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**The Kashmir dispute**

Many well-meaning British citizens accept the fact that it was Britain in the first place that made decisions which led to the dispute over the state of Jammu and Kashmir at the time of the partition of India.

Partition resulted in the independence of India and Pakistan, which was a new state carved out of the Indian subcontinent with an overwhelming majority of Muslims. But the two newly independent nations became embroiled in a dispute that remains unresolved even 72 years after independence. The trigger for the dispute, which has led to wars and taken a heavy human and material toll, was provided by the British Raj and its last viceroy in India, Lord Mountbatten.

Mark Lyall Grant, the former British ambassador to Pakistan, made a remark conceding the British mistake concerning Kashmir during a panel discussion more than a year ago at Chatham House in London. The discussion was titled ‘The cost to Britain of the Kashmir crisis: Is there a solution?’ Grant said: “We (Britain) caused the problem (during Partition). So, whether it is discreet or not, we have a duty to resolve it.”

Britain has yet to perform that duty as the former colonial power that ruled the Subcontinent with an iron hand and fully exploited its resources. It has neither performed this duty discreetly nor indiscreetly. Instead, it has been content asking India and Pakistan to show restraint and resolve the dispute through talks.

Britain was one of the five members of the UN Security Council that adopted 11 resolutions calling for the right of self-determination for the Kashmiri people during the early years after independence of India and Pakistan. It hasn’t done anything to get these resolutions implemented, despite having a moral and political obligation to do so.

Mark Lyall Grant, the former British diplomat, was more concerned about the repercussions in Britain in case of a rise in extremism in Jammu and Kashmir following India’s unilateral decision to revoke Article 370 of its constitution to end the special status of the state. He pointed out that Britain had a large Kashmiri diaspora that could be affected by the extremist sentiment that may sweep Jammu and Kashmir due to India’s actions.

He made these remarks in November 2019, but there is no indication the Kashmiris have turned to extremism in any significant numbers since then – despite the provocative measures initiated by India to subjugate the people, curb their freedoms and amend the laws in a bid to change its demography by enabling Hindus to buy property and take up residence there.

The Kashmiri people still believe in a peaceful struggle for their rights even though the repressive Indian measures, including deployment of a record number of its forces and special laws, by now should have provoked them once again to wage an armed campaign against India’s rule. An armed struggle by the Kashmiris can be easily dubbed by India as terrorism the way it has done until now, even though the acts of repression against unarmed civilians by its forces clearly constitute state-sponsored terror. India has also strived to portray Pakistan as a sponsor of terrorism to hide its own failures to win the hearts and minds of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

No amount of repression by India, change in policy and tactics, holding of assembly and local government elections and allocation of development funds will make the Kashmiris accept Indian rule.

India has tried every means, but it hasn’t succeeded in altering the situation on the ground. However, it doesn’t really care because the world isn’t mindful of the plight of the Kashmiri people. Britain and other countries, including Muslim ones, are more concerned about losing the huge Indian market with a population of more than 1.3 billion in case they offend New Delhi. No principle or morality is involved in the policy they are pursuing with regard to Jammu and Kashmir since trade and profit is far more important for them.

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