

Pakistan-terrorism and its present woes

Pakistan is no longer a reliable partner in any forum, and this is beyond dispute. It led the United States astray in its fight against terrorism following the worst terrorist attack on American soil on September 11, 2001. The USA hunted in the wilderness for OBL in the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan, but ultimately the number one declared enemy of the USA was found nowhere else but in Pakistan, just adjacent to the military cantonment area of Abbottabad. The same is true of India, which has repeatedly extended a hand of friendship to Pakistan but has been turned down each time. Our PM Vajpayee's historic Lahore Bus Yatra was followed by the Kargil war, and PM Modi's friendship visit to Pakistan was returned by the Pathankot Airbase and the Uri terrorist attacks. Pakistan is the hub of Global Terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism is its official policy. Instead of focusing on its economy and development, it was busy in breeding terrorists. The present Gol took the decisive historic decision that "talks and terrorism cannot go together." Since then, the Indian strategy has taken a U-turn; whenever Pakistan provoked, it received an appropriate response immediately; the Uri attack was followed by surgical strikes, and the Pulwama attack prompted retaliation in the form of the Balakot operation. India revoked Pakistan's MFN status and imposed a 200% customs duty on Pakistani goods. The net result is for everyone to see: a failed country begging for help, but nobody is ready to bail out Pakistan this time, be it the IMF, the World Bank, the USA, or other Islamic countries.

India is also in no mood to help Pakistan without action on terrorism, all perpetrators of terrorism are roaming free in Pakistan while the victims are still waiting for justice in India. Dossier after dossier from India had no effect as Pakistan shamelessly brazened out all pieces of evidence with one line, there is not enough evidence; provide more. Talks and terrorism cannot go together' was the old slogan, the latest is "Terrorism and financial help cannot go together." For the last four years, Pakistan has been on the Grey List of FATF (Financial Action Task Force), the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog. While India has become the fifth biggest economy in the world and has cordial relations with all other neighbours, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives, a global power to reckon with G-20 Presidency and on other hand is Pakistan, a failed state. But it is still parroting Kashmir at the UN and fomenting trouble in our Kashmir. The manifestations of a nuclear Pakistan are not going to end soon. Pakistan has learned no lessons from its miserable condition, as no democratically elected Government has completed its tenure in Pakistan and the misadventures of its army have landed them in a no-return situation. Least development, nearly Rs 300 for a dollar currency, no wheat to feed its people, commodity prices that are out of reach for the average person, and no money to pay interest on international debt. It's time up for Pakistan now, and taking corrective measures is the only option left.

Water Resources Regulatory Authority

Jammu and Kashmir is a rare water-surplus State or UT in India, with all the major rivers—nearly twenty of them, some major and some tributaries—flowing through it. But it is most unfortunate that Jammu and Kashmir has never been able to utilise its water resources properly. Neither hydroelectricity production nor the diversion of river water for irrigation nor proper drinking water facilities exist for citizens. While other states are fighting their legal battles to get some water for their states, here in Jammu and Kashmir, we are unable to utilise our water. Even though the Gol has proposed hydroelectric projects, there is still much work to be done. Unfortunately, the most important body of the J&K Water Resources Regulatory Authority has been without a head for more than a year and is severely understaffed. There can be no planning or decision-making meetings in the absence of the chairman. On the one hand, there is no one to plan for water regulation, and on the other hand, the most important positions of groundwater scientist, agricultural scientist, executive engineer, and so on are unfilled. It is beyond comprehension how UT can plan without proper regulatory authority. This regulatory authority's importance has been undermined and compromised, necessitating immediate intervention from the highest authorities. Jammu and Kashmir's cities are suffering from a huge shortage of drinking water, and our Kandi area is devoid of irrigation. The time has come to close all of the gaps from the past and move forward with proper planning. Many water schemes require immediate, focused planning for the future, and delays are major stumbling blocks in development work. How will we double our agricultural income or supply tapped 24-hour drinking water to the people of Jammu and Kashmir? The administration must look into the matter urgently.

Harsha Kakar

Biden's visit to Kiev signalled a year into the conflict which is nowhere near termination and has transformed from a war between two states into a proxy conflict. While the west backs Ukraine it blocks all support to Russia, accusing Russia of being the invader. What the west fails to mention is that it pushed Ukraine into a war, which could have been avoided while creating a scenario for Putin from which he cannot disengage. While western mercenaries engage Russian soldiers and their proxies on the battle-front civilians pay with their lives in air and missile strikes. Moscow has launched a fresh offensive, while Kiev plans a counter offensive. The war is only getting messier.

The world has witnessed rising prices of oil, gas and fertilizers, as also shortfalls in foodgrains. All this while US and NATO arms manufacturers profit from sales to the conflict zone. The west's attempts to isolate Russia and break its economy has failed. The Russian Rouble has survived, and nations continue to procure oil from it. Indian imports of Russian oil are re-routed to many western nations including those imposing sanctions. Simultaneously, sanctions have blocked Russian import of microchips impacting its defence industry.

Biden's visit was announced as reaffirming the west's 'unwavering commitment to Ukraine's democracy, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.' Rubbing salt, Biden mentioned, 'one year later Kiev stands.' In reality, the visit intended to shore up his falling popularity, especially when he has decided to throw his hat into the presidential race.

Biden announced a package of security assistance worth almost USD 500 million to include

A year into the war

ammunition for artillery, HIMARS, Javelin missiles and air defence radars. He also granted an additional USD 10 Million for maintaining Ukraine's energy infrastructure. The US taxpayer funds the war resulting in deaths of innocent Ukrainians. Speaking in Warsaw, Poland, to heads of erstwhile USSR nations, post his Kiev visit, Biden promised to continue backing Ukraine adding that the US and its allies 'would have Ukraine's back.' It signalled a direct confrontation with Russia.

Putin, at the same time, displayed his disdain for western support to Ukraine. In a national address Putin reiterated that Ukraine was created by Russia after 1917 with Crimea being added to it in 1954, thereby reiterating that Ukraine is part of Russia and its future existence will be determined by Moscow. Refusing to back down, Putin accused the west of fuelling the war. He stated, 'It's they who have started the war. And we are using force to end it.'

He announced Russian suspension from the START treaty, which limits the number of inter-continental range nuclear weapons which both, US and Russia can possess. The west hopes that Putin will not withdraw from it. He also threatened recommencing nuclear tests. Putin's refusal to back down was evident when he stated that a war against Russia can never be won.

Both the US and Russia have adopted hard-lines on Ukraine, US promising support and Russia continuing with its offensives. The US has been careful not to cross Moscow's red lines of

the war spilling into Russia by not providing fighter aircraft and long-range missiles to Kiev. The more powerful weapons that the west provides, the deeper Russia will venture into Ukraine to offset their effectiveness. Space for negotiation appears to be shrinking.

The US is determined to convert Ukraine into a second Afghanistan for Russia. Deaths of innocent Ukrainians is of no concern. European nations are being forced to share the burden as the proxy war in Ukraine would weaken Russia and thereby reduce threat to Europe. Saner heads in Europe are seeking an end to the conflict. The EU envoy to India, Ugo Astuto, stated, 'we trust the Indian presidency (G 20) will find a way, in any case, to steer the proceedings towards a positive conclusion,' adding, 'We intend to support Ukraine politically and economically.'

This was a major discussion subject during the visit of the German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz as also will be during Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's visit to Delhi as also the G 20 foreign ministers meet. India has been insisting on dialogue. Indian NSA recently discussed Ukrainian proposals for peace talks with the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Andriy Yermak.

With Biden visiting Kiev, China cannot be far behind, after all, Beijing and Russia have a friendship with 'no limits.' Wang Yi, China's top diplomat visited the Kremlin and met Putin, displaying Beijing's continued support. China has also announced that President, Xi Jinping will vis-

it Moscow shortly. This reiterates plummeting of US-China relations with Xi intending to counter Biden's visit to Kiev.

The US is suspecting that China is contemplating supplying weapons to Russia. If it does so, it would present a Russia-China coalition confronting NATO, without direct involvement of troops. North Korea is already supplying ammunition while Iran is providing drones. Beijing is also advocating dialogue between Kiev and Moscow. The Chinese announced their proposal in a 12-point paper last week, stating, 'Dialogue and negotiation are the only viable solution.' This was questioned by the west but cautiously welcomed by Ukraine. The EU stated, 'It is not a peace plan.'

With both, India and China, mentioning dialogue, the issue at hand is whether peace talks possesses support from the US, which has emerged as the main backer for Kiev and will, in all probability, be taking decisions and Zelensky mousing them. Also whether the US would prefer the initiative to be led by India or China is to be seen. The US is unlikely to give China the lead in promoting talks.

Equally of concern is what is the framework under which both sides are willing to sit at the table. Russia will never withdraw from Crimea and would be unwilling to place territories it has annexed back under Kiev. It may agree to them being independent entities, under Moscow's influence. Will Zelensky back down from his demand of complete Russian withdrawal. A peace solution must be found if loss of lives is to be avoided. Before Zelensky signals his willingness, the US needs to be convinced that the only suitable solution is a dialogue.

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Science cannot be silenced: Sometimes you win & sometimes you learn

Dr Ashaq Hussain

The essence of Science is independent thinking, hard work, and not equipment: CV Raman

There are in fact two things, Science and opinion; the former begets knowledge, the latter ignorance. Every brilliant experiment, like every great work of art, starts with an act of imagination and so is science a way of thinking much more than the body of knowledge. Thus Science is a systematic way of studying the world around us, using skills such as observation, inference among others. Anything that can be created and that has a utilitarian purpose is an example of science and technology. A list of science wonders in today's technologically dependent society would be almost endless. Medicines and drugs, computers and calculators, audio and video electronic devices including radios, televisions, and cell-phones, nuclear reactors, and nuclear weapons, communications satellites, spaceships, plastics and synthetic materials, automobiles, airplanes, and other means of transportation, pulp and paper products etc. are the ones which can never be ignored.

Today, we live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology, in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology. What life can be without science today is beyond imagination. By drastically changing our means of communication, the way we work, our housing, clothes, and food, our methods of transportation, and, indeed, even the length and quality of life itself, science has generated changes in the moral values and basic philosophies of mankind. In this sense, the popularization of science thus plays an important role, since in an accessible form it presents to a wide audience both the knowledge and the most advanced discoveries, inven-

tions, achievements, and even controversial issues of science. Thus, the popularization of science contributes both to the preservation of the traditional and the development of the innovative component of the culture of society, the balance of which is important for the innovative development of the nation.

After four decades of independence, a new beginning took place in our country and for the first time on February 28, 1987, National Science Day was celebrated throughout the country. In fact, the purpose of celebrating National Science Day is to promote scientific communication in public life and development of scientific approach among common people, to discuss new technologies, to provide opportunities for scientific minded students for research, to enrich human life with scientific inventions, to make science popular, to popularize science and technology among people, to connect science with humanity, to create scientific trends and to conduct scientific research for the welfare of human beings etc. The question arises why the date of February 28 was chosen for this?

In 1982, the National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC) was established under the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. The main objective of this council was to promote scientific communication activities. After the establishment of the Council, people interested in science wrote letters to the Council wherein an opinion or say a demand was raised to celebrate National Scientists Day like National Teachers Day. The Council held two sessions on November 4 and 21, 1986, seriously considering this letter. In this meeting, it was suggested that Science Day should be celebrated instead of Scientists' Day. The second suggestion was that November 7 is the birthday of Indian scientist CV Raman, which should be

celebrated as Science Day. In this context, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi believed that November was already the birthday of many scientists and is thus associated with celebrations and festivals of many the historical events of science. Thus it was suggested that since the Raman Effect research was announced on February 28, thus, February 28 will be a perfect day to celebrate National Science Day. After the agreement in the meeting, a decision was taken to celebrate National Science Day on February 28 in the entire country from 1987 and the Science and Technology Department of the Government of India designated February 28 as National Science Day. Another reason for choosing this day was to inspire new researchers to make their careers by taking inspiration from the research work of our scientist CV Raman.

The famous Indian physicist Chandrasekhar Venkata Raman announced the "Raman effect" on February 28, 1928 at the laboratory of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science in Calcutta. The Raman Effect is basically the process of scattering of light particles by molecules of a medium. The scattering occurs due to a change in the wavelength of light as it enters the medium. In 1921, C.V. Raman was on a trip to Europe when he noticed the striking blue colour of some icebergs and the Mediterranean Sea. He was inspired to want to understand the reason behind the phenomenon. He conducted experiments with transparent blocks of ice and light from a mercury arc lamp. He recorded the spectra from shining the light through ice and detected what would come to be known as the Raman Lines, caused by the Raman Effect. The blueness of the sky and water bodies was accurately explained on the basis of the Raman Effect. Two years after the announcement of the Raman Effect, i.e. in 1930, CV Raman was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics. He

was the first Indian scientist to win the country the world's most important and prestigious Nobel Prize in the field of science. This award was not for an Indian scientist alone but for the whole of India. He played a key role in the promotion of science and especially Physics in India.

In the world of science, CV Raman is recognized as an exemplary person. CV Raman has made special contributions to science research and popularization of science. About ten thousand research papers have been published on Raman Effect. The occasion of National Science Day thus reminds us all that we must explore the world of science to enlighten ourselves with new knowledge. Let us celebrate the occasion of National Science Day in schools, colleges, universities and scientific institutes by promising that we will never get satisfied with what we know and we will keep exploring more and side by side bring awareness to people about the importance of science in our daily life and to encourage people by popularizing Science and Technology. The good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it as the science of past is the technology of today and the technology of today is the sustenance of tomorrow. In short, science is a way of life and a perspective, a process that takes us from confusion to understanding in a manner that's precise, predictive, and reliable. It is thus a transformation, for those lucky enough who experience it. For those who love science, know that sky is the limit when it comes to learning new things in science. At last but not least, always keep in mind the famous quote of Raman about science, "Treat me right and you will see the light...Treat me wrong and you will be gone". Wishing you all a very Happy National Science Day.

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Correcting the biases, exploding the myths-biggest challenge for the Govt

Vishal Sharma

"Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth." - Marcus Aurelius

"The Economist," which ran a story captioned "The mirage of peace and prosperity in Kashmir - Narendra Modi's headline approach has not made the region richer or safer", on 10th January, 2023, has been extremely economical with the truth. In fact, if anything, the piece represents the complete distortion of facts as they exist on the ground.

The problem with international writers writing on Kashmir has been that they have chosen for the most part to follow rhetorical approaches at the expense of truth/ground realities. This piece of writing is no different as the writer has merrily joined the vanguard of the international drumbeaters who claim to know everything about Kashmir. Alas! It has been seen that they know about Kashmir as much or as little as they know about Mars!

The period that has followed abrogation of Article 370 and reorganization of erstwhile State of J&K into two Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh has been the most peaceful in the history of J&K.

Let's start with internet: the internet restrictions, as we have known, are gone and, predictably so, as there has been a significant dip in incidents of unrest/militant incidents over the last three years.

Prior to 2019, the Govt's default option in the face of a militant attack/unrest was to shut down the internet to quell spread of misinformation and rein in the army of trolls on the twitter, whose only article of faith was to create further discord in the region.

Today, it is unthinkable! In fact, when one thinks back to those days, they are not easily recallable; forgotten and part of our dim and the distant past as they have come to be.

Remarkably enough, J&K today is perhaps the most digitalised economy amongst the 36 States/UT of the country. It has been amongst the first few States/UTs to have rolled out 5 G services with a speed of about 300 mbps. About 450 digital online G2C services have been launched in record time of less than 10 months under the campaigns "Digital J&K Mission" and "Aapka Mobile - Hamara Datar" thereby ushering the era of transparency and corruption-free Jammu and Kashmir.

In a few days from now, all services in J&K will be rendered on line.

Come to think of it, would this be possible if internet services were patchy and unpredictable in J&K!

The terror incident, which occurred in early January this year, happened in Rajouri district of Jammu Division and not in South Western Kashmir, as has been claimed in the piece. It is understandable that the writer has no understanding of geography of the J&K, but at the bare minimum, should he not then have cross checked his facts with the local administration and ensured that he was spot on with his facts?

The case of Abdul Nadaf is held up as a test case as if a point proven in this case would settle the argument in his favour.

It is counterintuitive to accept the writer's argu-

ment in this case! No person, howsoever mighty he may be, is above the law. In all secular liberal societies of the world, a person who is involved in any subversive/terrorist activity has to face the law. If he turns out to be innocent, he is set free. On the other hand, if he is found to be on the wrong side of law, he has to accept the punishment that he gets under law. This is a universally accepted principle and is upheld much in the same manner in J&K as in other progressive secular/liberal democracies in the world.

The writer would have had an argument if he had stats to show for. Unfortunately, he does not! Consider this: the number of detentions under the Public Safety Act has actually decreased from 646 in 2019 to 134 in 2020 and 303 in 2021. It may not be a quite linear decline. But it is a decline nonetheless. So much for the argument on illegal detentions and disturbance in the Valley!

The most misunderstood fact about the number of troops in the Valley is the number itself that is usually bandied about.

Firstly, the strength of troops in the Valley is overblown quite significantly. And secondly, the troop deployment in Kashmir has to be understood in the context of Indo-Pak geostrategic dynamics in the region. India and Pak have gone to war over Kashmir thrice in the last 75 years. Thus, it's region which is militarily defended on both sides of border/LoC strongly by both India and Pak. The troop deployment in Jammu and Kashmir has the larger focus of preventing war and not merely fighting the jihadis. The battle against counter insurgency is largely led by paramilitary forces and local police whose numbers are not quite as many as the writer says they are. He is way off the mark on numbers he is using to buttress his point!

The number of bunkers, nakas, checkpoints in Kashmir is more or less the same as it has been in the past. There would have been a need for more checkpoints/nakas in the Valley, if there were more incidents of violence. Let's look at the stats because that's where all the answers are!

The number of militancy related and law and order related incidents have reduced from 417 in 2018 to 125 in 2022 (reduction of 70%) and 825 in 2018 to 26 in 2022 (reduction of 97%).

Also, the killings of police personnel and security forces have declined from 45 in 2018 to 14 in 2022 (reduction of 69%). The killings of security forces have also dipped from 46 in 2018 to 17 in 2022 (reduction of 63%). The number of civilians who have lost their lives in militancy related incident has also reduced from 55 in 2018 to 30 in 2022 (reduction of 45%).

In contrast, the arrests of the militants have shown an increase; clearly a result of an improved law and order situation in J&K. As against 71 militants arrested during 2018, 159 militants were arrested during 2022. The above numbers are clear pointers to the fact that the security situation has dramatically improved during the last three years, which is further buttressed by the fact that elections to three tier Panchayati Raj System and Urban Local Bodies were held during this past three years which witnessed huge public participation without even a single untoward incident despite boycott

calls by all the political parties.

The easy inference that can be drawn from these figures is that people are fed up with this mindless violence and have now parted ways with the peddlers of mindless violence and decided to join the national mainstream. India has a free and vibrant media and if Kashmir were such a disturbed place, it would not have been lost on the Indian media. There is no disturbance, no gore and bloodshed in the Valley! There is only peace and calm in the Valley now! This is the only story that can be written about Kashmir.

There is no such thing as "Non-Kashmiri Guest Workers", but the writer would have us believe otherwise. The people who come to Valley do so only in search of work. Work brings them there.

The writer has let his imagination run riot and in the process has ended up self contradicting. For instance, he says there is strife and discord in Kashmir and then goes on to build an argument around so called Non Kashmiri Guest workers thronging Valley. The question that he does not answer is this: if Valley is disturbed and no body's life is safe there, why on earth would some one visit Kashmir for work? Or Better still why would the Central Govt (if that is what he is alluding to) send these workers to Kashmir to act as cannon fodder?

The entire process of migration of labour in the entire country is the product of demand and supply dynamics of workers in different parts of the country. Workers will keep migrating to areas where they can find jobs. In any case, India is a free country and every one is free to move to any place within the country at his/her sweet free will. The premise that the Government is driving the migration of workers to Kashmir is ill-founded.

Another myth that has been pushed in recent times is that the investment pouring from outside J&K is a ploy to dispossess the people of the UT of their land. Industrial investment is flowing as a part of the New Central Sector Scheme for industrial promotion in J&K. The Scheme has a number of incentives for the prospective entrepreneurs and the incentives are linked to the criteria based evaluation of the proposals. It's an objective and merit based allocation of resource and quite expectedly, J&K has witnessed a record investment of Rs. 1416 crore in the first nine months of the current financial year as against Rs. 590 cr during 2018-19 despite COVID induced disruption.

As the industrial development throws up results over time, the actual investment and number of units that will be set up as well as the jobs that will be generated will increase exponentially in the weeks and months ahead.

Tourism, along with horticulture, is the mainstay of the J&K's economy. However, as things stand, it is difficult to measure the scale of its contribution to GDP. That is partly due to the fact that value of tourism as a sector is not quantified separately. Infact many facets of this sector overlap with other sectors and, therefore, they are computed as part of those sectors' contribution to GDP.

It is, therefore, difficult to figure out as to what has formed the basis of the writer's assertion in

putting a number to contribution of tourism as a sector to GSDP.

However, while it is difficult to compute tourism's contribution to GSDP, there is no difficulty in seeing the positive result that improved law and order has had on tourist arrivals in J&K. 26,73,442 tourists visited J&K in 2022 as against mealy 8,30,758 in 2018 and 5,65,532 in 2019. This represents nearly 3 and 5 times increase in arrivals over the years 2018 and 2019 respectively.

Government has recently made a strong push towards developing new off-beat destinations/ trekking routes. Infrastructure build up in these areas remains top priority with the Government and it is expected to increase the tourist footfall, leading up to a significant boost in the J&K's economy.

Efforts are also underway at promotion of tourism in a big way. There is unrelenting focus on creating a buzz to attract the tourists all the year round. This will make the sector sustainable in the long run and also improve incomes and opportunities for the people connected with the sector.

The year long tourism related activity, which has already begun and will be strengthened going forward will make the region vibrant and throbbing with positive energy. Infact, the signs of this are already visible in the Valley!

Lastly the writer's view on employment is completely misplaced and not based on facts. His reliance on CMIE data is inexplicable given that he has not tried to confirm the CMIE figures by tallying them with those of the central government statistics organisation (MOSPI). CMIE methodologies are not available in public domain and many states have challenged its ways of calculating employment figures. CMIE has never approached J&K Government on employment numbers and, therefore, it is not known where it has sourced its numbers from. Given such a background, unqualified reliance on CMIE data to make a case is inappropriate.

As per J&K's own calculations, the unemployment rate has actually reduced over the last three years and is not more than ten percent. As per the conservative government estimates, more than 20000 people have been recruited in the public sector including in the companies over the last two years. Taken together with around 40000 self employment opportunities that have been created outside the public sector created during the corresponding period, this represents a massive increase over the last few years.

On all fronts, be it law and order or be it the employment, J&K during the last two years has seen a turnaround never witnessed in the past. Its developmental success has ridden on the peace that has been ushered in the Valley due to relentless efforts of the govt.

The govt has defeated long running militancy/terrorism; the biggest challenge imaginable. But much bigger challenge still remains to be conquered; the challenge of correcting biases and winning battle of perceptions. This is exactly the challenge the write up in the Economist poses to the government!

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(The views expressed by the authors are their personal)

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