

A peace plan for India and Pakistan already exists

A path toward resolving the Kashmir dispute, negotiated in the mid-2000s, deserves another look.

Ahmed Rashid

LAHORE, PAKISTAN India and Pakistan don't have to be on the brink of war. Negotiators painstakingly put together a way out of the crisis and a road map for resolution of the Kashmir dispute in the mid-2000s, and we need to get back to it.

Kashmir has been disputed since 1947, with India holding around two-thirds and Pakistan one-third of its territory and both claiming all of it. The unresolved future of the largely Muslim region has led to three wars between the two countries, while frustration with Indian misrule in Indian-controlled Kashmir led to an insurgency supported by Pakistan in 1990.

India and Pakistan have alternated between phases of intense hostility and moments of calm since 1947. At various points, their leaders have — although unsuccessfully — sought to find ways to resolve their disputes. The insurgency in Kashmir was ebbing by the mid-2000s and India's prime minister, Manmohan Singh, and Pakistan's president, Pervez Musharraf, initiated a secret dialogue through trusted aides.

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mir, irrelevant by giving the Kashmiris the right to free movement and trade across the line. They agreed upon providing autonomy to Kashmir's sub-regions and drawing down forces as violence receded. They also agreed to establish a body of Kashmiris, Indians and Pakistanis, vaguely

described as a "joint mechanism," to oversee the political and economic rights of the Kashmiris on both sides of the line.

Unfortunately, negotiators had little time to build support for the deal. In the spring of 2007, President Musharraf, stung by rulings that challenged his military government, fired the chief justice of Pakistan's Supreme Court, setting off nationwide protests by lawyers that led to his ouster in August 2008. With General Musharraf gone, the peace plan fell apart. It was the closest the two countries came to resolving the dispute.

Around three months later, militants belonging to the Pakistan-based group Lashkar-e-Taiba mounted attacks in Mumbai that resulted in the deaths of at least 174 people and killed any remaining hopes of renewed peace talks. Relations between the two countries deteriorated further as Pakistan refused to hand over suspects in the



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withdrawing from peace talks with Pakistan until it agreed to talks in "an atmosphere of peace without a shadow of terrorism."

Mr. Modi proceeded to adopt a scorched-earth strategy in Kashmir and closed all doors for dialogue with Kashmiri politicians. His use of brute force signaled that no discussion on the unresolved future of Kashmir is allowed and it is considered a settled, integral part of India.

A crackdown by Indian security forces led to hundreds of Kashmiris being killed, blinded and arrested. Not surprisingly, since Mr. Modi has come to power an increasing number of young Kashmiris have joined the militants.

Across the border, despite international opprobrium, Pakistan failed to keep its numerous pledges to curtail

aid to Pakistan and made sales of military equipment to the country conditional on its cooperation with counterterrorism efforts. The intergovernmental Financial Action Task Force put Pakistan on its "gray list" of countries that have not fulfilled their obligations to curb terrorist activities; Islamabad has allowed organizations listed as terrorist groups by the United Nations to operate as charities.

Pakistan has been suffering from a severe economic crisis and has been desperately trying to raise some \$20 billion from friends, allies and the International Monetary Fund. And then, in February, came a suicide attack in Kashmir, claimed by Jaish-e-Muhammad, that killed dozens of Indian soldiers.

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does that mean it has lost control of the militants?

Prime Minister Imran Khan has shown willingness to discuss all questions including terrorism with New Delhi. On Tuesday, Pakistan announced that it would seize and freeze the assets of militant groups and individuals designated as terrorists by the United Nations. Pakistan arrested 44 people, including Mufti Abdul Rauf, the brother of Masood Azhar, the chief of Jaish-e-Muhammad. There was no word of Mr. Azhar himself, who remains in Pakistan.

Although India indicated that it wouldn't pursue military options for now, New Delhi has shared a list of suspects with Pakistan and wants it to take credible, verifiable action to undermine militant groups' capacity for cross-border terrorism. Islamabad has

and feels the political need to act tough on Pakistan, will budge from his hard-line position until after the elections.

Pakistan should prosecute the perpetrators of the Kashmir attack. And once India forms a new government, the United States, Britain and the United Nations, whose response to the current crisis has been slow, must encourage India to restart dialogue with Mr. Khan. Simultaneously, Islamabad must start dismantling the terrorist groups operating from its soil. Mr. Modi must stop his relentless use of lethal force in Kashmir and end his stubborn refusal to hold talks.

A return to back-channel diplomacy is necessary, and the Musharraf-Manmohan peace process needs to be dusted off and looked at again. It offers a way forward, an alternative to a war that would not be in the interest of either

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In 2014, the Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi became prime minister of India. In his first address to the United Nations General Assembly, in September 2014, he announced that India was



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Across the border, despite international opprobrium, Pakistan failed to keep its numerous pledges to curtail Islamic extremist groups — Kashmir-focused groups such as Jaish-e-Muhammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba and also the Afghan Taliban — operating from the country.

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aid to Pakistan and made sales of military equipment to the country conditional on its cooperation with counterterrorism efforts. The intergovernmental Financial Action Task Force put Pakistan on its "gray list" of countries that have not fulfilled their obligations to curb terrorist activities; Islamabad has allowed organizations listed as terrorist groups by the United Nations to operate as charities.

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Several Western diplomats in Islamabad believe the Pakistani Army's insistence that it had nothing to do with the attack in Kashmir, which might have been independently carried out by the militant group. But that raises a troubling question: If Islamabad had nothing to do with the attack,

does that mean it has lost control of the militants?

Prime Minister Imran Khan has shown willingness to discuss all questions including terrorism with New Delhi. On Tuesday, Pakistan announced that it would seize and freeze the assets of militant groups and individuals designated as terrorists by the United Nations. Pakistan arrested 44 people, including Mufti Abdul Rauf, the brother of Masood Azhar, the chief of Jaish-e-Muhammad. There was no word of Mr. Azhar himself, who remains in Pakistan.

Although India indicated that it wouldn't pursue military options for now, New Delhi has shared a list of suspects with Pakistan and wants it to take credible, verifiable action to undermine militant groups' capacity for cross-border terrorism. Islamabad has also placed Jamaat-ud-Dawa and the Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation, two offshoots of Lashkar-e-Taiba operating as charities, on its list of proscribed organizations. It is unlikely that Mr. Modi, who faces an election in April

and feels the political need to act tough on Pakistan, will budge from his hard-line position until after the elections.

Pakistan should prosecute the perpetrators of the Kashmir attack. And once India forms a new government, the United States, Britain and the United Nations, whose response to the current crisis has been slow, must encourage India to restart dialogue with Mr. Khan. Simultaneously, Islamabad must start dismantling the terrorist groups operating from its soil. Mr. Modi must stop his relentless use of lethal force in Kashmir and end his stubborn refusal to hold talks.

A return to back-channel diplomacy is necessary, and the Musharraf-Manmohan peace process needs to be dusted off and looked at again. It offers a way forward, an alternative to a war that would put both India and Pakistan in jeopardy.

AHMED RASHID is the author of, most recently, "Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of America, Pakistan and Afghanistan."

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