

**KASHMIR: AT THE EPICENTER OF
POLITICAL EARTHQUAKE**

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By Professor Khurshid Ahmad

The devastating earthquake of 8 October, 2005, wrought havoc in Kashmir and Pakistan's Northern Districts that was unprecedented in the region's recent history. Equally unforgettable and unique were the courage and resolve with which the peoples of Pakistan and Kashmir and the Muslim Ummah as a whole rose to bear this calamity. With thousands of candles aglow of faith, fortitude and hope, the gloom of the dreadful night of sorrow and mourning appears to be giving way now to the new dawn of a bright future. There is a lesson for all of us in this calamity. In the massive reconstruction efforts now going on there is also the sign of a new lease of life and the phoenix-like rebirth of a people out of the ashes of a massive destruction.

The nation that valiantly fought the earthquake is unfortunately faced now by the tremors of a different kind. An earthquake is a natural phenomenon that overtakes the natives of a certain geographic location all of a sudden and unannounced. But the kind of political earthquakes that appear now to be waiting in the wings can very well be foreseen and forecast. Though the time is running out fast, the tragedy can be forestalled before it is too late. While it is possible for the disasters wrought by natural calamities, like the earthquake just witnessed by the nation, to be remedied through relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction, there is no remedy for the political earthquakes other than effective steps to prevent them from taking place. Once a political storm has overtaken, there can be of no avail any attempt of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The calamity that has taken place in the form of earthquake is being projected by some short-sighted people as having offered a new opportunity for a breakthrough over Kashmir. These people are in fact inviting more trouble by such hollow claims. The dark clouds hovering over Kashmir need to be viewed in a correct perspective and preparations made in earnest to avoid the disaster which otherwise is looming so large that only a myopic may not be able to see. It is, therefore, essential to fully understand the game now being played in Islamabad, Delhi and Washington and take timely measures to prevent the country and the nation from falling prey to a great mishap before it actually takes place.

The post-9/11 world is witnessing the storms that have shaken the entire Muslim Ummah, from Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and Chechnya to Kashmir and much beyond. All the Islamic revivalist movements and even the very fundamentals of Islam are today in the eye of that storm. The saddest part of the situation is that while the US and Britain remain in the vanguard of the modern day 'Crusade', the rulers of some Muslim countries have become their tools in that Satanic war. It is our misfortune that Pakistan's leadership, and to be more specific Gen. Pervez Musharraf, is hand in glove with George Bush in this declared anti-Muslim and anti-Islam war. General Musharraf started by taking a 'U' Turn on Afghanistan and betraying *Taliban*. This paved the way for the US to subdue Kabul and then move on to Baghdad. Toeing Washington's line, he is impatient now to 'improve' Pakistan's ties with India, even at the cost of the country's vital

national interests. He has no fixed agenda on Kashmir and is ready apparently to even give up Pakistan's principled stand and accept a solution that might lend permanence to the Indian stranglehold over Kashmir. He has already withdrawn Pakistan's moral support to the resistance movement, which till recently has been the mainstay of our policy on Kashmir. To him the Kashmiri people right of self-determination means nothing, nor does him care much for the UNSC Resolutions which guaranteed them that right. The indigenous uprising, or *Intifadha* and *Jihad* both in Kashmir and Palestine, is to him nothing but 'terrorism'. He is not shy either of publicly expressing his soft corner for those involved in state terrorism there. A new three-point formula of 'demilitarization', 'self-governance' and the 'United States of Kashmir' has now been floated, although there is nothing new in any one of these, nor can these be helpful in any manner in actually facilitating the resolution of the Kashmir issue.

Retreat on Kashmir: Six Deadly Blunders:

Gen. Musharraf's retreat on the Kashmir issue had begun in the year 2002. His retreat started the moment he was caught into the trap of the America's so-called 'War on Terrorism' and inducted as part of that 'Coalition of the Coerced'. Earlier, he used to differentiate between 'Terrorism', the 'War of Liberation' and the 'Struggle for the Right of Self-Determination'. But once converted to the Bush agenda, he glossed over his own words and began talking exactly like the Indians and describing the Indigenous Intifadha in Kashmir as 'Cross-Border Terrorism'. This posture was finally accorded a permanent status in the protocol on terrorism signed by India and Pakistan on 6 January 2004. Meanwhile, discreet moves have been made to side-track the UN Resolutions on Kashmir and instead fly the kite of alternate proposals. All that has been done on the dictates of one single person without taking into consideration the 58-year old national consensus, the crystal clear imperatives of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic and the policy statements, pledges and resolutions repeatedly made in the two Houses of the Parliament. The six steps that the General has initiated have put Pakistan's Kashmir policy today in total disarray. The ground has surreptitiously been paved thus for the roadmap that the US has prepared for the region in collusion with India. These six steps or blunders are as follows:

1. In its talks with India Pakistan has unilaterally given up its policy position on Kashmir as the core issue. It remains no more the top-priority issue in our so-called 'composite dialogue' with our belligerent neighbor. As a natural corollary of our somersault, Pakistan's leadership has come down to accept India's declared policy posture that the real issue was not Kashmir, but the normalization of trade and cultural ties and cooperation in various fields with Pakistan. The Pakistani Government is now moving headlong on this friendship track and taking heedlessly different measures in the name of CBMs, as may suit and please the powers in Washington and Delhi.

2. The UNSC Resolutions have been shelved as an archival material. A total disregard to these Resolutions is tantamount in fact to giving up Pakistan's universally accepted position on Kashmir. The Security Council Resolutions are the anchor-sheet for the solution of the Kashmir problem. They provide the legal, the political and the moral basis for the issue. The most significant of these is the 1948-Resolution, which plainly states that:

"The only way to settle the Kashmir problem peacefully was to demilitarize the State and hold a plebiscite under UN supervision."

The right of self-determination is a basic human right guaranteed by the UN Charter. It remains unaffected by the passage of time. From the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, to the Social Summit of Copenhagen, held in 1994, as well as the Millennium Summit of 2000 and the UN World Summit of 2005, all these world moots have reaffirmed as irreconcilable the right of the people to self-determination. In the words of an Observer to that Summit, "All affirmed the right of all people to self-determination in a situation of foreign occupation and alien domination".

The people of Jammu and Kashmir have given no authority to anybody to deprive them of their right to self-determination and deny them the option which the UN Resolutions have authorized them to exercise. Gen. Musharraf, has done wrong not only to the people of Kashmir, he is guilty as well of trying to deprive the entire oppressed section of humanity of their birthright. The people of Pakistan and those of Kashmir came to know of his decision only through the Reuters' news clip. Even his Government's Foreign Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Parliament could know of it through the same news channel. He considers himself too supreme and all-knowing and perhaps it is much below his dignity to consult even the men and agencies of his own-making. His pro-announcements, therefore, have no locus standi, and no legal, political and moral validity and hence these have been rejected outright by the peoples of Pakistan and Kashmir. But the damage he has done to Pakistan's principled position is colossal.

3. By ignoring the difference between the actual acts of terrorism and the struggle for the right of self-determination and the resistance against foreign occupation, Gen. Pervez Musharraf has okayed the line dictated to him by the US-Indo-Israeli conglomerate. The step is also a flagrant violation of the UN General Assembly Resolutions and the NAM Charter. It is also contrary at the same time to the Makkah Declaration, issued following six-day special OIC Summit held recently in that holiest of spots on God's earth. The Declaration has clearly defined terrorism as an unjustifiable act of violence against the common man, whether committed by an individual, a group, or a state, while all efforts by an individual or a group to resist

against the foreign domination, or a struggle for the liberation of the homeland from the forces of occupation, or colonial settlers, do not come under its purview.

4. By the unilateral declaration of ceasefire an attempt has been made to announce that war is no solution to the problems. But the very question of war being a solution to any problem or not is absurd. A war means nothing but the failure of the efforts for the political resolution of a problem peacefully between the two states. In such a situation, the experts of international law and foreign relations consider the war as the only effective tool of the aggrieved country's foreign policy. Just as a country has its criminal law, the police force and a system of accountability for the enforcement of law and order, to ensure the people the security of their lives and property and respect for their contractual obligations, it has to maintain a viable deterrence in the form of its armed forces and defence mechanism in order to guard against any foreign aggression and guarantee its national security as well as world peace. In case of a State foreclosing all options of war in its national strategy, it has then no justification to maintain the armed forces. From diplomacy and political maneuvering to the defence preparedness and maintaining a strong deterrence, each one of these has its own place in world politics. The Pakistani leadership's unilateral appeasement measures and those too in the face of India's war mongering and jingoistic postures are nothing but an expression of a defeatist tendency and a foolish attempt to embolden a declared enemy. That is why we see that in spite of the General's submissive attitude and all his overtures of peace and compromise, the posture adopted by the Indian leadership remains that of haughtiness, disdain and threat. What the Indian Air Chief Marshall S.P. Tyagi said on 18 November, 2005, in his lecture at Pune University, is nothing short of a slap on the face of our military leadership. Speaking on the role of the IAF in the changing regional security environment, he declared Pakistan as India's 'Enemy No.1' and said:

"Pakistan remains a major threat and we cannot assume that the peace process is firmly entrenched. Terrorist threats and attacks continue to be regular phenomena, indicating that the infrastructure for terrorism in Pakistan and PoK is still very active."

(Deccan Herald, 19-11-2005)

Dilating on the security dimension of his country in view of what he described as the "terrorist infrastructure still existing in Pakistan", Air Marshall Tyagi gave details of the measures India was taking to make the IAF invincible and the biggest aggressive air power of the region. His future plans included indigenous production of fighter planes, acquisition of the latest vintage F16s, including transfer of its technology, purchase of ultra-modern helicopters, development of the hi-

tech air defence missile system and equipping Mig-21 and 27 and Jaguar planes with the latest technology.

5. The fifth biggest blunder committed by Musharraf regime is the unique style of diplomacy that the General has followed since he came to power. Off and on he comes out with options of different sorts and when faced with adverse result, he willingly eats his own humble pie and moves on to hoist yet another option. On the contrary, India has remained firm in its stance on Kashmir without surrendering even an inch to accommodate the General's 'friendly' initiatives. India has vociferously reiterated its refusal even to discuss anything that concerns its 'land' or an alternative not in conformity with the Indian Constitution and the resolutions of its Parliament. It goes on harping on the same time-worn strain of Kashmir being India's 'Atoot Ang', or integral part and that there is no room for any dialogue with Pakistan except on the areas now part of AJK and Pakistan's North. It continues describing the so-called 'cross-border terrorism' as the root-cause of the problem and that no division of Kashmir is possible on religious grounds. That is a policy posture which has been jealously guarded and followed not only by India's political leadership, but also by its entire intelligentsia and leaders of public opinion. They have displayed perfect unanimity on their side, while on our side it is a story of utter confusion, lack of foresight and vision, abject surrender and total disharmony and discord.
6. The sixth and the most deadly blunder that has dealt a heavy blow to the resistance movement in Kashmir is the division of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC). It has definitely been shameful on the part of the Pakistani government to ignore on the one hand the dedicated and selfless services of Kashmir's undisputed and the most trustworthy popular leadership, the leadership that has all along been Pakistan's staunch supporter, and on the other promotion of a few chosen pigmies through the state propaganda machine and putting on them the cloak of leadership. The Pakistani government's somersaults have left little impact on the genuine leadership of the Kashmiri resistance movement, which stands firm in its resolve under the guidance of Syed Ali Shah Gilani, his Hizb-e-Islami and other sincere political and *Jihadi* forces of Kashmir. They are active as before to achieve their goal, but Pakistan has been demeaned and debased once again by its leadership. Following the betrayal in Afghanistan, the Pakistani leadership's unabashed betrayal in Kashmir has exposed us as a most unreliable and untrustworthy 'friend'. It has caused irreparable damage to the Kashmir cause and it is extremely difficult now to restore Pakistan's credibility and image in the IHK. I am afraid that the rupture thus caused to the trust between Pakistan's political leadership and the genuine

leadership of Kashmir's resistance movement is too irreparable and might also prove too costly for the country and the Kashmir cause.

As a natural corollary of these blunders, the very status of the Kashmir issue has now changed. To Gen. Musharraf and his cohorts, the issue at stake now is no more the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination. To them the question is now only that of self-governance. That is the reason why the common talk today is how to divide Kashmir into five to seven areas and grant them some sort of autonomy under the overall control of India and Pakistan. To add more colour to such proposals, efforts are on to revive once again the same US scheme, which was initiated in 2000 by a US billionaire of Kashmiri origin together with some American politicians and intellectuals and which was rejected unanimously by all Kashmiri groups and the leaders of Pakistani public opinion. The same scheme has now been floated by certain Kashmiri leaders with the name of the 'United States of Kashmir' It has been done with the same gusto as the imaginary plan of Kashmir's autonomy hoisted by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah in the year 1953 and which had cost him his premiership of the Occupied State. Once out of office, the charismatic Sheikh could see again the light of 'Plebiscite' through the chinks of his prison cell.

Surrender on Kashmir:

It is evident that Gen. Pervez Musharraf and those around him are suffering from a defeatist mentality due to which they appear hell-bent on getting rid of Kashmir. They have the US roadmap before them for which they are trying to pave the way to facilitate things as best suited to their patrons. They are trying their best to formalize the division of Kashmir on a permanent footing. They may not have the courage to declare LoC as the permanent boundary line, but have practically done everything towards that end. Off and on they have been speaking of 'soft' borders and borders being 'irrelevant'. India was generously allowed to erect permanent fence along the Line of Control as if to grant it the de facto status of the international boundary line. Our leadership has absolutely no regard for the valiant sacrifices which the people of Kashmir on both sides of the LoC have made for their right of self-determination. In a recent statement, the General's appointed Prime Minister of Pakistan went to the extent of declaring that withdrawal of the forces and self-rule should permanently settle the Kashmir dispute:

"Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Tuesday that Pakistan supported demilitarization and self-governance in Kashmir for an end to the long standing dispute with India".
(The Daily Times, 30 Nov. 2005)

One may very well say that the cat is now out of the bag and the Pakistani leadership can no more hide their real intentions behind the smoke-screen of such confused outbursts. To them the 'demilitarization' of Kashmir and 'self-governance' are more plausible an option than the right of self-determination and the plebiscite guaranteed by the UN to determine once for all the status of

Jammu and Kashmir. They do not know that neither the people of Kashmir, nor the Pakistani nation would ever condone such an unabashed betrayal of the Kashmir cause by such self-seeking leaders, because that is tantamount to making a deal over the immense sacrifices of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The series of statements made by Gen. Pervez Musharraf, Shaukat Aziz and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq is nothing short of a surrender on Kashmir and acquiescing to the Indo-US scheme of a splintered State of Jammu and Kashmir with some sort of self-rule. India is waiting from a point of strength for more retreats on the issue by the Pakistani leadership, before it eventually moves to accept the formula of Kashmir's division in the name of 'demilitarization' and 'self-governance'.

Joyoti Malhotra, Diplomatic Editor of the Indian daily 'Star News', could not resist concealing his joy over these Pakistani somersaults. In his article "Soft Borders and Self-Governance", he appears to be chiding us that 'look, you Pakistanis, how easily can you be cowed down to give up your principled stand which till recently looked so much like being within your reach!':

"What a far cry from Azadi that combination of genuine anguish and crafted political cunning of a decade ago, when many thought the slipshod and inexact end of Indian control was near. The last few months possibly constitute a churning on the idea of 'Kashmir' that has not been seen for many decades on either side of the Line of Control and the international boundary. The latest such idea of 'self-governance' and 'demilitarization' has emerged from Pakistan, with the Foreign Offices in New Delhi and Islamabad confirming that Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz touched upon the subject with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in their bilateral conversation in Dhaka during the SAARC Summit in mid-November. ... Meanwhile, we have Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Farooq's statement in New Delhi in mid-November of the desirability of a 'United States of Kashmir'."

Malhotra concluded on an interesting note:

"The likely visit of US President George Bush to India (and Pakistan) in February 2006 is certain to add momentum to the Musharraf-Manmohan schools of thought. With 'Azadi' having been finally consigned to history, a hundred new ideas have begun to bloom. The most exciting part of this debate is that it has begun."

(The News International, 05 December, 2005)

The well-known syndicated columnist from US, Jonathon Power, in his article of December 16, presented a long list of concessions given by Pakistan on Kashmir and suggested that it was the most opportune moment to settle the Kashmir issue once for all:

“This is the time to push, whilst the military strongman Musharraf can deliver Pakistan. In a year’s time planned elections might weaken his clout.”

The Columnist acknowledged:

“It is Pakistan that has set the pace on sensitive concessions, such as being prepared to one-side the promise made by India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, to let the issue be settled by a referendum and to accept that most of Kashmir will remain directly under Indian sovereignty. Moreover, Musharraf has finally cut the umbilical cord between Jihadis and the military. ... India perhaps feels too comfortable. If it sits back, Pakistan may make more concessions.”

(The Daily Times, December 16, 2005)

The Pakistani leadership may say whatever may please it to keep itself and the nation in self-delusion, the fact, however, remains that Musharraf’s Kashmir policy is nothing short of surrender on Kashmir. The people of Pakistan would be better advised to look deeper through the smoke-screen of the government propaganda and gird up their loins to play their role right in earnest and in a most effective manner without losing more time because it may then be too late.

Self-Governance or Self-Determination?

It is essential to understand the nefarious attempts being made to confuse the actual position on the Kashmir issue. The struggle for Kashmir began not after the partitioning of the Subcontinent, but much earlier. Ten years before the passage of the Pakistan Resolution in 1940, the people of Kashmir had begun their popular movement to gain independence from the oppressive yoke of the Dogra rule and its patron the British Imperialism and to restore their State’s Islamic character. They made tremendous sacrifices for this purpose. Following the adoption of the Pakistan Resolution and the start of the Pakistan Movement, it was but natural for the liberation movement of Kashmir to become part of the greater independence movement of the Muslims of the Subcontinent. When the British India was partitioned, the Muslims of the State of Jammu and Kashmir proceeded with a new momentum in their struggle for the State’s accession to Pakistan. The freedom achieved by the liberated areas, which now form part of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, was not doled out to the people of Kashmir as ‘Bakhshish’, or munificence of some big power. It was achieved through tremendous sacrifices of the *Mujahideen*. Similarly, the instantaneous rise of the people of Gilgit and Baltistan to win freedom and align their strategically located area with Pakistan was due solely to their resolute struggle and sacrifice. Nobody should forget the historic fact that the *Jihad* has been going on in the State of Jammu and Kashmir since 1930. During 1947-48 alone, the people of Kashmir scarified over 400,000 lives to liberate the areas that today form part of AJK and which serves now as the base-camp of Kashmir’s liberation movement. The resistance movement

that started in Occupied Kashmir in 1989 was a continuation of the same *Jihad* and the result of the closing down of all avenues for a peaceful political change through democratic means.

We must not also forget that there is nothing new in the idea of 'self-governance', which the Musharraf regime is projecting as a plausible option. The idea of self-governance was at least theoretically at the center of the plan drafted in 1953 during Sheikh Abdullah's rule. Article 370 was, therefore, inserted in the Indian Constitution guaranteeing special status to Kashmir. Subsequently, however, the rulers at Delhi true to their Chanakyan mindset made a mockery of this 'special status' and imposed the worst type of dictatorship on IJK in the form of the 'Center's Rule'. They have continued repeating, nevertheless, to the Occupied State the offer of the self-rule's lollypop under the Indian Constitution. During the reign of Narasimha Rao there was much talk of 'maximum autonomy' and in June 2002 the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly also passed resolutions to that effect. The Indian leadership claims even today that India has already granted self-rule to Kashmir and it is now for Pakistan to follow suit and give the same to its part of Kashmir and Northern Areas.

According to reports, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had told his Pakistani counterpart Shaukat Aziz at the SAARC Summit in Dhaka that:

"Jammu and Kashmir already enjoyed autonomy under the India Constitution and has in place a popular government elected through free and fair elections." He went on to remind Mr. Aziz that there was "clearly a lack of autonomy in the Pakistan-controlled Kashmir and there have been no popular elections at all in Gilgit and Baltistan to determine the wishes and aspirations of the people there".

(The Hindu/the Nation, 10 December, 2005)

By trumpeting the idea of 'self-governance', the Musharraf Government has done a greater damage to its own case on Kashmir. As explained earlier, the issue is not that of self-governance, but that of self-determination. By taking a 180 degree turn, the Government has itself changed the status of the case and Pakistan's principled position is now in doldrums. We are now caught in India's trap and as remarked by Jonathan Power, Gen. Pervez Musharraf due to his latest somersault has virtually accepted India's absolute sovereignty over a large part of Kashmir and was willing now to grant this division a permanent status. That is why Sheikh Abdullah's son Dr. Farooq Abdullah and grandson Umar Abdullah, the current President of the National Conference, have termed Musharraf's proposal of self-governance as 'an old wine in a new bottle'. Umar Abdullah chided Mirwaiz Umar Farooq for re-echoing the idea and said:

"If they were to steal what was our agenda, why did they let thousands of people die for nothing?"

India is not ready to accept even a real self-rule for the Kashmir's. That is why Article 370 of its Constitution has been amended repeatedly and defaced beyond recognition through Presidential Orders. Moreover, the IJK Assembly Resolution of 26 June 2000, which sought autonomy for the Occupied State, was turned down the very next month through an Indian Cabinet decision of July 04, 2000. The history of Indian stranglehold in Kashmir is a witness to the fact that India has neither granted any autonomy, or self-governance to the Occupied State, nor it would ever agree to do that. The fact, therefore, remains that the real question is not that of self-governance, but of the Kashmiri people's right of self-determination. The people of Kashmir would never agree to anything less than that irrespective of the time that it may take to achieve their goal. They laid down 400,000 lives during 1947-48, while more than 100,000 have achieved martyrdom from 1989 till date. This they have done not to win self-rule, but for the sake of liberation from the India occupation and to decide their own future as guaranteed to them by the UNSC Resolutions. There has been no decline in their fervor and their heroic struggle for the right of self-determination goes on. If they feel disappointed and let down, it is because of the continuous betrayal by the Pakistani leaderships and their repeated somersaults. The Kashmiri people's position otherwise remains the same as Iqbal spoke of his proverbial 'Shaheen' (Eagle):

"The Eagle suffers no downfall as it's never tired of flight. Keep your spirits soaring and you too have no fear of a mishap!"

Since last two years, Pakistan has made blunders after blunders over Kashmir. Contrary to Gen. Musharraf's repeated retreats, India has remained firm and adamant, ominously demonstrating that it is ready to budge not an inch from its '*Atoot Ang*' posture, or that of Kashmir being its integral part. As for the General and his Foreign Minister, Khurshid Kasuri, they have nothing left now to do but to lament over India's stubbornness and lack of flexibility. How unfortunate it is that Pakistan's myopic leaders are not yet ready to draw any lesson from history and check their steps. They continue moving on their beaten track with blind faith in America and its elusive support.

The US Plan:

Whoever has traveled to India, or Occupied Kashmir during the past few months, would admit that Pakistan's principled position and the national consensus on Kashmir are totally in disarray today and the trust of the people of Jammu and Kashmir on Pakistan has been badly shaken. There has been no change, on the other hand, in the Indian policy posture and it continues asking Pakistan for more and more concessions the way Israelis are doing day in and day out with the hapless Palestinians. The US has its own game-plan, which it is actually playing in all earnestness. It is pressuring Pakistan on the one hand for more and more retreats and on the other it is bent on strengthening India more and more morally, politically and militarily. The US interests lie in keeping Kashmir divided and in maneuvers to ensure a foothold for itself in the area and station its forces there for monitoring and overseeing the region around.

The proposal of the so-called 'United States of Kashmir' is yet another decoy for the US goal of 'Kashmir for the United States of America'. As mentioned before, the idea was floated first by the US-based 'Kashmir Study Group' and it was then put into the mouth of Mirwaiz to present it as his own brain child. There is yet another aspect to this proposal and that is the distortion of Kashmir's Islamic identity and promotion there of a secular system, leading eventually to the damaging of Pakistan's Islamic character and speeding up its secularization.

The main thrust of the 'Kashmir Study Group's plan of the 'United States of Kashmir' has been spelled out as follows:

"The new entity would have its own secular, democratic constitution, as well as its own citizenship, flag and legislation, which would legislate on all matters other than defence and foreign affairs. India and Pakistan would be responsible for the defence of the Kashmir entity. India and Pakistan would be expected to work out financial arrangements for the Kashmir entity."

The veteran Indian journalist and former diplomat and also a prominent player in the so-called 'Track-II' diplomacy, Kuldip Nayar has this to candidly declare:

"The Central Government of India could retain the subjects of defence, foreign affairs and communication and on all other matters the Kashmir's should be allowed to govern them, and of course Pakistan will have to give the same kind of permission to this side of the Line of Control."

(SAFMA Lecture, the Daily Times, 13 December, 2005)

In his interview to The News International, Nayar could not restrain himself from laying bare his heart's desire:

"Noted Indian journalist and columnist Kuldip Nayar said the peace process between Pakistan and India could spread to the whole of South Asia and turn it into a single State having soft borders and economic prosperity."

(The News, 16 December, 2005)

Nayar reiterated that no solution to the Kashmir problem could now be acceptable on the religious ground. The focus of his 'lecture' was to prove that the Quaid-e-Azam was wrong in his approach and he actually committed a mistake by creating an independent homeland for the Muslims, while the policy followed by Mawlana Abul Kalam Azad was right. He had the cheek to attribute to the Quaid the greatest lie conceivable of that great man that he was not sure whether the partitioning of the Subcontinent was right or wrong:

“In Karachi, a young Navy Officer asked Mr. Jinnah whether making a separate homeland for the Muslims was the right step or not. ‘I do not know’, was Mr. Jinnah’s reply, Nayar said.”

(The News, 16 December, 2005)

There can be no greater calumny against the Quaid-e-Azam than this. He is on record in dozens of his post-independence speeches and addresses to have described the establishment of Pakistan as the greatest blessing of *Allah Subhahu wa Taala* and the biggest achievement of the Muslims of the Subcontinent. It is a misfortune, however, that the mindset of Hindu India and its leadership remains today what it has all along been. It is this centuries’ old hatred against the Muslims, rooted deep into the Hindu psyche that had been instrumental in giving a new shape and direction to India’s independence movement and the eventual parting of the ways between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Hindus have remained obsessed with the idea of reversing the course of history, negating the partition and thrusting upon the Muslims their own brand of ‘Secularism’, which in fact is nothing but the modern version of the so-called ‘*Hindutva*’. They have never been reconciled to the idea of an independent homeland for the Muslims of India, where they could fashion their lives according to their own ideology and Faith. According to the grand design of ‘*Akhand Bharat*’, prepared by the Hindu leadership of India, schemes have been devised and trap laid all over to use the weapons of the linguistic proximity of the Punjab, the cultural commonality of the Urban Sindh, as also the lure of commerce and trade for cutting at the very roots of an independent Pakistan, for which the millions of the Muslims of South Asia laid down their lives, and to annex it once again in one form or the other with ‘Mother India’. Unfortunately, some of our young intellectuals too are counseling the people of Pakistan to forget the past and look out for a new future. They do not know perhaps that there can be no greater mistake than forgetting one’s own history. The history is the greatest of all the judges and it is as such the cruelest critic of human actions and deeds. Those who do not learn lessons from history, the history then teach them the harshest of lessons in its own way. The Indo-US game-plan is too obvious. Only he would shut his eyes from it that is hell-bent on making the final plunge into a bottomless pit. I am sure; the Muslim nation of Pakistan would never allow the people to make such a deadly plunge.

The Root Cause, The Real Solution:

Now, the question arises why this weakness of Pakistan’s Kashmir policy? It may not be difficult to find out its root cause. It lies in the autocratic rule, the helplessness of the Parliament and the absence of a national system of check and balance. The tragedy being faced by Pakistan today is that there is no effective institutional set-up for taking decisions on national issues. There has in fact been an erosion of all institutions. Since the time Ghulam Muhammad took over as the country’s Governor General till the assumption of power by General Pervez Musharraf, this process of erosion has been going on which has now reached its apex.

The situation as it stands today is that whether it is the Kashmir issue, the military's role in politics, the NFC (National Finance Commission) Award, friendship with India, or ties with Israel, or even the relief and rehabilitation of the earthquake victims, as also the developmental projects and priorities of the Provinces, everything depends on the sweet will of a single person, who is taking decisions as dictated by his own priorities and preferences. Others are there only to watch like dummies but having nothing to say. August national institutions like the Senate, the National Assembly and the Judiciary have all lost their clout. Based on my personal knowledge, I may as well say that Pakistan's veteran diplomats and intellectuals having deeper insight into the realm of foreign policy feel much disturbed today over the Government's indecision and absence of the well-thought out policy postures. Even our Foreign Office is faced with a dilemma. It is evident that they have no role today in the formulation of the country's foreign policy. There can perhaps be no worst scenario than what we are facing today of this total erosion of national institutions? That is why the crying need of the hour is to revive these institutions and restore their autonomy and assigned role, and for this it is imperative that the people of Pakistan and their political and religious leaders should rise together to untidily snatch the power from those who have usurped it and take it firmly into their own hands once again. Unless that is done, everything including our independence, national solidarity, ideological existence and economic strength would remain at stake. To prevent further rot, it is, therefore, essential that the country's leadership should be checked immediately from following its suicidal course on Kashmir. For the resolution of all our national problems on permanent footing, it is needed at the same time that the country's autocratic regime be put under a tight rein, concerted efforts be made to restore the supremacy of the Constitution, the rule of law and the Parliament's authority and to give the people their real powers. On the success of such a selfless struggle depends the rooting out of all the ills from Pakistan's polity once forever.

Strategy for the Future:

What is needed the most in the context of the Kashmir issue is Pakistan's firmness on its principled position and formulation of a comprehensive strategy, in line with the world situation today, a strategy that may become an effective means for the achievement of our historic objectives. It may be desirable to follow a new path to reach the destination, but in case of no such path being in sight, it would not just be a folly but a national '*hara-kiri*' to give up the quest for the ultimate goal.

Pakistan's national policy on Kashmir has been defined so succinctly in Article 257 of our Constitution:

“When the people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir decide to accede to Pakistan, the relationship between Pakistan and that State shall be determined in accordance with the wishes of the people of that State.”

According to this policy, the State of Jammu and Kashmir is an indivisible entity and only that decision would be acceptable to Pakistan which the people of Kashmir would make by exercising their right of self-determination through a free and impartial plebiscite under the UN supervision. The State's relationship with Pakistan would subsequently be determined according to the wishes of the people of the State. This is the logical course that is in conformity with the UNSC Resolutions, as also it is based on the principles of justice and the dictates of democracy.

I am firmly of the view that in the light of this basic policy framework any thoughtless action taken in haste on Kashmir would prove counter-productive and detrimental to the interests of both Pakistan and Kashmir. We would be better advised today to stick to our principled position with courage, patience and sagacity. The world situation is changing fast. The blood-thirsty policies of the United States are doomed to die their natural death. The US is the most hated entity globally and it is despised today not just by the world public opinion, but also internally by the people of the United States themselves. America's demise in Iraq is now written on the wall. The world intelligentsia is crying hoarse that the US war against terror has led to the rise in terrorism and the world's peace and security stand shattered today more than ever before. This US-led war and the policies being framed at its behest sound like death knell for democratic values and human freedom. There can be no greater folly than relying too much on the United States under such circumstances.

The need of the hour is to keep the issue alive, for which Pakistan will have to stand solidly behind the resistance movement in Kashmir and to do nothing that might be construed as a betrayal of the Kashmir cause, or detrimental to the people's trust there. Our goal should be to continue exposing on the global level the occupation forces' brutality and their massive abuse of human rights in the valley and thereby to keep up a calculated pressure on India. At the same time, we would have to maintain at all costs and under all circumstances our moral, material and diplomatic support to the struggle.

It is an undeniable fact that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are not at all willing to live with India at any cost and in any form. Any attempt to ignore the immense sacrifices they have made so far and the resolve they have demonstrated in the face of unbearable oppression and tyranny and to lend support with the help of a few opportunist elements to the moves that may lead to perpetuating the Indian stranglehold would be nothing short of a great betrayal of the Kashmir cause and the meanest act of treachery against the oppressed people of the Occupied State. Attempts like these are bound at the same time to invite the wrath of Allah Subhahu wa Taala, for He would never pardon us on such perfidy.

It has now also become crystal clear that the real leadership of the people of Kashmir rests with those who are standing like a rock against the Indian atrocities and in spite of the Pakistani retreats

on so many fronts are ready to budge not an inch from their principled stand on freedom and the right of self-determination, or to compromise on the basic principle of plebiscite. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference, led by Syed Ali Shah Gilani stands out, therefore, as the sole spokesman of the Kashmiri people's aspirations. It also enjoys the confidence of all Jihadi forces. Hizb Al-Mujahideen similarly remains the back-bone of the indigenous resistance movement and no solution of the Kashmir issue is possible by ignoring its heroic struggle.

Those who have an insight into the ground realities are aware that the personalities and groups whom Pakistan's State media is trying to promote these days as the champions of the Kashmir cause have no locus standi. Instead of enjoying popular support they are viewed with suspicion by all the political and Jihadi forces of IHK. A study of the history of the resistance movements against the Imperialist powers makes it crystal clear that only those have always proved the decisive factor that have remained actively engaged in their struggle against the forces of occupation. In case of Kashmir too the heirs to the hereditary thrones can never be the decisive factors, but the Mujahideen and those political leaders who are actually engaged in a valiant struggle against the Indian Imperialism. It is they on whom the people of Pakistan too have reposed their trust and they can be expected either to barter away their principled stand for the sake of petty timely gains or to give in on a show of favour by the Indians.

Viewed from this backdrop, it becomes obligatory to the people of Pakistan and their effective political and religious leadership to realize the gravity of the situation and do their best to mobilize and organize the Pakistani public opinion for stopping the country's short-sighted leadership from proceeding unchecked on the road to destruction and then eventually to remove it from power and replace it by a conscientious, well-meaning and far-sighted leadership that may be worthy of the people's trust. The country needs a sincere and dynamic leadership capable of mobilizing the people to achieve the national goals and objectives, a leadership that may itself be faithful to those objectives and can devote all the national resources towards that end.

Pakistan and Kashmir are not two separate entities. They are part and parcel of one another and each one of the two complements the other. To us, the Kashmir issue is first and foremost an issue of principles. The future of fifteen million people remains at stake because of this and it is simply not possible for us to leave our oppressed brethren aside and promote friendship with their enemies. Taken from the geographical, political, economic, cultural, religious or from the point of view of transport and communication, our brotherly bonds with Kashmir are such that the fate of one remains interlinked with the other. Those who talk in terms of 'Either Pakistan or Kashmir' are living in fools' paradise. We cannot conceive of a Pakistan without Kashmir, or a Kashmir without Pakistan. That is the reason why the Quaid-e-Azam, with his great sagacity and proverbial wisdom, almost summed up this complementary nature of the two when he declared that Kashmir was "the jugular vein of Pakistan."

That is also the reason why there is not much of a difference between what the undisputed leader of Kashmir Syed Ali Shah Gilani is saying today and what is being stated within Pakistan by men of foresight and vision, like Qazi Husain Ahmad, Agha Shahi and Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali. We have no alternative before us but to hold fast to our principled position and succumb to no pressure, internal or external.

The people of Kashmir have to decide their future through their own free-will and it remains now the duty of the people of Pakistan and their leadership to do their best to let them achieve that objective. For this, a reversal of the apologetic posture of the last four to five years is immediately needed, as also an organized effort to energize the people of Pakistan on the one hand and on the other to start a campaign to effectively project Pakistan's historic and principled stand on Kashmir so that the world public opinion could be mobilized in its favour. The history is a witness to the fact that no nation can be kept captive forever, and no people can be deprived of their freedom once they decide to achieve it even with their blood. No sacrifice is too great for a nation to win freedom and no cost is too high for liberty. The people of Kashmir have chosen the path of freedom from the Indian yoke and have already made invaluable sacrifices. To them it is now a point of no return. It is a hard fact that no sane person can afford to ignore.

Neither the history will ever forget, nor the people of Pakistan can afford to forgive, those who are guilty today of a great betrayal on Kashmir. We as a nation are on trial. Our wisdom, farsightedness, courage, sincerity of purpose and resolve to live up to our national objectives are all on test. It is time for us to prove that as a living nation we are ready to uphold what we believe and only thus can we look for the Divine Support and Guidance:

“And those who strive in Our (Cause), we will certainly guide them to Our Paths: For verily God is with those who do right”

(S. XXIX: Al-Ankabut, 69)
