

February 16, 1957

Premier Zhou Enlai Receives Pakistani Ambassador Ahmed, and Accepts Letter From Pakistani Premier Suhrawady Explaining the Kashmir Issue

Citation:

"Premier Zhou Enlai Receives Pakistani Ambassador Ahmed, and Accepts Letter From Pakistani Premier Suhrawady Explaining the Kashmir Issue", February 16, 1957, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 105-00351-02. Obtained by Sulmaan Khan and translated by Anna Beth Keim. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/112749>

Summary:

Zhou Enlai and Pakistani Ambassador Ahmed discuss the Indian-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir, the likelihood of a military conflict in the region, and the possibility that such a conflict could be used by the United States to its advantage.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

[Sultanuddin] Ahmad: On the orders of [my] government, I express [our] gratitude to Your Excellency, and thank you for your attention to the Kashmir issue. I now pass on a letter from the government. (Document attached)

(Premier Zhou opens and reads the letter on the spot)

Premier Zhou [Enlai]: What new circumstances [have emerged] in the Kashmir issue lately?

Ahmad: I am sure Your Excellency already knows of the resolution that the [United Nations] Security Council passed before. It is said that the Security Council is considering a new resolution today, which will send the Security Council Chairman in person to the regions of Kashmir separately occupied by Pakistan and India for an on-site investigation, and to seek a way to resolve this issue.

Zhou: When I was in Ceylon [from 31 January through 5 February 1957], Ceylon's governor-general and premier expressed great concern over the Kashmir issue. They were worried that there would be conflicts among Southeast Asian countries. [They worried] especially that a regional conflict between India and Pakistan would be brought on by the Kashmir issue. And that this kind of conflict could expand. When I was in India and Pakistan, the premiers of both countries told me that they would not strike first. The Pakistani premier said to me, Pakistan has started arming itself because it fears an Indian offensive, especially a future offensive. The Indian premier promised that India would not start attacking Pakistan first, but was worried that after Pakistan armed itself, it would instigate a conflict. One can see from this that the two sides of India and Pakistan do not trust each other. At the time I was mediator for the two sides. We guess that there will not be a major conflict, but there may be small conflicts. The two countries of China and Ceylon are both very concerned over the Kashmir issue; thus, the two sides' [China and Ceylon's] joint statement calls on the two countries of India and Pakistan to further strive for a peaceful resolution to the Kashmir issue. At present, does Your Excellency Mr. Ambassador think there is a danger of conflict breaking out over the Kashmir issue?

Ahmad: As I see it, there is not in fact this danger at present. Neither side has marshaled troops at the border. Pakistan would never attack India first, because we would be defeated. Not only is Pakistan weaker than India in manpower and financial resources, [but] as soon as war broke out our entire economic system would be ruined, and there wouldn't be enough food. Thus, as soon as there were conflict, the people would not only die from the war, they would also die from starvation and poverty.

Zhou: Now Pakistan is uneasy about India, and thus has sped up [the process of] arming [itself]; the burden of its military expenditure is very heavy—it has put vast numbers of troops on the border. India, too, is quite anxious about Pakistan starting to arm itself; thus it, too, has increased its military expenditure. Recently India spent over 20 million British pounds buying a jet bomber from Britain. In this way the two countries' construction [illegible] have been reduced; the two countries have put vast numbers of armed forces at the border. Imperialists will make use of the disagreements to instigate a conflict. Now the United Nations is once more getting involved; this is very dangerous. Nothing good comes from United Nations involvement; thus, we are worried about the possibility of a local conflict. Imperialists want to make use of discord between Asian countries to instigate conflicts and profit from them; they are happy to see a conflict in Kashmir. Asian countries hope the situation can be stabilized, reducing military expenditure and engaging more in the work of construction. Our worries are not completely baseless, so we hope and call for the two friendly countries of India and Pakistan to become reconciled.

Ahmad: The Pakistani prime minister has proposed as many as seven or eight times that Pakistan and India negotiate directly, but has always been refused by India. We

have already lost heart; there is nothing else to be done, [we] can only go to the United Nations.

Zhou: While in Pakistan, I already spoke to your president and premier about the negative consequences of going to the United Nations—the United States will make use of that, and the United States will want to colonize Kashmir. That result would be even worse than [what's happening] now; neither India nor Pakistan could gain anything from it.

Ahmad: It is impossible for the United States to get rid of India and Pakistan and enter Kashmir. We can demand that the Americans not be allowed to join the United Nations Emergency Force [UNEF].

Zhou: Even if the Americans don't join, [the United States] can have its agents join. Isn't that the case with the UNEF in Turkey today? Right now the Eisenhower-ists are trying to expand; the United States very obviously wants to take the place of Britain and France.

Ahmad: The Kashmir situation is different from that of the Middle East; although we accept American aid, we are not influenced by it at all. For example, the premiers of the two countries of China and Pakistan visiting each other—this is something the United States does not like, but our premier still came to China to visit. [He] also invited Your Excellency to Pakistan to visit.

Zhou: I acknowledge that Pakistan's president, premier and government are friendly to China; we are also [friendly]. What we would like to know now is whether Your Excellency thinks there is a possibility that conflict will break out in Kashmir and be made use of by foreign countries?

Ahmad: If armed conflict broke out in Kashmir, then each side would want victory and would request aid from a major power; it is only this that would lead to the problem of foreign forces infiltrating Kashmir. For the past seven or more years, we have kept calling for a peaceful resolution, but with absolutely no result. My predecessor, Ambassador Raza, talked about this issue several times with Deputy [Foreign] Minister Zhang Hanfu. When the Russians [visiting] India issued remarks about Kashmir, I also brought this issue up with Your Excellency; at the time you stated that you wanted to do some research.

When our premier visited China, you once promised to convey our point of view to [Jawaharlal] Nehru; later, when you came to Pakistan, our premier further asked you, what exactly is Pakistan to do? Nothing came of all this. As one in charge of a major Asian power, Your Excellency shows insufficient enthusiasm about resolving this issue and should take responsibility. During the Indo-Pakistani partition in 1947, we suggested that Pakistan and India resolve the Kashmir issue through direct negotiations, but India refused. We further suggested that the two countries directly supervise a referendum, and India also refused. Then, we made the further suggestion that the two sides together raise the issue with the [United Nations] Security Council, and India refused once again. The result was that India later submitted the issue to the United Nations on its own. This proves that it was not our original intention to raise the issue with the United Nations; it is only now that all courses of action have been exhausted that we have raised the issue with the United Nations.

Zhou: Now is not the time to debate historical facts, but to face the current circumstances. First of all, I want to understand whether there is a danger, in the current circumstances, of a conflict occurring. If there is this danger, that is very disadvantageous. The two countries of Pakistan and India are sister countries; if a

conflict occurs, it is not only disadvantageous to the two countries, it is also disadvantageous to the peace of Asia. This is the shared opinion of Asia's anti-colonialist countries.

Ahmad: It is necessary to talk about the past, because it is only in this way that India's stance can be ascertained. The reason we are asking the United Nations to take measures is that [we] are hopeless. At the 1954 Colombo Conference, our premier wanted to issue a statement about Kashmir; at that time, Nehru said that if the Pakistani premier issued such a statement he would rip it to shreds. Because of this, other countries also did not let our premier issue the statement. This is something we cannot forget. In 1953, the Asian Socialist Party Conference was held in Burma; at that time, the Conference set up a three-person committee, with [Premier of Burma] Ba Swe as chairman along with one Pakistani and one Indian committee member. The three-person committee decided to go to Kashmir to do on-site research and seek a method of resolution. For four years, Ba Swe has made the effort seven or eight times to go to the India-occupied area of Kashmir, but India will not provide a visa. At present, China is the number one power in Asia and Africa; it is only China whose advice India will still consider, and we have always felt that the Chinese government and people are friendly to Pakistan.

Zhou: In the ten-day course of [my] visit to Pakistan, everyday there were people talking to me about Kashmir's history. In the past I had researched this matter very little, and I was very willing to know some more historical facts; but [let] us first let go of historical facts for the moment and discuss the current issues. I want first of all to know if there is currently a possibility that conflict will occur.

Ahmad: Before all courses of action have been exhausted, Pakistan will never consider attacking India first. But if India first instigates a conflict (which is perfectly possible), we will certainly firmly resist.

Zhou: In the event that all courses of action are exhausted and the issue still cannot be resolved, does Pakistan plan to use armed force? This is the point Ceylon's premier and I are worried about.

Ahmad: I cannot state my government's attitude any more clearly. I am deeply convinced that before all efforts made through the United Nations fail, before the United Nations announces there is no way to resolve the Kashmir issue, we will never use armed force.

Zhou: We do not approve of submitting issues to the United Nations. I once spoke to your foreign minister about this when I was in Peshawar. Don't speak to us of United Nations issues; as soon as the United Nations is mentioned, it provokes us. We have nothing to do with the United Nations; we are averse to the United Nations organization (not to its charter). I have also spoken about this point with your ambassador to the Soviet Union. At the United Nations you supported Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek], and Jiang Jieshi supported you. Of course, this point did not at all make our two countries unfriendly; we still have always been friendly to Pakistan. [You] should have patience in seeking to resolve the Kashmir issue; haven't we already waited for seven or eight years on the Taiwan issue?

Ahmad: The Taiwan issue and the Kashmir issue are different. We hold that Taiwan is a part of China, and that this issue will eventually resolve itself. But the Kashmir issue is a point of contention between two independent countries.

Zhou: Of course the Taiwan issue and the Kashmir issue are different in nature. We have always hoped that the two countries of Pakistan and India can peacefully resolve the Kashmir issue; this is not only advantageous to both sides, it is also

advantageous to Asian and world peace.

Ahmad: There is also the matter of the Ceylon premier's letter to our premier, in which he said he also wanted to write a letter on the Kashmir issue to give other countries in the Colombo and Bandung conferences. As we understand it, the letters he gave to some countries' premiers advised that Pakistan and India conduct direct negotiations now.

Zhou: We only received a duplicate of the Ceylon premier's letter. We can't know the contents of [those] he gave to the premiers of other countries. As to the issue of direct negotiations between Pakistan and India, the Ceylon premier never raised this issue when we talked; it was in fact I who brought up this issue in our talks.