

Peace prospects

BY DR NOOR UL HAQ

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Kashmir and infiltration from the side of Pakistani held Azad Kashmir into the Indian held Kashmir. Pakistan denies the allegation and has time and again suggested that an impartial agency e.g. United Nations be allowed to monitor the LoC to ascertain facts instead of casting aspersions. India rejects the proposal.

It has been reported that the Group of Eight (G-8) nations and the North Atlantic Organization (NATO) are seriously considering deployment of an international helicopter force to check alleged infiltration on the LoC dividing India and Pakistan. It is believed that Jack Straw British Foreign Secretary is supporting the proposal being referred to as "Straw Formula". It is also reported that G-8 nations, the European Union and the NATO are willing to provide "helicopters, other logistics and technical support" for the proposed force without getting themselves entangled in the Kashmir dispute. If both Pakistan and India accept this proposal, the ambiguity will be removed and truth will be known to the whole world. This will be a positive development leading to the promotion of peace in the region. Now it appears that there is a realization in both India and Pakistan that there is no alternative to peace. Two years after the Agra summit (July 15-16, 2001) a number of steps have been taken by both Pakistan and India to improve their strained relations, such as withdrawal of forces from international borders, exchange of High Commissioners, restarting of bus service and likelihood of resumption of train service and air link. On July 28, 2003, 269 Indian fishermen and their 25 boats were released by Pakistan. Earlier a Pakistani girl Noor Fatima was treated at Bangalore where she was also provided financial help. Although persons like Pravin Tagodia, the International General Secretary of VHP, an ally of the ruling BJP, criticized the Chief Minister SM Krishna for the financial help, the humanitarian action, by and large, is being perceived as a goodwill gesture both in India and Pakistan.

There has been an exchange visit of Parliamentarians. There is some change in the rhetoric against each other. For instance, it is encouraging to note that Indian Foreign Minister Mr Yashwant Sinha while referring to militant activities against Indian Army in Jammu and Kashmir did not seek to sabotage the improving climate for peace process. Earlier, a delegation of religious leaders headed by Maulana Fazlur Rehman who is the General Secretary of Muttehid Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a coalition of religious parties, which has about 15 percent seats in the National Assembly visited India. Senator Mushahid Hussain referring to Maulana Fazlur Rahman's visit observed that it conveys an "important message" to the world that "today there is no constituency in Pakistan that

favours confrontation with India." The Army, the political parties and even the conservative MMA want peace with India. Earlier on March 1, 2003 Qazi Hussain Ahmed, Chief of Jamaat-e-Islami, a component of MMA, had stated his preference for normalization of relations with India rather than "submitting to the dictates of the US." Pakistan is keen for a bilateral dialogue with India but India is so far hesitant. On return to Pakistan Fazlur Rahman stated that Indians are reviewing past mistakes that had led to the derailment of the talks between India and Pakistan. He also stated that Vajpayee would attend the SAARC summit in January next in Islamabad. This means that the next summit could not be held till then. There are crucial elections in five states such as Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chateesgarh and Manipur in November next and there will be general elections for the Indian parliament next year. Thus while there is electioneering in India there may or may not be a conducive atmosphere for a summit. The encouraging thing is that unlike the state of Gujarat elections in December 2002, anti-Pakistan rhetoric did not pay dividend in Himachal Pradesh elections this year. It seems that the forthcoming elections may not be fought on anti-Pakistan stance, but on issues like economic development, good governance, etc. The present government of India will like a settlement on its own terms so that it could help them in the elections. The prospects of peace could be bright only if the two countries discard rigidity and show greater understanding and flexibility in their respective attitude. The process could be facilitated by a serious change in thinking for resolution of disputes and facilitation if not mediation by friendly countries. Asia Times of 15 August has brought out that the "hesitant movements by New Delhi and Islamabad to resolve the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) dispute are making Washington decidedly jittery". The paper has quoted Secretary of State Collin Powell as saying that Kashmir is on the "International agenda. Everybody is focused on it". Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Adviser told media earlier on 27 June that Bush is committed "to alleviating - and, where possible, ending - destructive regional conflicts, from the Middle East, to Kashmir, to the Congo and beyond." The 2001 military standoff has brought out that nuclear capability and international pressure would not let the two countries involve themselves in fatal disaster. The alternative is to solve mutual disputes through peaceful means and not military force. The dictum of Prussian General and theorist on land warfare Clausewitz that "war is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse" is no longer operative if the confronting nations happen to be nuclear states.

Much time has been lost and South Asia needs change in its thinking. First, they should abandon the politics of hatred, mutual threats and extremism. They should not blame each other for whatever happens in their respective countries without a proper and transparent enquiry. Second, it would be better if India being the bigger country does not traverse the path of an imperialist power, sheds its superiority complex and deals with its neighbours on an equal footing. In fact, India should be generous in dealing with them. A just and considerate attitude is bound to evince a reciprocal response. The brotherly relations inter se are essential in the interest of peace, progress and prosperity of the region.

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here any prospects of peace in South Asia? is is a question being asked since independence. It was once posed to Quaid-i-Azam and Ali Jinnah in March 11, 1948. His answer provided the Indian Government will shed its superiority complex and will deal with Pakistan on an equal footing and fully appreciate the reality. His answer is valid even today, more so when India emerged as a dominant and super power in the region. For instance, there is prevalent Indian attitude towards its neighbours - Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan or Sri Lanka - that India they would be pleased otherwise they would be strained. Similarly if Pakistan wishes to remain friendly with India, it should be happy, but if it demands self-determination for the people of Kashmir under UN auspices, it is promised to them by both UN and India, it will hate Pakistan and level charges against it. A couple of examples are cited to substantiate the use of coercion against Pakistan. First, in leaders statements after nuclear explosion on May 11 and 13, 1998. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee warned that his country was a "nuclear power" and that they had "the capacity to use it." Other leaders threatened Pakistan. This rhetoric is nothing but coercive.

the terrorist attack on Indian parliament in December 2000 was immediately branded as an act of terrorism by Pakistan without an enquiry. The fact that the assailants on the Indian Parliament were shot dead by Indian security forces. It is surprising that the so-called terrorists could not damage even a single building nor were they able to harm any legislators who are claimed to be their targets. The Supreme Court of India held three persons responsible including a professor living in India who was planning the attack. In case the Indian government were involved, how was Pakistan made responsible? The reported crime might in fact be the Indian intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to forge a case of terrorism against Pakistan. Or it may be an attack by Taliban or a group against whom India was physically supporting its adversary Northern Alliance. Or it was an economic strain on Pakistan whose economy was fragile, or meant to suppress the struggle for self-determination by the people of Kashmir. The Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan was to provide an excuse for crossing the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir.

According to Pakistan's former Chief of Army Staff General Mirza Aslam Beg the objective was "to improve relations with the US, force Pakistan to stand on Kashmir, to test nuclear capability of India and to compel Pakistan Army to control elements." It may be possible that the incident was devised for a fourth war against Pakistan. The massing of troops by India on Pakistan borders for a year was an extension of coercive diplomacy. Similarly the recent massive movement of troops in Kargil Drass sectors is being viewed as a concern in Pakistan, which, according to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Pakistan's Information Minister is "harmful to peace" and may again "damage the recent peace process." India blames Pakistan for "cross-border terrorism" the name it has given to insurgency in

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Are there any prospects of peace in South Asia? This is a question being asked since independence. It was once posed to Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah in March 11, 1948. His answer was "Yes, provided the Indian Government will shed their superiority complex and will deal with Pakistan on an equal footing and fully appreciate the realities." Quaid's answer is valid even today, more so after 1971 when India emerged as a dominant and overbearing power in the region. For instance, there is an ambivalent Indian attitude towards its neighbours. If Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan or Sri Lanka toes the line of India they would be pleased otherwise the relations would be strained. Similarly if Pakistan submits to Indian wishes and keeps quiet on Kashmir, they would be happy, but if it demands self-determination for the people of Kashmir under UN auspices as promised to them by both UN and India, they would hate Pakistan and level charges against it which may or may not be true, and use coercive diplomacy. A couple of examples are cited to substantiate the use of coercion against Pakistan. First, the Indian leaders statements after nuclear explosions on May 11 and 13, 1998. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee warned that his country was a "nuclear weapons state" and that they had "the capacity for a big bomb now." Other leaders threatened Pakistan directly. This rhetoric is nothing but coercive diplomacy.

Second, the terrorist attack on Indian parliament on 13 December 2000 was immediately branded as being committed by Pakistan without an enquiry. The identity of the assailants on the Indian Parliament is not known as all of them were shot dead by the Indian security forces. It is surprising that the so-called trained terrorists could not damage even a portion of the building nor were they able to harm any of the legislators who are claimed to be their target. The Supreme Court of India held three Kashmiris responsible including a professor living in Delhi for planning the attack. In case the Indian nationals were involved, how was Pakistan made responsible? The reported crime might in fact be the work of Indian intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to forge a case of terrorism against Pakistan. Or it may be an attack by Taliban or Al-Qaeda against whom India was physically supporting their adversary Northern Alliance. Or it was to put economic strain on Pakistan whose economy was already fragile, or meant to suppress the struggle for self-determination by the people of Kashmir. In the opinion of Pakistan's High Commissioner in India this was to provide an excuse for crossing the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir.

According to Pakistan's former Chief of Army Staff, General Mirza Aslam Beg the objective was "to seek strategic relations with the US, force Pakistan to change stand on Kashmir, to test nuclear capability of Pakistan and to compel Pakistan Army to control religious elements." It may be possible that the incident was devised for a fourth war against Pakistan. The amassing of troops by India on Pakistan borders for about a year was an extension of coercive diplomacy. Similarly the recent massive movement of Indian troop in Kargil Drass sectors is being viewed with concern in Pakistan, which, according to Sheikh Rashid Pakistan's Information Minister is "harmful for peace" and may again "damage the recent peace initiative." India blames Pakistan for "cross-border terrorism" the name it has given to insurgency in

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