**India-Pakistan Equation**

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Secular and liberal activists in Pakistan were always dejected by the jingoistic rhetoric of jihadist hawks at home. Now the outshining firework by the Indian brand has totally dampened their dreams for a peaceful and prosperous South Asia.

Groomed under Mahatma Gandhi’s secular ideology, the Indian intelligentsia had traditionally been liberal and pacific. They remained so for as long as the Indian National Congress remained in sway. Those saner voices have long died down. The firebrand Indian microphone warriors are now spewing fire from their mouths. Pakistan aside, these fifth-generation warriors are not sparing even the basic faith and religion of Muslims. “These (Muslims) are actually not the dwellers of this world. They believe that this world is a transitory place and their actual abode is in the hereafter,” the hate emitting Major Gaurav Arya shocked by uttering in a video debate several days back.

In their Hindutva-inspired contempt, they forget that Muslims are heirs to a shining civilization that has ruled the world for many centuries rendering unparalleled contributions to human civilization. Western historians, like Edward Gibbon, have documented proof that modern Europe has inherited much of its civilization from medieval Islam.

India itself was in abject darkness before the advent of Muslim monarchies. Syed Sulaiman Nadvi has, in his Urdu book Hindustan Me Hindustani, presented a long list of names and institutions lent by Islamic civilization to India.

The Indian fifth-generation war brigade is also actively playing up the issue of ethnic and linguistic nationalism in Pakistan.

In several podcasts over the previous weeks, Indian anchors taunted Pakistanis for the surrender of their Army in Bengal. Nationalists in Pakistan believe that Pakistan Army was more defeated by their own Bengali brethren, rather than India.

The sense of deprivation among the Bengalis at the hands of their western wing was writ large on the walls of Dhaka and other cities of East Pakistan as the Army marched from city to city.

A big disadvantage to the Army was that it fought thousands of miles away, deep inside the enemy territory.

Lt General (Retired) KJS Dhillon, a former Kashmir-fame Indian Army General, excelled in all the jingoes in India and Pakistan when he said, “we crossed the international boundary. We hit inside proper Pakistan. We breached the Pakistan air defence system. We hit and we came back safely.” The General spoke of the Balakot air raid by Indian Air Force, in a recent interview with Smita Prakash.

While the General remembered the Balakot air raid, he failed to justify why Abhinandan landed in Pakistan. Was he dropped from his jet’s window? India flew Abhinandan, and Pakistan shot him down.

The Indian fifth-generation war brigade is also actively playing up the issue of ethnic and linguistic nationalism in Pakistan. Nationalist tendencies have certainly dominated the politics of Pashtoons, Balochs, Sindhis, and Siraikis in south Punjab. All these communities have their grievances against the federation or dominant Punjab.

But it is a misconception that anyone can use this card against Pakistan. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, much like the Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam leaders, did oppose the creation of Pakistan. But as soon as Pakistan was established, he adapted his politics to the new reality.

He even invited Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to his native Shahi Bagh residence in Charsadda. Jinnah did accept his invitation and reached Peshawar for the purpose. But unfortunately, he fell prey to palace intrigues and was misguided by the local Muslim League leaders who had apprehensions that once the popular Khudayee Khidmatgar appears on the scene, their game would be finished.

Today, not even five per cent of Pashtoons and Sindhis would opt against Pakistan if they are given a choice. The proportion of anti-Pakistan tendencies might be slightly high among the deprived Balochs but to the most, they would not exceed 20 per cent.

India might plead that Pakistan is abetting the separatist movement in Indian-occupied Kashmir. But the question is why Pakistan is not doing so for other millions of Muslims in India. The separatist uprising in Indian-occupied Kashmir is an indigenous movement, that both Pakistan and India need to resolve amicably – even the Third Option be put into consideration if regional peace requires it.

The fact remains that the Indian state is no more secular and Sangh Parivar’s Hindutva has converted it into a hate-based non-tolerant entity. At the UN Human Rights Council’s recent Universal Periodical Review of India, 21 states, including Germany and Canada, rebuked New Delhi for the rampant violence and hatred against minorities, particularly Muslims in Indian society.

Neither India nor Pakistan can submerge each other. Both are destined to exist. Hindus and Muslims did co-exist for many centuries. Rather than living in a perpetual state of war, they ought to take pity on their poverty-stricken people. This is the call of history.

People from both sides would rather reap a bumper harvest if both neighbours shift their paradigms from geopolitics to geo-economics. Both countries are situated at the confluence of West Asia, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. If they just open their borders for trade and exchanges, their people will find the vast steppes of Central Asia and abundant coasts of Southeast Asia offering a prosperous future to their future generations.

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