

## Hypocrisy Doesn't Pay

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Situation in Pakistan is bothering everyone who has any interest or link with this region; and what worries people is that no one seems to be in control of the situation there, and no one knows future of the country. The situation started getting from bad to worse with Pakistan's entry in the 'war on terror', which in view of many Pakistani experts was not Pakistan's war, and if anything Pakistani agencies had their own history and experience of promoting and exporting this business.

Like politics of Pakistan it is difficult to predict future of the State of Jammu and Kashmir and the on-going struggle. The State is multi-religious and multi ethnic; and has competing interests from various political, religious and armed groups. Politics of the State is controlled from outside of the State boundaries and people of the state suffer as a result of this control and interference.

In June when Yasin Malik and APHC leaders went to Islamabad for new 'instructions' and a new 'mandate', this writer wrote in an article titled, *They are back in Islamabad* : 'Since the new government has taken power in Pakistan [the] role of secret agencies has reduced considerably. Pakistan is reviewing its policy on Kashmir and has said goodbye to the policy of General Musharraf. New policy requires a new strategy; and new strategy has a considerable political input as well. Militancy in Jammu and Kashmir will increase and to support and justify this, political activities will be organised inside and outside Kashmir.'

Since June people have seen many changes: rise in infiltration, rise in militancy, serious and violent agitation with strong communal flavour—first in the Valley then followed by in Jammu, and political conferences organised by pro-Islamabad Kashmiris in various capitals of the world. This communal aspect of the Kashmir polity is so worrying that it could create situation similar to that of 1947.

Apart from that a new and interesting development is taking place on the Pakistani side of the divide, where the local people in the Neelam Valley are demonstrating against increased presence and activities of the militants. According to BBC report of 17 August 2008, this is the second such demonstration in the area in the past six weeks. The local people closed their shops and protested in hundreds on Saturday 16th in Athmaqaam in the Neelam Valley, and demanded that activities of these militants should be controlled as this could result in cross border shelling which could make life hell for the local people.

Munir Sharafat, advocate on behalf of the demonstrators said, that for the past number of weeks “we have noticed increased activities of these militants”. Their facial features, language and behaviour state that they are not Kashmiris. People are seriously concerned about their presence, as it makes ordinary citizens vulnerable and potential target of the Indian retaliation. He said people here have enjoyed peace since November 2003 and don't want the hostilities to resume.

The demonstrators informed Deputy Commissioner about activities of these militants and potential threat they pose to the people of the area. Before the

ceasefire between India and Pakistan on the LoC, Neelam Valley was the worst hit area where hostilities are fierce and more frequent because of the terrain and close proximity of the rival forces which are only divided by the small river Neelam.

Some months ago one commentator said Kashmir dispute has been removed from the back burner as both countries are occupied with other priorities. But now Jammu and Kashmir is on fire with very dangerous trends. A Russian journalist in his e-mail to this correspondent asked : 'What is at heart of the recent escalation of conflict? Frankly, I find it hard to believe that 40 hectares of land could have stirred the communities to the boiling point. But then, I'm not an expert on the region, regrettably'.

So what is really behind this present uprising which some believe could be as nasty as the uprising of the 1989/90, if not worse? Is it that people are frustrated with the on-going peace process, although it has brought peace to the region and better understanding between the both countries, but for the people of Jammu and Kashmir there are no tangible outcome of talks spread over many years.

Apart from that both countries still have paid no attention to the repeated demand of the Kashmiri people that they want to be part of the process that they can present their case and safeguard their interest. Also people feel that they have been let down by their leadership, as they have no road map for solution of the dispute and they are busy with their personal gains and rewards with little or no attention to the problems of the suffering people.

When people are on streets and hold violent demonstrations that is not a sign of popularity of APHC leaders. All it shows is that people are not satisfied with the status quo—they are not happy with what India is doing, they are not happy with the government in Jammu and Kashmir, they are not happy with their leaders, they are not happy with large concentration of army, they are not happy with activities of the militants, they are not happy with lack of opportunities and unemployment; and demonstration is one way to show their anger and frustration.

Both India and Pakistan have their own game plan and agenda on Kashmir. Pakistan under General Musharraf a few years ago showed serious desperation and a clear change of policy on Kashmir. It looked he was desperate to have a 'solution' to have another feather in his cap to tell the world and his own countrymen that he has finally resolved the long standing dispute which was a source of instability in South Asia and which has held back progress.

Because of his determination, drive and somersault on Kashmir many predicted that the Kashmir dispute would be 'resolved' by 2007. This writer, however, was among those who discarded this claim, because India would use General Musharraf to achieve maximum but would not make a deal on Kashmir with a man in uniform. Indian policy was to drag it on and take heat out of the militancy and rebellion. They have experience of dragging on talks for years and decades without giving anything in return.

But those Indian policy makers who thought that they can win the day by dragging their feet were wrong. They thought that the worst is over in Kashmir, and they can wrap up things by some window dressing and by some cosmetic changes. Perhaps they also thought that the other party to the dispute was sincere

and both would jointly crush 'terrorism' and eradicate violence for ever, forgetting that both have contradictory claims on Kashmir and divergent interests both in South Asia and in the wider world. Interests of the parties and rules of game can change with changing situation and that is what has happened.

Things don't always work out as people plan or expect them to happen. India had full control of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir for decades and very popular leaders sincerely helped them to make progress in Jammu and Kashmir. Then question is what went wrong? One can say Pakistani agencies also had hand in the matter but Indian policy makers also need to have a serious appraisal of their Kashmir policy, as one can only put so much under the carpet or continue to blame others.

Kashmir dispute is a serious matter although some have made a business out of it; and it needs serious and sincere attention. It has to be understood in its true perspective and appropriate strategy needs to be in place to resolve it. If policy makers continue to play with sentiments of the people and continue to treat it as a territorial dispute or a religious matter then they could have another partition on communal lines.

One must remember that wounds of the communal partition which took place in 1947 have not been healed yet, and some people have let the communal genie out of a bottle again, and fear is that it will claim many innocent lives and destroy peace and harmony in the State. Those who believe in humanity, liberal and democratic rights for all, need to tell all concerned that Jammu and Kashmir is one political entity, and people would not allow division of the State; and that the struggle is for unification and independence. □□□