

# All quiet on the eastern front?

By Anwer Mooraj

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**PRIME MINISTER**  
Jamali has at last something to smile about. The King's party, after much humming and hawing, appears to be finally arriving at some sort of understanding with the opposition on the LFO, and the country has emerged relatively unscathed from the Iraq war. And then there was the phone call, to Mr Vajpayee, which couldn't have come at a better time.

Mr Jamali is once again his old buoyant self, confident and self-assured, trying to demonstrate with relish that happy days are just around the corner. All the nation has to do is be patient. Publicly the gentlemen in the Pakistan foreign office are equally exuberant and are literally gushing with enthusiasm. But privately, they must be feeling that the euphoria is a little premature, and all is not quiet on the eastern front.

They have seen all the signs before: the exchange of olive branches, the editorial build-up, the swapping of tributes by cricketers, the visits of the peace committees, the exhortations of eternal friendship by statesmen sodden with emotion, and then the sudden denouement, followed by an anxious lull and the renewal of hostilities.

However, the point is, Mr Vajpayee has taken the plunge, in spite of threats from Hindu extremists who want no truck with Pakistan. In a somewhat positive but guarded statement he informed the members of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha that India and Pakistan would once again be on track, so far as diplomatic relations and over-flying rights are concerned. He even added that this time the dialogue would be "decisive and conclusive". And, as if to placate the conscience of the anti-military lobby in his country, remarked to his aide after the session that it was much easier to negotiate with Pakistan, now that the country is once again a democracy!

This, at least, is the first step in what analysts believe might result in normalization of relations between two adversaries who have fought three wars and whose people are still trapped in the ineluctable web of suspicion, hatred and bitter memories. But it is not likely to happen overnight. In India the perception is that there is every likeli-

What did transpire in the discussions, however, was the admission by one of the participants in the talk show that there were also genuine, indigenous freedom fighters in Kashmir, who were responsible for the insurrection in the valley. This is something that had never been publicly admitted before, at least on television.

The BJP representative, on the other hand, while enthusiastically defending Mr Vajpayee's endeavours to break the ice, vehemently denied that the Americans were involved in any way whatsoever in bringing about a rapprochement. "India is a big country and nobody can push us around," he said with aplomb. He had obviously forgotten the Blackwill episode which bears mention.

Mr Blackwill, a former US ambassador to India, had increasingly come to be identified with that country's stand on South Asian politics, and his constant harping on "cross border terrorism" was certainly strengthening Indian intransigence. His sudden recall from Delhi is being interpreted in Pakistan as America's attempt to remove all unnecessary irritants which were vitiating the political atmosphere between the two countries, so that the way could be paved for future talks.

The involvement of the United States in South Asia covered three timeframes. The first phase, which spread over the whole of the 1990s, began with the Kashmir uprising of 1989. The United States chose to ignore the issue and treated it as a minor aberration. But the superpower did take some precautionary steps and sent the Gates mission to Islamabad to warn President Ishaq Khan against military adventurism along the Line of Control.

The second phase, which coincided with the nuclear tests of 1998, could best be described as the containment phase. The 'Islamic terrorist' had surfaced in the media and there were widespread fears in the West of the creation of an 'Islamic bomb'. The issue of Kashmir was unfortunate, but it had to be contained. The important thing, however, was that much to the chagrin of the Indian foreign office, Washington had come to

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result in normalization of relations between two adversaries who have fought three wars and whose people are still trapped in the ineluctable web of suspicion, hatred and bitter memories. But it is not likely to happen overnight. In India the perception is that there is every likelihood that the talks will succeed, because the military, which one Indian columnist charmingly referred to as the third chamber of the Pakistan parliament, is supporting the move. They are confident that nothing will go wrong.

The general view in both countries, however, is that the move was not altogether unexpected. The Indian premier had already dropped a hint on April 18 when, heavily guarded by a special unit of commandos, he addressed a public rally in strife-torn Srinagar. In a speech, primarily designed to propitiate an audience that had developed elevated expectations, he said that his country was prepared to discuss all outstanding problems with Pakistan — including Kashmir. "Guns," said the premier of the world's largest democracy, "cannot solve any problems. Only brotherhood is the answer." It has apparently taken the Indian leadership more than 55 years to arrive at this conclusion.

There were a few other hints that a possible dialogue might take place. These had been dropped by some American statesmen who, after Iraq, have developed a robust estimation of their ability to solve problems, any problem, anywhere in the world. Mr Colin Powell, who somehow manages to add a certain elegiac depth to his pronouncements, and comes across to people in this part of the world as the moderating presence in the current hawkish American administration, had hinted that there would soon be "a stirring in the political wind" in south Asia which would benefit both countries.

This probably led to the belief which has gained currency on both sides of the divide.

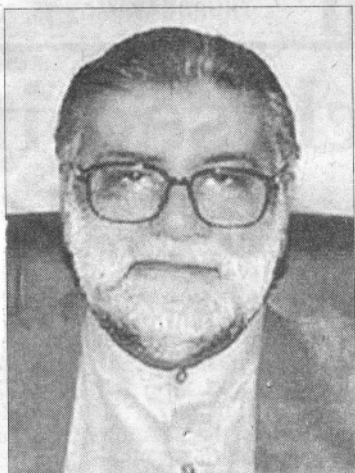
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acknowledge that a problem did exist, and that Jammu and Kashmir was a disputed territory.

The end of the decade saw the Vajpayee-Nawaz Sharif summit, Kargil and the Zinni-Lampher mission to persuade Pakistan to withdraw from the frozen wastes of Kargil. The decade also saw the US rebuke of India for committing human rights violations in Kashmir.

at the time that they were witnessing a tilt in policy. At a seminar speakers fondly recalled a famous telephone call between an angry President Nixon and President Brezhnev in the summer of 1971 when the CIA had informed Nixon that Gandhi had plans to invade the western wing of the country well.

In the third and fourth decades the US is apparently looking for a solution to the stalemate. Who is the realist behind the scenes? The heart on the parade of leadership, isn't it? The point is, a solution has been made, and the future is looking forward.



Prime Minister Jamali



Prime Minister Vajpayee

# Kashmir and the Elysee Experience

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BY NAEEM SARFRAZ

As hopes rise for a Kashmir solution, a look at the Elysee experience may help bring into focus how conflict resolution can actually succeed.

For the better part of a thousand years, states of Western Europe had been perpetually at war, interspersed with periods of uneasy peace. Germany and France were the principal protagonists. In the First World War, there was unprecedented death and destruction. Chemical weapons were first used on the battlefield, to devastating effect.

In single battles casualties ran into the hundreds of thousands, figures which could never have been visualized in the past. But no lessons were learnt from the horrors of that terrible war. Soon after the War ended, the Germans began re-arming to avenge the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty, while the French started work on the defensive Maginot Line. The inevitable occurred. They went to war once again, leading to the most terrible of conflicts in history, the Second World War, in which millions upon millions perished and use of weapons of mass destruction escalated from chemical warfare to atomic bombs.

After the Second World War, people of both the countries vowed never to let the horrors of the past be repeated. It was civil society which took the first bold initiatives, not governments. Journalists from the Aachen area of Germany broke the ice by making goodwill visits to France, from where reciprocal visits were made by the French. Prominent names included Hans Hahn and Leo Vallot from Germany and the famous owner of Pommery champagne, Count Guy de Nat from France. Such citizens initiatives grew. These tiny first steps led to exchanges of youth, of sportsmen, of cultural groups and of vacationing families.

led to scores of initiatives to facilitate movement of people across borders. Other countries of Western Europe, seeing the phenomenal success of this initiative, decided to join in resulting in the European Union of today. For what is the European Union but a group of states who retain their sovereignty, their culture and their languages, while permitting their citizens to move freely across borders, to live where they wish, to work where they wish and to conduct their business unfettered throughout the region.

Visa requirements slowly eased as did customs duties for cross-border trade. So did restrictions on working anywhere and hiring anyone disappear. Even the nuisance of multiple currencies was removed by the successful introduction of the Euro. A significant result of this freedom of movement is the economic prosperity that inevitably followed. But the far more important achievement is that Western Europe has seen almost 60 years without any war, perhaps the longest such period of peace in its history. With another 10 countries joining the present 15 members, the expanded European Union will continue to be a zone of peace as far into the future as one can see. And the added spin off has been the disappearance of all territorial disputes like Alsace-Lorraine.

What is the relevance of the Elysee experience to Kashmir? In the same period that Western Europe experienced peace and growing prosperity, India and Pakistan have faltered badly. They have gone to war several times. They now stand on the threshold of a nuclear conflagration with all its potential damage not only to the sub-continent but also to the entire Northern hemisphere including Europe, Japan and the US.

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Realisation dawned upon them that their neighbours were not the terrible monsters they were made out to be but were perfectly normal human beings. Leaders began championing the cause of burying the past and looking to a future of lasting peace and prosperity. The stage was now set for these aspirations of the people to be given concrete form. But aspirations of people are not enough. They can be converted to reality only in a democracy, where state policy reflects the will of the people.

More significantly democracy is also a prerequisite for lasting peace, there being few examples of two democracies going to war against each other. War invariably involves one or more dictatorship. Fortunately by then fully functioning liberal democracies existed in both countries. It was also fortunate that they were led by two very great men - Chancellor Adenauer and President de Gaulle. These towering and fearless men who had both fought in the War, pledged to fulfil the aspirations of their people.

It was no easy task. These were incredibly difficult times for both countries. Germany was split in two, with its Eastern half under repressive Communist rule. Its proud capital Berlin, completely surrounded by Communists, remained divided and occupied by the four victors of the War. France's situation was no less difficult.

The trauma of the Algerian independence movement had left a deep scar on French society. And then there was the debacle of the Suez Canal war when, incidentally, the US vetoed the French position in the UN Security Council. All territorial disputes like Alsace-Lorraine also remained unresolved. Despite such serious impediments these two great leaders boldly went forward on the path sought by their people, to move freely across the border. The result was Elysee Treaty, signed forty years back in January 1963.

What is so special about the Elysee Treaty? It did not resolve the territorial dispute over Alsace-Lorraine. Nor did it address the usual issues of armament or trade or commerce. It simply facilitated free movement of people across the border between Germany and France. To ensure that this freedom would be expanded, the treaty required foreign ministry officials to meet every month; for youth ministers and military officials to meet every two months; for foreign ministers to meet every three months; and for heads of state to meet every six months.

These incredibly frequent and regular contacts at various levels

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In Kashmir all known options for a solution have been tried and have failed. Military solutions including Operation Gibraltar, 1965 and 1971 wars, Siachen attack and Kargil operation have all failed. Both countries now know that there can be no military solution. The militant uprising of the oppressed people of Kashmir over the last ten years has also failed to solve the problems despite the loss of 70,000 lives. The much heralded UN Security Council Resolution for a plebiscite failed decades back, when Admiral Chester Nimitz was appointed by the UN to implement the resolution. Seeking a plebiscite now after fifty years is an exercise in futility. All national and international efforts having failed it is no longer a serious option.

International intervention like at Tashkent has also failed. As have other initiatives of American and European leaders. And the scores of meetings of heads of governments of India and Pakistan over the last fifty years, culminating in the Agra Summit, have also not led to a solution. The current revival of a desire to find a solution - be it making the Line of Control the international boundary; or of some parts being retained by India others by Pakistan and independence for the rest - are all non-starters, simply because they are based on completely ignoring the wishes of the Kashmiri people and imposing decisions upon them which leave their land, their homes and their families divided.

That is where the Elysee experience comes in. It is the only tried and tested method of conflict resolution, with results which are substantial, long term and irreversible. It is also the only alternative that has been not tried in the context of India and Pakistan, all others having failed. What it involves is the two governments removing restriction on people travelling across their border.

Opening the borders to sportsmen, students, artists, cultural troupes, families, holiday makers, journalists, thinkers and intellectuals is the only way in which the bitterness and hatred of the past can be overcome, never mind the over-used national security concerns. Gradually, as was the case with Germany and France, understanding grows and disputes disappear. Trying to find solutions to problems like Alsace-Lorraine and Kashmir become irrelevant, simply because the problems themselves no longer exist once people are free to move and work and live any where. The Elysee Treaty cut the Gordian knot of centuries of bitterness and hatred in Europe. Its lessons may well offer a viable alternative for a lasting peace in this unfortunate sub-continent.