

# **A study of Kashmir Question in the foreign policy of India: An Analysis**

**Sonika Kadian**

*Research Scholar*

*Department of Political Science, Baba Mastnath University Rohtak, Haryana, India*

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## **Abstract**

The word Kashmir which had previously described as “Heaven on the Earth” has now become a synonymous with death, turmoil, destruction and genocide in India, South Asia as well as in the world. Kashmir questions is an Atomic Flash. Point between two of South Asia’s Enemy Countries, India and Pakistan; India and Pakistan, Both Atomic Powers have several times engaged in fighting over the Kashmir Region Utmost Kashmiris, On the other hand have been fighting for their Right of Freedom recognized by the UN for many Decades The Promise made by the first Indian Prime Minister, Jawharlal Nehru which is also envisaged in the Instrument of Accession of 1947 to let Kashmiris decide their future through a plebiscite still edudes Kashmir. In the past two decades, the region has been witness to a lot of violence which has also strained the relations between India and Pakistan. Sadly, There has not been any substantial Positive Outcome in resolving this dispute. The Kashmir dispute has been Analyzed several times in terms of its Impact, Economics or Political, On India, Pakistan and also Kashmir. An Analysis through a kashmiri point of views as to what the Kashmiris want and how the two decade long conflict has Affected their resolve for self determination this paper this reports the result of this exercise and discusses the same in light of Kashmir Question in the foreign policy of India.

## **Keywords**

Kashmir, Autonomy, Human Rights Violation, India- Pakistan, Indian Foreign Policy

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## **I. Introduction**

Jammu and Kashmir have been struggling for their right of self-determination from more than six decades. The issue of Kashmir started just after India’s independence and the birth of Pakistan in 1947. At that time there were around 560 princely states under British India and Kashmir was one of them. The delay in deciding Kashmir’s future by Maharaja Hari Singh – the last king of independent Kashmir – after the British left was the root cause of Kashmir conflict. The tribal invasion caused by raiders from Pakistan made the Maharaja feel incesure and he decided to seek help from India. India’s viceroy Mountbatten promised him militarily help and in return Maharaja signed the “Letter of Instrument of Accession to India”, which stands controversial ever since. And with that Instrument of Accession, the Kashmir dispute has stared into the faces of the two nuclear neighbors for more than decades. Although the American reaction was to impose economic and military-related sanctions on both India and Pakistan, their respective importance in United States foreign policy soon generated less coercive measures to counter proliferation. In a significant development, within the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), both countries agreed to develop confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the nuclear and conventional fields aimed at the avoidance of conflict within nine months of the nuclear tests. The Lahore documents signed at the Summit between Vajpayee and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Lahore appeared to provide the momentum towards enhanced and formalized nuclear stability in South Asia.

## **The strategic importance**

This region is located in a key strategic location sharing borders with important countries and regions. It provides Pakistan with much needed waters i.e. the Indus and its tributaries flowing in from this region comprise the primary source of fresh water in Pakistan. As a result, control of the flow of water in these rivers through dams and canals has been a very important issue for decades. Furthermore, the Silk Route allows China to maintain an aggressive posture towards India. The Silk Route is bounded by more countries than any other states of India; in the North East with Tibet, and further North with Xinjiang, in the North West with the Wakhan corridor of Afghanistan, in the West with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and further with Punjab of Pakistan. An instance displaying the strategic importance of the Silk Route was when Pakistan reopened the road in 1965. Pakistan handed over complete control of Gilgit which is very much of strategic importance from

where China can penetrate deepest into Indian Territory. Over the last few years, China has unleashed an aggressive multi-pronged agenda that involves building dams, operationalizing branches of Chinese banks, constructing roads as well as a proposed rail network under the coveted China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Since Pakistan is central to China-led larger designs of promoting a regional connectivity network, Gilgit-Balistan as the only land link between the two countries is of foremost significance. There are many other areas in Kashmir that have major geo-political significance one such area is the Siachen Glacier in the Karakoram Pass it is the only barrier preventing Pakistani and Chinese forces from linking up in Kashmir. If Pakistan and China were allowed to link up their militaries at Siachen, India's national security over the entire northern frontier would be greatly undermined. As today the world is gradually shrinking, the greater role –economic or otherwise- of external powers in a particular region or country is perceived as routine. Today according to the analysts it is believed that the West has also strategic interests in Kashmir because an independent Kashmir would be dependent on the West due to its land locked nature this would give the West an opportunity to establish a military presence in the valley, thus enabling it to extend its influence beyond the Middle East to Central Asia and the Western border of China. China's growing stakes in this region has captured increasing media attention. China's larger designs regarding networks of connectivity as well as oil security in which PoK figures prominently, has driven other countries to also place PoK in their strategic and economic agenda.

### **Role of External power**

The region of Jammu and Kashmir is an important region having direct links with Pakistan, China, Afghanistan and very close border with the former Soviet Union. The area former considered as Paradise on the Earth, became a paradise lost especially in the last seven years due to the conflict between India and Pakistan. Kashmir issue has been transformed in to a crucial inter-state conflict during the first and second Indo-Pakistan wars of 1947 and 1965 owing to conflict over Kashmir. Pakistan and India are directly linked with China, USA and the former Soviet Union respectively, which ultimately increases geographic and strategic importance of the region. Therefore regional as well as global power's interests are also involved in Kashmir issue. During the cold war, the US Defence experts recognized Pakistan's strategic importance for checkmating the USSR ambitions and preventing communist encroachments in South Asia. In the interests of the security concerns of their country, Pakistan leadership also showed their willingness to support any US-backed effort to prevent communist expansion in the region. India sharply reacted to the US-Pakistan Agreement and Pakistan joining SEATO and CENTO. It is interesting to know that after the end of the cold war nothing has substantially changed except the two countries swapping their alliance partners. New Delhi is trying to get closer with America 'old ally' of Pakistan to new levels and Pakistan endeavoring to improve its ties with Moscow. Pakistan has received nearly \$67 billion between 1951 and 2011 from America as the relationship between the USA and Pakistan turns sour again, an impact on the India-Pakistan relations looks inevitable, with implications for the Kashmir dispute eventually. As the core of current geopolitical dynamics in the region is a power struggle in South Asia, US geopolitical motives in Kashmir, especially in Gilgit-Baltistan, seems to be guided majority by the Chinese factor. USA wants to counter China's CPEC which includes investments of over \$60 billion, along with India. On September 6, 2018, New Delhi and Washington signed a key defence deal, after the first 2+2 dialogue between the two countries. The agreement has wide-ranging consequences that go beyond India-Pakistan relations and involves India's relations with Russia, China and Iran. In view of India and the United State strategic partnership having strengthened during Trump region, Pakistan is looking forward for a strategic partnership with Russia.

United Kingdom shares perhaps the oldest ties with the region. The Gilgit-Baltistan region was leased out to the British by the maharaja of Kashmir in 1935. The British had gauged the strategic worth of the region long ago, and referred to it as the Northern frontier. This is also believed that it was due to these strategic implications that members of the British army facilitated Gilgit-Baltistan's accession to Pakistan. In the present, the British influence in PoK lies in the form of the diaspora. These people form a significant section of the PoK diaspora in Britain and contribute a substantial chunk of remittances to the Pakistan economy. A number of countries including China and the US are now involved in several hydropower projects being built in PoK important ongoing projects are the Diamer Bhasha dam in Gilgit-Baltistan, Bunji dam, Neelum Jhelum project and the Mangla dam raising project in the so called Ajud Kashmir. The role of external powers in this region is wide ranging and varies in terms of the level of penetration and the nature of opportunities. While China has been active in the PoK region for a long time, countries like the US have a fast evolving interest. Other countries, like Russia and Japan, seem to have just started to develop some interest.

The external power's influence in this region is incomplete without the study of China's policies towards this region. China's policies on the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan affect regional stabilization and crisis management efforts in South Asia. In the early decades of the cold war, China's policies in South Asia were driven by security threats from India and New Delhi's alignment with Soviet Union. China entered an anti-India military alliance with Pakistan after Sino-Indian border war of 1962 and became a vocal

supporter of Pakistani acclaims on Kashmir. Today China has sought to advance new investments in Pakistan. Chinese investments in India totaled \$956 million between May 2014 and 2016 and the President Xi Jinping has pledged to increase investments to \$20 billion in 2019. China's plan to invest \$46 billion in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) over the next fifteen years could create a new equilibrium. CPEC has not altered China's formal position in Kashmir but has increased its interests in regional politics to protect Chinese economic interests. China's ambitious 'one belt one road' initiative has been at the centre of strategic debates, with a focus on how this project would manifest Chinese connectivity-based engagement in the wider region. The passage of CPEC through Gilgit-Baltistan has been a prime cause of concern for India. During his visit to China in May 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised the issue of the upcoming corridor, including India's reservations on the project being built in a disputed region. The another aspect of contemporary Sino-Pak ties that bothers India is the strengthening three-way partnership between Pakistan, Afghanistan and China. Besides the New Silk road strategy and policies of economic assistance to Pakistan, China is steadily increasing its influence in the region with its "conflict management" initiatives, mediating between Kabul and the Taliban and organizing trilateral strategic engagements with Afghanistan and Pakistan. For example in February 2014, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan initiated a new trilateral strategic dialogue in Kabul. Then in July 2014, Pakistan hosted a meeting in Murree as part of the "Murree Peace Process", between the Afghanistan government and the representatives of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani branch of the Taliban, which was attended by the representatives of China and Pakistan. Policy makers of New Delhi are used to adopting the strategy of limited engagement when it comes to dealing with China. For example, India's response to the two-pronged problem that it faces with Pakistan and China has been to give disproportionate attention to Pakistan, attempting to shame and isolate the country rather than engaging in a sustained and high level political-strategic engagement with China. Indian diplomacy has been proved lacked in thinking beyond bilateral issues with China while India has engaged with China on a variety of bilateral issues. It has not been able to join forces with China and other neighbours in fighting terrorism in Kashmir, stabilizing Afghanistan and addressing the IS threat. The present government has not yet brought pressing regional security issues to the table in its bilateral engagement with China.

### **Possible Solutions**

The role of external players in Kashmir issue has mixed implications for India. For its standing claim on PoK, this kind of intervention does not augur well. It is also interesting that India has raised standard objections publically with China, but it has chosen to remain silent on others. There is a need to change this attitude because the role of external powers in Kashmir issue is likely to dilute India's claim on the PoK. China and USA have the potential to play a greater role in stabilizing the region, but both have not proactively called for solutions. Although both prefer that war not break out, it also benefits from some level of Indo-Pakistani tension. Further India prefers bilateral settlement of the Kashmir issue that allows no room for external mediation, particularly by China. In the context of India-China relationship, the one factor that has brought renewed stress into their relationship is China's much stronger strategic commitment to Pakistan. So India has to work with other powers and in the subcontinent to ensure that its interests are protected in the neighborhood. The balance will keep shifting between cooperation and competition with China, both of which characterizes that relationship.

Looking back at the past, external powers have not had much success mediating in the Kashmir dispute; not even United Nations is able to do much. The outside countries can't enforce a solution on the issue, they can only persuade. So there is a need for both China and USA to rethink their periodic, positive and limited role on this issue. Looking at the current international scenario, it seems India and Pakistan relations are once again intertwined in the emergent 'neo-cold war' between America and Russia the two countries are yet to learn a lesson from the past.

If the interest of external powers in the region remains same, there is a possibility of two things. First, the role of other countries could help bring about much needed development in the region.

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It is quite possible that the competition between the powers may result benefits for the people and the region. The second possibility is that the competition among the powers could quickly turn this region into a hotbed in which major powers became rivals of each other in order to further their geopolitical objectives. China's growing relationship with Pakistan has balance the India-Pakistan power equation, but the dynamics of USA-India are being closely watched in the region. As the economic concerns have always driven and shifted the foreign policy of the countries, it remains to be seen how India, Pakistan, the USA and China will look at the growing violence in Kashmir and its regional impact.

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