

Pakistan cannot pass over the one and possibly only opportunity to demonstrate to India its resolve. Nuclear club membership will provide Pakistan with status it cannot otherwise hope to achieve. Moreover, as a nuclear power Pakistan will have the deterrent it believes essential to ward off an aggressive Indian manoeuvre. Pakistan cannot match India in conventional forces, nor does it have the industrial capacity that India enjoys in producing sophisticated weapons systems. Pakistan does not share with the United States the same arrangements. New Delhi enjoys in its relations with Moscow. The Soviet Union supports and assists India's nuclear programme whereas the United States will never consent to Pakistan following such a course.

Pakistan, therefore, has operated in relative isolation to establish itself as an atomic power, and hence a major actor on the international stage. This posture has given Pakistan the second reason for its nuclear programme. Pakistan's quest for leadership in the Islamic world will be enhanced by its membership in the exclusive club. What Zulfikar Ali Bhutto described as an 'Islamic bomb' has enormous implications, and no more so than for the other Muslim nations.

The third or final reason for Pakistan's nuclear programme is something of an extension of the latter. Benazir is committed to the legacy of her father, and her father's association with the programme is a matter she continues to nurture. She has stated on more than one occasion that Pakistan has the sovereign power to judge its own needs and that it will neither be pressured by the United States, nor intimidated by India.

This issue was high on the agenda in the July 1989 meeting between Rajiv and Benazir when the two Prime Ministers again met in Islamabad. Benazir once more publicly declared her country's interest in 'any arrangement' that would guarantee a nuclear-free subcontinent, but in their private conversations they apparently were unable to find that certain formula. Arms control and nuclear proliferation were the principal topics of discussion, but they were also the subjects most difficult to resolve to the satisfaction of the parties. Neither personality, for all their apparent friendliness, was prepared to yield to the other and their talks ended on a negative note. In their final public presentation, Benazir sparred with Rajiv over their respective arms programmes and the lighthearted atmosphere gave way to the realities of an unyielding, but for the time being, latent hostility.

Although the Bhutto-Gandhi summit of 1989 provided more urgency for those engaged in finding a formula for the five-year border war in the Himalayas, Rajiv referred to the Siachen Glacier dispute at an

official banquet in his honour. 'We seek an end to clashes and conflicts that have led to the loss of so many lives in the forbidding, icebound terrain of the north,' he said.¹ In reply, Benazir spoke of the Siachen Glacier as a 'flashpoint' for an expanded conflict between their two states. She noted the futility of such renewed hostility and called for a quick, statesmanlike settlement of the problem. Siachen the world's highest battleground, was a significant test of the future relations between India and Pakistan. A breakthrough there, to the satisfaction of both parties, would be an incremental step toward the resolution of more substantial issues in the future. Failure to resolve the dilemma, however, would convince both sides that their only recourse was the military option. Both countries lamented the heavy expenditure on their armed forces when their development programmes were in such desperate straits, but neither was prepared to commence a serious diversion of resources to the public sector.

Although the United States was helpless to mediate the Pakistan-India problem, Benazir's announcement on 10 July 1989 that her country would rejoin the Commonwealth of Nations held out the hope that perhaps that body might some day address the matter. The 48 Commonwealth nations, including India, were to meet in Malaysia in October 1989, and Islamabad was expected to seek readmission prior to that date. Benazir did not have to be reminded that it was her father who had withdrawn Pakistan's membership and that his action had proven to be counter-productive. For Benazir, however, reinstatement not only meant an opportunity to join with other nations in a common endeavour, it also cast Pakistan as something more than a Muslim nation, with broader interests and goals. Pakistan's acceptance by the organization was also seen as recognition of Pakistan's new democratic experiment under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto. India's sponsorship of Pakistan's membership would also stand as a positive marker in the attempt to elevate understanding between Islamabad and New Delhi.

V. The Afghanistan Opening

Benazir had been a sharp critic of Zia's policy in Afghanistan. Her party consistently called for direct negotiations with the Soviet Union as well as recognition of the Marxist Kabul government. The PPP was opposed to the American connection that made Pakistan the primary supply base and staging area for the *mujahideen*. Thus the party leaned heavily on Benazir to come to terms with Soviet power in the region, to cease assisting the resistance, and to find the most direct

¹ *The New York Times*, 17 July 1989.

While the PPP decried Pakistani policy that permitted the United States to fight a proxy war, that made Pakistan a vulnerable ally, they attributed the perpetuation of the Afghan conflict to Zia and the junta, who were perceived strengthening their grip on the country. Zia and the junta, who were perceived strengthening their grip on the country, wished to 'bleed the Russians,' and they had more influence over the civil-military apparatus. Zia therefore was required to go along with the decision to support a mujahideen assault on Jalalabad in January 1989. In expectation of a quick victory that would dramatically shorten the life of the government, the mujahideen abandoned their guerrilla tactics and opted for a full-scale assault on the provincial capital. Despite all their successes, however, the defenders of Jalalabad could not be dislodged, nor did they defect to the mujahideen side. After several months of costly fighting, the siege was lifted, the mujahideen were forced to retreat, and the Pakistani government began an agonizing reassessment of its approach to the Afghan problem.

Instead of Afghans returning to their homes, more of them entered the course of the Jalalabad fiasco.¹ Condemnation of government policy could not be avoided and Benazir was forced to take some steps aimed at disarming her critics. On 31 May she was credited with the removal of Lieutenant General Hamid Gul, the head of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and the reputed mastermind behind the Afghan strategy.² Gul's ISI was responsible for channelling American aid to the mujahideen, and under Zia's orders the General had to it that the more fundamentalist Islamic factions among the resistance organizations received the larger portion of available aid. That strategy too, especially after American prodding, was now under greater scrutiny by Islamabad.

In the war in a new phase, the mujahideen factions resumed traditional feuding, and violent confrontations were inevitable

¹ Pakistan Times, 22 June 1989.
² New York Times, 1 June 1989.

in the aftermath of the Jalalabad debacle. The 'brutal murder' of 30 commanders of one group by another was attributed to followers of Gulbuddin Hekmatiyar, a longtime favourite of the late Zia ul-Haq.¹ Moreover, word of the killings came just as the United States was in the process of mounting new arms shipments to the resistance. Washington had indicated a desire to see the Ahmed Shah Massoud forces in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley, bolstered by the resupply. It was Massoud's men who were gunned down in the tribal ambush. In estimating the staying power of the Afghan resistance, Washington apparently concluded Massoud was the best person to rally the resistance forces. More pragmatic than most of the other resistance leaders, Massoud was a member of Burhanuddin Rabbani's *Jamiat-i-Islami*, long at odds with Hekmatiyar's *Hizb-i-Islami*. He was also a field commander with direct knowledge of the war and familiar to the men fighting at his side. But Massoud's problems had dramatically multiplied since the Soviet withdrawal. The enemy was no longer clearly drawn and the order of combat was not easily arrived at. More important, the factions seemed more opposed to one another than to the Kabul regime. Nor could the United States, with Zia gone, balance and control the bitterly competitive units or effectively direct the guerrilla campaign.

The United States' dilemma was written large in Pakistan. On the one side, the war continued and Pakistan's commitment to the struggle, for the immediate future at least, was undiminished. On the other, the Najibullah government seemed strengthened by the Jalalabad episode, its forces held the major metropolitan centres and showed no signs of caving in despite frequent terror bombings and indiscriminate rocket attacks on the capital. The Soviet Foreign Minister's visit to Kabul in August 1989 was viewed as a gesture of confidence in the Najibullah government, as well as a signal of defiance to Pakistan and the United States. Soviet supplies were getting through in increasing quantities and although Moscow acknowledged the heavy cost of feeding the Afghan society, in addition to providing the necessary arms for the Kabul army, there was obviously no intention to let up. Both the United States and the Soviet Union, therefore, were determined, from a safe distance, to perpetuate the war irrespective of the pain and uncertainty it caused. The *mujahideen* and the Afghan government sustained their struggle even if they were less enthusiastic about the eventual outcome. Pakistan alone seemed to hold the key to the situation, and the

¹ The New York Times, 17 July 1989.

government of Benazir Bhutto was faced with an impossible set of choices.

If Prime Minister Bhutto had a clear hand in this matter she no doubt would call for the recognition of the Najibullah Government, cease supplying the mujahideen, and arrange with Kabul for the return of the Afghan refugees to their ancestral homes. Such action would terminate American assistance to the mujahideen. It would also cause the United States to reduce its military commitment to Islamabad. But Benazir does not have a clear hand, and she is not likely to acquire one. The Pakistan military establishment remains the dominant institution in the country and none of the above is in its interest. The war in Afghanistan may wind down, the flow of supplies may diminish, but this will only add to the condition of stalemate that already permeates the mountain kingdom. The Soviet involvement in Afghanistan spanned nine years; it is likely the current phase of the contest will continue for at least the next five. If this is an accurate assessment, Benazir will find her tenure as Prime Minister of Pakistan even less rewarding than she or her followers bargained for.

VI. Pakistan, the Islamic World and the Future

Immersed in conflict within and across its borders, Pakistan finds little relief in its association with the Muslim nations. They too are rocked by crisis and challenged by conflicts that refuse to yield to solution. The Iranian revolution held out the promise of a new beginning, but the situation there has been more destabilizing than anything experienced during the long reign of the Shah. The Arab world is no better. The war in Lebanon is now a decade and a half in duration and a once flourishing country has been willfully and deliberately transformed into a classic hell on earth. No agency or power would seem to have an answer to the anarchy that has destroyed the civilized character of that Mediterranean community. The Israeli-Palestinian struggle entered the phase of the *intifada* in 1987 but that violent recourse has only piled more new tragedy on the old. The Iraq-Iran War, after eight savagely destructive years yielded to a ceasefire in 1988, but the fires of that contest still burn red in Baghdad and Tehran. Official and clandestine terror is a fact of life in the majority of Muslim states and none can adequately project the cause of human freedom. Even in Turkey, where the military again allowed civilian government to resume its managerial

¹ Pakistan Progressive, R. 1, Winter 1987, pp. 1-18.

ways, ethnic and sectarian tensions prevent a full-blown experiment in democratic expression.

Pakistan under Benazir Bhutto is something of an exception when viewed in the context of the contemporary Middle East. The promise of democracy is now a practical reality, albeit under tight constraints, and not without significant limitations. But there is more free expression in Pakistan today than at any time since the first months of independence. This fragile experience needs nurturing if it is to be sustained, but the source of that success will not be found in the external world. Pakistan's quest for fulfillment is within itself, where it has always been. If the country can perpetuate the current experiment and give it strength and substance; if it can bridge ethnic differences and ease sectarian strife; if its government proves more responsive to the material needs of its many publics and can improve their quality of life; Pakistan stands a chance of doing what no other Muslim country in southwest Asia has done, that is, establish a working democracy.

The challenge of democracy is also the challenge of Pakistan's foreign policy.² A democratic Pakistan in the twenty-first century holds out the possibility of a new political model for the Islamic world. When Pakistan was formed in 1947 some observers believed the country was destined to lead the Muslim nations. That belief remains alive in the last decade of the twentieth century. Of all the Muslim countries Pakistan alone seems likely to set a pace for the others. But before this can be realized there still remains the matter of Pakistan's immediate neighbours, and no one has suggested that resolving the Indian, Afghanistan and Iranian questions will be easy.

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¹ The Nation, 1 June 1989.

² Pakistan Progressive, 10, 1, Spring 1989, pp. 1-19.