

Starting with the CBMs

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SOUND and stable relationship between two nations is built not by merely applying the principle of reciprocity but by each nation seeking to promote its own enlightened interests. Indian and Pakistani leadership needs to change its mindset and stop weighing every proposal or action in terms of "gains to us and losses to them".

The recent twelve-point Indian proposals and Pakistan's response, including its own thirteen counterproposals, are indeed a welcome development. But the mutual responses highlighted the fact that the political will required to create the right kind of environment and to establish procedures for the CBMs' smooth operation is still lacking in the two countries. Little realizing that faithful implementation of even these modest confidence-building measures can pave the way for normalization and peace talks between the two countries.

A bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad can be extremely useful in reviving lost contacts and building goodwill on both sides of the divide. It could be the first step towards the realization of soft borders and the means to facilitate the emergence of a unified Kashmiri entity.

Interaction could have a moderating influence on the Indian security forces that are committing gross atrocities on the Kashmiri people and will provide Pakistan the opportunity to be more transparent on the question of cross-border infiltration. When Pakistan made the counter-proposal of induction of UN personnel for manning exit/entry points between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, it knew that India would reject it. Instead, they could have agreed in principle and offered to work out the modalities.

The possibility of using neutral observers from countries like Norway, Sweden, Thailand or Malaysia, could have been explored. The other alternative could be that Kashmiris use their state identity cards as travel documents in lieu of passports or have documents similar to the ones that are used by Taiwanese in countries that do not recognize Taiwan.

Undoubtedly, the best course would be if India and Pakistan could accept this proposal by merely reiterating that a bus service on this route has been agreed upon without prejudice to their respective positions on the future status of Jammu and Kashmir. After all, India and China too have a long disputed border where normal procedures for travel apply. The proposal for reviving the ferry service between Mumbai and Karachi and re-opening of Khokrapar-Munabao land route should have been given serious consideration by the Pakistani authorities. By suggesting a postponement of this proposal, our govern-

ment from the security point of view because passengers remain on board for nearly 24 hours and if travel documents of some of them are incomplete or some facts are inaccurate for one reason or another that could be corrected or at worst landing or departure in such cases could be denied. India should accept Pakistan's proposal for the Amritsar-Lahore bus service. Many Sikhs would like to visit their holy shrines in Pakistan. Apart from promoting goodwill between the two peoples, Pakistan will benefit from increased religious visits.

The twelve-point offer of India is indicative of its willingness to move to the December 2001 position, and somewhat beyond, to facilitate people-to-people contact. However, it is clear that as of now New Delhi is not prepared to engage in a structured and substan-

on conflict management.

India has strengthened its traditional relationship with Russia which is now its single largest supplier of latest military equipment and technology. Russian interest coincides with India's in fighting Islamic militancy, neutralizing the influence of the Taliban in Afghanistan and cooperating in the fight against secessionist movements. Russia supports India's position on Kashmir.

Despite their mutual reservations and latent rivalry, India and China have normalized their relations, put aside the Tibet, Sikkim and border issues and have agreed to expand trade and cooperate in several areas, including curbing terrorism. This gives both countries the benefit of a peace dividend in both political and economic terms. In the last few years there also appears a subtle shift in

Beijing's position on Kashmir.

Furthermore, strong reservations exist in some powerful Indian circles regarding the advisability of engaging with Pakistan that has a military-dominated regime. Apart from the deep mutual distrust between the BJP and Pakistan's military leadership, the Indian government would not like to take measures that could lead to further strengthening of the grip of the army on the country's governance. In any case, unless there are clear signs of a shift from entrenched positions by both countries on Kashmir, entering into serious negotiations would not be possible.

Time is needed to prepare public opinion on both sides so that the two governments can take initiatives that would lead to a solution acceptable to their people. There is need for creating maximum possible space for people and civil societies of both countries to interact for laying the foundations for peace, goodwill and mutual trust. During the interim phase Pakistan should continue raising the Kashmir issue in international forums both in the context of self-determination and gross human rights violations. It should also take more transparent and effective measures on the LoC so that Kashmiris regain international support for their just cause. The formation of a verification mechanism under the UN or any neutral body could be an important CBM but, regrettably, India has always opposed any meaningful role for the international community in Kashmir, including border monitoring.

Despite India's intransigence over Kashmir, it may be in the larger interest of Pakistan to pursue the path of peace and seek an improvement in relations with India. Not that it would involve any immediate shift in priority budgetary allocations from defence to the social and economic sectors, but at least it will release the nation from being excessively preoccupied with security so that it could focus more on the social sector. Indulging in an arms race with India could have serious long-term consequences for Pakistan.

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tive dialogue with Pakistan. This is in line with its part engagement and part containment policy towards Pakistan that aims at normalizing relations at an incremental pace, provided Islamabad does not push for substantive negotiations on Kashmir in the immediate future.

Meanwhile, India is pressing forward with its policy of an internal solution of Kashmir. Through a combination of military pressure and improved governance, it is aiming at reducing the deep resentment and alienation of the Kashmiris. By arranging a relatively free election last year it has somewhat raised the credibility of the state government and provided a sense of limited participation in governance to the people.

In a parallel development, some prominent Hurriyat leaders have started challenging the logic of linking Jihadi elements with Kashmiris' freedom struggle. This has gained momentum in the aftermath of 9/11. The struggle between the militants and Indian security forces continues to take a heavy toll of Kashmiris with no clear military or political gains.

New Delhi has exploited the divisions among Kashmiris to its advantage by splitting the APHC and some of its militant groups. Having weakened the APHC, Mr. Advani now feels confident about initiating a dialogue with the moderate group led by Mr. Ansari. Surely, no one should have any false hopes that the hawkish Indian deputy prime minister will make any major announcement

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Undoubtedly, the best course would be if India and Pakistan could accept this proposal by merely reiterating that a bus service on this route has been agreed upon without prejudice to their respective positions on the future status of Jammu and Kashmir. After all, India and China too have a long disputed border where normal procedures for travel apply. The proposal for reviving the ferry service between Mumbai and Karachi and reopening of Khokrapar-Munabao land route should have been given serious consideration by the Pakistani authorities. By suggesting a postponement of this proposal our government has shown lack of sensitivity for the people of the south Sindh. There are much greater numbers of people from among divided families, businessmen and tourists who are desirous of travelling to India from Karachi and interior of Sindh than from Punjab. So it is only logical that this proposal be accepted after working out the modalities. To reject it on the basis of an apprehension that India would undermine the loyalty of these people is untenable.

Ferry service between Karachi and Mumbai would greatly facilitate travel between the two countries. It is equally safe

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The international climate is also favourable for India. New Delhi is developing a strong strategic partnership with the US which is apparent from close military-to-military cooperation, sale of military hardware, transfer of dual-use technologies through Israel if not directly, increase in US investment and close cooperation in matters relating to terrorism and protection of sea lanes.

America considers Kashmir to be a disputed territory but it will not get involved in conflict resolution without the approval of both parties. So far its efforts have mainly focused

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We have to take lessons from the "Star Wars" syndrome which brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union. The greatest threat to Pakistan today is internal — rising poverty, increasing population, illiteracy, political instability, and ethnic and sectarian extremism. Our recent change of geostrategic fortunes by becoming a major ally of the US in the war against terror is a short-lived phenomenon and should be used for strengthening ourselves internally rather than using it as a cover for continuing the policies of the past.

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