



## Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI)

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### PRESS RELEASE

‘Even if there is some lull, Indians won’t let us forget. Kashmiris have decided not to be a part of India.’ This was stated by Sardar Masood Khan, President, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Muzaffarabad, Government of AJ&K, while delivering his keynote address at the international conference on ‘Strengthening Peace and Cooperation in South Asia- Incentives and Constraints’ organized by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute and Hanns Seidel Foundation. The Security Council has double standards for Syria, Yemen, North Africa and whole of Africa, but it pays no attention to the issue of Kashmir. The UN Security Council is not holding any debate despite ruthless killings in Kashmir by ISF. But we should make a transition from helplessness and despondence to success. If the two nuclear powers i.e. India and Pakistan decide to go to war, it will be a disaster not only for both the countries and SAR but for the whole world. One area where India has beaten us – the Kashmiris, Pakistanis, and the diaspora – is in the domain of communication. ‘They get away with murder because the world has bought their lies, but is not ready to believe our truth,’ said President AJK.



India has frustrated and obstructed Pakistan’s keen overtures towards peace and reconciliation, repeatedly. It has literally set Kashmir on fire. With thousands injured, mutilated and hundreds killed or kidnapped, there can be no confidence building measures. We are chasing a mirage. President Khan

warned that no regional cooperative pacts or deals can work if the Kashmir issue, burning at the core of South Asia, is not resolved. Kashmir cannot be swept under the carpet, he said. He urged the international community to pay immediate attention to stop killings and torture of the people who are demanding their right to self-determination. Kashmiris have stood up to break the cycle of Indian subjugation, and their demand for self-determination is not rhetoric, rather a legitimate right. 'The freedom struggle is indigenous being carried out by unarmed young men and women, he emphasized, and called on the younger generations of Pakistan and South Asia to raise their voices and use social media to open the world's eyes to Indian brutalities. Sardar Masood Khan said that the UN resolutions on Kashmir would remain valid until they were implemented in their true spirit.

'The long-standing Kashmir issue is the biggest failure of international diplomacy', said Dr Muhammad Khan, former HOD from the National Defence University in Islamabad. In his presentation, he stressed that Kashmir holds the key to peace and stability in the subcontinent, and provided detailed analysis of why bilateralism has not worked in its resolution since most of these talks 'had more expectations without results', therefore, he proposed that it is time to move towards a multilateral approach and diplomatic engagement. Deterioration in bilateral relations due to trust deficit has led to one-step forward and two steps backward. In fact, taking two steps back has also added many more issues such as the Siachen Glacier, water issues, and heavy defence expenditures. While Kashmir remained in cold storage till 1989, the current situation is alarming. Even though Kashmir has become complicated, it can be resolved through farsightedness and statesmanship, he said. He stressed that Indian obduracy has been the major cause of the Kashmir dispute remaining unresolved. Despite UN resolutions, international commitments and Indian commitments, India has remained a reluctant partner for normalization. Discussing why Kashmir remains an overshadowed global issue, he said it was mainly because the neutral observers and international media have had no access in the state, as India totally banned the movement of outsiders, who could have observed the HRV there since 1990. In his recommendations, he called for the projection of Kashmir issue as a humanitarian issue besides its political nature; visits of affected Kashmiri families to various international capitals; indigenous Kashmiri youth to take a lead in projection; global awareness about the Indian HR violations in IHK by Pakistani diplomatic mission around the globe; special Kashmir cells to work in selected Pakistani missions; and political leadership of Pakistan and AJK must be made to visit world's capitals for creating awareness on HR violations among global leadership.

Dr. Attaullah Wahidiyar, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Education from Kabul, Afghanistan in his heartfelt appeal to the audience and to South Asian governments stressed that in order to create space for future leadership, the blame game that Pakistan is a source of terror; India supports the Baloch; the NDS support the TTP, needs to be stopped. Support to and for proxies, Taliban for Pakistan; TTP for India; ISIS for US need to end. 'Let us stop propaganda wars because they benefit no one. Let us instead develop areas of common interest that benefit the masses in this region; cooperate strategically not tactically; and allow the immediate needs of our people to guide our national interest,' he proposed. Afghanistan should not only be seen as a problem but also an arena of incentives for connectivity; mineral resources; headwaters for practically every single South Asian neighbor. 'Afghanistan only uses 10% of its available water. We are in the midst of 3 billion people and we are ready for cooperative arrangements regarding water,' he shared. He insisted that Afghanistan does not want to be 'a battlefield for proxy wars; a space to become tested over; nor a buffer to be dominated. What we want is to become a model and platform of cooperation, dignity and prosperity. This can only happen regionally, not nationally.' For Pakistan, Afghanistan is the best market for developing business partnerships in the private sector, especially in the education, mining and logistics sectors.



Dr Manzoor Ahmad's presentation was delivered in absentia by Mr Tauqeer Hussain Sargana, Assistant Professor, Department of Politics & IR, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan. He outlined many critical questions such as whether economic liberalism and free trade would really bring peace and prosperity to South Asia or it will contribute to new conflicts and tensions. The audience was warned that India would drain existing industrial and investment resources from Pakistan as MNCs would be tempted to close down their productive facilities in Pakistan and enhance their production capabilities in India, a market far more attractive for foreign investment. Pakistan may lose a lot in terms of potential investment, revenues, and employment opportunities for its youth. His analysis of the current tense situation on the Line of Control was that India can even harm Pakistan economically and politically as well. The presenter shared how in 1948–49, India stopped water flow into rivers coming into Pakistan; in 1948–49, used, unsuccessfully, trade as a weapon to force Pakistan to devalue its currency; and currently, it is building scores of dams in IHK to use water as a weapon as it has contemplated recently after the Orhi incident. India has already threatened, downgrading of economic ties and revoking of MFN status quite recently and left the audience with an open-ended question about who will help India overcome this mindset.

Chair of the session Dr. Syed Rifaat Hussain, Professor, Government and Public Policy, School of Social Science and Humanities, National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan concluded that there are unprecedented levels of tension between India and Pakistan, making the South Asian region hostage. The power structure of South Asia is dominated by India by the virtue of its geography, size, military might, which gives it an unfair advantage and gives it the space to browbeat its neighbours. If India wants to be the leader of SA, then it must treat small countries in the region with respect and abandon its hegemonic designs. 'We need to learn to unlearn the habit of destabilizing each other,' he stressed.

‘Being born out of a Caesarian process, India and Pakistan have inherited the pangs of birth and never reconciled to strengthen peaceful coexistence. Seventy years of relations have at best been hot, with the tendency to raise the temperature to boiling hot, on flimsiest of grounds. The deep mistrust, with its roots in the pre-independence era, has only deepened as the state of relations has gotten more complicated over time. Unprovoked ceasefire violations by India with multiple objectives, Indian involvement in promoting terrorism and terror financing in Pakistan, use of Afghanistan’s soil against Pakistan, Indian pronouncements against Balochistan and CPEC and so on, are some of many reasons that bitter the relations’, according to Mr. Muhammad Nafees Zakaria, spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, Pakistan. He informed the audience that currently, since the extra-judicial killing of young Kashmiri leader, Burhan Muzaffar Wani, on 8 July 2016 and the subsequent blatant human rights violations around 150 people have been killed, over a thousand blinded, more than 16,000 injured and over 7,000 arrested with no news of their fate in Indian occupied Kashmir. This has sent Indo-Pak relations on a rollercoaster ride down a steep slope. The situation has gone from bad to worse with India showing no signs of lessening tensions. Constant anti-Pakistan statements at the political level are only vitiating the atmosphere further. ‘Pakistan has sentimental attachment to the Kashmir issue and we pursue a declared policy of extending diplomatic, political and moral support to the Kashmiris’ indigenous and peaceful movement for self-determination, whereas India sees Kashmir as a strategic asset. Pakistan believes that with bilateral mechanism not working at all, it is the international community’s responsibility, more so of the United Nations and UN Security Council Members, to counsel India for an immediate halt to the bloodshed,’ he concluded.

Dr. Severine Minot, Visiting Assistant Professor from Habib University, Karachi, questioned the term ‘major powers’ as being other nation states and proposed that major powers were more precisely stakeholders governing global finance and the military-industrial apparatus. These stakeholders exert tremendous power on all nation states, and in turn on the articulation of international policy, the establishment of development priorities and the configuration of international tensions and conflicts. Major Powers in the current politico-economic climate, said Dr Minot, constitute the stakeholders that have the power to influence the New World Order such as the United Nations, the UN Security Council, the World Trade Organization, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The New World Order requires both Pakistan and India to put their houses in order, and to move past the legacy of antagonism for achieving sustainable peace and cooperation through dialogue and compromise. Another way to achieve peace is through enormous financial pressures or even by force in the hands of Western powers—which remains an undesirable option, she stressed. ‘Russia and China must play a more active role in expediting and supervising a proper conciliation over Kashmir and other lingering border and territorial issues,’ offered Dr. Minot.

Dr. Shabir Ahmed, Associate Professor, Area Study Centre from Peshawar University in his presentation on ‘Prospective Role of Regional Organizations (SAARC and SCO)’ highlighted that SAARC has so far failed to address and settle the issue of Kashmir, however, SCO as a security organisation having vast experience of resolving border disputes can play a vital role in in this case and pave the way for regionalism in South Asia. ‘SCO can establish a permanent committee for mediation between Pakistan and India having representatives of both the parties along with Hurriyat leaders to resolve the Kashmir dispute through a compromised and negotiated settlement’, he suggested.

In the concluding session, HSF representative Mr Kritof’s thought piece was read out in absentia by their Programme Manager Mr Omer Ali. He shared that it is the task of governments to continuously give their citizens stability and awareness. It is an ever on-going task, and one should never commit the mistake of resting on one’s laurels, but continue to reach greater heights. ‘The pursuit of stability and cooperation is even more important and we should not want to go back to the dark times. As states and citizens, one does not necessarily need to agree on every single account with one another, but one needs to listen to the other carefully and jointly develop approaches while doing it peacefully and with mutual respect,’ he said.

Closing the two-day Conference, Ambassador (Retd.) Sohail Amin, President of IPRI, called on South Asian governments to resolve their longstanding territorial/political disputes on priority basis by using bilateral and multilateral institutional frameworks. ‘While there are several constraints on developing cooperation, the incentives are far greater.’ The role of regional organisations, such as SAARC, Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), with overlapping membership of India and Pakistan, can be significant. ‘Through these platforms, the common threats and challenges can be addressed and preventive strategies worked out. At the multilateral level, the major powers can also contribute positively in harnessing peace and cooperation in South Asia through mediation and facilitation’, he recommended.

