The end of the cold war provided India and Pakistan with opportunities to develop the concept of cooperative peace and security. The desire for peace, recognition of the futility of confrontation and the utility of confidence-building measures, the cumulative impact of 'track two diplomacy' and the intent to succeed in a dialogue process have all strengthened the peace process in recent years. Added to this is a post-9/11 change in South Asia's security environment and a perceptible shift in US attitude to subcontinental peace and compelling the countries towards peace initiatives.

Post-cold war Indo-Pak friendship
Giving peace a chance after 9/11

Sanjeeb Kumar Mohanty

THE END OF THE COLD WAR

External powers have been instrumental in making. Post-cold war developments have changed the US's attitude to subcontinent- al affairs. The US accepts that there are possibilities of better relations with India. It also accepts India's security concerns. However, this does not rule US relations with Pakistan. Pakistan remains important to the US and the US has a 'strategic-speaking engagement' is useful and necessary for monitoring and controlling cross-border terrorism and religious extremism. Linkage with Pakistan is also considered necessary in maintaining an atmosphere of restraint in the region in the context of the nuclear weaponisation of India and Pakistan. The US wooed Pakistan during the cold war period, in particular after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. That era is dead and those compulsions are now gone. In the post-cold war era, Pakistan has little choice but to go along with US interests, ending its isolation and carving out a new role as a frontline state fighting the Islamic militants in South Asia.

Locked in a loveless embrace
After 9/11, Pakistan and the US found themselves locked in a loveless embrace. Their mutual relations conditioned more by fundamental differences than by shared connections and interests. The US believes a strong and friendly India can maintain stability and prosperity in South Asia. India remains an obvious choice for the US as increasingly powerful in economic terms, militarily responsible (despite Pakhmar II) and with a track record of combating terrorism. The US and India build a strategic partnership based on their shared commitment to freedom, prosperity and security. This new Indo-US partnership has changed the security environment in South Asia, and India's increased importance in the eyes of the US after 9/11 has forced Pakistan to seek peace in the region.

Changes had already taken place prior to 9/11. When the Taliban took power in Afghanistan they "made use of their ISI and Pakistani military contacts, but also relied on the support of friendly non-governmental organisations and charities. Both India and Pakistan have offered considerable assistance to NGOs involved in relief and rehabilitation work in Afghanistan". The US has been an effective mediator, encouraging both India and Pakistan to encourage the Taliban in pushing him in the direction has pressurised General Musharraf to change his policies to heighten the level of trust and understanding. It has also been consistent. That said, both sides exhibit tremendous political will and determination and recent peace initiatives have been responsive to both countries with equal vigour. There is room for guarded optimism.

Dr Sanjeeb Kumar Mohanty
Fahm University, Osaka, India
mohanty_sanjeeb@yahoo.com

Notes

CBMs include ‘track-two diplomacy’ and the process of ongoing dialogue. ‘Track two diplomacy is not a substitute for track-one official diplomacy but it supplements the process of unofficial manner to promote an environment through education of public opinion, that would make it safe for political leaders to take risks for peace.’ During the 1990s, despite officially imposed constraints, both governments found it valuable to have a track-two channel available in the absence of any serious official dialogue. It is non-official dialogue in a bid to promote cooperation and resolve issues through conflict management and it aims to heighten the level of trust and understanding. It has to overcome past reservations, enmities and misunderstandings and find creative solutions to difficult issues. Track two had a cumulative impact on the recent peace initiatives, creating interest in the minds of the Indian and Pakistani public to get to know each other better, to correct misperceptions and create opportunities for rational behaviour by leaders of both countries.

Ongoing dialogue
In the post-9/11 phase, a civilian government in Pakistan is likely to be friendlier to India. Since Pakistan has continued to use its counter extremist operations for the foreseeable future, there is also the option of ‘buying’ peace with India. As a civilian President, Musharraf is still able to dictate the terms of the peace process which he initiated, as he enjoys the support of the army and the US. Peace talks have taken place under both dispensations (civilian rule and military rule), making it difficult to draw any facile connections between democracy in Pakistan and good relations between the neighbours.

Initiatives to succeed in the most important aspect of the current India-Pakistan dialogue process and hopefully both countries will exhibit the required degree of flexibility and openness to offer the best prospects of a detente, if not a solution. Despite continuing political turmoil in Pakistan, the talks to resolve the issues bedeviling Indo-Pak relations continue. While both countries are still unable to address the crucial issues in meaningful terms, mutual tension and suspicion has been reduced...The peace process remains highly vulnerable to Indian and Pakistan political whm with the US and Pakistan, Pakistan remains important to US interests in the region and ‘constructive Pakistan’ is dead and those compulsions are now gone. In the post-cold war era. Pakistan has little choice but to go along with US interests, ending its isolation and carve out a new role as a frontline state fighting the Islamic militants in South Asia. India, in turn persuading Pakistan to work with US interests, ending its isolation and carving out a new role as a frontline state fighting the Islamic militants in South Asia. India, in turn persuading Pakistan to work with US interests, ending its isolation and carving out a new role as a frontline state fighting the Islamic militants in South Asia.