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Tensions at Line of Control (Pakistan Observer)

Shams uz Zaman, Mr.
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The recent tensions arising at Line of Control comes at a time once the Indian government is facing a blizzard of criticism over its profound failure to control corruption and heinous crimes like rape. Such crimes are a natural consequence of secularism which ultimately relieves individual of any fear of divine retribution who then deems such odious felonies as playful activities. This recent incident of violation at the LOC in which Indian soldiers attempted to cross over into Pakistani controlled territory to attack and possibly behead few Pakistani soldiers (in similar fashion of beheading 13 civilians in February 2000) seems to be an attempt to divert the attention of masses from growing domestic unrest.

The Indian nuclear testing of 1974 came at the heels of a nationwide railway strike and provided a temporary relief for the government which was accused of rigging and winning the elections in 1971. The nuclear testing of 1998 was also meant to serve as a booster to the weak position of the BJP. Likewise this tension resurrected by the hawkish Indian media from a 14 years old non-issue over the status of an alleged desecration of Indian military officer’s dead body, which was settled then, subsequently followed by a frail attempt to carry out a raid violating nine years old ceasefire also seems to be an attempt to divert attention from internal unrest.

Such tensions from petty affairs profoundly prove that till the time the unsettled dispute of Kashmir is not resolved, the peace between both the states would remain an elusive dream thus fuelling risks of war. Since the partition major issues between India and Pakistan have increased manifolds which initially were limited mainly to Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagadh. While India annexed Hyderabad and Junagadh after a military action followed by a plebiscite which it never allowed in Kashmir. In 1960’s Sir Creek issue and Rann of Kutch disputes were added to the list of conflicts which also significantly contributed towards the 1965 Indo-Pak war. The Indian
involvement in training the militants and arming Mukti Bahini in East Pakistan amid deeply flawed Pakistani policy and strategy leading to the separation of the Eastern half is now part of the history. While the tensions over Kashmir, Sir Creek and Rann of Kutch were still in air, India added nuclear dimension to the conflict prone region in 1974. Confident of its conventional and nuclear edge over Pakistan it just supplemented the list of issues by occupying snow covered mountains at Siachen in 1984. Other minor heights, occupied by the Indians from time to time along the LOC have never been highlighted. Terrorism and water dispute have recently been tagged to the existing list of disputes between the two states.

The first casualty of this recent tension has become the 22 members Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry delegation which has been denied to attend three day “Vibrant Gujarat Summit” thus confining them to their hotel. The ongoing confidence building measures, economic cooperation and bilateral dialogue could be the next to fall amid this deteriorating situation. This profoundly illustrates the fragility of the Indo-Pak relationship with the continuing and ever increasing unresolved issues.

However, India must remember that it has lost its edge of conventional superiority after 1998 and any show of brinkmanship can slip towards unintended consequences. In case of a war between the two nuclear rivals no one would emerge victorious thus both India and Pakistan have to realize the risks. It therefore becomes incumbent for India to sincerely move towards the resolution of Kashmir dispute without which South Asia would remain a nuclear flash point. Those short sighted analysts who advocate that Pakistan should now look beyond Kashmir must realize the importance and correlation of water with Kashmir, which serves as lifeline for Pakistan. The future of the region now largely depends on the leaders’ resolve to settle the lingering disputes and the initiative has to come from Indian side if they really interested in peace.

— The writer is an MPhil research fellow at NDU.

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