



VISUAL: TEENI AND TUNI

Below the surface, Jammu and Kashmir simmers



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Of late, I have been to both the Jammu region and the Kashmir valley, asking questions. On the surface, the Union government's claim of 'normalcy' having been restored is borne out by booming tourism, the numerous full airlines flying in and out of Srinagar, the overfull hotels, the streets straining under the load of traffic, and the educational institutions humming with activity. The population moves around fairly freely. The spectacle of heavily armed cops at every corner is sensibly reduced.

But just below the epidermis, Jammu and Kashmir simmers. All it takes for the resentment and anger to surface is a mild question or two.

The fundamental rift between Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's perception of "normalcy" and the people's view is that, while Kashmir may have been captured, the Kashmiris have been alienated. There is profound resentment at the robbing of the people's dignity, the pervasive sense of having been humiliated, the denial of democracy and human rights, and solutions being thrust on them without consultation – whether it is larger questions concerning Articles 370 and 35A, or quotidian matters like the expropriation of land for large highway-building projects, or apple movements being severely restricted while Adani-branded Himachal apples capture the market.

Above all, the psychological distancing is a reaction to the Union government's unsubtle attempts at diluting the specific, separate identity of Kashmiris that was critical to the compact of J&K accepting Indian citizenship on the strict condition that, to preserve their identity, they would be encouraged to exercise as much autonomy as possible.

That is the basis of Article 370, elaborated in the Delhi Agreement of 1952 under which the opening article in the J&K constitution proclaims the region as an integral part of the Indian Union, while subsequent articles left J&K far freer than other states with respect to exercising political and administrative authority. Indeed, Article 370 spawned the subsequent Article 371 which ensured special provisions for the governance of at least 11 other states, including – interestingly – Gujarat.

It is precisely because their distinct identity is so crucial to the Kashmiris that Atal Behari's invocation of "Kashmiriyat" has had so much resonance in Kashmiri hearts. The principal objective of the reading down of Article 370 has been the shifting of identity from "Kashmiri" to "Indian."

To a Kashmiri, accepting the "Indian" label depends entirely on the Kashmiri identity being valorised. I understand this as a Tamilian – for my home state has abandoned its secessionism only on the clear understanding that the Tamil

can privilege their Tamil identity in exchange for accepting Indian citizenship. The same holds for India's northeast hill states – which is why Article 371 is so important to them. There is thus nothing unique to J&K's insistence on identity as the fulcrum of their willingness to be Indian. This is insufficiently understood in the Hindi Hindutva heartland from which Modi derives his authoritarian power and insensitivity to the sentiments of the periphery.

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In J&K, this insensitivity has had the serious and deleterious consequence of pro-Pakistan sentiment spreading even among schoolchildren, as affirmed to me by one young teacher from a prominent political family.

The saffron view of "normalcy" being measured by the absence of overt street agitations is ahistorical. Intifada in Kashmir is always as unpredictable as it is certain. We saw this in December 1989. We saw it again in June 2010. That explains how the sudden eruption in 2016 was not anticipated till the volcano erupted. Unless current trends at forcibly "Indianising" J&K are reversed, the region will continue to drift from it. It is admitted on all hands that Article 370 had been leached of much of its substance long before August 5, 2019; but the Article remains crucial to J&K's future, because it is their constitutional guarantee of Kashmiriyat determining their identity.

The other key consequence of Sinha's rule has been that large-scale disillusionment with BJP rule is not confined to the valley, but stretches to Jammu and even to Ladakh.

In Jammu, the rising dissatisfaction is centred on the Kashmiri Pandit, who had long been fed the illusion that all it would take to return to their homes in the

valley would be for the BJP to take charge. Initially, they were delighted at being recruited in large numbers to government jobs. When they found the administration was inept at ensuring their security in posts in Kashmir, they fled with their families to Jammu. But while they believe they are entitled to their salaries while taking refuge in Jammu, Sinha's administration is adamant that they first return to their posts in Kashmir. Thus, they are faced with a stark choice between life and livelihood.

Moreover, a locality in Jammu city, with the largest concentration of Muslims, is being targeted with the bulldozer of encroachment. At least 20,000 protesters are on the streets. But some of the most prominent politicians of J&K also have large homes in the area. They are not being targeted. It is such religion-based discrimination that causes deep discontent in the union territory (UT) as a whole, for it denies the heterogeneity of religious belief that lies at the heart of Kashmiriyat.

But, above all, it is the adverse impact of the withdrawal of Article 35A that is far more serious in Jammu than in Kashmir.

While outsiders are buying up land, securing jobs, and being voter-registered in the lakhs in Jammu, the impact is less in Kashmir where there is little outside investor interest visible on the ground. It was the Dogra fear of Punjabi businessmen and professionals muscling in which led to the 1927 Act that Article 35A protected.

Article 35A grew out of Article 370. So, when Jammu's non-Muslims welcomed the suspension of 370, they did not immediately realise that, as 35A was the child of the 370, it would lead to the safeguards of Dogra identity withering away under the impact of non-Dogra encroachment on their fiefdoms. Now, there is even fear that a Bihari might emerge as the leader of Jammu as a result of the registration of some 2,500,000 outside labour as voters, made possible by the precipitate withdrawal of Article 35A safeguards.

In Ladakh, the famous engineer, innovator, and educationist and Magsaysay-winner Sonam Wangchuk has been prevented from going on fast at a pass high up in the mountains to press his demand for the inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution (the status of autonomy enjoyed by many northeast hill states like Nagaland and Mizoram). He has instead undertaken his fast on campus, leading to the detention of scores of his student supporters and attempts to force him to sign a bond saying he will call off his agitation to avoid incarceration. Wangchuk has, of course, refused this Faustian offer.

Such is the disillusionment with separate UT status that Wangchuk is on record as saying they were much better off when Ladakh was an integral part of J&K than it is today as a UT. He demands statehood. When elections are held – whenever – if the Gupkar alliance holds, the BJP does not stand a chance anywhere in the erstwhile Riyasat of J&K. But will the alliance hold? That, as Hamlet mournfully reflected, is the question.

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Our world is becoming economically fragmented



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

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In recent months, there has been a cacophony of warnings that the global economy is heading towards fragmentation. The basic premise underlying this alarm is that "globalisation is good" and any restructuring that challenges this tenet of the present world order is considered harmful.

There is no doubt that, in recent years, we have seen a few adjustments in trade patterns and international economic relationships, as well as some realignment of political power. But does this amount to fragmentation or a reversal of globalisation?

Fragmentation can be viewed as countries stepping back from the

The Biden administration has, through its Inflation Reduction Act, Chips Act, and other legislations, enacted policies to subsidise domestic chip makers and green industries. The impact of these measures, which provide protection from foreign competition, will be felt in the years to come. Asia and the Pacific could lose over three percent in GDP if trade is cut off in sectors hit by recent US chip sanctions on China and if non-tariff barriers in other areas are raised to Cold War era levels, the IMF said in a recent report.

European countries have already announced that they will retaliate – and this will strengthen the call for protectionism in other countries.

not receding – a view shared by James Mittelman, a globalisation and development expert at American University in Washington, DC. "Clear evidence shows that the combined impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Brexit, supply chain disruptions and the Ukraine war have created barriers to cross-border flows and inefficiencies, but no significant retreat from globalisation," Mittelman told Al Jazeera.

The South is aware that financial fragmentation may lead to short-term costs from a rapid unwinding of financial positions and long-term costs from lower diversification and slower productivity growth because of reduced foreign direct investment.

But we can build a better supply chain for the future. The lessons we learned are that, first, complex, long-distance trade routes aren't meant to handle severe disruptions, thus setting the preconditions for what the world economy is experiencing today. Many companies are willing to hold more inventory because the loss of a sale is of greater risk than the extra cost of holding the inventory.

Second, the side effects of globalisation are apparent. Wealth



FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

In times of crisis, more affluent countries have historically offered very little to the developing world.

path of increased global integration and moving towards localisation in terms of production, trade, or fintech.

At the World Economic Forum's (WEF) annual meeting recently in Davos, IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath came out swinging and alerted the business leaders and government functionaries of the dangers of fragmentation or deglobalisation. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva went further. On February 5, on CBS' "60 Minutes," she said that world GDP would go down by USD 1.5 trillion or 1.4 percent, and this damage will be three percent in Asia if world trade goes down. However, her estimates are way off, as we explain later.

Undoubtedly, some changes are taking place in how the global economic community copes with the forces unleashed by the US-China tariff war, Covid-induced economic disruptions, and supply-chain ruptures, and recently, the massive anti-trade measures initiated by the US and its allies to punish the eastern bloc. The US and its Nato allies tried to isolate Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. But even during the Trump era, the US and China had engaged in a damaging trade war. These actions have led to visible changes in economic and political relationships.

So, the current situation has been many years in the making.

In times of crisis, more affluent countries offered very little to the developing world. During the pandemic, the G7 countries poured money into their own healthcare systems to protect their citizens, leaving only scraps for the poorer countries. Consequently, emerging countries, including India, South Africa, and Brazil, have been striving to change the status quo where only a few benefit from the much-heralded "new economic order." In her interview, Georgieva conceded that the benefits of globalisation have been unequally distributed or, as she put it, there have been "some gains and some losses."

So, we can conclude that the current debate and the reshuffling of the global supply chain network are inevitable – and all for the better. Even before the pandemic began, The Economist ran a story titled "Globalisation is dead and we need to invent a new world order." Nonetheless, a careful analysis of economic data shows that it is too early to conclude that "globalisation is dead." Of course, there is a push towards streamlining the supply chain, so it might be more accurate to say that globalisation is evolving, and some losses."

Fortunately, big companies, in their

effort to diversify their manufacturing out of China, are turning to Mexico, Vietnam, and India rather than "nearshoring" (that is, shifting the bulk of their manufacturing back to the US). Some businesses are "re-shoring" their outsourced staffing (engineering, accounting, legal, IT, etc), manufacturing, and supply chains.

Third, in the existing setup, real wages are falling and are unable to keep pace with surging prices, and food and energy insecurity could easily lead to social unrest. Even though globalisation may have peaked, it is far from being wholly reversed, and Western countries need to stop weaponising trade and economic policy. Nations should also lower their trade barriers.

Thus, the real outcome is

nuanced. Globalisation is still (slowly)

increasing but in different ways and areas. One could say poetic and

say that the waves of globalisation

will continue to tide back and wash forward.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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