

# The Cease-Fire in Kashmir Is a Step in the Right Direction

by Ramtanu Maitra

The unilateral declaration of a cease-fire on July 24 by the militant Hizbul Mujahideen in Kashmir, and the Indian government's positive response to the cease-fire, has opened up an opportunity to restore peace in the Indian part of Kashmir. Though resolution of the overall Kashmir conflict is not in sight yet, a step in the right direction has been taken. It will take a lot of cooperation by forces in both India and Pakistan, as well as by the international community, to make the Hizbul-New Delhi talks a success and pave the way to defuse the Kashmir problem once and for all. At the moment, the promise of a breakthrough is founded on treacherously thin ice.

How fragile the situation is, can be best understood by what happened in Kashmir on Aug. 1: Within a span of 24 hours, in four separate attacks, extremist groups led by the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Toiba, with the Afghan mujahideen acting as mercenaries, gunned down more than 100 people in cold blood, including 32 Hindu pilgrims making their way to the holy shrine of Amarnath. Lashkar-e-Toiba and the United Jihad Council, to which Hizbul belongs, opposed the cease-fire and went on a rampage. The objectives were to force the Indian Army to break the cease-fire, discredit the peace process, and even trigger an anti-Muslim wave of hostility among the pro-Hindu religious groups in India.

## Fragile Cease-Fire

Both New Delhi and the Hizbul have withstood the first wave of violence, perpetrated to break off talks, and have begun to work out the modalities for future talks. Differences cropped up as the Hizbul Mujahideen, formed about 11 years ago by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and which operated as the militant wing of a mainstream Pakistani political party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, demanded tripartite talks involving Pakistan. India categorically rejected the demand, but there are indications that, if the talks proceed in a promising manner, Pakistan will be allowed in. Hizbul also set Aug. 8 as a deadline for talks to begin, and has complained that India has broken the cease-fire. The Hizbul Mujahideen, which differs from other Kashmiri militant groups in that it wants Kashmir to become part of Pakistan rather than independence from both India and Pakistan, will, no doubt, continue to exert pressure, and both the Indian and Pakistani governments will have to weigh in to keep the talks going.

However, there is hope. The cease-fire came about following intense efforts by New Delhi, Islamabad, and, to a

large extent, Washington. Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami chief, called the "Ameer," Qazi Hussain Ahmed, was in Washington for a whole month working out the details of a cease-fire. There are indications that the recent visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan to both India and Pakistan helped to bring about the present breakthrough. It is also refreshing to note that the Kashmiri Jamaat-e-Islami has welcomed the talks and quickly re-elected Ghulam Mohammad Butt, a moderate religious leader, as the Ameer. A number of Kashmir-based militant groups have also supported the cease-fire and talks.

Kashmir is not the only pressure point in Pakistan. Pakistan is financially bankrupt, one of the poorest countries in the world. The country spends about \$3 billion on defense. Given debt service payments of \$3.5 billion, little more than \$100 million was left for development this year. Pakistan is seeking debt rescheduling, but the International Monetary Fund is sitting on Pakistan's shoulders, dictating terms. There is a strong possibility that Pakistan may default at the end of this year.

India, too, has suffered badly because of Kashmir. Increased deployment of the Army to tackle the insurgency in the northeast and in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the northwest, reduced India's growth rate by 40% during 1989-91.

The citizens of both these developing nations are faced with widespread poverty, appalling levels of infant mortality, poor health, lack of education, and access to the basic necessities of life.

## Background of the Crisis

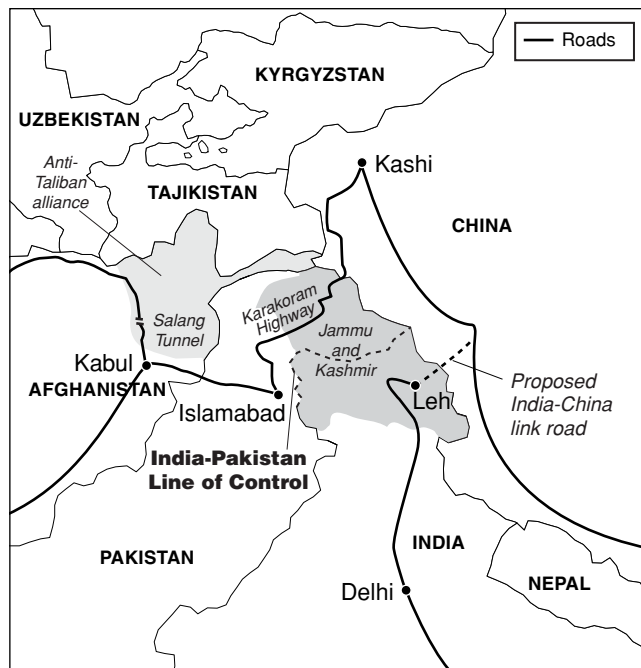
The Kashmir conflict, which erupted in 1947 and has triggered three wars between India and Pakistan, is extremely complex and cannot be resolved either arbitrarily or legalistically. It will require genuine effort by both India and Pakistan. To say the least, give and take is the key to success.

Kashmir, which includes an India part and a Pakistan part, was a Muslim-majority province long before the British came to India. Kashmir was never directly under the British, but remained a princely state under a Hindu Maharaja. In 1846, Britain signed the Treaty of Amritsar with the Maharaja—for 7.5 million rupees and a promise to accept British supremacy. The Dogra kings kept immediate control of Kashmir.

On Aug. 14, 1947, the day the subcontinent was parti-

FIGURE 1

## The Afghanistan and Jammu and Kashmir Areas of Conflict



tioned into India and Pakistan, and the British left, the Kashmir Maharaja, Hari Singh, had the option of joining either Pakistan or India. As Hari Singh was weighing the decision, on Oct. 22, Pakistani tribesmen, and soldiers in the garb of tribesmen, entered Kashmir.

Maharaja Hari Singh, at that point, beat a hasty retreat. He hurriedly signed the Instrument of Accession to join India, and sought the help of the Indian Army to drive back the invaders. The Indian Army drove them out of the Kashmir Valley, but they were still in the northwestern third of Kashmir when India brought the issue to the United Nations in 1948. India conditionally offered to hold a plebiscite under UN supervision. On Aug. 13, a UN Commission proposed that the people decide the state's future. That meant that the Kashmiris could vote for Pakistan or India, or decide to form an independent Kashmir. Pakistan, buoyed by the fact that the majority in Kashmir are Muslims, accepted the resolution on Dec. 20, 1948. India rejected it on the grounds that Pakistan did not withdraw its forces from Kashmir.

On Oct. 17, India gave the India part of Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir, the special status it enjoys to this day, and an interim constitution for the state came into effect in November.

On March 21, 1949, Adm. Chester Nimitz of the United States was designated Plebiscite Administrator by the United Nations, and on July 27, 1949, the Karachi Agreement was drawn up on the basis of which the cease-fire line was deline-

ated and ancillary points settled. However, India continued to resist the plebiscite.

The Karachi Agreement and the delineation of the cease-fire line did not resolve the fundamental problems. Kashmiri leaders within the India part of Kashmir, inspired by the UN resolution, continued to agitate for an independent Kashmir and provided fodder to the pro-Pakistan elements that wanted all of Kashmir to belong to Pakistan. Powerful Kashmiri families, such as the Abdullahs of Srinagar, in alliance with the mullahs, kept the pot boiling. Pakistan became involved in 1965 and again in 1972, through armed invasions. It became more and more clear that the ball was in India's court, and that India would have to play a major role to resolve the dispute and bring peace to Kashmir. But, it also needed Pakistan's cooperation.

### Geopolitical Interests

The Kashmir issue fell victim to a number of important geopolitical dynamics. To begin with, the British colonialists, the perpetrators of the "Great Game" in pre-war days, wanted Kashmir to remain independent and a strategic outpost of Britain in a very sensitive area. With Russia and China having become communist, and India independent, it was only natural for the British to act to ensure that the Kashmir issue would never get resolved. In Britain, a number of pro-independence Kashmiri groups formed, and they worked in tandem with some British politicians and British intelligence. "Human rights" luminaries, such as Lord Avebury, and the British intelligence-linked Amnesty International, used India's "heavy-handedness" against the Kashmiris to British advantage. Pakistan, whose military depended heavily on arms purchases from the West, went along with British interest in the United Nations.

What, however, made the situation even more tenuous, was the Cold War. With China and Russia in the enemy camp, and India disaffected toward the West and sidling closer to Moscow, the Kashmir issue was put on the Cold War chessboard. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's father, Joseph Korbel, became the U.S. "handler" for Kashmir, and he steadily pushed for U.S. policy to follow that of Britain. And, there was a reason.

Pakistan, despite its intransigent conduct along the border, became an important ally of the anti-communist crusaders of the West, while India's 1974 testing of nuclear explosives, and its refusal to become a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, earned the country "pariah" status. Western intervention into the Kashmir issue during this period followed the pattern: India was told it must accept the UN resolution and allow a plebiscite.

The Kashmir issue came to the fore in 1972. After the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, the subsequent negotiations between the late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan and the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India resulted in the Shimla Agreement. In order to establish durable peace, both governments agreed that Indian and Pakistani

forces would be withdrawn to their respective sides of the international border, and that, in Jammu and Kashmir, both sides would respect the line of control resulting from the cease-fire of Dec. 17, 1971, without prejudice to the recognized position of either side.

In the 1971 war, the Pakistani Army was badly mauled. Through India's active participation, Bangladesh was created out of East Pakistan. The Indians captured 92,000 Pakistani soldiers, and imprisoned them in a camp in the State of Bihar. The Indian Army also captured a significant amount of Pakistani land in Punjab, which, like Kashmir, straddles the India-Pakistan border. There are many in India who believe that if Indira Gandhi had played tough, she could have extracted adequate concessions from Pakistan at that point, which would have led to the resolution of the Kashmir issue. However, things remained as they were.

### The Next Watershed

In 1989, almost a year after the Soviets had left Afghanistan badly bruised, the Indian part of Kashmir blew up. Prior to the Soviet invasion, Pakistan's military, having been defeated soundly by India and having lost almost half of Pakistan, was in the dog house. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the pro-British factions in Washington moved in to shore up Pakistan's military with arms and cash, and to carry out a proxy war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, based on a plan called the "Arc of Crisis," cooked up by Madeleine Albright's mentor, Zbigniew Brzezinski. Taking a page from British geopolitics, Brzezinski's Arc of Crisis envisaged encircling the U.S.S.R. with hostile "Islamic fundamentalists." (These very "Islamic fundamentalists" were then the cannon-fodder of the George Bush/Oliver North Iran-Contra operation.)

Pakistan's military ruler, Gen. Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, a religious fanatic, used the money, guns, and Washington's sweeping support to rebuild the Army with mullahs and fellow fanatics. All that helped in the *jihad* against the "godless" Soviets.

It was also during this time that Pakistan and the *jihadis*—recruited from the underground of various Islamic nations and Afghanistan—moved in in a big way with the heroin and hashish trade. Pakistan, which had had a smattering of heroin addicts before 1980, soon became a haven for heroin addicts—Islamic tenets notwithstanding. The arms bazaar and narcotics trade made the Pakistani Army and the mujahideen wealthy and powerful.

In 1989, two things happened: First, India's Congress Party, which had ruled for almost the entire period since 1947, lost the general elections, and a weak coalition government came into existence. Second, in August 1988, the Soviet Army withdrew from Afghanistan, leaving the *jihadis*, armed and powerful, without a cause.

The inevitable followed. The Afghan mujahideen, including Afghans, Sudanese, Algerians, Egyptians, Tunisians,

Yemenis, and others, launched a crusade in Kashmir—and also turned their guns on other Afghans. The new *jihad* began, and the Indians responded with force. Violence became unbearable in Kashmir, and at one point it seemed that India would not be able to quell the uprising. India deployed a massive army to deal with the *jihadis*, and as a result, more violence occurred, and Kashmiris became further alienated from New Delhi.

The influx of mujahideen from Afghanistan into Pakistan, over the open border, began to subvert Pakistan's internal security. A number of incompetent, corrupt, and self-seeking democratic governments in Pakistan allowed the situation to deteriorate rapidly. Within Pakistan, a number of terrorist groups grew, and, in later years, sectarian killings began in earnest.

### The Post-Cold War Scene

In 1988, with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and the mysterious assassination of President Zia ul-Haq in a plane crash, Western support for Pakistan began to wane. Media reports of the degeneracy of the *jihadis*, their narcotics trafficking and rampant terrorism, turned them into "forgettable." While the West quickly forgot what it had done to Afghanistan and Pakistan in its fight against the Soviet bloc, it could not wish away the mujahideen.

In the post-Cold War days, Washington, along with the rest of the West, began a damage-control operation to contain, and eventually, eliminate the monsters that they had created. This once again threw a spotlight on Kashmir. The West recognized for the first time that the terrorists couldn't be curbed unless one of their main killing grounds—Kashmir—was made inaccessible. This called for resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

In 1998, the issue got pushed a notch further up the agenda. In May of that year, India and Pakistan each carried out several nuclear tests, bringing the danger of a nuclear war to the subcontinent. These tests woke up a slew of geopoliticians. Some went to work to force both countries to give up their nuclear and missile programs. Others alleged that both countries were ready to attack each other with nuclear weapons over Kashmir. Others worried that these two hostile nations might pass on their nuclear weapons to nations such as Iraq.

### Local Initiatives

Under pressure from the West, which had imposed sanctions against both India and Pakistan in the aftermath of their nuclear tests, India made the first move. In February 1999, India's Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee took a historic bus ride from New Delhi to Lahore, Pakistan to meet his counterpart, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The objective was to build the foundation for friendly relations. This called for resolution of the Kashmir conflict as well.

It was evident from the outset that the "bus ride" was fraught with danger, when three Pakistani services chiefs,

who considered it humiliating to salute the Indian Prime Minister, failed to show up at the India-Pakistan border town of Wagah, where the Pakistani Prime Minister welcomed his Indian counterpart.

The brief interlude of promise for Kashmir came to an end abruptly in July, when the Indian Army discovered that Pakistani soldiers and mujahideen had infiltrated in huge numbers into the Kargil sector in the north. Although the Indians drove the intruders back within a couple of months, it became evident that Islamabad controlled neither the terrorists, nor the mujahideen, nor even its own army. In October, the Pakistan Army, under the leadership of Gen. Pervez Musharraf, carried out a coup against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and came to power.

The next important intervention took place this year, when U.S. President Bill Clinton visited India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan on March 19-25. During his visit, the Kashmir issue was kept in the forefront as the militants went on a rampage, killing 45 Sikhs in a Kashmiri village. Clinton exerted pressure on Islamabad to curb the mujahideen and the *ji*had-seeking terrorists, and renewed efforts to resolve the Kashmir dispute were put into motion.

Since then, things have moved at a fast clip. First, in May, the Indian Prime Minister released from prison a number of leading Kashmiri militants belonging to the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), a local group of politicians who have supported militancy and extremism from time to time. New Delhi began to negotiate with the APHC with the objective of bringing peace to the Kashmir Valley — the center of violence and extremism.

A few days later, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, whose party is a partner in the coalition government in New Delhi, pushed a resolution in the state legislative assembly to seek more autonomy. Abdullah feared that the New Delhi-APHC talks were an attempt to undermine him politically, and that his party, the National Conference, would have to share political power in the state with the APHC.

As Prime Minister Vajpayee was smoothing Abdullah's ruffled feathers, the Hizbul Mujahideen announced the ceasefire on July 24. The extremists, who are still killing randomly in an attempt to sabotage the talks, have accused the Hizbul of getting the formulation scripted in Washington. While such sweeping accusations have limitations, it is true that Washington has leaned heavily on Islamabad to get "something" going.

What is evident now to both India and Pakistan, is that the Kashmir issue cannot be resolved militarily. Islamabad has realized, but is not in a position to act upon it decisively, that the *ji*hadis need to be curbed and that a better relationship with India would help Pakistan economically.

However, the Kashmir issue has become entangled with Afghanistan, where the civil war between religious fanatics under the Taliban flag and the non-Pushtoon alliance continues, threatening to destabilize the Central Asian situation as well. This thread still needs pulling.

## London Goes Berserk against France

by Mark Burdman

Leading circles in London, and among London's co-thinkers in Washington, are in a state of apoplectic rage against France. The French have recently "broken the rules" on several fronts, including Foreign Secretary Hubert Védrine's attacks on the phony "democracy" extravaganza of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Warsaw in June, and, more recently, his insistence that the American and British bombings of Iraq be stopped, and that the sanctions policy against Iraq be eased. The French government has also distanced itself from crucial aspects of Anglo-American pro-speculation, "free-market" policies, by throwing its support behind the so-called "Tobin Tax" on international financial transactions.

As we reported last week, Lyndon LaRouche associate Jacques Cheminade, former French Presidential candidate and head of the Solidarité et Progrès organization, has stated, that the Anglo-American hostility toward France is a central factor to be taken into account, in establishing the context for suspicions, among leading circles in France, that the July 25 crash of the French Concorde supersonic jet may have been an act of sabotage and terrorism.

### 'Very Unhelpful to Great Britain'

Cheminade pointed, for example, to the July 19 speech by former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, at the neo-conservative Hoover Institution in Palo Alto, California. In that speech, in the course of expressing her enthusiasm for the candidacy of George W. Bush for U.S. President, the old degenerate ranted against France, for its "delusions of grandeur," in allegedly trying to create a "European defense identity" that would weaken NATO. She said that France must be stopped, since it is "behind all the attempts to reduce American influence in Europe. . . . In the 21st century, the dominant power is America, the global language is English, the economic model is that of Anglo-Saxon capitalism."

This mind-set was expanded on by her guru, Lord Harris of High Cross. Harris was formerly head of the Mont Pelerin Society-linked Institute of Economic Affairs in London, and is often credited with having "created" Thatcher. During an Aug. 7 discussion, his lordship exploded against French policy in Europe, as "very unhelpful to Great Britain." He complained, that the French are "constantly talking negatively about what they call the Anglo-Saxon economies, blaming them for imposing a 'wild market economy' on the world.