

# REPORT



**Islamabad  
Policy Institute**  
*Supporting Dialogue for Peace & Development*

## **Pakistan Kashmir Strategy: An Assessment and Future Outlook**

*Wednesday, February 10, 2021*



# **Pakistan Kashmir Strategy: An Assessment and Future Outlook**

**Rapporteur**

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## **Introduction**

Kashmir Solidarity Day is an occasion to commemorate the struggle of the people of Kashmir for their right to self-determination. The Kashmir dispute is one of the oldest and unresolved agenda items pending with the United Nations (UN). The present situation demands the urgent attention of the international community and major powers given its dire consequences for global peace and security. Under the rule of the ultra-Hindu nationalist government of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, Kashmiris have been deprived of their special constitutional status and even their limited rights trampled without a second thought. Meanwhile, the persecution of innocent Kashmiris continues unabated. The expansionist designs of India pose a threat to regional peace and stability. The gravity of the situation calls Islamabad for urgent measures to tackle the challenges emanating from an antagonistic India while not letting the Kashmiri aspirations lay to rest. Against this backdrop, the webinar organised by Islamabad Policy Institute (IPI) offers several recommendations gathered from the insights of the worthy speakers of the webinar to address the bilateral relationship with India and to reinvigorate Pakistan's Kashmir strategy.

## Key Point of Presentations

### Prof. Sajjad Bokhari

#### Executive Director Islamabad Policy Institute

- The webinar is being held after February 5, Kashmir Solidarity Day. The event is a part of IPI's academic activities on Kashmir.
- IPI hosted an international webinar on Kashmir on the occasion of the first anniversary of the illegal annexation of Occupied Kashmir in August last year.
- The objective of this webinar is to candidly analyze Pakistan's strategy on Kashmir and suggest pathways for the future.
- The issue of Kashmir is not only a diplomatic and military challenge but also an existential challenge for our country.
- As per our count since Aug 5, the brave Kashmiris have endured nearly 555 days of an intensified lockdown and siege by the occupation troops. In reality, the subjugation of Kashmiris has been continuing unabated for 73 years now. All along these seven decades, you could witness instances of systemic genocide and forced exodus of Muslims from the region. Meanwhile, Hindus from outside have been brought to settle there. The goal earlier was to reduce the Muslim majority in Jammu to a minority.
- The measures announced by Modi on August 5, 2019, are in fact, India's 'final attempt' at wiping away the Kashmir dispute and erasing the political identity of Kashmiris through a demographic change in the Valley. In essence, what began in Jammu is now being completed in the Valley.
- Pakistan's response has been symbolic and diplomatic, so far.
- Pakistan's government exhibited a sense of emergency in the days following India's August 5 action and downgraded diplomatic ties with India. However, 18 months down the road, little could be done to create meaningful pressure on India although the dispute has got greater focus in international media now. Therefore, it is important that now re-assesses its Kashmir strategy.
- The immediate objective of Pakistan's current Kashmir strategy is to stop ongoing genocide and force India to reverse the restrictions imposed on the people of Kashmir and its efforts to change the Valley's demography. In medium-term Pakistan's goal is to end the Indian occupation of Kashmir paving the way for the people of Kashmir to exercise their fundamental right of self-determination.

**Shamshad Ahmad****Former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan**

- No journey can ever be accomplished unless we are unaware of the ultimate destination.
- Our struggle for Kashmir began ever since we became independent.
- On the eve of the partition of the Indian subcontinent, Muslim-majority Kashmir was to become a part of Pakistan.
- The Kashmir conflict that is more than seven decades old is a somber reminder of how the world cannot ignore the legitimate aspirations of the Kashmiris. It is also one of the oldest unresolved agendas pending to be resolved with the UN.
- As per the UN resolutions, the people of Kashmir were guaranteed to freely decide their future.
- The people of the occupied Jammu and Kashmir were influenced by the freedom movements taking place in other parts of the world, so they started waging a fierce struggle for independence.
- India is crying wolf by raising a boggy of terrorism to deflect attention from the mass atrocities taking place in the occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Indian efforts to obfuscate the issue of Jammu and Kashmir through terrorism will not succeed. The only fair and permanent solution to the Kashmir dispute lies in abiding by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions which both Pakistan and India have mutually accepted. There is also a global commitment to the issue. Even Indian leaders in the late 1950s accepted the fact that the only solution to the Kashmir issue lied in the framework of the UN resolutions. In the later years, with the changing global dynamics and the world community becoming complacent if not indifferent, they started projecting the issue as their integral part.
- Setting aside the UN resolutions is one thing, but discarding the principles they embodied is another. The cardinal principle of self-determination cannot be thrown overboard.
- A struggle for movement cannot be ignored. Even the sole superpower of the world owes its existence to a long struggle of the freedom movement. Even modern India cannot deny the importance of a freedom movement, like the War of Independence in 1857 laid the foundation stone of Indian independence.
- Over the years, the Kashmir conflict has been transformed into a global issue of peace and security. It can become a nuclear flashpoint. The eye-ball to eye-ball confrontation between India and Pakistan on the Siachen Glacier and the Line of Control increases the probability of it.
- Despite the Narendra Modi-led administration's attempts at concealing the gravity of the Kashmir dispute, the ruling party in Pakistan has managed to place the Kashmir dispute on the global radar as a nuclear flashpoint, unlike the predecessors who were always apologetic even when uttering the word Kashmir.

- In his debut speech made at the platform of the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Imran Khan aptly sensitized the world by giving a wake-up call about the gravity of the Kashmir dispute. He even declared and promised to the Kashmiris during his address at the AJK Legislative Assembly that from then he was their ambassador at every global forum. He assured the Kashmiris that their cause was the cause of Pakistan. It is exactly the policy of Pakistan now.
- The Indian actions to unilaterally and illegally strip the Jammu and Kashmir of its special status on August 5, 2019, which is in contravention of international law and the relevant UN resolutions, has once again brought the entire region to the brink of another conflict.
- Goethe says that man is not born to solve the problem of the universe, but rather to seek to lay bare the heart of the problem and then confine himself within the limits of what is amenable to understand. His last words are important as we are here for a realistic understanding of the Kashmir problem to be able to have some idea on a pragmatic way-forward that answers the question as to really where should we go now and that requires obviously a sound approach. The same sound approach guided the Dixon talks on the Kashmir dispute in the early 1950s. It also paved the way for the Bhutto-Swaran Singh talks in 1962. The Simla Agreement also recognizes the reality of the disputed status of the region of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The major stakeholders to the issue are the people of Jammu and Kashmir who are affected by the status quo. The status quo is in no way a solution, but rather a problem.
- Pakistan is in a tough spot, and India wants Pakistan to accept the decision of August 5 as fait accompli. India wants to use its illegal annexation as bait to lure Pakistan into doing the same in AJK and GB. Even the global powers did not show any displeasure over Indian actions which continue to undermine the UN legitimacy. Does anyone care about the laws of armed conflicts under the Fourth Geneva Convention? If it had mattered, India would have been named and shamed at every human rights forum without Pakistan pushing for it.
- There are some serious questions to be answered by sensible minds. What should we do? Should we accept what India did on August 5, 2019, and take the Indian bait by assimilating AJK and GB and give them provincial status, so Indian claims to these two territories are ever laid to rest? Should Pakistan wage a war to liberate Kashmir irrespective of the cost involved, can we afford it? Should Pakistan work with China to create difficult circumstances for India by engaging it in a two-front war in Ladakh enough to leverage the situation where India reverses its August 5 decision and reverses to the status quo?

## Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed

### Chairman Senate Foreign Affairs Committee

- Kashmir, Palestine, CPEC, and nuclear issues are above party politics in Pakistan and they should not be a part of any rhetoric or a political confrontation.
- The most important decision in the history of Pakistan was made on May 28, 1998, and it was to go for a nuclear explosion. That was the moment when the Kashmir dispute was placed in the international arena.
- The last time the UNSC referred to the Kashmir dispute in any of its resolutions was on June 6, 1998, and resolution 1172 referred to Kashmir as a disputed territory which required a resolution. And after the martyrdom of Burhan Muzaffar Wani, then Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif dispatched 22 special envoys to the world capitals for highlighting the gravity of the Kashmir conflict.
- The status quo does not provide a lasting solution to the Occupied Kashmir dispute. Even when former president Pervez Musharraf tried to maintain it, many senior diplomats, like Inam-ul-Haq and Riaz Khokhar, resisted the Musharraf policy of maintaining it.
- First, we all should accept that China has now become a *de-facto* part of the dispute, thanks to the Indian government's short-sighted policies. Now China has started referring to Kashmir in the context of UNSC resolutions.
- The second reality is the consolidation of the Indo-US strategic partnership as former US Defence Secretary Mark Esper and Secretary of the State Mike Pompeo, on October 26, 2020, signed BECA with India. It shows the US is all set to rope in India in its campaign to confront China.
- The third reality is Modi's most of decisions are now back-firing. Be it on J&K, Covid-19 dealings and everyone can see what happened in India on January 26, the Republic Day of India. India has seen fierce farmer's protests and has the worst deteriorating relations with its neighbours.



## General Asif Yasin

### Former Defence Secretary of Pakistan

- The decisions taken by the Modi-led administration on the occupied Jammu and Kashmir were a result of the nudge it received from the sole superpower of the world, the US and other members of the quadrilateral coalition. It also resulted from the influence of the Indo-US strategic partnership in the Pacific region. It gives encouragement to Indians who have started acting like local bullies. It is a naïve assumption that China can be outweighed by India. India cannot compete with China even for the next hundred years.
- Although the Pakistani prime minister has termed the Indian atrocities as a case of ‘Nazism’ yet I believe that they are worse than Nazis. It is because the Nazis killed people but in modern India, people are being roasted alive.
- Kashmir has now transformed into a quadrilateral issue comprising four stakeholders: Pakistan, China, India and the people of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Many policymakers take Kashmir as an issue of strategic importance to Pakistan, but I believe it is a secondary issue. Even back in 1948 when India and Pakistan took the issue of disputed Jammu and Kashmir to the UNSC, the main focus was fixed on the Kashmiris’ right to self-determination. Unfortunately, millions of the Kashmiris are living in an open prison and no power is willing to acknowledge the fact that the Kashmiris have a right to live a life as per their desires. It is not a religious factor, but it is a humanitarian factor. All the Kashmiris, be they Muslims, Hindus, or Buddhists, have an inherent right to live as per their aspirations.
- Talking about the UN, the lesser said the better. I believe that is the best debating club we have ever established in the world. It is an unfair place where five superpowers dictate their way forwards. It really does not mean that we should stop knocking on the doors of the UN. We should, instead, keep on knocking and haunting the UN about the gravity of the Kashmir dispute.
- Diplomats at the UN should send a report of speeches made on the issue and distribute to other parts of the world, so the issue is highlighted all over.
- I disagree with the slogan of ‘*Kashmir Banega Pakistan*’ (Kashmir will become Pakistan). My view is that it should be ‘*Kashmir, Kashmiriun ka Hai*’ (Kashmir belongs to the Kashmiris). It is the stance that should be given and left to the Kashmiris. I know a majority of the Kashmiris want to be a part of Pakistan, but it should be left on them to decide. It strengthens our stance. It resonates with our international stance. There is a need to understand the difference between a local stance and an international one. The local stance can ignore the geostrategic importance but the international stance is more important.
- We are faltering in the region because we wait for foreign pressure to move ahead towards the negotiations. There has been a diplomatic effort but it has been pretty low during the previous governments. There is a dearth of political awareness in the people of both states.



We lack public opinion. We should encourage it. We should start a campaign to interact with the people of those countries and force their states to expose India. It is an important step. An effort at forging people-to-people interactions and boosting parliamentary campaigns can provide a way forward. The Kashmir Committee has performed abysmally worse and we have set aside its chairmanship seat to be bestowed on political favourites as a prize. We should go beyond the politics of the Kashmir Committee and encourage democracy-to-democracy dialogues all over the world.

**Question/Answer session**

**Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed:** There were efforts made in Pakistan to encourage parliament to parliament dialogues but these efforts did not succeed. Parliaments in Europe enjoy popular public opinion. If we make a way for outreach to those places, we can make our case heard with great resonance.

**Shamshad Ahmad:** As far as the statement of Prime Minister Imran Khan about article 257 is concerned, we believe that the Kashmiris can decide their own fate, either to join India or Pakistan or remain as a third independent state. They can choose about their future once they are a part of Pakistan. Unfortunately, our national politicians sow the seeds of discord on the basis of ethnic and linguistic lines. There is no imminent threat to the Kashmiriyat, yet our politics is leaving a bad example for them. Likewise, there should be only Kashmiri political parties instead of Pakistan-based ones that embarrassingly divide them on the basis of linguistic and ethnic lines.

**Mushahid Hussain Syed:** The Kashmir issue should be above the national political partisanship. The coming summer elections in AJK might see fierce political wrangling. We formed a united front at the senate to forge unity among all the political parties on the Kashmir dispute where different resolutions on the issue were unanimously adopted by all the parties. Unfortunately, this gesture was missing in the National Assembly.

**Lt Gen Asif Yasin Malik:** In general elections of AJK, only local problems of the region should be brought to the fore instead of resorting to political mud-slinging all over Pakistan. We have even divided the Kashmiri expatriates on the basis of the party politics of Pakistan. We should review the constitution and set parameters between the federal and provincial governments of Pakistan. It is not a sacred text like the holy Quran.

**Shamshad Ahmad:** The states of Hyderabad and Junagadh were annexed by India as their majority of the population comprises of the Hindus who were ruled by Muslim leaders. It was a legal framework given on the eve of independence that Muslim majority states would join Pakistan and Hindu majority would be a part of India. But when it came to Kashmir, India used a double standard policy owing to its ruler being a Hindu and totally ignored the Muslim population. It is our stance on the Kashmir dispute. Then it was further reinforced by the UN in spite of India going

to the UNSC. Pakistan is an ultimate destiny for both GB and AJK, though some national security concerns can cause taking some actions in the first place. Kashmir cannot stay independent due to its geo-strategic importance. They can either be a part of Pakistan or India. The Kashmiris can only have dignity with Pakistan despite we ourselves are grappling with many problems. Otherwise, they would be a part of China and I do not need to tell you anything about it.

**Mushahid Hussain Syed:** Pakistan is the freest Muslim democracy among 57 Islamic states. Thanks should be extended to Allah and gratefulness to Quaid-i-Azam who knew 80 years ago about the sinister Hindutva ideology. Pakistan has kept the issue of Kashmir alive. Pakistan never compromised on Kashmir. Look at Palestine where its poor leadership and betrayal on the part of the Arab neighbours have almost compromised its struggle.

**Shamshad Ahmad:** Pandit Nehru once said that Pakistan would not be more than a piece of culturally autonomous states, and I regret, our malpractices and poor law and order have proved him true. It is a great agony to see it. I am telling the Kashmiris to get rid of the divisive politics of Pakistan as it has also destroyed Pakistan. The Kashmiris should avoid it. The democracy in Pakistan exists only in name. The true form of democracy does not exist in the UK or the USA either. We need a unique democracy in Pakistan that can serve the interests of ordinary Pakistanis. We need educated and well-read parliamentarians to run the affairs of Pakistan who can talk to the world leaders. They can't interact with global leaders. There should be a standard for parliamentarians and exams should be formulated on merit to make them eligible for running for a constituency. We are making politics a circus in Pakistan in the name of democracy.

There is a time for everything. I initiated a peace process with India in 1997-8, I cannot do that today. So, political dynamics are changed with the passage of time. The Musharraf formula was suitable for that time only as the India of those years was in a mood to have cordial relations with Pakistan. Indian leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee wanted a solution for Kashmir in the 1990s, so that was an appropriate time to forge bilateral ties. Pervez Musharraf derailed that process through the Kargil dispute. Musharraf's attack on the judiciary disrupted the entire process. I was against the four-formula. The status quo is a problem. Musharraf wanted to legitimize the LoC. It was like curing cancer with a tablet of panadol. But today I think that was better given on the ground changing situation by the Modi-led administration.

**Mushahid Hussain Syed:** Indian airstrikes on Balakot in 2019 were the first aggression on Pakistan as an act of war on Pakistan since 1971. Pakistan's handling of the crisis was the finest after our conducting of the nuclear tests. We shot down two of their planes and captured one of their pilots, Abhinandan, who was later returned as a gesture of goodwill as we did that in Kargil as well. Pakistan captured the moral high ground. I think our assessment of Modi was not accurate. It was not only related to gain an electoral victory but we should understand that the current Indian leader represents a different ideological outlook: the Hindutva mindset. The mindset is divisive, hatred and based on prejudice. It is anti-Muslim at home and anti-Pakistan abroad. We should get a clear assessment of Narendra Modi. India has a clear policy on Pakistan and Kashmir, but Islamabad lacks that decisiveness on both India and Kashmir. We pursue an ad-hoc or reactive approach. After the illegal annexation of Jammu and Kashmir on August 05, 2019, more than two million illegal domiciles were issued overnight to non-Kashmiris. India wants to bring a demographic change in the region. I think it is a very big and serious challenge confronted by Pakistan at the moment. We have a new US administration and previously we were banking on Donald Trump for mediation. The US will never mediate in our favour, but to the advantage of India. When UN Secretary-General visited Pakistan, I had two opportunities to meet with him and I never found any UNSC so disposed towards Pakistan and our position on the Kashmir dispute. He said the rights of the Kashmiris must be respected. Pakistan has got some 'strategic space' for the next couple of years. Modi is for the first time in a defensive position due to poor Indian economy, farmers protest, covid-19, Kashmiri resistance. Arundhati Roy wrote that RSS was a state within India today. There is an architect of fascism being erected today in India. We should have an outreach to India, to Indian society, minus Modi. The dossier sent to the UN against India presents evidence of 87 Raw-operated camps against Pakistan, around 66 in Afghanistan, and 21 in India. So, it is crystal clear that India has in advance launched an undeclared hybrid war against Pakistan through Afghanistan. Second, CPEC has given us space in our bilateral ties with China. We are emerging as a hub of regional connectivity between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics. Third, the US needs us for Afghanistan. We have already delivered on the intra-Afghan dialogue. The US is a power on a decline. Their –Do more- mantra will be limited. The US is more polarized than even Pakistan. The US will follow less intrusive and less-interventionist policies in the future. The US might have some improvement with its relations with Iran. It is highly productive for us because Iran is a neighbour. It means lessening of tensions in the region. Indian relations with

Nepal, China, Bangladesh, and Pakistan are not so good. China is speaking up on the Kashmir dispute for the first time now. Pakistan got geo-strategic space, geo-economic breather and we should use this to our advantage. Parliamentary diplomacy is one thing. Kashmiri diaspora is another one. Public opinion in the west is there. Alleviation of the sufferings of the Kashmiris at the hands of the brutal Indian army should be highlighted. Pakistan should make sure it encourages and stands by the Kashmiris. It should keep the Kashmiri cause of freedom alive. We can do that. Pakistan is an important state in a very important part of the world. The issue is above one person, one party, one government and one institution. It should have a national approach. The ruling party should have an outreach to the opposition. We have played a role to support the oppressed in Bosnia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Palestine, not just in Afghanistan. We have brave and resourceful people. We should use law ware to pursue our case using legal means. Modi faces a lawsuit in Houston. European Court on Human Rights has universal jurisdiction, so have the courts in UK, Europe and the US. We should expose the RSS. We should put them in a defensive position. We should make it a national pledge to do it, like Bhutto talked about the making of a nuclear weapon back in 1974, it took us 24 years but we made one.

## Recommendations

- 1) The Kashmir issue should be highlighted as a dispute having implications for global peace and security.
- 2) Any effort aimed at maintaining the status quo in the region should be discouraged and opposed as it does not provide a lasting solution to the Kashmir dispute.
- 3) Islamabad should not take a hasty decision and annex either GB or AJK into its territory in a tit-for-tat fashion. India has lost its moral ground by illegally annexing Occupied Kashmir. Pakistan should continue to support the Kashmiris' right to self-determination.
- 4) Like a unanimous position of all political parties on CPEC, nuclear and Palestine, a national consensus should be reached on the Kashmir dispute and the issue should be dealt with above political partisanship.
- 5) The issue of Kashmir should be projected as a crisis linked with nuclear war to draw maximum global attention towards it.
- 6) China has emerged as a new stakeholder in the Kashmir dispute due to Indian expansionist designs in the region. Pakistan should, however, forge closer ties with China to give a unified response to Indian aggression.
- 7) The ever-increasing Indo-US cooperation points towards an alliance-making-like scenario in the region where the US wants to put up India against China. Pakistan and China should further consolidate their partnership to tackle emanating threats from bellicose India.
- 8) The issue of the Kashmiris should be depicted as a humanitarian crisis rather than showing it as an issue of religion. The former enjoys a wider appeal all across the world.
- 9) Although the role of the UN has been confined to a club of hollow speeches, yet Pakistani diplomats should not miss any platform to expose Indian atrocities in Occupied Kashmir. Islamabad should record the speeches made in favour of the Kashmiris and distribute them to every foreign mission for an effective lobby.
- 10) The government of Pakistan must not solely rely on the politics of the Kashmir Committee, which is time and again proved ineffective and short-sighted in solving the Kashmir dispute. Islamabad, however, should try to play a role to expand people-to-people contacts as public opinion paves a way for positive democratic decisions. The lingering issue of Kashmir has also remained unresolved due to the lack of political awareness among the people in the world. If

Islamabad launches democracy-to-democracy dialogues, it will perfectly expose Indian atrocities in Occupied Kashmir and strengthen our stance on the Kashmir freedom movement.

- 11) The political parties in Pakistan should deal with the Kashmir issue above the lens of party partisanship. There must be local Kashmiri political parties with their main focus on Kashmir issues instead of dragging national political discourse into the coming Kashmir general election. It sets a bad example for the Kashmiris and acts as a stumbling block in the way of their just movement for independence from India. The practice has even divided expatriate Kashmiris into the party lines and affected the Kashmir movement.
- 12) All political parties, in both the legislative houses, should create a unified front on the issue of the Kashmir dispute. There should be a clear and decisive national policy on the issue.
- 13) All parliamentarians should be made eligible for running an election after they have acquired requisite skills, passed merit-based exams, and undergone rigorous training like those of civil servants. There should be only parliamentarians who can draw a global appeal by engaging with the charismatic leadership in the world.
- 14) Islamabad should reassess and reformulate its foreign policy towards India while keeping in view the ultra-Hindu tendencies depicted by the ruling party in Delhi. Pakistan should not rely on the US for a permanent solution to the dispute as any mediation efforts carried out by the US would be in favour of India.
- 15) The Modi-led Hindutva government is on a defensive mode due to its own short-sighted foreign and domestic policies. Pakistan should utilize it as an opportunity and make outreach for the Indian population-minus-Modi formula to exert domestic pressure on the Hindu nationalist leader of India.