

Jammu and Kashmir: Victim Of Britain's Imperial Legacy

by Ramtanu Maitra

A victim of outside instigators and poor governance by both New Delhi and the state government, the Indian part of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) state continues to seethe in violence, with no end in sight. During the last three months, at least 100 of the stone-throwing protestors in the Kashmir valley have lost their lives challenging the Indian security forces stationed to maintain law and order. Now, it is up to New Delhi and the J&K government to formulate a policy to bring normalcy back to people's lives. It is also necessary to find a mechanism to ensure that no such prolonged violence occurs again in the future. To expect anything further in the present context, in the region, is nothing but a dream. Let me explain why.

The reason that the Kashmir dispute cannot be resolved by anyone other than the two parties involved, is that the third force, which is promoting an independent Kashmir, is being pushed from London. Soon after the Kashmir dispute broke open in 1947, following the British-organized partition of India, the largest migrant group from Pakistan to appear in the U.K. was Punjabi-speaking Muslims—from the Pakistani Punjab, as well as the Pakistan-held part of Kashmir.

The migrants from the disputed Kashmir are called Mirpuris. They are not ethnic Kashmiris, but Punjabi-speakers from the Pakistani Punjab, whose families had settled in the Mirpur area of Kashmir generations ago. The British intelligence agency MI6 built up a strong anti-India lobby in J&K with the help of the Mirpuris, and encouraged the demand for an independent Kashmir. At the same time, MI6 lent a hand to Pakistani intelligence, the ISI, to carry out terrorist acts within the India-held part of J&K, which would undermine India's efforts to stabilize the area. The policy has not worked so far, but a royal mess has been made, thanks partly to India's misguided, and often ruthless, policies.

The Break-Up of India

The Kashmir dispute is a British imperial legacy, designed to prolong a conflict between two newly born nations—India and Pakistan—created by the British Raj in 1947 in its drive to break up the subcontinent. Left as one of the many princely states (almost 550 of these states existed, which were not formally incorporated into the British Raj), which were left with the option of joining either India or Pakistan, or remain independent, the Muslim-majority princely state of Kashmir, under a Hindu king, opted to accede to India, as armed invaders from Pakistan were advancing on his capital, Srinagar. That was the beginning of the Kashmir dispute.

The resulting Indo-Pakistani war of 1947-48 divided the state, reflecting the status of forces on the ground. Since then, Pakistan has controlled “Azad” (Free) Kashmir and the adjacent Northern Areas, while India remained in control of two-thirds of the former princely state. The Karachi Agreement, signed by India and Pakistan in July 1949, formally established the ceasefire line in Kashmir, which was supervised by a modest number of UN observers.

But, from the very outset, Pakistan, which was under British control, propagated to the world that its survival depended on getting Kashmir into its fold. That obsession of the Pakistani elite was fully exploited by the former British rulers to create not only a state of permanent hostility between India and Pakistan, but also to try to pave the way for an independent Kashmir, wholly dependent on its creator—Britain.

Over the years, particularly following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the final days of 1979, the United States and the rest of the Western world poured money and arms into Pakistan, which was under the military dictatorship of Gen. Zia ul-Haq, to carry out a proxy war against the Red Army. At the time, Islamabad, besides carrying out the mission to defeat the

FIGURE 1
Jammu and Kashmir



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Soviets in Afghanistan, also set up various terrorist groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Sipah-e-Sahiba Pakistan (SSP), and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen-al-Islami (HUMI), among others, whose principal objective was to spread terrorism within the Indian part of Kashmir. Zia, who was close to the Saudi rulers, and a follower of orthodox Deobandi School, the flip side of Wahhabism, the Saudi-version of Sunni Islam, used these virulent Sunni groups to infiltrate the Indian part of Kashmir, and spread hatred towards the Hindu population there.

Bring in the Wahhabis

Years before the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Afghanistan in 1989, and the American disengagement from that country, Pakistani President Zia ul-

Haq had come to realize that an armed conflict with India for the purpose of annexing Kashmir was a non-starter. (After three wars with India, despite what London said, or the arms Washington sold, it finally dawned on Rawalpindi that the Indian military is fully capable of crippling its Pakistani counterpart.) Zia concluded that the cheapest and most convenient way to “bleed” India was through a resurgence of Islamist jihadis.

It was Zia who unleashed, in the mid-1980s, while the Soviet Army was still in Afghanistan, “Operation Topac,” to infiltrate and promote religious extremism inside India as a new weapon. More important than annexing Kashmir, Zia’s aim was to reinvigorate the “anti-

India nationalism” in Pakistan. Religious extremism was unleashed in the Indian part of Punjab, bordering J&K, in the 1980s, when a Khalistani movement was launched, using Sikh religious fanatics and some disgruntled locals.

While the violence in the India-held part of the disputed state made the headlines, violence also prevailed in the Pakistan-held part. The Pakistan side, which had been broken up into Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas, was largely inhabited by Shi’as. In 1948, Shi’as and Ismailis, one of many branches of the Shi’ite hierarchy, constituted 95% of the population. Now, reports indicate that the Shi’as and Ismailis represent only 53% of the population there, and Wahhabis now constitute 42%. In other words, to facilitate “Operation Topac,” Zia unleashed a violent anti-Shi’a movement on the Pakistani side, to bring in the Sunnis, with their Wahhabi-like orthodoxy, and virulent anti-India zealotry.

At a seminar in New Delhi in 1999, Indian security analyst Afsir Karim pointed out that the covert campaign to introduce fundamentalist Islam in Kashmir was designed to alienate Kashmiri Muslims and create a communal divide between Hindus and Muslims. Muslims were urged to overthrow the regime and demand independence. All material and military assistance was provided to Kashmir militants by Pakistan. As a result, over the years, intimidated Kashmiri Hindus left the valley en masse, making the valley almost 100% Muslim-inhabited.

‘Advantage’: The Pakistani Army

There are reasons why the Pakistani elite, under the influence of Pakistan’s only national institution, the Army, allowed this situation to develop. To begin with, the 1972 separation of Bangladesh, which was formerly East Pakistan, was widely accepted within Pakistan to have been the handiwork of India. Therefore, any effort to take over the Muslim-majority Kashmir from India is considered as a valid retaliatory action. In addition, the reason that democratic forces within Pakistan failed to gain ground, and remained submissive to the armed



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forces, is that the *raison d’être* for the power of the Pakistani military, is the projected threat from India. If Pakistan puts a halt to supporting the anti-India terrorists and other dissidents, it is not altogether unlikely that India will pull many of its troops back from the Pakistan borders, thus reducing the threat of an Indian attack on Pakistan. That, then, will, no doubt, undermine the Pakistani Army’s claim that it should be in control of Islamabad, because of the Indian threat.

As a result, over the years, a myth has been created through a sustained campaign, and that myth has come to be accepted as the self-evident truth. According to the myth, resolution of the Kashmir dispute is the only way to usher in a durable peace between India and Pakistan. In the forefront of this campaign is the Paki-

stani military, backed by London and Riyadh, and often, as well, by some in Washington. Nonetheless, the fact remains that while a judicious resolution of the Kashmir dispute, brought about by Islamabad and New Delhi, in collaboration with the Kashmiris residing on both sides of the disputed Line of Control, will surely help the Kashmiris, it will do little to help India-Pakistan relations.

Furthermore, despite huge problems that Pakistan faces on its western frontiers due to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the growth of terrorism in the tribal areas and Balochistan, and Washington’s ostensible efforts to eliminate the Pakistani Taliban and al-Qaeda which are sheltered inside Pakistan’s tribal areas, the Pakistani military remains “India-centric.”

In his new book, *Obama’s Wars*, Bob Woodward reports on crucial visits undertaken by CIA chief Leon Panetta and National Security Council chief Gen. James Jones to Islamabad, to convey Obama’s warning that the U.S. would have no other option but to respond, if Pakistan did not take decisive action against terrorists and their safe havens. Woodward reports that after meeting President Asif Ali Zardari, Panetta and Jones met Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, to tell the Pakistani Army chief that the clock was now starting on all the four requests made by President Obama. But Kayani

refused to budge. He had other concerns. “I’ll be the first to admit, I’m India-centric,” he said, according to Woodward.

Kayani had made the same point in Rawalpindi on Feb. 4, 2010, when he told the Pakistani media that “the Pakistani Army will remain ‘India-centric’ until the Kashmir issue and water disputes are resolved.” On that occasion, he also made clear that the army plans on “adversaries’ capabilities, not intentions.” Since India’s capabilities will only get stronger, it is taken for granted that the Pakistani Army will remain “India-centric,” no matter whether Kashmir is resolved or not.

Once the Soviets moved out of Afghanistan in 1989, and the United States untangled itself from the “mess” it had helped create in Afghanistan, the British and the Saudis moved in to gain control of the terrorists, who were then engaged to force India to give up the Indian part of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the Kashmir valley. While the British objective was to eventually bring about an independent Kashmir, independent of both India and Pakistan, the Saudi objective was to spread Wahhabism, Saudi Arabia’s state religion.

British-Saudi Takeover of Pakistani Terrorists

It is evident that Britain, when it “granted” independence, did not want India to have any direct land links to Afghanistan, Russia, or Iran. In the North, when the dispute over the status of J&K arose, India’s access to the North was blocked as well. The Kashmir dispute, the handiwork of London, revealed what the British were looking for.

The MI6 mouthpiece, and link to the British colonial establishment, Eric Lubbock (Lord Avebury), was the first Member of Parliament to publicly support the Kashmiri secessionist movement. In an address to a secessionist group, JKLF (Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front), conference in London, in 1991, he also announced his support for an armed struggle, according to *The Dawn* of Karachi. In a March 1995 issue of the JKLF’s *Kashmir Report*, Lubbock condemned Indian policy in Kashmir as equivalent to what would have occurred if “Britain had been invaded in 1940,” and suffered Nazi occupation.

Although Lord Avebury is not much heard from nowadays, the British push for an independent Kashmir remains in place. Take, for instance, the case of David Miliband, the protégé of former British Premier Tony Blair. Soon after the LeT terrorist attack on Mumbai on Nov. 26, 2008, Miliband, the then-British Foreign Sec-

retary, who visited India soon after, tried to link the LeT attack to the Kashmir issue. Miliband knew well that LeT has no Kashmiri representation; it is manned by the Punjabis and British Muslims, and controlled by the Pakistani ISI, in conjunction with MI6.

On July 4, 2009, the London *Times* Online posted a revealing article, “British Islamists plot against Pakistan,” according to which: “British militants are pushing for the overthrow of the Pakistani state. Followers of the fundamentalist group Hizb ut-Tahrir have called for a ‘bloodless military coup’ in Islamabad, and the creation of the caliphate in which strict Islamic laws would be rigorously enforced. At Lahore’s Superior College, where Muqem has set up a Hizb ut-Tahrir student group, he said the organization’s aim was to subject Muslim and western countries to Islamic rule under sharia law, ‘by force’ if necessary.”

The article also stated that Abdul Muqem, who is on the faculty at the London School of Economics, said Islamic rule would be spread through “indoctrination” and by “military means,” if non-Muslim countries refused to bow to it. “Waging war” would be part of the caliphate’s foreign policy. One of HuT’s strategies in Pakistan is to influence military officers, he revealed. “In 2003, four army officers were arrested in Pakistan on suspicion of being linked to extremist groups, although the groups and men have not been named. A Hizb ut-Tahrir insider at the time claims they were recruited by the organization’s ‘Pakistan team’ while training at Sandhurst.”

HuT is a terrorist outfit, born, nurtured, and protected in Britain. Like the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka and the Mirpuri terrorists demanding an independent Kashmir, HuT is also controlled and used by Her Majesty’s Service to assassinate leaders and destabilize nations. HuT is banned in Russia, Germany, and many other nations because of its terrorist activities. In Britain, from time to time, questions have been raised about its terrorist activities, but Blair, earlier, and later, Prime Minister Gordon Brown, made clear that HuT is to be given a free hand.

Britain’s ‘Fair-Play’ Crowd Active Again

“We must do all we can to make it a top priority to solve the world’s oldest unresolved dispute of Jammu and Kashmir,” MP Kaufman said, adding that Britain needed to do “much more” to put it high on the international agenda. He dismissed the Indian criticism of Miliband’s remarks about Kashmir as unacceptable,

and warned that not paying serious attention to a resolution of the Kashmir conflict would be a strategic error.

Last July, the head of the British ruling Conservative Party and cabinet minister Baroness Sayeeda Warsi was in Mirpur. In the presence of the British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Adam Thomson, among others, Warsi said Britain would play its due role to ensure an early resolution of the Kashmir dispute. On that occasion, top Kashmiri leaders, including Sardar Attique and Muhammad Yasin, called upon Britain to exert every possible pressure on India for the early resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

On Sept. 8, 2010, Kashmir National Party (KNP) leaders Abbas Butt and Dr. Shabir Choudhry had a detailed meeting with senior officials responsible for issues related to Kashmir and South Asia at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. Issues discussed by the Kashmiri leaders on that occasion included human rights abuses, terrorism, extremism, communalism, and militant infiltration. They also emphasized that there was no military solution to the Kashmir dispute, and that it was not a religious or a bilateral dispute. The dispute has to be resolved by a peace process, and by making people of Jammu and Kashmir part of the process. In a letter to the British Foreign Secretary William Hague, the KNP sought British help on self-determination and ended saying: “Sir, we believe Britain still has an important role to play in the matter of Kashmir; and we hope that you will take some positive steps to help resolve the Kashmir dispute.”

Last August, in light of the fact that the U.S. President is scheduled to visit India in November, 11 members of a group of British parliamentarians, headed by the chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Kashmir (APPG-K), Lord Ahmed of Rotherham, sent a letter to Obama seeking urgent U.S. intervention in Kashmir. The letter said: “Since the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, and India’s subsequent refusal to adhere to the United Nations Security Council Resolution relating to self-determination of Kashmiris, citizens of Jammu and Kashmir have suffered grave human rights abuses.

“Kashmiris are denied the right to freedom of speech, assembly and movement. Kashmiris are denied basic rights guaranteed to other citizens of India as a democratic republic. As such, India has made Kashmir a permanent state of exception where citizens are treated as second class to other Indians.”

The Indian Failure

Since the dispute is now 63 years old, and the British-Saudis, in conjunction with the “India-centric” Pakistani Army, have made clear their intentions, the blame for this bloody mess must be laid at New Delhi’s doorstep.

At the very inception of the Kashmiri dispute, New Delhi, then under the writ of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, a Kashmiri, who would not allow anyone else to make any decision about “his” native state, had put its trust in the Abdullah family. Sheikh Abdullah, ostensibly an anti-feudal secularist, was hand-in-glove with the British in festering the dispute. Subsequently, his son, Farooq Abdullah, with a British wife, and Farooq’s son, Omar Abdullah, the present Chief Minister, have stayed in control of this troubled state. It is a mutual-dependence relationship, while it is well known that the Abdullah family, not only because of its ostensible closeness to New Delhi, but also being in power for so long without being able to resolve any of the problems, is strongly hated by all Kashmiris—Hindus and Muslims alike.

Gen. S.K. Sinha (ret.), a vice-chief of the Indian Army Staff, and former governor of Assam and Jammu and Kashmir, in a Sept. 29 article in the *Deccan Chronicle*, pointed out a series of self-destructive policies carried out by New Delhi: For instance, Sinha wrote: “In 1990 there was ethnic cleansing of over three hundred thousand Kashmiri Pandits (Hindu Brahmins) and several dozen Hindu temples were destroyed, but the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits was glossed over and there was a virtual blackout of information about the vandalizing of dozens of temples. In 2007, to appease the People’s Democratic Party (PDP)—a militant anti-India group in J&K, the government took the bizarre decision of providing money for the families of terrorists killed in encounters with security forces. This does not happen elsewhere in India or anywhere else in the world.”

Furthermore, New Delhi stood by as the Hindus were totally driven out of the Kashmir Valley. Sinha points out that hitherto, Indian Muslims outside Kashmir had kept themselves aloof from the issue. “But now the Jamiat-Ulema-Hind—one of the leading Islamic organizations in India—has announced a convention of 10,000 Muslims of all sects at Deoband on October 4 to express solidarity with Kashmiri Muslims.”

New Delhi’s policy over the decades can be summed



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At the inception of the Kashmiri dispute, Indian Prime Minister Nehru (left), a Kashmiri, put his trust in the Abdullah family. But Sheikh Abdullah (right), ostensibly an anti-feudal secularist, worked with the British in festering the dispute.

up as follows: Appease the protestors, secessionists, and terrorists, meeting their demands with the “hope” that that is where it would end. This is similar to feeding the crocodile. One keeps feeding the crocodile, hoping each meal will be the last. J&K extremists show that that does not work.

The second stop on the road to perdition is when the extremists start killing, after which, New Delhi orders the military to kill some of them. This creates a new impasse; and then a delegation is sent to work out a tentative peace, which is broken preemptively by the terrorists, and the whole process begins again.

Where To Go from Here?

The first thing that New Delhi must do, is to face the reality that it is the British Empire which wants Kashmir to be an independent nation, for reasons stated earlier in this article. The Saudis also want a piece of the pie, to spread Wahhabism throughout the Muslim world. India must also realize that the Pakistani military, for the reasons stated earlier, and its intelligence service, which are deeply penetrated by British and Saudis intelligence, are involved in this as well.

Secondly, New Delhi must realize that appeasement, ruthless victimization, and phony talks with delegations, will lead to nothing, and instead, will only make matters worse.

In a recent discussion forum in the *Takshashila Institution* magazine, analyst Sushant K. Singh proposed a 13-point plan for restoring order in Jammu and Kashmir. The most important of these points are:

- The modes of financing of the separatists, mostly by hawala (Islamic financial network) channels, must be unearthed, investigated, and blocked. A special joint task force of the state government, Union Home Ministry, and the Union Finance Ministry must be established immediately with an independent and specific mandate—free of any local political interference—to pursue the money trail;

- The Indian army must remain vigilant at the Line of Control and continue with its three-tier deployment to stall any attempts at infiltration by Pakistan before the winter sets in. The Rashtriya Rifle units deployed in the non-urban areas must ensure that any attempts to revive the jihadi insurgency in the state is nipped in the bud;

- In the near-term, the state police force must be equipped, trained, and reoriented for tackling public demonstrations using non-lethal means. Sufficient quantity of modern non-lethal equipment, along with trained manpower, has to be inducted into the state police;

- The intelligence setup in the state needs to be re-inforced and reformed. A mechanism must be put in place under the Governor to co-ordinate and optimally use all the intelligence resources in the state—of central agencies, army and the state government;

- The idea that Kashmiris are special must be publicly replaced by the idea that all Indians are special. New Delhi must specify that any political solution will have to be within the Indian Constitution;

- The Union government must not announce any unilateral concessions, since as they would pander to separatists and violent mobsters. Back-channel negotiations with the separatists must be started in earnest, but any political or economic packages must be pre-conditioned to reciprocation by the separatist leadership;

- Although Article 370 of the Indian Constitution has kept the state of Jammu & Kashmir secluded from the rest of the country, it is a constitutional provision and cannot be revoked or violated without the due political consensus. However, the isolation of the Valley caused by this Act must be nullified by providing better inter-connectivity among all the regions of the state.