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## India: A Little Revisionism Never Hurts Anyone

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Guest Column: By Vasud Torsekar

The recent statements by Indian ministers alluding to Pak-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Aksai Chin as Indian territories are being misconstrued as revisionism. While revisionism itself has been vilified by the ethnocentric bias in International Relations literature, it seems to be the preferred strategy for almost all global superpowers today. Even the Pakistani stand on Kashmir has been blatantly revisionist for the larger part of its existence. So in a world that seems to be mainstreaming revisionism, India can survive the ignominy of being labelled a revisionist.

Just as the Azadi March of Maulana Fazl-ur-Rahman was beginning to distract Pakistanis from the events of August 5, the Government of India quietly released the maps of the newly constituted union territories of Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir. These maps showed the illegally occupied northern areas of Gilgit and Baltistan as part of the Union Territory of Ladakh. While the reorganisation of maps has changed nothing on ground, it essentially fits a pattern emerging from the Indian side.

On August 6, Home Minister Amit Shah asserted India's right to make laws for the entire territory of Jammu and Kashmir, including Pak-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Aksai Chin. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh pointed out that any future parleys with Pakistan would have to be about the PoK. External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar insisted that PoK "is part of India and we expect one day that we will have the physical jurisdiction over it". In essence, it was being insinuated that India was no longer content with the territorial status quo in South Asia.

It is generally believed that the peace and stability in the international system rest on the pivot of status quo, especially the territorial status quo. Seeking territorial reorganisation amounts to revisionism, which is anathema to international peace. This is why revisionist powers, we

are told, have few friends! So does India, in seeking to regain control over PoK, become a revisionist power?

For one, this apprehension of revisionism betrays the Anglo-American ethnocentric bias pervasive in the field of International Relations. E. H. Carr, a prominent historian and English diplomat says that status quo undermines the moral dimension and only those states support status quo that benefit from it. As such, the moral desirability of status quo is ambiguous at best and all countries are revisionist in their own ways.

Revisionism is essentially a sign of dissatisfaction with the existing features of the international system.

The characterisation of the Indian claims to PoK and Aksai Chin as “revisionism” is tenuous at best. Both territories have been on Indian official maps since 1948. The restriction on the Parliamentary power to legislate for Jammu and Kashmir came from article 370 and it was self-imposed. It was by no means a surrender of Indian sovereignty over illegally occupied territories. If India was open to converting the line of control (LoC) into the international border in the past (Swaran Singh-Bhutto talks in 1963, Simla Agreement in 1972), it is not to be construed as acquiescence to the territorial status quo. Such offers were made in discretionary exercise of India’s sovereign powers to cede territory in pursuit of regional peace and stability. And if India is no longer willing to make that concession then it must be put in a proper context instead of surrendering to the Occam’s razor.

In the 70 years since, India has survived a Pak-sponsored separatist movement in Punjab, the exodus of Kashmiri pandits, and countless terrorist attacks, including those that targeted even the citizens of Israel and America. Ghazwa-e-Hind (conquest of India), once considered the agenda of a few extremists, has made its way into the mainstream discourse through unsubtle monikers like “Endia”, used liberally even by Pakistani ministers. The Daesh flags bandied about in the Kashmir protests were probably the final knell in the coffin for the Kashmir-is-an-unfinished-business-of-partition theory.

While nobody wants to take the Pakistani rhetoric seriously, the stark reality of extreme radicalisation can no longer be discounted as just rhetoric. The solution-to-Afghanistan-lies-in-Kashmir innuendos can no longer be overlooked. With the US renegotiation of NAFTA and Russian occupation of Crimea, revisionism seems to be the preferred strategy of almost all superpowers today. 70 years of unilateral and disproportionate revisions by Pakistan have rendered the word meaningless anyway. So in a world that seems to be mainstreaming revisionism, India can survive the ignominy of being labelled a revisionist. After all, a little revisionism never hurt anyone.

*The Author is an analyst with expertise on International Relations and International Law.*

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