

Why Fear People's Choice?

Calling Pakistan's Bluff on Plebiscite in J and K

Despite reservations about the jurisdiction and value of plebiscites, the author argues that the only way for India to get out of the current stalemate on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir is to grab the bull by the horns and stop fighting a defensive battle on the issue of plebiscite. Instead of being blackmailed and terrorised at being reminded of this renege commitment, India should be actively working towards a carefully redefined plebiscite.

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The continuing acts of terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir is a clear sign that 'jehadi' groups and the military establishment in Pakistan are not comfortable with the dramatic change in people's mood in J and K following the 2002 elections which installed a popularly elected government through an election which was endorsed by most sections of the international community as being reasonably free and fair. The determined resolve being shown by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to heal the wounds of peace and democracy in the strife-torn state are viewed with obvious alarm by the Pakistani military establishment. For once both the Congress and BJP have also tried to rise above partisan considerations in allowing the PDP-led coalition government a fair chance of success. This is perhaps the first time that the most important political players in the country are acting in something resembling a unison at least as far as J and K is concerned. We must not let this reconciliation process be sabotaged by the deadly resolve of Pakistani rulers to keep J and K besieged by violence and unrest.

Promised Plebiscite

Pakistani rulers continually reiterate that India has gone back on the commitment Nehru made before the United Nations that the future of J and K would be decided through a plebiscite. The Pakistani claim to Kashmir rests on the assumption that, as a Muslim majority state, J and K should necessarily have become part of Pakistan.

They call it "the unfinished agenda of the Partition". Thus, on the surface, Pakistan uses the rhetoric of democracy and "people's right to self-determination" as a stick to beat India with, even though Pakistan itself has never been serious about holding the plebiscite on the terms and conditions agreed upon then. It is a disgrace that democratic India has let the world gain the impression that it is afraid of the people's verdict and allowed military-ruled Pakistan to emerge as the champion of Kashmiri right to self-determination.

Even at the height of the secessionist movement, it is highly unlikely that any plebiscite would have gone in favour of Pakistan because there is an overwhelming sentiment in favour of 'azadi'. I have personally heard important public figures from Pakistan say in private conversations that "if India actually agreed to hold a plebiscite, Pakistani rulers would be caught with their pants down and would not even know where to look for cover".

The promised plebiscite was to be held in both the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and in the areas that voluntarily opted to be with the Indian Union, pending a plebiscite. Interestingly, Pakistan studiously avoids talking of plebiscite in POK and has done its best to confine the issue of plebiscite only to the Kashmir Valley where the Muslims are a preponderant numerical majority. There is hardly ever a mention of plebiscite by Pakistani politicians in the Jammu or Ladakh regions of J and K where the Hindus and Buddhists constitute numerical majorities in the respective regions. The Muslims are positioned as a numerically significant minority in both these regions.

This is not to deny that even Nehru lost his nerve to honour his commitment to hold a plebiscite. It was not because his faith in democracy faltered but because he felt he would be jeopardising the fate of the Muslim minority in the rest of India if the partition-scarred Hindus felt that a Muslim majority province was being given yet another chance to effect yet another partition and drive out Hindus and Buddhists from the state of J and K as well. Another secession by a section of the Muslims would have emboldened the hitherto marginalised militant Hindu organisations to demand that the partition be carried to its logical conclusion by driving all the Muslims out of India much in the same way that the Pakistanis carried out a near total ethnic cleansing of Hindus and Sikhs in the newly-created Islamic Republic. Thus both India and Pakistan, for their own different reasons, let the issue of plebiscite be buried for nearly three decades till a series of rigged elections in the state led to massive resentment in the Valley, with Pakistan getting the needed opportunity to fish in troubled waters.

Voting with Their Feet

Nevertheless, even at the height of the estrangement of Kashmiri Muslims from the Indian government, pro-Pakistani sentiment has remained confined to a minority even in the Valley, while it is negligible among the Muslims of the Jammu and Ladakh regions. Even those among Kashmiri Muslims who are determinedly 'anti-India' demand 'azadi' or independence for not only the Kashmir that once opted to be with India but also POK.

It is noteworthy that even when the Kashmiri Muslims boycotted elections, alleging fraud and manipulation, the economically mobile segments of the people showed which side they align themselves with for their own economic self-interest. Those who needed guns went over to Pakistan. However, all those Kashmiri Muslims engaged in business shifted their base from Kashmir to cities in the heartland of India such as Delhi and Mumbai. Thus they could be said to have voted with their feet. Their choice clearly demonstrated that they saw at least their economic interest better protected in the heartland of India than in Pakistan.

And yet there is no denying that a large section of the population is deeply estranged by the many acts of commission and omission of the government of India and feel badly let down that the promise of plebiscite which would have respected their right to 'self-determination' was never honoured.

An essential precondition set by the UN resolution for holding a plebiscite was that Pakistan should withdraw its army and armed civilian invaders from parts of Kashmir it had illegally occupied. Pakistani Occupied Kashmir has not experienced even the limited and flawed democracy that prevailed in Indian Kashmir. The military in Pakistan has never allowed any civilian regime in POK, or for that matter in any part of their Islamic Republic, to have any meaningful role in governance even for those brief periods when civilian governments have been voted to power in Pakistan. Therefore, total withdrawal of the army from POK has always been seen as a high-risk initiative by the military establishment of Pakistan, which it was never willing to take. Therefore, there was no occasion for India to take the required follow-up steps as preparation for plebiscite. And yet India has fought a defensive battle on the issue of plebiscite.

New Dimensions to Plebiscite

The most important dimension of the current political scenario, however, is that when the average Kashmiri Muslim demands that the Kashmiri people be given the promised right to self-determination, he or she sees it primarily as a way to win azadi for Kashmir, rather than be forced to opt for either Pakistan or India. However, the terms set for a plebiscite in 1948 do not make this third choice available. As per that covenant, people can only opt for either India or Pakistan. Since that time the people of the state have become far more important as political players and stakeholders. At that time, if the maharaja of J and K had opted for Pakistan or India, they were likely to have passively gone along with him, as did people of other states.

When Sheikh Abdullah made the tilt in favour of India, Kashmiri Muslims went along with him. Today there is no leader who can swing opinion one way or another on the strength of his or her personal charisma. The citizens insist on their sovereignty and want the right to decide Kashmir's future. They have over the years opened up many new options. For example, the Simla Accord between Indira Gandhi and Bhutto committed the two sides to treat Kashmir as a bilateral

problem and move towards accepting the present Line of Control (LoC) as the international border. This was at that time widely welcomed by the people of Kashmir. The National Conference, which even in its battered condition won 28 out of 87 seats and got 29 per cent of the vote share and still commands the status of the single largest party in J and K, has publicly committed itself to this position.

Similarly, there has been a consistent demand from a section of the Kashmiris for the last decade and a half that the border between POK and J and K be made porous to allow for a natural process of social integration of the two Kashmirs, uniting divided families, de-escalating tension as necessary steps towards preparing for a plebiscite. All these new options being put on the agenda by the Kashmiri people themselves cannot be dismissed in favour of the old plebiscite formula, which becomes irrelevant because it was put in deep freeze and allowed to ossify, whereas the political situation at the ground level became more and more dynamic and open-ended.

Plebiscite vs Election

Those who insist on a plebiscite as the definite way of determining the people's will forget that there is more than one democratic method, and some more democratic than a plebiscite, of ascertaining the people's will. Election is one of them. The very fact that the people of Kashmir have enthusiastically participated in at least four elections after 1947 and disowned or boycotted only a few, shows that they did take elections as an instrument of self-assertion seriously. As Elie Kedourie in his discussion of plebiscites points out:

There is really nothing conclusive about plebiscites except that a certain population subject to conflicting propaganda or pressures or inducements voted on a given day in one manner and not in another. The result, if accepted once and for all, has the same element of arbitrariness as any other, which may come about by reason of conquest or bargaining (*Nationalism*, Blackwell, 1993, p 126).
Kedourie also argues that:

If plebiscites are justified by the same reason as elections, why should plebiscites not be held regularly like elections, and why should a population not be able to change its allegiance periodically, as it is able to change its government? (*ibid*:126)

To illustrate the point: if a plebiscite were held now not just in Indian held Kashmir but in POK, as well as in other parts of India and Pakistan on the issue of partition, the results might be very

different from the political boundaries that emerged from the partition of 1947.

We have yet to develop political systems which provide for effective mechanisms for broad-based participation of the people in decision-making without the use of one-dimensional majority vote as the single decisive criterion in decision-making on particular issues. But at the same time we must recognise the limitations of the use of the principle of majority rule when its leaders disregard minority rights that must be clearly stated and carefully observed if we seek to create acceptable, just and stable polities. Too often political leaders identify their self-defined majority not as a temporary group that has decided to vote together on a particular issue, but rather as an unfettered and unchallengeable permanent rule-maker for all.

In unstable societies with deep divisions and little agreement about basic principles there must be implicit or explicit agreement on what issues may be amenable to being decided by majority vote and what issues require limitations on the will of the majority and its representatives over certain basic human rights of the minorities. These need to be sorted out on some other basis than majority rule. For instance, voting on how much the society should be spending on health, education or transportation should under ordinary circumstances be handled through the rule of the majority by voting. However, we should not entertain the possibility of a majority of any kind assuming the right to exterminate the minority groups or to confine them to prisons or reserved areas or to disenfranchise them through the instrument of majority vote.

Differing Claims and Agendas

Broadly speaking, even if we do not take account of the opinion and desires of the diverse communities that inhabit the state of J and K and take into account only the inclinations of Kashmiri Muslims, there are currently three mainstreams of opinion among the Muslims of the Valley:

- (1) A small fringe led by the likes of Geelani and leaders of the Hizbul Mujahideen who would like to secede to Pakistan. They command very little mass support in the state, which is an important reason why they stay hooked on to Pakistan-sponsored terrorist brigades to achieve their political ends.
- (2) A very large section among Kashmiri Muslims wants azadi or independence from both India and Pakistan and reunification of the two divided parts of Kashmir. The leadership of the Jammu

and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has been facing murderous attacks and attempts at extermination from Pakistan government's terror brigades ever since it made it clear that its movement was not in favour of Kashmir becoming a part of Pakistan.

(3) The third section of opinion is in favour of greater regional autonomy within the Indian Union. Many of the followers of the People's Democratic Party, the National Conference, the Congress Party and a host of other national parties, like the Janata Dal and the Communist parties, are in varying degrees supporters of greater devolution of powers and rejuvenation of democratic institutions in the state.

It is noteworthy that the percentage of those who opt for any one of these three choices is very fluid. Some of those who were strongly 'pro-India' through the 1950s and 1960s turned 'anti-India' during the 1980s and 1990s. Many of the secessionist leaders of today have fought and some even won elections to the J and K assembly. Similarly, many who looked to Pakistan as a saviour during the 1990s have been disillusioned and have turned back to Indian democracy and several of them even took part in the October 2002 election. While a substantial majority might vote for independence for Kashmir today because they still feel estranged by repeated assaults on their citizenship rights, they might well opt for greater autonomy within the Indian Union five years from now, if the ruling establishment of India behaves sensitively towards their hurt and acts responsibly towards their political aspirations. This is a very likely scenario; especially considering that pro-azadi leaders of Kashmir have never taken the trouble to spell out the exact contours and content of azadi.

Slogan without Content?

Azadi is no doubt a very powerful and emotive slogan but it has remained precisely that: a mere slogan. Whenever I have personally tried to engage some of the Hurriyat leaders to spell out their political vision in a concrete way or asked them to explain what it is that they would do differently if they actually got azadi, I have been met either with silence or with evasive replies like: "We will figure that out once we get azadi".

This is very similar to how Jinnah kept building a frenzied movement in favour of Pakistan without spelling out even in vague outline what it would actually entail.

This is borne out even by the sympathetic and insightful political biography of Jinnah by Pakistani historian Ayesha Jalal. Gandhi, Nehru, Maulana Azad, Patel and a host of nationalist leaders lost out to Jinnah because they never once asked Jinnah to seriously explain what his Islamic haven would be like – what principle would be used to divide the geographical territories, who would qualify as a citizen and who would be denied the right to live there. Jinnah himself had no clue to the forces he was unleashing as is evident from the fact that he had purchased some property in Kulu-Manali just before the partition hoping to spend his summer holidays in that Himachali hill station. Had Muslims of the subcontinent been told in advance that millions of them would be uprooted from their land of birth to realise that dream and that all Muslims would not find a place in that Land of Promise – in fact many more would have to continue living in India than would find a place in Pakistan with millions of Muslim families divided between these two hostile nation states – it is unlikely that as many Muslims would have endorsed Jinnah's slogan of Pakistan as came to do during the frenzied 1940s.

Our political leaders of today are repeating the same mistake of not asking for a similar clarification from the separatist leaders on a variety of issues. For example, under the azadi dispensation, what will be the fate of the Kashmiri Pandits who have been forced out of the Valley with many still living in the refugee camps of Jammu because life became too dangerous for them in Kashmir? What about the nearly 70 per cent Hindu and Sikh population of Jammu region who will not hear of secession from India or for that matter the Muslims among the Gujjars, Punjabis and diverse other ethnic communities of the Jammu region who do not share the aspirations of their co-religionists in the Valley? What about the right to self-determination of the 52 per cent Buddhists of Laddakh who have often demanded that their part of J and K be made into a Union territory because they resent the domination of Kashmiri Muslims over the politics of the state? Many Laddakhi Muslims too would rather go along with their Buddhist counterparts than make common cause with Kashmiri Muslims. The Mufti Mohammad Sayeed government has been able to assuage the sentiments of the Laddakh and Jammu regions by making a genuine attempt to give them an effective share in power. However, before his 'healing touch' policy of bridging divides between the various estranged groups of J and K, the Laddakhis were as keen to break away

from Srinagar as are the Hurriyat leaders to snap ties with India.

According to the Census of 1981 (the religion and languagewise figures of 2001 are yet not available and there was no census in J and K in 1991), the population of Kashmir valley was 52 per cent of the total population of J and K. Out of it 10 per cent people do not speak Kashmiri and 5 per cent are non-Muslims. Though the Kashmiri-speaking Muslims of the Valley are in many respects the most important single community of the state, they are in a minority. In fact J and K is a classic land of minorities where every ethnic community is a minority.

However, the pro-secessionist leadership has so far shown no sensitivity towards the rights and aspirations of all these regional groups and minorities. If theirs is indeed a movement of regional independence, why then are non-Kashmiri Muslims and non-Muslim Kashmiris not being included in their vision of an independent Kashmir? The people of both these regions have felt as aggrieved against the domination of Srinagar in the state's polity as does Srinagar against New Delhi and have by and large stayed aloof from the secessionist movement.

Consensual Secession

If any region of India is to secede to Pakistan or become independent, the leaders of such a secessionist movement must demonstrate their ability to carry along a vast majority of opinion among all religious and ethnic communities inhabiting that region to endorse that option by political persuasion rather than by the gun. The civilised world cannot allow a repetition of the murderous solution of the 1947 variety to solve the Kashmir problem whereby millions of people were violently uprooted from their homes, villages and towns simply because in that region they constituted a religious minority. The partition of the subcontinent in 1947 proved to be a political disaster, not just because it divided people on the basis of religion, but because it also forced through terror and violence millions of panic-stricken people to abandon their homes and hearths, neighbourhoods and all they owned. Pakistan came into existence via mass murder and ethnic cleansing. Muslim majority areas came to be declared as belonging to the state of Pakistan and Hindu majority areas brought under the charge of the Indian Union with divided families on both sides of the border – one set of relatives labelled as Pakistanis and another set as Indians – depending on

whether they lived in a Muslim majority or a Hindu majority area.

If we accept the logic that within the territory of each arbitrarily carved out nation state, every ethnic majority of its region is entitled to unlimited rights to subjugate, eliminate or push out a minority we will be pushed to the inexorable logic of a nation state where tragedy after tragedy of ethnic cleansing, murderous riots, and political chaos overtake its democratic and secular features. As a leading political analyst of J and K, Balraj Puri, points out, way back in 1968 when Sheikh Abdullah organised the J and K People's Convention which turned out to be the most formidable secessionist challenge ever in Kashmir with a large representative gathering of Kashmiri political leaders, it was unanimously resolved that the future of the state should be decided keeping in view the interest of its three regions. It further adopted an outline of an internal constitution which envisaged regional autonomy and devolution of power to district, block and panchayat level. The convention was of the view that any decision about the future of the state must ensure implementation of such a constitution. Sheikh Abdullah himself was the unchallenged leader of Kashmir and the convention also included every possible dissenting voice such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Maulvi Farooq's Awami Action Committee and GM Karra's pro-Pak party. In other words, important leaders of Kashmir have in the past acknowledged the need to respond to the needs of minorities and different regional aspirations in the state.

Minorities and Majorities

Every Indian community is a minority in some places and a majority elsewhere. For example, Hindus are a minority in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Mizoram and Nagaland but a majority everywhere else. Muslims are a minority everywhere but in Kashmir. The Sikhs are a minority everywhere but in Punjab. The Christians are a tiny minority everywhere but in Nagaland, where they are a majority. The list doesn't stop there. Yadavs as a caste may be a majority in certain rural pockets of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, but an overall minority in the state. Jat Sikhs may be a majority in Punjab villages but are a minority in most Punjab cities. If Mazhabi Sikhs and other non-Jat Sikhs of Punjab were added to the non-Jat figures, Jat Sikhs would be a minority even within Punjab. Kannadigas living in Tamil Nadu, Gujaratis in Maharashtra, and Marwaris in Calcutta are minorities outside their own states. Not

too long ago the Shiv Sena, the party that today wants Muslims driven out of India, focused its energies on the demand to push Tamils out of Maharashtra.

The logic of majoritarianism, of identifying a minority group by certain supposedly objective characteristics that are in practice viewed as mostly religious, cultural or biological and then destroying or driving them out because they are a minority can easily proceed in its deadly logic from group to group. Once such a process is unleashed, a descent into panic, fear, hatred, desire for revenge and sheer murderous madness follows inevitably.

A New Plebiscite Deal

Just as a plebiscite that only offers two choices to the people of J and K – join India or join Pakistan – is altogether meaningless in a context where an overwhelming majority of those seeking self-determination want the third option of azadi, so also a plebiscite which ignores the security concerns and political aspirations of a very substantial proportion of the people of the state simply because they are at a numerical disadvantage is a mockery of the very concept of self-determination. Therefore, today's situation demands reframing the terms of a plebiscite or referendum to make it meet the essential requirements of democracy by giving the minorities an important voice in the decision because it affects every person's very survival.

Despite the principled reservations regarding the jurisdiction and value of plebiscites, I would still argue that the only way for India to get out of the current stalemate on this issue is to grab the bull by the horns and stop fighting a defensive battle on the issue of plebiscite. Instead of being blackmailed and terrorised at being reminded of this reneged commitment, India should be actively working toward a carefully redefined plebiscite on the following lines.

To begin with, the New Plebiscite Deal should require the winning of at least a two-thirds majority rather than a simple majority vote as is required in ordinary elections, since a plebiscite involves a permanent and momentous decision with serious consequences for every single person living in that state. The decision of a plebiscite is irreversible whereas in elections the voters can change their choice and verdict with every round of elections. Whether the chief minister of J and K is from the National Conference or the Congress Party does not have the same kind of bearing on people's lives as the decision about whether J and K becomes a part of India or Pakistan. For example, many of those who voted for the National Conference in 1951 turned against it in subsequent elections. Likewise, many of those who boycotted the 1996 elections, at the call of secessionist leaders, snubbed the very same leaders in the recent 2002 elections by turning out to vote despite great risk to their lives. Thus elections that

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involve less fundamental issues allow people to respond to new options, choices and issues thrown up by a polity at different points of time. In some elections, the majority vote in the Jammu region went to the BJP – while at other times the Congress managed to win a majority vote in its favour. The victory of the BJP or Congress involves relatively small shifts in the state's politics because both the parties have to operate under the framework laid down by the Indian Constitution and Indian jurisprudence.

However, a vote in favour of Pakistan or azadi for J and K drawn through a plebiscite means even those citizens who did not opt for either of those two choices have to end up living under a radically different dispensation. Therefore, a plebiscite must operate within a democratic framework that maintains strong and significant safeguards against the tyranny of the majority on the minority. It should, as far as possible, be carried out when tempers are not running high and when people are in a position to carefully weigh the pros and cons of their decision. The hallmark of democracy is how well it safeguards the rights of its minorities. Therefore, important safeguards must be built in and enforced before any plebiscite is held in J and K keeping in view all the varied choices and options which different sections of Kashmiri opinion have articulated in varied ways – ranging from democratic politics to support for a certain kind of militancy and rejection of the imported variety.

Three-Phase Referendum

In order to settle the issue once and for all, we should demand that both India and Pakistan prepare for a genuine three-phase referendum. However, a first necessary step would be to initiate serious discussion, public debate and participative consultations regarding what range of choices should become available to the people through a referendum. The exercise should be concluded within a specified time frame of say two years.

The unit for plebiscite would have to consist of the entire state of J and K (including Jammu and Laddakh) that is presently with the Indian Union as well all the Pakistan occupied areas of the state (POK). It is likely that at least the following four options would emerge out of the two-year process of public hearings and dialogue: – Azadi or Independence from both Pakistan and India for the entire and unified state of J and K.

– Secession of Indian Kashmir to Pakistan.
– Secession of POK to India with that

region joining the existing territory of J and K as part of the Indian Union.

– Both India and Pakistan agree to accept the existing LoC as the permanent international border between the two countries.

A likely scenario is that even if a referendum were to be held tomorrow around these four choices, a substantial number of Kashmiri Muslims would opt for azadi even if they were not clear about the exact implications and content of this choice. An equal number are likely to vote in favour of India. However, no more than 5 to 10 per cent would vote for Pakistan as their first choice. But if a referendum is held in the Valley about a decade from now, after two or three successful free and fair elections and meaningful devolution of powers to the state, the proportion of those opting in favour of India would shoot up and those in favour of azadi or secession from India will go down, while Pakistan is not likely to improve its tally. Thus Pakistan is likely to lose its claim to Kashmir in the first round itself. However, if the Indian government fails to deliver genuine autonomy and continues with its ham-handed ways, it could lose whatever little moral and political legitimacy it has today for resisting secession.

In the second phase, the international community should offer to the Kashmiri leaders who stand for an independent Kashmir that they will facilitate J and K's secession from India under the following conditions:

(1) The decision for secession be endorsed by a two-thirds vote of the Muslim population of the state and at least 51 per cent vote among the Hindus and Buddhists of J and K.

(2) The rest of those who are not yet won over to the cause of secession will need to be given concrete assurance through the UN that their rights as a dissenting minority will be firmly protected and an effective formula for power-sharing with minorities will be evolved under the new dispensation of 'Azad Kashmir'.

(3) The UN would retain the right to intervene in case the guarantees given to minority communities are not honoured. Thus an independent Kashmir, if it ever came into existence, would have to agree to limited and conditional sovereignty vis-a-vis the UN with regard to the rights of minorities and institutionalising democracy. This would include a provision that if the UN monitors find that the promises made at the time of azadi have not been respected, the UN would have the right to enforce a new democratic mandate in the state.

The Kashmiri Muslims are not likely to have problems with the enhanced role of

the UN because they have been vociferously demanding the active involvement of the UN in the affairs of Kashmir. We will only be giving them a generous dose of their self-prescribed remedy.

Other necessary steps involved in the plebiscite would be as follows:

– India and Pakistan would withdraw their respective armies from both sides of Kashmir for five years at the end of which a plebiscite would be held under UN auspices.

– Both sides should allow free access of people across the LoC during the plebiscite campaigning, including the right to campaign and propagate their viewpoint through television, cinema and other media, provided no hate speech or violence is used in the process.

The mechanics for differentiating the ballots of the three religious communities would be as follows: Three colour ballot papers – say white for the Muslims, blue for the Buddhists and green for the Hindus.

Minus all the above-mentioned safeguards, it is likely that a Muslim-dominated independent Kashmir might simply exterminate or drive out the non-Muslim population of the J and K state as happened in Pakistan where the few thousand surviving Hindus, Sikhs and Christians live under terror facing brutal forms of discrimination in every walk of life. Therefore, pre-emptive measures are needed right at the start of the plebiscite process to place firm limits on what the winners of the plebiscite can do and not do in the area of human, democratic and citizenship rights so that the well-being of minorities is not endangered if the plebiscite result goes against their wishes.

The international community is not likely to object to these safeguards for minorities since the key litmus test of a democracy is what institutional mechanisms exist for the protection of the interests of minorities. These safeguards become all the more essential considering that none of the Muslim majority nation states of our times have shown adequate regard for the rights of non-Muslim minorities. Today many other countries, including some in Europe, are facing similar challenges. The deal proposed for Kashmir would set a healthy new precedent for working out democratic solutions for minority-majority relations and an effective formula for power-sharing which might well become a model for many other countries where ethnic minorities find themselves trapped in similar vulnerabilities. [27]

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