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Indian Council of World Affairs

Sapru House, Barakhamba Road

New Delhi

Report

on

Book Discussion

**The Longest August: Unflinching Rivalry
between India and Pakistan**

authored by

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A discussion on the book titled “The Longest August: Unflinching Rivalry between India and Pakistan,” by Mr. Dilip Hiro was organised at the Indian Council of World Affairs on February 5, 2016.

The discussion was chaired by Ambassador Satish Chandra with Ambassador Rajiv Dogra and Mr. Sushant Sareen, Senior Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation, as the discussants.

The text of Ambassador Satish Chandra’s presentation is attached at the end of this Report.

Ambassador Rajiv Dogra started the discussion on the book by saying that ever since the partition Pakistan has been loud in its complaints whereas India fights shy of scenes. That's why Pakistan's propaganda version on issues like Kashmir finds more resonance in international councils.

Talking about the portions of the book dealing with the partition, Ambassador Dogra remarked that despite the horrible dimensions of the tragedy there is a lack of authentic information related to the 1947 killings and displacements. He questioned the author's claim that the suffering was equal on both sides. He said the fact is that killings of Hindus and Sikhs went on for over 10 months in Pakistan, whereas in Indian Punjab it was only an act of revenge that lasted for less than two months. It is also a fact that 50 and 60 mile caravans moved only in direction of India indicating the scale of suffering and migration towards it. Moreover there is hardly any instance of Jinnah controlling violent mobs attacking Hindus in Pakistan. Whereas Nehru put his life repeatedly at risk to save Muslims in India.

He also found fault with the author's claim that Jinnah didn't know of infiltration into Kashmir by the tribals. In fact Jinnah had full information about the plan of the Kashmir war and that's why he had stationed himself in Lahore in order to quickly fly to Srinagar.

Talking about the Indus Waters Treaty, Amb. Dogra termed the author's claim as deeply flawed. Rather the IWT treaty was the most generous treaty in the history drawn in favour of a downstream country. In contrast and around that time US had given virtually very little share of waters to Mexico.

On the author's claim that India had delayed payment to Pakistan, he suggested to the author that he should try and locate another example in the history of the world where a country facing a war gives money and armaments to the aggressor. This is exactly what India did despite being attacked by Pakistan.

The final discussant Mr. Sushant Sareen talked about the book saying that it has reignited the memory of partition. The book is structured in a unique way in the context of the two countries. He also pointed out two inaccuracies: that Motilal Nehru was a lawyer, not a barrister; and that Gen. Ayub Khan was a Hazara, and not a Pashtun.

Mr. Sareen further said that the book is biased in favour of Pakistan and bats for Jinnah against Gandhi ji. According to Mr. Sareen, the most troublesome part is that the author justifies the use of Terror in Kashmir, which is an endorsement of Pakistani position on Kashmir. He said that this is the failure of Indian diplomacy as public diplomacy has failed in its objective. He said that friendship should not be mixed with national interest and questioned the usefulness of people-to-people contact asking if there has been any study on this issue. Referring to India-Pakistan negotiations, Sushant Sareen said that those, who pitch for friendship and common culture, must remember that the two are different people. He mentioned former ISI Chief Durrani's statement on *Al Jazeera* regarding the AMS carnage in December 2014, saying that in strategic game, collateral damage takes places. We look at the relation as state to state, but Pakistan takes it as a civilisational conflict.

After the discussants, Dilip Hiro spoke about the book. He said that the book has covered political, economic, diplomatic and cultural relationship between India and Pakistan. He said that the work of a good historian is to be objective in dealing with the historical facts. The book is one-third about partition and two-third about the relationship between the two countries. He provided links to a few of the sources on which he built up his argument that

Jinnah did not know about the 1947 tribal invasion. Quoting from *The Friday Times*, September 23, 2005, he said that 5000 tribals had taken part in raiding Kashmir. Brig. Akbar Khan played an active role in providing arms to the tribals recruited from NWFP and FATA for the purpose. Mr. Hiro also talked about March 1888 speech of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan espousing the cause of two nations. From his book, he also quoted, Luis Fischer on the position of Gandhi on Hindu-Muslim affairs and religion.

This was followed by question & answer session where questions related to India-Pakistan position on SAFTA, Ramrajya, MFN and his experience in such a hostile situation, as an author, were asked and commented on. Mr. Hiro did not respond to any questions that came up during the session and instead tried to support Pakistan's position on granting MFN to India.

Report Prepared
By

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(Amit Ranjan)
and
(Nihar Ranjan Das)

The text of Ambassador Satish Chandra's presentation

I would at the outset like to thank DG ICWA for having invited me to participate in today's discussion on Dilip Hiro's "The Longest August" as the subject of the same is something which has been of great interest to me for the better part of my life. I would also like to compliment him in his choice of the two discussants notably Ambassador Dogra and Mr Sushant Sareen both of whom have a deep personal knowledge of Pakistan and of India-Pakistan relations.

Dilip Hiro is a prolific writer. Apart from his extensive writings in many papers and journals he has authored well over 30 thirty books of which "The Longest August" is one of his most recent offerings. It is long book running into over 500 pages. It is devoted to India-Pakistan relations with about 20 to 25% being devoted to the history of Pakistan's birth in the

first four decades of the 20th century and the animosities that developed between Jinnah and other Indian leaders like Nehru.

Despite its length the book is an easy read and the style is racy. It also contains several nuggets of information ranging from the relatively unimportant to the profound. Amongst these I may cite the following:

1. Gandhi's eldest son Hari Lal converted to Islam and became Abdullah Gandhi.
2. Bhutto married his first wife at age 14 only after being gifted a cricket bat.
3. At the first Gujarat political conference in Nov 1917 Gandhi admonished Jinnah for speaking in English and not Gujrati.
4. In 1916 Jinnah made out that he was a "staunch congressman" and had no love for sectarian cries.
5. Initial Gandhi-Jinnah differences arose over the Khilafat movement which entailed the mixing of religion with politics and of unconstitutional tactics which Jinnah was opposed to. While Jinnah advocated constitutional moves Gandhi took to the street.
6. According to Attlee the role of the Quit India Movement was minimal in causing Britain to leave India. Far more important was Bose's INA activities and the RIN mutiny.
7. In Jan 1948 Jinnah made it clear that the Pak constitution wd be based on Shariah to make it a truly great Islamic state.
8. Ayub suddenly changed command of his forces in Punjab in the 1965 conflict from Gen Malik to Gen Yahya Khan so that credit wd go to a fellow Pashtun.
9. Ayub regretted having gone to war with India and reportedly stated that never again will we risk 100 mn Pakistanis for 5 mn Kashmiris.
10. Under Bhutto Pakistan's traditional military doctrine that India was enemy No1 remained intact and PPP's founding charter was Jihad against India.
11. By 1988 ISI's employees numbered 100000.

12. At Tashkent Kosygin leveraged the Soviet veto to secure India's withdrawal from areas captured by it.

I would be less than honest if I refrained from also drawing attention to the fact that there are also several inaccuracies in the book. In this context I would like to list the following:

1. It is erroneous to suggest that Nehru accepted the UNCIP resolution on plebiscite only to achieve a ceasefire as the India Army had reached its objectives. The fact is that a continued conflict would have resulted only in accretion of additional gains for India. Moreover, the reason why no plebiscite could be held is that Pakistan was unwilling to effect withdrawal on which plebiscite was contingent.
2. The uncritical acceptance that India sought to strangle Pakistan is unfortunate. As proof that this was not the case is that India instead of destroying Pakistan over Kashmir referred the matter to the UN, Nehru while speaking at Aligarh Muslim University made it amply clear that India had no designs on Pakistan, India whilst even at war with Pakistan abided by the terms of the partition agreement and handed over 75 crores, and entered into the Indus Waters Agreement in 1960 which was exceedingly generous to Pakistan. This generosity has been shown time and again as epitomised by the Simla Agreement.
3. The suggestion that the Indus Waters Treaty was clinched once western countries like USA and Britain agreed to finance the construction of canals and storage facilities in India to transfer water from the eastern rivers in India to West Pakistan is a gross misreading of the facts. In actual fact no monies were paid to India and it was the latter under the Treaty which paid pound sterling 62 million to Pakistan for undertaking construction of canal works to transfer the waters of the western rivers to the canals servicing the eastern rivers in its territory. The book also fails to note that the Indus Waters Treaty was an extraordinarily generous one for Pakistan as under it 80% of the Indus waters were allocated to Pakistan while 40% of the catchment area lay in India.
4. The suggestion that Shastri gave the go ahead with a nuclear weapon program is implausible. All he did was to permit studies on a peaceful nuclear explosion.

5. It is also incorrect to suggest that India threatened to bomb Lop Nor in 1971 causing China to redeploy the troops that it had amassed on the Indian border.
6. The suggestion of an Indira-Bhutto back channel which set the agenda for Simla is also implausible.
7. The contention that a no war pact with Pakistan in Zia's time was turned down on Soviet advice is also unwarranted. This had for long been unacceptable to India whose counter proposition was a Treaty of Peace and Friendship.
8. Suggestions that India was considering plans for a raid with Israeli help on Kahuda are totally unwarranted.
9. Zia's visit to India in Feb 1987 was not at Rajiv Gandhi's invitation. Zia thrust this visit on Rajiv and his host was the BCCI. Rajiv also did not accompany Zia to Jaipur to witness the cricket match and thus the purported conversation between the two wherein Zia threatened a nuclear attack on India is incorrect.
10. India was by no means manufacturing bombs since 1980. Our first bomb came perhaps as late as 1987.
11. The book refers at length to the atrocities committed by Indian forces in J&K. While some atrocities were certainly committed they were on a much smaller scale than those committed elsewhere in the world in similar circumstances. Moreover, our open society and the ethos of our Armed Forces made such atrocities the exception rather than the norm. It should also be noted that we had introduced the ICRC in Kashmir by 1994 to minimise such instances.
12. In the composite dialogue developed in 1997 the integrated approach from the Pakistan view point did not mean taking the focus off on Kashmir. Rather it was a means to ensure that progress on other issues was linked to progress on Kashmir. As initially conceived the composite dialogue did not envisage a working group on Kashmir but that this issue wd be dealt with directly by the Foreign Secretaries. It is also wrong to project that India was reluctant to talk to Pakistan on Kashmir. Indeed, India under Simla was committed to do so.

13. The Kargil intercepts were certainly not the work of the NSA but a purely RAW endeavour.

The book is provocative and provides much food for thought and I would venture to make the following observations:

- First, I find it hard to accept as made out that partition was inevitable because of Hindu-Muslim tensions. The fact is that these communities have and continue to live together in harmony. These tensions were created and exacerbated by our leaders aided and abetted by the British. Perhaps this is a line of thought which will one day be the subject of a detailed analysis.
- Second, the book is unduly harsh on Nehru. I am no admirer of him and feel that he committed massive mistakes but to term him Machiavellian is stretching the point. In contrast one would have hoped that the author had made a serious attempt to analyse as to how Jinnah could change his stripes as often as he did and what his role was in the tragedy that was partition.
- Third, there is not the slightest recognition of the serious efforts made by India to reach out to Pakistan and the enormous concessions made by it on this account.
- Fourth, there is no analysis of the systematic use of terror by Pakistan as an instrument of its foreign policy. On the contrary, it is almost sought to be explained away by India's "obduracy" on Kashmir without even acknowledging that the legitimacy of the latter's accession to India both legally and by popular will cannot be seriously challenged.
- Fifth, India has no rivalry with Pakistan in Afghanistan. While the former's interests there are a function of its centuries old historical, commercial, and cultural ties and are not based on any desire to impose its will on that country the latter nakedly envisages exercising its hegemony there.

Finally, one was hoping that the book would come out with concrete suggestions on the way forward between the two countries. This unfortunately has not been done. Perhaps, those of us we need to dwell on this at length and come up with an appropriate prescription. It goes without saying that this has to be based on a ruthlessly objective assessment of the underlying nature of each country and their respective motivating factors towards each other.
