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Kashmir Valley Unrest is a National Security Issue and not a Political Issue

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Kashmir Valley's six week old unrest in end-August 2016 is a national security issue and challenge engineered by Pakistan and cannot be termed as a political issue as promoted by Indian protagonists of "intellectual terrorism", wishing to embarrass the Modi Government for political gains.

The ongoing Kashmir Valley unrest needs to be correctly understood and appreciated as a national security issue and challenge so that the responses of the Indian Republic are national security-specific and those perspectives are not distorted by injection of the misleading and misread propaganda that it is a political issue and needs a political solution as India's busy no-bodies would like the rest of us to believe. Implicit in such advocacy is that national security challenges can await being addressed and that for their respective political gains by India's Opposition parties, these advocates would like terrorists stuff their viewpoint down the throat of the Central Government.

Since the Kashmir Valley unrest is being engineered, financed and facilitated by Pakistan and the ongoing violence so unleashed, it is an act of war and needs to be viewed as such. The Indian Republic would therefore be fully justified in employing the full majesty of forces at its command to defend the honour, sovereignty and integrity of the Republic.

What is happening in the Kashmir Valley today is a globally isolated Pakistan seeking to regain international relevance by stoking fires amongst the Kashmir Valley predominant Sunni Muslims through the use of ISI and its terrorist affiliated organisations like the LeT and the JeM and using the paid services of the various separatists groups that thrive on Pakistani funding.

The overall dimensions of the Kashmir Valley unrest need to be first delineated before one outlines the external and internal dimensions of

this national security challenge that India needs to meet head-on firmly.

In the overall dimensions, the following factors emerge from a reality-check of the situation, (1) It is the Kashmir Valley that is restive and in unrest because of Pakistani incitements. The rest of the vast Jammu & Kashmir State comprising the larger regions of Jammu and Ladakh are at peace (2) The Muslims of Jammu and Ladakh, the Muslim Gujjars and the Muslim Bakarwals do not form the natural constituency of the Kashmir Valley separatists. (3) Even within the Kashmir Valley the unrest is confined to urban Srinagar and a few more scattered pockets. (4) The democratically elected Government in Srinagar exists not because of Kashmir Valley separatists dictates but because the larger population of the State have voted it to power with large voter turn-outs despite dire warnings by the separatists and Islamist Jihadis (5) The separatist Hurriyat leaders whose writ is confined to parts of Kashmir Valley only have never dared to run for any electoral office. Even their views on future of Kashmir Valley are divided.

Against such a contextual background it is intellectual dishonesty when noted Indian Opposition leaders, former diplomats, former Kashmir interlocutors, noted academics and above all eminent media personalities advocate that PM Narendra Modi should invite Hurriyat leaders for a dialogue. When running out of cogent reasons to convince policy makers these eminences then quote former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's outreach. PM Vajpayee's political outreach to Hurriyat "so-called leaders" was a fiasco brought about by the flawed-vision of his Kashmir policy advisers. Such a proposition is no longer valid in 2016.

On the external dimensions of the current unrest in the Kashmir Valley the point already made stands that Pakistan is the prime and only mover in 2016 of this Valley-specific unrest. Pakistan has sprung into action in realisation of its increasing global isolation brought about by its estrangement and denouement with the United States, Pakistan's marginal utility to the United States in relation to Afghanistan and the United States strategic tilt towards India. If that was not enough, PM Narendra Modi's political forays in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies which Pakistan considered as its own preserve have nettled Pakistan. Evidently therefore, Pakistan had to regain its erstwhile political relevance. What better way could have been possible than to denigrate India through its stooges in the Kashmir Valley?

Here too Pakistan is in for severe disappointment. India in the last two years or so under PM Modi has dynamically propelled India into global limelight as a global power in the making. It is therefore unrealistic for Pakistan to elicit global support or India's condemnation from the global powers.

Moving on to the internal dimensions of the ongoing Kashmir Valley unrest, a number of factors come into play and these need to be seriously weighed and considered. These are: (1) Challenge to Hurriyat leadership by younger generation of Kashmir Valley youth (2) Kashmiri traditional political dynasties losing their charismatic appeal (3) Slight shift of PDP from its soft attitudes on separatism (4) India's ruling party making a significant political foothold in governance of J&K State.

Reports have started emerging that the Kashmiri youth which is in the vanguard of the Kashmir Valley unrest have started questioning the

current Hurriyat leadership. They want that the aged Gilani is too old to lead the agitation and should retire and give way to younger leaders. The Kashmir youth also wants that Mirwaiz should confine himself to religious duties at the Jama Masjid and leave politics to the youth. Such a transformation opens new possibilities to New Delhi to explore political options.

The three generations of the Abdullahs and other political dynasties have no longer the same charismatic appeal. They all, including the Congress Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, do not seem to have gained many brownie points in the Kashmir Valley for their lack-lustre tenures as Chief Ministers. In terms of the future the question arises as to why J&K State should not have a Chief Minister from other regions of the State? Why should the Chief Minister's post be reserved for Kashmir Valley only?

The PDP which is the coalition partner of the BJP in Srinagar headed by Ms Mehbooba Mufti has recently indicated slight shifts on being soft on separatism and the Kashmir Valley agitators. This was on display at the joint press conference yesterday with Home Minister Rajnath Singh in Srinagar. If this trend in the making continues it augurs well for both the Jammu and Kashmir State as well as India. Of course, this would involve hard going both from separatists and the traditional political leaders.

India's ruling party, the BJP, having gained a foothold in the governance of the State in coalition with the PDP, has been a significant political achievement. For the first time India's Rightist and nationalist party has been able to do so. This arrangement has had much heartbreaks but a positive sustainability opens up many political avenues.

Certain other points need emphasis while discussing the Kashmir Valle unrest. The foremost requirement being that Indian Opposition leaders must learn to display the same unity that Pakistani politicians do when speaking on Kashmir Valley. Kashmir Valley is not the whole state but a small part of the overall State. It cannot be the recipient of special mollycoddling.

Article 370 is not a divine dispensation given for eternity so that the Kashmir Valley's political dominance of Jammu and Ladakh is ensured. So therefore it is not a sin to talk about it. At some point in time and especially when the people of Jammu and Ladakh desire complete integration with India, the Kashmir Valley cannot hold India to ransom.

Lastly, and only as a last resort, if the 95% of the Kashmir Valley population wanting peace to prevail are muzzled by separatists and terrorists and the Kashmir Valley's violence does not abate because of Pakistan's involvement and Pakistan peaks it as an insurgency, then what stops New Delhi from declaring Martial Law in Kashmir Valley for a month or so to flush out Pakistani abettors? Precedent exists when New Delhi under a Congress Government declared Martial Law in Punjab in 1984 at the peak of the Pak-inspired Khalistan secessionist movement.

Hopefully, better sense would prevail and the 'silent majority' in the Kashmir Valley would rise up against the Valley secessionists, terrorists and agent provocateurs in the pay of Pakistan, so that the Kashmir Valley youth can reclaim their future in an economically vibrant and

inclusive Indian Republic.

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