

Siachen: Conflict without End

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Abstract – The highest battlefield in the world, the Siachen Glacier has witnessed conflict between India and Pakistan for over thirteen years. It has so far resulted in hundreds of casualties caused mostly by adverse climatic conditions and harsh terrain rather than military skirmishes. The conflict is also putting an enormous financial burden on the national exchequer on both sides. Siding down a valley in the Karakoram Range, the glacier is 76 kilometers long and varies in width between 2 to 8 kilometers. It receives up to 6 to 7 meters of the annual total of 10 meters of snow in the winter months. Blizzards can reach speeds of up to 150 knots (nearly 300 kilometers per hour).

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THE SIACHEN: CONFLICT

The temperature drops routinely to 40 degrees centigrade below zero, and even lower with the wind chill factor. For these reasons the Siachen glacier has been called the "Third Pole." [1]

The altitude of some Indian forward bases on the Saltoro Ridge range from Kumar (16,000 feet) and Bila Top (18,600 feet) to Pahalwan (20,000 feet) and Indra Col (22,000 feet). Because of the steep gradient of the Saltoro Range, the area is also prone to avalanches. These adverse conditions have direct consequences: since the war began, only 3 percent of the Indian casualties have been caused by hostile firing. The remaining 97 percent have fallen prey to the altitude, weather, and terrain. [2]

Pakistani combat casualties are low because troops of dug in, artillery fire over mountain peaks is generally inaccurate, and infantry assaults are seldom made in the harsh climate and difficult terrain. Most Pakistani casualties, too, occur because of the climate, terrain, and altitude. Pakistani positions are, for the most part, at a lower altitude in the glacier area, ranging between 9,000 to 15,000 feet (some are at a much higher altitude such as Conway Saddle, at 17,200 feet, which controls ingress to the glacier). Glaciers at the Pakistani frontlines begin at 9,440 feet. Pakistani troops are stationed on steep slopes, exposed to harsh weather. As a result, the main causes of Pakistani casualties are treacherous crevasses and ravines, avalanches, high altitude pulmonary and cerebral edema and hypothermia. [3]

A HISTORY OF THE SIACHEN CONFLICT

The State of Jammu and Kashmir had formally and legally acceded to India in accordance with the

provisions of the Transfer of Power Act passed by the British Parliament which granted British India its independence. The instrument of accession of the State was duly accepted by the British Governor General of India on October 26, 1947, on the recommendation of the Government of India. That the whole State of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India from the date on is therefore unquestionable in the Indian view. On the other hand Pakistan until now has maintained a fairly ambiguous position in respect of its jurisdiction over different parts of the State occupied by it in 1947-48. As a consequence, Azad ("Independent") Kashmir does not appear on any published Pakistani map, and it has its own constitution, its own capital city (Muzafarabad), a full-fledged Government, a national flag, but without a formal recognition by Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's effort to integrate Azad Kashmir into Pakistan as a fifth state in 1973 was strenuously objected to by Kashmir constitution to include provisions granting the area its own Supreme Court, Prime Minister, and Chief Election Commissioner, thus reinforcing the political separateness of Azad Kashmir from Pakistan. Pakistan has maintained a different position with regard to the Northern Areas (of J&K State) which Bhutto insisted did not belong to the between Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas (which include the erstwhile principalities in the state of Jammu and Kashmir). For instance, General Zia-ul-Haq maintained a contradictory stand. He was quoted as having said that the Northern Areas including Baltistan, were disputed areas but part of Pakistan. [4] Two years later, he was reported to have stated that the Siachen Glaciers lay in disputed territory and that it was a no man's land. [5]

The very fact that initially Siachen was considered to be completely inhospitable and not worth any

conflict on the ground perhaps was responsible for the absence of more definitive arrangements concerning the line between territories of India and Pakistan. The original cease fire line (CFL) agreed to by India and Pakistan. The original cease fire line (CFL) agreed to by cover the area of "the glaciers" because of the difficulties of near Chalunka, the Karachi Agreement spoke of the line passing "north to the glaciers." When the ceasefire line was changed into a mutually accepted line of control (LOC) in October 1972, the newly delineated line ran from the Shyok river west of Thang (which is in India) to Point NJ 9842. The area north of it was left blank and open to subsequent Pakistani encroachments and then, since 1984, to military attacks to gain territory by force.[6]

The reason for the controversy is that the Siachen Glacier region falls within the delineated territory beyond the last defined section of the LOC map grid (point NJ 9842). As a result Indian and Pakistanis have tried to stake their territorial claims by interpreting the vague language contained in the 1949 and 1972 agreements to prove their respective points. For Pakistan thence northwards" means from NJ 9842 up to the Karakoram Pass.[7] India, on the other hand draws a north westerly line from NJ 9742 along the watershed line of the Saltoro Range, a southern offshoot of the Karakoram Range.[8]

MILITARY CONFRONTATION ON THE SIACHEN GLACIER

Regarding the outbreak of hostilities, Robert G. Wirsing, Who has done an in depth study of the Siachen conflict writes:

What is publicly known about events leading up to the outbreak of hostilities in the vicinity of the Siachen Glacier in the winter of 1983-84 does not supply unambiguous evidence that either India or Pakistan was the aggressor? Precisely was shot first is probably impossible to determine. Which of the two armed forces had the "right" to be on the glacier since the question of the legitimacy of the two sides territorial claims have never been submitted to impartial adjudication is a matter obviously open to disagreement. There is ample evidence, however, that the Indian armed forces were the first to establish permanent posts on the glacier and that they had prepared themselves long and well for the task. Published Indian accounts of Operation Meghdoot leave little room for doubt, in fact, that the Pakistanis were caught napping and that their principal strategy for fortifying Pakistan's claim to the glacier sponsoring foreign mountaineering expeditions to the area had failed.[9]

General Chibber, justifying the logic of operation Meghdoot in 1984, refers to his 1978 decision to sanction the first Indian expedition to Siachen, Colonel N. Kumar's "Operational Patrol" to Teram

Kangri in the Siachen area. The discussion was influenced, he recalls by an episode in the mid-1950s, when the Government of India had turned down the Army's plans for of Kashmir only to discovery one to the Aksai Chin area northeast of Kashmir only to discover one day that that the Chinese had built the Xinjiang-Tibet highway through it. After Kumar's trip in 1978, it was decided that the Siachen area "should be regularly patrolled during the summer months" but that "it would be impractical to establish a post in such a hostile environment." [10]

Although Pakistan claims that twenty mountaineering expeditions were undertaken between 1974 and 1980 (mainly by Europeans and Japanese), Chibber makes the claim that none came thereafter.[11]

Colonel Kumar's trip in 1978 to the glacier and subsequent activities by Indians alarmed the Pakistanis. On March 29, 1982, Pakistani registered its protest with India. Subsequent protests by Pakistan's Northern Sector Commander on August 21, 1983 disturbed Chibber because "for the first time... Pakistanis formally projected in black and white their claim to all the area northwest the Karakoram Pass. A subsequent protest on August 29, 1983, referred to the, LAC North of Point NJ 9842-Karakoram Pass. The Pakistanis asserted that the Siachen Glacier was „Inside Our Territory." [12]

Around September-October 1983, Indian intelligence spotted a column of Pakistani troops moving toward the Saltoro ridge, presumably with the intention of occupying the passes. The Saltoro range-an off-shoot of the Karakoram Range is topped by a high ridge punctuated by several passes that offer the only viable routes to the Siachen Glacier from POK. Inclement weather, however, prevented the Pakistani troops from reaching their destination that season. Pakistani writer, Zulfikar Ali Khan, notes "Late the Pakistanis decided to establish a permanent picket at Siachen. To preempt this move, the Indians airlifted a Kumaon battalion by helicopters" [13]

Since then India and Pakistan are involved in a conflict which is putting an enormous amount of burden on them in terms of both men and money. A. G. Noorani remarks that the fight could have been averted had Indian and Pakistani leaders acted 1983 to freeze the status quo as it then existed. The establishment of a permanent picket in the area contemplated by Pakistan, on the one hand, and accomplished by India, on the other hand, constitutes a breach of the Simla agreement. No LAC was violated, to be sure, but both sides had sought to unilaterally alter the situation. In the tense atmosphere of late 1983, a political decision at the highest level of leadership in both countries was needed in order to divert the course of events

from the use of force and toward a diplomatic solution.[14]

SIACHEN'S SIGNIFICANCE FOR INDIA

From an Indian perspective, the Siachen Glacier is the wedge of territory that separates Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) from Aksai Chin, the part of Kashmir claimed and occupied by China.[15] In Indian perceptions Siachen's geostrategic importance lies in the fact that its control would support the defense of Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir against Pakistan and /or Chinese threats.[16] It would prevent the outflanking of Indian forces in the Leh and Kargil sectors and the outflanking of Indian forces in the Leh and Kargil sectors and the connecting of the Aksai Chin highway with the Karakoram pass. Control over Siachen would enable India to keep watch over the Karakoram highway and the Khunjarab pass, while fortifying India's position in border negotiations with China.[17]

For India controlling the commanding heights is a crucial aspect of the Siachen conflict. This issue flows out of basic infantry tactics: height confers a tactical advantage. According to General Chibber, the notion that "reasonably well-prepared defensive positions could not be dislodged" was basic to the Indian concept of operations. He argues that "at these formidable altitudes it is difficult almost impossible to dislodge a force that occupies a height." [18]

But India has disadvantages too. As long as Pakistan does not commit its forces to an offensive against the Indian positions, the Indians have the disadvantage of being deployed at much higher altitudes. In order to block Pakistan's access to the Siachen Glacier India has no option but to maintain its hazardous post on the Saltoro Ridge, thereby exposing its forces to the dangerous altitude, weather, and terrain. India's strategy is also extremely expensive in financial terms and most of the Indian pickets and posts on the Saltoro Ridge are air maintained. Personnel, weapons and ammunition, fuel and food are usually flown in by helicopters and occasionally Para dropped. As M.J. Akbar remarks, "India's problems are greater than Pakistan's because the latter's supply lines need roads; our need helicopters." [19]

INDIA'S STAND ON SIACHEN

India has interpreted "thence northwards to the glaciers" to mean that the LOC proceeds from NJ 9842 along with watershed line that Saltoro range. Air Commodore Jasjit Singh says that "in mountainous terrain the high crest line marking the watershed is the internationally accepted norm for working out boundary settlements, much as the Thalweg (or the mind-channel) riverine principle is used to delicate boundaries along rivers." [20]

However, India's declared policy is not a sufficient indicator of the different perspectives, concerns, and objectives in the Indian policy community on the Siachen dispute. According to Samina Ahmed and Varun Sahni, three alternatives are readily discernible in India: (1) maintaining the deployment on Siachen at all costs, (2) negotiating a military disengagement with Pakistan, and (3) withdrawing Indian forces from the Glaciers unilaterally if necessary.[21]

A.G. Noorani thinks that a negotiated or unilateral Indian withdrawal would be a wise decision as the disputed region is uninhabitable and has no strategic value. Some believe that a Siachen settlement could be the first step in the resolution of the Kashmir dispute.[22]

Strategists averse to Indian withdrawal from Siachen argue its strategic significance on the grounds that it physically separates Pakistan and China, the country's primary adversaries. Furthermore a Siachen withdrawal would weaken India's position on Kashmir. Lt. Gen Chibber express the view that "the whole of Jammu and Kashmir belongs to India; so where is the need for compromise?"

Similarly Air Commodore Jasjit Singh argues that "the issues related to the Siachen Glacier constitute only a subset of a larger conflict... concerning the state of Jammu and Kashmir.... The fundamental issue here is not a border/territorial dispute... in the sense it would have been if the area held by Pakistan across the Indian defense line on the Saltoro range was Pakistani territory." [24] Control of the commanding heights gives India the tactical advantage and denies Pakistan access to the glaciers. India should therefore not relinquish its battlefield gains on the negotiating table, because Pakistan would occupy the heights as soon as India withdrew. Mahendra Ved, who rejects the idea of Indian withdrawal, says "Positions gained and maintained after fierce fighting cannot be given away through maintained after fierce fighting cannot be given away through talks, since there is no guarantee who will violate the pact and regain more than what was in their possession earlier." [25] As for the human cost because Indian military personnel are volunteers, casualties are not a sufficient reason to withdraw. In any case only a small part of the Indian army is deployed on the Saltoro Range, and over the years the Indian forces have learned how to engage in glacial warfare.[26] Although the financial cost is significant, India already borne this financial burden for 13 years and could continue to do so indefinitely. Here a very interesting and significant development should be brought to light. The Indian Defense Ministry had said that India plans to build a vehicle road in the Siachen Glacier

area to carry arms and ammunition and supplies to the troops.[27]

PAKISTAN'S CONTENTION ON SIACHEN

For Pakistan, the Siachen dispute has a linkage with the Kashmir dispute with India. Because of the hostile nature of the terrain, negotiations responsible for delineating the 1949 India-Pakistan cease-fire line in the disputed territory of Kashmir left an undefined area which encompassed the Siachen Glacier and its approaches. After the India-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971, neither state attempted to delineate a case-fire line or line of control in the Siachen region because of the nature of the terrain and the absence of any physical military presence.[28]

Pakistan has interpreted the 1972 Simla agreement to mean that the LoC should extend in a straight line in a northeasterly direction from NJ 9842 toward the Karakoram Pass. This also helps it to project Siachen as a disputed region. In the 1963 Sino-Pakistan agreement, for example, in which the Karakoram pass was defined as the terminal point for the delineation Pakistan international boundary, the areas south of the border were described as "the contiguous areas the defense of which is under the actual control of Pakistan," and not as Pakistani territory.[29] Pakistan also claims, that the Siachen Glacier and its approaches fall within the Pakistani-controlled and administered territory of Jammu and Kashmir, more specifically in the Baltistan district in the Northern Areas. Pakistani analysis claims that the Siachen Glacier has been a "de facto and demure pat of Pakistani's Northern Areas ever since the creation of the ceasefire line." [30]

Pakistan has very cleverly argued that the anomalous status of the Northern Areas has no parallel with Kashmir and India. Siachen has been portrayed as a regional issue by Pakistan as opposed to Kashmir, which, Pakistan reiterates is an international issue. The Pakistan Foreign Office expressed a willingness to demilitarize of Siachen and claimed it was not directly linked demilitarizes of Siachen and claimed it was not directly linked with the Kashmir dispute.[31]

In Pakistani estimates, Indian expenditure on the Siachen operations is five times higher, while the casualty ratio is 10 to one. Lt. Gen. Imranullah Khan, who served as Corps Commander responsible for Siachen, claims our aim has been to make it expensive for them, and that has worked." [32] While Pakistani troops are stationed outside the glacier in less forbidding terrain than their Indian adversaries the Pakistani military presence forces India to retain its troops on the more elevated and hazardous mountain passes resulting in higher attrition rates because of the dangerous altitude, weather and terrain.[33]

PAKISTAN'S STAND ON SIACHEN

Pakistan's official stand for always been averse to India's presence on the Glacier and always questioned India's right to be there. The Siachen Glacier and its approaches are located within Baltistan in the Pakistan administered northern territories. Pakistan will not accept the status quo on Siachen because India's military presence on the glacier and environs, in its view, is illegal and unlawful. Pakistani policy makers rule out any unilateral withdrawal and seem to have the following policy options: (1) to continue the armed conflict, (2) to sign an agreement limited to conflict containment; or (3) to reach a comprehensive and permanent settlement with India. The adoption of any of these options depends on the perceptions, preferences, and bargaining power of various sections of Pakistan's policy-making community.[34]

Hardliners within the Pakistan military and bureaucracy favor the continuation of conflict because India is perceived as the aggressor. Major General Jehangir Nasarullah, head of Pakistan's armed forces, Inter-Service Public Relations, declared, "Every square inch is sovereign territory. You can't throw it away." [35]

The segment with a moderate view favors a negotiated settlement. Announcing the resolve of the Nawaz Sharif government to maintain "normal good neighbourly relations with India." Foreign Office spokesman Khalid Saleem declared that, "we are always willing to discuss the question of withdrawing troops from Siachen provided it is based on agreements and agreed principles." [36] For this segment holding on to Siachen does not make any sense as the Pakistani casualties and the economic burden do not justify sustaining a conflict over inhospitable territory with no population or resource and little geostrategic territory with no population or resources and little geostrategic value. Even among Pakistani supporters of a negotiated settlement, however, there are concerns based on a history of mistrust that India would attempt to use a settlement to legitimize its claim over the disputed area. Pakistan has rejected any Indian presence in the area. According to the Minister of State for Defense Rana Naeem Mahmood, in the first rounds of negotiations in 1986 and 1987, Pakistan had rejected Indian demands for a withdrawal to pre-1984 positions must precede any agreement stand called for the withdrawal of troops to positions held at the time the 1972 Simla Agreement, when the line of the control was demarcated.[38]

Pakistan would never accept any agreement that alters the territorial status of the Siachen region to its disadvantage. That is why it always rejected Indian proposals for authentication of Actual Ground Positions (AGP) prior to a withdrawal or the delineation of the line of control beyond NJ 9842

along existing ground positions in the Siachen region.[39]

NEGOTIATIONS ON THE SIACHEN CONFLICT

For the first time, in 1984, the Siachen glacier boundary issue was added to the list of major issues of contention between the two countries. In December 1985 Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Zai-ul-Haq agreed in New Delhi to hold talks at the Defense Secretaries level on the Siachen issue. During the first round of Defense Secretaries' talks in January 1986, both sides indulged in accusing the other of violating the Simla Agreement. Furthermore Pakistan cited the statements of India Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and India's protests in 1962-63 over Sino-Pakistani negotiations, which resulted in the boundary agreement of 1963, and from these. It attempted to infer India's recognition of Pakistan's possession of areas to the west of the Karakoram Pass. Specifically, Pakistan cited India's protest note of May 10, 1962, which referred to "that portion of the boundary between India and China west of the Karakoram Pass which is presently under Pakistani's unlawful occupation." [40] It also cited Nehru's statement in Parliament on March 5, 1963 which said that "Pakistan's Line of actual control... reached the Karakoram Pass." [41]

The second round of talks in June 1986 saw a repeat of familiar assertions on both sides. India hinted at a cease-fire in all but name and proposed an accord on non-escalation of the situation. Pakistan rejected anything approximating a cease-fire. The talks were reportedly held in a "cordial and friendly atmosphere" and it was agreed that the talks should be continued at a later date. There were no signs of any material progress, however. The talks were highly repetitious, a "pantomime" of the first. [42]

After a lapse of two years the two sides again met for the third round of talks in Rawalpindi in May 1988. The two became quite specific over the issue of disagreement of troops. But they were conscious of the domestic political costs which they might have to pay over disengagement. The situation in Pakistan became complicated because of the tussle between general Zia-ul-Haq and Benazir Bhutto. Ultimately, these talks ended inconclusively with a promise to meet again.

The fourth round of talks was scheduled to be held in New Delhi in September 1988 in a new political atmosphere because of the death of Zia-ul-Haq in August in a plane crash. The interim government announced that it would hold elections in the coming November to choose a new leader this time a civilian. Pakistan, despite these surprising political developments, wanted to carry on the process of dialogues.

India pressed for a ceasefire and for demarcation for the LoC in places where the troops of both sides confronted each other; the rest of the demarcation could be postpone. Pakistan's rejection of the proposal prompted another Indian offer: a cease fire and partial withdrawal of troops, with a token military presence left by each side in existing positions. Pakistan rejected the offer, as this put a seal of approval on the Indian presence in Siachen. Nor would Pakistan accept an accord on mutual restraint, lest it be misconstrued as a cease fire. The Pakistan's were prepared, though to make concessions to Indian concerns about its domestic constraints by introducing the concept of "redevelopment" under an agreed schedule and with a view to the eventual total withdrawal of forces. However, the talks failed yet again without producing any results.

On February 8, 1989, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had expected India to withdraw its forces to the 1972 pre-Simla positions. [43] Her assumptions of power in late 1988 as the first democratically elected head of government since 1971 had vastly improved the political climate on the subcontinent. Robert G. Wirsing writes that the two sides initial positions in the fifth round in the June 1989 were revealed to him on June 12, 1990, by the Indian army headquarters in New Delhi and later by the members of the Pakistani delegation. India put forward the following proposals:

1. Cessation of "cartographic aggression" by Pakistan (that is, of its unilateral attempts in recent year to extend the LoC from its agreed terminus at map reference points NJ 842 to the Karakoram pass of the border with China).
2. Establishment of a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) at the Siachen glacier.
3. Exchange between India and Pakistan of authenticated maps showing present military dispositions on the ground.
4. Delimitation by India and Pakistan of a line from map reference point NJ 9842 northward to the border with China "based on ground realities".
5. Formulations of ground rule to govern future military operations in the area and definitely of "the last step" to be taken.
6. Redevelopment of Indian and Pakistani forces to mutually agreed positions.

Pakistan's formal terms by the opening of the fifth round of talks, by contrast, were fewer in number. As identified for A.G. Noorani by members of the

Pakistani delegation to the fifth round, they contained two essential points:

1. Deployment of Indian and Pakistani forces to mutually agreed positions held at the time the ceasefire was declared in 1971 (i.e., pre-Simla positions); and only then.
2. Delimitation of an extension of the LOC beyond map reference point NJ 9842.[44]

Noorani writes that against this backdrop the use of the word “agreement” in the joint statement at the end of the fifth round, on June 17, 1989, was highly significant. He found it in striking contrast to all previous joint statement.[45] The next day separate talks between the Foreign Secretaries of the two countries concluded. At a joint press conference, Foreign Secretary Humayun Khan of Pakistan, referring to the Defense Secretaries’ meeting, called it “a significant advance” and spoke of the Simla agreement. He went on to say, “The exact location of these positions will be worked out in detail by military authorities of the two countries.”[46] Foreign Secretary S.K. Singh of India said: “I would like to thank Foreign Secretary, Dr. Humayun Khan, and endorse everything he has said.”[47] The next morning, the press was summoned by Aftab Seth, and joint secretary and official spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi, who stated that no agreement had been reached on troop withdrawals. “There was no indication of any such agreement in the joint press statement issued at the end of the talks,” he noted.[48]

Interestingly, Noorani writes that the reasons for India’s veto of the accord that had been reached conformed to Benazir Bhutto’s assessment and was confirmed three year later by a journalist who was close to Rajiv Gandhi and who was also a member of his Congress party.[49]

That journalist wrote “S.K Singh had his Knuckles rapped sharply on his return to Delhi because it was felt that photographs of Indian troopers withdrawing from Siachen would not look too good for the government in an election year.”[50]

The two meetings of military representatives on July 11-13 and on August 17-18, 1989 also proved futile. In these meetings India insisted on Pakistan’s withdrawal from all military positions in the vicinity of the glacier that it had taken since 1972, including those at Conway saddle. India as argued that the Indian forces would redeploy only so far as Dzingrulma near the glacier snout and that a civilian camp be placed at the centre.[51]

The sixth round of talk was held in New Delhi, on November 2-6, 1992.[52] For Pakistan the task was a simple as implementing the agreement of June 1989. During the discussions, a broad understanding had been reached on disengagement, redeployment

monitoring maintenance of peace and an implementation schedule.[53]

It was agreed that the immediate focus should be on restoring peace and tranquility in Siachen. Towards this end, without prejudice to the position taken by either side in the earlier rounds of talk, India’s positions was that point NJ 9842 Should extend to Sia Kangari while Pakistan’s position was the point NJ 9842 should join with the Karakorum Pass both sides agreed that the delineation of the LC beyond NJ 9842 would be examined by the joint commission.[54]

This disengagement and redeployment of forces, aimed at securing peace and tranquility in the area, is without prejudice to the know positions of either side.

Both sides agreed that the position / area vacate will constitute a zone of complete disengagement (ZOD) both sides commit:

- a) That they shall not seek to re-occupy the position vacated by them or to occupy the position vacated by the either side or to establish new position across the alignment determined by the vacated position.
- b) That they shall not undertake any military mountaineering or any other activity whatsoever in the zone of disengagement.
- c) That if either side violates the commitment in (a)&(b) above, the other shall be free to respond through any means, including military.[55]

Both sides agreed to evolve monitoring measures to prevent violations and to maintain peace and tranquility in the area. Besides, it was also agreed that they would disengage and redeploy according the time schedule which was to be worked out to mutual satisfaction.[56]

In June 1997, in Islamabad dialogue resumed for the seventh time but was largely seen as a mere gesture, aimed at nudging the stalled talks ahead. The dialogue resulted in a basic agreement to fix the agenda for talk of seven Issues (which included Siachen) and mechanism for the future negotiations. Nothing specific was discussed and negotiated.

Issue based talks were held again after a gap of six years, amidst continued firing and conflict on the glacier. The Defense Secretaries from India and Pakistan met on November 6, 1998 in New Delhi for the eight rounds of talks to find a mechanism to reduce tensions. Pakistan’s Defense Secretary, Lieutenant General (retd.) Iftikhar Ali Khan, let the

twelve member delegation from Islamabad for the composite and integrated dialogue.

The twelve member's Indian side was led by Defense Secretary. Ajit Kumar. The talks, the time however, came at a time when there were reports of attacks by Pakistan on Indian Posts at Siachen almost every day. Diplomatic sources said that the Pakistan, during the eight round of talk of Siachen, called for the "redeployment of troops." A troops pull back they said, should be considered on the basis of the 1989 "agreement." In a joint statement, India and Pakistan agreed to continue the talk as part of a "composite dialogue process." While acknowledging the need of negotiating "redeployment" the Indian side has preferred to adopt an "incremental" approach which could lead to complete normalization eventually.[57] The source said," India at the talk proposed a package of confidence-building measures which would lead to a comprehensive ceasefire" in the Saltoro range region."[58] New Delhi also sought a "freeze" on the ground positions of troops from both sides to "immediately defuse tension and atmosphere of confrontation in the area." It was also agreed in principle that specific "modalities" which would make it durable could be discussed in an "agreed framework." [59]

It was hoped that both sides could establish a bilateral monitoring mechanism: This could include flag meetings, meetings with formation commanders at „periodic levels" and the establishment of a hotline between divisional commanders. But New Delhi has rejected the Pakistani proposal of placing an international monitoring mechanism to supervise the ceasefire in the Siachen area. These steps conformed to the Indian "suggestion" made in October 1998 in Islamabad at the Foreign Secretary-level talks to improve communication links."

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