1 7 JUN 1998

THE NEWS

**Imperatives of peace**

Prof Khurshid Ahmad

The threat of UN economic sanction became loud and clear once Pakistan con- ducted atomic test explosions on May 28. Debate on the sanctions' multifarious manifestations on country's already depleted economies state is on, and time and again the national electronic and print media comes up with recipes to face its onslaught. Imposition of these sanctions on Pakistan has become controversial not only in national but also in international circles. The post-World War II experiences suggest that sanction usually do not yield. 'Lite cannot contribute towards change and are counter-productive. Because they hinder constructive negotiations and at the same time pre- vent growth and slow the reforms. If one looks carefully at the diplomatic history of the 20th century, it be- comes apparent that economic sanctions have virtually become a widely used foreign policy tool in all sorts of situations. They can be applied in disputes among allies and equally on perceived enemies. Interestingly, the sanctions can now be imposed on political grounds. In this context, we find that all actions taken by the US had been •politically motivated and were always for its own interests.

At least three different methods have been used by successive US administrators in this regard since the mid-1970s. These include, for example, the Carter Administration's approach of public condemnation. The modus operandi of the Reagan, Bush and Clinton Administration's is quiet diplomacy, and the enfacement of economic sanctions for debt payment; the consolidation of the medium and long-term loan boycott; and the ex- tension of the boycott to the sphere of trade finance. Despite all this, the US has always failed. In this background, a change of strategy is the crying need of the hour. The G-8, European Union, and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council need to be more sensitive to the concerns of the people of South Asia.

They ought to unshackle the hegemonic, cold-war framework of thought, and make a fresh start to develop strategies that are cognizant of the present (lily real. cities and aspirations of people of the Third World in general and to South Asia in particular. Most significantly, sermons and bullying are not going to work any- more as they haven't in the past. Prance and China did not withhold nuclear tests in 1995-96 despite world pressure. Sanctions have not achieved the desired results in case of Cuba, China, South Africa, Iran, Libya etc. P Distant has been able to develop its nuclear capabilities despite all the embargoes from mid-70. No doubt sections can add to the hardships of the people, particularly the poor ones, but when it is a nation's perception that what IS at stake is its 111- dependence, security and honor, rich or poor, no price is deemed too high. Pakistani nation which has whole-heartedly supported the cur- rent tests — is no oblivious to the dangers to which the whole region is exposed. People here are conscious of the terribly devastating costs that are involved, since they are the one who are at the suffering end. They do not want to rush towards mutual destruction. Yet in the interests of security, maintenance of a• balance of power is an imperative. Once that has been achieved, all should be inter- tested in building a better future — not mutual destruction.

The era of strategic ambiguity has ended. India and Pakistan both have demonstrated their capabilities as nu- clear states. It is a qualitative phenornenon, and not merely a quantitative garner. Whatever be one's reaction to this development, a better future demands the acceptance of this reality. To explore and achieve a more se- cure and peaceful future in this part of the world three points deserve to be reflected upon: • Power structures are not static. There have been serious changes in the respective positions of even the big five and the G-8. The economic, political and military powers of the US and other countries of the west and the east are not in dispute. There are only two crucial issues as far as the nuclear debate is concerned. Fast, the claim to everlasting monopoly by the big five; and, secondly, whether the real issue is elil notation of nuclear weapons, or only their proliferation? The tests in South Asia represent the aspirations of at least one-fifth of the humanity not to accept monopoly of the five — a kind of a regime of nuclear apartheid and blackmail.

The west should show more real- ism and openness. Instead of insisting on unconditional signing of the and the corer, there is a need for fresh dialogue to resolve these critical issues amicably. The NIT was never implemented in earnest. It had two crucial eluents: (a) non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and (b) the generous sharing of nuclear technology. The part was conveniently ignored. That is unfair. Any international arrangement based on hegemony; distrust and discrimination cannot last long.Now is the time that nuclear weapon states gracefully accept others in the club, and all be prepared to review the rules of the game to achieve common objectives. Immediate objectives could be judicious control, management and transparency in respect of nuclear weaponry, but final objective Of elimination of such weapons by all must be made operational, and without discrimination. Small countries must be prepared to accept the disparity in power between states as a reality, but big powers should also be prepared to accept and treat smaller countries as partners, and not ju.st clients. Fairness can be achieved by accepting disparities without compromising on sovereignty and honor. • South Asia has its distinct problems and sensitivities. Peace and not war, dialogue and not rhetoric and saber rattling must be the objectives. India and must resolve their problems peacefully and within the framework of the UN charter and resolutions. Nuclear deterrence is relevant; nuclear war is sheer madness and destruction.

Indian tests on May II and 13 destroyed the deterrence based on ambiguity. A new elation could be achieved only on the basis of declared capability, otherwise Pakistan would have been at a strategic disadvantage; even exposed to the charge of bluff which could have provoked an actual nuclear holocaust. Test have cleared the fog. There is a new balance of power. But that is not the end of the story. This provides a starting point for more stable relationships based on the principle of resolution of (IIS puts through negotiations in accordance with UN principles. Even the global deterrence during the Cold War was neither an accident nor did it work out in a day. all the confidence-building treasures undertaken and the Cournand and control systoles set up were an inoperative. It cannot be otherwise in South Asia.

But all this calls for u fresh start, not only by India and Pakistan, but also by the world powers, particularly there is disparity '"within the sub-continent. India is a bigger regional power. But peace and cooperation are not possible under any region of hegemony. Tile greatest threat to peace cones front arrogance and (IIS- regard for the rights and interests of others. If UN resolutions are flouted, bilateral • termination violated, hunting rights of large populations tunneled and people's right of self-de- termination denied, there cannot be peace, nastily and cooperation.

The future of peace and tranquility in South Asia depends on serious and innuendo ate resolve to address the issues at the root of discard and tension. The core issue is that of Kaslunir. It can- not be shelved or by-prussic. Security of the region depends on its just and judicious solution, in the light of the UN resolutions and the will of the people of the state. The leaders of India, Pakistan and of the G-8 IL lust address this issue with the urgency it deserves. Then only will the region approach peace. We must not be. yoncloutrage.

The writer is chairman of the Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad