agreement, proved that there was a clear lack of consensus in the top echelons of power in Pakistan over seeking dialogue with India. It also suggested that the army in Pakistan had an independent policy towards highly emotive issues like Kashmir and could use it to legitimize its position. For Sharif, his dictatorial attitude earned him more enemies than friends. Being a discredited politician, his positive attitude on Kashmir and Indo-Pak relations was opposed at all levels. The Washington route he sought out of the Kargil crisis on July 4, 1999, upon pressure from the United States, made him even more unpopular.

The media in Pakistan discovered in him their new whipping boy. The pro-Kashmiri religious, as well as militant groups spewed venom against him for ‘playing with the blood of the martyrs’. Sharif’s Kashmir policy was interpreted as a shameful surrender of vital national interests. Only a few commentators interpreted the Washington declaration as a welcome internationalization of the Kashmir issue.22

The coup and the Kashmir policy
The Kargil misadventure was launched by the army, but the blame for it was passed on to Nawaz Sharif. His unpopularity soared and opposition politicians like Benazir and Qazi Hussain even invited the army to step in and unseat him. The inevitable happened on October 12, 1999, when Sharif, in a classic instance of gross overkill, tried to sack Musharraf while he was flying back to Pakistan from Sri Lanka. The army asserted itself and sacked him instead. Musharraf’s takeover was hailed by a majority of people as deliverance from Sharif’s dictatorship. In his maiden speech, in the seven-point agenda he set before himself, General Musharraf studiously avoided any mention of Kashmir and focused on ushering in true democracy. He would rather emphasize pursuing peace with India ‘with honour and dignity’. A few months later, however, his government would be blamed for facilitating the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane to Kandahar.

The Lahore Agreement was initially ignored by General Musharraf. As a virulent critic of Sharif’s policies, it was natural for him not to give credit to the latter for the Lahore Agreement. Instead, he was aiming for a new process of dialogue where he would secure greater concessions from India. Reeling under sanctions and crisis of legitimacy, and under pressure from the United States to start talks with India,23 he would perhaps turn to dialogue with New Delhi to show his good intentions to the international community. Thus, the Pakistan-controlled militant conglomerate declared
Strategic Analysis

a ceasefire in June 2000. Musharraf offered to talk ‘at any place, any time and at any level’ and even proposed a no-war pact with India in August 2000.24

However, Vajpayee’s government insisted and obtained an unequivocal commitment on the Lahore process from the Musharraf administration.25 Musharraf justified his penchant for talks with India in a philosophical manner on the eve of his visit to India after meeting a wide cross-section of people, which did not involve the opposition parties:

I have reached a stage and a position where one sees bigger things around. One obviously realises a stage comes when one has to realise that there are bigger issues (than Kashmir?) of economic development, of poverty and wellbeing of the people. These are bigger issues than merely deciding to fight a war.26

Musharraf appointed himself President of Pakistan few days before his Agra visit on July 14, 2001. In Agra, he insisted that India should recognize Kashmir as the ‘core dispute’ but refused to accept any mention of the Indian contention that terrorism in India was being sponsored by forces across the border. The dialogue broke down over this very issue after 10 sessions of intense discussions, including four between Prime Minister Vajpayee and General Musharraf. India called it the ‘beginning of a journey’. The Pakistani Foreign Secretary avoided calling it a failure and said it was ‘inconclusive’. A careful study of his interaction with the media also reveals that General Musharraf did not mention UN resolutions even once, and instead branded militancy in Kashmir ‘a freedom movement’. His televised interview with the Indian media, where he talked passionately about Kashmir, endeared him to Kashmiri militants, who congratulated him for his ‘bold’ stand.27 However, soon after his Agra visit, Musharraf imposed a ban on some of the jihadi organizations, wedded to the cause of Kashmir, for spreading sectarian violence in Pakistan.

The post-9/11 scenario: Musharraf’s Kashmir talks

The terrorist attack on the twin towers in New York followed just two months after the failed Agra Summit. Post-9/11, Musharraf had to take the most momentous decision of his life. The US threat to ‘bomb Pakistan to stone age’ forced him to reverse the direction of his Afghan policy. Pakistan joined the ‘war on terror’ to save, among other things, its Kashmir policy. Upon US pressure, Musharraf would soon ask his army to check infiltration into Kashmir.

India had its own version of 9/11. The attack on the assembly in Jammu and Kashmir on October 1, 2001, was followed by an attack on Parliament on December 13, 2001. Musharraf sent in his message of sympathy to Vajpayee and the Indian people. As the United States recognized ‘India’s legitimate right of self-defence’, the then Indian Army Chief, General Sunderajan Padmanabhan, sought to use the window of opportunity to launch hot pursuit and sharp and surgical attacks beyond the LoC. Vajpayee and Jaswant Singh, his foreign minister, however, only settled for Operation Parakram, which meant heavy army deployment along the Indo-Pak border.

Musharraf addressed Indian concerns through his speech on January 12, 2002, to the Pakistani nation. He argued that ‘Kashmir runs through our blood’, but ‘no organization will be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of Kashmir’. He banned Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad, seized their offices and denounced their ‘jihad’ as terrorism. The media reports coming in from Pakistan in the following days...
indicate, however, that his administration allowed these outfits to operate quietly by changing their names. People called it ‘slowing down’ rather than ‘turning off’ of the jihadi tap. But the jihadis were not ready for even a rudimentary constraint on their actions. They were dismayed by Musharraf’s official pronouncements that Pakistan would not allow its territory to be used for terrorist operation against any other country. They grew desperate and attacked Musharraf twice unsuccessfully within 15 days in November–December 2003. The trail of investigations pointed to Kashmiri militants. Musharraf perhaps then realized that the militants, whom he called ‘freedom fighters’, had come home to roost.

**Joint statement at Islamabad**

General Musharraf’s government made several efforts to convince India of his good intentions in early 2003. These efforts finally led to the then Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee extending his hand of friendship in April 2003. This was followed by a bilateral ceasefire on the LoC in November 2003. Musharraf tried his best to revive the peace process with India by seeking to project a ‘flexible’ approach towards Kashmir. In a November 2003 interview with the BBC, Radio Urdu service (in its programme ‘Talking Point’) he called for ‘patience, sincerity, and flexibility’ and reintroduced his four-step approach to Kashmir, one he had tentatively put across during the Agra talks which offered to eliminate all options unacceptable to India, Pakistan, and the people of Kashmir, and then evolve a consensual solution. The four-point formula envisaged:

1. Official talks commence;
2. Centrality of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute is acknowledged;
3. Any proposal unacceptable to any party or Kashmiris is taken off the table;
4. Best solution acceptable to the parties and the Kashmiris is taken.

In his interview with Reuters on December 18, 2003, General Musharraf went even further. He offered to set aside Pakistan’s long-held position on Kashmir and go beyond the UN resolutions. This offer was hailed as a ‘significant step’ by many observers. Interestingly, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister jumped in to cover the tracks by saying that Pakistan ‘has not given up its position on UN Security Council resolutions but if Pakistan and India wanted to resolve this issue, both sides needed to talk with flexibility’. His information minister said ‘If India is sincere in solving this issue, we have alternate proposals which can be considered’. Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, a Kashmir militant group, however, said that such a move would ‘sink both Kashmir and Pakistan’.

Vajpayee and Musharraf signed a joint statement on the sidelines of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit in Islamabad on January 6, 2004. The agreement was, in many ways, a restart of the Lahore process. Musharraf had come round to accept a process of composite dialogue, leaving aside his emphasis on the ‘core issue’, at least in the agreement. The joint statement mentioned Indian concerns on terrorism very clearly. It said that ‘in order to take forward and sustain the dialogue process, violence, hostility and terrorism must be prevented’, and went on to secure Musharraf’s reassurance to Prime Minister Vajpayee ‘that he will not permit any territory under Pakistan’s control to be used to support terrorism in any manner’. It also said that the two leaders agreed ‘to commence the
process of the composite dialogue’, and expressed their confidence that ‘the resumption of the composite dialogue will lead to peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides’.  

Later that year, there was a change in the government in India and Musharraf met the new Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, in New York on September 24, 2004. The two leaders signed a joint statement and indicated that they would start looking into various options on Kashmir and take the peace process forward.

Thinking Kashmir: from four-steps to autonomy and self-governance

Unlike Nawaz Sharif, Musharraf commanded enormous powers as both the president and army chief. He was now ready for his out-of-box thinking and made some proposals, which were interpreted as ‘flexible’ by observers in Pakistan and outside. If one examines the course of India–Pakistan dialogue since the Islamabad Summit, during the time General Musharraf held absolute sway (until 2007), one observes at the outset that Musharraf tried desperately to put Kashmir on the fast track, by offering a slew of proposals both to start dialogue with India and to project himself as a ‘flexible’ leader at the international level.

However, a closer scrutiny reveals that Musharraf offered most of his proposals through the media. Out of his several proposals, only the four-step proposal finds its place in the Pakistani Foreign Ministry brief on Kashmir. His utterances were taken seriously nevertheless because he was the source of all power in Pakistan. It is also believed that Musharraf’s four-step proposal was discussed amongst the officials of both countries during the course of the composite dialogue.

Musharraf took another step forward from his four-step approach on October 25, 2004, during the course of an Iftaar party in Islamabad, when he talked about progressive demilitarization of ‘seven regions of Kashmir’ to be developed as self-governing units under joint control or UN mandate. Lamenting about the lack of debate in Pakistan on his proposals, he said that ‘we are at a stage where options acceptable to Pakistan, India, and the Kashmiris ought to be considered. So, let’s talk about in geographical terms. Kashmir is divided into seven regions – five with India and two with Pakistan. The beauty of these regions is that they are still religion-based even if we consider them geographically’. He said that the debate could be initiated in the context of a three-pronged discourse. First, identify the region at stake. Second, demilitarize it. Third, change its status. For changing the status, there were ‘many options which could then be considered, and legal experts on both sides could then look at the pros and cons of ideas for joint control, UN mandates, condominiums, and so on’. He also outlined that Pakistan was not ready to accept the LoC as a permanent border and India was also not ready to accept a religion-based solution.

On November 17, 2004, while talking to the leaders of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) he dwelt on what he thought could be the options for a solution to the Kashmir issue and said that in his Iftaar interaction with the media on October 25, 2004, that he was only flagging different options. ‘I never meant to officially talk about finding out a solution to the 57-year-old dispute.’ However, he reiterated his earlier offer to jettison the UN resolutions and tried to convince the delegates from AJK forcefully: ‘If Pakistan can achieve its objectives without insisting on plebiscite, I think it is not a bad deal.’

The media reports suggest that Manmohan Singh, in his meeting with Musharraf in New York in September 2004, had asked the latter to elaborate on his four-step proposal and identify the ‘unacceptable positions’. Musharraf identified them on
April 18, 2005, in his meeting with the Indian Editors’ Guild in New Delhi. He set aside the option of the LoC to be converted into an international border and accepted Manmohan Singh’s argument that borders cannot be redrawn. Musharraf then offered a three-stage formula: ‘First, we need to generate a consensus, and if we have to at some stage include people’s involvement and having done that, then come to the second step where we need to generate public debate and public support. Then we identify the final objective … that involves … issues of independence, … self-governance, … autonomy, … joint control that have (different) shades and connotations, this needs to be analysed in a deeper context.’

A month later in May 2005, Musharraf held that any final solution on Kashmir had to be acceptable to Pakistan, India, and the Kashmiris. There should be enough efforts to generate public debate and public support towards the final objective. Manmohan Singh responded on May 29, 2005, saying that the ‘sky is the limit’ – once the Indian position about what was not possible – had finally been understood by Pakistan.

In view of the suspicion in certain quarters in Pakistan that Musharraf’s government might go for a secret understanding with India on Kashmir, a Pakistani Foreign Office spokesperson reiterated Musharraf’s position on November 28, 2005, and said, ‘Let me assure you that any proposal, any idea that emanates from the government of Pakistan, it is in consultation with and endorsement of the Kashmiri leadership on both sides of the Line of Control.’ Answering another query about whether trade with India before the solution of the Kashmir issue did not involve a shift in Pakistan’s Kashmir policy, the spokesperson, Ms. Tasnim Aslam, stated: ‘That is not our policy. We have trade relations with India and we are also working within the framework of South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA).’

On December 5, 2006, Musharraf further polished his proposal and reiterated that without changing boundaries, the borders and the LoC could be made irrelevant through staggered demilitarization and autonomy or self-governance, with a joint-supervision mechanism in Kashmir. The last time one heard Musharraf raising the Kashmir issue was in February 2007, a few days before he took what was a fatal decision, that of removing the Chief Justice of Pakistan. He was persuasive in his tone: ‘Kashmir is ripe for resolution… Courage is needed to reconcile and shake hands and forget and forgive rather than go for confrontation. Both sides have to swallow their pride and step back.’

While the official process of composite dialogue and Musharraf’s ‘thinking aloud’ in the media continued between 2003 and 2007, an unofficial back channel was activated (very much like the Niaz Naik–R.K. Mishra talks during 1997–1998) to discuss issues in an informal and more nuanced manner. There were more than 10 rounds of such talks between Musharraf’s secretary and his college friend, Tariq Aziz, and senior security advisors to the Indian Government considered close to the Indian prime minister during four years (2003–2007). Retired career diplomats of repute like Brajesh Mishra, J.N. Dixit, and S.K. Lamba represented the Indian Government in these talks. There were several speculations in the media about the status of India–Pakistan negotiations on Kashmir and other issues. There were even talk of India and Pakistan getting ready for clinching a deal on one of the lesser contentious issue like the Sir Creek. However, it is difficult to trace the co-relationship among these secret talks, the official dialogue, and Musharraf’s pronouncements on Kashmir. In the absence of any authentic information (official or otherwise) available now, on the nature and scope of these unofficial talks, it would be rather safe to conclude that while in the secret talks there could have been a mutual willingness to
depart from the official positions on Kashmir, senior leaders and officials from both the countries continued to adopt inflexible positions in their public statements, addressed to their people at the domestic level.

With the decline in Musharraf’s popularity since March 2007, especially after his suspension of the chief justice of country’s apex court, political situation in Pakistan worsened. As Musharraf battled for his survival, the back-channel talks lost their shine and were almost called off. The new civilian government that came to power in March 2008 has chosen not to restart them so far. Given the emotive nature of the Kashmir issue for both the countries, such secret talks have their own logic and importance. However, their effectiveness is considerably limited by the utter necessity to sale the options, so generated, to the people in both the countries. The leaders at the helm in both the countries have a big responsibility to create a favourable popular opinion for any flexibility shown by them on critical issues like Kashmir.

Unofficial initiatives and perceptions on Kashmir

Parallel to the official initiatives being taken to revive bilateral talks, there were many efforts at the non-official level to study the Kashmir problem and suggest solutions. Amanullah Khan came up with his four-stage solution in favour of an independent Kashmir for 15 years on an experimental basis followed by a referendum for independence. During this period, the US-based Kashmiri businessman, Farooq Kathwari, also put together experts on Kashmir to chalk out plans for resolution of the problem. The first report in 1997 offered several proposals, including softening of the LoC and the granting of autonomy to both parts of Kashmir and independent Kashmir, with or without international personality. There were other options which were discussed, i.e., Trieste, Andorra, Alan islands, the Irish peace plan, and the Noumena agreement. Such alternatives are supposed to feed the process of dialogue on Kashmir in the future.

Ground reality at present

Action on the ground suggests that India and Pakistan have made substantial efforts to encourage cross-LoC travel and trade. India’s help during the Kashmir earthquake in 2005 was appreciated by Kashmiris on both sides as a proof of right intent. Pakistan has also tried to support the move towards the softening of the LoC as the first step towards resolving the Kashmir issue. The fact that the process has moved forward despite serious impediments and provocations suggests that it has acquired some credibility among the people of India and Pakistan. It was also encouraging to see that during the course of elections in Pakistan, the manifestos of all major political parties endorsed the peace process and they ‘tempered their traditional rhetoric on Kashmir with pragmatism’.

The change of government in Islamabad after the February 2008 elections did not impair the pace of the talks. The two most prominent Pakistani leaders, Asif Ali Zardari and Nawaz Sharif, put their weight behind the peace process. Zardari went to the extent of saying that a solution to Kashmir could wait but there must be movement on other fronts like promoting trade, people to people contact, and a friendly relationship with India. In his interactions with the media, he said that he did not consider India an enemy and that there was a little Pakistani in every Indian and vice versa.

However, there is a residual section in Pakistan that considers such pronouncements contrary to national interests and Zardari was criticized for putting normalization
ahead of Kashmir. This constituency was earlier nourished by the Pakistani state to
champion its inflexible stand on India–Pakistan relations and it has always had a
tremendous nuisance value. The fact that the Mumbai attacks by a pro-Kashmiri
jihadi outfit, Lashkar-e-Toiba, on November 26–27, 2008 coincided with Pakistani
Foreign Minister Shah Muhammad Quereshi’s visit to India and took place just after
he addressed the Indian media expressing his good intentions to pursue the ongoing
peace process, confirms that such elements would continue to imperil the process of
peace and understanding between India and Pakistan.

Who frames Pakistan’s Kashmir policy?
Many commentators allude to Pakistan’s inability to translate its passionate stance on
Kashmir to any effective policy or strategy. Its policy towards Kashmir is at best reac-
tive. Keeping the Kargil fiasco in mind, it is difficult to believe that with Kashmir as
the mainspring of its foreign policy, Pakistan does not have any credible policy on this
both at internal and external levels.

This has been so primarily because there are multiple voices seeking to dictate
Pakistan’s Kashmir policy on a long-term basis with no apparent coordination among
them. The state has – through repeated propaganda over state-controlled media,
educational text books, political campaigns, and military misadventures – drummed it
deep into everybody’s psyche that Kashmir was too precious to be sidelined. Kashmir
has been raised as an existential issue intimately tied up with the Pakistani sense of
national honour and dignity. Kashmir has thus become a public property and open to
multiple interpretations. The political parties, the military, and the bureaucratic elite
have tried to use it as an essential lever for power. In the process, there is a multiplicity
of voices, each competing with the other to seek legitimacy over the other. Such
competing enthusiasm has often given rise to exclusive, irreconcilable positions, each
more strident than the other. In the cacophony that ensues, it becomes difficult to raise
a plausible consensual template which will dictate Pakistan’s Kashmir policy.

In a nutshell, there are too many stakeholders for Pakistan’s Kashmir policy. In a
way, this applies to all states with highly differentiated power structures. However,
what distinguishes the Pakistani case is its amazing anarchy and the state’s inability to
define the dominant perspective in a crisis situation. In the wake of Kargil, the tussle
for power between the army and the political leadership was too obvious to be
ignored. The present system, despite the changes brought about by Musharraf, does
not have any mechanism for raising a consensus among the three most powerful insti-
tutions in Pakistan. In a contingent situation, when there is power struggle among the
troika, the resultant advantage accrues to the entrenched civil-military bureaucracy,
which has largely determined the contours of Pakistan’s policy towards Kashmir.

Is there any change in Pakistan’s Kashmir policy?
Pakistan’s Kashmir policy is as much dictated by its traditional postures as by
changes in internal, regional, and international contexts. Since its formation, Pakistan
has advocated accession of Kashmir by every means possible. This has led Pakistan to
discourage pro-independence forces, to encourage insurgency in Kashmir, and to harp
on a plebiscite (without the choice of independence) under UN auspices. Pakistan’s
emphasis on a UN resolution has looked like an empty ritual more to spite India than
to secure its strategic aim of accession.
Pakistan’s fortunes have largely depended on the external political situation in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan had an unmistakable advantage in the 1990s with the rise of militancy in the valley. However, this situation tapered off with popular disillusionment following the meaningless violence by Pakistani militant groups since the mid-1990s. The global situation too was changing fast. In the post-9/11 context, the tolerance level for a violent, jihadi struggle has come down and Kashmir militancy is losing its aura and legitimacy.

This has necessitated a rethink on Kashmir in Pakistan. While the Islamist constituency has adopted jihad in Kashmir, the political elite has looked away from this and is seeking to maximize the gains from the jihad in Kashmir before it is too late. This has led to apparent changes in Pakistan’s policy since the late 1990s. The Lahore Agreement signalled a frantic and frenetic search for an alternative. For some time, Nawaz Sharif’s initiative was condemned. The army, led by Musharraf, who had been conspiring reportedly to launch his low-intensity incursion since 1993, was not ready to stand by the Lahore Agreement. This was natural in Pakistan where it is difficult to raise political consensus on policy matters given the sharp divisions amongst the chief power brokers. But once Musharraf himself assumed power, he understood the logic of moderation and restraint. He reinvented the wheel in the Islamabad Agreement and brought about further changes in his approach to Kashmir.

If at Lahore, Pakistan stepped back from its insistence on Kashmir as the ‘core issue’, in the intervening period between Lahore and Islamabad, Musharraf expressed Pakistan’s readiness to jettison the UN resolution and go beyond it. A fervent champion of militancy in Kashmir, he ate his own words and equated it with terrorism. Rather than a policy reversal, it was born out of a pragmatic attempt to save Pakistan’s Kashmir policy in light of the changes taking place all around. Moreover, after two attacks on his life, he might have realized that the policy of sponsoring jihad in Kashmir was risky, for it had started affecting Pakistan in disastrous ways. But in reality, Musharraf was more concerned about their operations within Pakistan than their operation in the neighbouring countries. Because of pressures from the United States, Musharraf did take action against the jihadi groups, which included Kashmiri militant groups as well. Reports from Pakistan during this period suggested that there was an attempt to contain these forces during 2002–2003. But in reality, the top leaders either escaped the security net through judicial intervention (the case of Masood Azhar and Hafeez Saeed), or were released by the authorities for serving their own political purposes (the Tariq Azam case). This change was therefore not for real. Since 2005, the pro-Kashmiri groups had restarted their action. Like his predecessors, the architect of Kargil would not have liked to get rid of these groups because that would mean leaving the field open for India to engage them and bring down the salience of the Kashmir issue.

Musharraf’s tentative bid to consider a third option (independence) and his insistence on involving the ‘Kashmiri people’ – a euphemism for the secessionist All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) – in the dialogue process, at least at the level of regular consultation, were aimed at keeping the secessionist constituency engaged with Pakistan. The growing disenchantment with the Pakistani policy of jihad would have otherwise taken these people away from Pakistan. Thus, Musharraf sought to win their sympathies by recognizing their demand to be counted as party to the dispute.

At another level, the Pakistani state used disguised coercion to discourage Kashmiri secessionist leaders from parleying with India. For example, all influential personalities in Kashmir who wanted to join the democratic and political mainstream
were either eliminated or coerced into submission. The resultant fear factor has been so acute that there is no room for moderation among the leaders in APHC today. All in all, Musharraf’s emphasis on a solution acceptable to ‘Kashmir people’, which has been a departure from Pakistan’s earlier positions on Kashmir, coupled with such a coercive strategy has been quite effective in weaning secessionist forces away from the Indian embrace.

Another apparent shift has been the recognition of the Indian position that borders cannot be redrawn. However, it has been presented by Musharraf in a rather ambiguous way, because he would dismiss the LoC as an option too. Musharraf indicated movement forward in the direction of soft borders and a soft LoC to assuage a feeling of separation in Kashmir at one level and to encourage them to get used to the reality of a division along the LoC at the other. But this proposal, as per his formulation, has to be acceptable to Kashmiris as well. The pro-liberation forces, who are in a majority, may not quite agree with Musharraf’s option to divide the state along ethnic, linguistic, or religious lines. At best, such proposals have been ‘trial balloons’. In the process, he has confounded his critics both in India and Pakistan who hailed him for his flexibility and openness.

Musharraf’s more ambitious propositions like shared sovereignty, joint control, and joint management were ideas that had been floated to retain Pakistan’s stake in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir in a borderless arrangement if it were to materialize. With experiments like joint anti-terror mechanism going on, Musharraf might be hoping to see joint control of Kashmir in the coming days. Upon careful examination, one finds that through all his proposals, Musharraf aimed at an ‘AJK-NA-plus’ approach and sought to raise the stakes for the Pakistani state at the cost of the Indian position on Kashmir.

At another level, given the extreme fragmentation of the Pakistani polity and the mutual suspicions and recriminations among them, there is the distinct possibility of sudden retraction from whatever position Musharraf had taken in the coming days. The current democratic dispensation under Zardari has pledged to carry the process forward, but in all probability it will not like to adopt Musharraf’s proposals. In fact, after coming to power, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Yusuf Gilani has already reverted to the position that a plebiscite through UN resolutions is the only solution. Moreover, even after agreeing to the composite dialogue, Pakistan has not left its position on Kashmir as the core issue.

In the changed circumstances, where the relationship among different stakeholders of power in Pakistan is not well defined, incoherence in approach among different institutions may also stymie the pace and progress of talks on Kashmir. The temptation to bet on Kashmir for political gains can also ruin the process. The continuing subversive operations by intelligence agencies seeking to derail the representative system in the Indian part of Kashmir are another worrying factor for India as well.

Pakistan’s commitment to its improvised Kashmir policy has to be tested by India through the level of violence in Kashmir. India can also expose these policies by bringing out innovative interjections in the process of dialogue on Kashmir. This can involve pushing Pakistan to bring in a genuine representative system in AJK and NAs, operationalizing cross-LoC trade and commerce and additional points of contact along the LoC, and persuading it to dismantle the terror infrastructure within Pakistan. This will lead to making the LoC irrelevant and convincing the Kashmiris of India’s good intentions. All this will materialize only if Pakistan sticks to Musharraf’s pledge in the coming days.
Notes

1. Resolution 47 (1948) was adopted by the Security Council at its 286th meeting held on April 21, 1948. This was followed by resolutions adopted by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) on August 13, 1948 and on January 5, 1949.

2. When the name ‘Pakistan’ was coined by Rehmat Ali, the ‘K’ word stood for Kashmir. Hence this is also regarded as an unfinished task for the leadership of Pakistan.

3. The NA is spread over 72,971 sq. km (compared to Azad Jammu and Kashmir – 13,297 sq. km, and Jammu & Kashmir – 101,387 sq. km) and has been divided into two divisions (Gilgit, comprising five districts, and Baltistan, comprising two districts).

4. The resolution, passed unanimously in the parliament on February 22, 1994, expressed ‘regret and concern at the pitiable conditions and violations of human rights and denial of democratic freedoms of the people in those areas of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, which are under the illegal occupation of Pakistan’ and demanded that ‘Pakistan must vacate the areas of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, which they have occupied through aggression.’ It further stated that ‘The State of Jammu & Kashmir has been, is and shall be an integral part of India and any attempts to separate it from the rest of the country will be resisted by all necessary means.’ It reaffirmed that ‘India has the will and capacity to firmly counter all designs against its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.’

5. It emerged from personal reminiscences of people like P.N. Dhar and P.N. Haskar, who were associated with the Simla Agreement later, that Bhutto was not agreeable to turn the ceasefire line into an international border at that point of time. But he had promised to work towards that in the coming years. See P.N. Dhar, *Indira Gandhi: The Emergency and Indian Democracy*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996.

6. In fact, in 1958, UN mediators Gunnar Jarring and Frank Graham had observed that implementation of the resolutions was quite implausible in the changed situation, only a decade after the passing of the UN resolution. Fifty years hence, the ground situation has changed immensely. Even in 2001, the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan had stated that since the 47th UN resolution was not self-enforcing, it would ‘require the cooperation of both parties for implementation’, hinting at the bilateral route. (During interaction with the media at Pakistan’s Chakala military airbase in March 2001.)

7. Indo-Pak bilateral talks have been characterized by top Pakistani officials associated with the dialogic track as dialogues between ‘two scorpions in a bottle’ which would only lead to a series of ‘false starts’, ‘full of sound and fury signifying nothing’. They only help India in delaying the issue of implementation of UN resolutions.

8. The elections of 1987 to the provincial assembly in Jammu and Kashmir were allegedly rigged by Farooq Abdullah’s men who had allied with the Congress Party, then led by Rajiv Gandhi. This led to widespread popular disenchantment with Indian democracy. India sowed the seeds of alienation in the valley and Pakistan reaped a good harvest. Zia-ul-Haq’s strategy of inciting an insurrection in the valley, towards the end of the Afghan jihad, worked.


10. The Army Chief Jehangir Karamat went on to admit that Pakistan’s internal security was ‘the most important facet of national security’. Quoted in *The News*, October 6, 1998.


12. The other six issues were Siachen, the Wular barrage/Tulbul navigation project, Sir Creek, terrorism and drug trafficking, economic and commercial cooperation, and promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields.

13. Even at the top leadership level, then Prime Minister I.K. Gujral was not in favour of applying his Gujral doctrine to Pakistan and was not serious about any talk on Kashmir.

14. While South Africa tendered an apology for this mention, there were pressures from the United States and the United Kingdom on India to talk to Pakistan.


16. *Nawai Waqt*, edited by Majid Nizami, known for his diatribes against India, wrote that Nawaz was ‘following the US agenda and appeasing the Indians. This was tantamount to betrayal of the cause of Kashmir’. *Nawai Waqt*, February 7, 1999.

17. The Urdu media, however, latched on to their ‘Kashmir first’ argument and argued that it was useless to talk if India would not agree to discuss Kashmir. Some would argue that the
Indo-Pak bus service was a hasty step, and called Nawaz a ‘weak-kneed politician’ falling for ‘mischievous and contemptuous’ strategies planned out by India and the United States. ‘Force not talks was the answer,’ they held.

19. Jamait-i-Islami argued that it would dilute the cause of Kashmir. The jihadi constituency, represented by the Lashkar-e-Toiba, held that jihad, not dialogue, was the need of the hour and if nuclear bombs could not make Nawaz confident then he should try with the Lashkar, which was no less than ‘an atom bomb for India’. Even his populist policy of introducing Sharia could not woo these Islamist forces to his side. Reported in *The News*, July 7, 1998.
20. Imtiaz Alam captured it well: ‘(The India Pakistan peace process is) an exceptionally risky route to tread, full of booby traps, mines and misleading signposts on the path.’ *The News*, July 12, 2001.
21. Niaz would later reminisce that he had made some progress on the Chenab formula which was unfortunately overtaken by the army action in Kargil in May 1999. See http://www.rediff.com.
22. Because US President Clinton had promised in the declaration that he would take ‘personal interest’ in resolving the Kashmir issue.
23. During Clinton’s trip to South Asia in March 2000, he emphasized initiating talks with India during his brief four-hour stop-over in Islamabad after spending four days in India. Apart from this, the United States had regular dialogue with Pakistan on nuclear and security matters since 1998 and in those forums emphasized Kashmir.
24. In the BBC programme ‘Talking Point’ on August 2, 2000. Musharraf said, ‘I am for the reduction of armed forces, I am for a no war pact between India and Pakistan. So let India come forward, I am for resolving this dispute of Kashmir, let India come forward, I am for talking to, at any place, to any leadership of India. So I’m offering all kinds of peace initiatives but the ball, may I say, is in the Indian court.’ Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/863561.stm.
25. It was not Musharraf but Abdul Sattar, his foreign minister, who lamely reiterated this position.
27. But Musharraf soon realized that his over-exposure to the media could not rescue the Summit talks at Agra. He had learnt his first lessons in diplomacy. He would advocate caution in his subsequent talks with the Indian media.
29. For example, American experts on South Asia like Selig Harrison and Teresita Schaffer. Kofi Anan said he was ‘very pleased and encouraged’. Richard Boucher said it was ‘constructive to relinquish the demand for a referendum to the status of Kashmir’. BBC, December 19, 2003, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3333201.stm.
32. These regions also included Northern Areas. The editorial of the *Daily Times*, the following day, suggested that Musharraf was getting acquainted with the complexity of the problem and diversity in Kashmir.
34. During his visit to Kashmir on November 17, 2004, Manmohan had stated: ‘I have made it clear to President Musharraf that any redrawing of the international border is not acceptable to us. Any proposal which smacks of further division is not going to be acceptable to us.’ Reported in the *Daily Times*, November 18, 2004.
38. Musharraf’s December 2006 proposal for demilitarization and autonomy was debated widely and the Pakistani media isolated the options for review and discussion as demilitarization, autonomy/self governance, joint control/shared sovereignty, sovereign Kashmir with no international personality, readjustment of territory and free trade zone, and open border.


42. In a thought-provoking essay on the ‘multivocal’ Kashmir policy of the Pakistani state, Amélie Bloom advances the argument that apart from these two principal actors there are other important institutions and actors like the foreign office, the defence ministry, the PM’s secretariat, the Ministry for Kashmir and Northern Areas (KANA), and the parliamentary committees on Kashmir. This does not exhaust the list. The armed forces also deal with Kashmir through different agencies like the ISI, the Corps Commanders’ Meetings, and operational corps dealing with Kashmir on the ground. The political parties, Islamic militant organizations, NGOs, and last but not the least the Kashmiri political and civil society groups. Therefore, the army chiefs have proposed to institute a National Security Council headed by the president and comprising the service chiefs, which would meet regularly to give the armed forces a regular stake in the decision-making concerning security affairs. The political forces have been averse to it. Musharraf’s proposal to this effect in 2004 was even resisted by the religious parties. For details, see Amélie Bloom, ‘The “Multi-Vocal State”: The Policy of Pakistan on Kashmir’, Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris, October 2000, at http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/archive/octo00/artab.pdf (Accessed February 28, 2009).