

# Pakistan has no Kashmir policy

BY KULDIP NAYAR

Nations, like individuals, look ugly when they break rules. This was the nth time that Pakistan raised Kashmir at the SAARC foreign ministers' conference in Islamabad. The rule is that no bilateral issue will be raised at such meetings. The violation not only exasperated India but also other members of the SAARC. Pakistan's obvious purpose was to get cheap publicity. But this it has been trying for quite some time; to make India accept that Kashmir is a disputed territory.

I have not been able to make out why Islamabad continues to insist on something which New Delhi cannot do. It means hordes of other things, primarily the amendment to the Indian constitution which lists Jammu and Kashmir as part of the Union. Any alteration in the state's status needs a constitutional bill that requires for approval two-thirds majority in each of the two houses of parliament. How is it possible for any government in India to do so?

Without bringing in the terminology of dispute, India has conceded the point. When it discusses Kashmir, it comes to that, although it doesn't say so. After all, New Delhi does not hold talks with Islamabad on Tamil



Nadu, West Bengal or even Pakistan's neighbouring states of Punjab, Gujarat or Rajasthan. Why only Jammu and Kashmir? This should satisfy Pakistan.

When the Simla Agreement between Mrs Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then Prime Ministers, singled out "Jammu and Kashmir" for "a final settlement," New Delhi said in no uncertain terms that the status of the state was still to be sorted out. More recently, former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and President General Pervez Musharraf underlined the same point in their joint statement. They specifically mentioned Kashmir as a topic for talks. If Kashmir had not been a dispute, the question of discussing it again and again would not have arisen.

My impression is that Pakistan has no policy on Kashmir. It raises dust all the time to confuse the issue. Except the contention that the state should become part of Pakistan because of its Muslim majority, what claim does it have over Kashmir? On the one hand, it says that the independent status of the state is not acceptable. On the other, it knows fully well that the demand of the preponderant majority of Kashmiris is for azadi (independence). Even Pakistan's most loyal exponent, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, says if it is the azadi the Kashmiris want, they should have it.

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In fact, the record of Pakistan is not clean. From day one after partition, it has been trying to occupy Kashmir forcibly. First, it was the adventure by regular and irregular forces of Pakistan. Then it was the Bhutto's war of infiltration and finally it was the exercise by General Musharraf at Kargil. All failed because Pakistan was not militarily superior to India, not capable enough to conquer any of its part, let alone Kashmir. Ultimately, former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif admitted at Male before then Prime Minister I K Gujral that Pakistan was not in a position to take Kashmir forcibly from India. It is also to Sharif's credit that he said India was not in a position to give Kashmir to Pakistan on a platter.

There was a time when India would even refuse to talk on Kashmir. Manzur Qadir, the then Pakistan foreign minister, told me how General Ayub Khan, then Pakistan's martial

law administrator, was furious when Jawaharlal Nehru refused to entertain any discussion on Kashmir during his visit to Pakistan to sign the Indus Water Treaty, more than 40 years ago.

I have recorded Ayub's version through Qadir as: Nehru was insulting. I tried to talk to him on Kashmir thrice, each time with the observation that since both countries had solved a big problem like the Indus Waters, they should tackle Kashmir to settle things once and for all. Every time, Nehru either started looking at the ceiling or outside the window. Once I felt that he had gone to sleep. He simply did not want to talk on the subject. He was an accepted leader of India and people in Pakistan listened to me; we should not have lost that opportunity.

Opportunities have arisen even after the Nehru-Ayub meeting. The biggest was at Simla in 1972 when Bhutto reportedly agreed to accept the Line of Control as the international border. He dared not even broach the subject after return from Simla because Pakistan had still not got over the humiliation of losing in the Bangladesh war. Still it is stuck in the minds of Pakistan's rulers that the valley should be part of Pakistan because it has Muslims in a majority.

Facts as they are, this is not going to be possible. No amount of Pakistan-

sponsored infiltration has changed the situation. All that it has done is to communalise the Kashmir movement which was once indigenous and national in character. Islamabad must realise that Kashmir is not a religious issue.

One way out is people-to-people contact, not only through easy visas but also through free trade. Both countries should become a single economic unit (with Bangladesh added) so that the ties of trade and commerce develop into the ties of dependence and friendship. Once the people of the two countries come to have an equation at different levels, Kashmir will be automatically solved.

To reach such a level of understanding, there cannot be any time limit. The threat that if there were no settlement by such and such date, all confidence-building measures would be snapped is counter-productive. Whatever the rhetoric, the two countries are moving forward slowly and reaching a modicum of understanding. The solution to Kashmir is a process that will take time to evolve. Conditions for such a thing to happen should be created. The hastening will not do. Both foreign ministers have done well to postpone their August meeting by a few weeks. This will help both New Delhi and Islamabad to assess the past and see how they can move forward.

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