

CHAPTER 10

Security Threats Confronting Pakistan

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Etymologically, security implies the absence of real or perceived threats whether originating from internal turmoil, external sources, or incumbent economic disparities and inequalities.¹ To effectively deal with such threats, nations not only seek power (economic, political, and military) and take adequate measures either to ward them off or to minimize their perceived adverse impact, but efforts are also directed to acquire more and more power. The founder of Pakistan, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, once said “The weak and defenseless, in this imperfect world, invite aggression from others.”* While tactics and strategies are devised to effectively handle visualized threats and an anticipated undesirable situation, efforts are also made simultaneously to inculcate a sense of security among the citizens.

Power and economic disparities and inequalities are known to be the salient features of the operative international political system. In addition, the absence of a supreme supranational institutional set up, such as a world government, to regulate the conduct of interstate relations, further aggravates the national security problems of the smaller nations. The prevalent anarchic state of affairs (by which is meant the absence of a central governing world authority) leaves the member states with no other option but to fall back upon the long standing recognized principle of self-help. Thus we witness the phenomenon in which almost all nations are constantly striving to attain that level of security which makes them feel more secure than others.

Given the nature of the existing international, regional, and domestic environment, Pakistan is facing many security challenges. This paper initially discusses important security challenges confronting Pakistan, followed by an analysis of implications for the defense policies. Finally it focuses on the future regional security cooperation.

¹ For a detailed analysis of security, see “The Imperatives of National Security: A Case Study of Pakistan,” *Asian Defence Journal*, November 1983, pp. 48-66.

* Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was not only the founder of Pakistan but is also regarded as the father of nation.

Security Challenges

To properly comprehend the security challenges, it would be appropriate to categorize these challenges into three groups; external, domestic, and those challenges that have linkage with both external as well as internal situation such as terrorism. A further grouping could be traditional and non traditional security threats.

External Challenges

Pakistan has been facing external threats to its independence and territorial integrity right from its birth. Periodic domestic troubles/upheavals along with internal subversion further complicated the situation. Sandwiched between India and Afghanistan, Pakistan's security perceptions have been largely influenced by its state of relationships with India and Afghanistan. More specifically, the single largest source of security challenges has been with India. Today, Pakistan is confronted with a three-threat scenario—the perennial threat from India, Afghanistan, and the threat emanating from a changing domestic situation. Threats from India and Afghanistan make a formidable task for Pakistani security planners. The developments following 9/11 have further complicated the situation.

Since partition, India and Pakistan have fought three major wars (1948, 1965, and 1971), witnessed two large border clashes (Rann of Kutch in 1965, and Kargil in 1999) experienced three major crises (Brasstack in 1987, Kashmir in 1990, and troops confrontation in 2001-2), and had innumerable exchanges of fire along the LOC within 65 years of independent existence. Indeed it must be an unenviable record for any two neighbors, especially between two developing countries. Deep rooted suspicions, mutual distrust, and antagonism continue to bedevil Indo Pak relations even after the passage of 65 years of neighborhood. Despite the fact that economic and political developments in South Asia have reached a stage where one can begin to contemplate with hope and optimism the prospects of normal neighborly relationships, the conflicting notions of normalcy do not seem to have registered sufficient impact.

Undoubtedly, the Kashmir dispute has been and in many ways still continues to be, the main source of continued antagonism between the two countries. Since partition, the state of Kashmir has experienced violence and varied kinds of troubles. In

addition, the people of Kashmir have been consistently striving and vociferously raising their voices for independence. The Indian interpretation of the situation in Kashmir is that troubles in Kashmir are primarily caused by Pakistani efforts. It refuses to acknowledge the existence of the Kashmiri people's freedom struggles as an indigenous movement. No movement for freedom can go on for such a long time unless the people involved are deeply committed to its successful conclusion. More than 100,000 Kashmir people have died along with countless injured and scared Kashmiris. The Indian government has consistently refused to read the writings on the wall, and has opted for a military approach to suppress the movement. In addition, Indian officials have also been asserting that the UN resolution is no longer valid and applicable, as the Kashmiri people have been regularly participating in the local state elections. Apart from the Kashmir dispute, Siachin, Sir Creek, and water related issues are also taking a huge chunk of goodwill.

Although the process of Indo-Pak normalization was initiated in 2004, and for four years meetings of various agreed baskets were regularly held, the Mumbai incident abruptly halted the process. The long delays in resuming the useful dialogue adversely impacted the process of desired neighborly normalcy. However, the dialogue has been recently resumed. It is the earnest hope of many South Asians that recently resumed dialogue would maintain a desired level of consistency.

The second major source of external threat emanates from the current developments in Afghanistan. The threat from Afghanistan did not acquire alarming proportion until the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. Since then, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have experienced many vicissitudes.² Post 9/11 developments further complicated the situation. For most Pakistanis, the experiences of the past have not always been very pleasant, and in case of Afghanistan, many times the unpleasant aspects took the front line. Invariably, something totally different was experienced than what was earnestly expressed by the rulers. There is no doubt that people of both Pakistan and Afghanistan have great regard for each other, but the policies are made by the ruling groups. The powerful elements within the incumbent Karzai cabinet are not just known to be extremely sympathetic to Pakistan's

² To comprehend the vicissitudes of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, see Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations," *South Asian Journal*, No.13, July-September 2006, pp. 96-113.

eastern neighbor, but appear to take some kind of pleasure in making Pakistan uncomfortable. It is difficult to prove whether such pursuits are undertaken at the behest of their external patrons, are the product of their own well disguised dislike for Pakistan and Pakistanis, or pushed ahead because of the vested interests. Such elements who appeared to take pride in advancing someone else's agenda need to be controlled and made more nationalistic.

It is true in strategic terms that in view of Afghanistan's internal problems (including the ongoing civil war) and the relative military inferiority, it cannot pose a serious threat to Pakistan's security. But the danger of possible fall out from Afghanistan's political instability into the neighboring provinces of Pakistan cannot be overlooked. The provinces of Kyber-Paktoonkhawa, FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), and Baluchistan are extremely prone to such an eventuality, primarily because of the existence of dissident elements. There exists sufficient evidence to support the contention that these subversive movements were and continue to be actively encouraged and materially supported by outsiders using the land of Afghanistan. During his recent confirmation hearings for Secretary of Defense, Senator Chuck Hagel remarked that India has over the years financed problems for Pakistan from Afghanistan.³

Pakistan's Afghan dilemma appears to be more complex than it needs to be. Basically, this revolves around the policy pursuits of the incumbent Afghan government. Six issues have been impacting Pakistan-Afghanistan relations rather consistently since the emergence of Pakistan as an independent country, and each of them has taken some toll on the Pak-Afghan reservoir of goodwill. These issues include unbridled rumors regarding the Taliban's linkages with Pakistan and their periodic adventurism, the status of the Durand Line, Indo-Afghan relations, the landlocked nature of Afghanistan, the presence of foreign forces (including American and NATO forces), and the undesired critical speeches of the Afghan leaders unnecessarily vilifying Pakistan. Each of these issues has been periodically making adverse contributions.

Soon after the tragic events of 9/11, the Americans invaded Afghanistan and further messed up the already chaotic and complicated situation in Afghanistan. If

³ See *Dawn*, February 27, 2013.

the Afghan mess is to be sorted out, then both the Afghan and Americans need to do much more than what they have done so far. The Afghans need to check and minimize corruption if they are unable to eliminate it altogether to reduce fairly heavy dependency upon the drug barons, transform its drug based economy, accelerate work on the developmental projects which could improve the job situation, introduce and undertake effective measures in order to improve law and order situation, improve techniques of police training, initiate and embark upon political approaches, expand and accelerate the training program for its army, avoid undiplomatic and irresponsible speeches and statements, and cooperate with Pakistan in order to jointly work towards the attainment of peace and stability in Afghanistan etc.

For Pakistan, Afghanistan's peace, stability, and territorial integrity is extremely desirable for a number of reasons. Therefore, Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan will continue to make extra efforts with a view to a stable and peaceful next door neighbor. Not only is Afghanistan a neighbor, but it houses a substantive Pashtun population and has age old trading relations with Pakistan. In addition, the desired gas from Turkmenistan can only be procured once the situation in Afghanistan stabilizes. The turmoil in Afghanistan has not only blocked Pakistan's access to Central Asian States and adversely impacted upon Pakistan's potential as an energy and trade corridor, but has also seriously effected stability in FATA. Besides, the danger of anticipated instability and the likely outbreak of fighting within Afghanistan in the post NATO/ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) drawdown are continuously on the rise. Indeed, Pakistan cannot afford to see Afghanistan becoming a haven for anti-Pakistan forces. In fact Pakistan also supports long term international assistance to Afghanistan in order to secure a viable economic system.

Internal Security Challenges

The third major source of concern revolves around domestic challenges. Internal security occupies a pivotal position in any country's national security policy. Not only is Pakistan confronted with many internal threats and challenges to its physical security, but also to its citizens. Among the domestic sources of concerns that had almost continuously impacted Pakistani society, there are issues relating to governance, political instability, sluggish economy, energy and water crises,

ethnicity, extremism, and terrorism etc.

Generally, Pakistan has experienced a severe economic downturn, though in the past couple of years it has begun to improve. Not only does economic security imply a desired level of capability to build a strong economy, but it also entails the “resilience to withstand the impact of financial shocks, and ability to cope and adopt to the dynamic forces of globalization in the international context, and finally it is the ability to translate the achievements in social welfare in the domestic context.”⁴

Not only did growth rate stagnate and inflation continue to stay in double digits during last few years, but also not much industrial investment was witnessed, and unemployment continued to grow. Gas and electricity shortages further complicated the situation. In spite of having huge-hydro-power potential and proven coal deposits, Pakistan has been facing and continues to experience energy shortages. However, one should stress that the government is trying hard to increase power generations. In order to meet both the industrial as well as public demands for power and gas, efforts are directed to intensify exploration within the country, as well as to secure gas from external sources.

According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2011-12, the current GDP growth rate is 3.7%, inflation 10.8%, unemployment 6% and population growth rate is 2.0%.⁵ Not only has tax collection registered increases, but both the public and external debt have also increased.⁶ Pakistan has installed capacity of 20,000MW, but has been unable to exploit the full potential of the existing capacity. While energy supplies have registered marginal increase, the future prospects seem bright with the accelerated work on 969 Neelum-Jhelum, 1410 MW Tarbela 4 extension, 7100 MW Bunji, 430 MW Dasu, 740 MW Munda Dam, and 4500 MW Diamer Dam.⁷ In addition, the Iran-Pakistan pipeline has been officially inaugurated, which is likely to improve the situation once the pipeline is completed and the gas begins to come to Pakistan.

⁴ See Lieutenant Colonel Jamal Abdul Nasir, *Pakistan's Security Challenges: The Increased Importance of the Domestic Imperatives*, A thesis submitted to Cranfield University (UK), 2006, pp.40-41.

⁵ See *Highlights of Pakistan Economic Survey 2011-12*, Economic Adviser's Wing, Finance Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, pp. 1-18.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

Weak governance along with a complex law and order situation not only deters investors (both local and foreigners), but it continues to pose a major challenge in terms of a desired pace of economic development. The extremist groups tend to thrive upon a situation where the state is unable to meet the aspirations of the people. The situation in Karachi, parts of Baluchistan, and FATA is still far from a satisfactory level. While the Karachi situation is indeed the product of multiple factors including ethnic and sectarian violence, terrorists' infiltration, and the resurgence of gang warfare along with target killings, the Baluchistan situation is also the result of many factors such as grievances over economic exploitation, underdevelopment, perceived unfair use of provincial resources, the quest for political power, and covert external intervention. Estranged local groups are exploited by the foreign players. In FATA, unnecessarily delayed socio-economic development coupled with state's inability to pursue gradual integration of the area provided opportunities to interested outsiders to exploit the situation.

It is often stated that part of the difficulties were inherited, and part are the product of transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic polity. However, things have begun to improve. Not only is the economy showing signs of improvement, but the democratic polity is also improving. A weak economy is bound to have an adverse impact upon the allocation of resources to the defense sector.

Terrorism

The fourth most important source of security challenges is terrorism and the ongoing war on terrorism. Since there is no consensus definition, different people and states have interpreted terrorism within the context of their own experiences and requirements. Terrorism connotes different meaning to different people. To the American officials, it may mean the use of violence against Americans by extremists. To the Indians, it may mean Pakistan sponsored infiltration of terrorists into the Indian Held Kashmir (IHK). To the Israelis, it may mean suicide attacks by the Palestinians. To the Pakistanis, it may mean the brutalities and excesses committed by the Indian security forces against the Kashmiri people in the IHK, the engineering of anti-Muslim riots, communal killings of Muslims in which the state machinery is directly or indirectly involved, the undesired terrorist activities of trained foreign agents in Pakistan, and the patronization and encouragement of local estranged

elements by providing monetary and material support.⁸

No country has suffered as much as Pakistan in terms of both human lives as well as material damage. Pakistan's engagement in the war on terror has cost her more than 6,700 lives of armed forces personnel, along with more than 15,000 soldiers wounded, and a civilian death count higher than 37,000.⁹ In terms of material damage to Pakistan, it is generally referred to as more than \$78 billion.¹⁰

It has become somewhat fashionable for both the Afghan government and its American supporters in Afghanistan to put the blame on Pakistan for all their own inabilities and inadequacies. One does not have to repeat that the Kabul regime's rights do effectively extend beyond Kabul and some areas in the north of Afghanistan, whereas the ISAF/NATO troops have not yet demonstrated any marked success in their pursuits either. Each time they experience a failure, they tend to assert that Pakistan has to do more. What is even more ludicrous is that their failure of actions in areas which are far away from Pakistani borders are also almost regularly attributed to Pakistan's inadequacies.

One frequently leveled charge against Pakistan is that the Taliban are using Pakistani territory for launching attacks on ISAF/NATO forces. It cannot be denied that there may be some sympathizers of the Taliban within the Pakistani Pashtun belt. It needs to be stressed here that the sympathies intensified when the Americans imposed an Afghan minority government in Afghanistan, without giving due representations to the majority section of Afghan society. Besides, the indiscriminate bombing, more specifically drones attacks especially in FATA, are causing lot of collateral damage which has further invoked strong critical responses among the sympathizers.

⁸ For a detailed discussion, see Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "Analyzing State Terrorism and Individual Terrorism," Kaniz Yusuf ed., *Unipolar World & The Muslim States* (Islamabad: Pakistan Forum, 2004), pp. 114-138.

⁹ Address of Pakistan's High Commissioner in Australia Mr. Abdul Abdullah Malik at RUSI of Australia entitled "Pakistan's Perception on War on Terror."

http://www.rusi.org.au/documents/original/1346121523_ACT-201208_08_Malik_Pakistan.pdf retrieved on January 7, 2013.

¹⁰ Ibid

Implications for Country's Defense

All the above mentioned challenges have direct linkage and implications for the country's defense policy in general, and more specifically with the defense sector in particular. To begin with India, one needs not to go into details. The main threat to Pakistan has always been perceived to be emanating from India. A large number of forces are stationed close to Pakistan's eastern border, and Line of Control (LOC). Border violations and exchange of fire across the LOC takes place on an almost regular basis. The most recent violation took place on January 6, 2013 when Indian troops crossed the LOC and raided the Sawan Patra check post in the Haji Pir sector.¹¹ The last 65 years of hostility has ensured that the border with India, including the LOC, cannot be ignored. Besides, India's recently framed Cold Start doctrine forced the Pakistani defense planners to make adequate preparations to cater for a perceived invasion. It is generally believed that Indian divisions are waiting just across the border to roll in once Pakistan's internal situation sufficiently deteriorates.

Since India has done impressively well in the economic sector, and views itself to be one of the major players in international politics, consequently it is spending massive amounts of hard currency in beefing up its armed forces. This in turn puts pressure on Pakistan to allocate more resources on its defense from its limited resources. While India is spending more than \$31 billion, Pakistan cannot afford to go much beyond \$5 billion.¹² Perhaps the dangerous development generating apprehensions is that since Pakistan cannot beef up its conventional armed forces to secure a minimum security level, it may become heavily dependent upon its nuclear capability. This increasing gap in defense forces and equipment continuously puts pressures on Pakistan defense planners. Indeed, more allocation to the defense sector implies that other sectors would get less than their desired allocation of resources.

As far as Afghanistan is concerned, Pakistan has already deployed 147,600 troops on its Afghan border, and has manned 2,106 check posts along the 2,611 km long border.¹³ Sandwiched between Afghanistan and India, Pakistan is forced to deploy a

¹¹ *Dawn*, January 7, 2013.

¹² While IISS mentions Indian Defense budget around \$32 billion, there are reports mentioning much more. See *Military Balance*, Vol. 112, Issue No. 1 (London: Routledge, 2012).

¹³ See "Pakistan's Perception on the War on terror," p. 2.

large chunk of its forces. Not only has Pakistan paid a massive cost both in terms of manpower and materially, it is still experiencing blow back effects for its participation in the war on terror. Not only are a large chunk of its forces deployed on its western border which indeed is incurring huge costs, but armed revolt and insurgency broke out in FATA resulting in the rise of TTP (Tehrik Taliban Pakistan). In consequence, not only did “Jihadi culture flourished and informal violence galvanized,” but also massive developmental losses and “severe damage to socio-economic infrastructure,” happened as a result.¹⁴ Thus, the overall security situation deteriorated. In addition, Pakistan’s allies continuously harped upon the mantra that Pakistan should do more, and frequently withheld and delayed the release of CSF (coalition support fund). They also periodically issued travel advisories which effectively deterred foreign investors without according due considerations to Pakistan’s known constraints, such as Pashtuns living on both sides of the Durand Line sharing the commonality of religion and code of ethics called Pukhtoonwali.¹⁵ It needs to be mentioned here that more than four million Afghan refugees took shelter in Pakistan after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and continued to live in Pakistan even after the Soviets departed from Afghanistan. Even today, there are more than two million Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Undoubtedly, American insensitivities have further facilitated the already existing anti-American feelings. Many sections of Pakistani society began to stress the early but orderly departure of the Americans from Afghanistan. The major motivational factor that brought the Americans into the area was to eliminate Al Qaeda and its associates. Having killed Osama bin Laden and effectively weakened Al Qaeda, Americans are continuing to operate drone attacks on Pakistani territory which have killed many innocent civilians.

Since the beginning of the war on terror, and Pakistan’s participation in the collective effort to control the spread of terrorism, Pakistan is perhaps the only country which has paid an enormous cost. Not only have its forces been deployed in numbers, but it has also seen the spread of terrorist activities all over the country, and experienced and still continues to experience, the undesired effects of terrorism.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 4.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp 3-4.

Pakistan's efforts to curb terrorism pre-date the September 11 attacks, and in this regard the Government of Pakistan has undertaken several political, legislative, and administrative measures. The turmoil in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine, as well as the American drone attacks has been continuously providing fuel to terrorism. However, Pakistan has undertaken many constructive measures in order to curb terrorism. Some of these measures are listed below:

1. Cooperating with the UN
2. Employment of Pakistani troops though troop usage in FATA is indeed selective
3. Apprehension and Killing of Al-Qaeda Terrorists
4. Rooting out Foreign Militants
5. Sharing of Vital Intelligence
6. Banning of Religious Organizations
7. Instituting Madrassa reforms
8. Ban on Hate Literature
9. Syllabus Reform
10. Setting up of Tripartite Commission
11. Proposal for Fencing and Mining of Borders
12. Anti-Terrorist Pacts and Extradition Treaties
13. Promoting Islamic Renaissance
14. Active member of International Coalition to combat terrorism

The third major challenge and perhaps the main challenge confronting Pakistan emanates from internal sources. The existence of an external threat along with the war on terror has complicated the law and order situation in Pakistan. Not only are paramilitary forces regularly called to assist the agencies entrusted with the task of maintaining the law and order situation, but the armed forces have to deal effectively with developments on both eastern as well as western borders. While prophets of doom have been predicting economic collapse and political chaos, neither development is likely to take place. Not only are most state institutions working, but the nation is looking forward to the holding of elections soon. Pre-election statements and media often create the impression that things are going to get out of hand.

Prospects for Regional Security Cooperation

The future of peace in South Asia rests heavily upon the Indo-Pak equation. Jointly, they can shoulder the responsibility of ensuring security, stability, and accelerated economic development of the region. Persistence in adversarial pursuits can continue to damage the collective interest of the region. For years, India and Pakistan concentrated on strengthening their defenses against each other. Admittedly, during the initial stages, problems emanating from the hasty surgical partition of the Indian subcontinent compelled them to adopt a hostile posture. However, almost 65 years of past experience indicates that a continuation of the antagonism can only result in further violence and destruction.

Cognizant of ground realities and acutely conscious of the futility of perennial conflicts, the current prime ministers of both India and Pakistan have repeatedly expressed their earnest desire for an improved atmosphere conducive to the resolution of outstanding disputes. The positive developments that have generated optimism and are raising hopes regarding the possibilities of an improvised atmosphere include, “continuous realization that military approach is unlikely to pay desired level of dividends,”¹⁶ a more positive approach of the recent leadership in both countries, a changed international climate following the death of the cold war and linked developments, the emerging ascendancy of the economic imperatives, the advent and the establishment of a vast network of the confidence building measure (CBMs), the role of SAARC, and the incumbent peace process.

It needs to be mentioned here that many factors that continuously impede the process and effectively reduce the pace of peace process exist. Among these factors are the ongoing Kashmir dispute, the water issue, alleged cross border infiltrations, adverse domestic developments, and the presence of outsiders.

While the process of normalization was actually initiated at the Simla Summit of Indo-Pak leaders, it acquired concrete shape following the successful conclusion of the 12th SAARC Summit in 2004. For four years it worked smoothly though it was slow, but then the Mumbai tragedy took place and the process was stopped

¹⁶ For details, see Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, “Indo-Pak Relations: Thaw or Further Turmoil,” Tomislav Delinic and Nischal N. Pandey eds., *Towards a more Cooperative South Asia* (Kathmandu, Nepal: Centre for South Asian Studies and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2012), pp. 86-97.

for several years. Recently it has restarted again and the official level talks were resumed.

Theoretically and logically, future prospects should be bright. The current atmosphere indicates that both nations are desirous of not only improved relationships, but appear to be fully cognizant of the need to improve interactions in a comprehensive sense. There are encouraging signs that New Delhi has reconciled with its own hiccups, and may eventually decide to join the gas pipeline project with Pakistan and Iran. India had previously linked it with a demand for MFN status and trade rights to Afghanistan in lieu of its participation in the project. Pakistan has already decided to give MFN (Most Favored Nation) status, and it will soon materialize as the few minor clarifications with regard to trading practices are cleared. It is a matter of days, not weeks.

The second major development that has recently taken place is the visa agreement between India and Pakistan, which would indeed further facilitate both people-to-people contacts and trading interactions. The new visa agreement would undoubtedly facilitate travel for the nationals of both countries, promote people to people contacts, and facilitate trading interactions.¹⁷

In terms of trading interaction between India and Pakistan, trade volume has been extremely poor, and did not exceed a few hundred million, whereas the potential is acknowledged to be in the billions. The trade relations have remained hostage to the political relations of both countries. In 1948-49, 56% of Pakistan's total exports were directed to the Indian market, and 32% of its imports came from India. The early years of the 1950s saw drastic reduction in trade, and since then, it has not really revived. In 2000-2001, India exported only \$186 million worth of goods to Pakistan out of a total export of \$44 billion. Pakistan exported to India only \$65 million out of its total export of \$8.8 billion. The increase in trade began to be visibly registered in the first four months of the 2004-5 fiscal year, when India's exports to Pakistan grew from \$39.10 million to \$167.38 million.

¹⁷ For details of agreement, see *The News*, December 15, 2012.

It is generally acknowledged that bilateral trade will bring benefits not only to both governments, but also for the business communities as well. Breaking the barriers of incumbent economic isolation from one another is easy to suggest, but quite difficult to realize. Since the political dialogue has started, expanding trade cannot be ruled out now.

Negative factors still effectively impeding the Indo Pak normalization process include the haunts of history, the ongoing complex Kashmir dispute, differing security perceptions, and the periodic adverse domestic developments with far reaching consequences etc.,

Since the dialogue process has once again started, it is not too difficult to assume that if the process continues for few years, the advent of a desired level of peace could certainly be achieved. Four factors appear to support this contention: increasing realization regarding the futility of antagonistic relationships, the rising support among the general public (Increasing track II contacts, Aman ki asha etc), the identification of the common threats confronting them in the form of terrorism, food security, water related issues, energy security, environmental degradation such as rapid deforestation, and the emerging realities in terms of globalization along with the advent of WTO etc.,

On the negative side, it would be difficult to ignore the impact of ongoing conflicts along with the long history of distrust and the fragility of the peace process until it is strengthened by all concerned including the people, leaders, government, media, and the international community. Positive statements like one recently made by former Indian Foreign minister S.M. Krishna that the “Trust deficit with Pakistan is shrinking,” and Pakistan foreign minister’s assertion that the “Trust deficit that typically existed between the two countries for many, many, years has been reduced,” along with Indian and Pakistani prime ministers’ assertion at the 17th SAARC Summit to open a new chapter in their relationship, are indeed sources of encouragement.¹⁸

¹⁸ *Daily Times*, November 11, 2011. Also see *Dawn*, November 11, 2011.

It is not very easy to predict the likely direction of Indo-Pak relations in the near future. Most optimists are hopeful and forcefully saying that the current resumption of dialogue is likely to persist, whereas the pessimists keep stressing that any adverse development whether minor or major, could halt the peace process as it has been frequently demonstrated in the past. While one would wish to sooner see the advent of normalized relationships between India and Pakistan, it is somewhat unrealistic to think that relationships would be truly normalized without resolving the major issues and disputes. There is no doubt that trade and people-to-people contacts would gradually increase. However, it would be difficult to ignore the above mentioned impediments especially the Kashmir dispute and water related issues. The only way out is for both nations to strengthen the dialogue process, and enlist the support of media in terms of generating positive vibes.

Once India and Pakistan attain a reasonable level of normalization, the chances for regional security cooperation would rapidly intensify. In addition, the regional organization SAARC would also make impressive strides within no time.