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Stabilizing South Asia

Ambassador Shivshankar Menon's piece on India's Pakistan dilemma ("Hostile Relations," Fall 2009) explains the obstacles Pakistan poses to India's ascent. He describes India's ability to "solve" the issue of its multi-ethnic and multi-religion demography through elections and legal protections for minorities. The failure of extremist Islamist groups to radicalize India's Muslim population over the issue of Jammu-Kashmir attests to India's success as a democracy.

India peacefully seeks a benign international environment to continue its economic growth. While jealousy explains Pakistan's position, Menon is awfully generous to China, which does not want to see an influential power emerge on its western flank and has consequently been Pakistan's foremost patron.

Information continually emerges about China's support of Pakistan's nuclear program. After India's recognition as a nuclear power with the US-India nuclear accord in 2008, China pledged to increase the provision of civilian nuclear power to Pakistan. While the United States and India negotiated their nuclear deal, Pakistan started producing more plutonium for its nuclear arsenal. Given Pakistan's abysmal proliferation record and instability, continued Chinese support of Pakistan's nuclear program is the height of irresponsibility.

The United States has indicated that India is on its own to face China's power plays, as evidenced by the November 2009 announcement that the United States and China would "work together" to solve South Asia's problems. Ironically, Chinese policy over the years has hardly helped calm waters in the region. And, arguably, the Chinese government does not consider "peace, stability and development in that region," as the joint statement puts it, to be in China's interests.

The Obama administration has it exactly backward. It is India and the United States that share common values and common interests, such as a stable Pakistan; China prefers Pakistan the way it is. The US and Chinese governments will not work together for peace in South Asia; rather, India and the United States should cooperate to end China's regional troublemaking. ■

DAN BLUMENTHAL

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Pakistan's Paranoia

India-Pakistan relations are cantankerous. Pakistan is hostage to religious extremists desirous of shaping the state into a perfect Islamic entity. Conditions of social strife at home and confrontation with India have resulted. Moreover, certain developments since 1947, such as the growth of the Indian Muslim population and its assimilation into the Indian democratic polity, undermine the *raison d'être* of Pakistan as the subcontinent's

Muslim homeland. Such developments have deepened rifts within Pakistani society. Added to this mix are Pakistani perceptions of a hostile India and a friendly United States, among others, targeting its nuclear arsenal and dictating its options in Afghanistan. What has emerged is a full-blown paranoid state driven less by sensible strategy than by defiance. Hence, Pakistan lives on edge, cultivating jihadi insurgents and proliferating nuclear materials. India has responded with a generally reactive policy, as Shivshankar Menon details (“Hostile Relations,” Fall 2009). Consequently, Pakistan uses the only leverage it has against India: terrorism.

At the heart of the matter lies disparity between the two countries. India’s GDP, for example, dwarfs Pakistan’s. Thus, Indian claims of Pakistan as a military threat lack credibility. Further, for reasons of organic links, Indian armed forces in league with their Pakistani counterparts have always waged restrained wars of maneuver even in pre-nuclear times. And yet India invests disproportionately in maintaining mechanized formations for deployment in the plains, firing up Pakistan’s worst fears. It is a capability obtained, moreover, at the expense of a meaningful thermonuclear and conventional military build-up against China.

With a larger margin of safety, India can overcome what Menon calls “mythical barriers” to build on the absence of mutual hostility at the “popular level.” For instance, Indian armor can be rationalized into a single corps-sized force. Ballistic missiles can be unilaterally removed from the western border for repositioning in the East. Further, the Indian military can hold joint exercises with Pakistani equivalents. India can cooperate to realize President Zardari’s plan for an economic zone “servicing” the “Central Indian market.” A petty-minded policy failed; India should try one promising durable peace in South Asia. ■

BHARAT KARNAD

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The Roots of Hostility

Shivshankar Menon’s article “Hostile Relations” (Fall 2009) demonstrates the difficulty in resolving differences between Pakistan and India. Indian officials fail to recognize the very existence of disputes. According to Menon, there is no issue of contention between the two neighbors other than terrorism.

Myths on both sides have complicated relations. But mythology often reflects a people’s collective recollection. Menon’s account glosses over harsh India-Pakistan realities, historical and current. The most significant historical reality is India’s military intervention in 1971, which culminated in

Pakistan’s breakup. As for current realities, three-fourths of Indian forces are deployed against Pakistan. Indian military and political leaders regularly call for punitive military action against their nuclear neighbor. Naturally, such chauvinism finds a response in Pakistan.

India sees a strong Pakistan as a constraint on India’s aspiration for great power status rivaling China. This drives India to make consistent efforts to undermine its neighbor. Islamabad sees Delhi’s present interference in Balochistan as testimony of this. India also seeks to achieve the same objective by acquiring and asserting overwhelming military superiority over Pakistan. A critical part of this effort involves neutralizing Pakistan’s strategic deterrence capability. India’s rejection of Pakistan’s long-standing proposals for a South Asia strategic stability regime based on nuclear and conventional restraint highlights this, as do Indian efforts to deny Pakistan a similar civilian nuclear deal to that forged with the United States and actions that play up the danger and challenge the safety of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons.

As for Kashmir, evidence suggests that most Kashmiris do not want Indian rule. Otherwise, Delhi would not have moved to brutalize Kashmir with over half a million troops. If India is confident of its democratic “soft power,” why not let the Kashmiris decide their own future as prescribed by UN Security Council Resolutions?

Terrorism challenges both countries. It would be easier for them to address these issues cooperatively if India would clarify that its counterterrorism policy is not designed to delegitimize the Kashmiri freedom struggle and if root causes were addressed. Finally, India’s offer to discuss trade and other secondary issues seeks to deflect attention from the fundamental problems and achieve its aim of regional domination by other means. If Pakistan’s economic progress matters to India, then it should halt construction of various dams in violation of the Indus Water Treaty, which could turn parts of Pakistan into a desert. The path to a viable peace rests on addressing the underlying causes of tensions between these two neighbors. ■

MALEEHA LODHI

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CORRECTIONS

Steven Haggblade’s “Forgotten Farmers” (Fall 2009) included multiple grammatical errors that were introduced during our journal production through no fault of the author. We also mistakenly asserted that productivity gains lead to favorable market incentives; they should be understood instead as distinct necessary conditions for on-farm innovation. Further, we erroneously claimed agricultural productivity stimulates variety across sectors rather than demand in those sectors. We apologize for the errors and direct readers to our website, www.hir.harvard.edu, for the corrected version of this article which supercedes any previous versions.