

Towards the Tashkent Declaration

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ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of September 1965 Indo – Pakistan the tragic happenings in the Indian occupied Kashmir were having repercussions on the Pakistan side of the Kashmir border. A news report was published in *Dawn*, quoting a radio programme *Sada-i-Kashmir* that the Indian Government was thinking of dividing the valley of Jammu and Kashmir into three parts on linguistic basis. In addition to this, the police had started taking punitive action against the students who refused to sign a prescribed form conforming their loyalty to India with the promise to take active part in Congress activities. To show solidarity to the Kashmiri brethren, Mr. Bhutto called a press conference in Rawalpindi on 11 November 1965 and criticized the Security Council for its slow progress in solving the Kashmir issue. An analysis of Pakistan's domestic atmosphere in the post-war period reveals that people felt betrayed psychologically and emotionally by the United States and were disillusioned with Pakistan's adherence to the Western sponsored pacts. In the meanwhile the Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin invited President Ayub and Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri to meet each other on Soviet territory to reach an agreement on the restoration of peace between India and Pakistan. The Sino – Pakistan axis was the underlying cause, which compelled the USSR to play the role of a peace-maker and Shastri immediately accepted the offer. The central argument of this study is that the US and the Soviet policies towards the regional arrangements in South Asia broadly coincided and resulted in Tashkent Declaration. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then foreign minister in Ayub's Cabinet differed with the contents of the declaration and sought to include a commitment to finalize a solution of the Kashmir problem. But it was clear that Bhutto's role and effectiveness was limited. Setting aside his exchanges with Swaran Singh, his talks with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko were also far from friendly. Ironically Ayub had to seek the help of the Soviet premier to overcome the obstacles to agreement imposed by his own Foreign Minister.

The report of *Newsweek* correspondent on Kashmir refugee camps in Pakistan in October 1965 revealed Indian atrocities against Muslims in Indian held Jammu and Kashmir. The whole Indian delegation at that boycotted the UN Security Council session.¹ Also, *Washington Star*, in its issue of 1 September 1965 commented on Indian atrocities in the following words:

“Indian officials claim Pakistani infiltrators started fire, both extremists and moderate Kashmiris and the victims themselves interviewed while digging in the smoldering wreckage claim the Indian army was responsible (Dawn, 1965, December 23).”

Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then foreign minister in a press conference expressed that Pakistan's relations with the United States had run into certain

difficulties. He stated Pakistan's desire to restore good relations with Washington, but not at the expense of the fundamental interests of Pakistan (Pakistan Times, 1965, November 12).

However, the Ayub government was not fully sensitized to the public sentiment, when President Ayub Khan left for the United States on 10 December 1965 for his talks with President Johnson. On his way to the United States, he stopped at London to meet the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson. The then Information Secretary, Altaf Gauhar has described Ayub's itinerary after his arrival in the United States:

After the informalities, the delegation was conducted into the White House and Johnson took Ayub by his arm and led him to a room towards the far end of the corridor... After a while George Ball, the United States' Secretary of State said, "Gentlemen! I am used to waiting for the President. It is most likely they will join us much before 12 O'clock..." That was around 10.30 in the morning. The two Presidents walked into the room a little after 1 O'clock. We are very good friends and there is no one whom I admire more than Ayub and I deeply cherish his friendship.... Ayub promised that Pakistan would use its influence for moderation and invited Johnson to visit Pakistan. As Ayub finished Bhutto nudged the Information Secretary and whispered he has given in (Gauhar, 1993:376).

The quotation from Gauhar reflects Bhutto's concern over American response to Kashmir and Pakistan's stance on the issue. Probably Bhutto had in mind that during the talks with President Johnson, Ayub would explore the possibility of using the American pressure to induce India to negotiate Kashmir's future on the terms laid down by Pakistan.

In fact, on 4 September 1965, Kosygin had written identical letters to India and Pakistan stating, "The parties should enter negotiations for the peaceful settlement of the differences that have arisen between them" (Asian Recorders, 1965, October 7, pp 6696-97). President Johnson wanted the Indo – Pakistani talks to succeed because only then the two countries would contribute to the establishment of peace, which the United States had desired as the only guarantee against the Chinese in the Area. However, it is significant to note that in the Joint Communiqué issued after the US - Pakistan talks, there was no reference to the forthcoming Indo – Pakistan talks, as it was earlier promised by USA (Times of India, 1965, December 7).² The Soviet overtures towards Pakistan reflected the growing spirit of détente with the US and expanding conflict with China. Ayub Khan had already visited Moscow in the first week of April 1965. Even before going to the United States, Foreign Minister Bhutto and President Ayub Khan had both visited Moscow on 23 November 1965. Mr. Bhutto went to Moscow not because he suddenly found a change in the Soviet attitude towards Pakistan, but to stir up a feeling of rivalry in Washington and thus increase the price for his coming back to the latter's fold (Ayub, 1971:235).

By this mission, Ayub also wanted to convey a message to the world that by giving up dependence on the United States Pakistan had not become a satellite of China. Accepting the Soviet offer for mediation in Indo – Pakistan conflict and agreeing to meet Indian leadership in Tashkent was equally used to appease the Pakistan's leftist opposition groups. The then Foreign Minister, Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto advised President Ayub not to accept anything less than an agreement on the holding of plebiscite in Kashmir. However, after turning down Bhutto's advice to the cautious and not to concede too much, President Ayub decided to sign the Tashkent Declaration as drafted by the Soviet Union. Bhutto asked the President to permit him to publicly disassociate himself from the agreement at Tashkent. The President, however, refused to accept his resignation at that time and ordered him to remain at his post (Ziring, 1958:66).

On the other hand, Indians were determined not to discuss Kashmir at the conference. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto at the end of his talks with the Soviet leaders before the Tashkent Conference on 23 November 1965 told a press conference that President Ayub would discuss with the Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri the whole gamut of Indo – Pakistani relations (The Hindustan Times, 1965, November 26). In the backdrop of this while addressing a public meeting at Roorkee, Prime Minister Shastri declared that the question of Kashmir could not be discussed at Tashkent. Kashmir was an integral part of India and its sovereignty and territorial integrity would be safeguarded at all costs (Ibid).

Before the Tashkent conference, the Indian government unleashed a diplomatic offensive against Pakistan. It even drew the Soviet government's attention to what it considered to be misuse of military equipment supplied to Indonesia by the Soviet Union for self-defence purposes, which was also non-transferable without specific Soviet approval. The British newspapers reported that the Chinese MIG 19s had been seen flying in Pakistan and China had given Pakistan a credit worth sixty-seven million dollars to buy armaments. The Indians were highlighting the significance of Chinese assistance to Pakistan and were using it as a counterweight to influence the Soviet thinking in the context of Pakistan's efforts to lead for the settlement of the Kashmir dispute at Tashkent (New York Times, 1965, December 30).³ As far as the agenda of the conference is concerned, there was no specific agenda for talks with India at Tashkent. It was expected that it might last a week to ten days and was to accomplish little except perhaps to open up some new avenues for exploration.

Prime Minister Shastri and President Ayub Khan reached Tashkent on 3 January 1966 with six members of the delegation. On the flight to Tashkent, Major General Rafi asked President Ayub, "Would the country accept whatever settlement does take place?" President Ayub replied, "Since I am the President, I have taken this decision. If our people do not like it, they can choose their own leaders" (Raza, 1984:285).⁴

The Pakistani delegation comprised Foreign Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Information Minister Khawaja Shahabuddin – Pakistani High Commissioner in

India Arshad Hussain, Foreign Secretary Aziz Ahmed, PIA Chief, Air Marshal Asghar Khan and Information Secretary Altaf Gauhar. The Indian delegation comprised the External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh, Defence Minister Y.B. Chavan, Secretary Ministry of External Affairs C.S. Jha and Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union T.N. Kaul.

According to a commentary on the composition of the Pakistani delegation by the *Patriot*, both the pro - China and pro-US lobbies were being represented by Bhutto. Shahabuddin was president's own man. Altaf Gauhar was reputedly a stalwart of the US lobby and Aziz Ahmed of the pro-China section. Arshad Hussein and Asghar Khan represented Ayubbist component of the administration.

On the first day of the Tashkent conference, there was an opening speech by Ayub Khan and the tone of the speech was so conciliatory that Ayub even did not mention the word "Kashmir" – definitely an act of commission, which was appreciated by the Indian press and criticized by the President's political opponents in Pakistan. While commenting on this aspect of Ayub Khan's speech, the *Patriot* commented in its editorial:

So it is a hopeful sign that the President of Pakistan did not think it prudent to talk of Kashmir as such and laid considerable emphasis on peaceful discussions if Pakistan had realized that war will not get its leaders what they want" (The Patriot, 1966 January).⁵

Further highlighting Ayub's inaugural address, C.S. Jha described Ayub's speech as constructive. Nevertheless on the same evening, a Pakistani spokesman made it clear that if the problem of Jammu and Kashmir, which is root cause of the trouble, was not settled then the Indo – Pakistan relations would collapse (The Statesman, 1966, January 5). Mr. Bhutto was the leading spokesman of this school of thought. He tried to convince Ayub to have an agenda for the conference. Altaf Gauhar has described the whole incident in these words:

Ayub's impression was that there was no possibility of Shastri yielding on Kashmir dispute. When Ayub was relating how Shastri kept saying that he was answerable to the people, Bhutto interrupted him and said quite sharply, but you too are answerable to the people. You do not have a heavenly mandate that was the first indication of Bhutto's unhappiness with the way negotiations were proceeding (Gauhar, 1993:382).

Due to Bhutto's firm stand and insistence on agenda, Ayub Khan had to convince Kosygin to discuss Kashmir. Z.A. Bhutto later on recalled:

Mr. Chavan the Defence minister said to me 'You must settle Kashmir here and now, there must be a final settlement. I said, 'Mr. Chavan, if you expect me to remove the ashtray from here to there, I would not do it. if Kashmir has to be settled it has to be settled on our terms'. Then he went to Mr. Shastri and Mr. Shastri went to Mr. Kosygin, Mr. Kosygin went to

Ayub Khan and they all said, ‘you have a very difficult Foreign Minister and unless and until he is removed from the negotiations, there can be no progress’ (Bhutto, 1976:49).

Therefore, Kosygin pressed Shastri to discuss the Kashmir problem because President Ayub also had to mollify public opinion in Kashmir. Thus, it was insisted by Pakistani delegation to have an agenda. India wanted to continue without the agenda, while Pakistan preferred having a specific list of subjects to be discussed. According to observers of the conference, Bhutto, “cut a sorry picture by constantly fidgeting in his chair and looking blankly at the ceiling, while Kosygin made an appeal for amity between the two countries. At one stage Bhutto lighted a cigarette leaned back on his chair – a posture which brought a hard look from President Ayub Khan towards his foreign minister” (Indian Express, 1966, January 6).

During the deliberations of the Tashkent Conference, parleys continued as Pakistani representatives asserted that they would sign a no-war pact, as insisted by India, only if there was some mechanism to discuss the Kashmir issue. This continued till the third day. It was indicated on the fifth day that the talks had reached a very delicate stage. The tense situation was reflected in the sudden hardening of Pakistani attitude to the Indian concern regarding the Chinese note to India, which had given a clear warning to India to be ready for a growing tension and an unrelenting military pressure all along the Indo – China border during the Indo – Pak 1965 war (Asian Recorders, 1966 January 29).

The situation had deteriorated to such an extent that on the sixth day of conference, there were banner headlines in all newspapers that the summit was going to flop. Newspapers gauged the mood of the two sides and speculated that unless a miracle happens, the Tashkent conference should end tomorrow on an unmistakable note of disagreement between Prime Minister Shastri and President Ayub Khan. However, the tables were turned on the following day. After the virtual breakdown of the talks, Prime Minister Shastri and President Ayub Khan dramatically reached on an agreement. They signed a nine-point declaration. In fact, the success of the summit depended on the last minute attempts of the Soviet premier. *The Washington Post* acknowledged the positive role of Kosygin in making the Tashkent conference a success in these words:

“Kosygin was able to do what neither Wilson nor Johnson could have done. Now the Soviet Union can talk with authority about peace in Asia, because it is a power with an Asian Frontier of thousands of miles (Lipman, 1966).

It is not difficult to understand that the success of the conference depended on behind the scene influence, pressures and tacit diplomacy. As mentioned earlier, inside story had been narrated by the then Information Secretary Altaf Gauhar in his book on Ayub. Altaf Gauhar mentioned his visit to Ayub’s villa in Tashkent on the morning of 9th January and found out that Ayub and Kosygin had gone somewhere outside Tashkent. A meeting was fixed for Ayub with Kosygin on the

evening of 9th January. The meeting between Ayub and Kosygin sealed the fate of the Tashkent conference.

According to Gauhar, when Ayub came back he invited him for a walk in the beautiful lawns around the villa and Ayub told him that Kosygin had taken him to see an aircraft factory and shown him how many aircrafts were produced there every month. Ayub Khan also told that Kosygin mentioned the total number of factories in the Soviet Union and the total number of aircrafts, tanks and guns that were manufactured by Soviet Union every year. Kosygin had told Ayub, according to Gauhar that for third world countries war was no longer a mean of resolving their disputes. Ayub was deeply impressed by what Kosygin told him (Gauhar, 1993: 386-387).

The Tashkent Declaration was signed by India and Pakistan on 10 January 1966. In lieu of the "no war declaration" sought by India, there was a "no force" commitment proposed by Ayub. About the issue of Kashmir the declaration merely stated that "Jammu and Kashmir were discussed and each side set forth its respective positions" (*The Times*, 1966, January 11). The Tashkent Declaration, which read as following.

"The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan, having met at Tashkent and having discussed the existing relations between India and Pakistan, hereby declare their firm resolve to restore normal and peaceful relations between their countries and to promote understanding and friendly relations between their people. They consider the attainment of these objectives of vital importance for the welfare of 600,000,000." (Ziring, op. cit.).

The details of the agreement were as follows:

1. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan agree that both sides will exert all efforts to create good neighbouring relations between India and Pakistan in accordance with the UN charter. They reaffirm their obligation under the Charter not to have recourse to force and to settle their disputes through peaceful means. They considered that the interest of peace in their region and particularly in the Indo – Pakistan sub-continent and indeed the interests of the people of India and Pakistan were not served by the continuance of tension between the two countries. It was against this background that Jammu and Kashmir was discussed and each of the sides set forth its respective position. While speaking in the National Assembly on 16 March 1966, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave critical appreciation of all the articles of Tashkent Declaration. First of all, he distinguished between a declaration of intent and a contractual agreement. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto regarded it as a declaration of intent. He stated:

Article-I says that in the background of tension the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir was discussed... and it was in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

Therefore, we do not enter into a new commitment. We are already a member of the United Nations – both India and Pakistan... This is a commitment, which is against India because in its confirmation it has committed itself to settle the Jammu and Kashmir dispute according to International Law and Treaties (Bhuttos' speech in the National Assembly on 16 March 1966).

2. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that all armed personnel of the two countries shall be withdrawn, not later than 25th February 1966 to the position, they held prior to 5th August and both sides shall observe the ceasefire terms on the ceasefire line.
3. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that relations between India and Pakistan shall be based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other.
4. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agree that both sides will discourage any propaganda directed against the other country and will encourage propaganda, which promote the development of friendly relations between the two countries.
5. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agree that the High Commission of India to Pakistan and High of Pakistan to India will return to their posts and the normal functioning of the diplomatic missions of both countries will be restored. Both the Governments shall observe the Vienna Convention of 1961 on diplomatic relationship.
6. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed to consider measures towards the restoration of economic and trade relations, communication, as well as cultural exchange between India and Pakistan and to take measures to implement the existing agreements between India and Pakistan.
7. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that they will give instructions to their respective authorities to carry out the repatriation of prisoners of war (POW).
8. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that both sides will continue discussion on questions relating to the problems of refugees and eviction of illegal immigrants. They also agreed that both sides will create conditions which will prevent the exodus of people.
9. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that both the sides will continue meetings at the highest and at other levels on matters of direct concern to both countries. Both sides have recognized the need to set up joint (Indo-Pakistan bodies, which will report to their Governments in order to decide what further steps should be taken.

“On 9 January, when we were discussing the machinery I put a direct question to Premier Kosygin”. Thus narrated Z.A. Bhutto, “in this question of machinery you must know that as far as we are concerned we can only accept it, if Jammu and Kashmir is made the main dispute for determination by this machinery”, and according to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Kosygin stated: “Jammu and Kashmir is disputed and naturally you have a right to bring this up under Article 9.”

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan recorded their feelings of deep appreciation and gratitude to the leaders of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Government and personally to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of USSR for their constructive, friendly and noble part in bringing about the present meeting, which has resulted in mutually satisfactory results.

They also expressed to the Government and the friendly people of Uzbekistan on their sincere gratitude for their overwhelming reception and generous hospitality. They invited the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of USSR to witness this declaration (Ibid).⁶ The Indian press welcomed the Tashkent Declaration. *The Times of India* felt that there was no reference to negotiation on the Kashmir issue although a discussion on all matters of direct concern to both the Governments was provided through the proposed joint India – Pakistan bodies (Times of India, January, 1966).

Asghar Khan narrated his impression of the Declaration in the following words:

“The Indians were jubilant and smiling. Tashkent Declaration was for Pakistan a statement of surrender. The Indians were all over the room shaking any hand that they could grasp. It was as if India had defeated Pakistan in hockey at the Olympic” (Khan, 1978:120-121).

The people of Pakistan and political parties strongly reacted against the Tashkent agreement, as it was predicted. It is interesting to look at the statements of various political leaders on Tashkent agreement. Shaukat Hayat Khan, General Secretary of the Muslim League said, “The feelings and sentiments of the people of Pakistan and Kashmir have not been taken into account in the Tashkent Declaration (The Statesman, 1966, January 18).

Moreover, Ayub’s reluctance to explain the reasons for accepting the Tashkent Declaration was more than the aroused Pakistan could tolerate. Henceforth, they precipitated the agitation movement against Ayub. People from every walk of life participated in the agitation. Women raised the slogans: “Give us back our husbands, fathers and brothers”. In Lahore the students marched to Governor House from the Regal Chowk and the Cheering Cross. The police arrested and tried to crush the unrest. However, the public mood was quite hostile. For them, the President had sold Kashmir to the Hindu babus and warlords, not in the battlefield, but on the negotiating table. The unrest in Karachi was equally strong and Larence Ziring aptly evaluates the politics of agitation in Ayub era in the following manner.

... Human torrents swept through Karachi’s principal thorough fare. On arriving at the US Information Services

Library, they proceeded to smash the windows before setting the buildings ablaze. Neither this outburst of popular disfavour nor the lesser ones in Lahore and Rawalpindi caused the President to reconsider his decision (Ziring. op. cit.).

However, Ayub broke his self-imposed silence with a mid-day radio address to the nation on 14 January 1966. Taking note of the popular outbursts against his policies, the President remarked in his speech. "There may be some amongst us, who will take advantage of your feelings and will try to mislead you". Clearly, the President held the view that the demonstrations were the work of his political antagonists and especially his Foreign Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

Notes

1. Text of the speech made by Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in the Security Council meeting held on 25 October 1965, as quoted in Deora, M.S. & Grover, R. (Eds.). (1993). *Documents on Pakistan and International Conflict*, (16) 263 – 279. New Delhi: Annual Publications,
2. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, "On Indo – Pakistan Speech in the National Assembly" 16 March 1966. *Politics of the People*, ed. Hamid Jalal and Khalid Hassan, vol. 1 "Reshaping Foreign Policy 1948 – 1966" op. cit., p.300. Subsequent quotations are from the same speech, pp. 301 – 303.
3. Also see *Washington Post*. (1966, January 3)
4. Also see *The Statesman*. (1966, January 4)
5. Also see Chaudhry, G.W. (1975). *India Pakistan Bangladesh and the Major Powers*. New York: The Free Press.
6. In the Indian document of the Tashkent Declaration the relevant paragraphs began, "The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan", as above, in the Pakistan documents these paragraphs begin, "The President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India", otherwise the texts were identical.

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Biographical Note

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The famous Tashkent Declaration, mediated by the Soviet Union, was signed 50 years ago, ending hostilities between India and Pakistan. Despite this tragic event, the Tashkent Declaration was considered a great success of Soviet diplomacy in the resolution of international conflicts. The Declaration did not go down well in India. The agreement was endorsed by the Indian National Congress Party and the Communist Party of India, but opposition parties said the peace treaty had demoralized the country. The Tashkent Declaration did not lead to the resolution of the crisis, says Peter Topychkanov. Peace between the two countries lasted six years. India on Monday expressed readiness to work towards implementing the Tashkent Declaration of March 1966 that called for direct talks with the Taliban without preconditions. Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev during his official speech delivered here suggested a political dialogue between Kabul and the fighters to put an end to the conflict in Afghanistan and to restore regional stability. In a joint statement at the end of official discussions with the visiting Uzbek leader, both sides pledged to work on the goals of the Tashkent Declaration. They expressed full readiness to a close partnership. Our flagship report maps health trends, charts progress towards achieving health goals and provides an advance base for health policy. Highlights. Full report. Health topics Communicable diseases Vector-borne and parasitic diseases Publications Tashkent Declaration: The Move from Malaria Control to Elimination. Vector-borne and parasitic diseases. News. But the Tashkent declaration was a negation of the same. This declaration shocked them very much and the people started saying that Pakistan had won the war in the battlefield but lost the war on the table. Tashkent declaration greatly damaged the Ayub Khan's personality and it became one of the main reasons of his downfall. In India the people also criticized this agreement because the President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India did not sign any pact on Guerrilla warfare in Kashmir. After the day of this declaration the Prime Minister Lal Bahadur died because of sudden heart attack. The Tashkent Declaration was a peace agreement signed between India and Pakistan to resolve the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 (August 5, 1965 – September 23rd 1965). It was signed at Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan which in turn was a part of one of the republics that comprised of the USSR. The main aim was to restore economic and diplomatic relationships in the respective countries and to keep away from each other's internal and external affairs, and to work towards the progress of bilateral relations. Background. There would be an orderly transfer of prisoners of war, and the two leaders would work towards improving bilateral relations. The agreement was reached to restore trade and economic relations as before. The outcome of the Tashkent Declaration.