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## GILGIT BALTISTAN: PROVINCE, NO PROVINCE?

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Gilgit Baltistan, part of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), has been subjected to political and constitutional exclusion. It remained disenfranchised and was denied representative governance for decades until the Gilgit Baltistan Empowerment and Self Rule Order 2009 was introduced as an experiment in a quasi-democratic exercise. The region's first ever elections were held in 2009 for the local legislative assembly, and a nominally elected government was put in place. After the completion of its five year tenure, elections were held in June 2015, which saw the incumbent PPP (Pakistan Peoples Party) government being dislodged and the PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) managing to secure a comfortable majority in the assembly.

The self-rule ordinance provided enfranchisement only in a limited measure. It did not grant Gilgit Baltistan the right to send representatives to Pakistan's National Assembly. There has been a long pending debate on whether or not Gilgit Baltistan should be accorded constitutional status by merging it as the fifth province of Pakistan. In January 2014, media reports in Pakistan suggested that the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan (KAGB) had been advised to set up an inter-provincial committee to explore options in this regard. The

debate on granting provincial status to Gilgit Baltistan has gained traction in the aftermath of the recently concluded elections and elicited reactions from several quarters, including the so-called 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK).

Link with 'AJK'

Aided and abetted by the British, Pakistan took advantage of the outbreak of a rebellion in Gilgit against the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir to establish its control over the region. For a while, these areas were projected as part of the so-called 'AJK'. However, as the Kashmir issue was taken up at the UN from January 1948 onwards and the UN mediated ceasefire came into effect in January 1949, the region was separated from 'AJK' under the Karachi Pact of April 28, 1949 (signed by Mustaq Gurmani, Minister without portfolio (office), Sardar Ibrahim Khan, President of 'AJK' (part of PoK) Government, and Chaudhury Ghulam Abbas, President Muslim Conference). Under the Karachi Agreement, the leadership of 'AJK' conceded administration of Northern Areas (Gilgit-Baltistan) to Pakistan. Subsequently, while 'AJK' was immediately provided the cosmetic trappings of a state, later supplemented by an Interim Constitution in 1974, Gilgit Baltistan remained in a state of political limbo for over half a century.

Apart from geographical proximity, 'AJK' shares with Gilgit Baltistan a common political origin. Article 257 of the Pakistan Constitution governs its ties with parts of the former princely



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state of Jammu and Kashmir (read PoK) under its control. The article states: “When the people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir decide to accede to Pakistan, the relationship between Pakistan and the State shall be determined in accordance with the wishes of the people of that State.”<sup>1</sup> Presently, both entities within PoK have models of interim governance pending the final solution of the Kashmir issue. It is in view of this bond that the idea of making Gilgit Baltistan the fifth province of Pakistan has been rejected across the board in so-called ‘AJK’. Its Prime Minister, Chaudhry Abdul Majid, has categorically conveyed his apprehensions in this regard to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who also heads the Gilgit Baltistan Council – the virtual decision making body in the region that is dominated by representatives of the federal government in Islamabad. ‘AJK’s’ fears are based on the premise that Gilgit Baltistan’s exclusion from the Kashmir issue will “dent” their cause and erode existing hopes for a peaceful amicable solution.<sup>2</sup>

Gilgit Baltistan, the strategic ‘norther frontiers’, is located at the confluence of three geographical regions — southern, central and eastern Asia. It retains its geopolitical criticality, and growing Chinese interest in recent years has elevated the region’s import in the regional strategic landscape. As the territorial link between China and Pakistan, the Gilgit Baltistan region is pivotal in the scheme of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. The oft-debated question of granting a well-defined constitutional status for Gilgit Baltistan is significant in the wake of demands for absorption in Pakistan made by a section. However, besides political assuagement of local sentiment, the issue also appears set to impact a wider geopolitical calculus including China and India.

## Pakistan: challenges, costs

Gilgit Baltistan epitomises the gross contradiction in Pakistan’s Kashmir policy. Unlike

the so-called ‘AJK’, Gilgit Baltistan was denied a political status for decades because of its disputed status. On the other hand, Pakistan has invariably altered the status quo there— first by transferring a significant chunk of territory to China; and secondly by revoking the State Subject rule to alter the region’s demography. Gilgit Baltistan has been at the receiving end due to its Kashmir link despite the fact that it has not figured substantively in most political debates on Kashmir.

Notwithstanding past precedents, ushering radical change in the status quo in Gilgit Baltistan may have political costs for Pakistan. As noted, there is strong opposition from certain sections, especially ‘AJK’, to such a move. Secondly, Pakistan is likely to face stiff resistance from nationalist groups who are opposed to Gilgit Baltistan’s absorption into Pakistan. Groups such as the Gilgit Baltistan United Movement (GBUM) have rejected the idea; they are instead demanding freedom from Pakistani control. Conceding a stronger political framework could transform local politics in Gilgit Baltistan from submissive to assertive, and this could possibly come in conflict with Pakistan’s wider strategic objectives vis-a-vis the region.

Gilgit Baltistan, with its huge landmass, constitutes more than 80 per cent of the portions of the former princely state of J&K controlled by Pakistan. Even though Gilgit Baltistan’s population is much lower than of the so-called ‘AJK’, the sheer size of the region could be an asset in the territorial contestation and negotiation matrix between India and Pakistan. By politically assimilating Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan runs the risk of compromising its broader Kashmir agenda. This would also require amending the Pakistan Constitution (Article 258) – which is difficult without a decisive political mandate and the endorsement and concurrence of the all-powerful army. Therefore, the road towards making Gilgit Baltistan a province – provisional or permanent – is not going to be easy.





## China: dividends

There is already a huge geopolitical debate on the magnitude of the proposed Chinese investment in the CPEC, its network potential and the projects to be taken up within the framework. The CPEC will cut through Gilgit Baltistan before unfurling the string of mega projects in Pakistan. Simultaneously, India's rather muted reservation on the CPEC surfaced clearly after it was taken up at the highest level during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's May 2015 visit to China.

Despite mounting challenges, China and Pakistan appear determined to realize the CPEC. Pakistan has raised a strong force for the CPEC to tide over Chinese concerns on security. Showing enormous receptivity and sincerity, Pakistan is striving to weed out China's reservations.

The timing behind, and the real impetus for, a renewed consideration to make Gilgit Baltistan a province, therefore, needs to be analysed by factoring in China's long term strategy in Pakistan. In the emerging context, the renewed consideration on Gilgit Baltistan's provincial status is not simply a function of Pakistan's efforts to redress long pending popular grievances or neutralise nationalist aspirations. China's stakes in Gilgit Baltistan is also a factor propelling Pakistan to introduce a stop gap provincial arrangement — a measure contrived to contain popular resistance and apprehensions amongst locals, promote greater stability, and more significantly, deflate India's objections to the corridor being built in disputed territory.

Pakistan's bid to amalgamate Gilgit Baltistan promises huge strategic dividends for China. China is in possession of the Trans-Karakorum Tract by virtue of the provisional Sino-Pak Boundary Agreement of 1963. With a change in the political status of Gilgit Baltistan as Pakistan's fifth province, China would make significant gains – territorially and strategically. But at the same time, such a

development would have severe repercussions on India and Pakistan and their bilateral equation.

Consistently maintaining that Kashmir is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan, China has controlled the Trans Karakoram Tract since 1963. Meanwhile, the Chinese role in Gilgit Baltistan is on a solid footing with several ongoing development projects. Therefore, in Gilgit Baltistan, a status upgradation with constitutional ratification would best serve China's interests. Irrespective of its official stance on the pending final resolution of Kashmir, it is unlikely that China would desire a situation that compels re-negotiation of the Trans Karakorum Tract or winding up its activities in and via Gilgit Baltistan. Instead, the presence of PLA soldiers in the region, speculations about Pakistan leasing Gilgit Baltistan to China and the establishment of a Chinese Consulate, and the region's criticality in China's endeavour to insulate its periphery from fundamentalist forces, all indicate heightened Chinese stakes in Gilgit Baltistan.

## India: fallout, derivatives

India's official position is opposed to a change in the status quo in both parts of PoK. India lodged its emphatic protest against the Sino-Pak Border Agreement of 1963. More recently, it opposed the introduction of the Gilgit Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Rule package in 2009. Apart from this, India has expressed reservations on the phenomenal growth in Chinese-aided infrastructure building and flow of developmental investments in the region, including the much anticipated CPEC. Moreover, the entire spectrum of political groups in J&K, including the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), is against Pakistan's move to make Gilgit Baltistan a province. According to the APHC's Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the areas cannot be integrated with Pakistan unless the Kashmir issue is resolved.

The incorporation of Gilgit Baltistan into





Pakistan will further undermine India's long standing claim to the region. Yet, the move may also have beneficial consequences. It would offer an opportunity to highlight the contradictions in Pakistan's approach to the Kashmir issue and at the same time fully integrate J&K into the Indian Union.

## DEPLOYMENT OF CENTRAL FORCES IN THE NORTH EAST: NEED FOR A REALISTIC SECURITY AUDIT

Gautam Sen

While presiding over a meeting of the Chief Ministers of North-East (NE) states on July 11 at Guwahati, the Home Minister called for a realistic audit of the deployment of central security forces in the region. The Minister hinted at a reduction of these forces, given the Centre's appraisal that the internal, i.e., insurgency, situation in the region has improved, and taking into account the high level of such deployment during the past few years. The implication of the Home Minister's remarks is that the Union Government expects the NE states to bear greater responsibility for internal security management in the future. The Minister has, however, assured the chief ministers concerned that Central forces would not be denied to their states if required.

### Issues of Concern

The views of the Union Government need to be evaluated in the backdrop of the actual scenario prevailing in the North-East states over the past two to three years. Nagaland remains in a state of political ferment and continues to contend with latent insurgency. Central security forces such as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Assam Rifles have not been able to prevent extortion by the underground groups. In fact, civil society groups like the Action Committee Against Unabated Taxation have had to intervene and oppose extortion. Further, the state has continued to witness

incidents of security concern: insurgents have intercepted a state government minister's vehicle and shot at a chief minister's media adviser; more than one insurgent group has engaged in hostile activities in the wake of the NSCN(K)'s withdrawal from its ceasefire accord with the Centre; and a total collapse of the law and order machinery occurred in Dimapur over an alleged rape case. The issue of autonomy in the eastern Nagaland districts of Mon, Kiphre, Tuensang and Longleng has not yet been put to rest. In addition, a significant border fracas had occurred in the disputed areas of Golaghat and Wokha districts of Assam and Nagaland, respectively.

Nor have other NE states, with the exception of Tripura and Mizoram, been completely free of the activities of anti-national elements. Border management, particularly with Myanmar, remains an issue as was evident during the recent assault on the army contingent in Chandel District of Manipur. Hostile action has also been prevalent in the Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh. Though the activities of the Garo National Front in Meghalaya and the Songbijit faction of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland have been contained to a great extent, they still retain the potential to disrupt public life. The situation in the Bodoland Territorial Area District, comprising Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri and Kokrajhar, are not totally free from communal tension.

It is undeniable that the primary responsibility for maintaining law and order as per the constitutional provision rests with the state government. However, the fact of the matter is that over the years the capacity of the NE states to ensure credible security has eroded. The causes are many, including declining administrative ability, financial mismanagement, inappropriate recruitment, etc. An interesting fact is that in some of the NE states the strength of the police establishment is nearly 30 per cent of the total personnel strength (which itself







is very high vis-à-vis the population of the State) of the state government concerned. Despite financial support from the Centre for upgrading the state police's operational capacity, apart from the deployment of Central forces, the overall situation has been in a state of flux and even sensitive in some areas of the region. In fact, continued dependence on the Centre has led to a situation where state governments expect the Union Government to step in every time the security situation deteriorates.

The Centre had been executing a police modernisation scheme for the states. This scheme, broadly financed by the Centre, involves augmentation of the state police's permanent infrastructure, their equipment and logistics, and also provides for the raising of India Reserve Battalions (IRBs). The operational-cum-maintenance expenditure, as per the scheme, was borne by the states. This scheme has benefitted the NE states substantially.

But apropos the 14th Finance Commission's recommendations, the Union Government has totally de-linked the police modernisation scheme from Central assistance beginning with the current financial year. This decision will adversely impact the ability of NE states to assume greater responsibility for maintaining their internal security situation. The Union Government could have drawn up a plan for the gradual reduction of Central financial support for the NE state police forces, instead of withdrawing it totally and, that too abruptly. The likely adverse impact of this move was highlighted by no less a person than a Member of the Finance Commission (in a dissenting note on the recommendations made). One outcome of this decision could be that, eventually, more Central forces might be required at select areas and locations since support from the state police may not be adequate when the need arises. In the ultimate analysis, it is finances and political will that are likely to matter.

The finances of the NE states are, however, not robust enough to enable them to increase internal security expenditure. As a consequence of the 14th Finance Commission's recommendations, total Central assistance (inclusive of tax devolution and grants) to these states will de-facto decline because the outflow of Central funds to the states will reduce consequent upon the Union Government eliminating Central assistance from schemes like police modernisation, backward regions grant funds, etc. This will compel these states to deploy a higher proportion of funds for developmental expenditure from their own resources. The resultant financial situation may not enable the NE states to upgrade their police machinery. And there will be a consequential fall-out in the security sphere.

## Way Forward

An audit of the deployment of Central forces as hinted by the Union Home Minister may be worthwhile, provided it is undertaken holistically, i.e., by taking into account numerous relevant audit reviews carried out earlier by the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG). The North Eastern Council (NEC), which has a security adviser, could be associated with this exercise. But the NEC has not been allowed to perform its inherent security role by both the Centre and the NE state governments. In this backdrop, the Inter-State Council (ISC) machinery, which has a wide ambit under Article 263 of the Constitution to delve into matters of common interest to some States and the Centre, could be activated.

The security audit, to be done in a realistic frame, may include some interlocutors (with experience in the intelligence apparatus) who had interacted or are interacting with insurgent groups, and one or two officers (serving or retired) of the C&AG's department at the level of Deputy Auditor General (Secretary equivalent) given their understanding of the functioning of the state





government machinery at various tiers as well as their independence of approach. The outcome of the security audit may be considered and decided upon by a group of the ISC consisting of the Union Home Minister and the NE Chief Ministers, before final approval by the Prime Minister. This may be a politically acceptable way to bring about more discipline in internal security management and optimisation in resource deployment.

## DECIPHERING PAKISTAN'S KASHMIR LEXICON

**Prabha Rao**

Kashmir has been claimed by Pakistani leaders as central to their foreign policy. But a closer look shows that it has been more of a political convenience for Pakistan since 1947, both as a smokescreen to cover up endemic deficiencies and as a convoluted foreign policy mechanism to use state sponsored terrorism in the quest for “strategic depth” – a concept which is increasingly viewed as illusory.

### Exploiting the Kashmir Protests

A cursory glance at Pakistan's current lexicon on Kashmir demonstrates both these above aspects. After the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen leader Burhan Wani on July 8 in Kokernag, Anantnag district, barbed references have been made by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his cabinet members eulogising Wani as a martyr and emphasising anti-Indian, anti-Hindu, sentiments in the Valley. Much of this was in fact underwritten by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The Pakistani cabinet, not so subtly, declared July 21 as Kashmir Black Day, to coincide with elections in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The result was the ruling PML-N winning a landslide victory with 31 of the 41 seats. Nawaz Sharif, who was under a cloud due to his family connections with shell front companies allegedly involved in money laundering which had been disclosed in the Panama papers,

and also under threat from a section of the armed forces and public obliquely supporting Chief of Army Staff, General Raheel Sharif, seized the opportunity to proclaim his political relevance and resilience. The leitmotif of his victory speech at Muzaffarabad was “*Kashmir banega Pakistan*”, which was repeated in his Independence Day address on August 14. Pakistan's President, Mamnoon Hussain, reiterated the message in his address to the nation. As did Pakistan's High Commissioner to India, Abdul Basit, who emphasised Islamabad's unswerving commitment to the Kashmir cause, testing the already strained relations with India.

These Independence Day speeches reflected the current reality in Pakistan, where the emphasis was primarily on terrorism; paeans of praise for the success of Operation Zarb-e Azb, criticism of terrorist attacks from Afghanistan, and of course the Kashmir issue. There was no talk about economic growth, job creation, or any serious development agenda. The rhetoric on the Kashmir issue is now serving as an effective smokescreen for the flailing economy and fractured politics of the country.

### Pakistan's Diplomatic Campaign

At the multilateral level, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, requested the Islamabad-based Ambassadors of the member countries of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir, which comprises Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Niger, to raise their voice against “the blatant human rights violations” affecting Kashmiri Muslims in the Valley. Subsequently, the Secretary General of OIC, Iyad bin Amin Madani, (former Saudi minister for Information and Hajj), going beyond the usual litany of the Kashmiri right to self-determination and a referendum as per UN resolutions, publicly stated on August 21 that Kashmir was not India's internal problem but an





international issue given humongous human rights violations. He exhorted the international community to raise its voice against alleged Indian atrocities. And added that the OIC contact group would meet in New York in the run-up to the United Nations General Assembly session, where Nawaz Sharif would be delivering an emotive speech on the situation in Kashmir, and warned that several groups would be demonstrating against Prime Minister Modi there. The OIC Chairman's speech was uncharacteristically harsh, and indicative of the sustained campaign launched by Pakistan regarding Kashmir.

Later, the President of PoK, Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan, and Prime Minister of PoK, Raja Farooq Haider, in a statement issued on August 25 following the swearing in of the former, pledged that they would ensure that "the blood offered by the men, women and children in Kashmir in the current struggle will not go vain." Muhammad Masood Khan, a career diplomat, who was earlier Foreign Ministry spokesperson and Ambassador to China in addition to a successful stint as Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, has been nominated as PoK President to further Islamabad's Kashmir agenda in the UNGA. In his inaugural speech, Masood Khan emphasised that Kashmiris needed to increase their outreach and multiply their friends to influence powerful countries and multilateral agencies. He noted that "[t]he UN will not come to us, we will have to go to the UN to remind it of its seemingly forgotten commitments on Kashmir."<sup>1</sup> He also added that Islamabad needs to work on the UN Secretary-General and influence him to use his good offices and appoint a special emissary for Kashmir without waiting for consent from India, as New Delhi was not prepared to accept mediation. Significantly, Masood Khan has also spoken about the necessity of cultivating sympathetic sections of India's political class and civil society in order to put pressure on the Government for agreeing to bilateral

talks on Kashmir with all stakeholders.

It is interesting to note that Congress leader Saifuddin Soz has publicly asked for the revival of Pervez Musharraf's four point action plan for Kashmir, which contemplates:

- i. status quo on borders to remain, with people on either side of the Line of Control (LoC) allowed to move freely;
- ii. autonomous status (not independence) to Jammu and Kashmir along with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir for internal management;
- iii. troops to be withdrawn from the region in a phased manner; and
- iv. a joint mechanism, with Indian, Pakistani and Kashmiri representatives, to supervise the implementation of such a road-map for Kashmir.

While the Musharraf plan has no legal basis either in the UN recommendations or the Constitution of India as regards autonomous status for Kashmir, Soz's statement provides a tailwind for Islamabad's international initiatives, given that such opinions are being voiced by members of mainstream political parties in India.

## Pakistan's Plans for the UN General Assembly Session

Nawaz Sharif's chief international strategy is now focussed on the 71st UNGA session (September 13-26), where Islamabad wants to highlight what it terms India's bellicose jingoism in Kashmir. Sharif has appointed 22 "envoys" to work globally and sensitise countries about the situation in Kashmir before the UNGA session. Given below is a communication from the Pakistan Prime Minister's office appointing the Envoys and the countries they are to concentrate upon. Pakistan's Opposition and sections of the media have questioned these appointments, as all the appointees are from the







treasury benches, and most of them have tardy attendance in parliament – their chief qualification being proximity to the establishment.

## Pakistan's Continued Use of Terrorism

Pakistan's Kashmir script is being enacted, and to a large extent written by, state-sponsored actors, headed by Hafiz Saeed of the Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT)/Jamaa't ut Dawa (JuD) and ably supported by Masood Azhar and his cohorts of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Syed Salahuddin of the Hizbul Mujahideen, as well as minor terrorist *dramatis personae*. The US country report on Pakistan states unambiguously that

“Pakistan did not take substantial action against the Afghan Taliban or HQN, or substantially limit their ability to threaten U.S. interests in Afghanistan, although Pakistan supported efforts to bring both groups into an Afghan-led peace process. Pakistan has also not taken sufficient action against other externally-focused groups such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), which continued to operate, train, organize, and fundraise in Pakistan.”

This report is borne out by the statements given by Bahadur Ali, alias Abu Saifullah, a resident of Raiwind, Lahore, who was arrested on July 25 in Yahama village in Handwara in North Kashmir. Bahadur Ali, who is a regular LeT cadre and Falah e Insaniyat Foundation activist, claimed that he was given three training sessions by the LeT – the ‘Daura-e-Tulba, which is the basic ideological training at Manshera in the year 2013, the ‘Daura-e-Aam’ which focused on arms training at Aksha camp near Muzaffarabad in 2014, and ‘Daura-e-Khas’, which involved training in the use of sophisticated arms and communications equipment at Tabook camp near Muzaffarabad in 2016. He was then infiltrated into India from the Mandaku area of PoK with the active assistance of the Pakistan Army on the LoC. According to him,

officers who were called ‘Major Sahib and Captain Sahib’ by the trainees in the camp briefed them about the objectives in Kashmir, which included causing disaffection, engendering pro-Pakistan pro-Salafist sentiments, causing violence by lobbing grenades at security forces etc.

This information has been corroborated by another LeT cadre, Mohd. Naveed, who was arrested following an attack on a BSF convoy at Udhampur in August 2015. Bahadur Ali was in touch with his Pakistani handlers on a real time basis, with instructions given to him from a control room called Alpha-III which is said to be located in PoK. Communication was being carried out using Japanese I-com radio sets that had been modified to give them an enhanced range, a process which requires considerable technical skill. Similar sets have been seized by the NDS in Afghanistan and President Ashraf Ghani has openly accused the ISI and LeT of engineering terrorist attacks in Kabul.

Red Corner Notices and a USD 10 million bounty on his head notwithstanding, LeT's Hafiz Saeed is one of Pakistan's designated ‘good’ terrorists who enjoys state privileges comparable to a serving minister. He has been permitted to file a preposterous public interest litigation in the Lahore High Court on August 12, seeking directives for Nawaz Sharif's cabinet to agitate the Kashmir issue at the Security Council in order to exert pressure on India to follow the Security Council's resolution passed in April 1948. The designated international terrorist was allowed to hold a public rally on Pakistan's Independence Day in Lahore, when he urged the Army Chief Rahil Sharif to send troops into India to teach it a lesson in order “to avenge the brutalities of Indian forces on Kashmiris.”

Similarly, Syed Salahuddin, alias Mohammad Yusuf Shah, of the Hizb ul Mujahadeen, in an interview to the *Times of India* on September 4 warned that he will turn Kashmir into a





“graveyard” for the Indian armed forces and unleash an army of fidayeen because the region has been turned into a “concentration camp”. Salahuddin, who normally resides in Pakistan, has five sons who are being supported in various ways by the Indian government – one son serves in Sri Maharaja Hari Singh Medical College, another is a research scholar in the University of Agricultural Sciences, and a third is doing his M Tech. It can be safely presumed that none of his five sons will join the proposed fidayeen army, and Salahuddin will continue to enjoy the patronage of Islamabad and encourage minor children to stand in the line of fire during riots, many of which are being nurtured and fed from across the border.

Meanwhile, on August 7, the Lashkar-e-Islam, a relatively unknown Salafist group headed by one Abdul Qayoom Najar, who was originally a Hizbul militant, has issued posters in Pulwama threatening Kashmiri Pandits and asking them to leave the Valley or be ready to face the consequences.

Earlier, in May 2015, Lashkar-e-Islam posters appeared in Sopore asking telecom operators to shut shop in North Kashmir, and subsequently some telecom operators were killed by the LeI. Stymying Indian telecom operators appears to be yet another attempt to distance the Kashmiri public from the Indian state.

## Radicalisation in the Valley

Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who often decried the lack of dialogue with New Delhi, refused to meet a small group of Opposition members of parliament headed by Sitaram Yechury on September 4 on the grounds that there was no basis for talks. Hurriyat leaders have made it clear that Home Minister Rajnath Singh’s objective of holding talks in Srinagar with “individuals & groups who want peace & normalcy in Kashmir,” cut no ice with them, as it did not address any Pakistani claim or separatist agenda. Meanwhile, there are now three

threads of narratives within Kashmir – pro-Pakistan, pro-Azadi, and pro-Salafist Islam – with calls for Nizam-e Mustafa, and Khalifat-e Rashida gaining considerable currency. Pakistan-sponsored terrorists have fed a toxic narrative into the valley, espousing a recidivist Takfiri form of Islam, which is far removed from the original Sufi ideology of Mir Syed Ali bin Shahab-ud-Din Hamadani, Hazrat Khwaja Naqshband Sahib, Hazrat Noorud Din, and others, which characterised Kashmir. While Pakistan has used the rabid Islam card to try and distance the Kashmiri public from the Indian state, it has planted seeds of Islamic extremism that could prove far more dangerous in the long term than clarion cries of Azadi, which the protestors and the sponsors are both aware will not come to pass.

## Finance for the Protests

Illegal money flows into the Valley through Pakistan-sponsored agents have given impetus to both armed protests and radicalism. Large transfers of money from Pakistan have been traced by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is tracking some 22 bank accounts in south Kashmir that received money from unaccounted sources and had the same withdrawn during the time of the current unrest. A case in point is that of JKART (Jammu Kashmir Affectees Relief Trust), a Pakistan-based front outfit of Hizbul Mujahideen. The trust, which was floated in 1999 by Syed Salahuddin in Rawalpindi and sponsored by the ISI, was regularly raising funds in Pakistan and sending it to India through both regular banking channels as well as Hawala networks. According to the NIA, around Rs. 80 crore was routed through JKART to India over eight years and distributed to various accounts some of which functioned only to facilitate transfers and then shut down. Witnesses in Kashmir have spoken about payments being given to protestors by the Hurriyat and Hizbul Mujahideen elements to throw stones and attack convoys. Sustained efforts have been made to ensure that minor





children are the first line against security forces, and thus become victims of pellet guns and lathi charges, which leave crippling injuries. There is cynical disregard for human life in the quest for emotionally charging the local population with visuals of child victims, and to broadcast Kashmir's disconnect with the Indian state. The current round of conflict has been concentrated in southern Kashmir, the main constituency of the PDP, to demonstrate to Kashmiris and the rest of the world that Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti has lost her political relevance and that the PDP's coalition with the BJP has no real mandate in the state.

### Modi's References to Baluchistan and PoK

Nawaz Sharif's government, which was hoping to cash in on the current Kashmir conflict in the UNGA, has been rattled by Prime Minister Modi's reference to human rights violations in Baluchistan, Gilgit and Baltistan, and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in his Independence Day address to the nation. The chief minister of Balochistan, Sanaullah Zehri, decrying Modi's comments, castigated Brahamdagh Bugti, the grandson of the late Baluch leader Akbar Bugti and leader of the outlawed Baloch Republican Army (BRA), for supporting Modi. Anti-Indian demonstrations were held at Quetta, Harnai, Khuzdar, Mustang, Noshki, Sui and Dera Bugti, apart from a shutter down strike in Bolan and Dhadar. And Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafizur Rehman has stated that Modi raised the issue of Gilgit-Baltistan, PoK and Baluchistan because he is feeling beleaguered both by the Kashmir protests and the growing cooperation between China and Pakistan on CPEC.

### The way forward

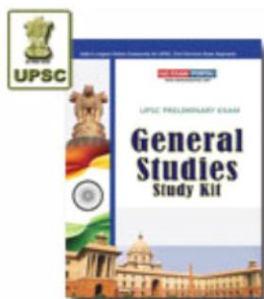
The Government of India, and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in particular, are in a quandary about suitable crowd control mechanisms in Kashmir. According to officers in the CRPF, security forces use force in a calibrated manner, with

warnings on the loudspeaker, followed by teargas/lathis and then only pellet guns, which were considered to be less lethal than rubber bullets. Several of the protestors are not locals, as has been revealed in the statements of Bahadur Ali and Mohammad Naved, cited above. The damage caused by pellet guns, especially on children, are of course horrific, but the onus of responsibility needs to be suitably apportioned to elements across the border who sponsor the riots, and the misguided youth who have been fed a deceitful narrative without concern for their welfare or future. The MHA has now decided that a total suspension of pellet guns would not be possible, given the imperative of the security of the personnel of the CRPF and J&K police. However, it has resolved that a greater reliance would be placed on PAVA shells which contain Pelargonic Acid Vanillyl Amide, an organic compound found in chilli pepper. It derives its name from the compound, which is also known as Nonivamide, and causes extreme irritation and temporary paralysis. The Indian Institute of Toxicology Research, Lucknow, has been working on the shells for over a year now and the Tear Smoke Unit of the Border Security Force in Gwalior will be producing 50,000 PAVA shells for immediate use. However, the Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) of Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital has expressed concern about the Government's decision to use PAVA shells as capsaicin, the active chemical in the compound, could cause Periorbital Edema/Erythema, Ophthalmodynia, Blepharospasm, and respiratory failure, which could be fatal.

Any adverse publicity on this matter will act as an adrenalin shot for Nawaz Sharif, who wants to build up his anti-India arsenal for the UNGA session. Given this, the dialogue process has little chance of proceeding within the contours of the Indian constitution. Emphasis needs to be put on Modi's call for 'vikas' and 'vishwas'. The finance







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minister of J&K, Haseeb Drabu, who is the ideologue of the PDP, has also emphasised development, revival of the Kashmiri crafts industry, and government-sponsored skill development programmes. Innovative confidence building measures need to be considered expeditiously. India has failed the Valley by not countering the false narratives of Pakistan's false lexicon on Kashmir. There is a need to revive the Sufi tradition of Kashmir, and counter the imported Salafi/Wahhabi tenets that are being used by Pakistan as a vehicle to cause dissonance. India needs to re-claim its Kashmiris.

## AN ASSESSMENT OF PRESIDENT OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY

K. P. Fabian

As President Obama approaches the end of his eight-year tenure, it is time to assess his foreign policy. Any reasonable assessment should take into account two considerations. One, Obama inherited from his predecessor, George W. Bush, a toxic legacy. The much bruited about Global War on Terror (GWOT), including the eminently avoidable military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, which terminated 'the unipolar moment' over-celebrated by Charles Krauthammer following the collapse of the Soviet Union, only globalized terror and made the world more vulnerable to terror and in the process abridged civil liberties in the US and elsewhere. The second consideration is that many IR (International Relations) scholars in the US and some outside still believe that the international system resembles the solar system, with the US occupying the place of the sun and others orbiting around it. They believe that the acts of commission and omission by the US alone provide a complete account of what happens or does not happen in a crisis situation. For instance, the ongoing, seemingly unstoppable, carnage in Syria is Obama's fault according to some scholars who exaggerate what

the US can do to influence the rest of the world.

Keeping these considerations in mind, this article evaluates Obama's foreign policy on eight major issues likely to shape his legacy.

### Reconciliation with Cuba

Economic sanctions were imposed on Cuba first in 1960 when Fidel Castro, who overthrew the US-supported dictator Batista, started asserting Cuba's right over its economic resources by nationalising the properties of US companies. Under Batista, the US Ambassador was even more powerful than the Cuban President. In 1960, the CIA sent 1,500 Cuban exiles to dislodge Castro, a disastrous failure known as the *Bay of Pigs*. Yet, the US persisted by replacing pigs with mongooses, with *Operation Mongoose* including assassination attempts on Castro. Castro, in turn, sought missiles from the USSR which led to the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis when the world got very close to a nuclear war. In all fairness, the US should have ended the sanctions when the crisis was resolved. It is to Obama's credit that he exerted his utmost and accomplished a reconciliation with Cuba in 2015. Sanctions have, however, not been fully lifted yet, as the Republicans control Congress.

### The Iran Deal

In December 2007, US intelligence concluded "with a high level of confidence" that Iran had halted its nuclear weapon programme in 2003, and "with a moderate degree of confidence" that the programme remained "frozen in 2007." Instead of engaging with Iran, President Bush continued with confrontation, and used the US clout with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the UN Security Council to impose asphyxiating sanctions. Resenting the sanctions, Iran started a uranium enrichment programme that could have given it enough fissile material for bombs. A disinformation campaign made sure that hardly any attention was paid to the fact the enrichment





stopped at the industrial level, far below what is required to make a bomb. In other words, Iran was punished not for what it was doing but for what its foes alleged it might do in the future.

Obama, in contrast, demonstrated a singular tenacity of purpose and superb diplomatic skill in engaging with Iran and signing a deal in July 2015. He withstood pressure from Saudi Arabia and Israel, and prevented the latter from starting a dangerous war by bombing Iran's nuclear sites. As Congress is standing in the way, some US sanctions remain.

Moving towards a nuclear-weapon-free and more peaceful world

Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize less than nine months after assuming office and without having done anything in particular to merit it. But he did promise to respect multilateralism and to restrict the use of the US military as the first option when confronted with a crisis. In a famous address in Prague in 2009, Obama said, "To put an end to Cold War thinking, we will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy... begin the work of reducing our arsenal." A new START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) with Russia was signed in Prague in 2010 setting the following aggregate limits:

- 700 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and deployed heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments;
- 1,550 nuclear warheads on deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs, and deployed heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments (each such heavy bomber is counted as one warhead toward this limit);
- 800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers, and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments.

The treaty marked progress towards a limited reduction of nuclear weapons, but it obviously does not take us to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. But the fault is not Obama's. States holding nuclear weapons are not willing to give up their weapons. However, under pressure from hardliners in the Pentagon and Congress, Obama did approve a modernisation project for more accurate weapons with lesser yield (B 61 Mod12). The project might cost up to USD one trillion over three decades. Obviously, Russia and China will respond and Obama has inaugurated a new arms race. His refusal to send troops to Syria and arms to Ukraine is sensible as will be explained below.

### The Arab Spring

When Tunisia's Ben Ali fell from power in January 2011 and Egypt's Mubarak the next month, Obama sent out signals supporting the aspirations of the people to move towards democracy. But on Libya, Obama let France and Britain persuade him to make a 'humanitarian military intervention'. Russia and China agreed to a loosely worded Security Council resolution enabling NATO to effect regime change in a crude manner and the result is Libya in a 'state of nature' with a war of 'all against all' as Thomas Hobbes would have put it. Obama has publicly admitted that it was a mistake, but the harm done to Libya is enormous and he could have prevented it by exercising better judgment.

In Syria, Obama has been without a clear policy. In August 2011, he publicly asked President Assad to leave office. But the US has been reluctant to give effective weapons such as Stinger missiles (man-portable air defence system) to the rebels supported by it because of worries about foes getting hold of them. In 2013, Obama drew a 'red line' over the use of chemical weapons and the Pentagon got ready to carry out bombing after Assad reportedly used such weapons. But subsequently Obama reversed his decision, thus inflicting a degree of







damage on his credibility as leader. And after spending USD 500 million to train 5,000 so-called moderate rebels fighting against Assad, the US managed to train only a handful. Russia stepped in by starting a bombing campaign and as of now, Russia has the military and diplomatic advantage.

However, Obama acted with wise restraint by not sending troops to Syria as it could have been a new 'Vietnam' or 'Iraq'. In any case, he did not have that option as the US had become war weary after Bush's misadventures. But, Obama need not have drawn a 'red line' if he was not ready to use his military power to take consequential action. Inconsequential words are best avoided. Obama could have prevented the ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and Levant) from taking Mosul in June 2014, but he unwisely used the situation only to put pressure on Prime Minister Al Maliki to resign. Earlier, Obama had misjudged the ISIL and called it a "JV team" (junior varsity team) of not much consequence.

## Relations with Russia

The new START (referred to earlier) followed a decision by the newly elected Obama to 'reset' the rather frosty relations that had developed with Russia during the Bush years. The reset ran into problems from time to time, but it worked until the onset of the crisis in Ukraine. The Ukraine crisis was practically the creation of the US, which supported a popular agitation started in November 2013 to unseat the elected president Victor Yanukovich, who later fled to Russia in February 2014. Putin had reason to conclude that the new government would move rapidly towards joining NATO as well as EU and make it difficult for Russia to maintain its hold on the naval base in the Crimea established as far back as 1783. As a majority of the people in the eastern part of Ukraine are of Russian stock, a separatist movement arose supported by Putin. In March 2014, Putin staged a referendum after annexing the Crimea. Of course,

what Putin did was illegal. But, keeping in mind his national security imperative, Putin had few options.

Obama personalized bilateral relations and nursed a personal hatred towards Putin, publicly demonstrated at a lunch given by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon at the 70th anniversary of the founding of the UN. Putin smiled as he raised his glass while Obama looked stern. As we all know, anger does not lead to good policy. Obama's reset has boomeranged and relations with Russia can improve only under a new president. But, Obama wisely chose not to send weapons or troops to Ukraine.

## Relations with China

Obama has more or less accepted the inevitability of the rise of China as the only power that can pose a challenge to the US. He also realises that the US and Chinese economies are virtually Siamese twins. In this context the 'pivot' or 'rebalance' to Asia announced in 2011 entailed plans to divert some of the military resources available with the winding down of the engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan to 'Asia'. The main purpose of the 'rebalance' was to reassure allies that the US intends to remain in the area and will be able to render them protection, if needed, against an assertive China.

Five years after the announcement, it is doubtful whether the allies feel confident that they can count on the US if China moves from assertiveness to aggression. The ASEAN has repeatedly failed to take a stand against China in support of Vietnam in the matter of the South China Sea. China has rejected the verdict of an international tribunal against its claims and has not stopped creating 'facts on the ground'. The pivot appears weak for now.

## The Palestine Question

Despite numerous shuttles by Secretary of State





John Kerry, there has been no progress. By taking on Prime Minister Netanyahu on the question of settlements in his first term, Obama made an avoidable mistake.

## Relations with India

Obama succeeded in bringing India into a closer defence cooperation relationship marked by the signing of LEMOA (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement) in August 2016. Critics have unfairly faulted him for not getting India into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). A comparison with what Bush did in 2008 in getting an NSG waiver for the Indo-US nuclear agreement does not hold as China's clout has grown considerably in the intervening years. Closer defence cooperation with India is part of the 'pivot'.

Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) had said that world history is the world's court of justice. History will rate Obama, the 44th President of the United States, among the top ten of the holders of that high office.

## BRINGING INDIA-NEPAL TIES BACK ON TRACK

Rajesh Singh

India heaved a sigh of relief after Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' assumed charge as Nepal's Prime Minister earlier this month. New Delhi had got tired of and frustrated with the predecessor KP Sharma Oli regime, which appeared determined to undo the new warmth that had crept into the India-Nepal bilateral after Narendra Modi became Prime Minister in May 2014. Modi was quick to congratulate Prachanda and invite him to India.

Note the contrast: When Prachanda had become Prime Minister for the first time in mid-2008, India had viewed the development with some alarm. After all, the Maoist leader didn't exactly have a track record of being India-friendly. New

Delhi's worst fears were soon realised. Ironically, India had played a crucial role in clearing the way for Prachanda's elevation, by persuading the monarchy to walk into the sunset; nudging the dominant Nepali Congress to do business with the Maoist leader; and convincing the Prachanda-led Maoists to give up arms and join the political mainstream. New Delhi had not reckoned, though, with the prospect of Prachanda forming a Government.

This change in attitude from 2008 to 2016 speaks volumes about how and where India-Nepal relations have progressed. There are indicators that the new Prime Minister will make his first official visit to India — as per a long-standing convention. It could be in September or October. New Delhi will view this positively, given that Prachanda had chosen China over India for his first official visit when he became Prime Minister in 2008.

The first few steps that the new Nepalese Prime Minister takes will set the tenor for the development of the relationship between New Delhi and Kathmandu. Prachanda has demonstrated some indication of change in style. He has admitted, "Last time I was inexperienced in the ways of competitive democracy. We (the Maoists) still had a mind-set from the insurgency years."

Admittedly, there is nothing in the statement which alludes to ties with India. But an admittance of error can be interpreted as one encompassing his attitude in general, including towards New Delhi. Moreover, given that Prachanda's Government is dependent on the Nepali Congress and a clutch of Madhesi parties that have grouped under the umbrella of what is called the United Democratic Madhesi Front — both of which are on robust terms with India — the new Prime Minister is unlikely to adopt the confrontationist posture he did eight years ago.

The India-Nepal relationship has often swung from one extreme to the other. In the last two years





alone, this tendency has been in full play, and with unfortunate results for both countries. New Delhi and Prime Minister Modi were the toast of the Nepalese leadership cutting across party lines, and of the people of Nepal, following the Indian Prime Minister's hugely successful visit to that country and his address to Parliament in August 2014. He struck a chord when he told the gathering of law-makers, "We have not come here to interfere with your internal matters, but we want to help you develop." In light of the then ongoing work in framing a new Constitution of Ne-pal that would address the concerns of all communities of the nation, Modi advised, "Those involved in writing the Constitution should have a heart like that of a *rishi* (sage) and they should think far ahead."

Modi had also, during the course of his interactions, remarked that India was prepared to accept a revised version of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in 1950. He said that Kathmandu had only to bring forth the amendments and New Delhi would sign on the dotted line, since it implicitly trusted Nepal. The New Delhi-Kathmandu bond grew stronger after India rushed in expertise and relief material within hours after a massive earthquake hit Nepal in April-May 2015, and promised any additional assistance that Nepal would ask for.

Problems began after the Constitution, shepherded by the then Nepali Congress Government led by Sushil Koirala and backed by certain opposition parties, was adopted by Parliament on the strength of numbers in the House. It had followed a so-called 16-point agreement between the Government and the opposition, which had laid down the roadmap for the new Constitution. It was instantly condemned by various Madhesi parties and Janjatis because they felt short-changed by the provisions of the Constitution. Modi's earlier advice that a consensus-driven rather than a numbers-determined approach should

finalise the Constitution had been ignored. Koirala quit as part of an earlier arrangement, but failed to get renominated as prime minister, losing out to Oli and his Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist).

India had got a whiff of the situation getting bad even as the countdown to the new Constitution began and the Madhesi leaders upped the ante. Trouble was in the air. Foreign Secretary Jaishankar was rushed to Kathmandu as Prime Minister Modi's special envoy, to persuade the leadership there to defer the adoption of the Constitution, make appropriate amendments to it, get the Madhesi and others on board, and thereafter proceed. But it was too late. Moreover, Kathmandu viewed this intervention with hostility — a brazen attempt by India to meddle in Nepal's internal matters. Adding to the sentiment were reports that Jaishankar had come armed with a set of seven amendments New Delhi wanted to see in the Constitution. The fire-fighting visit failed, and Nepal adopted the flawed Constitution in September 2015.

The India-Nepal relationship plummeted to a further low in the wake of the disruption in the movement of goods caused by the Madhesi agitation. New Delhi and Modi suddenly became villains in the corridors of power in Kathmandu. Oli and some of his senior leaders added fuel to the fire by blaming India for the 'blockade' and the resulting misery it had brought on the common citizens of Nepal. This, no doubt, served the then Prime Minister's political agenda. In the end, Oli lost the trust of both India and the larger political system of his own country, and quit.

This backdrop is necessary to understand the challenges that both Kathmandu and New Delhi face in recasting the bilateral relationship. What is most needed is the restoration of mutual trust. Here, the China factor can be a deterrent, but it should not. New Delhi realises that it would not only be futile but also non-pragmatic to expect Nepal not







to deepen ties with Beijing. However, Kathmandu must ensure that it does not engage with China in a way that can harm India's strategic interests in the region.

Finally, the Prachanda regime's success in bringing India-Nepal ties back on track will greatly depend on his domestic performance; that is where the goodwill which can give him political heft lies. He has to move swiftly to amend the Constitution; live up to the promises made during the second People's Movement (*Jan Andolan*); and get his country out of the financial morass the earthquake landed it in. According to some estimates, the economic damage the natural disaster caused has been to the tune of USD 10 billion — half the country's GDP. Nepal is already reeling under heavy external debt (almost USD 3.5 billion to the IMF, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank put together). Prachanda has his work cut out.

## NAGA 'FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT' AND ITS AFTERMATH

Pradeep Singh Chhonkar

The signing of the historic "Framework Agreement" between the Government of India (GoI) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland Issac-Muivah (NSCN-IM) on 3 August 2015 had brought glimmers of hope amongst the Naga populace. The contents of the framework agreement are, however, not in the public domain, leading to differing perceptions amongst the various stakeholders.

The NSCN-IM has been able to galvanise broad consensus amongst the Naga political and social entities with respect to its ongoing negotiations with the GoI. Prominent Naga social bodies including the Naga Hoho, Naga Student Federation, Naga Mothers Association, Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights and United Naga Council – most of whom were already amenable to the NSCN-IM's

idea of a settlement for the Nagas – have given their consent to the process. There are continuous efforts by the outfit to re-establish its clout and dominance in the claimed areas of Nagalim, including the Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Attempts by the outfit to reshape the existing construct of tribal loyalties in Eastern Nagaland has gathered pace after the defection of self-styled 'General', Khole Konyak, of the erstwhile NSCN-Khole-Khitovi (NSCN-KK) to the NSCN-IM, which was followed by a large scale defection of Konyak leaders as well as cadres.

The Nagas of Manipur, in general, are known to be supporting the ongoing peace process despite the prevailing anxiety over the contents of the framework agreement and its possible impact on their status. There is an ongoing awareness campaign on the social media in Manipur wherein the Over Ground Workers (OGWs) of the NSCN-IM have been highlighting the apathy and discriminatory policies of the Manipur government against the tribals. The outfit's attempts to create divisions among the Aimol tribe, which is mainly based in Chandel district of Manipur, and its continuous engagement with the Lamkang tribe is aimed at the merger of such smaller tribes into the Naga fold. In Assam, especially along the border areas with Manipur and Nagaland, there are attempts by NSCN-IM cadres to intimidate the non-Naga population in Naga-dominated areas which conform to the territorial claims of greater Nagalim.

Developments in the aftermath of the Framework Agreement indicate that the NSCN-IM has been engaged in a focused manner on extending its influence over the entire Naga populace. The organization is making full use of its military strength, financial prowess and strong support bases in Western Nagaland and Manipur. In areas where it is relatively weak, as in Eastern Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, the NSCN-IM is either creating divisions within existing tribal





constructs or is exploiting historical linkages with smaller tribes. The outfit's usage of terms like "shared sovereignty" and "sovereignty lies with the people" is possibly aimed at addressing vulnerabilities generated on account of its changed stance on the issue of Naga independence. Besides raising the slogan of "no integration, no solution", the NSCN-IM leaders, in an August 18 statement to the press, also hinted at walking out of the ongoing process if the issue of Naga integration is not addressed by New Delhi. This could well be part of the outfit's pressure tactics in the ongoing negotiations. And in case the talks fail, the presence of sizeable cadres along the Indo-Myanmar border in Ukhrul and in Somra areas of Myanmar could cater for armed contingency scenarios.

Other Naga factions have responded variously to the ongoing peace negotiations between the GOI and NSCN-IM. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland Khaplang (NSCN-K) has rejected any form of engagement with the GoI and is continuing with its acts of violence. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland Khitovi-Neokpao (NSCN-KN) views the ongoing process as an arrangement for the Nagas of Manipur only, and not for the Nagas of Nagaland. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland Reformation (NSCN-R), which had earlier supported the Framework Agreement, is now complaining of delays and emergent complications in the process. Finally, factions of the Naga National Council (NNC), the Manipur-based Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) and the Manipur Naga Peoples' Front (MNPf) have all expressed their disagreements with the current format of negotiations.

Likewise, some of the prominent Naga civil society organizations including the Eastern Naga Peoples' Organisation (ENPO), Naga Tribes Council (NTC), Against Corruption and Unabated Taxation (ACAUT), and Zeliangrong Baudi (based in Manipur) have all denounced the framework of the

talks. The NSCN-IM's expanding dominance in Longding, Tirap and Changlang in Arunachal Pradesh has elicited sharp reactions from the local bodies in these districts, which are currently not willing to be part of the proposed arrangement.

The GoI has undertaken significant confidence building measures, and is also trying to rally divergent stakeholders in support of the ongoing process, besides continuation of talks with NSCN-IM. The joint communiqué issued by the GoI and the NSCN-IM on the ongoing peace process, along with the release on bail of Anthony Shimrey, an important NSCN-IM functionary who was arrested on charges of arms smuggling, have generated goodwill and appreciated by the Naga public as well as civil society organizations.

However, there exist several unresolved issues, which could obstruct the ongoing peace process. These include: the issue of integration of contiguous Naga inhabited areas of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh; the demand for a separate Frontier State by the tribes of Eastern Nagaland; addressing the aspirations of the people of South Arunachal Pradesh (areas of Longding, Tirap and Changlang Districts); rising differences amongst the 'Naga political groups' whose support is essential for any accord to succeed; and visible cracks in Naga society over the non-inclusion of all stakeholders in the pursuit of an acceptable and comprehensive political solution. It remains to be seen as to how the GOI and NSCN-IM work towards resolving these extant impediments.

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## REVIVAL OF THE RUSSIAN MILITARY: AN ASSESSMENT

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Rajorshi Roy

Russia's military intervention in Syria – its first beyond its immediate neighbourhood since the end of the Cold War – highlights the significant transformation that its armed forces have gone through. The mobility and reliability of both men





and machines during the operations in Syria stand in sharp contrast to their performance during the 2008 Georgia War, when nearly two decades of neglect had exposed crippling vulnerabilities. The success of this turnaround can be attributed to the USD 300 billion 10-year modernisation programme initiated in 2010, which envisioned structural and functional changes in the armed forces. While its incipient results emerged during the Crimean takeover, it is the Syrian intervention that has provided a real insight into the qualitative shift in capabilities. One can even argue that the Syrian intervention has given a new dimension to Russia's foreign policy. This assumes significance given Moscow's attempts to project itself as a pole in international affairs. Against this backdrop, the pertinent questions are: What are the key qualitative and quantitative changes being implemented in the Russian military? And, what role do they play in influencing the Kremlin's foreign policy?

## Military Modernisation and Reforms

The 2010 modernisation programme envisaged structural reforms at three levels – personnel, equipment, and military industrial complex. As such, one of the most vital doctrinal shifts has been the emphasis on mobility and flexible deployments.<sup>1</sup> This is in sharp contrast to the mass mobilisation of the Soviet Army, which ruined the element of surprise. The focus, therefore, has been on re-organising divisions into brigades, and promoting inter-services integration. Each military district commander now controls all units in that zone, with the National Cent for Defence (NTSU) in Moscow being the supreme command and control centre. The air force, space force and aerospace defence force have been merged into the unified Aerospace Forces (VKS). A key priority also involves increasing the Russian military footprint in the Arctic, and strengthening non-conventional and cyber capabilities. Meanwhile, the much maligned conscription (*'kontraktniki'*) service has

been reduced from two to one year. Wages have been increased across the board, and housing and pension disbursement made more robust. These have helped attract personnel during a period of acute economic crisis. As a result, professional soldiers have outstripped conscripts for the first time in Russian history. Their combat readiness is being frequently tested through snap military exercises.

Moreover, the goal of modernising 70 per cent of all weapons platforms by 2020 has seen the Russian armed forces receive a wide array of both new and upgraded equipment. The most notable include: Kalibr and Kh-101 cruise missiles, Koalitsiya self-propelled guns, Armata tanks, Borei and Yasen class submarines with Bulava missiles, Ratnik body armour, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). These systems represent a significant leap of technology. More importantly, the defence industrial complex (OPK) has been earmarked to be the pivot of innovation that will spur the civilian high-technology sector. This assumes importance given the compelling need to diversify the economy.

## Limits of the Modernisation Programme

The modernisation plan, which remains a work in progress, will be severely tested by the ongoing economic crisis. The defence ministry's budget for 2016 was cut by five per cent, and the incipient social unrest will further challenge Russia's ability to consistently spend 4.5 per cent of its GDP on defence, like it did in the preceding two years. The Syrian intervention is an additional expenditure as well. Given the fixed outgo in the form of 'revenue expenditure', the crisis is likely to affect the development and acquisition of new weapons platforms. Already, the deadlines for a number of flagship projects such as the PAK DA bomber, PAK TA transport aircraft, Barguzin railway ICBMs, hypersonic missiles and aircraft carrier have been pushed back by several years. Other weapons systems have seen a massive cut in their orders. As a result, the innovation in OPK,







which was expected to be the fulcrum of rebuilding Russia's industrial base, is likely to remain atrophied.

Meanwhile, the Syrian intervention has highlighted significant gaps in Russia's existing technology. These include attack UAVs and targeting pods, and limited number of precision guided munitions. The break with Ukraine has also forced Russia to reinvent the wheel of gas turbine technology. Moreover, a number of technological innovations that Russia has introduced in Syria, namely cruise missiles, were actually developed by the 'West' in the 1990s. And the majority of its weapons platforms continue to be derivatives of Soviet technology. This highlights the significant catching up that Russia will have to do to achieve conventional weapons parity. Consequently, the salience of nuclear weapons for Russia is likely to continue to increase in the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, given Russia's historical resilience in the face of adversity, one cannot rule out the modernisation plan being reprioritised. The idea of Russia to be perceived as a great power by its citizens goes hand in glove with a strong military arsenal. This assumes significance given the asymmetrical confrontation with the 'West'. As Russia's Syrian intervention indicates, sophisticated technology is likely to gradually emerge while the available systems are upgraded. Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has pointed out that Russian VKS, Navy and armoured units have attained a serviceability of 63, 76 and 94 percent, respectively. Overall, Russia's capabilities appear to have qualitatively and quantitatively improved. As upgraded systems demonstrate their resilience, doctrinal shifts in the realm of mobility and new platforms have helped Russia project power in ways that was difficult to envisage a few years ago.

Dynamics of Military Modernisation and Russia's Foreign Policy

It can be argued that the Kremlin – particularly

after the fall in hydrocarbon prices since 2014 – has punched above its weight on the global stage despite its lack of economic competitiveness and a stagnant military. Therefore, its ability to now project power beyond its immediate neighbourhood has added a new flexibility to Russia's foreign policy. This assumes significance given Russia's attempts to project itself as a pillar of global diplomacy. Till now, the ability to influence global events militarily rested primarily with the United States. Russia's entry into this group alters the existing dynamics. In this context, Russia's use of the Hamadan airbase in Iran highlights the way it has asserted itself in West Asian geo-politics by creating facts on the ground. But having done so, the resolution of the Syrian conundrum will be a litmus test of its diplomatic skills.

Moreover, the Syrian intervention has had an accompanying benefit to Russia's defence industry as well. It has not only allowed Russia to test new weapons but also advertise new technology to potential buyers. This can have a positive salience on its arms exports, especially given the Kremlin's claims about having received a renewed interest in its weapons portfolio. While the politico-economic benefits of such transfers are well documented, what is often ignored is the 'rouble dividend' that Russia earns through exports. The additional income can cushion the economic crisis from getting worse.

However, there exist significant limits to Russia's power projection capabilities beyond its periphery. The escalation dominance that Moscow enjoys in its immediate neighbourhood diminishes exponentially away from it. The economic crisis continues to fester while the technology hurdles remain high. The modernisation plan also appears to be geared more towards the augmentation of defensive capabilities, given Russia's size and the evolving regional security landscape. This involves an increased NATO presence in the west and the



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north, the threat of Islamic terrorism from the south, and latent fears of China from the east. It is unlikely that Russia envisions a global expeditionary role in the same vein as the United States. Its focus is more likely to be on Eurasia – the area of its core interests.

Russia's plan, therefore, appears to be to raise the stakes in order to project its vital role in resolving some regional disputes. This helps dispel the notion that it can be isolated. The U.S. and Turkey have already been compelled to negotiate Syria's future with Russia. The strong posture allows Russia to bargain for a better outcome in its standoff with the 'West'. The nuanced interplay of several events involving Syrian developments, NATO military build-up, economic sanctions, and the Ukrainian crisis will involve a grand trade-off in the future. When the time comes, each party would like to hold an upper hand. Similarly, upping the ante strengthens the domestic narrative of a strong Russia resisting 'Western' pressure. It helps distract attention from the mounting economic problems within.

## NSG AND CHINA'S GRAND STRATEGIC FLIP-FLOPS: SOME PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

A. Vinod Kumar

When India responded cautiously to the international tribunal's rejection of China's claim over the South China Sea (SCS), many commentators construed it as India ceding crucial ground on an issue where a tit-for-tat response would have been more appropriate to China's 'sabotage' of India's admission to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). For South Block mandarins, a low-key diplomatic reaction to the tribunal's verdict was an opportunity to not ruffle Beijing's feathers and keep a window open for engagement with China on the NSG affair. The latter tactic seems to have been effective with the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to India – ostensibly to prepare for the upcoming G-20 and BRICS summits

in Hangzhou and Goa, respectively – opening the space for dialogue on both the NSG and SCS. While Beijing evidently wants to buy New Delhi's silence on the SCS at these summits, the possibility of a *quid pro quo* on the NSG was highlighted by the conciliatory voices in the Chinese media.

A commentary in *Xinhua* noted that India had 'wrongly' blamed China for the NSG episode, and that New Delhi should not be "downhearted as the door to the NSG is not tightly closed." This apparent toning down of rhetoric is a far cry from the days when the Chinese official media spewed vitriol on India's NSG quest, to the extent of warning India against letting "its nuclear ambitions blind itself." Is a *quid pro quo* possible or tenable for India, especially since the SCS and NSG have emerged as strategic arenas for both powers to grapple with each other in their power balancing quests? The answer may lie in understanding China's recent grand strategic behaviour, including why it blocked India's NSG bid.

## The 'hedge' finally takes-off

When the India-US nuclear deal was announced through a joint statement on 18 July 2005, followed by the NSG waiver of September 2008, the dominant perception was that the US was providing India with this special privilege as a means to counter-balance China. Though factors like India's burgeoning nuclear energy market and the need to strengthen non-proliferation by including a country with a good record were espoused, that the US simultaneously talked of making India a 'major power' underlined the *realpolitik* that drove the deal. Both the Chinese and Indian strategic communities had then rejected this notion. Nor has India substantially added to any American effort to contain China or the Chinese sphere of influence in the subsequent years.

Things seem to have changed, however, with the advent of new dispensations in Beijing and New





Delhi, with Xi Jinping showing signs of aggressive Chinese international posturing and Narendra Modi pursuing a proactive foreign policy agenda. The increasing strategic proximity between the US and India since Modi assumed office – including India's consent to the logistics and communications agreement, firmly placing it in the US strategic ambit – seems to have convinced the Xi regime of India beginning to play a hedging role. Beijing could have seen the redline being crossed when India took the unprecedented step of issuing a joint statement with the US on SCS, and also espousing their common strategic vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region – zones where China is beginning to engage in a contest for dominance with these powers. China's NSG action has a clear message– that the hedging role will come at a cost for India.

## A power transition in the works?

Another explanation for China's behaviour could be linked to its larger strategic outlook – on the roles China wants to assume for itself on the global stage. This may be shaped by two key aspects: (a) Xi Jinping's perception about the world order and the potential space for Chinese leadership in global affairs; and (b) the strategic imperative of countering the US rebalancing strategy in its periphery and securing its interests in the Asia-Pacific littorals. As the power transition argument goes, when a rising power is dissatisfied with the status quo maintained by a ruling hegemon, it could seek to challenge this condition through contestation, aggression or realignment. China's evolving economic crisis and America's Asia Pivot are developments that could undermine Beijing's prominence as an economic and military power. The need to reverse these conditions, and thereby reduce the US hegemonic grip, might be the rationale for Beijing's belligerence in its current global postures, be it on the SCS or at the NSG.

The NSG episode, in fact, suitably fits into this dimension as a calculated attempt to challenge US dominance of the non-proliferation regime. The US as the sole hegemon leads a group of guardians (described as a liberal security community, owing to its western domination) to lord over the regime and its normative structures. While Russia had figured in this group thanks to the superpower consensus that led to the creation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968, China, having termed the guardians as an 'imperial' grouping in those formative years, later became a palpably incompatible partner in this framework. Beijing, hence, sees its NSG role as a means to restore its pride of place among the guardians, and also by virtue of being a nuclear weapon state and a leading nuclear energy producer. Well before India's membership episode, Beijing had expanded the scope of its 'grand-fathered' nuclear agreement with Pakistan to newer facilities as a symbolic response to the India-US deal, thus demonstrating that it too could flex muscles within the regime– a posture further reinforced by blocking India. However, it needs to be seen whether these actions will elevate Beijing's standing in the regime or instead further its image as an irresponsible actor.

## Beijing's dented image

At the core of China's current problems is its inability to project itself as a responsible global player or one that is peacefully rising on the global scene. Its recent actions –the saboteur role at NSG and sabre rattling over SCS –only aggravate concerns of an authoritarian state seeking to further its hegemonic ambitions. Added to this dimension is China's own shady record of indulging in or aiding proliferation and the strategic deception it pursues in its international behaviour. From Mao's terming of nuclear weapons as 'paper tigers' and subsequent change of tack to develop a nuclear arsenal, staying out of NPT negotiations calling it





an instrument of imperialism and ending up with the current “care about NPT,” and from the activism on the Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) and subsequent pursuit of Anti-Satellite (ASAT) and Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) capability, examples abound on how words and actions hardly match in China’s grand strategic posturing.

While currently attempting to assume a guardianship role, Beijing’s record of supporting many clandestine nuclear programmes had not just invited numerous sanctions from the US, but also underlined its own struggle for legitimacy as a nuclear-armed great power. In fact, China was nowhere involved in the initial construction of the non-proliferation regime, and was kept out for long years from the affairs of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Though it managed to join the IAEA in 1983 and sign the NPT in 1992, Beijing’s failure to get into groups like the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), thanks to its proliferation history, reflects its frustrations on India gaining greater recognition in the system, despite being a non-NPT state.

Is a quid pro quo needed?

Though the reference to NPT and full-scope safeguards is cited to deny membership to India, the unprecedented India-specific waiver of 2008 and the possibility of devising new criteria for non-NPT states refutes any element of sanctity for this framework. Relevant to this aspect is the different set of parameters employed to endow the India-specific waiver, which illustrates the scope of flexibility that this grouping has to determine its membership rules. However, formulating criteria for non-NPT states with the objective of also including Pakistan will imply that the grouping has diluted its fundamental philosophy of non-proliferation. Such a criterion could also mean that the NSG may not deny a similar claim by even

North Korea in the distant future.

Accordingly, it could be argued that the NSG may not be able to withhold the India membership question for long, in spite of China’s inconsistent positions. Given that, it would be unwise on India’s part to forfeit any advantage it has on the SCS issue. Therefore, India should emphasise upon freedom of navigation in the high seas at the forthcoming multilateral summits in order to convey the message that Beijing needs to perfect its behaviour if it seeks a respected global standing.

## WHY INDIA’S SOUTH CHINA SEA STAND MATTERS

Abhijit Singh

During his visit to New Delhi last week, Wang Yi, China’s Foreign Minister, held wide-ranging talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj. The agenda for discussion is said to have included a number of sticky bilateral issues – China’s perceived opposition to India’s membership of the NSG, Beijing’s opposition to UN sanctions on Jaish-e-Mohammed Chief, Masood Azhar, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Missing from the list of issues, however, was the South China Sea (SCS) – a subject Beijing had apparently debarred from discussion in any context or form.

Oddly, a day after Wang returned to Beijing, the Chinese media hailed India for being “neutral on the South China Sea” – as if the Chinese foreign minister has secured an assurance from India that if the matter ever came up for discussion in an international forum, New Delhi has promised not to take sides. Meanwhile, Indian newspapers pointed out that, despite never mentioning the South China Sea in his official discussions, the Chinese foreign minister did bring up the issue informally with the media. In response to a question by a journalist, Wang had observed solemnly that India needed to decide “where it stood on the







matter of the South China Sea” – a clear indication that support on the vexed territorial disputes in Southeast Asia may have been the real purpose of his visit.

Interestingly, in the run up to Wang’s departure for India, *The Global Times*, a tabloid widely seen as the Chinese government’s mouthpiece, warned New Delhi that its seemingly inimical posture on the South China Sea was potentially damaging for bilateral ties and could create obstacles for Indian businesses in China. “Instead of unnecessary entanglements with China over the South China Sea debate during Wang’s visit,” an editorial in the newspaper declared, “India must create a good atmosphere for economic cooperation, including the reduction of tariffs...amid the ongoing free trade talks.”

Clearly, China remains worried that India could join other countries in raising the controversial issue during the G-20 summit to be held in Hangzhou next month. With the United States certain to rake up the UN tribunal’s rejection of Chinese claims within the “nine-dash line”, Beijing is determined to muster support for its own position on the matter. Wang’s India visit was widely seen as part of a Chinese lobbying effort to ensure that New Delhi does not join Washington and its supporters in pushing Beijing on the defensive by bringing up the SCS.

Chinese leaders might claim that by avoiding a mention of the South China Sea during discussions with Wang, Beijing can safely conclude that New Delhi is in agreement with its stand on that matter. The Chinese political leadership must, however, know that while New Delhi respects China’s viewpoint, it chooses to take a principled position on the disputes in the SCS. For three reasons, Southeast Asia and its contested littorals matter to Indian interests.

First, Indian trade and economic linkages in the Pacific are becoming stronger and deeper. Not

only are ASEAN and the far-eastern Pacific key target areas of the “Act East” policy, Asia’s Eastern commons are increasingly a vital facilitator of India’s economic development. With growing dependence on the Malacca Strait for the flow of goods and services, economics is increasingly a factor in India’s Pacific policy. China must know that territorial conflicts in the SCS threaten the future trajectory of India’s economic development, creating an unacceptable hindrance for regional trade and commerce.

Secondly, India believes that the disputes in the Southeast Asian littorals are a litmus test for international maritime law. In the aftermath of the Hague Tribunal’s verdict on the South China Sea, New Delhi feels obligated to take a principled stand on the issue of freedom of navigation and commercial access as enshrined in the UNCLOS. Beijing must know that regardless of the guarantees it seeks from India about staying neutral on the SCS, New Delhi cannot be seen to be condoning the aggression of armed Chinese naval ships, aircraft and submarines in the region.

Regardless then of the concessions Beijing is willing to offer India on the NSG and bilateral issues, New Delhi has reason to continue viewing China’s maritime manoeuvres in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) with suspicion. For all the geniality on display during Wang’s visit, Beijing still hasn’t explained its rapidly growing undersea presence in littoral South Asia. The flimsy pretext of anti-piracy operations to justify the deployment of Chinese submarines in the Indian Ocean makes many Indian maritime analysts believe that China is preparing for a larger strategic thrust in the Indian Ocean.

Lastly, Beijing must know that New Delhi recognizes the threat that Chinese aggression poses for the wider Asian commons – in particular the exacerbation of existing power asymmetries. In order to contribute to a fair and equitable regional





maritime order, New Delhi will take a stand that restores strategic balance in maritime-Asia.

There are, of course, things that New Delhi isn't in a position to officially communicate to Beijing. For instance, the correlation that Indian maritime analysts discern between aggressive Chinese patrolling in the SCS and its growing deployments in the Indian Ocean Region; or the suspicion in Indian strategic circles that China might use its SCS bases as a springboard for active projection of power in the Indian Ocean.

Beijing might be surprised to learn that many Indian analysts and policymakers view China's aggressive response to the UN Arbitral Tribunal's verdict as part of a broader strategy to project power in Asia's critical littoral spaces. Indian experts, however, recognize that China operates from a position of strength in the SCS, wherein it has physical possession over some critical islands.

What New Delhi really worries about is China's reclamation and militarisation of features in its possession – particularly the deployment of missiles, fighters and surveillance equipment in its Spratly group of islands, allowing the PLAN effective control over the entire range of maritime operations in the SCS. Indian experts also recognize the important role Beijing's militia forces play in achieving its regional objectives. India knows well that the main threat to maritime security in Asia isn't so much the PLA Navy, but China's irregular forces. Chinese surveillance ships, coast guard vessels and fishing fleets are the real force behind Beijing's dominance of the littoral spaces.

With the expansion of Chinese maritime activities in the IOR, New Delhi fears a rise in non-grey hull presence in the Eastern Indian Ocean. Already, China's distant water fishing fleet is now the world's largest, and is a heavily subsidised maritime commercial entity. While an increase in the presence of such ships doesn't always pose a security threat, India remains wary of Chinese non-

military maritime activity in the Eastern Indian Ocean.

That said, nothing lays bare Indian anxieties as much as the prospect of Chinese naval bases in the IOR. India's China sceptics are convinced Beijing's blueprint for maritime operations in the Indian Ocean involves the construction of multiple logistical facilities. China's 10-year agreement with Djibouti in 2015 for the setting up of a naval replenishment facility in the northern Obock region is widely seen by Indian experts as proof of the PLA Navy's strategic ambitions in the IOR.

This does not mean that New Delhi is going to team up with the United States in an effort to contain China. On the contrary, Indian policymakers clearly recognize that naval manoeuvres in the SCS emphasising "freedom of navigation" are a risky proposition. While India would like to see all parties act in accordance with the law, New Delhi will not take sides on the territorial disputes. Even so, the possibility that China might eclipse India in its own "backyard" will continue to drive a security response in New Delhi, even as it seeks to strengthen the Indian naval presence in its near and extended waters.

Of course, Indian leaders cannot articulate the full extent of their anxieties over Chinese maritime operations in Asia. Regardless of the concessions on offer to New Delhi, Beijing must know that India will not agree to a compromise deal with China on the South China Sea.

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## DEVELOPMENTS IN POK AND THE KASHMIR VALLEY: AN ANALYSIS

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S. K. Sharma and Ashish Shukla

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made a statement on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and expressed his concerns about the state of human rights there. The government as well as the establishment in Pakistan has issued statements about the turmoil in the Kashmir Valley. The people





on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) have demanded undivided attention from their respective governments during the past few months. Against this backdrop developments on both sides of the LoC require critical study and analysis. An attempt is being made here to understand these developments and suggest some policy alternatives.

## Situation in PoK

The recent elections in PoK or Western Jammu and Kashmir, consisting of both Gilgit Baltistan (GB) and the so-called “Azad Jammu and Kashmir”, which is under the occupation of Pakistan, resulted in the overthrow of incumbent governments led by the local chapters of the Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) and their replacement by governments led by local units of the party ruling in Islamabad — the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

By now, familiar charges of rigging have been made and protests have ensued in both regions of PoK. Although the PPP was, in a way, reconciled to its defeat in G-B, it is crying hoarse about the results in so-called ‘AJK’. The ballot took place under strict supervision of the Pakistan Army and, therefore, the allegations reflect the familiar trend in Pakistan— that the party or parties losing the electoral battle have always been bad losers. The election in ‘AJK’ took place under the shadow of turmoil in Srinagar Valley over the death of a Kashmiri youth who had started advocating armed struggle.

Before this incident as well as after it, the opposition parties had started raising the *ante* on ‘Kashmir’ and a lot of anti-India sentiments was stirred especially by the young and inexperienced PPP leader, Bilawal Bhutto. He had started raising the temperature on the ‘Kashmir’ issue by levelling allegations that Nawaz Sharif’s government is pandering to India and especially Prime Minister Modi. The slogan that PPP supporters raised in

‘AJK’ was—”*Modi ka yaar, gaddar, gaddar*” (“He who is Modi’s friend is a traitor”).

The PML-N leadership was quiet until the turmoil gathered momentum in the Valley, but joined the anti-India campaign closer to the day of the elections. The India factor did not cut much ice and PML-N won a handsome mandate, bagging 31 out of the 41 seats contested by 427 candidates. Raja Farooq Haider Khan, of Kashmiri origin, and one time member of the AJK Muslim Conference party, led the local branch of the PML-N to this spectacular win.

## ‘AJK’ and GB: Getting used to Controlled Politics?

Like many times in the past, the politics of *baradari* (clan) as well as the popular bias in favour of the party ruling in Islamabad determined the fate of the elections. The electorate proved poll pundits wrong, in that the ‘AJK’ elections would be influenced by events in the Valley and the people might vote for the party flagging the issue of the so-called Indian ‘state atrocities’ in the most combative manner possible. If that had been so, the PPP and JI would have reaped a huge dividend. That was not the case, however. Without being too belligerent, Sharif gained a massive electoral mandate by emphasising his ritual position on ‘Kashmir’ and his determination to seek a settlement through the medium of UN resolutions.

Like in the past, this time around as well the post-poll scene witnessed charges of rigging, and people came out on the streets to protest. The intensity of these protests forced a halt to the trans-border movement of goods vehicles for some time.

At the end of the day, Raja Farooq Haider Khan was chosen as the Prime Minister and the PML-N seemed to have acquired a firm grip of the ‘AJK’ government. An eternal complainant like Imran grudgingly tweeted his acceptance of defeat and congratulated the PML-N for its victory.







In the absence of the participation of the independence-minded groups in the elections, the political discourse in both 'AJK' and GB is inextricably interwoven with that of Pakistan. In GB, more than in 'AJK', there is an assertive constituency, however small, which advocates total independence. In 'AJK', that constituency has resigned itself to fate. Thus, in both regions, which the authorities in Pakistan have deliberately kept apart as separate administrative units— theoretically not part of Pakistan, but under its tightest possible control— representative politics means controlled power-play, which is resented, yet strangely tolerated, by the people.

The people of GB have recently taken to the streets in support of a left-wing politician of the Awami Peoples' Party who has not only been prevented from contesting the elections there but imprisoned for advocating the rights of the people to ask for compensation in Gozal area, which was washed away in the January 2010 Attabad lake-burst. There is also an ongoing popular movement— with the slogan "No taxation, without representation" — demanding provincial status for GB within Pakistan.

About the Valley and the Pakistani connection

Agitations are not new to the Kashmir Valley. Nor even phases of violent outbursts. These street-shows reflect what pundits regularly pontificate as the political alienation of Kashmiris from India. Paradoxically, however, the turn-out in the Assembly elections even when held in the face of boycott calls by the separatists have been impressive.

The 1996 election took place amid ferocious agitations and bloodshed. Yet, it recorded 53 percentage of voting. People simply ignored the threats held out by terrorists and came to the polling booths to exercise their franchise. The following

elections in 2002, 2008 and 2014 also saw high percentages of popular participation.

Like in the past, during the latest election as well, Pakistan worked full throttle to prime its case on 'Kashmir'. But its demand for the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions on 'Kashmir' went largely unheeded, apart from a ritual expression of interest in the issue.

Undeterred, Pakistan Foreign Secretary Aziz Ahmad Chaudhry held a special briefing to some of the Islamabad-based envoys of the member-nations of OIC (Organization of Islamic Countries) contact group on J&K. Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Niger were members of the group. Aziz requested their support for the Pakistani demand for plebiscite. However, the OIC surprised Pakistan with its apathy and deafening silence.

For a change, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been forced by circumstances to lead the Pakistan campaign for 'Kashmir' during the 'AJK' elections, happened as it did against the backdrop of Burhan Wani's killing. "We are waiting for the day Kashmir becomes Pakistan," he declared from Muzaffarabad. This, he himself knows, and has informally acknowledged to interlocutors from many countries, is "wishful thinking."

However, after raising the 'Kashmir' bogey for the last seven decades, politicians of his ilk have been overpowered by a praetorian military which is deaf and blind to the negative consequences of their jihadi intervention in 'Kashmir' on their internal security situation. Even though politicians like Sharif are aware of the reality on the ground, they have become victims of their own narrative. 'Kashmir' dangerously brings them closer to the viewpoint of the military on India and disturbs their thinking on India-Pakistan relations. They are mute spectators on the one hand and quiet and helpless cheerleaders on the other when the military is refashioning its strategy of asymmetric warfare against India. Absent a Kashmiri component in the





jihad, there was a conscious attempt to fuel militancy in the Valley.

They have managed to fray the nerves by provoking, on the one hand, the Indian security forces unceasingly since January 2013 to resort to a hardened response, and on the other, taking full advantage of the political uncertainty in the state after the unclear verdict in the 2014 elections leading to an inevitable alliance between two most unlikely allies—the Bharatiya Janata Party, which seeks the same status for J&K as any other state of the Union, and the Peoples’ Democratic Party, which is seeking the maximum possible autonomy from the Centre.

Against this backdrop, there has been some plain-speaking by commentators, especially in the English media, even as the vernacular media is busy spewing venom on India and exhorting the Pakistani establishment not to let this unique opportunity slip by. Some sane observers in Pakistan have said that Sharif’s statements might create “more trouble” for their country as well as for the Kashmiri people. They pointedly ask Sharif what Pakistan can offer to the Kashmiris when it is still coping with numerous challenges that are posing a threat to its own stability. For the last 67 years, Pakistan has failed to ensure good governance in PoK which is under its own control, the *Daily Times* reminded Sharif, who traces his roots to Anantnag in the Valley.

The mainstream Pakistani media was not impressed by Nawaz Sharif’s rhetoric. Nor are they encouraged by the antics of the likes of Hafeez Saeed, who have been threatening to take out marches to the LoC and to Wagah.

Sharif-speak – the new war cry “*Kashmir banega Pakistan*” – undermines Pakistan’s case for a plebiscite. It is not for nothing that Pakistan has officially confined itself thus far to extending ‘moral, diplomatic and political support to Kashmiris’, while letting loose the ISI-trained, funded and

pampered jihadis of different hues to turn ‘Kashmir’ into a simmering cauldron. The Pakistani hand is exposed by militants captured by Indian security forces and inhibits any idea of constructive engagement at the bilateral level.

Islamic State hand behind Kashmir Protests?

Even as demonstrations have taken place in a routine manner in the Valley over the last few weeks and there has been a minor show of Pakistani flags and talk of nizam-e-Mustafa (Islamic rule) in the air, it is suspected in the rest of India that more sinister forces are out to exploit what is basically a political struggle in Kashmir. While it is, of course, tempting to see the IS hand behind the current wave of agitation in the Valley, there is no direct evidence to back such an alarmist hypothesis.

Graffiti in downtown Srinagar and Harvan, a Srinagar suburb, or Islamic State (IS) flags seen fluttering atop some buildings in the Valley do not mean that the IS has set its foot in Kashmir. Nor does it mean that the IS has started actively supporting the agitation. But the perception persists so much that the possibility of India stumbling into a self-fulfilling prophecy remains. Many outside neutral observers of the situation in Kashmir, such as Michael Kugelman, also argue that “The notion of IS expanding into South Asia is a bit of exaggeration.” Kugelman’s views have ironically been echoed by separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani as well. For him, the actions of the IS, Tehreek-e-Taliban (Pakistani Taliban) and Boko Haram are un-Islamic. Shujaat Bukhari, a Srinagar-based journalist who has had a ring side view of the scene for many years, has an interesting take: “Kashmiris cannot be attracted to IS because of its barbaric actions.”

It is true, nevertheless, that in an interview to the 13th issue of the IS publication, *Dabiq*, Hafiz Saed Khan, the so-called Emir of Khorasan, had





threatened to expand his war against India and “recognise Kashmir for Muslims from the cow-worshipping Hindus.” In the same breath, he also scolded Pakistan for its approach to the issue and dubbed Pakistan’s primary jihadi instrument, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), as an “apostate faction”. According to Khan, LeT follows the “tug and pull” of the Pakistan army and does not have “control over any territory in the regions of Kashmir.”

Within Pakistan, only the Mullahs and Maulanas of the Lal Masjid in Islamabad have hailed IS Khalifa Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as Ameer-ul-Momineen, that too not so openly. This is surprising since Pakistan is the fountain-head of modern day jihad. It has been host to jihadis from across the world right from the days of the so-called jihad against the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan during the Cold War. If there is an active threat from the IS, it is more so in Pakistan than in Kashmir.

Pakistan’s Diplomatic Blitzkrieg: Why has it failed?

There is no denying whatsoever that Pakistan’s new diplomatic blitzkrieg, as in the past, has failed to deliver any dividends. A revisit of the strategy is therefore in order for the ‘GHQ Shura’ in Rawalpindi and the Sharif-led government in Islamabad. It is essential for Pakistan to put its own house in order. It has managed to keep the whole of PoK – GB and ‘AJK’— under its jackboots for long. But murmurs of protests are appearing in the horizon. In the days of social media, it is coming out into the open. Pakistan’s efforts to change the demography in the Shia-majority GB through the active settlement of Sunnis from the outside is a matter of grave concern for the locals. Similarly, the local parties of ‘AJK’ are quite resentful about the way the mainstream political parties are hijacking their politics.

Moreover, the world has seen through the Pakistani approach to terror when it comes to the

issue of ‘Kashmir’. They were watching when Prime Minister Sharif bestowed martyr’s status to Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Muzaffar Wani, whose quite inadvertent death in a police encounter gave a fresh lease of life to the ‘Keep Kashmir Burning’ campaign.

It is time for the leadership in Pakistan to get back to the mechanism that was being discussed both in the front and the back channels during 2004-2007. The blueprint that the negotiators were preparing provided a better solution to the problem. Pakistan should also understand the unintended consequences of encouraging jihadi outfits to operate in J&K all over again with utmost fury. It has to shun revisionism and the use of terror as an instrument of its India policy, and get back to meaningful dialogue. Therein lies the solution to the problem. It is highly unlikely that Pakistan would ever be able to pressure India either through cross-border terror or by encouragement to insurgency in Kashmir to concede a legitimate portion of its territory.

## Indian Response and Options

The response of the Indian government to the turmoil in the Kashmir Valley has been along expected lines. The incident that led to the current unrest was in a way inevitable. The person targeted, Burhan Wani, was unapologetically proclaiming himself as an armed militant through social media and there was a bounty on his head. As to why his killing has had a cascading effect is something that needs to be understood. Kashmir has always been a sensitive border state due to the continuous interference of Pakistan. The militant and separatist constituency has studiously avoided participation in the democratic process in the state and chosen to fuel militancy instead. They have fallen easy prey to Pakistani machinations because Pakistan has enabled this constituency through constant funding and use of force and threat of use of force through







militancy. Any Hurriyat leader, who has shown a minimal interest in a constructive dialogue with the government in New Delhi, has been eliminated.

During the last few years, especially since the November 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack by the LeT, Pakistan has gone back on the mutual understanding to work towards a practicable solution involving a representative (read democratic) system of governance on both sides of the LoC, encouragement of travel and trade between the two parts, and finally, at an appropriate time, if it suits both, evolve a joint mechanism to oversee the changes on the ground. However, Pakistan (especially the military establishment, post-Musharraf, which is controlling the country's India policy) has rescinded from its commitments and insists on its maximalist position which has pushed the dialogue back to the pre-1997 years.

India has found it difficult to adapt to such a revisionist stance by the Pakistani establishment. Under constant provocation from Pakistan and the continuous flow of funds and materials, the separatists have been girding up their loins. The killing of Burhan Wani only acted as a trigger. Be that as it may, in a situation like this, the Indian government has rightly asked the security forces to exercise utmost restraint.

But on the ground, in situations such as those prevailing now, the degree and kind of reaction from security forces the world over, even when they are practising restraint, will depend on the intensity of the protests. Unfortunately, the intensity of the protests in the Valley have been unusually severe, may be because the failure of the local leadership is also being laid on the doors of the government in New Delhi.

However, the ongoing round of protests may pass sooner than may be evident because there is a view emerging in the Valley now that the Pakistani connection to the unrest will be ultimately

counterproductive for the people. Be that as it may, there is a real problem in terms of Kashmiris being unable to elect a responsible and responsive representative government for themselves. Corruption, nepotism and mis-governance have characterised the governments in Srinagar for decades and at a time when the Valley has a majority youth population, educated and unemployed, there is a tendency for popular resentment to flow onto the streets. The Indian state has to find a way of keeping a close tab on governance issues inside Jammu and Kashmir and intervene positively in case of misrule by local politicians.

The security forces should be asked to practise maximum restraint and the local administration must gear up for action. Only then the situation will turn back to normal sooner than expected. However, all this is also subject to the ability of the security forces to stop the infiltration of men and material from Pakistan, on the one hand, and the level of determination of Pakistani agencies to fish in troubled waters, on the other. India will have to keep a close watch on the developments within PoK and highlight the Pakistani strategy of promoting terror in Kashmir and expose its policies towards both the regions within PoK—'AJK' and GB, which legitimately belong to it.

As far as radicalisation is concerned, the Kashmiris are not known to flaunt their religious identity even if ISIS flags were visible in a couple of places before Burhan's killing. Such incidents should be seen as a show of popular resentment rather than commitment to the regressive Islamist cause that outfits like IS espouse. An over-reaction to the IS bogey may prove counter-productive in such a situation and could lead to a mis-diagnosis of the problem by the security forces and their resulting excesses may end up acting as 'fertilizer' for an insurgency.

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WHITHER TURKEY?

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K. P. Fabian

Turkey is going where President Erdogan wants to take it to, as those who do not agree with him are too intimidated to stand in his way. To figure out Erdogan's plans, we have to look critically at both what he has done in Turkey after the coup collapsed and his foreign policy moves before and after the failed coup a month ago.

Erdogan invoked the people's power initially to crush the coup and subsequently to approve the huge purge and other measures to suppress dissent with the aim of concentrating more and power in his hands. Hundreds of thousands of Turks came on the street night after night to show support for Erdogan. His thesis that the followers of Fehtullah Gulen, living in self-chosen exile in the US since 1999, carried out the coup attempt and that Gulen himself masterminded it has been accepted by a majority of Turks. That no convincing proof of Gulen's involvement has been offered is a different matter.

Erdogan moved fast after the collapse of the coup giving the impression that he had planned it all beforehand. He started a purge, declared a national emergency, shut down dissenting media outlets to intimidate the rest into falling in line, and suspended Turkey's compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights. On July 16 itself, hours after the coup collapsed, 2745 judges were taken into custody. Obviously, the list was there before the coup attempt. Erdogan has done some 'purging' in the past from time to time, but this time it has been truly massive even at the cost of making it difficult for the government to function. For example, 21,000 private school teachers and 1500 university deans have been purged, while 1700 schools have been shut altogether. Naturally, the education sector has been gravely disabled. Can the Finance Ministry function normally when 1500 have been sacked? About 300 in the Foreign Office are under investigation including two ambassadors.

About 32 diplomats have refused to return to Turkey and have sought refuge in other countries including the two military attaches in Greece who escaped to Italy. There is hardly any part of the government that has escaped the purge which has affected over 80,000 individuals.

What will be the impact of all this on the economy? Will foreign investment be attracted to a country in such turmoil? On July 17, Bloomberg carried a story with the caption "Turkey set for market turmoil as coup turns investors 'ice-cold'." Turkey has worked hard to convince the world that the failed coup has not in any way made investment in the country riskier than it was. A paid advertisement was taken out in the *Financial Times* of London. The rating agency Moody's announced on July 18 that it was reviewing the current Baa3 grade and that the finding will be announced in mid-October. On July 20, Standard & Poor's downgraded Turkey from BB+ to BB, drawing attention to 'polarization of political landscape' and erosion of 'institutional checks and balances'. What Turkey's government does not seem to or does not want to understand is that while the outside world is glad that the coup attempt failed it is concerned about the future of democracy and the rule of law in Turkey.

The 75,000-strong Turkish military, the second largest in NATO, has lost about half of its 360 generals in the purge. Ever since he became Prime Minister in 2002, Erdogan has consistently tried, not without success, to reduce the clout of the military. It was a happy coincidence for him that Turkey's bid for admission to the European Union (EU) necessitated raising its democratic credentials by reducing the military's role in politics, especially since it had staged coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997. In its 2004 report on Turkey, the EU said, "A number of changes have been introduced over the last year to strengthen civilian control of the military to aligning it (Turkey) with practice in EU member





states.” In 2007, the Army Chief, General Yasar Buyukanit, posted a memorandum on the military’s website objecting to the nomination of Erdogan’s candidate, the then Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, for the post of President on the ground that his wife had worn a headscarf and thereby undermined the secular order. Erdogan responded by pointing out that it was none of the military’s business to give an opinion on candidates for the presidency. Gul was elected and the military’s lack of clout was exposed.

The Supreme Military Council met at the Prime Minister’s office on July 28. In the past, the Council always met at the General Staff Head Quarters and the change of venue is significant as an indicator of the primacy of the civilian government. It is also possible that the civilian government deemed the new venue safer. The Council’s recommendations will have to be approved by the President. There is a move to change the composition of the Council by adding more ministers in order to reduce the role of the military. The Army Chief will be deprived of some of his responsibilities.

Predictably, the imposition of emergency, the suspension of the European Convention on Human Rights, the purge, and the suppression of dissent by shutting down media outlets, all in quick succession, alarmed the EU and the US; and they gave vent to their concerns about the erosion of the rule of law, Europe being more vocal than the US. Equally predictably, Turkey reacted with a degree of hostility to that criticism, pointing out that the West did not condemn the coup, its leaders did not personally call Erdogan to show support to the democratically elected government, and that there has been no high level visit after the failed coup.

But the real reason for Turkey’s dissatisfaction with the US is that the latter has not agreed to extradite Gulen. The US is insisting on evidence of Gulen’s involvement and it is doubtful whether Turkey has so far given any evidence that can stand

scrutiny. Gulen wrote an article in the *New York Times* on July 25 titled “I condemn all threats to Turkey’s democracy”. The clear implication is that he condemns the coup and what Erdogan has done in the aftermath. There are signals that the US is willing to be patient and reason with Turkey. A team of US officials is due shortly in Ankara to discuss the matter of Gulen’s extradition. The Turkish media have put out a story that the team will assist Turkey in drafting a memorandum meeting US standards. This story might not be true. US Vice President Biden is due in Turkey on August 24 and the Gulen issue will top the agenda.

Erdogan’s visit to St. Petersburg and meeting with President Putin on August 9 has attracted a good deal of media attention. This was a meeting planned well before the coup attempt. When Turkey shot down a Russian SU-24 war plane in November 2015 ‘for violating its air space’, Putin had broken off economic and trade relations inflicting much pain on Turkey. Erdogan’s initial efforts to talk to Putin were rebuffed. After a while, President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and a prominent Turkish businessman mediated, and Putin relented after Erdogan apologized in June. Putin who was keen to reconcile with Turkey telephoned Erdogan immediately after the coup collapsed. Erdogan told Putin that the call was ‘psychologically important’. There is a report that Russian intelligence gave Erdogan some advance tip off on the coup.

The economic and trade relations broken by Russia to punish Turkey for shooting down its fighter plane are being restored. Russian tourists have already come back, and being received with champagne and flowers. Some commentators in the West have misinterpreted the resumption of relations primarily as an anti-US move. This interpretation is wrong as this is a resumption of what was there before the shooting down of the plane. The Turkish-Russian differences over Syria







remain, but one should not be surprised if Erdogan were to over time get closer to the Russian position on Assad. Russia and Turkey have agreed to cooperate in the war against the Islamic State.

Russia and Turkey are not yet allies, but they might get closer as Turkey's hopes of gaining entry into the EU fades away. Austria has called on the EU to break off talks with Turkey on its admission. The bone of contention between Turkey and the EU is the latter's delay in granting visa-free entry to Turkish citizens to the Schengen area in return for Turkey taking back illegal migrants who had entered Greece. The deadline for the deal was June 2016. While Turkey is insisting that the deal be formalised by October, the signals from Brussels indicate that it might not happen any time this year. Most probably, the EU is not going to agree to the visa-free entry of Turks in the near future. Erdogan might threaten to inundate the EU with Syrian refugees and might even carry out the threat unless the EU pays a huge amount of money. Europe is vulnerable to such blackmail.

Iran sent its Foreign Minister to Turkey to show solidarity with Erdogan. The two sides agreed on the need to uphold the territorial integrity of Syria and agreed to talk more on Syria to narrow their differences. The opening to Israel signalled by Turkey before the coup will continue.

The Turkish media have been suitably intimidated and subordinated. The media have now 'divulged' that it was some Gulenist group in the Air Force that brought down the Russian plane. This is dis-information. Some columnists have threatened the US that its refusal to extradite Gulen might cost its use of Incirlik. It is difficult to take the threat seriously as the air base was built by the US in the 1950s, the US has stored nuclear weapons there, and the two countries have signed a joint use agreement. Nevertheless, Erdogan has cards to play. In 2003, the Turkish Parliament passed a resolution denying the use of the base to US in the

War on Iraq. It was Erdogan who talked to his MPs and made them change their stand. Will Erdogan re-enact the same and demand that the US extradite Gulen?

Turkey is seeking more manoeuvring space by reconciling with Russia; the two may work closer in the fight against the Islamic State. Turkey might try to blackmail a vulnerable EU by threatening to inundate it with Syrian refugees. Turkey will play hard ball on Gulen, but short of hard evidence extradition is unlikely. Unless Erdogan takes due care, serious damage can be done to his country's relations with the US as the latter might reluctantly conclude that Turkey is an unreliable ally. Has the US started looking at alternatives to Incirlik? It has built one and has started building another in Syrian Kurdistan controlled by its Kurdish allies. Russia has announced plans to build an airbase at Khmeimim in Aleppo province to 'rival Incirlik'. Will Syria, partitioned *de facto*, if not *de jure*, have Russian and US airbases?

One wonders whether a phone call from President Obama before Putin's would have changed the course of history. It might not have, but Obama should have called early knowing Erdogan's paranoia and that would have made some difference as Erdogan is playing 'the jilted lover' with much success. Over time, Erdogan's pursuit of absolute power and hard-line policy towards the Kurds might boomerang. The EU's vulnerability should not be exaggerated as it takes 44 per cent of Turkey's exports. After the general election in Germany around October 2017, Merkel's successor might be less indulgent towards Erdogan.

## ARE RUSSIA AND NATO INCHING TOWARDS A CONFLICT?

Rajorshi Roy

The Joint Communique issued by the recent NATO summit, held on July 8-9 in Warsaw, appears to have sown the seeds of a renewed



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