
India-Pakistan Cross-Border Peace Initiatives: Challenges & Prospects

Dr Shaheen Akhtar



Regional Studies
Vol XXXII, Issue 1

pp.3-20

© Author(s)

<http://irs.org.pk>

P-ISSN: 0254-7988

E-ISSN: 2959-5459

Date of Acceptance: 8 November 2013

Introduction

Over the past two decades or so, many peace groups have emerged with the objective to work for easing India-Pakistan tensions by increasing people-to-people interaction and searching for solutions to bilateral contentious issues. The major peace initiatives are Pakistan-India Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFDP), Aman ki Asha (AKA), South Asia Free Media Association (Safma) and Pakistan Institute for Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT). While PIPFDP engages a cross-section of society, the Safma has largely engaged the media, PILDAT brings together parliamentarians and AKA business community as well as different segments of civil society from both countries. Their common agenda aims at shedding negative perceptions, trust building and creating awareness about peace dividends. To achieve these ends they have been pitching for removing visa restrictions so as to increase people-to-people interaction, like cultural exchanges and sporting ties. They have also taken up bilateral contentious issues including Kashmir, Siachen, and Sir Creek that sustain processes of securitization and have offered ideas to resolve them. The issue of terrorism that has emerged as a constant source of distrust and tension between the two countries has also been on the agenda of their discussions and dialogues. The water issue that is increasingly being securitized in recent years also figures in discussions organized by these groups.

The study attempts to examine the effectiveness of peace movement between India and Pakistan within the broader framework of Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) propounded by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. South Asia is a regional security complex where the processes of securitization and desecuritization are deeply interlinked and the patterns of amity and enmity between India and Pakistan are shaped by “security dilemma” and unabated rivalry that is rooted in the distribution of power as well as “ideational” factors. Within this broader framework the study will examine the objectives, agendas, approaches, actors/stakeholders engaged and the extent of contribution made by the major peace groups initiating processes of desecuritization from the social constructivist perspective. It argues that the role of the cross-border peace groups is constrained by the “essential structure”⁽¹⁾ of the South Asian regional complex which is conflictual, but they do create an opportunity to help build a “security regime”⁽²⁾ that moderates fears, hostility and rivalry. To achieve that

end, the study identifies gaps in the cross-border peace movement that need to be filled so as to create a positive “inter-subjective understanding”⁽³⁾ between the two countries which can help transform South Asian Conflictual Regional Security Complex into a more cooperative security complex. The study attempts to explore the following questions:

- What role peace movement is playing in creating positive inter-subjective understanding and initiating desecuritization processes between India and Pakistan?
- What are the objectives and agendas of the major peace groups and how they have been engaging major stakeholders in the changing divergent security perceptions and addressing ideational drivers of conflict formation?
- What have been the contributions of the peace groups in shedding negative perceptions, trust building and searching for creative solutions to contentious issues?
- What are the gaps in the existing peace groups’ initiatives that need to be filled so as to strengthen peace movement between the two countries?

Contextualizing peace movement in South Asian Regional Security Complex (RSC)

The cross-border peace movement in the South Asian Regional Security Complex has been dominated by conflict rather than cooperation has been quite slow, weak and subjected to deeply entrenched processes of securitization characterized by unsettled disputes, divergent identities, ideologies and negative threat perception rooted in bitter historical experience and distribution of power.

A Regional Security Complex (RSC) as put forth by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever in their Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) is based on “a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another.”⁽⁴⁾ The RSC theory uses a combination of materialist and constructivist approaches in understanding a security complex in a specific region. On the materialist side, it uses ideas of “bounded territoriality” and “distribution of power.” On the constructivist side, it builds on the securitization theory which focuses on the political processes by which security issues get constituted.⁽⁵⁾ This implies that RSCs are socially constructed by their members, whether consciously or more often unconsciously by the ways in which their processes of de-securitization interlock with each other. Thus, they can be changed by changes in those processes, though the scope for change may well be conditioned by the relative depth or shallowness of the way the social structures of security are internalized by the actors involved.” Therefore, RSCs treat distribution of power and the patterns of amity and enmity as essentially independent variables. Based on these variables, there are different types of RSCs functioning around the world. These include a) Conflictual RSCs, which are characterized by predominantly military-political interstate rivalries. b) The

RSCs that have developed “security regimes” or security communities, and the discourses of security have shifted away from both states and military issues. c) The RSCs which have developed ‘security community’ based on the patterns of shared security interests.

South Asia falls in the category of “conflictual RSC” where patterns of amity and enmity are socially constructed and influenced by factors such as history, culture, religion, and geography and are manifested in fears and threats and ideational rivalry. The distribution of power has over time reinforced the security identities. For South Asia, Wendt is very correct when he argues, “States act differently towards enemies than they do towards friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not.”⁽⁶⁾ Thereby, argue Buzan and Waever, that “within South Asia, the security agenda was largely traditional dominated by military/political concerns.”⁽⁷⁾ For the past decade or so, India seems to be beginning to transcend its region without resolving its “dangerous conflict” with Pakistan, and is increasingly looking towards wider horizons in Asia which Buzan describes as emergence of “Asian super complex.”⁽⁸⁾ However, by and large, South Asia’s regional security complex remains intact. In fact their competition in sub-complex of Afghanistan has added complexity to their relationship.

It will be pertinent to understand that cross-border peace initiatives are taking place in a conflictual regional complex and thereby are constrained by the dynamics of conflict formation. Their role can be located in terms of the contribution that they can make in initiating the de-securitisation processes across sectors (issues dominating the conflict) and levels (domestic, regional) that are driving the dynamics of securitisation. Here is an analysis of major peace groups’ agendas, engagement with the stakeholders; contribution to de-securitisation processes and the gaps that need to be filled to strengthen the role of these groups in creating patterns of amity and “security regime” in South Asia.

Major cross-border peace initiatives in the region

Pakistan-India Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPPFD)

PIPPFD was formed in 1994 by eminent intellectuals, academics and activists from both sides to promote people-to-people dialogue between the two countries. The Pakistan chapter of the forum is based in Lahore, headed by Dr Mubashir Hasan, while the Indian chapter is in Delhi and currently led by Tapan Bose. The major activity of the PIPFPD is to organize a convention of 100-200 delegates from each country, alternately in India and Pakistan. Joint conventions are also held with venues alternating the same way. The Forum also arranges exchange of delegations of peace activists between the two countries. The eighth joint convention, the most recent one, held in 2011 was attended by some 700-800 delegates from Pakistan and India coming from a cross-section of civil society.

The objective of these joint conventions is to formulate strategies for promoting peace between the two countries through people-to-people

initiatives.⁽⁹⁾ The principles of PIPFPD were laid out in the initial Declaration of 1994 that the “politics of confrontation between India and Pakistan has failed to achieve benefits of any kind for the people of both countries,” and that the respective governments should honour the wishes of their people who “increasingly want genuine peace and friendship.”⁽¹⁰⁾ The discussions at the joint conventions revolve around issues ranging from “war, demilitarization, peace and peace dividends” to democratic solution to the Kashmir problem, democratic governance, eradication of religious intolerance, minorities issues, to globalization and regional cooperation.

In the first convention, held in 1995 in New Delhi, the delegates discussed the contentious issues of Kashmir, demilitarization and the politics of religious intolerance. PIPFPD formulation on Kashmir is now part of public discourse.⁽¹¹⁾ In the 7th joint convention held in Delhi in 2005, the Forum came up with a “Joint Position Paper on Jammu and Kashmir,” stressing inclusion of Kashmiris in the dialogue process. It viewed Kashmir not merely as a ‘territorial dispute’ between the two countries but a matter of the lives and aspirations of the Kashmiri people, who must be involved in any discussion about their future.⁽¹²⁾ It urged both governments to agree to an “unconditional no-war pact” and to recognize the need for “a peaceful democratic solution” to the Kashmir dispute.

The 8th joint convention held in Allahabad, India, the in December 2011 after a gap of four years, did have, for the first time, active participation of Kashmiris comprising politicians, mediapersons, academia and civil society representatives from all parts of Kashmir. The working group on Kashmir supported solution of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Kashmir. It specifically demanded an immediate end to violation of human rights; unrestricted travel across the LoC; opening of communication channels and travel routes; enhancement of trade relations and people-to-people contacts with an emphasis on students and youth; demilitarization of Kashmir; immediate withdrawal of forces from Siachen and declaring it a zone of peace, and repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. It also suggested the establishment of a joint forum for peace and democracy of peoples of both parts of Kashmir.⁽¹³⁾ The PIPFPD has also been promoting intra-Kashmir interaction through joint conventions that it has been holding since 1995.

South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA)

On 2 July 2000, a South Asia Free Media Conference (SAFMC) held in Islamabad decided to form a mainstream media body of the region for promoting peace. The founding conference evolved a programme, “Media Development, Freedom and Peace in South Asia”, that focused on two-fold objectives:

- a) Media development, free flow of and access to information and a free, professionally competent, unbiased and independent media in the region and
- b) Promoting a culture of dialogue and an environment for understanding, tolerance, peace, conflict resolution and cross-

border cooperation leading towards a South Asian Union and help bring an end to the menace of extremism and terrorism.

SAFMA is operating in all the eight member countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The South Asia Media Centre was established in Lahore from where SAFMA Central Secretariat operates. SAFMA has eight elected National Chapters and a Regional Executive Body. It is recognized by SAARC as an Associated Body but has yet to be given the status of an Apex Body, which it must be given at the earliest. The Action Plan approved by the information ministers of SAARC countries has been implemented by SAFMA, by establishing South Asian Media Centre, South Asian Media Net, *South Asian Journal*, South Asia Media School and journalists exchanges and editors conferences. So far SAFMA has held seven regional South Asian Free Media Conferences, five SAARC Journalists Summits, two Indo-Pakistan, two South Asian, one Pak-Afghan parliamentary conferences and various sub-regional exchanges to promote free media, peace and regional cooperation such as Dhaka-Kolkata, Mumbai-Karachi, Punjab-Punjab and Kashmir-Kashmir.

SAFMA aims to achieve sensitized and responsible media community and informed public as a mainstay of tolerance, peace, harmony and cooperation. Its purpose is to develop mainstream media platforms, joint media mechanisms and unbiased sources of information across South Asia for both the media and the public that promote free flow of information, peace, understanding and cooperation. It has launched several initiatives that are geared to identify common problems and common approaches to resolve the challenges that all South Asian states, especially India-Pakistan, are facing.

- **Asian Policy Analysis (SAPANA) network:** A virtual think-tank and network of experts, academics and researchers. It has produced high quality research-based South Asian Media series consisting of 13 books on major policy issues facing South Asia including economy, energy, water, security, religious radicalization, gender, democracy, education, minorities, human security and role of the media. Another research-based series consisting of seven books on important regional issues is under preparation and was expected to be published in 2013.
- **South Asian Media Net:** South Asian Media Net has been online for eight years. The news contribution and views website is updated daily to provide one window to all South Asian countries. It has been renovated with audio-video facilities and can be accessed at www.southasianmedia.net. Any South Asian can file a story or views on the site and join any of the various discussion forums on it. SAFMA/SAWM/SAMC members can have their conferences on this site.
- **Free Media Foundation (FMF):** FMF has been the implementing agency for SAFMA, SAWM FMF/SAFMA and SAMC. The Foundation has entered into contribution agreements with the United Nations Development Programmes

(UNDP), Norway and the Netherlands and raised more than US\$ 8 million to run SAFMA activities in the past eight years. The Foundation accepts the work-plans and the budgets proposed by the Regional Executive Bodies of SAFMA, SAWM, SAMC and their secretary generals are represented on the Board of Governors of the Foundation.

- **South Asian parliament:** SAFMA is also making efforts to establish a South Asian parliament, aimed at bringing the nations in the region closer. In 2007, the Second South Asian Parliament conference adopted Shimla Declaration, agreeing to set up a South Asian Parliamentary Forum to move towards forming a South Asian Parliament. The conference proposed creation of an intra-parliamentary union in South Asia, appointment of an expert group for preparing a comprehensive report and a timeframe to establish South Asian Parliament, activating the SAARC Speakers Forum and holding of annual meetings of parliamentarians to discuss issues of common regional concern. It also called for establishing a SAARC security forum on the lines of ASEAN Regional Forum. The idea is yet to materialize.

Aman ki Asha (AKA) peace initiative

On 1 January 2010, *The Times of India* Group and Pakistan's *Jang Group* launched Aman ki Asha (AKA — A Hope for Peace) to promote peace between the two countries. AKA is considered the most significant peace movement because it is led by two biggest media groups that reach out to a large number of people. It is engaging the civil society in both countries in a big way. AKA campaign has played a positive role in creating conducive environment for Pakistan agreeing to grant most-favoured-nation (MFN) status to India, agreement to ease the difficult and complicated visa regime and bring about a sea change in perceptions in both countries. The campaign has received widespread appreciation and is the recipient of several national and international awards. It involves diplomats, senior journalists and civil society leaders and people with military backgrounds.

- **Lobbying for expanding business ties and securing MFN status for India:** In May 2010, AKA organized a two-day business conference at New Delhi in which leading Pakistani and Indian businessmen met each other. The meeting, titled "Partners for Peace and Progress," was a joint initiative for peace launched by the Jang Group of Pakistan and the Times of India Group (TOI).

The second AKA Indo-Pakistan economic conference, under the title "The Power of the Subcontinent", was held in Lahore in May 2012. About a hundred delegates from India attended the conference. About half a dozen of the Indian delegates flew in on their private jets. Their combined turnover, estimate economists, is a few times the GDP of Pakistan. The conference also attracted the top business luminaries from Pakistan including Mian Mohammad Mansha,

Razzak Dawood, Bashir Ali Mohammad, Syed Babar Ali, Syed Yawar Ali and many others, including CEOs of leading multinational and local corporations. In addition, in an extremely significant development, the top leadership of Pakistan's major political parties attended the conference and endorsed the roadmap for peace being discussed. For the first time both the government and the opposition agreed that there is no other way forward for Pakistan but to develop friendly ties with India. For once there was a convergence on the need for peace with India, unlike other occasions that have been marred by efforts at one-upmanship.

Also significantly, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), whose members contribute over 70 per cent to India's GDP, suggested that it would partner all AKA events intended to further economic collaboration between India and Pakistan. Its counterpart in Pakistan, the Pakistan Business Council, has also extended support. According to one executive, it has "given the governments the confidence to take concrete steps towards encouraging trade and business ties"⁽¹⁴⁾ and has provided a platform to the business community. The initiative has thus evoked positive response from the major stakeholders, especially the government and business community.

- **Discussing bilateral strategic issues:** Aman ki Asha has also been taking up bilateral contentious issues that have been sustaining much of the hostility between the two countries. In this context, AKA has organized closed-door strategic seminar series followed by public interactions. The first such seminar "A Common Destiny," took place in April 2010 and was participated by academics, former foreign services officers and retired armed forces personnel. They discussed issues of critical importance including water-sharing, Jammu and Kashmir, terrorism and intelligence-sharing, easing visa restrictions, and promoting trade and investment between the two countries. They also made specific suggestions in that regard and emphasized the importance of a sustained dialogue to resolve bilateral issues.⁽¹⁵⁾ The third in this series was a two-day seminar that took place on 2-3 December 2012 in New Delhi. The agenda included finding solutions to the contentious issues like Sir Creek and Siachen, Kashmir, terrorism and related issues.
- On Sir Creek, experts recognized that an impasse existed even after many bilateral meetings and a successful survey carried out in 2007. "The solution is complex because of historical hostilities and linkages to other more weighty issues." The solutions proposed included de-linking the maritime boundary from that of land and delineation from seaward to a point where both sides concur. The experts highlighted that as long as shore points were mutually acceptable to both sides, the boundary line delineated using the angular bisection method would undergo only minimal changes when the final baselines were established.⁽¹⁶⁾

- On Siachen, it was proposed that a comprehensive resolution be worked out and that the two sides should consider withdrawing from the area despite territorial claims while retaining the option of punitive action should the other side renege on the commitments. The experts proposed a joint scientific centre to be set up in the area for environmental studies without any change to the area's status. It also proposed the primary monitoring and verification mechanisms to be both bilateral and cooperative. "The two essentials will be monitoring and verification during disengagement and thereafter for the Demilitarised Zone to ensure no re-occupation of the glacier."⁽¹⁷⁾ The civil society solutions were submitted to the respective governments for their consideration.
- **Easing visa restrictions, promoting cultural exchanges:** *Aman ki Asha* is forcefully lobbying for easing the visa regime that can facilitate people-to-people contacts and cultural interactions between the two countries. Towards this end, it has launched a *Milne Do* (Let People Meet) campaign in July 2010.
- **Water is life:** AKA has also organized track II dialogue on water-related issues between the two countries. In July 2010, it organized a two-day conference on water issues, in New Delhi, titled "Water is Life". Water management experts from both sides were brought together to discuss and identify steps to mitigate distrust and develop areas of cooperation. The Pakistani side emphasized the lower-riparian concerns that were caused by lack of timely data. Both sides agreed on the need to share up-to-date data and information in order to remove misperceptions. They stressed on the need for better management of water resources internally and a joint, cooperative approach to counter the growing water crisis that threatens not only the lives and livelihoods of the people of the region but also bilateral ties.⁽¹⁸⁾ They suggested a regional approach, and certain concrete steps which are necessary to improve Pakistan-India relations, improve trust, transparency and also ease water stress.
- **Humanitarian issues:** At the humanitarian level, *Aman ki Asha's* in partnership with Rotary International continues organizing a highly successful "Heart-to-Heart" programme for saving the lives of Pakistani as well as Indian children. The issue of fisherman straying across the poorly-demarcated territorial waters has also been taken up. The fishing communities along the shared Sindh, Balochistan and Gujarat coastline continue to risk harassment, arrest and detention by the other country on charges of border violation.⁽¹⁹⁾ They are repeatedly arrested and released but the issue remains unresolved, despite a joint survey that was conducted in 2007.

Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT)

PILDAT was formed in 2001 by a group of resident and non-resident Pakistanis active in the area of social development. While being an independent think tank, it focuses largely on political and public policy research with the objective to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions in Pakistan. It covers issues related to finance, economy, poverty-reduction, political-economy, civil-military relations, inter-provincial relations/federalism, women/youth in politics regional/international trade, and foreign/regional relations. Since 2002, PILDAT has organized over 200 capacity-building and issue-based briefings for the parliament and provincial assemblies. It has prepared over 300 briefing/background papers, case studies and other publications on public policy and legislative issues. Since 2004, it has initiated a policy dialogue on areas such as civil-military relations, electoral reforms, relations between Muslims and the Western world, FATA status and centre-province relations.

While the major focus of PILDAT has been on domestic issues, it has gradually taken up issues which are very important in India-Pakistan conflict management such as trade and water. It has tried to initiate an informed debate by publishing research giving both Indian and Pakistani perspectives on problems relating to bilateral and regional trade including MFN status for India, South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and water-resources conflicts. It also came out with background papers regarding Pakistan-India composite dialogue, from Indian and Pakistani perspectives that tend to contribute to a productive debate on policy issues. In addition from 2004 onward, PILDAT started facilitating parliamentary exchanges between Pakistan and India; and has since 2011, facilitated a series of Pakistan-India Parliamentarians' dialogue. Five such dialogues have taken place so far, the last being organized in September 2013. In these dialogues, the parliamentarians from both countries have been discussing issues of mutual concerns ranging from water, trade and investment, liberalizing visa regime, to the implementation of cross-LoC confidence-building measures (CBMs) on travel and trade and people-to-people contacts. The first dialogue, held in Islamabad in January 2011, stressed "building on commonalities and the positives with a view to resuming the dialogue and promoting a peoples' movement for peace and reconciliation."⁽²⁰⁾

In the second parliamentarians' dialogue, held in New Delhi in August 2011, more substantive issues such as Kashmir, water and terrorism were discussed along with expanding trade and investment ties. The joint statement issued at the end highlighted the imperative of consolidating the outcome of the Composite Dialogue into further agreements and "to continue forward in an uninterrupted and unintermittible manner." It recognized that "peace, security and development require the resolution of outstanding issues," and urged that progress made so far should be consolidated by addressing, "through the dialogue, all outstanding issues including Jammu and Kashmir, Siachen and Sir Creek as also the challenge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations" including the Mumbai terrorist attacks.⁽²¹⁾ The water issue, in particular Pakistan's concerns relating to the flow of water during the sowing season and

timely sharing of information in the Indus Basin, were discussed. The parliamentarians urged upon both governments that such concerns be addressed within the framework of the Indus Waters Treaty 1960. The Treaty should be complied with “in letter and spirit.” Issues relating to energy security, including the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline; trade and investment; easing visa restrictions and people-to-people contacts were also discussed. Significantly, the participating parliamentarians agreed to take steps that strengthened the dialogue process. These included:

- a) Transmission of the outcome of the dialogue to the Presiding Officers of the Parliaments in the two countries.
- b) Participating Parliamentarians to brief governments on both sides.
- c) Raising and resolution of relevant issues through the respective Houses and Standing Committees of both Parliaments.
- d) To promote constituency of peace in the two countries, the participating Parliamentarians, instead of highlighting differences and carrying on negative stereotypes of each other in the media, would focus on building bridges to move forward with dialogue, understanding and trust.⁽²²⁾

The third parliamentarians’ dialogue, held in Islamabad in January 2012, was primarily devoted to trade and economic relations between the two countries. The parliamentarians agreed to encourage policymakers to take all necessary measures for realizing “full normalization of commercial relationship” and “fostering improved trade links based on optimizing comparative factor advantages.” Expert opinion suggested that there exists bilateral trade potential of over US \$ 14 billion. A number of recommendations were made to enhance trade ties between the two countries. The fourth dialogue was organized in New Delhi in August 2012. The dialogue reiterated that to secure sustained peace, security and stability in the region, the two countries must also devote their attention to resolving long-standing disputes such as Siachin and Sir Creek; questions relating to terrorism and counter-terrorism; the final settlement of issues relating to Jammu and Kashmir; water issues; and the consideration of Afghanistan-related issues, through sustained “uninterrupted and uninterrupted” dialogue. In the fifth dialogue, held in Islamabad in September 2013, the delegates called upon the two governments to resume the dialogue process for sustainable peace in the region. The interaction between the parliamentarians helps in developing better understanding for resolving bilateral issues.

Cross-border women peace movement: Cross-border women peace movement is still very weak. There have been a few women groups that tried to build bridges between the two countries. There are two major women peace groups engaged in peacebuilding on both sides of the border — Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), and Women Initiative for Peace in South Asia (WIPSA). WISCOMP was formed in 1999 to “enhance the role of women as peacebuilders, negotiators and as agents for nonviolent social change; contribute to an inclusive, people-oriented discourse on issues of

security including perspectives of women; empower a new generation of women and men with the expertise and skills to engage in peace activism through educational and training programmes in conflict transformation and build constituencies of peace through research and peace advocacy and cross-border networks.”⁽²³⁾ It has organized several conflict transformation workshops over the past decade or so that include young Pakistani women and mid-career professionals who can become a part of the nascent peace constituency on both sides of the border.

Besides, another forum, Women Initiative for Peace in South Asia (WIPSA), was formed in 2000 with the objective to bring peace to South Asia. It has been facilitating communication and interactions between women groups in India and Pakistan. In 2000 in the wake of the Kargil crisis when bilateral relations were badly strained, a “Women’s Peace Bus” comprising several women’s groups under the umbrella of the WIPSA came to Pakistan. Nirmala Deshpande led the initiative from India and on Pakistani side Asma Jahangir received the peace bus when it reached Lahore. A number of resources, links and networks have emerged such as South Asian Network of Gender Activists and Trainers (SANGAT) which concerns itself with globalization, militarisation, old and new forms of patriarchies which impact women of the region. The Pakistan-India Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIFPD) also involves peace activists and women’s groups.⁽²⁴⁾ In Pakistan, several women NGOs, many of them launched by feminists become politically active in building bridges that contribute to greater understanding and push for peace across the border. One of them is Women’s Action Forum (WAF) that started in 1981. It has largely domestic agenda but also aspires for India-Pakistan peace.

Contribution in India-Pakistan peace process

Changing perceptions and building trust

A major contribution of these peace groups has been that by engaging various segments of society they have been trying to change “enemy” perception of each other which is so important in bridging the trust gaps. Some of them have specific initiatives for connecting people on both sides. Aman ki Asha launched as mentioned above, *Milne Do* (let people meet) campaign in July 2010 to change the stereotype images of the people on both sides. Another ongoing element of this partnership is the Youth Exchange Programmes that are also helping to bridge the perception gaps.

There have been some indications that AKA media has developed some synergy in sharing platforms where leading current and former officials and mediapersons discuss issues of critical importance in India-Pakistan peace process. At the end of a strategic seminar in December 2012 in Delhi, the newly appointed Indian Foreign Minister Salman Khursheed gave his first interview to Pakistani journalists — Kamran Khan and Najam Sethi — who hosted this TV programme, and the discussion continued after Mr Khursheed’s departure. It was also for the first time that *Times Now* and *Geo TV* jointly conducted a programme in Delhi, hosted by Maroof Raza and Kamran Khan, respectively.

That the Government of India allowed Geo TV, a Pakistani television channel, to conduct the show inside the Foreign Office, marked another breakthrough and can be seen as indicative of a changing mindset.

Awareness raising: Spreading the value and dividends of 'peace'

Peace is an idea that needs to be inculcated in the minds of the warring societies and states. The peace groups do provide platform for interaction to different segments of the civil society, especially the media, business communities and political leaders which also act as track II channels and contribute to creating awareness about the value and dividends of peace. This helps in creating common grounds for building a shared vision for peace. The realization of cost of the enmity and mistrust and shared benefit of peace is quite visible in the discussions and dialogue organized by these groups.

Easing the visa regime

All the four peace groups have been calling for liberalizing of the visa regimes. AKA and PILDAT along with SAFMA and PIPFPD in their meetings have been stressing the need for easing the visa regime between the two countries. The government of Pakistan were able to sign a new visa regime which is again a huge development on the people-to-people front, which is the most dynamic level for good relations. The visa regime still has its limitations that Aman ki Asha continues to campaign against, but the breakthrough is still very significant.⁽²⁵⁾

PILDAT Parliamentarians' dialogue has also urged easing of visa regime for different segments of civil society from both sides. In the second round of dialogue, the parliamentarians called for an early action bilaterally to introduce various categories such as "trusted visitors programmes" to include categories such as elected representatives, senior citizens, businesspersons, cultural and sports personalities, accredited journalists, former diplomats and various categories of students and researchers. Where feasible, multiple entry, 10-year visa, no-city restrictions and no police reporting should be urgently pursued.⁽²⁶⁾ In the 4th dialogue the parliamentarians called on both sides to sign a liberal visa regime, endorsing tourist group visa, visa on arrival and a separate category of business visas. They also urged that citizens of both Pakistan and India should be facilitated in health-related travel and religious tourism. Many of these recommendations are reflected in the new visa regime that the two countries have agreed to though implementation issues are mired in the political realities.

According MFN status to India

All these peace groups are advocating expansion of economic ties between the two countries. AKA is considered to have played an important role in creating conducive environment that enabled Pakistan to grant MFN status to India in 2012. It is felt that AKA seminars involving business community and political figures from both sides created political consensus and encouraged

Pakistani government to announce moving forward with granting the MFN status to India.

In another major development, the two State Banks of both countries have in principle agreed to allow two banks from each side to open branches in the other country. Discussions are also underway regarding a possible partnership between the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and the Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE), allowing them to offer trading in each other's top indices. As part of the plan, the KSE-100 index would be traded on the BSE and the Sensex — India's benchmark index — on the KSE.⁽²⁷⁾

Offering imaginative ideas for resolving bilateral conflicts

Apart from developing societal interactions, these four groups have tried to develop workable solutions that can provide a way out for the resolution of the major outstanding issues. The PIPFPD has floated its proposal on Kashmir solution, while AKA has also offered ideas to tackle the Sir Creek and Siachen issues. Although there is still a long way to go for the resolution of these issues, it is significant to note that AKA ideas are based on the consensus built by current political leaders, senior journalists, and retired security personnel while those of PIPFPD reflect the intent of broad segments of civil society on both sides. The AKA, in fact, passed a resolution in its December 2012 seminar, envisaging a follow-up seminar, to be held on Kashmir, and in Kashmir, with one session in Muzaffarabad and another in Srinagar. Also, for the first time at such a discussion in India, there was some third-party attendance with the presence of US ambassador Nancy Powell and some Russian diplomats.⁽²⁸⁾

Changing India-Pakistan discourse

Changing the mindsets rooted in mistrust, hostility and stereotypes is a very challenging task. Pakistan-India narratives are largely diametrically opposed especially when so many outstanding disputes remain unresolved. The four peace groups under discussion have tried to defreeze the traditional mindsets on both sides by bringing in fresh ideas that provide common grounds to resolve the issues that are causing distrust and sustaining animosity. The effort is also to initiate informed debates on issues that divide them and build on the commonalities that can help both sides to develop a shared vision for a common future and sustainable peace.

Engaging multiple stakeholders

One of the contributions of all the four peace groups is that they have tried to engage major stakeholders on both sides, largely in the civil society like the media, academia, parliamentarians, former foreign services officers and retired armed forces personnel, artists, etc. SAFMA is engaging the media and politicians, the AKA business community, academics, former foreign services officials and retired armed forces personnel; PILDAT parliamentarians, diplomats, intellectuals and PIPFPD a broad segment of civil society like

journalists and intellectuals, lawyers, NGOs working at the grassroots level, trade unions and artists. These individuals who not only belong to important segments of civil society on both sides but also have some institutional linkages as well which makes their voice important in the broader peace process. Being in the middle, they can play an effective role in connecting the aspirations and concerns of the grassroots populations with the policymakers. This is what Lederach calls “middle out approach” in conflict transformation.

Gaps in the peace groups’ initiatives & the way forward

There are many gaps in the existing cross-border peace movement pursued by SAFMA, Aman ki Asha, PILDAT and PIPFPD. They have yet not been able to carry out a shared conflict analysis which could be very helpful in developing shared advocacy agenda and strategizing peace effort. Further, a huge gender gap is quite visible in their agenda, objectives, approaches and involvement of stakeholders in peacebuilding across the border which needs to be filled.

Need for a shared conflict analysis

The peace initiatives are segmented and none of them have got into a deeper shared conflict analysis and they mostly try to discuss issues and offer solutions without developing shared understanding of the dynamics of the conflict that is very important in strategizing peace initiatives. A shared conflict analysis is very important for evolving a ‘shared vision for peace’ and developing ‘shared advocacy agenda’ which also need to involve women who constitute half the nation’s population in the two countries. In sheer statistical terms, by virtue of being half the nations’ population, there are around 90 million women in Pakistan and 600 million in India.

Need for developing a shared advocacy agenda

The existing peace initiatives have yet to develop a shared advocacy agenda even when they have floated some good ideas to resolve bilateral political issues. There is dire need to put in place a shared advocacy agenda which brings in human and people’s dimensions to national security and urges on building commonalities and convergences.

Filling gender gaps in agenda, approaches & involvement of stakeholders in cross-border peace process

Women are an essential part of conflict resolution and peacebuilding process for many reasons. They are not only affected by the conflict but as an important civil society actor have a great potential to play a key role in peacemaking. They are deeply connected with the society and thereby bring a bottom-up approach which is based on positive peace which is sustainable as it addresses the structural causes of the conflict and violence. Women’s voice and narrative is, however, as yet missing in the agenda as their concerns and perspectives are not given due importance. By implication, an exclusionary

approach is pursued which does not recognize women as major stakeholders in peace and security in the region. There is need to bring in gender dimension to India-Pakistan peacebuilding and develop synergy of women across the border.

As women are marginalized in socio-economic and political structures on both sides of the border, their capacity for peacebuilding is very limited. To enhance their capacity, training workshops in conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills is essential. What is sorely lacking is a shared gender analysis of the conflict; an understanding of gender role in peacebuilding; developing of a shared vision of peace and a shared agenda for advocacy and building synergy with other stakeholders through networking and interaction with the policymakers and officials on both sides of the border is an urgent, essential requirement. There is need to strengthen women peace constituency on both sides of the border.

Conclusion

The cross-border peace movement is still evolving and is greatly influenced by security dilemma and ideational factors that underlie the regional security complex of South Asia. Their agenda is geared to create positive inter-subjective understanding between the two countries by changing perception, building trust and spreading awareness of the value of peace. They have been emphasizing easing of the visa regime so that the people on both sides can interact with each other which can help in shedding the stereotypes and enemy image of the 'other'. They have also been trying to promote business ties which not only have economic value but can also help in creating economic stakes in each other. The outcome of their efforts in this field has been very limited as the dialogue to accord MFN status is still not complete and the gas pipelines projects — Iran-Pakistan- India and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipelines — are also mired in the security issues. In fact, India has practically pulled out of IPI. Similarly, these peace groups have offered some imaginative ideas to resolve issues like Kashmir, Siachen and Sir Creek that are dominating securitisation processes but they have yet to make their mark in the resolution processes. They are giving attention to growing tension on the water issue but probably have to play a more active role in framing a more informed debate on cooperation on management of water resources of the Indus basin.

In terms of engagement with the stakeholders, the groups have been involving different segments of society such as the media, business community, former civil-military bureaucrats and academia that have an important role in changing India-Pakistan discourse. But there is a major flaw: these interactions are either ad hoc or at best less institutionalized. There is also near absence of women and gender perspective in cross-border peace movement. The other gaps in the peace movement pertain to lack of shared conflict analysis which is very essential for shaping a shared vision for peace between the two countries. Both see their deep future differently and thereby commonalities remain marginalized while security identities and interests remain mutually exclusive.

Notes and References

1. The four constituent elements of a regional security complex (RSE) are: boundary, which differentiates the RSC from its neighbours; anarchic structure, which means that the RSC must be composed of two or more autonomous units; Polarity, which covers the distribution of power among the units; and social construction, which covers the patterns of amity and enmity among the units. Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, (Cambridge University Press, UK, 2003) p.53.
2. Security regime is a pattern of security interdependence still shaped by fear of war and expectations of the use of violence in political relations, but where those fears and expectations are restrained by agreed sets of rules of conduct, and expectations that those rules will be observed. *Regions and Powers...*, p.491.
3. Inter-subjectivity is the shared understanding of interests and identities of the individuals or states through interaction. Hence security identities, interests and policies are constructed through interaction between states.
4. Buzan and Waever, op.cit., (ref.1), (Originally from Buzan & Waever 1998 edition: 201)
5. Buzan and Waever, op.cit., (ref.1), p.4.
6. Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,' *International Organization* 46, No.2 (Spring 1992), p.397.
7. Buzan and Wæver, op.cit., (ref.1), pp.124–25
8. Barry Buzan, "The South Asian Security Complex in a Decentring World Order: Reconsidering Regions and Powers Ten Years On", *International Studies*, 2011.48: 1, p.11, available at <<http://isq.sagepub.com>>.
9. PIPFPD, <www.pipfpd.org>.
10. Beena Sarwar, "People for peace: 8th Joint Convention, Allahabad," *ibid*.
11. Beena Sarwar, "People for peace: 8th Joint Convention, Allahabad", See *The News*, Islamabad/Rawalpindi, 29 December 2011. Also available at <<http://beenasarwar.worldpress.com/2011/12/29/people-for-peace-8th-pipfpd-joint-convention-allahabad/>>.
12. "Joint Position Paper on Jammu and Kashmir." Bringing in the Margins... A New Voice, a New Destiny", PIPFPD Report, 7th joint Convention, 25-27 February 2005, New Delhi, India, pp.80-91.
13. Allahabad Declaration of PIPFPD, 31 December 2011, <<http://www.pipfpd.org>>.
14. Beena Sarwar, <http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-01-01/india/30578879_1_aman-ki-asha-india-and-pakistan-pakistan-s-jang-group>.
15. <http://amankiasha.com/detail_news.asp?id=109>.
16. Sameer Arshad, "Former diplomats mull over improving Pak-India ties", *The News*, 4 December 2012.
17. *Ibid*.

18. "Indo-Pak experts want to use water as tool for cooperation", 31 July 2010. <http://www.amankiasha.com/articles_cat.asp?catId=1&id=93>.
19. Sheher Bano, "Prisoners of poor policies: Indian and Pakistani fishermen... Arrest, release, repeat", <http://www.amankiasha.com/sp_english_detail.asp?id=44>.
20. "Implementation Status on Recommendations from the Pakistan-India Parliamentarians", PILDAT, September 2013. <http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/FP/ImplementationStatusonRecommendationsfromthePak-IndiaParliamentariansDialoguesince2011_ProgressReport.pdf>.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), <<http://www.wiscomp.org/mission.asp>>.
24. Satbeer Chhabra, "Gender Perspective in Peace Initiatives: Opportunities and Challenges," <http://www.eldis.org/fulltext/womenslinkjournal_gender_peaceinitiatives.pdf>.
25. "Aman ki Asha: Another happening year", *The News*, 26 December 2012. <<http://images.thenews.com.pk/26-12-2012/ethenews/e-150548.htm>>.
26. "Implementation Status on Recommendations... op.cit., (ref.20).
27. "Aman ki Asha: Another happening year", op.cit., (ref.25).
28. Ibid.