

“Crisis Management Between India  
and Pakistan : A Study of The 1987  
Brasstacks and 1990 Kashmir Crises.”

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## CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "CRISIS MANAGEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN : A STUDY OF THE 1987 BRASSTACKS AND 1990 KASHMIR CRISES" submitted by Mr. ANURAG YADAV in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Philosophy We certify that this is entirely his own work and has not been considered for any other degree either in this or any other university.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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DEDICATED TO

*My Parents who raised me strong enough to face any challenge  
and to my best teacher  
Kanti. Bajpai  
who has shown the way to succeed through any challenge.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explain the origins, nature and effects of the two crises that occurred between India and Pakistan in 1987 and 1990. The study will be limited to an analysis of these two crises. There are three main reasons for explaining these crises, the so-called Brasstacks and 1990 crises. First, we have from a specific interest in studying the processes that had led to these crises. Second, although a number of interpretations about the two South Asian crises exist, none provides a comprehensive explanation and analysis of their origins. Third, the issue of understanding the crisis behaviour of the two states is still relevant because of the continuing conflictual relationship between the two states. Indeed, it gains importance in the wake of the nuclear tests and possible weaponisation after May 1998.

### **Theoretical Perspective of the Crises**

As is true with most important concepts in social sciences, there is no generally accepted definition of international crisis. Thus, each researcher has defined the concept in a manner suitable to his preferred methodological orientation or the chosen focus of his study. Assessing these definitions in the *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Science*, James Robinson concludes that they “are either extraordinarily precise and specific, and hence, not widely applicable to a variety of situations, organizations and subjects; or they are unrestricted in meaning

that, in this case, it is difficult to distinguish crisis from non-crisis.”<sup>1</sup> Most of these definitions have a number of elements in common though.<sup>2</sup> This includes the nature of perceived threats, heightened anxieties on the part of decision-makers, the expectation of possible violence, and the belief that important or far-reaching decisions are required and must be made on the basis of incomplete information in a stressful environment.

Are there any standard criteria by which to define crises? Richard N. Lebow provides three criteria: First, policy-makers perceive that the action or threatened action of another international actor seriously impairs concrete national interests, the country's bargaining reputation, or their own ability to remain in power. Second, policy-makers perceive that any actions on their part designed to counter this threat (capitulation aside) will raise a significant prospect of war. Third, policy-makers perceive themselves to be acting under time constraints.<sup>3</sup> Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld also suggest similar criteria. Thus, according to them, in a crisis the perceptions of the “highest decision-makers” of a state include the following: (1) a threat to basic values.

(2) the awareness of finite time for response to the external value threat.

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<sup>1</sup> James A. Robinson, “Crises,” *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Science* (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1968), Vol.3, pp. 510-513.

<sup>2</sup> See, Oran Young, *The Politics of Force: Bargaining During International Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp.6-24.

<sup>3</sup> Richard N. Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp.7-12.

- (3) a high probability of involvement in military hostilities.<sup>4</sup>

Before we proposed to an analysis of the two crises of 1987 and 1990 within this theoretical framework, a brief history of the previous crises between India and Pakistan is essential to understand the crisis pattern between the two states.

### **A Brief History of Crises Between India and Pakistan Before 1987**

Soon after their independence from British Empire, the two states fought an undeclared war in 1947-48 over the issue of Kashmir. A cease-fire was managed after India took the issue to the United Nations. Since the enforced peace was accepted only conditionally, the cease-fire line has been a source of tension.

A crisis of a different sort erupted in 1951 when a dispute arose regarding water distribution of the river water flowing from India to Pakistan. This crisis did not result in an armed conflict as both states accepted the mediation of the World Bank for the sharing of water, but tensions rose high.

In early 1965, the two states fought a mini-war over a boundary dispute in the Rann of Kutch. The crisis was solved by both sides agreeing to accept the verdict of the International Court of Justice. But it did not cool tempers or the urge to settle the issue of Kashmir by the use of force. In September 1965, Pakistan

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, *Crisis, Conflict and Instability* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1989), p.5.

launched 'Operation Gibraltar' in the hope of liberating Kashmir. India retaliated by crossing the international border and a full scale war broke out. A cease-fire was arranged within the auspices of the United Nation. The Soviet Union offered to mediate and, at Tashkent, President Mohammad Ayub Khan and Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri signed the 'Tashkent declaration'. The accord provided for the withdrawal of troops to positions held before the hostility broke out. Apart from the proposals for re-establishing trade and diplomatic relations and promotion of "friendly relations between the two countries," the declaration also reaffirmed India's and Pakistan's "obligations under the [UN] charter not to have recourse to force and to settle their disputes through peaceful means."<sup>5</sup>

The peace could not last for long. In 1971, a crisis erupted between the two states over the issue of East Pakistan. The crisis finally led to a war which resulted in the break up of Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh. The Simla agreement was signed between the two states. The Simla agreement is very comprehensive and provides for a number of things: refraining from the threat or use of force; restoration of communications; withdrawal of troops; and, most significantly bilateralism to settle differences.<sup>6</sup>

An analysis of the past crises between India and Pakistan reveals the following important points: First, the ideological factor regarding Kashmir has been

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<sup>5</sup> A. Appadorai, ed., *Selected Documents in India's Foreign Policy and Relations* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), Vol.2, P.388.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.443.



the most important issue between the two states. Sumit Ganguly points out that “war is most likely to occur in the subcontinent when the ideological commitments of either side are threatened in a fundamental fashion. Neither side was capable of overlooking basic threats to its ideological underpinning. In 1947-48, the possession of Kashmir was crucial for both states. Just prior to the 1965 war, Pakistan recognized a fundamental ideological challenge from India because India was attempting to integrate Kashmir ...Finally in the late sixties, it was weakening of the ideological bond between the two halves of Pakistan that led to civil strife within the state and ultimately spilled over to India ...Thus in all three cases threats to the ideological integrity of each state played a crucial role in precipitating conflict.”<sup>7</sup>

Second, the management of the conflicts reveals that both states have shown some sort of accommodative behaviour immediately after the conflicts. Thus, both states withdrew their troops to the normal position once the conflict was over. Whether successful or not there were attempts at least in principle to establish communication.

Third, the experience of past conflicts shows that although the two states were in different blocs during the Cold War years, the U.S. as well as the Soviet Union did not play any influential role in any armed conflict. Finally, after the war of 1971, “India’s unquestioned military might made it pointless for any Pakistani regime to contemplate an attack on India...[thus] recognising its inferiority in

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<sup>7</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia: Indo-Pakistani Conflicts Since 1947* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1988), p.12.

conventional warfare, Pakistan embarked on a programme of nuclear armament after 1971. The programme received considerable impetus after India's nuclear explosion of 1974."<sup>8</sup>

After the war of 1971, there was no hostility between the two states for almost a decade. However, things began to change during the 1980s. In 1984, the two states entered into a low intensity but rather costly armed conflict over the issue of the Siachen Glacier. There are at least three instances before the Brasstacks crisis in 1987, when crisis alarm has rung.<sup>9</sup> In 1987 and 1990 India and Pakistan witnessed two crises which appear to have followed a basic pattern and which point to some broader propositions about the characteristics of crisis interaction between the two states.

### **The 1987 Brasstacks Crisis**

The precipitating event of the 1987 crisis was the decision of the Indian government to conduct a major combined-armed military exercise involving nearly one-half of India's armed forces. Though announced in advance, this exercise was to be carried out near Pakistan's border in India's training areas in the Rajasthan desert region. Pakistan felt the Indian exercise to be threatening and responded by moving major army units forward. This created an environment of hostility as India also put its forces on

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<sup>8</sup> Ganguly, *The Origins of War*, op.cit., p.147.

<sup>9</sup> See, Kanti P. Bajpai, P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Stephen P. Cohen and Sumit Ganguly, *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995), pp.9-10..

alert. Thus, during the ensuing weeks of January 1987, the forces of the two sides continued to confront each other in war time positions. The crisis was finally resolved after the holding of high-level communications between the heads of the two states. The crisis also assumed a nuclear dimension to it after an alleged press interview with A.Q. Khan, in which he threatened India.<sup>10</sup>

There is no agreement among analysts about the nature of Brasstacks crisis. Ravi Rikhye notes: "Brasstacks was to remind [Pakistan] of its vulnerability to India's superior might."<sup>11</sup> For K.Subrahmanyam, Brasstacks was a routine military exercise and Pakistan's "hue and cry" were "meant to sent some signals to India, the Superpowers and perhaps the Khalistani extremists."<sup>12</sup> For Samina Yasmeen, Brasstacks crisis was used by the two governments "as a technique to divert their respective population's attention away from domestic problems."<sup>13</sup> Although Bajpai et al. suggest that Brasstacks "reflected and came about because of underlying India-Pakistan mistrust and suspicion,"<sup>14</sup> this study also highlights the point that "even among the authors of this study, there are also overlapping and not quite identical interpretations as to the significance of the 1987 crisis."<sup>15</sup> This brief review

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<sup>10</sup> *The Observer*(London), March 1, 1987.

<sup>11</sup> See Ravi Rikhye, *The War That Never Was* (Delhi: Chanakya, 1988), p.19.

<sup>12</sup> K.Subrahmanyam, "Pak Troops on Indian Border: A Way Out of a Dilemma," *The Times of India*, January 24,1987.

<sup>13</sup> Samina Yasmeen, "India and Pakistan: Why the Latest Exercise in Brinkmanship?," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.34, no.1,1988, p.69.

<sup>14</sup> Bajpai et.al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op.cit., p.95.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.vii.

clearly reveals that there is no agreement about the nature of the 1987 Brasstacks crisis.

### The 1990 Kashmir Crisis

During the last quarter of the year 1989, Pakistan undertook a military exercise similar to Brasstacks. The exercise, called "Zarb-I-Momin", involved around 200,000 personnel. During the same period and in the early months of 1990, the insurgency on India's side of Kashmir reached unprecedented heights, and India believed that this insurgency was being fuelled by support from Pakistan. The concern in India was that Pakistani military units were allegedly not returning to peacetime deployments after major exercises in November-December 1989. In the ensuing period of greatest tension, from perhaps mid February to early June, Indian fear of direct Pakistani military intervention to support the Kashmiri insurgency grew. As Indian troops moved closer to the border, making clearer the scale of those deployments, Pakistan's perception of threat reached a maximum as well. On both sides, statements by political leaders served only to exacerbate the crisis. These official pronouncements were matched by semi-official analysis and commentary in both countries' press. The crisis also assumed a nuclear dimension after the sensational publication of reports about a "nuclear war threat."<sup>16</sup> Finally, the crisis was diffused ostensibly after the mediation of the United States.

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<sup>16</sup> James Adams, "Pakistan's Nuclear War Threat," *The Sunday Times*, May 27, 1990.

The crisis of 1990 has become very controversial because of the nuclear factor. Analyst like Seymour Hersh argues that “in the view of American intelligence, the weak governments in place in Pakistan and India in May of 1990 were willing to run any risk -including nuclear war-to avoid a disastrous military, and thus political, defeat in Kashmir.”<sup>17</sup> For Subrahmanyam, the May 1990 episode was a “non-crisis... artificially created by the Washington bureaucracy...[which] brought into open the Pakistani nuclear capability and [thus] to withhold the certificate of not possessing a nuclear device.”<sup>18</sup> The report of The HenryL.Stimson Center on the crisis noted: “the threat of nuclear confrontation was not great, nor were India and Pakistan eager to have another conventional war. Nevertheless, there were very worrisome possibilities of a ratcheting up of tensions in the absence of a U.S. initiative.”<sup>19</sup>

The above interpretations reveal the disagreement among analysts about the nature of the 1990 crisis as well. Thus, an overview of the two crises leads one to ask the following questions:

When did one state become aware of the threatening movements made by other state’s forces, movements which triggered the crises? Why did the hotline and other channels of communications remain unused during the crucial phase of the

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<sup>17</sup> Seymour M. Hersh, “On the Nuclear Edge,” *The New Yorker*, March 23, 1993. pp.56-73.

<sup>18</sup> K.Subrahmanyam, “The Non-Crisis of 1990,” *The Economic Times*, June 6, 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Krepon and Mishi Faruqee, eds., *Conflict Prevention and Confidence - Building Measures in South Asia: The 1990 Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L.Stimson Center, 1994), Occasional Paper No. 17, p.v.

crises? Was there actually a crisis or did the states panick unnecessarily? Another dimension to be addressed is the role of the nuclear factor. Was there nuclear signalling during these crises? How far was the decision of the two states influenced by it? And what was the effect of these crises on the nuclear politics of the two states? Finally, the two crises raise important questions about the capability of both India and Pakistan to drift into or create and then to manage a crisis. This leads to the issue of conflict avoidance and confidence-building measures. What role can CBMs play in the relationship? How effective have these measures been ?This study tries to answer these questions. It is organised as follows:

Chapter 1 focuses on the precipitating events and initial build up of the Brasstacks crisis. How did the two states respond and what were the reciprocal reactions? What factors led to the winding down of the crisis? Finally, the chapter looks at the nature of the crisis. Chapter 2 analyses the events leading to the crisis of 1990. The nature of the crisis, and the crisis behaviour of the two states are also once again discussed. Chapter 3 focuses on the crisis management and crisis prevention mechanisms between the two states. Here the role and influence of confidence-building measures have been analysed.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Brasstacks Crisis of 1987**

Brasstacks was the code-name given to a major combined-arms military exercise conducted by the Indian army during 1986-87.<sup>1</sup> This massive military exercise (involving nearly one - half of India's armed forces) was to be carried out near Pakistan's border in India's training areas in the Rajasthan desert region. Concerned about Indian intentions, Pakistan responded by moving major army units forward and apparently taking steps to place all of its forces on a higher state of alert. This led in turn to reciprocal steps by India to increase its military readiness by occupying war-time deployment positions on the India - Pakistan border. Thus, within a short period of time Brasstacks, which was a military exercise turned, into a major crisis between the two states, involving a massive build-up of troops on the border. Before the crisis was resolved, a nuclear dimension had been added because of an alleged interview with Pakistan's chief nuclear scientist Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan, In which Khan declared that "Nobody can undo Pakistan or take us for granted. We are here to stay and let it be clear that we shall use the bomb if our existence is threatened."<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will analyse the course of events that turned Brasstacks, a military exercise, into a crisis. In the following subsections of the chapter, the

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<sup>1</sup> Manoj Joshi, "From Maps to the Field," *The Hindu*, March 29, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> *The Observer*(Loodon), March 1, 1987.

background of the crisis is discussed in terms of the global, regional and domestic context in which the decision to conduct exercise Brasstacks was taken. This will be followed by a factual summary of the course of events that followed during the Brasstacks crisis. Finally an attempt will be made to understand the nature of the crisis.

## Background of the Crisis

In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and a new era of rivalry between the two superpowers began. This renewed Cold War affected the regional balance in South Asia significantly. Pakistan became a front-line state for the United States to oppose the communist occupation of Afghanistan. Pakistan received massive military and economic aid from the United States.<sup>3</sup> India became very suspicious about the amounts and types of military assistance. New Delhi argued that Pakistan was acquiring state-of-the-art weapons that were far in excess of its legitimate defence requirements and were to be ultimately used against India and not Afghanistan. Thus the issue of giving F-16s caused great concern in India. The M48A5 tanks, it was pointed out, were less suitable for mountain warfare, i.e., against the Soviet or Afghanistan forces, than for wars in the plains, i.e. against India. Similarly, the purchase of the 155mm howitzers instead of the 105mm

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<sup>3</sup> In 1981, the US agreed to provide Pakistan U.S.\$3.2 billion of aid for six years. In March 1986, it concluded another agreement with Islamabad. Accordingly, Pakistan was to receive U.S.\$ 4.02 billion of aid over a period of five years beginning in September 1987. See Robert G. Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security Under Zia, 1977-1988 : The Policy Imperatives of a Peripheral Asian State* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1991), pp.101-113.



howitzer indicated that Pakistan intended to use them against India and not against Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> In response to the growing military capability of Pakistan, India also started to modernise its army. This led to an arm race between the two states. A notable analyst of the region, Robert G. Wirsing comments, "...the sharp intensification of Superpower confrontation that developed in the South Asian region in the wake of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan... had led to a situation in which the United States and the Soviet Union found themselves cast as direct competitors in the subcontinent arm race. This situation had very little precedent in the region."<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the Afghanistan problem, another problem in the region was the intensification of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Colombo's invitation to Pakistani, British and even Israeli military advisers caused much concern to the Indian Government. For strategic reasons India could not afford to allow the presence of a third party in Sri Lanka. India repeatedly offered assistance to the Sri Lankan Government and this ultimately led to the Indo- Sri Lanka accord of July 1987. Although this accord was signed after the Brasstacks crisis, its importance lies in the fact that it highlights the nature of India's regional policy, which aimed to stop any third party involvement in the region for the purpose of maintaining order.

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<sup>4</sup> Peter W. Galbraith, *United States Security Interests in South Asia (Pakistan-India)*, A staff report prepared for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 98Th Congress, 2nd session, April 1984, (Washington, DC, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security Under Zia*, op.cit., p.82.

Apart from these indirect global and regional influences on the two states, the direct bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan was also witnessing a very uncertain phase. On the positive side, both states signed an accord in 1985, according to which it was agreed that there would be no attack on the nuclear facilities of the two states. However, the list of negative trend in the relationship of the two states was much longer. Before the Brasstacks crisis, there are at least three instances in the 1980s when a crisis has been reported. First, in 1984, General Zia-Ul-Haq informed *The Wall Street Journal* that India might emulate Israel's attack upon Iraq's Osiraq nuclear facilities to destroy Pakistan's atomic installations.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, a *New York Times* story described information presented to the United States Senate Intelligence Committee that Indira Gandhi had considered attacking Pakistan's nuclear facilities.<sup>7</sup> Dean Hinton, the United States ambassador to Pakistan, stated in a public lecture in Lahore that the United States would be "responsive" if India attacked Pakistan. This assurance was later repeated by James Buckley, the United States Under-Secretary of State, in Islamabad, which led to Indira Gandhi's seeking verbal assurances from the Soviet Union, and the latter agreeing that American actions were a threat to India and the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup>

The second instance came a year later, when Zain Noorani, Pakistan's Defence Minister, said that an attack upon Kahuta would be construed as an act of

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<sup>6</sup> *India Today*, July 29, 1984

<sup>7</sup> *The Statesman*, September 29, 1984

<sup>8</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 8, 1984.

war.<sup>9</sup> This statement was apparently made because of unconfirmed reports that Indian planes had conducted exercises simulating an attack upon Kahuta and had actually overflown the facility. Again, diplomatic representations were made to New Delhi, and (it is believed) Moscow and Beijing were included in an effort at preventive diplomacy.

Again, in 1986, Pakistani officials informed the United States that Pakistan had been threatened by the Soviet Union if it did not close down its nuclear programme. Although sceptical, the United States responded by sending a d'émarche to the Soviets. The latter replied that it had not threatened but was actually echoing American concern about proliferation in South Asia.<sup>10</sup>

All the above instances signify that by the first half of the 1980s the nuclear factor had become quite controversial. On India's part, the nuclear test of May 1974, had already demonstrated its capability to the world. However it also posed a significant challenge to Pakistan's nuclear programme and ambition. For Pakistan nuclear weapons were almost inevitably seized upon as an equaliser and the best insurance against growing Indian military power. The main problem of Islamabad was its relationship with the United States over the issue of nuclear proliferation. The United States Congress had passed significant laws to stop aid to any state which was pursuing a nuclear weapon programme. The Afghanistan problem

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<sup>9</sup> See, Kanti P. Bajpai, P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Stephen P. Cohen, and Sumit Ganguly, *Brasstacks and Beyond : Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995), P.10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11 and pp. 76-77.

provided a crucial leverage for Pakistan as the United State's non-proliferation policy became entangled in its containment policy. Wirsing observes, "...as long as Washington attached importance to the struggle for Afghanistan, Pakistan because of its pivotal brokerage role in the war, could afford a certain indifference to U.S. anti-proliferation policy."<sup>11</sup> Thus, whereas the Reagan administration advanced the argument that bolstering Pakistan's conventional forces against the Soviet threat might increase its sense of security and thus it would forgo a nuclear weapon programme, the government in Islamabad went ahead with its programme to make it self a nuclear power.

In February 1984, Pakistan's atomic establishment chief Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan said that Pakistan could enrich uranium and produce its own atomic bomb if necessary.<sup>12</sup> In March 1985 Zia said, "We have the capability of making a bomb, or something like that"<sup>13</sup>. In September 1986, Pakistan signed a comprehensive agreement with China for peaceful nuclear co-operation. Sino-Pakistan collaboration on the nuclear issue was significant, as there were reports indicating Chinese help to the Pakistani nuclear weapon programme.<sup>14</sup> Thus, during the 1980s Pakistan was advancing towards the capability to make an atomic bomb.

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<sup>11</sup> Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security Under Zia*, op.cit., p.109.

<sup>12</sup> *Nawa-I-Waqt*, February 10, 1984.

<sup>13</sup> See, Ravi Shastri and Savita Dutt, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapon Programme: A Chronology (1955-1990)," *Strategic Analysis*, February 1991, pp. 1323.

<sup>14</sup> See, *Ibid.*, pp. 1326-1327.

Other than the nuclear issue, the most important matter that became a point of confrontation between the two states during the 1980s was the dispute over the Siachen Glacier.<sup>15</sup> The Indian Army got control of the Glacier in April 1984. Since then, it had become a point of low intensity armed conflict between the two states. The conflict had proved to be very costly, both in terms of men as well as material, because of the high and extremely difficult terrain of the Glacier.

Another issue which was a point of controversy between the two states involved their mutual allegations about interference in each other's internal affairs. India blamed Pakistan for its support to the terrorist movement in Punjab, whereas Pakistan blamed India for the rise of the secessionist movement in Sindh.

In short, the external environment as well as the bilateral relationship between the two states were not conducive to a stable relationship and there were various issues between the two states that led to an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and threat about each other's intentions and actions.<sup>16</sup>

As far as domestic politics is concerned, two issues could be included as having a significant impact on the relationship of the two states. At the macro level, there was the type of regime in the two states. India had a government in power with an unprecedented majority. In Pakistan the polity was undergoing a transition. After almost eight years of martial law, Zia introduced democratic culture in 1986.

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<sup>15</sup> Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security Under Zia*, op.cit., pp.143-170.

<sup>16</sup> For the existing disputes between the two states see, Sundeep Waslekar, "A Break Through?," *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, December 7, 1986. pp32-33.

The problem was that India being a strong democratic state always felt uneasy with the military regime in Islamabad. Any proposal of confidence--building measures proposed by Zia during the early 1980s was looked upon by India merely as propaganda.

Another important domestic issue at that time was growing secessionist and militant movements in both states. The situation was grim, particularly in the Indian state of Punjab and Pakistan's Sindh province. India alleged that Pakistan was supporting militancy in Punjab, whereas Pakistan alleged Indian involvement in Sindh. These allegations became very important during the course of the crisis, as Pakistan formed strike formation near Punjab, whereas Indian troops were concentrated near Sindh. This made both states believe that the other one was trying to exploit the internal disturbances.

The analysis of above global, regional and domestic context reveals that though there was not a hostile environment, the region was in flux. When India started its biggest military exercise ever, its intention became the subject of controversy between the two states.

## **Exercise Brasstacks: The Military Setting**

All armed forces need to hold training exercises and manoeuvres regularly to ensure their combat readiness, develop new tactical concepts, and evaluate the

integration of new weaponry and equipment in an operational setting. Further, these exercises serve discrete political ends in that they highlight the professionalism of the armed forces, their state of military preparedness, the numbers of formations, tanks, and combat aircraft that could be deployed within certain time frames. These military exercises up to brigade and division level are routine affairs for the army establishment of both India and Pakistan.<sup>17</sup>

In 1986 India launched its most ambitious military exercise to date, code-named Brasstacks. This multicorps level exercise (actually one and half corps with assorted independent Brigades) involved close to 200,000 men with a reported cost of between Rs. 200 to Rs. 400 Crores.<sup>18</sup> The entire Western Air Command was activated, and a limited amphibious exercise was also scheduled to take place in the Saurashtra region. In effect, it was more or less an interservices exercise, but with a dominant army role.

The political scenario for Exercise Brasstacks visualised that insurgency in Kashmir had reached unmanageable proportions. Simultaneously, according to the scenario, the existence of the independent Sikh nation of Khalistan is declared by Sikh militants encouraging Pakistan to make a final push to detach both Kashmir and the erstwhile Khalistan from India. According to the scenario, the weight of the Pakistan thrust makes a dent in Indian defences, requiring an Indian counteroffensive to relieve pressure by carrying the conflict into Pakistan.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Bajpai and others, *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op.cit., p.24.

<sup>18</sup> *The Hindu*, March 29, 1987.

<sup>19</sup> Bajpai, et.al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op.cit., p.29.

The brain child of the then Chief of the Army Staff, General K. Sundarji, Exercise Brasstacks was designed to test out logistical and tactical doctrines which included<sup>20</sup> **The RAPID (Recognised Army Plains Infantry Division)** formations, an important element of the deployed forces that include armoured and mechanised divisions, infantry and air assault formations designed to be partially mobile but capable of holding territory. It was a uniquely Indian concept suitable for the India-Pakistan theater. **Plan AREN (Army Radio Engineered Network)**, an indigenously developed and produced communications grid, which could provide secure links with voice, telex, facsimile, video, and computer terminals. **The CI system**, based on commercially available computer equipment, included to provide field command with real time information on troop movements, battle situations, logistics, and so on, for effective decision making and control over the developing battle field .

Elaborate in detail, Exercise Brasstacks was divided into four phases spread over nearly five months. The first two phases (Brasstacks I held in May-June 1986) and Brasstacks II (held in November 1986) were played out in the operations rooms of Army Headquarters and were restricted to paper. These two phases dealt largely with working out the logistics of men and materials that would be needed, along with optimum deployment profiles. In fact, the deployment of troops did not get underway till early November when Brasstacks III, scheduled for November-December 1986, was envisaged as segmented exercises by different arms and services to support divisional

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<sup>20</sup> See, Manoj Joshi, "From Maps to the Field," *The Hindu*, March 29, 1987.



battle ground environments. The final phase, or rather the "shooting phase", was scheduled to begin in February 1987. This was the most important part of Brasstacks and envisaged an all out "counter offensive". This phase was converted to "Operation Trident" when it was felt that Pakistan might go on the offensive.<sup>21</sup>

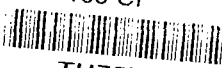
Clearly, the underlying concepts, setting, size and parameters of Exercise Brasstacks made it comparable to the most massive NATO and WARSAW pact exercises. However, Brasstacks which was intended to be a controlled military exercise did not evolve in that fashion and the precipitating events turned Exercise Brasstacks into the Brasstacks crisis.

### Precipitating Events and Initial Build Up of the Crisis

From the very beginning of Exercise Brasstacks, Pakistan was anxious about its location and size. These anxieties were heightened because Pakistan had not been informed of Exercise Brasstacks' contours, despite repeated efforts to obtain them. Again, alarming intelligence reports that India was storing large quantities of POL (Petroleum, oil lubricants and ammunition) for the exercise, activating forward air fields, alerting air defence systems, and dumping extra ammunition in storage facilities led to further suspicion.<sup>22</sup> However, from the very beginning, a segment of military experts and defence analysts in India believed that Pakistan's objections towards Exercise Brasstacks was to create a crisis atmosphere in South Asia before U.S. Secretary of Defence Caspen

<sup>21</sup> Bajpai, et al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

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Weinberger's visit to the region in October.<sup>23</sup> Another group felt that Pakistan's complaint was aimed more at the ongoing U.S.-Pakistan negotiations for a second aid package than over any genuine concern with the Indian manoeuvres.<sup>24</sup>

The first significant official interaction over Brasstacks between the two states occurred when Pakistan brought up the matter during the SAARC (South Asian Associations for Regional Co-operation) summit in November 1986 amidst reports that Indian troops were massing on Pakistan's border.<sup>25</sup> Pakistan's Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo first raised the issue in his meeting with India's External Affairs Minister, N.D. Tiwari. Again, during the summit, bilateral talks were held between Junejo and Rajiv Gandhi. Junejo's speech at a managerial session came up with the suggestion that a formal convention should be drawn up making it obligatory for SAARC member states to inform each other of any significant troop movements. Junejo went on to add that observers should be allowed to watch all major exercises. These remarks were an obvious reference to the Indian troop movements. Apparently in their private meetings, The Indian Prime Minister took exception to Junejo's comments and linked the reference to troop movements with the ongoing Indian Army's Exercise.<sup>26</sup> Junejo further claimed that the Indian Prime Minister had given him certain assurances regarding the Exercise. What kind of assurances were given by Rajiv Gandhi is yet to be ascertained. However,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>25</sup> Salammat Ali, "Sophistry at Summitry," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 27, 1996, p.30.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.30.

it seems that the Indian explanation convinced Pakistan. In informing the National Assembly members in Pakistan of what steps Pakistan was taking to deal with the Indian troop movements, General Zia ruled out “any immediate threat of an attack on the Eastern border” but he also assured the members of a “close watch on the developments on border areas”.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, Pakistan too was conducting its own military exercise<sup>28</sup>, Saf-e-Shikan and Flying Horse. These exercises had begun in October and were scheduled to end by November and mid-December, respectively. The exercises were centred around the two strike corps of the Pakistan Army. Saf-e-Shikan was headed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured and Infantry Divisions of Army Reserve South(ARS) and was located in the Bahawalpur-Marot sector. The 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured and 17<sup>th</sup> infantry Divisions of Army Reserve North (ARN) were involved in Exercise Flying Horse which was scheduled to take place further North in the Jhelum- Chenab corridor. The Pakistan Air Force was also conducting its own exercises, code-named High Mark.

Despite being assured that the massing of troops was in relation to routine military exercises, Pakistan continued to express concern over the unprecedented concentration of Indian troops on its borders. Pakistani anxieties were increased by reports that several express, mail and passenger trains going to Srinagar via Punjab, Haryana and Jammu had been cancelled. According to official sources, missing fishplates

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<sup>27</sup> Bajpai, et al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op. cit., p.31.

<sup>28</sup> For detail see, Inderjit Badhwar and Dilip Bobb, “Game of Brinkmanship,” *India Today*, February 15, 1987, pp.26-32.

in certain sections of the Northern Railways led to precautionary inspections which restricted train movements. However, this could not be stated officially and thus the speculation was that additional troops were being moved into Punjab.<sup>29</sup>

On 17 November 1986, the Pakistani DGMO (Director General of Military Operation) sought and received assurances from his Indian counterpart about Brasstacks. He was informed by the Indian DGMO, Brigadier Dias, that it was a routine multi -corps exercise and was in keeping with India's triennial exercises. This was the first time that the hotline between the DGMOs was used as a communication device. It was used again in the first week of December, when the Pakistani DGMO sought clarification about the movements of 6<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division from out of Bareilly (its peace station) to the sensitive Jammu sector. The Indian DGMO assured his Pakistani counterpart that the Mountain Division's mobilisation was a relief movement. However, Pakistani apprehension was not eased, for relief usually involves units, not entire divisions. Leaving aside these two occasions, the hotline between the DGMOs was not used again during the whole Brasstacks crisis.<sup>30</sup> One probable answer to this was given by General K. Sundarji that "what was needed was mutual trust and confidence" and "communications per se would not get much farther if there is not trust".<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Bajpai, et al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op.cit., p.

<sup>30</sup> Badhwar and Bobb, "Game of Brinkmanship," op.cit., p.29.

<sup>31</sup> Narendra Ready, "Pakistan's Fears Baseless: Sundarji," *Indian Express*, March 7, 1987.

Thus, we find that the mutual suspicion between the two states was growing towards the end of December 1986. Indian intelligence picked up some disquieting signals regarding the two Pakistani military exercises, Saf-e-Shikan and Flying Horse. These were not proceeding as scheduled. The troops belonging to the 1st Armoured and 37th Infantry Divisions, which headed Saf-e-ShiKan, continued to remain in position near Rahimyar Khan even after the conclusion of their manoeuvres. Initially, Indian intelligence concluded that they were probably monitoring Brasstacks. Adoption of such defensive postures while monitoring the military exercise of another country are normal practice. But Flying Horse, scheduled to be held in the Jhelum-Chenab corridor, shifted venue to the Ravi-Chenab corridor so that by the end of their exercises Pakistan's Northern strike corps was dangerously close the Indian border near the Shakargarh bulge. The change in location was not communicated to the Indian DGMO. But information was sent stating that Pakistan had decided to extend the exercises, renamed "Sledge Hammer", because of India's Brasstacks. Again, Pakistan's Air Force's exercise "Highmark" had come to an end, but satellite bases were kept operational with detachments flying regular sorties. In January 1987, Pakistani forces crossed the Lodhran Bridge over the Sutlej River near Bahawalpur. They did not return to their peace-time location in Multan but moved instead to occupy positions opposite Bhatinda and Ferozpur.<sup>32</sup> At that time, Pakistan's 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Division, which was at Tamewali (between Bahawalpur and Bahawalnagar), was withdrawn to north of the Sutlej river,

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<sup>32</sup> Badhwar and Bobb, "Game of Brinkmanship," op. cit., p.27.

and the 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division was moved closer to the Gujranwala area. While making these moves, Pakistan made sure not to be provocative or threatening. However, according to a senior Indian official, the positioning of the northern and southern reserves painted the picture of an enemy who could now strike at two points simultaneously- not only in the Kashmir area directly but also the Punjab, cutting off Amritsar and Ferozpur, thus denying India access to Kashmir.<sup>33</sup> Another important factor which caused concern to Indian authorities was that Pakistani forces in the forward areas were issued extra ammunition, all new postings and transfers were suspended, and service leaves were cancelled. Furthermore, para-military forces, such as the Mujahids and the Janbaaz, were activated.<sup>34</sup>

Another very significant factor which heightened Indians concerns was that Indian Punjab was in a state of crisis since separatist elements were waging a battle against the state's para military forces. The Pakistani move was perceived as perhaps being synchronised with a Sikh extremist plan to whip up pro-Khalistan sentiments at a Sarbhat Khalsa (convention of the Sikh community) to be convened on January 26, 1987, India's Republic day.

On the other hand Pakistanis were becoming apprehensive about the nature of Brasstacks. Despite their repeated requests, the size of Brasstacks was not scaled down. In addition, the movement of the 6<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division from peace time stations to

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<sup>33</sup> Bajpai, et. al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> Badhwar and Bobb, "Game of Brinkmanship," op. cit., p. 27.

the border and the issuing of live ammunition for the troops involved in the Exercise were seen as suspicious moves on India's part. Another factor which comes to light is that although Indian authorities claim that they informed Pakistan about the nature of Brasstacks, it is not clear at what point they were informed and what was the actual nature of information given to them. Thus, in the absence of clarity about the concentration of troops, the Pakistani media and strategist remained very suspicious about Brasstacks. They viewed Brasstacks in the following ways<sup>35</sup> :

1. at the minimum, the Indian aim was to cut off Sindh from Punjab.
2. India was acting at the behest of the Soviet Union, then engaged in a conflict in Afghanistan.
3. Adventurists in the Indian Army hoped for some incident along the border which would give them an opportunity to use the assembled forces for an attack on Pakistan.

### **Period of Greatest Risk**

By mid January 1987, Indian intelligence had gathered reports about the concentration and location of Pakistani troops on the border. The Indian reaction was followed by a carefully orchestrated campaign in the newspapers about the massing of Pakistani troops in the Punjab sector. On 18 January, at the direction of the Prime Minister, General Sundarji held a press briefing for editors of prominent newspapers to inform them about the dangerous moves of the Pakistani Army. The next day, Indian

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<sup>35</sup> Bajpai, et al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op. cit., p.50.

newspapers carried screaming headlines about the threat to India from Pakistan.<sup>36</sup> The Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi was not informed of this briefing and was caught by surprise, causing it great embarrassment. This suggests the lack of co-ordination at a significant juncture in the crisis.

On January 20, the Prime Minister addressed a press conference, in which he drew attention to the concentration of Pakistan's troops along the India-Pakistan border. Another significant development was the removal of Foreign Secretary A.P. Venkateswaran for suggesting that the Prime Minister would shortly visit Pakistan as the current president of SAARC. This created a gap in the higher decision-making apparatus at a critical juncture.<sup>37</sup>

On January 22, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) was briefed by the Service chiefs about the border situation and the need for appropriate countermeasures being taken by the Indian armed forces. This led to the sounding of a "Red Alert". The airlifting of troops was started, and the Navy was also put on alert. Para-military forces were put under the command of the Army.<sup>38</sup>

On January 23, a flurry of diplomatic activities occurred, with Minister of State for External Affairs K.Natwar Singh meeting Pakistani Ambassador Humayun Khan; Minister for External Affairs Narayan Dutt Tiwari meeting Soviet Ambassador Vasily

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<sup>36</sup> *Indian Express* carried the head line, "India Cocerned Over Pak Massing Troops on Border,"; *The Hindustan Times*, "Disturbing Build-Up,"; *The Times of India*, "Concentration of Pak Troops on Border,"

<sup>37</sup> Bajpai, et. al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op cit., p.33.

<sup>38</sup> *Reuters North European Service report*, Dateline: New Delhi, January 23, 1987.



Rykov, and Minister of State for Defence, Arun Singh, meeting American Ambassador John Gunther Dean.<sup>39</sup> In a parallel move, following a meeting of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, Pakistan proposed urgent talks with India to resolve the problem. Indian Ambassador to Pakistan, S.K. Singh, was asked by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Zain Noorani, to convey the message that Pakistan wanted immediate discussions to de-escalate border tension. Though these conciliatory moves were made, the day ended with significant confusion. Natwar Singh is reported to have warned Humayun Khan that Pakistan must immediately withdraw its troops from the Punjab border, while neglecting to mention the decision taken by the Government of India that morning of airlifting troops and sounding a full alert to the army and air force.

Thus, military movements to the border by Indian troops proceeded, but were restricted to Punjab. This was in defence to the movement of ARN (Army Reserve North) and ARS (Army Reserve South). Pakistan saw these Indian movements as preparations for blocking ARN and ARS prior to launching an offensive against Pakistan. A Defence Ministry spokesman briefed Indian journalists on the dangers of the Pakistani moves, whilst the Pakistani Ambassador held a press conference in New Delhi reiterating the need to avoid war hysteria and affirming that his country would never initiate a military conflict, since Pakistan was aware of the military equation between the two sides. In retrospect, the crisis appears to have peaked on this day.<sup>40</sup> the telephone

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<sup>39</sup> For detail see, *United Press International Report*, January 24, 1987.

<sup>40</sup> Bajpai, et al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op cit., p.35.

hotline was activated, and discussions took place between military officials of two operations directorates.

## **Winding Down of TheCrisis**

India-Pakistan relations are often viewed by decision makers in both countries as a zero-sum game. The result is that neither is willing to make any concessions or worse, even appear to make concessions, since this will be taken as a gain by the opposite side. The entire process of de-escalation was marked by this characteristic, and neither India nor Pakistan wished to appear as backing down. Hence, statements expressing a desire to sit and talk things over were invariably mixed with rhetorics laced with patriotic fervour. So the day India placed its forces on "Red Alert" it also took the initiative to defuse tension by offering to hold official level talks.

On the 24 January, the two Prime Ministers, Junejo and Gandhi, had a telephonic conversation.<sup>41</sup> Observers at the time attributed this conversation as being decisive in de-escalating the tensions. Another significant development on the day was the shifting of V.P. Singh from the Finance Ministry to the Defence Ministry. This move helped to signal that something had gone wrong and that Indian authorities were now serious about resolving the problem.

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<sup>41</sup> Badhwar and Bobb, "Game of Brinkmanship," *op.cit.*, p.32.

The next day, Indian Ambassador, S.K. Singh, met Junejo. India now agreed to hold talks with Pakistan and suggested that their level, venue, and timing be settled through diplomatic channels. The following day was India's Republic Day and both President Zia and Prime Minister Junejo conveyed Pakistan's greetings to Rajiv Gandhi. President Zia, who had left a day earlier to attend a summit conference of Islamic states, said that "Pakistan has never felt any threat from India during the last ten years and, as such, it never asked New Delhi why it had been buying large quantities of weapons from several countries."<sup>42</sup> On 27 January, it was announced that Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Abdus Sattar, was to lead a five-member delegation to New Delhi for talks on the border crisis.

The de-escalation talks opened in New Delhi on 31 January. The Indian side was led by acting Foreign Secretary Alfred Gonsalves and the Pakistanis by Abdus Sattar. The talks immediately ran into difficulties, with both sides disagreeing on the scope of the talks. The Pakistani attempt was to negotiate procedures for preventing any future misunderstandings arising out of military manoeuvres and the Indian insistence was on keeping the current talks confined strictly to a de-escalation of the current military confrontation.<sup>43</sup> The Pakistani strategy thus seems to have been to ensure a check on any future military manoeuvres by India by, among others, limiting their size. The Indian objective was to, firstly, focus attention on Pakistani troops movements north of Fazilka

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<sup>42</sup> See, Bajpai, et al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op.cit., p.36.

<sup>43</sup> Hossain Haqqani and Salamat Ali, "Ready for Peace or War," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 12, 1987, pp 16-17.

and, secondly, to ensure withdrawal of the two armies back to their peace-time stations. The Pakistani attempts to include Brasstacks in the talks and wrangle an assurance that its size be cut down were also rejected by India.

The talks, initially scheduled for two days, eventually lasted for five days. At the talks, Sattar made it clear that there was no way Pakistan would withdraw its forces unless India scaled down the size of Brasstacks. The Pakistani insistence on scaling down Brasstacks seems to indicate that they were probably proceeding on the assumption that it was not purely a military exercise. An apparent trade-off between Sindh (Brasstacks was located in Rajasthan across the Sindh border) and Punjab (the Pakistani strike corps were poised for an offensive close to India's Punjab border) appeared to be the Pakistani line of thinking.<sup>44</sup> The talks appeared to be going around in a vicious cycle. If India went ahead with Brasstacks on the scale Pakistan objected to, then Pakistan would continue to retain its forces on the border. In that event, India would be obliged to match forces and so back to square one

Fortunately, on day five, a limited agreement was arrived at. Neither side was prepared to make any major concessions that might create an impression of a climb down. A sector-by-sector study of the ground positions was made in an attempt to identify the nature and extent of deployment in the various sectors. Following this, a

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<sup>44</sup> Prem Shankar Jha, "Indo-Pak Relations: Clue to a Riddle," *The Hindustan Times*, February 3, 1987.

mutually acceptable package of procedures for a withdrawal, within the framework of a wider agreement on de-escalation were worked out.<sup>45</sup>

The withdrawal of forces to be monitored by the DGMOs of India and Pakistan was to proceed on a sector by sector basis starting from Shakargarh. One significant point was a no-attack assurance and an undertaking that both sides would avoid provocative actions along the border. Pakistan's northern strike corps of 6th Armoured Division and 17th Infantry Division were to withdraw from Shakargarh in exchange for India's 6th Mountain Division from Jammu. This withdrawal was to be completed within fifteen days. All mine-laying was to be terminated and existing ones were to be lifted or de-activated. Both the Pakistan Air Force and the Indian Air Force were to remain in contact so that misunderstanding of aircraft movement would not take place. Moreover, all satellite air bases were to be de-activated and were to revert to a lower status of operational readiness. But the most important aspect of the agreement was the exclusion of Exercise Brasstacks from its purview. For this, India had to allow the Pakistanis to maintain their southern strike corps of 1 Armoured and 37 Infantry Division to remain just 15 kilometres from India's border near Fazilka. The February 4 agreement also provided for a second round of talks. An Indian delegation was to visit Pakistan in early March and discuss the pull-out of troops from the other sector. The significant thing to note here is that the agreement did not mention who was to move troops first.

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<sup>45</sup> See, Rajendra Sharma, "Indo-Pak Pact to De-escalate Tension," *The Tribune*, February 6, 1987.

By April, a major part of the second phase of the troops pull out from Punjab, Rajasthan and the Rann of Kutch regions was over. This was in pursuance of the agreement reached during the second round of the Secretary-level talks in Islamabad.

## Understanding the Brasstacks Crisis

Why did the Brasstacks Exercise turned into the Brasstacks crisis? This question has been answered in different ways by different analysts. Although there is no unanimity, the explanations can be grouped in three broad categories: First, the crisis is viewed as a case of coercive diplomacy. The second view is that the crisis was the result of a deliberately played game of brinkmanship, which was aimed to divert public opinion from domestic issues. Another group of analyst feels that the crisis occurred largely because of misperception between the two states.

### A Case of Coercive Diplomacy

There are two opposite views on Brasstacks. At one extreme we find Ravi Rikhye who argues that initially, the aim of Brasstacks was, "...to remind it[Pakistan] of its vulnerability to India's superior might." However, according to Rikhye, "Somewhere along the line the pressure began to build up for converting the exercise into an actual provocation of Pakistan in the hope that it would attack India, leading to a war."<sup>46</sup> Rikhye refers to Operation Trident, which, according to

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<sup>46</sup> Ravi Rikhye, *The War That Never Was* (Delhi: Chanakya, 1988), P.19.

him, called for an attack on February 8, 1987 at 04.30 hours, with Skardu as the first objective and Gilgit as the second. The operation was expected to last two weeks, within which time the Northern Areas under Pakistani occupation since 1947-48 would be recovered.<sup>47</sup> According to Rikhye, this did not happen because the Indian Army failed to provoke Pakistan enough to provide India with a *casus belli*<sup>48</sup>, and “when the time came, we let the Pakistanis outmanoeuvre us and backed down.”<sup>49</sup>

This extreme view of Rikhye falls almost outside the scope of coercive diplomacy as it assumes that there was actually a war preparation and not a limited use of demonstration of force. However, there are several objections to his thesis. First of all Rikhye fails to explain why Rajiv Gandhi would ever agree to a war? Rikhye himself suggests that “he [Rajiv] may not at any point have consciously wanted war, may have in fact been revolted at the thought of war, but a crisis short of war would have suited him very well.”<sup>50</sup> Anybody who is familiar with civil-military relations in India knows very well that the Indian Army is fully under the control of political authorities and no ambitious Army General (as Rikhye always refers to General Sundarji)<sup>51</sup> can have so much independent authority as to actually plan a war of such a big scale. It is clear that at no point did, political authorities

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 192-204.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-26.

ever visualise a real war scenario, and Rikhye himself concede that “a crisis short of war would have suited him[Rajiv] very well.”<sup>52</sup>

Another problem with Rikhye’s thesis is that he does not take into account the Pakistani as well as the other superpower perspective. There is no account of the nuclear factor and its role between the two states. In short, Rikhye’s thesis seems to be an extreme one sided view and his arguments fail in absence of any provable evidence.

At the opposite extreme of Rikhye, we find K.Subrahmanyam, who was Director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. Subrahmanyam argues that Brasstacks was a routine military exercise and Pakistan’s “hue and cry” were “patently phoney”.<sup>53</sup> According to him, Pakistani army deployments across the Sutlej river and in the Shakargarh area were intended not “to launch an attack on India”, but rather were manoeuvres which amounted to “the demonstrative use of force” and “were meant to sent some signals to India, the Superpowers and perhaps the Khalistani extremists”. Thus according to his explanation, India was doing a routine military exercise, whereas Pakistan resorted to demonstration of force for the following purposes. First, with the Afghan government’s cease-fire, and with the start of Congressional hearings in Washington on U.S. military aid, Pakistan needed

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>53</sup> For K.Subrahmanyam’s arguments, see “Pak Troops on Indian Border: A way Out of a Dilemma,” *The Times of India*, January 24,1987; “Indo-Pak Deployment: A Probe and a Responce,” *The Times of India*, January 31,1987; “Pakistani Fibs and Intentions: Some Lessons for India,” *The Times of India*, February 7,1987.



to continue “to project an image of beleaguered nation”. “Controlled tension” with India served this purpose well. Secondly, the Pakistani move was aimed at signalling to the Khalistani extremists that Pakistan would support them. Finally, Pakistan’s troops movements were an attempt to pressurise India to cut the size and duration of Brasstacks.

On close analysis, none of the above arguments seems plausible enough to accept. First, if Brasstacks was a routine military exercise, then Pakistan should have been notified about the magnitude and contours of the Exercise early on. Again, Subrahmanyam does not take into account the view that Pakistani troops were positioned near Punjab to deter any possible Indian attack on Sindh. Therefore it is plausible to argue that it was a defensive measure rather than a demonstration of force. Secondly, if Pakistan’s aim was to influence the United States Congress decision on the military aid, then why would it work so hard on its eastern flank, when the aid was given for the problems on its western flank? Another problem with the military aid thesis is that India had always raised the issue of U.S. military weaponry being used against it, and a Pakistani demonstration of force would have made it difficult to explain to the United States, the possibility of not using military aid against India. Thirdly, as far as Khalistani extremists are concerned, there is no real explanation of how a mere demonstration of force would help them. In fact, it could have had the opposite consequence. Mobilising all along the border of Punjab and then doing nothing but going back would certainly have a demoralising effect on the

extremists. It would have given India cause to seal the Punjab border even more tightly and to deploy more troops in Punjab. Fourthly, let us consider the point that Pakistan's aim was to cut the size and scale of Brasstacks. This argument seems plausible enough. However, at the same time, it raises the question, why were the Pakistanis so apprehensive about Brasstacks? If Brasstacks was just a little larger than the previous exercise, Exercise Digvijay(1984), then why did Pakistan want to risk a crisis to scale down the size of Brasstacks? Given that there were ambiguities regarding the nature of Brasstacks, it seems possible that Pakistan's action was more of a defensive move and less a demonstration of force. Certainly for Pakistan, Brasstacks was more than a pure military Exercise. How Pakistan perceived Exercise Brasstacks will be discussed in a later section.

In between the two extremes of Rikhye and Subrahmanyam, we find analysts like Sumit Ganguly. According to Ganguly, "the Indian leadership decided that a flexing of India's hard-earned military muscle would have a salutary effect on a number of audiences. First, it was designed to remind India's recalcitrant neighbour, Pakistan, of the dangers inherent in taking advantage of India's domestic trouble. Second, it was a warning to Sikh extremists and...[the] Indian leadership no doubt believed that this dramatic display of military prowess would arouse patriotic sentiment. Third, it was a reminder to other regional powers(like China, with whom India continues to have border troubles) and the superpowers, of India's growing

military might and its ability to demonstrate it”.<sup>54</sup> According to Ganguly, the crisis resulted because “Pakistanis may not have been told of its full scope and intent”. Thus, the problem began with India’s demonstration of force. It got heightened because of “misgivings”. Apart from Ganguly, *India Today* (in its issue of May 15,1988) also refers to a confidential report prepared for Army Headquarters. The report set out to show that Brasstacks,”...clearly indicated to a belligerent and recalcitrant neighbour, the power and the strength of India’s armed forces.”<sup>55</sup>

The problem of misperception will be dealt in a later section. However, there are problems with Ganguly’s position. First, any military exercise is going to demonstrate the military capability of a state. It seems hard to believe that India would spend so much money, just to remind Pakistan and others of its capabilities. Since 1971, India’s military superiority over Pakistan was well established, and surely Pakistan cannot have been in much doubt about it. Again, as far as China is concerned, the argument does not seem persuasive as India was trying to improve relationship with China and any demonstration of force with Pakistan, its friend and ally, was certainly not going to help India.<sup>56</sup> As far as the issue of Sikh extremists is concerned, the problem is, how would a military exercise in the desert region of Rajasthan affect the militancy in Punjab which was largely a result of

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<sup>54</sup> Sumit Ganguly, “India and Pakistan Getting Down to Brasstacks,” *The World & I*, May 1987, pp.100-104.

<sup>55</sup> Inderjit Badhwar and Dilip Bobb, “Disputed Legacy,” *India Today*, May 15,1988, p.84.

<sup>56</sup> For Sino-India border talks, see Sumit Ganguly, “The Sino-India Border Talks,1981-1989,” *Asian Survey*, Vol.29.No.12, December, 1989, pp.1126-1132.

misgovernance. Ganguly does not explain why the Indian authorities got interested in infusing patriotism in 1986-87?

In short, the above analysis of viewing the Brasstacks crisis as a result of coercive diplomacy or demonstration of force (either on India's part or on Pakistan's part) does not seem to present a very telling explanation of the crisis.

## **Brasstacks Crisis as a Game of Brinkmanship**

Writing on the nature of brinkmanship crises, Lebow has pointed to two conditions: first, the presence of a serious domestic or international threat that could be overcome by successfully challenging the adversary's commitment, secondly, the belief that the adversary will back down rather than fight. He argued that the motivation for brinkmanship is derived from the weakness of the political system, the political vulnerability of a leader or government and an intra elite competition for power.<sup>57</sup>

Some analysts have tried to interpret the Brasstacks crisis from the perspective of brinkmanship. Thus we find Rikhye arguing that the, "imperatives of domestic policy led to a situation in which an incident with Pakistan was necessary to divert attention from the growing chaos at home."<sup>58</sup> K.K. Katyal, a political analyst on the other hand argued "there had been several instances of friction

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<sup>57</sup> See, Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 57-82.

<sup>58</sup> Rikhye, *The War That Never Was*, op.cit., p. 11.

between Gen.Zia, who retains the office of Chief of the Army Staff even after taking over as President and Prime Minister Mohammed Khan Junejo, though Junejo is Zia's nominee. The army, which felt its hold over the country threatened by the momentum of post-martial law developments could not but be anxious to re-establish its supremacy. And it perhaps calculated that fear of a conflict, if not an actual conflict with India would provide it with an ideal device to achieve that."<sup>59</sup> Samina Yasmeen points that "the answer to why India and Pakistan raised the spectre of a war... lies partially in the host of domestic problems faced by the two governments."<sup>60</sup> She presents a long list of domestic problems faced by the Indian government.<sup>61</sup> This includes militancy in Punjab, disturbances in Jammu and Kashmir, problems in the north-eastern state of Tripura, naaxalite problem in Bihar, and the linguistic agitation in TamilNadu and Goa. As far Pakistan is concerned, there were disturbances in Baluchistan, increased number robberies and kidnappings in the Pakistani state of Punjab, and the ethnic problems in Sindh which led to the worst riots ever faced in the city of Karachi. Thus Yasmeen concludes, "Faced with these problems, both the Pakistani and Indian governments tried to use the threat of a war with the major South Asian adversary as a technique to divert their respective population's attention away from domestic problems."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> K.K.Katyal, "Back From the Brink," *Frontline*, February 7-20, 1987, p.6

<sup>60</sup> Samina Yasmeen, "India and Pakistan: Why the Latest Exercise in Brinmanship?," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.34, no.1, 1988, p.66.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.66-69.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69.

An analysis of the above and other arguments about brinkmanship suggests the following pattern and explanation of the Brasstacks crisis. First, both states were facing serious domestic problems which were particularly acute in the Indian state of Punjab and the Pakistan's state of Sindh. Second, the leaders in both governments were facing challenges to their authority, as pointed out by Katyal in the case of Pakistan, whereas in India the shift of V.P.Singh from the Finance Ministry to the Defence Ministry in the midst of the crisis led to the speculation that Rajiv wanted to get rid of Singh from the Finance Ministry for a variety of reasons. Rikhye argues that because of V.P.Singh's probe into the close associates of Rajiv(Amitabh and Ajitabh Bachan in particular), may have been the cause of an escalation with Pakistan.<sup>63</sup>

Third, Indian and Pakistani leaders were convinced that the crisis would not go out of control. In the midst of the crisis. General Zia left for Kuwait to attend the Islamic Summit, whereas the Indian government did not seem overly concerned about the possibility of a war either. It took two days to respond to Pakistan's call for negotiations and to determine the level at which the talks were to be held because Rajiv Gandhi and his colleagues were preoccupied with the AFRICA Fund Summit.<sup>64</sup>

Fourth, what is unclear is who was the initiator of brinkmanship. According to Lebow, the initiator challenges an important commitment of an adversary. On

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<sup>63</sup> Rikhye, *The War That Never Was*, op cit.,pp.28-30.

<sup>64</sup> Yasmeen, "India and Pakistan," op.cit , p 66

the one hand, Pakistan as an initiator perhaps tried to raise the pitch to challenge India's commitment to carry out the military exercise. On the other hand, India could be seen as an initiator, which tried to challenge logic of the military aid to Pakistan. According to Yasmeen, the brinkmanship was used by "the Indian government to convince the world in general, and the American public opinion and legislator in particular, of the inherent dangers involved in supplying the state-of-the-art weapon systems to Pakistan, a country which has already fought four wars with India during the last forty years"<sup>65</sup>

While Brasstacks could be regarded as a brinkmanship crisis, there are various objections to this explanation. First, the basic thesis of brinkmanship in the context of Brasstacks seems to be seriously flawed, as the domestic problems of India and Pakistan are rooted in the socio-political and economic conditions of these states which are common to most Third World states and these problems are not short term or transitional. Assuming that a crisis of a few weeks can divert public opinion from these basic problems is an erroneous view. Again, the question is, if the crisis is not going to provide a solution to any domestic problems, then why would a government compound its difficulties at both the domestic as well as international fronts? The domestic problems of these states are deep rooted and a war scare would just as likely exacerbate them, not ameliorate them

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.70.

Second, as far as the internal challenge to the authority of the head of state is concerned, in the case of Pakistan there might have been some friction between Zia and Junejo, to assume that a crisis short of war could provide an opportunity to enhance power in a growing democratic domestic environment is not convincing. To increase one's popularity on the domestic front, what was needed was a strengthening of the democratic culture, not an external crisis. In the case of Rajiv Gandhi, using a war scare scenario to get rid of V.P. Singh is also not convincing. We should note that Exercise Brasstacks was planned much earlier, and it is hard to believe that Rajiv would have planned such a massive exercise and have imagined on Pakistan's reaction (i.e. its strike formation on the Punjab border) so that in the midst of crisis he could get rid of V.P. Singh. What is plausible to argue in this case is that the crisis was not created to get rid of him but the crisis did provide an opportunity to shift Mr. Singh from Finance Ministry to Defence Ministry. It was an effect and not the cause of the crisis.

Third, Pakistan initiated the brinkmanship challenge to the Indian authorities to cut down the size of Exercise Brasstacks is questionable. As Lebow points out, brinkmanship is initiated to overcome a serious domestic or international problem. What is missing, then, is a satisfactory explanation of the nature of the problems that Pakistan sought to overcome by challenging India. Again, as far as the argument of India initiating the brinkmanship to influence the U.S.- Pakistan relationship on the matter of aid, two objections can be raised. First, if it was in the



United State's interest to give Pakistan military aid, it would do so regardless of what was India's interest. Moreover, creating a war scare scenario could easily backfire on India as Pakistan could easily use this to argue that it needed military aid to meet India's aggressive designs. In short, the arguments in favour of viewing Brasstacks as brinkmanship seem to be inadequate to explain the cause of the crisis.

### **The Brasstacks Crisis: A Result of Misperception**

Lebow points out three sources of misperception in any crisis.<sup>66</sup> The first is politicisation of intelligence in a state. This refers to the decision-making process of the state. The second source of misperception is situational, i.e. the political context, domestic and foreign, in which the decision is made. The third source is the belief system of the policy makers.

First, an analysis of the decisions taken during the crisis might help us to understand the crisis better. India and Pakistan have always been very sensitive to each other, and both states use propaganda against each other. Whether the decision making process was politicised is very difficult to prove. However, certain interesting questions remain to be unanswered. The first question is why not Pakistanis were not given the notification of Exercise Brasstacks and when they were given(as Indian authorities claim) at what point was this given? The second question is, why did the Indian authorities waited for more then two weeks to

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<sup>66</sup> Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, op cit , pp 148-228

disclose the movement of Pakistani troops (Indian authorities knew about it in early January but it was publicly stated on 18,January)? The unusual thing to note here is that Army Chief briefed the press, whereas this is normally done by the Directorate of Public Relations in the Ministry of Defence and the civilian bureaucracy.<sup>67</sup> Why was the Ministry of External affairs not informed of this briefing? Apart from these, the removal of Foreign Secretary A.P.Venkateswaran and, the shifting of V.P.Singh from the Finance to Defence Ministry in the midst of the crisis leads one to believe that the policy-making process was far from coherent and the gap in decision making certainly had an impact on the crisis.

As far as the situational context is concerned, there were both domestic as well as foreign factors that could have encouraged misperceptions between the two states. At the time of the Brasstacks Exercise, there were serious ethnic problems in Sindh and militancy was growing in the Indian state of Punjab. Thus Pakistan could have interpreted Indian military exercise as a design to exploit the problems in Sindh,<sup>68</sup> whereas India could have interpreted Pakistani troop deployment as a plan to exploit conditions in the state of Punjab.<sup>69</sup> Another factor which created much of the misperception was the U.S. military aid that was to be given to Pakistan in 1987. From the beginning of the Exercise, whenever Pakistan raised its concerns about it, the Indian authorities discounted the message. The dominant view was that Pakistan

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<sup>67</sup> Bajpai, et. al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>69</sup> Badhwar and Bobb, "The Game of Brinkmanship," op. cit., p. 28.

was beating the drum to attract Washington's attention in order to remind it that India was dangerous.<sup>70</sup>

As far as belief systems is concerned, this was the most significant source of misperception between the two states. Because of the four wars and due to the different political cultures, policy makers in both states have always viewed each other's intentions with great suspicion. During the Brasstacks crisis, the following significant incidents could be cited as misperceptions resulting from the different belief systems

First, since the war of 1971, and the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan, the Pakistani elite has always feared Indian hegemony in South Asia and when India launched its largest ever military exercise, this was viewed as part of India's hegemonic design. Thus, from the very beginning, Islamabad tried to cut down the size of Brasstacks. Indian policy makers' belief on the other hand was that India is a peaceful country, that it has every right to conduct a military exercise, and that since Pakistan had not objected to the previous exercise, Exercise Digvijay then this time around the hue and cry was aimed at other factors (e.g. the U.S.).<sup>71</sup>

Second, during the SAARC meeting in Bangalore when Junejo and Rajiv met, they came back with different perspectives altogether. Apparently, Junejo concluded that Rajiv would scale down the size of Brasstacks and thus Pakistan seems to have waited till early December. However, when there was no discernible reduction,

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<sup>70</sup> Bajpai, et al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op cit , P.100

<sup>71</sup> Bajpai, et al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op cit , p.100

Pakistan extended its own military exercise and stopped communication between the DGMOs. On the other hand, during the Bangalore meeting Rajiv seems to have concluded that Junejo's request to scale back Brasstacks referred to the original "full mobilisation" exercise. This original plan had already been rejected by India, and therefore Rajiv took no further steps and interpreted Pakistani apprehensions as ingenuous.<sup>72</sup>

Other smaller factors which created misperceptions were the issuing of first-line ammunition, which Pakistan interpreted as signifying real military "operations" rather than merely an exercise, whereas this ammunition was apparently dumped into divisional storage areas rather than carried in troop knapsacks. Again the deployment of India's 6th Mountain Division was viewed by Indian authorities as a relieving measure, whereas Pakistan interpreted it with trepidation.<sup>73</sup>

The notable thing about the Brasstacks crisis was that decision makers in both states acted promptly and with the heightening of the crisis there was a concern not to create further misperceptions. Thus, when India decided to move its troops towards defensive positions in the Punjab. It simultaneously announced readiness to negotiate a withdrawal of forces from forward positions. Again, at the height of military mobilisation, the head of the two states tried not to heat things up. Thus, Rajiv was busy in attending an AFRICA Summit, whereas Zia went to Kuwait.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.101.

<sup>73</sup> For detail, see Ibid., pp.100-106

To conclude, it seems plausible to argue that the Brasstacks crisis in 1987 was largely a result of misperceptions between the two states about each other's intentions and actions at critical moments of the crisis. To quote Bajpai et al, "A degree of error, miscalculation, and misadjustment characterizes all decision making, particularly under condition of crisis...So perceptions do make a difference, and did make a difference."<sup>74</sup>

### **The Nuclear Factor and the Brasstacks Crisis**

On 1 March, *The Observer* published an interview with the director of Pakistan's uranium enrichment programme, Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan. Dr. Khan claimed that "what the CIA has been saying about our possessing the bomb is correct and so is the speculation of some foreign newspapers. They said that Pakistan could never produce the bomb and they doubted my capabilities, but they know we have done it."<sup>75</sup> This interview became a matter of controversy because, according to Kuldip Nayar, who interviewed Dr. Khan, the interview was conducted on January 28, 1987 just after the Brasstacks crisis peaked.<sup>76</sup> Dr. Khan denied any such interview, but, according to Mushahid Hussain, the editor of the Pakistani daily *The Muslim*, this interview was conducted and it was Hussain who had arranged the

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>75</sup> The interview was published in *The Muslim* (Islamabad) as well. See, Kuldip Nayar, "India Forcing Us to Go Nuclear - A Q. Khan." *The Muslim*, March 3, 1987.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

meeting of KuldipNayar with Dr.Khan.<sup>77</sup> Believing that this interview was not fake, one wonders about intentions of Dr.Khan in making such pronouncements. The crisis was largely over by January 28, and in any case the interview was published after five weeks. Indian authorities ascribe the following motives to the nuclear signalling.<sup>78</sup> First, there was an attempt to reassure the Pakistani people that Pakistan's nuclear programme was being continued. Second, it was a signal to the US Congress that Pakistan would unveil its nuclear weapon programme if the aid package was not given. Third, it was seen as a signal to India that it cannot take the risk of moving into the Sind desert without running the risk of a nuclear weapon being used against it.

Although the interview did succeed in publicising the nuclear programme of Pakistan, the timing of the publication of the interview was too late to have any influence on the Brasstacks crisis. The significance of the Khan interview derives from its falling within a continuum of many similar assertions by Pakistan before and after these events.<sup>79</sup> Thus, we find, on January 28, *The Times of India*, carrying an article in which Prof.M.J.Brabers, who had taught Dr.Khan in Holland claiming that

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<sup>77</sup> This contrivency is discussed in detail in Leonard S.Spector, *The Undeclared Bomb* (Cambridge, M.A: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1988), pp.133-134 and pp.372-373.

<sup>78</sup> See, "Pakistan's Bomb Claim," editorial, *The Times of India*, March 3, 1987; K.Subrahmanyam, "Pakistan's Nuclear Message: A Well-Calculated Exercise," *The Times of India*, March 7,1987, K Subrahmanyam, "Pakistan's Islamic Bomb Disclosures by Bhutto's Aide," *The Times Of India*, April 4,1987; and see also, Dilip Bobb and Ramindar Singh, "Pakistan's Nuclear Bombshell," *India Today*, March 31,1987, pp.72-80.

<sup>79</sup> Bajpai,et.al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op cit., p.40

Pakistan was a few steps from bomb.<sup>80</sup> In the first week of April, Zia in an interview to *Time* magazine said, "You can write today that Pakistan can build the bomb whenever it wishes."<sup>81</sup> Apparently, for Pakistan the issuing of constant declarations of this nature seem to have given it some form of security reassurance.<sup>82</sup> As John Schulz argues, that Pakistan might be trying to pioneer a new type of deterrence- "deterrence by bluff".<sup>83</sup> However to conclude one can quote Bajpai et al, "the nuclear question was not a real issue during the Brasstacks exercise, although the outcome of Brasstacks may have influenced subsequent nuclear decision in South Asia."<sup>84</sup>

## Conclusion

Pinning down the cause of any crisis is always very difficult and the same is true about Brasstacks crisis, however, the crisis between India and Pakistan in wake of Exercise Brasstacks did highlight certain significant issues. Although, Exercise Brasstacks achieved its basic military aims, that is, the rapid deployment and withdrawal of forces in desert warfare conditions, and to achieve a close coordination between civilian and military agencies for this purpose. However, the Exercise produced a political crisis and this signifies the inherent danger in carrying

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<sup>80</sup> "Pak a Few Steps from Bomb," *The Times of India*, January 29, 1987.

<sup>81</sup> Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security Under Zia*, op.cit., p.114.

<sup>82</sup> Bajpai, et.al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op.cit., p.40.

<sup>83</sup> See Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security Under Zia*, op.cit., p.111.

<sup>84</sup> Bajpai, et.al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op.cit., p.40.

out such a large scale military exercise in the border areas. The Exercise revealed the lack of proper channel of communication and notification of troop movement between the two states. The crisis highlighted the point that in time of stress the intelligence reports seem to be exaggerated and alarmist.<sup>85</sup> Thus the crisis signifies the danger of miscalculation and misperception. The existing Confidence Building Measures(CBMs) that were in place during the crisis were not only not used, but were thought to have been deliberately misused by both sides.<sup>86</sup> As a result the crisis signified the need for fresh and sufficient CBMs and other war avoidance measures. Kanti P.Bajpai and others believe that the “crisis probably led to the decision to ‘weaponise’ Pakistan’s nuclear program.”<sup>87</sup>

Another important feature of the crisis was, the role of Superpowers during the crisis. It is important to note that, both Soviet Union and The U.S. did not play any significant role. China also kept itself out of the crisis. The nuclear issue of the crisis signified the dilemma of The U.S. The U.S. got itself entangled between its non-proliferation policy, which had been a long term objective and its containment policy on Afghanistan, Which was its immediate objective. The crisis made the United States believe that, the nuclear issue in South Asian region had become important and thus we find the United States playing a much more active role during the 1990 Kashmir Crisis.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.,p101.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p.ix.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p.ix.



Finally the crisis highlighted the prohibitive cost of initiating war in the region, as through out the crisis the political leadership in both states emphasised on the avoidance of war. Again, the crisis raised significant questions about the civil-military relationship during an exercise of such a large scale. Given the risk involved in misperceiving the intentions and actions of each other, the crisis also raised question about conducting such large military exercises. This becomes important in light of the crisis of 1990 which occurred in the background of Pakistan's largest military exercise Zarb-I-Momin.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Kashmir Crisis of 1989-90**

By the closing months of 1989, a full-fledged separatist uprising was underway in the Kashmir. At the same time Pakistan was conducting its ever largest military exercise, Zarb-I-Momin. The situation worsened due to a number of responses and reciprocal reactions taken by Indian and Pakistani governments. There was concern in India that all Pakistani military units were allegedly not returning to peacetime deployments after major exercises in November-December, 1989. Because of the ideological issue of Kashmir, the heads of the two states soon entered into war of words. This led to further heightening of the tension. The crisis was finally resolved after the U.S. provided its good offices to the two states. Before the normalcy could have come, there was sensational reporting about an alleged Pakistan's nuclear threat.

This chapter will analyse the factors leading to the crisis. In the following subsections of the chapter, the background of the crisis is discussed in terms of the global, regional and domestic context in which the old issue of Kashmir again became the forefront of crisis. This will be followed by an analysis of the crisis behaviour of the two states. Finally the chapter will assess the conflicting claims about the role of nuclear factor in the crisis and on the basis of the findings an attempt will be made to understand the nature of the crisis.

During the last quarter of the, the 1980s International system was undergoing profound changes. At that time South Asia witnessed a crisis in Kashmir in 1990 that had its root in domestic politics but was inflamed by regional dynamics and was finally managed to a large extent due to global imperatives. Thus to analyse the factors

influencing and affecting the Kashmir crisis, one has to examine the global, regional and domestic background of the crisis.

## Global Background of the Crisis

In 1989-90, major changes were occurring at the global level. First, the Cold War had ended without a bang. The world system that was shaped for forty years under the influence of two superpowers had changed drastically. Germany was united and The Berlin Wall, the symbol of a divided world was demolished. In short the abrupt end of Cold War changed the strategic equations of the world significantly. From the South Asian perspective, there were two events affecting the region in significant way.

First, the collapse of Soviet Union and Its withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan posed significant challenges to the South Asian regional security environment. The weakening of The Soviet Union meant that India, which for years relied heavily on Soviet Union's military and strategic help, could no longer rely on The Soviet's strategic help. However, this also provided India with the opportunity to come closer with the other superpower, i.e., the United States.

Another concern for India was that withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan gave Pakistan a breathing space on its western flank. Pakistan could movealter forces from its western flank to its eastern flank on India's border. From Pakistan's perspective, this change was a victory for them, however, this victory had its price in many ways. First and foremost was the impact on the US-Pakistan relationship.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a good analysis of US-Pakistan relations, see Thomas P. Thorton, "The New Phase in U.S.-Pakistani Relations," *Foreign Affairs* 68, no 3 (Summer 1989), PP.142-159. See also, R.B.Rais, "Pakistan in the Regional and Global Power Structure," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 4 (April 1991), pp 378-392

Since the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan became the frontline state for the U.S. to check the Soviet Union and massive military and economic aid was given to Pakistan. (Beginning in 1982 the US provided aid in the amount of \$3.6 billion for five years. In late 1987 Washington agreed to provide a further package of \$4.02 billion for the next six years.<sup>2</sup> The end of the Cold War and subsequent withdrawal of Soviet forces challenged the logic of continuing the aid programme. This also posed another serious problem for Pakistan as during the Cold War years, the hawkish lobby in the U.S. Congress persuaded it to turn a blind eye to Islamabad's nuclear programme. This was no longer possible in the changed circumstances, as the non-proliferation lobby became stronger in the wake of end of the Cold War.

The second factor that affected the region significantly was the growing upsurge of ethno-nationalism all over the world. In Yugoslavia, Caombodia, and in the states of the Soviet Union, all over Eastern Europe and particularly in the Middle East, where the *intifada* and subsequent peace plan (1987) was seen as major success for the Palestinian struggle, there was an ethnic upsurge. Pointing out the influence of the Palestinian *intifada* Sumit Ganguly observes, "Owing to the government of India's close connection with the Palestine Liberation Organization, a sizable number of Palestinian students attended Kashmir University in Srinagar in the late 1970s and early 1980s... Their struggle against the Israeli armed forces in the occupied territories animated many university students in Kashmir."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> (Beginning in 1982 the US provided aid in the amount of \$3.6 billion for five years. In late 1987 Washington agreed to provide a further package of \$4.02 billion for the next six years) Thornton, op.cit., p.151.

<sup>3</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis In Kashmir* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.42.

## Regional Background of the Crisis

The South Asian region has been characterised by the antagonism between India and Pakistan. The region has witnessed three wars between these two states. Thus, the mutual threat perceptions of these two states has played major role in affecting their foreign policies. Because of its sheer size, India has been always accused of trying to play the hegemon in the region.<sup>4</sup> In the post 1987 Brasstacks crisis, three specific instances were cited to support this argument. First, it was argued that was the New Delhi's military assistance to the government of the Maldives in crushing an attempted coup in 1987 was part of India's hegemonic self conception. Second, there was the decision to send troops to Sri Lanka as part of India - Sri Lanka Accord of July 1987, aimed at ending the insurgency in that country. Finally, the transit and trade blockade of Nepal by India in 1989 is regarded as the action of a regional hegemon. All this led to the impression that India was aspiring to an "hegemonic" role in the region.<sup>5</sup> Indian ambition of playing a dominant role was attributed to the statement made by Indira Gandhi that "India will neither intervene in the domestic affairs of any state in the region unless requested to do so, nor tolerate such intervention by an outside power; if external assistance is needed to meet an internal crisis, states should first look within the region for help."<sup>6</sup> Thus, Pakistan's perception of India's growing influence in the region was heightening. Its apprehension became much more acute because of the experience of the

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed theoretical account of India's hegemonic role, see Imtiaz Ahmad, *State & Foreign Policy: India's Role in South Asia* (New Delhi: Vikash, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, "India in South Asia: the Quest for Regional Predominance," *World Policy* 7, no. 1 (Winter, 1989-90), pp. 107-135.

<sup>6</sup> Bhabani Sen Gupta, "The Indian Doctrine," *India Today*, August 31, 1983, p. 20.

Brasstacks crisis of 1987 and the benign role of the US towards Indian intervention in the region.

Another major development in 1989 was Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China and, subsequently, the beginnings of a normalisation process between India and China. This had its implications for Pakistani strategy vis-à-vis India, as improving India-China relations meant a lesser role for China in any bilateral issues between India and Pakistan.

There were other developments in the region including the ongoing low intensity conflict on Siachin glacier which affected the strategic environment. Despite many rounds of talks in 1989, Rajiv and Benazir failed to solve the dispute. Then there was the missile race, with India successfully testing its IRBM Agni (July 1989) and Pakistan testing Hatf (February 1989).<sup>7</sup> In addition the near anarchic conditions in Afghanistan gave rise to the spread of small arms in which hand weapons became available to the militants in the region. Sumit Ganguly observes that, "...the collapse of the Soviet Union greatly facilitated the task of arming and assisting the Kashmiri insurgents. Significant numbers of battle-hardened Afghan mujahideen could now be directed toward a new cause. These Afghans had more to offer than direct support, their experience of ousting the Soviets from Afghanistan provided a model of opposition and resistance to a powerful state and its well-organised military."<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion, one can say that when all over the world erstwhile enemies were shaking hands with each other, the South Asian region was still plagued by mutual threat perceptions, insecurity and suspicions coupled with fear and.

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<sup>7</sup> Mushaid Hussain, "Missile Missive," *India Today*, March 15, 1989, p. 71.

<sup>8</sup> Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, op cit, p 41-42

## **Domestic Background**

During the end of 1980s domestic politics in both states was witnessing major changes and this was significant from the crisis perspective, because unlike Brasstacks, which was a military crisis, the crisis in 1990 involved major political issue of Kashmir and it was very difficult for the leaders of the two states to show any sign of weakness on that issue. What were the major domestic changes in both states that made the Kashmir Crisis of 1990 to continue for more than four months. The answer to this question is discussed in following subsections

### **India**

The year 1989 saw major political change in India . The Congress(I) party that had an unprecedented majority in parliament lost its majority in the 1989 general election. The National Front, a coalition of various parties. came to power and Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who was a Congressman, became the Prime Minister. Thus, politically, India had a weak government. The Janata Dal, the main constituent of the government had only 143 seats in the house of 542. Its main supporter was the right wing Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP), the Congress(I), on the other hand still had the largest number of seats (193) This had various implications

First, the weak government meant internal vulnerability. It became vulnerable to attack from the largest party in parliament, i.e., the Congress(I), and at critical moments, it found it difficult to cope with the rightist forces represented by thr BJP. Secondly, the government had problems in co-ordinating its policies. For instance on the Kashmir issue, the Governor, Jagmohan and the Kashhmir Affairs Minister, George Fernandes

were at loggerheads<sup>9</sup> Thirdly, the Indian economy was facing a serious external debt problem. As far as foreign policy issue is concerned, the government tried to reverse the hegemonic image of the previous government. Recalling the government's approach, J.N.Dixit, former Foreign Secretary comments that, "Gujral told me ... Rajiv Gandhi was characterised by tensions and conflict with neighbours and that all this had to be changed by a concerted effort and a positive attitude."<sup>10</sup> However, in the wake of rising militancy in Kashmir and Punjab, the approach of the government came under severe criticism for being too soft. In sum, the government of India faced many burdens whereas its resources to cope with them were too limited

## **Pakistan**

General Zia's death in an air crash (on August 17, 1988) ended the long authoritarian regime in Pakistan. The country changed over to civilian democratic rule after Zia's death with Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister. Although democratic rule was ushered in, Pakistan's democratic institutions were not yet strong enough to go beyond the influence of the army and the President. Benazir Bhutto headed a minority government (with the support of the MQM). Bhutto faced several problems. First, she was yet to prove her administrative potential and assert her authority in a system where each section of the ruling troika (i.e., the Army, the President and the Prime Minister) was claiming power. Second, at the time, Pakistan faced serious ethnic problem in Sindh and Baluchistan. Thus, the governance problem was becoming acute. Finally, a weak government also made her vulnerable to the hard-liners in the country. In the words of the I.I.S.S. *Strategic Survey* of 1990 "Her own [Bhutto's] domestic weakness,

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<sup>9</sup> Inderjit Badhwar, "Kashmir," *India Today*, April 30, 1989, pp 64-72

<sup>10</sup> J.N.Dixit, *Anatomy of a Flawed Inheritance: Indo-Pak Relations, 1970-1994* (New Delhi: Konark, 1995), P.123.



; may hamper her efforts to improve Indo- Pakistani relations (the same is true counterpart V.P.Singh). The attacks of her opponent, the opinion of the army and ident, who, in 1989 accused India of having 'hegemonistic' designs in South orced Bhutto near the end of the year to rein in her enthusiasm for nement.<sup>11</sup>

In conclusion, at the end of the Cold War, both India and Pakistan were headed : governments facing severe political, economic and ethnic problems. The position wo governments was too unstable to formulate a clearcut, coherent strategy : fast sweeping-changes occurring in the international system. Thus, on the eve of 0 crisis between the two countries, there were two weak governments in power re vulnerable to attack from hard-liners in their respective countries. As a result, s in 1987 it took a telephone call between Rajiv and Zia to wind down the itation, in 1990 the crisis carried on for months before it was ended.

## **Kashmir Crisis: The Internal Dimension**

There is no denying the fact that "peace" has had a very chequered history in ir. However, what was surprising in 1989-90 was the unprecedented rise in the f violence and militancy. To analyse the genesis of the Kashmir problem is beyond ope of this chapter. The focus here is on the underlying causes of the rise of cy in the year 1989-90

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s, *Strategic Survey*, 1989-1990, p.166.

The roots of the current problem can be traced to the 1983 Assembly elections, when the National Conference headed by Dr. Farooq Abdullah won a convincing victory. Farooq did not have a very cordial relationship with the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Farooq had refused an electoral alliance with the Congress(I). Furthermore, Farooq began to unite opposition Parties on the sensitive issues of Centre-State relations.<sup>12</sup> Desperate to establish a presence in the State, the Congress(I) succeeded in ousting Farooq by inducing the defection of a block of his supporters in the State Assembly. This marked the beginning of the deterioration of the democratic culture in the State. G.M. Shah, with the support of the Center, became the Chief Minister. However, his two years' rule yielded no positive development in the State and in 1986 the State was put under Governor's rule. Farooq, looking for an opportunity to come back to power, agreed to an alliance with the Congress(I) and the elections were held in April 1987.

Farooq's compromising attitude brought him the wrath of the people in the Valley. Their anger was further fuelled because of massive rigging in the elections. Though Farooq again emerged as victorious, the malpractice's in the elections sealed the fate of those who had believed in democratic norms.<sup>13</sup> As Shekhar Gupta points out, "A look at the intelligence agencies' lists of the A and B category extremists shows how much the rigging of 1987 poll has cost the nation and Farooq himself. Nearly all the young men on the wanted list today were guarding ballot-boxes for the Muslim United Front (MUF) candidates in the last election."<sup>14</sup> The sentiments of the Kashmiri people are captured in the following words of the editor of the *Hambwara* weekly, Tameel-I-Irshad: "For once

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<sup>12</sup> M.J. Akbar, *Kashmir: Behind the Vale* (New Delhi: Viking, 1991), pp. 202-204.

<sup>13</sup> Shekhar Gupta, "Militant Siege," *India Today*, January 31, 1990, pp. 22-32.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 27.

people thought of integrating with the Indian mainstream through elections. But they were robbed. You can't steal our votes, thrash us with lathis and say come, join up with me."<sup>15</sup> Sumit Ganguly comments, "The conduct and outcome of this election effectively closed the possible venue for the expression of the legitimate dissent in Kashmir."<sup>16</sup>

Besides the problems created by the elections, there was also the problem of maldevelopment. The new government was inefficient and corrupt which failed to bring any positive economic development in the state. Sumit Ganguly points out that, "The poor economic conditions that spurred high unemployment among semi-educated youths provided a fertile recruiting ground for various secessionist organisations."<sup>17</sup> Throughout the year of 1988 and 1989, sporadic bursts of violence, riots and strikes characterised the state, but the Farooq government and central government in Delhi both took shield behind the "foreign hand" explanation as put forward by Farooq in his many utterances: "the problem is basically a creation of Pakistan and should also be tackled at the political level between New Delhi and Islamabad."<sup>18</sup>

However, with time, militancy was growing in strength and was gaining popular support. The nature of violence changed from being sporadic to orchestrated and deliberate. The targets of violence were carefully chosen, and the objectives of the perpetrators exceeded the limited goal of removing the Congress(I)-Farooq Abdullah regime. The Kashmir insurgency, in an incipient form, had begun. Pointing to the dangerous situation, the then Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Jagmohan wrote to the Prime Minister: "The situation is fast deteriorating. It has almost reached point of no

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>16</sup> Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, op cit, pp 98-99

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, pp.88-89.

<sup>18</sup> Shekhar Gupta, "Militant Siege," *India Today*, op cit, p 31.

return. ...The Chief Minister stands isolated. He has already fallen-politically and administratively; only constitutional rites remain to be performed. The situation calls for effective intervention. Today may be timely; tomorrow may be too late.”<sup>19</sup>

But instead of doing anything effective, in July 1989 Jagmohan, who had been Governor for five years was replaced. General Krishna Rao, a former Chief of the Army Staff and Governor of the insurgency- ridden Northern- Eastern states of Nagaland and Manipur took his place. The appointment of a former Army General as Governor sent a wrong signal to the extremists as well as the masses, who were already dissatisfied with the repressive measures of the State government. The Farooq government’s policy towards the militancy earned him the term “CCM” (i.e. Curfew Chief Minister). the impact of his regime was well characterised in an editorial of *India Today* (September 30, 1989): “Today thanks to rampant nepotism, corruption and notorious maladministration Farooq’s compact with his people seems to have broken. He has lost his trust with them. Some of them have turned to guns and others, who initially blamed The Farooq government for their woes now increasingly blame New Delhi.”<sup>20</sup>

### Rubaiya Sayeed Affair and Worsening of the Problem

On December 8, 1989, Dr. Rubaiya Sayeed, daughter of the Home Minister in the newly constituted Janata Government, was seized from a public bus and kidnapped by militants. The Government could secure her safe return only after releasing the five militants as demanded by the kidnapers. This incident proved the inefficiency of the administration and the growing turmoil in the valley. Commenting over the government’s handling of this incident and its effect Sumit Ganguly writes, “There is little question

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<sup>19</sup> Inderjit Badhwar, “Inexplicable Neglect,” *India Today*, February 28, 1990, pp.32-33.

<sup>20</sup> “Indianise Kashmir,” editorial, *India Today*, September 30, 1989, p.11.

that the new government's willingness to promptly meet the demands of the abductors sent out an important signal. Insurgent groups throughout the valley saw that the government lacked the necessary discipline to stand firm when confronted by an act of terror."<sup>21</sup>

Another effect of the incident was that, Farooq, who already was at loss because of Congress(I) defeat in the last general election, now found himself completely isolated and alienated. On his precarious condition a journalist aptly remarked, "More than anything else, the kidnapping highlighted the ineptitude of the Farooq Abdullah government and its utter alienation from the people."<sup>22</sup>

Finally the incident marked the seriousness of the instability in the region. Mufti Mohammed Sayeed told in an interview following the abduction, "There is a total collapse of administrative machinery and other institutions. The law and order machinery has lost authority. I think it is in more turmoil than Punjab."<sup>23</sup> A look at militants' strategy and tactics clearly reveals the fact of inefficiency and total failure of administration in the state. The militants imposed ban of university books that they deemed to be anti Islamic, they successfully ensured the closeness of bars in Srinagar and of liquor stores in the region. The growing mass support to militancy was turning it into a full scale insurgency movement. An example of how much public support they enjoyed, could be asserted from the fact that, "the receipts on the account of electricity dropped from Rs. 21.86 Crore in 1988-89 to Rs. 14.42 Crore in 1989-90. The sales tax department found its

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<sup>21</sup> Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, op.cit., p.104

<sup>22</sup> Pankaj Pachauri, "Abduction Anguish," *India Today*, December 31, 1989, pp.62-64.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p.64.

revenue reduced to Rs. 23.50 Crore in 1989-90 to Rs. 10.06 Crore in 1990-91, while the income tax department had stopped functioning.”<sup>24</sup>

Facing with such an acute problem of governance the new government in Delhi reappointed Jagmohan as the Governor of the state. Jagmohan being appointed on 18 January 1990, declared Governor’s rule on the following day and the Farooq government resigned. Pointing out, the condition of the state at that time, Jagmohan said in an interview, “Every component of the power structure had been taken over by the terrorists. Subversive elements had infiltrated the police ranks and the portion of the police was on the verge of mutiny. Civil services had broken down completely. Lawyers, doctors and even the press were dominated by the militants...”<sup>25</sup> Jagmohan known for his hard-line approach towards militancy pointed out that, “The best way of solving the crisis is to assert the authority of the state and create an impression that no matter what the cost, the subversionists and their collaborators will be firmly dealt with and eliminated.”<sup>26</sup> However, Jagmohan’s iron handed strategy proved to be futile in the wake of militants’ strategy of selecting specific targets and displaying a massive defiance of the authority. The failure of Jagmohan’s hard line approach was best illustrated by Shekhar Gupta, who found that, “Trigger-happy troops mean more deaths which is exactly what the militants want. Every ‘new martyr’ means a namaz-e-zanaza (funeral prayer) from the mohalla’s mosque which inevitably results in an angry mob resulting in more firings, more martyrs and more mobs. As a build to urban insurgency, there could not be more

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<sup>24</sup> Gautam Navalakha, “Bharat’s Kashmir War,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 21, 1990, pp.2957-2963

<sup>25</sup> In an interview with *India Today*

<sup>26</sup> in an interview with Inderjit Badhwar, “Dissolve the Assembly,” *India Today*, February 28, 1990, p.31.

vicious cycle.”<sup>27</sup> How much this alienated the masses could be understood by two examples. On January 20, 1990 thirty-two people died in a shooting incidence by Indian security forces in a demonstration in Srinagar. Another incidence occurred when Maulvi Mohammed Farooq the Mirwaiz of Kashmir and the leader of the Kashmiri Awami movement was killed in Srinagar on May 21, 1990. In his funeral procession, a trigger prone paramilitary picket opened fire on the crowd, killing twenty people on the spot. Twenty-seven other died of their wound. Ironically, the procession was started out, it had a strong anti-Hijb-ul-Mujahideen tone (the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen was widely suspected of having killed the mirwaiz). However, once the shooting started, sentiments quickly shifted against the Indian government.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the repressive measures often backfired in more tragic and dangerous way. Whereas, the militants continued with their terror activities, which took heavy toll of intelligence personnel, administrative men and common masses out of which the most tragic killing were of H.L.Khera the manager of the state-run Hindustan Machine Tools factory in Srinagar; Mushirul Haq, the Vice-Chancellor of Kashmir University; and Haq’s personal secretary Abdul Ghani.

Explaining the internal factors that made the new generation of Kashmiris so defiant of the authority, Sumit Ganguly argues, “...given the dramatic expansion in literacy and media exposure, a generation of Kashmiris has now emerged that is more conscious of its political rights and privileges ...the new politically aware generation has proved unwilling to tolerate the sKulduggery that has long characterised Kashmiri politics.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Shekhar Gupta, “Militant Seige,” *India Today*, op cit., p.27.

<sup>28</sup> Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, op cit., p.108.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36-37.

In conclusion, an overview of the above arguments and facts suggest that the rise of ethno-nationalism in Kashmir during 1989-90 was rooted essentially in indigenous politics. However, the time was ripe enough for Pakistan which is always looking for an opportunity to exploit.

### **External Dimension of the 1990 Crisis**

With the rise of unrest in Kashmir, Pakistan became active in supporting the militancy. Commenting on Pakistan's role, Sumit Ganguly writes, "Pakistan sensing an opportunity to weaken India's hold on Kashmir, funded, trained, and organised a loose, unstructured movement into a coherent, organised enterprise directed toward challenging the writ of the Indian state in Kashmir."<sup>30</sup> The US Ambassador in Pakistan, Robert Oakely observed: "Pakistan, willy-nilly, began to play a much more active role. Unofficially, groups such as Jamaat-i-Islami as well as ISI and the Pakistani Army, began to take a more active role in support of the Kashmiri protests. Training camps of various kinds multiplied. ...The idea of training camps conjures up all sorts of massive things. There was much more activity. There were more people and more material going across the border from Pakistan to Kashmir"<sup>31</sup> Thus, the rise in the militancy coupled with Pakistan's support brought the Kashmir issue to the forefront of relations between the two neighbours. In early January 1990 Bhutto sent Abdus Sattar, a veteran career diplomat, to India for consultations. Sattar returned with Indian assurances of continued good relations, but that did little to assuage Pakistan's feeling in the face of continued unrest in Kashmir. Following the tragic shooting incidence of January 20, Bhutto,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Krepon and Mishi Faruquee, eds. *Conflict Prevention and Confidence-Building Measures in South Asia: The 1990 Crisis, Occasional Paper No.17* (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 1994), p.5.



declared that there could be “no compromise” with India on the Kashmiris’ right to “self-determination.”<sup>32</sup> She also held an extraordinary meeting attended by President Gulam Ishaq Khan and the three armed forces’ chiefs<sup>33</sup>.

It is believed that the cabinet session gave its brief to Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan who left for New Delhi two days later. Yaqub’s visit yielded little, but created more problems. It is believed that Yaqub came with very strong message. The content of his message is yet to be known. However, that it was toughly worded one is evident from the words of the then Indian Foreign Minister, I.K.Gujral, “The turning point was the visit of my old friend Mr.Yaqub...Yaqub Sahib came here with a very hard message. I don’t know why. And I tried to persuade him to understand and appreciate our situation. I told him that the message he was conveying to me and to India’s Prime Minister amounted to an ultimatum.” When asked what exactly was said Gujral said, “Hawkish. Almost challenging the Indian State’s authority on Kashmir, saying that nothing in fact was binding on them and that the Simla Agreement was not relevant.”<sup>34</sup> He added that Pakistan justified its interference in Kashmir by claiming that the provisions of the 1972 Shimla agreement were no longer operational, and the destiny of the people of the State was inseparably linked with those in the “Pakistan-occupied part of Kashmir.” As it was expected this kind of gesture from Pakistan made the situation in Kashmir more problematic.

## **Escalation Of War of Words**

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<sup>32</sup> “Beginning of War of Words,” *The Economist*, January 27,1990.

<sup>33</sup> Salamat Ali, “Vale of Tears,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 8,1990, p.20.

<sup>34</sup> In an interview to M.B.Naqvi, *Newsline*, May 1990, p. 23.

In Pakistan, on February 5, there was total response to a nation wide call for a strike on the Kashmir issue. With the opposition members in National Assembly calling for a 'jihad', Benazir was left with little option but to raise the tone of her support for the insurgency in Kashmir. Addressing the joint session of Parliament on February 10, She said, "Can the Muslim Ummah and Pakistan remain silent... a mass uprising can't be termed the work of miscreants,... in their hour of need the people of Jammu and Kashmir will not find us wanting."<sup>35</sup> After a few days, addressing a public meeting in Lahore, she described the Kashmir Valley as awash "in blood and tears" and "crying for freedom."<sup>36</sup> The war of words escalated to a peak when Benazir travelled to Muzaffarabad in POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) and promised a "thousand year war" in support of the militants and assured people of the creation of a 4 million dollar fund to support the "freedom fighters" across the LAC<sup>37</sup>. She drew loud cheers by threatening to turn Jammu into "Bhag-mohan".<sup>38</sup>

Indian Prime Minister V.P. Singh responded to this rhetoric in an equally strong fervour. In an address to the Lok Sabha a few weeks later on April 10, he said, "I warn them that those who talk of 1000 years of war should examine whether they will last 1000 hours of war." He further galvanised his speech by saying, "a momentum may develop that might result in a war... Let us be prepared... steel yourself for it. We cannot remain soft."<sup>39</sup> One day before the fierce speech of Mr. Singh the BJP in a strongly

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<sup>35</sup> Madhu Jain, "Raising the Stakes," *India Today*, February 28, 1990, pp.27-29.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>37</sup> Raja Asghar, "Bhutto Predicts Victory for Kashmir Independence Campaign," *Reuters Library Report*, March 13, 1990.

<sup>38</sup> Shekhar Gupta, "Playing With Fire," *India Today*, May 31, 1990, pp.22-26.

<sup>39</sup> "VP urges Nation to be ready as Pak troops move to border," *Times of India*, April 11, 1990.

worded resolution of the party's national executive, called on the Government to 'knock out the training camps and the transit routes of the terrorists.' The resolution said that, 'Pakistan's many provocations amounts to so many acts of war' and added that 'hot pursuit is a recognised defensive measure.'<sup>40</sup> BJP's aggressive posture was significant for the hard-liners as it was providing support to the Singh Government in Parliament.

Meanwhile, India's strategic community was convinced that Pakistan's covert involvement in stoking the flames in Jammu and Kashmir was certain to escalate.<sup>41</sup> 'What we are going to see is a sustained low-level confrontation in Kashmir that could escalate,'<sup>42</sup> said Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, head of the Institute for Defence and Strategic Analysis IDSA. Lieutenant General Mathew Thomas, editor of the *Indian Defence Review*, predicted that, 'Islamabad will opt for a festering sore campaign rather than military war. And hope for a civil war in Kashmir.'<sup>43</sup> Echoing this belief of Indian strategists, V.P. Singh in his address of April 10 said, 'Our message to Pakistan is that you cannot get away with taking Kashmir without a war.' He further added, 'They will have to pay a very heavy price and we have the capability to inflict heavy losses.'<sup>44</sup>

Thus, by the second week of April, war of words between the two states had changed from simply blaming each other to issuing threats of war. Although this war rhetoric was mainly aimed towards strengthening their position in domestic

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<sup>40</sup> "Crush Pak Camps: BJP," *Times of India*, April 8, 1990.

<sup>41</sup> Dilip Bobb and Raj Chengappa, "War Games," *India Today*, February 28, 1990, pp.22-27.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>44</sup> *Times of India*, April 11, 1990

constituencies<sup>45</sup>, it became dangerous against the background of mobilisation of armed forces near the borders.

## Militarisation of the Crisis

The first notable development in the military sphere came into notice when Pakistan raised its concern about Indian forces located at Mahajan.<sup>46</sup> US Embassy officials in India voiced Islamabad's concern to New Delhi. Indian Army Chief, General V.N.Sharma, explained to them that Indian forces were doing routine military exercises which are normally conducted during that period. Sharma also asked the U.S. officials to go into the area and to verify for themselves the Indian claim. After visiting the area of Hissar and Bikaner, and checking on the location of the Indian Army division and the Mahajan training area, the military attaches of US Embassy "observed nothing unusual."<sup>47</sup> According to the US Air Attaché in New Delhi, Colonel John Sandrock, the only thing unusual from his perspective,<sup>48</sup> was the deployment of additional troops in Kashmir and then along the border, south to the rest of Jammu and Kashmir and into the [Indian state of] Punjab. This deployment included not only regular army troops but also significant increase in the Border Security Force, which had the primary responsibility for border security on the Indian side."<sup>48</sup> However he found that "As far as the build-up was concerned, there was no evidence that we could see that it was accompanied by the movement of heavy equipment such as tanks and artillery. This appeared to corroborate the Indian claim that the build-up of forces on the border was to prevent cross-border infiltration and did not constitute a build-up of forces preparing for any hostile action

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<sup>45</sup> Madhu Jain, "Raising the Stakes," *India Today*; op. cit., p.29.

<sup>46</sup> Krepon and Faruqee, eds., *1990 Crisis*, op. cit., pp.12-16.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, P.14.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

against Pakistan.”<sup>49</sup> The co-operation of India and the U.S. in verifying Indian force dispositions established a pattern for the monitoring of forces on both sides from then onwards during the crisis period.

Although the forces were every calm on both sides, a heated exchange of words led to full military preparedness by the second week of April. Responding to the V.P.Singh’s speech of 10 April, Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff, General Aslam Beg called on his military commanders for a “high state of preparedness and vigilance to frustrate the design of the enemy.”<sup>50</sup> On 13 April, *The Daily Telegraph* reported that “The Armies of India and Pakistan have been placed on alert and leave for service personnel cancelled.”<sup>51</sup> On 14 April, State Minister for Defence Ghulam Sarwar Khan told a parliamentary committee that Pakistan’s Armed forces were on “a high state of preparedness and vigilance to meet any external threat.” As far as Indian forces were concerned, on April 12, Indian intelligence sources said that India was building-up its forces in Kashmir but that was in response to Pakistani troop movements.<sup>52</sup>

### **Shadow of Brasstackes and Heightening of the Crisis**

With the mobilisation of troops along border the fear of another war gripped the region. This fear got heightened because of the perception of military exercises on both sides. In December 1989 the Pakistan Army had carried out its largest ever military exercise Zarb-i-Momin (Sword of the Believer).<sup>53</sup> The exercise included more than

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>50</sup> Rahul Bedi, “Armies Are Put on War Footing Over Kashmir,” *The Daily Telegraph*, April 13, 1990.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> “Pakistan Ready to Meet Indian Invasion,” *The Reuter Library Report*, April 14, 1990.

<sup>53</sup> Maj. Ger(Retd) Sarfaraj Khan, “Zarb-e-Momin --- Pros And Cons,” *The Nation*, January 14, 1990.

200,000 troops involving seven infantry divisions, an armoured division, two armoured-cum-infantry brigades and a mechanised brigade. The Pakistan Air Forces' exercise, Highmark, was also integrated with this. Spelling out the prime objective of Zarb-i-Momin, General Beg said that it was designed to test and prepare the army for an "offensive-defence" doctrine which implied a pre-emptive strike and carrying the war into the enemy's territory. For India, this was signal of a much more aggressive Pakistan. The perception of Zarb-i-Momin became crucial when Indian COAS, General V.N.Sharma, claimed that the troops involved in Zarb-i-Momin did not go back to their peace time stations and stayed on the in exercise area which is close to the international border and cease fire line primarily because they were intended to support the infiltrators.<sup>54</sup> According to Sharma, tank units of Pakistan's 2nd Corps had moved into the desert region of Bahawalpur and Bahawalanagar, across the border from the Indian states of Punjab and Rajasthan. In addition he claimed, parts of Pakistan's 1st Corps had moved into the Shakargarh area, just across the border from the vital road linking Jammu to Punjab. He also claimed that a tank division was included in these force formations.

Thus for Indian military planners the deployment of Pakistan's forces was along the same line as it was during the Brasstacks Crisis of 1987. Although Sharma's claims have been refuted by Pakistani Army officials, they are important as they imply the perception of India's COAS. As far as Pakistan army officials' perceptions about Indian forces are concerned, they had already expressed their apprehensions about the Indian military exercise in the Mahajan area. The unusual continuation of the Indian exercise raised their fears, thus General Beg accused India of assembling an armoured strike

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<sup>54</sup> V.N.Sharma made these claims in his interview, "It's All Bluff and Bluster," *The Economic Times*, May 18, 1993.

force about 50 miles from the border in the Rajasthan sector.<sup>55</sup> On April 19, addressing a group of journalists, the Commander of the Pakistani Army in the Punjab region, Lieutenant General Alam Jan Mahsud, commented 'More than 25000 Indian troops, including a full fledged brigade, have moved threateningly toward Pakistan from their peacetime positions in recent days... India's southern strike corps, which included 50,000 infantrymen, heavy artillery of at least 300 tanks, remains poised 30 miles from Pakistan border...' and this was "highly unusual" and "provoking."<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of the public pronouncements, the forces on both sides were taking precautionary steps. Colonel Sandrock comments that "the [Indian] military was certainly aware of the tensions and was conscious of the fact that its action could complicate the situation."<sup>57</sup> His counterpart in Pakistan Colonel Jones later noted, "I have a lot of respect for the Pak military and Indian military, because when [everyone around] was losing their heads, by and large they kept things under control."<sup>58</sup> In light of these observations, it would seem that, in comparison to the Brasstacks crisis, in 1990 the armies maintained greater restraint. The explanation for this could be that whereas in 1987 the crisis was purely a military affair, in 1990 the crisis involved Kashmir, a very important political issue for both sides and thus "the politicians were going berserk, and the military guys were fairly calm."<sup>59</sup> Even though the military was calm, the atmosphere was charged with the tensions on both sides. As Shekhar Gupta pointed out in the May

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<sup>55</sup> "Assault on Pakistan Gains Favour in India: Kashmir Sparks Change in Position," *The Washington Post*, April 19, 1990.

<sup>56</sup> Mark Fineman, "Nervous Pakistanis Watch the Wall And Indian Troops," *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1990; Malcom Davidson, "Pakistani General Says More Indian Troops Deployed on Border," *The Reuter Library Report*, April 19, 1990.

<sup>57</sup> Krepon and Faruqee, eds., *1990 Crisis*, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

15,1990 issue of *India Today*. "All the vital signs are still missing ...Yet beneath the surface the signals are unmistakable: Indian and Pakistani forces are preparing for a possible war... the forces may not be arrayed for war but the movement is distinctly toward battle-stations."<sup>60</sup>

## **Heightening of the Crisis and the Response of the International Community**

With the mobilisation of troops and rising war hysteria, the International Community became alarmed. *The Independent* reported on April 16 that, "In a joint international effort, the Soviet and American ambassadors in Islamabad and New Delhi have been exerting quiet but strong pressure on both sides to reopen a dialogue."<sup>61</sup> The

UN Secretary General's special representative in the region, Benion Sevan was also involved in similar diplomatic efforts. On April 18, the US Under-Secretary of State Robert M. Kimmitt, expressed his concern over the "growing risk of miscalculation which could lead events to dangerously out of control."<sup>62</sup> He further asked the two governments to "take immediate steps to reduce the level of tension by lowering the rhetoric and avoiding provocative troop deployment, and instead to devote their energies to addressing this issue through dialogue and negotiations."<sup>63</sup> However, throughout this period India maintained its position of not negotiating anything unless Pakistan stopped supporting the militancy. Both states were also involved in extensive diplomatic manoeuvring to convince the international community of their respective position. India's Energy and Civil Aviation Minister, Arif Mohammed Khan, and Congress(I) leader,

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<sup>60</sup> Shekhar Gupta, "On The Alert," *India Today*, May 15, 1990, p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> *The Independent*, April 16, 1990.

<sup>62</sup> Al Kamen, "U.S. Voices Concern Over Kashmir: State Dept. Cautions India And Pakistan," *The Washington Post*, April 19, 1990

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*



Najama Heptulla were sent to conduct some quiet diplomacy in the Islamic world.<sup>64</sup> To reduce tensions, the Foreign Ministers of both states, I.K. Gujral and Yaqub Khan met in New York on April 25. After the talks Yaqub Khan said, "I can not pretend that our meeting can be seen as breakthrough...Nevertheless, it is an advance, particularly because both sides spoke of seeking a peaceful settlement and of avoiding the possibility of confrontation and conflict."<sup>65</sup> Although international pressure continued on both sides,<sup>66</sup> the war of words also continued. On May 2, BJP President, Lal Krishna Advani, called for an attack on camps inside Pakistana which were training Kashmiri militants.<sup>67</sup> On May 16, V.P.Singh told a parliamentary committee that Pakistan had put military airfields on top alert and massed troops along the border, forcing India to take counter-measures.<sup>68</sup> On the same day, a Foreign Ministry spokesman of India announced the visit of a high-level delegation dispatched by US President George Bush to discuss the problem between India and Pakistan.<sup>69</sup>

## The Nuclear Factor in the Crisis

The analysis of the nuclear factor in the crisis suggests divergent opinions about its role. The first provoking reference to the nuclear factor came to light on May 27, when *The Sunday Times* carried a story under the headline, "Pakistan 'nuclear war threat'."<sup>70</sup> According to the report, "American spy satellites have photographed heavily

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<sup>64</sup> Shekhar Gupta, "Turning Down the Heat," *India Today*, May 15, 1990, pp 22-25

<sup>65</sup> Anthony Geodman, "Pakistani Minister Calls Kashmir Situation 'Extremely Grim'," *The Reuter Library Report*, April 26, 1990.

<sup>66</sup> see *India Today*

<sup>67</sup> Dev Varam, "Powerful Hindu Party Calls For Attacks on Camps in Pakistan," *The Reuter Library Report*, May 2, 1990

<sup>68</sup> "Pakistan, India Reportedly in Top Alert Over Kashmir Dispute," *The United Press International*, May 16, 1990

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> James Adams, "Pakistan 'Nuclear War Threat'," *The Sunday Times*, May 27, 1990.

armed convoys leaving the top-secret Pakistani nuclear weapon complex at Kahuta, near Islamabad, and heading for military airfields. They have also filmed what some analyst said were special racks designed to carry nuclear bombs being fitted to Pakistani F-16 aircraft.”<sup>71</sup> The report also referred that, “India is also believed to have nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union has detected signs these, too, are being readied for use.” It quoted a senior Pentagon official saying, “If readiness is measured on a scale of one to 10 and the Indians are normally at six, they have now moved to nine.”<sup>72</sup>

Apart from the story of *the Sunday Times*, *The New Yorker* of March 29, 1993 carried an article titled, “On The Nuclear Edge”<sup>73</sup> According to ... Seymour M. Hersh, the author of the article, “In the spring of 1990, Pakistan and India faced off in the most dangerous nuclear confrontation of the post-war era.”<sup>74</sup> Hersh refers to Richard J. Kerr, who, as Deputy Director of the C.I.A., co-ordinated the intelligence reporting in May 1990. Kerr told Hersh, “It was the most dangerous nuclear situation we ever faced since I’ve been in the US government. It may be as close as we’ve come to a nuclear exchange. It was far more frightening than the Cuban missile crisis.”<sup>75</sup> Hersh’s central thesis is based on the following arguments<sup>76</sup>

Sometime in the early spring of 1990, intelligence reached Washington that General Aslam Beg had authorised the technicians at Kahuta to put together nuclear weapons.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Seymour M. Hersh, “On The Nuclear Edge.” *The New Yorker*, March 29, 1993, pp. 56-73.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp 64-65.

Sometimes in May, as condition inside Kashmir worsened, an orbiting American satellite relayed photograph of what some official believed was the evacuation of thousands of workers from Kahuta. Satellite and other intelligence later produced signs of a truck convoy moving from the suspected nuclear-storage site in Baluchistan to a nearby Air Force base.

Eventually the intelligence community picked up a frightening sight, that is, of F-16s prepositioned and armed for delivery, on full alert, with pilots in the aircraft. According to Hersh, the reason for all these preparation was that Pakistan feared an Indian attack and all this was “in essence, a warning to India that if ‘you move up here’- that is, begin a ground invasion in Pakistan - ‘we’re are going to take out Delhi.’”<sup>77</sup> As a result of this alarming situation, President Bush ordered “the high-powered mission,” i.e., The Gates mission, to “fly to the rescue.” Although Hersh’s story has been further sensationalised in *Critical Mass*<sup>78</sup> by William E. Burrow and Robert Windrem, his arguments have been refuted by the policy-makers in the region. General Beg claimed that “Pakistan did not possess a usable nuclear device at that time. Therefore his country could not have been poised to use such a weapon against India.”<sup>79</sup> Moreover in Beg’s opinion, such readiness was unnecessary because Pakistan had not faced a critical or desperate situation. Furthermore “there was a solid fear of massive retaliation from India,” he recalled, “as they [the Indians] have a stockpile of more than a dozen warheads.”<sup>80</sup> General Sharma has also refuted Hersh’s arguments. “There is a lot of bluff

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p.64.

<sup>78</sup> William E. Burrow and Robert Windrem, *Critical Mass: The Race For Superweapons in a Fragmented World*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994)

<sup>79</sup> Pervez Hoodboy, *Nuclear issues Between India and Pakistan: Myths and Realities*, Occasional Paper no. 18 (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1994), pp.2-3.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p 3.

and bluster from Pakistan. It is different to talk about something and totally different to do something. In hard military terms your capability is not judged by bluff and bluster, but by what you have in your pocket and what you can do with it.’<sup>81</sup>

The U.S. Embassy officials too have refuted Hersh’s argument. William Clark, US Ambassador in New Delhi at that time, disclosed: ‘Hersh did talk to me. My views were not as apocalyptic as his. My comments really did not fit his thesis, and so you will not find me in the article anywhere.’<sup>82</sup> Robert Oakley, the US Ambassador in Islamabad suggests, ‘we never believed that there was going to be an explosion in the spring of 1990...I tried to make it clear to Mr Hersh and he diddled with it.’<sup>83</sup> Colonel John Sandrook, U.S. Air Attaché in New Delhi, was of the view that, ‘by the time the Gates mission came around, the crisis was largely over; it was a thing of the past... tensions were winding down.’<sup>84</sup>

All these claims suggest two significant points against Hersh’s thesis. The first is that Pakistan was not capable of threatening India in nuclear terms. Secondly, by the time the Gates Mission reached the region the crisis was largely over. To understand the role of nuclear factor one must examine these two arguments

When we look at the development of the nuclear programme in Pakistan, we find that, in 1989, Benazir Bhutto spoke at a joint session of the US Congress and promised that ‘We do not possess nor do we intend to make a nuclear device.’<sup>85</sup> However, she herself accepted in 1992 that, ‘I have no proof for this, but I feel that

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<sup>81</sup> ‘Its All Bluff and Bluster,’ *Economic Times*, May 18, 1993.

<sup>82</sup> Krepon and Faruqee, eds., 1990 Crisis, op. cit. p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>85</sup> Hersh, ‘On the Nuclear Edge,’ op. cit., P 61.

someone may have turned on the switch in the spring of 1990 to justify the dismissal of my government.”<sup>86</sup> Robert Oakley, who refuted Hersh’s arguments also observes that “the freeze on the Pakistani nuclear programme was removed. And the programme began to move forward again. That is what led to the application of Precessler Amendment.”<sup>87</sup> He further adds: “By the time Gates got there we had ascertained beyond a shadow of doubt that the promises Mrs.Bhutto had made and kept during 1989, and that the Chief of Army Staff had made and kept during 1989, had been broken and that the nuclear programme had been reactivated.”<sup>88</sup> Apart from these confirmations, many other defence and strategic experts on the region more or less agree with the fact that Pakistan had crossed the line by that year and it was capable of threatening India. As for the Gates mission, it will be discussed in detail in the next section. However to make the point one can quote Mr.Douglas Makeig, an intelligence officer in the CIA who noted: “I don’t want to get into specifics, but I can guarantee you that despatching the Gates Mission was a Presidential decision that was based on intelligence assessment at the very highest level.”<sup>89</sup> These arguments suggest that although Hersh’s claims might be exaggerated, they are not completely irrelevant and the truth lies somewhere between his claims and the claims made against him.

Was there an attempt to use nuclear weapons for deterrence purposes during the crisis? The answer to that question can be inferred from the perceptions and the viewpoints of the policy-makers and the defence analysts. To begin with, according to General Sundarji, in an interview in April 1990, the “probabilities [of war] are pretty low

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<sup>86</sup> Burrow and Windrem, *Critical Mass*, op.cit., p.66.

<sup>87</sup> Krepon and Faruqee, eds., 1990 Crisis, op. cit., p.7.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p.40.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p.27.

... you can't gainsay the fact that any sensible planner sitting on this side of the border is going to assume Pakistan does have nuclear weapon capability. And by the same token, I rather suspect the view from the other side is going to look very similar."<sup>90</sup> Again, in 1993, at the Stimson Center seminar on the crisis he argued, "One of the possible causes of the relative stability - or at least preventing the incipient crisis from spreading out of control - could well be de facto, perceived, non deployed, nuclear deterrence in operation ... if this kind of a nuclear backdrop existed from '47 on, I wonder whether those crisis would have spin out of control and ended up in shooting matches. My answer is perhaps not. I'm not saying that this can be proven. Obviously, it can't. But it's plausible at least, and cannot be ignored."<sup>91</sup> Ambassador Clark argued, "it[nuclear deterrence] may have played a role in the thinking of both militaries - I think that is a reasonable assumption, but I can't verify it." Douglas Makei observed, "It's a theory I wouldn't want to see tested. It probably had been tested in '87 and '90 and perhaps it did work in those cases."<sup>92</sup> Again, as far as the two Governments' response to the nuclear factor is considered, we find that both Indian as well as Pakistani government declined to comment on the story of *The Sunday Times* published on May 27, 1990. This suggests that both governments were trying to maintain the ambiguity regarding their nuclear posture thereby trying to play the deterrence in some way without fully admitting to the possession of nuclear weapons. In conclusion, although it is not possible to get definitively to the bottom of the role of the nuclear factor in the crisis. However, the analysis of policy-makers' view and the response of the two governments to the nuclear factor, strengthens the case for an influential role of nuclear factor during the crisis.

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<sup>90</sup> Interview to *India Today*, April 30, 1990, pp.76-79.

<sup>91</sup> Krepon and Faruqee, eds., 1990 Crisis, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p.41.

## The Gates Mission

On May 16, President Bush ordered a high-powered mission to visit India and Pakistan.<sup>93</sup> The Mission included Robert Gates, Deputy National Security Adviser, John Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, and Richard Haass, senior National Security Council staffer responsible for South Asia. Pointing out the purpose of the Mission, a White House spokesman said that the President had been talking with the Indian and Pakistani leadership for months but, as the situation had deteriorated, a special White House envoy would be able to get a more realistic and accurate assessment.<sup>94</sup> This view clearly supports the argument that the assessment of the US Ambassadors in the two states and the assessment of the intelligence department were not the same and thus Bush took account of the worst case scenario.

The Gates Mission visited Pakistan and India on May 19-21, 1990.<sup>95</sup> The official position of the Mission was very cautious in not showing any form of intervention or mediation role in the region. The publicly stated purpose of the Mission was "to help both sides avoid a conflict over Kashmir, which would entail great loss of life, and damage to both countries, and to begin some sort of political dialogue which not only reduce tension but could lead to a peaceful and permanent resolution of the Kashmir problem, as called for under the Simla Agreement... We are urging both states to restrain their rhetoric and to take Confidence Building Measures on the ground to lower the

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<sup>93</sup> *Tribune*, May 17, 1990.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

tension.”<sup>96</sup> According to Hersh, the following events unfolded during the Gates Mission visit.<sup>97</sup>

Gates told Hersh that “there was the view that both sides were blundering toward a war” and that his main worry was the essential instability of both governments which he feared were “too weak to stop a war.”<sup>98</sup> Thus, in addition to Presidential letters urging restraint, Gates was authorised to tell the leadership in Islamabad and New Delhi that, the United States was prepared to share its most sensitive satellite intelligence with both sides, so they would simultaneously be able to verify troop withdrawal from border. According to Hersh, Gates tried to meet Benazir in the Middle East where she was trying hard to mobilise the Gulf countries support in favour of Pakistan’s case on Kashmir. Hersh claims that Benazir did not meet Gates. However, this has been refuted by Pakistani officials as “totally incorrect.”<sup>99</sup>

Whatever may be the truth, Gates did not meet. He met General Beg and President Ishaq Khan. Gates told General Beg, “General, our military has war-gamed every conceivable scenario between you and the Indians, and there isn’t a single way you win.” According to Oakley who was present at the meeting, “this was a real eye-opener for Pakistan’s President.” Oakley further recalls Gates saying, “Yes, we will have to stop providing military support to whichever side might initiate things. And this, of course, will impact upon you more than it will upon the Indians.”<sup>100</sup> According to Hersh, Gates told the Pakistani leadership, “You guys are going to stop supporting terrorism in

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<sup>96</sup> M.Ziauddin, “U.S. Envoys Hold Talks on Kashmir,” *The United Press International*, May 20, 1990.

<sup>97</sup> Hersh, ““On the Nuclear Edge,” op cit , pp67-68.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.67.

<sup>99</sup> Krepon and Faruqee, eds., 1990 Crisis, op cit., p.32.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.8.



Kashmir.”<sup>101</sup> And the Pakistani President assured Gates that camps for Kashmiri insurgent would be shut down. Hersh’s claims are further strengthened by other accounts. According to *The New York Times* report of May 21, there was “tough talking” over the way that Pakistan had responded to recent developments.<sup>102</sup> Pakistani Newspapers were also critical of the Gates mission.<sup>103</sup> In its editorial of May 23, *The Nation* pointed out that, “The nation has the right to know what Mr. Gates told Islamabad and what reply had been given to him. The Americans have been playing a dubious game on Kashmir and there is a genuine concern that the so-called high power delegation was sent to secure peace between India and Pakistan at the expense of bartering away Kashmir’s freedom.”<sup>104</sup> Reacting in the same vein, *Nawai Waqt* on May 22, wrote “the USA should display a sense of realism and, instead of trying to pressurise Pakistan, try to persuade India to fulfil its obligation as that would be the only solution of the problem.”<sup>105</sup>

According to Hersh, “the Pakistani concession turned out to be essential... When Gates asked the Indians to stop infiltration in Sind and to improve the human rights situation in Kashmir, the Indians responded with a significant concession: they agreed to let American military attaches of the United States Embassy go to the front in Kashmir and Rajasthan and see for themselves that no imminent invasion of Pakistan was in the works. The American attaches duly reported that the Indian units, including its vaunted Strike Corps, were in the process of closing down their exercises. That information was

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<sup>101</sup> Hersh, "On the Nuclear Edge," op cit., p 68.

<sup>102</sup> John F. Burnes, "U.S. Urges Pakistan to Settle Feud With India," *The New York Times*, May 21, 1990.

<sup>103</sup> See, "Pakistan series," POT, 1990, pp.2158-2161.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p.2158.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p.2158.

quickly relayed to the Pakistani leadership, and over the next few days both armies moved their troops away from the borders and both foreign ministries opened discussions on confidence-building measures. By the end of June, the crisis was over.<sup>106</sup>

Hersh's claim of a success for the Gates mission was not shared by the media initially. *Newsweek* reported that the group led by President Bush's Deputy National Security Advisor returned "alarmed and discouraged."<sup>107</sup> However, the analysis of the Gates mission and its background suggest that no political leader in India as well as in Pakistan at that moment could have afforded to make any concession publicly. Another significant event which occurred was the murder of Maulvi Mohammed Farooq and the shooting incident of Srinagar on May 21. This incident provoked public sentiments on both sides of the border and it might have prevented policy-maker from showing softness or accommodation. The Gates mission did not appear to be successful immediately but on May 28, India sent a set of comprehensive proposals aimed at building confidence. *The Hindu* reported that "the proposals were spelt out in a longish note sent to the Pakistani High Commission... the contents of the note- even the fact of its despatch- was kept a closely guarded secret. Obviously, New Delhi wants to proceed with what is a delicate phase of diplomacy."<sup>108</sup>

On June 1, India announced withdrawal of its armoured division. Pointing out Indian concerns, a Defence Ministry spokesman said, "Some of our formations had moved to our permanent field ranges in the Mahajan range, south of the Punjab state, for

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<sup>106</sup> Hersh, "On the Nuclear Edge," op.cit., p.68

<sup>107</sup> "One Step Closer to War," *Newsweek*, June 4, 1990.

<sup>108</sup> K.K. Katyal, "Steps Proposed to Defuse Tension," *The Hindu*, June 1, 1990.

exercises. As this was bothering the Pakistani authorities, they were moved back as a unilateral gesture.”<sup>109</sup> On June 7, Pakistan responded to the Indian proposals and offered to hold a meeting of the Foreign Secretaries of the two states. The proposals included the following:<sup>110</sup>

(1) sharing of information on military exercises in their respective territory; (2) sharing of information on field firings (not routine cases but shooting which has the potential of causing concern to the other side); (3) communication between the commanders in identified sectors, at levels lower than the DGMOs who, already, are in touch through a hotline; (4) joint (or parallel) patrolling on the border; (5) steps to prevent violation of air space by military aircraft and (6) exchange of armed forces’ delegation so as to create confidence in regard to military activities in each other’s territory.

By the third week of June both sides had agreed to hold a Foreign Secretary - level meeting and the crisis had blown over. The important thing to note is that the crisis that had been continuing for months was resolved just after the visit of the Gates mission. This suggests that the Gates proposals mattered significantly for both governments. Remarking on the role of the Gates mission, Pakistani Ambassador, Abdul Sattar said, “from all that I’ve heard, mostly from my Indian friends and from my American friends, and to some extent in Pakistan, leads me to believe that the Gates mission was very, very valuable.”<sup>111</sup> According to George Sherman, “the timing was

<sup>109</sup> “India Says India Today Has Withdrawn Armored Division From Border,” *Reuter*, June 1, 1990.

<sup>110</sup> “Pakistan Seeks Clarification on Indian Peace Proposal,” *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, June 7, 1990.

<sup>111</sup> Krepon and Faruqee, eds., *1990 Crisis*, op. cit., p 31.

felicitous; they [India and Pakistan] were both moving toward trying to diffuse the crisis, and the Gates mission gave them the perfect cover in that sense.”<sup>112</sup> According to Ambassador Clark, “He[Gates] came with some ideas about the actions that could be taken. And he came with the credibility on both sides, because he was asking the Pakistanis to stop doing something on their side. He was also asking India to stop doing certain things on their side, and had some ideas as to how you might thicken the net, if you will, between the two in terms of CBMs.”<sup>113</sup> These assessments clearly suggest that the mission was quite helpful in difusing the crisis.

## Conclusion

There are different interpretations the nature of the 1990 crisis. On the one hand, there are Hersh and Burrows arguing a near nuclear holocaust in the region. On the other hand, K.Subrahmanyam argues that there was ‘no crisis’ in May 1990. For Subrahmanyam , “the Washington bureaucracy had ...particular interest in creating an artificial nuclear crisis.”<sup>114</sup> The reason for this was that “the US administration knew that Pakistan had assembled the bomb in 1987 and yet knowingly and willingly issued misleading certificates to the Congress in 1987,1988 and 1989 that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear device. In October 1990 this certification was withheld. Therefore, it will be logical to explore the connection between the withholding of the certificate in

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p 26.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p 33.

<sup>114</sup> K.Subrahmanyam, “The Non -Crisis of 1990,” *The Economics Times*, June 6,1994.

1990 and the crisis that did not happen in the spring of 1990. That artificial crisis brought into the open the Pakistani nuclear capability and focused the world's attention on it."<sup>115</sup>

Three objections to Subrahmanyam's arguments may be cited. First, if the U.S. wanted to withhold the issuing of the certificates, it could have done it in 1988 or in 1989. The question here is, why did the U.S. choose 1990 as the year to withhold the certification? One explanation is that the U.S. wanted to contain the communist presence in Afghanistan, so the aid was continued. This argument does not seem plausible because the Geneva accord (according to which the Soviets agreed to withdraw their forces) was signed in 1986 and the U.S. did not need to continue the aid for another three years. Subrahmanyam does not explain the reasons behind the withholding of the certificates in 1990.

Secondly, Subrahmanyam does not focus on Kashmir, which was the real issue behind the crisis of 1990. He just focuses on the military issue and argues that "the misunderstanding created by some troop deployments were sorted out by February-March 1990 and therefore there was no crisis [in May] for Mr. Gates to defuse."<sup>116</sup> One cannot deny that there was no misperception about the military deployment. However, the important issue during the crisis was not military but the highly political and emotional issue of Kashmir. The two states had already fought two wars on the issue, and Kashmir was again the issue with the fear that it could escalate into another war. Subrahmanyam fails to focus on why Benazir threatened a "thousand years of war" and why V.P. Singh urged the nation to "prepare for a war".

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

Again, the misunderstanding about the military troop deployments might have been cleared up, but what about the full preparedness of the militaries for war during the month of April and May? The argument that “no one in his senses would start a war on the India-Pakistan border in the scorching heat of May,”<sup>117</sup> might seem plausible but the history of conflict between the two states shows that it is not so. Thus in 1965, war started with the Rann of Kutch episode, in which the conflict escalated throughout the month of April.<sup>118</sup> It is plausible to argue that Gates did not come to clear the confusion about the military deployments, but to find a way to resolve a political crisis which had a high probability of escalating into a military conflict between the two states, where the leaders were talking of a “thousand years of war”.

Finally, Subrahmanyam himself has accepted the logic of nuclear deterrence during the crisis. He argues, “the awareness on both sides of a nuclear capability that can enable either country to assemble nuclear weapons at short notice induces mutual caution. This caution is already evident on the part of India. In 1965 when Pakistan carried out its ‘Operation Gibraltar’ and sent in infiltrators, India sent its army across the cease-fire line to destroy the assembly points of the infiltrators. That escalated into a full scale war. In 1990 when Pakistan once again carried out a massive infiltration of terrorist trained in Pakistan, India tried to deal with the problem on Indian territory and did not send its army into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> This argument was put forward by General V.N. Sharma, *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia: Indo-Pakistani Conflicts Since 1947* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1988), pp 83-91

<sup>119</sup> K. Subrahmanyam, “Capping, Managing, or Eliminating Nuclear Weapons?,” in Kanti Bajpai and Stephen Kohen, eds., *South Asia After the Cold War: International Perspectives* (Boulder: Westview, 1993), p.184.

The above arguments clearly reveals that the crisis in 1990 was much more than an “artificial non-crisis”. Understanding the crisis from Lebow’s perspective, one can see the Kashmir crisis of 1990 as a case of brinkmanship. The issue of Kashmir was very much a serious domestic issue from India’s perspective, and it was an international issue from the India-Pakistan perspective. Both states’ political leadership was very weak, and they were quite vulnerable to internal pressure.

For Pakistan, the discontent and rising turmoil in Kashmir provided an incentive to intervene and revive the old but highly emotional issue between the two states. Commenting over Benazir’s approach to the crisis, a senior Pakistani politician said: “Whatever be the long term consequences of her tactics, today the reality is that she has completely outmanoeuvred the Opposition.”<sup>120</sup> Thus Kashmir certainly provided Benazir with an issue over which to generate political support. As far as the external threat is concerned, Lebow has pointed out that “ the most important external threat is the expectation by policy makers of a dramatic impending shift in balance of power in an adversary’s favour.”<sup>121</sup> It is plausible to argue that by the year 1989, Pakistan had lost its front-line status for the U.S., and the end of Cold War had paved the way for a better Indo-U.S. relationship. Thus, there was a change of balance of power in favour of India and in such circumstances Pakistan launched its largest military exercise ever and tried to revive the conflictual issue of Kashmir so that it could overcome the shift in the balance of power. As far as India is concerned, the brinkmanship provided its weak leadership with a reason for the worsening condition of the State of Kashmir.

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<sup>120</sup> Shekhar Gupta, “Playing With Fire,” *India Today*, op.cit., p.23.

<sup>121</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1981), p.62.

Although it is plausible to argue that the exercise in brinkmanship was largely addressed towards the domestic constituency, the crisis entered a dangerous phase when it was no longer a controlled brinkmanship and the chances of misperceiving or inadvertent war become significant. V.P.Singh feared that “when a government itself joins masses to whip up hysteria, there may develop such a momentum and pressure which may lead to a conflict.”<sup>122</sup> During the crisis Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary, Tanvir Ahmad Khan, said in an interview, “I don’t know how long we can avoid the dynamics of an eyeball to eyeball confrontation...we have learnt from third country sources that a section of the Indian intelligence community says this is the last chance to destroy Pakistan’s military machine.”<sup>123</sup> The U.S. Under-secretary of State Kimmitt noted: “there is growing risk of miscalculation which could lead events to spin dangerously out of control.”<sup>124</sup> The experts at the Institute for Defence Studies And Analyses(IDSA), also felt that “Pakistan’s successfully launching of a low-intensity conflict against India may blow into a full-fledged war.”<sup>125</sup>

All the above pronouncements clearly indicate that there was a chance of miscalculation and things getting out of control. What prevented the crisis from getting out of control? For Hersh, it was The Gates mission, for Subrahmanyam and Sundarji, it was mutual caution because of the nuclear factor. Devin Hagerty, who has analysed the nuclear deterrence during the 1990 crisis, also makes the case in favour of nuclear deterrence.<sup>126</sup> The role of the nuclear factor has been already discussed and, even if one

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<sup>122</sup> “V.P. Urges Nation to be Ready,” *The Times of India*, April 11, 1990.

<sup>123</sup> “I Think War is Avoidable,” interview to Shekhar Gupta, *India Today*, May 31, 1990.

<sup>124</sup> Al Kamen, “U.S. Voices Concern Over Kashmir,” *The Washington Post*, April 19, 1990.

<sup>125</sup> “Indo-Pak War Likely: Experts,” *The Times of India*, April 26, 1990.

<sup>126</sup> See Davin T.Hagerty, “Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: The 1990 Indo-Pakistani Crisis,” *International Security*, Vol 20, No 3, Winter 1995/1996, pp



does not take into account the nuclear factor, the cost of a conventional war was too high. *India Today* calculated the cost as Rs.687.39 crore per day.<sup>127</sup> On both sides, the policy makers were aware of the prohibitive costs of war. General Beg was the first “to caution the Prime Minister and the President that war could cost US\$350 million, with no prize of victory.”<sup>128</sup> In India, also, there was a feeling among defence experts that “the casualties will be colossal this time because both sides have a much larger number of lethal weapons in their inventories than before ...this means it will be a long drawn out war.”<sup>129</sup>

In short, one can conclude that the prohibitive cost of war induced the element of caution between the two states. However, it was the Gates mission which finally helped the two states to back-off from the escalating situation.

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<sup>127</sup> Shekhar Gupta and Kanwar Singh, “The Rs 27,000-Crore War,” *India Today*, June 30, 1990.

<sup>128</sup> See Bhabani Sen Gupta, “Neither War, Nor Peace,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 14, 1990, P.24.

<sup>129</sup> Moses Manoharan, “India, Pakistan Hesitate on Brink of War,” *The Reuter Library Report*, May 20, 1990.

## **CHAPTER THIRD**

### **CRISIS PREVENTION AND CONFIDENCE - BUILDING MEASURES**

An analysis of the crises of 1987 and 1990 reveals that both India and Pakistan have realised that war is too costly an option to settle their dispute. However, the crises also amply demonstrated that the relationship between the two states is fraught with the possibility of misperception and inadvertent escalation. It is the possibility of inadvertent escalation that necessitates mechanisms to prevent a crisis from blowing up into a war. This chapter will focus on the problems of crisis management in South Asia, the history of confidence-building measures (CBMs) between the two states, and finally the role and effectiveness of CBMs.

#### **Problems of Crisis Management**

Confrontation between adversaries can be easily terminated, -indeed avoided altogether, -if either side is willing to back away from a confrontation and accept damage to its interests. But here lies the basic paradox of crisis management, as Alexander L. George points out that "Once a crisis is set into motion, each side feels impelled to do what is needed to protect or advance its most important interests; at the same time, however, it recognizes that it must avoid utilizing options

and actions for this purpose that could trigger unwanted escalation of the crisis. This is the policy dilemma of crisis management.”<sup>1</sup> How can policy makers resolve this dilemma? George suggest two political requirements. “limitation of objectives purued in the crisis, and limitation of means employed on behalf of those objectives.”<sup>2</sup> However, the problem is that the political requirements “will not ensure control over the danger of unwanted escalation... a number of operational requirements for crisis management have to be employed in order to deal with the crisis.”<sup>3</sup> George suggests therefore seven operational principles:

1. Each side’s political authority must maintain informed control of some kind over military options - alerts, deployments and low-level actions as well as the selection and timing of the military movements.

2. The tempo and momentum of the military movements may have to be deliberately slowed down and pauses created to provide enough time for the two sides to exchange diplomatic signals and communications and to give each side adequte time to assess the situation, make decisions, and respond to proposals.

3. Movements of military forces must be carefully coordinated with diplomatic actions as part of an integrasted strategy for terminating the crisis acceptably without war or escalation to higher levels of violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander L. Geogr, “A Provisional Theory of Crisis Management.” in Alexender L. George, ed., *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management* ( Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p.23.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.24.

4. Movements of military forces and threats of force intended to signal resolve must be consistent with limited objectives, -that is, "noise" must be avoided or minimised.

5. Military moves and threats should be avoided that give the opponent the impression that one is about to resort to largescale warfare, thereby forcing him to consider preemption.

6. Diplomatic- military options should be chosen that signal, or are consistent with, a desire to negotiate a way out of the crisis rather than to seek a military solution.

7. Diplomatic proposals and military moves should be selected that leave the opponent a way out of the crisis that is compatible with his fundamental interests.<sup>4</sup>

Understanding the two crises of 1987 and 1990 in the context of the above mentioned requirements, clearly reveals the fact that India and Pakistan have managed to fulfil the political requirements, i.e., politicaly, both sides had limited objectives and none of them was interested in war as a mean to pursue their objectives. However, the military requirements of managing a crises were introduced very late. In fact, during both crises, the suspicions began because of the confusion and misperception about each other's military movements. The limitation of these military requirements is that they are supposed to work when a crisis situation has actually developed. Another limitation is that these are unilateral gestures followed

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.24.

by a state to reduce the tension and to buy time. In the absence of any institutionalised arrangement for communication between the two states, these military requirements become contextual. What mechanism could minimise the misperception between the two states and develop a sense of mutual confidence about each other's intentions and actions? The answer is confidence building measures (CBMs).

Defining CBMs, Johan Jorgen Holst noted: "CBMs are arrangements designed to enhance...assurances of mind and belief in the trustworthiness of states and the facts they create."<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Alford has defined them as "measures that tend to make military intentions explicit."<sup>6</sup> Thus CBMs aim to lessen opportunities for the initiation of war either through accidental miscalculation and misperception or by surprise attack. Reducing the opportunity for the latter comes primarily from the use of CBMs as a means of removing the element of surprise. Enhancing a state's abilities to detect deviations in the adversary military actions that may be indicative of war preparations, or accurately interpret adversary military actions not intended as war preparations are thus the most important objectives of CBMs. In other words, CBMs increase predictability about the actions of the other side by "[f]acilitat[ing] recognition of the 'normal' pattern of military activities."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Johan Jorgen Holst, "Confidence-Building Measures: A Conceptual Framework," *Survival*, vol.25, no.1, January/February, 1993, pp.2-15.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Alford, "The Usefulness and Limitations of CBMs," in William Epstein and Bernard Feld, eds., *New Directions in Disarmament* (New York: Praeger, 1981), p.134.

<sup>7</sup> Holst, "Confidence-Building Measures," *op cit.*, p 2.

## CBMs And India-Pakistan Relations

The history of various measures resembling CBMs in South Asia can be traced to the establishment of the Joint Defence Council in 1946. This was to preside over the division of the military assets between India and Pakistan.<sup>8</sup> Since then various agreements have been signed between the two states, which include: The Nehru-Liaquat pact (1950), The Indus Waters Treaty (1960), The Rann of Kutch Agreement(1965), The Tashkent Declaration(1966), and The Simla Agreement (1972).<sup>9</sup> Although these agreements aimed at achieving broad principles of cooperation, the experience of Brasstacks revealed the lack of any proper channel of communication. In fact, when the crisis began, the hotline communication between the DGMOs of the two states, which was the only existing notable CBM at the time, was not used. This led to a belief that CBMs are not effective in the region. However, the recent history of the CBMs between India and Pakistan clearly illustrates the point that the two crises have stimulated various confidence - building provisions. Thus, after the experience of Brasstacks, when Pakistan conducted its exercise Zarb-I-Momin, Indian and other foreign military attaches were invited to observe, in order to confirm non-hostile intent

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<sup>8</sup> Sumit Ganguly, "Mending Fences." in Michael Krepon and Amit Sevak. *Crisis Prevention, Confidence Building, and Reconciliation in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996), pp 11-12.

<sup>9</sup> For detail see, Chetan Kumar, "A Chronology of Cooperation 1947-1995" in Bajpai, et al., *Brasstacks and Beyond*, op.cit., pp115-139

That said, the first major proposal regarding a systematic and self-conscious programme of CBMs was made by India after the 1990 crisis. These were aimed at reducing hostility, increasing contact between military commanders, sharing information on military exercises, preventing airspace violations by military aircraft, and opening negotiations on a wide range of outstanding issues at a ministerial level.<sup>10</sup> The reaction to these CBMs was mixed. Most of the analysts felt that the ground for CBMs between India and Pakistan was not good enough. Thus Manoj Joshi noted: "Unless there is a modicum of trust, there is little point in working out a verification and confidence-building regime."<sup>11</sup> Subrahmanyam commented, "It needs to be pointed out, however, that there is no conceptual clarity on the issue of confidence - building measures in South Asia... In the Indo-Pakistan context, the basic requirements for a climate conducive to CBMs, namely, deterrence and mutual determination to avoid even the smallest of incidents which may escalate, are thus absent. The Pakistani leadership appears to be under the impression that sustaining low level conflicts over a period of time in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab is to their advantage. CBMs are possible only when both sides have an equal perception of stakes and risks involved. Unfortunately, that is not yet the case in the Subcontinent."<sup>12</sup> K K Katyal commented "How can one talk of confidence-building without addressing the issue that is causing the lack of

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<sup>10</sup> "Pakistan Seeks Clarification on Indian Peace Proposals." *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, June 7, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Manoj Joshi, "Is There a Shared Interest in Promoting Peace?" *The Hindu*, June 19, 1990.

<sup>12</sup> K. Subrahmanyam, "Mutual Restraint: Pak Perceptions Pose Problems." *The Times of India*, June 13, 1990.

confidence?"<sup>13</sup> In Pakistan also there was skepticism about these proposals. Malecha Lodhi observed "It[CBMs] does not address any of the central questions responsible for the current tensions between India and Pakistan - namely Kashmir and the deployment of troops."<sup>14</sup>

To conclude, the CBMs proposed in 1990 were viewed in both states with pessimism. For India, the real issue was to stop the aid to militancy in Punjab and Kashmir, whereas in Pakistan the core issue was Kashmir, and without any talk on Kashmir other issues could not be sorted out. The focus on military-to-military CBMs proposed at that time seemed natural given the need for crisis management. Once the immediate danger of conflict disappeared, though, the differing security concerns and domestic political considerations prevented any progress towards reconciliation. It was only in December 1990, that the two states agreed to upgrade DGMOs contacts on the hotline to once a week.

After June 1990, the next impetus to CBMs came during the Foreign Secretaries talks of April 1991. Many significant agreements were signed. The confidence-building agreements included advanced notification of military exercises and mutual respect for each other's airspace. In addition, it was also decided to resume talks on the disputed Siachen Glacier which had been suspended in 1989, to discuss the Wullar Barrage/Tulbul navigation project, and to demarcate boundaries in the contentious Sir Creek region. Commenting over these agreements K.K.Katyal

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<sup>13</sup> K.K.Katyal, "Package to Ease Tension," *The Hindu*, June 7, 1990

<sup>14</sup> Malecha Lodhi, "Delhi's Latest Moves: Ruse or Real?" *The Nation*, June, 5 1990.



noted. "the agreements will contribute to the promotion of confidence -building measures and improve the climate in the bilateral field ... [the] agreements-along with the earlier one on non -attack of nuclear facilities -will certainly reverse the negative trends which, not long ago, brought the two countries to the brink of an armed conflict."<sup>15</sup> Inder Malhotra wrote "The agreement on advance notice by each country to the other of military exercises of certain size at a particular distance from the border should not be dismissed as minor ...It is also noteworthy that the details of the agreement advance notice of military exercise and that of on avoidance of violations of each other's air space were settled by senior military officers of the two countries who can benefit from more frequent contacts in future."<sup>16</sup> On the Pakistani side, M.H. Askari noted: "the decision to keep each other informed of the timing and location of their exercises, combined with the agreement on non-violation of each other's air space, would certainly avert unnecessary tension. All this indicates the will on the part of both Governments to think in terms of peace rather than war."<sup>17</sup>

After the 1991 talks, the CBMs between the two states could not be extended because of the failure of the Secretary level talks in 1994. However, the CBMs agenda was revived in 1997. The two governments pledged to commission Working Groups to address peace and security, including CBMs; Jammu and Kashmir; to settle disputes such as Siachen, Wullar Barrage/ Tulbul Navigation

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<sup>15</sup> K.K. Katyal, "India, Pak. Sign Accords," *The Hindu*, April 7, 1991.

<sup>16</sup> Inder Malhotra, "Tangled India -Pakistan Ties," *The Times of India*, April 11, 1991.

<sup>17</sup> M.H. Askari, "The Dialogue Should Continue," *Dawn*, April 10, 1991.

Project and Sir Creek; and to promote economic and commercial cooperation and friendly exchanges in other fields. The prominent position assigned to CBMs in the document suggested that more ambitious measures would be attempted in future. Speaking for Shamshad Ahmad, the Pakistani Foreign Secretary, and himself, Salman Haider, the Indian Foreign Secretary stated "there is no beginning and end of the CBMs. The setting up of a hotline between the two countries' [P]rime [M]inisters, for instance, is a big CBM. ..This communication must be expanded by the two sides."<sup>18</sup>

What does this brief history of CBMs reveal? In contrast to 1991, when very technical military-to-military CBMs were worked out, CBMs proposals in 1997 focused instead on trade, tourism, and peoples -to-peoples contact. This shift in emphasis demonstrates that CBMs have shifted from being controversial, yet provocative and often misunderstood devices designed to reduce conflict in the region, to widely-supported components in the architecture of the India-Pakistan dialogue.

## **CBMs: Incentives and Limits**

Sumit Ganguly notes four incentives for CBMs in the region: "First, [CBMs] could ...reduce the likelihood of an unintended drift to war. Second, the pursuit of aCBM regime may well enable them to reduce defence expenditures and

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<sup>18</sup> UmerFarooq, "Foreign Secretaries Confident of Fruitful Results," *The Nation*, June 24, 1997.

divert them toward more productive ends. Third, a CBM regime that limits hostile propaganda, promotes greater peoples-to-people contacts, and allows freer information flows may help to correct deliberately distorted images of adversaries. Finally, a CBM regime between India and Pakistan may be a notion whose time has simply come.”<sup>19</sup>

Apart from the incentives that Ganguly has mentioned, the most important incentive for the two countries to adopt CBMs emanates from the nuclearisation of the region. Both states have avoided any involvement in the international regime on non-proliferation. Both refused to sign the CTBT. The missile programme of the two states have also been modernised. Thus, it is imperative that CBMs should be deepened. At a minimum, preventing a crisis in India-Pakistan relations from escalating into a nuclear war requires that both countries soberly consider establishment of regular contacts at the highest level to deal with nuclear issues.

CBMs do not ultimately remove the deep causes of conflict between adversarial states. Ascribing to CBMs a lofty goal of cessation of all, or even most, conflict is a prescription for disappointment and cynicism about any type of arms control

CBMs can certainly help to confine unresolvable political conflict to the political and diplomatic arena by curtailing its transformation into military action. Whether CBMs actually prevent surprise attack is questionable; any state determined to undertake

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<sup>19</sup> Sumit Ganguly, “Mending Fences,” in Krepon and Sevak, eds. *Crisis Prevention*, op.cit., p14.

offensive military action will likely find clever routes of deception.<sup>20</sup> What CBMs can do, for states anxious to avoid war, is remove the most gratuitous reasons for initiating it, namely, accident, miscalculation, and misperception.

## Conclusion

Reviewing the measures taken in the aftermath of the two South Asian crises suggests the point that both states have placed greater emphasis than in the past on mechanisms to avoid a future military crisis. However, the problem is that there are various conflictual issues between the two states. Kashmir is still the core issue and the different approach adopted by the two states limits the significance and utility of the confidence-building measures in developing thus far. For India, the issue of Pakistan occupied Kashmir and aid to the militancy in the Valley is the main problem, whereas Pakistan views Kashmir as disputed territory. The ideological component related with Kashmir has made it a prestige issue for the two states. Again CBMs cannot suffice the political process of normalisation, which depends upon political will. Despite these limitations, confidence-building measures have become a part of debate and discussion among policy makers in the region. Finally, the CBMs have been an instance of effective and positive inputs by the U.S. in the region. During the crisis of 1990, the U.S. played a major role in verification of troop deployments. With the nuclear factor becoming more and more significant in

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<sup>20</sup> Richard K. Betts, "Hedging Against Surprise Attack," *Survival*, Vol. 23, No. 4, July/August, 1981, p.147.

the region, India and Pakistan will both need a better and more effective command-and control and verification regime, and the U.S. perhaps can play a constructive role in the region.

## CONCLUSION

This study, based on the two crises of 1987 and 1990, demonstrates that misperception, played a major role in the origins of the tensions. During the 1987 Brasstacks crisis, the misperceptions originated due to India planning a large-scale military exercise and Pakistan taking the precautionary steps of deploying its troops at forward positions. In the 1990 Kashmir crisis, misperceptions originated due to continuation of military exercises by both states past the usual duration. This leads to another significant finding that in the perception of both states, large-scale military exercises could easily become the “real thing” because they created the objective conditions needed by the other side for a full-fledged invasion.

Clearly, the domestic issues were an important factor during both crises. In 1987, India feared that Pakistan might exploit the secessionist movement in Punjab whereas Pakistan feared an Indian attack in Sindh. The 1990 crisis revealed the centrality of Kashmir as the focus of tension and instabilities between the two countries. This highlights the possibility that Kashmir may well be the most likely cause of potential India-Pakistan conflict, apart from being the chief theatre of military operations in the 1948 and 1965 wars

The nuclear factor is another issue that assumed importance because of these two crises. The findings of this study suggest that the nuclear factor was not central in either of the two crises. In the 1987 crisis, the nuclear factor came to light much after the crisis was over. In the 1990 crisis, there is no convincing evidence that

nuclear signalling occurred during the crisis. However, the nuclear politics of the region have been influenced by these crises. In the aftermath of the two crises policy-makers in both states have tried to achieve some sort of nuclear deterrence. Thus, General K.Sundarji notes: "Bilateral nuclear deterrence has emerged in South Asia."<sup>1</sup> Mushaid Hussain observes that "on at least two occasions, during January 1987...and during May 1990...Pakistani policy-makers were convinced that it was the Indian fear of Pakistani nuclear retaliation that deterred India from attacking Pakistan."<sup>2</sup> This belief in nuclear deterrence has led both states to oppose any kind of international non-proliferation regime. Both have not signed the NPT or the CTBT. Their desire to obtain a credible nuclear deterrence led them to conduct tests in May 1998 and possible weaponisation.

Another finding of the study is the importance of the role of the United States. In both crises, the U.S. tried to play a significant role in establishing the communication process between the two states. In 1990 the U.S. also played a key role in verifying the troop withdrawals from the border. Thus, the crises highlight the point that in the absence of a bipolar world, the role of the U.S. has been accepted by India as less biased. The U.S. interests in the two crises emanates from its larger commitment towards non-proliferation. The U.S. believed that these crises would catalyse the nuclear programme of the two states. Thus, it tried to contain the crises.

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<sup>1</sup> Genral K.Sundarji, "Is Pakistan's Nuclear Deterrent Lossing Credibility?" *Indian Express*, September 15, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Mushahid Hussain, "Let Us Have N-Bomb." *The Pioneer*, June 8, 1994.

Another important finding of the crises is about the role of intelligence agencies. The crises reveal that a certain eagerness obtains in the intelligence agencies on both sides to construct worst-case scenarios. This suggests that the intelligence agencies are generally inclined to furnish biased and exaggerated assessments, both to err on the safe side lest their reports be questioned if events developed into crisis, but also in conformity with their traditional philosophy that, whilst hoping for the best, one must plan for the worst. This gets accentuated in the absence of direct communication at high military and political levels between the two countries. This leads to the other important finding of the study, that is, with respect to conflict avoidance measures and CBMs. The two crises reveal that CBMs were not on their agenda before these crises to any great extent and whatever did exist (the hotline between the DGMOs) was not used at critical points. This was due to the lack of confidence about mutual intentions and actions. However, after 1990, the two states have tried to adopt some CBMs regarding military exercises along the border. In fact, one of the major effects of these crises has been that policy-makers in both states have realised the significance of CBMs, and the case for comprehensive CBMs in the region is much stronger than before.

Yet another finding of the study relates to the importance of the role of decision making in both states. Despite the establishment of democracy in Pakistan, and its longer vintage in India, these crises point to the concentration of authority in small groups of individuals in both countries. In Pakistan, effective power is limited to the



troika of the President, the Prime Minister and the Army Chief. In India, the experience of the two crises reveals that the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had full control over other establishments like external affairs or defence. This leads to another problem of coordination among the various agencies. During the 1987 Brasstacks crisis the Indian External Affairs Ministry had no coordination with the Defence Ministry. In the midst of the crisis, the Indian Foreign Secretary was removed because of some misgivings on the part of the Prime Minister. Thus, the two crises reveal a lack of command and control in the two states to deal with crises.

Last but not least, a key finding of this study is that decision makers as well as the general opinion in the two countries are against the use of force to settle disputes. This could be largely due to the fear of heavy costs involved in war as well as the fear of any armed conflict escalating, especially to the nuclear level. However, this immunity from a war has led to the increase in the low intensity conflicts along the border. This has become a significant issue between the two governments, as the two crises also highlighted the entanglement of domestic politics with the propaganda against each other. Thus, the normalisation process between the two states have been hostage to domestic politics.

Finally, this study aims to strengthen the case for normalisation between the two states through a process of confidence-building measures. This is essential for the two states in order to develop their human resources. Both India and Pakistan face

serious problems of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and health deprivation, but their conflictual relationship has led both states to continue to use their resources for defence. With the nuclearisation of the region, the imperatives for restraint are more than ever, and this demands an understanding of each other's interests and shared mutual interests. One way of doing this is to understand the earlier mistakes. This study was an attempt to do so.

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