

# *Nuclear Free Local Authorities* **briefing**



Date: 26 July 2002

No. 24

Subject: **Kashmir Nuclear Crisis**

## Introduction

The NFLA Steering Committee meeting on 28 June 2002 received a paper on the Kashmir nuclear crisis. At its height in early June the crisis was likened to the 1962 nuclear stand off between the USA and the then USSR over Cuba. Hostility between India and Pakistan brought these countries very close to a devastating nuclear conflict that would have reverberated around the Globe. Communities here, particularly those with family ties to the Indian sub-continent, and the local authorities which serve them, would have been deeply affected. Nuclear war on the Indian sub-continent would have counted its casualties in millions. A massive international humanitarian response would have been required. Social dislocation and population movement from the Indian sub-continent could have been expected, and a fragile international economy would have been further shaken. Overlaid on this would have been an environmental disaster – including the injection of large volumes of radioactive debris into the atmosphere which would eventually encircled the earth.

By the time of the NFLA Steering Committee the Kashmir crisis was beginning to subside but the meeting recognised the potential for it to reignite and therefore it was decided that the following briefing, together with its recommendations for action, prepared by Dr Shaun Gregory, should be circulated.

Dr Shaun Gregory is a reader in international security, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, and a visiting researcher at the Institute for Strategic Studies, Islamabad, and at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi. His briefing below sets out to do **four** things: (1) provide a background to the present military crisis; (2) explain a little the complexities of the Jammu and Kashmir (JK) dispute and why it has proven so intractable; (3) talk a little about possible solutions to the dispute; and (4) finally, offer some ideas about how UK local authorities might assist efforts for peace in the region.

## Background

The nuclear weapons of India and Pakistan first came to most people's attention in May 1998 when both States tested a number of nuclear devices in the face of a great deal of international opposition. The tests were, however, only the end-point of a much longer nuclear history going back for both states to early work from the 1950s onwards. In fact India first tested a nuclear device in 1974, which it termed a "peaceful nuclear explosion", though it did not then go on to develop a nuclear arsenal. The reasons India went nuclear are complex but have their roots in India's defeat by China in the 1962 border-war, in the detonation of China's first nuclear weapon in 1964, and in nuclear pressure applied to India by the United States during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. Pakistan in turn developed its nuclear weapons because it did not wish to be at a nuclear disadvantage to the "great enemy" India.



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Pakistan is believed to have developed nuclear weapons in the latter half of the 1980s, perhaps having an operational weapon as early as 1985/6. India is understood to have had primarily French and Soviet help with both its nuclear infrastructure and its ballistic missile programmes and Pakistan primarily help from West Germany and China, though both have also had much direct and indirect support from the UK and USA at one time or another. It is worth adding that the spread of nuclear weapons to South Asia are in turn now creating further proliferation pressure in neighboring states such as Iran.

Although there are no precise figures the best estimates are that India has around 70-100 nuclear warheads and Pakistan perhaps 25-60, though higher figures have been suggested. While many of these weapons are presently configured for use by aircraft both India and Pakistan have a range of short and medium-range nuclear missiles and these are quickly becoming the mainstay of the respective nuclear arsenals.

India released a draft nuclear doctrine in August 1999 the central features of which were a counter-city strategy and a “no-first-use policy”. India is able to adopt this position because it has conventional superiority and considerable strategic space. That is to say that even if its forces were losing a war it could retreat a long way before its major cities would be under direct threat. Pakistan has neither of these luxuries. A push by tanks across the Pakistan border, for example, could be outside Islamabad or Lahore in under a few hours. Pakistan accordingly has a “first-use” policy and a counter-force and counter-city strategy to compensate for this weakness and most observers believe that if nuclear weapons are used in the region it will be Pakistan that fires first.

On the positive side India and Pakistan have successfully de-escalated three significant nuclear crisis in the past and have in place a number of arms control and confidence-building measures to stabilize their nuclear competition. There is also considerable bilateral dialogue taking place at many different political, diplomatic and military levels, and bilateral hotline communications available between the two leaders.

### Jammu and Kashmir

Like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir (JK) is extremely complex and has lasted more than fifty years. The region borders India, Pakistan and China. At the time of partition when India and Pakistan emerged from the end of the British Raj in 1947 the status of JK was unclear. India claims a legal case for possession on the basis that the Maharajah who ruled the territory acceded to India; Pakistan disputes this claiming that the Maharajah had lost his authority in the turmoil of 1947 and that the fate of JK should have been decided by the Muslim majority of the state who, at the time, undoubtedly wanted accession to Pakistan. The two sides promptly went to war until a UN brokered ceasefire was agreed in 1948 along what is now the Line of Control dividing the State. Since then the two sides have been in perpetual conflict over the region and in the crossfire more than 40,000 people have been killed in the past ten years alone.

The present crisis is particularly dangerous precisely because it links nuclear weapons to the volatile JK conflict. Following the attack on the Indian parliament on Dec 13<sup>th</sup> 2001 by Kashmiri separatist groups India has amassed perhaps 6-700,000 troops along the line of control and Pakistan perhaps 3-400,000. India is seeking two objectives: the first is to align its war on Kashmiri separatists with the wider US-led “war on terrorism”, a point aided by the fact that there are many Kashmiri-al Qaeda linkages, and to force Pakistan to stop “cross-border terror”. The second and equally important reason is to try to change Pakistan’s deterrence calculations. In the nuclear era, post 1998 in particular, the evidence is that Pakistan believes that fear of nuclear war prevents India from risking conventional war and that consequently Pakistan is free to step up cross-border insurgency in JK confident that India will not respond for fear of nuclear escalation. It is in order to

disabuse Pakistan of this belief and to force Pakistan to end support for Kashmiri separatists that the Indian troops have massed.

### Towards a Solution

Notwithstanding these tremendous difficulties the nuclear war risk has brought a lot of international attention to the crisis and it may also have knocked some heads together in India and Pakistan, much as the Cuban Missile Crisis did in the US and Soviet Union. A solution to the JK dispute may be possible around the recognition of the Line of Control as the *de facto* border but it will require a long-term and multi-dimensional process to address the economic, political, ethno-religious and security issues which underpin the crisis. It will also take a sustained international effort and strong political leadership in both India and Pakistan. At present there are very few indicators that this can happen quickly which is why any and all positive contributions to the process are needed at present.

### A Role for Local Authorities?

- Local authorities can exert influence on Government and Parliament and through MEPs and other routes on the European Union. It is in all our interests that more attention is given to developments in Kashmir/South Asia and local authorities can contribute to that. By way of example, last May Rotherham MBC carried the resolution below which conveyed the Council's concern to the wider community and local elected representatives:

Rotherham Council is seriously alarmed by the prospects of very real nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan over the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The Council is aware of two wars fought by both countries with conventional weapons, but since then the parties have acquired nuclear arsenals, which, if used, will not only wipe out major cities on either side but can have serious implications for the rest of the world. The Council therefore calls upon the British Government to exert its combined political and economical pressure on both India and Pakistan to avoid military conflict and resolve the dispute through negotiation with the help of the United Nations.

- A resolution along the above lines can be used to engage UK-based diplomats from the region, business people, media, NGOs and others with links or roots in the region. In Bradford, for example, there is a significant Kashmiri population with intimate and multi-stranded links to the region and the Department of Peace Studies within Bradford University is involved with many of the community leaders through interfaith and peaceful city initiatives.

- Advice could be sought from the Local Government International Bureau about extending international town twinning or friendship links to municipalities in India and Pakistan. This could provide opportunities for cultural and educational exchanges which can help to strengthen bonds between communities.

- Study groups and non-governmental organisations exist in Delhi and Islamabad that work for peace, nuclear disarmament, and sustainable development. Information about these organisations and the ways in which they could be assisted is available via the NFLA secretariat on request.

- During the 1980s a number of studies were supported by the NFLAs to identify the consequences of nuclear weapons effects on towns and cities. The intention was to inform the nuclear war planning that local authorities were required to undertake at the time. Customs, norms, social, legal, economic and physical structures in India and Pakistan will be vastly different from the UK, nonetheless, the NFLA Secretariat will explore whether there might be interest in local governments on the sub-continent in the 'Planning Assumption Study' methodology developed by

NFLAs in the 1980s with a view to informing more people in India and Pakistan about the consequences of nuclear weapons use.

Finally, below is an appeal from the Mayor of Hiroshima to the Chair of the LGA for England and Wales. The Mayor calls for local government action along the lines suggested in this briefing.

July 11, 2002

Sir Jeremy Beecham  
Chairman  
Local Government Association  
Local Government House  
Smith Square  
London SW1P 3H2  
U.K.

Dear Sir Beecham,

I trust this letter finds you well, and I express my heartfelt respect for your activities.

India and Pakistan have deployed missiles carrying tactical nuclear warheads along the line of control and borders between the two countries. Pakistan has conducted missile tests three times, and the tension between the two countries is ever higher. I am gravely concerned that a nuclear war might break out at any time.

If India and Pakistan use nuclear weapons, it is estimated that the number of victims could easily reach 12 million. Such a war would inflict tremendous harm on innocent people in both countries, not to mention the global environment. It could, should it escalate and spread, lead to the annihilation of human beings. Given the total refusal of the nuclear weapon states, who are supposed to be working on nuclear disarmament, to move in that direction, India and Pakistan are pursuing a policy of power out of frustration. As a result, they are running headlong toward reliance on nuclear weapons in its most extreme form. People around the world seeking peace hope this can be contained.

We need now to return to our starting point and look to the future of the Earth and human beings. As long as we approach our problems from a narrow framework that accepts hostility and resort to violence as a potential solution, peace will never prevail.

India and Pakistan should listen sincerely to the voices of the international community seeking peaceful resolution. They should cut the cycle of animosity, violence and retaliation and strive to solve the Kashmir problem by dialogue. This would create hope in the human family for our common future.

If nuclear war takes place in the Indian subcontinent, radioactive fallout emitted into the atmosphere could prove dangerous to your country. Moreover, there are Indian and Pakistani communities in your country that might suffer terrible social effects locally.

Because of the current tension between India and Pakistan, I visited the embassies of both countries in Tokyo and submitted letters demanding a peaceful solution to their conflict. We need to arouse much stronger international demand for a settlement through dialogue.

In this respect, I would ask the following of you in your capacity as chairman of the Local Government Association. First, please speak out against the nuclear madness we are confronting and demand that all problems be solved peacefully through negotiation. Second, I would ask that your Association utilize the power of its local governments to work locally and internationally to promote the peace movement in India and Pakistan. I am convinced that a call to this effect from you would be met both in England and internationally by a strong chorus of support.

I believe the situation is extremely serious. Please take action as soon as possible. I close with my best wishes for your continued good health.

Sincerely yours,



Tadatoshi Akiba  
Mayor of Hiroshima