

Sinha syndrome and Pakistan's response

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Yaswant Sinha's indulgence in strong and at times, crude language needs to be understood in terms of a well-designed stand that the BJP government has come to take on India-Pakistan relations. Increasingly it reflects the feelings and thinking of Lal Krishana Advani, the de-facto prime minister.

It was Mr Advani who forced a change in the Indian cabinet by elevating himself as deputy prime minister and replacing Jaswant Singh by his handpicked Mr Sinha.

While Jaswant had done a yeoman's job in making inroads into the mind of the State Department and lining up Washington, London, Paris, Berlin and Moscow against international terrorism (read Pakistan's support to the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination) long before Nine Eleven, his successor has been commissioned to keep hammering at Pakistan.

One needs to understand Mr Sinha's reaction to the rap on his knuckles when he was told by USA not to fly off the handle and desist from drawing a parallel from the situation in Iraq. This plain talking by the super power did not apparently miff Mr Sinha. His reaction was remarkable if not amusing: If you ask us not to go for a pre-emptive attack on Pakistan, why don't you do it yourself against this terrorist state? And there have been more of such "Sinhalese".

Obviously there is a method in this madness. It is possible that he speaks with conviction and believes in what he says. For a peep into his mind let us see what he said at the 29th convocation of the (Indian) Punjab University, last month:

1. Islamabad could never have parity with New Delhi as far as "locus standi" on Kashmir was concerned since Pakistan was the aggressor..... Faced with an act of such blatant aggression, it was India which decided in January 1948 to take the matter to the

United Nations... A three-steps formula — a cease-fire, a truce agreement, and plebiscite — had been agreed to be implemented by both countries in sequential order. India had made it clear that Pakistan was also required to withdraw its troops and try to secure the withdrawal of tribesmen and Pakistani nationals from J&K.

2. Till today, neither the conditions nor the assurances have been fulfilled by Pakistan.... Further, instead of withdrawing Pakistani troops and other nationals from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as called for by these resolutions, Pakistan introduced huge quantities of military equipment and armed forces into PoK....

3. Shimla Accord provides the "framework for the India-Pakistan relationship today and supersedes previous arrangements. And, should agreements as sacrosanct as the Shimla Accord and the Lahore Declaration come under challenge, then all treaties between the two countries will automatically also come under question.

4. Pakistan's championing the cause of self-determination was nothing but a crude attempt to bolster its agenda of territorial aggrandizement through terrorism against India.

5. Pakistan's effort is to unilaterally alter the status quo on the ground and try to undermine India's secular fabric.

6. India has always been willing to discuss the issue of J&K with Pakistan. But, Pakistan seeks parity with India in term of *locus standi* on Kashmir. Pakistan is in illegal occupation of a part of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

7. Unfortunately, the complete domination of Pakistan's politics and economy by the military prevents choice of policies that would respond to popular needs and aspirations. If only Pakistan would be willing to shed hostility and stop using terrorism as an instrument of national policy, there can still be a new dawn in our relationship.

One should give even the devil, his due. We should not hesitate to register, analyse and appreciate the Indian point of view. One day hopefully, the two countries will sit together and sort

things out, as the use of force by the two nuclear powers is not a practical proposition. In fact, in the thesis built by Sinha in his convocation address, he does not rule out the need for talks on Kashmir in the light of the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration.

Sheikh Rashid's tit-for-tat counter statements apart, let us see how the world and in particular the USA views this on-going confrontation. Appearing before a House of Representative Committee, Assistant Secretary of the State for South Asia, Ms Rocca recently said:

1. To end this conflict continued de-escalatory efforts, increased communication within Kashmir and a peace process between India and Pakistan are required.... Ending infiltration into Kashmir remains a key goal. Washington will continue to hold Pakistan's feet to the fire on infiltration.

2. Continued US. attention and creative diplomacy will be essential to help move these two nations away from confrontation and towards dialogue and resolution.

3. The US and India have overlapping vital national interests — promoting peace and stability in South Asia, combating international terrorism and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We seek a vital and comprehensive partnership with India that removes as many Cold War and other barriers between us as possible.

Perhaps the most significant development to-date is the Anglo-American joint statement signed by Powell and Straw with the full backing of Bush and Blair personally handed over to the Indian and Pakistani foreign ministers by the American ambassadors in New Delhi and Islamabad. In clear-cut terms it asked: (i) Pakistan to fulfil its commitments to stop infiltration across LoC and do its utmost to discourage any acts of violence by militants in Kashmir; (ii) the two countries to begin a renewed engagement (US and UK will help them start a peace process); (iii) India and Pakistan to

agree to "an immediate cease-fire".

While India continues with his threatening stance — the latest salvo coming from George Fernandes — what must Pakistan do?

Repetitive reactive statements are not good enough. I propose the following:

1. With the world lined up on the Indian side (because of our inadequate diplomacy during the last decade or so), Pakistan has to take US and other major powers into confidence about the exact nature and extent of Pakistan's support to the Kashmiri's struggle for self-determination and the utmost it can do to address the international demand. Presently not only is Pakistan's credibility suffering, our less than convincing routine statements only add grist to the Indian mill.

2. India cannot wriggle out of the inevitable resort to opening a dialogue on the subject. Pakistan has to press into service all its diplomatic clout and skills, to secure a pro-active initiative on the part of Washington in the matter. Not enough is being done and there is very little of public diplomacy — use of media, think-tanks, lobbies and civil society organisations — being deployed to astutely supplement formal diplomatic efforts.

3. Taking a leaf from the way India dynamically and speedily projects every terrorist incident, eliciting high-level international attention and response, Pakistan too must intelligently project and persist with the exposure of brutal state-terrorism in Kashmir. This crucial part of the Kashmir picture has become increasingly obscured and almost forgotten because of Indian's artful and adroit handling of the terrorist card as against our poor record in spotlighting the barbaric treatment of the Kashmiris by hundreds of thousands of Indian troops let loose in the "occupied state". Hopefully Messrs Jamali and Kasuri will heed these words.

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After the killing of 24 Kashmiri Hindus (Pundits) in Nandi Marg village of Pulwama district about 50 km south of Srinagar in Indian-held Kashmir, India has as usual blamed Pakistan for this inhuman act. The Government of Pakistan has strongly condemned the massacre and said "the blatant act of terrorism, reportedly carried out by persons wearing Indian Army uniforms, is reprehensible."

India has in the meantime moved some of her Air Force fighter and bomber squadrons to forward bases and is planning to induct more troops into Indian-held Kashmir. It may be recalled that in the previous military confrontation, although the troops from the international border and the working boundary were pulled back by India, but the extra troops and headquarters inducted into Kashmir were not.

It is also reported that India had secretly informed some western nations including the United States that after the killing of Pundits in Indian-held Kashmir it is clear that Pakistan has not stopped "cross-border" terrorism, as a consequence India reserves the right to take appropriate action. It is therefore evident that India is planning to take "some military action" across the Line of Con-

India's pre-emptive ambitions

Lt. Gen. (Retd) Sardar F. S. Lodi

trol in Kashmir, taking advantage of the fact that the US attention was focused on the battle in Iraq.

The Indian Prime Minister Mr AB Vajpayee convened an emergency meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security. Senior Army and Air Force Staff also attended. Mr Vajpayee said in the meeting that there needed to be a "permanent solution" to combat terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Since 9/11 India has mounted a well-orchestrated campaign to malign Pakistan to declare it a terrorist sponsoring state. Fortunately US and other European countries have seen through the Indian plan and refused to go along. The latest killing is a repeat performance of the Chattisingpura massacre where at least 36 Sikhs were killed on the outskirts of Srinagar in Indian-held Kashmir.

The Indian Army had carried out the cold-blooded killing of Sikh civilians as their camp was located next door, it was proved later. This was done on the eve of President Clinton's

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visit to India to malign Pakistan in the US perception.

Since the Gulf war India has been emboldened and is talking of a pre-emptive strike of her own. The Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha said during an interview to Agence France Presse "India will do whatever it takes to fight Pakistan-sponsored 'terrorism' in Kashmir including possible pre-emptive operations." He went on to say that international opinion regarding India's position on disputed Kashmir had been boosted by the precedent set by the United States-led military intervention in Iraq. "We derive some satisfaction, because I

think all these people in the international community realise that India has a much better case to go for pre-emptive action against Pakistan than the United States has in Iraq," he said.

The Indian BJP-led politicians seem to be actively considering the option of a pre-emptive strike for political reasons, but this may not be a consensus opinion in the armed forces. Even when India was planning a military operation against Azad Kashmir during the military confrontation there were officers who opposed the move. It was their contention that an Indian Commando Brigade could attack across the Line of Control in Kashmir but it would be extremely difficult to extricate it owing to terrain problems and immediate counter moves expected from Pakistani troops in the area. Saner counsels prevailed at the time and the planned offensive was aborted.

Owing to the nuclear environment India wishes to restrict her military action to Kashmir under the mis-

taken belief that an attack against Azad Kashmir may not elicit a non-conventional response. Pakistan has given a timely warning to India about any misadventure. Any misadventure by India will be met with full force," the Pakistani Foreign Minister said.

The US government found it necessary to immediately caution India. The State Department spokesperson said that India must not use the US-led pre-emptive war against Iraq as a pretext for an attack on Pakistan. "Any attempts to draw parallels between the Iraq and Kashmir situations are wrong," she said and added: "The circumstances that made coalition military action necessary in Iraq do not apply in the subcontinent and should not be considered a precedent."

The Indian leaders fail to appreciate that the road to war in a nuclear South Asia is no more an option. The answer to the outstanding problems between the two countries is not a pre-emptive military strike but a peaceful dialogue between the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan. It is only at the conference table that differences can be thrashed out and some middle ground discovered. This could later be built upon in the spirit of give and take.