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The Peace Process That Matters Most

By Stanley A. Weiss

LONDON—When asked how he envisioned India and Pakistan's relationship developing after their bloody partition in 1947, Pakistan founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah would tell the story of two brothers who clashed over the division of their inheritance. Eventually, they went to court, and Jinnah represented one of the brothers through the bitter proceeding. Two years later, Jinnah met with his client and asked how he was getting along with his brother. He replied, "Oh, once the case was decided, we became the greatest friends."

Jinnah believed, as later recalled by Hastings Ismay, then-chief of staff to the Indian Viceroy, "that once partition had been decided upon... all troubles would cease, and they would live happily ever after." Sadly, it was not meant to be. Jinnah died within a year of partition. And "happily ever after" dissolved into three wars that left 15,000 dead, a blood feud in Kashmir that has claimed up to 100,000 lives, and nearly three decades of dispute over a Himalayan glacier.

In the latest chapter, just five weeks after U.S. troops killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, testimony from the trial of a Chicago businessman charged in the deadly 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai seems to confirm India's suspicions: that Pakistan's intelligence agency supported terrorists operating on its soil, and helped plan the attacks that killed 164 people while wounding 300. Until the Mumbai attackers are brought to justice, said Indian Home Minister P. Chidambaram last week, relations between India and Pakistan "could not improve."

While international attention remains focused on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, when it comes to global security, resolving the crisis between India and Pakistan may be the peace process that matters most. In the wake of bin Laden's death, there have been numerous proposals for what Pakistan must do next. Four that I support include: arrest all jihadist groups; place military and intelligence services under civilian rule; drastically reduce the nuclear arsenal; and invest more in health and secular education.

But underlying these difficult tasks is the most monumental challenge of all: Pakistan must learn to love itself more than it hates India.

"What Pakistanis desperately need is a new narrative by their leaders -- a narrative that does not blame India and the U.S. for all the country's ills," says Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid.

Nobody has played the India card more effectively than the Pakistani military. Empowered in the 1980s by massive aid from a U.S. government intent on preempting a repeat of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in Pakistan, Pakistani generals took control of the nation's defense and foreign policy programs -- and never gave it back. Today, Pakistan's military claims 16 percent of the nation's budget (while education gets 1.2 percent). The generals claim that the funding is necessary, not to fight extremism -- but to fight India.

"The Pakistan military spends its time thinking about how to defend itself against the non-existent threat of an Indian invasion (hence defense in depth involving Afghanistan), how to prevent India encircling Pakistan through its development programs in Afghanistan (hence the support for the Taliban), and how it can tie

up the Indian military by making it fight in Kashmir (hence the support for Kashmiri insurgents and terrorists)," former U.S. Ambassador Peter Galbraith, a lifelong friend and advisor to the late Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, tells me. "In reality, beyond the fear of terror, Pakistan looms about as large in India's thinking as Canada or Mexico does in the U.S. thinking."

It is hard to say which is more dangerous: a Pakistani military that manipulates public fears to preserve its power -- or one that actually lives in an alternative universe where India is plotting Pakistan's demise. In truth, the last thing that the Hindu-majority India wants -- with 133 million Indian Muslims -- is to invade a country that would bring another 180 million Muslims.

"But, as Maleeha Lodhi, the former Pakistani Ambassador to the U.S. and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, writes me, "with 60 million Pakistanis under the age of 24, there is great potential in Pakistan waiting to be unlocked -- if it can find the means to govern itself better."

This is an economic challenge as much as it is a military one. As Brahma Chellaney, one of India's top strategic thinkers, said to me, "The road to Pakistan-India cooperation lies not through Kashmir but through Washington." Since 2001, Pakistan has received \$20.7 billion worth of U.S. assistance, about two-thirds of it military aid. That balance is shifting. In 2009, Congress committed \$7.5 billion in civilian assistance to Pakistan through 2014.

Bin Laden's death within 30 miles of Islamabad has put a spotlight on the Pakistani military. The U.S. should take advantage of this moment to continue re-crafting the relationship from a short-term military alliance to a sustained economic and social partnership, in four ways:

First, root the relationship in trade, not aid. Hussain Haqqani, Pakistan's ambassador to the U.S., recently called for Washington to "move beyond the begging bowl." A new report from the Center for Global Development provides a good starting point: offer duty-free, quota-free access for all Pakistan exports to the U.S. market for at least five years. As Haqqani says, it would create economic opportunity and foil extremists' designs to exploit unemployed Pakistani youth;

Second, increase U.S. incentives for investment, including credit programs for Pakistan's small and medium-sized businesses;

Third, publicize the many economic benefits that would accrue to both nations if India and Pakistan were to normalize relations, an idea a top Indian official told me is "supported at the highest levels of the Indian government."

Fourth, use leverage from the recent U.S.-India nuclear deal to nudge India, as former Indian Foreign Secretary M. Rasgotra suggested to me, "to create a final settlement on the existing line of control in Kashmir, but then soften it by turning both sides of Kashmir into a Free-Trade Area."

September 11th brought tragedy in Pakistan before anywhere else -- for it was September 11, 1948, that Mohammad Ali Jinnah died before his vision for Pakistan was realized. Perhaps his great-grandchildren will find a way to create the "happily ever after" he long craved.