

The Seminar Education Foundation, The Project on Ethnic Conflict and Peace Processes, Council on Foreign Relations, & the Delhi Policy Group

Workshop on **Kashmir: The Way Forward**

October 21-22, 2002

Venue: The Willow
Habitat World
Habitat Center

Agenda

Monday, October 21, 2002

6-8 p.m.: After the Election: Prospects for peace.

The post election scenario has created new opportunities for a sustainable peace process in Kashmir. India and Pakistan have both announced troop withdrawals along the border. Two of the major winners in the Kashmir elections, the Congress and the PDP, are committed to opening talks with separatist and militant groups; indications are that this will not be opposed by the other big winner, the National Conference. There were also promising breakthroughs before the election, with talks at two levels: on ending the violence, and on the autonomy/devolution issue.

But for these initiatives to be successful, Kashmir's newly elected parties will have to work together, and with the center, to establish a consensus on the way forward. Can they do so, and what will it take? Who are key actors – locally, regionally, nationally and globally – and how can they help? What are key steps to expand the opportunities and shrink the obstacles?

Tuesday, October 22, 2002

10 a.m.-12 noon: Establishing confidence on the ground.

Experience shows that without basic security on the ground, it will be difficult to take advantage of the new opportunities for peace in Kashmir. First and foremost, what is needed is a lasting cease-fire, followed by the decommissioning of irregular forces (the mujahideen and the “renegades”) and demilitarization. Can the cease-fire initiatives of 2000-1 be revived? What would it take to achieve a lasting cease-fire, and what kind of steps would help, both from above and below?

Secondly, as Northern Ireland makes evident – and was incorporated in the cease-fire initiatives of 2000-1 – demilitarization, troops' withdrawals and police reform need to take place in tandem with a cease-fire and decommissioning. Without these steps a lasting cease-fire and decommissioning, even if promised, are unlikely to be sustained. What kinds of security guarantees will the Indian government require to make troops'

withdrawal successful, and who can help acquire the guarantees? What kind of resources will the new Kashmir government need for police reform, and whose support?

12 noon-1.30 p.m.: Lunch

1.30-3.00 p.m.: Reconciliation in Kashmir.

Thirteen years of worsening conflict have left Kashmir's different regions, religious and ethnic groups divided (to different extents), and there is a danger that the process of polarization will continue if each group's grievances are not addressed – especially the needs of refugees and internally displaced. While security on the ground might provide a much-needed respite to begin this process, a cease-fire will not by itself reconcile groups that have been polarized through violence.

The only way to overcome these divisions is through a concerted effort by government, regional and minority representatives, dissident groups and civil society. Yet each is at loggerheads with the other, and each is also fractured by the internecine conflict that has beset Kashmir. Many groups are also afraid of the threat from the militant groups. Given the circumstances, what are the options for the concerned governments, regional and minority representatives, dissident groups and civil society respectively? What steps can any of them take?

3.00-3.30 p.m.: Break

3.30-5.00 p.m.: Jump-starting the Kashmir Economy.

A decade of conflict has left Kashmir's infrastructure in a poor state, and ruined many traditional sectors of the economy – though Kashmir's agriculture has survived to a large extent, and might recover quickly with judicious aid and modernization. Economic reconstruction is a key element in stabilizing Kashmir and moving towards peace, but it is also the case that investment and reconstruction tend to be sluggish in conflict areas. Are there potential sectors of the economy that could be quickly revived to jump-start economic growth in Kashmir, and what would be key sources of aid? How large an obstacle is the “unofficial” economy, and is it mainly restricted to certain areas? What would be the best approach to wiping it out, and who could help?

5.00-7.30 p.m.: The Way Forward – Policy Recommendations.

What are the key steps towards a durable peace, and what are the prospects for implementing them? Is it possible to chart a modest framework for peace based on a concrete step by step plan?

Rapporteur's summary of main points to emerge from previous sessions, and discussion of how to frame these as a set of policy recommendations to be presented to the Indian and Kashmir governments as well as the new assembly.

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