

Pak-F. Relations India 26/8/04 To News

Bullying nor bleeding will promote Pak-India peace

The word from both Islamabad and New Delhi is that the dialogue process is moving satisfactorily. That it must continue. After all in the June-August rounds of bilateral talks held to discuss all the eight issues under the composite dialogue, both sides said that the talks were constructive and candid. Alongside these positive expressions exist signs of concern.

One, very few concrete outcomes have flowed from the eight rounds of composite dialogue. There has been an exchange of a draft agreement in June on advance notification of missile testing. This was a follow-up of the MOU signed during the 1999 Pakistan-India summit held in 1999. The Indian draft, given to Pakistan during the June dialogue on Peace and Security, is being examined by Pakistan. Also leniency will be shown by the two sides in issuing visas to certain category of visitors.

However, on other issues ranging from Siachin to the Wullar Barge, from terrorism to trade, from Sir Creek to Kashmir, the two sides, not unexpectedly, have used the first round of composite dialogue to merely repeat their previously held positions. For example Pakistan has sought the end of Indian occupation of the Siachin glacier. India who now illegally occupies the area West of the line that joins NJ 9842 and the KK pass seeks authentication of the current location of the Pakistani and Indian forces. Earlier in 1992 India had demanded this authentication and given a formulation for this. While India has neither ruled out nor agreed to the relocation of its forces, Pakistan is not willing to authenticate the present position of the two forces. Pakistan seeks acceptance of the line by India that has de facto existed and was accepted internationally since the Simla agreement.

Two, India's repeated commitment to dialogue is now being coupled with the complaint against increase in "Pakistan-supported cross-border terrorism." Significantly, on the Independence Day while India's Congress Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called for dialogue with Pakistan with sincerity, the Indian Home Ministry produced a report claiming that Pakistan was involved in "training terrorists" and sending them to Indian occupied Kashmir.

The sentiment, however, on the people's front seeking normalisation and in fact friendship between the two countries was also evident. Reportedly, a large number of people gathered on August 14 and 15 at the Wagah border to jointly celebrate the independence of the two countries.

The dialogue process, while still continuing, seems to be switching tracks. From the steady footed track laid down personally by former Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee and the Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf, it now appears to be veering towards a slippery slope. Resolving disputes may not be easy. After all dispute resolution in only one round of talks on each of the eight issues is not possible. A definitively pessimistic conclusion may, therefore, be premature.

Yet other non-dialogue indicators on confidence building too are not too promising. The bilateral talks for starting the Srinagar-Muzaffabad bus service still remain stalled. Since the



Nasim Zehra

The writer is an Islamabad-based security analyst, is a fellow of the Harvard University Asia Center
nasimzehra@hotmail.com

last Foreign Ministers' SAARC meeting Islamabad in July, where Pakistan sought specific dates from India on the talks, there has been no response from the Indians. Earlier there had been differences over the composition of the delegation for these talks. During informal exchanges India has expressed reservations over Pakistan's decision that State documents and not national passports will be used cross-LOC movement by Kashmiris.

Agreement to reopen their Consulates in Bombay and Karachi has been reached. Yet Pakistan's latest reiteration of its decades old

The dialogue process, while still continuing, seems to be switching tracks. From the steady footed track laid down personally by former Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee and the Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf, it now appears to be veering towards a slippery slope. Resolving disputes may not be easy

request that India give Pakistan the possession of its founder Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's home in Bombay has been met with a clear refusal. The Indian Prime Minister Narisinha Rao in 1996, like many before him, had made a commitment to hand the Jinnah house to Pakistan. India gave it instead to a cultural institution running under its Ministry of External Affairs in 2001. Giving the said property to Pakistan would have been a major confidence-booster. By contrast in 2004 Pakistan's Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain took the initiative of naming a boys public school in Chakwal, the birthplace of Manmohan Singh, after the Indian Prime Minister.

Improvement in Pakistan-India relations remains tied to developments on IHK. Over the last few weeks, significant developments have taken place there. One, the increase in violence in IHK the end of APHC-Delhi talks. Two, the increase in violence in IHK. Three, the concern expressed over the problems caused to citizens by increased deployment in IHK of Indian paramilitary forces by none other than the Jammu and Kashmir chief minister. Four, the European Union's report on the Kashmir dispute which categorically stated that without the participation of India, Pakistan and Kashmir in resolving the Kashmir dispute, a sus-

tainable resolution cannot be found. The report also recommended a bigger role for the United Nations Military Observation Group on India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) monitoring LoC violations. India has repeatedly called for disbanding UNMOGIP.

A corollary to this has been Delhi's increasing accusation against Pakistan supporting cross LoC infiltration. Indian failure to take any tangible steps in reducing massive human rights violations are obviously being linked by the Indians to increase in Pakistani support to so-called "cross-border terrorism." This claim notwithstanding, top Indian officials have conceded over the last one year at least that so-called cross-LoC Pakistani support for cross LoC infiltration has greatly decreased. Yet the Kashmiris in IHK have not experienced any major reduction in State-perpetrated human rights violation.

Against this backdrop, on both sides of the border questions have been raised regarding sincerity in pursuing the dialogue process. There is expectation that tangible progress may take place during the September 4 and 5 talks between the Foreign Secretaries and the Foreign Ministers. For genuine progress political commitment to normalisation and improvement of bilateral relations is required.

Perhaps the one key factor in such an effort is the consensus between the two sides on what would be the basis of resolving existing bilateral disputes as well as for conducting inter-state relations? Will it be some principles, legal framework, international law, UN declaration or bilateral agreements? Will 'muscle play' approach or 'fair play' approach, will force-studded inflexibility or enlightened flexibility work? The answer to such questions needs to be worked out in New Delhi and Islamabad and then at the negotiating table. This is crucial for achieving substantive output from the current dialogue.

Clearly an approach to dispute resolution whether on Wullar Barrage, Siachin, or Sir Creek, which seeks holding on to what is in possession of either side, without reference to any legality or bilateral commitment, is no formula for dispute settlement. It will merely perpetuate the Indo-Pak hostility in the long run, while appearing to reduce it on the short run. The history of Pakistan India relations clearly indicates that internal weakness of either country, the international pressure and often the high cost incurred by either side in upholding their respective positions, has never led to the solution of any bilateral dispute. These factors may have only led to temporary reduction in bilateral tensions.

Given their geography and their socio-economic challenges, India and Pakistan both must have a stake in making the dialogue process generate positive outcomes. Yet none appear so desperate so as to rush towards peace at any cost. Banking therefore on 'peace' flowing either from the 'bully' tactics or from 'bleeding' tactics would be unwise. Peace will flow from only a sincere, principle-based and mutually beneficial approach to conflict resolution.