**Facade Of Normalcy**

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Reportedly, India is going to host a G-20 meeting in IIOJ&K. The Indian move has invoked a sharp reaction from Pakistan. While condemning the Indian decision, it has dubbed the move as irresponsible and rightly so. China has also objected to it urging India to avoid politicising the issue. However, India dismissing the Pakistani objection maintained that IIOJ&K was an inalienable and integral part of India, so it was natural to hold the meeting on its territory.

The position taken by Pakistan on the issue derives legitimacy from UN resolutions that recognise Kashmir as a disputed territory and have made it obligatory to resolve the issue through a plebiscite under the auspices of the world body, the implementation of which is still awaited. The Indian claim of IIOJ&K being its integral part, therefore, has no moral or legal basis and is nothing but a travesty of the ground realities.

In the wake of the rebellion by the people of Kashmir against the so-called instrument of accession of the state signed by Maharaja of Kashmir, Lord Mountbatten clearly said that the accession was accepted provisionally and the question would finally be settled through a reference to the people. However, when war broke out between Pakistan and India the Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru took the issue to the UN. Consequently, the resolutions adopted by the UN reiterated the settlement of the question of accession of the state by allowing its people to exercise their right of self-determination. Nehru is on record to have assured his Pakistani counterpart repeatedly to abide by the UN resolutions and has also unequivocally made statements to this effect in the Indian parliament. However, India reneged on its commitment and tried to have the question of accession resolved through the constituent assembly of the occupied Kashmir in 1957. That move was repudiated by the UN through its resolutions 91 and 122, maintaining the issue could not be settled through any arrangement other than an UN-sponsored plebiscite.

Since the constituent assembly of Kashmir was dissolved in 1957 after the adoption of the state constitution and replaced by a legislative assembly, the possibility of the article ever being revoked was foreclosed.

It is also significant to note that India, despite declaring IIOJ&K as its integral part, granted special status to the state with its assembly and constitution through Articles 370 and 35 of the Indian constitution, which also prohibited the purchase of property in the state by outsiders. That itself negated the Indian claim of the state being an integral part of India.

Under Article 370, only the President of India could revoke the special status of the state on the advice of the constituent assembly of Jammu and Kashmir. Since the constituent assembly of Kashmir was dissolved in 1957 after the adoption of the state constitution and replaced by a legislative assembly, the possibility of this article ever being revoked was foreclosed. The supreme court of India also held that this article has attained permanency and could not be revoked. The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir in its decision also ruled out any such possibility. The strongest repudiation of the Indian claim is the armed struggle launched by the people of Kashmir in 1989 to throw off the Indian yolk which continues with its momentum. The Indian security forces as per the documented details have killed more than 95 thousand Kashmiris and raped thousands of women. The freedom movement is a ranting testimony to the fact that IIOJ&K is an occupied territory.

But regrettably, despite the foregoing realities, the Modi government repealed Articles 370 and 35 of the Indian constitution on 5th August 2019 and bifurcated the state into two territories and amalgamated them in the Indian union, followed by new domicile law to change demographic features of the state and also allowed outsiders to buy properties there. He took this step notwithstanding the fact it was not only vehemently opposed by the opposition Congress party and other saner elements within India but was also rejected by the pro-Indian politicians like Farooq Abdullah and Mehboob Mufti who had also served as Chief Ministers of IIOJ&K.

There was also a strong reaction in IIOJ&K over the Indian move and the Indian security forces turned the state into an open prison while continuing the killing spree. Since then hardly a day passes without the martyrdom of Kashmiris in the name of cordon and search operations. But India continues to tell the world that situation in the state had become normal. The Indian decision to host G 20 meeting in IIOJ&K is meant to engineer a façade of normalcy and deceive the world into believing that the situation in the state was safe and secure. That is what the Kashmir Diaspora Coalition and its international affiliate organizations from the Western countries have alluded to in their letters to all the heads of G 20 countries expressing the hope that the G20 countries, as signatories to the universal declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Convention, would adopt a definitive pro-people stance. They have reiterated that their credibility was on the line. Therefore they should stand firm and refuse to be used in the disempowerment and subjugation of the hapless people of the state.

In light of the foregoing facts the Indian action in IIOJ&K is a blatant violation of the UN resolutions, the fourth Geneva Convention, international laws and bilateral agreements including Simla Agreement between Pakistan and India. It is also an affront to the UN and the members of the world community who believe in people’s right to self-determination and adherence to international laws and Geneva Conventions. The move by the Modi government has surely exacerbated the security situation in the region and intensified tensions between the two nuclear states. The UN and the international community must act to defuse the situation before it is too late. The refusal by the G 20 countries to participate in the meeting in IIOJ&K would surely send a strong message to India that it could not get away with its indiscretions in defiance of the UN resolutions and Fourth Geneva Convention provided they look at the situation rising above their strategic and commercial interests. Whether they do it or not remains a million dollars question.?

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