

NEW WAVE

The New Wave is a Socialist newsletter reporting on issues of the working class, revolutionary politics, and world affairs

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FOREWORD TO THE 19th EDITION OF NEW WAVE

We bring to you our 19th monthly newsletter for the month of November. As Bolshevik Leninists, we know this month as the month of the Russian revolution. It has been 108 years since the Russian revolution opened the door to a new chapter of class struggle, and despite the cries of the naysayers, history has not died. Class struggle lives on, be it in the form of the Bangladesh garment workers who have gone on strike, bringing the country to a standstill, or the Palestinians who have erupted in rebellion against their Israeli oppressors.

Through the ebb and flow of history, the struggle of the working class has remained one of the few constants. The lessons learnt from 1917 are as relevant then, as it is now. The world in which the Russian workers broke the chains of capitalism, imperialism and feudalism, has remained fundamentally unchanged. We still live in the era of imperialist capitalism, now in a more sharpened and advanced form without the bureaucratic baggage of colonialism.

The imperialist nations exploit the periphery in ways more subtle than before, but no less ruthless. The struggles of oppressed people and of the workers within the imperialist core, continue without halt. In this age, the sharpest
In this edition, we write on the situation in Indian occupied Kashmir. While Pakistan Occupied Kashmir is witnessing large scale protests against military rule and exploitation, Indian Occupied Kashmir is dealing with the aftermath of the full destruction of its autonomy at the hands of the new right wing Indian government led by the BJP. The

struggle for self-determination, against the unequal treatment and exploitation of an oppressed nationality, is as valid today as it was in the past. The mere changing of a law does not invalidate this. Struggle is not linear, but undergoes periods of depression and rise. The story of Kashmir is no different in this regard.

In the next article, we explore and examine India's role in Israel's war on Gaza, the history of the relation, and the causes behind the present day Bonhomie between the Netanyahu led Israel and Modi led India. Our support is resolute behind the Palestinians as much as it is behind the Kashmiris of India. While we do not support the agenda of Hamas and islamist reactionaries in either oppressed nation, we also do not hold back our support for their legitimate struggle against their oppressor states, as much as Marx supported Indian independence in 1857 despite the sepoys led by reactionaries that committed massacres on British civilians.

We also publish herein the statement in support of Bangladeshi garment workers, who have been on strike since October. This mobilization may yet become the most politically impactful workers strike in the history of the young country, and show the way for workers across South and South East Asia. Mobilizations in solidarity in the imperialist core as well as within Bangladesh will be key to shake the intransigent Sheik Hasina government, which has always stood on the side of the garment bosses, many of whom belong to her party.

We hope you enjoy our writing, and write back to us.



Miners holding rocks with lithium ore

Kashmir after Article 370 – Blood for Lithium

Intro :

On the 5th of August 2019, the Modi led BJP government took the unprecedented step of abrogating Article 370 of the Indian constitution. This article was inserted after Kashmir's annexation to India and guaranteed a degree of autonomy to Kashmir, recognizing a limited sovereignty. This exceptional situation for Kashmir was the result of the peculiar conditions under which it was made a part of India. While this 'autonomy' was whittled down over the decade of the 50s and 60s, being rendered a dead letter by the end, the BJP intended to score a symbolic political victory.

Today Kashmir has not only been incorporated to the same level as other states, it has been downgraded from a state to a union territory. In other words, even the limited federal sovereignty that Indian states are accorded to, doesn't apply to

Kashmir. To make matters worse, the state of Jammu and Kashmir has been broken up, with Ladakh being separated from the state, and turned into another union territory.

In the immediate aftermath of the passing of the 'Jammu and Kashmir re-organization Act of 2019' was passed, the state was brought under direct central control as a union territory, and an information blackout was imposed. The internet was shut down for months, and hundreds of arrests were made. According to official data, 4000 activists were arrested, including two former chief ministers of the state.

For nearly two years Jammu and Kashmir was placed under lockdown, communications were barred, Kashmir was effectively sealed from the outside world. No journalists were allowed access, internet was blocked, and even after it was partially withdrawn in January of 2020 only certain white

listed sites were allowed access with 2G internet. The shutdowns and lockdowns made life hell for the inhabitants of the region, as state authorities clamped down on dissidents, activists, and even mainstream politicians. The state's terror was meant to pre-emptively suppress dissent in the state fearing widespread unrest following the passage of the reorganization act.

The abrogation of Article 370 was part of a political blitz orchestrated by the BJP government using its new found dominant position following the 2019 general elections. The Kashmir reorganization act was passed on the 5th of August, and three days later in the same session of the parliament, the 4 new labour codes were passed as well, but remains unimplemented. Unfortunately, the abrogation of article 370 was passed and implemented in full, with the consequences still affecting the wider region.

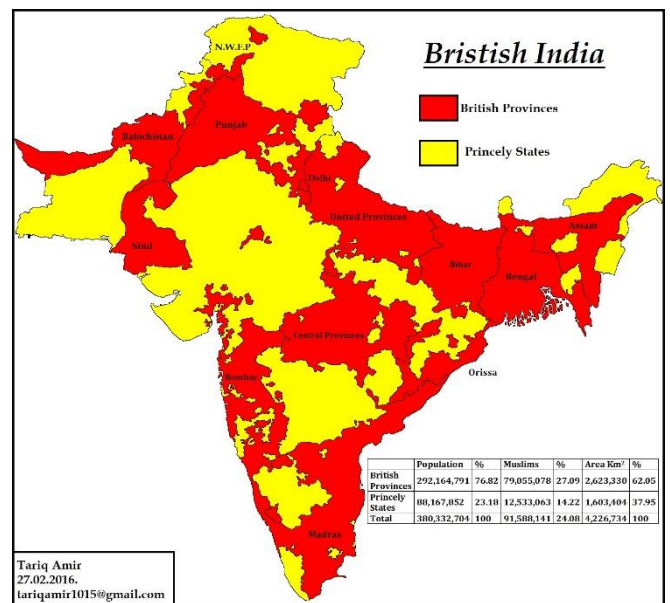
Today, while the Indian government has secured the peace of the graveyard by terrorising the population of its occupied section of Kashmir into submission, the people of Pakistan occupied Kashmir are in revolt. They are not protesting for merger with India, as some in the Indian media might have you believe, but for separation from Pakistan. They are revolting against the exploitation of Kashmir's hydro-electric resources, of Kashmiri land for the benefit of the militarist elite, and the exploitation of Kashmir and its people, for their resources and lands.

The story on both sides of Kashmir is fundamentally the same of two greedy bourgeoisie in competition with each other for the fruits of a beautiful resource rich piece of land, that sits strategically on the edge of Central Asia, and the cross roads of the Himalayas and the silk road. For this prize, both are willing to sacrifice as many of their country's workers and peasants as necessary to keep their hold over Kashmir, the people be damned !

Background :

In the aftermath of Indian independence, the princely states of the Raj, which formed about a third of the total area of South Asia, had three

choices. They could join with Pakistan, join with India, or attempt to stay independent. In reality, the third choice was no choice at all , for most of the 500 Princely states, which would be poor, barely industrialized and landlocked. Despite this, some large Princely States, mainly Kashmir, Kalat, and Hyderabad. With the former British Raj being partitioned on religious lines between Hindu majority India and Muslim majority Pakistan, the decision to join either had taken a religious angle. There were some states whose rulers were muslim but with majority hindu populations, such as Hyderabad and Junagarh (modern day Western Gujarat), and others with a majority muslim population but with Hindu rulers, such as Kashmir.



Map of the British Raj with Princely States

Most of the 500 princely states fell to India, with its superior military, diplomatic intrigues, and the threat of communist revolution, which had gripped much of the South. The revolt of the masses triggered by the Red Fort Trial, and the Naval mutiny, had electrified the countryside as well as the cities. The princely states were a target, with Travancore and Hyderabad experiencing massive peasant uprisings. Kashmir too, had its fair share of unrest, led by the left wing petty bourgeois National Conference, led by the so-called Sher-i-kashmir (lion of Kashmir) Sheik Abdullah.

A combination of peasant and agrarian workers protested the harsh rule of the Dogra kings. The

kings in turn, had been placed on the throne of Kashmir by the British, as a reward for aiding them in the conquest of the Sikh Empire. The Dogra rulers were not popular, infamous for their exploitative ways, and ruthless rule. The last chapter of Dogra rule proved to be the bloodiest. In the context of a revolutionary wave throughout the sub-continent, Raja Hari Singh, relied on the Hindutva organization the RSS. To crush the growing movement of peasants and workers under the leadership of the National Conference, he used the state militias and the RSS. According to Pakistani estimates, the number of killed amounted to 50,000, while others notably Ian Stephens of the Statesman, had cited higher estimates, with half a million being either killed or displaced.

Maharaja Hari Singh is celebrated by the Hindutva right wingers in India, for his decision to bring Kashmir into India. The manner in which this was done, or the aftermath of his decision, do not factor into their thinking. The massacres of Muslims in Jammu gave Jinnah and Pakistan the perfect excuse to intervene, and attempt to militarily annex Kashmir. This in turn compelled the beleaguered King to beg for Indian assistance, but this would only come in exchange for accession.

Much like Manipur, a state which had declared independence on its own terms, and even adopted a constitution, the people of Kashmir were not asked whether or not they would join India, it was a monarch, detached from his people, and ruling as a murderous autocrat, who made that decision for them, squeezed between two larger powers.

The 1948 Kashmir war saw massacres on both sides, with the tribal militias armed by the fledgling Pakistani state massacring Hindus and Sikhs in Poonch, in retaliation for the massacres of Muslims in Jammu. The first war between India and Pakistan was fought by an army still led by British officers and generals, on both sides. While the war ended in a stalemate, it was still a political victory for India who secured the most productive parts of Kashmir, Jammu, the valley of Srinagar, and strategic frontier passes, before Pakistan could push further. Pakistan was left with a sliver of Kashmir, ironically called 'azad kashmir', and the mountainous regions of Gilgit and Baltistan, areas

which were arid but form a strategic frontier on the border of Central Asia and Western China.

However, the Indian army wasn't the only force in the fight, workers and peasants militias organized by the National Conference bolstered the defense against Pakistan's army and tribal militias.

Kashmir was brought into India, but it had not yet secured its hold over the territory. It could not deal with Kashmir as it had with the other Princely States, where there was no other armed power attempting to take it over. The question of plebiscite had first been proposed over the state of Junagadh for its accession into India, it was a means to placate Jinnah and Pakistan over the accession of the Princely States. India was keen about its position in the world, and its place in the United Nations, building its diplomatic reputation in the world. Nehru approached the United Nations to help resolve the question of Kashmir, and by the UNSC (United Nations Security Council) resolution 47 of 1948, it was resolved that status of Kashmir would be decided through an impartial plebiscite.

Later developments would practically nullify this resolution. A ceasefire was achieved, and a shaky peace came to Kashmir, but what was once a united realm lay divided in two parts, one occupied by India and one by Pakistan. As part of the conditions of the plebiscite, Pakistan would withdraw its tribal militias and nationals, and India would withdraw its troops. Neither honoured their commitment. The plebiscite, like so much of the UN, became a dead letter.

It is under these conditions, we must see the decision to incorporate article 370 into the Indian constitution, which at the time of the ascension of the Princely States, had yet to be adopted.

The ascension of Princely States originally required only the realms of defense, communication and foreign affairs under the control of the Indian government. The Princely states were further encouraged to form constituent assemblies, where they may or may not draft their own constitutions. In most cases, the Princely States were unable to set up constituent assemblies, but those states which

did (Mysore, Travancore, and Saurashtra Union) adopted the Indian constitution. The state of Kashmir was an outlier in this regard.

In terms of the treaty of accession signed by the King, Kashmir was not compelled to accept the Indian constitution. The state was within its rights to draft its own constitution and decide for itself. Kashmir's leadership formed a constituent assembly and requested only those provisions of the Indian constitution be applied which corresponded to the treaty of accession. The Indian government agreed to this demand, recognizing the popularity of the National Conference and Sheik Abdullah. Thus, article 370 was incorporated into the draft of the Indian constitution as a temporary provision, which granted some autonomy to the state of Kashmir, more than most states of India.

Article 370 embodied six special provisions for Jammu and Kashmir:

1. It exempted the State from the complete applicability of the Constitution of India. The State was conferred the power to have its own constitution.
2. Central legislative powers over the State were limited, at the time of framing, to the three subjects of defence, foreign affairs and communications.
3. Other constitutional powers of the Central Government could be extended to the State only with the concurrence of the State Government.
4. The 'concurrence' was only provisional. It had to be ratified by the State's Constituent Assembly.
5. The State Government's authority to give 'concurrence' lasted only until the State Constituent Assembly was convened. Once the State Constituent Assembly finalised the scheme of powers and dispersed, no further extension of powers was possible.
6. Article 370 could be abrogated or amended only upon the recommendation of the State's Constituent Assembly.

These provisions, along with the UN resolution on Kashmir calling for plebiscite, contained the seeds

of a potential secession of the state from India. However, this was not to be.

Conflicts between the government of Kashmir and that of India came to a head in 1953, when the state constituent assembly took a majority decision to abolish the Kashmiri monarchy. At this time, the Kashmiri monarchy remained as the head of state for Kashmir, a major point of contention between the government of Kashmir and India. Negotiations between India and Kashmir over the fate of the monarchy concluded in the Delhi Agreement of 1952, which Sheik Abdullah was very slow to implement. The tensions came to a head in 1953, when a resolution was passed by the Kashmiri government to abolish the monarchy. After the abolition of monarchy, Prince Karan Singh, who succeeded his father Maharaja Hari Singh, became the head of state.

Around the time that the USA and UK engineered a coup in Iran, India was conducting a coup of its own in Kashmir. The decision to abolish the monarchy resulted in reactionary protests by pro-monarchist groups in Ladakh and Jammu, led by the Jammu Praja Parishad. Sheik Abdullah was subsequently removed by the head of state citing 'loss of support from the cabinet'. Immediately thereafter, Sheik Abdullah was imprisoned in the Kashmir conspiracy case.

According to author A.G Noorani, the Prime Minister Nehru himself ordered the arrest. Sheik Abdullah alleged the entire ordeal of his dismissal and arrest were engineered by Nehru. It would not be until 1964 that all charges against Sheik Abdullah under the Kashmir Conspiracy case would be dropped.

This chapter began what many authors call the erosion of Article 370. The presidential order of 1954 expanded on the terms of the Delhi Agreement, extending Indian citizenship to 'permanent residents' of Jammu and Kashmir. Crucially, the Presidential order extended fundamental rights of the Indian constitution, the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, it placed financial relations between the central government and the state of Kashmir on the same footing as other states, and most importantly gave the central

government the right to declare national emergency in the event of external aggression. Between 1956 and 1994, forty seven presidential orders were passed over Kashmir eroding the state's autonomy. By the time the article 370 was abrogated, Kashmir's autonomy was a dead letter.

The riches of Kashmir now lay ready to exploit. Soon the biggest prize would be revealed.

The Lithium find :

On the 5th of August 2019, Article 370 of the constitution was abrogated, and the state of Jammu and Kashmir broken up into three union territories. In February of 2023, the union government announced the find of 5.9 million tonnes of lithium in Jammu and Kashmir. This find turned India into the third largest holders of Lithium reserves in the world.

The timing is quite telling, as the Geological Survey of India began its work around 2018-2019, the same year that the government passed the Jammu and Kashmir reorganization act, abrogating Article 370 of the constitution. Not only did the remnant of Kashmir's autonomy get erased, but its existence as a state was done away with. Jammu and Kashmir was broken up, and downgraded to union territories, administered directly by the central government, which would now control much of its bureaucracy, and policing.

It would not surprise us in the least, if this step was undertaken precisely to facilitate lithium mining in the region. For this, the people of Kashmir would suffer a suffocating lockdown, the degradation of civil society and institutions, all for the benefit of Indian capitalists, particularly in the mining sector. The groundwork for this was already laid down by the previous Congress government, but it was the BJP government under Modi that finished the job.

Even before the lithium find, Kashmir was exploited for its hydro-electric power potential. The Indus water treaty with Pakistan is tailored to ensure the exploitation of Kashmir's water resources, particularly the Indus river water. Kashmir has 20,000 megawatts of hydro-electric power potential. So far it produces only about 10%

of this potential power generation at near 2500 megawatts. Even this relatively meagre production is sent to states outside of Kashmir. Most of the state's hydro-electric power is generated by dams run by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation, which transfers most of the power it generates to other states in North India. This exploitation of the state's natural hydro-electric power is not limited to the Indian side of Kashmir, but finds its mirror image in Pakistan's exploitation of Kashmir's hydro-electric power.

The result is that while Kashmir is a land rich in resources and potential wealth, much of this is taken away. The Kashmiris do not benefit from their nation's hydro-electric power potential, they do not benefit from their resources, they are left with power cuts while India and Pakistan has power for their capitalists.

Abrogation of art 370 :

The BJP government came to power for a second term in 2019 with the platform of revoking Article 370 and promulgating a Uniform Civil Code. On the latter, it still finds itself struggling, but on the former, it moved like lightning. The BJP's absolute majority in the lower house, and majority in the upper house, ensured the passage of the controversial law, but not without challenge. Even today, multiple petitions are pending before the Supreme Court, challenging the legality of the abrogation of the article.

The immediate aftermath of the abrogation of the law saw protests in Kashmir, and only tepid protests by the main oppositional bourgeois parties in the rest of India. Before the abrogation of the article, Kashmir was placed under emergency, the army was moved in citing 'security threats'. Arrangements were undertaken to crush protests should they arise. However, the sheer speed and weight of the state's oppression made organizing for protests nearly impossible. The uprising the government feared never happened.

Nevertheless, the government prepared every possible tool of repression to answer to unrest, should it emerge. Kashmir saw its internet shut down in 2019, and it remained that way for 18

months, the longest internet shut down in Indian history. A lockdown was imposed in the state between August 2019 and February 2021. Over 2000 people were detained by the state in a pre-emptive crackdown. Opposition leaders were arrested including the Hurriyat leadership, and the National Conference leadership. Security forces had cordoned roads and highways, effectively sealing the state. It even became impossible for the press to access Kashmir. The country was blinded from whatever happened within Kashmir. Even today, the heavy security presence in Kashmir is a reminder of Indian authority over the state.

The presence of the army and paramilitaries ensured the people would be cowed. In the words of the governor, 'even the dogs won't bark'. Years of oppression, betrayals and failures, have created the condition for a sense of defeatism. The abrogation stung like a 'final' defeat in a long struggle. To further consolidate its hold over the region, the central government played out the strategy of divide and rule. Much like the Congress before it, pitting the Muslims against non-Muslims of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, ensured the isolation of Muslims and the prevention of solidarity emerging between them. It strengthened the hold of the Indian government, while weakening the autonomy of Kashmir.

The separation of Ladakh from Kashmir was aimed at placating the Buddhists of Ladakh, but its downgrading to a union territory has caused conditions to worsen. Protests have been taking place in Ladakh since earlier this year, as promises for jobs and development have proven to be hollow. Now the people of Ladakh are demanding statehood.



protesters in Ladakh

Protests in Pakistan Kashmir :

The swiftness and suddenness of the Modi government's move had taken the population by surprise. No less surprised was the establishment in Pakistan, which found itself stymied for action. For decades Kashmir was seen as the holy grail for Pakistan, its conquest being much desired by its leadership.

Pakistan had never truly accepted Indian occupation over Kashmir, neither did it ever accept any pretence of Kashmiri independence. It is why, Pakistan treats its part of Kashmir almost as a colony. The bureaucrats and military officers live large at the expense of the people who mostly live in abject poverty. The conditions in Gilgit Baltistan are worse.

For years the Pakistani bourgeoisie tried and failed to acquire Kashmir from India, appearing to fight for Kashmir's independence while denying any independence to the people of Pakistan occupied Kashmir, which it ironically names 'Azad Kashmir' (meaning Free Kashmir). All of their efforts have failed, and this latest failure comes on the top of a long legacy of failures of the Pakistani bourgeoisie to outmatch India.

The cost of their failures have been borne by the workers and peasants of Pakistan, including those who live in Pakistan's part of occupied Kashmir. This has come in the form of military dictatorships, poverty, economic crisis from excessive military spending, and the continued exploitation for the benefit of a clique of bureaucrats and military officers who live large while the masses of Kashmir live in abject poverty.

The only reason why Pakistan has managed to hold on to their part of Kashmir, and pacify the people of that region, was the promise of freeing the whole of Kashmir from Indian rule, and unifying both occupied parts of Kashmir. This goal seems more distant than ever now. The Pakistani state's feeble response, and culmination of failures through the years, even as it undergoes one of the worst economic crises in its history, has been the spark that set off the protests in Pakistani Kashmir.

The Indian media reports these protests as if a vindication of Indian rule over Kashmir, some go as far as to suggest that the people of Pakistan occupied Kashmir wish to *join* Indian occupation. Nothing could be farther from the truth ! The people of Kashmir march against their exploitation at the hands of the Pakistani bourgeoisie through it's army and corrupt civilian government. They wish nothing more than the unification of their country, and the independence of Kashmir. It is becoming clearer by the day, that this will not be achieved with Pakistani arms, but by the solidarity of Kashmiris.



Protests in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir

Self-determination still valid:

The abrogation of Article 370, and the breakup of the state of Jammu and Kashmir does not itself invalidate the struggle for Kashmiri self-determination. This is another blow to Kashmiris in a long history of oppression at the hands of the Indian state, held together by coercion, overwhelming military power, and heavy handed policing. The desire for independence for Kashmir is grounded on the aspirations of the people, rooted in the history of class struggle in Kashmir. This has not fundamentally changed.

It is necessary to see through the lies and grasp at the reality of Indian and Pakistani rule in Kashmir. Neither state is after the well being of the people of Kashmir, that includes Kashmir's non-muslim population. Pakistan may pretend to be a 'friend' to the Kashmiris, who balk and suffocate under the weight of Indian occupation. India may pretend to be the 'defender' of Hindus and Buddhists. This is just a ploy to further their agendas. The agenda being the exploitation of the resources of Kashmir, it's hydro-electric power, it's mineral wealth. The people of Kashmir do not figure in this, only the profits and ambitions of their bourgeoisie do.

The revolutionary stand today is more valid than ever. We stand for Kashmiri self-determination. The workers and peasants of India and Pakistan have no reason to identify with their bourgeois governments who cloak themselves in the national flag and order the sons of workers and peasants to go die in the unforgiving mountains of Kashmir. All they have to offer is death, either by poverty and starvation, or the bullet in war. The patriotic illusion is the tool of the oppressor to make the workers of either country a party to the oppression of Kashmir. By supporting Kashmiri self-determination, we intend to break this false and toxic alliance between the working class and bourgeoisie of India and Pakistan, and build the solidarity between the workers and peasants of Kashmir, India and Pakistan !

UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR KASHMIRI SELF-DETERMINATION !

FULL SUPPORT TO THE PROTESTS IN KASHMIR !

END THE OCCUPATION !

KASHMIRI RESOURCES FOR KASHMIRI PEOPLE !



Prime Ministers Narendra Modi of India and Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel in India in 2017

India's stance on the war in Gaza

When a resolution was put forward before the UN general Assembly, calling for a humanitarian ceasefire on Gaza, India abstained. This marked a departure from India's traditional stance of supporting a two-state solution for the Palestinian question. The excuse given by the External Affairs Minister was that "India understood terrorism", the resolution did not include Israel's 'right to self-defence'. Many commentators remarked that this was a break from the traditional position India held at the UN. Indeed, even under the Modi government, India voted several times in favour of resolutions critical of Israel.

India's changing attitude towards Israel from one of distance and hostility, towards one of friendship was not an overnight phenomenon, but the result of decades of transformation that began in the 90s. Today, pro-palestine protesters are being arrested and harassed. In Delhi, protesters were harassed by the police and arrested, while in Kolkata people

holding the Palestine flag during a cricket match were arrested. This is reflective of a new reality in India and one which will have a larger regional impact.

The history of India's position on Palestine

India emerged as an independent nation after over a century of British rule in 1947, with much of the colonial era infrastructure and industry intact, despite the partition of the sub-continent. This unexpectedly propelled India to be the most industrialized of the formerly colonial nations. Nehru, the first Prime Minister, sought to leverage this position, and place independent India as a leader of the decolonization movement. Against the two main cold war blocs of the Soviet Union and the United States, India and several other formerly colonized nations, proposed the non-aligned movement. For decades, non-alignment was a key part of India's foreign policy.

For the middle east, this meant, India would assume a position of opposing Israeli colonization of Palestinian lands, aligning with Arab countries, with whom Nehru wished for stronger ties, particularly Nasser led Egypt, another member of the non-aligned movement. India's stance had two aspects, one was gaining diplomatically with Arab and muslim nations who sympathized with the Palestinian cause, and the other was to outflank Pakistan, who sought to gain the support of Arab and muslim countries, with the aim of diminishing India's diplomatic position.

India secured good ties with gulf Arab nations and Levantine nations, even as Pakistan tried to lobby for their support. Pakistan could not isolate India from the wider muslim world. India's position towards Palestine was not one of ideology, but pragmatism. Even as India's position in the non-aligned movement was smashed by the defeat suffered at the hands of China in 1962, and the movement itself unravelled in that decade, India kept it's position on the Palestinian question. India refused to recognize Israel, and kept it's diplomatic recognition of Palestine.

For long Palestinians, and the Arab world, viewed India as a 'friend' of Palestine, this goodwill translated into stable relations with Arab countries, and continued to generate economic benefits for the Indian capitalist class. However, the reality is, capitalist countries are never 'friends' of anyone but themselves. India during it's non-aligned days, was skilful in garbing pragmatic positions with ideological veneer. In truth, India has always sought out that position which will yield it the greatest benefit. This is seen in India's 'neutrality' over the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, and it's tilt towards Israel in the current conflict in Gaza. However, there is a marked change in India's position relating to Israel today, since the BJP government under Prime Minister Modi took power. India's position on Israel now has an ideological element.

Israel and Hindutva :

One of the most unexpected things to happen since Israel's onslaught on Gaza began, was the

outpouring of support from right wing Hindutva supporters on the internet, and on the streets of India. It is difficult to imagine why a movement aiming at Hindu supremacy, and Brahminical hegemony in India should express solidarity with the Zionist cause. However, this becomes clearer once we understand Israel as an apartheid state, and how Israel treats it's Palestinian population generally.

In Israel we have a model for a bourgeois democracy functioning with a full-fledged apartheid regime against Palestinians. The native Palestinians have been displaced from their homes and towns, some concentrated into isolated besieged communities, Gaza being the worst off among these Israeli equivalent of the infamous 'bantustans'.



Walls and checkpoints in the West Bank, Israel's means of enforcing apartheid.

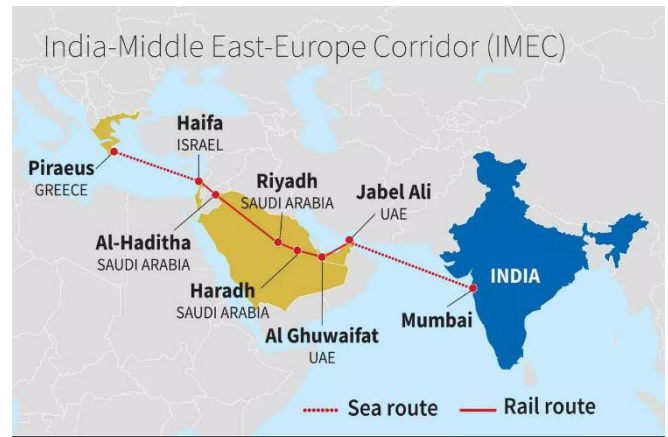
Israel is a jewish state, even if not a theocracy. Only jews can legally settle in Israel, notwithstanding if their families may not have lived in the region for generations. Non-jews cannot settle there and gain equal citizenship, the native Palestinian population has to settle for second class citizenship, subjected to the terror of the Israeli army, and security apparatus. All the while, every recognizable institution of bourgeois democracy, elections, parliamentary democracy, an ostensibly independent judiciary, are kept propped up. These institutions of course, are rendered meaningless, because they must operated within the framework of an inherently undemocratic Zionist settler colonialist, apartheid project.

The supposedly free press, the parliament, the judiciary, can never question the basis of Israel's

existence which cannot be secured without permanent terror upon the Palestinians. Israel presents a model for the Hindutva right in India, as well as every right wing movement world wide which seeks to create ethno states, or states on the basis of a single religious identity. The fact that Israel's victims are muslims only enhances the appeal to every islamophobic movement across the world, especially those who support and identify with Hindutva.

In Israel, the RSS and BJP, the current dominant proponents of Hindutva, find a role model to follow. The transformation of India from an ostensibly secular state, which at least on paper, does not discriminate against religious minorities, into one that is openly Hindu supremacist, is something that is a long term project of the Sangh. This transformation is taking place before our eyes, and has been taking place for decades. In it's modern day form, we are seeing the slow but sure transformation of India's foreign policy as well, from one of pragmatic non-alignment, to one guided by the perspectives of Hindutva.

India's new found "love" for Israel, especially under the present Modi government, must be seen in this context. In material terms, India's benefits from Israel are questionable, even the weapons supplies India receives from Israel aren't irreplaceable. India still maintains one of the largest stock of Russian made weapons in the world, and collectively European countries and the US account for far greater share of India's weapons supplies. The pivot towards Israel, is fundamentally an ideological decision, of an islamophobic government to another regime which maintains apartheid against a largely muslim population, and routinely desecrates some of Islam's holiest sites. India's Hindutva supporters dream of the day when they too can lock up, harass, and terrorize muslims to the scale of ferocity with which Israel does. Israel's most virulent Zionists would love nothing more than to replicate the Babri masjid demolition on the Al-Aqsa mosque.



Map of proposed economic corridor linking India and Israel with Europe, the IMEC

India's 'balancing act' in Western Asia. :

In the aftermath of decolonization, India embarked on a policy of non-alignment. The objective being to assume a leadership position among decolonized nations, this included many in the Arab world, the middle east, North Africa and the Levant. Resistance against the colonization of Palestine by Zionists was a key programmatic position of newly independent Arab nations.

Pakistan had positioned itself to garner sympathy for it's cause from other muslim nations, India sought to check this by garnering support from Arab countries. For this, it aligned itself with Arab nations. Israel offered India little to nothing, neither was US imperialism as invested in it as it is now. India recognized Israel in 1950, but never held full diplomatic relations, preferring to keep it's distance from Israel to maintain it's relations with Arab states, particularly Egypt.

Over the course of the 60s and 70s as India's economy developed, and the gulf oil became important, India's relationship with the wider Arab world centered around the gulf countries. After the 6 day war, the USA became more invested in Israel, and the present day American-Israeli alliance emerged. At the same time, India had just fought a losing war with China, and a stalemated war with Pakistan, in 1962 and 1967.

Pakistan had pivoted towards the USA, adopting an exploitative liberal capitalist model, and joining

CENTCOM. The USA had supplied much of Pakistan's crucial military hardware including fighter aircrafts and tanks. India acquired its weaponry from the USSR. Thus, the cold war rivalry found its way to South Asia. This would inevitably put India and Israel on opposing sides of the cold war. India's non-aligned era relationship with the Arab countries took priority over good relations with Israel. As the latter was aligned with the ally of the USA, who in turn was aligned with Pakistan, the relations were strained further.

This was a matter of pragmatism on India's part, not necessarily concern for Palestinians. Maintaining cordial relations with the Arab nations, allowed India to build trade and investment ties over the period of Congress hegemony between 1950 and 1991. With economic and strategic ties with the Soviet Union, India further entrenched itself in the anti-US bloc. This status quo would end with the fall of the Soviet Union.

In 1991, India opened up its economy to foreign investment and trade. It did so from a position of vulnerability, as its foreign reserves had dwindled to a crisis point. Taking the IMF loan against a gold pledge, India acceded to IMF terms. However, there was no coercion, in the words of the then IMF director 'we did not need to use the medicine'. India moved from a largely state capitalist economy, towards a market oriented neo-liberal model, and with it came changes to India's foreign policy.

Russia could no longer be relied upon as a counter-weight to the USA. India had no alternatives but to improve their relations with the sole superpower remaining in the world. India's pivot towards the USA could counter both Pakistan and China, undercutting America's relationship with the former, and utilizing America's existing suspicion and hostility to the latter. This also resulted in India improving its ties with Israel, as now there was a utility in bringing India's West Asia policy more in line with that of the USA.

Pragmatism dictated India stand against Israel during the cold war, pragmatism now dictated that India slowly turn towards Palestine. At the same time, it could not jeopardize its ties with the gulf nations and Egypt. In the years after India's

liberalization, the economy expanded drastically, along with India's appetite for oil to fuel its rise. The oil exporting countries of the Persian gulf became crucial for India, and would shape its approach to the region.

The gulf monarchies had been the least hostile towards Israel among the bloc of Arab nations, taking no direct military action against Israel in its history. These are among the most autocratic countries in the world, with a tyrannical state apparatus that stifles any dissent. However, no matter how tight their grip on power might seem, no dictatorship is ever immune from the threat of revolution. Saudi Arabia had to resort to economic warfare on Israel and America to save face from shying away from any military action, the rulers had to put up a charade before the muslim world and their own people, that they can stand against Israel.

India is heavily invested in trade with the gulf countries, and now with Iraq as well, which has emerged as one of the largest sources of petroleum imports for India. To safeguard this relation, India aligns its policy with the considerations of the gulf monarchies and the unpopular governments of West Asia's arab states. At the same time, India is also a chief importer of oil from Iran, a nation that is implacably opposed to Israel, in order to safeguard its investments and trade with Iran, India can never lean too far towards Israel. For this reason, even as India improves and deepens its ties with Israel, it continues to pay lip service to the Palestinian cause, and to Palestinian concerns.

This has not fundamentally changed even with a BJP government in power, notwithstanding their ideological affinity with Zionism. They must continue to play by the rules of geo-politics that had been set out long before them. The class considerations of the Indian bourgeoisie, and machinations of imperialism, trump ideology in this regard. India's duplicitous stance on Israel's war on Gaza is not too different from its stance on the Russo-Ukrainian war.

Soon after India chose to abstain from the UN resolution for a ceasefire, India 6.5 tonnes of aid to Palestine. India chose to vote against Israel on the

resolution condemning illegal settlements. Such double speak is the expression of India's double dealing diplomacy, which while keeping it's ideologically rooted lean towards Israel, also seeks to keep itself in the good books of Arab countries and Iran.

Conclusions:

Capitalist India first and foremost stands with the interests of it's capitalists, not with the interests of it's people nor with the interests of oppressed people elsewhere. This must be understood first and foremost.

We cannot look to bourgeois states to stand in solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles, we must look towards class solidarity. Stalinists advocating for non-alignment or Nehruvian principles, have no inkling of the class interests that express themselves in a state's foreign policy. India's foreign policy is guided by the class interests of it's bourgeoisie. This was served by non-alignment in the early years of Indian independence, it no longer serves it today.

India's bourgeoisie is aligned with the USA and it's hegemonic project, to the extent that it helps it counter China, and checkmate Pakistan, and to the extent that the USA will accept the expansion of Indian power and influence over South Asia and the Indian Ocean. There are still many areas of contradiction and conflict between the two, which suggests that no matter what the mainstream press might suggest, the two nations are far from allies. Being bourgeois democracy is a meaningless basis for forging alliances, the USA for it's part has no problem dealing with the most tyrannical regimes in the world. India for it's part has been active in it's dealings with dictatorships within South Asia and beyond.

India's current turn towards Israel, and the deepening of ties, has a lot to do with the party in power which idolizes Israel as an apartheid state and seeks to emulate it. This is in addition to Israel's role as a strategic partner to India in West Asia, and a key military equipment supplier. We are seeing a convergence of interests between ideologically rooted Hindutva and the class interests of Indian capitalists.

ALL OUT SUPPORT TO BANGLADESHI GARMENT WORKERS !



Bangladesh garment workers on protest

Since October, garment workers have been on strike in Bangladesh. This represents one of the largest mobilization of workers in South Asia, and perhaps one of the largest and most significant strike actions of women workers in history !

The Bangladeshi garment workers are among the most exploited workers in the world, powering the profits of big textile corporations in Europe and the USA. The Rana Plaza disaster in 2011 exposed the savage exploitation present in Bangladesh's sweatshops.

The workers have no safety, are paid a pittance from which they can barely survive. The workforce of four million are mostly composed of women, and have to deal with the double exploitation of sexism and class oppression.

A system of exploitation and billions in profits :

The garment industry accounts for 85% of Bangladesh's exports, amounting to \$55 billion. Most of the garment industry is focussed on making clothes for fast fashion, cheap and expendable clothing which finds its way to garbage dumps and oceans after being worn out quickly.

Most of the money finds its way to the pockets of the factory bosses and owners, while the workers have to make do with an average wage of 8000 taka (\$72 a month). The low costs of labour is one of the key factors that attracted global brands to source their supplies from Bangladesh, and turned it into a textile powerhouse, something Bengal was known for since the middle ages.

This progress was achieved on the backs of 4 million workers, most of whom are young women, and most of whom are the only breadwinners of their family. From sexual abuse and torture at the workplace to systematic exploitation with a starvation wage that is barely above the UN poverty line.



The final embrace, an iconic photo from the ruin of Rana Plaza

The horrible conditions of work were exposed in 2011 when the Rana Plaza disaster happened, that saw the massive sweatshop at Rana plaza collapsing, and killing hundreds of workers with it. The picture of the 'last embrace' of two workers, buried by the rubble remains etched into our collective memory.

This was the event that first stirred the workers into action, and evoked global solidarity. The big brands like H&M, Levis, and Zara were forced to sign a global framework agreement, to curb the exploitative practices by the garment bosses. However, the exploitation didn't end.

Conditions were bad enough before the pandemic in 2020, after it things only got worse. Bangladesh was less impacted directly from COVID, but the indirect economic impact of the pandemic is still being felt today. Orders were cancelled as demand collapsed, factories shut shop, and overnight hundreds of thousands of workers were deprived of employment, the bosses shifted the burden of the pandemic on to the shoulders of the workers.

Worse was in store, as the Russo-Ukrainian war sparked a global oil price spike. Now Bangladesh is suffering through a period of inflation, while exports dwindle, and remittances slow down. Once again, the workers are made to suffer.

The protests :

While political protests by corrupt islamist opposition parties have made the news with mass rallies, the strike action of the garment workers garnered less attention. The Awami League is heavily invested in the Bangladesh textile industry. The oligarchical party has enforced a one party system by coercion, intimidation, and one of the most lethal police forces in South Asia, in the form of the Rabid Action Battalion. Assassinations, enforced disappearances, and police brutality are the norm.

The garment workers have had to face all of this, as they go out on the streets to protest. Till now, 20000 workers have faced police charges. Hundreds have been arrested, and many more injured under police assault.

While the workers march for a living wage, and dignified life and work, the bosses respond with unrestrained brutality. Despite everything that they have thrown at the workers, they continue to fight back.

A meagre 56% increase on their already intolerably low wage was suggested by the Sheik Hasina government, who fancies herself as another Lee Kwan Yu. Breaking this strike, is not just a question of pride or ego, but a question of the profits of the major garment companies, and the continuation of the Bangladeshi sweatshop economy model. The Prime Minister is on the side of the bosses and the multi-national global brands. We must stand on the side of the workers.

Unconditional Support !

We must take this chance to express our unconditional support and solidarity with the hundreds and thousands of garment workers who are out on the streets today, protesting and struggling against the exploitative system which serves the bosses and corporations.

This is a decisive moment in Bangladesh's history as the country goes to the polls in January 2024,

while the workers are mobilized. The capitalist system had first condemned Bengal to brutal colonization, and is now condemning Bangladesh to becoming it's sweatshop for fast fashion. One oppression was traded for another. It is time to break the chains !

The garment workers strike gives the workers a chance to change the conditions of their life, making an unbearable system more bearable, but to change the system at it's root, we need a revolution !

A LIVING WAGE !

END THE POLICE REPRESSION ! DROP THE CHARGES AGAINST THE WORKERS !

NATIONALIZE THE FACTORIES UNDER WORKERS CONTROL !

Contact us at :		
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