

Jammu & Kashmir – A Way Forward

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1. In my view there is no stalemate. There is tendency to put too much emphasis on global aspects of the Kashmir issue and not enough about what really drives the major policy decisions related to Jammu & Kashmir (“Kashmir” for brevity) which have more to do with understanding the polity of India
2. Indian politics is very complicated and the strategic decision making is even more complex. But there is a method in the madness which Kashmiri politicians and analysts typically choose to ignore at their own peril.
3. The new political architecture creating JKUT was not a two-day change over in August 2019, but culmination of a 5-year effort of careful political and security analysis, planning and execution that was initiated as far back as in 2014.
4. But why was the Statehood taken away? That goes beyond the Article 370 and 35A. Actually, that is the crux of the problem now. I have been saying since 2010 that Kashmir will lose its Statehood once the GOI wises up. The security, finances, and the law & order situation in the valley was simply unsustainable.
5. **Show 4 viewgraphs from 2012**
 - Other states have ruling parties in power, we have a “ruling class” in power
 - New Delhi policies were inconsistent and mostly knee-jerk reactions
 - The political-security situation in the State was unstable and unsustainable for a long time, but no one in Delhi could figure out how to break the jinx
6. What finally forced the decision was when a clear link between the political class and anti-national elements was established by the Indian security agencies That by itself would not have been a pivotal point had it not been for the man who led BJP to victory in May 2014. (BJP/ABV 1998-2004)
 - The new PM wanted a real change in Kashmir for the better and not just a symbolic makeover. And he wanted it to be done constitutionally
 - Arun Jaitley (not Raj Nath Singh, HM) was put in charge
 - Focus of the Jaitley strategic team sharpened after the J&K State Assembly Elections (December 2014)
 - New Strategy (Constitutional and Law & Order changes) were implemented with success on 5-6 August 2019. Selective incarceration of relatively few political operatives, coupled with lack of any bloodshed following the change proved the soundness of the strategy
7. The paradigm has shifted, and so where do we go from here
8. Start with ground realities
 - J&K is a fully integrated part of India

- Pakistan is moving towards granting provincial status to Gilgit-Baltistan, with blessings from Dr. Karan Singh
 - DGMO's agreed to ceasefire across the entire border between the two countries that is holding, and both countries are engaged in behind-the-scenes dialogue (many reasons)
 - The LOC is now a de-facto international border, reinforced by the USA
 - There is no religious diversity in the valley and Kashmir will never be itself without Kashmiri Pandits (KP's). Kashmiriyat without Pandits is a farce
 - BOTTOM LINE FOR KASHMIRIS: Let India and Pakistan address their irritants bilaterally, and let us productively focus our energies entirely on domestic politics, religious equity and diversity, and quality of life issues within the UT
9. A Way Forward:
- Pursue steps that will give hope and justice to people of Jammu and Kashmir, including minorities, ensuring full rights of UT subjects as enshrined in the Indian Constitution
 - Bringing peace, prosperity, religious plurality, and betterment in lives for the people should begin with a serious commitment to attract Pandits back to the valley. They have made their choice clear – they will only return to a new township that has new infrastructure, facilities and housing, and is open to all faiths – a religiously diverse Smart City
10. Restoration of Statehood:
- Not as easy as it sounds. UT Assembly Elections will take place after Delimitation is completed, but restoration of Statehood will happen only on its own merits after satisfying various decision-making check-lists within GOI.
 - Challenges to national security, good governance, and religious diversity (return of Pandits) have to be addressed and resolved to a large measure
 - The plan can be accelerated if Kashmiri politicians and the local civil society recognize and address various deficiencies and lapses in the past, and work collectively to strengthen institutions, religious diversity, and security in UT
 - That will be the primary challenge facing the first elected CM and his/her Cabinet in the JKUT.
 - So, my advice to the intellectuals in Kashmir is to end the polemics of only complaining about problems and become part of the solution

I will close with a famous and a historical quote:

“Government is not reason; it is not eloquent; it is force. Like fire, it is dangerous servant and a fearful master.”

Gorge Washington, the first President of the oldest democracy in the world, commenting on the power of the federal government.

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