

The third option is the way ahead

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his problem in even another 50 or 100 years. It will lead to more misery and hardship.

The Indians are talking about cross-border terrorism. I think, as a gesture, because there is now no confrontation between the armed forces of India and Pakistan, we should seriously address this problem, and invite India that they can have observers if they like, and make an effort to satisfy the international community that nobody is going across the LoC anymore.

Q: Do you think the people of two countries will agree to such a solution?

A: I think they will, if the leadership is bold enough to put it to them. I think in the international field it is an opportunity that we will never have in decades. If Congress comes to power in India, it will not be strong enough to take this position. The situation is unique, and we should take advantage of it.

Q: Should it be done bilaterally or through the United Nations?

A: I don't think any of them will propose this, but I think Kashmiris want this. It is going to lead to their prosperity, and if they agree to this, I think this is the answer. I see no other answer. Otherwise, we will go on arguing over it for another three, four generations and in the meanwhile destroy ourselves. We are both nuclear powers now — which is highly dangerous — and we should not think of confrontation.

Q: At least one Kashmiri group, the JKLF, has proposed that Kashmir be placed under UN control for five or

ten years after which Kashmiris should be given the choice to join either India or Pakistan, or remain independent. Do you agree to this?

A: I don't think they want to join India or Pakistan, very frankly. What are we going to offer them. What have we done in the last 55 years while yearning for them to join us. I

think of it?

A: The only superpower now is the United States. They don't need Kashmir as a base. Base for what? To go where? I don't share these fears. American bombers can easily refuel in the air, so a ground base is not that important to them.

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'I think General Musharraf can take the initiative. He can do it. Nobody else can do it. People want votes, they do not have the courage to do this. He can do it and he will carry the army and the nation with him if he is bold enough to tell them the truth. If Kashmir becomes one country with a Muslim majority, but Hindus and Sikhs also living there in peace, we will have peace with India.'



think they want to be free, and this will lead to prosperity. It will lead to good relations between India and Pakistan, and I think it will change the whole complexion of the situation in South Asia.

Q: There have been fears expressed in the past that an independent Kashmir could become a military base of any superpower. What do you

bold enough to carry the people with him on this issue. Politicians should stop bickering on small matters. We lost half the country on just academic discussions. I think it's time we came to our senses, and think about it seriously.

If you think India will take Kashmir and we will sit back, that is not possible. If you think

we will take Kashmir by fighting, that is just not possible. Forget the United Nations. Let India send its observers on the issue of cross-border infiltration. There is no need of being dogmatic and rigid about it.

Q: Do you plan to discuss this idea with other political parties?

A: No, I won't. I have seen political parties for 35 years, they (politicians) think only about themselves. They come first, their party comes next, and the country gets the last place. I don't expect any initiative from anybody.

They say we will conquer Kashmir, we will liberate Kashmir, we will do this, and fly our flag on the Red Fort. There is no use talking to such people.

I think General Musharraf could take the initiative. He can do it. Nobody else can do it. People want votes, they do not have the courage to do this. He can do it and he will carry the army and the nation with him if he is bold enough to tell them the truth. If Kashmir becomes one country with a Muslim majority, but Hindus and Sikhs also living there in peace, we will have peace with India.

Q: Will the ruling Q-League agree to this?

A: They will do what General Musharraf says.

Q: Will the two sides forget hostility of the past?

A: Yes. We must confess we made a lot of mistakes. The first mistake was made when Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel suggested that Pakistan take Kashmir and India get the state of Hyderabad, and Pakistani leaders turned it down. It is on record. Ultimately, we lost both. Then Sheikh Abdullah wanted to meet the Quaid-i-Azam before Partition, but it did not materialize. When Kashmir had still not acceded to India, we started an operation there. Let us forget about the past. Let us start afresh. Let us retrieve the situation.

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