**Future of Pak-India elations**

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On **Jun 6, 2022**

India’s action in August 2019 and stripping Jammu & Kashmir of the autonomy it had been guaranteed, was a kind of fait accompli practically forced simultaneously upon the Kashmiri people and Pakistan to accept. From the ‘doctrine of realism’ to revisiting the LoC ceasefire agreement to an almost ‘about turn’ to refusing a dialogue with India until it reverses its decision to abrogate Article 370, one has seen a series of ideas emanating from Islamabad without any tangible result. Complete silence on the subject by New Delhi was expected as finally the ‘integral part’ had unilaterally been made so by adopting an integrally defying posture. Following the annexation of an internationally disputed territory, India tried to show its political and military superiority through violating Pakistan’s territory in every possible way, provoking some correspondingly befitting response from its western neighbour. Pakistan behaved.
The latest action that showed New Delhi’s intentions on having or not having any discussion on Kashmir or the nature of relations with Pakistan was India’s ‘accidental’ firing of a version of the Brahmos cruise missile into Pakistan on March 9. On the other hand, the ‘dossiers’ presented by Pakistan providing conclusive proofs of India’s nefarious designs including state-sponsored terrorism and well-drafted arguments placed before the world by Pakistani diplomats have fallen on deaf ears.
Over the past few decades, Pakistan has vehemently tried to achieve its objectives on a settlement of the Kashmir dispute. May it be the UN Security Council or General Assembly or UN Human Rights Commission, no substantive positive result came out. Even floating a number of proposals such as the Chenab formula or the LoC formula or ‘proxies’ or for that matter the Simla Agreement was unable to satisfy each other’s desires. India would simply not budge, to say the least. The military route adopted in 1965 also was of no avail. The talk of an agenda of putting ‘Kashmir’ or ‘Terrorism’ first or ‘Trade without Kashmir’ kept lurking on the negotiating tables along with levelling of serious allegations and raising voices of interference in each other’s internal affairs.
Let us take a deep breath and accept that India has annexed Jammu & Kashmir while permanently putting an end to any discussion on the ‘future settlement of the Kashmir dispute’. For PM Modi, the action of August 2019 was ‘necessary to restore stability and bring economic prosperity to the region’. In the absence of any credible voice from the world against India’s action, the subject matter has squarely been put to rest, proving at least one thing beyond any reasonable doubt. The deciding factors in any international dispute are not the international law or the UN system. Eco-military might be always right and the realpolitik bishop takes over all pawns of justice and fair play with impunity.
Ten factors indicate, compel and plead for a fresh approach by Pakistan to peacefully co-exist with its hostile, larger eastern neighbour.
One: The ‘Waiting for Allah’ approach on addressing issues is not going to work as neither the international community nor a few friendly countries are concerned about what happens between Pakistan and India, particularly on the Jammu & Kashmir dispute.
Two: India with all its ills is still the bigger eco-military power and hoping for it to disintegrate is a long shot.
Three: Having nuclear deterrence is by no means a tool to address and resolve issues.
Four: Dossiers, calls on the world, Press Releases, demarches and two-way allegations are likely to continue with no effect. The world has not heeded to even the unbiased reports on India’s human rights’ violations.
Five: No arrangement or proposal has worked. Now after the August 2019 actions by India, all future proposals on Kashmir are already made ineffective unless history, which seems to be on India’s side, springs a surprise.
Six: Incidents like the arrest of Kulbushan Jadhav, Abhinandan’s embarrassment, Samjhota Express and now the accidental missile firing is not likely to stop occurring. One will not be surprised if tomorrow India starts violating the LoC again or creates further hurdles in the implementation of the Indus Waters Treaty.
Seven: There is no guarantee that after Modi, any new PM would have the political guts to reverse India’s August 2019 actions or offer Jammu & Kashmir to Pakistan on a platter.
Eight: Internal divisions, political instability and striving for economic stability are likely to keep New Delhi and Islamabad busy at least for the foreseeable future. Commencement of bilateral trade without touching Kashmir could prove to be the right step in the right direction. But why would India take a step that goes in Pakistan’s favour?
Nine: Major powers like the US, China, Russia or Europe are not going to forego India’s usefulness in the economic field or its assumed police man’s role in the region.
Ten: A final decision amongst ‘selected’, ‘imported’ or ‘real’ governments coupled with severe economic and security challenges are likely to keep Pakistan busy for a long time to come. There is hardly any time left to cry over spilt milk.
War between India and Pakistan does not seem to be an option anymore. Not on Kashmir at least. The lessons learned from previous wars and May 1998 have made the two arch-rivals a bit wiser. In any case, conquering Pakistan was never an objective for India particularly in view of its inability to handle streaks of separatist movements creating problems inside its own territory. India wants a ‘compliant’ Pakistan to pursue its national agenda and to keep pleasing its western masters in their China-containment pursuit.
Guessing and calculating another provocative ‘adventure’ from India seems to be a futile exercise unless both sides reach a kind of ‘understanding’ on not crossing the ‘red-line’. A few skeptics believe that perhaps such an ‘understanding’ is already reached through the channels that revisited the Ceasefire Agreement. In any case, after experiencing the ‘accidental’ firing of a missile from India, it was time for Pakistan to draw a line and keep an adequate and proportionate response handy, just in case. There must be a limit to the doctrine of restraint. The fact remains that co-existing peacefully and focusing on addressing own issues is by far the best option.