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Kashmir: Recent Developments and U.S. Concerns

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Summary

Perennially high tensions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir have hindered attempts so far to achieve a sustained peace process, despite occasional moments of optimism. U.S. concern for stability in South Asia increased considerably as a result of the ratcheting up of India-Pakistan nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities, especially since their May 1998 nuclear tests. Almost exactly one year after these tests, India and Pakistan appeared on the brink of launching their fourth war in the past half-century. A two month skirmish which began in May 1999 near the town of Kargil along the Line of Control (LOC) in Kashmir marked the worst outbreak of fighting between India and Pakistan since the India-Pakistan war of 1971. Since Kargil, tensions over Kashmir have remained high. Following a December 13, 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian parliament by militants alleged by India to have been supported by Pakistan, a chain of events ensued that placed the nuclear weapons states at military loggerheads. India and Pakistan have levied sanctions against each other, mobilized their armies and positioned missile batteries along their borders prompting the United States to embark on an intensive diplomatic effort to calm emotions and de-escalate the warlike rhetoric and maneuvering of these two South Asian adversaries.

Given these dangers, United States policy in the region is geared towards reducing tensions between India and Pakistan, encouraging a constructive dialogue and confidence building measures between the two countries, and working to reduce terrorism in the region and worldwide. For further details of U.S. relations with India and Pakistan, see CRS Issue Brief IB93097, *India-U.S. Relations* and CRS Issue Brief IB94041, *Pakistan-U.S. Relations*). This report will be updated as circumstances warrant.

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Kashmir: Recent Developments and U.S. Concerns

Most Recent Developments

In early June, the diplomatic efforts of Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld helped cool tensions between India and Pakistan that had brought the two nations to the brink of war. Deputy Secretary Armitage was able to persuade President Musharraf to halt infiltration and to dismantle the training camps in Azad Kashmir. India, in return, pulled its naval deployment, that had been close to Pakistani waters, back to home port. Pakistani civil aircraft were given permission to overfly Indian airspace and India, reportedly, lowered the alert status of its troops on the border. Discussions with Secretary Rumsfeld focused on a range of issues but one of the main areas concentrated on was, how to monitor the troublesome LOC between the two countries in Kashmir. The United States reportedly agreed to provide sensors, satellite photos, and unmanned aircraft to carry out monitoring.

Tensions between the two countries, already at a high point following the December 13, 2001 attack on the Indian parliament, had been lowering until events in May 2002 drove both countries dangerously close to war. In particular, gunmen (believed to be from Lashkar-e-Taiba) staged an attack on civilians on a bus and in the family housing section of an army camp in the Kashmiri town of Kaluchak, killing 32, including 10 children. India has claimed that the three assailants, who were killed by Indian security forces, were from Pakistan. Although Pakistan condemned the attacks, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee vowed to respond with "appropriate action." The attack came as Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Christina Rocca, was visiting the region in an effort to defuse the five month-long standoff between the two nuclear-armed nations.

Although many analysts have argued that the retaliatory action would probably be a limited strike against Pakistani troops across the LOC in Kashmir, others have warned that Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has a domestic political interest in allowing the conflict to escalate (to draw attention away from recent violence in Gujarat in which more than 800 mostly Islamic Indian citizens have died). Many have also argued that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has done little to prevent infiltration of religious militants from Pakistan into Indian-controlled Kashmir since his speech in January. The issue was further complicated by the reports that India would strike against terrorist training camps in Pakistani Kashmir and President Musharraf's declaration that Pakistan would not rule out the first use of nuclear weapons. By late May it seemed as if the two countries might be heading towards the world's first nuclear exchange.

Events within Indian Kashmir added to the confusion surrounding the India-Pakistan tensions. In mid-May, Abdul Ghani Lone, a moderate separatist belonging to the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, was assassinated while addressing a meeting. Lone's son initially accused Pakistan's InterServices Intelligence of planning the assassination but then backed away from the claim. Lone had called for a non-violent settlement of the Kashmir dispute and some reports claimed that he was considering participating in the September 2002 elections to the Kashmir assembly.

There were also reports of a split within the Hizbul Mujahedeen, the main Pakistan based insurgent group fighting in Indian Kashmir. Following an editorial in a Kashmiri daily, reportedly written by a Hizbul commander calling for a cease-fire, the Pakistan based leadership of the insurgent group first dismissed the report as fabricated and then went on to expel three senior commanders including Abul Dar Majid, the overall Kashmir commander of the group. Dar claimed that the Pakistan based commanders were out of touch with the realities on the ground. There were also reports that Dar was considering a run for office in the forthcoming Kashmir elections. But the main focus of the international community remained on preventing a war in Kashmir.

Introduction

For the United States, the issue with Kashmir is how to prevent an all-out war between India and Pakistan while concurrently maintaining Indian and Pakistani cooperation in the anti-terror campaign and keeping bilateral relations with the two nations on an improving trend. The United States also is interested in preventing the conflict from escalating into a nuclear exchange and ensuring that nuclear weapon related material in South Asia not be obtained by terrorists or other organizations that would be contrary to nonproliferation efforts. For the long-term, the United States seeks a permanent solution to the Kashmir problem while at the same time attempting to avoid creating a sanctuary for extremist Islamic militants.

Current U.S. policy on the status of Kashmir is that it should be resolved through discussions between India and Pakistan while taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

Background to the Kashmir Dispute

India-Pakistan rivalry dates from the 1947 partition of British India into mostly Muslim Pakistan and Hindu-majority India. Claims by both successor nations to the former princely state of Kashmir have resulted in a half-century of bitter relations that has included three wars: in 1947-48, 1965, and 1971. A U.N.-brokered cease-fire in January 1949 left Kashmir divided by a military cease-fire line into the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-controlled Azad (Free) Kashmir and the Northern Territories. The cease-fire line was renamed the LOC under the 1972 Simla Agreement, which ended the third India-Pakistan war. In 1984, Indian troops occupied the Siachen Glacier area in the undemarcated area north of the LOC, which

since then has been the scene of a costly, high-altitude military standoff between India and Pakistan. (See map.)

Figure 1. Map of Kashmir Disputed Region



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 Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, August 1998.

G-1998-25-S.I.

Meanwhile, India blames Pakistan for supporting a separatist movement in the Muslim-dominated Kashmir Valley that has claimed 30,000 lives since 1990. Pakistan maintains that it lends only moral and political backing to the rebellion. Pakistan seeks international support for the carrying out of the 1948-49 U.N. resolutions that call for a plebiscite in Kashmir, by which the Kashmiri people would choose to join either India or Pakistan. India maintains that the U.N. resolutions have been superseded by various local elections as well as the 1972 Simla Agreement, which calls for settlement of India-Pakistan differences through bilateral

negotiations. A number of the leading Kashmiri militant and political groups and their supporters favor independence.

The economic and social development of both India and Pakistan — and, in fact, the entire South Asia subcontinent — have been substantially held hostage by the half-century Kashmir dispute. The bitterness and suspicion resulting from the continuing feud have led both countries to devote a comparatively large percentage of their resources to defense, including conventional, nuclear, and ballistic missile weapons capability. Although the Kashmir dispute is rooted in the colonial era, little progress toward resolution has been made during five decades of independence. Any solution to the Kashmir issue must necessarily take into consideration the complex tangle of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and legal issues that surround the dispute. Above all, any settlement of the Kashmir dispute by India and Pakistan would appear to require a new level of commitment, political will, and leadership by the two South Asian adversaries. A major impediment to a resolution has been that many regard the Kashmir issue as inseparable from the self-definition of the two states. Some have argued that for Pakistan, which since its inception aspired to be the “homeland for Muslims in South Asia,” the existence of a contiguous Muslim-majority state outside its purview undermines the full realization of the state. For India, whose self-definition is as a secular nation that can accommodate a plurality of different groups, the existence of a Muslim-minority state that can live within its borders is often considered essential to the nation’s credo of unity in diversity. The option of a Kashmir independent of both India and Pakistan has generally been outside the realm of consideration for the two South Asian adversary states.

U.S. Concerns

U.S. and international concerns about stability in South Asia have increased considerably as a result of recent regional weapons developments. On May 11 and 13, 1998, India conducted a total of five unannounced underground nuclear tests, breaking a 24-year self-imposed moratorium on nuclear testing. Despite U.S. and world efforts to dissuade it, Pakistan followed suit, claiming five tests on May 28, 1998, and an additional test on May 30. Responding to these nuclear tests, President Clinton imposed economic and military sanctions on India and Pakistan, as mandated by section 102 of the Arms Export Control Act. The tests created a global storm of criticism, as well as a serious setback for decades of U.S. nuclear nonproliferation efforts in South Asia.¹ On April 11, 1999, India tested its intermediate-range Agni II missile, firing it a reported distance of 1,250 miles. A few days later, Pakistan countered by test-firing its Ghauri II and Shaheen missiles, which have a reported range of 1,250 miles and 375 miles respectively. Either country has the capability of targeting the major cities of the other. India tested the Agni II again in January 2001 and tested a short range variant of the missile in January 2002. The United States has worked to encourage India and Pakistan to: (1) halt further nuclear testing and sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT); (2) halt fissile material

¹ See also CRS Report 98-570, *India-Pakistan Nuclear Tests and U.S. Response* and CRS Report RL30623, *Nuclear Weapons and Ballistic Missile Proliferation in India and Pakistan: Issues for Congress*.

production and cooperate in the Fissile Material Control Treaty (FMCT) negotiations; (3) refrain from deploying or testing missiles; (4) maintain and formalize restraints on sharing sensitive goods and technologies with other countries; and (5) reduce bilateral tensions, including over Kashmir. U.S. officials have continued to urge India to resume dialogue with Pakistan, while pressing Pakistan to improve the climate for talks.

Major Events Since the Kargil Conflict

The Kargil Conflict

The confrontation between India and Pakistan along the LOC in Kashmir in May-July 1999 was the worst outbreak of fighting since the 1971 war. The conflict related to Indian attempts to dislodge some 700 Pakistan-supported fighters occupying fortified positions along an 80-mile stretch of mountain ridges overlooking a key supply route on the Indian side of the LOC near Kargil. According to Indian sources, the intruders were mainly Pakistan and ethnic Afghan forces who crossed the border in early spring to seize high altitude positions usually occupied by Indian troops in the summer. Pakistan claimed the forces were Kashmiri *mujahadeen*, or Muslim freedom fighters. Although India used air and artillery barrages against the fortified positions, these were often ineffective, and two Indian jets and a helicopter were downed early in the conflict. Much of the fighting came down to Indian infantry assaults on mountain peaks under near-Arctic conditions. Mounting casualties created domestic political and military pressure on the Indian government to order strikes across the LOC to cut the supply lines of the infiltrators. Such suggestions — although resisted by New Delhi— fueled international concern over the danger of a widening war and the possible use of nuclear weapons.

U.S. Involvement. By early June 1999, the United States and the other Group of Eight (G-8) countries had expressed concern over the destabilization of the LOC and urged India and Pakistan to seek a bilateral resolution of the tense situation. In what was widely viewed as a major diplomatic victory for India, the Clinton Administration and most international opinion refused to accept that such a large-scale, well-supplied offensive could have been planned or executed without Pakistan's support. India further claimed evidence that many of the fighters actually were Pakistan army enlisted men and officers. Then-Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif flew to Washington to confer with President Clinton on July 4. It was reported, in May 2002, that during this meeting President Clinton presented Sharif with evidence that (without Sharif's knowledge) the Pakistani military had deployed nuclear-armed missiles to the border with India, a further indication of just how far the conflict had progressed.² Following the meeting, the two leaders issued a joint statement in which they agreed that "concrete steps will be taken for the restoration of the LOC, in accordance with the Simla Agreement." They further agreed that "the dialogue begun in Lahore in February provides the best forum for resolving all issues

² Sipress, Alan and Thomas E. Ricks, "Report: India, Pakistan were near nuclear war," *The Washington Post*, May 15, 2002.

dividing India and Pakistan, including Kashmir.”³ Following Sharif’s return to Islamabad, Indian and Pakistan military commanders met to discuss the modalities for disengagement of forces and the withdrawal of the infiltrators, which was largely completed by July 18.

Post-Kargil

Tensions between India and Pakistan remained extremely high following the Kargil conflict. In August 1999, Pakistan accused India of shooting down a naval aircraft over Pakistani territory, killing 16. India countered that it was shot down over Indian territory. The October 1999 military coup in Pakistan further soured bilateral relations because of India’s perception of Pakistan army involvement in the Kargil fighting. India accused Pakistan of being behind the December 1999 hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane on a flight between Kathmandu and New Delhi. The plane was flown to Kandahar, Afghanistan, where it remained until the crisis ended, on December 31, with the release of the passengers and crew in return for the release of three Muslim militants being held in Indian jails.

Throughout 2000, cross-border firing and shelling continued at high levels. India accused Pakistan of sending a flood of militants into Kashmir and increasingly targeting isolated police posts and civilians. Pakistan also accused India of cross-border raids by Indian soldiers. According to Indian government sources, more than 5,000 militants, security forces, and civilians were killed in Jammu and Kashmir state in 1999-2000. The United States strongly urged India and Pakistan to create the proper climate for peace, respect the LOC, reject violence, and return to the Lahore peace process. The waning days of 2000 saw a reduction of tensions as India announced in November that it was halting its military operations in Kashmir during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. In December, the Pakistan government announced that its forces deployed along the LOC in Kashmir would observe maximum restraint and that some of its troops would be pulled back from the LOC. Indian army officials noted that clashes between Indian and Pakistani forces along the LOC had virtually stopped since the cease-fire began and that there had been a definite reduction of infiltration of militants from Pakistan.

In February 2001, Prime Minister Vajpayee extended the cease-fire for three months. The All Parties Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference (APHC) — an alliance of 22 political and religious separatist groups in India— cautiously welcomed the cease-fire offer “if it represents a sincere step towards resolution of the Kashmir problem.” APHC leaders also sought permission from New Delhi to visit Pakistan in order to discuss the Kashmir situation with Pakistani leaders and supporters of the Kashmiri separatist movement. Kashmir’s main militant groups, however, rejected the cease-fire as a fraud and continued to carry out attacks on military personnel and government installations. As security forces conducted counter-operations, deaths of Kashmiri civilians, militants, and Indian security forces continued to rise. On May 23, 2001, the Indian government announced that it was ending its 6-month unilateral cease-fire in Kashmir but that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee would invite

³ “Text: Clinton, Sharif joint statement on Kashmir conflict,” *USIS Washington File*, July 6, 1999.

Pakistan military ruler General (now President) Pervez Musharraf for talks to “pick up the threads again...so that we can put in place a stable structure of cooperation and address all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir.”

The Agra Summit

On July 14-16, 2001, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee held talks with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf in Agra, India. Although widely anticipated as a possible breakthrough in India-Pakistan relations, the July summit failed to produce a joint communique, reportedly as a result of pressure by hardliners on both sides. Major stumbling blocks were India’s refusal to acknowledge the “centrality of Kashmir” to future talks and Pakistan’s objection to references to “cross-border terrorism.”

Post-September 11

The standoff between India and Pakistan over Kashmir has taken a new tone since the terrorist attacks on September 11. Analysts in Washington have argued that two militant groups linked to al-Qaeda – Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad – have staged attacks in Kashmir and Delhi in order to provoke a major standoff between India and Pakistan and divert Pakistani military attention away from assisting U.S. efforts in the war on terrorism. On December 13, 2001, militants reportedly from these two groups attacked the Indian parliament building in Delhi, killing 14 and provoking the largest military buildup between India and Pakistan to date. After intense U.S. diplomatic pressure, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf made a bold speech on January 12, 2002 in which he promised to crack down on Islamic extremists. For five months, India adopted a wait-and-see attitude with troops mobilized along the border.

During the ensuing few months, efforts were made to allow both sides to withdraw their troops from the standoff. Top Kashmiri leaders from both India and Pakistan met in Dubai on April 30, 2002. The thrust of the talks reportedly centered on creating a congenial and peaceful atmosphere in order that India and Pakistan could negotiate and allow the Kashmiris to present their case. Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan, the chairman of the National Kashmir Committee of Pakistan, and Abdul Ghani Lone and Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, attended the meeting.

The pro-Pakistan Kashmiri insurgent group Hizbul Mujahideen said it was willing to lay down arms if New Delhi begins a “genuine process of settlement and peace” in Kashmir. In May 2002, in an article in the English daily, *Greater Kashmir*, Deputy Supreme Commander of Hizbul Mujahideen, Moin-ul-Islam, stated, “Once India takes an initiative with good intentions, she will find us ten steps ahead of her one step. We will at once give up guns and observe real ceasefire so that [a] solution-finding path receives headway.”⁴ (Subsequently, the authenticity of this offer was reportedly rejected by official Hizbul sources.) Hizbul’s head, Syed Salahuddin, went on to expel its chief operations commander, Abdul Majid Dar, and two of his

⁴ “Hizbul offers ceasefire, flays Hurriyat,” *The Indian Express*, May 3, 2002.

followers. Dar was the Hizbul leader who had offered a cease fire in 2000 that had held out hope for peaceful negotiations in the valley. Some reports suggested that Dar was considering running for office in the September elections to the Kashmir assembly. The fact that Dar and other Kashmiri separatists are even considering an election run suggests that there is growing exhaustion with waging a brutal insurgency that has taken its toll on both the Indian army and the insurgents. Participating in the electoral process may be one way to attain some of the goals that the insurgent groups have been seeking.

The move to seek other avenues may also be coming from the concern that Pakistan, as shown by its policy reversal towards the Taliban, might reduce support to the Kashmiri mujahedeen. In that case having an alternative makes tactical sense. Some analysts also argue that infiltration will become more difficult as India gets better surveillance equipment from the United States—particularly sensors and systems for border management. In fact, some Indian sources believe that intelligence and technology sharing between the United States and India may be the best way to monitor infiltration along the LOC.⁵ It has been reported that U.S., Russian, and Indian satellites are now monitoring both militant camps as well as troop movements along the border.

The Military Standoff and the Kashmir Situation

The military standoff between the two countries has raised the fear of a nuclear war, and both domestic and international factors have made it difficult for either side to back down. The scope for miscalculation also persists. President Musharraf faces domestic pressure from the main stream political parties that he alienated by his decision to hold a referendum in April 2002. He also faces criticism from hardliners within the military who first opposed the decision to stop supporting the Taliban and are now against compromising with India.

The world community has not supported Pakistan to the extent it may have expected in the current conflict. The leaders of several western countries have called upon Pakistan to halt cross border infiltration by militant Kashmiris. Western leaders have also been concerned because the Pakistani government has not declared a “no first use” policy on nuclear weapons. Pakistan’s reluctance to do so comes from its conventional weapons inferiority *vis a vis* India. The international community is concerned, however, that nuclear weapons could be used as the first, and not the last, resort in a major conflict. Initial utterances by Pakistani officials on the lack of a no first use policy alarmed the international community. British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said that such a policy could not be tolerated, which led President Musharraf to subsequently say that a nuclear war would be unthinkable and should not be allowed to happen.

At the domestic level, President Musharraf is facing criticism about his April 30th referendum that was boycotted by the major political parties in the country. Jihadi groups within the country are angry with the president for attempting to halt

⁵ C. Raja Mohan, “India’s Focus on Sharing Intelligence with U.S.,” *The Hindu* (New Delhi), June 6, 2002.

infiltration into Kashmir and for removing support for the Taliban.⁶ Groups within the military, so called Islamic hardliners, also reportedly are angry with Musharraf for becoming a “lackey of the West” and for giving up both of Pakistan’s Jihadi strategies—in Afghanistan and Kashmir.

Successive Pakistani governments have viewed reclaiming Kashmir as vital to the country’s national interest and identity. Making concessions on Kashmir, without a *quid pro quo* about the disputed status of the state, would be seen as bowing to Indian and international pressure. In discussions with India, however, Pakistan will be under pressure to take a different approach from the past one of using the support of militants and the declaration that Kashmir is the core issue in India-Pakistan relations.

President Musharraf stated that the only way to solve the Kashmir problem is, “through flexibility from stated positions on both sides.” Pakistani observers view this as significant since the military establishment has traditionally been very rigid on its irredentist stand on Kashmir.⁷ Such flexibility, it has been argued, will be required to lower tensions between the two countries and help initiate a series of confidence building measures between them.

On the Indian side domestic constraints come from the Indian perception of national identity, the concern with national unity, and, more immediately, from the declining political fortunes of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). India’s belief is that Kashmir represents an integral part of its secular identity, and that losing Kashmir would suggest that the Indian state cannot function as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious entity. Less articulated is the fear that if one ethnic grouping breaks away from India, others might follow suit. India has faced separatist movements in both the North-East and the South. Finally, the BJP has faced widespread criticism at home and abroad for its poor handling of the sectarian violence in Gujarat that led to the deaths of over 800 people.

At the international level, the Indian government is attempting a delicate diplomatic strategy of asking the international community to put pressure on Pakistan while simultaneously keeping other nations from internationalizing what New Delhi views as a bilateral dispute with Islamabad. The constraints on both the Indians and the Pakistanis help explain what attempts may work in managing the relationship between the two rivals and in helping contain the situation in Kashmir.

On the Indian side there was some discussion of waging a preemptive limited war in Kashmir. The goal was to wipe out the militant training camps in Azad Kashmir without provoking a broad conflict with Pakistan. The reported plan was that the Indian Air Force would launch precision strikes on the camps in the same way as the United States Air Force had on al-Qaeda locations in Afghanistan. This was to be followed by an attack by Indian special forces on these sites. Heavy casualties were expected.

⁶ Jason Burke, “‘Betrayal’ of Confused Jihadis,” *The Observer*, June 9, 2002.

⁷ Imtiaz Alam, “Success of an Unavoidable ‘Retreat’,” *The News International*, June 10, 2002.

The plan rested on the assumption that Pakistan was willing to limit the conflict and would not use nuclear weapons. The latter view came from the belief that Pakistan's nuclear weapons had been secured by the United States and, therefore, would not be used in a conflict.⁸ Implementing the plan would have been difficult. India lacks the precision guided munition arsenal to carry out such strikes on 60-70 camps in Azad Kashmir. It would also run into fierce opposition on the Pakistani side of the border. More difficult to contain, however, would have been the outbreak of conflict in other border areas. Worse, if Indian reports are to be believed, Pakistan may have tactical nuclear weapons and, if deployed in Kashmir, a military commander would have no incentive to exercise restraint if his positions were being overrun by Indian forces.

Defusing Tensions in Kashmir

In May-June 2002, the efforts of Deputy Secretary of State Armitage and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld helped reduce tensions in the region. India has agreed to allow overflights by commercial aircraft if Pakistan reciprocates. The Indian government has recalled the five naval vessels that were patrolling close to Pakistani waters and is likely to name a new ambassador to Pakistan. President Musharraf has adopted a wait and see approach and says he will be satisfied when India reduces its force levels along the border.

Maintaining long-term stability and security in the area, however, requires that both countries work together, but at the moment their agendas diverge. The Indian government has repeated its earlier offer of joint patrols of the border. The Indian logic is that the militaries of both countries know the border well and they can collaborate effectively to halt infiltration. Pakistan, while not rejecting the proposal out of hand, has expressed doubts about its feasibility. It has argued that given the current state of tension and distrust between the two armed forces it would be difficult to operationalize such patrolling. The other problem is that by agreeing to joint patrols Pakistani officials fear that this would be a de facto endorsement of the LOC as the international boundary between the two countries. Pakistan reportedly would prefer to have an international force monitoring the LOC, since such force would be easier to implement and it would help internationalize the Kashmir issue.

India is unlikely, at least officially, to welcome a multinational force because that it is committed by the 1972 Simla Agreement to bilaterally resolve all disputes with Pakistan. It is also concerned that a multinational force would put pressure on India to resolve the Kashmir dispute to Pakistan's advantage. One report has also suggested that India might allow U.S. special forces into Indian Kashmir ostensibly to hunt for al-Qaeda forces but actually to monitor the border.⁹ Other reports indicate that the United States has agreed to give India sensors to monitor the border.

⁸ Ahmad Faruqui, "India Losing the Initiative," *Asia Times*, June 5, 2002.

⁹ Siddharth Varadarajan, "Rumsfeld has Special Forces Offer for India," *The Times of India*, June 12, 2002.

U.S. Interests and Policy Options

When coupled with the war on terror and U.S. relations with India and Pakistan, the Kashmir issue becomes complicated and difficult to address through foreign and security policy. The anti-terror campaign and hunt for al-Qaeda in the region would be hampered considerably if the Kashmir conflict were to escalate to all-out war. The threat that such a war would further escalate to include nuclear weapons also presents serious challenges to U.S. nonproliferation efforts. Defusing the current crisis and establishing some degree of stability in Kashmir is, therefore, important to U.S. long-term interests.

Until the September 11 attacks on the U.S., however, in terms of U.S. global strategy, South Asia tended to be of lower interest to the United States than the Middle East or East Asia. U.S. forces in Asia are concentrated in South Korea and Japan with a focus on potential hot spots along the Korean Demilitarized Zone and the Taiwan Straits. Pakistan became a front-line state for the United States only because of the campaign in Afghanistan. In the absence of the war on terrorism, there would be few strategic resources for the United States in the region, nor are there strong historical, cultural, or ethnic ties to it. Should the war on terror move away from South Asia, American interest in the region could wane. Furthermore, despite market reforms by both India and Pakistan, the volume of U.S. trade with and investments in these countries remains relatively low. In other geopolitical contexts, however, such as U.S. relations with China, the focus on India and Pakistan could intensify, depending on circumstances.

The ability of the U.S. government to generate the domestic political support necessary to intervene in South Asian affairs or for India and Pakistan to accede to U.S. influence tends to be greatest in crisis situations – such as the one that currently exists. Over the longer term, however, the United States could find it difficult to maintain the type of long-term political and military commitment to South Asia that it has maintained for other regions, such as East Asia or the Middle East.

Currently, the policy options for the United States to deal with the Kashmir conflict seem to be to reduce tensions between India and Pakistan, to encourage an ongoing dialogue and confidence building measures between the two countries, and to work to reduce terrorism in the region and worldwide.

Since much of the current tension has arisen because of alleged incursions from Pakistan across the LOC, an important step in reducing tensions might involve some type of monitoring of the LOC in Kashmir. A system would be required that would allow India to present proof of reported incursions but also enable Pakistan to reject any false claims of infiltrations. Airborne or satellite surveillance would be non-intrusive and could help both countries make their cases. Another possibility would be to expand the United Nation's presence in South Asia to include monitoring the LOC. Currently, India opposes an expanded UN role, as noted above.

Another source of tension is the short reaction time to a possible nuclear attack by either country – whether intentional or accidental. The concern is that neither side may have sufficient controls in place to prevent either an accidental launch or a

nuclear strike by rogue forces. A reduction of nuclear tensions requires that both countries have the technology in place that will allow them to have better control over their nuclear weapons and mechanisms and facilities in place to prevent accidental launches or theft. In the past, Western nuclear powers have been reluctant to provide these technologies because it made nuclear weapons safer to deploy. Now that each side appears to be operationalizing its nuclear weapons, more cooperation may become necessary. Pakistan already has a nuclear command structure, while India is reportedly moving toward establishing one.¹⁰

Encouraging an on-going dialogue and confidence building measures between the two countries would include several specific projects, many of them non-military. For example, one could be discussions on easing travel restrictions across the LOC, particularly for those with cross-border familial ties. A second would be the sharing of river waters. The Indus Waters Treaty guarantees Pakistan a share of river water flowing from India. During the military standoff some analysts in India argued that the country should shut off the water supply to Pakistan as a way of coercing it to halt cross-border terrorism. The time may have come to discuss the latter part of the Indus Waters Treaty that deals with the development of riparian resources. For the two countries, harvesting river resources cooperatively could prove mutually beneficial. Pakistan's water supply would be further guaranteed, and India, like Pakistan, could benefit from developing resources in the heart of its agricultural region.

With regard to the anti-terror campaign in the region, this is discussed in other CRS reports and issue briefs.¹¹ It is worth noting here, however, that in the solution to the Kashmir conflict, a haven for Islamic extremists organizations not be created. As veteran South Asia observer Selig Harrison has argued, there is the real danger that an independent Kashmir, given the Jihadi nature of some of the insurgent groups, could end up as another permanent sanctuary for Islamic extremist terrorist operations.¹²

¹⁰ See CRS Report RS21237, *Indian and Pakistani Nuclear Weapons Status*, by Sharon Squassoni.

¹¹ See CRS Issue Brief IB94041, *Pakistan-U.S. Relations*, and CRS Issue Brief IB93097, *India-U.S. Relations*.

¹² Selig S. Harrison, "India's Bottom Line," *The Washington Post*, June 11, 2002.