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A suspicion arises, could the whole objective of the Indian diplomatic overdrive be only to re-open overflights? The Indians had themselves suspended overflights, and have been repenting ever since. Air India's westward operations were seriously disrupted. SARS has caused all eastward Air India flights to cease, and a few more weeks without Pakistani overflight permission will bankrupt it. Indians have a habit of camouflaging faux pas by grand gestures.

as part of a greater gameplan to further discomfit Pakistan. When and where will the next "designer terrorist" incident meant to defame Pakistan happen?

Pakistanis are usually more than generous in our responses, we get carried away and go overboard without understanding "realpolitik" as practiced by India. Can one gloss over the "ad nauseam" Indian statements that Pakistan must stop "cross border terrorism"? India seems to want us to confess publicly (for a world audience) that the Kashmir freedom struggle is actually terrorism against Indian sovereignty and Pakistan is guilty of fomenting terrorism, the Indians would love to bask in the same "anti-terrorist" coalition as the US.

The revolt within Kashmir is a freedom struggle far removed from terrorism. For its part, Pakistan has repeatedly suggested neutral observers along the LoC to monitor whether the alleged infiltration is actually happening and the quantum thereof. Within Pakistan we have cracked down on all terrorist elements. The indigenous freedom movement within Kashmir has a life of its own built on the atrocities committed by Indian occupying forces, the freedom struggle will keep on getting fresh recruits, and one daresay some armed freedom fighters will also keep crossing over from Azad Kashmir, even if there is nothing official about it. The media vitriol of Indian politicians, particularly of the BJP/VHP/RSS kind, is to be seen and heard to be believed.

On BBC's 'Question Time' a member of Parliament wanted to bomb Pakistan out of existence. Shocked at his statement, the compere tried to get

him to tone down his outburst but the elected representative went on to express his burning desire to become a suicide bomber and kill Pakistanis! The audience clapped and roared their approval for this 'popular' Indian "final solution" for Pakistan. And we thought our 'Jehadis' had the corner on espousing violence!

We must also look within our own ranks for those who seek to appease their real masters by undercutting Pakistan's stated position that Kashmir is the root cause of all our mutual problems. A very senior official publicly stated recently, albeit at a private function in Karachi, that we should 'forget' Kashmir. This was shocking. A more loyal-than-the-king businessman jumped onto the bandwagon to please the senior official, and said he did not want to "die for Kashmir".

When reminded that the sensitivity of his appointment did not behove his statement countering Pakistan's justified stance, the senior official backtracked somewhat, to quote, "put Kashmir on the backburner because rapprochement with India would bring tremendous economic benefits to the whole Subcontinent."

Even a child can figure that one out, but let this official figure out the human cost to the hapless Kashmiris, 70,000 of whom have died in only the last decade. Across the LoC, the Indians deliberately target schools (and schoolchildren) with their artillery fire. Can Pakistanis ever target civilians on the Indian-occupied side?

Pakistan's misfortune is to have such people placed at critical posts, not only privy to all State secrets but in constant rapport with foreign officials who can be forgiven for reporting back to their governments that at the highest level our government has privately decided to forget Kashmir! Such sweeping, thoughtless remarks can only be given by persons who have no deep connections to the soil.

Having benefited most from being Pakistanis, they have consigned to contempt the people of Kashmir and the atrocities being visited upon them. Do they also forget (or care for that matter) what the rivers passing through Kashmir mean to the people of Pakistan, particularly Sindh? While the NWFP and the Punjab can survive without Kashmir because of the rivers available to them, if the Indians interdict the rivers passing through Indian-occupied Kashmir (as they are doing through the Wullar Dam), Sindh will become a gigantic Mohenjodaro. Anyone in a crucial appointment who cannot accept what Kashmir means to Pakistan may kindly go off immediately to anywhere he wants.

Normal relations with India should always be the utmost priority for Pakistan. Anything that force-multiplies the normalisation process must be supported by all sane elements of society. It should also be taken for granted that both within Pakistan and India there will be a vocal lot of extremists who would kill and maim rather than kiss and make up. The President's 'denuclearisation of South Asia' proposal must be pursued, so as to let the world know who really craves for nuclear weapons and why! While we will have to pay a price for normalising relations, it cannot be at the cost of our self-respect as a country subject to Indian hegemony, and subject to the appearance of the moon whatever accusation or threats the Indians choose to hurl at us.

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BY I

Having spent 18 months on the knife-edge of a nuclear war, the result of a unilateral decision by India, for reasons that are still mindboggling, to put almost its entire armed forces on our doorstep, and only a week or so after Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha was advocating a pre-emptive strike against Pakistan — la Iraq, Atal



Behari Vajpayee offered unconditional talks on all issues including Jammu and Kashmir. There is a "blow-hot blow-cold" situation here. Since Sinha's tone and tenor remains aggressively anti-Pakistan despite the peace moves, one is rather skeptical about the very sudden change of heart.

Minding his political back by neither accepting Jamali's spontaneous invitation or rejecting it, the Indian PM reciprocated Jamali's further initiatives by announcing resumption of full diplomatic relations (by appointment of a permanent High Commissioner) and allowing of overflights. An Indian Foreign Office spokesman went to great lengths to emphasise that "overflights" was a part and parcel of any air transit agreement.

A suspicion therefore arises, could the whole objective of the Indian diplomatic overdrive be only to re-open overflights? The Indians had themselves suspended overflights in the first place, and have been economically repenting ever since. The westward operations of Air India were seriously disrupted, devastating the Indian aviation industry. SARS has caused all Air India flights to the East to now cease, and a few more weeks without overflights permission from Pakistan would bankrupt the prime Indian air carrier. Indians have a habit of camouflaging their faux pas by grand gestures. Can anyone forget their "generosity" last year in recalling the Indian Navy as a "goodwill measure" from the Indian Ocean where it was positioned to blockade Karachi in case of war? This had been coupled with loud talk of "quarantining" Pakistan during peace, that is, of not allowing any sea traffic to and from our ports.

The badly maintained Indian Navy took a massive beating during the storm-ridden Arabian Sea's summer months. It takes no genius to work out why the Indians needed to get their seasick sailors (and ships) to the relative safety and comfort of their home ports. That is why the focus on overflights in supercession to everything else among confidence-building measures is rather suspicious. If the Indians are serious, call their bluff by requesting Vajpayee's presence at an overdue SAARC Summit in Islamabad.

Preparing for Agra, President Musharraf moderated a series of meaningful discussions among a cross-section of intellectuals, academics, politicians, and media leaders, where a mandate was formed with genuine enthusiasm among all sections of Pakistanis for a negotiated and honourable peace with India with Kashmir's settlement as the core issue. It is no use speculating why Vajpayee was forced to backtrack by Advani and company from the agreed draft after it had gone for final typing. We must shrug off that frustration and pick up from where we left off at Agra. Somehow one cannot escape the feeling that Vajpayee's peace-loving reputation is being used by the hardliners led by Advani

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