

Doing Kashmir in India?



MURTAZA SHIBLI

The last ten days or so have seen a lot of violence in India. From Assam to Bengaluru and from Chennai to New Delhi, peaceful protesters have been brutally attacked and assaulted by a police force motivated to display ruthlessness and raw power.

This is not all. There are bans on the internet, mobile telephony and even employment of colonial-era Section 144 that bars even peaceful assembly of four or more people. Many people are suggesting that India is becoming like Kashmir — but that is a terrible overstatement. A few days of curfew and communication ban or a few hundred injuries cannot be compared to the continued state of emergency and state-sanctioned violence that has continued in Kashmir for decades.

The situation is nothing compared to the mass fear and ruthless dread that is produced in Kashmir, away from the media gaze and with the active support from a large Indian population. Here is why it is so:

Four days after the Modi government imposed a blanket curfew throughout Kashmir, followed by the announcement of the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution, an imam in one of the old mosques in southern Kashmir made a heart-rending supplication that usually concludes the Friday prayers. He wailed at the loss of 'mulk-e-Kashmir', or the country of Kashmir as the Valley is traditionally known, and asked for God's help and guidance. The broken-hearted audience of the curfewed devotees that had made it to the prayers cried in unison, which gradually turned into a course of mourn-

ing. For the next couple of minutes, all that would issue from the minaret was uncontrolled sobs of covered down people who had lost all sense of belonging and identity.

The security personnel who had been deployed in strength to keep a constant vigil on everything Kashmiri could hear the moans from the nearby road and the alleyways they had blocked with concertina wire. They felt alarmed, given that a large number of them had been airlifted in only a few days ago with scant information about their new deployment and its purpose. Among them, a mid-ranking officer started to display signs of discomfiture, perhaps more because of the appreciation of his own strategic importance in guarding national interest — as constantly laid out by the television channels where patriotism on the Kashmir issue is measured by the decibel levels one can produce in the studio. According to some eye-witnesses, as soon as the prayers finished, the personnel inquired about the whinging that was so loudly performed. Fearing a harsh reaction, the people avoided a proper response; thereupon, the officer allegedly approached the devotees with an austere pitch and instructed them to avoid any such crying in the future.

At the time, the fear of the unknown was so fresh and deep that a large number of people were unable to sleep for days and even weeks. The ghastly sight on the roads and streets was terrifying; almost every security personnel manning the roads — or, in precise terms, blocking them — and ordering public movement was a non-Kashmiri. The Kashmir Police had all been removed sparing a symbolic presence of a couple with every contingent of CRPF or the army.

The Kashmiri cops were unarmed and were only allowed to carry plastic canes and deployed but to assist the non-native personnel in translating their instructions or perhaps advising them on minor issues of no strategic value. Under these circumstances, the fear generated by the informal inquiry and instruction passed by the security officer forced the mosque's administrative committee to request the imam to leave. Sensing the mood, he straightaway complied. In the heavy presence of military personnel of every ilk and hue, the

dread that has been cultivated on the ground is so deeply overwhelming that the Kashmiris have been deprived of even decent mourning at this acute sense of a tragic loss, a luxury the rest of India is still able to avail. On the same Friday, August 9, just before the prayers were to commence, another CRPF officer from the neighbouring camp called on the imam at our local mosque and advised him that there should be no 'bhadh-kau bhashan' or incendiary sermon. Otherwise, the imam was to be held responsible, a prospect that, under the new rules of engagement, could earn an instant Public Safety Act that carries a prison sentence ranging from six months to two years without recourse to any credible mechanism of justice. To my knowledge, our local preacher had been guilty of dispensing long sermons that I have religiously avoided but which have never inflamed passions on any issue — small or significant. However, the threat was so potent that our mosque stopped the Friday sermon for several weeks in a row. It was later reinstated for a couple of Fridays but has since been excised altogether. Several weeks into the siege, the desperation of Kashmiris was at its peak. There were rumours claiming various sightings of 'mehman' (guest) or 'dastair' (literally meaning turbanators), neologisms for Afghan fighters. All these stories suggested that contingents of foreign combatants were roaming about with each group supported by a couple of Kashmiris who act as their guides and interpreters. Luckily, it all turned out to be dud. Since then, luckily, people have realised that hollow promises from far-off places won't change their lot.

Almost all Kashmiri Muslims — from the valleys of Kashmir, Pir Panchal and Chenab; and Kargil to Jammu — fear their indigenous character is under serious threat as an aggressive New Delhi is on a civilizational mission to subsume their identity as crudely enunciated through the slogans of 'ghar-wapsi', a euphemism for forcible conversion to the Hindutva faith. The only other possibility is migration — forcible or voluntary. Regardless of how the new public rebellion against Prime Minister Modi shapes in the near future, Kashmiris will

The new war

DR FARRUKH SALEEM

The hybrid threat to Pakistan is three dimensional: economic, societal and political. Pakistan's enemies are throwing dollars to exploit our internal fissures. Our enemies are throwing dollars to pitch powers within Pakistan against each other.

Yes, critical institutions are under attack in order to weaken the state. There's no blood on our streets because hybrid warfare aims at 'degrading the morale and well-being of a nation's citizens'. The new war has just one goal: To weaken Pakistan's war-fighting capability. The 'weaponisation of finance' is the new battleground. A financial attack is three things: indirect, un-attributable and difficult to detect. Yes, financial warfare is about 'entering enemy territory behind enemy lines. Yes, financial warfare is about denial of financial resources.

The focus of 'financial warfare' is just one thing: to target the country's capital. Yes, financial warfare is about engagement-engagement through the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO (On January 29, WikiLeaks leaked a document authored by Army Special Operations Forces Unconventional

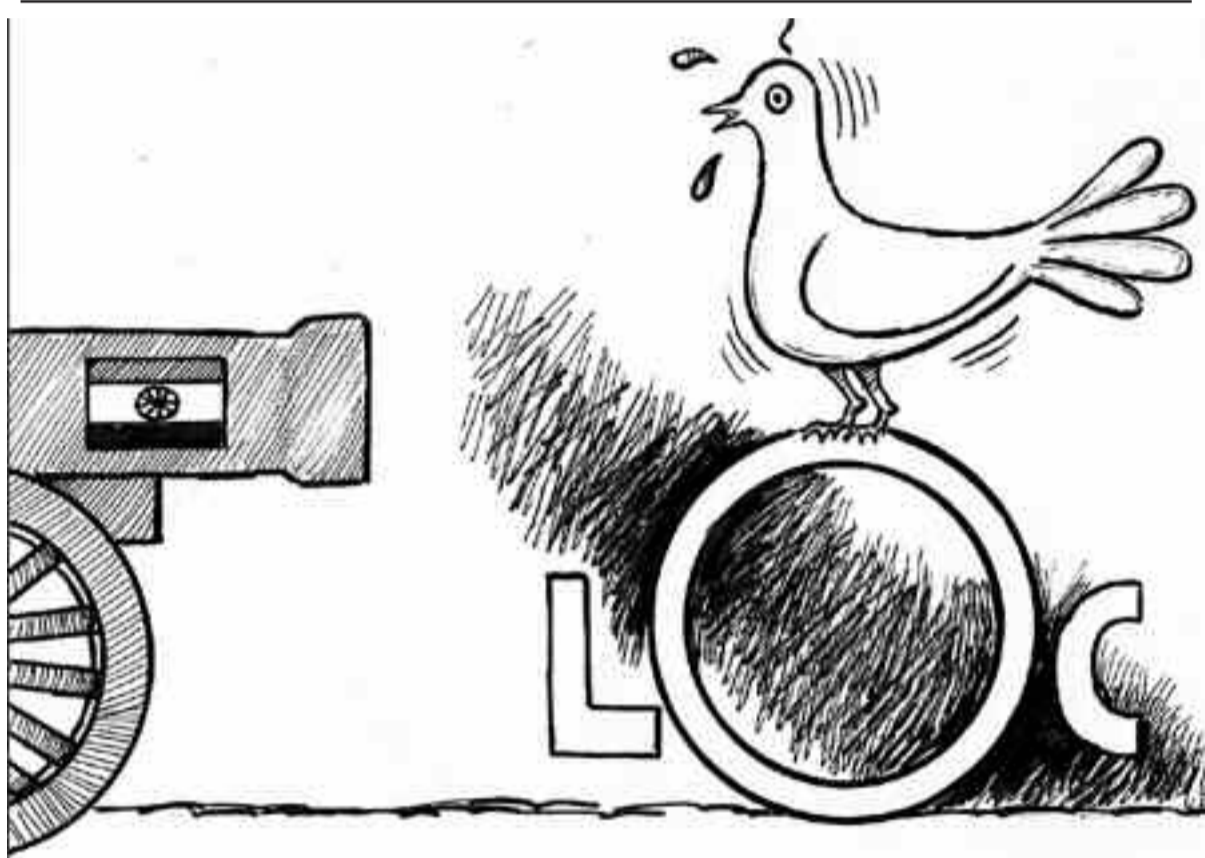
Warfare. The document states: "Like all other instruments of US national power, the use and effects of financial weapons are interrelated and they must be coordinated carefully." The document further states: "Of particular interest politically are the World Bank, the IMF, and the World Trade Organization".

At a more strategic level, the new war is about disrupting Pak Army's focus and diluting its ability to concentrate on its primary mission. The new war is about degrading our army's core capability: our soldiers' morale or their will to fight. In essence, "morale relates to confidence, enthusiasm and discipline.... That is, the self-assurance to undertake a given task, the level of passion for that task and the degree of will-power in relation to that task." The new attack is an attack on esprit de corps — the "feeling of pride and mutual loyalty shared by the members" of our armed forces. Morale is not about military hardware, tanks and fighter jets. Morale is a feeling — motivation, job satisfaction; do my leaders care about me. Morale gives our soldiers a "sense of purpose higher than that of individual survival." The morale of our soldiers is Pak Army's most important

intangible force multiplier. The morale of our soldiers' is how they "feel about themselves, their team and their leaders". This intangible is under attack. Morale is three things: intangible, invisible and volatile. This volatility is under attack. Our adversary is attempting to damage our military's morale through weapons other than tanks and jet fighters. This is 'demoralization warfare' — agents of influence, propaganda, disinformation and political warfare. Napoleon claimed that 'In war, three-quarters of victory is down to morale, only one quarter to the balance of military forces.' We are under a strategic demoralization attack — 'sowing seeds of doubt and anxiety'; 'diverting frustrations and hatred to a new target'; and 'denial of an enemy image'. A general defined morale as "when a soldier thinks his army is the best in the world, his regiment the best in the army, his company the best in the regiment, his squad the best in the company, and that he himself is the best blanket-blank soldier man in the outfit."

The writer is a columnist based in Islamabad.

Email: farrukh15@hotmail.com
Twitter: @saleemfarrukh



Ides of December



GHAZI SALAHUDDIN

It becomes hard to look at the larger picture when, wobbling in a surge of momentous events, you get breathless with emotions. Some issues get overblown and others, possibly more influential in a historical context, are left in the wings. And a question that lurks in the shadows is: are we sliding into a state of massive disorder?

We did expect some developments during this December.

There was something ominous about Maulana Fazlur Rehman's march on Islamabad. But what we have is a whirlwind. Perhaps we deserve it, considering what we had sown in the past. It seems weird that all this is happening in December. After all, this month is the repository of some unbearably dark moments in this country's existence.

Sadly, something planted this December will affect our foreign policy and our image in the world, particularly in the Muslim world. My reference, obviously, is that very bad decision of Prime Minister Imran Khan to step out of the Kuala Lumpur summit at about the last minute. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has openly said that Pakistan had decided to stay away because of Saudi Arabia's threats of economic sanctions.

This important development has somehow not received the attention it warrants because of the more sensational headlines

that have dominated all our conversations. In fact, there is trouble brewing on every front. Most worrying, however, is the tension that is building up between two major institutions.

Outgoing Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa said on Friday that a malicious campaign has been initiated against him and the judiciary. At the end of his farewell speech, he also recited a defiant poem by Fehmida Riaz. The special court verdict in the treason case of former military ruler, retired Gen Pervez Musharraf has made history. A former army chief has been awarded death sentence in absentia for suspending the constitution.

While the verdict itself, announced in a short order on Tuesday, was promptly criticised by the military spokesman, the detailed judgment released on Thursday has raised a storm. The focus is on one small paragraph that projects the vile spirit of barbarism and it is penned by Chief Jus-

tice of the Peshawar High Court Waqar Ahmed Seth, who headed the special court.

I would not repeat those grisly words that have subverted the substance of the majority judgment of a bench of three judges. There was an immediate and angry response from the army and the government. A reference against Justice Seth is to be filed in the Supreme Judicial Council and the verdict is to be challenged in the Supreme Court.

Already, the issue of the extension of the chief of army staff (COAS) had drawn a line between institutions. It needs to be resolved within a six-month period. There is still some confusion about the parameters of the legislation that would set the terms and conditions of the office of the COAS. As I said, there is a rush of events at this time, compelling us to constantly struggle to assess our thoughts and feelings. One is not able to fully grasp a situation before it suddenly changes

into something very different.

It should be possible to identify certain strands that are woven into this tapestry of chaos. We are familiar with the intimations of dark ages in our thinking and behaviour. One major spectacle we witnessed this month was the attack of lawyers on a cardiac hospital in Lahore, though it has now receded in the background.

For the moment, there is outrage over the grisly image projected in paragraph 66 of the detailed Musharraf verdict. It is scary, but violence is ingrained in our daily lives.

This government is rightly furious about the specific rider in the verdict. But there was no response when one its federal ministers had said, also in a formal statement made in the National Assembly, that five thousand people should be dragged on the streets and then hanged to suppress corruption in the country. Invoking Article 6 against suspension of the constitution by a usurper has

been talked about a lot. The irony now is that, while his government is defending Musharraf, there are numerous video clips of Imran Khan in which he had forcefully demanded Musharraf's trial and conviction.

These reversals, classified as U-turns, have become a joke. But this is different. It shows that Imran has abdicated the high moral ground that was the basic justification for his leadership and the support he had gathered. In addition to these betrayals, we have to also contend with incompetence and poor judgment.

At this point, look at his decision to not attend the summit called by Mahathir Mohamed of Malaysia. The paradox here is that he apparently was a part of the plan. If you remember, Imran had become very friendly with Erdogan and Mahathir during his New York visit in September to attend the UNGA session. So much so that the three of them had de-

ecided to launch their own English language television channel of BBC style to counter Islamophobia. Imagine how that channel, if it had been established, would have covered Pakistan's absence from the summit. Likewise, it would be interesting to analyse the strategic consequences of submitting to the dictates of Gulf monarchies.

It would be a distraction, but think of that glorious Islamic Conference that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had put together. In fact, there are many reasons to remember Bhutto this month. He was an elected prime minister and he was overthrown and later executed by a military dictator in what is certified as a judicial murder. Gen Ziaul Haq was able to get away with it. He had also staged not just public floggings but also public hangings. The writer is a senior journalist.

Email: ghazi_salahuddin@hotmail.com

Letters to the Editor

Water logging problems

Through your esteemed newspaper I want to draw the attention of concern authorities towards the problem of water logging in Lahore during every monsoon season. It was a bit odd to see parts of many streets and roads in Lahore being waterlogged just after a few hours of intermittent rains a few days ago. This shows a major problem with the drainage system in the city. Lahore gets rains like this only for few weeks in a year in every month. But even then, the city could not cope with it. The situation was especially bad on the roads below some flyovers. Many drivers had to abandon their cars after being stranded in pools of water. Waterlogging refers to the saturation of soil with water. When new roads are being built, especially in low-lying areas, it is important that a proper drainage system is put in place so that water is quickly drained in case of rain. It is incongruous to see flooded roads after a spell of rain.

Every year the heavy rains make some parts of the city to suffer from waterlogging. The rainwater infrastructure, if it exists at all, is not enough to guarantee the drainage of the water so that streets in low-lying areas get inundated. Roads are blocked leading to traffic jams, pedestrians must wade through flooded streets

and especially the urban poor, living in slums or squatters have their homes often damaged by the water, which may take several days to recede. But waterlogging happens everywhere, whether in rich or in poor neighbourhoods. Every year newspapers weather report informed about the exact date when the rains are expected and whether the monsoon has brought rain than in the years before despite that concerned authorities failed to manage the situation.

Our MCD has enough resources to manage the situation, but improper garbage dumping by the public and the failure of the MCD is one of the main reasons for sewers getting choked with garbage which exacerbates water logging. Because of waterlogging people must face lots of problems like road accidents even causes death sometimes, traffic jams, increase mosquitoes and so on. We hope that Public Works Authority will take the water logging problem seriously and adopt new practices and measures to prevent such problems in future.

Syed Waleed-ul-Hassan
STUDENT BS (MC), HMT, LAHORE

Snooker title

Mohammad Asif once again made the nation proud by winning the IBSF World Snooker title in Antalya, Turkey on Saturday. He defeated Jeffrey Roda of the Philippines in the final match

by 8-5 and won the trophy for the second time in his career. The 37-year-old once won the prestigious honour in 2012 in Sofia, Bulgaria. He has now joined the list of five players who have won the title twice since 1963.

Several Pakistani players including Mohammad Saleh, Asjad Iqbal, Mohammad Bilal, Babar Masih and a few others are struggling to win a title because of lack of support, lack of funds, etc to compete on the international level. Snooker has still kept the Pakistan flag flying high. I congratulate Mohammad Asif for his brilliant efforts and great achievements and I request the government and the concerned authorities to support him and other players.

Mohammad Uzair
PESHAWAR

Indian deflection

It is very unfortunate that Pakistan's longest border has always remained at tenterhooks. Now the latest diatribe of Indian Army Chief Bipin Rawat has escalated tensions. For decades, Pakistan has been accused by India. But the recent wave of protests in India have shaken its foundations. The social turmoil caused by unjust and unwise policies and actions have infuriated many Indians. To cover up its failures, the simplest option for India is to frown at Pakistan. The international community

should stop India from any aggression, which could throw one fourth of the world into war and prove totally fatal for humanity.

Ifikhar Mirza
ISLAMABAD

Civic sense

It is very unfortunate how members of two noble professions came face to face in the Punjab Institute of Cardiology, Lahore. The incident has made evident the dearth of moral and ethical values in our so-called Muslim society. Our educational institutes only produce morally and ethically bankrupt professionals whose sole aim is to make money. The government must make sure that educational institutes focus on ethos rather than only focusing on academics. In order to prosper, a nation must have responsible citizens, who possess civic sense and know how to show regard to other fellow beings.

Musab Manzoor
ISLAMABAD

Malaysia Summit

Much has been talked about Prime Minister Imran Khans U-turn on withdrawing from the planned Malaysia summit at the eleventh hour. I see it as a complete failure of Pakistan's Foreign

Office. It is the responsibility of the Foreign Office to apprise the political leadership about the pros and cons of any policy change. In this case, it seems that our Foreign Office completely ignored the implications of our participation in such a summit. Pakistan was trying to act as a bridge to help diffuse tensions between KSA and Iran which is indeed a very commendable gesture but forming a new platform for Islamic countries parallel to the OIC without other Gulf countries' participation would have surely antagonized them. Our Foreign Office should have foreseen it to avoid a domestic and international letdown for the present government. The prime minister should exercise extreme caution in such cases and must consult other experts and not rely on the Foreign Office only.

Khalid Ismail
ISLAMABAD

Right to appeal

Could anyone kindly throw some light as to why the present government did not withdraw the Musharraf case? If Para 66 was not there, would the government have accepted the verdict? Under the present circumstances, Gen Musharraf is requested to kindly appeal to the president of Pakistan to set aside the decision of the court.

Lt-Col (r) Arshad N Qureshi