The recently announced steps to normalize relations by India and Pakistan are a positive development and offer a window of opportunity to move forward. India and Pakistan need to settle the Kashmir dispute for their own well-being and that of the region and the world. In doing so, both must work with the peoples of Kashmir region to secure a peaceful future. The conflict in Kashmir has been the chief source of tension between the two great nations of India and Pakistan. It has resulted in tremendous costs for the region - mounting death toll, impact on economic growth, military build-up, and psychological stress, especially in Kashmir itself. Hence, the necessity of resolving the dispute.

Debating the history of the dispute and the rights and wrongs of those involved will not be productive. We need to discuss a road map to peace. The first step is to create the right environment in the region. Before "negotiations" start, "dialogue" is necessary. What is needed for peace in Jammu and Kashmir, and for the whole region, is for the beginning of a dialogue in which representatives, both official and non-official, of the groups concerned will participate before fruitful negotiations can succeed. To provide a basis for fruitful negotiations, dialogue must be characterized by three features. One is equality and the absence of coercion, with all participants agreeing to treat the others as equal. A second requirement is for participants to respond with empathy, "to think someone else's thoughts and feel someone else's feelings." The third requirement is that dialogue "must be concerned with bringing forth people's most deep-rooted assumptions" in order to overcome misunderstandings. There must be a genuine desire for peace.

In my view, the road map to peace can be built around three principles that have guided the work of the Kashmir Study Group (KSG) - a solution must be peaceful, honourable, and feasible.

**A Peaceful Solution:** Too much suffering has taken place. We can all dream of a future when there is peace in the region, especially in Kashmir, itself, where we can dream of children laughing, gardens used for beautiful flowers rather than graveyards of the young, people from the region coming to Kashmir as tourists, rather than as militants or armies, and enjoying the beauty and grandeur of nature. We can dream of a peace where most energies are spent on improving the health, education and economic welfare of people in the whole of South Asia. The region cannot afford the conflict that has kept its people from realizing their potential. Furthermore, if we do not reach a peaceful resolution, the Kashmir dispute will continue to fuel extremism throughout South Asia, further alienating people and ensuring continued conflict.

**An Honourable Solution:** Kashmir is an emotional issue for many people in South Asia. A solution that is not perceived as "honourable" by the most concerned parties will not work in the long run. A solution in which one party declares a total victory is not going to bring peace. Give and take will be required. We need to recognize the legitimate concerns of India, Pakistan, and the peoples of Kashmir. For this to happen, each side has to understand the concept of an "honourable" solution by looking at the issue from the perspective of the others.

**A Feasible Solution:** The third element of the road map to peace is the need to develop ideas for a solution that is feasible. In this regard the main contributions we believe the Kashmir Study Group has made was to help change the paradigm of the last fifty years - that Jammu and Kashmir, as it existed in 1947, is an indivisible unit. India, Pakistan, and some leaders claiming to speak for
Kashmir have claimed that the whole region, as it existed in 1947, belonged to them alone. The United Nations, in its resolutions, also appeared to endorse the indivisibility of the erstwhile state. At this stage, a feasible solution needs creative and practical approaches. In the final analysis it is the parties themselves who will need to consider and discuss various implementable options. Over the years, many ideas have been developed that will help the parties in their deliberations.

The KSG, through its report, KASHMIR - A Way Forward (www.kashmirstudygroup.org), has depicted the historical, demographic, geographic, and linguistic background of the Kashmir region. These presentations provide opportunities to study various options for dispensation of the Kashmir region that could generate solutions that are implementable and also be perceived as honourable by the concerned parties.

The 1998 Livingston Proposal was developed by some members of the KSG in consultation with well-informed Indians and Pakistanis. In brief summary, the Livingston Proposal envisages a future dispensation for Jammu & Kashmir that departs from the paradigm of "indivisibility" and suggests reconstituting an entity (or entities) from portions of the former princely State of Jammu and Kashmir that would have their own secular, democratic constitution(s), as well as their own citizenship, flag(s), and legislature(s). The legislature(s) would act on all matters other than defense and foreign affairs. India and Pakistan would be jointly responsible for the defense of Kashmir, which would itself maintain police forces for internal law and order. India and Pakistan would be expected to work out financial arrangements for the new Kashmiri entity or entities.

One of the main elements of the proposed dispensation involves the ability of the Kashmir region to have liberal access to and from both India and Pakistan for the transit of people, goods, and services. In this connection, the KSG and the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) announced recently that the institutions will undertake a study of the economic dimensions of peace in Kashmir. The project will map out a vision of how Kashmir would fit into the regional and world economy following a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir problem. One can address the economic dimensions of Kashmir's plight even before the political aspect has been settled. The road map to peace represents a practical framework that could satisfy the vital interests of the people of Kashmir, India and Pakistan. It would end civil strife and the tragic destruction of life and property in Kashmir. And by resolving the principal issue that could lead to further armed--and possibly nuclear--conflict between India and Pakistan, the process would go far toward diminishing the high political tensions in South Asia.

While India and Pakistan, in consultation with the peoples of the Kashmir region, will have the primary responsibility of developing this process, it is also to be recognized that they cannot do so without the help of friends from the international community.