

The Business

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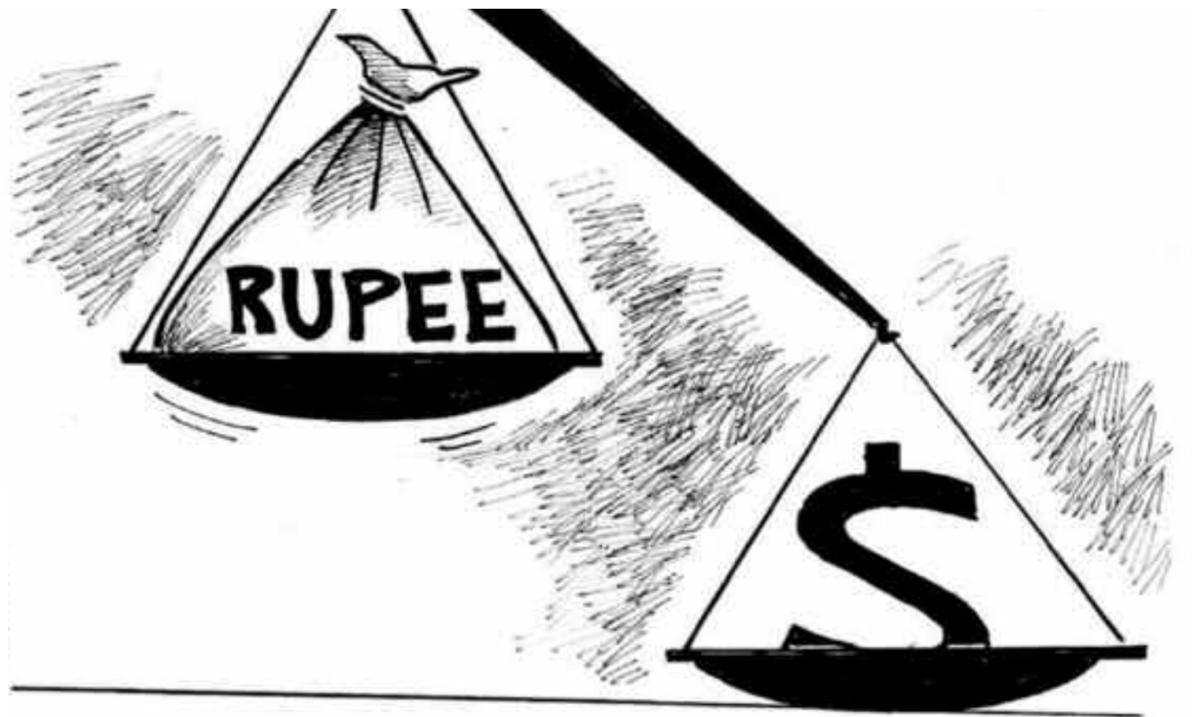
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An unjust trial

Jammu Kashmir Liberation Leader (JKLF) Yasin Malik, a true political prisoner and a freedom fighter, who has been peacefully championing the Kashmiris' just cause of freedom. Since Yasin Malik's arrest on February 22, 2019, particularly after his transfer to New Delhi's infamous Tihar Jail on May 10, 2019, the JKLF chief had decided not to contest the fabricated cases. He had withdrawn his defence lawyer in protest after observing and anticipating the unfair and biased court proceedings and the ill-intentions of the Indian government. The Modi Government has been preparing false grounds to hang him as was done in case of Maqbool Bhat and Afzal Guru. Kashmiris will not rest till given their right to self-determination as was promised to them by the UN. Concerns have been raised about the questionable trial of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front chairman Yasin Malik by an Indian court, with the AJK prime minister as well as Yasin Malik's party convinced that he would not get a fair trial.

Seven people, including Yasin Malik, were accused of killing the IAF officers in Srinagar. The Jammu and Kashmir High Court stayed their trial in 1995, but that ruling was struck down by the same court. Malik's lawyers maintain that the charges do not stand since Malik and his accomplices were armed rebels who had announced a unilateral ceasefire in 1994. Malik is also accused of orchestrating the kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayeed in 1989. Rubaiya is the daughter of the then federal home minister and former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. Both the cases – the killing of IAF officers and Rubaiya Sayeed's kidnapping – are being pursued in a Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) court in Jammu by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) agency.

Yasin Malik had been "coerced" by a "kangaroo court" into pleading guilty in a dubious case of terrorism dating back to 2017. Moreover, the trial is part of a "political vendetta" against the veteran Kashmiri leader being carried out "at the behest of the Narendra Modi-led Hindutva regime". There can be little doubt that Yasin Malik is being punished by New Delhi for refusing to toe its line on India-held Kashmir. Similar tactics have been used by India to target Kashmiri leaders who favour freedom, while even some of New Delhi's loyalists have been meted out despicable treatment by the Indian state, particularly after the revocation of IHK's special status in August 2019. The last but not the least point is that India needs to quash such dubious references against all pro-freedom leaders. The Muslim world's response to the Kashmir question is concerned, though the statement from the OIC body is welcome, the Muslim bloc – especially its more influential members – needs to do more to press home the point to India that its brutal policies in the occupied region are unacceptable.

RAASHID WALI JANJUA

The ethereal beauty of the Kashmir valley is being assaulted by the ugliness of Indian deprivations on human rights and international law fronts in the disputed territory.

The disputed status of IIOJK is a fact established by 18 United Nations resolutions. The statement of the Russell Tribunal mentions the Kashmir issue as the worst exemplar of settler colonialism, genocide and crimes against humanity. The tribunal has based its opinion after hearing evidence from two genocide alerts given by Genocide Watch. The only big difference this time is the obliteration of Kashmiris' identity through an insidiously choreographed annexation campaign.

The denial of human and political rights has been combined in a perfect storm of identity denial through killings, torture, rape and gerrymandering of political constituencies to impose a puppet chief minister who can sanctify the gross violation of human rights and international law by doing the bidding of the Indian government. The US Commission on International Religious Freedoms (USCIRF) has in its recently unveiled report in April 2022 recommended that India be listed as "Country of Particular Concern." USCIRF is an independent bipartisan US Congress mandated entity created under International Religious Freedom Act 1998 (IRFA). The report has put India on the list of concern for the third year running, highlighting egregious violation of religious rights and freedoms through discriminatory laws such as Citizen Amendment Act.

The denial of religious freedoms and visceral hatred for minorities is in line with the extremist vitriolical ideology of Hindutva that aims at sanitizing India of all non-

DAVID D'AMATO

In 1881, Henry George, already famous for his most well-known work, 'Progress and Poverty', published 'The Irish Land Question'. In the book, he argued that if all people have "the same equal right to life, it follows that they must all have the same equal right to the land."

For George, the liberal notions of individual liberty and equal rights for all were worthless unless they meant the end of land theft and land monopoly, the return of the land to its proper status as the inheritance of all mankind. He observed a great disconnect: while we all need the land and its products to survive, only a small handful of landlords own it, thus allowing them to dictate the terms under which most of us live out our days.

That disconnect has defined the modern age, and while it remains with us, it has been notoriously diffi-

How to tackle Crisis 2022

MOSHARRAF ZAIDI

Much has been made of Crisis 2022 – the multi-layered problems Pakistan faces today in the economic, political, cultural and social realm. I anoint it Crisis 2022 because many of the other fitting titles don't do justice to everything the 'crisis' is, and isn't.

We aren't quite suffering Notification Gate anymore – though Imran Khan is. This isn't the fallout of the Vote of No Confidence, or the renewal of judicial power – though it is both of those things, but not exclusively. A petrol bomb, or economic Molotov cocktail? Where? How? Gasoline prices, deliberately and mischievously set lower than sustainable by Imran Khan, still haven't risen. The ordinary Pakistani sees people like your friendly neighbourhood columnist appeal for a removal of the petroleum subsidy and an increase in petrol prices and wonders what moral plague has afflicted so-called educated men and women that argue for higher prices!

Of course, we are living through a delicious and wholly predictable civ-mil crisis, but it is difficult to talk too openly about it, given that such a discussion necessitates analysis of the state of affairs in the civ-civ space (which we can, should and do indulge in voraciously) but also a discussion of what is happening within the confines of the mil-mil space (which we 'eschew' – and on which many more powerful people than newspaper columnists and editors should reflect on much more seriously).

Of course, the house is divided in many places. Cousins are fighting each other on WhatsApp groups. Facebook communities once united by things like cars and food and fashion, are being torn apart by too little or too much dedication to national honour and genuine freedom. No one likes slavery, but free people like to be called slaves even less than slaves enjoy being called slaves. The testosterone-fuelled, disinformation-heavy propagandists that initiated Pakistan's response to fifth-generation warfare (and delivered the 2018 general election) now run Pakistan and its national discourse. And that discourse has come full circle. Boy(s), is it ugly!

Crisis 2022, or The Big Ugly, is a little bit of a lot of things, but not quite one single thing. Imran Khan has attacked any and all individuals and institutions that do not bow down to him. Now, the Insafians and the more radical cultists within that church don't like the fascist label – but references to dropping atomic bombs and a full-on offensive against the sitting leadership of the

military merits some treatment that identifies what it is. 'Fascism' feels extreme, and unfair and upsetting – but then, perhaps former PM Khan needs to think more deeply about the impact of him mounting his favourite perch (the veritable container) and letting loose like no one was watching.

The problem is: we all are. Watching. We can't look away. But that problem isn't Imran Khan's. Or his followers'. Or even his cultists'. That is a problem for the PML-N and those that are invested in trying to beat Imran Khan at his own game. This is a sad spectacle. Something akin to Kapil Dev or Ian Botham imagining that they look, smell and taste like Imran Khan – on or off the cricket field, between 1978 and 1992. Those two were great cricketers, even giants, in their own right. But Imran Khan? Please. Watching the PML-N try to match populist wits with Imran Khan or trying to beat him at the crude rhetoric game is as cringe worthy as Dev or Botham trying to pretend they were Khan on or off the cricket field. PML-N 2022 is a party built on the brick and mortar (and alleged graft) of economic growth in Punjab over the last decade and a half. The Punjab-based achievements of Imran Khan, the man the PML-N is trying to outwit in the trolling department? IK has unearthed gems like Usman Buzdar and the obscene cast of clowns that help run his affairs as party leader of the PTI since he was voted out of office. He found and lost Jahangir Khan Tareen and Aleem Khan in less than a quarter of the time that it took deep state activists enamoured by IK to find and convince these serious election financiers (JKT and Aleem Sb) to underwrite that titanic moment in Pakistani political engineering, the '2018 tsunami'.

In short, maybe the PML-N should focus on what it actually knows how to do: build roads, create jobs and expand the middle class. It cannot, should not and will not beat Imran Khan on social media, or in WhatsApp groups, or in middle-class minds seized with righteous rage about their place in the world. This ecosystem was built to undermine and reduce the PML-N to bite-sized morsels that a capable new force in politics could devour without indigestion. The 2018 tsunami got everything right except the capable part. Now, Jimmy wanna eat world. That's not a PML-N problem. That is a sewage problem in Rawalpindi division. PM Shabbaz Sharif never met a crisis he didn't want to jump into and solve, but he should put on a mask and walk away from this one. Crisis 2022 is no laughing matter. But it is also not the calamitous end of days many are painting it to be. It is a one-stop junction for about six or seven separate Pakistani crises to collapse and collide

into one another, right about now – but Pakistan's four fundamentals have not changed and inshaAllah, are not going to change. That is why, those that are hoping for a magical shift to a reform trajectory should take their hopes, wrap their fingers around the throat of this hope, and squeeze the life out of it. Pakistan's elite daylight-dacoity compact will remain intact – and this Crisis 2022? This too, shall pass. What are these four magical fundamentals? One, unparalleled geopolitical salience. Two, a large, young, growing and increasingly urban population. Three, being a Muslim majority nation that has defeated violent extremism once and four, a high-functioning global upper middle class. Pakistan's geopolitical salience is valuable, especially if Saudi Arabia, China, the US and other partners know that they will not end up being randomly jack hammered by Pakistan's rulers every couple of months. Pakistan's young, growing and hungry population will keep generating higher remittances, increased demand and greater consumption – these GDP booms were made for walking. The status of Pakistan as perhaps the most important Muslim majority nation on the planet (one that is a democracy) is more important – strategically, economically, politically and culturally – than it ever was before. Most importantly, a high functioning, global upper middle class affords Pakistan avenues into global finance and a technology startup ecosystem that may yet drag Pakistan – late, unkempt, kicking and screaming – into the 21st century. It is okay to feel despondent at the diminishing sustainability of the fiscal and monetary gaps the country faces. The incoming wave of inflation will batter household incomes – even in DHAs – it is not pretty and will get uglier. The continued humiliation of being ruled by incompetent and callous pinup heroes, family dynasties and incapable political engineers is not about to suddenly evaporate into thin air. But the long-term destiny of Pakistan remains in the safe, praying hands of its ordinary people. The elite daylight-dacoity compact in Pakistan only slows the people down. It cannot immobilize them.

Now go. Go exit that toxic WhatsApp group. Put away Twitter. Turn off the TV channel that you trust. Go. Go hug someone that you respect and love for who they are. Ignore their politics. In fact, go seek out the ones that have a different politics from you, the ones whose politics is deplorable and inexplicable. Go and hug those ones first. Go. Go pick up a book. There are wonders in the multiverse waiting to be discovered and exploited, jobs to be created, new science to be forged, new poetry to be written, and something to be bought and sold. Stop sulking. Go!

Godse's India

Hindu faiths to pave the way for a Hindu Rashtra. Eliminating all vestiges of pluralism and religious diversity is aimed at religio-cultural homogenization of India that has given rise to a spate of human rights violations spanning a wide gamut of crimes including crime against humanity, genocide and ethnic cleansing especially in Occupied Kashmir, northeastern states, Rajasthan, Gujarat, UP and Maharashtra. The apotheosis of this ethno-religious xenophobia has been witnessed in Kashmir whose illegal annexation in August 2019 has set in motion a cascading sequence of encroachments aimed at erasure of Kashmiris' identity. This is being achieved through a systematic campaign of alteration of demography and centuries-old land ownership pattern.

Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) has been without a representative government since 2018 and is being ruled directly by New Delhi through Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. The latest attempt at artificially limiting the Kashmiri presence in the legislature is the announcement of new delimitation of electoral constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir. The Modi government's delimitation commission has increased the number of assembly seats in Hindu dominated Jammu from 37 to 43 while adding only one seat to Muslim majority Kashmir Valley's existing tally of 46. The addition of six seats in Jammu compared to only one in Kashmir gives a clear advantage of five seats to Hindu community. The biased commission has also awarded two reserve seats to Kashmiri migrants who are predominantly Hindus and in the grip of government-in-

spired vitriolic propaganda against Kashmiri Muslims through hate spewing films such as Kashmir Files. According to Mehbooba Mufti of the PDP, a relatively moderate political leader, the gerrymandering of the electoral constituencies is a blatant attempt at disempowering the Muslim community before even one vote is polled in the elections. In 2002, Occupied Kashmir's government and India had amended their constitution deferring the delimitation of constituencies till 2026. A new census superseding the census of 2011 was planned to be held in 2021 whose results were to be the basis of new electoral delimitation in 2026.

Instead of abiding by that commitment, the BJP government encouraged by the revocation of Article 370 and 35 A in August 2019 has taken the ultimate step towards formalization of annexation through illegal delimitation of constituencies based on existing population. According to independent analysts, one person in Jammu is now equivalent to 1.3 persons in Kashmir due to iniquitous electoral delimitation that badly discriminates between 56 per cent of valley-dwelling Kashmiris and 44 per cent Jammu dwellers. The clever majority altering artifice is clearly aimed at bringing the BJP to power in IIOJK through rigged elections to legalize the illegal annexation of the disputed region to the Indian Union. A dispassionate analysis of the new delimitation of constituencies shows that by carving out one constituency for 1,25,082 people in Jammu as opposed to 1,46,563 in Kashmir Valley 1,009,621 people have been disenfranchised in Occupied Kashmir. Manipulation of

constituencies has been a long-standing ambition of the BJP government as it has often raised the bogey of under-representation of the Jammu region. The party had won 25 seats in the 2014 assembly polls and was made part of the government for the first time in Occupied Kashmir's history. Having tasted blood in 2014, it now aims to capture the chief minister's slot through an artificially altered political geography of the region. The delimitation has come in for scathing criticism in IIOJK with Farooq Abdullah, the president of National Conference, terming the exercise illegal while the Gupkar Alliance challenges the constitutionality of the Delimitation Commission in the Supreme Court of India. The delimitation exercise itself is a product of a bigger deprivation – the infamous Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act 2019, that illegally sought to assimilate IIOJK in Indian Union. Under the act, the IIOJK assembly would have 90 seats excluding the 24 seats reserved for areas across the Line of Control. The original sin of re-siling from UN-mandated plebiscite commitments has been revisiting the hapless denizens of the disputed region with metronomic regularity. First it was a wriggling out of plebiscite commitment on spurious grounds of troops' presence, then it was a mirage of autonomy enshrined in Article 370 of the Indian constitution, and later stripping of that autonomy through revocation of the same article in 2019.

The Indian deprivations in IIOJK have even compelled pro-India leaders like Farooq Abdullah to comment that present India is more Godse's India than Gandhi's India, driving Kashmiris towards an armed uprising. Indian human rights violations are rapidly attaining the hues of crimes against humanity and genocide which now needs an international intervention sooner

Right to the land

cult to quantify its social, economic, and environmental impacts. In particular, the causal relationship between land monopoly and present-day environmental conditions has not been sufficiently studied. Exploring this relationship reveals that a comprehensive critique of land monopoly entails a program for the more responsible and sustainable use of land and natural resources.

In order to make those who use the land accountable, planning strategically for the long term and internalizing their costs to the extent possible, it must be owned by small groups of people who live on it. When decisions are made by large, distant corporate bodies that are not answerable in any robust way to local communities, we cannot be surprised to find them depleting

and draining the life from the land. The ability of the land to sustain life begins with the soil, which, when it is strong and healthy, is a world of irreducible beauty and complexity. This world is full of life forms and the relationships between them, from bacteria and fungi, to plants and animals, both living and dead, of various sizes and scales.

Soil is a living thing – an infinitely complex network of them, more precisely – and human civilization has been phenomenally good at killing it, at making dead, dry deserts of dynamic living networks. As observed from space, we might regard humans as a desert-making species. It is important to point out that the current environmental and ecological crisis is not entirely a product of the industrial age, but begins thousands of

years ago, as human civilization's agricultural endeavors became progressively (perhaps regressively) more widespread and intensive. It is not enough to point the way to organic farming, as such practices were all that was available to previous agricultural civilizations, which likewise pushed their natural environments beyond sustainable limits. The introduction and successive redoublings of modern, industrial techniques, particularly the indiscriminate, irresponsible use of "fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and whatever other chemicals are at hand," have aggravated the soil crisis to such a degree that many of the world's formerly rich soils are now almost completely bereft of organic matter. This is a direct consequence of the fact that although our farms have grown larger, they are owned and operated by comparatively fewer and fewer people, through corporate operations with short-sighted business strategies and goals.

Excerpted: 'The Enduring Land Question'.