



## Lose-Lose Situation

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The Jammu and Kashmir problem has blighted our existence since independence, draining us politically, diplomatically and militarily. Who should be blamed and in what measure? The actors have been Pakistan, India and the Kashmiris. Pakistan has used various means to either wrest Kashmir from India or to keep it as a buffer state. Pakistan largely absorbed the Muslim majority areas of Kashmir into Pakistan in 1948 itself when it occupied 2/5ths of J&K by force. It obtained vital strategic contiguity with China and India lost it with Afghanistan. Realism would have dictated a compromise solution, but hatred stumps rationality. By knocking out Pakistan aggression, India exposed the J&K issue to the cross-currents of the Cold War, the price of which we continue to pay with calls for a settlement "in accordance with the wishes of its people", a formula that tilts against India's territorial integrity, undercuts its secular polity already under stress by rising Islamic extremism and terrorism. It gives Pakistan room to continue even today its cynical pretensions of only "giving political, diplomatic and moral support for the right of the Kashmiris to self-determination".

India has remained on the defensive since and has not found the policy mix of diplomacy, force, military superiority and clarity of purpose and discourse allowing third party intervention, India itself has emboldened separatist forces in the past. In 1972, with the Simla Agreement, India bungled again in seeking a settlement. From December 1989 onwards cross border terrorism has ravaged J&K. India has had no choice but to maintain a large security presence in J&K to prevent aggression, infiltration etc, but also in the populated areas to maintain law and order and counter terrorist activity. This has exposed India as an oppressor of the Kashmiris, of acting as an occupying power, of violating the human rights of Kashmiris, of denying veritable democracy to the Kashmiris by J&K has been heavily subsidized economically by the centre but its development has suffered because of continuing instability and violence.

The Kashmiris too are culpable for the chronic disorder and disarray in the state. They have constantly exploited India's discomfiture at the hands of Pakistani circles to keep the pot boiling in Kashmir. They have ignored India's geo-political concerns and threats to its security from hostile powers.

Instead of shoring up India's secular and democratic vocation in their own interest, they have preferred a highly self-centered pursuit of their relations with the most challenging external and internal circumstances India has largely preserved J&K's autonomy, but the Kashmiris choose to overplay their hard separatist leaders confabulate openly with Pakistani leaders and work against national interest. They dialogue with India's enemy but not with Delhi.

They have let their "Kashmiriyat"- signifying a composite, non-religious view of their identity- to become increasingly Muslim-centric. There is little anguish among Muslims about the expulsion of Kashmiri pundits from the valley. The Sufi tradition is losing ground to obscurantist Arabised religious thinking.

The stone-pelting youngsters inspired by the Palestinian intifada reveals how the new generation Kashmiris look at their equation with India, and how influenced by toxic pan-Islamic propaganda networks and protest techniques. The narrative of Kashmiri victimhood has become narcissistic and tiresome. The fact, India. If the Kashmiris feel alienated from the rest of India because of the actions of the Indian government, the people of India have reason to feel because of their constant spurning of India. The Kashmiris fail to understand that they cannot win if India has to lose.

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