**Bygones of the Lingering Kashmir Crisis**

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August 5, 2021

As the world is divided into more than 190 bigger or small nations, it is not surprising that border disputes exist among some of them. Nations have fought mighty and destructive wars on such disputes, resulting in millions of deaths, and obliteration of empires, but after the World War 2, most of such disputes were resolved. Some more intricate disputes were left to dormant with prevailing sanity that deliberate glossing over was the best way to avoid future wars, especially when WMDs were invented and stockpiled. The fear of nuclear meltdown forced man to seek reasonable and objective solutions, putting down emotional frenzy.

However, some territorial contentions refuse to subside. Some of them keep on seething on slow burner; while others threaten to become a nuclear flash point with virtual threat of total annihilation. Kashmir dispute is one of them. Ironically, its solution does exist with the consensus among the representatives of the global powers.

Kashmir was a part of Sikh empire until 1846, when the Britishers defeated Sikhs and sold it to Gulab Singh of Jammu for Rs. 7.5 million, under the Treaty of Amritsar. Mahraja Gulab Singh signed a treaty with the English that made him an independent princely ruler of Kashmir. His successors brutally ruled Kashmir, whose 80% population comprised of Muslims that occasionally used to rebel against the most despotic regime of the time, only to be ruthlessly trampled down.

Time went on till the Colonial Raj of the British was rolled off from the subcontinent. According to ‘instruments of partition’, rulers of princely states were given choice to accede to either India or Pakistan, or to remain independent. They were advised to accede to the contiguous dominion, taking into account the geographical, religious and ethnic issues.

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In Kashmir Maharaja hesitated in doing so. The Muslim population, seeing the arrival of Indian troops, rebelled as they were demanding to join Pakistan. Maharaja eventually gave in to Indian coercion by signing a so-called Instrument of Accession on 26 Oct 1947. The freedom fighters began to liberate the valley. They reached in the proximity of Srinagar when on January 1, 1948 Nehru took issue to the United Nations. UNSC passed Resolution 47 (21 Apr 1948), declaring it a dispute that required plebiscite.

Seven decades have lapsed since then, but the implementation of this solution has been hostage to political patronage, colored in injustice and bias. The concerning countries, Pakistan and India have fought three major wars, besides fighting countless small but bloody skirmishes, but Kashmir solution still seems to be a distant dream. As a result, both the countries are caught up in a nerve-shattering arms race at the expense of material prosperity and economic stability of the region, which is already improvised, besides being the region of swarming population.

After the Cold War, the Indian held Jammu and Kashmir began to witness low level protests from the masses, but the brutality of Indian forces turned it into an armed uprising that was out and out indigenous. Out of frustration and being unable to control it, India started accusing Pakistan of cross-border terrorism. Pakistan denied the charge. Unfortunately, after 9/11, the USA and global powers began to buy India’s narrative. It was because of the growing value of Indians for the West, which intended to contain China by using Indian geographical location. This global tussle allowed India to brutalize Kashmiris more than ever.

India often tries to bully Pakistan to only receive a befitting answer. However, its incumbent leaders are obsessed with the concept of greater India supported by the extremist ideology of Hindutva, spell out Cold Start Doctrine or their frequently repeated mantra of surgical strikes across the LOC. In 2016, India claimed to have surgical strikes against the so-called terrorist launch pads across the Line of Control, although it failed to provide any concrete evidence. Soon, it turned out to be a drama of the RAW. After Pulwama false flag operation, on February 20, 2019 the Indian Air Force conducted air strike on a so called Jaish-e-Muhammad camp at Jabba, Balakot. Pakistan allowed some foreign journalists to visit the site. They were shown a crater in an open space, and a dead crow, where Indian planes had dropped their payload. Once again India’s claim of bombing a madrassah had been proved wrong. Pakistan warned India that the former would respond in its own time. On February 27, 2019 the PAF engaged six targets across the LOC and also shot down two Indian aircrafts.

India, under Modi regime, took an aggressive step when on August 5, 2019 the Government of India revoked the special status, or autonomy, granted under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir. Subsequently, it started changing its demography at gun point by allowing and luring Hindus to buy properties in Kashmir. Since then, the imposition of curfew has turned the valley into a mass prison, resulting in human tragedies.

However, this trauma cannot linger on forever. India will have to come by the moment of truth. It should remember that extreme times call for extreme measures. Sooner, its brutal clutch will give way to a chain of reactions that will be hard to control. The sooner it realizes, the better it is.

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