Book Review

Double Betrayal: Repression and Insurgency in Kashmir

Paula R. Newberg. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1995, 77 pp.

Since 1989, more Kashmiris have died in the struggle against Indian rule than the cumulative number of Bosnian casualties of Serb attacks in Sarajevo and of Palestinians during the intifada. Even so, not many people are aware of the mass freedom movement that has gripped the northern Himalayan state of Jammu and Kashmir for the past six years. Reasons for such apathy are not hard to gauge: Western stakes in Kashmir are of a different kind than those in the Balkans or the oil-rich Middle East. Consequently, the uprising in Kashmir and the massive human rights violations there have been relegated to the fringe of the Western media. Overburdened by its post-cold war concerns, the Western conscience seems to be on recess in Kashmir.

A corollary to the lack of international concern over Kashmir is the virtual absence of literature on contemporary Kashmiri reality. The study by Paula Newberg, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment who has visited Kashmir several times, is an apt response to this double deficit. Academically unpretentious and refreshingly free of prescriptive solutions, *Double Betrayal* (available from The Brooking Institution in Washington, DC) etches a disturbing image of mass resistance and insular mass repression in this land-locked Indian-administered state. The book encapsulates the nature of the Kashmiri insurgency, Indian repression, and the agony of an entire population whose suffering the world refuses to fathom.

The study is divided into fifteen brief sections, mostly with headings emblematic of the insurgency and repression. For examples, if "Strikes," "Prisoners," "Mosques," and "Graves" are emblems of insurgency, "Soldiers," "Sandbags," and (thwarted) "Justice" reflect government repression. Moreover, if Kashmir is locked in a seemingly endless war, this is largely because "the Indian Government views the insurgency as a cause, rather than [a] symptom of political problems" (p. 10). After all, the essence of insurgency, as Newberg notes, "is about the right of Kashmiris to achieve self-determination." Furthermore, "the absence of democracy in Kashmir" and India's failure in responding to Kashmiri aspirations over the last four decades has turned "disaffection into insurgency" (p. 2). As a result, over six hundred thousand Indian security forces deployed in Kashmir "are being used as instruments of terror":(p. 29) as well as "a weapon to close politics" (p. 10).

Indian human rights violations run as a red thread through Newberg's study. The all-pervasive nature of state repression, reminiscent of Argentina's "dirty war," is brought out with clinical precision. Srinagar, summer capital of Indian-held Kashmir, "is full of mothers without sons," because in Kashmir "simply being a young man is to be suspect" (p. 48)—and suspected insurgents run the risk of being shot dead in cold blood by security forces. Such highhandedness has radically altered Srinagar's landscape: "Once known for shimmering lakes, ornate house boats and majestic Himalayan peaks, Srinagar is now a city of cemeteries" (p. 7). Here "young Kashmiris are an endangered species" (p. 48).

Indian officials either deny or justify human rights abuses, with some arguing "that the nature of the conflict requires torture both as punishment and to extract information" (p. 29). Moreover, their argument that Kashmir is "a domestic dispute" is used to ignore "the rules of war, including internationally established humanitarian and human rights protection." This has created a situation in which "those who commit criminal acts like rape, molestation and robbery are protected" (p. 28). Moreover, if such international rights organizations as Amnesty International have not visited Kashmir, this is because New Delhi requires their "advanced judgment" on two counts: first, "that rights violations committed by insurgents are as seri-

ous and pervasive as those committed by security forces," and, second, "that insurgents act on Pakistan's behalf" (p. 59).

Pakistan does not figure as a benign force either in Newberg's reckoning, its "support for Kashmiri insurgents being founded on geo-strategic self-interest more than its concern for Kashmiris" (p. 2). Newberg is critical of both countries because "India and Pakistan have assumed the right to decide the fate of Kashmir, setting their claims to territory against the right of Kashmiris to determine their own future" (p. 2). Even so, as is implicit in the study's title, Pakistan and India are only one side in Kashmir's betrayal; the other is the United Nations and the West. This intersection of regional and international betrayals has consigned Kashmiris, "surrounded by some of the world's highest mountain peaks," to a "private purgatory."

Inevitably, Newberg's attempt at neutrality on India and Pakistan leads her to level equal blame on both for Kashmir's "betrayal." Thus, she contends, misleadingly, that neither country "can decide whether Kashmir is the starting point, the sticking point or the end point for future discussion" between India and Pakistan (p. 71). It is well known that for Pakistan, Kashmir forms the starting point of any discussion, whereas for India, the problem does not exist because of New Delhi's insistence that Kashmir is its "integral part." Also misleading is the author's lumping of Pakistan with India in ruling out trilateral talks between India, Pakistan, and Kashmir—a demand for which Kashmiris are pressing. Indeed, Pakistan favors, while India opposes, trilateral talks. This is borne out by Islamabad's support for an intra-Kashmiri dialogue of representatives from Indian- and Pakistani-administered parts of the disputed state as a prelude for a unified Kashmiri voice in such talks. Moreover, Newberg is unfair when she draws a resemblance between Kashmir and Afghanistan's "corruption" (p. 37). Such a comparison contradicts her own view of Kashmir, which she notes is marked by a "tolerant, syncretic Islam with the ambiance of Kashmir's peace and isolation" (p. 44).

The Kashmir problem, Newberg fears, will remain unresolved as long as India and Pakistan are unable to break out of a "reflexive domestic opinion that supports Indian army powers on the one side, and jihad on the other" (p. 74). This may not be possible in the foreseeable future, because neither side seems prepared for democratic debate on the question of self-determination.

Inasmuch as a post-cold war wave of reconciliation has bypassed Kashmir, Newberg's pessimism may seem valid. However, she feels that should India allow international monitoring of human rights and relief efforts in Kashmir, the way to a political settlement could be opened. Such a possibility, though, seems highly unlikely, for inherent in New Delhi's discourse on Kashmir is an insularity that seems to have written off the Kashmiri population. One has only to recall senior Indian parliamentarian Shahabuddin's lament on the floor of the Indian Parliament on 14 February 1995:

> Now we have lost all pretence. There is not even a sense of shame when we kill our own people. Previously we used to say we are protecting the (Kashmiri) people against the militants. Then we started saying we are suppressing the militants, and militants only. And now we have gone to a phase where we are repressing the people of Kashmir, the people as a whole.

Moreover, Newberg does not spell out clearly in her book that Kashmir is the oldest unresolved dispute on the UN's agenda or that the UN resolutions on Kashmir call unequivocally for solving the problem through a referendum that would give Kashmiris the right to decide whether they wish to be part of India or Pakistan.

Even so, pressure for resolving the Kashmir issue might be forcing "new options" into the light of day. Discussed more openly in Pakistan than in India and confined mainly to the intellectual community rather than official circles, these options are also being voiced by some political leaders. As Mehtab Ali Shah's study in *Contemporary South Asia* (March 1995) indicates, the idea of an independent Kashmir is gaining currency in Pakistan. His interviews with political leaders and intellectuals in Pakistan's four provinces reveal much support for the creation of "an independent, secular and demilitarized" Kashmir. Many of those interviewed, especially in the provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan, believed this could help Pakistan and India "to improve their relations and direct resources from defence to development." Other options envisage an autonomous or confederal Kashmir, with defense and foreign affairs controlled jointly by India and Pakistan.

While diverging from Pakistan's official position, which calls for implementing UN resolutions to resolve the issue peacefully, these options are also in sharp contrast to the "status-quo oriented" Indian proposals. Indeed, the dominance of India's civil society by New Delhi's thinking on Kashmir seems so total that even an otherwise vibrant Indian press seems wary of transgressing the "official truth."

Unlike India, new thinking on Kashmir in Pakistan reflects a South Asian reality in which the nuclear capabilities of the two major powers have rendered the "heroic" decisiveness of yet another Indo–Pakistani war on Kashmir redundant. Raising public awareness on the obsolescence of such a war, as well as the apathy of an insular India to Kashmir's aspirations, is a challenge facing the subcontinent's quest for peace. Newberg's study gives this challenge a fresh impetus.

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