

# Untangling India and Pakistan

By K. Shankar Bajpai      May/June 2003



Courtesy Reuters

## EVER ON THE BRINK

As one of the world's longest-suffering victims of terrorism, India had high hopes for

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the source of that violence, Pakistan, seems better placed to get away with it.

This bizarre situation arises from the importance of Pakistan to the ongoing effort to secure Afghanistan. Pakistan joined the campaign against the Taliban, its erstwhile client, in part due to international pressure but also in part because Afghan extremists were swiftly becoming a threat to Pakistan's own security. It is of course an old Wild West custom for the sheriff to co-opt the gunslinger in hunting bigger outlaws -- and the Afghan campaign resembles nothing so much as a Wild West manhunt writ large. But problems arise when he who helps the good guys also keeps his ties with the bad ones. The military government of General Pervez Musharraf doubtless confronts severe obstacles in any effort to root out Islamic extremism on its own soil. Islamists carry weight in the country and are said to be beyond government control. In addition, the army feels an irresistible temptation to use terrorists in its campaign against India in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (referred to hereafter as Kashmir). As a result, Pakistan has sought to let what India calls cross-border terrorism in Kashmir continue, as though exempt from the international war against terror.

Whether with Islamabad's connivance or tacit approval or despite its genuine willingness to stop them, groups directly linked to Pakistan-based extremists have perpetrated ever more

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