



The Belfast solution-Peace process in Northern Ireland could offer a roadmap for Kashmir.

Posted at: 11/08/2018

Highlights

The Troubles was an ethno-nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland during the late 20th century. Also known internationally as the Northern Ireland conflict, it is sometimes described as a "guerrilla war" or a "low-level war". The conflict began in the late 1960s and is usually deemed to have ended with the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Although the Troubles primarily took place in Northern Ireland, at times the violence spilled over into parts of the Republic of Ireland, England, and mainland Europe. If the Irish could achieve peace what bedevils Kashmir?

The sceptic is entitled to ask — what's the connection between the two conflict zones?

- The similarities between the conflict in Northern Ireland and Kashmir are surprising but real.
- We cannot turn our eyes away from the reality that a religious divide has emerged in Kashmir.
- The idealism of Kashmiriyat now sounds like a fable once told.
- On ground zero, Kashmiri Hindus have been forced to leave their homeland.
- The strands of a Wahabi-inspired Islamic counter-culture is making inroads in the Valley.

In Thatcherite Britain, religious polarisation in Northern Ireland was also at its peak.

- The world would wake up every day to images of British army soldiers patrolling the inner streets of Belfast.
- Paramilitaries on both sides of the Protestant-Catholic divide would be in action, sniping, maiming, torturing and killing innocents.
- Replace those images of the past with those of stone pelters attacking troops in the Valley, search-and-cordon operations, terrorists ambushing convoys and raiding security camps.
- Then take a look at the compulsions and behaviour of career politicians in both areas.
- For historical reasons, just about every politician in the Valley chooses from the shade card of autonomy to separatism.
- It was a similar deck with the Sinn Fein and other separatist organisations when they began negotiations with the British government about Northern Island's future.

Present Day Northern Ireland

- Yet, despite all the contradictions, peace has held in Northern Ireland for the last 25 years.
- Northern Ireland is still part of the UK. The Good Friday Agreement, which ushered in peace, by and large still holds.

Mechanisms that restored peace in Northern Island

- The two mechanisms that restored peace in Northern Island were the emergence of honest but wily brokers who understood the contradictions of the difficult process, yet, successfully guided the peace negotiations.
- This went hand in hand with the effective addressing of the grievances of the affected citizenry.

Mechanisms proposed for Kashmir

- It can't be an international negotiator because that would be unacceptable to any government at the Centre.
- It would have to be a personality respected by all sides — which means the Hurriyat's would have to be persuaded to come into the fold.
- The promise of "peace with honour" should be sustained by all the parties involved to persuade the deeply divided Kashmir society to move away from separatist ethos
- A close look at the history of separatist movements shows that the crux of the problem is not so much the gain of territorial control but the acknowledgement of hurt, anger, betrayal and the loss of prestige of a people. There is a need for measures focused to address and alleviate these issues

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

