

Indo-Pak Relations: Limited War to Limited Peace?

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Jean Luc Racine, Director, International Programme for Advanced Studies and Senior Fellow, Centre for the Study of India and South Asia, Paris, attended the Round Table discussion organised by the Centre on 19 August 2003. The topic of discussion was *Indo-Pak Relations: Limited War to Limited Peace?* In his address he analysed the Indo-Pak relations from the perspective of limited war and limited peace.

Racine said that Kargil was significant in understanding the concept of limited war. To him Kargil was indeed a limited war fought under the nuclear umbrella. The case for Kargil was old. It was originally presented to Gen. Zia ul Haq who discarded it. It did not find favour with Benazir Bhutto too. It was the nuclear tests of 1998, which changed the situation and made the idea for Kargil operation different. It was a test case for limited war under nuclear umbrella.

According to Racine, there were different readings of Kargil in Pakistan. One of them was that Kargil was in a way blown out of proportion by New Delhi, because it was the first war conducted with the TV channels not far away. Kargil was in a way, Pakistan's reply to Siachen and some of the Indian crossing of the Line of Control (LoC). Another reading was that if there were no nuclear dimension, India would have done what it did in 1965. At least it would have crossed the LoC. One of the several readings in the Pakistani strategic circle was that it was not just a matter of Indian restraint, but it was perhaps also a tactical problem. Racine added that there were quite a number of experts in not just in Pakistan but in India too, who believed that the difference between the status of the conventional forces of the two countries was perhaps not as large as the figures on paper suggested. The relevance was found in the fact that Kargil was a limited war.

He then proceeded to show how the Jihadis were at risk in the changed circumstances. According to him, after 9/11 the situation changed in Kashmir. The Jihadis were at risk as the international opinion was against any kind of terrorism. They were not welcome to the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) too. Abdul Ghani Lone, during his son's wedding in Pakistan, said that the Jihadis were welcome in the initial stages as a sort of additional pressure, but not subsequently. The Jihadis (Hizb ul Mujahideen) were seen as hijacking the agenda of the separatists. Racine opined that his interactions with educationists in Kashmir revealed that not many of them were reconciled with the Indian policy on Kashmir. At the same time, the Jihadi philosophy was not fully acceptable to them. Jihad was a risk for a number of Kashmiris in the new international context. Jihad, of course, was a risk for Pakistan too, not just because of the sectarian killings between the shias and the sunnis, but because of the link between the sectarian groups and the jihadis. And Jihad would also be a risk for Pakistan's international image.

On the issue of nuclear deterrence Racine raised a few questions as to where to draw the line. What is the threshold? He said Musharraf had said that nuclear war was unthinkable. At the same time he had also said that nuclear strike would be possible if the vital interests of Pakistan were affected. Racine further said that it was also necessary to address issue of nuclear command structure in India. Also, important was the Pakistan apprehension about the upgrading of the Indian forces, especially the new missiles and the AWACS, which were seen in Pakistan as providing a cutting edge to India as far as deterrence was concerned. There was serious concern about the fragile state of military balance in the framework of deterrence. Obviously, this had an impact on the way one looks at the concept of limited war.

According to Racine, on the question of limited peace, a number of options were open. On the day dialogue would restart seriously, the scenario of the so-called 6+2 that was agreed between the foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan in 1996-97 might be revived. The additional two issues were security and Kashmir. The reading in Pakistan was that Kashmir was the core issue. Kashmir addressed the question of state power in Pakistan and hence became the core issue. Kuldip Nayyar, in one of his writings opined that the core issue was not Kashmir but 'mistrust'. The question of mistrust was important. Even if there was willingness to move from war to peace, the mistrust between the two countries would remain for long. The memories of partition still clouded the issue. So, the question of mistrust had to be addressed. Another option would be to put the issue of Kashmir on the backburner, either by a common decision or perhaps de facto after the next elections in Jammu and Kashmir. During the third track meeting in Islamabad between the visiting Indian MP delegation in Islamabad, a few experts and a number of journalists, one of them said that it was time to define a new policy. Otherwise, the Kashmiris themselves would define it when they vote again in the next elections.

Racine also raised the issue of external powers and their role in the Kashmir issue. He wondered whether the United States (US) was playing a double game. India held the view that the US was not pressuring Pakistan enough to contain the Jihadis. Pakistan, on the other hand, was of the opinion that the US was not pressuring India enough on the issue of dialogue. Racine said that there was also the concern of India, Israel and the US nexus. After all it could be the clash of civilizations with the Christians, Jews and Hindus coming together against the Muslims.

Finally, Racine made a few points about the Fazlur Rehman initiative. He wondered whether it was Fazlur Rehman initiative at all? He doubted that Rehman probably carried a message from Islamabad to New Delhi and vice versa. He also pointed out that his mission could have been a deceptive strategy to score points over his opponents in Pakistan. During his visit he said that, "we will not have any objection to the conversion of Line of Control to international border if both the countries accept it and the move is also accepted by the people of Jammu and Kashmir." He concluded by raising the question as to whether Musharraf was simply putting the Mullahs on board for revising the Pakistani line on Kashmir and Indo-Pak relations. Racine wondered whether the Rehman initiative coupled with the big third track meeting of the Indian Parliamentary delegation and experts and journalists in Pakistan could be a new opening. He added that what gave a new dimension to the third track meeting was that for the first time the organisers had not invited specific MPs, rather the invitation was for the parties and parties chose the MPs. This gave some additional

weight to the meeting for they were not individuals but representatives of their parties. Racine also made a note of caution when he said that it was not because there was once again the door opening for dialogue that progress in the new route would be fast.

One of the points made during the discussion was that we should move from the thinkable to the unthinkable. A bold, intuitive and a proactive approach is necessary to move ahead in the resolution of the India-Pakistan dispute. Further, there is also the need to differentiate between postures and intentions. Very often postures are misunderstood for intentions. The track two and track three diplomacy are important to gauge the public sentiment, which would help in making decisions. Further, it was also said in the discussion that for the average Indian, Pakistan is non-existent, especially in the South. It was also pointed out that one could not term India not crossing LoC during the Kargil war as evidence of limited war. India did not want to escalate the war because it would set its economy back by a decade or two.

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