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### **Non-Official Dialogue between India and Pakistan: Prospects and Problems**

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## About the Author

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Aqil S. Shah completed his M.S. in International Relations from Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad in March 1997. He has been a visiting fellow at the Henry L. Stimson Center in Washington, D.C. Mr. Shah spent the summer semester at the Program in Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign specializing in nongovernmental strategies of conflict resolution and confidence building measures. He will be at Oxford University on a Rhodes Scholarship in fall 1997.



# Non-Official Dialogue between India and Pakistan: Prospects and Problems

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Aqil S. Shah

## Introduction

The past three decades have seen an acceleration in the involvement of non-official groups in the resolution of deeply rooted interstate conflicts. In South Asia, non-official efforts between India and Pakistan have intensified since 1990. Initiated by the United States Information Service (USIS) in Islamabad and New Delhi, the process has picked up momentum over the years, and at present there are more than forty such initiatives operating in South Asia.<sup>1</sup>

This paper assesses the collective impact of these non-official contacts between India and Pakistan and the major constraints upon the dialogue process. The role of former officials in track two diplomacy (the Neemrana Dialogue) and that of the younger generation (Summer School) in contributing to a future peace process is discussed in detail. These are critically evaluated in terms of their utility and their flaws, and strategies to make these and other initiatives more meaningful are discussed.

## Non-Official Diplomacy: Definition and Objectives

Track two, or non-official diplomacy,<sup>2</sup> is defined by an American specialist in the field, Joseph Montville, as “unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversary groups or nations which aims to develop strategies, influence public opinion, and organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflict.”<sup>3</sup> Track two diplomacy is not a substitute for track one official diplomacy but is a supplemental or parallel operation. It seeks solutions which might satisfy the basic political, security, and esteem needs of the parties to a particular dispute. On a more general level its goal is to “promote an environment, through the education of public opinion, that would make it safer for political leaders to take risks for peace.”<sup>4</sup> Track two, observes Montville, assists leaders by “compensating for the constraints imposed on them by the psychologically understandable need for leaders to be, or at least to be seen to be, strong, wary, and indomitable in the face of the enemy.”<sup>5</sup>

Track two advocates argue that this form of diplomacy can be useful in many ways. Track two diplomacy may (1) help resolve ongoing disputes, (2) prevent the emergence of new disputes, (3) ease tensions and build confidence between the parties involved, and (4) serve as a platform for exploring alternative approaches to rigid official positions and provide governments the opportunity to pick up new ideas when the political will to improve relations is forthcoming.

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed inventory of nongovernmental dialogues in South Asia see Navnita Chadha Behera, Paul M. Evans, and Gowher Rizvi, *Beyond Boundaries: A Report on the State of Non-Official Dialogues on Peace, Security and Cooperation in South Asia*, (Toronto: Joint Center for Asia Pacific Studies, York University, 1997), 62-98.

<sup>2</sup> The terms ‘Track Two’ and ‘Non-Official’ diplomacy are used interchangeably. However, a distinction can be made between elite track two diplomacy which is designed to influence policy making and people-to-people or citizens diplomacy which aims to create support for peace in society. For a taxonomy of non-official diplomacy in South Asia see Behera *et al.*, 20-24.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph V. Montville, “The Arrow and the Olive Branch: A Case for Track Two Diplomacy,” in John W. Mc Donald and Diane B. Bendahmane, eds., *Conflict Resolution: Track Two Diplomacy* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, 1995), 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

### **Directions of the Track Two Process between India and Pakistan: The Neemrana Dialogue**

The non-official dialogue in South Asia has largely operated in the quasi-official realm. A few retired government officials, both civil and military, dominate most activities. With generally the same participants and faculty in most senior level dialogues there is lack of a cross-fertilization of ideas. "The conflict resolution process has been limited to bureaucrats, retired bureaucrats and aspiring bureaucrats," writes Sundeep Waslekar, "there has been little involvement of those who can directly influence policies, those who can mobilize opinions of the masses or the young generation who hold the key to the future."<sup>6</sup>

The eruption of the insurgency in Kashmir and the subsequent spring 1990 crisis prompted the Gates mission to New Delhi and Islamabad, which is believed to have provided the impetus for a track two dialogue between India and Pakistan. Washington, alarmed over the dangerous consequences of a future crisis with nuclear dimensions, was eager to see a relationship between the two countries based on communication and dialogue. One of Robert Gates' proposals was to promote a "non-official dialogue" so that the two sides might communicate even when official communications break down.<sup>7</sup>

The first serious effort at track two diplomacy was launched under the auspices of the USIS in 1990. The USIS conducted a series of WORLDNET dialogues for Indian and Pakistani intellectuals and experts on nuclear nonproliferation, confidence building measures (CBMs), and regional economic cooperation. The WORLDNET dialogues and the Neemrana dialogue series had their origins in a series of regional Dartmouth type seminars moderated by Harold Saunders.<sup>8</sup> Later on, American foundations and German nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) took over the process. More recently, indigenous people-to-people initiatives have come to the fore.

The USIS's hope was that former bureaucrats with access to official quarters would exercise the kind of prompt, indirect influence required during crisis situations and would also provide an additional means for both governments to keep communication channels open. Since these individuals had spent decades in government, they were considered the most appropriate choice for reaching policy makers. That some of these key former officials were willing to be part of the nongovernmental process was considered reliable evidence of their stake in improving relations between the two countries. Their inclusion was moreover, premised on the "old boys net" theory whereby the well connected former civil and military bureaucrats would use their seniority and contacts to facilitate positive input to governments.<sup>9</sup>

From a situational perspective, at the time when the USIS initiated the dialogue there was no such forum for prominent Indians and Pakistanis to discuss bilateral issues. A non-official dialogue, successful or otherwise, was, in the view of American observers of the process, better than no dialogue at all.<sup>10</sup> Neemrana provided an opportunity for both governments to test official waters from a non-official vantage point. As Khaled Ahmed, a former member of the Neemrana dialogue, writes:

The Neemrana teams were carefully selected to represent the variety of points of view on both sides; but because this variety is not too broad, the two teams clearly upheld their national positions. Thus the discussions were not too unrealistically remote from the official stance, and it was therefore possible for the governments to look at the Neemrana meetings as a useful parallel process.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sundeep Waslekar, *Track Two Diplomacy in South Asia*, ACDIS Occasional Paper (Urbana: Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, University of Illinois, October 1995), 7.

<sup>7</sup> See "Security in South Asia: A Question of Confidence," *The Economist* (London), May 20, 1995, 34. According to a senior State Department official the idea of a non-official Indo-Pak dialogue was under consideration during the last years of the Reagan Administration, but it materialized in the aftermath of the 1990 crisis when the Gates Mission was dispatched to Islamabad and New Delhi.

<sup>8</sup> Harold Saunders is a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asia who was involved in the Camp David negotiations. Later, Saunders helped conduct the Dartmouth conference—named after its first meeting at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire in 1960—that brought together prominent American and Soviet citizens.

<sup>9</sup> Senior policy makers in the region pride themselves on their personal camaraderie with the other side based on their mutual interaction at different levels. They assert that they can better resolve the conflict as they know the other side better. Historical evidence however suggests otherwise.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Stephen P. Cohen, Champaign, June 1997.

<sup>11</sup> Khaled Ahmed, "Is Neemrana Dialogue a Conspiracy," *The Friday Times* (Lahore), December 29-January 4, 1995, 9.

From a tactical perspective, the induction of former bureaucrats in track two diplomacy raised some problems. Critics argue that these retired officials have invariably spent their careers with a bureaucratic psyche that allows little room for innovation and dissent, so it is rather difficult for them to get out of this official mind-set. For officials who have formulated and staunchly advocated policies responsible for the current malaise between India and Pakistan, a psychological stake in the status quo comes all too naturally. Critics also point out the contradiction apparent in the unwillingness of these former state functionaries to change or influence policy while in service and the sudden post-retirement 'change of religion' in favor of peace.<sup>12</sup>

"Since most of the participants involved have served in official capacities for their respective governments," argue Samina Yasmeen and Aabha Dixit, "as soon as these core issues are raised they find themselves taking positions very similar to those of their governments."<sup>13</sup> These former officials tend to put up a united front transforming the dialogue into a mini-government forum.<sup>14</sup> In any dialogue, the tendency to present a collective view is a natural reaction to the presence of an adversary especially if the group sees itself as the weaker party. The presence of conflict and the larger political environment also add to the rallying tendency.<sup>15</sup> However, a track two dialogue that emulates official positions and is caught up in traditional point scoring is essentially a monologue. As Khaled Ahmed comments, "the first hurdle in the dialogue comes up when each participant conceals his point of view by being 'objective' that is, presenting the collective point of view and saying this won't go, given the political environment back home."<sup>16</sup> For a track two dialogue to be even marginally successful it should provide room for alternative views that the governments may choose to use. Ironically, while most retired officials want to have a piece of the action, most of these participants tend to engage in "anticipatory compliance" with the assumptions and perspective of their respective governments.<sup>17</sup>

In actual fact, in both India and Pakistan, contrary to American perceptions, an ex-foreign secretary or an ex-Chief of Army Staff (COAS) is an outsider as far as strategic policy making is concerned. The bureaucracies and security agencies in both countries exercise tight secrecy and control over decision making which remains restricted to a few individuals at the top, leaving little room for former officials to maneuver. The stringent opposition within their erstwhile institutions is enough to deter any ex-bureaucrat from going out on a limb. Connections and seniority is useful only for securing personal favors as opposed to strictly official business.

Moreover, the dialogues at the senior level have become insulated over time. The permanent retention of the same members has led to a group psyche in dire need of "new blood and fresh ideas."<sup>18</sup> The 'Usual Suspects' who participate in these dialogues say the same things over and over with slight changes of words and tone. There are individuals who can boast of participation in virtually every workshop in the region. The inability of these former officials to act constructively—and independently of their former parent organizations—effectively minimizes the chances for a broad-based, productive and dynamic non-official engagement in South Asia.

To their supporters, however, the utility of a permanent group lies in the mutual understanding that has evolved during the successive meetings. According to one member, "the Neemrana teams have nurtured a certain rapport that is essential for such a dialogue. Changing the members will only serve to erode this mutual understanding."<sup>19</sup> The merits of a dialogue based on a group camaraderie notwithstanding, the group needs to be rejuvenated or enlarged to bring in more diversity. According to one South Asian scholar, "the Neemrana dialogue cannot achieve what it has not already accomplished."<sup>20</sup> Organizers are aware of the need to renew these dialogues, but it poses a peculiar problem. Exit from a dialogue hurts the prestige of members. In addition,

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<sup>12</sup>Based on informal conversations and interviews with several Indian, Pakistani and American analysts.

<sup>13</sup>Samina Yasmeen and Aabha Dixit, *Confidence-Building Measures in South Asia*, Occasional Paper 24 (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Centre, September 1995), 18.

<sup>14</sup>Based on various interviews with people closely involved in the process.

<sup>15</sup>The Neemrana dialogue started when the insurgency and violence in Kashmir was raging and India-Pakistan relations were at an all-time low.

<sup>16</sup>Khalid Ahmed, "Is Neemrana Dialogue a Conspiracy," 9.

<sup>17</sup>Yasmeen and Dixit, *Confidence-Building Measures*, 18.

<sup>18</sup>Interview with a former American diplomat, Washington, D.C., June 1997. Some members on both sides have been aware of the need for periodic "reinfusion of blood" although a formal renewal process was never developed.

<sup>19</sup>Interview with a Neemrana member, Islamabad, March 1997.

<sup>20</sup>Interview with a South Asian scholar, New York, June 1997.

retired officials in India and Pakistan have the right kind of influence to arrange such sensitive activities. Nonetheless, participation of the same people in all dialogues defeats the purpose of the whole exercise. Organizers could, however, limit the number of times a member can take part in a dialogue or, alternately, one or two members can form the core group and organizers can urge them to bring in new faces.

The quasi-official dialogues like the Shanghai and Neemrana initiatives are also criticized for the secrecy that shrouds the proceedings. Critics argue that a crucial function of track two diplomacy is to inform and sensitize public opinion. In a conspiracy-driven society, behind-the-scenes talks only give rise to suspicions as to the real motives and purpose of both the organizers and participants. Such secrecy gives credence to the extremist view that track two is a mechanism designed to cajole governments into a sellout of national interests.

It is true that the socio-political environment in South Asia is hostile to the full expression of dissenting opinions on sensitive issues of national security, yet one of the objectives of non-official dialogue, according to some, is to educate public opinion. This cautious approach only satisfies the 'official hang-over' of shielding discussions from the public eye and plays it safe, argue critics. On the other hand, advocates of quiet diplomacy contend that press publicity will sabotage the process as the very purpose of track two is to engage in a 'quiet' dialogue to avoid domestic backlash and convey specific policy proposals and agreements to governments for their perusal. "One reason governments in both countries let the dialogue continue was that privacy of the more sensitive aspects of the discussions—honored on both sides—averted embarrassment for both governments, particularly during tense periods."<sup>21</sup>

Both views are valid. A *via media* can be found to address public concerns and keep the dialogues intact. There is no alternative to infusing subtle awareness of such activities in the public mind for creating a favorable climate of opinion in India and Pakistan. The only way to do so is to publish the general theme and thrust of the discussions in the press initially. Detailed reports based on the discussions can be made available to the press and public at a later stage. Perhaps lowering the walls of secrecy and including a group of journalists and academics as observers will slowly defuse undue criticism and help build the public legitimacy of these dialogues.

Despite clear shortcomings, argues an expert, the Neemrana dialogue has made a positive contribution to the cause of non-official dialogue in South Asia. In fact, it has played the role of a "bellwether in initiating, supporting, and legitimizing a concept and process unknown in the independent history of India and Pakistan." From the time its first meeting was held in 1991, "the process has evolved into an interactive forum where participants have openly expressed views that were quite widely askew from official opinion."<sup>22</sup> The progress in these meetings has regularly been conveyed to both the governments. It is not clear whether the two governments have taken stock of the proposals put forth by the Neemrana groups, but in the absence of official channels of communication the process has served as a crucial mechanism for filling the dialogue gap. Members have written extensively on issues and ideas brought up at Neemrana meetings. Moreover, the group has recently submitted a joint policy paper to both governments identifying options for resolving the Kashmir dispute. Above all, the process has remained intact despite tensions. While, meetings have been deferred several times due to political reasons, the dialogue was never disrupted. It is evident that both governments found it valuable to have a track two channel available in the absence of any serious official dialogue.

Perhaps the high expectations associated with Neemrana, as it symbolizes the entire track two process, and the resentment of people not included in the dialogue also amplify the criticism directed at its quasi-official content. The track two encounters of these relatively influential people are important for a cross-border exchange of 'feelers,' especially when official relations are troubled. The frequent encounter of these former officials with serving policy makers and leaders in private and official gatherings affords a frank exchange of ideas in which the perception of the other side is floated in official circles. The fact remains that these elite dialogues form an important part of the confidence-building-cum-conflict management exercise.

With the resumption of track one, high profile strategic and military issues are on the official table; the next step for track two should be the broadening of issues and topics for discussion coupled with fresh

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with a former American diplomat, Washington, D.C., June 1997.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

membership of more academics, policy makers and journalists. The Neemrana dialogue has brought together groups of scientists, businessmen, Kashmiri leaders and women. Members of the dialogue can initiate and moderate workshops for these and other constituencies that can form part of a sustained confidence building exercise in the future. Creating such spin-off groups will serve the dual purpose of enlarging the track two ambit and allowing renewal of the parent groups.

### The “Generational” Approach

By 1992 it seemed as if the scope of nongovernmental diplomacy would be restricted to a select few retired diplomats and generals. This left much to be desired in the way of including the future leaders and opinion shapers of India and Pakistan. While there was a nominal representation of academics and journalists, the post-1971 generation was largely excluded from the conflict resolution process.

The security debate in both India and Pakistan had been dominated by a generation of older people with minuscule participation from the younger one. This apparent generational vacuum led George Perkovich of the W. Alton Jones Foundation and Chris Smith of King’s College London, on a trip to the region in September 1992, to initiate a track two channel on security and arms control for the younger generation of regional scholars, scientists, journalists and policy analysts.<sup>23</sup> The idea was to bring together young talented individuals and expose them to the latest technical expertise and materials in order to give the arms control and security debate a scientific outlook. The summer school, as it came to be known, was also a test of the assumption that exposing members of the young generation of South Asians to conflict resolution methodologies and providing them the opportunity to interact with their regional counterparts will help build a critical mass of scholars, future policy makers and analysts. It was hoped that these younger South Asians, unencumbered by the burden of hostile history, will initiate a more meaningful dialogue in the future. In the words of Stephen Cohen:

A Third Generation is now emerging . . . the third generation does not have a sense of responsibility for the gloomy history. Their competence and their interest in the things that matter—above all a fresh approach to economic issues, plus the collapse of many institutions dominated by a generation in the past—will bring them to power sooner rather than later. More than any other development in the region, this new group of regional leaders will make it possible for a change to occur.<sup>24</sup>

As of August 1997, four summer school meetings have been organized, two each in Pakistan and India. More recently the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) in Colombo has started a parallel series of annual workshops for younger South Asians. The first Winter Workshop on Non-Military Sources of Conflict in South Asia was held in Kandy, Sri Lanka in March 1997 with participants and faculty from all South Asian countries.<sup>25</sup> Younger South Asians have also had the opportunity to interact with each other at the Henry L. Stimson Center in Washington, D.C. and at the Program in Arms Control Disarmament and International Security at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign.

Some basic questions that stem from the Third Generation approach need to be stated at the outset. Is there actually a Third Generation in India and Pakistan that has the ability and willingness to rise above the prevailing mistrust, suspicions, and historical burdens? How have the negative influences of history textbooks, socialization processes, and institutional biases affected the perceptions of this generation?

<sup>23</sup> The inspiration for a dialogue for young regional leaders came from a similar initiative undertaken by Frank Von Hippel for young American and Soviet scientists in the 1980s which aimed at establishing a community of young scientists and strategists.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen P. Cohen. *Every Fifth Person: The Origins of War and Conditions for Peace in South Asia*, forthcoming. John Thompson, director of a conservative Canadian think-tank, has propounded a contrasting theory of generational conflict. Quoting examples from Yugoslavia, Chechnya, Ireland, and Israel, Thompson argues, “it would seem that the first generation experienced a severe trauma, the second generation did little to address it and the third attempted to settle accounts.” In his view these “Children of Trauma” may be more conflictual and hostile to each other since it may feel guilt for having missed the traumatic experiences of their fathers and grandfathers and this guilt may turn into a desire for retribution. See Abu Taha, “The Thompson Theory about Kashmir and the MQM,” *The Friday Times* (Lahore), July 4-10, 2.

<sup>25</sup> The RCSS winter workshop held in March 1997 was the first truly representative workshop as it brought together a mix of participants and faculty from all over South Asia.

An important consideration is that the younger generation of Indians and Pakistanis do not constitute a monolithic social group. Widespread differences in upbringing, education, social mobility, and regional and ethnic preferences separate them to a great degree from peers in their own countries. However, the post-1971 educated urban middle-class, which is large in India and a comparatively smaller in Pakistan, may fit this description of a forward thinking group. This segment of the younger generation is more cosmopolitan and liberal in outlook than the preceding generation. It has been exposed to a variety of transnational influences through movies, music, travel, and, more recently, satellite television. This impact should not be underestimated as it has created an international culture based on identical consumer tastes. The onslaught of information and communication technology has made its members more sensitive to changed global economic realities. For them the 'other side' is not the root of all evil. They realize that the bitterness of the past need not ruin the prospects of better relations in the future. Aware of the socio-economic costs of confrontation, they have the sense and ability to realize that dialogue with the other side is a prerequisite for ending a futile conflict. As Waslekar rightly points out, "the generational gap is clearly evident in track two dialogues. Most retired army or government officials tend to be obsessed with problems in terms of some treaty, resolution or conflict of ten or twenty years earlier. Most young people look at problems in terms of what it means for their future."<sup>26</sup>

The younger generation of Indians and Pakistanis did not personally experienced the traumas of partition in 1947, the 1962 Indo-China War, the 1965 Indo-Pak war, and the East Pakistan crisis. This physical and emotional detachment empowers them to rise above the psychological barriers that permanently colored their elders' perception. They do not share the 'psychic wounds' of their elders and are more forward-looking and future-oriented. The term "typical Hindu"<sup>27</sup> and "typical Pakistani" does not carry the intensity of hatred peculiar to the older generation. And even if they have enemy stereotypes, it is easier for the younger people to dispel these images through exposure and contact with each other.

### Potential Constraints

Several negative social, political, and psychological influences may, however, undermine the possible contribution of a younger generation toward a peace process. For practical purposes, the role of the younger generation cannot be assessed in isolation from the older one. The family structure in both India and Pakistan revolves around traditional norms of obedience and respect for elders and their views. Parental influence plays a dominant role in shaping perceptions. The prejudices and hostile perceptions of one generation trickle down, producing the same kind of distorted interpretations of history in the next. Traumatic events in the past and hostile images of the other side based on these are internalized by members of a new generation as the older generation transmits its injuries and sufferings. This socialization, more often than not, is a one-way process.<sup>28</sup>

A majority of this generation is the product of state run educational institutions. The state in both India and Pakistan presents the official version of the truth through textbooks.<sup>29</sup> Curricula act as instrumental tools of state policy for shaping the minds of future generations. The one-sided flow of selected history through these poorly researched books permeates the minds of a majority of students, in turn creating a mentality infused with hatred, prejudice, and intolerance.

Perhaps no other factor strikes at the heart of the youth dialogue more than the rising tide of religious and sectarian extremism in both countries. The young political cadre of right wing parties in Pakistan and the pro-BJP youth in India stand in sharp contrast to the presumably pro-peace sections of the youth. Similarly changing individual priorities, career considerations, and socio-economic pressures can effectively influence people in ways that militate against taking the risky course of peacemaking through dialogue. Recruitment in the military and civil bureaucracy is also a decisive negative factor. Bureaucracies are anathema to personal

<sup>26</sup> Waslekar, *Track Two Diplomacy*, 8.

<sup>27</sup> For Pakistanis there is no typical Indian but a "typical Hindu." Even the Indian Muslims are seen by some as "Hinduized."

<sup>28</sup> The intergenerational transmittal of attitudes is discussed at length in R. R. Rogers, "Intergenerational Exchange: Transference of Attitudes Down the Generations," in J. Howells, ed., *Modern Perspectives in the Psychiatry of Infancy* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1979), 339-349.

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, Pervez Hoodbhoy and Abdul Hameed Nayyar, "Rewriting the History of Pakistan," in M. Asghar Khan ed., *Islam, Politics and the State: The Pakistan Experience* (London: Zed Books, 1985), 165-175. See also Behera, "Enemy Images: The Media and Indo-Pakistani Tensions," 178-180.

initiative and independent thinking. Hierarchical decisions take precedence over personal ones. These colonial organizations have an exclusive corporate mind-set that defines the value system of their personnel.

### Prospects

On the positive side, the younger generation in both countries has lived in virtual isolation from each other. Outdated travel restrictions deter well-meaning youngsters from taking the risk. Yet younger people are curious to know what a Pakistani or an Indian of their age is like. The nominal contact opportunities that have come through the summer school, the People's Forum, and, more recently, the winter school have actually shattered the enemy myths for some of the participants.<sup>30</sup> The purpose of these workshops is well served when even a few individuals are able to see the human face on those 'wily Indians' or 'treacherous Pakistanis.' While age should not be the only criterion in determining the effectiveness of track two activities, the youth of today will ultimately take over leadership in both countries. And there is a widespread agreement in India and Pakistan on including youth in security and peace related dialogues.<sup>31</sup>

Acting as a counter to the future state-sponsored co-optation of this generation is the declining appeal of government professions. The booming private sectors in metropolitan cities in both countries will attract more educated youth to non-official professions such as business, finance, management, marketing, engineering, law, science, and architecture. Democracy, economic reform, privatization, the freedom of press in Pakistan and the privatization of electronic media in the region will allow more pluralism in the future, opening the doors for a critical discourse on the future of the region.

The youth-to-youth dialogue process will hopefully come to fruition in the long run. A prominent Pakistani analyst predicts that the course of relations between India and Pakistan may be less conflictual while the third generation is in power. Perhaps the fourth or fifth generation will make a difference in resolving the conflict.<sup>32</sup> Only time will tell whether the youth of today will take steps in the right direction when it is their turn to shape policy and opinions. It is even uncertain if the current exchanges are making any impact on the perceptions of this generation.

Critics point, for example, to the lack of a substantive post-dialogue debate amongst the summer school alumni. The only forum for such a debate is provided by the Centre for Defence Studies quarterly newsletter to which the alumni contribute articles on security issues. But the limited circulation and readership of the newsletter limits its ability to produce any seminal impact on the security debate in both countries. As one American foundation officer remarked, "Where was this new blood of the summer school when the CTBT debate was on in India? Not one single voice from this group dared to counter the pervasive argument on CTBT, neither in India nor in Pakistan."<sup>33</sup> Others argue that the summer school has been a nonproliferation gala where the American dominated faculty has had a clear anti-nuclear bias. While the agenda allegation on the summer school is somewhat valid, the workshop is merely four years old. Moreover, it has already been revamped to substitute nuclear arms control with more flexible and regionally relevant topics such as "Cooperative Security." An effort is underway to include more South Asian faculty with a balanced mix of doves and hawks. Recently the Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese alumni have formed local chapters. The Indian chapter plans to bring out a quarterly newsletter. The idea of a book on a mutually agreed theme with contributions from Pakistani and Indian alumni is also under consideration. The chapters will promote informed public debate and dialogue on issues covered by the summer workshop.

On balance, the summer schools have been a resounding success in bringing a new generation of Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese analysts and scholars together. The workshops have provided a unique chance for confidence-building through the establishment of interpersonal relationships among the participants and a

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<sup>30</sup> As of 1997, the summer and winter schools have brought together approximately 150 young Indians and Pakistanis, plus smaller numbers of Chinese, Sri Lankans, Nepalis, Bangladeshis and individual scholars from Bhutan and Maldives.

<sup>31</sup> A Ford Foundation sponsored review team, comprising Paul M. Evans, Gowher Rizvi, and Navnita Chadha Behera, conducted extensive interviews on track two dialogues in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka in July and August 1997. The team found a consensus in the region on including 'Young Leaders' in track two activities.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Prof. Hasan Askari Rizvi, Washington, D.C., October 1996.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with a foundation officer, New York, May, 1997.

window of opportunity for many young scholars to advance their careers in the field through contacts and access to leading experts and research fellowships. These ventures have been less successful in developing the scientific expertise as envisaged by its mentors mainly because of a lack of institutional infrastructure in South Asia. According to George Perkovich, “the absence of free, institutionally supported independent views on security issues is a big impediment in creating a viable community of independent analysts”<sup>34</sup>

The summer school, or for that matter any non-official diplomatic effort, is a slow and cumulative process. Small success, as a South Asian scholar put it, is big.<sup>35</sup> To equip the younger generation with essential skills of conflict resolution and enable them to strive for peace in the region is a tall order, these efforts are a step in that direction.

### **Track Two and the India-Pakistan Conflict: Assessment**

In South Asia, different non-official initiatives seem to operate under varying assumptions. The elite track two dialogues are seen as an alternative form of communication when official dialogue is stalled. On the contrary, some organizers believe track two is a mechanism to directly influence governments through lobbying. Yet another variation is the populist belief that the key to reconciliation is the creation of pro-peace constituencies at the grass roots level through people-to-people contacts. This approach assumes that people are generally peace loving and the governments are the real obstacle and hence the task of peace-building should be undertaken outside the government.

In both India and Pakistan the debate on track two is sometimes divided between those who view it as a useful exercise, on the one hand, and those who consider it a western concept and hence irrelevant to the conflict in the subcontinent, on the other. For right wing chauvinists, it is a foreign-inspired conspiracy aimed at favoring the other side, or promoting US foreign policy goals in South Asia. The fact that track two has not achieved anything substantial in the way of conflict resolution gives hawks on both a justification to discredit the process as a futile exercise engineered by malicious foreign interests.<sup>36</sup>

In both the countries, track one and track two rarely interact. The bureaucracies on both sides have an interest in maintaining the status quo and are suspicious of nongovernmental dialogue as it poses a threat to their monopoly over bilateral interactions. Strategic policy making tends to be insulated and impervious to public opinion. However, non-official diplomacy can play a positive, albeit limited, role to the degree it remains free of bureaucratic bottlenecks and embedded institutional interests. It can identify fresh approaches and facilitate a better appreciation of the other side’s perception. In the India-Pakistan conflict, there are sensitive questions of national identity, ideology, and religion—all deeply rooted in subjective perceptions and historical experience. Such “post-conflict peace-building”<sup>37</sup> requires a focus on changing the relationship between the bodies politic of India and Pakistan. Admittedly, private citizens alone cannot transform adversarial relationships between states, but through sustained dialogue they can act politically to induce incremental change in perceptions and explore ideas without committing governments.

### **Impact on Peace and Security in the Subcontinent**

In South Asia the process is still at a nascent stage. It is hard to quantify the impact of such a slow, cumulative process on policy making. The general performance of these initiatives over the past seven years has been encouraging. These activities have more notably led to an improved level of communication between South Asian elites and have broadened regional thinking and understanding of issues. Second, track two has helped disseminate information on regional security matters and has opened new avenues for expression of mutual

<sup>34</sup> Interview with George Perkovich, W. Alton Jones Foundation, July 1997.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Ford Foundation, New York, June 1997.

<sup>36</sup> In a comical satire of track two as an American machination, the editorial cartoon of *The Muslim* (Islamabad) of February 23, 1997 portrayed track two participants as rats following Uncle Sam on the deserted road of track two diplomacy.

<sup>37</sup> See Boutros Boutros-Ghali “An Agenda for Peace,” UN Annual Report, 2d ed., (New York: United Nations, 1995), 61.

concerns and problems. Moreover track two diplomacy has facilitated the gradual erosion of enemy images and stereotypes on both sides. As a senior Pakistani journalist has noted:

The biggest hurdle in the way of a tension-free relationship between India and Pakistan is the distorted perceptions which have been fostered by vested interests on both sides. They are the result mostly of lack of contact and communication at the people-to-people level and which would dissipate if formal and informal exchanges of visits by non-officials are allowed to continue. Some such process has been discernible in recent years.<sup>38</sup>

In a region where intra-regional interaction is minuscule, these nongovernmental activities have considerably increased the levels of interaction providing, decision makers an informal means for communication. Despite obstacles in communication through conventional means like mail and telephone, electronic mail and the internet will facilitate bilateral flows of information, in turn creating greater awareness of different regional issues.

In Pakistan, the ongoing track two process has encouraged a domestic debate on the pros and cons of reconciliation with India. The earlier hesitation of Pakistani scholars and journalists to participate in these dialogues is gradually dissipating. At the public level, there is now a greater recognition in both countries that in the absence of conciliatory attitudes both are bound to lose out on the benefits of normalization.

Also, Indians and Pakistanis attending these activities have generally taken back positive images. The “anecdotes” of track two meetings have helped form a “humanized” perception of the other based on the social and cultural commonalities.<sup>39</sup> The track two experience has become part of the mental baggage of its participants which is bound to play an instrumental role in eroding the “all evil” image of the other side at the public level.

The coverage and discussion of track two activities, however little and biased, in the Indian and Pakistani print media has aroused curiosity bordering on interest in the minds of the ‘attentive public.’<sup>40</sup> The press coverage, both positive and negative, has further heightened the importance attached to representing one’s country in these dialogues. Since track two has become prestigious, providing the most unique opportunities for contact and interaction for people on both sides, this enhancement in the status of track two activities has facilitated the active participation and interest of scholars, analysts, and journalists of all shades of opinion. The proliferation of non-official initiatives and the public outreach of such organizations as the Indo-Pak People’s Forum have in fact made the real difference in creating a pro-dialogue, though small and scattered, constituency, which in due course of time will counter the anti-peace lobbies in both the countries. Perhaps the most commendable contribution of non-official dialogue towards future normalization has been its role in encouraging private contact as a normal attribute of India-Pakistan relations.

### **Policy-makers and Track Two Processes**

Governments in both India and Pakistan have displayed ambivalence and distrust towards the process. For instance, the Pakistani Foreign Office (FO) has tacitly endorsed track two initiatives which have the blessings of a third party, but has summarily dismissed indigenous people-to-people contacts. For example, the Foreign Office criticized the February 1995 Pakistan-India People’s Forum for Peace and Democracy’s convention as “inappropriate” because the FO felt that the “timing of the meeting was not proper as it was being held when the Kashmiris were being brutalized in held Kashmir.” A few days later, however, the Ministry termed the multi-national track two talks held in Goa as “Track Two Diplomacy.”<sup>41</sup>

Coupled with governmental distrust of non-official diplomacy is the dichotomy in Indian and Pakistani approaches to normalization that erect a major hurdle in the way of any conflict resolution effort. For India, negotiations on the Kashmir issue should focus on Islamabad’s alleged abetment to terrorist activities and

<sup>38</sup>M.H. Askari, “Obstacles to Normalization,” *The Dawn*, May 21, 1997.

<sup>39</sup>Informal conversations with several track two participants in Islamabad and Kandy, March, 1997.

<sup>40</sup>The term ‘attentive public’ is derived from Gabriel Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1960), 151.

<sup>41</sup>Saba Khattak, “FO Doesn’t Have a Monopoly on Indo-Pak Dialogue,” *The Friday Times* (Lahore), March 9-15, 1995, 5.

infiltration in the state together with the 'forcible occupation by Pakistan of parts of Kashmir.' Addressing a press conference on his return from Islamabad after the recent official-level dialogue between India and Pakistan, foreign secretary Salman Haider said, "there is no dispute on our part of Jammu and Kashmir but there are issues relating to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK)."<sup>42</sup> Pakistan insists that the dispute be resolved through a plebiscite in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. The Pakistan Foreign Office has repeatedly rejected a bilateral dialogue that precludes Kashmir, including informal people-to-people contacts. A spokesman summed up the Pakistani position on the issue in these words, "Pakistan is ready for talks with India provided the latter agrees to discuss the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir in a meaningful manner. It is necessary that the Kashmir issue should form the basis of any future talks between India and Pakistan."<sup>43</sup>

### Historical Memories and Mistrust

A continuing siege mentality on both sides, fueled by bitter historical memories, deep rooted prejudices and undying mistrust, is a powerful political tool for fanning public passion in the hands of those decision makers and governmental institutions with a vested interest in perpetuating hostilities. Hard-line politicians and policy makers on both sides denigrate the dialogue and promote enemy images, aided in their task of manipulating public opinion by sympathetic segments of the media<sup>44</sup> and years of indoctrination through state controlled educational systems.

In addition, the asymmetry in the subcontinent coupled with India's self-assigned role as the 'regional security manager' makes dialogue even more difficult. Uneven growth in the state and private sectors, combined with India's large size and population, regional and ethnic diversity, scientific and technological advancement, and a comparatively developed civil society do not make for a level playing field. Restrictions on travel between the two countries further diminish opportunities for increased contact. Visa issuance procedures and harassing inquiries by security agencies prevent many from taking part.

### Recommendations: Potential Constituencies and Future Options

A potentially successful dialogue regime in South Asia will have to reach out to pertinent constituencies and individuals left out so far. Core groups with fundamental common interests need to be identified to enlarge the ambit of dialogue. These could include business people and financial managers, scientists, lawyers, scholars, education administrators, students, environmentalists, engineers, school and college teachers, agriculturists, scientists, and the vernacular press. Peace-building strategies can be devised only through a comprehensive and sustained dialogue between groups representing the civil societies in India and Pakistan. All nongovernmental initiatives must inherently serve as evolution grounds for new ideas and fresh approaches rather than a mini-version of official policy postures.

The important first step is to de-emphasize the role of differences in generational perceptions as a yardstick for utility in dialogue. Age is not the sole criterion for dialogue compatibility. The dominant age group in track two has been males in their fifties or above and more recently, people below thirty-five. One way to make track two more representative is to have a balanced mix of different age groups and views in different initiatives.

A second area to emphasize is the role of the vernacular press. The vernacular press was almost completely excluded from non-official diplomacy until recently. The USIS traveling seminar in February 1997 brought together senior editors from the vernacular newspapers of India and Pakistan. Similarly, the Henry L. Stimson Centre has invited a senior Pakistani Urdu journalist for its Visiting Fellows Program in 1998 and is planning

<sup>42</sup> See *The Times of India* (New Delhi), June 26, 1997. The two sides have once again identified Kashmir as one of the issues to be discussed at the foreign secretary level. There is no indication [as of August 1997] however that any side will budge from its traditional maximalist position on the issue.

<sup>43</sup> *The News* (Islamabad), January 26, 1997, 12.

<sup>44</sup> For a detailed account of the mass media's role in India-Pakistan tensions see Navnita Chadha Behera, "Enemy Images: The Media and Indo-Pakistani Tensions," in Michael Krepon and Amit Sevak, eds., *Crisis Prevention, Confidence Building and Reconciliation in South Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 171-198.

to team him up with an Indian counterpart. The significance of the vernacular press lies in its much larger readership in India and Pakistan and hence, its impact on public perception.<sup>45</sup> However, it remains bigoted and jingoistic, serving to perpetuate a particular mind-set by reinforcing hostile images and projecting governmental rhetoric. While the Indian vernacular press is more diverse than its Pakistani counterpart, there is relatively little coverage of foreign policy issues and little impact on New Delhi's policy perception. The Urdu press in Pakistan, on the contrary, is important and influential in foreign policy issues, especially on the India-Pakistan conflict.

The lack of contact with the other side further diminishes the chances for objective coverage of news. In addition to cross-border contact, an internal dialogue is a prerequisite for creating a favorable opinion within the fourth estate. Track two groups can lead the way through seminars and op-eds designed to inform, sensitize, and educate the press about security issues and conflict resolution. An across the board dialogue for English and vernacular journalists would be more effective even if a small percentage of the journalists are aware of the importance of nongovernmental channels of confidence building.

A third important step would be the promotion of an economic dialogue. Peace is essential for business and, conversely, increased business ties may produce peace dividends. In a comprehensive study of the prospects for better India-Pakistan economic ties, Aurangzeb Khan observes:

As bilateral trade expands and both economies progressively integrate and as the benefits become larger and more evident, policy makers will become aware of the importance of sustaining and further consolidating bilateral economic and political ties. As political ties improve, the level of bilateral tension and mutual suspicion may subside . . . it may prompt both governments to start channeling resources away from their bloated defence establishments to their acutely neglected social, infrastructural and other developmental spheres.<sup>46</sup>

India and Pakistan fail to exploit the advantage of cheap production inputs in a range of products, lower freight costs, and shorter delivery time stemming from geographical contiguity. However, unofficial trade through cross-border smuggling and routing through third countries like Dubai and Singapore amounts to one billion dollars per annum in each category.<sup>47</sup> Under the World Trade Organization (WTO), India and Pakistan are under obligation to grant Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to each other. India has granted MFN status to Pakistan, whereas Islamabad is delaying the inevitable for political reasons. The disparity in the industrial sectors of both countries places Pakistan at a disadvantage. Pakistani business lobbies are apprehensive that cheaper Indian goods will flood Pakistani markets and harm their legitimate business interests. While some of these concerns are valid, withholding MFN status only benefits smugglers when Pakistani industries and consumers can benefit from procuring Indian raw materials and intermediate capital and consumer goods at a much lower price. In addition, the government can collect substantial revenues otherwise lost to smuggling.<sup>48</sup>

In large measure economic compulsions are driving both India and Pakistan toward rapprochement. South Asia ranks as one of the poorest regions of the world. Home to half the world's poor, it has unenviable human development indices at par with sub-Saharan Africa. The global trend toward economic integration and transnational interactions is a reality South Asia has defied at a high price. The business community in the two countries must be brought into the track two fold to create a nongovernmental business forum for mutual interaction and cooperation. A sustained South Asia business dialogue will not only supplement efforts at the official level but will also help in continuing business relations and providing a forum for addressing mutual concerns and grievances in the event of improved business ties. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Punjab-Haryana-Delhi Chambers of

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<sup>45</sup> The vernacular press comprising Hindi and other regional languages accounts for 80 percent of the readership in India (FBIS Media Guide: India, February 1996). Similarly in Pakistan the two leading Urdu dailies Jang and Nawai-Waqt have a circulation five times larger than the combined readership of Dawn, the News, the Muslim, the Nation and Frontier Post. (FBIS Media Guide: Pakistan, February 1996).

<sup>46</sup> Aurangzeb Z. Khan, "Confidence Building Through Free Trade and Joint Ventures," in Sony Devabhaktuni, ed., *Regional Cooperation in South Asia: Prospects and Problems*, Occasional Paper 32 (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Centre, February 1997), 47.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>48</sup> This argument is made by Aurangzeb Khan in *ibid.*, 53.

Commerce are already striving for increased regional trade.<sup>49</sup> More private initiatives and exchange opportunities will increase the premium on opening of bilateral trade.<sup>50</sup>

Fourth, there should be parliament-to-parliament initiatives. With democracy consolidating its gains in Pakistan, the civilian political leadership is emerging as a powerful actor in the political system. Parliament members from India and Pakistan rarely interact, let alone discuss bilateral problems. Legislators from both countries can capitalize on their influence to shape positive approaches to outstanding issues through mutual discussions and contact. An inter-parliamentary union for South Asia which would include legislators from all SAARC member countries could help provide a head start for private dialogue in turn creating a conducive environment for official talks. The International Centre for Peace Initiatives (ICPI), a Bombay based NGO, has been collaborating with Parliamentarians for Global Action for organizing workshops on conflict resolution for South Asian parliamentarians.<sup>51</sup> The ICPI brought out a handbook on conflict resolution as a result of the workshops. The Henry L. Stimson Centre's Visiting Fellows Program can provide parliamentarians the opportunity to interact with their counterparts and with American political leaders. Similarly organizations like the Regional Centre for Security Studies (RCSS), Colombo and other track two channels can provide technical support, information, independent analyses, and data on national and regional security matters to South Asian parliaments to encourage a much needed debate on these sensitive issues.

In both India and Pakistan extremist political elements are a major hurdle in the way of tension reduction. Moonis Ahmar suggests, "a dialogue at the level of hard-line leaders will help them understand different issues in a rational manner."<sup>52</sup> Similarly Waslekar has argued "if Jamaat and BJP leaders were to meet and exchange views they might surprise themselves by discovering a few common interests."<sup>53</sup> It remains to be seen whether the Jamaat or the BJP will agree to such a dialogue. The hard-line leaders in both countries have capitalized on the anti-enemy sentiment. Castigation at the hands of their opponents for 'talking to the enemy' is the last thing these leaders would risk for the sake of peace and cooperation, although some of the relatively moderate elements from these groups could be included in a larger parliament-to-parliament initiative.

Fifth, academic and other public institutions need to be linked. The level of institutional interaction between India and Pakistan is virtually nonexistent. While different public and private organizations collaborate with institutions outside the region institutional linkages in the region are almost negligible. The time for institutionalizing the nongovernmental dialogue process is ripe. Both India and Pakistan have agreed in principle to remove visa restrictions and encourage friendly exchanges in different areas. The Gujral government has liberalized its visa policy for Pakistani businessmen, students, academics, journalists, and artists, and Islamabad will hopefully follow suit. With a relative letup in governmental restrictions on private contact the scope for testing out new initiatives like joint research projects and study tours is widening.

Institutionalized contacts between universities and research institutes, such as student-faculty exchange between the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi and Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad, could be inaugurated, followed by similar joint programs for other universities and colleges. While the prospects of such a dialogue will remain limited in the face of official control of syllabi, such initiatives can create the possibility of more objective classroom discourse in history and politics at the school and college level. For a more fruitful dialogue, it is essential that textbooks in India and Pakistan be objectively revised and a dialogue aimed at rectifying distorted interpretations of history could be initiated. Student exchange programs like regular summer

<sup>49</sup> The Punjab, Haryana and Delhi Chambers of Commerce set up an Indo-Pakistan desk in 1982. It actively lobbies for improvement of economic ties between both countries. The desk organizes exchanges with various chambers of commerce in Pakistan and helps in arranging visits to India by individual Pakistani businessmen. The PHD Chambers has presented a paper on India-Pakistan business prospects to the Neemrana group. Similarly the SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industry has worked with the SAARC Secretariat since 1989 and has facilitated meetings for business people from South Asian countries.

<sup>50</sup> For potential economic CBMs between India and Pakistan see Punam Barua, "Economic CBMs between India and Pakistan," in Michael Krepon and Amit Sevak, eds., *Crisis Prevention, Confidence Building and Reconciliation in South Asia*, 157-167. See also Aurangzeb Khan, "Confidence Building Through Free Trade," 52-71.

<sup>51</sup> The first workshop was held in May 1994 and the second in Maldives in May 1995. The second workshop was attended by thirty political leaders from the region including ten serving or former ministers.

<sup>52</sup> Moonis Ahmar, *The Road to Peace in South Asia: Lessons for India and Pakistan from the Arab-Israeli Peace Process* (Urbana: Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, University of Illinois, August 1996), 49.

<sup>53</sup> Waslekar, *Track Two Diplomacy*, 9.

camps for school and college students will prove invaluable in countering the formation of morbid images. A free flow of ideas and information through educational exchanges would strike at the root of distorted perceptions and images accumulated over the past five decades. At the same time, a sizable group of future scholars, civil servants, diplomats, journalists, engineers, and scientists wedded to the idea of peace and reconciliation would be exposed to conflict resolution techniques. Similarly, regular NGO-to-NGO and think tank-to-think tank dialogues could bridge the institutional vacuum and weaken the sociocultural alienation and malice that exists on both sides.

Sixth, a grass-roots effort to mobilize public opinion and create mass awareness in favor of peace remains important. Some such efforts are on the agenda of a unique people-to-people initiative known as the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy. This initiative could serve as a catalyst for future citizens diplomacy. The Forum holds annual meetings and has organized local chapters in major Indian and Pakistani cities.

The People's Forum represents an indigenous initiative undertaken by well-meaning individuals from both societies without any foreign or governmental funding. A diverse group that has expanded over the past three years, the forum includes former civil servants, academics, journalists, artists, trade unionists, politicians, and social activists. The last convention, held in Calcutta in December 1996, brought together 300 Pakistanis and Indians, a truly historical event in itself. While the implementation of the Forum's programs is yet to be seen, it is a civil society-based initiative that aims to work at the grass-roots level to create awareness and exert public pressure on the governments for the realization of its objectives.<sup>54</sup> The Forum has released a collection of alternative writings: "Other Voices from Pakistan." Supporters argue that the Forum can provide the sociocultural foundation for a comprehensive confidence-building regime in South Asia. The task of such confidence-building public diplomacy is to modify or reshape the hostile public perception of the 'other side.'

Differences over agenda and lack of implementation of grassroots work have led a number of members to leave the Forum. The Forum has come under fire in the Urdu press for promoting an 'unpatriotic cause'.<sup>55</sup> Despite minor problems, the Forum has provided opportunities to people from all walks of life to take part in a sincere trust building exercise.

Finally, both regional and non-regional supporters of the dialogue process must face the issue of funding. It goes without saying that the expansion and maintenance of a comprehensive nongovernmental dialogue in South Asia requires sustained financial support. So far, American Foundations like Ford, W. Alton Jones, and Rockefeller along with German, Japanese, Canadian and Australian organizations have borne the burden of funding non-official conflict resolution in the region. Funding has not matched the high goals set for the process. "There is little disagreement [in the region] that there are more good projects than available funding."<sup>56</sup>

Not unexpectedly, the involvement of foreign funding and expertise has raised controversy as to the motives of the organizers. The suspicion has been more pronounced with U.S. money. To American funders, this suspicion reflects a colonial mind-set. To South Asians, this funding is an effort to force American nonproliferation terms on the region. The fact remains that non-official dialogue in South Asia would not have taken place without foreign initiative and funding. Official visa regulations, logistics, lack of indigenous financial support, and a score of other organizational and political problems pose a major hurdle to any such activity. With regional dialogue efforts now in place the question of external interference can be addressed in several ways. Funding can be rationalized by bringing more non-U.S. NGOs and foundations to fund these

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<sup>54</sup> The Forum's objectives are, *inter alia* regional disarmament, a ban on fissile materials production, balanced reduction of conventional forces, mobilization against violation of human rights in Jammu and Kashmir, greater federalization, decentralization, empowerment of civil society, removal of myths and prejudices in the educational system.

<sup>55</sup> The Islamabad chapter of the India-Pakistan People's Forum organized a seminar on "Prithvi and Our Response" in Islamabad in February 1996. The Urdu Press came out lashing at the speakers with headlines calling for their immediate execution for engaging in the worst kind of slander against the armed forces and Islam. The speakers were deliberately misquoted and demands were made for initiating treason proceedings against them. The news reports were followed by scathing editorials and statements from self-serving politicians condemning their unpatriotic behavior. For the vicious media campaign against the Forum see *Jasaarat, Al-Akhbar, Khabrain, Assas, Pakistan* of 11 February 1996. *Jang and Nawai Waqt* reported the events quite objectively but their editorials were no less sparring.

<sup>56</sup> Behera *et al*, *Beyond Boundaries*, 47.

activities. For instance, German and Japanese funding will partially neutralize these concerns.<sup>57</sup> Similarly American funding can be utilized more efficiently if the dialogues are run by South Asians themselves with minimum foreign presence. In the summer schools and other dialogues with foreign faculty, perceptions of external intrusion are further heightened when the proceedings are dominated by American experts “preaching virtues of nonproliferation and arms control.”<sup>58</sup> Perhaps a balanced mix of regional and international faculty will help defuse these perceptions.

Eventually, a major portion of the financial support for these activities will have to originate from within the region. At present, it is extremely difficult to generate indigenous resources for track two efforts in South Asia.<sup>59</sup> Security and foreign policy related issues fall within well-defined areas of governmental control. In addition, the asymmetry in the private sectors in India and Pakistan makes it even harder to elicit support in Pakistan. Reciprocity puts Pakistanis at a disadvantage and increases their reliance on foreign sources.<sup>60</sup>

### **Conclusion: The Future of Non-Official Diplomacy**

India and Pakistan have maintained an “ugly stability”<sup>61</sup> based on a nonweaponized nuclear deterrence. This uneasy deterrence stability does not, however, preclude future crises propelled by threatening military exercises, air-space violations, low intensity conflicts, covert intelligence operations, and political crises. During periods of high tensions, track two channels can be used by governments to send out ‘feelers’ and receive feedback. The only source of information available to governments regarding the other side’s actions and intentions is intelligence reports which tend to be biased and alarmist. Secondly, track two channels could help prevent crises by providing independent information to the broader public and governments through press writings, seminars, and informal contact with respective governments.

The Male summit meeting between Nawaz Sharif and I. K. Gujral may have ushered in a new era in India-Pakistan relations. In the subsequent Delhi and Islamabad rounds of Foreign Secretary level talks, the two sides have identified issues to be discussed in an integrated manner with a mechanism including working groups at appropriate levels. Kashmir will be discussed at the Foreign Secretary level along with peace, security, and CBMs. Both sides have agreed to prevent hostile propaganda and provocation against each other and to promote friendly exchanges in various fields. The two prime ministers are talking to each other over a hotline. Never before have the atmospherics surrounding bilateral official talks been better. What is even more encouraging is that despite heightened tensions resulting from alleged Indian air intrusions, the alleged deployment of the Prithvi missile and the killing of a Pakistani military officer in cross-border firing, the talks went ahead. Both leaders have shown considerable pragmatism and have the will to put an end to decades of acrimony and hostility. It remains to be seen how long will Mr. Gujral’s shaky United Front coalition government last. However the stage for sustained and constructive official dialogue is set.

Non-official diplomacy may not be a panacea for the mistrust amassed over decades of hostility, but it provides a unique opportunity to the citizens of India and Pakistan to prevent the bitterness of the past from ruining the future. The future role of track two in South Asia may be minimal without a concurrent improvement in relations at the official level, a sustained multi-faceted dialogue will help build confidence and provide information to both sides on each other’s perceptions, potential solutions to outstanding disputes and dangerous courses to avoid. This in effect will ease domestic tensions and hostility and pave the way for enlightened political action.

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<sup>57</sup> Depending on the source of funding and sensitivity of issues, the contrast in the attitudes of participants is clearly evident in the summer and winter schools. The RCSS Winter School on ‘Non-Military Sources of Conflict in South Asia’ was funded by the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, a German NGO, and was run almost entirely by South Asians. During informal interactions, there was hardly any discussion amongst the participants of any ‘American’ or ‘imperialistic’ agenda as is the case in the summer schools.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with an Indian Scholar, Kandy, March 1997.

<sup>59</sup> The International Centre for Peace Initiatives in Bombay is an exception as it draws financial support for its activities from indigenous business sources.

<sup>60</sup> Behera *et al*, *Beyond Boundaries*, 48.

<sup>61</sup> See Ashley J. Tellis, “Stability in South Asia,” Documented Briefing, (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation 1997), 5.

