[Nasim Zehra](https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/nasim-zehra)

July 8, 2021

**Kashmir: is sincere rhetoric enough?**

The writer is a senior journalist.

Terrorism is again the top talk-trend. On July 5, the Prime Minister Imran Khan said there was no doubt of India’s involvement in the June 23rd terrorist attack in Lahore; in the cabinet on July 6 members were informed that after the Kulbhushan Jadhav network another major Indian terrorism network targeting Pakistan had been unearthed; on July 4 Pakistan’s National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf had first claimed of evidence that showed that an Indian citizen connected to India’s intelligence agency RAW had masterminded the Lahore terrorist attack.

Meanwhile on June 30, the PM had somewhat emphatically repeated his usual message to the Kashmiris: all Pakistanis back your resistance against Indian occupation, they respect and admire you, Pakistan will never engage in a dialogue with India unless New Delhi reverses the steps it took to divide Occupied Kashmir and end its special status on August 5, 2019. Earlier in his June 4 Reuters interview, the PM had also said clearly that Pakistan can begin talks with India “even if they give us a road map, that these are the steps that we will take to basically undo what they did, which is illegal, against international law and United Nations resolutions... then that is acceptable.”

In Delhi all messages and urgings from Pakistan are ignored. In substance, Delhi is on track on its own Kashmir and Pakistan policy. As far as Pakistan goes, the ‘Jadhav way’ is Delhi’s top policy preference – as long as Pakistan continues to disagree on the LOC as a border, or till it opens the overland trade routes from Delhi to Afghanistan and beyond and pulls back from the fast-expanding Pakistan-China strategic architecture.

On Kashmir, Indian PM Narendra Modi, in his June 24 meeting with some Kashmiri leaders from Occupied Kashmir made some fanciful statements, ranging from removing ‘Dilli ki duri’ as well as ‘Dil ki duri’ to restoring J&K statehood at an appropriate moment. In substance of course Delhi continues with its three-step plan to demolish the Kashmiri freedom struggle essentially by attempting to reduce Muslim majority in J&K and reduce Muslim seats in a restored J&K assembly.

The three steps include: one, holding the delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir; two, followed by holding elections in the now Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir in which a majority of non-Muslim MPs would be elected; and three finally the non-Muslim majority J&K state to pass laws regarding the restored status of Jammu and Kashmir but essentially factoring in the August 5, 2019 steps taken by New Delhi. Beyond the restored J&K assembly, it will be the BJP majority Lok Sabha in Delhi that will have the final say in what will be the status of a J&K’s restored statehood. There is no change of heart in Delhi regarding the August 5, 2019 step – hence, only cosmetic statehood restoration will take place.

This roadmap poses existential problems for the Kashmiri Muslims. One, the delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir means Delhi is going ahead with ‘engineering’ within J&K a new demographic, and political and parliamentary reality. Additional seats are planned for the old non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan currently residing across J&K; for the Scheduled Castes (a practice criticised in the 2006 Sachar Committee report). The Committee had observed that introduction of seats for Scheduled Castes was done to undermine unity among the Muslims and the socially marginalised Dalits plus to dilute Muslim political strength in Muslim majority areas. Hence, a similar exercise is now to be introduced in Jammu and Kashmir to damage the delimitation exercise, still a work-in- progress; this is the tool Delhi is planning to use to reduce the Muslim majority in the Jammu and Kashmir area.

Two, the holding of elections after delimitation means that Muslims’ demands for the restoration of Articles 370 and 35A, the reversal of the demographic changes and finally the restoration of statehood will all be dependent on a manipulated ‘elected’ state legislature and not by the original rightful inheritors of Jammu and Kashmir. J&K as laid out in the UNSC resolutions will have been demolished forever. Three, with hundreds of Kashmiri political prisoners including one of the most credible Yasin Malik and the iconic Syed Gailani now suffering from Alzheimers, the challenge for Kashmiri fight-back from the streets, side roads, hills and forests of Occupied Kashmir will be overwhelming.

Modi appears to be on a gaining trajectory since the unlawful August 5 action. Although his proposed plan for ‘restoring statehood at an appropriate time’ is in violation of UNSC resolutions, Delhi appears to be on the road to scoring diplomatic points with its G-7 friends and those keen to see Delhi engage in fire-fighting when matters come to a boil in Occupied Kashmir. Biden will now be an easy host this September for Gujarat’s butcher and Kashmir’s villain Modi.

Against this backdrop what then is the value of statements coming from the Pakistani prime minister and others? Interestingly, regarding Kashmir Pakistan’s NSA had publicly said that India had conveyed to Pakistan that Delhi had made a mistake and wanted to fix it – that it would reverse statehood, and the demographic changes made via issuance of domiciles. And that Pakistan would wait for Delhi to fix that mistake on the ground.

Evidently, Delhi is doing the reverse by framing it in clever-by-half ways. India continues with its efforts to entirely decimate the three century old Kashmiri resistance, incapacitate it, altering the foundations upon which the Kashmiri movement has survived. Its fundamental strength of numerical majority is being nefariously reconstructed using India’s constitutional tools.

This sinister attempt at re-engineering by Delhi of the foundational facts of the three centuries old Kashmiri movement demonstrates that India has finally conceded that gunpowder language has not worked against the growing fearlessness of generations of resisting Kashmiris. Hence now the need to use constitutional tools, a strong oppressive lockdown policy, the imprisonment of Kashmiri leadership and deflecting Islamabad’s focused and proactive action and attention on Kashmiri by enticing it with a half-baked talks offer, a farcical acknowledgment of its ‘mistake’ and some tattered promise of the reversal of the illegitimate steps of August 5, 2019.

Given these hard realities, ill-advisedly Pakistan’s earlier post-August 2019 proactive official and public diplomacy efforts, led by the prime minister himself, are missing. The PM and his team were on a roll – exposing Modi and his government as fascists, followers of Hitler, architects of apartheid and of a near genocide. Now, though, only Delhi’s smartly deceptive story of ending ‘dil and dilli’s doori’ is the dominant Kashmir story.

Pakistan must vigorously activate its public diplomacy and formal diplomacy using all available global platforms to begin to push back against Delhi’s fatal plan against the Kashmiris. Through its near silence Islamabad will globally be seen as Modi’s unintended indirect facilitators in his diabolical Kashmir plan.

Email: nasimzehra@gmail.com

Twitter: @nasimzehra