

6/8/0
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IN the nineties, the Kashmir resistance added a new dimension to the struggle there and brought renewed international focus on the India military occupation of Kashmir and its repression of the Kashmiri people. The cost of the heroic struggle in human life and limb has been enormous.

As India tried to impose a "Punjab type" solution in the occupied Kashmir, it blamed Pakistan for sponsoring militancy through "recruitment and armed training" of Mujahideen. The outside world also believed that the Kashmiri struggle was kept alive largely on account of massive support to militancy from outside.

International human rights organizations extensively documented India's excesses against innocent Kashmiris but also focused on the violence caused by Mujahideen groups against civilians.

India exploited this situation by linking the Kashmiri struggle to the prevalent global concern against terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. The Jihadi organizations in Pakistan facilitated the task of Indian propaganda by publicly boasting their operations in the Indian Held Kashmir. As India got a sympathetic ear from the international community on the issue of "terrorism supported by Pakistan" it succeeded in bringing enough pressure on Pakistan to back off from its support to militancy in Kashmir. It also tried to deflect the international attention from its own repressive policies in Kashmir by engaging in a fruitless dialogue with Pakistan.

The period from 1997 to 1999, however, witnessed significant developments in the form of several summit-level meetings between the two countries on the sidelines of the UN sessions and other regional and international conferences. For the first

The two countries solemnly agreed to "intensify their efforts to resolve all issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir" and also to "intensify their composite and integrated dialogue process for an early and positive outcome of the agreed bilateral agenda". (Islamabad agreement of June 23, 1997)

During Kargil crisis, Kashmir was, no doubt, put on world's centre stage, not as an issue of unimplemented right of self-determination but as a "nuclear flashpoint" with grave implications for global peace and security. In less than a year after their overt nuclearization, India and Pakistan were at the brink of a full-scale war which some feared "might plunge the world into its first nuclear exchange". The West blamed Pakistan for the crisis and considered India as

It would be premature for either India or Pakistan to indicate a preference for any of the options available or proposals made or discussed at any level in the past. But if they take a fresh look at the proposals which they discussed at early stages of the dispute under UN-sponsored negotiations or high-level bilateral talks, they could find a common ground to evolve a mutually acceptable road map for a possible solution.

the aggrieved party. The US not only accepted the Indian claim that "Pakistan-supported forces" had crossed across the Indian-held side of the LoC but also demanded "complete withdrawal without preconditions".

India felt emboldened by this international understanding of its position and started demanding that Pakistan cease "cross-border terrorism". Major powers, including the US, UK,

the on-going "composite" dialogue and the normalization process would be predicated on the fulfilment of these two basic assumptions. Given the past experience, deep-seated mistrust and volatile history of relations between the two countries, one must be careful in drawing euphoric conclusions.

India is still questioning Pakistan's sincerity in curbing cross-border activity. US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage also endorsed the Indian claim by publicly declaring during his recent visit to New Delhi that "Pakistan had not done enough to dismantle militants' training camps in its territory". The fact conveniently being ignored is that India itself has yet to demonstrate its "sincerity of commitment." It is not giving up its adamant claim that

Kashmir is "an integral part" of India and seems to be pushing normalization of relations with Pakistan without any meaningful progress on Kashmir. Its human rights violations in occupied Kashmir remain unabated.

India is also using the current bilateral dialogue to ease international concerns over tensions in a nuclearized South Asia and to show that Pakistan and India can do business together and, hence, no third-party mediation or UN involvement was necessary. Pakistan has already shown utmost flexibility by making some extraordinary commitments to seeking resumption of the "composite" dialogue. These include strict adherence to the "bilateral" track and assurances of not letting

its territory "to be used to support terrorism in any manner."

India must understand that Pakistan's extraordinary flexibility as well as the momentum of normalization between the two countries will be difficult to sustain in the absence of a more serious and result-oriented dialogue with a clear road map for resolving the outstanding issues, particularly the Kashmiri conflict.

Kashmir policy: an overview-II

Reversing the tide of history

time in their 50-year history, the two countries agreed formally on pursuing an integrated and structured dialogue to address their outstanding issues, including Kashmir. In their June 23, 1997, agreement reached at the foreign secretary-level meeting in Islamabad, India and Pakistan laid down an eight-point agenda and a mechanism of working groups dedicated to each subject. Kashmir figured prominently in the agreed agenda and mechanism.

In their meeting in New York on September 28, 1998, the prime ministers of Pakistan and India "reaffirmed their belief that an environment of durable peace and security was in the supreme interest of both India and Pakistan, and of the region as a whole". While expressing their determination "to renew and reinvigorate efforts to secure such an environment, they agreed that the peaceful settlement of all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, was essential for this purpose".

The Lahore Declaration of February 1999 marked a genuine breakthrough in the history of the two countries, covering the full spectrum of their relations and issues. It recognized that "an environment of peace and security is in the supreme national interest of both sides and that the resolution of all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, is essential for this purpose".

It also recognized that "durable peace and development of harmonious relations and friendly cooperation will serve the vital interests of the peoples of the two countries, enabling them to devote their energies for a better future".

ers, including the US, UK, France, and Russia, have been urging compliance by Pakistan without any anxiety over India's repression in the occupied state.

Even after Kargil, the region remained under dark war clouds. While the world was focusing on the post-9/11 campaign against terrorism, India in a blatant show of brinkmanship moved all of its armed forces to borders with Pakistan as well as the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir. Intense diplomatic and political pressure by the US, in coordination with other G-8 countries, averted what could have been a catastrophic clash between the two nuclear capable states.

A ceasefire at the LoC in November 2003 with several other mutual confidence-building measures, including Pakistan's assurances of not letting its territory to be used for any terrorist activity or cross-border infiltration as well as constant pressure from influential outside powers led to the resumption of the stalled India-Pakistan dialogue in January this year. The January 6 Islamabad joint statement is now the basis for the new bilateral approach in the current normalization process, which, it is hoped, will lead to a peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides.

This agreement in itself was based on two varied assumptions: For India's Vajpayee, it was the prevention of "violence, hostility and terrorism" that will sustain the "composite dialogue"; for Pakistan's Musharraf, it is the "positive results" that must emerge from "a sustained and productive dialogue".

In actual effect, the success of

flict.

Both countries will have to make a determined effort for resolving their disputes through peaceful means. This is not an easy task. Besides the complexity of the issues involved, the two countries have domestic and external challenges to reckon with. In the ultimate analysis, the success of their dialogue process would depend entirely on the freshness of political approach that both sides would be ready to bring in with sincerity and seriousness of purpose.

What should be clear to them by now is that in today's world, there will be no military solution to their problems. If recent global events have any relevance, the lesson is that wars aggravate, not eliminate problems.

There are other disputes that are part of their dialogue agenda and need to be addressed through fairness and equity. Among the major outstanding issues, the Siachin, the Wullar Barrage and the Sir Creek issues are all retarding the process of bilateral normalization. Hopefully, these would be amenable to quicker solution if both sides manifested political will to move on with constructive endeavours.

In Siachin, the two countries are engaged in a costly and meaningless conflict. This area was under Pakistan's control until India militarily occupied it in 1987, in clear violation of the Shimla Agreement. An agreement was reached in 1989 for withdrawal to positions conforming to the pre-Shimla period. India now needs to implement this agreement. No more discussions are needed.

The Wullar Barrage or the Tulbul Navigation Project as it is