

Assessing Pakistan's Kashmir Policy: A Medium to Long-term Strategy



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Strategic Vision Institute organized a webinar on “Assessing Pakistan’s Kashmir Policy: A Medium to Long-term Strategy” on February 9th, 2021. The webinar was chaired by Lt. Gen. (R) Naeem Khalid Lodhi, former defense minister while moderated by Haris Bilal Malik, Research Associate at Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), Islamabad. The speakers included; Ambassador (R) Ashraf Jahangir Qazi (former high commissioner to India), Lt. Gen. (R) Masood Aslam HI (M) (former corps commander Peshawar), and H.E. Sardar Masood Khan (President Azad Jammu and Kashmir).

The webinar deliberated upon what medium Pakistan can take vis-à-vis a long-term strategy on the Kashmir dispute. What effects have been created by Pakistan’s Kashmir policy and what can be likely in the future? Kashmir’s dispute between India and Pakistan rose back in 1947 when the British withdrew from the sub-continent and two Independent states: India and Pakistan came into being. The Indian illegal occupation of Kashmir has aggravated the relations of both the neighbors to a large extent and following the accession of Kashmir by abolishing article 370 by the BJP government under Narendra Modi in August 2019, the situation is so troublesome that a war may start between the two nuclear rivals at any time.



Lt. Gen. (R) Naeem Khalid Lodhi formally inaugurated the session with a warm welcome to the panelists and expressed his gratitude for their attendance on the behalf of SVI. Naeem Lodhi started his remarks by trougning light on the Kashmir cause and what options Islamabad has in hand. The focus of Lodhi’s remarks was on the recent past of the Kashmir issue rather than the past seventy years. He made it clear that a state cannot keep any populace hostage by force, a lesson of history. However, India is doing the same in Indian-occupied Kashmir. He reaffirmed that when people stood for their independence, the occupier cannot keep them at bay for a long time.

Following the introductory remarks, **Amb. (R) Ashraf Jahangir Qazi** highlighted that today is the 530th day since August of 5th 2019 when Modi split the Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories thus turning the valley into a prison. On August 11, 2019, he asserted, six days after that brutal and illegal act, Dr. Gregory H. Stanton¹, founding President 'Genocide Watch' warned the world that out of the ten indicators of the genocide process, India's genocide policy in Kashmir is fulfilling many of those indicators. "We believe that the Indian government's actions in Kashmir have been an extreme case of persecution and could very well lead to genocide," Ashraf J. Qazi quoted Stanton. Furthermore, he highlighted the Modi's government severe blackout and militarization of the valley has turned the state of Jammu and Kashmir into a police state. In the picturesque valley, Qazi said, the Indian government has confined more than seven million Kashmiris to their homes and quoted Stanton again "The state has been under lockdown. The Narendra Modi government imposed a sweeping communications blackout and a curfew that was so draconian that residents couldn't even step out. In short, it is a police state," referring to the situation in the valley after the Hindu nationalist government in New Delhi unilaterally stripped the region of its constitutional autonomy.



The report written by Stanton described the Indian occupation and abrogation of articles 370 and 35A as pre genocide policy. Ambassador Qazi quoted the report that the Indian acts in Kashmir are a case of severe persecution and a very clear process of pre-genocide process. According to him the persecution of Kashmir's Muslims has increased significantly on Prime Minister Modi's watch. "So many of the early stages of genocide are already present. We don't wait until it is a full-out mass killing campaign to declare genocide. There are early warning signs of genocide now and that's what we believe is the situation in Kashmir," explained the American scholar, who is known for examining the stages of genocide and

¹ Dr. Stanton, who served at the US Department of State during President Bill Clinton's term, is known for drafting the United Nations Security Council resolutions that created the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Burundi Commission of Inquiry, and the Central African Arms Flow Commission.

formulating his '10 stages of genocide' theory'.² He moreover told Stanton has compared Modi with Adolf Hitler. Moreover, he ironically referred to the UN caution to Pakistan following August 5th, 2019 against using strong language such as the word genocide vis-à-vis Kashmir.

However, ambassador Qazi said I wonder if the UN cautioned the US and the UK similarly against using strong language against Xinxiang. Former US officials recently made clear that on the question of human rights violation Pakistan cannot expect the US to treat it similar to India. He also added — after a year and a half of the Indian strong aggression in Kashmir and the subsequent demonstration by Kashmiris and other human rights groups against the Indian atrocities over its action India is not under pressure at all to revise its decision of August of 5th 2019. Even they have no intention of talking to Pakistan or the Kashmiri political leadership. Unfortunately, reports say India can even go to hang the Kashmiri political leadership i.e. Yaseen Malik struggling for independence. Ambassador Qazi referred to an analyst that Pakistan's reaction to August 2019 was full of diplomatic aggression and empty of any meaningful content — other than symbolic gestures. The Prime Minister of Pakistan calls himself an ambassador of the Kashmiri people and he has indeed delivered several effective speeches on Kashmir i.e. in the UN in 2019 and last year with another one. The name of the Kashmir highway was changed to Srinagar highway. So, Pakistan at the level of speeches and diplomacy has taken a very strong stand yet there is an impression among the people of Pakistan and Kashmir there is a sort of frustration to the existential crisis India has created for all Kashmiris whom Pakistanis regard as their brethren.

Ambassador Qazi made it clear that a two-step process for the solution of Kashmir and the third option of the independence of Kashmir can undermine Pakistan's diplomacy over Kashmir cause on one hand and UN resolutions on Kashmir on the other. If that (two-step process) would somehow be compromised then Pakistan would be in a very difficult position and even if the status of the parties of the Kashmir conflict could be brought into question by those who do not agree with Pakistan with regard to the Kashmir dispute. Strategically, this would imply a third option granting independence to Kashmir and would imply preaching Pakistan's territorial contiguity with china. Also, Azad Kashmir could become very alienated and

² Gregory S. Stanton, "The Ten Stages of Genocide," Genocide Watch, available at: <https://www.genocidewatch.com/tenstages>.

we should not even contemplate granting independence to the Kashmiris. He on the other hand criticized those advocating third options to the Kashmiris because it would undermine the UN resolutions on Kashmir.

While talking about article 257 of Pakistan's constitution, which says: when Kashmiris will decide in favor of Pakistan, their relationship with Pakistan will be decided by Kashmiris themselves. And the option of independence is there in article 257 yet if we delink the offer of independence from article 257, we will then clearly be undermining the UN resolution on Kashmir which recognize Pakistan as a party to the dispute and denies the accession of Kashmir to India and would create a kind of confusion in the Kashmiri brethren. Thus, giving statements about giving Kashmiris independence should be avoided. Pakistan does need to reappraise its Kashmir strategy in the aftermath of August 5th, 2019 so much contradiction and such misinterpretation have no room. For a problem to be solved, the two conditions of necessity have to be fulfilled: diplomacy in the aftermath of August 5th has been adequate but diplomacy is far from sufficient in the present situation with regard to Kashmir. If Pakistan believes has no other option except diplomacy to counter the Indian genocidal policy in Kashmir, it will not have a viable Kashmir strategy. Diplomacy is hugely important but they are not sufficient. The post-August 5th crisis is not a long-term problem and diplomacy can only work in the longer run. Thus, the Kashmir issue needs urgent measures.



The second speaker **Lt. Gen. (R) Masood Aslam HI (M) (former corps commander Peshawar)** talked about supporting the indigenous Kashmiri struggle: dimensions and prospects. While talking about the changed of the Kashmir political status was stressed to change to its old position i.e. the restoration of article 370. No change in the status should be accepted. We want to have a sort of inquiry by the UN into the issue. However, no reaction came from the UN side of the human rights commission. Besides, no UN resolution, OIC was passed to denounce the Indian act. Domestic pressure on India is negligible.

While talking about Pakistan's solidarity with Kashmir, he stated even we observed the 5th of February recently but all measures are cosmetic. The internationalization efforts of the Kashmir issue have only been restricted to unofficial discussions. We only changed the highway names in solidarity with Kashmiris. All the measures were symbolic and cosmetic. Masood Aslam compared the Indian and Pakistani measures vis-à-vis the Kashmir cause in the wake of August 5th. He reasserted there were only cosmetics measures Pakistan took vis-à-vis the issue of Kashmir following August 5th. He moreover highlighted the issue of citizenship to the Indians in Kashmir by the BJP government in addition to land allocations to them. And the legislative assembly elections can hold in the three states of Kashmir in 2021.

He likewise linked Pakistan's vital interests to Indian Occupied Kashmir: Water security, food security, Gilgit Baltistan, economy (CPEC), and cultural and ethnic bonds between the Kashmiris living on both sides of the Line of Control. Some assumptions are very important to be highlighted. The first point is that the government needs to have a comprehensive strategy and cohesive policy. It has to have strategic goals in all day-to-day working. The second assumption which must be remembered is: all the unresolved bilateral disputes with India will remain critical and trigger conflicts of security and internal political and economic instability. So, we must remember that this has to happen. The third on that big power struggle and strategic rivalry in Sino-Indian competition will remain in considerable future. Furth, Pakistan will continue to struggle to navigate and balance its relations with the bog powers and carve its place in the new world order.

While discussing support to the Kashmir issue, there can be two ways: soft intervention and hard intervention. The soft intervention will remain in the realm of broadcast, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, throwing of leaflets, balloon campaigns, DVDs, and keep encouraging strikes inside the Indian held Kashmir, moral as well as financial support to the Kashmiris, and encourage the people inside Kashmir to start civil disobedience and bring a paralysis in the administration installed by India in Srinagar. This is not an easy task to start but that's how we have to move. The second that is hard intervention is material support to Kashmiris to fight for their self-determination as they have the right to choose their destiny. At the same time, we need to be prepared for the military option too but as a last option.



The Chief Guest H.E. **Sardar Masood Khan (President Azad Jammu and Kashmir)** talked about the strategies Pakistan required vis-à-vis the Kashmir dispute. He highlighted the demographic change India did in the Indian-occupied Kashmir that he called the annexation of Kashmir to its federation as a barbaric act on the part of the Indian government. But the most punitive act India did is diluting the identity of the Kashmiris by allowing Indians to the valley after abolishing articles 370 and 35A. He put a question, what can we do to stop that? Do we have to leverage via-a-vis India over the international community or the international capitals? We will need to focus on the challenges we are facing and list them to come up with some solutions. His Excellency was referring to the Israeli settlements on the Palestinian territory how they did it and same India is doing in Kashmir. This is the agenda as far as India is concerned in addition to the strategic agenda they have vis-à-vis China, vis-à-vis Pakistan and their agenda of Hindutva which I think makes it mandatory for the Zionists to create Akhand Bharat. Besides, India has shut all the doors for diplomacy which Pakistan wants to go for. All the asymmetric steps they are taking for instance their integration of Azad Kashmir militarily or investing heavily to sabotage CPEC and support insurgents in Baluchistan. When we talk about Kashmir, we talk about the whole of Pakistan and an integral part of Pakistan which has been cut out from it through aggression, the aggression that was committed in 1948 and the recent one in August 2019.

While elaborating on Pakistan's options, he said we have some options vis-à-vis leverage and some doors open automatically in the international community. I am talking about the European Parliament, the US Congress, and so the British parliament, and some ASEAN countries. Think tanks and community organizations have played a vital role in promoting the Kashmir issue since August 5th. In late January 2020, 626 members out of 751 members of the European parliament moved half a dozen of resolutions to condemn Indian brutality in Kashmir and Citizenship Amendment Act. However, those resolutions were shelved due to the COVID situation. Recently, the British parliament held a debate and the US Congress also held a series of hearings to discuss the Kashmir issue and condemn Indian acts in Kashmir and further demanded that Kashmiris be given a choice according to the UN resolutions to decide their

fate. Likewise, the foreign ministry, diplomats, political leadership, and oversees also played a vital role in projecting the Kashmir dispute. He said I have delivered to the western community that you have the most sophisticated and resourceful intelligence, satellites, and other means thus brutality in Kashmir cannot remain hidden from you people.

Additionally, his excellency stressed on the community and the UN Security Council to give serious thought to the Indian brutality in Kashmir which can trigger a war in the region, if the situation aggravated. And asserted, let's steer this movement towards two things: one, is that holding these genocidaires sitting in Delhi accountable. Two, he suggested we should start a sanctions movement against India on the international level.

Observations/Question & Answers Session:

Dr. Ateeq-ur-Rehman (Assistant Professor, NUML) asked a question: India always narrated that the Indian occupation of Kashmir is an internal option, how can Pakistan handle it and convince the world especially the P5 that Kashmir not India's internal issue? While responding to his question, ambassador Qazi stated, India has contended that Kashmir is its internal matter and they also extend to cover their claim over Pakistan's Azad Jammu and Kashmir. However, the UN resolutions exclusively reject the Indian contention, and even the UN Secretary-General in the aftermath of August 5th did say that the resolution of the Kashmir dispute should be under the resolutions of the UN. So that position of not recognizing Kashmir as part of India's global position. What happening now is that for a strategic reason, many countries wanted to maintain this position in effect argue that Indian occupied Kashmir is a part of India and Azad Kashmir as part of Pakistan and the Line of Control in effect be treated as an international border although which is of course not so. India has deteriorated the situation following unilaterally changing the status of Jammu and Kashmir. Even if Pakistan follows effective diplomacy, is not enough to contain the Indian moves vis-à-vis the Kashmir issue.

Ms. Zenia Satti asked a question to his excellency Sardar Masood Khan: when the troubled world we are in now in the Pandemic and other major troubles like political turmoil in the US, India is doing genocide in Kashmir without any scrutiny, his excellency Masood Khan

said the world has given a carte blanche to India and they may not be saying India that go-ahead for genocide but looking the other way by keeping silence on the Indian brutal acts in Kashmir can be seen as a support to the Indian barbaric acts inside Indian occupied Kashmir. He stated the genocide is happening for decades in Kashmir but this new intensity we see started in August 2019 is a more serious one. The western states want to appease the monster only and the monster even becomes more monstrous. It's because of the big power's economic interests with India; they have kept a blind eye on the Indian acts in Kashmir.

Mr. Shahbaz Ahmed, (a graduate of International Islamic University) asked his excellency Sardar Masood Khan: in real politics as we know states go for their power and interests, so all the major powers have their interest in this particular conflict in form of war, economy, weapon business, so why the world sensitise on human rights basis? President Sardar Masood Khan said the point is that realpolitik is a real challenge we face and it's a very substance because of international politics. For centuries, realpolitik has been driving international politics of course. Let me tell you, in the last century, the world came to realize that there is short-term realpolitik and long-term realpolitik. If you miscalculate and solely rely on realpolitik, it may have long-term unintended consequences. For instance, in the last century, realpolitik tried to appease Hitler but real political interests of the UK and France were not to confront Hitler so look at the cost they paid in the shape of the Second World War Thus, I will predict if India is keep doing it, India may disintegrate. Also, this conflict can escalate a nuclear war between India and Pakistan that can destroy the whole region.

Mr. Noor-ud-din Ahmed (former Brigadier from Pak army) asked a question to ambassador Qazi: when we talk about the option of independence, do we take Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan? A question to Ashraf Jahangir Qazi. While responding to the question, Ambassador Qazi said we regard Kashmir as one and the Kashmiris see themselves as one and the UN resolutions apply to the whole of Kashmir. If the Kashmiris were given the right of self-determination, they will have two options: India and Pakistan. If the Kashmiris were given the third option: being independent, it will undermine the UN resolutions that support Pakistan's claim as a party to the dispute. The fact of the matter is that India does not care for

the opinion of the international community about Kashmir. The only thing that can force the international community to wake up would be if Pakistan began to assert itself that we want a peaceful settlement and we wanted to be according to the wishes of the Kashmiris. Yet India is refusing it for the last seventy years.

Mr. Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai (Senior Research Associate, SVI) posed a question to ambassador Qazi: how Pakistan can garner the new Biden administration support for the cause of Kashmir in the wake of August 5th, 2019 to stop the atrocities in the Indian occupied Kashmir? While answering the question, Ambassador Qazi said the Biden administration is not going to do anything different from what all previous administrations have done. Some of them were completely supporting India while some were partially supporting India but they do not want to see a war between India and Pakistan. So, the emphasis of the Biden administration will be on the prevention of war and because these are two nuclear weapons states. If on one hand, Pakistan offers negotiations to India, they deny it for no reason on the other.

In the end, Lt. Gen. (R) Naeem Khalid Lodhi, the chair of the event thanked the panelists and participants for enlightening the audience on the vital issue of Kashmir and options for Pakistan. He also thanked the participants, who have joined the webinar and raised very meaningful questions.

Media Coverage:

The coverage of the SVI webinar was reported in print, electronic, and streamed live on Facebook. The recording is also available on the SVI official YouTube Channel given the link below.

Here are the links to the event:

1. Dawn

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1606501/strategy-needed-to-foil-delhis-plan-to-change-held-kashmirs-demography>.

2. Associated Press of Pakistan

<https://www.app.com.pk/national/strategy-requires-to-prevent-demographic-apartheid-in-iiijk-ajk-president/>.

3. DND

<https://dnd.com.pk/ajk-president-for-devising-strategy-to-foil-indias-plan-of-demographic-change-in-iiijk/212176?amp>.

4. YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCjVX7w6DgQ>.