

Pak. F. 201-India  
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**D**uring the last two weeks, New Delhi has taken a number of measures to further lessen the level of its relations with Islamabad. Though the current status of Pakistan-India relation remains unprecedented, the last lowest downturn in relation was witnessed during the troubled times of Dhaka fall. The Indian power brokers are working on different fronts to deal Islamabad once for all. In the current phase, New Delhi has put increased pressure on Islamabad by not only 'routinely' expelling its embassy officials but also by registering a case against its acting high commissioner Jalil Abbas Jilani under notorious act, Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA).

At the same time, the Indian government has already tightened the circle around the Hurriyat Conference. Most recently, the APHC's New Delhi office has been closed down while its bureau chief jailed. Besides the government has deprived Mirwaiz Umer Farooq of his right to move around by cancelling his passport. If that was not enough, the Vajpayee regime has shown greater persistence in not releasing old and bed-ridden top Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Geelani. The 74 plus veteran leader is suspected of kidney cancer. The 'merciful' Indian establishment, however, succumbed to the massive diplomatic and political pressure and has ordered the release on parole of former Hurriyat Conference Chairman Geelani for the time he would re-

main hospitalised. This 'favour' for the Kashmir leader comes after about nine months of detention. The Indian Deputy Prime Minister, however, made it clear that they would not tolerate those raising Pakistani views in Jammu and Kashmir.

Simultaneously, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his fired-brand deputy LK Advani have consistently been harping against Pakistan even after withdrawing forces from the Pakistan border. For instance during his recent visits to Singapore, Qatar and France, Advani made it a point to criticise Pakistan while his main agenda was to isolate Pakistan in the global political arena and depict the Kashmir struggle as a terrorist movement.

Eminent Indian writer Praful Bidwai very correctly observed in the current issue of *Frontline*: "The reality of terrorism as a growing phenomenon in India (although it can be exaggerated) has influenced some otherwise liberal-minded people to view the BJP's 'anti-terrorist' platform with a degree of sympathy. The BJP has decided to use this perception to its advantage. Thus, party president M Venkaiah Naidu recently summed up the reasons for the BJP's success in Gujarat: "As the election process peaked, national perceptions crystallised on the central issues of terrorism and extremism... Our adversaries were rightly recognised as willing to compromise on national interests... The people had been watching the country being bled by terrorists... The Gujarat elections offered an opportunity to effectively ar-

ticulate their concerns on these larger issues...."

With this statement one can easily understand the anatomy of India's Pakistan policy and its forthcoming implications. Reasons of the Indian inflexible attitude are very simple. Successive development on the International political scene has gone in the Indian favour, especially, the developments following the 9/11 events. They had drastic implications on the Kashmir struggle and its relations with Pakistani establishment. Although the Kashmir conflict made more headlines in the international media, plus references to Kashmir were made by various world leaders after 9/11 events. However, by and large media as well as the world leaders projected Kashmir in wrong and negative perspective.

**W**orld community is already against Muslims viewing Kashmir struggle as an offshoot of global Muslim terrorism. The American and British officials and media have not only been opposed to the armed struggle but have also been helping India diplomatically besides offering technological help to deal with the turmoil. For instance, the United States Ambassador to India Robert D Blackwill recently visited Srinagar and condemned the 'terrorist violence' only to avoid a meeting with the Hurriyat. At the same time, the British ambassador to India held a meeting with the Hurriyat but advised them to join the political mainstream. Most recently, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko supported the In-

dian point of view just a few days ahead of Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf's visit to Moscow. The Russian president himself has expressed similar views in his recent visit to Delhi.

With these developments at the international front going to their advantage, the Indian leaders are confident to control the Kashmir struggle. The Indian decision-makers believe that the world community, especially Washington, not only understands their concerns but also pursues Pakistan to quit its support for Kashmiris.

The international as well as domestic indicators give Vajpayee administration a reason to "continue its current policies regarding Pakistan and Kashmir struggle". The worst form of Indian oppressive measures is gradual cut in the political space available for the APHC and other pro-freedom political and human rights groups which are likely to vanish soon. Moreover, POTA and other black laws will be used against the remaining Hurriyat leaders. As a beginning, Delhi police has already registered a case of money laundering against Abdul Ghani Bhut, the Hurriyat Conference chairman.

To the utter dismay of the Kashmiri people, Mufti Sayeed's entrance to the power corridor has caused more anxiety and frustration against the hopes they had attached with his political resolve. Many observers hoped that Mufti would bring some fresh cure to the wounded Valley. It took him less than a hundred days to bring more despair and disappointment to the poor people. Release of prisoners, repeal of the

POTA and disbanding of task forces as well as the special operations groups have not materialised and there is little hope for the same in future. Moreover, he has also completely failed to prevail upon the BJP's hawks in his desire to initiate unconditional talks with the Kashmiri resistance leadership. Interestingly though, Advani had expressed willingness to start talks with all sections of society including 'separatists' during his recent visit to Jammu but he refused the same to Kashmiris ie APHC when he returned to New Delhi. It goes without saying that the Kashmir independence struggle is passing through a very critical juncture, particularly bad times persist for the political leaders of the state. Like his close ally, America, India is also failing to understand that reduction of space and advantage to political leadership gives a natural reason to militants and extremists which are said to be their real targets. To the disappointment of many Pakistanis as well as Kashmiris, Islamabad's ruling elite is also running out of innovative ideas to frustrate Indian aggressive designs. Tit-for-tat approach is no doubt a natural reaction but it is in the interest of Pakistan to envisage a fresh approach which should not only challenge the India policy designs but also forward the country's own national interest positively as well as independently.

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# Another somersault by Vajpayee

Pak. F. rel India



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**C**ontradictory and irrational statements emanating from New Delhi has become a routine development. Either the ruling group in India genuinely forgets what they have said in the recent past or this is part of a long-term strategy to retain maximum options. Innumerable examples are available and can be easily quoted in order to highlight systematic and sinister pursuits of the ruling extremist group in India. Indeed it would be unfair to lump all BJP stalwarts as irrational but it is equally difficult to refute the charge that a vast majority of the Sangh Parivar are militant and extremist Hindu nationalist. While nationalism can prove to be a motivating and unifying force, the savage nationalism could result in total destruction of the much sought after unity.

Among the latest irrational charges is the recently reported statement of Mr Vajpayee (The News, Feb 15) that "security problems created by Pakistan forced his government to order nuclear tests in 1998". Almost all observers who follow developments in India are well aware of the fact that BJP was determined to make India a nuclear weapon state. Besides, following the nuclear tests of May 11 and 13 (1998) many leaders of the ruling group categorically stated that it was the China threat that contributed more towards the weaponisation than alleged threat from Pakistan. The official Indian view, at the time, was that China had considerably improved its tactical position in Tibet and its modernisation programme had pronounced military overtones with dangerous security implications for India.

Undoubtedly five factors seemed to have contributed significantly towards the Indian decision to acquire nuclear weapons. These are discussed

below in order of their position on the priority ladder. Perhaps the most important factor that motivated India to conduct the necessary tests and equip India with nuclear weapons is "India's own vision of itself". Being a large and strategically placed, India feels that it is destined to play a great role in global politics and in order to play a desired role it believes that it must strengthen itself militarily. It seems to believe that the ability to intimidate others facilitates the desired acquisition of status. Thus it embarked upon a path that leads to a militarily strong India both in terms of conventional as well as nuclear capabilities.

Even before the May tests and declaring itself a nuclear weapon state it had been pressing ahead with sensitive nuclear activities in enrichment, plutonium reprocessing and breeder reactor installations as well as with the ballistic missile developments. The massive allocation of resources to defence with a view to develop its armed forces and acquiring the desired status of a nuclear weapon state fits in the strategy devised to attain its visualised objectives. Besides it was also argued that the acquisition of a nuclear weapons status would facilitate India's entry into the UN Security Council in the capacity of a permanent member. Three reasons were often advanced in connection with the visualised prestige argument; nuclear weapon and missile programme was and still is a vital symbol of nation's technical prowess and scientific competence; ability of India to acquire requisite sophisticated technology despite the concerted preventive efforts of many powerful nations and finally the quest for securing a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Second, equally important justification to acquire nuclear weapons re-

lated around what Indians asserted frequently - "the unfair nature of the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) system". Why should the nuclear haves be allowed to retain the nuclear weapons while these are denied to others? In addition the nuclear haves have not stopped their vertical proliferation. Why don't the nuclear haves give a time frame for overall nuclear disarmament? The poverty of western arguments was almost repeatedly exposed by assertions like "What is good for me is not good for others". Such were the questions that were frequently raised by the Indians.

**P**rime Minister Vajpayee gave his own justification for conducting the tests of May 1998. According to Mr Vajpayee, "India had to conduct these tests to show strength after these countries paid no attention to our pleading that they stop manufacturing nuclear weapons that intimidate others. They continue to build their nuclear arsenal and never listened to us". The world they refer to is the nuclear weapon states. Writing in an international magazine the then Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh stressed that by exploding the bomb "India in fact has moved away from its previous moralistic position to what it now considers a much more realistic stance".

Third argument that was devised to generate support for the desired acquisition of nuclear weapons revolved around what India at the time dubbed as "the deteriorating security situation especially with regards to China". As stated above that the offi-

cial India view was that China has considerably improved its security environment and thus generated a threat to India. To an outsider the argument regarding Chinese threat did not seem convincing. Not only the Indo-Chinese relations had been steadily improving but also India had officially recognised Chinese claim over Tibet in 1988. Linked with the China threat argument was the issue of Chinese supply of sophisticated weapons to Pakistan.

The fourth factor is directly linked with the aspirations of the BJP future agenda. The BJP had given an election promise to acquire nuclear weapons if it comes into power. While explaining to President Clinton why India went nuclear, Prime Minister Vajpayee highlighted BJP's commitment to nuclearise India. Even when the BJP was unable to secure the requisite majority and had to make compromises in order to form the government, it did not concede this commitment. It opted to abandon other commitments like removing the article 370 from the Indian Constitution, a pledge to build a temple on the site of demolished Babri mosque, and abolishing the Muslim personnel laws on marriage, divorce and property etc.

The fifth and the final factor that may have contributed towards the Indian decision to acquire nuclear weapons could be the inability of the Indian government to effectively check the spread of freedom movement in the Indian Held Kashmir (IHK). The Indian officials attempted to and still continue to advance the argument that the freedom movement in IHK is the product of Pakistan's efforts. But no movement can last over a decade without the willing participation of the majority of the local population. Indeed the foreign element was neither the creator nor the

sustainer of the ongoing freedom movement in IHK. If the foreigners were fanning the fire, there must be simmering flames to fan in the first place. Sustaining a freedom movement from outside is perhaps an impossible task if the fatigue syndrome sets in (as is frequently claimed by many Indians and even outsiders) or the people involved are fed up with the movement itself. Freedom movements are not sustained by outsiders, it is always the people involved who actually sustain it. Inability to control the freedom movement often gives birth to arguments that outsiders sustain it.

Indeed a combination of the above factors influenced the Indian decision makers to opt for nuclear tests in May 1998. It is ludicrous to blame Pakistan for making India a nuclear weapon state. On the contrary it would be much more realistic to stress that it was India that not only violated the incumbent international norms and irreparably damaged the ongoing global disarmament efforts but also forced Pakistan to become a nuclear weapon state. A by-product of India's nuclear tests was the internationalisation of the Kashmir dispute. Vajpayee's assertion that it was not BJP's intentions to conduct nuclear tests but because of security situation that was created by the neighbour compelled them to opt for nuclear does not seem logical. If one seriously considers the combination of the above-mentioned factors, one can only conclude that it was a well-planned strategy of BJP. The recent changed interpretation could be a forerunner of another move. India is a slippery customer. It has a well-planned strategy and a series of tactical moves. When one tactical move fails to deliver the expected dividends, it immediately replaces it with another.