PERFIDIOUS ALBION AND INDIAN STRATEGIC IGNORANCE” by S L Rao

**During the last year, two well-researched books ‘Era of Darkness’ by Shashi Tharoor, and ‘Unravelling the Kashmir Knot’ by** [**Aman M. Hingorani**](https://www.kobo.com/us/en/search?query=Aman%20M.%20Hingorani&fcsearchfield=Author) **, have shone bright lights on British loot of and perfidy to India.**

Dr Tharoor establishes that the British governments and their bureaucrats in India looted the wealth of india. Researxhers estimate that India abd  China were the two richest countries in the world in the 19th century. India was then estimated to account for 20% of global GDP. When the British left on India’s independence it was 2%.

 The British rule destroyed globally thriving Indian industries especially in textiles and metallurgy. They did not aim to unify India but to exploit it. The Railwys which we regard as a great unifying force, were for the British,  investments that used Indian funds and earned exceptional returns for their British shareholders. The railways were intended to, and did, enable the British to better extract and transport India’s rich natural resources to Britain. They introduced their penal and judicial system to better rule India. To emable a small number of Britishers to rule the vast country and its people they developed a cadre of Indian clerks. The British established universities that provided this cadre with facility in the English language. India provided vast numbers of soldiers to die in British wars. Food grains were procured and sent to Britain, resulting in periodic famines. Indian families starved, ;eading to lakhs of Indian deaths.

   The other recent book by Dr Hingorani  gives an unusual insight into the ‘Kashmir knot’. It argues that the issue was an inevitable result of Britain’s ruthless policies to satisfy its political, defence and strategic interests in the Indian subcontinent. North India and Kashmir were the gateways to Afghanisthan which gave access to Britain’s feared competitor, Russia. British strategy was to control the entrance to Afghanistan and hence to Central asia and Russia as well as China.

The Census of 1852 of the North West provices  'was a regular house to house numbering of all the people in the Province at one fixed time. The first complete census of population was, however, conducted in 1881, on a uniform basis throughout India. The administrators realized the dominance of Muslims in their gateway to Afghanisthan. From this knowledge they evolved the strategy of dividing the Muslims from the Hindus. They encouraged a separate Indian Muslim identity, even antagonistic to the Hindus. India had for long had intercommunal friendliness. The British approach was to destroy this harmony. They succeeded. The desire for a Muslim nation, and Jinnah as its leader, developed from this.

Modern India and Pakistan are creations of British statutes that the British and the Muslim League, (eventually accepted by the Congress(, to partition the sub-continent.  
The British provinces were to be partitioned according to the two nation theory. However, all the princely states were to regain full sovereignty, vested in the ruler, regardless of the religious complexion of the people of that state.  
The ruler alone could offer accession. These British statutes were accepted by India and Pakistan. Pakistan accepted that princely states were sovereign as of August 15, 1947.  
Thus Jammu and Kashmir was a sovereign state which is why it could accede to sovereign India in October 1947. Pakistan had no say in the matter. But because of the controversy over accession of Junagadh and Hyderabad, Hindu majority stes under Muslim rulers,  the Congress formulated a policy of obeying the wishes of the people to the accession of a princely state. Nehru agreed that this would apply to Jammu and Kashmir.  
But could Nehru could make such a promise that was contrary to the constitutional law then in force and which was accepted by both India and Pakistan -- namely, the British statutes? Rhese clearly stipulated that it was only the ruler who was competent to decide the future of his princely state.  The Government of India kept reiterating this stand even in its White Paper on Jammu and Kashmir thereby creating a feeling of injustice amongst the Kashmiri people when no referendum was held.

The ceasefire when the Pakistan Army- supported invasdion of Kashmir occurred, the reference to the United Nations by India, the ceasefire under auspices of the  U.N., and the agreement to hold a plebcite in Kashmir, can also be viewed as British strategy. Mountbatten was their agent topersuade the Indians, especially Nehru.

Hingorani goes on to prove that the Kashmir issue has been aggravated  by  India’s habitual bungling and the inadequacies of solutions often proposed to resolve it. The cynical attitude of the super powers made the peoblem unmanageable.

Indian governments bungled in Kashmir: jailing the most forward looking Sheikh Abdulla, crudely rigging elections, letting politicians and bureaucrats in Delhi and Kashmir to mismanage and waste vast sums meant for Kashmoir development, sending an aged and rigid bureaucrat for a long s[ell as Governor of J & K, not assisting Kashmiri youth to study and work in other parts of India (as North Eastern states jave done).

Other instances of Indian innocence of strategic thinking are illustrated by actions that led to a humiliating war with China, by the decades of excessive intimacy with the Soviet Union, and hostility to the West and particularly the USA, the absence of a strategy to make Muslims feel safe in India, the early decades of neglect of South East Asia, etc.

Hingorani argues that in international law, in 1948 Kashmir and India were sovereign, and  Kashmir could be independent or acede as it did, to India. Pakistan could not be a factor. When the attack on  Kashmir was made by Pakistanis supported by their Army, Indian forces stoppe them.  Viceroy Mountbatten persuaded Nehru to take the issue of the invasion to the United Nations, accept a ceasefire under UN auspices,  and a plebicite. This gave Pakistani claims a legitimacy they  should not have had.

To unravel the Kashmir knot it is imperative to first depoliticize the issue and go back to arguing for the legitimacy of the accession to India. The book uses comprehensive legal analysis of court rulings, UN papers, political observer reports and international law to conclude that a plebiscite was uncalled for. The accession of sovereign Kashmir to sovereign India was legally beyong challenge. It must be ratified at the International Court of Justice. This will clear the legal air. In India we must put Kashmir for a while under President’s rule, bring down the size of Indian forces in Kashmir, substantially reducew the coverage of AFSPA, send well trained police from other parts of India, put honest and good administrators in charge of Kashmir administration, offer many scholarshis and jobs in india to youth,

  Thedocile and tolerant Indians accepted  the devious strategyof the British government and Mountbatten, its representative. Now we have to distance ourselves from that strategy.

Of course the British colonial rule led to the integration of India and the present advantage of having many Indians  proficient in the global lingua franca, English. But it also left an impoverished country and people in 1947, and in 1948 to a deeply festering sore with Pakistan,  on Kashmir. India’s political class has not displayed the intellect, unity, resolve, nor clarity in dealing with Kashmir.

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