**G-20 Leadership**

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The theme of the upcoming G20 Summit that will take place on September 9, 2023, in New Delhi is ‘One Earth. One Family. One Future.’ The leaders of the major economies of the world will discuss among other issues, the ‘safeguarding international peace’ and ‘sustainable development and growth.’ The question arises, is there any linkage between international peace, development and growth as well as a resolution the Kashmir dispute?
Few members of the G20 have already spoken. Former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa said on September 2, 1998, “All of us remain concerned that the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. It should be solved through peaceful negotiations and should be willing to lend all the strength we have to the resolution of this matter.” Former Japanese Deputy Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata said on July 4, 1995, “Kashmir is a thorny issue and unless India takes initiatives to resolve this key problem, peace in South Asia remains threatened,” and Russian President Vladimir Putin said on December 3, 2004, “India and Pakistan should resolve Kashmir dispute in the interest of peace in South Asia and the rest of the world.”
Likewise, German Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock said on October 7, 2022, “Germany has a role and responsibility with regard to the situation in Kashmir. Therefore, we support intensively the engagement of the United Nations to find peaceful solution in the region.” President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey said, “We are in favor of peaceful solution of Kashmir issue and international legitimacy in the region. We have always stated that we are in favor of a just solution of Kashmir.” Former Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang said on May 1, 2023, “Kashmir dispute should be properly and peacefully resolved in accordance with the United Nations Charter, relevant Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements.” The spokesman of the Indonesian foreign ministry, Teuku Faizasyah said on August 7, 2019, “The Government of Indonesia is optimistic that conflicting parties would placate tensions, engage in negotiations, and adopt diplomatic means to solve the problem of Kashmir.
G20 countries need to listen to the President of the World Bank when it comes to the sustainable development and growth. Its former President, James W. Wolfensohn said on February 2005, “Peace and stability will not return to South Asia unless Pakistan and India sort out Kashmir conflict amicably.” In addition, an internationally known academic, Professor Stanley Wolpert, University of California, LA. wrote, “There cannot be lasting stability in the region until and unless Kashmir dispute is resolved “peacefully and equitably as soon as possible”.
The leadership of G20 countries need to realise that there is still great opportunity for peace in Kashmir, but it cannot occur unless the people of Kashmir are permitted to have their own identity and chart their own course.
Were India to allow a referendum in Kashmir, it would prove to the world that it too is a great democratic country, and not the persistent and militaristic oppressor that it has become. P. Chidambaram, one of India’s seasoned diplomates, graduate of Harvard University and former interior and Finance Minister of India, said on July 31, 2016, “If India is to make Jammu and Kashmir love India, referendum is the only way.”
We hope that G20 countries understand that trade and commercial deals are important but not at the expense of the high moral ground and universal principles the world powers have always claimed. Moral values and human rights are the very essence of even being called civilised. The denial of democracy and human rights in Kashmir, especially self-determination, has spawned nuclear and missile proliferation. Kashmir has been an open wound in India–Pakistan relations for more than 76 years. That is why Amnesty International along with four other international NGO’s have written to G20 countries on August 24, 2023, to persuade India to ‘end the human rights violations in Kashmir and release jailed human rights defenders and political prisoners.’
Prime Minister Modi should realise that money can certainly solve some of the problems in Jammu and Kashmir, but it will not remove the ever-present and destabilising atmosphere of oppression, the violence in the streets, and the persistent trauma of rape, murder and disappearances that have been the hallmark of India’s history in Kashmir.
Mere sloganeering, economic packages and G20 tourism diplomacy will never solve the Kashmir problem. Kashmir is a political issue which needs a political solution. The immediate necessities include the intervention of the international community to bring the violence in Kashmir to a quick end, the demilitarisation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir on both sides of the Cease-fire Line and the release of all political prisoners, including, Mohammad Yasin Malik, Shabir Ahmed Shah, Masarat Aalam, Aasia Andrabi, Khurram Parvez and others. Lastly, there must also be a political dialogue between all parties concerned–India, Pakistan and the leadership of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to set a stage for a democratic and peaceful solution.
Finally, in 1938, British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain scoffed at the Nazi menace to Czechoslovakia as a dispute over a faraway country about which little was known. His irresponsible neglect precipitated World War II. The G20 should learn from that and end its neglect of Kashmir to avoid a corresponding calamity