

KASHMIR AT THE UN AND BEYOND-II

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Some lessons for the future

By Senator Prof Khurshid Ahmad

THE resolution was weak and toothless; it only tried to bring some pressure on India to come up for genuine dialogue and also to invoke the UN good offices to make this possible.

It did not mention the gruesome human rights situation in India and the brutal use of state-terror machine against civilian population engaged in a political movement. There was no mention of earlier UN resolutions and the Kashmiri people's right of self-determination. It did not reflect even the basic position of Pakistan on this issue. That is why Pakistan was not a sponsor of the resolution, which was to be co-sponsored by seven OIC countries with a view just to reactivating the issue at the UN level.

India mobilised all its diplomatic strength to defeat this move. Indian Deputy Foreign Minister called some 22 OIC ambassadors in Delhi to dissuade them from supporting the resolution. Indian missions abroad became active in all the capitals of the world. High-powered delegations were sent to important countries. To take an instance, Canada was visited by three Indian Cabinet Ministers within a short span of three weeks. A highly efficient and powerful delegation was active at the UN.

Despite all these efforts, this time the support for the OIC move was much greater than what was witnessed at Geneva. Majority of the OIC countries and a number of non-Muslim countries had promised to vote in favour of the resolution. The real threat to the resolution was the possibility of abstention by a majority of the countries and also from the alternate strategy of India to bring a "No Action Motion" to make the resolution unoperational. The fight was very close. It was my objective assessment that if the resolution was to come to vote, it could have been carried by a few votes. The Government of Pakistan, however, was under very heavy pressure from the US and Europe. Some of the Muslim countries also dis-

played a lukewarm approach despite their support of the earlier OIC resolution in September, 1994.

In the midst of an intensive psychological war, those at the helm of the Foreign Office, and the President and the Prime Minister, on their advice, succumbed to this pressure. Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan and myself were firm till the last moment. Senator Shafiqat Mahmood was also very positive till the last moment. In our view, the chances of success of the resolution were marginally greater. But what is more important, it was my considered opinion that the real issue was not one more resolution at the UN. The real issue was the display of our determination and resolve to stand by the Kashmiri people and their heroic struggle.

Even the defeat of the resolution would have enhanced our moral position and exposed those who talk of human rights and people's rights to self-determination, but when it comes to taking position on real issues, they turn out to be no better than pawns in the game of world politics. What pains me is that even the Government of Pakistan failed to show that resolve which is expected of it.

The Kashmir issue has been brought on world agenda by the struggle of the Kashmiri people and it would be decided *Insha' Allah* in the streets of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir, as *The Economist* (London) surmised, is no longer ruled by India, it is only controlled by it. Even *The Times of India* (May 6, 1992: Report by P. Bidwani) confessed "that New Delhi's writ no longer runs in the valley despite its overwhelming military presence". The future of Kashmir would be decided by the people of Kashmir and not in the chambers of the UN. The government and the people of Pakistan must show complete solidarity with the national resistance movement in Kashmir and extend all possible support to it. That is the real answer. That is the only strategy in consonance with the interests and aspirations of the peoples of Kashmir and Pakistan.

Success or defeat at an international forum is not the real issue —

the purpose of active political effort at these platforms is to mobilise world opinion, exert continuous pressure on India and show our resolve and commitment to the cause, whatever be the price. Half way exercises do not serve the purpose. It is unfortunate that the government and its foreign office have

failed to clearly understand the real purpose of political effort and lobbying at international platforms. Mobilisation of world opinion, particularly in a climate that has totally changed in the light of the disappearance of cold war politics, is a challenging task. It calls for long-term planning and a continuous and ceaseless effort. It is not a one-shot operation.

Pakistan's foreign policy lacks direction as well as prudent and efficient management. When I tried to contact Pakistan missions in different capitals, I was astonished to find that we had no ambassadors in Canada and Malaysia. Sudan has been without an ambassador for the last three years. Even where we have a mission, its contact with the political leadership of the country is often very weak. There are no proper and regular briefings on Kashmir issue. Even the delegation at the UN was not fully involved in decision-making. The government was being fed with advice by the Foreign Office based more on its biases than on facts. The government was more concerned with domestic political moods and reactions and lacked a clear strategic perception of certain political initiatives and their credibility fallouts.

The eleven days that I spent at the UN have left me with the impression that while some of our younger diplomats have greater commitment and better perception of what is to be done and what is expected of certain moves, the leadership at the Foreign Office lives in a make-believe world of its own. Let me conclude by drawing a few lessons for the future:

1. The issue of the future of Jammu and Kashmir is a matter of life and death for both, the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the

people of Pakistan. The defence of Jammu and Kashmir is the defence of Pakistan and the loss of Jammu and Kashmir, God forbid, would be fatal to Pakistan. As such, there is need for a clear, well-thought out national policy on Kashmir. Short and long period strategies have to be formulated in the light of this policy. A battle won or a battle lost is meaningless; the strategy is to win the war and to fight unwaveringly till the war is won.

2. The real struggle is in the streets of Jammu and Kashmir. The

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government and the people of Pakistan must commit themselves unreservedly to all possible support for this struggle. It is a question of our existence and our future. Appeasement of this or that power would be a recipe for disaster. Mutual wranglings by political parties would harm the cause. Despite past failures national consensus on Kashmir is the need of the hour.

3. Changed world conditions underscore the need for a reformulation of our foreign policy priorities and development of new initiative to win friends and reduce strains, tensions and animosities.

4. Mobilisation of effective diplomatic support for the cause of Kashmir is a target for which we will have to work 365 days a year. It is not a part-time affair. Our diplomatic and economic policies have to be geared to this priority-issue, which calls for a multi-dimensional effort in all seasons, and all directions.

5. The success of our efforts towards the solution of the Kashmir problem depend very much on our success in setting our own house in order, politically, economically and ideologically. Politics of confrontation and agitation has adversely affected, not only the political and economic processes in the country, they have also affected our credibility abroad.

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